

which could produce 120 thousand volts and perhaps one million horsepower during its brief discharge. After the death of Steinmetz the work was taken over by Frank W. Peek at Pittsfield and after his death by Dr. McEachron.

Today artificial bolts under a pressure of ten million volts, striking across thirty feet of air, are managed with perfect familiarity. Yet even these are minute compared with lightning itself which may have a pressure of a billion volts and carry two hundred thousand amperes.

Experimenting with these artificial bolts is a source of direct information and an excellent means of testing theories of protection against lightning. Another, almost equally spectacular, is the recording of actual lightning bolts that strike the Empire State Building in New York. Records have for years been made both by delicate instruments in the tower itself and by photographs taken from another tower eight blocks away on Fifth Avenue. During the first three years of this study the Empire State Building was struck sixty-eight times. Dr. McEachron's account of the obtaining of these records, which were conducted mainly late at night, forms one of the most interesting chapters of his book. "If Franklin," says Dr. McEachron, "could have spent one such night at the Manhattan headquarters of the modern lightning hunter, he would have had to remake the whole front page of 'Poor Richard's Almanac.'"

Dr. McEachron's chapters on the protection of high tension transmission lines are of interest primarily to the electrical engineer. But they contain also arresting observations for the layman. Lightning, for instance, does strike more than once in the same place. Steel frame buildings are almost completely safe for their occupants. Even within an all steel automobile one is also safe. The fear of lightning, like all fear, can be dispelled only by knowledge. G. W.

Records in Review

By Edward Tatnall Canby

ARTHUR SCHNABEL makes an interesting appearance this month as an interpreter of Brahms with the First Concerto in D minor (V M-677; \$12). Though his reputation came about largely because of Beethoven, Schnabel is in fact strangely like Brahms. A short, square little man (the beard is missing) who seems, offstage, with his ingenuous smile and bowlful-of-jelly laugh to have stepped out of a Breughel, he has, as a musician, qualities of iron of the same uncompromising sort that lay behind the playful Brahmsian whiskers. In this recording his characteristic technique is well suited to the teeth-gritting first movement with its reflection of the tragedy of Schumann's attempted suicide. The balance, for a European recording, is not perfect and the London Philharmonic under Georg Szell is sluggish, but the whole is still a recording of first importance. . . . Equally important is the latest and perhaps finest of the European Toscanini series, the Beethoven Fourth (V M-676; \$8). Again may it be said, the "Maestro" is at his greatest conducting Beethoven, and his European recordings have a naturalness and balance not yet achieved on records by our N.B.C. Orchestra. Perhaps, it may be added, this set will end the silly romantic prejudice against the Even-Numbered Symphonies. The fact that the Third is undeniably greater than this seems to me perfectly irrelevant, since this symphony is greater than a hundred more often heard works.

One of the least known and most important American composers is Roger Sessions. Like many other important creative figures, he is more interested in composing than in selling his work, and in this age of publicity he is unknown to many music lovers who take their cue from the big radio and

concert programs. A subscription recording of his recent Quartet in E minor, played by the Galimirs, should be considered by any one hardy enough to swallow and to like the last Beethoven quartets (and that should be almost everyone). Like the first Brahms symphony this is a work of maturity, not a first attempt at a difficult medium. A first hearing is not easy; the musical thought is concentrated, dissonant, uncompromising. But three or four more hearings begin to reveal a profundity which I, for one, have not found so far in other native music. No satire, no dry-as-dust mathematics, no self-conscious nationalism here; the basic inspiration is Beethoven, last period. . . . In the near-modern category Columbia has a new Minneapolis-Metropoulos version of Prokofieff's well-known Classical Symphony, with the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's Octet thrown in (C X-166; \$4.50). I like the unusually slow tempo more with each playing. I don't like the price. Columbia has a long tradition of reasonable prices. . . . A cheaper buy is Ravel's Debussyesque Introduction and Allegro, for harp and sextet of strings and woodwinds (C X-167; \$3.50). Innocuous and pleasant, with the power of the later Ravel, but Laura Newell's harp has more to say than most harps.

Ernst Wolff sings to his own accompaniment a group of Early German Lieder (C X-168; \$2). There is a special quality of extreme simplicity and directness in the songs of the 14th to 16th centuries that is lacking in later periods, probably because of the preoccupation with harmony. Many, including Isaac's *Innsbruck, Ich Muss Dich Lassen*, here recorded, were utilized with few changes as religious chorales, which in turn found their way into the greatest music of Bach and others. *O Welt, Ich Muss Dich Lassen*, sacred version of the above, is one of the most celebrated of the Bach chorales. . . . Americana: Two volumes of Dust Bowl Ballads (V P-27, 28; \$2.75 ea.) bring up to date the never ending folksong chronicle. Many of these are run of the mill, but you can get the whole story of "Grapes of Wrath" in one song (26621) and amuse your cocktail guests with the marvelous Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues (26619). Mr. Guthrie and guitar are first rate. . . . There was no resisting

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

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SCRIBNERS

the announcement of a definitive album of Boogie-Woogie, as set forth on the piano by its founder, Mr. Jimmy Yancey (V P-25; \$2.75). "B-W" seems to be a relatively primitive form, depending largely on constantly repeated figures, is modal, and above all, in contrast to other jazz forms, uses a harmonic pattern even simpler than that of the spirituals and the American hillbilly and cowboy tunes. It has a peculiarly disjointed sound, since the damper pedal is not used. It all sounds alike; but its rhythm undoubtedly grows on you.

## PERSONALS

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