

instruments at home, and, worse still, forgotten what the subject was. Mr. Crowther, pianoless, was reduced to harping on the *Lily of Laguna*. Mr. Austin did a lot of straight-from-the-shoulder shooting at targets not for tonight (of Benjamin Britten—"Hasn't written a bar of real music yet"). Mr. Harris produced a quotation from someone that some modern songs were better than

Strauss, which Mr. Austin denied absolutely. The only relevant remark was contributed by the chairman, who said that if some modern songs were suggestive some Elizabethan lyrics were downright inviting. Now at this stage the only modern songs I could think of were "Riders in the Sky," "Buttons and Bows," and "Shoo-Fly Pie and Apple

Pan-Dowdy," none

of which seemed to pose a moral question. I feel more could have been done had the panel selected one modern song, say "Civilisation," got Mr. Crowther to play it

so that we all knew what we were talking about, then settled down to decide whether "Bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't want to leave the Congo" expresses a legitimate impulse towards self-determination or merely an anti-social and reprehensible bias against self-improvement.

—M.B.

The Lilburn Sonata

IT was interesting to hear for the first time from 4YA a performance by Frederick Page of Douglas Lilburn's controversial sonata for piano. Musical controversy is particularly barren in New Zealand because it rests upon no background of solid musical criticism. For this latter, musical gossip columns and abusive letters to the Press are not much of a substitute. However, enough had been said in the North about Lilburn's Sonata to whet our curiosity. The sonata turned out to be one of considerable scope, recognisably modern in tone, but, to my ears, not excessively harsh. The impression I formed (and an impression is all that a broadcast hearing can give) was of a sensitive, closely-textured work, distinctly individual in style. Certainly it should do much to vindicate Lilburn's claim to be our leading composer. Frederick Page further braved the pundits by presenting on Tuesday a Stravinsky Serenade. This work, with its restraint and preference for low-toned effects, must have surprised some who still see Stravinsky only as the high priest of the devilish cult of modernism, celebrating musical orgies with the noises of the jungle. The pianist maintained his usual standard of care and competence, effacing himself and letting the music make its own impression.

Weariness of the Flesh

OF the reviewing of books, over the air there is no end, but a good deal of wearying of listeners' attention. Many, no doubt, tune into these sessions simply seeking the title of a decent novel to borrow from the library or book club over the week-end, and, if all they get besides, is a stodgy *résumé* of the plot, then presumably they don't worry. The book reviewer from 1YZ, whose session prompts these remarks, follows this pattern of reviewing pretty faith-

fully, and so do quite a number of other reviewers. But book reviews, for many people, do not really fall into the same category as stock market reports, and something more should be given the listener than a mere descriptive catalogue of contents, with title, author and publisher. Surely the first essential is to interest the listener, and, as anyone who has tried to pass on his opinion of a book knows, the worst and duller way to set about it is to re-tell the plot. Some information about the contents of the book must obviously be given, but the main thing for general reviewing is that the reviewer should convey to his listeners a definite personal impression, having himself as pre-requisites a warm and human approach, width of literary background and sound critical standards.

Shadow Circus

SOMETHING like an un-English flavour has crept into the programmes recently. Our announcers in Auckland have been grappling manfully with the names of athletes from Nigeria and Ceylon, the French Broadcasting Service has a Chopin Centennial Programme for us, and on Sunday from 4YA we had a surprise from Switzerland. It all makes a welcome relief from Anglo-Saxon ubiquity. *The Swiss Circus*, however, though genuinely made in Switzerland, had little in it to remind us of its origin. It might have been made by the BBC, except that the latter are too experienced to try so unrewarding a task

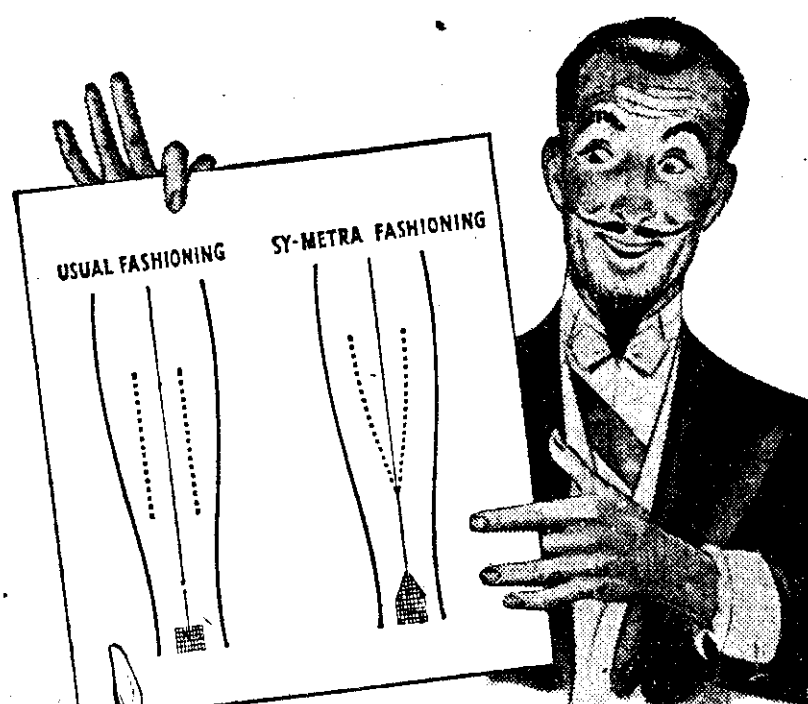


as reducing the sights, the colours, and the smells of the big top to the shadowy presences of a narrator's voice and some sound effects. Some of the asides of the commentator suggested that a straight talk about the training of the animals and acrobats might have been more interesting. I should think, though, that a juvenile audience, having, as it were, a vested interest in circuses and with more vivid imaginations than their elders, would find *The Swiss Circus* better listening.

—K.J.S.

Shapeless Ghost

THE minutes of the Chitchat Society for October 28, 1893, record that "Mr. James read *Two Ghost Stories*." Every year after that, a small party assembled at his rooms to hear "Monty" James's latest. A Fellow of King's and for 18 years Provost of Eton, Dr. Montague James admitted that Sheridan le Fanu was his chief inspiration, especially where walking corpses were concerned, but James surpasses most writers of ghost stories in the eeriness of his atmosphere, in the vindictiveness and malignancy of his ghosts, who have an uncomfortable habit of operating in broad daylight. One of M. R. James's stories, a chiller in miniature, called *The Haunted Doll's House*, was written for the library of the Queen's Doll's House. Another and even more famous story describes the unnerving experience of a professor who plays a tune on an old flute, and conjures up a horror that is not only nameless but shapeless. This story, "Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, my Lad," told by Valentine Dyall in the BBC series *The Man in Black* will be heard from 4YZ at 10.0 p.m. on Friday, March 3.



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