

MUSIC

ONE of the most enterprising ventures in the gramophone-record market of recent months has been the issue of several notable items from the German catalogue of *Cantate*, available through the firm of Novello, 160 Wardour St, W.1. These records provide authentic and often outstanding performances of organ and choral music ancient and modern.

Robert Kobler's account of some preludes on the chorale *Da Jesus an dem Kreuze Stand* by Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654) is mainly for the specialist and is played on the eighteenth-century organ at Herford Minster. The sleeve-jacket accompanying the disc (T71880F) carries a specification of the instrument. This is music not usually included in the programmes of British players and, on this account alone, deserves consideration.

Heinz Wunderlich's persuasive account of Bach's *D Minor Trio-Sonata* (T71876F which, like the Kobler record, is a 45-r.p.m., 7-inch), will be greeted by all students and teachers. The involved third movement is marked by clarity and care, and the acoustics of the church in Borgentreich lend themselves ideally as a recording chamber.

Wunderlich, whose earlier disc of Bach's *A Minor Prelude and Fugue* was released last year, is a virile worker.

On T71690F the *Windsbacher Knabenchor* perform two motets by composers who died in 1946. Kaminski's setting of words from Psalm 130 is really no more up-to-date than, say, Stanford or Charles Wood. It is all very pleasant. The reverse side contains Hugo Distler's treatment of Psalm 98. The quality is good, the music has a certain 'Britten bite', and its intervals are forbidding—though they hold no terrors for this accomplished choir!

There are two other choral discs in hand. The first is of Bach's *Cantata BWV 187* with the *Göttinger Stadtkantorei* providing a sturdy opening chorus. Entries are bold and there is vocal expansion in plenty. The soprano soloist (Ingeborg Reichelt) is clear, though neither the contralto (Lotte Wolf-Matthaus) or bass (Hans-Olaf Hudemann) has a deep voice. This is not to deny their pleasantly-grained qualities, however. The oboe work of Wilhelm Cremer is superb. (T720196.)

The remaining choral item is Handel's *Dixit Dominus* (CAN 72 452—L.P.) with the aforementioned lady soloists and the *Chor Der Kirchenmusikschule Halle*. The sound is glorious and, even with *Cantate's* high recording standards, the disc can claim regal distinction. Here, Ingeborg Reichelt is in generous voice. The first chorus goes at a spanking pace, thus creating a mood for this early yet splendid example of Handel's choral-writing.

Back to the organ for a worthy presentation by Arno Schönstedt of some Buxtehude on T72081F. The *Prelude, Fugue* and *Chaconne in C*, coupled with the *F Major Prelude and Fugue*, make a reputable group. The player is confident and brings out the bold, determined character of the C major fugue and the insistence of the F major one. On the whole a useful issue of some music which must not sink into oblivion.

The last *Cantate* record under review here is T72460F, containing cembalo performances by the gifted Irmgard Lechner of Bach's *A Minor Fantasia* and *E Minor Toccata*. The former has a fine swagger, allied to a reading of some authority. Miss Lechner's *Toccata* is not without shape or security and she shows herself adept and skilled with the part-playing.

Lastly a disc from the *Qualiton* firm in Wales (QEP4005: 7-inch). On this the contralto Helen Watts, a most painstaking artiste, sings (with a section of the London Symphony Orchestra) Mansel Thomas's moving, elegaic *Y Bardo* and Morfydd Owen's *Gweddir Pechadur*—a song indicative of a genuine talent nipped so suddenly by a tragically early death. Without doubt Miss Owen had an intuitive song-sense.

Helen Watts, who sings here in the originally-intended Welsh tongue, has an easy production and is well able to span the phrases, in addition to the compass, comfortably. Whilst sacrificing nothing in the way of rich, round, low notes, Miss Watts is able to display the upper reaches of her voice in a manner both attractive and subservient to musical ends.

WILLIAM VARCOE