



A 16TH CENTURY illustration of 14th Century music. The lady is playing a dulcimer and has a harp and portable organ at her feet. In the background the instruments are (from left) recorder, shawm, and bagpipe

French Song Through the Ages

A SERIES of five studio recitals under the heading *French Song from the Thirteenth Century to Debussy*, which will be presented from 1YA by the soprano Alison MacClement, should make rewarding listening for its educational and entertainment value as well as for the simple enjoyment of the music. In each case the words will be in French, but the singer will give a brief spoken explanation and translation.

The series will open with excerpts from *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion*, a work by Adam de la Halle which some historians describe as the first recorded example of comic opera. It was written a hundred years before Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales*. This work was revived in Quebec for a folk-song festival in 1928, and the last performance before that is believed to have been given at Arras in 1896. Alison MacClement will employ a copy of the score translated for the Quebec festival from medieval documents.



Alison MacClement

A collection of early *pastourelles* will be heard in the second recital, including what must surely be one of the first examples of "music while you work"—*En Roulant m'a boule Roulant*. There will also be the sage advice of grandmother Bontemps to the young girls of her village, which gives a revealing glimpse at the customs of the time:

Dance, my children, while you are young.
The flower of gaiety does not wait 'till summer;
Dance while you are only fifteen,
Later there is no time.
Games and laughter were there at my wedding.

But soon there were other cares;
My husband growls, my child cries—
Me, I know not which to listen to!
Dance, my children, while you are young.

Perhaps the wise old 13th or 14th Century grandmother will touch a responsive chord in the hearts of the over-worked housewife of to-day.

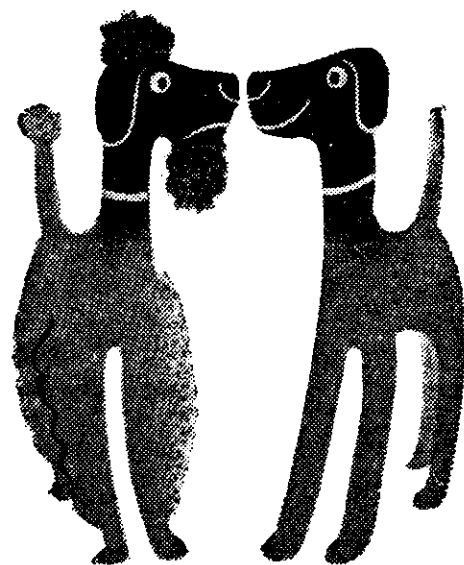
And in our modern ears there is a pristine simplicity about the words of another item from the same programme: Let us sing of the love of John and Jean, No one is so charming as Jean, No one is so kindly as John; John loves Jean and Jean loves John.

The third recital will bring a change from folk-songs and *pastourelles*, many of which were probably a form of spontaneous self-expression, created by the people for their own enjoyment, to songs attributed to definite composers and written for the purpose of entertaining an audience. It will include items by Lully, said to be the first composer of opera in a distinctively French style, and by Gounod.

Finally, in the fourth and fifth recitals Alison MacClement will present songs which "show a change in character from the direct and lovely melodies of the earlier period to a more intense awareness of words." Among these will be examples from the works of Fontenailles and Francois Coppée, Reynaldo Hahn and Paul Verlaine, Henri Duparc and Jean Lahore, Debussy, and to conclude, a song by Paul Vidal, a Parisian composer and conductor contemporary with Debussy.

French Song from the Thirteenth Century to Debussy will be broadcast by 1YA on consecutive Wednesdays, beginning on August 10, at 8.12 p.m.

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