

Broadcast Music

(Continuation of Cover page.)

Liszt himself said of Rubenstein, "He is King of all pianists—he must carry all before him." The tribute of a master to a master. The famous "Melody in F" will be played as a cello solo at 8YA on Friday (March 22) by Mr. Harold Beck.

Chanties and the Negro.

AS two typical sea chanties, (1) Shenandoah, and (2) Rio Grande (both arranged by Sharpe), will be sung at 2YA next Thursday (March 21), by the Lyric Quartet, a few remarks on the origin of these interesting songs will be quite in order. The majority of the chanties are Negroid in origin and these two are no exception. As is well known the Negroes of the Southern States of America and the West Indies are most musical and sing on every possible occasion. They have songs to suit all kinds of collective action, such as working at a pump, loading or unloading a ship, or digging in the fields. One of the gang called the Chantyman is told off to act as a sort of precentor. He sings the tune, improvising the words after the starting verse, the rest of the gang roaring out the choruses, working with the swing and rhythm of the music.

The melodies used are traditional and have been handed down from generation to generation. Many of the chanty tunes bear a strong resemblance to hymn tunes of the Moody and Sankey type. After the American Civil War troupes of Negro singers toured the Northern States, and it was this introduction of their traditional slave tunes that brought about the mix-up with religious hymns. Thus it will be seen that American revival hymns and

chanties have a common source—Negro music. The two chanties in question are what are called windlass and capstan chanties, of which Rio Grande is probably the finest extant. It seems to appeal to all, giving, as it does, such splendid possibilities of sound to open vowels. To hear it pealing over a quiet anchorage with the musical clatter of the windlass pawls adding a quaint accompaniment unlike that of any orchestration ever attempted, must have been a memorable experience.

The days of sailing ships and chanties are quickly passing, but we do appreciate their rendition by our male quartets, reviving memories of a bygone day and generation.

Brahms and Chopin.

LISTENERS to 3YA will have the pleasure of hearing miss Dorothy Davies in a bracket of two fine piano solos on Thursday, March 21. At one of these, the Brahms number, "Capriccio, Op. 72, No. 2, B Minor," the average listener might well shy clear. But we must not worry over its formidable title, rather let us listen with attention to what is just a "caprice" reflecting the greatest of modern classicists in lighter mood. The piece suggests in its gay dance rhythms the background for a ballet of care-free sprites. The clever shifting of accents and the extraordinary variety of tone-colour give the pianist unique opportunities not present in the usual run of piano solos.

Coming to Chopin's "Nocturne, Op. 15, No. 2, in F Sharp Major," this solo is full of details of ravishing beauty. A delicious warmth of colour gives it almost an Oriental atmosphere, painting, as one writer says, "the palm and the cypress, the rose thicket, and the great stars burning low in the Southern Sky." It opens with a melody of heavenly beauty,

lavishly bejewelled with such art that the very embellishments become a part of the melody itself.

The whole nocturne is instinct with a fervour, yet repose, that reveals the true Chopin, writing from his heart and not for salon display. At the close we hear again the haunting melody of the opening, here its indescribable calm touches one like a benediction.

Famous Hymn Tunes.

FOR nearly a quarter of a century bands in New Zealand have taken a deep and abiding interest in hymn tunes and have studied them with excellent results. They play them so well that they have become regular items on their programmes, and next Tuesday (March 19) the St. Kilda Band will play two well-known hymns at 4YA. The expression that is put into their rendition by our New Zealand bands would do credit to the Besses o' th' Barn, or the Black Dyke Band. These tunes are in reality more folk tunes than many of the freakish ditties that research students would foist upon us, and ninety-nine out of a hundred listeners really enjoy hearing hymns. "Fierce Raged the Tempest" was written by a clergyman, the Reverend Godfrey Thring, one time Prebendary of Wells, and editor of "The Church of England Hymn Book." He says he wrote this particular hymn, to picture to himself the scene on the Lake of Genesareth which he had visited some time previously. No doubt the words owe much to their magnificent setting by a fellow cleric, the Reverend John Bacchus Dykes. The tune "St. Aelred," is one of the reverend doctor's finest efforts, and is "chock full of fat for the lucky basses."

"Sun of My Soul," a notable inspiration of John Keble, the poet-parson, and author of the "Christian Year," has three tunes to it, Sir Herbert S. Oakley's tune "Abends," shares popularity with "Hursley," composed by Paul Ritter. The third tune is called "Keble," but is not often sung.

Wireless Receiver Developments

Progress of 1928

THE exhibition of wireless receiving apparatus at Olympia in September was of great use to the broadcast listener who does not follow the technical journals closely in assisting him to realise the trend of progress in both components and receivers, states the wireless correspondent of the "London Times." Although at the time even the experts were unable to follow in detail all the lines of development illustrated at the exhibition, the interval of the last three months has made it possible to view the material in better perspective, so that certain outstanding features now emerge.

Just as 1927 had its special valve novelty in the shape of the screened-grid valve, so the year 1928 has given

us the pentode, the new valve for the loudspeaker stage which has been introduced into many standard receivers. The pentode, as its name implies, is a five-electrode valve, and it is best described as being similar to a screened-grid valve with the addition of an extra earthed electrode between the screening grid and the anode. By the addition of this third grid an undesirable transference of electrons (initially bombarded out of the anode) from anode to screen grid is prevented. With the pentode a remarkably wide grid range of undistorted output is obtained. For a grid swing of 15 volts a change of anode current of 16 milliamperes is obtained, which is ample for average loudspeaker purposes.

The success of both the screened-grid valve as a high-frequency amplifier and the pentode as a power valve has led to the prediction, in some quarters, that the standard three-valve set of the future will be one incorporating both these features with a detector stage of normal type in between the two. At present, however, there are some excellent new three-valve sets built on what one might call straightforward lines, which can be recommended to the listener who, originally a crystal user and thus accustomed to faithful reproduction, wishes to obtain good reception from local stations with the possibility of hearing some Continental stations. Such sets should not be judged by the number of stations they can bring in, but by the standard of reproduction of the local station with a good loudspeaker.

The general adoption of an "all-from-the-mains" policy will undoubtedly come in time, and there have appeared during the year some interesting sets for which the only external connections are those to a power socket, aerial, earth, and loudspeaker. It is difficult to say at present what will be the ultimate trend of this development—e.g., whether unrectified alternating current will be used for the filaments of the amplifying stages together with an indirectly heated cathode valve for the detector, or whether the tendency will be to use a rectifier to produce direct current to run filaments in the ordinary way. The problem is an interesting one, and the year 1929 will be one of intensive experimenting in both these directions. At present the tendency seems to be to go on using existing sets with a high-tension eliminator and a trickle-charger for the low-tension accumulator. For both these devices the copper-oxide rectifier has been found to be eminently suitable and reliable.

A year ago there were many who were of opinion that the "moving-coil" loudspeaker would gradually replace the old "moving-iron" type, because at that time the best moving-iron instruments could not compare with the moving-coil types either in quality or in the power they could handle. Extensive research on the part of a small band of workers has, however, produced an instrument which has shown such an opinion to be quite erroneous.

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