

## Expert Use of Sound

ONE of the most interesting episodes in Picture Parade (from 4ZB) was devoted to the film production of *The Beggar's Opera*. This was not merely an abridged version of the film, but a lively documentary from the BBC which was filled with information on the musical and literary background of the film, and the personalities involved in this most recent revival. Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir Laurence Olivier, Christopher Fry and Benjamin Britten had a hand in it, as the excerpts performed bore eloquent testimony. This programme, unlike some others in the series, was distinguished by its expert use of sound to convey scene, most obvious in the introduction where the vivid description of the rider led into the sounds of horse and so to journey's end and play's beginning, providing the listener with a comfortable sense of certainty that he knew just where he was supposed to be. This, which is perhaps

the first essential in radio, is not as common as one might expect.

### Dim Background

THERE are times when I feel that the NZBS could be a little more generous with its information on the people involved in one of its productions, and, indeed, even a little more informative about the production itself. To give an example, one Sunday we were offered "Play: The Demagogue, by Reginald Kirby (NZBS)." On investigation, this proved to be a fairly interesting, well-produced play lasting over an hour, and it dealt with the life of John Wilkes, who was, of course, the demagogue of the title. One likes to know to whom one is indebted for an hour's entertainment, but the back-announcement merely informed us that we had been listening to *The Demagogue*, by Reginald Kirby, an NZBS production.

—Loquax

### The Wrong Voices

THOUGH poets at times read their self-composed rhymes (in New Zealand they're ready and willing), the results at the best very seldom attest to their power of moving or thrilling. Professional skill can capture at will both meaning and cadences meetly, while poets intense often mangle their sense,

and ruin the rhythms completely. And such was conveyed when 1YC played Americans reading their choices. Some poems were handsome examples, but Ransome, Shapiro and Williams had voices so dullish and lacking inflections that whacking great sections went past me unrelished. Only Cummings, though flat, read so carefully that his substantive-verbs were embellished. Historically, true, such recordings will do to preserve writers' voices; yet verses of value demand more sensitive and more expressive projection which nurses both rhythm and sense. I, for one, would dispense with hearing Shapiro right through. They who easily soar in their volumes can bore when they read. So I wonder, why do they?

### Pleasure for Opera-lovers

SUNDAY evening programmes from 1YC used not to be particularly exciting; and, faithful most of the week, I would then switch to 1ZB's *TIFH* and other lively BBC programmes. But recent months have made this 1YC evening almost the best of the week. Partly this is because of the fine *World Theatre* plays—Malleon's delightful *Moliere*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Seagull* and *She Stoops to Conquer*—but also because of the unfamiliar and little-heard operas which are now presented frequently. In the old dispensation we used to hear from 1YA on "Sunday opera night" almost only the more hackneyed Verdi

and Puccini works, over-lengthily commented on by a too-familiar voice. But within the last few weeks, 1YC has given us Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*, Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne*, Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and, most recently, Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*. If 1YC can present pieces like this regularly, they will not only give much pleasure to opera-lovers but will help to remove the impression that the only worth-while operas are those whose most popular arias are flogged to death on screen and radio.

—J.C.R.

### Second Thoughts

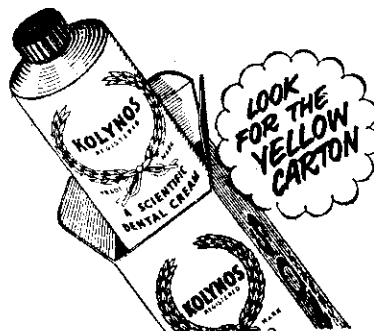
THE youngster who took life in such deadly earnest that he could never see anything in Noel Coward's plays but the affectation and constant posing of his characters has quite vanished. *Hay Fever*, whose people I somewhat bitterly condemned when I saw it performed in an open Roman-like amphitheatre in Maadi, left me convulsed with laughter when I heard the NZBS production over 3YC. The acting was of a high, even standard, leaving one free to enjoy the amusing situations which develop in a household of anarchic, arty-crafty individualists. Whereas in earlier times I had probably thought that Coward lay completely immersed in a world I couldn't stand, now it is just as evident that a play like this could only be written by someone who was at least

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