

# THINGS TO COME

## A Run Through The Programmes

**T**IME was, when we lived in the bosom of our family, when the parson used to make his weekly call and our mother knew all the right things to say and we did not. How useful, at that early stage of our career, we'd have found the talk scheduled from 3ZR on Tuesday, February 16: "What Not to Say to a Parson." It would probably have saved us from that ignominious lecture delivered after we had hot-headedly described to him our experiments with frogs, and from that other reception of our very good news story of old Mr. Blossomwell's plums. Ah, well, we must not grudge this turn of luck that has come to newer listeners: let us generously rejoice with them, that they in good time may hear what words to avoid, what subjects to skip, what opinions to leave unexpressed in the presence of a parson.

### Betting on a Certainty

So many half-crowns invested in Art Union tickets during the last 15 years or so have gone the way of the conjuror's rabbit that one is inclined to look on John Tempest's money machine with a healthy suspicion. Nevertheless, the memory of all those lost half-crowns, that cake whose weight we failed to guess, not to mention the cushion cover which we were unlucky enough to win, will inspire us to hear how John Tempest made his money out of an invention which enabled him to bet with the certainty of winning. The story of how he tried to gain control of the world's money, who tried to thwart him and how, is the theme of the new ZB serial *The Money Machine*, which begins at 22B on Saturday, February 20, and which will then be heard on Fridays at 7.15 p.m. and on Saturdays at 8.15 p.m. This serial will start at the other ZB stations on successive Saturdays.

### Now a Chinese

Paul Robeson has been many things, and seen many things. He has been a preacher, a labourer, a lawyer, an actor, and all the time a singer. But it would seem to require more than versatility to meet the latest demands made on him—the singing and recording of songs in Chinese! This, if we may believe the *American Music Lover*, he is now doing, and if he were not doing it well, his records would not be used by the China Aid Council in its appeals to its own nationals. We do not suggest that you will hear one of these records if you listen to 3YA at 9.51 on Sunday (February 14), but you will hear Paul Robeson, and hearing him again you will begin to understand what a miracle it is to transmogrify himself so completely that his own people no longer know him and the Chinese people accept him as one of themselves.

### Frying Pan and Fire

Few writers of modern thrillers can make the hair rise and the flesh creep as successfully as could Edgar Allan

Poe in his *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. We remember long nights when the ghosts of Lady Berenice and Ligea haunted our room, and the axe above our head swung nearer and nearer. Our artist has here shown the situation in one of the best of these tales, "The Pit and the Pendulum," which will be read over the air from 3YA on Wednesday, February 17. The man is



strapped down in a pit, above him is an axe on a pendulum swinging lower at every sweep, rats crawl over his helpless body, and the walls are gradually closing in on him so that if he escapes the frying pan, he will fall into the fire. In case you take the horrors too much to heart, we point out that the stage is set in 16th Century Spain.

## RECENT MUSIC

(No. 49: By Marsyas)

**T**HOSE who were fortunate enough to be listening to 2YA on the morning of Sunday, January 31, heard what was, with certain reservations, the most instructive musical broadcast for some time. Instead of the Catholic service scheduled, a prepared session on the development of the Mass in the early Christian era was presented, with plainsong illustrations recorded by the monks of Solesmes.

Nothing could have been a better preparation for the half-hour of Sixteenth Century Polyphonic Masterpieces which 3YL broadcast on the following evening, or for the Byrd five-part Mass, which is being heard quite frequently at present.

"I am quite aware that it needs some effort to appreciate sixteenth century works, which have none of the apparent 'purpose' of the later symphonists, and none of their dramatic perspective: only a purity of soul and a perfect plasticity of rhythm," wrote William Glock in that same issue of the Observer which I quoted last week.

The need for that effort would diminish if we had frequent opportunities of hearing plainsong in all its pure simplicity, and the polyphonic music which, while retaining the same purity of feeling, developed away to the other extreme—intellectual and technical complexity.

"Perfect plasticity of rhythm" is the phrase to give a most revealing clue to the nature of plainsong and its descendant polyphony, provided "rhythm" is

### Pity the Poor Dancers

"The Prospect Before Us," or "Pity the Poor Dancers" is the name of a modern ballet suite arranged by Constant Lambert from the music of William Boyce, a post-Handelian English composer of the 18th century, which will be introduced to New Zealand listeners by 2YA at 9.25 p.m. on Tuesday, February 16. The story of the ballet was based on an incident related by "Mr. Eber" in his *History of the King's Theatre*, concerning two rival London theatres, one of which was burnt down, leaving the dancers on the street. The decor was done "after Thomas Rowlandson" and the costumes (and Lambert's instrumentation), belong to the period. The sections in the recording to be heard are: The Rehearsal, The Fire Scene, The Lawyers, The Urchins, Ballet Scene, Street Scene and Finale.

### Animals' Who's Who

During the summer months at 5.15 p.m. on Mondays, 12B has broadcast a series of talks on animals at the Auckland Zoo. On a recent Sunday afternoon the technical staff visited the Zoo and broadcast descriptions and conversations direct from the cages. On this occasion the new polar bear from Australia was christened Snowball, and Jumuna, the elephant, gave a solo item on the mouth-organ. At three o'clock one morning a couple of weeks ago, enthusiastic members of the technical staff went out specially to record the dawn calls of the various animals for use on soundtracks. This very popular feature is scheduled to continue indefinitely.

read in its widest sense: rhythm of word-meanings, and rhythm of the emotional response, in addition to the purely mechanical factor—Latin prose rhythm. Our difficulty in being receptive to it all has arisen out of the predominance in our daily music of dance-rhythms, which govern the pattern-basis of almost everything on which the ordinary listener bases his musical experience: square-cut sections of music with recurring points of rest, the very opposite of "perfect plasticity of rhythm." By usage, we have made the prose-rhythm factor seem strange and incomprehensible to the ordinary listener whose daily bread it once was, and the understanding of the other factors has gone with it.

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**T**HOSE plainsong chants, which fall so strangely on the ears of some listeners, and the music of the sixteenth century differ from the great products of the symphonic era in that they admit no Questions; it was not a matter of stating and reconciling conflicting ideas, nor even of setting off contrasted keys against each other. They presupposed faith. There were no soulstorms, no torments to be resolved in the mighty struggles of masterly finales, only expressions of faith to be clothed in musical raiments of celestial beauty. If we had no other relics of the people who produced and used this music, we could assume that they never knew the torments of the soul that Beethoven knew.

So if we find that plainsong, or Byrd's *Mass in Five Voices*, conveys nothing to us, it is not because we don't know enough, but probably because we know too much.