

## VIVA VOCE

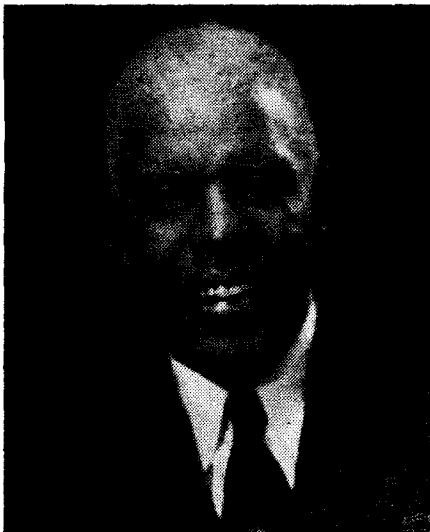
## Ferrier, Hayes, Dermota



Martyz—"she says something with her tone."

Miss Martyz's present qualities begin with a tone that has both suavity and personality; continue with rhythmic instincts of an arresting order; and culminate in a sense of melodic phraseology that might be envied by some of her better known contemporaries. It is routine to say that she has a formidable technique, for the Brahms concerto is a searching test of any violinistic machinery, and hers passes it in high and without stress.

What is most important, of course, is that she says something with her tone, rhythmic instincts, and technique, something that makes Brahms a fresh and rewarding experience all over again. It is not high-pressure playing, nor is it in any regard "dramatic," but it is fine-grained, thoroughgoing, and expressive. Paul Kletzki's handling of the orchestral score is one of his most creditable efforts for the phonograph, and the sound is warmly suited to the musical values involved.



Hayes—"much of his prime abilities."

**F**RRIENDS and admirers of the late Kathleen Ferrier will be delighted to know that there is an unexpected treat in store for them on London LS-1032, \$4.95 . . . nothing less than thirty-odd minutes of singing not previously issued. Termed a "broadcast recital," it offers a dozen songs from a BBC occasion of June 5, 1952. Even more fortunately, only one of them—Britten's arrangement of "O Waly Waly"—has previously been offered in another collection (LS-538).

The date preceded Miss Ferrier's lamented death by only a year or so, and she had, of course, been suffering from her ailment for some time previously. There is, however, no evidence of it in the sound of these songs, which give us the essence of her personality in its most attractive vein, as a singer of the simple songs of her own people, such as the enchanting "Kitty, My Love," arranged by Hughes, "Come You Not from Newcastle," and the best kind of English art-song writing: "Silent Noon," a Vaughan Williams masterpiece, Warlock's "Sleep," etc. Miss Ferrier was superb in the Mahler cycles, in some Brahms, the "Alto Rhapsody," etc. But that was an acquired skill which others have equaled, or in some instances bettered. Here she is singing from the heart, with no intervening technical barriers to overcome. Frederick Stone is the able pianist, and the recording is quite studioish in technical quality, very direct in emotional appeal.

Even more, in a similar vein, can be said about the best parts of the two Lps entitled "The Art of Roland Hayes" (Vanguard VRS-448-9), in which he traces "six centuries of song" from Machaut of the thirteenth century to Villa-Lobos of the present one. That best part would, inevitably, have to be the generous sampling of spiritual material, work-songs, etc. of his own people (spread in a can-nily commercial, if not wholly consumer-happy, arrangement over both discs). There have, of course, been other fine singers of his race, but he was the first, the original; and the emotions that produced "Were You There," "He Never Said a Mumblin' Word," "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel," and, of course, the classic "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" are very close to him. After all, there are not many mothers of those who followed him who said, as his did: "Son, the white folks don't want to listen to our songs." In spite

of which, he made them listen to anything he chose to sing.

Merely listening to the intensity of "Xango" (an African chant arranged by Villa-Lobos), followed by the charm of "Lil Girl," gives one a notion of the range this artist commands. Peculiarly, too, though such a song as "Roun' About the Mountain" works in the same register and at about the same degree of force as some of the art songs, it is sung much more freely, with less of the tension and sometimes disturbing deviations from pitch which afflict the Italian "Alma del Core." It is, to be sure, amazing that a man in his sixties should command so much of his prime abilities as Hayes does, with the results what they are—often astonishing, sometimes considerably less, but always an experience.

In the eighteenth-century literature—Schubert's "*Jungling an der Quelle*," "*Musensohn*," and "*Liebe hat Gelogen*," Berlioz's "Absence" (one of his best efforts), a "Song of Solomon," by Moussorgsky, and Debussy's "*Le Faune*"—the intention has to be sometimes taken for the accomplishment, but the mood is always present, the words meticulously organized, even if the tones are not squarely on pitch. It is also a pleasure to hear the consistently fine pianistic work of Reginald Boardman, his long-time associate. The technical work is first class, though it seems to me that the singer has occasionally been given an assist in microphone placement.

It may be an injustice to juxtapose a great artist, such as Hayes, with one who is merely a very good singer, such as Anton Dermota, but the record-release list is no respecter of persons. His "*Schöne Müllerin*" has much beautiful singing in it, and his lyric voice is well suited to Schubert, though its upper range is not what it was before he suffered the malaise that prevented his Metropolitan appearance a few years ago. However, whatever the beauty of the sound, one can always listen to it quite calmly, for he rarely goes beyond a polite expression of emotion. The shades and intensities of Schubert are paralleled in a careful, scholastic way, but he rarely wrings real music from his voice. Hilde Dermota plays the appropriate kind of accompaniments for his conception of the cycle, though her fingers are a little put upon for the scamper and swing of the piano part of "*Ungeduld*," for example. Excellent clarity and balance in the recording.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

# Recordings Reports I: Classical LP's

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Bach: Concertos Nos. 1 and 2. Walter Barylli, violin, with orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster WL-5318, \$5.95.	Scherchen at his best is a formidable workman, and here, it seems to me, his vitality and musicianship are channeled to wholly productive results. Barylli is better in the A minor than the E major concerto, but the integration and suitable sound of the ensemble almost take precedence over the solo performance. Very good reproduction.
Beethoven: Concerto No. 4 in G. Clifford Curzon, piano, with Hans Knappertsbusch conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. London LL-1045, \$5.95.	Tactful piano performance by Curzon, with all the amenities observed. However, his rather neutral musical personality would profit from association with a conductor of stronger convictions about this kind of music than Knappertsbusch. Beautiful sound, and a high standard of artistry throughout.
Chopin: Concertos Nos. 1 and 2. Paul Badura-Skoda, piano, with Artur Rodzinski conducting. Westminster WL-5308, \$5.95.	His first venture in this literature shows Badura-Skoda to be a considerable Chopianist, with a highly agreeable flexibility of phrasing and a sound that consorts well with the composer's thought. Artur Rodzinski's orchestral direction has the competence long associated with him. The sound, however, is not consistently of Westminster's best quality.
Decruck: "Andante et fileuse," etc. Marcel Mule, saxophone, with Marthe Lenon, piano. London LS-986, \$4.95.	Startling virtuosity by a past master of his <i>metier</i> hardly atones for the thin musical substance of works by Tomasi, Bozza, Pascal, Tcherpnin, etc. which he must call upon. London's series of solo recitals by clarinet, saxophone, etc. is well worth investigation. Excellent sound.
Grieg: "Peer Gynt," (two suites), etc. Hans-Jurgen Walthers conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra of Hamburg. MGM E-3139, \$4.85.	At the price, the two suites plus Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" are reasonably good value, though the coupling puts Grieg's "Morning" at the end of the "Nutcracker" side, with a turnover necessary to continue with "Ase's Tod." The performances are well recorded, but the direction and playing are tediously routine.
Mozart: Symphonies Nos. 25 and 38 ("Prague"), with Georg Solti conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. London LL-1034.	A repetition of a previous pairing on London, where the conductors were Celibidache and Ansermet, with a gain, surely, in orchestral sound. However, Solti is not a sufficiently skilful hand in such music as this to compete (in the "Prague" especially) with such a specialist as Beecham or the even more vigorous Kubelik.
Mozart: Concerti for Clarinet (K.622) and bassoon (K.191). Leopold Wlach, clarinet, Karl Oehlberger, bassoon, both with Artur Rodzinski conducting the orchestra of the Vienna State Opera. Westminster WL-5307, \$5.95.	Highly adroit execution in both instances, though the Viennese taste in tempo and dynamics does not yield results, in the instance of Wlach, to dislodge previous preference for Kell, Etienne, or Cahuzac (according to couplings). The bassoonist achieves a more Mozartian result than Toscanini permitted Leonard Sharrow in his collaboration, but he has to work hard for the result. Both are well recorded, though the solo instrument in each is too far from the microphone.
Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante (K. 297 B), and "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik." Herbert von Karajan conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra, with first desk soloists. Angel 35098, \$5.95.	The glories of this work are well known from several versions of the past, and a particularly good one of the present on the Oiseau-Lyre label. Karajan here is a more dynamic influence on the players than Froment is there, but a choice would depend on personal inclination to one style of woodwind playing or another. I incline to the French. Karajan's way with the "Kleine Nachtmusik," as known from an early Columbia issue, is rather strenuous, though it is now somewhat modified. Fine sound in both.
Rimsky-Korsakov: "Antar." Glazunov: "Stenka Razin." Ernest Ansermet conducting the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. London LL-1060, \$5.95.	Excellent work by Ansermet in both titles, with the strong score of Rimsky-Korsakov more responsive to the virtues of his treatment than the weaker one of Glazounov. The latter, however, has its curiosity value. In sheen and texture, this is some of the most musical sound London has given us from Geneva.
Rimsky-Korsakov: "Scheherezade." Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia ML-4888, \$5.95.	A maximum output of physical and engineering effort make this a fine sample of the art of phonography, if not a particularly convincing performance of "Scheherezade." It is all too calculated and purposeful to give the particular fantasy of this music an opportunity to cast a spell. However, if it is dazzling sound you want, it is here in all the colors of Joseph's robe. Loud, too.
Sibelius: Symphony No. 4. Anthony Collins conducting the London Symphony. LL-1059, \$5.95.	Apparently Collins is slated to do substantially all the symphonies of Sibelius, which is well for the listeners who relish diversity in any literature. This is a sensitive, well-planned performance, and perhaps a shade more lively in mood than the recent excellent one of Karajan. It also offers a very good performance of "Pohola's Daughter" to fill side two, whereas Karajan's is paired with "Tapiola." Clear, finely balanced recording.
Tchaikovsky: "Sleeping Beauty." Adolf Fritz Guhl conducting the Orchestra of Radio Berlin. Urania UURLP-7127, \$5.95.	Just how this can be described as anything but "excerpts" baffles me, but there is no indication of such qualification to the labeling which describes it as "Tchaikovsky: Sleeping Beauty, opus 66." There are, in all, some nineteen of the best-known episodes included, but the conducting is pedestrian, the orchestral sound jangly, with a preposterous emphasis on percussion. In other words, not recommended.
Tchaikovsky: "Pique Dame." Gershwin: "Porgy and Bess." Andre Kostelanetz and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Columbia ML-4904, \$5.95.	The first observation above might apply here also, save that it is captioned "opera for orchestra" which could mean anything, including a Stokowski-like "symphonic synthesis." Eleven sections from the opera are played in the sequence of their appearance in the complete work. Melodic charm it does have, but also a somewhat faded harmonic aroma. The Bennett "Picture" of "Porgy and Bess" is a Kostelanetz speciality, and he delivers it very well. Typically good Columbia sound.
Tchaikovsky: Concertos No. 1 and 2. Ethel Farnadi, piano, with Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster WL-5389, \$5.95.	The pairing of works is reasonable, more so indeed than the pianist and conductor, for Scherchen's endeavor to find a new way of playing the B flat minor concerto leads the pianist into some dubious paths. They are more fortunate in the G major (No. 2), which is reasonably straight-forward and full of energy, especially the finale. Farnadi's technique is impressive throughout, though the pickup of her tone makes it sound harder, more metallic than in some other discs. Big sound, but for my taste, on the blarey side.

—IRVING KOLODIN.