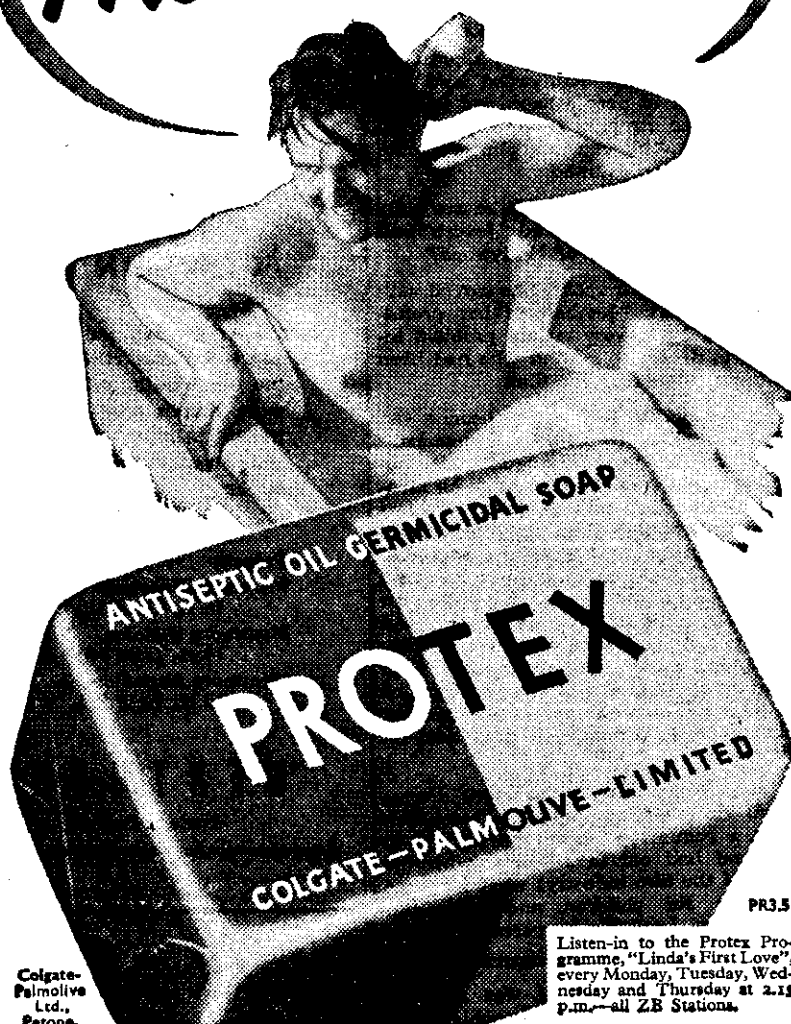


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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Patrons Wanted

THE other day the Correspondence School began a series of talks on the instruments of an orchestra. The first talk dealt with violin and viola, displaying their various moods and capabilities with well-chosen records. If this series increases the pupils' capacity to enjoy the intricacies of orchestral recordings, it will do a great deal. One might hope that it would do more—that a handful of country children would be fired with the determination to play one of these instruments—were it not that their chances of realising this ambition are so remote. There's an opening here for a patron of music to act as fairy godfather, discovering the would-be horn players and clarinetists of the back-blocks, putting the instruments into their hands and giving them access to lessons and orchestras. But musical patronage is a thing of the past, and so are symphony orchestras. If we had orchestras, the children might sometimes see and hear the living instruments in action and wish to work hard to learn to play them; if children were being taught how to handle these instruments we would not be wondering, as we are, where on earth our symphony orchestras are to come from. How we got into this slough nobody seems quite to know, but if everyone worked at whatever corner of the problem lies within reach, as the Correspondence School is doing, we would 'pull out of it somehow.

Among the Great Russians

THE English sailor may with impunity resist all temptations to belong to other nations. Not so the English musician. Occasionally a staunch singer like Clara Butt will stick to her stark, homespun name, and it is greatly to her credit, but many a would-be prima donna has helped herself along with something synthetic in the Italian style, just as a ballerina chooses a name with a Russian flavour. When Sir Henry Wood wanted an impartial hearing for his orchestral transcription of Bach's Organ Toccata and Fugue in D Minor he brought it out under the name Klenovsky. He was probably right; he had had long experience of audiences and critics. The truth leaked out with quite a flutter of publicity many years later, in 1934; and I was a little surprised to hear Klenovsky's ghost still walking at 1YA recently when the Toccata and Fugue was announced as "arranged by Klenovsky and conducted by Sir Henry Wood." Yet if this recording were to be accompanied always by the announcement that Klenovsky was really only Wood, it would give an unfair advantage to the great rival transcription of the same Toccata and Fugue made by Stokowski—unless of course the announcer were to tell us whenever the latter is played that Stokowski's name is really only Stokes, which would not be in the best taste.

Paul Robeson

PAUL ROBESON'S voice is wasted on most of the songs he chooses to record, just as his talent is wasted on the stories of some of the films he makes. His singing is apparently so effortless, so naturally faultless, the quality of the

voice so magnificent, that to hear him singing for example such a trifle as "Lindy Lou" is like listening to the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra playing "Hearts and Flowers," or Backhaus performing "The Merry Peasant" on a concert Steinway. But Paul Robeson lately showed his acting talents in the title role of Shakespeare's "Othello," and a record heard several times lately shows his better qualities as a musician. It is the recording of two Russian songs, "Within Four Walls," by Moussorgsky, and a Cradle Song by Gretchaninov. Personally, I could listen to Robeson even if he sang nothing by scales and arpeggios, but I hope this is only the first of a number of new recordings of better music. There are so many bass songs I should like to hear sung by this particular bass voice.

Rites of Spring

I SOMETIMES wonder what happens in the Brains Trust Studio at the BBC when the session is over. Do the members get together and gather up some of those loose threads of argument that have been left dangling, or do they rush



out into the fog to other engagements? So often they are just getting going on a topic when they are brought back to the point, or switched to the next question, or reminded that they are on dangerous ground. For one reason or another they seldom have a chance to develop as they could do that rare and wayward art of good conversation. The other evening they were faced with the question of what causes those attacks of spring-cleaning that affect housewives each year. There were the stock answers about grime from winter fires and dirty carpets shown up in the brightening light, and the usual complaint from someone who lived in a house where spring-cleaning went on all the year round. Then Dr. Snow expressed a wish to draw comparisons between spring-cleaning and some of the spring rites described in "The Golden Bough." Upon which the questionmaster politely but hastily applied the closure, and we passed to the next question with regrets from all except Mrs. Grundy.

Art and Conscience

I FOUND Norman Corwin, an American radio-dramatist, interesting in the "America Talks to New Zealand" series, heard recently from 3YA. He chose—one feels it somehow inevitable—to talk about the social function of Art and delivered an impassioned and impressive speech on the artist as the voice of the