

THE OLYMPIC FLAME

"THE important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. The essential thing in life is not conquering, but fighting well." Baron Pierre de Coubertin spoke these words in 1894, when he was attempting to revive the ancient Greek Olympic Games for the modern world. Two years later, through his efforts, the first Olympic Games since the fourth century A.D. were held in Greece.

This year, the fifteenth modern Olympiad, the Games belong to Mel-

bourne, the closest to home they are likely to be for many years. While New Zealand's representatives are being selected and the details of their trip abroad worked out, memories of past Olympics are bound to rise up. A timely new series of half-hour programmes from the ZBs, 2ZA and 1XH, beginning next Tuesday (ZBs) and Wednesday (2ZA, 1XH), will be *The Olympic Flame*, in which some of the hopes, disappointments and triumphs inseparable from the world's greatest sports meeting will be told.

Going back in history there is the story of Leonidas, the renowned charioteer of the ancient Olympics whom only death could defeat in his final race. At their best these Greek athletes displayed an ideal of fair competition and mighty effort without the lure of prizes which later ages had to try hard to equal. Yet, in modern times, who could deny men like Jesse Owens, the American Negro whose pace electrified the world, and whose colour embarrassed Hitler at the 1936 Berlin Games, their place on the roll of honoured athletes.

There there is "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias, outstanding woman high-jumper, hurdler and javelin thrower of the 1932 Los Angeles Games, who complained because she was not allowed to compete in more events. Later, "Babe" left the amateur ranks and became the finest woman championship golfer in the United States. At the peak of her golfing career she was struck down by cancer. Yet she came back again to play brilliantly.

Another dazzling figure who turned professional was Sonja



★ **BOB MATHIAS (U.S.), the Decathlon winner in 1948 and 1952, snapped in action at Helsinki**

Henie, three times figure-skating champion of the world, retiring unbeaten. As a very young girl from Norway she won her first title at the 1926 Winter Olympics and won again in 1932 and 1936. An even more glittering future beckoned for the tiny blonde, and she starred in several films before beginning to run her own ice-shows. The 1936 Games were remarkable, too, for the speed-skating of another Norwegian, Ivar Ballangrud, who had to overcome almost insuperable obstacles to win the 500 metres, the 5000 and 10,000, and finish second to his team-mate Charles Mathisen in the 1500 metres.

It is the track and field events, however, which always take the major share of the applause at Olympic gatherings. Everybody remembers Emil Zatopek, hero of the 1952 Helsinki Games, who smiled "like an angel," according to report, at the end of the gruelling 26-mile Marathon. The '52 Games might almost be called "Zatopek's Games," for the stocky little Czech army officer also cleaned up the 5000 metres, then the 10,000 metres in Olympic record

time of 29 min. 17.0 secs., beating his own 1948 record by 42.6 seconds.

At Helsinki the U.S.A.'s Bob Mathias was out to break his own world Decathlon record of 7825 points. He did it by 62 points. In two days, extending far into each evening, he ran second in the 100 metre dash, won the shotput and the 400 metres. He was third in the high jump, sixth in the broad jump, though handicapped by a pulled thigh muscle, and went on to win the 110 metre hurdles and the discus throw. Third in the pole vault, Mathias threw the javelin 194 feet 3.15 inches for a win as darkness fell on the second day. At 9.40 that evening he took off on the 1500 metre run and finished fourth. Nevertheless, he ended the exhausting contest over 900 points ahead of his nearest rival.

The Olympic Flame, in which all these champions figure, also devotes an episode to the story of attractive Shirley Strickland de la Hunty, the girl they said was over-shadowed by her brilliant fellow-countrywoman, Marjorie Jackson. Though she came third to Marjorie Jackson in the 100 metres dash, her great moment was the smashing of the world and Olympic records for the 80 metres hurdles at Helsinki in 10.9 seconds. This, incidentally, was the race which saw the final eclipse of Fanny Blankers-Koen, the Dutch flyer. Suffering from a blood-infection, she attempted to carry on in the events to which she was committed. Several penicillin injections failed to help her, and Blankers-Koen met disaster at the third hurdle.

Olympic events and their competitors seem to produce drama effortlessly. In 1936 there was the case of the swimming champion Eleanor Holm Jarrett, forbidden by the U.S.A.'s team manager, Avery Brundage, to take part in the Berlin Games because she broke a ruling against drinking alcoholic liquor on the liner crossing the Atlantic. An outcry in the American press and an appeal from her team-mates could not save her. At the opening ceremony she sat in a corner of the grandstand, weeping. On a more tragic, yet heroic, note, *The Olympic Flame* tells also the story of Paavo Nurmi, the Finn who re-wrote the record book almost every time he ran in the 1920's. Not many people know of the ski journey he undertook through the Russian lines, during the Russo-Finnish War. Nurmi got through, but his wife, who was with him, died of exposure.



FINAL EFFORT
Jack Lovelock hits the tape

(continued from previous page)

the Greek, *Para odē*—i.e., "an ode which perverts the meaning of another ode." This provides a definite clue, since "pervert" signifies "to turn to wrong use."

Parody is customarily associated with burlesque, derision and scoffing, caricature and grotesque misrepresentation. (N.B., I am not trying to parody *Alice in Wonderland*!)

Obviously, then, parody is entirely inept if applied to good music, the inherent characteristics of which are dignity, and high seriousness of purpose. In this sphere, the only possible latitude might take the form of poking gentle fun at the recognised mannerisms of a few standard composers—such as Mozart's reiterated cadences; Rossini's crescendi; or Beethoven's so-called Third-Period eccentricities.

Clever imitation of a composer's style—of which accomplishment the supreme exponent is Alec Templeton—cannot be classed as parody in its strict sense.

From my own viewpoint, therefore, *The Listener's* questions may be answered comprehensively as follows: Any attempt, no matter by whom, to parody serious music, whether in New Zealand or elsewhere, is contrary to the principles of true art and cannot be



STARS of "Emily Butter": Deryck Guyler, who took the part of Gabriel Hall-Pollock, and Marjorie Westbury, who played Emily

condoned by genuine music lovers. Such an attempt was made in Auckland some years ago by Lili Kraus and Owen Jensen, in their absurd and futile anti-Chopin crusade—a palpably foolish move, because Chopin, of all composers, is pre-eminently immune to ridicule.

But, in the field of degenerate music—including jazz, "popular hits," and the cacophonous concoctions of modern extremists—there is unlimited scope for legitimate parody, and the more we hear of it, the better I shall be pleased.

—L. D. AUSTIN