

QUINTET FROM SYDNEY

*October Tour by Musica
Viva Group*

ACROSS the Tasman there are at least two instrumental groups specialising in chamber music that have, in their beginnings, a touch of the romantic. One, the Queensland State String Quartet (which visited New Zealand in May last) was formed by a benevolent State Government to give concerts throughout the country; and because all it charged its audiences was a penny booking-fee it became known as the "penny orchestra." Next month New Zealand will hear the other—the Sydney Musica Viva Society's Chamber Players. The Musica Viva Society was formed by Richard Goldner, a viola-player who, having made money in commerce, found himself in the happy position of being able to give up all his time to music. The Society's Chamber Players—a group of five instrumentalists—will give concerts and broadcasts in the four main centres and in several of the provincial towns.

Goldner played with the original Musica Viva organisation in Vienna and founded the Sydney society in 1945, but it was not till 1947 that the latter body achieved its ambition of forming a permanent string quartet.

The principal of the quartet is the Hungarian violinist Robert Pikler (a pupil of Szymon Goldberg) who became known in New Zealand last year in association with the pianist Lili Kraus. Edward Cockman, an Englishman, well



THE SYDNEY Musica Viva Society's chamber players: (From left), Maureen Jones, Robert Pikler, Edward Cockman, Theo Salzman, and the founder, Richard Goldner

known in Australia for his concert and radio work, and his leadership of the Civic Symphony Orchestra (Sydney), is the second violinist. Goldner himself, who was a pupil of Tscherchen and Simon Pullman and has played in Europe with the Rose Quartet, is the viola player, and he was able to engage as 'cellist his friend Theo Salzman, former soloist with the Vienna and Pales-

tine Symphony Orchestras, who resigned from the latter to take a contract with Musica Viva. The fifth player is Maureen Jones, a young Australian pianist, who first came into prominence as winner of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's concerto competition, and has since played concertos with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Eugene Goossens.

This ensemble, it is said, will not perform any work in public without preparation of at least 80 hours. There is a reason for the inclusion of the piano with the strings. It makes possible the presentation of a wide range of works, the programmes being built up with items for string quartet, string trio, piano quartet, piano quintet, piano trio and two solo violins, as well as violin or 'cello sonatas with piano. The Musica Viva Society has found that recitals offering such a variety of formations have a wider appeal than merely string quartet concerts. Profiting by its success in Sydney it has recently extended its membership to Melbourne and Adelaide.

The New Zealand tour is being organised and managed by the Wellington Chamber Music Society, which brought the Queensland State String Quartet over here. The NZBS will present re-lays from the ensemble's public concerts at 8.0 p.m. in each case, except in Nelson, where only the second half of the programme—from 9.0 p.m.—will be broadcast, and in Dunedin, where the performances will be included in the evening's studio programmes. The dates will be:—1YA, Saturday, October 2, and Saturday, October 30; 2YZ (Napier), Thursday, October 7; 2YA, Tuesday, October 19, and Thursday, October 28; 3YA, Wednesday, October 20, and Wednesday, October 27; 4YZ, Thursday, October 21; 4YA, Friday, October 22, and Sunday, October 24; 2XN (Nelson), Friday, October 29.

In addition to the broadcasts there will be public concerts also at Hamilton, Gisborne, Napier, Wanganui and Palmerston North, and some recitals for secondary school pupils.

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achieved more easily in paint or by photography. We say to ourselves "How frightfully difficult. How can he have done it on a copper plate?"

In the Nevinston we have an effect of air and distance seen through glass and seen through an open window. And the pleasure we get from it is heightened by the perception that the effect is of the very nature of drypoint. The artist has left a thin film of ink over the surface of the metal except for the square of outdoor light where he has wiped the plate clean. And we say to ourselves "How delightfully simple. How exactly right to have done it this way."

Wonderful Wood Engravings

As to the wood engravings, it is safe to say that this is the most wonderful assemblage of them that New Zealand has ever seen. All the great names are here—in ascending power I should mention Agnes Miller Parker, Gill, Farleigh, Gertrude Hermes, and Blair Hughes-Stanton. In Hermes and Hughes-Stanton the humble woodcut suddenly takes flight into the highest reaches of fantastic delicacy, yet its essential character remains—the razor sharpness of the white incision upon the solid black bulk of the timber.

On each of the five times I have so far visited the exhibition I have seen one or more of our local engravers (and we have some good ones in Wellington) devouring these prints in a mixed mood of despair at their perfection and of determination to achieve a like excellence.

That, perhaps, is where a show like this has its greatest value. We laymen can go along to enjoy and wonder, but to these artificers it is a major experience to come face to face with the work of some of the finest engravers in the world.

It would be churlish to leave the show without a word of thanks to the British Council for bringing it to us, and to Mr. MacLennan and his helpers for the hard work involved in mounting it so well.



"PHYLLOCACTUS"—a woodcut by John Nash