

GIFT FROM ISRAEL

WHEN he composed his *Sacred Service* in 1933, the Swiss-born Jewish composer Ernest Bloch was haunted by the fear that he was about to die.

"Though intensely Jewish in roots," he said of this outstanding choral and orchestral work (which was designed for use in the Jewish Synagogue), "the message seems to me above all a gift of Israel to the whole of mankind. It symbolises for me far more than a Jewish service, but, in its great simplicity and variety, it embodies a philosophy acceptable to all men." Within the next few months *Sacred Service* will have two

playings from all YC stations. It will be heard first from 1YC at 8.32 p.m. on Tuesday, December 18. In these recordings Marko Rothmuller (bass-baritone) is heard with the London Philharmonic Choir—F. Jackson as chorus-master—and the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the composer. The English text is by David Stevens.

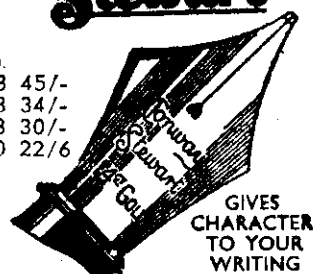


The American critic David Ewen describes *Sacred Service* as "a work compounded of tenderness and passion, power and humility."

Ewen says that Bloch had been ill for more than a year when he wrote the work, and he was strongly convinced that it was to be his last. "That Bloch should be obsessed with thoughts of death at the time he was constructing a monumental religious work was an enormously significant fact. There are certain artists who suddenly acquire a new vision, a new insight often profound and other-worldly, as though they had caught a glimpse of the eternal, when they believe themselves to be at the threshold of death. Beethoven composed his last quartets under such stress; Mozart his *Requiem*; Wagner, *Parsifal*; Bloch, too, was similarly affected. There are pages in the *Sacred Service* which seem to peer into another world and to catch glimpses of the infinite." While the work has its defects, Ewen adds, it remains one of outstanding importance.

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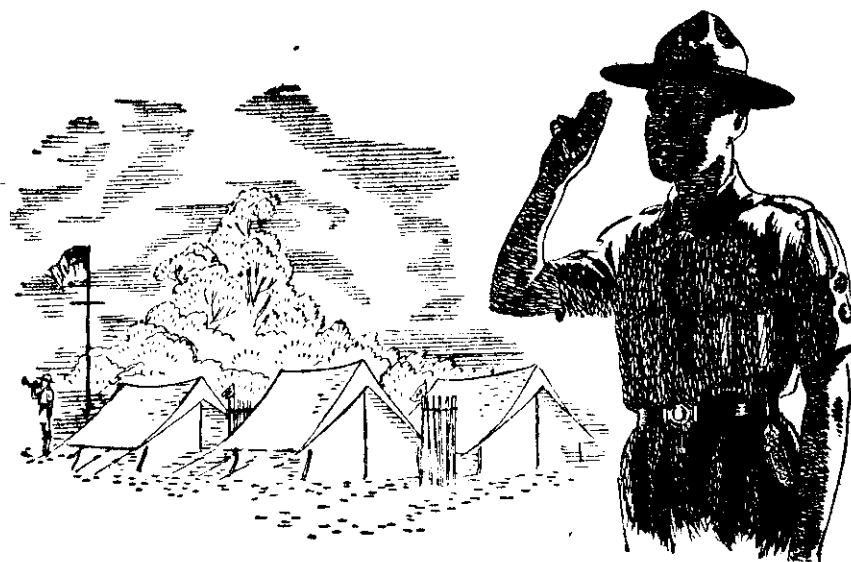
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