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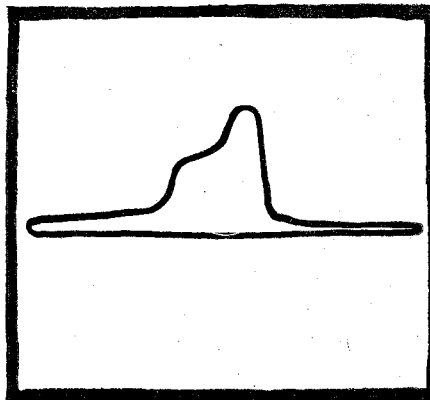
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EPICure No. 3

(A Roger Price "Doodle")



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Pop Roundup

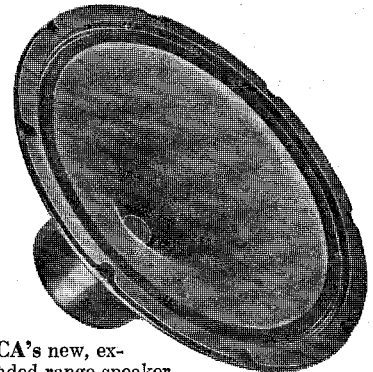
THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE" was hardly one of Rodgers and Hart's major efforts, but the show was a Broadway hit by 1938-9 standards, achieving 235 performances. In its score, however, are ample reasons for its reconstruction and recording, and Columbia Records has undertaken this for release in its selective musical comedy repertory series (ML 4837). As with the previous Rodgers-Hart releases, "On Your Toes" (ML 4645), "Pal Joey" (ML 4364) and "Babes in Arms" (ML 4488), producer Goddard Lieberson has assembled a cast of singers that suggests the live theatre more than the recording studio—which is to infer that they sing rather poorly by phonographic standards but manage to get their message across with appropriate flair and color. The musical arrangements are particularly fresh and theatrical, complimentary to the bright-eyed, urbane oeuvre of what I consider our greatest song-writing team.

I like my Rodgers and Hart, and almost anything else, the way Frank Sinatra sings it. Frankly, I'm a fan. This fellow, whose voice may or may not be as good as it used to be, is an intelligent, musical singer, with a heart and a beat. He loves to sing good songs, and his new Capitol disc contains eight of the best, including "Little Girl Blue" and "My Funny Valentine" (both by Rodgers and Hart), "A Foggy Day" and "They Can't Take That Away from Me" (Gershwin). I especially liked the lesser-known ballad "Violets for Your Furs," a holdover from Frank's Dorsey days. The title of the set is FRANK SINATRA—SONGS FOR YOUNG LOVERS (Cap. H-488), but let us not limit it thereto.

Some of the better dance sides in current release are provided by Columbia's new Les Elgart unit. Three new discs reveal a resourcefulness, functionalism, and sense of humor rare in modern bands. "Bandstand Boogie" (Col. 40180) (but is it really a boogie?) is a bright riff number that swings like the old BG. The over-side is the oldie "When Yuba Plays the Rhumba on His Tuba," rendered rhumba style but with tongue-in-cheek. "Varsity Drag" (40179) supplies a crisp Charleston, and "Roo Roo Roo (Kangaroo)" (40202) is fare for what threatens to become a new dance craze. Being in a less energetic frame of mind, my preference is the other side—a slow, sly revival of that monumental bit of nonsense, "Flat Foot Floogie."

—BILL SIMON.

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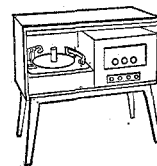


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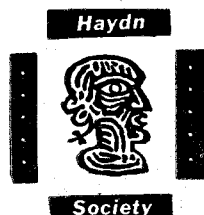
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Letters to the RECORDINGS Editor

UNDERRATING PUMPKIN HOLLOW

ONE EVENING not long ago my wife and I gulped down our dinner, threw the kids into bed, arranged for a baby sitter, piled into the car, and drove at a furious pace across seventy-five miles of countryside. The occasion for all this haste was a rare event in our less-than-populous corner of north Alabama, a concert by one of our major symphony orchestras. The acoustics of the concert hall (a high-school auditorium) were excellent, it was filled with an eager audience starved for live music, and the program was shrewdly contrived to hit somewhat but not too far above the least common denominator of taste (a couple of overtures, the Brahms Second Symphony, "Francesca da Rimini," and a short work by Honegger). Everything seemed set up for a memorably enjoyable evening.

What we heard, however, were surely some of the most perfunctory run-throughs to which the pieces mentioned have ever been subjected. The notes were there, but we listened in vain for the music.

It seems to me that it's time somebody told our maestros that even though symphony orchestras don't travel to Pumpkin Hollow, records do. The Brahms Second, for example, is available in performances by Furtwängler, Mengelberg, Monteux, Rodzinski, Toscanini, Weingartner, and a number of others (at least twelve in all), and the same situation prevails with most of the other well-known works that are the staples of the "hinterlands" repertoire. In the homes of my own circle of friends there are several good high-fidelity sets, a larger number of your "two-foot square boxes," and a still larger number of ordinary radio-phonographs (like mine), which at least reveal the structure of a musical work even if its purely aural values are somewhat truncated. Since I don't think that we're in any way a unique group, I would venture to guess that a substantial percentage of our conductor's audience had had a chance to become acquainted with the Brahms Second in a performance of better than average merit, and were therefore hardly the musical illiterates that he so obviously deemed them to be.

I cannot escape the conclusion that this sort of sloppy musicianship in the hinterlands can have serious financial repercussions for our orchestras. Adding up the cost of tickets, transportation, and baby sitter, my wife and I find that the amount of money expended on the average concert will buy on records all the music performed at that concert. Admitting that even the best of recorded sound is not up to what one hears in the concert hall, the fact that a record provides a source of repeated enjoyment whereas even the best of concerts is a fleeting thing makes it very tempting for the music lover on a limited budget

to forego the live performance. When this is added to the contrast in conductorial attitudes, with the conductor in a recorded performance at worst trying to put his best foot forward in order to sell a lot of records, and at best striving to leave a record of his musical ideas for posterity, and the conductor at the live performance giving the peasants a quick brush-off, the temptation to stick to the records becomes practically irresistible.

ARTHUR F. FERRIS.

Huntsville, Ala.

A PLEA FOR MURATORE

THANK YOU FOR RICHARD FLETCHER's excellent piece about Mary Garden [SR Feb. 27]. It is certainly deplorable that many of her really great contributions to the cause of French opera were not recorded and that she did not make any concerted numbers with her splendid male co-stars of the Chicago Opera days. I heard her with Muratore in "Carmen," "Faust," and "Monna Vanna," and they were really something to remember.

For that matter, the evidence of "Golden Age" re-recordings on LP would lead one to suspect that all the great male voices of the past belonged to Italians, except for one Russian and a couple of

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