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Radio Review

SHAKESPEARE "ADAPTED"

"POTTED" Shakespeare irritates me more than anything else on the radio. I thought *Julius Caesar* (1YC) less disastrous than the unfortunate *Macbeth* of a couple of years ago only because it was rather better played, misreadings and all. O. A. Gillespie's streamlining removed almost all the poetry and the high rhetoric, left hardly a scene unmangled, shifted the balance of characters, destroyed Shakespeare's dramatic rhythm, and ludicrously accelerated the conspiracy and battle-scenes. If radio audiences can take *World Theatre* plays, with a minimum of cutting, why does the NZBS consider it necessary to offer half a loaf of Shakespeare each time? Yet the truncated version of *The Bluebird* (1YA) a couple of days later, seemed to me justified. Maeterlinck's play is too long to begin with; it is largely a play of spectacle; it calls for a huge cast, and has neither the poetic value nor the structural tautness of Shakespeare's plays. The adaptation was intelligent, if rather hurried at the end; and it was acted with spirit. Potted Maeterlinck, yes, but, please, less *Classic Comics Shakespeare*! The thought of an NZBS "adapted" *Lear* or *Hamlet* chills the blood.

Memorable Week

THE amount of good, interesting and unusual material coming from 1YA and 1YC is greater than it has been for some years. Last week, a fairly typical one, gave me some hours of exceptionally fine listening, both in music and the spoken word. Sir Leonard Woolley's lucid talk on the deciphering of Hittite writing, "The Mystery of the Hieroglyphs," was, I think, the talk of the week; but W. A. G. Penlington's charmingly personal "On Being Daft" gave a different kind of pleasure. Music was rich, varied and intriguing. Layton Ring and Donald Rutherford playing Handel and Telemann works for recorder and harpsichord, and David Galbraith playing Schubert and Mendelssohn from the studio gave us grateful works to listen to. John Niles's arrangements of folk-songs in the NZBS *American Composer* series, Neilsen's Fifth Symphony, and Stravinsky's weird, plain-chanty operaballet *Renard* added spice to the musical offerings. But for beauty and fascination, the BBC concert version of Mozart's opera *Il Re Pastore* outdid the rest. By itself, this presentation of an almost unknown work of such stature would make any week memorable. But 1YC these days does not put all its eggs in one basket.

—J.C.R.

Background Music

IT is, no doubt, aesthetically sinful to half-listen to a radio programme. It is also sometimes a pleasant sin to indulge, more especially when one finds oneself gradually overtaken by the spell of the music, as I was by Mozart's

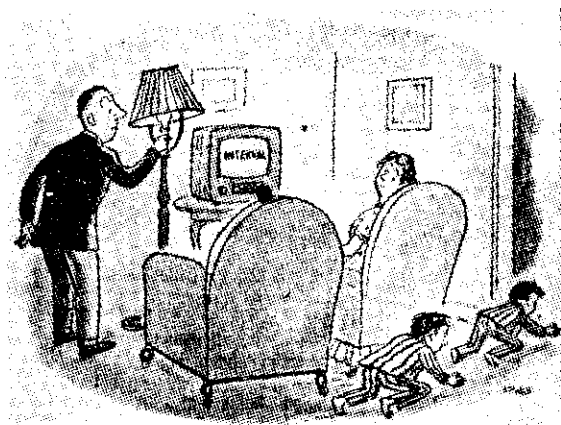
The Magic Flute, broadcast from 3YC. The title had a double significance then for me, for like the insistent background murmur of a creek which gradually weans us from other preoccupations through the wash of waters over stones, the exalted singing of the priests welled up undeniably into consciousness. As well as the connecting narrative, I was particularly grateful for Mr. W. Thomson's evaluation of the work, thinking it odd that only a quarter of an hour before his talk I had myself idly reflected that Mozart lived and wrote ostensibly for the present rather than for posterity. What a distinction we must draw between ox-like earnestness and sincerity. Beyond this the reference to Mozart's and Goethe's interest in Freemasonry cast a light back to a feature in *Wilhelm Meister* that has always puzzled me, namely, the nature and origins of the brotherhood which guided and disciplined the young man's career.

The Voice

BING CROSBY is practically an institution in America, almost, you might say, the "Voice of America" itself; and then you could appropriately compose a little requiem for the fate that seems to overtake all such well-established things. On his own programme, *The Bing Crosby Show*, heard over 3YA, Bing thanked Louis Armstrong for giving "a punch to our own little rodomontade here," and certainly the response of the audience to Louis's rumbling mimicry of Bing Crosby proved that he did just that. The same praise might as easily have been extended to Bob Hope a few weeks earlier for contributing the liveliest, raciest piece to the show. In between times Bing pushes things along with a seemingly endless flow of words whose chief function is that they stop anyone else from saying anything, the audience laughs from a reflex generated by long custom, and the listener toddles off to bed cheated out of a promised entertainment.

The Dark Flowers

AFTER listening to the NZBS production of Jean Anouilh's *Point of Departure* over 3YC, I must now place it among those plays which have left a deep and lasting impression on me. The NZBS cast, too, did not fail to do justice to a work that it might be considered an honour to act in. Where the significant question was asked of the unsuspecting, the pause in the response—as though the person questioned was checking his watch carefully—gave it the proper weight with the listener who knew that at that point in time Eurydice had already been killed. The way



(C) Punch