

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible, and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

Sir,—With reference to the *Messiah* illustration in *The Listener* of December 5, the "crown of thorns" (with the purple robe and the reed) was intended, according to the custom of the day, to make our Lord an object of ridicule, and not as an instrument of punishment or torture to his head. Learned men say the acanthine crown or wreath was made from the herb acanthus, a prickly plant, though not thorny as we understand the term.

Many Christians protest against the crown of long thorns as portrayed by some painters, as such representation causes both false and absurd ideas in the minds of people, and detracts from its real significance, the crowning insult by ridicule.

E. R. HEAL (Ahipara).

MUSIC WITHOUT WORDS

Sir,—Your correspondents A. K. Turner and "In Arte Voluptas" complain of the interrupting of operatic music by verbal explanations. For my part, I think these interruptions are necessary. We know, when the singer is singing a certain passage exactly what he or she is trying to express. If the whole story is told at the beginning only, or not at all, we do not know what part of the story is being sung. For example, in *Faust*, when Marguerite is in the cathedral, it would only be those who are very familiar with every part of the opera who would know that she was there. If the announcer interrupts for a second to say "the scene is now in the cathedral, Marguerite is kneeling—" etc., then we can interpret each passage of music more clearly.

Also, I wish to express my appreciation for the *Music From the Theatre* series. As a suggestion, I would like to hear more Puccini (*La Boheme* for preference).

OPERA LOVER (Auckland).

Sir,—I also join the ranks of those who protest against a running commentary on opera. "I.A.V." will, I am sure, have noticed with satisfaction equal to mine that in the latest issues of *The Listener* the mediocre (that is a kind word) dinner music has been given the space it deserves. The inch saved here has not yet been devoted to the afternoon classical music, but that considerable section of listeners to whom classical music is as important as swing to others will be most grateful for the details printed recently of classical programmes.

Then how loathsome and deplorable I, too, find the -odia, -ola, and -iana tribes! How I squirm when I read such abortions as rendition and radiotrician! But language is not static; it does not,

like a human being, cease growing after a certain age. Science does not lead us to believe that the Piltown man spoke the language we speak to-day, and the most fervent fundamentalist can hardly maintain that Adam and Eve were created with a vocabulary including mongrel upstarts like "coastal," and "bureaucracy," results of false analogy such as "reliable," or neologisms like "motor," "appendicitis," "celanese" and "zipp-fasteners." It is usage which governs the "rules" of language, not the rules which govern the usage, and I am afraid there is little A. J. Hodgkin, the Editor or I can do about it, except refrain ourselves from offending. Fowler quotes, "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," and if a sufficiently large number of people call a radio technician a radiotrician, Dr. Johnson may turn in his grave until he becomes dizzy, but radiotrician will sooner or later appear in the dictionary.

R. (Christchurch).

Sir,—I would like to protest against the view of "The Writer of the Interruptions" in the recent edition of *The Listener*. He tries to bring opera on the same level as race meetings, football matches, etc. I don't see any reason why an opera performance should have a "running commentary," as he calls his interruptions. The music of the great masters speaks for itself, and concerning the plot it would be quite sufficient to give an outline of it at the commencement of each act. It is exasperating to have a voice always butting in talking of trivial things when one is under the spell of the music. I hope the NBS will give us some uninterrupted opera performances.

Congratulations to your paper, which I consider one of the best published in New Zealand. A special clap for G.M. and his film reviews.

OPERA LOVER (Milton).

MORE NEWS, PLEASE!

Sir,—Would it be possible for the main national stations to feature a news session some time during the evening? I ask this in all seriousness. On a recent Tuesday, what was scheduled as a news session from 3YA comprised the following:

(1) A talk on New Zealand's Industrial War Effort. (2) A talk on War Loans by a Treasury Official. (3) A Salvation Army Appeal. (4) A Stock Exchange Report. (5) A Book Review. Can this be called a news session?

In this locality there are several of us who get our newspapers only once a week. No doubt there are hundreds, probably thousands, of others similarly situated throughout New Zealand. As about 90 per cent. of programmes is taken up with music, I don't think it would be any hardship on anyone to cut this down a little and put on a news session.

THAR (Lake Coleridge).

Sir,—I should like to see the local news session reinstated in place of the never-ending and, in a lot of cases, uninteresting talks that are put over in this session. There appears to be too many talks to the detriment of more interest-

ing items, and I would suggest that one of the main stations be permitted to put over a New Zealand news session during the 7.0 to 7.30 p.m. period. I feel sure that, if a census of public opinion was taken, a big majority would be in favour of the alteration I suggest. By New Zealand news, I am not referring to sports and racing results, but ordinary news items.

N.Z. NEWS ADVOCATE (Nelson).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

C. J. DOUGLAS (Masterton) asks whether the "Fourth Form" was "too subtle for high-brows" that we should have "cut out, probably for keeps," the "one green oasis in a series of lousy programmes."

F. A. SANDALL (Massey Agricultural College) wants Friedman without his "wordy, repetitive radioman," and says so in thirty lines.

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