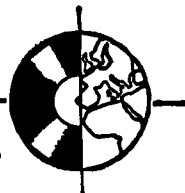


THE OTHER SIDE



Shostakovich Premiere, Boehm's "Wozzeck"

LONDONERS who filled the Albert Hall on October 9 to hear the visiting Moscow Philharmonic under Kyril Kondrashin were also privileged to witness the long-delayed confrontation of Russia's two greatest string virtuosos, David Oistrakh and Mstislav Rostropovich, who gave a truly magnificent performance of the Brahms Double Concerto. We were told that they had never before played together, in or out of the USSR, and one can only hope that this instrumental summit-meeting will not have passed unnoticed by one of our record companies, so that it may be repeated in studio surroundings!

Decca's October releases feature no fewer than four separate discs by Ansermet and the Suisse Romande devoted, respectively, to the music of Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Chabrier, and Debussy. It is true that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Ansermet's joining the staff of the Diaghilev Ballet, but Decca gives no special reason for this little "Festival of Ansermet." Its justification, in any case, lies in the musical distinction that the veteran Swiss conductor confers upon so varied a bill of fare. That he would be thoroughly at home in Chabrier (*España/Marche Joyeuse/Suite Pastorale/Danse Slave/Fête Polonoise*) and Debussy (*La Mer/Rhapsody for Clarinet/Khamma*) one knew from past experience, but the Mendelssohn Collection (*Italian Symphony/Hebrides/Ruy Blas/Melusina*) proves a source of unexpected delights, while the Berlioz program (*Carnaval Romain/Beatrice & Benedict/Corsair/Benvenuto Cellini/3 pieces from Damnation de Faust*) reveals not merely the accustomed sensitivity in matters of orchestral texture but also plenty of rhythmic vitality and a fine feeling for Berlioz's characteristic line.

After this extended visit to Geneva, it is the turn of Vienna to provide Decca with the remainder of this month's list. It includes a further installment, Vol. 4, of the company's projected ten-disc series devoted to the complete dances and marches of Mozart; as before, the Vienna Mozart Ensemble is directed by Willi Boskovsky, and the present, attractive volume is built around the nineteen Minuets, K.103, which have been split up into four separate sequences, interspersed with some later and more sophisticated Contredanses and the D-major March, K.445 (thought to belong to the splendid *Divertimento*, K.334). Three

more Viennese discs all feature the Weller Quartet. After their admired Beethoven and Brahms discs earlier this year, these players now turn to the fountain-head of the quartet literature and offer us Haydn's six "Russian" quartets, Op.33, spread over two discs—a wonderful set of works which they perform with outstanding skill and verve despite an occasional, slight want of flexibility. A twentieth-century coupling by the same group is unusual in that it features, along with Alban Berg's Op.3, the latest string quartet by Shostakovich (his Tenth) which has yet to be performed in public outside Russia. The composer offered this unusual form of "Western premiere" to the Weller after hearing their performance of his Eighth Quartet.

EMI's new stereo recording of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* has been eagerly awaited for many months, for this oratorio—which, Elgar claimed, "is the best of me"—has occupied a very special place in the affections of musical Britain since it was first performed under Hans Richter at the Birmingham Festival of 1900. Even if its pronounced Anglo-Catholic flavor may not be to everyone's taste, the beauty and sincerity of Elgar's response to the poem cannot be gainsaid; it receives here a fine performance under Sir John Barbirolli.

Among DGG and Archive recordings lately arrived from Germany, we welcome especially two twentieth-century operas new to stereo: Berg's *Wozzeck* and Ravel's *L'heure espagnole*. There has never before been a really satisfactory version on disc of Berg's masterpiece, although the opera is nowadays performed all over the world; fortunately DGG's two-disc album, conducted by Karl Böhm and featuring a strong cast led by Evelyn Lear and Fischer-Dieskau, makes handsome amends for past neglect. After the oppressive atmosphere of *Wozzeck*, Ravel's deliciously naughty one-act brings welcome relief, and there is much to admire in the performance directed by Lorin Maazel. Perhaps the casting is not ideal—the male voices seem insufficiently differentiated in character, and Jeanne Berbié's Concepcion hardly suggests a woman smouldering beneath her outward composure—while the recording misses a number of points in terms of "production" (I should like to see John Culshaw tackle it with Ansermet), but this is still a thoroughly enjoyable issue for the score is a gem, while singing and playing is highly accomplished.

—THOMAS HEINITZ.

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Telemann

Continued from page 81

recorder virtuoso, leads an ensemble called the Concerto Amsterdam on Telefunken. The DGC, labeled "First Complete Recording of this Delightful Work," was recorded about six months earlier than the Telefunken last year, but the Telefunken is available now *in toto*; the DGC release will not be completed until January.

Both sets were obviously made with the greatest care and commitment on the part of the respective participants, and the recorded sound in both upholds the high standards associated with these labels. The marked differences in the two interpretations, however, make the matter of preference simpler than one might have thought, for anyone who prefers one set over the other at any given point will almost certainly prefer it all the way through.

Wenzinger's broad, spacious conception is evident throughout the Archive set. Balance is immaculate and individual playing is excellent, as one would expect from a group including such distinguished instrumentalists as Hans-Martin Linde and Joseph Bopp, flutes (Linde playing the recorder as well), Eduard Müller, harpsichord, and Wenzinger himself as cellist. What is generally lacking, though, is the enlivening spirit one has also come to expect from this source. With Wenzinger's elegant, smooth-flowing handling, there is a bland effect, particularly in the chamber pieces, emphasized by rather unvaried dynamics (a gentlemanly mezzo-forte is maintained, for the most part) and matter-of-fact phrasing. The delicious minor-key episode in the last movement of the D minor Quartet in III (perhaps the finest single work in the entire sequence) is virtually thrown away here.

Those familiar with the glowing performances of that Quartet and the one in G (I) on earlier Archive single LPs will find the Telefunken versions of these and the other chamber works closer to (and occasionally surpassing) that standard. In general, the phrasing is more pointed in the Brüggén set, with far more dynamic variation. Where Wenzinger projects the charming *Bergerie*, which follows the Overture of the B-flat Suite in III as a placid pastoral, Brüggén brings it to life as a *pifa* with a faster tempo, more prominence for the oboes, and more angular phrasing.

Wenzinger's horns (Erich Penzel and Umberto Baccelli) are admirably crisp and clearly defined, but less stimulating in the E-flat Concerto (III) than the robust playing of Brüggén's Adriaan van Woudenberg and Hermann Baumann. The highly effective use of an organ instead of the harpsichord as con-

tinuo in the E-flat Trio (I) and the theorbo as continuo in the Violin Sonata (II) are additional credits for the Amsterdam team.

The keyboard player on that team, it should be noted, is Gustav Leonhardt. Maurice André is the brilliant trumpeter in the D-major Suite (II), Ad Mater and Lilian Lagaay are the oboes, Jaap Schroeder the fluent first violin, and Frans Vester and Joost Tromp the flutes. Brüggén's performance of the recorder part in the D minor Quartet represents his only participation as an instrumentalist.

When it comes to leadership, Brüggén (now thirty-one) may have a way to go before matching Wenzinger in subtlety and suavity. Some of his rhythmic accents in the orchestral suites are a little heavy and his (or the Telefunken engineers') idea of balance, with the winds very much forward, may not be to every listener's liking. There is, however, an animation in his readings that gives a hearty buoyancy to the material, with no lack of gentleness where called for, as in the exquisite *Grazioso* of the A major Concerto (I). In sum, the spirit shown in the Telefunken set makes it the inevitable choice.

THE third complete *Tafelmusik* is in the bargain price range and is not generally available in shops, so it may be considered apart from the other two. It is on the mail-order Musical Heritage Society label, played by a Viennese ensemble under the direction of a 25-year-old conductor named Dietfried Bernet. Unlike Brüggén and Wenzinger, Bernet has no identity as a chamber music player and his participation is limited to direction.

Bernet is no less vigorous than Brüggén, but a good deal less imaginative in such matters as phrasing and dynamics. Nor can it be said that his unfamiliar soloists are a match for those on either of the other teams. Bernet's most striking accomplice is Joseph Spindler, the trumpet in II, but he is up against the stunning Maurice André on Telefunken. Helmut Riessberger and Gerhard Perz, the flutes in I, are never less than competent, but seldom more, with nothing to suggest the suave blend of Linde and Bopp or Vester and Tromp. The horns in III, Robert Freund and Hannes Sungler, play neatly but without the confident flourish to bring out the majesty in the opening *Maestoso* of the Concerto in E flat.

But, if the MHS performances are not *Weltklasse*, their liveliness makes them far from unsatisfying. The recorded sound is very good, and the factor of economy is not to be entirely dismissed when we are talking about six records. Sides 2, 3 and 4 were labelled 4, 2 and 3, respectively, in my copy of II, but this

will be corrected in future pressings.

The aforementioned Brüggén and Linde, probably today's two outstanding practitioners on the recorder, are heard from again as the soloists in the two new recordings of the deservedly popular Suite in A minor. Oddly enough, this best-known of all Telemann's works has never been offered on DGG. Linde performs with the Collegium Aureum under Rolf Reinhardt's direction on an imported Harmonia Mundi disc. Brüggén is again on Telefunken, this time with the Southwest German Chamber Orchestra under Friedrich Tilegant.

Both performances are predictably excellent, with the Collegium Aureum the richer-sounding of the two neighboring German ensembles (Susanne Lautenbacher and Eduard Melkus are numbered among its violins). On the other side of the Harmonia Mundi release, Reinhardt leads what is evidently the first recording of Telemann's Suite in D for Viola da gamba and Strings, with Johannes Koch as soloist. It is a brilliant work, full of spirited bravura passages, and it gets a dazzling performance. Particularly impressive is the heady little section called *La Trompette*, just after the Overture. It is not "for the trumpet," as the English liner notes have it, but an irresistible *Trompetenstück* for strings, as identified in the German

text. The mono pressing received for review was disfigured by an obtrusive and hardly superficial swish, but the stereo edition is as attractive as the performance itself.

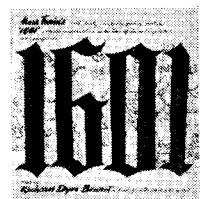
The other side of the Brüggén disc offers two shorter Telemann works: the Concerto in E minor for Recorder, Flute, and Strings and the *Ouverture des Nations anciennes et modernes* in G, for string orchestra. André Rieu conducts the Amsterdam Chamber Orchestra in these, with Brüggén and Frans Vester as soloists in the Concerto. The Concerto has already been well served on disc (by the Emil Seiler Chamber Group on Archive ARC-3109), but the new performance, despite a patch of out-of-tune violin playing, is *sui generis*, with more individuality in the solo work and a wild vitality in the *presto* finale that justifies the anonymous annotator's reference to Bartók and Kodály. The little Suite in G is not as broad in scope as its title might imply, caricaturing only the Germans, the Swedes, and the Danes. It is a handsome addition to the Telemann discography, though; M. Rieu shows a fine feeling for both its humor and its musical content, and the recorded sound is very good indeed. Obviously, Telemanniacs will have to have both of these fine discs.

Three of Telemann's strongest works are performed by the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under Rudolf Barshai on a new Angel release. The Suite in C that fills Side 1 is the *Hamburg Water Music* also recorded by Wenzinger on DCG (SR, December 8, 1962). The Concerto in B flat for Three Oboes, Three Violins, and Continuo is the one recorded by Hermann Tötcher and associates on Archive ARC-3109. This listener is hopelessly addicted to Tötcher's way with the oboe in this material, but must concede that the estimable Pierre Pierlot, who leads the oboes in the Barshai performance, is hardly less persuasive and has partners far more worthy of him. Moreover, stereo is a definite asset in this work. Finally, there is the Oboe Concerto in F minor, which has had several previous recordings, but none so stylish as this one, with Evgeni Nepalov as soloist.

The Wenzinger recording of the *Water Music* has given so much pleasure that one feels something like disloyalty in enthusing over the new version, but the vigor of Barshai's reading and the spectacular playing of his ensemble put this record in a very special class, and not just in the Telemann discography. Personally, I like the warmth of the Wenzinger version, especially in the sections featuring the viola da gamba and recorders (Barshai makes do with flutes and cellos), but I wouldn't think of doing without this marvelous new one.

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Music to My Ears

Continued from page 71

pretive intentions, disposed to utilize all his considerable equipment for the exposition of music rather than the exhibition of technique. There are still rawness and crudities in his achievements—a tendency to overpower rather than persuade in such a work as the Beethoven sonata, a little lack of the full range of colors to make the sixth sonata of Scriabin as persuasive as it can be—but these are all excesses of virtues that need but to be refined and coordinated to make Loewenthal the exciting musician-performer he promises to become. The associated pianist in the Bartok was Ronit Amir (Mrs. Loewenthal), and the percussionists were the peerless Saul Goodman and his able disciple, Morris Lang.

Of all the forms of music in which Bela Bartok composed—and there are very few that he missed—the category for which he is least known is the vocal. To judge from the group of songs which Eugene Ormandy performed for the first time in New York at the opening concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra's Philharmonic Hall series, this is not for lack of talent or the ability to make the voice fulfil an expressive function. Doubtless

these products of 1916 (they bear opus number 15 and were not published until after his death) will be characterized by some as conservative, retrogressive or—worst of all—reactionary, but what does it matter now whether they were written in 1905, 1915, or 1895, as long as they embody the kind of quality—Bartok quality—that they do?

Each is a mood piece concerned with some aspect of love—imaginary, erotic, reflective—and the texts are so far from distinguished that no authorship has been traced. They show Bartok still to be dazzled by the glow of some brighter names of the time—Debussy and Strauss especially—but feeling his way, nevertheless, to an identity of his own. The suitably pastel orchestrations were made, after Bartok's death, by his friend and colleague Zoltan Kodaly. Carolyn Stanford, a new mezzo to these surroundings, sang them with fine perception of mood and content, if with a vocal sound that was a little breathy at my point of hearing. The program served Ormandy's retrospective purpose (commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the composer's death) with finely shaped performances of the early "Portraits," the first piano concerto (Gyorgy Sandor was the soloist), and the late "Concerto for Orchestra." —IRVING KOLODIN.

LETTERS TO THE RECORDINGS EDITOR

The American Kundrys

IRVING SCHWERKE's letter in the September 25 issue gives rise to an interesting point. Edyth Walker was a teacher of Irene Dalis. Is it possible that Kundry was one of the roles they studied?

To answer the question raised by that letter, Minnie Saltzmann-Stevens (Bloomington, Ill., 1874-Milan, 1950) sang Kundry at Bayreuth in 1911-13. And if Olive Fremstad is considered an American singer (born in Sweden, she was raised in America and did not return to Europe until she was twenty-three), she was surely the greatest of American Kundrys.

ALAN MARK SILBERGELD.

St. Louis, Mo.

AS MR. SCHWERKE's letter and your postscript conclude, not many Americans have performed the role of Kundry. Some additions to the list are: Marion Weed (Met, January 7, 1904), Florence Wickham (Savage English Opera, Boston, October 19, 1904), Minnie Saltzmann-Stevens (Bayreuth, 1911 and 1912; Chicago Opera 1914), Cyrena Van Gordon (Chicago Opera, 1922-23), Anna Balos (Milan, Scala, 1948), Grace Hoffman (Stuttgart, 1958). It is also possible that some of the young Americans active in Europe (Marion Lippert and Lenore Glickman come readily

to mind) are being heard in the role.
CHARLES JAHANT,
Landover Hills, Md.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The editor's note made mention only of recent Kundrys. As the citations in the letters at hand indicate, there have been many "American" Kundrys relative to the frequency with which "Parsifal" is performed, far too many for a reference to the singer described as "the first American Kundry" to be a mere oversight.*

"Etudes" by Rubinstein

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R. C. JACKSON.

Chicago, Ill.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Doubtless the first thing necessary would be to get Rubinstein into a studio with this project in mind. That RCA Victor would be happy to issue it hardly needs saying.*

Shure's "Diabelli"

MR. RIEDE, whose letter appeared in the September 25 Recordings issue, may be advised that Leonard Shure did remake the Diabelli Variations. Since the second recording (Epic LC-3382) was deleted only