

The Week's Music... by GRAHAM PATON

THE Hollywood Quartet must surely rank among the best. As a machine it functions with brilliance and precision, its intonation is impeccable, its tone is consistently warm—often juicy—with never a trace of that mean, gritty sound that mars lesser quartets. Nor do you get any impression of stuffy pedantry from its style, only the sense of players setting about the music with a large-hearted enthusiasm. The quartet's energy and ardour are remarkable. At times, though, the ardour is overdone. In the outer movements of Haydn's quartet, Op. 77, No. 1 these qualities were both captivating and seemly; less so, however, in the slow movement. The use of too-insistent vibrato in melody playing and an occasional slide on a string to point the tear in a phrase may possibly tell us that players feel their music deeply;

(continued from previous page)

why shouldn't Edith Campion have played it in Scots for the New Zealand Players, and why not an Irish Maid? After all, the Saint spoke, presumably, rough French: to use an English text at all is merely a convention. That said, let me pass on to say that at the end of the first five scenes of this production (the trial and epilogue will follow) I think this Irish Maid the most distinguished I have ever heard. She seemed to have studied with care the words of her countryman J. M. Synge, in the introduction to *The Playboy*: "In a good play, every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or an apple." *Saint Joan* is such a play, but it needs an artist determined equally on flavour to make its tang palpable. This fine actress did so with the most touching intensity and a wide emotional range. The great difficulty of the part is to fuse in one image the child of nature and the child of God. Siobhan McKenna did so, firing her Joan by passion, insight and understanding.

Let's Make an Opera

DURING the run of Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, the New Zealand Opera Company presented two afternoons for schoolchildren, showing the opera broken down into its component parts; and one of these, in an edited version, was broadcast last week on the National Programme. The head of each section spoke on his responsibilities: the secretary, faced with every kind of administrative crisis ("Is the composer sufficiently dead to avoid paying royalties? How will we uplift those 30 wigs?"), the conductor breaking the opera down musically, the producer on his problems, the designer, the stage director, the electrician, the singers themselves. One thing emerged, wholly valuable no doubt to people who imagine that such occasions get themselves together: the tremendous amount of varied energy willingly pooled to field an opera. But is this really our concern? I recall one very distinguished gentleman's speech after a professional opening some years ago: "We were sewing Miss—into her dress three minutes before she went on!" None of our business, I felt, and an invincibly amateur approach. Despite the intrinsic interest of this account of the *Madam Butterfly* jigsaw, it is the whole assembly we are concerned with, and that for which we buy our tickets.

—B.E.G.M.

it does not indicate a revealing insight into the slow movement of Op. 77, No. 1—a less demonstrative treatment might. If the Hollywood Quartet saw this Viennese classic in too florid a light—Haydn with a dash of semitic sensuality about him—they made no miscalculations in the fervid world of late Beethoven. The Op. 132 quartet emerged in smooth coherence (no mean achievement) with a wonderfully sensitive balance and shading of parts: the reading itself had no suggestion of either shall-

owness or over-statement about it: a quiet radiance and a feeling of long-standing intimacy with the music were projected instead. Then there was, also, the tremendous rhythmic vitality and spontaneity of their playing to admire in the performance of Bartok's third quartet, a work whose asperities seemed to soften in the warm luxuriance of the players' tone. It will be very much to our discredit if we do other than chase the remaining broadcasts of the Hollywood Quartet.

In a series of concerts the National Orchestra showed that, like the rest of us, it has been greatly stimulated by the visit of the Czech Philharmonic. Not

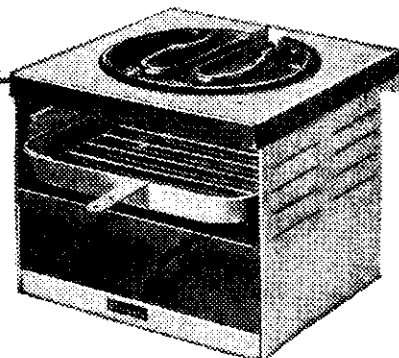
only has ensemble been commendably tidy but the strings, especially, sound in better shape—stronger in tone, more urgent in phrasing. Guest tenor, William Herbert, gave a musicianly if otherwise somewhat neutral performance of Gerald Finzi's compact, lyrically-fired work—*Dies Natalis*. Cheek by jowl, Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* prelude came as a piece of portentous windiness—and gauche programming. But we cannot have enough of the initiative which led to the playing of Karl Amadeus Hartmann's fifth symphony later in the week, even if this adroit, brittle clever-fast-rhythm music has little to offer the spiritually hungry.

When kitchen space is limited

in SMALL HOMES, FLATS,

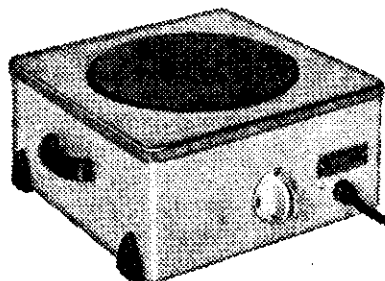
SEASIDE BACHES or CARAVANS

Ultimate solves your cooking problem!



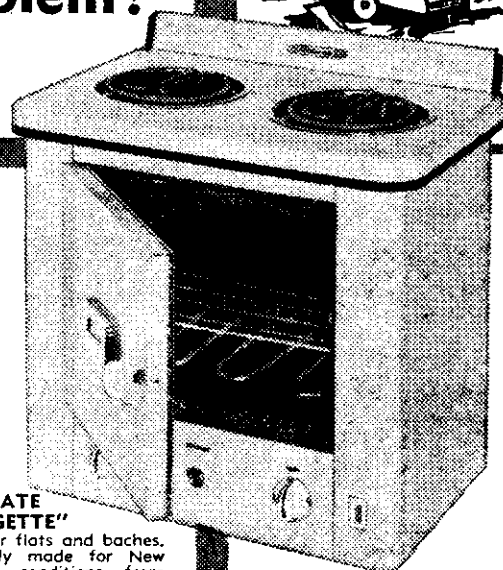
ULTIMATE "MINIGRILL"

This compact little cooker will prepare a variety of meals with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum expenditure in cost and time. Can be used as a Griller, Hot Plate or Immersion Heater. £5/12/6



ULTIMATE "HANDI-HEAT"

Hot plate with varied 3-heat control. Sturdy cast 8" plate built into strong steel surround and finished in ivory enamel. Excellent for jobbers, roomers, etc. £6/19/6



ULTIMATE "RANGETTE"

Ideal for flats and baches. Especially made for New Zealand conditions from selected top-grade materials and incorporating entirely new features and design. The best "small oven" buy on the market and firm favourite in thousands of baches and flats throughout New Zealand. £25/10/-

Obtainable from all
ULTIMATE-EKCO
Stockists, Electrical
and Hardware Stores.

Ultimate COOKERS

Designed, Manufactured and Distributed by



ULTIMATE-EKCO (N.Z.) CO. LTD., Quay St., Auckland.