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Listening While I Work (24)

By "Materfamilias"

[T was a little startling to find that my casual and somewhat frivolous comment ("What is classical music—serious?") should have stirred Mrs. Scott to the open letter printed elsewhere in this issue of *The Listener*. I of course did not mean that serious was my interpretation of the word classical, but merely that it was the best word the NBS programme arrangers could find to cover the sort of music that can be heard during the Classical Hour. By serious I meant good music in the sense of music that has been accepted to be good by those who know a good deal about music. Classical, in the sense in which it is applied to literature, can hardly be applied to programmes that also include quite modern music. Serious did not to me mean non-humorous at all, and I had forgotten that boogie and swing manufacturers took themselves seriously, which of course they do.

But although I welcome Mrs. Scott's interesting and precise definition of classical, I still am reluctant to see our Classical Hour going by any other name. It isn't always an hour, it isn't always classical music in Mrs. Scott's sense of the word, and it isn't always music by classical composers. But on the other hand the term Classical Hour does tell listeners certain things quite simply. It warns off the Swingers, the Old-Time Melodists, the Band Bandits, and the Woogie Bugs; and it tells me, and others with tastes like mine, that I shall have the sort of music that I consider worth hearing. In point of fact I cannot think of a term that I would prefer. We might get instead For the Music Lover, or An Hour with the Masters, or worse.

* * *

THE only alternative that I would consider preferable would be programmes which would tell us more precisely what we are likely to hear. I would like a whole hour, or even a series of hours, of one composer, so that perhaps for a week or a month we could soak ourselves, or rather be soaked, with Bach or Beethoven or indeed any composer who has established his reputation. For my part, I am as much prepared to learn as to enjoy; perhaps I enjoy more when I am learning. But since I may well be in a minority in preferring these things, the Classical Hour as it stands serves me well.

* * *

"STERNER STUFF" the NBS production from 2YA the other Sunday evening, was described as a drama of the Yorkshire Mills. The plot was neater than the characterisation. The mill manager, Robertshaw, told by his doctor that he needs to ease up on his work for his heart's sake, refuses to do so. He doesn't want money, he wants power. His second in command, Joshua, egged on by a nagging wife and an unpleasant and ambitious daughter, presses his claims to an increased salary. There is a heated interview, in the midst of which the old manager has a heart attack and Joshua doesn't pass him his medicine but lets him die. Joshua steps into Robertshaw's shoes, buys a new house and car for his wife, marries his daughter to

(Continued on next page)