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RADIO VIEWSREEL What Our Commentators Say

Classical Requests

I'VE been wondering lately if the YA stations would include a Classical Request Session in their programmes, say once a week. The ZBs have their request session, of course, and the stock answer to the question why they include so much rubbish is that nobody asks for anything else; if they had enough requests for it, they would play good music, but the listeners want popular stuff. But although lovers of the classics are in such a minority I can't agree that they needn't be considered. If a station gets 50 requests for Vera Lynn and only five for Yehudi Menuhin, must the sessions contain ten times as much mush as music? The jazz addict won't mind listening to one classical item in ten jazz ones, but the classical musician isn't going to listen to nine popular hits in the hope of hearing one item which he enjoys. So he refrains altogether from writing for request items, thus giving the impression that he and his friends are an apathetic minority. Couldn't one of the national stations attempt to disprove this by holding request sessions for, say, a month or so?

The Housekeeper's Ghost

FOR a combination of eeriness, suspense, terror, and excitement I have heard little in the form of radio plays to equal "The Homecoming" heard recently from 4YA. The play lasts just fifteen minutes and has only four actors. It concerns a couple who have taken a lonely house in the country ("lonely" to an Englishman means two miles from the village, not 20, as we New Zealanders might suppose), and are awaiting the arrival of a new housekeeper. When she does turn up, she behaves in a manner which arouses suspicion, but it is not until near the end of the play that the listener discovers several things about her. Namely, she was housekeeper for the former owner of the house, whom she murdered; she has been in a mental asylum ever since; and anyhow she is dead, and what the couple actually encounter is presumably her ghost. Particularly eldritch is the effect of her last line: "I've come home; and I'm never going to leave this house again." The reader will understand why I recommend this fragment as being as good, in its own way, as *Night Must Fall*, when I add that the part of the housekeeper's ghost was taken by Sybil Thorndike.



Richard Dimbleby

PERHAPS it is too soon to wonder which of the war broadcasts of these past five years will live longest and clearest in our memory in old age, but there is little chance of forgetting the evening when Richard Dimbleby, speaking through the BBC, told us what he had seen at a German concentration camp that same day. Even those who have made, year after year, a consistent effort to face the facts of war, found that they could still be shocked beyond speech. For people did not talk about

it at once; the imagination was for a while immobilised by the task that was expected of it. It has been said that the only hope for the world is for us to train the imagination until the sufferings of people whom we do not know become as real as our own. I doubt whether the radio, or any other medium, has ever sent us further along this hard road than it did that night. The strengthening of our purpose and our understanding was the only possible good that could be salvaged from the wreckage that was found in these camps. We will, I think, live to be grateful that there were those there at the time who saw at once that this was the concern of the whole world, and had the courage and ability to insist on our participation.

He's Quite Tame

IT is strange how the microphone can turn lambs into lions and lions into lambs. I tuned into 1YA the other night with quite a shiver of expectancy to hear Sir Thomas Beecham in the "America Talks to New Zealand" series, only to find that something had stripped him of every symptom of that astringent personality with which we credit him. Perhaps it was his unfamiliarity with his antipodean audience, or the impersonal surroundings of the broadcasting studio, or the necessity of dealing with the vast amorphous subject of music in America to-day, in only a few minutes. His remarks were sensible, but mostly too vague and general to be memorable. He was definite, though, in his tribute to the help that is being given to musical projects by federal, state, and municipal authorities. The Metropolitan Opera of New York, for instance, is now bringing opera to a much wider circle of people by lowering its prices; this is possible, he explained, because the authorities had remitted some of its taxes, a concession which is made to charitable organisations. They had considered whether opera was charitable in its intentions, and had given it the benefit of the doubt. Next time a microphone is put in front of Sir Thomas, let us hope that it will be while he is going about his daily business of drilling an orchestra. Then, from all accounts, we really will hear some bright remarks.

The Farthest Hebrides

A RECORDING by Beecham of Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave," heard from 3YA on Sunday, reminds one of the odd career of the Hebrides island group in the European imagination in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I suppose it began with Macpherson's "Ossian," the famous forgery which so early foreshadowed everything worst in later Celtic literature. At all events, Wordsworth, Keats, Poe, and doubtless many others restored the Hebrides to their ancient position in Ultima Thule, the island at the edge of the world; they became a symbol of the delightfully remote and misty—Fingal's Cave being an exception in its precision and clarity—about which everyone could write without having to go there. They remain to this day, of course, singularly little known; Hebridean sailors have been seen in Christchurch, speaking a brand of English which perplexed

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