

Recordings Reports on Classical Releases

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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.

The Basic Record Library— Mozart: Instrumental Works

CONCERTOS (continued)

Two Pianos and Orchestra

In *E flat*, K.365. Performances of this work are wholly family ones: either the father-son Schnabels, the brother-sister Iturbis, or the husband-wife Babins. The last of these is the most recent in the market (postwar, that is), but I find it a little glossy and insubstantial for the music, though well achieved within its predetermined area (Columbia). The Iturbis are no more profound and less well-sounding (RCA Victor); leaving Schnabel and Son as the preferable firm for this transaction. It is hardly as good as the names would suggest, but it is reasonably satisfying. Boult is the conductor, the London Symphony the orchestra (RCA Victor).

Three Pianos and Orchestra

In *D*, K.242. A second-rate effort, not worthy of recorded permanence. Presumably it was made by Columbia because its team of Vronsky and Babin (assisted by Rosina Lhevinne) performed the work under its present conductor, Thomas Scherman, at a concert of the Little Orchestra in New York. That, however, is hardly a sufficient excuse, for it lacks buoyancy and style, or merely a well-sounding orchestra (Columbia).

Basoon and Orchestra

In *B flat*, K.191. A phonographic classic and not likely to be excelled soon, with Fernand Oubradous as soloist and Eugene Bigot conducting (RCA Victor). It is a prewar French product, but even so newer (as well as better performed) than the alternative Archie Camden-Hamilton Harty (Columbia).

Clarinet and Orchestra

In *A*, K.622. Discophiles may wonder why Columbia never produced a version of this work when Benny Goodman was under contract to that firm and enterprising enough to record the Debussy "Rhapsody" with Barbirolli. The answer happens to be that he did make it, but didn't think it good enough to be issued. A wise, if harsh decision, for Reginald Kell's execution, with Malcolm Sargent conducting, is a consummate piece of work, and stylistically of the first order (RCA Victor).

Flute and Orchestra

No. 1 in *G*, K.313. Marcel Moyse is,

for this phonographic era, the flute voice of Mozart, as indicated by his playing of this concerto and the companion piece following. There is no doubt that everyone in the studio is aware of his superior abilities, including the soloist himself. In consequence, the flute protrudes more than the best balance would decree; a deficiency which may be merely mechanical and no reflection of the soloist's virtuosic tendencies (RCA Victor).

No. 2 in *D*, K.314. More of the meritorious Moyse, in a recording of later date and subtler relation to the background. Coppola is his conductor in this instance (RCA Victor).

Flute, Harp, and Orchestra

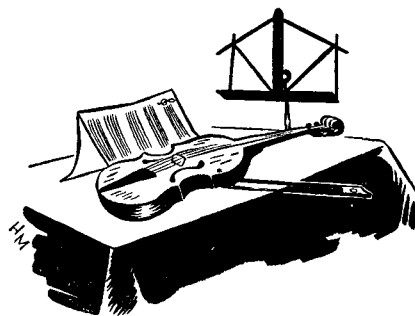
In *C*, K.299. See Imports.

Horn and Orchestra

No. 2 in *E flat*, K.417. See Imports.

No. 3 in *E flat*, K.447. A grand piece of virtuosity by the senior Brain (Aubrey), who is a complete master of his difficult instrument and a musician of equivalent sensitivity. An admirable accompaniment by Adrian Boult is properly complementary to the soloist.

No. 4 in *E flat*, K.495. Another member of the Brain trust, Dennis asserts in this—as well as several other recordings—that talent of the special sort needed to make a master horn player can be inherited. The study of heredity has not progressed (to my knowledge) to determining whether an embouchure can be transmitted through the blood stream, but the schooling provided by his father is altogether evident in his dazzling performance here. His skill is the more remarkable for the fact (attested by Beecham) that Brain plays the older version of the instrument. This lacks some later devices for facilitating execution, but, as demonstrated here,



commands a richer, mellower sound than its descendant.

Violin and Orchestra

No. 3 in *G*, K.216. The Menuhin of his teens may be cherished for the artist he was, but there were some elements comprehended by the much older Huberman version (or, for that matter, an even older Kreisler) which were lacking in his playing (RCA Victor). A new version of this work recorded in France by Jacques Thibaud has not yet come our way (Vox). For the moment, superiority remains with Menuhin, especially for the fanciful work done by conductor Enesco.

No. 4 in *D*, K.218. As a successor to the venerable versions of Szigeti (Columbia) and Kreisler (RCA Victor), the new Heifetz (see page 41) is a fortunate preservation of the best of the old—Beecham's conducting—with the qualities that make him exceptional among contemporary virtuosos. Those who are essentially Kreisler enthusiasts will find this performance (in album 623) one of the best of his recent ones for the phonograph.

No. 5 in *A*, K.219. Until the appearance of the work noted above, this was an abiding evidence of the rare distinctions of Heifetz when all his forces are marshaled to the ultimate challenge of Mozart (RCA Victor). The Busch playing of a few years back is a little differently conceived relative to the small ensemble which he also conducts, but not necessarily closer to the Mozartian ideal (Columbia).

No. 7 in *D*, K.271. More Menuhin and Enesco here, with the conductor of constant efficiency, the violinist less. He plays with appropriate strength, but with a tone excessively metallic and unlovely (RCA Victor).

IMPORTS

There is a rather scant supply of additional Mozart concerti in European catalogues, for the palpable reason that the best of them are already in the domestic ones—or assigned there as soon as practicable (recent instances are, of course, the Heifetz-Beecham in *D* and the Brain-Blank horn concerto). Outstanding candidate for succession to these is the flute and harp concerto (also conducted by Beecham) with Lily Laskine repeating the part she played in the previous, now-withdrawn issue, with René Le Roy replacing Moyse as flutist. Other than that we know only of another edition of the Violin Concerto No. 7 (in *D*) with Charles Münch conducting for Denise Soriano (Pathé).
—THE EDITOR.