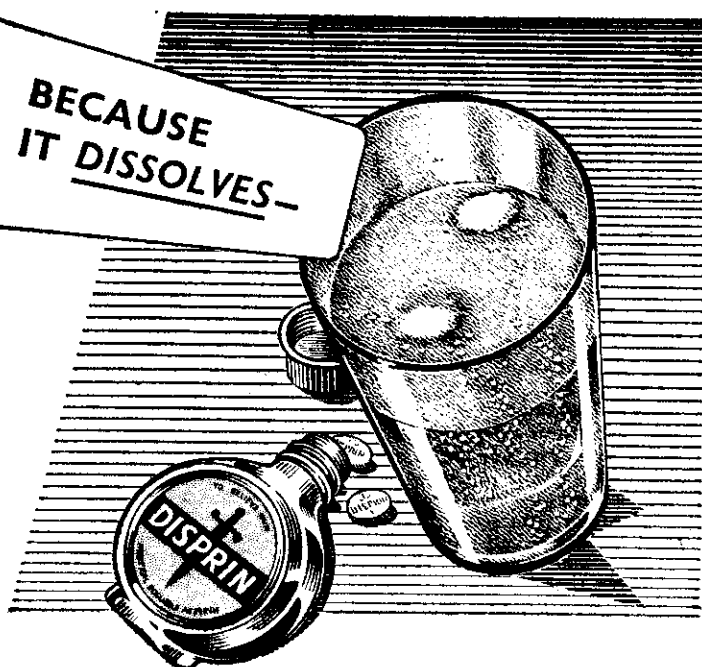


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RADIO REVIEW

Masterworks from France

MY heart sank when I was invited by a breezy American voice to "taste the gleanings of the Paris treasure house," and I thought that some kind of hoax was being perpetrated, and that under the title *Masterworks from France* there crouched old VOA. However, this voice was so good-humoured and rattled out French names with such a dazzling precision that I was disarmed. Finally, after a biographical sketch of the composer Marcel Stern who, I learn, reduces all musical rhythm to the pulse and the heartbeat, we had five waltzes for wind instruments and I enjoyed them enormously. The dances were sly, ingratiating and prodigiously witty; I wish Disney could have heard them. I suspect that they might have fired his imagination to some brilliant animal carnival. For, with a bassoon and a French horn beating it out in 3/4 time, all I could see were grave hippopotami and lumbering rhinoceroses making dignified circuits of some vast river flat. I chuckled throughout. "Masterworks" is a fairly large claim for the pieces which followed by Debussy, Ibert and Tournier arranged for harp ensemble, though they were charming and fresh. I shall look forward to the next series, and particularly to more of Marcel Stern.

Masterworks from All Over

NO one even remotely like Anna Russell has ever visited these shores. In her public manner she is as stentorian and absolute in authority as the President of some vast women's guild, and

she has a vocal dexterity which only Danny Kaye can rival. Her ear is marvellously acute and her intelligence malicious; she is venomous towards German *lieder* and the French Art Song, and there isn't much left of English folk music either. I thought she was at her best in the satire which also required some characterisation, in her Spanish set, for example (South American polite and Flamenco rude), and the series of sketches of pianists in action which, as they say, slew me, though the Wagner opera was too long and, I venture, too hackneyed. She is supreme mistress of the *double entendre* and the delayed fuse. Full marks to Anna! *Haeremai!*

—B.E.G.M.

Below the Surface

SEEING is usually believing, but hearing isn't always. It was only by retaining a firm grasp on the impressions gained from books and films that I was able to pay the BBC programme *Under the Deep Sea* (2YA, March 28) the respect due its authenticity. Hans Hass, with his exotic accent and his dead-pan treatment of the incredible, could have been another Baron Munchausen—his stories, for all their truth, have the *panache* of the extravagantly heroic. An exciting programme but not a harrowing one, since it is sufficiently far removed from our normal experience to confer emotional immunity. I cannot, for example, imagine myself sitting underwater on a coral reef like Lotte Hass, taking shorthand notes with a wax pencil. I'm still hoping, of course, that the deluge will be *après moi*.

Lawyers and Lucre

CONSISTENT listeners to radio plays meet up with plenty of lawyers. I suppose fifty per cent of plays written

(continued on next page)

★ The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN ★

RECENT programmes seem to group themselves naturally into sections—the singers, the chamber players and the orchestras, all of New Zealand production. The baritone Richard Collett (late of *South Pacific*) is showing his more tasteful side in a series of varied recitals (NZBS), featuring different composers or nations. He was probably at his best in a group of songs by Richard Strauss, whose music was not too smooth for the voice, as in a later bracket of French songs, nor yet too wilfully passionate, as in a programme of Schumann songs which tempted the singer into sharp intonation. Of a different type are the NZBS programmes by the contralto Christina Young, whose voice is rich though by no means fruity, with some tendency to the "sempiternal wobble" described by Tovey. One particular programme was excellent listening—that of five old Italian songs, including Pergolesi, Scarlatti and others of their genre. I noted also a bracket of songs from Thomas E. West in the New Zealand Singers' series (NZBS), in which his true tenor was most beautifully produced, and well recorded, too, if it was a recording. The Quilter setting of "O Mistress Mine" I could have heard again with pleasure—Mr. West rarely disappoints.

I have not been disappointed either in the sonata recitals (3YC) by the

cellist Frances Anderson, with Jennifer Barnard (whom I have mentioned in these columns) as accompanist. The 'cello sang most sweetly in a little sonata in G by Marcello, the 17th Century Italian, in a demure 17th Century manner; and later became by turns nostalgic for a Grieg sonata, and thunderous but no less sweet in the G Minor work of Beethoven. In all these there were the nice balance with the piano and the unanimity that come with true chamber playing, neither player seeking too much self-expression. In all, a very pleasant series.

The National Orchestra appears to be taking no holiday during its inter-series periods, though comparatively fixed in the capital. One concert conducted by W. H. Walden-Mills (2YC) featured Haydn's little-played Symphony in C, No. 97, which I think should be on more programmes, for its very buoyancy if nothing else in these depressing times. There was also some lovely singing by the soprano Merle Gamble. Another programme contained that old war-horse the Jupiter Symphony; this is a complete contrast to the three little Salzburg Symphonies recently heard from the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra (NZBS). The latter show us the Mozart of the sonatas rather than of the great concertos and later symphonies: *quelle délicatesse! Mais ce n'est pas la guerre*.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 15, 1955.