

He was equally at home in vigorous vagabond and road songs, sentimental ditties like *Lucia*, *The Rose of Tralee* and *Venetian Moon*, and musical comedy numbers. The tinge of huskiness in his voice, which many found so attractive, comes through very well, as does the clarity of his diction, an attribute in which Irish singers so often excel. The orchestral accompaniments are discreet and the balance is very good. Would that there were more such singers today. O'Connor always made the most of whatever he sang.

**KETELBEY.** In a Persian Market. In a Chinese Temple Garden. In the Mystic Land of Egypt. In a Monastery Garden. Bells across the Meadows. By the Blue Hawaiian Waters. Soloists, chorus and Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Fritz Marcsek. Fontana Special SFL14141 (14s. 6d.).

Ketelbey seems to be enjoying a new lease of life. Only in November last I reviewed a selection of his music presented by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus (Decca PFS4170) and now here is another LP devoted entirely to him. Immensely popular from about 1912 for a quarter of a century or so, Ketelbey began to lose favour during the war years, although he lived until 1959, and later there was a tendency even to sneer at his music. But he was a first-class craftsman, with a gift of facile, sentimental melody, and he was highly skilled in orchestration. Choice between the two records is mainly a matter of what is considered to be the best value for money. The only piece on this new record not included in the earlier selection is *By the Blue Hawaiian Waters*. As against this the earlier disc has four pieces not included here, so the difference in the prices, 14s. 6d. as against 37s. 6d., is in part discounted. There is little to choose between the performances, but the present recording, while good, has neither the brilliance nor the depth of that by Decca's Phase 4 process. For those with equipment capable of getting the best from the Decca recording I think that it is worth the extra cost, but this may not be so for those with small record players.

**MENDELSSOHN.** Elijah—choruses. Jacqueline Delman (soprano), Norma Proctor (contralto), George Maran (tenor), Bruce Boyce (bass-baritone), Michael Cunningham (treble), Hampstead Parish Church Boys' Choir, London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Josef Krips. Eclipse ECS532 Ⓢ ECM532 (17s. 6d.). Electronic stereo.

This selection is taken from the complete 1955 recording. Although labelled as "Choruses" the soloists too, of course, make appearances in some of the numbers. But in the main it is a choral recording and it is largely upon this ground that this reissue may have a great appeal today. The performance as a whole may be less dramatic than some but it is immensely musical, thanks to the very sensitive control of Dr. Krips and the bracing singing of both the adult and boys' choirs, both of which are delightfully alert throughout. Of the quality of the recording itself, in his original review of February 1955, PH-W went out of his way to say, "It is, in my view, the first time that the actual recording has really coped with the large masses of sound and the variations of level which are involved. It is in this, notably more successful than, say, the recent Verdi *Requiem*". Even by today's more exacting standards the electronically-contrived stereo sound is still very good, if a little less immediate than in some recent choral recordings.

**HELEN TRAUBEL.** The Loveliest Night of the Year. Autumn Leaves. Brahms' Lullaby. When I grow too old to dream. Summertime. I believe. Because. Danny Boy. Trees. When day is done. Too Ra Loo Ra Loo Ral. September Song. Helen Traubel (soprano) with orchestra and chorus conducted by Milt Rogers. Music For Pleasure Ⓢ MFPL341 (14s. 6d.).

Helen Traubel has had an unusual career. Born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1903, she was offered an audition at the Metropolitan Opera New York at the age of 20 but elected instead

to continue with her studies for a further eight years. In 1937 she appeared there in Damrosch's *The Man without a Country* but this ran for only five performances and her real debut at the Met. came two years later, as Sieglinde, when she took over from Kirsten Flagstad as the leading Wagnerian soprano. By this time she was 36. She quickly became famous, particularly for her Isolde and Brünnhilde, but she did not appear in England until 1953—except on some very fine records, with Toscanini and Melchior among others. About this time she was thinking in terms of lighter music and finally decided to quit the operatic stage. Her warm personality and keen sense of humour, coupled with her still glorious voice, made her a huge success in cabaret and she joined forces with Jimmy Durante, also taking leading roles in a film based on Romberg's life (1954) and the musical *Pipe Dream* (1955), one of the less successful of the Rodgers and Hammerstein productions. Miss Traubel never went back to opera. This collection of songs is similar to but not identical with the one which appeared here in 1958 (London mono HA-D2177). Many will greatly enjoy the fine singing of these popular and rather oddly-assorted songs but to me it falls between two stools. I would have preferred a reissue of one of her Wagner records or, at the other end of the scale, to have heard her thoroughly enjoying herself in the Durante style. Her *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee*, with Durante on Brunswick mono LAT8218, was a masterpiece in its way.

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The degree of success achieved by stereo reprocessing varies a good deal. **Pierino Gamba's** five Rossini overtures—*The Siege of Corinth*, *William Tell*, *Tancredi*, *Il Signor Bruschino* and *La Cenerentola*—with the **London Symphony Orchestra** was always a very good recording of its day. First released in 1956 in mono, and transferred to the Ace of Clubs label in 1963 (three of the overtures having also been offered on a 10-inch record in between) it now makes yet another bow in reprocessed form, and it is excellent. The performances are first class (Eclipse ECS531 Ⓢ ECM531). Another very good revivification on the same cheap label gives us **Ernest Ansermet** with the **London Symphony Orchestra** and **Paris Conservatoire Orchestra** in the Rossini-Respighi *Boutique Fantasque*, Ravel's *Bolero* and Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. The original recordings also date from the 1950s (Eclipse ECS529 Ⓢ ECM529). This last record is in part duplicated by **Paul Paray** and the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** who couple with *Bolero* and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* Ravel's *La Valse* and the ever-popular *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saëns. This is even

cheaper but I think that the Ansermet record is worth the extra three shillings (Fontana SFL-14140).

Another record that stands the test of time very well is that of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnole* and Chabrier's *España*, coupled with a group of dances by Granados and Moszkowski and played by the **London Symphony Orchestra** directed by the late **Ataulfo Argenta**. This first appeared in mono in 1957 and in stereo a year later. The other pieces may be the more important but I welcome the reissue most for the light-weight but very pleasant dances by Moszkowski, which are not otherwise available. (Decca Ace of Diamonds SDD216). A LP called "Orchestral Fireworks" is an omnium gatherum in all conscience. It is also something of a misnomer. Whatever such pieces as those by Kabalevsky, Glière, Falla, Debussy and some others may be I would certainly not call the waltz from Gounod's *Faust* or Strauss's *Fireball Polka* fireworks. Incidentally the record also includes a bit from Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, an odd work from which to offer a snippet. The playing of the **Hollywood Bowl Orchestra** under an unnamed conductor is good and the recording is pleasant sounding but a good deal short of the best modern standards (Music for Pleasure SMFP2128).

Surprising though I find it, I do not think that **Eugene Ormandy** and the **Philadelphia Orchestra** have ever given us Gershwin's *American in Paris* and the Symphonic Picture arranged by Robert Russell Bennett from the same composer's *Porgy and Bess* before, certainly not for a long time. The former has been fortunate in its recordings for many years and desirable alternatives are available. This challenges comparison with the best of them, even the superbly played Bernstein recording. The gem of this disc, however, is the *Porgy and Bess* piece, of which the only previous recording I know is that of 1959 by Dorati and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, a fine performance and good recording of its day but now long deleted. This Bennett arrangement is in the nature of a panorama of the whole score in free symphonic style and the lush tunes are quite superbly orchestrated and arranged. Ormandy and his team are in fine fettle and seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. They are supported by excellent recording, and at 28s. 6d. this is the best Gershwin bargain for many a long day (CBS 61109). Finally "Gems from Gilbert and Sullivan", with various soloists, orchestras and conductors is distinguished by the beautiful singing of **Elizabeth Harwood**. Orchestras, chorus and conductors are all named on the sleeve but the soloists are only identified on the labels, which is rather odd (Marble Arch MALS1184).

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