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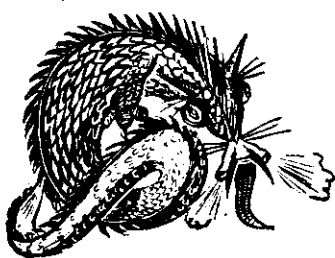
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PERCUSSION EXPERT English Teacher Touring N.Z.

THE percussion section, which other members of an orchestra lightheartedly call the kitchen department, is probably the oldest instrumental family in existence. In England, and to a lesser extent in New Zealand, it has been used in the teaching of very young children as the foundation on which to build a rhythmic musical sense. The percussion or rhythm band, as a communal activity, was introduced into infant schools in England during the 1920's, though it was not unknown earlier. A variety of percussion instruments is put into the hands of the children and a sort of percussion orchestration of nursery rhymes and other airs is achieved. Music is published for such bands and many of the classics—even whole symphonies—are arranged for them.

An English expert in percussion teaching, Louie de Rusette, who arrived in New Zealand the other day to give instructional courses of three weeks' duration at each of five Teachers' Training Colleges, told *The Listener* in an interview that she had been interested in the movement for 35 years and had written one of the pioneer text-books on percussion bands. Sir Percy Buck, the English musician, lecturer, editor, and writer who died last year, had trained her for 20 years in musical composition for infants and had himself taken a lively interest in her work with bands in many of the schools in England.

Free-Lancing with the L.C.C.

"I discovered when I was 29 years old that I had a gift for interesting children in music," she said. "I worked as a free-lance and before long the London County Council allowed me entry to any L.C.C. school in a voluntary capacity, teaching the children in the poorer areas mainly. And then I had another friend, Frederick Mason, who wrote special music for nursery rhymes. Using this material, I set to work to train teachers.

"We start with rhythm sticks and shot-rattles, and progress to triangles, tambourines, cymbals, and drums, which correspond to the soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass voices. I soon found that children round about five years old don't regard music as being high or low in pitch — they call it light or dark music, as represented on the one hand by the triangle and on the other by the drum. As they gain experience, they learn to use the percussion instruments as an orchestra, with the triangles representing the strings, cymbals and tambourines the brass and woodwind, and the drums the tympani. They play from four-part scores and eventually conduct their own bands. From this they go on to join school orchestras so that the percussion band can quite rightly be called the cradle of the orchestra.

"In 1938 I took the Queen's Hall, London, to present a percussion band concert. People warned me that it would not be a success, but all the seats were sold. Then came Munich; the children were evacuated and we had to return

the tickets. But the concert was given later and turned out a huge success. We had ten percussion bands, each providing an eight minutes' programme."

England had its Percussion Band Association, founded by Sir Percy Buck, and to-day its work was widely recognised as being the basis for teaching children the beat and melodic pattern of music, said Miss de Rusette. In most schools there were a certain number of children who could not or would not sing. Teachers were apt to pass them over, calling them the drones or growlers, and that negative attitude was worse than useless. These children were the unfortunate onlookers who could not express themselves in vocal music. But as soon as they joined a percussion band they learned to "sing with their hands instead of with their voices."

Asked why she had chosen to come to New Zealand, Miss de Rusette said that as soon as the war was over she had decided that she would like, for a time, to get as far away from England as possible.

"New Zealand appealed to me vastly. I had had a letter from a New Zealander interested in percussion bands, so I wrote to your Education Department offering to give courses and they accepted my offer. I understand that there are already some of these bands in New Zealand, but I believe that as they are mostly in the very early stages of development they could be improved. I have some instruments coming out from England and each Training College I visit will have the use of a full set. I intend to carry out these courses very thoroughly, for I believe that music runs parallel with the growth and life of every child."

Miss de Rusette, who has given percussion band instruction in America too, will start her courses at the Christchurch Teachers' Training College. She will stay in New Zealand until June of next year, and after that she hopes to visit South Africa.

Climbing the Cobbler

AS a sport, tramping gains more enthusiasts every year. With summer approaching, city buses to the nearest bush or mountain range are crowded once more with husky pack-laden youths and girls on their way to a week-end of clear mountain air, the tang of the bush, nights around a camp fire, and enough exercise to put most of us in bed for a week. In Scotland, tramping got a fillip during the depression years, when young people with no work to do escaped into the country to climb mountains like the Cobbler, which raises its three peaks at the head of Loch Long. The Cobbler (or Ben Arthur to give it its proper name) breaks no records in the way of height, but it is a symbol to Glasgow trampers. On its slopes and rock faces the working lads and lassies of Clydeside started the mountaineering clubs that have become so popular in recent years. The story of the Cobbler and its climbers is told in the BBC programme *Poor Man's Mountain*, which 4YA will broadcast at 2.1 p.m. on Sunday, November 21.

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