

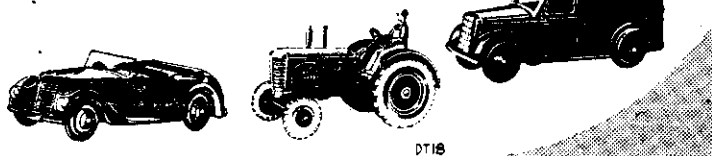


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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Banshee in the Background

THE news that we were after all to have an Olivier broadcast filled me with joyous anticipation, but it took the portentousness of Ngaio Marsh's opening comments to make me fully conscious of the signal of the honour. (The Old Vic, said Miss Marsh, has changed the face of drama in New Zealand, and given us a touchstone by which our own performances can be judged.) And though staunch Wellingtonians may remember against her that reference to "the banshee howling of the wind, Wellington's signature tune," yet even they may feel proud that the Olivier introduction to the local radio audience was effected by as famous a representative of the local drama. Apart from the aforementioned obligato by the northerly and a slight difference of opinion among the cognoscenti as to the pronunciation of Olivier, the epic broadcast went off without a hitch. Possibly there has never been over a New Zealand radio station so rich and varied a programme. Sir Laurence was Harry of England, Rhett Butler, Darcy, Romeo, and Sir Peter to Vivien Leigh's Katherine, Scarlett, Elizabeth, Juliet, and Lady Teazle. Not even the occasional offstage interruption by the banshee could spoil the show.

Mach 1 Comedienne

SELDOM have we had sessions so jet-propelled as Cicely Courtneidge's two NZBS-recorded programmes. Miss Courtneidge has obviously been reared in the great tradition of comedienues, and believes in giving the audience all she's got (and she's got a lot), and those whose ears have been tempered hitherto only by the gentle strains of Bing and Marion and their ilk possibly reeled from the impact of her powerful contralto. All the old favourites were there ("Sing, Brothers," "Keep It Under Your Hat") and in the second programme we even had Two Double Damask Dinner Napkins. But I rather regretted Miss Courtneidge's fondness for patriotism in monologue form. Her "There Are Two Ways Into England" and the "Ordinary People" which concluded her second broadcast, were both, I felt, items which demanded the personal contact between speaker and audience only possible in the theatre—throughout them I was uncomfortably conscious that at any rate some of Miss Courtneidge's personal magnetism was failing to make contact.

Quiet Wedding

WHEN first it gleamed upon my sight, *Quiet Wedding* was a modest little film, a winsome and unpretentious daisy rearing a shy but sturdy head in challenge to the more flamboyantly box-office blossoms of its day. Hoping to recapture my first fine careless rapture I tuned in on the radio version of *Quiet Wedding* from 2ZB only to find that the daisy was somewhat more crimson-tipped than I had remembered. Not that this impaired its entertainment value—quite the contrary, if we are to judge by the belly-laughter of that lowest common denominator, the studio

audience. But it was the same daisy. It is merely regrettable that the humour of character and action cannot easily be conveyed to a radio audience, so that most radio humour must make its appeal by chestnut or *double entendre*. *Quiet Wedding* (radio version) was a perfect mine of the latter, but if the salacity of dialogue and theme was more noticeable in the radio version there was this compensation, that the author's criticism of society's attempts to dress up and camouflage, and so destroy, personal relationships is also much more obvious in the play than in the film.

Cheers for Chesterton

IT is only when a really clever and original story gets itself broadcast that the listener realises the poor standard of much that takes the air in the form of radio plays. Of course it was a help to the play *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Brown*, that the original story was written by G. K. Chesterton, and it will be recognised by devotees of that author as a tale from the Club of Queer Trades. As an example of pure fantasy, I suppose this story would take a lot of beating. And yet, strictly speaking, there is not an atom of fantasy in it, provided that you are willing to believe that people secretly desire to lead romantic lives and will patronise anyone who offers, for consideration, to bring romance and excitement into their mundane existences. G.K.C. did not write for radio, but it is amazing how well he comes over, as to the manner born. Of course, this may have been partly due, in this instance, to the NZBS production unit, who did the whole affair with such gusto that it was easy to visualise the scene—and if the Major himself was reminiscent of Colonel Chinstrap, that, for me, only added a final touch of fantasy to an already fantastic play. But the atmosphere couldn't have come over without the word-spinning of the author. More of the Chesterton stories, please, done in the same splendid style!

Musica Viva

IT is seldom that we get a combination as good as the Musica Viva Society's chamber players. The only comparisons which suggest themselves are with the Boyd Neel Orchestra and the Queensland State String Quartet. For a first recital from the 4YA studio, the group chose the Brahms Piano Quintet, Op. 34, and this was a performance the like of which has seldom been heard on local stations here. I am sure that many listening musicians must have felt the urge either to put away their instruments indefinitely or else to redouble their practising efforts. Without the constant stimulus of the best in "live" performances by such groups, local music-making sinks into a slough of mediocrity. But listening to a performance like this,

(continued on next page)