

in an accent not refined, but unidentifiable. Davina Whitehouse opted for stage Cockney char, and every time she opened her mouth, shot you from Marseilles to the Old Kent Road. The men were varying successful by roughening the edges of their normal speech. But how the ghost of that great French actor Raimu stalked this piece! I shall never forget his gruff charm and mountainous humanity. On the whole, *Marius* was very sensitively produced, if somewhat lengthy and diffuse towards the end. I hope Mr Austin will soon do for us *Fanny* and *César*. But when he produces *Fanny*, I should be obliged if he will standardise her name. I heard last week Farney, Fanny, Funny, Fannee, and plain Fanny. I prefer plain Fanny, myself. Just so long as it's consistent.

—B.E.G.M.

The Whole Facade

WHEN Auckland Proms audiences enthusiastically received Walton's *Facade* suite recently, their applause was surely for the perky, jazzy rhythms, rather than for the parody qualities which the years have somewhat dimmed. Yet, having once heard the recording of Edith Sitwell reading the verses above the music, I've always felt mildly dissatisfied to come across one without the other. So I found the NZBS production, with Keith Falkner as chanter, quite delightful. It must be fiendishly difficult to chime in Miss Sitwell's fascinatingly odd patterns of words with the music, but Mr. Falkner made it all sound as if he'd written the poems himself. I had expected both words and music to date more than somewhat, to smell rather obviously of the sophisticated twenties, of bright young talents cocking a snook at popular tastes now almost forgotten. But, although here and there, the period showed through, the work as a whole had a wit and freshness, a lively humour and cleverness

which have not dated at all. And, in some of the sections, there was a strange, haunting poetry of childhood imaginings and innocent nostalgia which made *Facade* something more than highbrow fun.

Enter Marius

I THOUGHT that it would be impossible to translate into English the Marseilles dialect which Marcel Pagnol put into the mouths of his characters in his famous trilogy, *Marius*, *César* and *Fanny*. But Barbara Bray, whose adaptation of *Marius* was broadcast last week, has, by using a form of Cockney, remarkably well captured the spirit of Pagnol's waterfront types. The rich humour and pathos of the picturesque characters came over vividly. Perhaps my memories of this trilogy gave a special glow to the NZBS *Marius*, but it seemed to me to be one of the best productions the studios have given us this year. It was pleasant to hear the comparatively unhackneyed voices of Alan Jarvis as Marius and of Dorothy Munro as Fanny. By the standard set by Raimu, whose *César* was his greatest role, Roy Leywood appeared a rather shrunken *César*, smaller, rather than larger, than life, but Michael Cotterill lent an appropriately acid touch to Panisse. I hope we may look forward to NZBS productions of *César* and *Fanny* in due course; I am even optimistic to trust that some day we may listen to the whole imperishable trilogy in successive weeks.

—J.C.R.

The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

IT was with a sense of foreboding rather than any joyful anticipation that I tuned in to hear the winning entries of the 1956 String Quartet Competition of Liège (YC links). As it turned out, many of my fears were groundless, mainly from the performance point of view: because the Liège Municipal Quartet had obviously studied the entries thoroughly, and their playing even of unpromising passages carried conviction. At times I had the feeling that this was a waste of good artistry: but then—thank goodness—I did not have to judge the entrants.

Those who did have to distinguish the merits of such utterly dissimilar pieces deserve our condolences. They were all for quartet—and there the resemblances end, though all exploited the resources of the medium in a determined manner. The winning work, a German one by Kelkel, divided its energies between busy bustling passages and long-drawn sweeps of what sounded like lamentation, with a comparatively human interlude for slow movement: and even the attraction of this may have been due as much to the ennobling effect of the strings as anything. Just as aggressively modernistic (I believe the word is "graunching") was the entry of France's Borsari, whose rather more sentient

movements were clothed in raiment of needless work, obscuring the outlines with much detail. Otherwise, I found this much more rewarding listening—on a basis of one hearing, that is. Unfortunately, I don't suppose we shall hear any of these quartets again, or not for a long time.

The most pleasing of these works (to me, that is) was an example of that bitter-sweet style in which the British modern deals so successfully, in this case one Wilfred Josephs. In fact, a good deal of it appealed even at first hearing, which is unusual for modern quartets. Possibly this was because I am more familiar with the idiom; but in addition, the composer used a lighter mood, sometimes almost jaunty. This made the plunge back into the Weltschmerz of a Dutch work even more depressing than it should have been.

This would be one of my main criticisms of these quartets: like so many modern pieces, they are so in earnest that they have no time for mirth; and very often, to be always earnest is to be painfully dull, so the composers are putting themselves at an initial disadvantage. Still, in this cosmopolitan group—and where are the national distinctions now?—there is much that is music: and for us, that will suffice.

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(Proposal to paint fire engines white instead of red.—News item.)

THOUGH you may be inclined to cheer
And say it is a good idea,
It really is, I am afraid,
A step that is most retrograde.
Bleaching is all right in its place,
But what will happen to the race
If every small boy's heart responds
By working up a taste for blondes?

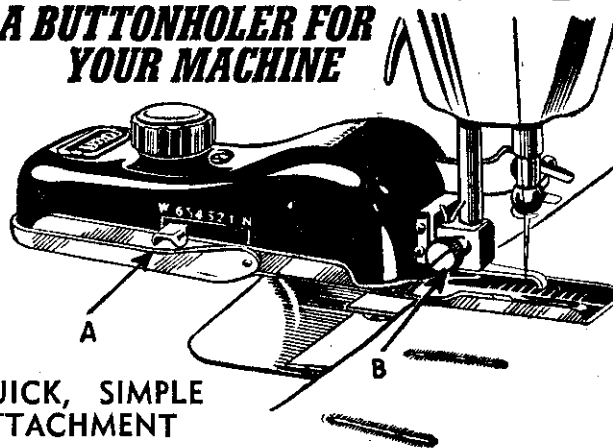
In fact, it has the makings of
A chance for Mr Shepilov
Still yet to earn his daily bread
Whitewashing everything that's red. —R.G.P.

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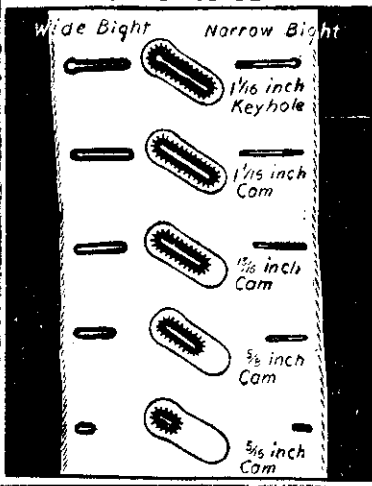
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