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RADIO REVIEW

DANGEROUS VOYAGE

OF the many odd, semi-private ventures to which the last war lent itself, the service run by small, armed fishing-boats between the Shetlands and occupied Norway has been one of the least publicised. Yet, in five years, it secretly landed 200 agents and 400 tons of stores, and rescued 350 refugees, all across the North Sea during the long nights of winter. In *The Shetland Bus* (from 1YC and 1YA), the BBC Scottish studios dramatised a well-deserved tribute to it. The story centred on a single typical voyage, in which the little vessel made a successful crossing and was spotted on the way back. After a battle against two German planes, the crew—four of them seriously wounded—took to their leaking dinghy, reached Norway again, were hidden by the underground, and finally rescued by a fast MTB. The telling was admirably straightforward, with neither false heroics or stiff-upper-lip. Sound effects—particularly the putter of the boat's single-stroke engine—were all the more effective for being sparing; and Scottish voices substituted acceptably for the Scandinavian.

The Music They Want

CORRESPONDENTS in an Auckland daily recently raised the questions of levels of taste in the ZB mid-Sunday request session. Listening with both ears instead of the usual one, I found that the Great Public seems to go mainly for jolly, bouncing tunes with brass in them, like "Sound Off" or "Sugarbush" or "Bella Bimba." Sprinkled among these are a steady average of the pensive-sentimental—"Because," Novello tunes, westerns, or the version of "Auf Wiedersehn," which sounds as if it were recorded in a cave. Lanza and other strenuous tenors are good for two or three discs per session; so are agreeable oldies like "Blue Moon" and "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," suitably shined and up-to-date. Other classics—Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Chopin—appear in small chunks; some meet an appropriate fate, as in the boogie version of that Sword Dance. Add for good measure some pleasing freaks like the one about the

foot-bone connected to the ankle-bone, or the gravel-voice version of "My Heart Sings." That's the mixture, and some people apparently wouldn't touch it with a long spoon; personally, I listen to ZB Requests just for the heck of it.

—M.K.J.

Marriage Song

POETRY blooms or withers in a true or false reading of it. When I listen to Stephen Spender reading his own poetry he lifts and animates the otherwise lifeless print, but when I heard *Poetry Interlude's* rendering of Spenser's "Epithalamium" over 3YC I would have wondered at the selection of a subject had I not chosen it for myself long ago. The reader gave to this grave and ritualistic marriage song the speed, almost haste, of one of Shakespeare's more passionate declamations. To me the varying refrain at the end of each verse, "That all the woods may answer and your echo ring" will not really "ring" back and forwards through the poem unless read slowly. That the reader delivered the poem with naturalistic rather than ritualistic passion was indicated also by a pause inserted between "behold" and "whiles" at the beginning of the 13th verse as if the word was meant to be exclamatory. There is neither comma nor exclamation mark in my copy of the poem. These, however, are only two instances, which would not have the same importance were they not characteristic of the reading as a whole.

Maoris Singing

WITH due ceremony Selwyn Toogood ushered in a Maori Concert Party in the ZB's *On Stage Tonight*. After outlining its course he walked down the hall towards the stage and was "Challenged." So far so good. Later, however, when the Maoris sang, one felt that one had been cheated of the real climax—that is, of hearing either some of the really traditional Maori songs or new songs made at the same level of feeling. These Europeanised songs, even of Alfred Hill's, do not to me sound well. I admit that his are bearable, for what they are; but when Maori words are mated to Vera Lynnish sentiment the bottom has fallen out of the whole show. At the same time the "Challenge" and the Haka were quite real and there can be no doubt about the discipline and accomplishment of singers worthy of better themes. One hopes that when these people get their meet-

"I KNOW WHAT I THINK . . ."

LIFE AMONG THE PERISHABLES

A. L. HIGGINS'S lively talk on the life of a fish retailer which I heard by chance on a recent Thursday made me regret that I had missed the rest of the series on New Zealand fisheries. The fish retailer's day—the term fish-monger seems slightly outdated in this plate glass, stainless steel age—was graphically described; the rising at five, the round of the marts, the cleaning and preparation of wares, the long hours standing on wet concrete. I was made to feel a little guilty that I had ever thoughtlessly bought the same old fillet of terekihi or proper without, in his words, taking him into my confidence, that in fulfilling my modest requirements I had not always availed myself of the advice of a man who had personally gutted every piece of fish in the shop. Hints, too, on new and more interesting ways of cooking fish would be ours for the asking. Perhaps I had also been guilty of blaming him for high prices, without realising that every price rise is as much a headache to the retailer as to the consumer. May I suggest that this final talk could also be the starting point of a new series, and that in the cause of over-the-counter relationships, the NZBS find us a butcher, a baker, a grocer, and a green-grocer who could present their case as forcefully as Mr. Higgins?

—J.S.