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hint that its mid-section is an evocation of Bach, despite the helpful signposts offered by the retrograde forms of that famous theme (oboes and cellos, bars 56–8). In general this ebulliently extraverted performance turns the music innig-side out—as further amply evidenced in op.136, the trivial aspects of which are thereby remorselessly exposed. But the interior symphonic details have already been faithfully recorded elsewhere, notably by Klemperer; and the reminder that Schumann also has an outer surface is quite salutary. ERIC SAMS

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony no.15 in A, op.141.
LPO/Haitink DECCA SXL 6906 (£4.50)

The 15th Symphony remains one of the most perplexing, and certainly the most enigmatic, of Shostakovich's major works. That it is so lucid and so finely realized in every respect seems, if anything, to deepen the problem, which is essentially one of meaning. Why the quotations from Rossini and Wagner? What is the tone of the opening movement? (Outwardly this Allegretto is Shostakovich at his most Eulenspiegel-like and yet completely poker-faced. He is said to have referred to it himself as representing a toyshop at night!) Why the references, not only in the scherzo but at the end of the finale, to the percussion pattern from the second movement of the Fourth Symphony? And so on, each question giving rise to others.

The scope for speculation is immense, but such is the precision of the score that differences in reading will be largely matters of emphasis. Haitink seems to maximize the lugubrious expressiveness of the second and fourth movements, and generally to underplay the rhythmic qualities. The former, presumably, is a positive point of interpretation, but associated with some of the rhythmic flaccidity is playing less vital and exacting than one expects from the LPO. However, Haitink has a good feeling for the predominantly chamber music textures—apart from two climaxes, there are very few bars of tutti—and for the silences and empty spaces. I am persuaded that the work matters to him, but I find both

Ormandy (ARD1 0014) and Kondrashin (SLS 5025—not available separately) more convincing. Very well recorded. HUGH OTTAWAY

WHITLOCK Organ music. Graham Barber
VISTA VPS 1058 (£3.49)

Percy Whitlock's C minor Sonata has waited 40 years to be recorded (somewhat unaccountably, for it shows the English Romantic idiom at its best) but no-one could have recorded it more sympathetically than the brilliant young organist Graham Barber. He has penetrated so deeply to the springs from which the music flows that it sounds almost as if he and Whitlock were making it up together in partnership. The work has the power and immediacy of the best improvisation, yet it is also skilfully constructed and shaped, and Barber does full justice to both elements in this compelling and moving performance.

Whitlock's style leaves no doubt that he was nurtured in the English cathedral tradition: but he ultimately achieved fame in the 1930s as a concert organist, as the Scherzetto—waggish and wistful by turns—reminds us. This movement, and the canzona preceding it, seems rather under-recorded, apart from the big splashy flute sounds which are obviously nearer; the spatial division of the organ at Coventry can cause problems. But there are some fine and very characterful sounds in the first and last movements, and in the bouncy Fanfare which fills up the second side. This record should make many converts. ANN BOND

THE QUEEN'S MEN. Camerata of London
CRD 1055 (£3.99)

There have been so many recordings of Elizabethan music in recent years that another such anthology needs some special quality to set it apart. This disc's producer and performers have solved the problem most ingeniously, taking attractive and worthy selections by outstanding composers of the time, notably Batchelor, Byrd, Holborne and, above all, Dowland, and grouping them by their associa-



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