

RECORDS: JIM CROW BLUES

New Album of Six Songs Dealing With a Social Problem—Other Releases

By HOWARD TAUBMAN

AS the output and distribution of records increase, the stuff which is graven on the shining black disks goes steadily beyond accepted musical compositions. Records are beginning to reflect the national scene, even its sore spots. From Keynote comes an album called *Southern Exposure*, which presents six Jim Crow blues (three ten-inch records, \$2.75). The burden of these songs is the bitter lot of the Negro seeking his meed of equality.

These are not pretty songs, nor is the Negro singer being obsequious or ingratiating to the "boss man." He is recalling what high officials have enunciated as government policy. In *Uncle Sam Says*, he asks for the right of the Negro to be among those flying our warplanes. In *Defense Factory Blues*, he asks for the right to work in our defense industries; he wants "some democracy to defend." *Jim Crow Train* deals with a well-publicized evil. *Southern Exposure* reports the want and oppression of the Southern Negro. *Bad Housing Blues* and *Hard Time Blues* are further expressions of the troubles Negroes see.

In a foreword to the album, Richard Wright, author of "Native Son," points out that the blues, "contrary to popular conception, are not always concerned with love, razors, dice and death; they are concerned with every item of experience that disturbs and moves the imagination of the Negro folk." He remarks that this album presents the other side of the blues, "the side that criticizes the environment, the side that has been long considered 'non-commercial' because of its social militancy."

These blues were written by Waring Cuney and Joshua White. Mr. White does the singing and accompanies himself on the guitar. He is a smooth and knowing performer. We wish he had been less smooth and less knowing in the ways of showmanship. His performances have a sophistication that militates against the impression of utter sincerity which such an album must have, and some of the accompaniments are intrusive. Nevertheless, the heart of the songs is conveyed, and the comment is deeply moving.

Here and There

Arturo Toscanini may not be conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra this season, but he will go on making records. He has apparently signed a new two-year contract with Victor, and it may well be that he will record with the NBC Symphony. . . . Victor expects to make a special release this month of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Piano Concerto with Mr. Toscanini conducting and Vladimir Horowitz, his son-in-law, as soloist. . . . Another mid-October special release has come from Columbia: Lily Pons singing arias from last season's Metropolitan Opera revival, "The Daughter of the Regiment."

OTHER REVIEWS

Brahms: Double Concerto in A minor, Op. 102. Jascha Heifetz, violin; Emanuel Feuermann, cello, and Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. (Victor, four twelve-inch records, \$4.50.) A modern recording that takes precedence over other versions of this work, including the Casals-Thibaud. Here is the mature Brahms played with admirable proportion and with stunning virtuosity. Mr. Heifetz and Mr. Feuermann make an unusual team of soloists, and the Philadelphians are fit companions. The recording is excellent.

Beethoven: Quartet No. 13 in B flat, Op. 130. Busch Quartet. (Columbia five twelve-inch records, \$5.50.) The quartet which has Adolf Busch as its first violinist makes its first appearance under the Columbia banner, choosing one of the great works of the repertory. Its musicianship is beyond cavil, as its playing of the searching and noble *Cavatina* will quickly establish. As an ensemble it is not quite up to a group like the Budapest; its tone and balance are not always perfect. Nevertheless, its interpretations have a perception that merits deep respect. The recording is sound.

Debussy: Quartet in G minor. Budapest String Quartet. (Columbia, four twelve-inch records, \$4.50.) The Budapest ensemble, pausing from its exciting job of recording the Beethoven quartets for Columbia, gives us an eloquent performance of Debussy's work in this form. The group tone adheres to its customary balance, and the playing has clarity of design and virility of approach. There may be some who will find too little of the Gallic spirit in this recording, but we prefer a performance that is clear and strong to one that is so vaporous that the outlines of the scope are softened and obscured. Taken by and large and considering the up-to-date recording, which tends to excessive volume, this is

first choice in recorded versions of the Debussy.

Beethoven: Quartet No. 7, in F, Op. 59, No. 1 (Rasoumovsky No. 1). Coolidge Quartet. (Victor, four twelve-inch records, \$4.50.) Continuing with its project of recording all the Beethoven quartets, the Coolidge ensemble moves into Beethoven's middle period with this album of the first of the Rasoumovsky set. It is no longer needful to stress the greatness of this music; it is enough to report the forthrightness of the performance. There are places where too much restraint suggests tameness, but the net impression is of a performance of feeling and dignity. The up-to-date quality of the recording makes this new version especially welcome.

Handel: Concerti Grossi, No. 1, in G, and No. 5, in D (Op. 6, Nos. 1 and 5). Hermann Diener and his Collegium Musicum. (Victor, four twelve-inch records, \$4.50.) These versions, which employ the harpsichord continuo, are the first complete performances of Handel's concerti grossi issued by Victor. Mr. Diener and his ensemble give the two works spacious presentations, without becoming too sober or pretentious about it. The music itself, particularly the No. 5, sings with freshness and breadth of feeling. The recording is good.

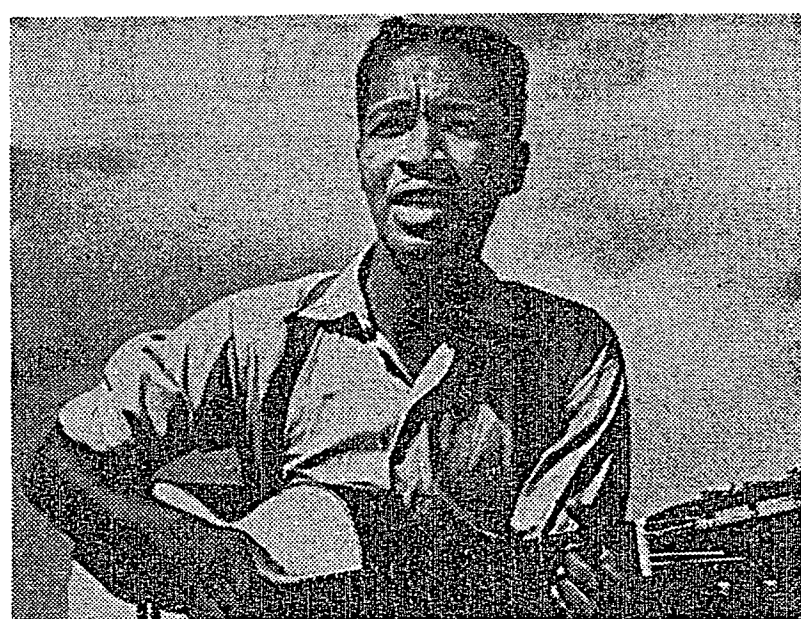
Bach-Walton: The Wise Virgins' ballet suite. Sadler's Wells Orchestra conducted by William Walton. (Victor, two twelve-inch records, \$2.50.) This music was recorded in London in wartime, and the shells for the matrices were delivered despite the Battle of the Atlantic. The music gives no hint of war, nor does the recording. Mr. Walton has orchestrated a selection of Bach cantata movements and organ works for a ballet presented at the Sadler's Wells. The choice of music, made by Constant Lambert, is adroit; so is the orchestration. A delightful suite.

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 1, in F. Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodzinski. (Columbia, four twelve-inch records, \$4.50.) The Soviet's most talented composer tossed off this work when he was 19. It remains more than a precocious effort, though it is not in the class of his more recent Fifth symphony. The writing is sure; the orchestration, brilliant. The superficiality of the slow movement is now more evident, but the work as a whole has a power that is more than mere cleverness. The performance has pace and precision, and the recording is good.

In the Popular Field

Four of the best jazz pianists contribute to a new album, *Hot Piano* (Victor, four ten-inch records, \$2.50). They are Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Jelly-Roll Morton. All but the Morton numbers were recorded last Spring; Morton's share dates back to a 1929 recording session. There is no boogie-woogie punching in this collection; the heat is subtly and gently applied. Mr. Ellington in *Solitude* and *Dear Old Southland* has the most distinguished style; his tone is something that some famous virtuosos seldom surpass. Mr. Hines does *On the Sunny Side of the Street* and *My Melancholy Baby* in sound, energetic style. Mr. Waller plays *Ring Dem Bells* and *Carolina Shout* with bouncing warmth, and Mr. Morton generates a fair measure of heat with *Seattle Hunch* and *Freakish*.

Bing Crosby, Mary Martin and Jack Teagarden plus the Teagarden orchestra join in *The Waiter and the Porter and the Upstairs Maid*, a mildly amusing ditty. (Decca, 35 cents.) On the reverse side Bing sings *Birth of the Blues*.



Joshua White, who sings in new album, "Southern Exposure."