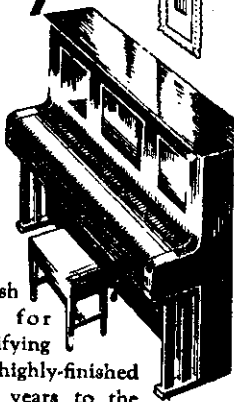


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## RADIO VIEWSREEL

### What Our Commentators Say

#### Music, Madness, Murder

AFTER seeing more than one film exploiting the fact that a woman may be young, beautiful, brainy, and yet able to play the piano like a virtuoso, I felt that the theme of John Gundry's play *Campground's Over Jordan* was just a little trite for 1947. Yet I couldn't help listening to the bitter ending of the play (I mean bitter in its strict sense, since Mr. Gundry wisely made no final concession to popular liking for the "happy ending"), merely for the satisfaction of hearing that final pistol-shot which I correctly anticipated would end the play. Indeed, the thing which kept my radio turned on was not sympathy with the heroine, a world-famous pianist unhappily married, but my acknowledgment that Mr. Gundry in the character of the music-hating husband, has drawn a thoroughly detestable portrait; all through the piece I longed for someone to take a shot at this monster in professorial robes, and I can't say that I registered anything but intense satisfaction when he was liquidated, the self-righteous humbug! However, I doubt if Mr. Gundry meant his hearers to feel the same way about his heroine. Possibly she was intended to enlist sympathy, but she got none of mine. Any world-famous pianist who would give up music voluntarily, and continue to cower under the intellectual dictatorship of her husband, until he drove her to madness and murder—well, my conclusion was that she must have been either a little insane to begin with, or else not a true musician; either way, the plot lost point. Radio plays about musicians suffer from the same necessary and inherent difficulties as films about musicians—if authors include too much action, they offend the musicians; if they include too much music they offend the listeners who want plot. I'm sometimes inclined to think such stories should omit music altogether and concentrate on drama; musicians would rather hear the music complete and unabridged, as they can do at any time by means of records, unhindered by wondering in the meantime who is going to bump off whom.

#### Back Again

THERE was on a recent Sunday night a programme from 4YO entitled "Recalls: Recordings selected from the week's programmes." Unless there was some special reason for doing this, unless these records were recalled for some particular reason, one might ask, "Why bother to label the programme at all?" And indeed, listening to it, I couldn't discern any obvious reason for the programme, nor discover upon what principle the items had been selected, for they were not specially new or specially superb examples of recordings. I could understand a programme being labelled "Recalls" if there was an idea behind it—if the records were all by one artist (as 4ZB did the same afternoon playing a timely selection of Ninon Vallin's records when the singer was actually in Dunedin); or if the records were all humorous, or all classical, or all swing music, or all new releases which we might want to hear again; or with any other connecting link, however slight. But the mere fact that all the records had already been included in the week's programmes was no reason for repeating them, especially as the method of announcing the items was the shop-worn

one of pretending that the artists were not on gramophone records at all ("We enjoyed the way Isobel Baillie sang 'Love's Philosophy'; we are asking her now to repeat it.") The selection began with Gershwin; went on by means of Webster Booth and a popular pianist playing Strauss, J., to Pierre's "Little



Fauns" and the Kentucky Minstrels singing "White Wings"; an example of Strict Tempo playing; and then, most incongruously, Isobel Baillie singing "Love's Philosophy." After this, I switched off. I could see no reason for continuing to listen to "recalls," only one of which I had really cared to hear again. Why "recalls?" Why not "Rag-out," "Random Harvest" or "Rag-Bag?"

#### Lemon-Drop

THE 4YO announcer evidently felt, as I did, that the whole performance was mildly incredible, for in the middle of it he took time off to say, "You may not believe me, but you are actually listening to Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker Suite.'" Those of you who have heard it will guess that he referred to Spike Jones's remarkable arrangement of this suite, in which the maestro of de-bunkery and his City Slickers administer what should be the *coup-de-grace* to Walt Disney at his soupiest, to all imitators of the Silly Symphonic mannerisms, to the majority of verse-speaking addicts, and to that combination of inhuman voices scathingly referred to by *The Listener's* Little Man as the Celestial Choir. In spite of the trouble Mr. Jones has gone to in polishing his parody, I don't doubt that there will be many people who will buy these recordings in pure and simple good faith, thoroughly enjoying the oh-so-childish story of the dear little girl and her sugary adventures in Lemon-Drop-Land. Others will relish the performance with tongue in cheek. But no matter in what spirit it is approached, I have no doubt that this rendition of "Nutcracker Suite" will prove a best-seller.

#### Play with a Past

THE late Victorian edifice, so solid-seeming to its inmates, now shows many a gaping hole where a 20th Century finger of scorn has been poked in to point the fact that it was jerry-built. Late Victorian dramatists (if we exclude those who lived on long enough into a succeeding era to prove their solidity and solidarity) have shared the fate of the building, and now Pinero, T. W. Robertson, and Henry Arthur Jones are merely names to conjure the big money out of quiz-sponsors' pockets. Thus it was something of a surprise to read in the programmes that a scene from Henry Arthur Jones's *Mrs. Dane's Defence*

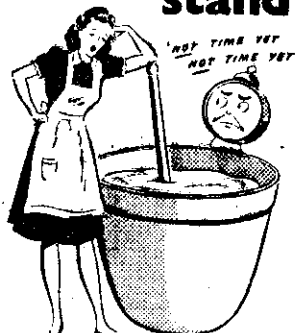
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