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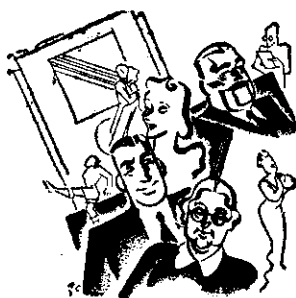
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### Three Plain, Three Serious

"RESTRAINT" is a dangerous word to use in praise of an artist's work, because it is such a temptation for someone to retort as the poet Roy Campbell did in connection with certain South African novelists, "I'm with you there, of course; they use the curb and bit all right, but where's the bloody horse?" Nevertheless it was this word that came to my mind when I heard six new compositions by Douglas Lilburn, broadcast for the first time by Frederick Page (from 2YA). And if Roy Campbell's question is put to me (with or without the Great Australian Adjective) I shall have my answer ready. The six piano preludes made me think of power in harness, waiting to be given rein—and where they were not being forceful, their motion was so nicely balanced and smooth that again I thought of the care that must have gone into keeping it so. They had that gentle modesty that one misses so much from a lot of contemporary music and yet there was no diffidence about them when the composer cared to be emphatic. Three of them

# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

were called simply "Preludes" and three were called "Serious Preludes." The first of the former was printed in Lady Newall's Gift Book—it is a delightful little formal fragment. The first and last of the "serious" group seemed to me to be highly original. Every note seemed necessary. Mr. Lilburn writes in a way that demands exactness, clear precision; which is what very good composers do.

### Back to Normal

WHEN life began to return to normal on January 3, one of the most pleasant manifestations was the reinstatement of the afternoon *Classical Hour* from 1YA, which included on this day the Brahms Piano Concerto in B Flat. Those who enjoy these hours were probably more conscious than anyone else (except perhaps the harassed tramways staff) of the fact that most days of the previous eight had been given over to racing and cricket meetings. Our newspapers have been full of reports of sporting events held in most of our towns, but *The Listener* gives no indication that elsewhere these have had first claim on the air; from the printed programmes it would seem that on all these afternoons the *Classical Hours* were held as usual in the other three main centres. Admittedly it is not easy to find out what most people want, nor to decide which of the various sections should have first consideration, but it would be

interesting to know on what basis it was determined that in Auckland sport should come first.

### Beggar's Opera

WHY do songs have words? I switched on to the 3YA broadcast of the *Beggar's Opera* anticipating some relief from the remorseless and incomprehensible Italian which usually leaves one entirely dependent on the commentator to know what's going on; but I was frustrated. Michael Redgrave as Macheath was sufficiently articulate to demonstrate that most of the songs (choruses in particular) in this abridge-



ment consist of one verse sung twice; but the others enunciated the first word of each verse and the last of every second line; the rest was—not silence, but music. One should, of course, be admiring the music for its own sake, and that brings me back to my opening inquiry. As for the *Beggars* themselves, I found considerable charm in the union of truly rural music with a plot dealing with criminal life in early eighteenth-century London, the result (I suspect expurgated) being a sort of affable naughtiness in the best music-hall tradition.

\* \* \*

But unaided by the visual, the atmosphere of the plot was practically nil; those respectable gentlemanly voices, we were told, were those of characters bearing such Newgate Calendar names as Jimmy Twitcher, Crookadfingered Jack and Robin the Basher, and they did not sound as if they believed it. Redgrave had something of the necessary raffishness, but it failed entirely elsewhere. In any case, Newgate and Tyburn in the 1740's are so totally devoid of amusement to the modern that only a thoroughly eighteenth-century approach, with its curious union of goodfellowship and complete callousness, could make the *Beggar's Opera* authentic; and this presentation, as I say, consisted of little more than the orchestra and people singing—the tune, no doubt, but hardly the sense.

### Communication

IN "The Common Reader" Virginia Woolf suggests that every writer must know clearly in his own mind for whom it is that he writes; and that very readable music critic, A. H. Fox Strangways, also admits that he cannot write for an average reader but has in mind always one particular friend. If this is a good method for writing, it is surely to be recommended also for radio programmes; too often they become incoherent, as many of our concerts do,

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