

peared to be well rehearsed, but suffered from the substitution of a two-piano accompaniment for that by orchestra or organ, and as a result came across somewhat thinly. There was also a curious fuzziness about the reproduction throughout, suggesting echo in a partly filled hall, and there were long waits between items while the choirs were regrouped, which the announcer tried valiantly, but unsuccessfully, to fill in with gossip and details of coming programmes. The session was largely redeemed by *The Blacksmiths* (as a poem familiar to all students who have struggled through Sisam's Middle English selections), which was sung confidently by the choir, with the two pianos striking, in the exciting setting, precisely the right note.

—J.C.R.

Words Before Music

MAURICE LEECH arranges and narrates various musical programmes from 4YA, and is to be congratulated on his efforts to introduce listeners to something worthwhile in choral and orchestral works. There are times when a straightforward type of concert is preferable, when the works performed are by standard composers and well known to the majority of listeners. But even with standard composers, there are times when a commentary helps both the listener who knows the work and the listener who hears it for the first time. This is where Maurice Leech's commentaries are of great use, as a preliminary to his Sunday concerts of large-scale works. Composers like Schonberg, Richard Strauss and Delius (to mention only three whose works have been heard recently in these programmes) did not write compositions which are self-explanatory at first hearing. The only criticism I have to make about these commentaries is that they are too long; I find that, by the time the music starts, I have already forgotten what it was the narrator told me to listen for in section two of the third movement.

Parlour Songs

THE Southern Singers, from 4YZ, unashamedly called their programme *Part Songs of Other Days*, as if to warn off the critical listener who might decry the items on the score of old-fashioned sentiment. No apology is needed for such a programme, for, as the announcer said, the songs chosen were all melodious and pleasantly - harmonised examples of the part song, and sung in a smooth and polished style that made for good listening. But as the title indicates, this four-square type of part song is now dated. Selections like *O Who Will O'er the Downs*, and *Hail, Smiling Morn* bring to mind the days of parlour concerts, feminine bustles, and waxed male mustachios, and are appropriately resurrected nowadays only in some such nostalgic programme as this. By selecting part songs from a previous or later period, singers have a choice of good madrigals or interesting modern songs, and in either case the gain in musical vitality is worth the effort of learning something more difficult, from the point of view of the singers and the listener.

—D.S.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 2, 1949

Specialist in Everything

IN the good (or bad) old days, organising a women's session was easy: three recipes, each one repeated twice so that there was less chance of the housewife putting the salt where the sugar ought to go, a couple of hints about removing ink stains from the tablecloth, and a piece about the idyllic home life of a film star. Nothing to it at all. Now things are different. At 3YA there is a day for everything, and everything in its day; the town, the home, the children, the news, books, music, people. Getting this assortment before the microphone for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon is about as much as one person can uncomfortably do, but it seems a worthwhile job, and one which is at present being well done. There is still the freshness of innovation about these sessions, which some of the older NZBS features seem to lack, and it is possible that the flow of new ideas will continue, stimulated at least in part by discreet and friendly competition from the commercial network's *Women's Hour*.

—G. leF. Y.

Real Voices

PRONUNCIATION and accent are vexed subjects. Every now and then I have an idle and disorganised evening's listening, going all over the dial, shortwave and broadcast, trying to make a pattern of announcer's voices. I presume the BBC and the NZBS have a policy about announcers. It seems to me that in Britain the Home Service at least leans towards standardisation, and on the Home Service the standard is high. News readers on the General and Pacific Overseas Services, on the other hand, are apparently allowed mild dialects and even idiosyncracies, and the standard is not quite so high. Generally speaking, the voices have a genuine ring, and lead me to believe that they have sounded as they do now for the whole of the adult life of the speaker. Many Australian and New Zealand announcers do not possess this genuine quality. Admittedly they are on the horns of a dilemma. If they speak like the majority of their countrymen, some of the sounds they make will be ugly. If they try to speak in what they imagine is an English accent they almost always sound affected. I am against over-standardisation, and I am against ugly noises, but I think I prefer either or both of these to mellifluous phoniness.

Vocal Chamber Music

FROM that happy time when England was a "nest of singing birds," and every educated person was deemed to be capable of reading at sight a part in a new madrigal, we have been having a most interesting series of broadcasts by the Wellington Madrigal Group, under the direction of W. Roy Hill. Madrigal singing may be a lost social art, but this well-balanced group of singers has been showing that it presents some fascinating things for listeners—gems of composition whose interweaving strands make up a rich polyphonic texture. The words seem to disappear altogether and we are frequently left with what sounds like chamber music for voices. The texture of this seemed to me on occasion to be rather too uniformly mezzo-forte, which can be my only criticism of a well-produced series, the spoken commentary on which, both in amount and style, might be a model for broadcasters.

—D.M.



The Final Touch..



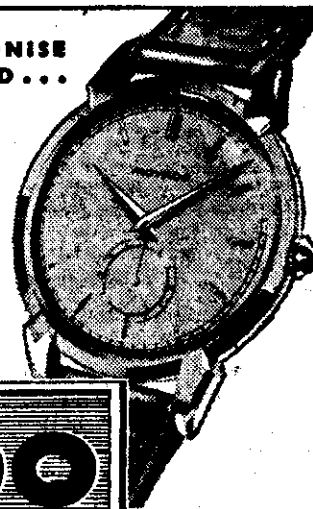
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