

# With GRAMOPHONE and RADIO

BY "B NATURAL"

## Why the Electric Gramophone is Superior



THE past season saw the introduction of the radio and gramophone combination and this coming season will see its firm establishment. It has and will be the means of diffusion of music into homes that have until now been silent. But in many cases this has been so through the use of the gramophone and the problem faces many who are desirous of introducing music "Shall I have a gramophone or a combination?" Of course, there is the extra cost of the combination or the question would need no solving, and so, before deciding, it is necessary to see what are the salient features of the combination and how they compare with the ordinary gramophone.

WE shall only briefly refer to the radio part of the combination for the virtues of this instrument have been oft told and consider the gramophone aspect. "Why use a gramophone when there is a radio?" I can almost hear someone say, "Surely one is in opposition to the other?" No! music to be enjoyed must be had when wanted and the taste of the individual changes from time to time. We could diverge into the realms of psychology to further this argument, but lines of thought other than those ostensibly covered by the title of this page must be left. "Then why the radio?" And now we have arrived at the basic argument. Music at will, and any class of entertainment for the evening. One could go on elaborating these two arguments, to show how the news and views of the world are brought to the home faster than the proverbial Mercury, the messenger of the Gods, how the world's best music is introduced where it might never have been heard, how it is possible to have a Kreisler or a Jazz Band to entertain one's friends, and how all this can be had merely by a rotation of a knob or the simple movement of transferring a record to the and from the turntable. These achievements sound hardly possible, but they are being accomplished in thousands of New Zealand homes to-day.

BUT now to facts. "How does a 'wireless gramophone' compare with an ordinary gramophone?" They do not compare, they contrast. Let us then examine the facts a little more closely and see why.

At a future date we shall see how a record is made and of what it consists, but for the present it can be assumed that the marvel of the gramophone is the result of an impression in wax made by the waves set up by the voice or instrument being recorded. Further, it has been shown that sound

consists of waves in the ether (space) and that each note is a definite number of waves per second. The lower the note the fewer the waves. The range is from about 16 to 15,000 per second, but the notes of the piano fall within the band 28 to 8192. The upper "frequencies" are overtones that must be reproduced if absolute fidelity is required. Each voice and instrument is characterised by certain peculiarities, and these are variations in the number of "overtones." For the present we shall consider an overtone a note set up by the original or "fundamental" note. It can be seen then that faithful reproduction entails two achievements, the reproduction of both fundamental and overtone, and this is where the electric gramophone scores.

To impress these notes on the wax recording discs, a diaphragm is made to vibrate by the impulses arising through the voice or an instrument. The movement of the diaphragm is transferred to the record by a needle—almost the reverse of the reproduction. Before the advent of the electric amplifier (part of the radio receiver) all the power imparted to the recording needle was that supplied by the voice so that the impressions were very weak and the deep notes which need to be strengthened to record were lost. The same thing happens when an ordinary gramophone is played there is no power in the reproduction and the needle moving in the sound grooves vibrated a diaphragm and this moves a column of air, which causes the notes to be audible.

The function of the electric amplifier, which is part and parcel of both recording and reproducing outfits, is to strengthen the otherwise weak vibrations. It is a combination of valves, transformers, resistance and condensers that strengthen weak vibrations. It is employed in the recording to strengthen up the sounds produced by the voices or instruments to be recorded and this impresses a stronger and more balanced signal on the record. This gives the reproducer a "flying start," and with an amplifier at this end each little variation can be reproduced and our sensitive ear can detect the variation that classes the reproduction and the recording in a superior class.

Beside these little variations that make or mar the quality there is the bass. This constitutes the body of all music and unless a very expensive gramophone is used it cannot be reproduced without an amplifier. The comparative costs are very much in the favour of the electric amplifier.

Because of size and cost the popularity of the electric combination is

**R**EALIZING the growing popularity of the gramophone and radio "Symphony" combination we are this week commencing a section devoted to the gramophone side of the combination. It is hoped to discuss in non-technical language some of the oft-asked questions, "Do pick-ups shorten the life of records?" "What type of needles should be used?" "How do pick-ups vary?" "Why is the Pick-up superior to the ordinary gramophone?" and a host of other interesting and important points that concern the owner and the prospective owner of the combination or the electric gramophone. Further, the most important releases of the week will be reviewed in brief and from time to time short biographies of the better known composers and artists will be published.

### New Recordings

#### Galli-Curci singing in English.

ALL who listen in during the afternoon sessions cannot fail to remark upon the recordings of the world's greatest soprano, Amelita Galli-Curci. Usually these are in Italian, and can be appreciated by those who are musically inclined, and to whom the words matter little, but she has a few songs in English.

Another delightful recording has been added to this category, "Lo, Here the Gentle Lark" (Bishop), and "Chanson Solveig" ("Peer Gynt") (Grieg). H.M.V. DB1278. The words are as English as can be, and though the melody is in the Italian coloratura manner, it is English in spirit, too. Shakespeare wrote the words, and Sir Henry Bishop the music; and Amelita Galli-Curci, Italian to the core, sings it in English, in a style to make anyone stop and listen with delight. Those who appreciate vocal gems should endeavour to hear this record as it comes over the air, and judge for themselves whether or no it deserves a place in the record album.

#### "The Cocoanuts."

GIL DECH, one of Columbia's younger pianists, gives us his own private version of "When My Dreams Come True." It is doubtful whether the talking picture, "The Cocoanuts," made this such a success, or whether the theme song made the picture. Probably the latter. Anyhow, together with "Old Timer" theme song of the picture "Noah's Ark" it will be found on Columbia 01687.

#### Gladys Moncrieff.

Australia's glorious Gladys also sings "When My Dreams Come True." On the reverse is "Heart o' Mine" (Columbia 01688). "Smiling Irish Eyes" is another Gladys Moncrieff success, paired with "A Wee Bit of Love" (Columbia 01779). During her sojourn in Wellington, where she appeared in "Rio Rita," Gladys Moncrieff broadcast from 2YA to the delight of all listeners. Several selections from "Rio Rita" are regularly broadcast from the YA stations.

fairly restricted, but modern small and portable machines do much to fill the gap. When used with electrically produced records little can be desired when everything is considered.

From all angles, then, the advantages are with the electric combination and in a future article we shall discuss the work of the pick-up and how this may be attached to any receiver and used with any cheap gramophone.

### Celebrities

#### The Songs of Schubert

"YOU have my heart, but Schubert has my soul," said the dying Beethoven to his closest friend, and truly that soul sang its sweetest in the songs that Franz Schubert left behind him. At thirty years of age, but ten months after his adorned Beethoven, Schubert was to pass the same way to dust, but not to silence and oblivion. His 700 songs remain to testify that no composer in the whole history of music even nearly approached him in song writing. Necessarily but a fraction of this glorious treasury has been recorded, but even that fraction is sufficient to prove that not Mozart, nor Haydn or Bach, not even Beethoven himself could match him in the lovely art of wedding a ballad to music.

Perhaps the best known of all is the wild "Erl King," written when Schubert was only 19 years of age. Sophie Braslau, the famous contralto, gives a thrilling reading of this, changing her voice to suit the three protagonists in the dialogue with a vivid sense of the dramatic. This is paired with "Death and the Maiden," a tune of which Schubert was so fond that he based a quartet upon it. (Columbia 04161.)

"Der Lindenbaum," as lovely and spontaneous as a folk-song, is paired with "Am Meer" (By the Sea) by the great German basso, Alexander Kipais (Columbia 04115). Another of his pairings is "Der Wegweiser" (The Signpost) a song with a sad but haunting and appealing melody, and the dark, gruesome "Der Doppelgänger" (The Phantom Double). (Columbia 04195.)

One of the most charming of all the song records is sung by Sir George Henschel, accompanying himself at the piano. The songs are "Das Wandern" and "Der Leiermann" (The Hurdy Gurdy Man). Sir George sings them with great artistry and feeling on Columbia 03594.

Elsa Alsen, the famous American soprano, has chosen the exquisite "Du Bist Die Ruh" (Thou Art My Peace), the loveliest of all Schubert songs, and sings it with incomparable sweetness, paired with "Greutchen and Spinnrade," on Columbia 04194.

Can you solve a difficult problem?

See

"TRIALS IN TACT"

(on page 33 of this issue).