

## SOME RECENT MUSIC

No. 14: By MARSYAS

A REPEAT performance of Douglas Lilburn's *Concert Overture* by the IYA Orchestra was an opportunity for better acquaintance with what is undoubtedly a most impressive work. It is one of Vaughan Williams's favourite jokes, I believe, to tell his pupils never to write any early works. But though Mr. Lilburn possibly had the benefit of this advice, he should not regret this Overture.

The first time I heard it I was puzzled by the tension; I couldn't tell what it came from or what it resulted in. There seemed to be great stresses and strains remaining unresolved; the second hearing cleared all this away. The substance of the *Concert Overture* might be merely delight in sound; at any rate we can know that there is a man among us hearing strange, delightful sounds — sounds no one else hears until he struggles to commit them to paper and finds a conductor and an orchestra who will reproduce them. They are fine sounds, very moving, and they have something that makes them seem to belong to New Zealand. In addition, they have been completely transcribed. I mean that once having some good musical ideas to relate, Mr. Lilburn is able to put them down well—his orchestration is clear and vivid.

Some listeners will have noticed copious evidence of what is known as "influence of Vaughan Williams" and "influence of Sibelius." Some commentators would draw attention to the fact and leave it at that. They would be overlooking the other fact that no really good composer has been totally a pioneer and inventor. Great composers point forward to their latter works, but in their early works they usually imitate slavishly.

Every artist must learn by working on models at first. The men whose music we hear and admire most got their models from inventors whose works survive only as museum pieces. Where are the symphonies of Stamitz and Dittersdorf now, which served as models for Haydn and Mozart? And the sonatas of C. P. E. Bach, which served the same two masters; the pre-Chopin nocturnes of John Field? And how often do we hear the works of the men who actually "invented" opera?

If Mr. Lilburn's music seemed to come out of the blue, utterly original, unrelated to the past, containing nothing of any other man's music, then we would properly throw it into the dustbin. But this overture (and the latter works which we heard at Centennial time) prove that the future of Douglas Lilburn's music will be something to keep an eye on, because he is not exhausting his energy on the invention of novelty.

There remains one thing I have not said; shortly after hearing the *Concert Overture* I found a sentence in G. Lowes Dickinson's *The Greek View of Life* which (referring to Greek music) says

what I felt better than I can ever hope to say it:

"Instead of being exhaustive and confused by a chaos of vague and conflicting emotion, the listener had the sense of relief which accompanies the deliverance of a definite passion, and returned to his ordinary business 'purged' as the Greeks said, and tranquillized, by a process which he understood, directed to an end of which he approved."

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[T] is always better to listen to a local performance of a piece of music, so long as it is done with a sense of responsibility, than to the best of recordings. And when it is a local composition, then it is more interesting still. That is why I was disappointed to find that I had listened to an evening of recorded music and overlooked a group of songs composed and sung by Mary Martin, of Auckland. This is the kind of artist we should encourage. The more we have like her the more likely we are to find a John Dowland among them, someone who can go round delighting, not indeed in our day Kings and Queens, but the populace with his own songs. But for that to happen here it would be necessary to use the words of New Zealand poets.

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THE piano concertos done from the IYA studio with Eileen Ralph as soloist were a generous treat. It was hard to know during the Mozart (in A Major) whether the orchestra was in form because of the brilliant piano playing, or whether the pianist was stimulated by the marvellous sounds that came from the orchestra. In spite of the apparent absence of a bassoon, both the Mozart concerto and the Brahms (in B Flat) gave me absolutely all I want to hear as far as performance goes. The shade of difference between a performance here under Mr. Matthews, and the London Philharmonic is not in proportion to the difference in price. Frankly I would rather listen to the local performance and have the satisfaction of knowing that with a little help we can do it ourselves.

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A *Little Night Music* came over 4YZ labelled "For the Connoisseur." But this is an insult to the shade of Mozart, whose joyous little out-of-doors serenade was surely everyman's music, if ever any music was! And if the label was a sort of apology for the music then it is the listener who has been insulted, because his taste, I think, enables him to accept Mozart without apology.

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I FELL into precisely the same pitfall that recently trapped IYA's announcer when I said two weeks ago that some records by the London Philharmonic were "apparently with Thomas Matthews conducting." I meant to say "leading" (because Beecham of course was conducting), but my fingers slipped just as the tongue of that announcer slipped whom I teased for saying "Sir Thomas Matthews."

# A PERSONAL Matter

A nation is the sum total of its inhabitants. The efficiency, courage, and good behaviour of the individual sets the standard for the population as a whole.

At a critical time like the present — a testing time for both individuals and communities — it behoves everyone to work efficiently, to be cheerful, and to be moderate in all things. That is the only way to be worthy of the sacrifices of our fighting men overseas.

Especially is good behaviour called for on the part of those — the majority among our citizens — who enjoy the hospitality, relaxation, and good fellowship to be found at a licensed house.

This privilege, under our free law, imposes certain responsibilities on the individual as to his behaviour towards his fellow citizens: and it is here that abuses can creep in unless people discipline themselves.

The majority of people behave themselves in an exemplary way, but under today's conditions of stress and worry a small minority can be at times a source of annoyance and criticism. Moderation in wartime, therefore, becomes a duty as well as a virtue.

*An announcement inserted in the Nation's interests by the National Council of the Licensed Trade of New Zealand.*

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