

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

IT'S a shame that a country's music is so rarely appreciated in that country, except for tourist attraction. It's even more of a shame in New Zealand, for we have some high-developed yet natural music in the lore of the Maoris. Phyllis Williams, in her series on Maori song forms (NZBS), champions the cause of this music, and does so in an attractive manner—by giving numerous examples and cutting explanations to the minimum required. To those of us whose acquaintance with Maori songs is limited to "Come O Maidens," it comes as a shock to hear tunes and harmonies that might grace a Swiss alpine village, or monotonal chants that bring African tribal music to mind, in an easy juxtaposition. Fortunately, the lure of drum rhythms has bypassed the Maori, so that his song tends to be at once comprehensible even to European ears. Some of the effects are quite modal, others again rather commonplace; and in their lack of commercialised sophistication, they have a charm all their own. In this connection I should also mention the NZBS programme *Song and Story of the Maori*, whose music is at least as well sung, but has less that is off the beaten track, more of the obvious; but it is still a good sign that someone

is taking an interest in publicising what is, after all, our own folk music.

The National Orchestra seems to have gained strength from its brief absence from the stage, and were playing really well in a recent studio concert (YC link). A varied programme opened with Gordon Jacob's lush orchestration of Handel's "Theodora" overture, which I prophesy would be a resounding success at any concert; it has interest, tune, bounce, and, in fact, all the makings for a classical hit number—if you will excuse the contradiction in terms. Janetta McStay played Prokofiev's C Major Piano Concerto with dexterity, sensitivity and a sense of humour: a rare combination in so-called serious music, but definitely the right approach in this instance. Lastly, there was the fascinating ballet suite *Corroboree*, by the Australian composer Antill; a piece which stylistically has much in common with Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, though poles apart in cultural background. The orchestra handled its difficult rhythms and effects with remarkable deftness, and at times the music was quite awe-inspiring. Now (vide supra) we need only a ballet based on a typical hangi, and our experience will be complete.

## Radio Review

### IN SCHOOL

I HAVE heard now several of the semi-documentary programmes, *Their Guided Years*, which have been broadcast monthly for some time from 1YA. The main purpose of this series, I take it, is to give parents some idea of what is going on inside modern classrooms and why their children don't learn the things they did, and, incidentally, to justify Janetjohn. Well scripted and well made, and judiciously using material recorded in the classroom, these sessions have made their points pretty well so far, although an avoidance of any hint of criticism of current pedagogical orthodoxies has made them less stimulating than they might have been. Last week's programme on secondary schools, for instance, which featured some pleasant, articulate youngsters, gave a clear picture of the modern curriculum at high school, but by-passed any discussion of the value of the "core," and the effect of early secondary years on the academic pupil. Still, I applaud these sessions as a new and welcome departure, and hope that they will later be rebroadcast weekly in *Feminine Viewpoint* and other women's programmes, since monthly intervals tend to break continuity and dilute interest.

and no more of them than is absolutely necessary. I suppose he could scarcely allow himself more latitude, even if he wanted to, without neglecting some of his large correspondence. How amazingly passionate we get about our language and how convinced we all are that our prejudices are scientifically based. We're certainly convinced that the pronouncements of an Authority have authority. I'm not sure to what degree this is true, but at least Professor Wall wears his mantle with scholarship and sense. He may, as we all do, loathe abominations which, rationally considered, are not really so at all; but he is quite ready to admit changes into the language when they are useful and expressive, and he is less ready to condemn than most of his correspondents. These are surprising attributes in a man of his years.

### Alpha and Omega

PRINCESS TURANDOT is presumably the original of Puccini's last opera. Apart from this presumption I am lamentably ignorant of the history of the play and its author, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, and my reference books give me no help; so I may be saying the obvious when I praise it. The story of the princess who imposes tests on intending suitors is usual enough, but there is a chilling atmosphere about it which one thinks of as typical of Oriental courts—and others, Renaissance European, perhaps: the mannered elegance on the surface, the horrors beneath. It is a witty, light-hearted play, yet its effect is macabre. The Auckland studio played it with that sense of style which I find more often in their work than in that of other New Zealand studios. Naturally, even they need a play which contains the possibility of style. They couldn't do much with *The Sleeping Partner*, the story of a man who robbed a bank, served his sentence, and used the proceeds to play Father Christmas to deserving cases. I nominate this as the silliest play of the year, hoping there will be no worse; but, unfortunately, it is all too typical of the routine nonsense with which the NZBS pads its production schedules.

—R.D.McE.

### Studio Concert

THE studio concert on YC link last week, conducted by James Robertson, was really most enjoyable. Only three works were performed, and the main offering, the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3, was outstanding from many points of view. Richard Farrell seemed the obvious choice for soloist when he was on his last tour, but Janetta McStay made a wonderful job of it, making regrets for this or that soloist, needless. It is a formidably taxing part technically; Miss McStay made light of its difficulties, and played through it with splendid assurance. Her tone in the first movement, which demands steely fingers quite to bring off its liveliness, was a little too warm and slack for my taste, but the lyrical passages towards the end of the movement, and in the whole of the entrancing second, she played most beautifully. The orchestra was throughout spirited and suave, as these qualities were by turn called upon. Another work was a Handel overture, *Theodora*, arranged by Gordon Jacob. Mr. Jacob evidently has not needed the

(continued on next page)

### Cue for Calypso

I CAUGHT an oddity from 1YD the other day. *The Bedser Calypso* it was called—a vigorous, topical piece on the well-known cricketer. I suppose the calypso, with its lively, yet simple melodies, its journalistic recounting of topicalities, and its eulogistic or, more often, satirical, handling of personalities, is the only surviving parallel to the songs of the minstrels. I have read that calypso-making is a favourite occupation of many Caribbean males. How much healthier this than the parroting by Kiwi adolescents of the inane "lyrics" of current pops, or even the more formal rendering of Victorian ballads by their elders. It is a great pity that we have no equivalent to the calypso in New Zealand. What wonderful opportunities for the writer would be offered by a general election, Springbok fever, parliamentary broadcasts, commercial radio, Wellington's jealousy of Auckland's cultural life, and much else. There are at least two poets who would be capable of making calypsos and several others who would be fitting subjects. But since it is idle to hope for products of a Latin culture to spring from Puritan soil, we must be content with the occasional import, like the Bedser item, which brightened up my whole afternoon.

—J.C.R.

### Father and Son

SO *Book Shop* is back in Christchurch, a little fuddled after its journey from Auckland, convinced that Margaret Garland is Joan Wood. I'm sorry to lose Sarah Campion, but I'm looking forward to new examples of Arnold Wall's exuberant habit of flying off at some totally irrelevant but wholly delightful tangent. He and his father use the language very differently. Professor Wall does not wanton with words. He uses them with cool precision and efficiency,

JOHNNIE RAY

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