

passed without incident. Indeed, most of us were too exhausted to pay attention, awakening only when the grinding halt at 6:30 announced our arrival in Berlin.

Amid the traveling, the changes of halls, food, and sleeping conditions, the orchestra has performed with unflagging spirit and enthusiasm. Hospitality has been unbounded, and often of a touching personal nature. The orchestra of the Radiodiffusion Française tendered the visitors a cocktail party at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées with appropriate speeches, at which hosts and guests were so numerous that getting a martini or a glass of champagne was a major achievement. In Amsterdam the town council toured the musicians through the canals, then received them in the modernistic council chamber of the Town Hall, whose desks and lecterns gave one the uneasy feeling of having been hauled into court. Here Pierre Monteux, once regular director of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, was received as an old friend, with several hundred well-chosen words of greeting from Dr. Anton de Roos, head of Amsterdam's Department of Education and Culture. The next day the orchestra was feted with Geneva gin and other local delicacies at a reception by the Concertgebouw Orchestra.

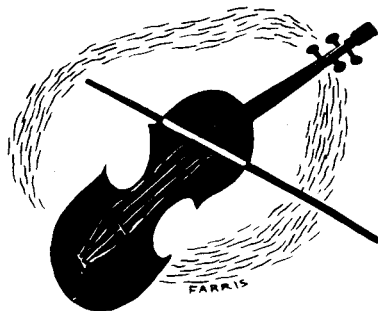
Among the European born musicians who have been singled out for special attention is cellist Jacobus Langendon, a native Hollander who was greeted in the Hague by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. He was one of a party including conductor Munch, concert-master Richard Burgin, and manager George Judd summoned to the royal box during the intermission. At Frankfurt a party of official greeters included not only High Commissioner John J. McCloy but also the Burgomeister, of Oberstaufenbach, who bore a volume of tributes destined for one of its native sons, Daniel Kuntz. This violinist was a member of the Boston Symphony at its formation in 1881, and is still living in Boston at ninety-two.

Oberstaufenbach hasn't forgotten the Boston Symphony, and it isn't likely that any members of the Boston Symphony will forget this tour even if they should, like the fortunate Mr. Kuntz, live to be ninety-two. With Strasbourg, Metz, Lyon, Bordeaux, and London still to come, anything can happen. What's most likely to happen is that the Boston Symphony will go on playing its triumphant way across Europe. That it's that kind of an orchestra, with the morale to meet any and all circumstances, this tour has—I think I can say without undue egotism—already proven.

Projects in Progress

A CONTINUING evidence of the deep penetration and enduring effect of LP is contained in the number of sizable projects it has propagated—even more, the indication that a reasonable number of them will attain fulfillment. Scherchen's "Salomon" symphonies of Haydn, the clarinet literature by Reginald Kell, Chopin by Rubinstein, are all represented in the present production, but the largest and most promising new venture is introduced by Decca LP's DL 9580 1 (\$5.95 each) on which Wilhelm Kempff plays one-eighth of Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas—on the first the "Appassionata" and Opus 90, on the second the "Waldstein" and Opus 101.

Assuming that the Schnabel performances will, sooner or later, be available on LP—a considerable assumption, but one not without solid



foundation in current planning—the Kempff performances have these distinguishing attributes: more consistently contemporary reproduced sound (Decca is purveying postwar performances, on the whole beautifully processed), a lighter hand on some works in which that virtue is welcome, an over-all individuality worthy of comparison with Schnabel, though it might, in the end, be faced down by his power over some of the biggest works.

This is, of course, the second Kempff "complete" series; the fact that the first came along in the early Thirties inclines some to believe that he is now an ancient, fairly passé. The reverse seems to be true; he is now fifty-seven, with sound technical discipline to match his unquestionable understanding of what he is about. If the pairings continue on the high level of the first two, the series will have its own justification, Schnabel or no.

The Rubinstein Chopin is another, much more individual matter. His concern on RCA Victor LM 1205 (\$5.72) and LM 152 (\$4.67) are the seven "Polonaises," a literature both intense and individual. I can imagine

the works played in a more rigid, mathematical manner; but it would not be Rubinstein's way nor, do I think, Chopin's either. My particular favorite is the "Andante Spianato" and "Grande Polonaise" (E flat), which is realized in a style both meaningful and magical. Clear, resonant piano sound.

Scherchen's investigation of the "Salomon" symphonies of Haydn (Nos. 92 to 104) has now covered ten of the twelve, with the issue of Nos. 96 in D and 98 in B flat (Westminster WL 5111, \$5.95). In neither does he approach the exceptional level of the "Military," which protrudes—after months—as one of the peaks of contemporary recording effort, but in neither does he fall off drastically. Whatever the fallible consequence of human sympathy and its limitations—and these two works are not the most stimulating to Scherchen—the mental processes are always dependable, the objective unvarying. I find both performances admirable but a little dull, the recording decent but not remarkable.

In the case of Kell, mention of his associates are about all that is needed to characterize the qualities of the work of the moment—Mozart, Brahms, or Beethoven. In the Mozart Quintet (Decca DL 9600, \$5.85) it is the Fine Arts Quartet, in the Brahms A minor Trio (Decca DL 7524, \$3.85), Frank Miller, cello, and Mieczyslaw Horszowski, piano. Both are splendidly played, but I find the Mozart a little overwrought and pushed-ahead by comparison with the recent more relaxed version in which Wlach is the soloist (Westminster). The Brahms gets all there is to get out of this not-too-promising score.

Also in the realm of chamber music are the mounting issues from Westminster of Beethoven quartets in performances by the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet, just extended by LP's WL 5134 and 5127, which completes the treatment of Opus 59 (these are Nos. 1 and 3), and 5120, which contains Opus 127. (Each is \$5.95.) Quite the most distinguished thing about this series is the recording, of a breadth and fulness rarely excelled in chamber music, if verging at times on the oversized. The playing is unfailingly sober and musically sophisticated, with few strokes of personal illumination or emotional insight not inherent in the literal markings. Of this group, Opus 59, No. 1, is outstanding in stylistic appreciation and consistently good reproduction. —I. K.

THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN PARIS



Pierre Monteux at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées—"homecoming."

Stravinsky in the audience—"enthusiastic hands stageward."



Charles Munch rehearsing the orchestra in the Paris Opéra—"only the visiting firemen seemed to mind."

Fritz Reiner—Perpetual Prodigy

CESAR SAERCHINGER

THE first I ever saw of Fritz Reiner was the back of his head as it protruded above the orchestra pit of the Dresden Opera during a revival of Wagner's "Rienzi" in December 1920. He was just under thirty-two, and looked absurdly young, with the pudgy face and pouting smile of an overgrown baby; yet he had been the star conductor of this historic theater for almost six years.

The other day I watched the same Fritz Reiner conduct an even more impressive performance of "Elektra" at the Metropolitan Opera. Here was the same head—a little wispier at the top—on the same shortish figure, grown a little more chunky, and the same quiet energy producing an even more brilliant complex of sound. Between the two events, over three decades apart, lay the career of a life-time prodigy—a person as accomplished and effective in youth as most of us would like to be in age; a man to whom success became a habit; who solves every musical problem with a quiz kid's ease.

In the course of thirty-two years I have had no call to revise my first impression of Reiner, though our tastes and principles are as divergent as the roads we have traveled. Not till the other day did we meet again for a conversational journey through the past. How did it all happen? How does a youngster, born in a small businessman's family in Budapest without artistic antecedents or pretensions, blossom forth into a baton virtuoso?

"Well," said Reiner, "we had a musical clock—a wonderful musical clock. It played excerpts from 'Lucia,' the sextet and the tenor aria of the last act."

That's how it started—with tinkling tunes from "Lucia" and the singing of Schubert's songs by Mama Reiner, a talented amateur. When Fritz was six he was taken to the Opera House to hear the real "Lucia," and was so excited that he was given piano lessons forthwith. At nine he was able to play the "Tannhäuser" Overture by heart and so won the friendship of the future composer Leo Weiner, who remained his musical mentor throughout his formative years. At ten Fritz was admitted to the Academy of Music, and at thirteen he conducted the annual students' concert of his school. At the Academy he specialized in

piano, finishing up as a pupil of Béla Bartók with a public performance of Liszt's B minor Sonata and Beethoven's Opus 111. His specific talent for conducting was accidentally discovered by Hans Koessler, the professor of composition (there being no conducting lessons in those days).

At nineteen—following a short turn at the study of law to satisfy a parental order—young Reiner landed his first job, as coach in the Budapest Comic Opera, a private institution then on its last legs. Before it passed out, however, a providential emergency forced Reiner to conduct a performance of "Carmen" without benefit of rehearsal. He has been fond of emergencies ever since. ("Watch out for emergencies," he told his conducting pupils at the Curtis Institute many years later. "They are the young conductor's chance.")

After the Comic Opera closed, Reiner supported himself by teaching, accompanying, and coaching would-be prima donnas at two crowns per hour. One day he played for a local soprano auditioning for the opera house at Laibach (now the Yugoslav city of Ljubljana). The soprano didn't make it, but Reiner, aged twenty-one, landed the post of "chief" conductor of the Laibach Opera. This was a happy augury, for Laibach was the city where Gustav Mahler got his start. The job involved conducting anything from "The Merry Widow" to "La Bohème" with an orchestra of twenty-five, and learning the Slovenian

tongue. Reiner made his debut with Smetana's "Dalibor," a work with strictly Slavic appeal. As director of the city's Grand Symphony Concerts he also conducted Beethoven's Fifth and other classics with an "augmented" orchestra of thirty. The Laibach public fell in love with their young conductor, and he reciprocated by marrying one of its most attractive members.

The end of this idyll came when the manager of the Budapest People's Opera visited Laibach, heard Reiner, and signed him up for three years. The offerings of this Number Two Opera House of the Hungarian capital ranged all the way from "The Chimes of Normandy" to all the Wagner operas except the "Ring." In his third year Reiner expanded the repertory by staging one of the first European productions of "Parsifal" outside of Bayreuth. The performance started at the instant it became legal under the copyright laws, at midnight of December 31, 1913!

With the news of this event still fresh Reiner scored a spectacular hit with the Budapest premiere of "The Jewels of the Madonna," starring three leading members of the Dresden Opera as guests. Intoxicated with their success this trio went home singing the praises of Budapest's conducting boy-wonder to their chief, Count von Seebach, who promptly invited Reiner to Dresden for an interview. Ten days later Dresden lost its aging musical director, the world-renowned Ernst von Schuch, and Reiner was engaged to fill the gap, presumably for a limited time.

At this point Reiner faced another of those fateful "emergencies"—a monumental one this time—which could either make or break him. He was asked to take over, without rehearsal, the entire "Ring" cycle, the one Wagner opus which he had not previously conducted. He came through the ordeal with flying colors, and presently was appointed Royal Court Kapellmeister. The other leading contenders for the post—Weingartner and Muck—were passed by for the twenty-five-year-old Reiner.

During his eight years in Dresden Reiner conducted all the important operas in the repertory, also new productions and novelties, some of which brought him into contact with Richard Strauss. He also shared the direction of the symphony concerts of the Saxon State Orchestra, reputed to be the finest in Germany. Not the least advantage of Dresden was its proximity to both Berlin and Leipzig, the two cities where Artur Nikisch held sway. Nikisch represented the apogee of what Reiner calls the great Hun-



—By Rudolf Scheffler (1919).

Fritz Reiner—"eclectic in method."