

# The Tougher The Music, The Greater Bozak's Superiority

There are scores of loudspeakers which will do a more-than-adequate job of reproducing "Chopsticks," played as a piano solo.

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## Consider The Auto

You might draw an analogy to the automobile. A twenty-horsepower engine might be adequate to maintain normal speed on a smooth, level road, but it could fail dismally on an uphill pull. A drive around a city block is not an adequate test.

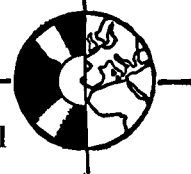
For similar reasons we urge you to compare loudspeakers under the most trying musical conditions possible. Only then will you be able to appreciate to their fullest extent the superiorities which have made Bozak the most respected name in the re-creation of music.

We'll gladly suggest a couple of recordings which will adequately test a loudspeaker's mettle.



DARIEN, CONNECTICUT

## THE OTHER SIDE



"Musicassettes," Dennis Brain Memorial

LONDON.

FALL HAS SEEN the launching in Britain of "Musicassettes"—miniature cartridge tapes and the pocket-sized recorders upon which to play them—by some of our leading manufacturers (though, perhaps significantly, nothing has yet been announced by Decca).

Judging from the lists of recordings so far released, this latest development will not have much significance for those interested in serious music. Indeed, one of the most striking contrasts between Britain and the United States in this field is the fact that, even today, prerecorded tapes of music other than the most ephemeral kind are virtually nonexistent on this side of the Atlantic. Why it should be thus is difficult to analyze, for there is no shortage of tape recorders in British households. It is more than twelve years since EMI first marketed such tapes, and our bizarre purchase tax structure exacts a duty from discs while leaving tapes untouched.

It could be said that Decca's consistent aloofness, allied to the rather half-hearted manner in which EMI and others have sought to promote the product, has never given tape a real chance to become established as an alternative to discs. It may be, too, that British record collectors tend to share my view of tape as providing, not a substitute for discs, but rather a complementary facility of an exciting, though somewhat specialized, type. I cannot see its latest manifestation as likely to affect the wider situation, however much Musicassettes may delight teenagers as a portable alternative to the ubiquitous transistor radio—especially if, as now seems likely, our off-shore pirate radio stations are to be silenced by government action. Moreover, how can tape hope to compete with discs now that we are witnessing so remarkable a proliferation of bargain labels?

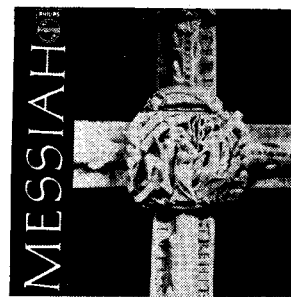
This really has been the dominant trend these past two or three years, and, however much the more far-sighted observers may view its ultimate effects upon the industry with misgivings, the record-buying public has by now shed its erstwhile suspicions or incredulity and accepts the new price structure as part of the natural order of things. Supraphon, which really opened the floodgates here and, for a while, reaped a rich harvest, now plays a less important role because of a repertoire which leans heavily toward Czech composers as well as toward chamber music. (Even when

it produces a real winner such as the Suk/Navarra disc of Brahms's Double Concerto, extra supplies arrive too slowly to meet the demand of the moment.)

The latest release to arrive from Prague includes only a single orchestral disc—the Second Piano Concertos of Chopin and Liszt—but plenty of chamber works: quartets by Bartók and Milhaud; Schubert's B-flat Trio; violin/cello duos by Hindemith, Martinu, and Kodály; Bach sonatas for cello and harpsichord; a recital of modern French organ music; and two rather surprising vocal collections—a Caruso recital and an operatic concert, with the Prague National Theater Orchestra, by baritone Giuseppe Valdengo, of whose transatlantic activities between 1947 and 1950 I need hardly remind American readers.

Nowadays our own major companies offer formidable competition in the \$2.50 to \$3.50 price range. Among recent outstanding reissues of this type one notes Decca's *Parsifal* (Bayreuth, 1951)—still a marvelous set—and *Zaub-*

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*erflöte* (the 1955 Böhm album, in stereo as well as mono). EMI has put out its fine *Flying Dutchman* (with Fischer-Dieskau) on World Record Club, and Beecham's performance of *Die Entführung* is scheduled as a forthcoming bargain. Not only that, its new recording of *The Messiah*, conducted by Charles Mackerras, will appear on an economy label straightaway—a fact which will hardly delight Philips, which is putting out the Colin Davis set at full price.

Then, too, one must consider the superbargain labels which, while they may offer a fair amount of rubbish and not a few superannuated recordings, every now and again come up with issues which few thrifty collectors can resist. This month I noted, on Saga, a very decent stereo version of Schubert's C-major Quintet (Aeolian Quartet), for less than \$1.50, and a new label from the same stable, Pan, has been launched with initial releases ranging from an ancient *Creation* conducted by Clemens Krauss to an obviously new recital of music for—of all things—mandolin and forte-piano! These discs, which cost \$1.80, come in "two-faced" sleeves with program notes printed on the inner sleeves.

But enough of the marketplace! There is still, it can happily be reported, no shortage of high quality issues for those prepared to pay for them. Decca has two major albums—Bruckner's Seventh by Solti and the Vienna Philharmonic, including, as Klemperer did before them, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* in the original scoring and Rossini's *Semiramide*. The Bruckner is splendidly played and sounds gorgeous, yet Solti's reading seems to me rather shapeless compared to the readings of Walter or Klemperer (however much these two may differ from each other). With the Rossini, it is not so much the performance as the work itself that is open to question: All my love for this composer cannot persuade me that *Semiramide* is anything other than a diverting vehicle for vocal pyrotechnics. The music is splendid in a way; the two principal ladies (Mesdames Sutherland and Horne) sing superbly; and the recording is all that anyone could wish. But from a dramatic point of view the work's impact seems to me negligible.

A third Decca album, entitled *Vienna Chamber Music Festival* contains no new recordings. Its four discs offer a delectable assortment of previously issued performances by Viennese ensembles; a Haydn quartet, Mozart's Clarinet Quintet (plus a march and some dances), the Beethoven Septet, Schubert's Octet and the *Trout* Quintet. Over the latest recital by Mario del Monaco—so-called "Sacred Songs" with organ accompaniment—I would like to draw a discreet veil, and the same goes for a Phase-4 "Verdi

Spectacular" by Camarata and the "Kingsway Symphony Orchestra" (intended for anyone who likes Verdi but hates the human voice!).

On Argo, a varied and interesting list includes more choral music by Gustav Holst—Six Medieval Lyrics for Men's Voices, and Seven Part Songs, Op. 44, for Women's Voices, both with string orchestral accompaniments—conducted by Imogen Holst; a fine collection of Handel arias sung by the gifted young Irish contralto, Bernadette Greevey; and *Carols of Today*, a splendid anthology of original settings by Britten, Bennett, Gordon Crosse, Peter Wishart, Peter Maxwell Davies, Rawsthorne, Fricker, Phyllis Tate, and many others, excellently sung by Louis Halsey's Elizabethan Singers. Richard Rodney Bennett and Phyllis Tate are also represented on a British Council-sponsored disc of instrumental music, the former by a skillfully wrought Trio for Flute, Oboe and Clarinet; the latter by a more diffuse Sonata for Clarinet and Cello. Sharing this issue is a most attractive Horn Trio, with the same scoring as the Brahms, by Australian-born Don Banks, and Ian Hamilton's brief, atmospheric *Sonata Notturna* for Horn and Piano. The recordings are exemplary and feature an impressive array of instrumental talent, including Barry Tuckwell, Gervase de Peyer, and William Pleeth.

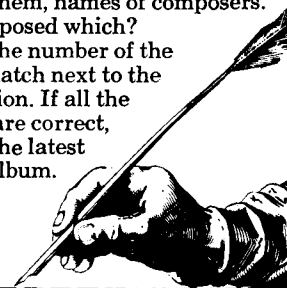
Mention of Tuckwell leads one naturally to one of this month's EMI issues, a disc commemorating the incomparable Dennis Brain. Nine years have passed since this greatest of horn players died in an auto crash on the outskirts of London after an all-night dash from an Edinburgh concert to a recording session at the EMI studios, yet he remains the shining model whom all aspiring practitioners seek to emulate. The latest economy-priced LP devoted to his art features some of his earlier recordings, transferred from 78s, when he was still using an old and notoriously battered French instrument. These include the Beethoven Sonata (with Denis Matthews), Mozart's Concerto No. 2 (with the Philharmonia under Susskind), and the Dukas *Villanelle* and Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro* (both with Gerald Moore). What matchless playing!

Another EMI offering is the Bourne-mouth Symphony, aided by the Band of H.M. Royal Marines and "pyrotechnic effects," performing the *1812 Overture* and other Tchaikovsky favorites, under Silvestri's baton, in one of its gimmicky Studio Two recordings (only half as effective as Phase 4?). And there is yet another little set of EP discs that introduce the four orchestral families in separate consorts—a project clearly intended for school use, but offering, for the most part, excellent entertainment value in the bargain. —THOMAS HEINITZ.

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# Listening in Leningrad

**B**ERTRAND RUSSELL once remarked that we very much overestimate the amount of freedom in the West and very much underestimate it in the East. This principle of underestimation, which we apply so often on frequently questionable grounds, can be examined in every field, not the least of them music. Partly on behalf of the pursuit of evidence for or against the existence of musical freedom in the Soviet Union, I spent an afternoon recently in Leningrad at the world-famous Conservatory, listening to tapes and discussing new music and musical culture in the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Leningrad Conservatory, housed in an old building now undergoing much repair, glitters with the departed great and the illustrious present. Among portraits of Nicholas Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Liadow, Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev, Glazounov and other figures, one also sees Shostakovich, who is on the faculty today, dividing his itinerary between Leningrad and Moscow.

One of the directors of the Conservatory, Flavi Sokoloff, critic and musicologist, kindly arranged a most unusual event for the benefit of Fred Lazarus III, a Cincinnati department store president and patron of music, and myself. We were part of the touring Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Women's Committee (with some male accompaniment).

In a high-ceilinged room, with modern stereo equipment, we heard tapes of scores by composers Uspinsky, Nogovizin, and Slonimsky. These are young men in sufficiently good standing to be singled out as exemplary. Uspinsky is a pupil of Shostakovich's, and Slonimsky is already on the faculty of the Leningrad Conservatory.

Uspinsky's Piece for Violin and Chamber Orchestra achieves lyric feeling by the use of Russian themes much altered into discrete sequences. Fugal texture with strong tonal episodes recalling Shostakovich in his chamber music—for example, the Piano Quintet—was a distinct early feature of the composition. The tonal implications often were submerged by sharp, dissonant attacks upon the material and indeed upon the violin concerto idea. The violin writing produced middle-range melodiousness, with the qualifications indicated above, and upper-register timbre experimentation. One senses rebellion, repose, and the reconciliation of the traditional

and modern viewed in the Soviet context.

Young Mr. Slonimsky, a nephew of the American musician and lexicographer, Nicholas Slonimsky, offered two tapes for our inspection. The first was *Four Polish Stanzas* for voice and orchestra, with texts by a Polish poet. A kind of post-Webern pointillism characterized the idiom, with flute and vocal exchanges. But one also had the feeling of Slavic musical bias combined with a Renaissance chromatic-textural fabric.

Mr. Sokoloff stressed the fact that young Russian composers seek new modes of expression, but that naturally enough they bring certain contexts to them. These contexts are not necessarily framed by Marxism or socialist realism at all, but simply by such earlier music as can be appropriately absorbed into the new idiom.

More advanced from the formal point of view was Slonimsky's *Konzert Bouffe*, consisting of a canonical fugue and improvisations. The fugue began strictly, but the introduction of clashing, angular timbres quickly modernized it. Timbre became the dominant field of development, in precise opposition to the notion of fugue. Sounds of great variety and opposition overcame considerations of fugal form, thus preparing the field for improvisation. The old art of fugal improvisation was supplanted by the new esthetic of timbre exploitation. From this there emerged once again the traditional concepts and techniques of rhythmic pulse, thematic statement, and instrumental sequence. The piece wound up in a propulsive reiteration of the fugal theme, with piano, percussion, trumpet, and other instruments.

Mr. Nogovizin thereupon played at the piano his own Toccata, after explaining that his basic instrument was the violin. The work was in the manner of Prokofiev, with faint hints of jazz. Later that day, during a reception at the Palace of Friendship, Sokoloff questioned me about U.S. attitudes on such idioms as we had heard earlier. I explained that terms such as "mainstream" and "avant-garde" are applied differently in the United States and the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. (and Czarist Russia) has achieved world stature with music in certain styles, and obviously is anxious to retain that stature. One can hardly blame the Soviet Union for encouraging in one way or another those idioms in which it has triumphed. The United States has quite different considerations to maintain. Ours are much