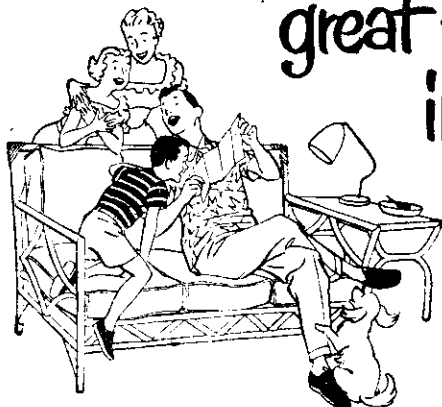


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RADIO REVIEW

Voyage Without Landfall

RUTH PARK'S play *So Early
in the Morning* (2YA, Janu-
ary 20), based on the life of
Abel Tasman, did not succeed in
painting any aura of historical ex-
citement round its hero's unlucky
head, and we were left feeling glad it
was Captain Cook to whom we owe the
greater historical voltage. We seemed
to spend the greater part of the time
floating on a slow-moving river past
banks clothed with luxuriant growth of
fictional detail that the historical land-
marks were almost overgrown. Nor did
we ever make a satisfactory landfall.
More immediacy would have been given
the play if we had started with our one
point of contact with Tasman—the dis-
covery of New Zealand—and then
looked back to find the reasons behind
his failure to press on with the explo-
ration of the new country. As it was, we
were left feeling as jilted as in *The
Seekers*—we just happened to supply a
bit of the background to the old, old
story of a man, his job and his faithful
mate.

—M.B.

Echoes from Milk Wood

SHORTLY before his death, I heard
Dylan Thomas, with four professional
actors, read *Under Milk Wood* in New

York—an unforgettable, stimulating and
rather bewildering experience. Since
each actor read several parts, it was
almost impossible to separate character
from character. After a while, I was
forced to listen to it as a poem rather
than as a "play," and surrender to the
jostling, leaping waves of metaphor. The
BBC version in 2B Sunday Showcase,
a superb piece of radio, was much easier
to follow. Yet even here, I found the
narrative-descriptive passages the most
satisfying parts, perhaps because, in the
voices of the two narrators, I seemed
occasionally to catch an echo of Dylan
Thomas's own distinctive cadences. This
remarkable work would almost by itself
justify the existence of radio and com-
pound for its sins. But, heresy though
it may be, I couldn't help wondering
last Sunday if Thomas wasn't just a
little too deliberately "earthy" in this
piece, as if "warm and noble humanity"
had always to him perforce to be some-
what shabby, and whether if, some
Sweet Thursday, you turned the corner
from Thomas's Milk Wood, you
wouldn't find yourself among the "love-
able" bums and golden-hearted harlots
of Cannery Row.

Music and Poetry

STATION 1YC gives us poetry and it
gives us music, but seems to neglect
all opportunities when an association of
the two would sharpen listeners' enjoy-
ment of both. By the time I had turned
up a copy of "The Rio Grande" the
other night, Constant Lambert's com-
position was half-finished, and the words
(continued on next page)

★ The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN ★

SOME cynic once remarked that the
only good composer was a dead one;
certainly it seems to be true these days
that the deader a composer is, the more
respected he becomes, and it also follows
that the ops. posth. of a man will re-
ceive more than their due reverence. In
this category come notably unfinished
works by various people, Beethoven's
last quartets and Schubert's final ad-
ventures in sonata form.

We heard one of the latter last week
(YC link) with David Galbraith playing
it from Auckland. This was the sonata
in B flat, arranged in a slightly ab-
breviated form by Harold Bauer, the
intention being (as the announcer said,
as though he were personally responsi-
ble) to eliminate the repetitions of
phrases without manhandling the form
in any damaging way. Without wishing
to be a purist, I feel that repetitions are
an integral part of Schubert's style;
or perhaps I'm just rationalising and
justifying my own preference for his
happy tautologies. After all, if he can
give us a good tune, which he does with
amazing frequency, why shouldn't he
let us hear it again, so that it can
really sink in?

In any case, Mr. Galbraith's playing
of this sonata proved to be a compe-
tent and enjoyable effort. The Schubert
player needs to have many affinities with
the performer of Mozart; they are both
simple but deep, like a little tarn placed
by a skilled landscape architect; both
demand a mode of playing which brings
out their strength through naiveté, and
delicacy without effeminacy. This per-

formance brought out the point, being
clear and light without that tinniness
and tinkliness which one is so apt to
get. The off-bar rhythms of the scherzo
and surprising changes of key and mood
were handled with great charm, though
the last movement seemed a little ham-
handed in places—and yet they were
just the places that beg for a little ham.
I shall look forward to the next sonata
in Mr. Galbraith's series; and I bear
Harold Bauer no malice, since I rather
think half an hour is long enough for
any sonata.

While I'm on pianists, I've noticed
a lot of Bach-Busoni works in the pro-
grammes lately. Unlike so many people,
I find myself forced to admire them,
for all the lily-gilding, especially in the
finer pieces such as the C Major Toccata
and the ubiquitous Chaconne; Busoni
uses some of Bach's own routine, making
the notes do duty as expression marks
as well. He groups his notes so that,
even if played at the same tonal level
throughout, the work has all the tonal
light and shade it needs; in fact, the
performer requires little more than tech-
nique to overcome the considerable
difficulties, to produce a fine rendition.
Busoni's insight is also responsible for
the success of those transcriptions where
the original is barely recognisable, but
whose overall effect is that of transfor-
mation rather than spoiling.

On the whole, looking back over the
past week, I'm forced to the realisation
that the programme I enjoyed the most
was *TIFH*; but I'm afraid that is in-
evitable, and had better be taken as
read in future.

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 4, 1955.