

Travel
SHAW SAVILL



1st. Class—Athenic, Ceramic, Corinthic, Gothic, Dominion Monarch.
Tourist Class—Southern Cross.

To England

Via Panama Canal and Curacao or via South Africa.

RADIO REVIEW

No Comment from Cicero

DO you know what Cicero said when the radio reporter asked his opinion of the murder of Caesar? He said, "No comment." Did you know that Queen Elizabeth's Armada speech ("I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman") was relayed to the crowd over loudspeakers? And that a traitor named Sir William Stanley broadcast from Spain in a voice like Lord Haw-Haw's? Do not miss, I beg you, *You Are There* (ZBs, Monday night). It's the funniest show on the air. There's an argument going on in our house as to whether it's meant to be funny, whether Australia houses a budding Brahms-and-Simon; or whether, as appears on the surface, it's meant to be dramatic, even

educational. I incline, reluctantly, to the latter view, and must therefore be severe. It isn't merely that events in the distant past would scarcely have been what they were if radio had been known then. It's that once you start being anachronistic it's hard to stop, so that here we have people with 20th-century minds acting in events which in their real setting 20th-century people could scarcely imagine. We are given a few facts, but no understanding. Still, maybe there's a Brahms-and-Simon after all.

No Embroidery

HISTORY rather more to my taste is found in George Naylor's series of talks, *Raw Material*. I don't know if any novelists or scenario writers will accept his invitation to use this raw material for their plots. I rather hope not, historical novels and films being what they are; I prefer Mr. Naylor's own unembroidered narrative. But any hook is good enough to hand a series of talks on when the talks are as good as these are in their own right. I don't know where Mr. Naylor found these remarkable characters and events—in the publications of the Hakluyt Society, perhaps?—but he makes the best of such a man as the English shipwright who became the friend of the most powerful shogun in Japan. Although they have been, so far as I have heard them, stories of action, Mr. Naylor's style is ruminative rather than exciting. I've been chary of using the word "interesting" since the time I heard a book reviewer on the air use it seventeen times in one talk, but it's the right word for this kind of material, good middle-brow, YA material. I'm glad the YAs are getting more of the kind these days.

—R.D.McE.

Non Angeli, sed Angeles

MAY I cheat a little this week, and admit that I not only heard Victoria de los Angeles in two solo recitals, but

saw her also? And may I try to give an idea of what that total experience amounts to? I think it true to say that no singer has made a like impact on our imaginations since the memorable visits of Ninon Vallin some years ago. Both share the gift of creating an indescribable ambience round each song; of summoning inexplicably a whole world of feeling to surround them. In one of Vallin's ripe years, it amounted to sorcery to hear her sing of a young girl going breathless to meet her lover by a lake; sorcery, because she turned by some alchemy into that girl before our eyes. Victoria de los Angeles does not astound us in quite this way because she is young and beautiful, and so we need no sorcery. Yet what else is it that holds an audience of 2500 so rapt, so absorbed, held by a radiant personality in the strongest, yet most delicate relationship? I found her, finally, adorable; I can hardly say more. She is so complete an artist: no detail escapes her. Her dresses, for example; at one concert she wore a tent of red silk, and when she sat down at the end with her guitar, she was a Velasquez or a Murillo come to life. On Saturday, she was a vivid green bell, with two pink roses on her breast. As for her art, it is so various that in these brief notes I can recall only what impressed me most profoundly. The line of Schumann's *Nussbaum*, for example, drawn out like a thread of purest silk, the ravishing, melting tone of Respighi's *Stornellatrice*, the vigour and *brío* of her Spanish songs. Other singers can sing lieder or early French songs as well, no doubt, but in her Spanish songs she is unique. A fragrance has hung on the air while she has been with us. And how fortunate for Maurice Tili to be associated with such an artist! And how splendidly, in what fine taste, he accom-

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The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

THIS week we have heard two things: some inimitable singing and some illimitable music. The former was by Victoria de los Angeles (YC link), whose smooth tones of honey-coated velvet have spanned the gap from national folk song to the classics in a wonderful series of recitals. With the National Orchestra she sang the motet *Exultate Jubilate*, in an unusual way to us, who are used to the brittle tones of true coloraturas; this in its individual way was quite as good, with more mellow runs, more powerful attack and an approach to Mozart as sincere and graceful as the music itself. At the other stylistic extreme was Turina's *Canto a Sevilla*, breathing the air of Spain and its rhythms with a sunny confidence that would be disarming even without such a voice to introduce it. Between the two extremes lay the contents of the recitals—gorgeous Spanish songs filling one of them, and in another an array of song ranging from Monteverdi to German lied, with no sense of incongruity in juxtaposition, since they were blended by the unity of that lovely voice.

The other outstanding programme was the performance (YC link) of the St. Matthew Passion in its entirety by the

Phoenix Choir and National Orchestra, conducted by James Robertson in a brisk and businesslike way. The galaxy of soloists included the tenor William Herbert in probably his most arduous role as the Evangelist, when he showed himself at his greatest with a fine acute tone and an enviable clarity of diction; he conquered the myriad difficulties with no sign of strain, and retained a most impressive reserve for the climactic earthquake. Keith Falconer made a noble study of the part of Jesus, while Muriel Gale did her best with the contralto parts, despite occasional lack of unanimity with the accompaniment. The remarkable tone of the new harpsichord used as continuo was evident; at times it blended with the strings so as almost to disappear, at others it was piano-like and obviously among the soloists. The choir was very good, as is expected of them, though their words were often lost, either through speed or the sheer mass of sound. The tempo was rather rushed in places, more so in the chorales, but in general the work proceeded at a speaking pace and turned out to be a speaking likeness. I have a feeling that as far as baroque oratorio is concerned, we shall not be able to do better than this.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 19, 1956.