

with this composer. He had not Chabrier's gusto and contrivance, but it's good enough for its purpose: which, Fiedler seems to reckon, is to waltz to, without any hesitations, rubatos, or fallals. If you like it that way, here is a good strong recording.

A word of gratitude, not, I hope, too belated, to this orchestra for devoting the proceeds of a festival of British music, directed by Koussevitzky, to the Myra Hess National Gallery concerts, which have greatly benefited the Musicians' Benevolent Fund. Thank you, brethren, for this typical piece of American generosity!

Boston Promenade Orchestra (Fiedler); New Vienna Waltz (J. Strauss). H.M.V. B9113 (10 ins., 3s. 8d.).

Op. 342, like many of the waltzes, starts with a jaunty square-dance step, in the best spirit of the old dapper hub-of-the-universe spirit, to taste which again must always be a pleasure, though shot with sorrow as we think of Vienna to-day. One or two harmonies have the authentic tang of nostalgia—even if it be only for a world we have dreamed of, not experienced. The very full, forward, ringing tone asks, I think, for a steel needle (though the volume and vividness with good fibre is most gratifying). A small disc seems about sufficient for these Strausses: the variety then just about lasts out its welcome, and does not, as in some of the twelve inchers, outlast it, for me. An excellent account of the music, in the straightforward Bostonian fashion which is now so familiar.

Salon Orchestra (N. Shilkret): Humoresque, Op. 10, No. 2 and Romance, Op. 5 (Tchaikovsky, arr. Shilkret). H.M.V. B9100. (10 in., 3s. 8d.).

Arrangements of piano pieces, of the salon of around-1870, and so suitable for translation into terms of more highly-coloured emotion. The tones of the instruments are chosen more for individual telling quality than for smoothness of blend. They come out best in the quickstep middle part of the *Romance*. In the much-played *Humoresque* they supply piquancy. The middle section of this, I am told, is a French folk-tune. The recording can thus be sufficiently enjoyed if one remembers that this is not the older kind of pier or cure-house salon band, but that the day demands a more pointed, perky and to some, doubtless, pleasing pungency.

COLUMBIA

London Philharmonic Orchestra (Beecham): Symphony No. 38 in D Major, "Prague." K504 (Mozart). Col. LX911-3 (12 ins., 22s.). Auto LX8502-4.

A performance of quiet strength and the finest feeling, which satisfies me fully.

The work was first heard at Prague in 1787, when *Figaro* was all the rage. Mozart found the Praguers "flying about with such delight to the music of my *Figaro*, transformed into quadrilles and waltzes." Not *Figaro*, but *Giovanni* (later), is the thought (in spite of the thematic resemblance in bars 5, 6): the prelude (unusual with Mozart), spacious, leisurely, solemn, with its minor-key second element, makes it a little difficult to break off at the *Allegro* and take quite another line of feeling. Exposition and development (the latter highly contrapuntal) are on side 2. The weaving develops from the opening of the *Allegro*, from the violin figure in bars 5-7, and from the octave wind figure (not very clearly heard here) which begins with the leap upward, immediately following this. Some development has begun even before the second subject, which is a song-like pendant, appears (just-over one-third of the way in). Such close weaving as this is worth much discipline. It is not the only kind Mozart offers, and it is certainly not the most immediately attractive, for some. Its tremendous concentration of technique and thought puts it on one of the highest pinnacles of art.

The slow movement is scored for the small orchestra of strings and wind only (the only brass being the two horns; the work has no clarinets). The wind sounds a trifle small, but the delicacy is vital. I remember Mr. Grew's remarking on the difference between this exquisite 6/8 motion and the sort of lazy, even smarmy 6/8 we have been smothered with for the last hundred

years, in so many salon pieces, organ pastorales, and the like, down to sentimental songs. The sentiment here is at once open and reserved: the more reserved, I feel, at the minor-key episode: yet there is a poignant undercurrent here, different from the sensibility of the movement's opening, which itself is sufficiently keen for the heart of anyone who thinks of music as it is and as it was a century and a half ago.

This movement is one of the vital documents for any lover of Mozart, who wants to find the man behind the music. Beecham and his players touch its beauty with the most affectionate fingers.

The finale (one side: the 1st movement, by the way, runs on to 3) will be found to provide the most remarkable mixture of lightness and force: the major-minor alterations, which pervade the whole work, exhibit the outward elements of the perfect athlete, in bone, muscle and flesh; within is the inward nervous power that rules all. Beecham has not striven for any great production of tone. That the Mozart-lover will understand and appreciate. Some might like rather more; but coming from the great weight—rightly used—of the Rachmaninov, the smaller orchestra and restrained volume of the Mozart is intensely refreshing, in its own world of power, to which it is always a joy to attune ourselves.

Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (Mitropoulos) Coriolan Overture (Beethoven). Col. LX914 (12 in., 7s. 4d.).

Yet another *Coriolanus* imperiously demands the ear, and takes it most agreeably, as regards strength and forthrightness. I find the balance not always quite perfect (e.g., the brass, early), and the outline rather hard; but dignity demands, you will agree, a certain starkness in the music. A trifle of even playing about half an inch from the end of side 1 is not a great matter. The general thrust and all-through quality please me. Other readings make more of the contrast between *Coriolanus* and (if we accept the usual interpretation) his mother, the tormented hero and the feminine spirit faced with the same problem. But the feminine quality is fine here, and I think the simplicity of the reading will please most people. The style of the recording is very good: clarity is eminent, and the tone comes more genially than in the Toscanini record, without that one's rather difficult hardness.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Stock): Danse Macabre (Saint-Saëns). Col. LX910 (12 in., 7s. 4d.).

Stock, *b.* 1872, has been with the Chicagoans since 1901 (first as assistant to Thomas, then as chief conductor since 1905). His orchestra has not been very much heard of late on records. This one replaces the early-electrical L. number of Wood's making. I don't think (from memory) that it comes quite up to the excitement of Stokowski's performance and recording. All is solid, ample, but rather stiff. The solo bit for the fiddle, for instance, could be more ghostly. I suppose one might fluctuate between the opinions that it ought to be tenuous, for ghosts, and bony, for skeletons. I like well the bit when the old man has his touch of the classical, and threatens fugality (side 1, two-thirds). The chamber's resonance shows up too much here. Rather heavy-handed, I'm afraid, on the whole.

DECCA

A. W. Ketelbey and His Concert Orchestra: (five 10 in., 12s. 3½d.—and all by Ketelbey).

F7615. **In the Moonlight: In a Monastery Garden** (with male chorus).

F7616. **'Appy' Ampstead (Cockney Suite): In a Persian Market** (with male chorus).

F7617. **Gallantry: Sanctuary of the Heart** (with male chorus).

F7618. **Bells across the Meadow: The Sacred Hour** (with male chorus).

F7619. **Jungle Drums: In a Chinese Temple Garden** (with male chorus).

A representative selection of the composer's works, including some new to me. I shall not be expected to say much about

them. That might be an interesting task for the new William Morris Musical Society, founded to study "the relationship between music and social conditions," and "the varying functions in society which music has been called upon to perform at different stages of social development." Most of these pieces were issued in two Columbia albums of eight records each, a good many years ago. The Hampstead one includes a neat moment of concertina-imitation, and a reminiscence of (I think) the *Donauwellen* waltz. The *Persian Market* is the kind of thing that Nervo and Knox dance to. (I see the Bostonians have also done this—played, not danced.) The men sing lustily, and there are bits of solo vocal tone in other pieces. *Gallantry* "features" cello and fiddle solos, with piano. The only dictionary reference I can find does not give Mr. Ketelbey's age. He has been a theatre conductor, and has written a comic opera, produced in 1900, and a *Concertstück* for piano and orchestra, a piano and wind quintet which won the Costa prize, and, I read: "many popular pieces under the pen-name of Anton Vodorinski." The pieces can be regarded as well named, except, perhaps, *The Sacred Hour*: I mildly opine that in this line nothing is sacred. The recording, of a smallish orchestra is of the full-blown, plenty-for-money type that befits the music.

W.R.A.

INSTRUMENTAL

***Hephzibah and Yehudi Menuhin : Rondo in B minor, Op. 70** (Schubert). H.M.V. DB3583-4 (12 in., 14s. 8d.).

Beneath the high spirits and elaborate virtuoso decorations of this piece Schubert's music is fitfully apparent. It is very far from being the best Schubert and, frankly, not the sort of piece I should want to hear again—this on the strength of the first two parts, which are all that I have received. A final verdict cannot therefore be given: for on Parts 3 or 4, or both, Schubert may surprise one with a captivating tune. The recording seemed to me hard and unsympathetic; the playing, though full of dash and glitter, perhaps the same, even granting the defects of the recording. I wonder if this piece would ever have survived had Schubert's name not been attached to it?

Kentner (piano): **Scherzo and March** (Liszt); **Children's Pieces** (Book 4, Nos. 22-33, 32 and 42) (Béla Bartók). Col. DX988, 9 (12 in., 9s. 9d.).

No stars given to this piece of music, written in Liszt's middle years, in Sitwell's book: and yet it seems to me one of the most amazing things he ever did. The form is unusual: for the March is the Trio of the Scherzo and the recapitulation of the Scherzo links them both together, and shows the relation of one to the other.

The whole piece is *Macabre* to a degree, from the sinister thuds and mutters at the start to the orgiastic finale. It is a veritable Dance of Death.

After fiery cascades of notes—some of them like the ringing of "hell's bells"—a well defined theme emerges and is treated with wonderful resource. Sometimes the music grows stealthy and ominous (Part 2), but we are soon again plunged into a witches' cauldron of sound. At length the Scherzo dies away in an evil mutter the March begins. It comes from a distance, hard and ruthless, a sort of funeral march that rejoices in the slaughter of an adversary. How different this from the sugary sort of Trio I thought Liszt might give us! The March reaches a frenzied climax and then dies away. The astonishing recapitulation follows: in which, it seems, evil spirits dance round the corpse and harshly rejoice in their triumph.

I have been tempted—*mea culpa*—into a "literary" description of music that really cannot be described: but it is so remarkably vivid and dramatic in its impact that the impulse could not be avoided.

Has Liszt ever written with greater magic for the keyboard than here? He makes a veritable orchestra of the piano, and it seems supernatural that two hands and some hammers and strings

should produce the astounding volume and variety of sound that we have here.

Kentner's playing is phenomenal. He plays, indeed, as one inspired. It is a tribute to him that my hair almost rose as I considered what this piece would have sounded like under Liszt's fingers—and what he would have looked like—the devil a monk would be, indeed. The recording is magnificent.

After this most exciting experience—which no one must miss—I could give scant attention to the Bartók pieces. But I know them well as most charming and delightful miniatures, and Kentner plays them with complete understanding. I hope he will give us more of them and also some of the "Ten Easy Pieces" which, like these others, are by no means so easy.

Perhaps I ought to say that the "Children's Pieces" are all—I think—founded on Hungarian folk tunes: each one being given its poetic and appropriate setting.

Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson : Sheep May Safely Graze (Bach, arr. Howe); **Arrival of the Queen of Sheba** (Handel, arr. Easdale). Col. DX992 (12 in., 4s. 10½d.).

It is not always easy to "bring out" the tune in Miss Howe's piano solo transcription of the captivating air from Bach's "Birthday Cantata" (Oxford Press), but that difficulty vanishes in a two-piano arrangement. It is not the fault of these most able artists that one grows a little weary of the sergeant-major-minded bass—the persuasive nature of the piano is to blame for that: but this criticism should not be allowed to weigh against the appeal of a really entrancing piece of music.

Everyone knows Sir Thomas Beecham's arrangement and recording of the "Arrival of the Queen of Sheba." Is he, by the way, responsible for a title which is absent from Handel's score? It is hardly credible that the august queen should arrive in so sprightly and quick-time a fashion! The outriders of her train perhaps! or perhaps just an interlude by Handel. Anyway it is a gay and lively piece of music and played with any amount of spirit by the two artists. I hope they will draw largely on their repertoire—which is full of good things—for our delight. Admirable recording.

Moiseiwitsch (piano): **Liebstraum No. 3: Nocturne in E flat, Op. 9, No. 2** (Chopin). H.M.V. C3197 (12 in., 4s. 10½d.).

If Moiseiwitsch is responsible for his choice of repertoire he really should not ask the public to pay an increased price for two pieces of music which they can buy in many other interpretations, and then play them in a style below his usual high level of artistry. Anyone might make the little splash he makes in the Liszt: but the cadenzas should partake of the spirit of the piece and not be turned on like a hose. This is a very patchy performance, with few poetic moments. The Chopin is merely dull. All this is a pity because the piano tone is most excellently and vitally recorded.

I hope this pianist will give us better value next time.

Florence Hooton (piano) and **Gerald Moore** (piano): **Suite Italienne** (Stravinsky—Piatigorsky). Decca X263-4 (two 12 in., 12s.).

The label conceals the fact that this Suite is an arrangement, made in 1934, from the composer's *Pulcinella*, a ballet with songs after Pergolesi. The movements are Introduction and Aria: Largo and Tarantella (X263). Serenata: Minuet and Finale (X264).

Most of us know little more of Pergolesi than, vaguely, the *Stabat Mater*, *La Serva Padrona*, and, more positively, the song *Tre giorni son che Nina* (which he did not write!). But it soon becomes clear, and is abundantly so by the time the *Finale* arrives, that Stravinsky's personality is uppermost: the Suite is indeed Pergolesi (some way) after Stravinsky. Little of the sentimental charm said to be characteristic of Pergolesi's music remains; more, perhaps, of his Neapolitan humour. The *Aria* must certainly have been a humorous piece and the *Serenata* a sentimental one.