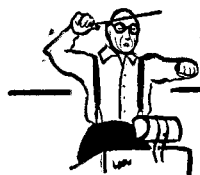


Recordings Reports II: Miscellaneous LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Beethoven: Sonatas in B flat (opus 106) and E major (opus 109). István Nádas, pianist. Period SPL-718, \$4.98.	This Hungarian born pianist (now identified with Xavier University, La.) does more than play the notes of these works, though that is a sizeable task in itself. I find him a more convincing performer in the lyric E major than in the dramatic "Hammerklavier," suggesting that he might be most at home in some Schumann literature. The piano recording is well abreast of contemporary standards.
Brahms: Sonatas 1 and 2 (opus 38, opus 99). Tibor de Machula, cello, with Timo Mikkilä, piano. Epic LC-3133, \$3.98.	The long-standing belief that these are works essentially for the cello-minded is not contravened by anything in these performances. De Machula is a first-class artist on his instrument (he is first cellist of the Concertgebouw Orchestra), but he doesn't deliver enough impact or expressiveness to alter the prevailing grayness of thought and texture in the writing. Good recording.
Chopin: Etudes in A minor, G sharp minor, B minor, etc. Josef Lhevinne, piano. Camden CAL-265, \$1.98.	Most of the not-too-extensive Lhevinne repertory, including two Chopin preludes and the A flat polonaise as well as Debussy's "Fêtes" and Strauss's "Blue Danube Waltz" with the second piano played by wife Rosina. The execution throughout is of the highest caliber, and those who recall the etudes as originally released will find them here even glossier as enhanced for re-issue. Highly individual in thought as well as masterful in mechanics. A bargain, without question.
Debussy: "Le Promenoir des Deux Amants," "En Sourdine," and "Fantoche," etc. Irma Kolassi, mezzo, with André Collard, piano. London LD-9176, \$2.98.	Calmly beautiful singing by the able Kolassi of some of the finest vocal material in the Debussy catalogue. However, her manner is a little stolid and unvaried for matter of such emotional and poetic range. Collard's participation is expert, the recording decidedly good.
Grieg: "Lyric Pieces," Books 1 and 2. Menahem Pressler, piano. MGM E-3196, \$3.98.	Grieg's melodious pleasantries can be given reasonably convincing shape by the application of skilled fingers alone, as Pressler demonstrates; but it doesn't hurt to have higher faculties at work, as Gieseking has exemplified in his Columbia excerpts. Here they are mostly absent, so that the shape of the music is suggested but not its content. Fine piano sound.
Kreisler: "Allegretto in the style of Boccherini," etc. William Primrose, viola. Camden CAE 244, \$.79 [45 rpm].	Some of the best viola playing ever put on discs, including the "Andante Cantabile" of Tchaikovsky, a Myronoff "Caprice," a K.P.E. Bach "Solfeggietto" etc. The sound of the 1940 Primrose tone is not as richly reproduced as it would be today, but it is more than tolerable. David Stimer and Joseph Kahn share the accompaniments.
Liszt: Sonata in B minor, Etude in D flat, "Mephisto" waltz, and "La Campanella." Geza Anda, piano. Angel 35127, \$4.98.	An uneven exhibition of Anda's redoubtable pianistic art, best in the sustained passages of the sonata (which is sometimes dramatized with a power reminiscent of the early Horowitz) and the D flat etude. Elsewhere, especially in the "Mephisto" waltz, the sound tends to be brittle and without the true brilliance wanted. "La Campanella" comes off very well. Variable sound, as indicated.
Puccini: "Manon Lescaut" ("Sola, Perduta, Abbandonata"), etc. Licia Albanese, other sopranos. RCA Victor LM-1909, \$3.98.	A preview of RCA's forthcoming complete version of the Puccini opera, introducing a collection called "Ten Sopranos, Ten Arias," as successor to the tenor ten previously issued. In addition to Albanese's passionate delivery of Manon's outburst, the disc includes such choice matter as Bori's "Mi Chiamano Mimi," Ponselle's "Casta diva," and the "Liebestod" as sung by Flagstad in the complete "Tristan" led by Furtwängler. However, the version by Rethberg of "Dove Sono" will not englamour her memory. The recording is variable, spanning recording techniques from Galli-Curci's "Sempre libera" to Traubel's "Du bist der Lenz." Lehmann, de los Angeles, and Milanov are also included.
Lully: Miserere. Margaret Ritchie, Elsie Morrison, sopranos; Alfred Deller, counter; Richard Lewis, William Herbert, tenors; and Bruce Boyce, baritone. Anthony Lewis conducting. L'Oiseau Lyre DL-53003, \$2.98.	There is much eloquent music in this score, but it is only occasionally liberated by performers and engineers. The promise in the good repute of most of the performers is belied by rather tentative treatment of the chromatic texture, which must be given bold articulation if it is not to sound inadvertent. For this, conductor Lewis must share partial blame, though inexperienced microphone placement contributes to the total of inadequacies.
Rameau: "Hippolyte et Aricie." Soloists and orchestra conducted by Rober Désormière. Oiseau Lyre 50034, \$4.98.	Much of the situation above prevails in this other product from the same source, save that the music is much more beautiful, the performance decidedly poorer. In the cases of Claudine Verneuil (Aricie) and Geneviève Moizan (Phèdre), it is close to amateurish. Flore Wend (Une Matelote) and Raymond Amade (Hippolyte) maintain a decent professionalism, as does, of course Désormière, when he is not hopelessly handicapped. The sound suggests a not too skilful dub from 78s. Nonetheless, there is much to enjoy in Rameau's delightful use of the orchestra for the dance music and the hunt atmosphere.
Ravel: "Schéhérazade;" "Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé;" "Deux Mélodies Hébraïques," Suzanne Danco, soprano, with the Suisse Romande Orchestra conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LL-1196, \$3.98.	About the best singing yet to Danco's credit, with her shining instrumental timbre molded to expressive ends by the artful Ansermet, who evokes an irresistible atmosphere with his orchestra. The second side is less consistently good, the two "Hebraic Melodies" being somewhat pale and inexpressive. Exceptional sound throughout.
Ravel: Sonata. Bartók: No. 2. Rafael Druian, violin, John Simms, piano. Mercury MG-80000, \$3.98.	Highly skilled work by the team of Druian (concertmaster of the Minneapolis Orchestra) and Simms, with gratifying results in the Ravel especially. The Bartók is given a full measure of interpretative insight, but it does not yield too much in listening pleasure. Razor-sharp reproduction throughout.

—I. K.



WEST COAST REPORT

L. A.'s "Most Likely to Succeed"

HOLLYWOOD BOWL, now nearing the brim of its thirty-fourth season, has been a focus of especial interest this summer for those Angelenos to whom music is something more than a coefficient of cooling breezes in a pleasantly sylvan setting. No undue credit for this need be given to the programs which, eye to turnstiles, have hewn stolidly to a weatherworn repertoire, embellished by interludes devoted to such frontier enthusiasms as squaredancing and the coonskinned glamour of Davy Crockett.

What lifts the present season above the ordinary is the element of speculation attending the podium appearance of this summer's several guest conductors, a development intensified by the announcement last June that the end of the 1955-56 season would find the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in the market for a new musical director to succeed the resigning Alfred Wallenstein. This is the first time in twelve years that symphony-goers have been in a position to scrutinize any visiting conductor with an eye to a permanent position, and it has stimulated a conjectural buzz not paralleled in this city since the pregnant hours that preceded D-Day.

Among the names that bubble to the surface most frequently in musical gatherings are those of Eduard van Beinum and Georg Solti, both of whom were heard during the opening weeks of the season, and both of whom are contracted for further appearances with the orchestra during the coming winter. Mr. Solti, who since 1952 has been musical director of the Frankfurt Opera, was first heard here in the fall of 1953, when he won the instant affection of operagoers with his brilliant handling of several of the repertoire's more prickly items. A subsequent span of symphonic conducting at Hollywood Bowl last summer, however, left some of his most ardent partisans with their enthusiasm faintly tempered, and the present season's two opening concerts found him bringing no more than a literal approach to standard material that was curiously at variance with the virility of his operatic showing. Some considerable part of this may have been due to the orchestra, which like all orchestras has its own dark, unfathomable moods, and which seemed determined on this occasion to give Mr. Solti no

quarter. Hollywood Bowl, of course, is scarcely the place to judge of any conductor's prowess, since only the bolder outlines of any musical reading are preserved across the reaches of the amphitheatre's 20,000-seat acreage.

The same, of course, goes for Mr. van Beinum, with the difference that his not inconsiderable qualities are already well known to many of us through recordings, and that the baton which has successfully conjured with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw was able to wreak an instant and salutary effect upon the Los Angeles ensemble. By the end of his four concerts, antebellum Angelenos who remember Otto Klemperer's distinguished regnum here were visibly heartened. Even those most persuaded of Van Beinum's musical gifts felt some misgivings over his espousal of so many Mengelbergian dramatic artifices, however.

A vacant podium, of course, does not mean that every visiting conductor who crosses it briefly is interested in taking up a permanent stance thereon. His audience, for all this, is apt to eye him as purposefully as a parent with seven marriageable daughters, and this intent scrutiny has been the common portion of such further summertime visitors as Izler Solomon, Enrique Jorda, Leonard Bernstein, Carlos Chavez, and Erich Leinsdorf.

But whether any or all of the summer's visitors might be persuaded to take up permanent residence in the City of the Angels is a question not likely to be answered before next year, if then. Van Beinum, especially, would appear to be comfortably occupied between his Concertgebouw chores and his continuing affiliation with the London Philharmonic. On the other hand, Southern California is able to offer any conductor such inducements as an attractive salary, an attractive climate, and a wealth of fine instrumentalists.

At the moment, local odds are being offered on Van Beinum, but there is still a winter season ahead, and one that will bring William Steinberg here for a concert pair early in February. The ardency felt here in musical circles toward Pittsburgh's Promethean little maestro has reached epic proportions at times, and his visit to the Philharmonic Orchestra—his first in a dozen winters—is certain to have provoking consequences. Meanwhile, Los Angeles ponders her problem of succession.

—MILDRED NORTON.

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