

Festival Proms at Dunedin

THE National Orchestra, with James Robertson conducting, is back on the platform again for its 1955 Prom season. This week the Orchestra belongs to Dunedin for the summer festival of music, art, sport, and straight-out entertainment.

On paper the Prom programmes seem to offer as pleasantly exciting music as we have yet had from the Orchestra at this time of the year. In fact, they fulfil the old recommendation, as good as any for a post-holiday musical jaunt—something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.

Picking the eyes out of this week's broadcasts from Dunedin there are, for instance, the Haydn Trumpet Concerto (4YC, February 4), which soloist Ken Smith has pretty well made his own in these parts, "Pineapple Poll" for something new and something borrowed, being Charles Mackerras's arrangement of Sullivan tunes for a ballet, and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (4YC, February 5).

Among the major works to be broadcast by the Orchestra this week will be two old acquaintances—Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C Minor. They will undoubtedly receive a warm welcome, despite their ubiquity; or, maybe, because of it. The popularity of these two compositions shows no signs of diminishing. Yet, apart from certain almost superficial aspects, their appeal is very different. What is the secret of their popularity?

There's more to it than "fate knocking at the door" or those portentous eight chords which are the soloist's opening gambit in the Rachmaninoff. To those still making friends with the music, the liberal helpings of emotion that each composer gives us, the rich tunes in Rachmaninoff, his lyricism, and the drama of Beethoven, will all be enough to renew affection.

Those, however, about to write off the familiarity of the music may wish to



JAMES ROBERTSON

MUSIC WITHOUT PREJUDICE

A SEARCHING analysis of the listening habits of New Zealand's music-loving public is made in the series of talks by Nigel Eastgate, *Listening to Music*, which starts on 2YC at 7.55 p.m. on Monday, January 31, and from 3YC at 9.46 p.m. on Thursday, February 3. Mr. Eastgate (below), who is a medical student, has some incisive criticism of musical snobbery, and his outlook is nothing, if not broad.

There are four talks, the first bearing the same title as the series. The others are "Live Versus Canned," "Oh, No! Not Tchaikovsky," and "The Audience Has to Work, Too." Mr. Eastgate illustrates his points at the piano.

"Most people know what they like in music, and all too often are vociferous

about it—but few know why they like it. Many have formed, quite early in life, listening habits which they find difficult to break . . ." says Mr. Eastgate. So it comes about that familiarity with tunes, both popular and serious, becomes a standard by which all other music is judged. The listener's mind is limited to a small repertoire into which previously unheard and new music breaks with difficulty. The remedy therefore lies in the listener's staying power during a first hearing combined with intelligent appreciation and its corollary, lack of prejudice.

Why, asks Nigel Eastgate, does an increasing number of listeners choose "canned" music? There are many advantages to be found in listening comfortably to the radio at home and to selected gramophone recordings of good quality. But it is only a selection, the same limited repertoire—played by a favourite artist or group. Concert going and the live performance represent for the listener a disciplinary exercise which lifts him out of this well-worn musical rut. The psychology of musical snobbery draws from Mr. Eastgate his most scathing comments. The concert-goer who goes to be seen, the critic who criticises for the sake of criticism, and the learned listener who slavishly reproduces the opinions of authorities as his own to the suppression of his personal taste—all are revealed for what they are.

As for modern serious music the task of the audience, he says, is a little difficult. You must listen "until it sounds good to you, or until you have a nervous breakdown." This, then, is Nigel Eastgate's message—try to be honest in your appreciation, and above all else, be honest with yourself.



N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 28, 1955.

strike deeper. They will discover that the vitality of these two widely differing works comes from below the surface. The tunes, the themes, the ideas or whatever you like to call them may continue to catch the ear, and it is true enough that when it comes to popularity in music, a shaft in the heart is worth two in the head. But what keeps both these works near the top of the poll is the superb craftsmanship with which the ideas are put together, the consummate logic with which the musical argument is developed. Feeling this, the music is re-created anew. Even if you don't like the line of expression of either one or other of these composers, one cannot fail to be moved by the art that lies behind the presentation.

—Owen Jensen

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