

1938's First Recordings Will Keep "Radio-Grams" Busy

THE first quarter of this year of grace, 1938, has yielded a harvest of fine H.M.V. recordings of orchestral, instrumental and vocal gems of classical music. They will keep the turntables of many a "radio-gram" busily spinning.

In the forefront is the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra with a vivid performance of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2. Easily one of the best-known examples of Liszt's refining process upon genuine gipsy tunes, this should be a standard version for many a year to come.

Beethoven Overtures

Two Beethoven Overtures come to us from the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. The "Leonora," No. 3, is one of the four different overtures Beethoven wrote for his "Fidelio" opera, which of recent years has enjoyed a prosperous revival. No. 3 is first favourite among them, and the three sides it occupies abound in beautiful musical themes. It is conducted by Bruno Walter. The odd side is occupied by the lively "Ruins of Athens" Overture. Conductor Arnold Rose makes a fine job of this work.

These records will certainly command the attention of serious music lovers. Technically, also, they are almost perfect.

Under Serge Koussevitzky the Boston Symphony Orchestra plays three excerpts from Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust." The parts presented are "Minuet of the Will-o'-the-Wisps"; "Presto and Waltz"; and the rousing "Hungarian March."

Like many composers, Berlioz was intensely fascinated by the "Faust" legend as written by Goethe, and saw wonderful possibilities in setting parts of it to music. These selections prove how successfully he pulled it off. No less than Wagner, Berlioz was a pioneer in modern orchestration, and his "Faust" music is a typical example.

An odd side is occupied by the sublimely beautiful Larghetto from the Concerto Grosso No. 12 in B Minor, by Handel. Here's music for the gods, my masters, and, as a complete contrast to the later and more advanced Berlioz, an excellent "fill up."

In Milton's Memory

From the New Symphony Orchestra, with organ, we have "Solemn Melody," by Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King's Musick, and Easthope Martin's "Evensong." The conductor is George Walter.

"Solemn Melody" was written to celebrate the tercentenary, in 1908, of the birth of John Milton, and performed in St. Mary-le-Bow Church, close to where Milton was born, on his birthday, December 9. The tune well befits the subject of its inspiration.

Although known principally as a

song writer, Easthope Martin's first composition to attract attention was his "Evensong," first published in 1911, as an organ solo. In the present recording, played by organ and orchestra, it suggests fragile beauty in contrast to the solemnity of the Walford Davies' work on the reverse side of the record. The organist is unnamed, but both pieces are most reverently and efficiently performed and recorded.

The lively Scherzo from Mendelssohn's String Octet sounds attractive in orchestral form. Considering it was written when its creator was a boy of 16, it wears well. The orchestration is Mendelssohn's own, and its performance under Arthur Fiedler is by the Boston Promenade Orchestra.

The other side has that consistently bright and joyous Polonaise Militaire in A Major, by Chopin (orchestrated by Glazounov). It is full of life and power, festival uproar and buoyancy. This is clearly a record for Mr. and Mrs. Everyman.

The same orchestra also gives us Weber's romantic overture, to his operatic masterpiece "Der Freischutz" ("The Marksman"). The supernatural basis of the plot of the opera is vividly suggested in the note of foreboding which makes itself heard as an undercurrent to the main joyous tunes. The playing is superb, and the record one to treasure.

And Eric Coates

One of Eric Coates's earlier suites is "Summer Days," which appears on a record made by the Light Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of the composer. For nearly twenty years Eric Coates has been turning out good, clean, light music, but none better than this suite. With Eric in the rostrum, the orchestra gives us an authoritative rendering.

In lighter vein still are the tangoes "Monika" (Kotscher) and "Cara Mari" (Zalden), excellently played by Barnabas von Geczy and his orchestra.

In a subsequent article the latest instrumental and vocal records will be discussed.

Sayings of the Week

THE Labour Party local organisation is rotten.—*Mr. Ben Greene.*

I AM tired of giving away money and need a rest.—*Lord Nuffield.*

WE have ceased to be one of the most invulnerable of the Great Powers and have become one of the most vulnerable.—*Mr. Harold Nicholson.*

THE purpose of the "United Front" is to capture the Labour Party for the Communist Party.—*Mr. Herbert Morrison.*

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