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## Open Microphone

### NEWS OF BROADCASTERS ON AND OFF THE RECORD



N.P.S. photograph

HOMESICKNESS is no new thing among travellers, but we were a bit surprised with a case we struck the other day. Talking to us about her year in Moscow, Shirley Magee (who is seen at the top of this column) said it made her homesick for New Zealand, not be-

MUSCOVITE cause it was different FOR A YEAR but because the countryside was so much like what she'd known here. She has described her feelings in the first of her talks, *My Moscow Year*, now going the rounds of National Women's Session. "I had spent several years in England, and I'd grown to love the gentle English countryside. . . But the country around Moscow was so different—long straight roads lined with telegraph poles, and acres of untidy, straggling grass on either side—real New Zealand paddocks." The car would bump over a shingly track off the road and then there would be swimming in a wide, gravelly river—just like the Hutt or the Waimakariri.

Shirley Magee, who has recently taken charge of the *Women's Session* at 2YA, is a Wellington girl—she was born there and went to school and university there. At 'varsity her subject was history, a specialty which she thinks probably began with a very good history mistress at Wellington Girls' College. She would have liked to go straight from graduation to historical research, but instead she went teaching at Christchurch and Marton, till the end of 1952, when she set out for Britain.

"I had a shot at social service in a Bristol housing estate," she told us. "For several months I ran clubs for adolescents and younger people. It was interesting but a bit grim to someone coming straight from a new country, and after that teaching seemed more attractive." Miss Magee had a spell in two girls' schools in London, and was thinking of returning to New Zealand when, early in 1955, she saw an advertisement for a position as governess to a family in the British Embassy in Moscow. That was how she came to spend a year in the Soviet capital teaching and generally looking after two English girls.

Like other visitors, Miss Magee was at first oppressed by the dreary appearance of the crowds, but as she became

familiar with Moscow's shops and snack bars, its bus queues, its underground stations and its parks—where she often ate her lunch as she would in New Zealand—she came to identify herself with the ordinary life of the city and found herself indignantly defending it against criticism. She told us stories of the kindness of the ordinary people and the helpfulness of taxi-drivers and police, and said that when she was strap-hanging in a crowded tube or picnicking in the lovely woods outside Moscow she found it hard to believe she was far from home—"it all seemed so familiar and friendly."

But nostalgia had its way, and a year ago Shirley Magee found herself on board ship following an ice-breaker through the Baltic. She arrived in England in spring—"it was wonderful just to see the grass growing as we came up the Thames"—and intended to stay a while before coming on to New Zealand. "But the surf off the Dorset coast," she said, "made me want to see Pae-kakariki again."

Back in New Zealand, which she reached in a "vicious southerly," Miss Magee took a job in the National Archives, a natural enough home for a student of history. Then one day, when she was recording her talks on Moscow, she was asked if she would be interested in a job in broadcasting. She welcomed the chance of work concerned with people, she said. Already in the midst of her first documentary when we talked with her, she was enthusiastic about her new job.

★

QUITE often composers have to wait many years for satisfactory performances of their works. Thomas Gray, whose *Overture for a Festive Occasion* was recently broadcast in a National



Spencer Digby photograph

THOMAS GRAY

Orchestra studio concert, began this work in 1939. The work remained on the shelves for some time until it received one hasty orchestral performance. There was another long delay, then at last year's Composers' Workshop it



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