

# LOOK BEFORE YOU LISTEN

## A Run Through The Records

By B. W.

### Hates His Prelude

AT the age of 20 Rachmaninoff sold one of his compositions, a "Prelude", for £4. Since then, it has been thumped on all the pianos of the world, until to-day, nearly half a century afterwards, the very name of this work almost gives its composer a brain storm. He hates, even more deeply, that the audience at every concert insists that he play it—that noisy kettle tied to his tail which moreover has made someone else's but not his own fortune. The piece has even given rise to legends about its meaning. One commentator finds it in the Moscow of 1812—a baffled Napoleon—a blazing city. To another it is a symphony of the bells of the Kremlin and the lesser churches. Still another is certain that it depicts the striving and knockings of a man who has been closed down in his coffin as dead—but revives.

*Rachmaninoff himself will be heard on Thursday, January 23, from 4YA, playing with the Philadelphia Orchestra.*

### Caruso's Cigarettes

ALL his life Caruso waged a desperate war against the weaknesses of the flesh. One of his besetting sins was a passion for cigarette smoking. He knew how harmful they were to his constitution, but could not give them up. His



ENRICO CARUSO  
Smoked secretly in the side scenes

servants were in the habit of keeping cigarettes alight, which he smoked secretly in the side scenes, during the short intervals between his entrances and exits from the stage. He also loved Italian pastry, and as a result lived in constant dread of stoutness. He simply worshipped good wines, but was not

allowed to touch them. His voice made him forgo nearly all the things he loved—but cigarettes he could not resist.

### Born in a Hansom

DURING one of the lowest ebbs of the Lupino family fortunes, Stanley Lupino was born in a hansom cab on May 15, 1894. He says in his autobiography that it was the only good joke he never laughed at himself. It appears that Mrs. Lupino was shopping in Petticoat Lane, when a kindly stallholder, on being made aware of her situation, suggested a hansom, and, what is more, offered to pay for it. Stanley was born while the cab was taking her home. For the next five years ill-health and ill-luck dogged the mother's footsteps, and she died the morning the bailiff visited the poor little home and took away all that she had struggled to keep together for so long. From that tragic debut emerged one of the greatest present-day comedians.

### Gillie Potter in "Panto"

WHEN Gillie Potter recognised that his bent was for comedy, he deserted the "legitimate" stage and determined to enter the world of variety. He certainly did. At Towcester a company to which he was attached performed on an improvised stage of boards set on trestles, with four local heavy citizens holding down the boards to enable a lady performer to do her dance. Later he was a member of the first concert party to visit the Far East, and played the Widow Twankey in the pantomime of "Aladdin" in Peking the day the abdication of the young Emperor was announced. While playing in pantomime at Exeter, he was seen by a representative of Sir Oswald Stoll, who gave him an immediate contract which led to his appearance on the music-hall stage.

*4YA listeners will hear Gillie Potter, comedian, on Tuesday, January 21.*

### Cedric Sharpe's "Comeback"

THE mother of Cedric Sharpe, the 'cellist, came of Yorkshire stock, but was a New Zealander by birth. Cedric once declared that his mother's grandfather was the first man to put his foot in New Zealand after the missionaries. When the last war broke out Cedric Sharpe joined up as a Tommy, but later obtained a commission in the Tanks Corps. For two and a-half years his 'cello was stowed away in its box in his father's house, and music and Cedric became absolute strangers. Then, as a result of wounds, he found himself in hospital back in England, and he was more or less convalescent; he was asked to play in a concert at the hospital. He went home in a taxi to get his 'cello. He played a few quite simple pieces and everybody was nice about his perform-

ance, but he says that it was the worst experience of his life. He could hardly remember how to hold his bow.

*4YA listeners will hear Cedric Sharpe, 'cellist, on Monday, January 20.*

### WAR NERVES CURE

TO protect employees from "war nerves" the BBC is considering providing them with a rest home in the country. At present complete plans have not been formulated, but the home will be open to all BBC employees from announcers to the cleaning staff.

They will be "retired" to this "safe" area for short periods, the same as office workers from many London firms who are forced to work in areas which are the subject of Hitler's blitz. The BBC will probably lease a large country home and run it on the lines of an hotel complete with manageress or hostess.

Many members of the BBC staff are working long hours and the strain is beginning to tell on some of them.

THE beauty advertisements in the London papers to-day reflect the war atmosphere. With powders and face creams, stress is laid on the fact that women should not ruin their skins by leaving on their complexions all night so as to be in readiness for an air-raid. Special fine powders are advertised that will not clog in heated underground shelters. Dainty ear-pads are sold to protect the ears. A physical culture advertisement thoughtfully advises women not to forget their morning exercise—even though they have been up all night in an air-raid.



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