

RECORDINGS REPORTS II: Miscellaneous LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

REPORT

Beethoven: Trio in B flat, Op. 97. Josef Suk, violin; Jan Panenka, piano; and Josef Chuchro, cello. Crossroads 22 16 0021, \$2.49; stereo, 22 16 0022, \$2.49.

Busoni: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*. Peter Serkin and Richard Goode, pianos. Reger: Sonata in A minor, Op. 116. Mischa Schneider, cello, and Peter Serkin, piano. Columbia ML 6291, \$4.79; stereo MS 6891, \$5.79.

Goodman, J.: Quintet (1954). Piston: Three Pieces (1925). Krenek: *Pentagram* (1957). The Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet, Lyricord LL 158, \$4.98; stereo LLST 7158, \$5.95.

Honegger: Sonata No. 1. Webern: Pieces, Op. 7. Debussy: Sonata in G minor. Ives: Sonata No. 4. Joseph Szigeti, violin, with Roy Bogas, piano. Mercury MG 50442, \$4.98; stereo SR 90442, \$5.98.

Schubert: Quartet No. 12 in C minor (*Quartettsatz*); Quintet in A (*Forellen*), Op. 114. Members of the Smetana Quartet, with Jan Panenka, pianist. Crossroads 22 16 0029, \$2.49; stereo, 22 16 0030, \$2.49.

Stamitz: Quartets (Op. 4, Nos. 3 and 6; Op. 8, Nos. 1 and 3). Jean-Pierre Rampal, flute; Jacques Lancelot, clarinet; Pierre Pierlot, oboe; and Gilbert Coursier, horn; with the Trio à Cordes Français. Nonesuch H 1125, \$2.50; stereo H 71125, \$2.50.

Vaughan Williams (arr.): "Just as the Tide was flowing"; "The captain's apprentice"; "The lark in the morning"; "An Acre of Land"; "The unquiet grave"; "The Carter"; "As I walked out"; "On Christmas Night." The Purcell Singers conducted by Imogen Holst, with Rosamond Strobe, soprano, and Patrick Shuldham, baritone. Six Studies in English Folksong. Jean Stewart, viola, and Daphne Ibbott, piano. Everest 6137, \$4.98; stereo 3137, \$4.98.

Had the order of audition been different, this performance might have been cause for the same paean of praise inscribed below for Panenka's part in the *Forellen* Quintet of Schubert. It may suffice then to say that his work here speaks as eloquently for his qualifications as it does in the other context. Those affiliated with him are no less able (Suk, of course, has toured as soloist with leading American orchestras), resulting in an *Archduke* of singular vitality and freshness. It lacks some of the musical sophistication that characterized the recent version by Isaac Stern, Leonard Rose, and Eugene Istomin, but, also, some of its over-finicky detail. It is, in any case, a performance of its own high qualifications and distinctive character, which entitles it to a place of honor among the best versions of this great work.

As an earnest of the intentions of Serkin *fils* to keep alive the enthusiasms of Serkin *père* this issue is altogether affirmative. There are doubtless enthusiasts for Busoni and Reger who will welcome those opportunities to further the "cause," and some others who will respond to the invitation to improve their knowledge of both subjects. However, a candid appraisal would lead to the conclusion that there are many more notes than music on these two sides. Creatively, there is more to be said for the Reger, which uses sound to project more than an architectural conception. But it also tends to turn backward to Brahms for guidance at almost every critical point, which tends to lessen its interest. It is difficult to imagine it being performed with greater understanding than it is here, for Schneider, the long time "low" member of the Budapest Quartet, shows himself possessed of a singularly sympathetic art as a soloist, and the ensemble is beautifully supported by Serkin. The two pianists cut a clear path through the forest of notes that make up Busoni's variations on Bach, but the underbrush makes heavy going for the listener.

There is an abundance of general interest in these grooves, but the special interest relates to the quality of compositional art commanded by Joseph Goodman. A member of the faculty at Queens College, Goodman should certainly have a higher rating than he enjoys among composers generally, and Americans in particular. His background includes studies with Hindemith and Malipiero, which suggests neat workmanship; but there is far more than workmanship in these atmospheric, finely imagined sounds. They are superbly performed by the Soni Ventorum Quintet, which was responsible for its first performance in 1962. The early Piston work is full of aural felicities but not much emotional substance, the Krenek a typically "enigmatic" production of this composer's recent trend. The excellent ensemble, which includes Felix Skowronek, flute; James Caldwell, oboe; William McColl, clarinet; Robert Bonnevie, horn; and Arthur Grossman, bassoon, is an example of American musical skills which can be matched with those of any group anywhere.

This is in every way a "typical" Szigeti recording, of which there have not been too many lately, from the discerning choice of works to the beautifully proportioned performance of them with the latest in a series of excellent pianistic associates (previous ones included Nikita Magaloff, M. Horoszowski, and Andor Foldes) previously unknown to fame. Each of the works is attractive in itself, while contributing a share of individuality to a well-varied sequence. Of greatest interest to me is the Honegger, a work of 1918 which shows the qualities of that admirable musician at their best. As for the others, they have long rated as Szigeti specialties, in whose style of performance Bogas had become thoroughly indoctrinated at the time of the recording (in 1959). The virtues of the repertoire and performance are complemented by the reproduction, which is excellent.

There could hardly be a more auspicious introduction for this new series of economy-priced discs than this derivative from Supraphon sources. It is not only a superlative performance of the music, but a true and resonant reproduction of it that must give many reason to wonder why those who work with more expensive products cannot do as well, or even better. Panenka is a pianist hitherto unknown to recorded fame, but he leaves little doubt that he is one of the best chamber music players of the day, with just the right kind of sonority to blend with strings and a musician's instinct where balance is concerned. Indeed, as he seems to provide the leading impulse to the performance, the equality of opportunity that results suggests that *he* wants to hear all the other voices as much as the listener does. If nothing else, this performance is a living example of the importance of rhythmic precision to an alive outcome—but it is much, much more. In the short but exquisite quartet movement in C minor, the Smetana players sing out the enchanting sequence of sounds with an enchanting command of melodic statement. A disc to treasure.

Players of the quality enumerated above could produce a web of sound to entice the listening interest with the slimmest of materials—a challenge to which they are almost, if not quite, put in these performances. Stamitz was a composer whose eminence earned the esteem of Mozart, which is understandable if one considers he was writing what was in many ways "Mozartian" music before the Salzburger. However, what is necessary to make it "Stamitzian" is mostly absent. That is to say, he echoed a mode, but never developed a method of his own. The performances are of the first quality, and with particular aural appeal in those works of side two in which cello and violin are combined, respectively, with oboe and horn, and flute and horn. The reproduction is worthy of the subject matter.

Vaughan Williams's affection for folk song is, popularly, best known by his treatment of "Greensleeves" which virtually rescued that memorable tune from obscurity, but it was a pervasive part of his musical functioning generally. The present examples benefit from practically impeccable performances by the finely matched group of voices directed by Miss Holst, herself something of an authority on the subject. Miss Stewart, who draws a fine sound from her instrument, can claim almost equal identification with Vaughan Williams, for he shaped his second quartet to suit her special qualities in the Menges ensemble. In addition to the items enumerated above, the collection includes "Dives and Lazarus," "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale," "Bushes and Briars," and the "Wassail Song." —I.K.

Nancy and John Seletti aren't trying to save the world. Just a little piece of it.

About a mile outside the Korean village of Ku Am there are a dozen young, still-tender mulberry trees growing on a small hill. Someday these trees and their succulent leaves will be the heart of a new village industry—a silk raising business. That day is still many months away, but it doesn't stop the village from making daily inspections up the steep hill, just in case, in case something miraculous happened since yesterday. After all, it wouldn't be the first miracle to happen in Ku Am. Everyone in the village knows the story of Chang Sook, the daughter of the widow.

Ten years ago Chang Sook's chances of survival were as slim as hers was. Her father had disappeared during the family's flight from North Korea. Her mother, a seamstress, worked a backbreaking day most of the evening to earn a month. Barely enough to keep them from starving.

But today that's all changed because an American couple named Seletti are sharing a little of their good fortune with a girl to whom a dollar means everything. Nancy, 40, and five-year-old Alexandra Seletti are New Yorkers. They're not fabulously wealthy as the villagers of Ku Am believe. But, they're not poor either. *Comfortable* probably describes them best. They have everything they really need, but if they wait ten minutes and they'll be up with ten things they want. A \$15 a month would buy. Luckily, they thought of Chang Sook first. Through Save the Children Federation, the Seletti's \$15 a month is doing a remarkable number of things. First, Chang Sook's immediate needs and future school-are being taken care of. The family is getting help, too: Enough to enable Chang Sook's mother to start a small knit shop.

And with all this, there is still money left over. This money, together with money from other sponsors, was borrowed by the village to start its precious mulberry business. Someday silk raising will mean a permanent increase in the village's income—and permanently



end the need for charity. That's what Save the Children Federation is all about. Although contributions are tax-deductible, it is not a charity. The aim is not merely to buy one child a warm coat, a new pair of shoes and a six month supply of vitamin pills. Instead, your contribution is used to give the child, the family and the village a little boost that may be all they need to start helping themselves.

Sponsors are desperately needed for children in Korea, Vietnam, Latin America, Africa and Greece. You can select the child's nationality. You will receive a photo of the child, regular reports on his progress and, if you wish, a chance to correspond.

Chang Sook writes to the Selettis. She also sends small homemade gifts to Alexandra. And she tells them of her dreams of becoming a nurse. She'll probably make it. If she

does, the Seletti's investment in one girl will be repaid a thousand-fold.

The Selettis know they can't save the whole world for \$15 a month. Just a small corner of it. But, maybe that is the way to save the world. If there are enough people like the Selettis. How about you?

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Schoenberg Revealed by Gould

By ALAN RICH

SOMETHING NEW has been added in Volume Four of Columbia's survey of the music of Arnold Schoenberg (M2S 736, also available in mono M2L 736), and that something is a precious commodity. Instead of the efficient, noncommittal, and uncommitted direction of Robert Craft, we are confronted here with a genuinely dedicated artistic viewpoint, that of Glenn Gould. It is a point of view with which issue might be taken, but it is at least strong and personally valid.

Gould once remarked to me in a radio interview that, to him, one of the greatest tragedies was that Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler had left behind no important piano music. The contents of this new album—all of Schoenberg's solo piano music, the lieder of Op. Nos. 1 and 2 and the song-cycle *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Op. 15—offer his taste and his fingers a viable alternative. Even when Schoenberg himself seeks to obliterate his footsteps and to cut certain ties with his own musical past, as happens from time to time in the later piano pieces, Gould is there with his bloodhounds to reveal the trail.

Schoenberg's piano music forms something of a core around which the rest of his output revolves. Setting aside the two relatively inferior works of Op. 33, it spans the crucial years 1908-25. Thus, it extends between the composer's first real plunge into the waters of atonal possibility and the ultimate formulation of a method of composing with the twelve tones. Furthermore, somewhere along the 5:27 course of the six Opus

19 "little" pieces, the bright light of possibility suddenly begins to shine. These fragments really work. In them the whole paraphernalia of the atonal movement—the wispy trails of color, the extreme compression, the harmonic rootlessness, the little rhythmic crags—seem to coalesce into an obsessive search for a new philosophy of beauty. What's more, the search is as successful here as it has ever been since.

Leading up to these wonderful pieces is the trail that began in the proclamative, resonant rhetoric of Brahms, turned a little muddy in the sentimental Straussian bogs, and pushed more exuberantly forward via Mahler. The songs of Op. Nos. 1 and 2 partake of all these elements, although it is more Mahler's influence that turns the harmony toward adventure, toward a seeking-out of strange and sudden darts of color in ways unexplainable by classic procedures. The best of the songs, *Waldsonne* from Opus 2, has the geniality of the *Wunderhorn* style, along with moments of harmonic unrest that seem to come right out of the later Mahler. Brahms is the composer one senses the strongest in the Opus 11 piano pieces, especially in the way the music is laid out along the keyboard and the melodic sweep. But in these works, as in the earlier songs, there is always that sense of unrest, of discontent with the adage that dominant chords resolve to tonic chords, which points clearly toward the drastic rethinking of the nature of harmony to come.

Yet, in *The Book of The Hanging Gardens* of the same year (1908), Schoenberg had already moved drastically forward. Perhaps the impetus was the symbolist, close-to-expressionist poetry of Stefan George, or merely the idea that a text, *any* text, might support certain advanced practices impractical in purely instrumental music (an idea shared, after all, by Bach and Mozart). Whatever the case, this cycle of fifteen short songs represents the emergence of a composer mature, self-assured, and dedicated; there could be no turning back from the new esthetic.

Even so, we cannot hear these songs today without some awareness of their romantic forbears. Fully atonal though their harmonic language may be, powerful as is their poetic atmosphere (formed out of the utmost freedom in the use of both vocal and piano color), we still hear in them melodic shapes and textures out of the past.

The importance, therefore, of Opus 19 is that here, for the first time, we do not hear these things. Here we have a new style fully formed and wholly communicative. Strangely enough, the piano pieces of Opus 23 represent almost a kind of reconciliation between past and present; again one senses something of the Brahmsian layout in one or two of the pieces, and it is today mostly of academic interest that the fifth of these pieces is Schoenberg's first piece of doctrinaire tone-row writing. The point is, rather, that Schoenberg *did* immediately set out to achieve some sort of synthesis, some inquiry as to where in the new esthetic some scraps of the old might be accommodated. The ultimate result of this inquiry, at least among the piano works, was the Opus 25 Suite, projected somewhat as a latter-day study in Baroque textures into which the twelve-tone outlook could be completely blended. The result was a masterpiece.

IN an endearingly subversive way, Glenn Gould manages to direct the attention almost continually to the old esthetic, rather than the new. His approach is constantly romantic, making the most of every invitation toward *ritardando* and *rubato*, intensifying the sonorous aspects of the music as though seeking some further reconciliation with the past. By comparison, the recordings of the piano works by the late Eduard Steuermann, whose career was intertwined with Schoenberg's for decades (Columbia ML 5216, deleted), are sharper, leaner, more propulsive.

Yet, it is a testimonial to the durability of any score, old or new, when it can support more than a single approach. Gould's performances are fascinating, assured, and, most important, loving. The music has engaged him, not merely to play it but to think about it, and this album is quite clearly the result of a great deal of important reflection.

Three singers are involved, and, for the most part, well. Donald Gramm's singing of the Opus 1 songs is elegant, beautifully phrased, and sympathetic to the music's relatively modest demands. Helen Vanni sings the cycle of George poems with lovely, rich, warm tones and a good sense for the special atmosphere of the poetry, but I prefer the greater dramatic thrust (although it is produced with some shrillness) of Bethany Beardslee's performance on Son-Nova 2. Ellen Faull's singing of the Opus 2 songs is flavorsome, but a persistent vibrato, not very well controlled, undermines her efforts.

Gould's work as accompanist is no less interesting or less carefully proportioned than his solo accomplishments. He is, also, as is unfortunately often the case in his recordings, his own vocalist from time to time.



—Columbia Record.

Glenn Gould—"endearingly subversive."