

LENINGRAD via HOLLYWOOD BOWL

"I SEEM to have bits of paper in all of my pockets these days," said John Hopkins, conductor of the National Orchestra, when *The Listener* saw him recently. Carefully transferring a vagrant document to his already bulging passport he told us that fairly soon he hoped to spend a few hours lying on a beach at Honolulu, one of the only rests he will get on his coming overseas tour.

"I leave by air for San Francisco on November 3, stopping briefly at Honolulu, on the way. I will be spending about a fortnight in the States as an exchange visitor, at the invitation of the U.S. Government—the idea is that they will look after me for fourteen days, and see that I meet whoever I want to within that period. It's all arranged by the State Department and at this stage it looks as though I am in for a hectic fortnight."

He hoped to visit four of the main colleges of music while in America said Mr Hopkins—the Juilliard School and the Eastman School of Music at Rochester, New York; Mills College in California, and the Curtis Institute at Philadelphia.

"I want to visit these places because much of the work they do and the way they go about it is relevant to any future establishment of a conservatorium of music here in New Zealand. There will also be many things to interest the Bursary Committee, of which I am a member."

He also hoped to meet the conductors and people on the concert management side of some of the American orchestras, said Mr Hopkins, "to find out their approach to some of the problems which beset all orchestras"; and to visit some of the opera organisations—from the Met. in New York to some of the "opera workshops" which are a feature of modern operatic development in America.

"I hope to pay a visit to the Hollywood Bowl—the State Department think that they can arrange for me to go out there with the sound engineers—to learn something of the techniques they have developed for presenting orchestral concerts in the open air. This will, of course, bear on similar concerts held in New Zealand, such as those at the Brooklands Bowl in New Plymouth."

Later in November he would fly to London, said Mr Hopkins. After seeing a number of people there on musical matters, he hoped to be able to take a brief holiday to see his father and

mother, as well as his wife and children who will have been back then for some time.

"On December 12 I am to conduct the London Philharmonic in a concert at the Festival Hall. The programme—the Overture to *The Bartered Bride*, *Ein Kleine Nacht Musik*, Beethoven's *Emperor* and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony—is rather conservative, but that is the general pattern over these days. It is not the agents' fault; experience has taught them to be cautious. By contrast, this shows how we in New Zealand are striding ahead—we are able to cover a very wide repertoire."

Soon after this concert he would go on to France and Belgium, then to Czechoslovakia by the end of December, said Mr Hopkins. He was to conduct four or five concerts in the latter country, but only two dates were final as yet. These were for January 7 and 8, when he would conduct the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra in Bratislava.



JOHN HOPKINS
Has baton, will travel

"Karel Ancerl tells me that this orchestra—the same size incidentally as the Czech Philharmonic—is a very fine

one. The programmes for these concerts are not decided yet, but I am hoping to play Douglas Lilburn's *Festival Overture* as well as some English music.

"After Czechoslovakia, my next stop is Austria. I have no conducting engagements fixed there—though some are under negotiation—but at any rate I would like to hear some music there as well as visit music schools in Vienna."

By about January 20 he would be back in England, where he has to conduct four concerts, three with the BBC, and another concert with the London Philharmonic, said Mr Hopkins. The BBC concerts, which would be broadcast, not public, would include a lot of New Zealand music.

"About February 4 I will be off again—this time to Russia. I have not yet heard officially which orchestra I am to conduct there—though the Leningrad Philharmonic has been mentioned—nor do I know the programmes, but I hope to play some Lilburn there also—and English music. After that I will be coming straight back here to conduct the Auckland series of prom. concerts."

The conductor for most of the 1960 prom. season—who will appear with the National Orchestra in Dunedin, Invercargill, Christchurch and Wellington—is the ABC's Assistant Director of Music, Joseph Post. Before his appointment to this position, Joseph Post was Associate Conductor (under Sir Eugene Goossens) of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He has twenty-five years' experience as a conductor behind him and has conducted various overseas orchestras, including the BBC and the Halle.

OPERA

The Snow Maiden

OF the fifteen operas written by Rimsky-Korsakov, none reflects more his pantheistic joy in nature than his third—*The Snow Maiden* (*Snegurochka*). This opera was his own favourite among his works, and the fact that he composed it in a mood of deep spiritual enjoyment is revealed in the many felicities of melodic invention. *Snow Maiden* in fact, goes far to prove Ernest Newman's contention that "as a melodist pure and simple Rimsky-Korsakov reigns supreme."

The first composer to write music for Ostrovsky's fantastic play was Tchaikovsky the play being produced with the incidental music at Moscow in 1873. Rimsky-Korsakov read the text about the same time but was unimpressed; seven years later his eyes, he says, "were opened to its marvellous poetic beauty."

"The more I thought about it the deeper I fell in love with Ostrovsky's tale. My mild interest in ancient Russian customs and pagan pantheism flamed up. There seemed no better subject in the whole world than this, no more poetic figures than *Snow Maiden*, *Lel* or *Spring*, no better realm than the kingdom of the *Berendeys* with their marvellous *Tsar*, no better religion and philosophy of life than the worship of the sun-god *Yarilo*."

During the summer of 1880, Rimsky-Korsakov worked hard on a rough draft of *The Snow Maiden*, finishing it on August 12 of the same year. During this period he was living at Stelozovo, a

country estate, where everything (he tells us in his Memoirs) was in harmony with his pantheistic frame of mind and his passion for the subject of *Snegurochka*.

"A thick crooked knot or stump overgrown with moss, appeared to me the wood demon or his abode; the forest *Volchinyets*—a forbidden forest; the bare *Kopytyets* hillock—*Yarilo's* mountain . . . It sometimes seemed to me that animals, birds, and even trees and flowers, know more of the magic and fantastic than human beings do; that they understand the language of nature far better! You will say that all this was fearfully exaggerated and illogical, and yet it seems to me that it was all really so! I warmly believed in it all as a child would, like a dreamer surrendering himself to his fancies, and yet, strangely enough, in those minutes the world seemed to me nearer, more understandable, and I was somehow merged with it."

Written thus as a labour of love, the composition flowed easily and well; the following winter the orchestration was completed in St Petersburg, and in February, 1882, the opera had its premiere at the Maryinsky Theatre in the same city.

Ostrovsky's play was a poetic version of an old Russian fairy tale, and the music with which Rimsky-Korsakov clothed the legend is typically Russian—deriving in some cases from folk songs which he had known from early childhood. Like *Snow Maiden*

herself, although beautiful, it is often cold at the heart; and the personages—even when intended to be real and not mythical—are little more than abstract formulae devoid of life and drama. Though cold, however, Rimsky-Korsakov's music conquers by its brilliance, his sure sense of form creating a musical tale of unaffected beauty.

"Rimsky-Korsakov," wrote Nicholas Slonimsky "has the advantage of a sober-minded professor over those among the moderns who conjure up all the elements of earth and heaven for crashing effects; he doses out his splashes of colour so that when a cymbal player flourishes his *piatti* in the air, we really see golden suns and hear golden thunder which we would not have seen had we had this cymbal insensitising our eardrums for some time . . . His splendid consistency we cannot ignore; and this consistency may teach modern know-it-alls what they are yet to acquire in their own works."

The first complete broadcast of *The Snow Maiden* in this country will

occupy the full evening programme (starting at 7.0 p.m.) on all YC stations on Sunday, November 1. There will be two brief intermissions during the course of the opera (at approximately 8.30 and 10.5) during which short folk tales will be broadcast. The performance to be heard is by the National Opera, Belgrade, conducted by Kreshimir Baranovich, with Sofiya Yankovich (soprano) singing the part of the *Snow Maiden*.



N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 23, 1959

NATIONAL ORCHESTRA'S WEEK

NEXT week, the last week of the season in which it will be on tour, the National Orchestra will play in the following centre:

Auckland, October 29, 8.0 p.m. (soloist, Lili Kraus).

October 30, 12.15 p.m. (Lunch Hour Concert).

October 31, 8.0 p.m. (soloist, Janetta McStay).

The Orchestra will also be heard in five of recorded programmes as follows: October 26, YC; October 27, 2YC, 3YZ, 4YZ; October 28, 3YC; October 29, YC; October 30, 1YA, 2XG; October 31, 1YC, 2YC, 4YC (soloist, Janetta McStay), 1YC; November 1, 1ZC, 2ZA, 4ZA (conductor, Vincent Asprey).