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THE SAMAROO JETS BREAKTHROUGH IN THE CLASSICS

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JEREMY TAYLOR
Express Drama critic
finds the real break-
through in steelband
has been made by the
"Samaroo Jets."

WHATEVER "break-through" there has been this year on the "classics-on-steel" scene - and there's certainly been a lot of activity there - it has come from the Samaroo Jets, who gave a full classical programme at the Queen's Hall.

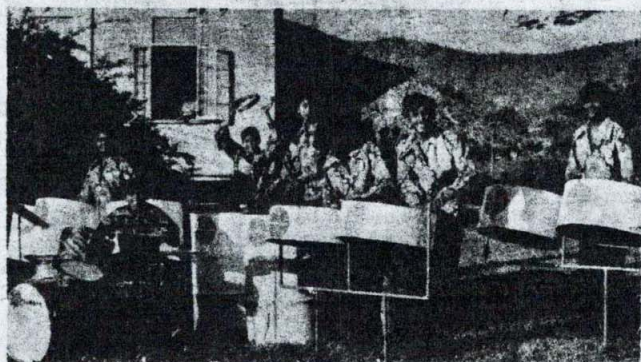
It was substantially the same programme as the one they gave for the Recital Club at St Joseph's Convent in October, except that the Overture to Handel's "Messiah" was replaced by a group of three songs sung by June Nathaniel to the band's accompaniment.

There are precise reasons why the Samaroo's achievement does mark a major advance. First and

most important, the programme consisted of complete works,

That may seem a trivial point, but any classical musician will recognise that the determination to say a work complete, as the composer wrote it, is the first and essential sign of serious musicianship.

The time is past for praising an athlete just for finishing the course, or panmen for playing bits and pieces from the rag-



Samaroo Jets in action

bag of popular classics.

The performance of classical music involves the acceptance of its conventions, which is what the Samaroo's have done; and their programme is the first to be given in this country comprising complete classical works.

Secondly, playing the classics means giving attention to classical style, which the Samaroo's have also been careful to do.

It means understanding the conventions of different periods in music, rhythm, phrasing, and it means a careful dynamic control, a sense of climax, an understanding of how different parts weave in and out of each other, of how in a concerto "full orchestra"

effects contrast with solo textures, and so on.

The Samaroo's are by no means the first group to think of all this, and could be faulted on several points - the Bach Double Violin Concerto could have done with a clearer definition of the solo parts, a steadier pace in the first movement, and so on.

But whatever argument there may be over detail, a lot of thought has clearly gone into their performance, which was remarkable for musical sensitivity and restraint, and a softness of tone often very appropriate for the chamber music selections.

Thirdly, the fact that the