

# RECORDINGS REPORTS I: ORCHESTRAL LPs

## WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

## REPORT

Brahms: Concerto No. 2 in B flat. Hans Richter-Haaser, piano, with the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel S 35796, \$5.98.

As might have been suspected from his recital appearances here during the winter, the bigger and heavier the work the better Richter-Haaser responds to it. He proves himself worthy not only of the fine orchestra and its celebrated conductor, but of the work itself. More mellowness of sound, a broader singing line might be desirable (especially in the Andante) but it is strong-minded, firm-willed performance he provides. Admirable reproduction. (Monaural: 35796, \$4.98.)

Chausson: Symphony in B flat. Berlioz: "Benvenuto Cellini" Overture. Robert Denzler conducting the Paris Conservatory Orchestra and the Suisse Romande. London CS 6119, \$4.98.

There are few conductors who may be depended upon for an unfailing quality of performance, but Denzler is one who clings unflinchingly to his own dull, dogged manner, whether the work is Adam or Chausson. Here he leaves only a trace of distinction in the symphony, managing to make it sound more like Franck than Franck himself, which is, of course, not the whole story of Chausson by any means. The Berlioz is no worse, but no better either. The engineers do not seem to have overextended themselves.

Frescobaldi: "Quattro Pezzi" (orchestrated by Ghedini); Petrassi: Concerto for Orchestra. Ferdinando Previtali conducting the orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia. London CS 6112, \$4.98.

Both sides of this disc have interest, related not only to content but also to the presentation by Previtali. Petrassi's work, though dating to 1934, represents much the same idea as Bartok exploited nearly a decade later (especially in choir groupings and sound values). The Frescobaldi (two toccatas, two canzoni) are all derived from organ sources, an ancestry Ghedini has aptly honored in his orchestration. Not since Respighi and Casella has such tasteful work been done by anyone on behalf of an earlier Italian's creation. Fine sound throughout. (Monaural: LL 1570, \$3.98.)

Gershwin: Cuban Overture; Bernstein: "Danzon"; Gould: "Guaracha"; Benjamin: "From San Domingo," "Jamaican Rumba," etc. Louis Lane conducting the Cleveland Pops Orchestra. Epic BC 1047, \$5.98. (Monaural: LC 3626, \$4.98.)

As was evident in his previous Epic effort (Gould: "American Salute," SR, Aug. 29, 1959), the Eastman School product has a finely discriminating hand for music of a lively, rhythmic flow (the kind to which our acquaintance is thus far limited) and a strong control of the orchestra. There has rarely been a better playing of the Gershwin (it "sounds" so well some new instrumental touches could be suspected), the Bernstein, Benjamin, and Gould are deftly done, likewise Villa-Lobos's "The Little Train of the Caipira" and Galindo's "Sones de Mariachi" on side two. A bright-sounding delight.

Massenet: "Scènes Alsaciennes," "Scènes Pittoresques." Albert Wolff conducting the orchestra of the Paris Conservatory. London CS 6139, \$4.98.

No one acquainted with his output needs to be reminded that Massenet was writing "mood music" long before the title was minted, or that Wolff, for all his seventy-six years, is the ideal interpreter of it. This stereo equivalent of London mono 1298 utilizes the resources of the medium advantageously for some effects of distance in the "Scènes Alsaciennes."

Mozart: Concertos No. 21 (in C, K. 467) and No. 27 (in B flat, K. 595). Artur Schnabel, piano, with London Symphony directed by Malcolm Sargent and John Barbirolli. Angel COLH 67, \$5.98.

This generation has produced nothing to equal, let alone surpass, the qualities of insight and animation Schnabel applies to these works, matched with a finger fluency that always surprises one anew for its purposefulness and dependability. As both conductors were alert to their participation in an enduring effort (Barbirolli in 1934, Sargent in 1937), the balance of attributes is as much as one could reasonably ask. Schnabel's cadenzas for No. 21 are exemplary. The sound, if not glistering, is by no means dull.

Rivier: Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5. Georges Tzipine conducting. Pathé DXT 286, \$5.95.

The earlier of these works dates to 1938, which means that it antedates Honegger's Symphony No. 2, in which the concept of a "symphony for strings" attracted substantial attention. Rivier is neither of the *avant garde* nor is he retrogressive, but rather a man with a clear conception of how he wants his music to sound and a skilled technique for accomplishing this objective. Tzipine is an efficient intermediary, and the reproduction is satisfactory (including No. 5, where brass, woodwind, and percussion are added to the strings).

Schubert: Symphony No. 4 (C minor). Walter Susskind conducting the London Symphony. Symphony No. 6 (C major). The same, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt conducting. Mercury SR 90196, \$5.95.

It was a happy thought to combine these two works, for they provide a different view of Schubert's compositional personality than what the average listener knows from the "Unfinished" or the "Great" C major. Both conductors are adjusted to their tasks, though Schmidt-Isserstedt adds a measure of refinement and artistry (reminiscent of a scattering of superior efforts going back to the Haydn "Surprise" of early LP days) which Susskind lacks. Mercury, incidentally, assures us its stereo is also hi-fi.

Strauss: "Tales from the Vienna Woods," "Fledermaus" and "Gypsy Baron" Overtures, "Annen" and "Auf der Jagd" Polkas; Strauss, Josef: "Delirium" Waltz. Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan. RCA Victor LDS 2346, \$5.98.

One of the prime memories of the New York musical winter to date was the half-program of Johann Strauss performed with infectious zest by the Vienna Philharmonic under von Karajan in Carnegie Hall. That quality is not quite equaled here (live stimulation rarely is in the recording studio) but it comes very close to the level of such other Ks as Kleiber and Krauss. Higher praise, in the literature of the J. Strausses, is unknown to me. The visual presentation (one of the inaugural items in the Soria series for RCA) has more than one reason to be termed angelic. Lovely sound, too. (Monaural: LD 2346, \$4.98.)

Tchaikovsky: Suite No. 3 in G. Sir Adrian Boult conducting the orchestra of the Paris Conservatory. London CS 6140, \$4.98.

Well-acquainted as the average person is with the variations-finale of this work, it is worth noting that the other three movements are equally expressive of Tchaikovsky's best idiom (as of 1884). Indeed it amounts to another "ballet" score, whether that is taken to mean "Swan Lake" or the Serenade as adapted by Balanchine. Boult's work is tasteful, poised, and plentifully spirited. Both the orchestra and the reproduction are suited to the score.

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 ("Pathétique"). Vladimir Golschmann conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Vanguard SRV 112SD, \$2.98. (Monaural: SRV 112, \$1.98.) Ernest Ansermet conducting the Suisse Romande Orchestra. London CS 6108, \$4.98. (Monaural: LL 1633, \$3.98.)

Two performances of more contrasting character could hardly be imagined, truly expressive of the varying background of the conductors in question. Ansermet strokes this score gently, with a solicitous rather than a loving hand, evoking an order of sound more appropriate to some of the lighter variations in the ballet scores rather than the sort appropriate to this truly symphonic expression. Golschmann is appreciably more fervent, though never quite profound, which strikes me as the only justification for dealing with this score. It investigates the depths of the finale, for example, without quite touching bottom. The Ansermet is well recorded, the Golschmann even better—a superior specimen of stereo, even though the players are not as good as their Swiss opposites.

—IRVING KOLODIN.



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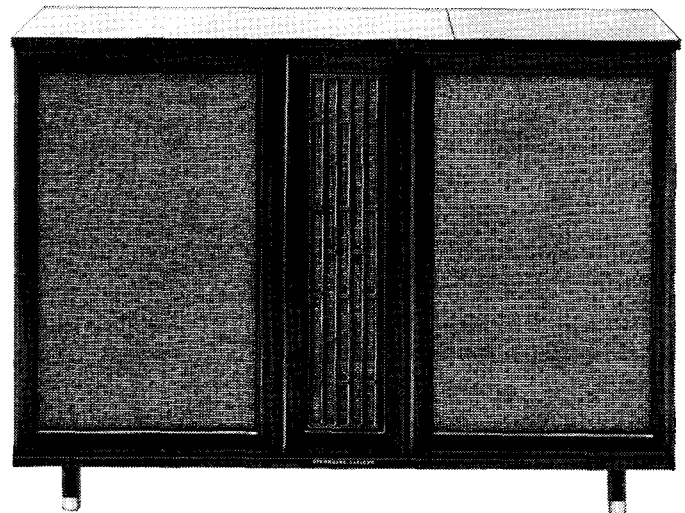
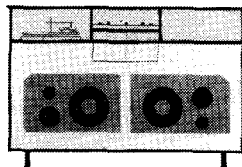
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# RECORDINGS REPORTS II: MISCELLANEOUS LPs

## WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

## REPORT

Beethoven: Quartets in D major and C minor. (Opus 18, Nos. 3 and 4). Fine Arts Quartet. Concert-Disc CS 210, \$6.95.

It is a particular pleasure to hear the seldom played D major done with such care and finesse as the group led by Leonard Sorkin provides. If a reminder is needed that Beethoven's musical mentality was a probing one at all times of his life, it is here. The better known C minor is also performed with dash and spirit, if some roughness of sound. (Monaural: 1210, \$5.95.)

Brahms: Four Serious Songs; Schubert: Harfen Lieder; Wolf: Michelangelo Lieder. Kim Borg, bass, with Erik Werba, piano. Deutsche Grammophon DGS 712033, \$5.98.

Try as he may (and he tries notably hard) Borg lacks the depth of sound, as well as of mood, to make much of an impression on these weighty matters, let alone with them. As microphoned for Brahms's purpose, Borg sounds like a baritone verging on tenor rather than a bass verging on baritone. Over-side, he has a broader, deeper timbre, but nothing more notable. Werba, as usual, is excellent. (Monaural: 12023, \$4.98.)

Chopin: Waltzes. Alfred Cortot, piano. Angel COLH 32, \$5.95. Moura Lympny, piano. Capitol SG 7169, \$5.98. (Monaural: G 7169, \$4.98.)

Doubtless there will be some who feel otherwise, but it strikes me as something of a misnomer to describe the Cortot as one of the "great recordings" of the century, for the same kind of "stop-and-go pianism, his fondness for imposing little deviations of tempi and phrasing on the music" noted years ago are, of course, still present. I find Miss Lympny a sounder interpreter altogether, with a finely personal feeling for many of the waltzes, together with a few played rather mechanically. The sound of her piano is excellent, of Cortot's better than might be expected.

Chopin: Sonata in B flat minor, Nocturnes (Opus 15, No. 2, Op. 27, No. 2), two Etudes, four Mazurkas. Adam Harasiewicz, piano. Epic LC 3633, \$4.98.

This young Polish pianist (winner of the Chopin competition of 1955) plays some of the shorter pieces with taste and facility, but he lacks the interpretative range or technical distinction to make an interesting experience of the sonata. By any real standard, Harasiewicz has not enough to say to merit it being perpetuated on a "record," even less to justify the blurb describing him as "one of the world's finest Chopin performers." As a passing note: the quality of piano sound is adversely affected by the dull, aged sound of the instrument employed.

Donizetti: "Piangete voi?" ("Anna Bolena"); Thomas: "A vos yeux" ("Hamlet"); Bellini: "O! s'io potessi" ("Il Pirata"). Maria Callas, soprano. Nicola Rescigno conducting. Angel 35764, \$4.98.

For those unfamiliar with the verbal designations, these may be all identified as "Mad Scenes" in which Callas's extraordinary sense of melodic *morbidezza* is blended with a kind of vocal control seldom heard from her in the theatre, and a rarity even on records. Needless to say, her "Hamlet" scene is quite different from Melba's, but rather nearer the composer's purpose. Excellent "Pirata," beautiful "Bolena." First class sound. (Stereo: S 35764, \$5.98.)

Massenet: "Manon," "Hérodiade," and "Werther" excerpts. Ninon Vallin, soprano, with orchestra conducted by Gustave Cloëz. Odéon XOC 120, \$4.98.

The ever-charming art of Vallin is presented here in its most appealing form, as the voice for three of Massenet's most insinuating heroines. Included are "Je suis encore," "Voyons, Manon," "Adieu, notre petite table," and the Gavotte, "Il est doux," and the "Letter Scene," "Air des Larmes," and "Ah! mon courage m'abandonne." Contrary to the bland claim of the French cover, the recording is very far from "Haute Fidélité," dating, as it does, from the modest French techniques of the Thirties.

Mozart: Quartets (complete), Vol. 1. Barchet Quartet. Vox VXB 12, \$6.95.

Even the record collector who thinks he has a fair idea of Mozart's quartets will find something to interest him in these very early works, all of which precede the "famous" ten including the six dedicated to Haydn. They begin with K. 80 and continue: K. 155-160, K. 168-170. As with the early symphonies, the mixture of influences provides an absorbing study, with the Italian predominating. And with all the development that ensued (the most mature dates from his seventeenth year), there are ample evidences of procedures and devices that persisted in later evolutions. The Barchets play them all with style, with spirit, and with a very pleasant string sound. Also included is the later Adagio and Fugue in C minor (K. 546). The recording is bright, sonorous, well-placed in the acoustic frame.

Puccini: Ten Arias. Richard Tucker, tenor, with Fausto Cleva conducting. Columbia MS 6094, \$5.98. (Monaural: ML 5416, \$4.98.)

In this kind of tonal outpouring, Tucker is the match of any tenor in the world, and challenged by few. In his survey of the tenor territory of Puccini, Tucker ranges from "Manon Lescaut" ("Ah, Manon" and "Guardate pazzo son") to "Turandot," with stops en route for "Tosca," "Bohème," "Butterfly" ("Addio, fiorito asil"), "Fanciulla," "Gianni Schicchi" and "Turandot" ("Non piangere, Liu" as well as "Nessun dorma"). It is an impressive demonstration of Tucker's power and finesse, marred, from time to time, by a little excessive word-emphasis, for dramatic effect.

Schubert: Sonata in D. Sviatoslav Richter, piano. Monitor MC 2043, \$4.98.

If Shafran comes, can Richter be far behind? The appearance lately of the excellent Soviet cellist (who was known here years ago) encourages hope that Richter may follow in the sequence he well deserves. He performs this Schubert sonata, as the one previously noted (in A minor, SR, Feb. 28, 1959), with deft assurance and warmly sympathetic understanding. His rhythmic poise and musical refinement are also admirably suited to the work. Reasonably good piano sound.

Schubert: "Die Allmacht," "Fischerweise"; Brahms: "Liebestreu," "Sapphische Ode," "Die Mainacht," "Der Schmied"; Wolf: "Gesang Weylas," "Auf einer Wanderung"; Strauss: "Die Nacht," "Allerseelen"; Mahler: "Ich bin der Welt," "Des Antonius von Padua," "Rheinlegendchen." Christa Ludwig, mezzo-soprano, with Gerald Moore, piano. Angel S 35592, \$5.98.

Ludwig's voice is a more than promising one, and she uses it resourcefully. However she is over her twenty-three-year-old head in such songs as "Die Allmacht," "Sapphische Ode," "Der Schmied," "Gesang Weylas," and "Allerseelen." She has a keener understanding and more temperamental affinity with the Mahler songs, of which the "Rheinlegendchen" is particularly well sung. Gerald Moore's piano playing is of its customary refinement, though his attention seems to wander now and then. Excellent stereo. (Monaural: 35592, \$4.98.)

Wagner: "Einsam in trüben Tagen" and "Euch Lüften" ("Lohengrin"), "Dich, teure Halle" and "Allmächt'ge Jungfrau" ("Tannhäuser"); Weber: "Wie nachte mir der Schlummer" and "Und ob die Wolke." Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano, with Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind. Angel 35806, \$4.98.

The spirit is relevant, the musicianship outstanding, but the quality of vocal sound is pinched, constricted, unnatural, as though there were a filter between the microphone and the tape. The singer's fluency in the high range of the "Tannhäuser" climaxes stimulates some curiosity as to how they might sound in the theatre or concert hall. Altogether, an interesting mechanical experience if not a very convincing musical one. (Heinz Wallberg is the conductor for "Euch Lüften," in which Christa Ludwig participates.) (Stereo: S 35806, \$5.98.)

—I.K.