

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 controversy.*—Frank Rutter.

VISITING Auckland last week I found reception not as good as might have been. It was disappointing because I expected to hear some good things from the Auckland national. The best of the week was undoubtedly a performance of a Bach Suite for two violins and piano performed by Vincent Aspey and Haydn Murray (violins) with Dorothea Ryan at the piano. The playing was clean and the intonation good. The combination played with great care. Just one quibble—a slight difference in the graduation of tonal colour adds interest to any work and in this department alone the performers were not quite at their best. Still, it was a good show and the ensemble was fine listening.

THERE was delightful entertainment in the performance of "Madame Butterfly" presented by an alternative station during the week. The version was, of course, recorded, but none the less notable. It seems remarkable that "Butterfly" was hissed off the stage and had to be withdrawn after one performance in Milan—that was in 1904—yet thirty-four years later we find the opera as attractive as when it first really gripped the public imagination.

Who does not know the splendid soprano aria "One Fine Day?" Last week I had occasion to complain about a local artist who did not please in the number, so I do hope she heard the recording, and has no hard feelings.

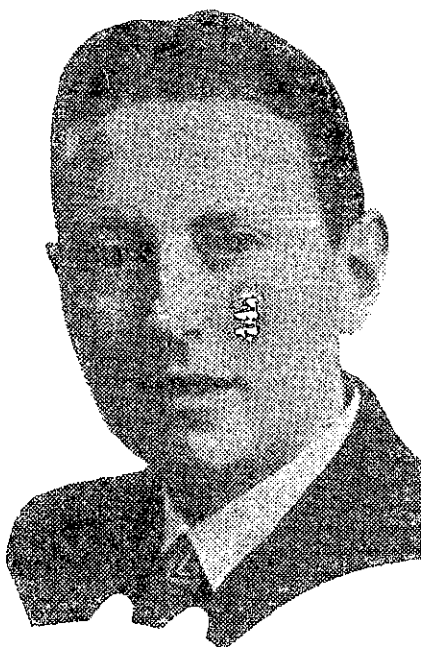
Puccini has retained a most suitable musical atmosphere for his plot and the originality of the score no doubt accounted for the mixed receptions the opera received when first produced. The composer is full of melodic ideas, but Puccini may well be forgotten within the third generation, so rapidly are musical ideas changing these days.

AFTER the Dunedin operatic programme I switched over to the 60 kilowatt station to hear the New Zealand Grand Opera Society. Surely this is not a Dominion-wide body? The name implies as much, but the performance was frankly unsatisfactory.

The chorus work was not together and at least some of the soloists were either very much out of form or totally incapable of fulfilling the roles allotted them. The performance dragged dreadfully and sounded to me as if the small chorus had not been able to get sufficient time to rehearse properly. It is no use whatever attempting grand

opera choruses without diligent practice. In the first place the choir must be well balanced—there was a distinct lack of this necessity in last Sunday's performance. Then the singers must sing with perfect cohesion—anticipation by any one voice completely spoils the general effect.

Good choral singing is one of the most attractive forms of musical en-



NOEL NEWSON.

... Played Delightfully.

tertainment, but poor concerted work is foul...

For a combination to carry such an imposing name as the New Zealand Grand Opera Society, rather suggests it should possess something of a real credit to the country.

The idea of a Grand Opera Society in New Zealand is splendid, but if the members of the combination I heard have been drawn from all parts of the Dominion then I can only suggest that there was not a great deal of time spent in the selection of blending voices. If the chorus was selected in the principal city only, then there may be some excuse. It is not always easy to obtain operatic voices to make a satisfactory chorus from a restricted area. The New Zealand Grand Opera Society should do much better in lighter work, providing the general ensemble singing is touched up a bit.

NOEL Newson, a pianist I heard in Christchurch recently, played delightfully from 3YA on June 15.

The Bach Italian Concerto was

delightful and the Canterbury capital should be proud of its pianist's capabilities. The Scarlatti went well also. What I liked most about Mr. Newson's playing was the manner in which he phrased the works—there was just sufficient contrast at the beginning and ending of each phrase to give complete musical sense. It was a tip for young pianists too, who, after hearing that performance would surely appreciate the fact that correct phrasing is one of the most important factors in polished performances.

THERE was some singing by a Miss Leighton MacFarlane on Wednesday from the Wellington main National Station. This artist does not sound sufficiently matured yet for much work. The voice is small and tuneful but minor musical deficiencies were apparent. However she should improve rapidly, provided attention is paid to exercises which have a beneficial effect on general vocal quality. The recital was at least interesting. The same station presented a splendid French programme the previous evening—the Cesar Franck variations being included. Next week I will write something about Franck music providing space is available.

A CORRESPONDENT has taken me to task regarding a comparison I recently made between modern musicians and those of the earlier school. I hope shortly to contribute to this page a short article on modern composers. Here's hoping my friendly critic will be convinced.

MOLLY HAYRES, a new vocalist, was heard in a short group on Tuesday from 2YA. Miss Hayres has a good voice, but does not always use it with discretion, but there is one fortunate factor in her favour—the voice is steady and even throughout its entire range. But I do like expression in music. Colour is equally as important as in painting. Miss Hayres did not broadcast as well as one could wish, but she did display splendid musicianship.

A VISIT to the "Master's Music Room" from 2UE every Wednesday at 9.45 p.m. New Zealand standard time, will be found a delightful recreation. "The Master's Music Room" contains the better class of light, soft and sweet operatic music. In each programme is the kind of music that allows the listener to sit back comfortably, make smoke rings from his pipe, and dream a little.

BY "SCHERZO"