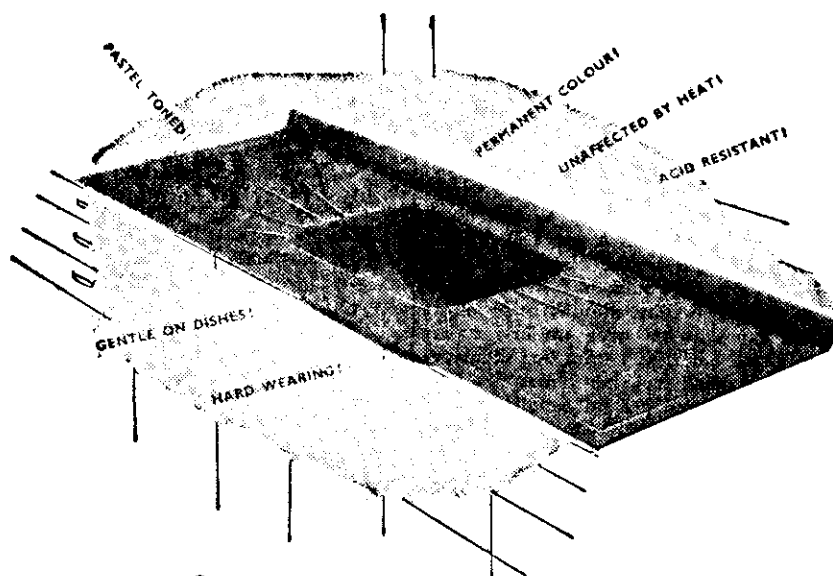




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RADIO REVIEW

Chaplin Self-Portrait

FORTY YEARS IN FILMS (1YA and 1YC) was a dull title for the BBC's interview with Charlie Chaplin. For this, as Chaplin himself remarked of *Lime-light*, was not an autobiography but a self-portrait. Instead of memories of early days, we had a Cockney's nostalgia for London, and a great comedian talking informally about his art. There was the well-known voice, the voice of Verdoux and Calvero, quizzical, urbane, egocentric. As it talked, one could sense behind it a combination of man-in-the-street moralist and poet which is very much Chaplin and, perhaps, very much Cockney, too. It was the shrewd and humane Chaplin who said, "I have never talked down to the public," and who argued that the story was no more than a "framework" for the display of human personality. It was the clown and dreamer, bred in the tradition of music-hall, who protested that sound had destroyed the poetry of the film, and that "an art form is great in virtue of its limitations." Although he qualified this by admitting technical progress, older filmgoers might agree that the film has yet to capture a certain imaginative freedom, which it possessed before 1928.

Voice of the Dummy

MANY of us have, in youth, fallen for those little advertisements in the boys' magazines, which offered to initiate us into the secret of ventriloquism. The secret never quite worked, and a sizeable part of the male population must consist of frustrated ventriloquists. Perhaps that accounts for the continued popularity of the art. But it's surely essential that the voice should appear to come from the dummy, and it seems odd that even a very good ventriloquist like Peter Brough should be a radio star. It's true that he has a fair script, and his Archie Andrews has a distinctive style modelled partly on the late Charlie McCarthy. All the same, the effect is—to make an obvious point—wooden. I can't help thinking that Max Bygraves is the real hero of the programme. His "Cowpuncher's Cantata" is a comprehensive piece of dead-pan parody which disposes of half a dozen ex-song hits at one shot. He has an unabashed, resourceful personality, and has in recent weeks figured with equal aplomb as a spook sent to scare an unscarable miser, and a magician who accidentally finds himself in the place people get to when they do the Indian Rope Trick.

—M.K.J.

Nothing Personal

ARE you a psychopathic personality? I'm sure Nesta Pain didn't mean us to take it personally when she compiled her programme *The Misfit*, but after hearing it I couldn't help feeling that I had something in common with Lorna, the chronic self-deceiver, and with Martin, the spineless drifter, and there seemed little consolation in the pronouncement later on that geniuses

(Van Gogh, De Quincey) are often psychopaths. But apart from this I found the programme surprisingly gay—social science without tears. You couldn't help liking Valentine, who refused to give up drinking because he enjoyed it and who, ringing his doctor from a suitably inaccessible pub, announced himself as an alcoholic who preferred to remain anonymous. And then Lorna, so undaunted by experience—it was being so irresponsible kept her going. Refreshingly the programme made no attempt to proffer a solution to the problem of the misfit—didn't even suggest that there's something wrong with the social set-up that the misfit doesn't fit into.

Lost Enchantment

THE cast of the NZBS production of *The Enchanted Cottage* put up a gallant 80-minute fight and finally went down with colours flying. The fault was mostly Pinero's. The playwright has failed to achieve any reconciliation between farce and sentiment, which tend to exist side by side, resenting one another. In this case the situation was further confused by the heavy hand of the adapter, who decided rather arbitrarily to bring the whole thing up to date by having one hero crippled at Tobruk, and the other blinded at Dunkirk, in blithe disregard of the fact that such farcical characters as the Vicar and his wife, with their seven children and an eighth "hovering between earth and heaven," and the autocratic Mama with her epigrammatical turns are impeccably 19th Century. It says a great deal for the playing of William Austin and Olive Lucius as the two lovers that at the end of the play they managed to salvage some genuine sentiment from the foundering vessel.

—M.B.

The Debate Continues

"EQUAL Pay for Women and Men" naturally put 3YA's "Well-Informed Circle" on its metal. Fortunately for the debate there was one dissentient in the person of Alan Danks, who obligingly and without flinching provided a core for the vortex of the storm. Jean McGregor was in danger of making the typical democratic mistake that because the majority may favour a certain proposal it is necessarily the right one. I myself belong to the minority who quite dispassionately wonder about (1) the relative importance of the ethical point involved, (2) the practicability of an alteration which would have a lot of obvious repercussions on our society and a lot of unseen ones that could be even more harmful to the life of the nation as a whole. In fact, when America was cited as the place where equal pay was given, I could not help remembering Mr. A. R. D. Fairburn's "Utopia," in which the cause of women had got so far under way that while animals had the vote men had been deprived of it. At any rate, it's a good discussion when the points raised by the panel stimulate the thought of the listener.

Concert Networks

WITH almost religious zeal I have followed the 3YC relays of the Griller String Quartet and the National Orchestra. I own that the reception is good, but dare I offer any objections? The broadcasting of any celebrated concert party from one's own town hall has a claim on sentiment that can hardly be overlooked, but it is sentiment because

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 28, 1953.