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Radio Review

NOT SO DEAD

IF you saw a programme labelled "Voices From the Past: The Voices of Poets and Writers of the Past 60 Years," wouldn't you expect echoes from the grave, the nostalgic tones of people who had passed on, as they say? I certainly did when I turned to 1YC to catch this BBC feature. But the voices proved to be, not Rupert Brooke, Galsworthy, Chesterton, de la Mare and the like, but four familiar ones, three still very much with us—T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Osbert Sitwell and Dylan Thomas. After the initial disappointment, I found the programme interesting enough, well-worn though the poems read were. For the four readers varied so widely—the dry, austere delivery of Eliot, the sibylline chant of Dame Edith, the matter-of-factness of Sir Osbert, the plangent, bardic luxuriance of Thomas. Eliot's reading I stubbornly like, and Edith Sitwell and Dylan Thomas, in their different ways, do genuinely "interpret" their verses, but Sir Osbert, who writes so wittily and well, is the worst reader possible, rattling on with an aristocratic disdain of such tricks as emphasis and pause. He is a good argument against always expecting poets to do justice to their own inner ear. But, of course, 60 years from now, it might be interesting to hear his voice!

Bevin As He Was

HOW very vividly the actual voices of the dead can bring them before us again may be illustrated by the BBC portrait of Ernest Bevin (1YC). Done with all the BBC flair for documentaries, this impression of the personality of Britain's war-time Foreign Secretary had a real tang—partly because of the snatches from Bevin's own robust speeches and partly because of the frankness with which the man's faults as well as his virtues were set out.

Communists, Tories, Labour M.P.'s, Mrs Bevin, Clem Attlee and other colleagues, intimates and adversaries, by their recollections, built up the portrait of a quite formidable personality, a self-made man of immense courage, energy and rough common-sense, which was much more telling than masses of cold print could be. Christopher Mayhew, who had worked under Bevin, was a sympathetic commentator, not blind to Bevin's limitations, but clearly devoted to him and understandably respecting the doggedness of the Labour leader, especially in his last days of illness. To my mind, the most sympathy for Bevin was created, unconsciously, by the mincing, prissy voice of his former male secretary, petulantly complaining of the man's sensitiveness and suspiciousness. "One of the bravest and warmest-hearted Foreign Secretaries Britain has ever had," was Mayhew's fitting epitaph, for his programme had convinced us fully of at least that.

—J.C.R.

Gravity and Outer Space

LYDIA RAGOSIN'S play *Beyond*, which the NZBS, in Earle Rowell's production, presented recently in Sunday Showcase, had an excellent idea, and she was well served by producer and cast. Four men are on their way to the moon: how did they get there? Not physically, understand; what psychological motivation persuades a man to forsake the pull of gravity for other, more persuasive attachments? The opening scenes, where we experience the excitement of the expedition being prepared, had a fine authenticity and a range of virtuoso sound effects which must have exercised the ingenuity of the Auckland studios; then we are aloft, and the play loses impetus as the spaceship gains it. We are taken deep into the lives of two of the travellers; we learn that one of them has never found the "gravitational pull of human attachments" sufficiently strong. He feels that his emotional life is a mess; hence he needs

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The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

THE last of the strolling violinists has left for the time being, this last being Maurice Wilk, leader of the Alma Trio, who has been giving solo recitals as well (NZBS) accompanied by Doris Sheppard. Like other recent visitors he has a good technique and wide tonal range, and to these merits added an interesting programme selection. The Sonata by Walter Piston cast a pleasant melodic sidelight on contemporary American thought, without the sprawling unnecessary dissonance that makes or mars so much string music from the U.S.A. A Sonata by Gail Kubik I thought was quite fun, and did not pretend to be an epic, which was all to the good; and the playing in both of these had a smooth perfectly modern efficiency, suited to their style. In the more ancient and serious field there was a solo Sonata of Geminiani which was rather heavy going though tuneful. The Bach solo Partita in D minor was fine until the culminating Chaconne (which we seem to have heard a number of times lately); here technical considerations appeared to preoccupy the player, leaving not enough room for planned working out and climactic treatment, though the final section was suitably fiery. All the same, I still prefer Mr Wilk

in his role as an important factor in the Alma Trio's success: I have followed the Trio's broadcasts, and appreciated them the more for their delayed recordings, especially as there has been such a large amount of touring music recently.

One concert from the National Orchestra was heard and enjoyed (YC link) in which Mr Hopkins struck out on new paths—of repertoire, that is, for the music is not new. Berlioz's overture "Beatrice and Benedict" is one of those colourful pieces of orchestral writing that support themselves on the grounds of imagination alone; its form is a little diffuse to follow easily, but it is never unpleasant and the continual reinforcement of freshness prevents tedium. So did the performance, which brought out every turn of rhythm and colour to the best effect. Then we had Mahler's heavy-footed joy in his fourth Symphony, with Marie Robinson as soprano soloist, and a delightfully liquid tone it was, intensifying the emotion and binding the music together. The Orchestra sounded as though it were enjoying itself, and the whole performance seemed more coherent than the version heard two night previously in a studio concert; evidently a case of dress rehearsal to some advantage.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 1, 1958.