

themselves are good mysteries, if not especially baffling; but it is the sense of background, of the dinkum Australian character, and way of life, which gives them their particular appeal. I am glad, too, that the actor who plays Bonaparte speaks, as this well-educated man would, fine and pleasing English, and not that kind which some producers think essential to indicate native blood. Australian productions, so often imitations, or reproductions, of American soap-operas, rarely appeal to me, but this genuinely indigenous product, like the Chips Rafferty stories, brings a breezy whiff of Australian air across the Tasman.

—J.C.R.

### Bo Do Deo Do

IT was a happy thought of the NZBS to invite A. R. D. Fairburn to compare the recording of *The Boy Friend*, by Sandy Wilson, in *Sunday Showcase* last week. Mr. Fairburn, armed with a "sprig of rosemary and a damp handkerchief," took an avuncular and nostalgic look at the twenties, that enchanted vanished world of flappers and *jeunesse dorée* neck-to-knees, and cloche hats, which brash young Sandy has dared to make the terrain of his witty period piece. Mr. Fairburn enlivened the occasion with agreeable accounts of his inglorious battles with the Charleston, and other memories which evidently still retain their power to wound. Stimulated by his words, I found myself back in the twenties. Look, said Memory, at that hollow-eyed tot peering unseen at his parents and their friends successfully negotiating the Charleston; and what songs are those, vaguely stirring? The Stein Song? Bye-Bye Blackbird? And who is that stealing into a matinee of *The Jazz Singer*? Enough: although I have no rosemary, I shall soon need a handkerchief myself. And Mr. Wilson, although he was only six when the twenties ended, clearly understands the fragrance that so many people attach to that oddest of decades. He has caught its foibles with a wickedly accurate grasp, yet in doing so has touched a vein of genuine nostalgia, such as the charming waltz with which the preposterous Madame Dubonnet recalls an episode of her vivid youth. Sandy Wilson seems beautifully to have judged where absurdity ends and fragrance begins.

### Pons Asinorum

EVERYONE has one, I suppose. I never found the real one any difficulty. Though an unusually stolid geometrician, that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal fell into my lap without effort, even if after this early triumph my talent languished. But in music, my bridge of asses has somehow always been *The Magic Flute*. For years, I looked up at it, as to a mountain peak, which once scaled would afford a vista over the whole world of music. It was, therefore, with feverish intensity that I sat rigid in the back row of the gallery at Covent Garden in 1950, my knees against my chest, awaiting music's sublime chair-lift. I found it a shattering disappointment, and at the end of the first act slunk away, unable to stand another note. It seemed a colossal absurdity, an idiotic overblown farrago, on which Mozart had wilfully squandered his fabulous gift.

Further, not being a mason, except in restricted, private sense, I was imperious to its allegorical undertones. Yet my *pons asinorum* has at last been crossed, and the pontifex I have to thank is Herbert von Karajan, the Vienna Philharmonic and an illustrious cast, of whom Sena Juriac and Irmgard Seefried are only two. It was magnificent, music verily of the spheres, transporting and intoxicating, and I no longer care what it means, outside its own sublime terms. Mozart, incomparable Mozart, can conquer any third-rate litterateur like Schickaneder, reach anyone who will open his mind to the inexhaustible riches of his world of sound. It is unlikely that we will ever hear in this country a sublime performance of this opera. Still, we have this recording and I hope the NZBS will let us hear it many times. This old ass has crossed his bridge, and is more than content.

—B.E.G.M.

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