

THE ORCHESTRA ON THE COAST

Sir,—In your issue of October 28, there is an article by "G. leF. Y."—"The Orchestra on the Coast." In fairness to those hundreds of Coasters who deeply appreciated the visit of the orchestra, I feel impelled to protest at the tone of slighting condescension in which the article was written. A reader who knew nothing of the Coast could be forgiven if he gathered from the article that the Coast is inhabited by a race of web-footed oafs utterly incapable of aesthetic experience. One scarcely knows whether to be more amused or annoyed at the writer's mentioning rain eight times in eleven paragraphs and his quite deliberate ignoring of the fact that three out of the four days the Orchestra spent in Greymouth and Hokitika were brilliantly fine. Such misrepresentation is, however, relatively unimportant compared with what follows.

Why should "G. leF. Y." have been so apprehensive of the effect of a symphony orchestra upon Coasters? What is the factual basis for his implication that the Coaster is alien to the rest of New Zealand? One gathers the impression that the members of the orchestra took their lives in their hands venturing into the wilderness to soothe the savage breasts of its inhabitants with music. Perhaps "G. leF. Y." expected to be waylaid by bushrangers somewhere along the road. His ignorance of the Coast becomes little short of insulting when he chooses to describe, from among all those who attended the concerts, two odd people whom he naively characterises as "Coast types." Of the concert audiences he says, "I suppose they had screwed themselves up for an ordeal," implying that it is quite improbable that a barbarous Coaster could possibly have any understanding of symphonic music. By such cheap sneers, "G. leF. Y." reveals himself as an extremely insensitive person to interpret the effect of any great art upon the people.

He gives several paragraphs to the chattering of three tiny tots for whom the concerts were not intended, and except for a casual mention ignores the hundreds of quiet, well-mannered, appreciative teen-agers in the school audiences, of whom Andersen Tyrer said afterwards with warm commendation, "Weren't they good?" I wonder if "G. leF. Y." bothered to question any of those youngsters as to how they enjoyed the programme.

It is regrettable that so memorable an occasion for the Coast as the first visit of the National Orchestra should have been recorded in a responsible journal by so paltry and prejudiced an article. I can only hope that readers of *The Listener* will be more charitable in their reading than was "G. leF. Y." with his pen.

H. C. HOOPER (Greymouth).

PROFESSOR PALMER'S BROADCAST

Sir,—I listened with interest to Dr. Laurence Palmer's impressions the other night and have observed with at least equal interest the stir in the editorial columns of *The Listener*. I found his talk stimulating and provocative.

What I was chiefly aware of, however, as his talk went on, was a growing feeling of sympathy for Dr. Palmer's state of mind. I, too, have been a sojourner in a strange land. In 1927 I spent two months foot-loose in the United States, mostly in Boston and up country in Virginia. The Sacco-Vanzetti

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trail was in its closing stages and I also saw the fiery cross of the Ku Klux Klan in a small village off the Shenandoah Valley. What stuck in my mind in either case was the blank wall a stranger met in attempting to make enquiries. When my time came to leave I was glad to be returning to a country that didn't do things that way—and yet I left many friends and I know that is not the whole story. There is far more to the American way of life than ruthlessness.

I would say that three months is just long enough to sharpen the critical faculties, and this is why the comments of the unacclimatised visitor are so valuable. It would be unreasonable to expect from him the whole picture, but it does not follow that his impressions are to be disregarded. To mix metaphors, it is hard for a guinea pig to see the wood for the trees and harder still for an ostrich.

ERITA (Havelock North).

UNITED NATIONS DEBATE

Sir,—Listeners who tuned in to the 12B Citizens' Forum to hear the question, "Is the UN Effective?" debated were sadly disappointed, for within two minutes after the discussion was opened the three participants were in complete agreement. Because there was not one person on the panel to take the negative, the question was quickly answered by the three members to their own satisfaction, although there were many points that could have been contested by any person taking the negative. One cannot but ask why there was not such a person on the panel.

The panel agreed that the League of Nations and the United Nations were fundamentally different whereas the basic structure of both of these organisations is that of a league. The panel seemed to think that the removal of the veto would make the UN more democratic and then completely overlooked the undemocratic nature of the one vote per nation system of representation. A statement that the ability of a court to enforce its decision has no bearing upon the question of its effectiveness or power, was accepted without protest. At one point it was stated that the UN was not intended to be a world government but was created to prevent war. If there had been a real discussion someone might have mentioned that history shows that only government is able to prevent war between social units.

When the fate of our civilisation depends upon the ability of the UN to keep the peace every effort should be made to discover whether or not the UN as now constituted is effective. Discussions which are not discussions, but merely one viewpoint, will not help us to find the answer.

CHRIS MCPHEE (Auckland).

"THE DREAM AND THE REALITY"

Sir,—I have read your splendid editorial, "The Dream and the Reality," and endorse every word. Most of the people coming to New Zealand today arrive in the wrong spirit. Expecting to find several "Old Kent Roads," they want to bring their ideas along too. As for the assisted passages, it has been my experience that anything worth having has to be striven for. I arrived in Dunedin (at the tender age of 25) nearly 43 years ago, with the large sum of one pound in my pocket, so I had to bustle

around to find a job. Nevertheless, I am quite content to finish my time in "God's Own Country."

A DEALITE (Auckland).

"PIGS IS PIGS"

Sir,—May I say that Mr. Temm's "Eyes of the Pig" was well worth while if only for the delightful "Pigs is Pigs" which resulted.

M.E.J. (Waharoa).

Sir,—Please inform your contributor to "Pigs is Pigs" that Dr. Johnson defined a horse's *pastern* as its knees. Fetlocks, m'foot!

CHICOT THE JESTER (Auckland).

"W.G.'s" LAUGH

Sir,—The prodigious figure of Grace," says "J.C.R." in *Radio Review* (Listener, November 4), "with his great beard, his deep laugh . . ." Did "W.G."

Election Chart Next Week

NEXT week's issue of "The Listener" will contain an Election Chart for use by radio listeners in recording polling results as they come over the air on November 30. There is certain to be an unusually heavy demand for this issue, and readers are advised to secure their copies early.

have a deep laugh? He had a high squeaky voice, you know. So I wonder. Bernard Darwin's biography might answer the question.

W. HISKERS (Wellington).

NATIONAL ORCHESTRA PROGRAMMES

Sir,—The programmes of the National Orchestra are rarely above criticism, and the one presented to Wellington citizens on October 22 cannot be allowed to pass without comment. It consists of three works. Beethoven's third "Leonora" overture, Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto, and the first symphony of Brahms. The first and last items were given in 1947, again both in the same concert, and the Brahms was given last year. Why the repetition?

The Rachmaninoff has never been played here before, and of course is excluded from the following remarks. Now surely the object of a National Symphony Orchestra is to develop the public taste and appetite for symphonic music. How can it possibly do this when the repertoire in any centre is thus restricted? I have no quarrel with Brahms, but to most listeners he is dull stuff compared with Beethoven, Tchaikovsky or Mozart. We have already had a Brahms symphony this season, and when the orchestra can only give us three concerts, that one is quite enough. The Beethoven symphonies are far more varied in style and content, and are far more popular; yet only two, the sixth and seventh, have ever been played here. The "Eroica" and the fifth are both

"sure-fire." We have heard them from our orchestra only over the air. But almost any week we can hear more competent performances of these works on records, which is just as good as hearing a relayed broadcast—usually much better. The chief virtue of having our own orchestra is that we hear the music "in the flesh," which inevitably makes it come far more alive, especially to our unsophisticated audiences.

We want a full sampling of the symphonic repertoire—and there is a large one within the grasp of the orchestra. It is futile and destructive to make the orchestra waste time in rehearsing music beyond its capabilities. And repetition of last year's programmes is not good enough.

H. J. STEELE (Wellington).
(Abridged.—Ed.)

MARK TWAIN AND W. M. HODGKINS

Sir,—It may interest those interested in the work of Frances Hodgkins to know that Mark Twain and her father did in fact exchange platforms, as stated in the little booklet about her, which was reviewed over the air recently. It happened in this way. W. M. Hodgkins was a prominent solicitor and president of the Otago Art Society. He was also a member of the Savage Club of 1885 or thereabouts, and when Twain visited Dunedin on a lecture tour he was entertained by the Savages. Mark Twain and Mr. Hodgkins arranged for each to go on the platform when the other was announced and get all the humour out of the incident they could. The hospitality of the club was held responsible for the mix-up and everybody enjoyed their attempts at explanation. Twain finally appeared when Hodgkins was announced. I was only a boy at the time. Both Frances and her father had a keen sense of humour and I feel that she has given expression to her puckish wit in all her modern work. She satirises art after the method of the French School who, failing to receive recognition from the critics, turned to satire. She happily retained her humour to the last.

P. D. E. HODGKINS (Auckland).

CHOPIN CENTENARY

Sir,—May I express, through your columns, intense appreciation of the splendid tribute paid to Frederic Chopin by Station 2YA on Sunday night, October 16? The script was beautifully written and delivered, while the choice of accompanying recordings showed musical acumen and discrimination of high order.

The observance of the centenary at 4YA on October 17 was particularly notable for the delightful pianism of Koa Nees; but it is a great pity that some of her items were spoilt by the announcer butting in. Apart from this minor lapse, it is much to the credit of the NZBS that such an important musical event was adequately commemorated by radio. In other respects the Chopin Centenary was shamefully neglected by New Zealand musicians generally. Elsewhere in the musical world the immortal composer's memory was fêted as it deserves.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS
E.E.M.: It would be better to write to an art dealer.
Curious (Lower Hutt): We may be able to help you in the near future.