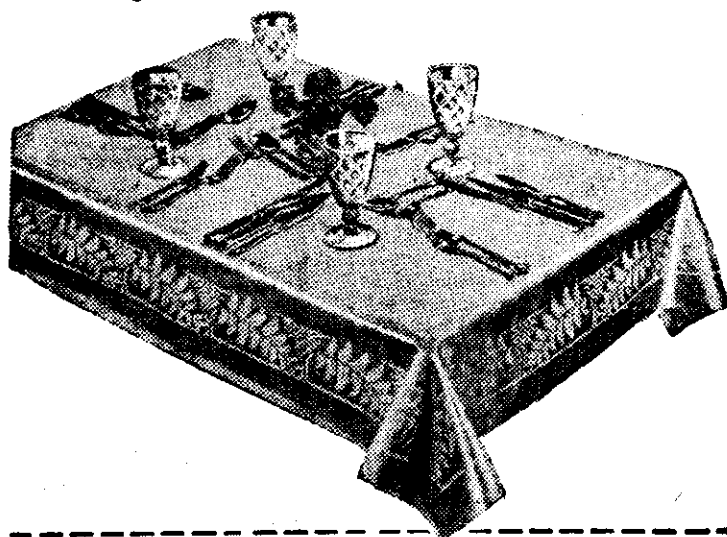


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Radio Review

DISTANT PROSPECTS

SOME people prefer to listen only to poems already well known to them—ones mastered at school or found in every anthology. Others, who would not perhaps seek out new poems in a library, are ready to listen to poetry with pleasure whether or not they recognise the verses or the author. The NZBS wisely caters for both groups: on the one hand, by its playing of recordings of Milton, Keats, Shelley and others, and on the other, by its presentation of New Zealand verse, for instance, and of a new IYC poetry series. The second programme in this series, *The Parson's Landscape*, consisted of, to me, wholly unfamiliar, and yet quite delightful pieces, by 18th and 19th Century clergymen describing the English countryside, among them, William Barnes, George Crabbe, and Charles Tennyson-Turner. Very sensitively read by Laurence Hepworth and Roy Patrick, these poems gave none of the pleasure of a well-known piece, endowed with new significance by an expressive reading, but the joy of hearing for the first time, poems of quiet charm, which, in their newness, conveyed something of the bracing freshness of the prospects they celebrated.

Poor by Comparison

OFTEN only by reading a really poor novel can a person whose taste is normally good see clearly certain positive values in the kind of thing he's used to. The same principle applies to the BBC *First Rehearsal* (1ZB), which has replaced *Much Binding*, which replaced *TIFH*. The newer *Much Binding*,

benefiting from a change of location, had passed from a period of invalidism to one of late convalescence, in which it was regaining some of its war-time vigour. But *First Rehearsal* seems to me to be dying on its feet already. Bernard Braden's jokes so often just fail to come off, the rest of the cast are pale echoes of *ITMA* types, and the sketches are remarkably unfunny. Perhaps I have an unusually keen ear for the *double entendre*, but many of *First Rehearsal's* lines, too, strike me as being bluer than *TIFH* at its mauve. At least, *First Rehearsal* has this value—that those who listen to it will approach a new series of *TIFH* with a sharper appreciation of its wit, its skill and its originality.

—J.C.R.

Encircled by Scenery

I'M glad I caught up with Ruth Park's *One Man's Kingdom*, though this was not, I felt, Miss Park at her best. Her usual talent for dramatising the background of her characters to intensify our compassion for them seemed here a little over used—her pioneer couple (1900 to 1920) would have been more convincing fifty years earlier. One had the feeling that Miss Park was giving it all she had, which was sometimes a bit more than we were prepared to take. Then, too, the writer's gift for vigorous and indelible description was sometimes used at the expense of the dramatic action, so that the struggling couple were often dwarfed by being forced to exist encircled by scenery. The play had its share of excitement—the crowd scenes at the beginning and the scene at the logging camp where Lachlan literally pulls the villain's house about his ears—but I was never able to feel in my bones that this was *my* country and these *my* people.

Women in Action

TWO recent radio discussions have delighted me by providing evidence of the demise of the Little Woman. In the

(continued on next page)

★ The Week's Music . . . by OWEN JENSEN ★

IF the National Orchestra's joust with Ravel's *Bolero* (YC link) came over the air anywhere near as effectively as it sounded in the Wellington Town Hall, it must have been something of a knockout. In the flesh it was both stupendous and stupefying. Someone tells me that this is the longest crescendo in any piece of music. I can well believe it. The immediate effect, on myself, anyway, was one of some small embarrassment as, knowing the inevitable conclusion, one waited in patience with a "must we go all through this again" feeling. It was a pleasant and not unprofitable pastime whiling away the bars with a consideration of Ravel's skilful orchestration.

In the hall there was, of course, the hypnotic effect of watching bunches of strings and percussion stirring up the implacable rhythm. What with this and the monotonous repetition of Ravel's tune, becoming more and more insistent, one was left at the end a little like the punch-drunk boxer who, after 15 rounds of being knocked from post to pillow just had enough breath left to murmur: "Well, no one can say I can't take it." James Robertson and the National Orchestra, as you may gather and probably heard, gave an electrifying performance. At least they could take it, for a repeat performance at a Lunch-hour Concert next day (2YA) was even more zestful.

Donald Munro's New Zealand Opera Group's performance of Menotti's *The Telephone* (2YC) is the sort of opera that fits the microphone. For one thing, there was no difficulty in following the story as there wasn't any to speak about—merely a passage of arms with the telephone. And with only two parts, well sung by Mary Langford and Donald Munro, no great strain was placed on the ear in picking out who was who. The clarity of the orchestral writing—and the playing, too—all helped to make this 20 minutes of good fun. The same goes, too, and even more so, for the second opera in the Group's double bill, Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*, broadcast a few nights later (2YC).

Listening to John Gray's excellently produced *New Records* session (YC link), it was interesting to be reminded that Egmont was a man as well as a mountain, and that Beethoven's well-known overture on the subject was but a prelude to a further batch of incidental music for Goethe's play. I'm still a little hazy as to what this Egmont fellow was up to in Goethe's story, but at least Beethoven's neglected music went nobly with the election address broadcast at the same time on the YA link. As a matter of fact, a little appropriately chosen music would considerably brighten the election campaign. I leave you to choose the pieces.

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 5, 1954.