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Radio Review

THE CONSTANT CRITIC

WHO, one often wonders, is Constant Listener? Those who have broadcast will remember the awful conviction that nobody listened at all, yet the whole radio day is geared to this imaginary and pervasive person, who is abroad from 6.0 a.m. until midnight, and who, like some bat from Below, will complain that he is expected to listen to either Aunt Daisy or the Correspondence School, or that he gets lost in the middle of the Weather Report—which I do, and the only remedy, as we've been told, is to go and live in the Chatham Islands—one always wakes up for that. Does Constant Listener work, or eat? Does he read, does he write? More important, does he listen to the programmes he wants to listen to? Has he a wife and children? (On Sunday one of our youngsters resurrected Jet Morgan from Dunedin. Not that again, for pity's sake.) These things I know: Constant Listener must be single, idle, and of amazingly limited taste, considering the time spent at the radio. Nothing pleases him. He wants classics at breakfast, Rock 'n' Roll in the Classical Hour: he wants stories instead of criticism, racing instead of cricket. Constant Listener, we all know, is a myth, but we just can't ignore him.

In Praise of God, and Donne

"THESE poems are written for the love of Man and in praise of God, and I'd be a damn' fool if they weren't." Thus Dylan Thomas, yet the same could have been written over three centuries before, more mildly perhaps, by John Donne. Poets write for complicated reasons, yet reach, in the end, the simplicities. That we are to have 26 poetry readings seems too good to be true; if New Zealand poets starve in fact they

need not, this winter, wither in spirit. And if the rest live up to the first, a reading of Donne's poems by Christopher Hassall, they will be fortunate indeed. I approach readings cautiously. I once heard a young woman burlesque a serious poem she could not understand until I bled for the author. I need not have worried. The combination of Christopher Hassall's technical excellence and emotional understanding, which only lagged faintly in the longer poems, gave us a moving programme. Highlights for me were "The Rising Sun," "The Ecstasie"; then, "Death Be Not Proud" and "Hymne to God the Father." From the discoveries of love to the appropriations of truth, yet not "so much truth as it defeats all Poetry," is a feast for one evening.

—R.F.

Parson's Egg

LOUIS MacNEICE'S plays for radio have become justly famous. *The Dark Tower* and *Christopher Columbus* may be considered masterpieces in their genre, exploring the resources of their medium with the virtuosity open to a poet of his distinction. But I cannot feel that these qualities were always present in *Prisoner's Progress*, an allegory in the Bunyan style of prisoners of war in the struggle between the Greys and the Browns, but clearly enough, British and Germans. The modern Christian, Thomas Waters, is a bastard who knows his own father all too well, since he tried to seduce his son's wife. This bizarre situation produces in Waters, as well it might, an intolerable anguish from which he is finally released by Alison, a prisoner in the adjoining women's compound. Waters is one of an escape group which tunnels out of the camp to find that by miscalculation they have bored into the women's camp, into a stone age burial chamber which one of the women discovered beneath their dormitory. Dr Guggenheim, a fanatical archaeologist, tries to prevent them from escaping by

The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN

WHEN a visiting artist is favoured with a blaze of official advance publicity, we are led to expect a perfection of artistry. It may be something of a gamble; but if the glowing notices draw us to hear a really first-rate musician, we can be grateful for them.

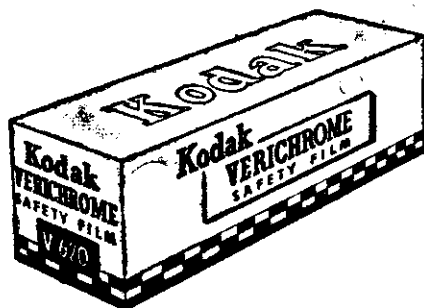
So it was with Ricardo Odnoposoff, on tour in this country with a lovely violin and a fine accompanist (YC links). He received adulation in his Australian tour, and has repeated the process here; for he has a warm and captivating tone, a wonderful technique, and a wealth of material in his repertoire which can literally satisfy all tastes. With the National Orchestra, for instance, he played the Tchaikovsky Concerto, a work of immense difficulty that can be most rewarding; so often one hears the taxed violinist assaulting his part with a resulting hard tone, so that however brilliant it is, one has to make a distinct effort to listen. Here there was a smooth and easy playing that concentrated on the musical values rather than the showmanship; and the Orchestra, somewhat subdued if anything, interfered not at all.

To his solo recitals Mr Odnoposoff brings the same polished but thoughtful approach, and more tenderness at

times since here he is on intimate terms with his audience. Particularly lovely was the unaccompanied Sonata of Geminiani, in which the lilting rhythms and flowing double-stops mingled in brotherly concord; and no less powerful the G Minor Sonata of Bach given with the sureness of long familiarity. The Vieuxtemps Concerto No. 5 was a complete contrast, in its technical achievement and lighter touch; and to show that all is grist to his mill, the violinist included in the recitals short pieces ranging from Mozart to the modern Spanish field, with equal aplomb and appeal. I would not go so far as to say "I shall not look upon his like again" but he must be included among today's great violinists.

His pianist, Raymond Lambert, is a soloist in his own right, and also gave recitals. I commend his playing of Franck's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue for its fine sonorities, though it seemed a trifle cold-blooded in places; while Liszt's "Fountains at the Villa d'Este" was a perfect blend of virtuosity and mood-feeling. He is a musician, take him for all in all, and I think any soloist would be grateful to have him as an associate.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 12, 1957,



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