

Musica Viva Players May Become Regular Visitors

NEW ZEALAND music-lovers have been very fortunate since the war in being given opportunity to hear a considerable number of artists of outstanding merit. Some of these artists will doubtless return—Isobel Baillie, for instance, hopes to pay us another visit in 1950—but at the moment, apart from the National Orchestra, there is neither soloist nor ensemble which the whole country can expect to hear regularly each year. However, the situation may shortly change, for the Sydney Musica Viva Society's Chamber Players would like to include New Zealand in their seasonal itinerary. Richard Goldner, founder of the society, told *The Listener* that he felt that one ensemble such as his was quite capable of catering for both countries, but that whether or not there would be a regular New Zealand season would depend upon the reaction of musical institutions and audiences during this, their first visit.

"I never dreamt we would attract such audiences," said Mr. Goldner in answer to questions about Australian reaction to the group and whether there were limitations in the Commonwealth to the number of chamber music devotees. "The first year we thought that it was just the novelty which was responsible for the good audiences, but we are now in our fourth season and are playing to ever-increasing numbers." In Sydney they had noticed a change after the first season in the composition of the audience. Some people who had been attracted for social rather than musical reasons had dropped out, but they had been replaced by a new and bigger group. Sydney audiences are very discriminating and very critical.

The society worked on a subscription system similar to that employed in the United States and they now had 2,000 subscribers. "These people of course came to the concerts regardless of the programmes and therefore door sales became the gauge by which they could judge popularity. They had found that Beethoven had a greater appeal than even Schubert recitals, and next season they were going to do a full cycle of Beethoven quartets.

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all types. In *Snow-white* and *Bambi* he used charm and fantasy as well as humour, and although back Home they used to say that that sort of thing had had its day, I think the charm and pathos we saw in the early Disney films will always form the cartoon's strongest appeal to the public."

"Well, let's get back to New Zealand for a moment. From what you've seen of us since you've been here, and speaking quite objectively, would you say that animated films produced here could show any characteristic distinct from those of the American or European product?"

"Since I've been here I've read several books of Maori legends, and I think there's a wealth of material awaiting



THE CAMERA CLASS—Maureen Jones (piano), Theo Salzman (cello), Richard Goldner (viola), and Edward Cockman (violin) photographed in Auckland. The fifth member of the group, Robert Pikler (violin) was delayed at Sydney and did not arrive until the following day

The growth of audiences might become a problem, Edward Cockman, second violinist in the group, pointed out, for if they became too big the sense of intimacy required of chamber music would be lost.

Another problem the group faced was the tremendous amount of travelling—much of it by air—that they had to do. During the past year they had given between 160 and 170 concerts and had travelled 50,000 miles in the season, playing in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne and smaller centres. Next season they would also include Perth and Tasmania. However, they were re-arranging their itineraries so that travelling would be cut by approximately half.

Having experienced the musical life of the Continent—he played with the original Musica Viva organisation in Vienna—was he musically happy in Australia? Mr. Goldner was asked. "Extremely happy," he replied. "A group like ours is more justified in Australia than it would be, for instance, in America. In the States it would just be another of

a dozen or so string quartets, but in Australia it is something of a pioneer. However, we try not to exploit the lack of competition, and endeavour to do our very best. Our aim is not to make money, but to popularise chamber music, and we visit places where we are asked to play even though some of these excursions might result in a loss." For the first visits to the smaller country places, the group had "utility programmes," including pieces which could even be whistled—"futility programmes" is what Maureen Jones calls them—and then on a second visit they would present a more "difficult" programme.

Some idea of the heavy cost involved in maintaining a group like the Musica Viva Players was given by Mr. Goldner. To keep out of the red they had to earn £10,000 a year. Besides travelling expenses, hire of halls and management costs, the artists were entitled to a reasonable living. They were the best available anywhere, and all of them could earn much more elsewhere. Furthermore conditions were not enticing. "Family life is out because of the constant travelling, and this is not offset by our having in-laws that we want to avoid." The group is not subsidised, either privately or by Government grant. They had not applied for assistance because they wanted to prove their worth first, but now that they had, Mr. Goldner indicated, some form of backing would be welcome. "So far," he said, "the miracle has happened and we have paid our way, but it only requires one of the players to take ill and we would be in a difficult position."

Musical Palestine

From Theo Salzman, cellist with the group, whom Mr. Goldner described as "one of the most outstanding cello players there are to-day," *The Listener*

sought some impressions of music in Palestine, for he was formerly soloist with the Palestine Symphony Orchestra.

There were 30 or 40 music schools, he said, and it seemed that everyone played some instrument, besides "buying records like mad," and to walk down the street was like walking through the corridor of a conservatorium. In this atmosphere of tremendous musical activity, competition was fiercely keen, and visits to Palestine by some internationally famous musicians had proved a very salutary experience for them. Big names meant nothing and good performances everything to critical Palestine audiences. In America and elsewhere if a musician had established a reputation, he was assured of a good reception, but not so in Palestine. Mr. Salzman said he could quote several instances of famous artists faring badly because for some reason or other they had not given of their best. On the other hand, a French pianist, whose name was unknown, had been a tremendous success just because he was very good.

After nine years of life in this atmosphere, how did he like being in Australia? Very much. He found playing with a quartet the most satisfying work, and he was glad to lead a less busy existence. In Palestine, with appearances with the orchestra, quartet recitals, and teaching, he was working a 16-hour day much of the time, and had insufficient opportunity for practice. In addition he preferred the Australian climate, for that of Palestine took a toll of both nerves and instruments.

The Musica Viva group will broadcast from 1YA on October 30; 2YA, October 19 and 28; 3YA, October 20 and 27, 4YA, October 22 and 24; 4YZ, October 21; and 2XN, October 29.

the artist in them alone. I'm sure it could be worked up without any loss of dignity to the subject. And your wild life has great possibilities too. The kiwi is an ideal cartoon character, just waiting to be done, and so are many of the other birds. There's no reason why the kiwi shouldn't be resurrected for the cartoonist's paradise.

"There is also an important future in the diagram film, which is already being used a good deal at Home. I think something along the same lines could be done in this country. Educational films, for instance, offer possibilities."

(In a later issue of "The Listener" an article specially written and illustrated by Mr. Morrow will describe how the film animator goes about his work and what problems he has to surmount in it.)