

LISTEN TO GOOD MUSIC

(By «Opus.»)

MANY theories have been advanced as to why the standard of musical appreciation is not higher among the New Zealanders. Perhaps the main reason is that the listener on hearing the title of a classical composition and even before hearing the first note, becomes to some extent overawed and imagines he is in for something intensely dry and erudite.

Accordingly, if he is listening to a radio—and most of our music in New Zealand must necessarily, at our present stage of musical development, come to us on the radio—he immediately changes to something he imagines is better and easier to appreciate—usually the ubiquitous jazz or swing.

Yet one does not need to be one of the intelligentsia nor yet deeply versed in aesthetics to appreciate the works of the masters. This should be an essential part of a



universal education. In Elizabethan times anyone who reached a reasonable standard of education could take a sheet of music and sing a part. Yet, what small percentage of New Zealanders—a supposedly educated people—are able to do this?

Many folk will often listen to, and thoroughly enjoy, a piece of music, the name of which they do not know. However, if they had been told at the beginning that the composition was to be, say, Beethoven's String Quartet in E Major, Opus 62, No 2, they would immediately have shown an air of boredom and a marked disinclination to listen.

Such an attitude resembles strongly that of judging a book from its cover. It is, however, the attitude adopted by a great number of people with regard to classical music. In other words, they are prone to condemn even before hearing what it is all about. Should they listen without this

knowledge, their comments often show that the composition has been absorbed carefully and intelligently. There has grown up, over the past few years, an increased desire for more good music, but this is not nearly as widespread as it might be.

It must be remembered that a title, as that given above, is not always an indication of something dull and uninteresting.

The term «String Quartet» means simply that the piece is composed for four string instruments—two violins, a viola—like a slightly overgrown violin—and a cello—a satisfying combination. «In E Major» indicates the key in which the piece is written. «Opus 62» means that it is the 62nd work of the particular composer—«Opus» from the Latin meaning «work.» «No 2» is an indication that the whole work is composed of several quartets, this being the second quartet of the group. Thus it becomes obvious that such a title is merely a type of index to the particular piece and is really nothing that should make the listener feel overawed or out of his depth.

Listening is, of course, essential for appreciation, and by listening is meant not a half-hearted concentration, but an honest attempt to follow the course of the music. Until interest becomes sufficient to support orchestras and other ensembles most of our music, as previously mentioned, will be heard on the radio, which in itself presents listening difficulties.

It is absolutely useless endeavouring to listen while at the same time playing a game of cards or carrying on an interesting conversation with Aunt Fanny. The importance of intelligent listen-