

of Gladys Young as Amy gave the production a finish and authority unique in my experience of radio plays.

One achievement of Eliot in *The Family Reunion* is his successful setting of a theological drama in the most improbable of places—an English country house, and the plausible working-out through the guilt-ridden Harry of the theme of the expurgation of sin and the coming of the knowledge that good and evil are real words, not existing in "that awful privacy of the insane mind." Another is that he transmutes the stock phrases and occasions of a family gathering into the language and matter of superb poetry. I know of no other modern play in which poetry has been so infused into such a prosy existence, or in which, without a technical vocabulary, religious thought operates in the region deeper than conscience. Nor do either force their parts. Eliot's beautiful, precise language sounded inevitable in the mouths of the players.

How admirably radio suits this play! The mind, undistracted by scenes and costumes, unembarrassed by the lack of action, can follow nearly every detail of the symbolism and of Harry's spiritual growth, and relish fully the great scene between Amy and Agata. The Eumenides provide another reason for the satisfying nature of the radio version. We are normally forced to take them on a larger faith than anything in the play implies. We do not question the reality of Harry's state of mind, but we feel unreality in the specific symbol of his guilt. On the radio, where we do not see them, we accept them, despite the curious sound, like the creaking of a roller-blind, which heralds their coming. They become a natural part of a play which sums up and illuminates the neuroses of an age that is at once comfortable and precarious, "withered and young."

—J.C.R.

She Stoops to Conquer

SOME critics have been tempted to ascribe the long-continued success of *She Stoops to Conquer* to its inoffensiveness, to the fact that Victorian audiences could take it without a blush; so that while Restoration Comedy was "resting" and even Sheridan was looked at askance, *She Stoops to Conquer* was continuing to win friends and influence people. And now it has received the accolade of inclusion in the BBC *World Theatre* series, undoubted proof that the piece has the more positive comic virtues as well. To be frank, I have seldom enjoyed a radio presentation more. It's uproariously funny. Mostly it's the humour of implication and extrication, with the angles of the complications somewhat blunted for us by subsequent imitations, but still good for an appreciative chuckle. Then the dialogue, though not as incisive as Sheridan's, is none the less pointed, and its shapeliness and rhythm are sharply silhouetted by the restricted radio medium. Gusto was the keynote of the whole production. The pace was good, a brisk trot, and pauses in the action were pleasantly bridged by a few bars of music suggestive of mob-caps and warming pans (though passengers may protest at the fact that Goldsmith's vehicle, like all others doing the *World Theatre* run, was

held up for 36 minutes in mid-course to allow for the slow but necessary passage of news and station notices).

Yes, time and the BBC have been kind to Goldsmith, have, in fact, added instead of taken away. It is impossible for the listener to hear even a simple aside such as Kate's "Generous man, I now begin to admire him," without telegraphic overtones of everything from Old Time Theatre to Gilbertian farce. And in the case of Tony Lumpkin time and the BBC have surpassed themselves, for what is that loud-voiced wag but an 18th Century Wilfred Pickles, acting



the compère for all he's worth? Up till now I have been deceived by the fetch- ingness of Kate's farthingale into thinking it was round her that the plot revolves—I now realise that Goldsmith would never have given Tony so many of the play's best lines ("loud as a hog in a gate," "buzzing round like a catherine wheel"), if he had not intended us to Love That Man.

—M.B.

Antony and Cleopatra

TO go to the theatre in your own drawing room, kitchen, or study, this is what the BBC *World Theatre* enables you to do. This is very different from going to the theatre in the usual manner. No evening clothes, no taxi, no crowds in the vestibule, no craning of necks to see Who is There. You only have to stop your telephone bell with a handkerchief, settle down comfortably, and wait with your Shakespeare before you—or without it. This is a debatable point.

I had my fears and my expectations as I always have, when I go to the theatre. Only this time they were directed to different objects. I personally favour with Sir Lewis Casson "the illusion of real happenings." Would the sole medium of the voice be sufficient to create this illusion? Another object of my anticipations was the greater intimacy that I expected from the radio. One of the conventions of the theatre one has to put up with is the volume of the voice which is frequently quite out of proportion to the actual situation.

What came of my expectations? I have nothing but praise for the producer of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Val Gielgud. The use he made of the narrator was of real help and in no way obtrusive. The play was slightly abridged and the order of scenes changed to good effect. But what about the matter of intimacy and of illusion of reality? Here frankly I was terribly disappointed. There was far too much shouting. Clifford Evans, as Antony, did not take advantage of the new medium of the microphone. He was in fact on the stage, and there he reached moments of real greatness as

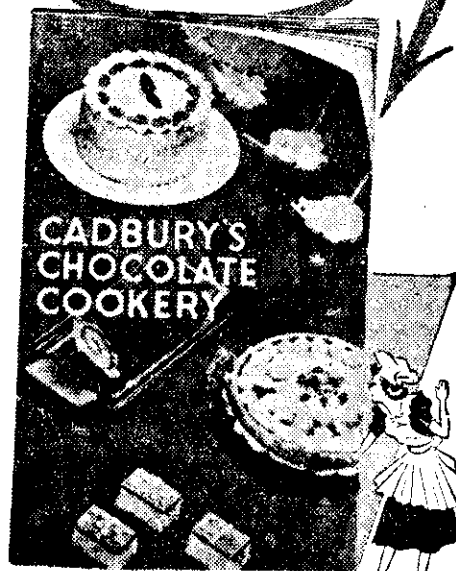
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