

he knows nothing of brass bands and their capabilities. Let me remind your correspondent that there are good, bad and indifferent choirs and orchestras, just as we have A, B and C grade brass bands; some of our A grade bands have reached a high standard of musical excellence and culture. He also makes an astounding statement, viz., "a brass band playing really has little or no relation to music." That is not the opinion of England's best musicians and conductors. Sir Adrian Boult, referring to the Harringay Band Festival, June 1948, said, "I was impressed enormously. I always enjoy brass bands and this festival was as fine as any I have taken part in. The finish of the bands was extremely good. The whole thing is a source of amazement to foreign musicians, though it no longer amazes me." . . .

PERCY L. BRADY
(Wellington).

Sir,—I am glad that A. R. D. Fairburn admits that brass bands can be used to good effect on occasions. He says that brass bands have no real relation to music. Is he then a fanatical piper or just a critic who knows nothing about brass music? Evidently he has not heard of hymns. . . .

B. A. N. THOMAS (Timaru).

Sir,—The letter of A. R. D. Fairburn was perhaps a little "clever" in a sneering kind of way; but it was certainly not charitable. . . . He states that bands show satanic virtuosity in their choice of pieces; but the bands were required to play the pieces according to orders (in the Contest) whether the conductors and bandsmen approved or not. . . . He admits that he did not hear the Mozart piece. Surely a claimant to the title of musical critic should not criticise merely on hearsay evidence. His second paragraph is so obviously written for effect that it does not merit comment.

F. M. PRICE (Auckland).

Sir,—I have the greatest admiration for Mr Fairburn's articles on the subject of the Fine Arts, but I think he has got out of his depth when he writes so dogmatically about brass bands. With his first sentence I agree wholeheartedly, but the remainder of his letter can be dismissed as a witty piece of journalism without making a useful or helpful approach to the subject. . . . I was introduced to music through the brass band. I have played in symphony orchestras and smaller musical combinations, but I still feel that the brass band has some contribution to make in the field of music. . . . All people are entitled to their likes and dislikes and in this respect I appreciate and understand that there are many people who never will like brass bands, just as some dislike virtuoso sopranos and "raging" operatic tenors, but I cannot agree that "the brass band has little or no relation to music. . . ." We must not forget that the brass band has given the world some very fine musicians who have made their name as solo performers on the concert platform, and in our best orchestras. . . . It might surprise Mr. Fairburn to know that the principal double bass player in the National Symphony Orchestra

started his musical career in the brass band. A. A. KIRK (Mt. Albert).

Sir,—Your correspondent A. R. D. Fairburn states that brass bands lack taste. I suggest, sir, that A.R.D.F. apparently, from his outburst, has had no experience, either theoretical or practical, of this medium of music production and that his effort at criticism lacks taste. One could perhaps have overlooked his making such a big noise had he been blessed with the necessary musical qualifications to criticise such renowned music writers and conductors and players as our Empire has produced down the years. Maybe Dr. Malcolm Sargent would be pleased to explain to A. R. D. F. just why he has lowered his musical standard to such an extent as to include his conducting of brass in Albert Hall. . . . Maybe the Brass Bands Association could approach A.R.D.F. before next year's championships for recommendations regarding choice of music, as the Old Masters and present experts in England are apparently under his standards. . . . Hats off to the public-spirited brass bandsman, who plays a man's instrument, for his self-sacrifice in the cause of music generally.

W.H.M. (Hamilton East).

Sir,—Mr. Fairburn can scarcely conceal his contempt for brass bands—I think his attitude shows the profound gulf that exists today between "popular" (continued on next page)

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