



## POP ROUNDUP

## Music Halls, Jazz, and Les Femmes

**I**N RECENT months several labels concerned exclusively heretofore with "serious" repertory have ventured cautiously into the popular field. Cautiously—a few French *chansons*, a little jazz—imported, or produced here at reasonable cost, but occasionally with consummate taste.

Such taste characterizes a group of discs from Vanguard. There's an especially effective set of CHANSONS DE JACQUES PREVERT (VRS 7018), divided among Cora Vaucaire and Michele Arnaud—sopranos, and Eric Amado—baritone. The poet Prevert's autumnal palette, typified by

his best-known song, "Les Feuilles Mortes," fulfils itself in company with Kosma's music, often attaining the art-song category. Certainly these *chansons* are unlike anything from Tin Pan Alley. Prevert's sometimes surrealist or abstract introspective musings are a far cry too from the product of our own lyricist laureate, Oscar Hammerstein II, whose own artistic tie may be closer than we've admitted to our own Edgar Guest. The closest thing we have to the *chanson*, I believe, would be the sophomoric stuff on which several bad East Side singers sustain their cults. At any rate, the Prevert article is further distinguished here by the performances of Mlle. Vaucaire, who interprets the above-mentioned "Feuilles" as well as the soaringly lovely soliloquy "Cet Amour." I look forward to hearing more *chansons* sung by Cora Vaucaire.

There is more Prevert-Kosma on one side of another Vanguard issue, GERMAINE MONTERO SINGS SONGS OF PARISIAN NIGHTS (VRS 7005). There are two "children's" songs, wistfully sad, while one, "En Sortant de l'Ecole," is purely surrealist. Mlle. Montero reveals her versatility in the overside's "Tha-ra-boom-de-he," the international music-hall rouser, and then there's a nonsensical period-piece, "Belle-ville-Menilmontant," by Aristide Bruant, the chap whose songs are best remembered for their Lautrec covers. It's sung here purportedly in the style of Yvette Guilbert.

While on the "music hall" beat, there's a new twelve-inch collection by the Eternal Parisian, MAURICE CHEVALIER—PARIS JE T'AIME (Columbia CL-568). Chevalier's high-spirited projection, his Daumier-like portrayals of the bourgeois *chasseur*, are as delightful as ever. Aram Avakian's forthright album notes, with complete, excellent translations, provide a model for most of the other labels producing this sort of thing.

While Chevalier professes his love of Paris and *les femmes*, Annie Corday proclaims in similarly saucy, bubbling fashion MOI, J'AIME LES HOMMES (Angel 64006). This is musical-comedy material performed by a real expert. . . . And over on the left (bank, that is), straight from the existentialist cellars, we're told, we have Juliette Greco in ST. GERMAIN DES PRES (Columbia 569). Mlle. Greco has a rich, throaty sound, and she impresses as an intelligent actress who enjoys singing. For material she also has turned to Prevert and Kosma, and she has come up with such as "Je suis comme je suis," in the best *demi-monde* tradition established by the earlier Dietrich and



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Piaf. On the other side of the twelve-inch disc are two excerpts from Kurt Weill's masterpiece, "The Three Penny Opera." "Barbara" and "Pirate Jenny" are sung in French, and Mlle. Greco's intense acting-singing often approaches the effectiveness of Lotte Lenya's original.

Vanguard informs us that the Boheme Bar in Vienna is a favorite hangout of the international set. The big attraction, it seems, is a polylingual miss called Liane, who, as advertised, sings German songs like Dietrich, French like Piaf or François, and English like Hildegard or better. Most important, Liane sings each song as it should be sung, and she has turned out three very attractive discs. In each she is accompanied by the Boheme Bar Trio, which on its own contributes an assortment of dance medleys and operetta potpourris. The most recent issue is THE BOHEME BAR (Vanguard VRS 7013). The previous set, CAFE CONTINENTAL (VRS 7007) contains my own Liane favorite, "Deinetwegen"; and then there is the initial release in the series, A CONTINENTAL COCKTAIL (VRS 7002).


**B**ACK to our own hemisphere, several of our more distinctive vocal stylists are represented by unusually tasteful programs newly released. A comparative newcomer is heard in WARM, INTIMATE SONGS IN THE JERRY SOUTHERN STYLE (Decca DL-5531), and the more familiar Peggy Lee may be heard in PEGGY—SONGS IN AN INTIMATE STYLE (Decca DL-5539). In both you can almost feel the singer's hot breath. Actually the best tunes are contained in the Southern set, and she turns out to be a musical, jazz-wise singer. "All in Fun" was one of the better Kern-Hammerstein songs that went down the drain with "Very Warm for May," but Miss Southern rescues it, complete with its delicious verse. One of her novel contributions is "Cabin," an enterprising piece of word-painting by Tennessee Williams, with music by Paul Bowles. Miss Lee's selection consists mainly of off-beat items, several of which she herself wrote. In "Baubles, Bangles, and Beads" (from "Kismet"), she's the same swingin' gal who made "Why Don't You Do Right" one of Benny Goodman's big hits back around 1942. Peggy's debt to Billie Holiday is evident in most of her ballads. The model has a new set too, BILLIE HOLIDAY (Clef MGC 161), and I wish I could go along with my colleagues' general enthusiasm for this one. I suspect most of them are applauding what this wonderful artist was, but here I feel she is caricatur-

ing her own highly-distinctive man-fun have departed, leaving only an exaggerated sweetness that palls in nerisms, and that the bitterness and short order.

You'll undoubtedly be hearing a great deal about a young jazzman, Don Elliott, so I'd like to hurry and register among the early "discoverers" of this unique talent. Elliott is represented this month in a collection, THE DON ELLIOTT QUINTET (RCA LJM 1007) and in it he performs on mellophone, trumpet, vibraphone, and bongos. He also composed four of the numbers, and sings one ballad, "I Just Don't Care Any More." Regardless

of the vehicle, Elliott swings, relaxed and forceful. He gets a beautiful tone on trumpet and mellophone (a close relative to the French horn), plays everything lyrically, and avoids clichés with no apparent effort. On trumpet he combines the best elements of Harry James and Bobby Hackett, but he also has a working acquaintance with the modern school. Perhaps the best trumpet example is his sixteen-bar solo on "I Just Don't Care Any More," between his own Sinatra-inspired vocals. His vibes solo on "Laura" is no less creditable. Young Mr. Elliott is obviously a remarkable fellow.

—BILL SIMON.




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
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SPOTLIGHT ON THE MODERNS

## Bartók, Copland, and Petrassi

**T**WENTIETH-CENTURY composers have drifted away from program music not because it proved inadequate as a mold for great works, but because these were often achieved in spite, not as a result, of the stories deployed. It was evident after a while that if the sequence of events precluded proper musical development, the one could not extenuate for the absence of the other, since the events were not presented within the immediate experience but stored, rather, in the listener's mind. I remember a concert at which "Salome's Dance" replaced "Till Eulenspiegel" without notice, and one listener read all the merry pranks into the epic strip-tease.

Curiously, the void left by the tone poem's decline has been so thoroughly filled that the proportion of "absolute" works to those with a story has not changed since Berlioz. I refer to the upswing of ballet. Concert audiences craving a peg of recognizable symbols on which to hang tonal relations they claim not to "understand" do not distinguish between ballet scores and tone poems. Indeed, at times there is no difference. Bartók's "Wooden Prince," a ballet of 1916 only now recorded for the first time (Bartók 308 and 308a), has all that the Romantic tone poem ever had. A synopsis with thirty-eight musical examples enables us to know what the characters are up to at every moment.

Covering three LP sides, the score lags, like some program music, in the interests of the story. But a ballet composer may point out with clean conscience that the music without the stage components is not the total work. Still, it is nice to hear this music. There is quality in the way it applies the sumptuous colors that Stravinsky's Russian ballets established as a vogue around the time it was written. The lovely sounds, excellently produced under Susskind's direction and superbly recorded in London's Kingsway Hall, fall pleasantly on the ear.

Bartók's next theatre piece, "The Miraculous Mandarin," though following the same coloristic tradition, reveals the composer as having absorbed, in the two intervening years, the bolder and more striking devices in the air (Mercury 50038). Its greater incisiveness is also due to the violent

plot that replaces a romantic fairy tale. It comes down to us in a condensed concert version, but still unfolds like a tone poem. The new LP, with Dorati leading the Chicago Symphony, is more forceful and disciplined than the one made by Serly for Bartók Records. But the blaring brass stands too much in relief, and in general there is too much reverberation. In some ways, then, the earlier LP is superior, but Dorati's dynamism is final arbiter. The coupling with Kodaly's commonplace "Peacock Variations" only serves to crowd the grooves, which may be one reason why Bartók Records, which spread the ballet over two sides, got neater sound.

The streetwalker's siren call in "The Miraculous Mandarin," a coy clarinet recitative, provides a structural element for the music by separating the violent episodes of the thieves for whom she is a decoy. Often a plot is not so obliging, and it devolves on composers to create formal interest for a score to survive concerts. Not many have succeeded. One recipe is the series of set-pieces, roughly like arias, reflecting each scene's general mood without blow-by-blow musical continuity. Melody is important here, and the uses to which folk music may be put to this end have been brilliantly demonstrated by Copland in "Billy the Kid," with its cowboy tunes, and "Appalachian Spring," with its variations on a Shaker tune (Westminster WL 5286).

"Appalachian Spring" is now on five LPs (including one subscription release). It well merits this unprecedented attention for an American work. Also, the inadequacies of the earlier LPs amply justified Mitchell's adding a fifth. Utmost poise is needed to sustain this deceptively simple work and balance its subtle instrumentation. Mitchell comes mighty near the goal and Westminster's immaculate reproduction helps enormously. It is a pity the strings are weak. In the third variation their runs punctuating a two-part brass counterpoint, are almost inaudible. (I also hear what sounds like tympani tuning up here.) This is a matter of engineering, but I suspect, too, that the National Symphony strings lack the resonance of the Boston's, as heard on the RCA Victor LP made