

NEW RECORDINGS

The Year Begins Well

By OWEN JENSEN

AFTER two weeks of intensive live music and another two of almost no music at all, perhaps any but the most flaccid recording would sound well. Be that as it may, only something out of the top layers of the box could sound as fresh and exciting as some of the first discs to cross my path.

Pride of place must go to Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, recorded complete by Robert Helpman, Terence Longdon, Anthony Nicholls and a chamber ensemble conducted by John Pritchard (H.M.V. ALP 1377). This, I think, is the first recording that has the libretto attached to the music. The words, suitably translated and excellently narrated, give even greater conviction to the clarity of Stravinsky's music—music that is magical in its rhythms and the sonorities the composer obtains from his small group of seven instruments. The playing is in the virtuoso class. The recording is fine.

In the same line of playing and recording is the French Wind Quintet's recital of Contemporary French Wind Music (London OL 50122). The programme includes the sprightly *Three Short Pieces* of Ibert, a set of variations by Jean-Michel Damase of something the same texture, some conventional but pleasant enough variations by Henri Tomasi and a Wind Quintet in C by Claude Arrieu which takes us back to the light-hearted clarity of Ibert. Altogether this recital makes very pleasant listening indeed.

And then, treasure trove, there is Dinu Lipatti playing the Chopin Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58, now issued on a long-playing disc (Columbia 33CX 1337). This was recorded in 1947, three years before Lipatti's death. That we can still enjoy today the exquisite imagination of this rare pianist is enough to make anyone grateful for the gramophone and all that goes with it. The reverse side carries a playing by Lipatti of Sonata No. 3 in D Major by Georges Enesco, one of Lipatti's god-fathers—beautiful playing of music which may grow on one.

With the recording of Bartok's String Quartets Nos. 5 and 6 (Columbia 33CX 1285), the Vegh String Quartet completes a series that makes a major contribution to the recorded repertoire of chamber music. This is music to learn to know and to live with. The acquaintance will come the quicker and more complete perhaps if first meetings are made with the miniature score in hand. You will find, too, that the Vegh Quartet measures up to the vitality of Bartok's music.

A new recording of the Fauré *Requiem* is somewhat disappointing. The music is presented by the chorus of La Radio-Télévision Française and L'Orchestre du Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, with soloists Françoise Ogeas (soprano) and Bernard Demigny (baritone), with organist J. Baudry-Godard (London DTL 93083). Whether it is the impress of conductor D. E. Inghelbrecht or a little sluggishness in the singers and players, I wouldn't know, but Fauré's ethereal music comes out with an unsuitable earthy quality that by no

means does the composer justice. The second side is made up with three additional choral pieces by Fauré—*Cantique de Jean Racine*, *Madrigal* and *Pavane*. The recording is fairish only.

Nor can I work up much enthusiasm for Ernest Ansermet and the L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande's performance of Manuel de Falla's ballet *El Amor Brujo* (Decca LX 3151). Marina de Gabarain's singing of the mezzo-soprano solos is likeable, but not so much as that of Ana-Maria Iriarte in the Columbia version.

The Best of 1956

Choosing a record is like choosing a wife; it must be one you can live with.

In fact, it is a more delicate operation than wiving, for while marital relations may be expected to improve with the years, the insufficiencies of a record are there for the whole of its life. As you may know, there is no more irritating frustration than the

appalling inevitability of recorded errors. And so one must take occasional stock of the situation.

Of those discs that have come my way in the past twelve months, here are some whose companionship would be more than tolerable over the years—according to taste, of course.

There is the sheer delight of Mozart's *Il Seraglio* as presented by the RIAS Kammerchor, the RIAS Symphony Orchestra and soloists conducted by Ferenc Fricsay (Deutsche DGM 18184/85). Along with this you can put the Glyndebourne *Marriage of Figaro* under the direction of Vittoria Gui, with soloists Jurinac, Sciutti, Rise Stevens, Hugues Cuenod and Brusanti (H.M.V. ALPS 1312/14).

Among the symphonies there is the "Eroica," played by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Paul van Kempen (Philips ABL 3013) and, on the contemporary side, Symphony No. 10 by Shostakovich by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Efreim Kurtz (H.M.V. ALP 1322). Orchestrally, to these may be added Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, played by L'Orchestre du Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, conducted by D. E. Inghelbrecht (London DTL 93048), Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (Mercury MG 50030), and Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* (Mercury MG 50033). The last two are played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

For choral music you might remember the Toscanini version of Verdi's *Te Deum* (H.M.V. ALP 1363), and the Frankfurt St. *Matthew Passion* (London OL 50113/16), and in the repertoire of solo singing, Fischer-Dieskau's *Winterreise* (H.M.V. ALPS 1298/99). There has been a wealth of folk music, but none more attractive than *Musique Populaire Roumaine* (London TWBV 91107). Off the beaten track for an especial beauty, *Music of India* (H.M.V. ALPC 2).

And that's enough to go on with, especially as, no doubt, you will have your own favourites to add to these.



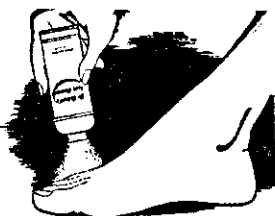
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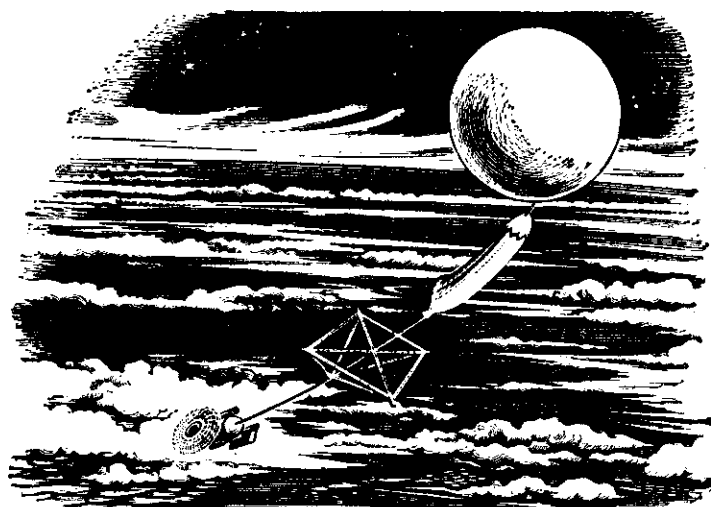
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