

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

Price Threepence

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Christmas

CHRISTMAS for most of us has come too soon this year. We are not ready for its jollity or its loving kindness, and we don't know how to get ready. It is there facing us in the calendar, but it is not yet in our minds and hearts. We are cold, dull, suspicious, after a year of anxiety and disappointment. We don't love some of our neighbours and we don't want to love them, because we can't get it out of our consciousness that they are working day and night against us. Well perhaps they are. Perhaps they are bent on our destruction. Perhaps they hate us, and perhaps they would look on any friendly gesture from us as a reason why they should go on hating us. They are not likely to be less suspicious of us than we are of them, and since we wash our dirty linen in public and not behind a very high wall, we must expect them to be more suspicious. But that is not a reason why we should let them spoil our Christmas dinner. We can't help being grown-up most of the time, but the crowning folly is to be grown-up and cynical all the time, to trust no emotions, and surrender to no warm impulses. Christmas offers peace, not merely to men of good will, but to men of bad will; happiness for a day at least to all, and an end to foolish inhibitions. It offers these things at no price but the good sense to take them, lights the fire, and asks us to draw near and get warm. We are poor slaves if we say No, sit shivering in the coldest corner of the room because we are sure that as soon as we move closer and get comfortable the window will blow in or the wood give out.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

GRAND OPERA SEASON

Sir,—In the interesting article on the 1949 Operatic Season in *The Listener* of 19.11.48, it is stated that the artistic director of the company, Franco Ghione, conducted the first Italian performance of Puccini's *Turandot*. This is incorrect, as the conductor was Toscanini. In both *Opera at Home* and *The Victor Book of the Opera*, reference is made to the fact that Toscanini conducted at the premiere of the opera, which took place at La Scala, Milan, on April 23, 1926.

Your readers may be interested to know that at least three of the singers with the company have recorded. Mario Basiola, who is a well-known international celebrity (he sang leading roles at the Metropolitan from 1925-32), can be heard as Tonio on the complete recording of *Pagliacci*, with Gigli, etc. Maria Huder sings the roles of Flora Bevoise and Annina in new recordings of *La Traviata* and that of the Priestess in *Aida*. The tenor Adelio Zagonara sings on both of these recordings, as Gaston de Letorieres in *La Traviata*, and the Messenger in *Aida*.

M. T. STEWART (Mt. Eden).

(We referred this letter to Mr. J. N. Tait, and give here the relevant portions of his reply: "With regard to the statement concerning the first performance of *Turandot* in Italy which was associated with the name of Maestro Franco Ghione, this was due to an error and arose from an announcement in a programme in Turin which indicated he was the first conductor of Puccini's opera, but actually it referred to the first performance at the Regio Theatre in Turin. Toscanini was the conductor of the premiere of *Turandot* at La Scala, Milan, and Maestro Ghione also conducted at La Scala, but at a later date. We produced *Turandot* in Australia for the first time in 1928 when Signor Gaetano Bavagnoli conducted the premiere. We intend to present *Turandot* in Sydney about the middle of January. It will, however, be impossible to present *Turandot* in New Zealand, for two reasons—the first being the shortness of our seasons in each city, and the second the fact that this opera calls for a greatly augmented chorus and elaborate staging, and time would not permit this being attempted.")

VOICES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Sir,—The article *Voices Across the Pacific* in your issue of December 3 described the beginning of a programme to be broadcast by children of Auckland schools to those in the United States, and possibly in Norway as well. This is very praiseworthy. However, in the broadcast by one schoolboy I was horrified to read that in describing "sport" he included birdnesting. I wonder how this mention of so-called sport will be received by the children at the listening end. Are New Zealanders aware that "God's Own Country" is known overseas as having a greater percentage of cruelty to animals than any other English-speaking country?

Not only have I read this in an English paper, but I have heard a Scottish woman state that whereas in England and Scotland an owner of an animal attends to its wants before his own, in New Zealand the reverse is the rule. But one does not need corroboration from outsiders; there is too much evidence of cruelty to animals before us every day: horses starved to death, dogs chained up year in year out without being released, birds in cages left in the blazing sun or exposed to icy winds with no hope of obtaining shelter, cats mutilated, dumped or tied up in sacks, and left to die miserably, traps to catch rabbits and opossums, and so on ad lib.

I once heard the dreadful scream of a rabbit caught in a trap and will never forget it.

The point is, is this world-known cruelty of New Zealanders the result of a boy's upbringing? Do parents instil into his mind the fact that birds and animals feel pain? Why is he allowed to rob birds' nests and consider it "sport," and not taught to try to imagine the feelings of the poor, robbed mother-bird? Why is the boy not taught to watch the building of a nest and the wonderful work put into it, the different kinds of nests, the habits of birds, and all the interesting things connected with their daily life, or are the mothers and fathers too busy to bother with such "trifles?" The world would no doubt be a better place if children were taught to be humane.

"SANCTUARY" (Mount Eden).

(We print this letter because of its obvious sincerity, but it is a pity that our correspondent has not been more careful in some of her statements and less hysterical in others.—Ed.)

UNITED NATIONS.

Sir,—The United Nations programme a few weeks ago mentioned the danger to world peace of rumour spread by newspapers. The other day my newspaper published a cabled report from the *New York Times* stating that "well-informed Western sources in Moscow believe . . . the Politburo is divided on the vital question of war or peace with the West." One faction, it said, wanted war immediately, while the others wanted to wait until Russia was better prepared.

This statement pre-supposes that the Soviet does desire to go to war with the West. It may be true, certainly, but no purpose can be served by its publication except the development of hatred. We are all sufficiently aware of the danger of war without being made fearful of Russia. If such reports are intended to produce the correct psychological attitude for war, they are certainly going the right way about it.

The *Listener* and the Broadcasting Service are to be congratulated for publicising United Nations. May the daily Press follow the example.

TERENCE ANDERSON
(Great Barrier Island).

RADIO NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—The following are a few facts concerning Radio New Zealand which may be of interest to other listeners who are shortwave enthusiasts. ZL2, on the 31-metre band, was received during its two-weeks test (till September 27) at local broadcast strength in Gisborne. There was no surge during daylight and only slight loss of signal with very little surge from dusk till closing down. This was an immense improvement on 2YZ, which is generally only reasonably strong and fades frequently in the evenings, more especially during westerly weather, which occurs, mostly about the equinoxes. ZL3 was good during daylight, but lost strength from 4.30 p.m. onwards till 7.30 p.m., when it remained at strength 2-5. Its surging is from poor to fair strength. ZL4 ranges from very poor in daylight to inaudible in the evenings.

As frequency modulation is not to be introduced into New Zealand in the reasonably near future, would it not be helpful to listeners in country and

"noisy" districts if two low-power short-wave stations were established at the far South and two in the far North? These could be beamed to cover the whole country, the "skip" of the near station being covered by the farthest away, and there could be a commercial and a national programme. Reception quality would surpass that of the commercial stations even if their power is increased to 10,000 watts. The engineers of Radio New Zealand are to be complimented on the tonal quality of the stations. The sharpness, and depth of the high notes and bass are far ahead of stations on broadcast. Compliments are also due to the programme staff for a concentration of so much variety. This oasis in the shortwave desert must be welcomed everywhere.

A. E. GEORGE (Gisborne).

"NEW ZILLAND"

Sir,—In reference to the "New Zilland" or as often as not the "Noo Zilland" pronunciation, it is only fair to point out that this travesty of a name which should be musically sounded to make it acceptable at all, occurs in high places in the political arena as well as in the mouths of radio speakers. This lapse leads one to reflect rather ruefully on the question of correct pronunciation, since fearful and wonderful renderings of familiar words come out of the ether from time to time, leading the listener to speculate whether it is his own lack of culture which makes them sound strange, or whether the BBC, whose father and mother is the Oxford Dictionary, has licensed these changes.

To cite a few of them I have noticed; such words as "compensate" and "non-combatant" have now become "cumpensate" and "nun-cumbatant." One radio personality always says "illustration" for "illustration" and "Parliament" for "Parliament"; another with a bold bid at anglicising the French language says "moe dames" literally according to its spelling. One of our visiting speakers recently referred to a "capitalist" with the emphasis strongly on the syllable "pit." It's all very confusing to have to learn the language all over again. Could any of your readers supply any more "howlers" which I may have missed?

ISABEL M. CLUETT (Auckland).

MUSIC AT MEALTIMES

Sir,—One tires of reading so many complaints in the *Letters From Listeners* columns about the kind of breakfast and dinner programmes served up, and the lack of classical music at these periods. As Omar might say, "much has been written about it and about." It is impossible to please everyone, but here is a letter from one of the vast army of the proletariat who surely must outnumber those who can't bear to listen to anything but classical music, and after all it is easier to please the masses than a handful of highbrows. For one, I thoroughly enjoy the popular music played during these periods with the exception perhaps of the "City Slickers" who in my opinion should be incarcerated sans instruments. However there are those who like them and one can always switch off anything one doesn't want to hear. It would be a queer world if we all cared for the same things. I would not by any means say I abhor classical music. On the contrary there are very many classical pieces I thoroughly enjoy listening to, but I must admit that the old favourites hold more attraction for me, and as I remarked before, there is always the knob. G.F.B. (Hastings).