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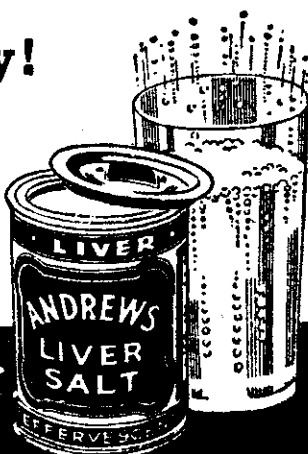
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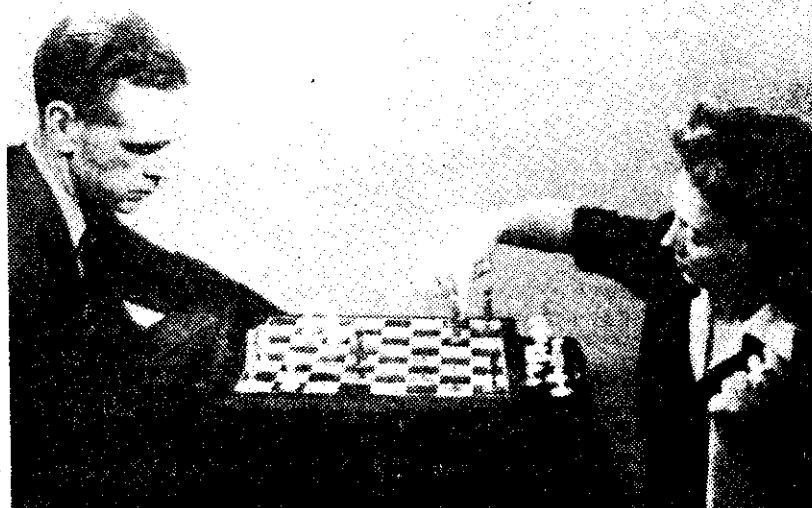
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"MUSIC MUST BE TAKEN
TO THE PEOPLE"



MR. AND MRS. THOMAS MATTHEWS

REASONS why the New Zealand radio audience should be hearing contemporary music, and some suggestions on how to listen to it were offered by Thomas Matthews, who has recently completed a period of several weeks as guest conductor to the IYA Orchestra in Auckland. Mr. Matthews has had recent first-hand experience of the effects of new music, both as observed from the orchestra and from the audience, and has also had personal associations with certain modern works, for instance, Benjamin Britten's violin concerto, of which he gave the first performance in England. Delius's violin concerto, which Mr. Matthews presented recently in Auckland, was also first performed by him in Finland after he had studied it with Albert Sammons, to whom it was dedicated.

"People could hear contemporary music in this country through at least three mediums," he said. "First, a society specially founded to propagate and foster it. Second, public concerts, of which there seem to be regrettably few. And third, the most powerful medium, radio. I noticed while I was in America that practically every concert I went to had a piece of contemporary American music in the programme. Stokowski in particular seems determined to have something new as often as possible. But this state of affairs is quite a recent innovation. The practice had to be established in America, and I think it could be established in New Zealand."

Something Done Already

In any case, Mr. Matthews himself has done something already.

While he has been conducting the IYA Orchestra, first New Zealand performances have been given of a Concert Overture by Douglas Lilburn, works by Aaron Copland, George Butterworth, Edmund Rubbra, and Turina.

"Composers like these are not chattering among themselves, above (or below), the audience's heads," Mr.

Matthews went on. "They are not 'difficult' to listen to. Of course there's a lot of contemporary music that can't be done here at all, because of its technical difficulty, so that can only be heard with the help of the gramophone. The gramophone is a good thing in enabling the people to hear things they wouldn't hear otherwise, but it is a bad thing when it prevents orchestras from getting to know the repertoire they would know otherwise."

Who Listens?

"Then there's this in favour of actual concert performance: in a concert hall you know that people have heard the music and you might even know what they have thought of it. But on the radio you don't know whether people have heard two bars, or three bars, or what. My wife and I played the Rubbra sonata recently, but we haven't the faintest idea who listened to it."

"Now supposing you had some group here to foster contemporary music. It would have to confine its activities to chamber music unless it joined forces in some way with the broadcasting orchestras. When I gave the first performance of the Benjamin Britten violin concerto in London it was done with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (under Clarence Raybould), at one of a regular series of public concerts devoted to contemporary music."

What to Listen For

We asked Mr. Matthews to say how new music should be listened to. "Take the average person hearing Beethoven," he said. "What does he expect? Tune? Or rhythm? Or both? I'm sure he doesn't examine the form. Melodic or rhythmic interest are the first things. Well, it's the same with new music, that is what the radio listener should be looking for when he hears a contemporary work. Not any 'message.' The first thing is just to decide whether he enjoys the sound of it, and if he finds he does, then he can look for some message in it later on."

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