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The New Recordings

COMPOSITION, PERFORMER, ALBUM NUMBER, NUMBER OF RECORDS	ENGINEERING		PERFORMANCE AND CONTENT
	Recording Technique	Surface	
BEETHOVEN, GROSSE FUGE, Opus 133. Kroll Quartet. Musicaft 73 (2) \$2.85	Good quartet recording, but surfaces are poor; records (my copy) badly warped, like many pre-war Musicafts.	B— to B	Musicaft revives. Commendable job on this furious, ungrateful, great quartet music; but technical trouble (left) makes for hard listening.
SCARLATTI, SONATAS (9). Sylvia Marlowe, harpsichord. Musicaft 72 (3) \$4.85	Nice, clear harpsichord recording, though over-loud in spots; not as hi-fi as her plastic Gramophone Shop job but perhaps more musical in sound. Records warped.	B	Nine sonatas; several duplicate the Landowska set. Interpretation seems closely studied after Landowska. Good, but far from L. herself in subtleties of rhythm, phrasing.
SCHUBERT, QUARTET IN E FLAT, Op. 125, #1. Guilet Quartet. Concert Hall AE (3 plastic)	Good, broad recording; but with irregularities. Level too high on alternate sides, 2, 4, 6; lower on 1, 3, 5. High highs seem lacking.	A— (plastic)	The finest of the new quartet groups does a fine performance, somewhat marred by recording troubles. This is early Schubert, like the popular early symphonies.
ITALIAN OPERATIC ARIAS. Helen Traubel; orch. conducted by Charles O'Connell. Columbia M 675 (3) \$4.	High fidelity, but with unpleasant studio-type deadness. Balance reasonably good.	A—	Traubel's aria album shows fine vocalism but this music decidedly unsuited to the Traubel style. Orch. is indifferent. Cordon is more <i>en milieu</i> ; his orch. plays with considerable life. He is sincere, serious, bit weighty. Good singing.
ORATORIO ARIAS. Norman Cordon, RCA Victor Orch. Sylvan Levin. Victor M 1094 (3) \$3.85	Auditorium liveness. Unusually fine highs, more than most Victors. Why aren't they all like this one?	A—	
A NIGHT AT CARNEGIE HALL. Pons, Pinza, Stevens, assorted orchs. Columbia M 676 (3) \$4.	How were these thrown together? Great variation; some high fidelity, some sound like poor dubs. Pinza's, w. orch. are best.	A	Film stuff. "C. Hall" is hasty potpourri of works, as composed, but mostly in so-so performance. "Humoresque" is elaborately re-composed classics, radio-film style—ingenious or desecration acc. to taste. Well performed.
HUMORESQUE. Isaac Stern, vl. orch cond. Waxman. Columbia M 657 (4) \$5.	This is a fine recording, concerto style. Violin exceptional, excellent balance.	A	
PROKOFIEFF, PIANO CONCERTO #3 (1921). Mitropoulos; Robin Hood Dell Orch. Columbia M 667 (3) \$4.	Perspective liveness not too good; piano is too near, orch. in background. (Volume balance is OK.) Still an effective recording.	A— to B+	Interesting but somewhat cluttered concerto; a lot of late Rachmaninoff in it! Mitropoulos's piano intense, rhythmic, rather hard. He conducts too.
LONNIE JOHNSON BLUES. Johnson (voice, guitar.) Disc 710 (3 10") \$3.93	Voice somewhat scratchy, guitar could be sharper. Good enough job.	B+	An "authentic" old-timer, real artist in his field.
FOLK MUSIC OF THE CENTRALEAST. USSR. Disc 132 (3 10") \$4.75	A surprisingly good set of recordings—apparently made "on the spot."	B	First of an "ethnic series." this is remarkable Eastern-type music, full of weird gargles, strange instruments, fine rhythms. Includes Armenian.
HOVHANESS, CAGE, PIANO WORKS. Maro Ajemian, Alan Hovhaness. Disc 875 (2) \$4.04	The strange percussion noises of "prepared piano" are well conveyed. Plain piano tone a bit percussive, too.	B+	Armenian Hovhaness's music is based on Eastern non-harmonic techniques; will take much experience to make sense of it, but interesting to hear. Cage's "prepared piano" is novel medium; music is relatively simple to get.

the Phoenix Nest

BALLADE TO MY FATHER ON HIS EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

DOWN the long stretch of patterned sun and shade
The Sundays stand in gold;
—Fifth Avenue,
Your tall hat in the after-church parade,—
These are the ways I love to think of you.
Or in the saddle, from my worm's eye view
Blocking the sky as high as I could gaze—
Till I was tossed up into heaven too—
I love to think of you in all these ways.

Great rollers roared an endless cannonade;
We dove into their icy green, we two!
Riding your shoulders, I was unafraid.
These are the ways I love to think of you.
Fourth of July—and falling from the blue
We saw the paper-pig balloon ablaze!
The tiny man up on the roof was you.
I love to think of you in all these ways.

Round resonance of the guitar you played;
The words distinct, the singing sweet and true.—
"In Old Madrid," and Schubert's Serenade.—
These are the ways I love to think of you.
You read us Kenneth Grahame through and through,
On autumn evenings, toasting by the blaze.
We dozed, and woke for more, and dozed anew;
I love to think of you in all these ways.

L'ENVOI

And yours is still the grandeur that I knew;
(These are the ways I love to think of you),—
And yours the stubborn valor of those days;
I love to think of you in all these ways.

KATE BRACKETT.

* * *

I have received a communication concerning the late Robert G. Ingersoll

and the Lotos Club, addressed to—*sic*—the *Hornet's Nest*, and I think that would be a superb title for a column of political gallimaufry, which this column has sometimes tried to be, but is not. Howard Brubaker, of *The New Yorker*, would be a fine editor for it, too!

One item might be that Senator Bilbo, whose idea of replying to a Jewish letter-writer was to address her as "My dear kike"—that chevalier of old Southern courtesy!—has been in the Touro Infirmary at New Orleans. "Judah Touro gave of his wealth, and of the greatness of his spirit, to found this hospital 106 years ago. It is one of the finest medical institutions in the South. Its mercy, like the mercy of Judah Touro, knows no Jew and no gentile, but only mankind." I quote from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

* * *

MME. KARINSKY

It was very select—Mme. Karinsky's boarding house.
She gave cocktail parties in the garden on her Wednesdays.
The invitations were written in white chalk
On blue paper.
And at the bottom she inscribed
"I think you would like to know Lieutenant Van Eyck,"

Or
"Have you met La Farinita?"
(And you've forgotten how many times.)
She charged \$4.00—and got the carriage trade.
It was very select—Mme. Karinsky's boarding house.

—They wore black lace; and staggered down two flights of stairs;
No. 32A did an impression of Edna St. Vincent Millay
With a coat turned-out and an old phone book;
Mme. Karinsky herself appeared
Toward evening.
She had the dirtiest seed pearls
In the East Fifties.

No. 31 wrote poetry and kept a sailor
In the South Wing;
She wore a muslin hat and a spiritual expression
No one could doubt.
The garden and Mme. Karinsky were precarious
In the extreme.

Her morning glories *never* came out.
And yet she tried.
She had a lovely soul and used to share her strawberries
With the iceman,
And he, in turn,
Responded.
Even La Farinita (the aged lieder singer
in No. 47)
Said he was very attractive
For an iceman.

Mme. Karinsky had her openings in September
With great regularity.
No. 33B would fall out of the French window
Into the tulip bed
As she had for seven years.
Towards midnight the old actress rehearsed her lines;
And Mme. Karinsky, all tulle and osprey,
Conversed always with uplifted hands.
(Of course, she had very beautiful hands).

Like a Parca in the corner,
The Countess de Gascogne worked on her rug;
Coco Westcott drank gin out of an iced tea glass;
Stirrings to and fro;
Whispers; intimations;
And then, toward morning, suddenly individualized,
Stript, defined as single and apart,
They all crept back to their cells.
It was very select: Mme. Karinsky's boarding house.

HOWARD GRIFFIN.

* * *

Christopher Morley, the Old Mandarin, has been telling me recently of a good old English word with which you may or may not be familiar. He says:

One version of the old ballad "Sweet William's Ghost" (Child: "English & Scottish Popular Ballads" #77) has the stanza:

Cocks are crowing a merry midlarf,
I wot the wild fowl boded day,
Gie me my faith and trouthe again,
And let me fare me on my way.

Dr. Gummere used to tell us that no one knows what the antique scribe may have meant by *midlarf*: possibly middle-earth which might mean middle night or it might mean the ghostly half-world of which the cock was the boding clarion or curtain-call. Nobody knows, nor exactly what they meant in the ballads by *merry**—it seems to have meant to R. Hood companions, pals, buddies; not mirthful.

*And *Merry* England meant companionable England?

* * *

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

MAY 17, 1947

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