



CARA HALL
"A sort of district nurse of music"

young New Zealand pianist, Cara Hall.

The scheme, started in April of this year, aims at stimulating and broadening appreciation of music among children in towns where opportunities for hearing concert artists are rare, and from its success so far, it seems unlikely that there is any child who will fail to respond to this kind of education. Cara Hall returned to New Zealand recently after three years in England, where she gave recitals at the Arts Council clubs and from the BBC, staying for a while in Australia on the way home to fulfil engagements for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. She is now under contract to the Education Department to give 100 lecture-recitals this year in 33 post-primary schools, each school being visited three times.

"The more remote schools have been chosen because their children have not, like those in the main centres, the chances of hearing good music except through the radio and perhaps now and then in musical films," Miss Hall told a staff reporter of *The Listener* in an interview. "I have come across children who had never seen a real live concert performer. The original idea was to cover the whole of New Zealand with these recitals, but I could not carry it out in that form for it would mean my having to travel all the year round, and I don't want to give up my public recitals and broadcasting work."

So far the tours have taken Cara Hall through the areas which include Gisborne on the East Coast, Taumarunui, New Plymouth on the West Coast, and Blenheim, Nelson, and Westport. The reason for the three visits to the selected schools is that going back as someone the children already know increases their interest. She is her own transport driver—a sort of district nurse of music—very often playing and lecturing at one school in the morning and another several miles away in the afternoon, with possibly a public recital at night.

Graded Programmes

"The programmes for the three visits of the year are graded," Miss Hall explained. "By the third, the children have been gently led to the more profound works. In some schools I have to create the interest from scratch, as it

were; but in others there is already a keenness to settle down to an hour of music. On occasions where a school has no large assembly room we all move off to the nearest public hall."

"What about the pianos?" we asked.

"Pianos are sometimes a bit of a problem, but generally speaking they are in reasonably good condition. Then, private people sometimes lend us their instruments."

Each performance is prefaced by a talk; then come transcriptions of jolly tunes, dances from suites, and so onwards to Bach, who, with Debussy, seems to be among the children's favourite composers. Here is what one teacher wrote about a recital: "The children already interested in music are naturally expected to enjoy the performance. But I sat next to one pupil with no interest in music whatever and who did everything possible to avoid even class-singing. At the end of one item there was a broad smile of appreciation on her face, and she was applauding enthusiastically. This might be an indictment of us, but at least it indicates the response to the performance."

As an itinerant specialist, Cara Hall is taking the concert platform into the schoolroom and giving children a grounding in artistic appreciation for which they may be thankful for the rest of their lives.

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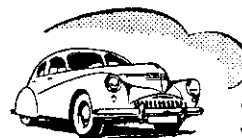
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