developed when he worked with The Group; some undoubtedly goes to an excellent cast, in which the long-experienced Beth Merrill gives a performance as the half-insane but desperately ruthless mother which is, rather surprisingly perhaps, equalled by that of the radio actor Ed Begley as the dishonest manufacturer. But there must be something unusually genuine in the writing, also.

All this is not to say that "All My Sons" is perfect. For one thing, the neat plot is almost too neat. The pieces fit together with the artificial, interlocking perfection of a jigsaw puzzle, and toward the end one begins to feel a little uncomfortable to find all the implicit ironies so patly illustrated and poetic justice working with such mechanical perfection. For another, Mr. Miller seems rather unnecessarily careful to express explicitly his warm respect for all the leftist parties. Sometimes this leads him to work in sweeping but rather dubious generalizations, as it does, for instance, when he permits one of his characters to explain that anyone who made war profits is, in some manner not made quite clear, just as guilty as those who deliberately made defective equipment. Worse than this, he seems unaware of one fundamental incompatibility between the logic of his story and the logic of his doctrine. The play is a play about personal guilt and personal atonement; and it is difficult to see how either can have any meaning if, as the author seems anxious elsewhere to proclaim, men are not what they make themselves but what "the system" makes them. It is, one is bound to conclude, rather a pity that Mr. Miller's intellectual convictions are so much more stereotyped than his dramatic imagination, but it is also only fair to add that these blemishes are for the most part pretty much on the surface. In any event, those theatergoers who have got in the habit of assuming that leftist plays can be interesting only to those who have sternly disciplined themselves to a point where they are interested in whatever they think they ought to be interested in can get a pleasant surprise at "All My Sons."

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films of this sort—to say nothing of the ideas given, in such films, of the life after death. Fortunately, I don’t have to wait for ecclesiastical permission to say that I am getting beyond further endurance sick and tired of angels named Clarence, Mike, etcetera; I am not even sure I want any further truck with Israel. These. John Q. Public, commonman insurts against the very nature of the democratic spirit are bad enough, applied to the living. If the after-life is just a sort of St. Petersburg overrun by these retired Good Joes, taking steam baths in nebulae, scratching themselves with stars, and forever and ever assuring themselves and Almighty God that they are every bit as good as He is and a damn sight more homely and regular, then heaven, so far as I’m concerned, can wait indefinitely.

Records

B. H. HAGGIN

The people all over the country who heard Marian Anderson on the Telephone Hour in January—who, that is, heard how fresh and big and beautiful her voice sounded at close microphone range—had no idea of how different it had sounded the night before in Carnegie Hall. If I had left her recital at the intermission I would have carried away an impression of great deterioration from her singing of Bach, Schubert, and a Tchaikovsky operatic aria, which had been lifeless -successions of tones that had lacked their former lustrous beauty and power, had been dulled with a strong vibrato, and occasionally had even sagged in pitch. Only with the French songs after the intermission did the singing begin to gain in animation, the voice in warmth and volume—until in the aria from Debussy’s “L’Enfant prodigique” there was something like the exciting vocal sound and intensity of former occasions.

On the Telephone Hour Miss Anderson sang Brahms’ “Sapphische Ode,” a spiritual, and an aria from Massenet’s “Herodiade”—which the producers of the program seem to have considered so staggering a burden to the radio audience that even after playing a dance from Delibes’ “Coppélia” and a little piece by Tchaikovsky the orchestra had to show that “music also can relax” by playing Robert Russell Bennett’s variations on “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean.”

Columbia has issued a new recording of Strauss’s “Tod und Verklärung” by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy (Set 613; $3.85). The performance is good, and is well-reproduced by the records, except for wooden-sounding kettle-drums and poor balances that obscure solo instruments on the first side, and a leveled-off climax on the last side. It is certainly to be preferred to the lurid Stokowski performances, especially the one that is atrociously recorded in the older Columbia set.

Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 1 has been recorded for Columbia by Serkin with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Reiner (Set 652; $6.85); and I have forced myself to listen to a few sides in order to report to those who love this dreadful work as I once did that the performance is good but is poorly recorded—with its sound dulled and confused by the poor balance of piano bass with treble and of piano with orchestra.

Victor has issued a volume of folk songs and ballads sung by Susan Reed (Set 1086; $3), who is charming when she sings simply, but who often sings artily.

Vox has issued a pre-war Polydor recording of Busoni’s arrangement of the D major Concerto of Bach, played by Alexander Borovsky with the Lamoureux Orchestra under Bigot (Set 162; $4.05). I have learned to disapprove of Busoni’s amplification of Bach’s writing, and advise anyone who is interested in this concerto, one of Bach’s greatest instrumental works, to acquire either the original clavier version recorded by Fischer or the violin version recorded by Szifflet. Borovsky’s playing is straightforward; and the performance is clearly reproduced.

Another Vox set (617; $2.99) offers Debussy’s “Pour le piano”: Prelude, Sarabande, and Toccata, performed by Gaby Casadesus. I enjoy the effective writing “for the piano” in the Prelude and Toccata, but don’t care for the Sarabande; I also like Mme. Casadesus’s more spirited playing better than her husband’s; and the sound of her piano is well reproduced, but there is leveling off and limiting of volume at some of the climaxes, and loss of volume also at the ends of sides, and the surfaces are poor.

Still another Vox set (614; $4.05) offers a number of pieces by Paganini which are occasions for violin-playing by Ruggiero Ricci that is breath-taking in its technical brilliance and its vitality. When Ricci records some better music we will know whether he has developed into as superb a musician as he is a violinist.

Jacques Abram’s performances of the Chopin waltzes he has recorded for Musicraft (Set 76; $3.85) haven’t any of the relaxed grace and plasticity which the pieces call for, but are, instead, hectic and tense, with extravagances and violence that impress me as utterly capricious, wilful, and perverse. The sound of his piano is excellently reproduced, but with distortion in some of the fortissimos; and there are also some sides with noisy surfaces and some with wavering pitch.

Twelve of the songs of Fauré that were sung by Isabel French and Olympia di Napoli in the Fauré Festival at Harvard University in 1945 have been recorded for Technichord by the same singers with piano accompaniments by Paul Doggerereau (Set T-7; 3 vinylite records; $7.95). Rehearing the songs I find them no more interesting than I did them; and their sameness of style is unrelieved by the unvarying—though agreeable—color of the voices that are used with musical intelligence and taste. The performances are well-reproduced; the vinylite records have occasional noisy defects which are more noticeable because of their quiet at other times. The French texts and English translations are provided; and there are again instructions for the care of the records that still permit a pickup weight up to two ounces when they should forbid anything over one ounce, and that warn against dust without mentioning that it has to be cleaned out of the grooves of red vinylite records with a soft brush before each playing.

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