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NATAL WITNESS

Noted Norwegian musician's visit to S.A. has two-fold purpose

By Fylippa Cumming

THE chance meeting in Switzerland with a group of White, Black, Coloured and Indian South Africans, led to an invitation which the noted Norwegian pianist, Miss Ruth Lagesen accepted, to visit South Africa—as a musician—and also to enable her to see for herself what true conditions are in this country, regarding the racial situation.

Not only is Miss Lagesen a pianist of note, she is also a conductor of some prominence having conducted the Youth Orchestra on the Oslo radio for over four years. and while a professor of music at the university for 40 years, has upon numerous occasions been invited as a guest to conduct the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra on radio broadcasts and also the Norwegian Broadcasting orchestra.

Always interested in music—descended from a musical family—she made her debut in Oslo and then spent a year in London and two years in Paris studying under the most famous teachers of her day. The State scholarships which she had been granted from Norway, France and Belgium, enabled her to spend three years abroad and she recalls with emotion the privilege of working under such teachers as Nadia Boulanger and Eugene Bigot.

"So many of their pupils became famous," she says, and mentions world renowned names from many countries.

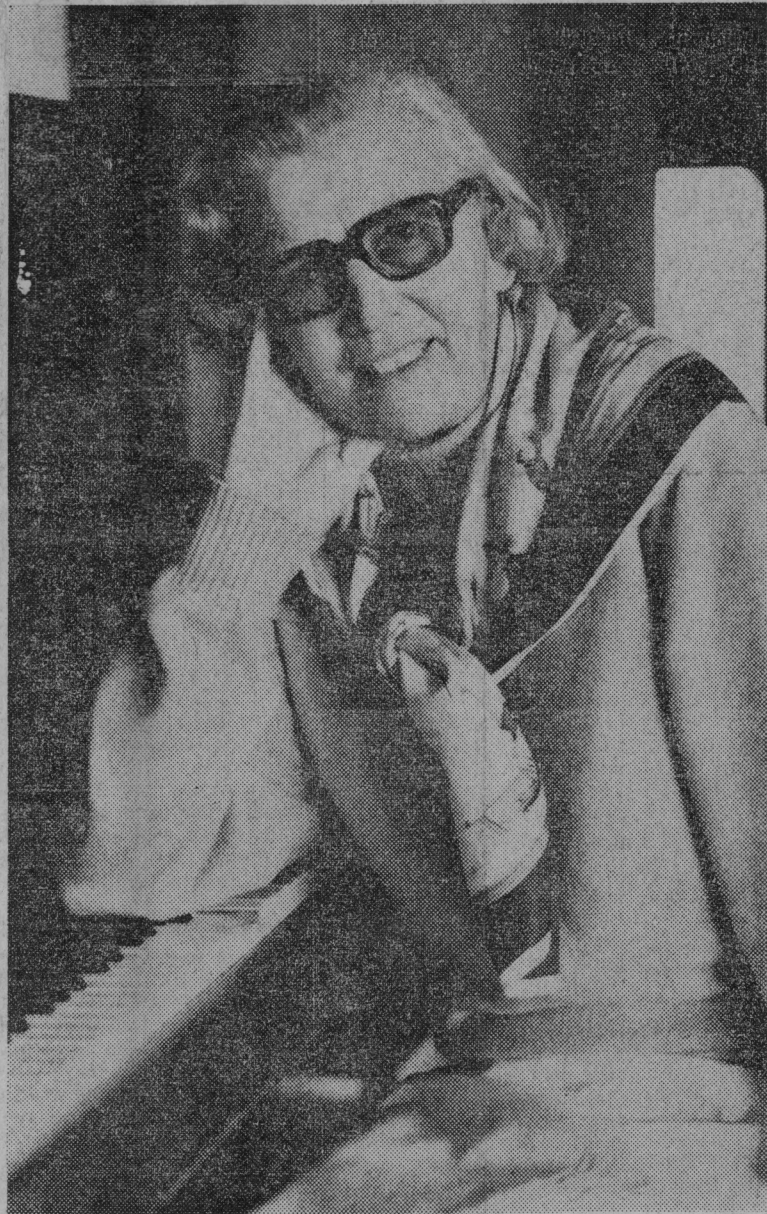
But as deeply ingrained as her music, are her religious convictions. In this sense her visit to the Republic is two-fold.

"I agreed to come here only in the event that I might be allowed to perform before a certain number of multi-racial audiences," she says. "I have been anxious to use what influence I have to improve relations between my own country and South Africa and to see for myself the true conditions here. The

recently announced policy by a well-known Swedish motor concern I find hypocritical in view of the fact that they are keeping their present investments in this country. In Norway also they damn the policies here but Norwegian firms advertise their goods in South African newspapers and are quite prepared to sell sardines and other small items."

Miss Lagesen arrived in South Africa late last year and has held concerts in every major city in the country. She has talked with leading persons in every racial group and feels that large numbers of the White community are sympathetic to the attitude of the other racial groups and that the Government and municipal authorities are gradually moving in the right direction, as shown by the partial abolishing of petty apartheid in parks, in sport and in allowing multi-racial gatherings such as the International Assembly for Moral Re-Armament, which is being held in the Auditorium of the University of South Africa in Pretoria today, April 9.

Representatives from abroad will give evidence of an answer at work in their own countries. Miss Lagesen will represent Norway and will play at this gathering which will be attended by the Hon. M. Mackay, former Minister of Navy, Australia; Mr. J. Windig, Member of the Dutch Reformed Synod in Holland; the Hon. C. Phatudi, Chief Minister of Lebowa; the Hon. C. J. Claasen, former Judge of the Supreme Court and Ds. G. M. Daneel, former Rugby Springbok.



Miss Lagesen will return to Norway in a few weeks to prepare a television programme on the art of conducting. She has been the recipient, for the last six years, of a yearly grant amounting to approximately R2 500, awarded by the Nor-

wegian government to serious artists, to enable them not only to be inspired to continue work they might not otherwise be able to afford, but to travel. Through this financial assistance she has been able to accept invitations to give recitals and lectures in London and the

United States of America at various universities.

She has been invited to give two lectures at the Summer School of Music at Dartington Hall in the South of England later this year and, with short spells in Norway, plans to travel for the next 18 months.

MISS Ruth Lagesen, the Norwegian pianist, was deeply influenced by her mother's interest in Africa, and after her death decided to continue with her religious work in this field.

"My hatred of communism and all it stands for has led me to try, in my own way, to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between various countries. Communism means a Godless state and as South Africa has taken a stand against this, I wished to see for myself the condition existing here so that I could, in my travels, speak at first-hand on the subject."

She was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. J. Schroöder while in Pietermaritzburg.