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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

French Without Tears

I HEARD from 3YA recently my first of the Inspector French series of episodes (BBC). The method, combining narrative (by the Inspector) with reconstructions of incidents (black-mailer's dying agonies very realistic) seemed to me practically ideal for the broadcasting of thrillers. None of the everlasting “So this is the railway station (bump; sizzle; hoot). Who's that over there? (footsteps). Hello, Smith” with which less skilful producers convey us from incident to incident. The essentials are clearly given without undue fuss, and one is thankful. But French himself? I remember him as a rather engaging figure in print, plodding and perspiring with pure conscientiousness; but Milton Rosmer makes him languid—almost what someone called la-dipperishing-da and comfortably superior to those poor poops of murderers.

A Passacaglia

YOU might write a Passacaglia on any theme you like, from God Save the King to Pop Goes the Weasel. All you would have to do, according to the Harmony Text-books, would be to write the tune again and again in the bass, while inventing variations in the parts above it. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Students of harmony, try it and see whether you can do as well as Gordon Jacob, whose “Passacaglia on a Well-known Theme” was played by Gil Dech and the 4YA Concert Orchestra. The well-known theme? Oranges and Lemons! But in this tricky version, the old nursery-rhyme, plodding along in the bass, is decorated with such profusion of harmonic and contrapuntal invention that it sounds like a tinsel Christmas tree—and a very charming one at that.

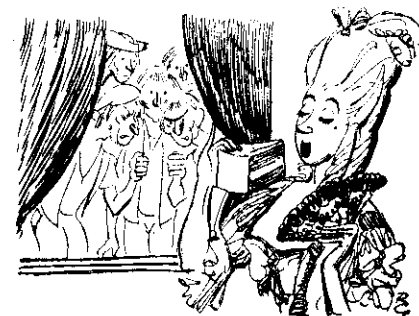
Unusual Songs

I MUST commend Pat Woods for her constant choice of none but the most interesting and unusual songs; her recent recital from 4YA contained some splendid examples of Modern British songs. “Silent Noon,” by Vaughan Williams is, alas! in danger of becoming popular, which means that it is beginning to be sung in all keys, by all types of voice; but the mellow, smooth contralto seems most suited to it. I remember a friend of mine, who doesn't like contraltos, speaking of “the concentrated femininity of the contralto voice.” He meant the phrase to be derogatory, but I find it rather complimentary. Similarly, I suppose, you might say all bass voices are the essence of masculinity. There is, indeed, something choir-boyish about all tenors, something airy-fairy about lyric sopranos, which often makes them prefer the high note and the roudade to the more important matter of interpreting the composer's message. As for the rest of Pat Woods's programme, I liked best

her shepherd “with a pair of fine bagpipes”—I couldn't help wondering how New Zealand sheep would react to being mustered with the aid of such skirling.

First Catch Your Hare

WHEN I dined once with a couple who, being childless, were affluent, we had black-currant tart; on another occasion a friend returned from Christchurch with a pot of the jam and gave a lunch party in its honour. So I was as well equipped as the average Auckland to listen to an A.C.E. talk from 1YA on *How to Preserve Black-currants*. Up here we find it best not to let our thoughts dwell upon this quintessence of vitamin C, for if we plant black-currants they exhibit



stubborn and leafy sterility, and the tiny quantity that comes into our shops is not likely, I find on inquiry, to sell at less than 3/- per lb. this year. We grow some strange local fruits of our own, and during certain seasons the balance of good things is decidedly in our favour. But at this time of year, if we are not reduced to crawling about nibbling grass like Captain Cook's men, we are at least warding off scurvy by measures that range from the dull to the quite distasteful. It is when an occasional one of these excellent Dunedin-born A.C.E. talks disagrees with us that we are reminded sharply how untidily this little country straggles down across the lines of latitude, for what is sound advice to two-thirds of its population can make the rest of us feel rather like those breadless citizens of Paris whose queen recommended them to eat cake.

Open-Minded Quartet

IN Auckland we have noted gratefully that the almost weekly performance of the NBS String Quartet at 2YA takes place on a Monday night—our own really blank night for classical music. Equally gratefully have we noticed that in spite of their long record of satisfying performance, these four players have not grown so exclusive as some quartets, who are said to regard quintet writing as a regrettable pandering to popular taste, and to resent the entrance of a fifth player who steals their thunder; for last month they admitted Mr. McCaw with his clarinet, and we had Mozart's Quintet. This moved a little slowly, I thought, particularly in the first movement, but it had that mysterious tension and poise on which much of the excitement of Mozart depends, and this is often lost at a quicker tempo. And to say that we were disappointed when the Cesar Franck piano quintet listed for last Monday did not materialise, is no reflection

(continued on next page)