

How to Listen to Good Music

(Reprinted from Radio News.)

WE have utilised this department before to make tearful entreaties to the radio lords to furnish more straight instrumental music. If we may be said to have any platform, that is its principal plank.

In one of these articles we advanced the point that listening to symphonic music via the radio has at least one distinct advantage over listening to the same in a symphony hall, namely: the orchestra cannot be seen. With none of the modesty proper to the father of an idea, we aver that the point is an excellent one, and well worth dragging out again.

THE universal custom of lighting up concert halls with a dazzling effulgence of electric light has about as much to recommend it as would the equipping of art galleries with a fire siren and a ship's bell beside each picture. It is our occasional custom to attend the Friday afternoon concerts of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, frequented, presumably, by the very cream of Chicago's music lovers. Here, as elsewhere, the blaze of light system prevails. In the course of the concert a surprisingly large proportion of the audience may be observed to be taking advantage of this lavish pyrotechnical display in any one of three ways: (a) reading their programmes, (b) embroidering, (c) sitting on the edge of their chairs better to watch the conductor. Anyone who can thus disport himself before Brahms or Beethoven, or even Tchaikowsky, and then later claim that he "heard" the music, is either a physiological phenomenon or a prevaricator. To follow honestly the development of a piece of music requires so high a degree of concentration that it is absurd to imagine that an attention divided between the eye and the ear is sufficient. We have essayed the more or less successful subterfuge of slumping down in the seat

with one or the other hand before the eyes, but this lays us open to the suspicion of our neighbours that we are (a) a silly fellow feigning intense absorption, (b) asleep. Extinguishing the lights would solve the problem, but this the persons who run concert halls will not do.

TO attack the reading of programme during a concert is a ticklish proposition. It is "done" by our very best people. Tell them they are demonstrating their ignorance of music by so doing, and they will look at you aghast.

It is perfectly possible to look at, and enjoy, a picture without knowing a thing about the painter's life, in fact, without even knowing who painted it. This is done constantly, even by connoisseurs. Music, a purer art than painting, is even more independent of its composer, and he may be even more easily ignored.

Or it may be protested with still more vigour that "you have to watch the conductor really to 'feel' the music unfolding!" This likewise is pishposh. The gesticulations of the conductor, however graceful or dramatic they may be, have little to do with the music as music. They exist for the purely technical purpose of evoking the proper sounds at the proper time, and the technique of putting the thing across is no more your business than would be the trade name of the pigments your artist used in his painting.

Perhaps we seem to wax too wroth and to be making a mountain out of a mole hill in our vehemence against optical assimilation of music. But our fury is aroused by the fact that the people who so insult good music in the concert hall are supposedly the very topmost strata of music lovers—the highbrows, no less! If the highbrows of the nation don't know how to listen to serious music what about the masses?

IT would seem, perhaps, that the case we are making out for proper concert listening is no very happy one, and that we would place it on the same tedious and exacting plane as listening to a class-room lecture on philosophy or astronomy. This is not entirely true. Certainly we have to concentrate just as much—a symphony by Brahms has just as much meat in it as any four chapters from Kant's "Critique"—but the concentration can be entirely effortless.

Herein, as we have said before, lies the advantage of radio. Given a good receiver and a symphony orchestra properly "picked up" and transmitted and you are all set for a concert which may nine times out of ten be more enjoyable than one in a mazda-equipped concert hall. You can don your slippers, turn off the lights, and park in an easy chair—three separate counts wherein "second-hand" radio has it over the first-hand thing. With your own private stage thus set you are in an ideal position really to "hear" the music with a fullest possible realisation of what it really has in it.

A POPULAR delusion exists that music should caress the listener and lull him into a pleasant state of lethargy, and that he need do nothing but just "set" and let the vague tides of sound wash over him soothingly. The answer to this is age old: the artist can go only half way.

The reward for going half way is the surprising discovery that there are tasty bon-bons waiting at the half-way point whose existence was never even suspected.

Now our point is that it is easier for the neophyte to cultivate an understanding of serious music by listening to it on the radio than by going to concert halls—simply because he can do it with less distraction.

Devious and many are the ways suggested for learning "how to appreciate music." Most of them involve too much work (they are the best ones).

Others go in too much for the technical and intellectual, which, after all, is only half the content of music at most. We are going to suggest a short-cut method—one which requires no preparatory work at all.

DOUTBLES this system of learning how to follow music has been suggested before—though we have not run across it. It may be objected to as an unscientific method, as an unintellectual method—in short, as a too strictly emotional method. But it is a practical method.

Sit yourself before the receiving set in the aforementioned slippers condition, when there is some first-rate symphonic orchestra programme going on (we hope you can find one). Turn off the lights and the oil burner, and otherwise exclude all conceivable distractions, and then concentrate on the sound issuing from the loudspeaker, as though you were entombed in a mine waiting for the faint ring of a distant pick axe. Or strain your ears as though you were trying at three in the morning for 2L.O. Things will immediately begin to happen. Surprising things. A host of sounds will begin to emerge that were formerly just lost in the shuffle. Pick out one of the thinnest and feeblest of these sounds and follow it through the maze like a bloodhound pursuing little Eliza through the forest. Keep on its trail and see what it does—and what some of the big bulging noises do to it. Then for a change pick out some little transitory tune—perhaps only five notes long—wait for it like a cat before a mouse-hole. Presently it will appear again, perhaps in a different key or on a different instrument, or even disguised with false whiskers. But you will recognise it, and with a glee quite equal to that of the cat when the mouse finally emerges from its burrow.

NEXT try listening to two tunes—or two instruments—at once

Watch how the two tunes sneak along side by side, sometimes drawing together and shaking hands; other times running off on by-paths and making faces at each other. Watch them intertwine and overlap and disappear, and emerge again with a new snit, and their hair combed on the other side. Search out some little insignificant orchestral effect that seems to be buried obscurely away at the bottom of the heap of noises. Watch it while it pussy-foots around the corner and gets itself a drink. Watch it start to swell and swagger and toss its hat around. Presently the snifter does its stuff, and it is strutting around bombastically. Before you know it, it is running the whole works, the other noises fleeing, terrified, to shelter.

In such wise, listening to the symphony orchestra becomes a grand game with yourself, just as much a participant as the orchestra. It has much in common with football; there are long end-runs and fake plays and intercepted passes and trick formations; there is team work and tripping, signalling, and shifts, even "time out," where a rest occurs in the music. And both the football game and the symphony are divided into quarters.

The analogy to football is not quite complete. What happens in a football game is largely subject to chance. But what happens in a symphony, far from resulting from chance, results from perfect organisation.

Herein our proposed method of learning how to listen fails. It will not reveal to you the organisation of the music. That would be asking too much. However, the method we suggest will at least demonstrate to a listener that music is not simply a blur of sound, and will enable him to recognise the elements out of which music is organised.

This will be a first step. Furthermore, it will be fun—which is the only excuse music has for existence, anyway.

NEWS FOR THE CHILDREN

A ZOO PARTY

(By Brooke Nicholls.)

In conjunction with Jimmy, the new orang-outang, Mr. and Mrs. Hippopotamus and their son Ernie, Algernon and Pamela, the thousand pound baby giraffes, Skipper, the cinnamon bear, Paddy, the monkey, Silas and Myram, the American grizzly twins, Maudie and Betty, the baby tigers, Lizzy, the lioness, Digger, the kangaroo, and Jennie, the emu, 3LO Melbourne gave a grand party at the Zoo to the children of Melbourne on Saturday March 31.

A special representative of 3LO Melbourne visited the gardens beforehand, and with Mr. D. Wilkie, the director, interviewed several of the hosts.

Jimmy, the orang-outang, who is much more entertaining than his predecessor, Molly, was delighted to hear that four thousand children had been invited. During the interview he sneezed once or twice, and when given a handkerchief used it quite nicely. He had a new one for the party.

Though only eight months old, Pamela and Algernon Giraffe, are the tallest babies in the world for their age. They arrived in Melbourne a few weeks ago, and are still very shy and timid. Mr. Wilkie says he hoped that in addressing them the guests would not refer to these most distinguished hosts as Algie and Pam, but give them their full names Algernon and Pamela. Coming from an ancient aristocratic family, they do not like their names shortened. Between ourselves, they looked a bit gawky and awkward, and have fully, little short tails, but it was particularly requested that no audible remarks will be passed about their appearance in their presence. Their exquisite eyes, long lashes and silkily, mottled coats make an irresistible appeal.

Chattering, grimacing, and baring his little sharp teeth, Paddy, the Capuchin monkey, sang his morning hymn of hate when Mr. Wilkie introduced him. The director apologised for Paddy's behaviour, and explained that eight or nine years ago he held him while a keeper removed a collar that was hurting his neck, and ever since the monkey had a grudge against him and all his friends.

Mrs. Hippo was having her morning bath, but there was no sign of her baby, Ernie, for he was having his breakfast under the water, his usual practice. Mrs. Hippo is awfully big, and, on account of her weight—one and a half tons—was a little slow coming out of the water. "Come on, Girlie," called Mr. Wilkie, and she waddled slowly to him and opened her mouth at his request to show her teeth.

Standing erect on the edge of her pool, Queenie, the Polar bear, looked very smart and handsome in her new white fur coat. She misses the ice floes and seals, and disdainfully turns up her nose at peanuts and lollies. However, Skipper, the cinnamon bear, who lives next door to Queenie, is exceedingly fond of them. He was brought out from Oregon by the wife of a captain of a timber schooner. The sea agreed with him so well that he doubled his size. On the day of his

Children's Sessions for Next Week

AT 1YA.

Tuesday, April 10: Uncle George will have more Maori stories and songs for the radio family. There will be songs, recitations and piano duets by the cousins.

Wednesday: Grown-ups as well as children look forward to Uncle Tom's cheery evenings. This time he will have Hobo and Lady Hobo with him. The children have heard Hobo's humour before, and many have been the requests that he should come again.

Thursday: Hurrah! Peter Pan will have his ever popular Boy Scouts with him. The Leys Hawaiian Scout Orchestra is now well known to the radio family, and their music is always eagerly looked forward to.

Friday: Nod's hour. You are sure to hear some jokes and some useful information as well. Cousins will provide songs, sketches and banjo items.

Saturday: Cinderella in charge, assisted by the pupils of Miss Beryl Nettleton and Miss Marjorie Turner in many novel items.

AT 2YA.

Monday, April 9: Uncle Toby and Uncle Jeff will have fun and frolic for all. A merry band of youngsters will join in the laughter. Songs, sketches, riddles and stories.

Tuesday: Uncle Jasper and the Trinity Methodist Choir. Happiness will be in the air, when Uncle Jasper and the Choir unite to entertain Radioland.

Thursday: Uncle Sandy, our poet-uncle, will tell stories of the ages, past and present. Little friends from the Queen Margaret College will be present.

Friday: Uncle Ernest and one of his fascinating travel talks. Listen for the aeroplane leaving the studio. The children of the Kelburn School have been invited by Uncle Ernest to travel with him.

Saturday: Auntie Gwen with her stock of surprises and jolly stories. A little party of friends will assist in this cheery hour.

AT 3YA.

Monday, April 9: Uncle Jack and Aunt Edna are here to-night with their lovely stories and songs. So watch out children and don't miss this bedtime hour.

Wednesday: Another happy hour with Uncle Peter and Mother Hubbard. Auntie Robin is coming too, and has some pretty nature stories to tell the little ones.

Thursday: Aunt Pat and her new helper, "The Jolly Miller," can promise you some fun and merriment. Also the Standard V boys from the West Christchurch School are coming along to sing some stirring songs and choruses for you.

Friday: Here is Peterkin with a fresh batch of his own delightful stories, and a band of little helpers.

Saturday: Uncle Sam and Aunt May keep you happy and gay during this bedtime hour. "Uncle Ted" will take you all for a lovely aeroplane flight over Australia.

Sunday: The beautiful Song Service again. Uncle Sam in charge, and little friends from the Oxford Terrace Baptist Sunday School will assist.

arrival in Melbourne Skipper broke away, and the crew and the stevedores unloading the vessel hurriedly jumped for the rigging, whilst the bear took charge of the bridge. Although it was a case of rank mutiny, the captain was powerless. The new Skipper paced the bridge deck in true sailor fashion, occasionally standing upright to scan the horizon. For several hours he remained in sole possession of the ship, and it was not until the captain's wife returned from her shopping in town and offered him a bag of sweets that he was induced to leave his post.

The only one that seemed a little upset about it was Queenie, the elephant. Perhaps she overheard Mr. Wilkie whisper that she could easily carry 12 hundred children in an afternoon, but she brightened up at the mention of buns and bananas.

Ebb and Wellington, the lions, and Maudie and Betty, the twin tiger cubs, who were born and raised on the bottle at the Zoo, welcomed the guests in their new palatial home in Carnivora Terrace.

1YA'S FAMILY OF 2,000

Last week the number of children in the Radio family at 1YA reached 2,000, so little Joy Reed, whose name was the 2000th to go down in the large book, was invited by Cinderella to come to the studio and speak to her 1,999 cousins. Despite her nervousness little Joy sent a very nice message to her many cousins and uncles and aunts. She will certainly remember her first appearance before the microphone.

Old King Cole is a very welcome visitor at the children's session at 1YA, and it was with great delight that we hear him again in his quaint musical numbers and recitations. His rollicking laugh is most infectious, and makes one realise that Old King Cole was a merry old soul indeed.

Aren't the children of 1YA lucky in having the Rev. A. W. McMillan come along to tell jungle stories? Having lived for 23 years in India, his jungle stories are first hand and mostly personal experiences, which gives them an additional thrill.

HARD LINES!

*CROWDS come to visit me every day,
Yet nobody seems to want to stay.
The quicker they reach me the better they're pleased,
And yet they desert me like lightning that's greased.
And if for an hour with me they're delayed,
They growl and they stamp 'nuff,
to make you afraid,
Then complain to my Master, demand explanation,
And finally call me a rotten old Station!*



PUPILS OF THE MARIST BROS. SCHOOL, CHRISTCHURCH.
Everyone who heard these boys during the Children's Session on St. Patrick's Day, will tune in for Thursday, May 3.
—Steffano Webb, photo.