

Music Seminar at Melbourne

RECENTLY a Unesco seminar on "Music in Education" was held in Melbourne, the first of its kind ever to take place in Australia. Five New Zealand delegates attended, among them Frederick Page, senior lecturer in music at Victoria University College. A vitality, foreign to our conventional view of Australia, was the overriding impression brought back by Mr. Page.

"As one walks along the street one is impressed by the vitality and energy of the Australian scene—by their fine new buildings, for instance—and this vitality is something one is aware of in their music-making. I was also surprised by the vastness and loneliness of the landscape," he said.

The Seminar itself was opened by Sir Bernard Heinze, and consisted of lectures, discussions and concerts touching all aspects of music in education. Among the lecturers was the celebrated English viola player Bernard Shore, now a Chief Inspector in Her Majesty's Schools. In his address he implored all teachers to keep their own music going and told the delegates how often he had found that young people could listen happily to Bartok as well as Haydn. Later he played Vaughan Williams's Suite for Viola with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. William James, Director of Music for the ABC, and himself a composer, spoke on a recent European tour he had made and on overseas standards of performance. University representatives from Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Dunedin and Wellington discussed the teaching of harmony and counterpoint—one of the liveliest sessions of the Seminar.

"There was also a very good evening function at the Melbourne Art Gallery," said Mr. Page. "A magnificent collection of French tapestries was on display. These were woven over the last ten years, and many of them made brilliant use of musical instruments in their designs. I think every effort should be made to get this collection to New Zealand.

"Another interesting event was a concert of Margaret Sutherland's works. I hadn't heard any of her music before, and was delighted to find a fresh, vigorous composer. It is good news that Sir Bernard Heinze will be playing a work of hers in Auckland, and I would very much like to hear her recent Concerto for Strings by which she set some store."

Later Mr. Page met Miss Sutherland and he described her as a woman of fine distinctive mind and character, very concerned with the problems that face the contemporary composer in Australia—how he is to be taught and how his music is to be brought to performance. In Australian broadcasting there is a ruling that a small percentage of all music played over the air must be by Australian composers. "I asked Miss Sutherland what she thought of this and would she recommend its adoption in New Zealand," said Mr. Page. "Miss Sutherland, however, would make no comment. At the moment popular ballads get an enormously good run in Australia, but how far the more serious composer comes in on this scheme I could not discover.

"I was disappointed that I did not meet other composers, for so far as I



MARGARET SUTHERLAND
"A fresh, vigorous composer"

could see there was very little other composition going on in Melbourne or Sydney. A serious intellectual composer like Don Banks has chosen to work in London. Perhaps other composers were at work, but I did not come across any."

As for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra—"it bowled me over," said Mr. Page. "I was enormously impressed. I had no idea it would be as good as it is. It was a great pleasure to listen to a full complement of strings, and I doubt whether the first horn, flute or oboe could be bettered anywhere in the world. I also heard them give fine performances of French music under the guest conductor Jean Martinon.

"I heard nothing but praise for the way Sir Eugene Goossens had brought the Sydney Symphony up to its present standard, and many musicians said to me how sorry they were he was leaving," said Mr. Page.

"Australians seem to have a great feeling for music on the bigger scale—to have a real love of opera," he went on. "Everything one hears about them being a nation of singers is true. Both publicly and privately one hears the most outstanding voices. However, they are very poorly off for halls. It was almost ludicrous to listen to the Pascal Quartet in the great barn at the Sydney Town Hall—also hideous to the eye—after hearing them in better surroundings in Wellington. To hear exactly the same programme was like looking through the wrong end of a telescope."

Mr. Page had the opportunity to see two excellent collections of pictures in the Melbourne Art Gallery—those by 20th century English painters, and by artists of the Australian schools. "There were Drysdale, Dobell and Sydney Nolan—and not only these, but particularly in Melbourne, the 1890 school of Conder, Streeton and Tom Roberts. How good it would be if we could have a collection of Australian paintings shown over here, and if we could catch some of the frequent travelling exhibitions which tour Australia."

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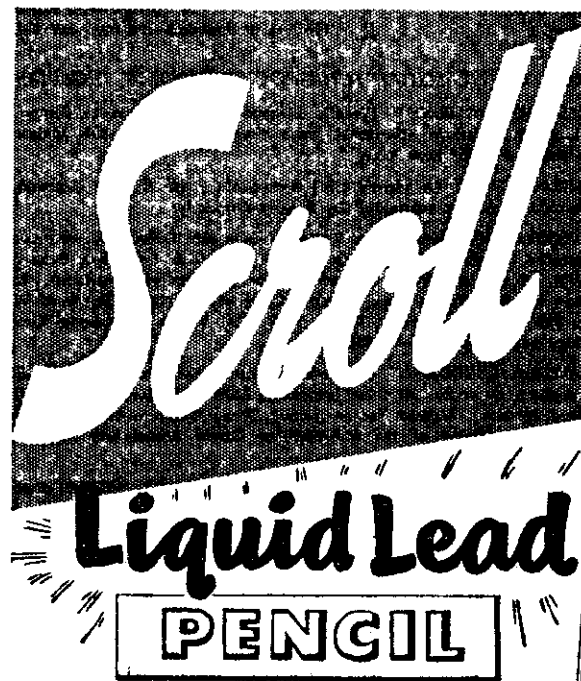
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