

## MUSIC



Conductor Smetacek . . . boost for orchestra.

## Rule one: don't be boring

Evan Roberts

FAMILY concerts are a good idea provided that two principles are kept in mind. The first is that the worst crime anyone in the field of entertainment can commit is to be boring; and I believe strongly that the purpose of a concert is to entertain. Music may be good for your soul; it may soothe the savage breast; it may even (horrible thought) educate you; but I don't agree at all with the schoolteacher mentality which insists that music has to do you some good and turns every concert into a musical appreciation lesson. Whatever concerts may be to the musical elite, to the ordinary music lover, Ernest Newman's Plain Musical Man, they should not be a bore. The second principle is that the span of attention not only of children but also of a great many adults is limited, and this means that ideally a family concert should comprise a large number of short items, with perhaps one moderately long work.

Using these two principles as a yardstick, the NZBC's Family Concert programme in Auckland and Wellington measured up pretty well. The only work of any length was Weber's Concert Piece for piano and orchestra, and the rest of the music consisted of shortish, familiar works in a fairly accessible style, the kind of thing which has a wide appeal. On questioning my own primary school age children on what they liked best, they chose Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, and *Pacific 231*, predictably enough I suppose — they were the noisiest pieces of the evening (another factor for programme planners to consider). Other music in the concert was *Vltava*, familiar to most people by now, and four of Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*. These were given an excellent performance by the orchestra; they were played in the right spirit, with liveliness and lightness of heart, and just a touch of romance in the slower sections.

This was almost all good stuff

and a great improvement on previous concerts of this kind. There is plenty more music like it, lightweight and easy to listen to, but good quality. If those who plan the programmes run short of ideas they could take a look at such composers as Suppé, Hérold, Bizet and their fellow countrymen, Rossini, Gluck, Wagner (the overtures), Stravinsky, Falla, Kodaly; the list is almost endless. All these have written excellent light music, vigorous, noisy and tuneful.

Václav Smetáček's visit has been a tonic to the NZBC Symphony Orchestra and standards all round have gone up, the most noticeable improvement being the tone of the fiddles; it has become rounder, less metallic. He has also given us some fine interpretations, particularly of music by his fellow countrymen Dvorak and Smetana, which the orchestra played with a warmth unusual for them. And he ensures that this relaxed mood doesn't degenerate into sentimentality. The players follow his beat closely and reflect the mercurial changes of mood demanded by Bohemian composers.

In the subscription concert the main work — and the one I was most looking forward to — was Lutoslawski's *Concerto for Orchestra*. What a disappointment. The composer must have been too much in awe of his government to rise above their cultural policy of compelling composers to write in an acceptable style. This was second-hand music; its moves were predictable. Structural devices like ostinato patterns were used for their own sake, and the musical material, the actual stuff of which the music is made, was too insubstantial to stand up to the great size of the sections. The most original feature was Lutoslawski's use of orchestral colours and effects. There were brilliant touches, like the prolonged flute note which is left suspended when the rest of the orchestra fades away. But effects do not make a piece of music. In this case they only served to heighten the absence of ideas.

LIDOVÁ DEMOKRACIE, 21.6.1972

### L. D. 21. 6. 1972 Český dirigent na Novém Zélandě

(la): Ve Wellingtonu na Novém Zélandu hostoval šest týdnů pražský dirigent dr. Václav Smetáček. S tamním rozhlasovým orchestrem nastudoval a dirigoval sedm veřejných koncertů a uskutečnil tři rozhlasové nahrávky. Dirigent Smetáček uvedl ve svém programu především českou, ruskou a polskou hudbu. S pronikavým úspěchem se setkala zejména skladby Dvořákovy (Slovanské tance a Novosvětská) a Smetanovy (Vltava). Mimoto uvedl náš dirigent soudobou českou a slovenskou hudbu (Suchoně, Kabeláče, Fišera a Jiráka). Svě turné zakončil symfonickým koncertem a Brittenovou Cantata misericordia.