

THE radio and the gramophone both have one tremendous advantage in the presentation of concertos in that the problems of balance between orchestra and soloist which are sometimes almost insoluble in the concert hall are so easily solved by twiddling knobs in the control room that the temptation is sometimes to give the soloist even more than he deserves, to the detriment of the music as a whole. A spate of concertos of high quality has come out in the past few months, not all of which can be mentioned here. The first is a very welcome one, Coronet KLC 522, of the Brahms Double Concerto, played by Isaac Stern and Leonard Rose with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Bruno Walter, for no record as completely satisfying has been hitherto available. With it is the Brahms Variations on a Theme of Haydn and the

Music on Record

CONCERT OF CONCERTOS

By "DISCOBOLUS"



the performances, because they are both so completely different—Oistrakh and Stern are both superb players, and they are placed well forward from an orchestra, the Philadelphia under Ormandy, which is simply a modern string orchestra. In the other record the soloists are both within the orchestra, so to speak, which is smaller and has a good harpsichord continuo, so that the general effect is one of authenticity which is not that of Oistrakh and Stern. Both are fine records—the choice of style will be yours.

Of the five violin concerto recordings one is the old master Heifetz giving on H.M.V. ALP 1334 his interpretation of the Violin Concerto of the other old master, Brahms, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Reiner. Heifetz's playing is always directional; he never sprawls, and this is as fine a record as he has ever made. David Oistrakh is electrifying in Shostakovich's Violin Concerto, Op. 99, which was written for him, and which he has recorded on Columbia KLC 518 with the New York Philharmonic under Mitropoulos. If your taste lies even slightly to modern Russian music don't miss this music, alternately moving and spiky. A great contrast is the lush romantic playing of Isaac Stern in the Lalo *Symphonie Espagnole* and the Bruch Violin Concerto, on Coronet KLC 544, with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy. Stern grows in stature as a player, and he gives these works the loving warmth of tone which makes one understand how they have kept the affection of audiences so long. Two other violinists play Mozart concertos, Schneiderhan (the husband of Irmgard Seefried) plays No. 4 and No. 5 on Deutsche Grammophon DGM 18314, and Leonid Kogan No. 3 on Columbia 33CX 1395. All are very satisfactory performances indeed, with very clean playing; the contrast is that Kogan couples with the Mozart a recording of the Prokofiev Second Concerto, Op. 63, which is as delightful in its own way as are the other Mozart concertos. Your tastes in the music will be the deciding factor in these records.

What a marvellous cellist Fournier is! On Columbia 33CX 1407 he gives a breathtaking performance of Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Sargent, which is coupled with the Schumann Cello Concerto, in which his playing is so fine that it makes this work almost interesting. The recording is excellent.

There are three piano concerto recordings, of which the first is really outstanding. This is also a double concerto, the C Major, by J. S. Bach, which is played on H.M.V. CLP 1111, by Gina Bachauer and Ilona Kabos with what is called the London Orchestra under Alec Sherman. They play this on two pianos, which may displease you if you

are a harpsichord purist, or delight you if you love magnificent pianism. Gina Bachauer is rapidly becoming the foremost woman pianist in Europe, and on this record she plays also two Bach works, the Concerto in F Minor, and the Busoni arrangement of the Organ Toccata in C, both of them with masculine authority and vigour. With vigour and authority, too, Julius Katchen with the London Philharmonic under Boult plays Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Dohnanyi's *Variations on a Nursery Song*. I am very fond of the Rachmaninoff, but I find with repeated hearings that Dohnanyi's humour partakes a little of the Teutonic "big joke now comink" school. Still, it's an excellent performance.

Not so completely satisfying is Friedrich Gulda and the Vienna Philharmonic under Andrae, in the Schumann Piano Concerto on Decca LXT 5280. It has been said that this concerto should always be played by a woman, meaning that there is a vein of tenderness which runs through it. This is, I think, what Gulda just misses; notice the matter-of-factness with which he starts the second movement. The performance is fine up to a point, but does not quite get that extra warmth. Gulda is better in the Weber *Konzertstück*, Op. 79, which is on part of the second side. Incidentally, there is one of the most unsatisfactory turn-overs on this record that one can find in these LP days.

If you love old favourites in the symphony world you will get the greatest pleasure from Cantelli's conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra on H.M.V. ALP 1325, in Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony and Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. This is music in which Cantelli's unfailing sense of melody is at its very best, and I have never heard a more satisfactory Schubert. If, however, you want something a little new in symphonies, and yet the work of the moderns doesn't appeal to you, try Franz Berwald's Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, played by the Berlin Philharmonic under Markevitch, on Deutsche Grammophon DGM 18317. Berwald was a neglected Swedish composer of the middle 19th century, though these delightful symphonies sound surprisingly modern for their date. They stand repeated hearings.

Finally, if Chopin is your joy, listen to Deutsche Grammophon 19064, where Stefan Askenase plays all the Polonaises (except the two war-horses in A major and A flat) with a refreshing absence of rhythmical exaggeration which is a treat to hear again and again.

This Week's Prize: To the lady who wrote to a record shop asking for a copy of Schumann's "Taumarunui"!

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