

Editorial Notes.

Wellington, Friday, September 29, 1933.

THE balance and control of orchestral broadcasts is criticised by a correspondent in our columns to-day. He finishes his letter by "recognising the power of the men at the knobs, but doubting their necessity." This letter may arouse sympathy among listeners who, failing to recognise the poorness of their receiving sets, are only too ready to lay the blame on the Broadcasting Board's officials whose duty it is to control the volume. And this control is not a duel between the conductor of the orchestra and the official.

Abolish the control, shout others, and let the pure milk of the composer's music flow out to the listeners, without interference or revision. Do this, and all will be well. This may sound quite simple and reasonable, and would be answerable if it had any relation to the elementary engineering conditions which govern broadcasting. Unfortunately it has none. Balance and control are two different things. Balance is concerned with the placing of singers or other performers in relation to the microphone so that proper balance between the performer and his accompaniment can be preserved, where a difference of position would make one predominate unduly over the other. Control consists in guarding the electrical input to the transmitter so that this input shall not fall so low as to be inaudible or be drowned by interference when received on an ordinary set, or rise so high as either (a) to cause overloading and possible damage to some part of the transmitter, thus causing a breakdown; or (b) to cause "blasting" in the receiving apparatus.

This intervention is necessary because the toleration of extremes between loud and soft within these limits is less than that which the human ear in the concert room will tolerate. If the suggestions of our correspondent were adopted it would result in inaudibility in certain parts of the programme, frequent bad quality in others, and a probable breakdown at some point or other. Thus the official in charge of control in a musical performance has considerable power and responsibility.

And the New Zealand Broadcasting Board's officials are not merely engineers with the necessary qualifications for adjusting dials and machinery. They are men with a

musical knowledge and a technical ability. It is their business to correct the proportional discrepancy between the human and the mechanical toleration of dynamic extremes, so that the music that comes to the

Books to Read

Literature in Demand at the Moment

THIS list, supplied each week by the Wellington Public Library, indicates books that are in general demand at the moment, and may serve as a guide to those readers who are looking for new and interesting literature.

FICTION.

Glastonbury Romance, by J. O. Powys.

It seems that one member at least of the famous Powys family of stylists is to become a best-seller. In "Glastonbury Romance," John Cowper Powys has created a remarkable, if uneven book, and one which is already in great demand. The story runs to over eleven hundred pages, but in spite of its length and frequent metaphysical and mystical digressions, which to some might appear tedious, it remains a valuable and interesting contribution to modern fiction.

Human Being, by Christopher Morley.

A many-mooded story, amusing and strong with truth of how the biographer explored the life and times of Richard Roe, the unknown citizen.

The Street of the Sandal-makers, by Nils Peterson.

An historical novel picturing the daily life of the poorer folk of Rome at the time of Marcus Aurelius. It is vivid and picturesque.

GENERAL.

The Egypt's Gold, by Davis Scott.

The amazing story of the salvage of a million pounds in gold and silver, told by an eye-witness. It is a fine book of adventure and a splendid story of persistent heroism.

So Far, So Good, by Elsie Janis.

A sparkling and witty autobiography of the famous actress. Told in an original and scintillating style, her book is full of reminiscences of people famous both in America and England. It is a unique record of an extraordinary career and personality.

Ways of Escape, by Sir Philip Gibbs.

The famous novelist and journalist in his latest book fearlessly and logically traces from their sources the development of our troubles since the war, and explains what he believes to be the remedy.

listener is a faithful reproduction of that which is being heard in the actual concert chamber. They are not there to duel with the conductors, but to protect the listeners.

It is no easy problem and the explanation above is just a very broad definition of the function of control. But it is necessary that the public should disabuse its mind of a stolid engineer sitting at a control device and determined to frustrate the intentions of the composer and to neutralise the *nuances* of the conductor.

The Broadcasting Board might, of course, prove the utter impossibility of the "no control" idea by giving a demonstration along the lines suggested by our correspondent. In other words, it might table the advice of a person who is anxious to have his theories substituted for such experience as the New Zealand radio authorities have been able to acquire during the last ten years. We use the word might, knowing full well that the broadcast would be a musical caricature and a waste of money. Both the musical and the engineering departments of our radio services are engaged in the technical control of musical transmissions. There is no artistic interference other than that designed to assist in getting over to the public a faithful reproduction of the music performed.

But, in the case of orchestral music, listeners and critics should always remember that, at its very best, the reception of broadcast music can be but a reproduction on a reduced scale of what is happening in the concert chamber. For that reason the listener cannot expect to experience the physical and dynamic contrasts between the *fortissimo* and the whisper of an orchestra heard in the concert hall.

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