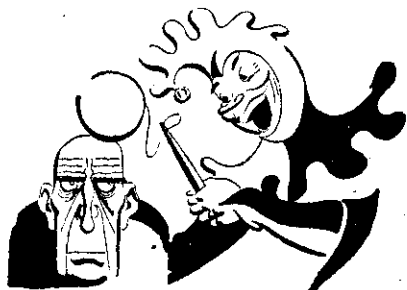


no specific drama in mind, yet expressing in musical terms and with overpowering vividness the atmosphere of the theatre. In one passage I have particularly in mind the music seems to reproduce the chattering buzz of an audience watching lights and curtains, and like it conveys to the listener a sensation, physical and muscular (diaphragmatic, dare I say?) of nervous expectation. Bax's music is not "From the Theatre"—to use a phrase of special significance to the New Zealand radio public—but for the theatre; it renders into music the unique experience, the interest, intimacy, and suspense, which the theatre offers to its audience. In this work, more than in any other I can at the moment call to mind, one art salutes another.

Jack Davey

IN Jack Davey's *Cavalcade* one of the characters sings "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire" and another retorts that he hasn't been disappointed yet. This might well be taken as a comment on the show itself, in spite of the fact that a recent programme was concerned with fires and fire-fighting. On the other hand there is hope in that "yet." Jack Davey has modelled his programme



fairly closely on the Tommy Handley Half-Hour and if he has not yet attained the high-speed enamelled finish shown by Tommy Handley and his team he seems to be getting somewhere near it. He uses the same techniques—he has set before himself the Handley ideal of a gag a line—but the gags are not usually so funny nor the rhymes as felicitous. And his *Cavalcade*, like most *cavalcades*, tends to be slow-moving, partly because its continuity is broken too often by commercial announcements and musical numbers. But it certainly has its moments—I liked the fireman who couldn't fight the fire because his hose had a ladder in it, and couldn't climb the ladder because he was wearing wedgies—and I appreciate the fact that inside the Handley framework the idiom is dinkum Aussie.

Thackeray

A QUARTER of an hour spent listening to "Bluebeard's Ghost" in 2YA's *A Story to Remember* session was sufficient to convince me that William Makepiece Thackeray was a man born 100 years too soon. For "Bluebeard's Ghost" reveals him as a master in the art of radio entertainment—the story is just that happy blend of wit and nitwitty that is considered most suitable to be served up with the housewife's afternoon tea. The story concerns the widow Fatima, now courted by two suitors, Captain Bluebeard and Frederick, nephew of the Rev. Dr. Sly, to whom appears the ghost of her late husband, presumably to help her with her decision. (Line to remember—When Fatima asks tremblingly of the manservant if the apparition has a blue beard the manservant reports "Yes,

m'am, powder blue.") But apart from this one line there seemed to me very few evidences of the master's touch, and if I had not heard the announcements fore and aft I might have wronged a great man's memory by assuming "Bluebeard's Ghost" to belong to the same literary family as "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife."

Four-Minute Alibi

SOME time ago, a writer in these columns commented on the choice of Bach's "Art of Fugue" as a radio-alibi in a certain detective novel, since this work, in spite of Miss Marsh's assurances, had at that time not been heard on the radio in this country. Those who have been listening to 4YA on Friday nights now know different. Bach's "Art of Fugue" has made brief but regular appearances, before and after the weekly readings by Professor T. D. Adams, and selections have been used by a skilful hand to illustrate a variety of subjects. Nothing could better have set the stage for readings from Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford* than the string quartet's performance of something labelled, simply, *Contrapunctus 9*. But as for providing an alibi such as the one in *Died in the Wool*, this would not be possible in the short extracts played, unless the murder were done with fine despatch in the time taken to play one side of a record.

Early French

A CHARMING recital of music by early French composers was given by Bessie Pollard from the studio of 4YA. The composers included Lully, Rameau, and Couperin, the eight selected works were played with clarity and a nice sense of nuance, and I hope this will not be the last recital of music by these and other early masters of the keyboard. Couperin, whose works abound in literary imagery anticipating the later piano pieces of Schumann, is a composer who loses much of his subtle distinction when heard in a concert-hall. His talent is perfect for the drawing room, the music studio, the select gathering of music lovers. For the presentation of intimate music of this sort, the radio is exactly right, allowing the music's fragile beauty to be heard in quiet, untrammelled by distraction.

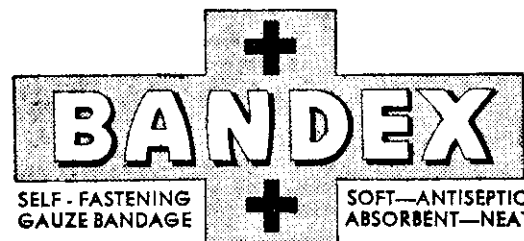
Learned Enemies

RICHARD SINGER's 3YA talks on *Great Figures of the Bar* I have urged on readers before, as possessing solid erudition and genuine wit. I now find that they may claim another virtue, not perhaps as common as it might be in radio talks on deceased worthies, that of objectivity and detachment. His most recent choice was a mid-19th Century potentate, Lord Campbell, who was, it seems, a great lawyer, but (like King John in the poem) "not a good man; he had his little ways." These little ways included relentless ambition, pitiless intrigue, the furious and humourless industry of the social climber, and savage and uninhibited ill manners. These things were made plain by Mr. Singer with admirable calm and fairness. He quoted Dr. Johnson's pronouncement that the fairest prospect in Scottish eyes was the road to England, and showed its relevance to Campbell ("Mon, it's a grand sight tae see a Scotsman on the make"—Barrie) without becoming involved as a weaker man might have done in disputing the justice and accuracy of the dictum. Mr. Singer dares to assume that his public appreciate good prose and good anecdotes.



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