



PROGRAMMES FOR CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS programmes this year bring back the old standbys without which Christmas would not be Christmas, but there are also some new things this time. Among the standbys, we'd name the adaptation of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* with Ronald Colman as Scrooge; and Charles Laughton doing "Mr. Pickwick's Christmas"; and Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*; and of course all the carols that pertain to the season.

Among the new things, we could name the one-act opera by the American composer Eleanor Everest Freer, which has been recorded by the NZBS in Wellington; two new BBC programmes, "The Top of the Tree" and "Music for Christmas"; and one or two programmes to be contributed from the local studios—a talk on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem, one on Christmas in Canada, Christmas readings, and a programme called "Come Christmas the Morn," to be given from 3YA by Myra Thomson (soprano) and H. G. Glaysher (harp).

As a guide to the Christmas programmes we print on this page a table showing the main features to be heard on December 24 and 25, and the following notes on some of them:

A Christmas Tale

(One-Act Opera by Eleanor Everest Freer, 2YA, Christmas Day, 9.30 p.m.).

THIS work was to have been performed with the late Harold Whittle (the Wellington pianist) at the piano, but he fell ill as it was being prepared, and the finished performance was recorded two days after his death. Harold Whittle was a personal friend of the composer, and she had given him the full rights in Australia and New Zealand over her compositions, with the stipulation that he was to take part himself if that was feasible.

Eleanor Everest Freer was born in Philadelphia in 1864, and after study in Europe, she became a leader of musical life in Chicago, where she founded the American Opera Society. She was well known as a composer of songs, but only began to publish her work in 1902. Altogether she wrote over 150 songs, and 10 operas, besides some chamber music and piano pieces. "A Christmas Tale" was her Opus 35. Its one scene is a room in the home of Pierre Coeur (a sculptor) with the Cathedral of Notre Dame seen through the windows; and the period is the 15th Century. There are four singing characters, St. Nicholas (baritone), St. Rose (soprano), Pierre Coeur (tenor), and Jacqueline, his wife (mezzo-soprano). Rosetta, their child of three, is asleep in her cradle in the room.

Music for Christmas

(1YA, 2YA, 3YA, see table, Christmas Day).

SOME of the old favourite carols, sung by the BBC Singers, and Coleridge-Taylor's "Christmas Overture," played by the London Radio Orchestra, make up this BBC programme. The BBC Singers, under their conductor, Leslie Woodgate, number 16, divided into two sets of eight, and their beautifully balanced singing, often unaccompanied, has long been a distinctive feature of British broadcasting. Much of their time is given to the performance of sacred works—they take part regularly in the daily morning service and the Epilogue on Sunday evenings—but they are on call for every type of vocal music in BBC programmes.

Leslie Woodgate has specialised in conducting choral music since he joined the BBC in 1928 as Assistant Chorus-Master. Since 1934 he has been Chorus-Master. He went on the stage from an architect's office, but soon decided to make music his career. At the Royal College of Music he won the Carnegie Award for Composition on his 21st birthday, being the youngest British composer at that time to attain this distinction. He is also an organist and has written a good deal of incidental music for the theatre.

The London Radio Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Denis Wright, makes its chief aim to cover as wide a field as possible of the better-class light music and the smaller symphonic works that do not need the full forces of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Before he joined the BBC in 1936, and since he has been with them, Dr. Wright has done much to further the interests of brass band music. He has written a number of works for brass bands and for many years has been adjudicator for the principal band festivals throughout Britain. He is also an expert in the recording of all types of music and nowadays devotes much of his time to this field.

"The Top of the Tree"

(1YA, 2YA, 4YA, Christmas Day, see table).

THE BBC admit frankly that this is an unsophisticated little love story, although the setting may strike you as rather unusual. The tree in question is a Christmas tree, and the story is about the private life of Diaphene, the fairy who lived at the top. Poor Diaphene, she found life very difficult. For one thing she hadn't really any head for heights, and for another, she couldn't decide whom to choose from the suitors who wooed her from the lower branches. Until a Pierrot came along . . . As we said, it's a simple little story, and rather a sad little story too, although it all comes right in the end. Diaphene is played (and sung) by Wynne Ajello and the Pierrot by that very sensitive actor, Leslie French.

Wynne Ajello has been broadcasting since 1925 when she walked into the BBC offices, demanded an audition, and got it. She was the first member of an Italian family of musical amateurs to take up music professionally (the fact that she won a singing competition at the age of three probably had something to do with it). Wynne was born in London and still lives there.

Leslie French, actor, singer and dancer, is one of the most versatile artists in the English theatre. In addition to many broadcasts, he has played in Shakespeare, musical comedy, ballet, revue and straight plays. He had a remarkable success as Ariel in *The Tempest*.

A Christmas Gift

(The Story of the Juggler of Our Lady, 2YD, Christmas Day, 9.2 p.m.).

THIS is a reading by John Nesbitt, an American, of a translation of the French legend *de Jongleur de Notre Dame*. Nesbitt who is now 56, was living in poverty in 1932, after the death of his father, who had left his sons practically nothing but books, art objects, and a trunk full of clippings and notes about strange people and strange customs. Nesbitt found there a translation by his father of the legend, and later used it as his script when he had an audition for a radio job. He first gave it on the air in 1938, and since then it has become staple fare in America's radio Christmas. Nesbitt himself has been highly praised by American critics, including Alexander Woolcott, for his dramatic work on the air.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Features and Plays:

- 3YA, 11.15 p.m.: "Santa Claus Rides Again."
- 3ZR, 11.50 p.m.: "There is a Santa Claus."

Music and Carols:

- 1YA, 11.50 p.m.: "A Noel Phantasy."
- 1YX, 10.0 p.m.: "The Story of the Carol."
- 2YA, 11.15 p.m.: Carols.
- 2YH, 11.30 p.m.: "Seasonable Songs."
- 3YA, 7.52 p.m.: "Come Christmas the Morn."
- 3YL, 9.1 p.m.: "A Ceremony of Carols" (Britten).
- 4YA, 9.45 p.m.: "The Coventry Carolers."
- 4YZ, 11.45 p.m.: The 4YZ Choristers.

Religious Services:

- 1YA: Midnight Mass—St. Patrick's Cathedral.
- 2YA: Midnight Mass—St. Gerard's Church.
- 3YA: Midnight Mass (Anglican)—St. Michael's Church.

Talks:

- 1ZM, 8.30 p.m.: "Christmas Eve in Bethlehem."
- 2YA, 11.0 a.m.: "The Christmas Season in Canada."

CHRISTMAS DAY

Features and Plays:

- 1YA, 2.0 p.m.: Play, "Four Looked Down."
- 1YA, 4.15 p.m.: "The Top of the Tree" (BBC).
- 1YX, 6.30 p.m.: "Santa Claus Rides Again."
- 1YX, 8.0 p.m.: "A Christmas Carol" (Dickens).
- 1ZM, 3.30 p.m.: Jugo-Slav Youth Choir.
- 1ZM, 7.15 p.m.: "Kings in Judea" (Dorothy Sayers).
- 2YH, 5.15 p.m.: "Mr. Pickwick's Christmas."
- 2YH, 8.0 p.m.: Play, "He That Should Come."
- 2YA, 11.0 a.m.: Milton's Ode, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."
- 2YA, 8.0 p.m.: "The Top of the Tree" (BBC).
- 2YA, 10.10 p.m.: "A Christmas Carol" (Dickens).
- 2YD, 9.2 p.m.: "A Christmas Gift" (Nesbitt).
- 2YN, 7.6 p.m.: Readings from St. Luke by Charles Laughton.
- 2YN, 8.22 p.m.: Play, "A Reputation for Benevolence."
- 3YL, 2.0 p.m.: "The Lovely Lady of Bethlehem."
- 3YL, 7.0 p.m.: A Reading for Christmas.
- 3ZR, 4.0 p.m.: "A Christmas Carol" (Dickens).
- 4YA, 2.0 p.m.: "The Top of the Tree" (BBC).
- 4YO, 6.0 p.m.: "A Christmas Carol" (Dickens).
- 4YZ, 10.30 a.m.: "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" (Corwin).
- 4YZ, 11.15 a.m.: "Mr. Pickwick's Christmas."

Music and Carols:

- 1YA, 9.30 a.m.: "Music for Christmas" (BBC Programme).
- 1YA, 8.0 p.m.: "Christmas Concerto" (Corelli).
- 2YA, 9.30 p.m.: "A Christmas Tale" (One-act opera).
- 2YA, 10.35 p.m.: "Music for Christmas" (BBC Programme).
- 2YN, 7.0 p.m.: Christmas Overture (Coleridge Taylor).
- 3YA, 9.30 a.m.: "Music for Christmas."
- 3ZR, 8.45 a.m.: Carols.
- 3ZR, 5.45 p.m.: "Christmas Symphony" (Schiassi).
- 4YA, 9.7 a.m.: Christmas Music (Various).
- 4YO, 8.0 p.m.: Organ Recital.
- 4YZ, 11.0 a.m.: Carillon Recital.
- 4YZ, 3.35 p.m.: Organ Recital.

Religious Services:

- 1YA, 10.0 a.m.: Combined Service.
- 1YA, 11.0 a.m.: Anglican Service.
- 3YA, 7.30 p.m.: Carol Service.
- 4YA, 11.0 a.m.: Anglican Service.
- 4YA, 7.0 p.m.: Combined Service.
- 3ZR, 5.0 p.m.: Service from the Studio.

Talk:

- All Main Stations, 3.0 p.m.: "One World." (Repetition of Norman Corwin's first talk to New Zealand).