

A Label Discography of Long-Playing Records. Series 1 -- Columbia Blue and Green Labels, Oct. 1952-Dec. 1962, Voices of the Past No. LP 1. Series 2 -- H.M.V. Red Label, Oct. 1952-Dec. 1962, Voices of the Past No. LP 2. Series 3 -- H.M.V. Plum Label, Great Recordings of the Century, Golden Treasury of Immortal Performances, and reissue supplement (Concert Classics, HMV-20, Encore, and Music for Pleasure), Voices of the Past No. LP 3. Compiled by Alan J. Poulton. The Oakwood Press, Old School House, Church Hill, Tarrant Hinton, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 8JB, England. 90 pp. each. £1.80 each.

These three pamphlets brought me back to my first interest in discography. As each volume of WERM was published, those foreign numbers so intrigued me that, poring through the pages, I was impelled to synthesize the numerical series. The main series treated here appeared in quantity (after a start in Supplement II) in WERM'S Supplement III, and I did what I could to find them and later continue them with the aid of the Gramophone catalogue.

The publication of these numerical discographies of series which offer little difficulty to anyone with access to a batch of Gramophone catalogues has been criticized elsewhere as unnecessary. We would all be greatly enlightened by a comparable treatment of Russian LPs, to be sure, but Mr. Poulton starts with the more obvious and goes on, perhaps, to more adventuresome areas, much as the record companies move from Tchaikovsky symphonies to unrecorded works of Penderecki.

There is a more serious objection to these booklets than that. Previous VOP books have shown a bias toward vocal material, especially vocal classics, and they have not hesitated to ignore non-vocal material (omitting the 040000 section of the German Gramophone catalogues) or to slight it (supplying matrix numbers only for vocal selections in the H.M.V. DB series). Here, however, within the sequence of numbers he has chosen to list, Mr. Poulton arbitrarily skips non-classical items, simply indicating NC.

This may be small loss in the CX and ALP series which make up most of the first two volumes, but the SX and S series in LP 1 and the CLP and DLP series in LP 3 cross over to a considerable extent into less rarified areas than the compiler cares to pursue. At the bottom of this is faulty method—these are professedly numerical lists or label discographies, not indexes of classical music. Mr. Poulton asks himself the question, "Non-classical—where to draw the line?", but the question itself is irrelevant. The people at EMI have drawn a line, and what is good enough for Plum Label should be good enough for a Plum Label Discography.

No space is saved; the line which reads "(CLP) 1005 NC" has room for "1005 Paint Your Wagon Broadway Cast", and the catalogues Mr. Poulton borrowed from EMI have all the information. Other numbers are entirely blank; in no case have I found any data to fill in, and it may be assumed that such numbers were never issued. Within these limitations, each number is supplied with the composer, title, artist and release date of its contents, although details are sparse in the case of anthologies. Toward the end stereo equivalents are added where they exist. The COLH series in LP 3 is complete, although many numbers were issued only in one country or another, and the recording dates are generally supplied. Each volume has an index of artists by record number. The reissues all refer back to the original numbers, but Music for Pleasure gives no more than the cross-reference. The work is accurate and legible.

Mr. Poulton indicates that these series will be continued further and more labels will be added. He is earnestly requested to upgrade his method.

—J. F. Weber