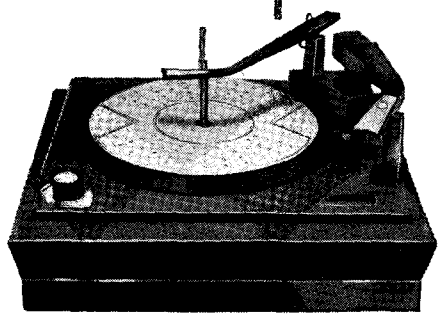


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THE AMEN CORNER

"Harvest Home"

MY RECORD bins are rich with autumnal jazz, especially in the small-band, modern category. The pianist Thelonious Monk, having had some unfortunate big-band experiences in recent months, is represented in wonderful quintet form in the LP "Five by Monk by Five" (Riverside RLP 12-305). I think one of the new performances, based on Monk's composition "Jackie-ing," is among the finest jazz records of any period I have ever heard. The theme is an exotic chordal line which suggests that Monk may have been listening to "March of the Siamese Children" from "The King and I" (certainly he has not copied it, however). There is a superbly jubilant, eccentric momentum built up between the leader's dissonant chording, Charlie Rouse's rolling tenor saxophone, and the bass and drums of Sam Jones and Art Taylor. Then an added starter lays down the brazen law—the brilliant cornetist Thad Jones. The other excellent tracks of the LP include another new Monkish theme, "Played Twice."

An elegant band with Detroit associations has Thad Jones as leader, composer, cornetist, and fluegelhornist; Billy Mitchell, tenor sax; Al Grey, trombone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; and Elvin Jones, drums. These are, simply, some of the best men in the country, playing a fastidious jazz, full of spirit as well as great technical finesse—"Motor City Scene" (United Artists UAL 4025). This, it seems to me, is the most valuable modern jazz direction, one which is not overly bemused by the possibility of bizarre instrumental combinations, "new sounds," but which clings to the balanced band and refines and ramifies the traditional jazz forms. There is another admirable example in the LP "Kelly Blue" with Wynton Kelly, piano; Nat Adderley, cornet; Bobby Jaspar, flute; Benny Golson, tenor sax; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums (two numbers by this band, four by Kelly with bass and drums—Riverside RLP 12-298). Such groups of mutually respectful stars are bound to stimulate each other, in the manner of the older jazz, and I begin to feel that even the ancient virtues of group improvisation have had a fuller revival.

Another delight of the month is the first recording together (believe it or not) by the great veterans Benny Carter, alto sax and trumpet, and Earl

Hines, piano (their assistants are Leroy Vinnegar, bass, and Shelly Manne, drums). Here are two of the most buoyant, graceful musicians in history, and it should be enough for modern fanciers as well as vintage ears to know that the album is called "Swingin' the '20s" and that its program of twelve numbers opens with "Thou Swell" and closes with "A Monday Date" (Contemporary M 3561).

Some of my fellow record reviewers were greatly excited last winter by a session of the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop, which now appears on wax (United Artists UAL 4036). I have admired some of Mingus's work before, especially his "East Coasting" with the brass team of Clarence Shaw, trumpet, and Jimmy Knepper, trombone (Bethlehem BCP-6019). Mingus is one of the foremost string bass virtuosi and a composer of learning and seriousness. I have not, however, enjoyed his new Workshop program—the wan bathos of his ballad "Alice's Wonderland," or the flamboyant intricacy of the bass solos, which seem to me to depart from the rhythmic essence of jazz.

For brass addicts, cornet player Nat Adderley leads a warmly ingratiating program with "Slide" Hampton, trombone; Layman Jackson, tuba; Wynton Kelly, piano; Sam Jones, bass; and Albert Heath, drums. The general tone here is rather benign, in a syncopated way, and Adderley concludes with a moving "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" (Riverside RLP 12-301). A full-dress brass section, "Brass Shout," with handsome arrangements by the notable Benny Golson, includes about as many masterly key and slide men as one is likely to encounter on a single disc. The featured trumpeter is Art Farmer, a man of golden merit, but there is also the young and powerful Lee Morgan, and the commanding lead man, Ernie Royal. The trombones include the dazzling manipulator Jimmy Cleveland; Wayne Andre; and Curtis Fuller, whose earthy, middle-range inventions continue to strike me as among the most solid joys in jazz trombone playing today. These two sections are filled out by James Haughton, baritone horn; Julius Watkins, French horn; Don Butterfield, tuba; and Percy Heath, bass. Finally, there is drumming by both Philly Joe and Elvin Jones. That will do (UA UAL 4047).

—WILDER HOBSON.

Awards

(Continued from page 43)

and the casual inclusion of so much obviously partisan material demonstrate the inadequacy of a voting system which produces such results.

To those who would excuse these failings as hazards of democratic procedure, I wish to pose, then, the basic philosophic question: What is the purpose of NARAS's running a popularity poll? Is such a poll desirable? How can it bring distinction and recognition to our industry when it fails to evaluate the intrinsic merit of the products? It would seem that a popularity poll, in which artists and members of the industry merely vote for themselves, is superfluous, particularly since the public through its purchases votes for its favorite records every day, and trade paper charts already reflect these preferences. I see no merit in self-served awards won by the sort of electioneering and lobbying which, I believe, must inevitably accompany the NARAS method of balloting.

If a truly impartial critical evaluation is desired, I believe it can most objectively be obtained under the sponsorship of an organization such as the Record Industry Association with the aid of qualified observers and professional critics, who, by the way, are already polled annually.

Columbia Records would be happy to cooperate with any qualified agency which would, in the largest and best sense of the word, truly evaluate and recognize our industry's participants and their work.

The NARAS balloting, which we now observe for the second time, does not in any way enhance the stature of the industry or its participants. Its inadequacies can ultimately only become detrimental to our industry.

If we all feel that awards can bring honor and status to the record industry, and there are very good arguments to support this view, let us at least devise truly objective methods which will confer real distinction on the recipients.

Sincerely,

Goddard Lieberson

Some members of NARAS to whom these objections have been made known agree that the nominating procedure may be subject to improvement, but also contend that a lack of interest on the part of some companies (including Columbia) has produced an unbalanced membership. Whatever the causes, the results, plainly, are awards without distinction, to which no well-informed record buyer or critic would attach any significance whatsoever.



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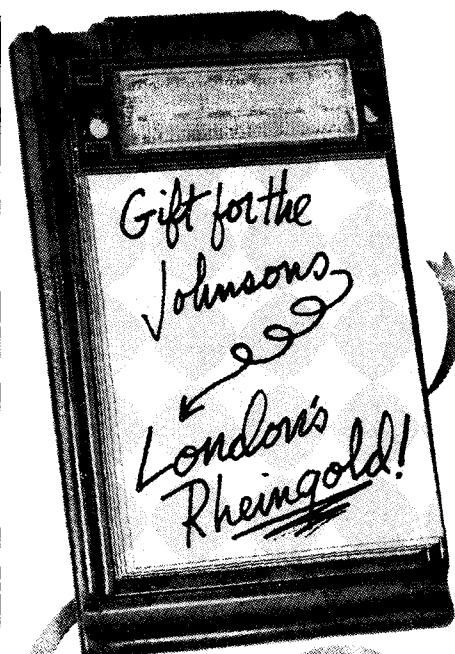
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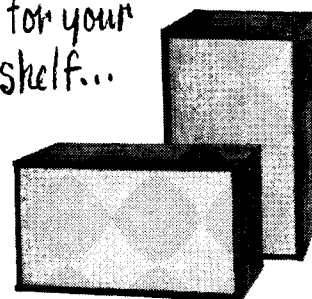


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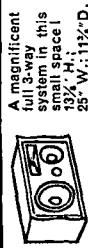
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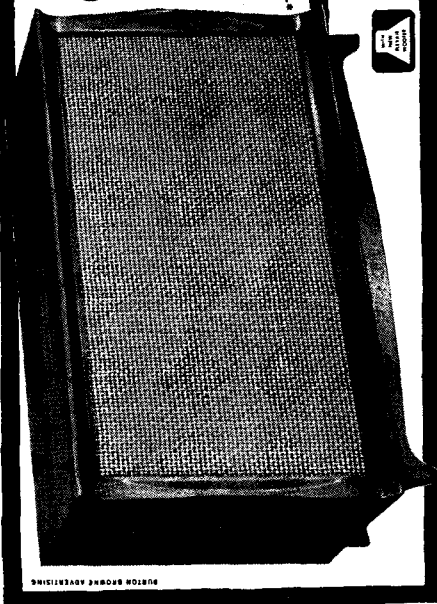
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Harpsichord

Continued from page 42

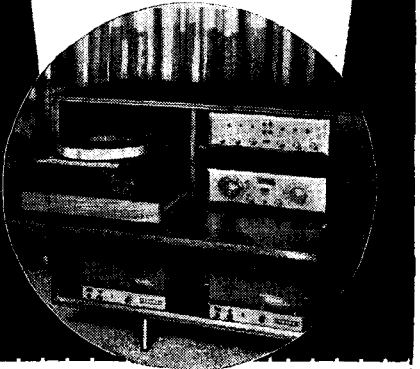
gation and exclamation points. . ."—qualities little exercised in this era of stereo (and sterile) preferences.

Some musicians wonder to what extent Landowska's interpretations—which have held such a magisterial sway for two generations—coincided with Bach's original intentions. Or could these intentions be in tune with the artistic demands of the twentieth century altogether? If anything, we can say here that no one ever strove harder to ensure that this be so. A long and difficult campaign sharpened in Landowska certain criteria and blunted some others. She was, for instance, most intolerant of composers who transcribed Bach's organ works for the piano and published them under the names of Bach-Liszt, Bach-Busoni; who put original "Bach, Mozart, Handel back on the loom . . . and after calumniating the greatest masterpieces, they dare couple their names with those of our supreme masters." Naturally, not all of us will agree with her harsh judgment, but we must acknowledge her right to pass it. This we can do easily after listening to certain current performers who constantly misrepresent these transcriptions. Moreover, it is unfair to criticize Landowska's approach without reading the vast literature she had produced during her lifetime in which she explained her exact reasoning on controversial points (unfortunately, much of her published works had not yet been translated into English). For example, she took up arms against the plague of "modernists" who backed the view that so-called faithfulness to the score is sufficient to do justice to the composer (how about the interpreter?). "Performances which we respect today for their literal devotion," wrote Landowska, "would have been quoted ignorant and barbaric by Mozart's contemporaries." She also talked about eighteenth-century ornamentation which, although entrusted to the taste of the performer, "was not inspiration alone, but a science, based on very severe laws."

Freedom versus faithfulness or piano versus harpsichord are matters of eternal dispute. Let us adjourn here by recalling the remark of Schweitzer, after he had listened to Landowska's harpsichord version of the Italian Concerto: "Now it is hard to understand how it could be played on the piano." There might be some who still fail to comprehend Landowska's magnificent contribution; while this is their prerogative, it involuntarily brings to mind Landowska's favorite philosopher, Nietzsche, who wrote: "The higher we soar, the smaller we appear to those who cannot fly."

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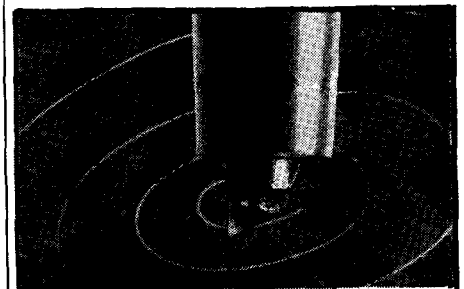
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Simionato

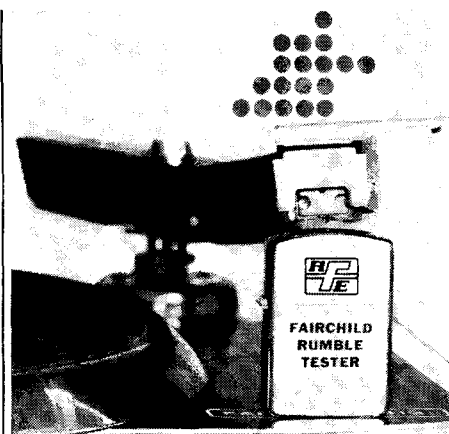
Continued from page 39

stein in "Fledermaus") better than, if as well as, his contemporaries.

The test, of course, is quality as well as quantity, and thoroughness as well as diversity. The extent to which Simionato qualifies for the implied accolade may be gauged from London LP 5269. Along with such customary mezzo matters as "Printemps qui commence" from "Samson" and "Connais-tu le pays" from "Mignon" (both sung in Italian) the "Habanera" from "Carmen" and the Letter Scene from "Werther," are her adroit "Non più mesta" from "La Cenerentola" and "Una voce poco fa" from "Il Barbiere," flanked by "O don fatale" from "Don Carlo" and Simionato's own special contribution to the lore of fine singing—"Deh! tu bell' anima," from Bellini's "I Capuletti ed i Montecchi." Clearly, the argument in favor of such a command of vocal art and styles must be based on two factors, one external, the other internal. The first, of course, is contained in the sheer beauty of much of the singing (the rather static "Carmen" excerpt is the least persuasive), the continuity and power of the vocal line she projects, the ease with which one note is joined to another without sliding or scooping, the surely centered intonation, the fine feeling for and active response to the dramatic point and atmosphere of the situation embodied in each selection. But it is the second, less apparent factor which is even more consequential: the resource of power for "O don fatale" which makes her management of "Non più mesta" so deceptively simple, the flexibility of voice for "Una voce poco fa" which underlies the varied inflection of Massenet's "Air de la lettre." In other words, rather than being mutually exclusive, as some "specialists" would contend, the full range of skills is subtly complementary to the *total* artistic effect with which she is concerned.

Lest it be supposed that there is anything particularly new in this—there isn't. It is, indeed, a throwback to some of the oldest principles in the vocal book. Some have pretended that this "book" can be conveniently rewritten, updated for purposes of accommodating those who do not want to abide by the rigorous letter it propounds, while somehow benefiting from its spirit. Indeed, the fabrications may be fairly convincing, so long as the proponent doesn't venture too far afield; but when so broadly based a vocalist as Simionato comes along, comparisons may not only be odious, but embarrassing.

It is perhaps the strongest clue to her character and distinction that one thinks of Simionato as "a vocalist" rather



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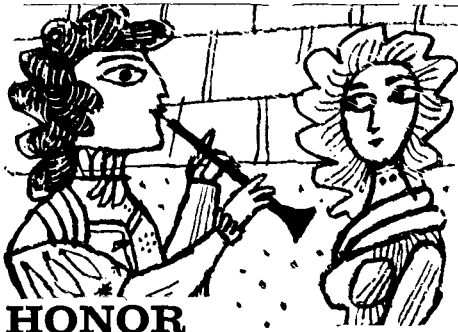
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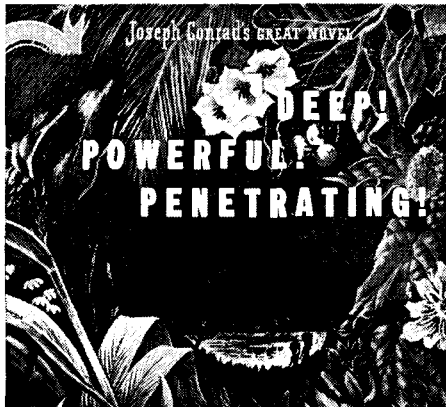
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than as a mezzo, an alto, or that practically unknown thing, a "contralto." For it is only within relatively recent times that kinds and conditions of voices have been divided, further divided and then subdivided, into the fragmented categories of the present.

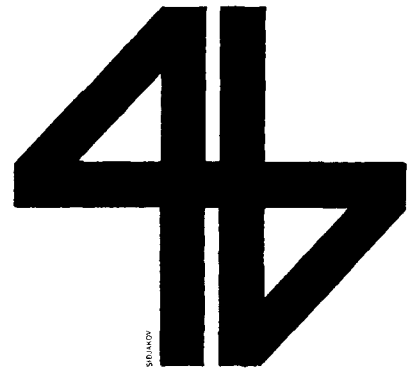
Whether in "Figaro," "Cosi," "Zauberflöte," or "Don Giovanni," Mozart's female roles are uniformly labeled "Soprano" or "Sopran" (when the text is German), including Dorabella and Cherubino. None of Weber's operas shows a leading mezzo part, and even Adalgisa in Bellini's "Norma" is labeled "Soprano." As "Il Barbiere" of 1816, "Cenerentola" of 1817, and "Semiramide" of 1823 testify, Rossini expected his female singer to have just as much agility in the lower range as in the upper, to which there is no barrier save the inertia of the average performer.

Indeed, when a distinction began first to be made (about 1825), the first example was the remarkable Maria Malibran, who is described in Grove's Dictionary as a "mezzo contralto." Her repertory included not only Leonore in Beethoven's "Fidelio," Zerlina in Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Amina in Bellini's "Sonnambula," but also the leading roles of Rossini's "Otello," "Tancredi," "Cenerentola," and "Semiramide." Thus, by the standards of those who commonly sing such parts today, Malibran would have to be described as a dramatic-lyric-coloratura-mezzo soprano. As for Pasta, the first Norma, her famous parts also included Rossini's "Semiramide" as well as "Anna Bolena." If you can imagine Lily Pons, the last Metropolitan Amina, also singing Norma, you can visualize the narrowing of vocal horizons and the easing of musical requirements that have lightened the load of even our best-known singers from then to now.

Could one believe that the singers so lightened consistently soar to heights not attained in older times, the argument for specialization would have something in its favor. But when the relatively simple florid music of Violetta in Act I of "Traviata" becomes a hazard for the soprano who has "specialized" in producing the heavier sound suitable for Acts II, III, and IV, the obverse is obviously the case.

Thus such a singer as Simionato has made of herself becomes something of a general object lesson, of value to others than those who share some of the parts she sings, or aspire to the mastery of her total list. As the citation of a Malibran's or a Pasta's repertory attests, even she hasn't come close to the most of what is possible. But so much enterprise combined with so much accomplishment qualify her for description as "great" in a way that means more, merely, than well-publicized.

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LETTERS TO THE RECORDINGS EDITOR

SUPERVIA'S ROSSINI

IN REFERENCE TO the newly available Odéon albums of Conchita Supervia, SR readers might be interested to find that the Rossini issue devotes an entire side to "L'Italiana in Algeri" . . . As an added dividend my copies have beautifully reproduced cover photos of Supervia taken from Covent Garden archives. Perhaps, Odéon will soon restore Supervia's lesser known operatic roles (Dalila, Mignon, Octavian). Another LP would almost cover them all with perhaps her delightful children's songs as a filler. I, for one, would welcome it.

JOHN W. MCGUIRE.

Perrine, Fla.

STOKOWSKI IN PHILADELPHIA

NEXT FEBRUARY Leopold Stokowski will return to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra for the first time in almost twenty years. Is it too early to request that some of these performances be preserved on long playing records? There would surely be a large market for such records, as well as great historic value.

JAMES FLOODY.

Philadelphia, Pa.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Let it not be said that the idea was broached "too late."*

PRO WALTER

THE RECENT REVIEWS of two of Bruno Walter's fine recordings leave this listener with a sense of outrage. In addition to the implication that Walter lacks the physical capacity to continue making records, the reviewer concludes by stating that "it doesn't add up to a powerful 'Eroica.'" To these ears, there is not only power, but also that subtlety and variety worthy of Beethoven, and characteristic of Walter's musicianship. Furthermore, the description of the "New World" Symphony performance as having a "lumpy kind of conformity" is a vague and inexact use of the English language which leaves literate people confused and which is unidentifiable in the music. This admirer of Maestro Walter will buy as many of his records as Columbia will offer (and purchase additional ones as distinctive gifts).

ROLLAND S. PARKER, PH.D.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Differences of opinion account not only for horse races but the total content of the Schwann catalogue.*

MORE ON "THE BOYS"

ALL ARTISTS and all lovers of the arts should be grateful for your article on Spoleto. Your examination of that pressure group which has increasingly infested the arts in our time is long overdue.

The presence of numerous and influential beings who by their nature must be both sterile and immature, can only harm those arts in which creativity and maturity

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