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## RADIO REVIEW

# No Ladies for My Lady

I HAVE lately been bringing myself up-to-date on soap operas, and have found to my surprise that I needed to. I had supposed that since soap operas always had been written to exactly the same formula, they always would be. I now find that I was mistaken, that a new formula is creeping in; and it is one I don't much care for. In the traditional s.o., still represented by *Dr Paul* and *Portia Faces Life*, the hero or heroine valiantly battles against every conceivable evil and misfortune through half a lifetime of daily episodes. If most of the misfortune and evil is the result of plotting by villainous characters, that is merely part of the simple view of life which is one of the marks of the genus. At least we know whom we are supposed to admire, and why.

Not so with *Fallen Angel* and *Career Girl*. The title characters in both are unpleasant young women, so much alike that I have difficulty in remembering which is which; but the serials are conceived from their points of view and they are obviously the ones the listener is supposed to identify herself with. The fact that both are prostitutes, not to put too fine a point on it, is a secondary matter. Our broadcasting service would never allow overt pornography in its serials. But these stories make up for their reticence in this respect by the ghoulish delight the principal characters take in entangling everyone else in trouble. Their technique is mental torture; and this, it seems, is respectable enough to get by the auditors.

Mind you, Arlene Ford and Angel Whateit are made obvious enough villains to let the listener condemn them while following their progress avidly, which is no doubt satisfying to the conscience. No doubt in a few years' time they will come to a sticky end or be made into reformed characters;

but meanwhile a grand time is had by all. And I am wowsier enough to think it ought not to be. —R.D.McE.

## The Heat Is Off

LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S illustrated lecture on jazz from 2YD last week, which I had eagerly anticipated, in no way let my expectations down. I found it lively and illuminating. Did you realise, for example, that there is a distinct jazz scale, which is simply the major scale with the third, fifth and seventh flattened? And that this scale in conjunction with the major triads, produces dissonances which are an attempt to sound the African quarter notes from which the whole form developed? It's worth knowing. Bernstein loves jazz because it is an original art form, never wholly sad, nor wholly happy, which is a somewhat dubious and half-hearted claim to make for anything which calls the emotions into play, but there is something in what he says, particularly of modern, "cool" jazz, which, as he demonstrated, is discreet and subtle, working always towards a greater refinement, towards ever more musical, ever less kinetic end. As an introduction to jazz variations Bernstein played a few Mozart variations with glittering skill, and then gave us "Sweet Sue" performed so variously, that in the progressive jazz world, the sweetness vanished, and so, to my ear did Sue herself. He outlined the forms of blues music, which have an equally rigid pattern, and extemporised a perfectly respectable sounding one to two lines from *Macbeth*: "I will not be afraid of death and bane/Till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane."

## And the Kitchen Sink

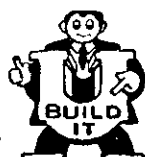
BECAUSE Western music is so complex, difficult, and serious, musical parody, as they say in America, is a sure-fire draw. The spectacle of someone engaged in high devotions, but serving ends of the utmost triviality, is, if done with sufficient comic flair, irresistible. But I maintain that it is a spectacle and the ceremony of the performance must be seen, and weighed, for comic effect, with what is happening. Therefore I did not find the Hoff-

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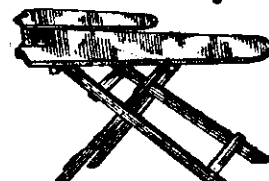
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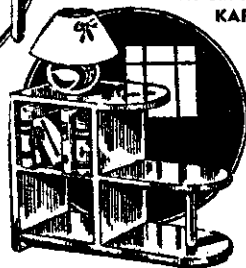
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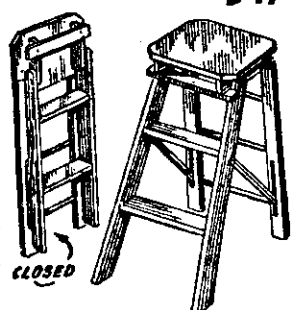
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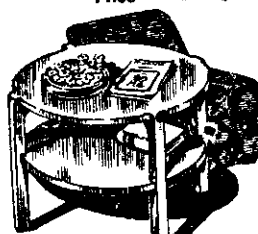
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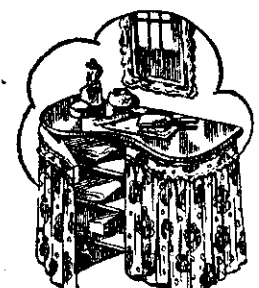
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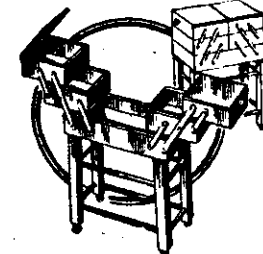
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## The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN

BALLAD operas are all very well, but they need careful handling, especially when the songs are folksy or nearly so. There is peril in producing the songs in too simple or naive a manner, since the contrast with the spoken portions shows too much disparity for comfort. There is more peril in using an actor and a singer doubling for each part; the break between speech and song is liable to become obtrusive and spoil the dramatic flow. The large cast needed for such a manoeuvre also tends to cause unwieldiness. For all these reasons, the NZBS production of *The Dark-Eyed Sailor* (YAs, 3YZ, 4YZ) was rather less than satisfactory: the singers often sounded distant or divorced from the rest of the action, and though the songs are lovely and are meant to hold up the piece, the detachment here was too much. Then again, some of the acting sounded too amateurish to carry enough conviction. All the same, the piece was not wholly bad; the songs are natural and fit well into the dialogue, which, if taken in the light of a connecting link for the music, is quite adequate. The orchestra, conducted by Alex Lindsay, did well, while the soloists sang with plenty of enthusiasm and feeling. The

whole opera, if not up to the over-all standard of works such as John Gay's, was encouraging as a light on what may yet come from local studios.

A welcome addition to the Sunday National Programmes has been the singing and playing of short pieces of a lighter nature by Mary Pratt and Maurice Till. No heavily classical works are included, but only the more popular ones—a programme, you might say, of drawing-room music, designed as a background to a sedentary afternoon at home. Yet I think that most people, willingly or no, will have found themselves thinking, so rich is the voice and so sparkling the piano. I hope the series is a long one.

As a final titbit, I happened to hear an amusing and little-known piano work by Herbert Howells, entitled *Lambert's Clavichord*, played by Ian Harvey (4YC). This is a collection of delightful pieces in the Elizabethan tradition, but a more modern idiom, each labelled with the name of a famous researching musician, such as "Fellows's Delight" and "Foss's Dump." Scholarly but tuneful, these little sketches would fill a gap in many a programme normally devoted to more hackneyed works—pace Falla!

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 18, 1957.