

Let Us Draw a Little Closer

A Xmas Programme from 2YA,
being a Recital of Folk Songs of
European Nations.

Presented by . . .

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CHRISTMAS is an apt time for a programme that directs our thoughts to other lands and other people. It is a

time when the spirit of friendship abounds; there is a bond seeming to unite us all. The British rejoice round the yule log as snow blankets the land and keeps them indoors, the Tyrolese on the sunny slopes of Mediterranean hills sings gaily round his wine. The Norwegian is more sombre, more stern, yet he lifts his voice in praise of his beautiful country. The French, the Greek, the Austrian, all sing, imbued as they are with the Christmas spirit. And it is this universal happiness that unites all nations at this time of the year. What time is more fitting, then, for the rendition of the songs of all nations than this.

The programme is representative of many nations, and the songs are those of the people—the ones they sing as they join in the Christmas festivities. To appreciate the songs fully, one must transplant oneself to their country and reconstruct the scenes that give the atmosphere. We sing the song of the Tyrolese—let us then in imagination transport ourselves to the land of the gaily dressed chasseur and rejoice with him as he sings of his beloved mountains. We join with the Cossack as he, preparing for the wars, takes a tender farewell of his lady love. We see him in his picturesque costume, beside his proud charger, without which no Cossack would be complete, and we think of the glory that was Russia's.

We are transported to France, and join with the French in singing that anthem that has aroused the spirit of nationalism for a century and a half—"la Marseillaise"—which, to be fully appreciated, must be sung in the native language. Translating it, though making the words intelligible, causes much, if not all, of the original sentiment to be lost. And in a song it is rarely the words that are important—it is the atmosphere created by the music that counts.

Of the beautiful cities of the world, Naples is outstanding. Is it any wonder, then, that the people sing of their surroundings and that the folk songs consist in the main of an admiration of their city? The song being broadcast, "Vesuvian Shore," tells of the blue Mediterranean which breaks upon the coast. This song and "Where Gentian Blows" (Tyrol) can be more fully appreciated by us than by those whose Christmas falls in the depth

of winter. Imagine a family group sitting round the blazing Christmas fire being able to join with the Italian who is rejoicing in his sunny climate.

The Tyrolese folk song has an added charm in its ending. After the verse, in English, the music changes entirely, and assumes almost the character of the flute that accompanies the singer. The head voice finishes the verse with Jo-di-di-di ho! repeated at intervals. This particular ending is typically Tyrolese.

The "Austrian Landler" conveys us to another, entirely different, scene—more sombre than the Tyrol and Naples certainly, but nevertheless typical of the country. Similarly, the folk song of the Pays-bas is a recital of the beauties of Holland and Belgium. It is expressive of a longing to return thither and once again see the stretching plains, the lazy windmills, and the colourful tulip fields.

"Funiculi Funicula" is well known. Made popular in this country by the Sistine Choir some years ago, the song is still a great favourite.

Perhaps the most interesting song of the evening comes from Greece, and will be sung in the original tongue. Written during the Great War, it portrays the scene at the death of a guerilla chief. For forty years he has led his little band and harassed the enemies of his country. And now he realises his end has come. The faithful band gather round with bowed heads, seeing fading before them a once virile life that no enemy could take. He charges them to carry on the work he has begun, and that by so doing they will render loyal service to their mother country.

His last charge concerns his rifle—his lifelong friend, which has never yet, and must never, fall into the hands of the enemy. It is to be buried with him, to repose for all time on his bosom.

The final number on the programme will be that beautiful song, "O Sole Mio." Although perhaps not strictly, within the category of folk songs, its rare beauty and topicality make it an admirable ending to this programme.

The concert, which will be presented from the studio on the evening of Sunday, December 27, will be given in the main by my company and myself, though we shall have the assistance of the Wellington Artillery Band, who will render appropriate numbers.

We hope that we shall at least succeed in directing thought to others, and, after all, that is the idea of Christmas.

