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## Radio Review

### NEW VOICES

THE theme of the moral problems of the idealist-cum-traitor scientist has been so over-worked by novelists recently that I didn't expect anything very new from Norman King's play *The Shadow of Doubt* (YA link). In fact, although the scientist turned out to be a clean potato after all, the plot followed the line more of a quiet thriller than of a psychological study, as Arthur Ross, the scientist, helped the police to trap the real traitor. But a literate script and some very sound acting made the play quite acceptable middle-brow listening. It was a pleasure to hear in the main roles of this Auckland studios production some voices whose impact had not been blunted by over-familiarity. The policy of the NZBS of using in radio plays the cast of visiting theatrical companies is a sensible one.

For this reason alone, it is to be regretted that we don't see more such companies. *The Boy Friend* cast, notably John Huson as Ross, and Richard Meikle as Frank, his friend, brought freshness to the script, and among better-known voices, Laurence Hepworth, as a dogged Scotland Yard man, made the strongest impression.

### Beyond Compere

WHAT a vast difference to the success of a musical programme the right presentation can make! I suspect that the numbing effect of periods of record after record comes at least as much from the announcer's impersonal statement of title and artist as from the canned items themselves. The enthusiasm, knowledge and personality of a "compere" (alas, there seems no more suitable word), can turn even indifferent material into an interesting session. Rex Sayers and Doug Laurenson handling the *Golden Age of Opera*, Henry Walter introducing his American folk songs, A. R. D. Fairburn ushering in *The Boy Friend* (ZB Sunday Showcase) with mock-nostalgic irony—these are a few recent samples of lively and intelligent presentation. On the other hand, the *Let's Get On With It* quarter-hour from 1YA, featuring Jennie Howard, described as a "British comedienne," seemed to me little short of disastrous. For those who like that sort of thing, Miss Howard's singing of ballads and musical comedy items would doubtless have its appeal. But her scraps of chatter and tired jokes gave a corny air to the whole programme. A technique effective on the revue stage suits the microphone not at all. I feel that Miss Howard would have been better served by a compere than by her own efforts.

—J.C.R.

### Last Concert

I AM happy to report that at Sir Bernard Heinze's last concert in Wellington the National Orchestra was at the top of its form. Only three works

were given, the Hamilton Harty version of Handel's *Royal Fireworks*, the Beethoven Triple Concerto, and the Sibelius Second Symphony. The Handel spanked along with all the proper fizz and sparkle, the strings were mellow, and the trumpets clean and precise. All very lively, invigorating, and wholesome. The Beethoven had as soloists three members of the Robert Masters Quartet. It is a seldom played work, and it is good to have heard it. Musically, it seems to me much inferior to the piano concertos; the first movement is wearily extended, and the last is commonplace. The second movement, characteristic of what a friend is pleased to call Beethoven's Salvation Army mood, had I thought a dark, noble gravity. The cello part is enormously difficult, and Muriel Taylor made a splendid job of it. Robert Masters, violin, made it clear how grateful to this work are his years of chamber playing; in long, intricate passages with the cello, the two instruments were always impeccably together. The piano, less spectacularly written for, was played with style and discretion by Kinloch Anderson. But the plum of the evening was undoubtedly Sibelius. This old giant of forest and snow, of vast empty landscapes, creates a world with which we feel much akin; we seem imaginatively to enter those alien, beautiful spaces with the same awe that those of us who have read Mr. Holcroft enter our forests and climb our mountains. The orchestra gave us a tone of great amplitude and richness, and the last movement, with its tormentingly delayed climax, until finally we were launched into the splendid sea of the last long tune, was the most exciting moment I have had in listening for a long time. What an error, though, to play that sugar sweet encore! Who wants to go to bed humming Boccherini?

### Snobs Corner

WE live in a strange world where nouns can be verbs, adjectives nouns, and anything at all, it seems, can be turned into a musical. I listened in *Sunday Showcase* to *The King and I*,

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

MOST of us will remember the Robert Masters Quartet from their previous visit here, but their present tour makes one conscious anew of the range of works available to such a group, by ringing the changes between the various combinations of the four instruments.

Their versatility has certainly been put to the test these last few weeks. They played, for instance (YC link), the Schumann Piano Quartet, a work dating from the same period as the Quintet, but very much less known or played: why, I wonder? There are fewer musical fireworks, admittedly, and perhaps more of an air of hard work about it; but the graceful melodies are there, the force and purpose of development, the incessant movement and the ingenious twists that are part and parcel of a major Schumann piece. Then there was Brahms's Piano Quartet in A, which takes itself rather more seriously, and invites its performers to do the same. Really, its inescapable, in spite of its bright major key; the Robert Masters Quartet fortunately didn't struggle against the tide, and there was a solid Germanic satisfaction in the result they attained, not without its soft lyricism when the moment was ripe.

One particular pleasure was their playing of the Beethoven Triple Concerto (YC link) with the National Orchestra. Faults were not many—the cello tended to be somewhat overpowered—but a general excellence of soloists and support was the chief matter for comment. Co-ordination of forces must be as hard in this Concerto as in any; but the Quartet's members, under the direction of Sir Bernard Heinze, made light of all the obvious articular difficulties, and at no juncture could one say the joint was out of time.

Alex Lindsay and Janetta McStay (NZBS) played the Mozart Sonata in B Flat, K.378, in as nice a piece of team and solo work as I have heard recently, with a clarity of touch and tone that any artists could be proud of. And as a late postscript, I should mention the Quartet by Walter Piston, played at their last recital by the La Salle Quartet; a modern work but euphonious, with a wealth of internal interest brought clearly to the notice of the ear—too carefully, if anything, but the effort wasn't wasted. No apology was made for the inclusion of such an unfamiliar piece, for none should be necessary: if such works have reached the repertoire of American groups, then there should be no reason for anyone else to exclude them.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 31, 1956.