

THE FESTIVAL IS TEN

[T] is ten years since the first International Festival of Music and Drama was held at Edinburgh, and it was staged with considerable misgivings in some quarters as well as with sturdy confidence in others. The timid thought that Edinburgh had undertaken something too costly and too ambitious in scheming to bring the world's best to Scotland. The world might not send its best: the visitors might not come. The timid were proved wrong. The Festival has contradicted the view that the "Age of Bigger and Better" has passed. It has grown steadily bigger in statistics of attendance and its quality has also mounted and grown better with the years. It is certain that the attendance in Edinburgh this year will be greater than ever.

In the last six years the number of guests known to have been accommodated at hotels or lodgings in Edinburgh during the three weeks of the Festival has risen from 57,000 to over 84,000, while the number of overseas visitors has mounted from 11,000 to 27,000. These figures do not include many who were staying privately with friends, and those who were housed outside Edinburgh and went in for the day. The Festival Society, whose headquarters are at Synod Hall, Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, plays a big part in securing accommodation, and more than 10,000 of the 80,000 who stayed in the city during the Festival of 1955 were found rooms by the Society.

It was proposed from the first that the Edinburgh Festival should be essentially international. The best opera companies, orchestras, choirs, soloists and ballets were engaged from all over the world: theatrical bookings included not only the English Old Vic Company, but leading French, German and Italian artists. There has always been a showing of the best films of many nations, and the art exhibitions have featured superb collections of modern masters, including Gauguin and Renoir. This year Braque is the choice.

For 1956 the musical visitors include the Hamburg State Opera, offering among other things their first performances in Britain of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Mavra*; the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Hofmusikkapelle, and Britain's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. The Sadler's Wells Ballet will be in Edinburgh for a fortnight, and in the theatrical section well-known companies from Canada and Italy will take a part, while Scottish drama will be represented with a play by James Bridie.

The Festival has so much expanded that it has now developed a series of "fringe" activities, existing on the edge of the major features. They are not recognised officially as part of the Festival nor assisted financially. But that does

IVOR BROWN, a Scot who became a noted London dramatic critic, wrote this article shortly before the 10th Edinburgh Festival opened on August 19. He was at all the nine previous Festivals

not mean that they are second-rate. What happens is that independent music-makers or theatrical companies take over halls, of which the city has a good number, and offer concerts or plays. There has been a growing public response to these performances, some of which (of no mean quality) are put forward by student groups. One thing is certain: even if one of the major items of the Festival programme is so booked up that a visitor who has made no previous arrangements cannot get in,



NAN MERRIMAN

Alto soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at this year's Edinburgh Festival, Miss Merriman will be heard in the first of a series of BBC Transcription Service programmes from the Festival to be broadcast from YC stations on Saturday, September 15

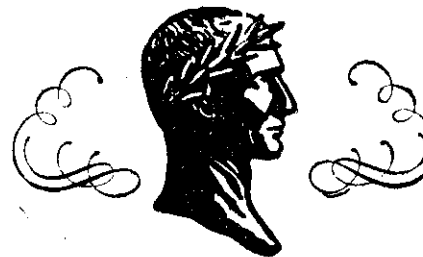
there are always plenty of alternative attractions.

A favourite item of the Festival every year is the military floodlit tattoo on the Edinburgh Castle esplanade. This is a grand parade of troops, many of them, of course, Scottish troops, who demonstrate, with massed bands and full panoply, their drill, their piping, and their dancing to audiences of six or seven thousand every evening, and sometimes twice nightly. The spectacle of Edinburgh's ancient fortress, which stands towering on its pile of stone over the city, is magnificent at any time; but at night, when the castle is illuminated and seems to float in the sky above the dark rock on which it stands, it adds a striking spectacle in mid-sky to the general glitter and gaiety of the city below.

Some Scots have felt that the Festival is insufficiently native; the tattoo, however, is fundamentally a Scottish panorama on Scotland's historic stronghold. And there are always in addition exhibitions of Scottish arts and crafts arranged in the fine old mansions of the city as well as Highland dancing in the public gardens and a big display of Highland Games.

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