

Summer Mirth as Winter Comes

Bottom (awaking): When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho! Peter, Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life! Stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was . . .

And, most dear actors, eat no onions or garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. . .

BOTTOM THE WEAVER is one of the great comic characters of the stage, a boisterous figure of fun who will soon be seen by audiences in 25 New Zealand towns and cities, roaring his ridiculous lines or prancing and gesticulating in his ass's head. He will be played by John Gordon, a member of the New Zealand Players' Company who are touring the country this winter in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is the Players' fourth tour as a professional repertory company since their formation 12 months ago, and their first Shakespearian production. The pro-

ducer, Richard Campion, has assembled for it the largest cast, and it will play the most exacting itinerary of any of the Company's tours.

One problem that the company was faced with in this play—the provision of the incidental music which comes into a number of the scenes—has been overcome with the co-operation of the NZBS. Last week in Wellington ten members of the National Orchestra recorded music which had been specially written for the play by David Farquhar, a lecturer in music at Victoria University College. These recordings will be played through an amplifier at each production. The music, with the relevant extracts from the dialogue spoken by the actors themselves, was also made into a radio programme which will be broadcast from National stations in coming weeks. The programme was heard from 2ZB last Sunday, May 30, and will be broadcast from the other ZB stations on the Sunday before the play opens in each centre.

A visitor to the headquarters of the New Zealand Players in Bond Street,

Wellington, at any time during the past month or so would have been impressed by the activity stimulated by a tour of such magnitude. When *The Listener* called a few weeks before opening night, the company's designer, Raymond Boyce, was working from his water-colour sketches on the costumes of Oberon and Titania, the King and Queen of the Fairies. In the costume-room his assistants were cutting out and pinning up materials for the attendant fairies, Pease-Blossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustard-Seed. Mr. Boyce talked about his ideas for the production, which were aimed at getting as much light and airiness into it as he could. He showed us his set models, and demonstrated the ingenious arrangements of wires inside the papier-maché framework of Bottom's ass's head, which are so placed that when the actor speaks the ass's jaw moves in synchronisation with his words.

In the properties room next door spears and other accoutrements were being cut out of brass and gilded felt for the Athenian courtiers, Theseus, Lysander and Demetrius. Leather aprons, pouches,

balls of thread and various rustic tools of trade were being made for the so-called Athenian Players: Quince, a carpenter; Snug, a joiner; Bottom, a weaver; Flute, a bellows-mender; Snout, a tinker; and Starveling, a tailor. In the business offices the new business manager of the company, K. B. O'Brien, and the touring manager, Charles McCormick, were worrying over the problems of transport, accommodation and theatre-bookings.

But the real business of rehearsal was carried out mainly in the gymnasium of Wellington Boys' College. Here *The* (continued on next page)



RILLA STEPHENS as Titania



★ LEFT: "Company Call"—rehearsals for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" begin with the first read-through of the play by the full company. BELOW: David Farquhar, lecturer in music at Victoria University College, who has composed the incidental music for the production ★

