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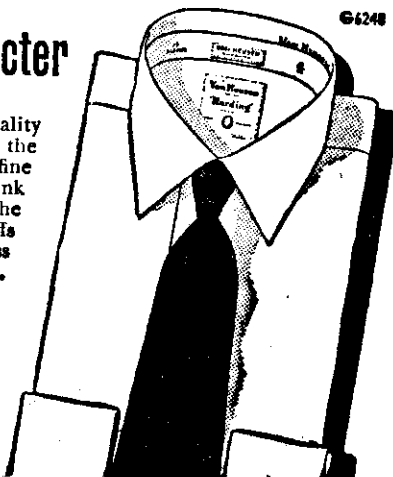
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## The shirt with character

Unblemished character, inherent quality are evident in every stitch of the Van Heusen 'Harding' shirt. In fine poplin, fully shrunk, it has a pre-shrunk neckband woven on the curve, like the Van Heusen collar. Semi-stiff cuffs and collar add extra smartness to this shirt.

## Van Heusen

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## RADIO REVIEW

### Ballads With Background

THE incomparable artistry of Burl Ives as a ballad-singer makes *Historical America in Song* one of the most delightful series to hit the air for some time. Any kind of ballad, from the drama of "Edward" and "Sioux Indians" and the robust vigour of "Hullabaloo Belay" to the nostalgia of "Haul Away, Joe" and the tenderness of "Cotton-Eye Joe," seems to come equally easily to him. It is a joy to hear such an array of unfamiliar folk-songs as well as to encounter in their fresh, original form pieces which have been mauled by swingsters. But the over-long and slightly pompous introductions by Cecil and Celia Manson are dragons at the gate of this programme. Burl Ives's own brief comments on each song make only a minimum of introduction necessary, while his easy, relaxed manner serves to emphasise the solemnity of the local background talks. This is a case, I feel, in which well might well have been left alone.

### Plays on Sundays

THE 1YA Sunday afternoon play is logically enough placed, as no other afternoon in the week is likely to provide a larger audience for such a feature. But I'm glad that National Orchestra programmes have recently pushed the drama starting-time from 2.0 to 3.0; by the later hour one can be reasonably sure that dinner will be over, and clattering dishes silenced. So far, only old plays have been re-presented; and I still doggedly hope to hear new material, or,

at least a re-play of *Moby Dick* (which I regard as the high point of NZBS production), or of *The Fire on the Snow*, instead of the very "ordinary" scripts we've been hearing. Last Sunday's *Ladies in Retirement* seemed more impressive on the stage than on the radio, although this gloomy piece of feminine Grand Guignol was done as well as the writing allowed. Perhaps I've heard too many plays recently, for I find myself saying, "So what?" after most of them. Poor as the average stage play is these days, the average radio play is even poorer in content and significance.

—J.C.R.

### Innocents Abroad

MAY I HAVE THE TREASURE? the new NZBS serial by John Jowett (of *Crooks' Tour* fame), is delightful proof that the pudding's just as good when made with locally processed ingredients. One was agreeably haunted by the ghosts of Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne. In the new serial it's Boulcott and Plumley, played by David Kohn and Alfred Farrell, instead of Woolcott and Spenser (Radford and Wayne), but all four are blood-brothers. *May I Have the Treasure?* is John Jowett's usual recipe, the old and well-loved joke of the innocents strolling casually through the fire, which they haven't the nous to recognise as such, while professional fire-walkers and angels suffer cold feet at the edge. There are the usual trimmings, plenty of corpses (four in Episode I, which is good despatching even by Jowett standards), and Ria Sohler's very attractive French *pièce de resistance*.

### Slightly Chilling

IT'S positively uncanny, but straight on the heels of my plea for more of the eerie on the air I listened to 2YA's  
(continued on next page)

## ★ The Week's Music . . . by OWEN JENSEN ★

A *TALE OF TWO CITIES*: an opera by Arthur Benjamin based on the novel by Charles Dickens. The libretto by Cedric Cooke.

Whatever the merits of the music or the performance, the first presentation of Arthur Benjamin's opera (YC link) must be put down as the broadcasting event of the week. In New Zealand we have too few opportunities of enjoying the impact of something entirely new, of measuring our listening with a composition still running warm from the composer's pen. The excitement of a first performance is quite different in character from the pleasurable stimulation of renewing acquaintance with music we already know. In listening to a new work, we are offered the privilege of sharing in the first fruits, as it were, of creative thinking. It may turn out to be good. It may disappoint. But whichever way it is, we have added to our musical experience, we have indeed, if only in a small way, undertaken a little creative thinking ourselves. And among all the debris of unrewarding new listening, there is always the happy chance that we will have happened on a new star in the musical galaxy. Whatever way you look at it, the broadcast of *A Tale of Two Cities* was a notable occasion.

It was a little difficult in one performance to discover just how successful was Arthur Benjamin's drama. Two hours and more of broadcast opera when the ears have to do all the work and the eyes cannot assist is, a big chunk of listening. The composer calls his work a "romantic melodrama." It certainly had

romantic warmth and the dynamics of the orchestra writing gave plenty of colour to the drama. But at first hearing, one had to work hard to make it hang together. For one thing, most of the words of the chorus were completely unintelligible and a good deal of the solo story was lost, too. In opera, especially opera sung in English, it is fair to ask that the threads of the story should be comprehensible without the ear having to work overtime. Much of this should straighten itself out, however, at a second hearing, which we can hope will not be too far distant. Despite all this, there could be no doubt of the competence of Arthur Benjamin's writing.

Nor could there be any doubt about the first broadcast of the Alma Trio (YC link) the most superb trio playing we have had in these parts for many a long day, perhaps ever. Here were three players, each of the first rank, with complete understanding between them, and a sensitive appreciation of the sensuous beauties of the music of Schubert's Trio in B Flat. A good mark must go, too, to the technicians who brought off the broadcast relay so admirably. Gabor Rejto and Adolph Baller's Martinu 'Cello and Piano Sonata, which completed the broadcast, was a breathtaking piece of virtuosity.

Noted in Passing: Another enjoyable trio performance by May Hannam, Frances Anderson and Althea Harley-Slack of John Ireland's Trio No. 3 in E Major (3YC); and some bright playing of Vivaldi among other music by the Auckland String Players, with guest conductor Maurice Clare (1YC).

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 17, 1954,