

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—In his letter to *The Listener* (September 7) Mr. Varian Wilson betrays his feelings of inferiority by the manner in which he defends what he calls "the living music of the people." He very patently feels it needs defending, which suggests that it cannot stand on its own, and his defence is conducted in an intemperate orgy of name-calling which will probably lose the support for his cause of the people who share his views but do not feel inferior about them.

Then another intemperate person, Mrs. D. M. Mirams, accuses *The Listener* of becoming a "rather cheap jazz-sports weekly," and goes on to say that "the English *Listener*, on the other hand, is always dignified and never offends against good taste," which, of course, is an evasive way of saying that Mrs. Mirams knows what good taste is. It makes me wonder whether she holds the views she does because she wishes to be considered dignified and to possess good taste (whatever it is) and all the pompous self-approving correctness which goes with it.

Here, I'm sure, lies the truth. Neither is so interested in their respective brands of music as their letters superficially proclaim. They are more interested in grinding their axes; the one for the common people, the other for dignity. Everything Mrs. Mirams says, both stated and implied, proclaims her support for what is considered nice and acceptable in genteel society. Mr. Wilson displays the shortness of temper so characteristic of people who are sick and tired of being treated like a speck of dust on the superior one's immaculate business suit, and by his very loss of temper confirms the nice person's opinion that he is superior to the herd.

But all the same, both deserve congratulations for bothering to write their letters at all. It is the people who are quite content to concern themselves with events which affect them only in the most direct manner, who fail to realise, or are too lazy to realise, that the radio incessantly thumping sentimental pap into their slothful minds, newspapers pushing emotion-laden, "authoritative" news down their throats, off whose tongues such clichés as "they (some remote, almighty authority accessible to them only through the propaganda mediums) know best" or "it's not for us to decide," and so on, who ought to be berated.

Maybe specialisation in vocation nowadays is necessary. From these two correspondents' letters one feels that specialisation in musical taste is equally essential. Why? Can not these intolerant defenders of their music each find something acceptable in, say, the Concerto for Clarinet, composed and played by Artie Shaw, who has also played clarinet solos with dignified orchestras; or in the Tchaikovsky originals from which many of our popular tunes are adapted and improved upon so that they have become living musical entertainment of the people?

The living music makers of the people do not share Mr. Wilson's views about "tones synthesised under rigid mechanical rules by musicians who were ignoramuses compared with the veriest amateurs of today." They are so in agreement with such ignoramuses as Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky that they pirate their music and convert it into three-minute ditties in which the word love and all the heart-rending predicaments stemming from this state, are reiterated until emotional dishevelment must, one feels, result. If we believe Mr. Wilson, masochism, heart-break, and adolescents around juke-

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

boxes are factors of living reality and just because of that require glorification. I hope he is wrong. Stan Freberg puts the contemporary pop tune in its place with his amusing satirical parodies. He is a breath of humour in the world of pop-tune heartbreak and serious music's remoteness.

J. MICHAEL D'ATH (Hamilton).

Sir,—May I be among the first to congratulate the NZBS and *The Listener* on an excellent balance in musical entertainment and verbal coverage of same. I am a staunch admirer of both classical music and the best in jazz, such as is presented in the VOA broadcasts over 4YA.

Musical bigots such as L. D. Austin and Varian Wilson miss a great deal of enjoyment from this art in their failure to appreciate the qualities of both forms. Few people are likely to derive equal pleasure from both "good" music and jazz, but no one is justified in exalting his own preference to the total exclusion of the other. Jazz is not necessarily a cheap and degrading form of music, any more than classical music is necessarily "glutinous gloom." I am thoroughly weary of these one-eyed attacks, and would suggest that their perpetrators take a few badly needed lessons in tolerance.

I feel that the NZBS does the best possible job in providing musical entertainment for all tastes. My only regret is that there are not enough highbrows in this country to warrant an all-day programme over the YC stations.

ALISON WILLIAMS (Dunedin).

WHAT SPRING MEANS TO ME

Sir,—Why all this fuss about the spring? Writers in your symposium, despite their gambolling, sounded, I thought, a trifle glum. Even you, August Symposiarch, didn't exactly (if I may say) spark. Spring is a many-clichéd thing. God wot. Can we afford to play with it? Punch gets away with it, but English people love the spring. Hey ding-a-ding! Quite obviously we do not. It means we start to save for Christmas, hope that the fuel will suffice, and mess about the yacht, scraping and painting—got to have the old craft nice to put down—oh, yes, there's cherry bloom, of course, a filagree of green upon the oaks, the scent of freezias and violets, and laughing girls in town, a high wind blowing, sun-flashes, rain that soaks. That sort of thing—nothing to make a song about nor get facetious, see! For maybe She (the Goddess who presides) doesn't appreciate such spoof. Yes, primavera! it may be so. Sweet Botticelli is your proof. So, Sir, if you should have a summer symposium, an autumn olla podrida and winter wassailing in mind, I bid you treat those seasons tenderly or they may stand upon their dignity and bring a spate of trouble on our kind.

J.C.T. (Remuera).

Sir,—Could you support one more opinion on this subject? We are all so anxious not to be taken too seriously that G. leF. Y. alone among your contributors has conveyed in words that first fine careless rapture. But why in a far country? It is here. At any rate, I would rather have spring in New Zealand than in the Antarctic. The fault, dear Editor, is not in our seasons, but in ourselves, that we are kiwi-blind. At twenty-one we would not have been so. We are too busy, too encompassed in noise, to pause and know that "Lo, among the grasses Young September passes." I wish I could quote the whole of Enid Bowie's lovely, unschooled

poem. Whether or not Christchurch is more English than the English, new life awakened in its grasses when those words were penned, and will do so each September so long as grasses blow and birds sing. Whether it be the first cuckoo or the wise thrush or the little grey warbler matters not, so long as it expresses soft sounds as at the dawning of the world, sudden discovery, swift joy and renewal of life. Nature knows that the best things of the past are worth renewing, if not in the same form then in another. You have only to look at the new green leaves on the lopped willows by the Avon to realise that. Why must we pretend to be like stuffed cabbages that do not care about these things? We do not deserve the loveliness of spring.

The illustrations to the symposium were delightful—the kites, the absurdly bounding lambs, the early birds; the tender new potatoes and caterpillars and lovers; the springing paint-pot, the car springs and the thoughtful Mooloo in Solemn, purposeful procession: all had the forward look.

ANOTHER M.B. (Christchurch).

THIRD PROGRAMME WANTED

Sir,—There must be many people who, like myself, work during the early hours of the morning, and on coming home at about 9.0 a.m., like to turn on the radio and relax for about half an hour, with a cup of coffee, before starting off again on some other job.

We have the choice of listening to either the Correspondence School, or Aunt Daisy's morning session. After playing at being a little tugboat (chug! chug!! chug!!!) for about two months, and being alternately three kings and a little pig, I changed over to Aunt Daisy. Unfortunately, I am of the wrong sex to enjoy her morning session to the fullest extent.

Would it not be possible to put some other station on the air, which can be received well in Wellington? I am sure that many people would appreciate such a move very much.

H.G.F. (Kelburn).

"THE VANISHING ISLAND"

Sir,—The broadcast over all YA stations at 9.15 on Sunday, September 9 of the musical play *The Vanishing Island* was one of exceptional interest. May I congratulate the NZBS on a most excellent programme? Not only was the continuous listening to a single programme a rare experience, but the play itself, in its music and spoken material, must have left a deep impression on thoughtful people.

I, for one, would very much like to hear *The Vanishing Island* repeated.

N. R. PRICKETT (Featherston).

Sir,—I would be interested to know how it came about that one and a half hours of unadulterated rubbish in the form of the musical play *The Vanishing Island* occupied a prominent place in all YA stations last Sunday night.

The play itself was something less than a third-rate musical comedy. The plot was absurd, even for a musical comedy, the lyrics at times pure doggerel and the music very ordinary. In fact, as a piece of entertainment, it had no merit at all. Thus, it would hardly have been broadcast as entertainment. Reluctantly, then, I must conclude that it was broadcast as a piece of propaganda.

Is the M.R.A. to be the only favoured "ideology"? Or was the play broadcast because it had been performed before

U Nu and the heads of Governments of 25 other nations whose populations total more than 1,000,000,000?

The Oxford Group movement, or M.R.A. as it is now called, offers a sort of panacea for the ills of the modern world and therein lies the danger to a gullible public. To broadcast its propaganda gives it an air of official approval and therefore it is to be hoped that there will be no repetition of this third-rate musical.

CANTABRIGIENSIS
(Christchurch).

Sir,—Thank you for the excellent broadcast of *The Vanishing Island* on Sunday, September 9. I feel sure that many people listening to the play would find something which was not only refreshing but creative, too. I was particularly impressed by the music and clarity of the production. It gave me hope for the world today.

JOHN B. MACEY (Christchurch).

APARTHEID

Sir,—Mrs. Sarah G. Millin, whose husband was a brilliant Judge of the Supreme Court, is a South African writer internationally known. Among her numerous works are *Rhodes*—a Book Society choice and filmed; *General Smuts*, a biography authorised and approved by him while he was still alive; and *The People of South Africa*. About an hour after I had listened to Mr. de Villier's broadcast expounding the South African Government's apartheid policy, I was reading Mrs. Millin's autobiography, *The Measure of My Days*, and came across this:

The essential Afrikaners had not moved since they had called Smuts "The Apostle of a Kaffir State." On their native policy the Boers had never, in three hundred years, moved. Apartheid began the day the Dutch set foot in South Africa. It continued as the Boers trekked East, and the Blacks West. Upon a Black Manifesto the Boers had gone north a hundred and twenty years ago. Upon Apartheid they had built their republics. Upon every quarrel with the British and upon the Boer War itself there had been a Black Manifesto. The inequality of the natives was one of the things the Boers had insisted on when Joseph Chamberlain came to negotiate with them after the war. . . . In 1948 Dr. Malan came out with the Black Manifesto of Black Manifestoes—in short, the basic policy of Rhodes and Smuts, of the Rhodesians, of all British settlers in Africa, of the British South African territories that, for their part, admitted no white men—Apartheid, Separation. . . .

Only Smuts could have said: "The war of the freedom of South Africa has been fought, not only for the Boers, but for the entire people of South Africa. . . . When only seven years later he devised the union of the two old Boer Republics and the two British colonies, few besides Smuts could have honestly felt that here was "a union not of top-dog and under-dog, but of brothers . . . under the majesty of the British Flag." Smuts did not foresee—nor Balfour, when he spoke of "this most wonderful issue out of all the horrors of war and difficulties of peace"—that the British colonies were thus delivered, under democracy and the rule of numbers, into the hands of the old Boer Republics."

In my judgment apartheid is basically wrong, because it is founded on fear; fear of reprisals by Africans for treatment they have received at the hands of white men. This fear springs from the guilty consciences of the white people. A policy of sops to keep the Africans quiet while perpetuating the domination of Africans by a white minority is not the right solution. There should be announced a policy of educational and social development for the Africans which envisages a time when a government of cultured Africans could be trusted to rule and administer the Union as efficiently, and with even more justice, than any white Government has done.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).