



Salzburg—"regular trips have become necessary to keep the patient patient."

CONFESSIONS OF A MOZART ADDICT

SR/RECORDINGS

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IT ALL started in the 1930s at one of those expansive and expensive Beverly Hills charity benefits where movie starlets sold their ordinarily gratuitous kisses for \$5.00 and bartenders handed out minuscule drinks for \$2 apiece. There was also music.

It came from a gazebo at one end of the formal garden where a man by the name of Bruno Walter, of whom up to then I was only vaguely aware, was conducting an orchestra while a lady, whom the program identified as Lotte Lehmann, was singing. It was the most beautiful singing I had ever heard.

One reason I was in the vicinity of the gazebo was my dear and celebrated friend, whom we shall call Tecumseh, since no part of him is Indian. The other reason was Mrs. Tecumseh. She had watched the five dollar kissing with complete complaisance, but the miniature martinis had her worried.

"For Pete's sake," she whispered after the third one, "walk him around

somewhere. You know he can't drink!"

It took some coaxing to separate Tecumseh from the fourth thimbleful he had ordered, but eventually I got him started down the garden path. As we shuffled along, his deviation from the perpendicular became more and more pronounced; the garden path became more and more difficult to pursue; and it was with considerable relief that I saw an array of folding chairs just ahead. I made for them. Tecumseh by now was not making for anything, but I managed to steer him into one of the seats.

Then and there I met Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Not that I knew it at the time. All I knew was that the lady in the program was singing something exquisitely lovely and that if I didn't keep a tight grip on my companion's arm he would topple over into the lap of the elaborate dowager on his left.

The song ended. The audience clapped delightedly. I applauded with my one free hand against Tecumseh's cheek, not only to show my apprecia-

tion of the music, but to see if it might not bring him to. It was a vain hope. Slowly, and with a certain gelatinous dignity, he slid forward off the chair and came to rest on the grass with his head just touching one of the dowager's satin slippers. She shrank back from him in horror, but Tecumseh neither knew nor cared.

I was delighted to see that Mme. Lehmann was going to favor us with an encore. But it was not to be. The dowager was hissing in my ear.

"Get him out of here!"

"Why?" I inquired.

"He's drunk!"

"But quiet . . . and happy—"

Our colloquy, unfortunately, had attracted too much attention. Reluctantly I stole away with Tecumseh draped limply over my right shoulder. On the way out a few heads turned as we passed, but on seeing who it was they smiled understandingly and resumed their conversations about who had been with whom where.

Mrs. Tecumseh met us near the entrance gates. "Put him in the gold room," she said. "He doesn't like the morning sun."

Lotte Lehmann's entrancing tones followed us as I pushed my way and my burden through the cluster of autograph hounds on the sidewalk and deposited his flexible form in the car at the curb.

It was only a few blocks and a few minutes until he was snoozing peacefully in his gilded bed. I thought to myself how well he looked. And why not, someone had observed. He never drank much and always got to bed early.

I was back at the party in no time at all and headed straight for the gazebo. Mme. Lehmann had finished, but Bruno Walter was just starting to play something. The program called it "Eine kleine Nachtmusik." And it had a number, K. 525—whatever that meant. Whatever it meant, the sound was heavenly. So this was Mozart. Where had he been all my life?

But Mozartian addiction, like the surrender to barbiturates, comes on slowly. My musical interest was still centered in songs out of Broadway shows, from some of which came ASCAP royalties.

Off Broadway, so to speak, my tastes ran to Gilbert and Sullivan, Strauss waltzes, and such assorted characters as Till Eulenspiegel and Serge Prokofiev. How his Third Piano Concerto ever got in, I can't imagine.

But Wolfgang Amadeus turned out to be a great little infiltrator. At first it was just a smattering of 78 rpm discs. Remember, this was long before LPs. "A Little Nightmusic" naturally

came first, then items like the Clarinet Concerto, the "Jupiter" Symphony, the operas as done at Glyndebourne, John McCormack singing "Il mio tesoro," the Piano Concerto in C Minor, K. 491—and then how those Köchel numbers began to pile up—364, 550, 99, 516, 136, 361, 296, 626, 165, 524—the whole list would resemble a long stretch of ticker tape.

It wasn't too long before the supply of available 78s ran out. But the Mozartphilia had increased rather than diminished. It was then that the real searching began. You could find little out-of-the-way record shops that would let you paw through hundreds of dusty discs on which they had given up hope. You could get catalogues from England and order records that either had been deleted over here or had never made it across the Atlantic. You could ferret out arias by Nellie Melba and Adelina Patti and Frieda Hempel and singers with such unlikely names as Lidia Stix and Leila Ben-Sedira on unfamiliar labels such as Lumen, Sens, Christ-schall, and, of all things, *Nightmusic*.

WHEN you were in Paris you could prowl the Left Bank and pick up an occasional rarity on the "La Voix de Son Maître" label. And then there was that joyful day in Rome when you came across the three "La Voce del Padrone" discs on which Gioconda de Vito outdoes all other violinists in her rendition of the Concerto in Sol Maggiore (K.216), with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting.

There is a little magpie blood in all of us, I fear, and that's how collectors are born.

Probably a third of the 626 numbers in the Köchel catalogue had been assembled on 78s when LP records made their debut. Now it became necessary to get long-playing versions of whatever shellacs were being duplicated and also to acquire the hitherto unrecorded works that came pouring forth every month. But even these did not begin to fill up all the vacant spots in the Köchel index.

At about this point tape came to the rescue. With a recorder you could seek out orchestras, chamber groups, and soloists who might be playing something you didn't have. You could exchange tapes with other magnetically dedicated collectors. You could take concerts off the air now that it was possible to roll your own.

And just when everything seemed to have settled down in the music field, what should pop up but stereo. In the beginning, though, it was known as "binaural" because it was heard through earphones and each ear got a completely separate channel. I set up two

microphones, listened—and flipped. This was definitely destined to make monophonic recordings seem second-rate. And so it proved.

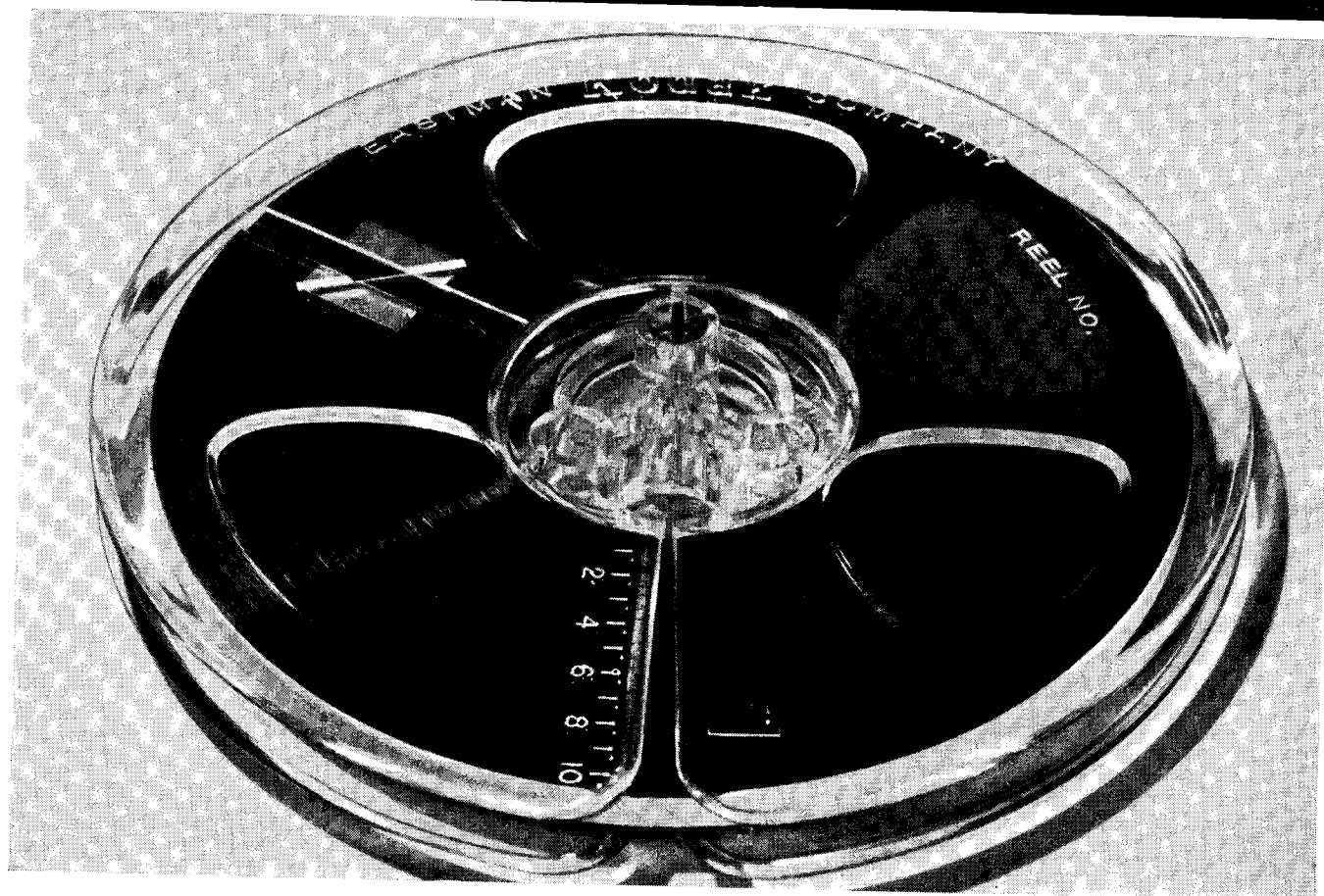
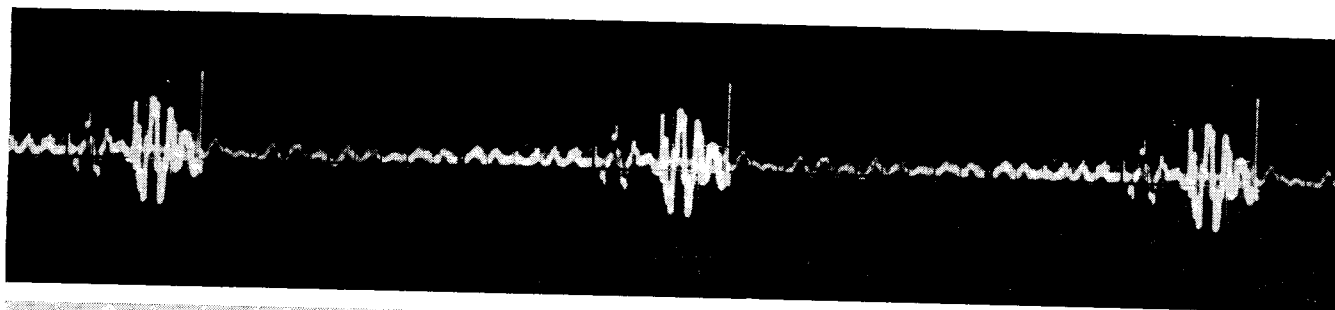
Now the thing to do was to add two-track versions of such music as was available to the single channel works already on the shelves. Sometimes it wasn't easy. You found yourself hiding microphones among the footlights in a concert hall, running cables down into the basement, and taking the end of the preliminary tuning-up as a starting cue. It was sneaky business, but what chance have scruples against the *sostenuto* determination of a Mozart stalker? Besides, at fifteen inches per second, the tape sound was resplendent.

In time, prerecorded stereo tapes began to trickle on the market and after them the deluge of double channel LPs. These, along with new monophonic releases, helped widen the Mozart repertory. Naturally, over the years, the collection has taken in many other composers, but Wolfgang remains the odds-on favorite. In fact, the obsession has progressed to a stage where regular trips to the Salzburg Festival have become necessary to keep the patient patient.

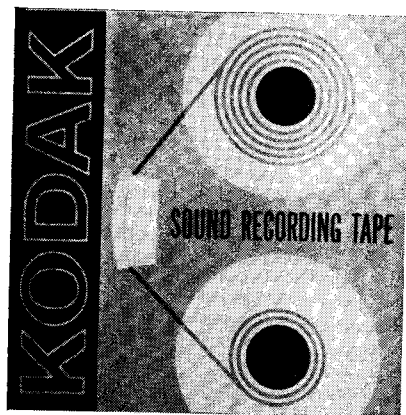
To become statistical, I have rounded up 527 Mozart recordings to which Köchel numbers have been assigned. Of the missing works, thirty are described as spurious, dubious, lost, or fragments. There are fourteen arias and fourteen minuets apparently still unrecorded, also twelve very early sonatas, ten short masses, and nine songs. The rest, except for "Davidde penitente," an oratorio (K. 469), and "Il sogno di Scipione," a *serenata drammatica* (K. 126), are of no great importance, although I have tracers out for eleven which show signs of having been recorded at some time or other abroad.

"Davidde penitente" was performed at Tanglewood last year, but I was out of the country and couldn't do anything about it. The only missing works I know of that have appeared on a domestic label are some excerpts from a ballet, "L'Epreuve d'amour," which were on a long since deleted Columbia record; and a Sonata for Piano and Violin in C (K. 403), which has somehow eluded me.

In my book the world has produced three men with the clearest title to the appellation "genius." They are Shakespeare, da Vinci, and Mozart. Had Wolfgang not died at thirty-five from poverty, malnutrition, and other lesser complaints, try to imagine how many even greater masterpieces might have been created by this incredible little man who was born old and died so young.



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A Masterly "Fidelio"

LIKE every work which is officially timeless, "Fidelio" is also the work of a time—post-Mozart, pre-Weber (which, needless to say, also means pre-Wagner). It is Otto Klemperer's awareness of both the timeless and the timely in Beethoven's score that makes his just-released version with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus and a finely matched complement of vocalists (Angel S-3625-C/L, \$17.98) something more than merely new. It is the best-recorded "Fidelio" ever, and on the level of the best "live" ones I recall from a range of listening that includes such conductors as Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Artur Bodanzky (who had a fine feeling for this work), and Bruno Walter.

The knotty problem, in presenting "Fidelio," is, of course, the personification of the title role itself. More often than not, the concentration has been directed toward a vocalist who could deal with the heroic "Abscheulicher," on the premise that everything else would fall into place thereafter. Thus the inclination of some conductors is toward such

Wagnerian voices as Nanny Larsén-Todsen, Kirsten Flagstad, and the present Birgit Nilsson (to mention those who have been heard in New York). The other trend is to choose a performer with the fervor and appeal to make Fidelio-Leonore dramatically credible and take the risk that the big vocal demand may be slighted, or only partially fulfilled. Thus the choice of Strauss and Toscanini (in Salzburg) of Lotte Lehmann, or Toscanini's preference for Rose Bampton (whose career as a soprano was unfortunately brief) for his NBC broadcast, or Bruno Walter's belief that Regina Resnik could qualify in an English-language "Fidelio."

Given a conductor of the requisite conviction—and all those enumerated above certainly qualify—the listener can be persuaded to overlook the inevitable compromises in the impact of the work as a whole. The women of weight and range rarely can reduce their output to the intimate requirements of the canon quartet, while those who are able to take it in stride are inclined to stumble in the work's moments of high drama in the dungeon, or in the following "O namenlose Freude." The election of alternatives is, on the whole, simpler in the opera house, where vision and action

can supplement the bare impression of competence or incompetence that comes to the ear alone from a record. Thus, at the time of her "Fidelio" with Fricsay, Leonie Rysanek might have made a memorable heroine in the theatre, given the visual supplement lacking for the home listener. The sum of it is, really, that the ideal Fidelio existed, probably, only in Beethoven's mind alone. To succeed as well as Klemperer has here means only one thing: a new approach, in which the opportunities of the recording studio are utilized to create a result disassociated from the demands of theatre.

All of which is to say this is a performance with a point of view, and a cast painstakingly matched to that point of view. Whether or not the names are what would seem to be indicated by the roles with which they are associated, they have exactly the qualities that Klemperer requires to satisfy his point of view—they are all vocalists capable of clean, well-controlled articulation, able to fulfill his essential premise that as well as a performer can speak the text of "Fidelio," it is even more important to sing, sing, sing Beethoven's music.

For, in a literal sense, "Fidelio" is a *Singspiel*—half spoken, half sung. More important, the speaking should be confined to the connecting text and not (as is sometimes heard) be allowed to invade the lyric line, in a half declamatory, quasi-Wagnerian way. One first becomes aware of this after the opening scene of Marzelline (Ingeborg



Ludwig — "both the extension and the fervor."

Hallstein is her name and she is a delightfully pure soprano) and Jaquino (Gerhard Unger) with the entry of Rocco. He is not the customarily gruff, toneless bass, but the excellent Gottlob Frick, whose sound, abetted by the microphone, is as close as a German voice can get to a basso cantante. And when Christa Ludwig joins them as Leonore-Fidelio, the canon quartet becomes what it may be, but not often is—a miracle of flowing song.

That is all very well, one may say, but how does Miss Ludwig, abundantly well known as a mezzo, cope with the dramatic demands of Leonore's role, especially the treacherous "Abscheulicher"? The answer comes soon enough, and it is: very well indeed. Her rich middle tones are ideally controlled for the purposes of the prayerful prelude "Komm' Hoffnung," and—for the purposes of recording at least—she has both the extension and the fervor for a powerful delivery of the flourishes up to B that follow. To complete the list of performers in Act II, there is Walter Berry.

At face value, the most reassuring part in this project would seem to be Jon Vickers's participation as Florestan. However, this singer has delivered work of such variable quality in the last season or so that one had no conviction how he would perform this time. But—and the credit must certainly be in large part Klemperer's—he has not sounded nearly so well since his "Messiah" with Beecham. This is not merely a matter of competence to sing the notes: Vickers has demonstrated that in several opera houses previously. But there is a security, freedom, and ease in his delivery that reflect a performer and conductor at one in what they are trying to do.

With this kind of plastic material to mold, Klemperer is not impelled to add the dramatic emphasis as a kind of appliqué. Rather it proceeds from his own sure sense of where he is going, and the willingness of his cast to go the way with him. Among these must be included not only the cast, as enumerated, but also the orchestra, which plays the tricky score with virtuoso proficiency, and the individual enthusiasm of chamber music performers (including all the horn parts faultlessly produced). For a further detail, the Philharmonia chorus makes a rich sound throughout.

Noteworthy, too, is the concentration of the recording technicians on the best possible rendering of the musical sound, without sounds of chains rattling or teeth chattering. Like the work itself, then, this "Fidelio" is of a time (1962), but it has much in it that promises to be timeless. —IRVING KOLODIN.