



Musicians were affected, especially in those countries, like Scandinavia, Russia and Bohemia, where the struggle for political freedom was most intense. Taking Schumann's advice to "listen attentively to all folk songs" that taught "the character of nations," composers in all those countries set out to discover their own national idiom, thus escaping from the German and Italian influences that had dominated music for so long. What Smetana and Dvorak did for Bohemia; and Borodin, Glinka, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov for Russia, Grieg did all alone for Norway.

Grieg was a lyric writer, wrote Paul Nettl, and his strength was in small, precise, but unusually plastic forms. "In his Lyric Pieces, in the Norwegian Dances, in the orchestral suites and the three magnificent violin sonatas; in the piano concerto, the piano sonatas, and in his quartets and his songs, there is found life in the Fjord, in the Hardanger moor, in the Norwegian village, and in the lofty mountains of the North. . . . We hear the bells of the little church, the rushing mountain stream, the thunder of the avalanches, we see the Hallings and the rural dances and hear the melancholy tones of the Hardanger fiddle. Like Chopin, Smetana and Albeniz, Grieg has unbelievably plastic ability. Dreamily his musical poetry covers up all the scenes of northern life. They give plastic form to the visions of his youth."

Early in the morning of September 4, 1907, Grieg died in his sleep in hospital at Bergen, at the age of 64. On September 9 the Norwegian nation honoured him with a State funeral, and 40,000 people thronged the streets of Bergen to pay him tribute.

The first of two special NZBS Grieg programmes will be broadcast from all YCs on Wednesday, September 4, at 8.35 p.m. This will begin with a talk, *Grieg: The Man and His Music*, an assessment by Nancy Martin, of Wellington, of the composer's life and place in music today. Next, Lola Johnson (piano) will play the Sonata in E Minor, Op. 7, a work written in 1865 when Grieg was 22, and after this sonata comes a recital of six of Grieg's songs by the soprano Honor McKellar, with Maurice Till at the piano. These songs will be "The Last Spring," "Two Brown Eyes," "On the Way Home," "A Lovely Evening in Summer," "The Brook," and "My Mind is Like a Mountain Steep."

The composer wrote about 100 songs, which are notable for their remarkable variety and range. His wife, Nina Hagerup, used to sing them, and it was at the time of his engagement to her that he wrote one of the above songs, "Two Brown Eyes."

"It may be doubted," wrote one critic, "whether for spontaneity or simplicity more charming songs have been written since the death of Schubert."

This programme will conclude with the String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 27, played by the Latchem Quartet, comprising Malcolm Latchem and Vivien Dixon (violins), Glynne Adams (viola) and Farquhar Wilkinson (cello).

The second of the Grieg programmes will be heard in a YC link on Friday, September 6, at 7.30 p.m., when Ritchie Hanna (violin) and Maurice Till (piano) will play the Sonata in G Major, Op. 13. This programme concludes with a recording of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, playing the Norwegian Romance with Variations, Op. 51.

## THE VOICE OF THE NORTH

EDVARD GRIEG, the 50th anniversary of whose death will be marked this week by the NZBS, still remains for Norwegians a national hero to a degree that perhaps their great writers could never achieve. Even out of Norway, in places where the name of Ibsen might mean little and that of Bjornson even less, Grieg would be known by his music.

"Artists like Bach and Beethoven," he once said, "erected churches and temples on ethereal heights. My aim in my music is exactly what Ibsen says

about his own plays: I want to build homes for the people in which they can be happy and contented." And within this aim few composers could be said to have had greater success.

Norway in the middle years of the 19th century was, like other nations, intensely concerned with the idea of nationalism that was a by-product of the industrial revolution. H. G. Wells wrote of this time that "Men were brought to feel that they were as improper without a nationality as without their clothes in a crowded assembly."

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THE Smetana Quartet, who will arrive in New Zealand next week, have been since 1951 the chamber music ensemble of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and as such, for six years in person and in broadcast recitals, have represented Czech chamber music at home and abroad. Named after their great national composer, this Czech string quartet team was formed after some earlier attempts in 1943 in Prague, and gave their first public concert there on November 6, 1945. At that time the Quartet consisted of Jaroslav Rybensky and Lubomir Kostecky (violins), V. Neumann (viola) and Antonin Kohout (cello)—a group of players who had all been friends and co-students at the Prague Conservatoire under Professor Josef Micks.

Since 1947, when Neumann (who wanted to devote his time to conducting) was replaced by Jiri Novak, there has been only one other change in the group. The present quartet, Jiri Novak (first violin), Lubomir Kostecky (second violin), Dr Milan Skampa (viola) and Antonin Kohout (cello) has therefore had, in the main, a relatively long period of ensemble playing.

Due to its outstanding qualities, both in technique and in style, the quartet has established a high reputation since its founding. From the start, apart from the attention inevitably given to classical quartet work, the quartet have based

## QUARTET FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

their repertoire and style of performance on the music of Czech composers. They play without the score, and consider this an integral part of their whole art of performance, not because of any external impression created, but because of the conviction that it entails a far deeper understanding of the fundamental meaning of the work concerned.

During their New Zealand tour for the Federation of Chamber Music Societies the quartet will give recitals, performing works by Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Schubert, Prokofieff and Richter, and music by the four Czech composers, Novak, Dvorak, Janacek and their namesake, Smetana.

The Smetana Quartet will be heard in five YC link programmes during

September, the first on Tuesday, September 3, at 8.0 p.m. In addition to these five programmes, the Quartet will be heard from provincial stations as

follows: 1XN, September 4; 1YZ, September 5; 2XG, September 9; 2YZ, September 10; 2XN, September 14; and 3XC, September 17.



★  
THE SMETANA QUARTET  
—from left, Novak,  
Kostecky, Kohout, and  
Skampa