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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Four Feet Away

FOUR feet away from the singer is the microphone; and that, for all practical purposes, is his audience. Close to him, listening in intimacy, hearing all if seeing nothing, the radio audience need not be attacked with the assaults of the concert-hall. Frederick Cocks in a group of tenor solos from 1YA sang all his songs with the exuberance suggested by the title of the last number, "Open Your Windows to the Morn." Singers quite often forget that their radio audience is very near them. Whether from carelessness or from an automatic desire to compensate for the unaccustomed deadness of the studio, they sing far more loudly than is necessary. This is quite different, of course, from the legitimate incisiveness demanded for the proper emphasis of climaxes. The microphone broadcasts what it receives, and while it can absorb all the volume of a loud singer, it can do nothing to correct the coarseness of tone that comes from forcing. There were one or two very pretty notes in Mr. Cocks' singing, giving promise of much more musical results if he would but curb his tendency to strain for effect.

### Nationalism in Music

JUST when I am comfortably convinced that music, the most universal of the arts, is an international language through which can be strengthened the bonds of goodwill, 1YX comes out with a programme, "Nationalism in Music." With music by Smetana, Dvorak, Grieg, Sibelius, Moussorgsky, Balakirev and Falla, a good case was made out to support the argument that national characteristics express themselves through music. However convincing this argument may be, it still remains true that music as a language and an art is international. The qualities which become associated with the music of different peoples, are but dialects, mutations imposed upon a grammar and vocabulary common to all western civilisation. The uncompromising forthright utterance of Moussorgsky may not fall sweetly on the Spanish ear, but at least it will be intelligible, as intelligible as the smartness of Walton, the pranks of Poulenc, or the Hegelian solemnity of Hindemith. In the cause of international goodwill it is a matter of small moment whether the music of one nation is enjoyed by the peoples of others. It is sufficient, and indeed necessary, that it be understood.

### Lear and Carroll

THE only thing that jarred on me in the first programme of 2YA's *Book of Verse* series was that, in the course of his opening remarks on the nature of nonsense, the speaker stated that though the Germans could perhaps produce a treatise on the Philosophic Concept of Nonsense they were incapable of producing any themselves. This idea was treated with more finesse in *Pimpernel Smith*, and is somewhat irrelevant to the discussion on hand. However, in other respects the programme left little to be desired, and devotees of Lear and/or Carroll did not feel the necessity of shouting "Off with his head!"

Daniel George and his assistants did not commit what Montaigne considers the primary error of taking nonsense too seriously, but they took time off from enjoying themselves in declaiming "Beware the Jabberwock, my son," or smacking their lips over "a serene and sickly suavity only known to the truly virtuous" to throw out a few illuminating comments, to trace the mathematical logic, "the wild gleams of reason" behind Carroll's nonsense verse, and to draw attention to Lear's perfect rhythm and unflinching instinct for the right word.

### Good Boy

I HAVE heard some very good programmes in Gramophan's *I Pulled Out a Plum* series from 2YA. I particularly liked two items heard a week or two ago, one a new arrangement of Greensleeves by Richardson, the other an air, "There sheep may safely graze" from a secular cantata, arranged by Constant Lambert and William Walton.



This Friday, however, some of the plums were a little over-ripe. There was perhaps too much sweetness in Jeanette Macdonald's rendering of "Annie Laurie" and "Coming Through the Rye," and "Song of the Volga Boatmen" and "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2" have lost their freshness through overmuch handling. But Gramophan's comments have the merit of arousing interest in even the stalest offerings, and I enjoyed my Annie Laurie much more through having learnt that she was a real person, that she did not marry the William Douglas who wrote the song for her, but someone with less talent and more money, and that she lived to the age of 83.

### Talking About Music

DR. EDGAR BAINTON in his lecture-recitals from 2YA speaks so clearly and simply, that one forgets that music is the most difficult of all the arts to talk about. There are so many things that can be said about music and so few that ought to be said, that the musician who can strike the happy balance between talking and playing is rare indeed. If he be a fluent and well-informed speaker he is likely to ride his pet theories at the expense of the music. On the other hand, if his enthusiasm for the music is transcendent, he will probably become inarticulate or incoherent if forced to explain it. Commentary may arise from the music itself—a discussion of the material of the composition—or, by introducing biographical and historical facts it may give the music a background. Dr. Bainton in introducing Haydn and Mozart on June 25 chose the latter course. Either

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