

friend. The whole work gives an impression of closeness to its subject, and there is a tenderness and deep appreciation of this great twelfth-century figure unparalleled in similar works. It well repays the reader. The translation is easy and faithful, catching the sentiment of the original.

The sermons of St Bernard contain some solid matter, including winning solutions to problems that might occur to the mind. The style tends to be, here and there, a little like confetti poured over one. The translation seems to be a little too obviously from the Latin.

The sermons of Bl. John of Avila are simple but rather empty of content by comparison with those of St Bernard. The style is one of grand eloquence. The translation here runs a little more easily.

G.H.

MUSIC

AMONGST the vast output of new records, usually calling for a heavy financial outlay, are various 'bargain' discs which sacrifice nothing in the way of performance-polish or recording quality. Indeed, the Decca *Ace of Clubs* series is usually a jump or two ahead of most of its British counterparts in these matters and especially is this true of orchestral records, always a popular proposition.

Ansermet Favourites on ACL 37 is a case in point wherein Ansermet, conducting *L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande*, invests Chabrier's *Espana* with the abandon which is its just due. To the same composer's *Marche Joyeuse* the Swiss conductor brings vitality and amply scaled dynamics. Ravel's intriguing *Pavane pour une Enfante Défunte*, with some really mellifluous horn-playing, and imaginative performances of two ever welcome works by Saint-Saëns—*Danse Macabre* and *Le Rouet d'Omphale*—complete this entertaining French concert. The record-jacket carries some informative and lucid programme-notes by Martin Cooper.

Another *Ace of Clubs*, ACL-R 56, offers a choice collection of music for trumpet and orchestra. Not only are the familiar Jeremiah Clarke-cum-Purcell items there, and in resilient performances at that, but also the complete Haydn *E flat Concerto* (generally cut down to two bare movements only) and the Vivaldi baroque *Concerto for Two Trumpets in C*. In many ways this is a most unusual collection of items, specialist or otherwise. At least half will interest a scholar and all will satisfy those for whom style and musicality are just as important as mere technical skill. The players are Roger Voisin and Armando Ghitalla, with the Unicorn Concert Orchestra under Harry Ellis Dickson. Ample annotations are provided by Mary Rasmussen.

Other music for brass, this time by a group of such instruments, can be had on Cantate T 71693F (45 r.p.m.) in the form of self-contained pieces by Reiche and Pezel. These are not difficult for listening

purposes, nor unpleasantly brittle in *ensemble*. Without fear of contradiction it might fairly be described as a brass edition of *Music in Miniature*.

T 72062F carries hymns for male voice choir. The singers concerned are the *Karlshöher Brüderchor* and they possess choral richness and solidity. Here, too, trumpets and trombones are used in certain verses.

Cantate's recording of *Telemann Cantatas* (Nos. 19 and 72) on T 72088K (33 r.p.m.) is every whit as good as the actual performance by Helmut Krebs, which is to rate the whole affair at a very high level indeed. This tenor takes such music in his stride, and interpretation is as easy as his spontaneous approach.

Eduard Buchsel plays two Buxtehude *Preludes and Fuges*—in E minor and D minor—at the Ott organ of Zionskirche, Bethel. He has the suppleness of a healthy athlete. Although he never loses sight of the early style, his playing, with its ingenious choice and use of stops, is still richly-varied—a veritable magic-box of delightful sounds, and frequently exciting ones at that.

More Buxtehude is at hand. T 72091F (again 45 r.p.m.) holds a life-like performance of his *Missa Brevis* (coupled with a rare motet by the equally recondite Michael Bach, 1649-1694) which gives more than an inkling of the best in continental singing. *Windsbacher Knabenchor* resemble a carefully-moulded chamber orchestra in their blend and clarity.

In some German arias of Handel on T 72010F (*Sing praise to God and Sweet Stillness*), Herta Flebbe's soprano voice, agreeable though it is, seems not always well-focussed. Stylistically, things are authentic; and the instrumental accompaniments are finished products in their own right.

In case anyone should still be needing excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*—ever a subject for much heated discussion—the recent issue, on Decca DFE 6623 (45 r.p.m.), of *Comfort Ye and Ev'ry valley*, by Kenneth McKellar (with the Covent Garden Royal Opera House Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult) might be profitably considered. If a need also arises for a new or alternative recording of the same composer's *Ombra mai fu* (or *Largo in G* as the old Star Folios styled it), then this Decca release should go a long way in solving the problem. *Silent Worship*, from Handel's opera *Ptolemy*, is used to fill the remaining band and, all in all, this does seem an economical enough way of gathering some of the composer's favourite vocal solos. Be it added that there is nothing economical about the performances. Mr McKellar, as here recorded, has a fine ring to his well-produced tenor voice and an ability to sing the *Messiah* runs with exemplary breath-control.

Quite different are *Love Songs* of Robert Burns, a diverse group of

seven sung on Oriole EP 7020 by the Scottish baritone Ian Blair. He is a satisfying singer, generous of voice in the robust songs and mellow-toned with his lower notes. On the whole this is quite an enterprise on the part of this smaller gramophone company and Mr Blair, who has frequently sung many little-known songs in B.B.C. recitals, should be invited to make other, not necessarily Scots, recordings.

Also from North of the Border is the touching *O can ye sew cushions?* which may be found on Norma Procter's recital of miscellaneous folk-songs on Decca LW 5248 (Medium 33). Accompanied by Alec Redshaw, she sings six other songs on this disc, and all with a freshness which does not pale quickly. Maybe the most unusual example here is the late Arthur Benjamin's arrangement of the haunting Creole tune *Jan*. Miss Procter sings it appealingly and brings a felicitous, though never arch, touch to *Oh No John* and a sense of narrative to *Lord Rendal*.

Another singer, Muriel Smith—definitely a mezzo-soprano, as distinct from a contralto—gives five Negro Spirituals on Phillips NBE 11007, a 45 E.P. Well partnered by Daniel Kelly, she uses the voice with artistry and avoids sophistication. She finds solace in *Weepin' Mary* and vigour in *Honour, honour*. The favourite *Were you there?*, given without accompaniment, comes from the heart.

Next some eighteenth-century opera from England with the Intimate Opera Company, introduced and accompanied by Antony Hopkins, in Arne's *The Cooper* on Saga XIX 5015 (33 r.p.m.). Words are the first essential here and, by and large, they are clearly articulated—especially by the men. Strings and woodwind are used pleasantly, sometimes crisply as well. In some of the recitatives a slight studio echo is noticeable. Arne's infectious airs are attractive in a lively atmosphere of wit and drollery.

Finally, more of Antony Hopkins in his familiar role of music-guide and friendly counsellor—in fact, permanent records of *Talking about Music*, the programme which commands such a wide radio audience and which is without an equal in the whole field of musical appreciation. Jupiter Recordings Ltd (22B Ebury Street, London, S.W.1) have issued Mr Hopkins's talks on Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* (JEP PPC4) and *Fifth Symphony* (JEP OOC6) as well as of César Franck's *Symphonic Variations* (JEP OOC4). Further discs are on the way. This venture deserves support and is just the thing for seminaries and schools where music needs encouraging. Ideally the talks should be followed by a recording of the work in question, for the whole idea is that Mr Hopkins should help unravel the mysteries which the standard classics still hold for many listeners. They could not have a more devoted instructor.

WILLIAM VARCOE