

KINGSMERE FESTIVAL OF ARTS FIRST SUMMER

The Kingsmere Festival of the Arts became a reality in the summer of 1955 in the Gatineau hills near Ottawa on the grounds of the Kingsmere estate which was bequeathed to the people of Canada by Mr. W.L. Mackenzie King. The spacious grounds, the rolling lawns, the wide expanse of starry sky by night, the rambling country house, "Moorside", all contributed to form a natural setting of very great beauty for the music, the plays and the art classes which were presented during the short six weeks season in July and August.

The idea of a Festival was born of a small seed which stubbornly pushed down its roots into the soil of Kingsmere in the summer of 1954 when "The Barnstormers", an itinerant group of Ottawa actors and actresses conceived the idea of putting on a play at Kingsmere, using the porch of "Moorside" as a stage. The play was a great success and the audience seated on the lawn followed with rapt attention and applauded enthusiastically the *dénouement* of "Lady Audley's Secret".

Tall oaks from little acorns grow. In the autumn of 1954 a small group of citizens of Ottawa, Hull and the Gatineau met to discuss the possibility of presenting a series of outdoor musical and dramatic performances on the grounds of the Kingsmere estate. The plan was received with enthusiasm and popular support seemed assured. Public meetings were called to discuss the pros and cons, and as time went on the small body of citizens became a Board of Directors duly incorporated in April, 1955 by the Secretary of State under the Companies Act of Canada to promote and foster Canadian theatre, music, art, to conduct festivals of the arts at Kingsmere and elsewhere in Canada. The Charter also provides for the wide growth of the organization as it will develop in the coming years.

For the first season of the Festival the Board of Directors proposed a series of six plays suitable for summer evening outdoor entertainment and four Sunday afternoon programmes of music. In addition, it was planned to establish a School of the Arts and a School of the Ballet. The plan for the School of the Ballet had to be abandoned

because of the lateness of the season in organizing the Festival and because of the lack of sufficient students to finance the enterprise.

The Art School of Kingsmere -- a very great success -- was held in the old Jackson Booth residence across the lake from the Kingsmere estate. Dr. H.O. McCurry, formerly Director of the National Gallery, became Director of the School and Mr. A.Y. Jackson, dean of Canadian painters, was appointed "visiting professor". The teaching staff for the adult and youth classes included Mr. Wm. Baillie of the Edinburgh School of Art and many well known Canadian painters. Four evening lectures were given as part of the Art School courses, which the public were invited to attend. Memorable talks were given by Mr. Jackson and by Mr. Alan Jarvis, the new Director of the National Gallery.

The six plays of the Festival were directed and produced by Mr. Eugene Jousse of Montreal and the four concerts were arranged for by Mrs. Dorothy Lampman McCurry of Ottawa. The average attendance at performances was about 350. The plays and concerts presented were:

Sunday, July 10th, 4:00 p.m.

The St. George's Cathedral Choir, of Kingston

Friday and Saturday, July 15th, 16th, 8:30 p.m.

"Come Back, Little Sheba" - by William Inge

Sunday, July 17th, 4:00 p.m.

The Palestrina Choir, of Ottawa

Friday and Saturday, July 22nd, 23rd, 8:30 p.m.

"The White Sheep of the Family"

by L. du Garde Peach & Ian Hay

Sunday, July 24th, 4:00 p.m.

The Leduc Symphony, of Montreal

Friday and Saturday, July 29th, 30th, 8:30 p.m.

"Zone" (in French) - by Marcel Dube

Sunday, July 31st, 4:00 p.m.

Bress-Joachim-Newmark Trio, of Montreal