

## EDITORIAL

To most detached observers the collecting of phonograph records is a harmless, if expensive, hobby. To those in the game it is the most contagious, incurable, serious, and educational of interests, with the possible exception of book collecting. There are several categories of discomania. Some begin with a love of music, some with an interest in interpretative artists. To others rarity and antiquity are enough; some are content to amass unplayed disks for the pleasure of contemplating their variegated labels. On any of these collectors it may dawn at some time that they are dealing with documents in sound, that the value of a recording does not begin and end with casual listening or contemplation. For more than a half century now, not only the greats of the musical world, but outstanding personalities from every walk of life, have been sending out messages to all who will hear about their talents, their convictions, and about their careers. History, thereby, has taken on a new dimension.

The first public libraries to add records to their collections of books and music were not thinking in terms of posterity. As long ago as 1914 there was a recordings section in Saint Paul. About a decade later there were listening collections in New York and Philadelphia, among other cities. But the disks were available to anyone who would make an appointment, and they were more or less expendable. The archival collection, dedicated to the preservation of sound documents, was still a thing of the future on this side of the Atlantic. To be sure, the Library of Congress, and earlier the Smithsonian Institution, had been doing systematic field work recording folk music throughout the country -- the present vast archives in Washington were well past the beginning stages. In the thirties agreements were made with many record companies to send copies of all new releases to the Library of Congress. At the same time the New York Public Library was laying the foundations for its large archival collection. Gifts from companies and from many private individuals were stored, so that when financing and space could be found for listening facilities, an impressive collection would already be in existence. The dream has achieved realization in the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Other historical collections were established in various parts of the country, notably at Yale, Stanford, Syracuse, and Michigan State universities. Outstanding archives of ethnic and folk music have been built up at the University of Indiana, at Columbia, and at UCLA in Los Angeles. Recorded Speech archives are planned at Brooklyn College, while the Oral History Project at Columbia and the unparalleled collection of recorded broadcasts at the University of Washington in Seattle typify other areas of special endeavor.

It was because such archives were springing up in so many places, sometimes without notice beyond that of a local character -- and also because of the known existence of unique and irreplaceable material in many private collections -- that a need became felt for The Association for Recorded Sound Collections. From the first exploratory meeting in July 1965 at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, it has been perfectly clear that not only public and university libraries, but private individuals as well, are willing and anxious to cooperate in the pooling and exchange of resources in order to make documentation available to those who need it -- be they scholars, historians, writers, or musical artists.

Among the Association's initial accomplishments is publication through the New York Public Library of a directory of American sound archives and collections, which will be available by the time these words reach print. It is a fundamental aim of ARSC thus to develop means of locating the whereabouts of existing recorded sound materials, and to assure that such materials are properly cared for and not lost. Valuable specialized collections, indeed, should never be dispersed, but should find their way in due course into institutions with the means both to serve and to preserve such materials for study and research purposes.

In short, record collecting is much more than a harmless hobby.

-- Philip L. Miller

#### THE EDISON AUTOGRAPH ALBUM AT THE RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN ARCHIVES

Among the choice mementos from the infancy of the phonograph contained in the holdings of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at the New York Public Library in Lincoln Center is an Edison autograph album furnished to Company representatives throughout the world for the purpose of gathering testimonial advertising.

One of these representatives, and a personal friend of Edison, was one J.H. Block, who travelled to Russia in 1889-90, and again in 1894. As a tribute to the memory of Thomas Edison in the ninetyeth year following his invention of the phonograph on August 12, 1877, the ARSC Journal offers these telling excerpts from Mr. Block's autograph album. (all are translated from the Russian, French, or German, save for that of Tolstoy, which was written in English):

- D.H.

The phonograph is certainly the most surprising, the most beautiful, and the most interesting among all inventions that have turned up in the 19th century. Glory to the great inventor, Edison!

P.I. Tchaikovsky  
14/26 October, 1889

I heard the phonograph and was astonished at the ingenuity of the inventor, who - though not a musician - is causing in the sphere of music a revolution second to none.

S.S. Taniev

Professor at the Moscow  
Conservatory of Music

Amazed at the wonderful invention, I feel the mysterious approach of a new life of humanity, the path of which has been intimated by the ingenious discoverer, Edison.

Vassily Safonov

Director of the Imperial  
Conservatory of Music

Moscow 14/26 October, 1889

As an ingenious child of science the phonograph will undoubtedly be useful to said science. ... At present the phonograph is mainly an object of curiosity or surprise, but it is bound to play an important role in the near future. He who will have the possibility of listening to the voice of a long departed wife, or girl whom he had passionately loved, will not so soon be able to forget her. Again, in the distant future, the phonograph that has recorded speeches or the everyday language of our forebears, will be of great service to those studying the history of the language, as well as to literary men, who thereby may be stimulated to write historical novels embodying personages of a forgotten epoch.

J. Polonski

St. Petersburg

16/28 November, 1889

While sitting in Petersburg we heard music, singing, recitation, etc. that came to us from the other side of the Atlantic. We heard the applause of the American audience encouraging the artists; we heard the voices and sounds of the mechanical workshop in Edison's American laboratory. All this has been carried over to us from the other part of the world by a small apparatus that stood before us, the Edison Phonograph, which has forever imprinted on its rapidly turning cylinders sounds that previously could not have been preserved and which heretofore had vanished without trace.

... Henceforth nothing dies with the human being; his thoughts are preserved in his letters and in books, his image in portraits and photographs, his voice in the phonograph. In this sense the invention of the phonograph possibly represents an event in the history of

humanity comparable to the invention of the printing press.

Alexis Potechin

I don't know where the giant strides of Mr. Edison will lead him in the sphere of science, but already performing artists -- singers, actors, instrumentalists -- must look up to him as their savior. Their lamentations that their art is forgotten immediately after performance are groundless, since it is now being saved by the phonograph. -- Nevertheless, Performers beware!!!

Anton Rubinstein

St. Petersburg

15 February, 1890

I heard the phonograph, and was amazed at the ingenious invention. Being a musician, I can foresee a wide application of this apparatus in my own field.

The accurate reproduction of talented musical performance, of notable vocal timbre, the recording of folk song, musical improvisation, etc. by means of the phonograph may become of enormous importance to the musical art.

Most surprising and valuable is the device for increasing or decreasing the tempo and thus transposing the key of the music.

Glory to the ingenious Edison!

Nicolas Rimsky-Korsakov

St. Petersburg

23 February, 1890

The severest critic of the performing artist is the ingenious invention of Edison, the phonograph.

J. Hřimalý

(Professor of Violin,  
Moscow Conservatory)

... The Phonograph, this unbiased mirror of speech, carried along with the words of the poet, false intonations which impertinently crept into my ears ... If the phonograph had reached me 25 years ago, how many mistakes would I have avoided, how it would have saved me from pitiful self-confidence and bad habits, not to mention wasted energy! But now I am almost 47 years old. Will I have time to change all the bad habits I have acquired in the course of the last 30 years?

Now I resemble a squirrel, and the phonograph a big store of nuts, which (similar to the lion) the muses send me for

my faithful service, but alas, at a time when (similar to the squirrel) I have hardly any teeth left for it. Very sad indeed!

But I too exclaim: Glory to the great inventor!

As of now, he has immortalized only one half of the dramatic art, that half which is the spoken word. It is now but a question of time, when complete immortalization of the actor's art will be attained -- the mime and gesture that goes with the sound. Then those complete creations will serve as guide to future performers in the same way as the masterpieces of music and architecture are guiding today's composers and sculptors.

A. Lenski

Dramatic Actor, Moscow Intimate  
Theatre 21 November, 1894

The greatest power of the world is thought. The more forms there are of expressing thought, the more this power manifests itself. The invention of printing made an epoch in the history of humanity. Another will be made by the telephone and especially the phonograph, which is the most efficacious and striking form of fixing and immortalizing not only the words but also the expression of the voice which pronounces them.

Leo Tolstoy

16/28 December, 1894

The effect of the Edison Phonograph, shown to me by my friend, Block, is a miraculous one. The fantasy of the listener is aroused in a wondrous manner; one seems influenced by some supernatural power. The genius of Edison has achieved an unprecedented triumph over matter.

Artur Nickish

Berlin 3 April, 1900

ASSOCIATION FOR RECORDED SOUND COLLECTIONS

First Annual Conference March 9-11, 1967  
University of Indiana, Bloomington, Ind.

Business Meeting Minutes, March 10

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 A. M. by the President, Mr. Philip Miller. A membership roll call was read. Mr. Donald Leavitt, Treasurer, reported that he had sent statements for the

1967 dues. Dues paid in November and December of 1966 were applied to 1967. The 1966 membership totalled 114; the 1967 membership as of March 6th totalled 107. A recess was called in order to