

AN AMERICAN SUMS UP

Sir.—I have restrained numerous temptations to brandish lively swords with your correspondents and contributors, and to introduce new (and perhaps facetious) battles myself. However, now that my time in New Zealand as an American Fulbright student draws to an end, permit me to comment seriously on how the radio programmes and *The Listener* seem to me.

The former are undoubtedly impressive for the wide variety of tastes and purposes, despite the small population catered for. I personally agree with those critics who would like to see longer continuous periods allotted to the YC talks. Currently they are limited to the bare outlines or superficialities of the subject, but certainly the worthy speakers and topics you select could (and deserve to!) sustain listeners' interest for more than 10 minutes. These informative talks are excellent; let them be better by giving the speakers more time—there are plenty of hours remaining for the enjoyable selection of evening music.

The Listener, as a source of cultural information, outright criticism, and lively exchange of ideas is, I must admit, my favourite New Zealand periodical. Criticism is often on matters of emphasis, and, anyway, seems sometimes to lead to improvement. (But WHY the red ink? Are sales increased? If so, I'll approve, for it should be in more homes.)

I would be delighted if, back home, I could turn on an ordinary radio, in every part of the country, and expect to receive from the multitudinous stations operating the quality which the National links offer for daytime and evening listening. Our State-affiliated stations are quite good, but they are few and not powerful. Our commercial stations do undoubtedly have some top quality programmes, but sponsors are usually concerned with sales, and so we "would-be listeners" more often scurry off to "live features" or to a good book. I have never listened to the radio so much in my life, by planned choice, as I have in New Zealand.

YVONNE Z. PAINTER (Oratia).

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—I have read every issue of *The Listener* since the first (and the old *Radio Record* before that) and cannot agree with the charges of snobishness which have been made against it. It caters fairly well for the average reader interested in music, opera, drama, plays and the arts, and has a New Zealand flavour, in sharp distinction to so many of the magazines in circulation, with the exception of the correspondence columns. It is here that the charge of snobishness has foundation because of the policy of refusing to publish criticisms of the NZBS whilst at the same time giving unlimited space to a few correspondents to conduct arguments on academic subjects of no general interest.

For this reason I was very pleased to read the letter written by Mr. V. J. Wilson in a recent issue, which, although I do not agree with all he says, contained some pertinent thoughts relative to the Service. Mr. Wilson makes the common mistake of confusing jazz and music by modern composers. Jazz is not music. By jazz I mean the stuff of the type broadcast by "Turntable." It is discordant, even obscene, noises made by musical instruments. It has no melody, no rhythm, no expression—it has only time, noise and thump. It is not "modern" or new, being merely the addition by Americans of other instruments to the drums used by primitive

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peoples for ages. It is meaningless except to the extent that a noisy bulldozer personifies the machine age. All the talk about understanding its "meaning" is so much poppycock. It has no more meaning than the bulldozer engine which is an advertisement for the technical ability of its constructor and performer.

I agree with Mr. Wilson that much of the music of the old masters is just as bad in its way. It is formless, aimless and tremendously dull. Admittedly it is, like jazz, well constructed, but so is the prison, and just as unattractive and dull.

The broadcasting people cannot be brought to realise that all music which is dull is not "good" music, and that good music does not necessarily have to be a dirge. This is the problem which confronts us with the family radio. So often the only alternative to the rubbish of the commercial stations is the dull "classical" music of 2YA and 2YC, the devotees of which are just as much labouring to "understand" it as are those of jazz—and just as snobbish about it.

J. S. LYNCH (Wanganui).

(If we refuse to publish criticisms of the NZBS, it seems odd that Mr. Lynch should be able to refer to a letter which "contained some pertinent thoughts relative to the Service." We do not print all criticisms; neither do we print all letters received on other subjects: there is not enough space. But we print a wide selection, and we do our best to see that specific complaints and suggestions are passed on and answered.—Ed.)

Sir,—May I add my few words to the many already poured forth on the subject of jazz? Music, as do the other arts, appeals to the emotions. Anyone who considers such matters knows that in some wonderful way a beautiful flower, a scene, a picture, a poem, a sound, yes, and even the majesty and beauty and rhythm of a good piece of music, can and does lift one spiritually. Sometimes one seems to contact Heaven itself. Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty, sang Keats. "There is no religion higher than Truth," said a great teacher.

Now what effect has jazz on the emotions? The country of its origin tells us of no good record along this line. From its own reports we read of a mounting crime rate, the over-emphasis on and degradation of sex and the young drug addicts. Even our own New Zealand dare not criticise this too sharply. Jazz with its broken and maddening rhythm (the dance drums of primitive and not so primitive races give an example of stirring up the sexual passions), its dissonances, its close har-

monies, appeal to the lower emotions. For that reason alone it is bad—it pushes one down instead of raising one up. It is a steady drugging and poisoning of the emotions.

Of course there are those who listen and enjoy jazz intellectually; but the intellect without emotion is cold. It prides itself on understanding the ultra modern in music, painting and sculpture. But does it? Not without the emotions too.

I do not think the golden age of music is over, as one writer suggests. Music and the arts will revive at a higher level when the emotional turmoil of the two great wars has worn itself out and jangled nerves have become soothed and whole again. The Plan for our earth is to evolve to perfection. The Americans may boast of a "new culture," but all cultures are not of necessity good, and jazz as being good and helpful is decidedly questionable.

MARTINA MASON (Wellington).

SPEAKERS AND ORATORS

Sir,—"Sundowner's" comment on the rate of speaking is interesting. I suggest that Lloyd George's recording so slowly in 1934 was purely a matter of age—he was in his seventies. I several times reported him and would be surprised to hear that he did less than 100 words a minute. As Churchill said, he had a beautiful speaking voice and he spoke the King's English without the slightest accent (an NZBS production some months ago had him cast tragically as a stage Welshman).

Asquith was by nature a slow, deliberate speaker, always mindful of the printed word, by which Victorians placed more store than they would in these days of immediate access to audiences of millions. They were more after literature for posterity to read than oratory on the spot.

Has broadcasting of Parliament speeded up the average rate of speech? For many years Sir Joseph Ward was considered our fastest speaker. He was reputed to attain, and even to maintain, 150 words a minute. Certainly he hesitated rarely, but he was prone to repetition and adding unnecessary phrases.

GUY H. SCHOLEFIELD (Wellington).

GOLDEN AGE OF OPERA

Sir,—Your contributor J.C.R. is quite right. *The Golden Age of Opera* was one of the most popular of YC programmes, and it will be missed. I do not, however, hope, as he does, that someone will have another idea by

which we will hear some of the discs again. I most earnestly hope that the session will be brought out of retirement, that instead of compromise we will have the same session continued, the mixture of good, bad and indifferent as before.

I understand that the session had to be closed because of pressure of work on those enthusiasts who put the programmes together. It should surely be a matter of concern to senior officials of the NZBS that they are unable to arrange schedules which will permit their staffs to satisfy a very real and intelligent demand from the public. It should be pointed out that the programme was an Auckland one, but the audience was national; and that in no other programme has there been such a valuable participation by listeners who made their collections available to the country at large.

It will be a reproach to the Service if *The Golden Age* stays off the air. It would, moreover, be fitting in these admittedly unhappy circumstances to have the older artists appear again in spite of the supposed end of their careers. After all, they seldom hesitated to come out of retirement in response to popular demand.

KENDRICK SMITHYMAN (Auckland).

(The series is to be reorganised and presented nationally. As programme sources are not unlimited, recordings previously played will be heard again, with new ones.—Ed.)

MR. JOHN RITCHIE

Sir,—On page 27 of your October 12 issue there is this statement: "John Ritchie, who was music lecturer at Canterbury University College, recently left New Zealand to study composition in America."

Mr. Ritchie is senior lecturer in music at Canterbury University College. He has not left New Zealand to study composition in America. On refresher leave for six months, he is visiting various musical institutions in America and Great Britain, meeting a number of overseas musicians, and observing certain musical activities and developments. He returns in March, 1957.

VERNON GRIFFITHS (Christchurch).

(The information was accepted in good faith from a reliable source, and we are sorry that it did not give the facts exactly as Dr. Griffiths has stated them.—Ed.)

MINGINUI SCHOOLS' MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sir,—At the beginning of part 1 of this programme it was stated that Mr. McCracken spent a week preparing the children for their concert.

I feel that it is only fair to all persons concerned to point out the error of this statement; in fact, I spent only about three and a half hours rehearsing with the children, who had been well grounded in their songs before I arrived. G. A. MCCracken (Ardmore).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Music Lover (Wellington): More stations on the air, more programmes, more choice—a good formula, but incomplete. It's necessary to add, "And more to pay."

F. K. Tucker (Gisborne): The time given is the standard time for the end of Parliamentary broadcasts. It is virtually impossible to arrange YA-YC programmes so that each station can always resume its own precisely at that time without interrupting a transmission. The change-over is therefore made at the first convenient moment; and the interim broadcast of the same programme by both stations is a means to that end.

Ima Hand (Waiouru): Much appreciated. J.W.B. (Whangarei): Information was given in our issue of September 7.

Judith Terry (Auckland): The programmes will not be repeated.

NEW CONDUCTOR FOR NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

"AS the Broadcasting Service is about to call for applications for the post of conductor of the National Orchestra," said the Minister in Charge of Broadcasting (Hon. R. M. Algie) last week-end, "I feel that I should give the public some notice of what is to be done. With his very kind consent, Mr. James Robertson's appointment has been extended from its normal expiry date next August until a date nearer the end of the year, enabling him to complete the 1957 concert season and hand over at a convenient time to his successor."

"We shall follow a procedure much the same as served very well three years ago. The position will be widely advertised immediately in New Zealand and overseas and the closing date will allow full opportunity to musicians within and beyond the Commonwealth to apply. The appointment will be for two years."

Arrangements, Mr. Algie went on, would be made for the interview of applicants in London, in Australia and if necessary in other centres and for the setting up of a committee of advice here to make a final recommendation.

"This is not the occasion," said Mr. Algie, "to pay Mr. Robertson the tribute which he has earned, but I may just add that his work for the National Orchestra in particular and generally for music in New Zealand has set us a difficult problem. We are setting out to find someone who will do as well or better, and we shall be fortunate if we succeed."