

Echoes from London—Karajan's Nine—*Così*

IN A WEEK that offered a range of music from song to symphony and comedy to tragedy, the highest, noblest expression of its function came from London and the echoes of the state funeral for Sir Winston Churchill that filtered through radio and TV. Gathered with the mourners that thronged the streets were Chopin and Mendelssohn, Handel and Julia Ward Howe, each adding a note to the solemn chorus of lament and homage. If the conception, as has been said, was Sir Winston's own, the execution of it was worthy not only of the plan but also of the man.

Among more temporal matters, the most consequential was Herbert von Karajan's conducting of the First and Ninth Symphonies of Beethoven, which concluded a week-long, five-part review of the whole sequence by the Berlin Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall. It not only crystalized much about his treatment of the Nine; it also held up a glass to that classic sequence through which could be seen, dark or bright as preferred, the many facets of his musicianship and the single one of his personality. It matched, to the extremes of simplicity and complexity in that marvelous span of art, a comprehensive sense of line, texture, contour and tonal relationships, but an essentially limited appreciation of the ethos, pathos, and mores Beethoven wove into them.

The sum of it was a week of glorification of Beethoven the musical scientist, and a week of frustration for Beethoven the poet. Of the works I heard, the two qualities struck me as most nearly in balance in the First Symphony, for the reason, perhaps, that it is in the main a rejoicing of musical powers by a young man who has just discovered the orchestra. They were most widely at variance in the *Pastoral*, which glided by as on a series of Kodachrome views, suggesting less a leisurely stroll than a time-conscious spurt. The performance of the Second made much of abrupt contrasts and flashing surges of sound while missing by more than a little the humors and the spirit they were meant to convey.

For the Ninth, it appeared for a while that Karajan would gather all his forces, marshal all his resources for a compelling résumé of the elemental force in this work. What he was capable of in it was new neither to New York nor to Carnegie Hall, where he had conducted a series of performances with the Philharmonic in 1958. But after a tautly drawn first movement and an insistently

restless Scherzo, it struck me that the interests of the performance were more in the resonant purity of the ten double basses (and how they played the enunciation of the chorale theme in unison with the cello!), in the relaxed perfection of the horn solo in the trio of the Scherzo (it sounded to be the work of Alan Civil, the English virtuoso who spends half a year annually in this ensemble), and in the shining line of filigree articulated by the virtuoso string section in the slow movement, than in the emotion they conveyed. In the end, for all the sizable structure he reared, one remained more conscious of what about it was Karajan's Ninth, rather than Beethoven's.

For his chorus, Karajan once more utilized the Westminster Choir, and its present membership gave him back all he asked of it. In addition to such familiar singers as Sándor Kónya, tenor, Yi-Kwei Sze, bass, and Lili Chookasian, mezzo, the solo quartet included Gundula Janowitz, a soprano of European repute not previously heard in this country. Hers is a sizable sound, rather coarse in this context, but with the kind of power conductors like to dominate the ensemble.

As an ensemble, the Berlin Philharmonic has changed by almost 50 per cent since it was first heard with Karajan in this country a decade ago. Its distinction and pride remains the large and well matched string section (the roster for the tour shows seventy names), whose membership would seem to constitute an élite within an élite. The woodwind and brass are less appealing to the American ear, though Karajan's preferences in doubling for Beethoven contributed to some thickness in sound. It is, under Karajan, a marvelously responsive instrument, which occupies something of a middle ground between the two other orchestras with which he has been primarily identified: the English Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic. The capacity audiences and the enthusiasm they generated left no doubt there would be more of the same anytime they reappeared.

On the theory, perhaps, that one good deed deserved another opportunity, Rudolf Bing has persuaded Alfred Lunt to restore the Metropolitan's *Così fan Tutte* to the conditions of elegant amusement that prevailed when the Rolf Gérard-Lunt production was new a dozen years ago. It had, in the meantime, first become less elegant and then less amusing as normal attrition led to a restaging by Carl Ebert. There were high hopes of

good things to come when the eminent actor-director stepped before the Metropolitan curtain to repeat his bit of pre-performance pantomime (lighting fanciful "candles" and motioning a cougher to desist), but they were only intermittently fulfilled.

Such veterans of Lunt's original staging as Richard Tucker (Ferrando) and Roberta Peters (Despina) were not only as good as they were then, but better. Theodor Uppmann's talents as a *farceur* and Mozart baritone have blossomed into a most likable, well-sung Guglielmo, and Donald Gramm, as a replacement for the indisposed Frank Guarrera, showed himself to be quite the best Don Alfonso the company has had since John Brownlee's retirement. With the amount of pliable voice at his disposal, and a handsome presence to go with it, Gramm could have an outstanding career as a Mozart singer.

But the women . . . "Ah, what women!" as Guglielmo and Ferrando sigh in the first scene. Neither Leontyne Price as Fiordiligi nor Rosalind Elias as Dorabella matched the prior standards of Eleanor Steber and Blanche Thebom either as voices for Mozart's music or as bodies for Lunt's action. Neither has a suitable acting technique to convey the elegance or the amusement that are inherent in Lunt's procedures, resulting in much that was awkward and unfunny. Even worse, neither has the vocal character or technical discipline to meet Mozart's requirements acceptably, let alone with distinction. When they sang together, as they are required to do at considerable lengths in this work, the sound came out opposite to the way it should; in her middle range, Miss Price has the heavy, broad sound of the mezzo, Miss Elias the lighter, more compact quality of the soprano.

To her credit, Miss Price made a musicianly effort to lighten the broad strokes she uses to paint her Verdi characterizations, and some of the legato singing was quite beautiful. But she didn't command the flexibility to manipulate the turns or embellishments of "Come scoglio" in Act I, or the ease in florid singing to combine accuracy with intensity in "Per pietà" in Act II. Out of consideration for her limitations, conductor Joseph Rosenstock tranquilized the latter to near practice tempo and in so doing, deprived it of the fervor and dramatic purpose which Steber, for all its difficulties, managed to preserve. Miss Elias left the impact of her important aria similarly in abeyance, which meant that, in both parts, the weight of "sincerity" that Mozart conceived as counterbalance to the clowning of the men was absent. Probably some broad strokes of posture and action that Lunt

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Accent on Architecture

BRAVO! YOUR FEATURE "The New Architecture of U.S. Cities" was excellent. It is an indication of a growing realization by the public that the city is not only a place to live but also a place of immense beauty. More esthetics and less anti-architecture will help produce a more livable city.

ARNOLD M. MASLOW, President,
Organization of Rutgers
Planners.

New Brunswick, N.J.

THE DISCUSSIONS of the apparent directions of American architecture are gratifying to read. It is only by a sharpening of the public consciousness of the role that the ordinary individual plays in the shaping of the man-made elements of his environment that any improvement in it will take place.

The ultimate responsibility for the quality of architecture in this country lies with the citizen. It is he who, as a taxpayer, philanthropist, and corporate shareholder, foots the bill for and suffers the consequences of today's construction. The whimsical projects of individual financial titans are a thing of the past. As never before, the appearance of buildings directly represents the esthetic will of the community.

Despite the hullabaloo over the paucity of "greats" known outside the profession, there are literally hundreds of artistically and technically superior architects living out frustrating lives in this country today. Their ability to provide the euphoric ambience so hypocritically prayed for by Joe Blow is not forthcoming because Joe, who pays the piper, calls a different tune, namely mood music to match his indigestion brought on by a mixture of gasoline and pizza pies.

ALLEN C. PARRETTE, AIA.

Wilton, Conn.

AS YOU PROBABLY have heard from many people by now, the photograph at the top of page 24 in your January 23 issue is not the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences but a prototype building constructed by the School Construction Systems Development on the Stanford campus.

ROBERT W. BEYERS,
Director, News Service,
Stanford University.

Stanford, Calif.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A number of other readers also pointed out the error. SR is grateful to them and to Mr. Beyers for setting us straight.

MY PIECE ON New York architecture is quite misleading in one respect. In my text I quoted an unnamed architectural critic in Italy as referring to the kind of architecture represented by Lincoln Center as "Mussolini Modern." I did not elaborate on this comment—largely because I felt it was both unfair and premature. In any event, even if I were to agree that there were traces

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"Would you rather I went to some loan shark?"

of "Mussolini Modern" visible at Lincoln Center, I would not have chosen Philharmonic Hall as an illustration.

Yet that was the picture chosen by you, and the caption, supplied by someone on your staff, implied that "Mussolini Modern" was *my* term for Max Abramovitz's building. I was greatly disturbed to see the juxtaposition of that picture and that phrase, and I imagine that Max must have been even more disturbed. In fairness to him, I hope you will publish this correction.

PETER BLAKE, AIA,
Editor,
Architectural Forum.

New York, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Blake is right; the juxtaposition of caption and photograph was unfortunate and regrettable.

Justice by Press Release?

THE MADISON AVENUE METHODS employed by Amnesty International, as described in Irwin Ross's article "Rescuing the Forgotten Prisoners" [SR, Jan. 16], proves that "sweet are the uses of adverse publicity"—but it also poses the problem of means vs. ends.

Granted that the ends—the freeing of political prisoners—are good and desirable, the means suggest to me a sort of blackmail by press releases.

The idea of Justice abandoning her scales

and substituting the techniques of modern communications seems to bring the world even closer to the computerized age.

MRS. FRANK DUINO.

Index, Wash.

Recoil from Peyton Place

THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN at a Tucson high school has asked me to assure readers of SR that my statement, "I am told one class in a Tucson high school is 'studying' *Peyton Place*" [SR, Jan. 16], cannot refer to a typical situation. My information came from a pupil in the class referred to, but I am assured that it is neither a usual nor an authorized procedure to permit a class to choose the books it will study.

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH.

Tucson, Ariz.

The Poet's Eliot

T. S. ELIOT'S INSISTENCE that the poet should "be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory," was perhaps an unconscious expression of his oft-acknowledged debt to Dante, and John Ciardi's fresh analysis [SR, Jan. 23] of that debt could only have been written by a Dante scholar.

He has given your magazine its finest piece in months.

RONALD B. MARTINEZ,
University of Michigan.

Ann Arbor, Mich.