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cheerful about this play, which is one of the most convincing things about it. It builds up a brutal atmosphere charged with fear, horror, suspicion and finally panic, and the author does not make the mistake of allowing even the glimmer of a silver lining to shine through the storm-clouds. The play requires, for its perfect presentation, complete concentration on the listener's part throughout its entire length, since the climax at the very end demands the preliminary build-up of emotion for its effect. It was unfortunate, therefore, that 4YA allowed its preliminary programme to run so badly over time that the play had to be broken in two. The climax, in consequence, came as a sort of after-thought, after the listener had been regaled with the nine o'clock news and a local summary to boot. No indication was given that the play was not finished or that it would be resumed later, and it was only my interest in hearing the end of it which kept me tuned to the station, where more than half-an-hour later my patience was rewarded.

Excerpts from Britten

STATION 4YA lately gave listeners a small taste of *Peter Grimes* in Britten's "Four Sea Interludes" from this opera, presented with the accompaniment of a commentary. I was pleased that the commentator didn't find it necessary to talk during the music, a fault too common in opera programmes; pleased, too, that the comments were mainly confined to a resume of the theme of the opera, and that we didn't have to listen to a long dissertation on Britten's musical history, style, and technique. Comment of the latter sort has been rather overdone from Dunedin stations lately (I don't know whether such is the case farther north), and descriptions of thematic material, orchestral effects and entries, etc., have taken up too much time before the playing of major works; such comments, unless they occur in a special session devoted to musical analysis and appreciation, should be cut to a minimum. Regarding the works of Britten, by the way (I don't refer here to the *Peter Grimes* excerpts, which can do with a little explanation regarding the opera itself, but to this composer's orchestral and other works) is it still necessary for us to be told that he is a young newcomer with a fresh and different musical vocabulary which we, poor ignorant savages, are likely to find a bit weird and difficult to understand?

What Nonsense

IT is not often that we have anything approaching real nonsense on the air. We have Arthur Askey and Tommy Handley and their ilk being funny and sometimes subtle, and always careful not to go quite over the edge; and Cyril Fletcher (whose one desire is to remain anonymous), and people like Spike Jones who specialise in a kind of musical insanity which goes down very well with a public who are always glad to be reminded how sane they really are. But sheer verbal nonsense takes more

TOP MAN

("8.0 BBC Brains Trust: Al Rowse. . ." from a programme announcement in *The Listener*).

FOUR guys and a doll sat round the mike, Al Rowse, Cy Joad, Bert Russell, Ba Ward, and McCullough (or Spike).

Al was strictly a campus type, Harris tweed, history, cherry-wood pipe. "

Bert was hep to systems of think From Platonic blue to Marxian pink.

Ba was the gonest chick alive, Sterling and dollar was her jive.

Spike was around to crack the whip And pull the quizzes from the lucky dip.

He pulled them out and he laid them down, But the gang was strictly from out of town.

Al didn't know who Palmerston was, Bert thought Hegel discovered because, Ba pulled a boner over Ricardo, Most of Spike's wisecracks were retardo.

But Cy knew this and Cy knew that, Cy yanked seven muses out of his hat. Cy was top man, he was the works, He showed 'em all up for a bunch of joiks.

Those four rubes who sat round the mike, Al Rowse, Bert Russell, Ba Ward, and McCullough (or Spike). Were dumber than spare cups baked in Spode. Who knows why the chicken crossed the road? Only Cy (til Edwin Mitchinson) Joad.

—G. leF. Y.

courage than any of these people show. Recently I have heard little to beat a 10-minute programme of *Nonsense Ballads* from 3YL, featuring the BBC Male Chorus with soloists, and the McGowan Male Quartet. But even here it was the combination of verbal nonsense with outstanding musical artistry that made these numbers appeal. After all, the story of little Tommy who went fishing on Sunday would soon pall for the most unsophisticated mind if delivered as an ordinary recitation. Many humorists have found that with skilful rendering (and, one must admit, judicious amendment) ditties usually confined to the nursery schools make an excellent stock-in-trade.

Interesting !

WHEN a programme is labelled "interesting," it is generally more damning to the commentator who uses the word than it is to the programme itself. To describe a programme as interesting may mean that the commentator couldn't think of anything else to say, has been too lazy to switch off, was talking to someone at the time and missed the point, or went to sleep in the middle. On the other hand, it may mean that without being inspired to put enthusiastic pen to paper, or even to exert his critical faculties very much, he found the programme—well, interesting! And that was just my reaction to the BBC series *Flying Visit*, the description of a flight made by Leonard Cottrel from London to Sydney. This, in my opinion, was all a Sunday afternoon programme ought to be—no great tax on the Sabbath somnolence, but sufficiently engrossing to keep one from being overcome. In particular I enjoyed the description of Cottrel's stay in Cairo, and his various impressions of the place, so much so that I was sorry when the plane took off again, and British Overseas Airways took over from Cottrel. Special mention, too, should be made of the music, which was well worth hearing in itself, quite apart from the atmosphere it created.

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