

## MUSICAL PROGRAMMES

Sir.—I am pleased that J. Edmonds has written about the deterioration of 2YC's Dinner Music programme. As your correspondent points out, the ZB class of listener is adequately provided for between 6.0 p.m. and 7.0 p.m. Why, then, should it be necessary for the YC stations to present, during this hour, a programme which comprises for the most part, inferior music? Not everyone wishes to dine to a musical accompaniment, but those who do, and prefer a more serious musical diet, should be catered for.

I suggest that in New Zealand educational standards are gradually being lowered, causing a consequent inability on the part of many people to appreciate, not only music, but all art of any quality. Instead of mirroring this tendency, the Broadcasting Service might endeavour to supply a corrective influence, even if it does no more than maintain at all times, on the YC network, a high standard of programmes.

The same should apply to the programmes presented by the National Orchestra. I do not want to appear a musical snob, but in my opinion there has been a noticeable decline in the standard of music presented by the Orchestra, especially in the recent series of concerts. If the majority of the population prefer inferior music it is probably because they are not educated sufficiently to appreciate something better. Here I believe the resources of the Broadcasting Service can be used to advantage. No good purpose will be served, however, by lowering standards.

J.R.A. (Christchurch).

(Dinner music policy was explained last week in an answer to two correspondents.—Ed.)

Sir,—I must express agreement with Mr. J. Edmonds (Wellington), whose letter on musical programmes appeared in your issue of March 16. I have long been puzzled about the policy of the NZBS in offering from YA stations (and even from YC in the early evening) music of the so-called "popular" variety in fairly large doses. From my observations I believe that the majority of people who appreciate this sort of fare listen almost invariably to YD and ZB stations, which cater admirably for these listeners. While I enjoy some "hit-parade" tunes—in small, digestible amounts—I find little relief from them between the hours of seven and nine in the morning. I am not suggesting Brahms or Beethoven symphonies as suitable breakfast session fare: what I plead for is a programme different in character from that of the ZB stations. Perhaps recordings ranging from "light orchestral" to the shorter works of both classical and romantic composers would be a welcome change in the morning to more people than myself.

J.W.B. (Onehunga).

## HAYDN'S TOY SYMPHONY

Sir.—Like A. Harman, of Christchurch, I am a member of the younger concert-going public, but I do not agree with him in his view "that the criticisms of Mr. Robertson and of the Toy Symphony by the National Orchestra have been going on for long enough." I am sure that Mr. Robertson appreciates the criticisms and is a regular reader of them, and can find in them some idea of what the public wants at concerts. As Roger Sutton states (March 23), "matters of orchestral policy and standards of playing become an important public issue." So why shouldn't the public put forth ideas and criticisms as they see fit?

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Originally, I beg to differ, the Toy Symphony was not meant to be treated as a joke. So why should it now? It is the same as spoiling a lovely opera, *Carmen* in question, and turning it into a jazzy film, and giving a different approach to the public of Bizet's music. Surely Bizet would turn in his grave if he heard the way in which his music has been treated. Bizet meant it to be the way he wrote it. The same applies in some respect to Haydn's music. Why should the Toy Symphony be turned into much the same thing? I thoroughly enjoy the symphony under normal circumstances, but not when played to an audience, the majority of whose members have come along evidently to have a good laugh at some well-known personality. I agree there should be comedy in music (but not at the expense of the music), as well as in art or ballet. But one does not find on going into an art gallery people roaring with laughter at something that strikes them as particularly funny. Why should the music-lover who goes to an orchestral concert, purely to hear good music, be subject to the raucous laughter of people who come along for the "act" and not the music?

And why should people have "to be led up the path" to appreciate serious music? They won't suddenly become interested any more because a few laughs have been thrown in, just the same as one doesn't appreciate art more because an attractive frame has been placed around a beautiful painting. One won't appreciate music any more if certain "props" are used to make it more interesting. I like my music well enough without frills such as those at the Toy Symphony performance.

M. McKENZIE (Auckland).

Sir,—The National Orchestra has reached a new high standard of playing under Mr. Robertson, but I thought they came an awful cropper with their "Toy" burlesque. We know that it was written as something of a joke, but there are many other "musical jokes." Dukas's "Sorcerer's Apprentice," and Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, for instance, and no overseas orchestra of any standing would get away with a slovenly performance of them. Long live the National Orchestra! But, please, no more "Too-good Symphonies" or "Tin Pan Alley."

H. F. PAYNE (Auckland).

## "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Sir,—We in Greymouth, for obvious reasons, too seldom see anything like the New Zealand Players' *Twelfth Night*. We are indeed grateful that they

do come sometimes. But (if I may be forgiven this one "but"), it was sad to see an audience restive during the opening scene, when some of Shakespeare's loveliest poetry might have been enjoyed.

"If music be the food of love, play on..." became trivial under the actor's efforts to make it vehemently naturalistic. What should have been the slow, incomparable music of the words was replaced by mere fretfulness; and this, I could not help suspecting, was aggravated by the actor's feeling the audience was not with him, and endeavouring to make good the lack by fretting the scene still further in an exasperated effort to get across, somehow, anyhow. He did not succeed, and Shakespeare was murdered in the effort. The audience did the only thing it could—waited to enjoy itself when the really first-rate fun-scenes came on.

I am sure West Coast audiences are not bad, whatever may have been said about them in the past; and given, in such passages, pure poetry-speaking in a properly leisurely atmosphere and setting, could enjoy that, as well as Shakespeare's infectious fun.

M. T. WOOLLASTON  
(Greymouth).

## ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION

Sir,—The author of the article "Strange Cargoes" in your issue of March 16 should check his facts. Hut Point was not the base camp for Scott's last expedition, it was the Discovery base of 1902-03. The base camp for his last expedition was at Cape Evans on Ross Island, some distance to the north.

Incidentally, may I suggest that some collaboration between the NZBS and the Ross Sea Committee to produce a series of short historical sketches on Antarctic exploration would arouse much-needed interest in the present appeal, and at the same time provide fascinating programme material? The doings of men such as Bellingshausen, Ross, Scott, Mawson, Amundsen, Shackleton and Byrd, to mention only the most prominent, cannot fail to excite the imagination, and there is certainly no shortage of books from which to take the necessary information. G.P. (Hamilton).

## ENGLISHMEN IN MOSCOW

Sir,—I would endorse Elizabeth's Schiessel's plea for a panel discussion on Russia. One grows weary of the interminable platitudes about the ugliness of Russian life, and I rather fancy that a period of residence in Moscow might be a stimulating experience for

many New Zealanders. Contemporary Russian literature gives the impression that Soviet men and women are less self-centred than we are and more actively conscious of the welfare of their fellow citizens. To lose oneself in the suburbs is popular in New Zealand; it is much less so in Russia. Their attitude in this respect appears to me to bear the seeds of greater human dignity.

There is ample matter for debate, competent debaters are not lacking, and so let us on to some real controversy.

W. D. AIMER (Wellington).

## HUNTING POETS

Sir,—The pages of *The Listener* seem to be a happy hunting ground for our budding poets. Far be it from me to suggest that anyone should be prevented from expressing his feelings, but I do not understand why you should publish some of the reckless efforts we see from time to time. In fact, I think it is wrong that radio listeners should be forced to patronise these people if they wish to secure a copy of the broadcast programmes.

The first requirement in art is sincerity, and I suggest that contributions in verse should be accompanied by a note either indicating the purpose of the poem or otherwise pointing out wherein its merit lies. RUSTIC (Dunedin).

## PARKING METRES

Sir,—May I have a few lines in which to express my enjoyment of "Parking Metres"? R.G.P.'s snappily topical wit is for me a bright spot in a patchwork of mainly dull hues. Had *The Listener* no M.B., G.I.F.Y., Jno. or R.G.P., it would indeed be a suitable subject for a *Dunciad*. R.G.P., however, could almost redeem it singlehanded.

DONNE BUCK (Wellington).

(Four swallows should almost make a summer.—Ed.)

## THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—The remarks of your regular correspondent, to wit, L. D. Austin, on the National Orchestra as compared with overseas orchestras, must fill the majority of your readers with mirth. It would be very difficult indeed to agree with such fatuous nonsense. Is your correspondent really serious? For purposes of comparison one has only to compare a recent rendering of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony by the National Orchestra with that of the Philharmonia under von Karajan. This is only one comparison; there are numerous others. The National Orchestra is, I feel, an asset to the community, but it is not up to world standards yet.

H.V.K. (Upper Hutt).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

S.A.W. (Fernhill): The articles you refer to are not easily accessible for most of our readers.

Salute to the Dying God (Wellington): Sorry, the quotation is too long. And letters should be confined to broadcasting matters or to topics raised in *The Listener*.

A. M. Crompton (Christchurch), Violet A. Roche (Wellington), and Mrs. M. Neill (Wanganui): Much appreciated.

Indignant (Wellington): Then you didn't listen at 9.0 a.m. on March 1, when a half-hour St. David's Day programme was played by that station. If you had been listening at 7.50 that morning, you would have heard something else well suited to the day. And on Sunday, March 4, at 11.30 a.m., Thomas L. Thomas was presented in a programme of Welsh songs, in recall of the day.

Elizabeth Schiessel (Takapuna): It is not unusual for brief cuts to be made if space requires them. The names added nothing to your argument.

Mrs. E.C.H. (Wellsford): The butterfly analogy should give you the key.

## "THE LISTENER'S" PRICE

AS from next week, the retail price of "The New Zealand Listener" will be sixpence. The increase was postponed as long as possible; but rising costs, especially for newsprint, made the change inevitable. Newsprint is our largest single item of expenditure. Since the war its price has climbed steeply, and every new increase adds thousands of pounds to our costs. Other costs have moved upwards, though not to the same extent. The price of newsprint is now four times what it was in 1939, and there is no early prospect of relief. Advertising brings in substantial revenue, but a gap remains between revenue and expenditure which cannot be closed without a larger return from sales. "The Listener" seeks no more than a modest profit. It must pay its way, however, to maintain and improve its service.

Postal subscriptions for delivery within New Zealand will now be 26/- for 12 months and 13/- for six months.