

Tapes in Review

EDITOR'S NOTE: With this issue **RECORDINGS** inaugurates a monthly coverage of pre-recorded tape in all its aspects—monaural as well as stereophonic, popular, classical, experimental, etc. The department will be under the editorship of Mildred Norton, former music critic of the Los Angeles Daily News, and well known to SR readers for reports on music in the West Coast area.

The Toch Detail

TOCH: *Symphony No. 3. William Steinberg conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Capitol stereo tape ZF-7, \$19.95.*

SO NEW IS THE field of stereophonic recording, and so limited its present frame of reference, that any critical evaluations or pronouncements can in no wise be regarded as categorical. However, among the tapes recently released, none better illustrates the value of comparative listening than the present Toch symphony, which in its only slightly earlier LP release by Capitol (P-8366) started off with the twin advantages of a fine performance and a first rate processing.

It is only when one hears the stereo version immediately after the disc that one realizes how much of detail and color was absent from the latter, and how greatly the restoration of these enhances the work's significance. Detail is the essence of Toch's writing; this, and a curious imperative to entrust the musical design rather too often to the inner voices. Unless these are cleanly brought out the

result is apt to seem merely prolix and without unity.

Unity, to be sure, is scarcely the Third Symphony's strong point. What it does have, in abundance, are exotic, lucent timbres, icy melodies in an alpine register, bold engagements of percussive forces. Stereo's ability to capture such instrumental and harmonic subtleties, and present them, furthermore, with fidelity to Steinberg's own sure sense of balance, makes a strong case for the two-channel medium. However, the tape does not include the disc's overside bonus of Hindemith's "Mathis der Mahler," performed by the same ensemble.

From Kenton to Pitt

A STUDY IN STEREO: Capitol stereo tape ZH-2, \$16.95.

HOWEVER FEW the releases so far available on stereo tape, there is no dearth of introductory packages, offered like musical hors d'oeuvres to whet the appetite for more substantial fare. This particular appetizer is more costly than the same company's "Intro to Stereo" (see **PRERECORDED TAPES**), but its contents are directed at a wider variety of musical tastes. These range from Stan Kenton to the Pittsburgh Orchestra, with each selection featuring some particularly persuasive attribute of the stereo medium.

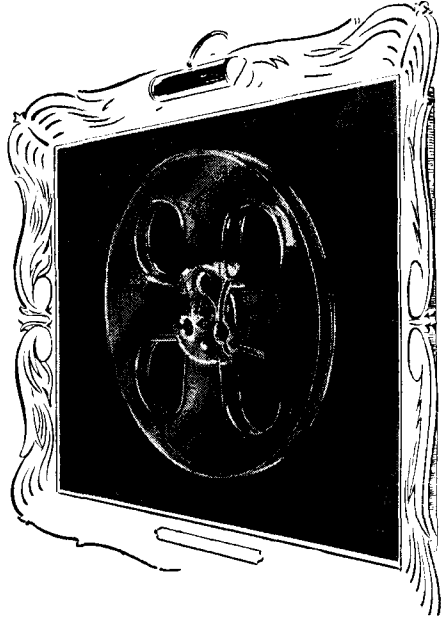
Benny on Wolfgang

MOZART: *Concerto in A for Clarinet (K. 622). Benny Goodman, clarinet, with Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor stereo-orthophonic tape DCS-39, \$12.95.*

MOZART'S DECEPTIVELY limpid music might easily be overlooked in the first fine careless rapture of stereo's infatuation with tonal glamour, and therefore RCA's release on tape of this, his last concerto, is a gracious *Luftpause* in the recording industry's seeming determination to find an answer to CinemaScope. Unfortunately, though, this latest processing is no great improvement over the RCA disc (LM-2073), which was itself something less than an ideal performance.

Goodman's clarinet tone is clean and full, and his technical mastery well adequate to the considerable demands of the solo role, but in subtle phrasing and coloristic variety he cannot

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WORK. PERFORMER, DATA

REPORT

Dvorak: Slavonic Dance No. 8. Monti: Csardas, etc. Carmen Dragon conducting the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra. Capitol ZF-6. \$14.95.

An energetically performed collection of seven well-worn Romany airs, bearing the jacket title of "Gypsy!" and including "Zigeunerweisen," "Dark Eyes," and the Hora Staccato, all gustily but not very sensitively turned out. Whether stereo's acute delineation makes this worth the price must depend on whether your concern is with musical values or sheer brilliance of reproduction.

Intro to Stereo: Art Gilmore, Narrator. Capitol ZA-1, \$9.95.

A provocative sampler of the breadth and realism possible to the binaural medium, whose ability to locate both the source and direction of sounds is graphically illustrated by remarkably realistic aural "clips" capturing the sounds of a bowling alley, a Diesel engine, a subway train, etc. Excerpts from Capitol's popular catalogue further illustrate stereo's multi-dimensional properties and its close fidelity to living performance. A convincing demonstration package, if aural sensation is your aim.

Kern: "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Porter: "In the Still of the Night," etc. With Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. Capitol ZD-12. \$12.95.

This popular musical group also gets the "higher fi" treatment in Capitol's stereo taping of eleven familiar favorites. Waring's congenial arrangements and smooth choral passages emerge ingratiatingly in this two-channel version, which gives better definition to the choral plateaus than Capitol's discing of them. Clean, well-balanced recording.

Ravel: "Bolero." Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio Espagnol." Felix Slatkin conducting the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra. Capitol ZF-4. \$14.95.

Ravel's rhythmic tour de force is a natural showpiece for stereo's vivid recreation of instrumental color and dynamic range, but for all its sensuousity it needs a high degree of musical intellection to evoke it properly. Slatkin has a rousing go at it, but his hand is a little heavy. The "Capriccio Espagnol" comes through with all its tonal glitter intact.

Rimsky-Korsakov: Suite from "Le Coq d'Or." Arthur Fiedler conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra. RCA Victor CCS-40. \$10.95.

Four tableaux from this satirical fairytale, which is far oftener heard on records than in the opera house. Fiedler brings his customary verve to the melodious, brilliantly orchestrated music, and the Boston ensemble considerable finesse to the prismatic palette. A technically clean engineering job presents the instrumental timbres purely, without background noise or textural muddiness.

Rossini: "William Tell" Overture. Tchaikovsky: "Marche Slave." Arthur Fiedler conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra. RCA Victor BCS-41. \$8.95.

This tape release of "Hi-Fi Fiedler," previously on LP, presents the redoubtable maestro in the full glory of stereophonic sound. That the experiment is justified is amply demonstrated by the wider tonal range thus made possible, and the concert hall immediacy of Fiedler's animated and forthright style. Quiet tape, good balance.

Schubert: "Ave Maria." Franck: "Panicus Angelicus," etc., sung by the Roger Wagner Chorale. Capitol ZF-9. \$14.95.

As one would expect from this superb ensemble, it offers a finely-detailed, eloquent performance, richly deserving of stereo's expanded facility for recreating the sonority and definition of actual performance. Packaged as "House of the Lord," the eight works include the "Kol Nidre" and Malotte's setting of "The Lord's Prayer," all sung with characteristic finish and good taste. Stereo's pin-pointing of the solo voices against the rich choral tapestry is a further argument in its favor, despite the higher cost factor.

Shearing: "Black Satin," etc., with the George Shearing Quintet and Orchestra. Capitol ZC-13. \$11.95.

Capitol takes the theory of "light summertime listening" anything but lightly, to judge by the percentage of popular music in its opening salvo of stereophonic tapes. Devotees of George Shearing's satiny stylings should be pleased with the added aural splendor of "Starlight Souvenirs" and "What Is There to Say," in addition to the title song and six others. The plushy strings and keyboard accents emerge vibrantly in the sharply focussed sound.

Strauss: Waltzes. Arthur Fiedler conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra. RCA Victor CCS-45. \$10.95.

The art of making two tapes grow where only one disc grew before is a provocative corollary to present recording practices. Here, RCA's single disc of six waltzes by the Strauss family (LM 2028) has furnished melodies for two tapes, the present one of which contains "When the Citrons Bloom" and "One Thousand and One Nights" by Johann, Jr., and "Secret Attractions" by his brother Josef. Fiedler captures much of the music's sweetness and lilt in a good, live recording.

Tchaikovsky: "Capriccio Italien" (finale), and short pieces by seven other composers. Carmen Dragon conducting the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra. Capitol ZF-3. \$14.95.

Attractively jacketed pot-pourri titled "L'Italia" and featuring such well-thumbed items as "Santa Lucia," "Come Back to Sorrento," and the Intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana," all of which receive a straightforward, but rather coarse-grained performance. However, the aural richness of stereo may make them sufficiently beguiling to warrant the price differential between this taping and the corresponding LP (P-8351).

Tchaikovsky: Waltz from "The Sleeping Beauty," and dances by seven other composers. Felix Slatkin conducting the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra. Capitol ZF-5. \$14.95.

A wide sampling, not so much of dance forms as of musical styles, ranging from Khatchaturian's "Sabre Dance" to Ravel's "Pavane for a Dead Princess," with lightsome examples from Grieg, Saint-Saens, Delibes and Kabalevsky. Slatkin's readings are appropriately lush, if a trifle ponderous, but the orchestral texture is rather too dense to show off adequately stereo's capacity for tonal definition.

Young: "Love is the Thing," etc. Nat "King" Cole singing nine romantic ballads, arranged and conducted by Gordon Jenkins. Capitol ZD-11. \$12.95.

Intimacy is the essence of the Nat Cole vocal styling, and in these songs the winning Cole voice is almost palpably in the room. The illusion of perspective operates here, also, to place the soloist clearly forward of his discreet accompaniment. This, plus the clarity of reproduction, makes it possible to reduce the volume to a mere whisper and still lose nothing of "presence" or spatial relationships.

Stan Kenton in Hi-Fi: "Intermission Riff," etc. Capitol ZD-10. \$12.95.

This transfer to tape of Capitol's popular jazz maestro should give fans on the Kenton Bandwagon some interesting moments of comparing the excellence of their idol in full-dimension stereo as against the far less costly discing of the same jump and riff tunes.

—M. N.