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Robert Masters Quartet

SECOND TIME ROUND

(ON a recent wintry morning *The Listener* called to see the Robert Masters Quartet in the lounge of their Wellington hotel. Robert Masters, leader and violinist, was the first to appear from the dining room, and it was not long before we were joined by the violist Nannie Jamieson, Muriel Taylor (cellist) and Kinloch Anderson (pianist). This is the quartet's second visit to New Zealand—six years ago they toured here for the British Council, and their present visit is part of an extensive world tour. Already they have passed through some of the Eastern countries, and when they were in Baghdad nearly took part in Iraq's first television transmission.

"At the last minute they asked us if we could play," said Kinloch Anderson, "expecting in the way people do in the East that we could just walk into the studio and play, like that. Later on I was astonished to see a huge crowd of Arabs in the street standing looking into a shop window at a blank television screen. Nothing was happening, but they were just standing and watching."

In England, the recent increase in TV viewers has been in Mr. Anderson's words, "simply colossal."

"The Coronation really put television on the map," explained Muriel Taylor, the quartet's cellist, "it was one of the best things Britain has ever done."

"We all watched it on our sets," said Nannie Jamieson, "except Robert, who was playing in the orchestra."

"Yes, we sat on top of the choir screen," said Robert Masters. "The orchestra was made up of orchestral and quartet leaders and as it was an orchestra of 'firsts' we all drew lots to decide where we would sit."

"How about ordinary TV—do musicians get much of a look in there?" we asked.

"There isn't a great deal of music on TV," replied Robert Masters. "The concert hall and sound radio still supply most of it. Serious music makes things a bit difficult for the TV boys. They tend to get very restless and with a pianist will swoop from one side of the keyboard to the other. In the first orchestral concerts I used to get rather tired of looking down the end of a trombone."

Kinloch Anderson, who had watched TV at work in America, including colour transmission, told us he had seen some splendid productions. They had been liberally financed and when he returned to England and saw the first TV opera by Arthur Benjamin he was "simply staggered by the amateurism of it." "It was done on a small stage," he said, "and looked as if not enough money had been spent on it."

Summer schools of music are very popular in England, and the quartet hold their own school for string players in a country house at Wokingham, in Berkshire. A former week-end house of an Irish lord, it is now a teachers' training college.

"We rent it," said Robert Masters. "We started the schools four years ago, very much on an experimental basis, and the response was so great that the following year we set about finding larger premises. They've grown and grown since then. At first they lasted a week, but latterly they've been for two weeks."



ROBERT MASTERS

We have a wonderful organiser, so this year they're continuing while we're away with the New Edinburgh Quartet."

"We've purposely kept it to the personal level," said Nannie. "About ninety people come so that each one can feel he or she is getting personal instruction from us. It's the best thing we've done in our lives."

"It's sometimes a difficult job teaming everybody up," said Robert Masters. "Someone may come along and say that Mrs. Jones is such a bad player, couldn't she please be shifted to another group, or Mrs. Smith will ask to be moved into a fresh group, and then next day say she'd rather go back where she was."

"It's a lovely place to stay," he added, "and sometimes listeners come along. Non-playing husbands may accompany their wives."

To play in a leading quartet today is to take world tours in one's stride. No doubt the Robert Masters Quartet will be circling the globe again. Next time they come here we, too, may be staring at small white screens, though unlike the Baghdad viewers, we will probably prefer to be distracted in privacy and comfort.

Social Credit: Pro and Con

THOUGH the Monetary Commission gave a good deal of attention to Social Credit, it did not have the last word on the subject. Advocates of the new monetary system are still with us, and on August 30 *Question Mark* will take another look at their arguments. "Is There Anything in Social Credit?" is the title of the discussion listeners will hear then from YA stations and 4YZ. The programme will take a different form from other *Question Mark* discussions. Each of the two speakers taking part will first be heard in a statement of attitude in which he will develop his argument without knowing what the other speaker has said or is about to say. Then for the rest of the programme they will discuss under an independent chairman the points raised in these statements. R. O. C. Marks, Social Credit candidate for Wanganui at the last General Election, will answer the question "yes," and the "no" viewpoint will be put by F. W. Holmes, Senior Lecturer in Economics at Victoria University College.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 24, 1956.