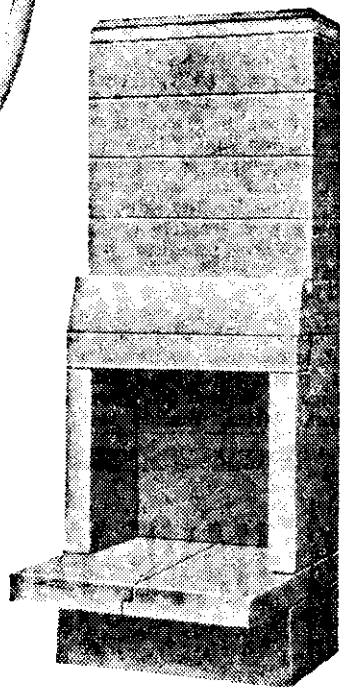
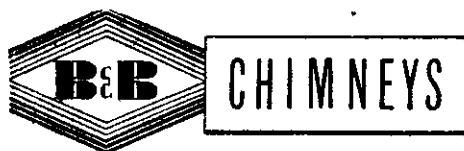




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Radio Review

RELIANCE ON FACT

NORMALLY I have little admiration for the New Zealand documentary programme, having listened to too many in the past which have been produced by hesitant speakers without scripts, or, if more carefully prepared and edited, have been punctuated by loud bursts of music and strange "noises off" in an attempt to manufacture local colour. Even so, as I listened to the BBC feature *The Palace of Westminster*, it seemed that I had already heard many times the information contained in it, and that I should have welcomed more warmly a feature on the New Zealand Parliament Buildings, the history of which is probably much less familiar to many New Zealanders. Shortly afterwards, I heard a local documentary, *The Age of Flight*, an hour-long survey of aviation in New Zealand, which proved that someone here is capable of producing documentaries, a thing I had begun to hope when I heard the programme on Everest. Like the Everest programme, *The Age of Flight*, relied without pretentiousness on fact, and incorporated into its interesting historical treatment of its subject earlier recordings such as the voices of Kingsford-Smith and Sir Frank Whittle. No music was used, and very few sound effects, a promising sign of maturity.

The Inconvenient Truth

IT would be interesting if sometimes we could be told why some of the bad material used in our national programmes was ever accepted. *Strictly Personal*, for example, 4YA's new Friday night serial, is journalism of a very low order, badly written, sensational, and, I suspect, not even accurate. Take the episode dealing with "the strictly private life of John Wilkes Booth," the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. The play was badly constructed, episodic, and told us next to nothing of the character of Booth himself, except for the constantly reiterated statement that he was "the greatest actor of his time," a statement which I received with considerable doubt. Junius Brutus Booth, the father, had his measure of fame, but was it not Edwin Booth, John's brother, who gave up ranting for restraint and earned that title? The reason for this redirection of fame on the part of the script-writer was all too obvious; the inconvenient truth would have deprived him of his tear-jerking obligato—"This admired and famous man, etc. . . . come to this, etc. . . ." Juggling with facts is termed poetic licence, and it has an honourable ancestry; but I feel a certain amount of poetry is required to justify it, and a programme which has neither truth nor beauty has little to recommend it.

—Loquax

Aspects of Shakespeare

THE life of Shakespeare the man can be written on the back of a postcard; but looking at the serried ranks of Shakespeariana on the library shelves, one realises that the inexhaustible work of Shakespeare the poet is a very different matter.

At first sight it might seem foolhardy to attempt anything like a summation of it in a 35-minute radio feature; yet Maria Dronke's illustrated talk on Shakespeare (from 1YC) turned out to be just as informative as the two earlier programmes in the series *Aspects of Drama*. It touched on Shakespeare scholarship old and new, on characters and language, the structure of the "wooden O," the nature of the audience, and the development of the plays. It was something of an achievement to say so much that was relevant in so short a space, and still find time for substantial illustrations. These were judiciously chosen, and gave pride of place to *Antony and Cleopatra*—rightly, I think, for even if it is not the greatest of the plays (a title that can be endlessly disputed) it is certainly, in its autumnal glory, the most resplendent. By bringing together various aspects of *Cleopatra*, these extracts showed again Shakespeare's astonishing power of making his characters exactly true to what we expect of them.

Descriptive Music

LISTENING again to the William Primrose recording of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* (from 1YC), where the hero-violist discoursed so eloquently among the musical mountains and fiestas, one was left speculating once more upon the possibility of programme music. At present, of course, we're not supposed to approve: music should be "absolute," and the descriptive piece belongs in the limbo of "impure" art, along with every-picture-tells-a-story, the historical novel, and grand opera. Historically, there is solid reason for the purist attitude on the subject, if only as a means of clearing up the thorough confusion which arose in the 19th Century, when music and painting told stories, and poetry and prose (in retaliation) painted pictures. One of the basic principles of the arts in the 20th Century has been, on the contrary, that everyone should stick strictly to his own job—no literary pictures, no symphonies-with-a-story, no so-called "word pictures"; though there were always the notable exceptions—Richard Strauss, for example. By now we should have them all sorted out into their proper compartments: can't we perhaps allow ourselves once more to mix them a little?

—M.K.J.

Meeting the Other Half

RADIO DIGEST, on Sunday evenings, is a must for all those who like to know how the other half lives without, if possible, revealing to the other half how they do. Its interviews are much more intimate and revealing than anything you get in the newspapers. (To be sure, the interview with Mr. W. Burnside, casting director for the film *The Seekers*, was word for word what we got in the newspapers, but it seemed to make it more personal having his remarks about "glamour," "a young Dorothy Lamour," and all those requests for photographs directed so much more pointedly at us.) I like the way that versatile young man, the interviewer, adapts himself so perfectly to his audience, sounding Dunhillishly respectful when addressing a Third Sea Lord (a scoop here), bendingly avuncular when chatting backstage with small competitors in the Competitions. And I do admire his ability to impart the

the daily song of good health!

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