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speech and drama

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Are you looking for interesting and unusual material for your next school production or for stimulating classroom reading? If so, you will be delighted to learn that Ginn is publishing a variety of plays of high literary merit and with some historical flavour for the enjoyment of 13-18-year-olds. Each play has a useful introduction which provides background information with suggestions on production, props and costumes. Every play has been newly edited; some have been newly translated. All are unique in their present form.

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by C. Goldoni,
translated by Frederick Davies

Three Cheers for Paris
by Eugène Labiche,
translated by John Yeoman

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collaboration with A. Delacour) translated by John Yeoman. As in *The Italian Straw Hat* the comic detail and the exchange of phrases takes us effortlessly into the limited world of the characters; despite their weaknesses, or perhaps because of them, they emerge as familiar human beings. The handling of the incidents displays a fine economy and reveals Labiche's ability to extract every ounce of humour from a situation.

These texts have excellent introductions on the authors, their writings and the background to the plays.

PEGGY BATCHELOR.

The Idiot

by SIMON GRAY adapted from the novel by FYODOR DOSTOIEVSKY. Methuen & Co. Ltd.: 70p paperback. (Available in hardback).

Simon Gray's dramatization of *The Idiot* was first presented by the National Theatre at the Old Vic in 1970. In creating a stage play based upon Dostoevsky's novel, the playwright has taken some of the most

vidid and contrasting episodes recounting the strange involvement between Prince Myshkin, the good natured 'Idiot', the beautiful Nastasya Filippovna and her desperate lover and husband, Rogozhin. The ambiguity of these episodes, hovering between sombre tragedy and grotesque farce, is heightened by the use of a strange, sinister commentator, Ferdyschenko. The result is a haunting piece of theatrical bravura, true to the spirit of the original book.

PEGGY BATCHELOR.

Hilda Tablet and Others — four pieces for radio

by HENRY REED. BBC: £2.10.

The Streets of Pompeii and other plays for Radio

by HENRY REED. BBC: £3.15.

All Third Programme listeners please note that the plays of Henry Reed you so

enjoyed between 1949 and 1958 are now in print—a permanent memorial of the radio drama which otherwise has no permanent life.

As Reed says in a most interesting foreword to *The Streets of Pompeii*, 'They were not for the most part written with any idea that they might appear in print. When it was suggested that they should, I was naturally delighted: it seemed to imply that they had not entirely gone in one ear and out of the other'.

I have just taken up knitting and when reading the pattern I have tried to visualise the finished article. Possibly knit two together through back loops creates a picture for the experienced knitter but even so it remains for most of us simply a code. In the same way the printed word is a poor substitute for radio drama. 'Cross-fade rapidly' needs a great deal of aural imagination.

Hilda Tablet and Others consists of four pieces from what many regard as the funniest and most sustained piece of social comedy written for radio. They are *A Very Great Man Indeed*, *The Private Life of Hilda Tablet*, *A Hedge, Backwards*, and *The Primal Scene, as it were*. The productions were all by Douglas Cleverdon, with music by Donald Swann and the casts include most of the great BBC repertory names: Hugh Burden, Carleton Hobbs, Gwen Cherrell, Mary O'Farrell, Marjorie Westbury . . . (dear Marjorie Westbury as Steve in Paul Temple — there's nostalgia for you) . . . the list is endless and very well-loved. The plays arise out of the research by Reed's alter-ego Reeve into the life of Richard Shewin, novelist.

The Streets of Pompeii on the other hand contains those plays which have Italian themes and settings. They are *Leopardi* in two parts: *The Unblest* and *The Monument*; *The Streets of Pompeii*, *Return to Naples*, *The Great Desire I Had*, and *Vincenzo*. Again the productions were by Douglas Cleverdon with a cast which sounds like *Who's Who in Radio*.

The BBC are of course quite right and to be commended for publishing Henry Reed's radio plays but now, before they disappear aurally altogether, may we have them recorded? After listening to the record of *Under Milk Wood* recorded by Argo with the cooperation of the BBC, I am convinced that there is a market for radio plays on record.

JANE GREGG.

Covenant with Death

by MARGARET WOOD. Evans Plays: 20p.

Margaret Wood can usually be relied upon to provide us with material which has originality and purpose. This play has an immediate appeal. Of the cast of eight women, six of them should be young. Youth drama groups should find it useful.

At the opening of the play an archeologist is giving a lecture. Soon the scene flashes back to an incident being referred to, which took place around 3500 B.C. The medium is verse, rather more free than blank, but it has a pleasing rhythm in its broadest sense and some effective climaxes.

A worthwhile play, challenging to dress, equally permissible to be played in a very simple or more elaborate setting, giving opportunities for imaginative lighting if facilities are available.

Just the Ticket

by JOHN WATERHOUSE. Evans Plays: 40p.

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