

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

FOLK song, straight from the horse's mouth, as it were, continues to gain in favour, and the number of popular collector-singers increases steadily. We have had Negro spirituals, Burl Ives, "All Day Singing," and others, mainly untrained or natural voices. Now we hear William Clauson, the much-lauded American troubadour, who is soon to be here in person. His is a smooth, trained voice without the rasp in its timbre that we are beginning to expect in folk singers, a versatile organ that can sound from a mellow baritone up to a comic falsetto, never losing the essential quality—that of clear enunciation: for even when the words are nonsensical (as in "The Bold Fisherman") they control all the rhythm and meaning of the song. The gems we heard (YA link) were from one of his successful recordings, and if his singing in the flesh is as impressive, we will be well rewarded if we listen to him. From the tragic to the farcical, from old sea ditties to Welsh tunes, he has an all-too-rare insight and zest; and his own guitar accompaniments make a first-rate setting, not too complex, not obscuring the song. Folk song represents some of the best marriages of words and music that we know, and with Mr Clauson officiating as priest, these weddings go without a hitch.

I find an unpleasant diet awaits me; I shall have to eat my words as far as Valda Aveling is concerned. I have heard three of her recitals (YC links), and at least in harpsichord work there is no doubt that solo playing is her metier. Until one hears the instrument thoughtfully and intimately played,

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sister Monique was hardly less impressive in the Ravel G Major Piano Concerto; her playing was beautifully neat, meticulous and subtle—in the best sense, French. And so to a rousing finish with a suite of Tchaikovsky variations. If one has any criticism, it is that this concert offered an embarrassment of riches. Malko and two Fallots: this is more than a feast, it is banquet.

Au Revoir

LILI KRAUS has left us after her brief tour, and I am sure that many of us are grateful for hearing her again. She gave four broadcasts and I heard them all. In a Schumann-Brahms programme, she gave a wonderfully free, soaring account of the Schumann *Papillons*, but her versions of two Brahms Rhapsodies did not increase my affection for these lumpy, gawky pieces, so ungratefully laid out for the piano; why pianists bother with them, I cannot fathom. Lili's enthusiastic playing of them fused them into that dark-brown sludge that, it seems, only Julius Katchem can clear. But her Haydn broadcast was a joy, beautifully light and witty, and her playing of the Beethoven, Op. 109, far the finest reading of this amazing work that I ever remember. The theme was beautifully stated, and the slow fragmenting of the sound into ever more aerial modes was a triumph of intellect and feeling. It is good to know that when she returns in 1959 she will stay for some time, and I can only say that she will find these shores always hospitable to her fine artistry.

—B.E.G.M.

there remains in the mind the impression of impersonal or inexpressive sounds, with the mechanics of it all looming large in one's consciousness. Yet how different, for instance, the colour in a true harpsichord work like the G Major Sonata of Scarlatti; here the brilliant jingling scales and arpeggios are interspersed with rather pathetic little interludes, which with the registration used, sounded almost like a Spanish guitarist in the throes of a serenade. Again, all pianists at some stage struggle with Handel's "Harmonious Blacksmith" variations; but few of them can realise on their instrument the tonal contrasts, the thrumming figures and the whirlwind runs in the way that we heard here. As a pianist, Miss Aveling seemed a little less happy; but I shall remember the harpsichord recitals with pleasure.

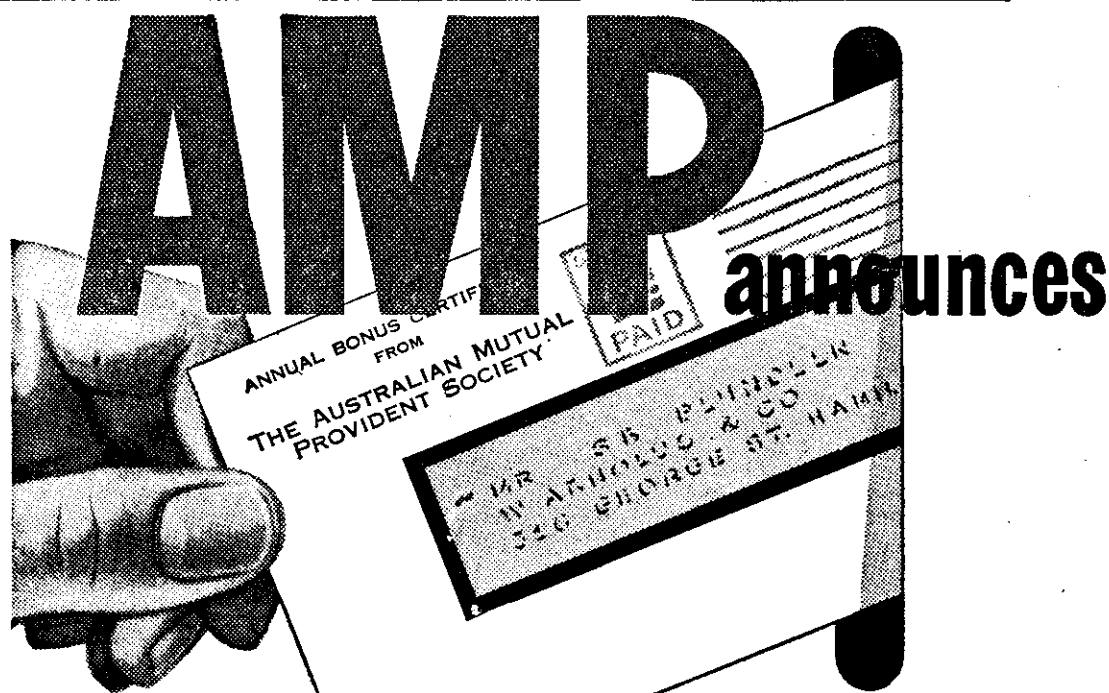


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