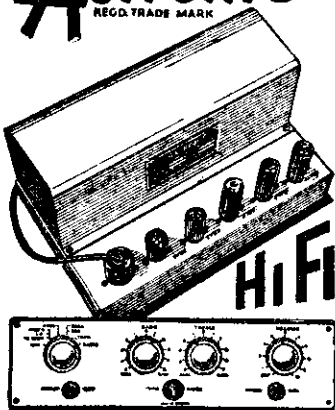


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NEW RECORDINGS

Lucky Dip

by
OWEN JENSEN

THE recording machine is a great leveller. It sucks in the sound—Beethoven or Bop—and pours it all on the disc with dispassionate care whether it be past, present, classic or the latest pop. Swathed in a plastic cover, neatly labelled and packaged in eye-catching envelopes, when the parcel is opened it's anybody's guess what comes out first.

This time Beethoven was the first jack to pop out of the box—String Quartet No. 10 in E Flat, Op. 74. This music, the tender poignancy of the slow movement, the dynamic scherzo, the grace of the finale, is surely some of Beethoven's finest chamber music. It is played by the Quartetto Italiano (Columbia 33CX 1396) with a polish and sensitive feeling that would surely have gladdened the heart of the composer.

A suitable partner for this quartet is the Trio di Trieste's performance of the Beethoven Trio No. 4 in D Major, Op. 70, No. 1 ("Ghost"), playing that whets the appetite for more trio music. The piano, which can too easily take charge and dominate a trio performance, is here patterned to make a well-balanced ensemble. The Mozart trio on the other

side of the disc—No. 4 in E Major, K.542—complements the delight.

While we are along with Mozart, there is his Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major, K.216 played by the Russian violinist, Leonid Kogan, whose distinguished Bach playing we reviewed lately (*Listener*, March 22). Leonid Kogan gives us Mozart as elegantly as you could wish, an exhilarating performance. The orchestra is the Philharmonia, conducted by Otto Akerman (Columbia 33CX 1395). The reverse side of the record has Kogan playing Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Basil Cameron. This is attractive enough playing, but suffers by comparison with the Mozart. Perhaps, also, one remembers too affectionately the old standard recording by Heifetz and the Boston Symphony Orchestra—richer, it seems, in tone and more brilliant.

Beethoven, Mozart, Prokofiev, and now out of the box comes Stravinsky. The pianist Nikita Magaloff plays the Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments and the Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra with L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande, conducted by Ernest Ansermet (Decca LXT 5154). Both are attractive works, plenty of rhythmic vitality, as you would expect from Stravinsky, and the middle movement of the concerto with wind instruments, as clear in texture as Mozart. Stravinsky certainly knows how to handle wind instruments; and these

players, soloist and orchestra, know how to handle Stravinsky.

The performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 in E Minor by Georg Solti and L'Orchestre de la Societe Des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris (Decca LXT 5241) improves as it goes along. What may be lost a little on the roundabout of string tone—the wind have the edge on the strings—is made up on the swing of the rhythm which makes it altogether a quite exciting playing.

From music to words—Dame Edith Evans presenting Shakespeare's Sonnets and with Michael Redgrave, Ursula Jeans, Peter Coke and Jessie Evans, scenes from *As You Like It* (Columbia 33CX 1375). One should, I suppose, be a little rapturous about Dame Edith Evans speaking the Sonnets. After all, the note on the record cover says, "There are tears at the back of the beautiful voice—the kept-back tears of hopeless but dignified adoration." But I am afraid



Museum of Modern Art

IGOR STRAVINSKY
(by Picasso)

I cannot share these "kept-back tears." I hear the sonnets more simply and more intimately. *As You Like It* is—well, probably quite as you'd like it.

Sugar and Spice

Just over the border meet Leonard Bernstein, that phenomenon of contemporary American music, in selections from his musicale *Wonderful Town* with Rosalind Russell of the films and others (Festival FGL 12-1221). I listened hopefully for just that tune or two that might place Mr Bernstein up in the Frank Loesser *Guys and Dolls* class. But no. Leonard Bernstein, if all one hears is right, must be a much better pianist, conductor, lecturer and composer of serious music.

"Rock and Roll" is not as bad as it is painted. The rhythm kicks along gaily enough and the exercise is as good as a tonic. But once you've heard one, you've heard the lot. These rolling rocks gather a lot of moss. The film *Rock Pretty Baby* (Festival FR 12-1310) may be a pleasant bit of escapism for the younger fry, but—let's skip it.

Songs for Saints and Sinners (Coral C12-1052) left me feeling neither like one nor the other, just thoroughly bored. With all this sugar, however, the disc will probably sell like candy, so who am I to talk?

Next, out of the dip, *Time Out for Tears* by the Ink Spots. How this singing ensemble has come down in the world. At this stage my typewriter began to go —**!!@ + npqr, which being interpreted means—better luck next time!

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 18, 1957.

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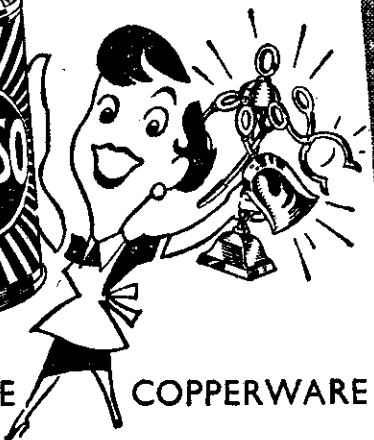
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