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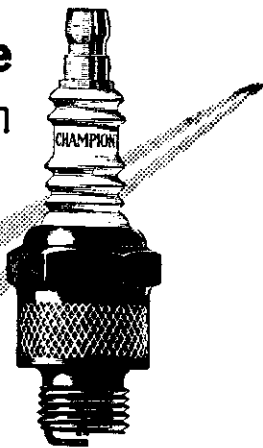
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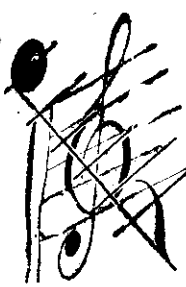


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Midsummer Music



[T'S rather like sitting on the stone which marks the 45th parallel just north of Oamaru; or standing on the centre of New Zealand near Nelson—in themselves of no real importance either to the human race or the person concerned. Yet on December 22 most of us will feel oddly fascinated when we hear the announcer over the YA link saying, "The time is 9.25 p.m. At this moment, as the nautical almanac has it, the sun enters Capricornus Solstice." For at that hour in New Zealand it will be noon on the tropic of Capricorn. The sun will be directly above the Straits of Madagascar, off the African coast—its highest southernmost point above the earth. Then having heard, we will probably forget the summer solstice till weeks later when we may casually remark "Aren't the nights drawing in," or (if of Irish ancestry), "Doesn't it get late early in these parts."

Midsummer in most parts of the world is celebrated with traditional dancing and music, and the announcement just mentioned will introduce a programme of such music called *Summer Solstice*. Apart from two songs from Rhodesia the music is from the Northern Hemisphere. It seems fairly clear that the motives underlying the midsummer celebrations were originally concerned with man's anxiety for the well-being of crops and herds, for freedom from the malevolence of the weather and witchcraft, and for the fertility of man and beast. In Europe, the celebrations often take the form of young people dancing round bonfires

or even jumping over them. This hazardous sport was apparently intended to make the crops grow high.

The music of each country in the programme is introduced with a short description of the circumstances under which it is played. In Norway, for instance, the midsummer nights are no nights at all, and the celebrations are characterised by a symbolic wedding with the prettiest of the girls and the boldest of the boys as bride and groom. The bridal procession arrives at the feast round the bonfire to the stately music of the Bridal March. Listeners will hear *Bridal March of Myllarguten* played on the traditional national instrument of Norway, the Hardanger fiddle. It is similar to an ordinary violin but smaller, with four or five sympathetic strings.

From Norway to Croatia in the north of Yugoslavia, parties of girls visit the houses—as do the carol singers in England at Christmas—singing songs with words like: "Good evening to you, mother dear, Summer's quiet and God is good." In addition, music from Finland, Britain, France, Italy, Ceylon, Spain and Portugal is played in the programme. The material for *Summer Solstice* was prepared by the International Folk Music Council, supplied through the BBC and arranged for broadcasting by the NZBS.

COMING ROUND THE CHRISTMAS BEND

with Denis Glover

BELIEVING in Father Christmas

Is a pleasant annual task,
But which one is the real one
I sometimes blankly ask?

The one with whiskers in the shop
With a hotly scarlet blazer
Inviting me to shave myself
With an electric razor?

—The whiskery, red-faced, padded one
With the most peculiar notion
That for prickly heat in summertime
I need soothing lotion?

—The one, white-whiskered in top boots,
Who thinks it would be grand
If I wore soleless sandals
For walking on hot sand?

—Or the one who tells me I should buy
A car with a sunshine roof
While whiskers—he, apparently,
Drives reindeer on the hoof?

—Or the family one who says how nice
And wipes his whiskers on my ice
And says he'll have a whisky—twice—
Or a squash and soda even:

Tell me, please, which one of the lot
Which one to believe in?

SCOTTISH SUPPLEMENT

Oh, white white as the eider yarn,
Whiter whiter nor green,
Is the bonny beard o' the cottonwool
That he pu's ower our e'en.

N.Z. LISTENER, DECEMBER 17, 1954.