

## MUSIC

ISO ELINSON has always been regarded as a tasteful Chopin player. On Pye CCT<sub>3</sub>1002 and CCT<sub>3</sub>1003 (33 r.p.m., 10 inch) he lives up to his reputation with well-conceived performances of the *Opp.* 10 and 25 *Etudes*, using rubato sparingly and then only in the best interests of the music. Not for Mr Elinson are the shallow troughs of virtuosity; with him musical considerations are uppermost. In the first study from *Op.* 10 he plays with tremendous verve and *élan*. The well-known E major example, which Chopin himself regarded highly, is an unaffected piece of piano-playing. No. 7 is not over-scaled or precipitous and there is keyboard control too in the famous 'Revolutionary'. The *Opus* 25 set begins with a cool A flat study and goes on to a reading of No. 2 which is without skirmish in its right-hand triplets. No. 3 is rhythmic, even jaunty, and No. 5 has an E major melody which sings from the heart with no sentimentality. No. 7 has some attractive fingerings, and bravura is not exploited for its own sake in No. 8. The popular 'Butterfly' is straightforward, the pianist exercising restraint in his dynamics—a characteristic which is also apparent in No. 10 when Mr Elinson is careful not to overdo his fortissimo at the top of the piano. The A minor ('Winter Wind') study is graphic, though the performer avoids any pig-headedness and subsequent loss of dignity. In short, there is an inherent musicality about Mr Elinson's work, a sense of spontaneity and an affection which no mechanical technician could ever succeed in imparting. On Pye CCL30112 (33 r.p.m., 12 inch) he gives further proof of his artistry with Chopin's *Twenty-four Preludes*, *Op.* 28.

Helen Watts has a notable disc (*L'Oiseau Lyre* OL50173, 33 r.p.m.) of eight Purcell songs and two cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti. The latter, stylishly sung, are valuable reminders of a prolific composer whose output has, to some extent at least, been overshadowed by that of his illustrious son Domenico. The Purcell side also carries some intelligent singing, particularly so in the sad song *From Rosy Bowers* where Miss Watts can give reign to dramatic and imaginative qualities as much as to the exercise of a big vocal range, and a flexible one at that. The lower notes have a certain masculine quality and, always, the words are absolutely clear. *Music for a-while* is a good example of Miss Watts's easy voice-production and her natural feeling for a phrase. She is joined by Bernard Richards (with a 'cello continuo on the Scarlatti side), Desmond Dupré (viola da gamba) and Thurston Dart (harpsichord) who also provides some authentic notes on the record sleeve.

Mr Dart also comes up as a solo-player in his own right on H.M.V. 7EP-7051 (45 r.p.m.) with some charming organ pieces by, again, Purcell, and also Handel. These are meticulously done on old instruments in St John's, Wolverhampton, and All Saints, Rotherham.

Owen Brannigan, whose versatility is amazing, has a further group of *North County Folk Songs* on another H.M.V. 7-inch—7EG8578. With Gerald Moore accompanying we have seven well-recorded specimens. Not all the songs are familiar, and, apart from *The Water of Tyne*, *Blow the wind southerly* and *Elsie Marley*, there are items from Longbenton and Durham together with a Northumbrian pipe tune (*Doon the waggon way*) and a pantomime song based on the legend of the Lambton Worm. The performances by Mr Brannigan are most persuasive and, gradually, a generous library of traditional northern music is being built by this artist in recorded form. Previous releases were 7EG8551 (containing the older version of *Lavender's Blue* and the amusing character study of *Cushie Butterfield*) and 7EP7050 with mainly Gillies Whittaker arrangements and the entertaining *Blaydon Races*.

So, in swift transition, to *Gelineau Psalmody* which has proved something of a revelation in Catholic circles. The simpler forms of musical expression, possessing much in common with the appeal and purity of folk-song, have asserted themselves in such a way as to make these settings a vital and compelling adjunct to worship. Thanks to the far-sightedness of The Grail (58 Sloane Street, S.W.1) we can now study the system for ourselves from one or all of several leaflets—including a reprint of a knowledgeable article by Dom Gregory Murray from *The Downside Review*—or listen to first-class performances by various choirs with solo singers, some of them professional, on EP and LP records. These include a group of six psalms, under Fr Murray's direction, by monks of Downside Abbey as well as by children at the nearby St Benedict's School in Stratton-on-the-Fosse and the Edgar Fleet Quartet. The same record—G.R.24, 1-2 (L.P. 33 r.p.m.)—contains two further psalms by a section of the Westminster Cathedral Choir under George Malcolm. The Somerset children's voices are quite endearing and they have no difficulty at all with Gelineau's melodies, thus proving the practical use of these psalms. Four more psalms, the Blessings, and the Magnificat are sung (with Rev. Alexander Wells in charge) by the Choir of St Edmund's, Ware, with Owen Brannigan on G.R. 3-4—singing which contains much vigour and determination in Nos. 112 and 135—while the third release, another EP catalogued as G.R. 5-6, has five psalms and the Cantic of Simeon by the Parish Choir of St Luke's, Pinner, with a section of the Digby-Stuart College Choir, all directed by Rev. Wilfrid Trot-

man, who appears as soloist in addition to Theresa Marrow and John McHaffie. These Gelineau settings stand a good chance of wider popularity if more priests, teachers and choir-trainers take them to heart and make a point of hearing these discs. Congregations too, must be given similar opportunities. The Psalms, translated from the Hebrew, are an outstanding and useful contribution to a hitherto neglected branch of Catholic music. The Gelineau influence can but be a good one and his work should become public property in next to no time if only these recordings can make their way.

At a more modest level is a single 7-inch record (45 r.p.m.) of *Gregorian Plainsong* by the Boys' Choir and Schola Cantorum of St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham. This is the kind of thing to which all reasonable church choirs should aspire. The Nottingham choir (conducted by Peter Smedley) is not a professional body, and their performances here of the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* from Mass XVI, together with the *Gloria* and *Ite Missa Est* from Mass XV, are good examples of sincerity and choral discipline. The boys are particularly alert. The singing, many will be pleased to note, is in the revered Solemnnes manner. The recording has a certain atmosphere about it and one or two extraneous traffic noises serve as a reminder that this choir, like many another, enhances the worship of a largely workaday district. This kind of private enterprise must be encouraged. The disc can be obtained from Mr Farrell, Director of Records, St Barnabas' Cathedral, Nottingham, or any branch of Burns, Oates (12s. 6d., post 6d.).

WILLIAM VARCOE

