

# Patons



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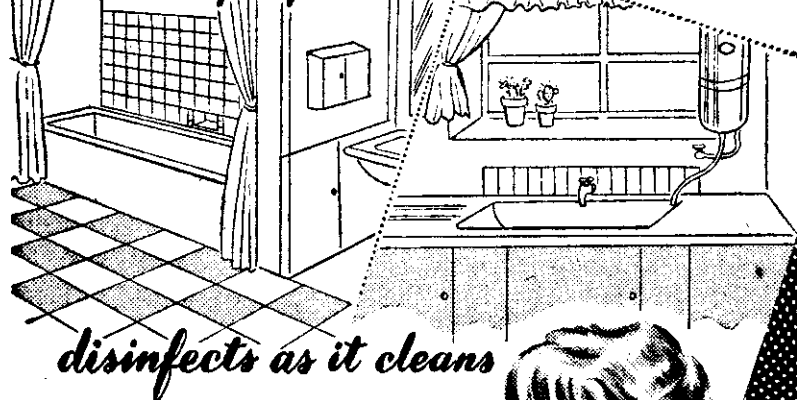
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# ATAWAY

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# Open Microphone

"SORRY I'm late. Mr. Young gave us a party. It was our last broadcast." It was one of the young singers in T. J. Young's Studio Class, sorry that this was their last session for the year. Many children throughout New Zealand will have been sorry, too, that this was the last singing lesson for 1954 in the *Broadcasts to Schools*, and sorrier still that this would be Mr. Young's final Singing Class in the studio.

For 18 years—except for one year when he was in England, seeing and hearing how they did it over there—

TEACHING THEM TO SING T. J. Young has

broadcast his weekly singing session, 460 broadcasts altogether. Hundreds of children, thou-

singing. After all, the best teaching is by example, the best examples that can be obtained.

Nevertheless, the group of children from Kelburn Normal School who have assisted Mr. Young in each year's broadcasts have never been chosen for their singing. They have been selected on an I.Q. basis from a composite class of Standards 4, 5 and 6. The high I.Q.'s—and some of them have been very high indeed—mean that the children are all quick in the uptake, thus saving rehearsal time; and the composite class gives continuity as there has always been a core of singers left over from the previous year. The actual broadcasting group is increased during the year as children who have started with, sometimes considerable, vocal and pitch difficulties have improved with coaching based on the same principles illustrated in the broadcast lessons. In fact, Mr. Young has had to cope with all the difficulties that confront any other teacher of singing in the schools that listen in.

Each broadcast has involved a considerable amount of preparation. Nothing has ever been left to chance. Rehearsals have taken from three to four hours each week. The children memorised everything, no music or any written aids whatsoever being taken into the studio. This has meant, of course, that with no distraction of any sort, the utmost concentration could be given, not only to the singing, but to assisting Mr. Young to the full in bringing out the points he wished to make. Mr. Young himself has never let up in the whole 18 years in working out each broadcast down to the last detail, to the extent even of bringing in experts to advise of the singing of Maori songs or, for instance, of songs in French.

In this sort of session, broadcasting becomes a powerful ally of education. Music, among all subjects, is hampered most in the primary schools by lack of adequate teaching. Many teachers, with the best will in the world and considerable enthusiasm, too, have not the skill nor the experience to cope with the problems that arise in children's singing. Music, particularly its performance, cannot be taught from books. When you hear it done by an expert, things begin to fall into place. Over the years, Mr. Young has received many letters from teachers, expressing appreciation, asking advice and, what is more, making suggestions for improving his broadcast session. The children in the schools, too, have written, not only passing on their enjoyment, but offering criticism or implied criticism.

In his 17 years of broadcasting to schools, T. J. Young has made a valuable contribution to the development of singing in the primary schools of New Zealand. His successor in 1955, George Wilkinson, head of the music department at Dunedin Training College, will take over what has become almost a tradition of school singing broadcasts.

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"SOME of these rationalists dig into a reference book, get a few facts, and think they have established a scientific case," Dr. E. M. Blaiklock, Professor of Classics at Auckland University College, said to us the other day. He was commenting on the controversy on Mithraism and Christianity which followed the recent discovery of the Temple of Mithras near St. Paul's by



Spencer Hughes photograph

T. J. YOUNG  
His last broadcast

sands of them, perhaps, several generations have learnt their singing this way; and many teachers, particularly in rural schools, have been helped and encouraged in their musical work by the authoritative but cheerfully informal voice and voices coming through the loudspeaker. "Turn to page . . ." and the studio broadcast is on its way—just, as someone said, just as if they're in the room with you.

"We started on pitch and we finished on pitch; but we got a bit of a twist somewhere in the middle." The children in the studio have, through the years, taken almost a professional interest in their work. As Mr. Young says, he asked of them their best and they always gave it. In this was his greatest satisfaction and that of the young singers, too.

A criticism of these studio lessons, made from time to time, is that the class sounded almost too perfect, a hand-picked group to which no city school teacher, let alone any country ones, could aspire. But then, a broadcast, if it is to go across smoothly, must be well prepared. A drone at the back and a few off-pitch singers or some slow pokes in rhythm might give "they're just the same at home" realism, but this would most certainly be at the expense of putting over the points that Mr. Young was striving for in the achievement of good tone production and lively