



"Man sees his own faults as little as a monkey or an owl recognises his ugliness in looking into a mirror."
—Old German proverb.

"TILL'S MERRY PRANKS"

The Adventures Of A Witty Rogue
Told In Music

However, New Zealand listeners should not find it so very difficult when they know more about the circumstances and the history of the vagabond Till.

A Rabelaisian Fellow

Till, according to a Dr. Murner who chronicled his life about the year 1500, was born in 1283 and died of the plague in 1353 after wanderings through Germany, Italy, and Poland. Till's exploits



EARLY in the 14th century there was born in the little village of Brunswick a peasant whose escapades have made him one of the most famous characters in all folk lore. The practical jokes and humorous adventures of this witty, hair-brained young scamp — Till Eulenspiegel — have become proverbial.

He is not only the hero of innumerable German legends, but he was also a popular figure in the stories of Queen Elizabeth's day, where we find him called Tyll Owleglass (a literal translation, as *Eulen* means "owls," and *spiegel* means "glass"), and Richard Strauss has told the story of his adventures in witty and attractive music.

The full title of this work by Strauss is "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," set in the old-fashioned roguish manner, in the form of a rondo, for Grand Orchestra. It will be heard as the feature item of 3YA's afternoon programme on Sunday, April 27, played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Strauss Wouldn't Explain

When this interesting piece was first produced, in 1895, the conductor requested Strauss to furnish an explanatory programme. The composer declined. "It is impossible," he said, "for me to furnish an explanation of *Eulenspiegel*; were I to put into words the thoughts which its several incidents suggested to me, they would seldom suffice, and might even give rise to offence. Let me leave it, therefore, to my hearers to crack the hard nut which the Rogue has prepared for them."

were mischievous pranks that he practised without discrimination, and with a frank absence of delicate sentiment which can best be described as Rabelaisian. In Murner's tale, Till is sentenced to the gallows, but escapes death at the last moment. Strauss, however, does not let his hero off, but makes him die on the scaffold to a special chord of music.

To show the close connection between the story and the music, here is a description of one of the first incidents: The rogue, putting on his best manners, passes through the gate, and enters a certain city. It is market day; the women sit at their stalls and prattle (flutes, oboes, and clarinets). Hop! Eulenspiegel springs on his horse (indicated by rapid triplets extending through three measures), gives a smack of the whip, and rides into the midst of the crowd. Clink, clash, clatter! A confused sound of broken pots and pans, and the market women are put to flight. In haste the rascal rides away (admirably illustrated by a fortissimo passage for the trombones) and secures a safe retreat.

The End of Till

At the end, Till wanders down the street whistling a popular song and looking for some new form of devilment. Slowly the music works itself up into a

climax, and we find Till at the height of his glory. But retribution is at hand. Till is suspected by the law as an incorrigible rogue and finally the heavy roll of drums announces that the hand of the law is upon him. He is dragged up before the court. The judge speaks in slow, stolid and portentous phrases—Till whistles to himself indifferently, almost cheekily. Again the law speaks and again Till whistles. He tries to bluff things out, but that does not work, so he assumes a contrite air. The law remains unmoved, justice is delivered, and Till, the merry rogue, is strung up on a gibbet—a drop of the seventh in the brass tells us that he has taken "the drop" and his soul (flute) flutters up to Heaven.

The music which Strauss has written to illustrate his story was set to a ballet some time ago, and was presented in America by the great Nijinsky. Listen to it next Sunday afternoon from 3YA.



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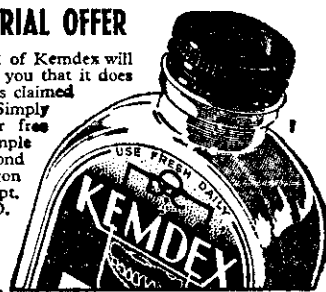
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