

SOUND ON DISC

FOR many years, Monteverdi was heard rarely — except for an occasional madrigal or aria. His music was like a great submerged cathedral, engulfed in seas of sound from the brasher composers. Yet music as we know it in our time came to being in full maturity under the impact of his overwhelming genius. To the limpid purity of the older music, Monteverdi added both formal and spiritual dimension — the human utterance, echoing with tragedy and passion and solitude, and set in counter-voice to instruments which had once been not very much more than accompaniment.

Monteverdi is in vogue nowadays. The long-playing record liberated his liturgical music, his madrigals, and his operas. Critics began to discover that he was “modern” and listeners that he was listenable — and record companies that he was “commercial.” Vox, for example, has issued in a two-record LP set the *Vespro della Beata Vergine* in which the Swabian Choral Singers and the

Stuttgart Bach Orchestra combine with conductor Hans Grischkat to produce a notable musical offering (PL 7902). Along with a Period recording of settings to two Psalms, *Beatus Vir* and *Laudate Dominum*, and a song of praise, *Ut Quaeant* (SPLP 536), sung by the Choral Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra of the Scuola Veneziana, this gives you a panoramic view of Monteverdi's liturgical writing at its deepest and richest — the kind of personal religious expression, still set in the context of the ritual, which died with Haydn and will never return again. Both the Vox and the Period discs are excellent as to performance and recording balance.

A genius of another type was Mussorgsky. A man of disorganized inspiration, he finished few of his grandiose projects, leaving his incomplete scores for later “editing” and rewriting by Rimsky-Korsakov. MGM has issued a Mussorgsky Orchestral Program (E 3030) which bypasses the often-played excerpts from *Boris Goudonoff* and *Pictures at*

an Exhibition. Played with adequate verve by Walter Susskind and the Philharmonica Orchestra of London, it introduces to records for the first time such works as *Intermezzo in B Minor* and the *Turkish March* — the former Mussorgsky without the interfering hands of Rimsky. *A Night on Bald Mountain* and a suite from *Khovantschina* complete an album which should be very satisfying fare to the musical Slavophiles.

TO these rather tired ears, the music of Heitor Villa-Lobos is too astringently contrived to give more than momentary pleasure at its cleverness and its interesting sonorities. But there is more substance to a cycle of sixteen piano pieces, based directly on Brazilian folk songs, which Villa-Lobos has written and then taught Joseph Battista to play. Battista, a young American pianist with dollops of technique and a surprising amount of artistry, has a picnic with *Cirandas* (£ 3020). Surprisingly enough, the very Brazilian folk tunes seem almost to harken back to the Negro spiritual with its overtones of the English hymn — and Villa-Lobos has refrained from recasting their gentle melodies in modern tonality.

The vast works of Hector Berlioz, conceived for even vaster aggregations of instruments and voices, have also profited by the adventuring in forgotten music which began with LP recording. Vox issued the haunting *Enfance du Christ* and Co-

lumbia, the massive and thundering *Requiem*. Now Columbia has done it again with Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* — eight LP sides of music which can make up an entire evening's listening (SL 1110). Jean Fournet, conducting the Emile Passani Chorus and Orchestra, leads a group of first class soloists through the intricate and somber pages of the *Faust* score. Berlioz was a maverick among musicians, and in many respects his music leaps away from the precision of the French tradition. But he was imbued with the Nineteenth Century's romantic despair, which he expressed in crashing orchestral masses and sudden, delicately-phrased whispers of doom. In *Faust*, he runs this gamut with seething eloquence. This is unforgettable music.

Slipping into the Gallic of the *boites*, whose small-time creativeness produced Edith Piaf, Maurice Chevalier, and a host of others, Vox sat Georges Feyer at the piano to rip out a collection of such French popular standbys as *J'attendrai*, *Feuilles Mortes*, *La Vie en Rose*, *C'est Si Bon* (and it is), etc., plus a few older and less piquant items (vx 500). Feyer's playing is quite a few cuts above the cocktail lounge variety; he is a good musician and therefore not so much given to the gratuitous arpeggio. The record makes good background music for any number of activities, including the less strenuous forms of seduction.

R. DE T.

Eclipse of the Family Porch

by Geoffrey L. Pratt

AN epidemic, many years a-building, is now rife through the length and breadth of this lovely land, and senior citizens in every walk of life view the malady with sorrow and apprehension. The family porch is disappearing from the American home, with nothing like an honest substitute evident in the strange new housing that burgeons everywhere.

For upwards of thirty years, an architectural conspiracy to truncate a time-honored mode of life has gained increasing momentum. Today, the designers of modern houses will not hesitate for a moment when you meekly suggest that you would like a veranda. "Automobiles put a stop to those relics," you'll be told. "Now this utility space . . . and this planting area, handy to your outside fireplace . . . and a breeze-way, of course . . ." Should you insist, nostalgically, that home somehow seems a bit unfinished without a broad porch, the good architect will pocket his pencil, be plain rude, and send you packing.

It is true that the advent of the

automobile began to threaten the family porch long ago. Right after World War I the hammock and porch swing were abandoned in favor of the Model T. The internal combustion engine, and five or six very hard tires, made new and exhilarating horizons available. Pop and Mom picked up the box of peanut brittle where it lay on the veranda rail, and they were off in the family Ford. Uncle Oswald and his intended also renounced the family porch, with its love seat and its swing. Four or six noisily-firing cylinders provided a background music for their sweet nothings. But the chief reason why lovebirds abandoned the veranda in favor of the flivver was the opportunity to get the hell away from everyone.

Yet there are still those among us who insist that no new-fangled architectural gimmicks can compare with the old-time porches. From the utilitarian point of view, the roomy old veranda's advantages still loom very large. Automobiles aside, who ever heard of Young Love util-