

# Recordings Reports: Classical LP's

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Beethoven: Quartet in F (Opus 135) with "Grosse Fuge." Barylli Quartet. Westminster WL 5151, \$5.95.	Exceptional solution of the sound problem posed by these works, especially by the "Grosse Fuge," one of the most formidable in the literature. However, I do not think the ensemble dredges quite as much meaning of the patterns as it might. The F major is very well played.
Beethoven: Sonata in A, Opus 47 ("Kreutzer"). Jascha Heifetz, violin, and Benno Moiseiwitsch, piano. RCA Victor LM 1193, \$5.72.	Less value, performance-wise, than the promise in the names of the performers, with conscience rather than conviction prevailing. The range of dynamics is narrower than it should be, with the piano in particular held to less than its due. There is, in fact, no outstanding version of this work on the market, but that is no reason to accept an imperfect one.
Beethoven: Symphonies No. 2 and 4. Bruno Walter conducting the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Columbia ML 4596, \$5.45.	Neither of these comes close to the previous standard established by Beecham, largely for want of the volatility and animation he imparted to each. No outright distortion, actually, of meaning, but a tendency always to laboring the obvious. The Second suffers more thereby, but the net of the two sides is stolid, rather heavy-handed music. Excellent balance in the sound. The two sides total sixty-seven minutes of music, an accomplishment to which Columbia points with pardonable pride.
Brahms: Symphony No. 1 (Opus 68). Rafael Kubelik conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Mercury MG 50007, \$5.95.	Not quite up to the previous high standard of this partnership; in the first instance for a stodgy, overdeliberate reading of the score by Kubelik, in the Furtwängler manner, but not successfully so; in the second, for a sound not quite as clean or well defined as the Tchaikovsky and Moussorgsky issues previously admired.
Brahms: "Liebeslieder" Waltzes. Roger Wagner chorale, with two pianos. Capitol P 8176, \$4.98.	A questionable concept in two respects, whether or not one accepts Wagner's tempos and dynamics as desirable: first, for the doubling of the voice parts specified by Brahms (whereas the microphone should make his design the easier to realize); second, for the use of an English translation, though not one word in ten can be understood in any case. Finally, I find the interpretative impulse rather pale, without the vigor or variety to serve the material properly. Good enough sound.
Chopin: "Etudes" (Opus 25) and "Trois Nouvelles Etudes." Guiomar Novaes, piano. Vox PL 7560, \$5.95.	Piano playing of peerless sensitivity and control by the artist whose concept of these (and the Etudes of Opus 10) seems to me the most sympathetic now to be heard. Those unacquainted with the "three new etudes" are especially commended to them. The warmly resonant sound of the Novaes piano is lovingly reproduced. Uncommonly quiet surfaces on my copy.
Elgar: "Variations on an Original Theme" ("Enigma") and "Serenade" (Opus 20). Walter Goehr and the Concert Hall Symphony Orchestra. Concert Hall CHS 1154, \$5.95.	The first "Enigma" on LP and a more than creditable accomplishment for Goehr. However, the purchaser should know that there is a Toscanini version in prospect, and be guided accordingly. The playing here of the E minor Serenade is inferior in quality to the version by Anthony Collins on London 583, and not as well recorded.
Handel: "Royal Fireworks" Suite. Eduard Van Beinum and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. London LS 620, \$4.95.	Of a miscellany also including the usual excerpts from Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust" and the "Trumpet Voluntary" (usually attributed to Purcell but here credited to Jeremiah Clarke), the Handel music is the longest in extent and the best played. Bright work by Van Beinum, effectively reproduced. The Berlioz lacks the ultimate in virtuoso finish, but it is certainly expert.
Haydn: Symphony No. 49 in F minor ("La Passione"). Harry Blech conducting the London Mozart Players. London LL 586, \$5.95.	A duplication of the previously unheard No. 49, first offered in an excellent performance by Newstone on the Haydn Society label recently. The values of the two issues are about evenly divided, with the slight edge in recorded quality to London. However, what is more likely to attract attention to this disc is the beautifully turned playing of the early Mozart Divertimento, attesting for still another time to the divinity that shaped the ends of this master at sixteen. A worthy impulse, carried out with fervor and discipline.
Meyerbeer: "Les Patineurs." Robert Irving conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. London LL 651, \$5.95.	Lively treatment by conductor Irving of Constant Lambert's engaging arrangement for the Sadler's Wells Ballet of some choice if not wholly characteristic Meyerbeeriana. Uncommonly acute reproduction. Both this side and the coupled excerpts from Massenet's "Le Cid" assay higher, musically, than the earlier offering, on Columbia, of the "Patineurs" music with Arthur Bliss's "Checkmate" score. Regardless of material, the recording is superb.
Mozart: Concertos in A (K.414) and C (K.467). Folmer Jensen, piano, with the chamber orchestra of the Danish State Radio conducted by Mogens Wöldike. Haydn Society HSLP 1054, \$5.95.	Two of the greatest of the Mozart piano concerti (Nos. 12 and 21) played with model devotion and care by Jensen and the excellent ensemble under the direction of the able Wöldike. Rather surprisingly, the sterner challenge of the C major is more completely met than that of the more delicate A major. The former to me is decidedly more attractive than the earlier version by Casadesu, Munch, and the Philharmonic-Symphony, especially in combination with the A major, an LP first time. Bright, well-balanced recording in both instances.
Schubert: Quartet in A minor (Opus 29). Vegh Quartet. London LL 587, \$5.95.	An orderly and sometimes a penetrating performance of the unique work, devalued by some unfortunate mannerisms of the first violinist, especially an inclination toward a sentimental <i>portamento</i> . I cannot see justice in the uneasy tempo of the Andante. Beautifully clean recording, a little shrill on the high end.
Strauss, J: "Wein, Weib, und Gesang," etc. Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia ML 4589, \$5.45.	Conductor Ormandy's likable work in the Metropolitan's "Fledermaus" is belied by these mannered, stiff, and generally overstressed performances. The superlative orchestra responds to the whip like a circus horse, but the results are more suitable in the showy "Perpetual Motion" than they are in "Wine, Woman, and Song" or the "Emperor." The collection also includes "Feuerfest Polka" of Josef Strauss and "Bahn Frei" of Eduard Strauss, as well as the master's "One Night in Venice" Overture and "Acceleration" Waltz. Generally good recording, though not up to the quality of the best recent Philadelphia issues. —IRVING KOLODIN.

## OPERA IN ENGLISH

(Continued from page 53)

the French text was no keener than it had been before. What would English words have added to the effect of the sumptuously staged, imaginatively directed "Don Carlo"? This refreshing emphasis on stage direction, lighting, scenery, costumes, even on acting, have given new hope to those long distressed by the dusty remnants of the arm-swinging era of old. Let the creative emphasis be here, and not on the texts alone.

At bottom one can sense a well-meaning but misguided effort to provide an "easy way" to the understanding of an art that involves a certain amount of effort for its enjoyment. The irony is that never before has that effort been accompanied by such easily accessible adjuncts to comprehension—regular broadcasts each winter of the major repertory, books and pamphlets that can be consulted at will, not to mention choice recordings of virtually any opera one is apt to encounter in the theatre, and many others beside.

The "easy way" actually exists, through such adjuncts, for Americans to have a wider knowledge than ever before of the original works in their authentic versions. Out of that knowledge, I feel sure, will come a wider audience for original works in English than has ever existed before, works in which the word and the tone will be mated in a way hardly possible with a translation. For while you can translate the meaning of a phrase, you cannot translate the curve of a musical line, the flavor of a modulation, the expectancy induced by a pause on a salient tone—in other words, the things that give music life, vitality, and meaning.

In the meantime, the arguments will, no doubt, go on. If you belong to the school of the present writer, it is well to have an ace up your sleeve when confronted by someone who believes that the way to "popularize" opera is to present it in the language of the people—for us, in the American tongue. A number of years ago, a few members of the Princeton University choir made a brazen attempt to shock a complacent congregation by substituting a slight variation for the words: "Venus Has Lit Her Silver Lamp." They sang instead, and with considerable relish, "Venus Has Split Her Silver Pants."

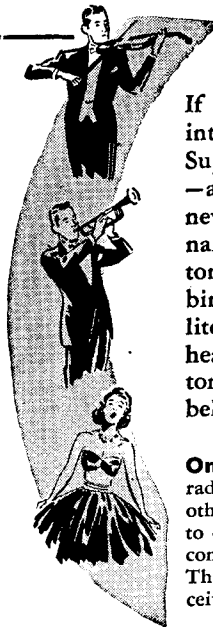
The prank fell flat because the new version sounded exactly like the old, and no one was the wiser.



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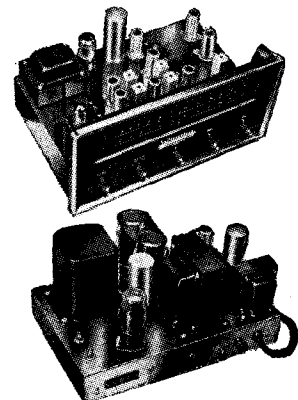
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# MUSIC AND MAESTROS

By John K. Sherman

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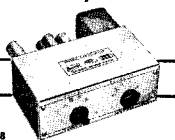
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# The Spoken Word

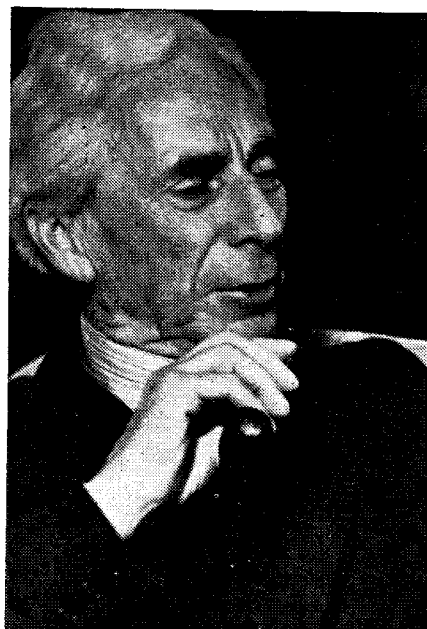
IRWIN EDMAN

**T**HE reviewer of records of the spoken word has an ambiguous task. What is he reviewing? The fidelity and clarity with which the voice is recorded, the acoustical surface of the record? The quality of the voices themselves, the deployment of timbre, accent, cadence, music in syllables? In so far forth the reviewer becomes in these respects a highly specialized musical critic.

But how is one to detach one's self from what the records say? Or should one? Language is something more than a melodious mumbling of sound. Speech worth recording has style, of course, but the very texture of the style is the way in which certain things are expressed, feelings communicated, ideas expounded. A reviewer of discs cannot be deaf to the fact that in one case it is Racine's "Phèdre," a masterpiece of world literature, at once elegant and eloquent, ordered and intense, that has come to hand. It matters and should matter to him that another disc, like one of those here under review, reproduces one of the authentic lyric voices of our time, Dylan Thomas. The critic of recorded speech cannot properly ignore the fact that one of the discs he has to consider is the Nobel Prize acceptance speech of Ber-

trand Russell and that its subject matter is "Human Nature and Politics," or that another is Archibald MacLeish reciting his own verse, and still another Thomas Mann reading "Tonio Kröger," among other things, and a testament of his own faith.

But one is considering something more and something more subtle than either surface or message. Voices are more intimately, even than handwritings, the expression of a whole personality. In speech, certainly the style is the man. In the bardic intoning, the rhythmic rises and falls, the Celtic half melody, half moan of Dylan Thomas one feels something of the very essence of his person. In Bertrand Russell, how much seems to come of the man himself in the carefully timed ironies, the detachment touched with both *hauteur* and compassion, the reasonableness with its reluctant recognition of rapture. How much of the combined intellectual, artist, and bourgeois there is in the comfortable, the *gemütlich*, and (to this ear) slightly smug speech of Thomas Mann as revealed in his recording. Monica Mann tells us in a program note that Thomas Mann had a habit of reading his works, often as yet unpublished, to his family. It was, she says, like listening to "the voice



—Disraeli.

Bertrand Russell—"hauteur, compassion."



—G. D. Hackett.

Dylan Thomas—"melodious power."