

# NIGHTS AT THE ROUND TABLE

By W. A. CHISLETT

**SONGS FROM VIENNESE OPERETTAS.** J. Strauss. DER LUSTIGE KREIG: Nur für Natur. Lehár. PAGANINI: Liebe, du Himmel auf Erden. DER ZAREWITSCH: Hab nur dich allein. Müllbacher. DER BETTELSTUDENT: Nur das eine bißl' ich dich. Suppé. BOCCACCIO: March. Dostal. UNGARISCHE HOCHZEIT: Heimat deine Lieder. MONIKA: Ein Walzer zu zweien. Zeller. DER OBERSTEIGER: Sei nicht böß. Jessel. SCHWARZWALDMADEL: Bauernpolka. Künneke. ZAUBERIN LOLA: Du warst von Anbeginn. Friederike Saller (soprano), Fritz Wunderlich (tenor), Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Fritz Maraczek. Vox STGBY632 (28s. 6d.).

Here is unexpected treasure for lovers of operetta. Any record which adds to the little we have of Fritz Wunderlich (who has an excellent partner in Friederike Saller) is welcome, and doubly so when so many of the songs are not otherwise to be had in this country on records. The programme offers a miniature cross-section of Viennese operetta, from Suppé and Johann Strauss, who started it, and continuing through their successors to Nico Dostal, by whose time it had largely given place to the spectacular musical. Two of the composers are almost unknown here, and others are represented by unfamiliar works. Dostal was born in 1895, studied law, became a church musician and only began to compose operetta when he went to Berlin in his mid-thirties. *Monika* dates from 1937 and was first produced in Stuttgart. "Ein Walzer zu zweien" is in the true style of the Viennese waltz. Léon Jessel (1871-1942) is chiefly known here by his *March of the Tin Soldiers* but he wrote numerous operettas, of which *Schwarzwalddädel* ("The Girl from the Black Forest") is the best known. It dates from 1917 and on the stage the lively "Bauernpolka" is the St Cecilia polka in which the girls choose their partners. Künneke is probably best known for his *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* of 1921, which became *The Cousin from Nowhere* when produced in London two years later. *Zauberin Lola* followed in 1935. Enough of history and derivation, however. Probably the sleeve, which I have not seen, will give relevant details. Suffice it that here is a lot of attractive music that is all the more desirable because of its unfamiliarity, admirably presented and recorded and modestly priced.

**NESA CONCERT BAND.** Halvorsen. Entry of the Boyars. Gordon Jenkins. Manhattan Tower Overture. Cavez. Tambou. Alfven. Swedish Rhapsody. Gade. Jealousy. H. L. Walters. Reeds in Front; Trumpet Holiday. Palange. Brass Woodwind Clique. Mancini. Tango Americano. Morrissey. Hoopla. Sibelius. Alla Marcia. Rimsky-Korsakov. Trombone Concerto NESA Concert Band conducted by Paul Ivan Moller. World Record Club ST941 (28s. 11d.).

This record is an exciting surprise. Apparently the NESA Concert Band was formed in Denmark in 1951 as a modest "works band". When its first conductor died in 1964 Paul Ivan Moller took it over and gradually rearranged the instrumentation on the lines of the great American concert bands. Less than two years later it won the first prize in an international competition in Italy at which no less than sixty bands took part. This record dates from 1967. The programme is deliberately mixed, to display not only the band's concerted skill and musicianship (there are some 54 players) but also that of many of its soloists, in many kinds of music. Most welcome of all is Rimsky-Korsakov's Trombone Concerto. I doubt if many people even know of the existence of such a work. It is one of three compositions for solo instrument and military band dating from about 1878. The solo instruments in the other two are oboe and clarinet respectively. It is in three movement form and is by no means typical of its composer. Indeed, were one to hear it and then have to guess the composer I fancy that

Rimsky-Korsakov would be well down on most lists. The soloist is Carsten Svanberg, a pupil of the band's conductor, who is himself a famous trombone player. Musically I like best the slow middle movement and it is beautifully played with suave tone and fine legato. Some listeners may find greater immediate attraction in the cadenza-like finale to the last movement, the fireworks of which call for immense agility and judgement. Talking of what is not generally known, I wonder how many know that the composer of *Jealousy*, one of the best as well as best-known tangos, is a Dane, Jacob Gade. It is quite splendidly played here, in an admirable arrangement by the band's conductor. *Swedish Rhapsody* is a free arrangement by Percy Faith of Alfven's *Midsummer Vigil*, transcribed for band by Mr Moller and *Alla Marcia* is the last movement of the *Karelia* music in an arrangement made by Edwin Franko Goldman at Sibelius's request. *Hoopla* is a brilliant piccolo solo and *Tamboou* is a samba in which the clarinet plays an important role. A record not to be missed by band enthusiasts, containing a number of pieces not otherwise available, very well played and recorded with a combination of richness and brilliance that only just falls short of the very top grade.

**ECO DI NAPOLI** (The Songs of Naples). Kenneth McKellar (tenor), Michael Sammes Singers and orchestra conducted by Peter Knight. Decca SKL5018 © LK5018 (37s. 6d.). Electronic stereo.

This record is based on the TV film first seen on BBC-2 in 1968 and later on BBC-1. And an excellent film it was. Here, then, in addition to the songs (14 of them divided between 11 bands) is a good deal of narrative, with background music, and descriptive sounds where appropriate. The whole is welded together with charming original music by Peter Knight. As a film I remember finding it all very attractive but divorced from sight it does not make a record that I shall want to hear often. So well does Mr. McKellar sing the songs, which include a few which are less familiar in England than those which have been beloved by tenors ever since Caruso started to sing them, that I should have preferred a straightforward recording of the songs alone. But each to his own taste. There will be some to whom the narrative will not become tiresome with repeated hearings. Presentation is excellent and the recording is good, although not in Decca's top class.

**KETELBEY.** In a Monastery Garden; In the mystic Land of Egypt; Bells Across the Meadows; With Honour Crowned; In a Persian Market; The Sanctuary of the Heart; The Ploughman Homeward Plods his Weary Way (from "Three Fanciful Etchings"); In a Chinese Temple Garden; Bank Holiday ("Appy Amstead"). New Symphony Orchestra of London with Chorus conducted by Stanford Robinson. Eclipse ECS2016 © ECM2016 (17s. 6d.). Electronic stereo.

Decca offered nine of Ketelbey's popular pieces in November last, extremely well played and brilliantly recorded in their Phase Four process for 37s. 6d. Last month this was followed by six pieces, also well played and quite adequately recorded, on the Fontana Special label at 14s. 6d. Now we have nine pieces for 17s. 6d., in an old recording refurbished in electronically reprocessed stereo. The three programmes are not identical but four pieces are triplicated and others are duplicated. The performances are again good and the sound, for a 1954 recording, is spacious and pleasant in the reprocessed version. However, I doubt if there is really room for this record and I should have welcomed it more enthusiastically had it contained more of the less familiar numbers, like *Bank Holiday*. This is an entertaining piece

not in Ketelbey's usual sentimental style. Instead it introduces snippets from various old songs set one against another until all are banished by the waltz *Over the Waves*. By the way, *With Honour Crowned*, commemorates the 25th anniversary of the accession to the throne of King George V.

**TALES FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM.** Read by Ed. "Stewpot" Stewart. World Record Club SCC108-4 (17s. 5d. each).

There are seven of the well loved stories by the Grimm Brothers on each of these records, which can, of course, be bought separately. They are read simply and naturally, without any frills or histrionics, in a pleasant and deep-sounding voice. Similarly the anonymous and reticent musical backgrounds are plain and straight-forward, consisting of well-known orchestral music. Whether classical music is ideal for such purposes is a matter which each must decide for himself. I confess that being familiar with the stories I found myself sometimes straining to hear the music, which is not what is intended. When stories are as well read as these are I personally prefer to have no musical background and I think that young children are better able to concentrate when there is nothing to distract attention from the reader and his stories.

In February 1966 MM gave a very warm welcome to a LP containing the whole of the music which Holst wrote for bands, with Imogen Holst and Wing Commander John Wallace respectively directing the **Central Band of the Royal Air Force** in the two military band suites and the **Hammersmith Prelude and Scherzo** and Miss Holst directing the **BMC (Oxford) Band** in *A Moorside Suite*, which was written for the 1928 National Band Festival at Crystal Palace. I now welcome it equally warmly on a new and slightly cheaper label. That the original recording was withdrawn so soon from the HMV list suggests that it did not sell very well, which is sad because the supply of music originally written for bands is very small. Holst was a trombone player himself and his scoring is full of piquancies and unexpected touches. Both playing and recording are first class (World Record Club ST938).

So far as this country is concerned a splendid record of Ravel's *La Valse*, *Bolero* and *Rapsodie Espagnole* played by the **New York Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Leonard Bernstein** first appeared in 1959, on the cheap Philips GBL label, and recorded in mono only. The sound as such was ahead of the general standard of its day and a newly released version in stereo sounds even better. As a performance I do not think I have ever enjoyed *La Valse* so much and the *Rapsodie Espagnole* is equally desirable. *Bolero* is about as good as it could be, although it is not a work I want to hear very often. We tend to expect reissues (even in stereo) to be cheaper than the original releases and not dearer but this is still a highly desirable record and the price is modest (CBS Classics 61027).

Finally, for those who want a memento of **Mario Lanza** at his full-throated best and in music admirably suited to him there is an electronically created stereo version of songs grouped together as "Speak to me of Love", and including several numbers from musicals and such songs as *Roses of Picardy*, *When You're in Love* and *Ay-Ay-Ay*. Here is one of the great natural voices of the century and who is to say nay to its owner's decision to dedicate it to the delight and charm of the many rather than the few (RCA SB6809 © RB6809).

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