

A BLAZE IN THE HAND

"THIS is a tale of vice and sorrow." One does not often hear a phrase like this from 1YC, a station given mainly to the arts and to the politely formal language of their critics. Sports commentators speak straight from their hearts, and in this case Bruce C. Bell and Len McKillop were devoting their *Bridge on the Air* session to the No Trump Bid.

"For some reason or other the No Trump Bid brings out the worst in human nature." It certainly brings out human nature. A man sees a general sort of blaze in his hand, he bids it without adding, he misses a mean slam in clubs the cautious type would have found, he is down in No Trumps. He is the uncalculating romantic of bridge players, the Cyrano de Bergerac who spends his whole purse in one day. "Jeter ce sac, quelle sottise!" "Mais quel geste!"

When I graduated from auction at the table of my father, an inveterate No-trumper, I found that neither Culbertson nor two-pence a hundred cramped these characters. But the Culbertson No Trump had no *panache*. It knocked out the suits with a blunt instrument, and recriminations were acid and precise. Similar language crops up in chamber music, though not publicly, when a pianist joins a string quartet. The piano score looks handsome, the notes may be the merest supporting accompaniment, but the pianist will play them as game in No Trumps.

Bridge is the chamber music of games. It comes over the air with the same lucid pleasure, building up by "artificial response" and "raise into a major suit," like an exposition of musical form. Both Mr. Bell and Mr. McKillop expertly developed their theme, which on this evening was the Gladiator No Trump Bid, devised by the late Dr. Bruce MacKenzie.

The system promises to restore subtlety to the No Trump Bid, and the name Gladiator surely reaffirms its defiance. There was even a loophole for a born No-trumper. We were told that the minimum for one of the bids was "36 points—or a good 35." A 35-point hand will always look good if you need 36 points to bid. The Jacks are almost Kings—they are Crown Princes anyway—that 3 of diamonds is bound to make with any luck—it's really better than the conventional 36-pointer if you have vision.

The experts finished with a reminder that whatever No Trump system was chosen, it should be used consistently. In fact, they said *semper eadem*, using another language we arts critics are shy

about. No-trumpers will easily manage the *semper*, but they are born of the genus *mutabile*. —Nanook

Author and Publisher

MOST of us can take crime or even fantasy in half-hour doses, but, when a play lasts for an hour and a half as did Edouard Bourdet's *Prize Novel* (1YC), we expect something fairly substantial. This piece, however, amply justified its selection. A skilful satire on the French literary scene and the writer's use of real-life material, it had a rare sparkle and incisiveness. The best part, I thought, was the first act in the office of the publisher (Moscat, unless my ears deceive me) where the award of the "Zola Prize" was rigged beforehand. This witty scene confirmed my suspicion that the Goncourt Prize is usually awarded by plucking a name out of a hat. Moscat's flow of critical clichés and his aphorisms for authors ("Never kill your characters; you never know when you may need them again") were delightful. Like many playwrights, Mr. Bourdet had some trouble in following up his initial idea, and my interest faded somewhat when we left the publishers, but a neatly ironical ending caught it again. Frederick Farley gave his usual reliable performance as the embarrassed prize-winner, and Joachim Kahn was suitably self-confident as Moscat, if a thought too hearty at times.

N.Z. Church Music

WHY is it that, when New Zealand composers are discussed, we rarely hear mentioned the several admirable composers of Church music this country possesses? Is it that, perhaps, the works are heard by too limited a range of people—or that some prejudice exists against accepting music so wedded to a special purpose as music pure and simple? (Poor old Bach!) Whatever the reason, the NZBS is performing a worthy service with the recorded series of *Church Music by New Zealand Composers* now running from 1YC. The works are performed splendidly by the Christchurch Cathedral Choir, with all the austere beauty of men's and boys' voices. Last week we heard compositions by Dr. Vernon Griffiths, Professor of Music at Canterbury University College, who must be one of the most prolific of our composers. This was a moving session of devotional music in the truest sense of the term, in which the *Magnificat*, the *Gloria* and the *Super Omnia Ligna Cedrorum* stood out for me. Here, I felt, was not a little of that "serenity and luminous spirituality" which Dr. Richard Terry finds in Byrd's music. It

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