

# ONE SMALL WORLD

(Special to "The Listener")

September 5

THE new piano concerto by Lennox Berkeley, written for and dedicated to Colin Horsley (as *The Listener* reported on June 25), was given its first hearing at a Prom on September 1. It is a nervous, excitable kind of music, with orchestral textures and harmonic colourings that kept reminding my ear of the *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* by Stravinsky, and at other moments of the Concerto (for two hands) by Ravel. That is to say, there is something in it of the dehydrated-jazz ingredient that found its way into not a few of the austerity recipes of the years-between-the-wars for compositions in this medium, and which so seldom (even at the hands of pupils of the distinguished Nadia Boulanger, Berkeley's teacher of composition) has been made to seem other than a substitute; yet there may well be some inner logic in the Concerto that escapes the ear (especially at a first hearing) of a listener who has heard only one other example of this composer's music—his startlingly beautiful *Stabat Mater*.

It is written in a conversational fashion, not using the 19th Century concerto device of rivalry as between orchestra and soloist, but tending instead to treat the soloist as an extra instrument of the orchestra. There are three movements, each fairly short, and the scoring is for a fairly small ensemble as these things go (or used to).

The work seems to have been well received. It is now a commonplace, of course, for new compositions, even adventurous ones, to be heard in the first instance at the Proms—so far have the Proms come since their early *Maiden's Prayer* days—and therefore it has enjoyed no more than the usual notices and ignorings of the four-page dailies, which at present are giving most of the space they can spare for music to the Edinburgh Festival.

*The Times*, welcoming a new work from "a mature and profound artist," drew the comparison which the key-signature invites; the concerto is in B Flat and so are (according to *The Times*) Brahms's second, Tchaikovsky's first, and that of Arthur Blüss, but this one is "not constructed on the heroic scale." It is ingenious but "not full blooded," is "lucid . . . deft . . . charming" and so on.

It would be difficult to go much further and call it beautiful or important; but it will be an engaging novelty for Colin Horsley to take round during the next two years, when he has the sole performing rights.

WHILE Mr. Horsley is in my mind, I will allow myself to tell a tale that involves some autobiographical detail. New Zealanders who come to London at the present time must inevitably come with many false notions of what they will find, not the least being notions of hardship and hunger. Of these, no-one like myself can hope to relieve them,

since they are part of a system of misconceptions which the concerted Press of England and New Zealand believe in; but there is another which I may be able to remove, and that is the notion that London is a vast and lonely place where one will never see a soul one knows.

I mentioned in an article a year ago about a day spent in New York, that I had met Colin Horsley in a street somewhere near the *New York Times* office—by what seemed to me then to be the queerest sort of chance, where no very good reason for our meeting could be discovered apart from the fact that we had both come off the same ship that day.

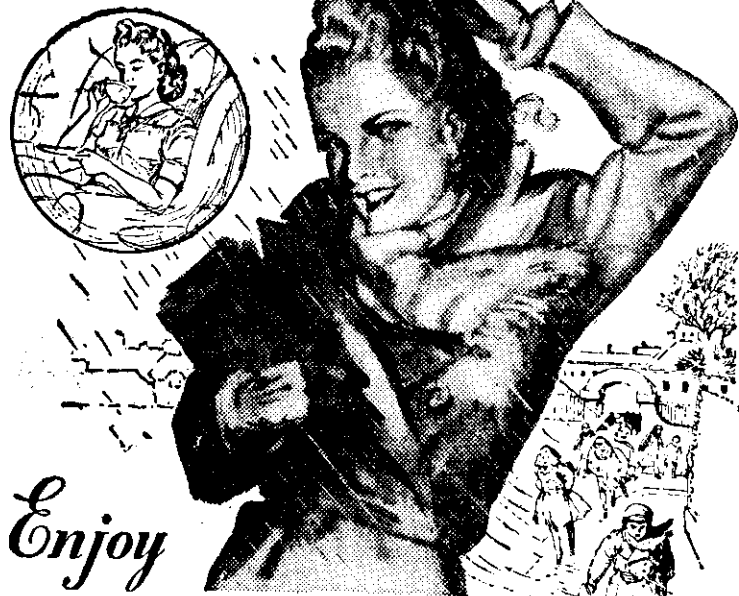
London is a good deal bigger than New York, and perhaps New York is irrelevant anyway, so here now are some simple and true facts about London set down in the order of their occurrence:

Six months ago I went to live in a house near Olympia, on the fringes of Kensington and Hammersmith; after some weeks I noticed that a New Zealander whom I half knew was living two doors away on one side of the house; some more weeks went by, and one summer evening while searching for a lost cat I met a familiar figure at a gate, two doors from home in the opposite direction. This was Colin Horsley, who was far more surprised at finding me his neighbour than I now was, having had a series of chance meetings in public places with New Zealanders or people I had met first in New Zealand (for instance, Vivienne Dixon, the violinist, in a street in a south-east suburb of London, going to visit her aunt; John Green, the BBC agriculture expert, in Piccadilly; an NZBS radio engineer in the gallery at an Albert Hall concert attended by about 7,000 people; a former Wellington journalist in Kensington High Street; a former Wellington photographer in the Strand; and so on).

Some more weeks passed and I found that during all this time I had been paying my rent each week to a refugee from Czechoslovakia who was at school with a Czech I had known well in New Zealand. I thus had New Zealanders symmetrically placed on either side of the house, and a link of acquaintance within its very walls. (I had found it in the first place only by hearing from a daily cleaner in a Paddington flat that some friends of people she also worked for in Kensington were about to let off a floor.)

This began to feel rather queer. It would not have surprised me to meet my godmother in Timbuktu; actually, I bumped into her in the Strand one day in midsummer. More weeks went by, and I surprised a friend who was with me in a bus queue by nodding to a person (a BBC official) in the crowd in Oxford Street. I offered a wager then that in the next three days I would have three encounters with people I knew, at least by sight.

On the next day, while cycling through Chelsea I saw the unmistakable figure of Sir Harry Batterbee on the footpath; late at night on the second day, having supper after a theatre in a Lyons Corner House (a vast place in itself) I found



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