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RADIO REVIEW

Gone Goon

I MAY have a rather eccentric sense of humour, but I thought the first broadcast of *The Goon Show* one of the funniest things I've heard on radio. What a delight it was to encounter something which breaks away from the club-sandwich formula or even the best BBC comedy programmes—introductory patter, musical number, sketch, musical number, parody—and which goes on developing a mad story in its own alogical way, giving us only the first bars of musical interludes. Here at last is a radio equivalent of the Marx Brothers, an explosive universe in which a gunshot and galloping horses represent a telephone ringing, in which you climb out of windows to open doors, and, as in film cartoons, you set off dynamite without actually getting killed. This is indeed "pure radio," which depends for its impact upon not seeing the insane world conjured up in the imagination by dialogue and sound effects. Something like a combination of a top-class Varsity revue, Addams's cartoons, *ITMA*, Edward Lear and Wilbur Schmutz, but adding up to authentic goonery, one single *Goon Show* made me a convert, a gone goon, avid for the promised solution of the mystery of the *Marie Celeste*.

Design in Nostalgia

WHEN one is in a mood to curse the radio for its intrusiveness, for its brashness, for its peddling of mediocrity, there often comes something which makes one aware of its real value. Such, for me, was Walter de la Mare's brief recollection of a meeting with Thomas Hardy. It was quite simply a privilege to hear this wonderful old man, speaking with slow, gentle deliberateness and jewelled precision of a cherished encounter with one of Britain's greatest writers, and reaching back to the world

before two world wars when time was something more than a commodity. Old men's memories are always misted by nostalgia, and Mr. de la Mare, himself a master of literary nostalgia, perhaps gave us a double dose, softening Hardy's outlines and turning him into one of his own characters. Yet whether the subject was Hardy as he was, or Hardy as an old poet re-sees him, it was good to make contact with such gentle courteous integrity. This brief walk round an old walled garden of memory, brought from an instrument which so often vibrates with a resonant vulgarity, a rare echo of the thoughts which lie too deep for tears.

—J.C.R.

Not With a Whimper, But a Bang

I HAVE never got to the end of Joyce's formidable last work *Finnegan's Wake*, though I must have read the first thirty pages a dozen times. I have learned, though, that the work is based on the cyclic view of history first made coherent by the 17th century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. According to Vico, an evolving culture can be divided into four periods, which he calls theocratic, aristocratic, democratic and chaotic. The end of the chaotic period is announced by a thunderclap, awakening the hearts of men to the supernatural, and then the cycle begins all over again. I could not help remembering this last work when T. A. Rafter opened from 2YC a series of talks on the hydrogen bomb. He took as his subject the power of the bomb, and though I knew in a vague way of its enormous destructive power, it gave me a shudder to know that *radio strontium* could be deadly 220 miles from the centre of the explosion, and that the whole of the North Island from Wanganui south could be devastated by a single bomb. No one could say that our world is chaotic, nor that a great thunderclap hangs over it like a curse. Mr. Rafter's last words were extinguished by a fault in transmission, but I did hear him put the choice ahead of us quite squarely. We

THE INDIES AND US

NOT long before the West Indies cricket team left New Zealand recently, the captain, Denis Atkinson, and the player-manager of the team, John Goddard, were interviewed by Brian Russ for the NZBS. In this interview,



John Goddard

which was recorded and will be heard from YA and YZ stations at 6.50 p.m. on Wednesday, April 11, they discussed New Zealand cricket, commenting on the performance of our teams in the recent Test series, and making suggestions on such topics as the preparation of wickets. They also had something to say about the way they prepare for an overseas tour—a matter of particular interest to New Zealanders who already have our tour of Britain in 1958 in mind.

can choose, he said, between a ruthless totalitarianism, or long term physical mutations, transmitted through the genes for many generations. Either prospect terrifies. There is surely the third way out of unity against this madness which threatens to obliterate us all, but how that can be achieved is anybody's guess.

No Bangs, No Whimpers

IT was agreeable, after the above gloomy prospect so cogently outlined for us, to hear on the same evening, Donald Boyd's first talk in a BBC series, *Private Reports*. He called this talk *Commonplaces*, a review of the events and changes he has seen through fifty years. Mr. Boyd regards the Welfare State as the magnificent consummation of the liberal movement which he joined in spirit as a boy in the early 1900's and later, in fact. His backward view over fifty years is humorous and unsentimental, and his reverence for the British devoid of any taint of jingoism or flag-wagging. He says in effect of the last two wars against Germany: "We English just couldn't be ruled by those barbarian German leaders," and consequently socks had to be pulled up to make this impossible. The redistribution of wealth which is now proceeding in England he views dispassionately as a logical development, while admitting its hardship to some. But he managed to convey most agreeably that the world is now better than when he was born, for reasons in which he was personally involved. This talk warmed me with its style and pleasant good sense, and I look forward to the others.

—B.E.G.M.

★ The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN ★

BARTOK is not everyone's cup of tea, nor is there reason to think he should be; but his fans must have had an ecstatic week when there was an hour or so of his music every night (YC stations, Radio Hungary) from concerts to commemorate the composer's tenth post-humus anniversary last year. Some of our best-known musicians introduced the programmes with well-chosen words, and the music that followed covered the whole gamut of Bartok's output, from the great Violin Concerto to the tiny Duos for violins. New to me was the Dance Suite for Orchestra, which is based on Hungarian folk tunes, and breaks the law of repetitious utterance that most folk-inspired pieces have; in this case it is fresh and charming, more synthesised than sinning. Bartok in more serious mood is the rule for most of the concerts: the third Piano Concerto, in which he becomes less percussive than his pianistic wont, and the Violin Concerto I mentioned, were among the highlights; set off in another programme by the second String Quartet, beautifully co-ordinated by the Tatari Quartet—another stranger to me, but an amiable one. And if you didn't like it—well, there was always some other

station playing something more traditional and innocuous.

Geoffrey Tankard, examiner for the Royal Schools of Music, was heard here last year: now he has given a series of talks to young pianists (NZBS) virtually on how to perform their set pieces so as to gain in his estimation. The talks are lucid, spiced with pictorial illustration according to the ages of his young hearers, and exemplified at the piano. The whole idea is good; but I must take umbrage at the forcing of any special illustration on the minds of children—after all, it is just possible that they have thoughts of their own. The playing, on the other hand, was so pastel-shaded that it allowed their pictorial sense a pretty free hand.

The Schumann cycle, *A Woman's Life and Love*, has been recorded often enough, but is infrequently heard as a live performance. One such was by the contralto Muriel Gale (YC link) and Ormi Reid, and if one overlooked some of the German, the voice and its accompaniment were smooth and faithful. No real fault glared for me to glare back at, but perhaps some lack of inspiration; the singing breathed as much of heavy work as of woman's love; and it is a tribute to the singer's artistry that the cycle was successful.

Women in Uniform

HAPPY IN THE SERVICE, the Wednesday morning Women's Session documentary programme from YA and YZ stations on April 11, deals with the lives of trainees newly recruited to the Women's Services. Barbara Basham, of the NZBS Talks Section, produced this programme from recordings she made herself at Waiouru and at H.M.N.Z.S. Philomel, and from others made at the R.N.Z.A.F. station at Taieri. The documentary deals with the recruits' basic training, after which they go on to more specialised trade courses or to on-the-job training.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 6, 1956.