

MUSIC OF THE WEEK

*There is no art without life,
There is no life without growth,
There is no growth without change,
There is no change without contro-
versy.—Frank Rutter.*

ON Sunday week I tuned in to the Wellington Commercial station and picked up a Mr. Marshall—I do not know the initials—wandering through "Myself When Young" from the "Persian Garden" cycle, by Liza Lehmann. The singer had fine depth, but the general presentation of the song lacked a trifle of refinement—which hurt, because I like the song—it is one of my favourite bass solos of the popular variety.

Mr. Marshall started well, but I definitely did not like the break between the second and third bars after the soloist enters. Yet, apparently, the singer and I disagree because the same break occurred later when the phrase was repeated.

Yet another grouch—the pianist rushed through the final bars and added unnecessary flourishes. It is a characteristic of concert accompanists to rush final bars—why? I always have the uneasy feeling that the pianist does it as a "Thank goodness that is over" gesture.

ON somewhat the same subject the Christchurch Commercial, 3ZB, offended on Wednesday evening by suddenly cutting in on the final bars of a recording, striking a gong and announcing the time. Yet it would not have taken more than five seconds to finish the disc, a most enjoyable item. It is the attention given such details as this that so often makes or mars a programme. Please, Commercials!

AT 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, I listened to 1YA. The artist was Madame Annette Chapman—a mezzo-soprano, who has apparently had some solid voice training. Sandwiched in between Beethoven and Bach were two Hugo Wolf songs. The singer's quality in the lower notes and middle register was good, but the top notes did not come through well. Still, reception was not all that could be desired, and perhaps I should give the singer the benefit of the doubt. For all that, it sounded to me as if Madame Chapman was inclined at times to force. Disastrous over the air. Diction, too, is important in serious radio work. In this case it was fair.

THE same evening I heard Rex Harrison, bass-baritone, from 3YA.

Mr. Harrison, why did you sing your songs in English? Schubert should always be sung in German unless you intend "singing down" to an audience.

Mr. Harrison's voice, in quality, is too good for that. In all translations the characteristic vowel must suffer. Schubert surely would know best!

In the "Serenade" the artist seemed a little unsteady at times—the vowels did not flow well and it was the notes that suffered most.

Mr. Harrison has a voice of really good quality. Sometime I would like to hear him in a group of ballads.

THE "Orpheus" sextette was sung by a women's choir at 2YA during the week, but, alas, the balance was not good and the sopranos overpowered the contraltos—or should I



REX HARRISON.

Why did you sing in English?

say contralto?—throughout. Further, the programme appeared unrehearsed and the tempo dragged.

There was, furthermore, no point in using a piano accompaniment when the piano part merely doubles the vocal notes. Perhaps the pianist was trying to keep the combination in tune. If the microphone is to serve them as an expressive medium, women's voices MUST blend well.

WHILST on the subject of vocal music. I must mention a general tendency on the part of New Zealand singers to dis-

guise the real meaning behind a song by taking too many liberties with the score. There is not that natural abandonment to the song behind their efforts so necessary for success. Judging by much that I listened to last week, all high notes are apparently introduced by the composer for the express purpose of showing off the technical ability of the performer!

For goodness sake, singers, get rid of this ridiculous idea. Songs will forever sound meaningless while "technique" overrides the simplicity of melody. Really good teachers would not stand for such treatment. For indeed the student is not always to blame. Sincerity in the performance of music is utterly essential. Vocalists should always be guarded against the superficial and extravagant.

WORTHY music is an outflow of emotion—"the artistic use of the phenomena of sound." If the emotional constituencies of some of the New Zealand artists I have heard in the short time I have been in this country are consistent with some of the interpretative exhibitions they have given, then they fail.

The true musician enjoys his music and does not make it sound too much like a hard day's work. Am I correct in assuming that the lack of real musicianship is a national characteristic? I do not think so.

THE Max Scherek Trio played the Frank Bridge Fantasia very creditably last week at 4YA. I would like to hear this artist present a group of solos. His style is good and he has what I like—character.

FOR those who see this page in time. I commend a short programme of folk songs, scheduled to be presented from the Australian station, 2BL, on Thursday, March 31, at 9.15 p.m., Australian time. Clement Q. Williams is the singer. Folk songs are always good entertainment, especially when they are performed by a musician.

ON Sunday afternoon I was delighted to see that 3YA was to present William Walton's symphony. This brilliant young Lancashire composer—he is 36 on March 29—has already made a name for himself in England and on the Continent. His "Facade" Suite is one of the finest examples of musical humour I know.

The symphony was first presented from the BBC three years ago. Sir Hamilton Harty conducted the performance and claims the work to be the finest he had ever presented for the first time. English people should be proud of the achievements of this young man. With Vaughan Williams, Arthur Bliss, and men like Walton, British music is making itself felt in the world to-day.

BY "SCHERZO"