

★ The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN ★

SOMETIMES, unheralded and practically unsung, we have a visit from an overseas artist of fine capabilities, and tune to his recitals almost by accident. Whether by accident or design you hear the Australian violinist Ronald Woodcock. I think you'll agree that he is worth hearing. He played, with the Alex Lindsay Orchestra (YC link) the Bach A Minor Concerto with a breadth that would do credit to any soloist, and in the slow movement a feeling for the lovely melodic line that resulted in as lyrical a sound as any I have heard. The orchestra, by no means a subsidiary element in this work, gave a well-balanced support, at times lacking in contrast but entirely without those falsities of intonation that so often ruin a soloist's best efforts.

Mr. Woodcock was also heard associated with Janetta McStay in some studio recitals (YC link), in which he proved his sterling qualities extended well beyond the rigours of Bach. In one programme of French music, the difficult sonata of Debussy showed in a good light, with a kind of moderated impressionism in which the outlines remained clear, like a crystal bowl of opalescent liquid; and conveying its rippling and shimmering ideas as only Debussy can. Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpetuels*, graceful fragments that they

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of pitch, the smallest rhythmic violation. The old man was both endearing and splendid. He called his orchestra "my friends" and "my dears"; "Sing!" he would shout to the second violins, "Sing!" to the oboes, and this duty to sing seemed primary in his conception of the work. And when the completed movements were heard, his points had been well taken. The orchestra sounded crisp and rich, and indeed there was plenty of song. I can think of no better way of learning an orchestral work, to say nothing of how crucial a part the conductor plays in the finished performance. Might one suggest that the pleasant deceit practised on Bruno Walter might be repeated by our technicians with James Robertson? The results could well be most edifying.

The Lowest Rung

I RECALL the flavour of Damon Runyon stories as sourly humorous, and a texture hard and dry. I don't think my memory plays me false. I found neither of these in the recorded half hour of *Guys and Dolls*, the American musical reputedly based on Runyon's New York stories. What I did find was the brassy, blaring fortissimo of the American musical star, in lyrics of quite exceptional triviality, and the usual sloppy obeisances to *Luv* by a squeaky soubrette. I may be unjust in judging the whole show by a half-hour record, but it seemed to me that everywhere the Runyon spirit had been violated, neutralised and gutted. The Americans are, it seems, prepared to make a musical of anything, and they all sound the same in the end. I wait apprehensively for a hot *Twelfth Night*. *Guys and Dolls* was followed by a half-hour from American Mom's favourite boy, Liberace, who I had never heard before. I find the adjective *loathsome*, both for illiteration;

are, were entirely charming, played with all the apparent wit of the composer: while Milhaud's flamboyantly South American "Ipanema" was a tour de force of rhythm—not to mention technique.

I caught up on half a programme I had missed from the National Orchestra: the Prague Symphony of Mozart, given with considerable grace and finesse; and with Richard Farrell at the piano, Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand. This latter sounded perhaps a little less assured, but its very nature, which savours somewhat of the stunt or gimmick, must affect the judgment to some extent, however musical the setting within its sinister limitations.

It's hardly within my orbit to mention talks, but I feel I must trespass a little when it comes to H. W. French's admirable talks on *Sound and Music* (BBC), which, as the title implies, are based on the physical and acoustical aspects. I found these clearly put and enlightening, and especially approved of illustrations demonstrating the nature of tone colour, varying harmonics by electronically-produced sounds. We do tend to lose touch with the basic matter of any highly-developed art, and it takes a reminder such as this to bring to us in our ivory pinnacle an idea of its foundations and their importance.

and because it neatly pinions the quality of this quite horrible pianist. He began with Chopsticks variations, which somehow worked the Liszt second Hungarian Rhapsody into itself, and this was followed by what the announcer described as "The Beer Barrel Polka," but sounded exactly like the Tchaikovsky Concerto in B Flat Minor, or rather, a digest of this concerto. Liberace has stated that he is not interested in the philosophy of composers but in their melodies. Acting on this high principle, he gave us the first 30 or so bars of the first movement, coupled somehow with the last 15 of the last movement. That this should then be called "The Beer Barrel Polka" struck me, in a wild way, as justice. The announcer later apologised for his error, but too late. The association is now inextricable in my mind. Piotr Ilyich! Thou should'st be living at this hour!

—B.E.G.M.

Jazz at the Philharmonic

NORMAN GRANZ'S team is right at the top these days. Their reputation can truly be called international—after their tour to Europe and the United Kingdom a few years ago sales of their discs in these countries greatly increased. The latest of the series to arrive in this country, the seventeenth, is to be heard from 2YD next Thursday (May 31, 9.0-10.0 p.m.), and it will be heard later in the month from other stations. It is rather unusual in that it all comes from the one performance—at Bushnell Memorial Hall in Hartford. As a rule, Norman Granz takes recordings from concerts at various places on tour and picks out the best for this programme. But at the opening concert at Hartford, the first time the band had worked together as a unit, the playing was completely fresh and imaginative; and in every way the peak performance of the tour.



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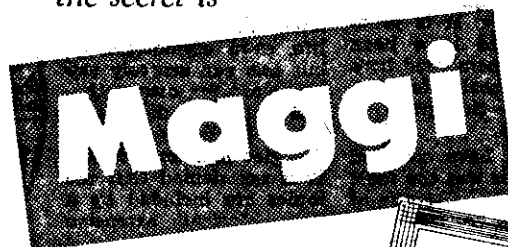
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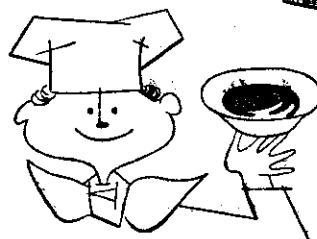
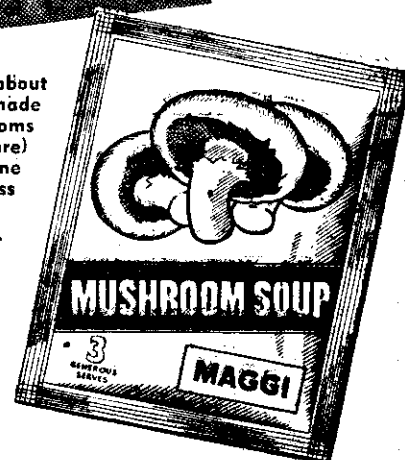
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