

# At Home With the Orchestra

THE orchestra from Haydn to Beethoven, to Brahms, to Bartok—you can bring it into your home at the flick of a switch, a diversity of music for every mood and every occasion. The trouble is that if you flick the switch without turning the knob of your thinking, you may miss both the occasion and the mood.

For instance, there is Haydn's Symphony No. 94 in G Major ("The Surprise"). The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Fritz Lehmann (Deutsche DG 16012), play it superbly, with rather more polish, I fancy, than Haydn's own orchestra may have turned it out. In listening to this exciting playing, one may easily forget the congenial surroundings of London's Hanover Square Rooms, where the symphony took its first bow. It is probably even more difficult to recapture the environment of a Vivaldi concert—especially, perhaps, when you have five of them on one disc. But you can hardly miss the engaging quality of the music. The Chamber Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera with soloists Jan Tomasow (violin) and Ludwig Pfersmann (flute) bring out all the liveliness of Vivaldi's music (Vanguard PVL 7018).

Whatever trouble you may have in going back to Haydn or Vivaldi, it's very likely Johann Strauss will dance you into Vienna in a few bars—unless, of course, you happen to be allergic to Strauss. If the rhythms are as electric as those of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra (conductor, Anton Paulik), draw from a bunch of Polkas by Johann Strauss, Jr., and Josef Strauss (Vanguard PVL 7003), your allergy may have a hard job sustaining itself. The Viennese players give the music its genuine lilt. The recording is fine.

And there's the complete recording of the Strauss operetta, *Die Fledermaus*. It's a little frustrating to hear excellently delivered dialogue in a language you can't understand, but the infectious music is ample compensation; and infectious it becomes in the hands, or rather voices, of this cast which includes Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Nicolai Gedda and Helmut Krebs. The orchestra is the Philharmonia, with chorus. The conductor is Herbert von Karajan (Columbia 33CX 1309-1310).

Of course, it's every man to his taste. If you don't like the Strauss idiom, there is a good humour in Wolf-Ferrari's operatic intermezzo *Susanna's Secret*, and some extraordinarily fine singing by Ester Orel (soprano) and Mario Boriello (baritone), with the Turin Symphony Orchestra (Deutsche DGM 18135). A little like Puccini with some of the sugar scraped off.

By Owen Jensen

If you are a one for sugar, maybe you should listen in to *Music for You*, No. 2 (Argo Rg 66), another programme from Eric Robinson's famous TV show, a marshmallow confection of orchestrations of well-known numbers from "Rustle of Spring" to the "Flight of the Bumble Bee."

For myself, I would prefer the more dashing music of José Greco's Spanish Ballet with the Orquesta Zarzuela of Madrid (Festival CFR 10-762), or some more music of Spain in *Olé, Olé*, by the same orchestra (Festival CFR 10-758).

On the borders of Spain, musically speaking, there's some smart orchestral playing of an orchestral suite from *Carmen* by the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Mario Rossi, with a suite from Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* on the reverse side (Vanguard PVL 7002).

The orchestra that started with Haydn—the symphony orchestra—comes into its own again in this batch of discs, with Sibelius's Symphony No. 5 in E Flat Major and *Night Ride and Sunrise* to complete side two. The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anthony Collins give an interesting if not an exciting performance of the music (Decca LXT 5083).

## Some Concertos

Concertos from Bach to Bartok. Vera Appleton and Michael Field (pianists) with the Castle Hill Festival Orchestra conducted by Frank Brief (Nixa 16007), play attractive performances of two Bach two-piano concertos, No. 1 in C Minor, and No. 2 in C Major.

From Bach to Brahms, and the Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor. Friedrich Wührer (pianist) and the Vienna State Philharmonia conducted by Hans Swarowsky (Vox APL 8000) give nobility and breadth to the music. You would probably be quite happy with this combination if you did not hear Arthur Rubinstein and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner playing the same work (H.M.V. AP 1297). The lyrical moments sing more, the rhythms pulsate more strongly and Rubinstein's playing has an intangible quality that gives an added distinction to the piano part. The recording is a little more alive, too. For sheer brilliance, however, and rhapsodic beauty among these concertos, the palm must go to Tibor Varga (violin) and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in a performance of Bartok's Violin Concerto (Deutsche DGM 18006).



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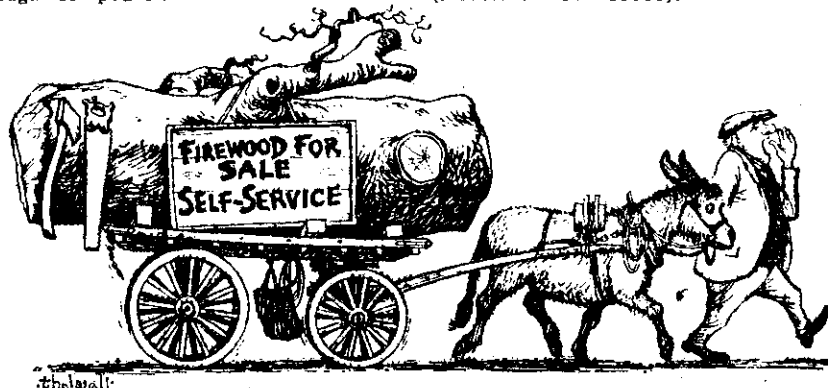
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