It is a long time since we had a complete *Carmen* and few operas needed so urgently to be done on LP. Since there is much to be enjoyed in this one I would urge intending purchasers to do some sampling, if they can, beginning with the entrance of Carmen. A.R.

***BYRD. Mass for five voices. Fleet Street Choir** (T. B. Lawrence). Decca LX3060 (10 in., 29s. 6d.).

This recording is not so successful as the one of the *Mass for four voices* issued in June (Decca LX3046) and reviewed in THE GRAMOPHONE of that month. The surface is rather noisy and the opening of the *Sanctus* sounds ugly. The remarks made before about the altos and tenors apply equally here, and once again the intonations of the *Gloria* and *Credo* are omitted. I am afraid I found the whole thing a bit on the dull side. A.R.

GRIEG. Ved Rundarne, Op. 33, Vol. 2, No. 3. Guten. Op. 33, Vol. 1, No. 1. Kirsten Flagstad (soprano) **Philharmonia Orchestra** (Braithwaite). Sung in Norwegian. H.M.V. DA1992 (10 in., 6s. 5½d.).

I hope the finished labels on this record will not only give the Norwegian titles of the songs but also their German equivalents. The only edition available to us of Grieg's songs is published by Peters (represented here by the music publisher, Max Hinrichsen) and this edition unfortunately gives no Norwegian titles, only German with an English translation, and is very casual about *opus* numbers. The German-English title of the first song is *Auf der reise zur heimat* (On the way home), the other is *Dichterlos* (The Youth). Both the songs are strophic. The burden of the first one is explained by its title and the poem is wedded to a lovely tune that gradually rises to a joyful climax as the wanderer comes in sight of home. It is gloriously sung by Flagstad and the orchestral accompaniment, well played, is even better balanced with her voice, here and in the next song, than in her last Grieg record. The theme of the second song is that the heart of the artist learns from suffering and loss so that he sees the world with new insight. Flagstad's noble tones make a thrilling thing of this dramatic and moving song, which rises to a big climax at the end of each verse. I hope Flagstad will record a whole album of Grieg's lovely songs: they are still all too little known amongst music lovers. A.R.

***LEHAR. "The Merry Widow." Max Lichtegg** (tenor), **Hans Hopf** (tenor), **Nora Jungwirth** (soprano), **Tonhalle Orchestra and Chorus of the State Theatre, Zürich** (Reinshagen). Decca LXT2607 (12 in., 39s. 6d.).

The Merry Widow must be a grandmother by now, but she shows little or no sign of her age, and the exhilarating melodies are as pleasant to-day as when they were first heard in this country.

The present recording is excellently sung by experienced artists, and the familiar tunes are given with great charm by the soloists. The chorus and orchestra are well handled by Victor Reinshagen, and it would be ungracious to listen to this excellent disc in the spirit of carping criticism. Personally I prefer to relax and enjoy a very fine recording, which has the authentic atmosphere in every groove.

I particularly liked the singing of Nora Jungwirth in the title role. J.F.

MEDTNER. The Rose: When Roses fade. Sung in English. **Im Vorübergehen: Elfenliedchen.** LX1423. **Meeresstille: Glückliche Fahrt: Die Quelle: Selbsbetrug.** LX1424. **The Muse.** Sung in English. **So tanzet: Waltz.** Sung in English. LX1425. **Einsamkeit: Praeludium Winternacht.** LX1426. **Elisabeth Schwarzkopf** (soprano), **Nicolas Medtner** (piano). Sung in German except where otherwise stated. Columbia LX1423-6 (12 in., 38s. 10d.). Recorded under the auspices of the Maharaja of Mysore's Musical Foundation.

It is hard to understand how this set of records came to be issued without a leaflet giving the words of the poems or even the German titles put into English on the records. I have managed to see some copies of the songs, most of which are, I believe, out of print at the moment, and was further irritated to find that the English translations of the Pushkin poems had not been followed. All this is a grave handicap to the appreciation of what the blurb calls "the fine flavour of Medtner's songs" and should not have been allowed to happen.

Of the songs recorded all the poems except the following are by Goethe. *The Rose*, *When Roses fade*, *The Muse*, *The Waltz* (Pushkin). *Die Quelle* (The Pool) (Chamisso). *Winternacht* (Winter's Night) (Eichendorf). The translations of the Goethe titles are—in the order given above *Passing by*, *Song of the Elves*, *Becalmed*, *Happy Journey*, *Self-deception*, *So dances*, *Loveliness*, *Prelude*.

The poem of *The Rose*, a simple and charming little song, describes the short life of the flower and, in compensation for her early death, points to the newly flowering lilies.

In *The Muse* the goddess gives the poet reed pipes and indulgently watches his attempts to bring music out of the instrument. At times she takes the reed and, while he listens enraptured, makes wonderful music for him. *The Waltz* tells of a girl who wishes to live for ever in the rapture of a dance with her beloved. *Prelude* is a metaphysical poem hard to express in English. The burden of it is an optimistic world view, a time when "turmoil, strife and labour merge in the peace of God our Lord. Alleluia."

As the emotion of the song mounts up the word *ruh* (peace) is placed on a quiet high B flat, the *Alleluia*, by contrast, on a loud one. That, I fear, is all the help I am able to give the intending purchaser. *Meeresstille* (Becalmed) is, of course, familiar in Schubert's wonderful setting. I cannot reconcile myself to the restless accompaniment Medtner writes in his setting unless this is meant to express the seaman's anxiety for a breath of wind. This song is, to my mind, the one failure in the set. All the remainder will recommend themselves to lovers of German *lieder* (for they are written in that tradition) in various degrees. *The Muse* and *The Prelude* are fine elegies, *Song of the Elves* and *The Pool* are charming miniatures, *Winter's Night* is a picturesque landscape.

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf is in exceptionally good voice and with the composer at the piano we can be sure that the interpretations are definitive. Perhaps Miss Schwarzkopf is inclined to sacrifice clear enunciation of both German and English words to beauty of tone (which is not necessary in the case of so vocal a line) but in all other respects she is admirable. The balance and the recording in general are excellent. A.R.

MOUSSORGSKY: TRADITIONAL. Song of the Flea: Song of the Volga Boatmen. Boris Christoff (bass). **Philharmonia Orchestra** (Dobrowen). Sung in Russian. H.M.V. DB21305 (12 in., 9s. 8½d.).

Those who are familiar with Christoff's other recordings, will know just what to expect from the present offerings.

It is difficult to avoid comparison with Chaliapin, in two of his most outstanding successes on records, and the resemblance is more striking than ever.

The *Song of the Flea* is very well done. The laughs are natural, and the necessary edge is added to the voice to convey the sardonic nature of the words. In the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*, Christoff uses a very effective mezza voce, which is under complete control.

There is a slight pre-echo before the opening of the *Song of the Flea*, but apart from this, the recording is excellent, and the orchestral accompaniments are first rate. J.F.

MOZART. Recit.: Ei parte! Aria: Per pietà from "Cosi fan Tutte" Act 2. **Sena Jurinac** (soprano) **Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra** (Fritz Busch). Sung in Italian. H.M.V. DB21120 (12 in., 9s. 8½d.).

Joan Cross recorded this rondo-aria, in English, in 1947 and in praising it in the March number of THE GRAMOPHONE that year I said the only criticism to be made was of indifferent enunciation and rather bumpy trills. The same criticism must be made of Sena Jurinac except that her trills (in the last two bars of the aria) are too indistinct even to bump! In the pause before "*Ah questo core*" in the recitative, there is a "pre-echo," which I mention in case an American correspondent of last month may think I failed to hear it. Sena Jurinac's tone sounds rather hollow in the middle of her voice on this disc and there is some unsteadiness on the trying lowest notes, but in all other respects, save those mentioned above, she gives a good performance and the two horns play their important part well.

The recitative and aria, perhaps I should add, express Fiordiligi's pangs of conscience at having even wished to yield to her supposedly Albanian lover, who is, of course, her betrothed in disguise. A.R.

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