

## Records

**I** RAISED the question of incidental music recently when reviewing the attractive Atlas Tale-Spinner records for children. The problem has been neatly solved in H.M.V.'s ambitious new Junior Record Club series. Most of the dozen records so far issued (these are 7-inch, coloured discs) have songs specially composed by Cyril Ornadel (perkily tuneful music) and David Croft (neatly turned, revue-type lyrics). There are five **Beatrix Potter** stories, sympathetically narrated by Vivien Leigh (TEG 101, 2, 3, 6 and 110), and Dennis Quilley as a clean-limbed, upright **Sinbad the Sailor** in a version of this story narrated by the comedian Dick Bentley (there are several examples of this sort of imaginative casting). Sir Ralph Richardson brings his sonorous voice to the name-part in **The Story of Noah** (TEG 107), although it is a pity his three sons sound so well-bred. Among the records that don't have special incidental music is **Fifteen Favourite Children's Songs** (TEG 109), attractively sung close-harmony versions of nursery rhymes old (*Pop Goes the Weasel*) and new (*The Ballad of Davy Crockett*). **Nursery Rhyme Toys**, a collection of traditional songs about animals, is presented in the form of a concert, and has the benefit of some lively characterisation from the Michael Sammes Singers (TEG 109). You don't have to join the club to get the records, but if you do (it costs nothing) you get a badge and other advantages.

**Die Fledermaus** is neatly tailored onto two Columbia discs, 33CX 1688-9, with a German cast, conducted by Otto Ackermann, and the Philharmonia Orchestra. I am not familiar with the two rival versions (both have star casts) but find this one has plenty of verve. Wilma Lipp is a pert, clear-voiced Adele, and the principal tenors, Anton Dermota and Karl Terkal, are relaxed and open-throated. The Rosalinde, Gerda Scheyrer, has a large voice that is inclined to spread, and her sense of character is less acute than this sound cast

Some of the artists in Columbia's new *Die Fledermaus* listening to a play-back in the recording studio. This was the last recording made by the late Otto Ackermann (right). (Photograph: Brian Seed).



shows generally. The orchestral playing is polished but the all-important *rubato* seems managed rather than instinctive.

Organ-playing in the grand manner is to be found on Mercury MMA 11103, the first of a series called **Marcel Dupré at Saint-Sulpice**. The Bach Preludes and Fugues in D Major, A Minor and E Minor inspire Dupré to some gloriously full-blooded sound, though for my taste the registrations are occasionally coarse and the interpretations sometimes a little inflated. The problem this church sets the engineers can be judged from the enormous echo at the end of each work; considering this, they have been most successful.

Sir Arthur Bliss, the elder statesman of British music, gets happy results as a conductor when performing other people's music as well as his own. On a recent World Record Club disc (T52) the Sinfonia of London plays stylishly for him in Handel's **Water Music Suite** (not the familiar, 'romantic' Harty version, but one made by Anthony Baines which is more 18th-century in feeling); an attractive suite of Purcell's **Dances and Act-tunes**, fashioned by Sir Arthur himself and including a typically strange hornpipe; and Bliss's own **Checkmate Ballet Suite**. This much-performed ballet, built round a romanticised game of chess, works marvellously well in performance, and the frank theatricality of the music has much to do with its success; the score sounds well here, even if a little dated.

In spite of 50 years of relentless musical experiment, and the consequent softening-up our ears have undergone, Stravinsky's **The Rite of Spring** retains its impact. Its vision of primeval force is still one of the most shattering experiences the concert hall has to offer, even though the final section always seems to me to fall short. The Philharmonia Orchestra under Igor Markevitch give an exciting account of it on H.M.V. ALP 1745, though I have heard the opening page sound more insidious, and the savagery is less marked than on the celebrated Monteux version. There is some congestion in this mono recording—and 35 minutes for a 12-inch l.p. is rather short value.

Some of Schubert's six **Moments Musicaux** are of decidedly small moment; the very familiar No. 3 is the most catchy, and the 'key-less' No. 5 the most adventurous musically. This is real drawing-room music, and Claudio Arrau plays it with just the right intimacy, spoilt occasionally by a touch of pedantry (Columbia 33CX 1709).

### In brief

Four Vivaldi concertos is about three too many for me; *aficionados* will, however, enthuse over **The Four Seasons**, with its picturesque musical illustrations (chattering teeth, barking dogs). Impeccable playing from the Virtuosi di Roma (H.M.V. ALP 1786).

Telemann's **Cantatas Nos. 19 and 72** for tenor and continuo gave me a pleasant surprise: I expected rather dull 18th-century rum-te-tum but found instead music that is melodious and fresh, with a personality of its own. Helmut Krebs is the able-voiced tenor (Cantate T72 088K).

Easy on the ear and decidedly satisfying is **Back in Town** (H.M.V. CLP 1382), with Mel Tormé and the Mel-Tones, a richly chromatic, musically subtle close-harmony group. Imaginative arrangements of 12 'standards', backed by a piquant combination comprising saxophones, vibes, celeste, organ, trumpet and guitars.

On a 7-inch Cantate disc (T 71675P) the Westfälische Kantorei are rather too stolid in music from Schütz's **Kleine Geistliche Konzerte**.

A new Talking Book, **Windy Old Weather**, presents a collection of sea shanties and saltwater ballads, sung by Bob Roberts. This sort of singing-in-the-raw has rather a limited appeal, but if you go for authentic folk art, this is your record (Talking Book 2/1501/26). 'DISCUS'