

the Vienna Philharmonic. However, it is almost a revelation of a new work to hear it in this crystalline playing and recording, in which the integral interplay of winds and strings may be heard at their proper definition. Flutes and bassoon, clarinets and oboe, have a merry time at their work, in a kind of intellectual hide and seek with the strings. Crispness and definition are organized by Van Beinum with a vigorous enthusiasm that makes the health of Haydn a tonic to the musical ear. "Charm" is a weak word to assign for the superb variations of the slow movement, unless we remember that, as a verb, it does mean "to magnetize" or "cast a spell."

Mozart à la Mode

MOZART: *Concerto in D, No. 4. Jascha Heifetz, violin, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.* (RCA Victor album 1267, \$4.75.)

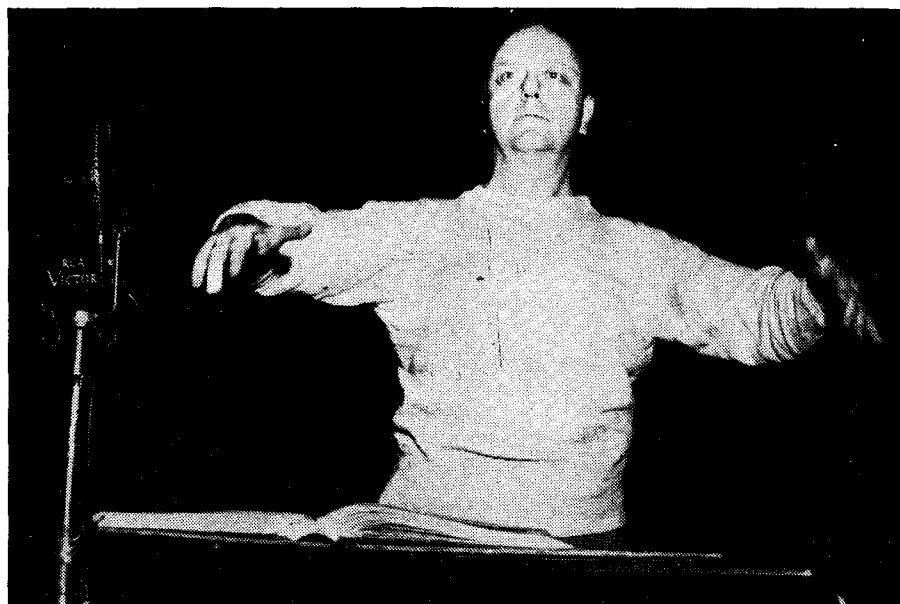
MOZART: *Symphony in G, No. 27, etc. Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic.* (RCA Victor album 1254, \$6.)

It was, in the very first issue of this publication a year and a half ago, our scarcely pleasant duty to hold the critical mirror up to the nature of Jascha Heifetz's playing of both parts of the D minor double concerto of Bach. We had no reason then to suspect there would ever be so eloquent an apologia from his hand as his playing here of this Mozart concerto; but we welcome it in kind, with the thought that bygones may be bygones.

In his year of absence from the American concert stage Heifetz has followed a sure instinct in refreshing his musicianship at the wellspring of such a purist as Beecham. He knows completely of what the essential Heifetz is capable, and he has incited him to a performance which may well bring glory to both their names. If "à la mode" suggests a serving of something with an unexpected added ingredient, this is it. A superb recording.

As a link with the foregoing, the Mozart No. 27, in the current "Music of the Eighteenth Century" album directed by Beecham serves its purpose. However, it is neither a strong nor a winning piece of work. Far more notable are the Paisiello ("Nina Pazza per Amore") and Mehul ("Les Deux Aveugles de Tolède") overtures. They are fascinating in substance, irresistible in execution. No thoughtful host should be without them, as he would not be without wine or water.

—IRVING KOLODIN.



Virgil Thomson "paid the only compliment a composer could pay."

Pigeons on the Grass

THOMSON: *"Four Saints in Three Acts." Virgil Thomson conducting soloists, double chorus, and orchestra.* (RCA Victor album 1244, \$7.25.)

On February 8, 1934, at the Avery Memorial Theatre of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut—and twelve days later at what was then New York's Forty-fourth Street Theatre—a gay, historic, and incredible event happened. From a Gertrude Stein text first published in 1929 in *transition*, Maurice Grosser had painstakingly prepared a viable scenario. Virgil Thomson, then not well known to most of his countrymen, had set that scenario to music as an opera. With utterly fantastic and beautiful décor and costumes by Florine Stettinheimer, choreography by Frederick Ashton, and production by John Houseman, an all-Negro cast had entirely caught the spirit of Stein and Thomson. In fact, the performers added to the occasion a dignity and sheer physical excitement all their own.

"Four Saints in Three Acts" was gay. It has proved to be historic. What was incredible was that audiences greeted it with something close to rapture. Those happy people who attended one of the performances in Hartford, New York, or Chicago still discuss the whole as a perfect musico-theatrical creation. It has taken "Four Saints" more than fourteen years to reach purchasable records.

In this recording of a condensed version of his opera Virgil Thomson conducts an all-Negro cast in which the leading roles of St. Theresa I, St. Ignatius, St. Stephen, St. Plan, the Commère and the Compère are sung by veterans of the original produc-

tion. There are really, you see, about thirty saints in four acts, and some of them are new. All of them, old and new, sing Miss Stein's words as though they made as much logical sense as, say, Scribe's or Wagner's (they do), treating them with complete respect and simple gravity. The Compère, the Commère, and most of the Saints have rich, free voices, which have been superbly recorded, as have the orchestra and chorus. The whole moves clearly forward, with celerity and verisimilitude.

There is no use, of course, in arguing with well-intentioned people who believe that the Gertrude Stein text does not make sense. It is kinder, to be sure, not to attempt any disturbance of that comforting belief. All that is lost through it is the ability to realize how closely Virgil Thomson's light, always vital, and perfectly serious music clothes that sense. The marriage is as binding, in fact, as that of Da Ponte and Mozart or Boïto and Verdi, and the result as lively. Mr. Thomson, this is to say, paid the words Miss Stein used in building her picture of the religious life the only compliment a composer could pay: he set them so that each syllable can be sung and understood. Had he believed them to lack cogency or logic he might—he is a man perfectly capable of such criticism—have set them so that they could not have been heard at all.

For those who know the score of "Four Saints" it ought to be reported at once that all the greatest moments are here. St. Theresa I, beautifully realized by Beatrice Robinson-Wayne, still sings her great interrupted solo. "There are a great many persons and places near together." Her outburst

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Recordings Reports on Classical Releases

See Page 49 for Pop Releases

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Brahms: Quartet No. 3, in C minor. M. Horszowski, piano, with A. Schneider, violin, M. Katims, viola, and Frank Miller, cello. Mercury album 9, \$6.56.	A gap filled in the recorded catalogue of Brahms (domestic) by a performance of sober merits rather than overwhelming distinctions. Horszowski is an efficient balance wheel for the ensemble, which is completely competent, if somewhat matter of fact. Good broad recording, in the modern manner; surfaces the best being pressed in America.
Chopin: Preludes. Artur Rubinstein, piano. RCA Victor album 1260, \$6.	Beautiful playing, in a rather concert style, which leaves the versions both of Petri and Cortot with a difference of style which is also a distinction of treatment. Sonorous, well balanced recording.
Gounod: "Faust" ballet music. City of Birmingham Orchestra conducted by George Weldon. Columbia album MX-304, \$3.50.	Worth having for the seldom-played "Walpurgis Nacht" scene usually omitted from performances of the opera. Weldon is an admirable workman, and his orchestra is equal to most of ours. The familiar "Kermesse" waltz introduces the excerpts.
Debussy: "L'Après-midi d'un faune." Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia 12917, \$1.25.	As an impressionist, Ormandy had a success with Debussy's "La Demoiselle Elue" which he has rarely had elsewhere. There is the same feeling for color here, but less sensitivity in applying it. Superb work by the orchestra and engineers.
Handel: "Royal Fireworks" music. Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting the National Symphony Orchestra. Decca album 64, \$5.25.	Spacious playing of the Harty transcriptions (four sides' worth) of the overture, siciliano, menuet, and bourrée. The orchestra is not impressive, but Sargent is.
Liszt: Sonata in B minor. Gyorgy Sandor, piano. Columbia album 786, \$4.75.	Piano playing of a steely brilliance and clangor hard to believe; some suggestion that the microphone was not only beside the piano, but in it. Opening section somewhat over-dramatized, rushed, with technical inaccuracies. Thereafter, a well-considered, admirably phrased playing, which does not, however, win me away from the old Horowitz—which might usefully be reissued in an up-to-date recording.
Mendelssohn: Symphony in A ("Italian"). Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor album 1259, \$4.75.	An uncommon instance of a reissue of a standard version of a work which is improved by more than recording fidelity. Meticulous wonderfully animated playing, perfect in detail and sum.
Mozart: Quartet in D minor, K. 421. Griller Quartet. Decca album 75, \$9.45.	Authoritative work by the Grillers, but a little lacking in bite and intensity. Ffr tends to magnify individual instruments, so that cohesion of quartet is spread. Superbly played andante, in definitely reserved style. I prefer the Budapest version of prewar issue.
Moussorgsky: "Boris Godounow" ("Clock Scene," "Monologue," Act II, and "Farewell.") Feodor Chaliapin, basso. RCA Victor Heritage Series 15-1043/4, \$5.	Unlike most other items in the "Heritage" series, these records were listed in catalogues of fairly recent date, at the usual prices. They are impressive, of course, and the quiet surface is a help; but they could sound as well on the proper kind of shellac, with appropriately less cost. Oddly enough both records I received were the 1928 "Monologue" though the envelopes read as noted. Bellezza was the conductor.
Rachmaninoff: Sonata in G minor, Opus 19. Edmund Kurtz, cello, with William Kapell, piano. RCA Victor album 1261, \$6.	The Rachmaninoff melos at rather generous length. An able playing in which Kapell is not at all reticent with the showy piano part. Not previously available in America and well-accomplished for those who welcome any extension of the Rachmaninoff catalogue.
Scarlatti: Six Sonatas. Vladimir Horowitz, piano. RCA Victor album 1262, \$3.50.	With the exception of Longo No. 33, in B minor, none of these are duplications of works already recorded by American sources. The numbers are 25, 27, 209, 430, and 483, all from the Longo catalogue. Among them the one outstanding performance is No. 209, a toccata-like work which finds, in Horowitz's fingers, a fortunate match for its qualities. Otherwise the sounds he produces are a little aggressive in substance for the scope of this music with a romantic coloration in Nos. 33 and 430 which are a little beside the point. Fine clean recording.
Tchaikovsky: "Sleeping Beauty" excerpts. The Covent Garden Orchestra directed by Constant Lambert. Columbia album MX 302, \$3.50.	Aside from the "Red Riding Hood" music, most of these six excerpts are unfamiliar to those who are dependent on the Basil-derived ballet scores for their knowledge of this music. The titles are "Panorama," "Pages' Dance," a solo of Aurora, "Vision Scene," and "March." Sturdy direction by Lambert, with fine orchestral detail in the playing, an acute reflection of it in the recording.
Tchaikovsky: Concerto in B flat minor. Oscar Levant, piano, with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia album 785, \$6.25; and ML 4096, \$4.85.	Erraticism is the besetting sin of this performance, which is technically spotty and musically uneven. Some of the big bravura passages are dispatched with facility, but others are over-pedaled and blurred. Nor is the piano tone more than piano tone. The ensemble with orchestra is well-maintained, and there is a thoughtful attention to details of the original score at some unexpected points. However, occasional melodic phrases are distorted for an emphasis that approaches the sentimental. A better recording than the recent Rubinstein, but otherwise inferior to it in authority and pianistic control. A Rachmaninoff Prelude (in G) is well played on the final side.

—IRVING KOLODIN.