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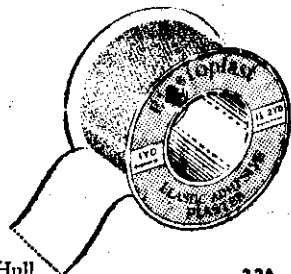
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22A

New Recordings

BACK TO BACH

IF you ever want to start a good argument in musical circles, one of the best opening gambits is to shoot out guilelessly some such question as: "Should the pedal be used in playing Bach on the piano?" or, more simply and devastatingly, just: "Should Bach be played on the piano?" Before you can say "John Sebastian," the hounds will be hot on the scent and it will be Bach this and Bach that, harpsichord against piano, the speeds of his music, the dynamics, or the way the strings should bow Bach's elusive phrases. It is all good, clean fun and, up to a point, the answer is anybody's bet. You pay your money and you take your choice. You have your Bach served piping hot or laid out on the ice of 18th Century purism.

The first way is well demonstrated by Lukas Foss (piano) and the Zimble String Sinfonietta, who together play two Bach keyboard concertos, No. 1 in D Minor and No. 3 in F Minor (Brunswick AXTL 1012). Mr. Foss never forgets that he is playing a piano and nearly always remembers that the music was first written for the harpsichord. The precision of both soloist and strings is built out of meticulous phrasing and sensitive attention to suitably graded dynamics. The effect, of course, is hardly the same as if a harpsichord had been the principal protagonist, but nevertheless very satisfying.

If you prefer your Bach the other way, as authentic as may be, and the pure unadulterated spirit of the music, turn to Maria Van der Lyck, who plays the harpsichord with the Tonstudio Orchestra of Stuttgart conducted by Hans Michael. This time it is Concerto No. 3 in D Major and No. 6 in F Major, the latter with the addition of two solo recorders (Nixa PLP 547). Both these works are arrangements, but being made by the master himself bear the warranty of genuineness. The F Major is a refurbishing of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G and the D Major is a transcription of the E Major Violin Concerto. The performance and the recording, offering intelligent interpretation, clear playing and sensitive instrumental balance are admirable. How not to present Bach—or Handel for that matter—is illustrated by the Allegro Chamber Society (Allegro AL 53) and, quite differently by Campoli (violin) and George Malcolm (harpsichord) (Decca LXT 2751). In the recording of the six Handel violin sonatas, Campoli has used all his tone and a good deal of his technique, both of which are considerable, and therefore altogether too

A monthly review by
OWEN JENSEN

much for the slender threads of Handel's music. The result is like a Bikini suit at a cocktail party—very attractive, no doubt, but embarrassingly out of place, and perhaps a little in bad taste. Campoli indulges himself at times in luscious swoops and scoops of tone, and in many of the fast movements sounds as if he is a little anxious to catch the last bus home. This, in the end, makes Handel sound for the most part like Paganini sweetened with Spohr. When Campoli gives you Handel straight, instead of as a shandy gaff, the effect is fine. This happens in Sonata No. 6 and some other odd places.

Of the Allegro Chamber Society's performance of Bach's *Coffee Cantata* with Uta Graf (soprano), Earl Rogers (tenor) and Ralph Herbert (baritone), the less said the better. The approach is pedantically dull, nor have musicians or technicians even made the most of their opportunities for being dull.

Music for Wallowing

Perhaps it should be said at once, that I regard wallowing as a legitimate and sometimes desirable musical pleasure. Not that

it should be confused with genuine listening, with which it has only a superficial connection, but, like fifteen minutes in a hot bath, a little music wallowing may promote a feeling of well-being and perhaps even tone up the listening system. If you are this way inclined, nothing could be better than Verdi's *Aida* which, shorn of its stage trappings and presented for listening only by the chorus and orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, with

HEARING IS BELIEVING

IF you are one of those who find that few shops will allow you to try over new recordings—especially LPs—you will appreciate the value of record reviews. But as Owen Jensen told "The Listener" the other day, not everyone's taste is the same and hearing is believing. With this in mind Mr. Jensen is in future to give an additional service to readers of "The Listener's" reviews of new recordings. Starting on Thursday, September 24, at 9.0 p.m., he is to be heard fortnightly from ZYC in "Hearing is Believing," a programme which will not only discuss his "Listener" reviews, but also will include excerpts from recordings. In his first session he will deal with some of those mentioned in this issue.

Ranta Tebaldi as Aida, Ebe Stignani as Amneris, and Albert Erade as conductor (Decca LXT 2735-37), is as good as a hot bath, a brisk rub down and a double Scotch. Despite a suspicious resemblance now and again to Sousa, Moody and Sankey, and an occasional chorus from *The Vagabond King*, Verdi's music still has thrills aplenty. The performance and recording are both superb.

Take away the brisk rub down and substitute a Pernod for the double Scotch and you have Debussy's *La Demoiselle Elue*, with a spot of choral Chabrier on the other side. This Demoiselle, the selfsame one who appears in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem, is early Debussy, and suggests a touch of Wagner which, as everyone knows, is likely to make almost the whole world kin. The performance by Janine Micheau (soprano) and Janine Collard (mezzo-soprano), with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra and the Chorale Elizabeth Brasseur (Decca LXT 2743), produces sensuously beautiful music. The Chabrier on the other side is very pleasant, too.

On Being Contemporary

It takes all sorts to make a world and none the less in the world of music, particularly today when music offers a handy and harmless outlet for a little