

JOY TO BE BOUGHT

by DONALD BESWICK

Since my article, 'Joy to be Shared', in the May 1961 issue of the *Parents Review* seems to have met with some approval, I am encouraged to go a step farther and offer some ideas on how to start a collection of records, designed to interest children in music, and to lead them on step by step to a fuller appreciation of it. Notice that I do not say 'good music' or even 'classical music', but just 'music'. I do this quite deliberately because there is, to my mind, no 'good' or 'bad' music, because, if it is *bad*, then it is not music.

In the first place, I think we must decide what is to be our aim in this collection of records. I think we shall probably all agree that the primary aim will be to let our children hear a good selection of the best that the world of music has to offer, in the hope that they will grow to like it. The operative word in that sentence is *best*: I have always found that children prefer the best to the second-rate, and can generally spot it.

In the second place, I want to make it quite clear that I am attempting an impossible task, because it is extremely difficult to forecast what children are going to like. A few years ago, before bitter experience had taught me better, had I been asked which piece of music a Secondary Modern Class would choose, given the alternative of the *Donna Diana Overture* or the slow movement of Brahms' *Fourth Symphony*, I would have said that they would certainly choose the former. Now I know that I would have been wrong. *Donna Diana* comes pretty well at the bottom of all the music I have tried on children. The slow movement of Brahms' *Fourth* comes near the top. Of course, I must confess that I use odd methods for getting *some* children to listen. When I wanted to get the reactions of a class of twelve-year-olds to the Brahms, I first of all asked them if they remembered the tune of 'Away in a Manger' (and, of course, they did), and then told them to shoot up their hands as soon as they heard anything in the Brahms which resembled it. Only about six children heard the actual phrase, but it meant that they were all listening, and they nearly all liked it. Quality will out!

By this time you are probably wondering where the list of records has got to; but I did not intend this article to be a list of records, but suggestions on building a library of records. It is far more important that you should see the principles on which I am trying to work, so that you may apply them to your own collection if you are thinking of

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making one for your children. One of the most important principles, I think, is that music can be divided into two categories for our purpose: music which makes an immediate appeal and music which requires some degree of study or close listening in order to be appreciated. This is a very important distinction to make, especially where children are concerned. Most of them will express an immediate liking for Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* or the first movement of Rachmaninoff's *Second Piano Concerto*, but a Bach fugue will take a little sorting out before it is fully appreciated. Again, there is some music which is best heard in a live performance, where it will be enjoyed far more than if it were heard for the first time on a record. I remember an

instance of this when some time ago I was offered, at a few hours' notice, tickets for a concert at the Festival Hall. I had no chance of inviting any friends who might be interested, so I gave a ticket to one of the boys who had been showing an intelligent interest in music. The concert was of music by Hindemith and Bruckner, so I thought it as well to warn my pupil that all might not be to his taste. The first item on the programme was Hindemith's *Concert for Brass and Orchestra*, which would not have had a very good reception on a record, I feel. However, my young guest sat enthralled through the performance and had some intelligent comments to make afterwards. He also sat through a performance of the same composer's *Marialeben*, but with less enthusiasm, although by the sixth song he had become accustomed to the idiom and was beginning to like it. The final item, Bruckner's *Third*, he enjoyed also, but came away with a firm preference for the Hindemith. The point is that, at a concert, you cannot switch off with a gesture of impatience: you have to see it through; and, since you have to see it through, it is less boring to listen than not to listen. There is the visual appeal also, of course. All these things should be borne in mind when introducing anyone to a new piece of 'difficult' music.

Now for the difficult business of our choice of records. I would suggest that you might start off with a recording of something already known. Thanks to the TV, there are several pieces of music which are familiar because they are signature tunes to the various programmes. 'This Week' is introduced (or was, the last time I saw it) by Sibelius' *Karelia Suite*, of which the march and the intermezzo are available on a 45 r.p.m. disc, now, I think, priced 6s. 7½d. Part of Holst's suite, *The Planets*, is used to introduce a programme on astronomy, and some of the movements from this work can also be obtained on 45 r.p.m. discs, although the whole suite can be obtained on one of the 21s. issues and is well worth the extra outlay. Another favourite piece of music on a 45 disc is the march from *William Tell* by Rossini. Familiarity has already made these compositions popular, and they provide a good starting-point for a collection. [p 117]

At 9 p.m. on Sunday evenings on the radio, there used to be a programme called 'Your Hundred Best Tunes', which was well worth tuning-in to for ideas for further recordings to be added to a collection. Similar programmes are given from time to time and should be explored. On the other hand, I know a boy whose musical taste started two years ago with a good deal of 'pop' music and the *1812 Overture* by Tschaikevsky [sic]. The 'pops' and the *Overture* have been outgrown now, but a great deal of other music has taken their place, including a recording (at 22s. 6d.) of Wagner overtures and another of a Beethoven symphony.

Odd things sometimes take people's fancy. I have at school a recording of excerpts from *Das Rheingold* by Wagner, backed with excerpts from *Die Walküre*. In one of the three *Rheingold* excerpts, there is a tremendous clap of thunder as Donner forges the rainbow arch over to Valhalla. This has been a starting-point for boys who were not otherwise interested in music and who had, indeed, been antagonistic. The Ride of the Valkyries is always a favourite.

All these are fairly noisy pieces of music, however: what about something a little quieter? Two things which always seem to catch the attention of younger people are the Second Movement of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* (I recommend either the Walter or the Toscanini versions) and the Slow Movement of Haydn's *Surprise Symphony*. Both these have

the added advantage of having two tunes going at the same time, so that they are a good exercise in ear-training. The *Siegfried Idyll* of Wagner is another quiet piece which seems to be appreciated, though I suspect that where my own pupils are concerned some of its popularity may be due to the fact that I prepare them for it by saying a few words about Wagner living by Lake Lucerne when he wrote it, and how he played it, with a small company of musicians, whilst sitting on the stairs of his villa early in the morning of his wife's birthday, for whom he wrote it as a present. I draw attention to its gentle, rippling movement at the beginning, like the lapping of the water at the side of the lake. Some people might frown on what they regard as a dishonest form of musical appreciation, but I do not think it is as dishonest as all that and, if it helps to put the children in the right mood to listen to the music, I suggest that it is permissible.

If you want some general lists of records, E.M.I. publish a list of their series 'Your Kind of Music'. These are all 45 r.p.m. recordings, costing 6s. 7½d. each, and contain a good deal of excellent stuff, including pressings from old 78's. The list is probably obtainable on application to E.M.I. House, Manchester Square, London, W.1. Among many other interesting items on the catalogue, there is the well-known recording of the three hundred Manchester schoolchildren singing the Children's

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Prayer, from *Hansel and Gretel*, by Humperdinck, and *Nymphs and Shepherds* by Purcell. There must be very few people who would not be enchanted by this recording, and the Prayer might provide a good introduction to opera. This is a much more tricky thing to introduce on records, since opera is partly visual as well as audible. Although I am a firm opponent of opera in any language other than the original, I cannot help being illogical in this instance and bewailing the fact that there are so few opera recordings in English, and *no* recordings, as far as I know, of complete operas. For all that, I find that most children will take to the Columbia recording of *Hansel and Gretel*; and E.M.I. have recently put out a *Carmen* suite from the Beecham recording. The complete opera, *Carmen*, costs about six pounds and is sung in French, but there is so much in it which is well known that it might be worth saving up for.

I think we might have a slight digression here and talk about score-reading. This, of course, is where parents have to work hard in order to help their children, but I think you will find that your own knowledge of music (and therefore your own enjoyment) is increased at the same time. It is well known in educational psychology that if a child can watch something while he is listening, then his powers of concentration are increased. I have tried score-reading with my own fourth and fifth year classes and on the whole, once they have got over the initial difficulties, they enjoy it and benefit from it.

Score-reading, I know, sounds very professional and rather formidable, but it is not as difficult as all that. We use, at school, the set of score-reading books published by the Oxford University Press. There are three volumes, of which I think the second and third are the best value for money as far as class-teaching is concerned, though the first volume, *Orchestration*, might go down better in private. The second book deals with the symphony and contains much material under one cover which, if bought separately, would cost at least three times as much. Thus, in one book, we have amongst other things the complete score of *Eine Kleine*

Nachtmusick, the slow movement of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*, the slow movement of the *New World Symphony*, part of a Brahms *Serenade*, and several other good things. There is an equally good selection in the third book, *The Concerto*. The books are by Roger Fiske and each costs about 9s.

And what if you cannot read music? My boys are by no means fluent readers, but they can at least follow the rhythm of the score and soon get into the habit of reading the melody as well—if they only see where it goes up and where it goes down! But you *can* see the various instruments come in as you hear them, and I have been quite surprised at how much the boys insist that study of the score increases their enjoy-

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ment of a piece of music. We spent about five or six lessons on Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*: I got worried in case I was overdoing it, so we stopped for a breather and had a short discussion on whether or not this was doing the class any good. All the boys who had not liked the work when we started said that a study of its shape and construction had made them like it; those who had liked it to some extent said they now enjoyed it more. So on we went.

Boosey and Hawkes publish a good little book on the subject, *How to Read a Score*, by Gordon Jacob; and I hear that there is another on the way from Penguin Books.

To return to records. Are your children thoroughly familiar with the sounds of the orchestral instruments? If not, invest in a set of four E.P.s (7EG 8672–8675), published by H.M.V. and introduced by Yehudi Menuhin. These introduce all the instruments of the orchestra played solo and then played in context. The pieces you hear on these records may well suggest more records for the library. There is also a book to go with the records, *The Instruments of the Orchestra*, by John Hosier, published by the Oxford University Press at 6s. My latest information from E.M.I. is that the four E.P.s are to be put on one L.P. This will mean an overall saving of money, but if you want to get them in instalments, order your disc now.

A different approach to learning about the instruments is provided by the school favourite, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* by Britten. Younger children will also appreciate the usual backing of *Peter and the Wolf*, though other backings are available. Two other favourites are the Grieg *Piano Concerto* and *La Boutique Fantasque* by Rossini, both available on Ace of Clubs issues. There are also the *Marosszek Dances* by Kodaly and the *Tam o' Shanter Overture* by Malcolm Arnold. Both are very popular with children, and rather different from anything else I've suggested. *Ancient Ayres and Dances for Lute*, arranged by Respighi, is also different. I gave this record to some friends last Christmas. They are only beginners in musical appreciation, but they liked it very much.

By now, you will realise how true was my earlier remark that I was attempting an impossible task in trying to suggest records. There are many things I would like to suggest, but they are too numerous, and they are all listed in the catalogues. I still get surprises at some likes and dislikes. *Balshazzar's Feast* by Walton is regarded as a very uneven work (and here I agree with the verdict of the boys); but I was amazed when, in discussing this work, I played some of

the *Victoria Tenebrae* (recorded by the choir of Westminster Cathedral), this had such an enthusiastic reception that it had to be repeated. This, of course, is atmospheric music, and really made its mark on the class.

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Don't leave out opera. The selection from *The Magic Flute* should be popular: the Karajan recording has the overture and all the main *arias*. Try also one or two *Lieder*. Fischer-Diskau has done a very good E.P. of *Erlkönig* by Schubert; and if you can find a recording of *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* (there is an E.P. of it), I am certain that your children will bless you for it.

There are also selections. There is a very good one of music by Handel, recorded by Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra, which includes an organ concerto, an oboe concerto and several *arias*, including the original form of the so-called *Largo*.

There is so much more I would like to recommend, but there is a limit to space. At least try to hear some of the music I have suggested, and keep your eyes open for things in the *Radio Times* and your ears open for things on the radio and television. Remember the old educational adage, 'Work from the known to the unknown'. It is a very good principle to apply to music, and it is surprising how soon the unknown catches up on the known.

There are certain to be disappointments: no two children are alike in their tastes and, as the editor of *Point and Counterpoint* in the Festival Hall list of April records said, 'One man's soufflé is another man's haggis'. But if a record proves to be an apparent failure, don't turn it into a tea-pot stand. Keep it carefully and try it again later. Once a record has been bought, there is all the time in the world to get to know it—and to like it. *Festina lente* must be the guiding principle in teaching the love of music, and if it takes two years for a Bach fugue to catch on and only one hearing for the Tchaikovsky *First Piano Concerto*, what matter? You will continue to like the Bach fugue long after the Tchaikovsky has become a bore. In any case, we never really appreciate anything which comes to us without any effort on our part. A struggle to get to know and appreciate a piece of music will give us pleasure for years—a pleasure that neither the moth nor the rust will corrupt.