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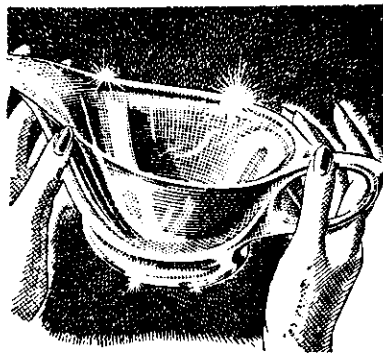
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## RADIO VIEWSREEL

### What Our Commentators Say

#### Light and Live

FROM Station 4YA have come recently a number of new studio presentations of the "light" or popular type, some of which are much better than others. Popular jazz, "novelty" numbers, and the ballad type of song cannot be said to be my cup of tea in the very least, and I am not therefore an unbiased judge of programmes containing this kind of item. But, as a speaker in the recent discussion on Culture v. Popularity pointed out, whether a programme is cultural or popular or both at once, it must be good of its kind. If, as well as being technically competent, it manages to present the listener with something new, or present old material in a new and interesting way, it has earned its place on the programmes and will stand a good chance of impressing listeners. Not all the new programmes have been impressive, but two of the best were Roi Don's piano programme of rather sentimental-style popular jazz, and the session called *Songs For Sale*. The singers in the latter were both possessed of pleasant voices which blended well, and Ron Clarkson's piano accompaniments were good enough for me to want to hear him doing solo work. On the same night as these two programmes, 4YA gave us yet another which I hadn't heard before, entitled *It's a Date*. This was not a studio presentation, but a combination of various popular types of entertainment, including an old record about Will Hay and the bootmaker, a new record about the ancient sport of racing which was decidedly "different," a brief detective problem, and an elementary musical quiz. It is encouraging, however, to note that more of our own artists are being used in new programmes of the popular type, and if the best of our own singers and players replace the less attractive of the overseas recordings, the attempt to provide listeners with more "live" programmes will at the same time raise the whole standard of this kind of entertainment.

#### Sting in the Tail

THE short story *Prelude to Murder* is one of J. Jefferson Farjeon's more effective, and especially is it effective for radio, as was shown by the presentation of it in the NZBS series *Radio Playhouse*, from 4YA. (The inclusion of a short story under this heading was rather confusing, leading listeners to expect a dramatized play, but there was more real drama in this narrative than in most radio plays, however highly-pitched.) This is the story of a brief interval in a railway carriage, during which, it would appear, a murder is forestalled by the wit of the proposed victim, who keeps on talking, as did Scheherazade, in order to postpone the evil moment. Later it transpires that the unobvious reason for his talking the time away is that he is trying to conceal a crime of his own, but as this point doesn't emerge until the very last sentence of the story, the listener receives it as something of a surprise packet—an excellent example of the "sting in the tail," that target for which so many writers of mystery yarns aim

but which most of them manage to miss. Since the author has attempted to keep his denouement a secret while allowing the reader a gentle hint here and there about the depth of still waters, it may be imagined that the radio presentation of this story requires no little skill. Too little emotion, and the listener will not get the atmosphere; too much, and wary followers of murder plays will anticipate the climax. It says a great deal for the performance that it was infused with the necessary mystery while the dramatics were not overdone, so that I, a blase listener to far too many radio murders, was kept in a state of suspense throughout—as a record heard earlier in the evening put it, "the hooks I sat upon were tenter." However, as no indication was given of who was responsible for *Prelude to Murder*, I am unable to thank the narrator who gave me such an exciting time.

#### Technical Excellence

*THINE INHERITANCE* (from 2YA on Friday, April 30) differed refreshingly from most of the plays I have heard in the *Radio Theatre* series in being technically more akin to the screen than the stage. An elderly woman is writing to her girlhood friend (flashback to farmyard scene of early childhood) and reviewing her whole life story in the light of subsequent events. The flashback technique has been thoroughly exploited by film writers, but, judging by *Thine Inheritance*, there is still plenty of room for it in the world of radio, particularly when the sense of past experience is reinforced by the author's talent for almost lyrically evocative language. Technically *Thine Inheritance* could scarcely be improved upon. Artistically and emotionally considered its theme is perhaps too exaggerated to be entirely convincing, yet it remains gripping, and there is a lot to be said for an emotional grip that does not positively throttle, and which leaves our critical faculties sufficiently unimpaired to admire technical excellences.

#### Not-so-Grand Opera

AFTER hearing two instalments of 2ZB's *Opera for the People* I have more or less decided the Opera is best left the prerogative of the diamonded dowager, and that the proletariat has better things to do with its time. For I certainly did not enjoy the emasculated version of *La Bohème*, though I



think perhaps a rousing Soldiers' Chorus may do something for *Faust*. But one good thing about *Opera for the People*—it has made me feel retrospectively appreciative of the almost full-time opera we get from the National stations on Sunday nights, for all the imperfectly assimilated wing-side comment

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 14



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