

Laurence from "Romeo and Juliet." The Bassanio speech was the most amusing, as it so vividly depicted the marked lack of respect felt by most moderns—I think not without justice—for that play and in particular that character. This Bassanio was a verbose young man, making a prolonged oration in somebody else's palace on the subject of plain and honest virtue, and quite distressingly conscious of his audience and of his own pronounced failure to line up to his precepts. It is certainly the case that Shakespeare often displays an uncomfortable cynicism towards his jeunes premiers; but I wonder whether he meant to treat Bassanio so. And into the bargain Mr. Maine extended something of this irreverence to Friar Laurence, though treating him sympathetically enough and vesting him with an interesting detachment from the field of his benevolent participation in Romeo's troubles; thus increasing one's tendency to wonder just how good a churchman the Friar was, especially as Friars were generally expected to behave with a certain latitude not enjoyed by their more regular brethren.

Lovely and Not Too Long

A WEEK overcrowded with good music is the exception rather than the rule and, after a seeming dearth of Beethoven Symphonies, it was rather surprising to hear the Fifth twice in one week. It seems amazing to modern listeners that this symphony was described, after its first performance, as "lovely and too long"; perhaps on that occasion, however, it was the entire concert which was too long, since it began around 6.30 p.m. and went on until some unrecorded hour, which must have been well after midnight if the programme is to be believed. It is just as much a mistake now, as then, to overload a single programme, and I think 4YA made a mistake in saving the Fifth until the hour of 9.25, after the listener had heard a Beethoven Concerto, a group of Schumann songs, two orchestral trivialities, and the nightly newsreel and commentary. I enjoyed the Symphony more when I heard it at the commencement of the afternoon Classical Hour. It is probably one of very few symphonies which retains the listener's active attention from the first note of its well-known opening phase until its final reiterated cadence.

Realism and Quietism

AT the not very convenient hour of 6.15 p.m., I listened recently to the first of a fortnightly series of BBC talks



on the present condition of the arts in Britain. The speaker, Miss C. V. Wedgwood, is one of the best contemporary historians, and it will be interesting to see if she cares to challenge renewal of battles long ago by including history among the arts she discusses. On this occasion, however, she gave a general

survey of the field. Her tone was cheerfully optimistic, for she detects a new promise and an achieved maturity, which is definitely the product of the war years; a diagnosis especially interesting in New Zealand, much of whose intellectual life is still stuck in pre-war avenues. The main tendencies, she said, were a wartime realism, as of certain painters who were engaged in translating and transmuting war and blitz experience and effect into the terms of art; a quietism and search for the restful, which was certainly not escapism in the ordinary sense; and a renewed interest in the macabre and romantic, with a strong tinge of the supernatural, which nevertheless was not morbidity, but a desire to tackle and accept the uncomfortable and inexplicable.

Orchestral Players Needed

I WONDER how many pianists in New Zealand could perform Beethoven's C Major Concerto one Thursday evening and follow it up with the Grieg A Minor on the following Thursday? I have just heard Olive Campbell play the first from 4YA, and by the time this appears in print I shall have heard the second also. If the Grieg is as expertly done as the Beethoven it will be something to look forward to; and it will be expertly done, for Mrs. Campbell never gives a performance that is not interesting, musically, and professionally brilliant. After hearing most of our pianists doing Concertos to the accompaniment of that poor orchestral substitute, the Second Piano, I found it refreshing to hear the 4YA Orchestra in the Beethoven. It was a pity that such a forceful player could not have had a larger, more imposing orchestral background, but with the numbers at their disposal the orchestra made the most of their supporting part. It is to be hoped that after the war we will have a blossoming of orchestral talent, and that more players will be able to concentrate on the two or three instruments which in New Zealand are rarer than diamonds, namely, oboe, French horn, and bassoon.

Is It What It's Cracked Up To Be?

"PACIFIC Image," said the announcer, "is a work of deep and sincere emotion. It is not for the ordinary listener, but for those who are prepared to sit quietly and let the emotion unfold for itself." Resisting an immediate, if perverse, instinct to switch off, I sat quietly and was interested. The composer-author, John Gough, said in his introduction that he had aimed to present a picture of the Pacific "through the method of melodrama." Just what he meant by this I am not quite clear, but the main characteristic of the work appeared to be the attempt to transport the imagination into a completely different physical sphere. Thus we began with the idea of waves and a brassy Van Gogh sunrise; and the first half of the work, interspersed with excerpts from Ecclesiasticus and the Psalms, aimed at painting a picture of the sea's surface; it was interesting to compare it with Constant Lambert's "Merchant Seamen," which clearly contained the idea of the Atlantic. But the second part took a deep breath and plunged below the surface with Walt Whitman, who makes us see, feel, and taste the underwater world by his own methods, the music nobly supporting him.

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