

# "The Records I'd Give"

## As Chosen by the Critics

THE gift season being almost at hand, we have presented a page of this issue to some of the leading opinion formers of this country, and they in turn have presented us with their free-hand opinions of what recordings they might give their friends as Christmas gifts.

If we see any pattern, it is that four professional listeners are in agreement that the thing their friends would most like to have is a copy of the Brahms Requiem. The four are **Felix Borowski** of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, **Suzanne Martin** of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, **Albert Goldberg** of the *Los Angeles Times*, and **Hilmar Grondahl** of the *Portland Oregonian*. Trust the critics, however, to make things as difficult as possible; for having shown so much agreement, they promptly diverge on which of the year's two versions of the Requiem they consider preferable. Messrs. Borowski, Goldberg, and Grondahl bestow their favor on Herbert von Karajan's direction (Columbia) while Miss Martin, both a critic and female, exercises the prerogative of her sex by nominating the Shaw-RCA Victor Chorale album.

Borowski adds a "hang the expense" to his Brahms recommendation and proceeds with further lavishness to suggest, for a violin-playing friend, the Heifetz recording of Vieuxtemps No. 5 (which he calls "remarkable") and, for a piano fancier, the Saint-Saëns G minor (both RCA Victor) by Moiseiwitch. For his single he reverts to a phonographic classic: Bidu Sayao's singing of the "Bachianas Brasilieras No. 5" of Villa-Lobos (on Columbia). Miss Martin is also a Sayao enthusiast, though she prefers the "O Mio Babbino Caro" from "Gianni Schicchi" (Columbia), regretting that the other side "does not have an early Italian art song sung by Pinza." She has children on her list, too, and for them it's Basil Rathbone's "Sinbad the Sailor" (Columbia). Goldberg's friends will get the Prokofieff "Toccatà" played by Horowitz (RCA Victor) if he is a man of his word, and asks that we mention his difficulty in preferring the Brahms to Klemperer's direction of the "Brandenburg No. 5" (on Vox). Further up the coast in Oregon, it's a Bampton Christmas for Grondahl, with "D'amour l'ardente flamme" from "Damnation of Faust" (RCA Victor) the No. 1 single. Danny Kaye's "Tubby the Tuba" (Decca) and "Alice in Wonderland" with Bambi

Linn (RCA Victor) are his nominations for single and album gifts in the children's category.

**John Rosenfeld** of the *Dallas News* has a special reason for liking Florence Quartararo's "Tacea le Notte" from "Trovatore" (RCA Victor) as his gift to Texas enthusiasts: "Here is great vocal material," he writes, "and estimable art that could be significant in a few years." With men who know the Dallas Symphony best, it's Copland's "Rodeo" ten to one, to judge from Rosenfeld's notation that "gin rummy players and poker pals have already asked me for 'Rodeo.'"

Though Ravel's "L'Enfant et Les Sortilèges" has but recently been issued, two critics hold it in high favor, for different reasons. **Jerome D. Bohm** of the *New York Herald Tribune* cites it without reservation as the ideal album gift, while **Harvey Taylor** of the *Detroit Times* works it into his list in the children's department. It's a technicality, however, as Taylor adds: "I have deliberately cheated in classifying 'L'Enfant' as a work for children but I think it's one of the year's most important records—just as 'The Medium' was." As may be deduced from the foregoing, Taylor is a Menotti man in the classical album field. Stokowski's recording of the Revueltas "Sensemaya" (RCA Victor) and Thurber's "Many Moons" (Columbia) complete his selections in singles—classical and children's. The Bohm single is Berglund's "Blick ich umher" (RCA Victor).

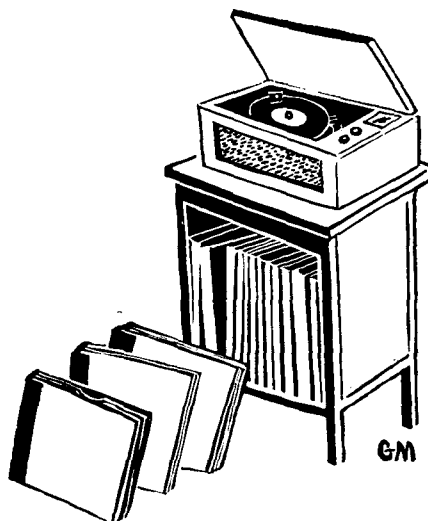
Sayao—or is it merely Debussy?—wins another vote in the preferences expressed by **Cyrus Durgin** of the *Boston Globe*, who estimates the

Columbia recording of "La Demoiselle Elue" with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra as the thing his friends would like to see under their Christmas trees. With it should go Hindemith's "Lively" (Columbia) as enlivened by the Stuyvesant Sinfonietta. "Inside USA" is his choice for a popular album (RCA Victor), with Haydn's "Toy Symphony" (YPR) directed by Max Goberman and Columbia's "Sinbad the Sailor" for the tykes.

Out San Francisco way **Alfred Frankenstein** of the *Chronicle* poses a problem: "When is a single not a single?" He has capably chosen the Budapest Quartet's playing of the Beethoven Opus 132 as his "single"; but adds, "If LP records are not single, put me down for Koussevitzky's recent 'Academic Festival' under that heading." And the mail carriers who have to deliver the fifty or so Berlioz Requiems that Frankenstein is giving away, will not bless either him, Columbia, or Berlioz. Children's singles, he expressively notes, "Nah." But the Young People's "Building a City" is favorably Frankensteined.

From the periodical press, a vote for some standbys by **Robert Darrell** of *The Review of Recorded Music*: Edwin Fischer's direction of a string orchestra in the six-part "Ricercare" of Bach and Beecham's "Great Elopement" Suite of Handel (both RCA Victor). He thinks children will welcome the Haydn "Trumpet Concerto" as played by Eskdale (Columbia) or the "South African Veldt Songs" of Marias (Decca). **Peter Hugh Reed** of *The American Record Guide* selects the new Stokowski version of "The Swan of Tuonela" (RCA Victor), the "Vienna Waltzes" played by the Alexander Schneider Quintet (Columbia), and Count Basie's "Piano Rhythms" (RCA Victor) for the grownups. For the small fry, "Little Toot" (Capitol) and "Irving the Unemployed Horse" (MGM).

Being neither a horse nor unemployed, the editor regards the last as suspiciously akin to a slur from the genial Reed, but will resolve that aspersion after the holidays. To his friends **Kolodin** proposes the following: Fauré's "Pavane" (Columbia) as a single token of affection, Kathleen Ferrier's "Alto Rhapsody" (English Decca) of Brahms for multiple joy. At least one of the younger set will get Copland's "Appalachian Spring" since she's asked for it now six times, and can be put off no longer. A much younger one will get Thurber's "Many Moons," and a handful of Dizzy Gillespies will make the rounds of the bebop set. For his neighbors, Kolodin proposes a closed phonograph and no music on Christmas Day.



# The Basic Record Library

## Instrumental Works

### Mozart

#### CONCERTO FOR PIANO

No. 4 in G, K.41. See Imports.

No. 9 in E flat, K.271. Since Mozart is not to be measured by the standard of any other composer, this work of his twentieth year will surprise no one for its grace and expressiveness. Gieseeking's prewar performance with the Berlin State Orchestra directed by Hans Rosbaud is splendidly controlled, the recording still listenable (Columbia).

No. 12 in A, K.414. One would have thought that Louis Kentner, whose sensitive playing of this work is but one of a series of fine recordings, would have made his American debut ere this. The fast movements are animated by care and musicianly understanding the slow movement admirably akin to the cultivated feeling of Sir Thomas Beecham. Both the piano and the London Philharmonic are suitably reproduced (Columbia).

No. 14 in E flat, K.449. The ensemble directed by Adolf Busch is smaller than is customary in the concert hall, but the chamber-music style is respected by Rudolf Serkin. Subtle work all the way (RCA Victor).

No. 15 in B flat, K.450. Fine finger work by Kathleen Long and well-accentuated direction by Boyd Neel have revived the listening pleasures of a work which had, for more than a decade, only Elly Ney as its interpreter. One of the richest dividends of English Decca's enterprise, it has been surpassed by more recent frr albums but its quality is high by any measurement.

No. 17 in G, K.453. Whether Columbia will relist the imaginative playing of Dohnanyi (in which he also conducts the Budapest Philharmonic) is uncertain; even preferable would be a new version by him, since he is in this country at the present time. Awaiting that, we can commend the Edwin Fischer (RCA Victor) as a lesser but still respectable treatment of this score, and acceptably recorded.

No. 18 in B flat, K.456. See Imports.

No. 19 in F, K.459. A wartime casualty, and still not rescued from the file of the missing, this performance by Schnabel and Malcolm Sargent has values enduring enough to merit re-issue.

No. 20 in D minor, K.466. Iturbi

with Walter conducting might be a commendable blend, but the two available editions offer Iturbi as a facile pianist and not very good conductor, Walter as an adroit conductor but not wholly successful pianist. Between the deficiencies, I am inclined to prefer Walter, whose conception is more satisfactory if not always realized. The orchestra is the Vienna Philharmonic, which dates the issue accurately. (Both RCA Victor.)



—Drawing from a 1786 painting.

“... Mozart is not to be measured by the standard of any other composer.”

No. 21 in C, K.467. A masterful work, masterfully played by Schnabel, and handsomely accompanied by the London Symphony directed by Sargent. There might be some reservations about the reproduction, but obviously enduring interpretative art must be accepted in its own dimension as time passes and mechanics improve (RCA Victor).

No. 22 in E flat, K.482. Rather methodical playing by Edwin Fischer, which is not disturbed by Barbirolli's equally objective direction of the orchestra. A calm way to enjoy the music, lacking any other (RCA Victor).

No. 23 in A, K.488. One of the two Mozart piano concerti to reach the American market since the war (neither of American origin), there is virtue in the playing of Clifford Curzon, but hardly the special feeling for this work which has kept the Rubinstein version a favorite since the early

1930's. Ffrr is a not inconsequential addition to the merits of Curzon's playing—which are many—but my preference remains with Rubinstein and Barbirolli (RCA Victor). Also see Imports.

No. 24 in C minor, K.491. Casadesus and Fischer are the alternatives here, with not much variation in reproduced quality. Animation and shading are administered by Casadesus (Columbia) with a more supple hand than Fischer (RCA Victor) commands, and it is the former's views which appeal to me.

No. 25 in C, K.503. See Imports.

No. 26 in D (“Coronation”), K.537. Something less than the best of Landowska, it is nevertheless a fluent, sophisticated playing on its own small scale. Walter Goehr is the conductor, and hardly notable (RCA Victor).

No. 27 in B flat, K.595. This is the remarkable work recorded by Schnabel with wisdom and art, by Casadesus with subtlety and finesse, Barbirolli being the uncollaborative collaborator in both. There is an advantage of instrumental fidelity in the more recent Columbia-Casadesus, but a greater fidelity to Mozart in the Schnabel (RCA Victor). Since one has to accept Barbirolli in either case, it might just as well be with Schnabel.

#### IMPORTS

Considering the quantity of European recording in recent months and years, the attention to these works of Mozart has been distinctly meager. Of indeterminate age (though sounding older than newer) is a lively, stylistic playing by Marguerite Roesgen-Champion of the early No. 4, a work of absorbing felicity despite its derivation by the juvenile Mozart from contemporary (1770) French sources. Albert Wolff conducts, and the recording is typically French-studio in sound (French Columbia). An exceptional accomplishment from the Parlophone catalogue is Lili Kraus's intensely alive performance of the invincibly spirited No. 18 in B flat, done to the remarkably tasteful orchestral direction of Walter Goehr. Denis Matthews's playing of No. 23 in A, on English Columbia, is a further count in the favor of this interesting artist, but not sufficiently forceful to dislodge me from my stand on Rubinstein. I have heard good things about both the No. 25 by Fischer and No. 27 by Backhaus, but neither has been available for audition at this time. However, there is a possibility that the first of these will be cleared by RCA Victor for Red Seal release next spring.

—THE EDITOR.

(To be continued)