

## COLUMBIA.

LX19-22 (12in., 26s.).—Solomon and Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Harty: *First Piano Concerto, in B flat minor* (Tchaikovsky). In album.

LX16-18 (12in., 19s. 6d.).—Orchestra, conducted by the Composer: *Ballet Music from The Seasons* (Glazunov).

DX31-3 (12in., 13s. 6d.).—Berliner Staatskapelle (Berlin State Orchestra), conducted by B. Walter: *G minor Symphony (K.550)* (Mozart).

DB74 (10in., 3s.).—Milan Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Molajoli: *Overture to Norma* (Bellini).

Concerto, symphony, and suite—a delectable Spring repast. The kindly skill of Solomon is not my ideal for the Tchaikovsky, but he is happy here, and one would not unseat him for the world. I have often declared that for vulgar music a vulgar player is the only one to be considered; and Solomon is not vulgar. Bating that complaint, if such it can be called, I beam on him—and even on the dear old Tchaikovsky, on which no wise man looks down, even if he *does* know in his bones and by his development that it is vulgar. One can learn so much from Tchaikovsky. The first movement takes five sides, and the second runs on to the last record. The music was recorded in the Central Hall, Westminster, which I think a pity, for this is not a good hall, as anyone who has listened to several different kinds of sound in it knows. If you can avoid its truly remarkable echo—one of the best I know—you have the curious feeling of never getting properly in touch with an orchestra there. The microphone has got over that with a vengeance by shoving its ear close up to the works, but the record makes us do so, too, and that is not very nice. We miss nothing, and sometimes I wish we did: not that the playing is bad, though I do not reckon it the Hallé's very best; but there is too much of it, and the pianissimos come out oddly. Nearly every month the experiments of our recording friends produce some oddity. This one is worth your trying, but I recommend you to listen several times, and if possible in different chambers. The slow movement may be liked for its evidence of a cheerful little spirit of quietness in the performers, but that spirit seems to me not perfectly conveyed. However, try it for yourselves. In particular, note the *proportionate* rise of the tone when it goes from *p* through *mf*. This is the most curious "pocket orchestra, instantly expanding at a touch to three times life size," that I have heard. I think everyone will appreciate the quite unusual nattiness and poise of Solomon, even if, like me, they wonder what next in the way of curious recordings we are to have. Surely the truth is that the companies are trying all kinds of experiments, of which this is just one, and that we are not for some time to expect stability—nor they the sure praise of ear-comforted musicians.

In ballet music Glazunov is in a great succession—Delibes, Gounod, Tchaikovsky. He is nearest to his countryman, naturally, in spirit. These sweetmeats are thus endorsed: the *Winter* sketches are on LX16, with the last on 17; these comprise the *Introduction, Frost, Ice, Hail, and Snow*. Then on the rest of 17 there are the *Spring* piece, and the beginning of *Summer*—the *Waltz of the Cornflowers and Poppies*—which is concluded on 18 with the *Barcarolle, Variation* and *Coda*. *Autumn* is omitted. The name of the orchestra, if it has one, is not given. The place of recording is not named, either—only "a concert-hall." There are some fine melodramatic sonorities in *Winter*—about the effective limit of gramophone loudness without noise, I should think. The second side gives us a lighter touch and some agreeable piquancies, that easily conjure up stage pictures before us. The tunes are not perhaps very distinguished—slick rather than of high inventive power—but there are felicities, as in the first *Snow* dance, and a good command of effect, as in the second of these. No. 17 has most pretty sentiment, and 18 the most graceful, luscious music, in the *Waltz* and *Barcarolle*. The recording,

on present levels, pleases me. The tone builds up without excessive harshness, and there are some good plummy effects.

A cheap G minor is not new, but this latest example has the great Walter to conduct it, and that makes a difference. Each of the first two movements takes one record, and the last two are on DX33. It is odd to find a commentator remarking (in the leaflet given with the set) on the "lurking spirit of happiness" and "the presence of Puck" in the last movement. Puck, forsooth—the devil, if anybody! Much has been said lately about the so-called "dæmonic" element in Mozart. It is not perhaps a good word to use, for it is easily misunderstood; but surely this last movement is an apt example of its real meaning? Another thing puzzles me. Attention is drawn in the annotation to the slowish speed that Walter takes for the first movement, which is labelled "Allegro moderato." But my Philharmonic score has "Allegro molto." Is there another score, which Mozart himself headed "moderato" instead of "molto"? It is possible, though not, I think, likely. I should like to know the authority for the substitution on the label of the former word. Walter seems to me too slow. The music has an underlying leisureliness, if you like, but it is the leisureliness of fate, and not a happy fate: and that can never come but swiftly, to our anxious senses. He quickens up, too, towards the end of the exposition, which does not seem very logical. Thus the movement does not hang together well; but I like the gentle tone—by far the best of the month, for quality. Some may think it small, after the rattles of Tchaikovsky and the heavy weather of Glazunov, but to my mind and ear it is more pleasant, despite the slight acidity apparently inseparable from all electrical recording. In the slow movement I find the instruments almost too reticent. It sounds rather as if the orchestra had withdrawn some little distance. One remembers, of course, that the work is scored for strings and only *nine* other instruments, without heavy brass or drums. There was, by the way, an earlier version without clarinets (they only came in during Mozart's later years), and I remember the curious effect of this version, on the only occasion I have heard it used, at a Prom. a few years ago. I could not for a few moments tell what was the matter, for I had not specially noticed how the orchestra was seated. In the *Minuet* here, the tininess of the volume of tone seems overdone—or rather, underdone. Something depends on whether you find firmness and austerity in this movement, or regard it as a gentle foil to the others. I take the former view, and Walter seems to incline to the latter. The last movement has the right speed, but has it quite the urgency? On the whole I think it has. It strengthens in this respect, I feel, as it goes on. Throughout the strings keep respectable quality, and do not out-face the wind. Altogether a really interesting performance of a work that never loses its dark fascination.

The Milan orchestra is a startling contrast to the Berlin one. Here is bully Bellini ruffing it and languishing it with both eyes on the gods. *Norma* is down for Covent Garden this season. Its queer old tunes are positively made for a barrel-organ, and at least one of them is scored to sound like that—hear the close of the first side. The orchestra serves them up dandily. It records uncommonly well—why, I don't quite know.

DX27 (12in., 4s. 6d.).—Ketelbey Concert Orchestra, conducted by the composer: *The Clock and the Dresden Figures, and Wedgewood (sic) Blue* (Ketelbey).

This is a very bright-toned and effectively recording little band, with a good pianist in it, and other percussion delights. The tunes are in gay garb (as a gloss, I remember affectionately Baboo Jabberjee's "attired in the garb of a gentleman"). But I would not disparage Mr. Ketelbey when he does a small thing neatly: only when he thinks he has done a bigger thing, and hasn't. For the cinema these tunes should serve well, in a light comedy or romantic film.

exceptional diction. In fact, it is an exceptional record, almost flawless, and bespeaks splendid work by Dr. Bullock. I can imagine it freer, warmer, under Mr. Kennedy Scott, but I certainly don't mean it is dull.

Some people may be unnecessarily worried about form in the Motet. It merely consists of several short sections—a simple, strong chordal section, a fugue, a dance-like section, and so on to a chorale setting.

The Westminster Abbey Special Choir, with organ. C1849 (12in., 4s. 6d.). A very good record of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* of Stanford's B Flat Service, which for some details (e.g., use of *leitmotif*) and in general is something of a landmark in English church music. The *Magnificat* is perhaps a little mechanical. In my conception, its vitality, which marks it out from dead and deadly mechanical church music, depends on a quick pace. Still, this is good.

#### PICCADILLY.

Emory University Glee Club (men's voices, unaccompanied). 5024 (10in., 2s.).—I think easily the best plantation-song record yet. My only criticism is that the tunes (in inner parts) would be quite indistinguishable did one not know them. They should stand—though not stick—out as they would in good instrumental music. Can't choral and recording directors see and hear this? The soloists are perfectly clear and efficient, and pleasant to listen to.

#### ZONOPHONE

Church Choir. 5564 (10in., 2s. 6d.).—Two old favourites of the mission-hymn type, *Tell me the old, old story* and *In the sweet bye-and-bye*, done without fuss or stunt, and efficiently. One is inclined to be grateful, in these days of cinema and other foul tonal monstrosities, to have the accompanying perfectly ordinary but legitimate organ upheld as "grand."

#### DECCA.

Community Singing. See Roy Henderson (Song Reviews).

#### COLUMBIA.

The London Male-voice Octette, see Song Reviews.

#### "BROADCAST."

Congregation of St. Martin-in-the-Fields (with organ). 529-30 (two 8in., 1s. 3d. each).—Countless people will prize these two records as almost literally a godsend. They are a special instance of what will, as I think the Editor has said, undoubtedly be the regular function of the gramophone—indeed, already is one function: the recording of music and performers which have been established by the wireless. On 529 are the hymn, *Lead us, Heavenly Father* and Psalm 8, *O Lord, our Governor*, on 530 the hymns *Hark, the glad sound* and *Holy Father, in Thy mercy*. They were recorded during the broadcast service at St. Martin's on December 8th last. I think the recording will satisfy, though it has been severely tried. Not that the records are harsh or even loud—on the contrary, they are milder and mellower than most. It is that the tone is very full, analogous to and, of course, still stronger than that of a large body of strings.

The Choir of the City Temple Church (with organ). 5148 (10in., 2s.).—A prodigious example—though not one that matters much—of casual labelling; one hymn given on the label its unfortunate original first line, *Jesus lives! No longer now*, but sung in its amended version, "Jesus lives! Thy terrors now Can no longer," etc.; the other given on the label as *Jesus Christ is risen today*, but sung as "Christ our Lord is risen today." The singing is well up to this Choir's high standard, and makes an excellent Easter record. Articulation, however, needs attention.

#### REGAL.

The Temple Singers, with organ. MR35 (10in., 2s. 6d.).—Two hymns of the mission type, *The Glory Song (O, that will be glory)* and *I surrender all*. In a good all-round performance one notices especially the well-trained soloists.

C. M. CRABTREE.



### HISTORY BY EAR AND EYE.

What a long time the simplest ideas take to "get through"! For fifteen years at least Percy Scholes has been presenting the history of music in one palatable form or another, and only now have we a history from him, in parts, as he has long wanted it, with its own specially recorded illustrations. Columbia is his collaborator. Dr. Dyson recently recorded a little plain-song, and *Sumer is icumen in*, that thirteenth-century choral wonder, for the first time (in the I.E.S. series of lectures); but no other systematic historical illustrations have appeared until now. Here we have a set of eight 10in. 3s. records, 5710-17, illustrating the first volume of Mr. Scholes's *Columbia History of Music by Ear and Eye*. "Volume," by the way, does not imply a hefty tome—only a booklet of some 50 pages, price 1s. 6d. There are to be about eight booklets in all, each with its set of illustrative records. In this set Mr. Scholes has the aid of the best experts on early music—Sir Richard Terry to school a choir for the plainsong examples and the music of Dufay and Palestrina (5710-12), and the Dolmetsch family to make records of pieces for virginals (Rudolph, that excellent virtuoso, on 5712-3), and for viols (the family of six, on 5714). Then, on 5715, Cécile Dolmetsch sings a Dowland love song, to the lute and viol. On 5715 the St. George's Singers, whose work we have lately admired on other Columbia records, give us the 1240 miracle *Sumer*, under Dr. Fellowes' direction, and continues their work on 5716-7, with ayres and madrigals. These several authorities add their specialist weight to Mr. Scholes' broad scholarship, which in the well-illustrated book is as brightly displayed and lightly worn as ever. The recordings come off well, some of them extremely well—the virginals, for example, and the madrigals. The plainsong has an odour of its own, with which one needs to be familiar before the music's radiance can fully shine out. That spirit was captured in the old days at Westminster Cathedral, when Sir Richard Terry reigned there. Here it is re-created as nearly as may be. Since these early works have never before been recorded, there is historic value in the discs, as well as enlightenment for the mind and sweetness for the ear. It is right that the set of records and the book are available in an album. This would be the handiest way to issue them, so that when all are produced one could have on a single shelf this most valuable apparatus of appreciation. One thing more is wanting—the printed music. This should be obtained wherever it is available, and diligently studied by those who can read it. Without the music one misses a good deal of the woven beauty of the madrigals, for instance. I hope this venture will be well supported. British musical scholarship needs all the support it can get, for our good fame's sake as well as for the sustaining of authors. One thing comes to mind: why did not the B.B.C. do something like this, years ago? And, especially, why should it not get Mr. Scholes to do something like it, yet?

W. R. A.

### COUPON

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