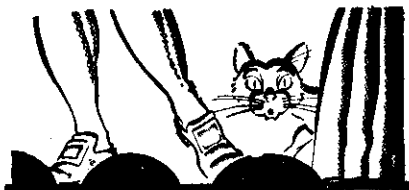


being read by the intellectuals for what it is and by the young for what their parents tell them it is. This is in some considerable part Melville's own fault. When I last returned to the reading of *Moby Dick* I found long passages of it quite unreadable. For one reader at least those interminable passages dealing with the by-products of the whaling industry serve no purpose, not even the ostensible one of building up a background against which the Whale and the Captain move to their rendezvous. Again, at the climax the figures of the three savages—African, Indian, and Polynesian—who are the ship's harpooners attain tremendous significance, but the earlier chapters are filled with that depressing facetiousness about primitive man in which the 19th Century compares so badly with (say) Robinson Crusoe. But Melville's great secret—that of creating a storm of violence and fate, a demonic atmosphere like nothing else in literature—remains his own.

### We Owe it Partly to Cats

THE Pantomime is, if you really analyse it, the most surrealist of entertainments. We boggle at a canvas depicting a torso with a wooden door in it showing the landscape through its opening, whereas on the stage we are quite prepared to accept a play in which a handsome Prince is really a girl and marries a female Princess; in which an elderly widow has the face and voice of a raucous male comedian; in which a horse parts company in the middle and reveals a human means of locomotion; in which a more-than-life-size cat



speaks in rhyming couplets, and demons and fairies are a necessary part of the scenery, mixed indiscriminately with performing seals and trick cyclists. Such is the Pantomime, as vividly described in the series *The English Theatre*, from 4YA, and we can all of us recognise the pattern, no matter what the story. Invented originally by one John Rich, an eccentric cat-lover who hated actors but happened to own a theatre, the Pantomime became the darling of the people's heart and a perennial box-office attraction. I can only endorse the view of the American in this production, who at his first Panto just didn't get it; but who presently was applauding as loudly as anyone in the pit seats—and who declared that "You don't have to understand it; all you have to do is join in!"

### The Tasks of Criticism

THE critic is an artist in his own right. The idea that he criticises because he himself cannot do the job is to-day discredited. A. R. D. Fairburn, who speaks as well as he writes, opened a series of Winter Course talks from 1YA on criticism in the arts, by discussing the principles of criticism. His talk, presented lucidly and logically, was an admirable introduction to the subject. Mr. Fairburn described the functions of criticism as twofold—to state the nature of the work and to evaluate it. Evalua-

tion is the really important job. Standards of art criticism in New Zealand are relatively low. It may be that writers here lack the essential critical qualities, but it is possible also that we have not yet a definitive enough tradition in the arts to supply adequate premises as bases of judgment. "To assay value," said Mr. Fairburn, "implies something with which to measure it." Time and the formative influence of education alone can create traditions of taste and judgment.

### Winter's Tale

STATION 3YA has found a new programme time in which to present its Winter Course talks. A. J. Danks led off the series in the week of which I write at 9.15 p.m., immediately after the NBS newsreel. This is to use the time formerly taken up by a BBC commentary, now more sporadic than ever for what are by all odds the year's main series of talks. This is much to be applauded; it relieves the congestion on the period 6.45-8.0 p.m., which must sometimes leave the organiser, announcer and technician as cross-eyed and gasping as the listener, and utilises a dead patch in the fabric of the evening.

### Half-way Music

THE "Cornish Rhapsody," music by Hubert Bath for a very popular film, will, I predict, have as brilliant and brief a vogue as its counterpart, the "Warsaw (so-called) Concerto." I heard it for the first time from 4YA, played by Mantovani and his Concert Orchestra, and the first thing that struck me about it was its premeditated resemblance to the Addinsell music mentioned above. Hubert Bath wisely calls his effort a Rhapsody, thus giving rise to none of the invidious comparisons which the pretentious title of Concerto at once invokes. To claim for either of these pieces a lasting quality would be ridiculous, but as film music they are very good indeed, and it is as film music that they should be judged. Placed beside modern works by serious composers they are eclipsed; placed beside the usual tin-pan-alley medley which serves as thematic material for the average film, they appear refreshing in the extreme.

### Lili Kraus

LILI KRAUS opened her New Zealand broadcasts with a Haydn sonata. No fireworks, no eager display of virtuosity, this was music whose greatness lies in its simplicity, its eloquence in direct, unadorned statement. Lili Kraus's playing is the perfection when creation and re-creation become one. One is not aware of difficulties or even of the overcoming of them; dynamics, tempos, all the inflexions of sound but define the phrasing, and make it a living speech. The Bartok which preceded the Haydn Sonata was excellent programme building. Although 150 years separate the dates of these compositions, they are much akin in thought. Both have their origin in folk-music. There is little else one can say about Lili Kraus, for the remembrance of the playing is the music itself. Hers is the true art which conceals itself. On the basis of this first broadcast alone I would commit myself to the opinion that it is a long while since we have had with us such a consummate artist expressing herself through the piano.



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