

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

SEPTEMBER 27, 1940

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

93-107 Featherston Street, Wellington, C.1.

Post Office Box 1070.

Telephone, 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

For Subscription and Advertising Rates see Page 47.

The Piper And The Tune

"**W**ITHIN reasonable limits of dignity and decency," we said two or three weeks ago, "he who pays the piper still calls the tune." But some of our readers ignored the first half of that sentence and throw back the second half. Some readers, too, and some listeners will ignore the reasons for the programme changes announced in this issue and complain of the changes themselves. They will want no change, or more, or something totally different, and it is not in itself a bad thing to be discontented. But let us look at the facts.

Broadcasting comes nearer to universality than any form of communication so far used by man. Therefore it gives more pleasure and more pain. Where a hundred people once attended a concert or saw a play ten thousand now listen to concerts and plays without leaving home, and say what they think about them. So every molehill of appreciation and criticism becomes a mountain. No one knows or can know how many people like symphonies, how many hate jazz, whether a thousand or twenty thousand are following a serial, what proportion of the population like music to dinner, how many would weep if Fred and Maggie died. Even if we did know the answers to such questions we would not know the meaning of the answers—for example, whether there should be a hundred hours of Sandy Powell to one of Alexander Kipnis if it could be established that a hundred to one is the numerical proportion of listeners. If culture depended on counts of heads it would soon cease on a national scale, since the number who wanted a university, say, or an art gallery would never be big enough to prevail against those who wanted swimming baths or a new bridge, or to provide such institutions themselves.

There is a point beyond which the piper must not be driven, and most people know where it is. It is the point below which they try not to descend if they are parents and guardians. It lies, that is to say, a little above what they know to be their own natural level, and the same rule applies to broadcasting programmes. Whatever the practice of the public may be, their desire is to rise rather than to sink. This does not mean that programmes should cater only for highbrows, or primarily for highbrows, or for highbrows more than for lowbrows. It does mean that it is better to overrate than to under-rate the prevailing standards of intelligence and taste.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

"AS OTHERS SEE US"

Sir,—I was disappointed in your editorial ("As Others See Us") in reply to Fred L. Garland. I think it is fairly obvious that the main point in Mr. Garland's letter was that, if it is necessary to omit any feature from *The Listener*, it should not be the programme chart, "What Would You Like to Hear," but rather some of the many features which you continue to include but which have not the remotest connexion with radio programmes. There is little doubt that this programme chart was to a large proportion of your readers, not only to lovers of classical music but to people of all tastes, the most useful part of the journal.

You, however, in your editorial, made no attempt to reply to this point. Instead, you confined yourself to sneering at people who enjoy the really excellent programmes of good music which are broadcast from our national stations. It is often said that lovers of good music, the so-called "high-brows," are intolerant of other people's tastes; your editorial shows that the intolerance is not all on one side.

Personally, I enjoy records by Sandy Powell and Gracie Fields, but your judgment is surely warped by prejudice when you say that nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine people would rather listen to them than Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite or to his symphonies. If you yourself are bored by classical music and find Tchaikovsky merely morbid, you may remember that a month or two ago a Centennial Musical Festival was held in New Zealand, in the course of which, I think I am safe in saying, Tchaikovsky's works were played more frequently than those of any other composer. The large audiences which attended these concerts and the enthusiasm with which the performances were received in all the principal centres of New Zealand showed quite conclusively that music-lovers, while they are probably a minority, form a not inconsiderable section of the listening public. Your last paragraph that "for every reader who wants symphonies, a thousand want hill-billies, and ten thousand Sandy Powell or Gracie Fields" is an insult to the people of New Zealand.

As I said at the beginning of this letter, this editorial was a great disappointment to me. You claim that he who pays the piper calls the tune, and while this is true enough, you made no attempt to show that the programme chart was the least popular feature in *The Listener*.

In fairness, however, I should say that I still enjoy reading *The Listener*, and I appreciate particularly the excellent explanatory notes which accompany the announcements in the programmes of the despised symphonies.

—TOLERANT (Invercargill).

Sir,—With reference to the letter in this week's *Listener* signed by Fred L. Garland, of Auckland, it is plain that your small leader deals efficiently with the position and with the somewhat random opinions and non-constructive criticisms of your correspondent. The task of catering for 40,000 subscribers to your paper, is a colossal one, and the measure of success you have attained is deserving of commendation. For my part, after listening to some Russian's interpretation of the theme suggested to him by the musical bugs which drive him to expression, I find it a relief to turn to "Pat and the Pig" (page 16), or to Aunt Daisy's recipe on Potato and Fish Soufflé. But then, my education in music has been neglected. I am not receptive to the soul-stirring British-hating foreigners, and I would gladly welcome the timely action of some patriot who would immerse all such people in a soufflé of Aunt Daisy's design.

One suggestion only I make for your consideration. Give us more dance music. Not only at night sessions when we can dance to it, but during the day, when it would prove a relief from business worries and an antidote to broadcasts of the slaughter of the innocents at Home. Not that I suggest we try and dissociate ourselves from the Battle of Britain. That is impossible, as it is just as much our battle as the battle of those on the Home Front, but cheery music (dance music with vocal renderings by orchestra leaders) will certainly help to keep up the morale of people generally.

Let's sing and dance in these perilous times! Those who want to listen in rapt and exquisite agony to the works of old masters can always buy a gramophone and spent the sums demanded by dealers for records of their favourites.

Carry on the good work, Mr. Editor. When the war is over, and there is nothing else to fight about, we listeners may turn our attention to you, and start a non-constructive aggression, but in the meantime the "old masters," for my part, can lie idle on the shelves of the radio-library while we concern ourselves with the subduing of the would-be "new masters."

—"NOT Highbrow" (Takaka).

WOMEN IN MALTA

Sir,—I am sorry that my remark about Malta did not satisfy "Saltwater," and on one point I am ready to stand corrected. My script should in fact have read "do not seem to learn." English is taught in the schools, but as far as I could gather, there is no compulsory period of attendance, and in the case of many working women, education has been so brief as to leave little mark. I myself encountered young women who spoke no English. My information regarding this and the origin of the Faldetta was gained from Maltese in Valetta a year ago, where, by the way, "goats and aromas" are no longer a feature of the streets.—EDNA PARSON (Christchurch).

LESSONS IN MORSE

Sir,—The latest issue of *The Listener* has a page on Lessons in Morse, and I became interested, because, as a member of the local volunteer corps about 40 years ago, I set out to learn signalling. I picked up a book on the subject, and it contained a hint on a quick way to learn the code. I do not know if this system is still in existence or is still practised, but it might be helpful to beginners. My son went away with the signallers, First Echelon, and he was interested, and had not seen it during his instruction.

The idea is to get one signal, and in a parallel column put down the reverse signal; for instance opposite one dot, a dash is placed, and so on down the column. Then words are fitted, so that when the list of words is learned, the signal for that word is soon worked out.

I enclose the system, as far as I can remember it, after 40 years. —H. L. CHADWICK (Hawera).

FIRST SIGNAL	SIGNAL REVERSED
Every	Time
I	Make
Signals	On
High	Not
Answer	Distinguished
Until	Bad
Very	Guessing
When	Keenly
Commences	Young
Read	Quickly
Learn	Xercise
Flag	
(P) and	
Judicious	
Zeal	

(We are indebted to our correspondent for his interesting letter.—Ed.).