



HOFFNUNG MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sir,—Words like Distortion, Misquotatation and Misrepresentation should be used with due care and restraint in election year if they are not to become utterly debased and meaningless. Nevertheless, your contributor R.D.McE. leaves me no alternative but to take a leaf from the politician's notebook (or a plank from his platform) and level these querulous and much abused accusations at his review of the Hoffnung Music Festival Concert.

He says that in my programme notes I stated (not implied) that the Concert "exposed the pretensions of the symphony orchestra." I am surprised to hear it, and I am sure Mr Hoffnung would be equally surprised. Exposure is an act that has come to be associated only with American vaudeville and investigating committees, if one may make such a fine distinction. I certainly had no intention of lending Mr Hoffnung's satire to such a dubious practice.

I think your contributor has been led astray by mishearing or misinterpreting my remark that Hoffnung was "gently de-bunking the whole mystique of symphony concerts." This, I think he will agree, is a rather different kettle of fish. Not that I blame R.D.McE. for his lapse. It is scarcely surprising that, amid the falling cadences of broken glass and the tuneless exuberances of the tuba, some of the finer points of meaning should be lost or misunderstood. Let me assure R.D.McE. that, like him, I look upon the Hoffnung as Satire, but not Satire With a Serious Purpose. PETER HARCOURT (Wellington).

SURROUNDED BY AESTHETES

Sir,—There may be rather more in Dr Roderick's comment about aesthetes and New Zealand writing than is conceded in your penetrating editorial. The "Oxford" defines an aesthete as "one who professes a superior appreciation of what is beautiful and endeavours to carry out his ideas in practice." You give a secondary meaning, a person who "pretends" to appreciate. I suggest a third, a person whose conceptions of beauty and sympathies with life are limited. This recalls the hostility to Kipling, a vulgar fellow who comes between the wind and comfortable living. So "aesthete" or "aesthetic" becomes akin to "academic" in the derogatory sense of that word, an outlook narrowed by study. I believe we have such a school of critics. They have set views of what a novel should be. It should be analytical and deal with the more sombre sides of life. Joy of living is frowned upon, and popularity highly suspect. One may cite the ignoring in certain quarters of the work of Nelle Scanlan, the first New Zealand novelist to be widely read in her own country, John Brodie, and Mary Scott, who is selling so well. Even the *New Statesman* has cast an appreciative eye on Angela Thirkell. In England a disposition to inculcate *distaste* rather than

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taste, a critical attitude rather than enthusiasm, is causing some concern. Is it absent here?

It is quite likely that, as you suggest, the energy put into poetry has cramped other writing. It may have affected judgment on novels. The Australian is less reverent than the New Zealander towards arbiters of taste. So I can imagine a novelist looking over his shoulder and muttering: "What's So-and-So going to say about this? Must I try to write like Katherine Mansfield? . . . Damn K.M.!"

I have heard this story of a New Zealand novelist (name forgotten) who has won some success in England. When someone spoke to her of "the integrity of the novelist," she replied: "I don't know anything about that. I just write." Need I point the moral?

VICTORIAN (Wellington).

FIRST HEARINGS IN JAZZ

Sir,—In reply to Mr Harris I would advise that I have already heard Leonard Bernstein's "What is Jazz?" on two occasions—once from 2YD on the recommendation of his column and again from 3ZB on the following Sunday evening. However, this left me unconvinced in so far as Mr Harris's usage of the word "jazz" is concerned, as it was solely an attempt by an American composer of serious music to discover the components and construction of jazz, and not its classification. Nevertheless, I seem to remember Mr Bernstein saying something to this effect: "Jazz is a form of music in which the artists play in a relaxed manner producing simultaneous improvisation—this is what I like about jazz." Can Mr Harris honestly say that he is convinced that high-powered swing consists of simultaneous improvisation?

The Oxford Dictionary describes jazz as "syncopated music of United States Negro origin," and once again I would inquire what Negro group ever arranged music when at that stage of their evolution few of them could read or write words, let alone music? Might I be permitted to make two suggestions to Mr Harris?—1: Change the title of his column to "Preview of Music for Moderns," or something to that effect. 2: Read *Jazz*, by Rex Harris, who was the 1949-50 Chairman of the National Federation of Jazz Organisations. This is available in a cheap edition from larger booksellers.

A. JOHN SCOTT (Christchurch).

THE GREAT DETERRENT

Sir,—It is the hydrogen bomb, rather than the hydrogen bomb tests, that menaces mankind; but while Russia has these things the Western peoples must also have them, or they could be bullied like sheep. When each side has a weapon that could destroy the other it may be that neither will dare to use that weapon, but since quarrels and war can still occur, and have occurred in Korea, Egypt and Hungary, all great nations, to be safe, must be fully armed for war that will be fought either with or without nuclear weapons.

Mr Duncan Sandys now tells us that Britain's economic position is such that without use of the hydrogen bomb Britain could conduct only a small war, so must rely on her hydrogen bombs to prevent a great one. How is that curious formula to work? If Britain uses the hydrogen bomb against Russia, Russia will use it against Britain, so Britain is to depend

for her defence on a weapon that Russia knows perfectly well she can't use without being destroyed.

We are complacently told to expect the use of small atomic weapons. How is their smallness to be maintained? Any nation at war will strive, constantly and furiously, to develop weapons that will be stronger than those of its opponent. To expect the case to be different with atomic weapons would be mere lunacy. If nuclear weapons are used at all they will be used to the full.

But man is a planning animal and statesmen are not destructive maniacs. Surely the world's statesmen, assisted by her scientists, could work out a plan that, either with a common government, or with the common use of existing governments, would destroy these monsters. J. JOHNSTONE (Manurewa).

THEATRE ORGANS

Sir,—Could not some standard be set which performers must attain before being permitted to broadcast on "Theatre" or "Electronic" organs. I have enjoyed broadcasts of grand organ playing, many of which have reached world standard, but as a player of both instruments I must protest at the lack of ability heard in recent broadcasts from instruments of the lighter type.

Performances from the Embassy Theatre in Wellington showed no grasp of registration on an instrument whose specifications I know from experience. The Jennings organ at Auckland I do not know, but I gathered the impression of a pianist with a smattering of organ technique doing his best on something left over from a Sunday school. No variety of tone colour was produced, and if the instrument could not be made to do this, would it not be better left alone or sent to the zoo?

VOX INHUMANA (Oxford).

UNITED NATIONS

Sir,—World government is an ugly obsession of the master mind. Unity does not lie in the deserts of remote control, neither do we serve democracy by extending its lines of communication. Organisation cannot protect us from aggression against the individual, for corruption grows with the size of the office and it makes no difference that it is an elected one if the electors can be kept at a safe distance.

There is little resemblance between our own police force and any international invention for keeping the peace. International law would take generations to evolve, and until it does so we must be on our guard against executive action by the United Nations.

NORMAN WALWYN (Te Kuiti).

BIG BEN

Sir,—In reply to Betty Keene's letter, I think she is unfair in her remarks about the quiz-master. First, she is splitting hairs, as the name "Big Ben" has through common usage come to mean the whole clock rather than the hour bell. Secondly, she is in error: the clock is not St. Stephen's, but the Westminster Clock—or, as the designer Lord Grimthorpe titled his drawing, "The Great Westminster Clock." E. Dent and Co., London, the makers, prefer in their trade advertisements to use the more friendly term "Big Ben."

Incidentally, the chimes now called the Westminster chimes are more correctly named the Cambridge chimes, and are said to have been invented by

Dr Crotch in 1780 from an air by Handel. What's in a name, anyway? Perhaps Betty's correct name is Elizabeth. A. R. JONES (Auckland).

"BONAVENTURE"

Sir,—I would refer you to the programme notes regarding the play *Bonaventure* in 1YZ's programme for April 8. Personally, I had already heard this play from another station, and was therefore aware of the identity of the murderer, but many listeners must have had their enjoyment of the broadcast marred by your quite unwarranted publication of these notes, which in a few words destroyed the whole element of mystery inherent in such a play.

Film critics as a rule attempt to play fair with their readers when reviewing films with surprise endings. It is equally important for compilers of radio programmes not to betray a confidence, as it were.

I trust that programme notes will in future confine themselves to a few words only sufficient to whet the appetite, not turn prospective listeners away.

WHODUNIT (Auckland).

(We agree that the programme note was too revealing.—Ed.)

WRITING ON MUSIC

Sir,—How refreshing it was to read in your April 18 issue some lively, informed writing on music! I refer to the article "French Choral Music," by S. M. Rhind. This article pointed up the fact that your regular reviewers' contributions, Arthur Jacobs's boring letters, *et al*, frequently fall below the standard expected of a serious journal.

Please commission some more independent experts to write about music for *The Listener*. It will be better to have food for thought in place of what often degenerates into mere gossip.

Here is one reader who will welcome a change of policy.

PETER CROWE (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

M. R. Muir (Christchurch): It would be inconvenient to lengthen the programme.

C.A.E. (Dunedin): Regarded as suitable for children. These five half-hour programmes are not, in terms of the rights purchase, available for a replay; but the possibility of buying extended rights will be considered. Thanks for your commendation and suggestion.

Gordon L. McA. (Hastings): From Station 3YA on May 10 at 10.0 p.m. It will also be heard from other stations.

F. Stuart Jones (Invercargill): (1) Not 6.0 to 6.30; 6.0 to 7.0. Because the programme of dinner music formerly scheduled by the YA stations between 6.0 and 7.0 was so frequently and long interrupted by market reports, weather and news, and so forth, that its function was not fulfilled. It was accordingly transferred to the YC stations, whose characteristic evening programme begins at 7.0. (2) Heard well in some parts of Southland, not generally in Southland. The disabilities you mention have been observed, of course, and changes designed to lighten them are in train. (3) Though policy aims at systematic use, the aim can be deflected by personal taste or prejudice, for example, but is usually corrected very soon in the process of local and national supervision. Thanks for your instances; the Medtner set, which is about eight years old, is in Head Office Library only, and stations could overlook that.

