

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

## UGLY BUILDINGS

Sir,—“Norman Blood” apparently wants to confuse the issue regarding standards of architecture; and I fear that I, by my loose reference to the photographic competition for the ugliest buildings held by the English monthly journal *Horizon*, may have given him some assistance.

First let me say that I did not use the *Horizon* photographs as a “yardstick.” My reference was a casual one. When I wrote that “the winning snaps were bad enough” I was speaking from memory. What I should have said was “the winning snap” for it was the piece of domestic architecture that won first prize that I had in mind when I said that “one could find a hundred examples that were much more horrifying around the suburbs of Auckland.” Of this Walter Gropius has (naturally) nothing to say. Astragal, in the *Architects’ Journal*, ascribes its appearance to “an inept wilfulness rather than downright ugliness,” and says that “Since an element of fantasy is never out of place in a country retreat, this would seem almost a virtue.” The last remark is nonsense. We know all about these “elements of fantasy”; and I see no reason why Nature should be singled out as the special butt for such practical jokes. The building that won the *Horizon* competition is repulsively ugly. But my point was (after all), that, bad as it is, we can produce many worse examples in the suburbs of New Zealand.

As for the Lawn Road flats, which Gropius defends, I had no memory of the photograph as one of the prize-winners when I wrote my article. Looking it up now, I am not surprised. The photograph is a bad one, with the building partly obscured by trees. Personally, I am not very interested in flats, for they belong to a pattern of concentrated urban life with which I have little sympathy. But if we are to have flats, at least let them be well designed—and on this score I am quite prepared to believe that Gropius was right and the *Horizon* judges foolish for judging a building from such a bad photograph. To have attempted a comparison between this building and anything equivalent in New Zealand would have been a little meaningless: one would have to refer to the new Housing Department flats, which are probably as good, architecturally, as the Lawn Road flats.

The point I made originally is not affected by all this. It was, briefly, that in our New Zealand suburbs we have many horrifying examples of pretentious and badly-designed houses, which are much worse than anything *Horizon* could show us. I suggest that “Norman Blood” should ignore what any “oracles” say about them, and go and take a good look at some of them himself.

A. R. D. FAIRBURN (Auckland).

## NOW THE SINGERS

Sir,—Musical interest has been greatly stimulated of late by the presence in our midst of several visiting artists. On the instrumental side the Boyd Neel combination has contributed greatly in this direction, also the fine performances of our own National Orchestra, which now, rightly, occupies an important place in our musical life. Development of the vocal side of music should, however, be equally encouraged to provide artistic

balance in the realm of musical art generally. Several notable choirs from overseas have visited us in the past, adding much to our musical education, and only recently Auckland received a visit from the Schola Cantorum of Wellington.

It is pleasing to know that the vocal talent in our country is quite on a par with the instrumental side, but it deserves similar recognition. In each of our main cities an attempt should now be made to form a first-class choir of professional standard. Such combinations, in addition to their own presentations, could unite on occasions in collaboration with our National Orchestra. The cultural aspect of singing must not be overlooked. Only a few can achieve virtuosity, but the majority of singers can be trained to produce excellent team-work. Let us then recognise the value of all types of music which contribute artistry and culture to the community.

ALBERT G. TAYLOR  
(Birkenhead).

## A PROTEST

Sir,—Seldom are we shaken sufficiently from our apathetic acceptance of things as they are to raise a protest, perhaps because we feel no one bothers about our petty agitations anyway. But it is impossible for a lover of Lieder to accept the fact that the New Zealand Broadcasting Service not only allow for inclusion in their programmes, but go to the length of making a transcription of an American recording of Anita Boyer crooning “Ein Schwan,” one of Edward Grieg’s greatest songs and one which it is authoritatively said no one should attempt to sing unless endowed with sufficient dramatic feeling to bring out the deeper meaning of Ibsen’s poem. This might be a popular recording in America—but this is not America.

New Zealand is a country young in culture and therefore should seek growth where cultural roots are deep. We look to the youth of this country to absorb and extend that culture, but why, through many such recordings as this, confuse their sense of values? Let them grow up with increasingly good dance bands for their amusement, but at the same time let them appreciate and love the music of the masters in its true form.

A.W.G. (Wellington).

## POINTS FROM LETTERS

H. E. LAWRENCE (Stratford), replying to “Puzzled Layman,” claims that there are many instances of rabbits and other animals passing over portions of a field sown with the help of chemicals, and going on to portions sown without chemicals, but enriched with animal manure.

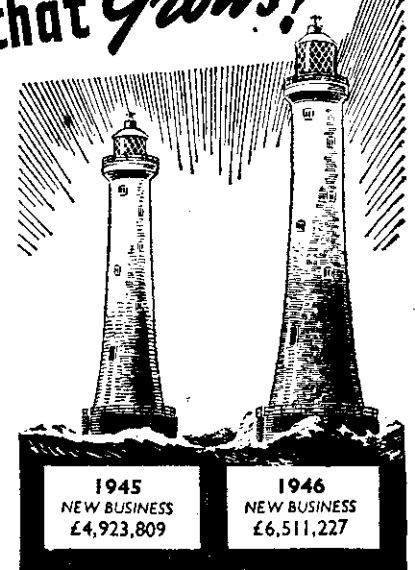
“APPRECIATIVE” (Wellington) hopes that Lili Kraus has not gone from New Zealand without leaving behind many recordings to be broadcast in the future.

C. A. BOOTH (Petone) objects to the way in which one of our Viewsreel commentators recently “dismissed brass bands as something situated on the lower rung of the musical ladder,” and also to the cartoon which accompanied the paragraph.

BRASSY (Dunedin) says that if a combination such as the Goldman Band includes reed instruments in its ranks it is a military band and should not therefore be included in a brass band programme, as happened recently from 2YA.

A. T. BAILEY (Ohakea) replies to a correspondent’s complaint about the “free publicity” given to wrestlers on the air, by putting out that the wrestlers do not arrange the commentaries themselves, and that in any case the broadcasts could affect the box-office adversely by keeping patrons at home by their radios during the winter evenings.

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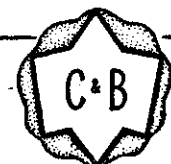
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