

NEWS OF BROADCASTERS, ON AND OFF THE RECORD,

By *Swarf*

Irish lady who was paying us a visit that evening made a suggestion.

"Try the Welsh Regional, dear," she quavered. "I understand they're a very musical people."

BELOW is a photograph of Mabel Roper (mezzo-contralto), who was heard last week from 2XA Wanganui in a studio recital of four songs by Brahms. On Sunday, June 21, at 8.25 p.m., she will present a studio recital from 2YA, sing-



ing "O Rest in the Lord" and "But the Lord is Mindful of His Own" (Mendelssohn), and "O Thou that Teltest" and "He Shall Feed His Flock" (Handel).

"MIDDLEBROW" sends this cutting from the English *Melody Maker*: In a prominent position, under a picture of Anne Shelton which carried the heading "Oh, Anne! You ought to know better . . ." the following letter appeared in the London *Daily Express*:

Dear, dear. Those crooners in dance bands. Little breathless girl crooners warble: "We won't live in a cass-le." Young men crooners sing: "Some enchanted evening"—while the young things in the audience swoon with joy. Even Anne Shelton, who ought to know better, sings: "If you loved me half as much as I love you." It infuriates me. I cannot think what is wrong with our English accent.

The *Melody Maker*'s Maurice Burman comments that the situation is far worse than that, and it was unfortunate that the writer should pick on Anne Shelton, who seldom offends. "The real culprits are our younger singers who not only sing with a pronounced 'American' accent but, when they have a few words to say on the radio, speak in Americanese . . . Listeners don't like phoney accents. Some of the best American vocalists are now singing—or trying to sing—with an English accent. And though it may seem absurd to suggest that our vocalists try to put on an English accent because it's the vogue among

the best American singers. I know of no other way that would so easily persuade our people to sing in their native manner."

[Note: As to the words, they go to prove that the Ruling Passion is still the main ingredient of popular vocal music.]

YI-KWEI SZE, Chinese bass-baritone, who is to tour New Zealand this year for the NZBS, giving solo recitals and appearing with the National Orchestra, is expected here in September. His wife, Nancy Lee Sze, will be his accompanist.

Yi-Kwei Sze attended a school in Shanghai conducted by missionaries, and it was there that he first learned English and the rudiments of Western music. He entered the National Conservatorium of Music at Shanghai and while still an undergraduate made his professional debut in Haydn's *The Three Seasons*. He was so successful that

he was engaged to sing in *Rigoletto*, *Tosca* and *Aida* with a professional opera company. After graduating from the Conservatorium in 1937 he began a concert career in China and carried on until the Japanese invasion. He gave hundreds of concerts for Chinese and British relief work and appeared in radio in Hong Kong. Yi-Kwei Sze is the first Chinese artist to make a career on the international concert stage, and it is reported that he has a voice which, for power and beauty, has been compared with that of Chaliapin. Nevertheless, it took three years of concerts in Nanking, Hong Kong and Shanghai, supplemented by gifts from well-wishers, to collect enough money for the singer to go to America. Yi-Kwei Sze's Carnegie Hall debut in 1947 received high praise, and a few weeks later when he appeared in *Messiah* with the New York Oratorio Society, the *New York Times* singled him out for special mention. The Szes have one son, Alexander, named after the bass, Kipnis, with whom Yi-Kwei Sze studied.

PIRACY. PHOTOGRAPHY. ASTRONOMY

JOHN PIKE was once a pirate bold; on another occasion he became Neptune. God of the Sea; eventually he floated to the surface to transform himself into a humble duckling. This was all in the line of duty and necessary for the purposes of a serial called *Tiki and the Twins*, broadcast for child listeners to Station 3ZR, Greymouth (now 3YZ). In fact, John took part in several such adventures and enjoyed every minute of them. For some time he also had ideas about being on the writing end of a serial for children, and he produced *Jimmy Winkle in Storybook Land*, consisting of only four 20-minute episodes. Jimmy went on the air with one of the Station's typists playing the title role. "It wasn't a very good show," John told me, "but oddly enough no bricks came our way." In 1949 John was asked to conduct the Children's Session "just for a couple of weeks" filling in until the young woman in charge—who was about to leave the district—was replaced. He's still at it. "There's something really satisfying in working with and for children," said John. "If they like a thing they let you know about it; if they don't they still let you know."

Later John Pike wrote another serial, *Jimmy Winkle's Second Visit to Storybook Land*. "This didn't seem to me to be any better than the earlier effort," he said, "but it started something we haven't been able to stamp out. In this tale there was a minor character called Simple Simon. Young people took to Simon and asked if he would make any more appearances. As the young customers seemed to want him, Simon began to pay weekly visits to the studio and soon had his own little spot in the programme. Then he started bringing his friends along, so now we are likely to be invaded not only by Simon but by all the rest of the gang, including Mr. Tonsil, Major Tadpole-

Tonsil, Mary Quite Contrary, the Professor and Rumpy the Witch."

I asked John about hobbies. He has two—photography in the summer and astronomy all the year round. When he was about 19 years old he was given a copy of Maxwell Reed's *The Stars for Sam* as a Christmas present. "That was the start of it all," he said. "I still have this book, and what's more I find myself browsing through it with interest from time to time. I suppose a hobby shouldn't be allowed to influence one's work, but astronomy has poked its nose into the Children's Session, although it wasn't really my fault. For two or three years now we have been broadcasting a programme called *Let's Talk About Things*. Young listeners send in questions on any general subject and we try to give the answer. A few months back we made an analysis of the subjects covered and were rather surprised to find that about a sixth of them dealt with astronomy. So, on these grounds we began a series of short talks on astronomy under the title of *Seeing Stars*." John Pike is now Senior Announcer at 3YZ and Children's Sessions organiser. Here he is at the microphone.



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