

SUNDAY TIMES (DATE UNKNOWN)

INDIAN SUMMERS

"Most people think you are dead", said Mr Eric Robinson, introducing Mr Albert Ketelbey to viewers on Wednesday evening. "Are you still composing?"

"I'm certainly not decomposing," replied the Ethel M. Dell of music, with infectious relish.

Relish, gusto, confidence, *character*: how well the old men show up on television! Mr Bransby Williams, Sir Compton Mackenzie, Professor Bodkin, Lord Russell – time and again veterans who in an earlier epoch might have been languishing in obscurity have surprised viewers by their vitality.

Television extends the span of a man's effectiveness. A great man is rarely wholly expressed in his work; his company and his conversation sustain and stimulate the lucky few who enjoy them. Now, the lucky few may become the lucky multitude, and the creator who has spent his vital creative energies may yet enjoy a long Indian Summer of benign influence.

We have also been gladdened by any number of tough and jolly old boys of no particular fame who have popped up from time to time, spritely and serene, in such entertainments as "What's My Line?" and the various interview programmes.

Perhaps the secret of their impact is that all of their stagers achieved careers as characters before broadcasting made it possible for a conceited young man without talent to make a good living as a professional "personality". The vacuity of the camera-struck young man who has done nothing, and can do nothing, beyond composing his precious features in an ingratiating smirk, compares very unfavourably with the vigour and sincerity of the old brigade.

One young man who appeared in the same programme as Mr Ketelbey ("Music For You") is far from being untalented. Mr Anthony Oliver's stories are one reliable pleasure in a very uneven show. Another, of course,

is the gentle personality of Mr Robinson himself; but I felt that he was charging me a high price for the pleasure of meeting Mr Ketelbey and Mr Harry Welchman when I had to sit through those "production numbers", as the jargon has it, of "A Monastery Garden" and "The Desert Song".

But perhaps my sense of humour ("somewhat Germanic," says a cruel reader, let me down again; perhaps the highly talented producer Mr Robinson in introducing guest artists of the calibre of Miss Gladys Ripley and M. Pouishnoff is that they make the studio just about uninhabitable for his resident corps of singers and dancers.