



LEFT: "Seaside resort dances where you shuffle through sand-drifts"

land "near enough." With an eye on the success of the old-fashioned progressive dances, Sydney has recently introduced a progressive mambo, which has become immensely popular over the Tasman. The examiner told us, much to our surprise, that Latin American is not nearly as popular in Great Britain as it is in New Zealand. Over there, dancers like to show off the purity of their ballroom style or the vehemencies of their jiving. Jive is so new in dancing that it is treated with a fair amount of reservation, sometimes indignation, by the "squares." One Wellington dance-hall actually had its jive-artists roped off on the floor, yet most people who want to learn to dance want to learn to jive as well. Our examiner told us that jive is extremely subtle and that to be good at the quickstep, for instance, a knowledge of the broken rhythms of jive is very valuable. Teaching jive by means of "baby jive" is very difficult and it isn't until a jiver can forget most of what he has learnt and interpret the music with the characteristic lack of inhibition, that he can really "rock."

THE story goes that if you can walk, you can dance. Having been propelled round dance floors by some marathon walkers in her time, this reporter feels that there are a lot of men about who haven't yet realised there's any difference. However, forgetting injured feet and feelings, we got around to discussing ballroom dancing in general when we listened to the first programme in the BBC *Old Time Ballroom*, now being heard on Saturday nights at 8.30. Incidentally, its absence from the YA stations' programmes for April 21 is only a temporary one (because that evening's performance of *Theatre of Music* is longer than usual). *Old Time Ballroom* will be back on the air the following Saturday.

Talking again (just try to stop us!) about *Old Time* ballroom dancing, we wondered just how popular it was, who danced it now, and where, in New Zealand. As anybody who has tried to dance the Maxina in any two New Zealand towns will no doubt remember with embarrassment, the dance varies from place to place, even a few miles apart. Yet in spite of these complications the Maxina, like an aged aunt determined to prove that there's life in the old girl yet, goes merrily on—about the last of the real Old Timers to do so. Seeking some light on the mystery of why some old dances have survived generally while others are danced only in smaller centres, and others again, like the Lancers, only on special occasions, we asked two dancing teachers and one examiner for their views.

Old Time, it appears, is fairly definitely dying out, especially in Wellington

and Auckland. There is only one regular dance in Wellington devoted to dances like the Military Two-step, the Veleta, the Destiny Waltz, and so on. However, the further south you go, especially in the South Island, the stronger is their hold on life. Some North Island towns, too, like Napier and Palmerston North, are keen centres as well. In fact, the examiner told us that Palmerston North is the only place in New Zealand (as far as he knows) where the Maxina is performed correctly—that is, with the familiar "grape-vine" step replaced by a small circular rocking step. The survival of many of these old "sequence" dances, especially in the country, is partly due to the strong Scottish leaven in our rural settlers, to whom complicated dances come naturally. In the cities, the sophistications of Latin American, jive and modern ballroom dances have tended to drive them out.

One thing that everybody seems to like, though, is a lively "progressive" dance, where partners change round a ring. The variations throughout the country are interesting even on this simple form. In some parts, they do "Eva" or "Gay Gordons." In others, notably in Auckland and Rotorua, they do the "Three-step Polonaise," rather similar, but with the girls twisting under their partners' arms. In Christchurch and Dunedin and New Plymouth they do what they call the "Three-step," but having a name for conservatism, they don't give up their partners. In Dunedin, they dance the progressive "Canadian Schottische"—very similar to the "Gay Gordons," but the separation and moving on to a new partner

are done to the right instead of the left.

Both teachers commented on the universal popularity of Latin American, which includes mambo, samba and rumba. Though these look difficult at first, they are actually easier to do well than modern ballroom dances, and their attractive music appeals to everybody. A number of older people come to take lessons especially in Latin American, and do it very well, though their ordinary ballroom style is often an example of the classic New Zea-

what he has learnt and interpret the music with the characteristic lack of inhibition, that he can really "rock." The teachers were most noticeably unhappy about standards of dress at today's dances. Seaside resort dances where you shuffle through sand-drifts feeling over-dressed in flannel bags and an open-necked shirt, can probably be tolerated, but a woman teacher said she was shocked at seeing a girl recently, at a city dance, in matador pants. A bull in a china-shop would, one gathers, have been no more inappropriate.



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