



"THE angry seas of the past weeks had given way to a surface with scarcely a ripple, and the Britannia's blue hull and the yellow funnel and the grey of the escorting warships stood out against the sparkling water on the green coastline of Fife." With these words *The Times* described the arrival of the Royal yacht at the ancient seaport of Leith, bearing H.M. the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, to open the tenth International Edinburgh Festival. The Festival ended only last weekend, but already at Head Office programme tapes

of the Festival concerts are arriving ready for broadcasting in New Zealand. In the past we have had to wait some time before processed discs of selected programmes were made and sent out here, but this year the BBC offered airmailed tapes to the Commonwealth.

"We aim to despatch tapes of all these programmes to you by air freight within three days of each event. Processed discs will be available later," said a BBC communiqué.

The recording of a concert in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, on August 22

arrived in New Zealand on August 31. As the BBC put it, "Tape leaves London airport 20.30 hours Saturday, August 25, and due in Sydney 07.00 hours Wednesday, August 29. Leaves Sydney 15.00 hours Thursday, August 30, and due in Auckland 22.00 same day. Leaves Auckland 08.05 hours Friday, August 31, and due Wellington 10.00 hours the same day." These are typical movements of all the tapes being flown out.

The opening concert of the Festival this year was a performance of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The soloists were Sylvia Fisher, Nan Merriman, Richard Lewis and Kim Borg. Those who are curious about the way in which Sir Thomas would tackle a work such as the 9th may have their curiosity whetted by the verdict of *The Times*: "Sir Thomas Beecham's interpretation of the 9th Symphony calls for some comment." (YCs, Saturday, September 15, at 8.30.)

The orchestras attending this tenth Festival were the Royal Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Vienna Hofmusikkapelle, the London Mozart Players, two Scottish Orchestras, and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Overseas orchestras always excite interest and both the Vienna Hofmusikkapelle and the Boston Symphony will appear in the programmes here. The Vienna Hofmusikkapelle, made up of members of the Vienna State Opera Chorus, the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna Boys' Choir, gives two programmes, one of Schubert and one of Beethoven. This group is a modern version of the musical ensemble created by Emperor Maximilian in 1498 to provide "Court Music," a group which existed mainly for the cultivation of church music. It still provides music for the church services in the ancient Court Chapel of the Vienna Hofburg.

The National Youth Orchestra (a short extract by them was heard earlier in the year in a programme by Dr. Denis Wright) is immensely popular at the Festival. The tremendous applause the players receive is not all from dewy-eyed relatives, but comes from even hardened critics, who applaud the orchestra's youthful zest and genuine musicianship. The other orchestras are all comparatively well known—such as Beecham's Royal Philharmonic, and the famous Boston Symphony.

In this programme week the R.P.O. will be heard playing two works of Arthur Bliss, conducted by the composer. The Overture "Edinburgh" is a response to an invitation to write a concert overture for this year's festival. It proclaims its title in the rhythm pounded out by the drums in the massively scored opening bass—an opening which the composer says, may suggest the castle on the heights. The melody that follows is taken from the Scottish Psalter, in which it is set to Psalm 124. "Now Israel may say, and that truly. If that the Lord had not our cause maintained. . . Then certainly they had devoured us all," and about this tune a tempestuous rhythm surges. The next tune, a Pavan, is dedicated to the memory of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the composer imagines it as played on a harpsichord in Holyrood Palace. The work ends with reel and strathspey rhythms. The Violin Concerto No. 2 in D Major, to be played by Campoli, was commissioned from him by the BBC and composed between 1953-5 (YCs, Tuesday, September 18, 8.30).

Other programmes to be heard will include *Enoch Arden*, a melodrama by Richard Strauss, adapted from Tennyson's poem (a recitation with piano accompaniment used in a modern way); the Renaissance Singers; the distinguished Hungarian composer and pianist Erno von Dohnanyi; Irmgard Seefried (soprano), and Wolfgang Schneiderhan (violin); and the American pianist Robert Casadesus playing a Mozart Concerto.



FAMOUS MUSICIANS who will be heard in the 1956 Festival programmes: Below, left to upper right—Robert Casadesus (pianist), Sylvia Fisher (soprano), Wolfgang Schneiderhan (violinist) and Irmgard Seefried (soprano), and the composer and pianist Erno Dohnanyi

BBC photographs

