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Teaching by Radio

IT is greatly to be regretted that it has been found necessary to attempt teaching by radio, and earnestly to be hoped that it will not be necessary to carry the experiment very far. If the whole scheme disappears before we have learnt much from it, parents, teachers, and the Broadcasting Service will all be happy. But there is no present reason to expect such a development. The indications are that North Island schools at any rate, especially those in the northern half of the North Island, will not open for many weeks, and the choice is therefore radio teaching with correspondence or none. Without much warning, and with far less than enough time for adequate preparation, a new technique has had to be attempted for maintaining instruction without too violent a break. It will not be claimed by anybody that this emergency teaching is sufficient. It is not a substitute for lessons in school but an alternative to no lessons at all. It may, however, prove a very interesting alternative if there is active and imaginative co-operation. Neither the teachers nor the Broadcasting Service, nor both combined, can do the job without help in the homes. Full co-operation is not to be expected, human nature being what it is; but no co-operation means failure at both ends, frustrated teachers and not even amused children. It is on the other hand at least possible—probable is too bold a word for our ignorance—that co-operation will bring results which are at present only half-formed hopes. Though teaching by radio is not in itself an innovation, teaching by radio and correspondence alone certainly is. It will be interesting to see if we make an earnest enough attempt to use the new method to prove that we have been made sensible by the old method.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

BEETHOVEN AND BACH

Sir,—I can appreciate the feelings of your "Naive Listener" who questions the reverential awe given to Bach rather than to Beethoven. It is right that the ascendancy of the All-Time Stars should be overhauled now and then. However, I cannot agree with his opinions. As a listener even more naive than he, I was first introduced to Bach through the film *Fantasia*, at a time when "classical" music meant practically nothing to me. Since that time, the vitality and beauty of Bach's music have always exerted a hold over me to an extent that Beethoven's does not—yet, anyway. Unless whistling musical themes by ear makes one an executant, I cannot claim to have performed Bach. I am a "plain ornerly" music-lover, untouched by the taint of the "more exalted musical circles." I doubt whether it is ultimately possible to give convincing reasons for the supremacy of either Beethoven or Bach. After all, what explanation can be given

uniformity of quality throughout his works. It is in this uniform excellence of form and content that Bach shows his superiority. Technique is, and always should be, only the means to an end.

G. W. BARLOW (Palmerston North).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Naive Listener" strikes a welcome if controversial note when he refers to portions of Bach, especially fugue, as "aural mathematics." There seems to me to be an extremely elusive (but nevertheless real) distinction between that music which we listen to for its beauty and form, and that which impresses us because of the amount of time and work the composer has put into it.

Some time ago a contributor gave a view which loses nothing in being repeated. This was that the fundamental test for any composition is simply whether or not we like it. Not, you will notice, whether or not we can

SPECIAL SCHOOL BROADCASTS

AS schools are not re-opening until after Easter, the special programmes at present being broadcast from the four Main National Stations will continue each day at the following times:

9.30 - 10.0 a.m.—Primers to Standard Two.

11.0 - 11.30 a.m.—Standard Three to Standard Six.

1.0 - 1.30 p.m.—Form Three and Form Four.

1.30 - 1.50 p.m.—Form One to Form Four.

in any field of art for people's preference of Milton to Dante, of Louis Armstrong to Duke Ellington, or of Bach to Beethoven? If analysts claim that Bach's music is more intellectual in conception and Beethoven's more specifically emotional, I can only state my own experience of tremendous emotion in listening to Bach—a grandeur and power which, far from being lacking in feeling, is the very source of emotion at its deepest.

That is my musical confession. For further explanations of our difference in musical allegiance, a psycho-analyst will probably be helpful.

"BACH FAN" (New Plymouth).

Sir,—Your correspondent, "Naive Listener," is not in agreement with the contention that Bach is the greatest composer. "The trained ear," he states, "can doubtless perceive the various permutations, but to the majority of listeners it is just aural mathematics." By trained ear, I assume he refers to musicians, and if they place Bach on the highest pedestal are they not the best judge and authority?

I am not writing as a professional musician, but simply as a music lover (not exclusively a Bach lover) and find that the old Capellmeister has written some very lovely and exciting stuff. For instance, to me, the Sanctus from the B Minor Mass is anything but "dreary and monotonous." Bach can become a source of sublime satisfaction to anyone with musical inclinations.

Beethoven is, perhaps, my favourite composer, but I know his limitations. In their greatest moments Bach and Beethoven are about equal, technically and aesthetically, but Beethoven does descend to banality and crudity at times while Bach maintains a remarkable

educate ourselves to like it, which is synonymous with learning to appreciate the ability of the composer, but whether we like it now. If the music fails this test, which is an individual one, and not a matter of a consensus of opinion or a majority vote, then surely it can have no further aesthetic value to us.

R. WARD (Takapuna).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Naive Listener" seems to have the illusion that the two composers Beethoven and Bach can be compared. Such a process is quite impossible, as both belong to entirely different schools of music, Bach to the Baroque, and Beethoven to a mixture of Classical and Romantic. They thus have completely diverse qualities and approaches toward their art.

Bluntly to assert that Bach has nothing of interest to non-technical music-lovers is both sweeping and intolerant. "Naive Listener" complains about "long-drawn-out fugal development" which sounds like "aural mathematics." He is apparently incapable of feeling the emotional experience in the gradual climax of a Bach fugue, as in the "Thema Fugetum" from the *Pastorale*, or the well known Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. Admittedly, one does derive more pleasure from listening to a fugue if one has some knowledge of form, but this does not mean that depth and emotion are lacking in the fugue. The same is true of the Theme and Variations form, a favourite with Beethoven himself. I doubt that there are many true music-lovers who are content to remain in ignorance of the mechanics of music, in any case.

Again, I am sure that if "Naive Listener" found the B Minor Mass boring, he would have found the Solemn Mass in D Major just as tiresome.

Beethoven is emotional, often rough, usually noble, and rarely complicated. Bach is austere, often inspiring, always ingenious, and usually very beautiful. It all depends which you prefer, the sun or the stars. I love both.

H. J. STEELE (Wellington).

ILLITERACY

Sir,—Recently the Chancellor of the Otago University disclosed what he called a drifting standard of candidates' qualifications for University Entrance examinations; and certainly the many examples of faulty spelling fully bore out his statement. But if this be true of the younger generation, what can be said of those supposed to have arrived at years of discretion—and I include in particular the announcers at the broadcasting stations—who, either of malice aforethought or sheer affectation, continuously give over the air ludicrous and sometimes impossible pronunciations of everyday English words? I could give already nearly one hundred instances. Surely they are far more to be condemned!

And the same illiteracy extends to the so-called music which is served out day after day—Sundays included: the air is polluted by plagiarists, pirates, crooners, jazz fiends, modernistic atrocity-mongers and gutterbrows generally, to an ever-increasing extent.

J. D. PARKIN (Timaru).

MOZART WITH TOOTHPASTE.

Sir,—I very much enjoyed listening to the life of Mozart which was broadcast by 2ZB, but halfway through I was annoyed to hear the announcer break into the middle of Mozart's lovely music with a blurb about toothpaste. Was this necessary?

SCHOOLBOY (Manawatu Heads).

"UNCLE HARRY"

Sir,—After listening to 2YA's radio play, *Uncle Harry*, I would like to ask what entertainment value it had. Such a play for young people must have been boring and in the worst possible taste. Humorous plays would be welcome, not such an item as 2YA deemed fit for broadcasting.

F. W. HARRISON (Epsom).

SUNDOWNER'S ARTICLES.

Sir,—I should like, sometime, to catch "Banana Bender" bending. "Sundowner" gave the impression that transport to and from Nelson was adequate. This was more than generous.

I have watched the Nelson ferries crossing Tasman Bay and I could swim as fast (though not for the whole distance). On one occasion while I was a passenger I was awakened at midnight by the winch unloading stores for French Pass and taking aboard what sounded like scrap iron. When we arrived at Wellington the winch started at 5.30 a.m. to put the mail on the wharf. This mail is taken from the wharf at 7 a.m.

When booking berths the company asks you the age of your son to see where he is to sleep. If, on the spur of the moment you say "twelve," you pay full fare for him. The company does not advertise the half-fare age.

"Sundowner" can be sure he has a big reading public and it is a fact, if I may coin a phrase, that "there is no sunshine but hath some shadow."

"ARETHUSA" (Atawhai).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

G. W. Darvall (Nelson): Interesting, but too late.