

Bruce Mason's Intimate Revue

FOR those lucky enough to be invited to the Christmas parties of Wellington's Unity Theatre in recent years one of the special attractions has been the intimate revue written by Bruce Mason. The first of these was presented in 1952, and though the party moved each year to a larger hall there was a growing feeling that Unity's Christmas Revue was too good a show to be confined to a private party. Since Mr Mason wrote both script and music, produced, and acted in his revue, he was bound to admit himself that it was an enormous amount of labour for one performance only, so last year he decided to risk putting it on in public—for five nights in Wellington, and at Lower Hutt. *Wits' End*, as he called the show, was more successful than he expected. The NZBS also was interested and made a recording, and an edited version of this is now to be heard, from all YC stations on Sunday, July 21, at 9.15 p.m. It will be introduced by James Robertson.

Talking to *The Listener* about *Wits' End*, Mr Mason said he used some of the material he had found successful at Unity Theatre, but wrote a good deal more of a topical flavour. Among his own favourite items is *The Kitchen Symphony*, K.1/2, by Little Wolfy Mozart. This is a suite in Mozart style which Mr Mason wrote partly to mark the Mozart bi-centenary and partly to cock a snook at the National Orchestra's performance of *The Toy Symphony* earlier last year. There's an absurd story to justify its existence, and it is scored for piano, pot lids, egg-beater, milk bottle and spoon and assorted squeakers. The conductor and

soloists have names which should either strike chords or ring bells (or both) if said aloud. They are Robert St James, Aunt Breezy, L.D.A. ("a modest man who likes to be known only by his initials"), Manley Allover and Seldom Doogood. "*The Kitchen Symphony*," says Mr Mason, "proved to be the *piece de resistance* of the revue."



BRUCE MASON

A short lecture on speech training by a distinguished visitor, Herr Professor Eusebius Apfel-Strudel, is another item to be heard in the radio version of *Wits' End*. On the vocal side the guest artist will be the French cabaret singer, Brumasson, who will sing "Lambton Quay," a little number he has written for New Zealand audiences; and a brand new radio serial, *Doctor Poop*, "dealing with wholly adult relationships," will be presented

for the first time by the proprietors of *Slosh*, the new, family, all-purpose compound. Like every good revue, this one will also include an opening chorus.

Mr Mason says: "I had a most gifted and inventive cast, some of them well known in the theatre—Dorothy Toogood, Sunny Amey, Jessie Weddell, John Norton, George Webby, Ian McClymont and Ralph McAllister. They all seemed to like playing in revue, because it gives each the chance to do a wide variety of comic parts in one evening—though the speed of some of the changes was wearing on the nerves." The pianist for *Wits' End* was Barry Nalder. Mr Mason now hopes to make the revue an annual event in Wellington.

Though most Wellingtonians have known Bruce Mason as a writer of revue for less than five years, his interest goes back much further than

that—further even than the revue he did while in the Navy during the war. When he was a child at Takapuna, he recalls, friends and relations came up from the beach in the dusk on Christmas night and squashed on to the verandah for an hour or so of variety. Theatrical production had its bad moments even in those days. Mr Mason found his sister co-operative, but his brother Tim furiously opposed the whole show, and had to be wheedled with chocolate into doing anything at all. That taste for chocolate broke up the last of the Takapuna revues halfway through, for Tim ate a threepenny cake that had been set aside for a prize. After that he gave up acting for good—and later he became an All Black instead.

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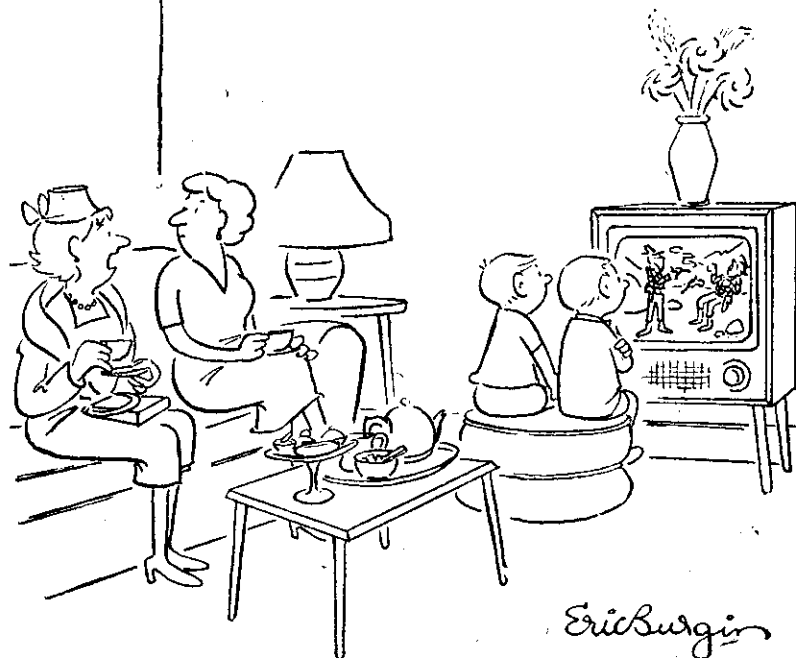
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