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RADIO REVIEW

The Road Back

THE theme of the restless soldierturned-civilian, the man, who, having breathed exotic airs and tasted the Services' freedom-in-discipline, finds home and a routine job hollow, was as common in plays and novels just after World War II as the type himself was. But Willis Hall's play One Man Returns '(1YA), by making its hero a National Serviceman back from Malaya showed that the situation could still be a topical one. This was a simple-hearted play, and, in its way, a good one, a drama which interested me less because it had anything new to say (Johnny Johnson settles down eventually) than because the ordinary people who were its characters were accurately and compassionately observed. Perhaps the Lancashire dialect helped to give this sense of homely reality, but Mr Hall's use of the circling repetitions, the popular idioms, and the half-inarticulate sentences of Mancunian colloquial usage had more style than the language of the usual dialect play. Altogether an honest, satisfying job, skilfully produced, in which the NZBS cast gave a good account of themselves, most notably Patrick Smythe, whose Johnson was played with genuine understanding warmth.

For the Kiddies

AN experienced librarian once wrote. "those who cannot read a good book for children with something of a child's enjoyment should never criticise children's books." This came back to my mind while listening to a reviewer on Feminine Viewpoint disdainfully dismissing a reprint of a Mrs Molesworth classic which I, my own little girl and several of her friends have all delighted in. I felt that this particular critic had only that adult view of what a child-ren's book should be like, which Paul Haszard said is death to good children's reading. Things are rather different in the 1YA Children's Session. "Joan," who, until recently discussed books, was

not only deeply sensitive to the things that please youngsters, but was able unobtrusively to indicate the importance of standards in youthful reading. The same understanding of the tender mind is displayed by the admirable "Douglas" who comments weekly upon the verses aspiring poets send him. He is kindly, never devastating, yet he talks good sense about the rules and temper of poetry. And, above all, perhaps, he conveys a real enjoyment of those occasional pieces which exhibit the symptoms of poetry. And this sense of enjoyment, whether of Mrs Moles-worth or of children's verses, is something of which we could not have too much on the air. —J.C.R.

Varieties of Humour

THERE could surely be no more remarkable contrast in English humour than to hear on the same evening the two BBC programmes, Life With the Lyons and The Goon Show. The Lyons saga is made up of the old, well-tried ingredients of family farce. The jokes are often pure corn, though no more so than we are accustomed to in family circles, and they make their points because their base is traditional and archaic. Father is ageing and vain, at the mercy of his family and in particular of his wife, to whom he is transparent; Mother is also vain, but keeps beside her a steady sense of humour which pilots her through the most disastrous situations, and Junior Miss experiences the comic agonies of puppy love. A somewhat bizarre note is struck by this family being vintage American, somehow embedded in the heart of the English comic landscape, though that may be considered a sign of the times, and their humour is typical of the prosperous middle class in any Englishspeaking country. But The Goon Show is unique: wild, surrealist, virtuoso in its scripts, its fearsome range of sound, effects, and in the remarkable vocal dexterity of its performers. I have listened to several sessions in the present series, and am always entertained by its wit, its ferocious pace, and its zany, but oddly illuminating view of (continued on next page)

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The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

SIBELIUS has died at last, one of the longest-lived and best-loved of composers; few become national institutions in their lifetimes. His legacy to us contains no "last-period" works like Beethoven's, no youthfully-striving creations like Vaughan Williams; and his rumoured eighth symphony seems destined to remain a rumour. It is almost as though he said what he wanted to say, and then stopped, like a good orator eschewing vain repetition once his meaning was clear.

Very properly we were given a brief memorial programme (YC link) by the National Orchestra, in which they played some of his freshest, most appealing work—Findlandia, the Karelia Suite, and the storm from the "Tempest" music. Here he is not so much concerned with symphonic design as with pictorial and vital music, breathing of his north lands and thundering their solemnities. The Orchestra gave of their best in tone and vivid colour, with some fine brass playing in particular, and I feel Sibelius's intentions were served well. Certainly he will be remembered for such shorter pieces as he is for his full symphonic canvases.

Again this year we have been well erved by the BBC in respect of the Edinburgh Festival, and have visited many of its concerts by proxy. The standard as usual was high, in recording as well as in performance, and we had plenty of variety. I felt the show was stolen by the recital of Victoria de los Angeles, whose indescribable voice demends eulogies which can never do it justice. But there were other good things, among them Hindemith's things, among them Hindemith's Symphonic Dances, partaking more of the concert than the dance in feeling, but in a very Teutonic good humour, from the Bavarian Radio Orchestra; and an amusing concertante by Kox for brass solo instruments, from the Concertgebouw Orchestra. The whole series was wonderful, as one would expect of the world's great artists.

In contradistinction to the somewhat messy programmes of last year, the present series of the New Zealand Music Society in London (BBC) are nicely contrasted and presented, with a wide range of styles and even the odd New Zealand composer. I've enjoyed most of what I heard, and it would be idle to go into much detail; but the songs by Finzi and Oldham from John and Sue Thompson I found especially appealing. These programmes go a long way towards showing what our young rausicians are doing; and from what we can hear, they are doing well,

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 25, 1957.