

## Herod of Fleury

"THE PLAY OF HEROD" from manuscript 201 of the Orléans Bibl. de Ville; transcribed and translated by Dr. William L. Smolden, scored for voices and instruments by Noah Greenberg. Boys' Choir, vocalists and instrumentalists of the New York Pro Musica, conducted by Noah Greenberg. Deca DXA 187, \$9.96; stereo DXSA 7181, \$11.86.

Two liturgical music-dramas of the twelfth century have provided the enterprising Noah Greenberg and his Pro Musica ensemble with a splendid new holiday vehicle. Combined, they represent a worthy successor to the *Play of Daniel*, which the same forces have been performing throughout America and Europe since 1958. *The Play of Herod*, first mounted at the Cloisters in New York last year, offers a similar challenge, and it is being met with comparable style and authority.

The medieval music-drama was often a surprisingly theatrical affair, even though it was composed for specific religious occasions and intended to be performed in the church by members of the clergy. *The Play of Herod* is a reconstruction of dramas found in a playbook originally of the monastery of Fleury. The first deals with the story of Herod and his court, the second with the slaying of the innocents. To this austere foundation, in which practically everything is intoned *a cappella*, the Pro Musica forces have taken the liberty of adding some instrumental *estampies* from the thirteenth century and an organ prelude. Subtler liberties are taken in the form of repeated verses and simple instrumental embellishments. In each case, the "inventions" prove so tasteful and discreet that they could disturb only the most unbending purist. At the same time, they serve to make *Herod* a sufficiently varied emotional experience to satisfy even those listeners who do not happen to be scholars.

It is generally to Greenberg's credit that the performance emerges with none of that touch-me-not museum-piece air that robs even the best scholarship of vitality and communication. In this case, the quest for authenticity has not produced even a hint of pedantry.

If there is any flaw in the performance, it must lie in the polish of the singing and playing. It seems unlikely that the French clergy of the twelfth century could have numbered many musicians of this extraordinary caliber in its ranks. But there can be little doubt that exquisite music-making, as provided by the Pro Musica ensemble here, is preferable to rough, amateurish performing, no matter how authentic the latter may be historically.

—MARTIN BERNHEIMER.



## Singing spruce

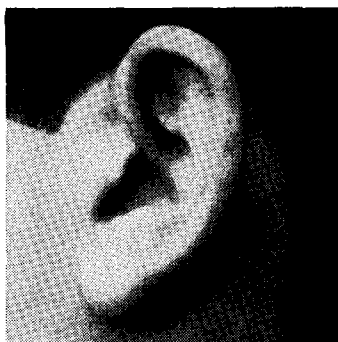
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## "Glade Jul!"

Continued from page 55

native editing: it is all too obviously a compilation of bits and pieces from other tapes.

However, Capitol is all but undiscouragable at Christmas time, and the same label bears what is easily the most attractive "celebrity" greeting of the year. This is a contribution of the "voices" of Jo Stafford, as arranged by husband Paul Weston, with bells, chimes, Hammond organ, etc., supervised by Jack Marshall. Out of the resources of the electronic mixing panel, Miss Stafford is enabled to become a four- and five-part choir singing lead, second, third, etc., as circumstances require. The collection begins, as it happens, with the same "Little Drummer Boy" admired in the Ormandy-Philadelphia compilation, here sung by Miss Stafford as an anti-phonical lullaby (in which the words are more intelligible than they are in the performance of the Boys' Choir). Almost everything indispensable is included, from "Deck the Hall" and "Little Town of Bethlehem" to "White Christmas" and "Jingle Bells," and not excluding "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." To be sure, vocal dubbing is nothing new, but anything as well and tastefully done as this is, per se, new. (Capitol T 2166, \$3.98; stereo ST 2166, \$4.98).

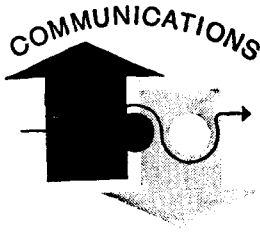
This year's version of the Ur-text of Irving Berlin's perennial favorite may be found on Reprise F 2022, in which Bing Crosby is necessarily the performer. Fred Waring is the orchestral embodiment of Father Christmas, playing host also to Frank Sinatra. They, too, get around to "Little Drummer Boy," performing it as one of two duets. (The other is "We Wish You the Merriest.") Also available for family gatherings are the voices of John Gary (RCA Victor LPM 2940, \$4.98; stereo LSP \$5.98), Jack Jones (Kapp KL 3399, \$4.98; stereo KS 3399, \$5.98), Hank Thompson and the Brazos Valley Boys (Capitol T 2154, \$3.98; stereo ST 2154, \$4.98), Jerry Vale (Columbia CL 2225, \$3.98; stereo CS 9025, \$4.98), Bobby Vinton (Epic LN 24122, \$3.98; stereo BN 26122, \$4.98; and Al Martino Capitol T 2165, \$4.98; ST 2165 \$4.98). His "Little Drummer Boy" is solo.

—IRVING KOLODIN.



# COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN



## EDITORIAL

By Richard L. Tobin 61

ROY HOWARD: "PRINT THE NEWS  
AND RAISE HELL" 62

LETTERS TO THE  
COMMUNICATIONS EDITOR 63

THE BULL PEN: PUTTING  
THE TIMES TO BED  
By John Tebbel 67

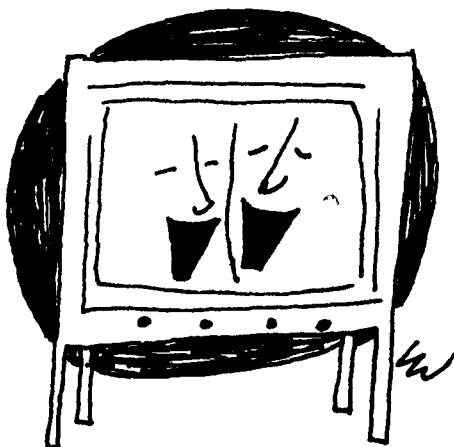
MOVIES THAT CARRY THE FREIGHT  
By Hollis Alpert 69

ADVICE FROM A MILLIONAIRE  
PUBLISHER  
By John Hay Whitney 71

BOOKS IN COMMUNICATIONS:  
TRAVELER'S TALES  
By James F. Fixx 73

MADISON AVENUE: WHEN MAGAZINES  
FIGHT TOGETHER  
By Theodore Peterson 74

PUBLIC RELATIONS: SEARS, ROEBUCK  
CALLS THE DOCTOR  
By L. L. L. Golden 75



## NBC Turns Down a Golden Chance

THE diligent Val Adams recently broke in the *New York Times* a story of more than passing communications interest. It seems that the National Broadcasting Company has canceled plans for televising a two-part drama about an ordinary high school boy who has contracted a venereal disease. Scripts were written for *Mr. Novak* and *Dr. Kildare* and, as we understand it, were to have been run in tandem instalments on the two programs. The programs had the formal backing of such eminent and worried medical authorities as the American Public Health Association and the Surgeon General of the United States. When NBC turned thumbs down, both these agencies issued strong renewed pleas.

The network canceled the project because, to quote Mr. Adams, "If the drama were to be valid, it would have to contain passages and dialogue, including a discussion of sexual intercourse, that the network considered inappropriate for television." Dr. Luther L. Terry, the Surgeon General, immediately pleaded with NBC to reverse the decision. In Dr. Terry's letter to Robert E. Kintner, president of NBC, he noted that 1,500 young Americans contract venereal disease every day. This is no typographical error. Dr. Terry did not mean 1,500 new cases per week or 1,500 per month—he meant what he said: 1,500 youngsters now contract venereal disease in the United States *every day in the year*. He added: "It is of the highest importance that every possible means of education be used to bring to our youngsters the message of prevention and cure in a manner they can appreciate and understand."

According to Mr. Adams, a high school teacher (*Mr. Novak*) was supposed to learn, in the script, that one of his students had contracted a venereal disease; then the medical aspects of the case were to have been dealt with by *Dr. Kildare*.

Among others who have petitioned NBC to reconsider its decision ruling out these vital scripts was Dr. John D. Porterfield, president of the American Public Health Association. In response to a letter from Dr. Porterfield, Robert D. Kasmire, Vice President of Corporate Information, wrote for NBC: "Let me assure you that all who took part in the decision recognize the seriousness of the problem of venereal disease, especially among young people. In addition, the subject was not held to be inappropriate for television. In support of both these points, I should like to point out that NBC personnel cooperated closely over many weeks with the producing organization with a view toward arriving at a treatment of the subject that would be consistent with the needs of an all-family audience. Out of this effort and, of course, the extraordinary talent of the writer came a skilled and sensitive treatment for our consideration. In the final determination, however, it was felt that passages within the story, considered by all concerned to be essential to development of plot and theme, made it inappropriate for such a program as *Mr. Novak*, and we decided not to proceed."

Now, we are not the science department and we have no inside knowledge of modern medicine's antidotes for venereal disease. But we do know, from inquiry at medical information centers, that cures are still by no means