

Furthermore, the score has unfortunately suffered some pretty severe cutting. The cast seldom seems to have been infected with the wit, humour and grace of the music and much of the performance is dull and lifeless. Karl Böhm conducts and he manages to infuse elegance into some of the orchestral playing; the principals, however, want little of it, which is surprising seeing that they include such eminent artists as Lisa Della Casa, Emmy Loose, Anton Dermota and Paul Schoeffler.

"W. A. Mozart—A Short Biography" by Donald Mitchell has been published by Decca and is now on sale, price 5/6. It is an elegant production which incorporates musical examples and many superbly reproduced illustrations. A catalogue of recordings, of works by Mozart, by Decca and its associated companies takes up ten of the fifty-six pages, and includes details of a dozen important works by this composer which are to be issued during 1956. The first long-playing version of Puccini's unfinished opera *Turandot* is released on LXT 5128-30. The chorus and orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome is conducted by Alberto Erede and the principal singers are Inge Borkh (*Turandot*), Renata Tebaldi (*Liu*), Mario Del Monaco (*Calaf*) and Fernando Corena (*Ping*). The recording is good though some of the solo singing is spoilt by occasional patches of inferior balancing which is also noticeable in some of the bigger choral ensembles. Miss Borkh's vocal performance is accomplished but it lacks much of the grandeur and authority implied in the music Puccini gave to the part of *Turandot*. Mario Del Monaco, on the other hand, sings splendidly throughout; his performance, together with those of both the orchestra and the choir, is of an excellence that is rewarding and which to some extent makes up for the imperfections of a recording that, one imagines, will have to suffice for some time.

Benjamin Britten's songs entitled *Winter Words*—a setting of lyrics and ballads by Thomas Hardy for high voice and piano—have been recorded for the first time, on LXT 5095, by Peter Pears accompanied by the composer. On the reverse side the same artists perform Britten's *Michelangelo Sonnets*. The Hardy songs are vivid examples of the form which Britten understands so completely and which he inevitably accomplishes with such mastery. The lyrics vary considerably both in mood and content, but with an uncanny sureness the composer evokes in his writing the precise atmosphere of eight situations as contrasted as they could be. The energetic figuration of *Proud songsters*, the haunting whistle of the

journeying boy's train and the creaking of *The little old table*, among other such pictorial possibilities in the words, are treated representationally; such obvious handling would not necessarily imply a master-touch, but Britten's subtlety has endowed each simple idea with the unique quality of his thought so that they become in themselves precious gems in a priceless procession of beauty and profoundly moving experience.

ERIC THOMPSON

LETTER

THE EDITOR, *TEMPO* 295 REGENT STREET,
LONDON, W.1.
10th February, 1956.

DEAR SIR,

The article by Mr. Alan Fluck in the Winter issue of *TEMPO* deals forthrightly with a problem over which I have concerned myself for a long time. I hope you will allow me to say that I agree strongly with a great deal of Mr. Fluck's complaint that contemporary composers are not writing enough contemporary music for contemporary children.

I have been connected with the fortunes of two of the principal music publishers in this country for some twenty years, and intimately concerned with one or other of their publishing policies for ten; so I have been able to see for myself how young people are fed daily with the mediocre and the bad because there is not enough good. Although the situation is being slowly remedied, there are unfortunately many teachers who only want bad or mediocre music. But there is also a great body of informed musicians in the schools who, like Mr. Fluck, are deploring the fact that our Rubbras and Rawsthornes and our Finzis and Frickers do not show any real interest in letting schoolchildren into their secrets by providing them with material which is not too difficult technically and in which the sentiments are not too adult. The two magnificent exceptions to the general stricture are of course Vaughan Williams and Britten; both have gone out of their way for the youngsters, and neither has sacrificed his personality or his artistic ideals in doing so. There is abundant evidence that the people who take part in *Let's Make an Opera* or who listen to the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell* will much more easily understand and come to love the operas; and those who struggle with the *Concerto Grosso* or sing

Folk Songs of the Four Seasons will accept and appreciate the symphonies.

What I have said up till now will serve to corroborate and underline Mr. Fluck's words of censure on our composers. He goes on to doubt whether the publishers will risk printing school music by contemporary musicians. He can be reassured. We know how badly it is needed—and not only by schools, but by the women's organisations, youth clubs, and all other amateurs, organised and unorganised; and it is constantly demanded. It is not forthcoming on the whole, and the responsibility must be placed on the composers themselves. I sometimes ask myself not, like Mr. Fluck, whether they are too occupied in producing 40-minute masterpieces; but much more irreverently whether many of them are capable of descending to a level which has been trodden without shame by the great masters of the past.

Yours faithfully,

KEN STRAKER,
Educational Dept.,
Boosey & Hawkes Ltd.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

"THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET," by Mary Clarke. Published by Adam & Charles Black, 4-6 Soho Square, London, W.1.
Price 2 1s.

"ORCHESTRATION," by Walter Piston. Published by Victor Gollancz Ltd., 14 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.

"GREAT CONCERT ARTISTS"—ALFRED CORTOT, WALTER GIESEKING, YEHUDI MENUHIN AND GEORGES ENESCO, ANDRES SEGOVIA. Photos by Roger Hauert; Text by Bernard Gavoty. Published by Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1 Dorset Buildings, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.
Price: 7s.6d.

"KODÁLY ZOLTÁN, ÉLETE ES MUNKÁS-SAGA." Published by Zenemukiado Vallalat, Budapest.

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