

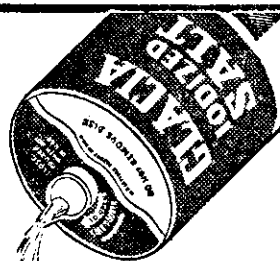
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## RADIO VIEWSREEL

### What Our Commentators Say

#### Roots in Our Soil

IF we are to develop a sense of history, if we are to confute the frequently-made accusation that we in New Zealand are members of a rootless society, swayed about and even uprooted like *pinus insignis* by blasts of culture from overseas, we need more and more talks like those of Douglas Cresswell, whose new series *More Historic New Zealand Estates* has just started from 2YA. Recently Mr. Cresswell dealt with the Teschemakers of Otaio, going right back to the Elizabethans and the Duke of Alba to disentangle his first rootlet, and taking a long detour through Dutch Guiana before allowing it to establish itself in New Zealand. Mr. Cresswell's talks have a gossipy informality that makes their details stick. We will probably remember the picture of Granny Teschemaker at 80 cracking her nine-foot stock whip, and it is difficult to forget John Rutherford's horse Otaio, who habitually carried John Rutherford's 20 stone. But I hope we will remember Mr. Cresswell's interposed lament "So much of New Zealand's early history is being lost" and do what we can to counteract this process of historical erosion.

Purcell's name wasn't even in it, although the P section abounded in non-entities like Pujol, Puchalski, and Purday. (I hope this omission has been corrected in later editions.) Purcell's genius overshadowed since his time by greater names, is only now being restored to its rightful high place in music.



Although his opera *Dido and Aeneas* falls with an antique sound on modern ears, it is music which will never lose its freshness, and is bound to grow rather than decline in favour when the present passion for noise has spent itself. This particular recording, with Joan Hammond as Dido, is an excellent interpretation of Purcell's music, and makes the most of its beauty and passion.

#### Fun with Fugues

FORTIFIED by the news that "Fugues are fun," I listened hopefully to 3YA's programme the other Sunday evening. I take an earnest mathematical interest in fugues, pursuing the voices diligently until they reach the stage where my calculations also take flight, and outstrip even the regions of Higher Mathematics. Then I sit back and let them sort themselves out. But I wouldn't call it fun. In spite of its confident assertion to the contrary, however, the programme held out only a slender hope for those who are not already fugue-fanciers. Either you like fugues, we were told, or you don't. Apparently it's something like lobster and tripe—if you don't like them, you don't, and no amount of talking will ever make you. It all sounded rather sad. But the selection of recordings was a bright and interesting one, and well chosen for the purpose; it would not surprise me in the least to learn that many who came to scoff remained to listen to the end. There seems to be plenty of scope for this type of programme—not only for the beginners in musical appreciation, but also for all those who would like to make the most of their listening. So much is happening in our musical world at the moment, and listeners as well as performers require plenty of coaching and encouragement. Let us have more fugues—and more fun; even if it does take something like an advertising slogan to put them over.

#### Women Through the Centuries

IT is a little disconcerting to an admirer of the calm and saintly Madonna of some Italian portrait to find that the model was—if a gross understatement may be pardoned—neither calm nor saintly. So I listened in to the first of Dr. Eichbaum's series of talks from 3YA on *Portraits of Women Through the Centuries* with some misgiving, expecting to have my few remaining illusions rudely shattered. They are still, happily, intact. The subject is an enormously wide one, particularly when literary portraits—a subject in itself—are included. But Dr. Eichbaum has avoided the pitfalls of generalisation and simply chosen particular examples to discuss. The selection must have been an extraordinarily difficult one to make, and I found myself wondering how one would go about it. Mona Lisa, of course; but how to choose from the rest of the gallery of great portrait painters? Which of Van Eyck, Rubens, Rembrandt—and what about the others? In the field of literature things looked even worse, and when it came to choosing from Shakespeare I gave up. Dr. Eichbaum's choice was pleasant and familiar—Chaucer, Raleigh, Herrick, Carew, and a sonnet from Shakespeare. How she did it I don't know. The talk dealt superficially with painting and poem alternately, touching here on character, there on a detail of dress. The attempt to link up artist and author was, I think, a pity. Van Eyck's gentle Margaret has little to gain from a comparison with Chaucer's vivacious and voracious Wife of Bath ("Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve"); she, the baggage, wins every time.

#### Purcell's Place in Music

*DIDO AND AENEAS*, scheduled to be heard from Dunedin, unaccountably went down to Invercargill and returned before it was finally presented, so that I heard it twice. A reflection on the place of Purcell in music is the fact that recently, wishing to verify some details of this composer's life, I consulted the handiest reference-book, which happened to be the American publication *Music Lovers' Cyclopaedia*; and found, to my astonishment, that

#### Prompt Ghosts

THERE is a pleasant feeling of superiority in knowing something beforehand about what one is to hear, even if it is only what the man-in-the-tram tells you about the film you haven't yet