

Records in Review

BY EDWARD TATNALL CANBY

AFTER-CHRISTMAS buyers will be interested in a group of works of the Haydn-Mozart period. Musicraft has issued a concerto by J. C. Bach, youngest son of J. S. (*Harpsichord Concerto in E flat major*; Ralph Kirkpatrick. Mus 38 \$3.50.) Here, within the scope of a string quartet and harpsichord, is the concerto form of Mozart, Beethoven, the Romantics, complete in all essential aspects, even to the bravura cadenza. It is characteristic of the eighteenth century that, though this piece represents an almost complete break with the two-hundred-year tradition culminating with the composer's father, there is never a sign of indecision or clumsiness. Only a shallowness of thought marks the new era's infancy. Two fine examples of the greatest music in the new style pioneered by the Bach sons are Haydn's *D major Symphony, number 104* (V M517; \$5) and Mozart's "*Linz*" *Symphony, number 36*. (Col. M-387; \$5.50). The "*Linz*" Symphony is not as well known in this country as its numerical neighbors, but is equally fine; the Haydn #104 is the last and probably the greatest he wrote, especially for the almost Wagnerian introduction to the first movement. Of the two performances Beecham's Mozart is definitely superior to Fischer's Haydn. Careful listeners will notice poor ensemble, bad attacks, uneven string tone in the latter. Both are well worth the money for the average listener. Left over from last month is Mozart's *Divertimento #17, K.334*. (Col M-379; \$7.50.) Similar to number 10 reviewed last month, this recording is for quartet and horns, as scored. Unfortunately the balance is poor and the first violin unduly tremulous. The excerpts (full orchestra) played by Harty (Col M-207; \$4.50) are probably a better bet.

The problem of children's music is brought up by a fine recording of Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite*. (Barlow, Col X151; \$3.50.) Give them this—it's fine music—but consider that children react quickly to beauty simply and directly expressed, whether musically or otherwise, that to sugar-coat music for them via story-telling is to imply that music is a bitter pill. Children—thank heavens—don't know that Bach is reputedly difficult, and have far less trouble liking him than some of their elders. Try Handel's *Water Music Suite* (Col X 13) on your youngest child. **** Perhaps the outstanding set of the year was the first complete modern recording of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*, performed by Stokowski and the Philadelphia. I was glad to find that "Stoky" does not treat Stravinsky as he does Bach; in fact there is little to choose between Stravinsky's own performance for Columbia ("concert version") and the present one, and for once Higher Fidelity is a virtue rather than an annoyance. Though it seems almost old-fashioned now, this work has plenty of life left.

We are impressed not so much by its dissonance and barbarity as by its terrific energy, its masterly construction and brilliant orchestration. No one can yet judge Stravinsky's ultimate greatness, but can anyone, hearing this work, fail to see why he is considered the most powerful figure in contemporary music?

Edward Kilyeni, twenty-six year old Philadelphia pianist of Hungarian ancestry, plays 14 *Chopin Waltzes* for Columbia (M 390; \$7.50). Some of them are familiar, notably the C sharp minor, but most will be new and interesting to many listeners. These waltzes are a strange combination of the introverted, aristocratic pallor so often called "Chopinesque" and the gay spontaneous rhythm made famous by the Strausses; sometimes one prevails, sometimes another, but the Viennese spirit finds the going rather hard. Kilyeni's performance is unusually fine. His touch is light, but this serves to highlight the introspective beauties, soft-pedal the occasional vulgarities. Like the Mozart *Divertimenti* these were never written to be played all of a piece; sample one or two at a time for the best effect. **** A brief hearing of Walter Piston's *Quartet No. 1* (Col M 388; \$5) left a very favorable impression. In the front rank of American composers, Piston can hold a number of candles to Hindemith, Alban Berg, and other European composers of chamber music. His harmony, while as dissonant as Hindemith's, seems to me to be more solid, more structural; Hindemith places too much emphasis on motival material. This set is especially recommended for the timid; it is quite easy to listen to, yet never superficial. **** The latest Negro sensation, Dorothy Maynor, comes hot from the press with two Schubert songs, *Ave Maria* and *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (V 15752). Miss Maynor has an appealing quality, but in this first record she seems over-strained, and she "scoops" too often for comfort. The first Anderson records were a similar disappointment (undoubtedly our expectations were unreasonably high) and so I look forward to more Maynor.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ No. 6

1. Topsy, in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by Harriet Beecher Stowe.
2. Glumdalclitch, in "Gulliver's Travels" (the voyage to Brobdingnag), by Swift.
3. Jane Baxter, in "Seventeen," by Booth Tarkington.
4. Little Nell, in "The Old Curiosity Shop," by Dickens.
5. The Infant Phenomenon, in "Nicholas Nickleby," by Dickens.
6. "Elsie Dinsmore," by Martha Finley.
7. Eppie, in "Silas Marner," by George Eliot.
8. Alice, in "Alice in Wonderland," by Lewis Carroll.
9. Pearl, in "The Scarlet Letter," by Hawthorne.
10. "Little Orphan Annie," by James Whitcomb Riley.

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