



## Kiwi Spoken Here

SEIZING the timely topic on the wing, the National Women's Discussion Panel, heard in *Feminine Viewpoint* last week (from Dunedin this time) set themselves to talk about New Zealand speech, and to try to answer the question: Is there anything wrong with the New Zealand accent? This was a very friendly, even matey, session, with a good deal of cross-talk and innocent merriment. Several solid commonsensical things came out of it—an exploding of the fallacy that New Zealanders speak "better" English than the English. The distinction between a dialect and slovenly speech, comments on the self-consciousness of the Kiwi

about individuality in speech, and his instinct for conformity. I felt, however, that the discussion was to some extent hampered by the absence of an academic phonetician to give an accurate definition of Standard English. Modified Standard and dialects, and thus save the beating about the bush that followed upon one member's "What's wrong with the New Zealand dialect, anyhow?" But this session will remain memorable for one of the most ingenious explanations I have heard for New Zealand speech—that so many have dentures that they are afraid to open their mouths lest they lose them! You know, there might be something in it.

## Mozart as Novelist?

OWEN JENSEN'S Mozart Bicentenary programmes (1YC on Fridays), which are just drawing to an end after some months' run, have given me the most consistently enjoyable listening of any 1956 session. As complete a revelation of the diversity and depth of Mozart's genius as possible, they have gained immensely from Mr. Jensen's lively, unaffected and thoroughly well-informed presentation. Last week, as a prelude to the ending, we heard the first of three talks by Antony Alpers on "Mozart as Novelist." My curiosity was aroused by the title, but not satisfied by the first talk. It is impossible to judge Mr. Alpers's thesis on what was really a broad introduction, but I felt that he did not justify his use of the term "novelist." His case, that in Mozart's operas we find an embodiment of the new man-centred humanism, and a shedding of the impersonality of earlier music, seemed somewhat over-simplified. Surely a theocentric humanism is no less a humanism than an anthropocentric one—as so much of medieval art demonstrates. But, even granting his premise that in Mozart's operas there occurs for the first time a presentation of profoundly-conceived individual human

traits, who not "Mozart the dramatist"? It is that word "novelist" that worries me; I hope Mr. Alpers will substantiate his terms more convincingly in the remainder of what promises to be a most provocative series. —J.C.R.

## From Abroad

I FOUND two recent Sunday night talks instructive—about Sunday night talks. The first was by the Indian Minister of Health, the Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. I'm sure her charming personality and impeccable and lively English (thoroughly U-English) would have made a scripted talk worth listening to; but I'm equally sure the success of this one was largely due to its being an interview, skilfully conducted by Marie Griffin. Not only is an interview less formal: a tactful interviewer leads a speaker to the things that will interest the listener, while leaving him free to say the things he most wants to say. The following Sunday we had a talk on the care of the aged, by the President of the International Association of Gerontology. It was an admirable script, expertly read by Basil Clarke. The only trouble was that almost exactly the same talk has so often been delivered on the air or written in newspapers by New Zealanders. It seems a pity that a man should come right around the world and say no more than our own experts habitually tell us. I'm sure an informed interviewer could have brought out things we knew less about—details of what other countries are doing, for example.

## From Unesco

NORMALLY I avoid United Nations programmes; but I listened to a commemoration of Unesco's first ten years, broadcast on October 14, and found it good. Not outstanding, but good. There were no spacemen, no civilisations on trial. ("Call the first witness (continued on next page)



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

FIRST judgment on a new work must always be a tentative one, since further hearings may modify a first criticism so much as almost to reverse it. Thus I made mental resolves to tread Agag-like when Vaughan Williams's new Violin Sonata was broadcast on his birthday: but the resolves were scarcely necessary because the music never exceeds the composer, though it does strike out in new paths, and no critical strangleholds would be applied, even if they had been justified. The Sonata was played (YC link) by Francis Rosner and Frederick Page; it was nominally in A Minor—the composer still gives keys to his works—but soon the shift of the scales and modes interrupted any key-feeling, as usual.

I expected a rather crude piano part, for Vaughan Williams is notorious for his handling of the instrument, but was delighted to find that though distinctly lumpy, there was nothing of the yokel about it, and its rather thick texture was in keeping with the composer's more recent orchestral works. The violin work was pure joy, especially in the last movement (a theme and variations), where it lapsed into those long speaking melismas of mystical and dreamy sound that, more than any music I know since Palestrina, give one that "way up in the middle of the air" feeling. Most remark-

able movement was the Scherzo, which in its style seemed quite new, while in its haste one might discern a promise of repentance at leisure. This is one work that we should be allowed to hear again fairly soon, before memory wrecks its usual havoc with impressions.

With the National Orchestra the violinist Malcolm Latchem played Prokofiev's Concerto in G, and a very suave performance it was, too. Prokofiev's melodies are nothing if not ingratiating, and there was nothing here to grate on the contemporary ear, for the melodies form the basis of this concerto, its stimulating rhythms being exciting but secondary. At times the soloist was a little subdued by the weight of the orchestra behind him, but usually held undisputed sway with a fine ringing tone that brought the tunes to the fore. I've heard some ear-jarring cadenzas—the Tchaikovsky concerto leaps to mind—and was happy to find nothing offensive in this.

In the same programme (YC link) there was included an overture, "At the Tabard Inn," originally written for his *Canterbury Tales* choral piece, by George Dyson. This was disappointing, having neither body nor saving melody, but being fairly consistently mediocre. Still, it ensured that the other works would not be anticlimactic.