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RADIO REVIEW

Death of a Gangster

THE Voice of America play, *The Rat on Lincoln Avenue* (1YA) was a magnificent piece of radio. Produced by the University of North Carolina with the author, John Ehle, in the cast, it used the form of a crime thriller to put across some pungent social propaganda. For the occasion was that Chicago night in 1934 when the vicious gangster, John Dillinger, was shot down by FBI men as he left a cinema—a fact only gradually revealed during the play—and the drama flashed back and forth between terrified citizens watching what seemed a massing of hoodlums, and waiting detectives, their nerves at full stretch. With its laconic, colloquial, meaning-packed sentences and cross-cutting rhythms like those of a Hitchcock thriller, the play forcibly made points implicit in so many good American movies—the glamour of crime that leads to the over-publicising of the criminal, the average man's instinctive rebellion against order which complicates the policeman's job, the temptation of the police to adopt the methods of their enemies, and the dependence of the rule of law upon the co-operation of the people. Jam-packed with ideas, *The Rat on Lincoln Avenue* was a beautiful example of radio writing, which dramatised and not merely stated its moral.

Golden Wedding

WHEN, early in 1956, the NZBS broadcast Barbara Jefford's reading of Alan Mulgan's *Golden Wedding*, I commented on this page that, for all her professional skill, I felt that the work needed "a male reader, and a New Zealander at that, able to respond more spontaneously to the local references and atmosphere." From *Book Shop* last week,

I learnt that this pious wish has been fulfilled. With the quite legitimate excuse that book shops sell records these days, Arnold Wall reviewed the new commercial recording of the poem, and played us an extract from it. I can't imagine a better reader for this work than William Austin, who fulfills both my conditions, and several other more exacting ones as well. He catches the warm, nostalgic quality of the poem admirably, and yet allows the piece to project its own charm without any attempt to impose a "personality" on it, as he did with the very different long poem A. R. D. Fairburn's *To a Friend in the Wilderness*, which I remember as one of the finest radio readings I have ever heard. It is by such unexpected bonuses that Arnold Wall keeps *Book Shop* from sinking into the doldrums. Many listeners will share his pleasure that *Golden Wedding* is available in this excellent rendering. I hope the NZBS will make an opportunity to broadcast the entire recording very soon.

—J.C.R.

Proteus

I MISSED *The Grand Prix of Gibraltar* on Showcase recently, and it was therefore a great pleasure to pick it up on ZB last Sunday afternoon. What a performance! Peter Ustinov, of celebrated Russian parents and English education combines in his personality the warring ingredients indispensable for wit and comedy; add to his heritage ears with the sensitive detection of radio antennae, a wickedly accurate eye for incongruities of behaviour, and you have a unique bag of tricks. But *The Grand Prix* has more even than this. His show is no mere stunt; his observations on national characters, revealed through his protean voice, capable of assuming any accent or timbre, are not only shrewd and witty, but genuinely touching as well. This, for example, when in his guise of American newscaster, thrilled to the marrow with the historical associations of the great event,

The Week's Music... by GRAHAM PATON

★ WHAT was probably the most dazzling and exciting performance in the whirlwind tour of our Czech visitors—Tchaikovsky's Fourth symphony at Dunedin—was heard again in an NZBS recording of the concert. As this work gives a conductor a wonderful chance (one which Beecham, for instance, never misses), to make his audience swoon under the impact of sumptuous colour and fiery emotions, much could be expected of the Czech Philharmonic. Given the lavish resources of this orchestra—its rich, passionate strings, its brass choir at once mellow and incisive, its remarkably lyrical woodwind soloists—it would be a tame man, indeed, who could not make something of the opportunities Tchaikovsky throws his way. But Ladislav Slovák is no mere routine musician: his nervous reactions to a score would seem to be pitched a few degrees higher than Karel Ancel's; he has, also, a more acute sense of forward-driving rhythm. This last quality enabled him to keep the symphony's slow movement free from undue sentimental emphasis yet elegant in line and expressive in phrasing; with its help he was able to keep the scherzo off the ground and all of a piece; it was the chief factor in charging the music's brilliant display in the last movement with a throbbing electric current so that each climax in turn shot up in emotional

temperature with spine-racing effect. Earlier in the week a rapturous performance of *Daphnis and Chloe*, implying fine-grained sensibility and a sophisticated technique on the part of the conductor, made it plain that Mr Slovák's memorable Tchaikovsky was no mere flash in the pan.

Without question Lili Kraus, at her best, can bring the gods down among us. It was so in the broadcast from her Wellington recital. And it is probably true to say that, among today's interpreters of the Viennese classics, she has a vision equalled only by Clara Maskill. In a sense these two artists are complementary aspects of the one view—Madame Kraus more impulsive in manner, more sheerly human in her approach; the other more concerned to erase all self from her interpretation, more detached in attitude and more fastidious about polishing the outward form. Yet Madame Kraus cuts the more boldly into the substance of Mozart and Haydn; her work is both more stark and of greater emotional weight. The expressive force of her playing of Mozart's great Fantasy and Sonata in C minor comes directly from her ability to focus the work's masculine and feminine elements in such a way that the interplay of inner tensions is at a maximum. And Mozart does not ask more than that.



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