

# Master Pianist from U.S.S.R.

CLOSE on the heels of his fellow countryman David Oistrakh, the Russian pianist Eugène Malinin begins a concert tour of Australia and New Zealand at Wellington on August 5. Aged 28, he is the youngest of the select group of top Soviet pianists which includes Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels. The NZBS will cover his three-week tour with 11 broadcasts from stations throughout the country.

A lover of warmth, Malinin is reported to be a little rueful about touring south of the line at this time of year. He will have to face two winters in succession. The growing international reputation of Russian artists, however, should ensure that his reception here is some compensation for the cold.

Unlike his friend Oistrakh, who comes from the Ukraine, Malinin is a Russian artist in the most exact sense. He was born in Moscow and received his musical training there, first at Moscow Central Music School, to which he was admitted two years earlier than usual at the age of five, and later at Moscow State Conservatoire. Like most musicians of talent he showed his abilities early. He was not yet four when he first reproduced on the piano some music he heard on the radio. His mother, a well known singer, encouraged him, and by his fourth birthday he was playing arias from Glinka's opera *Russian and Ludmilla*. At the same age he made what might be called his concert debut, accompanying his mother in Mozart's

"Cradle Song," and Schubert's "Trout." The audience gave him a tremendous ovation, but his teachers wisely decided thereafter to keep him out of the public eye till his training was completed.

Malinin was still a student, however, when in 1949 he made his first real impact on the wider audience. In that year he won first prize at a competition in Budapest, held in conjunction with the World Festival of Democratic Youth, and again at an international contest in Warsaw, where he established himself as a great Chopin interpreter. Before long he also added the most coveted prize of all for a Russian by winning the Moscow International Piano Competition, and was chosen as soloist for concerts with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.

With a handful of other musicians over the years, Eugène Malinin shares the honour of having caused something like a riot in Paris. In 1953 he took part in the biennial Paris International Competition begun by Marguerite Long and Jacques Thibaud and was awarded second prize, no first award being made. The audience, which had been carried away by his playing, promptly denounced the judges, Marguerite Long herself joining in the protest.

A not dissimilar incident occurred last year in Manchester, where a Malinin concert concluded with the critics raving about his performance and raving at the concert's organisers for providing a quite inadequate piano. Critics through-

out Europe unanimously describe his technique as "amazing" and he is commonly hailed as a "poet of the piano." About his life offstage little is known save that he has a wife and child in Moscow and that his interests include the national food and national music of other countries, and driving himself in motor cars, preferably fast.

Malinin's first concert consists of Beethoven's Sonata No. 21, Prokofiev's Sonata No. 4, Shostakovich's Prelude and Fugue in E minor, Scriabin's Sonata No. 5 and "Betrothal," and Liszt's "Mephisto Waltz." The first half of this concert will be heard from 2YC and 3YC beginning at 8.0 p.m. on Tuesday, August 5. For further recitals, see YC and YZ programmes during the next three weeks.

EUGENE MALININ  
Youngest of the top group



## CONDUCTED BY NICOLAI MALKO

THE surest way for an artist to obtain rough treatment in the Press is to tell an interviewing journalist exactly what to write. When these directions extend as far as the exact location of new paragraphs, semi-colons and other punctuation marks, he is inviting what the Americans aptly call a "hatchet job." Yet, to our astonishment, one man has upset this rule and escaped unscathed. He is the National Orchestra's very distinguished guest conductor, Nicolai Andreievitch Malko, an elderly gentleman so wilful yet benign, so determined yet disarming, that no person of lesser years or talent can do other than rise when he enters the room and listen respectfully to whatever he cares to say.

Before taking over the conduct of the interview, however, Dr Malko permitted one question. Was it he we had seen at Anna Russell's recent concert? It was. "It is not necessary," he reminded us, "to be always gloomy or serious if a talented person can make us smile or laugh." And what did Dr Malko think of such joyous hatchet jobs as that which Miss Russell performs upon Wagner's opera *The Ring*? There was no direct reply, but the conductor's benign smile broadened.

"It is no secret that in the approach to Wagner there is some hypocrisy," he informed us. "I remember at Bayreuth you are playing and you hear a bump from the audience. You hear opera glasses fall to the floor as somebody falls asleep!"

"Wagner had a way of megalomania, the idea of grandeur, about him. Verdi and Mozart are more really lyrical in their approach to musical theatre. Their way is more natural. Musical theatre is

born when talking is not enough, but when my emotions produce organised speech, on musical intonations, that is the start of melody. It always must be naturally expressive, naturally emotional—and if some fan of Wagner will tell me that his operas or music-dramas are natural, I would doubt his sincerity."

Gently, the hand which so expertly controls a symphony orchestra waved our next question into limbo. "I had in Australia," he began without further ado, "good reports about the National Orchestra and its new conductor John Hopkins, which my impression at rehearsal has confirmed. The Orchestra is progressing. This you know is my second visit; I was here last year.

"One of the good reports I got from the violinist David Oistrakh, who played with me last week in two concerts at Sydney. David Oistrakh asked me: 'Do you remember you were guest conductor in Odessa, and I was sitting on the last desk of violins?' I forgot it. Then he asked: 'Do you remember you came again to Odessa and I was your concertmaster?' I forgot it, too. Then he asked 'Do you remember



NICOLAI MALKO: "It is not necessary to be always gloomy or serious . . ."

my first appearance as soloist and you conducted?" This I remember very well. Oistrakh reminded me how he played for me in a private house in Odessa and that afterwards I invited him to be my soloist with the Leningrad Philharmonic. And it was . . . 30 years ago, in October, 1928, that he played the Concerto by

Tchaikovsky which he played again with me now in Sydney."

Dr Malko himself was born in 1883 in Tchaikovsky's home town, Brailov, in the Ukraine, and lived for seven years in the Tchaikovsky house there. He studied at St Petersburg Conservatoire with Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Glazounov and Tcherepnin, later becoming a professor at the same institution—by then the Leningrad Conservatoire—and conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic. From there he moved to South Russia and later to Europe, England and the U.S. He is now an American citizen. "I left Russia many years ago," he told us, "but now I'm glad to say that they have asked me to come back as a guest conductor." He is at present resident conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Discussing his concerts here, Dr Malko touched on the pieces from Shostakovich's opera *The Nose*, which was once denounced in Russia as "bourgeois and decadent." "It certainly is one of the more complicated and modern works," says Dr Malko, "but if we touch on the question of modern, bourgeois or formalistic music, we are lost in two minutes. I can say, though, that when David Oistrakh heard these pieces just now in Sydney he was not just happy, he was enthusiastic about them."

"It occurred to me," continued Dr Malko, specifying a new paragraph for the purpose, "that I was the first performer of the First Symphony by Shostakovich, and that I really launched that composer as I did David Oistrakh, and I'm not sorry that I did."

Dr Malko looked forward to his New Zealand concerts. "I tell you without any exaggeration," he says, "that the musical activity of Australia and New Zealand is astonishing."

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