

TURN TABLE TALK

National Gramophonic Society

The meeting on November 13th in the upper room at Murdoch's in Oxford Street was made possible by the courtesy of Mr. A. T. Evans, the manager of the gramophone department, and a hearty vote of thanks was given to him at the end of the proceedings.

There was an average attendance of members—and it is a low average; which was the greater pity because those present had a great treat. To begin with Mr. Bernard Van Dieren, the composer, closest friend and literary executor of Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine), came to tell us something about the history of *The Curlew*—how in its first form it was one of the earliest works of Warlock, and how he had steeped himself in Yeats's poetry and had rewritten his setting of the poem in later years and inserted the cor anglais part. The new records were then played on an Isovox gramophone, which Mr. Evans had installed specially for the purpose. Mr. Bernard, the designer of it, was present with Mrs. Bernard, and Mr. Wybrow took charge of the demonstration.

Then Mr. H. W. Legge addressed us on the subject of the Hugo Wolf Society, of which he is secretary, and played some test records of Wolf songs made by Madame Gerhardt, with a brief but highly entertaining introductory comment on each song. We were much privileged in being the first people to hear these first-fruits of the great scheme.

Mr. Peter Latham was the next to address the company, and after touching upon *The Curlew* and telling a good story about Mendelssohn's economy with his brass, he added some remarks about Hugo Wolf, which were admirably complementary to what Mr. Legge had told us. The gist of them was that none or hardly any one of Wolf's songs was suitable for transcription for solo instruments (in contrast, e.g., to Schubert's songs) and that secondly Wolf's songs always roused discussion—they were essentially provocative—and the recording of them was therefore likely to be of immense value to all song-lovers.

The Isovox radio-gramophone was then demonstrated with a few chosen records, and the meeting came to an end shortly after 8 p.m.

The three records (N.G.S.163-5) are ready for distribution to members. There is an unfortunate mistake in the labels. Mr. John Armstrong, who is properly a tenor, is there called a baritone. The mistake arose from the fact that the voice part in *The Curlew* is written for a baritone.

New Recording Studios

The inauguration of the magnificent new H.M.V. studios, which have been growing up with meticulous expert supervision behind the unassuming façade of a typical St. John's Wood house during the last six months, took place on

November 12th and marked an occasion of congratulation and happy augury. Visitors were shown all, or nearly all, the marvels that research and money have provided for the more perfect recording of H.M.V. artists, and in the great concert hall Sir Edward Elgar was conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in his "Symphonic Study," *Falstaff*, while Mr. Louis Sterling, Mr. Alfred Clark, Sir Landon Ronald and

Mr. G. B. Shaw sat together listening. If Paderewski had been able to carry out his intention of being present, Sir Edward was ready to conduct the orchestra in his *Polonia*. However, there were plenty of notabilities there to do honour to The Gramophone Company for so convincing a gesture of world-leadership at this critical moment, and everyone seemed to agree that we may confidently expect a steady flow of sensationally good H.M.V. recordings.

Here are some extracts from the official report:—

"The brick walls of the three recording studios have a minimum thickness of 13½ inches and are so constructed that there can be no possible interference from outside noises, nor will the sound from one studio interfere with the others.

"The three studios have been placed so that corridors and rooms separate them; it is therefore possible to hold recording sessions in each studio at any one time. A separate recording room is built adjacent to each studio and each one houses

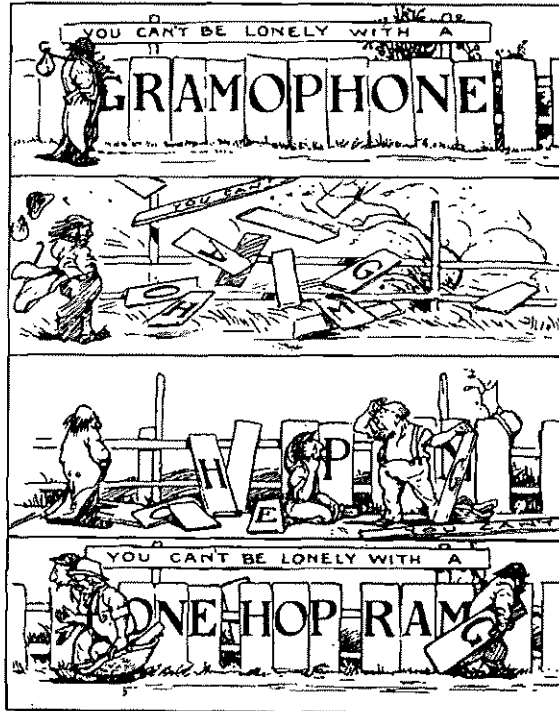
two complete recording outfits, so that it is possible for the performance of each artist to be immediately reproduced without using the commercial wax.

"A control room is situated centrally for the three studios, so that at any moment they can all be linked together for any recording, such as novelty records, sketches, dramatic work, etc., and the performances in each studio can all be merged together and recorded on a single record. A special room is also provided for the transferring of records; that is for the preparation of composite records of the Aldershot Tattoo type. Playing desks with multiple turntables are used, and extracts from a number of existing records can be recorded on a single disc.

"Just over four and a half miles of electric cable connect the three studios with the central control room.

"Up to six microphones can be used at one time in each studio and each microphone has a separate control; this ensures that all records will be recorded with correct balance of instruments and vocalists.

"The walls of each studio have been designed to eliminate any echo effect, and as the three studios vary in size from 32,000 cubic ft. to 200,000 cubic ft. (considerably larger than the Kingsway Hall), a single instrumentalist or a large symphony orchestra and chorus can be recorded in natural conditions."



SCHERZO IN G BY R. T. COOPER

Vocalion

The old Vocalion recording studios in Duncan Avenue, off Gray's Inn Road, have been abandoned and Mr. A. W. Hanson has moved to a large corner house in Holland Park Avenue. Here in future Broadcast records will be recorded, and this will be the London headquarters of the company. The large studio is of impressive proportions and there is a delightful atmosphere of light and airiness through the whole building, which should conduce to great cheerfulness and zest in artists and staff alike.

The Pampelmouse

Just before Noel Coward went off on his trip to South America I was lucky enough to catch him for a few minutes' conversation at the Little Queen's Hall H.M.V. studio where he was making his *Cavalcade Suite* record with Ray Noble and the New Mayfair Orchestra; and among other things I had the curiosity to ask him about the use of gramophone records for his play at Drury Lane. He proceeded to give a most witty description and imitation of the scene at the back of the stage when Queen Victoria's funeral cortège is supposed to be passing along under the balcony from which the players watch it. First go four men crawling along with coco-nut shells in their hands, imitating the horses' hooves; then follows the Pampelmouse on a trolley, playing a record of the Funeral March, while at the side is another man with a long heavy chain in his hands which he drops at regular intervals on to the boards to imitate the tramp of feet.

"We all call it the Pampelmouse," said Noel Coward; "that is its name at Drury Lane."

Its real name is the Pamphonic Reproducer and it is already installed at Drury Lane, the Dominion Theatre and the Strand Theatre, and is likely to be in two other theatres before these lines appear. There is nothing surprising about this. Although the senior model, with two turntables which can be played separately or simultaneously, costs £250, it is so completely satisfying in performance in a theatre or hall or large music room that the outlay would be well justified. What struck me particularly—and I have heard it in Drury Lane, in the laboratory where it was designed and in Messrs. Keith Prowse's showrooms in Bond Street—was the quite unusual purity of tone in orchestral records controlled from a whisper up to Queen's Hall volume. It is like a Rolls-Royce in its gentle and inflexible mastery of its job, and I was interested to notice the efforts that have been made in its design to cope with the problem of amplifying transients.

The running costs are negligible—½d. an hour with power at 1d. a unit. As for the inside of the Pampelmouse and how it works, that must be left to our technical staff to deal with. All I know is that even at the second time of seeing *Cavalcade*, when I knew that records were being used here and there throughout the play, I was unable to detect them by ear alone, whereas I doubt whether I have ever been deceived by an electrical reproducer in any other theatre.

Flexible Records

Filmophone records, with their gay colours and constantly improving quality, have outlived their competitors and are to be seen in many shop windows this Christmas. In one shop window in London a press has been erected and Filmophone records can be watched in the making, a great attraction for the public. The factory is said to be the only one in this country where electricity is used throughout for the manufacture of records.

Now comes another flexible record, the Trusound Pictorial, which has long been expected. In this case both sides are not merely coloured, but are covered with a picture or pictures. The effect is most striking, for the designs are bold and so are the colours. The first that was seen in this country was used for advertising purposes by the United Dairies Company, and had a great success: it is to be found in most nurseries where there is a gramophone. Now we are to have the Trusound Pictorials issued in the ordinary way with an appropriate picture for each title.

Imhof's

Years ago, it seems, we published a letter from a correspondent describing in glowing terms the ideal music shop. He was referring to the showrooms of a well-known North Country firm. We offered a prize to the first reader who identified the shop from the description; and the extraordinary thing was that nine out of every ten competitors plumped for Alfred Imhof's in New Oxford Street: extraordinary only because Imhof's has no piano department and no sheet music department such as were described by our correspondent.

But the tribute remains unchallenged to-day. Imhof House still has no rival as a house devoted solely to radio and the gramophone: it has no rival in its turn-over nor in the practical efficiency of its service to its clientèle. The number of audition rooms and the facilities, by means of the most elaborate system of wiring, for comparing various radio sets and radio-gramophones side by side in identical conditions, set a standard which should be the pride and the envy of the world.

At the end of another year we still take off our hats on approaching Imhof House. It is the centre of the gramophone world in this country.

Hold Hard!

Lest green eyes glint, let us hasten to add that no honour paid to Messrs. Alfred Imhof can for one moment or in any particular detract from the honour due to other gramophone shops where, in less palatial surroundings, prodigies of intelligent salesmanship and a service of the very highest standard are constantly witnessed. The vastly important chain of Keith Prowse branches, those paradises of connoisseurs the Gramophone Exchange in Shaftesbury Avenue, E.M.G. Gramophones in Grape Street, Rimington, Van Wyck in Cranbourn Street, and Mr. E. M. Ginn's retreat in Rathbone Place—in each and all of these the gramophone lover and record collector meets kindred spirits and gets loyal service. What we say here about our friends, whose clients are largely composed of our readers, will be taken in the right spirit as a word of gratitude and good-fellowship; and especially at this time of year we can unite in our pride in our standards of efficiency and integrity, and can wish each other a full share of next year's prosperity.

Short Commons

Mr. Leslie Woodgate writes to point out a mistake in the review of the B.B.C. National Chorus record (Col. DB632) last month. It was he who arranged *Here's a health unto His Majesty* and Gerrard Williams who arranged *The Bay of Biscay*, not vice versa.

Other mistakes to be noted were: (a) Gaspar Cassado's record on p. 180 (October) costs 6s., not 4s.; (b) Friedl Lusser's record on p. 230 (November) is Col. DB636, not 366; (c) the portraits of Stracciari and Lindi on pp. 214-5 (November) were transposed.

Among the new Book Lists issued by the National Book Council (3, Henrietta Street, W.C.2) is a fifth edition of "Books for Young People" (3d.), valuable suggestions at Christmas time for those who have children's presents to think about. It is surprising that the new edition (Basil Blackwell) of Compton Mackenzie's *Santa Claus in Summer* is omitted.

If any reader has the records of Bach's *Suite for flute and strings in B minor* played by the Hallé Orchestra (Columbia L1557-8) and would care to dispose of them, we know of another reader who would like to acquire them—"like" being an example of meiosis.

The Music Department of the Oxford University Press announce the re-issue, with additions, of "Euterpe," a collection of madrigals and other vocal music of the 16th and 17th centuries, edited by Charles Kennedy Scott and originally compiled for the Oriana Musical Society and published abroad. Copies of any number will be sent on approval to conductors of choral societies and secretaries of musical festivals.