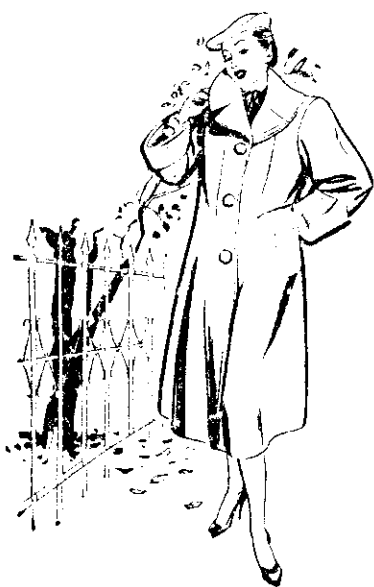


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RADIO REVIEW

MAN OF MANY VOICES

I HAD missed D. G. Bridson's *Aaron's Field* (BBC) on previous occasions, and so was grateful for the 1YA re-broadcast on Easter Sunday. For me, Mr. Bridson is one of the most accomplished script-writers England possesses. His '45 feature is surely one of the real "classics" of radio, and this more recent versified modern morality has exceptionally speakable verse and solid imaginative substance. But it will go down in radio history less for its content than for the astonishing performance of Wilfred Pickles in 14 different roles. I can usually detect, if I listen hard enough, the characteristic personal inflection through the vocal disguises of even so brilliant a mimic as Danny Kaye. Yet never once during the variety of accents in *Aaron's Field* could I catch hold of any inflections which might be said to be unmistakably those of "Have-a-Go" Pickles. The only drawback to this *tour de force* was that I found myself listening to the voice rather than the words at times. I hope the play will be broadcast often again. It is rarely that radio offers so remarkable a piece of playing in so rewarding a play.

Selection of Books

ZB BOOK REVIEW, well established and working to a time-tested formula, remains a pleasant weekly feature. It has variety; its level is fairly high; its reviewers are widely chosen. But it seems to me that, of recent weeks, we have heard several programmes of exceptionally dull books, which even the most able reviewers have failed to make appealing. It sounds almost as if the session discusses only books sent by publishers, and all of these, without discrimination. We have novels, books on sport, war, politics, history, people; but seldom any new translations of foreign novels, even more rarely religious books of a non-specialist kind, books on art and the theatre, poetry, plays, literary studies or reprints of the classics, and the like. Sometimes, indeed, the books reviewed appeared to have been taken at random from the "Miscellaneous" counter of a poor book store. I feel that the session

would be more even in quality if books were more carefully selected, and if a wider range of subject were included. Why, for instance, should religious works be ignored—even though the session is broadcast on a New Zealand Sunday?

—J.C.R.

Inside the Theatre

PROFESSOR ISAACS'S talks, *Twentieth Century Theatre*, are thoroughly exhilarating, and I must say I never expected to see the day when a drama critic could refer to the debt the theatre owes the cinema. (He's quite right in saying it has made us quicker on the uptake, so that the dramatist can now convey by a single word and a pause what would formerly have taken pages of explanation.) His angle of vision is new, and practical. He discusses, for example, the value of the telephone in speeding modern comedy, and you find yourself evaluating, for the first time, the difference in dramatic voltage between the ring of the telephone and the entrance of servant with salver. Professor Isaacs's lectures are further enlivened by excerpts from the plays he discusses, so well done that even examples of the second-rate (*Mrs. Dane's Defence*) make you grateful for good theatre as well as for good drama.

Congreve's Comedy

I CANNOT see in Congreve's *Love for Love* much of what Macaulay refers to as "that gorgeous blaze of wit that dazzles us almost to blindness," but time has probably been doing a little tarnishing. However, the NZBS production was certainly equivalent to a brisk rub-up. The acting had a style and finish calculated to make the most of any remaining scintillation, but though Congreve's dialogue emerged from the treatment with pristine shapeliness much of the wit was past revival. The farce, however, was surprisingly vigorous, and a rollicking production made the most of the seduction between Tattle and Miss Prue. The production was an encouraging example of the value of virtuosity. It is surprising to find out that what appear to the reader to be the stock characters of artificial comedy can have such rude life breathed into them.

—M.B.

After Many Years

THE ZB memorial programme *The First Anzac Day*, was an interesting reconstruction of a story told so often

"I KNOW WHAT I THINK . . ."

A NEW ZEALAND PIANIST

THE old saw about the prophet and his own country has been demonstrated again, this time by Janetta McStay, former Invercargill girl, now established as a concert pianist in Britain. Miss McStay came back to New Zealand unheralded and unsung, and the first we knew about her was a sparkling performance of Mendelssohn's G Minor Concerto with the National Orchestra from ZYC. When this was followed up by some really interesting, and at times exciting, Spanish music from ZYC, it was obvious that Miss McStay was a good deal more than a capable pianist. To the Mendelssohn concerto she brought a light-hearted approach in the first and last movements, and an unusually thoughtful reading of the gem-like slow movement; the ancient war-horse emerged freshly caparisoned and with its youth regained. The Spanish works, played crisply, with beautifully-maintained bass rhythms, captured the essential spirit of native Spanish music, based on plucked strings. Give us more, please, Miss McStay.

—D.J.C.M.

(Readers are invited to submit comments, not more than 200 words in length, on radio programmes. A fee of one guinea will be paid after publication. Contributions should be headed "Radio Review." Unsuccessful entries cannot be returned.)