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RADIO REVIEW

More Concertos Wanted

LISTENING to Vincent Aspey play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto from Auckland with the National Symphony Orchestra, I was aware of several impressions. The chief one was pleasure in that

we had, in the leader of our orchestra, a violinist capable of giving so fine an interpretation. The quality of tone is peculiarly Aspey's; if it has not quite the bigness we are accustomed to from Kreisler's recordings, it has more natural warmth and emotion than some of the so-called technical virtuosi we have heard. The cadenza was nearly flawless, the lovely melody of the *andante* was allowed to speak for itself, without excess of "sugar," and the pace and execution of the *molto vivace* left one breathless.

For once, too, transmission was unusually good, except for a little fading near the beginning and near the end.

The soloist was better favoured by the microphones than was the orchestra. At a rehearsal heard previously the balance was very well kept, but the orchestra over the air was a little scratchy and out of proportion in the *tutti*, which is not, I feel sure, how it actually sounded in Auckland. Satisfactory transmission of music—especially loud music—between Auckland and Wellington has not yet been accomplished.

Another impression I had was regret—regret that we do not more often hear the standard concertos, not only for violin, but for other instruments as well. We have of late been fairly well favoured with piano concertos: Helmann with the Mozart K488, the Tchaikovsky No. 1, and the Rachmaninoff No. 3; Cara Hall with the Grieg; and before that, Richard Farrell with Tchaikovsky and the Beethoven No. 4; Lili Kraus with the same Beethoven and the Mozart in D Minor; and Colin Horsley with the Schumann, the Saint-Saens No. 2, and the Rachmaninoff No. 2. Also there have been several odd movements or complete concertos played at lunch-time and school concerts by local pianists. Quite a respectable list it is from the piano literature, though we still want the other Beethoven works, the two Brahms, the two Chopin, the Ravel, and some of the moderns.

But it is in the field of concertos for instruments other than the piano that we lack most. We have had only three: the Mendelssohn for violin, the Mozart for clarinet (by Jack McCaw, now with the London Philharmonic Orchestra), and the Moeran for 'cello (by Peers Coetmore)—a fine but little-known work. What of the many other famous violin concertos, the Beethoven, the Tchaikovsky, the Bruch, the Elgar, the Delius, even the strange Bartok, which Sammons believes to be a miscalculation in balance? There are viola concertos,

there are several other 'cello ones (what about the Dvorak?), there are concertos for flute, for horn, for oboe (two fine ones by Strauss and by Goossens recorded lately), and others for clarinet; and there are the Bach and Brahms' double concertos.

It is not always feasible, one knows, to put on such works; but at least it is pleasant to think that we may some day hear them, now that the orchestra is well established as an accompanying as well as a symphonic body. Considerations of employment make it difficult sometimes

to play works with too thin a structure, leaving large sections of the brass, for example, with nothing to do for much of the programme. But it should not be forgotten that the sight of a solo artist performing in front of a symphony orchestra is one that always captures the imagination and attention of an audience; and because of this—and as a plea-

sant change from the usual symphonic fare—continued efforts should be made to overcome the difficulties.

—H.J.F.

Rekindled Enthusiasm

SO often have we heard Manuel de Falla's "Ritual Fire Dance" from visiting pianists desiring to end their programmes with a flourish, so often have Hollywood virtuosi slammed it out on anything up to twenty pianos, so often has it throbbed from the radio on orchestra, xylophone and harmonica, that it is in some slight danger of losing its freshness. The only way, I believe, to give new life to a piece like this is to play it in its context as was done in a recent *Ring up the Curtain* programme. Here the BBC Theatre Orchestra presented a potted version of the great Spanish composer's *Love the Magician*, as well as his more familiar *Three-Cornered Hat* music. The commentary was brief, but illuminating. I had vaguely associated the "Ritual Fire Dance" with some solemn pagan placation, but to learn its place in Falla's ballet as Candelas's attempt to drive away the jealous ghost of her dead lover was to appreciate fully for the first time its fantastic and barbaric qualities, and its dramatic significance. The semi-oriental Andalusian melodies which make up *Love the Magician* are so haunting that I regretted still more that the too frequent performance of one section alone seems to prevent our hearing the others save on rare occasions like this.

Vintage Comedians

IS the art of comic and light entertaining something which, like wine and cheese, improves with age—in this case, the age of the performer? The

(continued on next page)