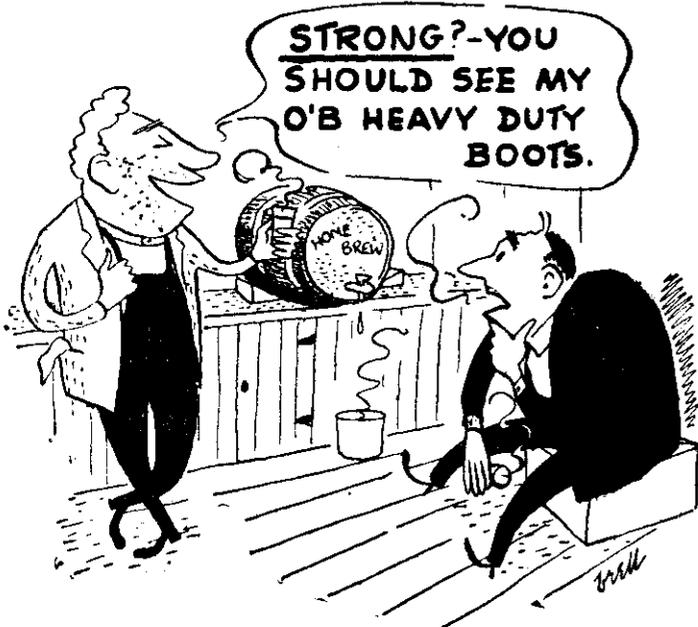


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BRITTEN'S "LUCRETIA"

Recorded Version Features N.Z. Baritone

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S second opera *The Rape of Lucretia* was first produced at the Glyndebourne Opera House in 1946, when, because of its gentler, more lyrical, and appealing vein, it was considered by many critics to have made a deeper impression than *Peter Grimes*. The NZBS has just received a recorded version of the opera, which will be heard from 4YA at approximately 9.30 p.m. on Sunday, July 18. In the recording the opera has been cut down to a little over an

cast and small orchestra, it is ideal for recording purposes. The libretto was written by the farmer-poet Ronald Duncan (for whose play *This Way to the Tomb* Britten wrote choral music in 1945) and is described as being "after the play *Le Viol de Lucrece*, by André Obey, and based on the works of Livy, Shakespeare, Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Heywood, and F. Ponsrad."

The opera opens with the two commentators Peter Pears and Joan Cross describing the historical setting of the drama and the part they play ("we will view these human passions and these



ABOVE: A stage scene from "Lucretia" and (left) the New Zealand baritone Dennis Dowling, who scores a success in the recorded version of the opera



Spencer Digby photograph

years through eyes which once have wept with Christ's own tears"). The Christian note which is here introduced has caused considerable argument amongst critics, some of whom consider it out of place in an event that occurred near the end of the 6th Century B.C.

Dennis Dowling Outstanding

Next the Roman generals and the Etruscan Prince Tarquinius appear on the stage, and Junius, jealous because Collatinus's wife Lucretia has, alone of all their wives, been faithful to him, arouses Tarquinius's latent passion for her, although her chastity is considered inviolable. In this role Dennis Dowling is reported by *The Gramophone's* critic to give an outstanding performance.

Following an Interlude in which the orchestra builds up a brilliant picture of Tarquinius's ride to Rome, Lucretia and her attendants are introduced at work spinning. Tarquinius's entrance and reception are dramatically described by the chorus and another Interlude succeeds the ravishing scene. After an outburst of hysteria Lucretia dies by her own hand, and the music rises to a climax of the greatest beauty with the words "How is it possible she being so pure should die." In an epilogue the two commentators answer the question left in the listener's mind with the final duet, "He is all."

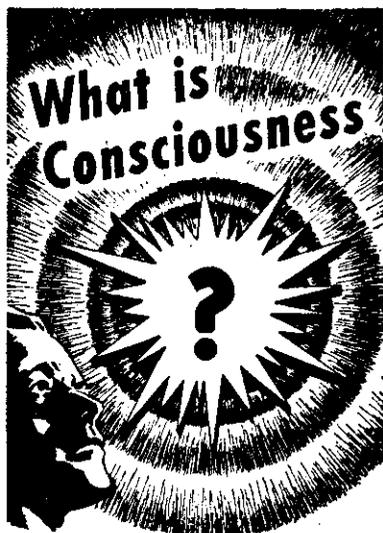
This recording of *Lucretia* will be preceded at 8.0 p.m. by the Four Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, which will give listeners an opportunity to compare some of the musical qualities, at least, of these two works.

The Rape of Lucretia will be heard later from the other main National stations.

hour's playing time, which means that a few small sections have had to be deleted, but otherwise the performance is of a very high standard.

The cast includes Peter Pears (tenor) and Joan Cross (soprano) in the roles of Male and Female Chorus which they created, while the New Zealand baritone Dennis Dowling plays a leading part as Junius, the sinister, Iago-like figure who arouses Tarquinius's latent passion for Lucretia. The other parts are played by Norman Lumsden (bass), Frederick Sharp (baritone), Nancy Evans (contralto), Flora Neilsen (mezzo-soprano), and Margaret Ritchie (soprano). The chamber orchestra is conducted by Reginald Goodall, and the whole performance was carried out under the supervision of Britten himself.

As many will know, *The Rape of Lucretia* is a small-scale opera, bearing about the same relationship to grand opera as a string quartet does to a symphony orchestra. Because of its small



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