

STRATFORD STAR BEGAN IN RADIO

BARBARA JEFFORD, the talented 21-year-old who plays opposite Anthony Quayle in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre's productions at present touring New Zealand, began her acting career in Radio. Her first important engagement, she says, was in a *Children's Hour* serial broadcast in the Western Regional service of the BBC. She played the girl Ayacanora in a three-episode version of *Westward Ho*. Later she performed as "the good little wife" in a crime play entitled *The Bird-bath*. She was then aged 16.

Barbara's ambition was the legitimate theatre, but even after her broadcasting debut she did not appear on the stage. At 17 she performed in yet another medium—television. This was in a one-act play—part of a BBC variety series entitled *The Under Twenties*.

ON SHAKESPEARE

*IN the beginning, the theatre silent, kings came
Ironcoated, murderous, dealing in battle and intrigue;
The fat man thwarted them, giving not a fig
For valour or virtue, and still they won the game.
Lovers trooped in through forest and moonlit garden
With clowns and guitars, wine and witty speech,
The garlanded cytherean barque at the beach
Awaited them. Then the sky began to darken,
In the walking wood the statues spouted blood,
The bride lay strangled in the bridal-room,
Giant forms arose brooding above the flood,
Until he in a final miracle from the tomb
Raised the lost children, and the stage became a sea
Of music waters and eternity.*

—M.K.J.

It was not till the young actress was 19 and had graduated with honours from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art that she appeared on the stage. It was her first Shakespearian role. She played Viola in *Twelfth Night* at a Brighton Repertory theatre. "It's a part I'd like to play again," says Miss Jefford. "I might be able to do it properly

now I know a little more about Shakespeare. The first year it's always touch and go whether you do anything right."

But Miss Jefford apparently did everything right, for in that year—while still only 19—she was selected for the part of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, opposite John Gielgud, at Stratford-on-Avon. Since then she has appeared mostly with the Shakespeare Memorial Company, but between times she has performed repeatedly on radio and television. She has been heard in New Zealand lately in the BBC dramatisation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (which begins at 2YZ Napier, at 4.0 p.m. on Monday, April 20), and also plays Helena in the World Theatre *All's Well That Ends Well* (see page 15).

When interviewed in Wellington, Barbara Jefford was able to give *The Listener* some interesting comments on the demands made by three different dramatic media. In many ways, it seemed, the microphone and the TV camera were more exacting taskmasters than the critical audiences of Britain. "On the stage, and especially in Shakespeare," she says, "there is a tendency to make large movements and gestures and to rely overmuch on physical and visual things. Broadcasting makes you conscious of your voice and forces you to do everything with the voice alone."

Television, says Miss Jefford, has a similar disciplinary effect. It relies largely on close-ups, so that your face and voice must tell the whole story—"You can't fling your arms about in front of a TV camera." In addition, the camera magnifies mistakes a hundredfold. "The attention of the viewer is more concentrated than it is on the stage," she says. "No error passes



BARBARA JEFFORD

Her first important engagement was in the "Children's Hour"

notice. It is therefore doubly important for the performance to be completely and utterly sincere."

But Miss Jefford does not intend to forsake the stage for radio, television, or the cinema. For one thing, there is no visible audience, and that she considers makes a big difference to an actress's performance, as well as to the enjoyment of her work. At the mention of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, however, her face lit up—"I did enjoy that. I

admire Thomas Hardy, and I love doing dialect. Of course, it was easy for me with West Country people."

The reason the West Country dialect comes easy to Miss Jefford is, of course, that she was born in the West Country herself. There is no trace of dialect in her normal speech, but it is to the soft, rolling accents of Devon that she credits her pleasantly musical voice.

Barbara Jefford was born at Plymouth, and admits to having been "obsessed with the stage" since as early as she can remember. She studied elocution, music and dancing from the age of six till 16, when she took her diploma in drama from London's Guildhall School of Music. She then left school and for a year studied drama at Bristol under Eileen Hartly-Hodder before going on to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. It was during this time that she made her first broadcast from the Bristol studios of the BBC.

Since she has spent most of her time in Shakespearian productions Miss Jefford has little experience of modern plays. She recalled with some horror a performance in what she called "a dreadful Swedish play" entitled *Frenzy*. "I had to play the part of a drunken woman," she said, "and I'd never been drunk in my life." This experience has not made her shun the moderns, however, and she would like to take part in a play by Shakespeare's chief debunker, by the man who had the temerity to refinish *Cymbeline*—in short, by George Bernard Shaw. Shaw's *St. Joan*, she considers, is one of the greatest works ever written for the theatre.

THE ORCHESTRA

Subscription Concerts at Dunedin

THIS year, for the first time, Dunedin concertgoers will be able to buy subscription tickets for the National Orchestra's six winter-season concerts. The tickets mean an overall reduction of about 20 per cent in the cost of admission, as well as relieving holders of the necessity for queueing to book for each performance. Subscribers hold the same seat for each concert, but the tickets are transferable. The move brings Dunedin into line with the other three main centres.

Mail application for tickets will be received at the Dunedin booking office during the week beginning May 4, and personal applications during the week beginning May 11. From May 18 seats for the first two concerts will be open for booking in the ordinary way.

Of particular interest to Dunedin people will be the appearance of a local artist at the first subscription concert on May 25. She is Dora Drake, a Dunedin lyric soprano who has been study-

ing in London under Roy Henderson for the past three years, and is at present en route to New Zealand. She will sing "Breeze of the Night," from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, and the "Countess Aria" from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

While in London Miss Drake sang 10 performances of the leading soprano role of Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and seven performances as Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. She has also given concert and oratorio performances in the provinces. Up to five days before embarking for New Zealand, on March 26, she was at Derby, singing the part of Marguerita in a concert version of Gounod's *Faust*.

In addition to her Dunedin appearance, Miss Drake will take part in an operatic concert by the National Orchestra at Auckland on June 13. This has been arranged by the NZBS in conjunction with the Auckland Music

Council as part of Auckland's Music Festival.



Five other solo artists will appear with the National Orchestra during the Dunedin subscription series. At the second concert, on May 26, the New Zealand violinist Alan Loveday will perform Mozart's Concerto in A Major, No. 5. Mina Foley, the Auckland soprano who made such an impression during this year's Promenade Concerts, and Maurice Clare, formerly leader of the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, will perform at the July 18 and July 21 concerts respectively. Miss Foley will sing the "Bell Song" from Delibes's *Lakme*, and "Ernani Involami" from Verdi's *Ernani*, and Maurice Clare will perform with the orchestra Beethoven's Concerto in D, Opus 61. The Chinese bass Yi Kwei Sze and the New Zealand pianist Peter Cooper will be the solo artists at the two final concerts of the season on September 22 and September 24.