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RADIO REVIEW

With Wapiti

EVERYTHING about "Wapiti Country" was right, from the typical voices of outdoor men to refreshingly civilised attitudes. Love of the life for its own sake permeated the programme, and though I find it hard to believe that anyone could miss Fiordland when away, this is not the only time I have heard it. Ken Miers and Frank Tully gave plenty of fact for the mind to fasten on, and the first indication of pleasant philosophy was the remark that it was like going fishing; there was always some fool who wanted to catch fish. Through listener-shared diversions such as burning off sandflies we came to what each thought his most felt experience. These again were not the excitement of the hunt; for one, watching wapiti on a river-flat at close quarters, for the other, camp and sleep after days in the rain. Though both looked forward to time, place, weather and record wapiti bull coming together, what I remember most is that one said, "To see him standing on the bluff above you, giving forth, is enough, whether you shoot him or not." This rounded off, with the more than impressive bugling, a seemingly casual, but well prepared programme.

Elvis a Legend?

I HAVE seen orchestral society players swing with gusto into dance music for the members; I have seen children at a school concert, when allowed to sing their own choice, put far more into the "Rock and Roll Waltz" than ever they could hope to do into "Alouette"; and dimly wondered at the atavistic urges in all of us. One can condone, in a musically conservative household, the passion of a ten-year-old for Winifred Atwell, but when one realises with baffled wonder, "Is THAT Elvis Presley?" all hopelessness is expressed, and it is difficult to bring to bear the open-

mindfulness with which one visits, say, the Exhibition of Young Artists. Yet un-understanding is not only a matter of generation, and it is well to reflect that many poetry lovers have the same marked reaction to the work of Dylan Thomas. But does music of all the arts produce the most charlatan of exponents? Only time will assess them. Since heroes such as Lindbergh now need to be explained, as film-makers have found, to the under-forties, seemingly the odds are against Elvis becoming a legend; but if the possibility seems laughable, remember the Minotaur.

—R.F.

Enchantment

LA BOHEME has been in the operatic repertory for so long, it seems, that it was with a shock one heard a few weeks ago, when Toscanini died, that he conducted its first performance. I listened to the new recording last week, with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the RCA Victor Orchestra, and Victoria de los Angeles and Jussi Bjorling as the star-crossed ones, and I hope there will never be a time when this enchanting masterpiece fails to hold a large public. Sir Thomas omits no detail of the lovely, sensuous score, and moves it along throughout with that subtle eloquence, crackle and *brío* for which he is so justly famous. And to Mimi, Victoria de los Angeles brings all that dark, melting lyricism of which, last year, some of us were such fervent admirers. She shows an exquisite tenderness and fragility in the celebrated "Mi chiamano Mimi," and her consumptive coughs into the score from time to time were both elegant and touching. Jussi Bjorling has lost none of that high tenor shimmer which is the mark of great operatic singing, and the famous duet, "O soave fanciulla" had that glittering, piercing beauty which reminds one that glory can still walk abroad. Whether this recording will extinguish earlier ones, I do not know, but sure, it is a monstrous fine one.

The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN

COMPARED with the prodigious quantity of fine music produced by composers of Elizabethan days, modern performances of their work are still lamentably few. Scholars such as Fellowes have collected and edited reams of their pieces of all sorts and sizes, mostly in the field of song and madrigal, but only the brave few sing them today; though a certain technique is required, most of this bulk of writing is fairly easy, and only a good musicianship is necessary to make the music live.

In this field, then, we heard a selection of pieces, mainly of the lute-song type, sung by the tenor John MacDonald, with Dorothea Franchi at the harp (NZBS). This variety of light tenor is the ideal voice to make something of such songs; and I feel that the additional sonority of the harp gives it many advantages over the lute, even if it does lose a little in authenticity. Only a pedant would quarrel with that, for musically it is more satisfactory. Some of Philip Rositer's plaintive airs made an excellent introduction, and Dowland was also well represented; the singer laid himself open to comparisons by essaying the lovely "Willow Song," but as it turned out most of the comparisons would be in his favour. It has been sung by tenors

powerful, reedy, effeminate, counter, and in fact everything short of Neapolitan; and the smooth control of this rendering made it as good as any of them. We can look forward to the rest of this series with a cheerful mind.

The National Orchestra's studio concerts are under way (YC links), with guest conductors and interesting programmes. The Orchestra's quality does not seem to have been affected much — for better or worse — by their frequent changes in guidance, but it has continued to give competent and musical performances. Under Willem Komlos, they played the "Surprise" Symphony with verve and a larger-than-life rhythmic bite; and followed this with the well-organised, sympathetic and rather conventional Variations on a Theme of Kuhnau, by Andriessen — a stranger to me, but a welcome one in a quiet way. It said what was necessary, politely and without unseemly excitement, and made a neat exit still smiling pleasantly; quite a nice piece to know, in fact. Wagenaar's boisterous overture "Cyrano de Bergerac" made a colourful end to the programme, the first of the present series. If the standard is maintained, the remainder should be worth listening for.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 29, 1957.