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Radio Review

SEE WHAT I MEAN?

SARAH CAMPION, in one of her *Admirable Criterion* talks, made an admirable distinction between private language truly incomprehensible to any but the writer and his cronies and language which is difficult but accessible with effort. Recognition of this distinction might save some of those who are baffled by the wholly unintelligible from being classed with those who make no effort to comprehend. I'm not as sure as Miss Campion seemed to be that a rule can be given which will decide to which category a particular work belongs. Some are clearly on one side of the line, some as clearly on the other, but every reader has his own threshold of comprehension (which may vary from time to time) beyond

which he just hasn't the equipment to penetrate. There's not much point in being indignant about writers beyond one's ken. They are fully entitled to write what no one will understand. They are not entitled to demand to be bought and read, and indignation is justified when a writer who has put himself out of reach of most readers ferociously accuses the same readers of moral delinquency if they avoid him. This is a form of blackmail which ought not to be tolerated.

Hark at Them

LOVERS of commercial copy will no doubt have noticed that advertisers are entering the general knowledge field. With seven quizzes on national link and ever more spectacular prizes there is an enhanced demand for facts. So one philanthropist tells us for free that a milestone of human progress was reached when slavery was abolished in 1800 and whatever (and another milestone when So-and-so started making ready-made suits), and a rival chimes in to inform us that a classic of the world of music is the secret varnish Stradivarius used on his violins (and the classic of the clothing world is Such-and-such). This is brilliant stuff, but admirers of the traditional style which actually tells something of the product will find new heights are reached in this field too. "Intimately yours... the dainty rotary-action hair-remover with the powder-puff touch." An electric shaver for women, in other words. But the mere words convey nothing of the artistry of the presentation. Lucky young man cast for such a role.

—R.D.McE.

Virtuous Sister

AFTER the solemnities of orthodox translations, the modern colloquial version of Sophocles' *Antigone* (BBC

Parking Metres

SMASH HIT

(ON yonder hill there stands a shrine
Which bears on its face the mournful sign—
"Here lie the remains of Augustus Toad,
Who didn't believe in the highway code.
His throttle was open wide
When he rounded a corner at seventy-nine
And said as he straddled the centre line,
'I won't be a chicken and cross the road.'
But still, as the next ten seconds showed,
He got to the Other Side." —R.G.P.

World Theatre, 1YC), by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, sounded at first almost too chatty. But as this fine production strode onwards, I found not only that I became attuned to an idiom capable of dignity, especially in the choruses, as well as of intimacy, but also that the play came across with new power. What a great drama it is, and how permanently true are the human values it enunciates! In mid-twentieth century, we can appreciate as fully as could the Greeks, the corruption of power and the inability of the tyrant to destroy the free spirit. It is no wonder that the classically-minded French adapted *Antigone* more than once to express the mood of the Occupation. I found the BBC performances thoroughly satisfying. Dorothy Gordon made a strong, believable *Antigone*, and that splendid old trouper, Leon Quartermaine, chilled the heart as *Teresias*. It was with particular pleasure and a little surprise that I learnt from the final announcement that Creon had been played by Michael Hordern, whose films had not prepared me for such a powerful performance. In such dramas, the BBC is incomparable.

Ropier, Not Bludgeon

ALTHOUGH *Britons on Broadway* (2B Sunday Showcase) didn't sound especially thrilling, I listened all the same. And it turned out to be the wittiest spot of the week. Stanley Holloway, Beatrice Lillie and Joyce Grenfell are old friends, although Bea

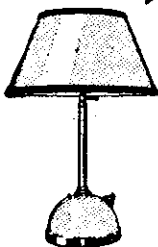


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The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN

THIS last week the National Orchestra has been giving its last Auckland concerts under James Robertson, for they will have a new conductor when next up north. Their programmes have been very varied, and I'm sure all tastes were catered for admirably, from the most serious to the frankly flippant. In the former category, the seventh symphony of Sibelius took pride of place, with its concentrated power of argument: here the composer truly composes, with his multiplicity of fragments making the jigsaw which, when complete, is also a picture. You can describe the picture if you like, though your descriptions are unlikely to tally with anyone else's, but I doubt whether anyone can adequately describe the music. One meets much the same difficulty and even the same general style in certain symphonic works of Vaughan Williams. The Orchestra themselves were a credit to the music here, and imparted an unexpected clarity to passages that often sound turbid; I think the virtue was the woodwinds, whose balance seemed more assured and defined than their usual compromises. Following this work came Debussy's *La Mer*, which has an almost oriental opulence, and in this performance succeeded well in all its diffuse splendour.

Another programme was a complete contrast: we heard Haydn's 99th Symphony, a sunny work of no great pretensions, of the type that the Orchestra does so charmingly. Certainly the delicate wind passages of the slow movement were a delight, and the heavy gaiety of the Minuet set off perfectly the lighter-texture movements: it was marred only by a little faulty string intonation. To maintain the classical atmosphere, Mozart's E Flat Concerto was played, with Janetta McStay and David Galbraith as its joint soloists: we have heard them in this work before, but the experience was worth repeating, if only for the bright tune that pervades the finale.

The other concert was devoted to lighter works: I missed some of the *Nutcracker Suite*, which didn't grieve me unduly; and then Gail Jensen was soloist in a movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, which she did with a pure limpid tone, and most expressively. The contrast was stunning as the next work opened with a clarinet's elderly wail; this was Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, with Oswald Cheesman as solo pianist, and this made a fitting close with all the gaiety of a revival meeting. Aucklanders must be well satisfied at the farewell Mr Robertson has given them.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 4, 1957.