

among its listeners. Imagine the feelings of a listener who wants to hear the Beethoven programme as advertised. He tunes in, expecting the first bars of the Eighth Symphony. Instead, he hears the final bars of an overture which is not mentioned on the programme at all. He verifies the date and time again; no, there is no mistake, except that the programme has begun ten minutes too soon, apparently. Anyhow, the Symphony will be next. But no; the announcer says that we will now hear a Piano Concerto, and sure enough here it is—except for a false start of some twenty bars or so, which, after an apology, we hear repeated. The recording was old and parts of it were very blurred; pauses between records were too long; but it finally came to an end. The Beethoven Violin Concerto which was down as the next item on the programme, however, was



also jettisoned in favour of something else, and it was not until 9 o'clock that we had the programme as scheduled. This was Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, which made up for the previous erratic hour. The announcer couldn't resist explaining the title, of course; how Haydn's musicians, at the performance, packed up and left one by one, as a gentle reminder to their patron that salaries and holidays were long overdue. Personally, I find the erratic behaviour of the recordings listed above a strong indication that these well-worn American symphony programmes have outstayed their welcome, and are in need of a holiday, too.

Stravinsky

STATION 4ZD the other Sunday morning played for us Stravinsky's *Firebird*, and this prompted me to read something about the composer, with results which I had not anticipated. Stravinsky's own words in his Autobiography, "I have a very distinct feeling that in the course of the last 15 years my written work has estranged me from the great mass of my listeners," may be quite true, but since the period mentioned does not include *Firebird*, *Petroushka*, or *The Rite of Spring*, it presupposes that listeners find no difficulty in understanding what the composer meant when he wrote those works. To those dismayed listeners who still find the last of these works especially a trifle difficult to listen to, it is no solace to hear from the composer's own lips that they (the listeners) are already old-fashioned, and that "I believe that there was seldom any real communication of spirit between us." Let us hasten to bring the soaring spirit of Stravinsky down to earth by mentioning, also, that he does not rely on "inspiration," but forces himself to compose for a set time each day; it will make his work sound less abstruse if we compare this sensible habit with the similar methods employed by the novelist Trollope, and add that

Stravinsky regards inspiration merely as a driving force in human activity, but "in no wise peculiar to artists."

What the Eye Doesn't See

THE Consumer Time session heard from most stations on Thursday evenings has recently placed some emphasis on the dwindling British food rations and the need for saving here. Details of the weekly individual ration were disturbing if one was prepared to think hard enough into their implications. It is no reflection on this carefully prepared session to suggest that visual evidence is a more effective stimulus to the imagination. Hunger is a curious business—it is almost impossible to recollect or imagine the feeling, if one is well fed. If we New Zealanders, in our chronic state of comparative good feeding, are to remind ourselves constantly of the chronic under-nutrition of Britain, we shall need a good deal of help. Consumer Time mentioned a display of models of the weekly ration available to individuals in England. This exhibit has been seen in shop windows in Wellington, Christchurch and is now on its way to Timaru. The campaign to save and to produce more food for Britain will be most effective if it develops this visual attack on the imagination. It would be worth multiplying these models and giving them permanent place in all towns and suburban shopping centres, with photographs for reminders in cinemas and households.

If We Are Moved . . .

LISTENING lately to some of William Walton's work, notably the Viola Concerto, I decided that in the field of musical criticism anybody's word is as good as anybody else's. But it becomes difficult for the average listener if he hears one critic lauding a work which another critic derides. In this case let the bewildered listener have enough courage to make his own decision. In a hundred years from now he may be proved wrong, but so, of course, will one of the two critics; and since by that time the listener, critics, and composer will be dead in any case, what has one to lose by coming out in the open with a bold opinion one way or the other? Walton himself has given listeners a sensible enough yardstick for the measurement of their appreciation. He says, "I am afraid that to-day much unsuccessful experiment secures the recognition of public performance, to the bewilderment of listeners eager to go all the way with those who set the pace for them. If we are honest with ourselves, however, we have our criterion. If we are moved as by great poetry, for us the work is good—it is art." Judged by this standard, Walton's own works must inevitably take their place among the great works of modern music.

The Guest of Honour

ALMOST everyone likes a party, but the party 1ZB turned on in the Radio Theatre on Sunday, March 10, was a very sad one; and a dull one, too. It was given by one whose name sounded something like "Signor Greasepardon." He was reputed to be a musician of sorts, but spoke like a rather poor imitation of an offside of the Marx brothers. He was entertaining his guests—a naive crowd—with suitably sentimental music, while they awaited the guest of honour. This mysterious per-

sonage was apparently not one for punctuality and as, impatient of waiting, the other guests champed away at the hors-d'oeuvres, still to the accompaniment of soft music, they gazed at the vacant chair, and speculated on the identity of its absent occupant. Well, to cut a long story short, it turned out after all, that no one else was coming, no one corporeal anyway. The party was in honour of old Signor What's-his-Name's dead daughter whose spirit had apparently been along with them right from the beginning, enjoying her favourite music and generally joining in the festivity in her quiet spiritly way. This all goes to show that someone in broadcasting still believes the average mental age of listeners to be about twelve.

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