

THINGS TO COME

A Run Through The Programmes

SOME unfamiliar variations of a very familiar theme will be heard in the fourth of the BBC recorded programmes "Happy and Glorious," which will be heard from 2YA this Friday, February 19, at 8.2 p.m. Spike Hughes, who directed the musical side of this production, wrote in the *Radio Times* that our National Anthem was "about the best of its kind, in addition to having been the first. Its quality makes all the more surprising the discovery that it has inspired some of the worst music ever written by famous composers." (Here he refers possibly to *The Battle of Vittoria*, ascribed to Beethoven, Weber's *Jubilee Overture*, and a set of variations for military band written by Queen Victoria's mother to show off a pair of 500-guinea silver drums). But the real musical curiosity of the programme is Paganini's set of fantastically ingenious variations for the violin, written in 1829 for the King of Prussia.

"My Sister and I"

The story of a 12-year-old Dutch boy's experiences in Holland at the time of the German invasion, is told in a BBC feature programme "My Sister and I," adapted from the diary of Dirk van der Heide. It will be heard from 2YA at 8.2 p.m. on Friday, February 26, Symbolising the blow to Holland's culture, the tale opens with the interruption of the boy's work on an essay on Erasmus which he never finished, because on May 10, 1940, he awoke to find Rotterdam, the city of the great medieval humanist, being bombed by the Germans.

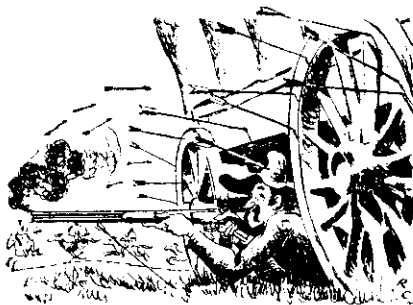
A Rum Go

We always imagined that "grog" was one of those words, with which King Alfred cheered on his stalwart Saxon fleet to sink the Danes. We find, however, that "grog" is quite a new boy in the English language, and that it owes its name, not its quality, to Admiral Vernon's trousers. This worthy Admiral of the Fleet in the mid-eighteenth century always wore a pair of gingham trousers, made of cheap cotton and wool. This same fellow introduced the custom of giving the British sailors a measured amount of liquor, usually rum, every day. So when the admiral went by, the cry would go up "Here's old Grogam," and when the rum ration came along, the cry would go up "Here comes old Grogam," too, so that the admiral gradually lost his identity, first in his trousers and then in his rum ration. If you are interested in the origin of words and phrases and customs, listen to *That's How it Started*, broadcast on Saturday evenings at 8.5 p.m. from 3ZB.

The Music Goes Round

Interesting descriptive music by the man to whom the *Rhapsody in Blue* owed much of its success—Ferde Grofe, American conductor, orchestrator and composer—will be heard from 3YA at 9.43 p.m. on Sunday, February 28. Three movements from his *Wheels* suite will be played by the Ferde Grofe orchestra. The first movement is called "Covered Wagon," with a rhythmic

basis related to the slow grinding of the heavy wheels across the desert. Part two, "Pony Express" depicts an encounter with Indians by a U.S. mail rider. Curiously enough, each time a Redskin bites the dust, we hear "Pop



Goes the Weasel." Part three, "Iron Horse," depicts the struggle of the workers who joined east and west by rail.

Of Course, If Only . . .

"Your If is the only peace-maker; much virtue in If," said Touchstone; and how useful we have always found the little word in our own somewhat limited diplomatic career! But the most noble, sonorous, and air-cushioned If-poem in the English language, Grey's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," is to be read from 3YA this Sunday, February 21. So let us all, all of us If-reliant ones, look forward to sinking into our cushions while Ion Swinley reads from "The Curfew Tolls the Knell" (Oh, sink deeper, deeper yet).

RECENT MUSIC

(No. 50: By Marsyas)

THE concert relayed by 2YC, in which both Ignaz Friedman and the NBS Orchestra took part was, on the whole, an appeal to our more mundane tastes. After an inconsequential overture by Moniusko (a tribute to a Polish pianist) we had the Tchaikovsky B Flat Minor piano concerto, on which Mr. Friedman spent some grand playing, to the delight of those who recognised a popular tune in its opening bars; then the orchestra played, in such quick succession as might trip up the best of all orchestras, three widely divergent pieces by Delius, Mendelssohn, and Moussorgsky.

Applause came as a surprise to the radio listener after the first movement of the Tchaikovsky concerto (i.e., before it was halfway through), but this probably served a useful purpose in releasing the feelings of an audience that might otherwise have been incensed at the droves of latecomers who trampled in, and for whom Mr. Tyrer had to delay the very soft opening of the slow movement. Applause was unwanted by the non-participating audience at another point too, immediately following the last whisper of the tragic *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, where everybody clapped as if someone had just done something clever. One of the things to be learnt from Disney's *Fantasia* was the insistence on a contemplative hush at the end of each musical work, ingeniously effected by producing the final

to the end where we'll leave that Youth, sincere of soul, in the bosom of his Father and his God. Then as we go to put out the cat and milk bottle, we can reflect on the fame that might have been ours had it not been for this, if only that . . .

A Mighty Man

Perhaps there is something in the swing of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil that leads to the forging of ideas as well as of chains. At least two notable figures of modern Europe have sprung from the smithy. Mussolini, forger of chains as well as ideas, was the son of a blacksmith; Masaryk, creator of Czechoslovakia, was himself a blacksmith. He was also professor of philosophy at Prague University, and the first and greatest president of the Czechoslovak state. The country to which he devoted his life's service may be temporarily in servitude, but Masaryk will always remain one of the great men in history. "Masaryk, the Liberator," a BBC programme, may be heard from 3YA on Friday, February 26, at 7.30 p.m.

Listening to America

"War has its Victories no less renowned than Peace," as the poet didn't say, and that is probably what the CBS felt when they found that they had been able to arrange for the Washington War Department programmes to be sent to New Zealand for transmission from the ZB stations. Although the crooning of Bing Crosby and the patter of Bob Hope, Fred Allen, and Eddie Cantor are not new to New Zealand, it is thanks to the war that we can hear them more or less in their own world. Sunday night is American night (7 and 9 p.m.), but these programmes may also be heard on week-days from the various Commercial Stations.

image beyond the music, and keeping the audience in expectant suspense for a moment.

After the Moussorgsky (*Night on the Bare Mountain*) we had a set of piano pieces, all Mr. Friedman's own compositions. He does this sort of thing in perfect taste; *Marquis et Marquise*, and the *Musical Box*, are gems of their kind.

Orchestrally, it was a resplendent programme, but some listeners must have felt the trombones too assertive, and been troubled at the other extreme by a somewhat petulant instrument, whose player we excuse when we remember its reputation for being "a woodwind that nobody plays good."

Dorothy Helmrich's tour concluded at Auckland with recitals that confirmed previous high estimates of her worth. Though she often sang songs that got her into trouble with the microphone, yet when she sang lightly and softly we heard the true artist more easily, and there was nothing to distract the attention from delightful phrasing, the gentlest nuance, and articulation that bespoke close study of the words.

Congratulations to 3YA for assembling a complete Handel programme out of studio performances, preceded by a studio recital including Purcell and Arne. Though one performer had to drop out, recorded Handel was substituted, and the whole session was a satisfying example of what can be done by putting music in its own setting.

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