

"Record" Special

By ERIC BAKER



The Man Who Comes Back

SAD it is, but true, that the New Zealand artist, writer or musician who hopes to keep abreast of the times in his profession, must spend a considerable portion of his working time overseas.

And there's the rub.

Once overseas, art, writing, or music assumes in their eyes a greater stature than it ever seemed to have in that hearty, healthy, pioneer-ridden country where it is more profitable to work for that doyen of departments, the P.W.D., than to wield the brush of a Whistler or the pen of a Huxley.

So they don't come back.

At least some of them don't. Some, in generosity, or because old associations are strong, do come back—with information and enthusiasm that means much to the army of those performers who cannot get away, or have yet to "manage" it.

One of the ones who comes back is Mr. Victor C. Peters, conductor of the Christchurch Harmonic Society. A few years ago musical Christchurch felt the benefit of one of his periodical visits to Europe. Now he is in the midst of another English and Continental study tour.

In a letter to me last week he told how many of the scores of young New Zealand musicians now overseas are getting on with their work.

Abroad

EARLY last month he met Merle and Malcolm Miller of Lyttelton, Mrs. Vaughan and Terence Vaughan, Hubert Carter, Nancy Bowden and Nelle Scanlon, all New Zealanders who are doing well in the English world of music and art.

Terence Vaughan, who won a scholarship for piano-forte at the Royal Academy of Music, has blossomed out as a composer, and recently won the Agnew Prize for composition at the Royal Academy of Music. He has successfully conducted a choir at the London School of Economics.

Malcolm Miller is in St. Paul's Cathedral Choir and the London Madrigal Group, consisting of six professional singers. His sister Merle has just returned from a tour of the Continent as professional soloist with the famous Fleet Street Choir. While there she contracted scarlet fever, but has fully recovered. She has done a lot of work for the BBC, and at her own recital received unusually high praise from the leading critics of London.

Representing Otago nobly is Dennis Dowling. He is doing good work at the Royal College of Music, and has had a number of professional engagements in different parts of England.

The Blamires sisters, of Wellington (piano, singing and violin), recently gave a successful recital at the Royal College of Music. Their father is a member of the well-known family of cricketing parsons.

Douglas Lilburn, of Christchurch, is studying composition with Vaughan Williams, and there are good reports about his work. Edith Astall (Wairoa) has earned distinction by winning the Chappell Gold Medal for piano, Royal College of Music.

Cecilia Keating (West Coast) has just given a successful recital in Ireland.

Many Christchurch people will remember Grace Wilkinson, who toured with the YA stations recently. She is at present studying at the R.C.M. with Dawson Freer, Mr. Peters's old teacher.

Incidentally Dennis Dowling is with him, and the Millers studied with Freer, too.

While in Germany, says Mr. Peters, he had the pleasure of hearing opera in Berlin—Sir Thomas Beecham conducting twice during his visit. He visited Bach's birthplace, Eisenach, and played on some of his old instruments.

In The Schools

"MOST of my time," Mr. Peters wrote, "is spent in studying school and orchestral music as requested by the Carnegie Corporation. I have visited schools in the Midlands, Yorkshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as in and around London. The thorough work of the schools explains why the British adult singers are so much ahead of ours in sight reading—though our voices are as good.

"In Birmingham there is a first-rate choir composed of school teachers; 900 applied and 300 were selected. All are expert sight-readers. They practise out of school hours and do difficult works, mostly by living British composers.

"I visited Leeds for a rather unique concert. The choir consisted of 400 men from the London North-Eastern Railways—all working men. A full orchestra of about 90 players accompanied the choir, and these were also employees.

"I attended a rehearsal of the famous Huddersfield Choral Union and heard a wonderful choir of highly competent sight-readers. While there I stayed with Mrs. Pullon, mother of Dr. E. D. Pullon, of Christchurch. Dr. Pullon's two sisters sing in the choir. Another most interesting musical combination which I had the good fortune to hear was the Scottish Fisherwomen's Choir, with all the members in the traditional costumes similar to those worn by the fisherwomen of 400 years ago."

SCHOOL music in Scotland, says Mr. Peters, is on a very high plane, particularly in the secondary schools. Most, if not all, the large secondary schools have a full-time music master. He attended school festivals in London and suburbs. The bamboo pipe bands he found particularly pleasing, and he hopes to stimulate interest in that type of playing in New Zealand. The children make their own pipes and the sound is like that of many flutes played on the middle notes, and is very mellow. Children themselves conduct; there being a different director for each item.

Naturally, he has been spending a lot of time at the BBC, listening to rehearsals—every one being an education in itself. He particularly enjoyed being with Sir Walford Davies and the professional BBC singers. Sir Walford is kindness itself, and very easy to talk to. "I have found the men at the top of the tree the most generous with advice and kindly

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NEW ZEALANDERS who go overseas have a habit of making their own way, particularly in the world of music. In this article, based on a letter received by the "Record's" Christchurch correspondent, "Record" readers will find much interesting gossip about home-town boys and girls who are preparing to show the world that frozen mutton isn't all the Dominion exports.