

## THE ROAD TO GUNDAGAI

YEARS ago, more than I care to recall, I used to listen to *Dad and Dave* every week. They were archetypal characters of my youth, mountainously, but engagingly stupid, surmounting with a gigantic earthy calm, the forces of hostile nature arrayed against them. Wasn't it always teeming in Snake Gully? As I recall, they lived in unpainted lean-tos and shacks, with Dave and Mabel mooring cretinously at each other as they floundered amiably along the soggy road of their interminable courtship, subject of a hundred unprintable accounts of the Life Force in the outbacks. I tuned in to them the other night, after an absence of, I fear, 20 years. It was a shock. They seem entirely respectable now, well housed, and it was not raining. They spent their time on trivial errands which in one episode I could hardly untangle, but the old earthy comedy of humours, that curious enlivening mixture of mercury and sludgy melancholy, has gone. It is, I suppose, quite unreasonable to expect a comedy series to maintain its invention or its style over a whole generation: after all, Dave and Mabel would have to get hitched sometime, but the present series has no more relation to the old, than, say, a modern comedy has to the stage humours of Ben Jonson. Most of the episode consisted of various sections of *The Road to Gundagai* rendered by full orchestra. I shall not listen again, I fear, but use

this page to mourn the passing of three great, and for all their dampness, noble characters.  
—B.E.G.M.

### Chekhov and Branch Water

WE have now had on radio both of N. C. Hunter's imitations of Chekhov. I think I prefer *A Day by the Sea*, broadcast last Monday, to the later *Waters of the Moon*, chiefly because it seems to strain less after melancholy and literary nostalgia, and to achieve genuinely poetic overtones, where the other play is trite. The grouping together of frustrated and self-deluded people with empty lives hardly makes for cheerful entertainment; yet the serious and sensitive playing of the NZBS cast left behind not depression but a sense of character explored and humanity vindicated. In roles "created," as I believe the jargon goes, by Sybil Thorndike and John Gielgud, Davina Whitehouse and William Austin played with exactly the right nuances. But I felt that Michael Cotterill, as William Gregson, made the deepest impression, especially in his scene of maudlin self-pity. A play of this kind—contrivance masked by delicate character-balance—seems just right for radio: Roy Leywood's adaptation kept all the flavour of the original. But how very much better the Russians do this sort of thing—and how faintly but unmistakably dated the characters appear beside the tail-chasing types of Messrs Osborne, Amis and Wain.

### Bernstein on Beethoven

"THE incredible Bernstein." *The Listener* called him recently—not too extravagantly at that. Having shown

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

NOW that we have a harpsichord, there is more early music to review, for those who espouse the gospel of authenticity no longer need to wrestle with their consciences before they plunge into piano recitals of baroque pieces. A case in point concerns Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, played previously and now presented, en masse as it were, in two concerts (YC link), featuring Valda Aveling as the harpsichordist. There is at least no complaint about programme arranging here, the whole set being homogeneous in style if not actually in texture.

In the first concerto the slow movement was particularly lovely for balance and clarity of tone, and the faster sections built up well to their climaxes, marred only by some rough edges from the horns, which are here forced almost above their playing register. The second, with its flying trumpet, can scarcely fail to appeal, and was well up to expectations. The third, for strings only, was rather pedestrian, and I was disappointed at the deficiency of an improvisatory passage between the movements. The last concerto, for the dark-coloured lower strings, somehow contrived to be jaunty and immensely vivacious, without the blurred contours that one so often hears and endures in this piece. Even the Mantovani-like canon effect in the opening movement

was convincing, while the finale positively bounced along to its resoundingly finite conclusion.

The remaining concerti were impaired by anomalies of balance; in the fourth, the flutes were soft and the violin far too loud, while in number five the harpsichord was barely audible in some of its important passages, possibly owing to the microphone's limitations.

Valda Aveling also appeared as soloist in a suite for harpsichord, in which she exploited the instrument in all its tonal range, from the soft damped tones to the ringing brassy octaves, with impeccable interpretations of Bach's intentions. In the Italian Concerto she was less assured, as evidenced by flurrying tempi and consequent inaccuracies; and her practice of changing tone colour in the middle of a phrase I found deplorable. In the orchestral works, on the other hand, she judged nicely the tone required, always supporting without obtruding.

James Robertson's readings were fairly conventional but satisfying; yet though this was all a commendably ambitious venture, I felt the difference between the good and the faulty so marked as to magnify the latter, which was a pity; perhaps a judicious selection of concerti in one concert would have provided a higher overall standard.

himself as a most engaging and knowledgeable commentator in his illustrated talk on jazz, he revealed another side of his expository talent in his talk, heard on the Sunday National Programme, on

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Taking the rejected sketches for this work, Leonard Bernstein explored with the understanding only a composer could possess, the presumed reasons for Beet-



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