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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Gone, No Address

FOR the past year or so there has been at 12B each Sunday morning a session called "You'll Enjoy Education." These 15-minute talks were sometimes strictly factual (physiology, for instance) and sometimes touched on the more controversial issues of sociology and economics. The speaker was P. Martin Smith, director of Adult Education in Auckland. On September 30 the talk was given as usual with no indication that it was to be the last. On October 7 a medley of musical records took its place, and as the announcer made no explanation I rang the station, to be told curtly, "That session's off the air." "For good?" "Yes, discontinued." One must assume in such case that everything has gone smoothly behind the scenes, that the proper things have been said and the necessary thanks expressed, that whichever party terminated the arrangement did so with fair warning, and that it is through mere carelessness that the talks are scheduled in the programmes as far ahead as October 31. But is it enough that courtesy should rule only behind the scenes? Is it not radio's function to encourage the listener in the illusion that he is one of an intimate group along with the announcer and the speaker? What becomes of the friendliness and responsiveness expected of this listener if, after months of punctual and happy attendance at a weekly meeting, he turns up one day to find the door suddenly and inexplicably barred against him?

Opera

"THIS leads to a highly dramatic trio, the Count leaves the stage to seek his vengeance, Leonora falls senseless and that brings us to the end of the first act" . . . "Maddalena flings open the door, Gilda rushes in and the deed is done" . . . "Torn between her love for her father and for Alvare, the unwitting cause of her father's death, she prays in this aria that she may die." The Christchurch stations have been going operatic in a big way of late, and the voice of the narrator has been heard in the land, recounting dilemmas and disasters such as the above, in tones of rich satisfaction. For the radio audience the narrator may yet become as indispensable to the opera as the blazing eye of the conductor: and there can be no doubt that he enjoys himself. Perhaps this is the best attitude to the misfortunes of Verdi's characters—one of undisguised, though in no way sadistic, glee—for I doubt if it can be maintained that tragic opera purges the soul with emotions of pity and terror (I hasten to add that there are exceptions). One wishes to see the louder passions on a lavish scale, and one does.

The Easy Way

A PLATTER of sheep's hearts on a butcher's counter gives us a very good idea of what a flock of sheep looks like and saves us the trouble of trekking into the country to view the animal as a whole. Anyone who quarrels with the above statement will probably dislike a

record now frequently heard in otherwise respectable sessions. It is called "The Heart of the Symphony." It begins with the first movement (abridged) of Beethoven's Fifth, slides into a fragment of Schubert's Unfinished, dips into Brahms, Franck, Tchaikovsky and so on. To know this record is a liberal education—as liberal, anyway, as we can afford if we are pressed for time and our powers of concentration shattered. The other arts are lagging behind music in adapting their great works for busy people, though I find that Professor Walter Murdoch has made a start on poetry, rearranging it so that it is guaranteed not to strain the mind:



One crowded hour of glorious life,
The Tuscans raised a joyous cry,
They all ran after the farmer's wife
And let the ape and tiger die.
Hark hark the lark at Heaven's gate sings,
Of old, unhappy, far-off things.

Concerto for One

WHAT is to be said of the orchestral concert held in the Wellington Town Hall and broadcast by 2YA? Do we hold our tongues, or do we drive towards some compromise between the bitter truth and the sort of things the announcer said? Do we insult the orchestra—who after all can only do as they are allowed or made to do—and say the oboe sounded like bagpipes being filled, the bass notes could barely be heard, the trumpets brayed? Or do we insult the musical public and say it was all well up to our standards? Must we admit that this is the best we can do? The announcer called it several times "this great musical treat." He was honest enough; he positively glowed with anticipation, left verbs hanging and used redundant prepositions in his fervour. He depicted "this vast assemblage" that had filled the Town Hall. Would they have all been there if there had been no distinguished Palestinian pianist? Is the question fair? On the other hand, would we be fair to ourselves if we never faced these questions? Why did the oboe and the brass sound that way? Is it anybody's job in New Zealand to make an oboe or a trumpet sound well—anybody's full-time job, that is to say? It is several people's full-time job to make



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