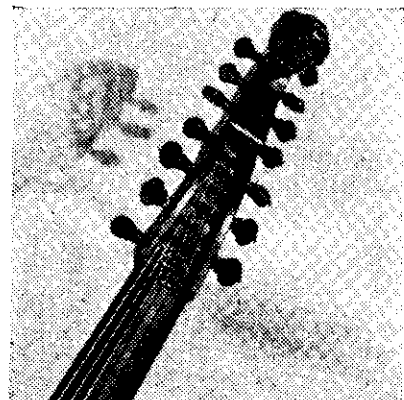


★ Fourteen-Stringed Instrument ★

AN old instrument—and at the same time a new one to most New Zealand listeners—is the viola d'amore, which is being heard in the programme *The Golden Age of Music*, presented on alternate Tuesday evenings from 2YA by Zillah and Ronald Castle.

The viola d'amore is a most unusual stringed instrument, both tonally and in its construction. It was a favourite instrument during the 18th Century, but with the changes of fashion it dropped out of use (except for an occasional part in last century operatic works) which was a pity, for it possesses a tone of singular sweetness. It has seven strings played with a bow, and an additional seven sympathetic strings below the bowed strings. These sympathetic strings are threaded through the base of the bridge, run parallel with the upper strings and terminate each in its own peg in the neck of the instrument. The sympathetic strings are not touched by the bow, but merely vibrate in sympathy with the bowed strings, thus imparting a richness and a kind of "distant" quality to the tone, which renders the instrument unrivalled in conveying sentiments of poignancy, tenderness and wistfulness. The tuning of the bowed strings is varied according to the key signature of the composition. Although the instrument has the sloping shoulders and deep ribs characteristic of the "viol" family, it has no frets, and is held, not between the knees, like the viols, but under the chin, like the violin, or viola. The outward-curved bow of the period is used. The music for the instrument is difficult to obtain, as nearly all of it is in manuscript form in museums and libraries.

The viola d'amore, in addition to being heard as a solo instrument, in *The Golden Age of Music* programmes, will be used in later performances of the series in obligatos to songs by John Dowland, J. S. Bach and Henry Purcell, in combination with the Recorder and Harpsichord. Associated with Zillah and Ronald Castle in the programme are Roy Hill (tenor), Sybil Phillipps (soprano), Joseph Miller (baritone), and Shirley Marmont (2nd Recorder).



DETAIL of the scroll in the viola d'amore, showing the 14 tuning-pegs. The upper seven pegs control the sympathetic strings



THE VIOLA D'AMORE, showing the characteristic viol shoulders, and the outward-curved bow

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