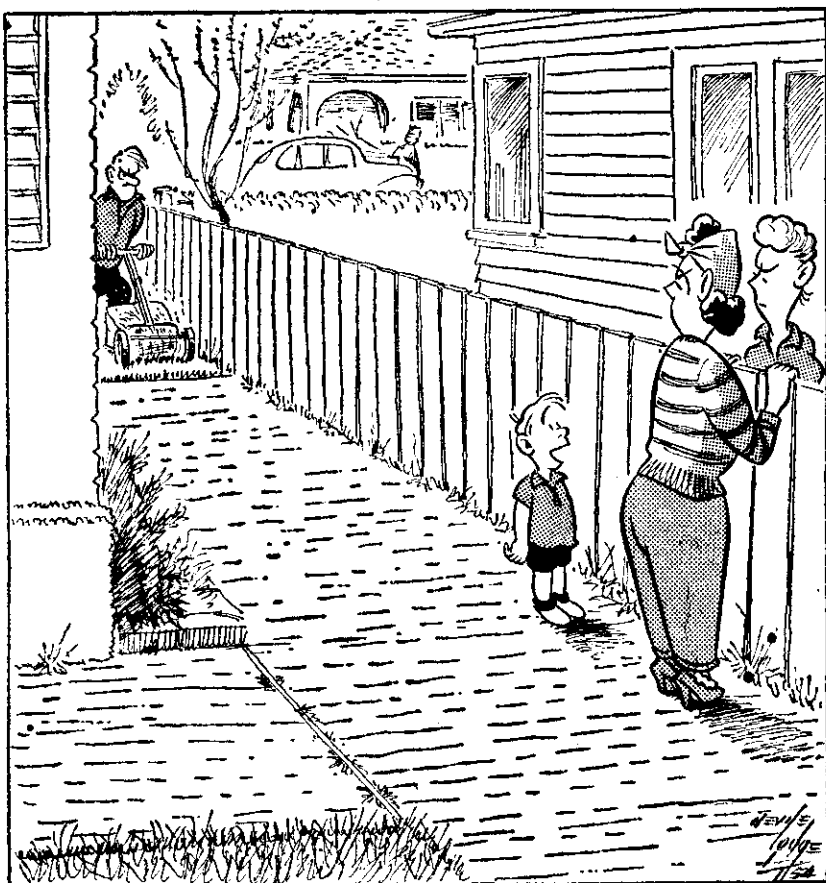


Lodge Listens . . .



"Dad says d'you want him to bring the radio outside—he wouldn't want you to miss 'Music While You Work'."

(continued from previous page)

feature of some of this folk music even more noticeable in Jo Stafford's *American Folk Songs* heard over 3YA, but also evident in Burl Ives's signature tune, is how a line often feels its way to the end, as though uncertainly improvised during a day-dream. Together with melancholy themes this ingredient adds the appealing plaintive note to the songs of a people who instinctively know that it is the unhappy far-off things which move us and most easily drive us to be creative.

Out of the Steppes

FROM a book I had been reading which suggested that the immense flat expanses of Russia lulled the eye only to intensify the imagination, I turned back in memory to a vivid story by Tchekhov which tells of a young boy travelling across these very steppes, and thence I moved to consider the alternately exalted and depressed egos so noticeable in Dostoevsky's novels. Through these thoughts I at length came, peculiarly well fitted, I should think, to listen to a fine rendering of Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, played by Cyril Smith (piano) and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra over 3YC. I seemed to see the vast horizon, and the sedgy lakes, the slow birth of a storm in the blackening cloud. This solitude breeds drama, I thought. And in at least two Russian composers, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, it is the dramatic element which appeals to me more than the angelic lyricism of, say, Mozart. The "I" is poised in tension against a vast solitude,

and there finds all its hopes and fears magnified a hundredfold. Standing on the threshold of silence the soul breaks into a storm, and that storm is the dramatic music of Rachmaninoff.

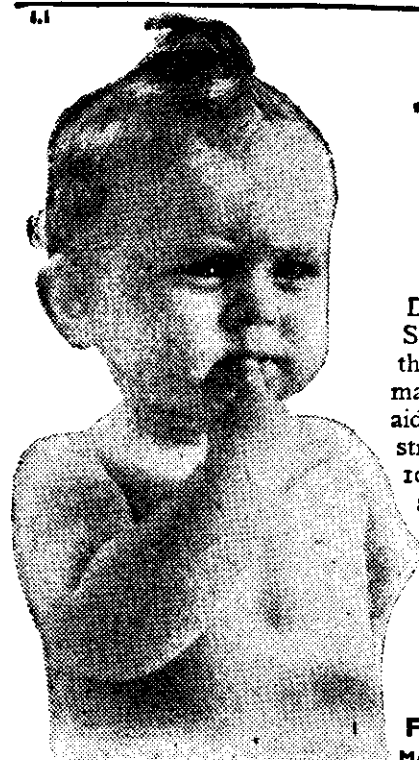
—Westcliff

Promenade Readings

IT was good of the NZBS to provide, halfway through the Henry Wood Promenade Concert, a programme of readings from the Benjamin Britten works which followed. Basil Clarke revealed in his excerpts from Crabbe's *The Borough* a strength and disciplined harshness which seemed completely attuned both to the author's intention and the interludes from Peter Grimes which followed. Peter Varley, reading the poems of the Serenade, had a harder task, since no human voice could hope to foreshadow the amazing variations Benjamin Britten achieved in his settings—in my case, in fact, the preliminary renewal of old acquaintance with the poems made me less prepared to accept novelty in the settings. The music for the Lykewake Dirge seemed, for example, quite theatrical, and the song less impressive than the naked poem. It was startling, though perhaps beneficial, to have Jonson's "Queen and Huntress, Chaste and Fair," clothed in what seemed a mixture of Handel and Gilbert and Sullivan. But most stimulating of all was the treatment of Tennyson's familiar "The Splendour Falls," where the horns of elfland sounded an evocation so out of this world as to be almost Martian.

—M.B.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 10, 1954.



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