Recordings Reports I: Orchestral LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Arnold: "Homage to the Queen." Robert Irving conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. RCA Victor LM 2037, $3.98.	This always skilful and sometimes attractive score for a Sadler's Wells (now Royal) Ballet production of the Coronation Year has some listening lapses, in the episodes devoted to stage spectacle alone, but it is a desirable addition to the ballet literature. Given a subject of a less ceremonious nature, Arnold might well write a score of real quality, combining technical skills with a feeling for the idiom. Excellent performance and reproduction.
Brahms: Symphony No. 3. Eugen Jochum conducting the Berlin Philharmonic. "Tragic" overture. The same, Fritz Lehmann conducting. Decca DL 9899, $3.98.	The emerging image of Jochum is provided with a few more details in this strongly formed, finely paced performance, suggesting a conductor in the mold of Pfitzner or Abendroth. Along with a firm sense of phrase goes an ability to let the key players in the orchestra have their own say on Brahms. Lehmann's direction of the "Tragic" is of lesser dimensions, but it is also well played.
Britten: "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra." Dohnanyi: "Variations on a Nursery Tune." Felix Slatkin conducting the Concert Arts Symphony Orchestra, with Victor Aller, piano. Capitol P 8373, $3.98.	Without feeling the need to take the customer into the kitchen to observe the dish being prepared (as was done, at the length of a full side, in Westminster's Boult-directed version on XWN 18372), Slatkin has served a tasty measure of Britten, well seasoned with a good garnish of tonal fidelity. He is also successful in his treatment of Dohnanyi, giving Aller a suitable opportunity to develop his personal conception.
Elgar: Symphony No. 2 in E flat. Sir Adrian Boult conducting. Westminster XWN 18378, $3.98.	There is some typically Elgarian eloquence in this score, but not more and much less concentrated than in the briefer, better realized "Variations on an Original Theme" ("Enigma"). I would not question Boult's knowledge of the work, or his devotion to it, but the performance sounds insufficiently rehearsed, not all of the strands of sounds aligned in the same direction to make a cohesive texture. It could, for that matter, be a factor of the writing itself; for whatever reason, the aural impression is not a persuasive one. As reproduction of sound, it takes a place among Westminster's best.
Hindemith: "Mathis der Maler." Toch: Symphony No. 3. William Steinberg conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Capitol P 8364, $3.98.	Two outstanding performances by Steinberg, reproduced with a clarity and tonal adjustment that outdo any previous accomplishment by Capitol in Pittsburgh. Steinberg's penetration of Hindemith's most satisfying score is total, though his sense of sonorities results in something leaner, more linear, than in the composer's own direction of it. Toch's ambitious work has a strong animating purpose, but its length outruns its ideas, the style becoming rhetorical without commanding the eloquence to match its Mahlerian pretentions.
Puccini: "Turandot." Domenico Savino conducting the Rome Symphony Orchestra. Kapp LCL 9000, $3.98.	A voiceless version of highspots of Puccini's last score makes more sense in this instance than is customarily the case (as in the coincidental release of similar treatment of "Cavalleria" and "Forza del Destino"), for the orchestral scoring is brilliant, the voices less conspicuously absent. However Savino's estimate of the situation is rather on the surface, the tonal qualities of the orchestra a little distorted to make the highs sound impressive.
Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 2 in E minor, opus 27. State Radio Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. conducted by Alexander Gauk. Westminster XWN 18424, $3.98.	A performance much in the manner of the one by the Leningrad Symphony (Sanderling conducting) issued from German-made tapes on the Decca label last winter, which is to say that the effects are broad, the timbre of such instruments as French horn, clarinet and oboe rather different than that to which we are accustomed, the total effort in a broader, less hectic spirit than is usual in this country. As sound, it is not as good as the Decca version.
Strauss, R: "Don Juan," "Tile Eulen-Baron" overtures, "Tales from the Vienna Woods," "Blue Danube," waltzes, "Annen" and "Pizzicato" polkas, "Perpetuum Mobile" and "Radetzky March." Sir John Barbirolli conducting the Halle Orchestra. Mercury MG 50124, $3.98.	Barbirolli knows the Strauss style and the Hallé is a fine orchestra, but climaxes are regularly overproduced for the sake of orchestral effects disproportionate to the needs of the music, the "style" applied from the outside rather than permeating the total effort (especially in the waltzes). Altogether if Viennese music is available, why settle for the Mancunian approximation? Good reproduction in a rather boomy style. The occasional grunts from the conductor are hardly aesthetically appealing.
Strauss, R: "Don Juan," "Till Eulenspiegel," "Rosenkavalier" waltzes and "Feuersnot" love scene. Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia ML 5177, $3.98.	The playing of the opera excerpts appeals more than those of the tone poems, the latter having more to do with the virtuosi of the Philadelphia Orchestra than to the virtuosity of Strauss. Brilliant, unquestionably, but with a bulldozer drive that tends to level off niceties of detail in a pursuit of dynamics extremes, especially in the percussion. The "Feuersnot" excerpt, for those not acquainted with it, is an exercise in Strauss's most lavalike tonal flow, given a properly volcanic treatment by orchestra and conductor.
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 in B minor. Ernest Ansermet conducting the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. London LL 1633, $3.98.	A really superlative recording, matching a profoundly personal statement of the score by Ansermet with a highly judicious, well balanced concept of fine orchestral reproduction. The end product, if not immediately ear-shattering, stands the test of repetition which a recording must endure. Ansermet's Tchaikovsky is not shredded and tattered and rather ragged by result, but clearheaded and convincing. A notable accomplishment.
Tchaikovsky: "Aurora's Wedding" and "Black Swan" pas des deux ("Swan Lake"). Antal Dorati conducting the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. Mercury MG 50118, $3.98.	As is well known, Dorati's background in the ballet is substantial, but his attention to power to the detriment of poetry tends to put their qualities in a perspective not intended by Tchaikovsky. Efficient recording as Mercury conceives it, a little lacking in sheen and resonance for my taste. However it gives the orchestra all its decibelic due.
Tchaikovsky: "Nutcracker" suite, Chabrier: "España," Ponchielli: "Dance of the Hours," and Suppé: "Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna." Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Columbia ML 5171, $3.98.	For all save the "Nutcracker" this is a second or third time around for these works in Beecham performances which have lost no whit of freshness, zest or artistic interest. The "Dance of the Hours" can be challenged only by the Toscanini, which is electric rather than mercurial, the "España" is on a par with Ansermet's, the Suppé in a class by itself. However I find the Tchaikovsky suite a little over-refined and, even, sluggish, without the sportive overtones of the sense of fantasy imparted by Stokowski, for one. Satisfying sound throughout, without overt striving for effect. —IRVING KOLODIN.

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Tebaldi (London, LL-1571). To many who think of Miss Tebaldi only as a prima donna of the opera stage, this record will come as a revelation, fortunately, a happy one. As a program of songs, sensitively accompanied by Giorgio Favaretto, the recording always holds interest. Ravishing beauty of tone and a consistent excitement and verve in the voice itself never fail to come through to the listener. Most of the songs are a delight. A possible exception is Alessandro Scarlatti's "Le violette," in the opinion of many a very fragile song, which is executed in a rather heavy manner, more as an operatic aria than as a puff of confection. But, before one has a chance to become too exacting, there is Rossini's "La promessa," which Tebaldi imbues with such urgency that she leaves the listener breathless and waiting for more. Even though what we might call the standard interpretation of this song is light and lyric, this reviewer finds Miss Tebaldi's performance memorable. It would probably be too much to say that Miss Tebaldi has changed our conception of how the song should be sung, but it is not too much to say that in at least one mind she has challenged tradition, and for the better. Three Martucci songs, hardly of significant musical quality, are sung so beautifully that they acquire an importance which they lack intrinsically. Such ability to transmute music is the proof of an artist. While it may be that Miss Tebaldi is aware of her limitations in the concert field and here sings only what she knows she does best (all-Italian), the result is still rewarding, for she has been able to transfer her exquisite *bel canto* from the opera setting to the recorded medium in an exceptionally beautiful recital of songs.

In still another recording, we have an opportunity to hear Hilde Gueden in a recital of Richard Strauss lieder (London, LL-1591). Miss Gueden's singing and the recording itself are superior. Moreover, the singer has the good fortune to have as accompanist one of today's most talented young pianists, Friedrich Gulda. "Schlechtes Wetter" is sung and played as Strauss himself must have wished it. "Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten," one of the most difficult of songs, is performed with great elan and beauty of tone. Yet, for some reason, when she is called upon to sing quietly, Miss Gueden thinks that the tone production must change. Why? When she does this, she makes a thin white sound which takes away all beauty of the voice itself. Or, as in "Die Nacht," a harsh chest tone, quite foreign to the vocal line, suddenly mars one's pleasure. "Befreit" is an example of vocalization peculiarly Miss Gueden's. She slides tentatively into a note *in alt* as if she feared for its focus. But, having arrived, she lets her voice go until it swells into a bell-like sound that is glorious to hear. Is this mannerism a carry-over from the opera stage where it is less obvious; or is it due to a lack of experience in meeting the demands of recital singing? In spite of these reservations, this record, including as it does an engaging variety of thirteen Strauss songs, all of them well-interpreted by the happy combination of Miss Gueden and Mr. Gulda, deserves a place in the library.

To add to the wealth of song recitals we are offered two more records by Kirsten Flagstad: a Bach and Handel recital, sung in English (London, LL-1641) and a Grieg recital (London, LL-1547). Mme. Flagstad's voice is always warm, sumptuous, and thrilling, and brings a real richness to the Bach and Handel melodies. There will, however, be two opinions about this recording. For those to whom sound is all in all, it will be a source of lasting pleasure, even of wonder. On the other hand, those who

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Recordings Reports II: Miscellaneous LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Bartok: Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. Wilfrid Parry and Iris Loveridge, pianos, Gilbert Webster and Jack Lees, percussion, with Richard Austin directing. "Contrasts" Parry, Frederick Grinke, violin, and Jack Brymer, clarinet. Westminster XWN 18425, $3.98.	A suitable paring of complementary works, with a particular success in the sonata, which has a range of rhythmic and coloristic effects that the jazz people might investigate to advantage. The performance is well-prepared, the sound qualities keenly presented. "Contrasts," however, another story, for the playing lacks the bite and humor of the original by Goodman, Szigeti, and Bartok, providing instead a kind of fuzzy, rough textured sound that doesn't add to much that is pleasurable, aurally.
Bizet: "Carmen," with Geraldine Farrar, soprano, Giovanni Martinelli, tenor, Pasquale Amato, etc. Camden CAL 359, $1.98.	RCA has extended the bargain principle a little too far, it seems to me, in offering this compilation of "Carmen" material by the favorite soprano without so much as a sequence of excerpts, dates of recording, etc. Allowing for the acoustic techniques of the 1910-1920 period, she is represented in favorable vocal form, though many of the ritards, accentuations, and phrasings now seem more than a little quaint. Miss Farrar is also presented as singer of Micaëla's "Je dis que rien m'epouvante."
Brahms: Fantasias, Op. 116, Capricci and Intermezzi, Op. 76. Daniel Wayenberg, piano. Ducretet-Thomson DTL 93059, $3.98.	The favorable impression Wayenberg made some months ago with a Ravel collection is, unfortunately, not strengthened by this effort. It is able, orderly playing, but more than a little dull and lacking in vitality, which is a special misfortune in an aspect of Brahms not overly provided with interest by the composer.
Britten: "Les Illuminations" and Ravel: "Shéhérazade." Janine Micheau, soprano, Paul Sacher and Jean Fournet conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra. Debussy: "Trois Ballades de François Villon," Ravel: "Don Quichotte a Dulcinee." Camille Maurane, baritone, with Fournet conducting. Epic LC 3355, $3.98.	The works are nicely mated for similar musical tastes, and all are well performed if not, in every case, as well as in the best previous versions. Micheau's qualities are familiar ones, her refinement and taste being offset somewhat by a little lack of color in the voice. Maurane may be unknown save to those who have noted his name in a Fauré "Requiem" or Rameau's "Les Indes galantes," but he is a perceptive artist, with a malleable voice and excellent vocal technique. Not yet of the Bernac mold, he has some attributes which may eventually enable him to qualify.
Busoni: Sonata No. 2 in E minor. Max Rostal, violin, and Noel Mewton-Wood, piano. Westminster WXN 18426, $3.98.	This gargantuan work (its six movements cover both sides of the LP) has more than a little of everything in it, but mostly Brahms and Richard Strauss. The inadequate notes fail to identify the time of composition, but its view is almost defiantly retrospective. Much of it is enjoyable if lacking individuality, but the final contrapuntal movement (a kind of Cesarian—Franck—operation) attains a staggering volume of complexity unrelieved by self-evaluation. The players have the work under firm control at all times, the late Mewton-Wood again giving us cause to regret his early death.
Debussy: "Preludes." Albert Ferber, piano. Ducretet-Thomson DTL 93116, 93117, $3.98.	Evaluation of the capacities of a player in such evocative literature as this from discs alone is more than an ordinary challenge, but one which Ferber makes inviting. He has a suitable array of the qualifications required for Debussy, though he sometimes overstresses his tone with percussive, metallic results. But he is a player of much strength and some imagination. Good piano reproduction.
Dvorak: Serenade in E (Op. 22) Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on "Greensleeves"; "Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis." Boyd Neel String Orchestra. Unicorn UNLP 1044, $3.98.	Typically polished, well-disciplined performances under the direction of Neel, though in no case does he probe far below the music's surface or illuminate substance as well as externals. In compensation for this lack of profundity the listener is offered a steady flow of solid musical sense and no incursions of "interpretative" nonsense. The sound is very good.
Elgar: Serenade in E minor. Brahms: Liebeslieder Waltzes, Grieg: "In the Popular Style," Dvorak: Nocturne in B. Cedric Dumont conducting the Boyd Neel Orchestra. Epic LC 3350, $3.98.	Something for every taste here, even if not everything on it is to all tastes. Dumont directs the Elgar expressively and the orchestra responds well throughout, though the sweeping string effects in the Brahms are excessive for ears accustomed to the crisper sound of the pianos (and voices) for which the waltzes were written. Included are Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9.
Rossini: "Cenerentola" ("Miei rampolli femmini"), etc. Fernando Corena, basso. Gianandrea Gavazzeni conducting the orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. London LL 1636, $3.98.	A broad range of buffo specialities, including "Ho un gran peso sulla testa" from "L'Italiana in Algeri," "Sia qualunque delle figlie" from "Cenerentola," and "Udite udite" from Cimarosa's "Matrimonio Segreto" on the Italian side, and excerpts from Massenet's "Griselidis," Thomas's "Le Caid" (Air du Tambour-Major), Gounod's "Philemon et Baucis" ("Vulcan's Song") and "Piff-paff-puff" from Offenbach's "Grande Duchesse" on a French side directed by James Walker. Lively work by Corena all through.
Schumann: Variations on a Theme by Clara Wieck. Chopin: B flat minor Mazurka and Polonaise-Fantasie, Haydn: Sonata in E flat, Scarlatti: Sonata in E, etc. Vladimir Horowitz, piano. RCA Victor LM 1957, $3.98.	To judge from its number, this should be the RCA Victor record of the year which, while good, it does not quite become. Horowitz is represented by a wide variety of excerpts from public performances, all informed, thereby, with a kind of aliveness not always heard in studio performances. The variation in quality is considerable with the rarely heard Schumann variations and the two Chopin pieces delivered with artistic fervor and tonal grandeur, the Haydn sonata and the Scarlatti rather picked at, as if the pianist didn't have a real appetite for them. Amongst other things (Brahms Intermezzo in E flat, and Moszkowski "Etincelles") is a dazzling dash through Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" in which the pianist provides his own rockets and pinwheels for 4th of July purposes. Good sound.
Strauss: Excerpts from "Spitzentuch der Königin," and other operettas. Hansgeorg Otto conducting, with Sonja Schoner and Herbert Ernst Groh, vocalists. Telefunken LGX 66046, $4.98.	The formula is a familiar one, but along with the lusty chorus and soloists is an uncommonly attractive assemblage of operetta excerpts, with only brief allusions to "Fledermaus" and "Zigeunerbaron." Among the others are "Tausend und eine Nacht," "Der Lustige Krieg," "Wiener Blut," "Blindekuh," "Waldmeister," etc. It is a little late in the day for tenor Groh, but he has the manner, certainly. Side II is devoted to a medley of Viennese songs in a popular vein.
Waxman: "Sinfonietta for String Orchestra and Timpani." Foss: Concerto for Piano. Both conducted by Franz Waxman. Decca DL 9889, $3.98.	Two works of uncommon appeal, provided with an authentic interpretation through the participation of the composer in both (Foss is his own soloist). The Waxman "Sinfonietta" is lively and well written, the Foss a little overstated. —I. K.

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