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LETTERS

DR. BEAGLEHOLE REPLIES

Sir.—I accept your invitation to write my impressions of the first performance of the National Orchestra, and I find myself an enemy of the human race.

I hope your correspondents will forgive me if I do not argue with them individually. I hope they will forgive me if I suggest that some of them might do me the unusual honour of reading me before they smite. They would find that I made no attempt to be pontifical ("Well, that's how one person at least reacted to the show"); and that I adopted a pretty moderate standpoint ("To crab for the sake of crabbing at this moment would be both churlish and silly"). Indeed, after reading through my article again, very carefully and in cold blood, it seems to me to be couched in very fair and moderate terms.

This is perhaps why it was so offensive. I have in reality paid the orchestra the highest compliment in my power, and treated it seriously. It is not treating a brand-new orchestra of this sort seriously to break into paeans of adulation as soon as it lets go its first note. It is not treating music seriously. I presume that Mr. Tyrer and the members of the orchestra have some sense of duty to music, and do not object to being treated seriously, whatever the sentiments of your correspondents—otherwise it would be a sorry look-out. But whatever I say, I get it in the neck from someone. I thought I was giving praise when I said that "considering the fact that some of these people have never heard an orchestra before, let alone played in one," they did something well; but no, even Dr. Finlay finds that "unjustly belittling." To which in my blank amazement all I can rejoin is Well, have it your own way.

I am the more blankly amazed because there is so much in Dr. Finlay's interesting article that strikes me as acute and well-put. He imputes to me, on I do not know what grounds, opinions which I do not hold, and a musical taste more limited than I feel is a fact; but I think that fundamentally we occupy a good deal of common ground. That does not prevent me from being horrified by a few of the things he says; and when he says that "the point to bear in mind" is that a performance "is still vastly better than any we have heard here before," I reply that that is not the point to bear in mind at all. If the performance were not vastly better than any we have heard here before we should have every reason for grousing. Once again I assert that if we do not go further than that we are, so far from treating the orchestra seriously, "unjustly belittling" it.

Of course Dr. Finlay does, really, go further than that. He is a critic who may well be feared. If I had said about the bassoons what he said about them I should probably be lying a cold assassinated corpse by now; but I wouldn't have the courage. It reminds me of that excellent proverb that one man can steal a horse while another can't look over a fence. I peer gingerly over the fence, to the accompaniment of roars of indignation; while Dr. Finlay, in the most charming and deprecatory fashion imaginable, and to general applause, walks off with the noble animal—slinging a brick at me on the way. Well, I

give fair warning; the next concert I go to I'll have a miniature score with me (I'll borrow it from Dr. Finlay), and I'll really take the piccolo to pieces.

Dr. Finlay himself points out that he and I heard two different performances. He heard his over the air, carefully controlled. I heard mine in the Town Hall. "Dr. Beaglehole should therefore bear in mind that the defects he fancied were not audible to the majority." Well, well: so the people in the hall don't count, as long as technicians who place microphones and twiddle knobs on panels can give a satisfactory performance to listeners-in. If you go to a concert you may "fancy" defects, but the defects aren't really there. It seems an odd argument. Is Dr. Finlay seriously inviting us to our Town Halls for a gigantic game of false pretences? Or is he asking us to stay away and listen over the air? No, the argument isn't just odd. I'm afraid it's phoney.

One correspondent I cannot leave unnoticed in the crowd is Mr. J. W. Heenan. Mr. Heenan makes the serious charge against me that I have written not in good faith but with "the venom of chagrin." I feel some embarrassment. There are few men for whom I have a higher admiration than for Mr. Heenan; there is no man whose judgment in many things I respect more; there is no other man to whom in many things I owe so much; there is no man with whom I should be more unwilling to enter into public controversy. To Mr. Heenan therefore I can only say, borrowing those words of despair which Oliver Cromwell addressed to the Kirk of Scotland, "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."

J. C. BEAGLEHOLE (Wellington).

(Dr. Beaglehole's reply to his critics must be regarded as the end in our columns of this particular controversy. This of course does not mean that the National Orchestra may no longer be discussed.—Ed.)

LEONARDO OR DA VINCI.

Sir,—In a letter appearing in *The Listener* recently were the words "the type of service Shakespeare and Da Vinci gave their customers." This illustrates what seems to me a deplorable tendency to depart from Italian usage and custom. That great Italian's name was Leonardo Da Vinci with emphasis on the "Leonardo." If you must shorten the name, say Leonardo, not Da Vinci.
P.M. (Hampden).

ARE WE MATERIALISTIC?

Sir,—I am amazed to learn that New Zealand is considered a particularly materialistic country. Surely the number and variety of religions listed in the population census papers would suggest the contrary. During some research for a newspaper article, I found that within a mile of the Auckland G.P.O. one could find literally dozens of religious services taking place every night of the week. These ranged right through every well-known and orthodox faith to the strangest and most esoteric of sects. It was obvious, too, that the followers of these faiths were living seemingly lives, secure in the bonds of their various religions, were doing good both by stealth