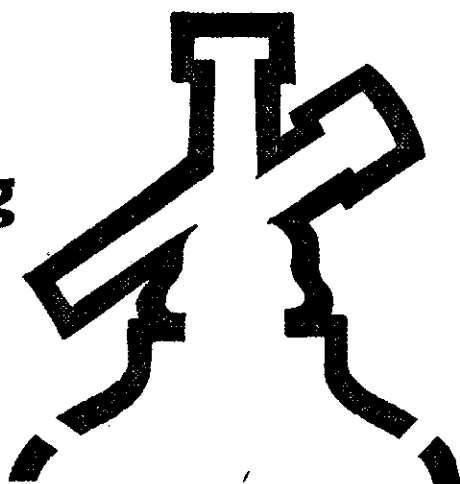


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RADIO REVIEW

The Nail on the Head

SOMETIMES a programme, by its scale and performance, dwarfs anything one has heard for some time. Such a programme is "The Creative Mask," the second of the three MacMillan Brown lectures which James K. Baxter is broadcasting from 2YC. I thought it splendid. Mr. Baxter's broadcasting style is noble, grave, witty and majestic; in twenty minutes he taught me more of the nature of poetic creation and creative problems in this country than half a dozen books. His mock poem "Egmont," dedicated to the State Forestry Department, shamed me by an accomplishment I should, alas, not be too proud to possess; I hope after this I shall not be so easily taken in by the sham and the threadbare, nor have the nerve to offer it to others. What I admired above all else was the absolutely uncompromising way in which he made his points. No punches were pulled, no holds barred. In a community where plain speaking is suspect, and the half-truth revered, it is encouraging that a man of Mr. Baxter's authority and integrity is allowed his voice. I hope his talks will be repeated as often as possible.

The Hammer on the Thumb

AFTER this, Professor I. A. Gordon's talks in the series, *The Art of Letters*, seem small beer. This is hardly fair to Professor Gordon, since his aim is so much lower, but I have one major cavil. I heard his third talk last week. I think it a great mistake to have letters read in character. The recorded excerpts embedded in Professor Gordon's text were,

for my taste, hammy produced with far too many expression marks. Letters are not written to be read aloud, though some may repay doing so if they are lively or significant: what is not defensible in my view is the attempt at imaginative reconstruction of the character of the writer. Why did Professor Gordon not read the letters himself? His soft Scottish burr could make something quite agreeable of them, and the imaginative identification could be left to the listener. This is, after all, what we all do when we read a letter: get a picture either benign or frosty of the person who sent it. The letters themselves ranged in interest from the fascinating one from the beleaguered medieval lady asking for poleaxes and almonds, to dullish ones from Richard Steele to dear Prue.

—B.E.G.M.

Safe Landing

MY only complaint about the YA discussion (March 23) on 20th Century Chivalry was that no one made use of my favourite schoolboy aphorism, "Chivalry is the way a man behaves to a strange woman." This, I feel, is the nub of the matter, the "something extra" Mrs. Turner was talking about, the act of kindness outside the likelihood of reciprocity. Whereas the panel at one stage seemed all set to drape the concept of chivalry over husband-and-wife, employer-and-employee relationships, and even to bring down legislation to make its blanket use compulsory. But what fun the discussion was, with plenty of interplay of personality, and with protagonists actually admitting they'd been influenced! And a special tribute to the chairman for managing to beach his discussion on a mutually acceptable bit of shore instead of following the usual practice of scuttling it in mid-stream.

Reflected Glory

"SPEAK the Speech, I Pray You" (a programme celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Royal Academy of
(continued on next page)

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

AT long last we are to hear the one-time prima donna of the Ellice Island Opera—Anna Russell: parodist without peer, mistress of scalding satire, evoking ecstatic reviews from the hardest-boiled American critics. "British Singer's Longhair Takeoffs Wow Audiences" was one typical banner, which describes what she does and how it is received, but the full impact that her voice makes can't be described to those who have not heard its protean manifestations and doubtful charms. At the risk of being accused of anticipating the event, I must condole with anyone who misses her Art.

From the sublimely ridiculous to the purely sublime, and Maurice Clare's series of Bach's unaccompanied violin works (NZBS). In the first programme, he showed that at least the remainder will be worth the hearing. He gave an enlightening introduction explaining his use of the bow and style of the time, and leaving us in no doubt as to his intensive study of these works over a long period. His playing of the G Minor Sonata was accurate and assured, being in the best Bach traditions with certain personal overtones, and in no way as

"scratchy" as so many string players make the solo works. Perhaps this was due to the bow—I prefer to believe that it was Mr. Clare. In particular, the fugue was masterly, with the parts clearly distinguishable and smooth.

In between movements Gerald Christeller sang a Bach aria, a practice that I'm afraid is going to be continued for the remainder of the series: not because of the singing, which was restrained and in keeping with the whole atmosphere of the programme, but because of its disrupting effect on the continuity of the sonata. Though the latter is indeed almost a suite, I can't agree that it is boring enough to demand an intermission; those who think it is will probably not listen to the programme at all.

For something unusual, I can recommend Borsari's Quintet-Concerto for woodwind and harp, which is being heard at the moment in one of the FBS programmes. The style is contemporary (whatever that means), and the playing impeccable. In this case, I take "contemporary" as implying slightly more discord than most of us are used to; but here every method is employed to make this palatable, even to the conservative listener.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 7, 1955.