

ANKARA CONSERVATOIRE.

April 1942.

Ankara Conservatoire is a characteristic example of Turkey's desire to learn from the West what the West has to teach. The growth of this young institution from a handful of students to its present size, the widening scope of its policy and activities, and its increasing success as the musical and dramatic centre of Ankara all testify to the fruitfulness of this westward orientation.

The Conservatoire started in 1924 as a school for the training of music-teachers and of recruits for Atatürk's new Presidential Philharmonic Orchestra. Its progress was rapid from the start: from an original nucleus of six students it had grown by 1928 to seventy-one. But the chief period of expansion followed 1934, the year when Atatürk, in his address at the opening of Parliament, emphasised the importance of the fine arts in any civilised community. The Ministry of Education that year invited Reşat Nure to draw up plans for a school of drama, and this led to the addition of the Dramatic Section (incorporating Theatre, Opera, Ballet, Chorus). Next the Ministry sought the co-operation of foreign experts with marked success. Thus, in 1935, Paul Hindemith was engaged "to found a conservatoire and to act as a counsellor to the Ministry in the organisation of the musical education of the country." In the course of repeated visits to Turkey, during which he took pupils in composition, he made reports and recommendations that have been substantially adopted as the basis of the general musical policy of the country as well as of the Conservatoire's curriculum. In 1936 Bela Bartok was similarly engaged to draw up plans for the founding of an institute of folk-music. For drama and opera the Ministry secured the co-operation of Carl Ebert, who now directs the Drama Section and is advisor to the Ministry on Drama and Opera. The Conservatoire received its name at the official foundation ceremony in 1936.

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The Conservatoire now has one hundred and sixty-four students, of which eighty-seven belong to music and seventy-seven to drama and opera. The staff comprises sixty teachers in all subjects. Students receive free board and education in return for a stipulated period of service after graduating. Scholarships begin at the age of fourteen in most subjects and twelve in piano. Education proceeds along normal secondary-school lines ~~and~~ up to certificate standard; intensive specialisation in music or drama begins after that. Certificated students may attend Ankara Faculty free of charge. Apart from two conservatoires in Germany, Ankara Conservatoire is unique in providing secondary education for its students and in allowing certificated students to attend the University.

The Conservatoire provides most of the normal musical courses in vogue in western countries, including composition which has seven students. Most of the students are training to be music-teachers, but the Presidential Philharmonic Orchestra, with its headquarters on the spot, largely staffs the Music Section and draws most of its recruits from it. This orchestra, conducted by Ernst Pretorius (formerly Musical Director at Weimar), is the high-light of Ankara's musical life, and the Saturday afternoon symphony concerts are the constant resort of all local music-lovers. There is also a strong Chamber Music Section under Liko Amar, formerly leader of a famous string-quartet. Orchestra, solo-work and chamber music have all benefited enormously from the recent drift of artistic talent away from Central Europe, and a formidable list could be made of first-class players and singers, in all departments, who are of incalculable value to a young institution.

The Drama Section is younger still, but under the directing genius of Ebert.....

Ebert it is no less promising. Performances of the following have already been given:- Interior (Masterlinck), Les Précieuses Ridicules, The Innkeeper (Goldoni), Riders to the Sea, Bastien and Bastienne, Madame Butterfly, Fidelio, Antigone. The foundations of a flourishing National Theatre would seem to have been laid. More and more will the Conservatoire, on both its sides, be looked to as a leader in the cultural life of the country.

T D V I S A M
Kütüphanesi Arşivi
No 059-116