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## Turnover and Twistaround

THE problem of playing two groove sizes and shapes upon one phonograph has been "solved," quotes used advisedly, in numerous ways according to the equation, Importance of Ease of Operation vs. Importance of Good Quality and Minimum Record Damage. Unfortunately, most of the answers have had to be of the either-or type. The best solution for high quality and low record damage has been, for many of us, the relatively clumsy and expensive dual plug-in cartridge arrangement, with two separate heads, one for each groove. However, two new refinements in the more dubious area of the single turnover or twistaround head now make this convenience available without compromise on the quality side.

The double-pointed pickup, so convenient to use, has generally been a fair to very poor compromise as to tone quality, for good technical reasons. This has been true not only in the common crystal forms but even in the GE dual magnetic cartridge, which to the best of my knowledge gives somewhat less good performance than two equivalent separate GE cartridges. The trouble is tandem. One cannot, it seems, have two needles hooked together, or linked into a single crystal unit, without certain complex tail-wagging-the-dog effects, interactions that on the microscopic scale of values involved in needle vibration can play havoc with smooth sound. Details are complex, but in any case it's a practical fact that most present turnover crystal cartridges give mediocre to bad performance as a price for convenience. Astatic, quite honestly, rates its AC model single cartridge, for example, as "50 to 10,000 cycles" but the corresponding double turnover unit, the ACD, at only "50 to 6,000"—and this takes no account of jagged irregularities likely in the response [SR Nov. 24, 1951]. GE's turnaround magnetic abovementioned has a Siamese needle with two ends, the inactive partner always fastened rigidly to the rear of the playing needle, again a factor to cause engineering uneasiness.

Two new refinements, the Astatic CAC-D double crystal unit and the new Chromatic Audak Polyphase, allow you to have your quality without compromise, since in both cases the two needles are independent, without interaction either mechanically or electrically between the two. Neither one is a new cartridge; both are wel-

come improvements on basically sound existing models. The small CAC crystal remains the finest cartridge of its type commonly available, with wide-range, smooth response (to 11,000) very nearly matching the best magnetics. It is internally equalized to play most average new records without extra tonal balancing, comes now with replaceable sapphires or diamonds for either 78 or microgroove. (The CAC has been used in all recent Columbia LP players and other equivalents.) Astatic has put two of these little cartridges back to back within the space usually taken by a single cartridge, with the usual turnover arrangement in front, switching to connect only one unit at a time. Looks just like the other turnovers and is as easy to use—but performance should be radically different and a lot better. A desirable replacement for present turnover type arms and a unit to watch for in new phonographs.

The twistaround Audak Polyphase magnetic, in a fancier category (like all magnetics, it requires a preamplifier), has been available for some time. Earlier models, with lowish output and a single internal coil, tended to pick up hum from transformers and phono motors, though otherwise they gave excellent quality. The Audak, like the new CAC-D, has two separate needles with no interaction between them, and hence no compromise in quality. The new model, the Chromatic Polyphase, has a new stylus (fits older models) with very high compliance—that is, it's "soft," doesn't impose its own vibrations on the musical ones it passes along. I've tried the Chromatic and am glad to report, remembering the hum my first one picked up from my turntable motor, that this one seems perfect. No hum, very fine quality, and ease of operation.

I was impressed, too, with wear tests that indicate a very low wear factor on LP records. Audaks come in models for popular changers (some of which may still cause some hum trouble—you can find out quickly enough in your own case) and also in separate arms for fancier turntables. Be sure you get the new Chromatic model, and better get the L-6 head rather than the cheaper and less trustworthy R-6 models. For big LP libraries, use a diamond on the LP side, a sapphire on the 78 for good economy, and the same with the CAC-D.

—EDWARD TATNALL CANBY.

# Spotlight on the Moderns

**C**HANCES are very good nowadays that the records stacking up each month for this department's notice will contain one or more Hindemith items. Hindemith is one of the pegs that keep the small companies intact, since they inevitably resort, in lieu of big-name performers, to the little-explored music of well-known composers as bait for the buyer. If the choice gravitates towards just a few names, among them also Bartók and Martinu, it is because at least two conditions are fulfilled. The composer's output abounds in works of the modest proportion of chamber music. These do not impose upon the performer the difficulties of the most advanced music of our time.

Since the trend has made available on records so much music by so substantial a composer as Hindemith, it is welcome. A monthly chronicler is, however, hard put to find new words for the separate manifestations of a style so highly consistent. It is comforting to report a variation in the pattern in the latest Hindemith releases, both from Decca. The Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (LP 9750, \$5.85) is territory that has already been explored by a previous LP; and the present performer is the noted virtuoso Reginald Kell, which is naturally the point of emphasis. The other release is one of the composer's major orchestral achievements, "Symphonic Dances" (LP 7250, \$4.85).

The uncommonly soothing quality of Kell's tone has been well transmitted by the recording engineer. In the Hindemith and Debussy's "Première Rhapsodie" he has the excellent assistance of Joel Rosen at the piano. Alone he is heard in Igor Stravinsky's "Three Pieces" (1919), which exploit contrasts of range and color in striking fashion. The appeal of Kell's style derives partly from fade-out and elastic phrasing which he imposes on the composer's conception. It is very good to have new music performed with all the niceties that go along with the best readings of traditional literature, even if some liberties are taken in the process.

Some such approach would have done much to redeem the "Symphonic Dances," I suspect. The work is a companion to "Nobilissima Visione," which Ormandy translated for us into

properly sensuous sound not long ago for Columbia. It is more austere, more contrapuntal. But it was originally intended for the same ballet, "Saint Francis," from which "Nobilissima Visione" is drawn. It assumed too abstract a shape for the theatre, and was thus completed as a concert piece. But it shares with "Nobilissima Visione" the balletic curves and luminous woodwind writing.

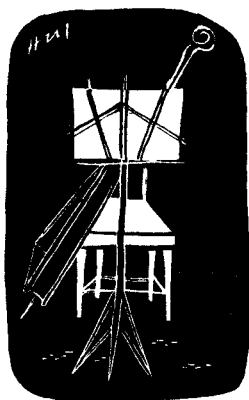
The obstacle to deploying these features in the "Symphonic Dances" is the heavy contrauntal texture. In the Decca recording, made in Germany by the RIAS Symphony, the reproduction lacks the outline and perspective to surmount the obstacle. The conductor, Ferenc Fricsay, also fails to give sharpness and balance to the contrapuntal parts. The score has been curiously cut at a few places. The excision of the contrasting quiet episodes in the finale seem to me especially injudicious.

For faithful orchestral sound the newest recording of Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony is far more satisfying (London LLP 527, \$5.95). L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande is incapable of the virtuosity of the Philadelphia Orchestra on the excellent earlier Columbia LP led by Ormandy. But Ernest Ansermet finds an interesting residue of Prokofiev's earlier classical leaning in this eminently post-romantic work. His reading is a highly distinguished one.

Among the other works on the current list, the most modest, but by far the most rewarding, is the set of "Old American Songs" arranged by Copland, sung with the finest artistry and clarity of diction by William Warfield, who is accompanied by the arranger (Columbia LP 2205, \$4).

The representation of lesser known European composers is thin. The Second Piano Concerto of the British composer Alan Rawsthorne gives Clifford Curzon an excuse for some imposing playing (London LPS 513, \$4.95). But it is a compilation of the most obvious keyboard devices, sanctioned and by now sufficiently exploited by Rachmaninoff and many others. The innocuous quartet of Jean Binet and flute sonata of Alfred Brunner (London LLP 498, \$5.95) are far from exemplifying the best music now being written in Switzerland.

—ARTHUR BERGER.



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