

WORDS ABOUT SINGING

MAY I introduce Anna Russell Sings? The "Sings" is not Miss Anna's last name, but what she does. After hearing her, you are at liberty to describe her art by any other name that comes readily to mind. Miss Russell also gives advice on making the voice a career, which is what it may be when it is no longer, as some have pointed out, an art. If you have not yet met Anna Russell, you may find her a bit of a handful, or rather, mouthful. Meeting her, however, is an experience such as no really thorough listener can afford to miss. You may be delighted, shocked, amused or even—but perhaps I should mention that it may be difficult for you to acquire Miss Russell honestly in New Zealand. But before you take up your pen—more in sorrow than anger, of course—to protest against this introduction to the unattainable, it should be added that Miss Russell is not the sort of artist you will want to have about the place all the time. You will understand what I mean if you listen to 2YC on June 16. 2YA shortly after and other stations as may be from time to time, occasions

A Monthly Review by OWEN JENSEN

when Anna Russell Sings? (Columbia ML 4594). What Miss Russell sings, can best be left, I think, for her to tell.

After a session with the famous Miss Russell, it is appropriate to give advice on songs that are worth acquiring and that may be come by reasonably easily. There is, for instance, a disc of songs from *The Youth's Magic Horn*, by Gustav Mahler—Lorna Sydney, mezzo-soprano; Alfred Poell, baritone; the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Felix Prohaska (Nixa—VLP 412: 1 and 2). Alfred Poell has a voice well suited to Mahler's fruity romanticism and Lorna Sydney is not far behind him. The Vienna State Opera Orchestra play beautifully. Whether you will enjoy this disc—technically and musically it is very good indeed—will depend on your reaction to Mahler. If he is for you "banal," "morbid" and "sentimental," as some critics have alleged, then there's no more to be said about it; if, however, you find him "magnificently convincing," you will not need to be pressed further.

Dover Beach, a setting of Matthew Arnold's poem by the contemporary American composer Samuel Barber, is romanticism of a different hue. It is performed by John Langstaffe, baritone, with the Hirsch String Quartet (HMV C4201). This is serenely beautiful music and, not being too contemporary (cf Anna Russell) should have many admirers. Langstaffe is not quite in Alfred Poell's class, but he obviously knows what he's about, and sings Barber's music lovingly. The Hirsch Quartet does all it is asked to do.

My pick, however, among the singing is a little disc of 12 short, very short, songs by Darius Milhaud—*Soirées de Petrograd*. The singer is Jean-Christophe Benoit. He is accompanied by Jacqueline Stip (Ducretet-Thomson-Selmer LP 8439). Again, your enjoyment depends on your affinity with contemporary French music and French singing. (Refer again to Miss Russell.) In this case both are fine. Jean-Christophe Benoit's voice has a rich texture, and his singing character. On the reverse side is a group of pieces from Milhaud's music for the film *Madame Bovary*, played by Maxime Chapiro. Very interesting; and easy enough on the ear.

Contemporary Music

To Barber and Milhaud can be added Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Bloch; and the best of these is Stravinsky. This is his *Concerto for Piano and Wind*

Orchestra, with double-basses and tympani, performed in Paris in 1924. The pianist is Noel Mewton-Wood and wind orchestra and etc. comprises members of the Residentie Orchestra under Walter Goehr (Nixa CLP 1160). The wind playing comes off well, with a velvety richness which can turn biting when required. Mewton-Wood plays excellently. This is altogether fine—Stravinsky in benign mood "quite in the style of the 17th Century," as he himself puts it, "that is, the 17th Century viewed from the standpoint of today." On the reverse side Ricardo Odnoposoff gives a brilliant performance of the first Prokofiev Violin Concerto with the Radio Zurich Orchestra, a work which has become known through the Szegedi's earlier recording. Not as ingratiating, perhaps, as the second Prokofiev Violin Concerto recorded by Heifetz, but nevertheless exciting music.

Then there is Bloch, his *Israel Symphony* performed by the Vienna State Opera Orchestra under Fritz Litschauer and soloists of the Akademie Choir (Nixa—VLP 423), with the fervour and fire that Bloch's music needs. Much Bloch, however, leaves me with similar after-effects to those of an excessive intake of carbohydrates, affecting the figure—emotionally.

Coda

Luis Maravilla, guitar (April Choice) appears on a second disc, guitar only this time (Ducretet-Thomson-Selmer

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