LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

BOOK REVIEWS

Sir,—After hearing the *ZB Books* (October 28) and the reviewer, R. T. Robertson, I have been wondering whom the session is intended for, and what it is supposed to provide for its listeners. Mr. Robertson dealt at length with the reminiscences of an airman, an officer at times associated with New Zealanders. A long notice would be justified of a book such as Adolf Galland's which has much to contribute to the theory of aerial warfare, but could this be claimed for Mr. Robertson's subject? Was it not, rather, a book of popular appeal, of interest to ex-servicemen (or some of them) and ATC cadets, present or prospective? I have no quarrel with noticing books of this kind, but the time given amply to these reminiscences was time taken from considering Mrs. Wilson's *Moonshine*, which was treated briefly, and Mr. Duggan's *Immanuel's Land*, which was treated curtly.

Are we to take it from Mr. Robertson's presentation that he thought the Wilson and Duggan books are not the sort likely to interest his listeners? If he did think this, is he not effectively showing a contempt for his audience—and I do not believe Mr. Robertson would take on, deliberately, such an annoying superiority. On the other hand, we are admitting that books and capable discussion of books have a decided importance for and in our community. Are we to understand that by the time he allocated them Mr. Robertson was showing how much less worthy he thought the two New Zealand books were in relation to the warbird's jottings? This seems unlikely. I am not setting out to rap Mr. Robertson's knuckles, but I am suggesting he did considerably less than justice to Maurice Duggan's fine collection. I wonder if Mr. Robertson was influenced, in apportioning his time as he did, by the fact that this was a ZB programme? It would be a great pity if this did have any bearing on judgments in the book session.

KENDRICK SMITHYMAN (Auckland).

HENRY MOORE

Sir,—Auckland's reaction to Moore is surely eructation, not eruption, let us not confuse upset tummy with heroics. Scarcely weaned on a classical tradition in sculpture, viewers are swallowing whether they like it or not the strong meat of Europe's great innovator. It all sounds very much like gunfire—could it be mental and emotional indigestion?

Seriously form-conscious when it comes to horse-flesh, a nicely-filled spinnaker and certain landscapes, we are sometimes apt to confuse that which gives us aesthetic and other pleasure with art itself—screen Venus Marilyn Monroe may be a "thing of beauty" for millions, but she is not more than a work of art than a piece of cold pork, nor even can she ever attain the "joy foreverdom" of the Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Europe with its out-of-door sculpture—both traditional and modern—gets a reasonable start, but what have we got apart from the "wax-works" of what the 19th century considered classical sculpture? In spite of this, last year's exhibition of abstract sculpture in Auckland brought big crowds, yet surprisingly little adverse criticism, possibly because many Auckland homes and interiors reflect the language of the modern sculptor and painter—Plato's "beauty of geometric forms in perfect balance"—for this reason wouldn't we view Gabo and Pevsner with less tummy rumbling?

Why are the many who appreciate abstract sculptural forms in everyday life bewildered by or even hostile to Moore's work? This may be due to his startlingly original amalgam of organic, as well as abstract, forms, including bone shapes, muscle structure, landscape and water-worn rocks, which are expressed and unified in the media of wood, stone, bronze or concrete.

"There's a power of explaining to be done." Well, let us have the bismuth in terms of illustrated lectures, and guide lecture tours of the exhibition; especially so since many artists and critics consider Moore's sculpture to be as valid and unique, in its own field, as Einstein's contribution to physics.

J. E. BROWN (Auckland).

NEW ZEALAND MUSIC

Sir,—It was good to read up to date news about one of our most talented young composers in a recent issue of *The Listener*. I mean Edwin Carr. In the article, obviously by an overseas contributor, there was a significant reference to the music "by which we know him so well." But it would not be true to infer that we know Carr's music at all well in New Zealand. It has taken five or six years for the overture "Maadi Gras" to get a performance in this country. Why, please?

It seems to me that the NZBS needs to adopt a more vigorous policy towards New Zealand music. Instead of waiting and hoping for the good works to be sent in, then submitting the composers to the agonies of departmental procrastination, could the Service not appoint an officer whose sole job it should be to ferret out worthwhile works for broadcasting? Let him wheedle, cajole, entice, offer commissions and prizes—let him do anything, in fact, as long as he turns up with new music (or unplayed music), and when he gets it, make him have it played to us at once!

There'll be a fascinating brouhaha for a while, I'll bet, but I'm sure it'll be worth it in the long run.

PETER CROWE (Wellington).

(i. Two previous conductors did not wish to perform the Mardi Gras—not "Maadi" Gras—overture; the present conductor wished to perform it. ii. If Mr. Crowe is able to show that the methods of the Service are fairly summarised in the words wait, hope and procrastinate, he may have the space to do so. iii. Mr. Crowe's ferret is only to do, it appears, what the Service already does without Mr. Crowe's knowing anything about it, except that the ferret is to be uniquely authorised and empowered to have his discoveries played "at once," amid the wreck of programme plans.—Ed.)

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—I have read with some interest the correspondence under the title of Jazz in New Zealand, and I am disturbed at the number of correspondents who find "classical music" dull. If they mean true classical music in its strict sense I would hardly describe Mozart's music, for instance, as dull. Much of it is very light-hearted and full of vigour. I personally find Bach difficult to listen to, but that is because I have not given him a fair trial, not because his music is inherently dull. If they mean "classical" in its loose sense, that is, so-called "serious" music, then "dull" is even less applicable.

For Mr. Lynch to say that much of the music of the old masters is formless, aimless and tremendously dull is, in my opinion, completely incorrect. Contemporary music comes nearer to the first two adjectives and sometimes to the third, to the individual taste, that is.

Again, I find that some jazz, and I mean true jazz, not popular music, is delightful when I feel like "letting my hair down," but then much of "serious" music can do this just as well, if not better. As an example, I think Enesco's Rumanian Rhapsody No. 1 would be hard to beat.

I think many of your correspondents who put "serious" music in the dull class are trying to run before they can walk. One cannot expect to appreciate, or even like a Beethoven symphony on its first acquaintance, especially if the listener has heard little or no "serious" music beforehand. From my own experience I did not like Beethoven's "Eroica" on its first hearing, or even the second or third, but after twenty or thirty hearings it is among my favourite works. More programmes after the style of *A Listener's Notebook* would help tremendously here.

Finally, jazz has never reached the heights that "serious" music has achieved, and while it follows its present form I doubt if it ever will. To enumerate the reasons for this would be space consuming, so I will leave it at that and sincerely hope that some of the people alluded to will give "serious" music " a fair go."

D.J.M. (Lower Hutt).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

TEN YEARS AGO

Sir,—The opening paragraph of "Ten Years with the Orchestra" must have caused no end of merriment among the old-timers of the orchestra and a goodly number of ex-members like myself. (1) We did not meet in St. Paul's schoolroom but in the Studio of 2YA. (2) To the undying glory of Mr. A. Tyrer be it said that he flatly refused to play anything for the Governor-General whose request he rightly considered untimely. (3) The statement regarding this item is consequently entirely invented and stupid to boot.

This sort of reporting, unworthy of *The Listener*, must be eliminated at all costs.

OTTO HUBSCHER (Auckland).

(The statement that the orchestra had played to the Governor-General when it first assembled was accepted in good faith from a member of the orchestra present on that occasion, and was corroborated by another foundation member. Further inquiries have shown that impressions from two separate occasions were telescoped into a single memory. The orchestra did not play part of Dvorak's "New World" Symphony to the Governor-General (as we said in our article); but the music *was* played that day—after the official visitors were gone. Also, the orchestra gave a private concert for the Governor-General before its first public appearance. It is not difficult to understand how impressions from these two occasions coalesced. And a lapse of memory, after 10 years, is not quite the same thing as a "stupid invention."—Ed.)

SPEAKERS AND ORATORS

Sir,—Like my friends "Sundowner" and Dr. G. H. Scholefield, I find it difficult to understand how two of Britain's celebrated orators could speak as few as 78 and 87 words a minute. Following "Sundowner's" suggestion to try speaking at 78 words a minute, I would suggest to those interested to time themselves at both their lowest and highest rate of continuous reading. I think the very low rates of speech referred to would be accounted for by speakers making somewhat lengthy pauses between sentences, doubtless for effect. I would think Sir Joseph Ward's normal speech was much beyond 150 words a minute, and that on occasion he might reach as high as 250. As a self-taught shorthand-writer on the Northland gumfields in the nineties, I attained 150 words a minute, but that was only sufficient to enable me to keep pace with a deliberate speaker, and I'm sure it would have been quite hopeless for me to attempt to report Ward verbatim. Top-speed Pitman writers could take down 200-225 words a minute, presumably to keep pace with top-speed speakers.

A.H.R. (Dunedin).

PURCHASING POWER

Sir,—Possibly Mr. K. O'Brien thinks he has made something clear. What is clear enough is the fact that any attempt to give an appearance of mathematical accuracy to the assumption that production is carried on in "cycles," isolated islands in an ocean of time, can only give us a jumble of nonsense. Production is continuous. If in ten years an equipment costs its original price in repairs and replacement, it will usually have more than paid for itself in that time; and every payment made, over those ten years, for repairs and replacement, will give purchasing power equal to the cost, and cost and purchasing power will originate together. If reserves accumulate they, invested, will circulate.

It is not correct that the Report of the Monetary Commission "postulates" on page 361 that a decrease in our overseas assets will reduce our purchasing power. What is there stated is that money taken out of New Zealand to be spent abroad reduces both our money supply and our overseas assets. Money coming here has, of course, the opposite effects.

If Mr. O'Brien wishes to be really useful he had better get thoughts of "cycle N" out of his head. Like the "gap," it is a mare's nest.

J. JOHNSTONE (Manurewa).

AUSTRALIAN BALLADS

Sir,—We learn from James K. Baxter's critical review of the Oxford *Book of Australian Verse*, edited by Judith Wright, that this addition to a standard series does not include the work of certain very well-known poets. Mr. Baxter quotes Judith Wright as pleading that "the balladists did not contribute anything to the solution of the problems of Australian poetry." Is this the only test? What of the pleasure and enlightenment these poets have given to generations of Australians—and New Zealanders? I cite a particularly telling testimony to their influence here. In her preface to her anthology of *New Zealand Farm and Station Verse*, Mrs. Woodhouse says that Banjo Paterson followed Macaulay in opening up to her, as a child, the charm of verse. Gordon came next. "Then a high country shepherd, about the time that he gave me my first lesson in working a dog, commanded me, as an essential part of my education, to read Ogilvie's verses." Many years later, as Mrs. Woodhouse rode to the blacksmith's shop on a fine morning, with some of Ogilvie's lines "swinging in time" with the strides of her horse, the idea of a New Zealand collection of country-life verse recurred to her and was developed.

According to Mr. Baxter's review, neither Paterson, Gordon nor Ogilvie is included in this Oxford anthology.

GALLOPING VERSES (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Muriel C. Fountain (Wellington): (1) From "All That's Past," by Walter de la Mare. (2) The poet was William MacCall, but we cannot identify the poem.

A. R. Kingsford (Nelson): Not at 2XN only, the impossibility of reconciling playing schedules (ZB, ZA, X) had that result.

M.J.F (Tauwhare): Sorry, no address available.

J. R. Wigg (Waitara): "Casarella," by Veroli; Decca F 4908.