

"SONGS THAT SINGERS SING"

Sir,—I have just read your review "The Songs That Singers Sing," and I am sufficiently moved with compassion for "D.M." to endeavour to pen something in reply. He begins, "I am very fond of songs with piano accompaniment," and so classes himself as one who regards a song as a story set to musical accompaniment. Such a conception must surely be archaic. I would go almost as far as to say that any song, the piano part of which does not play its own full share in providing the atmosphere aimed at by the composer, falls short of being a worthwhile composition. The following of words as the main conception of a song is elementary in the extreme. I suggest to "D.M." that he secure a good recording of Schubert's "Erl-King" and listen to the music in an endeavour to discover for himself how much the atmosphere depends upon the music, be it supplied by orchestra or piano.

Coming to the question of translations, I fear "D.M." is again wandering hopelessly. There are in my mind two functions of words in a song—first, they make the human voice articulate and render the tone quality much more pleasing to the ear, and, secondly, they tell the story of the poem. The composer in setting his music must take full cognisance of the tone quality provided by the vowel sounds of the original language and this tonal colour and the music are inseparable. This is why the original language of a song is always the better, and it would be a miracle if any translator could portray the sentiment in another language and at the same time retain the original tone quality. I would go so far as to say there can be no satisfactory translation as compared with the original. To suggest that Todd Duncan would better have performed his Schubert songs in English comes nigh to sacrilege.

This is no attempt on my part to excuse the inability of singers to enunciate properly. There is nothing easier than clarity of diction if the voice production is correct, but failing this the singer is left struggling with detrimental effect on performance of the music itself. I suggest to "D.M." that most of the trouble mentioned in his article lies in the uneducated listener who "flounders" if the words are not clear. The remedy, of course, is mostly more general education in listening, and the complaints voiced from time to time about songs in foreign languages emphasise this. D.L.I. (Wellington).

THE REFERENDUM

Sir,—Probably many thousands of voters who, like myself, deeply dislike conscription and war preparations, voted for compulsory military service. I did so after giving respectful hearing to Christian Pacifists, Quakers, etc. I did so because I believe that we, along with others, are entrapped in the meshes of what Tolstoy (in *War and Peace*) calls the "law of inevitability." Which means—to go no further back—that in February, 1946, Stalin said Marxists must prepare for a third war because the world's problems could not be peaceably settled. And because he said that, it was inevitable that various persons, in the U.S.A. should urge the immediate dropping of atom bombs on Moscow; and because they did that, Russia goes on with war preparations; and because she does that, the Atlantic Pact is signed; and because that Pact is essentially military, Russia

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is more fully convinced that war is inevitable, international tension increases, and will grow despite temporary easement until—lacking the irruption of saving sense—the world will once more be engulfed in total war. I also voted for it because I consider we have a duty to Britain who has done so much for us. Rejection by us of military service, disbanding of all our armed forces and scrapping of all our armaments, and announcing that we do this because fully convinced that the use of force to settle differences is utterly wrong, would not alter the international situation for the better. Indeed, such evidence of disension in the British Commonwealth might increase the menace.

I wonder if the Christian pacifists ever ponder on Luke XI, in which Jesus exoriated Pharisees and lawyers? Was that a message of love? Do they remember that Jesus made Himself a whip and drove the money changers out of the temple by force? Do they recollect that Jesus is reported as saying: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one"? Are a man's thoughts full of love for his enemies when he is buying a sword? Propounding lofty moral precepts is unlikely to influence those who have no regard for them. The lunacy of war, the stupidity of peace-time armament expenditures, the fantastic notion of defending "the Christian way of life" by means of the calculated bestialities of modern war, will continue unless myths and misunderstandings, prides and prejudices, are subjected to the alchemy of intelligent consideration. Meanwhile we have to try to survive in a crazy world. J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

MUSIC BY CHOPIN

Sir,—I read with interest the article on Aleksandr Helmann, and in particular the following paragraph: "He also scored a great success in a recital devoted entirely to the works of Chopin. There is wide public interest in this composer in his centennial year, . . . etc."

I recollect attending a similar recital in the Wellington Town Hall in 1928, given by Paderewski. The hall was packed and the audience tremendously enthusiastic. There is no doubt that Chopin's music is universally loved, and it has always been a source of wonder to me, especially in view of the amount of recorded Chopin available, how seldom we hear the music of this composer broadcast by the NZBS. The programmes are packed with the works of Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart and the like (which is as it should be, of course), but the amount of Chopin broadcast is negligible. LUSTIG (Timaru).

CONTEMPORARY SPEECH

Sir,—All language is mutable. Words come on-stage; enjoy, in some cases, brief periods of acceptance and then pass off-stage into oblivion. During their periods of acceptance, some words are used in every possible connection—and sometimes, philologically, improperly.

About 40 years ago, a very hard-worked and ill-used word was "inimical." Poor thing, it was trotted out on every possible occasion and was often made to serve purposes quite outside its root meaning. Though the word has not sunk into desuetude it is used far less frequently nowadays.

"Nostalgia" is a word that seems to be enjoying a high popularity these days. I

notice it often in *The Listener*. In a recent criticism of some Swiss music that had, I suppose, come over the air, the critic wrote that the music was warm, nostalgic and clinging. I assume that the critic is a New Zealander or, at least, not a Swiss. I had some fair idea of the true meaning of the word. I thought that it meant the yearning of an exile for the land of his birth. So I went to Dr. Chambers to see whether the use of the word in the criticism could be justified. I could find no such justification. It is beyond me to imagine what the critic meant.

Notice may also be taken of the over-use of the word "stem," when branch only is intended. And it is unusual, yet, to use the word as a verb; but that use seems to be creeping in. I suppose that it has a high-brow look about it. If within a movement, a subsidiary movement take shape, then the latter is said to "stem" off from the former. I do not see why the more correct and homely "branch" could not be used.

I write only to urge that plain and homely English is a very satisfying vehicle for the expression of thought, and that writing in such a paper as *The Listener* might well be characterised by well-known and well-understood language.

L. A. TAYLOR (Hawera).

"THE LILIAN DALE AFFAIR"

Sir,—This is first-class radio fare which leaves one enjoying the many moments of suspense, but anxious to know the conclusion of an interesting story. All the world loves a lover and loves, too, the time when the villain is upended. I for one am longing to hear that smooth-tongued oily villain, Crosbie, unmasked and the comments of Christopher Dale when he finds out how he has been led by the nose, should be very forceful and interesting. Every week I expect satisfaction on these points, but the story takes another turn like Tennyson's brook. Couldn't we have a little more of the story each half-hour and a little less of that soft voice extolling in dulcet tones the virtues of a certain soap? The suspense is getting almost more than I can bear. I should hate not to live long enough to hear the end of the story.

L. GERARD (Christchurch).

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Sir,—In spite of "G.H.D.'s" arguments, and because of them, I think that Mr. Prior, in reviewing *The History of Western Philosophy*, had good reason for finding greatness in its author. Bertrand Russell does not confuse common sense and philosophy, as "G.H.D." does. A philosopher has always to beware of accepting as philosophical truth the notion of common sense, which has little to do with philosophy. Bertrand Russell does not mistake numbers for logic; he does not use "99.9 per cent of humanity" as a logical argument.

I note, by the way, that "G.H.D.'s" ever-widening smile has become "irritating"—to whom I do not know, nor does it matter; but I still think Uncle Toby's Argumentum Fistulatorium is an adequate answer for this Argument of the Cheshire Cat.

"G.H.D." has more or less got the meaning of my explanation why treachery to truth may appear to Russell to be morally reprehensible. In pursuing my train of thought he adds an unnecessary emotional element, but he understands

fairly well my opinion that, to a Nazi or to a Thug, treachery to truth may not appear morally reprehensible, while to Russell, an Englishman, it does. After all, the chief greatness of *The History of Western Philosophy* is Russell's treatment of philosophers in relation to their social and historical backgrounds.

ROBERT MOUAT (Christchurch).
("G.H.D." may reply if he wishes, after which this correspondence will be closed.—Ed.)

A TROLLOPE SERIAL

Sir,—In reply to "A.H.R." why all the fuss about the poor adaptation of *The Small House at Allington*? Surely nearly 20 years of film and radio "adaptations" of famous books, particularly from Commercial stations, should have made all immune to anything more they care to inflict upon us. "A.H.R." should do what I did—go straight to the originals and deliberately avoid such junk.

It is an odd commentary, now I come to think of it, that while even the moron screen has produced a small number of classics, radio in 20 years has scarcely produced one. Judging from the present standard of broadcast plays, we are not likely to get one for a long long time. WOOL (Dunedin).

AMERICAN MUSIC

Sir,—Your contributor "G. leF. Y." may be surprised to learn that the lady he mentioned in his paragraph "Not Made in New Zealand" actually is an American. I dislike "G. leF. Y.'s" insinuation that American music is becoming detrimental to the listening public. I have never read in your magazine a similar opinion about German, French, Russian or English music, which proves no doubt that in general your magazine is just too, too, highbrow, and in particular that "G. leF. Y." doesn't really know very much about the comparative values of jazz. He also probably did not compare as well with some of the more eminent American jazz critics, as "Doug" did, with Art Tatum, despite the fact that "Doug" was basing his style on Teddy Wilson rather than Tatum. PROFESSIONAL (Auckland).

"EYES OF THE PIG"

Sir,—Do I hear hoots of derision from pig hunters? I wonder whether your contributor has ever attempted to stick a wild boar without holding dogs—in fact, I wonder whether he has ever seen a wild boar. NIMROD (Nelson).

Sir,—As a regular hunter of wild pigs with a fox terrier, I feel constrained to write and tell you that I have never read such utter tripe from a technical point of view as is contained in the story "The Eyes of the Pig." It is obvious that the author is completely ignorant of his subject.

The artist also had never seen a wild boar, or he would not have created the peculiar animal with tusks like mustachios projecting from its upper jaw. N. V. HODGSON (Opotiki).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS
An Appreciation (Palmerston North): Many thanks. Will pass on your request.
L. W. Tye (Wellington): Your inquiries should be sent to the orchestra.

G. M. Tawseley (Eastbourne): Your request has been sent to the Talks Department.
Mary R.W. (Wagga Wagga): Have forwarded letter, and have sent your requests to the Programme Department.