

Tinkle, Tinkle

G. C. A. WALL has shown a liking, which has vexed some, for tinkly tunes in *Book Shop*, so he was the obvious choice to narrate *A Memory of Music Boxes*. I remain unvexed and enjoyed this programme. Odd corners of New Zealand must hide many enthusiasts for such out-of-the-way matters which might similarly be brought to light. I associate music-boxes with elderly aunts. Not that any of my elderly aunts own music-boxes, that I know of, but that's the general notion. The thought that, as mechanical novelties, they might once have excited the young and enthusiastic as much as a juke-box does now had not entered my mind before, and made less incongruous the musical clock playing martial airs which was once thought a fit presentation to an officer retiring from his regiment. The music we were given from these boxes and barrel-organs varies a good deal, though it's likely that the mechanism of some is not what it was. But the polyphon, the last grand fling before the gramophone arrived, was a wonder. Incidentally, what one of the announcers meant by saying that the tune called "The Old Hundred" (*sic*) is "better known to us as a contemporary hymn tune" is better known to him than to me.

Defer, Defer

SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT from 22B recently interviewed the producer of the current Gilbert and Sullivan season. Mr Walker was worried about the imminent expiry of Gilbert's copyright. After us the deluge, seemed to be his belief, and he pinned his hopes on the petition which some G. and S. enthusiasts are bringing before Parliament to have the copyright "protected." This is an odd commentary on the odour of sanctity which has arisen about the Savoy operas. There is only one Gilbert-and-Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte is his

prophet, world without end. Imagine the plays of Sheridan and Wilde being the monopoly of one company apiece, or the symphonies of Beethoven of one orchestra. The D'Oyly Cartes have faithfully preserved Gilbert's routines for 70 years (though I don't know what Gilbert would have said to the "Three Little Meeds" and "Were Oi Thoi Broide" in the latest recordings), but these routines are now dying on their feet. It's certainly time to let new talent have a go, as free of old ideas as possible. The result might often enough be dreadful, but an occasional production might achieve a distinction which is now beyond the monopolists. —R.D.McE.

Lili

LILI KRAUS is back, and she gave her first recital on YC link last week. I wonder how many listeners felt as I did: the years dropping like scales from the mind, back to 1946 with the war just over, but the musical famine still on; then this goddess among us, opening for us with her art a whole new world of sound. I owe her much. She first made me listen to Mozart and Bartok, and made me aware for the first time of Schubert as a serious composer. Over her best playing in those years there hung what I can describe

HULK

*SHE lacks no tether, acquiescing in
The mud-loving anchor—she accepts
A paralysis of contentment, conceding
A monopoly of barnacles.*

*Spent all her spirit, she is denied
Gold-pampered soils, she hugs
The squalid wharf who was rich
In sunsets, and death gnaws her ribs
Who lightly as a legend ran.*

*Not to be robbed in regimentation, never
To outsmart winds . . . stilled to acceptance,
Schooled to the dirge of decay, and cringing
Beneath the counted hours . . .*

—J. R. Hervey

only as a golden bloom, and I have wondered since whether it was because she was merely the first of a long line of impressive musicians, whether her striking personality and my youth were responsible, or whether nostalgically, I was simply gilding the past. But now I have heard her again, playing the Beethoven F Sharp Major Sonata and the Eroica Variations, and I know that my tender ears were not deceived; there is the same wonderful ripe bloom on her tone, the highest finish of performance, and all the evidence of the deepest musical insight. In the matter simply of keyboard athletics, she can make some resounding names look foolish, and of the playing as a whole, I can only say, gratefully and inadequately, a musician is back among us. Her great gift, surely the supreme one for a musician, is to lead one into the heart of the music itself without a single irrelevant distraction. Only one artist in hundreds offers this purity of intention. My regret is profound that she will not be playing more often here, and I envy all those fortunate souls who will be hearing her for the first time. —B.E.G.M.

Vas You Dere, Sharlie?

I AM quite unable to determine whether the NZBS intended *Potash and Perlmutter* to be accepted in its own right as entertainment, or as an example of an outmoded curiosity. Misleadingly described as "one of the classic comedies of the American theatre," this

trivial old dialect piece was played so dead-pan that, if it was offered as a "specimen," there was nothing to indicate it. *Potash and Perlmutter*, like *Abie's Irish Rose*, belongs to a period when patronising dialect comedies, with sentimental plots, were acceptable popular material in polyglot New York. The two wrangling, friendly-enemy Jewish partners in a clothing business no longer satisfy a less naive view of reality nor tastes sharpened by more searching presentations of racial characteristics. And the ridiculous story derives from the brash popular theatre of the late 19th century. Selwyn Toogood and Alan Jarvis did what they could with subordinate roles; but as *Potash and Perlmutter*, Bernard Beeby and Roy Leywood hammed outrageously. Given these stereotyped parts, I suppose they could do little else. But I am not one of those who find corn and ham a palatable radio meal.

Owen Jensen

IT'S hard to realise that we must now get along without Owen Jensen. His departure for England removes our most engaging, lively and consistently reliable musical commentator, whose enthusiastic advocacy has ushered in some of my most enjoyable listening. Not only in the venerable *Music Magazine*, as guide through Mozart and Bach, as principal of *Feminine Viewpoint's School of Music*, as panel-member, as interval speaker, but as brains of the Cambridge Music School, conductor, accompanist, and solo pianist, he has been a vital force in the shaping of our musical tastes. As a crusader against musical snobbery, as an apostle of the enjoyment of music, as advocate of contemporary music, and as a populariser of musical ideas, Owen Jensen must have done as much as anybody to help create a climate in New Zealand in which music is really beginning to flourish. And that air of off-the-cuff spontaneity, the result of years of exposition on the radio and in the lecture-room, which removed music from the realm of the long-haired, is a gift which only very few share. It is to be hoped he will return to us, like a giant refreshed. Even in the present hopeful state of music here, we can ill spare him—from the air, at least.

—J.C.R.

The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

WHEN an idealist in music composes, he aims at but does not necessarily attain his ideals, and if he perseveres, may live to become impatient with his own music, since such ideals are hardly reached. Even then, his goal may not be common to all, and so his music may be unacceptable to some audiences. George Dyson had no illusions on this score; his ideals lay in art as an inspiration to the fellowship in Man, and the theme of fellowship lies happily at the root of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, his best-known and perhaps best-wrought work, in which he portrays the pilgrims as musical characters, diverse yet knit by common purpose. As Dyson says, he does not claim to be markedly original, but writes "everyday music," which he omits to say is often markedly derivative as well.

This work was performed (YC link). I think for the second time locally in the past few years, with the National Orchestra; the Phoenix Choir were the singers, and contrived to make even their most unconvincing numbers sound feasible and natural. Portraits such as the Clerk, who represents here a feat of vocal control, did not die the unnatural death that they meet at the hands of most choirs, while the hearty

Merchant brought their full force to bear stunningly. Sybil Philipps made an agile Wife of Bath, Donald Munro sounded more than usually competent, and Richard Lewis graced the difficult tenor solos. With such talent, even the words failed to make their poor impression ("modernised" from Chaucer by distortion rather than by paraphrase). The best thing in the performance was undoubtedly the closing passage, which died away into an ancient distance as realistically—and companionably—as one could wish. Even Dyson's ideals would be satisfied.

I should like to toss a bouquet to the 3YC programme organisers; out of the YC stations, they seem to have most urge towards interesting programmes. Instead of the usual Bach-followed-by-Verdi-followed-by-Bartok, they try to bind an evening together, giving generous portions of style or atmosphere rather than mere snippets. For instance, a talk on primitive magic was surrounded by musical works based on folk lore; and this was the only station with a programme of American music on July 4. Naturally, some of this work is a little naive so far; but bringing such imagination to the task, there is no reason why stations should not produce integrated entertainment.

"Psst, Comrade! Your cover is slipping"



(C) Punch

DAVID SYMONDS