

Recordings in Review

Pergolesi's "Padrona"

PERGOLESI: "*La Serva Padrona*." Virginia Zeani, soprano; and Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, bass; with orchestra conducted by George Singer. Vox OPX 380, \$4.98; stereo SOPX 50.380, \$4.98.

Here is an enterprise that can be heartily commended either for the performance or the material that is performed. That is to say, those who have some knowledge of the musical delight in this early example of *opera buffa* will find it produced with verve and impeccable vocal manners by Singer and the two adept performers with whom he is associated. Others, to whom it is wholly new, will find it hard to resist, once they have been exposed to the opportunities it offers for Rossi-Lemeni and Zeani (Mme. R-L, as it happens) to exhibit their skills as farceurs.

What the unknowing are likely to discover almost at once is the extent to which they are already acquainted with a major aspect of Pergolesi's expression—assuming, that is, that they are reasonably well acquainted with *Le Nozze di Figaro* and/or *Così*. For it is clear that he had perfected, half a century before these works (or Paisiello's *Barbiere*), the same kind of *recitativo secco* which is so integral a part of their scheme. Or to invert it, one could say that Mozart was so thoroughly indoctrinated with the Italian mode of writing recitative that, when mated with his own (German-derived) ideas of aria, a new type was evolved. But, as can happen, the

prototype was, in its own way, delightful.

Here the tale of the maid, Serpina, determined to become master not only of her master's domestic domain but of her master himself, is spun off with a mixture of high spirits and vocal virtuosity that is all but irresistible. Neither voice is in a time of vocal prime: Miss Zeani's in particular, has receded in vibrance since she was last heard on a collection of Puccini arias for London, and the plush has gone from Rossi-Lemeni's sound, leaving but a bit of nap to conceal the worn spots. But each has the rare ability to shape sound as a fine violinist bows tone—broad and full, or narrow and concentrated—according to the needs of the composer. Moreover, each is in complete control of the means to deal with the secco recitative as a musical pattern as well as a dramatic device, which adds vastly to listening interest. Finally, they have obviously invested all the time necessary to perfect the nuance and interplay of the two-part drama, something which is more accessible to a husband-and-wife partnership than it is for other performers. Conductor Singer has a relevant idea of the proportionate places of the singers and orchestra in this kind of recording project, and it all comes together delightfully. No text, Italian or English (not to say the desirable combination of them) is provided.

Krauss for Strauss

STRAUSS: "*Metamorphosen*." Clemens Krauss conducting the strings of the Bamberg Orchestra. Eight Songs. Viorica Ursuleac, soprano; with Krauss, piano. Amadeo 5034, \$6.98 (mono only). Couperin Suite (*Divertimento*). Entr'acte "*Capriccio*." "*Der Rosenkavalier*" waltzes. Krauss conducting. Amadeo AVRS 5033, \$6.98 (mono only).

Of all the conductors who were famous in the composer's lifetime as Strauss "specialists," the late Clemens Krauss was the one who grew closest to him as time passed and circumstances altered. Some of this had to do with the contraction of the physical circle in which Strauss lived, in Garmisch, which made Krauss, in Munich, the nearest musician of authority to him. But a good deal of it was an outgrowth of a genuine rapport, which had its most conspicuous evidence in the works they wrote together, especially in *Capriccio*.

Among these performances, derived from public and private occasions, the one of greatest musical interest is the

Metamorphosen dating from 1953. In the aftermath of what is now known about the work and its attachment to the Munich National Theater (Opera), which was destroyed in a bombing during 1943. Krauss's association with it was perhaps the closest of anyone's (next to the creator's). He was director of the Munich Opera at the time, and, of course, disenfranchised as a result.

The performance is not one of the richest, tonally, that we have (that description belongs to the recent one by Klemperer), but it has some musical insights that should be known to anyone with a fondness for the work. He takes it in a slow, undulating but steady tempo, with few of the *accelerandi* and *crescendi* that have been added by others to animate what is, admittedly, a lengthy, uninterrupted movement. But precisely because the meaning of it is so close to him Krauss is not impelled to added emphasis, but plays the work quietly and to an enormous accretion of expression.

Best sounding of the performances, as well as the least familiar, is the second Couperin Suite, which Krauss was the first to perform in 1941. The results may be closer to Strauss than they are to Couperin, but, of themselves, the pieces are delightful, the elaboration of them as artful as only Strauss could make them. Krauss makes a highlight of every instrumental effect that lends itself to such possibility, and the sequence—despite a turnover between Nos. 5 and 6—is a succession of delights. Likewise enjoyable is the *Capriccio* interlude, taken from a broadcast performance of 1953, and the rearranged waltz sequence from *Rosenkavalier* (Strauss's own effort, late in life, to escape the "atrocious transitions" of the earlier sequence, which had been "getting on . . . my . . . nerves" for some time).

The songs performed by Mme. Ursuleac to her husband's accompaniment are variable in quality but not in the voice—which is unvaryingly coarse, shrill, and off-pitch. It should be added that by the time, in 1952, when they were recorded at a Munich radio studio, Mme. Ursuleac had given up stage performances, but was still appearing in concert. The art is imposing and her feeling for the material unquestionable, but the totality will claim the suffrage of only the hardest listeners. The titles are: *Madrigal, Aus den Liedern der Trauer, Lob des Leidens, Seitdem Dein Aug' in Meines Schaute, Muttertündelei, Blindenklage, Für Fünfzehn Pfennige, O Wärs du Mein*. Among these, *Blindenklage* is a song of outstanding quality; the others not the compelling kind of Strauss. The annotations for this *Historische Aufnahme* series are brief but properly informative; the song texts are printed only in German.



Nicola Rossi-Lemeni and Virginia Zeani—"rare ability to shape sound. . . ."



Evelyne Crochet—"capable, clearheaded . . . responsive"

Four for Fauré

FAURÉ: *Complete Piano Works; Theme and Variations, Op. 73; Barcarolles; "Valse-Caprices"; "Pièces brèves"* (Vol. I). Evelyne Crochet, piano, Vox VBX-423, \$9.95; stereo SVBX-5423, \$9.95. *Preludes, Op. 103; Impromptus and Nocturnes; "Songs without Words"; Mazurka.* Crochet, piano. Vox BX-424, \$9.95; stereo SVBX 5424, \$9.95.

FAURÉ: *Nocturne in A flat.* RAVEL: *"Valses nobles et sentimentales," "La Vallée des cloches."* CHABRIER: *Scherzo-Valse.* POULENC: *"Mouvements perpétuels"; Intermezzi in A flat, D flat.* Artur Rubinstein, piano. RCA Victor LM 2751, \$4.98; stereo LSC 2751, \$5.98.

FAURÉ: *Dolly Suite, Op. 56.* BIZET: *"Jeux d'Enfants."* RAVEL: *"Ma Mère l'Oye."* Walter and Beatrice Klien, piano. Vox PL 12 590, \$4.98; stereo STPL 512 590, \$4.98.

Gabriel Fauré was hardly the greatest composer of his time, though that time extended from 1845 to 1924. Indeed, there are some who would doubt whether the word "great" could rightfully be applied to him at all. He was, like Edvard Grieg, capable of many fine small things, but not many that were both fine and extended. Withal, he represents a kind of musician who has all but disappeared: one who literally ran over with his subject, to a total of 119 opus numbers. Like the songs, the quality of the piano music is variable, but the facility was never purchased at the price of care in workmanship, or artistry in deriving the most from any idea that presented itself to him.

As was the case with Grant Johannesen, who preceded her in the pursuit of this extensive task, Miss Crochet lacks the artistic range or variety of pianistic palette to sustain the interest through good pieces and not-so-good pieces. In the best of them, she is capable, clear-headed, and invariably a responsive voice when the lyric spirit of the composer asserts itself. She doesn't attain the quality level of the best of the Johannesen performances, but she doesn't

deviate much from her own standard, either. Considering that this takes in twelve LPs, each with a multiplicity of pieces, it speaks well for her devotion to a particularly exacting task.

For those who want Fauré in microcosm, the Rubinstein miscellany can be recommended as the quintessence of his flavor. Miss Crochet plays the A-flat Nocturne capably; Rubinstein plays it unforgettably—the difference being not in what he sees in it that she doesn't, but what he sees in it that is not really there. It is, rather, in his own feeling for an idiom with which he has lived for almost as many years as it has existed. The Fauré Nocturne is but an incident of a retrospective look at some enthusiasms that have come but not gone in Rubinstein's long *affaire de coeur* with the keyboard. Among them one of the most endearing is the performance of the Ravel *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. Rubinstein imparts almost as many shadings and colors to its iridescent patterns as the most capable conductor and orchestra might to the composer's own orchestration of later date. As for the Poulenc pieces, Rubinstein was the first to record if not to play the *Mouvements perpétuels*, and no one has done either better since.

As Miss Crochet has not yet taken to playing duets with herself—a possibility that has not yet been exploited at the piano—her collection is necessarily lacking one of the most charming of all the charming works of Fauré. That is the set of pieces written for the young daughter of the singer Emma Bardac (the annotation says she "became Madame Debussy a few *leers* later," which is an obvious misprint as the word is spelled "leers"), and which has outlived everybody associated with the circumstances. Even in such an *en famille* task as this, Fauré could not spare himself the best workmanship of which he was capable. It takes on a kind of triumphant casualness in the delightfully overlapping canonic imitations of the middle part of *Tendresse*, a name perfectly suited to the piece that could have no other. It is also a perfect complement to this beautifully proportioned performance by the Kliens that it should be followed by a work of Ravel (one of Fauré's best pupils) which was also prompted by a young friend of the composer, and preceded by Bizet's thoughts on the subject of children's games. None of it is by the wildest imaginative stretch children's music, save that it shares with its subject a perennial freshness and undying appeal. As well as sharing an ensemble which is intuitive as well as mechanical, the Kliens produce a sound of ingratiating insinuation and ear appeal. If record prices were regulated by quality rather than custom, this one would be worth twice the usual.

"L'Histoire" Well Told

STRAVINSKY: *"L'Histoire du Soldat."* Igor Markevitch conducting; Manoug Parikian, violin; Ulysse Delécluse, clarinet; Henri Helaerts, bassoon; Maurice André, trumpet; Roland Schnorkh, trombone; Joachim Gut, double-bass; and Charles Peschier, percussion; with Jean Cocteau, Peter Ustinov, and Jean-Marie Ferte, speakers. Philips PHM 500-046, \$4.98; stereo PHS 900-048, \$5.98.

Assuming that the Schwann catalogue is the reliable source of information it generally has been, this is the only full-length *L'Histoire* now available, and also the first in stereo, which means the first in the better part of a decade. There have, of course, been recordings of the musical portions alone, as arranged by the composer in the form of a suite (one directed by himself, one by John Carewe). But without the text of C. F. Ramuz, which was an inherent part of its original effect, *L'Histoire* might be likened to a boiled egg without salt—nourishing perhaps, but decidedly bland.

The special virtues of this recording are enormously enhanced by the participation of the late Cocteau and of Peter Ustinov. The former's exceptional qualities as a speaker of the texts utilized by Stravinsky has been sufficiently documented on past occasions not to require repetition here; it need only be said that those who mourned his passing last October have an unexpected addition to their memories of him in this narration. Ustinov's musical services in the past have been limited, so far as is known to me, to Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Here he shows himself not only brilliantly adaptable to the pace and insinuation of the Devil's words, but also fully fluent in delivering them in their original French form. Ferte completes the highly adept ensemble of actors.

With Manoug Parikian as his left-hand man and properly incisive performer of the diabolical fiddling, Markevitch has a start on an ensemble of the first quality. The other six performers being equally resourceful, the musical results are superbly balanced with the spoken. According to the annotation accompanying the issue (an attractive brochure with French and English on parallel pages), the performance was originally put together in 1962 for a fiftieth-birthday celebration for Markevitch in Vevey, and subsequently recorded. Perhaps a part of the brilliantly successful results may be attributed to the local air, for it was not far away that *L'Histoire* was created in 1918. It cannot have been recreated as well many times since.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

RECORDINGS REPORTS I: Orchestral LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA	REPORT
Beethoven: <i>Fidelio</i> and <i>Leonore</i> Overtures Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Otto Klemperer conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. Angel 36209, \$4.98; stereo S 36209, \$5.98.	For those who own a prior release of this repertory by Klemperer, it should be clearly stated that this is not a belated stereo equivalent but four different performances (the orchestra in both cases was the Philharmonia). Although Klemperer's treatment of the opera was a cause for rejoicing (for this listener as well as multitudes of others), the same enthusiasm cannot be generated for these performances. They reach my ear as heavy rather than merely solid, and without the kind of animation to keep them moving. This applies even to the "light" <i>Fidelio</i> in E major, which puts undue stress on the timpani. (It is possible that it is the same performance included with the complete opera, in which case the transfer, or mastering, may be at fault.) Most successful of the four is the <i>Leonore</i> No. 3, which is cast on a scale to support the Klemperer treatment. It also is magnificently controlled to its climax.
Boieldieu: Concerto in C. Handel: Concerto in E flat. Debussy: <i>Danses Sacrées et Profanes</i> . Marie-Claire Jamet, harp; with the Orchestre de Paul Kuentz de Paris. Vox PL 512-730, \$4.98; stereo STPL 512-730, \$4.98.	Had Nicanor Zabaleta not been heard in a previous recording of the Boieldieu Concerto, it would command much more interest than it does in this able but hardly exceptional performance by Mme. Jamet. The Handel has also had its share of recordings in various guises (organ as well as harp) and there is no lack of qualified performances of the Debussy either. However, for those to whom the particular combination of works offered by Mme. Jamet may have an appeal, the performances may be recommended as technically expert, well-coordinated with the associated instruments, and successfully reproduced. Lacking, however, is the special kind of vitality and imagination provided for this literature by such performers as Grandjany and Zabaleta.
Britten: <i>Matinées Musicales</i> , <i>Soirées Musicales</i> . Respighi: <i>Rossiniana</i> . Robert Zeller conducting. Westminster XWN 19073, \$4.98; stereo WST 17073, \$5.98.	Zeller's ballet background has given him some useful ideas on the proper tempo for these suites (adapted in all cases from material by Rossini) and the results are, to that extent, attractive. However, for listening, and especially for home listening, something more is required, and that something more—spirited execution by the orchestra, a superior sense of phrasing, detail, and dynamics—is largely absent from this record. It is all too superficial and lacking in real finesse to be considered competitive with versions of the past by Désormière, etc. However, it may be noted that no version of any of the works is currently listed in the Schwann catalogue.
Clementi: Symphonies in D and B major; Concerto in C. Chamber Orchestra conducted by Alberto Zedda; with Gino Gorini pianist. Disco Angelicum LPA 2932, (mono only).	Beethoven's esteem for the works of Clementi is legendary, for reasons that became general knowledge when Vladimir Horowitz recorded a group of his sonatas on RCA Victor LM 1902. Those with a curiosity about Clementi's inclination as a composer for orchestra will find abundant evidences of it in this importation from Italy, especially in the adaptation of his sonatas of 1794 as a "concerto." It defines a good deal of the score of the piano and orchestra of the C-major concerto-to-come of Beethoven, though dealing little in its range of content. It is given a performance of relevant lightness and spirit by Gorini, who has obviously applied himself to mastering the style, its embellishments, passage work, etc. Zedda shapes an orchestral background of appropriate dynamic range, also doing well with the symphonies. Of these, the B-major is the more adventurous, with a slow movement of real distinction. The recording is sufficient for the needs of the music.
Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 (<i>From the New World</i>). Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Deutsche Grammophon LPM 138-922, \$5.98; stereo SLPM 138-922, \$5.98.	Karajan's work with the Berlin Philharmonic is consistently high in performing quality, and this example is typical of that standard: meticulously crafted and full of superior technical detail. However, it does not sound to me that it is a score with which Karajan has a profound acquaintance, or about which he has very strong convictions. The largo is the most successful of the four, a tribute in part to the excellence of the solo instrumentalists, and the scherzo is also rhythmically alive. However, both the first and the last movements are lacking in the kind of propulsion inherent in them, and the treatment is sectionalized. Whether this results from short "takes" being made into edited tapes, or is inherent in the conception itself, the result is the same—uneven, non-consecutive interpretation.
Haydn: Symphonies Nos. 44 (<i>Trauer</i>) and No. 59 (<i>Passione</i>); Overture to <i>Armida</i> . Leslie Jones conducting the London Little Orchestra. Nonesuch H-1032, \$2.50; stereo H-71032, \$2.50.	The rather empty program notes rephrase all the familiar information about Haydn but tell us nothing at all about Leslie Jones. As he is not included among the twenty-four Joneses listed in the English "Who's Who in Music," the presumption must be that he is young. He has, in any case, a strong and steady sympathy for the spirit as well as the style of these works, and does especially well with the <i>Trauer</i> . It is hardly to his advantage that the last performances hereabouts of <i>La Passione</i> were Hermann Scherchen's with the Philadelphia Orchestra; but, setting aside this comparison, Jones does more than commendably. What may seem a rather light, sometimes weak, bass may be simply a lack of sufficient numbers to provide the necessary support.
Prokofiev: Concertos Nos. 1 and 2. Isaac Stern, violin; with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia ML 6635, \$4.98; stereo MS 6635, \$5.98. Concerto No. 1 Erick Friedman, violin; with the Boston Symphony conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Concerto No. 5. Lorin Hollander, piano; with Leinsdorf and BSO. RCA Victor LM 2732, \$4.98; stereo LSC 2732, \$5.98.	Whether combining the beginning of a Prokofiev series with the promotion of two of RCA's younger performers multiplies or divides interest is debatable, and to be decided, in the final analysis, by the individual purchaser. What is not debatable is the superiority of Stern and Ormandy's performance of the first concerto to Friedman and Leinsdorf's. Though Stern is decidedly more of a "name" than his young colleague, he yields a substantial share of the prominence given to the violin by RCA Victor. The Columbia result is inherently more suitable to Prokofiev's purpose, which is to make the violin a part of the total texture, than is the RCA. In addition, Stern has a subtler, non-virtuoso conception to purvey, and does it superbly. So far as the piano part of the pairing is concerned, Hollander performs with energy and decision, qualities that become it well. Here, too, it strikes me that the piano has a disproportionate place in the total sound. The orchestra can be heard in the tutti, or when it is used in full against the piano; but passages with orchestral solos or lightly scored ensembles tend to sound remote.
Rózsa: Concerto. Jascha Heifetz, violin; with the Dallas Symphony conducted by Walter Hendl. Benjamin: <i>Romantic Fantasy</i> . William Primrose, viola; Jascha Heifetz, violin; and the RCA Victor conducted by Izler Solomon. RCA Victor LM 2767, \$4.98; stereo LSC 2767, \$5.98.	Each of these works is in the category of a "vehicle" for the skills of the principal performer, and like most such constructions, contains the kind of fittings preferred by the operator. In the case of the Rózsa, which was built for the purpose, it runs to equal amounts of plush (melodic matter) and inlay (display matter). The Benjamin was not written for Heifetz and Primrose, but might have been, so well does it suit them. Each was individually available before, but the pairing is new. —IRVING KOLODIN.