

THE
GRAMOPHONE
JUBILEE
BOOK

1923 - 1973

50 YEARS OF GRAMOPHONE HISTORY

The Gramophone was founded by Sir Compton Mackenzie in 1923. This book, published to mark the magazine's Golden Jubilee, contains a selection of material drawn from issues published during those fifty years. The authors include:

ERNEST ANSERMET
GEORGE BAKER
SIR JOHN BARRIBELLI
DAVID BIGENLI
PAOLO CASALI
ALFRED CLARK
PETER DAWSON
FRED GAZZIHO
SIR EUGENE GOSSENS
SPIKE HUGHES
HERMAN KLEIN
WALTER LEGGE
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GERALD MOORE
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ELISABETH OHMS
SERGEE RACHMANINOV
LEO RIEMEN
SIR LONDON RONALD
SIR MALCOLM SARGENT
IGOR STRAVINSKY
JOSEPH SZIGETI, etc. etc.

In addition there are special contributions to the book describing the growth and development of the gramophone record and audio industries over the past 50 years. The contributors include:

SIR ADRIAN BOULT
JOHN CULSHAW
ANTHONY FOLLARD
ALEC ROBERTSON
PERCY WILSON

The Foreword is written by Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the Queen's Music, with an Introduction by Sir Compton Mackenzie. The book is compiled by Roger Wimbush.

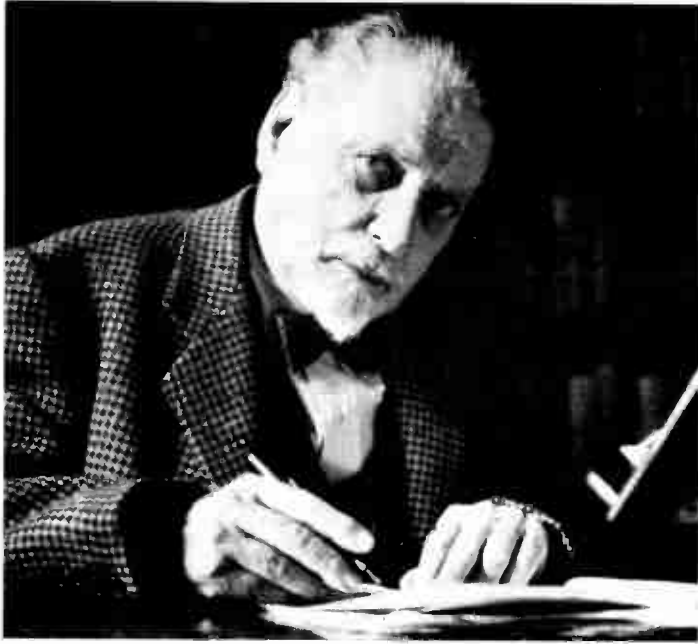
**THE
GRAMOPHONE
JUBILEE
BOOK**

Published by General Gramophone Publications Limited
177-179 Kenton Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 0HA

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MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE CHAPEL RIVER PRESS
ANDOVER, HANTS

THE GRAMOPHONE JUBILEE BOOK



SIR COMPTON MACKENZIE, OBE

b. 17th January, 1883 — d. 30th November, 1972

Just as this book was on the press Sir Compton passed away peacefully at his home in Edinburgh. The text remains as he saw it and the book is dedicated to his memory, linked, as he would have wished, with the names of Faith Compton Mackenzie, Christopher Stone and Cecil Pollard

FOREWORD

by Sir Arthur Bliss, CH, KCVO
Master of the Queen's Musick

The invention of the recording machine dating back to the last century, and its development and improvement year by year, must surely rank with the early days of printing as one of the great benefits bestowed on mankind. Fifty years ago if we wanted to hear a concert of fine music it meant an expensively planned outing, unless we were among the lucky few who lived close to a musical centre.

So it has always been. We remember John Sebastian Bach who, as a boy, had to walk thirty miles to hear the celebrated organist Johann Adam Reinken play in Hamburg.

But to-day we can house alongside our library of well-read books a collection of the world's musical masterpieces. The gramophone companies have issued literally millions of records, and in serious music there is already an encyclopedic range—from the age of Dunstable to the last syllable of recorded sound. Not only has the music of composers long dead been restored to life, but the performances of past great players and singers too.

Living composers and performers benefit in a very special way, but, I hasten to add, not all! Amongst British composers there are some who are very scantily mentioned in gramophone catalogues, and even other names which do not appear at all! I hope that time will remedy this injustice, a serious disadvantage to them as well as to us. With such a monthly outpouring of new recordings it is essential for the music lover to have a professional guide, who can suggest the best, and discriminate between several choices. It is *The Gramophone* which for fifty years now has filled this important role. Professional writers on music are in the same position as experienced 'tasters' of wine or tea. They must possess special qualifications, *i.e.*, knowledge and a 'palate'. *The Gramophone* has been clever or perhaps lucky enough in finding throughout the years a succession of experts whose opinion is eagerly sought by the readers of this paper.

As it reaches its Golden Jubilee I salute the fine service it has done for music.

Compiler's Note

Until the publisher of *The Gramophone* invited me to undertake the compilation of this book I had always envied those who edited anthologies. What could be easier than to assemble a selection of other men's work? I know better now!

This book is not a history of the gramophone, although in the course of it the reader should gain an impression of development and expansion. Older readers may well be disappointed by omissions, but they cannot be more disappointed than the compiler. When the decision was taken to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of *The Gramophone* with a selection of articles published over 50 years it was clear that the selection of material from nearly 600 numbers would have to be carried out ruthlessly and with strict guide lines.

It may, for instance, seem eccentric that in celebrating the jubilee of a magazine that sells to a very great extent on the quality of its reviews no record reviews are included. Yet to have decided otherwise would have been invidious. Similarly with so much material from a few writers, it would have been arbitrary at best, and unfair at worst, to have selected passages from such regular contributors. The exceptions to this rule are the articles on Chaliapin by Fred Gaisberg, on Albert Coates by W. S. Meadmore, on Elgar by W. R. Anderson, on Ivor Gurney by Alec Robertson and on Stereo by Trevor Harvey.

In early days, and particularly during the war years, the paper owed an enormous debt to its regular contributors, as well as to its advertisers. Many books could be culled from *The Gramophone*, and those who have contributed to it over half a century and who have survived will know that whether they are mentioned here or not this book would have been impossible without them.

From an original selection of some 600 contributions, all of which contained valuable information or opinion, these had to be reduced by stages to the present number. It was a heart-breaking, but inevitable, task.

One omission will strike the reader as inexplicable. For more than a quarter of a century *The Gramophone* was sustained editorially, as in every other way, by its founder and first Editor,

Sir Compton Mackenzie, whose editorials were not only stimulating but included vignettes on aspects of aesthetics, sometimes musical, but often on other matters. *The Gramophone* editorials indeed provided a platform, even a pulpit, for one of the most critical minds of our time, and provoked readers and writers to keep the fire going. Indeed, Sir Compton admitted to writing half a million words in these pages up to 1939. He has himself re-printed much of this material in book form (*My Record of Music*, published by Hutchinson in 1955), and thus given it the permanence that is its due.

It is therefore all too easy to say what this book is not. Its modest aim is to reflect on 50 years of partnership with a great industry and a world-wide readership, many of whom have been with the paper since the beginning. Anybody who writes for *The Gramophone* knows the refreshment of receiving letters from far-away places, and these same writers will know that somebody somewhere will know the answer to a query or correct a mistake!

Following the introductory essays, the book is divided into seven sections, prefaced by what Jacques Barzun would call an "interchapter", in which with the help of Brian Rust I have sketched a few landmarks of the period. So far as the reprinted material is concerned, editing has been kept to a minimum and some references to individual records have been retained. The fact that a single issue of *The Gramophone* can review records of music by more than 100 composers is enough to indicate the impossibility of any attempt at a comprehensive survey.

If I may be permitted a personal note it is this. I have been privileged to write for the paper in a variety of capacities since 1929 and have therefore been equally privileged to know both the Mackenzie-Stone and Pollard regimes for all but six of these years. I know that I write for every past and present contributor in saying that during all this time I have received nothing but courtesy and kindness, as well as endless patience. One of the last things that Cecil Pollard said to me before he died was to stress the family attitude that pervades the enterprise, and it is the nature of that family to foster a friendliness that has pervaded the adventures of the past and has taken us all—readers, writers and advertisers—to this Golden Jubilee.

Some time ago a man was surprised to hear me speak of the gramophone. "You mean a record-player", he said. A living language is constantly changing, and it may well be that in years to come this familiar word will only mean the magazine, to which this book is offered in tribute.

ROGER WIMBUSH.

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TELEPHONE: HOP. 4000.

THE GRAMOPHONE

Publishing Office:
48 Hatfield Street,
S.E.1

Edited by
COMPTON MACKENZIE

Editorial Office:
Isle of Horn,
Channel Islands

Vol. I.

APRIL, 1923

No. 1

Prologue

IO SONO IL PROLOGO.—An apology is due to the public for inflicting upon it another review, but I should not be doing so unless I were persuaded that many of the numerous possessors of gramophones will welcome an organ of candid opinion. The critical policy of THE GRAMOPHONE will be largely personal, and as such it will be honest but not infallible, while the errors we make will be mostly on the side of kindness. If we endorse what a firm claims for its goods in our advertisement columns, we shall endorse that claim because we believe it to be justified.

The instruments on which all records sent for us to review are tested are the Orchestraphone sold by the Gramophone Exchange, an horizontal grand of His Master's Voice, and an Adams model of the Vocalion Company. The soundboxes used are the H.M.V. Exhibition No. 2, a Vocalion, a Realistic, an Ultone, a Superphone, a Sonat, and a Three Muses. If the maker of any other soundbox likes to send us his product for trial, we shall use it in competition with the others; but no opinion will be passed on any soundbox sent to us before a three months' trial. We shall try each month to keep pace with the records issued; but we hope that our readers will accept these preliminary reviews as provisional; and every three months we shall deal very critically with the output of the preceding quarter.

I have received many kind promises of support from distinguished writers; and if I find that the sales warrant me in supposing that gramophone enthusiasts want the kind of review THE GRAMOPHONE will set out to be, I can promise them that I will do my best to ensure their obtaining the finest opinions procurable.

We shall have nothing to do with Wireless in these columns. Our policy will be to encourage the recording companies to build up for generations to come a great library of good music. I do not want to waste time in announcing what we are going to do in future numbers, because I do not know yet if there is any real need for this review at all. We shall write as servants of the public, and if we sometimes take upon ourselves a certain freedom of speech in dealing with our masters, such freedom of speech is the privilege of all good servants.

Andiam ! Incominciate !

Compton Mackenzie

The first page of the first issue of THE GRAMOPHONE

Introduction

by Sir Compton Mackenzie

In moments of depression it has always been my habit to buy something. A defiant piece of extravagance is a tonic for such a mood, and this habit led me to acquire my first gramophone in 1922. I was then living in the Channel Islands and in February of that year I was walking along Bond Street in one of those moods of depression. Suddenly I found myself in New Bond Street and walking by the Aeolian Hall; from all but twenty years before the memory of the Aeolian organ of George Montagu's through which I had had the opportunity to cultivate the enjoyment of music when I lived at Lady Ham, Burford, pressed upon my fancy. I would have an Aeolian organ on my island, and forthwith I hurried from the murk and rain of Bond Street into the Aeolian establishment when it was only about ten minutes from closing time. The manager tried not to look so much surprised as he must have been by my proposed purchase. I doubt if he had sold an Aeolian organ for some time. In fact we had to penetrate to some remote corner before I could be shown an instrument. I said I wished to buy it on hire-purchase terms, filled up the necessary forms, and asked for a catalogue of their rolls. None could be found but I was promised that one would be posted to me.

When I was back on Herm the catalogue of rolls arrived, but alas, the symphonies of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky I remembered from my Lady Ham days were no longer listed. Indeed, there was no classical music at all and the catalogue was full of selections from musical comedies already forgotten. My dream of interpreting Beethoven while the wind moaned round the windows of my library and rumbled uneasily in the chimney, dissolved. I wrote to the Aeolian Company to say that I had bought the organ under a misapprehension and—that I wished to cancel the transaction, to which a reply came explaining this was difficult owing to the financial arrangement they had with the hire-purchase people but that if I did not object they would be happy to send a Hepplewhite model of the Aeolian Vocalion Gramophone instead. Memories of the gramophone my wife, Faith Stone, and I had had in Cornwall fourteen years earlier coupled with the temptation of the chamber music available for the gramophone by now, combined to compensate for my disappointment in not being able to play worthwhile music for myself.

I waited for the arrival of that Hepplewhite model and the Vocalion records with growing eagerness. When the gramophone did arrive I immediately put on the first movement of the Schumann Piano Quintet and listened to it in a rapture, careless of the scratch, uncritical of the way in which it had been shortened. I was completely at the mercy of one of those passions without which Goethe says that man withers. I asked Adam Robertson, the engineer of my motor-boat, if he knew the name of the biggest company that made gramophone records to which he replied with a smile at what he supposed was leg-pulling on my part :

"HMV are the biggest."

"What on earth does HMV stand for?"

"His Master's Voice," Robertson replied when he realized that I really did not know.

The HMV and Columbia catalogues for 1922 would look odd to the gramophone enthusiast of today. In the HMV catalogue there was only one complete symphony—Beethoven's Fifth—played on four double-sided discs by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Nikisch. There were only a few snippets of chamber music. The strength of the catalogue was the Celebrity list printed on carmine paper at the end. In the Columbia catalogue there was a better selection of chamber music, but not a single symphony; the Celebrity list was a very short one compared with that of their rivals. I spent about £400 in acquiring every single record from HMV, Columbia and Vocalion which seemed worth acquiring and within two months I had a collection of about twelve hundred discs, all of which are extant today.

In that summer Robin Legge, who occasionally reviewed records for *The Daily Telegraph* for which he was music editor at the time, suggested I should write an article for him. It was published in September and I was astonished at the correspondence evoked by that naïve article. One letter from Percy A. Scholes which began "At last!" ought to have given me particular pleasure but the extent of my ignorance at that date was such that I had not heard of Percy A. Scholes, and I was completely unaware of the fight he had been putting up for some time to obtain some recognition of the potentiality of the gramophone from intelligent musicians. Another letter came from Archibald Marshall, who was writing about the gramophone for *The Morning Post*. The gramophone had come as an anodyne to his worries over his American reading public having lost interest in his novels about English country-house life. As a result of our combined enthusiasm for the gramophone a book of gramophone programmes, called *Gramophone Nights*, was published by Heinemann in November 1923.

For it I contributed an introduction in the course of which I wrote :

“At the present moment we are, all of us who earn our living by entertaining the public, wondering what is going to be the effect of the broadcasting boom on our sales, and the great recording companies must be wondering more anxiously than any of us. I do not think that, if they will follow a strict policy of building up for the public a great library of good music, they need be afraid of wireless competition; but if they issue nothing but rubbishy so-called ballads, schoolgirls’ violin pieces and hackneyed orchestral compositions, they will not be able to compete for long with the rubbish that is being buzzed into the ears of the public every day by the broadcasting companies; poor material soon wears out, and the public are not going to pay for records of rubbish when they can get a change of rubbish daily. But the masterpieces are not played daily, and as long as recording companies have enough faith in the public to issue entire symphonies and concertos of Beethoven, they have nothing to fear from the future. There is no reason why, in another fifty years, it should not be possible to find libraries of music that will compare with the great libraries of literature today. Let the recording companies take warning from the history of publishing; let them note that no great publishing business has ever been built up by publishing rubbish, even if a brief prosperity has deluded some firms into supposing that a pander’s life is longer than the wares he sells.”

Those remarks of mine drew a letter from Mr John Reith (later Lord Reith), Managing Director of the British Broadcasting Company as it was then. In it he invited me to call upon him at their new headquarters on Savoy Hill. I see that tall gaunt figure with the scarred cheek banging his fist down upon a very large glossy table devoid of papers, as he growled, “The Press think that they can smash the BBC. The Press will find they are mistaken.” At that moment I put my money on Mr John Reith, and came away from that talk convinced that his broadcasting policy was going to make the gramophone and wireless to a large extent a mutual help to one another. I came away determined to spur the recording companies into a bolder policy over good music; Mr John Reith was equally determined to pay no attention to the quacking of Fleet Street about the miseries of chamber music and Bach cantatas being allowed a place in the programmes of the BBC against the aim of Fleet Street to give the public what the public wanted. As I left him with an assurance that my magazine would recognize the value of broadcasting to the gramophone Mr Reith told me he was hoping to bring out a weekly paper in September which was to be called *The Radio Times*. He added that he had had promises

of articles about broadcasting from Mr Bernard Shaw, Mr H. G. Wells, and Mr Arnold Bennett and that he hoped I would agree to contributing an article sometime. That promise I was to keep the following Spring of 1924.

However, for the birth of *The Gramophone* I must come back to the early part of 1923, after I had written the article for Robin Legge but before the publication of *Gramophone Nights* and my subsequent meeting with Mr John Reith. It was then that I wrote to my brother-in-law Christopher Stone to ask if he would like to take up the other half of £2000 to launch a new paper called *The Gramophone*. He wrote back to say that he thought it was a venturesome undertaking in view of the development of wireless which would soon make the gramophone obsolete. I do not fancy that I convinced him by my argument that the wireless could not harm but would in all probability help the gramophone. However, he agreed more out of good nature than conviction to become a partner. It was a good thing that the two great recording companies, HMV and Columbia were less discouraging than most of my friends and acquaintances about my new venture or *The Gramophone* would never have become an accomplished fact. I was shaken for a moment when Walter L. Yeomans who was in charge of the Educational Department of HMV told me that there were already four trade papers in existence: *The Sound Wave*, *The Talking Machine News*, and two others the names of which I have forgotten, but when he went on to say that he thought HMV might favour the idea of something that aspired to take the gramophone seriously I was encouraged. Alec Robertson who was one of the musical advisers to HMV echoed Yeomans' encouragement and he was to be associated with *The Gramophone* for nearly fifty years, finally retiring from the post of music editor in December 1971.

The Managing Director of HMV was the late Alfred Clark, an American who had been a moving spirit in the great development of the company from the time it had opened its first office in Maiden Lane with a typewriter as a subsidiary product. I was invited to lunch with him at Hayes, and although he listened with patience I think he thought my plan was a bubble blown by a mad amateur. However, he promised us three pages a month of advertisements for a year—two pages from "His Master's Voice" and one from their popular-price Zonophone records—at seven guineas each.

"And we shan't object to your calling your paper *The Gramophone*," Clark added.

"Why should you?" I asked in astonishment.

"Well, it is a proprietary title, you know," he replied with a smile.

"Gramophone" was invented when Edison successfully opposed the right of exploiters of Emil Berliner's new method of recording to use "phonograph", which he had registered for the instrument that played his old cylinders, patented in 1877. I have never understood how Edison managed to establish a proprietary right to a word he did not invent. Emil Berliner's original word was "grammophone" but the less accurate "gramophone" has won and it is curious how many people still write "gramophone". Indeed, in that book of programmes compiled by Archibald Marshall and me the title on the cover was "Gramophone Nights".

The reception of the less exalted members of the Savile Club to my plans for my new paper discouraged me from approaching Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Charles Stanford for a contribution to the first number :

"Start a paper about the gramophone? What extraordinary ideas you do have!"

In the end it was the ever good-natured Mark Hambourg who gave me an article on piano recording for the first number of the new paper. When I look at this number today I wonder how there was ever a second :

'April 1923, Vol. 1, No. 1. Editorial Office: Isle of Herm, Channel Islands. Publishing Office: 48 Hatfield Street, S.E.1.'

The latter was the private address of Cyril Storey, a friend of Walter Yeomans, who had volunteered to handle the distribution.

In this first issue were twenty-one pages of reading matter, eleven of which had been written by myself under various signatures, one page by my wife, Faith Stone, and a page and a half of reviews of some of the latest records by my old friend John Hope-Johnstone under the pseudonym James Caskett. The Prologue which now reads uncommonly like the preliminary announcement of a school magazine that is being published as a rival to *the* school magazine stated that "our policy will be to encourage the recording companies to build up for generations to come a great library of good music. I do not want to waste time in announcing what we are going to do in future numbers, because I do not know yet if there is any real need for this review at all."

Following this came half a page about a Royal record, which we made the excuse for bringing out the paper almost at the end of April, in order that our readers might have authentic information about a record which King George V and Queen Mary had made of their Empire Day Messages to the children of the British Empire. The ten-inch disc, which had *God Save the King* on one

side and *Home Sweet Home* on the other, cost five shillings and six pence—27½p in today's currency. All profits were to be distributed by His Majesty among children's hospitals and charities. The announcement continued, "No other means are in existence by which the children of London, Inverness, Calcutta, Ottawa and Fremantle can at, say, noon on Empire Day 1923, hear speeches by their King Emperor and Queen Empress delivered in their own voices . . . Indeed, very few of the many millions of British subjects have heard the King speak, and fewer have heard the Queen."

The pride in that achievement of HMV expressed by Walter Yeomans may seem naïve nowadays after the achievements of radio and television in the way of Royal speeches, but the gramophone, I think, deserves to be given a pioneer's credit.

For that first issue of *The Gramophone*, which appeared on April 23rd, 1923, we printed 6,000 copies, not all of which were sold: for the second issue, which appeared in June, we cut the order to 3,000 and immediately it went out of print! Thereafter it never fell below the figure of 5,000.

In the autumn of 1926 the auditors gave a rather disturbing picture of the financial side of *The Gramophone*, but the young accountant, Cecil Pollard, who had been sent to advise us did not completely lose his confidence in the future of the paper. To confirm his faith in that future he agreed to leave his job and work for *The Gramophone*. Cecil Pollard joined *The Gramophone* as business manager in 1926 from which time the paper never looked back, not even during the depressing decade of the thirties which was a difficult time for the recording companies owing to the financial muddle into which the world got itself, and naturally some of those difficulties were felt by *The Gramophone*. During that difficult decade I was never in the least doubt that the policy of encouraging the growing taste both in Britain and the USA for records of the best in music was the right one, and Cecil Pollard's prudent skill prevented our circulation from dropping heavily. Towards the end of 1929 the offices of *The Gramophone* were moved to Soho Square from Frith Street, and with the expectation that the wireless trade would be as intelligent as the recording companies and the makers of gramophones we thought that a new weekly review of broadcasting called *Vox* would be a success but the last thing the wireless wanted was to encourage the BBC to improve their programmes. The wireless trade believed the 'highbrow' tendencies of the BBC about which the Press were complaining, would spoil business. A year later the names of *Vox*, *The Radio Critic* and *The Broadcast Review* were incorporated in

The Gramophone because it became clear the enterprise was in fact premature.

At this moment let me recall with gratitude the courage of Sir Edward Lewis when, amid that financial mix-up both in Europe and America, he launched that well beloved little portable gramophone of the trenches called Decca as a recording company. Walter Yeomans moved over from HMV to The Decca Record Company and before he died was able to know that Decca was well on its way to being a great company which it still is today. Cecil Pollard also died knowing that the most valuable contribution he had made to *The Gramophone's* future was to have a baby son in 1929. He and his wife, Nellie, managed to steer Tony Pollard's ambition to become a motor-racing star to devoting his energies to steering *The Gramophone*, although he remains the driver by whom I sit with more relaxation than any other. Without that capable steering we should not now be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of that little paper born on the Island of Herm.

Compton Mackenzie

Producing the Records

by John Culshaw

When I joined the record industry in 1946 the title of recording producer was unknown. It did not really establish itself until the nineteen-sixties, although it was preceded by the clumsy and now old-fashioned designation of A and R man—Artists and Repertoire. Yet long before the war men like Fred Gaisberg, Walter Legge, David Bicknell, Harry Sarton, Walter Yeomans, Frank Lee and Charles O'Connell—to name but a few—were working in one musical area or another as recording producers. Even before the first World War a sort of embryonic specimen must have existed, although given such limited technical facilities the job must have called for more ingenuity than creativity.

It certainly underwent a radical change during my career. The traditional requirement was for someone who could read music fluently and who knew at least the rudiments of sound balance; he had also to be able to handle artists *up to a point*. I am laying a stress there, because in the early days the artists could always get the last word if they wanted. Whatever score you were recording was divided into sections lasting between four and five minutes, and each section was then recorded several times at 78 rpm on wax discs. If you wanted to play back from a wax—to check balance, for example—it could not thereafter be used for processing. The routine was to make one 'test' recording for playback purposes, followed by three or four master recordings of the same four minute section. Output was expected to average four such sides during a three hour session—a total of about sixteen minutes. The waxes then went to the factory for processing, and a week or two later shellac test pressings arrived for comparison and evaluation. The factory was notified about the final choice—version B of Side 1, version A of Side 2, version D of Side 3, and so on—and the records went into production. Editing did not exist, and the choice was sometimes agonizing: I remember a solo piano recording where three of the four performances were musically clean but a shade dull, whereas the fourth was dazzling from the first to the penultimate notes. The final chord however contained scarcely

one right note, and was so comical that it torpedoed the rest of the performance.

Odd things happened in those days. Matrices with similar numbers (like D26589 and D26859) occasionally became transposed, and in one classic case the eighth side of a ten-sided version of Brahms's Violin Concerto was in fact the fifth side of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. Even funnier was a 10-inch disc by Anton Dermota of two Schumann songs. The first side was indeed *Mondnacht*; but the second, which according to the label was *Der Nussbaum*, turned out to be part two of a comic monologue by Norman Evans which began with the words "Ee, that's better!"

The arrival in the late forties of magnetic tape as a recording medium to replace the old wax discs was a major revolution technically and musically. It began to alter the function of the producer. The LP was just around the corner, and one was able at least to get rid of those wretched four minute sections. Indeed, theoretically you could record as long as you liked, governed only by the length of the tape and the maximum master recording permitted by the Musicians' Union, which was twenty minutes in three hours. (In those early days the tape speed was thirty inches per second, but a few years later with better quality tape it was reduced to fifteen inches, which has remained the standard ever since.) Playback without damage was immediately possible, and so was editing. That unfortunate pianist could have retained his brilliant fourth performance, with the addition of a correct final chord from any one of the other three.

One brief but nightmarish episode preceded the arrival of magnetic tape. LPs were required for export to the USA *before* professional tape machines had been installed. This meant that you lined up, say, eight sides of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra on 78 rpm turntables and dubbed them on a disc revolving at $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, attempting to make musical sense of the joins between sides. It was more a matter of luck than skill, and was all the more difficult because some 78 rpm sides had either 'artificial' endings (e.g., resolutions not provided by the composer) or overlaps (e.g., the final chord of one side might be repeated at the start of the next). This tiresome business came to an end when we had tape, since you simply copied the 78 rpm sides on to tape and edited them together.

Gradually, in the studio, the producer was assuming a status far above that of a mere score reader. Though I hardly knew him at the time, I was aware of the very close professional relationship that Walter Legge developed with many of his artists. Some people were suspicious of the growing influence and

authority of the producer, but others knew that he could create conditions and provide musical advice which would help an artist to relax and give of his best in the studio. The potential for opera production on records first struck me in the very early fifties when I heard a complete *Porgy and Bess* recorded by Columbia in the USA; it fairly jumped to musical and dramatic life, and for the first time (so far as I know) carried a rather significant credit at the end of the cast list: Produced for records by Goddard Lieberson. Mr. Lieberson was not long in gaining promotion to the very high echelons of CBS, but it was his *Porgy* which set the pattern for the imaginative use of sound (and sound effects) for opera on records.

The sudden realization by the record companies that the producer might be a creative influence of some importance led to the occasional bizarre mistake, such as the assumption that a stage producer might be employed with advantage in the recording studio. On one such occasion the gentleman in question elected to add a spoken running commentary over the music of the opera he was recording, and as this was in the days of single-track tape machines nothing could be done subsequently to remove the text. On the other hand, the companies tended to overlook the time needed by staff producers to prepare themselves properly for a difficult assignment, and burdened them with all sorts of incidental administrative duties. When I worked regularly in Paris in the early fifties, I was required not only to organize and produce the sessions and negotiate with publishers (which, especially in France, is a full time job in itself), but also to pay the orchestra and artists. Although the experience of writing a cheque in terms of millions is exciting, even if they are only (old) francs, it should not in my opinion be part of the producer's job: his attention should be elsewhere. In my own case things came to a head many years later in Geneva when, after an exhausting operatic session which had run from midnight until three in the morning, I was awakened just after seven by a Swiss special delivery man attached to a large Alsatian dog, and bearing several thousand pounds in Swiss francs which I was supposed to distribute to the cast and the chorus. I went on strike and thereafter refused to handle payments.

The coming of stereo obviously made a huge difference to the producer's activity. Once we had rid ourselves of the temptation to produce ping-pong effects, the possibilities for enhanced sound seemed limitless. Stereo demanded two tracks, but it was not very long before we had four. Today, eight or sixteen or more tracks are commonplace, even though the final

product appears in two-track (stereo) or four-track (quadraphonic) form. More of this later; at this point it is perhaps time to try to define what the contemporary recording producer is required to do.

To do the job at all, let alone do it well, you have to be either a musician with a strong diplomatic streak, or a diplomat with a strong musical streak. In addition, you need to pretend to know something, though not too much, about technology. You are precisely in the middle between the artists in the studio and the engineers in the control room, and in ideal conditions you will be working in harmony with both and, hopefully, uniting their different activities to make a beautiful record. Lack of communication one way or the other inevitably leads to failure. You also have to be able to tell a lie effectively, which calls for a modicum of acting ability. If an artist has performed inadequately, you will not get a better performance out of him by saying how awful it was. Equally, there is no point in saying that it was great, because if he has any sensitivity at all he will know it was not. In this situation there is no golden rule, except that an *effective* lie (the effect being to boost morale) usually works wonders. And your lie is condoned by your implicit faith in the artist's ability to do better.

The same sort of thing applies in dealing with engineers, who can often be as difficult as Italian tenors. A peremptory demand to change or move a microphone will usually produce either no action at all, or the enactment of an ancient ritual whereby although the order appears to have been carried out, nothing whatsoever has been changed. As a rule, it is wise to approach technical problems in musical terms, and musical problems in technical terms. Thus, if the percussion sounds too closely miked for your taste, it is sensible unless you know your engineer very well to propose moving the entire percussion section several feet backwards. As this will involve much humping of heavy instruments and rostra, it is likely that the engineer will offer to move the microphone, which is what you wanted in the first place. Similarly, if the conductor is forcing the brass section to a degree which virtually renders all other instruments inaudible, you are more likely to get a quick improvement by talking to him about microphone characteristics (of which you know little but he knows less) than by telling him that his internal orchestral balance is faulty.

The question of what I call internal or external balance of an orchestra should be the producer's first concern. Strictly speaking, the balance should always be done in the studio by the conductor. In practice, some conductors are very good at balancing,

many are uncertain and a few are hopeless. Ernest Ansermet, Pierre Monteux and George Szell (to speak only of the dead) were among those in my experience with the most acute sense of balance. If it turns out that, say, the violas are inaudible at a point where they should be heard, the wrong solution is to run out another microphone to give them a boost. The proper way is to analyse *why* they are inaudible and then adjust the balance internally within the orchestra. This may seem elementary, but it is a surprising fact that a good recording producer spends much of his time explaining to rather famous conductors that, for example, the cello line at letter K in the score would be perfectly in balance if he would stop forcing the horns at that point. In the case of a conductor with a poor sense of balance there is really nothing to do but attempt what I call an external balance, *i.e.*, you manufacture the balance in the control room by using a multi-microphone system coupled with a multi-track tape machine, through which errors of balance at the time of recording can later be corrected. As a rule this approach is to be resisted although, if used properly, it can be helpful and time-saving in certain very complicated operatic scenes or in any work calling for various layers or perspectives in sound.

It is of course now the standard approach in the pop recording world, where the producer has emerged rapidly as a figure of importance. It is often the case that what he eventually assembles from his multi-tracks is something that could not be created in live performance conditions. There are no longer very many staff producers on the pop side of the fence, since most of the good ones have found it more remunerative to go free-lance and make their own recordings in private studios or indeed in their own front rooms. Inevitably, the enormous output in the pop field means a high casualty rate among artists, producers and records; equally, the rewards of a success are immense. Some of the techniques of pop recording have rubbed off onto the classical field, and not only in Decca's Phase 4 and EMI's Studio 2 series. Over the past decade the number of microphones and channels in the average classical set-up has multiplied alarmingly. Yet during the first few years of LP the standard equipment was a four or a six channel mixer; it was on such machines that the early LP's of Ansermet, Karajan, Kleiber, Krauss, Serafin and van Beinum were made. The implication was that things *had* to be right in the studio, because if they were not there was little you could do about it. Some very fine records were made in those days, and many of them are still in the catalogue more than twenty years later.

Stereo inevitably meant more channels and more microphones. Then along came the four-track tape machine which, like anything else, could be used or abused. On the positive side it could save time and money if used as a sort of insurance alongside a regular two-track machine. For example, suppose you are recording a complicated scene like the opening of Act One of Verdi's *Otello*. The standard procedure is to try to get it correctly and excitingly balanced on two-track recording; if however something goes slightly wrong with the balance at one point and you have a four-track version available (orchestra on two tracks, with voices and chorus on the other two), then it is a relatively simple matter to correct the error *outside* recording time. You will have saved the time, money and energy needed otherwise for a retake. Exactly the same goes for sound effects. If you put them over music on two tracks you are irrevocably committed to them; but if you use the four-track machine you can have as many second thoughts as you like, again outside costly session time.

But—and it is a very big but—one is easily tempted to use a facility just because it is there. It requires great self-discipline *not* to use forty-eight microphone channels if they are available; and if there are sixteen tracks, then why not use sixteen tracks and play about with them afterwards? With the emergence of quadraphonic recording the temptation is likely to be even greater. Yet as one who has been standing back from the record business for the past five years or so, I can't help feeling that the extra facilities have not always contributed to a better result. One has exactly the same psychological-cum-technical problem in television: if you are scripting a programme for a big studio with five cameras available you will automatically tend to write for five cameras. Yet it can often be the case that the result would be better (cleaner, less fussy) if you were to write for three cameras instead.

One inevitable result of this technical sophistication is that many matters which used to be the conductor's concern have passed into the producer's hands. With rising costs, especially in the classical field, the producer has to make many more decisions than in the past, and make them quickly. In this respect he is beginning to resemble his opposite number in television where, with studio costs substantially higher than in gramophone recording, the producer has total authority and may not even have time to communicate directly with the artist once recording has started, though of course his communication during camera rehearsal will have been extensive. Costs in

television will not permit playback (*i.e.*, replaying what you have just made for the benefit of the artist), and it will not surprise me to learn that something similar comes about in the gramophone world before long. There have been occasions in the past when more time has been spent in the control room listening over and over to playback than in actually making music in the studio; and this, apart from boring the orchestra, is unlikely to continue because costs will make it prohibitive.

Because of the way things seem to be going, the artist in future will need to have total confidence in his producer. There is no reason why he should not. From the distinguished, and frequently uncredited, figures I mentioned at the start of this article a new generation of first-class recording producers has evolved. The record industry is fortunate to have them; but they themselves are enormously privileged people. They are working all the time with the greatest figures in the world of music, and working with a closeness that probably has no parallel elsewhere. The experience and insight they are bound to gain could not be paid for with any kind of fortune, nor acquired through any form of education. The business man who deals with contracts or the agent who sets up appearances both get to know a lot of artists very well; but in any really important sense it is the recording producer who is closest of all, because he alone is working with them through music. His own creativity, though relatively modest, should complement theirs, in order to extract and preserve on a tape or in a groove what may be at one extreme a fresh and youthful approach to the familiar or, at the other, the result of a lifetime's thought and experience.

John Culshaw is the Head of Music, BBC Television. Formerly he was Manager of the Classical Artists Department of The Decca Record Company.

Making the Records

by Sir Adrian Boult

I am indeed happy to accept the Editor's very kind invitation to contribute to *The Gramophone Jubilee Book*. I well remember the foundation of *The Gramophone* by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone. It seemed to me to mark the turning point: to establish the gramophone as an instrument of value whereas it had begun its life as an amusing toy with very squeaky results.

In 1919 I undertook, at very short notice, a twelve weeks' season of ballet with the Diaghilef Company. Coming, as they did, to London so close after the war they attracted an enormous amount of attention, and it therefore occurred to that inveterate discoverer of new movements in music, Fred Gaisberg, that it would be well to have a record or two of the most popular ballets. It was thus that I had the luck to get into the recording studio at a considerably earlier age than most of my colleagues.

We trekked down to Hayes one morning and found ourselves in a studio, so small that it would hardly have held a full-size billiard table. Besides the essential chairs and music stands, there was an enormous gramophone horn, I should think three or four times the size of the one we know so well in the "His Master's Voice" picture. Immediately in front of this sat the leader of the orchestra with his fiddle as nearly inside the mouth of the horn as he could hold it. He was surrounded by a few strings, but in those days, apparently, the low tones of the double-bass were an impossible proposition and the bass part was in the hands of a gentleman with a tuba who puffed away in the furthest corner of the studio with remarkable results. I always longed to hear him operating on the arpeggios in the last movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but this was not to be. I was perched on a little seat high up on the wall near the great horn where I could certainly see everybody (including the cellos who were in rather lofty positions opposite). The perch seemed to me to be in need of a seat-belt but this was never provided! Other instruments were placed at various distances from the recording horn, and an original feature was a large looking-glass into which peered the four players of the orchestral horns

because, of course, the sound came out from the instruments behind them and therefore they turned their backs on us all.

The recording process itself was a great strain on the technicians. Mr Arthur Clark was in charge at that time, but our old friend Mr Leonard Smith was later to come and give us his support. Mr Clark handled large discs of heated wax which looked three or four inches thick, and the indentations on them could not be touched until the wax had hardened. The result of this was that any tests were instantly scrapped, and when we made a master it had to be placed in a special container the moment it was finished. Not for us the cheerful handling of the modern tapes to which one can add so much and thereby improve the performance immeasurably. The performance was there and had to be perpetuated, warts and all. In this way we made double-sided records of tunes from *The Good Humoured Ladies* and the *Boutique Fantasque*. These were followed by other sessions in which I distinctly remember a much cut version of Butterworth's *Shropshire Lad* and some of Arthur Bliss's earliest compositions.

There was a horrible catastrophe on one occasion when, the moment the final chord had been sounded, our gallant composer, who was in the studio with us, shouted at the top of his voice "By Jove, you fellows, that was grand!" This was, of course, immortalized on the wax and had to be scrapped, to our great grief. I tried to persuade Mr Gaisberg that to have the voice of the composer would surely stimulate the sales of the record, but it was decided that this would not do. This also reminds me of the great moment when an eager producer told Mr Casals that he could hear him singing as he played, "Then you can charge double for the records" was the instant response!

This all seems a very far cry from the comfort of a modern studio, but I sometimes think it would be very good for us to have to do or die in this way, and I still feel each time I am asked to do a "patch" to be superimposed on my original performance that I am letting the side down for I ought to be able to do the thing in one. Surely we should be able to treat our recording friends exactly as we treat audiences in the concert room?

Reviewing the Records

by Alec Robertson

The reader who looked up the entry under "Gramophone" in the 1924 edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* would have found nothing but a reference to "Mechanical Appliances (6)" and even the 1926 edition of *Chambers Encyclopædia* spoke of the instrument as "employed for amusement purposes" and as "an office adjunct". Edison is responsible for the latter description for he regarded his phonograph at first as a dictating machine and the letter-heads of the Edison firm read "The Phonograph—The Ideal Amanuensis". Here, therefore, is the forerunner of the dictaphone and the tape recorder.

Compton Mackenzie had the inspired notion, in 1923, of founding a seriously monthly journal to deal with everything, musical and technical, comprised under the word "Gramophone". This hybrid was not to be found in the contemporary edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, or even as late as 1934, which only gives "phonograph"—the term adopted, and still used, by the American industry. Our journal, as the entries above partly reveal, was born into a world in which many and perhaps the majority of musicians, were too prejudiced to perceive the immense possibilities of the gramophone record. Among the shining exceptions were Hugh Allen, Edward Elgar, Walford Davies, Percy Scholes and W. G. Whittaker.

The battle had long been won when Desmond Shawe-Taylor contributed an admirable article of fifteen and a half columns to the entry under 'Gramophone' in the 1954 edition of *Grove*. He sums up the history of the gramophone to that date very neatly by dividing it into three phases, each of approximately a quarter of a century and these I now append :

- (1) 1876-1900, the period of discovery and early experiment;
- (2) 1900-25 from the earliest recordings of serious music to the introduction of electrical recording.
- (3) 1925-48 (in England 1925-50) from the birth of electrical recording to the appearance of slow speed, long playing records.

I joined the newly formed educational department of HMV in 1919. It was based on the pattern of the Victor Talking Machine Company and aimed at showing, by illustrated lectures in schools of all types and to the general public, the benefits and pleasures that could be had from the proper use of the gramophone in school and home. My colleague, Mrs Leigh Henry, and I tramped up and down the British Isles preaching the gospel, while Walter Yeomans, principal of the department, directed our activities and approached the authorities. The results were very satisfactory and eventually even the conservative minded academies and colleges of music capitulated.

By the time *The Gramophone* came into existence there was already, of course, a fairly wide recorded repertoire, extending well beyond the prima-donna complex which had engaged the interest of the recording companies from the start of the twentieth century.

Some important early issues should be chronicled here. In 1903 the first opera to be recorded complete, by the Italian branch of HMV, was Verdi's *Ernani*, contained on over forty single-sided records. The same company made the first chamber music records—single movements of works by Schumann and Mendelssohn—in 1905. In 1909 came the first complete symphony, Beethoven's Fifth by Nikisch and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The first complete string quartet—Brahms, Op. 51 No. 1, was issued in 1923.

I remember one of the HMV top brass saying to me that there were no bad recordings, there was only bad reproduction. The excellent reissues of so many of the recordings of the 1900-25 era do seem, in general, to bear him out.

I turn now to the first issues of *The Gramophone* which make fascinating reading. The magazine was, to begin with, quite a family affair. The Editor, his wife Faith Mackenzie and her brother Christopher Stone, contributed reviews; various literary figures, such as Frank Swinnerton, and other friends of the Editor, wrote articles; Hilaire Belloc provided a series of witty "Epigramophones" the first of which ended with the dismissive line

"Bad to begin with, it becomes no worse."

Peter Latham and myself were the first professional musicians to undertake reviews, but as both of us were on the staff of HMV we had at first to use pseudonyms. It so happened that the offices of the magazine were in Newman Street, W1, and partly over an alley called Newman Passage; so I became Newman Passage (NP) and Peter, Percy Passage (PP)! In those early days

we used to listen to records on one or more of the gramophones sent in by the companies to be assessed, in a large room in the office. Some of the instruments had rather exotic sounding names, such as Kestraphone, Waveola, Flameo-phone—this last involving the use of gas! We played the discs on various types of sound-boxes as well as those the instruments already had.

Each company's monthly release of serious records were submitted for review and were grouped, haphazardly, under their trade names—HMV, Columbia, Velvet Face, Parlophone, Brunswick, Edison. They were then shared out between us. Some judgements of that early period are interesting. "The piano tone can be unreservedly praised" (Joseph Hoffman playing a Rachmaninov Prelude); "the result is amazingly clear and well balanced" ("Salome's Dance"—Strauss), and, quite often, "surface good". This should not awaken surprise for recording techniques naturally continued to improve. What could not be praised—and this continued at least up to 1931—was the frequent omission of the name of the accompanist in vocal and instrumental recordings and of the orchestra in operatic records.

In the November 1924 issue, a reader protested against "the vicious habit of omitting the chorus in celebrity discs", instancing such arias as "Casta diva" from *Norma*. He went on to suggest that "in first reviews of records comments on (a) music, (b) recording and (c) performance (technique and interpretation) seem the essential points to be considered": and so indeed they remain.

Cuts continued for some time to be grievous. As late as 1931 Peter Latham, in reviewing the Flonzaley String Quartet's recordings, made just before they broke up, of Schubert's G major (Op. 161) and Beethoven's E flat minor (Op. 127) Quartets, began by listing score references to numerous cuts in the Schubert, of "a barbaric character", and deplored their presence in the HMV Connoisseur Catalogue. This twenty-eight page review of the Catalogue brings to notice the distinguished name of Herman Klein, whose vast knowledge of opera and operatic singers was a great asset to *The Gramophone*. We have here also reviews by W. R. Anderson, long associated with the magazine, C. M. Crabtree, Henry Warren, Peter Latham and myself. In many cases there is still no mention of who provided the piano and orchestral accompaniments. No cuts were made in the Budapest String Quartet recordings of quartets by Tchaikovsky and Beethoven. This bad practice was at last on the way out.

For the rest this HMV catalogue presented a remarkable and enterprising collection. Another admirable early venture was the founding by *The Gramophone* of the National Gramophonic

Society in 1924, especially noteworthy for the attention it paid to works by British composers. An equally valuable venture, which came some years later and for which we have to thank Walter Legge, was the special issue of recordings by Schnabel of all the Beethoven Piano Sonatas, by Edwin Fischer of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues, and a comprehensive selection in six volumes of songs by Hugo Wolf recorded by such artists as Elena Gerhardt, John McCormack, Gerhard Hüsch and Alexander Kipnis. Most of these were soon out of print but the Gerhardt volume, the Beethoven Piano Sonatas and several other items have since been reissued.

In 1925 the first electrical records were issued and I recall taking one of the first of these—a dance for orchestra by Moskowski—to play at one of my lectures to teachers. It made no impact whatsoever and elicited no comment! The process was, of course, a most important advance and signified the eventual end of the acoustic gramophone.

The one great disadvantage that remained—the short playing time of the records and consequent irritating breaks—was removed in July 1948 when the Columbia Company of the USA gave painful birth to the long-playing record. This finally established itself after a brief 'war of the speeds' and a longer period—not wholly conquered even now—of surface troubles. The Decca Record Company in Britain helped to end the confusion by producing a standard $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm disc of a high technical standard and, as Desmond Shawe-Taylor says in his *Grove* article, "turned the tide so far as serious music was concerned." The mono record was followed by stereo reproduction, involving two sound-channels, in 1958, and we are now threatened with four channels under the chilling name of quadraphony.

Our magazine has had to cope with all these phases since its inception in 1923. Companies have proliferated and are still being added to. The situation therefore that confronts today's reviewers is enormously different to the small groups of discs, under each company's name, which I mentioned when writing of the earliest years of *The Gramophone*. This therefore is the background against which I will try to describe the tasks and problems that a reviewer has now to cope with.

Even in the very earliest days we needed reviewers who had special knowledge of various fields of music, some then little known such as Gregorian Chant, church and secular music up to the first decades of the seventeenth century, folk music, organ music of the Bach era and earlier, contemporary music and its new techniques. It was not, and I hope never will be, the purpose of our magazine to appeal just to the learned and to compete in

any way with the few good music journals, but rather to give palatable guidance and information, devoid of a plethora of technical terms, to the ordinary gramophone listener, whose preferences are often surprising. The letter from a reader I quoted earlier on gave the right priorities: the music, the performance (technique and interpretation), and the recording—to which one should add the presentation of the issue, that is, the quality of the sleeve or album note and—a minor detail—the picture on the outer cover. There have been some horrors! Today the standard is high, both in originality and reproduction.

Two practical points: (1) All our reviewers have basically the same type of equipment: it is good, reliable but not necessarily the most expensive. We keep in mind readers who cannot afford such luxuries, who do not have large rooms and who cannot, living in flats or terraces of houses, turn on the volume anything like full blast, a practice which, in any case, is profoundly unmusical. Expensive apparatus, also, is apt to exaggerate faults that are not noticeable to anything like the same extent on an average reproducer. (2) A very important part of a reviewer's job is the comparison of different recordings of the same work. People often say to me, "I suppose you have thousands of records". I do not: none of us do. The records sent to us are returned to the central library maintained, since 1923, by *The Gramophone* and so can be borrowed to make the required comparisons. White label pressings, however, not being the finished article, are not returned and are regarded as reviewers' perquisites.

We come now to one of the main problems facing all reviewers of music, whether live or recorded; that is the standards to be used in music criticism. How does a reviewer judge the performance to which he listens? His standards are bound, to some extent, to be derived from inspired performances he has heard. To give a personal example. I was fortunate enough to hear Chaliapin sing Boris in Mussorgsky's great opera at its first performance at Drury Lane in 1913: many years later I heard Boris Christoff in the same role but though his was a fine performance I could not place him on quite the same level as Chaliapin. It is also difficult for a reviewer to evaluate fairly records made by artists he has never heard. A good example is Emmy Destinn whose recordings of arias from *Butterfly*, *Tosca* and *Aida*—the first performances of which by her in England I heard at Covent Garden—give no idea of how glorious and absolutely unforgettable she was. I could multiply instances. At the same time it would be absurd to suggest that an imaginative reviewer could not, some

exceptions apart, arrive at something approaching the same conclusions.

The criticisms in *The Gramophone* are said to carry considerable weight and on the basis that the magazine is read by something in the region of 120,000 people from every corner of the world this is perhaps understandable. In addition to this it is a known fact that today the international reputations of many artists have been made as a result of their gramophone recordings. Thus, the responsibility which the record reviewer has to accept is considerable and it is essential that his judgement should be fair. Besides criticism of the music and the performance he has to pay close attention to the *quality* of the recording in every particular. It is also important to introduce one's critical judgements at the right place. If the performance or recording, or both, are not good, but have some points in their favour, the reviewer has to decide whether his verdict be a much modified acceptance or a decisive rejection. All this is, no doubt, obvious enough, but placing unfavourable criticism is no easy task: a recording can be killed in an opening paragraph.

It is also important that a recording should be played in its entirety. The literary critic can skip through a book—and that he has done so, if one happens to be the author, becomes all too clear!—but it is dangerous and more reprehensible to take this course with a recording. Over the years there have been many instances of reviewers discovering poor tape joins, transposed movements, omitted bars, etc., during the course of their listening. When these have occurred on advanced 'test pressings' the companies concerned have been able to correct the faults and the buyer has been none the wiser. In the case of 'finished pressings' buyers have had to be warned and companies have had to withdraw the records until the fault could be corrected.

One of the things that makes reviewing so arduous is harbouring doubts as to whether one was really right in making this or that criticism; if it really was fair comment. This means finding the doubtful places on the disc several times over, which is time consuming and irritating particularly with multi-record sets. There is also the search for information the reader might expect to be offered and which would be helpful, but which is omitted from the sleeve-note and is often hard to find.

This seems to have become almost a tale of woe but it is only a part of the story. I have never ceased to be excited—and now, in retirement from reviewing, still am—by what each month's issues brought forth and promised, and rejoiced exceedingly when the promise was fulfilled.



Percy Wilson, Technical Editor and Technical Adviser to THE GRAMOPHONE from 1924 to 1966, spanning the years with an EMG Mk. 10a and a Ferrograph Tape Recorder



Sir Adrian Boult (photo: Lyrita)



John Culshaw

We may complain about continual duplication, often with justice—but the public never seem to tire of the familiar classical round and, after all, the companies are there to meet demand. They do very much more than this in continually enlarging the repertoire especially in regard to music both old and new, and for this deserve not only our gratitude but our help in inducing the public to break new ground. A special word is due to the smaller companies in this matter: they need all the support they can get.

There is enormous satisfaction to be able to write an enthusiastic review and I have never minded being accused of gushing. Some readers may remember that after listening to Beecham's glorious recording of *La Bohème* I declared that I had to go out and cool off in the garden before settling down to review it in sober prose.

Readers learn to trust critics: this is the acid test for it means they do not resent the drain on their pockets which our enthusiastic recommendations bring about. Perhaps I may be forgiven in relating once more an incident that left a deep impression on me. I had been lecturing to some teachers at Chichester. One of these travelled home with me and when we changed at dreary Barnham Junction there was time to have a cup of tea before the next train came in. A porter came in the refreshment room and I overheard him say to the woman in charge behind the bar, "I'm saving up for Leonora Number 3". "Polygamy", I remarked to my friend, "or Beethoven?" It was, of course, Beethoven. I discovered that both the porter and the woman were passionate Beethoven lovers and I delightedly pictured them saving up, out of their hard-earned wages, to buy recordings of Beethoven, then taking home the new disc and flooding their houses with his glorious music, looking, thereafter, at the growing number of their records on the shelf by their dear friend and constant inspirer. This is something no reviewer should forget.

Alec Robertson first contributed to "The Gramophone" in December 1923. In June 1955 he became Music Editor of the magazine, retiring in December 1971. In June 1972 he celebrated his 80th birthday and for his "services to music" was honoured by Her Majesty the Queen with the award of the MBE.

Reproducing the Records

by Percy Wilson

One sunny afternoon in 1923, my wife and I walked down Oxford Street, just looking at shop windows.

In a music shop, I saw a copy of the third issue of *The Gramophone*, edited by Compton Mackenzie. This intrigued me because I had recently bought what was to me an expensive table gramophone. So I bought a copy, and was enthralled, particularly by the discussion that was going on about "Needle-Track-Alignment".

I promptly applied my mathematical mind to the problem of "tracking error", as we now call it, and found two lovely formulæ for reducing the error (for a 9-inch tone-arm) to less than 2° at all points across the record. It was the "overlap" and "offset" principle, though I then called it "vector" and "divergence". This pleased me very much as a mathematical exercise.

Early in 1924 I went to *The Gramophone* office in Newman Street in order to get Numbers 1 and 2, and there I met Christopher Stone, the London Editor. This was one of the major turning-points of my life. When I told him that I had a mathematical solution of the alignment problem, he immediately said: "Why not write me an article about it?"

I wrote two which were published in the September and October issues, and created a considerable reaction, both in the industry but more particularly in gramophone societies. I recall that I was promptly invited to talk on the subject to both the Brixton and the Wandsworth societies, and since I myself lived in South London, I readily accepted.

It was at Brixton that I met G. W. Webb and H. F. V. Little who later joined me in the foundation of the Gramophone Expert Committee. Webb was the head of a building firm in Sutton, Surrey, but his hobby for many years had been phonographs and gramophones. He had a wonderful collection, including an early Edison and a large array of sound-boxes. He also had a mechanical workshop with precision lathes and other tools which helped us tremendously when we joined together in research.

Little was an industrial chemist with a mathematical-cum-

scientific training at London University. He was Chief Chemist, and later Managing Director as well, of Thorium Limited, which owned the Monazite Sands in Ceylon, from which the company extracted various rare elements. I recall going with him to the National Chemical Laboratory at Teddington, where he offered Professor Morgan a supply of Monazite sand, resulting in a paper to the Royal Society which broke the American stranglehold on the production of helium.

Little's hobby was opera. He always travelled in Europe during his summer vacation, and always stayed at places where there was an opera house. His knowledge of opera and the artists was encyclopædic. I shall always be grateful to him, for it was he who created my own love of opera. Perhaps the reason in both our cases was that opera provides an escape into an imaginary, yet romantic and sentimental world for those of us whose mundane affairs are concerned with technological or even purely scientific activities.

Anyway, Little and I became close personal friends, and joined together later in the twenties at Covent Garden as well as in gramophone circles. I became Technical Adviser to the magazine, and he, under the pseudonym of "Piccolo", became the originator of "Collectors' Corner", where he was able to display his extensive knowledge both of operatic artists and of the recordings they had made. Later, after the retirement of Herman Klein, that supreme impresario of operatic singing, Little became the reviewer of operatic records. He had not Klein's expertise on the techniques of singing, but he certainly had an outstanding experience of artists and operatic productions.

Moreover, he was a real expert on the technical aspects of sound reproduction. I took my hat off to him on this, many and many a time. So, naturally, he became one of the members of the Expert Committee when Christopher Stone invited me to form one after my articles in September and October 1924 had made their significant impact.

Another member, nominated in fact by Compton Mackenzie himself, was C. L. Balmain who had invented a gramophone consisting of a conical horn plus sound-box, which travelled radially across the record, supported by floats on two mercury baths.

This for many years was Compton Mackenzie's favourite instrument, especially after I had designed an exponential horn (in 1926) to supersede Balmain's conical affair.

Balmain was Deputy Controller of HM Stationery Office. This became significant, because when I had designed the exponential

horn and had had a "former" made for it (at my own personal expense) he arranged for one of the Stationery Office contractors to build up a horn on my "former", by sticking on parcel tape! Later we arranged for papier mâché horns to be made on the same "former" by a firm (Scientific Supply Stores) in South London, whose premises, alas, were blitzed in the Second World War.

As a digression from my main historical theme, perhaps I may be allowed at this stage to describe the papier mâché technique. This was built up by pasting blue sugar-bag absorbent paper, layer by layer on the "former". A thickness of about $\frac{3}{8}$ in was thereby secured. The whole thing was then allowed to dry. In drying the papier mâché horn lifted itself from the "former". This was indeed fortunate, because I later found that this very process converted the crude exponential formula adopted in the construction of the "former" into the modified form as deduced later in the Appendix to the chapter on Horns in my (and George Webb's) book *Modern Gramophones and Electrical Reproducers*. The conversion was as accurate as one could have wished. After the horn had dried out it was sprayed internally with varnish and externally with a peculiar preparation for stiffening.

Our success led other firms to have their designs made up by the Scientific Supply Stores. Instances were the EMG, the Expert and the Bond models.

The other two original members of the Expert Committee were Lionel Gilman and W. S. Wild. Neither had any special technological qualifications, but both were devoted gramophiles and had written forceful letters to *The Gramophone* about playing records, particularly with bamboo fibre needles, Gilman under his own name, and Wild under the pseudonym "Indicator".

Later, when electronic methods of recording had been adopted, we co-opted four other members. All were on the staff of the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington and all became heads of their respective departments: Heat, Electricity, Metrology and Acoustics. In that way we secured the highest possible expertise at minimum cost! For we were all unpaid, even as to our personal expenses.

I recall one vivid incident at our first meeting. Lionel Gilman accidentally knocked over a box of Christopher Stone's steel needles. They scattered themselves over the carpet. George Webb promptly produced a large magnet from his pocket and gathered them all up. We wondered what other mysteries his pockets contained. Anyhow, we thereupon made him chairman. I also recall that one of our earliest discussions was about the superiority of external horn gramophones over even the most

expensive cabinet models. Balmain, of course, had his own patented machine (Patent 177215/20). I had the table model which had cost me more than I could really afford at the time. The others had the HMV "Schools" model which had an external "flower" horn and 4-spring motor. As it was remarkably cheap I sold my table model and bought a "Schools" model with the proceeds.

It was at this meeting too, that I was stimulated to study the properties of horns. Fortunately I was adept in Hydrodynamics and the Theory of Sound which, along with Electricity, had been my special subjects when I took my degree at Oxford. So I proceeded to extend Lord Rayleigh's analysis for conical horns into a general horn theory. This was in 1925-6. Later I discovered that precisely the same solution had been found by A. G. Webster in America in 1919. But his work had just remained filed away for many years. Thanks to the Expert Committee, and particularly to Balmain, mine was put into production within a few months.

Before that, however, I had been interested in a feature, arising out of my October 1924 article, which had been drawn to my attention by the letter of a correspondent in *The Gramophone*. I mention this because it has been the subject of a good deal of notice in recent years. This was that the friction of the record on the stylus created an inward "skating force". So I drew attention to it in a note published in the March 1925 issue, and indicated a method of correction which was easy and simple with the conventional tone-arms of those days since they had their full mass in front of the vertical axis; but which no longer applies to modern pickup arms where counter-weights are used behind the axis so as to reduce the playing weight. However, other methods have been found for these.

It is intriguing to note that whilst we were only 20 years ahead of America in the matter of "needle-track-alignment", we were 40 years ahead in reference to "skating force". The effect of this force was not easy to observe when steel needles were used, but it was highly significant for fibre needles. Gilman and Wild always used fibres; Balmain used steel; Little, Webb and I normally used fibres but occasionally used steel. We soon found that the fibre points broke down more readily when the "skating force" had not been corrected, and therefore concluded that even with steel needles the skating force would place a substantial stress on the groove walls.

Of course, all this led to debate on the virtue or otherwise of fibre needles, and this set us off into much research on construc-

tion of sound-boxes, and to carry this out we had to learn what the functions of the various items were. We were fortunate in that George Webb had made a special study of the history of phonographs and gramophones, and could direct our attention to many significant patents. We were also fortunate that both Wild and Little were friendly with a working jeweller, named Virtz, who made superb sound-boxes, and before long each of us was the proud possessor of one or more of them.

So we gradually acquired both deeper knowledge and authority, and became justified in the title of the articles we wrote month after month: *Crede Experto*—put your trust in one who has been through the mill!

Then came Electrical Recording. It was first demonstrated in this country by Herbert Ridout of the Columbia Graphophone Company at the Congress which *The Gramophone* organized at Caxton Hall, London, in July 1925. The record was of a choir with 4,850 voices singing *Adeste Fideles* on Columbia 9048, and made a sensation on the Balmain machine which was then on view. Mind you, it was not revealed at this stage that the recording was by an electrical process. That would have prejudiced the whole existing acoustic catalogues of the recording companies. But, later, records crept out in the companies' lists which were obviously different, and then the secret had to be revealed.

Another revelation at this Congress was of a pickup and a loudspeaker system, invented by two young British amateurs, which was operated through piezo-electric Rochelle Salt elements. Later, their patents were taken up by Mr Brush of Ohio, who had recently retired from his huge electric corporation in America and was searching for a new hobby. I told the story about this in *The Gramophone* in November 1934, and more recently (1970) in a paper I presented to the Audio Engineering Society of America. It is a really romantic story. Historically, it had a crucial effect on the production of inexpensive, yet acceptable electric radio-grams in subsequent years.

It must be admitted at once that the early electric records were something of a disappointment, particularly in respect of voices. Yet we of the Expert Committee were convinced that once the trial stages were over, they would supersede the records made by the older acoustical system. We proceeded to modify our sound-box technique so as to neutralise the somewhat nasal quality which was the subject of so much criticism.

It was just at this time that I completed my design of the 5ft exponential horn for the Balmain machine, and arranged that all

six members of the Expert Committee should spend a weekend at Jethou in the Channel Islands, where Compton Mackenzie lived, and demonstrate to him the new techniques. We took a skeleton Balmain machine with us as well as the parcel-tape model, described earlier, of the exponential horn, and a number of sound-boxes, all of which, however, had been designed for fibre needles. It took us about an hour to set it up in Compton's library. The first record we played was a Sousa march. It knocked us all, Compton included, endwise. By the end of the day he was so bilious as to be positively green. He had to remain in bed for the rest of our stay, during which we set about 'tuning' one of the sound-boxes to match the new system and for use with steel needles.

After that I modified the "former" for the horn by designing a cast-iron elbow to go with it so as to make it suitable for the HMV "Schools" model. This combination gave us satisfaction for a number of years. It was placed on the market by the Scientific Supply Stores under the title "The Wilson Panharmonic Horn". But foolishly, as I see now, I did not bargain for any royalty or other payment!

Then, inevitably, came electrical reproduction, with pickup, amplifier, and loudspeaker. We knew for sure that it must in time supersede the sound-box system: it was so much more flexible and controllable. Yet again, to start with, it was something of a disappointment in its commercial application, though radiograms began to dominate the market. It was at this stage that the burden on the Expert Committee became too onerous for efficiency, particularly in keeping track of new developments and in reviewing new products. So Christopher Stone decided to have a full-time Technical Editor, and my younger brother, Gilbert, was appointed in 1929. I remained as unpaid Technical Adviser, but Gilbert did all the donkey work, including the keeping of Christopher's HMV Electrical Reproducer in order.

This was important for *The Gramophone*, for by this time Christopher Stone had built up a superb reputation as a Disc Jockey both for the BBC and later for Radio Luxembourg. I recall with some joy his first broadcast for the BBC from the Savoy Hill studio, for I accompanied him. He was decidedly nervous, and this must have been effective with listeners, for they never regarded him as any kind of superior person. Nor was he, but always modest and helpful. Perhaps what intrigued me most about his broadcast was that the pickup used by the BBC at that time virtually destroyed the disc at its first playing!

Happily for my brother, I had by 1929 just completed, in

collaboration with George Webb, my first book on *Modern Gramophones and Electrical Reproducers* which described the results of our researches as well as those of Maxwell and Harrison of the Bell Telephone Laboratories in America. It was published by Cassell but has long been out of print. I still have a real affection for it, and it had some rave reviews, particularly as it was the first book to be published about the new techniques. Its chapter on "Horns" is still regarded as a classic.

So the ten years from 1929 to the outbreak of war in 1939 were years of consolidation and development. The crystal pickup nearly ousted the magnetic pickup. It had a much higher output, so that one stage of amplification could be omitted in the valve amplifier, and this of course reduced costs appreciably. It has even been claimed that this fact saved the industry from insolvency. Yet it should be noticed in this connection that towards the end of the period, the pendulum swung back to the magnetic pickups (of greatly improved types) to ensure sound reproduction of superior quality. Voigt had a moving-coil type, and both EMI and Decca had moving-iron (or variable reluctance) types in this country, matched only by Ortofon in Denmark for a moving coil type, and by Telefunken in Germany.

When war broke out in 1939, the Expert Committee had to be disbanded, and both my brother Gilbert and I had to leave the service of *The Gramophone*. During the war the magazine carried on, but the technical aspect was virtually dormant and it was looked-after on a sort of caretaker basis by Geoffrey Howard-Sorrell.

After the war a new era dawned, and in 1953, having retired from the Civil Service, I was invited to come back as Technical Editor. We then entered on a most exciting decade. But before we come to that, and in explanation of it, mention must be made of one or two other significant things that happened in the pre-war period.

The theory on which electrical recording was developed was based on two fundamental principles which were thought to be essential for perfect reproduction.

Firstly, the apparatus, including the reproducer as well as the recorder, should uniformly deal with all sound frequencies within the normal range of hearing, *i.e.*, from about 30 cycles per second (now denoted by Hz) to about 20,000Hz. Secondly, only the original components of the sound that were fed into the recorder should come out in the reproduction. That, of course, was a tall order, and fortunately the human ear is tolerant, otherwise all sound reproduction would be impossible. Thus the spectrum of

the old, acoustic recording departed substantially from both criteria. The frequency range only extended from about 250Hz to about 2,500Hz, and there was a huge peak between 1,500Hz and 2,000Hz. Moreover, the second criterion was far from being satisfied. Yet records did manage to achieve a sense of realism.

The prospect with electrical recording was much better. At first, a uniform response in the recording from 200Hz to 5,000Hz was aimed at, with tailing off outside those limits in a prescribed fashion. This prescription was based on a preliminary study of the tracking of a stylus in a groove: at the bass end the amplitude (that is, the distance of the side to side modulation) of the groove would be too great for the needle, in its attachment to the reproducing mechanism, whether sound-box or pickup, to manage with comfort; and in the treble, the sinuosities of the groove would have too large a curvature to accommodate a needle of finite dimensions.

It was therefore contemplated that corrections for the lack of uniformity should be made in the reproducing amplifier.

The idea worked tolerably well except for two things. Both recording and reproducing elements then available introduced distortion, so that the second principle was not satisfied: severe criticisms were in fact made about the "nasality" and "fair-ground quality" of the tone; and the early pickups imposed too much strain on the groove walls, so that record wear became pronounced.

Happily, these disabilities were gradually avoided with improved instrumentation. Certainly by 1945, as a result of work undertaken as part of the war effort, the possible range of recording at the treble end had been extended to 20,000Hz, though a limit of 15,000Hz was voluntarily imposed as a general rule. The art of reproducing had also been intensively studied, notably by Pierce and Hunt of Harvard University (Journal of the American Acoustical Society, July 1938), so that the distortion factor was substantially reduced. Thereafter it was no longer thought that for ideal tracking the stylus should penetrate to the bottom of the groove, as had previously been supposed.

Round about 1926, too, there was a persistent demand for a longer-playing record. I recall that Christopher Stone specially asked me for an article in the December 1926 issue reviewing the prospects, more particularly in reference to electrical recording both on discs and on film. Luckily, I had by this time received full information about research both in Britain (*e.g.*, Voigt, Blumlein) and in America (Harvey Fletcher, Maxfield and Harrison, Rice and Kellogg, S. T. Williams). My American correspondent in

those days, by the way, was David Sarnoff, who later became President of RCA. So I was able to give a persuasive account of the possibilities. But, of course, I was unaware of the promise of magnetic tape, which had not by then been invented. Poulsen had invented magnetic recording on wire, but the response by no means equalled that of disc recording. The magnetic tape development was a German invention during the war, and was 'appropriated' by the Allies at the war's end. I myself was one of the British representatives on the Allied Committee which decided which inventions should be seized!

The fact that long-playing records should be possible was established in 1934 when the Royal National Institute for the Blind, in conjunction with St Dunstan's, produced Talking Books for the Blind. These had 200 grooves to the inch instead of the standard 100 grooves, and played at a speed of 24 rpm instead of the standard 78 rpm. I was asked by the Director of the RNIB, who met me from time to time at the Board of Education, to cooperate with Captain Fraser (now Lord Fraser) of St Dunstan's in developing the project. The recording companies had expressed doubts about its feasibility, so we set up a recording studio at St Dunstan's in Regents Park, and proceeded to solve the various problems that were involved. We were supplied with recording waxes by HMV for the purpose, and after we had demonstrated that good speech recordings were possible, had the utmost cooperation from both HMV and Decca.

But it was only economical to have a minimum of 50 pressings of each disc; and since on the average a talking book required 8 discs, and we had eventually built up a library of 1,500 books, the storage and weight problem became unmanageable for us. So after the war, a change was made to tape recordings. For this purpose, we actually invented the tape cassette and published the details, so as to avoid possible patent complications later.

The other development between 1926 and 1939 to which I wish to draw special attention was that of the moving-coil loudspeaker. This mechanism along with many others had been described in a Siemens Patent 4685 of 1877. It had been used in a number of scientific instruments, but the significant development for loudspeaker work started with a paper read to the American Institute of Electrical Engineers in September 1925, by Rice and Kellogg. The design soon outpaced all others. An alternative electrostatic device had a come-back in about 1953, and is still strongly favoured by some enthusiasts. But for both performance and price the moving-coil loudspeaker still holds an unassailable position in public favour. However, let us come back to 1953 and my

return to *The Gramophone* as Technical Editor. Much had happened in the Audio world between the end of the war and then; but thanks to my pre-war contacts I had been able to keep track. It was an exciting experience.

In the previous five years, not only had the German tape recorder idea been developed, but the long-playing record was with us. Moreover, there was a new, almost silent, record material, and both steel needles and fibres or thorn needles were dead. Sapphire and diamond styli took their place, as I had forecast in November 1934, and there were rumours of even further intriguing things.

I remember my visit in 1963 to the Ampex plant near San Francisco and talking to its Director, Mr Poniatoff, about his courage, when he was first shown the Telefunken Magnetophone in 1946, in deciding to devote the whole of the resources of his small firm, and even mortgaging his home, in order to develop tape recording. He himself told the story in that fascinating book by Gilbert Briggs, *Audio Biographies*, so I will not repeat it here. I will only remark that Poniatoff's enterprize has been one of the most important contributions to Audio since the war. It is not so much the domestic use that is significant: that has not been carried to the full extent of its capability at present. Its real value lies in the way it has transformed the process of recording. Every recording is now made on tape, and is then transferred at leisure to disc—or, in more recent practice, to cassettes or cartridges. This, of course, is to facilitate editing. By this process the final version as put on the market may be a conglomerate of several 'takes', and not necessarily a continuous performance.

Of course, there can be two opinions as to whether this facility of editing and splicing is really desirable or not. In some circumstances, as I pointed out to *The Times* newspaper in February 1966, during the course of a controversy on the legitimacy of editing films and interviews, particularly for television, it can be a menace. I instanced a tape recording I had listened to in October 1961, ostensibly of a speech by Herbert Morrison condemning the conduct of the war by Winston Churchill. This had been built up word for word from Morrison's speeches, so skilfully pieced together that no gap could be distinguished. The voice was accurate, the intonations were accurate. After the built-up tape had been copied on to fresh tape, there were no signs of physical joins. Yet the whole thing was a fraud.

Are the recordings we now hear to be classed as frauds too? It is a delicate question but I think we can say that thanks to the skill and integrity of today's record producers, the facility of

editing and splicing is being used to the benefit of all concerned.

Still, no doubts like this can be held about the value of LP records. They are a boon and a blessing to men and in fact could not be economically produced without the facilities of tape recording. Their inception was largely due to experiments carried out at the CBS Laboratory in Stamford, Connecticut, by Peter Goldmark, its Director, who had had his previous technological training at Cambridge, England. That culminated in 1947 and immediately made a tremendous impact, particularly as a new record material became available at about the same time.

Of course, a controversy arose at once about the best speed and size for the LP record, and a compromise was eventually reached that there should be two speeds, $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm and 45 rpm, and three possible sizes, 7in, 10in, 12in diameter. But it took much longer for a standard frequency response characteristic to be agreed. For a few years each recording company, whether in America or in Europe, had its own characteristic, and amplifier manufacturers had to include a variety of corrective circuits in their control units. All that is now past history, however. Unfortunately, a similar contretemps is arising again in relation to the new 'quadraphonic' (*i.e.*, four-channel) records.

The rumours I mentioned earlier concerned the possibility of obtaining stereophonic sound from the modulations imposed upon a single groove. Blumlein had forecast this in his fascinating British Patent 394,325, applied for in 1931 and granted in 1933. He concluded that there were two possible systems: a combination of the Edison vertical indentation of the groove with the Berliner lateral; or a system in which the indentations for one channel should be on one wall of a V-shaped groove and those for a second channel on the other wall. His patent works out the requirements for each type, and shows that they are compatible by a simple, so-called matrixing, system. Another system, entirely different, was later proposed by Livy (British Patent 612, 163/1946-8) whereby a high frequency carrier signal was modulated up to a frequency of, say, 15,000Hz by one audio channel and from 15,000Hz to 30,000 by the second channel. Rumour had it that Decca in conjunction with Telefunken (the consortium being called Teldec) were busy developing all three systems. For once Rumour proved not to be a lying jade. All three were in fact carried to the production stage between 1952 and 1954. In the meantime, EMI in 1954 had introduced "stereosonic" tapes following Blumlein's philosophy, while in America twin-channel tapes became available following a parallel philosophy of the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Decca, however, decided to keep their proposed system in abeyance until the commercial market was ripe for it. This occurred in 1957 when Westrex announced that their engineers had developed a 45/45 recording system and that they were preparing to produce the appropriate record-cutting machines for sale to recording companies.

The problem then arose as to which of the two systems, vertical/lateral or 45/45, should be made standard. An agreement was reached in Europe in November 1957 and in America in March 1958, that the standard should be the 45/45 arrangement.

Stereo records began to appear in the summer of 1958, and notwithstanding the fact that they demanded for their full exploitation both twin amplifiers and twin loudspeakers, they have rapidly found favour and displaced mono recordings from the market.

Fortunately, they can be played even on mono reproducing systems provided a pickup with adequate vertical compliance is used, and these are now available. They must not, however, be played with the older type of pickup in which the stylus assembly was stiff in the vertical direction, for that would destroy the stereo modulations.

From 1958 to 1970 the major developments have been in the design of improved loudspeakers and pickup cartridges. Some really tremendous achievements have been made in both respects, but especially in respect of cartridges. We used to play our 78 rpm records with sound-boxes at a playing weight (or in America, tracking force) of 5 oz. or so (about 150 grams). In 1950, the pickups for LP records had a playing weight of 10 grams or so. In 1958, a playing weight of 3 grams became feasible. Now, some of the most advanced designs can operate at a playing of 0.5 grams. Record wear has become negligible. The modern bug-bear has become the intrusion of "pops and crackles" due to the deposit on the records not only of fluff and dust, but also of a sticky substance derived from smog, tobacco smoke, household fumes and the like, which float about in the atmosphere and are drawn down to the rotating disc by a sort of vortex action. This substance entraps the particles of grit and gradually hardens, so creating semi-permanent pops. Methods have now been devised for removing it, as well as the loose fluff and dust.

This can be highly important in view of the demands which the new quadraphonic recordings are bound to make on groove cleanliness. For whatever the particular recording system, and I have heard seven and am told that there may be several more coming along, cleanliness of groove will be an absolute "must".

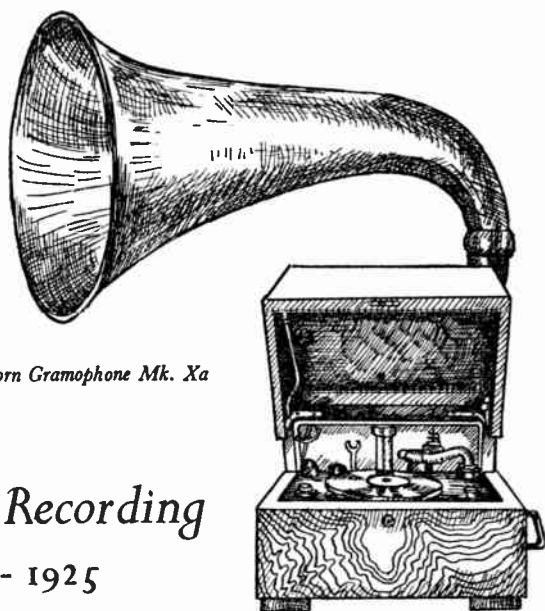
At the time this account is being written it is too early to forecast which of the various proposed systems is likely to succeed in preference to the others; or indeed whether the public as a whole will submit to buying four amplifiers and four loudspeakers, and to having the latter disposed in a square in the living room with chairs for listeners in the middle.

I am sure that my wife will not. But perhaps ours is an exceptional household. The framed motto, given to me in America, and put up in our hall just inside the front door, says:

“The opinions expressed by the husband in this house are not necessarily those of the Management”.

Percy Wilson first contributed to THE GRAMOPHONE in 1924 and but for a break during the war years served as Technical Adviser and latterly as Technical Editor until 1966.





EMG Horn Gramophone Mk. Xa

Acoustic Recording

1923 - 1925

In the early twenties magazine publishing was much more open than it is today. Even so, to found any kind of journal seeking nationwide support required immense faith, and in his Introduction to this book Sir Compton Mackenzie has told of the scepticism that greeted his idea for a journal devoted to something so esoteric as the gramophone—derided by some as a cheap toy and by others as doomed to extinction with the growth of radio.

Though few people could realize it at the time, the gramophone was in a particularly interesting stage of development. Serious music was fighting hard to retain a foothold, but it was there in the catalogues in however tenuous a form, and there were those within the industry who knew what lay round the corner—electrical recording, which would make possible for the first time a lifelike reproduction of the orchestra and the possibility of bringing into people's homes famous musical personalities beyond the scope of radio.

It was, after all, a record of chamber music that clinched the founder's determination to bring THE GRAMOPHONE into being, and for a long time the paper worked away to instil a love for chamber music among ordinary men and women. That original Vocalion record of part of Schumann's Piano Quintet hangs

framed today in the Editor's study. Moreover, since the beginning of the century the gramophone had issued records of famous singers, many of whom had voices that survived the primitive methods of those days with surprising accuracy.

It has for long been a point of debate as to whether Caruso made the gramophone or the gramophone made Caruso. There is plenty of evidence either way, and when that father-figure of the classical gramophone record, Fred Gaisberg, recorded the great tenor in a Milan hotel in 1902, against his company's instructions, he was building better than even he knew.

This book is concerned with THE GRAMOPHONE rather than with the gramophone. Nevertheless, since the two have served each other for 50 years a few landmarks should be mentioned. The date of Edison's invention has been given as August 12th, 1877, but as with so many inventions there were others working towards the same end at the same time. It was for these first cylinders that many famous people recorded, notably Gladstone, Sullivan, Tennyson, Florence Nightingale, William Booth, Brown- ing and Bismarck. Brahms played the piano. Liszt did not, though he lived until 1886. Not only did Tennyson recite "The Charge of the Light Brigade", but the bugler who sounded the charge was persuaded to do so again with the original bugle. Ironically Sullivan deplored the possibility of so much bad music being perpetuated.

By 1887 Emile Berliner had invented the lateral-cut flat disc and with it the word that has come down to us as "gramophone". The following year what is reputed to be the very first classical recording was made by Josef Hofmann at the age of 12. By 1891 opera singers were on record, and in 1898 The Gramophone Company began operations in London. Almost at once the Company bought the painting by Francis Barraud called "His Master's Voice", thus bringing into the industry its most famous trademark, though this was not to be adopted for a few years yet.

Orchestral records were issued in England in 1909, appropriately conducted by Sir Landon Ronald, who remained a staunch friend of the gramophone all his life. Certainly in early days he was the one leading English musician to have faith in the future of recording and to back it with his reputation. He was a particularly fine orchestral accompanist, and many people to this day play his concerto sets with pleasure.

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony under Nikisch was the first complete symphony to be recorded. This was in 1913, and two years later Kreisler and Zimbalist played Bach's Double Concerto with a string quartet. Italian HMV issued a complete "Ernani" in 1903

on 40 single-sided 10-inch records, and in 1907 a complete "Pagliacci" under the composer was issued in England. The Sistine Chapel Choir recorded an album of Gregorian Chant in 1904, and isolated movements from chamber works date back to 1905.

One other date can be noted. It was in September 1920 that Caruso made his last recording, and three months later Toscanini made his first. Neither of these men benefited from the quality of modern recording techniques, yet both stand out in the history of the gramophone as they do in the history of the music of their time, and each can be taken as symbolic of how the gramophone was increasingly to reflect musical taste and trends. Today the record industry is often in the van of public taste, but that is another story.

In one way or another, therefore, serious music was staking a claim in the gramophone market, and it was a significant coincidence that the first complete string quartet to be issued in England, Brahms' Op. 51 No. 1, played by the Catterall Quartet, appeared in 1923, the same year as THE GRAMOPHONE, which was to plead the cause of chamber music for a decade, not only in its pages but through its sponsorship of the National Gramophonic Society. Indeed the NGS is a set of initials as worth a memorial as any other in the history of recorded music.

Thus when Vol. 1 No. 1 of THE GRAMOPHONE hit the bookstalls on April 23rd, 1923, the climate, if not ripe, was reasonable. There were plenty of people buying serious records and shutting their ears to the inadequacies of contemporary recording. The old acoustic process had reached its apogee, and in this same year Columbia introduced what was called with justification "silent surface".

In the early days Sir Compton Mackenzie naturally invited a number of eminent men of letters to contribute, and so in the first numbers we find contributions by Francis Brett Young, Frank Swinnerton, Hilaire Belloc and Oliver St. John Gogarty. The first volume also had articles by Edmund Fellowes on Byrd, the first contribution from an acknowledged scholar of the period, Ivor Novello, Percy Scholes, W. W. Cobbett (later to publish his scholarly "Encyclopaedia of Chamber Music"), and Josef Holbrooke, as well as a series of profiles of famous musicians and potted biographies of lesser composers. The variety of reading is shown by such titles as "The Harpsichord and the Gramophone", "The Riddle of Haydn's Tombstone", "Piedigrotta and Neapolitan Songs", "Is Modern Music Any Good?" and "The Child and the Gramophone". Within a year the paper had secured the services

of Herman Klein, the doyen of opera critics and probably the greatest living authority on the art of singing. Klein had heard Tietjens in 1866, was a close friend of Benedict, who had met Beethoven, and he remained as principal opera critic until his death well into the era of electrical recording.

From these early issues, culminating in the arrival of the new process, we reprint one of a series of vignettes contributed by "F Sharp", the pen-name of Lady Mackenzie, who was the sister of Christopher Stone, the London Editor, and who, as Faith Compton Mackenzie, was the author of several delightful autobiographical books.

Of the records issued during the period, it is worth recalling Sir Arthur Bliss's "Rout", extracts from Parry's "Judith" and Elgar's "King Olaf", Holst's own recording of "The Planets", Bridge's "The Sea", and "Three Idylls for String Quartet", Delius's "First Dance Rhapsody", Vaughan Williams's "London" Symphony and extracts from "Hugh the Drover", Goossens's "Four Conceits", extracts from Boughton's "The Immortal Hour" and an abbreviated "Gerontius". What is extraordinary is that this astonishing output of English music was happening at a time when there was no Haydn or Mozart symphony and not a movement of Brahms on English records. This may surprise the modern reader, but it is a fact that the record industry was investing a great deal of money in promoting native music.

It is no less remarkable to recall that Landowska was recording the harpsichord, there was a pre-electric Beethoven Ninth and plenty of Wagner. Operatic arias, many from works now long forgotten, poured from the studios and the paper provided a service to readers by publishing translations, when copyright permitted. On the other hand, scholarship could be hazy, and such announcements as "Three Old Dances by Mozart" would not be found today! Nor, alas, would "Eight Minutes with Richard Wagner" by the Australian Newcastle Steel Works Band. "Hi-Fi" was diligently sought, and THE GRAMOPHONE sponsored demonstrations of equipment, notably at a Gramophone Congress in 1925, the forerunner of the modern Audio Fair. When the Queen's Doll's House was on view at the Wembley Exhibition of 1924 it properly contained a miniature working gramophone.

The editorial office was romantically situated on the Island of Herm, and the publishing office was successively at the more prosaic addresses of 48 Hadfield Street, London, SE1, and 28 Stockwell Park Crescent, London, SW9. By the end of the acoustic era there was a London editorial office at 25 Newman Street, W1, and soon after at 58 Frith Street, Soho. For a time the paper

incorporated a *Player-Piano Supplement*, but this was short-lived, lasting only a year. Of far greater permanence was the arrival of Percy Wilson, Alec Robertson and W. A. Chislett as contributors to THE GRAMOPHONE.

From the start there was a sturdy sense of independence and no thought of kow-towing to mere eminence. As we enter the world of electronics I take this opinion brutally out of the context of an early number. Of Rachmaninov's arrangement of the "L'Arlésienne" minuet, the Editor wrote: "Why on earth Rachmaninov should want to waste his time arranging this commonplace minuet for the piano, and why when he had arranged it he should want to play it, I cannot imagine".



JUNE 1925

Vincenzo Bellini

Catania 1801 - 1835 Puteaux

by F Sharp

In the year 1845 the Czar Nicholas I brought his consort, Alexandra Feodorovna, to Sicily for the benefit of her health, accompanied by their daughter, the Grand Duchess Olga, and a numerous suite. They stayed in the beautiful Villa Olivuzzi, near Palermo, for a year. To commemorate this notable visit Palermo produced a finely-printed book with several engravings—among them portraits of the illustrious visitors with such remarkable waists. A series of short articles on appropriate subjects is followed by a flood of rapturous poetry, terminating in a riot of florid music—*La Saluta Recuperata* (*Health regained*), *Olga Waltz for Military Band*—music overwhelming even to contemplate in perfect copperplate engraving. In the midst of all this, as though it had flown in and been imprisoned by mistake, is *La Farfalletta* (*The Butterfly*), unpublished music composed at the age of twelve years by Maestro Cavaliere Vincenzo Bellini. This touching little song was composed by “ce blond enfant de Sicile” for his marionette theatre. He, of course, had nothing to do with the Royal visit, as he had died ten years earlier, but it was natural that no *ricordo* would be complete without something of his—whose fame was the glory of his native island.

The juxtaposition of this melody and its exuberant companions seems very aptly to typify Bellini himself, not only in his music, but in his relations with the rest of the world. The simplicity of his character was matched by the music that poured from his very soul. He was one of those rare people born with a charm that is almost beyond human charm, with something unearthly about it—of an angelic beauty of countenance, inspiring a devotion almost fanatical, steadfast in friendship, and wholly unreliable in what are called affairs of the heart. Fresh and sweet were his melodies, innocent in the earlier days of any attempt at orchestration beyond a mere accompaniment to the voice. Cherubini said “il ne'en eût pu placer une autre sous ses melodies”. Such delicate webs might be too easily broken. There is a difference of opinion among biographers as to whether he was really ignorant of the

theory of music and counterpoint, or was indifferent to it. He certainly said: "What do I care about counterpoint? All I want to do is to enchant the ears and move the hearts of people". But this does not prove anything. It seems, however, unlikely that he can have passed through the Conservatorio di San Sabastiano at Naples, under the tutelage of Zingarelli, without picking up more than the rudiments of harmony and counterpoint. Certainly his musical education began early as a matter of course, music being his father's and his grandfather's profession. Vincenzo's gifts proclaimed themselves at an early age—he is said to have sung his own tunes at eighteen months—and in 1819 he entered the Conservatorio with a scholarship, thanks a good deal to the influence of the Duchess of Sammartino. All through his life Bellini was to bask in the favours of the "best people" without losing that shapely blonde head of his.

It was the custom of the Conservatorio to give the students the words of a cantata to set to music, the best of which was performed at San Carlo in the presence of the Royal Family. Bellini's version was the best, and "even the King applauded it". Barbaja, the famous impresario, at once commissioned an opera for San Carlo. At this time Bellini was deeply in love with Maddalena Fumaroli, whom he had first seen through a spy-glass on a distant balcony. She was the daughter of a Neapolitan gentleman, who did not favour the suit of a penniless young musician. Maddelena was passionately attached, and the cruel obduracy of her parents drove her to poetry, of which the most notable composition was *Dolente Immagine di Fille Mia*, which Bellini set to music. This made a great sensation among the most elegant people.

Bellini seized the opportunity of the San Carlo offer to fly from the scene of his tragic amour to Catania, his home, where he composed *Bianca e Fernando*. This work established him in the musical world, and in a few months he was engaged to write an opera for La Scala, Milan. Here he set to work on *Il Pirata*, keeping up meanwhile a correspondence with Maddelena, which, alas, became on his side, cooler and less frequent until it ceased altogether. When, after the triumph of *Il Pirata*, he was approached by mutual friends on Maddelena's behalf, his successes having melted the heart of her father, he refused to have anything more to do with her, in which, since his ardour had cooled, he was perfectly justified. It was a crushing blow for Maddelena. It is said that when an Italian woman really loves, it is either a fire that rapidly destroys, or a fever that gradually consumes. In Maddelena's case it was a fever, as she died only a year before Bellini himself, faithful to the last. It was in June 1834, that she

died, and he, for some reason, did not hear of it till a year later, when he wrote to his friend Florimo in a letter full of genuine sadness: "I have a presentiment that in a short time I shall follow to the grave the *poveretta* who is no more, and whom I loved so well". His presentiment was a true one, for in three months he had followed his Maddelena.

It was in Milan that he first met Felice Romani, a poet and man of culture, who became librettist in all his operas save one. Romani, besides being a good poet, had also done a great deal of literary and theatrical criticism, and had made a sensation by saying what he really thought about Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*, one of the dullest books in the world, when it came out. He had already done libretti for Meyerbeer, Donizetti, Mercadante, Pacini, and others, but none of these were of great value, so much constrained was he by the strict conventions to which these masters adhered. It was otherwise with Bellini, who flouted the heavy conventions then in vogue, matched his music to the libretto, and, among other innovations, refused to give *prime donne* and tenors roulades and fireworks unless they were supposed to be feeling happy.

At the age of twenty-six Bellini's conquest of the world had begun in earnest, and his personal charm, added to his artistic triumphs threw open to him the doors of the most exclusive houses. It was at this time that he met Giuditta Turina, wife of a rich Lombard, who became the strongest feminine influence of his life, and though a female contemporary describes her as a vulgar woman with nothing but a good figure, she was, nevertheless, the inspiration of his best work. His opera, *La Straniera*, produced also at La Scala with equal success in 1829, was dedicated to her. This amour was a shock to his friend Florimo, who regarded Bellini as a being far above common human weakness. The ideal friendship between these two young men was one of the fairest ornaments of Bellini's short life. Both were Sicilians, and met at the Naples Conservatorio. While Bellini went forth in 1827 to make his great name, Florimo remained at the Conservatorio as Clerk of the Archives, where in his prodigious work, the History of the Conservatorio, years afterwards he was to write the biography of his beloved friend. He was in character the very antithesis of Bellini, austere and thoughtful, a fine restraining influence for Vincenzo's childlike impetuosity. It must not be imagined that Bellini was at all weak, in spite of the sweet melancholy of his countenance. In the matter of contracts he was inflexible, and he not only insisted upon being paid four times as much as any other composer of the past, but latterly he

refused to sign a contract that did not specify the artists, chosen by him, who were to interpret his work. It is only fair to add, in regard to financial matters, that he was a generous friend, and his insistence on good contracts raised for all time the standard of payment, hitherto incredibly poor.

His friend and publisher, Ricordi, of the famous house, writes to him of his "volcanic character". He was not a Sicilian for nothing, and had a habit of believing impulsively everything he was told, being incapable of any insincerity himself, and rushing into unnecessary quarrels. This led to a good many misunderstandings, and in the case of Ricordi, gross injustice, for which Bellini made ample amends, and from which Ricordi emerged with great dignity, with, moreover, their strong friendship intact. It was always so with these little incidents. Bellini never made an enemy though he had naturally many jealous rivals, but they were strangely unsuccessful in harming him. The only exception to this was the case of Romani at Venice, but that will come later. His first disagreeable experience was at Parma, where he was invited to compose an opera for the Ducal Theatre. He was given a manuscript. *Cesare in Egitto*, by Luigi Torrigiani, a native of Parma. Bellini refused this libretto which did not appeal to him, and arranged with Romani to do a poem suggested by Voltaire's *Zaire*. As usual he had his own way, but Parma was annoyed at the slight put upon their own particular genius, and, whatever may have been its merits, *Zaire* was a dead failure, and was never repeated. Its first and last performance was on May 14th, 1829.

From this dismal incident he passed by way of Milan, where *Il Pirata* was revived with acclamation, to Venice, where he was engaged to produce *Il Pirata* for the Venice Theatre. Here, a new opera having failed through illness of the composer, he was suddenly called upon, and after at first refusing, he thought of his abandoned work, *Zaire*. This he adapted to Romani's poem, *Capuleti ed i Montecchi*, which had already been set by Vaccai. This opera, half new, half old, was produced on May 11th, 1830, with Giuditta Grisi, in the prime of her beauty and talent, as Giulietta. It was a success, full of charm and distinction, but failing in the pathetic situations, especially in the tomb scene, which after Bellini's death, was lifted bodily, and Vaccai's fourth act put in its place. So that it ended by being rather a hybrid work.

Ten months passed, during which Bellini was seriously ill with the internal complaint that was later to prove fatal. He spent a peaceful convalescence on Lake Como with Giuditta Turina and

her family, and in 1831 contracted to write an opera for the Carcano Theatre at Milan. Here not for the first time, he and Donizetti were engaged for the same season. As early as 1828 they were together at Genoa, when *Bianca e Fernando* and Donizetti's *Regina di Golconda* were done. Bellini meant to do *Ernani*, a serious opera, at the Carcano, but the great success of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* alarmed him, and he decided to do a lighter work instead. Some of *Ernani* was already done, and a fierce controversy raged between his two biographers, Amore and Scherillo, in the eighties, as to whether he had camouflaged *Ernani* as *Sonnambula* or not. Scherillo says he did, and Amore denies it *con amore*. Much ink, and very nearly blood, flowed over this question, and in the end each of them proved his case to his own satisfaction. The fact remains that the music of *Sonnambula* is throughout appropriate to Romani's pastoral drama, and that seems to be all that matters, even if a few of *Ernani's* melodies were adapted.

La Sonnambula was, at any rate, the success of the season, and Giuditta Pasta created the part of Amina. In the same year, on December 26th, *Norma* was produced at La Scala. The first night was a disaster, though Pasta and Grisi were in it. Bad criticisms the next morning depressed everyone except Bellini, who said "Vedremo, vedremo!" His theory was that it was a diabolical plot to ruin the opera, but, as he writes in a letter on December 31st, "money and the most devilish intrigues can for a short time hide the truth, but in the end it will shine in its real light". And indeed, on the second night the truth was unveiled, and the opera was played to packed houses for the rest of the season. At rehearsal Pasta had refused to sing *Casta Diva*, saying that its technical difficulties were beyond the powers of any *prima donna*. Bellini insisted upon her studying it with him, with the result that she sang it gloriously and it was, of course, the *furor* of the evening. On the wings of *Norma's* triumph he took flight for his native Catania, his Giuditta accompanying him as far as Naples. There is some doubt as to whether Giuditta's insistence on going with him to Naples was inspired by her desire to meet Florimo, or to "crow over" the unfortunate Maddelena Fumaroli. Perhaps a little of both.

His journey was a long triumphal procession. Everywhere on the way whole towns turned out to greet him, and in Catania he was followed by an adoring crowd always, and was not allowed to pay for anything. This visit was clouded by his strong presentiment that he would never see his parents or his native town again.

Rose-strewn indeed was now the path of Bellini, but the

inevitable thorns began to assert themselves at this time and were particularly vicious at Venice, where he appeared after his home visit, to produce *Beatrice di Tenda*. The opera was not ready in time—Romani was late with his libretto—he was much engaged with a love affair. Everyone was talking about it, Venice was annoyed at being kept waiting, and Romani wrote a most unworthy letter to the press with taunts at Bellini and his “three Giuditias”. It was a curious coincidence that Bellini was surrounded by Giuditias at that moment, Giuditia Pasta, Giuditia Grisi, and Giuditia Turina, but though he was no doubt adored by his two *prime donne*, it is most unlikely that there was any truth in Romani’s assertions. Bellini’s sensitive soul was deeply wounded by Romani’s action, and still more by the foul stream of gossip that followed it. When finally the opera was produced in May, 1833, the first night was a complete fiasco. There was such an uproar in the theatre that sometimes the singers could not be heard, and Bellini, who was conducting, says that it was as noisy as a fair, and “all my Sicilian pride possessed me and my intrepid aspect impressed some and enraged others, so that in four or five very effective pieces the public called me, but I remained as though nailed to my seat”. One can imagine the intrepid young back obstinately turned. But it was Pasta who changed the humour of the audience. She was so annoyed by the injustice of its attitude that when she sang “*Se amar non può rispettar mi*” (“if you cannot love me, respect me”) instead of addressing her husband in the play she hurled it at the audience, which evoked an immense burst of applause. The work was finished without further incident, and was received with enthusiasm at later performances.

The quarrel with Romani, the unstemmed flow of scandal that was now poisoning also Milan, almost broke Bellini’s spirit, and an invitation to go to London was accepted with relief. Here in 1833 *Norma* and *Sonnambula* were “fanatically applauded by the severe English”. Pasta sang the leading rôles at first, but half way through the season she was replaced by Maria Malibran (née Garcia) owing to a difference with Bellini. This young singer had already proved herself a serious rival to Pasta. In 1824 Pasta made her first English appearance, and all London was raving about her astonishing voice, which ranged with equal perfection over two and a half octaves. A serious illness in the middle of the season laid her low, and the management in desperation gave the part of Rosina in *Barbiere* to a young girl of seventeen, Maria Felicita Garcia. She studied it for only two days, and on January 7th, 1825, she made her first appearance. Her youth and beauty, her charming voice, and the brave figure that she made in difficult

circumstances, delighted the public, and she was immediately engaged for the rest of the season.

And again in 1833 she was at hand to substitute Pasta. Bellini had never seen or heard her, and in a letter to Florimo he describes his arrival in a London fog on the night of her first appearance in *Sonnambula*. From the Duchess of Hamilton's box he watched his poor music "torn to shreds" by these English in their "language of parrots". Only when Malibran appeared he recognised his *Sonnambula*. So carried away was he by her singing of "Ah! m'abbraccia" ("Ah! Embrace me"), that he cried "Viva, viva, brava!" with such "trasporto meridionale" even "vulcanico", that he roused the curiosity of the blond sons of Albion, who recognized him as the author, and the whole theatre burst into wild applause. Not only was he obliged to acknowledge the frantic welcome from the Duchess's box, but he was forced on to the stage by a crowd of "nobili giovani", among whom was the Duchess's own son, the young Marquess of Douglas, "giovinetto who has in his soul all the poetry of Scotland and in his heart all the fire of the Neapolitans". Malibran was the first to greet him. Singing "Ah! m'abbraccia!" she impulsively threw her arms round his neck, and the audience went mad with enthusiasm. "I was in Paradise!" writes Bellini to Florimo.

Fortunate young people they seemed—the blond and the raven-haired—hand in hand, smiling through their tears at the brilliant, critical audience, whose hearts went out to the beauty and genius of the youthful couple. Fortunate they were in that moment, for few are blessed with such an intensity of happiness as must have been theirs in their first meeting. "From that moment I became the intimate friend of Malibran. . . . I have promised to write an opera for her. The idea thrills me, my dear Florimo!"

Alas! all his schemes for the lovely Malibran came to nothing, and she was destined never to create a Bellini rôle. She died exactly a year after Bellini from the effects of a riding accident in London, on September 23rd, 1836, aged 27.

After London came Paris. Rossini was impresario of the Italian theatre, and he engaged Bellini and Donizetti for the season of 1834-35. Bellini was always nervous when Donizetti was about, but he need not have feared him. *I Puritani* was an enormous success, and Donizetti's *Marino Faliero* a ghastly failure. During this time the quarrel with Romani was made up, to Bellini's delight, though, of course, it was too late for another libretto. Count Pepoli wrote *I Puritani*, which is very poor stuff compared with Romani's poetry.

Giuditta Turina's sun had long set, and Bellini was looking for a suitable wife, that is one with two thousand francs *dot* and a good character, well educated, and not ugly. He was quite openly in search of a commodity, one that would, among other things, save him, he thought, from the entanglements in which he was continually finding himself against his will. There were innumerable applicants for this post, but none were completely desirable. One was English, but he found she conducted herself with a curious extravagance, and another had bad teeth, which "disconcerted" him. So he remained single.

In one of his self-revealing letters to his uncle, he says: "*I Puritani* has placed me where I deserve to be, next after Rossini". In the same letter he says: "My system has always been to mix with the best society wherever I am. . . . As soon as I arrived in Paris I was presented by the British Ambassadors, whom I already knew in London, to the most important people in Paris. . . . At the same time I made the acquaintance of the principal artists in music and painting, and of many writers. . . . Every night invitations to soirées, every day dinner either with some distinguished gentleman, or ambassadors or famous artists". After some more intimately personal confidences, he adds in brackets: "*Che insipidezza* that I should repeat such things; but you wanted to hear them, and I hope you won't show this letter to anyone". He goes on to say that the artists in the theatre think him snobbish and "*pieno di fumo*", because he likes to be with people of good position, but it is never snobbishness to despise low company and prefer honourable people. "I owe it to myself". If he was a little bit of a snob, and no doubt he was, he was never a climber, as he had never had to climb. It is doubtful whether he would ever have lent himself to that vile occupation even if it had been necessary. He was probably much too proud. In any case the "Jewel of the British aristocracy", as Florimo calls him, and the idol of fashionable Paris had no need of such methods. After all, a fastidious desire for the best of everything is not altogether to be despised.

In May of 1835 he retired to Puteaux to escape the rigours of social life and rest his overwrought nerves. The anxiety about *I Puritani* and, most of all, the shock of its enormous success, were too much for him. In the home of some English friends he spent a peaceful summer, with constant visits from friends in Paris, which was within easy reach. Early in September he was attacked by his old internal trouble and in a few days he was critically ill. Strange that his host did not call in the best Paris doctors to save this precious life! The only attendant was a young Italian doctor,

who wrote the five bulletins, the last in very imperfect French. Not only was no specialist called in, but a gardener was stationed at the front gate with strict orders to refuse admittance to anyone. There was a stream of admirers and friends as soon as the news of his illness reached Paris, and it was natural that some precaution had to be taken to guard the invalid from intrusion, but even his most intimate friends were denied. The only one who succeeded in seeing him was Carafa, who, pretending to be a court physician, got past the guardian of the door. Bellini was semi-delirious, and continually calling for his mother and Florimo.

On September 23rd, a night of tempestuous rain, Baron Aymé d'Aquino, a friend of Bellini's, rang the bell of the house at Puteaux. There was no reply. To his surprise he found the gate open and the guardian absent. He entered the deserted house and went straight to Bellini's room. There he found his friend apparently asleep. But the hand was cold. Bellini lay dead—in an empty house. The guardian appeared. He had gone to "find someone" and buy candles for the dead. The host and his wife were in Paris! It was not surprising that when Bellini's friends met that night, they were all "perplexed". The secrecy that was observed all through his illness and the strange loneliness of his death roused all Paris, and there was such a flood of conjecture and suspicion that the King himself ordered an autopsy to be made, if only to satisfy the public that there had been no "political poisoning". The autopsy proved that he died from natural causes.

Whatever may have lacked Bellini on his deathbed, the whole of Europe mourned him. All the theatres in Paris were closed, the women wore black, in public places the talk was all of the untimely death of the author of *I Puritani*. Rossini hurried back in the middle of a journey as soon as he heard of Bellini's serious illness, and he was the prime mover in the arrangements for the funeral which, in spite of a black downpour of rain, was magnificent, and fit for a king. Thousands lined the drenched streets, a chorus of the principal opera singers sang a specially composed Mass, and Rossini was one of the pall-bearers. The body was laid in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, and a monument executed by Blenat and Marochetti, raised over it. In those days of elaborate and hideous memorials Bellini's was considered simple and in keeping with his character, but it did not escape a trophy and a lyre, with a large-winged angel brooding.

For forty-one years there was an unceasing agitation to effect the translation of Bellini's ashes to his native land, but various causes, among them war, cholera, and endless political disturbances prevented it. The faithful Florimo devoted a great part of

his life to this purpose, and was rewarded at last when, on September 15th, 1876, under a misty grey sky that later broke into sunshine, a great company of notable French and Italians gathered at Père la Chaise for the function. Florimo was there, now an old man of 76, and he broke down completely when in a solemn silence the ashes of his dead friend were revealed.

Then followed the second long triumphal progress through Italy. Everywhere cities and towns came to do him reverence as he passed, and the journey was a long crescendo of enthusiastic welcome. Reggio in Calabria, where the embarkation for Sicily took place, indulged in a *fiesta belliniana*—surging crowds, bands, and choruses, princess and peasant mingling their tears and laughter. But when the "Guiscarda", which bore him to his home, cast anchor in the harbour of Catania, the scene became indeed fantastic. Every ship in the harbour was decorated with hundreds of coloured lights, the streets were illuminated with innumerable gas-jets, and from every ship and from every street went up a great cry in unison of "Viva Bellini!" And through it all resounded the vivid crash of fireworks. The Italians have no use for fireworks that are not deafening, and the greater the occasion the more deafening they are. There was certainly nothing funereal in the *fieste belliniane*.

But at midnight all was quiet, and the coffin was moved in silence from board ship to an ancient and noble carriage drawn by four horses. An immense crowd that had waited in the dark gathered round, the horses were taken out, and the people dragged the carriage through the dark streets to the church where the coffin was to lie till the solemn ceremony in the Basilica.

The next day the ashes of Bellini reached their final resting place, and over the principal door of the Basilica was inscribed :

This Basilica
In which sleep forgotten
The ashes of many kings
Will be from this day famous
For the Tomb of
Vincenzo Bellini



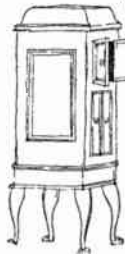
THE owners of the Gramophone rejoice
To hear it likened to the human voice.
The owners of the Human Voice disown
Its least resemblance to the Gramophone.

Epigramophones

BY

HILAIRE BELLOC.

December, 1929



Illustrations

by

NICOLAS BENTLEY



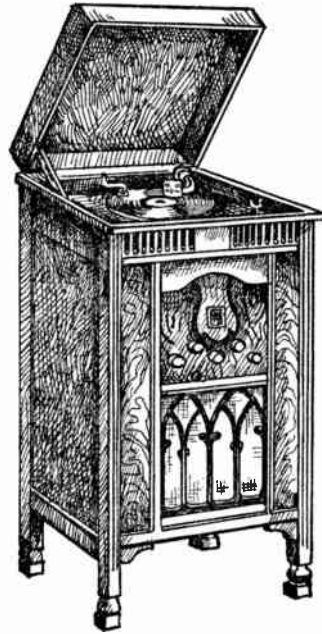
IN Freer Climes, when Music's hard to bear,
Books, Bricks and Cats go hurtling thro' the air,
But by the Gramophone's discordant disc,
The patient listener runs no sort of risk.

If, at the Opera, you're in the stalls
You dare not bolt until the curtain falls.
But, with the gramophone, it needs no skill
To stop the noise at once, and when you will.

Oppressed of years, the Human Organ grows
Less pleasing—as the Prima Donna shows.
The gramophone escapes our common curse.
Bad to begin with, it becomes no worse.



*Ferranti
All-Electric
Radio-Gramophone*



Electric Recording

1926 - 1930

The advent of electrical recording was the most revolutionary change in the history of the gramophone, and yet it happened almost without notice. To this day there is argument as to which was the first of the new process records to be issued and by which company. We can be sure it was a dance record, but although reviewers realised that something was happening no detailed announcement was made. Having built up a considerable catalogue of acoustic records the companies did not wish to lose the lot overnight! After all, the records looked the same, and if one or two sounded that much better, well somebody was doing a better job than usual.

Long playing records are a convenience, and stereophonic records widen the ambience, while all the time our engineers are improving the sound; but electrical recording actually made some things possible, notably in orchestral and piano reproduction.

A completely new horizon came into view, and as with stereo, with all those trains running round the sitting-room, so now the new process brought a plethora of stunt records, usually of massed choirs, preferably numbered in thousands. Naturally it took some

time to iron out the teething troubles, and THE GRAMOPHONE was not slow to point out the horrors of over-amplification, particularly in respect of vocal records, where it was now clearly possible to boost a poor voice. Even today there are collectors who prefer the acoustic records of those singers whose careers spanned both eras.

It was natural that the big choral festivals should attract the ambitious, and none more so than the Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace. Columbia captured the 1926 event, which proved to be the last before fire and fashion put an end to these monster celebrations, which dated from 1874. "Choir and orchestra of 3,500" said the labels. Another Crystal Palace job put on record 4,000 child violinists with the Grenadier Guards Band!

Location recording became a strong selling point and microphones were at Covent Garden for Melba's farewell appearance, and also to catch Chaliapin in "Mefistofele". The Aldershot Tattoo was a natural, and in 1927 came the famous record of Ernest Lough singing Mendelssohn's "Hear My Prayer" at the Temple Church, which curiously, in view of its subsequent history, was poorly reviewed in THE GRAMOPHONE. Two other famous recordings that have stayed the course were of a chorus of Manchester schoolchildren singing Purcell's "Nymphs and Shepherds" with the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Hamilton Harty, and of Schubert's Piano Trio in B flat played by Cortot, Thibaud and Casals.

Two statistics give an indication of production. At a luncheon to launch some new gramophones Columbia announced a sale of 1,650,000 records in a single month, and one of our reviewers was complaining of having to listen to 142 dance tunes. Dance bands and popular singers sustained the industry right through to the "pop" era, and the most envied man was he who owned the copyright of whatever was on the back of "Valencia". The flood of moronic records pouring onto the market brought a warning from the London Editor. "Though at present all is fair-seeming", he wrote, "we must not forget that beyond the horizon the twilight of barbarism is always waiting to sweep back over us". It always is, and at any time it would have been easy for the great companies to concentrate wholly on the easy money. That they did not do so is to their great credit, of which we are all the beneficiaries. THE GRAMOPHONE was prodding, protesting and nagging all the time, but never forgot the nature of the problem nor the economic facts of life. A great deal of what was being pleaded at that time is common practice today, notably translations and texts, and the reissue of records at a popular price after a reasonable time in the catalogue.



*On July 9th, 1925 THE GRAMOPHONE organised a Congress at the Caxton Hall in London. This was the forerunner of today's Audio Fairs and the exhibitors included:— Goodwin & Tabb, Keith Prowse, Imhofs, Marshall and Snelgrove, The Gramophone Exchange, EMG Handmade Gramophones, The Parlophone Co. and The Vocation Co.
The photograph shows THE GRAMOPHONE and NGS stalls*



Lady Faith Compton Mackenzie—1950



Cecil Pollard—1951

Moreover the industry was not receiving the encouragement it could have reasonably expected from the musical establishment, and among the articles reprinted in this section is a paper delivered by the London Editor to the Incorporated Society of Musicians. This was a "policy document" of the utmost importance at the time, and presented a cogent argument for the gramophone as a powerful aid to the profession.

Actual conditions of recording are described in two articles by Stanley Chapple, who was a tower of strength in the studios, and one of those conductors better known on labels than in concert halls. Whether this devotion to the gramophone meant a sacrifice it is impossible to say now, but, like the companies they served, we today are immeasurably in their debt. A memory of the embattled positions taken up by those supporting fibre as opposed to those supporting steel needles comes across the years, distilled into verse—the "Ballade Fibreuse" and "Réponse Ferreuse".

The expansion of the repertory proceeded apace, helped by the Beethoven (1927) and Schubert (1928) centenaries. For Schubert, Columbia offered a prize for a commemorative symphony and received 500 entries from 26 countries. The winning symphony was Atterberg's Sixth from Sweden. All Beethoven's symphonies and string quartets were on record, as was the Dolmetsch family, while records from "Nerone" and "Turandot" were on sale as quickly as those from London revues. The Flonzaley and Lener Quartets were recording busily, and by 1930 THE GRAMOPHONE had moved into spacious offices in Soho Square, which was to remain its home until the outbreak of war.

Decca had begun to make records and Leopold Stokowski had begun to popularize Bach. Two contrasted recordings should be mentioned. German Lieder sung by the veteran Sir George Henschel, accompanying himself at the piano, and Marguerite d'Alvarez's "Homing", which by some magic had a sheer animal magnetism seldom equalled on records—before or since.

It was during this period that THE GRAMOPHONE published a symposium of well-known people, who were asked to name their favourite song, singer and composer. Those who replied included Max Beerbohm, G. K. Chesterton, Fay Compton, Gladys Cooper, Walter de la Mare, Gilbert Frankau, John Galsworthy, D. H. Lawrence, Somerset Maugham and Hugh Walpole. Two replies are worth recalling: Lord Berners, the painter and composer, wrote: "My favourite song is 'The Last Rose of Summer', my favourite composer Bach, my favourite tune is the third of Schoenberg's six pieces for piano, because it is so obscure that one is never likely to grow tired of it, and if by singer you mean any

kind of singer then the one I prefer is Little Tich. But on the other hand if you mean merely concert singers substitute Clara Butt". George Bernard Shaw replied: "Only people in a deplorably elementary stage of musical culture have favourite tunes and so forth. The question is a monstrous insult".



AUGUST 1927

Early Experiments in Mechanical Music

by H. W. Crundell

"The entertainment concluded with a concert of mechanical music; I cannot tell how it was produced, but the effect was pleasing". So runs a sentence in Mme D'Arblay's "Evelina" (1778), and while we must agree that Dr Burney's daughter would be a good judge of the effect we are sorry she left us in the dark as to the instruments reproduced. Whatever they were, it is certain that some rather curious attempts to render the voice and instrumental effects were made much earlier than Dr Burney's day. The invention of automata capable of speech, for instance, has been ascribed to such surprising people as Roger Bacon and Descartes, while as regards mechanical music, something of the kind, if only as a curiosity, seemed to have been achieved by just those enterprising folk who, almost in the middle ages, thought out the first modern timekeepers.

Beckmann's "History of Inventions" (1846 ed.) has many out of the way details concerning these flute-playing and speaking automata. The "particular go" of these figures often rested on a deception, and the habit of mind which delighted in such things is of course alien to present day notions of what constitutes a novelty. For anything on lines we can appreciate we must look to the ingenious 18th century after all, and we shall find that the history of mechanical music, up to the time the gramophone and player piano were invented, is really the history of the musical box and its elaborations. And the musical box itself is an elaboration of the ubiquitous 18th century snuff box. Such, indeed, was the vogue at one time of the *tabatière musicale* that you will find in "Grove" an account of a once popular "Snuff Box Waltz", which seems to have been quite a good imitative effort. To-day I suppose there is a gradually dwindling number of people who can appreciate from experience the point of such piano pieces as De Severac's "Où l'on entend une vieille boîte à musique" (HMV D.780), which has, of course, the same aim as the long forgotten Waltz.

Obsolete as the musical box is, the principle underlying the action is well known, and its application to the barrel organ and

hurdy gurdy are only too familiar. But perhaps it is not so generally known that these ideas were once adapted to very ambitious ends, the revolving cylinder being used in conjunction with bells, levers and valves. One such queer triumph of these notions was exhibited in London in 1835—a mechanical trumpet, which performed “marches and other military pieces, arranged in four parts”. At this exhibition there was also shown an automatic piano, which must have been working on similar lines, since the perforated music roll seems to be a later idea.

When the devices mentioned above were used in combination some sort of orchestral effect could, of course, be obtained. Mälzel, of metronome fame, seems to have achieved a success of this kind, and it was for his invention, the “Panharmonicon”, that Beethoven arranged the first version of the “Battle” Symphony. Mälzel’s invention doubtless became well known, for I have come across what appears to be an allusion to it in one of Lamb’s papers in Hone’s *Every-Day Book*: “But what shall we say to the Ass of Silenus, who, if we may trust to classic lore, by his own proper sounds, without thanks to cat or screech-owl, dismayed and put to rout a whole army of giants? Here was *anti-music* with a vengeance; a whole *Pan-Dis-Harmonicon* in a single lungs of leather”. Like most lazy people, I read my Lamb without notes, and it was not until music began to interest me that I was able to hazard a solution to the meaning of this passage.

Mälzel was a remarkable man, for we not only find him inventing the metronome and the “Panharmonicon”, but also acting as sponsor for an “automatic trumpeter”. As has already been mentioned, these performing figures probably belong to the realm of the conjuring trick rather than to that of invention.

Readers of Browning will remember Abt Vogler “extemporising on an instrument of his own invention”. This he called an orchestrion, but it seems to have been simply a very compact chamber organ. In 1851, however, Kauffman, whose name is also connected with organ improvement, used the name to describe the complete wind orchestra, with kettledrums, he had invented, and thereafter the name crops up chiefly in connection with such musical mastodons. Patti installed one at Craig-y-Nos, quite possibly Kauffmann’s, or an adaptation. That curious book “*Music and Manners*”, by Beatty Kingston, tells us that this “superb” machine cost 3,000 guineas. It was christened “*L’Ame du château*”, and needed the constant attention of Patti’s major domo, William Heck. Its repertoire consisted of 52 operatic overtures and selections, and in reading about it one begins to wonder why the Panatrope is considered dear.

I am afraid this brief survey of an obsolescent field of human activity is rather dull, but it may help us to realize our present fortune. To-day the orchestrion and the musical box *et hoc genus omne* have been supplanted by the inventions we associate with such names as Edison and Berliner, and if these are not enough we can complete our equipment with a player piano and a loud speaker. These substitutes for the concert room are so much more versatile than their forerunners, and on the whole they are also much cheaper. Consider the price of Patti's orchestrion, with its range of 52 pieces, and then reflect on our catalogues, which we complain cover and recover the same well-worn ground! Is it not obvious that here is one field at any rate in which we have the best of it, even in comparison with the 18th century? If the *tabatières* of that period are still of interest it is to collectors of enamels rather than to musicians, while the Victorian orchestrion can hardly be of much interest to anyone at all.

CAR RADIO

In the catastrophic progress of wireless it is increasingly necessary to extricate oneself from the avalanche of new valves, components, sets and developments, and, standing aside, ask oneself where it is all going, and if every new movement is worth while or desirable. Looking out from such an oasis today, I see car radio to be a most retrograde step. Are we nowhere to be able to escape the loudspeaker? Is all our travelling in the future to be accompanied by wireless entertainment and instruction? Is this generation not only to have "music wherever she goes", but sporting commentaries, the latest news, vaudeville, jazz, and talks as well? Let us hope not.

Once the novelty of car radio has worn off (and that won't take long these days!) who in his senses wants to hear that conglomerate mass of sound commonly called music emanating from a loudspeaker when he is travelling! To the musician the idea of hearing a Beethoven Symphony in such an environment is a nightmare. To the quality enthusiast the reproduction of a car set will always be excruciating and the acoustic conditions appalling. Who would even try to follow a worthwhile talk or play through the extraneous noises of the car and traffic? Over and above all this there is the very real danger of the driver's attention being diverted from the road in an endeavour to follow the broadcast, or fumble with the controls of the set.

No, car radio—the latest manifestation of human progress and ingenuity—is definitely a backward step. It is bad enough to hear loudspeakers braying unheeded in nearly every house, the thought of them doing likewise in nearly every car is ghastly. Music, the highest and most aristocratic of the arts, is now, to the masses, merely a noise in the corner. Right thinking and timely action must prevent it from becoming a noise in the car as well.

Larne, Co, Antrim.

J. PATRIC L. STEVENSON.
November 1933

SEPTEMBER 1927

The Ravel String Quartet

by André Mangeot

When I heard that the NGS wanted us to record the Ravel Quartet I was delighted, for I have always had a special liking, and the greatest admiration, for this work. I have been so much associated with all his works, and those of his contemporaries (I remember Ravel in his early student days at the Paris Conservatoire when I was still wearing short knickers and he had side whiskers and light waistcoats) that I felt I had some good reasons for knowing the "style" of his music.

A few years ago I had given one of the first performances of his violin and 'cello Sonata at Lord Howard de Walden's house with May Mukle, when he spared us a whole morning on the correct reading and meaning of this very exacting work; and before that at Manchester I gave the first performance of his piano trio, and old Langford wrote a wonderful criticism of the work, although the London Press received it quite indifferently. Then for the last five years we have played it everywhere we've gone in Europe. As the Music Society String Quartet we played it in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Spain, and more recently, since we have taken the name of "The International String Quartet", in Italy and Alsace, with Boris Pecker, Frank Howard, Herbert Withers and myself. Our performances of the three big works of the French modern school, the César Franck, Debussy and Ravel Quartets, brought us the most flattering accounts from a somewhat critical Press and public.

In Strasburg, where we played the César Franck at the Old Chamber Music Society, Guy Ropartz himself, who is now Director of the Conservatoire and the most representative pupil of César Franck, paid us the highest compliments after the concert, and in Colmar, with Pecker leading, the Debussy performance created quite a stir, although they had heard so many performances of the work by the most famous French groups. Naturally, we have also played it all over England, and even in London one of the leading daily newspapers wrote of our performances, "Ravel, of course, they can play with closed eyes and under such leadership with authority and understanding". I say "even in London", for I feel that it is always the hardest thing to be recognised at your value by the Press of the town in which you live.

All this is to show you that when we arrived in the recording room to "wax" Ravel we felt confident that it was going to be "easy" work for us. So we made tests and then we recorded the 7 sides in one morning, and Miss Kathleen Long, whose interpretation of the *Sonatine* is well known, came to make a record to fill the 8th side. All went well till we heard the white label pressings. I thought they were not good enough: there was not enough clarity or "limpidity"; tone was not transparent enough.

We were allowed to re-record. We did the seven sides again. These were better. People who heard them said they would do. I was not satisfied. I begged to be allowed to re-record just one side again where at the end there was a slight fault in one bar.

Luckily for me Ravel himself came to London just then to play his new violin sonata with Jelly d'Aranyi and to make some piano rolls for the Aeolian Company. He consented to hear the records that we had made, and he heard them in a little cubicle at the Aeolian Hall, which was soon thick with cigarette smoke. I had the score with me, and as the records were played he marked it wherever there was an effect or a tempo that he wanted altered. It was very interesting. He is most precise—he knows exactly what he wants—how, in his mind, that quartet, every bar of it, ought to sound.

So, armed with such final authority, we had another recording at the studio, and my colleagues and I rehearsed hard for it over those little details. In recording we were very particular, with a metronome and a tuning fork, to get the tempo and the pitch exactly right. We also did a thing which is I think a novelty in recording—we played in the first movement a "fade away" (as they say in the film world) of four bars to show how the first theme is resumed after half the movement is over, and then at the beginning of the next side we played the same four bars again to convey the feeling of continuity. The new white label pressings arrived just in time for me to take them to Paris on a Saturday morning. Sunday was used to find a friend with a car and a gramophone, since Ravel had wired to me, "Semaine prochaine Montfort l'Amaury—apportez appareil!" On Monday, after four hours at the telephone, I got hold of Ravel at his house at Montfort l'Amaury. He would be there all the afternoon. My friend Hewett of the Capet Quartet, fetched me, with his gramophone. We took the precious discs down there, 40 kilometres out of Paris on the road to Dreux. It was 5 o'clock before we arrived, but it was a lovely afternoon, and Ravel was in the best of spirits. His house is the most picturesque imaginable, looking down over the village and the forest of Rambouillet, where, later on, we went for a delightful walk;



LE BELVÉDÈRE

89 MONTFORT L'ANAUROY (S. & O.)

18/7/27

Je viens d'entendre les disques
de mon quatuor enregistré par
le "International String quartett".
J'en suis tout à fait satisfait
tant au point de vue de la sonorité
qu'à celui des mouvements et des
nuances.



[Je viens d'entendre les disques de mon quatuor enregistré par le "International String Quartett".
J'en suis tout à fait satisfait tant au point de vue de la sonorité qu'à celui des mouvements et des
nuances. MAURICE RAVEL.]

for Ravel walks 10 kilometres every day and has resisted all temptation of having a car of his own although he was in the "Service Automobile" through the war. But he thinks that work and health would be impaired by having a car, so he walks in the woods and does not go to Paris unless it is absolutely necessary!

He showed us some very beautiful first editions of the great French authors of the XVII and XVIII centuries, which he likes to read in the editions of the period, and he also has some very good Japanese prints, in which he seems to be a real connoisseur. He was much pleased with the records, which we listened to from the terrace.

The old cook gave us a very simple and perfect dinner (Ravel is a firm bachelor), and we left him at 10.30 after a delightful visit, and afterwards he wrote the charming letter of appreciation which authorizes us to call our records of the Quartet a "version de l'auteur". Not only do I regard this as one of the finest compliments ever paid to our Quartet, but, as Ravel said to me, "It will constitute a real document for posterity to consult, and through gramophone records composers can now say definitely how they meant their works to be performed. If only we had gramophone records approved by Chopin himself, or anyone else, what a difference it would make to pianists of the present day! Even with Debussy a great chance was lost. He ought to have had all his works recorded under his own supervision".

EMI TELEVISION RECEIVERS

Soon after the beginning of the television test transmissions by the BBC on October 5th we were afforded the privilege, along with other members of the Press, to see and hear both HMV and Marconiphone television receivers in operation. The models used were HMV Model 900; and Marconiphone, Model 701, each of which is priced at 129 guineas.

The transmission on each occasion was by the Marconi-EMI 405-line interlaced scanning system, which, all things considered, was eminently successful. Not more successful, however, than the reception. At a distance of three yards from the receivers flicker was not discernible and definition was satisfactory. There were one or two hitches, such as bad framing, which could not be rectified at the receiver end but these periods were not of long duration.

These demonstrations proved conclusively that television is entertainment, and they also gave a hint as to what we may expect of the television sound transmissions. Both the HMV and the Marconiphone instruments exhibited musical characteristics the like of which we seldom hear from any ordinary radio receiver or radiogramophone. They were really outstanding.

November 1936

DECEMBER 1928

In the Recording Studio

by Stanley Chapple

Surveying the results of gramophone records made during the last two years, both the public and the experts agree that many successful developments have been made. The greatest, perhaps, is the tremendous progress which has been made in the recording of orchestral works.

We are told that the extreme frequencies have at last been recorded; that it is possible to reproduce the effect as heard in a concert hall, and many other technical difficulties have been overcome; but surely the most important acquisition is the feeling of ease and realism which is now apparent at our orchestral sessions and which, before the advent of the microphone, was entirely lacking in the recording studio. Before comparing the changes a definition of mechanical and electrical recordings should be given.

Mechanical recording means that the sound waves are gathered by various horns and focussed on to the diaphragm which transfers them on to the soft wax by means of a specially shaped sapphire.

These recording horns were of many sizes and innumerable designs, some were long with a narrow aperture and others were short with a wide aperture.

The number of horns used varied according to the type of recording to be done.

For a singer with piano accompaniment one horn of a particular design would be used. For an orchestral session two or perhaps three would be necessary.

These horns were constructed on a logarithmic basis and at a session much time was wasted trying the effect of different combinations of horns.

Now, with electrical recording, we use a microphone instead of these horns as the pick up for the sound waves; moreover we have a choice of these instruments which vary slightly in their quality, some being far more sensitive than others. Apart from technical matters the greatest change is that formerly the recording studio looked very complicated with its strange chairs, curious instruments, and numerous horns sticking out of the wall; the machine room was of a very simple character.

Now the recording studio looks perfectly normal and the

machine room is very complicated with its amplifiers, batteries, generators and other fearsome looking instruments used in electrical research work.

This is the reason why the recording artist now feels happier and the recording expert less happy than before.

If we try to visualize an orchestra recording in the old mechanical days, we should see 30 or 40 men all huddled together as closely as possible in front of one or two recording horns and the combination of the instruments would appear most curious. Let us compare an orchestra of those times with one recording now :

<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>
4 1st violins	10 1st violins
2 (Stroh) 2nd violins	8 2nd violins
1 or 2 (Stroh) violas	6 violas
1 clarinet	
1 'cello	5 'cellos
1 bassoon	
1 contra bassoon	4 basses
1 tuba	
2 flutes	2 flutes
2 oboes	2 oboes
2 clarinets	2 clarinets
2 bassoons	2 bassoons
4 horns	4 horns
2 trumpets	2 trumpets
3 trombones	3 trombones
Tympani	Tympani
2 or 3 percussion	1 percusion
Harp or piano	Harp

In addition 1 or 2 euphoniums, a bass clarinet and a bassoon to fill up the "middle" of a score.

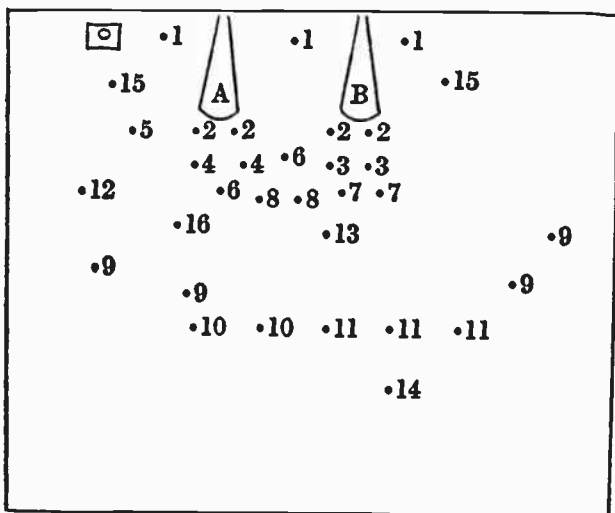
This of course necessitated re-orchestrating many of the passages in the full score and this did not tend to improve the music. Also more responsibility rested with the individual players since little solo passages would have to be brought out by the players themselves standing up and leaning forward.

Even to a lay mind this must convey the false atmosphere in which were recorded some of the masterpieces that are to be found in the literature of orchestral music.

Imagine these players sitting in front of the two recording horns—the violinists all packed tightly together—the 2nd violinists playing "monstrosities" called Stroh violins which appear to be

related to the one-stringed fiddle beloved of the street musicians, except that instead of one string the Stroh violin has four and the same metal horn but no belly or resonating chamber. The 'cello is mounted on a platform which is capable of being moved backwards and forwards.

Immediately behind the strings would be the clarinets and flutes with the oboe players almost pushing their instruments into the necks of the violinists. The bassoon players are placed beneath the horn, facing the violinists, who receive the full volume of the bassoons. At the back of the Studio are the French horns facing away from the recording horn, so that the bells of their instruments face towards it. The other brass instruments are ranged behind the orchestra with the various extras hovering on the outskirts a completely unhappy and a very warm body of men. A rough plan would be as follows:



A & B recording horns; 0 conductor; 1 bassoons; 2 1st violins; 3 2nd violins; 4 violas; 5 'cellos (on a platform); 6 oboes (standing); 7 flutes; 8 clarinets (on high chairs); 9 horns, 10 trumpets, 11 trombones (on very high chairs 3 ft, 4 ft and 5 ft from floor); 12 tuba; 13 contra bassoon; 14 tympani; 15 percussion; 16 bass clarinet.

Various mirrors are placed around the Studio, because the horns and bassoons have their backs to the conductor, and he sees them only as a reflection.

How can an orchestra composed and seated like this be expected

to give a first class performance, and yet we know that considering the disadvantages some of the results were magnificent! But the average orchestral player is the most adaptable person in the world, and somehow or other succeeds in what he sets out to do.

Dynamic contrasts were almost impossible to obtain and if anything louder than a *forte* was attempted, out would rush recorders tearing their hair out and commanding you to play less *forte* and less *piano*, regardless of what the composer required.

Another most important and serious drawback was that all instrumental balancing of the orchestra had to be done from the wax tests, which meant an enormous amount of reiteration and a consequent sense of tiring on the part of the musicians.

Now while the music is being recorded, whether as a test or a master, what is going on to the wax can be heard through a loud-speaker. This means that in the machine room there must be someone listening who is musician enough to be able to tell whether the balance is right or wrong according to the full score he is following.

Now, as to contrast, visit any concert hall where recordings are known to take place. There on the platform will be seated a complete symphony orchestra.

The conductor will be on his rostrum, perhaps in his shirt sleeves, otherwise with the exception of a little microphone suspended a short distance in front, the setting is exactly the same as it is at a public presentation of the works to be recorded. So real is the illusion that once when conducting a session in this manner, two or three people had entered the balcony in ignorance of what was taking place, and were so enthused by the music that they began applauding at the end. Luckily the cutter had been raised but on the centre groove of the record is the sound of the applause. This particular record has been issued.

Now let us consider the orchestral players as individual artists. They must be extraordinarily versatile because an orchestra, which in the morning is playing Stravinsky or Beethoven, in the afternoon will be taking part in musical comedy selections. Their fees vary and as a matter of interest I append these, with the variations for the two types of sessions.

	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Sub-principal</i>	<i>Rank and file</i>
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Session A	2 9 0	1 17 6	1 9 0
Session B	1 17 6	1 9 0	1 9 0

Session A is for symphonies and music of that calibre.

Session B is for all other orchestral work.

It seems a strange anomaly that the rank and file should receive the same fee for both sessions, for obviously there is the same difference in the work for them as for the principals and sub-principals, and one may ask why are there such people as sub-principals?

There is too much differentiation between players who generally are on a level with one another.

A more equitable and just method would be to pay a player by time; by that I mean that whether the session was A or B he would receive the same fee as if there were a permanent orchestra attached to the recording company, which would be treated as salaried people. Therefore, I suggest the following fees for all gramophone sessions.

<i>Principal</i>	<i>All others</i>
£2 2s.	£1 10s.

The point might be raised that better musicians are necessary for the A session, that their technique and experience has to be of a far more advanced nature. The contention is answered by the fact that in addition to the A session they attend all B sessions, and therefore we should not use such first class players for the B session but should engage musicians of a lower standard and pay them a lower fee.

As it stands the present system tends to cause disputes as to whether some particular music is A or B, and also the better players are apt to send deputies to the B sessions and come themselves to the A sessions, which is obviously unfair to the conductor, the company, and the deputies.

Working under my proposal would mean in effect, that a fee would be paid for three hours' work. If it is a classical session, then their enjoyment should compensate for more arduous playing, and here a very interesting point arises; which is the more tiring, playing dull and cheap music for three hours with a minimum of technique and artistic interpretation, or three hours of technically difficult but inspired music? Surely all musicians will agree that the former is the more fatiguing both mentally and physically. Personally I have found orchestral musicians to be on the whole the most helpful of all colleagues. Consider it from their point of view. They have played under some of the very finest conductors in the world, and then a young and inexperienced conductor is appointed. If he is unwise enough to attempt to ride roughshod over their heads they can be most disagreeable, but if he is prepared to take advantage of their wide knowledge he will gain an

enormous experience, and his friendly relationship with the players will result in that co-operation which is so necessary to re-create the music given to us by the great masters. In fact, the most valuable appointment that a young conductor can hold is the musical directorship of a gramophone company which is producing all and sundry types of records. His ability must range from jazz up to the classical symphonies and modern tone poems—embracing all instrumental concertos and operatic accompaniments. Moreover, he must be able to score a fox-trot, ballad, or to rescore a classical work for recording purposes, a duty which is now mercifully relegated to the past. He must accompany on the piano singers or instrumental soloists and sometimes he must take part in chamber music, and be prepared for the most outrageous demands in the way of transposing for some of our vocalists. Last but not least, he must be an expert at “cutting” and timing.

By “cutting” I mean reducing to four minutes a work that takes four minutes twenty seconds, without anybody realising that it has been curtailed in any way. The work also is very exacting, as, during a three hour session, the actual playing time may be only about two hours, the rest of the time being spent in listening to wax tests, or arguments between the conductor and the recorders, or between the conductor and the artists, or between all parties. The one saving grace for these poor orchestral players is “cross-words”.

One debatable point is whether orchestras should hear wax tests or not. It must be remembered that the reproduction from the wax is not yet perfected, and also the standard of the reproducing machine on which ultimately the record will be played has not yet been reached. Therefore if the players hear the tests they may try and effect balance themselves, not realising that if for instance, there is too much bass on the loudspeaker reproduction from the wax, there will not be enough on the ordinary mechanical reproduction found on the average gramophone, and so they reduce the strength of their playing on the master record, thus defeating the objects of the recording experts. It must also be remembered that we have to cultivate a gramophone ear; by that I mean when we hear a wax test we have to imagine it as a finished record played on perhaps twenty different gramophones, mechanical and electrical, which means that on perhaps eighteen of these machines the balance will be wrong, and on the remaining two it will be correct. The result is that orchestral players have to use a certain amount of discretion since they can so easily make or mar a record.

An amusing incident that once occurred may emphasise this better.

An orchestra had made a wax test and heard it played back to them. The piccolo player was then moved back a yard, as he was predominating and another wax test was made. He was again moved back another yard, and again another wax test was made. This proceeding was repeated another three or four times, by which time the piccolo player had arrived at the door of the studio, and could hardly be put outside.

At this deadlock he innocently told the recorders that as they pushed him back so he blew louder and louder.

What would have happened if he had been pushed outside the door?

At the time of writing this article Stanley Chapple was Musical Director of the Vocalion Company.

LONG-PLAYING RECORDS

We are already beginning to receive letters from English and American readers about the long-playing records which are being issued by the Victor Company and which are soon to be issued also by the Brunswick and Columbia Companies of America; and we have been gently rapped over the knuckles by our admirable cousin *Disques* (of Philadelphia) for the cool tone of the note on the subject which appeared in our September number. If we beg leave to remain cool on the subject even when we hear that the Philadelphians have recorded the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven complete on a single 12-inch disc and that thirty-two other discs (from \$4.50 each) have been announced on which existing works such as the *Nutcracker* Suite (Philadelphians), Haydn's *Clock* Symphony (Toscanini) and Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor (Rachmaninov) have been "transcribed", it is not because we do not appreciate the implications of this development, but because with our standards of reproduction, our wear-tests, our habits and prejudices we have not yet reached that "genuine landmark in phonographic progress", that "thrilling conquest of an obstacle that has long thwarted the larger development and popularity of phonography" (to quote the November *Phonograph* of Cambridge, Massachusetts). We have long seen the landmark on the horizon and long dreamed of that conquest. It is only necessary to look back at the article on "The long-playing record and the gramophone of the future" which Mr P. Wilson contributed to our Christmas number in 1926 (Vol. IV, p. 286) to see that it is rather premature now to wave flags about a long-playing disc which has to be made of a new and harder material and to be played with a special needle on an electrical reproducer with a new gear-clutch arrangement for its motor to enable the turntable to revolve at $33\frac{1}{3}$ revolutions a minute or at 78 for the new or the old records respectively. "Transcriptions", too, for which our unkind readers used to prefer the phrase "faked records", are not very popular over here.

No. Technical reasons perhaps and commercial reasons certainly (our record trade in England is by no means in the same condition as it is in America) make it most unlikely that we shall get long-playing discs on the market over here for some time, if ever. But the research departments are fully alive to the developments in America, and our readers may rest assured that we shall not bump into the landmark without seeing it coming.

December 1931

OCTOBER 1929

My Early Life

by Josef Lhévinne

I come of rich parents. That is to say, they were rich in children, if not in worldly goods, for when I was born in Moscow, in 1876, I was the eleventh!

My father played the violin in a theatre orchestra and had a very hard life. His small salary did not go far with such a large family. But he had a very great affection for us and determined that we should have an easier time than had fallen to his lot. He was always looking for precocious talent in his children so that it could be developed from the beginning.

When I was about three, his brother-in-law, who could make no headway in Moscow, resolved to go abroad. He sold the contents of his home to pay his fare. Everything went except an old-fashioned piano. No one wanted this curiosity, and so it came about that he made a present of it to my father. When it reached our home my father struck a few notes and told me to sing them. So correctly did I catch their pitch that he at once decided that I must be musical! I certainly loved music. By the time I was six I was able to play quite a number of piano pieces, besides being able to accompany and sing songs by Beethoven and Mendelssohn.

A Swede called Krysander took an interest in me, and for the next five years gave me lessons. He was a real good sort, sacrificing his scanty leisure time to me, with never a thought of any remuneration. When I was eleven it was he who arranged that I should play at a great *soirée* which was to be held in the town. The occasion was my first introduction into "grand" society.—The *soirée* was given in a palace, and I well remember how shy and timid I was in these magnificent and unfamiliar surroundings. The wonderful dresses, the sparkling lights, the glitter of the jewellery, and the pretty women all dismayed me. The Grand Duke Constantine, the patron of the Imperial Conservatoire, was present, besides all the Moscow aristocracy and artistic celebrities.

I played the *Moonlight Sonata*. The Grand Duke sat near me and I could feel that he was interested. Afterwards he talked to me. All I could do was to stammer a "yes" or a "no" to his

numerous questions. But I had the wit to return the right answer when he asked me if I would like to go to the Conservatoire. He shook hands and said that he would see to it. That same night he discussed the matter with a wealthy banker who had the reputation of helping young and needy musicians. The next morning my father and I were summoned to the banker's office. My father was asked whom he would like me to study with. Without hesitation he said "Savonoff"—the greatest teacher of the piano-forte in Russia. The banker laughed, and all three of us then went to see Savonoff. I played. All the time Savonoff seemed to be quietly smiling to himself as if with pleasure. Meanwhile, the Director of the Conservatoire had come into the room and suggested that I should be placed in a preparatory class, until I had become sufficiently advanced to study with Savonoff. Savonoff would not listen to this. He insisted that other teachers would spoil me for him.

Savonoff gave me lessons every day. My technique was all wrong, and with him I started all over again, right from the very beginning. All my ideas were entirely altered. Even his method of the high-raised wrist and the use of the fingers from the knuckles was different from all I had previously been taught. For a long time it was difficult to assimilate these new methods and, above all, to forget all I had, so far, learnt.

In those days the musical god of the school, and, indeed, of musical Russia, was Anton Rubinstein. He was the Director of the St Petersburg Conservatoire, of which the Moscow school was a branch. I had been studying with Savonoff for some two years when he told me that Rubinstein was coming to see how the work of the school was progressing. He was to listen to a recital at which the best pupils were to perform. Each pupil was given ten minutes. To my astonishment I was to play for no less than an hour! My group comprised the Beethoven *Eroica* Variations, a Liszt Rhapsody, three Chopin Etudes, a Bach Fugue, and an Etude by Liadov.

I was only fourteen and not particularly industrious. I much preferred playing about the streets of Moscow or shooting at a target with a rifle to practising the piano! My piano playing came with such ease that I felt that I could leave everything to the last moment. And I always did!

The night before Rubinstein was to arrive Savonoff called me to his house. I was to play my programme through to him. Always he had been very strict and severe with me. Often he had scolded me with a very loud voice, using fantastic, even bad language. But when he said nothing at all, that was worse still.

And this night as I finished each piece he was terrifyingly laconic. Nothing but just an ominous "Go on!"

When at last this ordeal was over, he started to talk to me. Very gently, quietly but pointedly he told me what a fool I had been, and how I had wasted my time and opportunities. I started to cry. Then he said: "Of course, I shall not allow you to play to-morrow. Everyone would wonder what sort of a teacher I was. And in front of Rubinstein, of all people! You have lost the greatest chance of your life. Now go home. But I shall expect to see you to-morrow. You owe it to the school to hear the others play".

You can imagine the state of my feelings as I walked home. For weeks the sole topic of conversation there had been that I was to play before Rubinstein. My father was a real martinet. I hadn't the courage to tell him what had happened. At least a frightful thrashing. At most . . . I could not imagine what that would be.

When I arrived home I commenced practising with the most intense concentration. My father returned from the theatre. He stood and listened to me. "You will do well to-morrow", he said. That was terrible. Early next morning I was at the piano again. I regained my confidence. That was of little use!

I went to the Conservatoire. It was the first time that I should see Rubinstein. I stood near him—to me a most wonderful inspiration. Even now he remains the ideal which I am always striving to reach. He had the most wonderful personality of any man I have ever met. Savonoff passed, and pretended not to see me. Dejectedly I scanned the programme pinned on to a wall. I read it again to make sure that I had not made a mistake. For my name was there, and opposite all the pieces which had been arranged for me to play! I rushed off to the Director. I asked him whether it was true that I was to play. "Of course", he replied.

Savonoff knew how to squeeze the best out of me.

I was to play last of all. The programme was very long. Rachmaninov and Scriabin, both fellow-pupils, played beautifully. Rubinstein was sitting in a front seat with Savonoff, quite near the piano. He had listened to piano solos for over two hours. My turn came. I was tingling with excitement. I went to the platform and drank a glass of water, and somehow steeled my nerves. Savonoff asked Rubinstein what he would like to hear, hoping that he would ask for very little! "Let him play everything", was the reply.

I started with the *Eroica* Variations. The music absorbed me. Rubinstein was moved. "Bravo!" he cried. "Now the Etudes!"

I played the B minor. Just as I was going to commence the C minor Rubinstein shouted, "Make it stormy!" and shook his big head like a lion and almost roared at me. I played it with all my strength and power. Rubinstein jumped to his feet, kissed me, and rung my hand. "You are a big, big boy", he said; "work hard, and you will be a great man!"

That was the first great moment of my life.

One day, at the end of this season, Savonoff said to me, "You bad boy, you have the devil's luck!" "What is it?" I asked. "Why, Rubinstein is to conduct next season in Moscow, and he has himself asked that you should play!"

It was true. I was to play the *Emperor Concerto*. All through the hot, long days of the summer I worked and worked. Savonoff continually reminded me not to do as I had done before, but to prove this time that I really deserved all the praise I had received. Work I did. All went well at the rehearsal. I felt I had nothing to fear. The great day came. The orchestra played the glorious *Coriolanus Overture*. Then it was my turn. Everybody waited expectantly for me to appear. But no Lhévinne came. Everybody got very excited. They searched for me everywhere, but I was not to be found. Quite by chance, and almost as a last resource, the Director looked into the room which had been set aside for Rubinstein. There he found me, fast asleep, sitting at a table, my head buried in my arms. The Director was frightened, and thought that I was ill. The real cause was that the nervous tension of waiting had been too much for me. In sheer exhaustion I had fallen asleep. It did me good, composed my nerves, and gave me strength.

I remember walking on to the platform, dressed in my blue Russian blouse with belt and knickers, and feeling as full of confidence as if the playing of the solo part in a Beethoven concerto was a thing I did every day of my life! The marvellous confidence of youth! I would give everything to have it now!

I played well that day. Rubinstein was genuinely and sincerely enthusiastic. Again he embraced me.

The second great moment of my life!

It was the practice not to permit encores at these concerts. But the applause was so insistent that I was told to go on again. I repeated the stormy Chopin Etude. Again I had to play. Savonoff whispered to me to play Rubinstein's Etude. As soon as Rubinstein realised what I was playing he covered his ears with his hands and ran out of the hall!

Long afterwards Rubinstein confided to me that he could not bear anyone to play his own compositions but himself!

DECEMBER 1929

Forty Years of the Gramophone

by Alfred Clark

(Managing Director of The Gramophone Company)

(in an interview)

For forty years I have been engaged in the talking-machine industry. During that period I have seen many changes. Although they were almost imperceptible at the time, on looking back at them I can now see that they marked definite advances, and their cumulative effect have placed the industry in the happy position it finds itself to-day.

It was on September 12th, 1889, that I started with the North American Phonograph Company which had acquired Edison's patents, and commenced my long association with phonographs, or, as they are now generally called, talking machines.

I remember the machine which Edison put on the market in those days. From the modern point of view it was a clumsy affair. A wax cylinder took the place of a disc record, and there was no spring motor. There was a burst of wonder at the invention, and then the public lost interest. The first machine was merely regarded as a clever scientific toy. Frankly, it was but little more. It was not long before the Phonograph Company lost its capital of £200,000, and Edison regained his rights.

I then went to work with him, and divided my time between the phonograph and the kinestoscope—the forerunner of the cinema. This was the first experimental work ever done on the film. The only films then in existence were of Sandow and such subjects as performing dogs and acrobats.

One day the idea occurred to me that it would be practical to make a film play. The execution of Mary Queen of Scots was chosen as a suitable subject, and in a few days I had invented the first film scenario. When the costumes were ordered, the costumiers were instructed that they were only to be delivered if it was a sunny day. There were no film studios then, and as all the photography had to be done out of doors a bright, sunny day was an essential part of the business.

The moving picture was in its infancy as much as the gramophone was, and it then made hardly any appeal to the public

imagination. At one time it nearly died of anæmia. It is certainly a coincidence that it started alongside the gramophone, and now seems inseparably bound up with our industry again.

The phonograph had begun to make some progress when Emile Berliner (who recently died, almost unnoticed), the inventor of the microphone and the telephone transmitter, patented a disc machine which he called a "gramophone". This was an historical milestone. In 1896 I went to Washington and threw in my lot with Berliner. I had made up my mind that the future of the talking machine, and incidentally my own future, lay with the disc gramophone. Fortunately, the years have proved that I was right! But I still kept up my connection and friendship with the Edison interests.

In those days I did considerable experimental work. In fact, all through my career I have kept myself closely in touch with all the many technical improvements. Not only have I been a "recording expert", but I also have been able to make and initiate a number of inventions. I am rather proud that I evolved the first gramophone which had a governor, a model of which can be seen at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington.

I also, in collaboration with Eldridge R. Johnson, afterwards President of the Victor Talking Machine Company, invented the first improved sound box, from which large profits were made.

In 1898 Berliner sold his gramophone patents and rights, outside of America, to William Barry Owen and Trevor Williams, who then started a private company in London, with British capital, which they called "The Gramophone Company". This, actually, was the beginning of the famous company which bears this name to-day.

So rapid was the growth of the business that, soon after, a public limited company was formed with a share capital of £600,000, the ordinary shares being first offered to the trade. Until then all the business of the company had been transacted at Maiden Lane, Covent Garden. In 1902 a move was made to City Road, which for five years was the recording studio, office, and centre for stock.

In January, 1889, I came to London, joined the new company, and moved on to start a branch in Paris. I might mention that from its earliest days the company made large profits.

It was in 1907 that I returned from Paris to London to become Managing Director of The Gramophone Company. My first step was to move the headquarters from the City Road to Hayes. The business had so grown that one could hardly move in the old headquarters. Hayes, with its numerous acres, offered itself as a spot where we could develop to our heart's content. The founda-

tion stone of the first building there was laid by Madame, now Dame Nellie, Melba.

The Hayes plant is now a miniature village of 58 acres, where between eight and nine thousand people work, in two shifts, night and day, to supply the incessant demand for HMV records and machines.

In the Museum there are records made in 1885—discs etched on hard rubber. There is also the first tinfoil talking machine of 1878, and the first phonograph, built by Stroh in 1879.

When Bernard Shaw visited Albert Coates in Italy he was so impressed with the records Coates played to him that on his return to England he made a special journey to Hayes to have his voice recorded. Incidentally he signed our Golden Autograph Book, which contains the signatures of all the great artists who have visited the factory.

In early days it was often a matter of difficulty to get the big singers to record their voices. It was Sir Landon Ronald, an ardent gramophonist from the beginning, who persuaded Ben Davies to record for us. Davies laughed at the idea of singing into a tin trumpet, but he was at length cajoled into recording *My Pretty Jane*. When he heard it repeated to him through the horn he was amazed and delighted.

For years Patti was impervious to all our tempting offers to record. In 1905, when she was retiring from the operatic stage, she chanced to hear some of Caruso's remarkable records. The *diva* was then 62, and living in retirement at her Welsh castle, Craig-y-Nos. She wrote to us asking whether arrangements could be made to record her voice. A special staff was sent to Wales, and some excellent records were made in her own home.

Caruso was first recorded as long ago as 1902, long before the fame of his wonderful voice had made his a household name. Arrangements to record were made with him whilst he was singing at La Scala, and his first record was made in Milan. For this he received 200 lira. Not long before his death he was sent a cheque for over £200,000, representing the royalties on the sale of his records for one year only! Caruso made some 160 records for us.

Chaliapin commenced to make records for us twenty-six years ago in St. Petersburg. The first of these were eagerly bought up at ten roubles (twenty shillings) each. Chaliapin has always been extremely careful about recording. Once he insisted that his voice was at its best at midnight, and he would record at that time or not at all!

Eugene Stratton was the first notability to visit the studio at Maiden Lane. Dan Leno followed him in 1900.

During the war The Gramophone Company was the first industrial concern not normally engaged on Government contracts to convert their plant for war needs. Within ten days of the declaration of war, the manufacture of fuse parts, which required absolute accuracy, was commenced. Only the perfect mechanism at our command rendered this possible. I am glad to say that we were able to turn out very large quantities of munitions for the men at the front.

With modern gramophones, electrical recording, and the perfect records of to-day, the early days of the gramophone now begin to take on the atmosphere of a fairy story for me. Here are some of the things I remember, strange and otherwise:

When there were only half a dozen male singers whose voices would record at all well.

When it was impossible to make a record of a female voice or a violin.

When artists were paid two shillings for each time they sang for recording.

When only three records were made each time the artists sang. (If a dealer ordered twelve records of one song, the artist had to sing the song four times.)

When a day's sale of a hundred records seemed stupendous. (Now we worry if they do not reach 100,000 daily.)

When the business so increased that one artist sang one song, over and over again, all day long.

When every single record had to be listened to through ear tubes, from beginning to end, before it was sent out.

When we first began to copy cylinder records. (This was done by playing one record and recording from it on to another. In this way we were able to make as many as fifty copies from one master.)

When I heard a disc record for the first time, and realised that from one master record hundreds of thousands of copies could be made.

When disc records were made on zinc plates by an etching process.

When the first gramophone records were recorded on wax instead of zinc. (We thought we had made progress then!)

When gramophones had no spring motors, and were turned by hand.

When the first spring motor built for the phonograph weighed over 300 pounds.

When the taper tone-arm was invented.

When the famous Exhibition sound-box was invented.

When the first electric reproducer was heard.

When radio broadcasting was first demonstrated by Marconi at Chelmsford and afterwards at Hayes.

As these memories pass through my mind, I come to the conclusion that our industry has had a long and arduous journey. The path has not been easy, nor has development been rapid. Amusing things have happened—never to the Managing Director. It has been a drab, plugging career, nothing spectacular, a business of laying one brick upon another. Never were we able to put a dozen bricks on at a time! I pause to salute those who have stuck to the task of building up our industry to the proud position which it now holds.

The future is bright and full of possibilities. What does it hold for us? I believe that, before very long, we shall have little portable boxes which will contain:

Records of longer playing duration.

Electric reproduction.

Radio.

Television with stereoscopic and colour effects.

And perhaps, best of all, the instruments and records will be so inexpensive that they will be within the reach of even the humblest of purses.

THE VEIL LIFTED

The demonstration of recording by HMV at the Small Queen's Hall arranged for members of the Press last month was very interesting. Three re-recordings of numbers from *The Pirates of Penzance* were done during the afternoon. Apart from the usual tedium of a recording studio, the endless rehearsals, tests and disappointments which make the onlooker wonder how a brilliant performance is ever achieved at the end, the two notable things were that two recorders were used, thus enabling one wax to be re-played to the performers (and, of course, ruined in the act) and preserving the other in case the performance was approved, and secondly that the comparatively new disposition of the orchestra was adopted by which the strings had a microphone to themselves on one side of the conductor, the wind, brass and percussion another microphone on the other side, while the soloists with a third and the chorus with a fourth microphone were penned off in the central space. Dr Malcolm Sargent had Sullivan's own score of the opera, and standing on a high rostrum in the middle of the studio controlled his scattered forces with the most admirable spirit and patience. Mr Derek Oldham (who was chuckling over a cutting from a colonial paper referring to the "dripping sentimentality" of one of his records) was in great form and with Miss Elsie Griffin made a truly beautiful record of the duet, "Ah leave me not alone"; but it remains to be heard whether the wax received all the beauty that was offered to the microphone.

May 1929

FEBRUARY 1930

Musicians and Mechanical Music

An Address given by Christopher Stone, London Editor of *The Gramophone* to the Incorporated Society of Musicians at Chester on January 2nd, 1930.

Sir Hugh Allen was in the chair, and introduced the London Editor, who began by saying that he felt like an officer in the Tank Corps invited to address the members of the Cavalry Club on the subject of mechanized warfare. After a brief reference to the early history of mechanical music, he proceeded as follows:

"Many of you remember the gradual emergence of the gramophone disc and of the gramophone itself from its disputable obscene childhood in the gutter and the side-show to its flaunting vulgar adolescence, and on to its years of gentility when the machine had to be housed in a cabinet of inlaid wood, to be cramped into a piece of indeterminate furniture for the drawing-room, and when the records of celebrities cost a guinea a piece. I daresay many of you are already aching to get to the discussion when you will be able to tell us your first experiences of the gramophone. You will perhaps ask us whether we, too, remember this or that monstrosity of twenty, thirty, forty years ago, and in asking us you will be implying that no one with any vestige of a musical education, any sense of humour or any sense of decency, could conceivably have associated himself seriously in those days with the gramophone.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, I give you all that—I give you all the ridicule and sarcasm that are in your mind. I have enough of my own and to spare. Can't we to-day agree to put them aside and to concentrate less upon the disreputable history of the gramophone—for all of us must bear our share of responsibility for its disrepute—and more upon the inherent divine spark—the life in mechanical music?

"I think we must, or at any rate I think you must. This is no time for gossiping and airing prejudices; but I am going to trespass on your indulgence to the extent of asking you to consider seriously with me for a few minutes the practical experiences of the last seven years of my life. They have been wrapped up in the gramophone almost to the exclusion of anything else. When my brother-in-law, Compton Mackenzie, started his magazine, *The*

Gramophone, seven years ago, the industry was in full swing; the record catalogues were full of illustrious names of artists—Patti, Melba, Caruso, Plançon, Tamagno, Kirkby Lunn, Nikisch, Toscanini and so on, dozens of them. It had already been established that Handel only wrote one Largo, and Chopin one Nocturne; and that Elgar's Violin Concerto, for instance, and most string quartets could be recorded in at most 15 minutes a piece. There was, you see, a public for good music—we soon found that. Arthur Clutton Brock wrote his last article before his death for our magazine, and he pleaded with all the sensitiveness of his nature and the charm of his writing for the acceptance of the gramophone record as producing a new quality of music, a quality of fairy music, very lovely in its way, and with some advantages over the music of concert halls and drawing-rooms which we had known all our lives.

“But he was alone. Where were the other musicians and musical critics? Who supported our venture except those who had already begun to do what they could in the same direction; the great recording companies who never wavered in their support of an endeavour to treat them seriously; leaders and conductors like that foremost and earliest champion, Sir Landon Ronald, and during the last ten years Sir Walford Davies; and writers like Mr Percy Scholes, Mr Herman Klein, Mr Robert Legge, Mr W. R. Anderson (then editor of *The Music Teacher*) and Mr Sydney Grew? All along the line it was the musical profession which was letting things slide, ignoring things, doing nothing to help the public or the commercial people. I believe that there are many of you here to-day who are glad that you *did* see, even then, that you must help to mould this great growing thing; but how many of you found it involved a slight loss of caste among your peers?

“You are like the heirs of a great heritage, a vast estate, a huge mansion—legislation by the people for the people, the march of events, the pressure of modern conditions threaten you. You have to surrender acre after acre; you are offered compensation. You can't get servants for your great house; you can't afford anything. What are you to do with all your traditions, your sensitiveness and pride, with even the thought of your own heir? It isn't easy. You can let everything go with a curse, snatch up the compensation money and turn your back on all that has made life worth living—and start again. Or you can return to your great house, close all the shutters, let the servants go, and eke out a miserable existence defiantly and proudly to the bitter end.

"The third course is surely the best. It is to accept the situation unselfishly with a high courage; to become a leader in the breaking up of your estate for the use of the public, to be yourself the guide and lecturer of the crowds who come to marvel at your pictures and furniture and gardens; yourself the historian of your great house and your great inheritance! With this never-flagging purpose in your heart, to ensure that as little damage as possible is done to a priceless inheritance, as little ignorance left festering in the minds of the ignorant, as much encouragement given to the enquiring and appreciative spirit, however humble, as it lies in your power to compass.

"That's all very well, but isn't it precisely what you have been doing?

"It is not. Perhaps it is a good thing that I am here to-day instead of the man whom you invited to address you, because I can say what he could not say. I can suggest to you that so far as the gramophone is concerned, he, Compton Mackenzie, an amateur with no musical training, has done as much for the fair fame of music as any one member of the Incorporated Society of Musicians. He raised the battle cry, he rallied round him the music lovers and the would-be music lovers of the gramophone world and taught them to sing in chorus: 'We want more good music, we want works recorded complete, not cut into a tangle'. The commercial people responded nobly. They said, 'Of course, if that's what you want and if you will pay for it you shall have it'. Compton Mackenzie had a competition to find out what symphonies and what concertos were most urgently needed by the public. Since then all those symphonies and concertos have been made available on gramophone records. He offered to give the *Trout* Quintet records to the writer of the best essay on 'Why I don't like Chamber Music'. This was four years ago. A miner won it, and in a few weeks he wrote to say that he was converted

"But I needn't tell you anecdotes of this kind; you know as well as I do that vast public which is slowly learning to enjoy and appreciate the glories of your inheritance through mechanical music. Whether you give any credit to Compton Mackenzie for the present quantity and quality of gramophone records of what I call vaguely good music, does not matter. But here are two small points that are connected with the support that you musicians have given to mechanical music.

"No sooner was *The Gramophone* magazine on its legs than we started a Player-Piano supplement. A good many musicians have given their blessing to the Player-Piano because the amateur can,

if he likes, do something besides listen. He can interpret; and Mr Ernest Newman and Mr Sydney Grew wrote books about this. Anyhow we were premature with our endeavour to do for player-pianists what we were doing for gramophonists, and though the Trade gave us full support, no one else did, and the musical profession, so far as I know, never lifted a finger to encourage us.

"The other point is that Compton Mackenzie started a Society, the National Gramophonic Society, in our early days for the purpose of making records of chamber music, to supplement the output of the commercial companies. Mr W. W. Cobbett was a strong supporter, and we had no difficulty in finding artists to play for us, and members all over the world to buy enough records to keep the Society afloat financially. We have made about 150 records. We are still making them.

"But the whole enterprise has been tremendously uphill work, only kept going by the loyalty of the handful of enthusiasts concerned in it. You might suppose that the musical profession would have welcomed our efforts, recommended our records to pupils for study, used them for lectures, put them in libraries. Not a bit of it. I must confess that from time to time I have been asked to *give* records to musical critics or to lend them to lecturers; but so far as I know there is only one musician in this country who is a member of the NGS and pays for his records, and that is Mr Alec Rowley. No single musical institution is a member and has our records; though for a year or two Mr Cobbett presented the records of the Society to the Trinity College of Music. In America, of course, it is different. Some American Universities and Public Libraries take all the records we issue, and the agents that we have over there take the liveliest interest in all our doings and are responsible for about a third of our sales.

"In this country the BBC has been very good about broadcasting NGS records; it does not advertise the Society or give its address, but it considers the records worth broadcasting on their own merits to listeners.

"But then the radio in this country is an amateur show, and there is no need for me to deal with broadcasting, though I am quite prepared to do so if you wish. My view is that the mistakes that the musical profession made in not guiding the gramophone industry cannot be repeated in the case of radio. Mercifully the chance has gone, or at any rate the risks are very much less. One sees the attempts of the gramophone to provide the best, rather than the worst, hampered by the apathy, if not the hostility, of the musicians; the International Educational Society struggling along by the munificence of one man; the NGS struggling along

because its overhead expenses are borne by a magazine; the old-established Education Department of The Gramophone Co. and the more recent one of The Columbia Co. fighting all the time for bare existence in the teeth of the sales-managers—and the musical profession looking on dispassionately.

"The long-playing record, which will only be of real use for the recording of big works, movements of symphonies, concertos and chamber music, and whole acts of operas, still waits for the musicians to say 'We must have it'. I hope that I shall be contradicted on this point, and that as a matter of fact every one in this hall has urged the recording companies to perfect the long-playing record.

"But perhaps it is a question of money? Perhaps the musical profession cannot afford to buy gramophones and records or radio sets and that those members of it who have never had any truck with mechanical music have refrained from poverty, not from disdain. If that is so it is a great pity, because it involves, not instantly, indeed, but gradually, the disappearance of the musical profession as we now know it.

"But be quite clear on one point. The musical profession may dwindle into nothing; but mechanical music does not threaten the composition or the performance of music, or even the teaching of music. More and more every year is the demand for new composers felt and for greater orchestras, permanent opera, world-famous virtuosos. Never in the history of the world has so much noble music been heard by so many living people as last year, never has your inheritance from the past been appreciated by a huger public of the present.

"What is doomed is mediocrity, and in this assembly I need not be cautious about what I say. The second-rate composer and second-rate artist are no longer finding it easy to bluff the public; the third-rate are struggling for bare existence. Look at the BBC, which cannot afford to employ only first and second-rate artists; it is constantly abused not merely by musicians but by the listening public for inflicting third-rate performers on the air. And yet those performers twenty years ago would have escaped chastisement. Can you deny that?

"It does not much matter for my argument whether you regard mechanical music as a juggernaut or as a gold mine. What does matter is that, whether you yourselves are destined to die paupers or millionaires, your plain duty is to serve music with all your abilities and experience and enthusiasm. Your service is bitterly needed in helping mechanical music. You must see how slow the progress will be if you do not give your help. Can you—I

don't say afford, because that's only a side-issue but—can you bear to pass by on the other side? When leaders are wanted, and not only leaders, but instructors, so badly, can you stand back?

“Well, you may say, supposing we offer our compositions or our services to the recording companies, shall we be so very welcome? I think not. You lost your opportunity twenty years ago; and quite enough musical people *have* taken the opportunity and are reaping the harvest. There is not much gleaning to be done in that field.

“The gramophone and the player-piano and radio are to all intents and purposes independent; they have only to beckon in order to get what they want. That Debussy died without having supervised the recording of his works for posterity is a reflection on the musical profession rather than on the commercial companies. Sir Edward Elgar and Richard Strauss have conducted their own works in the recording studio, and if the present spirit of the public is maintained we shall see that every composer registers his authoritative interpretation of his works in future. But we shall want your support in this demand.

“I have left till the last the form of mechanical music that seems to me most urgently in need of your serious consideration, and I approach it with some trepidation. Bluntly, are you musicians going to let the sound-films develop in the same way as the gramophone? These, as you know, are a tremendous menace and a tremendous opportunity. The time is already in sight when they will be linked with the gramophone and radio—this is an absolute certainty, and already the World Trust of Entertainment is being formed in America. Music will play a large part in this entertainment; outside it will inevitably have an attenuated existence.

“If the cinema were destined to set the standard for the world's entertainment, we should be in a bad way, for the artistic standards of the cinema, generally speaking, are the standards of the servants' hall and the popular gramophone records; they are far below the standards that some of you musicians and musical critics have brought into the gramophone world lately, and which the BBC has faithfully followed.

“But if you realize that the sound reproduction of the talking and singing film is now in the stage at which von Bulow gave his blessing to the phonograph in 1890, you will realize that now, and not ten years hence, is the time for you to take the development of films seriously. If the past has taught you its lesson you will not miss the present opportunity. Nothing can prevent operas being filmed with every device of sound and colour and

stereoscopy that money and inventive genius can produce. Nothing can prevent the great classics being recorded and filmed for the delectation of the humblest home. The musical side of this vast entertainment trust will be stupendous whether we desire it or not; and if any of you have any practical experiences of talkies you will know the unutterable degradation of Wagner and Verdi and the rest of them that we may expect unless musicians fling themselves, without any thought for their personal appearance and the comments of their friends, into the fray. You may have been amused to hear that Mark Hambourg was playing the part of Beethoven in a sound film, and I daresay the result will be open to criticism; but I do beg you, ladies and gentlemen, who have given your lives to music, and who know how to create the good and the beautiful in your work, to take an active and benevolent part in helping Mechanical Music to aim high, rather than as hitherto to take an almost malicious pleasure in watching its struggles and failures”.



The framed copy opposite of part of Schumann's Piano Quintet (Vocalion A-0162), played by The London String Quartet with Mrs Ethel Hobday, is referred to on page 37. The text of the inscription is as follows:—

First Gramophone Congress July 9, 1925

ISLE OF JETHOU—C.I.

This record which was first played by me in the month of March 1922 may be considered the founder of THE GRAMOPHONE. It was the first to teach me what the gramophone could do. Mr Robin Legge, the musical critic of the *Daily Telegraph* hearing my enthusiasm asked me to write an article for his page. That article provoked such a wide response from readers that I determined to found a magazine, *Floreat*.

COMPTON MACKENZIE



Alfred Clark, Managing Director of The Gramophone Co. at the time THE GRAMOPHONE was founded



Sir Joseph Lockwood, Chairman of EMI Limited (left)

MAY 1930

Patti and her Gramophone Records **(A Letter from Sir Landon Ronald)**

Dear Sir,—I read with interest Mr Herman Klein's letter to you.

Unfortunately I did not read Mr Klein's Biography of Patti, or I should have been tempted to have informed him that his account of that great singer's experience of making records for the first time was quite inaccurate.

He states that it was two or three days after she had finished making the records before she had heard one. This is not in accordance with the facts of the case. I can tell you exactly what did occur, as I happened to spend nearly a week at Craig-y-Nos Castle for the purpose of accompanying Madame Patti when she felt inclined to attempt to make records.

It is quite true that she had a great prejudice against the gramophone, and even whilst I was staying with her she continually expressed astonishment that I should have any admiration for such an "abomination". However, after I had been there a day or two, the goods news came that she would consent to try and make a record. The necessary apparatus had been fixed up in a small room, and from the moment that she began to sing there was not a single person present excepting myself at the piano.

After she had made the record she insisted on it being played back to her. It was explained to her that this would mean that the record would be destroyed and made useless, but she was adamant on the point.

Accordingly, it was played back, and it was at that moment (and not two or three days afterwards, as Mr Klein asserts) that Patti turned to me and said: "Ah, mon Dieu! maintenant je comprends pourquoi je suis Patti! Mon cher, quelle voix! Quelle artiste!" Let me add at once that this was said in a very naïve manner, as if she were speaking of somebody else. There was not a touch of conceit to be traced.

She was such a great artist that she knew exactly what great singing was. This was the first time she had heard the voice and phrasing of Patti, and her expression of admiration was entirely due, to my mind, to the fact that she was listening to one of the very greatest artists of all time.

GRA. 4

Even her husband, Baron Cederström, was not present on this occasion by her express desire. But the recorder was Mr Fred Gaisberg, who was on the other side of the thin partition which divided the recording room from the machine, and he can vouch that my story is accurate and not exaggerated.

I have never repeated this little history without assuring my audience of Patti's habitual modesty, and I think everybody will agree that the emotion of hearing her own voice reproduced for the first time in her life was more than sufficient to cause her little outburst, which was really touching in its simplicity.

I do not know who Mr Klein's informant was, but he or she was certainly not present on the occasion to which I refer. And, my dear Mr Klein, my memory has not played me a trick!

Yours faithfully,

LANDON RONALD.

[Mr Klein writes:—It was very wrong of my old friend Sir Landon Ronald not to have read my biography of Patti, because it was written at her reiterated request and she would not have liked him to be unacquainted with all the authoritative information which it contains. If he were to do so even now, he would perceive (as I have done since reading his letter) that the occasion of the exclamation which he has quoted both in English and French was entirely distinct from that referred to in my *Reign of Patti*. And evidently there were two such occasions—one immediately after she had made the record, when it was "played back" for her; the other when, a few days later, she was descending the staircase at Craig-y-Nos Castle and there fell upon her ears the sounds of her own voice reproduced *from a gramophone for the first time*.

By then Sir Landon had probably left the Castle and never heard the second exclamation at all. Anyhow, my informant was unquestionably present when it was uttered. The blame for the two being confounded rests entirely with Sir Landon Ronald—(1) for not having read my biography; (2) for not having clearly indicated the occasion in his speech as he has done in the above letter; and (3) for making no reference in the former to the naïve or jocular manner in which Mme Patti spoke of her voice and her artistry. Had he hinted at this last even in the slightest degree, for the information of his innocent audience, I think, Sir, I should never have thought it necessary to address a letter to you on the subject. Both Sir Landon and I knew the *diva* too well for such a defence to be essential.]

AUGUST 1930

The Gramophone in America

by Eugene Goossens

What is the musical importance of the gramophone in America? When my English gramophile friends ask me this question—as they frequently do—I feel rather like the young subaltern, ordered to India, who was requested by a dear old lady to look out for her nephew because he was in India too! But so far as one can generalize over so vast a field, and from experience among my personal friends over there, I should say that the American gramophone public, like its British prototype, is most interested in recorded music of the best and highest grade.

Possibly the average demand for records of highgrade music, as opposed to jazz, is comparatively greater over there than in this country. This is due to the enormous amount of dance music broadcast. The average American radio enthusiast can tune in to fifty or sixty stations; on a clear evening a family in New York can actually listen in to a concert from the Californian coast. And as the great majority of programmes are composed of jazz and light music, the gramophone is used to supplement wireless in many American homes. For despite their fine standards of wireless transmission, broadcast programmes in the States do not always favourably compare musically with those provided by the BBC. They have nothing, for instance, approaching the British chamber and symphony concerts of contemporary music, though fine orchestral relays are by no means rare, as witness the weekly concerts of the Atwater-Kent, Stromberg-Carlson (from Rochester) and other big radio manufacturing firms. Next season, too, all the Carnegie Hall programmes of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra are to be broadcast. So the American music-lover relies to a certain extent on his gramophone to fill his home with the best modern and orchestral music, and records made by the famous symphony orchestras of New York, Boston and Philadelphia enjoy enormous popularity.

Since returning to England I have frequently heard it suggested that the American Victor records are technically superior to anything produced over here. Personally, I am inclined to attribute this to our immemorial custom of praising anything that comes from abroad to the skies at our own expense. For apart from the

fact that the HMV and Victor companies are, to all intents and purposes, one and the same, I find it difficult to detect any difference in the quality of recording so far as my own records, made on both sides of the Atlantic, are concerned.

Undoubtedly, the American company possess the advantage of having at their disposal orchestras finer and more disciplined than circumstances permit of our supporting in Britain. But the obvious fact that the finest orchestras inevitably produce the finest recorded results in no way detracts from the uniform excellence of the British companies' process and reproduction.

My only personal experience of recording in America was a singularly interesting one. For I enjoyed the unique privilege of conducting the first open-air symphony concert recorded for the gramophone, in the famous Hollywood Bowl.

Everyone has heard of the Hollywood Bowl, but few people realise the acoustic marvels of this enormous natural amphitheatre in the Californian hills, where the metaphorical pin dropped on the orchestra stage can be heard on the hill-top a quarter of a mile away. During eight weeks of cloudless summer weather, concerts are held in the Bowl on four evenings out of seven. And the sensation of conducting a fine orchestra under that marvellous blue vault studded with blazing stars with an audience of twenty or thirty thousand thronging the darkness of the hillsides remains unforgettable and indescribable.

Immediately before the concert begins, the brilliant searchlights illuminating the amphitheatre are switched out. Except for the powerful light focussed on the orchestra of 110 players grouped beneath a moveable concrete shell, the Bowl is in complete darkness. Walking out on to the platform, one sees nothing but a few pale blurs of faces immediately below the stage, and only the sudden flash of a smoker's match far up the hillside betrays the presence of the waiting multitudes. The uncanny consciousness of those thousands of invisible eyes focussed on the small of one's back, the unique sense of contact with and response from that unseen audience, has made those Californian nights the most inspiring of memories.

Atmospheric conditions, and the fact that the microphone, placed about fifteen feet away from the platform, would inevitably have caught every movement and whisper of the public, obliged us to record for the gramophone in the mornings when the Bowl was empty. Even so, we discovered that an open-air studio had its disadvantages. Several of the first recordings were "killed" by a summer breeze wafting across the Bowl and deflecting the sound from the microphone so that the music on the record suddenly

faded in the most disconcerting manner. At first, too, we were puzzled by sounds like gunshots peppering the records here and there until experiment disclosed that the slightest crackle of turning pages had been enormously magnified by some curious atmospheric trick. And one of our finest efforts was completely ruined by an aeroplane which skimmed noisily overhead providing a gratuitous obbligato to Dvorák's *Carnival Overture*.

Ultimately, however, six double-sided records were satisfactorily completed and produced in an album entitled "Hollywood Bowl Concert". In addition to the Dvorák work, the discs included Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty Suite*, Casella's arrangement of Balakirev's *Islamey Fantasia*, a Falla dance, and the "March to the Scaffold" from Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony*—a good representative programme.

The success of this experiment, carried out with a portable recording apparatus specially brought from New York, suggests that outdoor recordings might be attempted on a much larger scale now that electrical methods have eliminated the necessity for artists' working in studios fitted with a fixed apparatus. But for reproducing the utmost resonance and brilliance of orchestral playing, there is little doubt that the echo in an empty concert hall gives the most satisfactory results. In America, the majority of orchestral recordings are made either in concert halls or in temporarily disused churches where the acoustics afford great clarity and sonority of tone.

CARUSO ON THE FILMS

Caruso died on August 2nd six years ago. A correspondent writes to remind us that he appeared in two films of light comedy, *My Cousin* and *The Splendid Romance*, in the former doubling the parts of a famous singer and his cousin: and adds that "by virtue of Caruso's droll humour the somewhat slender story proved to be good entertainment". Will not someone—the Film Society, for instance—rescue these reels from the limbo of Wardour Street and let us see them again?

August 1927

NEW DECCA ARTISTS

The following artists will soon appear on Decca labels: Monique Haas, Nicole Henriot, and Eileen Joyce (pianists), Maurice Gendron (violoncello), Gérard Souzay (baritone), Kathleen Ferrier (contralto), and Janine Micheau (soprano).

The London Philharmonic Orchestra are now recording Stravinsky's *Petroushka* under Ernest Ansermet at the Kingsway Hall, and the Conservatoire Orchestra of Paris, has also been placed under contract.

March 1946

In Memory of an old controversy—

APRIL 1930

Ballade Fibreuse

Long since, beside a stream where tall reeds grew,
The goat-foot Pan did rest him from the heat :
He put a notched stem to his lips, and blew,
And music came, beyond believing sweet,
And Echo did the fading sound repeat
That drew the woodland nymphs and satyrs fain,
And naiads, and the winds with dancing feet,
Such magic dwelleth in the hollow cane.

Man in his season sought to serve his need
And save what Lethe washes from his ken;
Remembered Pan, and took, and trimmed a reed,
And pierced its lips, and fashioned him a pen :
Victor was he o'er gloomy Pluto then,
And though he never leave that sad domain
His voice returns across Cocytus' fen,
Such magic dwelleth in the hollow cane.

The wax that bound Pan's pipe has learned to speak,
Taking its impress from a master's seal,
But they that grind not into dust the weak,
They that have ears to hear and hearts to feel,
They that have horror of the ruthless steel,
They turn them to the subtle reed again :
So riseth music from the lifeless wheel,
Such magic dwelleth in the hollow cane.

Prince, what is eight and six a time to you?
Go, steel your heart, mourn not the record slain :
We, of a gentler fibre, know this true—
Much magic dwelleth in the hollow cane.

R. S. J. SPILSBURY

Fibre needles or Steel needles

JUNE 1930

Réponse Ferreuse

When Earth was young and mountains in a trice
 Changed into valleys, and the lakes to hills;
Ere ever India had her fields of rice,
 Or flax was growing for the cotton mills;
 Ere birds made music with their warbling trills;
When Nature made of Earth her richest store;
 I lay beneath where now the farmer tills;
Such is the story of the brick-red ore.

Aeons have passed and Man has found my bed
 And used me in a million varied ways,
In shining whiteness now—no longer red—
 And I have learned to write the poet's lays;
 And I have learned to read the songs of praise
Written with sapphire pen. Thus evermore
 The rolling circle shall its music raise;
Such is the glory of the brick-red ore.

And ye who cry "Destroyer!" in your hate,
 Remember, in destroying I am slain.
One playing only—but I thus create
 A clearer treble than you'll e'er obtain
 From all the witchcraft of the hollow cane.
And for the record, kindly steel doth pour
 Swift death instead of long and lingering pain;
Such is the glory of the brick-red ore.

Let necromancers in their haunts of vice,
 From pagan fibres seek unholy lore.
The purest music comes from sacrifice;
 Such is the glory of the brick-red ore.

F. H. WISEMAN

USE YOUR WIRELESS SET TO PLAY YOUR RECORDS

It Means a New Enjoyment of Records!

THIS little Record Player has brought **NEW LIFE TO RECORDS**—in two senses. It has shown record-lovers how different their records sound when reproduced electrically in the modern way; and it has convinced so many that the enormous sales of the instruments have increased the sales of records generally—bringing **NEW LIFE**—in record interest. That's the influence this little Player is exercising.

Two other Models (with lids), 226, price £3 19s. 6d., and 227 (Automatic Record-Changer), price £9 9s.

The model illustrated is No. 228 (A.C. only) at 39s. 6d.—a complete Electric Player with constant-speed motor, so no winding. Lead and plugs connect with pick-up sockets of any A.C. radio set and records are heard through the radio set loudspeaker. Walnut-finish cabinet, fitted with needle container and hand and automatic brakes.

**GET THIS COLUMBIA
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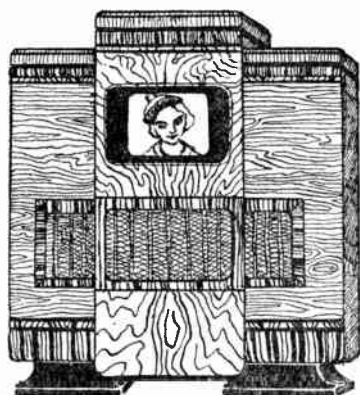


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YOUR DEALER WILL GLADLY GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION

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The famous "Banjo Player" advertisement which appeared during the late thirties as part of a determined effort by Sir Louis Sterling to sell more records. The success of this advertisement was to the benefit of the whole record industry



*HMV Combined Radiogram
and Television*

The Thirties

1931 - 1938

The thirties began in depression, yet the decade saw the gramophone firmly established as a music and entertainment medium. The world's great artists were on record, and the repertory expanded far beyond the standard classics. It was an omen that both Lambert's "Rio Grande" and William Walton's "Façade" were available in 1930.

Complete operas were commonplace, and both Verdi's "Requiem" and Schoenberg's "Gurrelieder" appeared on record. The quality of recording was such that only the short four-minute side stood in the way of total acceptance. Fred Gaisberg himself declared that "the period 1930-1940 will go down in history as the most brilliant epoch of musical reproduction". If that is no longer true, nothing can dim the glory of those years.

Already in 1931, when HMV, Columbia and Parlophone merged to become Electric and Musical Industries (EMI), HMV produced over 200 records in a Connoisseur Catalogue, to which additions were regularly made. This first issue included Adolph Busch playing Bach's solo violin music, Ravel's String Quartet and Debussy's Violin Sonata, Lieder from Elena Gerhardt, D'Indy's "Istar" Variations, Balakirev's "Ithamar" and Goldmark's "Rustic Wedding" Symphony. For some extraordinary reason it also included Liza Lehmann's "There are fairies at the bottom of our garden", but this was a time when songs and ballads were immensely popular.

Columbia went to Bayreuth, and soon after Glyndebourne opened in 1934 HMV issued records of Mozart's operas as one of their Society issues. Societies, or limited editions, were a feature of the decade, and THE GRAMOPHONE embarked on a major campaign

to support the Hugo Wolf Society, which was the father of them all. Schnabel in Beethoven's piano music and Kreisler in the Violin Sonatas, Bach's "48", Sibelius's symphonies, Haydn's Quartets and the songs of Kilipinen were thus recorded. So was Arnold Dolmetsch at 75. The Finnish Government had already given readers a taste of Sibelius by underwriting the recording of the first two symphonies.

Not everybody supported the Society movement, arguing that by subscribing for these albums the public would be by so much depleting its purchasing potential for other music. This argument would have had more substance if the monthly lists were themselves depleted. Yet in one month one company produced 14 major orchestral works in its general list, including four piano concertos and such esoteric works as Debussy's "Le Martyr de Saint Sébastien" and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Antar".

Two other ventures were the Columbia History of Music in five volumes, edited by Percy Scholes, always a friend of THE GRAMOPHONE, and published in association with the Oxford University Press, and Parlophone's Two Thousand Years of Music. Some of the music in both enterprises remains otherwise unavailable. "L'Anthologie Sonore" from France (distributed by THE GRAMOPHONE) did much to popularize the baroque, and Decca's distribution of the German Polydor catalogue produced further riches.

Other indications of the ever-expanding repertory were a set of records of Music of the Court of Henry VI from Nashdom Abbey, the prize-winning string quartets in a newspaper competition, respectively by Elizabeth Maconchy, Edric Cundell and Armstrong Gibbs, Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms" (reviewed in the same paragraph as a "Mosaic Fantasy on Coppélia") Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto with the composer as soloist, D'Indy's Op. 91 Suite for flute, harp, violin, viola and violoncello, Mahler's Ninth Symphony, Bruckner's Fourth and Seventh, Arthur Bliss's Clarinet Quintet, Nielsen's Op. 9 Violin Sonata and a complete "Norma".

Of great historical interest were Petri's records of Busoni, Cortot accompanying Maggie Teyte in Debussy's songs, and Fanny Davies's recording of the Schumann Concerto.

On the popular front Jack Hylton consolidated his position, and in the process shared a week on the same platform in Berlin with Elisabeth Schumann, Jan Kiepura, Maria Ivögun and the Berlin Philharmonic under Beecham. Of all the extraordinary effects achieved by this remarkable band perhaps the most imaginative was the use of the violoncello in a Sousa selection. Hylton's supremacy can be judged by the fact that when he moved from

HMV to Decca THE GRAMOPHONE published a slip page with the news, a unique tribute. Fred Elizalde had come to the Savoy from Cambridge to revolutionize the BBC's late night dance music, but unfortunately suffered from poor recording balance. Duke Ellington's career, like that of Stravinsky, was followed by the gramophone through its changing phases, signifying the gramophone's value in tracing and preserving a creative artist's style, both in composition and performance. Cinema organs and accordion bands were immensely popular, and the variety stage was still able to produce the occasional star performer. "Crooners" spoilt many band performances for the discerning, but were sufficiently popular to have a section to themselves in the paper. Bing Crosby with musicianly phrasing and a gift for whistling remained virtually unchallenged. Latin-American dance music also demanded a separate section. These years saw the zenith of the dance band with styles ranging from "near jazz" to comedy, their versatility largely dictated by their appearance on stage.

The creation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult gave the country a contract orchestra, and despite much criticism of poaching, set standards easily discernible on records. When Toscanini conducted the orchestra in 1935 he hardly touched Brahms's Fourth Symphony and generally cut down rehearsal time. In 1932 Beecham formed the London Philharmonic Orchestra, again with many distinguished soloists at first desks, and their records are still treasured. Beecham's records from the Leeds Festival of 1934 also created a sensation.

Folk music was far from neglected, the companies putting out special supplements, particularly of Irish, Welsh and Scottish music. The decade also saw the establishment of many specialist shops, finally killing off the old idea of records being part of the stock of bicycle shops, an extraordinary association indeed. Prices fell, and while it was possible to buy records in stores at 2½p, it was also commonplace to buy conductors of the stature of Weingartner and Harty for 22½p per 12-inch 78 rpm disc.

The silver jubilee of King George V and the Coronation of King George VI were each celebrated on record, all the music from the latter being recorded live in Westminster Abbey. From 1932 the Sovereign's Christmas broadcasts were issued on record. There were, in fact, many speech records, ranging from language courses to drama and poetry.

All these events were reflected in the paper, which itself was making its own contribution to growth. Jazz and modern dance music were given for review to Edgar Jackson, a leading authority, who also for a brief period in 1934 gave the whole journal a face-

lift with popular headlines in the review pages. Readers were quick to protest, as they were about what they regarded as the death of the old amateur spirit. While the Editor equally deplored "the decline into humdrum respectability" he realized that THE GRAMOPHONE must move with the times and take account of the widening interests of the industry.

Articles on Serbian folk music and the Portuguese fado were not considered too esoteric, nor were page articles on single works by Satie and Mihalovici. P. G. Hurst took over "Collector's Corner", for by now there was a genuine interest in historic records. "Terpander" was the champion of modern music and naturally found himself at the centre of controversy, and Lissenden lightened the rather heavy pages with a series of brilliant caricatures of performers. Discographies of singers were frequent, school gramophone notes kept the younger generation on its toes and THE GRAMOPHONE was given the United Kingdom distribution for the first comprehensive record encyclopedia, prepared by R. D. Darrell for The Gramophone Shop of New York.

New labels came and went, some of them using new material, such as the Durium record, flexible and single-sided, sleeved ready for the post, the back convenient for correspondence. Screen musicals brought a flood of theme songs, which demanded yet another specialised section of the paper. Gramophone Societies flourished, and in 1938 the first of a succession of national conferences was held at Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire, where Company executives and reviewers met their keenest and friendliest critics for a week-end.

Towards the end of the period Parlophone published a series of Music from the Orient, which was reviewed by Edmund Dulac; Rachmaninov's records of his "Paganini Rhapsody" were published before this popular work had been heard in London; certain artists were becoming far better known on record than in life, an example being the singer Miliza Korjus, and if someone was asked to pick a single record from such glorious years it might be that of Povla Frijsh singing Grieg's "Water Lily" in Norwegian; absurd, of course, but no more so than a choice of eight records for life on a desert island.

APRIL 1931

The Artist and the Gramophone

by **Sergei Rachmaninov**

(In an Interview)

Not long ago I was asked to express my opinion as to the musical value of broadcasting. I replied that, to my mind, radio has a bad influence on art: that it destroys all the soul and true significance of music. Since then many people have appeared surprised that, disliking wireless so intensely, I should lend myself to recording for the gramophone, as though the two were, in some mysterious way, intimately connected.

To me it seems that the modern gramophone and modern methods of recording are musically superior to wireless transmission in every way, particularly where reproduction of the piano is concerned. I agree that piano recording was not always so successful as it is to-day. Twelve years ago, when I was making my first records with Edison in America, the piano came out with a thin, tinkling tone. It sounded exactly like the Russian balalaika, which, as you may know, is a stringed instrument resembling the guitar. And results produced by the acoustical process in use when I began to record for "His Master's Voice" in 1920 were far from satisfactory. It is only the perfecting of electrical recording during the last three years combined with recent astonishing improvements in the gramophones themselves that has given us piano reproduction of a fidelity, a variety and depth of tone that could hardly be bettered.

I have no hesitation in saying that modern piano recordings do the pianist complete justice. Speaking from personal experience, I feel that my records can only help to increase my prestige as an artist. Not that excellent results are by any means limited to my own work. I have heard many fine records by many different pianists and in every case the essentials of the individual artist's performance have been captured and preserved.

In fact, through the medium of the gramophone we can now offer the public performances closely similar to those we give on the concert platform. Our records should not disappoint the most critical listener who has heard us in the flesh: to the millions who have no opportunity of doing so, they convey a just and accurate impression of our work. In addition, what is to me

most important of all, recording for the gramophone enables the artist to satisfy himself.

For I am by nature a pessimist. It is so seldom that I am sincerely satisfied with my performance, so often that I feel it could have been better. And when making records it is actually possible to achieve something approaching artistic perfection. If once, twice or three times I do not play as well as I can, it is possible to record and re-record, to destroy and remake until, at last, I am content with the result.

Can the radio artist, who has no opportunity to hear how his performance comes through, ever know a similar satisfaction in his work? Myself, I dislike radio music and listen to it very seldom. But from what I have heard I cannot believe that the best broadcast performance imaginable would ever satisfy a sensitive artist.

On this account alone, I deplore the present depression in the gramophone industry. It is a curious fact that when I began working for HMV ten years ago business was excellent, though only indifferent records were available. Yet to-day, when we have first-class recording, business is worse than it has ever been. For this, I can only think that the universal craze for radio is to blame.

Not for a moment would I wish to belittle the scientific value of broadcasting, its wonders, or its benefits to humanity. I can well imagine that if I were exiled in Alaska, for instance, I might be grateful for even the pale ghosts of music the radio would bring me. But to listen-in in great cities like London or New York when one could actually be present in a concert hall—to me that would seem sacrilege. Radio is a very great invention, but not, I think, for art.

To compare the ultimate musical value of broadcasting with that of the gramophone is to realize that the gramophone has bestowed upon the executive musician one priceless gift—permanence for his art. You listen to a broadcast recital. The next moment it is finished, gone. But a gramophone record can preserve for ever the playing and singing of the world's most distinguished artists. Think what it would have meant to us to-day could we possess records made by Liszt, the greatest pianist who has ever lived. Yet we can only dimly imagine what his playing must have been. Future generations will be more fortunate in that the finest musicians, through their records, will be something more than names to those who come after them.

I can imagine no more striking example of the gramophone's power to re-create the personality of dead genius than an experience

of my own when, in 1918, I first went to America. It was in New York that the HMV Company gave me the opportunity to hear some records made by Count Tolstoi shortly before his death in 1910. Having known Count Tolstoi, whose friendship had greatly helped and influenced me at a very difficult period of my early career, I was naturally keenly interested. The records, made on his estate in Russia, were simply speeches, one in Russian, one in English, explaining his philosophy of life. Yet when the machine started and I heard again his voice, perfectly reproduced down to the curious little husky cough characteristic of his speech, it seemed that Tolstoi himself had come to life. It was a marvellous experience. Seldom have I been moved so deeply. Never, never can I forget the impression the sound of that voice, so long silent, made upon me. But the tragedy of it is this. During the past ten years, I have tried continually in America, in Russia, to obtain those records. No one can tell what has become of them. Unique and irreplaceable, they have apparently vanished beyond recall.

To return to my own work for the gramophone, I have felt most satisfied with those records made during the past three years. These include my own Piano Concerto, No. 2, which I recorded with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra under Stokowski, Schumann's *Carnaval*, recently issued in America, the Chopin *Funeral March* Sonata, which I believe is not yet published, and the Grieg C minor and Beethoven G major Sonatas for piano and violin in partnership with Fritz Kreisler.

Do the critics who have praised those Grieg records so highly realize the immense amount of hard work and patience necessary to achieve such results? The six sides of the Grieg set we recorded no fewer than five times each. From these thirty discs we finally selected the best, destroying the remainder.

To make records with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra is as thrilling an experience as any artist could desire. Unquestionably, they are the finest orchestral combination in the world: even the famous New York Philharmonic, which you heard in London under Toscanini last summer, must, I think, take second place. Only by working with the Philadelphians both as soloist and conductor, as has been my privilege, can one fully realize and appreciate their perfection of ensemble.

Recording my own Concerto with this orchestra was an unique event. Apart from the fact that I am the only pianist who has played with them for the gramophone, it is very rarely that an artist, whether as soloist or composer, is gratified by hearing his work accompanied and interpreted with so much sympathetic

co-operation, such perfection of detail and balance between piano and orchestra. These discs, like all those made by the Philadelphians, were recorded in a concert hall, where we played exactly as though we were giving a public performance. Naturally, this method ensures the most realistic results, but in any case, no studio exists, even in America, that could accommodate an orchestra of a hundred and ten players.

Their efficiency is almost incredible. In England I hear constant complaints that your orchestras suffer always from under-rehearsal. The Philadelphia Orchestra, on the other hand, have attained such a standard of excellence that they produce the finest results with the minimum of preliminary work. Recently, I conducted their superb recording of my symphonic poem, *The Isle of the Dead*, now published in a Victor album of three records which play for about twenty-two minutes. After no more than two rehearsals the orchestra were ready for the microphone, and the entire work was completed in less than four hours.

Of all our own music-making silence must some day be the end. Formerly, the artist was haunted by the knowledge that with him his music also must vanish into the unknown. Yet to-day, he can leave behind him a faithful reproduction of his art, an eloquent and imperishable testimony to his life's achievement. On this account alone, I think that the great majority of musicians and music-lovers alike cannot hesitate to acclaim the gramophone as the most significant of modern musical inventions.



JULY 1931

Eugène Ysaye

Some Recollections by André Mangeot

So poor Ysaye is dead! And with him goes what was perhaps the greatest figure of its time where violin-playing is concerned. It is not too much to say that his influence on the generation of violinists which immediately precedes the present one was so big that there was not one of the "world famous" players of any country who did not look on him as "guide and spiritual father". They were probably right, for it was the generosity of his nature transfusing itself in his playing that had put him on that sort of pedestal from which he dominated all the little world of great violinists. His humanity had made him what he was, and in spite of all the deceptions that that very quality brought him, his urbanity was so large that it became infectious, and all those who frequented him got imbued with it, and it still radiates on that generation of violinists I talk about.

My personal recollections of him are numerous, and all so good to remember! Perhaps the best (because most personal) are the occasions when I had the honour to play with him—one in public when I did the first performance of his string trio (for two violins and viola) with him and Tertis. It was in London. We had worked on this very hard, as it was fairly difficult with double stoppings almost all the time, and the very afternoon before the concert we rehearsed till the last minute, and he corrected a note here and there on the MS until Tertis and I thought we'd better stop in case he would correct the whole work. So we parted from the "Master", but when I arrived in the evening I was greeted by the great tall figure handing me a little piece of notepaper on which he had traced staves with corrections of two more passages, saying, "Tiens, mon petit. Voilà deux petites corrections que j'ai faites depuis notre répétition de cet après-midi. Ça n'est rien du tout à changer et tu verras que ça sonne beaucoup mieux".

I was flabbergasted as I had fixed all the notes in my mind definitely to do honour to the great man, but when I met Tertis I found he had his little bit of paper too, so it comforted me, and I thought if I went wrong we should—all go wrong! But it passed off smoothly enough and the trio was quite a success.

The other occasions when I had the joy of playing with him

were in the intimacy of his or my place in London, where he loved playing quartets just for the pleasure of it.

He would ring me up and say, "Aportes un peu ton Zeppelin, ce soir on fera des quatuors". He referred to an enormous size viola I used to play on, and which always gave him great pleasure as he would handle it (he was a great viola player) and say it was the first one he found which was really suitable for him (in size!). Then we would play quartet after quartet till the small hours of the morning. In between we would play "jeux d'esprits", of which he was very fond, and the company always called him "Le Piche", and Mme Ysaye was called "La Miche"!

Those early Beethoven quartets were his favourites, but where he gave me the thrill of my life was the evening he turned up at my place with one of his sons and two 'cellists and said he very badly wanted to play the Schubert String Quintet.

So I got out the Zeppelin and he filled his huge curvy meerscham pipe, and with it in his mouth he led us through the lovely work (I think the loveliest work of Schubert) and played the part in the most wonderful way—a way I never expect to hear again. The last movement was just dazzling, and the acme of perfection in style and technique.

Then there was the great day in Brussels when they had organized a festival in his honour at the Opera House (Théâtre de la Monnaie), where I had the privilege to bring my quartet (in which Barbirolli played in those days) to play with Jacques Thibaud and Cortot in the performance of the Chausson Concerto, which made up a programme of works dedicated to Ysaye with the Lekeu and the Franck Sonatas.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in July. We had to wear thick morning coats, and I don't think I ever remember being warmer than I was that day while we played. The violin was positively transformed into a skating rink without the ice. But it did not stop the huge audience from applauding until the Master had come forward from the privacy of a box where he had hidden himself to acknowledge the delirious applause.

A memorable evening, or rather night, also was when we all met at the house of Paul Draper (Ruth Draper's brother) in Chelsea and decided to play the Mendelssohn String Octet at about 2 a.m. Ysaye was such an admirer of Thibaud's playing of Mendelssohn that as he was there that night he made him lead it while he played second violin to him! The other two violin parts were filled by no one "smaller" than Arbos and Nachez, and the two violas were Harold Bauer (who is a remarkable string player) and myself, while the 'cellists were Rubio and Ivor James!

It was *not* a bad performance, although the ensemble was not absolutely accurate, but how much we enjoyed it was indescribable—there was no audience!

Of course the loveliest recollection of his playing was in my young days in Paris when I used to hear him and Pugno play Sonatas together every winter in the little Salle Pleyel. It was incredibly beautiful. They gave six sonata recitals every year, and that is where I heard the César Franck sonata first. What an impression it made on me I cannot describe, but I understood afterwards when I realized that it was actually Ysaye's tone (warmth of tone and expression) that had inspired César Franck to write the work, which was, as it happened, presented to Ysaye as a wedding present by the author! What a wedding present—almost worth while getting married for!

Also during one of these series I well remember the evening when they played the Lekeu Sonata together, and just before they were going to play came the news (through the Artists' Room where I was) that Lekeu had died a few hours before. He was 24.

There are so many amusing stories and episodes I witnessed that they would fill up many columns, but I shall just recall a famous one here as it is connected with one of his big recitals with orchestra at Queen's Hall.

Robert Newman (who was the manager of the Queen's Hall Orchestra) had annoyed Ysaye over some management affairs, and when, just before the beginning of the concert, Newman came into the Artists' Room wearing a carnation in his buttonhole and his top hat on his head, Ysaye said, "Newman, take your hat off when you come in here; this is *my* concert to-day".



AUGUST 1931

The Lighter Side of Orchestral Accompaniments

by John Barbirolli

From the conductor's viewpoint, recording orchestral accompaniments is a nerve-racking business. Personally, I find making gramophone records a strain at the best of times. They must be so perfect. At a public performance, one has to forgive oneself mistakes that recorded would haunt their perpetrator to the end of his days. And to face a world-famous soloist and a large orchestra, knowing that one's slightest slip may impose an extra hour's work on sixty or seventy people, demands a degree of concentration both exhaustive and exhausting. To me, a whole week's rehearsing and conducting an opera daily and two on Saturday is little more tiring than a single afternoon in the HMV studios.

Each side of each record is made in triplicate, so what with preliminary rehearsing and re-recordings due to unforeseen slips, everyone concerned has a pretty strenuous time. To infuse freshness and vitality into a tired orchestra toiling through a tricky passage on the sixth successive occasion is no light task, enthusiastic workers though our British instrumentalists are. And here I should like to mention that, despite the prevalent custom of disparaging native orchestras, every foreign artist I work with invariably comments upon our musicians' splendid playing.

Another popular fallacy that needs exploding is the myth that great artists—and particularly great singers—are anything but pleasant to work with. My own impressions of such world-renowned stars as Chaliapin, Melchior, Inghilleri, Leider, Giannini, Olszewska, Suggia, Mischa Elman and Arthur Rubinstein have been that one and all are delightful people, far more concerned with helping us to turn out successful records than with indulging in displays of temperament.

Even Chaliapin, autocrat of opera house and concert hall, is like a great big child in the studio. I get quite used to his conducting with me, his arm round my shoulders—mounted on the conductor's dais I am just about his height!—explaining with a

wealth of gesticulation just what he wants and how he wants it. Yet, although I enjoy conducting for him in private, I would not undertake to pilot him through a public performance for a thousand pounds.

I remember one amusing scene when he was recording "Madamina" from *Don Giovanni*. After endless preliminaries, we had run through the aria to ensure that it was correctly timed within the limits of a 10-inch disc and were ready to begin the actual recording. But no sooner had this started than Chaliapin, oblivious of time and place, began to "spread himself" so lavishly that the record was overrun long before he had finished. With some trepidation, I broke the news to him, and during a lull in the ensuing storm of furious protestations, I hastily suggested that the record should be played back to us through the horn used for that purpose. Scowling ferociously, Chaliapin listened. Then, drawing himself up majestically, he declaimed with flashing eyes and magnificent Boris Godunovian gestures, "I sing with all my heart and with all my soul, and out of that horn comes . . ." Here followed a string of polyglot oaths which I dare not write down for fear some erudite reader might understand their meaning!

Most artists are thoroughly sporting over the slight contretemps that occasionally arise in the best-regulated studio. At all recording sessions, for instance, a distinctly rude little buzzer is used as a recording room signal that something has gone wrong. I was conducting the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra and Mischa Elman as soloist when Elman, giving a superb performance of the terribly difficult cadenza, was suddenly interrupted by the buzzer's loud "Brrrrp!" Unperturbed, this great little violinist turned to me with a broad grin. "That is a fine compliment!" he said.

My most hectic recording experience occurred when conducting the great *Fidelio* aria, "Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin?" with Frida Leider and an orchestra of sixty in Kingsway Hall. Starting work at two o'clock one afternoon, we slaved away for a couple of hours making what we all felt must be superb records. Suddenly, a wild-eyed messenger from the recording room burst in upon us with the glad tidings that none of the apparatus had been working! Speechless, we mopped our heated brows while Mr Gaisberg of The Gramophone Company telephoned frantically to Queen's Hall, which, he learned, was available until five o'clock only. Forced to complete the recording that day, prima donna, conductor, orchestra and instruments were hustled helter-skelter into Kingsway, where we hailed every taxi in sight and drove

furiously off to Langham Place. I shall never forget the priceless spectacle of little Gaisberg palpitating on Queen's Hall steps as he dived into his pockets, shovelling out fistfuls of shillings to pay off that army of taxis. By four-fifteen, however, we got our breathless and dishevelled performers to work again, and on the stroke of five I laid down my baton with a sigh of relief that the recording was safely completed at last.

A conductor grows used to various unconventional happenings during his day's work, but I have seldom been more taken aback than when Pertile, during the recordings of excerpts from *Andrea Chénier*, flung his arms round my neck and kissed me on both cheeks. It happened like this. Pertile is a Venetian, and all Venetians, aristocrats and commoners alike, talk in a distinctive dialect used nowhere else in Italy. Now, although I was born and brought up in England, my people are really Venetians, and this particular patois, picked up from my grandmother, was the first language I spoke as a child.

Introduced to "John Something-or-other" in a British studio, Pertile naturally took me for a monoglot Englishman until, hearing his record played over, he broke into delighted exclamations in his native dialect and I laughingly replied in the same tongue. Thrilled and amazed to discover a fellow-Venetian in a foreign land, he enthusiastically embraced me, to the unconcealed joy of the onlookers.

Such unrehearsed incidents certainly add to the gaiety of nations, but one's best work is generally achieved under more or less humdrum conditions. The two finest records I have conducted, the "Brindisi" from *Otello* and the Finale from Act One of *La Tosca*, both with Inghilleri, Dua and the Covent Garden Chorus and Orchestra—outstanding achievements vocally, orchestrally and atmospherically—were made without the slightest hitch. A tribute, I think, to the excellent organisation and methods of British recording in general and The Gramophone Company in particular.



DECEMBER 1931

Sims Reeves :
“Prince of English Tenors”
by Herman Klein

It was a Scotsman and a Glaswegian, David Baptie, who bestowed upon Sims Reeves the above appellation in his *Musical Biography*, published in 1883. He was right enough in so doing, though he was wrong about the date (as were other dictionaries at the time) of the famous tenor's birth, which was not October 21st, 1822, but, as shown by the register of Woolwich Church, September 26th, 1818. Our "prince of tenors" always had a pardonable weakness for wishing to appear young; and he certainly looked it when I last heard him sing in public at the Empire Theatre, 36 years ago—even also when I visited him at his bedside at Clapham not long before his death, which occurred at Worthing, October 25th, 1900. There were then people living who could remember his illustrious predecessor, John Braham (according to Baptie "one of the most wonderful tenor singers of whom we have any record"), whose career of sixty years he equalled, and whose age of 79 he beat by three years. The voices of great singers often last an amazingly long time; and Sims Reeves was a great singer in every sense of the word. I do not think, however, that he was a great teacher. I never heard a really remarkable pupil of his, and he gave lessons in the room next to mine at the Guildhall School of Music for several terms. One of them was his second wife, Miss Maud René.

Let me quote from my obituary notice in *The Sunday Times* of October 28th, 1900: "I heard Sims Reeves for the first time in Costa's oratorio *Naaman* at the Norwich Festival of 1866. He had just turned forty-eight, and was still, comparatively speaking, in his prime. What a beautiful voice it then was!—so peculiarly Italian in its clear, pure timbre and its 'velvety' yet resonant quality, so wonderfully capable of the tenderest expression, so tinged with that poetic sadness which was one of its rarest charms. . . . When Sims Reeves went to Milan to study in the 'forties, the art of the *bel canto* was still in its meridian there, and the glorious traditions of the Italian school were quickly and easily

imbibed by a young singer whose genuine tenor voice so readily lent itself to music and method alike. On his return to London in 1847, Sims Reeves was able to shine to advantage by the side of those vocal giants of the 'palmy days'. In a word, beauty of voice and style, high artistic intelligence, and rare distinction of manner and bearing combined to justify his being at once hailed as the leading English operatic tenor of his time. His triumphs as an oratorio singer began soon afterwards, and, although he did not desert the lyric stage for many years, it was in the concert room that he was destined to achieve the most lasting and memorable of the brilliant successes identified with his career".

If he died a poor man, it was largely because of two things: he had not the knack of saving, and he lost as much as he earned (he himself once calculated that the total amounted to £80,000) through the throat troubles—real or imaginary—that so frequently prevented him from keeping his engagements. The relief and joy when he actually appeared upon the platform were almost amusing; yet he commanded what were for those days very high fees. Sometimes there were other reasons for his non-appearance. He refused to sing at the Handel Festival of 1877 on account of the British high pitch then in vogue. He had long protested against it as being injurious to the voice, and in 1868 wrote a long letter to the *Athenæum*, confirming Chorley's complaint that the pitch in this country was half a tone higher than that of most foreign orchestras, and a whole tone higher than it was in the time of Gluck. Happily, in the end, the arbitrary dictum of Sir Michael Costa was overcome, and Reeves lived to see the *diapason normal* universally adopted.

As it was, however, I often had the good fortune to hear him in oratorio in my young days, and an immense treat it was to listen to his superb declamation in pieces like "Thou shall break them", "The enemy said", and "Sound an alarm"; or to admire his wonderful delivery of "Deeper and deeper still", which remained, "almost to the last, a miracle of tragic pathos". And then (again quoting from my memoir of him), "his rendering of *Adelaide* was one of those ideal efforts that entitle Sims Reeves to a place among the few great classical singers of his time. Somehow all his finest qualities both of nature and art seemed to be concentrated in the interpretation of Beethoven's immortal romance; and the result was a something that lingers with undying fragrance in the memory of all who heard it. As a ballad-singer he was for many years without a rival. The mantle of Braham fell upon his shoulders, and he wore it worthily even down to those darker moments of his life when necessity compelled him

to descend to a sphere beneath that whereof he had so long been a shining light".

In 1889 he published his reminiscences under the title of *My Jubilee; or Fifty Years of Artistic Life*. As proof that he was a good musician he wrote :

Besides being taught the piano and soon afterwards the organ, I learnt at a very early age to sing. When I was a boy of ten I could play all Handel's organ accompaniments from the original figured basses; and at the age of fourteen I was appointed to the post of organist, or at least performed an organist's duties, at North Cray Church. I also trained the choir.

He had, he recorded, been first trained as a baritone, and it was not until he had sung for some time on the operatic stage that "Nature and my own self-consciousness taught me that I was a tenor. There have been instances, as I have elsewhere remarked, of singers coming out as tenors and finding afterwards they had baritone voices. . . . But apart from my own case, I never knew any instance of a singer beginning as a baritone and afterwards becoming a tenor until a few years ago I found that the eminent vocalist, M Jean de Reszké, had gone through precisely the same experience". Besides reiterating in his book his views about pitch, he also penned some sane remarks about the miserable English translations of Italian opera libretti and the martyrdom that the "worthless doggerel" inflicted upon singers. Likewise, he denounced the "star" and the "encore" systems, the latter of which so long constituted the bane of his artistic existence. People were constantly asking, "Why won't Sims Reeves give encores?" His answer was, "Because I am not paid to sing them, and I wholly object to them on principle".

Lastly, let me print once more what he said to an interviewer from the *Pall Mall Gazette* long before he wrote his book :

You ask me how I have been able to put such pathos and feeling into a song and make a great success of it, when other singers would fail altogether. It is because I have always studied my words. I have read them and phrased them in every possible way, asked myself what they meant, and interpreted them according to my own feeling. I walk up and down, trying this line and that, until I feel I have struck the right idea. But I am never satisfied. Nowadays singers do not study elocution sufficiently, if at all. In a recitative, for instance, the words are sacrificed to the music. In my method they are of equal importance.

And yet, after the great tenor had died, one critic remarked

that in his opinion Sims Reeves used not to enunciate with sufficient distinctness—a libel that attested either to the critic's unconscious deafness or his lack of truthfulness. Anyhow, the words that he spoke to the *Pall Mall* reporter in 1884 come down clearly, strongly, and appropriately enough to the present day, nearly fifty years later, when we are informed by certain sapient folk that the diligent and meticulous study of song words by singers is an entirely novel development. That is where ignorance about *Tempi passati* can create false beliefs.

The pity is, of course, that the modern gramophone came just too late for Sims Reeves to leave the world any records of his indescribable voice and incomparable art. Unfortunately, too, he never had a successor; for neither Edward Lloyd nor Ben Davies ever laid claim to that distinction.

Like the other great 19th-century singers whom a few of us heard and perhaps knew, Reeves is just a memory, no more. Among the latter is the well-known choral conductor, Mr Arthur Fagge, who remembers him distinctly because he acted as his accompanist during the closing years of his career; and it has been left for Mr Fagge to devise a scheme whereby the gramophile can obtain some notion, at second hand, of those characteristics of treatment and phraseology that were prominent features of what may be termed Sims Reeves' ballad style. This idea has been carried out (under Mr Fagge's supervision and with his own pianoforte accompaniments) by Mr Frank Titterton, who has sung for the purpose eight records manufactured and just brought out by The Decca Company.



DECEMBER 1932

The Story of my Youth

by Pablo Casals

I owe nearly all of my talent at music to the influence of my father, organist of the Catalonian village of Vendrell, where I was born in 1876. As soon as I could walk he took me to all the services at the church, so that the Gregorian chant, the chorale and the organ voluntaries became part of myself and of my everyday life. These influences were to prove a solid basis on which the whole of my future musical knowledge could be firmly built. Not only did my father teach me to listen to music, he also taught me singing, to play the piano and organ, and gave me my first lessons in composition. At the age of five I was the smallest member of the choir, was assisting to play the organ—often at services—was an acolyte, and was composing music.

A year later I had mastered the violin sufficiently well to play a solo at a concert. Musical instruments of any description had a great fascination for me. In those days bands of itinerant musicians would wander over the countryside, making music in village streets, and precariously existing on the little money the villagers could spare them. But they were always welcome. One of these troupes, known as "Les Tres Bemoles" ("The Three Flats"), came to Vendrell. Their stay and the strange music excited me, and I was greatly interested in the variety and queer-ness of their instruments. These included guitars, mandolines, bells, and even such home-like affairs as teapots, cups and glasses, surely precursors of the oddities now to be seen in dance orchestras. One man played a broom-handle strung like a 'cello! Then I had never seen or even heard of a 'cello. I must have had a presentiment; this was the instrument which took my sudden fancy and which I enthusiastically described to my father.

My father laughed and went one better. He improvised a 'cello out of a gourd, a much better sounding instrument than the stringed broom-handle. On this home-made contrivance I learnt to play the many songs my father composed, and the popular tunes which reached the village from the outside world. I still treasure that strange 'cello; sometimes I play it to friends visiting me at my house, the Playa San Salvador. When, a few years ago, I revisited a favourite haunt of my boyhood—the ancient monastery of Santa Creus—an innkeeper told me that he

recollected me as a boy of nine playing my queer instrument in one of the cloisters. I also then remembered a moonlit night and a stillness only broken by the music I made echoing strangely against the crumbling white walls of the monastery.

Another instrument which I loved to play was the old Catalonian gralla which in appearance is rather like a small clarinet. One morning, three peasant gralla players called at my house and wanted my father to teach them some dance music. I asked one of the men to play me a scale. To his astonishment, I then took the gralla from him and perfectly imitated the notes he had played.

When I was eleven, a concert was given in the village by a trio from Barcelona. José Garcia, the teacher at the Municipal School, was the 'cellist. As soon as I heard the first notes I turned to my father and told him that that was the instrument of all others which I wanted to play. My father saw that I was in earnest; he bought me a 'cello and gave me my first lessons. Then I was allowed to go to Barcelona to study with Garcia. It was the first time I had ever travelled any distance from my home, and I was so young that my mother came with me.

For five years I worked hard in Barcelona, studying harmony and counterpoint, theory, composition, and the 'cello.

My father was by no means a rich man. It became necessary, if my studies were to continue, that I must somehow earn a little money. My music was the only medium. I secured an engagement to play in a trio at the *Café Tost*. Our repertoire comprised operatic selections, waltzes and popular tunes. But my mind was already humming with the music of the great masters. Occasionally I was able to introduce their pieces into our programmes; what was more, the customers liked them. Soon I was able to persuade the management to devote an evening a week to the classics. The *Café* was talked about; people journeyed long distances to hear our music. Isaac Albeniz, the great Spanish composer and pianist, heard me play there and told me that I should have a great career. I was only twelve years old; his kind words naturally thrilled and delighted me.

I obtained a better engagement at the *Café Pajarera*. *Pajarera* means a bird cage; the *café*, a large circular building with glass walls, was not unlike one. Not only did I receive more money, but now had an ensemble of seven instead of three. I found I needed more music.

I told my father this when he next came from *Vendrell* to see me. He took me to an old music shop overlooking the harbour. First he bought me my first full-sized 'cello. That was enough

to make the afternoon memorable; it was not all. Looking through a bundle of music, my attention was suddenly arrested by some unaccompanied suites by Bach for 'cello. The real reason of our visit to the shop was forgotten, I could only stare at this wonderful music which nobody had thought it worth while to tell me about. Even now, when I look at the faded covers of that music, I see again the interior of that old and musty shop pervaded by a faint smell of the sea.

At home I read and re-read the music which was to become my abiding delight. Every day for twelve years I worked and studied at the Suites. I was twenty-five before I had the courage to play one of them in public.

The time came when I could learn no more at the Barcelona School. It was decided that I should go to Madrid. Albeniz and Arbos gave me letters of introduction to Guilermo, Count de Morphy, at that time Councillor to the Queen Mother, Maria Cristina. Before that he had been tutor to Alfonso XII. The Count de Morphy was kind enough to take a great interest in me. I was presented to the Queen, and Her Majesty, after listening to a string quartet and some other of my compositions, granted me a pension. I studied chamber music with Jesus de Monasterio (of the Madrid Conservatory) and counterpoint with Tomas Breton. After my father, Monasterio made the greatest impression on my musical sensibilities. He opened my eyes and ears to the inner significance of music and taught me style. He was a lovable man with a delightful way of doing nice things. Once, at the close of a class, he warned all the pupils that they must be certain to be present the next day. "Among you", he said, "is a pupil who has so distinguished himself that the Queen has given him a royal honour in appreciation of his merit. To-morrow, you will all know his name". It never occurred to me that I was the lucky one. To my surprise, I was.

Once every week I went to the Palace, played on my 'cello and improvised at the piano. Queen Cristina, a fine executant, would often play duets with me.

Count de Morphy treated me as he would a favourite son. He urged me to concentrate on composition. Breton had just written the first serious Spanish opera: a complete breakaway from the traditional zarzuelas, or light operas, with which previous Spanish composers had been content. The revival of native music was beginning. Count de Morphy wanted me to follow Breton's example. With this in view, my pension was indefinitely extended and it was suggested that I should study with Gevaert, the Director of the Conservatoire of Music at Brussels. When

my mother and I reached Brussels, I had a long conversation with Gevaert. Although he was surprised at the individual technique of my compositions, the famous composer and teacher said that he was too old and his time too occupied already with many duties to fulfil any promise to give me lessons. He advised me to go to Paris, the Mecca of all musical aspirants. But before I left him an appointment was made for the school professor to hear me play the 'cello.

The next morning, I sat, unnoticed, at the back of the 'cello class. I listened to the students playing and it was not until the class had finished that the teacher made any sign that he had seen me. Then he inquired if I was the little Spaniard the Director had asked him to hear. I said I was. Had I got my 'cello? I had not. "Can you play one we have here?" he continued. I replied I could but try. The 'cello was found for me and I was then asked what I could play. Without conceit or even thinking what I was saying, I said: "Anything you like". I had said the wrong thing; the teacher smiled sarcastically and remarked that I must be remarkable! The class tittered, the professor amused himself with further ironical remarks, and I began to feel more and more awkward. This was my second day in a strange country!

Several standard concertos were mentioned, works which every student would study as a matter of course, and I was asked if I could play them. To every one he named I returned a laconic "yes". It just happened I *did* know them. Then he reiterated: "You must be wonderful". Finally I was requested to play the "Souvenir de Spa", with an aside made to the class: "Now, gentlemen, we shall, no doubt, hear something very surprising from this young man who plays everything".

Normally this audition would have been a nerve-trying ordeal for me, but I had been so hurt and irritated that my only thought was to show this uncivil professor that I could play!

I finished the piece in silence, the class waiting for their professor to give them a cue as to how they should behave. He gave none, but beckoned me into another room. Carefully closing the door, he congratulated me, saying that I had exceptional talent. If I would care to study in his class he could promise me the first prize at the end of a year. "Sir", I replied, "you have treated me so badly before your class that I do not want to stay one minute longer". And out I went through the door which he opened for me, feeling more indignant than I had ever done before in my life!

The fog that stifled my lungs in the streets, my unhappy experiences, a nostalgia for my own sunny country, all combined

to make me resolve to leave Brussels at once. Two days later my mother and I were on our way to Paris. The Count de Morphy could not understand my sudden departure. I found it difficult to explain to him through the medium of a letter why it had been necessary. He interpreted my actions as a disregard of the Royal wishes, and was obliged to stop my pension of 250 pesetas a month. It was on the strength of the continuance of this money that my mother had rented an apartment in Paris. We arrived to find our supplies had ceased! Fortunately, I met in the street a musician who had known me well in Barcelona. Now he plays in my orchestra there. Through his good services I secured an engagement to play second 'cello in a music-hall. This employment involved a daily walk of many miles with my 'cello tucked under my arm. My playing only brought in a few francs; my mother spent the whole day sewing for still fewer francs. Otherwise we could not have lived. Also there was not only two of us to keep, but also a little baby boy, too young for my mother to have left behind in Spain. But this life only lasted a few weeks. The strain made me ill. There was nothing for it but to return home.

There my fortunes changed. When I reached Barcelona it was to discover that my old teacher, Garcia, was about to retire and was on the point of sailing for Buenos Aires, where he intended to make a new home. I took his place as professor at the Municipal School, also his private pupils and the church services. Soon I had more work than I could manage. I played the 'cello in several churches as well as at the opera, taught at the Conservatoire Liceo and formed a string quartet with that fine Belgian violinist, Crickboom. I was now nineteen, and for three years I lived and worked in Barcelona.

During the summer of my first year engagements slackened, and I accepted an engagement to play at the Casino at Espinho. My way lay through Madrid. I wrote to the Count de Morphy acquainting him with all that had happened to me since I had left Belgium, and hoping that he would like to see me. I received an affectionate and friendly reply, and when I called on him in Madrid our past misunderstandings were soon dispelled.

At the Palace I once more played my 'cello to Queen Cristina. Saying that she would like to give me a memento I could "touch", she indicated a lovely sapphire set in a bracelet she was wearing. I had this stone mounted in my bow, where it still remains, a very cherished souvenir of this gracious lady.

At Espinho I had an orchestra of six players. The Casino was a favourite gambling resort and people came there from all parts

of Portugal. The music we played was apparently appreciated; at the end of the season I received an invitation from the then King and Queen to visit them at the Palace at Lisbon. I set out in such a state of excitement that it never occurred to me they would want to hear me play, so I left my 'cello at the hotel. But when I arrived, my oversight made a good joke, and I stayed on until my 'cello, which had been sent for, also turned up.

On my way back to Barcelona I again broke my journey at Madrid to play at my first concert as a solo 'cellist with orchestra. Tomas Breton conducted, and I played the Lalo Concerto in D. Visiting the Queen Mother at the Palace, she presented me with a superb Gagliano 'cello.

The next two years went quickly. I was able to save money; once more I determined to brave Paris. This time I carried with me a letter of introduction to the famous Charles Lamoureux, the conductor of the equally famous orchestra of that name. When I was shown into Lamoureux's private office he was at work on the score of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, which he was about to produce for the first time in Paris. Lamoureux was so absorbed in the music that he hardly noticed me. I excused my presence and gave him the letter from the Count de Morphy. Lamoureux read it and asked me to come with my 'cello on the following day.

Early the next morning I was again in his room. An accompanist was waiting for me, but Lamoureux seemed as disinclined as the previous day to be disturbed from his perusal of Wagner's score. I suggested that I should withdraw until some more opportune time. Lamoureux, who suffered from a physical disability which made it painful for him to move his body or legs, jerked his head and said: "Young man, I like you. Play!" His head went over his score again and I commenced to play. Soon I could see he was interested. He began to give all his attention to the music he was hearing. Then, to my astonishment, he painfully and slowly raised himself until he stood, and he remained standing until I had finished the concerto. Then he enthusiastically embraced me, crying: "You are going to play at my first concert!" How little did I realise that those words opened to me the path to whatever success my music has brought me.

I made my *début* in Paris in October 1899 with his orchestra. I played at a second concert for him. Engagements became plentiful. But my happiness was dimmed when suddenly, in January 1900, Lamoureux died. He had been a great friend to me. With his death passed my days of poverty and struggle.



First annual dinner of the National Federation of Gramophone Societies held at the Chanticleer Restaurant, Soho, on April 23rd, 1938. Identifiable in this picture are 1. Mr S. O. Miebs (NFGS Treasurer), 2. Mr R. R. Hopkins (HMV), 3. Mr A. C. Griffith (HMV), 4. Mr Cecil Pollard, 5. Mr W. W. Johnson (Founder NFGS), 6. Mr John Whittle (HMV), 7. Mr F. E. Young (Co-Founder NFGS), 8. Mr Walter Yeomans (Decca), 9. Mr Moore Orr, 10. Mr David Freeland and 11. Mr George Palmer



The first National Federation of Gramophone Societies Conference was held at Hoddesdon in November 1938. From the left: Cecil Pollard, Walter Yeomans (Decca), Alec Robertson, Mrs N. E. Pollard, Faith Compton Mackenzie, Christopher Stone, Fred Gaisberg (HMV), Miss V. Lovegrove ("The Gramophone") and Miss Anna Instone (BBC Gramophone Dept.). The two gentlemen on the right are unidentified

JANUARY 1933

Thirty Years of Record Making

by Peter Dawson

I have made so many gramophone records that I can look back over thirty years and recall the whole history of the gramophone from the early days of the primitive cylindrical machine to the present time of electrical apparatus. The change that has taken place since I first came before the public is tremendous. We used to think it wonderful to hear what was rather a caricature of a voice singing out of a machine. To-day we have the proper echo, the very breath of a singer is audible, and gramophone music is, so to speak, "two dimensional". You not only hear the words and music, but feel that the singer is standing there in front of you.

In the early days of the gramophone the system by which many records are "printed" from a master was unknown. A song had to be sung over and over again to twelve machines, grouped in fours on three shelves. Thus twelve records were made. As soon as you had finished, the records were changed and you went on again. One mistake and twelve records were spoiled.

Recording was a full-time job in those days. I used to reach the studios at 10 in the morning and sing without a real break until 1 o'clock. Then I had an hour off for lunch and sang again from 2 until 5 p.m. Fortunately, I have been gifted with a powerful voice and overstrain is almost unknown to me. Many singers simply could not have kept up the singing for six hours a day, five days a week. That was one of the reasons why comedians with "leather voices" were amongst the most popular recorders! It was tremendously hard work, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, and never managed to keep pace with the demand.

To-day, you sing into the microphone quite naturally. But thirty years ago you had to shout down the instruments. It was exceedingly exacting work, and both singers and orchestra found it a bit monotonous using one piece of music over and over again all day. We welcomed anything in the nature of a joke to break the monotony.

I was waiting to record at the studios one day while a famous Scots comedian was "doing his turn". He resented the flourishes of the flautist in the orchestra and turning round said, "I want

you to play what is written and not a note more". The flautist solemnly agreed, and during the next performance moved his fingers correctly but made not a sound. When the song was finished the comedian turned round to the flautist and said: "Thank you. That is exactly how I like it". Then he wondered why we laughed!

The most ludicrous scene in the studio I can recall was while I was singing a song with orchestral accompaniment. In those days the orchestra was very cramped, and the instrumentalists were very much on top of each other. Trombonists had to learn to play between the first violin and the 'cellist. On this occasion, the trombone player became a little inspired and missed his aim, with the result that his slide, instead of passing two inches from the violinist's head, caught his ear very neatly. The trombonist drew in his slide to make a high note, the violinist went over backwards with a yell, and two other musicians fell on top of him. We played the record over for amusement, and it sounded as if the proverbial bull in a china shop had arrived. Needless to say, that record was never offered to the public.

I have long since lost count of the number of records I have made. Four or five years ago I passed the 3,000 mark and the total number of copies issued must be in the region of 11,000,000, a rather frightening number! Easily my most popular record has always been *The Floral Dance*, and I have recorded it a number of times. I do not know why this song is so popular, but it is ideally suited to the robust baritone. *The Cobbler's Song* from "Chu Chin Chow" has probably been second favourite.

The "Chu Chin Chow" record was made under peculiar conditions. I had an engagement at the studio to record several songs, but when I arrived the manager caught my sleeve very excitedly. "Look here, Dawson", he said, giving me a piece of music. "This song is going to be all the rage, and I want you to record it". I looked at the song. "I've never heard of it", I replied, "but I'll sing it. When do you want me to do it". "Now, of course", he replied. It was a shock, but I ran over the song once with the orchestra, and then made the record. It was one of my best! I have often found that I sing a light song best with very little practice. A serious song requires careful and lengthy practice, and I spend a considerable time studying the words alone before touching the music. "Songs without words" are bad enough when sung on the concert platform. They are intolerable on a gramophone record.

Gramophone recording had its lighter side in the early days when it was a novelty. I remember meeting a famous comedian

going to make his first records. He had heard it was a bit monotonous and was evidently determined to create the right atmosphere, for he was accompanied by three cases of beer—one for himself, and two for the band. Unfortunately the officials would not allow the beer into the studio, ostensibly because the popping and gurgling might be recorded!

In these days of electrical recording the least unwanted sound is picked up by the microphone, and a number of records have never been made public because they were spoilt by unexpected sounds. I often wonder if the gramophone company keep a private library of them! On more than one occasion the crowing of a cock or the whistle of a passing train has been recorded, but this danger is now eliminated by sound-proof studios. On one record, which was made at a public performance, there was an impressive pause in the music, during which a woman's voice could be heard saying "And it was only two and eleven three, my dear". That record will never be issued!

I have only had one accident in the recording studio. I was making a record of a shipwreck song, with "noises off". The chief of these noises was thunder, provided by a large iron sheet suspended from the ceiling. This was struck at appropriate moments by a powerful man with a hammer. Unfortunately the thunder man was so carried away by his performance that he hit too hard and the thunder-sheet descended on my head, with the hammer in close pursuit. When I came to, there was a nasty lump on the back of my head!



APRIL 1934

Albert Coates Discusses Russia with W. S. Meadmore

Over the telephone I told Albert Coates that I wanted an article on Russia. "I'd love to", he replied. "Come along now". I did.

The secretary (she reminded me of Karsavina) said that Mr Coates was not in, but would I wait? So I warmed myself in front of an electric fire and looked at the open score of *Rosenkavalier* perched on the piano. My legs had just begun to feel uncomfortably hot when Albert Coates came in, bursting, as usual, with vitality, but much more rotund than when I had last seen him. We sat down. I wanted him, I said, to tell me about Russia—his experiences there; about modern Russian music and so on. A pretty young girl came into the room; she was introduced as Albert's niece. Could I, she asked, suggest a good subject for an opera? It must be typically English. Albert had just finished his version of *Mr Pickwick*. Such fun! Sam Weller and all the rest of that coloured canvas of comical characters. "Tell me something about Russia", I said to Albert. "Well, I am going back there in March. Ten concerts in twenty-one days". "That libretto", said the girl. "No Arthurian subjects". No, I could not think. Lady Hamilton—Paddington Green—Nelson—Naples? But Russia? "No", said Albert, "I want a humorous subject". Tea was brought in, and what a tea it was! None of your thin pieces of bread and butter, anæmic cake and fragile cups of tea to be balanced, but thickly buttered toast, honey in the comb, home-made strawberry jam, chunks of cut cake and breakfast cups. We all sat down to tea—the secretary, the niece, another visitor, Coates and I. But the secretary finished long before the rest of us and retired to another table, typed letters, and as she finished each one, brought it to Albert to sign. "Russia", I suggested to Albert. "Don't you dare call Uncle (the "uncle" caught me unaware. Startled to attention, I expected her to follow that word with Vanya in that Tchekhovian atmosphere) Albert Russian", said the niece. "He's not. He's Yorkshire". "I won't", I said.

"Russia", said Albert. It was then that all the electric lights went out and left us in darkness. "What's happened?" I cried. "Have the lights fused?" A matter-of-fact voice reassured me.

The meter wanted another shilling. The lights were always going out. But there were plenty of shillings in the other room. The lights came on again as suddenly as they had failed. "Russia", said Albert. There was a loud ring at the door, followed by the entrance of K——, an Austrian publisher of music. There were greetings. K—— joined us at tea. Albert heaped honey on his plate. They talked in German—French—Italian. The bell rang again; another visitor arrived. "It's no good, Mead", said Albert. "You'll have to come to-morrow. But Russia! What can one say?" He waved his arms as if quelling a crescendo that threatened to get out of hand. For that afternoon I abandoned Russia.

When I arrived on the following afternoon, *Rosenkavalier* was still open on the piano. But now a boy was sitting on the music-stool and playing the score, while Albert, leaning over the piano, was singing all the parts—they had just started the third act—falsetto for Sophie, a deep bass for the Baron, and so on. When the score became overlaid with notes, his fingers picked a way through the boy's. The clock struck four. It struck four-thirty. Still they played and sang. They turned from the last act and played the opening of the second. "Strauss", said Albert, "told me that he loved writing every note of this. He must have done. A stupendous score!" Albert sat on a couch. "Russia", I ventured. The niece came in. "Have you thought any more about that libretto?" she asked me. "I have", I said. "Elizabeth Anne Linley, the Nightingale of Bath—the Assembly Rooms, Beau Brummel, dancing, gaming, Sheridan, a duel, an elopement, Green Room at Drury Lane, Sheridan rehearsing the screen scene. But do let me talk to Albert about Russia". I turned to the couch. Albert was stretched full length, his eyes were closed. A far from gentle snore emerged from his open lips. We laughed. "He's so tired", said the niece. "Let him alone. The Linleys? I thought of Haddon Hall. Or there is Lorna Doone. Someone suggested Joseph Andrews". We talked. Albert snored. (He denied it when he awoke; all the same, he did snore.) Tea came in. We sat down. The secretariat, I gathered, were very busy, working in the next room. One heard the distant tap, tap of the typewriter. At intervals they came in, grabbed a piece of toast or a hunk of cake, and disappeared again. A visitor came in. We discussed librettos, and Albert said how necessary humour was. He imitated the funny noises of his orchestration in Pickwick. I tried to talk about Russia. "These Linleys", said Coates. The telephone bell rang. "Someone", said Albert, "asking me about an old Victor record I made in America years ago. It must

have been a pre-electric recording. It made me think of 1920, when our great ambition was to record Wagnerian opera. Of course, they were the days of the old horn, and when everything was made subservient to the voice. The singer would stand up against the horn, and the orchestra was kept well in the background. The result on the record was all voice and no accompaniment. Witness the Caruso records. Well, then James Beck, one of the HMV directors, got the idea of surrounding the singer with the orchestra, and making the accompaniment (quite properly) as important as the voice.

"Clarence Whitehill was the first of the big international singers to realise the importance of this idea. He travelled specially from America to make the first records. I conducted, and it seemed to me then that we were in the right direction for the future. But some of the HMV directors thought otherwise. There were some stormy meetings at which James Beck literally had his back to the wall. It was only through the medium of several letters from responsible music critics like Ernest Newman and Robin Legge that the directors were eventually persuaded to persevere.

"From that moment I consider the gramophone has never looked back.

"Five years ago I suggested that we should 'clothe' the old Caruso records with a new orchestral accompaniment. At length they did so. I consider the result amazing.

"Even before this I had begged HMV to try and persuade Mr Buckle to make records that would play for at least six minutes instead of the terrible three minute forty-five second sides. I felt, after the first radio broadcast, that the gramophone record was doomed unless a longer-playing record was introduced. Well, that is still to come".

Again the telephone bell rang. Albert answered it. He must go out at once. "It's no good, Mead", he said. "You must come to-morrow. But come back to-night and hear my Pickwick. I am going to play it to Cyril Scott and a few other friends. Eight-thirty. Goodbye". And he disappeared through the door followed by the secretariat with papers, notebooks . . .

I went the following afternoon. "Hallo, Albert", I said. "Now let's get down to Russia". "I like that Linley idea", he said. "But Russia", I said. The accursed telephone bell tinkled. "I can't to-night", said Albert into the mouthpiece. "Albert Hall. Is it very important? Well, perhaps I could slip away from *The Messiah* for half an hour. . . ."

A visitor came in. Connected with the film world. Albert became enthusiastic. The future of opera was with the film.

Imagine the possibilities! Opera on the stage had always been a compromise, on the film it need not be. Why not Wagner on the film, with the great stars acting and seen and the great singers singing but unseen?

Apart from Wagner, imagine George Arliss as Scarpia, Douglas Fairbanks as Don Juan, Anna May Wong as Butterfly (with Maggie Teyte singing), Ramon Novarro as Pinkerton, Jannings as Sachs. . . .

More visitors came in. Tea came in. "Think of the *Rhinegold*", continued Albert. "One compromise after another on the stage. Wagner has squeezed into this opera about fifty operas, and done it badly! No one likes the *Rhinegold*—no one understands it. But on the film! . . ."

"And Boris Godunov", I interjected. "And Khiteesh", said Coates. "The city actually disappearing in the clouds, as it should do".

"Russia", I said.

"Mead", said Albert, "you can't come to-morrow as I am off to Trieste. But next March! Then I go to Russia. When I come back I shall have lots of interesting things to tell you".

"About Russia?" I asked.

Albert smiled. When I said goodbye I had one last shot. "Are you sure", I said to Albert, "that there is nothing else you can tell me about your Russian adventures?"

"Yes". He grinned at me. "I am the only visiting musician who is paid in roubles and not in kind".

LIMITATION OF SUPPLIES

As will be seen from their announcement in this number, The Gramophone Company have found it necessary to restrict the issues of HMV records during the next two months. There is no need, however, for panic, for although this decision indicates a shortage, it does not signify that there will be a dearth of HMV records. It means, mostly, that the casual record buyer who usually either gets what he wants at once, or has delivery within a few days, may be kept waiting.

It will be of no use to blame the dealers, as their own supplies will be apportioned to them, and the only sensible thing to do is to make the best of a position that might have been a great deal worse, since the demand for records, in particular for popular classics and the favourite album sets, has outstripped every anticipation.

Still, there are plenty of less-known records of splendid quality in the recesses of dealers' shelves, and now is surely a fitting time to go exploring the byways of the HMV catalogue, and bring some of them to the light of your turntable.

April 1942

APRIL 1934

The Gramophone and the Living Composer

by Joseph Szigeti

Radio and the gramophone are to music what printing is to thought. Yet while the finest wireless performance can possess no more than the essentially ephemeral value of the daily Press, gramophone records, to my mind, may be said to achieve the dignity of books. The daily paper is read and thrown away; the book is placed on our shelves, a treasured permanent possession. But here the analogy fails, for while books are the most powerful channels for giving new thought to the world, the gramophone—recent courageous experiments excepted—can hardly be said to have done as much for new music, nobly though it has served the classical repertoire.

But why should the gramophone not lead the way in popularizing modern works? It is interesting to recall that the three prize-winning string quartets in the recent *Daily Telegraph* competition were immediately recorded—a significant step in the right direction. Pessimists who bewail the possible obsolescence of the gramophone in favour of its friendly rival, radio, should realise that the one infallible means of securing the gramophone's position against all comers and making it a vital musical force is by exercising more care in the choice of music recorded. It is useless to continue duplicating and reduplicating familiar classics. In my opinion, the future of the gramophone should consist, mainly, in breaking away from the existing routine in favour of creating popularity for forgotten classics and new works.

Think of the prestige that would accrue to the gramophone in this way! I can even imagine records of important modern works being issued at the same time as the sheet music. This seems to me the only possible way of capturing a new audience of gramophiles, and surely the basis of the commercial prosperity on which the gramophone's future hangs is to cater for and gradually create a new section of buyers.

In the same way, of the admirable gramophone societies lately formed for the recording of a limited number of sets of "un-commercial" works by various composers, those devoted to the

music of Delius and Sibelius are perhaps the most significant. To aim at popularizing the music of a composer while he is still alive to enjoy the fruits of his life's achievement is a fine ideal. It is better to pay active homage to the living than to erect costly memorials to the dead.

To-day, it is true, the best of modern music is appreciated in England as never before. This, I feel, is largely due to the influence of radio and the gramophone. But few people will fail to acclaim the vast superiority of the gramophone in this respect. Much modern music is not easily assimilated on one or even two hearings. The idiom of even such comparatively well-established composers as Delius and Sibelius still presents difficulties to the unaccustomed listener, while to very many music-lovers the works of Bartók, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Berg remain a closed book.

I personally have a good deal of faith in modern composers—playing, studying and hearing new works has always seemed to me a fine adventure—and among them I consider Stravinsky a musical giant—a really great man. It has become the fashion to belittle him as a potential genius whose inspiration has failed. But I predict that in fifty years' time the first movement of his *Symphonie des Psaulmes*—one of his later works which well merits the gramophone "immortality" conferred upon it—may well be used to mark the celebration of great occasions. By this I mean that the inherent dignity of the music may carry it along even into a time when its original "programme" or æsthetic intention may have lost its actuality and importance.

An argument often used in disparagement of modern music is that the great majority of ordinary people find the doors of music opened to them through some simple melody such as Handel's *Largo* or Schubert's *Ave Maria*, while a work by, say, Stravinsky could never have a similar effect. I do not agree. There are a thousand different ways in which music can establish contact with the mind. Some quality in a work by Stravinsky or Bartók might well throw the gates as wide open to certain hearers as the Handel and Schubert tunes do to others—only they have not yet had the opportunity to prove this! It is all too near us and too recent.

This is where a great responsibility devolves upon the artist. I believe that it is definitely "up to" a musician not to play what the public imagine they want, but to make the public want what he plays. (In this connection, it may amuse readers to know that on the great Paganini's first visit to London, his programme consisted mainly of variations on operatic airs, and a set of "Farmyard

Imitations" was the success of the evening!) Particularly is this the case with new works. One must have enough faith in them to play them again and again. Many people are instinctively afraid of music they do not know, but I have proved time and again at my concerts in many lands that audiences can be won over to clamour for a work towards which their original attitude was one of apathy, if not active antipathy.

This should be a powerful argument in favour of permitting artists to record more and still more modern works. For no one will deny that the gramophone record, with its unique capacity for unlimited repetition, is the ideal medium through which to gain familiarity with modern music. Ideal, I may add, from the artists' viewpoint also, for I frankly admit that to stand on a platform trying with all the faith that is in one to persuade a (probably subconsciously) inimical audience to accept a new work can be a harassing and nerve-racking experience!

But we may talk about the responsibility of the artist and of the recording companies towards the modern composer as much as we like: the fact remains that the final responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the music-loving public. If every gramophile, for instance, would adventure to the extent of buying even one set of records of modern music a year, this would go far towards cultivating and stimulating a wide appreciation of the living composer, who is as human as the rest of us in that he infinitely prefers a single bouquet when he can enjoy its fragrance and beauty to the contents of every florist's in London piled up over his oblivious corpse! The great dead have their reward of musical immortality: myself, I feel it a fine thing to help a man to appreciation while he still lives.



APRIL 1934

On Elgar

by W. R. Anderson

"Now he belongs to the ages". Those words, spoken by Stanton over the body of Lincoln, in John Drinkwater's great play, came to my mind on that sad Friday when we knew that Edward Elgar was taken from us. This journal was at press, and no more than a line or two could be added to a late review in a held-back page.

There have been heartening tributes, some even from those who might not be expected to have great enthusiasm for Elgar's music. However ripe a man's years, the shock of his passing cannot quickly be put by, when so few of his greatness of mind are left. The sword-thrust felt most keenly is that he never got over the bitterness of early neglect. In late life he had increasing assurances of our love: but the iron had entered deep, as well it might, into a heart so sensitive and proudly reserved. One side of its life was often misunderstood. The last movement of the *Enigma* is not of the order of imperialistic bombast: in his own words, "Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future, this variation is merely to show what 'E.D.U.' (a paraphrase of the fond name) intended to do". Even the slightest imaginative sympathy will suggest the pluck needed to face those friends by a man of forty-two, conscious then, as always, of greatness. It was right of Sir Landon Ronald, in his broadcast tribute, to remind us of neglect, and tell us that even the Second Symphony was "a comparative failure" at its first performance in 1911. I sometimes think that when we sing the Blake-Parry *Jerusalem*, we ought to sing also Mendelssohn's "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets. . . . Fain would I . . . and ye would not . . ." Only ten years ago he wrote to the *Telegraph* to tell of the pretty incident of the New Zealand boy who was so pleased with the Angel's Song from *Gerontius* that he said: "I wish he would come and stay with us—I would give him my pup". "I long for that pup", wrote Elgar. Yet he could then say that he had received, concerning the oratorio, "much praise and blame; as far as I can gather the latter predominates: but I may be wrong". How could he be assured that he was wrong? That thought must have tormented many.

A happy remembrance for all gramophiles is not only the way in which, to the honour of the producers, the majority of Sir Edward's works were made available for them in recorded form, but the unbounded pleasure the composer took in this work, and in the instrument itself. Everyone has heard how the last record was superintended from his sick-room a month before the end. Another month before that HMV had, in Christmas-present spirit, recorded his quartet and quintet. I recall him at recording sessions, the easy master of every detail. In one playing-over, for instance, the timpani were weak. Quick as lightning he said to the drummer: "Use the other end next time", and that was settled: when the wooden ends of the sticks were used, the hardness that Elgar wanted was there, and the notes stood out just right; he knew they would. It was amusing to see W. H. Reed, one of Elgar's oldest friends, spring up in the middle of playing, dab a finger at the score, and discuss things with the composer.

At the climax of the ground-bass movement in his "Princesses" suite, Reed was wreathed in smiles—some private joke with the composer, presumably. There is a special pleasure in watching the absolute master of his job at work, so lithely and easily. He beat strongly, with no fads. He did not talk about "interpretation". So much of what he meant was in the music, and if the players were worthy it would all come out. He knew exactly what he wanted, and wasted no words, going back several times, if necessary, but never without a clear purpose, which a few words explained. "At No. 40, violins keep the bows nearer the strings"—at a quick, detached bow place, where they were getting rather a lot of scratch.

Such a sense of power came from him. Chatting between recordings, he said, apropos someone's remarking on his walking with a limp, that he had sprained two tendons, and did not rest long enough: "I am a mercurial person: I get up too soon". It was that mercurial element in the man and the music that some misunderstood.

His enjoyment of the gramophone was frank, even childlike. A friend who spent an evening with him found that it resolved itself into a gramophone recital. "There was a fascinating record (the only one in existence) of himself rehearsing the LSO in the second symphony, and stopping it to make criticisms, etc. He also put on (by request) "Tame Bears, Wild Bears", and "Fairies and Giants" from the *Wand of Youth*, and brought out the MS for us to follow. He is quite unselfconsciously thrilled by some of his own music, and insisted on having "Fairies and Giants" again, because he 'loved to hear the three giants coming on one

after another'. The rest of the programme consisted of parts of Verdi's *Requiem*, the *Siegfried Idyll*, an overture by Suppé, Saint-Saëns's *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, and some of the ballet music from *Faust*. All the above he seems to admire intensely".

One of the reminiscences I liked best was that by Alderman Hubert Leicester, a schoolmate of Elgar's. He is the H. H. Leicester shown in the picture in R. J. Buckley's book about the composer, in Lane's *Living Masters of Music* series (now, I think, out of print). Two Leicesters and two Elgars, with an Exton, made up a wind quintet for which the composer (who played the bassoon: he was then sixteen) wrote a lot of music. The party was "sometimes called the Sunday Band, because it played on that day, and sometimes the Brothers Wind". Elgar played many instruments in his time. One of them, a treasured trombone, he sent to France for use at rest camps in the War.

Alderman Leicester, former first flute and director of that Sunday Band, recalled how some of the composer's ideas, written for it, were later incorporated in the big works. "I have the MSS still. Elgar borrowed them twice to recapture those early themes"—doubtless, with a special affection for their associations. One would like to know where they come. There is, too, the programmatic element in certain works, on which light might be thrown by the right people.

Even of our greatest it remains true that "A prophet hath honour, save in his own country". Said the Alderman: "It isn't easy to make folk round here realise that the Ted Elgar they knew, the son of the chap who kept the old music shop in the High Street, was anybody in particular". He thinks they appreciated him in a "take-it-for-granted sort of way". He has the idea of trying to buy Elgar's home, Marl Bank, on Rainbow Hill, as a national and local memorial, with the former music shop as a museum, possibly; and he hopes for a much needed Elgar Hall.

In the music-room attached to the Crown Inn at Worcester I saw a list of members of the Worcester Glee Club for 1883-4 (it was established in 1810). The leader of the violins was "Mr E. W. Elgar". Mr Elgar senior played the second fiddle, another Elgar the oboe (F. T., I take it), and a fourth the harmonium. Is it not among the greatest of our weaknesses to-day that so few of these grand music-making families are to be found?

Another little light I found in *The Dickensian*, the organ of the Dickens Fellowship. It told of Elgar, on a visit to Delius, discussing the rich humanity of the novelist, and Delius commenting on "his uncertain art". That is a right criticism, but the great qualities overtop the defects, as both agreed. Other Dickensians

may like to know their opinion as to the best of the novels. They both felt that *Pickwick* stands alone; Elgar thought *Bleak House* the greatest, and Delius, *Copperfield*. They agreed that Dora was overdrawn.

I hope that someone will collect Elgar's writings. He had a choice literary sense, and wrote splendidly, as those who have his annotation of *Falstaff* know. Apparently his lectures, when for a short period he was professor of music at Birmingham, have not been published.

Such memories and sidelights might long continue. They all help to clarify and focus features of a great, complex personality. There are deeper thoughts about Elgar and his music which do not readily find shape. He has done us all good, and we must know how to prove our gratitude. Humbly, we believe, with Drinkwater:

“When the high heart we magnify,
And the sure vision celebrate,
And worship greatness passing by,
Ourselves are great”.



AUGUST 1934

As I See Myself

by Igor Stravinsky

(In an interview with Norman Cameron)

You ask me under what influences I began to compose twenty-five years ago? The great living masters of Russia, Germany and France—Rimsky-Korsakov, Strauss and Debussy—were my earliest inspiration—that and the influence of my father, who was a great bass singer. A superb artist, his fame might have equalled Chaliapin's had he cared to travel outside Russia, but nothing would persuade him to leave his own country. Thus I was brought up in an atmosphere of musical achievement, and inherited a natural capacity for transmitting my feelings into music and a keen interest in the study of technique.

I studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov himself, and from the earliest days he insisted upon the importance of systematic work.

"Never wait for inspiration", he would say, "but compose regularly every morning whether you want to or not. If you can achieve nothing one day, never be discouraged: you may rest assured that another day ideas will flow". And always I have found this system of regular work to be the best.

Nowadays, when I spend much time also in playing my own compositions in public, my life is divided into two parts. When I am at home, I compose every morning and live a quiet and ordered existence; when I travel and play and meet people, that distracts me, so I do not compose at all.

Do I play the music of others besides my own? Well, I feel that to gain true satisfaction from his work, an artist should specialize, so I prefer to play and to study the works of contemporary and classical composers whose music is near in spirit to my own.

People so often say to me: "We like your *Petrushka* and *Fire-bird* so much better than your later works. Why did you not continue to compose on those lines?" But apart from the fact that when I ask what they mean by "those lines" none has ever an answer to give, you must remember that I wrote *Petrushka* and *Oiseau de Feu* twenty-two years ago. I was a young man then, but like everyone else I am afraid I cannot help having

grown older, and being older, I find new musical problems to solve and new ways of expressing the solutions. Do not forget that these people who now enjoy *Petrushka* and *Oiseau de Feu*, and even the *Sacre de Printemps* (though the critics still swear at this work!), because they are used to them and have learned to accept them by constant hearing, were not present at the premières of these works when they were unfamiliar and caused even more discussion and controversy than my later works do to-day.

Critics continually say of me: "Stravinsky—he does not develop gradually but in jerks—he jumps". The poor fellows do not realise that in nature itself there is no "gradual" development in their sense: one needs only to watch a plant growing under a microscope! Yet because one day I compose *Oiseau de Feu*, another day *Apollon Musagète*, another day the Violin Concerto, another day the *Duo Concertante*, they say I "jump". This causes ill-feeling and misunderstanding, because I do not "jump"! It is simply that with every fresh work I undertake I have a new set of problems to resolve, I am working with completely new material and often with different instruments.

For example, after writing the Violin Concerto, I became deeply interested in studying the rôle of the violin in Chamber Music, and the idea of the *Duo Concertante* for Piano and Violin, which I lately recorded with Dushkin, was born. For years, the mixture of piano chords with chords made to vibrate by the bow had seemed to me to produce confused pseudo-orchestral effects which are anything but pleasing. To solve this instrumental and acoustic problem, I was finally obliged to have recourse to the minimum number of instruments—two only, the blending of which seemed to me much purer than that of the piano and several stringed instruments. But why stigmatize this as a "jump" from the Violin Concerto? It is merely different, just as at one meal I eat fruit, at the next a beefsteak, at the next cakes. No one quarrels with this, it is simply common sense. And I do not want to quarrel with my critics if only they would not always be so busy "explaining" things they do not understand themselves! All the time, other people try to explain me, when really only I can explain myself. Continually critics ask: "What possessed Stravinsky to do this, or that, or the other thing at all?" But it never occurs to them that always there is a reason for what I do, or to say to themselves: "Stravinsky had some definite aim in composing this work. What was his aim, and has he succeeded or failed in achieving it?"

In the same way, many people seem obsessed with the idea

that I do not desire to express emotion in my music. They are completely mistaken. The emotion is there all right—I myself feel it and express it, and for those who cannot or will not share it, I can only suggest that they consult a psychiatrist!

Listeners are too ready to condemn the "new" music because it is not overflowing with the type of melody and emotion to which they are accustomed and which they can recognise at first hearing. I think that before they rush in to criticize, such people would do well to recollect that, in his day, even Gounod was accused of writing music without melody, and that within living memory the same charge was levelled at Wagner and Debussy.

The ordinary music-lover has always found it difficult to understand the new music of his own time—to participate in the emotions and appreciate the melodic ideas of any composer who has something original to say and an original way of saying it. It is only of recent years that the depths of feeling inherent in Mozart's music have been generally realized and understood, yet the emotion itself was always there for those with ears to hear and hearts to understand!

But I am afraid that such people are growing rarer instead of more plentiful, because although there never was a time when music was more widely distributed, this very fact is turning the great majority into lazy listeners who want to hear only what they already know or can recognize as familiar in type and form; who are afraid of originality and of new experiences in music. The possibility of hearing music at any time by merely turning a switch or putting on a record serves to encourage a superficial attitude towards music that threatens to undermine its foundations. In former days, young ladies who were considered accomplished used to eat cakes in their drawing-rooms and play on the piano. Nowadays, they still eat cakes, I imagine, but the piano is closed and the radio accompanies the cake-eating!

Myself, I would prefer infinitely a young lady who played the piano badly—*bêtement*—to one who only listens. Those who have made music themselves understand better, and those who understand hear better. And we shall never have a world in which music is genuinely understood, appreciated, revered and loved until listeners become active again—active not only in performance, but in making definite efforts to *participate* intelligently and receptively in all they hear.

SEPTEMBER 1934

Making Three Thousand Records!

by George Baker

For twenty years I have been making gramophone records and there are just over 1,000 records under the name "George Baker—Soloist". Yet, to make a rapid calculation, there must be well over 3,000 records containing that voice. In my early days singers had to work like old-time town criers to succeed on the gramophone. Those 3,000 records, stretching one behind another back over twenty-five years, seem to epitomize my singing history. Many of them are of duets, trios, quartets, and so on. The earliest ones, however, although actually sung by George Baker, are under different noms de plume, or should it not be noms de chanson?

Nowadays few singers of repute would consent to any name but their own being placed on a record label, but in 1906 this was as harmless a trick as is the appearance today of a "lunch edition" of an evening newspaper at 10 o'clock in the morning! The reason for this amiable fiction was that with the old recording instruments a voice either recorded well or not at all. Unless a voice was 100 per cent. gramophonic it was of no use to the gramophone companies. They had such difficulty in finding suitable voices that, in order to give a semblance of variety to their catalogues, they gave each singer two or three names and hoped the public would not recognize the remarkable resemblance between the voices of two different singers!

I began recording just for fun. Haydn Draper, the now famous clarinet player, and I were fellow students at the Royal College of Music. We were interested in gramophones, for the change over from cylinders to discs had just taken place. One afternoon he suggested that we might have a bit of fun by going to a gramophone company and asking for a test. I agreed and we made our way to the old Pathé Frères studio in Lamb's Conduit Street, off Theobald's Road. I was twenty-one at the time and just come from Birkenhead, with a four years' scholarship. I was still wearing a cap and must have looked like a big schoolboy.

However, I was given an audition and sang *Tommy Lad*. The accompanist put me down as an "extra special" singer of *Tommy Lad*. I heard no more till twelve months later, when I received a letter asking me to call at the studio. I went along in the

afternoon, but they could not believe I was the boy singer of *Tommy Lad*! That was because I wore a top hat and frock coat. They were not convinced until I sang *Tommy Lad* again and they had compared it with the record. I made two more records, *Nellie Deane* and *I'm coming through the corn, Sweet Eileen*, for which I was paid four guineas. Shortly afterwards I was put under contract by Pathé Frères, later by the German Beka Company and "His Master's Voice" Company, for whom I have recorded ever since.

Peter Dawson, Mark Hambourg and I are the only three original record-makers left who are still recording regularly. We worked really hard in those days, for one song had to be sung perfectly at least six times. The records thus made would be played back again and further records made from them. The conditions under which we recorded were crude in the extreme. We sang in a tiny bare room and into a big tin trumpet which was connected direct to the recording needle by a rubber tube. We sang collarless and in shirt sleeves, for the place quickly grew stifling. When electrical recording came in, this was all changed and we now sing into microphones in beautiful rooms, not unlike broadcasting studios.

The records that have made more friends for me than any others have been those of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Although I am identified by thousands of Savoy Opera lovers with the George Grossmith parts—Ko-Ko, Jack Point, Bunthorne, the Duke of Plaza Toro, and the rest—I have never played any of them on the stage. Recording makes cowards of many of us, and although the regular members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company must know their parts inside out, Darrell Fancourt and poor Bertha Lewis were the only two who dared record without their vocal scores.

The first time we recorded the operas was in the days of the old tin trumpet, and principals joined in all the chorus-singing. When it came to our turn to sing in concerted numbers we elbowed our way through the other singers to get to the trumpet in time. Nowadays, there is a profusion of microphones and the principals do not sing in the choruses. A "mixer" blends the sounds from the different microphones into an harmonious whole, much the same as in broadcasting.

I have met most of the outstanding figures in the world of music at the gramophone studios, and find them a fascinating study. There is that great-hearted giant Chaliapin, with whom I have often sung in recording Russian operas. He is very sensitive and is easily cast down in spirit if he thinks he is not singing his

best. I remember on one of his "off days" he tore his music in shreds and stamped on it, and we had to soothe him like a child before he would go on singing again!

Melba had very decided views on when she was singing at her best. If a record did not please her she would sing it again, but she was not exactly the soul of patience and if she decided that a record was suitable nothing on earth would induce her to repeat the song, even if suggestions for improvements were obviously good ones. The personalities of conductors are also extremely interesting. Albert Coates is so energetic that he is physically exhausted at the end of a session. When he arrives at the studio he is accompanied by a valet carrying an open-necked cricket shirt and a pair of flannel trousers. If he has two sessions he has to change into a dry shirt before he commences a second session!

As a direct contrast there is dapper Dr Malcolm Sargent, who displays the most extraordinary energy of any man I have ever known and yet is as unruffled and cool at the end of six hours' recording as when he started. There is not even a hair on his head out of place. I have always thought Sir Edward Elgar the most typical example of what is known as "a fine old English gentleman". Sir Henry Wood works by the clock, both at rehearsals and at performances, and I consider him the most systematic worker in the world. Certainly he is the most knowledgeable person we have in English music to-day.

FLEXIBLE RECORDS

Filmophone records, with their gay colours and constantly improving quality, have outlived their competitors and are to be seen in many shop windows this Christmas. In one shop window in London a press has been erected and Filmophone records can be watched in the making, a great attraction for the public. The factory is said to be the only one in this country where electricity is used throughout for the manufacture of records.

Now comes another flexible record, the Trusound Pictorial, which has long been expected. In this case both sides are not merely coloured, but are covered with a picture or pictures. The effect is most striking, for the designs are bold and so are the colours. The first that was seen in this country was used for advertising purposes by the United Dairies Company, and had a great success: it is to be found in most nurseries where there is a gramophone. Now we are to have the Trusound Pictorials issued in the ordinary way with an appropriate picture for each title.

December 1931

SEPTEMBER 1934

Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart.

by Basil Hogarth

Signs are not wanting that at long last the general public is realizing what experts indeed have known for a long time: that in Sir Thomas Beecham we can claim to possess one of the three greatest conductors in the world to-day. The other two, it is perhaps hardly necessary to say, are the Italian *maestro* Toscanini and the Russian Kussevitski. The simple truth is that in all matters artistic we British suffer from an acute sense of inferiority complex: in Sir Thomas Beecham we possess a conductor of exceptional genius who challenges and sustains a critical comparison with the greatest orchestral directors. Yet it is only within the last year or two that the general public has shown any signs of appreciating Beecham's inimitable gifts.

For it is incontestable that England has never produced his like before. Most of our native conductors in bygone times were essentially men of the retiring sort who regarded the conductor's calling as that of a glorified accompanist. It is only necessary to glance over the programmes of Victorian concerts to be convinced that, apart from foreign visitors like von Bulow and Hans Richter, the conductor's chief function was to wait on the *diva* or the "star" instrumentalist. Occasionally, in the intervals between *Lo! hear the gentle lark* and Paganini's Violin Concerto, a conductor might stealthily emerge from his obscurity and conduct a "Selection from Signor Verdi's new opera", or possibly, on a very special anniversary, attempt a Haydn or early Beethoven symphony. The result was that tradition sprang up, as traditions will in England, which has only died within comparatively recent years. It was this tradition of stoic indifference that provoked Sir Edward Elgar's outburst against the spineless conductors of his day. "We have in this country", he declared, "too many merely pedantic mechanics who, if they must keep time at all, would do it more successfully in a factory. They treat orchestral works like problems in Euclid".

Whatever critics may be inclined to urge against Sir Thomas Beecham on the score of his highly subjective readings, there can be no doubt of this, that so long as his records are available for future generations to hear, we shall never revert to that

pernicious old system under which the "soloist" was of primary importance, the orchestra of secondary consideration, while the poor conductor was nowhere at all. An aristocrat of the baton himself, Sir Thomas has increased the prestige of his calling and raised his orchestra to the highest rank in the musical world.

Thomas Beecham was born on April 29th, 1879, at Huyton in Lancashire, that stern county where, according to a Manchester wit, music shares with mammon the devotion of its denizens. Both his father and grandfather were remarkable men, combining a spectacular flair for commerce with an unappeasable hunger for fine art. His father, Sir Joseph Beecham, was a keen musician and as a connoisseur he could always be found at Christie's whenever there was an auction of more than passing interest. He housed what was probably the finest private collection of Constables in this or any other country. Young Thomas Beecham was not trained specially as a musician, but it will be interesting for gramophone lovers to learn that as a boy he used to listen with huge delight to a mechanical orchestration belonging to his father; for years he heard this machine every day, until his plastic mind was perfectly familiar with its repertoire, ranging from the classics to long extracts from Wagner. It is perhaps more than a mere coincidence that another remarkable conductor, Nikisch, also renowned for his miraculous memory, was brought up in a household where the mechanical orchestration was a daily feature!

At Rossall School, where he was Captain of his House, he distinguished himself particularly in music, and during the last two years there he took private lessons in harmony and composition from Dr Edward Sweeting, a rather pedantic taskmaster of the old type who cherished an almost superstitious veneration for the mysteries of counterpoint and fugue. After Rossall he went to Wadham College, Oxford, where a laudable intention of bagging a double first in classics and history kept him busy for a year. Deciding that music was his *forte* after all, he abandoned the attempt at scholastic honours and placed himself under the college organist, Dr Varley Roberts; but a few months under that gentleman's tutelage soon convinced him that there were better ways of approaching music than by the dry-as-dust methods of the pedantic Beckmessers. This refusal to be bound by stereotyped methods was as characteristic as it was prophetic. It is interesting to recall what Beecham himself said many years later about the academic approach to music. "Such training", he remarked, "is a mistake; especially training by chronology. Go to Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven by way of the moderns. If in youth attention is given to the archaic, the taste is unduly biased and later

music is judged by too narrow a standard. Never having been educated at a musical academy, never having been musically educated at all, in fact, I have nothing but the most profound contempt for all such-like organizations. You have only one thing to do when you decide to become a musician, and that is, elect to be born one, and everything else will be given to you”.

In 1899, the young Beecham left Oxford and returned to Huyton, where an irrepressible craving to conduct led him to form an amateur orchestra. To this orchestra of enthusiastic amateurs, assisted by a sprinkling of professional bandsmen enlisted from the Hallé organization, he owes his earliest experiences as conductor.

His first appearance in public occurred in very dramatic circumstances. His father, Sir Joseph, was elected Mayor of the town in 1899, and as part of the mayoral entertainment the Hallé Orchestra was engaged to give a symphony concert in the local Town Hall. On the day of the concert the Hallé men arrived, with all band parts, but Richter, their conductor, did not: neither did the conductor's scores. Almost at the last minute word came from Manchester that the famous conductor was too ill to appear that night. The concert would certainly have been called off had not the Mayor's son gallantly saved the situation by conducting, with neither score nor rehearsal, a splendid performance which included Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the *Pathetic* Symphony, and the Overtures to *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger*. This accident decided the future of Thomas Beecham: henceforth he would devote himself to a career as virtuoso of the baton. For several years he wandered about the Continent gaining experience in an empirical fashion. Such a haphazard training might not appeal to the schoolmasters of music, but for a personality like Beecham it was worth years of tedious classroom pedagogy.

In 1902 he drifted to London and applied for a post as musical director of a suburban opera company organized by a singer named Kelson Truman, who eyed the youthful conductor doubtfully and asked him about his qualifications. "Haven't any, but I know all your operas from memory", he candidly confessed. The upshot of this interview was his engagement as travelling conductor. For twelve months he saw the seamy side of provincial stage life that Leonard Merrick has so graphically portrayed in his novels. Week after week he had wretched orchestras recruited mainly from labourers by day, who played in the evenings at the theatre to increase their wages. What they earned was promptly spent in the taproom of a hostelry conveniently near the stage door, so that the conductor frequently found (especially on pay night) his entire wood-wind or brass section missing! On these

occasions he had to fill in their cues with his left hand on a cracked piano, while simultaneously leading the rest of the band with his right.

After this he withdrew to the Continent, and it was not until June 5th, 1905 that he made his *début* in London. His programme at the Bechstein Hall was a challenge to the critics, for it consisted wholly of unfamiliar masterpieces. He conducted, like Safonoff, without a baton, and this novel departure from orthodox usage brought some of the die-hard policemen of the musical press buzzing round his ears. The concert, although it did not secure the patronage of the public at large (which is not surprising considering the unusual nature of the programme and the spectacular counter-attractions of the musical season that year), nevertheless marked Beecham out as a coming man. From the outset he was patently a conductor of unusual capabilities, gifted with personal magnetism and an impeccable taste. In the limits of a brief survey, it is impossible to trace in detail his career. From 1905, when he first tentatively began, to 1910, when he had definitely "arrived" and set the seal on his fame by an unparalleled opera season, his progress was one interrupted line of victories over musical Philistinism. In 1905, when he appeared unheralded on the London scene, he was a shy musician in a city that offered no opportunities for unknown artists. Yet in 1910 he was the uncrowned king of British music; his name was on all lips. "I have lived to see changes in many men", observes an intimate friend of Sir Thomas Beecham, "but seldom have I seen such a radical change as that which took place in Thomas Beecham during the space of five years. Out of a shy, groundward glancing little figure in a frock coat, brown boots and a 'pork pie' hat and dark woollen gloves, there emerged a personality of such force and magnetism that the whole of the musical world was to feel its grandiose effects".

The explanation of this unprecedented musical transformation scene can be summed up in one word: personality. Conducting calls for certain traits of temperament that tend to cancel each other out: an iron nerve and a hyper-sensitiveness; a capacity for organization, together with a genius for conveying the inspired effect of spontaneous improvisation; a fastidious attention to subtle detail and to every ornament of the orchestral arabesque and still a capacity to think in wholes rather than sections; the disciplinarian routine of a Napoleon, allied to the sensitive awareness of a poet; a cool, calculating brain packed in ice, offset by a passionate devotion to the sensuousness of *timbres*. Such a combination of contradictory characteristics is so rarely met within

one personality, that it may be regarded as an ideal occurring only once or twice in a century. We had it in Richter; we had it in Nikisch; and we have it in Sir Thomas Beecham.

"His style", says Ernest Newman, "is the true singing style. It is this fine singing quality that Beecham strives incessantly to secure from an orchestra, and that he usually succeeds in getting despite difficulties in the matter of sufficient rehearsals. He is not interested in any music except the really beautiful music—music that should not be touched by anybody except with a caress".

He dominates the musicians under him, not by the military tactics of the martinet, but by the sheer glamour of his personality. His vivid gestures, his power of mimicry, his courageous sang-froid in face of perilous situations, magnetize his players, while his infallible memory enables him to dispense with the score and frees him from its bondage. From the instant when Beecham raises his baton to the moment when, with that unforgettable, imperious gesture he tosses the stick aside, there is a sense of inevitability about his performances, that authentic touch of genius which elevates even the most hackneyed work far beyond the familiar and commonplace. Yet for all this, he never condescends to that grossest of artistic vices, the intrusion of his own personality into self-contained works whose classic proportions are debased by shifting the emphasis from the music to the interpreter. Many composers have declared him to be their ideal interpreter. Dame Ethel Smyth recently confessed that for the first time in her life, after Beecham's reading of some of her works, she had heard her music played to perfection. While Richard Strauss, himself a superb conductor, declared after hearing Beecham conduct *Der Rosenkavalier* at Covent Garden, that the Englishman brought out latent strokes in the score that even the composer himself had never evoked. Incidentally, Strauss was amazed to find that Beecham conducted the complicated score from memory!

Someone once asked Sir Thomas if he did not feel as it were "intoxicated" by the exuberance of his own conducting. "On the contrary", he replied, "I feel like a slave driver. When I am conducting, I have two tasks before me. The first is to galvanize the players. The second is to keep a cool and clear brain, otherwise I should lose my effects. Suppose that I am building a huge *crescendo*: every phrase in it must be clearly graded in my mind. It must be delivered with mathematical accuracy from start to finish. If I allowed my emotions to run away with me, the whole outline would be blurred. The only conductor who can allow himself to be 'intoxicated' is the leader of a jazz band. (He usually is, by the way)".

There is no secret about Beecham's technique: for like all artists of real genius he never trades in "secrets". But he possesses one stylistic attribute which singles him out from all other conductors. A comparison between the recorded versions of Beecham and those of others will instantly reveal this quality: it consists in his genius for "bringing off" a climax that is neither a rowdy noise nor the musical equivalent of rhetorical clap-trap. Nothing is easier in music than to step on the soap-box and compensate by brute assertion for the lack of eloquent and logical persuasion. But this is not Beecham's way. He prepares his climaxes in advance as carefully as a scrupulous playwright plans his "big scene". Every phrase is made to yield its quota to the climax, which, when it arrives, is distinguished by an intensity, an inevitability that is almost Greek in its emotive symmetry.

It is a commonplace of musical aesthetics that the finest work of the interpretative artist is only transient. He can only survive as a name in musical history: of his actual performances, posterity possesses only such a clue as can be gleaned from the reports of contemporary documents. The organ-playing of Handel, the harpsichord of Couperin, the daemonic technique of Paganini, the golden tones of Jenny Lind, the dulcet touch of Chopin—these can only be matter for conjecture and speculation. But the music student of the future will not labour under such a handicap for he will be able to hear for himself the great interpreters of our own and successive epochs. Through the gramophone will the art of a Beecham, a Kreisler or a Casals be perpetuated. The records which Sir Thomas Beecham has made, though not so many as his admirers would wish, constitute an anthology of definitive readings, and no gramophone enthusiast with a taste for the *crème de la crème* in orchestral music will remain content until he possesses the whole series.



MARCH 1936

Laudator Temporis Acti

Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur—1773 - 1823

by **Percy Colson**

I have just been re-reading Lord Mount Edgcumbe's extremely interesting reminiscences of his musical life from 1773-1823. His remarks regarding the decadence of music, both creative and executive, are singularly like those we are constantly hearing to-day from the more elderly of our musical amateurs and critics.

Lord Mount Edgcumbe was a passionate lover of music, especially opera, and an acute critic. He had every opportunity of gratifying his tastes, for he began to frequent the opera at an early age and subsequently travelled all over Europe in order to visit the famous Continental opera houses. He lived in what he calls "the golden age" of opera and his book is a long lament for the past. "Tastes", he says, "are always various, generally fluctuating; mine, which were formed nearly half a century ago, have not wavered in the slightest degree down to the present moment!" It is the tastes "formed nearly half a century ago" which are responsible for the eternal sameness of our concert programmes and they make things very difficult for young composers, who cry despairingly, "No doubt ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you".

Who were the composers and singers whose genius was such as to occasion this intelligent music-lover to write so wistfully about the past? He says:

"As the good singers disappeared and remained unreplaced; as the style of the compositions changed and as their execution deviated more and more from what I had been accustomed to in the *golden* age of the opera, my curiosity diminished with my pleasure, and though both have latterly been occasionally revived, yet I never expect to hear again what I have done, or any new music or new singers that will make me amends for those which are gone".

Surely, one would imagine, composers of such excellence would be remembered to-day and the names of such singers would have become legendary?

Alas! time has dealt very heavily with most of them. A few melodious fragments excepted, the works of the composers then popular—Paer, Pergolesi, Paesiello, Sarti, Tarchi, Bertoni, Sacchini and Salieri—are quite forgotten. True, Pergolesi's delightful little operetta *La Serva Padrona* is sometimes played in Italy, as is also the charming *Matrimonio Segreto* of Cimarosa. Gluck, too, survives—our author had an admiration for his melodic genius—but his lovely operas are very seldom performed. Of the operas popular in Lord Mount Edgcumbe's day, only those of Mozart and Rossini are still heard. We shall see presently what he thought of Rossini.

Certainly he lived in an age of great singers: exactly how great we cannot say, for it is the tragedy of the actor, the singer and the orator that his message is a personal one and it dies with the passing of the messenger and those of his generation. But as society went to the opera solely to hear the singers and composers wrote for them alone, we can safely say that such sopranos as Banti, Mara, Vestris and Catalini, and such male singers as Marchesi, Guadagni and Pacchierotti, were very good indeed. The qualities chiefly demanded from them were, in addition to beautiful voices, a fine *cantabile* and great agility in the execution of *fioritura* and *bravura* passages.

It was the age of the male soprano. Of Pacchierotti we read: "Decidedly, in my opinion, the most perfect singer it has ever been my lot to hear". His voice was "an extensive soprano, full and sweet in the highest degree; his powers of execution were very great". And the author fills two or three pages with enthusiastic praise of Pacchierotti's art. It is curious to note that at that time no female was permitted to appear on the stage at Rome in any character whatever, operatic, dramatic or dancing. The youngest and best-looking of the *castrati* were employed as their substitutes.

The bass voice was apparently very little appreciated; Lord Mount Edgcumbe has no use whatever for it. "A bass voice is too unbending and deficient in sweetness for single songs, and fit only for those of inferior character or of the *buffo* style", he writes. In speaking of Mozart he says: "It has always surprised me that the principal characters in two of Mozart's operas should have been written for basses, namely, Count Almaviva and Don Giovanni . . . I can account for it no otherwise than by supposing they were written for some particular singer who had a bass voice".

In the latter day of his opera-going career a new star arose—Rossini, whom he criticised with keen penetration. "His (Rossini's)

music is alone liked in Italy", he writes. "That he is possessed of genius and invention cannot be denied, but they are not guided by good taste: neither are they inexhaustible, for he is so rapid and so copious a writer that his imagination seems already to be nearly drained, and no one is so great a plagiarist of himself". He complains of the importance he gives to the orchestra, of his triviality and his *mannerisms*. It is interesting to note that his *Il Barbiere de Siviglia* was far less successful than a dozen other of his operas which are now forgotten.

One is glad that Lord Mount Edgcumbe recognized the genius of Mozart. True, he thought his style not quite so agreeable as that of some of the "excellent Italian masters" who had held the stage in his early days. It was a trifle heavy; too German, perhaps. But he says that of his beauty, originality, infinite variety and scientific excellence, there can be but one opinion and he cannot understand that, "though he has been so long dead, his works should have been but so lately known and performed in this country". Says he: "I think I may venture to predict that Rossini will not long have ceased to write before he will cease to be remembered . . . while the name of Mozart, with those of his two great countrymen, Handel and Haydn, will live for ever, and his compositions, like theirs, descend as sterling gold to posterity".

Lord Mount Edgcumbe ends in the same minor key in which he began. "I now close these remarks with little hope and no great desire of ever seeing another opera", he writes sadly.

When I was very young I can just remember a song which was extremely popular, called *The Maid of the Mill*. The second verse ran:

"Leaden years have passed, grey-haired I tread the ground,
The earth has no such maidens now, such mill wheels turn
not round".

The eternal lament of age! Alas! it is we who have changed, not the windmills, but if ever we are inclined to cry with Lord Mount Edgcumbe, *Ichabod*, let us remember that when he wrote his pessimistic book, there were growing up a few quite clever little boys; Verdi, Wagner, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt, for instance. And the world had yet to hear Jenny Lind, Patti, Melba, Mario, Jean de Reszke and Caruso.

JUNE 1936

Twenty-Five Centuries of Russian Music by Nicholas Nadejine

Amongst many unexpected experiences awaiting every traveller to Russia, one of the most impressive is the discovery that Russia is almost the only country where Grand Opera does not show any sign of decay. In fact, it seems sometimes that the titanic efforts of the proletarian State are concentrated on preserving that particular form of Art, which everywhere else, with the possible exception of Germany, Austria, and Italy, has degenerated beyond any possible hope of resurrection.

Why the most democratic, most plebeian, and unsentimental government in the whole history of our civilization, should choose to become the patron of one of the most patrician Arts, is a problem worth meditating on. Opera is dying everywhere, as architecture has been dying for the last hundred years, together with poetry and every other non-commercial Art, yet Stalin does not hesitate to add to his many duties the arduous task of saviour of the Russian musical tradition.

When Michaelangelo was obliged to flee from Florence, following the expulsion of the Medicis, he wrote to a friend: "What is the meaning of Republic? Liberty for the citizen and scorn for Art!" And now the strong men of the Kremlin have undertaken the task which up till now in history has fallen to such men as Petronius, Tiberius, Nero, Lorenzo the Magnificent, Piccolominis, the Borgias, Farneses, Colonnas, Catherine the Great, Ludwig of Bavaria and Otto Kahn. They keep alive this great Art in a country whose population would appear in the eyes of a Western observer much more wisely occupied in efforts to secure a ration of daily bread instead of tickets for a gala performance of *Carmen*. Yet it is an indisputable fact that modern Russia lives up to her ancient musical tradition. For ancient it is, beyond the recollection of any chronicler.

A long time ago, the archæologists, working on excavations in South Russia, found in the tombs of Scythia (so often mentioned by Herodotus and Hesiod) every conceivable kind of musical instrument, from a Pan's flute and horn to the almost modern

balalaika, and harp. Probably the most interesting of these early discoveries was the predecessor of the fifteenth-century lute, and the two-stringed Persian tanbour, which was first introduced into Scythia by the musicians of Darius, King of Persia, when about 510 B.C. he tried unsuccessfully to conquer the country. Having been first partially Graecised, then overcome by the Sarmatians, the Scythians have been always accepted by historians and ethnologists as direct ancestors of the Russians.

Anacreon, in one of his poems (of the sixth century B.C.) disapproves of the ever-boisterous Scythians, thus:

“Friends, we must not indulge
In the drunken orgies of Scythians.
Let us drink our wine peacefully,
And quietly sing our lovely hymns”.

The cultured Greeks were able to study the character of Scythians at close quarters, for a great many of them were employed as policemen in the streets of Athens. The witness to this is the comic character of a drunken Scythian who speaks broken Greek in Aristophanes' comedy the “Thesmophoriazusae”, which, staged in 411 B.C., contained a vitriolic attack on Euripides.

Julius Polideuces (A.D. 11) in his “Lexicon” describes a musical instrument called a “pentachord”, a five-stringed harp in embryo invented and played by Scythians, which is identical in every detail with the instruments found by Russian archæologists sixty years ago.

Martianus Capella, a Roman writer of the fifth century A.D. and author of an encyclopædia known as the “Satyricon”, tells an amusing story of an Amazon, who having decided to beget a child by Alexander the Great, caused the King many embarrassments until by way of compensation he offered the determined lady warrior a slave who was an accomplished player upon the lute. The bargain proved to be a great success, and the lady returned happily to her native Crimea, bearing the King no rancour. This story only confirms the earlier references by Herodotus, Strabo, and Maximus Tyrius, to the Scythian passion for playing the flute and reed pipe.

From ancient manuscripts we learn that Constantin Porphyrogenitus, Byzantine Emperor from 912 to 959, had engaged several companies of Russian musicians to visit him, and the enthusiastic accounts of their performances could have been written by the critics of a quarter of a century ago when, for the first time, Russian singers were heard in London.

Ibn Fadlan, a famous Arab traveller of the tenth century, gives a detailed description of various instruments used by people living on the shores of the Volga. Thus, we come into contact with our old friends, the balalaika and the lute. Another traveller from Bagdad, Abou-Hassan Ibn Hussein, says that Russians were very fond of playing the reed pipe, which was sometimes two feet long, and a lute which had eight strings.

In the old cathedral of St Sophia in Kiev, built in the eleventh century, there is a fresco which represents a musical festival. The large body of musicians are divided into three sections: the players on flutes, the trumpeters, and the players on lutes and harps.

Nestor, a Russian historian of the twelfth century, tells us that one of the reasons why Prince Sviatopolk had been nicknamed the "Damned" was his unholy devotion to music. This prince, being caught by St Theodore while indulging in an outrageous musical orgy surrounded by hundreds of drunken singers, was promptly excommunicated by his infuriated Archbishop.

Famous preachers of the thirteenth century, Archbishop Cyril and Archmandrite Serapion, prophesying the inevitable advent of the last judgment, saw the explanation of all Russian calamities during the invasion of the Great Mongol in the pagan devotion of the people to music and community singing.

Thus Russia, from the very beginning of her history, became the promised land for foreign musicians. And it was the ruling prince of Kiev, Jaroslaff the Wise, who in the eleventh century engaged the best Byzantine musicians to codify the rules of choral singing. These Greek monks devoted themselves to their task with a religious fervour, chiefly inspired by the great beauty of Russian voices. So that at the time of the marriage of Jaroslaff's daughter Anna to King Henry of France in 1051, a selected company of musicians followed the new Queen of France and took Paris by storm. This happened at the time when Edward the Confessor reigned in England, and Godwin, Earl of Wessex, was fomenting the civil war; and two English knights, having fled to Kiev, were able to testify that Prince Jaroslaff's court was the most civilized in Europe.

Then, apparently, the Russian character and temperament were very much the same as they are now. There was too much singing, too much vague learning, and too much insatiable interest in all things divorced from the real business of life. The Russian clergy, having learned the canons of Church music from Byzantine teachers, soon became the disseminators of newly-acquired knowledge. Towards the end of the eleventh century every cathedral and monastery possessed a school of singing, and many teachers

became so famous that Polish and Lithuanian monasteries sent their promising singers to Russia to be trained. Early Russian epics are inspired by the vocal efforts of such legendary personages as Prince Igor's wife, Jaroslavna, Starv, and Sadko. Six centuries after they were first created by unknown minstrels, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Gretchaninov drew them out of oblivion, dressed them up in the gorgeous robes of polyphonic orientalism, and introduced them to modern civilization.

Fletcher, Queen Elizabeth's Ambassador to the Court of Czar Theodore, son of Ivan the Terrible, tells in the history of the Russian Commonwealth, how the eating of gargantuan meals composed of seventy courses, drinking of vodka, watching the fights, and listening to the orchestras were the favourite occupation of the Moscow Court.

Another Ambassador of Elizabeth, Sir Jerome Horsey, became a great favourite with the Czar and Czarina Irene, after having presented them with a clavichord and an organ, complete with a London organist. He somewhat bitterly records how some of his men, on account of being able to play the organ, were often invited to the most exclusive inner circle of the palace, to which he was never admitted.

The Patriarch Nikon, in a letter forbidding the use of organs in churches, calls it a pagan and soulless instrument—which shows that even a sixteenth-century Moscow monk could occasionally formulate a very sound aesthetic judgment.

The first Russian orchestra was formed just before the death of Ivan the Terrible. It consisted of a body of thirty musicians, each playing only one note on horns of different shapes and dimension. The ultimate effect depended on perfect timing, and demanded from the conductor a great deal of skill in order to produce the right kind of sound at the right moment. What the exact artistic value of such an orchestra was is hard to see, but from the same ambassadorial reports we learn that during the wedding feast of the first Romanoff, Czar Michael (1613), the orchestra played continuously for five days and nights.

The use of musical instruments being forbidden by the Church, Russian choirs had always to sing *a cappella* unaccompanied. This probably accounts for the proverbial purity and depth of Russian basses who, unsupported by the sounds of organ pipes, had to rely on their own sonority and beauty.

During the reign of Alexis (1645-76), the father of Peter the Great, his court orchestras played in the Moscow parks three times a week. It was the time when Cavalli of Cremona realised the importance of the violin, and reorganized the existing miscel-

laneous body of orchestral players on an entirely new basis, which later on was accepted and improved upon by Monteverdi and Haydn. In 1672 Moscow acclaimed the first foreign orchestra from Germany, and a few years later Boyard Matveieff was appointed the first Director of the Court Theatre. He contributed to the development of Russian musical culture by forming an orchestra of seventy players, selected from among his own serfs. One of the most important acts of this unusually capable administrator was his abandonment of the Pope Gregory notation in music and the introduction of the much improved system invented by Guido of Arezzo in the beginning of the eleventh century.

At this time the Russian Church was looking with great distrust and apprehension upon the overgrowing passion of the people for music, and though it failed to produce a Russian Cartwright, or Pilgrim Fathers, it nevertheless succeeded in checking musical progress to a certain extent. In the seventeenth century, Alexis, the Patriarch of Moscow, was given power to confiscate and burn in public musical instruments, whenever the interests of the Church demanded such a drastic measure. The contemporary correspondent of the *Gazette de France* tells that amongst the sequestered properties of Prince Galitzin, exiled to Siberia in 1690, was found a priceless collection of organs, clavichords, lutes, horns, violins, and native instruments of the Ukraine. However, the pious efforts of Russian Puritans were soon stopped by Peter the Great, who, in his new capacity of Pontifex Maximus, prohibited the clergy from interfering with musical matters.

Handel was struggling at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket producing his operas, only to find that Grand Opera did not pay in England, and that the *Beggar's Opera* was a much greater attraction than his own *Alessandro* and *Tamerlano*. Every foreign musician who ventured to travel to the new Russian capital, St Petersburg, was assured an immediate success.

Peter the Great sent students of ecclesiastical colleges to be trained as singers, and established orchestras in every regiment and military school, and never went to a battle, a hunting expedition, or a cruise without taking with him his own private orchestra of twenty players. This curious phenomenon of absorbing interest in music was not by any means confined to the Court and upper classes of Russian Society. There was no exclusion of the peasants from the creative efforts to promote what two centuries later was to be acclaimed as Russian music. Rather, it was the other way round. The music performed by the orchestras of Czar Alexis and the Emperor Peter was the people's own creation. The war songs of Cossacks, the oriental laments of Mongolian nomads,

the religious chants of wandering pilgrims, the plaintive melodies of Volga boatmen, became early the inexhaustible source of inspiration to the composers. The blind Bandouristes of the Ukraine, the singers of Psalms from North Russia, the players on the gousle were continually touring Russia on foot, going from one village to another, from Kiev to Moscow, from Moscow to Novgorod. The creative power of the Russians in the field of music-making was so fertile that anyone with a sufficient knowledge of notation could collect the richest melodious harvest, without as much trouble as creating a single note of his own, by simply writing down what he heard from anonymous Russian troubadours.

What the real attitude of Peter the Great was towards music is difficult to know. He liked his regiments to march accompanied to tornadoes of rhythmical noise made by his drummers, pipers, and trumpeters, and in the playing of regimental orchestras he saw a great driving force, regulating the martial steps of his newly created pretorians. With a deafening uproar of drums the people lived in his new display of pomp and circumstance, while his courtiers and the foreign Ambassadors were deeply interested in the more serious side of music.

Great and ruthless reformer that he was, with his eyes cast on the West, Peter would not allow Russia to lag behind Europe. Not only did he modernize his administration, his navy and army, and his Church, assuming the title of Pontifex Maximus, but he revolutionized the centuries-old customs of his subjects. By one stroke of his pen he abolished beards in the most bearded country in Europe; he ordered the ladies of his court to discard the picturesque national dress, and adopt French and German fashions, the men being forced to copy the uniforms worn by the subjects of Frederick II of Prussia. So, as mercilessly as he had trained his soldiers, did he begin to drill his Society. He had in his mind the courts of Charles II, James II, and Louis XIV when he issued his imperial edicts regulating the number of musicians in regimental bands, the number and kind of instruments to be used in court orchestras, the kind of dances to be danced at his assemblies and banquets, even to the minimum of drinks to be consumed on these occasions.

The foreign Ambassadors did not hesitate to take advantage of the young Emperor's love of carnival display. We read that in July, 1698, the Austrian Ambassador Quarent brought his orchestra and choirs into the gardens of the Palace and gave an elaborate serenade, which was greatly appreciated by the Crown Prince and his sisters.

In 1699 Peter I gave his permission to the widow of his favourite, Leforte, to make use of her own private orchestra during the State funeral of her husband, thus creating a precedent which in future had to justify the people's desire for brighter funerals. From then, funerals and victories became the great stimulant for development in Russian orchestral playing.

Many victories were celebrated over the Turks and Swedes at this time, which thronged the streets of the newly-built St Petersburg, filled with triumphal arches, to the sound of regimental bands. These were followed by firework illuminations, merry-go-rounds, Court dances and assemblies, at which the hard-worked orchestras often played till the dawn. The old order of Court Jesters, who were the chief entertainers of pre-Imperial Russia, found the competition of trained musicians too difficult to cope with, and gradually died out. They were finally abolished by Empress Anna (1750), and the last jester, Prince Wolronsky, died in retirement.

Under Peter the Great, and his widow Catherine I, very important promoters of Russian musical life were the foreign ambassadors, their governments having discovered that the best way to please Russia was to send them a musical ambassador. The diplomatic successes of the Prussian Ambassador Mardefelt were chiefly due to his sensational appearances as a lute player. Not to be outdone by his Prussian colleague, the Swedish Ambassador introduced to the Court one of his pages, who was such an accomplished whistler that the Empress christened him the Swedish nightingale, and heaped magnificent gifts upon him, and a substantial pension. Another Ambassador, Count Kinsky, engaged an orchestra of ten players from Vienna, and invited the Empress and her Court every week to hear the works of Caccini, Scarlatti, and Monteverdi.

The progress of Russian orchestral playing was following the same line as was taken some time earlier by a group of amateurs in Florence, who met at the house of Bardi with the object of trying experiments in musical declamation by solo voices supported by instruments.

It was only to be expected that interest for the newly-invented Opera should be keenly felt in St Petersburg. Empress Anna engaged an Opera Company with the Florentine composer Araja, who produced his opera "Albiasere" in 1737, with a cast of the best singers from Italy, including Saletti, Marigi, Vulcani, Piva, the prima donna Rosina Bon, the two sisters Dovoli from Venice, and the violinists Madonio and Mira. Thus the Italian Opera came to St. Petersburg to stay and reigned supreme for 150 years.

The purely national school of music originated with the Byzantine monks, and supported by the princes of Kiev and Moscow, counted among its adherents such accomplished musicians and singers as Prince Basil (1505-33), his son, Ivan the Terrible, Czar Theodore, and Czarina Irene. Then came the first manifestations of foreign influences, and it is interesting to note that although Fitzwilliam's Virginal Book was not published in London till 1627, the works of John Bull, Byrd, Phillips, and Morley were played and sung at the Court of Czar Theodore.

The first miscellaneous orchestras belonging to Czars Michael and Alexis, which were enlarged by Italian violinists and serfs trained in Italy, became towards the middle of the seventeenth century the objects of a universal interest amounting to an almost religious cult. Like the proverbial millionaire of a decade ago, who did not consider himself worthy the name unless he possessed a steam yacht, a polo team, and a fleet of motor cars, no Russian seigneur considered his social equipment complete unless he could boast an orchestra, a *cappella*, and serfs trained in Italy to be soloists in operas produced in his private theatre. Thus we hear of a full orchestra organized by Grand Duchess Elizabeth, of a string quartet and vocal *cappella* of Count Apraxine, and of the huge companies of trumpeters and kettle-drummers who followed Prince Menshikov wherever he went.

Not only members of the aristocracy urged their serfs to study music, but many of themselves became famous as musicians. So Prince Repnin became the best-known flautist, Princess Rantemir an accomplished singer and player on the clavichord, while Princess Dashkov, a friend of Diderot and confidantè of Catherine II, was a noted composer. Prince Belosselsky, a friend of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Marmontel, became a great authority on Opera, having written "L'Histoire de la Musique en Italie". Even Peter, the unfortunate husband of Catherine, played the violin; and the future Emperor Paul often took part in operatic performances.

A young shepherd, Rasoumovsky, was the possessor of such a beautiful tenor voice that he became the lover and omnipotent favourite of Empress Elizabeth. Singers were accepted everywhere, and when they retired were often given important posts in the administration. Not infrequently some young prima donna, who only a few years before was a miserable serf in some obscure village, would be set free and marry her owner. Meanwhile, all through the eighteenth century the Italians were busy composing operas, cantatas, and orchestral music, to the detriment of the national school, and produced them in newly built theatres.

When Catherine II came to power she, in spite of her personal

indifference to opera, sent Orlov and Belosselsky to Italy to find some good composers. The result of their mission was the beginning of an endless pilgrimage of Italians to "Hyperborean Palmyra", as the flatterer Voltaire called St Petersburg. Sarti (who was so unsuccessful in London), Baldassare Galuppi (1743-85), Cimarosa (1749-1801), Paisiello (1741-1816) were all at the court of the great Catherine. They taught the Russians the mysteries of *bel canto*, they wrote and produced hundreds of operas and at the same time became able courtiers, participating in the most exciting of court intrigues. Most of them made fortunes, were decorated, and altogether firmly established Italian influence on Russian music.

Sarti produced in 1785 a *Te Deum* in honour of Prince Potemkin, in which, besides two choirs and a huge orchestra, a prominent part was played by two field batteries, which had to produce the bombardment of Otchakov. Curiously enough, this more than ultra-Wagnerian experiment was repeated by Rossini, when he composed a Cantata in 1867 which was played at the opening of the Universal Exhibition in Paris.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Grand Opera and orchestral performances were firmly established in Russia. The stormy torrents of unruly Byzantino-Asiatic inspiration were tamed, and henceforth flowed safely in channels of musical convention. The Italians, pupils of Monteverdi, Stradella, Carissimi, Handel, Haydn, and Bach, had done everything to make Russian composers sound as European as was possible under the circumstances. The real iconoclasts in music, Moussorgsky, Balakirev, and Scriabin, were to be born a hundred years later.

With the coming of the French Revolution the first French refugees introduced into Russia the music of Lully, Gluck, and Grétry. Following the isolation of Russia, the close of Catherine the Great's reign, the glory of young Alexander's rule, and the French invasion and the fire of Moscow, came the fall of Napoleon, Russian armies in Tilsit, Paris, and Vienna, the Vienna Congress, and the friendship of the ageing Beethoven for Prince Galitzine and Rasoumovsky. Such were the events immediately preceding the era of national revival in Russian music!

For the first time in their history, Russians felt tired of foreign tuition. Bortniansky came back from Italy, and began to write his glorious Church music; Glinka was born, and then Dargomijsky, and two decades later Cui, Balakirev, and Moussorgsky. Istomina, the first great ballerina, sprang into fame, and the Russian Byron, Pushkin, acclaimed her in his poems. Grand Duke Konstantin

befriended young Chopin in Warsaw; and Berlioz came to Russia to conduct the Imperial orchestras.

In 1826-27 Prince Dolgoroukov toured Europe with his private orchestra, giving concerts in Paris and London. Another accomplished composer and conductor, Prince Georges Galitzine, made a name for himself and his choir of seventy serfs. When the serfdom was abolished in 1861, and the landed gentry became impoverished, most of the privately owned orchestras and choirs were disbanded, but Galitzine was able to replace his serfs with trained amateurs, and in 1869 toured France, England, and America. Several other members of the Russian aristocracy were making Russian music known abroad. The names of Princes Troubetsky, Odoievsky, and Jousoupov became well known in London and Paris. But the days of enlightened dilettanti as the only promoters of Russian music were over.

Europe became aware of the existence of Nicholas and Anton Rubinstein, Glinka, Dargomijsky, and Tchaikovsky. A few more decades, and on the proscenium of the Russian Theatre appeared the now legendary figure of Serge Diaghilev, a composite character of a Lorenzo, Medici, Cagliostro, a mighty Barnum, and Mr Cochran. The rest of the story is known to everyone, and it would be superfluous to repeat it.

Russian music had conquered the world, and this conquest, having lasted twenty-five years, it is small wonder that Europe became rather tired of this Scythian invasion. And we understand the reasons which made Mr Aldous Huxley write: "This Russian revelation was a very poor Apocalypse". Now Russian music preaches its gospel from the Kremlin.



OCTOBER 1936

A Few Reminiscences

by John Barbirolli

Although I have little time for writing articles at present, I was unable to refuse the invitation of *The Gramophone*, which was responsible for my first orchestral recordings in the days of the National Gramophonic Society. Proud and happy as I am at the compliment which New York has paid me, I am deeply aware of the hard and difficult task which lies before me, and I hope that I shall not prove too unworthy of the honour which has been paid to British Music through me.

Please let me deprecate at once any talk that I am going to be Toscanini's successor. With his going closes a great era in the history of the New York Philharmonic, and an official of the New York Philharmonic Society put the position in this way to a reporter in an interview. He said: "We feel that in inviting Mr Barbirolli we are making what may prove an interesting experiment. We realize he is young but we are faced with the necessity of discovering fresh talent, and from what we have heard of his conducting in England we have every reason to believe that our choice will be a happy one".

I hope so. Strangely enough this year is my Silver Jubilee as a public performer; it is almost exactly twenty-five years ago that I, a small boy of eleven, played the solo part in the Saint-Saëns Concerto at the Queen's Hall.

I continued my studies as a 'cellist, but my real ambition had always been to conduct. Bandmasters in parks were my heroes when I was a youngster. When I was about six or seven, a small band used to play in Lincoln's Inn Fields: we lived near by in Drury Lane at the time, and it was the greatest treat I could think of, to be taken there to watch the bandmaster. Meanwhile I practised and practised on the 'cello and was earning my own living long before most boys had left school. When I was fourteen I set out on my professional career and it was not long before I had played everywhere except in the street!—theatres, music halls, cinemas, in opera orchestras, and in chamber music. I went right through the mill. I think now that it was the best possible thing that could have happened to me.

A conductor must be a good psychologist, he must know how

to handle the different personalities which make up an orchestra. Living among orchestral players and knowing them so well was to be a great help to me later on.

When I was sixteen I became a member of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and it was good schooling to work my way through such a large repertoire of orchestral works. Round about this time I also played in the Carl Rosa Opera Company Orchestra, and soon after joined the Beecham Opera Company at Drury Lane: in fact I scorned no avenue that would teach me something about my job. In those days mechanical music was unknown in the theatre; wherever plays were performed there would be a small theatre orchestra. I played in one of these. There was not much to do, incidental music to plays had fallen into disuse; all we did was to play the people to and from the bar in the intervals. In the long waits between the act-intervals I studied scores. When the time came that I had the opportunity to conduct, all these early experiences, this knowledge of playing inside an orchestra were to stand me in good stead.

Actually the first conducting I ever did was when I was in the Army. The Colonel of the Suffolk Regiment, with which I served, was an enthusiastic amateur fiddler, and after the Armistice he found that a number of us could play, and formed a small orchestra. I played in the orchestra and we used to have some very good evenings. But one night the regular conductor was unable to turn up, and at the last moment I took his place. I have always maintained that the stick technique of an efficient conductor was a natural thing, and I can with truth say that as far as "stick facility" (if I may use such a term) is concerned, I conducted as naturally then as I do now. Anyhow, I enjoyed myself that night.

My first professional effort was in 1925 when I founded a chamber orchestra under the auspices of the Guild of Singers and Players. The orchestra was small but of fine quality, and it soon made some reputation for itself. It was with this orchestra that I made my first gramophone recordings for the National Gramophonic Society with some Purcell and Delius pieces.

About this time Ethel Bartlett and I had enjoyed some success playing piano and 'cello sonatas from memory—everybody seemed to think it rather wonderful that we should play without music, but it was merely the result of the very intensive rehearsing in which we used to indulge. Ethel Bartlett was the soloist at my first Guild orchestral concert, and she and her husband, Rae Robertson, are to be my soloists at the concluding concert of my season in New York.

A few months later the Chenil Galleries were opened, a chamber orchestra was formed, and through the offices of John Goss, the conducting of it was entrusted to my care.

John Goss, always a good friend and a believer in me, was, in a way, responsible for my *début* in opera. He engaged me to conduct at a concert he gave of Van Dieren's works. Frederick Austin, then the artistic director of the BNOC, was in the hall, and was sufficiently impressed to engage me to go on tour with the BNOC. Within a year I was conducting at Covent Garden.

My first big concert opportunity came when, through the sudden indisposition of Sir Thomas Beecham, the London Symphony Orchestra sent for me, giving me forty-eight hours' notice to conduct the Elgar Second Symphony. Casals was the soloist in the Haydn Concerto, and one incident I remember vividly. At rehearsal, after the first few introductory bars, I stopped the orchestra and made a few remarks. Casals leaned forward in his chair and said: "Listen to him. He knows". I was only a boy, and those few words coming from such a great artist touched me deeply. It was a wonderful thing for a man of his greatness to do: I shall never forget it. But then I have always cherished the thought that all really great men are simple and generous, and very rarely have I been disillusioned. It is certainly true of Casals and Kreisler, to mention but two.

The Queen's Hall was packed that night, and a memorable evening for me. Coming off the rostrum, after the closing bars of the Elgar, I found a little man on the platform who accosted me with the words: "Don't sign any gramophone contracts. See you to-morrow at ten. My name's Gaisberg—HMV". And that was the beginning of my association with HMV, and a very delightful friendship with that great little man, Fred Gaisberg, an association that has lasted ever since.

I would not like to go to New York now without acknowledging my very real debt to my friends, the orchestral players of this country. From the day I left my seat among them to stand before them, our relations have been those of mutual respect and affection, and in the great honour that has come to me, I would like to feel that they have a share.

MAY 1938

Chaliapin as I Knew Him

by F. W. Gaisberg

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, the 12th April, Feodor I. Chaliapin passed peacefully away at his home in the Avenue D'Eylau, Paris, in the presence of his wife and almost his entire family.

His hope of winding-up his career with a world tour of farewell appearances in opera and concert was thus never realized.

With his death the book is closed of the most brilliant period, artistically speaking, of Imperial Russia, which reached its zenith during the ten years immediately preceding the War, when the Romanov Dynasty subsidised with vast sums the Marijnsky and Bolshoi Opera Houses, and when wealthy patrons of music like Prince Cheremetieff who had his own private choir and orchestra, and the rich Merchant Marmontov lavishly supported the Moscow opera, which gave the operas of Mussorgsky, Serov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin their first hearing. Chaliapin found and seized his opportunity in this fertile field. He dominated the dramatic and musical world and his name was on everyone's lips when I first went to Russia to secure a gramophone repertoire of Russian music.

I had the honour of recording M Chaliapin for the first time in St Petersburg in 1902. To get him to record was always trying work for everyone concerned, and if space would permit I could quote numerous episodes to prove how nerve-racking an experience it was.

As a rule, the session was appointed late in the evening, and it usually fell to my lot to fetch him to the studio. If in good voice, this was an easy matter, but if he were dissatisfied with the condition of it, on arriving at his palatial home one usually found him sulking in bed. He would let out a roar at frequent intervals with the idea of proving that he could not possibly be expected to record; then, perhaps, clearing his throat, he would call for a laryngoscope, and his unfortunate valet had to hold up a mirror whilst he examined his vocal chords for red spots.

Chaliapin in such a mood was a most difficult proposition and the poor valet, shivering with apprehension, might not hold the mirror steadily and would get cuffed for his pains. None of us

felt very comfortable on these occasions, as we knew that he had to be pacified and pampered in order to get him to the studio.

Other times, when a study of his vocal chords revealed no red spots, we all breathed a sigh of relief; Chaliapin would then sing and if the song came forth smooth, rich and velvety he would smile, whilst we almost danced with joy and then rushed to get him dressed.

His first recording session is an unforgettable memory. We persuaded him to enter a waiting sleigh, and when he reached the recording room, he was greeted boisterously by the choir and orchestra who had been waiting patiently for some hours. On that particular evening he was tireless. He continued in excellent voice for hours and we worked on one record after another until one o'clock in the morning. His pleasure was so great that he invited the choir and myself to finish the evening at the "Strielka" Restaurant, listening to its gypsy choir. This entailed hiring six sleighs or more and undertaking an hour's journey over the hard frozen snow, through the biting Russian night winds. On arriving at the "Strielka", we were received with a great welcome and the show began all over again with Chaliapin standing in the midst of the performers, singing and conducting combined choirs of the nomadic gypsies and of the members of the opera house chorus who had come with us.

Several hours passed in hilarious music-making, and Chaliapin was truly in his element. Trouble was occasioned by a certain Prince D. who, being more than a little tipsy, became annoyed when our combined choir overwhelmed the efforts of an impromptu choir which he had organized, and was conducting. There were hot arguments and bitter words and the hostess and her attendants had difficulty in maintaining peace. Eventually we returned to our hotels, completely exhausted by one of the most riotous nights I personally have ever witnessed, at about eight o'clock in the morning—not at all an unusual thing in the Russia of pre-war days.

It is interesting to recall that some of the records made that evening are still on the "His Master's Voice" historical catalogue.

In those days of the "old regime" in Russia, Chaliapin was the most successful artist in the country, both from the artistic and the financial points of view. Having earned big money ever since his twenty-second year, he was already a wealthy man, possessing a beautiful home in Moscow and a palatial apartment in St Petersburg. I well remember one of his salons in which the walls were covered with eight priceless Gobelin tapestries, each of them about 8 ft. by 10 ft. in size.

At various times I was a guest at his home in Moscow or in St Petersburg, and evidence of the appreciation and admiration of his fellow countrymen was there in the shape of gifts and Russian trophies in large numbers. All that abundance of valuable things had to be abandoned when he left Russia in 1922, and in that fateful year I met him in Riga, and assisted him in drawing up programmes for a series of recitals. The question arose of finding suitable songs for encores—songs which would appeal to non-Russian audiences.

We had put down on our list Schumann's *Two Grenadiers*, Mussorgsky's *Song of the Flea* and *When the King went forth to War*. It came into my mind that Chaliapin's early experiences as a boy—he was born at Kazan on the Volga river, and had played on the banks and swum in the waters; and as a restless youth, become a member of a wandering opera company, frequently sailing up and down its course, seeing the toilers on the banks of the river, hauling great barges upstream to the accompaniment of a monotonous chant—comprised a great deal that was picturesque and also close to both the traditional and the everyday life of the Russian masses. I knew that this early experience was the foundation of his intense sympathy with the life and the aspirations of the Russian worker, and therefore suggested that he should give the outside world an impression of that early environment by singing the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*. Its simple melody, with the refrain "Ei ukhnem", was already well known to the Russian public, but he objected that it was nothing more than a chorus, and had only one complete verse, which only Russians could appreciate. I said that we would write others and get his friend Koenemann to prepare an appropriate piano accompaniment. This, Koenemann was commissioned to do, and he made several attempts before Chaliapin finally accepted the version as it now appears. I was present at the first performance of the song in 1924, and was gratified by the fact that it at once made a hit. From that first post-war concert until the last, it had always found a place in Chaliapin's programmes, and if omitted, the gallery would shout until he did sing it!

In Russia, before the war, he was frequently the guest of the Grand Dukes, having had at his command the two finest opera houses in the world: the "Marijnsky" in St Petersburg and the "Bolshoi Teater" in Moscow. Whenever he was to appear, seats sold at a premium, and even his own valet and secretary regularly indulged in speculation in seats for his performances. I have seen a queue waiting to buy tickets, extending entirely round the opera house, with a detachment of cavalry to keep order, twelve hours

before the seats were on sale, in the terrible coldness of a Russian mid-winter.

In future years men will treasure the remembrance of his mad "Boris", and recall with a thrill his entrance on to the stage as Tsar Ivan in *Pskovitanka*.

For me, however, the memory of his entry in a salon during a reception at the "Hall of Nobility" in St Petersburg will always be the most dramatic. In spite of the imposing array of uniforms borne by the dignitaries who were present, he seemed to fill the big room with his personality and a thoroughly dull evening was transformed and sprang into life.

I was fortunate in being able to pay a last tribute to my old friend, and attended the Russian Cathedral in the Rue Daru in Paris, where the famous Afonsky Choir, assisted by the Aristov Russian Opera chorus sang an elaborate choral service lasting two hours and a half, during which the beautiful two-fold Litany of Gretchaninov—an old favourite of Chaliapin's—was sung.

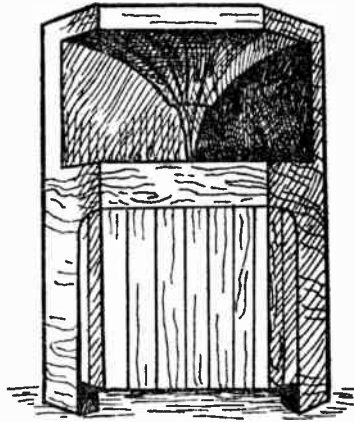
The Metropolitan Mgr Euloge officiated and the Liturgy for the Dead was rendered. It was the most wonderful unaccompanied choral singing I have ever heard. Many of his old colleagues sang as choristers, among them Pozemkovsky, Alexander Mozjoukin, Kaidanov, Zaporozhets, Borovsky, Mde Davidova, Mde Smirnova and others.

The earnestness and the whole-hearted emotion these choristers and former colleagues put into their singing were very, very touching.

My mind recalls the frequent battles and storms they had weathered with him during the pre-war Imperial days, the lean, miserable revolutionary period and then their hardships as refugees. Wondering at their zeal, I asked Prince Zereteli, who was present, the reason. He answered me, "Chaliapin dead—all is forgotten". They realize now that there will be no other like him. With his faults, for them he was their Russia. A book is closed.



Voight Corner Speaker



The War Years

1939 - 1945

Looking back it is possible to see how the fortunes of the record industry reflected those of the country during the war years of 1939 to 1945. Naturally at the beginning much was already recorded and awaiting issue. As time went on, more artists became unavailable, and eventually there was an acute shortage of actual material, so that the companies appealed directly to the public for the return to dealers of old and unwanted records.

Earlier in that summer of 1939 London had enjoyed the greatest music festival the country had ever known, a fitting summation of the previous decade, and in September THE GRAMOPHONE warned that "in the event of hostilities breaking out some difficulties may arise regarding distribution". In the event, the paper closed its London office and, after producing one issue from Steyning in Sussex, moved to Kenton in Middlesex, continuing operations from a private house, whence it was published without a single break throughout the war. The companies continued to advertise, and somehow W. R. Anderson and Alec Robertson bore virtually the whole brunt of reviewing, as well as writing many feature articles. How heavy this burden was will be apparent from the merest sketch of the period.

Curiously in that very month we find a German title, which though of a popular work, never appeared like this again—"Bajazzi" ("Pagliacci"). Even in 1940 there was a review of the Overture to "Die Macht des Schicksals" ("La Forza del Destino"), even more curiously from Munich.

Bloch's music was much recorded and generally welcomed. Toscanini was conducting the NBC Orchestra, and, as so often, the British public was the beneficiary of fine and interesting records from the Philadelphia Orchestra, notably of Rachmaninov's major works, including the Third Symphony conducted by the composer, and of Shostakovich's First and Fifth Symphonies conducted by Leopold Stokowski.

Two major influences affecting the gramophone for good were the direct result of the war. The British Council began sponsoring records of British music, beginning with Moeran's *Symphony*, and continuing with "Belshazzar's Feast" in the famous Huddersfield performance, Vaughan Williams's *Fifth Symphony*, Bax's *Third*, Holst's "Planets" and "Hymn of Jesus", and Elgar's "Gerontius". Secondly His Majesty's armed forces came into contact with a great deal of music at first hand through the Department of National Service Entertainment (ENSA), as well as through the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the predecessor of the Arts Council. Also in Italy the Army itself was instrumental in resuscitating musical life and many Englishmen developed a passion for opera. Even in the Middle East the indomitable Lady Russell sustained an amazing musical scene in Cairo.

These were the years when the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitsky made a tremendous impression and brought us much splendid music, such as the *Third Symphony* of Roy Harris and the first recordings of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" and "Lieutenant Kijé". From Cincinnati came Heifetz's first recording of William Walton's *Violin Concerto* under Goossens. Meanwhile Rubinstein continued to make his great records of Chopin, and a succession of interesting records came from Eileen Joyce, such as Grieg's *Ballade*, the first recording of Shostakovich's *First Piano Concerto* and Ireland's *Concerto*.

Dvůřák had his centenary in 1941, and as well as records from the Czech Philharmonic under Talich, there was a flowering of his chamber music, to which Decca made a remarkable contribution by English artists, including both *Piano Quartets* and the *Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola*.

With the advent of Russia into the war there was a flood of Soviet choral music, and a few large-scale works, though David Oistrakh could have made a more illuminating *début* than with Miaskovsky's *Violin Concerto*. In this field it was Moura Lympany who was to make the headlines with Khachaturian's big popular *Piano Concerto*.

Other noteworthy records were of Webern's *String Trio* by

English artists, a Bax album containing the *Nonet*, the *Sonata for Viola and Piano* and the *Motet "Mater Ora Filium"*, Holbrooke's *Clarinet Quintet*, Ireland's *Third Trio*, an album by Marian Anderson, Tchaikovsky's *Second and Third Symphonies*, Britten's *Michaelangelo Sonnets*, Bliss's *Piano Concerto and String Quartet* and Howard Ferguson's *Octet*. Aubrey and Dennis Brain, a famous father and son, came together to play the horn parts with the *Lener Quartet* in Mozart's *K.334 Divertimento*.

Isobel Baillie and Joan Hammond made many beautiful records, the latter's "O my beloved father" from Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi" becoming a 'hit' record, Astra Desmond sang Grieg in Norwegian, and Maggie Teyte made a succession of enchanting records of French "mélodies", as well as an album for Rimington Van Wyck Limited, which included two songs by Berlioz with Leslie Heward conducting. The same firm also issued a recording of Michael Tippett's *Piano Sonata* played by Phyllis Sellick.

Paper rationing restricted the number of articles in THE GRAMOPHONE, but there were authoritative surveys of American and Russian music, and a marvellous headline: "Leo Riemens Discovers in Holland an Unknown Odeon-De-Luxe of Felia Litvinne". There were 39 reminiscent articles by Herbert Ridout of early days with Columbia, and many fascinating pieces on great artists by Fred Gaisberg. Deletions were heavy, and as usual showed the public's failure to respond to the unusual. Throughout the war HMV issued the Prime Minister's broadcasts.

After three years of war W. R. Anderson reckoned that 57 orchestras under 64 conductors had recorded. When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, it was also the end of the 22nd volume of THE GRAMOPHONE, which had come of age the year before.

Among those killed in action were Walter Leigh and Michael Heming, son of the singer and opera administrator Percy Heming. On his way to the Middle East Heming had sketched out some music, which his friend Anthony Collins completed. As "A Threnody for a Soldier Killed in Action" it was sensitively recorded by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli and can serve as a memorial to brave and terrible years.

FEBRUARY 1939

The Songs of Ivor Gurney

by Alec Robertson

Who now, asked out for the evening, takes their music with them? No longer do drawing rooms echo the classic query: "Have you brought your music with you?" and no longer does a roll of music, usually songs, lie coyly hidden in the hall anticipating this request.

But there must still be a number of amateurs whose vocal equipment is far from indifferent. And if it isn't wireless that scares them off it can hardly be song records, for so few of them are issued; which can only mean that sales are small.

Personally I regret extremely the decay of amateur vocalism: and though I have suffered many things from it in my time it has also given me much pleasure. I regret it most of all because it must mean that a large part of English song literature, rich in lyric beauty, remains unsung. Even the dishonoured and mocked-at ballad concerts had a certain proportion of good music in their programmes—the songs of Quilter or Graham Peel for example—which thus obtained a fair circulation and home performance.

These melancholy reflections are the result of a study of a number of Ivor Gurney's songs, six of which were recently recorded by Decca and reviewed by Roger Wimbush in the October 1938 issue of *The Gramophone*.

RW's review was, on the whole, sympathetic to the music, but he thought that Gurney's songs would be likely to suffer from his having been a poet first and a composer afterwards. This might well have been so: but I gather, from the account of Gurney's early life in the article upon him in the January 1938 *Music and Letters*, that his development as poet and musician was more or less simultaneous. Born in 1890 at Gloucester he had a godfather, Canon Cheeseman, who made him read much of the finest English poetry aloud: but at the age of eight he was a member of the choir of All Saints, and in 1900 a chorister at the Cathedral, where he became a famous solo boy. Miss Marion Scott says, in the article from which I am quoting: "People flocked to the Cathedral to hear the beauty of his voice and the deep musical expressiveness of his renderings". Shakespeare and Beethoven, remarks Miss Scott, early became master-passions

with him. In 1911 Gurney won an open scholarship for composition and came to the Royal College of Music. When he walked into the room for his *viva voce*, Stanford, greatly excited by his compositions, and the similarity in idiom and even in handwriting to Schubert, said in an awestruck whisper, "By God! it is Schubert".

This much quoted remark has done little good to Gurney. Similarity in idiom, handwriting, and appearance, all of which Gurney is said to have had, is not the same thing as identity: and Gurney is most certainly no Schubert. Nor is there much resemblance to Schubert in the tortured face that looks out of the frontispiece in *Music and Letters* and the two volumes of songs recently published by the Oxford Press. But that photograph, of course, was taken in 1920 after the poet-composer had been through the searing experience of the war, which had sickened him to the soul. During that time, but before the Passchendale offensive, his first book of verse "Severn and Somme" was accepted by Messrs Sidgwick and Jackson: and after the offensive, in which he was gassed and sent to hospital, he wrote one of his loveliest songs, to his own words, "Severn Meadows". It is a great pity Miss Evans did not record this exquisite example of Gurney's art as poet and musician.

Gurney continued his training after the war but was, Miss Scott tells us, continually harassed by poverty. He would walk to London from Gloucester to save his fare, earn his lodging at inns by singing folk-songs: and in London itself had sometimes, like Francis Thompson before him, to sleep on the Embankment or in Rowton House. In such manner does England look after her artists!

In September 1922 his health broke down and "he suffered from delusions, principally connected with the war . . . the last fifteen years of his life were passed in the City of London Mental Hospital. He died there on December 26th, 1937, and was buried in Twigworth Church, near Gloucester". It does not do to think of the suffering endured by a man of Gurney's temperament during those fifteen years, in spite of the great care and kindness with which he was treated. At least he died knowing of the symposium of articles about to appear in *Music and Letters*, and of the growing interest in his work.

It is not for me to assess the value of Gurney's poetry—lovely though I think it is—but I note with regret that not one piece appears in the just published "Century's Poetry" (Penguin Books, 2 vols.) though others with, I should have thought, less claim find a place there.

Neither as poet nor musician was Gurney impeccable in technique. He himself referred to his own "roughness" and lack of patience ("because words are so rebellious and because he has so much to tell of, and therefore must assiduously condense the telling"); these defects, and the condensation which Edmund Blunden notes in his poetry, are faults to be found also in his music, making some of his songs sound crabbed: and certainly there is in many of the songs something "uncompromising and intractable", as Dr Howells remarks in his fine article in *Music and Letters*.

Gurney's writing for the piano is often not happy. Two of the songs recorded, *The Scribe* and *The Latmian Shepherd*, have very thickly written accompaniments, and generally Gurney seems to show a lack of invention and variety in this matter of accompanimental figures, though not in modulation or harmony.

But when criticism has said its worst what richness remains! Gurney gives us not only a literary perception most rare in English song-writers (or any others) in his settings, but has an extraordinary power of "setting the seal upon a whole song by its first phrase". *You are my sky* is a fine example of this. His melodies, at their best, go right into one's heart and memory, even though they are, for the most part, such quiet and unobtrusive tunes. What Dr Howells calls "the pervading, wandering beauty in his work" is Gurney's most endearing characteristic. He may give us some commonplace turns of melodic thought, some harsh modulations (though he is never "modern" his inspiration is unequal), his emotional range may not be very great, but suddenly you turn a stone and start an angel's wing.



APRIL 1942

The Record Collector

by P. G. Hurst

In its beginnings, and for some years after, the collecting cult was distinguished for a spirit of harmony and friendliness which was as delightful as was the enthusiasm of its devotees. A new and easy way of discovery seemed assured, with both pleasure and prestige to the successful and diligent searcher. Every junk shop and second-hand emporium became a potential Sinbad's cave, and many indeed yielded up their treasures. Collectors gleefully reported their finds to "Collectors' Corner", which gladly passed on the good news, and so the good work went on. However, this could not endure! The amount of hidden treasure was limited, and baffled collectors, unwilling to abandon wholly what they had begun, perforce adapted themselves to circumstances—they turned to other and less exacting forms of record collecting; and thereafter, as may readily be imagined, the old spirit of concord vanished like the mists of morning. It may be difficult to find a parallel in other collecting cults for the schisms that rent collectors of records, often amounting to a degree of impatience and intolerance quite regrettable, and causing the rival devotees to pass their opinions on each other's activities in a manner to provoke mild surprise.

Briefly put, these differences resolve themselves into two simple issues: should collectors make a virtue of rarity (within understood limits), or should they not? Of course the answer also is quite simple—they may do exactly as they please. Most of the abuse seems to flow from the followers of the latter inclination towards those of the former, though how much of this may be due to frustration one hardly dares to guess, but there would seem to be no reason why these two courses should not proceed side by side in parallel lines, not only without friction, but without meeting.

What follows is frankly concerned with those who, while possessing a keen musical sense and a desire to understand and preserve the highest traditions of the vocal art, have also the collector's urge and instinct to seek out objects of curiosity and rarity, and to classify them in an expert manner.

It is a curious reflection that so much of future knowledge of

the principles and background of record collecting should finally depend upon personal contact within its origins. There is a thin though tough vein of sentiment in all forms of collecting, and especially in this, where origins are not quite lost to view. It is intangible and somewhat vague, but it is there, and young collectors feel it hardly less strongly than do the older ones. This susceptibility in the younger generation is one of the strangest and most pleasing features of our cult, for it proves to us elders that our impressions are not bigoted or selfish, but are based upon practical foundations. Few indeed are there who have retained vivid memories of the events which led to the advance of the "talking machine" into the territory of Art, but the writer, who somehow managed to be present when each new batch of "red labels" was being tried over, humbly hopes that his heart at least will enable him to embody in the written word something of the recurring excitement that stirred their imaginations.

Serious recording for the gramophone began just at the time when great singing was on the point of decline. It is a matter of history how the Covent Garden triumphs of the 'nineties did not long survive the death of Augustus Harris, that impresario of genius. It was Harris who brought the great Jean de Reszke to his dominant place, and with that supreme artist's departure from London in 1900, the end came with some precipitancy. The influence of his art, by precept and by example, undoubtedly contributed to build up that higher standard of artistic endeavour which resulted in the thrilling crescendo of excellence which marked the progress of Opera throughout the 'nineties, and if this is true, it would seem that the effect of his departure was inevitable. With the passing of the century, of Queen Victoria, and of Jean de Reszke, the great stars began one by one to disappear from our shores. Within the space of only three or four seasons we may write *finis* to the Covent Garden careers of Tamagno, de Lussan, Eames, Alvarez, Saléza, Plançon, Calvé, de Lucia, and Ancona, leaving the short and lustrous years of the Edwardian epoch—so aptly described by Herman Klein as *operdämmerung*—to use what material was left over and to find its own. The twilight, however, was a warm and genial one, lit by a few new and brilliant evening stars, but never again were the shining constellations as of old to illumine the operatic sky. From 1909 onwards performances of real brilliance became exceptional, while mediocrity became commonplace: but a somewhat hard and cold competence continued until the war in 1914, after which Italian opera became at best a perfunctory and dismal affair.

The gramophone, as we have said, came just in time, but only just. Some of the greatest voices of the 'nineties were not unsuccessfully recorded while still in their prime, as well as those of a few who were actually flourishing as leading singers in the 'seventies and early 'eighties, and whose day had naturally passed, but whose records are historical documents of the first importance.

It is now generally recognized that there was something ironical in the pioneer struggles to improve recording without giving serious attention to the crude and inefficient apparatus for reproducing. It was a matter of twenty years before this truth was realized, and was celebrated by the appearance of a new type of apparatus which gave much the same effect to acoustical records, so called, as a stereoscope gave to a flat photograph. Although this discovery was soon to be lost sight of in the still more exciting advance made by electrical recording, the early records had at last justified themselves, but only after all save a comparative handful had suffered destruction at the hands of steel needles and had passed unmourned to the scrapheap. But those who had the foresight to retain unharmed, and the energy and enthusiasm to acquire such as had escaped destruction's hand, have reaped a rich reward, which will be cumulative in its benefits, for they and they alone will be the custodians of these relics of an art which has already passed into limbo.

Let us now turn to the practical side. As most collectors will be aware, little of importance occurred during the "Berliner" phase of recording, which for practical purposes we may date from 1896 to 1901, so just overlapping the beginnings of the Gramophone and Typewriter epoch, universally known as "G. & T." In 1900 (some say earlier) an artistic and praiseworthy attempt was made to raise the standard of recording by employing British artists of high standing, and this experiment has provided us with some of our rarest and most interesting all-British specimens. It was not, however, commercially successful, and the need became apparent for the best possible reproduction rather than for eminent artists. So, many of the better artists were quickly withdrawn, and were replaced by a team of singers whose vocal attributes were better suited to wax and tin trumpet, and whose reputations were less brittle.

It will at once be clear that unless these two groups can be kept quite separate in the mind of the collector, certain confusion will result, and it was in this respect that my good friend Robert Bauer, of Milan, was led into error by including in his *Historical Records* an immense amount of material, both British and foreign

which was not historical in any sense, and in the nature of this work, no differentiation was possible. *Historical Records*, therefore, was useful as a reference catalogue only to well-informed collectors.

It is necessary to explain here that as our present line of research is naturally taken from an English standpoint, it will follow that the pioneer efforts of eminent British artists will take precedence over the work of their opposite numbers abroad. I must claim this, like Euclid of old, as a "postulate", otherwise my inclusion of British artists of the concert platform may appear inconsistent.

We shall find, after a brief review of the recording done during the collectors' period, that the year 1907 offers such palpable advantages for ending a recording era that it will be difficult to find another equally logical, or to offer the collector anything of further value for his showcases. The period 1900 to 1907 combines with complete harmony the recording of British singers whose names are worthy of our remembrance, of international singers of immortal fame, and the development and evolution of the gramophone record throughout its only period of romantic interest. It also conveniently rules out discussion on the propriety of omitting repetitions made for other manufacturers. After that year came little that was new, for the highly costly Victor green labels were no more than a natural development of what had already been done. Recording, moreover, passed through a dull time, vividness and naturalness being sacrificed to a somewhat smoother surface and more even reproduction. There were few new artists worth recording, and so in due course the dignity of the old red label became sadly watered down as lesser singers were pushed in to fill the gaps—gaps which in truth should never have occurred had full advantage been taken of the superb opportunities which presented themselves in the early days. G. & T. showed flashes of real vision, but it is a pity that they did not show more.

The actual year in which Ben Davies recorded his first batch of five discs is not easy to fix with precision, though the margin of error can be but small. The earliest catalogues were undated, though it is likely that the rough dates now attributed to them are correct, so November 1901 may be accepted as the date of the appearance of the first catalogue of ten-inch records. It would be wrong, however, to assume that ten-inch records were not already on sale before this. They were few in number, and did not warrant the issue of a catalogue, though they may well have been added to current Berliner lists. There was only one

retailer at that time—Mr Alfred Hays, of Cornhill, to whose staff the writer owes a lasting debt of gratitude for much kindness to a troublesome youth—and it was the custom to post up new titles in the shop window, or to repeat them orally, as the waiters in the old City chop houses recited the bill of fare. Exactly which of the interesting records which figured in this catalogue of 1901 belong to that year and which were older must remain in some doubt, but whenever we discover a specimen having the old "plain back", as in the cases of Ben Davies, Kate Cove, Denis O'Sullivan, Leo Stormont, William Paull, and Rosa Olitzka, we may feel sure enough that these belong to a pre-catalogue period, probably 1900.

More interesting perhaps is the early history of the famous "red label"—the record *de luxe* of its time, both for its associations and its price, for the ten-inch single-faced disc cost ten shillings. Here again, the very earliest of these just baffles our researches, for it is not the case as is generally supposed that the London and Milan issues of 1902 were the first to appear. The pioneer *de luxe* issues were made in St Petersburg and Moscow as early as 1900. The writer suggests this date on the evidence of two copies in his possession having the large label of the earliest issues of ten-inch discs and the "plain back". Mr Leonard Smith, of the artists' department of HMV, whose patient good nature will be remembered with gratitude by more than one searcher after original truth, has discovered a theory that these first Russian celebrities had *pink* labels, which were altered to conform to the general issue of red labels in 1902, and not to be confused with the well-known pink labels invented for Patti. The writer remains politely sceptical as to this, on the evidence of the specimens just mentioned, which are of the earliest type yet recognized. However, perhaps we shall learn more of this anon.

The first celebrities, then, were Russian, whether red or pink, and were followed in May 1902 by practically simultaneous issues from London and Milan—the issues which have generally, though not quite correctly, been considered the first red labels. The manager for G. & T. at Milan at this time was Mr Michaelis, who first recorded Caruso, and to whom is ascribed the idea for the use of red labels—presumably for the Russian issue.

From 1902 onwards for the next four or five years, each year produced its batch of new recordings by singers of the highest renown, and it is a fortunate coincidence that in each of these years certain small but significant changes were made in the types of the numerals and the settings of the labels, which enable

collectors to tell with almost complete accuracy the date of any disc of the period, whether red or black. And when he knows the dates of the original issues, he can tell at a glance the date of any later pressing. The first twelve-inch black and red label records were made in London in 1903, but after that only a few scattered and isolated "celebrities" came from our capital. So far Europe had had the monopoly of red labels, with Warsaw in 1903 producing a very fine and much-desired issue by Battistini; but at the latter end of 1903 the associated Victor Company took over this red label sideline and developed it into a major part of the rapidly growing industry. The Victor "celebrities" possessed characteristics of their own—advantageous as regards smoothness and durability; but somewhat retrograde in the loss of some of that spontaneous naturalness and sense of nearness to the singer which was a feature of the earlier and more adventurous method. Over-tones were missing, and a somewhat pinched tone was noticeable, but despite these criticisms, the results were excellent.

While Victor was busy with its red labels, Fred Gaisberg and his myrmidons were preoccupied with the absorbing and exciting novelty of recording Melba. It is to be feared that not even a book of personal memoirs could reproduce some of the episodes that occurred at these sessions—even nowadays the censor has his feelings! And yet those stormy exchanges produced that angel-child voice! In these issues of 1904, 5 and 6, the old methods were, generally speaking, persisted in, with the losses and gains already mentioned. Nearly all these were re-recorded by Victor in 1907, again with the losses and gains peculiar to their method. With this American issue, all those which they replaced were withdrawn, and this in the long run has proved to be an artistic loss, if a collector's gain, because we now know, with the help of modern reproducing methods, that Melba's voice was never afterwards so vividly recorded. Soon after Melba, Patti broke her silence, and successfully insisted that, the recording apparatus should come to her, and not she to the apparatus. Melba's experiment under those conditions had resulted only in failure. This event produced another great flutter, and several really fine records: but otherwise G. & T. ventured no further than recording some of England's best concert singers on black label—records which rank highly in the judgment of discriminating collectors.

At this point it may be mentioned that some of the records of this period are still commercially obtainable, though often in a sadly mutilated form. Most of the greatest examples have been irreparably lost through fire, but of those which remained, several were subjected to experiments, of a clearly deleterious kind, for

the improvement of their surfaces, while others show unmistakable signs of surface wear on the matrix. The usual result of this "grooming" has been a loss of overtones, and less fire and vigour of performance. Tamagno and Patti have been especial sufferers from these experiments, the results of which, one would have supposed, had been a foregone conclusion.

The old order was now showing signs of change. No longer was it the case that the possessor of a "Dog Trademark" machine was considered a crank who, to propitiate his sceptical friends and distracted relatives, hardly dared to venture beyond military bands and banjo solos. Now a well-to-do paterfamilias saw nothing derogatory in owning a "Senior Monarch", with one of those new "Morning Glory" horns in a range of gay colours, and with a fine selection of high-class records he could be sure of ample opportunities for displaying them.

RHYTHMIC MUSIC

It is difficult for a musician to keep his language within the limits of the printable when confronted with the grotesque and fantastic impudence of the expression "rhythmic music" as applied to the dismal and dreary trash that is modern dance music. Nothing but a staggering ignorance of the history or art of music in general on the part of the fabricators and hawkers of this offal could ever have brought the phrase into currency as a description.

These ignoramuses do not know that any Bach Fugue or Tallis Mass embodies a conception of rhythm so manifold and complex as to make the "rhythmic" efforts of their kidney appear as the babblings of mentally defective infants, but we—at least, musicians and music lovers of knowledge, cultivation and discernment—do not talk about Bach's "rhythmic" Fugues or Tallis's "rhythmic" Masses, any more than one speaks of some great patrician, with centuries of tradition and breeding behind him, as looking a "perfect gentleman" . . . *that* is said by his aunts of the young man from behind the Brixton counter when he appears in evening dress for the first time. . . . Mr Newman perfectly summed this stuff up when he said of it that it was written by people without either breeding or taste for those with less.

In the classic Ragas of India—a musical art, not fifteen, nor five hundred, but more thousands of years old—rhythm attains to such a transcendental degree of subtlety and complexity as to make the greatest achievement of European music sound crude, clumsy and obvious in comparison—with a percussion technique that begins a long way beyond where that of Europe leaves off.

So much, or little, for the preposterous pretensions of "rhythmic music".
London, NW1.

KAIKHOSRU SORABJI.
February 1932

MAY 1943

Sergei Rachmaninov, 1873 - 1943

by Benno Moiseiwitsch

For April 2nd the civilized world was making arrangements to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the birth of a great man and unique personality. Alas, on the preceding Sunday the same world was cast into a deep gloom. Rachmaninov died.

Millions must have heaved a deep sigh in the realisation that no more can be expected from a fountain of melody that was so productive for the last fifty years or so. Numberless thousands must have lamented in the thought that they would never again see the tall, lanky, swaying figure walk on to the platform and transform a piano into an instrument of sheer magic. Many deeply mourn in the knowledge that Rachmaninov—their friend—is no more.

I was assisting Sir Henry Wood, on April 1st, in what should have been a birthday celebration, but instead of taking part in a festive occasion, Fate ordained otherwise, and his two friends—Sir Henry and myself—were two sad individuals paying tribute to a deeply admired and dearly beloved friend.

I met him for the first time just over twenty years ago in New York. The occasion was indeed a proud and epic one for me, for it was after one of my first recitals at the Carnegie Hall, New York, that the great Rachmaninov was introduced to me in the artists' room. He was very gracious in his praise for the way I played some of his compositions, and was particularly intrigued by the fact that I played a certain unknown Prelude of his. When I told him that I played it because it happened to be my favourite one, he shook hands solemnly with me again and said that it also happened to be his favourite Prelude. That, I think, was the foundation of the bond of friendship between us that lasted all these years.

The consensus of opinion seemed to be that Rachmaninov was a very sad man. It is true, he was a sad man. He always gave me the impression that he was longing for two things to happen. One was to retire from the concert platform so that he could spend the rest of his life amidst his beloved family, where he could freely pursue his real vocation—create instead of recreate. The other was his pathetic longing to see his Russia again. For one

who had an almost passionate affection for this man, it was indeed sad to think that his desires were denied him and he left this earth on the same minor note that characterised the major part of his life.

How well I remember meeting him in London round about May, after the completion of a strenuous tour in the States. He told me, his eyes gleaming with pleasurable anticipation, "Next week I go to Paris; my chauffeur is meeting me; after my concert there, I get into the driving seat of the car, put my foot on the accelerator and never take it off until I reach my home in Switzerland".

By virtue of my having to play in the near future on two successive days his four principal works (Concertos 1, 2, 3, and the Rhapsody) I find myself warmly wrapped up in an atmosphere of biographical Rachmaninov as it were. There is a long cry from Op. 1 to Op. 43, yet one can hardly perceive any deviation in this long period from his well-known characteristic style. Always a sterling craftsman, a youthful romanticist has evolved into an impassioned and matured Master. Those who were privileged to enjoy his friendship were enriched and inspired by the glow that emanated from this forceful and lovable personality. Although almost a fanatical conservative in his daily world, he never turned a blind eye to economic changes and newest inventions, just as a musician he never turned a deaf ear to modern music, but he thoroughly disliked both. His frail body seemed to contain gigantic nervous force that was not merely physical, but was the willing slave of a great and clear intellect.

His was the gentlest of natures; he was tolerant with mediocrities; was modest in his criticisms; gracious in his praises and generous towards his colleagues. I do not agree that with Rachmaninov the last of the romantics died. It is only fair to his memory to say here and now that he had a tremendous admiration for his countryman and colleague, Nicolai Medtner. The latter is a romantic *par excellence*, and I know that it would have been the wish of Rachmaninov to see his tradition carried on by so great a friend who was imbued with the same ideals and thoughts that were inspired by the same school and environment. Rachmaninov's was not, I think, programme music, although several of his compositions were directly inspired by Böcklin's paintings. In this connection a vivid episode comes to my mind.

I was with him in his room after luncheon one day when he smilingly showed me a postcard from a lady admirer asking him if the C sharp minor Prelude meant to describe the agonies of a man having been nailed down in a coffin while still alive. When I

asked what reply he was going to give, he said, "If the Prelude conjures up a certain picture in her mind, then I would not disillusion her".

This gave me a clue, and his answer courage to ask him something that had been on my mind for very many years. It concerned his Prelude in B minor, which I referred to before. While studying the Prelude and playing it all over the world, I so vividly visualized a certain picture that I could almost translate every bar into words. It became almost an obsession with me, and I felt that no one could change my mind. For many years I felt reluctant to delve into his innermost thoughts, but I always wanted to know what had inspired him to write this small masterpiece. On this occasion I could not resist the temptation to ask him boldly whether this particular Prelude had a story attached to it. There was a short pause—then slowly, almost reluctantly: "Yes; why do you ask?" So I won the first round! Being thus encouraged, I went on to tell him that I made up a picture—or rather, the Prelude did—in my mind, and it was so strongly engraved in my imagination that not even he could change it for me. He laughed heartily—yes, bless his soul, he could and did laugh heartily on occasions—and asked me to tell him what picture I visualized in his Prelude. I told him I would give him my version if he would give me his, and he agreed. Round two was mine again. He then said, "Tell me yours and then I will tell you mine". I almost butted in before he finished his sentence with "Please, Sergei Vassilievitch, tell me yours first and I promise not to be influenced by it when I tell you mine—besides, mine is rather a long story". He laughed again and said, I thought not without a hint of satisfaction of one who can keep a secret to himself after all, "Well, if your story is a long one, then it cannot possibly coincide with mine because mine can be told in one word". Though I expected a final jolt, his last remark was rather unexpected and I felt myself slipping and rather disillusioned. "However", he said cheerily, "go on and tell me yours and I will tell you mine". Having lost the lead, as it were, I had no recourse but to obey. I settled myself in an easy chair in preparation for a long recitation in a losing battle to satisfy my vanity. To disguise my feeling of hopefulness, I began on a high note, thus: "To me it suggests the Return . . ." Suddenly I heard a booming voice say, "Stop!" and I saw a long hand with outstretched fingers shoot out in front of my face and then slowly, in deep tones that left an unforgettable impression on me, I heard him say, "That was the one word of my story—'The Return'".

After I recovered from what was to me a dramatic minute, I heard him tell me that the Prelude was inspired by one of Böcklin's paintings called "The Return". I was too amazed to ask him to describe to me the nature of the return and we left it at that.

His gracious consent to appease my ego was a secret that I cherished with pride, and I guarded it from the world at large; but now that my beloved friend is no more, I, with deeply affectionate respect and in all humility, do appoint myself the spiritual Godfather to this, his Prelude in B minor, and christen it "The Return".

LILLI LEHMANN, JULIA CULP, VICTOR MAUREL

In connection with Mr Klein's enthusiastic notice of the Lilli Lehmann records in last month's issue, some of your readers may be interested in the following reply, written in her own vigorous handwriting, to a request for information about her records made by my friend, Mr Edgar Ailes, of Detroit, USA (to whom, rather than to myself, the present re-issue is ultimately due):

Salzburg; 10-8-1926.

Mozarteum.

DEAR SIR!

Yes I sung many gramophone records long ago! . . . I cannot tell here what songs. But you could ask of: *Casta Diva*, *Norma*.—*fidelio* aria.—*Traviata* aria and *finale* very good,—many songs all nicely good. I know that the Company has spoiled many of mine records throwing the war, as they not had material; but there are enough good one you may order. . . . I and II aria from Belmont and Constanze (Entführung) *Schubert* and *Beethovenlieder*, *Volkslieder*: *Kommt ein Vögel* geflogen, and english ones, *blue bells*, *Robin Adair*, etc.

I am here in Salzburg for 2 months teaching, but I finish the 5th of September and shall only be at home: Berlin—Grunewald, Herbertstrasse 20—of the middle of October. Wishing you could get all you want with most kind regards, very sincerely yours very truly,

LILLI LEHMANN.

I am informed that Mme. Lehmann also recorded, among other things, *Mi tradi* (Don Giovanni), *Porgi amor* (Figaro), *Schubert's Erlkönig*, *O hätt' ich Jubals Harf* (Handel), and Schumann's *Intermezzo* and *Mondnacht*; but up to date the Parlophone Company has not succeeded in tracing these.

After the success of the Lehmann issue, it would be interesting to know how many people wish to possess Victor Maurel's Odeon records from *Otello*, *Falstaff*, and *Don Giovanni*. Maurel was, of course, Verdi's idol, and the original Iago and Falstaff. Julia Culp's complete and unsurpassable Odeon *Frauenliebe und Leben* (four records) would also be welcomed by many; they make Lotte Lehmann's version sound sentimental and breathy, and they have the correct piano accompaniment.

Greenlanes, Burnham, Bucks.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR.
September 1931



as in 1914... so in 1939

DECCA KEEPS THE FLAG FLYING WITH ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE TROOPS AND THE HOME

DECCA 'ALL STAR' RECORDS

AMBROSE AND HIS ORCHESTRA—

F.7267. Merry Viceroy: Rhythms of the Times.
F.734. How saturated I was: Run, Rabbit, Run.
F.7264. Adoli: Kiss me good-night Sergeant-Major.
F.7265. (We're gonna hang out) The Washing on the Siegfried Line: I'm sending you the Siegfried Line (To hang your Washing on).

LEW STONE AND HIS BAND—

F.7173. What me luck (as you wave me goodbye): Good-night, my Darling, good-night.
F.7169. The Girl who loves a Soldier: On the outside looking in.
THE STREET SINGER (Arthur Tracy)—
F.7096. South of the border: The Masquerade is over.
FLANAGAN and ALLEN—
F.7268. Run, Rabbit, Run: (We're gonna hang out) The Washing on the Siegfried Line.



VERA LYNN—

F.7268. We'll meet again:

Later on:

TOMMY HANDLEY—

F.7249. Who is that Man (who looks like Charlie Chaplin): The Night we met in a Black-out.

SIDNEY BURCHALL and MALE CHORUS—

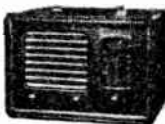
F.7138. There'll always be an England: Home-land.
CHARLES KUNE (WARTIME) PIANO MELODY, No. D.31—
F.7277. Intro.: Run, Rabbit, Run: I'm sending you the Siegfried Line (To hang your Washing on); Adoli: (We're gonna hang out) The Washing on the Siegfried Line; Here we go again (This time it's gonna be the last time); Kiss me good-night, Sergeant-Major.

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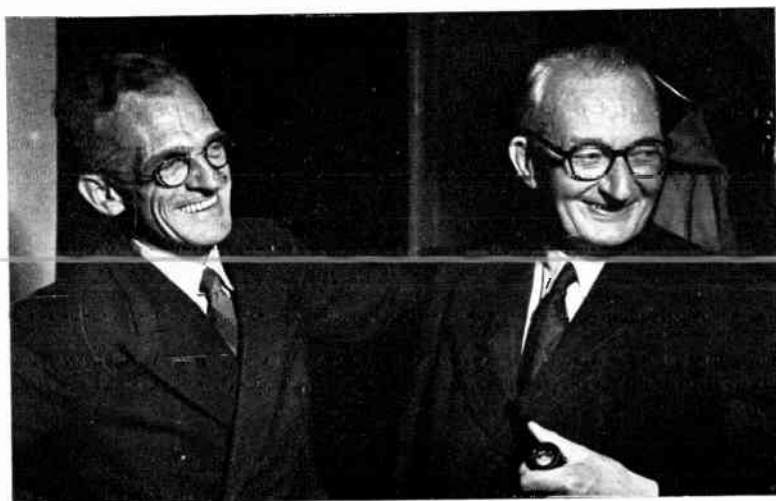
DECCA RADIO and RECORDS

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An advertisement from The Decca Record Co. Ltd., which appeared in the November 1939 issue of THE GRAMOPHONE, linking the famous Decca portable gramophones of the 1914-1918 war with the Company's contribution to entertainment in the Second World War



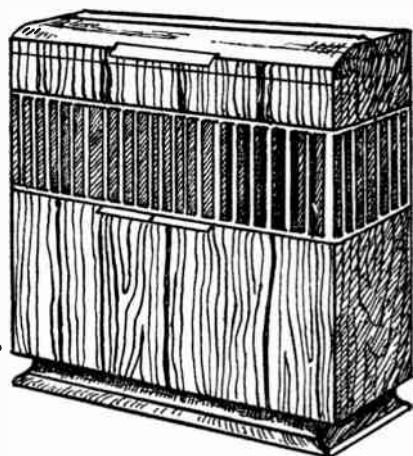
On June 16th, 1948, THE GRAMOPHONE celebrated its Silver Jubilee at Canuto's Restaurant. The picture shows Compton Mackenzie (left) with Sir Louis Sterling, first Managing Director of the Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd.



Christopher Stone (right) with G. Wilson (brother of Percy Wilson), Technical Editor of THE GRAMOPHONE 1929-1939. Photographed at the Silver Jubilee party on June 16, 1948



Mr Edward Lewis (later Sir Edward Lewis), Chairman of The Decca Record Co., with Sir Compton Mackenzie (right) at a dinner given in September 1952 to celebrate the 21st Anniversary of Mr Lewis's appointment to the Board

The Decca "Decola"

The End of 78s

1946 - 1949

The end of the war found the record industry not only alive but wasting no time in restoring its international contacts and introducing many brilliant artists to the catalogue. It was during these post-war years that such names as Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Victoria de los Angeles and Isaac Stern began to appear.

Thanks to the loyalty of readers and advertisers, and through the dynamic leadership and improvisatory brilliance of Cecil Pollard, who had guided the paper virtually single-handed, THE GRAMOPHONE emerged with a circulation twice the size of that in 1939. Stringent paper rationing had to meet the increased demand for good music and records.

These conditions continued to prevail after the war, and both the monthly lists and the paper remained thin. Nevertheless there was great activity, particularly in opera, which because of its international nature had suffered most during the war. In 1949, for instance, 11 complete operas were issued. Apart from complete works, the period saw the publication of such famous records as Margherita Grandi in the Sleep Walking scene from "Macbeth" and Ljuba Welitsch in the Letter Song from "Eugene Onegin". The first of these gained a great deal of popular publicity because the last notes of Lady Macbeth were in fact sung by Dorothy Bond, an extraordinary procedure and at this date probably unique in gramophone history.

GRA. 7

Among complete opera releases were "Un Ballo in Maschera" and "Aida" with Gigli and Caniglia, "A Village Romeo and Juliet" and "L'enfant et les Sortilèges". Meanwhile Covent Garden had re-opened, initially with a season by the San Carlo Company from Naples.

Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" may have been unlucky at its first performance, but it has proved accidentally to be very much an occasional work, in that it was the last music heard in Queen's Hall before that historic building was destroyed by enemy action, and its first complete recording heralded peace in Europe. Benjamin Britten was already beginning to have his work recorded almost as it was written, even though he was the youngest composer to appear in the HMV annual catalogue in 1946; the oldest was Charpentier, then 86. Other music to be recorded included Tallis' 40-part motet, Vaughan Williams's "Job", Mahler's Fourth Symphony under Walter, Prokofiev's "Alexander Nevsky" cantata, Delius's Violin Concerto, Rawsthorne's Symphonic Studies, Priaux Rainier's First String Quartet, Benjamin Frankel's Solo Violin Sonata, Edmund Rubbra's Second Violin Sonata, Szymanowski's Piano Variations and Lennox Berkeley's Piano Preludes, as well as the works of Strauss's Indian Summer.

Sir Georg Solti was playing the piano and shared a recording of Brahms's Op.78 Violin Sonata with Kulenkampff in the same month that saw the issue of Mozart's K593 Quintet, Haydn's Op.64 No.5 Quartet and Ravel's Trio, an indication of rapid recovery by the industry. Casals played the Elgar Concerto, Solomon put a Haydn sonata into the catalogue as well as much else, Schnabel and Pierre Fournier played Beethoven's Op.69, a complete "St Matthew Passion" came from Bach's own church in Leipzig and another from the Bach Choir in England, there was an anthology of English Church Music and an album from the Welsh Recorded Music Society.

These were the years of Kathleen Ferrier, of Dennis Brain, of Pierre Bernac, of Ada Alsop and Boyd Neel. They would have seen the flowering of Ginette Neveu and of Leslie Heward had they not died at the height of their powers. Neveu's recording of the Sibelius Concerto had "every quality of greatness", wrote Alec Robertson at the time.

The LP record may have been round the corner, but the era of 78s was going out in a blaze of glory, for not only did the repertory expand after the barren years, but the quality of recording was greatly enhanced. So was the playing equipment, epitomised by Decca's "Decola" and EMI's "Electrogram". Decca's "Petrushka" under Ansermet was hailed as "staggering", though,

like "Sheherazade", this has always been a lucky work in the studios.

There were complaints, as there always are when the level of recording changes, and there were fears that the gramophone might create its own sound rather than reflect a "natural" sound. Today we have detail on records that would be otherwise lost, and the science of electronics is itself a source of creative work. It was also true that despite all the enterprise of the industry, the public too often refused to move on. Hence the excessive duplication of standard works and the pitiful deletion lists. Richard Holt, a regular contributor and a scholarly exponent of the Russian school of composers, noted the disappearance of Chausson's Symphony, Liszt's "Faust", Rimsky-Korsakov's "Antar", Rachmaninov's Second and Third Symphonies, Mahler's "Resurrection", Reger's Mozart Variations and four of Bruckner's symphonies. Nothing frighteningly "modern" here, yet none of this music was easy to find in contemporary concert halls, and the companies rightly offered it on record. THE GRAMOPHONE and its readers kept hammering away, and in spite of these set-backs there was a genuine advance.

Corporal Jerome Pastene of the US Army, in a long appreciation of Koussevitsky, referred to the young Leonard Bernstein as a composer-conductor in the Mahler mould, and now Mr Bernstein has recorded a complete cycle of Mahler's symphonies. Lieut. (A) J. R. Culshaw, RNVR, wrote in praise of Fauré and published a book on Rachmaninov, and now John Culshaw has revolutionised the technique of opera recording and is Head of Music for BBC Television.

"Oklahoma" had set new standards in musical comedy and put the choreographer almost on a par with the electrician, let alone the leading lady, though she was to retain the spotlight in the contemporary "Annie Get Your Gun", while a taste for nostalgia, which was to flourish in the ensuing decades, was temporarily satisfied by a long series of old-time dance records by Harry Davidson, which were stylishly played and beautifully engineered.

The BBC had devoted a wavelength to the arts and to scholarship, known then as the Third Programme, later to become the Music Programme, and the Maharajah of Mysore had set up a foundation for recording much interesting music, notably that of Medtner and including that composer's three Piano Concertos. Above all "The World's Encyclopædia of Recorded Music" was finished, though not yet in print. WERM was the work of Canon G. J. Cuming and F. F. Clough and listed virtually every record of serious music issued anywhere in the world. Its preparation

had taken years and involved world-wide correspondence and research. To this day it remains an indispensable work of reference and one can only hope for a successor.

Readers of THE GRAMOPHONE are never slow to criticize the paper, which is only right and proper in the case of a journal which is itself a critical review, and there was a flurry of letters suggesting that reviewers were giving too much space to musical history and analysis and not enough to the quality of recording. In a sense this showed how readers were growing up musically, but in another sense it ignored the fact that there are always new readers who look to THE GRAMOPHONE for musical induction and instruction. It is a difficult balance to preserve, and every reviewer is aware of it.

Edward Sackville-West, later to be part-author of "The Record Guide", began contributing a quarterly review, and Harold Schonberg latterly of "The New York Times" sent a regular Letter from America. New reviewers were engaged, notably Ralph Hill, Hubert Foss and Lionel Salter, and in 1948 the paper celebrated both its Silver Jubilee and its 300th issue.

It was at the end of this period that the professional tape recorder, with a tape speed of 30 inches per second, arrived in the recording studios. This was truly a major turning point in the history of the art of recording.



MARCH 1946

Pseudonyms and Anonyms

by Leo Riemens (Holland)

Recently I have spent an engrossing week-end in reading all the war-time back numbers of *The Gramophone* I never had a chance to see for so many years. In one of these I found a paragraph about the identity of Zonophone's mystery singer "L'Incognita", while in September, 1942 Mr Robert J. Nathan correctly revealed that the fine Italian "tenore comprimario" Angelo Bada, so long with the Metropolitan company, sang a long solo on HMV DB1183 as Prince Shouishky in *Boris Godunov*, though his name is not mentioned on the label. Having been cursed or blessed with a painstaking sense for historical detail and correctness, I have always tried to obtain exact knowledge about all the singers I have in my collection, and I'll never rest until I have complete details about all those whose names are not mentioned, or those who sang under various names.

Of the two categories, the pseudonyms generally provide anticlimaxes, while the anonymous singers may yield many surprises. Generally there were two reasons for singers to record under various names. One was that they had a contract with a certain company, and wanted to make some money with a rival firm, which they had to do in another identity. Curiously enough there are only a few proven instances of this. The other reason was that certain staff artists of Victor, Columbia and other big companies made such a lot of records, that they were issued under various names, just to make the catalogue look a bit more varied. In isolated cases artists appeared under their own name in their regular repertoire, while choosing a pseudonym when recording popular music. Everybody knows that Emilio De Gogorza recorded extensively as "Carlos Francisco" (mostly in Spanish repertoire) and "Herbert Goddard" (mostly in ballads). I believe he used Francisco for all his Italian, French and Spanish records until he was made a red seal artist and began to use his own name. At any rate I never heard of any black label De Gogorza.

The identity of L'Incognita as an obscure Australian soprano Violet Mount will have come as a severe disappointment to all the optimists who had been hoping for a sensation.

Here are some more identities revealed. Of the Victor staff the soprano Olive Kline also recorded as "Alice Green", mostly when recording children's songs and light music. Likewise the tenor Lambert Murphy changed into "Raymond Dixon", the baritone Reinald Werrenrath into "Edward Hamilton" and the contralto Elsie Baker into "Edna Brown". A queer case is that of John Young and Frederick Wheeler, two pioneer American gramophone singers, who appeared on Victor, Columbia and Edison both under their own names and as "Harry Anthony and James F. Harrison". The Italian baritone Ferruccio Corradetti had the habit of changing into Corrado Ferratti from time to time, without any apparent reason.

The reason why the famous French coloratura Alice Verlet recorded on Pathé as Mme X was probably because she had an exclusive HMV contract at the time. The American baritone Royal Dadmun (on Victor) recorded for Emerson as Bruce Craine, and I have reason to think that many other Emerson artists (all unfamiliar names) were pseudonyms. I am quite sure Mario Chamlee recorded for that company, although his pseudonym eludes me at the moment.

The dual personality of Colin O'More and James Harrod is well known. The late Virginia Rea, an excellent coloratura on the acoustic Brunswicks, had a long and honourable radio career as "Olive Palmer" (because she appeared in the Palmolive Hour!), but never recorded as such. When, at the end of her contract, she returned to her own name, she found that it practically meant making a reputation all over again.

The excellent French mezzo-soprano Susanne Brohly, well known to every collector of acoustic records, sang a long list of operetta-songs under the name of "Alix Martell". And of course Leon Beyle's pseudonym "Mr Stendhal" was obvious from the very beginning. The famous author's name Stendhal had been a pseudonym for a Beyle too! The mezzo-soprano Claudine Arméliny sang light music as Claudine Moreau, both for HMV.

That these confusing alternations were not confined to the dim past is proven by some more recent cases. Few collectors will be aware of the fact that the magnificent Italian soprano Pia Tassinari, one of the best lyric sopranos of the day, has recorded many popular songs on Italian HMV as "Pia Rossi". Likewise the tenor Christy Solari, of Columbia, is the same as "Franco Lary" of the popular repertory.

Then there are the singers who all of a sudden take it into their heads to change their names altogether, not just on records. The easiest among these are the ladies who insist on tacking their

various husband's names behind their own. It needs no detective to find out that Ottilie Metzger-Froitzheim and Ottilie Metzger-Lattermann are one and the same. But who could guess that Else Ruziczka, who recorded on so many electrical Polydor and HMV records has been singing in Berlin these past ten years as Else Tegetthoff? This change was made for the grotesque reason that Hermann Goering would not have any Czechs in the company of his State Opera, so that poor Rusiczka had to take on her mother's name!

The Dutch baritone Carel Butter sang both in Germany and at Covent Garden as Karel van Hulst. He also used that name (which was that of his mother) for all his German made records on Odeon and Edison as well as Pathé, but when he returned to Holland in 1915 and recorded extensively for Columbia here, he did so as Carel Butter. An analogous case was that of the tenor Johannes Reinhardt, whose death I reported last month. Under this name he sang in Vienna and Germany, but in Holland he used his real name, singing as J. R. Schulze, making records as such for Odeon.

The Norwegian soprano Borghild Bryhn had the disconcerting habit of changing her name with each husband, without troubling to retain her own one. So that all of a sudden she would become Borghild Langaard, later still Borghild Lindvig, ending up as Borghild Brunelli (no records under the last name, but plenty under the other three!). This seems to be almost a Norwegian habit, as the famous soprano Eidé Norena also started her career under quite a different name. She recorded on Norwegian HMV as early as 1914 (and also on Pathé about 1916) as Kaja Eide, adding the Norena only when she started her international career in the 1920's.

So much for those records that have any names on them, real or false. But what about the anonymous records, like that of Bada? I have managed to collect a good many such identities. First there were the anonymous records HMV recorded during public performances in the Berlin State Opera in 1928. The Encyclopedia of Recorded Music only gives the cast of the *Meistersinger* set, which is correct: Elfriede Marherr (Eva), Robert Hutt (Stoltzing), Friedrich Schorr (Sachs), Emanuel List (Pogner), Leo Schützendorf (Beckmesser), Karl Jöken (David). To these I can add Lydia Kindermann who sang Magdalene. She can be heard in one or two words in the second act. The *Rosenkavalier* record, which was issued in England in the regular catalogue, was sung by Barbara Kemp, Elfriede Marherr and Tilly De Garmo (not Lotte Schöne as some claim). The conductor of this disc was

Georg Szell. The *Bohème* record was made by Maria Muller and Tino Pattiera. The lady is almost inaudible on it, and I can understand her having made such a fuss about it that HMV at last had to issue the records anonymously. On the other hand the *Trovatore* record is a gem. The tenor here is again Tino Pattiera, and Azucena is sung by Margarete Arndt-Ober (who at the Metropolitan sang as Margarete Ober, tout court). This is her only electric recording, and a real gem it is! The Amneris on one side of the *Aida* record is unmistakably Karin Branzell. That leaves only the artists who made the love duet from *Aida*, who have not yet been definitely identified. By process of elimination however I can state with 95 per cent. certainty that the soprano is Violetta De Strozzi, while the tenor is either Robert Hutt or Alexander Kirchner, probably the first.

A miniature *Martha* was issued by HMV on three plum label records, without names on the labels, though they did give the full cast in the accompanying libretto. The principal artists were Sabine Meyen, Charlotte Müller, Eugen Transky, Otto Helgers and Waldemar Henke, while (interesting to note) the few lines of the Erste Magd were sung by Maria Elsner, now in London!

Many collectors may have wondered who sang the lines of Loge, Froh and Fricka on Schorr's magnificent *Rheingold* record, D1319. Both Loge and Froh were sung by Waldemar Henke, the veteran tenor-buffo of the Berlin opera. He was in Holland in 1942, as stage manager of a small operatic company that performed for the German army. I met him then, and he helped me in identifying the records mentioned above. Unfortunately he was not able to remember who was Fricka on that record, though he agreed it might have been Genia Guszalewicz.

I have never succeeded in identifying the eight Walküren on the old HMV set under Blech. The record claims "Chorus of the State Opera", which is pure nonsense, as the solo parts are never sung by chorists. Besides I positively recognize the voice of Lydia Kindermann among them!

On the other hand, I do have the full casts of the Bayreuth 1927 Columbia set, on which only Fritz Wolff and Alexander Kipnis were mentioned. The eight Walküren mentioned in the usual order (Helmwige, Gerhilde, etc.), are: Ingeborg Holmgren, Henriette Gottlieb, Maria Nezasdal, Erika Plettner, Maria Peschken, Minnie Ruske-Leopold, Charlotte Müller and Charlotte Rückfort. The Flower-maidens on the *Parsifal* record are (also in the usual order): Ingeborg Holmgren, Anny Helm, Minnie Ruske-Leopold, Maria Nezasdal, Hilde Sinnek, and Charlotte Müller. The Rhine-maidens are Ingeborg Holmgren, Minnie Ruske-Leopold and

Charlotte Müller. Note that by identifying these we have now records by at least one prominent singer absent from any record lists, Maria Nezdal, who sang at Covent Garden, and was very popular in Munich before 1933. Anny Helm too became famous later.

In labelling and cataloguing HMV has often been careless. For years the soprano Barbara Kemp was called a "contralto". But a weird mistake, never corrected, was made on the records D1581-83 of the old *Götterdämmerung* set. I don't mind so much the persistent misspelling of Lydia Kindeamann, odd as it looks. But I was always puzzled about the identity of Marker, who is supposed to sing the third Rhinemaiden, with Tilly De Garmo as first and Kindermann as second. As soon as I heard the records I decided that Kindermann sang the *third*. I happen to know her voice out of a thousand. The riddle has now been cleared up. There never was a Marker, but the second Rhinemaiden was sung by Elfriede Marherr, whose name was so badly misspelled that she assumed a totally different identity!

Mr Nathan correctly names Grace Anthony as the soprano on Martinelli's *Trovatore* record. The same soprano can also be heard on the Martinelli-Pinza *Aida* record, and in the ensemble of Martinelli's Passover scene from *La Juive*. The Amneris who mutters a few deep tones at the end of the Ponselle-Martinelli *Aida* duet DA809 is Elsie Baker.

Another recording veteran I met during the war, the conductor Bruno Seidler-Winkler, who accompanied practically every G. & T. record made in Berlin, and a good many outside Germany as well, identified the voice that sings a few phrases on Ernst Kraus' old G. & T. of *Salome* as belonging to Therese Rothauser. The excellent pianist who accompanied this record, whom many supposed to have been Strauss himself, was Dr Redl, a repetiteur of the period.

I wish I knew who was the Commendatore on that *Manon Lescaut* record by Pertile, and also who was the Monterone on the Gentile-Galeffi "Si vendetta". Sometimes such lines are sung by the most unexpected people. For instance the coloratura Nunu Sanchioni, who recorded on Italian Columbia and HMV around 1930, once told me that her very first recording was made singing the solitary line of Mamma Lucia in Turiddu's Farewell from *Cavalleria* as a contralto, on a record by Roberto d'Alessio. She studied with Madame Molajoli, and visited the studio with her, when Molajoli was making these records and suddenly needed someone to sing this phrase.

I still don't know the four singers who made operatic quartets

on acoustic Parlophone as "Members of the Dresden Opera", and the identity of the various soloists in the Victor "Vocal Gems" also intrigues me. I once found the *Lucia* sextette by the Victor Grand Opera company as a single-sided HMV with the names obligingly etched into the matrix and showing through under the label. The soprano was Lucy Marsh, assisted by Dunlap, Mac-Donough, Wheeler and Holey. But I also have the *Lucia* sextette double-sided, and there the soprano is very obviously Olive Kline, and the other singers also different ones (possibly Murphy, Werrenrath and others). I also have old records with obvious pseudonyms on them not yet identified. Names like Lilli Lejo, and Carlotta Cambiati. Well, someday we'll find out.

BROADCASTING RECORDS

Some of our readers may have discovered that, beginning on July 7th, the London Editor co-operated with the BBC in arranging the programmes and writing a few words of introduction for the gramophone records broadcast from 2LO from 1 to 2 p.m. on Thursdays. The innovation has been well received by listeners; and readers of *THE GRAMOPHONE* who have receiving sets may like to hear the records of which they have read our reviewers' opinions, and may also be able to assist the London Editor with suggestions for making the "gramophone hour" increasingly useful and enjoyable.

August 1927

BROADCASTING RECORDS

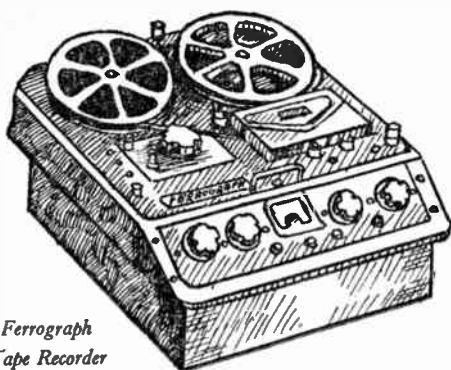
A much more enlightened policy has been adopted by the BBC with regard to broadcasting records since the agreement with the gramophone industry has been signed, and the library at Broadcasting House has superseded the cupboards of Savoy Hill.

Clearly the listening public likes gramophone programmes within reason, and since these are limited to two hours a day from any one station, there is no fear that the BBC will damage the record-selling industry by excess of repetition—the chief cause of the American situation.

Mr L. Bowker Andrews has been put in charge of the gramophone department controlling all BBC stations, and has already laid the foundations of the biggest and best-catalogued library of records in the country. He has also called in two of the best known programme builders of the gramophone world to help him: Mr H. L. Rink, the HMV lecturer-recitalist, and Mr Moses Baritz, the encyclopædic music critic who has advised and lectured for Columbia for many years.

Of course, both these recitalists are working for the BBC without any sort of reference to their previous connections—or at least I hope so; and their thousands of admirers up and down the country will agree with us that the BBC has chosen well, and could not have chosen better.

April 1933



Ferrograph
Tape Recorder

The Long-playing Record

1950 - 1957

The LP record was a long time coming. Its possibilities had been discussed in THE GRAMOPHONE by Percy Wilson as early as 1926, when electrical recording was in its infancy, but the first commercial LPs in the United Kingdom were issued by Decca in June 1950. Shortly afterwards EMI issued a statement that they would give six months' notice of any departure from 'standard' records, and the company's first LP issues appeared in October 1952.

During this time the industry was engaged in 'the battle of the speeds', and of different playing times. The 10-inch and 12-inch sizes were retained, but in addition there were 7-inch records, and the useful EP (Extended Play) and MP (Medium Play), allowing some 12 minutes a side, invaluable for shorter works and operatic scenes. Eventually, for classical purposes the 12-in record alone survived, doubtless to the comfort of the trade, but an inconvenience to the man who wants to buy a single song or short piece without other material which he may already have.

Meanwhile the classical 78 continued for some time, and many works were issued in both forms as the public gradually adapted their machines. There were the usual teething troubles, criticisms of 'papery strings', and much airing of views in the correspondence columns of THE GRAMOPHONE.

Extensive as was the 78 rpm repertory in its last days, the advent of LP brought a mass of new material before the public,

and it was a tribute to the vision of the industry that it was not merely content to re-build its existing catalogue. The LP gave the gramophone its own programme notes, printed on the record sleeve, which also gave scope to the graphic designer. Some designs were imaginative enough to sell on their own merits.

In September 1954 the review pages of THE GRAMOPHONE discussed 46 orchestral recordings, 23 records of chamber music, and 10 operatic issues, including complete recordings of "Dalibor", "Bastien und Bastienne", "Rodelinda" (much cut, but the first 'complete' Handel opera to be issued), "Faust" and "Orfeo" (Gluck). This was also the year of Scherchen's "The Trojans at Carthage", Leibowitz's "Lélio", the Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 (with the expected textual debate), Spanish zarzuelas (13 in one month), Pijper's Third Symphony and Onslow's Sextet for Piano and Wind, as well as music by Malipiero and Petrassi.

A year later, in addition to the complete instrumental music of Rameau, the operatic tally for a single month consisted of "The Damnation of Faust" (at least an 'honorary' opera), "Boris", "Così", "Butterfly", "Turandot", "Forza", "The Flying Dutchman", "Véronique", "Trial" and "Pinafore". At this time, too, a British musical called "The Buccaneer" played briefly in London and was recorded on an LP, which had a short life but which has appeared regularly in the "Records Wanted" column with extraordinary regularity.

Many new labels appeared, some like Capitol, Philips, Argo and Supraphon still with us, and others like Nixa and Monarch no longer on the British scene. Nixa gave us a series of Haydn string quartets, "Idomeneo", some marvellous Offenbach, Kodály's "Te Deum" and a pioneer "Symphonie funèbre et triomphale"; Capitol introduced us to the fascinating variety of Villa-Lobos and to the superb playing of the Hollywood Quartet, and Monarch provided a memorable "Jupiter" Symphony (Harry Newstone) and an equally memorable operatic record of the Rubini-type high tenor by Benvenuto Finelli, as well as a complete "Sadko" and the songs of Weber.

The London Baroque Ensemble under Karl Haas reminded us that Handel was using the clarinet as early as 1748, Bloch and Barber directed much of their own music, Beecham made his solitary appearance on the Decca label on the soundtrack of his "Hoffmann" film, Maria Callas revived interest in the Bellini-Donizetti school, while Renata Tebaldi sustained it in Puccini and Verdi, Columbia issued its classic "Merry Widow" and Decca its equally classic "Fledermaus" (Krauss) and "Meistersinger" (Knap-

pertsbusch). Rarities included the music of Ned Rorem, Jean Absil, Dukas (Symphony), Phyllis Tate's "Nocturne", which Decca brought out on 78s, while Supraphon issued many complete Czech operas, some totally unknown in England, as well as music by such composers as Fibich and Novak.

Toscanini's first recorded opera, "La Traviata", appeared, as did his "La Bohème", of which he had conducted the first performance in 1896, Deutsche Grammophon's "Archive Production" promised "A Millennium of Music", Daniel Barenboim made his first records at the age of 11, the complete harpsichord music of Couperin le Grand was on record, and a quartet of saxophones recorded some Scarlatti sonatas.

The Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Coronation of 1953 were duly celebrated, the latter inspiring a colour cover for THE GRAMOPHONE, being a reproduction of a bas relief by Luca Della Robbia. Also properly celebrated were the Mozart Bi-centenary in 1956 and the Elgar centenary in 1957. HMV launched a 10-volume History of Music in Sound in association with the new Oxford History of Music, beginning with "the strumming of an elderly gentleman in a state of refined intoxication" from China, while there was real Chinese opera from Peking on Columbia. The British Institute of Recorded Sound began to consolidate its archives, and Society issues sprang to the defence of Cherubini, Neglected Masterpieces, and Adelina de Lara, who not only played the music of Schumann, but spoke about her life as a pupil of Clara Schumann. Croydon instituted a Croydon Celebrity Recording Society for local musicians, opening remarkably with music by Pick-Mangiagalli, and HMV produced its short-lived Archive Series, which included a record of Caruso singing the bass Coat Song from "La Bohème", with Frances Alda describing the circumstances of this extraordinary performance.

The sound of the counter-tenor was heard again in the person of Alfred Deller, and there was much poetry and drama, including a spate of French classics in the original language. Curiously, in the popular field there was a lull between the end of the dance bands and the arrival of the electronic vocal-guitar groups, though a single year would see some 2,000 "Miscellaneous and Dance" records reviewed. Let the names of Ted Heath, Cyril Stapleton and Sid Phillips be remembered for keeping a tiny flame alight, while Stan Kenton blazed a fiery trail for a fleeting fancy called "be-bop".

In 1951 the circulation of THE GRAMOPHONE stood at 30,000 and the cover price was still 1s. (5p), unchanged since 1924, although the cost of paper had increased six-fold since 1937, and

that of printing had doubled. By 1955 the circulation was up to 65,000, and the price was at last increased to 1s. 6d. (7½p) in 1956. The roster of critics now included Roger Fiske, Trevor Harvey, Philip Hope-Wallace, Malcolm Macdonald, Jeremy Noble, Andrew Porter and Denis Stevens, and the annual Christmas feature of "The Critics' Choice" was established. Desmond Shawe-Taylor began to write his quarterly review of vocal and operatic records, and John Warrack took over the quarterly retrospect of other music. The *Index*, always a valuable reference work, listed nearly 400 composers in 1956/57 with no fewer than 117 entries for Bach. Controversy raged, notably on the performing edition of Torelli's *Concerti Grossi*, Op. 8, and on the 'adulation' of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, whom some readers regarded as not quite as peerless as did some reviewers. There were monthly letters from America and France, as well as news from Germany and Spain.

The first edition of the LP *Classical Catalogue* appeared in 1953, compiled then, as now, by Stanley Day, and the popular catalogue a year later. These publications have become not only the dealer's vade-mecum, but a stand-by for authors and journalists as well as for collectors. Among contributors was Aida Favia-Artsay, and while it is cretinous to make jokes about people's names nothing could be more apt for a writer on opera. One thinks of the soprano Louie Yelling, and violinist Giulia Bustabo, the dramatic tenor Browning Mummery and the organist Alfred Sittard. Sir Compton Mackenzie, the founder and editor, was appointed to a Unesco committee of the United Nations to recommend representative European recordings and was knighted in the Birthday Honours of 1952. In fact, Sir Compton was sharing the editorship with Christopher Stone and Cecil Pollard, while Anthony Pollard had assumed the responsibilities of London Editor. Alec Robertson, the senior reviewer, was appointed Music Editor.

Second-hand vocal records were fetching high prices, and the "Financial Times" reported sales in 1954 of between 35 and 40 million records, well up on the previous year; the increase applied to 78s as well as LPs. Two major divorces occurred during the period. EMI lost the American Columbia catalogue to Philips in 1953, and in 1957 they also lost the American RCA Victor catalogue to Decca after an association of nearly 57 years. The ramifications of international labels have long puzzled the layman, but these two breaks affected a large part of the industry. Suffice it to say that CBS (originally American Columbia) and RCA are now British labels in their own right.

DECEMBER 1950

Joseph Batten

by William Sutton

He is known to everybody as Joe, spoken of with affection and respect by musicians and fellow members of the Savage Club, and often with gratitude by the many now successful artists to whom he gave their first chance. Manager of the Special Recordings Department of EMI, Joe, "the grand old man" of the gramophone industry, retired on October 10th, the 65th anniversary of his birth and after fifty years' association with record making. During his long career he acted in every possible capacity that a musician could be called on to do. He has been connected with the gramophone industry in this country from its earliest days, and he has seen the instrument develop from the toy it was to its present acceptance by serious musicians. He lived and toiled in the most exciting years of gramphonic history; when you talk to him he makes you feel the romance of those years, for romantic they were.

How and when he first began to earn his living is obscure. When he should still have been at kindergarten, he was being billed in a tour of young Australians of small English towns as "The Australian Boy Prodigy" but the first musical noise he ever heard was the sound of Bow Bells. Before this, however, and at the age of 12, he had made his first public appearance as an accompanist at a sing-song at a working men's club. Many such engagements followed, his pay for an evening's work was three-and-six and as much as he could drink. Lemonade was then his drink and he was also provided with a plate of Banbury-cakes. At the age of 16 he was commanding the top fee of half-a-guinea as an accompanist. Of these years he says he can claim the somewhat invidious distinction of having played at more pubs than anybody else living. He was also earning small sums orchestrating. His first commission was to write a set of ten band parts at a fee of three-and-six. He tackled the job with enthusiastic optimism and then suddenly realised that he did not know whether a viola was a stringed instrument, or wind, or one of percussion. It was with mingled emotions that young Joe sat in the stalls of Collins's Music Hall at Islington Green to listen to his own first orchestrations. He says that it is beyond him

to describe his feelings on that Monday night except that he knew that Richard Wagner himself could not have listened to a first performance of his own first great work with more pride than he did to his own first effort.

His first gramophone engagement was with Mr Dan Smoot of the Musiphone (afterwards Odeon) Company in 1900. Joe was 15. The accompanist had failed almost at the last moment and Joe was asked to take his place. It was a hot summer's morning when he walked into the recording room to accompany A. H. Gee (bass) and Montague Borwell (tenor) in *Come into the Garden, Maud, The Diver*, and *The Soldiers of the Queen*. An upright piano had been raised from the floor and rested on a wooden structure some four feet high, its back and front had been removed and only the action and soundboard were visible. Joe had to climb four steps to the stool; when he was seated at the keyboard his head almost touched the ceiling. The singer, standing in front of a recording horn some five inches in diameter, his left arm resting on the back of the piano, was out of his sight. There was no music stand on the piano and the music, which Joe had to read at sight, was held up in the hand of anyone who happened to have nothing to do for the time. Joe perspired and pounded and everything seemed wrong, but at the end of the morning Mr. Smoot said it was all right and would Joe come again the next day? The pay was half-a-crown an hour, the session having lasted six hours Joe departed jingling six half-crowns in his pocket and feeling incredibly rich. From then and until 1906 he was in daily demand by the various companies and after a time was able to demand the exorbitant fee of five shillings an hour. His earnings got to his head, for when he was 20 he married, but that year was a lucky one for him. Soon after he had set up his first home he was appointed musical adviser to a gramophone company called Neophone. Their records, made of papier maché, were advertised as "warranted indestructible", and to prove this, the Managing Director, having assembled a group of potential buyers at the top of a four-storied building at the corner of Worship Street and City Road, would throw a record through the open window to the street below. A boy then dashed down the stairs and retrieved the record which, then played, gave forth its normal ghostly strains and groans, none the worse indeed for its treatment. But although people didn't buy records to drop on the heads of unsuspecting pedestrians, yet all might have gone well had not the records, when displayed in shop windows, curled up in the sun and assumed strikingly surrealistic shapes. The records did not sell and the sad

upshot of this was that many hundreds of recordings of military bands, banjo soloists, concertina players, and singers, both comic and serious, were made, but never heard. In less than a year the Neophone Company was in liquidation.

Soon after this dismal "winding up", Joe became the General Manager to a German company, "The British Polyphon Company". His duties were odd and complex and included the engagement of all artists, instrumentalists and bands, the orchestration of numbers, the conducting of orchestras, advertising and problems of copyright. Work here might be said to be seasonal: for a fortnight every three months there were hectic and prolonged daily sessions. Then within the space of a further three weeks, the masters were rushed to Germany, there processed, and the resulting records rushed back to London for sale. Joe's salary was now £5 a week—when he got it. When the war broke out in 1914 and the company ceased to function, he was owed £130. He still is.

During the earlier years of this period the transition from cylinder to disc was taking place. Every day there were experimental sessions, and Joe accompanied hundreds of songs which, owing to wax processing difficulties, were never put on sale. The piano was still mounted on a rostrum and the recording horn adjusted to the height of the performer. Singers complained of the volume and resonance of the piano and urged Joe "to keep it down", and the recorder would thereupon whisper: "Take no notice. Keep it double forte". As the singer occupied all the space in front of the mouth of the horn, the strings of the orchestra, relegated to the background, could hardly be heard: this led to the invention of the Stroh device in which a sound box, such as was used on the tone arm of the gramophones of this period, was attached to the belly of a stringed instrument. This amplified the tone which was projected through a metal horn which focused the sound in a direct line with the recording horn. A trade advertisement of 1905 which announced that "Kubelik has made two records with his own Stradivarius, not a Stroh", was regarded as sensational. Although the Stroh attachment made the violins and violas tolerably satisfactory, the 'cellos were less so, while the double bass was always a headache, even to the recorder, tone deaf and unmusical as he often was in those early days. More often than not a bass tuba played the double bass part. Percussion was another problem; this player had somehow to edge himself to within a foot or so of the horn, otherwise, as far as the record was concerned, he might not have been in the recording room at all. As it was to his financial

interest to be heard, he usually wormed his way in somehow. When a quiet song requiring no noises off was recorded his distress was obvious, and his predilection for Harry Champion over Ben Davies or Robert Radford, if hardly aesthetic, can readily be understood. Even in those days the singing voice presented little difficulty, with the exception of the contralto, which was always and even now is the bug-bear of the recording operator. These were also the days when controversy raged fiercely as to whether the lateral or "the hill and dale" cuts gave the best results. That the industry was already thriving may be judged from the fact that there were 78 companies in active production between 1906 and 1914. Of these, Joe worked for 39.

When he returned to civil life after the first war, he was appointed Musical Director to the Edison Bell Company, then ambitiously planning to outvie the HMV and Columbia companies in the recording of good music. The first three musicians he engaged for this project were Dr, now Sir Adrian, Boult, Eugene Goossens and the late Sir Hamilton Harty. In those days Joe would often spend the morning recording the popular dance hits of the moment, scored by himself, or in accompanying music-hall comedians, and the afternoons in conducting an orchestra in such works as *The Siegfried Idyll* or the Tchaikovsky No. 5. In 1924, Edison Bell, on Velvet Face records, issued Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in an album of eight double-sided records, a truly great achievement in those pre-electric days, for such a recording presented difficulties which had hitherto been considered unsurmountable. The recording had the approval of Elgar and his co-operation. Joe conducted and was indeed responsible for the enterprise. It was the first serious choral work to be attempted on the gramophone: it was a success and for long remained a matter of wonder.

It was about this time that I first met Joe, going to the recording room at Glengall Road with Marie Novello to hear her record there a Mendelssohn piano concerto, and I still vividly remember the curious placing of the small orchestra in relation to the horn and the free and happy air in which the recording was, nevertheless, efficiently carried out. When he joined Columbia, most of their great orchestral recordings by Beecham, Wood, Weingartner and Bruno Walter were recorded under his guidance and direction. In 1932, Joe recorded a version of *Merry England* with the help of the then 70-year-old composer. Sir Edward German, a pathetic figure, was tragically and slowly losing his sight. Joe remembers sitting with him on the tavern stand at Lords and doing his best to describe with words the

brilliant scoring strokes of Hendren and Hammond on that afternoon. When, in October of this year, the studio staff gave Joe a farewell dinner in this same tavern, he remarked how happy had been the choice of venue, for it was here that he had spent so much of the company's time! When Debroy Somers, Harold Williams, George Baker, Denis Noble and other lovers of the game were about to record, sessions were always arranged on a day which fitted in with an important match. Such telephone conversations as: "Well, next week?" "What's the game?" "Hants". "No, let's make it the week after. Then it's Yorkshire", were frequent.

Joe has retired from the gramophone industry but not from the Savage Club. For upwards of thirty years now he has been responsible for the Club's world famous and entertaining Saturday dinners. Upstairs, in his home, is his working room, filled with music scores, gramophone records and albums, books, a gramophone, and in a place of honour, a bust of E. J. Odell, the most famous of all Savages, "the last of the Bohemians". The walls are covered with programmes of past dinners, all with drawings by well known artists and covered with the autographs of all famous in literature, art, and drama.

IS THIS A NEW ONE?

Mr G. H. Russell, of The Gramophone Exchange, sends the following letter from a Bombay correspondent:

Matunga,
BOMBAY.

Most honoured Sir,

Understanding there are several hands wanted in your Honour's Department I beg to offer my hands.

As to my adjustments I appeared for the matriculation examination at Oty, but failed, reason for which I will describe to begin with my writing was illegible, that was due to clemat reasons, for I having come from a worm clemat to a cold one found my fingers stiff and very disobedient to my wishes.

Further I have received a great shock to my mental system in the shape of the death of my only fond brother, besides most Honoured Sir. I beg to state that I am in very uncomfortable circumstances being the soul support of my fond brother's seven issues consisting of three adults and four adultresses, the latter being the ban of my existence owing to my having to support my own two wives as well as their issue of which God's misfortune the feminine gender predominates.

If by wonderful good fortune the few humble lines meet with your bening kindness and favourable turn of mind I the poor menial shall ever pray for the long life and prosperity of your self and postumous olive branches.

I am etc.

October 1931

FEBRUARY 1951

Dinu Lipatti

(March 19th, 1917—December 2nd, 1950)

by **Walter Legge**

Dinu Lipatti had the qualities of a saint. The spiritual goodness of his nature, his modesty, his gentleness, his will's firm purpose, his nobility and loftiness of thought and action communicated themselves to all who met him, and to the remotest listeners in the halls where he played. His goodness and generosity evoked faith, hope and charity in those around him. We not only hoped—we had faith. Even his doctors believed that the incurable disease he had suffered for six years would miraculously yield to some hitherto untried treatment, or that some new cure would be discovered before it was too late. Last June and July we had reason to believe that this miracle had happened. Injections of Cortison, the American preparation which has had spectacular successes in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, arrested his malady's progress and gave him a brief summer of well-being, high spirits and energy. This treatment was expensive—the injections cost eighteen pounds a day—but as soon as the facts became known musicians like Charles Munch and Yehudi Menuhin, as well as private persons, many of them anonymous Swiss admirers, guaranteed him several months' supply. He was the cause of goodness in others. But Cortison was only a dam, not a remedy. When the injections ceased the disease resumed its inexorable course. Although he managed with Cortison's aid to give two more concerts, the inevitable end came on the afternoon of December 2nd. He was thirty-three.

Lipatti was born in Bucarest and cradled in music. His father was a wealthy amateur who had studied with Sarasate and Carl Flesch, his mother was a good pianist; Georges Enesco was his godfather. Music was his preoccupation from infancy. His mother has told me that he could play the piano before he had learned to smile. At four he gave concerts for charity and began composing pieces describing the characters of his family and their friends. It was never in question that he should devote his life to music, but only later did circumstances dictate that he should become a professional pianist. He never attended school; profes-

sors from the University of Bucarest tutored him at home, building his general education around his music. His pianoforte teacher was a woman, Floria Musicescu. In winters in Bucarest and in summers on the family estate at Fonda she stood over the boy relentlessly building that incomparable technique and magical touch. Admitted early by special dispensation he entered the Conservatoire before he was old enough officially to take the entrance examination. In 1934 he entered for the International Competition in Vienna. At the stormy final session Constantin (his baptismal name, Dinu is a diminutive) Lipatti was awarded second prize, and Alfred Cortot resigned from the jury as a protest that Lipatti had not been given the first prize. Before he left Vienna Cortot invited Lipatti to Paris to study with him.

In Paris he worked at pianoforte with Cortot and studied conducting with Charles Munch. On the evidence of some compositions submitted to the Conservatoire Paul Dukas had accepted him as a pupil with the comment "We have nothing to teach him; all we can do is encourage him to compose and guide his development". Dukas died shortly afterwards and Lipatti was put under the care of Nadia Boulanger, who at once became, in Ansermet's words, "his spiritual mother". That noble and energetic woman, who has been the artistic conscience and guide to three decades of musical life in Paris, remained a close friend to the end of his life and a powerful influence on him. It was Nadia Boulanger who first brought him to recording. In 1937 he recorded with her and four singers Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes* (HMV DB5057-9) and a selection—Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 14 and 15—of Brahms' *Waltzes* (HMV DB5061). By an engaging oversight in French HMV this latter record was announced as being played by Mesdames Nadia Boulanger and Dina Lipatti.

In 1936 Lipatti began to make his name as a pianist with concerts in Berlin and various Italian cities. At the outbreak of war he returned to Rumania, where he stayed until 1943 when, together with his fiancée, Madeleine Cantacuzene, he escaped from Bucarest, and by devious ruses and routes they arrived, via Stockholm, in Geneva with a joint capital of five Swiss francs. The fates and the Genevese were kind. His reputation as an artist and teacher spread rapidly. In Paris, in 1944, Francis Poulenc told me of "this artist of divine spirituality", a judgment I was fully to endorse a few months later at a rehearsal of Chopin's *F minor Concerto*. From January 1946, Lipatti had an exclusive contract with Columbia.

He was already an ill man. Frail from childhood, the illness which was eventually to destroy him had taken its hold. From

1948 onwards his fame was such that he could command his own terms to play wherever he chose. Tours in North and South America, and of Australia, which would have provided him with the money he so badly needed, were arranged and at the last minute cancelled on doctors' orders, but his only complaint was for the inconvenience and expense that he had caused others.

Our first recordings were ill-starred. In July 1946, he made a series of records in Zürich which, owing to an unforeseen fault in the material, were not good enough for publication. After that unfortunate start all his recordings, except the last incredible achievements of July 1950, were made in the Abbey Road studios. Only his illness is to blame for the comparatively small number of records he made. Karajan's recording of Bartók's Music for Strings and Percussion was a last minute substitution for the recordings Lipatti was to have made for The Maharaja of Mysore's Musical Foundation of Busoni's *Indian Fantasia* and Bartók's Third Pianoforte Concerto. As recently as October Galliera recorded Respighi's *Brazilian Impressions* a year earlier than we had planned, owing to Lipatti's non-arrival to record Chopin's F minor Concerto.

Lipatti visited England four times: October-November 1946, when he recorded one of Liszt's Sonetti del Petrarca, *La Leggerezza* and the Chopin valse which is coupled with it, and made his English début at Walthamstow Town Hall, where he played a Mozart Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Karl Rankl. On his second visit, February-March 1947, were recorded two Scarlatti sonatas, Chopin's D flat Nocturne, Chopin's B minor Sonata, and we began the long series of attempts to produce his ideal performance of Myra Hess's transcription of *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. In September that year he recorded the Grieg Concerto with Alceo Galliera and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and repeated the Chopin valse, a Sonetta del Petrarca and a Scarlatti sonata. All these became the definitive versions. *Jesu, Joy* was also repeated several times, and although he was not completely happy with the results he yielded to the appeals of admirers in Switzerland and France by allowing the best of these recordings to be published—but only in those countries. For the final version we had to wait until July 1950. It is impossible to explain to those who have not experienced it the wonder of his playing of this piece, its rapt beauty and fascination. It was always the first encore he played, and for him it was a prayer and utterance of thanksgiving to God. The sound was not of this world, it hovered in space like some celestial blessing.

On his last visit in April 1948, he recorded the Schumann

Concerto with Herbert von Karajan, the incredible performance of Ravel's *Alborada del Gracioso* with its fantastic graduated *glissando* that I still cannot believe was played by human hand, and Chopin's *Barcarolle*. He was not completely satisfied with the latter. After that we made nothing but plans for visits to London, which were frustrated by his illness. Last Easter I went to see him in Geneva and promised that if he would get well enough I would find ways and means of recording him wherever or whenever it might be.

In the last days of May I had a private letter from a Dr Dubois-Ferrière in Geneva urging me at once to organize an expedition to Geneva to record Dinu Lipatti. As his doctor he had administered injections of Cortison and the improvement was remarkable. Unfortunately, he explained, the treatment could not be continued for more than two months, and since this was the first time it had been tried for Lipatti's complaint he could give no promise of its permanence or continued efficacy, but he begged me as a friend of Lipatti's to stop at nothing to make recordings in Geneva possible while the improvement lasted.

Dr Dubois-Ferrière had already collected subscriptions from friends and admirers of Lipatti to present him with a new Steinway pianoforte from the Hamburg factory—a luxury Dinu had long wished to enjoy. But it was not a concert-grand, and I have a rooted objection to the lack of warm bass that seems inevitable in recordings made with short grands.

Those colleagues and friends who made those last Lipatti recordings possible have earned the gratitude of musicians and music lovers for decades, perhaps generations to come. W. S. Barrell, Director of EMI Studios, interrupted his holiday to find a suitable studio in Geneva. Radio-Geneva rearranged their programmes so that the studios should be available to us day and night. Paul Jecklin, Columbia's agent in Switzerland, bought from Steinway in Hamburg and had sent to Geneva the first of those fabulously beautiful post-war concert-grands to enter Switzerland, the instrument Lipatti had always wanted to use for recording. Our French company sent their superbly equipped new recording van directly from the Casals recordings in Prades.

I found Dinu in better health and spirits than I had ever known him to enjoy. Friends had placed at his disposal a house standing in its own small park, outside Geneva and a few minutes' walk from the French frontier. We christened it "Haus Tribschenli", because it looked like a diminutive copy of Wagner's house on Lake Lucerne. Dinu loved the sun and the trees, and the weather smiled on us. For two radiant and blessed weeks the sun shone

out of a clear blue sky and the thermometer settled itself comfortably in the nineties. Cortison had given him a ravenous appetite and restored his natural gaiety. Dinu laughed and made music. He had just heard the story of a great conductor, known among musicians for his nervous and seemingly undecided down-beat who, at the beginning of his first rehearsal with a famous Italian orchestra had been encouraged by a shout from the first contra-bass player "Corragio! Maestro, corragio!" Whenever an *arpeggio* in the Chopin valse failed to come off with the desired clarity, accuracy and grace, Dinu stopped and called out either in apology or impatience "Arpeggio Maestro! arpeggio". It became a catch phrase which he cherished to the end. And when a legato passage was less smooth or chords less brilliant than he wanted it was always "Doigts de Maccaroni"—maccaroni fingers—the contemptuous epithet which he used on himself and his pupils for a lack of controlled strength in the fingers.

The recording van stood day and night beside the Radio-Geneva studios among lawns and well kept rose beds in rural peace. Both new Steinways were in the studio, Jecklin's noble concert grand and Dinu's exquisitely sensitive short grand, his "virgin, whom no other hands have caressed". We spent the first day satisfying ourselves by innumerable test recordings which piano to use, where it sounded best, which microphone to use and where to place it.

Let me here and now correct the current belief that the Chopin Valses, Bach's B flat Partita and Mozart's A minor Sonata were recorded all in one day. I can well believe that my illegible writing misled some friend, to whom and to all others I now apologize. The recording of the Chopin Valses took nearly all of nine days, from three to seven hours a day. We worked as a rule from nine until lunch time and from half-past six or seven until ten or after. The first seven sessions were devoted to the Valses. Apart from all the other problems Lipatti was particularly concerned with the fact that unlike the Studies, which were composed in two batches, and the twenty-four Preludes, Chopin's Valses, although sometimes played as if they were written at one period of his life, belong together only by virtue of title and rhythm. To differentiate between these works of different periods, to avoid applying a *personal* range of nuances or mannerisms of rubato, was his constant preoccupation while studying and recording them. We decided, after seven sessions of Valses, that it would be refreshing to make a change from waltz rhythm and Chopin's texture, and to record some Bach. That evening he recorded Kempff's arrangement of a *Siciliana* and returned,

not for the last time, to the old problem of *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring*. After six days eight of the Valses had been completed to the satisfaction of the most critical trio who ever sat in judgment on performances—Dinu, his wife, and I. At supper late that night we decided to devote the Sabbath, the next day, to Bach.

Sunday, July 9th, was the hottest and most memorable of all the days in that spell of incredible happiness. At nine in the morning we began Bach's B flat Partita and it was finished before lunch. Fearing that the effort of recording those four perfect sides—most of them were done some four or five times—would be too much for him I counselled cancelling the evening session, but Dinu would not hear of it; his sun was shining and he was going to make hay. At seven he started on the Mozart sonata. If ever a player was inspired it was Dinu that evening. Mozart and Bach were the composers nearest and dearest to his heart, and this was his first Mozart recording. The music came to an intensity of life rare, if not unique, in my experience. Phrases took on human form and character, living their exciting lives before the mind's eye as in a perfect performance of some unwritten opera. In no other way could he have demonstrated so convincingly his belief that even in his instrumental works Mozart was at heart a dramatic, an operatic composer. By ten o'clock the sonata was finished and now there was no stopping him; we must try to get the outstanding Valses while he was in the mood. He recorded five, not all finally, and when shortly before midnight the exhausted engineers were trudging wearily in search of a meal, Dinu, the freshest of us all, played *Stormy Weather*.

In the next three days were again repeated the Valses still outstanding, recorded the Mazurka, which is on the final side of that set—"Let us see if we can whet the public's appetite so that you will ask me to do all the Mazurkas next year"—some Busoni-Bach transcriptions and—*Jesu, Joy*. I have lost count of how many times that was repeated, but the last version made on July 11th at last pleased him. On July 12th he again repeated the fourteenth Valse and with it completed the recorded part of his artistic testament. It is comparatively small in content but of the purest gold.

He loved recording. Times without number he said to me, "I do not want to give any more concerts—except perhaps as rehearsals for recording. Let us give our lives to making records together". As an incurable perfectionist it delighted him to work in a medium wherein he could repeat until he was satisfied that

he could do no better, where the slightest blemish, what he called his *bêtises* and *cochonneries* could be obliterated and a fresh start made. Such faults were rare: he had such a complete physical mastery that he was by nature the "cleanest" player I have ever worked with. The innumerable repeats were made in pursuit of an ideal sensibility and beauty. His wife was his invaluable and incomparable collaborator. A pupil of the same teacher and herself a magnificent pianist and teacher—I doubt if she has her equal in the latter field—she hears and senses overtones and subtleties of nuance with ears that matched, and might have been, his. Her art, as well as her love and selflessness, are also in Dinu Lipatti's records.

This is not the place to write about Dinu Lipatti as a composer, neither have I yet had the opportunity of examining more than a small part of his output. There exists a recording he made with Hans von Benda and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for the Rumanian Radio before the war of his *Concertino for Pianoforte and Orchestra*, a charming essay in the modernized classical vein reminiscent of Prokofieff's *Classical Symphony*. In the last months of his life he made some wonderful Bach transcriptions, a Pastorale in four movements, of which the manuscript is complete, and two which he played to me, which may or may not have been written down—the aria *Schafe können sicher weiden* (Cantata 208) and the dance epilogue of the aria *Mein gläubiges Herze*. Those works apart, those of Lipatti's compositions which I have seen have one astonishing characteristic. His Balkan blood, of which there was no trace in his playing of Western music, suddenly dominates him. The *Rumanian Dances*, originally written for orchestra and played by Ansermet and later rewritten for pianoforte duet, as well as the *Sonatina for Left Hand*, might have been written by Bartók.

I do not believe that there has been, or will be, a pianist like Dinu Lipatti. It is not a matter of comparisons of quality, it is a matter of difference in kind. Hard as he worked and thought on purely technical problems of touch, sonority and pedalling, he was not a "virtuoso" in the word's modern and debased sense—but certainly in its seventeenth century application "a connoisseur". For himself he had no use for display or brilliance of execution as ends in themselves, though he was almost over generous in his praise and admiration for his many contemporaries who have. He was a musician, a musician who used the pianoforte as a means of communication and expression. Only in terms of his qualities as a musician and a man can one hope to explain, to understand or describe him.

He was a good man in the highest sense, and a particularly sensitive one. He was in all things an aristocrat of the finest fibre, temperamentally incapable of vulgarity in thought or deed. He was fastidious and distinguished in all he did, unable, in showing a pupil how *not* to phrase, even of imitating bad taste. When he played jazz to amuse his friends or shock the seriousness out of some too-earnest guest, he could not avoid giving the most trivial tune the lustre of his magical sound and delicate sensibility. He approached music with a composer's mind and his love for his favourite masters was blended with reverence. When I first knew him he had never played Beethoven: he felt that he was not yet worthy. That he played the *Waldstein* Sonata in the last two years of his life was due to the encouragement of Artur Schnabel who, as a wise and paternal admirer, persuaded him to take the plunge.

Lipatti's sense of responsibility to the public came out of his reverence for music. In the five years we worked together I was able to offer him a repertoire for recording for which many another pianist would have sacrificed his wife and family. Lipatti was not to be deflected from his devoted approach. To prepare the *Emperor* Concerto he would need four years, even for the Tchaikovsky he needed three. Nothing in his work was unprepared or left to chance. He had his schedule of works to be studied and practised carefully mapped out for five years in advance. He never played a note in public that was not meticulously prepared: his miraculous playing was the result of a mastery of the physical-technical part of his art, so complete that his mind and spirit was free to express themselves in music.

The softness of his sound came through strength. He had enormous and powerful hands—the “little” finger as long as its neighbour—and the shoulders of a wrestler, quite disproportionate to his frail build. As he played each finger had a life and personality of its own, independent of its neighbours, of his wrists and arms: each finger seemed prehensile and the ten of them, when he played contrapuntal music, looked like a fantastic ballet danced by ten elephants' trunks each obeying the orders of its own mahout. This visual impression of each finger having its own life is evident in the sound of his playing. Every note he played had a life of its own. To his pupils and to himself he preached giving every phrase and every note in every phrase “character”. Every note in every part must live and contribute its meaning to the whole. He aimed at presenting the music of other periods in such a way that it would have for us to-day the vitality and significance it had had for the composer and his

contemporaries. He did not seek in Bach to imitate the sound of a cembalo or clavier, he set out to play it as he believed Bach would have done if he had had a modern concert grand at his disposal. For this reason he occasionally and discreetly added octaves or transposed the lower voice down an octave. In certain works of Liszt he used the modern resources of pedalling to obtain effects implicit in the character of the music, but beyond the resources of Liszt's instruments. These were the only liberties he allowed himself or his pupils, who adored him.

Half an hour before he died he was listening to the Schneiderhan Quartet's records of Beethoven's F minor Quartet. To his wife he said, "You see, it is not enough to be a great composer. To write music like that you must be a chosen instrument of God". By the same light we may say that it is not enough to be a great pianist: to play as Lipatti played you must be a chosen instrument of God.

God lent the world His chosen instrument whom we called Dinu Lipatti for too brief a space.



JUNE 1952

Elisabeth Schumann

by Gerald Moore

I cannot think of any artist during the past thirty years who was more universally beloved than Elisabeth Schumann. It is understandable and must be accepted as an inevitable truth that anybody who knew her, loved her. But what can be the explanation of the genuine affection she inspired in the hearts of the many thousands who had heard her sing without having known her? What was the secret of this rare spell she cast, whether from the operatic stage or the concert platform, direct to each person in her audience? Other singers could, perhaps, rival her in sheer beauty of sound; other singers could sing high notes like gleaming jewels with similar ease; there were other sopranos who were also gladdening to the eye and had an equally infectious—(no, not nearly so infectious!)—smile. But any or all of these delightful virtues do not answer my question. I would say that the secret of Elisabeth Schumann's magic was that she radiated goodness and happiness. This radiance came from deep down inside her, and the listener in the distant gallery felt the truth of it and was warmed and affected by it.

The very finest artists sometimes allow their audience to become aware of the art—and it can be great art—that goes into their performance and this effectually erects a barrier between themselves and the listener. It is a barrier which hinders free communication. Gone are spontaneity and unfettered expression. With Elisabeth Schumann one forgot her consummate art, did not notice her flawless technique, one only knew that she sang for the pleasure of singing and for the joy of living.

When Mme Schumann sang "How beautiful is thy world, O Lord!" (from Schubert's *Im Abendrot*) she really meant what she said, and we believed her and shared her faith. When she sang *Du bist die Ruh* we were aware that she really knew the meaning of the word "Peace", for she had an inner peace and serenity that few people enjoy. She was at peace with the world and at peace with herself. And, thinking back, one sees why this was so: she was a stranger to jealousy and meanness and was the personification of generosity; generous in her love and her laughter and her kindness. She reaped the harvest of her own sowing

and was loved in return by her own dear children, by her immediate friends and by millions of music lovers, the world over.

In referring to Elisabeth's serenity, I must correct any impression that the reader might form that this repose which was a part of her, was in any way related to self-satisfaction. She was the most modest of artists and was rarely satisfied with her own work. After a concert with me she would want my opinion as to how she had sung; during a rehearsal she would frequently seek my advice. Could I hear her words? Was every note in tune? Did I agree with her *tempo*? Did that song suit her? And there was no deceiving her. She had no time for flattery and unlike most *prima donne* she welcomed suggestions. If, for instance, as sometimes happened in the last year or two, I would ask her to sing certain songs in a lower key, she would acquiesce without demur. On one occasion when I counselled her to omit one song from her programme and to drop it from her repertoire altogether, she embraced me with enthusiasm and, laughing in her joyous way said, "My dear, you have made me so happy. Now I can really enjoy my programme with that song out of the way".

Elisabeth Schumann was never heard at a disadvantage for she had the wisdom only to sing what was ideally suited to her. The voice which thrilled us all ("a golden voice"—Melba called it) was not a big voice; its quality was exquisite and its range wide but it did not lend itself to music of a dramatic nature. Yet her field—as you can see by a catalogue of her records—was immense, and although we were intoxicated by the charm of Mozart's *Das Veilchen*, Schubert's *Die Forelle* or *Geheimes*—Arne's *Where the bee sucks*, Strauss' *Serenade* (all songs of a playful nature) she could on the other hand move us profoundly by her tenderness in Strauss' *Morgen*, her reverence and purity in *Ave Maria* by Schubert, the depth of feeling in Schubert's *Nacht und Träume* (and with what wonderful technical virtuosity, of which she never allowed us to be aware, did she accomplish the long phrases in these songs), and last, but by no means least, one of my favourites *An mein Klavier*.

It was interesting to me to see what such eclectic musicians as Kirsten Flagstad or Alec Robertson preferred of her records. Mme Flagstad has proclaimed the Trio from *Rosenkavalier* with Mmes Schumann, Lehmann and Olszewska, and "The Presentation of the Silver Rose" (the duet between Sophie and Octavian) as two of her best loved of all records: Alec Robertson chooses the Quintet from the *Meistersinger*: others insist on Mozart, either "Non so più" or "Deh vieni non tardar" from *Figaro*. I find that

many music lovers are in ecstasies over her interpretation of Robert Schumann's tragic song-cycle *Frauenliebe und Leben*, while one of my favourites is Strauss' *Morgen*.

Elisabeth Schumann was born on June 13th, 1888 at Merseburg, a medium-sized town in Germany. Her father was organist at the "Dom" there and her mother had a beautiful voice. She says she could sing before she could speak and even sang at a charity concert at the age of four. Her ambition to become a professional musician was firmly planted while still a child, though at eleven, when she heard her first opera by a Düsseldorf company, her high hopes received something of a shock when she visited one of their "good" singers and saw the poor conditions under which this "star" lived. (Already, it seems, Elisabeth was fastidious.) But the high spirits—which we, her friends revelled in—must have been almost irrepressible in those early days for she frequently ran away at night when she was supposed to be in bed and sneaked in to the Opera House. "Schoolboys buying cigarettes opposite my windows used to send me cheeky glances". From 15 onwards little Fraülein Schumann studied with various teachers in Gotha, Dresden and Berlin but already she knew enough to be convinced that there was nothing to be gained by remaining with them. Having by nature a voice that was beautiful in quality and perfectly placed she confined herself to studying operatic roles under Dr Walter Krone and abandoned her lessons in voice production. At last came her first few engagements in small towns such as Aschersleben and Halberstadt where she received fees of 75 marks. But her great chance came after an audition with Professor Spengel, conductor of "Caecilien Verein", and he engaged her to sing the *Matthew Passion* in Lübeck. Emboldened by this experience she straightway asked for an audition at the Hamburg Opera and was engaged on the spot (aged 21).

It was in Hamburg that "my best teacher" Mme Alma Schadow took charge of Elisabeth. Here other powerful influences came into her life: Klemperer who became a good friend to her, Busoni (she sang Albertine in the first performance of his opera *Brautwahl*), and here she met Lotte Lehmann, a fellow student, and this was the beginning of a life-long friendship. The year 1911 was a busy one, for in addition to the Busoni opera she studied and sang Sophie in *Rosenkavalier* and also found time to get married! Her fame spread so rapidly in Germany and Austria that Richard Strauss in Vienna was hearing so much about this phenomenal young artist that he wrote and recommended her—without so much as having heard her sing or met her—to the

Metropolitan Opera Company, New York. It is interesting to record that, about this time, Klemperer induced her and taught her to sing the role *Rosenkavalier* with Lotte Lehmann as her Sophie. "I was a failure", she says with characteristic frankness.

But this was a minor set back for from now on her career was a long unbroken run of successes: 1913 a summer season at the Kroll Opera Berlin; 1914-15 Metropolitan Opera, New York; 1917 first personal meeting with Richard Strauss (followed in 1921 by a tour with him in the USA), 1924 Covent Garden. We in England took Elisabeth Schumann to our hearts but so did Italy, France (Legion of Honour), Scandinavia and every other country in which she sang. Mme Schumann was already an American citizen before the outbreak of the last war and she spent a fruitful time during the early war years passing on her knowledge, her technique and art to others at the Curtiss Institute. But as soon as it was possible for her to cross the Atlantic she was back here again and enrolled herself as an ENSA artist.

In this outline of the life and glorious career of Elisabeth Schumann, I have reserved one item until the very end. The year 1914 saw the birth of her only child—a boy. Gerd, now happily living here in London and his charming English wife, were the greatest joy and pride to Elisabeth. They were both her dear children, and the deep love between them was touching and beautiful. In fact the only sad note that I wish to sound is that her untimely passing in New York last month prevented the realisation of a dream she had been cherishing for years—namely to come and live in London among her many devoted English friends and with her beloved Gerd and his family. She had already bought a house in London, alas, never to inhabit it. This is the only thought which gives me a pang of sadness. Other than this I find, as do countless others, so much cause for gratitude, so many recollected hours of sunshine and laughter, so many memories of loveliness and inspiration in Elisabeth Schumann's life and art that to dwell on a mournful note at the loss the world of music has sustained would be an unworthy tribute to the memory of a great woman and a great singer.



Joc Batten (left) retiring after 50 years in the record industry, with Oscar Preuss (Parlophone Co.), Fred Gaisberg (HMV) and Mrs Batten—October 1950



Alec Robertson (right), contributor and latterly Music Editor to THE GRAMOPHONE from 1923 to 1971, celebrating his 75th birthday at the Savoy Hotel on June 9th, 1967, with Edward Greenfield (left) and Anthony Pollard

NOVEMBER 1953

Reminiscences of Arturo Toscanini

by Elisabeth Ohms

My meeting and collaboration with Arturo Toscanini was, I think, the culminating point of my whole career in the theatre.

The first time I met him face to face was in 1926, when I was invited by La Scala, Milan to sing Isolde in Italian. As I had been on the operatic stage for five years only, this invitation was a great event for me—moreover Toscanini was to conduct the performances.

Realizing this to-day, it seems like a fairy tale to me; no wonder that I was feverishly looking forward to the great experience to come, my feelings torn between hope and the fear that I might disappoint this great artist.

I had been working for a whole week with maestro Votto, who had the task of correcting my pronunciation of the Italian text and of going through with me all the rhythmical changes caused by the translation of the original text.

I was impatiently looking forward to the first rehearsal with Toscanini. It was rumoured that he did not feel well and that perhaps the performances of *Tristan* would be cancelled, but I would not even admit the frightful thought of such a possibility.

Finally the great day came, when I was waiting, together with my Italian colleagues, for Toscanini's first piano rehearsal. They all were terribly nervous and chattered incessantly. The maestro's name was mentioned, but to my regret I could not understand everything they said. Strangely enough, after having lived all the days before in a state of extreme tension, I was now very calm.

We had waited for about twenty minutes, when suddenly the door was flung open and in came a man, slender, almost frail to look at and yet full of dynamic power and tension, as I at once felt by intuition. He did not seem to see anything besides the grand piano, towards which he hurried and sat down. With a little sigh he said: *Ma—(well!)*, and the rehearsal began.

I had no time to wonder at this somewhat strange introduction, for I had of course to open the rehearsal, which took place without any interruption or correction on the side of the maestro.

It had always been a habit of mine to walk up and down

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during piano rehearsals and I did so this time. During an interval the contralto standing by my side whispered to me to "stop it for God's sake". I did so for a while, then forgot about it and again started striding about.

Then it was that Toscanini seemed to become aware of my presence and looked at me with his great black eyes. I never knew how long this rehearsal lasted, but Toscanini stopped it as suddenly as he had begun. His precipitate departure threw my colleagues into great confusion. They expressed their conjectures with vivacious gestures and much raising of voices.

I left the room silently, feeling puzzled and not at ease. In the hotel I did not find either peace nor quiet, and in the afternoon I went out, wandered about the city, and, without intention, landed in the theatre, not knowing exactly what I was looking for.

All at once I heard an orchestra playing and followed the sound which was coming from the auditorium. Finding my way there I timidly opened the door and slipped into the house. Toscanini was rehearsing the orchestra. It was the beginning of the second act of *Tristan*. And here it was, that I was allowed to become acquainted with the man who was to become the fulfilment of my artistic ideals. Here it happened that I became aware of this great genius, his masterly art, here I listened to an orchestra, which under his hands, roused to new life music which I believed to have known before, and which now fulfilled itself with an impressiveness which moved my inner being to its depths.

Toscanini talked, shouted, shrieked and implored his musicians. He struggled and wrestled for the sake of the realization of his conception of this music, and he did not end his struggle before this wonderful instrument gave itself up to him, wholly subjugated, ready to follow the maestro's vision which, pitiless and unsparing towards himself and his musicians, he had to realise.

I was sitting in the dark house, breathless, as if my life were at stake, with strain and suspense; I did not want to lose anything of this revelation and how I got out of the auditorium I do not know.

Next day we were informed that the scheduled performances of *Tristan* would not take place. The maestro was said to be suffering from nervous pains in the right arm, an illness very frequent with conductors.

This information struck me like a heavy blow and completely crushed, I proceeded to return to Munich. Would I, I wondered, ever have the opportunity of singing under him once more?

It arrived, when, a few months later, I went to Milan to sing *Fidelio* under Toscanini's direction on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death on February 26th, 1927.

I was full of expectancy, sure of my Italian text, but nevertheless prepared for many long preliminary rehearsals with maestro Votto.

But hardly had I arrived, when I was told that the first rehearsal with Toscanini would take place very soon.

This time our meeting was so absolutely different that I was quite astonished. He welcomed me like an old acquaintance, was in very good spirits, and so different from before that I only now recognized in what state of health he must have been at the time when *Tristan* was scheduled.

We started with the ensemble rehearsals: the canon quartet in G major. Every bar was worked through with such a patience and love for the music that I felt very happy to experience this way of rehearsing. Here I could learn enormously and I greedily grasped the rare opportunity.

We rehearsed for about two hours and every now and then he shook his head and muttered, "atrocious translation". We had not yet finished when Toscanini suddenly said, "I shall make another translation, and also change these miserable *parlandi* into recitatives". My heart stopped, I remembered my newly learned text in that strange language, and the *première* was to take place in a fortnight.

To understand my state of mind, one must realise what rehearsing with Toscanini meant. Not the slightest nuance is left to chance and the piano rehearsals were legion, to say nothing of the stage rehearsals. Generally we worked from 12 to 3 p.m., and from 8 to 12 p.m. in the evening; would I find the spare time necessary to learn another new text? Toscanini must have read in my face how I felt, for he laughed and said: "La Ohms lo farà" (Madame Ohms will get it done). It could not be helped, I had to learn the new text. The recitatives were tried, did not suit him, were dropped and Toscanini returned to the *parlandi* (spoken text), but with new words.

In spite of all this work I made it possible to attend many orchestral rehearsals. To see this great man at work was such bliss that I could not resist going to the theatre every time, even when it meant skipping my dinner or sleep.

Toscanini brought the score to life with supreme reverence, without any personal vanity, without any casual sentimentalities. The great outline was retained everywhere and every detail was

lovingly moulded and worked over without ever losing the impression of spontaneousness.

I never shall forget Toscanini's rendering of the two *Leonore* Overtures. The two prisoners' choruses in the finale of the first act were really *allegro con motto* and *allegro vivace*. The short introduction to the second act was filled to the brim with tragedy. It is his genius that brings the spirit of the composition to life so incomparably without admitting the slightest arbitrariness.

No wonder he demanded that his collaborators should give their utmost, even grow beyond their normal selves, and he never gave up unless he attained the perfection he had in mind. How could he make sure that every nuance was achieved as required by the work, if he allowed the singers to save their voices during rehearsals.

In this connection I remember a small incident very characteristic of Toscanini. We had a full rehearsal only a very short time before the last dress rehearsal and we all were rather tired. It happened that in the G major duet with Florestan I did not keep up with the required quick tempo. The deviation was so small that few would have noticed it. Not so Toscanini: he broke off furiously. I was quite incapable of reacting, by the abrupt interruption, and sang to the end with half voice. Toscanini shouted: "La donna é stanca" (Madame is tired) and furiously conducted the performance to its end. Then he raced up onto the stage and in a low voice spoke to the stage manager about my "crime". I quietly left the stage: but I had not reached the backstage before I heard Toscanini's sharp command: *da capo!*

I returned, started anew, but I was not able to concentrate anymore, I was too exhausted. When I was about to leave the theatre, after having dressed, Toscanini awaited me at the stagedoor. Still under the impact of the *contretemps* I intended to pass by him with a short nod, but Toscanini opened his arms and soothingly said: "Ma . . . Ohms" (Now . . . Ohms). We were friends again.

The performances were a great triumph for all of us and especially for Toscanini. Toscanini was exceedingly original, and a scene which occurred at the beginning of the first performance shows his ardent temperament and the immense tension which seized him before every performance. The slightest disturbance, every unexpected occurrence, brought forth an explosion. When on that memorable day Toscanini stepped up to his podium the audience went wild. This maddened him so terribly that he turned round shouting: "Asini, sono io un tenoro?" (Fools, am I a tenor?)

On the other hand, the great maestro had moving little habits.

Every evening prior to the start of the performance he came to see me in my dressing room and asked me: "Come sta Ohms?" (How are you Ohms?). Without saying another word he walked to and fro until the stage manager came to fetch him. He left me saying with a deep sigh: "Ma . . . comincioms" (well, let's begin).

The success of the performances of *Fidelio* was excelled by that of *Parsifal*. These performances took place in honour of Arturo Toscanini's sixtieth birthday.

It was a great event in which the whole musical world was interested and sent their famous conductors to take part in the festivities. My own part as Kundry absorbed me so entirely that I hardly took in what happened round about me.

This part is doubtless not so large as those of other operatic heroines, but it is nevertheless very exacting for the voice as well as for the mind. Knowing Toscanini's method of working I enjoyed with every bit of my being the interesting rehearsals, which were enormously profitable for those who took part in them with their minds awake.

I remember a solo rehearsal of the second act with the maestro. We worked together about two hours, when he suddenly began to explain this music to me. Without realizing it, we soon were in the midst of the third act. Toscanini explained, sang every part, with his hoarse broken voice, up to the very end. He had so much love for this music that he forgot everything around and in spite of his shortsightedness sat for hours at the piano.

The piano rehearsals, as well as the stage rehearsals, which were numerous, were all informed with the spirit of Toscanini. He was present at nearly all of them; but this time he seemed not quite satisfied with my performance and he talked the question over with the stage manager. He asked him: "Why is Madame Ohms so tame in the second act? I don't recognize her". I observed that he seemed alarmed, for his pince-nez hung dangling on his lower lip, which always was the sign that he was pondering over something. I did not know what he was troubled about, I only learned later that my reserved playing was the reason for his nervousness. Even if I had known this, I should not have been able to change my tactics, for this part is vocally and histrionically so trying that I would not have been able to give my whole strength in every rehearsal without harming my voice.

The stage manager begged Toscanini not to talk about his apprehension, to leave me alone, and to believe "La Ohms lo farà". That was very difficult for the maestro; he avoided me as much as possible.

Before the beginning of the first performance he came as usual to my dressing room and, as usual, started his walk to and fro. Suddenly he stopped, looked at me as if he wanted to say something, hesitated and left me as usual. He probably had just remembered the stage manager's request.

Parsifal was certainly the greatest event I experienced under his direction at the Scala. After the second act the maestro visited me again in my dressing room. He was quite happy, I had not disappointed him. He then told me what anxiety he had lived through on account of my dull performance during the rehearsals. He felt quite relieved, and confessed that it had not been easy for him to let me have my way.

This opera meant so much to him that the thought that I might fall short of Wagner's idea of the part had been an obsession to him. Our co-operation had a special note in regard to Italian habits in opera. In Italy singers get their cues from the prompter and not from the conductor: maybe that Toscanini knew that the singers in Germany are accustomed to get their cues from the conductor, anyway he gave the cues to me and softly sang my part with me, which heightened the intensity of our musical contact enormously.

These performances of *Parsifal*, which were marked by Toscanini's amazing conformity with the work, were the last ones in which I sang under his direction in the Scala in Milan for Fascism forced him to avoid Italy and his beloved Scala.

Three years later Toscanini called me to Bayreuth to sing Kundry again and it was then that I had the following touching experience. We had most of the rehearsals in Villa Wahnfried and they took place in Siegfried Wagner's rooms where Liszt, also, had lived for some time. There Richard Wagner's famous Erard grand piano stood. During one of the solo rehearsals Toscanini said: "Imagine Elisabetta, here at the grand piano Wagner sat and composed; and sometimes he may have got tired and perhaps leaned his head here against the music stand". Full of emotion, he bent his head and touched that place with his forehead. Tears rose to my eyes, when I saw that great musician who was so modest and who spoke with so much veneration of Wagner, seeming to have no personal ambition for himself, this man, who was undoubtedly epoch-making for almost three generations of conductors over the whole world!

In 1934 I was his guest on the Isle of St Giovanni, where he spent the summer with Madame Toscanini. At that time he was not conducting in Bayreuth any more. The slandering of Bruno Walter had prompted him to avoid Germany. I well remember

the excited discussions between Toscanini and Wagner's daughter (Madame Thode) at St Giovanni, concerning national-socialism. He was a furiously outspoken adversary of that regime, and everything in connection with it upset him terribly.

Here I saw Arturo Toscanini for the last time. In between we have experienced years of war, losses, fear, sorrow and privations, but through it all, up to this day, I have kept reminiscences of him as the most precious ones in my heart and mind.

POLYDOR IN ENGLISH

Messrs Alfred Imhof have sent us a copy of a booklet of Classical and Modern Orchestral Music on records of the Deutsche Grammophon AG (which means Polydor) as sold at 110 New Oxford Street, W.C.1. It is a booklet which should be in the hands of everyone of our readers, for it contains in a very clear form a list of all the orchestral records in that remarkable Polydor catalogue, and moreover it is written in English. May we hope that it will be followed by a catalogue of the operatic records also in English? This is a great desideratum. But why not also in good English? Why this farrago of Teutonisms? If none of the agents for Polydors in this country was willing to superintend the production of the catalogue we would gladly have suggested someone competent to do it, and to provide the ha'porth of tar which was needed to make the booklet really ship-shape. Even the prices are still in German marks!

February 1926

LISTENING WITH HEADPHONES

A breakdown in my radiogram has led me to an interesting discovery, which although it is no doubt well known to your Expert Committee, is by no means widely known.

Being anxious to hear some new records before I could get my instrument put right, I tried the expedient of putting a pair of BTH light-weight headphones (which I had just bought for short-wave listening) directly across the terminals of my BTH Piezo-Electric pickup.

I expected to hear faint sounds only, but I was glad to use a volume control! True the full volume is not overpowering, but when cut down a little I find it just right.

Listening with headphones has a delightful intimacy, for one is able to give one's whole hearing to the music. I find that to get full satisfaction from a loudspeaker one must have it at good strength, which is often too good for one's neighbours! Possibly frequent concert-going makes one accustomed to having one's ears filled with sound: with home reproduction at a considerate level one is always aware of other noises. I now find that, making due allowances for bass cut-off, I get more real satisfaction from headphones and a nearer approach to concert-hall conditions.

South Norwood.

L. GIBBS.
January 1937

APRIL 1955

Messiah

by Sir Malcolm Sargent

It will always be as impossible to obtain a definitive performance of Handel's *Messiah* as it is to produce a Shakespeare play in a way that will completely satisfy posterity. In each case the creator, knowing that he would be personally responsible for the first performance, has omitted to leave detailed instructions to the interpretive artist.

To-day the author, or composer—anticipating the possibility of performances without his personal guidance—is careful to explain his wishes, and to make clear his intentions. Handel and Shakespeare wrote for the moment, never dreaming that their compositions would be performed, and respected as masterpieces, hundreds of years after their death.

The instructions are so inadequate in the case of Handel that no conductor can direct a performance even of the first chord of the *Messiah* without making at least two arbitrary decisions. Handel does not even indicate in his score whether we are to start loudly or softly. He marks the first movement *grave*, so that we know we must proceed slowly. But how slowly? The first note is a dotted crotchet, but composers in the 18th Century often wrote a dotted note to indicate a *double-dotted* note. I believe that in this case Handel intended a dotted note, to be played as he wrote it, but many conductors think otherwise, and no one *knows* which one is being truly Handelian. In the whole of the *Messiah* there is no indication of a *rallentando*, of a *crescendo* or *diminuendo*; whole movements are written without one indication of loudness or softness, and with only a very indefinite indication of pace; marks of phrasing are non-existent, and "bowings" very occasional.

Given the original score of the *Messiah* a conductor must make a personal decision at almost every bar.

If reliance is put upon "tradition" the problem becomes insoluble. The evidence is so slender and warped that those who, for example, say that it was traditional to interpolate cadenzas and ornaments in the arias have perforce to *invent* the cadenzas and ornaments, which can result in an almost new composition.

The "purists" seem to be satisfied if they listen to a performance which they believe to approximate to the "first performance". This extraordinary line of thought has always filled me with amazement. Even to-day the first performance is seldom the best one. After the first performance the composer often makes amendments. But in Handel's day the conditions of first performances and many subsequent ones were brought about more by circumstance than by the desire of the composer.

Must we to-day produce a Shakespeare play with a boy as the heroine, or with placards saying, "A Wood near Athens" because it was done in Shakespeare's day? No dramatic critic suggests this, but our "musicologists" are not all so intelligent.

Let us examine the circumstances of the *Messiah's* first production. In 1741 Handel had suffered many rebuffs in London—financial and artistic. He set to work in a blaze of inspiration to compose music to words from the Bible, depicting, mainly through Old Testament prophecy, Our Lord's Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Everlasting Glory. For twenty-two days he worked, hardly eating or sleeping, and completed an oratorio of incomparable grandeur and ineffable beauty which to-day, two hundred years afterwards, brings glimpses of Heaven and the Peace of God to thousands.

In 1741 he was invited by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to give a series of concerts in Dublin, and he set forth with many accepted compositions and the unrevealed *Messiah* in his knapsack.

It is important to realize the conditions of music-making in the 18th Century. There were no large amateur choirs, as now exist, capable of singing difficult music.

Passing through Chester, Handel tried to get a "run-through" of some of his music, but the best sight-reader there made him furious by failing utterly to sing passages which to-day would be considered too simple for a sight-reading test of a good choral society.

— Arriving at Dublin he set to work to rehearse the largest body of singers available. The combined choirs of the two cathedrals were, by special permission, placed at his disposal. They totalled six boys and fourteen men in all!

Handel scored the *Messiah* for strings only—with two trumpets and two kettle drums added for certain numbers. The organ was used as directed by him—but there is no part written for it. He himself directed the performance from the harpsichord, at which instrument he kept time by playing, gesticulating and at times shouting. Four oboes and four bassoons were added to increase

the sound; the oboes to double the sopranos or violins, the bassoons to help the basses. It is interesting that on one occasion Handel asked for twelve more oboes "because the chorus is so small". It is also interesting that, at a "purist" performance, I have "seen" (not "heard"—they were inaudible) twelve oboes doubling the soprano line of sixty sopranos! In London each year we have several performances "with original accompaniments". They are all different!

We must not be misled into thinking that had we been present at the first performance we would not have been profoundly moved. Standards of criticism and enjoyment are affected by experience. A solo part was sung by Mrs Cibber ("Polly" of the *Beggar's Opera*), and we read that although "her musical knowledge was inconsiderable" and her voice "a mere thread", yet in "He was despised" (she had become a contralto by then) "her natural pathos and perfect conception of the words penetrated the heart".

The magnificent music being heard for the first time was overwhelmingly thrilling, even from so small a chorus. But to-day I have no wish to hear the work "as originally performed", except for Handel's organ playing.

There is no musical evidence that Handel intended the *Messiah* to be considered as "chamber-music". He was renowned for his big effects—he was criticised by his rivals for being a "noisy" composer, for wanting twice as many voices in his chorus, and twice as many instrumentalists as was usual. It is tragic that in his lifetime—in Dublin and in London—Handel never heard his *Messiah* choruses, except when sung by a few choirboys and male altos, with tenors and basses in the majority. I am convinced that, had they been available, he would have rejoiced to have had a choir of several hundred for his first performance.

Twenty-five years after Handel's death—with many living who knew him and heard his performances—special Commemoration Concerts were given in Westminster Abbey, directed by Mr Bates who had known Handel well and respected his wishes. The orchestra employed was two hundred and fifty strong, including twelve horns, twelve trumpets, six trombones and three pairs of timpani (some made especially large). The chorus consisted of sixty sopranos (forty being choirboys), about fifty male altos (singing falsetto, I trust), over eighty tenors and about ninety basses. An odd balance of parts. There was no conductor, but Mr Bates led from the organ, at a special console twenty feet below it, and nineteen feet in front of the pipes. He must have had fingers of iron. There is no mention of a harpsichord.

The orchestral conditions of the 18th Century are particularly interesting. The art of the conductor had not yet developed, which means that, excepting where strict time was to be kept, an orchestral accompaniment to a "recitative" was out of the question. In a "recitative" speech should be clear and free, and to effect this the composer accompanied at a harpsichord near the singer. The harpsichord has little resonance and it became customary to help it by adding a violoncello to sustain its bass. This is a poor makeshift, and as soon as the conducting technique was developed orchestral accompaniments were usual for "recitative". For the Foundling Hospital concerts Handel evolved an elaborate mechanism, which, by "tracker" action, connected his harpsichord keyboard to the organ, enabling him to sit in front of his performers and direct them, at the same time playing the organ behind them. It must have been a very fatiguing and noisy business. At Dublin he had a separate organist under his direction. How much or how little he used the harpsichord no-one knows—nor how much he played it from necessity rather than desire. The organ is usually distant from the singers, and I much prefer a quiet string accompaniment to the recitatives, and have arranged them accordingly.

Remembering the speed at which Handel composed, it is not surprising to find that many arias are not harmonised. A violin part and a bass part alone are written and Handel would "fill in" on the harpsichord or organ. His concert halls were small—six hundred was the seating for Dublin—and this thin middle harmony would be much less disturbing than it is in our larger buildings. There have been many editions, made by various musicians, orchestrating the figured bass with soft wind or middle strings, but the most remarkable is that of Mozart. For a performance in Vienna where no organ was available, he added orchestral parts in the manner in which he believed Handel would have played them. They are so beautiful that it seems wiser to use them than to risk the extemporizations of an organist who may not be so good a musician.

With regard to the accompaniments of the choruses, as I have said, Handel added as many oboes and bassoons as were available (and they seem to have been plentiful). He also used horns and flutes for his oratorios. No parts for these instruments are extant for the *Messiah*, but it is noteworthy that at performances in London payments were made to five horn players.

The trumpets and drums are most effectively used, but their possibilities were very limited. Nowadays the drums can easily be retuned to new notes between movements, or even during

performances, but in Handel's day they were tuned "once and for all" at the beginning of the concert. In the whole of the *Messiah* the timpani play only D and A.

The trumpets also had no valves and are in D throughout. They can play the arpeggio of D in the middle octave, and the diatonic notes of the scale above. That is all. It follows therefore that whenever Handel wanted trumpets and drums, of necessity he had to write in D major. At the end of the work we find consecutively "The Trumpet shall sound", "Worthy is the Lamb", "Blessing and Honour", and the "Amen" Chorus, all in D.

Mozart and other arrangers have felt that Handel would have used his trumpets in certain other numbers had he been able to.

There is no evidence that Handel used trombones in the *Messiah*. They were not available in Dublin, and in London only by special favour from the King's military band. We know that Handel used them whenever he could for his operas and other oratorios, and they undoubtedly add a grandeur in certain choruses.

I have used clarinets in this performance to supply certain "organ-chording" effects. Their tone-quality blends well, and, although it is true that they are an anachronism, I must point out that the conductors who object to them are themselves an anachronism! They should not be there at all. The conductor, as such, was unknown in Handel's day. Direction was done from the keyboard, by sound rather than by sight.

I have known, loved, rehearsed and performed the *Messiah* for nearly forty years—a photographic facsimile of the original manuscript has been my musical Bible—I am still very conscious that the best of me is not worthy of this masterpiece. I can but hope that those of you who play this recording in your homes may get a glimpse of that revelation which came to Handel as he wrote it. "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the Great God Himself".



FEBRUARY 1956

Some Impressions of Kathleen Ferrier by Clare Campbell

I first heard Kathleen Ferrier from a choir-stall in Westminster Abbey in 1943. My memories of her work with the Bach Choir over the next ten years, together with a feeling that her achievements in the earlier half of her career are not always valued at their true worth by critics and record collectors, must be my excuse for adding to what has been written about her in these columns.

The 1943 concert was the *Messiah* which virtually opened her London career. She gave a subdued performance on that occasion, singing a little as though she were accompanying the orchestra rather than they her! No doubt she was nervous, though she did not betray the fact; she seemed, rather, all that the Scotch mean by "douce" both in voice and manner. It was not till the following year, when the Choir repeated its Abbey *Messiah*, that I was thrilled by her. She had almost a choirboy sweetness of tone and directness of delivery at that time, which can be recaptured in places from her Pergolesi *Stabat Mater* records. With all her early records, it is better to endure the occasional roughnesses of surface than to manipulate a merely ladylike sound out of them which is quite unlike the power and conviction of her actual performances. She had, as Neville Cardus has pointed out, a certain masculinity of style, particularly in the years before she had extended her repertoire widely into romantic music; but for some schools of thought this is the ideal way to sing Bach and Handel.

In fact the emphasis laid on her great debt to Dr Bruno Walter should not be allowed to obscure how much she had achieved before she met him. I remember her 1945-6-7 performances of the *St Matthew Passion* as the highlights of her work with the Bach Choir. It is commonly said that her interpretative powers increased after that time. But tastes differ as to how much "interpretation", in the sense of conscious underlining of detailed effects within the whole, Bach and Handel need or can do with. Personally I prefer the searching simplicity of her version of "Grief for sin" on Decca AK2005 to the technically superior later recording of it on Decca LXT2757. One of her lovely early

records is Handel's "Come to me soothing sleep" on Columbia DX1194, which also forms part of the Columbia EP disc, SED 5526 (though it has a few jarring high notes). Here again some tastes want more conscious expression, more lingering on the meaning of the words such as she affords in her late recording of "He was despised". But for others, words which are almost in the actor's sense "thrown away" can be more moving, because the emotion is implicit instead of explicit. In her singing of the phrase "dreams that my sorrow may assuage" enunciation and legato tone are so perfectly blended that the dividing line between words and music vanishes and each becomes the other.

Interpretation apart, the physical quality of her voice seemed to become better suited to the more romantic composers in the last years of her career—to which period also the perfection of her own and Decca's recording technique belongs. Hence the shortened perspective which makes her acclaimed at least in certain musical circles as above all a Mahler singer. Surely this is an injustice to her memory. For Mahler with all his command of pathos is nevertheless not a major composer, whereas the *St Matthew Passion* is widely agreed to be one of the world's greatest musical creations. Kathleen herself once said to a leading music critic, "You've never heard me sing if you haven't heard me in Bach".

To reconstruct the joy of her early performances one needs to combine in imagination effects from different records; for instance, in "Have mercy, Lord, on me" one must add the beauty of tone from the very early Decca K1465 (reissued as the 45 rpm disc 71037) to the greater rhythmic and emotional intensity of the performances under Dr Jacques (Decca AK2012 and K1676). These two again have different merits, and only the latter gives the heart-searching crescendo on the word "Lord" at the beginning, which one never knew her to miss out in an actual performance. By an unlucky coincidence the *St Matthew* records were made in the summer of 1947 in the very same week that she was singing in *Orpheus* at Glyndebourne. Hence her voice showed some signs of fatigue and anxiety in the long recording sessions, and I remember her seeming to wage a veritable war against the microphone—although during the lunch intervals she was sufficiently relaxed to be seen squirting cherry stones at the tenor soloist! There are many fine things in her singing in this set, for example the moving expressiveness of the recitative "O gracious God, behold the Saviour standeth bound" on Decca AK2107. But elsewhere one does miss some of her familiar beauties of phrasing. Which is only to say that the value of records is greater as a

reminder of live performances than as a substitute for them. The Albert Hall used to suit her voice exceptionally well, never putting an "edge" on the tone in the way that small halls or recording studios can do. She could fill it effortlessly in *forte* passages; and she was a lovely singer to sit behind among choir or orchestra, since one had the curious impression that she sang through the back of her head as much as through the front of it—that where most singers are like a torch beam focussed narrowly on the audience she was like a globe of light radiating in all directions.

One gains from being present at recording sessions some idea of the patience and emotional self-discipline which are required of the front-rank executant. There are endless hitches and repeats; one of Kathleen's most exacting *St Matthew* arias had to be done four times running. How tired she would look at times while waiting for that ominous repeat signal—and yet as soon as she reached the microphone, the song she was about to sing was once again the most important thing in the world. I have never felt from any performer a greater sense of concentration, as though the entire resources of her personality were being lavished upon what she was doing. The result was that the song somehow came across *as a whole*, with each part perfectly phrased and proportioned to the architecture of the rest. This is the essence of pure classical style, which I believe she realised most fully in her early work with Dr Jacques; and while there are other styles and other worlds of feeling, it may have answered to something in her own nature: for her friend Bernie Hammond said of her attitude to her illness "she had a wonderful sense of proportion".

That there was a profound correspondence between her singing and her personality has of course been felt by many of those who have written about her. There are signs that this has increased the difficulty of assessing her achievement. Because of the great demonstration of public feeling since she died, I have sometimes heard it speculated that she was admired more as a person than as a musician. Yet when her greatness as a person is considered it seems inseparable from the message which she conveyed in her work. Everywhere she went and of all that she sang—as Gerontius's consoler in face of death, as Orpheus pleading his way with music past the Furies into the Blessed Isles—people said the same thing: this girl is sincere, she seems to mean it from her heart. She seems to be burning to tell us that the things she cares for are the best things in creation, stronger and more lasting than anything that can lay siege to them, stronger than ugliness or pain or death. And so long as they listened,

people believed that it was true; and then perhaps they came away and said to themselves: "But after all, it's music". And so in the end she had to show by the courage of her life that it wasn't "only music": that the vision of greatness on which artistic experience opens out is a reality and not an illusion. How easy it might have been, but for the last chapter of the story, to think of her just as "lucky Kath", the girl born with a wonderful talent to whom success came with both hands full. But in the end she proved what in hearing her sing one had felt ready to believe, and served not so much herself as all her fellow artists in reminding us that people can only do anything with greatness who are themselves great.

THE NEW FEDERATION OF SOCIETIES

At the Columbia Recording Studios, London, on July 25th last, the National Federation of Gramophone Societies was launched. Thirty-seven representatives from all parts of the country were present to hear Mr F. E. Young (Gillingham), and Mr W. W. Johnson (Gillingham) relate briefly the history of events leading up to the meeting. At once it was made perfectly clear that the idea of federating came neither from the recording companies nor from *The Gramophone*, but spontaneously from the Gillingham (Kent) Gramophone Society which has been making investigations into the position of the society movement during the past year.

Practically every society in the country is not only willing but anxious to organize and work for the following objects: (1) the extension and development of the society movement; (2) the establishment of an information bureau and a register of societies; (3) the assurance of closer co-operation between the societies and the recording companies; (4) the support of a scheme to establish a national library of gramophone records; (5) the compilation of a panel of lecturers willing to visit societies; and (6) the encouragement of an interchange of visits between neighbouring societies. Thus the importance of an active association.

A formal proposal to federate was therefore carried unanimously and amid acclamation, and the subscription was thereupon fixed at five shillings per society for the first year. Mr W. W. Johnson was elected Chairman of the Federation, and Mr F. E. Young the Secretary; Mr S. O. Meibs (Dulwich and Forest Hill) was also elected Treasurer. The Committee consists of Mr D. M. Freeland (Acton) and Mr H. J. Lovick (Woodford Green).

Various matters were referred to the Committee, which meets in mid-September. Immediately after the meeting all societies will receive full reports of progress made and of plans for the future; a questionnaire will also be enclosed, and correspondents are particularly requested by the Secretary to deal expeditiously with all Federation communications so that work may not be held up.

The inaugural meeting was most satisfactory, and at the conclusion tea was kindly provided by the Columbia Company, followed by an extensive tour of the studios led personally by the manager, Mr Purser. Then followed an enjoyable programme of records presented by Mr Whittle of The Gramophone Company. A unanimous vote of thanks was accorded to EMI and to their representatives for their generous measure of hospitality and kindness.

September 1936

MAY 1956

Miliza Korjus

(A Letter from Rupert P. Seemungal)

Please forgive me my presumption in thinking that this may be the first letter you have received from Trinidad (at least in many a moon) and permit me to express the hope that it will reach the "Correspondence" column. My gripe? The paucity of even good—let alone, great—coloraturas on LP.

No coloratura on this new form (haven of lazy men like myself) has approached the jewelled excellence of a Tetrizzini or a Galli-Curci; save, in a measure, Lina Pagliughi, who is really a carry-over from 78 rpm. Two of the best on LP—Mado Robin and Wilma Lipp—are really nothing to write home about. Robin has stratospheric high notes (*à la* Erna Sack), but not much more than a thin, whitish tone. Lipp is a fair 'un, but one never knows what to expect of her vocally . . . a strangulated high D or a wobbly G above the staff. And while these two artists have a certain artistic sensitivity, where, oh where, in their voices is that steady beauty of tone exhibited by, say, Toti dal Monte in "Ah non credea" from *La Sonnambula* or in "Sul fil d'un soffio etesio" from *Falstaff*?

But let us be even more contemporary and examine the recorded work of the younger Miliza Korjus, the Polish coloratura. (We must by-pass Lily Pons because of her painfully pedantic cadenzas, pathetic and frequent lapses from pitch and intonation, insufficient resources of tone colour and dramatic variety, lack of true beauty, and an undeveloped trill not far differentiated from her sometimes insecurely focused and unsteady upper notes.)

A great coloratura must exhibit several virtues: 1. A sensuously beautiful middle and lower voice; 2. a sweet flutiness in the uppermost reaches that will teach the flute some lessons; 3. a brilliant, precise and powerful trill; 4. a breathtaking pyrotechnical proficiency in scale work; 5. easily floated high notes; 6. sufficient dramatic thrust in the middle upper range; 7. variety of tone hue; 8. a mezza voce and the ability to float extended pianissimi; 9. a steady tone, i.e., not too wide a vibrato and certainly not a tremolo; 10. a melting softness in the middle voice that will befriend, in turn, the violins, the 'cellos, the clarinets and the oboes.

No other contemporary coloratura has fulfilled these conditions more exactly than Korjus . . . not even Dal Monte and Pagliughi, for all their sterling virtues; certainly no LP marvel has arisen to challenge the qualities of the three aforementioned ladies. And those who would condemn Korjus' precise, near flawless, conditioned athleticism of her voice would do well to hearken back to Nellie, Luisa and Amelita. So let us face the facts (bitter though they be) that a coloratura's mission is far from that of a Desdemona or an Isolde . . . or even a Schubert interpreter.

Cite me the LP coloratura who can match this record—and I'll eat my hat: The fragrance of "Carnival of Venice"; the light-hearted agility and roudades of "Der Vogel im Wald" (in spite of Korjus being no Elisabeth Schumann); the limitless golden tone, the sprightliness, and the final easy and confident high A flat in altiss. in the "Shadow Song"; the easy air and individuality of "Una voce poco fa"; the dramatic aptness of "Der Hölle Rache"; the powerful dramatic fluency and opulence (no holds barred!) from top to bottom of "Märtern aller Arten", and the ease of negotiation of the perilous scales; the mechanical exactness of the "Doll's Song"; the languid oriental mysticism of the "Song of India", "Hymn to the Sun" and the Prayer from "Lakmé"; the virginal accents of Gilda in "E il sol dell' anima" with Roswaenge; the scintillating fireworks of the Bolero from "Sicilian Vespers"; those almost Flagstad-like upper notes in "Ernani" (admittedly, not a coloratura's dinner); the absolute perfection of a flawless diamond in "Liebe kleine Nachtigall"; the rhythmic intuition of "Voices of Spring", "Il bacio", and "Parla"; the exquisite, effortless exposition of the embellishments in Proch's "Variations" and in "Ah, vous dirai-je, maman"; the tone colourings of "Die Ziguenerin"; the final, dizzy sure climb of over two octaves in "Invitation to the Dance"; the ethereal pianissimi of "Die Nachtigall"; the bubbling flexibility of "La danza" and "Funiculi funicula"; the round, startling clarity of the middle and upper voice in "Das Ringlein"; the impeccable accuracy and ease of the "Bell Song"; the flight effects of the swallow swooping and soaring away into the distance in "La Villanelle".

I sometimes wonder if HMV have ever fully realised what peerless discs they possess in the 78 rpm European recordings of Miliza Korjus.

JANUARY 1957

Guido Cantelli

(April 27th, 1920—October 23rd, 1956)

A memoir by David Bicknell

The first person to tell me of Guido Cantelli was the Italian soprano, Margherita Carosio, a very discerning judge of other artists; she said that she had sung an opera performance (I believe Massenet's *Manon*) with him and he was inexperienced but very gifted. This must have been about 1948, shortly before Toscanini heard him and invited him to conduct the NBC Orchestra in New York. As soon as this occurred, on behalf of "His Master's Voice", I offered him a contract which was arranged through an agent in America. His first recording took place in New York with the NBC Orchestra and a few months later he recorded with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome.

For some reason which I have now forgotten, I was not present during the Rome recording and consequently my first meeting with Guido Cantelli took place in 1950 when the Scala Orchestra visited the Edinburgh Festival. I was not sure where he was staying in Edinburgh, but I knew that Victor de Sabata was at the North British Hotel, so I went there. I met de Sabata in the entrance hall and he said: "Yes, Guido is having dinner with Ghiringhelli [the Director of the Scala]; I will introduce you". We went into the big dining room together and a very young slim man stood up to greet me. To my surprise he spoke quite good English and, although quiet, appeared very self-assured. After some general conversation, I left him to the dinner, but not before I had been impressed by his intelligence and air of authority.

The outstanding event of the Edinburgh visit was a stupendous performance of the Verdi *Requiem* under Victor de Sabata, but Cantelli also made his mark. At the end of his first concert I was waiting to greet him as he walked off the stage of the Usher Hall. The concert had been a great success and the programme exacting, nevertheless I was appalled to see how much he had been exhausted by it. At that time he was very thin and frail and he appeared to be on the point of collapse. I remember that I was left with no doubts of his great musicality, but seriously

concerned whether he could sustain physically the career of an international conductor—one of the most exhausting professions in the world.

Before returning to Milan, the Scala Company visited London and I saw a good deal more of Cantelli and his charming young wife. We discussed future plans for recording; "I don't want to do anything *à peu près*", he said. I replied that I was delighted to hear it. Towards the end of our conversation he suggested that we should record the Tchaikovsky 5th Symphony with the Scala Orchestra in London before the orchestra left. This was very difficult to arrange and was only made possible by Dr Ghiringhelli agreeing to the departure of the orchestra one day after the rest of the company, which meant a considerable change in the travelling arrangements and extra expense for the Scala. Even so, it appeared very doubtful whether the symphony could be completed in one day and, if it was not finished, the recording would have been a total loss as it was doubtful whether the orchestra would visit London again in the foreseeable future and, for technical reasons, it could not be completed in Milan. "Don't worry", said Cantelli, "I can do it". I decided to risk it.

The recording was a triumphant success and later turned out to be one of the biggest selling long-playing records marketed by "His Master's Voice" in this country, but it was a very near thing so far as the recording was concerned and the noisy coda to the final movement was only completed during the last minutes of the second session. The two remarks quoted above are a good illustration of Cantelli's character. He was completely disinterested in the "approximate", everything he did was done to the best of his ability, whether it was learning English or studying a musical score. He did not spare himself or those working for him, but his efforts were not made for financial gain (he was not much interested in money), nor for personal glorification, but for the perfection of his art. At the same time, if he promised to do something, he did his best to accomplish it, but was prepared to make no concessions so far as his high musical standards were concerned. Where these standards were threatened, he displayed a will of iron.

Before he left London, I arranged that he should return and record with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Apart from a few sessions held in New York (which were supervised by Richard Mohr of RCA Victor), I was present at every subsequent recording and we became close friends. It would be insincere to pretend that I enjoyed many of these sessions. Naturally, with a very highly strung temperament which had been made more so by the

privations which he had undergone in a Nazi labour camp, he found many of the restrictions, inseparable from recording, insufferable and the smallest interruption infuriated him as it destroyed his concentration. At the last recording which he undertook in London he was driven nearly mad by the sound of hammering which entered the Kingsway Hall from a nearby building which was under construction and we were forced to suspend recording, leaving a great symphony without one movement. It was a fine evening and, as we walked together to the Savoy Hotel at the end of the recording, he said to me: "I can easily come back from the Scala during the winter, when the building will have been completed, to finish the symphony and do anything else that you want". Now this movement will never be done.

The extraordinary nervous tension created during these recording sessions often blinded me temporarily to the extremely high standard which he was establishing. When the time came to listen to the finished result, I was usually enchanted with what he had done and never disappointed. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. If he achieved it quickly, well and good; if it took twenty times to achieve, he conducted it twenty times and did not abandon the passage at the nineteenth. No matter how many "takes" we had made, he remembered perfectly and exactly what was good in all of them.

Great responsibilities had been heaped on his shoulders when very young—he was only twenty-eight when he first achieved fame. He rose triumphantly to the occasion and justified the confidence which Toscanini had placed in him, and such was his self-assurance that it was difficult to realize that he was doing what his colleagues had taken many years to equal—sometimes a whole lifetime.

His command of the orchestra was phenomenal—blessed with an exceptional memory, he never conducted from a score and knew not only every note, but all the orchestral reference numbers into the bargain! He was an excellent disciplinarian. "My father was an Army bandmaster", he said to me once, "and he taught me that discipline is as necessary in an orchestra as it is in the Army". No one doubted that he was capable of enforcing it. Nevertheless, I told him that with English orchestras he would achieve more by the human approach and he was intelligent enough to appreciate this very early in his career.

He had established such relations of intimacy with the Philharmonia Orchestra that during his last recording sessions in London during June they were delighted to hear that his wife was

about to have her first child. At the final session they made him promise to send a telegram as soon as the sex was known. I received this telegram, soon after his return to Milan, announcing the birth of a boy, Leonardo, and the telegram was read to the orchestra on the following day amidst great enthusiasm.

Away from his work, resting in his quiet flat in Milan, accompanied by his wife, who is a talented painter and the best of fun, with a few close friends for company, such as Ghedini—the Italian composer and formerly his professor at the Milan Conservatorio—he threw off all his cares and became a gay boy, making me feel very middle aged. His holidays were spent boating and swimming off the islands that abound in the Mediterranean and he returned from these holidays looking very brown and fit. His health had improved steadily during the last five years. He was a very sparing eater; between two sessions all that I could persuade him to eat was a little fruit and some cheese which I used to buy myself and he ate them alone in the Artists Room. Nevertheless, his physique improved steadily and he had become very wiry and well proportioned without a single surplus ounce of fat. Latterly there was no sign of the exhaustion which had impressed me so much on the first acquaintance.

Like many people, he suffered considerable pain in his ears from changes of altitude when travelling in unpressurised aeroplanes. After flying from London to Edinburgh in 1955 he arrived almost deaf and had to visit an ear specialist and very foolishly flew back to London, after his concerts, making matters even worse. We had some recording to do but, after the first session, I saw that it was hopeless to continue in such a condition and I put him in a taxi and took him to the London Clinic, where we saw an eminent ear specialist. To my horror he proposed to puncture the ear drum of each ear with a fine needle and draw off the accumulated liquid which had formed behind it. "You realize that if this man's hearing is affected permanently in any way it will be a catastrophe". He was much amused and said that the operation was a normal one and that no risk was involved. In fact, it improved Guido's hearing sufficiently to enable him to continue working.

Cantelli had had very little experience of opera, but he realized that it was a world which he had to conquer after the retirement of Victor de Sabata from active conducting at the Scala and he set about doing so last year with his customary care and energy, making his debut with *Così fan tutte* at the Piccolo Scala with a very experienced cast of soloists. Guido not only conducted but acted as his own stage producer, no doubt with a view to obtaining

first-hand stage experience. The test of a big Scala opera production at the large Scala had still to come.

When I visited him in Milan last March, he told me that he had accepted the post of chief conductor at the Scala but that the appointment needed confirmation and would not be announced until the autumn. He intended to open the 1957 season probably with *Otello*.

I feel that it is unnecessary to say much about his exceptional musical gifts as these are best displayed in his records and readers of this article can judge for themselves, but I would like to draw your attention to the great clarity of the orchestra (always a sign of a first-class conductor), the magnificent sense of rhythm displayed in the *Three Cornered Hat* Suite and in the final dance of *Daphnis and Chloë*; and above all to the magnificently good taste of his readings, which never descended to sentimentality.

In my opinion his talents were equal to any of those displayed by the great conductors whom I have had the privilege of knowing during the past thirty years. That he had not reached full maturity is certain—how could he have done so at the age of thirty-six?—and that the best was still to come is undeniable. All the same, Guido Cantelli, during his short career, showed himself to be one of the most gifted sons of an exceptionally musical nation and I am proud to think that we have played a small part in making his musicianship known to a musical public larger than it would have reached otherwise and in preserving it for the admiration and enjoyment of a generation that never knew him personally.

For myself, I look back on the figure of a sincere and upright man in many ways tormented, like all great artists, by his inability to express to perfection all that he had to say musically, but striving unceasingly to do so.



JANUARY 1957

Sir Thomas Beecham on "La Bohème" and Puccini

From an interview in the United States with Irving Kolodin

In my estimation, Puccini wrote two of the best operas we have: *Bohème* and *Butterfly*.

I have done *Bohème* over three hundred times and—a few years ago—I thought I had my last go at it. But I was tempted by the opportunity to do it here in the United States, where I had never recorded an opera before.

What I have done reflects Puccini's desires about this score of 1920. That was what—twenty-five years after the première? It came out in '96, didn't it? Well, in the intervening time Puccini had heard *Bohème* innumerable times. He had a positive mania for going about and hearing his own operas, whether they were played in a town twenty miles away in Italy, or in my country, a thousand miles off. People like Massenet or Saint-Saëns wrote an opera, went to the première and that was the end of it. They would go off and write another one. But Puccini was different.

Puccini, for instance, had come to London in 1920. We were doing the first performance of "Il Trittico" (*Il Tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*) in Covent Garden, and Puccini came over to—so he thought—"supervise" the production. It was then I had the chance to go over the score of *Bohème* with him in very close detail. I was particularly acquainted with it then because we played it all the time with my English Opera Company, in the provinces. Puccini was all the go in those days.

For an instance, there are many places in which the performing directions are simply not explicit enough, or even contradictory. You have a crescendo at a certain bar and nothing after it to indicate where the decrescendo occurs. You have dynamic markings in one part of an ensemble, but not in another. In almost every instance, Puccini confirmed my impression, gathered through many performances of *Bohème*, that something was lacking in one respect here, or incomplete there. So what I have undertaken to do in this recording represents—as Puccini indicated in my own score—his views of this earlier work not many years before he died (1924).

In assigning Puccini his rightful place among great composers of opera, one cannot compare him directly with such earlier masters as Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti or the Verdi of *Rigoletto* and *Trovatore*. The customs of writing were then very much different. They had a marvellous device called recitative secco. In other words, when the action bogged down or the librettist was in a quandary what to do next, he would simply stop, have the character speak some lines that developed the story—which could be put to any conventional musical line—and then the composer would write an aria. If the quality of the inspiration was great, as almost always with Mozart, or sometimes in Rossini, what happened in between was unimportant. But when the scheme of writing a consecutive musical texture was introduced, the problem became very much greater.

It is for this reason that I rate Puccini so highly. He achieved a synthesis of word, music and action that is not only highly appropriate to the subject and easy to assimilate, but also, in the end, very satisfying.

Naturally, it was important that he had the right text. He must have given his librettists the very devil's own time of it. I had some considerable conversation with my old friend Illica (collaborator with Puccini on *Butterfly*, *Tosca* and the preceding *Manon Lescaut*) in the early days of this century when I considered myself a prospective opera composer. He did a three-act libretto on the subject of Christopher Marlowe for me, and he spoke at great length on the problems of working with Puccini. He conveyed the impression of a rather reticent man, but one who knew what he wanted and was difficult to please. Didn't get along with too many people, Puccini. I never liked him too well, but we managed.

Illica told me, for example, that the idea for the whole last act of *Manon Lescaut* was Puccini's. He had already written the music for it and was determined that he was going to use it, though nothing much happens dramatically. "I didn't like it at all", said Illica, "but there it was".

Bohème is one of the most skilfully orchestrated scores we have. The use of the Glockenspiel or the chimes, not to mention the more conventional instruments, is precisely related to the happenings on stage. Even the big drum—the bane of Italian opera—is here used with restraint. It is rather an oddity that Puccini is not given due credit for being the master of orchestral writing that he is. The simple fact is that toward the end of the nineteenth century such men as Tchaikovsky and Strauss evolved a formula for orchestration which they used more or

less unchanged under almost all circumstances: doublings in the strings with the horns in the middle, or certain other set relationships. A very good sound, to be sure, but tending to a certain sameness. With Puccini each score presents a different tonal quality and colouration—*Bohème* is different from *Butterfly*, as *Butterfly* is different from *Tosca*. To be sure, there are family traits, but the texture and detail in each are very much related to the specific kind of subject with which he is dealing.

The evolution of a Puccini style embodied the development of a quasi-melodic yet narrative style which serves so well to carry the action along in his greatest works. We can see that style evolving in his earlier *Manon Lescaut*, which is in many ways a charming piece. Given a tenor of high quality, it can have quite a success. Puccini's gift for melody is apparent in the tenor's song in the first act ("Donna non vidi mai"), with which the right voice can make a fine effect. But the other order of things only emerges in Act 2 ("O tentatrice, O tentatrice").

Manon Lescaut has, for me, one abiding irritation—a constant striving for high notes, whether at the climaxes or not. That is something Puccini inherited, I think, from his studies in Milan with Ponchielli and his associations with Leoncavallo and Mascagni, his young contemporaries at the time. He got it out of himself, however, by the time he came to *Bohème*, where the vocal writing is more resourceful and suitable to the characters.

As to the varying values of Puccini's and Massenet's treatment of Abbé Prévost's *nouvelle*, there is no real comparison. Puccini's is the work of a gifted young man. Massenet's is a masterpiece of the French stage, perhaps the most French of all operas. It has everything the French love—an appealing young hero, a peccant bride, a reproachful *père de famille*, a fashion show on the Cours-la-Reine, a gambling scene à la Monte Carlo, all surrounded with melodious, artistically wrought music.

Nevertheless, I am always struck by Puccini's artistic resources in such a work as *Bohème*, though many regard him as of an intellectually inferior order, as great composers go. But the transitions and modulations from one episode to another in *Bohème*, sometimes within a particular song or duet itself, show a very high order of musical craftsmanship. As, for example, in the first-act narrative of the tenor. The tenor is singing along in E when he comes to a certain point where a change is wanted. Puccini takes it immediately, without any preparation, into A—which at this point is exactly what is wanted. It reminds me of the simple but highly dramatic effect with which Verdi uses the trumpets in the triumphal scene of *Aida*.

I have sometimes wondered why it is that many operas which are admirably constructed, have capital stories and excellent music, nevertheless fail to hold the public attention really interested and absorbed. I think it must be a highly developed inner visual sense in the consciousness of supremely gifted writers for the theatre like Mozart, Verdi, Wagner and Puccini that sees, as in an ever-present mirror, the progress of the drama running through every phrase, word and action, and simultaneously evolves the right sort of music to go along with it. Wagner, for example, didn't have it all the time. He stops to digress, to talk with himself, to talk with the audience quite outside the provocation of the dramatic moment. Puccini almost always avoids it, though I must say I think the moment in the second act of *Tosca* when the soprano sings her song "Vissi d'arte" (not a very good one), is such a moment. It is quite clear that neither Illica nor Puccini knew quite what to do at this point, having interrupted Scarpia's villainous pursuit of the lady with the off-stage drums.

But such lapses are rare in Puccini's best works. Mind you, I am not discussing here the quality of the inspiration, about which everyone will have his own opinion. Puccini did not strive for utterances on such a grand scale as Wotan's Farewell in the *Walküre*, where the expanse of the melody and the soaring sound of the orchestra are enormous. Nor did he fall to the monotony of the third act of *Siegfried*, or such tedious parts of Wagner as we have in *Götterdämmerung*. His art was a human and affecting one, perfectly appropriate to its subjects.

I have made a practice wherever I go to ask intelligent amateurs or the better informed dilettanti, whether in my own country, or here, or in Italy—where there are many more of them—who their favourite operatic composer is. Almost without exception, regardless of whether they are doctors or cab drivers or operators of a lift, they reply: "Puccini".

When I ask them to explain, they say in effect, though the words may differ: "He doesn't keep us waiting. He gets on with it". And that is one of the abiding attractions of an opera like *Bohème*. It doesn't keep us waiting. It does get on with it.

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FEBRUARY 1957

Toscanini and Opera

by Spike Hughes

Arturo Toscanini made his first professional appearance in front of an orchestra on June 25th, 1886; he made his last on June 5th, 1954. On both occasions he conducted a Verdi opera—a coincidence which may be considered to have had a symbolical as well as a literal significance, for in many ways Toscanini's life can be said to have begun and ended with the music of Giuseppe Verdi. Certainly, Toscanini's outlook on all music was dominated by his experience as a conductor of opera; the lyric theatre was in his blood; he brought drama to music and spent a lifetime trying to get orchestral instruments to ape the human voice in those lyrical passages which always set him shouting "Cantare! Cantare!" at rehearsals.

Twenty years ago I used to consider that Toscanini had not done well by my generation; we were too young to have known much of him as an opera conductor and he showed no signs of wanting to leave us any more in the way of a recorded legacy of opera than the immortal *Traviata* preludes and one or two overtures and Wagner excerpts. Toscanini put all that right in the last ten years of his life when he recorded *Fidelio*, *La Bohème*, and four Verdi operas—*La Traviata*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Otello* and *Falstaff*—as well as the second act of Gluck's *Orfeo* and the Prologue to *Mefistofele*.

Although one cherished a forlorn hope that he might record some more Verdi, or even another Puccini opera—like *Manon Lescaut* or *Turandot*—in spite of his "official" retirement, most of us, I think, began to reflect on Toscanini's life-work, particularly as it is represented in his recordings, as soon as we heard he had completed his *Ballo in maschera* in June 1954. (A recording of *Aïda* would perhaps have been a more appropriate this-is-where-we-came-in farewell to music, but there is no doubt that one way and another *Un ballo in maschera* played its part in Toscanini's life. It was the first Verdi opera he ever heard, and it was owing to an argument with the Scala audience on the question of encores in the opera that Toscanini so spectacularly walked out of the theatre after the second scene in 1903 and did not set foot in La Scala again for three years.)

The outcome of my own reflection was that perhaps in the end it was Toscanini's Verdi which proved the greatest revelation of all. His Beethoven was always a tremendous experience, but one had already glimpsed the peaks of the nine symphonies through the haze of other people's performances; with Toscanini and Beethoven it was really a matter of confessing that here was the way one had always dreamed of hearing Beethoven sound. But with Verdi there had never been any peaks to be sighted through the thick low-lying cloud of traditional "singers' opera" performances; one suspected that peaks did exist from looking at the relief map known as a full-score, but one never knew what they were really like. Toscanini's recording of his four Verdi operas (what applies to them applies to the Requiem as well, of course) were not a case of this particular music sounding at last as one had always dreamed it should sound; but of sounding as one had never dreamed it could possibly sound.

It was the sheer novelty of the experience of Toscanini's *Traviata* recording which, I believe was as much as anything responsible for the rather unenthusiastic Press which greeted it. It must have been a shock to find that what is commonly regarded as a "singers' opera" (an art-form Verdi never recognized) had been transformed not—as some suggested—into a conductor's opera, but into a composer's opera. Time and again in that performance of *La Traviata* Toscanini put things *back* into the score which a slipshod, singer-ridden tradition had thrown overboard. Cross your heart and tell me how many times you have heard Violetta's cry of "Amami, Alfredo" in Act 2—the complete phrase—sung as Toscanini insists it should be sung, which is by giving the full values to the notes Verdi wrote for those heart-rending eighteen bars of farewell. It is in details like this, in the restoration of apparently insignificant punctuation notes for strings to the right beat in the bar when Violetta, at the end of her scene with Germont in Act 2, tearfully echoes her "Conosca il sacrificio", in Toscanini's acceptance, first, last, and always, of the belief that Verdi rarely did anything without a good reason that his recording of *La Traviata* is in its way one of the most rewarding of all his opera performances. Complaints that this *Traviata* is too tense, or rigid, are also common; leaving aside tenseness, which is by no means out of place in this opera, in nearly every case where he is considered to be "driving" the singers Toscanini will be found to be taking the music slower than the official metronome marking indicated in the score. It is the old illusion, I fear, which fooled so many people when they first heard Toscanini; the illusion created by crystal-clear

orchestral texture and instrumental articulation, that the music sounded faster than it really was.

The purely sentimental reflection on hearing Toscanini's recording of *Otello*, that the first time the second violoncello part of the famous introduction to the love duet in Act 1 was heard in public the passage was played by the conductor when he was nineteen years old in the Scala orchestra in 1887, is not so important as the fact that it provides us with the conductor's rarest link with the musical past—his personal link with Verdi, to whom he always had privileged access. Toscanini's association with the première of *Otello* not only gives his recording a unique authenticity but has coloured his whole approach to the opera in a way which seems, most curiously, not to have been noted by those who must have heard earlier performances of *Otello* under his direction. At least, from my own experience of how little a Toscanini performance varied in its essentials or detail with the years, it seems unlikely that his recording made in 1947 should have included elements not already present and noticeable in his performances of the opera in, say, 1894 at Pisa or 1912 at the Metropolitan. As it was, hearing Toscanini's *Otello* unprepared for the first time in 1953, the performance came as a complete surprise, not least for the way the centre of gravity in the opera seemed to have swung entirely in the direction of Iago. The quality of evil with which Toscanini endowed the music of Iago is more than unusually sinister: it is also dead right, of course, for it must be remembered that Verdi's original title for his opera was not *Otello* but *Iago*.

Consistency was a predominant characteristic of Toscanini's *Falstaff*, and it is fascinating to find the same touches occurring nuance-for-nuance in the 1953 recording which one remembers from the Salzburg performance of 1935—the ludicrously optimistic elegance, for instance, of the music accompanying Falstaff's appearance before Ford in all his full courting-dress, and the subtle conception of the whole of the last scene of the opera as a kind of super-scherzo, with the "pizzica!" chorus setting the basic tempo for the final fugue. There is the same feeling of solid re-creation about Toscanini's 1944 *Fidelio* which has all the tremendous nobility of the 1935 Salzburg performance, though unfortunately no Lotte Lehmann. Unfortunately, owing to the congenital reluctance of engineers to persevere with the long-playing record when they can play with atom bombs, posterity has been denied what it should have inherited from the Salzburg years—complete recordings of Toscanini's astonishing performances there of *Meistersinger* and *The Magic Flute*. The Wagner

(and I am no Wagnerite) was a fascinating experience, with an orchestral texture of such clarity that one revised all one's ideas about Wagner's reputation as an orchestrator. The Mozart was unique inasmuch as *The Magic Flute* was almost the only music by the composer that Toscanini really understood—with the typical exception of the poignant instrumental postlude to Pamina's great G minor aria. Toscanini went on with the strict tempo he had maintained throughout, regardless and relentless.

If Toscanini's genius consisted of observing what the composer intended, it consisted equally of disregarding it sometimes, too; and not always to the composer's advantage. He bequeathed us an authoritative recording of a masterpiece which he brought into the world—Puccini's *Bohème*. One could wish for no better legacy; but what on earth made him ignore one of the most clearly written instructions in all opera—the *allargando* so carefully marked all over the last bars of Act 2? There was probably an answer, but if we knew the answer to everything Toscanini did we could all be Toscaninis, I suppose.

UP THE GRAMOPHONE

One of the most interesting sidelights of these difficult and anxious times is the growing enthusiasm about all things gramphonic. It was almost a foregone conclusion that recorded music, serious, light and dance, would be in greater demand, but one hardly expected the interest in new instruments and accessories would rise so markedly as it has during the past few weeks.

Letters from readers seeking advice on the purchase of new receivers, radiograms, loudspeakers, pickups, etc., usually reach the peak immediately following the radio exhibition, but even the uncertainty and excitement of the European situation has only succeeded in temporarily delaying the demand.

No doubt the cancellation of the television service may partly be responsible, for many people had set their hearts on introducing this form of entertainment into their homes this winter. Now, baulked of such a project, they are turning again with renewed interest and-zest to their gramophones and records.

Whether that assumption is correct or not, the fact remains that people are buying music and reproducers and are, with the black-out as an incentive, devising much of their own entertainment.

Reports from manufacturers and dealers confirm this, too; indeed, one of the dealers' chief complaints of late has been about the inadequacy of supplies.

Soon there will be the impetus to trade which Christmas will most assuredly bring. And so it behoves all those who have yet to make a decision to crystallise their ideas. For, believe us, it is a wise head that decides to shop early.

December 1939

JUNE 1957

Edward Elgar 1857 - 1934

by Bernard Shore

In the year of Elgar's centenary one inevitably calls to mind personal recollections of this great figure in English music, and none more clear and vivid than in that year 1933, when the BBC organized the "Elgar Festival". One can still feel the thrill of that moment in the old Queen's Hall, when the BBC Symphony Orchestra awaited his arrival for the first rehearsal—much as we first awaited Toscanini, only the whole atmosphere was far less tense and rather like the welcoming home of a loved member of the family from some distant land; whereas an awful expectancy lit by fear tinged our first meeting with Toscanini.

Elgar was 75 in 1933 and had long retired from public life, and it was even said that the world of music no longer interested him! So this was one of those rare occasions when we had the opportunity of paying homage to this great man, who had for so long disappeared from our musical lives. Homage it was, for every orchestra has always intensely admired him and owes him an enormous debt for writing music for every player to rejoice in. No composer, perhaps before or since, has ever understood the orchestra quite so well. Above all, he exploited the art of the orchestral player and none of them was ever neglected. Not only does his music demand a high degree of technical skill, but the whole art of colouring and phrasing is set before the player and the artist within him roused. Elgar seldom relegated his instrumentalists to "filling-up" chores; instead they had the excitement of the virtuoso's role. A favourite saying of his "now second violins, enjoy this tune, I wrote it especially for you" must have cheered many a sad heart in the second violins of the 'nineties.

So, on that summer morning rehearsal, as the beloved Squire came once more amongst his tenants, there was a roar of applause as we stood up and gave him one of the receptions of his life. Hale and hearty at 75, only his white hair and a rather curious impression of hunched shoulders gave much indication of his age, as he climbed on to the rostrum and faced us in his typically nervous manner. He looked like a retired general or, as we have said, a country squire rather than the famous musician. After



*Roger Wimbush, compiler of this Jubilee Book
and contributor to THE GRAMOPHONE since 1929*



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*Malcolm Walker—Editor
THE GRAMOPHONE—1972*

a few halting remarks in his attractively nervous vibrating voice which revealed his pleasure at coming amongst very old friends again, he at once got down to business as if he hated fuss. His peculiarly expressionless stick tapped the stand almost irritably and then began that unforgettable journey through all his major works. As they unfolded one after another, the orchestra gave him everything it had and a good deal more than he ever asked for. He was somewhat stiff in all his movements and was never an inspiring conductor, but the orchestra somehow never seemed to want much more from him, but just gave that extra ounce of energy and feeling which only the great conductors ever succeed in drawing out of the players.

Part of his genius for orchestration lay in his incredible mastery of nuance and balance. Every tiny detail is marked on the score, and there seems little for the conductor to do if the orchestra is finely trained; and this is probably one reason why we so seldom hear Beecham playing Elgar's music—there is little left for him to create!

Elgar was always extremely easy to work with, and the moments of trouble were so rare that the odd occasion might be worth recording, as there was another side of him that occasionally presented itself. He used to take immense pains in rehearsing *Falstaff*, and at one rehearsal he suddenly became fidgety over some quite trivial detail (the side drum happened to be a bit slow in obeying his beat at the moment of Falstaff's death). At the actual performance, which seemed to be a good one, the player was caught out again (we saw Elgar watching him) and we were suddenly horrified to see a spasm of anger on his face; he stopped conducting and made no attempt whatever to control things any more. We struggled to the end together somehow or other, but none of us will ever forget this shattering experience. However, such a thing was so rare that I can think of no other such case at an orchestral concert, but I understand exactly the same kind of thing has happened elsewhere.

Let us turn to one or two of his most outstanding works, first, *The Enigma Variations*. It seems difficult to realize that works like *The Enigma Variations* and the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* were written so long ago, the former in 1899 and the latter a few years later. Both are still so fresh, and matchless in their particular way. He set an entirely new idea for a Theme and Variations—breaking away entirely from the classical form hitherto adhered to by almost every composer, and adding the intriguing conception of another ghostly theme, never actually heard, but always present and throwing no shadow. With the

Theme as a frame, he writes each variation as a character sketch of his intimate friends. The first variation is a lovely portrait of his wife, who seemed to lie at the very source of his creative power.

At a Toscanini rehearsal of the *Enigma* we still remember the considerable amount of time the great conductor spent on the perfect phrasing of the theme itself and the balancing of its supporting harmonies. This is one of the occasions when Toscanini took a great deal of pleasing, yet no one else has ever seemed to worry about the statement of the theme, as real trouble always comes in the second variation where the string passages are as difficult to bring off to perfection as anything Elgar ever wrote; here we had to work hard to pacify Toscanini's demon! Even the shade of Sir Henry Wood may still be heard exclaiming, "You mustn't fluff these passages, violins, it shows!"

All these exquisitely poised and contrasted variations have their difficulties, but the orchestra of to-day now takes them all in their stride. Almost every adjective could be used to describe the diversity of mood of these variations, from the extraordinary tranquillity of the Romanza to the rampaging of the timpani in Troyte; the delicious lightness of Dorabella, and the magnificent self-portrait at the end. Of all the performances most remembered, Toscanini's stands out, and it is good to have his recording, which is thrilling.

Then, *The Introduction and Allegro* which remains a masterpiece for strings, still unchallenged by any other work in this field for its mastery of string writing. Here, Elgar again explored a new idea, as in the Variations. Whereas the Concerto Grosso was one of the earliest forms of works for strings, Elgar was the first to combine a string quartet with a mass of strings. This is dedicated to his friend, Professor Sandford, of Yale University. From beginning to end Elgar seems to have been thinking of the thousands of string players who wilt in orchestras, never feeling the thrill of the soloist, but just being members of a team, often alas spending their time in dull inner parts, playing A and B for their more fortunate brothers in the orchestra. In this piece every player finds himself playing superb tunes and passages with the confidence and *élan* of the virtuoso. Again and again Elgar's early training as a violinist shows through his writing for strings. His use of open strings in passage work, the bow in his phrasing, his knowledge of the "lay" of the music on the instruments, and skill in details such as contrasting his colours between the A and D strings, etc., all point to his own practical experience as a violinist. So, in this work we have the last word in the art of

string writing. The contrast of quartet and orchestra has the effect of lightening the rich colours of the mass of strings as if with four golden threads that are woven into the texture itself and not merely embossed.

One of the tests for the standard of performance presents itself in the opening bars. First, the terrific attack by the whole body of strings in which there must be no roughness but magnificent sonority; then the superb descending passages which should have the "bravura" of the virtuoso behind them. They are of the stuff that the fine artist craves for—freedom, brilliance, intense excitement, and the chance to produce a grand sound on every note. But 40 or 50 virtuosi here have to play as one and only magnificent leadership and training can bring this off to perfection. Played for safety, the whole of this opening becomes flat and stodgy.

The use Elgar makes of his contrasting protagonists is immediately apparent; the quartet, after this initial burst of sound, introduces us to a trial run of the main theme of the Allegro—playing the two bars of its ascending phrase whilst the orchestra completes its symmetry in descent, and almost at once we come to one of the most loved of viola solos—the theme which Elgar finally brings to ecstasy, at the end of the work. This viola solo is too often smothered, because of the failure to reduce the orchestra to the thinnest of pianissimi, and even Elgar in the final phrase surreptitiously calls in the 2nd violins to reinforce the tone of the viola.

As in all Elgar's scores, every minute detail is marked, and the frequent changes of tempo have to be worked out so that they all fit into the whole pattern. This is no place to describe the work in detail and it must suffice, if we again emphasise the extraordinary excitement that the work invariably awakens in every player, provided that the conductor has something to give and understands and believes in his Elgar. In spite of all the directions in the score, there is plenty left here for the conductor to create, it is for him to interpret Elgar's signposts, which point the way clearly enough but do not get him there. Of all the conductors one remembers playing with, Boult gives the finest performance of the work.

It is always a sad disappointment that the great Violin Concerto is comparatively seldom heard. Here again the work is in a class by itself, like the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*. None of the great classics is written more magnificently for the violin, and the brilliant orchestration is so closely woven in the texture of the solo part, that it seems almost miraculous that Elgar succeeds in keeping the violin invariably free and dominant.

Composed in 1910, it serves as a great bridge between the first and second symphonies which are widely different in style. There is one of Elgar's typical inscriptions on the score: "Herein is enshrined the soul of . . ."; but the concerto is dedicated to Kreisler, who gave the first performance, and W. H. Reed in his book speaks of this thrilling night at Queen's Hall, when he was playing in the orchestra. Reed also had the wonderful luck to have been closely consulted by the composer when he was writing the work, so he must have known every note of it. Both, Kreisler and Elgar, received an ovation, and all who were there might have expected that the work would find itself in every violinist's repertoire and its rightful place amongst the classics. In fact, this does not appear to have happened. Only our English violinist, Albert Sammons, with whom the work was always associated in this country, made it his own, but the great international virtuosi seldom seem to play it.

Its excessive length undoubtedly frightens many builders of programmes, but the structure of the work is of such majestic proportions that in performance one is not unduly conscious of its length. The work might well be considered to be the last of the great masterpieces for the violin, where the instrument is exploited in all its true qualities. Every technical device and magic of the violinist's art is concentrated on the essence of the music itself, at no moment in the work are the brilliant passages made to glitter for sheer virtuosity's sake, and always that lovely interplay between violin and orchestra fascinates the listener. It is true that the work is nostalgic, but this is nothing to be ashamed of, as the world of 1910 was not the frustrated, harassed thing which we now live in—and which is reflected in much of our contemporary music. Elgar's finest music still has the power to hold us fast.

Finally, the 'Cello Concerto, which is the last of his major works for orchestra. The tragedy of his wife's death, six months after the work was first performed, seemed to dry up all Elgar's creative energy, and his only efforts were thereon directed towards mere orchestral transcription. It was ten years before we find him making sketches for his third symphony.

The 'Cello Concerto, again, like the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* broke new ground. Never before had anyone conceived the idea that a full length concerto could achieve the intimacy of chamber music, for that is what it is in spite of the composer's use of the full orchestra. It is not a work for the virtuoso but for a great musician, no glittering passage work or the heroic overcoming of difficulties keeps the audience breathless;

instead, Elgar gives us an almost divine simplicity, with his exquisite orchestration fined down, as we have said, to the intimacy of chamber music. Yet, he does not hesitate to use the full power of the orchestra when it is most effective. Probably no other concerto, let alone that for 'cello, has ever been so wonderfully scored. Though we have spoken of its simplicity, it is actually one of the most difficult works to bring off because of its transparency, and the fact that the slightest blemish stands out like an eyesore. The flexibility, balance and perfection of ensemble presents considerable difficulty to both soloist and orchestra, and it was unfortunate that the first performance was marred by these very factors, and the response of the audience proved cold and disappointing. Such an intimate work was not expected after the huge canvas of the Violin Concerto.

One can but mention a few salient features. First the fine opening theme on the 'cello, which Elgar makes vastly impressive by the use of magnificently sonorous chords that the 'cello is so successful in producing. Then the single unaccompanied thread of the principal theme, first played by the violas then taken up by the 'cello accompanied, surely a unique and daring innovation. Much could be written on this one theme, which is merely a set of Elgarian sequences, yet has magic in it; so deceptively easy looking for the soloist, but demanding perfection of bowing and shifting technique. In the second movement we hear Elgar trying over the music first, before he finally launches the Scherzo, which flies at great speed and lightness of rhythm until we hear a typical grandiose theme which suddenly pulls up the tempo. This phrase is marked with Elgar's favourite "*largamente*", and he always liked to hear it rather exaggerated.

In most slow movements, composers generally use their solo instruments for decorating the music with freely written passage work, but here Elgar relies solely upon slow moving but exquisitely poised phrases, and a great depth of feeling. The 'cellist takes the stage throughout, but he has to achieve everything by the sheer beauty and range of his tone. One of the difficulties is to keep this movement in proportion—it can get out of hand. In the last movement, however, there is a vivid contrast, and the 'cellist has plenty of technical things to think about. The irresistible swing of the principal theme now takes us back into the concert hall and we return to the more typical "concerto". Only in the later stages of the movements do we return to the intimacy of the first three movements, but now the mood is darkened by

a heart-rending sadness which seems to foreshadow the composer's coming tragedy.

Such a work as this is peculiarly apt for our own English temperament, and it is curious that foreigners, great artists as they may be—even Casals himself—never seem to interpret the work aright. Elgar puts everything he wants in the score, and we English respect his directions and play it to the best of our ability. Our friends from abroad, however, seem to try and put things into it that are not there, and this is one reason why we prefer to hear the 'cello concerto played by an English 'cellist.

It is fitting to end with this work, as in some ways it contains all that is most lovable in his music, both for listeners and musicians.

GRAMOPHONE SERVICE

As your note in the February issue of *The Gramophone* must remind us, it is not so long ago since we were in the painful habit of asking for Beethoven in a cycle store that bristled with spare parts and little oil baths, etc. The shopkeeper, irritated and bewildered by the constant overlapping of music upon rim brakes, would frown at the merest mention of Chopin and scowl if we uttered the word Tchaikovsky.

There are times, when one is purchasing records in _____'s that the dreary memory of those cycle shop days returns, but with what pleasure we shake ourselves and recollect that here, at last, we have stumbled upon a service that is delightful!

However, the cycle-gramophone store was a link in the chain, and we must not be too hard upon that link.

Holland Park.

ARTHUR F. THORN.
April, 1926

BRUNSWICK AND DECCA

The Chenil Gallery, where most of the Brunswick recording is done, is very busy these days. We hear that Mr Anthony Bernard has recorded a big work of Delius as well as the *Air and Dance*, which the composer has given him to record for the gramophone before ever it is heard in public. This is probably unique in the annals. Mr Philip Lewis is busy preparing the first list of Decca records which is likely to create rather a sensation since it will include Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto*, with Sapellnikov as soloist, the third Brahms Symphony, and the *Carnaval à Paris* of Svendsen. Bert Ambrose and his Mayfair Hotel Orchestra are supplying dance records.

June 1929

AMENITIES

This month Schnabel is coming to England to begin his great undertaking of recording all the Beethoven piano sonatas and five pianoforte concertos in the HMV studios at St John's Wood for the Beethoven Sonata Society. A good start will be half the battle with an artist of this calibre, who has so steadfastly in the past refused his blessing to the gramophone, and in some ways this event may be regarded as the most critical in the whole history of instrumental recording. But Schnabel is not the man to turn back when he has once set his hand to the piano.

March 1932

NOVEMBER 1957

Dennis Brain

May 17th, 1921—September 1st, 1957

by Walter Legge

Music has suffered irreparable loss by the tragic death of Dennis Brain. He was, in the exact sense of the word, unique. Even among experts opinions differ on the respective and comparative merits of half a dozen conductors, singers, violinists and pianists, but since the days when he first became internationally known there was no voice to dispute that Dennis Brain had achieved unequalled pre-eminence in his art. In his warm and serene person all the essential qualities of the great interpretative artist were blended in perfect harmony.

He was innately musical in a way which defies description or analysis. He shaped phrases with an instinctive rightness that seemed inevitable. Technical problems did not exist for him. He had tamed the most notoriously intractable of all instruments to be his obedient servant and raised it again to sing the song the sirens sang. Over his instrument's whole range he had a mastery of intonation, of legato, of staccato, of dynamic range and, above all, of expressiveness that no other horn player has matched. But neither the listing of his qualities nor their sums explains the essential quality of his magic. That all these attributes should be embodied in one young man was miracle enough. But there was a still greater magic—the *personality* of his tone.

An unmistakable, immediately recognizable, personal tone is an attribute shared by the few great instrumentalists and singers of every generation. In Dennis Brain's case its sunny radiance was the outward manifestation of a warm and serene nature. His sound was balm to the ears, to the mind and to the spirit. Its essential character did not change in all the twenty years I knew him. Neither his growth to supreme mastery, the deepening of his perceptions, nor even the change from an old French horn (held together in later years with adhesive plaster) to a modern German instrument altered the basic character of his tone. It was the audible radiation of his basic goodness.

Dennis was only sixteen when he first blew himself into my awareness. From a studio which I believed to be empty there

came the most impudent imaginable utterances of the *Till Eulenspiegel* theme. In the studio I found a cherub-faced schoolboy standing alone with a horn in his hands. Unable to believe the evidence of ear and eye I asked him, "Was that you playing?" He blushed and said, "Yes. Aubrey Brain is my dad". He was there to record the Mozart D major Divertimento with his father and the Lener Quartet.

When his time for call-up came, Dennis went into the RAF Central Band at Uxbridge. All honour to Wing-Commander O'Donnell for the service he did to our post-war musical life. In wartime Germany and Italy music was a reserved occupation. It was otherwise here. But O'Donnell laid his net so that every exceptionally able young instrumentalist knew that a place would be found for him in the RAF Band. Dennis landed there, and acquired a nickname that stuck to him for ten years—"Dubbie", to distinguish him from Denis (one "n") Matthews. The goodwill tour of the RAF Band in America laid the foundation of Dennis's American reputation and brought him an offer from Stokowski to go as his first horn to Philadelphia "when the war is over".

During the war Dennis made several records, all of which have disappeared from the catalogues, through the advent of tape recording and long-playing records. For Columbia he made the fourth Mozart Horn Concerto with the Hallé Orchestra, and the Beethoven Horn Sonata with Denis Matthews. Decca recorded Britten's Serenade, written for Dennis, Peter Pears and the Boyd Neel Orchestra, and Brahms's Op. 17, Four Songs for Female Voices, Two Horns and Harp. In most of Sidney Beer's war-time records with his National Symphony Orchestra, Dennis was the first horn.

He was still officially an airman when I realized my long-laid plan of forming the Philharmonia Orchestra—the name retained from the Quartet I had formed in the early days of the war. Naturally, Dennis was first horn. The first time the orchestra met was to record the Tchaikovsky Concerto with Moiseiwitsch, Weldon conducting, in the Friends Meeting House. In the interval Dennis came to me and said, "This is going to be good. I didn't think we should ever have an orchestra like this here". Many battles were to be fought and some years to pass before the orchestra began to sound as I had dreamed. But that is another story. In the late nineteen forties Dennis was first horn of the Philharmonia, soloist with orchestras, the most sought-after horn-player for chamber music and, when Sir Thomas Beecham first formed the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, first horn there. Dennis formed his own Wind Quintet and toured it here and

abroad. He seemed tireless, but always relaxed. The story is told that on one occasion he played two concertos, Mozart and Strauss, with a provincial orchestra, the two appearances separated by a classical symphony and the interval. During the interval Dennis was missing from the Artists' Room. The conductor said jokingly, "He's probably giving a half-hour recital at the BBC". Dennis was!

Neither the great fame he achieved nor the admiration and affection of the most eminent conductors altered Dennis's nature. He remained, until the day of his death, the laughing, cherubic-faced schoolboy I had first met nearly twenty years ago, always arriving punctually at the last minute for a concert or a session, always racing out first to the canteen.

His only interests in life, apart from music, were his family and motor-cars. I do not believe he ever played a rehearsal or recording session or even a concert session without having the latest copy of *The Autocar* or *The Motor* open on his music-stand. The day of the Philharmonia's first concert in Zurich my wife bought a second-hand Hudson saloon, a huge vehicle that was afterwards nicknamed the Atlantic Liner. We invited Dennis to drive with us down to the next concerts in Turin and Milan. I drove. We planned to drive back to Zurich through the night after the second Milan concert. As we were about to leave Toscanini summoned my wife and me to his home to tell us that he would come to London to conduct the Philharmonia. By the time we got back to the hotel it was well into the night and I was much too happy and excited to trust myself at the wheel, so I asked Dennis to drive. At dawn we were at the foot of the Gotthard Pass. Although the road was not officially open to traffic, Dennis insisted that we should drive over it rather than wait for the first train to take us through the tunnel. The whole road was hard, polished ice, with snow piled up nine or ten feet high on one side, and often sheer drops of several hundred feet on the other. Dennis handled that unmanageable brute of a car on a Serpentine skating-rink surface with a cool mastery that I have never seen equalled. To this day I blush to think of having driven in the presence of such a master. Curiously enough, it was only when he was driving that Dennis shed his endearing, irresponsible boyishness. It is terrible that his own relaxation should have cost him his life.

Their passion for cars forged an extra-musical link between Dennis and von Karajan. They both knew by heart the specifications, advertised and actual performances, structural details, advantages and disadvantages of every fast car, and never tired

of discussing them. When Karajan told Dennis that he was giving up cars in favour of flying Dennis looked at him in hurt astonishment, then smiled and said, "Yes, but you'll need a car to get to and from the aerodrome". One of his happiest hours was when Karajan let him drive his Mercedes 300SL in Lucerne.

For an artist of his greatness Dennis has left a slender legacy of records. The fault lies in the repertoire rather than with the recording companies. As a soloist we have on Columbia the four Mozart Concertos with the Philharmonia conducted by von Karajan and now, posthumously published, the two Strauss Horn Concertos with the Philharmonia conducted by Sawallisch. Decca has the Britten Serenade, a work which did much to make Dennis famous. Still unpublished is Hindemith's Horn Concerto conducted by the composer, recorded early this year by Columbia, who had planned for him to record all the Haydn Concertos and the Brahms Trio this winter. But in the short history of the long-playing record his unmistakable voice is to be heard in nearly every major work in the orchestral repertoire and, in an impressive way, of opera. There is still much to come. The four Brahms Symphonies conducted by Klemperer, Mozart's B flat Divertimento with Karajan which, when he played it in America, prompted a critic to describe Dennis as "the only man who has the right to blow his own horn". And *Der Rosenkavalier* the horn-player's opera *par excellence!* I doubt if anyone told Dennis that Strauss was depicting an orgasm at three bars before figure five in the Prelude, but Dennis played it.

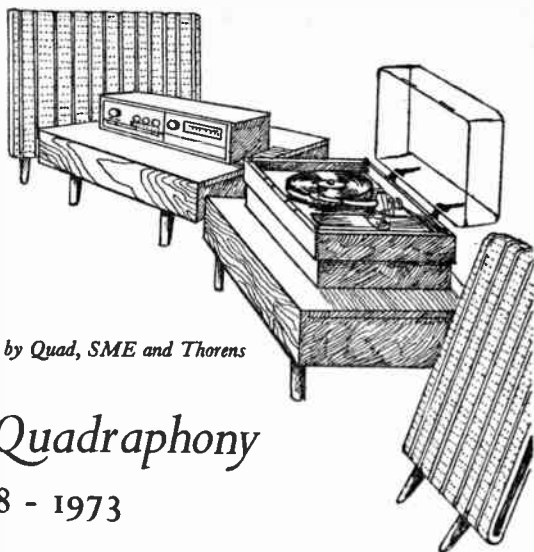
There is no knowing how Dennis would have developed. One of his unfulfilled ambitions was to play the "Ring" with a great conductor. His other ambition was to conduct, an activity he had already begun.

Deeply though I grieve his death, as a friend, as an artist, and as a matchless jewel in the Philharmonia Orchestra's crown, I cannot recall his art without smiling. Smiling at the impudent confidence of his mastery of his instrument, with anticipatory pleasure at the unconcerned and seraphic ease with which we knew beforehand he would play the notorious deathtraps in the whole symphonic literature, smiling in admiration and in gratitude for the joy of hearing such playing.

It was my privilege to have Dennis Brain as first horn of the Philharmonia Orchestra from the first day the Orchestra was assembled for our first rehearsal to the last day of his life. He is irreplaceable, but his art and his influence have left their permanent mark upon horn playing. His father, Aubrey Brain, had already effectively demonstrated that the bubbles and cracks

which were the rule rather than the exception in horn playing thirty years ago were the faults of the players: there was nothing wrong with the instruments. Dennis has done still more. He restored to the repertoire Mozart's four horn concertos and established Strauss's two concertos. He inspired contemporary composers (among them Hindemith and Britten) to write works for the horn. And he has proved and established as a tradition that the horn at the lips of a devoted artist is one of the noblest and expressive of instruments. We shall never hear his like again, but the standard of horn playing throughout the world has been inestimably improved by his example.





Stereo of the 70's by Quad, SME and Thorens

Stereo to Quadraphony

1958 - 1973

In 1954 EMI had introduced "Stereosonic" tapes but the real commercial impact came with the introduction of the stereo disc in 1958. Initially we were bombarded with fire engines, express trains and interminable games of ping-pong, but gradually it was realized by the record buying public that the new process was of permanent value, and in the intervening years it has become the norm. Once again there was the problem of altering the customer's machinery, and whenever this happens in a world of increasing competition in the arts and entertainment there is always a danger of losing the customer. Yet the continuing superiority of the flat disc as it has evolved has so far won through, and shows every sign of continuing prosperity in the face of cassettes, cartridges and other possibilities. Now, as these words are written, we are approaching the world of quadraphony, when four rather than two loudspeakers are called for.

The important point is that as this narrative comes to an end it does so at a point of advance for the industry. The claims of long ago, such as "listen to the bass", and "full frequency range recording", may seem as quaint as other discarded slogans, but except to the committed cynic they did contain a nugget of truth. Even the vulgar abbreviation "hi-fi" told the public something, if only to revive its confidence in an industry on the move.

It was in July 1958 that THE GRAMOPHONE first reviewed a batch of stereo records on the Pye label. That same year also saw what was probably the final appearance of an old friend,

"The Grand Symphony Orchestra", though to be fair such non-sensical nomenclature was often dictated by contractual arrangements.

The coincidence of the bi-centenary of Handel's death in 1759 and the recording of Wagner's "Rheingold" launched the new age with an obviously unplanned significance. The music of Handel and Wagner has had a profound effect on English taste, and the ensuing years saw at least some effort to put reasonable performances of Handel's dramatic works onto records. As for "Das Rheingold" it was by no means certain that this would lead to a complete "Ring", yet so it turned out. Now, as I write this, there are three! Nothing could illustrate better the investment policy of our leading companies, for such undertakings do involve considerable risk capital. In recording "Rheingold" Decca made much of the Donner call followed by the hammer on the rock and the thunderclap leading to the rainbow bridge music, but unlike those stunts which heralded previous advances, this was musically justified. Also justified was the recording of Handel's "Fireworks" music in the original scoring with 26 oboes, 14 bassoons, 4 double-bassoons, 2 serpents, 9 trumpets, 9 horns, 3 pairs of tympani and 6 side-drums, carried out in the middle of the night, the only time when such an assembly was possible.

Not only has the gramophone reflected public taste; it has often led it. Again, while nobody knows what the public wants, any more than economists are millionaires, the shadowy figures who decide musical policy, involving thousands of pounds, often play a successful hunch, while equally doing their duty by the avant-garde. Much is written about senseless duplication, but it is invaluable to have Beecham's Haydn, impure but marvellous, beside other more academic performances. It is still more valuable to have the whole canon of Haydn's symphonies, and the great Masses of his old age. Similarly the Handelian can hear "Messiah" by Beecham, Sargent, Davis and Mackerras, among others, and all radically different. If we still await an original "Boris" that is bound to come.

We have had most of Stravinsky's major works directed by the composer, and the same is true of Copland and other eminent composers. We have all the Vaughan Williams symphonies, all Liszt's symphonic poems, and we can profitably explore the music of Alkan, as well as the formerly neglected English music of the early twentieth century, which has found a large public. Shostakovich has only to write a new symphony and it is recorded.

A few trends can be noted. The music of the baroque has a

soothing effect on a harassed society and has proved highly profitable. Acres of Vivaldi, Telemann and Albinoni serve the purpose of a patterned carpet, just as the pop word 'cool' is reflected in the music of Satie. Again, if Mahler's is the music of a sick society, the existence of four complete sets of his symphonies has at least some social significance. On the other hand, the pop scene itself is burgeoning from a plethora of independent studios. The phenomenon of *The Beatles* requires—and has had—a book, but their influence was felt far beyond the confines of *The Cavern* or those of *Charing Cross Road*. Composed 'folk' music has also reflected the unease of a new generation. "Musique concrète" has come and gone, and now electronic music, impossible without the record industry, is in full flood. Yet the demand for the basic repertory of symphonic music grows daily. At the time of writing there are 18 recordings of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on offer.

These years have also seen a revival of interest in the operas of Bellini and Donizetti, paralleled by the emergence of sopranos to sing them—Callas, Sutherland, Sills and Caballé among them. Since Marian Anderson sang at New York's Metropolitan Opera a procession of great coloured singers have come out of the United States—Price, Arroyo, Bumbry, Dobbs, Weathers, and many more. A new generation of conductors has arrived, and it is interesting to read a reviewer at the time of the release of records based on the music of "My Fair Lady" writing: "Previn showing at last that he can play jazz piano".

Two price developments can be remarked. Simultaneously with the creation of bargain issues, sometimes of new recordings, but more often of reissues, there has been a tendency to issue integral sets of symphonies and other music. These boxed sets are issued at a special price over a period, and since the end of price maintenance dealers have varied the price to their customers, though the 'recommended price' normally prevails. A vast repertory is now available at a price markedly below that of 30 years ago.

Records now often carry the name of their producer, particularly in opera, and occasionally it is the producer's name that sells the record, in that it guarantees musical integrity in the studio. The use of dialogue in "opéra comique" and in such works as Weber's "Oberon" is still a subject of debate, even in Sullivan's operettas, where it could be argued as being essential. In this particular field we have a star-studded "Iolanthe" with distinguished singers in comprimario roles, but without dialogue.

The post-war outbreak of Festivals all over the country has

also been reflected on records, and there has been a remarkable increase in what is rather pompously called 'the spoken word', so much so that THE GRAMOPHONE has issued an annual Spoken Word catalogue to serve poetry, drama and documentary recordings. A complete Shakespeare is the most notable example, but by and large English acting is worthily represented.

So long as ordinary, opinionated music-lovers form the backbone of the readership, now in the region of a quarter of a million, so long will civilized debate continue and controversy flourish. That surely is the spirit in which to embark on the 51st Volume.



JUNE 1958

The Story of the Musical

by Mark Lubbock

One of the fascinating features of which one becomes aware in tracing the origin and development of the "musical", is the varying approach of different countries to this type of entertainment. The countries which are, or have been, the most diligent purveyors of the "musical" are France, Austria, Germany, Great Britain and America. Of these, Frenchmen demand intellectual, as well as musical, satisfaction. Both the Austrians and Germans favour the music first and last; the Austrians insisting on waltzes and sentiment, the Germans on spectacle and "hit" numbers. The British like a good laugh, a love interest, straightforward, uncomplicated tunes and plenty of girls and the Americans melody, modernity and vitality. The "musical" as we know it to-day began in Paris in the days of the Second Empire. It was invented by an eccentric but extremely talented individual, who called himself Hervé. His real name was Florimond Ronger and he was always known by the nickname "Le Compositeur Tocqué" ("The crackbrained composer"), the title of one of his shows. As a young man, Hervé was appointed organist to a lunatic asylum in Paris called the Bicêtre Hospital. He worked very hard to inculcate the principles of music into the minds of the poor mad inmates and was in the habit of organizing concerts and dramatic performances for their benefit. These latter consisted of little musical plays to be acted by the inmates themselves, Hervé's idea being to keep their minds off their morbid obsessions. The fame of these performances soon spread and enterprising theatrical managers came to see them. As a result Hervé was offered the post of conductor at the Théâtre Palais Royale and he soon established himself as a successful composer of the *genre* he himself had invented—"Operette".

But it was the genius of Offenbach, which consolidated and developed what Hervé had invented. In collaboration with his two brilliant librettists, Henry Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, Offenbach gave Paris a series of satirical operettas which enchanted and convulsed the public. Satires on court and society: *La Vie Parisienne*, *La Belle Hélène*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, *La Périochole*. Satires on big business: *Les Brigants* (with much appreciated *bon*

mots like "One must steal according to the position one occupies in society") and on the Army in *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*. Offenbach's satirical operettas were designed specifically for the pleasure-loving public of the Second Empire. But with the coming of the Franco-Prussian war and the fall of the Emperor Napoleon III, the mood of Paris changed. People, who had starved in the siege were no longer in the mood for frivolity. The Republicans, especially, associated Offenbach with the Imperial régime and regarded his ribaldry as immoral and his satire as merely idle jesting. It was on the crest of this republican wave that Charles Lecocq sailed into prominence, supplanted Offenbach and changed the face of operetta. Lecocq's attitude to the theatre differed fundamentally from that of Offenbach. He regarded it as the home of escapism, and operettas like *La Fille de Madame Angot* and *Le Petit Duc* are devoid of any direct and critical bearing to reality and incline more toward the form of opéra-comique made popular by Auber and Scribe. Lecocq set a new fashion which was followed by subsequent composers of "musicals"; Planquette with *Les Cloches de Cornville*, Audran with *La Poupée, Olivette, La Cigale* and *La Mascotte*, Messager with *Les Petits Michus* and *Véronique* and Reynaldo Hahn with *Ciboulette*.

The "musical" in Vienna started as a direct result of Offenbach's international popularity. As his operettas became more and more successful, Offenbach demanded higher and higher terms until the managers groaned under the tyranny of his rule and thought it high time this invading Napoleon of Operetta was dethroned. And who was the man to do it? Johann Strauss, the composer of the popular *Blue Danube* waltz. At the age of forty-five, under pressure from a Viennese manager, Maximilian Steiner, and his own wife, the singer Jenny Treffz, he deserted the dance floor to compose his first "musical", *Indigo, or the forty thieves*, produced in 1870. *Indigo* was an enormous success. Even Offenbach had seldom scored such a triumph. There followed fifteen operettas from Johann Strauss's pen which included the incomparable *Die Fledermaus*, in my opinion the best of all operettas. Other outstanding Strauss operettas are *Der Zigeunerbaron* taken from a novel by the Hungarian writer, Moriz Jokai, and *Eine Nacht in Venedig*. Johann Strauss's association with the dance band world naturally resulted in his exploiting in his operettas the rhythms of the dance floor. And so it was that the waltz became the staple ingredient of Viennese operettas, not only those of Strauss but those of his followers: Karl Millöcker who scored with *The D Barry, Gasparone* and *Der Bettelstudent*, and Karl Zeller whose charming *Der Vogelhändler* was given at the Palace Theatre,

London, just after the end of the war with the late Richard Tauber as conductor. The story of the Viennese "musical" divides itself neatly into two periods which may be described as "The Golden Age" of operetta and included Johann Strauss, Franz von Suppé, Millöcker, Zeller and Ziehrer and "The Silver Age" which included Franz Lehár, composer of *The Merry Widow*, *The Land of Smiles*, *The Count of Luxembourg*, *Gipsy Love*, *Paganini*, *Frederika*, and many others. Other composers who were outstanding in this second period of Viennese operetta are Oscar Straus, composer of *The Waltz Dream*, *The Chocolate Soldier* and *The Last Waltz*, and Leo Fall, one of the most talented of all operetta composers and remembered in this country for *The Dollar Princess*, *Princess Caprice*, *The Girl in the Train* and *Madame Pompadour*. Finally I should like to mention Emmerich Kálmán, like Lehár an Hungarian, with a colourful, brilliant style. His greatest successes were *The Gipsy Princess* and *Countess Maritza*.

The British "musical" appears in two forms, "comic opera" and "musical comedy". Comic opera was Britain's reply to operetta and was dominated of course by the operas of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. Their first collaboration was billed as an entirely original grotesque opera *Thespis, or the Gods grown old*, presented as part of a burlesque entertainment at the Old Gaiety in 1871 by John Hollingshead, who described himself as "licensed dealer in legs, short skirts, French adaptations, Shakespeare, taste and musical glasses". It was not a great success, the public were probably not yet ready for Gilbert and found him too clever and paradoxical for their taste. The real start of the enormously successful partnership under the management of D'Oyly Carte was the commission to write *Trial by Jury*, a curtain-raiser to Offenbach's *La Périchole* in 1875. It supplanted a revival of Henry Carey's *Chrononhoton thologos* which had been booed by the gallery. The success of *Trial by Jury* decided D'Oyly Carte to embark on a policy of British comic opera and there followed the famous series of Gilbert and Sullivan operas, beginning with *The Sorcerer* in 1877 and ending with *The Grand Duke* in 1896. The best wits and the best composers found it impossible to equal the achievements of these great collaborators, though many tried. The nearest approach to Gilbert in wit was Basil Hood. He collaborated with Sullivan to produce *The Rose of Persia* in November 1899 and the two were at work on *The Emerald Isle* when Sullivan died. Edward German was called in to complete the work, which involved harmonizing and orchestrating all the numbers Sullivan had already composed, in addition to completing

the score. *Merrie England* by Hood and German followed in 1902 and German's other comic operas were *Tom Jones*, *The Princess of Kensington* and *Fallen Fairies* to a libretto by Gilbert. Other notable composers of comic opera were Alfred Cellier (*Dorothy, Doris*), Edward Solomon (*The Nautch Girl*), G. H. Clutsam (*Young England* with Hubert Bath), Montague Phillips (*The Rebel Maid*), H. Fraser Simson (*The Maid of the Mountains*), Thomas Dunhill (*Tantivy Towers*), Alfred Reynolds (*Derby Day*) and Walter Leigh (*The Pride of the Regiment* and *Jolly Roger*).

The now well-known musical comedy developed from "burlesque", a form of entertainment which started with Madame Vestris' management of the Olympic Theatre in 1831 where she presented *Olympic Revels* by J. R. Planché. In the early forms of "burlesque" popular tunes were fitted to the words of the songs in the manner of *The Beggars' Opera*. Later, when George Edwardes became connected with this form of entertainment, composers like Meyer Lutz and Dr Osmond Carr contributed original music. The dialogue was in the form of rhymed couplets, interspersed with excruciating puns. Here is an example from *Faust-up-to-date*?

Mephistopheles: "Along the Riviera dudes her praises sing".
Walerlie: "Oh, did you Riviera such a thing?" at which the audience, understandably, groaned. When George Edwardes saw that what John Hollingshead called "The Sacred Flame of Burlesque" was flickering, he abandoned it in favour of musical comedy, a formula of his own invention, which he established successfully with *The Shop Girl* at the Gaiety Theatre in 1894. This was the first of "The Girls" and there followed *The Circus Girl*, *A Runaway Girl*, *A Country Girl*, *The Quaker Girl* and many others. The composers of these early musical comedies were Ivan Caryll, Lionel Monckton, Paul Rubens, Sidney Jones (with his enormously successful *The Geisha* and *San Toy*), Howard Talbot and Leslie Stuart. The lyric writers were "Adrian Ross" (Arthur Reeve Ropes, a history don at King's College, Cambridge), Harry and Percy Greenbank and Arthur Wimperis and some of the stars were Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss, Arthur Roberts, Connie Ediss, Edmund Payne and Gertie Millar. Later George Grossmith jnr, Phyllis and Zena Dare, W. H. Berry and Leslie Henson.

And so the story of British musical comedy continues uninterrupted through the years. Later milestones are Noël Coward's big success with *Bitter Sweet*, Ivor Novello's persistently successful series of "musicals" starting in 1935 with the spectacular *Glamorous Night* and ending in 1949 with *King's Rhapsody*.

Vivian Ellis has always maintained a high standard of melody in shows like *Mister Cinders*, *Jill Darling*, *Bless the Bride*, *And so to Bed* and *The Water Gypsies* which brings us to to-day with two phenomenally successful shows *The Boy Friend* and *Salad Days*, and *Grab me a Gondola*.

Finally we look to America where the musical stage has sprung into a commanding position. In 1852 Willard Spencer wrote one of the earliest light opera hits *The Little Tycoon* which is said to have had over seven thousand performances. John Philip Sousa brought to his operettas *El Capitan*, *The Bride Elect* and *The Charlatan*, all the virile qualities of his marches and Victor Herbert, a descendant of the Irish writer, Samuel Lover, is considered America's leading exponent of light opera. He is to America what Sullivan is to England, Offenbach to France and Johann Strauss to Vienna. The turn of the century ushered in a coterie of talented composers, who have done much to give the American stage prestige and popularity. Rudolf Friml with the alternating virile and plaintive strains of *Rose Marie* and the more martial notes of *The Vagabond King* and *The Three Musketeers*. Jerome Kern, to me the most engaging composer of the lot, went to America with a ready-made London reputation and charmed Broadway with *Sally*, *Showboat*, *The Cat and the Fiddle* and *Music in the Air*. Sigmund Romberg showed a wide range of ability in *The New Moon*, *The Student Prince*, *Maytime* and *The Desert Song* and although Irving Berlin has always been too busy writing songs to turn definitely to musical comedy, his characteristic music in *As Thousands Cheer*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *Call Me Madam* must be mentioned. George Gershwin made musical comedy history on Broadway with his smash hit *Of Thee I Sing* which won him a Pulitzer prize. Among his other hits were *Lady be Good* and *Oh Kay*, and the climax of his career the negro opera *Porgy and Bess*. Richard Rodgers, son of a New York doctor, has reached the topmost rank in the field of the "musical". He originally worked in partnership with Lorenz Hart and together they are credited with over a thousand songs and thirty shows which included *Dearest Enemy*, *Peggy Ann*, *The Girl Friend* and *On Your Toes*. After Hart's death in 1944 Rodgers teamed up with Oscar Hammerstein II and made stage history with *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific* and in 1951 *The King and I*. Other composers who deserve mention are Vincent Youmans, who gained his experience as assistant to Victor Herbert, and contributed the scores of *Wild Flower*, *No, No, Nanette*, *Hit the Deck* and *Great Day*; Cole Porter, a pupil of the Schola Cantorum, Paris, a strange preparation for the composition of *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, *Wake*

up and Dream, Gay Divorce, Nymph Errant, Anything Goes, Dubarry was a Lady and Kiss Me, Kate. Finally, Burton Lane with *Finian's Rainbow*, Frank Loesser with *Guys and Dolls* and *Where's Charley* and Frederick Loewe with *Brigadoon* and the enormously successful *My Fair Lady*. Loewe of Austrian parentage has a solid musical background. A piano pupil of Busoni and Eugen d'Albert, he won the Holländer medal in Berlin in 1923. *My Fair Lady* is adapted from Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and this is the second time that a play of Shaw's has been adapted as a successful "musical". The first was *The Chocolate Soldier* adapted from *Arms and the Man*. And so across the Atlantic modern America looks back to the past glories of Vienna, both countries sharing the common link of a British author.

HARRY TATE'S MOTORING

Just now, when Dick Henderson—on Aco and Imperial records—is being advertised as "the Man who made the King laugh" at the variety gala performance the other day, one is reminded that Harry Tate was, fourteen years ago, known as "the Man who made the King laugh" at a Royal Command Performance. The famous sketch "Motoring" which achieved this triumph was immediately afterwards recorded (Columbia 320), and was at that time the only 12-inch record of its kind in the world. It still holds its own as one of the very best comic records in existence.

September 1926

SEALED RECORDS

The practice of selling sealed records, that is, with a guarantee that they are unplayed, which was started by Messrs Goodwin and Tabb and has been adopted by other firms, has not been received without a protest by everyone. It has manifest advantages where demonstration records are available also; but it is not easily compatible with a "records on approval" system, and no small dealer could adopt the idea without a proportionately heavy loss on wasted records, unless he refused his clients the chance of hearing records before buying.

September 1927

GRACIE FIELDS

Listeners-in on January 10th heard Gracie Fields broadcast from London for the first time. It was obvious at once that a comedienne of the first rank, the very first rank, had come to town. This is one of those occasions when for years the provinces manage to keep to themselves an artist who would be an instantaneous success in London. Who is going to secure Miss Fields for recording? and will she be able to put her lovely voice and irresistible comedy into a record? Probably both questions are already answered.

February 1928

OCTOBER 1958

Stereo—The First Few Days

A note by Trevor Harvey

A few days ago I was equipped for stereo records. Since the Editor insists that I should keep my old set-up for the time being, this means that I now have three loudspeakers and two playing-desks-cum-amplifiers and the room looks like a gramophone shop. The stereo stuff is produced from corner speakers and, admirable as they are, they do need corners—and when I came to look at it, my room is strangely deficient in corners. (Actually, I do live in more than one room, but you know what I mean.) The only solution was to close a door in one corner and put a speaker there. It works wonderfully—but I can't get out when the telephone rings.

Then there is this business of where to sit. I pace out the distance between the loudspeakers, then down the room from there, plus at least a third of the distance more, according to instructions. This lands me in the fireplace. That is reasonably convenient now, but what do I do in the winter?

And what happens when I want to listen with a few friends? We can't all huddle in the ingle-nook (though, come to think of it, it might be fun on some occasions). Anyway, if I move a bit to right or left, I hear more from one speaker than the other. I see us all sitting in line, one in front of the other, which is scarcely conducive to the party spirit. And if somebody is a trifle deaf in one ear, will he have to sit slightly out of line? Domination by television seems nothing compared with this.

For the first few days of stereo listening I remained in what might be called the honeymoon stage. That is to say, I was as fascinated as any rabbit by railway trains and table tennis balls. Expresses thundered across my room, goods trains clanked from the opposite direction, my head jerked from side to side as I listened to a ping from this speaker, a pong from that. This stage, luckily for the neighbours, soon wore off. One bit of a demonstration disc still remains fun though, a recording of fire-engines leaving their headquarters, bells shrilling and clanging all over the place. The fun comes from watching the houses over the way and seeing the inhabitants throw up their windows to see the fire-engines. Most of them still do it after more than one

playing of the record, though one old chap refuses to be drawn any more; he just looks a bit mystified and hovers near his window, just in case this time there really might be a fire somewhere. Stereo is certainly realistic all right.

One of the train recordings raises a pretty problem. It's on EMI's disc and they say that it was made outside their factory at Hayes. The express thunders by from left to right at tremendous speed and as a recording it's a triumph. It must have been a down train, going from Paddington to the West, as you can tell if you know on which side of the line the Hayes factory lies. But here's the problem. Anyone who does much travelling on the Western Region line knows that it's just about there that their trains almost invariably slow down and dawdle around for a bit. I mean, how else could they count on being late at Reading? I've always known those EMI engineers to be very efficient: they must also be incredibly patient too, to have caught an express that rushes by as this one does.

Decca's trains are recorded from a station platform and, comparing them with EMI's express, I noticed something that I had never realized before—that though expresses make a tremendous row when they pass through a station, the noise recedes far more suddenly than it does when you are standing by the open line. However, Decca have a lovely local that comes to a halt, with banging doors, a porter who shouts out the name of the station, and so on. What's the name of the station? You don't expect to hear *that* from a porter's shout, do you?

But, alas, the honeymoon days are over and I must go and listen to overtures and symphonic poems, so that I can pronounce upon them for this issue. What's more, the Editor is bringing me two different speakers which don't need corners, so that once more I shall have to start answering the telephone again. Back to the old stern times, in fact . . . well, perhaps the trains, just once through again.



JUNE 1960

The Glory of the Waltz

by Peter Stadlen

On a wall in our drawing-room we have the autograph manuscript of a waltz. Underneath, in an old man's hand, it says: "First idea—to my dear nephew from his uncle Jeanny Strauss. Vienna, 6th January, 1898". The nephew was my wife's father and the uncle was Johann the Great who towers over the Strauss dynasty much as Johann Sebastian overshadows the Bachs.

To be sure, his father, Johann Strauss the Elder, with his friend and rival Lanner, was a household word in the Vienna of his day and, for that matter, in London where at Queen Victoria's coronation he was the Duke of Wellington's musical consultant. Yet the glory of that illustrious name is no longer vested in him; nor is it really shared by his grandson Johann III, who died in 1939, or by his sons Eduard and Josef. Indeed, the latter's main service to the cause of music lay in enabling Richard (no member of the clan!) to crib his *Dynamiden Waltz* and turn it into Ochs von Lerchenau's favourite tune.

As for Johann Strauss himself, his unending stream of inspiration is a firmly rooted legend. He certainly was at his Muse's beck and call at all hours; even when surrounded by guests he would jot down ideas on his cuff—in the midst of parties famed for the host's generous conviviality and for his chivalrous habit of spilling red wine right across the exquisitely laid table so as to put future offenders at their ease.

Yet for one who gained admission to Olympus on a strictly melodic passport Johann Strauss is remembered by surprisingly few tunes. Nor has history treated him unjustly; for these are by far the most successful of his never-ending attempts at perfecting a handful of melodic prototypes and composing, as it were, the same pieces over and over again. It was, significantly, in his later years that he produced *Fledermaus*, *Gypsy Baron* and the eight or nine truly great waltzes on which his fame rests.

How is one to find one's way through the maze of overlapping Strauss records—there are nearly 100, not counting the Operettas—if one is set on securing all of the best, but once only? What does one look for in Strauss interpretation?

The waltz is a newcomer to the concert hall and, like all

upstarts, it does well not to forget its origins. Even at its most inspired it must never lose the functional touch of music that is meant to be consumed with no more than half an ear by dancer and diner alike. We resist attempts to force our attention into top gear and are easily distressed by the merest suspicion of pontificating—fears amply justified on a memorable occasion when Furtwängler decided to give an encore. After a classical programme conducted entirely from memory, a music stand was brought in and the great man put on his glasses before beating his way through the *Blue Danube*. Perhaps not surprisingly, this reading remained unrecorded, as did a performance which Strauss himself conducted at the World Peace Festival in Boston in 1872 when 20,000 singers had to be started off by a cannon shot.

Of the three leading recordings (out of the dozen or so that are at present available) one is decidedly more Straussian than the others. Karajan, with the Philharmonia (Columbia mono 33CX1393) presents a masterly but somewhat chilling account of the facts. His prudent dispositions leave no room for special pleading—there is nothing to show the unique character of this music. Bruno Walter, conducting the Columbia Symphony Orchestra (Philips mono GBR6510) appears more profoundly affected by the music. Yet his high-minded approach seems subtly misconceived; to paraphrase a French saying: noble feelings make for poor waltzing. There is a distinct touch of *Lohengrin* about the pianissimo tremolos in his introduction, while the first waltz—surely the most popular tune ever composed—is weighed down by a certain chamber music quality. The melody is treated as a continuous whole and the vital rhythmic interjections are demoted to a subordinate detail that recedes into the background. With Krips and the Vienna Philharmonic, on the other hand (Decca mono LXT5431: stereo SXL2047), we enter the beer garden right away, even though it is a celestial one. In the main theme he makes as much of the rhythmic bits as of the melodious ones, bringing out a feature that is so characteristic in Strauss: the tension, within one phrase, between languorous yearning and rhythmic exuberance.

Again, there is the peculiarly Straussian device of frustrating our expectations by slightly delaying certain down-beats and playing them softer. Walter seems too conscientious and cultured a musician to use this to the full; with him each down-beat gets the same emphasis. Krips has no such scruples and, at the crucial moment, manages most delightfully to pull the chair from under us just when we are about to sit down.

No doubt about it: Krips' *Danube* emerges as the true blue one.

(Incidentally, in 25 years I never saw it other than a muddy grey.) In the *Emperor Waltz*, on the same disc, he again scores over the runners-up; here his relentless drum rolls impart to the famous trumpet tune an air of defiance that is briskly authentic and most attractive. The record contains yet another front rank waltz, *Roses from the South*, as well as the *Pizzicato Polka* which Krips invests with every traditional rubato without ever letting it degenerate into the "Arpeggio Polka" that is only too familiar. Finally, in the *Acceleration Waltz*—a skit on the Viennese custom of warming up to waltzing speed by degrees—the characteristic mock hesitancy is portrayed by a genuine accelerando very different from the initial slow note or two we are so frequently fobbed off with.

Admirable though Krips is, the Vienna Philharmonic have more than their usual share in the success of this record. In dance music the metre—normally supplied by the listener's imagination—is actually heard most of the time; this leaves much scope for the initiative of the orchestra. What the conductor is least able to suggest to his players is the metric curvature of the waltz space. As in a good football team, it is up to the players to note what the others are doing and to decide at each moment by how much to anticipate the second beat of the accompaniment.

The problem posed by a continually fluctuating distortion of the metre is particularly evident in *Voices of Spring*, which was originally conceived not for the ballroom but as a show piece for a high-grade coloratura soprano such as Rita Streich who includes it amongst her operatic excerpts on DGG mono LPEM19161: stereo SLPM136011. It may not be an accident that this virtuoso waltz opens with a rising quaver spiral which enforces an uneventful accompaniment—so exceptional in Strauss—and causes most orchestras to adopt even beats throughout the first piece. Not so the Vienna Philharmonic under Clemens Krauss (Decca mono Ace of Clubs ACL24); their oom-pah department are a joy to behold as they avidly grasp their chance of suggesting the sliding feet of the dancers the moment the melody will permit it.

This record contains another "indispensable", *Artists' Life*, as well as the overtures to *Fledermaus* and *Gypsy Baron*. It is a veritable classic of Strauss interpretation and makes compulsory listening, despite a definitely inferior recording. As for Clemens Krauss' tremendous verve and Imperial *panache*, we must not take it for granted; indeed, the same players (billed as Vienna State Opera Orchestra) display under Anton Paulik an absent-minded expressiveness that turns the *Voices of Spring* into mere Light Music; obviously, to be Austrian is not enough.

Yet while the conductor's conception of the music will leave its mark, a rigid division into mastermind and abject orchestral instrument is alien to the spirit of Strauss. It is the feeling of a common experience shared by all and sundry which distinguishes a record made at one of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Eve Concerts when their leader, Willy Boskovsky, as *primus inter pares*, directs them—standing up, fiddle in hand, in the manner of the waltz king himself (Decca mono LXT5432: stereo SXL2082). Here we are privileged to eavesdrop on the principals of the Vienna strings discoursing informally, by way of introduction, the first theme of another pillar of the Strauss Empire, *Wiener Blut*, until eventually the whole orchestra joins in and the waltz stands in full bloom.

On this splendidly recorded disc there are also *Liebeslieder* and *Wiener Bonbons*, two waltzes belonging to the wider class that has a magnificent first tune but is slightly off the gold standard later on, while the *Persian March* suggests that Strauss, undoubtedly at his best when strictly Viennese, did not count the exotic among his native Austro-Hungarian accents. With due respect to the pioneering spirit that causes a good deal of lesser known stuff to be unearthed, I wish I could persuade Vanguard, for example, to condense their largely exploratory records into one made up entirely of pieces that are good as well as unfamiliar.

Of the two great waltzes still unaccounted for, *Morning Papers* can be had on its own in a vigorous rendering by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic on Fontana mono CFE15000, coupled on the other side with Chabrier's *España*. The occasional whiff of gallic wit errs in the right direction, since Strauss wrote the piece as a counter to Offenbach's waltz *Evening Papers*, specially composed for his visit to Vienna.

There remains one, perhaps the greatest of them all: *G'schichten aus dem Wienerwald*—*Tales from the Vienna Woods*. Of several versions the one by Knappertsbusch with the Vienna Philharmonic is outstanding (Decca mono LXT5420: stereo SXL2016). How swiftly the zither player in the Introduction manages to set the scene in the Heurigen—the little taverns on the outskirts of Vienna where one drinks the new wine. There he sits, with his instrument laid before him on the table—and every time his finger slides along the melody string in a seemingly aimless glissando we wonder, a little anxiously, whether he will arrive safely at his destination. But don't worry, he does, in his own time.

Knappertsbusch is a slow and full-blooded waltzer and he almost exaggerates his first sweep, but he does bring out all the sweetness

in Strauss' music—a sweetness which never turns sickly, unlike that of some of his famous successors. This disc also contains the *Acceleration Waltz*, slightly inferior to the Krips version and one of the few duplications on these selected records, as well as three Polkas of which *Tritsch-Tratsch*, complete with cracking of whip, is an essential one. I recommend it no less warmly for including a waltz each by Komzak and Ziehrer. In fact, I am sure hardly anyone in Vienna knows that the immensely popular *Buergerwalzer* is by Ziehrer and not by Johann Strauss, which alone should suffice to place it within the Strauss family. Indeed, its power and grandeur reveal the innermost nature of the Viennese waltz as it was before Hollywood dolled it up beyond recognition.

Finally, we find here the piece I would choose before all others to keep me contented on that notorious island. The *Radetzky March* is the only music on these records composed by Johann Strauss Senior, who wrote it in honour of an Austrian Fieldmarshal of dubious merit. It is usually played somewhat rowdier and more aggressively. But while I believe that the Viennese waltz responds best to stern treatment, Knappertsbuch does well to relax with a cheerful twinkle in this martial utterance of a nation who proudly say of themselves that they might regard a situation as hopeless—but never as serious.

SAINT-SAËNS AND THE CESAR FRANCK PIANO QUINTET

Apropos of César Franck, the story about the first performance of his Piano Quintet related by Compton Mackenzie in his editorial (page 74, col. 2, October), quoted from Vincent d'Indy's article in Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey*, is a slightly different one from what Alfred Cortot told me when I recorded this work with him for HMV many years ago: Cortot brought to London a copy of the Quintet which had been given to him by Ernest Chausson's widow and which was the one that had been used at that first performance by Saint-Saëns and the Marsick Quartet in 1880 at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique. This copy was specially interesting, for it contained some important corrections relating to some marks of expression made by Franck himself before the performance and which we observed on the recording we made then.

But the story Madame Chausson told Cortot when she handed him this precious copy which her husband, who was then Secretary of the Society, had picked up on the table in the artist's room, after the concert was that Saint-Saëns had left it there on purpose before going home, saying, "I don't want this, for I never wish to play this nasty work again!" (*Je ne veux jamais ouer ce saleté là!*)

ANDRE MANGEOT.
November 1941

AUGUST 1960

Meeting Richter in Helsinki

by Igor B. Maslowski

"You're a real *sputnik*, Igor Bagirovich. Meeting you in Sofia, seeing you again in Prague, last February, and now here. . . . You know, if I ever play again in Peking, I'll be disappointed if I don't see you there also".

We were seated at the Fiskartorpet, one of the fashionable eating and dancing places of Helsinki, about four miles from the centre of the city—Sviatoslav Richter, M. K. Belotzerkovsky, one of the top executives of the Moscow State Philharmonic who accompanied Richter on this, his first Western trip, and myself. I had arrived there five days earlier and, as usual, about half an hour before the beginning of the first concert which had meant leaving my bag at the cloak-room of the Concert Hall and rushing through an excited crowd of music-lovers which included ministers, ambassadors and the musical cream of Helsinki.

Richter, who hates flying and has forbidden his wife, the famous singer Nina Lvovna Dorliac, ever to travel by air, had arrived about two hours before the concert, after an harassing eight-hour rail trip from Leningrad. He had had no time to practice yet he was as fresh as ever when on May 10th, 1960, he came on the platform to play four Beethoven Sonatas: No. 7 in D major, No. 17 in D minor, No. 22 in F major and the highlight, No. 23 in F minor, the *Appassionata*. His encores for this concert were an Impromptu by Schubert and some short pieces by Schumann and Rachmaninov and he repeated the same programme in Turku two days later, but without the encores.

"You see", Richter told me, "I think I played the *Appassionata* better in Turku; as a matter of fact, I think I played it quite well. And once you've played *this* work well, what else is there to play? But I had to give the Helsinki audience something more".

Perhaps he was right: perhaps he did play better in Turku, but then he played so well too in Helsinki! People could hardly believe their ears. After the first sonata, there was enormous applause; after the next one they started tapping their feet, which, in Helsinki, is their expression of the utmost admiration, and after the *Appassionata* one feared that the floor might give way. A

Finnish friend who was seated next to me said that, as a regular concert-goer, he had never witnessed such enthusiasm.

Next day, "rave" notices appeared in every paper and the second Helsinki concert, on May 15th, was sold out in a matter of hours. This time the programme included Haydn's Sonata in F major, Op. 82, and Schumann's Novelettes Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 8, while the whole of the second part was dedicated to Prokofiev: 10 *Visions fugitives*, the *Sonatine Pastorale*, *Paysage*, the third *Pensée* and the sixth Sonata, Op. 82. As usual, the audience wouldn't let Richter go, and after he had finished he had to play one of Prokofiev's *Gavottes*, a prelude by Rachmaninov, Ravel's *Noctuelles*, and two Etudes by Chopin. ("It's the first time I've played this piece of Ravel's in public", Richter told me after the concert. "You're from France, Igor Bagirovich, tell me, did I play it correctly?" I told him he had been amazing, and that was absolutely sincere.)

As usual, Richter slept late (he hates getting up before 11 am—"noon is even better", he adds jokingly) and he had a three-hour sleep before each concert. He does an average of three to five hours of practising every day and during that time will see no one at all. "I have decided to develop my repertoire", he says, "and one has to do a great deal of practice when learning something new".

Beethoven was one of the "new" composers (at least in regard to the sonatas); Chopin too ("although I've always liked Chopin. But there are others who play him so wonderfully. Think of Rubinstein—don't you think that Rubinstein plays Chopin wonderfully? Unfortunately I was in Prague when he was inaugurating the Chopin Year in Warsaw last February"). As a matter of fact, his own Chopin playing was heavenly (I think he was crying while playing the fourth *Ballade*), but he is so sure that some others play Chopin better.

Reger was on the programme of expansion too. "The Piano Concerto . . . and the C minor Piano Quintet, which I'll have to play in Moscow in a week's time. Awfully difficult, you know. Yes, one can like him too, but one has to understand him. I like Bruckner and Mahler as well, but their works are not often performed. I know Mahler's Eighth from a piano transcription: it's very beautiful".

After I had promised to send him a recording of the Symphony, Richter kissed me on both cheeks. "And that *Flaming Angel* you brought with you. It was really nice to have thought of that. Prokofiev was a genius, undoubtedly".

The same day we had been out shopping. Richter, with a

brand new Scotch cap which he had acquired the day before (in Prague he was wearing a French beret), was buying films and gadgets for his camera and some dresses for his wife ("I hope they will fit Nina Lvovna, as I don't know anything about this sort of thing. I suppose she sent you a telegram about my coming to Helsinki, and if you want to know my future whereabouts, just ring her up, don't be afraid. It's *her* telephone number you've got, as mine is now permanently cut off"). He hates telephones and broke two or three of his own because they had been ringing too insistently.

"What would I like to record? Everything that I think I play well. Yes, I know more than thirty Piano Concertos, but I wouldn't be prepared to record all of them because it takes so much preparation. Yet there is so much music which I don't know and which I would like to know. But one has to rest too. This summer, as usual, I'll go to my little country house on the Oka River. It's so nice and quiet there. Of course, there's an airline not very far away, but it's not a main one, and one sometimes doesn't even notice the roar of the engines. The house is very near the river, and at night it's so lovely. One doesn't feel like leaving, once one's there.

"Shall I come to the West? Ask our organizers! What I do know is that I have to give several recitals and concerts in Moscow. But it would be nice to come to London and Paris; I'm sure I would like these cities in spite of the noise. In a way, a big city is like a country place, you can get lost and feel alone".

Yet Richter is not wedded to loneliness. He likes company, he likes chatting with people, joking, telling funny stories and listening to them. In Prague, he took me out, with one of his Czech friends, to a restaurant about ten miles from the city where we drank vodka and mineral water, ate zakouskis and joked while Richter told us innumerable anecdotes about Russian musicians whom he knows. Later, the restaurant's waltz-playing pianist, who had recognized Richter, came to the bar where we were seated and begged him to play something. Richter refused, but told me later that sometimes he would play . . . if the piano were good. "But not today". And instead he enjoyed himself identifying one by one the seventy-odd flags decorating the bar.

"I like Haydn, he's a very great composer, but he too must be understood. Many people think of him as a light musician, which isn't true. He enjoyed life, and this is evident from much of his music. But look at his sacred works . . . maybe Haydn will become fashionable some day . . . He had a sense of humour too . . . take this Sonata I'm going to play tomorrow. Yes I like

all composers, be they Russian or not . . . Well, let's say practically all . . . Rubinstein [he meant Anton], is another thing, he was a great pianist, but I'd rather play something else. Tchaikovsky is my favourite, especially his operas. [We then had the usual argument about *Queen of Spades* and *Eugen Onegin*, which he likes and I don't, but we finally agreed that *Boris* and *War and Peace* were masterpieces. He likes Italian opera too and admires Verdi very much.] You see, Igor Bagirovich, you have to be in a special mood to listen to opera. It's the most complete 'projection' of a composer, because he has to make his characters live, to be credible. And you've got to have not only good singers, but good actors too. We Russians can't complain about that. We have fine singers, a younger generation is taking over from the older, and they're all marvellous. Yet they can all sing and act together, there's a tradition that ties them".

As the concert was scheduled for the next day, we had to leave the restaurant early and return to the city. Richter was in excellent spirits and suggested walking back—"We wouldn't get lost, I memorized the streets as we came along here". He has a phenomenal memory and can often memorize a score after one reading, but Messrs. Belotzerkovsky and Maslowksi strongly objected to walking, and we finally took a taxi.

I saw Richter every day of his seven-day stay in Finland. On the last day, I suggested that he should inscribe one of his photographs for THE GRAMOPHONE and he gladly did so, but he insisted on choosing one of his earlier photographs, which has become almost legendary. "You know why?" he asked me in a low and jokingly mysterious voice—"It's because I look younger there. Oh, and before wishing you a good trip, let me say that on second thoughts I liked the two records which you managed to bring from Sofia. Yes, my little finger has sinned here and there, but then there's an 'atmosphere' which you can't recreate in a studio. Playing for people isn't like playing for a microphone. I hate microphones, they frighten me. But that playing in Sofia wasn't so bad after all, although on second thoughts, I wish that you had included Liszt's first *Valse oubliée* in the recital instead of the second".



John Borwick—Audio Editor
THE GRAMOPHONE



June 1972—some members of "The Gramophone" staff.

From the left: Mrs L. Sherer (Manager, Subscription Dept), Mrs J. Russell (Editorial Dept), Miss Z. Brown (Accounts Dept), Miss H. Goddard (Cashier), Mrs B. Wortham (Secretary, Advertisement Manager), Mr D. Jones (Assistant Advertisement Manager), Mr V. P. Dunbar (Manager, Circulation Dept), Mrs H. Grimes (Manager, Accounts Dept), Mr H. Sandling (Maintenance Engineer), Mrs J. Lavendels (Subscription Dept), Mr A. Staniland (Post Room), Mrs S. Saxon (Assistant Editor), Mrs D. George (Switchboard and Receptionist), Miss C. Flegg (Accounts Dept)



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JUNE 1962

Igor Stravinsky at Eighty

by John McClure

*Formerly Director of the Masterworks Department
of Columbia Records, USA*

The four fascinating volumes that Robert Craft has already quarried from the variegated strata of Stravinsky's conversations, reminiscences and dicta are not only the best current writing on music, but the clearest picture so far of an elusive, protean figure. Since there are so many possible refractions of the Stravinsky truth (the most important and sure one being his music itself) it remains for his associates and friends to fill in the small but unavoidable gaps in these compelling self-portraits.

While patiently waiting for the biographical beacons of his friends Auden, Huxley, Spender and Isherwood, I have charged my own pencil flashlight during a six years' working association, and am sending out a feeble but hopeful beam in his direction. I tell myself that people are hungry to read anything about the great, and that God and Stravinsky will forgive me for joining the shabby regiment commanded by Princess Margaret's ex-butler.

To meet Stravinsky is a shock. There is no avoiding that fact. The immediate impression is slightness. The frailness of a bird. You ask yourself from where in this man comes the galvanic thrust of *Le Sacre* or the jazzy diablerie of *Histoire du Soldat*. But as you listen and watch, you become aware of a subtle aureole of power. There is no other adequate word. It is a kind of earth-derived staunchness like that of a tree. He would say, "Quite absurd". But I often have the hallucinatory impression while listening with him to his music or watching him conduct, that his neat black shoes conceal two long taproots extending down to some secret subterranean power source.

These are difficult images to align, a bird and a tree. I suppose that the baffling phenomenon of genius provokes implausibilities of this sort, but even the poor scientist with his encephalograms and cranial measurements can do no better. Earth-rooted does not imply any peasant quality, however, since nothing could be less descriptive of this cosmopolitan personality. It is a particular amalgam of the urbane and the elemental that make him and his music unique.

GRA. 10

His voice is deeply pitched and resonant with a persistent Russian accent. ("VAHN-derful" is a wonderful way to say "wonderful".) Stravinskian is a kind of unblended Esperanto made from English with *subito* French and German spiked with Italian, and the conversation in his polyglot household will switch without warning into any of them. Russian is considerably reserved for his wife Vera or for old friends like Nicholas Nabokov or George Balanchine. The terrors of this *mêlée* for the novice are lessened by Stravinsky's benign tolerance of the valiant linguistic *gaffe*, and an hour at his table is worth a month at Berlitz.

His use of English is both precise and fresh, and he has the philologist's love of finding and tracing new words and new meanings. He often complains that English is uncomfortable for him because he must first think in Russian and then translate, but during many a Stravinsky impromptu on art and culture I wish myself blessed with just such a handicap.

A convivial and outgoing person, he is not, as rumour inaccurately has it, without a temper. He has never prided himself on his ability to suffer fools gladly, nor is he one to rise blithely above personal attacks by critics. But the very sensitivity of his adrenal glands to the world's ubiquitous irritations must be responsible both for the superb tension in his music and for his perpetual youth. It is this last, overriding quality that makes it impossible for me to remember the half-century difference in our ages. His reactions and attitudes appear to obliterate the age gap and make it natural to treat him as a contemporary. And a contemporary he is by every measure save that of chronological time. In Hollywood this April, responding to the question of a misguided interviewer concerning his 80 years of accomplishment, he replied heatedly: "I DETEST 80 years. I DETEST years. They are not interesting. What I will be doing to-morrow, THAT is interesting".

Stravinsky is very conscious of his tie to the younger generations. Over our ritual Scotch after a long and particularly exasperating session he told me wearily that the only reason he inflicted the pain of recording on himself was for *my* generation and our children. "And the rest, go to hell". Similarly, his early indecision about the September trip to Russia was partly that he knew he would be surrounded by the older generation of official composers and musicians when he was interested only in the young ones.

Stravinsky's eagerness for the new or the next, whether music or book, concert or country, makes his critics by comparison look like testimonials to the art of taxidermy. The characteristic

caesuras of his conversation are: "You know?", "Tell me please", and "No, really?" He loves to know, to taste, to touch and to see, as much as to hear. One sees this immediately on entering the charming hillside house in Hollywood, where the nature of the walls behind the tropical foliation of books, paintings and photographs can only be surmised. The catholicity of this verdure is stunning: several Picassos, Wagner (rare photo), countless art books (on Etruscans, Giotto, Dali, Japan, etc., *ad infinitum*), D. H. Lawrence (the complete works and all criticism), a Chagall, Nietzsche (photo), Vera Stravinsky (oils, gouaches, stage designs), Berg and Webern (photo), several Klees, the complete works of Freud, assorted Tchelitchevs, a wall of dictionaries and so forth until a dizzy spell forces you to sit down.

The broad range of Stravinsky's interests is also evident in his friendships which spread across the world into every field of human activity, and often blossom into full-scale collaborations. The incredible parade of artists, poets, composers and writers through the "Conversations" is augmented by such disparate figures as T. S. Eliot, Willy Brandt, Ingmar Bergman, Isaiah Berlin, Georges Clouzot, Charles Bohlen and Pope John. This is cross-pollination raised to an art.

In contrast to Picasso, the only figure in contemporary art of comparable stature, the Stravinskys are inveterate wanderers. Each year they describe a concert orbit which leads them across the world to fresh territory and inevitably into the vicinity of interesting artefacts or archaeological sites. In the past several years they have managed to include South America, Japan, England, Italy, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Australia and New Zealand. This year: Germany, Africa, Israel and Russia.

Without the presence of his capable associate and friend Robert Craft to prepare the highly variable orchestras encountered *en route* and to act as buffer to myriads of zealous interviewers, musicians and impresarios, Stravinsky's high level of concert and creative activity during the past ten years would have been flatly impossible. No stranger can appreciate the work-involved in preparing the three existing volumes of "Conversations" which Craft has condensed slowly and painfully out of a welter of notes made on envelopes, concert programmes, napkins and anything handy at the time and which reproduce perfectly the colour and cadence of Stravinsky's talk. A highly gifted conductor and writer in his own right, he has earned the deep gratitude of the musical world.

It is a musician's supreme good fortune to be able to work with Stravinsky at all, and it was my particular good fortune,

in supervising his recordings over the past five years, to be able to serve him in such an intimate and useful way. Beginning at a time when the advantages of stereo had just become established, we both were given a clean slate and a fresh chance to put some real meaning into the often hollow phrase 'definitive recording'.

Stravinsky's views on the business of recording have been clearly stated. Though the process is no easier for him than for anyone else, he feels strongly enough about the documentary aspects to endure it. I suspect also that he feels a private pleasure in being the first major composer of history to be able to perform his works the way he conceives them and then sit back and listen, sure that at least one undistorted version is available.

Stravinsky understands and appreciates stereo and his praise or criticism is always acute. This sympathy and comprehension also contribute to his exemplary co-operation in the studio. Indeed he tends to worry more about the clock and the budget than I do.

Because we prefer to record his works just after he has performed them, we have trailed him already in 1962 to New York, Hollywood, Washington DC, and Toronto, Canada, and may end up later this year in Russia. Having the work already in good shape before the session frees us from scrambling for notes and allows us to concentrate solely on niceties of phrasing and dynamics.

In certain cases this is impractical, and with several familiar pieces such as *Petrushka* and *Firebird* we have assembled our hand-picked Columbia Symphony in Hollywood and rehearsed at the session itself. In this event Robert Craft attacks the preliminary problems of rhythm and dynamics while the Maestro listens to balances with us in the control room, taking notes and making occasional suggestions over the talkback. When this process is complete, Stravinsky takes over and puts the orchestra in final shape.

Whether he is making simultaneous translations from his Russian thoughts or not, there is never any groping for words or ideas. Musicians' mistakes are handled tolerantly during their first or second appearance, but subsequently with something less than cordiality. Equivocation is not an element in the Stravinsky personality, and if something is bad the orchestra quickly knows it. The surest sign that things are not going well is the increasing pungency of the rehearsal number announcements, thus: "PLEASE-WOODWINDS-NUMBER-ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-TWO", each syllable punched into a prominence so terrifyingly distinct that

molecules of even the fuzziest musician's brain align themselves with an audible snap.

Naturally the newer serial pieces pose knottier recording problems, since neither Stravinsky nor the musicians have them in their fingers, and techniques of beating and synchronization must often be invented as we go along. Occasionally, when things look dark near the end of the session, some odd combination of Russian and Scotch luck comes to bear on the final takes and we are able to collapse gratefully into post-session bonhomie and fatigue. Stravinsky must then shoulder the task of inscribing parts, scores and photos for the musicians, whose demands create the impression of a thriving international black market.

I need not say that it would make us very happy at Columbia to have Stravinsky record his entire output for our tape vaults, and with the dogged labour of the past five years we are now within hailing distance of our goal. To the familiar trinity of the early ballets we have added the less familiar opera *Le Rossignol*, the Russian charmers *Renard* and *Les Noces*, the increasingly popular *Symphony in Three Movements* and *Symphony of Psalms*, the *Violin Concerto*, *Oedipus Rex*, the *Mass*, the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*, and all the recent works: *A Sermon*, *A Narrative and A Prayer*, and *The Flood*. In the plans for the coming year are some early pieces, the *Symphony in C*, remakes of *Orpheus*, *Apollo*, and possibly even *The Rake's Progress* whose recording has never done it justice. Each of the re-recordings made so far is a distinct improvement over the original record. This is partly due to an improvement in microphone technique, but mostly because Stravinsky's increased number of concert appearances have put him at the peak of his conductorial form.

Probably as a result of *Le Sacre*, people are disinclined to accept the fact that Stravinsky is a genuinely religious man. But even more convincing than the ikons around his bed is the increasing frequency of his religious compositions. The *Mass* and the *Symphony of Psalms* span 18 years, but *Canticum Sacrum*, *Threni*, *Sermon* and *The Flood*—all come from the last six years and show a still-deepening spiritual preoccupation and insight.

Just as crabs must periodically shed their shells in order to grow, so a composer who is not hypnotised by his own success must shed a style or method as soon as it becomes constricting to him, if he is to stay alive. This process inevitably means a loss of armour and an exposure to the lances of the ever-backward-looking critics. Such a loss of 'safety' has never caused Stravinsky to hesitate, though it has meant intermittent skirmishing with critics throughout his career. Encouraged by the fresh winds in

recent British musical journalism he has made a forthright attack (in Volume III—"Expositions and Developments") on certain entrenched critics in America who appear to prefer the immortality of a Hanslick to the responsible and possibly less glamorous role of leading and educating their public. It is hoped that the resultant controversy will speed the familiar cycle whereby new cells multiply and old ones are cast off. Art never bogs down for too long in its own debris. Stravinsky knows this. The future is behind him. All honour to this musical phoenix on his birthday.

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

I have been very interested in Mr Youens' article on the London Symphony Orchestra, but there is a great deal more that can be written of the more intimate happenings of the orchestra. I cannot pretend to give anything like a history of it but in its early days I was in close touch with my friend Adolf Borsdorf and heard of many of the happenings at first hand. I particularly remember one tribute to the adaptability of the players which Mr Youens mentions. When Fritz Steinbach conducted a concert he was allowed, as was the practice in those days, one rehearsal and one only. He could speak no English and he had an interpreter by his side. He started rehearsing the Brahms E minor Symphony and after a few bars of the start he turned to a few other passages of the first movement of which a few bars each were played. He then turned to his interpreter and said in German: "These men do not want a rehearsal".

The Orchestra had its origin when the old Queen's Hall orchestra was returning from a Concert tour of England and the originators were Borsdorf, Busby and Vandermeersch the horn players and Morrow the trumpet player. Plans were discussed in the train and by the time the train reached London they were decided upon. Richter who was in London at the time was consulted without delay and he warmly welcomed the proposal. There was no other choice for the conductor for the first concert: in fact he was to be the conductor whenever he was available. In due course Richter produced his programme for the first concert and it contained the Trauermarsch from *Götterdämmerung*, but the extra tubas, trumpets and trombones were a difficulty. A deputation waited upon Richter and explained that with the new venture they did not want to incur any further expense than was necessary: would he therefore either allow them to play the Trauermarsch without the extra instruments or substitute some other item for it? Richter who was thoroughly enthusiastic would have nothing to do with either proposal; his reply was: "We will play the Trauermarsch and with all the instruments—at my expense".

On another occasion Borsdorf told me of his meeting Richter at lunch one day to discuss the arrangements for the then forthcoming season. These presented little difficulty but there was one term on which they could not agree and Borsdorf described to me how after lunch they walked in the rain from Piccadilly Circus to Oxford Circus and then back again until at last Richter got his own way. The condition in dispute was that Richter insisted that at any concert at which there was not a full house half his fee was to be returned.

F. BERNARD SMITH.
July 1941

FEBRUARY 1963

Kirsten Flagstad

July 12th, 1895—December 8th, 1962

Tributes by John Culshaw and Alec Robertson

Those of us who worked with Kirsten Flagstad during her last years knew the human being rather than the *prima donna*. She had a speaking voice strikingly reminiscent of Kathleen Ferrier's; she was warm, kindly and tremendously dignified; she sang like no other woman before or since, and I think in the end she was lonely. Among ourselves we used to call her, affectionately, "Mum", and I can see her now as she stood on the Sofiensaal stage in 1957, wearing an enormous picture hat, and bidding Sieglinde "Fort denn eile!" in a voice that had lost nothing in the six years since she gave the same command at Covent Garden. It is good to think that her visits to London and Vienna did much to break up the monotony of her retirement years.

If I give emphasis to those years, to the amazing re-emergence of Flagstad in full voice and full sail, it is because they were the years when I knew her personally. It was her misfortune that she retired officially at the very moment that LP made complete opera recordings a practicable venture. Even so, EMI made their complete *Tristan* and the *Götterdämmerung* Immolation Scene under Furtwängler, and the *Dido and Aeneas* recording which followed her appearances at Bernard Miles's original Mermaid Theatre. Earlier still were all the RCA 78 rpm discs, some of which have found their way on to LP. She herself had a fabulous collection of live transcriptions of her own performances in the 'thirties. One day, a few years ago, she had them broken up and thrown into the sea near Kristiansand where she lived; and I know someone who spent a small fortune trying to retrieve them and piece them together. I never heard whether he was successful or not. She was a strange woman in some ways: she said they were taking up too much room.

Of all the records she made for Decca, her favourite apart from Wagner was the collection of Sibelius songs. She was always looking for something new, and I think that is basically why she made the *Rheingold* Fricka for us. She loved Brünnhilde and Sieglinde because she could understand their feminine natures;

she didn't like Isolde later than the love potion, simply because she could not believe in the character. I once had a huge argument with her, and a huge amount of cognac, on that topic, but it got nowhere. In the war years she tried to learn Elektra, but gave up because she thought the words were rude. But as late as 1961, when she was sixty-six, we were actively planning Brahms's Alto Rhapsody and Sargent's orchestration of the Four Serious Songs. We wanted to get her to Vienna to record the *Götterdämmerung* Waltraute and the *Walküre* Fricka to keep in store until the completion of our *Ring*, and we were still in correspondence about these ideas until early in 1962.

It was quite a job to persuade her to sing Fricka in *Rheingold*, and it was our bad luck that just as she was making up her mind an American journalist got wind of the casting and published the news in New York. Within a week I received a letter from Flagstad which, in itself, is a charming self-portrait. She wrote:

"Last week when I was in New York I read in a paper that Mr London was going to record *Rheingold* as Wotan with me as Fricka. How can they make public such things before I have consented? Is it a way to force me to say 'Yes'?

"The part is very small but quite good for me, I believe, but hardly worth the long journey to Vienna. But, as I like so much to work with you and your friends, I will consent to do Fricka for you. Kindest greetings to you all".

There indeed is the prima donna—and the human being. She loved her evenings out with "the boys" in Vienna and, like most Scandinavians, she had no inhibitions about alcohol. She had a definite conviction that very strong black coffee last thing at night was an excellent sedative; but if we had to impose a morning session on her, she would get up at five and begin to vocalize at seven. It is doubly difficult to accept the fact of her death because she had, seemingly, such reserves of strength. Her diaphragm muscles were like iron, and even at sixty-two she seemed less tired than people half her age at the end of a session.

She never spoke badly of her colleagues; if there was a criticism, she spoke of the character rather than the person. "I was not very happy with my Tristan that year", she said of one of the pre-war Metropolitan seasons. She liked Astrid Varnay ("The trouble is, her voice is so like mine"), and acknowledged with the greatest admiration that Birgit Nilsson was her true successor. Towards the end of her life, when she depended on the gramophone for much of her pleasure, I used to send her miscellaneous records—"surprise packages" she called them—from time to time. She developed, of all things, a strong taste for Gilbert and Sullivan;

in the same letter that she enquired about future D'Oyly Carte releases, she also said that her doctors had told her to give up her daily practice:

"To give up singing when the voice is still good is hard, and to write this letter to you is very difficult for me, too".

Piano records pleased her a great deal, and she had all Clifford Curzon's records—she was present in Vienna when he made the Brahms B flat Concerto some years ago. I sent her our *Fledermaus*, which she liked, while rebuking me strongly for the Gala. "I do not care at all", she wrote, "for your *cabaret*". Little did she know that one of the production ideas we abandoned (because she was in hospital at the time) was to get Regina Resnik as Orlovsky to telephone to Kristiansand in the middle of the Gala sequence.

There are some artists with whom, even after years of work together, one can find little essential communication. That was not the case with Kirsten Flagstad. Quite apart from records, her fame came very suddenly and very late, and she regarded her voice with a charming objectivity—something God-given, to be tended, respected and eventually lost. Looking back over her letters, I know that her death sentence was pronounced on the day she was told not to sing. Her very last letter reads as follows:

Kristiansand,
September 15th, 1962

"Dear John,

Thank you so much for the letters and records. As you see, I still want more.

It is difficult for me to write. I am still in bed and cannot move easily. I have been in bed four months now. I have been at home three weeks and played records most of the time. I was delighted with the surprise ones, thank you. Gueden was glorious. The hymns of mine are quite good and I am glad you put them out—if only they could get some publicity here in Norway!

I think of you often and of the boys and our nice times together. Please, send them my greetings.

Love,
Kirsten".

I think I should say on behalf of all who ever worked with her, irrespective of company or label: our love to you, Kirsten. RIP.

JOHN CULSHAW

* * *

I have little of value to add to John Culshaw's charming and touching tribute to Kirsten Flagstad, except to hope that in due course the BBC will broadcast the talk on her art which she recorded for me during my time with the Corporation, and which is in the Archives. In my all too few dealings with her I found Flagstad wonderfully easy and co-operative, and—as I have related in my autobiography—when I asked her if there was any special passage she used to try out her voice before a performance, and she told me it was Brünnhilde's warning to Siegmund in Act 2 of *Die Walküre* (the *Todesverkündigung*) she responded at once to my suggestion that she should sing the opening phrases into the speech microphone on the table at which she was sitting. It was marvellous to hear the great voice in that intimate way. What one will always remember is not only the glorious quality of her phenomenal voice, with its characteristic slow emission, but its equally glorious certainty, the result of impeccable technique.

I can understand Irving Kolodin saying, in his book, *The Metropolitan Opera*, "Save for effects of great contrast—the superb repose of her Isolde or the radiant youthfulness of her Brünnhilde—one hears the memory of Flagstad with eyes closed". Yet her economical gestures were well thought out; and she charmingly says in her autobiography, in reply to criticisms of her acting as static, that it was due to her habit of listening to what the others were singing. "I like to know a whole opera if I can. I had studied my own roles, that's all there was time for, but not the others. I tried to make up for it during actual performances. I distinctly recall when Schorr began Wotan's long narrative how I listened and learned new things each time". This was during her triumphant first season at the Metropolitan, when she made her début as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* and later sang Brünnhilde in that opera, on both occasions without any rehearsal! She was always a "quick study". As early as 1920 she learnt Pamina in 24 hours just by reading the part, Desdemona and Amelia (in the *Ballo*) in a week, and Kundry, at that first Metropolitan season, in 11 days. But, as she said about her Wagnerian roles, "Nothing in the music ever frightened me". That confidence is half the battle. Looking over issues of *The Gramophone* for 1936, when Flagstad made her unforgettable début at Covent Garden, I was astonished to find that our Editor and H. V. Little (who reviewed operatic records at this period) were very cool about her records. Roger Wimbush, bowled over when he heard her on the stage, put this down simply to a matter of recording: and in the November issue of that year he felt the answer had been found. He called HMV DA1512, Flagstad's singing of Landon Ronald's

O *Lovely Night* and Cyril Scott's *Lullaby* the greatest vocal recording *qua* recording that he had ever heard. And that brings me to some questions about Flagstad's recordings, other than those that are now available.

In the May 1939 issue of *The Gramophone* there was a most interesting article by Knud Hegermann-Lindencrone which contains information likely to raise the temperatures of Flagstad's admirers to fever pitch. First of all it appears that a complete recording of *Tristan* (52 sides) was made during an actual performance—the last of this opera in the 1936 Metropolitan season—but it was refused issue by both Flagstad and Melchior. The closing scene from *Götterdämmerung*, made in the spring of 1938 with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, was also cancelled by Flagstad. But she confirmed to Mr Hegermann-Lindencrone the existence of a Covent Garden recording of *Der fliegende Holländer* with Weber, Janssen and Beecham, and of the third act of *Die Walküre* with Bocklemann and Furtwängler and that she had told HMV she would pass neither of these. Nothing more was heard of them and she said to the author of the article, "Possibly neither Bocklemann nor Furtwängler are satisfied! There you see, it is difficult to record alone, it is nearly impossible to record with others. In *this* case I am the satisfied part, in the others I am not: fuss, fuss, and fuss . . .!"

In later years Flagstad fortunately overcame her feelings about recording, and, as one who liked direction from her fellow artists, Furtwängler was able to draw from her the marvellous performance of *Isolde* in the complete set of the opera.

In treasuring her Wagner recordings we must not forget the two beautiful discs of songs by Grieg and Sibelius. Flagstad was never completely at home in *Lieder*, but in these songs she is at her finest.

My most lasting memory of her in performance will be the moment when she came quietly, but so impressively, forward in the closing scene of *Götterdämmerung*, deprived of her godhead by Wotan but in truth a goddess still, as well as a woman. The radiant nobility of her singing in this tremendous finale is one of the many things that those of us who were fortunate enough to hear her will never forget.

ALEC ROBERTSON

DECEMBER 1964

A Contribution to History

by Sir Compton Mackenzie

It is my privilege a month before the quincentenary of THE GRAMOPHONE'S monthly numbers to salute the most valuable contribution that the gramophone has made to history, not merely of our time but of all time. In issuing recordings of many of the speeches of Sir Winston Churchill and long extracts from his memoirs read by the great man himself Decca should be crowned with laurels by Clio, the Muse of History. What would we not give to have twelve double-sided long-playing discs of Pitt or Gladstone, of Fox or Disraeli, recording their voices for posterity.

In Octave 3 of *My Life and Times* in recalling the year 1903 when I was twenty years old I wrote :

"The young member for Oldham came to Oxford sometime that term, and I went to hear him speak at the Corn Exchange. I see him now striding up and down that platform, with reddish curly hair prematurely thinning and a pink cherubic face, in a frock-coat which had evidently been made for him before he went to South Africa and was now definitely on the tight side. At this date he had an impediment in his speech and speaking as he did with the rapidity of a machine-gun his words were often impossible to follow. It did not matter. The force with which he spoke and the vigour of his gestures roused enthusiastic applause whether the audience was able to know just exactly what he was saying or not; certainly I came out of the Corn Exchange that day completely sure that if Great Britain abandoned Free Trade no amount of writing about flannelled fools at the wicket and muddied oafs in the goal by Rudyard Kipling could save the British Empire from ultimate collapse".

In those days even if the gramophone had been as much a virtuoso of its medium as it is today the recording of a speech by young Mr Winston Churchill would not have been a success. It may have been the example of Stanley Baldwin's mastery of the microphone that convinced Mr Winston Churchill of its power if used adroitly. Lloyd George never used it directly; he needed a visible audience, addressing which he was sometimes heard over the radio, usually to his disadvantage. Let us remember, however, that when Lloyd George brought Colonel Winston Churchill back

from the trenches to a Ministry in his Government he added to his achievement in the First World War by ensuring that Great Britain would in the future be granted Winston Churchill's leadership of his country in the Second World War, and use the microphone with more effect than it had been used by any speaker before him.

These twelve double-sided discs represent 11 hours of consecutive oratory and reading. If I say I was able to listen for six hours at one stretch without a momentary loss of absorbed attention, I hope such an absorption will reflect the skill with which this choice of extracts from Sir Winston Churchill's memoirs and speeches has been made and the magnetism of his voice. I cannot hope in a few hundred words to pay adequate tribute to so many thousands.

The first five sides are almost entirely taken up with extracts from Sir Winston's Second World War Memoirs; but on the sixth side there is an enchanting speech he made at the Royal Academy Banquet in April 1938 which displays his humour at its devastating best.

Side 10 contains that memorable speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister on May 13th, 1940 and also his broadcast to the nation on that Trinity Sunday six days later. What a fresh thrill it is to hear him tell the House, "I take up my task with buoyancy and hope" and hear him offer the people of Britain "blood, toil, tears and sweat" for the accomplishment of their task. On this side, too, is a reminder of the great debt owed by our country to Franklin D. Roosevelt whom Sir Winston consulted 950 times by telephone and received from the President 800 replies.

Side 12 is another particularly enthralling side. We hear again Winston Churchill as the mouthpiece of Great Britain declaring after that disastrous June in France, our resolve to fight on alone. "We shall fight on the beaches and on the landing-grounds, in the streets and in the hills". And on Side 13 we have his resounding prophecy that if the British Empire should last a thousand years this would always be held its finest hour. That speech was made 125 years to the day after Waterloo.

On side 15 we hear the speech of September 11th while the Battle of Britain was still in progress. "Never in the history of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few". On this side, too, is an extract from the Memoirs about the Battle of Britain, in which he writes of that Sunday, September 15th, which destroyed Hitler's hope of invading England, and reminds us that Waterloo was fought on a Sunday.

In the extract from his Memoirs on Side 16, I should have welcomed a warmer appreciation of Wavell's great victory of Sidi Barani and of the moral courage he displayed when he sent the 5th Indian Division out of the Desert to reinforce the 4th Indian Division's struggle in Eritrea. I should have welcomed equally a recognition that we were no longer alone in that autumn of 1940: Greece had defied the Axis with equal valour. In later speeches Sir Winston paid a tribute to the "heroic Greeks", but it is well to remind people today that it was Greece's resistance to the Italians which brought Hitler to their rescue and that this interfered with the timetable for his assault on Russia and made it too late. It is also as well when we read so much pro-Turkish propaganda today to remind people that when Greece was under the heel of the Germans, Turkey made a ten years' pact of friendship with Hitler.

Side 20 contains Sir Winston's glorious comment in a broadcast to the world on Weygand's prophecy that Britain's neck would be wrung like a chicken. "Some chicken! Some neck!" On this side, too, is the speech on December 8th, 1941 announcing war with Japan, a great part of which was taken up by Sir Winston's attempt to explain the difficulty of making the American declaration of war coincide exactly in time with ours. I remember thinking in 1941 that it was the only speech I had heard Sir Winston make which did not seem worthy of the occasion. However, it obviously could not be omitted.

Some of the most moving speeches are found on Side 24 of this tremendous serial. The last of all was made to the crowds celebrating the end of the war with Germany on May 8th, 1945, in which we hear the voice of Sir Winston Churchill, above the cheering surge of acclamations, telling his countrymen, "This is your victory". When we listen to these acclamations we may reflect what a blow that 1945 General Election must have been to a great man and marvel at the 'buoyancy and hope' with which he bore it. Only two speeches I should have liked to hear again are not recorded. One was a speech in which he called Hitler a bloodthirsty guttersnipe; the other was the speech he made on the evening of the Normandy landing, in which he gave General Eisenhower's moral courage full recognition for deciding to go ahead on that "tempestuous morn in early June".

On Side 19 is the recording of a speech made by that great Harrovian to the boys of Harrow School on October 29th, 1941. To my mind it is imperative that the Education Authorities should equip every school in Great Britain with this inspiring story told by a man as secure of fame as Julius Caesar or Napoleon. After

the First World War young people were encouraged to suppose that war was an aberration of their elders, with the result that we had a Second World War by letting Hitler go on until it was too late to stop him. If the young people of today are given a chance to hear a lesson in history from the mouth of a great man who himself made so much history, it may help to avoid a Third World War, after which there will not be many young people left to bother about.

Decca has given the young generation of to-day an opportunity to benefit from history in a way no previous generation has enjoyed. I repeat that it is imperative this unique serial of the past should speak to every schoolboy and every schoolgirl in the land.

THE GRAMOPHONE IN POLITICS

It is the Socialists who seem to use the gramophone most effectively. In the Styrian Diet they learned to obstruct parliamentary business "with the cacophony produced by several gramophones playing different tunes simultaneously", the *Times* reported. In our own House of Commons this practical use has not yet been adopted; but Mr Snowden said that the Trades Union Bill was a veritable needle for the Communist gramophone, and Mr Jack Jones denounced the Chancellor of the Exchequer as being an "Edison Bell Record". Why Edison Bell? Because Mr Churchill is a Winner? Surely it would have been more galling to have called him an HMV record.

June 1927

THE GRAMOPHONE IN STALAG XXB

As a reader of your magazine for many years you might be interested to hear of the gramophone conditions here. In May, 1941, a supply of Decca Portables and records arrived. The records were Rex, Decca and Decca-Polydor. Needless to say they were received with great jubilation.

The machines and records were supplied to working camps of 100 men or more, thirty records (twenty of 10-inch and ten of 12-inch) being the average. Unfortunately the supply of needles is a great difficulty, causing great wear owing to having to make each needle work until all semblance of a point disappears. Also the record envelopes soon went west.—The 12-inch records were mostly extremely classical—Beethoven, Bach, Mozart symphonies—and to make matters worse, usually only one record of each work was received at the working camp. A fit subject for a Bateman cartoon is the POW who wanted to listen to Bach. I personally have been told, in no uncertain terms, just where to go when attempting it. The war cry is "Give us Bing". At the main camp of this Stalag is a large cabinet Electrola, bearing unmistakable signs of Hayes, Middlesex. All good wishes.

(Driver) M. C. MOORE.

Prisoner of War Camp,
Stalag XXB, Germany.

June 1942

OCTOBER 1965

The Dream of Gerontius

A personal note by Sir John Barbirolli

"Figlio mio, questo e un capolavoro sublime". With these words Pope Pius XII raised me to my feet, after I had knelt before him to receive his blessing and thanks for a performance of the first part of *The Dream of Gerontius*, given at his summer residence of Castel Gandolfo, by the Choir of Our Lady of Dublin, and three distinguished British soloists.

The treasured memory of these noble and sensitively appreciative words is made all the more poignant when we remember that barely ten days were to elapse before His Holiness was to pass from this world, and that this was the last 'live' music he was to hear. I have often wondered what the feelings of Newman and Elgar would be if they could know that the last music he heard had been Elgar's setting of Newman's words "Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul".

But as I recall this, other memories crowd in, and I will go back to one of the earliest of these. Not long after leaving the army in 1919, as a regular deputy with the London Symphony Orchestra, I had the great good fortune (at the last desk of 'cellos) to take part in the first post-war Festival of the Three Choirs, held at Worcester in 1920. The Three Choirs Festival in those days, when Worcester was still a lovely country town, with Elgar's father's music shop still standing, could, I think, well be described as Elgar's Bayreuth. For a young man who loved his music, it was wonderful to see the great man, radiantly happy amongst his friends in the Cathedral precincts; more wonderful still to play *The Dream* under his direction, with that great and noble artist Gervase Elwes singing the Soul. I remember that Elgar conducted from memory (the antithesis of Vaughan Williams, who always averred that he could never remember a note of his own music) and although he could not be called a great conductor by the highest professional technical standards, it was extraordinary how he could make you feel exactly what he wanted if you were in sympathy with him.

Now I come to the days when at last I had to study the work in detail for the preparation of my own first performance. I began to realize for the first time the great delicacy, imagination and

subtlety of much of the scoring. Alas, this is often obscured by lack of sufficient preparation of a work which bears that dreaded prefix "Everybody knows it" so that one rehearsal, or at most two, is deemed sufficient. Amongst the many performances I have now conducted, of course some of the most poignantly beautiful memories must be those in which the beloved Kathleen Ferrier took part, including the very last one she was to sing—at the Edinburgh Festival of 1950 with the Hallé Orchestra and Choir. There was an almost prophetic beauty of utterance in her singing of "My work is done, my task is o'er".

The next milestone for me was the opportunity afforded me, through the enthusiasm and indefatigable efforts of Sir Ashley Clarke (then British Ambassador in Rome), to give the first performance in Italy—incredible though this may seem—in the centenary year of Elgar's birth, with the magnificent collaboration of the orchestra and chorus of the RAI in Rome. Never shall I forget the look of joyful surprise and enthusiasm on the faces of orchestra and chorus at the first rehearsal, when the wonders of the work unfolded themselves. Incidentally, since Italian and English are mother tongues to me, the very voluble comments on the work did not escape me.

Such was the great impression created by this performance and broadcast, that the next year I was invited, with the Choir of Our Lady of Dublin, to the "Sagra Umbra" (Sacred Music Festival of the Umbrian Province) to give performances of *The Dream* and also *Messiah*, in Perugia, in the lovely old Morlacchi Theatre there; this time with the splendid orchestra of the Maggio Fiorentine.

The Dream of Gerontius has strong links with the Hallé Orchestra. Its first performance, at the Birmingham Festival on October 3rd, 1900, was conducted by my great predecessor, Hans Richter, who had taken over the Hallé a year before. Although that performance was a disaster, due to many causes, one of which undoubtedly was Richter's underestimation of its difficulties, Elgar did not blame the conductor. Richter, however, blamed himself, and he did not conduct it again until he had had ample time to prepare it and to rehearse the choir fully. On March 12th, 1903, Manchester heard the work for the first time. A critic of the day who was also one of Elgar's earliest champions, Arthur Johnstone, had attended every performance of *Gerontius*, including the two in Germany, and he declared this second attempt of Richter's to be the finest of all. It is particularly interesting to read that Richter attached great importance to the quality and balance of the semi-chorus. Those of you who may

one day be listening to these records, will, I hope, feel that I share this musical wisdom of my great predecessor.

In fine, it is a work exulting and exalted, written as only lasting masterpieces can be, in a constant white heat of inspiration. In this wise, it is very instructive and amusing to recall W. H. Reed's charming remembrance of a remark made to him by Elgar as they came out of Lincoln Cathedral after a performance of *The Dream*. "Billy, I believe there is a lot of stuff called double counterpoint, or whatever they call it, in that". Of course, that is the right way round to write "that stuff", when it comes out of the bones and tissue of the music and is not imposed on it from a species of cerebral hangover.

LEON GOOSSENS

Mr Goossens is the subject of an anecdote told by Mr Robin Legge in the *Daily Telegraph*. "It is due to a gift from Dame Ethel Smyth that he to-day is alive. As a souvenir of the production in London of 'The Boatswain's Mate' Dame Ethel Smyth presented Eugène Goossens, jun., with a cigarette case. Eugène has a weak heart, and rarely smokes, so he handed the case to his young brother, who carried it with him during the war. On November 5th, 1918, Leon was wounded, and the bullet which might have downed him was deflected when it struck the cigarette case."

August 1925

FROM FRIENDS OVERSEAS

I know of few dollars which bring me so much pleasure in our troubled times as those I send for my renewal. Shortly after the 15th of the month I find myself wondering whether your publication will pass the blockade this month. And, by George—"It did it again!" has come from my lips without fail these many months. Here is one reader who'll stand by you for a long while to come.

New York City.

WALTER F. GRUENINGER.

Once again I renew my subscription. I know you understand how gladly and gratefully I do so. To me it is a marvel how you get it out every month. It is always such a thrill to see it waiting for me and I cannot express my admiration enough—"for how can we extol thee?"

Toronto, Canada.

CARA HARTWELL.
November 1941

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

Month by month, the increased interest in records has been reflected in the increased demand for *The Gramophone*, and, our allowance of paper being restricted, we have been unable to accede to many late requests for the February and March numbers. After we have supplied standing orders we do our best with the limited balance, and we suggest that, in future, if you should be unable to get a copy of the current issue from your newsagent by the 12th of the month, you send us your order, together with 1s 2d, not later than the 15th. After that date, we are sorry, but . . . that's how things are.

April 1942

MAY 1967

Half a Century of Jazz

by Brian Rust

From the May 1917 supplement of Victor Records: *"The Jass Band is the very latest thing in the development of music. It has sufficient power and penetration to inject new life into a mummy, and will keep ordinary human dancers on their feet till breakfast time"*.

This publicity note, written just 50 years ago, announced the first jazz record to reach the record shops. Above the note were printed the details of Victor 18255, *Dixieland Jass Band One-Step and Livery Stable Blues*, and surmounting the whole thing, a photograph of the band responsible in action: the Original Dixieland "Jass" Band, so described.

From left to right can be seen Tony Sparbarro, now known as Spargo, and sole survivor of the group, on drums; trombonist Edwin "Eddie" Edwards, his slide fully extended over a can marked "Sugar" (this was for collecting tips, a relic of the days in New Orleans, whence came all the members of the band, when pay was low or non-existent); leader and cornet player Dominick James "Nick" LaRocca, with a mute in his instrument; Larry Shields, looking very thoughtful as he handles his clarinet; and poor Henry Ragas, the pianist who died at the age of 28, less than two years after the first record was issued.

The record was made in the Victor Talking Machine Company's New York studios on Monday, February 26th, 1917, as a test; but the band was drawing such crowds to Reisenweber's Café on Columbus Circle that the company decided to accept its first two sides on March 4th, and on March 7th a special pre-release was printed, announcing this historic issue. From recording studio to shop in nine days flat was something of a milestone in the history of the gramophone in itself!

The Victor records made that day half a century ago sound to-day extraordinarily clear. The recording engineer, the late Charles Sooy, took infinite pains to make sure that the unique sound of what leader LaRocca termed "a conversation of instruments" should be perpetuated as accurately as the acoustic method was able. He strung wires across the studio ceiling to absorb the overtones of cornet, trombone and clarinet, working their individual musical patterns in perfect cohesion, and though it has

often been stated that the bass drum was not used because it could not at that time be recorded successfully, this is utter nonsense, as Tony Spargo's massive specimen, topped by a huge "dew-drop" cymbal that produced an impressive gong-like sound, can be heard clearly and quite naturally on the record, along with the tap-box, snares and cymbals. (Contrary to another popular idea, this pioneer jazz band did not use kitchen utensils or any other extranea for percussion; these were the prerequisites of the many imitators who tried to jump on the jazz band-wagon and get a cheap laugh while making as much noise as possible. Noise was also deemed a *sine qua non* of jazz 50 or so years ago, but although admittedly the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was no string quartet, it could and did play softly, more in public than on record, where a vast expanse of sound was more or less *de rigueur* in those pre-hi-fi days, at any rate for dancing to the gramophone.)

I have said they were not a string quartet; yet they were treated as if they had been by the Columbia Graphophone Company for whom they made their very first recordings. These were achieved one afternoon in the last week of January 1917, again as a test; the band was put in a studio normally used for such exalted units as the Boston String Quartet, and left to get on with it. Further, they were under pressure to record two typical pop-songs of the day, *Darktown Strutters' Ball* and *Indiana*, rather than the numbers they dreamed up between them, mostly influenced by "Nick" LaRocca. The Columbia tests were rejected, although as many as four takes were made of the first of the pair of titles. When, in disgust, the band went to Victor, and found intelligence and understanding awaiting their efforts, and Victor scored a tremendous success with record No. 18255, Columbia hastily dug out the masters of their work and issued them that summer, on Columbia A-2297, using at least two takes of each number. The cloudy, muddy recording contrasts unfavourably with the brilliant natural sounds of the Victors, and it is fortunate that the latter company recorded most of the band's American sides. (It made a series for Aeolian-Vocalion, during the latter half of 1917, but these were not only vertical cut, but needed an Aeolian machine to reproduce them. "Nick" LaRocca felt that this was hurting sales and denying record-buyers who could not hear the band in person the chance of the next best thing, so in the spring of 1918 he took the group back to Victor, and stayed with that company until the London appearances of 1919-1920, during which time it recorded seventeen 12-inch sides for Columbia, most of which are now obtainable on Music For Pleasure.)

Although the late Sir George Robey took exception to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band when Albert de Courville introduced them in his first post-war revue *Joy Bells* at the Hippodrome, the British public loved them, and flocked to hear and dance to the "very latest thing in the development of music" at Rector's, the Embassy Club, and the newly opened Palais de Danse in Hammer-smith. The Columbia records were expensive: 5s. 6d. was a fair slice out of the average wage-packet of 1919, but they continued to sell at that figure, or not much less, even as late as 1924.

So jazz music was launched. Whether or not the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was the first jazz band in history is a point which will be debated, but never completely settled, for years to come. What is certain is that before 1917 there was nothing on records either labelled "jazz" (or any modification of the spelling, such as jas, jass, or jasz) or which sounded remotely like the music of the Dixieland Band. Until their arrival on the scene, dance music had been provided by string orchestras, military bands and banjo solos or duets, usually supported by piano and drums. The tradition they set took a long while a-dying; records of popular songs continued to be made by the string-dominated orchestras of Joseph C. Smith in New York and De Groot in London, and the Victor Military Band, Columbia's London Dance Orchestra and HMV's Mayfair Dance Orchestra were regular features of the dance music supplements for some two or three years after the Dixieland impact. (The dance music records of those days were as often as not 12-inch, and presented on special leaflets in the middle of the month; the regular supplements each month were reserved in the main for standard concert fare and ballads, straight vocals and instrumentals, and humorous items.)

It seems, then, that if anything sounding like the Original Dixieland Jazz Band had been in existence anywhere in America prior to that group's arrival, it would have made as much of an impression as they did, and records would have followed. Ragtime bands and marching bands there undoubtedly were in New Orleans, but whether they played jazz is somewhat questionable.

The strength and durability of the Dixieland style and repertoire is demonstrated by the fact that there are bands to this day attempting to play in this style (though for some reason they prefer to ascribe their inspiration to other bands that came later in the parade), and that the Dixieland repertoire is still a bedrock of the programmes presented by these bands. As "Nick" LaRocca told me when I asked him about Bix Beiderbecke and the influence LaRocca had had on young Bix: "He played my tunes; he didn't play theirs" (referring to other musicians alleged to have moulded

Bix's style). One has only to listen to LaRocca's record of *Jazz Me Blues* or *Dangerous Blues*, both made in 1921 for Victor, to discern great similarities of tone and phrasing to those of Bix.

No one, least of all "Nick" LaRocca, could expect that in 50 years there would be no changes in as lively a musical form as jazz. His conception of it was as a "conversation of instruments" in which impromptu ideas based on a given theme could be expressed simultaneously on a syncopated march rhythm, the whole being as satisfying to the feet as to the ear: it was above all dance music. That is why he could not understand how the effusions of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and the rest of the so-called "modern" school came to be classed as jazz. "They have better technique than we did", he said, "but their music is not jazz. They have a right to be heard; but why do they confuse what they play with jazz?" (Indeed, Charlie Parker himself disclaimed that his music was jazz; rather scornfully, since jazz to him was "Uncle Tom" music and redolent of segregation and the Negro bowing to the white. The Dixielanders were white, of course, though it is true that the number of great Negro jazzmen to have contributed to the recorded literature of the music is colossal and undeniable.)

It seems a pity that so extrovert and yet sensitive music, made for dancing and, incidentally, for listening, should in 50 years have become almost entirely a concert music, as, by doing so, much of its charm and virility seems to have vanished, and in their place has been put a technical virtuosity which makes technique an end in itself; as a result the "conversation of instruments" tends too often to become a monologue, even a lecture, and some pretend to see in certain extended solos the equivalent of a sermon. The Dixieland Band used little solo work; it has a place in jazz, of course, but like a good orator, after-dinner speaker, or preacher, the jazz soloist should be brief and to the point. If he cannot say all he wants to say in 32 bars, and if his colleagues cannot enlarge on his ideas in three minutes, it is an adverse reflection on their ability as *jazzmen*, and all the technical ability in the world will not hide that fact, no matter how many LPs they make with one 30-minute track each side devoted to the examination of some worn-out trivial pop tune, no matter what new title it may be given.

SEPTEMBER 1967

After Twenty Years of Recording

by Ernest Ansermet

It was in London in 1946 that I began to record for Decca with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. When Decca wished to continue this co-operation I proposed that in future I should make my recordings in Geneva with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, not because I did not appreciate the value of the London Philharmonic, but because after several years of work I had given to my orchestra a certain style and for me a style is the only thing which grades an orchestra. I was astounded to hear it said by the conductor of a French orchestra that it was a good thing for an orchestra to change its conductor constantly. I do not believe that at all; such a change may develop it from a purely technical point of view but prevents it from acquiring a style. And an orchestra can only acquire this style if it has a permanent conductor although this does not prevent it from having a guest-conductor from time to time who then benefits from the style of the orchestra.

Style is not perfection in playing; it is a certain method of playing and a method of playing corresponding to a way of feeling. It is, in the orchestral field, a method of playing by which the conductor tries to make the musicians participate in the same feeling for the music. For an orchestra is not an inanimate instrument. The style of execution on a piano depends upon the virtuoso, not upon the piano, and the piano lends itself more or less to that. But the playing of the best of orchestras would not have style if that style had not been inculcated in the instrumentalists by their conductor: here the "instrument" itself must acquire a style.

This notion of style is indefinable by analysis as it is something which can only be *felt* and is only felt, moreover, by listeners who enter into the music and who do not remain on the surface of the event experienced. But it is indispensable to have this present in the mind when one speaks of music, as it is something quite other than the quality of execution. The term "style" is applicable first of all to the composers. Why does one speak of the style of Bach, Mozart or Beethoven? Because the music of each of these composers implies a certain role and a certain quality of the melodic and the rhythmic (to mention these

elements only) which the written score does not show, and which in consequence the performer must discover, in order to make it felt by the listener. But the performer himself has his own feeling for the music: he seeks it in the acoustic effect or in the expression of the melodic lines, in the vigour of the rhythm or in its natural flexibility, in the static structure of this rhythm or in the continuous movement of the tempo where the rhythm is identified, in the external form of the musical image or in the internal intercommunication of the voices which underlie the flow. From the choice that the performer makes between these various methods of bringing the music to light his style and that of the music performed result. The question then arises of the relation to be established between the style of the performer and the style of the composer.

An American record collector asked me one day: "Could you explain a mystery to me? When I hear recordings of Toscanini or Koussevitzky I think immediately of Toscanini or Koussevitzky before I even think of the composer of the music, whereas when I hear one of your records I think first of all of the composer as if you did not play Beethoven in the same way as Haydn, or Debussy in the same way as Stravinsky". Doesn't this mean that there are some performers whose style is so strongly characterized that in some way it dominates the style of the composer and is found in all the music which they perform, while the style which I have impressed upon the playing of my orchestra consists of throwing as much light as possible on the style of the composer? I do not claim to have succeeded in this, although the testimony of this young American pleased me, but that is the object to which my efforts are directed.

Let us suppose that for an orchestral conductor playing the music consists of causing what is written to be performed as accurately as possible, without regard to the composer and his objectives in expression, *i.e.*, putting the notes in place in the tempo and achieving the quantities indicated in the score: the pitch of the sounds, duration values and graduations of intensity. As the style of the composer is involved in some way by the manner in which he writes his music, there will always remain something of him in the music thus performed, but as the performer has not fixed his attention on this style in order to cast light upon it, this something runs the risk of being reduced to nothing. There are perfect and sometimes brilliant performances of Haydn, Mozart and Debussy, from which Haydn, Mozart and Debussy are absent—that is to say the musical substance is neutral and reduced to insignificance.

In short, one can see of what 'style' should consist in the performance of music. Its first principle is that instrumental playing must never be routine—the simple exercise of an acquired technique: to play music is always to play in a certain manner and in a manner which is not exclusively determined by what is written. Its second principle is that all the indications in the text are relative indications, except for the pitch of the sounds and the rhythmic structure of the voices, and even this is relative to a movement experienced and not a mechanical movement. A *forte* is not always loud nor a *piano* always soft: the intensity of the sound depends upon the role of the instrumental voice in the ensemble and upon its tone quality. A melodic line does not always have to be sung. Sometimes it must just simply be caused to be heard without ostentation; that does not depend only upon the written shade of expression but again upon the role of this motif in the ensemble of the music. In other words it is not sufficient just to observe the text, one must interpret it. This interpretation depends upon the feeling which one has for the music and it is this feeling which one has for the music which dictates the method of performing it, that is to say the style of the execution.

Making music cannot be reduced to performing what is written because music is not an acoustic phenomenon; it is something which is inside the acoustic phenomenon and its truth cannot be formulated. It is like the facets of a crystal decanter stopper. One never sees the stopper; one only sees the light which is reflected by the facets in a certain perspective. That is why there may be several perfectly satisfactory performances of the same work; each one illustrates the truth of the music under a certain point of view which causes this or that of its facets to be appreciated. It is there that style comes in. The ideal performance is not to embrace all the facets of the music: it is to attain the *essential*, to touch the heart of the music so as to make its heart-beats heard by the listener. Once more, I do not claim to have always succeeded in that, but it is always that which I have tried to do.

I am deeply grateful to Decca for having welcomed my attempts and for having considered the style of my orchestra worthy of recording. Our recording sessions have moreover been a school of perfection, as tests are carried out there which permit faults to be corrected which are not noticed on the rostrum. Our long association with Decca has enabled us to express our style in all kinds of music and to show that style is not a formula. Furthermore this long association has enabled us to reach an

immense public which otherwise would not have known the name of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. As a result of that our two recent concerts at the Lincoln Center in New York were packed out and our listeners were able to convince themselves that Decca recordings are truly of high fidelity: after the concerts the *New York Times* critic wrote: "Everything surmised from recordings was found to be true in real life".

NEW RECORDS DEPEND ON YOU!

Important Statement by the Record Companies

The time has unfortunately come when the Gramophone Record Manufacturers are compelled to make a direct appeal to record buyers.

Owing to war conditions the Government has found it necessary to conserve supplies of shellac and other materials essential for manufacturing records by the most stringent restrictions as to the use of these materials. At the same time the Government has recognised the value of the gramophone in supporting morale, and the great help that it gives to the war effort.

We have spared no effort to maintain supplies over the last three years, and this, we are sure, is well recognised by record users. The further maintenance of adequate record supplies will depend upon the goodwill and readiness of the public to return old and unwanted records, because only by this means will manufacture continue.

We have asked the many thousands of record dealers throughout the country to invite the public to bring to them all their unwanted records of the following makes:

His Master's Voice	Zonophone	Panachord
Columbia	Brunswick	Vocalion
Parlophone	Decca	Beltona
Regal-Zonophone	Rex	

Any quantities of records of the above makes will be most gladly received by record dealers, who will make an allowance for them.

We ask users not only to give up their old records but to encourage their friends who may no longer be interested, but who may have old records, to give them up also.

Some millions of scrap records are needed. In the last ten years over one hundred million records have been sold and it should be possible for the quantity required to be returned by the public. It does not matter what condition the records are in provided they are not broken. All of them will be reground and aid in making new record material.

We should be glad if you could find space to make this appeal in the columns of your Journal. We are certain your readers will respond and so ensure that they can continue to enjoy the recorded entertainment which is in our catalogues.

THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY, LTD. THE DECCA RECORD COMPANY, LTD.
COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE COMPANY, BRUNSWICK, LTD.

LTD. 1-3 Brixton Road, London, SW9.

PARLOPHONE COMPANY, LTD.
Hayes, Middlesex.

February 1943

Past, Present and Future

by Anthony Pollard

Publisher and Managing Editor of *The Gramophone*

Those of you who have read this book must surely be impressed by the tremendous progress made over fifty years by the gramophone record and audio industries. To me, little more than a layman in the technicalities of recording and reproduction, it has always been a wonder that such realistic sounds could be produced from a black disc, inscribed with a single spiral groove. My first records were the 78 rpm shellac discs of the thirties and I have been fortunate enough to witness, from a position close to the hub of the industry, the progress of that disc through the post-war extended-range 78s, to LP, to stereo and now to quadraphony: and parallel to this the introduction of tape and its present culmination in the cassette and cartridge format.

Therefore at this stage in the history of *The Gramophone* I should like to pay a tribute, first of all, to the British Record Industry. As Sir Compton has recalled, it was the founders of that Industry who gave initial support to his idea for a paper such as *The Gramophone* and it has been those same men, and their successors, who have continued to support us ever since. What has been written in *The Gramophone* has been accepted by the Industry in good faith: at no time can I recall the threat of a withdrawal of support as a punitive measure, and as the Publisher I am more than conscious of the importance of both the advertising support and the review pressings which originate from the Industry.

For this happy state of affairs the greatest credit is due to the executives of the British Record Industry, and particularly to those who carry the problems of the present day. The standards which they have established are indeed high, the capital investment is considerable and the reputation of the artists whom they record can today stand or fall by their performance on a gramophone record. It is these men who have established Britain as the world leader in recorded sound.

From the endeavours of these men has grown a specialist Audio Industry which for many years was left to show the rest of the

world just what was meant by high quality sound reproduction. The tremendous success of this Industry, compounded in many instances of small private companies, has resulted in a far wider public appreciation of the efforts of the record industry to enhance the technical quality of their products. Again, I can only thank the executives of the Audio Industry for their respect of *The Gramophone's* independence and their whole-hearted support of our efforts.

For our part, what have we done to justify the trust which has been put in us by the record and audio industries and, most important of all, by our readers?

Perhaps one of our greatest assets is the fact that we are a small private family business—totally independent and with our interests concentrated on the record and audio business. I like to think that, in the main, we still follow the happy formula established by Sir Compton, his wife Faith and his brother-in-law Christopher Stone back in the twenties. Perhaps as the circulation increased and the responsibilities weighed more heavily we have had to adopt a more professional approach but I hope that we shall never lose the atmosphere of *The Gramophone*—an atmosphere generated largely by the happy band of contributors who have served the magazine so loyally and in whom that trust to which I have referred, and on which hinges our independence, is so largely vested. For those men and women, contributors to *The Gramophone*, no praise is too high.

One of my greatest joys as we approach our Jubilee Year is the knowledge that Sir Compton is still so happily with us to witness the continuing sea-worthiness of the paper boat which he launched fifty years ago. It is an extraordinary achievement to enter the field of publishing in your fortieth year and to participate in the Golden Jubilee celebrations in your ninetieth. However, I must admit that my joy is tinged with sadness by the thought that my father, Cecil Pollard, did not live long enough to enjoy more of the credit due to him for his part in the building of the magazine.

As Sir Compton has recalled, my father came to *The Gramophone* in 1926 to audit the books of the Company and on reporting an unsatisfactory financial state of affairs was invited to join the Company as General Manager, later becoming the Company Secretary and a Director.

With the outbreak of the Second World War the situation changed: the circulation fell, several of the staff went into the Services, the London offices at 10a Soho Square were eventually closed, Sir Compton living in his island home on Barra in the

Outer Hebrides was often totally isolated, and in due course Christopher Stone volunteered to return to the Army. My father was not called-up for Military Service, having been invalided out of the British Army in 1917, so by the end of 1940 the total permanent staff of *The Gramophone* was reduced to two—my mother and my father.

The 'office' occupied the front room of our home at 49 Ebrington Road, Kenton and as a schoolboy I slept through the London blitz with my head under the office desk, my feet under the dining-room table and the 500-strong subscription file so positioned to keep off the worst of the glass should the windows be blown-in. On coming home from school in the afternoon I well remember the monthly task of rolling the subscription copies, sticking on the stamps and then cycling around all the post-boxes in the neighbourhood, filling them up to the brim, much to the concern of the local Postmaster who later arranged for a van to collect them once a month.

By this time my father had assumed responsibility for the day-to-day running of *The Gramophone*—editorial, advertising, circulation, subscriptions, accounts—and, together with my mother's help, he kept the business going. His contributors, without whom he would have been lost, included Alec Robertson, W. R. Anderson, W. A. Chislett, Edgar Jackson and a near-neighbour Geoffrey Howard-Sorrell. In addition, of course, there were contributions from Sir Compton, Faith Mackenzie and Christopher Stone. However, even by the summer of 1941 the tide was turning and George Winkworth, another neighbour and formerly advertisement manager of *The Sound Wave*, joined the staff, initially on a part-time basis, to look after circulation and advertising. He was followed by Peggy Holloway, our immediate next-door neighbour who had been bombed-out from the south of London, who came to look after the subscriptions.

It was during this period that 49 Ebrington Road became something of a 'home from home' for readers in the Services. Needless to say, there were always plenty of records, a gramophone, a good coal fire in the winter and, with luck, something to eat. Because of their continuing friendship to this day I remember particularly Harold Schonberg, Jerry Pastene and Fred Lord (all US Army), John Culshaw (Royal Navy) and William Hollamby (ex-staff and British Army), all of whom were regular visitors.

And so *The Gramophone* survived the war. That it could claim never to have missed an issue was to a great extent due to the printers, Gibbs and Bamforth of St Albans, and our paper merchants, A. H. James & Co. of the City of London. The

printing of the magazine was entrusted to Gibbs & Bamforth in 1938; but for a change of name and their incorporation within IPC it is still in the same good hands today. In this regard it is a source of great pleasure to me that Fred Hunt, who worked as a compositor on *The Gramophone* in 1938, is still happily looking after us today.

A. H. James & Co. have supplied our paper since the early thirties and it was the foresight of the late A. H. James himself, who insisted in laying-in paper stocks for *The Gramophone* in 1939, to be paid for as used, that saw the magazine through the worst of the paper rationing which was introduced early in the war.

Thus, with the backing of Sir Compton, Faith Mackenzie and Christopher Stone, the support of the record industry, a small office staff and contributors plus the printer and the paper merchant, my father not only brought the magazine through the war but managed to trim the sails in such a way that as soon as more favourable breezes blew he was in a position to take full advantage of all they offered. And so it was that *The Gramophone* was able to participate in the tremendous post-war growth of the record and audio industries and expand its circulation from a war-time 5,000 copies to a figure well in excess of 70,000, with copies reaching virtually every country in the world.

On the completion of my Military Service early in 1949 I wrote, at my father's insistence, to Sir Compton and Christopher Stone requesting that I might join the Company: that request was granted and for the following sixteen years I worked happily with my father, sharing the same office and endeavouring to learn something of the running of *The Gramophone*.

But as 1950 drew to a close an important event in the history of *The Gramophone* took place which must be recorded. Up to this time the destiny of the Company had been vested in the capable and sympathetic hands of its two founders and controlling shareholders, Sir Compton and Christopher Stone. These two gentlemen, regarding my father as the rightful successor to *The Gramophone* and all it stood for and in recognition of all he had done for the Company over the years, offered to sell him their controlling interest thus ensuring that he would be placed in effective control of its policy for the future. This generous and far-sighted business offer was readily accepted by my father on terms mutually satisfactory to all concerned.

It may be that similar events have happened in the history of publishing but I know that my father was deeply touched by the

understanding and generosity of two men for whom he had the greatest respect—a view which I wholly share.

And so it was that the 'family' atmosphere of *The Gramophone* continued. In the late forties and early fifties we expanded our office in London (advertisement, circulation and accounts departments), and retaining our subscription office at Ebrington Road we opened a small editorial office in Stanmore, where my father had moved in 1950. Later, my wife came and worked in the editorial department with me for some five years looking after the supply of records to reviewers and reading authors' Mss and galley proofs. She then 'retired' to bring up our two children, rejoining the Company as a Director on the death of my father in 1965 and again involving herself in aspects of the literary side of the magazine. During the fifties, two of my uncles, Reg Pollard and Vic Dunbar, joined the Company: Reg Pollard succeeded George Winkworth as Advertisement Manager on the latter's death in 1957 and Vic Dunbar took over as Circulation Manager.

More office moves followed in 1960 when the subscription and editorial departments were combined at 379 Kenton Road, later to be joined by the accounts department from London, and finally in 1968 we moved yet again to 177-179 Kenton Road where we were able to have the benefit of all the departments under one roof and eventually close down our London office.

However, in another respect the sixties did not deal so kindly with *The Gramophone*. In July 1960 Lady Faith Compton Mackenzie died at the age of 82: Lady Mackenzie had contributed to *The Gramophone* from the earliest days through to the late forties. Apart from writing under the pseudonym "F Sharp" she also helped with editorial work on the paper in the twenties and thirties.

In May 1965 Christopher Stone, Faith Mackenzie's brother, died also at the age of 82. In addition to his editorial work on *The Gramophone*, Christopher had long since established himself as a broadcaster, particularly of gramophone records. Eventually he became known as the first disc-jockey, an epithet he did not like. Roger Wimbush, in the July 1965 issue of *The Gramophone*, wrote of Christopher, "It is probably true to say that we who grew up with *The Gramophone* and who owe it so much will in our turn think with affection of CRS when we put on our records, for this most companionable of men could conjure life from the flattest of surfaces".

In the September of that year my father died at the early age of 66. He had been ill for some three years but fortunately was

able to carry on working until a fortnight before his death. Three years later, in 1968, my mother died also aged 66.

Thus, during the sixties the Company lost four of its Directors, all of whom had contributed essentially to the success of the magazine.

Now as I write we are half-way through 1972 and fast approaching our Golden Jubilee in April 1973. From the earliest days of *The Gramophone* the picture around us has been one of change—in publishing, in our record and audio industries and in the whole society in which we function. The rate of change in the past decade has been considerable and the opportunities for the future are exceptional. Thus it is right that the team now producing *The Gramophone*, both in terms of permanent staff and contributors, contains a healthy proportion of younger people who, given the right encouragement and guidance, will provide a more and more significant contribution to the future of the magazine.

With higher standards of education and a move towards more and more leisure time the role of home entertainment is rapidly assuming an even greater importance. But who can tell what the next 50 years will bring? For the immediate future it is clear that the audio disc is capable of still further technical development, and parallel with this the cassette and cartridge market will develop an alternative format for the recording industry's repertoire. The addition of video, once agreement has been reached on a standard, will undoubtedly become an economic proposition although I do not see it ever ousting the audio disc or cassette: the two will exist in parallel as do radio and television today.

Over the years, *The Gramophone*, as an independent magazine of opinion, has witnessed and encouraged the progress of manufacturers towards greater achievement while at the same time endeavouring to maintain established and tested standards: concurrently we have been able to communicate present standards and future aspirations to our readers in an effort to ensure their full acceptance and appreciation.

Thus it is as a medium of specialized communication that *The Gramophone* stands ready for the next fifty years: we view the future with anticipation and optimism.

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