

*Editor's note: This series of essays by Dr. Hospers was written in the 1970s and were originally published by Robert D. Kephart in his Libertarian Review as a ten-part series of shorter installments. This series contains references to specific phonograph recordings. These are no longer available (except perhaps in collectors' markets that specialize in vintage vinyl). Digitally remastered versions of these performances are often available today either as downloadable MP3 files from the Internet or on audio CDs as those technologies have superseded phonograph records. This series of essays on music listening has also been posted by Roger Bissell on the Objectivist Living website.*

## **INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### **A Guide to Recorded Classical Music in Six Parts**

**By John Hospers**

## **PART IV. ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OF THE NINETENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

The symphonies of Beethoven have been so extensively played that they have really been overworked in comparison with equally great works by others (and by Beethoven himself) that have been neglected. There are so many recordings of these symphonies that the listener has a large range of choice. The recordings by Toscanini are still the most inspired and, in my view, definitive, but the sound quality, especially on high-fidelity equipment, leaves much to be desired. Of the symphonies of Beethoven to which the adjective "great" is universally applied and balancing the quality of the recorded sound against the technical skill of the performers and, most of all, the quality of the conductor's interpretation, I would say that the on-the-whole best performance of the no. 3 ("Eroica") is by Barbirolli on Angel S-3641; of no. 4 by Ansermet on London 15055; and of no. 5, by Reiner on RCA LSC-2434 (with fine performances of some of Beethoven's great concert overtures on part of the other side). The no. 6 ("Pastoral") is matchlessly recorded by Bruno Walter on Odyssey Y7-30051, which, though old, makes every other recording of this work pale by comparison. If you cannot get it, get the Böhm recording on DGG-2530142. For the scintillating no. 7, Reiner is magnificent on RCA LSC-1991. The light no. 8 is most compellingly done by Casals (with Mendelssohn's equally melodic Symphony no. 4 on the other side) on Columbia MS-6931. The no. 9 of which the first movement is one of the towering achievements of music is performed to the dramatic hilt by Solti on "Beethoven: Symphony No. 9."

Of the piano concertos, the no. 5 is too much a pompous display piece for my taste, compared with the far greater subtleties of Mozart and his predecessors, but it is well done by Solti and pianist Ashkenazy on London 2404, four discs containing all five piano concertos; if you don't want the whole set, get the exciting Swedish performance on Rococo 2047, or failing that, the fine Bernstein-Serkin performance on Columbia M-31807. But it is the no. 4, with

its probing introspective quality, that is the giant among Beethoven's piano concertos. The great Schnabel performance is now discontinued, and of those now available, the best done is by Solti-Ashkenazy, on the aforementioned London 2404; otherwise, I suggest Ormandy-Istomin on Columbia MS-7199. The violin concerto is a fine work, although minor Beethoven compared with the chamber works recommended in Part 1 of this series; but it is most feelingly done by Bruno Walter and violinist Francescatti on Odyssey Y-30042. For the great Beethoven overtures, get Szell on Columbia MS-6966 and MS-7068.

Schubert's style, like that of Chopin and Schumann, is so intimately wedded to chamber music that his orchestral works all suffer by comparison—with one great exception: the magnificent Symphony no. 9 in C. This amazing work, a total masterpiece of symphonic form (which Schubert never lived to hear performed), has an inexorable rhythmic drive that is simply beyond belief. And it grows on you continuously whether you have been hearing it for days or for years. Several "immortal" performances (immortal but for the fact that they have been discontinued) are the Sir Hamilton Harty on Columbia (78 rpm), the Furtwangler on Turnabout 4364 (mono), and the Toscanini (mono). There is, however, a superlative recording available, that of Szell on "Schubert: Symphony No. 9." The well-known no. 8 ("Unfinished") is best done by Walter on Odyssey Y-3031.

One of the greatest of all composers is Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). His early "Symphonie Fantastique" is easily forgettable compared with his other work, but it is excellently done by Ansermet on London CS-2101. His beautifully expressive tone-poem for viola and orchestra, "Harold in Italy," is best done by Ormandy (and Pasquale, violist) on Columbia M-30116. But if you have to select only one orchestral work by Berlioz—and I shall call it orchestral though it contains a few choral passages—let it be his "Romeo and Juliet" (Op. 17), which Toscanini called "the most beautiful music ever written." Even though this may be a bit of an overstatement, the work is so lovely, and the entire love-music section so melting, that when you hear it you won't be able to disagree, you will just want to hear it again and again for weeks. Toscanini's recording on mono has been discontinued, but a worthy successor is by the greatest contemporary interpreter of Berlioz' music, Colin Davis, on "Berlioz: Romeo et Juliette." I shall have a good deal more to say about Berlioz later in this series, when I discuss song, opera, and choral music.

The symphonies by Johannes Brahms are too well known to require much comment. The tense and electrifying no. 1 is best done by Stokowski on London 21090/1; the more "singing" no. 2 by Beecham (with the greatest of Brahms' overtures, the "Academic Festival," on part of the other side) on Seraphim S-60083; for the gentle "Sunset Glow" symphony, no. 3, Stokowski on Everest 3030 is more lyrical, Szell's on Columbia MS-6685 more dramatic (with Brahms' fine "Variations on a Theme by Haydn" on part of the other

side); and finally, the monumental no. 4, perhaps the greatest of his symphonic works, is best done by Haitink on Philips 6500389. Brahms' violin concerto is, in my opinion, the greatest of all violin concertos, and is done with splendor by Szell and violinist Oistrakh on Angel 36032 (though the Ormandy-Stern performance is also excellent and has the lovely Mozart Sinfonia Concertante K. 364 on part of the other side). And his Piano Concerto no. 2 is, in my opinion again, the greatest of all piano concertos. This sculptured, towering work is done with equal mastery by Szell and Serkin on Columbia MS-6937 and Barbirolli and Barenboim on Angel S-36526. Not quite on a part with these, but still eminently worth hearing, is the double concerto (for violin and cello), best done by Walter, with Francescatti and Fournier on Columbia MS-6158.

A fine symphonist, and much more simple and direct than Brahms, is Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). His most powerful orchestral compositions are the popular "Romeo and Juliet," best done by Stokowski on London 21032, and the Symphony no. 6 ("Pathétique"), best performed by Guilini on Seraphim S-60031. Very fine works too, though less concentrated in their emotional intensity, are the no. 4, best done by Barenboim on Columbia M-30572, and the no. 5 by Stokowski on London 21017. His violin concerto is one of the loveliest of all violin concertos—a genre in which there is a paucity of first-rate works, but a plentitude of good performances, especially in this case—of which I prefer the Schippers-Francescatti recording (Columbia MS-6758), with an equally fine playing of the almost equally fine violin concerto by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) on the other side. For those who like Tchaikovsky's bombastic Piano Concerto no. 1, I recommend the Kondrashin-Cliburn performance on RCA LSC-2252.

An entirely different aspect of Tchaikovsky's orchestral work is to be found in his ballet scores: "Nutcracker," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Aurora's Wedding"—of which "Nutcracker" especially is filled with enchanting singable melodies. Get the complete ballet conducted by Previn on Angel S-3788 (two discs) [Ed. Note: reviewed in the December 1973 Books for Libertarians by R. A. Childs, Jr.], or the suite done by Bernstein on Columbia MS-6193.

There is a large number of famous but eminently forgettable nineteenth century orchestral works. (The public still dotes on inferior works of the nineteenth century and ignores masterpieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth.) Among them are Tchaikovsky's second and third piano concertos, almost all the orchestral works by Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt, and the almost incredibly crude and vulgar "Symphonie Espagnole" by Lalo. Most of the work of Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) is also forgettable, except perhaps for the pompous but cumulatively impressive Symphony no. 3 for Organ and Orchestra, done with the greatest flair by Much non RCA LSC-2341.

Another minor figure with a large output is Rimsky-Korsakov, whose

“Scheherazade” is played again and again. If you want it, get the incomparable Beecham recording on Angel 35505. Rimsky-Korsakov did write one delightful, utterly spontaneous and exciting orchestral work, “The Russian Festival of High Easter,” performed with verve by Ormandy along with other pleasant nineteenth century Russian pieces (by Tchaikovsky, Balakirev, Glinka, and Borodin) on Columbia MS-6875.

The final forgettable orchestral composer for this month is Caesar Frank, who wrote one good, but overplayed, symphony, which is passionately performed by Bernstein on Columbia MS-6072 and by Stokowski on London SPC-21061.

Smetana's symphonic cycle “Ma Vlast” (“My Country”)—of which “The Moldau” (“The River”) is the most famous excerpt—thought not up to his operas, is excellently performed and recorded by Kubelik on a two-record set, DG-2707054. Dvorak's orchestral works, except for the second movements of his Symphonies 8 and 9 (“From the New World”), are in the forgettable category: you will enjoy them a few times and then tire of them. But there is one superb Dvorak orchestral work which is different from his other orchestral work: the Cello Concerto—certainly the greatest of all cello concertos (there are not many even moderately good ones). Since the Casals-Szell performance is no longer available, get it with brilliant sound as performed by Rostropovich and conducted by Von Karajan on DG-139044. Of the works of the more recent Czech composer Leos Janacek (1854-1928), try his delightful “Sinfonietta” (Ozawa on Angel 36045).

The symphonies of Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) are of somewhat uneven quality, with awkward transitions and “padded” passages intermixed with stretches of great lyrical beauty and cumulative powers, but his scherzos are always a delight. He wrote at least three memorable symphonies: no. 4 (“Romantic”), with its enchanting vernal quality (fully rendered by Barenboim on DG 2530336); no. 7, with its stately, slow, but finally overwhelming slow movement (best done on a three-record set with the no. 4, both conducted by Karajan on Angel S-3779; otherwise get Klemperer on Angel S-3626: and finally his masterpiece, the no. 9, with its muted dread, hope, and mystery, and ending in either mysticism, darkness, or quiet radiance (depending on what you bring to it), of which the unforgettable recording is by Furtwangler on Heliodor 2548701E. If you cannot get it (it is a foreign recording not listed in Schwann), get the fine Mehta recording on London 6462.

We come now to the composer who is, in the increasing opinion of those who have been exposed to his work, the greatest symphonist of the last hundred years, Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). His symphonies are of such monumental scope, with such massive orchestral (and often

choral) requirements, and with qualities of feeling hitherto unexpressed in music, that many critics did not recognize the emotional power and the symphonic inventiveness lying behind (or coming through) the sounds. Each of his 10 symphonies is in its own way a masterpiece, and some carry such elemental power that listeners remain speechless and immobile in their seats—in the case of the Second Symphony I have seen members of the audience lave the auditorium with tears flowing down their cheeks. Mahler “grabs” many listeners who are left comparatively cold by other composers: his works strike an emotional jugular, things like “the mystery of existence” and “the loveliness and the tragedy of life.” The First Symphony is exciting and monumental, qualities which are superbly conveyed in the Bruno Walter performance (still the best) on Odyssey Y-30047. For a more modern sound, get Horenstein's recording on Nonesuch 71240.

But even this massive symphony is only a curtain-raiser. Of his four greatest symphonies—in my opinion these are 2, 3, 9, and 10—no. 2 (“The Resurrection”) is the one to start with. It carries its intense emotionality more “on its face.” With oversized orchestra, plus chorus, plus soloists and bells, it ascends to such heights of exaltation as to leave the listener paralyzed and speechless. There are many fine recordings of this work, but you can seldom go wrong with the Mahler-Bernstein combination: Bernstein has a special affinity for “the tragic sense of life” which is so poignantly expressed in Mahler's work. Bernstein's performance of the Symphony no. 2, offered this month by LR, is simply overwhelming. Only after you have heard it a few times should you turn to Symphony no. 3, which I have come through time to prefer even to the no. 2. Of all Mahler's works the no. 3 is the most affirmative in tone, and one is left levitated as its matchless end is reached. Here again get the incomparable Bernstein (available from LR), especially for its final movement. (Regrettably, it does not use a real flugelhorn in two intermediate movements, and this does make a difference—perhaps for some listeners even tipping the balance in favor of Solti's breath-taking recording on London 2223.)

By contrast, the no. 4 is shorter and more quietly introspective; Bernstein's lyrical rendition is on Columbia MS-6152. The no. 5, with its nostalgically intense Adagietto and its powerful, savage horn and trombone passages in other movements, is perfectly suited to Solti's driving intensity on London 2228. For the nos. 6, 7, and 8, as elsewhere, take Bernstein for heart-rending passion and Solti for dramatic drive and heroism. Only with the no. 8, “The Symphony of a Thousand,” does Mahler (in my opinion) ever descend occasionally to the “vulgarily ostentatious.” [Ed. Note: Reviewed in the February 1974 Books for Libertarians by Mark Corske.]

In the two final symphonies, all the exhibitionism is gone and the means economical, yet the emotionality is tremendously intense. Only after

hearing at least some of the earlier ones can the uniqueness and greatness of these two be fully appreciated. For Symphony no. 9, again Bernstein is overpowering. The recording available from the LR Book Service couples this with Symphony no. 5, but if you want it by itself, get the Solti on London 2220. For Symphony no. 10, get Ormandy, where it is coupled with Mahler's song-cycle, "Das Lied von der Erde," or alone on Columbia M2S-775. Mahler is "total experience," and after it no one is quite the same again. [Additional note by JH (2006): Recently there have been new recordings (best ones in the Derek Cooke adaptation); at last it can be said that Mahler's Tenth is receiving its just reward.]

Then there is Mahler's friend Richard Strauss (1864-1949). Though his operas are his principal claim to fame, he wrote some impressive orchestral tone-poems, chief among them being "Don Quixote," written for cello and orchestra—the best sound-plus-performance is by Maazel (cellist, Brabec) on London CS-6593—and "Ein Heldenleben" ("A Hero's Life"), best done by Haitink on Philips 6500048. "Also Sprach Zarathustra" seems to me entirely forgettable: after its famous first minute (celebrated in the film *2001*) it deteriorates and wanders interminably. Short and light, but enjoyable, are "Don Juan," "Death and Transfiguration," and "Till Eulenspiegel"—all of them excellently done on Odyssey Y-30313, conducted by Szell.

A worthy successor to Tchaikovsky, whose early works resemble those of that great Russian composer, is the Finn, Jan Sibelius (1865-1957). The Symphony no. 2 is melodic like Tchaikovsky, but sterner ("the giant of the north") and more inexorable in its rhythm and climax; its spirit is powerfully conveyed by Szell on Philips 835306. But it is his late symphonies that pack the wallop: the mysterious and probing no. 4 (Karajan, who seems to have a special affinity for Sibelius' music, does a fine job on DG-138974, with Sibelius' lovely tone-power "The Swan of Tuonela" for violin and orchestra on part of the other side); the joyfully dramatic no. 5 (here Bernstein's performance is probably the best, on Columbia MS-6749); and most of all that miracle of symphonic construction, the one-movement no. 7, which is among the finest works in the entire symphonic literature (Karajan on DG-139032, coupled with the no. 6). It has to be heard a number of times; it gathers momentum slowly, like bits and pieces floating out of the fog and back again, but all coming together toward the end in a climactic vortex of great but controlled power. Sibelius' various tone-poems and his violin concerto are listenable, but (except for "The Swan of Tuonela") froth in comparison with his symphonies.

The Danish composer, Carl Nielsen (1865-1931), is less known in the United States than Sibelius, but in his own unique idiom he has composed some powerful orchestral works. Choicest among them is the Symphony no. 5 (Op. 5), best recorded by Jenson, on London 1143. Since this is a discontinued item, try Bernstein on Columbia MS-6414.

An unduly neglected twentieth-century composer is the Englishman, Frederic Delius (1862-1934). For works of quiet beauty and rustic pastoral quality, with an admixture of modern harmonies, Delius has no peer. On one record, "In a Summer Garden: Music by Frederic Delius," you will find some of his best: "In a Summer Garden," "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring," "Summer Night on a River," and "A Song before Sunrise." This record plus two others, Angel 36756 (continuing his "Appalachia," based on American Negro themes) and Angel 36415 (all three records beautifully conducted by Barbirolli), will together give you the best of Delius' music.

The twentieth-century inheritor of the Beethoven-Brahms symphonic tradition is the English composer, Ralph Vaughn-Williams (1872-1958). His early symphonies are all programmatic, but extremely evocative: no. 1 ("The Sea"), no. 2 ("London"), and no. 3 ("Pastoral"). All of them are impressive works, particularly as conducted by Sir Adrian Boult on Angel, but especially the no. 2 (Angel 36838).

But it is in his later symphonies that his great sustained power as a symphonist is displayed. Combining the drive and energy of Beethoven with the romanticism and involution of Brahms, we have some of the most moving orchestral music of our day. My own favorite is the intense no. 5 (Boult on "Serenade to Music; Symphony No. 5 in D," with Vaughn-Williams' fine "Serenade to Music" on part of one side), although perhaps the single most powerful movement is the second movement of the no. 6 (Boult on Angel 36469, with the lovely romantic violin-and-orchestra tone-poem, "Lark Ascending," on part of the second side).

In concluding, let me mention three other works worth considering. Vaughn-Williams' fellow Englishman, William Walton (1902- ), has written one symphony with great drive and suspense (Previn on RCA LSC-2927) and the enjoyable "Façade Suite" (London 15191). Gustav Holst (1874-1934) wrote a famous orchestral piece, "The Planets" (Boult on Angel 36420). And, the far more prolific Englishman, Benjamin Britten (1913- ), has written some intermittently interesting orchestral works, particularly enjoyable being the "Spring Symphony" (London 25242).

Now to Russian music since Tchaikovsky. The recorded works of Rachmaninov have already been reviewed by LR. Let me only remark that his Symphony no. 2, which I find the most inspiring of his works, has been recorded by Previn (on Angel 36954) in a performance so stunning that it would be a mistake to purchase any other recording. And do not forget Rachmaninov's contemporary, Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956), whose Symphony no. 3 ("Ilya Murometz") is a marvel of colorful symphonic writing (and of colorful recording by Stokowski on

Seraphim S-60089).

The most prolific, and in the opinion of many—myself included—the most important of contemporary Russian composers is Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953). His Symphony no. 1 (“Classical”), a takeoff of Haydn and Mozart, is a delight (Kurtz on Seraphim 60172); but his surging gut-level power is best exhibited in the Symphony no. 5, performed by Ansermet, on “Prokofiev: Symphony No. 5 in B flat.” But this is only the beginning. The violin concerto is a vehicle in which few composers have excelled; Prokofiev wrote two of them, each in its own way a perfect gem—both beautifully played by violinist Isaac Stern and conducted by Ormandy on Columbia MS-6635. His Piano Concerto no. 3 is already a major classic of piano literature, and among many good recordings one stands out: DG-139349, conducted by Abbado and played by Argerich. Also well worth listening to are the “Lieutenant Kije Suite” (Szell on Columbia MS-7408) and the “Love for Three Oranges Suite” (on Turnabout 34463 with Prokofiev’s great cantata “Alexander Nevsky”).

There have been three great musical treatments of the Romeo and Juliet theme (if one ignores Gounod’s opera by the same name): by Berlioz [Ed. Note: reviewed in this column last month.], by Tchaikovsky, and by Prokofiev. The only one, in my opinion that compares with Berlioz’ is Prokofiev’s; it lacks Berlioz’ tremendous intensity, but it is after all a ballet designed for a full evening’s listening and viewing, and it is a melodic inspiration throughout, with a shimmering beauty all its own. Until recently only selections from the ballet were available on records, but now there are two exceptional recordings of the entire work, each on three records, one by Previn (Angel 3802) and one by Maazel (London 2312), which I prefer by a small margin because of London’s superior sound. (Samples of all three orchestral treatments of Romeo and Juliet—Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, and Prokofiev—are well done by Stokowski on London 21108.)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906- ) is not up to Prokofiev’s standards, and many minutes of his many symphonies are cerebral contrivance, empty bombast, or careful padding. But the early Symphony no. 1 is fascinating (get Weller on London CS-6787), and the Symphony no. 5, after two arid opening movements, rises to a height of sustained tension. (Get the inspired recording by his son, Maksim Shostakovich, on Angel S-40163.) The no. 7 (“Leningrad”) is simple and tuneful, and was an inspiring wartime piece, but rather thin soup for such a long composition. The best one so far, I think, is the no. 10 (Ormandy on Columbia M-30295).

The Russian-Armenian composer Aram Khatchadourian (1903- ) wrote but one memorable orchestral work, the Piano Concerto (1936), which has a biting staccato intensity and catchy rhythms. (Try De Burgos on London 6181; different recordings of this piece have interpretations so



different that it hardly sounds like the same piece.)

Claude Debussy, though primarily a composer of chamber music, wrote perhaps the most convincing work of program music ever, "La Mer" ("The Sea"), which, though it does not exactly sound like the sea, imitates the rhythms of the sea and certainly conveys powerful images of the sea. Stokowski is at his best at this type of music, and now that the incomparable Toscanini recording is no longer available, Stokowski's on London 21059 is the one to get; it also has Maurice Ravel's almost equally evocative suites "Daphnis and Chloe" on the other side. (The same for Szell's fine performance of both on Odyssey Y-31928.) Debussy's "Images pour Orchestra" (including the famous "Iberia") is exquisitely rendered by Boulez on Columbia MS-7362. Stokowski's performance of "Nocturnes," on Seraphim S-60104, is equally exquisite.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) also wrote some interesting impressionistic music, such as "The Pines of Rome," "The Fountains of Rome," and "The Birds"—all available together on one record by Kertesz, London CS-6624 (though Much's performance, without "The Birds," on London 21024, has even more *élan*). But the pick of the crop is the "Ancient Airs and Dances" (which I recommend with Karajan on DG-2530247, because it also contains the lovely "Pachelbel Kanon." However, once you listen to these airs in their original form on Turnabout 34195 (recommend in Part 1 of this series), you will see that in their original form they have more charm than Respighi's adaptation of them for modern orchestra.

A highly original composer is Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), much of whose work contains more "cuteness" than inspiration. Until we get to choral music later in this series, I shall recommend only his Concerto in G-minor for Organ, Strings, and Tympani (Angel S-35953) and his Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (Angel S-35993).

Another French composer, Olivier Messiaen (1908- ), wrote the tremendously colorful "Turangalila Symphonie" (Ozawa on RCA LSC-7051), which some have found an overwhelming spiritual experience and others a crashing bore. But his "L'Ascension" ("Four Meditations") for string orchestra (Stokowski on London 21060) is, at the very least, a "different" experience. Listening to the dissonance-harmonies in the last section, leaving the chordal progression unresolved at the end, is a powerful and unique pleasure-pain music experience.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) is perhaps the most fertile contemporary composer, and enormously influential, though often leaving one unmoved. His "Sacre de Printemps" ("Rite of Spring"), even before it became programatized and celebrated in Disney's film *Fantasia*, was clearly a powerful gut-level musical innovation, and the savage "primal

scream" quality comes out best in the earlier of two Bernstein recordings, Columbia MS-6010. (There is a more structurally lucid, "intellectual" performance by Boulez on Columbia MS-7293.) Stravinsky's "Firebird" suite is performed with fiery intensity by Stokowski on London 21026, and his ballet "Petrouchka" by Ansermet on London 6009. You can get the two suites, "Firebird" and "Petrouchka," together on one excellent recording by Ozawa, RCA LSC-3167.

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) writes in a modern idiom with great power and conciseness. His best orchestral works seem to me to be the "Concerto for Orchestra," carefully yet passionately rendered by Bernstein on Columbia MS-6140; the "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste," brilliantly done by Boulez on Columbia MS-7206 (with Stravinsky's "Firebird" suite on the other side) and passionately done by Bernstein on Columbia MS-6956 (with Bartok's two-piano concerto on the other side); and the Piano Concerto no. 2, by Bernstein-Entremont on Columbia MS-7145.

The music of Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) is symphonic in quality, resourceful, and sometimes powerful. His most memorable orchestral work is the symphony "Mathis der Maler," colorfully performed by Kletzke on London 6665.

The American composer Samuel Barber (1910- ) has a large output, but only occasionally forgoes contrivance for inspiration. In his "Adagio for Strings" (Columbia M-30066), moving in its simplicity, the inspiration comes out, and for a moment it is almost Mahler. A fine collection of recent American orchestral music, including the Barber "Adagio" and the fine ballet "Appalachian Spring" by Aaron Copland (1900- ), as well as works by Piston and Ives, is conducted by Bernstein on a two-record set, *The American Album*.

The most controversial of American composers, and by many considered the most important, is Charles Ives (1874-1954). In spite of the ultramodern harmonies and the intricate complexity of his work, you will appreciate it more if you are acquainted with the revival hymn-tunes, passages from which (often in sardonically distorted form) besprinkle his work. His interesting Symphony no. 1 is well performed by Ormandy on Columbia MS-7111, with Ives' "Three Pieces in New England" on the other side. The Symphony no. 4 is played simultaneously (part of the time) by two orchestras in different tempos (Stokowski does it brilliantly on Columbia MS-6775), and in spite of its raucous cacophony, it can be a rewarding experience. Those who prefer modern music in a quieter idiom should listen to Ives' "Concord Sonata" on Columbia MS-7192.