

Contemporary Piano Music

FREDERICK PAGE, pianist and Senior Lecturer in Music at Victoria University College, is at present touring National stations in the North and South Islands, pushing a concert grand barrow for contemporary music. Mr. Page thinks that visiting virtuoso pianists are, on the whole, right when they stick to playing recognised classics or works by living composers who do not experiment too daringly with musical conventions established by Bach and Beethoven. Fresh interpretations of



FREDERICK PAGE

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well-known great works are welcome, necessary, and expected by the public, but at the same time the work of contemporary composers should be available to those who want to listen to it.

"One could be trite," Mr. Page told *The Listener*, "and say that contemporary music is difficult, one could be lazy and leave it thankfully at that; but the fact remains that now, at the half century mark, the greatest and most significant works of this century have yet to be heard in New Zealand, even if we confine ourselves to the pianoforte. One or two are heard occasionally. Lili Kraus played the Stravinsky *Sonata* to a private gathering in Wellington. Richard Farrell courageously persevered at public concerts with Aaron Copland's *Sonata*, and *The Seventh Sonata* of Prokofiev.

"But how," he went on, "are we to hear Busoni's *Sonatina Secunda*, Bartok's *Piano Sonata* or any one of his three piano concerti, Hindemith's three *Piano Sonatas* or *Ludus Tonalis*, and the Vaughan Williams *Piano Concerto*?"

"We have some contemporary music on films. I am looking forward to hearing Virgil Thomson's *Louisiana Story* score. In Wellington, new music can be heard at concerts of the New Zealand Branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music, and a good deal is played over the air at various times on records.

"I have wondered," Mr. Page said, "if it wouldn't be possible to broadcast new music at one particular time every so often. If we knew when they were going to be played, we could be sure of hearing, for instance, Bartok's String Quartets, all of which have been recorded.

The BBC puts on such programmes about half-past eleven at night, to be sure that no one listens by accident!"

During his tour Mr. Page will give the first New Zealand performances of Alan Rawsthorne's *Sonatina for Piano* (1949), Stravinsky's *Serenade for Piano*, a piece by Koechlin, and Ravel's *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*.

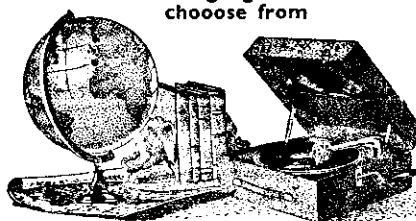
In August this year Mr. Page is taking sabbatical leave in England. There he will renew contacts with former teachers: men like Gordon Jacob and Vaughan Williams of the Royal College, and he will have a close look at the making of opera. He will see something of the work being done at English universities, and hopes also to visit the Continent briefly.

"In general," he says, "I want to have my ears stimulated with new sounds."

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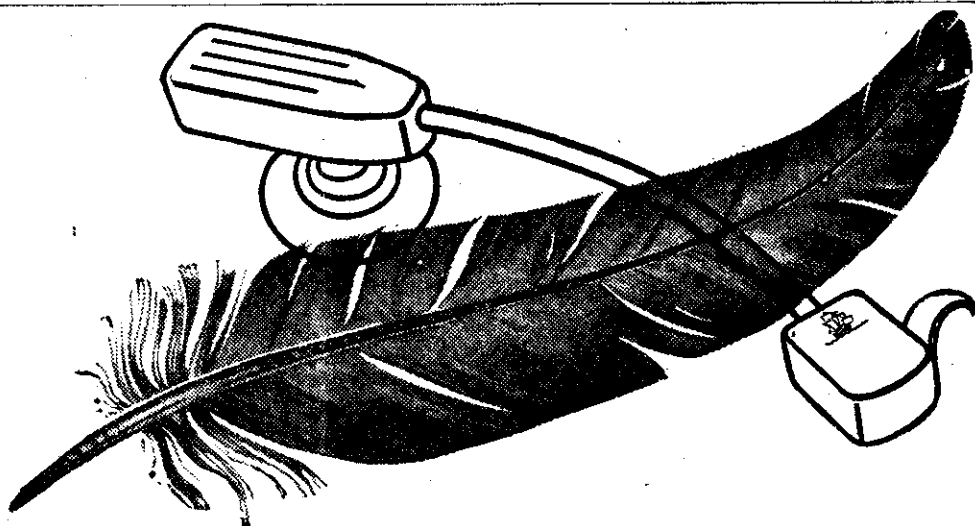
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