

UNPERFORMED OVERTURE

Sir,—A prize-winning work in the Auckland Music Council's composition competition for 1950 remains unperformed. Mr. Goossens, the judge, described the work in the awarding of the prize as follows (*Listener*, June 6, 1950): "A 14-minute arrangement for orchestra and piano entitled *Mardi Gras* is a colourful piece of music, with much contemporary harmonic expression, and clarity of expression, and in parts rather hectic." Early in June it was announced that the conductor of the National Orchestra would not be playing the work. Then Stanley Oliver made this statement (*Evening Post*): "I feel that it should be known that Mr. Goossens expressed no great enthusiasm for any of the compositions submitted, and had misgivings about the performance effectiveness of any of them. The National Orchestra put the winning work in rehearsal, and Mr. Bowles's decision that it was unsuitable was therefore only a practical confirmation of Mr. Goossens's misgiving."

May I ask in what way this work is lacking in "performance effectiveness?" Is it too hard for an orchestra? Is the work so badly written that it is technically unplayable? I have met Mr. Carr; he is a lively young man, of 20, keen on Stravinsky, and I can easily imagine him writing, as young composers will, a cheerful, rowdy overture, of irrepressible high spirits. Mr. Bowles has every right, in my opinion, to refuse to play a work with which he is not in sympathy. But what happens now? Would it have mattered so much had the Auckland Town Hall been filled with a noisy hullabaloo for five minutes? I think that the music, and the young man, should have been given a chance; and if Mr. Bowles, understandably enough, did not want to play it, then could not another conductor, say, Mr. Owen Jensen, in the composer's absence, have been asked to "give it a go?"

I am a little disturbed by the implication of the NZBS's attitude—if it has one. Are all musical matters in this country to be referred to the conductor of the NZBS orchestra, and is his word final? If so, then in my opinion, the conductor is being asked to assume more responsibility than should be placed on any one man.

FREDERICK PAGE (Wellington).

(The official comment on this letter is as follows: "In the opinion of Mr. M. A. Bowles, who, as conductor and musical director of the National Orchestra, is responsible for the quality of the music to be included in its programmes, a performance of the overture could not have been such as to sustain the musical prestige of the occasion—the Auckland Music Festival—or of the National Orchestra. Second, the loan of the parts, which are the property of the Broadcasting Service, was offered on March 21 to the Auckland Music Council, which has rights in the score, if it should be desired to have the overture performed by an Auckland orchestra. The offer was not taken up. Third, Mr. Bowles's responsibility is that defined above and certainly does not extend to 'all musical matters in this country.'"—Ed.)

OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER

Sir,—I acknowledge the gentle smacking administered by Audrey Cumming in your issue of June 22. However, it would appear that there are two schools and a road of some sort in the district she mentions. Yes, we have a school, a postal service and a cream run in our district. The snag is that half the district is cut off from the other half by two miles of beach and sand hills impassable for motor vehicles; so that when I write of the pioneer stage I

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mean the pack-horse, sledge stage that still exists for many. Far beyond the city's horizon and over the hills from our "Snake Gullies" with their Young Farmers' Clubs and their success stories, are the districts we inhabit.

Audrey Cumming has hinted that she would like a few of my experiences. Overcoming my natural modesty I may say that I was bush-felling with my little axe at the age of four. This gave me the ingrained love of chopping the firewood which has lasted to the present. I broke in my first wild horse at the age of seven. This accounts for my bandy legs. At the age of eight I shot my first wild boar with my little bow and arrows—I was early taught to draw the long bow. Lack of space prevents further chronicles of my experiences. Lack of encouragement seems to have prevented the fulfilment of my early promise.

Neither Audrey Cumming nor myself has used the usual adjective "hardy" to describe the pioneer. She would probably agree that "hardy" is the correct word, but being a cultured person has refused the obvious cliché. I have not used it because I consider a more appropriate word for many pioneers and their pioneer descendants would be something descriptive of a person who can be kidded to chew soap.

J. B. JACKSON (Raglan).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE

Sir,—Let me offer my compliments to you on the tone and construction of your editorial of July 6. I look forward keenly to hearing Fred Hoyle on July 12.

You say that Mr. Hoyle may be able to offer us a simplified explanation and you warn us rightly that if such is the case it would have to be taken on trust. Later you say, "A complete explanation is likely to remain unattainable." To this I would only add, "Thank God!"

I think that Hoyle's belief in "continuous creation" is significant and is indicative of the direction towards which some thinking of today is turning. In any kingdom of nature where you have organic life you can observe the process of coming to birth and dying away. In a particular kingdom it may be that one type dies away but always new types come into being. In winter plants die away—to be reborn through their seeds in the spring. No one would postulate the plant or the animal kingdom as a dying kingdom, though particular parts of both are always dying away.

As above, so below; and when man is prepared to take his place as "a living thinking being"—"one who has the power to see the universe as a whole"—he will let his thinking expand from the kingdoms of nature around him to the starry spaces above. He will find it impossible to hold on to the idea of a "dying universe." This idea arose, I would suggest, not anthropomorphically as you imply, but out of a gross materialism which sought to project into the universal spaces a shadowy copy of a mechanical contrivance.

The scientists and the thinkers of today are beginning to let the idea of life permeate their thinking about organic nature. One does not look for a mechanical or a simplified explanation of the character of a child. Rather does one

seek to enter into a growing understanding of the child and build up a satisfying personal relationship with it.

I would not regard Hoyle's belief in continuous creation as a simplified explanation, but rather as the starting point for the expansion of our thinking and the birth of wonder which, we are told, is the beginning of all true philosophy.

S. H. BARNETT (Lower Hutt).

PETER LLEWELLYN'S TALKS

Sir,—Peter Llewellyn is described as an Englishman who, after comparatively brief residence in a remote district of New Zealand, believes himself qualified to sit in judgment upon the character of this country and its inhabitants as a whole.

I have listened to three of his talks and I flatly refute almost every one of his statements. Being also an Englishman who has lived in New Zealand approximately three times as long as Mr. Llewellyn, I feel myself competent to assert that his knowledge of the subject—judged by his broadcasts—has been derived from obviously unreliable and negligible sources, backed by a warped imagination.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

CHURCH BROADCASTS

Sir,—Please allow me a little constructive criticism of Sunday Church broadcasts. As a church officer I have limited opportunity of listening in at home, but what little I have gives me the impression that there is urgent need of alteration. Several appalling things occur. Some men nearer to the microphone than others sing too loudly, and in a bass part at that. The choir rising to sing on resuming seats sound like horses clattering through the aisle. The organist plays a voluntary during offering that hasn't an iota of melody or reverent sound of a hymn. The choir sings with such lack of enunciation that no one can hear 25 per cent of the words. The Minister or Secretary bores listeners with a lot of purely local and uninteresting announcements better left until the broadcast is over. The Ministers (some of them only) pray in a tone that makes Christianity sound like a tragedy instead of a glorious reality and a victory. Some churches seem to be catering for only their own people listening in—people who, in some cases, not all, should be in their churches supporting their Minister. Thus the non-church going public who might be attracted are repelled.

Of course, I do not suggest that all these faults are found in one broadcast, but a month of listening (four mornings and four evenings) produces almost the lot.

As a churchman of long experience I state that an overhaul of church broadcasting is long overdue, if not too late. Some folks, indeed, must have given up listening. I, and many like me, are among the vitally interested ones who know that the Church has the message for today. Therefore, we are deeply concerned. The general public, as such, just tunes in to another station and we've lost our audience, and cannot recall it.

There is much in the way of suggestion to be said, but I dare not occupy any more of your valuable space, except to suggest that churches seriously dis-

cuss this matter, and on their broadcast hour appoint responsible officers to listen in at a distance and report faults and suggest improvements, endeavouring to get the other fellow's viewpoint as to why he cannot get the desired uplift.

A WORSHIPPER (Auckland).

(Official comment on this letter is as follows: "The Central Religious Advisory Committee is conscious of a number of the faults mentioned by the correspondent, and members are taking steps within their churches to have these eliminated as far as possible. It should be mentioned that the broadcasting of notices, appeals, etc., and the receiving of offerings—except during the singing of a suitable anthem or hymn—is contrary to the rules governing church relays."—Ed.)

A PENGUIN ANTHOLOGY

Sir,—Having just read *English Stories from New Writing*, in spite of rather than because of the ZB book review by A. R. D. Fairburn, may I comment briefly. Responsible critics have already suggested that this book is one of the most important collections of English short stories to have appeared in many years. *Penguin New Writing*, in a crucial period of history, provided inspiration and an outlet for the best imaginative work, particularly that of the younger writers. If it represented a coterie, as the ZB chairman rather testily suggested, it was a coterie in the best sense. Editor Lehmann has pointed out that its contributors were drawn from many different social levels and backgrounds. Quality of work alone was the entrance qualification. What other common ground was there between, say, Sartre, Graham Greene, Frank Sargeson, Gide, V. S. Pritchett, Denton Welch and Elizabeth Bowen? Moreover, to judge by Joseph Gurnard's story, "Poet's Excursion," the journal was not above burlesquing its own editor and contributors.

English Stories from New Writing is, then, a selection from 40 volumes published over 10 years. Consequently, the remarkable aspect of the ZB session was that in a review for New Zealanders, by a New Zealander, no mention whatever was made of the important consideration that the book contained a story by a New Zealander. Even a passing reference to this bright fact would have made reviewer Fairburn's familiar strictures a little less dull.

JACK LOVELL (Wellington).

NEWS BROADCASTS

Sir,—May I have the right of reply regarding news broadcasts? The issue seems to have been sidetracked since my first letter. I am not advocating the substitution of gardening or other programmes for news broadcasts, but am only asking better presentation of news by giving it a New Zealand angle.

TOO MUCH BBC (Wanganui).

Sir,—It is to be hoped that no official notice will be taken of two Wanganui correspondents who want BBC news and commentary cut down on the New Zealand radio. For every two who don't want this there must be 2000 who listen to it regularly and profit greatly by doing so. The BBC news is a "must" on New Zealand radio if our broadcasting service is to do its duty. Which leads me to say that Radio Newsreel is invaluable. Why, then, is it sometimes shifted from its proper time to be substituted by something almost always of less importance?

WORLD-MINDED (Nelson).