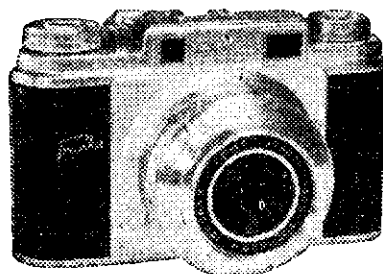


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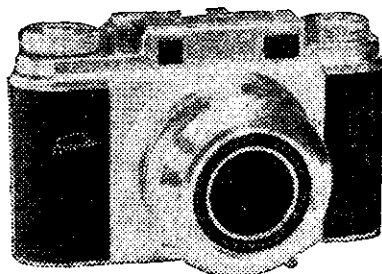
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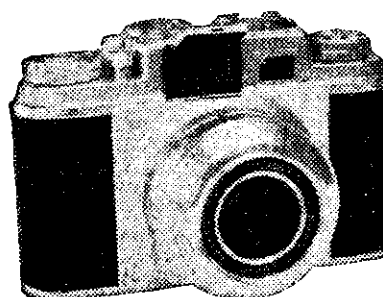
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Radio Review

WAITING FOR DAN

SAMUEL BECKETT'S play, *All That Fall* (1YC), had much the same effect on me as "that blessed word, Mesopotamia" had on the old lady. I had only the vaguest idea what it meant, but found it absorbing. Whatever Mr Beckett is trying to say—if, in fact, he is trying to say anything beyond "Yah!"—he certainly knows how to handle words. As startling in its first impact as *Under Milk Wood*, *All That Fall* uses language as gnomic as Thomas's is ornate, and as suggestive as his is rich. It spawns grey mists where *Milk Wood* shoots rainbows. Yet this odd play about a sorrowful Irishwoman waiting for a train and taking her morose, blind husband home, although crossed with talk of sterility, dung and young doom, with the tedium and pain of life, and with many hints of evil, did not leave me totally depressed. There was comedy in the church-haunting Miss Fitt, and pathos rather than despair in Mrs Rooney's "A little love—that's all I ask," and "Be nice to me, Dan"; and, whereas the characters in *Waiting for Godot* seemed to me puzzling abstractions, those in *All That Fall*, although twitching in a ditch of dead leaves, were people one could sympathise with as individuals.

Perhaps habitual listening to a certain highly-esteemed session explains my finding some of the lines ludicrous (Mrs Rooney's "lifelong preoccupation with horses' buttocks," for instance) and being reminded by the one-two-boom ambulatory effects of goonish pranks with coconut-shells. But, in general, the production was atmospherically excellent, and Mary O'Farrell's Mrs Rooney is surely one of the truly great pieces of radio acting.

Does one have to understand a play completely on at least one level to enjoy it? I could only make a stab at partial interpretation of this one. For instance, I feel that many of the images

and allusions could be taken in a Christian sense, and that perhaps Mr Beckett is saying that, in this age of unaccommodated man, we need each other more than ever. But, whether there is a deeper meaning here or merely a mood, *All That Fall* entertains throughout. A blend of darker existentialism, Joycean realism, Irish caricature and music-hall humour, it flickers between sadness, gloom, longing, despair, nostalgia, acceptance and nihilism, yet in the end comes up with a synthesis of atmosphere I can only call Beckettian.

I want to encounter this bizarre, effective work again. In the meantime, a word of praise to the NZBS for letting us hear it so soon after its first broadcast in England earlier this year.

—J.C.R.

A Hitch in Time

I RECALL Britten's *Let's Make an Opera!* as one of the most enchanting evenings I have ever spent in the theatre, and I was delighted to hear it again from YC last week. The opera, *The Little Sweep*, which forms the second half of the evening's entertainment, was given alone, and it runs about an hour. The music is always charming, often brilliantly adroit, and I could discern from time to time Britten's considerable debt to Verdi, which he does not hesitate to acknowledge. I was a little repelled by the upper-class pipe of Master Hemmings, who revealed, in his spoken dialogue, no trace of his humble origin. But what really incensed me about the broadcast was the arbitrary deletion of ten minutes of the score, which included the hilarious fugue "Help, help, she's collapsed!" though, through some technical hitch about twenty bars of the deleted passage were given, only to be extinguished by the audience song which opens the third scene. The opera thus finished ten minutes early, and this space was filled in by piano duets for reasons impenetrable to me.

Junk

THIS is the age of junk. Thousands of heaps of old motor-cars, perhaps only last year's models, litter the indus-

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

REAL humour in wordless music, as I have suggested before, is a rarity; parodies we have, witty trifles and several risible scherzi since Haydn, the master humorist. Otherwise, there is little—*L'Apprenti Sorcier* being a notable exception—till recent times. Composers took their art very seriously, and those who sought mirth were the hoi polloi, to be disregarded. Now their influence is felt again, mainly in America, but also in other countries (as in the Hoffnung Festival, which still leaned heavily on parody). We heard recently (YC link) the National Orchestra performing Alfred Hill's "Overture of Welcome," which employs Haydn's farewell device in reverse, but requires vision for its full effect. A purely aural humour, however, pervades Don Gillis's Symphony No. 5½, which they played in another programme; here the symphonic style is invaded by the idioms of the honky-tonk, and the wail of full muted brass is heard in sonata form. Again there is parody—did you notice Dvorak peeping shyly through the Spiritual?—and of course too much noise; but the Scherzo (frenia) was artistic as well as funny, and there were deft touches that would benefit a more serious-minded piece. The Orchestra played it with zest, and the spirit of fun for which the Symphony is named was served well.

Glenda Raymond, on a return visit, has sung several times with the Orchestra (YC link), notably in Glière's Concerto for voice and orchestra. Once more we were treated to a fantastic display of vocal aerobatics: and again I was impressed by the lack of worth and warmth in it all. There is the glitter, the tinsel trappings of a troupe of gymnasts; but the music that is written around such voices seems to lack feeling, being maintained on a lightly euphoric plane, summoning gasps but not tears, joy or contentment.

There were many good things in the rest of the Orchestra's tour: the *Coc d'Or Suite*, dazzling and barbaric, brought some excellent wind playing; and the *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, with pianist Janetta McStay, was a rhythmic pleasure. Yet their best effort of the week was a recorded concert (NZBS), the most enjoyable item being Mozart's Piano Concerto in G, with Olive Bloom as soloist. The piano sparkled, the players practically vamped, the variations were beautifully rounded, and the whole had a good-tempered security. In all, this was a series of concerts I would have been sorry to miss, and they showed fully how much James Robertson has done during his stay here.

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 8, 1957.