

SCRATCHING *the* SURFACE



HOLLYWOOD.

WITH New York boasting the greatest blizzard since '88, and sunny California under the blanket of an epidemic filmically titled *Virus X*, the major record companies have taken all possible precautions to complete their rush schedule for the late but scarcely lamented year of 1947. Working on a twenty-four hour shift, Capitol, for instance, has amassed a staggering quota of platters, turned out in three cities, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.

Capitol artists successful in getting in that last beat before the deadline include Margaret Whiting, who puts her singing signature on an album similar in styling to her Rodgers and Hart-warming ballads. This time she warbles songs by her late father, the talented Richard Whiting. Included are such nostalgic numbers as "Funny That Way," "You're an Old Smoothie," and "Sleepy Time Gal." Margaret's vocalizing is backed by Frank DeVol's orchestra. Another Capitol canary to make her last chirp before the year's end is Peggy Lee. With Dave Barbour on guitar, and the Brazilians accompanying, Peggy will be heard on one side of a platter singing "Mañana Is Soon Enough for Me," and on the reverse, "All Dressed Up with a Broken Heart." . . . Although Capitol refused at this time to divulge the title of their latest satire, Red Ingle and Jo Stafford have done another take-off along the lines of the fabulously successful "Tim-Tayshun." . . . Also to be expected in record shops within the near future is a record featuring Johnny Mercer and the King Cole Trio, captioned "My Baby Likes to Be-Bop." On the flip-over, Mercer and Trio give out with "You Can't Make Money Dreaming."

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Among the flicker gleanings we picked up, is the announcement that Mary Pickford and Buddy Rogers will film the life story of Hoagy Carmichael. Title of the picture, naturally, "The Stardust Road," from the autobiography of the same name. . . . Kathryn Grayson has recorded an album of records for the M-G-M label. Featured are songs Miss Grayson sings in the picture "The Kissing Bandit." Also from Leo the Lion, comes word that Fred Astaire will be seen dancing in slow motion. That's the treat promised in "Easter Parade," the new Technicolor musical currently in production. One of Astaire's swiftest

dance steps will be photographed at one-fourth actual speed, thus providing a clear study of the celebrated Astaire technique. After Astaire had conceived the idea for the novel dance routine, it required a full month of technical experiments for John Arnold, head of M-G-M's camera department, to perfect a way to synchronize the slow motion action to the sound, which continues in normal rhythm. This is the first time such synchronization has been achieved.

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In the classical field, Alco has recorded the Ravel "Duet for Violin and Cello," played by Manuel and Alec Compinsky. Other works carrying the Alco label are the Ravel Sonata for violin and piano, as interpreted by Manuel and Sara Compinsky; the Fauré Quartet, featuring the Compinsky Trio and Milton Thomas on viola, and the César Franck Trio in F-Sharp Minor. The last of these is a "second" for the Compinskys. A number of years ago they recorded this work for Co-Art Records.

Jacques Rachmilovich, who puts the Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra through its paces, has recorded a number of chamber music works, with different combinations playing a variety of opuses, ranging from Bach to Darius Milhaud. Rachmilovich has discovered that there is a rather extensive literature of music for two

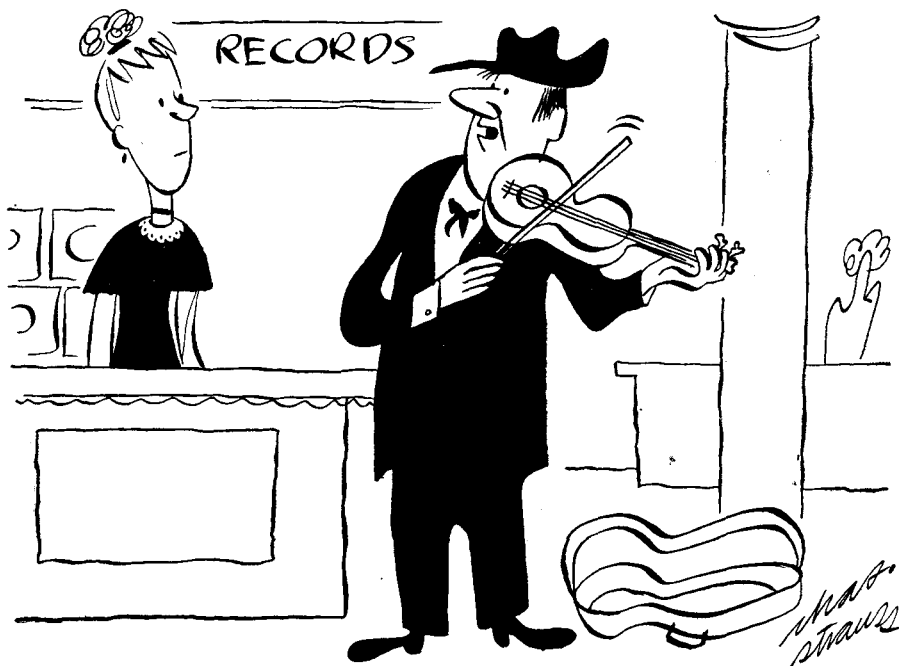
violins hitherto unrecorded. So with Joachim Chassman and Oscar Wasserberger as performers, Rachmilovich has supervised the recording of the Prokofieff "Sonata for Two Violins Unaccompanied"; a Bach sonata, as well as one of the Handel duos.

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Artur Rodzinski's short-lived career with the Chicago Symphony has brought into circulation some of the incidents that occurred when he took over the orchestra. Since his previous recording affiliation was with Columbia, and the orchestra is Victor property, there was something less than an ideal situation for recording work. While Columbia demurred and Victor hedged, Rodzinski informed both: "This is an ultimatum. The Chicago orchestra will not record for anybody." (It didn't.)

The last word from Columbia brings news of very little classical recording on the Coast. Except for a piano session with Oscar Levant performing the "Sabre Dance" and "Lullaby" from Khatchaturian's ballet "Gayane," the studios have been humming with popular artists. Among them are Jane Powell's "Summertime," and "Lover Come Back to Me"; Frank Sinatra's versions of "Why Was I Born?" and "When Is Some-Time?" . . . The horn of Harry James will be heard blowing out the last Petrillo-free air in "Ah, But It Happened," "Every Day I Love You a Little Bit More," and "You Can Do No Wrong." Not to be outdone by Levant, Woody Herman has recorded a dance-band version of the "Sabre Dance." Other waxings by Woody include "Cherokee Canyon," and "The Goof and I."

LEONARD HOFFMAN.



"Can't for the life of me remember the title, but the tune goes something like this. . . "

Music on the Cuff

E. POWER BIGGS

BACH'S "Royal Instrument," as Robert Schumann (in a notable review of a Leipzig recital by Felix Mendelssohn) calls the organ, is far from being the impersonal and imperturbable instrument that it may appear. It is, in fact, a rather fascinating combination of Gibraltar-like solidity and unpredictable temperament.

The hazards of Bach's time were fewer, with mechanical rather than electrical action, but the player of today performs on an instrument which offers him as varied an assortment of surprises and pitfalls as it does musical satisfactions and possibilities. In its capacity for the unexpected the organ possesses a repertoire almost as unlimited as its heritage of splendid music.

For example, consider the array of possibilities, for good or for mischief, spread before the player. There may be from two to seven keyboards rising terrace fashion in front, each having thirty-six white and twenty-five black keys. Underneath is an additional keyboard, with notes of larger size and of somewhat shorter range. This pedalboard continues downward the tonal compass of the manuals, and is played by the feet, toe and heel picking out the counterpoint of the bass.

To the left and right of the keyboards are possibly a hundred or more draw-knobs—the stops—each controlling a rank of pipes, and in total representing all the different gradations of tone and volume in the organ. Spread above the top keyboard, and down below above the pedalboard, may be half as many more knobs, or small domino-like tablets. These are the couplers. By tilting them up or down one may couple, or combine, the different keyboards; so that in effect one may play on all of them at once. Other tablets will make every note on a certain manual play an octave higher or lower. Both devices serve to give the player an additional pair of hands.

As a preliminary to performance, or even before touching the keys—however tentatively—one must set the stops, and survey the scene carefully on all sides to see what is "on."

A split note is harmless compared to a wrong stop! An accidental flick of the finger on a small tablet, or a stop out when it should be in, will com-



pletely change the tonal picture. One may expect the dulciana pianissimo, only to be greeted by trumpets fortissimo. A conductor giving a cue to the strings *pp*, and receiving trombones *ff*, is no more startled than the organist who inadvertently has overlooked some innocent little tablet, or who has failed to notice that some small foot lever is on instead of off. It may even be just the fault of a small bulb in a signal light, designed to signify this, which has quietly burned out. The range of delightful faux pas offered by the organ is as large as its specification, which is another name for its tonal capacity.

THE organ, moreover, has other novel caprices all its own. It is not unknown for an organ suddenly to start to play all by itself. This, by the way, being known—quite illogically—as "ciphering." A violin string may break, or an oboe reed may fail; but these instruments, if left quite alone, will at any rate behave themselves. Occasionally, and for no visible reason, a note in an organ may start to speak, and continue to do so until a tiny flick of dust is dislodged from some valve, or a sticking magnet adjusted. These valves and magnates are of course in the bowels of the instrument, quite out of immediate reach of the player. In the opposite extreme, it is even possible that a broken wire, or a blown fuse at the blowing motor, may reduce the instrument to complete and solemn silence.

Frankly, however, with our excellent modern instruments these incidents occur less frequently than broken strings to string players. And

on the rare occasion when something does happen it may have an amusing side. One may smudge an evening shirt front by delving into the organ in an emergency, but the audience will probably find this diverting enough, as I know from a few experiences on tour. I distinctly remember an instance where applause for fixing a cipher about equaled that for the whole concert.

Speaking of evening dress reminds me of another hazard—the starched shirt cuff. At the crucial moment of reaching for the trompette on the top manual one's shirt cuff may obligingly start doubling on the manual just below, no doubt in a totally unrelated key. For organ keys will speak with full voice if depressed by so much as one-eighth of an inch. There is no middle ground, no whispered approach, and the touch of a coat sleeve backed by a starched cuff is quite enough to unleash cacophony.

For a concert or recording session one prepares not only the music, but also all the changes of stops—the "registration"—and the changes of manuals, which will be peculiar to the particular instrument being used. Even the temperature must be just right to insure that the organ is dead in tune, for colder air is denser air, and vibrates in the pipes more slowly, thus lowering pitch. In fact one must replan the whole campaign, on each new instrument one plays, down to the last sixteenth note and stop and push button.

Thus the "Royal Instrument" for all its size and apparent solidity is something to be handled with the metaphorical kid gloves. The rewards are great, for through the instrument one inherits a rich and unequaled musical literature from the centuries, in whose preparation and performance the player enjoys a creative experience to be duplicated in no other way.

E. Power Biggs has done perhaps more recording than any other organist in America, and is often heard on the Columbia network. A new album will be available shortly.

MUSIC QUIZ

(Answers will be found on page 58)

What identical family names go with these pairs of unrelated popular musicians?

Nathaniel William	Lancelot Henry
Charles Jane	Maxine Joseph