

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

FOLLOWING the National Orchestra in its southward pilgrimage, we have managed to extract some plums from an otherwise rather unrewarding week. For instance, there was Maurice Till's playing of the Khachaturian Piano Concerto (YC link), deservedly one of the most popular modern concertos: it has verve, it has energy, exciting rhythm and even (spare our long hairs) some overtones of jazz. Just the thing, in fact, for a Prom or Youth Concert—it was one of the latter on this occasion, and went down very well. I don't think the plaudits were only for the composer of the Sabre Dance, but for the work and its playing. Mr. Till made a fine job of the solo part, with precise phrasing that interfered not at all with the lilt of the syncopations or the wistful lure of the slow movement; and the orchestra worked harmoniously with him, neither drowning the piano nor fading out altogether. In short, it was a performance which went as far as possible in breaking the sound barrier between artists and audience.

The Christchurch Harmonic Society repeated its success of last year in *Belshazzar's Feast*, a thrilling work if ever there was one. The choir showed no signs of becoming stale, Ninian Walden was at his resonant best in the

baritone solos, and the huge orchestral and band forces gave the impression of controlled power which was unleashed at intervals with stunning effect. This is certainly New Zealand's most successful and ambitious choral venture as far as I am concerned.

I felt that Schubert's Sixth Symphony, which formed the filling of this particular concert sandwich, was a trifle thinly spread. Not a major symphonic effort in comparison with the later ones, this was a light-hearted but light-weight piece, demanding and getting no special emphasis or enthusiasm. I must admit that I was beginning to find in it something of tedium towards the end, however delightful the themes, and however well played.

I tuned in with some justifiable misgiving to the so-called opera *The Vanishing Island* (YA link), produced by the Moral Rearmament Movement. The misgiving was occasioned by having seen the libretto, and the justification was quickly forthcoming; the script was of a Gilbertian doggerel type, though not as witty or humorous, and the music duly proved to be of musical comedy type, again sterile as far as artistry and originality go. However admirable the sentiments expressed, one could wish for more admirable means of expression.

RADIO REVIEW

Roses All the Way

WHAT is the purpose, I wonder, of such documentaries as the one on the Special School at Otekaikie, heard in the National Women's Session? Is it no more than to give free publicity to the institution? Not that I grudge the Child Welfare Division a chance to publicise its work, which is too often misunderstood; but must the programme stay always at an elementary level, not to say sentimental? If I say that the picture of Otekaikie sounded to me a little too rosy, it isn't because I know anything about the school there. I don't. But I have in the past helped to paint similar rosy pictures of other institutions and I know the technique. To delve deeper, it would be necessary that a programme should not take the institution wholly at the valuation of the people who run it. It would be necessary to find some independent person qualified to ask pertinent questions, so that listeners could be informed of some of the fundamental problems of caring for children in an institution, and of how much was being done to tackle them. If the picture which then emerged was just as rosy, so much the better for everyone.

High Country Legend

I KNOW an elderly man who has lived and worked all his life in the South Island high country, and who has no great opinion of Peter Newton's books. "Musterers!" he says, "heroes! Huh!" In spite of the scepticism of the inside man most of us feel there is something special about men who, like a shepherd in the NZBS documentary, *High Country*, express their contempt for mountaineers, who merely walk up to the top of a hill and down again. It is a sign of the spread of the legend that this feature, heard in the National Programme on a recent Sunday, was produced in Auckland. With the help of recordings made in the Mackenzie Country it gave a vivid and lucid exposition of the seasonal routine which this rugged country has evolved and which is not exactly duplicated, so far as I know, anywhere else in the world. This documentary would make a good radio export. The high country has inspired some good books, from the days of Butler and Lady Barker on, and some good radio features and films. Maybe an Amos from among the herdmen of Tekoa will yet descend to the plains to convict our cities. Maybe it is already happening.

—R.D.McE.

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