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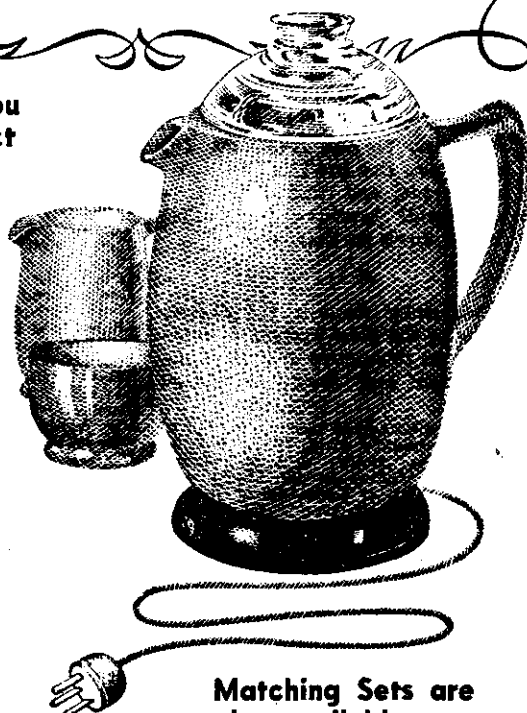
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Radio Review

NEW KING OF QUIZ

THE first youth concert by the National Orchestra was a delight. We know by now something of James Robertson's gifts as a conductor, but we were unprepared to find that as a quiz-master he is without peer in this country. His manner is brisk, invigorating and witty. His exuberant high spirits must have jockeyed the sourest member of his audience (slyly addressed as "girls and boys and older girls and boys") into a corresponding enthusiasm. The nine young men who volunteered to serve as his panel were put entirely at ease by Mr. Robertson's friendly badinage, though I was rather sorry for the young man, who, after a short performance by saxophone and "beat dat bass," tentatively suggested that a clarinet was on the job. Mr. Robertson's horrified "What!" would have done credit to the most classical of purists outraged by an error of taste. Mr. Robertson's sporting gesture in allowing the orchestra to sound like a dance band was greeted with frenzied enthusiasm. At another point, the theme of the Ride of the Valkyries was stated, and Mr. Robertson permitted himself a graceful tribute to the artist who had sung that very theme earlier in the week. "Never," he said, speaking, of course, of Anna Russell,

"has the plot of *The Ring* been made more devastatingly clear." Everyone clearly had a wonderful time at the concert.

The Romantic Agony

IT is a tribute to the musicianship of that fine Hungarian pianist Bela Siki that when he played the Liszt Sonata in B Minor in New Zealand last year, he made this colossal musical extravaganza both intelligible and plausible. The NZBS took the opportunity to record the sonata while he was here, and I heard it again on Sunday night from 2YC. Bela Siki still gives a superb performance, and it is admirably recorded as well. The sonata seems to me at once deplorable and glorious, an immense sprawling world of heroic and bizarre attitudes, a tender, almost wistful lyricism, the heavy solid trumpeting of triumphant force. Somehow, all these elements can be resolved into a consistent texture, and this is what Bela Siki does. I have heard the work many times, and can say that it has never reached me in quite this way. A kind of glory shines from it in Siki's reading, and this is, presumably, what Liszt intended.

—B.E.G.M.

Cheerful Double

WHEN you take in an NZBS *Double Bill* you don't expect both legs to romp home, but, on the other hand, I haven't struck a lame one yet. Last Friday's (April 15) was a happy choice. First came *Piper's Bid*, an expansion of the old chestnut about auctioning the chair with the probable fortune tucked in it, but the Dunedin cast acted with gusto and gave back some of the original freshness to the theme. *Honeysuckle Cottage*, however, an adaptation from P. (continued on next page)

★ The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN ★

THE EASTER SEASON always seems to produce some well-meant but rather dispirited programmes, with the accent on local choral efforts and the gloomier Bach cantatas. This year was no exception, though the programmes were for the most part well arranged and produced. Two NZBS transcriptions "With heart and voice" and "The dying of the Lord Jesus" were labelled as meditations for Easter, and were generally of the same type, though the former offered more variety, with an orchestra to enrich the singing. The inevitable performance of Stainer's overworked *Crucifixion* (BBC) was featured as a link—surely there must be some good alternative to this work, which deserves to lie fallow for a year or two at least. It seems odd, by the way, that while Good Friday is celebrated (if that is the word) by a plethora of broadcast productions, Easter Sunday is hardly noticed beyond the local festal church services—almost as though the day were religiously less important.

I commented favourably on a recital by Andrew Gold last week; now the series is well under way which he and his wife, Pamela Woolmore, recorded before leaving the country last year. She has a lovely true soprano, a little weak in the middle register, and sounds at her best in the duets with her husband, such as the delightful "I Follow Thee" of Telemann. Her Fauré is good stylistic singing, and her interpretation of Purcell's "The Blessed Virgin's Expos-

tulation" is quite moving. Andrew Gold continues his sensitive singing with some beautifully smooth and clear Italian songs, and a lively version of Aaron Copland's old American folk songs, as well as some interesting Greek folk music. The remainder of the series should be well worth the hearing.

Two piano recitals caught my attention recently—the country appears to have an inexhaustible supply of promising pianists; one was by Evelyn Dackers (4YA) who has an excellent technique and a heavy streak of romanticism. She gave a very adequate performance of Chopin's C sharp minor Scherzo, and a really brilliant one of Debussy's difficult "Masques," with a clear staccato and fully-controlled tone; this was mature and almost masculine playing. The other recital was from Therle Oswin (2YC) who gave us the evergreen fifth French Suite of Bach, again with a neat and clear touch. The movements flowed, as indeed they ought, but were rather marred by the common "hydraulic brake" effect of the cadences—an effect which I don't think Bach ever prescribed.

In passing, let me recommend Gerald Christeller, reliable as ever, singing two early German songs with a dash of Italian peeping through (NZBS), these are by Schutz and Weiland, and are accompanied by a piano quartet. I think in lieu of orchestra, though the present ensemble is most satisfactory.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 29, 1955.