

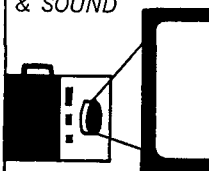
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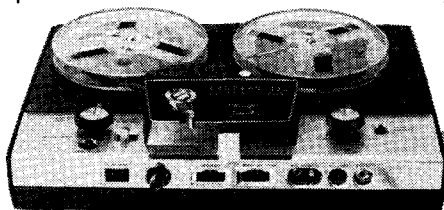


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Vanguard Replies

IN HIS PIECE "En Garde, Vanguard!" [SR, March 14] Howard Shanet states, "It gives me special displeasure to comment on the Vanguard recording of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *A Night in the Tropics*." Well might it give him displeasure, in view of the circumstances surrounding the genesis of this recording, which I will outline in a moment.

First, let me answer Mr. Shanet's allegations as to our annotator's inaccuracy, and his opinion that the "Vanguard issue represents a corruption of the composer's intentions":

1. Mr. Shanet argues with the statement of our annotator, Mr. Bennett, that "the orchestral forces for which Gottschalk planned the symphony were left somewhat fluid." This is astonishing to me in view of Mr. Shanet's preface to his own edition of the said symphony, in which it is clearly written, "The percussion parts were freely reconstituted in this movement." It was our own experience in reconstructing the score, and Mr. Shanet's as well, that the percussion parts in the *Bamboula* were ambiguously defined.

2. Mr. Shanet takes issue with our annotator's comment that "while part of this symphony was long thought to have been lost, a recently discovered piano score has enabled the entire work to be reconstructed." He says that this statement makes "little sense," yet further along in his article he states flatly that "in 1948, however, the New York Public Library acquired not only Gottschalk's holograph orchestral score of both movements of the symphony—lacking the last thirty-six measures—but also a not quite finished arrangement for two (and sometimes three) pianos by N. R. Espadero." It is precisely the Espadero version which we have referred to as "recently discovered." By the word "recent" we meant eighty years after Gottschalk's untimely death.

3. Mr. Shanet claims that "it borders on impudence for the record annotator to call attention to the instrumentation, like the use of a solo trumpet near the beginning . . ." particularly since Gottschalk at those points scored not for a trumpet but for a cornet." Our annotator was absolutely right, inasmuch as for our recording we preferred to use a first-class trumpet, playing in cornet style, rather than a cornet. Since Mr. Shanet does not himself comment on whether a trumpet rather than a cornet was used in the recording itself, it is clear that he did not hear the subtle difference which, in fact, is not intended to be heard.

4. Concerning Mr. Shanet's allegation that an injustice has been done to Gottschalk by condensation of the band parts, it should be pointed out that in no case were instrumental voices omitted, but only instrumental doublings. This was done for two purposes. First and most important, because in Maestro Abravenel's judgment, these doublings caused the wind orchestration to be out of balance in relation to the string parts and would have presented problems in both a concert performance of the work and in recording. Despite our ad-

miration for Gottschalk, he was not the most experienced orchestrator. Secondly, using all of the instrumental doublings would have expanded the proportions of the score beyond that of a normal symphony orchestra, which was a practical consideration not only for the Vanguard recording, but for subsequent performances as well. Our interest is that this work of Gottschalk's be made available in a practical edition so that it can be heard time and time again. For Mr. Shanet to state that the result sounds like a "salon orchestra" is an absurdity, in view of the fact that *A Night in the Tropics* was recorded with a full orchestral complement of over eighty men.

However, the basic issue really is what motivation prompted Mr. Shanet to make public this manifesto in the first place.

In the spring of 1961, Vanguard solicited suggestions from music critics, conductors, and composers throughout the country concerning worthwhile American music to record. The eminent music critic Alfred Frankenstein was the first to suggest Gottschalk's *A Night in the Tropics*, and subsequently Mr. Shanet made the same suggestion. When at a later period we decided to go ahead with this project, we contacted the Edwin A. Fleisher Music Collection of the Free Library of Philadelphia to obtain the orchestral score and parts for the work. The Fleisher Collection replied that these were indeed available to us. Following this, Mr. Shanet was notified by them of this development, and he contacted our office to advise us that the work was copyright by him. This was astonishing to us in view of the fact that the original work is in the public domain. However, we thereupon offered to pay Mr. Shanet the usual author's copyright royalties for our recording, plus appropriate credits and the opportunity to write the annotations for the album. Mr. Shanet turned this offer down but indicated that he would release the orchestral material if he were permitted to conduct the recording.

In connection with the foregoing, two points of good taste may be raised. The first is that Mr. Shanet would see fit to copyright a work in which, to quote the original preface, "the reconstructed section therefore consists of Mr. Shanet's setting of the flutes, oboes, bassoons, and strings in the last 36 measures, and the new percussion parts of the entire movement." This was the entire extent of Mr. Shanet's edition, according to the original published preface. Subsequently, this version of the preface from which we quote was withdrawn, as unauthorized, by both Mr. Shanet and the publishers.

Secondly, we are unable to employ for our recordings a conductor who is, under all circumstances, satisfactory to each reviewer. This is particularly relevant in this instance, since when a reviewer may also be a rival conductor, subjective feelings may very possibly color his judgment. As an apostle of Gottschalk, Mr. Shanet should, in our view, be pleased that a company of repute has recorded a major work by this composer with a major conductor.

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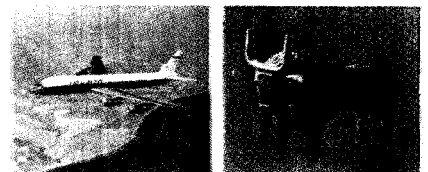
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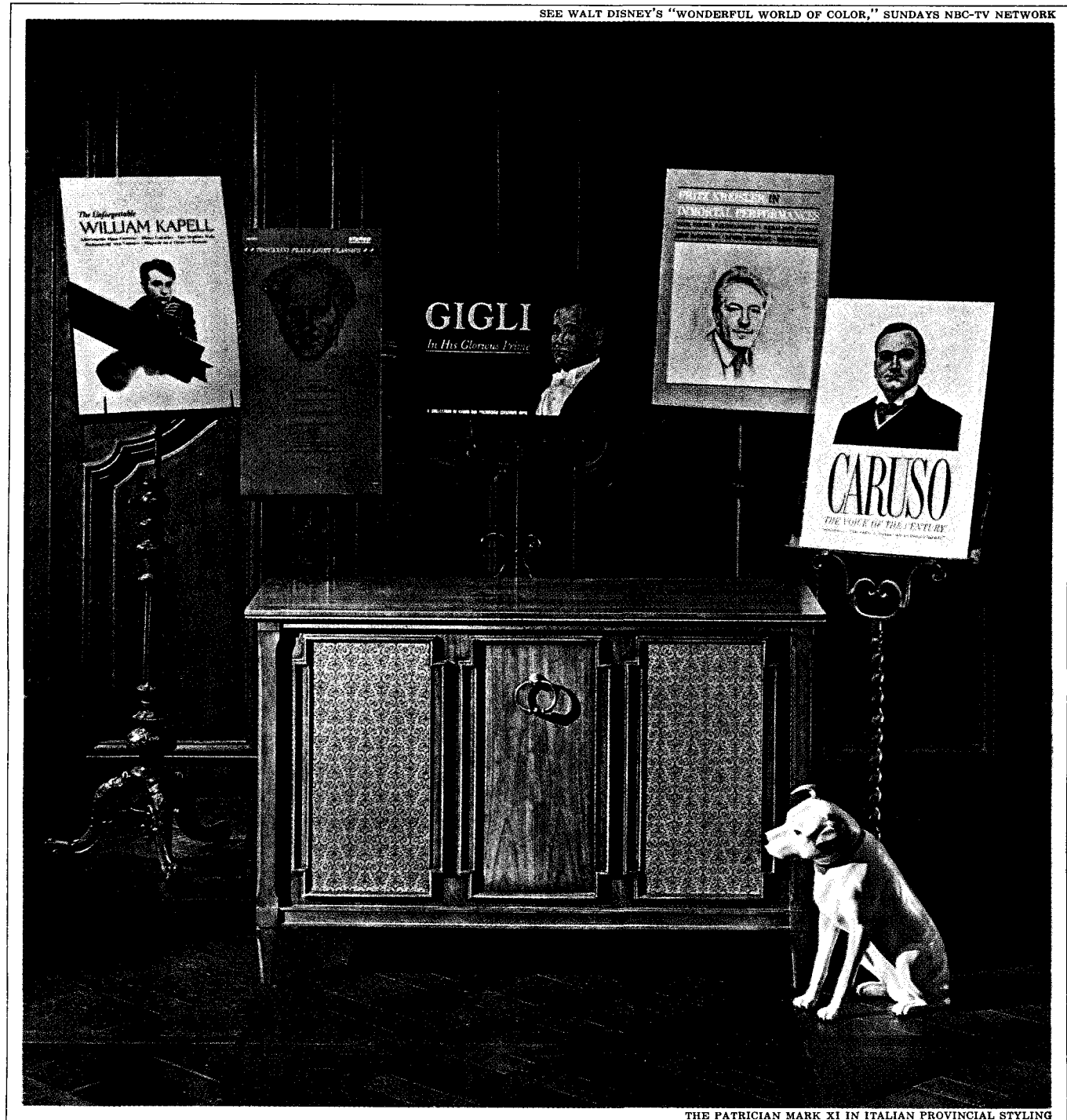
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Thomas's Parsifal, Evans's Falstaff

FOR those to whom the Easter season is incomplete without *Parsifal*, this Easter, musically, was only slightly less incomplete than one without any *Parsifal* at all. For its observance of the Holy Week, the Metropolitan combined a tribute to the memory of the late John F. Kennedy with a token of its long tradition by presenting the lengthy first scene of Act III of *Parsifal* in a concert version as preface to the Verdi Requiem, both directed by Georg Solti.

The reason for the Metropolitan presently being *Parsifal*-less is well known (desire to defer the needed new production until the new theater at Lincoln Center is available). Thus there was promise for the future as well as pleasure for the present in the appearance of Jess Thomas as the wanderer returned to the domain guarded by Gurnemanz (Jerome Hines). His vocal assurance and intellectual command of mood and style were expressive not only of aptitude but also of experience in German theaters. Combined with them were a physical presence that would contribute to a more youthful Parsifal than has been seen here in some time. Let it be hoped that the few years that must elapse before Thomas can be seen as well as heard here in *Parsifal* will add weight to the voice but not to the body.

The Gurnemanz of Hines is no less authoritative in white tie and tails than it is in white mantle and beard. He probes, year by year, closer to the heart of a role whose emotional range is infinite, especially in those moments of exaltation in which Wagner permits him to be a figure of the drama rather than merely its narrator. Looking back to the year (1950) when Hines ventured this massive task for the first time, one can only congratulate him for an effort that has enabled him to add so much in meaning without loss in beauty of sound. This concert version included the luxury of a Kundry (Marcia Baldwin) to pronounce the only two words of a part that is otherwise wholly mime: "Dienen, dienen." They were well pronounced.

So far as could be determined from this much of it, Solti's feeling for the idiom of *Parsifal* is strong, his sense of its sonorous texture acute. But, as in the Requiem that followed, one had to project something from the will that was lacking in the deed: an orchestra on the stage of the Metropolitan has always been at a disadvantage, especially when there are problems of vocal balance to be

considered. Brilliance was minimal, the overtones that give vibrance to musical sound smothered before they reached the ear.

This was a Requiem distinguished primarily for the beauty of its solo singing, especially by Leontyne Price, who led the quartet both in artistry and in range, and Carlo Bergonzi, whose beautifully even tenor sound enables him to sing an "Ingemisco" beyond contemporary compare. Cesare Siepi's bass is not so securely supported as it once was, but he has learned the patrician way of singing this music, which, for all her vibrant flow, is still to be found by Rosalind Elias. Whether through acoustical circumstances or otherwise, this was a Requiem more memorable for its lyric temper, in the "Lacrymosa" and "Benedictus," than for dramatic impact, in the "Dies Irae." Certainly, however, it has a base on which Solti can build.

Whatever Sir John Falstaff's order of honor may be, he was a true Knight of the Garter when Geraint Evans made his first New York appearance in the Inn earlier in the week. The snowy white hair fringing the ruddy bald pate, the carefully bristling mustachios framing the florid face, are details of an image that embody a host of English characteristics from the imaginary Colonel Blimp to the very real Sir Thomas Beecham. For all his empty purse, Evans's Falstaff was as well dressed as he was well fed, which is well within the tradition that there will always be an England.

Evans's dramatic portrait, with its leers and sighs, its nuances and graces, would be a masterpiece were he merely delivering Shakespeare's lines in *The Merry Wives*. The paunch that hangs before him is solidly weighty, and his gait proclaims the fact. Nevertheless, when he had to make a dash for cover at the warning of Ford's approach, he managed a gallop that was as laughable as it was believable. All this was bonus to a vocal impersonation that was brilliantly varied, and never at a loss for the suitable sound.

The art of this masterful effort is in the illusion of reserve it conveys, for the simple reason that Evans uses his full voice, which is just about big enough for the auditorium, sparingly. Much of the time he is working with half voice, enunciating, articulating, literally etching a fine line, which is more characterizing than floods of tone that wash away contour with their abundance. Probably his Italian would be marked

down by natives as being too explicit; but to the alien ear it brings a gratifying amount of the text to clear perception.

As well as commanding the falsetto and rasp for the varied requirements of the score, Evans contrived to make himself into a kind of countertenor for one amorous exchange with Mistress Ford, and, in the next moment, produces the full, bullish baritone with which she is supposed to associate irresistible virility. Needless to say, the famous solo interludes were all thoroughly under control, but it was in his playing to and with the surrounding persons in the ensembles that the distinctions of Evans's Falstaff reposed. He had a great success with the audience (though he missed the curtain calls at the end of Act II due to momentary exhaustion after the exertions in the hamper) and, one might also say, with his colleagues, who clearly responded to his stimulating presence.

Some of the tonal quality lacking in the broadcast of the "Good Friday Music" from the Metropolitan could be heard in the following day's Philharmonic program under the direction of George Szell, which also offered the prelude to *Parsifal* and the Seventh Symphony of Bruckner. For those who might not have observed the Philharmonic under Szell's direction during his current engagement, it may be noted that he has done away with the risers and platforms previously in use, and has the orchestra playing from one level: the stage floor itself. This might not work for anyone else, but for Szell it clearly provides a tighter interplay of elements, something like the blend and balance that should prevail with such an orchestra, whatever the acoustical surroundings. The Wagner was first class both in conception and execution; the Bruckner was equally well performed, though Szell's view of this work is clearer more of an exterior one—which is by no means to say superficial—than those who are considered its prime exponents.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

City Center Savoyards

BY mounting *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *Patience*, the City Center has done three things of importance. It has reminded audiences that there is more to Gilbert and Sullivan than the witty formulae of *Pinafore* and *Mikado*; it has caused some re-evaluation of the "authentic" G&S style; it has restored a sensible balance between words and music in this very specialized repertory.

In the past, self-appointed guardians of G&S purity have belittled American productions, invoking the sacred name: D'Oyly Carte. Unfortunately, the hyper-symmetrical staging rituals handed down from one set of D'Oyly Carte principals