

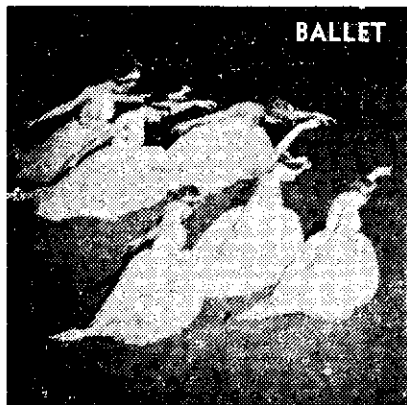
MUSIC



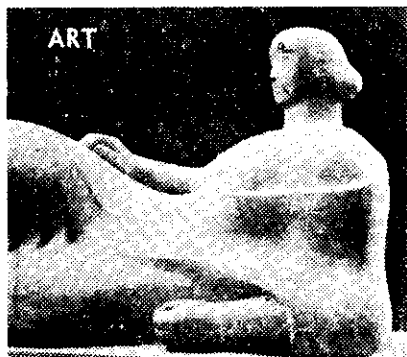
DRAMA



BALLET



ART



FILMS



AUCKLAND'S 1953 ARTS FESTIVAL

THOUSANDS of Aucklanders and their guests will soon enter a three weeks' programme in which each may find stimulus in his own art, and perhaps be moved to explore another. This is the Auckland Festival of the Arts. The name is new, but the city has been in training for the event since 1949.

In that year, sixteen musical societies sent delegates to form a council to promote and co-ordinate music in Auckland. Their first festival, held in August, 1949, was a week's music by choirs, bands, chamber music ensembles and the National Orchestra.

Other arts were invited in year by year and remained. Ballet and drama came with small programmes at first. The annual exhibition of the Auckland Society of Arts became part of the 1951 festival. By 1952 the Auckland Film Society was providing two sessions, and drama's contribution was a seven-night season of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (the New Zealand premiere). The festival was by then lasting fourteen days. The popular name "music week" would no longer do, and the Music Council wished to hand over to more representative management.

The Auckland Festival Society was formed at the end of 1952. Its president is the Mayor, Sir John Allum, and its chairman Julius Hogben, who was chairman of the Auckland Music Council from the beginning. Mr. Hogben is abroad now, visiting the festivals of Bath, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh, and inquiring about artists for our 1954 festival. With a grant of £500 from the City Council, and a cheering response to its appeals for solid sums from individuals, the Festival Society may be able to plan with a few thousand pounds in the bank. Until now it has been hand to mouth.

The printed souvenir programme will be the daily guide-book on the complicated journey through 1953's Coronation Festival. The Town Hall offers recitals, by Louis Kentner and Harold Williams, a youth concert, Coronation music by massed choirs and by winning bands from the New Zealand band contest, an organ recital, and four programmes by the National Orchestra with guest artists under Mr. Warwick Braithwaite. Nine performances of Shaw's *Saint Joan*, five sessions of the Ballet Guild and six of the Auckland Film Society will occupy the Concert Chamber. The School of Architecture plans to exhibit its work at the University; the War Memorial Museum is preparing two exhibitions—one of Maori and Polynesian Sculpture, and another of objects associated with Royal occasions. The Art Gallery—housing the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Arts, one of British drawings, several intimate concerts and many lectures—will stay open for twelve hours a day instead of six.

The festival will help introduce Auckland to itself, which is needed. Twenty and thirty years ago there seemed to be a general following for the arts. The same people would go to the Choral Society and to the Bohemian Orchestra, to Kreisler and to Galli-Curci, to the Italian opera and to Paderewski, to the Society of Arts and to the best drama. Auckland is now a much larger place, sprawling and full of newcomers, poor in transport, telephones and leisurely eating-houses—without a focus.

Audiences have shown dangerous signs of breaking into groups. It is not so much a division between the followers of Bach and those of Britten; the line is sharpest between those who want Bach and Britten sung, and those who will take only the string form. The piano is another world again, and so is ballet. The major arts themselves have been kept in touch with one another by very few people.

Our festivals have helped more than anything else to keep the mixture stirred. Season tickets have encouraged people to go through everything. Some have heard a long-established local choir, or a first-rate brass band for the first time. A concert that mated Brahms's Requiem with Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony, drew together two quite distinct audiences. Schonberg's name lost some of its terror when *Transfigured Night* came on the same programme as a Beethoven piano concerto, and was heard by many beyond the Auckland String Players' usual audience. Similarly, *The Cocktail Party*'s long season of good houses was more than could have been counted on outside the festival. Some of its audience moved on to the Auckland Film Society's public sessions, and met later in the Art Gallery.

In most years there has developed at some point that special festival atmosphere—the intensified perception of both listeners and players which lifts a performance above itself. Tiredness and want of food seem no handicap; perhaps they help. Almost every group, local and visiting, seems to have been heard at its best in a festival programme, and often feels, on its own part, that this was so. Looking back over the festivals, many Aucklanders might still remember first the Palestrina and Vaughan Williams masses, sung by the Schola Cantorum in St. Matthew's Church in 1950. The choir's own booklet later suggested that that was the finest performance in its history.

The chief meeting-place in the festivals has been a decorated dungeon, the Town Hall's supper-room, where a tireless committee of women has served supper for artists and audience after each concert. There is always a friendly buzz here, and sometimes an unforgettable occasion, as on the evening last year when Alfred Hill stood up on a table to address his friends, after exuberantly conducting choir and orchestra through two and a half hours of his own works. His visit was arranged by the Music Council for the 1952 festival. Sir Bernard Heinze, who came with the National Orchestra in 1951, and Stanley Oliver who brought the Schola Cantorum to the 1950 and 1951 festivals, were also with us long enough to become known, and to be an influence

beyond their concerts. Their spoken words have been a joy to newspaper readers and radio listeners.

Among the hundred and one practical hints Alfred Hill offered our musical life, was advice to work in with the Australasian Performing Rights Society. A concert of music by New Zealand composers enters this year's festival, backed by the A.P.R.S. with £100. Local sponsorship is behind the ballet, where four young Auckland artists are engaged for the decor and costumes. It is hoped that there will soon be ballet here with standards and permanence enough to warrant inviting solo dancers from overseas, in the same way that soloists join a choir or orchestra. Painting has a guest artist already. Besides trying to make the annual exhibition as nationally representative as possible, the Society of Arts has arranged through the British Council for paintings by Claude Rogers to hang among the others.

The word "Edinburgh," though often linked with Auckland festival policy, is quite inappropriate in one respect. Edinburgh has imported its autumn festivals, and it is even complained that the city puts its feet up by the fire for the winter and lives on memories. In Auckland the local groups which are, of course, mainly amateur, are expected to come into the festivals, and to run alongside some of the best New Zealand professionals and visitors from overseas. To make any showing, they have to become more professional in their own standards, and even assume a different outlook and way of life. Weekend painting and weekend rehearsals are not enough. Several local groups have entered the festival feebly the first time. Their second appearance has almost always been immensely better. Outside their own circle of supporters they meet a warm-hearted, but inexorable, general public.

Lectures almost every day in the Art Gallery will keep the 1953 festival public in touch with this urgent New Zealand problem—the uneasy transition from amateur to professional life in the arts. Daphne Kirner, for instance, and others in the ballet production, will discuss their work in a symposium; John Thomson, producer of *Saint Joan*, will speak on "Problems of the Festival Play." Eric Westbrook, director of the Art Gallery, will open the festival by discussing "The Festival Before Us," and sum it up in "Artists, Groups and Societies."

Participation seems to be the festival motif. Even those not busy with performance are being asked to involve themselves—by learning what the arts need, and by helping to find a direction for Auckland's lively but untidy creativeness.

—D.F.T.

AUCKLAND listeners have already had an opportunity of hearing something about the Festival, in "Arts Review," conducted by Donald McGregor. A discussion of the bollet and an introduction to the drama section have been broadcast, and this Thursday, May 21, there will be a talk by Mr. Westbrook about the visual arts, including the Festival films. In the same session on May 28 Dr. Charles Nalden will talk about "Festival Music and the National Orchestra," and John N. Thomson will discuss his production of "St. Joan." Festival events will also be thoroughly covered by "The Critics" later. "Arts Review" normally alternates with "The Critics" from 1YC on Thursdays, both being repeated from 1YA on Saturday afternoons, but for the Festival a rearrangement has given the former two successive Thursdays before the Festival and the latter successive Thursdays after it begins.

Broadcasts of the Festival proper will begin with the Official Opening and address by Mr. Westbrook, which will be recorded at 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, and heard from 1YC at 10 o'clock that evening. There will be no broadcast of the ballet, but all the main musical events will be covered by 1YC or 1YA. Details will be found in the programme pages for the next three weeks.