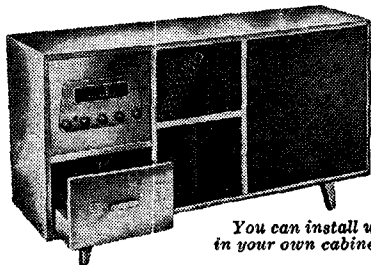


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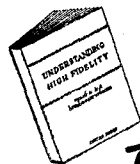
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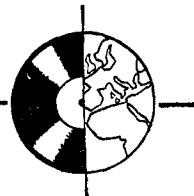
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# THE OTHER SIDE

(PRE-RECORDED TAPE IN BRITAIN)



LONDON.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that my reviewer's equivalent of the businessman's "In" tray is packed with newly arrived LPs, it is tape and not records which calls for this month's biggest headline. For, despite recent American developments in this field, HMV's decision to launch pre-recorded tapes in time for the annual Radio Show (Earls Court, Aug. 25th to Sept. 4th) took us all completely by surprise. I should not have thought that this country was yet ready for such a development because, due partly to the late emergence of FM broadcasting, comparatively few music-lovers own tape recorders. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this move represents an attempt on the part of EMI to regain at least some of the prestige which their hesitation vis-à-vis LP had lost them. This is borne out by the manner in which the tapes have been advertised under the slogan of "First Again!" ("again" in this context referring to 45 rpm discs, which EMI introduced to Britain).

The prices of the tapes range from 55s. to 84s. (roughly \$7.70 to \$11.75) and the first list contains Cantelli performances of Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony and Schumann's Fourth, Beethoven Concertos 2 and 4 (Solomon), Schubert's 4th and 5th Symphonies (London Mozart Players), Mendelssohn's E minor Concerto together with the two Beethoven Romances (Menuhin and Furtwängler) and some popular ballet music ("Carnaval," "Sylphides") from Robert Irving and the Covent Garden Orchestra. I have not yet had much opportunity of listening to these tapes but, if a special demonstration tape made up of short extracts from the above performances is anything to go by, it appears that HMV has done a good job of duplication: what I heard represented a distinct improvement on any of the discs in question. By a curious anomaly which, on the face of it, seems to defy logic, pre-recorded tape is not subject to Purchase Tax as are records (of every £1 we pay for our records, about 5s. belongs to the Chancellor of the Exchequer), but even so the price is, in the long run, likely to repel all but the most ardent seekers after Hi-Fi. No doubt other companies are watching the outcome of this venture with considerable in-

terest and Columbia-Angel will probably join HMV in the future—I gather that a tape-version of "The Merry Widow" is in course of preparation.

EMI's record releases for September are numerous and well-varied, save for the complete absence of any contemporary music. Included are two operas, "Faust" and "Norma," and a play, "Macbeth." The long-awaited Columbia set of Bellini's masterpiece has not reached me at the time of writing, but the cast, headed by Maria Callas and including Ebe Stignani, Mario Filipposchi and Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, with the orchestra and chorus of La Scala under the direction of Maestro Serafin, holds out the greatest promise. "Faust," as many SR readers in the U.S.A. will already know, is disappointing. On paper at any rate HMV's cast—De los Angeles, Gedda, Christoff and Borthayre—is much stronger than that of their Beecham set issued five years ago, but such was the life which Beecham infused into chorus and orchestra that I should still prefer to listen to his performance despite its lack of vocal distinction. HMV's two-record "Macbeth" is advertised as "The Old Vic Company Production" but just why this should be so is difficult to see. To be sure, the Old Vic Company is currently presenting a new production of "Macbeth" at the Edinburgh festival and the production will be seen in London during the autumn, but at Edinburgh the leading parts are played by Ann Todd and Paul Rogers whereas they are read on the records by Pamela Brown and Alec Guinness. However, this excellent and finely recorded performance is a most welcome addition to the rapidly increasing repertoire of plays on LP.

Among the orchestral discs, HMV's contribution includes Brahms's Third Symphony conducted by Toscanini (in my opinion the finest of the Maestro's Brahms recordings); a somewhat over-romantic performance of Bach's Double Concerto by de Vito and Menuhin, coupled with a ravishing Trio Sonata by Handel; a collection of no fewer than nine Mozart Overtures, capably but not very sensitively played by the Philharmonia under Kubelik; an exhilarating coupling of two Organ Concertos by Handel (Op. 4, Nos. 2 and 4) in which that admirable artist Geraint Jones

(Continued on page 70)

## Farnham

Continued from page 59

record includes two sets of variations—"O Gott du Frommer Gott"—also to be heard in the Farnham recording—and the familiar canonic variations on "Vom Himmel Hoch." Six Chorale Fughettas, delightful short works dating from the Weimar period, have been rarely, if ever, recorded before, and are a high spot of this release. A group of five Chorale Preludes, including "Herzlich tut mich verlangen" and "Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier," completes the recording.

A few months ago the organ-building firm of Aeolian-Skinner published a 12-inch LP record called "The King of Instruments"—examples of various types of organ tone, with spoken notes by the company's president, G. Donald Harrison. Intended as a guide to organ students and music committees (who might presumably want some day to buy an organ), the Aeolian-Skinner people were surprised to find a general interest in the record. Now, Volume II has been released, and the Möller company has issued a recording of a new organ they have built for the studio of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, in New York City. Möller was long known as a builder of traditional romantic organs, but recently the firm has joined the swing toward the more classic tone color. Doubtless it is a reaction to current taste, Möller's own taste in turn being guided by Ernest White, organist on this record and musical director at the church just off Times Square. White is an accomplished musician, a skilled performer and an expert in both the old and new.

Ernest White plays the third of this month's versions of the Bach Variations on "O Gott, du frommer Gott," and it is a splendid performance. Of the three, White's is the most interesting for its tonal concept, the variety of colors drawn from the palette of classic registrations. His style is more crisp than Farnham's, and he displays more bite and brilliance than Viderø. Möller is doing a good job with reed stops—the brassy wind instruments of the organ—and White knows it.

The work of Robert Elmore, young Philadelphia organist-composer, is being heard more and more on recital programs, and his "Pavanne," a piece of rare form and grace, is included in this Ernest White record. Works by Martini, Thomas Arne, Fiocco, and Karg-Elert are also included.

Volume One of "The King of Instruments," issued by Aeolian-Skinner, emphasized the vast differences between organs of the classic style and the mushy romantic instruments that



were in vogue until the middle twenties. Volume Two dips into organ literature "from Bach to Langlais," and demonstrates three of Aeolian-Skinner's more impressive recent instruments. They are the Symphony Hall organ in Boston, the First Presbyterian Church in Kilgore, Texas, and the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston. George Faxon, Roy Perry, and a "staff organist" are the performers. The Bach, played on the two Boston

instruments, includes three of the "Schübler" Chorals, the Trio Sonata No. 1, and the Allegro movement from the Vivaldi-Bach A-Minor Concerto.

The Kilgore organ is used for showing contemporary organ music—Sowerby's "Carillon," also on the Farnham-Watters recording, Alain's "Litanies," and a Paraphrase on the "Te Deum," by Jean Langlais. Kilgore is one of the few pipe organs to boast a "Trompette en Chamade," with the pipes arranged fanwise on their sides. It appears toward the end of Sir Henry Walford Davies' "Solemn Melody." Although it shows three different organs, this record lacks the novelty of Volume One, and unfortunately includes much that has been recorded before. —DAVID HEBB.

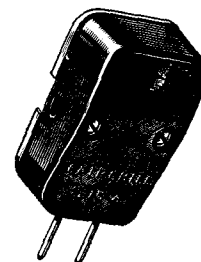
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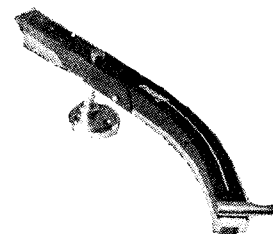
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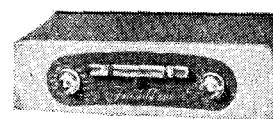
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## Koussevitzky Revalued

By ARTHUR BERGER

**R**CA VICTOR has re-issued some Koussevitzky recordings of the pre-LP era that come as a timely tribute to the late Boston Symphony conductor, who would have been eighty this past summer. If the assortment is curiously heterogeneous, scarcely remarkable for anything unusual as to repertory, and sometimes disconcertingly fragmentary in its choice of excerpts, it has been shrewdly planned to reveal to us in retrospect Koussevitzky's main musical preoccupations and to present a synthesis of his career—even to his early role as virtuoso on the double-bass.

That the five LPs, embracing almost as much standard music as contemporary, should all come within the domain of this column is evidence in itself of the vitality of that career. Fine readings of established masterpieces reflect honor upon any active conductor. But after his retirement—though the perpetuity of recordings has somewhat altered things—it is the significant new music he has brought to light for which he is chiefly remembered. As everyone who is acquainted with concert activity of the past few decades knows, American music would be far less advanced today were it not for Koussevitzky. Indeed, its future looks bleak; no one has emerged to take his place.

Copland, whose present eminence may be traced back to Koussevitzky more than to any other single benefactor, is represented among these LPs by "Lincoln Portrait," one of his more popular pieces (LCT-1152), since this is the only Boston Symphony version of his music that has not been previously re-issued. Harris, another of Koussevitzky's top protégés, is more solidly represented by his Third Symphony, probably his masterpiece to date (LCT-1153). Both works are already on LP in readings that compare well with Koussevitzky's. It is thus Hanson who profits most from this Koussevitzky revival, since his Third Symphony, coupled with the Harris, fills out the gap in the LP catalogue between his second and fourth symphonies.

But, as I have said, it is what these re-issues symbolize, more than what they contain, that is fascinating; and oddly enough, one of their most revealing facets is the little recital of flimsy encore pieces for double-bass,

written mostly by Koussevitzky himself in a frankly Tchaikovskian vein (LCT-1145). Here is the key to Koussevitzky's conducting and to the direction that much American symphonic music has assumed in the last quarter of a century. The personality capable of putting over a product (namely, new music) that is not easily marketable inevitably left its impression, as well, on the composers it abetted, so that some of Koussevitzky's preferences were promptly transmitted to them. At the same time those who wrote for the Boston Symphony conducted by Koussevitzky were merely being practical when they adapted their method on their own behalf to its superlative manner—a manner notable for sonorous richness, a capacity to produce enveloping fortissimos that did not revile the ear, string choirs that could despatch elaborate contours with the unanimity of a single virtuoso, and, above all, a tendency to draw out slow passages tenuously and patiently and give majestic resonance to the bass line.

Considering all this in the light of Koussevitzky's solos on the double-bass, one may observe, among other things, his need to delay and scoop in order to achieve suave connection between one note and the next, since large distances were to be spanned by the fingers with much pressure. His playing of Beethoven's Minuet in G strikes the unprepared listener as a travesty. Since the phonograph is capable of deception and because he used low notes sparingly, it may easily seem to be a cello that is being played haltingly. Everything changes with the realization it is a double-bass. Amusement is replaced by awe at the phenomenal lyricism. When he recorded his solos in 1929 his career as soloist had long since been superseded by his conducting interests, and he may no longer have had the facility of his heyday to play the minuet in more regular time. Also, allowances must be made for the fact that in those days string players normally took liberties that now strike us painfully. Yet, this predilection for drawing out the bow in brazen defiance of the beat was, I suspect, the origin of his particular brand of rubato in conducting. The exaggerations became less severe, but he handled the orchestra as if it were a huge, ponderous instrument that could be made to respond sensitively if allowed to move gingerly and with the utmost leisure at certain