

The Partyline Telephone

Endre Vészi was born in Budapest in 1916. He is an allround writer. He started out as a poet, his first volume of poetry appeared when he was 17, his latest, /A Portrait, in a Thousand Mirrors/ was published in 1964. He likes the dramatic short story with a tight-fitting structure: for his volume entitled "The Attack of the Wasps" he was given the Attila József prize in 1965. Seven of his plays have been produced so far, the best of which, he thinks, is a tragicomedy entitled "Don Quixote's Last Adventure" whose theme is how tragically difficult it is sometimes to prove one's identity, i.e. to prove that the genuine thing is genuine indeed.

"My experience as a poet and dramatist - Endre Vészi writes, - or rather the problems accumulated but not solved in poetry and the drama have attracted me to the radio play as a medium synthesising the claim for the vision and the representation of high-tension social problems."

Thus he has written a succession of radio plays /You Have but One Sunday a Week, The Red Lion,

Twilight Zone, A Matter of Statistics, The Man on the Roof/ some of which have been produced and broadcast in Berlin, Frankfurt an Main, Hamburg, and Prague.

His latest radio play "The Partyline Telephone" appeared in the March 1966 issue of the monthly "Uj Irás". The Hungarian Radio enters with this play for Prix Italia, 1966.

A young man is sitting in his room, within four bleak walls, with one leg encased in plaster of paris and bolstered up. He is just having his telephone installed: it will be about the only link that will connect him with the outside world while he is lying in helpless confinement.

The telephone rings: the voice of a young woman speaks. In gushing, lively sentences that sweep aside every chance of contradicting her, she tries to clear up a misunderstanding between herself and him /or the person she takeshim for/, to dispel what she says is a case of unfounded jealousy on his part. He tries to tell her that he doesn't know her, but it's no use: she takes that for a joke. Suddenly, it dawns on him that here is a heaven-sent lifeline, probably his only chance of breaking out of his solitude.

There enters an elderly gentleman, an aggressive no-nonsense type, an egocentric who seems to think that the whole world is dwarfed in importance compared with his ailing heart. He has found out that - because of the overloading of the telephone cables - the young man's telephone has been connected up with his own line, and from now on they will have to share the same telephone line.

By this right, the old man intrudes upon the helpless young man by day and by night, pokes his nose into the latter's most personal matters, continually interrupting his great love dialogue with the Unknown Girl. He even hounds the janitor at the young man staying on the line too long, and the guard of the established order puts the receiver back on the rest, thus causing the caller to vanish from the line.

Now begins a struggle, with the young man, fluctuating between hope and despair, anxious to re-establish contact with the girl whom chance put through to him and whom he now feels he cannot, and will not, give up.

PARTYLINE TELEPHONE is a new, imaginative variation on the theme of the need for respect for the human person and of its constant search for companionship.