

## GRAMOPHONE

When Beethoven conducted the 5th Symphony in the Vorstadt Theatre he upset the candles in his excitement. Sir Henry Wood's conducting of it is not of the type that upsets candles. There is, as usual, a lack of subtlety about rallentandos and diminuendos; but besides this, the treatment of the first movement is slow, far slower for example than that of Richard Strauss in the earlier Polydor version, and the second movement too is rather plodding. One has the impression of a duty competently and conscientiously done. Certainly the whole thing is very competent; there is no lack of decision. Moreover, in the last movement something of the missing fire is found; it goes well, convincingly, even excitingly. And the recording (except for a few rather blurred bars in the fifth record) is throughout superb, a triumph for DECCA; the woodwinds, for example, especially good, or the pizzicato strings in the third movement. For this reason if for no other the new version should be very welcome (K 757-760). In the *Ride of the Valkyries* again there is magnificent recording; and Sir Henry has treated the music in an ample manner—the sudden rushes of woodwind and cymbal are rather reminiscent of whizz-bangs—which does justice to its massiveness (K 761). In different mood is the delightful Mozart Quartet in E Flat major (428), admirably played by the Prisca Quartet and admirably recorded; a fine example of that imagination and originality which the Haydn quartets, for all their formal perfection, cannot rival (DE 7036-9). The singing of Felicie Hüni-Mihacsek is a joy to the mind for its polish and precision as well as to the senses. *O Verzeih Geliebter*, from *Così Fan Tutte*, is a delightful record (CA 8202).

That Mozart is still being played and sold is a consoling thought. Yet it is sometimes possible to despair. There is some music so very bad that words are useless and only tears remain. Of such are Abt's *Ave Maria* and Edward Elgar's *Ave Verum*. Jimmy Phelan has evidently been schooled to make the most of the pretty music. The whole thing is most deplorable (F 55562). *Sunt lacrimae . . .* A recognition of the fact is of course a necessary element in the good life; but to be overwhelmed by the *mal du siècle*, the jimmies, is tragic, and to adopt such a position voluntarily is just subhuman. *The Gentleman who Obviously Doesn't Believe* in any of the good things of life belongs to this unhappy class: he has no interests, no virtues, he is the modern Albigenian. It is intolerably sadmaking, and Elsie Carlisle describes it all with just the right amount of pathos. A good piece of work. A sermon in tone (F 5568). Mr. Cole Porter is yet more poignant. *You're the Top* is a fine song, and the Dorsey Brothers play it well (a pity they give us only one verse though); but it is

in *I Get a Kick out of You* that real greatness is expressed, the awful grandeur of a Greek tragedy. *Miss Otis* is here quite outshone. The lyric is exquisite; the music is great music, the perfect vehicle for the poem; a lovely little melody, a devil's tattoo undercurrent of accompaniment to it, a sudden voluptuous surge, and then da capo; suggestion of vast lonely spaces, Holst's *Saturn*, lost souls. Kay Weber sings the song in a wan little voice which is exactly right (RL 248).

In the Modern Rhythm series, Ellington and his orchestra play *Admiration*, not a first rank number but played with their usual first rank technique; its companion, *Merry-Go-Round*, is better, a fine composition, and played with equal brilliance (O 2030). In the same series Chick Webb has produced *Don't Be That Way*, a spirited tune and a fitting accompaniment, with excellent saxophone work; and *It's Over Because We're Through* which includes a piece of negroid crooning by Taft Jordan, not everybody's meat (O 2029). Both these and the two Ellington records rely for their crispness and brilliance on the brasses; a soft needle is indicated. Leonard Hibbs in the third of his *Conversations about Jazz* finishes off the chapter with some fine examples of swing music: Red Nicholls playing the *Bugle Call Rag*, Coleman Hawkins in Hughes' *Arabesque*, and so on (RT 3). As usual there is an Ambrosial *tour de force*: Reginald Forsythe's *Dodging a Divorcee*, which goes Bach in a joymaking manner, and ends with some electrifying cross-rhythms. *Lament for Congo*, on the other side, is good (a Reginald Forsythe also) but without the wit (F 5561).

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In 1809, Beethoven crouched in his brother's cellars while the French bombarded Vienna; the Archduke Rudolf fled; the *Das Lebewohl* Sonata (*Les Adieux*, op. 81A) was written. Mr. Pryce-Jones has been caustic about regarding it in terms of lovers' partings; it remains true, against the opposite extreme, that Beethoven did object: "*Lebewohl* is something very different from *Les Adieux*," and wrote in his notes, "dedicated to, and written from the heart for, H.I.H." However, such content is but index or accidental enrichment to significant form. And the form is superbly manifested in the playing of Backhaus, now excellently recorded by HIS MASTER'S VOICE. Comparison with the Schnabel (Beethoven Society) record is interesting: the differences, the result of characteristic qualities of each; in Schnabel, reason more predominant, in Backhaus, a more apparent sensibility, in both of course technical mastery. The best wine, too, has been kept for the end: on the fourth side is recorded the Bach Prelude and Fugue no. 22, by Backhaus, a perfect thing. These are emphatically records to possess oneself of (DB 2407-8).

Auber's Overtures are good for more than the librettos of

BOOKS RECEIVED

Scribe. The music of Cherubini and Rossini schooled him, and there is, too, much of the orchestral sense and brilliance of Berlioz. This, the overture to *Masaniello* (Adrian Boult conducts the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra), is gay and stimulating (DB 2364). One might have supposed that Paganini's Concerto was the last word in blurbs of a virtuoso. But no, there is his *Moto Perpetuo*, in which the piano keeps up a humble tum-tum accompaniment while Menuhin's fiddle darts up and down like an angry wasp; and Bazzini's *Dance of the Goblins*, yet more incredibly pyrotechnic. As statement of Menuhin's prodigious accuracy and agility these records could not be bettered; music is not mentioned (DB 2501).

The Drury Lane Orchestra plays selections from *Glamorous Night* (C 2756); there is charm in the earlier part, but the bulk is insignificant, sometimes dull. Lily Pons sings the delightful *Una Voce Poco Fa* from the *Barber of Seville*: some uncertainty of pitch, but great freshness and delicacy; gay runs and pirouettes, and a triumphant top F at the end (DB 2501).

(Key.—H.M.V.: DB series, 6/-; C series, 4/. Decca: K series, 2/6; F series, 1/6. Brunswick: Modern Rhythm Series, 2/6; RT series, 2/6. Decca-Polydor: DE series, 2/6; CA series, 4/-.)

G. V.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- ANONIMA LIBRARIA CATTOLICA ITALIANA (Rome): *Introductionis in Sacros utriusque Testamenti Libros Compendium*, P. Hildebrando Hopfl, O.S.B., Vol. II, *Introductio Specialis in Libros V.T.* (Lit. 25).
- BURNS OATES: *The Pre-Nicene Church. The Cambridge Summer School Lectures for 1934* (7/6); *A Spiritual Consolation, and other Treatises*, St. John Fisher (2/6); *The Four Last Things*, St. Thomas More (2/6); *St. John Bosco*, F. A. Forbes (2/6); *English Wild Animals*, J. Fairfax-Blakeborough (3/6); *Magic in the Woods*, Gareth H. Browning (3/6).
- DESCLEE DE BROUWER (Paris): *Les Droits du Travailleur et le Corporatisme*, Paul Chansom (8 frs.).
- HERDER (Freiburg, I.B.): *Tore zu Christus*, Donatus Haugg (4.50 m.).
- MARIETTI (Turin): *Acta Pont. Academiae Romanae S. Thomae et Religionis Catholicae, 1934* (10 lir.).
- OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS: *Polarity. A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion*, P. Erich Przywara, S.J., translated A. C. Bouquet, D.D. (8/6).
- SANDS: *In Merlac's Mirror, and other Stories*, Enid Dinnis (3/6); *Cliffmen of the West*, Tom O'Flaherty (6/-).

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