

A SOUTH AFRICAN TOUR

Sir.—Thank you very much indeed for the delightful account in your current issue of an interview between your representative and myself. This will undoubtedly have contributed greatly to the interest taken in my programmes for the New Zealand Broadcasting Service and for the C.A.S. in Auckland. I am glad, also, that it leaves your readers in no doubt as to my appreciation of the wonderful adventure which this tour is proving to be. Incidentally, the "almost perpendicular roads" so far encountered have been among the most exhilarating experiences, accompanied as they are by magnificent scenery.

May I, however, be permitted to express my regret at the woefully unbalanced picture which I would seem to convey of my impressions on a recent tour in South Africa; since this is represented by one sad little episode, which was brought about by the rulings in that country concerning native and coloured people.

I cannot be so unjust and ungrateful to South Africa as to make no attempt to restore the perspective. The situation is, I believe, far too complex to be subject to the understanding of anyone who has not lived in its midst for some considerable time; and certainly not to the judgment of a short-term visitor such as myself—one who accepted and enjoyed to the full the marvellous kindness and constant hospitality of its people.

DESIREE MACEWAN
(Wellington)

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir.—Mr. L. D. Austin is a prejudiced humbug if he fails to recognise that both our Broadcasting Service and *The Listener* cater more for him and a handful of musical snobs than for the general listener. The long-haired minority have four YC stations grinding out glutinous gloom continuously, thus ensuring that there is no real alternative programme to the YA's chatter and the ZB's detergent drama. Your well-meant but often unreliable "Highlights" feature graphically illustrates this. Unless it can be shown that jazz is harmful, and not merely distasteful to some, the Minister of Broadcasting is in no conflict with his portfolio of Education if he satisfies an obvious demand for this type of entertainment. There is already a tendency for the Broadcasting Service to improve our minds rather than entertain. Light music and variety would top a preference poll today, the same as it did twenty years ago, and a return to the staggered block diagram which followed that vote is long overdue.

The publicity recently given to jazz in *The New Zealand Listener* should be welcomed, for you have long been ashamed to feature light music in any detail. Recitals of opera and the hackneyed classical deadbeats are shown in full on the programme pages, but excellent local light entertainment such as *Three's Company*, the Gil Dech Orchestra, and the John McKenzie Quartet are not "nice" enough to have the individual items mentioned. Recently I stayed at home to listen to *Three's Company* from 2YA, only to find that it was a repeated recording of a programme broadcast from 4YA two months before. And why should the items in "Morning Concert" be given in detail any more than those of "Music While You Work"?—only because you have been intimidated by the noisy few.

Since the last word has been pronounced on jazz by our Hutt Valley oracle, I shall do the same for classical music. "Good" music consists of a series of groups of tones synthesized under

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rigid mechanical rules by musicians who were ignoramuses compared with the veriest amateur of today. We can hear more excellently performed classical music in a week than Mozart, Bach, Beethoven and the rest heard in all their lifetimes. Conventional music has been composed by electronic machines, but I doubt if any mechanical brain could predict the next decade's development in jazz, for the latter is the living musical entertainment of the people, in contrast to the dead dogma of a closed-shop union of tinkle-tinkle witch-doctors. The silly logic of these charlatans is seen at work each Easter, when dance music of the 18th and 19th centuries is fitting entertainment for Good Friday, while the 20th century's folk idiom is beyond the pale.

VARIAN J. WILSON
(Christchurch)

Sir.—It is a relief to find L. D. Austin (*Listener*, August 17) expressing in such strong terms what so many people are feeling about the deterioration in musical standards over the air in New Zealand. When the Service first started the NZBS had a unique opportunity to influence and raise the level of public taste by presenting good wholesome entertainment, musical and otherwise. Instead, it has fostered and encouraged the desire for cheap, sentimental rubbish and listeners have been apt pupils. The serials are as bad, if not worse, with the accent on murder and crime.

The policy, too, now seems to be to turn all stations into hybrids: good and bad all jumbled up together—an unholy alliance, perpetually pleasing some and exasperating others in see-saw fashion, all the time. Of course, *The Listener* reflects this downward tendency and gives the impression of a rather cheap jazz-sports weekly. The English *Listener*, on the other hand, is always dignified and never offends against good taste.

I would suggest that if we turned from the hybrid principle to exactly the opposite, and rigidly separated stations according to different levels of taste for all types of programme, then some degree of peace and contentment might be achieved for everybody.

D. M. MIRAMS (Timaru)

"HORI AND DAD"

Sir.—In his comments on the radio item "Hori and Dad" your correspondent J.McL.H. suggests that the Hori and Wiremu of my *Maori Tales* series of some 28 years ago were "stupidly cunning." While it is sometimes salutary to have one's youthful indiscretions brought to mind, it is disagreeable to have them distorted. That the Maori stories I dispensed were in good fun and good taste was plain from the manner in which they were received, particularly by the Maoris themselves. "Hare Hongi" contributed to later issues and Oriwa Haddon designed the cover of the third book. James Cowan, great student and lover of the Maori, wrote to me and warmly commended the *Tales*. At the same time he admitted that his best laugh came from a typographical error which had perverted a gracious compliment in Maori into a bawdy insult. Fortunately this error would not have been apparent to anyone but a Maori student.

I do not know of the radio number referred to by your correspondent. I must now listen in case there is any infringement of copyright! I would remind K.McL.H. that there is such a creation as "the stage Maori," just as there is "the stage Irishman." Although only re-

motely related to the living subject they do add to the laughter of the day. And how we needed a laugh in the dark days of the Depression, when my *Maori Tales* were abounding. Over 60,000 copies were sold at the depression price of 2/- per copy—and illustrated!

I do not like your correspondent's reference to "the poor Maori." There never has been, nor, please God, will there ever be "the poor Maori." No—the bountiful Maori—rich in goodwill, sentiment, and humour.

PAT LAWLOR (Wellington).

LIVING IN FLATS

Sir.—I do not think the theory put forward in the article "Family Health in Flats and Tenements" (August 10) accords with the facts. The tenement flat has been the accepted form of housing in the cities of Scotland probably since the industrial revolution. A rehousing drive thirty-odd years ago, moving people to houses with gardens in the outskirts, "broke the patriarchal family system and scattered the family unit geographically" without producing symptoms. "Mother emotional breakdown" was, of course, unknown, but "mother employment" quickly produces this modern malady.

Scotland has always lived in flats, England is now adopting flats, New Zealand has no flats and yet their social problems are almost identical. Juvenile delinquency alone reveals the emotional instability of the family in New Zealand now, without the "potent factor" of flats.

This kind of reasoned nonsense can do infinite harm and should not be given prominence. It merely diverts our attention from the real cause of our ills and so delays the curing of them.

LILIAN LEITCH (Auckland).

"MUD TO THE AXLES"

Sir.—There was one fallacy in the excellent broadcast by John Pascoe, "Mud to the Axles—a Journey from Wellington to Auckland in 1912," and that was the final assumption that conditions on the central highway are better today.

The introduction to this talk in the series *They Went the Unknown Ways*, suggested that anyone who chose the highway through Huntville, Taihape and the King Country was definitely misguided; and that the farmers and local residents were being caused hardship. How history repeats itself!

This route is still the Cinderella of New Zealand highways. Mossburn-Te Anau road, which carries little but tourist traffic, and that for only part of the year, has had its corners straightened, its dips filled and its surface tarsealed; but the road from Wellington to Auckland, and through the centre of the North Island still has all the hazards mentioned in 1912—yes, even the "MUD, spelt with capital letters!" The sharp bends, the abominable surface, the bridges of restricted capacity—how well we know them all. Truly the powers-that-be have gone "unknown ways" so far as we are concerned!

C. EMSLIE (Mangaweka).

THE ROMANTIC COMPOSER

Sir.—Some of your columnists are conducting a rather pathetic, "baying at the moon" crusade against the romantic composer. Writing about Schumann "Sebastian" says, "One gathers that there are people who actually approve of his music. If he hadn't married and died in such romantic circumstances one doubts whether he would be quite as

well known." The world's greatest concert artists and the world's leading publishers have thought fit to admire and accept Schumann's compositions. To suggest that they were influenced by his state of connubial bliss or any other personal peculiarities is manifestly absurd.

One cannot imagine any teacher of music arousing the interest of a favourite pupil by reciting particulars of the selected composer's love life. On second thoughts, when one remembers the romantic capabilities of some of the better-known composers, the idea has a certain fascination.

M.T.D. (Christchurch).

MUSICAL PROGRAMMES

Sir.—From time to time there have appeared in the public press complaints about the quality of musical programmes received from the New Zealand Broadcasting Service. May I submit yet another? The general position is that many early morning people preparing to go to work switch on their wireless sets at considerable volume in order that they may be apprised of the time at frequent intervals without having to dash out of the bedroom or bathroom to look at the clock. For this convenience, however, they have often to pay dearly. It would be interesting to learn whether early morning programme announcers have carte blanche in the choice of records played. I have been informed that what we have to listen to, the yowling and drooling of Hollywood crooners, male and female, with equally unpleasant orchestral noises, is quite popular. This I can hardly believe, but, if so, then the lovers of such tripe should be educated out of it. After all, one of the purposes of a national broadcasting service is to supply entertainment that enlightens and not debases its audiences.

May I also deprecate the large and growing demand for, or, more probably, supply of "harmonica" items? In my early days this was an instrument of torture used by small boys to drive their parents round the bend and was known as a mouth organ. Granted that this instrument has, through the years, been improved to some extent, and that some of those modern mouth organ maestros are now soaring into the rarified atmosphere of Bach, Beethoven, etc., one still can't shake off the uneasy thought that, as the gifted performer approaches the mike to gulp out his version of, say, a Brandenburg Concerto, he is pulling his instrument out of his trouser pocket and tapping it vigorously against the palm of his hand to get rid of the crumbs.

It may be that I am hypercritical. The medium of my own modest musical talent is the Scottish Highland bagpipe. I am, therefore, in a class that can appreciate only the finest and purest of instrumental and vocal music.

T.R.N. (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Douglas Cameron (Morrisville): Full details soon.

Sorry for Good Singers (Wellington): (1) Nothing unusual in judging different types of voices together; see the class schedule of any competitions society. (2) The judges have been chosen for their first-rate professional qualifications.

R. H. Woodward (Picton): Sorry; impossible. But you will be able to hear all section winners in a series of broadcasts over 12 weeks.

C.E.T. (Whakatane): A borderline case. Sorry.

D.D.L. (Whangarei): Many thanks. They will not be lowered.

R.J.I. (Onehunga): Because they keep themselves abreast of world affairs better than most people; but they number only about one in five of the commentators heard over a full year.