

# Recordings Reports on Classical Releases

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| WORK, PERFORMER, DATA                                                                                                                   | REPORT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anderson: "Sleigh Ride." Fiedler conducting the Boston "Pops" Orchestra. Victor 10-1481, \$1.                                           | Connoisseurs of "Pops" recordings will note a rounder sonority, a richer blend of sound in this fine reproduction than that to which they are accustomed. Also an uncommonly gay invention by Anderson, of which the highest praise is that it is worthy of Eric Coates himself.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Bach: "Italian Concerto." Edith Weiss-Mann, harpsichord. Allegro LA 5, \$3.85.                                                          | The first new version of this in a considerable time, and the first ever on LP. It comes off reasonably well, considering that Weiss-Mann is one of the more muscular harpsichordists, and the sponsors have chosen to provide the listener with all the pedal and mechanism noises of the harpsichord. The "Concerto After Benedetto Marcello" is the upside, and generally a lesser work. Clean, slightly brittle sound throughout.                                                                                                                                                             |
| Beethoven: Trio in E flat, Opus 70, No. 2. Alma Trio. Allegro LA 4, \$4.85.                                                             | More good repertory from Allegro, this time matched with thoroughly able performance, the trio's members being Roman Totenberg, violin, Adolph Baller, piano, and Gabor Retjo, cello. Highly integrated, well-sounding performance of this work, which has been unjustly obscured by the "Geister." With it is a lively playing of Haydn's G major Trio (with the "Gypsy" Rondo). In both cases, the LP is mechanically excellent, the tonal fidelity and balance splendid.                                                                                                                       |
| Brahms: "Hungarian Dances," Nos. 1 and 3. Clemens Krauss conducting the London Symphony. London R. 1011, \$2.10.                        | A graceful respite from Brucker masses and Von Einem "Concertos," played in crisp, idiomatic manner by Krauss, and suavely reproduced. The third (rarely favored on records) is particularly welcome for its interesting suggestions of both Dvorak and Grieg.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Caccini: "Amarilli," other songs. Licia Albanese, soprano, with Victor Trucco, piano. RCA Victor album 1316, \$4; WMO 1316, \$3.35.     | A much thinner, shriller version of this song than was recently offered, on London, by Suzanne Danco. Mme. Albanese, in fact, is vocally luxuriant in only two of her six songs: Szulc's "Clair de Lune" and Campbell-Tipton's "Spirit Flower," for strain and stress are much too evident in Tchaikovsky's "Lullaby" (Opus 16, No. 1), Liszt's "Oh! quand je dors," and A. Scarlatti's "Se florindo è fedele." Suitable reproduction, somewhat lacking depth in the 45 rpm.                                                                                                                      |
| Cardillo: "Core 'ngrato." Mario Lanza, tenor, with orchestra directed by C. Callinicos. RCA Victor 12-1026, \$1.25; WDM 1330, 95¢.      | Much the best of a batch of discs by the latest "second Caruso." Lanza is far from that: rather a young man gifted with a superb voice of indefinite size. Till he has been heard without benefit of amplification nothing more can be said. He sings these Neapolitan songs (the upside is "Mamma mia che vo' sape?") in the proper tear-drenched tones, but the same in "Che gelida manina" and "Celeste Aida" are loud, vulgar, and not very funny. As for Kern's "They Didn't Believe Me," Lanza is both in the wrong church and the wrong pew. Powerful reproduction, especially the 45 rpm. |
| Chabrier: "Fête Polonoise." Monteux conducting the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor 12-0978, \$1.25.                        | A rather more ingenious piece than the title suggests, this excerpt from "Le Roi Malgré Lui" is in the good, rousing, boisterous manner of Chabrier's "Marche Joyeuse" and "Bourrée Fantasque." Monteux is no man to spare an accent, resulting in a performance of breadth and vivacity. Good conventional recording, a little wanting in string resonance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Donizetti: "Spirito gentil," etc. Eugene Conley, tenor, with orchestra conducted by Alberto Erede. London LLP 26, \$5.85.               | Dazzling virtuosity by the American Conley, in this air especially, but also in various others by Bizet, Gounod, Flotow, Verdi, and Puccini (two "Toscas," a "Bohème," and a "Turandot"). The conventional arias range from good to excellent, but Conley's clean, hard-hitting top tones make exciting listening in the Donizetti. One of London's better LP's in sound, also.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Handel: "Timotheus Cries." Trevor Anthony, bass, with the London Symphony conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. London T. 5157, \$2.10.     | A hitherto unrecorded air from "Alexander's Feast," sung with taste and understanding by Anthony, also a rounder quality of voice than was heard from him in the Beecham version of "Messiah." Very sprightly work by Sargent in the bright first section, well modulated pathos thereafter.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Rachmaninoff: "Vocalise." Lily Pons, soprano, with Andre Kostelanetz and orchestra. Columbia 3-241, 90¢.                                | Though one would not think it likely, this is one of the rare recordings of this "Vocalise" by a vocalist—most others have been by orchestras. Miss Pons has too much ho-ho-ho in her tones for my taste, but it is otherwise well sung. There have been better versions of Rimsky's "Rose and the Nightingale" than hers on the reverse side.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Respighi: "Arie di Corte." Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia 3-190, 90¢.                                          | I can hardly commend this seven-inch microgroove, with its break in the middle of a relatively brief piece, when there is doubtless an LP on the way of which it will be a consecutive part. Otherwise deft playing of a well-arranged excerpt from Respighi's "Ancient Airs and Dances."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Sieczynski: "Wien, du stadt meiner träume." Mario Berini, tenor, with orchestra conducted by Max Rudolf. Columbia 3-294, 90¢.           | This record is obviously for listening, not for reviewing; for a seidel or two of <i>dunkles</i> would doubtless make its leisurely tempo sound just right. Berini sings this and the upside "Ich muss wieder einmal in Grinzing sein" with fine vocal quality, uncommon enunciation of the text, and a full measure of support from Rudolf.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Schubert: "Der Lindenbaum" and "Die Post." Heinrich Schlusnus, baritone, with Sebastian Peschko, piano. London T 5160. \$2.10.          | The postwar voice of Schlusnus, in unexpected amplitude and abundance. Only one with an aficionado's ear for Schlusnus's peerless best would note here or there a strain for a top tone or a blemish in production. Otherwise these are performances to be compared only with his own. Superbly clear recording, ideal for lieder.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Schubert: Trio in E flat, Opus 100. Alma Trio. Allegro LA 1, \$4.85.                                                                    | Unequal reproduction on LP is the bane of this worthy enterprise, played by the personnel noted for the Beethoven trio above. The playing is able, though inclined to spurn the fine points of Schubert's writing, but it is the wiry violin and percussive piano which are particularly disaffecting. The Beethoven is not so afflicted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Wagner: "Wahn, Wahn" ("Die Meistersinger"). Paul Schoeffler with the National Symphony conducted by Karl Rankl. London T. 5159, \$2.10. | The most of this superb scene to be heard on records since the days when the Schorr recording was considered a reasonable likeness of voice and orchestra. Schoeffler does not command the exceptional sweetness of nature that Schorr conveyed, but his rich, meaty voice (soon to be heard at the Metropolitan) is supervised with complete understanding and a wealth of expressive detail. Rankl collaborates sensitively, and the Kingsway Hallmark is on the sound.                                                                                                                         |

—IRVING KOLODIN.

## REVIEWS

(Continued from page 53)

sults in a sacrifice of a basic benefit of the LP method. I understand the Capitol people are limited in choice of "coupling" material, but here is a plain instance of haste making for waste.

Otherwise, the Stravinsky stands up remarkably well for a recording made a decade ago. Were one not aware of his special preference in orchestra sonorities, it might be criticized for lack of orchestral warmth and resonance. However, it is generically akin to the results he has sought in all his more recent recordings, though with the edgy sharpness and rather shrill top characteristic of these early Capitol LP's.

### Two Down, ? to Go

HAYDN: *Quartets in D (Opus 64, No. 5) and B flat (Opus 76, No. 4). Budapest Quartet.* (Columbia LP ML 4246, \$4.85.)

In the twenty-six issues thus far published of this magazine, I have no previous recollection of a Haydn quartet noted for the attention of its readers. Extending this total to include

works issued during and after the war, the American listener may expect to have a new treatment of the eighty-three Haydn quartets by A.D. 2122—not allowing, of course, for future Petrillo bans. Why this should be so, I cannot say, save that the production may be too cheap, the public interest too keen to appeal to the sporting instincts of the record companies.

Like virtually every other quartet of Haydn which the Budapest in its Roismann-led days has been permitted to record, these two are almost infallibly right in dynamics and accents; slides, slurs, and cesuras. The impulses which make its ensemble style sometimes a little robust for Mozart are precisely suitable to Haydn; as, for example, in the Opus 64 ("Lark") quartet, in which Roismann's soaring lyric phrase, at the outset, has just the right rhythmic crispness behind it, or the Menuetto of the Opus 76 ("Sunrise"), in which all the accents graze, but do not scar, the Haydn line.

Columbia has made notable progress in its treatment of such matter in the LP medium, and there is scarcely a hint of edginess in the tone, which has abundant highs but none of the searing edge remembered in the first Beethoven and Ravel quartets on LP. Moreover, the two sides are as free of surface sound as any records I have ever heard. —IRVING KOLODIN.



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## MUSIC AND DANCE

(Continued from page 35)

of art, but also the moral and social"—a realization that came to him when he "conducted in New York an exciting program of 'Music of Old and New Russia,' with some Red Army songs in it." What the structure of this "wider basis" may be I was unable to discover. Whenever a paragraph seemed to tremble on the brink of becoming reasonably clear, a new metaphor came along to fog things up again.

The book does make plain, however, that Mr. Saminsky possesses a phenomenal fund of contempt for his fellow composers. He expresses disdain for "the bannerbearers and the revered European governors who now lead an honorary musical existence—Schönberg and Stravinsky"; for "our own home-grown, terribly patriotic Aaron Copland, master of turn-style and wizard of *musique à succès*"; for Gershwin, whose "Rhapsody in Blue" is "already gasping for air"; for Charles Ives, whose Second String Quartet is "one long, gray trail of piffle"; for Virgil Thomson's "school," which "would almost terrorize us into being gay and spontaneous"; for Walter Piston, whose "music is but *musica distillata*."

When Mr. Saminsky contemplates the music of his favorites, his tone changes startlingly. Having administered a round spanking to the Stravinsky disciples for their preoccupation with "design and form," he praises Emerson Whithorne's "New York Days and Nights" for its "precision of design." He admires the "élan and charm" of a funeral march

by Douglas Moore, though these would scarcely appear to be the most desirable qualities a funeral march might possess. Such misplaced enthusiasm is almost the kiss of death for Professor Moore, who is an able and sensible musician but certainly not an epoch-making one, for Mr. S. praises his product at the expense of many composers who have undertaken to grapple with considerably more difficult esthetic and technical problems.

Such a pastiche of uncontrolled invective and effusive hand-kissing is really not allowable within the proper limits of professional criticism. From the point of view of objective analysis, his discussions of individual works are unreliable, since his references to passages and procedures are employed principally to document conclusions he has previously reached through personal prejudice and predilection. Musical criticism is not a matter of hating and loving either composers or their works; unless a critic proceeds from the assumption that dispassionate description is the basic, and most difficult, requirement of his task, he is certain—as Mr. Saminsky does—to leap to final judgments that are scarcely more than whims.

Over and beyond all this, however, the trouble with Mr. Saminsky's book is that nearly every page sets up insoluble problems of semantics. He is so enamored of the language of analogy that he quite forgets to require of his metaphors meanings that will be intelligible to anyone but himself. As an interpreter of values in our "living music" he has not recognized the responsibility, which he places onerously upon our composers, of "curbing everything in artistic means that is alien to his creative aim."

## Music and Dance Notes

**EDUCATION OF A CONCERTGOER**, by Homer Ulrich. Dodd, Mead, \$4. This book should do much to bridge the gap between the professional musician and the intelligent but untrained listener. Its author does not believe that those who are unversed in his craft are necessarily morons. More power to him, say I, since in this age of specialization a professor in any branch of a college is likely to revert to the kindergarten stage when he visits the department across the hall.

Mr. Ulrich puts himself in the shoes of a new friend of music. He takes the listener through typical music situations—attending a concert; overhearing the intermission talk of people who seem to know more, and whose opinions differ from one's own; reading a critic's review; listening to records at home. Also, he provides the answers to many of the questions an untutored listener might ask. Take the matter of interpretation. How can one thoroughly enjoy X's performance of "Liebesträume" in a concert if he fears that he may read in a review the next day that everything about the performance was wrong, and the piece moreover was not worth playing? Are there no principles of interpretation which a mere listener could learn so as to make fairly sound judgments? There are, of course; and one would have to search long to find a better presentation of them than in the chapter "Play It Like This."

Other sections of the book are concerned with such matters as the mechanics of program making, the home life of orchestra musicians, and the problems of reading a score. The final chapter has to do with music in the home, and some good, common-sense suggestions are made for bringing children and music closer together. There is a good bibliography for further reading, and a time-saving list of music publishers from whom chamber music for home performances can be obtained.

—PETER HANSEN.

**MOMENTS MOUSICAL**, by Deems Taylor. Ziff-Davis, \$2.50. Nobody will deny Mr. Taylor's accomplishments as a knowing and amusing commentator on music and "the dahnce," but he's stretching the indulgence of his numerous admirers by flagrant addiction to punning in this book. In his collection of brief and obvious burlesques of opera and ballet performed by mice rather than human beings, Mr. Taylor thereby presumably dem-



BILL HARRISON

"Sure I heard you calling, but I'm not the only Bascom Woolsey in the world."



onstrates that if Dean Swift could view the race in terms of horses and apes, why not he in the form of cute, endearing little rodents?

Accordingly, with the support of Walter Kummé's drawings, which may give the reader the puzzling impression that he's strayed into the juvenile department, Mr. Taylor discusses the prehistoric mouse discovered by Moustapha Kemal in a Mousopotamian cave, pertinent ethnological evidence on the Mousetta Stone found in an old mousque by a Mouslem explorer named Mousserschmidt, and so on to Greek friezes of the petite darlings now in possession of the Moussachusetts Institute of Technology. (Recalling the mountain in labor, you see how quickly this sort of thing might become a serious mental irritant.)

Terpsichore takes its licking from Mr. Taylor as he deems (ah, there!) to analyze the morris (corruption of "mouse") dance, Spanish jotás and habaneras, the ballet "Le Lac des Souris," and the modern dance of significance as opposed to the classical revolution of "Mousadora Dunkem." The Ring operas, the Bayreuth Festival, and "Fritz Miceler" all come under the spoofs at "long-hairs," and the dedication to "Moussorgski," "Mouzart," "Moussenet," and others pointedly ignores that eminent representative of the *Familia Muridae*, the mouse who's known as Mickey. Which may prove that we're men, after all.

—RUSSELL RHODES.

*DANCES OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA*, by Mila Lubinová. *DANCES OF THE NETHERLANDS*, by Elise Van Der Ven-Ten Bensele. *DANCES OF SWEDEN*, by Erik Salvén. *DANCES OF SWITZERLAND*, by Louise Witzig. *Chanticleer*. \$1.25 each. These are four additions to the little series called "Handbooks of European National Dances," edited by Violet Alford and published under the joint auspices of the Royal Academy of Dancing and the Ling Physical Education Association. Dances of Austria, Finland, Greece, and Portugal already have been issued.

The present group of four follows the same format—a short introduction discussing the customs and mores behind the folk dances, notes on costumes, basic steps, and dance figures, and an analytic description of four specific dances. Simplified piano accompaniments and a few colored plates are supplied, together with short bibliographies. Each volume, by the way, totals exactly forty pages.

—ROSALYN KROKOVER.

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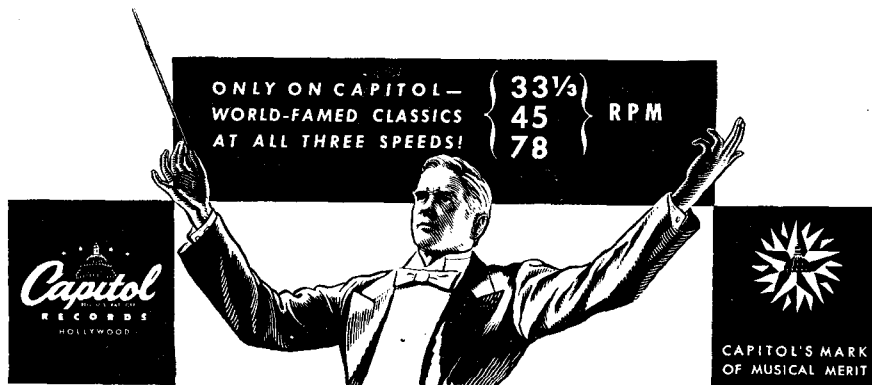
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# Report on LP: Experience Will Teach

THE record-makers of the country, with one very important exception, are now manufacturing 33 1/3 rpm, microgroove, long playing records. They are moved by a natural desire to obtain a share of the profits that Columbia's enterprise has uncovered in the distribution of this kind of recording. Some months ago Mercury, Vox, Cetra, and Concert Hall anticipated the general movement and issued LP's dubbed from 78's with very good results. "General movement" is a calm phrase to describe the stampede we are witnessing. Remembering that the first fruits of the new Columbia seed included a number of lemons, purchasers may suspect the quality of the additional crops so many are rushing to produce.

Is the suspicion valid? The smaller companies have the advantage of Columbia's experience, in some cases of Columbia's active cooperation. The vicissitudes of the early LP production, when splendor and squalor might appear on the same lists, have been erased by a steady standard of high efficiency. Is this advanced stage not the point of departure for the companies now imitating Columbia?

The question seems worth investigation, and the results of the investigation follow. It should be understood that most Columbia LP's have been made originally with LP in mind, from masters made at 33 1/3 revolutions, while the non-Columbia discs examined here are in every case the result of transcription into microgrooves of music reproduced from 78's. The records chosen for comparison were the first six for which an acceptable Columbia bearing an identical composition was at hand. Naturally from such a comparison between different musicians in different places no identity of sound can be expected, but the original problem and the ultimate goal were the same, and the results hoped for must have been very much alike. Here are the results:

**BARTOK:** "Concerto for Orchestra." *Eduard van Beinum and the Concertgebouw Orchestra.* (London LLP 5, \$5.85.) *Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.* (Columbia ML 102, \$4.85.)

The London is a fair recording in which the superb qualities of frrr are not audible. Intermittently the orchestra is as if curtailed, all choirs a little obscured, particularly the wood. The faults are not great but their cumulative effect is one of great dis-

appointment for those who retain an aural image of the frrr 78's at their best. Bass is not clean and tends to incipient blast. Against such mediocre opposition the Columbia LP, one of the very good ones, shows an easy superiority in all tonal aspects.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 12, No. 1. Roman Totenberg and Adolph Baller.* (Allegro LA 2, \$4.85.) *Joseph Szigeti and Mieczyslaw Horzowski.* (Columbia ML 4133, \$4.85.)

By contemporary standards the Allegro version cannot be called a satisfactory recording. The tone of both instruments is shallow; the piano, in the first movement, blasts in the bass, and in the three movements clatters intermittently in the treble. Lacking these defects, the Columbia would be excellent if Szigeti's violin were not accompanied by a wisp of alien harmonics, a feature found on many recent Columbias, 33 1/3 and 78, and which apparently must be accepted with the same resignation granted to surface noise.

**DEBUSSY:** "Ibéria." *Ernest Ansermet and the Orchestra of La Suisse Romande.* (London LLP 44, \$5.85.) *Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.* (Columbia ML 4021, \$4.85.)

An approving nod to the good sense which put the three "Images" on one disc, "Gigues" and "Rondes de Printemps" occupying the obverse of the London "Ibéria." There are illusory merits in this recording, illusory because the brilliance of some details tends to obscure the obscurity of the mass. Percussion is clear and sharp; so are some wind passages; but the orchestra lacks homogeneity, sweep, and muscularity in the London LP, qualities conspicuously present in the fine Columbia recording of Reiner's Pittsburghers, whose LP's to date have been more consistently successful than those of any other orchestra.

**FRANCK:** *Symphony in D Minor. Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra.* (Capitol-Telefunken P8023, \$4.85.) *Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orch.* (Columbia ML 4024, \$4.85.)

A bold dubbing by Capitol good in some parts (bright brass and reasonable balance), fair in most parts (blunt and heavy bass lessening the effect of the rest), and bad for the

first four minutes of the first movement, where the record has recurrent blasts. The Columbia LP is fair for the type, it has no obvious crudities, and it is certainly a more practised, a smoother example of orchestral reproduction.

**RICHARD STRAUSS:** "Ein Heldenleben." *Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra.* (Capitol-Telefunken P8013, \$4.85.) *Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.* (Columbia ML 4138, \$4.85.)

It may be that the Teutonic asseverations of this work dedicated to Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra influenced the treason by which the conductor will be remembered with the dedication. When the Telefunken recording was made he had already led intense performances of "Heldenleben" for forty years in a dozen countries. His work in this is more truly eloquent than his work in any other music, and more moving than any other conductor's work in this music. Thus Fritz Reiner's excellent performance is not really a performance of the same personal work; but the Reiner recording is better than the Mengelberg on these LP's. The differences are familiar: difficult bass on Capitol where bass is smooth on Columbia, intermittent roughnesses on the former absent from the latter, some confusion in the one, none in the other. There are, however, a few fortes on the Capitol quite magnificent, surpassing the best Columbia moments, and Capitol is inflicted with fewer extrinsic harmonics than the rival version.

**FIVE** random comparisons have shown five preferences for Columbia. Of the five losers only the Sonata may be called bad, but the other four did not press the winners very closely. From so small a number it would be improper to draw conclusive conclusions, but it seems prudent to deduce some tentative generalities from the results:

LP's recorded from 78's will be more variable in quality than LP's made from tape or 33's. Good quality may not be taken for granted.

Proficiency in LP recording is obtained by an empirical process and needs time. Witness the variability of the early Columbia efforts. No one is to expect that the disappointing London records noted here will not be surpassed after an experience of trial and error. The technicians who produced the peerless frrr's are certainly capable of approximating frrr on LP. Columbia on LP has surpassed her 78's, but that is not demanded of London. Phonophiles will be contented with a good facsimile.

—C. G. BURKE.