

THE ONLY NIGHT OF THE PROMS



Every year the Royal Albert Hall resounds to the sounds of *Land of Hope and Glory*, *Rule Britannia* and *Jerusalem* roared out by the audience and accompanied by the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

People who would never dream of watching or going to a concert of classical music watch it on television. It's an opportunity for the British, and particularly the English, to show the rest of the world that we can be unbuttoned, eccentric and openly enjoy ourselves. We don't even mind that some people are waving flags from other nations instead of the Union Jack or the English Cross of St George—it all adds to the fun. Proms are now seen as such a quintessential part of the British summer that you will find Prom concerts being held all over the UK.

And the entertainment this year was extended to the Residence Gardens in Riyadh when the Riyadh Concert Band and the Riyadh Choral Society braved a chilly evening to perform a wide range of material in front of a large audience. David Riley from AlRabie Dairy, who supplied the juices, had been instrumental in reviving the event after a two year absence.



RGBB Chairman Luke Bowen filled in the gaps between the numbers with a series of light hearted comments which upset a few, embarrassed a few more and generally added to the 'fun' nature of the evening.

The history of 'The Proms' goes back to 1894 when Mr. Robert Newman, manager of the Queen's Hall, London, met a talented young musician and conductor named Mr. Henry Wood and informed him of his plans for a new series of concerts to be held over summer. These concerts would, Newman hoped, educate the people about classical music and hopefully make it more popular. The



concerts would begin with easy pieces and gradually introduce more challenging pieces of music. Mr. Wood agreed to become the conductor of a permanent orchestra and to help Mr. Newman develop his concerts. And so the first of the Proms, or as they were then known, "Mr. Robert Newman's Promenade Concerts," was performed on August 10, 1895.

They were called Promenade concerts because a large part of the seating area had no seats and so the patrons had to stand during the performances. This is still true at Proms concerts in London today, and dedicated Prommers will tell you that this is the best place to be. During the original Proms the patrons could smoke, eat and drink, as Newman and Wood wanted to keep the atmosphere as informal as possible, although customers were asked not to strike matches during vocal performances.

Certainly the performers are to be congratulated for what was indeed a memorable evening. The British School who provide facilities for Band Practice and BAE Systems are also deserving of thanks for their assistance.

