

# THE YOUNGER SET



THE PERFORMANCE of Benjamin Britten's "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" (Columbia album 703, \$4.60) provides interested parents with an opportunity to discover whether all the orchestral indoctrination spread about in the last year or two has had any lasting effect. For, if you want to make a test case of it, Britten's clever work can be used as a check to see whether "Peter and the Wolf," "Tubby the Tuba," "Pee Wee the Piccolo," "Rusty in Orchestraville," and the more recent "Pan the Piper," "Celeste," and "Little Brass Band" have taught the older members of the younger set the difference between an oboe and a harp, a flute and a bassoon.

A word about the background of the work may emphasize its importance. It was commissioned, in 1945, by the British Ministry of Education as the score of a film called "Instruments of the Orchestra." For his form Britten chose the popular theme-and-variations device, and for his theme he chose an excerpt from Purcell. The idea is developed with great virtuosity, using single instruments and varied groups for each of the variations, to show their tone color, contrast, and range. Sir Malcolm Sargent, who did the original sound track, has also had great success with it at Promenade Concerts in London, and is responsible for the Columbia recording.

No narration is included with the present performance, but the brilliant playing and the life-like reproduction scarcely require it. As the variations develop, merging in a final fugue, each instrument is so crisply defined that the whole experience becomes a delightful "scavenger hunt" in which the child can participate with a keen sense of competition. There can be little doubt that Benjamin Britten has conceived the most dignified work yet to be presented for children; good thematic material, handled with skill and lively variety make this an important offering which adults will enjoy along with youngsters of all ages. By its example, too, Columbia may be starting a trend which would certainly be to the benefit of music educators and parents.

For the youngster who prefers his orchestra study enlivened by story and narration, I recommend "Celeste" (Signature C-1, \$2.37) and "Pan the Piper" (Victor Y-331, \$3.15). The first may be designated for the eights to ten, the second for the nines

to fourteens. A fault common to both, however, is the insensitive use of the narrator. Victory Jory takes too many parts in "Celeste" and the use of a deep baritone voice in "Pan" is more than a little disillusioning. Children somehow have a sensitivity for such things. For the pre-school group, Young People's Record Club has just issued "Little Brass Band" (YPRC 703 A, \$1.57) in which the instruments of the orchestra join a band on parade, give a concert, and return home. Walter Hendl's music is pleasant, the simple story well told by Frank Gallop.

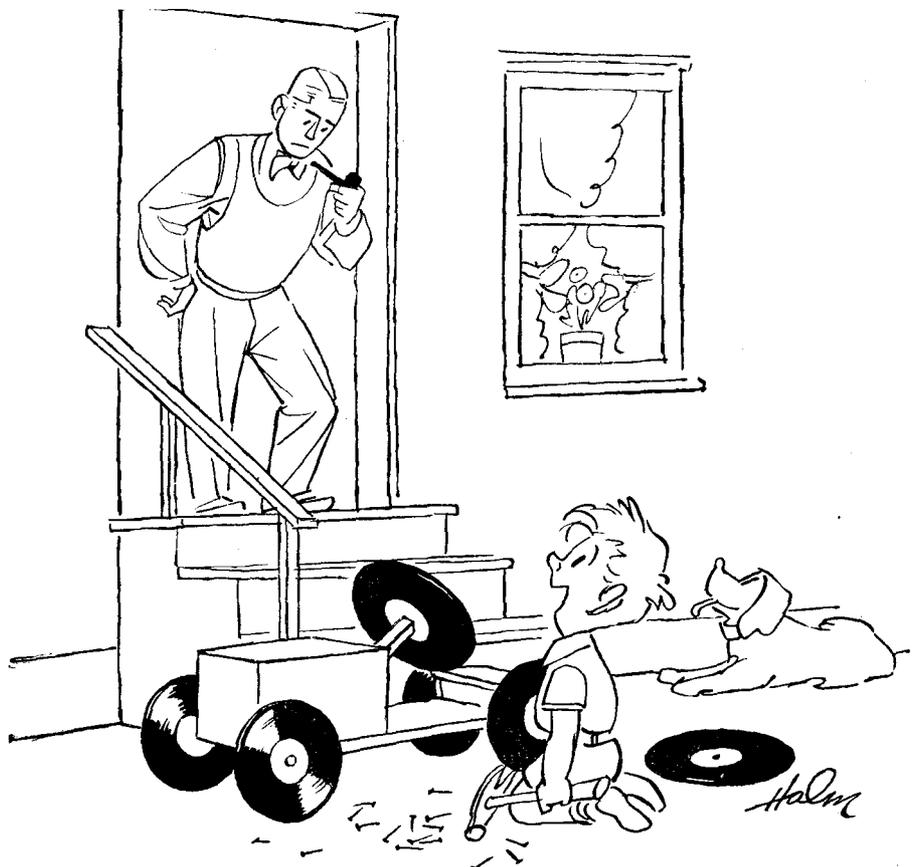
Young bookworms will find something to their taste in recent recordings of popular books. "Peter Churchmouse" (Victor Y-329, \$3.15) is an adaptation of Margaret Austin's well-known Dutton publication. The engaging tale of the hungry mouse and the nearsighted minister is attractively narrated by Paul Wing, a great favorite of the young, with André René in charge of the suitable music. Isabel Manning Hewson is her own narrator in "The Land of the Lost" (Columbia MJ 38, \$2.40), a delightful fantasy based on her Whittlesley book. It tells of a "magic kingdom on the bottom of the sea" to which

everything that has ever been lost on earth eventually finds its way. This is for the sixes to nines, and should charm them. Then there are new issues of the old favorites "Babar" (Decca CU 104, \$2) and "Manners Can Be Fun" (Decca CU 105, \$2) with music by Frank Luther, who also sings. "Babar" is gay and manners do seem "fun" as related by Luther. Both records, incidentally, are of the unbreakable variety.

In the story-telling vein, Bing Crosby again proves his incomparable appeal for children in a fine dramatization of "The Man Without a Country" (Decca AU 3, \$4.85). With the aid of a good supporting cast and Victor Young's appropriate music, Bing's performance of the Hale classic is stirring indeed. This is the kind of thing that goes well with the upper graders, correlating with their historical studies. The dramatization gives color to a moving chapter in American lore, especially as Bing interprets the character of Nolan.

Important news of the month comes from RCA Victor, which has now made available its "Record Library for Elementary Schools." It consists of no less than twenty-one albums, eighty-three records (unbreakable), and 370 compositions, selected and organized by Lilla Belle Pitts, of Teacher's College, and Gladys Tipton of Illinois State Normal. It will be described in detail next month.

MARIE L. MUTCH.



"It's all right, Pop—they're unbreakable."



"Figaro, Figaro, Figaro . . ."

## Imitation as Teacher

**SPOKEN LANGUAGE SERIES:** *French album. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 24 12-inch records, text, and key. \$50.*

**T**HE value of studying a foreign language from records has long been recognized and widely practised. The supposition is, that next to living in the country itself and learning its language under conditions of stress, the most satisfactory results can be acquired either from a native teacher—the "direct system" of the Berlitz Schools—or from such a teacher speaking from a disc.

But means must also be linked to method—and this is a point in which many earlier uses of records have been deficient. A chief merit of the Holt "Spoken Language Series" is its clearly defined principles, its well-conceived formula to which all the twenty-odd albums of the series conform, whether they are French or Russian, Hindustani or Arabic. They represent, in part, a reconversion from war uses, for the records were developed by the Linguistic Society of America and the Intensive Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies for use by the Army and Navy. The discs are unbreakable plastic.

Perhaps only one with some experience in the conventional approach to language teaching can give proper credit to the authors for a system in which, from the first, phrases and complete sentences replace word study, and the conjugation of the verb "to be" is nowhere to be found. Excellent ear-training material is provided, and space is left after each sentence or even phrase for the stu-

dent to do his own imitative practice.

However, the "spaced" record is only a partial solution of the problem. In teaching languages, the inadequacy of the continuous record early impressed itself on me; and it led to the development of a record player in which the student could easily (by merely pressing a pre-set switch) repeat any passage he had just heard, or indulge in his own practice while the machine marked time. This saved valuable space on the record itself, and allowed the latitude required for the individual student's reactions.

In this method of "learning by heart what you have imitated" it is not a disadvantage that there is no place for "explanation" of the language or grammar as such. Unlike the child who has no fixed habits to overcome when learning his mother tongue through imitation, the adult

can be greatly benefited if a teacher trained in phonetics is available to explain *how* the new sounds are made, to demonstrate the rhythmic and melodic differences between his own language and the one he seeks to learn. Lacking this, the recorded speaker should be extremely careful lest misinterpretation creep in through blind imitation.

One such example may be noted through the first lessons of this "Spoken French" course. The text is at pains to explain that in French the individual word loses its identity in a group, but that the accent always falls on the last syllable of the word or group. Thus "Thank You," written phonetically, is "mer-SI," with the last syllable capitalized to show the accent. However, an American student listening to the record would swear the pronunciation was "MER-si."

The reason for this confusion is simple. In English, the accent is usually accomplished by a rise in tonal pitch. But in French, with its slighter difference between the accented and unaccented syllables, a shift of pitch may actually suggest an accent when none is meant. The difficulty could be conquered had the native speaker been aware of the misconception he might convey, and chosen his intonation so that no doubt whatever was attached to the location of the accent.

A trifling matter? When an American misplaces the accent in speaking to a Frenchman it is anything but. I well recall how furious a friend became when a Parisian cabby showed no understanding at all of where he wanted to go, until I intervened and said: "le Boulevard Ras-PAIL." The driver beamed, and we were off. "But," complained my friend, "that's just what I've been telling him for five minutes—le Boulevard RAS-pail."

WENTWORTH D. FLING.

## If You've Been Trying to Get

Furtwangler's performance of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony—once available in Victor set M-553. It can be obtained on HMV DB 4609/14 or automatic sequence DB 8600-05.

Bruno Walter's superlative performance of Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony—once available on Victor album G-6. It is available on HMV records DB 3051/55 or automatic sequence DB 8219/23.

The Busch-Brain-Serkin performance of the Brahms's Horn Trio on Victor set 199, still listed in the catalogue but not to be found. Why wait? HMV records DB 2105/08 or automatic sequence DB 7610/13.

A complete set of the Holst "Planets" suite. An excellent new version, superlatively recorded and performed by the BBC. Symphony Orchestra and Chorus is to be had on HMV DB 6227/8, DBS 6229, and DB 6230/3. Sir Adrian Boult conducts.

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1 "Winter Daydreams." It is performed for the first time on records by the Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jacques Rachmilovich in Symphonic Records set SR 102.