

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Whadda Catastroph!

SURELY Jimmy Durante's record "The Lost Chord" deserves a paragraph to itself. It must at any rate be one of the most popular items in the request sessions nowadays, and few who listen, however infrequently, can have missed it altogether. I have heard of only one malcontent who voiced the opinion that this was a rotten record, and he was one of those pseudo-cultured people who can't bear to hear "good music" held up to ridicule. Neither can I. I cordially detest those hideous attempts at "hotting up" the classics (as though a Liszt Rhapsody can be made more exciting by being altered in rhythm and scored for a jazz band!) and those equally painful renderings of good melodies in popular guise (the appalling "Chasing Rainbows," "Deep is the Night," and "Till the End of Time"); on the other hand, any jazz arranger could do anything he liked to "The Lost Chord" and it wouldn't move me an inch, so little does the original appeal to me. Jimmy Durante, however, doesn't use anything of the original except the title and a vague suggestion of the opening words, "Seated one day at my pi-anner," etc. The record is a gem, and I challenge anyone to prove that it bears any but a coincidental resemblance to any work by Sullivan. Jimmy Durante

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of this type. The *Parthenia Virginal Book* (the first music for virginals printed from engraved plates in England) is perhaps the one we most prize, for its quaint engraving on the title page showing a maiden performing with great style on the instrument, and for the high artistic value of its contents.

One can never tell when collecting early music just what may be waiting to be picked up near at hand. It should not be overlooked that there are many old families in New Zealand whose grandparents may have been good musicians, and have brought with them from the Old World collections of music of the greatest interest. Only a few weeks ago we bought in Wellington a set of clavier sonatas printed in Leipzig in 1779. It belonged to a woman whose grandfather had brought it out from the Continent in the early days. To our great regret, this was one of the last pieces left from his formerly extensive library of music; the rest had been burnt only a few weeks before to make more room in the cupboards!

Should the members of any other old-established family with similar collections of old music read this article, we would strongly suggest that before consigning what may or may not be "rubbish" to the flames, they make lists of the titles, composers, and publishers (with dates where given), and forward them to the Librarian, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. There they will be perused by experts, and should any items prove of outstanding interest for musical research, arrangements could be made for having them permanently housed in the Turnbull Collection of Early Music.

has really found the lost chord, so far as I am concerned—more power to his raucously rasping vocal chords!

Ach, Zo!

BIRTH of a Ballerina, an NZBS production of a play by F. W. Kenyon, was one of those unsatisfactory dramas with foreign characters. Every listener knows the regulation treatment of foreigners on the radio. They must



be made to sound foreign, therefore they must have nasal or guttural accents, even when conversing among themselves—since no New Zealand listener could be expected to listen if they spoke in any language but broken English. No, I'm not pretending to be superior—I couldn't

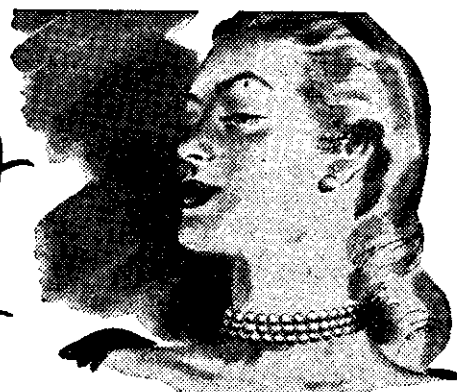
follow a foreign-language broadcast myself, unless it were spoken at half-speed in a schoolboy accent, and I admit the problem of presenting the radio foreigner is a difficult one. But couldn't these characters be allowed to speak in nearly-normal English? It would be so much of a relief for the listener! This particular play was not entirely satisfactory from other aspects, at least to me. The initial situation was full of possibilities. The former ballerina who marries and gives up her career has twin daughters, one of whom inherits the gift for dancing but is a weakling, while the other is healthy but can't dance. This was the subject of some strong situations, except, I thought, for the denouement, when the gifted twin collapses and dies while dancing—and hey presto! the gift is miraculously transferred to the sister! The emotional tie between twins is a good subject for any play, but here I don't think it was used to best advantage.

Well-Managed Programme

THE second of the Christmas readings, arranged by Dorothy White, and heard from 4YA was, I thought, better than the first. Christmas in New Zealand was traced from the times of early exploration to a much nearer date, and a splendid touch was the introduction of quotations from New Zealand authors—people of whom we hear far too little on our radio. The reading from Katherine Mansfield's story "At the Bay" brought the baking warmth of sun-on-the-sand into my very chilly dining room. Indeed, the Dunedin weather was such, that week before Christmas, that when the speaker told me that "The New Zealand Christmas is not always spent at the beach," I could cheerfully have seized the nearest blunt instrument and heaved it at my radio. I'm glad I didn't, for I would have missed the snippet of a story by A. P. Gaskell, in which all the atmosphere of the popular New Zealand institution known as the beer-party was expressed in a few lines. I should like to have quoted a great deal of Mrs. White's remarks about our "vestigial remnant" of the old English Christmas, but rather than leave out

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