

Songs of ALL TIME

THAT the crack-brained idea of the existence of the philosopher's stone should still be in someone's calculations as late as the 18th century seems incredible to us to-day. Yet Michael Arne, composer of songs and operas, and son of the great Doctor Arne, of "Rule, Britannia" fame, had this bee in his bonnet.

Michael Arne (1741-86) made an early stage debut as a boy vocalist in Thomas Otway's tragedy, "The Orphan," and this connection with the theatre lasted the whole of his life. He was a composer of many songs and pieces for the harpsichord, on which instrument he played very well.

On one occasion Michael Arne went over to Dublin to produce Garrick's "Cymon" at the Crow Street Theatre, and fancying himself a great alchemist, actually took a house at Richmond, near Dublin. Within these walls, neglecting all his music pupils, he gave himself up to a scientific search for gold. The consequences were ruin and a "sponging house," or detention place for debt.

Arne was under a contract to supply an opera for Covent Garden. The father of Michael Kelly, the singer, knowing him, sent him a piano and supplied him with wine. While in "durance vile" Michael Arne composed some beautiful music. In return for the elder Kelly's kindness Arne gave Kelly junior a lesson every day, and, after his release, continued to be particularly attentive to him.

Not only in Dublin, but in London, in order to follow his quest, he built a large laboratory at Chelsea, where his expectations were not realised. He had the good sense to return to music, and he afterwards composed for Covent Garden, Vauxhall and Ranelagh.

Vicissitudes and hardships as well as successes were Arne's portion and he carried on his musical work abroad as well as in England. He had the distinction of conducting the first performance in Germany of Handel's "Messiah." That was in 1772. His chief work was a musical setting of "Tristram Shandy."

Always In Debt

The first Mrs. Arne supported her husband for years by singing at Vauxhall Gardens, and Dr. Burney says of him: "He was always in debt, and oft in prison; he sung his first wife to death, and starved the second, leaving her in absolute beggary."

While Michael Arne's music was not as complex as his father's, it did succeed in being pleasing. His song, "The Lass With the Delicate Air," so frequently wrongly credited to his father, Dr. Arne, proves his ability to compose a lasting gem of English song.

The words of the last verse of Arne's immortal song are:—

*A thousand times o'er I've repeated
my suit,
And still the tormentor affects to
be mute;
Then tell me, ye swains, who have
conquered the fair,
How to win the dear lass with the
delicate air.*

4YA listeners will hear a choral arrangement of Michael Arne's song, "The Lass With the Delicate Air," sung by the Dune-din Glee Singers, on Monday, February 13.

IN THE WAKE OF THE WEEK'S ...BROADCASTS...

FRANK WILLIS, well-known Christchurch architect, who had a great deal to do with the reconstruction of 3ZB, and the installation of many new features, took listeners on a highly interesting tour round the building the

BUILDING TOUR BY RADIO

other night. There was only one fault to find with this broadcast. The quarter of an hour allotted for the job was by no means adequate. While city people can make a personal inspection of the studios for themselves, there are thousands of country listeners who would welcome a fuller word picture by an expert. One might suggest that 3ZB present another session for country listeners, giving Mr. Willis, say, half an hour for the broadcast. It would be well worth while.

Brief, and, I thought, rather inadequate, reference to W. B. Yeats, the great Irish poet, was made by 2YA's "Coranto" in a "Ramble in the News" from that station last

PASSING OF W. B. YEATS

week. "Coranto's" remarks were distinctly dull, and might have been culled from any newspaper obituary. He mentioned that Yeats was known for his association with the famous Abbey Theatre as well as for poetry such as "Lake Isle of Innisfree," and "Silver Apples of the Moon" and then remarked that "by the way, to-day is 'Candlemas,'" proceeding to outline the associations of the festival of Candlemas much more interestingly than he treated Mr. Yeats. At the time of writing, I have heard of only one radio tribute to Yeats—from 2YA. It is a pity, because quite apart from his work for Irish literature in particular, much that Yeats wrote will pass—some of it has already passed—into the English language. The best of Yeats is to be found in his simple lyrics, which reveal a truly Celtic realisation of beauty, and of the "heartbreak in the heart of things." To anyone interested in glimpsing Yeats at his best I would suggest turning up, in any good modern anthology, three poems, "When You Are Old," "Dream of a Blessed Spirit," and, especially, "The Sorrow of Love."

Station 2ZB had an interesting personality before the microphone last week in the person of Mr. J. W. Collins, O.B.E., former New Zealand Trade Commissioner in Canada, who

MR. COLLINS WAS READING

was interviewed by 2ZB's Gladstone Hill. Mr. Hill conducted the interview well enough, edging in little observations about his own experiences in Canada at occasional intervals, but I am sorry to say that Mr. Collins was very obviously reading what he had to say. Maybe it is necessary for a person in Mr. Collins's position to prepare carefully what he is going to say over the air, but careful reading of an interview completely destroys any attractiveness it would otherwise have. I imagine the ideal method must be for interviewer and interviewee to prepare and rehearse the interview, and then for the interviewee to speak from notes. For a practised public speaker like Mr. Collins this would have been a simple matter.

I listened in recently to the ubiquitous Inspector Scott getting yet another man from 2YD—"Case of the Fordyce Vampire" it was. I hardly bothered following the intricacies of the plot, which was, I suppose, exciting enough in its way, as I was too amused

INSPECTOR SCOTT AGAIN

by what the French would call the "naivete" of the whole thing. Inspector Scott is no doubt a very efficient sleuth, but it must be a great help to have the co-operation of a murderer who, when accused, confesses amiably, "Yes, I did it, Inspector. But please understand my feelings got the better of me." Dashed nuisance, really, one's feelings getting the better of one like that, and making one do silly things like murders.

Curious how a stage comedian can put over a joke and set a house roaring while that very same joke would be entirely unacceptable in a drawing-room.

STAGE JOKES CAN MISFIRE

Curious, too, how stage humour does not always create the intended impression when put over the air. Sidelights from a visiting show, which presented a



NOEL NEWSON, young Christchurch pianist, who has been engaged by the NBS to tour with Maurice Clare, the noted English violinist.

benefit performance in aid of the funds of Christchurch health camps, had the folk in charge of the microphones "hopping about a bit" the other night, watching out for gags "not quite suitable." Several "cnts" were made, and rumour has it that more than one thin-skinned listener righteously rang the station with a complaint. Still, it takes all sorts to make a world.

I have never heard anything quite like the "Big Ben Looks Down" session put over 3ZB the other night by Les. Strachan, who was in the city for a short spell.

"COME FAR TOO SELDOM"

Aided by a painstaking selection of recordings, he traced events of musical and historical importance through the years, bringing the session right up to date with Chamberlain. While hot jazz, swing and even "scat" music can be very clever and very bright, in its right place—and the B station seems to be the place for it—sessions of the type presented by Les. Strachan could be expanded a little by way of frequency. In other words, they come far too seldom.

Very enjoyable has been 2ZB's series of programmes dealing with the immortal association of Gilbert and Sullivan. An episode I heard the other night dealt very entertainingly with the period following "The Gondoliers," and told the story

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

of "Utopia, Ltd." Gilbert and Sullivan, the commentator recalled, sank their differences while "Utopia, Ltd.," that very pungent satire of a good many things which Gilbert didn't like, was enjoying its long run; were once again rumoured to have quarrelled; appeared, indeed, before the curtain on the final night of "Utopia, Ltd." on opposite sides of the stage, ignoring each other; but, to the accompaniment of a very gratifying emotional demonstration from the audience, made up again and shook hands. One phrase the commentator used, about the "oil of Sullivan's music alleviating the asperity of Gilbert's vinegar," was most descriptive and apt. I am wondering if I haven't read it somewhere before. Lovers of Gilbert and Sullivan, by the way, will be interested to hear that recently, in Chicago I think it was, a Gilbert and Sullivan opera was "hotted up" and swung in best jitterbug tempo.

I have been remarkably impressed with one aspect of Professor Speedee's General Knowledge Tests, presented by 4ZB every Thursday night. On several occasions, students, teachers, and high school boys have played leading parts in answering

SOMETHING WRONG SOMEWHERE?

the questions, but in only rare instances have these people shaped more impressively than others whose general knowledge might reasonably be expected to be definitely less. In several cases teachers and students have fallen down on very elementary questions, and their replies must have come as a surprise to most listeners. I don't know whether some of the replies can be taken as a reflection upon our system of education or not, but I have heard that opinion advanced. There certainly does seem something wrong when a secondary school boy is unable to reply to "What is an equinox?" The one I heard didn't know, yet that is a thing supposed to be known by boys and girls in Standard III. I know it is one thing to assume a fireside profundity, and another to answer questions in a few seconds before a soulless microphone, but, even so, there are questions asked every night the answers to which should come automatically. And they don't.

The advent of "Sandy Buys a House" marks another episode in the gramophone record life of Sandy Powell. I shouldn't like to make a guess as to how many Sandy records there are now, but it doesn't seem to me that they improve greatly in quality.

NEW RECORD BY SANDY

Sandy's records are mainly indifferent; very few being good, and several being bad, but I suppose they serve their purpose as a light interlude on any programme. The trouble is, I think, that Sandy tries to overdo the humour, transporting it into the realms of the merely silly, and however well that sort of comedy may "go across" in a hall, over the air it misfires badly. Of all his records I think that "Sandy in Hospital," "The Window Cleaner," and "The Astrologer" are the pick, with a whole-hearted "Bronx cheer" for "Sandy's Own Broadcasting Station."

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