

BUNS AND BEETHOVEN

SCIENTISTS and doctors have been puzzled to account for the fact that the health of the people in war-time Britain has been so much better than in times of peace. Some authorities have suggested that the plainer food which is now the fare of all and sundry may have something to do with it, but when we consider the many forms of nutriment that must be missing from the British menu, this is difficult to understand. However that may be, it is quite certain that MUSIC in all its forms is playing an immensely important part in maintaining the mental stability of the war-shattered populace.

Mrs. R. V. Goddard, wife of the new Chief of the Air Staff for New Zealand, when interviewed by *The Listener* on her arrival from England recently, spoke in most enthusiastic terms about the work of the BBC and other broadcasting services in making good music available at all times for the mental



S. P. Andrew photograph
MRS. R. V. GODDARD
Wife of New Zealand's Chief of Air Staff

relaxation of the people. Mrs. Goddard also spoke with particular enthusiasm of those individual personalities such as

Myra Hess, who have concentrated on the organisation of music for the masses.

Miss Hess, London-born of British parentage in spite of her German-sounding name, approached Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of London's National Gallery, in the early days of the war, and put before him her plan for lunch-time concerts. All she wanted was a room in the Gallery where, five times a week between one and two p.m., music-hungry Londoners could listen to the works of the great composers. Early recitals were held in the Dome of the Gallery, but when the blitz started the air-raid shelter became the concert hall. One shilling is the price of admission, and by October, 1940, more than £4000 had been distributed among the performers, many of whom were in very needy circumstances owing to the outbreak of war. The Musicians' Benevolent Fund has also gained financially from these concerts, the prestige of

which has been considerably helped by the fact that Queen Elizabeth has more than once attended.

The lunch-time concert-hall in the National Gallery is next to a canteen where the music-hungry may obtain equally vital fare. Buns and Beethoven go well together—for the first time in musical history. The audience may munch while great artists perform, and we all know that music aids digestion.

She Was Misreported

Mrs. Goddard was very anxious when we saw her to contradict a report in a northern paper, in which she was made to say that "she had already noticed that surprisingly little good music is heard over the air in New Zealand." As Mrs. Goddard herself said, she had been only one day in New Zealand when that interview took place, and had had no opportunity of listening to broadcasts in this country.

A NIGHT OUT

(Written for "The Listener" by "K")

A GIRL'S night out—that's nothing; that comes most nights. But a mother's night off—that's different.

There had been the usual shattering rush for the concert. It's not so easy with a large family and no help, not even a washerwoman.

Hugh and Evie were taking me in their greyhound car; very nice of them, but they'd be sure to be dolled up to the nines. Besides, they'd know in a snap that my frock did not bear the hallmark of Salon Jane's or Fletcher's, but was just something painfully achieved with a Weldon's.

Fortunately I was near the end of it, such as it was (and really, it was rather good, considering), and was rushing on the dome-fasteners when in meandered Mrs. B. "You just would at such a time," I said under my breath, snicking another length of cotton. "I'm not getting you tea, either."

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MRS. B. is elderly and comfortable with maids to do everything for her. And how she talks! Her voice went on and on, and I had to bestir myself to listen to her tremendous nothings—"And would you believe it, my dear, they tried to palm off the dinner set on me without a gravy boat. It was good enough value at the price—but still, war or no war, 'Where is the gravy boat?' I asked. I showed them I wasn't one of those simple simons who'd take anything—oh, no, I've got my wits about me. There MUST be a gravy boat, I said—I never heard of a dinner set without one. What would one do with the gravy? Oh, I made a fuss, you get nothing in this world without fighting for it. So I got my gravy boat."

(Oh, bother your gravy boat, I reflected. Why didn't you sail away in it and leave me alone?)

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SO I had to rush more than ever. The evening meal was sketchy, but still there were piles of dishes and what-nots to be disposed of. I was for banishing the family to bed after tea, but there was a noisy discussion. They begged to be allowed up for a while. "We're not babies, you know; you can't just dispose of us like that."

"You're quite young enough to get into plenty of mischief. Well then, if you do stay up, you'll keep things tidy. Remember now," I admonished, underlying it yet not being too severe about it. "You're to leave everything tidy. Books away, no raiding the tins, understand now no muddle for me to come back to. That wouldn't be fair now, would it? Now, please, you won't forget?"

Oh, no, there would be no muddle. My last agitated appeal as, all powder and bedazzled ("ooh Mum!") I rushed through the kitchen was: "DO be tidy. Turn out the lights when you go to bed." And there was the car waiting.

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THE concert was a splendid escape from the iron routine of rice puddings, missing buttons, and holey socks. Away from lusty wrangling voices, banging doors, muddy footprints, to an elegant adult world of bright faces and bright lights, animated chatter, wafts of scent—bits of the old glamour coming back.

And then the lowering lights and of voices subsiding to whispers, the thrilling feeling of expectancy as one by one the performers filed on to the stage. Then the two glorious biting adagio chords that herald *Egmont*: And that passage after the adagio when the notes



begin to trip over themselves in their wild rush ahead to pound out the main theme. One can't listen without that heightening and widening of one's world that Beethoven always gives. Some queer modern stuff, Prokofieff, I think they called it, I didn't quite get it, but I loved the Granados.

After this feast of sound and fancy, a car ride, supper, a little wine, Evie's witty mimicries, I came home dog-tired but most vivaciously stirred by it all.

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HUMMING a little Haydn tune I opened the kitchen door and the first thing I did when I entered the dark kitchen was to stumble over a chair left in the middle of the room.

This was not enough to quieten the gaiety in my blood, though it was slightly quenching. But when I nipped on the light and the room was revealed in all its horror, I could have sat down and cried for sheer vexation and disappointment that children can care so little.

The fireplace was in chaos, date-stones and muddy boots littering the

hearth, and also—which was worse—the crumbs of a chocolate cake I had been trying to hoard. On the table a medley of things; a cap, a soiled handkerchief, an open tin of biscuits, traces of biscuit crumbs everywhere, crumpled sheets of paper, inkstains.

Was my night so very bright after all? I hardly knew whether to cry or rage. There was not much emotion left for anger; tears somehow come easiest,

Then suddenly I saw the eggs. On the table I had left two hard boiled eggs in a saucer to be ready for the boys' lunch next day, and some waggish spirit had prompted one of the boys to draw a face on each egg. That would be Len, because he draws always with power, and sometimes with a salty humour.

On each egg was a face regarding me, one with a quiet saturnine and mocking twist to it; the other convulsed in a fat, Falstaffian grin. And because I couldn't help it, I stood there and laughed with the laughing faces on the eggs. Why could I not help it? any mother will tell you.