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Radio Review

AZIZ AS IS

IF ever there was a demonstration that good scripts demand good readers, it was that provided by the first and second of R. T. Robertson's intriguing series *Come Home to Roost*. The dialogue between Emily Bronte and Heathcliff was almost ruined for me by the unconvincing and stilted reading of Heathcliff's lines, which made the session sound like a rather drab tutorial given by a bored professor to a bothersome female student. But in the following week's contribution, Philip Smithells and John V. Trevor did full justice to E. M. Forster and Dr. Aziz, the latter in particular being very much as I have always imagined him. These original and intelligent programmes do indicate, perhaps, one of the basic differences between New Zealand's YC programmes and the BBC "Third." A "Third Programme" can afford to take for granted that its listeners know the work discussed. *Come Home to Roost* can't, with the result that a good deal of the Forster-Aziz conversation recapitulated incidents in the novel; leaving so much less time for aspects of Forster's vision and concept of India, which were only tantalisingly glanced at. Still, this sort of thing is a step on the way. Perhaps, some day, the YCs will take a giant step.

Un-UN Sentiment?

CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW'S BBC play, *Those in Favour* (1YC) was certainly a thought-provoking job, although I am in two minds as to what effect it is likely to have on listeners' attitudes to the United Nations. Set at Lake Success in 1948, it showed the contrast between the official and the per-

sonal relationship of Winter, a British delegate, and Volodovski, a Soviet one, and the method used by Lozovski, the local MVD man, to liquidate Volodovski when detected in a political indiscretion in his contacts with Winter. Good propaganda for the British concept of democracy as opposed to the Soviet doctrine, the play still allowed humanity and finer feelings to the Russian and did not burlesque the Soviet attitude.

But I was left wondering whether MVD types did really infest the UN building, contriving "accidents" for deviationists. The excellent cast, notably Robert Harris as Winter, almost sold me on the idea. Incidentally, a reference to "the usual long speech of the New Zealand delegate," apart from its amusing implications, provided a reminder that even remote and insignificant nations have their part to play in the UN—MVD men or not.

—J.C.R.

At the Proms

THE programmes of the prom concerts have already been fully reviewed, so I shall not do it again, but content myself with saying that at the final concert in Wellington, the whole of which was broadcast, the orchestra has never played better. What Mr. Robertson has succeeded in doing apart from making the orchestra play so well is to create a real proms atmosphere. Thank goodness he does not resort to the chattiness beloved of some conductors which implies that music is no more than a huge family joke. His little *jeu d'esprit* of walking off the podium while his orchestra played Benjamin's "Jamaican Rumba" for the second time, was charming, and his device of summoning the player farthest away from the piano to open and shut its lid, clearly put the audience into an excellent humour. This perhaps is derived from the London Proms, where the lid-lifter is a famous character, and some

(continued on next page)

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

SOMETHING for everyone seems to be the declared aim of the new National Sunday programme. As far as I was concerned, the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra was one of its highlights, reflecting the polished tones of the 18th Century with originality and effect. In particular the vivacious Telemann Viola Concerto took my fancy, with Winifred Stiles as soloist in a merry antiphony with the orchestra. Works like this—from a composer of several hundred concertos—show why Telemann was preferred to Bach by their contemporaries, for the light and tuneful Italian method replaces completely the greater solidity of the German school, which for most people is represented by Bach.

The familiar figure of Cara Hall is with us again in a series of piano recitals (2YC) of "period music" from various countries. Her playing of the lute dances arranged by Respighi, and the Scarlatti sonatas, were admirably clear, with a sure touch and not too much staccato for my conservative taste. The amiable French programme was perhaps not quite as successful, but the Gibbons and Farnaby pieces were a delight.

Donald Munro's pleasant baritone has been heard lately, not only with the National Orchestra in Ashley Heenan's Sea Songs, but with the Alex Lindsay String Quartet (YC link) in song cycles by the more modern English composers.

Love Blows as the Wind Blows, by George Butterworth, was a sensitive performance of a difficult work, very reminiscent of Vaughan Williams's earlier cycle *On Wenlock Edge*. (This may well account for the latter composer's praise of it.) The Quartet supported Mr. Munro most tastefully, marring their playing only by some poor intonation in the final bars. Of at least equal standard was the second in this series, the Alan Bush cycle *Farewell Earth's Bliss*, in which the composer has subdued somewhat his usual angular manner. This combination of voice and accompaniment is a particularly satisfying one, beside which a mere piano accompaniment sounds insipid especially for modern songs; I suppose the paucity of works in this form is due to the comparable paucity of good string quartets—in this country, at any rate.

At least we have the Francis Rosner Chamber Ensemble, who have been doing good work lately (NZBS) with some less frequently-heard music. The Schubert Octet in F suffered a little, through slight mishandling of the balance and a certain amount of poor wind tuning; but the String Quintet in G of Dvorak, not being open to such intrinsic faults, came through with some fine tone and a dash of final movement—in the energetic sense, that is. A lovely work, this: to resort to cliché, it should receive more of our attention.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 25, 1955.