



FIRST HEARINGS IN JAZZ

Sir,—Under this heading your contributor Ray Harris has included two orchestras which are obviously swing bands (*Listener*, April 12). Does he not realise that swing is not jazz? One of the most essential characteristics of jazz is that arranged passages are entirely absent. Greig McRitchie and Les Elgart are nothing but highly-disciplined aggregations which turn out one arranged piece after another, each one meticulously rehearsed down to the last cymbal crash. We all know that jazz stemmed from the primitive music of the West African Negro via the slave ships to the New World. This makes jazz folk music, but swing is the stereotyped music of the commercial world.

The Bobby Enevoldsen Sextet, also mentioned in this issue, appears to be a swing group which on occasions attempts to break into the jazz idiom. Here we find a *faux pas* on the part of the bandleader as swing is meant for dancing and jazz for listening, and consequently appreciating. You cannot do both, and obviously the choice is left to the listener.

However, I have no wish to denigrate these swing bands' valuable and excellent work in that sphere; it is only on the use of the word "jazz" to label their music that I have any difference of opinion. This letter is an attempt to vindicate the integrity of those who have kept jazz alive during the long years of its eclipse behind the meretricious blaze of artificially exploited swing.

A. JOHN SCOTT (Christchurch).

(This letter was shown to Mr Harris, who replied as follows: "Your correspondent revives an old and well-worn argument. I suggest that he listen to Leonard Bernstein's excellent illustrated lecture, "What is Jazz?"—to be broadcast from Station 3YA on May 10 at 10.0 p.m. Bernstein covers the points raised more than adequately and leaves no doubt in my mind (there wasn't any, anyway) that swing, along with bop, progressive, Dixieland, spirituals, and even rhythm and blues, is jazz." —Ed.)

MUSIC IN THE DARK

Sir,—*"Player in the Dark"* (Auckland) is obviously very much in the dark regarding the history of cinema orchestras in this country, and more particularly in Christchurch, which he claims to know so well. He writes: "Everybody's orchestra was founded in 1922 and was the first of its kind in New Zealand." This statement is so incorrect that it is almost ludicrous. The first orchestral combination of real competence was established by John Fuller and Co. at their picture house in Gloucester Street, Christchurch, in 1909. This comprised 15 players, conducted by a very accomplished German violinist named Zimmermann. There was also quite a good little orchestra at Hayward's Pictures in the then Town Hall, where, if I remember rightly, the conductor was Charles Parnell.

In March, 1910, West's Pictures sent over an orchestra from Sydney to play in a new cinema built right opposite Fuller's. The conductor was George Mulford and I was the pianist. However, West's could not compete against their rivals, and the new venture soon collapsed; but that's another story. Fuller's triumphed over all rivals for several years until other orchestras equally excellent made their presence felt in Christchurch—notably one at the Liberty Theatre, next to Warner's Hotel. In 1918 I was commissioned by the New Zealand Picture Supplies to conduct the Liberty Theatre orchestra in the music I had specially arranged for the then famous film called *My Four Years in Germany*, which was first shown at the King's Theatre, Wellington, under my direction. I cannot now recall the personnel of the Liberty Theatre orchestra, except that I believe the leading violinist was Gladys Vincent. At any rate, it was a fine combination, quite equal to anything heard later at Everybody's Theatre.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

But apart from all these Christchurch happenings, there were first-rate cinema orchestras all over New Zealand long before "Player in the Dark" saw the light—notably in Wellington, first at the King's, in 1910, then at His Majesty's (now the St. James') in 1913, followed by Everybody's, the Majestic (then called Empress) and the Paramount. In 1919 the King's Theatre Orchestra of 18 became New Zealand's leading cinema musical ensemble, and it formed the nucleus of the unrivalled orchestra which was installed in the De Luxe (now the Embassy) Theatre in 1924, when it opened with the record-breaking film *The Ten Commandments*. This orchestra set a musical standard never equalled in New Zealand by any similar body, and when it was revived in 1935-36, Dr (now Sir) Malcolm Sargent praised it as the best of its kind he had heard.

L. D. AUSTIN
(Wellington).

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

Sir,—The first two talks in the series entitled *In Search of Truth* have been of such quality that, without waiting to hear the rest, I am writing to suggest that, if you can possibly spare the space, you might print the whole series in successive issues of *The Listener*. If this is impracticable, perhaps the talks, when completed, could be published in booklet form?

It is not easy to give such closely-reasoned lectures the critical study which they deserve, while they are being spoken. Speakers run the risk of being misunderstood. For instance, when Professor Forder had finished his talk, I was left with the impression that his view was that the only reality that is "real" can be reduced to mathematical symbols; that if a deity may be postulated at all, He (or it) cannot be any more enlightening than was the Delphic Oracle. The connection was not quite clear to me; so I probably failed to follow this part of the argument. Also, I could not understand how man could use mathematics if there were no Master Mathematician to originate the possibility of mathematics: or did mathematics, like Topsy, "just grow"? If one had Professor Forder's lecture in full, in print, one could see where one had not understood him. This may be the case with other listeners besides myself.

H.S. HAMILTON (Waimate).

"DO NEW ZEALANDERS SPEAK BADLY?"

Sir,—If speech is an art, as Mrs Barnard stated so emphatically in *Question Mark* on April 4, then she is doomed to disappointment. Not every English-speaking person is endowed with artistic talent. Speech is a reflection of our environment and surely the accent of a Canadian, American, Englishman or New Zealander is more

colourful than ugly. How dull it would be if they all spoke standard English. If money, time and trouble are spent on speech training, one can expect to hear carefully-controlled speech, but does it matter so very much? Speech is essentially a form of communication. If Mrs Barnard sought to convince us of her case for Standard English, surely her own speech should have measured up to it. Twenty-two "um's" and "ah's" in one very long sentence make for very tedious listening.

The next time I hear some Burns read aloud I shall find it very difficult to convince myself that it would sound more beautiful in Standard English. I am sure I shall continue to be one of the large number of "uneducated" speakers who prefer the dialect.

DILYS BEARDSLEY (Christchurch).

Sir,—I had looked forward to this discussion by the two speakers, but after hearing it I must confess to much disappointment. This disappointment I think was caused by two important factors: (1) The inequality of the two speakers' ability: the lady being much superior to her opponent who, incidentally, did not enhance his claim to speak on the subject by continually pronouncing the word ZEALAND as if it was spelt ZEALUND, thereby not giving the correct vowel value, which, after all, is one of the faults they deplored. (2) The other factor was, I thought, the somewhat "brutal" manner in which the lady verbally thrashed us for our mode of speaking.

Seeing she has been spending most of her time in examining candidates for speech and drama diplomas, it does not say much for our New Zealand teachers when she speaks so harshly about their efforts to speak correct English. One point I agree wholeheartedly with was her reference to politicians. It was here that I thought the "mere man" lost his opportunity for smart repartee. In my fifty years of stage work, one of the first things they taught us was to articulate properly, and I have found on many occasions when lecturing that people you would naturally think knew how to speak in public, lamentably failed. I am convinced that in the majority of cases it is carelessness that lies at the root of our poor conversational and public efforts. We are not all born with voices like the late Forbes-Robertson, but we can do a lot to make the most of the voice that was given to us. I have proved down through the years, whether it be at the microphone, telephone or on the platform, that the real secret of speaking is always to be natural. Don't try to borrow someone else's technique. Finally, I do hope that the lady, by some of her remarks, did not try to create a suggestion of class distinction in this young and happy land.

THESPIA (Auckland).

THE GREAT DETERRENT

Sir,—Your excellent editorial "The Great Deterrent" in March 29 issue prompts me to submit the following letter, which I hope you will print, as I feel too much cannot be said about this subject at the present time.

The sands are running out fast. Soon it will be too late for England to retrieve the prestige she lost over the Suez blunder. This she could regain by abandoning the hydrogen bomb tests at Christmas Island, and giving a lead to the two opposing forces in the world, United States and Russia.

What is England to gain by holding tests? If the latest bomb can wipe out

the whole of England, what is the use of having the bomb as a deterrent? The first bomb used against her would finish England. This mad race has got to be stopped now before more dangerous weapons are perfected, and before more countries develop the bomb, for then it would be finish. If United States and Russia won't stop the tests, let England give the lead, and all the smaller countries combine to bring pressure to bear through the United Nations Organisation, to stop this headlong race towards the abyss.

And this is a challenge to the Churches, who should be right in the forefront. What outcry was there from them in support of the Japanese, when they were heroically proposing to sail to the danger area as a protest against the tests? What do the islanders in the Pacific think of our brand of Christianity, that can consent to releasing radioactivity to contaminate sea and air and endanger their lives? A Bible in one hand and the atom bomb in the other! No wonder they are bewildered and confused.

The very stones should cry out against our inhuman apathy.

PAT DENBY (Auckland).

THE HOFFNUNG FESTIVAL

Sir,—I have just been listening to the Hoffnung Music Festival. For a long time I racked my brains for an explanation of the odd sounds issuing from my speaker, and wondered what editorial excuse you could possibly offer to appease Mr Austin. As I listened, I became more and more convinced that the fault lay with the pick-up being used to play the recording. Then, as I turned the pages of *The Listener* of April 5, I found the answer. There, at the foot of Owen Jensen's article, lay the offending pick-up. Some careless technician had bent it to such a degree that it had a tracking error of at least 45 degrees. But how, I wondered, could the damage have remained undiscovered for so long? Ah, yes, it had obviously been used exclusively for playing rock-and-roll, and nobody had noticed any difference. By some mischance, it had then been used to play the Festival recording.

Please could we hear the recording again, played with a good pick-up?

HAFFHUNG (Wellington).

WASTE PAPER BASKET

Sir,—It is gratifying to see from the sketch at the bottom of page 11 in the latest issue of *The Listener* that your waste-paper basket is now empty, in contrast to its previous overflowing state. Are we to infer that the standard of your correspondence is now so high that all of it merits publication or answer? Or does the end of the financial year mean that the basket was due for its annual emptying and that we may watch it progressively fill again?

R.M. (Whangarei).

(Merely a correction of urban sprawl.—Ed.)

