

RECENT MUSIC

No. 16: By MARSYAS

THERE has been such a spate of Brahms within one week that anyone might have wondered whether some centenary was being celebrated, but Brahms neither died nor was born in the year 1842, so the occurrence within a week's programmes of the violin concerto and the D Minor violin sonata (both from the 1YA studio), the first symphony and the D minor piano concerto (3YA) and, in addition, a whole hour of Brahms from 1YX (including the third symphony and the Haydn Variations) must be put down to coincidence. To one who was able to hear a good deal of the music, the coincidence was a welcome one, following on the recent chain of Beethoven symphonies from 3YA.

It is impossible to imagine how such music could pass over the ears of the Uninitiated-but-Fond-of-Good-Music class of listener without giving some suggestion of the vast forces at work in it. Quite apart from what Brahms "says" in his first symphony, the sheer sound of such grandiose music must impress the novice listener long before he gets to the stage of examining the work. And the initiated one who knows the background can well understand the excitement with which they proclaimed it as "The Tenth" when it was first heard. To hear "the tenth" was some consolation for the non-appearance of Beethoven's Ninth.

SUMER is icumen in, however unseasonal, was a welcome item in a 4YA programme. It was written in 1226 or thereabouts, but archaism is the least of its charms. It has a fresh and lovely melody. The words are famous in their own right. And when sung in canon as a "rota" (or "round") it fascinates the most sophisticated ear. People who have never sung "in harmony" are delighted when they find themselves taking part (with no more effort than learning a simple tune) in a very sonorous "six men's song."

It should be known by every school-child in New Zealand. It can easily be sung by children (in four parts) and the ground bass (intended for two men) may be played on the piano.

A MORE recent antiquity found its way into a 3YA Sunday programme—some music from a Palestrina mass. The praise of God has never since Palestrina's day inspired such mellifluous heavenly music; and when I say this I do not mean that no subsequent religious music was worthy of its purpose. Later church music was often too earthy and rugged, or too contemplative, or too theatrical, or in some other way limited so that it didn't ascend into the astral dimensions the way Palestrina's does. The quality of his music makes it seem even more incongruous coming through an electrical contrivance than any other.

However such an anomaly is not a problem for the broadcasting people; they are doing their stuff simply by putting the music on the air.

MUSIC of the Masters is a ZB programme that has been going for some time, on Wednesday evenings. I listened for the first time the other night and was treated to an excellent programme of Mozart; short certainly and fragmentary, but very well done. Mozart's biography invites the sentimental approach, but this 3ZB programme wasn't like that. The music was well chosen and the commentary brief. To label Mozart "For the musical connoisseur" is a blow against the people. Such a programme as this, which acknowledged Mozart to be everyman's property, is a blow for the people.

Two correspondents wrote to *The Listener* after reading my comment on Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*. One agreed with what I said, and I appreciate his interest, but then he goes on to condemn Mendelssohn in such terms as I cannot endorse. Mendelssohn was not "at best a copyist." In his overtures he created a quality of sound that was unique—an orchestral texture that was unknown even to Mozart and certainly never achieved or indeed sought by Beethoven: a faery, shimmering, gossamer-like sound. I think especially of the *Hebrides* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* overtures. And the various scherzi are profoundly original. It would have been better to say that "Mendelssohn was at worst a copyist." Then your correspondent could have added that it was a pity Mendelssohn was so often at his worst.

The other correspondent didn't like what I said at all, and complained especially of my saying that "the chorales were just too Moody and Sankey for words." Of course he has heard more Moody and Sankey tunes than I have, but Percy Scholes has probably heard more still, and he, Puritan protagonist that he is, says that "the bulk of them are commonplace reiterations of one or two sentimental ideas set to fitting music."

LISTENINGS

(Perpetrated and illustrated by KEN ALEXANDER)

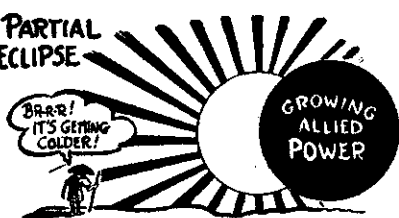
HEYDRICH the butcher has gone. The Nazis seem to think that he was worth five or six hundred Czech lives. The rest of the world considers that one dead rat would adequately represent his value.

Nippon's new song *Japannia Rules the Waves* turned out to be *The Broken Melody*. They thought it was a rhapsody in "A" but it went "B" flat.

Pétain announced: "M. Laval and I have shaken hands. We walk hand in hand." Perhaps the time isn't far distant when they'll run neck and neck.

It is thought that when the ships of the Jap fleet met the U.S.A. navy at Midway they were on their way "down under." Some of them arrived. It is reported that the Emperor of Japan decorated the admiral of the Midway fleet; probably with the Order of the Bath (extra wet).

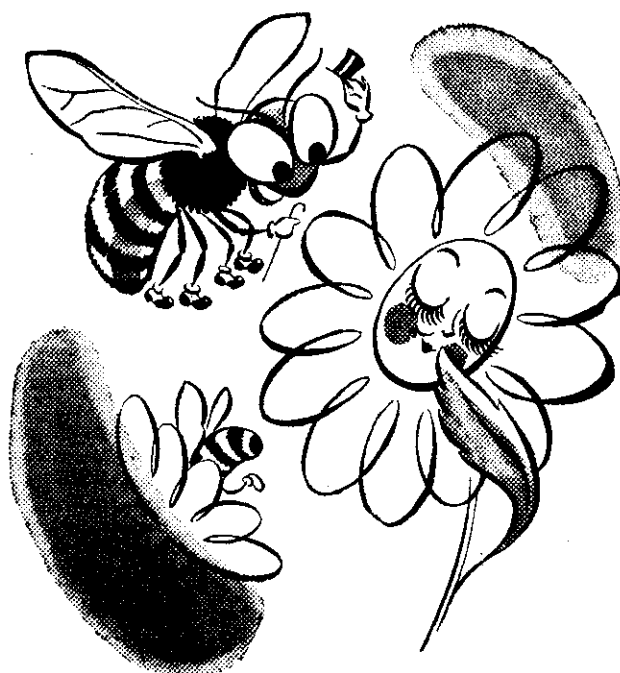
PARTIAL ECLIPSE



The Germans threaten to treat the Free French in Libya as irregulars. If it's irregular to pull a Nazi's nose, then they are.

A Sydney man claims to have invented the midget submarine during the last war. They suit the Japs all right, but probably the Aussies thought they'd be too tight under the arms.

Britain's growing might! Hitler's growing mightn't! Germany is throwing in everything it has. Russia is throwing out what's left of it.



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