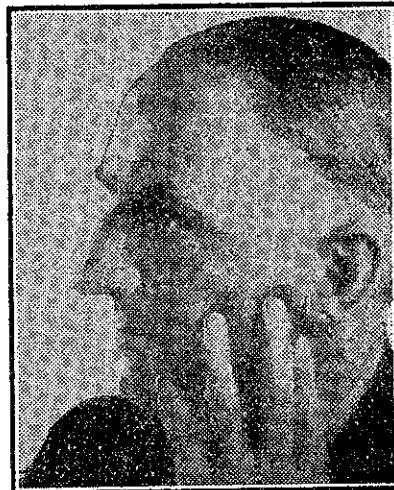


Even Variety in Broadcasting May be Boring SAYS DR. CYRIL JENKINS

Dr. Cyril Jenkins, the distinguished English composer, stole a few brief moments recently from his arduous work as one of the adjudicators in the Wellington Competitions Society's festival to discuss with a representative of the "Radio Record" at Wellington's Hotel St. George the modern trend, as he sees it, of popular taste in music—more particularly the modern broadcast programmes.



DR. JENKINS has had a remarkably successful musical career. While a student at Cardiff he carried off nearly all the awards for composition at the Welsh National Music Festivals of 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913. His compositions cover all classes of music—vocal and instrumental—and his work, notably the cantata "Freedom," has received generous praise from all parts of Europe. Dr. Jenkins was somewhat critical of modern programmes, though, as he pointed out, he has had no opportunity of hearing New Zealand's programmes as yet, but he admitted that radio has, within limitations, been very successful in giving the musical public what it desires. However, he had numerous criticisms to make.

"The other night," he said, "I heard an announcer remark that 'the chief virtue of this programme lies in its remarkable variety'—if this were true, it could not have been one of the station's own programmes, which are, I consider, usually of the opposite order. This so-called 'variety' in modern programmes can be as tedious to listeners as a 'unity' based on names, or on a definite period. Thus an extremely dull programme could be drawn up consisting of the works of Bach or Chopin merely because of the monotony of bad arrangement; and, at the same time, a concert programme which, on paper, appears diverse by reason of the variety of composers and titles, may also quickly exhaust attention."

In making a programme he suggested there is to be considered the relative familiarity of the items; this is often taken to be a question of old versus modern, but we can be equally bored by a mixture of old and new.

The question of what constitutes variety is a very delicate one: a glance at the B.B.C. programmes would suggest an excellent variety, yet the general impression over a year is one of monotony. The reason for this is, according to Dr. Jenkins, that the so-called "modern" composers run to type. "There is more variety in one Wagnerian opera," he said, "than in all the compositions of to-day put together. The idea of modern 'variety' is therefore merely self-deception." Actually, he considers modern tastes to be simple, tending to a limited and consistent unity. A symphony of daring contrasts and conflicting ideas will be voted dull and monotonous, with too much repetition. As musical taste grows it tends toward unity rather than diversity; but of elementary tastes this is not true—we begin with unity.

Then we have the extreme devotion to one style—the "classics." This narrow outlook will tend to atrophy the musical sense alto-

gether. These people demand more "classical" music—not because they desire to extend their knowledge and experience, but wishing merely a repetition of favourite airs. And those who dare to disagree, and express a liking for other music, they regard, at the very least, as depraved.

"Broadcasting," Dr. Jenkins said, "has not had time to create a widespread musical culture, but it has given a much greater satisfaction, musically, to the public along the lines which it already understands—to that extent, therefore, has broadcasting been successful. This has resulted in the musical societies showing a temporary decline, but this may easily become permanent. In conclusion, therefore," the musician said, "may I express the hope that the cultured musical public of New Zealand which still wants the best—new or old, native or foreign, familiar or unfamiliar—will patronise its local societies which are endeavouring to fill that want."

Dr. Jenkins has been amazed at the paucity of endeavour in musical composition in Australia and New Zealand, and while he was adjudicating at the Ballarat festival he put his point of view so forcibly that the recent contest fathered by the Australian Broadcast Commission resulted: some of the entries being reported as very fine indeed. It is suggested that the Broadcasting Board might attempt a contest on similar lines in this country. Dr. Jenkins considers that in a very few years there will, as a result of radio's tremendous consumption, be a greatly increased demand for new gramophone records, which will ultimately call for new composers.

Since his arrival in Australia for the Ballarat festival, Dr. Jenkins has adjudicated at Perth, Brisbane and in Tasmania, and is to act at Brisbane again after his New Zealand engagement. At the conclusion of the Wellington festival, Dr. Jenkins hopes to see something of the scenic glories of the country before his return to Australia. He is also giving a most interesting series of talks on music from 2YA.