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New Recordings

## RELAX AND LISTEN

A monthly review by  
OWEN JENSEN

SOMETIMES, I think, we take our music too seriously. ears and mind sergeant-major to attention as we take the salute in a parade of "classical masterpieces." We are losing the ability to sit back, and sometimes let the music wash over and around us in delicious waves of sensuous sound, listening just for the heck of it. It's a pastime worth trying.

If you're so moved, there could be little better to start with than Mendelssohn's Octet in E Flat, Op. 20, recently recorded by the Vienna Octet (Decca LXT 2870). This is one of Mendelssohn's finest works; but this is not so much to be noted as the fact that it was written in the composer's seventeenth year and was probably inspired by the Sunday morning music parties his father arranged at their home in Berlin. At these gatherings the four Mendelssohn children learnt their music the best way possible, meeting the city's musicians, hearing them play, playing with them and even hearing Felix's compositions tried out. Mendelssohn's silver spoon was not bought with his father's money only but fashioned in an enlightened, happy domestic atmosphere. In this spirit the Octet was born and in this way it can be enjoyed. The Vienna Octet play it like this, not following too zealously Mendelssohn's over-enthusiastic injunction that it "be played by all instruments in symphonic orchestral style." Treated suavely and intimately as the Viennese players make it, the Octet and the famous Scherzo particularly, comes out as the friendly music it is.

Having achieved a relaxed mood with Mendelssohn, we can turn to two quintets for piano and strings by Luigi Boccherini, better known for his celebrated minuet. These, too, were conceived as musical entertainment, not, however, for the family circle, but for the courts of the King of Spain, to which Boccherini was attached. In these surroundings and for this audience, Boccherini wrote most of his vast quantity of chamber music. Someone once dubbed Boccherini "Haydn's wife," which will tell you something about his

music. Add to this, not only that as a virtuoso cellist he writes well for that instrument, but also that he had discovered the knack of fitting piano and strings together, and you can well believe that these two quintets make enjoyable listening. As played by the Quintetto Chigiano (Decca LXT 2841) in this ensemble's usual polished style, even the King of Spain could not have wished better from his court musician.

Beethoven may not be so easy to take in the armchair, surrounded as he is by so much *sturm und drang* and the importunings of Fate. None of this, however, appears in the Serenade for Flute, Violin and Viola, Op. 25, which as its name indicates is for listening as quiet as Mendelssohn or Boccherini may be. The Serenade reminds us again that Beethoven could write good-humoured music as agreeably as he was convincingly dramatic or philosophical. The recording by Julius Baker (flute), Joseph Fuchs (violin), Lillian Fuchs (viola) (Brunswick AXTL 1033) rather over-emphasises the flute, and, in places, the string tone seems a little raw; but this is no fault of the players, who have obviously given themselves over to the charm of the music. The reverse side carries the quite splendid Trio in C Minor, Op. 9, No. 3, for violin, viola and cello played by Joseph, Lillian and Harry Fuchs.

For those who prefer singers to strings when taking their listening as a pastime rather than an art, Olga Coelho singing to her own guitar accompaniment may very well be the answer. Many listeners may remember the recitals of this Latin American who toured New Zealand for the Broadcasting Service some years ago, a personality as charming as her singing was accomplished. In this recording (Esquire 15-006) she sings traditional songs with artless artistry, and an aria by Alessandro Scarlatti, too!

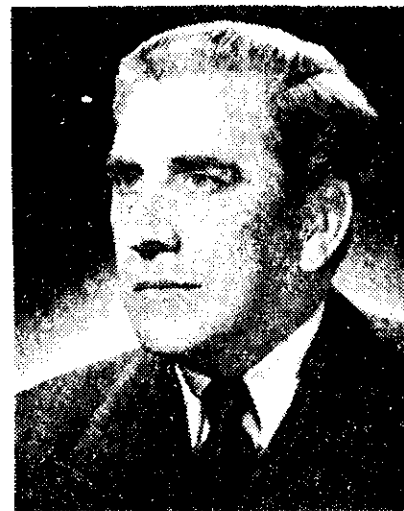
If none of this music should seem sufficiently relaxing, there's still Ethel ("Call Me Madam") Merman (Brunswick LA 8636), who would go with the

(continued on next page)

## STRANGE SEA STORIES

ACTUAL sea stories are dramatised in the series *Strange Stories of the Sea*, which is now being heard from 12B and 22B at 7.30 p.m. on Saturdays, and which will soon start from 32B, 42B and 22A at the same time. These programmes are produced by Walter Pym (right), who describes them as "a collection of the most unusual sea stories ever told." Titles of the first few episodes give some idea of their contents: "The Skull and Crossbones," "A Private War," "Ruby Three," "A Derelict on the High Seas," and "The Pearl of Balak Jendi."

Another new serial programme which will be heard from all ZB stations at 8.0 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, beginning on Wednesday, July 14, is called *Three Roads to Destiny*. The story is set in the 1830s, and concerns three brothers of the Allingham family who, after individual adventures



in various parts of the world, end up as immigrants in the young colony of Australia.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 9, 1954.