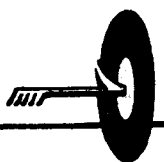


HITS AND MISSES



THIS month various fine traditions in American popular music have been prettily served. Among them is that of the California orchestra. The term will presumably mean little to the jitterbug generation, and what it may convey to the re-bop fanciers this department would rather not guess. But to barnacled, middle-aged devotees of sentimental dance music, the words "California orchestra" will always recall the lovely combinations, laden with mutes and fiddles, who in the Twenties came out of the West, bringing the brash and noisy East a breath of the languishing air around San Francisco and Los Angeles. Among the vintage California musicians was the late Art Hickman, sovereign romanticist of American dance players, who wrote "Rose Room" and wafted General John J. Pershing around the old Ziegfeld Roof with such "Oriental fox-trots" as "Along the Road to Damascus"; Paul Whiteman, who began his Eastern musical life at Atlantic City with a Hickman-style band, rather more spruce as to orchestration; Abe Lyman, presented with a gold-plated drum by Hickman on departing for New York — before Lyman succumbed entirely to Broadway he had one of the most seductively Pacific ensembles on record—, and its pianist, Gus Arnheim, who later appeared with his own outfit, including Bing Crosby.

The prime characteristic of all these bands at their best was a free-and-easy, sentimental style, void of pretentious orchestration. They played starlit, lingering music with the relaxation of a good New Orleans hot jazz band. There is little music like it today, but one California orchestra at least recalls the old days and is a pleasure and a relief after the stereotypes of the past decade. Georgie Stoll, a man of consequence around the studios, leads the MGM orchestra in an album of time-tested "Hollywood Melodies" (MGM 11, \$3.94) including "Pagan Love Song," "Blue Moon," "Temptation," "You Were Meant for Me," "Louise," "I'm in the Mood for Love," "Over the Rainbow," and "September in the Rain." His arrangements are on the lush side, as are most in these days when few orchestrators can resist utilizing everything they have learned from Richard Strauss and Joseph Schillinger. But the music is quiet, in easy dancing tempos. Instead of tiresomely slick section work by the saxophones, the

nostalgic solo voice of the instrument is featured; instead of frantic brass, the mutes are installed in the old California manner; and there are numerous strings. Extra special attraction; no vocals whatever. All in all, if Georgie Stoll lacks the spontaneity of Art Hickman, he has other attractions in the best Pacific tradition—a fitting sentimental nicety.

We may seem to have aspersed vocals above, but are merely wary of them. There is of course an irresistible vocal tradition and this department, an unequivocal admirer of such monuments as Crosby and Sinatra, also strings along with a huge section of the populace in the matter of Perry Como — the sensation is highly democratic. An album called "A Sentimental Date with Perry" (Victor P187, \$3.57) amply justifies that title, including such classics as "When Day Is Done," "Body and Soul," and "What'll I Do?" As a certain metropolitan music critic might put it, Mr. Como's discourse tarries on very high levels of schmalz indeed. It is no news to millions that Como often sounds amazingly like Crosby, but it seems equally clear that, at bottom, Como is his own man and a master of his art. That mastery, to anyone who makes it his business to listen to stacks of popular records, comes to seem exceedingly rare. The effective projection of popular songs is a subtle process of glazing over whatever is dross in the words or music, and panning as much lyric gold as possible. I can think offhand of few better examples than Perry Como's deft, light-spirited rendition of "Body and Soul," whose lyrics are pretty hammy busi-

ness; his blitheness makes it perfectly possible to ignore the words.

I was disappointed in Eddy Howard's new album (Columbia 0158, \$3.75) made before "To Each His Own" brought him celebrity. In recent discs, such as "Love Tales," previously mentioned in this column, he has shown real vocal sweep, a sort of popular musical bravura, but his earlier work has a good deal less rhythmic momentum and the phrasing is often theatrical. The hot-jazz clientele, however, should know that on three sides, "Star Dust," "Exactly Like You," and "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," there are fine, subdued accompaniments by clarinetist Edmond Hall, trumpeter Bill Coleman, trombonist Benny Morton, pianist Teddy Wilson, and friends. This page is no partisan of the song "But Beautiful," which seems to be taking the nation by juke box, but, having dutifully listened to versions by Denny Dennis, Art Lund, Mel Tormé, and Eddy Howard, we report a decided preference for Frank Sinatra, on the reverse of the fetching "If I Only Had a Match," reviewed last month (Columbia 38053, 75¢).

The blues we have always with us. There are so staggeringly many now on wax — from the real folk material to Carnegie Hall perversions — and we have heard so many of them that an acute case of fastidiousness has set in. Only the highly exceptional produce a marked response. A new album "Deep Woods Blues" (Circle S-4, \$3.94) contains thoroughgoing folk blues by three rugged practitioners, Bertha "Chippie" Hill, Hociel Thomas, and Montana Taylor. Their efforts are extremely warm and pervaded with that rich plaintiveness which runs through veritable folk blues as tintinnabulation runs through the music of Bali. But I would say that the only highly exceptional musical element included is the kazoo and washboard playing of Almon Leonard, supporting "Chippie" Hill in "Black Market Blues."

This month's selection for the Worst-Record-in-History Derby is "I'll Never Say I Love You," by Horace Heidt and His Musical Knights (Columbia 38061, 75¢). In this incredible joust against the canons of musical taste, the Heidt orchestra accompanies an enormous, electrically amplified, swooning murmur by an artist billed as "The Masked Spooner." When he reaches his climax—an overwhelming, gasping "Darling!" — it becomes perfectly clear that new musical dimensions have been opened. On the reverse is the juke-box sensation, "Now Is the Hour," reputed to be the New Zealand "Aloha." In this heart, Queen Liliuokalani still reigns.

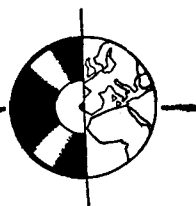
WILDER HOBSON.



—Bill Gottlieb.

"Perry Como's discourse tarries on very high levels of schmalz indeed."

THE OTHER SIDE



LONDON.

IN THIS country instrumentalists are almost invariably prejudiced against singers. Their precise training seems to make them intolerant of the freer though by no means lesser art of the vocal line. The pity of it is that their prejudice against singing must necessarily deprive them of intimate acquaintance with a large part of our great musical heritage. True, there are many indifferent musicians amongst singers, but to put all singers together into one inferior class is as stupid as it is vain.

Recently the gramophone enterprises have been producing such fine vocal records that I believe they will help to break down some of this prejudice; that is, if our intolerant friends can be persuaded to listen and not to dismiss them with the usual "Oh, I don't like singers" even though they may be dismissing Bach, Mozart, and Verdi in the same breath.

For example, "Depuis le Jour" from "Louise"—and "Je Dis que Rien ne M'Epouyante" from "Carmen"—sung by Eleanor Steber with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind (HMV DB 6514). For many of us this is our first experience of hearing this artist. I found real excitement in listening to her outpouring of thrilling sound, which is molded by such skilful use of graduation in volume as to give a rare sense of line to the music. I have never heard the "Depuis le Jour" so beautifully sung, but both sides are excellent.

A fine ten-inch disc has been made by an Austrian artist new to Columbia—Ljuba Welitsch singing with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Krips, "Ritorna Vincitor" and "I Sacre Nome Padre"—(LB 65). Although her voice does not move me emotionally as does Eleanor Steber's, I have nothing but admiration for her singing of these two fine arias from "Aïda." Singer, conductor, and orchestra all give one a sense of complete mastery of their medium and sureness of intent.

"Et Incarnatus Est" from the Mozart "Mass in C Minor" (HMV DB 6536) offers us something very different in musical measure, but it is in no less safe hands. Erna Berger is a beautiful Mozart singer with a clear, fresh voice. The three obbligato parts for flute, oboe, and bassoon make an unusual and charming effect. Again in contrast are the two delightful records of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Irmgard Seefried from "Hansel and

Gretel"—the "Dance Duet, Act 1," and "The Sandman's Song and Evening Prayer" on Columbia LX 1036-7. It is a real pleasure to hear these parts sung by these two distinguished members of the Vienna State Opera. Both are in their twenties, which enables them to add a youthful zest and charm that are not often found together with such resourceful and experienced singing. The scene from Act 1 is best and it is a rare pleasure to hear the voices and orchestra so well balanced; too often in the opera house these children get lost, not only in the woods but also in Humperdinck's immortal score. The orchestra in all these records is the Philharmonia of London and the conductor is Josef Krips, of the Vienna State Opera. I have nothing but praise for their part in these recordings.

Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra are in fine form playing the "Polka" and "Dance of the Comedians" from "The Bartered Bride." The rhythm is superb; the playing and recording distinctly good (HMV DB 6454). Another popular work made new by reason of the authority and artistry of its performance is Columbia's discs LX 1033-5, Auto. Couplings LX 8583-5. Herbert von Karajan conjures up new magic into Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet." His reading departs little from accepted paths, except that perhaps the opening is a little more reticent and the romantic line unfolds more gradually.

For those who want a new recording of Grieg's "A Minor Piano Concerto" I can thoroughly recommend the Columbia records LX 1029-32, Auto. Couplings LX 8579-82, made by the Rumanian pianist Dinu Lipatti, conducted by Alceo Galliera. It is a little difficult for some of us to remember that every day someone is hearing this work for the first time.

The Griller Quartet playing the "String Quartet in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3" by Haydn (Decca K 1668-9) is a worthy successor to the Mozart, K.387, that came out recently. The ensemble of this group remains something to be wondered at. The Bach "Sonata in G" (HMV C 3671) for flute, violin, and piano played by the Trio Mayse is less satisfactory. The sonata is a gem but both the balance of flute and violin and the intonation of the flautist leave a good deal to be desired.

HERBERT MENGES.

Liberty Music Shops IMPORTED RECORDS

Latest Decca FFRR Arrivals from
England

- MOZART**—Quintet for horn, violin, two violas & cello in E FLAT, K. 407—Denis Brain, horn and strings. *K1138/9. 2—12" records. \$4.20
- LISZT**—Malediction for Piano and Orchestra—Franz Osborn, pf. & Boyd Neel String Orchestra—Boyd Neel. K1194/5. 2—12" records. \$4.20
- DE FALLA**—The Three-Cornered Hat—National Symphony Orchestra — Enrique Jorda. *AK1335/6 2—12" records. \$4.20
- BEETHOVEN**—Coriolan Overture—National Symphony Orchestra, Reginald Goodall. K1355. 12" record. \$2.10
- MOZART**—Impresario—Overture; Idomeneo—Overture; National Symphony Orchestra—Boyd Neel. K1410. 12" record. \$2.10
- ROSSINI**—William Tell—Hallet Music—London Philharmonic Orchestra—Basil Cameron. K1454/5. 2—12" records. \$4.20
- HAYDN**—Symphony No. 88 in G MAJOR—National Symphony Orchestra—Enrique Jorda. *AK1472/4. 3—12" records. \$6.30
- HAYDN**—Quartet in C, Op. 33 No. 3 "BIRD"—Griller String Quartet. *K1668/9. 2—12" records. \$4.20
- CORELLI**—La Folia—Variations Serienes—Alfredo Campoli, violin and Eric Gritton, pf. K1670/1. 2—12" records. \$4.20
- DEBUSSY**—Nocturnes for Orchestra—National Symphony Orchestra & Luton Choral Society — Sidney Beer. *AK1344/6 3—12" records. \$6.30

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

- DELIUS**—Song of the High Hills—Luton Choral Society & Royal Philharmonic Orchestra — Sir Thomas Beecham. *DB9151/5. 3—12" records. \$7.86
- MOZART**—Flute Quartet in A MAJOR (K. 298) DB3365. 12" record. \$2.62

*Automatic & Manual Sequence

Complete Catalogue Free on Request

Mail and phone orders given
prompt and careful attention

LIBERTY MUSIC SHOPS
IMPORTED RECORDS DEPT.

450 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK 22, N. Y.

AVAILABLE AGAIN!

AARON COPLAND
EL SALON MEXICO

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Koussevitzky, Conductor. 2—12" records. DM 546 \$3.15*

HOWARD HANSON

SYMPHONY #2 ("Romantic")

Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer. 4—12" records. DM 648 \$5.25*

*Plus City Sales Tax in NYC. or Express Collect plus 25c for packing outside of delivery areas. (Prices subject to change.)
Write for our Catalog of Records, Appliances, Cameras, Radios, Sports, Gifts.

RABSONS

Dept.
95

111 West 52nd St., New York 19
CI. 7-0070

WATCH FOR

RECORDS

OVER THE

NATION

The Saturday Review's

Monthly Dealer Survey of
Top-Selling Records in the
Leading Stores of the Country