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TV and Radio

BLACK & WHITE OR IN THE RED ALL OVER

COLOR TV—like radio and the higher cost of living—is definitely here to stay. It will not be exorcised by Federal court orders. It will not be banished by voices crying in video's black-and-white wilderness: "Premature! Premature!"

Through a glass, but not too darkly, we can see the climacteric of the great struggle between the two titans of tinted television, RCA and CBS. Three calm, black-robed justices, in paneled chambers in Chicago, are pondering RCA's complaint that the Federal Communications Commission's choice of CBS's color system is "illegal, void, and beyond the power, authority, and jurisdiction of the Commission."

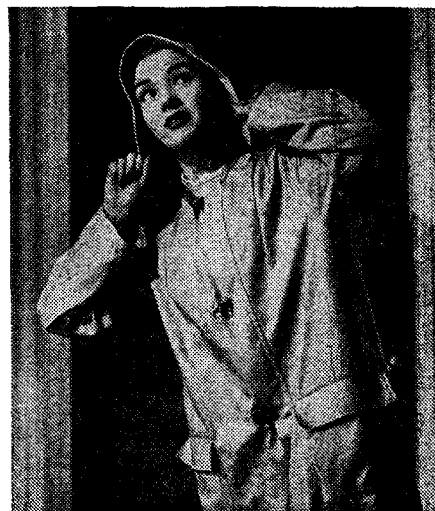
Their decision may eventually be reviewed by the United States Supreme Court. It may be six months, perhaps more, before a final ruling is handed down and the public learns which of the two rival color systems it will have to pay for in TV. The courts will rule solely on constitutional considerations.

The basic issues for the public seem to be "compatibility" and "convertibility." The words are shorthand for video's billion-dollar question: what happens to the ten million or so present owners of black-and-white sets who are holding TV's color bag?

If you have a TV set now, and the CBS system is ultimately adopted, and you wish, in the future, to receive CBS color programs in black and white, you will have to buy an "adapter." If you wish to receive the color programs in color, you will also have to buy a "converter." If the RCA system is adopted, you could receive RCA color programs in black and white without buying any gadget at all, because it is compatible, but if you wanted to receive them in color, your present set would either have to be "converted"—or you would have to go out and buy a new, all-color set. While RCA compatibility between color and black-and-white reception has been virtually perfected, the problem of converting a set from black-and-white reception to color has yet to be satisfactorily worked out.

All TV programs will ultimately be broadcast and received in color, under one system or another. And under the available RCA and CBS systems you will have to pay your way through the inevitable transition period, if you own a TV set today or buy one before the current deadlock is resolved.

The big questions for RCA and CBS,



"Miss Color Television"—"the glamour dolls will come busting out of the necklines in color."

for the set manufacturers, and for all broadcasters are: who will get first chance to pay off the huge investments made in pioneering and developing TV color; and who will win the lion's share of the great profits that lie ahead in patent rights—\$150,000,000 are at stake in royalties alone—in the production of sets, and in the sale of program time to sponsors. The individual consumer is merely a spectator. He can only hope that he will get the best system at the lowest cost. The FCC believes that CBS color is ready to go and that the change-over to color TV had better come now, while there are only ten million sets that will have to be modified, rather than wait until more millions of set owners face this costly problem.

You will not be disappointed in CBS's color if the courts uphold the FCC. The reports about its pleasing qualities are correct. CBS color is softer and generally truer than movie technicolor. The pastel shades, oddly, come through even more faithfully than the primary colors.

RCA has promised to unveil its latest achievements in color TV in Washington, D. C., on December 5. The RCA engineers can wipe out the present CBS lead and throw the race between the two systems wide open again, if they do two things: one—demonstrate that they have eliminated the "bugs" from their system, about which the FCC has complained; and, two—lick the problem of "convertibility" as they have overcome the challenge of "compatibility."

Color lifts the dead hand of flat

lighting from TV's black-and-white screens. The stage sets become bright, alive, and take on a certain degree of tension. This tension relaxes, tightens, and flows like music as the colors move and change into fresh patterns.

Color will have its biggest riot, production-wise, on the commercials. There is no limit to the big splash when the aim is all-out eye appeal. TV's palette will brighten up the variety shows, where scenery and costumes are important attractions in themselves. Color is a great plus in outdoor and indoor special events, and promoters of ball games, prize fights, and horse shows are bound to see more red in their gate receipts.

TV DRAMA will gain from the psychological impact of color, but here the spectrum will have to be used with restraint. It may be overdone until the producers have had their baptismal color baths and are once again content to tell a story first and paint pretty pictures second. We must all, I fear, steel ourselves to gallons of gore—bright red and dripping—in the murder and mayhem stanzas, night after sanguinary night. All the TV glamour dolls will come busting out of their necklines in color.

News shows pose the biggest problem. The color maps will help, but what about the newsreels? They may have to be shot in color film—an expensive process, or camera and screen will show us the studio sections of the news programs in color and the film portions in black and white—hardly a satisfactory, even if technically feasible, arrangement. Old technicolor movies will enjoy a new demand. It is to be hoped that color-film cost will not cut down the growing practice of filming television programs in part or whole, for this seems to be TV's major hope of breaking out of its space and set restrictions.

The transition from black and white to color will take time. The key is the sponsor. Until there are enough sets capable of receiving color broadcasts the sponsor will not transmit his programs in color. The networks will do all or most of the color broadcasting for a long while, and the programs on a sustaining basis will probably not equal the appeal of the high-priced, big-time, commercial black-and-white shows.

Yes—TV's great paint and varnish day will be wonderful, but color, of course, can never substitute for wit, imagination, and adult, creative programming. That is a gift horse of another color, and it is still galloping somewhere over the rainbow, untamed by either RCA or CBS.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

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Music to My Ears

PORTRAIT OF A COMPOSER—THE OPERA—BRIEF NOTES

DAVID DIAMOND is a composer from Rochester, New York, now thirty-five years old. His way is gentle; he is soft of speech, kind of manner. His cooking is admired from coast to coast, and when he last left Hollywood, where he was scoring a film, the regrets of the hostesses for whom he officiated followed him to Italy. In all, Diamond seems a man made for madrigals and nocturnes, in whose heart the bird should always be on the wing, while all's well with the world.

Hence when I hear such a work as his Third Symphony, which Charles Munch introduced to New York at the first visit of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, I am somewhat disturbed. In the words of a current radio program, is it true or false? I mean the tough flexing of the musical muscles and the strutting of the esthetic hard-guy stuff. At moments, particularly in the finely expressive adagio, there was a recognizable relation to the appealing Diamond you might meet outdoors on Fifty-seventh Street; but I never did quite catch up with the indoor Diamond. Anatomy and esthetics are not normally associated, but it is at least worth considering whether there may not be in the realm of musical rhetoric a repertory of padding that would suggest tonal muscles as another kind would fill out the shoulders. Mark Twain once deplored that for reasons of convention he could not write as funny as he might; in the light of such a piece as this Diamond symphony, I wonder if he dare not write as feelingly as he might, also for reasons of convention. It would be a pity, however, if one who could would be balked by the example of those who can't.

On the same program Munch introduced the Third Piano Concerto of Bohuslav Martinu, who wears no man's esthetic collar and is so much more the person for that reason. Despite the assertion in the program notes—"Martinu has shown no interest in producing music for a virtuoso's display of his technical ability"—this seems to me a straightforward example of nineteenth-century concerto writing, with a certain amount of personal poetry, much of it founded on folk music of Martinu's native Bohemia, a good deal of soloistic opportunity, and no little showmanship. The word "Bach-like" also appears in the annotator's comment, but I think it all much more Martinu-like. Rudolf

Firkusny was the soloist, and a good one.

* * *

MOZART at the Metropolitan came in sequence to Verdi and Wagner, just before Puccini—a hopeful happening which cannot yet be called a trend. This year's first "Don Giovanni" was not greatly different from those of last year, but the small differences were all welcome ones. Ljuba Welitch and Paul Schoeffler were conspicuously less conspicuous than in the past, which is to say that they were absorbed in the Graf-directed ensemble as they had not been last year, though the conductor was again Fritz Reiner. Schoeffler was obviously more at ease, summoning gusto and lightness he had previously lacked, while sustaining with authority the line and artistry of his singing. The Welitch voice was better modulated to the needs of the music, her singing retaining its dramatic power while adding something of lyricism ("Non mi dir" is still a trial for her). However, as long as she chooses to dress the part with her own flaming red hair, we shall think of her not more as Donna Anna than as Donna Henna.

At the first performance Nadine Conner's illness gave an opportunity to young Roberta Peters to make an uncommonly assured and qualified debut as Zerlina. Musically, her aptitude is amazing and her light voice is beautifully placed, easily produced, without a sign of strain. Add to this a real dramatic flair (for Zerlina, at least) and the promise of Miss Peters is plain. Eugene Conley sang a stylish Ottavio, Hugh Thompson has made the part of Masetto very much his own, and Leporello, which has been Salvatore Baccaloni's own so long that many opera-goers cannot recall another, is due for a fresh treatment. The sands of time are, plainly, running out for him vocally.

Eleanor Steber had a rare spell of



The Saturday Review