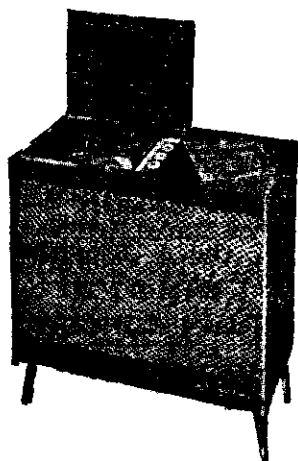


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Radio Review

CONSUMER RESEARCH

IT is years since I listened with half a mind to the ZB Request Session. It made a pleasant background to convivial gatherings; one could count on an agreeable atmosphere of light bal-ladry, John Charles Thomas and Paul Robeson singing their famous numbers, with sometimes Gracie Fields singing hers, "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Isle of Capri"; almost certainly, the Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings, and a Strauss Polka or Perpetuum Mobile, and The Inkspots and the Mills Brothers for those with lighter tastes. What would it be like now, in the post-atomic age? I thought of dazzling combos, Calypso and Rock 'n' Roll; eccentric popular idols like Elvis Presley giving their contorted works, and noisy hottings-up of famous orchestral pieces. After an hour of listening I decided that whatever else the atomic era may have changed, ZB requests remain unflawed by the years. John Charles Thomas and the Mills Brothers are still singing their old songs, Mario Lanza the "Drinking Song" from *The Student Prince*; even the Tchaikovsky Serenade is there, though Kathryn Grayson now sings it in a little coloratura pipe to words of marvellous banality; no combos, a couple of eccentrics, one of whom, Jones McGann, amused me vastly with a wedding ballad punctuated by bursts of maniacal laughter, and only one new idol, Tommy Sands, British, 19 years old, sounding exactly like Johnny Ray. I can only say, that from all unlikely quarters, the ZB Request Session gives a promise of wholesome stability in a tormented world.

Epilogue

I HAVE often wondered what it would be like to experience the programme with a gnomic title of *The Epilogue* (BBC), though usually at 20 minutes

before midnight, I am in no receptive mood. I tuned in last week. It was much as I had expected: soupy uplift, with an organ going flat out on the Vox Humana, followed by a short sermon on a given text. The speaker quoted from Saint Matthew, and unfortunately for him, a passage I happen to know particularly well. It was as if I were passing through a nightmare in which the whole corpus of English literature had been turned into Basic English. At the end of the passage I heard this: "Never worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will have worries of its own. The day's own trouble will be trouble enough for the day." I rushed to The Book, and found the passage. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." What dignity, what rotundity! And in the other, what flatness, what

The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

A COMPARATIVELY rare bird is the solo cellist. His plumage is not as gaudy, his mannerisms not as marketable as those of his light-fingered brethren of piano or violin; and so he is usually doomed to sing out his soul in the brown depths of the orchestral forest, only occasionally emerging into daylight. When he does, then there is a furor as though he were the first cuckoo.

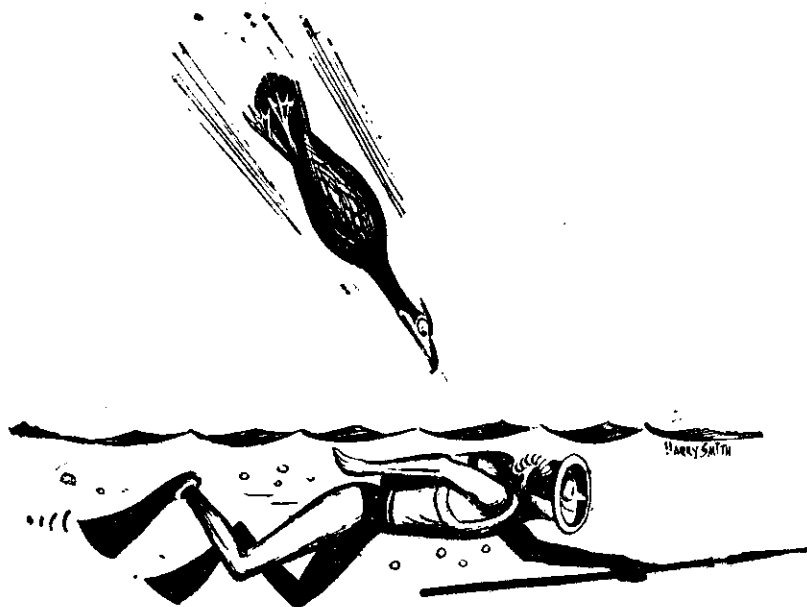
One of the difficulties that beset him is the attainment of a sufficient technique, because there is no other instrument that magnifies so blatantly small disturbances of intonation, or smaller harmonic squeaks. I often feel that Casals must coat his bow with emery rather than mere resin to produce his sure robust masculine tone.

One member of this uncommon species has taken flight here: he is Guy Fallot, who, with his pianist sister Monique, has been playing to us for the past week or so (YC link programmes). Fittingly enough, they began with a joint appearance with the National Orchestra, conducted on this occasion by Nicolai Malko, when he played a concerto of Haydn, and she one by Ravel. Each in its own way was revealing: that for cello in its lovely singing tones and formal discourse, and

that for piano in its shimmering and sparkling impressions, both the more pleasing in their support by an unusually sure-footed orchestra. The pair were shown effectively to be a partnership of equals, rather than virtuoso and accompanist.

Their recitals have hovered between the classic and the modern. A sonata of Loeillet displayed the cello's tone while remaining unremarkable musically; and I think that much the same comment can apply to the sonata by Fauré, because whatever understanding is given to the French nature of such pieces, and however much insight is put into their playing, no one can improve on a work which, though no doubt beautiful, remains doggedly undistinguished.

The Schumann Pieces in Popular Style were a rousing success, as usual, but some of the best work heard was modern. There was the A Minor Sonata of Hindemith, soggy at times, but quite severely classical in line, and abounding in contrapuntal features that emphasised the unity of the players as well as that of the piece. Honegger's D Minor Sonata was perhaps more brusque, but at the same time more unbuttoned, giving the performers' imaginations free rein. I'm pleased we are to hear more from this talented pair.



blankness! For the one has a majesty of utterance that is compelling, without in any way being obscure; the other is falsely "pi," gawky and misshapen. "If the salt have lost his savour, where-with shall it be salted?" If the above is a sample of a new translation, where-with indeed?

—B.E.G.M.

Back to Childhood (1)

PERHAPS one explanation for so much going back to childhood in literature these days is that in a chaotic world only childhood experience seems to have a simple, sharply-defined pattern. Wherever it is lived childhood is inevitably contained and circumscribed, and containment is what we are looking for. In a rootless community like ours the pattern found in childhood seldom has more than a personal meaning, but there are places where it can mirror a community as well, and one of these was revealed by W. R. Rodgers in his BBC reminiscence, *The Return Room*. Belfast would not seem a place to provoke a beautiful evocation, nor did it; but it provoked a rich one, a "criss-cross place" where green and orange were joined in holy deadlock and even children's skipping-rhymes had the flavour of religious controversy. The family's best friend was a philosophic undertaker; the father liked the texts which reminded him that flesh is as grass and flowers fade. But, Rodgers concluded, "I would give a roomful of small talk for the bitter tongue of them." This programme had a special meaning for me, for it showed me some of my ancestry; it also reminded me how much good stuff comes from the BBC regional studios. But I wondered how listeners with less practice than I got on with the accents.

Back to Childhood (2)

TERENCE RATTIGAN'S *The Final Test*, of which a BBC production appeared on the YA link, reminded me of stories I used to read long ago. The last man in, 20 runs to get, will Binks Major save the honour of the House? The details were more sophisticated but the emotion was the same. Sam Palmer, once the hero of English cricket, is playing his last test. His 17-year-old son who writes poetry has played hockey from the match because he has a chance to meet the famous post who is his hero. He finds the famous poet listening to the commentary to follow the