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New Recordings

## ASPECTS OF SINGING

"SINCE singing is so good a thing, I wish all men would learn to sing." Thus the incitement of William Byrd in the 16th century. Had he lived today, he might have changed his tune, for by all accounts singing is not what it was; or perhaps he may have insisted that today's singers learn a little more before they sing. But what would no doubt have surprised Mr. Byrd the more, is the variety of caprices the human voice gets up to today. Simona Dall'Argine, Nino Scattolini, the Swabian Choral Singers, Danny Kaye, Billie Holliday. It all passes for singing. You pay your money and take your choice.

My choice is most assuredly not Billie Holliday at Jazz at the Philhar-monic (Clef MGC-169), as she yearns her way through a bunch of blues with such metaphysical titles as "Body and Soul" and "Strange Fruit." Nor am I in any way convinced that, as the cover note puts it, Miss Holliday's "artistry is timeless."

If you are looking for something timeless in the singing line, turn to Vespro Della Beata Cergine, by Claudio Monteverdi. This 17th century music still lives magnificently. The Swabian Choral Singers with the Stuttgart Bach Orchestra and soloists conducted by Hans Grischkat (Vox PL 7902: 1 and 2) bring out all the beauty of the music.

Spanning the centuries, too, comes Bach's Mass in B Minor in a performance by the Choir of the Dreikonigskirche, Frankfurt, and the Collegium Musicum Orchestra conducted by Kurt Thomas (London OL 50094-6). The texture of Bach's counterpoint comes out with more clarity than one often hears it-or doesn't hear it-on recordings. The soloists are Lisa Schwarzweller (soprano), Lore Fischer (contralto), Helmut Kretschmar (tenor) and Bruno Muller (bass). Together with the choir and orchestra, they make this a performance you should look into.

Excerpts from opera usually leave me cold, but Highlights from Tosca, by Simona Dall'Argine (soprano), Nino Scattolini (tenor) and Scipio Columbo (bass), with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Kammerchor conducted by Argeo Quadri (Westminster WL 5208) makes most agreeably sounding music. The recording matches the performance.

Then there's Danny Kaye in music from The Court Jester (Festival FR 12-869)-a singer, too! Danny Kaye may not have the voice of a Caruso or be a

master of the bel canto, but in the patter song he has no peer and the verve of his vocalisations would put many a grand opera singer to shame.

## New and Good

Honegger's Symphony No. 3 (Symphonie Liturgique) is not all that new. It was written in 1945-46. But this is, I think, the first time it been recorded, a long overdue recognition. This is impressive music, 20th century in the best sense; which means that it is vital but by no means difficult listening.

## By OWEN JENSEN

Robert F. Denzler and l'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris give a convincing performance (Decca LXT 5118).

Old music newly discovered and something in the way of treasure trove is to be found in Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in A Flat, by Mendelssohn. Written when Mendelssohn was still in his teens, the manuscript was lost, to be fossicked out of the Berlin State Library some five or six years ago. It is a joyous work in Mendelssohn's best style. Pianists Orazio Frugoni and Annarosa Taddei, with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Moralt (Vox APL 7400) give a glittering presentation which is shown to the best advantage by the recording.

Peter Racine Fricker (born 1920) has rapidly established himself as one of Great Britain's most significant composers. His somewhat astringent style is not always the most ingratiating, but there is no doubt about the quality of music like his Symphony No. 2, Op. 14. It is well played by John Pritchard and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (H.M.V. DLP 1080).

Gina Bachauer brings both assured technique and poetry to a piano recital of music by Debussy (Suite: Pour Le Piano and Three Preludes), Ravel (Gaspard de la Nuit), and Mompou (Jeunes Filles Au Jardin) (H.M.V. CLP 1067). If the poetry is not quite as imaginative as, say, Alfred Cortot, this is still very fine playing.

## The "45"

It is sometimes held against the longplaying disc that, with all its advantages of reproduction, you are still committed to buying 40 minutes or more of music, which may be all right for a symphony, but overmuch for a collection of shorter works.

The "45" extended play record seems to be the answer. Among a number of pieces recorded on these pocket edition discs are some attractive sonatas by the early Italian composer Tommaso Albinoni. Trio Sonata in A Major is coupled with a violin sonata by Vivaldi (Festival XP 45-929), and Violin Sonata in A Major with a cheerful quartet by Alessandro Scarlatti (Festival XP 917). They are played with excellent feeling for the style by members of the Societas Musica, Copenhagen.

