

A New Trial for *Onegin*—Szell-Suk

THOSE who contend that there is an evening of absorbing musical theater in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* may have a weight of circumstantial evidence to support their case, but it is still to be proven in the court of opinion that convenes at the Metropolitan Opera House. Considering that it can muster a famous scene for soprano in the first act as well as solos and duets for the baritone, a celebrated tenor air in the second, and an opportunity for the basso to roll profoundly in the third while reminders recur of Tchaikovsky's pre-eminence as a ballet composer, the case for the defense would seem overwhelming.

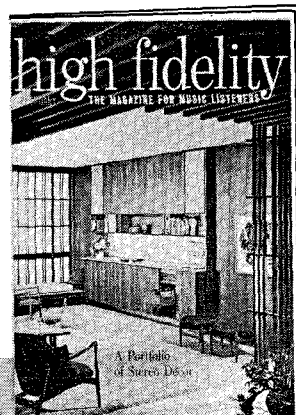
When the issue was last argued (in 1958) the presentation for a favorable verdict was less than convincing. Currently the defense has enlisted one of its most persuasive counsels—a veritable Portia—to make its opening and closing plea. Apt as she is in criminal cases (such as *Aida* vs. the state of Egypt, or the killing in self-defense of Baron Scarpia), Leontyne Price has yet to prove her equal abilities in domestic relations. These, after all, turn on delicate nuances of character as well as a grasp of situation, and Miss Price was at a disadvantage in dealing with the wavery character of the youthful Tatiana. She excels in broad strokes of musical logic, which do not yet suffice for a certain letter of intention addressed to *Onegin*. There was greater weight in her closing address of renunciation, but the whole case could have been better prepared.

Among new attorneys who were gathered to strengthen Tchaikovsky's case were William Dooley, who has

not previously appeared in this court, in the title role; Jess Thomas, well known for briefs on behalf of German clients, and Lili Chookasian, a dependable barrister for any case involving delinquent mothers, suspect aunts, dotting nurses, etc. Dooley showed excellent vocal endowment, seriousness of purpose, and composure under trying circumstances. He is undoubtedly destined to win a majority of decisions on which he goes to trial, for he showed strong powers of persuasion in dealing with a case as complex as *Onegin*'s. Thomas's appeal for Lenski was intelligently made, though it is questionable that he is as yet able to bear so heavy a burden as this plea.

ONE could go on in similar vein to apply such imagery to the renewed efforts of Rosalind Elias as Olga and Giorgio Tozzi as Prince Gremin. But this would leave out of accounting the non-atmospheric effect, in key assignments, of Henry Butler as stage director and Thomas Schippers as his musical coequal. What this *Onegin* lacked was not so much malleable vocal materials—Miss Price has much of that, as do Messrs. Dooley and Thomas—as a pervasive sense of style, or an informed point of view, or even a show of great personal conviction, from those charged with instructing the others in their undertakings. As an example: the changes of tempo that make Tatiana's Letter Scene the fluid thing it is were only mechanically provided, while the slow tempo for Prince Gremin's air brought it to the brink of inanition, at the same time putting difficulties in the way of Tozzi's articulation of it. Furthermore, an insistent three-four is not the way to make the waltz of Act II really dance (aside entirely from the lacks of Zachary Solov's choreography). So, in the end, the verdict must be "Not Proven," with a dismissal "without prejudice" for some future argument on the same subject.

For those who may have speculated how the Metropolitan audience might fare without the guidance of the experienced applauders in the standing space, the standeeless *Otello* (on the day of the Great Flap, or how two weeks became one afternoon) provided a convincing answer: very well. There was abundant enthusiasm for James McCracken's *Otello*, which becomes more remarkable, performance by performance, for some aspects of Leonie Rysanek's *Desdemonna*, and for the



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effort of Anselmo Colzani as Iago. To be sure, the end of the Credo passed without an outburst, but this could have related either to Nello Santi's pressing on to the next measure, or just to discrimination. (Its range puts a searching light on Colzani's vocal shortcomings.)

George Szell and Josef Krips were in agreement last week that the preferable way to open an orchestral program in mid-February is with a Weber overture. Their choices resulted in one performance of the *Oberon* that was dazzling for evenness, brio, and truly aerial horn calls; the other was effortful and plodding. The difference had to do not so much with which conductor directed which work but, rather, which conductor directed which orchestra.

As the leader of his own visiting Cleveland ensemble, Szell was rewarded with a quality of effort that was not merely cohesive but wholehearted. There have been notable performances of the *Oberon* in times past by Koussevitzky, Toscanini, Walter, Rodzinski, Barbirolli, among others; but rarely one in which the art of orchestral performance was so plainly the concern of every man on the platform. It may be that the Cleveland is currently the only orchestra in America in which such a totality of application is matched with the kind of direction to make the most of it.

There was, in addition to a beautifully clear, skilfully drawn Mozart No. 34, a new soloist of quality in Josef Suk, who is this generation's inheritor

of the name celebrated in Czech musical history. He is, furthermore, a violinist and a very good one, from the evenly sonorous tone he draws to the cultivated, intensely musical use he makes of it. By the measure of some more flamboyant performers, his style is all poise, finesse, and economy, in which nothing is done for show, but all that needs to be done for artistry is available to him. A degree more of temperament and fire would have been welcome, but the Dvořák concerto, which was his choice for an introductory work, hardly invites it. Szell's novelty was a set of variations by Walton on a theme of Hindemith, which accomplished its objective artfully.

Once he had persuaded the Philharmonic to go his way rather than theirs in the *Euryanthe* overture, Krips had a more harmonious time of it with Claudio Arrau as soloist in the D-minor Concerto of Brahms. There are not many contemporaries who can muster the breadth of sound for the trills and octaves of the opening movement while dealing still in sonority rather than noise. His is a big conception in every way—big in sound, big in style, and big in the dimensions assigned to each section—and he sustained it admirably throughout. Krips was also sympathetic to Szell's partiality to Walton, his selection being the first symphony of the early Thirties. It speaks clearly of several things, but most particularly of the esteem then enjoyed by the symphonies of Sibelius.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

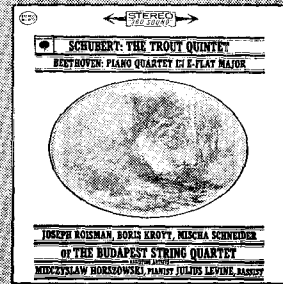
Double Dialogue Homage to Robert Frost

By Muriel Rukeyser

IN agony saying: "The last night of his life,
My son and I in the kitchen: At half-past one
He said, 'I have failed as a husband. Now my wife
Is ill again and suffering.' At two
He said, 'I have failed as a farmer, for the sun
Is never there, the rain is never there.'
At three he said, 'I have failed as a poet who
Has never not once found my listeners.
There is no sense to my life.' But then he heard me out.
I argued point by point. Seemed to win. Won.
He spoke to me once more when I was done:
'Even in argument, father, I have lost.'
He went and shot himself. Now tell me this one thing:
Should I have let him win then? Was I wrong?"

To answer for the land for love for song
Arguing life for life even at your life's cost.

THE SOUND OF GENIUS



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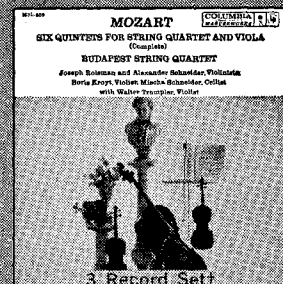
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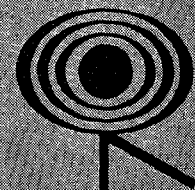


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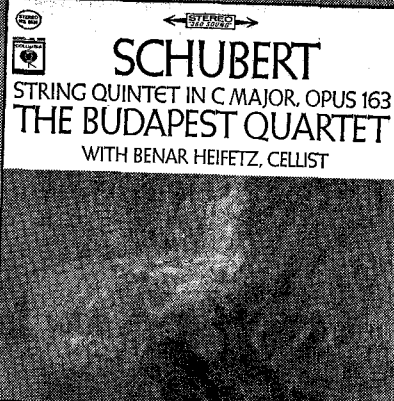
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His Wagner records are universally recognized monuments, and his Mahler has been acclaimed for its warmth and humanity. Under his baton Von Suppé overtures have breathtaking zest and sparkle, whereas his Schubert and Mendelssohn display delicacy and affection. Georg Solti is a musician of contrasts as he is a man of contrasts. In conversation, his eyes have a gentle, elf-like gleam, yet on the podium he seems at times to be possessed by a demon. Critics have compared his brilliance, intensity and accuracy with Toscanini, while they evoke the name of his other great inspiration—Furtwängler, when speaking of his warmth, sweep and nobility. Perhaps Solti's greatness is the fusion of

these musical and human virtues. Certainly his stature among contemporary conductors is universally recognized, so much so in fact that he is the most honored conductor in the history of recorded music. He alone has received more than once the most sought after award in the record world—the French Academy du Disque *Prix de la Plus Grande Realisation Phonographique Mondiale*. It would be historic to have twice received this award for the world's finest phonographic accomplishment, but Solti has received it no less than four times.

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Ingmar Bergman and his wife—"They live in, and with, music. . . ."

—Lennart Nilsson.

INGMAR BERGMAN, THE LISTENER

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By OSCAR HEDLUND

IN the script of his film *The Silence*, Ingmar Bergman discloses a great love and passion that he most often only hints at:

On the desk are few sheets of paper completely covered with Ester's microscopic handwriting. Certain words are in block letters, however: HADJEK = soul, MAGROV = anxiety, fear, KRASCJ = joy. After this she had written: "We listened to Bach. A moment of peace. I felt no fear of dying. . . ."

This fragment of a sketch from Bergman's film-making says everything about a basic need always to be found with Bergman—namely, music. Music, often that of Johann Sebastian Bach, has an important role in his films. This fact shows clearly in *The Silence*. Here Ing-

The author of this article is music editor of *Rosteri Radio/TV*, official magazine of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation.

mar Bergman has replaced the musical intimations and symbols of his earlier films with thick, passionate strokes of the brush. The word *Bach* appears intensely in the strange, incomprehensible language spoken by the people in the town of Timoka. Sturdy, confident harpsichord music suddenly shines forth through the silence of God and the solitude of the people. Ingmar Bergman's visions give us no consolation; this he assigns to the evangelist Johann Sebastian Bach. *The Silence* conveys the message that the music conveys to Ingmar Bergman: "We listened to Bach. A moment of peace. I felt no fear of dying. . . ."

I visited the home of Ingmar Bergman and his wife Kabi Laretei. They live in Djursholm, one of Stockholm's most exclusive suburbs. Bergman and his wife, however, judge their surroundings by other standards: light, air, silence. From their home a great meadow is visible; it seems to have detached itself from a pine forest. They live on a back