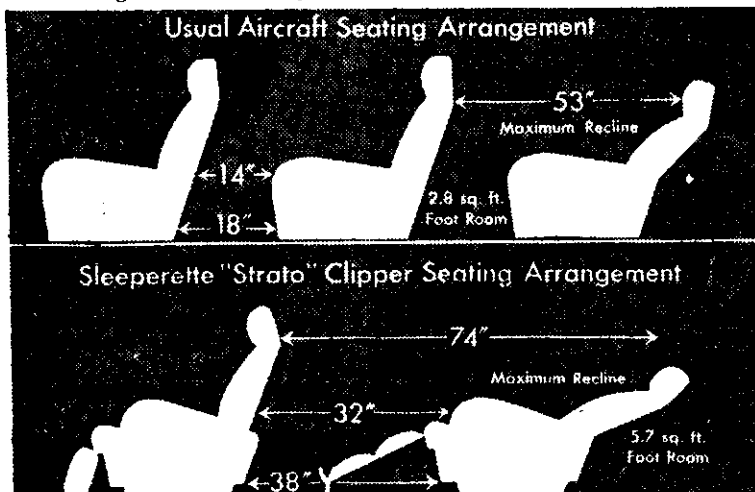


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## RADIO REVIEW

### Great Acting

IN many years of listening to radio serials, I have never heard a performance which impressed me more deeply than Hedley Goodall's embodiment of Michael Henchard in the BBC version of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which has just finished at 1YC. The earlier Hardy serial, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, seemed to me to bring out all his weaknesses of melodramatic plot and stagey characters, but *The Mayor of Casterbridge* which, on the surface, would appear to show similar weaknesses, became, with the aid of superb acting and Vaughan Williams's fine music, a radio work of great, sombre, tragic power. It surmounted even the technical flaw of making Elizabeth-Jane the narrator. Step by step, the degeneration of Henchard, victim of his temper and his obstinacy, and the proud pity of his death were presented with relentless magnificence. Although the production was excellent and all the players more than adequate, Hedley Goodall's characterisation dominated the whole serial. Gruff, tender, irascible, self-tormenting, tempestuous, his Henchard was a truly great piece of acting. I don't think I shall ever forget such scenes as that in which he breaks his long-held vow, and surrenders to drink, pouring out to the villagers all the agony of his soul. Certainly, whenever I read the book again, his voice will ring behind the printed page.



Thomas Hardy

### Celeste Grows Up

DISRESPECTFUL descriptions of orchestral instruments are common enough; an oboe, to the irreverent, is

an ill wind that no one blows good, a contra-bassoon is a back-firing bed-post, and so on. I wonder if anyone has ever thought of the celeste as a piano whose voice hasn't broken? We so rarely hear this instrument that most people must believe that Tchaikovsky's *Casse-Noisette Suite* is the only work which employs it. Like everyone else, then, I associated the celeste with the pretty cavortings of the Sugar-Plum Fairy alone, until 1YC recently played Bela Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*. The gulf between Tchaikovsky and Bartok as composers was indicated by the differences in their use of the instrument—in the one case light, graceful, delicate, in the other, dark, tart, often harsh. Bartok's unexpected dignifying of the tinkling toy, and his exploitation of the colour-changes in the mellow lower octave made this piece a high point of my week's listening. One qualification, however—the superior 1YC listener, obviously better informed than the VOA or BBC Concert Hall audience, was assumed to know all that needed to be known about this unusual work and hence to require no introductory explanation.

### Urbane But Unmoral

I DOUBT whether Anthony Berkeley has ever written a better novel than *Trial and Error*, either under that pseudonym or (since he shares the whodunit writer's passion for multiple identities) as Francis Iles, Anthony Rolls or A. B. Cox. The story of middle-aged Lawrence Todhunter who, dying of a heart disease, decides to kill the most odious person he can find, may not be a very moral tale, but it is a clever one, with typical Berkeley twists and a spectacular ending. The NZBS version, through compression, lost much of the novel's ingenious detail and unhappily left the identity of the real murderer a puzzle at the end. At the same time, it had an urbanity and an individuality of characterisation which lifted it above the average radio detective play. John Schlesinger was excellent as Todhunter, with his delightful little embarrassed giggle,

(continued on next page)

## Bach Masterwork



AN outstanding team was brought together by the BBC in July last year when it broadcast in its Home Service Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. The soloists were Suzanne Danco (soprano), Kathleen Ferrier (contralto), Peter Pears (tenor), Bruce Boyce (baritone), and Norman Walker (bass). With them appeared the BBC Chorus (with Leslie Woodgate as chorus-master), the Boyd Neel Orchestra (with Maurice Clare, well known to New Zealanders, as leader), Douglas Moore (horn), George Malcolm (harpsichord), and Charles Spinks (organ). Georges Enesco was conductor.

The *Mass in B Minor* broadcast on that occasion was recorded and transcribed for listeners in other parts of the world, and it will have its first New Zealand broadcast from 4YZ at 1.45 p.m. on Sunday, March 30. It will be heard from 4YA in the week starting April 7, from 3YA towards the end of April, and later from other stations. The performance lasts two hours and a quarter.

Generally regarded as one of music's noblest masterpieces, the *Mass in B*

*Minor* was completed in 1738, but the first complete performances were not given till 1834 (Part 1) and 1835 (Part 2)—more than 80 years after Bach's death. Bach prepared the first two sections of the *Mass*—the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria*—to accompany a petition to the Elector of Saxony in which he asked for the title of Court-Composer, but there is no evidence that the rest of the work was sent to the King.

"The circumstance that Augustus III was a Roman Catholic, like his father, may conceivably have caused Bach to set the Ordinary of the *Mass*," wrote Harold Rutland in a *Radio Times* programme note to the BBC broadcast. "On the other hand, the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, sung in Latin, were part of the ritual of the Lutheran Church. Although Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, described the *B Minor* as a 'great Catholic Mass,' it is unlikely that Bach himself had a liturgical purpose in mind; for this, indeed, the work is unsuitable."

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 21, 1952,