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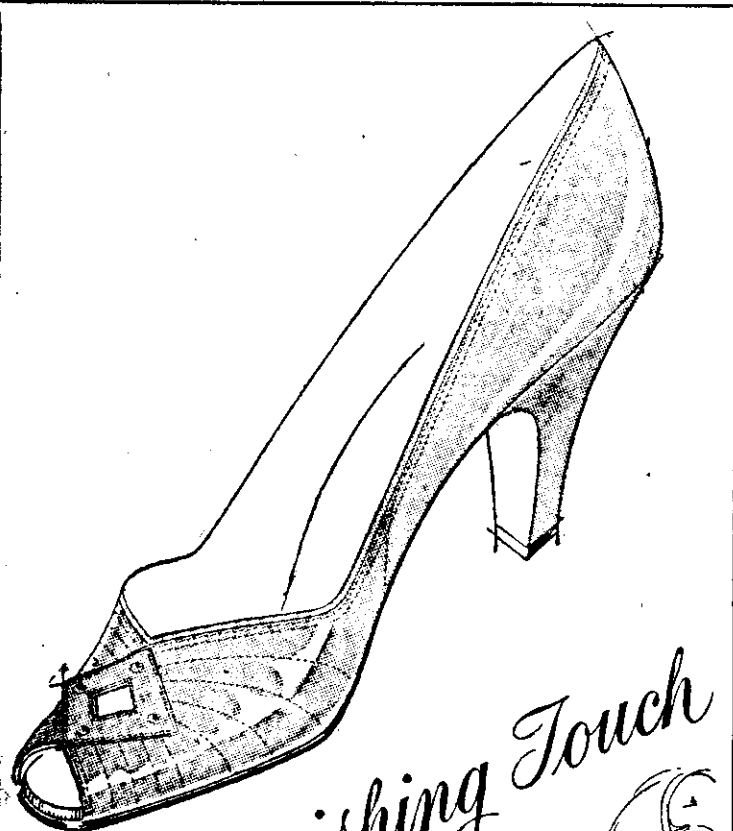
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HAPPY TO BE HERE

[T] is always refreshing to find someone who actually wanted to come to New Zealand—so many others, if what one reads and hears is true—would rather like to be somewhere else. When we met the visiting English pianist, Désirée MacEwan, a few days after her arrival, the clear, wintry sunshine of Wellington, like an English Spring, poppies and daffodils blooming at the same time, and the Maori names for fish and places were all for her pleasant signs of a

humility and sincerity towards the music she plays.

"We were taught to begin with the experience which produced the music," she said, "and we try to work outwards from that." With Matthay students technique is always subordinated to artistic ends.

Of her studio broadcasts still to be heard a particularly interesting programme is of works in the Spanish idiom by Debussy and Ravel (this coming Sunday, August 19, YCs, 8.0 p.m.). The three pieces that open the programme, "La Soirée dans Grenade," "La Sérénade Interrompue" and "Masques," are Spanish down to the smallest detail. They are works that Falla must have heard Debussy play, when he was a student of his in Paris. Falla was a devoted admirer of Debussy, and there follow two works of his which carry this particular vein a good deal further.



DESIRÉE MacEWAN

"Hommage (Pour le tombeau de Claude Debussy)", originally a guitar solo, pays tribute to his memory, and quotes a passage from Debussy's "La Soirée Dans Grenade." The programme ends with Falla's "Fantasia Boetica," which Miss MacEwan described as "a wonderful synthesis of the complex sources of Spanish music. It has Flamenco singing, dance rhythms and so on. It's a truly remarkable composition."

new country. Miss MacEwan will be touring here for the Community Arts Service, as well as giving a series of broadcast recitals, including three studio concerts with the National Orchestra. Her C.A.S. tour will take her to some very remote parts of the country. She starts at Whitianga, with a concert in Cambridge the next day, then Rotorua, Whangarei, Kaitiaki—these are some of the names she read out to us from her diary. "Whitianga," we said encouragingly, "to get there you will travel up an almost perpendicular road. And from there to Cambridge in a day!" At this stage Miss MacEwan began to look alarmed, so we hastened to put in a good word for the efficiency of C.A.S. transport, and told her, with a great deal of truth, that she would certainly see New Zealand.

We soon found ourselves talking about concert halls and the pleasures of old-fashioned chandeliers and red plush, the atmosphere that made old Queen's Hall such a favourite. Today in London there are the new marvels and delights of the Royal Festival Hall, a paragon of excellence in design, but for many musicians and especially pianists, a formidable hall to play in.

"It doesn't seem to give you anything back," said Miss MacEwan, "it's almost as if it was saying, 'You make a mistake and I'll show everybody!' Not that I mind making mistakes—only second-rate artists never make mistakes—but, of course, quite a lot of us are third-rate artists who make too many."

As a former student of the Matthay School in London, Miss MacEwan has a recognisable style, and an attitude of

Her liking for French music may stem from the French elements in her family—she has a French grandmother, and her vivaciousness, charm and spontaneity naturally lead her to music with wit, vitality and polish. She likes playing to live audiences best of all. "An audience can give you an extra lift that makes for a real performance. A pianist becomes very sensitive to an audience, sensing their mood and response, so in a way it is the audience that partly decides just how good a pianist can be."

South African Tour

Miss MacEwan has also toured in South Africa, travelling long distances into the interior. An unsettling feature of this visit was the law that prevented native people from attending her concerts. On one occasion this caused her great personal chagrin. She was being driven to her concert by a native chauffeur and it was only his skill in handling the car over difficult country that got her there in time. The driver was interested in music, and it would have been a fitting thank you to have allowed him to attend the concert. The law, however, could not be got over, and the best she could do was to find him a place outside a door, where he could hear most of the programme.

Next week Miss MacEwan returns to Wellington for her studio concerts (YCs, August 21, 9.0 p.m.; and August 23, 9.0 p.m.). By then, the steepest gradients will be behind her.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 17, 1956.