

time in technical language, requires considerable mental effort if the listener is to grasp the talk completely. Such phrases as population of events, procedure of drawing valid inferences from samples, normal law of error, price indices, pro-production function, marginal product, quality control, and so on, may be crystal-clear to those students to whom Mr. Williams lectures, but the radio audience is composed of people like me, of average intelligence only, and we find it lowering to our pride to have to admit we couldn't follow a talk without exerting our brains to the utmost. But cheer up, I said to myself; perhaps Mr. Williams' students might feel the same if a musician lectured them about pentatonic scales and the use of secondary ninths.

Unreal Mockery

"ENTER Brachiano's Ghost, in his leather cassock and breeches, boots and cowl; in his hand a pot of lily-flowers with a skull in it . . . throws earth upon him and shows him the skull." This superb stage direction, from the post-Shakespearean dramatist, John Webster, not only gives the quintessence of that extraordinary generation, it expresses with some vividness a strain of imagery recurrent in European thought—the macabre, that chilling mixture of the uncanny, the horrible and, perhaps most essential, the grotesque. To trace its history would be a vast task, but the main line of descent seems to have begun when the fancies of medieval civilisation in decay turned to images of death and putrefaction. Morbidity and necrophily have been distinguishing signs of the macabre tradition ever since, but curiously enough it occurs not in periods of decadence and decline, but of vigour and expansion. It was the dark side of the boundless zest for sensual living which the Renaissance introduced—in Shakespeare's lightest comedies Armado, Rosalind, and Falstaff abound in images of the grave—and this phase reached a climax of grisly efflorescence in Brachiano's pot of lilies. Then it lay in quiescence till the coming of romanticism, whose vehement and unbridled spiritual ardour overflowed in the familiar images—the skull, cerements, tombstone and worm, and many new ones; the figure of the ghost went beyond its Elizabethan role of moral accuser and became an emanation of the evil, the malignant-irrational, the uncanny. Dickens, Melville, and Scott were great authors who turned to the macabre, but there was a line of writers who made a cult of it—Poe, Le Fanu, Beddoes—and, as an interesting 3YA broadcast showed us, "The Influence of the Macabre" was strong in 19th Century music: Liszt, Moussorgsky, and Kilpinen were examples.

Musical Analysis

MY new *Listener* has only just arrived at time of writing—the copy containing the Analysis of Programmes (headed "Light Music is Well Ahead.") I find this item the most surprising piece of musical news for many a long day. Here I am, a confirmed lover of what the Analysis calls "serious music," and I have always imagined myself to be badly catered for; yet according to these

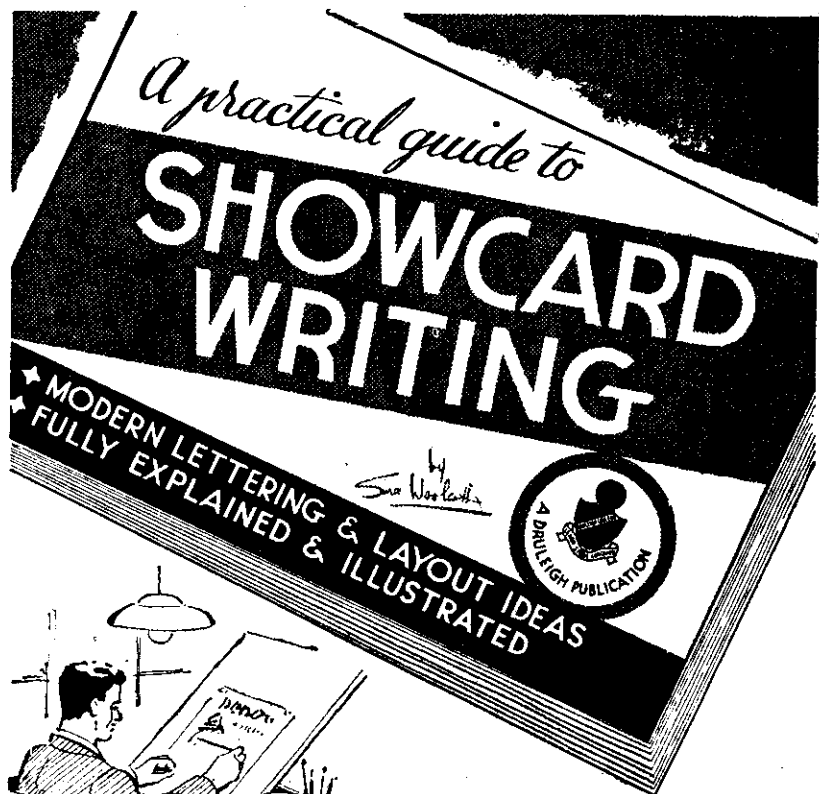
figures almost one programme in five is devoted entirely to my favourite music! But the most remarkable thing about this little chart is the time devoted to modern dance music—only five per cent. of the total, or about one hour in 20! I am not of that highbrow elect who sneer at the other person's prejudice while retaining my own, and for once I can add an ungrudging assent to the howls of protest which will probably arise from devotees of Ellington and Gershwin at this curtailment of their broadcasting time, in favour of that nondescript "light music" which is neither good "serious" music nor good jazz, but a hybrid which serves almost no other function than to provide a background of noise.

ITMA

JAMES AGATE, whose opinions I usually treat with respect, has let me down. I have discovered, via *Ego* 6, that he does not approve of Tommy Handley, except as a possible member of Parliament by virtue of the fact that his forthright sterling countenance is a guarantee against funny business. But the unfunniness of That Man's face, assuming that it is unfunny, cannot affect me, a member of the radio audience. So I am unreservedly glad to find Tommy back on his old Saturday night beat at 2YA, together with such members of the Old Guard as the Colonel ("I don't mind if I do"). It has been said that familiarity with the *Itma* programme is a necessary preliminary to its enjoyment, and though I am willing to admit that love grows by what it feeds on and one must have fuel to feed the flames, I do not therefore deny the possibility of mutual affinities and love at first sight. By which I mean that though I have met Tommy's Irish nurse Annie, only twice I now find the sound of the talcum powder squelching out of her shoes almost as welcome as Mrs. Mopp's "Can I do you now, sir?"

Drimin Dhu

A MAN who would lament the loss of his wife to his favourite cow may seem to us like a figure out of *Cold Comfort Farm*—where, you may recall, there is a dotard named Adam continually deploring the way of the world in communion with Graceless, Feckless, Aimless, and other sympathetic kine. But we would be wrong. That such an act may be as natural and moving as the running of water was proved in a 3YA broadcast by that indefatigable and sensitive unearther of folk-songs, Gerald Christeller. In a programme of "Songs of the Four Nations," he presented an Irish peasant song—part translated from Erse—the title of which I have prefixed to this paragraph; it means "O dear black cow," and recurs as a refrain. The picture it calls up is unexpectedly vivid and moving—a man, left alone in his house, gone out to do the milking (which in a peasant home would be the task of the wife) singing quietly as he works. The song says nothing of all this—it is a simple lament for the departed, with all the oddly felicitous gift of the Celt for fresh and effective comparison; and at the end of each verse the Erse words: "O dear black cow, my grief will last for ever." Not only the merits of the song and its presentation place us in Mr. Christeller's debt, but the reminder that a way of life existed in which a man might sincerely and without old-worldishness sing to his beasts and make their presence part of the fabric of his emotion and the means of its expression.



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