

"LOST LANDOWSKA" FOUND

WITH REFERENCE to the request for information on certain of the Landowska broadcasts [SR Sept. 26], I would like to inform you of the following:

I have, in quite good sound, presently on tape at 15 ips, the following:

2 December 1945: Mozart: Piano Concerto in E flat K 482 (The Haydn was not broadcast this day. There is one slight defect in the musical texture of the concerto.)

27 October 1946: Mozart: Piano Concerto in C K. 415.

A. F. R. L.

New York, N. Y.

WHEN I WAS music director of the American Forces Network in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1954-1956, the record library had transcriptions of the New York Philharmonic concert of November, 1949, during which Mme. Landowska played the Poulenc *Concert Champêtre* and the Handel Concerto in B flat major, Op. 4, No. 6.

The Handel was used several times on concert programs I produced, and my records show that the AFN file number for the set of transcriptions involved is NYPS #88. The Handel was in good condition, but I recall being disappointed to discover that the Poulenc was not in suitable condition for broadcasting.

If AFN cannot help you, or if the transcriptions have since been removed from the library, perhaps AFN's parent organization, the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, can help.

W. P. S.

Flint, Mich.

I HAVE an acetate recording (I.P. 33 1/3) of the Landowska broadcast of the Poulenc *Concert Champêtre* dubbed from the broadcast by a professional studio in New York City, Nov. 20, 1949. The surface is in good condition, except for a very small hump or minor warping that I believe could be corrected easily enough with heat and pressure.

E. B. K.

Los Angeles, Calif.

I HAVE A WIRE recording made, I believe, in March 1949, taken from an FM broadcast in New York City; Miss Landowska plays the following: Chambonnières, Chaconne; G. F. Handel, Suite in G minor; J. S. Bach, Prelude and Fugue in E flat minor; and Jean P. Rameau, Suite in E minor. The wire is in good condition—originally made on a Webster wire recorder bought in '47. If you have no tapes this might be of some use.

J. M. W., M.D.

San Francisco, Calif.

I AM INTERESTED in the statement on page 66 of the *Saturday Review* issue of September 26, 1959. I have acetate recordings of the broadcast of February 21, 1954, the Frick Collection Concert. The recordings are not perfect, but I treasure them since they contain the voice and playing of Mme. Landowska.

If you would like to listen to these, I would be very glad to lend them.

L. R. E.

Paterson, N. J.

Award Without Distinction

CHANCES are that few readers of these pages would know the significance of NARAS if they came upon it, suggesting as it does another inner, or outer, space agency. Translated, it becomes the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, whose members have been polled for their opinions on the "best records of the year" in thirty-odd categories, and have come up with answers on everything from the "Best Album Cover of the Year" to "Best Soundtrack Album." With these, and such other categories as "Best Country and Western" performance or "Best Performance by 'Top 40' Artist," SR is not particularly concerned: but there are others, suggesting accomplishments of unusual distinction in fields where critical standards prevail, with which it is.

In eight categories involving jazz and classical performances, a list of nominations has been published, from which the unconditional "winners" will be voted and suitable awards bestowed (the Academy has a TV program coming up on November 29). Of the forty-odd nominations, a total of thirty (or some eighty per cent of the whole) are products of RCA Victor. In three categories—"Best Classical Performance," "Best Classical Performance with Soloist and Orchestra," and "Vocal Soloist," the listening-dog label is credited with a virtual clean sweep.

No one acquainted with the total production of such records in this country needs to be told that such a "selection" based on some definable merit system, would be not merely improbable, but impossible. RCA Victor makes some very good records, but so do Columbia, London, Mercury, Capitol, Angel, Decca, and a host of others, as these pages attest. If the selection then is not the result of a "definable merit system," what is it the result of? Nothing more nor less than the number of members of the "Academy"—representing performers, engineers, cover-designers, editors, etc.—each company employs. Or to put it in another way, the number of company employees who "happen" to be members of NARAS.

All members of the industry, in the eligible categories, may become dues-paying, voting members of the Academy. A good many, for one reason or another, have not bothered to do so. On the other hand, it is "not inconceivable" (as one close to the Academy conceded) that some companies have paid the dues for their employees. This doubtless has good reasons of self-inter-

est to justify it: but it leads to the inevitable outcome—the company with the largest dues-paying membership will come up with the voting result most favorable to itself.

Presumably the purpose of NARAS is to enhance the stature and prestige of the record industry. But it is hardly tending in that direction when it proposes to make awards in categories that presume hundreds of hours of listening per year to have a reasonable (if necessarily incomplete) familiarity with what is being done. To decide, on the basis of stuffed ballot boxes, that "THE BEST CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE" ("ORCHESTRAL") must be one of the following:

Beethoven—Symphony No. 6, Montoux conducting

Debussy—"Images" for Orchestra, Munch conducting

Rossini—"Overtures," Reiner conducting

Tchaikovsky—"Capriccio Italien," Kondrashin conducting

Tchaikovsky—"Overture 1812," Gould conducting

is as much as to say that only RCA—for whom they all record—makes orchestral records of the classical repertoire.

How one member of the recording industry feels about it is contained in a letter from Goddard Lieberman (president of Columbia Records) addressed to the officers of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences:

As a member of a distinguished and creative industry, I am shocked by the results of the second year's NARAS nominations for outstanding phonograph record releases. In my opinion, these, as was the case last year, in no way reflect either the status, the quality, or the scope of the record industry. I say this after one year of considered silence and, even now, at the risk of being accused of "sour grapes."

It must seem obvious to any detached observer that the NARAS nominations do not, by any means, represent a true evaluation of our industry's output during the past year. With all due respect to the artists nominated including, I might say, those from Columbia Records, the NARAS method of nomination cannot provide a true measurement of artistic merit, nor give any indication of the record industry's great artistic accomplishments in either the classical, jazz, or popular fields. The omission of so many internationally famous artists

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Recordings in Review

Welcome, Sayão

VILLA-LOBOS: "Forest of the Amazon." Villa-Lobos conducting the *Symphony of the Air*, chorus, and Bidu Sayão, soprano. United Artists UAL 7007, \$4.98.

FOR THOSE to whom the voice and artistry of Bidu Sayão were among the most glowing memories of operatic affairs in the Forties, this specimen of her abilities will be both a pleasure and a perplexity: sheer delight in the soaring ease, purity of sound, and warmth of feeling with which she performs the "Canção de Amor" (a beautiful expression which is likely to be as closely associated with her name as the "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5"), and curiosity, bordering on wonder, why these talents haven't been put to more use in the last decade.

"Canção de Amor" is the high-lying highlight of side two of this issue, but it has worthy vocal material preceding ("Tarde Azul," "Os Índios à Procura de Moça," and "Veleiros") and following it (a reprise of "Canção de Amor"), to which Miss Sayão gives equally heartfelt service. In effect, her voice is treated as another instrument in the orchestra, and it is hard to believe that Villa-Lobos had any other sound than hers in mind when he was writing this music.

Though "Forest of the Amazon" is the title given to the work on label and liner, it is actually a derivative of the

soundtrack written by Villa-Lobos for the recent MGM version of Hudson's "Green Mansions." In some details, it is reminiscent of such earlier works as "Origin of the Amazon River" and "Uirapuru." However, that is a matter of small moment, for the materials have been reworked to serve new purposes, which they do with almost consistent success. And though Villa-Lobos is not the world's most convincing conductor of his own music, the orchestra plays very well for him. The recorded quality of sound is good, per se, but it sounds remote from the microphone, or the product of an adverse studio.

Enter Williams

BACH: *Suite No. 3*, ALBENIZ: "Torre Bermeja," PONCE: "Three Mexican Popular Songs," VILLA-LOBOS: *Etude No. 1*, CRESPO: *Norteña*, DUARTE: *Variations on "Canço del Llabre."* John Williams, guitar. Washington WR 424, \$4.98.

SHORT OF BEING named John Smith or Joseph Jones, John Williams could hardly be a less rememberable name for a musician bent on a public career. But nobody who plays any instrument as well, as sensitively, and with as much personal communication as Williams does the guitar can long remain obscure. A native of Australia, where he was born in 1940 (the liner bears the rather frightening misprint of "1946" for his birth date, but other references

make clear that it has taken him at least nineteen, rather than only thirteen, years to attain his present state of development), Williams pursued advanced studies in London, including the Royal College of Music.

One constant factor in his favor, whether he is playing Bach (as arranged by his teacher, Englishman John W. Duarte) or Albeniz, is a tone of uncommon vibrance and aural appeal. Whether this is a result of uncommonly clever microphoning (no individual credit for the English recording is assigned) or a condition that would prevail in concert performances as well, only the "live" experience could tell. But it is certainly a contributory factor to the interest and satisfaction of these performances, especially as modulated by Williams with the fine sense of relative dynamics that seems to be possessed only by players of such obstinate instruments as the harp, the oboe, or the guitar.

Williams plays his Bach (derived from the third suite for unaccompanied cello) with a clear comprehension of its contrapuntal character and enlivening touches of imagination where they are pertinent (in the Bourrées particularly). Aside from a little awkwardness now and then in moving from one position to another, and slightly squealing noises that accompany his hand action on the strings, the short pieces are uncommonly well played also. Doubtless he will continue to develop as a technician, but there is little doubt that he possesses the musical intelligence and personal view of what he plays to become a leader in his chosen field.

Not the Most of Lees

LEES: *Symphony No. 2*. COWELL: "Ongaku." Robert Whitney conducting the Louisville Orchestra. Lou 595, \$7.95.

THE QUALITY OF music (particularly chamber music) produced by Benjamin Lees within the last four or five years has identified him not merely as a composer to watch, but also one to listen to. A natural flow of musical idea and a suitable match of material to means of expression (and vice versa) are attributes by no means in oversupply among his contemporaries.

Some of these qualities (especially the flow of idea) are characteristic of this second symphony (first performed in Louisville last December). But it is also a little oversupplied with timpani thumps and staccato brass chords for my taste, as if Lees were anxious to identify himself with the "Angry Young Men" before it is too late (he is now thirty-five). Certainly by the middle of the scherzo (especially on the second time around) I had heard as much of



John Williams—"musical intelligence and personal view."