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## MUSIC OF THE WEEK

# Programmes from India

FOREMOST among the music programmes to be heard this week is the first of two broadcasts of Indian music by the brilliant sarod player Ali Akbar Kahn, with Pandi Chatur Lal on the tabla and Shirish Gor on the tamboura.

In an essay introducing this musician, Yehudi Menuhin writes: "Ever since my first visit to India some three years ago I have been wanting to introduce its music to my country. . . Two of India's outstanding musicians are Mr. Ali Akbar Khan, who plays the sarod, and Mr. Chatur Lal, who plays the tabla or drums. The third musician, Mr. Shirish Gor, plays the tamboura, a four-stringed instrument, which provides an hypnotic drone—usually the fourth or fifth note of the scale: against this anonymous background the melody and rhythm are manifest.

"In the centre of a circle the instruments lie ready, their highly polished wood gleaming as if new. The sarod, ancestor of India's stringed instruments, has the gourd style sound box and a total of 25 strings, of which ten are played with a piece of coconut shell and 15 are for sympathetic resonance. Of the ten that are played, four carry the melody, two serve to accentuate the percussive rhythms, and the remaining four are tuned to the dominant notes of the scale chosen. The solo instrument of the ensemble, it is plucked; at the same time, the left hand develops a vibrato which is a basic element of the whole musical technique and aesthetic.

"Mr. Chatur Lal plays the northern version of the Indian tabla or drum, which is an instrument in two parts. It is really two instruments, of which the one is the treble part and the other the bass. The tabla carries the metrical design, and in this the music will probably be the most accessible to Western ears—though in the end the most baffling element, because of the incredible subtlety of Indian rhythm, rivalling the melodic development in complexity and expressivity."

"Having no recourse to notation, Indian music is created before your very eyes, conjured, as it were, out of the void—improvised. You must not expect unbridled passion or flame as in Spanish or Hungarian music. Indians know these, but their music speaks of a different realm, a dimension with which we are less conversant, a dimension beyond the manifestation of personal emotions."

The first programme will be of a morning raga (YCs, Wednesday, November 7, 10.0 p.m.), and the second of an evening raga (the same time the following week). The raga is India's most important contribution to the art of musical composition—it is a form for the improvisation of melody in a given scale and mood—the word itself means "colour," "mood" or "passion." The classic system includes about 132 ragas, and the ordinary trained musician should be able to improvise freely in 50 or 60. The ragas are for certain times of the day, and are meant to be celebrations of different moments in the ritual of daily living, and for different seasons of the year. Some of the ragas

come from folk songs, others from religious chants, or from the work of individual composers.

## FROM THE STUDIO

NEXT week's studio concert (YCs, November 8) includes Jean McCartney playing the solo viola part in Gordon Jacob's Viola Concerto. Jacob is well known to musicians through his books on orchestration, his editing of the Penguin scores, and through his great variety of works for instrumental ensembles. His interest in orchestration started when he was a P.O.W. in the 1914-18 war. When he organised and conducted a small band of players, all his music had to be arranged for flute, clarinet, cornet, violins, cellos and piano. Alan Frank writes: "To meet Gordon Jacob suggests immediately the deliberate, honest and straightforward craftsman. There is nothing pretentious about his manner, and though he exhibits occasionally a shrewd wit, his conversation is homely rather than flashily—or, as so often, flashily—brilliant."

## NEW WORK

IN its final tour of the year to Blenheim and Nelson, the Orchestra opened its concert in the new Nelson College Assembly Hall with "A College Overture," specially composed for the occasion by Ashley Heenan, who attended Nelson and is now with the Concert Section of the NZBS. The present generation of boys and girls heard their college songs, along with other musical reminiscences in new harmonies and shapes, an exciting opening to what proved to be a memorable concert.

## Youth Concerts

WHEN Sir Bernard Heinze was here he showed great interest in our youth concerts. In Australia he had had a lot to do with starting them off. "The first youth concerts we held produced an incredible sequence of events," he said. "The initial concert in Sydney was an explosion. Then the young people became so vociferous in their demands for more that providing the concerts became slightly embarrassing. In Sydney and Melbourne as soon as the offices closed, young people would sit through the night in queues that tailed more than half-way around an office block.



"We presented a plan to the ABC which stipulated that the prices should be the same all over the house, so that the more handsomely privileged financially should not score over those less well-off. We thought a florin should be able to buy the best seat in the house.

"The young people were invited to decide what they wished to hear, who should conduct and which soloists they wanted. This plan has had to be modified slightly because we now have three audiences for each programme, and the best part of a thousand subscribers in both Sydney and Melbourne, and the same proportion holds in the other States. These concerts have had an incredibly stimulating effect on the demand for good music."

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 2, 1956.