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RADIO VIEWSREEL

(continued from previous page)

what ideas can be expressed on each theme. But a fresh subject found my interest reviving, and I tuned to 4YA to hear Henry Thornton and Christopher Small giving their ideas on "What do you mean by good music?" Unfortunately the speakers, after their initial definitions of "good music," plunged listeners into an analysis of the possible emotional content of certain specified compositions by great masters. This was splendid for those who knew the works referred to; but the radio audience does not consist solely of connoisseurs who know their Bach and Beethoven. The connoisseur, anyhow, knows perfectly well what he means by good music, and doesn't need a radio discussion on the subject; whereas any listener not a musical highbrow would probably have switched off when the deep waters of technical and emotional analysis threatened to engulf him. I am sure more general interest could have been given to the discussion if even a part of some of the quoted works could actually have been played. After all, it means absolutely nothing to a listener unfamiliar with a work to be told that it expresses an exaltation of spirit; no radio discussion can prove that point half as quickly as the hearing of the work itself.

Cold Dixie

THE war between Be-Boppers and Moldy Figs hasn't yet made headlines in this journal, but in circles where jazz is taken seriously nobody talks about anything else. Be-Bop (with or without the hyphen, or just Bop) is new, frantic, intricate, technically polished, and puts in too many notes to the bar for my own comfort. Moldy Fig is New Orleans traditional, come to us via Chicago, getting a bit careworn, the bags under its eyes a little darker and a little deeper each day, the sound of its voice more and more resembling a cliché. Still there's vitality in both of them, and their home is the U.S.A., not, I fear, England, or at least not the BBC. The other evening 3YA broadcast a quarter-hour transcription of the BBC Jazz Octet. This group set out to be Dixieland, or Moldy Fig if you like, but it had as much human vitality as a pianola grinding sadly in a refrigerator. The four wind and the four rhythm lumbered through four tunes, good old good ones, like "South," "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate," the announcer made some helpful historical references in a gently academic voice, and the temperature went down and down and down. At the finish I tip-toed away blowing on my fingers, wondering how many BBC Jazz Octets laid end-ways it took to sink the Titanic.



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