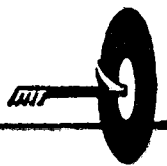


HITS AND MISSES



THE JOYS of popular record reviewing are easy enough to suggest—occasionally it leads to musical delight. The aches and pains of the business call for somewhat more comment. There are three broad categories of aches: (1) the waste of sound talent on trifling material; (2) the apparently limitless dullness both as to talent and material; (3) musical horror. In writing these columns we have tried to ignore the dull: what has the reader done to deserve asphyxiation? But the waste one keeps mentioning in the hope that it may promote a happier use of attractive performers. And the horrifying is occasionally referred to out of a lingering streak of pulpity. Besides, the real purpose of the department—to point, if possible, the way to delight—is perhaps served here and there by contrast.

Under the heading of waste for December we are emboldened to ask: who would not prefer to hear Pearl Bailey's irresistible power and high spirits applied to "Mr. Jefferson Lord,



Play That Barbershop Chord" rather than this month's routine "I'm Lazy, That's All" and "Say It Simple" (Columbia 38328, 75¢)? Or the lazily infectious voice of Johnny Mercer devoted to "Saloon, Saloon, Saloon" rather than "Winter Wonderland" and "If I Knew Then" (Capitol 15276, 79¢)? We merely mean to imply that, despite the recent rash of revivals, there are still a great many first-class vehicles in which no one is riding.

Horror department. Referring to those solemn souls who objected to his friend Abraham Lincoln's habit of cracking jokes, Robert G. Ingersoll observed that "solemnity is the preface, the prologue, and the index to the cunning or the stupid." Well, the p. p. and i. to the art of musical corn is offered this month in a new album by the enterprise which makes itself available under the title of "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye" (the title, of course, has lent itself to any number of easy parodies such as Lose Faith, Take Heart with Jean-Paul Sartre). The album is called "Dusty Manuscripts" (RCA Victor P228, \$4.00), although it is difficult to see what is dusty about such constantly revived numbers as "I Want a Girl (Just Like the Girl that Married Dear Old Dad)," "Cuddle Up a Little Closer," "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," "Down Among the Sheltering Palms." It is even harder to imagine the labor of arrangers and musicians being deliberately applied to the production of such whiffing and maudlin effects as appear on these eight sides. Taken separately, they might perhaps be expunged from memory, but it strikes us that gath-

ered together, in all their octagonal ignominy, there is something monumental about them. Like a forty-foot statue of Louella Parsons. Here is a whole catalogue of rhythmic tiddling à la Lombardo and coy sentimental duets à la Church Social, and there are even three lugubrious "readings" by the Maestro himself, one love-lorn dirge being accompanied by Schubert's Serenade on the organ, while a father's remarks to his son concerning his deceased mother are supported by a funereal rendition of "Waves of the Danube." In the year 1948, even to one fully aware of the comic-book and horror-movie aspects of American civilization, this album must give pause.

We hasten to an antidote in the form of Duke Ellington's excellent revival of "My Honey's Lovin' Arms" (RCA Victor 20-3135, 75¢). In recent years Ellington has trended pretty heavily into the purple and overripe, but there is nothing of that sort here. The grand old tune is served up with easy rhythm, a fine muted trumpet solo, and some robust figures for the brass which have the spontaneous quality we associate with the Ellington band of years ago. It all sounds as though the boys hadn't worried much about putting it together, and we wish we could feel this holiday spirit in more recent Ellington recordings.

The vast public of Frankie Carle will rejoice to hear that he has a new piano album, "Roses in Rhythm" (Columbia C-174, \$3.90)—the varieties in the bouquet include Picardy, Wild Irish, Mexicali, Washington Square, and Honeysuckle. Carle plays, as usual, with exemplary cleanness and rhythmic buoyancy, but we continue to find a certain monotony verging on the tinkly. His playing always reminds us that Teddy Wilson's single-finger inventions are much subtler, and that Eddie Heywood's approach to the instrument is much more vigorous and rhythmically incisive. Which is perhaps no way to discuss Frankie Carle, but the three pianists do have a broad stylistic similarity which invites comparison. Eddie Heywood this month offers a handsome new tune, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," in which his own admirable work follows a dispensable vocalist (RCA Victor 20-3012, 75¢).

The suspicion arises that a considerable run is due for a number called "My Darling, My Darling" from the Broadway hit "Where's Charlie?"—a musical version of "Charlie's Aunt." We put the selection down as pleasant if not smashing, and add that at least two good versions are available: by Doris Day and Buddy Clark (Columbia 38353, 75¢) and Eve Young and Jack Lathrop (RCA Victor 20-3187, 75¢).

—WILDER HOBSON.



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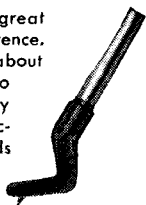
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OPERA ROUNDUP

(Continued from page 55)

Victor 12-0450); and a crooned version by Luigi Infantino, late of the City Center, of the Duke's two big arias from "Rigoletto" (Columbia 17557).

For the Wagnerites, there are new issues of the Rome Narrative from "Tannhäuser" (Set Svanholm) and "Die Frist ist um" (Joel Berglund) from "The Flying Dutchman." Mr. Svanholm, an excellent musician, though dry-voiced singer, brings intensity but little glamor to his work (RCA Victor 12-0528). The older recording by Lauritz Melchior of the same excerpt is much more vital. Mr. Berglund's performance (RCA Victor 12-0532) is a good one, but does not eclipse the memorable recording of this excerpt made by Friedrich Schorr.

One aria theoretically welcome to the record collector should be Elvira's "Mi tradi" from "Don Giovanni," so often omitted in stage performances of Mozart's opera and one of the noblest pieces in the work. Elizabeth Schwarzkopf of the Vienna Opera sings the recitativo, "In quali eccessi, O Numi," in a strident, Wienerblut Italian that mars the vocal quality. Her accounting of the aria itself is more satisfactory but scarcely a model, while Josef Krips conducts in sentimental vein (Columbia 72640). Felicie Huni-

Mihacek's old Brunswick-Polydor recording of this music, if memory can be trusted, is still the best.

Another Mozart excerpt has been tackled in the current listing by Eleanor Steber, who offers a cool, straightforward, well-sung performance of "Voi che sapete" from "The Marriage of Figaro." Jean Morel provides a distinguished accompaniment. Miss Steber's singing of the Waltz Song from "Roméo et Juliette" on the reverse side is less good. Though competently done it lacks brilliance and the soprano's scales are not always even (RCA Victor 12-0526). Victor might have done better to reissue Galli-Curci's incomparable recording.

Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette" also yields a disc by Jussi Bjoerling of the second-act aria, "Ah! lève-toi, soleil," sung with beautiful tone and a minimum of imagination. Mr. Bjoerling is more successful on the reverse side with "Ah! fuyez" from "Manon," in which the lack of interior drama is felt less keenly because of the music's natural surge (RCA Victor 12-0527). Here his fine voice sounds at its best.

Of all these releases, only Miss Albanese's singing of "Adieu, petite table" can be recommended wholeheartedly.



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NOVEMBER 27, 1948

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DECCA has climbed a long way out on a limb with its sponsorship of Danny Kaye as a Gilbert and Sullivan performer, but it could well be a golden bough. Traditionalists will miss the choral backgrounds, and are likely to take offense at the touched-up orchestrations of Johnny Green, the added verses of Sylvia Fine (Mrs. Kaye). But the zest and humor of Kaye's interpretations, the sparkling clarity of his delivery of the texts are virtues of a high order. (Decca album A 694, \$3.)

Kaye's gamut in this collection includes "The Nightmare Song," "If You're Anxious for to Shine," "When First My Old Love I Knew," "In Enterprises of a Martial Kind," and "The Policeman's Song." The last of these, delivered with a masterful Cockney accent, is completely untraditional and wholly amusing. On the other hand, Danny has over-reached himself in "The Moon and I," where his talent for delivering patter is not involved, but his limited voice is. As the album cover notes, this is "Danny Kaye and Gilbert and Sullivan," a combination which spells lively entertainment for the young listeners.

The very young are favored this month by several issues. Outstanding are Anita Mayfield in the "Sing A-Long" series (Disko, KR 11 and 13), records offering easily followed songs in which the listener fills in missing

words when the songs are repeated, promoting alertness as it provides entertainment, and Irene Wicker (in Mercury album MMP 6, \$2.36) making the ABC's melodic in "Alphabet Fun from A to Z." She has able assistance from Milton Rettenberg, piano, as well as sound effects supervised by Barney Bick. Speaking of the alphabet we'd like to add our endorsement to the new issue of Dohnányi's "Variations on a Nursery Theme" reviewed on p. 52. The theme is one that every child knows and the clever elaborations of it are excellently adapted for music appreciation purposes.

Frank Luther and Milton Herth have a gay new version of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" to their credit (Decca 7461-2, \$1.25), but there is less to admire in his delivery of "Happy the Harmonica" (Decca CUS 12, \$2.10). The story material of Beth Brown is poor, not much better in "Tick Tock House" on the other side. Woodie Guthrie's "Car Songs" (Cub, plastic, 98¢) are also suitable for very young listeners, combining some familiar songs with several newer ones.

For the seven to eleven group, Peter Seeger offers traditional sea songs in a Young People's Record (unbreakable, 415, \$1.58) that includes "Cruise of the Bigler," "Johnny Comes Down to Hilo," and "New Bedford Whalers." "Rainy Day," by Tom Glazer (YPR 712, unbreakable, \$1.58) deals with the perpetual problem of the weathered-in child, suggesting ways of keeping himself busy until the sun shines again. A promising release which has not yet arrived is a version of "Cinderella" in which Margaret Lockwood, of screen fame, tells the tale in song and story to her daughter. It is a London release selling for \$2.25 which will be reviewed next month.

Parents with Columbia attachments for Long Playing records will be interested in some additions to the list of releases. The pairing and prices are as follows: "Sinbad the Sailor" and "Oliver Twist," with Basil Rathbone (4072, LP, \$4.85); "Rhumpy the Rhino," with Craig McDonnell, and "Kanky the Concertina" with David Allen (8004, JLP, \$2.85); "Many Moons" with John Lansing, and "Eager Piano" with John Larkin (8002, JLP, \$2.85); "Nursery Songs," Vols. 1 and 2, with Gene Kelly (8001, JLP, \$2.85); and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," with David Allen, and "Gingerbread Boy" (8003, JLP, \$2.85).

—MARIE L. MUTCH.



Christmas Recommendations

ALBUMS

CHRISTMAS CAROLS. Sir Malcolm Sargent directs the Royal Choral Society in fine sonorous performances of familiar carols. (London album 42, \$5.)

CHRISTMAS CHIMES. Charles Smart, organ, and Tommy Blades, chimes. (London album 44, \$3.15.)

RING OUT CHRISTMAS BELLS. Chimes and Organ (Mercury album A. 60, \$4.50.) Instrumental performances, both marred by clanging sounding chimes.

SONGS OF CHRISTMAS. Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians, with soloists and glee club, offer a musical version of the Nativity in songs and verses from the Bible. Excellent selection of material and first-rate performance make this an outstanding offering. (Decca album AU 13, \$5.)

CHRISTMAS HYMNS AND CAROLS. Robert Shaw and the Victor Choral, performing in concert style, and very well too. (RCA Victor album 1077, \$5.25.)

CHRISTMAS SONGS. A seasonal greeting from Frank Sinatra to his fans, including both the traditional and the popular material of the Yule. (Columbia album C-167, \$3.95.)

SINGLE DISCS

O, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL; SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT. Kathleen Ferrer, with Boyd Neel String Orchestra. (London T 5052, \$2.)

ABIDE WITH ME; AWAY IN THE MANGER. Anne Shelton with George Mitchell Choir. (London 10025, 75¢.)

O TANNENBAUM; STILLE NACHT. Franz Winkler Terzett. (London 10026, 75¢.)

LITTLE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM; THE CAROL OF THE LITTLE KING. Ada Alsop. (London 10039, \$1.)

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS; WHITE CHRISTMAS. Fred Waring and Glee Club. (Decca 24500, 79¢.)

CAROLS. Allegro Carolers. (Allegro 102, \$1.25.)

STORIES AND PLAYS

STORY OF THE NATIVITY. Walter Hampden and supporting cast. (RCA Victor album P 225, \$3.15.)

THE BOY WHO SANG FOR THE KING. Dennis Day portraying all characters. (RCA Victor album Y 376, \$2.25.)

I LIKE CHRISTMAS; MY NEW YEAR'S WISH FOR YOU. Poems read by Franklin McCormack. (MGM 50009, \$1.50.)

THIS IS CHRISTMAS. Irene Wicker. (Mercury album MMP 7, \$2.37.) As for the "Christmas Carol," perennial and indestructible, the choices include Basil Rathbone (Columbia album 521, \$4.75), Ronald Colman (Decca album 290, \$3.85), and Lionel Barrymore and Richard Hale (MGM album 16, \$3.94).