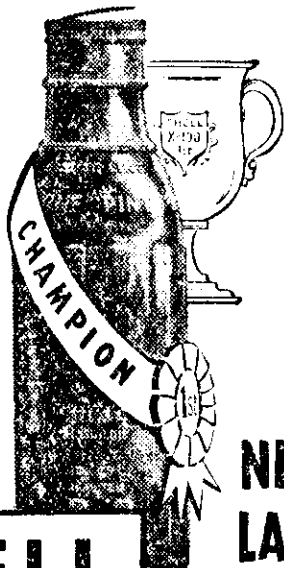


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Radio Review

MUSIC AT EASTER

AS music for Easter Week,
Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*
is both inevitable and right.
It was heard from 1YC on the
Wednesday, and in view of the
distance of time, it was to be
hoped that we might have had the BBC
recording of the *St. John Passion* later
in the week. (But, on referring to *The
Listener*, I see that 2YC had the good
fortune to programme this for Good
Friday.) Also predictable, and less
essential, was the Good Friday music
from *Parsifal*—twice. The Friday even-
ing brought Stainer's *Crucifixion* (from
1YC), which, for all its evident sincer-
ity, is monumentally dull music. How
evident this was in contrast with
Haydn's *Seven Last Words from the
Cross*, which (in the admirable Griller
recording) immediately followed! This
sumptuous and sombre music is of the
very essence of Holy Week, an echo
from the great, darkened, baroque
cathedral of Cadiz, for which it was
originally designed. On the Saturday, as
a kind of tailpiece, BBC Newsreel
brought us the Benedictines chanting
Tenebrae in Rome, the great bell of
Cologne booming through a fog of dis-
tance, and a reminder of the Easter
Fair in Paris.

Figures Near the Cross

PROFESSOR T. W. MANSON'S talks,
Steadfastly Towards Jerusalem
(from 1YC), which began on the Mon-
day and ended on the Friday of Holy
Week, were well-timed and well-pre-
sented. Dealing in turn with the various
groups, both Jewish and Roman, who
were concerned in the Crucifixion, they
recreated the historical picture with
clarity and feeling. An interesting con-
trast was the play *Caesar's Friend* (from
1YC) on the Saturday. Centred on
Pilate during the vital 24 hours, it was
convincing only up to a point. The plot-
ting Caiaphas was a figure of melo-
drama, partly carried off by the vigorous
reading of Ralph Truman; and Mary
Magdalen was little more than a con-
ventional figure. The real difficulty

however, lay with Pilate himself. Ob-
viously much can be done by modernis-
ing him into a decent, worried official
who bungles a difficult colonial crisis,
and has the misfortune to be remem-
bered by history. But at the end of the
play, he remained an enigma. Dorothy
Sayers went a good deal further with
the Pilate of *The Man Born To Be a
King*—harsh, overbearing, obstinate,
decent in a way, but not big enough
to smash his way out of a compromising
situation."

—M.K.J.

Aids to Reading

IF we think we are too busy to read
many of the great or famous English
books, radio versions do much to over-
come our inertia. These BBC features are
very well done down to the last detail.
Take, for example, the slow dignified
tones of the organ which over the past
few weeks have ushered in that diffi-
cult man Mr. Crawley in 3YC's pre-
sentation of *The Last Chronicle of
Barset*. It was impossible, though, not
to wonder how a modern book with a
similar theme would be received in our
own country, remembering the Bishop,
the Archdeacon and Mr. Thumbie. It is
also obvious that in being critical of
the assumptions of any group in the
community the novel written for a large
population is more easily accepted be-
cause each person sees everyone but
himself in the novel, whereas in the
small country each person is forced to
the conclusion that either he himself,
or someone very like him, is being held
up for examination.

Bach's Message

THE title "Passiontide Chorales of J.
S. Bach" does not in itself represent
for me a half-hour of unalloyed pleasure.
A great deal depends upon the way the
work of J. S. Bach is presented, and in
this connection the Good Friday feature
given by Clarence B. Hall and the Avon
Singers over 3YA spoke directly to me:
The narrator (C. W. Cobby, if I am
not mistaken, though his name was not
given), with his strong, pleasantly modu-
lated voice, gave these melodies their
15th Century reformation setting, and
repeated their words. The peculiar per-
sonal intimacy with Christ characteristic
of these very words set the same mood
of tender passion as the music itself
better than any formal analyses could
have done. In saying this I am not

"I KNOW WHAT I THINK..."

MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

THE classical hour is well placed, at least for housewives: it comes at an
hour when the more sordid domestic claims are satisfied and it is possible
to feel temporarily neat and peaceful. This was just the mood for hearing
selections from Scandinavian composers, played on a recent Tuesday afternoon
from 2YA. The hour began with a Little Overture for Strings, by the Danish
composer Reger, an intricate and pleasant pattern of sounds, using recurring
themes of considerable grace and sweetness. Also Reger's was the Concertino
for Trumpet and Strings, a merry thing beginning with echo effects and using
for its climax the subtle dominance of trumpet over strings. The composer
Nielsen introduced a melancholy note in Clarinet Concerto, felt, too, in his
Carnival in Paris, despite its superficial gaiety. But the Romance for Violin and
Orchestra, by Svendsen, another Dane, was the most satisfying of all this
tempting array of good things. Its underlying rhythm formed a well-knit texture
against which the solo (by Carlo Anderson) rose and fell in poignant beauty.
This programme was good for the soul; caused all its sweetest juices to flow;
and made one reflect just what pleasant people the Scandinavians must be.

—L.E.

(Readers are invited to submit comments, not more than 200 words in length,
on radio programmes. A fee of one guinea will be paid after publication. Contributions
should be headed "Radio Review." Unsuccessful entries cannot be returned.)