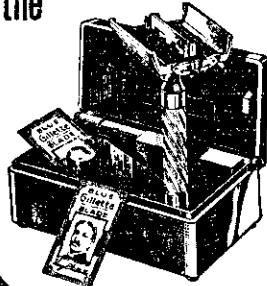




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LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(Continued from page 6)

MODERN MUSIC

Sir,—I see that L. D. Austin is again, or should I say, still, writing letters to the Press. Having read letters by this gentleman on all subjects from cabbages to kings, I am not as impressed as some readers might be.

But I am roused by his cavalier treatment of "Schoolboy" who, L.D.A. admits, wrote a reasonable letter. Since L.D.A.'s own weakness is that he distorts other people's quotations to suit himself, as in the case of the Hibbs quotation, I think that he should be the last person to suggest that "Schoolboy" might develop a keener sense of logic when he matriculates. Indeed, anyone who could not see the real meaning of the Hibbs simile shouldn't be criticising even schoolboys, let alone musicians such as Cyril Scott and William Walton.

In a "History of Music" used in one of our Training Colleges, examples of new harmonies written by Cyril Scott and others are given, and the text says that such experiments are permissible. As for William Walton, his work is very individual. L.D.A. says that no one applies the word "beautiful" to modern music. One criticism of Walton's first Symphony that I read says that the slow movement is an example of "lovely" writing. I have sent William Walton a clipping of L.D.A.'s letter, and I imagine that when he sees the error of his ways, as pointed out by L.D.A., Walton will throw away his individual tendencies. Maybe. And perhaps he will burn those preliminary sketches for a work specially intended for Szigeti and Benny Goodman, who impresses Walton greatly. Again, maybe.

"There is no hope for the adult jazz fan." Abandon hope, Heifetz, Petri, Stokowski, Bartok, and Szigeti. The last-named has a large collection of Louis Armstrong recordings. L.D.A. should remember Armstrong, because in the press of a southern daily he had a bad dusting from correspondents on this subject about a decade ago. Then take another L.D.A. quotation: "Sincere Jazz — whatever that may mean." If he does not understand the subject any better than that, who is he to criticise? I don't expect columns on boxing from swimming experts. I expect knowledge of boxing in that column devoted to pugilism.

Again, if a steady rhythmic background is one "of deadly monotony," what about the waltzes accepted as "good light music"? Is a steady three in a bar any better in this respect than a steady lilting four? Or perhaps L.D.A., like those professional critics Strauss had to face, regards the waltz as "immoral and unworthy of the attention of a composer." The waltz still lives, though the professional critics are dead. Again, L.D.A. cannot blame jealous contemporaries for the majority of the criticism that tried to blast the talents of Wagner and Berlioz. He knows that it came from professional critics in large measure. Those critics are gone forever, with nothing remaining to show their presence on the earth. But the music remains. Professional critics are always suspicious of anything new, and in any case it does add to one's sense of importance to look down one's nose at one's contemporaries.

I should like to suggest to L.D.A. that a little more tolerance in his writ-

ings would tend to his being more seriously entertained as a "professional critic." Certainly, I consider it in his power, with his command of words, to write some charming stuff in appreciation of music that will do him, and the public, more good than all the distorted attacks on other fields where he is an amateur and a clumsy one.

However, as he admits that he thrives on invective, he will get it. Till the day he reforms, he will not be considered as a critic while better-balanced and more authoritative criticisms are available from overseas.

And, Mr. Editor, you are at liberty to give my name and address to L.D.A. My occupation demands as little publicity as possible, and so I must just sign myself—F.B., (Invercargill).

(This letter has been abbreviated. Although we are glad to give correspondents an opportunity to express their views, short letters have the best chance of publication.—Ed.)

CROONING AT BREAKFAST

Sir,—May I be permitted to add my grouch to the others you have received against "crooning" for breakfast. For months past those performances have been a source of annoyance in our home. Whenever we have the misfortune to tune in without first of all consulting *The Listener*, and the "noise" we are greeted with is a "crooner" there is a rush across the room to "cut his throat."

Surely by now organisers must realise what is tolerable, particularly for breakfast sessions. How many folk rise, really thrilled and anxious to set off for their daily routine? Music in the early morning should be bright and tuneful to send people off to business feeling cheerful and happy. "Crooners" are an insult to intelligent listeners.

As "Average Listener" stated, the ZB stations supply sufficient in that style, so why can't we have from the YA's more Moncrieff, Crooks, Natke, Dawson, ballad singers, and tuneful orchestral music?

—"ANOTHER AVERAGE LISTENER" (Christchurch).

Sir,—In your last week's publication "Average Listener" made some strong remarks about that Public Enemy No. 1, the crooner. In my opinion he did not write strongly enough. I certainly agree with him in all respects. One station makes a point of even putting on the prime moaner of the lot for a full quarter of an hour every Sunday morning. Why is this monstrosity foisted upon us? I can imagine what a reception some of these singers would have got in the old days of Fuller's Vaudeville in Wellington. They would have been lucky to get off the stage alive. How anyone can honestly say that he appreciates the efforts of these zoological specimens passes my comprehension.

—"OLD FASHIONED" (Miramar).

PRONUNCIATION OF MAORI

Sir,—A correspondent asks why Maori is not taught in all schools throughout New Zealand. The Maori language is not taught in the schools for Natives because the purpose of those schools is to teach the Natives English. The Maori language may be taken as a subject for

(Continued on next page)