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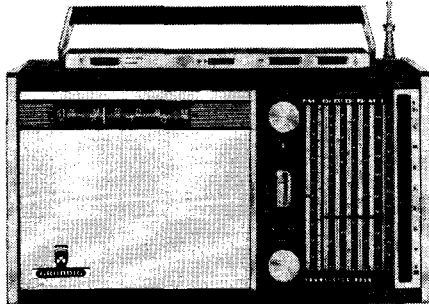
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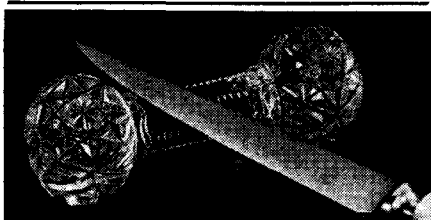
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MUSIC TO MY EARS

Isolde without Tristan—Debut of Suliotis

THE METROPOLITAN is venturing *Tristan und Isolde* again after a lapse of three seasons, but the Wagnerian sum of it remains very much what it has been in New York for much too long—Birgit Nilsson's Isolde and very little else. The conductor this time was Georges Prêtre, with the Danish born Ticho Parly in his debut as Tristan. Aside from a commendable Brangaene by Mignon Dunn, the match to the composer's requirements was provided by Nilsson and Nilsson alone.

There have been occasions since her memorable debut in the role in 1959 when an evening of *Tristan* has been a dialogue between Nilsson and such conductors as Karl Böhm, Joseph Rosenstock, or Georg Solti. This time it was rather more of a monologue, for Prêtre's sense of what this score is about tended too often to understate the orchestral values, too rarely to assert the compulsion and leadership implicit in the conductor's function. As in his *Parsifal* of last season, it had a musician's feeling for color and nuance, but neither the weight nor substance to balance the vocal-instrumental equation created by Wagner.

This was, in fact, even more costly to the outcome than the limitations of Parly, whose honorable intentions were without the physical resources to make them meaningful. The first two acts were sustained by the sheer splendor of Nilsson's effort, which is much more varied in quality and searching in emphasis than hitherto. Whereas it was originally extraordinary for abundance and stamina, it is now absorbing, too, for the manner in which she underlines the transition from the vengeful Princess of the first act to the enamored woman of the second act. This was conveyed not merely by a subtle change in physical appearance, but the more difficult alteration in vocal color to suit the inner transformation.

Act III was on another and much lower plane altogether, for here the burden is borne for virtually all its length by the male performers (including the conductor). Earlier, Parly had managed to make his smallish, neutral sound suffice by reserving its modest power for the climaxes. However, by the middle of Act III (abridged though it was) his effort with such passages as "Das Schiff! Das Schiff!" came as gasps of sound rather than as formed projections of tone. To his credit, Parly performs with exact rhythm and intonation through

Acts I and II, but the real commentary on the power he commands came not by contrast with Nilsson's—which is more or less on the order of inevitable—but with Ron Bottcher as Melot, whose "Ver-räther" ("Betrayal") rang out more clearly than Tristan's answer.

By contrast with the Kurvenal of Walter Cassel and the King Mark of Jerome Hines, neither of which had the kind of vocal presence that commended them in the past, Dunn's Brangaene was vastly superior to what it was previously. Her good appearance as well as steadily improving sound need only the authority that comes from performance to measure to the best standards of this role. As for the Teo Otto décor, it was as barren of mood as much of the happenings within it.

THE American Opera Society came closer than would seem possible to a direct hit on a difficult moving target in its latest presentation of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* in Carnegie Hall. Not content with making this the occasion for the debut, in the title role, of the brilliant young soprano Elena Suliotis, director Allen Oxenburg extended himself to bring together such other singers new to opera here as Janet Baker (Smeton) and Carlo Cava (Henry VIII) to form an ensemble with Plácido Domingo (Lord Percy) and Marilyn Horne (Jane Seymour) under the direction of Henry Lewis. Not everything was on the same high level, but there were pages at a time, in the ensembles, when one had the sensation of hearing not merely a part of the effect Donizetti intended, but a full five-fifths of it.

That this was possible at all was, in the first place, due to the presence of the exceptional Suliotis, who looks like an angel and sings like a fury. Whether she is a meteor, a shooting star, or one destined to occupy a fixed place in the artistic firmament for years to come, only time can tell. But at twenty-four she has already attained an intensity and magnitude rare in performers of any age. The tone runs somewhat to the veiled, covered quality pioneered (for this era) by Maria Callas, but the youth and strength of the sound, through a range to the piercing top D with which she ended the first act, are uniquely her own.

Even more important was what Suliotis did with the tones in between, most of them squarely on pitch and without
(Continued on page 95)

They're Christmas Gifts.



CHRISTMAS RECORDS FOR THE YOUNG—1966

IN LISTING records for the young it is necessary to remind prospective purchasers that many titles suitable for children may be found in the general listings in the Schwann (or similar) catalogues. Not only will the youngsters enjoy such records, but they will serve to offset the poorer programming on radio or TV. Children are as receptive to quality as nonquality, and hearing the best will condition them to being more discriminating when they choose on their own. For children fortunate enough to have their own record players and record libraries, reissues of first-class recordings are often available at a lower price. Inferior renditions of classical music can do little to develop musical taste and discrimination.

For many years Vox has issued a series known as *Music of the Masters*. These records present the stories of the lives and works of many great composers. The material has been prepared by Ward Botsford and is narrated by Arthur Hannes. (See listing under heading "Music With or Without Comment"—Vox MM 3630, MM 3590, MM 3580, MM 3530, MM 3560, MM 3650, MM 3570, MM 3660, MM 3600, MM 3680, MM 3640, MM 3520, MM 3540, MM 3550, MM 3690, MM 3670.) This reviewer recently met a young woman who is making music her career. In discussing recordings for children, she remembered that at about the age of six she received a gift of one of the Vox *Music of the Masters* records. She feels that it was this recording of Beethoven that aroused her interest and love of music.

A new recording of an ever popular favorite with adults and children is being offered by London Records. Antal Dorati conducts the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Sean Connery is the narrator in Serge Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (London 55005; stereo, 21007). Benjamin Britten's *Young People's Guide to the Orchestra* is the companion piece. Somewhat similar in scope is *Invitation to Music*, prepared and narrated by Elie Siegmeister with illustrations of musical examples from the masters and from folk music and jazz (Folkways FT 3603).

An unusual album made up of five LP records issued several years ago has just come to our attention. Wheeler Beckett, a composer and conductor of long experience, gives a lecture demonstration of thirty-three instruments. They are heard first in solo passages and then as they sound in orchestral context. The

For Young Children

Chicken Little and other Tales	Prepared by students of Mills College of Education in New York. Read by members of the Mills Theater Workshop under the direction of Dr. Nellie McCaslin. Music composed by Harold Triegg	Record Guild M 46
Mary Martin Sings Walt Disney Favorites	Accompanied by illustrated book	Disneyland S 1394
Why Mommy?	Sung by Tom Glazer; music by Paul Tripp	Columbia Harmony HL 9504
The Lollipop Tree	Folk songs for children sung by Burl Ives	HL 9551
Around the World; Sing Around the World	Told by Lawson Zerbe and Gil Mack; sung by Arthur Melvin and Sing Along Chorus, with Tony Mottola Orchestra. Written and produced by Tom Glazer	RCA Camden CAL 1064
Dr. Seuss Presents: If I Ran the Zoo; Dr. Seuss' Sleep Book	Dramatized by Marvin Miller with Marty Gold and his orchestra	CAL 1078
A Child's Garden of Verses	By Robert Louis Stevenson; read by Nancy Wickwire and Basil Langton	Spoken Arts SA 904/5 (two discs)
Tubby the Tuba; Gulliver's Travels	Told and sung by Jose Ferrer; written by George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp; MGM Orchestra	MGM Leo CH 1005
ABC-123	Kay Lande and Wade Denning	CH 1012
Dr. Seuss' Horton Hatches the Egg; Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves	Narrated by Marvin Miller Narrated by Lionel Barrymore	CH 1013
Teddy Bears' Picnic Side 1: Teddy Bears' Picnic Songs Side 2: The Bear that Wasn't	Story by Frank Tashlin; narrated by Keenan Wynn; music by Walter Schumann, with the MGM Orchestra	CH 1020
Children's Stories and Songs	Conceived and performed by Ed McCurdy	Folkways FC 7771
Stories in Words and Music Over in the Meadow The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night I Know an Old Lady Three Blind Mice		Weston Wood PBP 114
The Snowy Day The Cow Who Fell in the Canal The Happy Owls Norman the Doorman		PBP 115
Whistle for Willie The Tom Ten Christmas in the Stable Danny the Dinosaur Wheel on the Chimney		PBP 116

Stories With and Without Music

Babar the Elephant (Music by Francis Poulenc, orchestrated by Jean Françaix, words by Jean de Brunhoff, translated by Rieu); The Little Tailor (Music by Tibor Harsanyi; after a story by Grimm)	Told by Peter Ustinov with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra under the direction of Georges Pretre	Angel 36357
Alice in Wonderland; Through the Looking Glass	By Lewis Carroll, adopted by Douglas Cleverdon; Jane Asher as Alice, narration by Margaretta Scott	RG 145/6 (two discs) RG 180/1 (two discs)
Always the Young Stranger	Carl Sandburg reads episodes from his boyhood	Caedmon TC 1209
Tom Sawyer	By Mark Twain; read by Ed Bagley	TC 1205
Edgar Allan Poe (Assorted Tales)	Read by Basil Rathbone	TC 1195
The Scarlet Letter; The Great Stone Face	By Nathaniel Hawthorne; read by Basil Rathbone	TC 1197
The White House Saga	Julie Harris, Hal Holbrook, Kevin McCarthy, Edward Woodward; from the book by Nanette Kulner; music composed and arranged by Hershey Kay	TC 1194/5 (two discs)
Best Poems of Longfellow	Read by Hal Holbrook	TC 1107
Evangeline (abridged)	Written by Longfellow; read by Hal Holbrook	TC 1179
Tell Me a Story (musical arrangements of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade")	Maria Ray and cast; orchestra under George Cole	Decca Vocalion VL 73787