her, and she lonely, waits for his coming. About the middle of this side I wish the chorus had omitted a few unsteady voices ; but it sings in the true spirit of the music, ethereally.

Side 3 starts with the first words of the Damozel (the musical phrase is repeated to her final ones). Note, at 10, the moving use of the 22 theme, here in quicker motion, to the words " Are not two prayers a perfect strength ? " A lovely tissue of weaving is this side, and the singing is finely rhapsodical. We find, at 39 (" Dans le feuillage secret ") a new theme, which is splendidly brought out at 80 (" Alors, je demanderai "). This we shall hear in quiet completion of the work. On side 4, after the pause, we have her final words, " All this is when he comes," to the descending phrase noted above, with which the Damozel uttered her first phrase, " I wish that he were come to me." At 67, the orchestra murmurs the rising theme of side 3, 39 and 80 ; and with a final gesture that recalls the spaciousness of the music at the start, the work ends. The presentation of this little masterpiece has taste and delicacy. It pleases me very much. What a great man Debussy was! Can one be blamed for being at times overwhelmed (as I confess I am) by the bleak feeling that this kind of music has passed for ever, that nowadays scarcely anybody cares, for instance, about making the piano speak as Chopin did, or touching our hearts with such persuasive intimations, such affectionate melodies, as Debussy finds here ? In listening to even the much more chancy hit-or-miss music of people like Mahler and Bruckner, the heart is warmed, because the whole man is spread before us. Now we seem to get, from nine composers out of ten, only chips or chunks from the spiritual workshop, strung together with thin, mind-spun threads of discourse or diatribe—frail vessels wallowing in gluey seas. There is more joy in a page of this Debussy than in dozens of the works of contemporaries. I warmly commend its comfort to you.

**Eunice Norton** with the **Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra** (Ormandy) : **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra** (A. Honnegger). H.M.V. DB2686 (12in.—6s.).

Two sides seems quite the irreducible minimum for even a " little concerto." This one began, unpropitiously, with such jazzy repetitions that I began to think it had been delivered at the wrong address, and was really meant for my respected specialist-colleague, Mr. Edgar Jackson, with whom I have on occasion enjoyed a little seemly mirth about such things. But I hope (and believe) that he, too, would throw out such rubbish. I suppose the chief danger, when a composer of known skill in serious music dives into the shallow waters of sportive jazz music, is that he will hit his head against the bottom and stun himself. It certainly seems as if Honegger (some of whose works I have keenly enjoyed) had done that this time. There is the poorest little childish tune on side 2, and otherwise just the nose-thumbing japes that I am sure any party of jazz players could better in invention, by simple improvisation. This record seems to me merely the deification of mindlessness. We had perhaps better not inquire what such reputable performers are doing in this driveller's galley.

**Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra** (Ormandy) : **Die Fledermaus—Overture** (J. Strauss), H.M.V. DB2622 (12in.—6s.) ; **Tales from the Vienna Woods—Waltz** (J. Strauss), H.M.V. DB2623 (12 in.—6s.) ; **The Gypsy Baron—Overture** (J. Strauss), H.M.V. DB2625 (12in.—6s.).

Any products of this family are still assured of a welcome. The ballet boom partly accounts for that ; the rest is, I suppose, to be put to the account of the re-emergence of melody. This recording, like the rest of the Minneapolis batch, is full and forward. The lighter tones of the music are apt to be rather over-weighted, for my taste. The delicacies of nuance are not obtruded : and I think that in the article of rhythmic fling, the product is not as highly graced as it might be. The wood-wind quality might be a bit more individual, big though the tone is ; it all sounds slightly bigger than life-size. I do like the strings in Strauss to stroke me as suavely as, I am sure, their players are stroking them. But in this kind of recording it seems that you have to lower your expectations of that a little, for the sake of big bouncing tone. Those who are happy to make the exchange can, therefore, buy these discs with the assurance of getting loads of tone for their money, if only (to my ear) average points in the things that pertain to the finer distinctions of interpretation and performance.

**London Symphony Orchestra** (Blech) : **Anacreon—Overture** (Cherubini). H.M.V. DB1674 (12 in.—6s.).

Cherubini (1760–1842), an old friend of my youth, is remembered by only the overtures of his operas. I should like to see one of them. Perhaps this classical soul was too easily satisfied with a libretto—a weakness that has put many an opera on the shelf, though I do not think it is entirely crippling. " Anacreon, or Fugitive Love," came out in 1803, and went in very soon after. The overture is the kind of music that, I think, can be heard now and again with brisk pleasure. There is a pompous chordal preface, and then some sweet wood-wind calls and answers. The material deals considerably in one or two figures (mark the quiet start, and the long crescendo, a plan which Rossini used so freely). The music is no brain-stormer, or barn-stormer : rather, a mostly-Mozartean spirit working with French needs in view. Anacreon may not be the ideal subject for an opera, though he sang of themes that filled so many stages—pleasure, the sportive life, lyricism, and the grape (without a headache) ; not forgetting lovely 'ooman, bless her, who, as the poet sings, denied the weapons of all other creatures, is given " Beauty ; this Both her arms and armour is : She, that can this weapon use, Fire and sword with ease subdues." And so forth (but distrust the too trustful Moore's translations of what he thought was Anacreon). Dr. Blech always turns out reliable, tasteful work. The level of recording is such as my fibre can endure, and I enjoy. Enough, but not too much.

W. R. A.

**Nicolas Medtner** (piano) : **Fairy Tale in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2 ; Fairy Tale in A major, Op. 51, No. 3 ; Fairy Tale in E minor, Op. 34, No. 2 ; Fairy Tale in A minor, Op. 34, No. 3 ; Danza Festiva, Op. 38, No. 3 ; Danza Jubilosa, Op. 40, No. 4 ; Fairy Tale in B flat minor, Op. 20, No. 1 ; Fairy Tale in B minor, Op. 20, No. 2 ; Fairy Tale in E minor, Op. 14, No. 2 ; Arabesque in G minor, Op. 7, No. 3 ; Novelle in G major, Op. 17, No. 1 ; (*a*) Fairy Tale in E flat major, Op. 26, No. 2, (*b*) Fairy Tale in F minor, Op. 26, No. 3.** H.M.V. DB3003–8 (12 in.—36s.) album.

These records are of particular interest to the many admirers of Medtner's work, for the composer himself is playing. His music is becoming increasingly popular in this country, not only through the agency of the B.B.C., but also because many pianists include his compositions in their recital programmes. Rachmaninov, for example, often plays a piece by Medtner at his concerts.

Medtner was born in 1879, in Moscow. He is a first cousin of the composer Goedicke. His first leanings were towards the violin, but later he entered the Moscow Conservatoire to study the piano under Basil Sapelnikov and Safonov, and theory under Arensky and Taneiev, the great contrapuntist. He became a professor at the Conservatoire in 1909, and continued to work there until 1921, with a period of four years absence from 1910 to 1914, when he resigned to devote himself to composition. He left Russia four years after the Revolution, settling first in Germany, then in France, and eventually in London, where he has lived since 1936.

This collection of pieces is representative, though it is a pity that one of the fine piano Sonatas could not also have been recorded. (And, *en passant*, it is strange that none of Medtner's songs were included in the recent album of " Songs of Famous Russian Composers ".) To many listeners the name of Medtner is associated with his " Fairy Tales," nine of which are to be found in this collection. Medtner has specialised in this form

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of composition, but, as Gerald Abraham points out in the excellent booklet that accompanies the records, the title is misleading. The Russian word *Skazki* finds its exact equivalent in the French *Conte*. The nearest we can get to it in English is *Legend* or *Ballade*. There is no connection with the English fairy. The *Skazki* are concerned with Russian folk-lore—water-sprites, magicians like Kotschei in the *Firebird*, strange animals and birds. The listener should remember this when the thought passes through his mind that Medtner's fairies seem a little ponderous.

There are also some dances, *Danza Festiva* and *Danza Jubilosa*, an *Arabesque* in G minor, and a *Novelle* in G major. The booklet gives very adequate information about all the works played, and it only remains for me to say that the recording is good, except in the B minor Fairy Tale (DB3006), where there is a preponderance of bass. Medtner is a finished player and a highly intellectual one. Every lover of the piano will be grateful for this opportunity of increasing his knowledge of Medtner's work, which is written with such a complete understanding of the instrument, and such a rare feeling for clarity of expression.

The reader who feels that he cannot afford the whole set of records, would be well advised to choose DB3008 and DB3007 in that order. The other four, though in every way interesting, do not in themselves offer such variety of mood.

**Emil Telmanyi** (violin) and **Christian Christiansen** (piano) : **Sonata in A major, Op. 9** (Nielsen). H.M.V. DB2732–4 (12 in.—18s.).

The music of Carl Nielsen is not at all familiar to most listeners, and this fine Sonata will do much to pave the way towards a further acquaintance with his works. A more suitable introduction to his music than by this particular work would be hard to imagine.

Nielsen, who died three years ago, was born in Denmark in 1865. He studied under Niels Gade, at whose death in 1890 he was appointed the Principal of Copenhagen Conservatoire. Gade had previously held the post. His works are widely performed in the Scandivanian countries, and he has written some important symphonies. The Sixth Symphony in particular is a work of genius. The listener who feels that he wants to hear more of Nielsen's music is advised to get hold of the records of the Wind Quintet, which is a later work and a most interesting one.

This Sonata is a delightful work, very easy to grasp and though it is not as mature or as substantial as some of his later work for violin and pianoforte, it has great individuality of style and directness of expression. The first movement is, if anything, influenced by Brahms, and parts remind one strongly of the music of Franck. The *Andante* is the least appealing of the three movements. The treatment is far more severe, and there is a great deal of double-stopping. This favourite device of modern composers tires very quickly, and the effect is seldom pleasing to the ear. The last movement is a sheer delight. It opens with a theme that might have come from the pen of Delius, and it is violin music of the highest quality. This movement ought to win many converts to Nielsen's work, for it is difficult to imagine a more graceful and original piece of music.

These records are not only significant because of their musical content. The playing of Telmanyi and Christiansen is most artistic and sensitive. The violinist's tone is beautifully produced and the pianist's interpretation of a difficult score is sympathetic. Only in the slow movement when he is left to himself for half a minute does he disappoint us with some rather characterless playing.

D. W.

**Strub String Quartet : Quartet in E Flat Major, Op. 109** (Reger). H.M.V. EH971–2 (12 in.—12s.).

This Quartet is reaching us in bits. The Scherzo has alone been recorded before, by the Wendling Quartet, and now come the last two movements.

The romanticist behind the contrapuntal genius of Reger is well to the fore in the passionate but over-loaded slow movement. There are some beautiful movements but no feeling of inevitability in the music. It continually seems to lose direction, and one wearies of the over-ripe harmony.

The final movement is a tremendous double fugue which opens in delightfully humorous style, like a party of gossips, but abandons this pleasant vein in order to build up a grandiose structure which in the end causes one to lose interest.

The Strub Quartet appear thoroughly to understand the music and give a good account of themselves. The tone of the leader is thin as recorded. The recording itself is quite good.

**Prague String Quartet : Quartet in A major (A Dur), Op. 41, No. 3** (Schumann). H.M.V. DB2170–2 (12 in.—18s.).

I noticed a previous recording of this quartet by the Lener people in the January 1937 GRAMOPHONE and it was undoubtedly superior to this one in every way.

This performance, indeed, is quite definitely not a success : it sounds for the most part extraordinarily perfunctory and lacking in vitality. The Finale alone seems to come to life, but even here there is little evidence of the poetic insight which the music of Schumann imperatively demands. Not even the slow movement evokes it. The lovely first movement is heavily played and with a disagreeable swell pedal effect at certain points : and surely the romantic second subject should be given less hurriedly and more tenderly. On the other hand, the second movement is too slow, and lacking in rhythmic vitality. The tone of the leader is frequently astringent and the recording only moderately good. Altogether it must have been an off-day for everybody concerned. Perhaps there was an east wind—but not one of love !

**Rome String Quartet : Ancient Italian Airs and Lute Dances** (arr. Ottorino Respighi). H.M.V. DB4441–2 (12 in.—12s.).

These lovely old tunes, limpidly scored and discreetly modernised, make up a pair of most attractive records. The gem of the collection is the first of the *Arie di Corte* heard on the 'cello, a grave and solemn tune richly harmonised, and akin to the exquisite Pavane that sounded through the " Romeo and Juliet " film. Five other short tunes, grave and gay, follow it and then it is played once again. After the Siciliani, with a charming " walking " upper part, comes the elaborate Passacaglia, the theme given out by the first violin and then the 'cello. In this, the least interesting and the most difficult of the movements, the playing becomes a little rough at times and the intonation not quite perfect in the octaves.

**Budapest (Roismann) String Quartet : Quartet in G-Major, Op. 54, No. 1** (Haydn). H.M.V. DB2905–6 (12 in.—12s.).

This Quartet appears in the second volume of the Haydn Society, issued I think early in 1934, played by the Pro Arte Quartet.

It is distinguished, amongst the three Quartets of Op. 54, for a dramatic virility which is found in all the movements, and particularly in the short first movement and in the slow movement, with its remarkable modulations.

The Budapest Quartet's fine performance brings out all the splendid fire and energy of the music, but somewhat at the expense of clarity in the final movement. The recording is excellent.

A. R.

## Empire Youth Speeches

Viewed in the light of recent events, the Columbia records of speeches made by Earl Baldwin (then Prime Minister) and the Archbishop of Canterbury contain some rather significant passages. The Baldwin speech (broadcast on May 18th, 1937) takes up three 12 in. records, DX833–5, and the Archbishop's pronouncement made on the following day occupies the six sides of DX836–8.

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