

New Zealanders Phyl Wardell has reduced it from more than 20 short episodes to seven long ones. The story is to be published in book form next year.

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AT a rehearsal in Wellington a couple of weeks back, William Herbert was chuckling about a conversation he happened to overhear at breakfast the morning before. He took great delight in sharing the story with Janetta McStay, and also with *The Listener*. It opened something like this: "Went along to the Concert Chamber last TENOR night to hear that tenor fellow; but by a strange quirk of fate I found myself in the main hall listening to the Luton Girls' Choir. And I'm very glad I did. You can hear a tenor anytime, but it's not often you get a chance to hear a choir of girls like that."

William Herbert's New Zealand tour followed a very full Australian one, so the first questions that came to mind were about the precautions he might take to withstand the strain of concerts night after night, and his way of looking after his voice. Both were answered very simply. "I never worry about my voice, it seems to take care of itself. The great thing, however, is knowing how to relax. After three or four concerts in as many days, the first, say, in London, the second in Amsterdam, the third in Liverpool, with a 12.10 a.m. train to catch back to London afterwards for a BBC broadcast—I've had to catch that train more times than I care to remember—it's essential that you stretch out somewhere and relax completely." When time allows, Mr Herbert has a way of relaxing that is of strictly limited appeal—he likes cutting grass. "At my home in Surrey I have two beautiful lawns, and during the summer months when, apart from choir festivals and a few short tours, there are only the Edinburgh Festival and Proms at the Albert Hall, I usually manage to spend quite a bit of time looking after them." He also enjoys a game of golf, though he doesn't bother to carry clubs around on tour.

Mr Herbert mentioned that during his stay in Wellington a friend had taken him for a drive into the hills. There was a radio in the car, and they were able to pick up the first part of a concert held a few days earlier when he



Spencer Digby photograph

WILLIAM HERBERT and JANETTA McSTAY

had sung with the National Orchestra. "Although I knew at the time they were playing magnificently, it was not until we heard that broadcast that I realised just how good they were. Really first-class."

Just before leaving England for his Australian tour, Mr Herbert received a cable from the ABC asking if he would sing Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* in Sydney under Nicolai Malko. "I had never seen the work and no copy was immediately available, but after a brief hesita-

tion I cabled back saying I would do it. When I finally did study the score I was astounded to see what it involved. However the difficulties fell into place fairly quickly and the performance was a success. A few weeks later, in Adelaide, I met Malko again and I told him how much I had enjoyed working under him, adding that I had been invited to sing *Oedipus* in Copenhagen next January. To my surprise he beamed, put out his hand and said: "Good. I am conducting."

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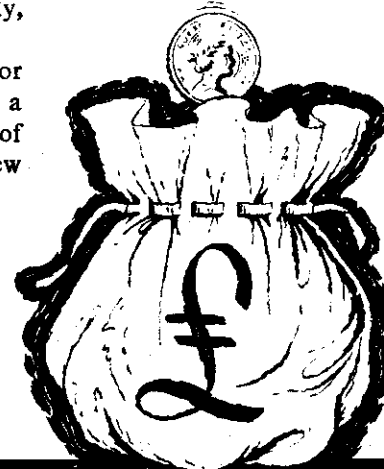
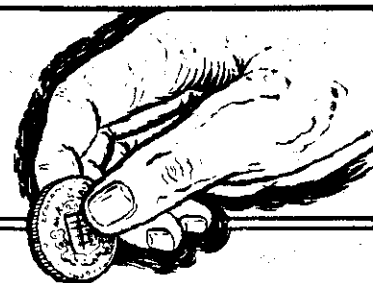
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