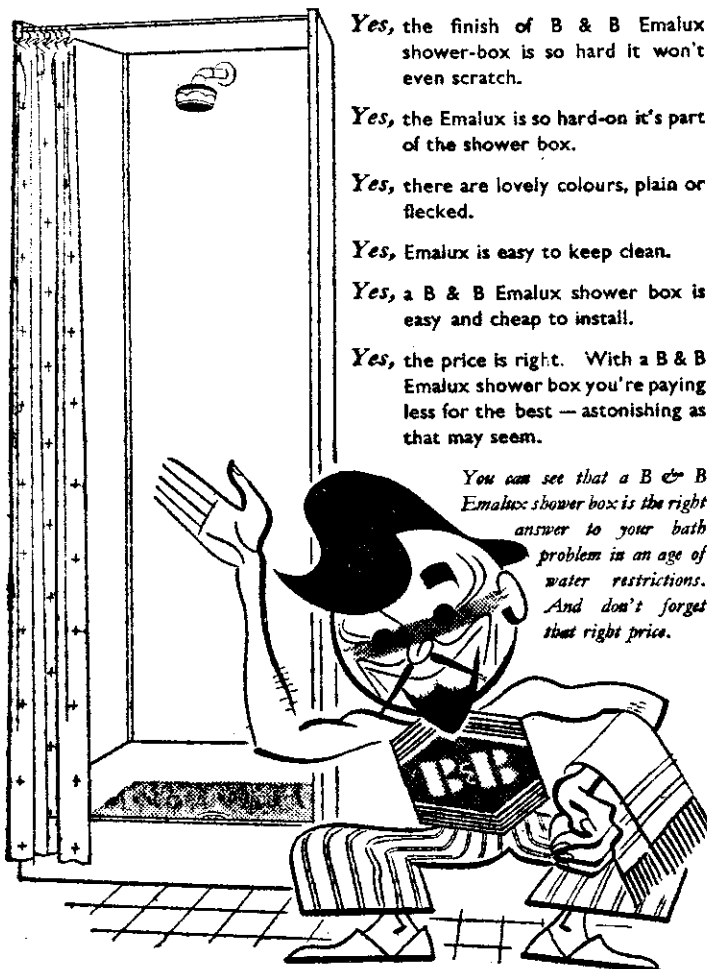


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RADIO REVIEW

From the Horse's Mouth

"NOWADAYS, Englishmen and Americans have everything in common, except, of course, the language." Oscar Wilde, of course, at his most wilfully paradoxical. I wish he could have heard four American poets reading their own verse last week: it was the most piquant justification of his *bon mot*. William Carlos Williams read his verse in a voice like the scraping of two metallic surfaces; John Crowe Ransom's dry finicky disdain sabotaged his; Karl Shapiro measured his lines with a downbeat as strict and inexorable as a drum major; only E. E. Cummings (or is he still e. e. cummings?) in a tone of magisterial authority gave his work any life. Should poets read their own verses? I think they should. Dylan Thomas and Edith Sitwell have shown how wonderfully their voices can reinforce their printed work; so on their own level have Mr. Curnow and Mr. Vogt. If poets find themselves poorly endowed by nature for public address, I feel that a course of voice production with the most reputable teachers should be considered part of their poetic discipline.

Hell's Black Intelligencer

I FOUND the BBC production of *King Richard III* only partially successful. The family embroilments are barely comprehensible on stage; how much less so when only voices guide you was made bafflingly obvious by Peter Watt's production. Donald Wolfit had fine moments as Richard, particularly in the closing

scenes when he delivered his speeches with a gnarled, vicious desperation, and his oration to the army at Bosworth stirred the blood. But as the Duke of Gloucester in the first three Acts, he either purred in the conventional silken style of Victorian melodrama, or rattled like a Lewis gun with a lethal effect on audibility. I missed the joy of sheer evil which Sir Laurence Olivier communicated so superbly when he played Richard here. Whatever Richard may be to the historian, to Shakespeare and his collaborators, he was the incarnation of a man devoted to evil with the tenacity and unremitting exercise of a saint devoted to God, and it is this which explains his extraordinary fascination for his contemporaries. In short, he must have a diabolical charm. Wolfit lacked this, and hence the play, which has no comedy, became dreary with one cursing character after another rushing helter-skelter for the block, and tedious with the wailing of wronged queens.

—B.E.G.M.

A Sense of Loss

TUNING in to Theatre Royal last week I found myself fobbed off with *Movie Cocktails* (not as stimulating as its title) and felt a keen sense of loss. For *Theatre Royal* was more than Sir Laurence Olivier and showmanship; it was the means of bringing to a large audience an extraordinary variety of reputable literary material. Not always first-rate material, not always intrinsically dramatic material, but always something you could get your teeth into. And it had an uncanny knack of turning up with a new version of something half-remembered, perhaps from school reading, like a photographer who produces glossy reproductions to replace old prints from the family album. But the real disadvantage for a session of this type

(continued on next page)

★ The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN ★

THE highlight of last week as far as I was concerned was one of John Gray's proteges in his monthly review *New Records*, none other than our old friend Beethoven's Violin Concerto, transcribed for piano and orchestra by the maestro himself. It seemed totally pianistic, and it was difficult at times to remember how the solo violin used to fit in. After years of hearing the violin version this was a refreshing change, the more so for being unexpected. I hope we shall hear more of Beethoven's Sixth Piano Concerto.

I don't appear to have much of a dossier on Dossor, a new planet that is swimming into our ken on an NZBS tour. I gather Lance Dossor is a professor of piano from Australia, and that he has entertained the troops on occasion overseas. Apart from this, only his playing can inform me. Apparently his programmes are designed to show his versatility, since the first was based on Haydn and Brahms, the second Chopin, and the third French composers; this plan fell a little flat, because all these received approximately the same type of treatment, including a rather overweighted bass.

I did like his Haydn, especially since it was the free-for-all D major Sonata, which a theatre agent would probably describe as a riot of fun. None of the fun was lost, and the clarity was what one always imagines for Haydn. Less

happy were the Brahms-Paganini Variations, which suffered sometimes from a surfeit of sentiment, and from a complete lack of climax.

The Chopin programme included a fiery performance of the little-played B minor Scherzo, but the rest of it lacked something of the expected delicacy, not excepting the misty tracteries of the *Berceuse*. In this programme Lance Dossor's playing sounded rather workaday, as though he were trying to inspire the music rather than let it inspire him.

He made up for this in the next recital with a spirited performance of the difficult Fairy-tale Sonata of Nicholas Medtner (the Cinderella of modern music) and some pleasant Poulenc and Debussy.

This has been a good week for Schubert—apart from two or three recorded symphonies and some chamber music, there was another competently-recorded and conscientiously posthumous piano sonata from David Galbraith (YC link), and the Violin and Piano Sonata in A Minor, Op. 137, No. 2, from Vivien Dixon and Frederick Page (2YC). The latter I thought was just right—clear and melodious, like all the best Schubert. Anyone would think he was having an anniversary, though in point of fact this shouldn't occur till November 19. Still, let's not deny him the fair play and fairer playing that he failed to get during his lifetime.

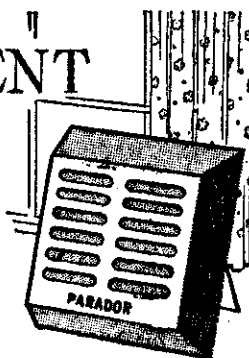
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