

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Not Here, O Apollo

VINCENT SHEEAN, in a recent book, describes the impact of the Negro art of Marian Anderson on the Salzburg Music Festival of 1935. What she did, he says, "was something outside the limits of classical or romantic music: she frightened us with the conception, in musical terms of course, but outside the normal limits, of a mighty suffering. Without the conventional training of an art-singer she would probably never have been able to do this, and yet she did it most of all by a quality of tone and expression which transcended even her rare gift and related her to millions of others; it was most of all a racial quality . . . Anderson's tragic music, coming from a world outside the formal design and limited aspiration of the baroque town, seemed too much to be contained there, and even at moments when it was most wedded to German romantic music . . . invested the whole with a barbaric wildness, a sheer tribal terror for which our musical experience gave us no clue." I was vividly reminded of this quotation—my excuse for repeating it—by a pro-

gramme of negro spirituals sung from 3YA by Gerald Christeller. Mr. Christeller chose several spirituals—"Go Down Moses," "I Stood on de Ribber," "Oh, Didn't it Rain"—which are too seldom heard. It was clear from his manner and approach that he was quite aware of this strange quality of which Sheean speaks, and put forth all his powers to capture it. But the thing could not be done, through no fault in the singer—though I cannot feel that the accompaniment helped him; Mr. Christeller's training and background is essentially that of the Central European baroque tradition into which Marian Anderson so disturbingly broke, and the return journey simply cannot be made. As a rule, these negro songs can hardly be satisfactorily presented by a singer of another race. Anderson, Robeson, or the Inkspots, all have a unique and unproduceable *cachet*.

Where's Banjo?

"THE Man from Snowy River" is generally accepted as a typical product of Australian narrative poetry of the late 19th century—the cheerfully primitive theme, the thumping unabashed cliché,

the metre drawn from debased balladry, the real energy and simplicity that corresponded to something well-rooted in the life of the people who read it. But what has become of all this in "The Man from Snowy River," a modern fantasy by Trevare, played by George Trevare and his Concert Orchestra from 3YA one Saturday? The music is of the lesser cinematic kind and closely resembles that employed in Fitzpatrick travelogues to inform the audience that they are looking at hills; the choral interludes deal with the mysterious horseman of the poem in a metre not much resembling the original; and nothing of the narrative can be detected. I think that probably Mr. Trevare was trying to express some abiding spirit, a sort of Snowy River essence and legendary quality. Unfortunately, he does not convince one that it is there in the first place, though the aim is interesting as a symptom of Australian cultural problems.

Orlando

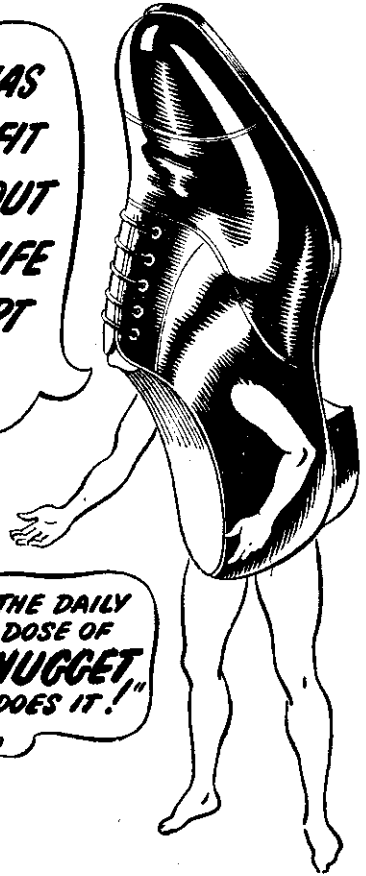
EXTRACTS from Virginia Woolf's strange re-creation of four centuries formed an attractive BBC reading from 3YA on a recent Sunday. The extracts ignored the more puzzling theme of the book, the personal development and adventures of Orlando, which included a change of sex at the end of the second century; and heaven forbid that I should discuss these mysteries here. But the

aspect emphasised by this reading was the purely historical; about one of the great English country houses—actually, I think, the Sackville-West seat at Knole—Virginia Woolf brought successive historical periods and scenes to life and translated them into that familiar idiom of the imaginative writer, the telescoped or timeless present: as Orlando walks through the great rooms, each prepared for a king who never came, each reign is simultaneously, yet in its order, alive and contemporary. Behind all, at the end of the gallery, moves the figure of a monk from the age before the great nobles; and the reading ended here, with a fragment of Peter Warlock to point this last cowed moral. But, in the end, the history lives only by the life-giving but distorting creation of the artistic retrospect; and each piece, as it is read, proves to be not record but high and magnificent fantasy. It is a personal vision at the last, and a certain brilliant impatience characterises it.

Music from America

WHOEVER thought of giving another airing to the records of new music originally issued by the U.S.A. Office of Information and used on the American "Mosquito" network deserves congratulation and encouragement, for this music needs to be heard often to be assimilated. But to label the series "Contemporary Music," just this and no more, is an insidious if unintentional form of

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