

En Garde, Vanguard!

By HOWARD SHANET

IT GIVES ME special displeasure to comment on the Vanguard recording of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *A Night in the Tropics* (Vanguard 1103, \$4.98; stereo VRS 2141, \$5.98.) because the composition (which I revived in 1955, after it had lain silent for almost a century) is dear to me. In my opinion, the Vanguard issue represents a corruption of the composer's intentions. Those of us who have championed the cause of American nineteenth-century music are dismayed that the first complete recording of this historic work is inadequate, for it means that an opportunity has been wasted to remove the condescending attitude that prevails toward an important part of our national cultural heritage. It is all the more irritating because the notes on the Vanguard record jacket, signed by S. W. Bennett, make pretensions to authenticity and scholarliness which are not borne out by the facts.

A principal beauty of Gottschalk's score is the breathtakingly grand scale of the orchestration. Vanguard has condensed the orchestra to ordinary size, mainly by omitting about one-third of the required wind instruments. The result is something like playing a Berlioz or Mahler symphony with a salon orchestra.

The record jacket claims that "the orchestral forces for which [Gottschalk] planned the symphony were left somewhat fluid." This is inaccurate. Gottschalk's autograph manuscript in the New York Public Library is as precise as it is original in its requirements; the score, reading from top to bottom, calls for: piccolo, E-flat clarinet, flutes, oboes, a whole section of clarinets divided into four parts, bassoons, cavalry-trumpet in E-flat, a whole section of cornets divided into four parts, trumpets, horns, whole sections of trombones and euphoniums divided into four parts each, ophicleide, bass tuba, strings, and percussion. In view of this, it borders on impudence for the record annotator to call attention to "the instrumentation, like the use of a solo trumpet near the beginning and near the end, lending an impressionist color"—particularly since Gottschalk at those points scored not for a trumpet but for a cornet.

In Gottschalk's manuscript the pages containing the last thirty-six measures are missing. The Vanguard jacket comments on this problem: "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. The present performance is based on the score in the New York Public Library, Music Division, with the band parts condensed and the last thirty-six measures arranged by Gaylord Hatton, under the supervision of Maurice Abravanel, from this library score and the two-piano version."

These are imposing sentences, but to one who knows the subject they make little sense. There is no "recently discovered" piano score; on the contrary, a pieced-together piano version of the first movement was for a long time the only known score of the work. As early as 1937 Quinto Maganini used it as the basis for an attempted reconstruction which Richard Korn subsequently recorded. 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. A few years later John Kirkpatrick of Cornell University, who is a Gottschalk enthusiast, made a brilliant transcription of the symphony for two pianos, modestly acknowledging his "grateful borrowing from the unfinished arrangement for two or three pianos by N. R. Espadero."

The Vanguard forces presumably con-

densed their version of the symphony from these sources, particularly the composer's incomplete orchestral score and Mr. Kirkpatrick's two-piano arrangement, of which they obtained copies from the New York Public Library. I challenge them to produce the "recently discovered piano score" which purportedly "has enabled the entire work to be reconstructed."

What really permitted me to reconstruct the work when I conducted its first modern performance on May 5, 1955, with the Columbia University Orchestra was my discovery among the holdings of the New York Public Library of an additional score, apparently prepared for rehearsing the wind instrument players for one of Gottschalk's performances between 1859 and 1866. Since this score does contain the final thirty-six measures for all the wind instruments, I was able to fill in those measures with some certainty that I was following the composer's intentions. But the makers of the present Vanguard recording have apparently been unaware of the very existence of this additional score; indeed, as recently as November of 1963, even the Music Division of the New York Public Library was unaware of its significance because (as I pointed out to their representative at that time) the score has been incorrectly catalogued as "*Andante (portion)*" whereas it is really a complete score of the wind tutti for the entire work.

AS A matter of fact, it was I who first proposed the Gottschalk recording to Vanguard in the spring of 1961 when they wrote to me, and to a number of other musicians, requesting suggestions of American works to record. They received with particular enthusiasm the idea of my conducting a recording of Gottschalk's *Night in the Tropics*, which had attracted the attention of the public and the press in two performances I had already conducted.

Shortly thereafter Vanguard decided instead to do the recording with the Utah Symphony Orchestra because, as an executive officer of the company eventually admitted to me, the Utah orchestra had received a subsidy that would help finance such a large-scale recording.

In my subsequent dealings with Vanguard it soon became apparent that they were not prepared to record the piece under my direction. Since I felt that my guidance was essential if my reconstruction of the composer's intentions was not to be jeopardized, I forbade Vanguard to use my copyrighted materials. Operating within this limitation, Vanguard turned out the present recording, with its façade of authenticity. They have succeeded in obscuring Gottschalk's creative imagination.

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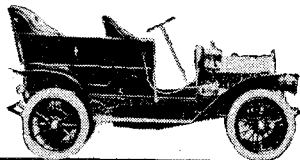
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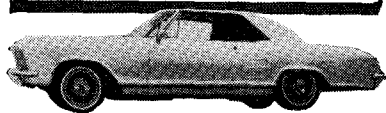


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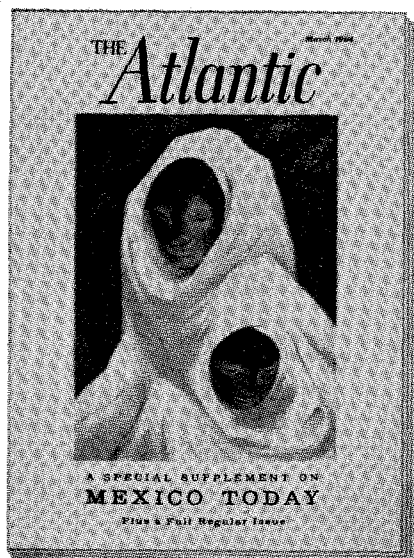
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WHEN last we visited Mr. Frederick Fennell, he had just finished recording Volume I of *The Civil War*, as related in the music of the time, faithfully inscribed by instruments 100 years old in this Centennial year. Now we come upon him, (*The Civil War, Gettysburg to Appomatox*, Vol. II, Mercury LPS 2-902, \$11.98; stereo only) as we did in March, 1962, up to his baton in a new batch of wartime quicksteps, polkas, waltzes, gallops, bugle calls, twelve-pounders, Napoleons, bursts of grape and canister, all as painstakingly recorded on original instruments (including Civil War cannon) as in Volume I, which took us from Fort Sumter to Gettysburg and pleased us with its authenticity, simplicity, and honestly reported musical fact. No fuss or production hokum in the second and final volume, either; Volume II is every bit as persuasive as the first, a genuine experience in the indigenous music of the bloodiest war ever fought on the North American continent, precisely a century ago.

Once again Martin Gabel lends his rich voice to a description of the terrible munitions of war as they pour right into your marrow via the most terrifying stereo sounds these old ears have heard. Dear heaven, how any man stood his ground against the brutal cannonading you hear on these amazing recordings is simply beyond a modern man listening in the utter safety of Harvey's best stereo booth. Shattering artillery explodes—on the very field of Gettysburg, then the echo smashes from Cemetery Ridge and you involuntarily duck your head as though the blast were coming right back through the three enormous speakers, tearing into your blood and bones and flesh.

As before, the four sides include band music of Union and Confederate troops, played on original instruments with their over-the-shoulder straight bells and hazardous pitch. The musical sounds of conflict are all there, played from original arrangements that sometimes trick you; yet they have that strangely authentic ring of sheet music. All of the fancy arrangers in the world working all hours of the night cannot do better than an original melody as it first caught on and was sung or played by its creators. The Eastman Wind Ensemble, and Mr. Fennell especially, cannot be credited too highly for sticking to the truth, in instrument and note.

Best of the band music this time are "Twinkling Stars Quick Step," "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming," "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning," and our



old Irish washerwoman, "Garry Owen." The sung songs include such immortals as "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground," "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," "Marching Through Georgia," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Yet, the songs are clichés by now, something like mercantile Christmas carols drowning you by repetition in a crowded department store. The band music with its authentic instrumentation and score is no cliché at all but a marvelous revelation to a Civil War buff who listens totally absorbed.

The package is, then, complete with this second batch of four sides. Nothing quite like it has ever come our way before, nor is it likely to. The ring of the truly authentic is here and the painstaking genius of Mr. Fennell leaves us all in his profoundest debt.

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