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The Orchestra

IT is something to be able to print a list of nationally employed musicians. That we did last issue. It is a little more to be able to add their photographs. We do that in this issue. But players and instruments are not an orchestra. However good they may be in themselves, and however promising after a few days' trial, they can't become an orchestra until they have been moulded into a single instrument. It must take months and it may take years, and the responsibility of the public is to allow it to happen. Mr. Tyrer will have to be as firm as a rock (in addition to being a glowing fire) if he is to resist the demand for premature performances, and it is encouraging to find him declaring himself so strongly on this point at the outset. But the public will also have to be as patient as Job and as forgiving as Paul's letter to the Corinthians if they are to abstain from intolerant complaints. There is a limit to one man's capacity to resist pressure. There ought to be no reasonable limit in the circumstances to the determination of the rest of us not to apply undue pressure but to allow conductor and players the time that all living things require to come to maturity. It is impossible to say yet how long that will be. Growth may be more rapid than at present seems likely or it may be slower. Winds blow, accidents happen, selections that at first seem safe are found to be unsuitable, and so on. It would be contrary to all experience in such cases if no prunings proved necessary; if the present place of every player in the group remained the best place; if growth went on without a check. Orchestras are not made in that way. They are half sweating and half changing and trying again. The conductor must be free to experiment. The rest of us must be disciplined to wait.

CORRECT AGE FOR PIANO STUDY

Sir,—Paul Von Sturm's article "Don't learn the piano till you're 21" strikes an answering chord in my own experience. I don't think for one moment he meant us to accept the above statement literally, but he does succeed in conveying that a musical education need never finish, and can start, or continue at any age. My own experience was as follows: In childhood I learnt the piano indifferently from indifferent teachers for about five years, and cannot remember finding the learning any hardship. The classics were entirely foreign to me, and I thumped and banged with a fair amount of success and a great deal of zeal, for the "silent" movies, 20 years ago.

But a Training College education introduced me to an appreciation of good music. It was like an awakening. Consequently, a deep desire urged me to continue my piano lessons. This I did for three years (until I was married) and held down a teaching job too. (Please note, Miss "Practice Can Be Fun," who, thinks earning a living prevents a continuance of musical education.)

Having bought my own piano before marriage, I have kept up practice intermittently while bringing up three children, and running a farm home. Now I have a dream. It is this: In a year or two, when the children are away at secondary school, it is my intention to continue with my piano lessons, and study the history of music. There is so much to learn, and a life is so short. I'm over 40, but that is no deterrent.

It is my opinion though, that the mechanics of piano-playing should be learnt in childhood. It saves tedious time later. The discipline of application, in moderation, does not hurt any child who has some musical sense. But true application, and true appreciation, develop only as one grows older, when a love of accomplishment urges one on, primarily because the inner life becomes ever more enriched through a love of good music.

"R.V.C." (Auckland).

FRIENDSHIP WITH RUSSIA

Sir,—Perhaps the Soviet Press does, as you say "openly attack Britain and America." It does so only because the policy of the British and American Governments merits the condemnation of responsible journalists. But the impression that is sometimes given that these attacks are motivated by sheer ill-will towards the British and American peoples is surely not borne out by the facts. Your readers have only to compare for themselves in a recent issue of *The Listener* the courteous words which Mr. Ehrenberg addressed to the American people with Mr. Atkinson's abusive and very silly attack on the Soviet Union. Where good manners are concerned the Russians win hands down. One has only to compare the calm and moderation of Soviet diplomats with the gaucheries of, say, Messrs. Evatt and Jordan to realize this.

Certainly you will find no Russian using the violent and provocative language that is used by some prominent Americans apparently driven power-crazy by their country's possession of the atomic bomb. What for instance could be more wicked than Admiral Standley's description of the Soviet Union as "a virtual enemy," or his suggestion that Mr. Wallace, for the crime

of modestly recommending peaceful relations with his country's greatest neighbour, deserved shooting? After what the world has just gone through talk like this makes the blood run cold.

No wonder thousands of industrialists and high ranking naval officers cheered when the Secretary of the Navy attacked Mr. Wallace. The brutal fact is that powerful sections of American business are hell-bent for war with the Soviet Union. Why is this? The first reason is that the very existence of the Workers' and Peasants' State is a perpetual challenge to their claim that society cannot manage without them. The second reason is that the Soviet Union stands as a mighty bastion for Socialism and Democracy thwarting their plans for the realisation of the "American Century"—in other words, the imperialistic domination of the world by American Capital. JAS. W. WINCHESTER (Wellington).

Sir,—So "the 150 millions of Russians are deliberately isolated by their rulers from free contact with their neighbours" are they?

Anyone who cared to investigate truthful sources of information regarding this amazing civilisation of less than 30 years, would realise the people have been far too busy with their own affairs

More letters from listeners will be found on page 14

to have time to think of their neighbours. Unless it was to fear them, for Hitler made plain his evil intentions in *Mein Kampf*. Those same Russians were the only ones with constructive ideas toward a world peace. Neither Britain nor America have shown much desire for anything but the satisfying of their own greed and an excuse to abuse the Soviet Union on every possible occasion.

The whole propaganda network of untruths about Russia is most shameful to decent thinking people, and historians a hundred years hence will see only too plainly that Russia was given little opportunity of showing friendship.

COMMON SENSE (Wellington).

PLACING OF MICROPHONES

Sir,—The criticisms of at least one of your "commentators"—I refer to the one who wrote in your issue of October 4 about the Solomon and *Elijah* concerts—convince me that it is neither wise nor fair to judge a performance from a broadcast. There may be faults both of reception and of transmission. The receiving-set may be of indifferent quality, or else the microphones may not have been placed to get the best results. Having been in the audience at both of the two concerts mentioned, I am in a position to explain to the writer that the instrument played upon by Solomon, with its harpsichord tone, was more suited to the Scarlatti sonata than to the sonorities of Beethoven's "Apostrophe"—I'll leave it at that! As for the *Elijah* concert, had your commentator been present instead of listening in, he would have realised that the orchestra, "so little heard" actually was, if anything, rather too much in evidence throughout the evening.

At this point I might make my own comment that, if your contributor, instead of making niggling and slightly

contemptuous remarks about the chorus, soloists, and Mendelssohn's work, had pointed out that the tempo at which several of the solos were taken was altogether too fast, he would be doing some service to our musical community. Reverting to the question of transmission, it would seem that the technical staff of the NZBS has yet something to learn about the placing of microphones so as to obtain an even balance between all sections of an ensemble.

In the performance of *Messiah* given here last December—described as being "flat" by this writer—the organ, which in the hall was most impressive, was barely heard by listeners outside, as was evidenced by letters in *The Listener*. In the same month, listening to the Wellington performance of Handel's work, I wondered why the organ was not being used, and it was only when the announcer at the interval told us the name of the organist that I found out that it had been.

This matter of placement of microphones is a most important matter and it is to be hoped that more research along these lines will be taken by the Service.

"CRITICUS" (Auckland.)

ECCENTRIC PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—It may be no bad thing that people seem to be paying now to pronunciation much of the attention that was once given to orthography. May 1 therefore record what, to my hearing, is a record collection of curious (or eccentric, or unusual, or affected) pronunciations of place-names; it was achieved by the football announcer who gave results from 2YA at seven o'clock on September 21. First came "Marlborough," which was pronounced "Maulborough." Even one of the standard English pronouncing dictionaries records (in effect, using phonetic symbols not carried in commercial printing houses) that in England the accepted pronunciation is "Maul," but in (inter alia) New Zealand, "Marl." Repeating the word, the announcer slipped into the accepted pronunciation, but using it a third time, he again produced the "Maul" sound. Then came "Taranahky." Whatever Mount Egmont sounded like on the lips of the Ancient Maori, for two generations at least it has in ordinary English been "Taranacky," and still is. Another word sounded less like "Canterbury" than like "Canterberry." At Canterbury schools (or some of them) boys are expressly taught (or used to be taught) that "Canterberry" is one of the sounds that ought not to be uttered; the accepted pronunciation is more like "Canterb'ry." Finally came "Mahnawatu," which has not been anglicised for as long as "Taranaki," and sounds the first syllable as in "man." As it happens, I believe "Mahnawatu" is no better Maori than it is English. I am told that the Maori incline to give the first vowel the same short "a" sound as is heard in "haka," "tangi," "cup" and "butter." The BBC issues for guidance to its announcers phonetic lists of place-names. Some such publication might be useful to the Broadcasting Department in New Zealand.

C.E. (Wellington.)

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT
C.B.W. (Christchurch): Protest noted.