

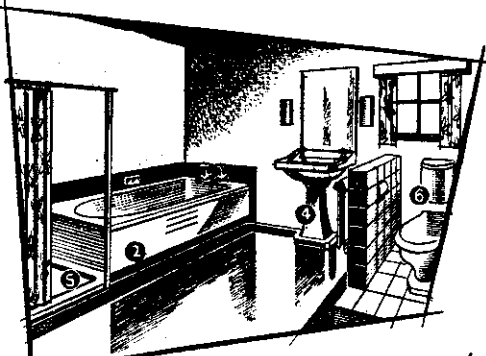
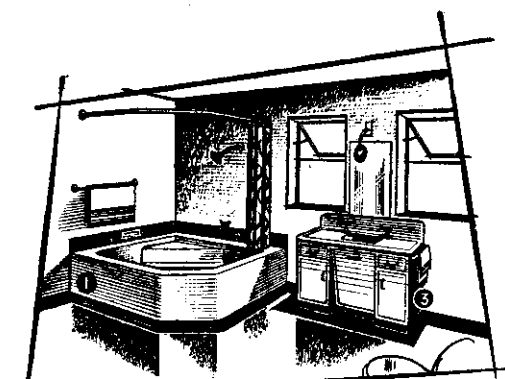


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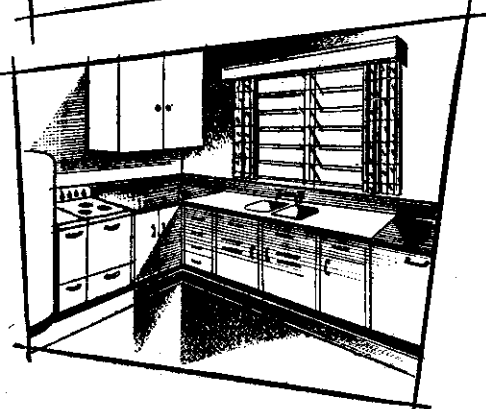


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RADIO REVIEW

Antidote for Humidity

IT might have been that the debilitating effect of a scorching Auckland summer Sunday afternoon made me unresponsive to anything but the lightest of light plays, but I enjoyed the NZBS production of *He Who Laughs Last* (1YA) as much as any play I've heard for a long time. It was a very fragile and quite predictable piece, based upon a story of Gerald Kersh, "Fairy Gold," which is considerably less sardonic and tough-minded than his usual run. I listened to this story of a practical joke played by a life-of-the-party type on a struggling couple, which involved sending them a bogus notice of a legacy, with the certainty that it would all come out right in the end. And it did. The play, breezily acted, took me back to the years B.E. (Before the Existentialists) when people like Leonard Merrick wrote stories by which life, far from kicking young people in the teeth, showered them with legacies, winning doubles, and such. A good cast, with William Austin zestfully playing the triumphant victim, gave this pleasant dollop of day-dream all that was needed to forget Auckland's humidity for a brief hour.

Without Batons and Bows

IT is pretty clear that in Mr. James Robertson we have gained not only a very fine conductor, who has already made his personality sound through the

playing of the National Orchestra, but also a first-class radio speaker. Some of our speakers on music are lively and stimulating—Owen Jensen is a conspicuous example; others are pedantic and dull, and sound as if they would be much happier communicating with a baton or a bow. In his introductory talk to the Verdi operas to be broadcast from the YC's, Mr. Robertson showed that he belongs to the former category. Thoroughly well informed, with just the right amount of detail, salted with vivacious asides, and a touch of wit, and excellently delivered, this introduction was, as such introductions should be, but seldom are, not only a firm basis for the series, but a complete and worthy programme in its own right. I hope that we will hear a good deal more of Mr. Robertson. He is clearly not one of those musicians (I have met some!) who deny the value of the written and the spoken word as an aid to the enjoyment of music.

—J.C.R.

Musical Opinions

I MISSED Nigel Eastgate's earlier talks "Listening to Music" but I had heard much about how they were phrased and delivered, that he talked down outrageously, and that he couldn't be more than eighteen years old. It was therefore with a lively anticipation that I listened to his final talk: "The audience has to work, too." I failed to find in it any of the unpleasing qualities I had been led to expect. His voice is light, and his manner slyly urbane, and though he must be young, he spoke with dryish detachment which would have become a much older man. Perhaps Mr. Eastgate was unable to be too high-handed in his discussion of the modern musical modes, since they have not yet

(continued on next page)

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

THE Proms in Auckland offered similar programmes to those given in our southern outlets (cultural outlets, that is), and more local artists and guest conductors, Dr. Charles Nalden and Georg Tintner proving worthy maestros. New to me was Halffter's *Rapsodia Portuguesa*, in which David Galbraith was the solo pianist. He certainly had more to do than anyone else, and what is more, did it very well. Maurice Till's playing of the *Rachmaninoff Rhapsody* seems to be slowing down a little and improving with repetition, while the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* has lost none of his magic.

A particularly lovely church service caught my attention a short while ago—a BBC transcription of a choral Evensong at Ely Cathedral (YC link). Some of the best English church music was used, and the multiplicity of anthems served to add rather than detract from the purpose of the service, unlike so many local festal services.

There has been a large amount of advance publicity for the series of recitals by Hilde Cohn (2YC) of various studies by the "schools" of studymongers, from Czerny to Liszt. Certainly she selected some of the most attractive plants in this much-maligned field; maligned, I feel, more because of childish associations among pianists rather than for any lack of artistry in the pieces themselves. Actually it always

surprises me that the greater studymerchants have bothered to put so much musical value into what is always regarded as a "grind," or something which must be unpleasant so as to be good for you, like cod liver oil.

In any event, Hilde Cohn did nothing to make them any more unpleasant. Her playing of Czerny and his pupil Cramer aroused both my envy and my admiration, and I hardly recognised two old war horses at which I once struggled myself. In these and the studies of Heller and Moscheles I thought there was too much sentiment for the content (or for mine), but naturally this could not apply to the Chopin and Liszt studies which are concert pieces in their own right, besides embodying enough sentiment for the most rampant romanticist.

While I'm dealing largely with pianists, I ought to mention a very pretty Chopin recital by Patricia Gibson (3YC) and another by Jennifer Barnard of works by Mozart and Haydn; I think that for the young pianist with a sure touch and balanced dynamic sense nothing can be better for a studio recital than these two composers, and the selection and performance in this case were both neat. There is no doubt that our studio artists are maintaining a good standard, so that locally we are well catered for, even without the girle round the earth provided by the linked programmes—a girle which fits a little snugly at times.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 11, 1955.