

# She Worked With Matthey

**T**EACHING, broadcasting for the BBC, solo concert performances, and public lectures, all contribute to the very busy musical career of Jessie Hall, an English pianist now visiting her family and friends in New Zealand, who has recorded four programmes for the NZBS. These will be heard from the main National stations, beginning with 1YC, late in May.

Jessie Hall studied with Dame Myra Hess and Tobias Matthey, then became a professor at the Tobias Matthey School in London, a position which she held for twenty years, until the school closed soon after the death of its founder. She began broadcasting from the BBC's early home on Savoy Hill, and for the last few years has been heard regularly on the Midland Home Service, in solo recitals and with the Midland Light Orchestra under Gilbert Vintner. She has also broadcast with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Heathcote Statham, and with the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, in addition to giving frequent concert recitals in London and the Provinces.

"Public performance of good music should mean a keen sense of responsibility on the part of the artist," she

says. "One should be aware of a definite duty to the music, to the composer, and to the audience. I like to spend about six months' study on an unfamiliar work, leave it for a while, and return to it again. I then feel that I have some authority for including that work in my programmes."

From the listener's point of view Miss Hall believes that any work which on first hearing commands attention is worthy of closer acquaintance. "The music may make you angry, you may be shocked and alienated, but if you find yourself compelled to listen you can be sure the work has something in it. Future hearings may enable you to begin to understand that composer's language."

Miss Hall's home is in Norwich, about forty miles along the coast from that of Benjamin Britten. "We meet occasionally, but we're both very busy people, with no time for social contacts." Asked about Britten's seventh opera, *Billy Budd*, which had its first performance in London last December, Miss Hall told *The Listener* she felt that the opera probably needed its dramatic settings to really bring it to life for the audience—she had heard only a broadcast—but it was of absorbing interest and contained some intensely moving music. *Billy Budd* is a tragedy, based on Herman Melville's

novel adapted by E. M. Forster and Eric Crozier, portraying the allegorical struggle of good against evil. Perhaps the most impressive moments occurred in the finale of the third act (in which a verdict of death is delivered to Billy Budd, the innocent young sailor who represents good), as sung by the tenor Peter Pears, Miss Hall thought. A breathless hush of several seconds followed the tenor's final phrases before the audience burst into applause.

Jessie Hall hopes to make regular visits to New Zealand, probably every two years. On this occasion she will be here until September, when she will return to England, and will give public recitals as well as a number of studio broadcasts at times and from stations yet to be finalised when this issue went to press.

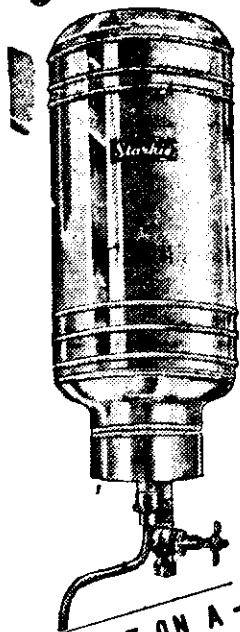


Amalgamated Studios photograph

JESSIE HALL

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