

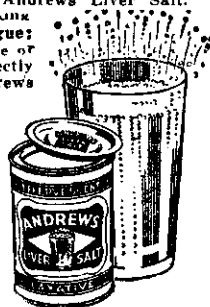


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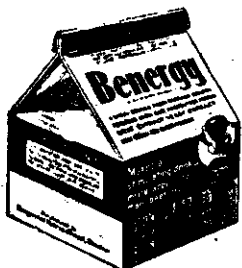
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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Georgian Drawing Room

"EIGHTEENTH Century life was plump and easy," said the commentator, aptly of a section of the population at least, and I thought of Fragonard, then of Reynolds and Gainsborough. This was my introduction to what was the third of a series of four programmes for Sunday afternoons, arranged and sung by Myra Thompson, with Althea Harley-Slack at the piano. It was a pleasant quarter hour spent in the tinkling daintiness of 18th Century English music; formal but without form. The piano tone held a suggestion of harpsichord, Myra Thompson's voice was care-free, clear, and touched with a worldly sweetness. It was obvious that the sun was shining on the green lawns of Ranelagh, where the songs of Thomas Arne were delighting the assembled ladies and gentlemen, and it was equally obvious that these were times when there was nothing more urgent than peaches ripening against a mellow brick wall, nothing so vulgar as a singing commercial.



larded his commentary with recordings. One speculated rather ruefully what the BBC might have done with such a programme, but one returned to reality with the thought that this was a small alternative station in a small, young and underpopulated country. The unfortunate contrast came when the Chaliapin records ran out and records of English singers were substituted. It was like eating bar soap after Gorgonzola. English singers are a highly estimable race and have a rich store of their own lovely music to perform, but they are perhaps a little too inhibited to compete successfully against Chaliapin in his own field.

Britten's Place

OF living composers I turn with most eagerness to Sibelius and Benjamin Britten. It happened on Tuesday afternoon that the Sibelius Third Symphony came from 4YA at the same time as Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings* from 3YA. Of the two compositions I knew Sibelius' better, and so I listened to Britten's. As usual I was somewhat carried away by his ingenious accompaniments to the voice, by the fresh tang of his writing for strings, and by his strong flow of ideas. In this *Serenade* he has written settings to four poems; Blake's *Elegy*, Tennyson's *Nocturne*, a *Pastorale* of Cotton's, and an anonymous 15th Century dirge, which lies under quite a weight of Celtic twilight:

This ae night, this ae night,
Every night and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-light
And Christ receive thy saule.

The unusual flavour of Peter Pears' tenor voice and the masterly horn of Denis Brain blended beautifully with the Boyd Neel String Orchestra. The whole made a memorable performance. It is not hard to think of other memorable Britten compositions; his eastern-facing *Ceremony of Carols*, his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, with its original quirks of pizzicato writing, his plaintive settings of the *Seven Sonnets of Michael Angelo*, and his almost unbelievable *Les Illuminations*, all of them fresh, original, signed with his own mark. How good is he? It seems to me he is about as good as a composer can be in the atomic age. It is surely unreasonable to expect any sensitive man to attain the spiritual serenity and confidence of Bach or the gaiety of Mozart in an age of anxiety and disintegration.

Good Stuff

ONE good deed does not make a boy scout, though one bad deed may mar him. The same is true of radio talkers. To produce one good talk is relatively easy; it is the high level of consistent achievement which marks the radio virtuoso. And such is Alan Mulgan, whose series of talks *The Making of a New Zealander* (16 to date) adds up to an impressive yet shapely edifice of personal, social, and literary history. The mining of reminiscences is a favourite activity of radio talkers, but (particularly in the Morning Talk) there is a tendency to favour the opencast method. Mr. Mulgan goes much deeper into the field of autobiography, delving into the social and political strata that underlie

Goodman at the Port

I THOUGHT Novelty Instrumental a prosaic title for the King Cole and Benny Goodman Trios. There is nothing I like better in the small jazz field than the Goodman Trio, but I had to go down to the Port that afternoon and it looked like a clean miss. However it was the appointment at the Port which missed (bad staff work, sir), there was no train for an hour, and so I wandered down the waterfront. An overseas liner had just docked. A lot of people were waiting about. Electric gantry cranes groaned along the wharf inch by inch while the ship's crew rigged a gangway. The men off watch hung over the starboard quarter rail. Near the stern somebody shoved a wire-wound pole out of a porthole, there was a pause, and then, misted by static from the electric crane, the Benny Goodman Trio's record of *After You've Gone*. Through the porthole I could see a naked electric bulb, wisps of steam, a blue coat on a hook, and a gym shoe lying on the edge of a bunk. The men off watch silently eyed the people on the wharf. A seaman with thick shiny black hair and pointed shoes pushed to the rail, climbed over, down the steel latticed leg of a crane, and swaggered off through the crowd, folding his coat round him and casting bold glances to right and left. It was a rafferty, tomcat atmosphere, very suitable for jazz, and I was glad I'd come to the Port to hear Goodman.

Unfortunate Contrast

THE Story and Music of Boris Godounov, by Moussorgsky, was a fairly routine feature. The 3YL announcer read competently and clearly from his script, which was no doubt from an impeccable source, and inter-