

a more rigorous over-all direction to keep his musical structure from sagging. Even so, there are enough scattered nuggets in Oistrakh's performance—particularly in the buoyantly bowed rondo—to make one anticipate the day when he can be heard in this work under more favorable circumstances.

Considered as sound reproductions, these discs are among the best to have emanated from the USSR, which is to say that they are several notches below the best work being done in the studios of New York, London, or Vienna, but adequately listenable nonetheless. In this respect, too, the Dvorak has a slight edge over the Beethoven.

## From K.46 to K.614

MOZART: *String Quintets (complete).*  
Pascal String Quartet with Walter Gerhard, viola. (Concert Hall CHS 1185-8, \$23.80.)

**L**ISTENERS partial to the vigorous and incisive playing of the Budapest-Katims ensemble in this literature may find the Pascal-Gerhard group a bit subdued. But there is more than one valid philosophy of Mozartian interpretation, and the path of cool, polished restraint which the French players follow is hardly one to be deprecated. Certainly, they are guilty of no blatant stylistic trespasses, and they are the only ones to date who have recorded the Mozart quintets *in toto*.

Among the previously unrecorded items, there was a special interest attached to the Quintet in B flat, K.46, a work which—despite its low Köchel number—is nothing less than an arrangement, for strings, of four movements from the fragrant Serenade in B flat, K.361, for thirteen wind instruments. However, the transition from one musical medium to another proved disappointing. Passages which speak exalted poetry when sounded by an inspired blending of winds seem dull and prosaic when translated to strings. Whether Mozart did the arranging is matter for scholarly conjecture, but it is evident in any case that his musical substance is heard to far better effect in K.361 than in K.46.

—ROLAND GELATT.

## "Il Pastor Fido"—in Part

**A** THREE-ACT Handel opera on one twelve-inch record (Columbia ML-4685, \$5.45)? It hardly seems possible. First, therefore, one reads the unsigned notes on the record jacket. But they are far from clear. Is this, for example, a complete recording or an editor's scissors-and-paste job? Deponent sayeth not. Is it the 1712 version of "Il Pastor Fido," of which London supported only six performances, or is it the revised version of 1734 (and if it is the latter, where is the chorus)? The jacket-note merely states that the 1734 revision was made by Handel for the purpose of "adding to it some ensemble numbers and generally improving the music." Whose arrangement have we here, and how does it manage the two roles written by Handel for castrati? No answer. Is the continuo performed on the harpsichord, as it should be, or inappropriately on a piano? No answer: merely "Gino Smart, Continuo." These notes will not help; they will not even give us the Italian text as sung. Let's listen to the record—and look at the scores, 1712 and 1734, in the Handel-Gesellschaft edition.

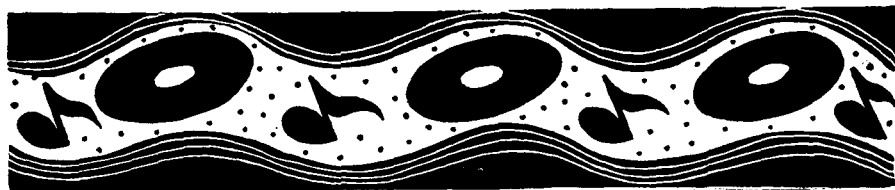
Right off we hear Genevieve Warner singing "Fato crudo, Amor severo," a very charming Handelian aria belonging to Mirtillo, the opera's hero. Miss Warner is excellent, and if the others reach her standard, this will be one of the few really well-sung Handel operas on records. Suddenly we are faced with answers to two of our questions. Unmistakably there is a piano here—and this is not only the 1712 version of the opera, but a drastically cut singing of that. For immediately after "Fato crudo, Amor severo" our Mirtillo should go on to a recitative and another aria, "Augelletti, ruscelletti," neither of which is here. One way of getting all of a three-act opera on one record is just to leave out a lot of it.

Miss Warner is a delight whenever she is allowed to sing one of the arias Handel composed (or borrowed) for Mirtillo. None of the other singers seems to have a very clear notion of Handelian style or of the character being portrayed. And then, defeating Lehman Engel's practised conducting,

there is always the conspicuous, undesirable sound of that piano. By the end of "Act III" it has become evident that this record is really just a collection of excerpts from the 1712 version of "Il Pastor Fido." I count as major omissions (I overlook the absence of numerous recitatives that give the plot some sense, and of one orchestral excerpt) three arias each for Mirtillo, Eurilla, and Dorinda, two for Silvio, and one for Amarilli.

**T**HE publishers of inexpensive paperbound reprints of books are required to print plain statements about any excisions or other tamperings with the texts of the books they reprint. I do not see why recording companies should not voluntarily do the same service to the prospective purchaser. Handelians, of whom I happily count myself one, believe that a well-performed, complete version of one of Handel's best operas (arranged only the inescapable minimum) would astonish and delight today's listeners. This recording of "Il Pastor Fido" is intermittently pleasant listening; but it is not often much more. It could astonish no one but Handel.

I am not saying that recording excerpts from an opera is an immoral, or even a reprehensible, act. But full candor would have required that the notes for Columbia ML-4685 should contain a statement something like this: "In March 1952 the New Friends of Music presented at Town Hall, New York, a concert version of 'Il Pastor Fido,' 1712 version, made up of what so-and-so considered to be manageable high spots. It contained thirty-nine numbers from the score, and included nothing added in the second, 1734, version. We have recorded a large part of that 1952 performance, with the cast intact except for the solo cellist. The continuo is played on a piano. Do not judge Handel's opera from this recording, for much of it is not here; just sit back and enjoy these fragments, some of which are winning, charming, even powerful, in peculiarly Handelian ways. We did not even try to look up castrati for the roles of Mirtillo and Silvio (human males can no longer be gelded legally), but we think that you will not mind, especially as Genevieve Warner is a sensitive interpreter and a beautiful singer, though we do not pretend that she sounds like a man, or even like a castrato. As for the rest of the cast, they all do their very best." —HERBERT WEINSTOCK.



# Recordings Reports: Classical LP's

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Bach-Liszt: Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, Prelude and Fugue in A minor, etc. Gyorgy Sandor, piano. Columbia ML 4684, \$5.45.	Now that the battle for Bach on the organ and harpsichord has been won, purists no longer have reason to boggle at the very mention of Bach-Liszt. Today we can appreciate these transcriptions for what they are: big, brilliant noisemakers in the grand nineteenth-century manner, though no substitute for the efforts of Messrs. Schweitzer, Biggs, and company. Sandor plays with appropriate steel-fingered vigor—almost as if his name were Sandow.
Beethoven: Concerto No. 1 in C. Paul Badura-Skoda, piano, with Hermann Scherchen conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Westminster WL 5209, \$5.95.	Young Badura-Skoda is on happier terrain here than in the G major and "Emperor" concertos previously issued. He combines high rhythmic polish with good-natured brio, and Scherchen responds with an orchestral accompaniment of ingratiating dash and light, brittle texture. All concerned sound as if they were enjoying themselves hugely—and what more could one ask for in this work?
Beethoven: Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor") Elly Ney, piano, with Karl Böhm conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. Urania URRS 7-10, \$3.50.	One of a series of popular classics issued by Urania at a budget price in which Mme. Ney belies her sex with an interpretation of splendid bravura forcefulness. She does not strike glowing interpretative sparks, nor does Böhm, but the performance is thoroughly creditable. The reproduction, however, falls below current standards; piano tone is glassy, the over-all sound flat and hard.
Charpentier: Te Deum. Louis Martini conducting Orchestra of the Concerts Padeloup, chorus, and soloists. Haydn Society HSL 2065, \$5.95.	The Charpentier, be it noted, is Marc-Antoine of that ilk, a seventeenth-century composer who—by the evidence of this disc—is a much more formidably endowed musician than the reference books lead one to believe. This Te Deum stands up as a ringing asseveration of faith in full Baroque style, exultant with Handelian flourishes and Bachian amplitude—but as Bach and Handel were only nineteen when Charpentier died at the age of seventy the adjectives, though descriptive, are historically misleading. An energetic, resounding performance by M. Martini and his massed forces, and superb recording by Erato, a French firm, which is suggestive of the resonance of a big church (L'Eglise Saint-Roch) without being freighted with excessive reverberation. There are twenty-eight thick volumes of Charpentier manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and if they are all of this quality there need be no fear of an LP music famine for some time to come.
Dvorak: Symphony No. 2. Rafael Kubelik conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. HMV LHMV 1029, \$5.95. The Same. Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt conducting the Hamburg Radio Symphony. London LL 778, \$5.95.	Kubelik's reputation as an adept practitioner of the flavorful Dvorak idiom is well sustained by his reading of the D minor Symphony: the bouncy articulation of the strings, the careful blending of woodwind and brass, the delicately shaded dynamics all bespeak a loving comprehension. Schmidt-Isserstedt bears down a bit too heavily on the music's Brahmsian attributes; the derivations are there beyond doubt, but they need not be so inflated. Compared purely as reproductions of orchestral sound, the London recording has a slight edge over the HMV, but not enough to deflect recommendation away from Kubelik.
Khachaturian: Violin Concerto. Leonid Kogan, violin, with the composer conducting USSR State Radio Orch. Concert Hall CHS 1300, \$5.95.	If the LP cornucopia can provide competing versions of "Carmen" from Paris, Strauss waltzes from Vienna, and Puccini operas from Italy, why not competing versions of Khachaturian from the USSR? What a strict Marxian economist would make of this sort of duplication I don't know, but the fact is that you can get Oistrakh on one label and Kogan on another, both playing the same concerto. Concert Hall's version has the advantage of better reproduction and the cachet of the composer's participation. As for the young violinist (Kogan won the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels two years ago), he is patently a phenomenal technician; whether he is also a phenomenal musician would be hard to say on the basis of this flashy concerto.
Lalo: "Symphonie Espagnole." Alfredo Campoli, violin, with Eduard Van Beinum conducting the London Philharmonic. London LL 763, \$5.95.	Although there are no overt <i>gaffes</i> in Campoli's conception, neither are there the imaginative nuances and the rhythmic elan such as Jacques Thibaud, for one, has bestowed on this score. Van Beinum's direction is also contributory to a performance of workaday earnestness.
Mendelssohn: "Andante and Rondo Capriccioso," etc. Ania Dorfmann, piano. RCA Victor LM 1758, \$5.72.	Ania Dorfmann has a particular affection for the "Rondo Capriccioso," as evidenced by her previous attention to this music for English Columbia, and her gossamer execution of its tripping fancies shows that the affection is well-placed. Like most heterogeneous LP recitals, this one has its ups and downs—the ups including a well-paced "Papillons," the downs an unyielding Ravel Sonatine. Fine piano sound throughout.
Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 ("Italian"); Beethoven: Symphony No. 8. Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Columbia ML 4681, \$5.45.	Beecham has contributed so many classics to the recorded literature that it is almost like crying wolf to herald another. But that risk must be taken in assigning this coupling to the company of Sir Thomas's finest phonographic achievements. Both works accord well with the conductor's celebrated penchant for genial musical expression, and they give him the opportunity to provide an object lesson in combining utmost relaxation with note-perfect execution and propelling rhythm. The third movement of the "Italian" is taken more slowly than I have ever heard it, but Beecham manages to carry it off with grace and conviction.
Mozart: "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik." Felix Prohaska conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Vanguard VRS 435, \$5.95.	No. 16 among LP issues of Mozart's Serenade, K.525, and one of the most satisfactory. Fastidious, accurate playing by the Viennese musicians, who could probably perform this in their sleep but sound very wide awake here. The engineers have captured a string tone neither overweighted in density nor afflicted with edgy rasp. On the reverse Franz Litschauer conducts the same group in Schubert's charming, inconsequential "German Dances."
Shostakovich: Symphony No. 1. Kiril Kondrashin conducting USSR State Orchestra. Vanguard VRS 6014, \$5.95.	Kondrashin argues the logic of this opus less persuasively than Rodzinski in his older recording with the Cleveland Orchestra, but the Soviet conductor has the benefit of wide-range reproduction such as was not possible a decade ago. At that, the virtues of this recording lie mostly in the domain of extended frequency response. Highs and lows the Russians have provided in abundance, but not the ultimate in balance between sections of the orchestra nor in the quality of room tone.
Weber: Sonata No. 1 in C, Opus 24. Helmut Roloff, piano. Decca DL 7543, \$3.85.	An engaging trifle by Weber, if no towering masterpiece, which is of historical interest for its early intimations of Chopin and Mendelssohn (the sonata dates from 1812). Roloff has the requisite dexterity for the breakneck rondo and is properly <i>sympatico</i> in the quiet adagio. The piano sound proffered by Deutsche Grammophon is not of the best.

—ROLAND GELATT.