

# Unexpected Pleasures

THE 19th century Viennese music critic Hanslick kept his critical spirits up through the many years' rounds of concerts, recitals and opera because, he said, not a year passed, "but that the sources of artistic creation bring us a golden nugget, or two, or three." Today's record companies might object to their discs being labelled nuggets even though what comes out of them is very often gold. But sometimes the gold may be missed through the chromium-plating of hi-fi, and sometimes it may be washed away unnoticed in the tide of records that seems to pour through the market.

This last week I was handed a bunch of discs which, so it seems, no one wants very much. I can't understand why. The immediate assumption that they are probably more nugget than gold turned out quite the contrary. They provided some unexpected pleasures.

First, there was a programme of Saint-Saens—Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor (Arthur Sandford, soloist), and Ballet Music from Henry VIII—played by the Hastings Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Bath (Allegro ALX 3028). Admittedly this is not the greatest of music, nor is the Hastings Symphony Orchestra a virtuoso ensemble. But both music and playing are most pleasurable, and this includes the soloist, Arthur Sandford, who gives a clean-cut performance of the concerto. The recording adds to the pleasure.

In this same packet of discs comes the harpsichordist Alice Ehlers, playing Bach's English Suites No. 2 in A Minor and No. 3 in G Minor, and playing them well (Allegro ALX 3017). This is music that comes off on the piano, but whose heart beats happier in its original harpsichord medium.

Then there's the Kroll Quartet presenting Mozart String Quartets—in B Flat Major, K.458, and in C Major, K.465 (Allegro ALX 86). This is accomplished playing, with maybe a little too much dependence on the first violin, but with admirable verve and clarity.

Oscar Shumsky (violinist) and Leopold Mittman (pianist), however, are inclined to treat Mozart with a little too much verve in Sonatas for Violin and Piano, A Major, K.305, E Minor, K.304, and B Flat Major, K.570 (Allegro ALX 112). One cannot but admire the technical fluency of both players; but it doesn't seem quite Mozart.

If "Lieder" singing is your taste, you might look into a recital by the soprano Helga Mott, with pianist Erik Werba (Delyse EC 3138).

The programme is a most interesting one — Schubert's "Shepherd on the Rock," with Jack Brymer, clarinet, a group of Richard Strauss, two songs by Beethoven, one by Neeffe, who taught Beethoven something about conducting, and an off the beaten track group by Hugo Wolf. Helga Mott is in the genuine tradition of lieder singers, maybe a little short of



By OWEN JENSEN

subtlety of interpretation, but with more than ordinary beauty, all the same.

## The Super-Colossal World of Jazz

The halls of jazz are lined with genius, tremendous talents, giants, miracle men and soulful, exciting personalities. I quote from various record cover blurbs. Taking a pinch of salt with all this sugar and putting aside the conditioned prejudices, you'll still find a bit of nuggety gold lying around.

As good a nugget as most is swing pianist Art Tatum. Take away his arpeggio arabesques, which become a little tedious after a while, and beneath the surface you'll hear some out-of-the-groove pianism that will live through quite a few listening sessions. That's the way it is in "The Genius of Art Tatum" if you put aside the title (Clef MG C-612). The said Art's art is somewhat under the bushel when he teams up as the Tatum-Carter-Bellson Trio (Clef MGC 643), but nevertheless a not uninteresting disc.

Meade Lux Lewis (with Louis Bellson, drums), as one of the early boogie pianists, cuts a different rhythmical figure to Art Tatum. His playing goes places and is as different from the ordinary run of boogie as chalk from cheesecake (Clef MGC 632).

Harry Carney with Strings (Clef MGC 640) takes us off the main road of jazz. In fact, the purist might object that it isn't even in the same country. Think of a mixture of Duke Ellington and the Melachro Strings—if you can bear to think of such an alliance—and add the "most soulful, most exciting baritone saxophone" of Harry Carney and you get something of the idea. It sounds much better than it seems, and is, in fact, worthy of attention.

The Gene Krupa Sextet (Clef MGC 631) would, you might expect, feature the drumming of the famous Krupa. What comes out most is some exciting trumpet playing by Charlie Shavers.

The Ronnie Scott Jazz Club (Esquire 32-001) may be good. I wouldn't like to say. I found it a tedious repetition of well-worn jazz formulae.

## Coda

To your collection of Spanish music you could add the pocket-size discs of Roman el Granaino's Guitare Flamenco (Le Chant du Monde LDY 4037), and the flamenco singing of Manolo Leiva with Nino Ricardo, guitar (Le Chant du Monde LDY 4053). If you like the accordion, you'll appreciate "Les Classiques du Musette" (Le Chant du Monde LDY 4044), and if this is not your usual line, you might still take time off to listen. It's attractive playing. The collector of folk music will find some authentic interest in two small discs of Irish Songs of Resistance (Topic T3 and T4).

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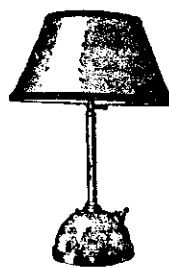
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