

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.*

WHEN O. H. Murfield, reviewing the desperately poor houses at Alexander Kipnis's concerts throughout New Zealand, wrote a special article in the "Record" suggesting that the brows of the cultural set were high only because they were bald, he omitted one point—the point that flesh-and-blood listening is always better than radio.

I believe profoundly in the force of radio (and not only because I am supposed to be a critic). But I am quite certain that the best way to judge a performer is in the theatre or hall. Many are flattered by the microphone; others, like Lotte Lehmann (and Kipnis), lose something of their vital appeal, as their notes skip miraculously through space.

THIS week, Lawrence Tibbett begins his New Zealand tour with the very good prospect that his recitals will be stormed by the public. But even the scores and probably hundreds who attended his concerts because it's the social thing, will have the satisfaction of hearing him under the best conditions. The musical public which so brutally cold-shouldered Kipnis, missed that satisfaction; I regret I cannot offer it my sympathy. Maybe, if the NBS continues its policy of importing first-rank artists, the public will at last realise that flesh-and-blood is finer than a condenser.

JASON found the Golden Fleece; as the rotary presses roll their way through this issue, I must report that my search for a well-balanced radio choir is almost as hard a job as Jason had before Hellas went off the gold standard. And there are no Medeas to waylay me, either. Last week, I heard the Auckland Madrigal Choir performing 16th century works by some of the finest madrigal composers: at least, I heard a fine body of sopranos and a fine body of tenors. The altos and the basses were distressingly fond of reading pp for ff. What they read for pp I haven't the least idea. Maybe they thought it means a rest. A pity, because the skilfully-chosen programme contained some of the finest in madrigal music and the part singing by the sopranos and tenors was generally good. Moreover, John Tait's conducting was precise in its reading, though more care should have been exercised in some of the crescendos and diminu-

endos. As they were taken, they resembled a sudden shout.

LYNDALL GREAGER'S soprano solos from 2YA inclined to the characterless at odd moments and tremolo was present rather too often to be excused. Other faults included a scooping, best exemplified by "toeryou," and the old one of carrying the note on to the catch of the breath. The upper register, too, had a tendency to thinness, though in its behalf I may say it did not squeak—a merit in contrast to other radio singers. Miss Greager has a voice and the elimination of the elementary faults which preclude its best development should be her first step in a campaign for better singing.

I REMEMBERED the famous judgment of Mr. P. Kerry at the band championships at Nelson a couple of years ago—"I've never heard bands so damnably out of tune in my life"—when listening to the Wanganui Garrison Band's "Desert Song" selection from 2YA. Because there were definite occasions when the band veered out of tune. Rather too many, in fact, for a band of its class. The cornets often lacked colour and their shape to a note was frequently insufficient. Other selections, I must admit gladly, were better done. On the night that the Ashburton Silver broadcast from 3YA, 2YC was presenting its weekly recorded band hour and switching between the two was not always in favour of Ashburton. Nevertheless, the band played uncommonly well at times. I should have liked, however, a rather more humorous interpretation of "The Joker," for the reading was ever-careful and the trombone soloist insufficiently smooth with his slide.

A MELANCHOLY note in the "Record" a couple of weeks ago mentioned the impossibility of the Dunedin Returned Soldiers' Choir's perpetuation: Not so melancholy was the performance of the choir from 4YA last Monday. Schubert's lovely "Am Meer," for instance, was performed with admirable fidelity. I was not so satisfied with Speaks's setting of "On the Road to Mandalay": the tempo was so slow that each syllable needed accent, a tedious operation faintly recalling the parrot cry of schoolboys giving birth to poetry. Tremolo occasionally spoilt the otherwise satisfactory delivery of R. Duerdon, the soloist, in "Benediction of the Alps," by Baldamus; its elimination

would make his voice most pleasant. I trust that the melancholy certainty of dwindling numbers among the choir will be averted as long as possible.

T.A.L. (Opunake) asks a question the reply to which may be of general interest to readers. He writes: "Can you tell me briefly the difference between sonata and sonata-form?"

Sonata-form is quite a different thing from a sonata. Sonata-form is the form in which first movements and and sometimes other movements of a sonata, symphony or chamber music work is generally written. A movement written in sonata-form consists of three parts. The first section announces two principal subjects linked by the bridge. It is an **exposition** of related themes, which is **developed** in the second section and **recapitulated** in the third. This is a comparatively bald explanation of simple sonata-form but will probably serve. The term sonata-form applies equally well to the first movement of a piano sonata, a violin sonata, a chamber music composition or a symphony. All those compositions are practically one and the same thing as regards their form.

Radio Comedy

(Continued from page 6.)

that can get over without visualisation, is not the sort of copy a writer can batter out of his machine ad lib. It is copy in which every word, every phrase and every suggestion has to be weighed and tested, and then, finally, it must be polished with the same care given a diamond. It is as rare as diamonds, too, not only in the radio studio, but even in the world of letters. If you doubt this, count up the authors who have made a world name by writing comedy. After Wodehouse comes—well, who?

All of which leads me up to the real point I wish to make, and which, had I been really modern, I would have slammed into the opening paragraph and then recapitulated for the rest of the chapter. Here it is:

Newspaper and magazine pages in this country are cluttered up with syndicated material to the exclusion of New Zealand talent—except at rates that can tempt only the veriest tyro anxious for the passing flicker of limelight. To-day radio offers a new vehicle of creative expression, and as time goes on will do so even to a greater extent. What, then, is going to happen to our national humour? Is it to be allowed to die stillborn because it is rare and therefore expensive? The economics are beyond me—but not the implication as it affects the creative work of New Zealand writers.

BY "SCHERZO"