

RECORDINGS REPORTS I: Orchestral LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

REPORT

Beethoven: Concerto in D. Yehudi Menuhin, violin, with Otto Klemperer conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Angel stereo, S 36369, \$5.79; mono, 36369, \$4.79.

The rare and gratifying thing about this performance—Menuhin's third for the phonograph of the great work—is a sound point of view, mutually shared. In this respect it is measurably superior to the predecessor with Silvestri and, to my taste, more satisfying than *its* predecessor, with Furtwängler. To be sure, the point of view is one that will be disputed by some, for it comprehends the work with a steady, sober eye, with no tolerance for frivolity, even in the finale. As a whole the work proceeds with a measured, thoughtful gait which permits the composer's purpose to unfold without hurry or slight. As one who has been listening to Klemperer even longer than to Menuhin, I find it gratifying to note that his conception has retained its fluidity and deepened its purpose. All of this is fully congenial to Menuhin, who has not played anything, to my knowledge, as well in a long time. There is a trace of sharpness here and there but much, much more that is squarely on pitch, and in the restatement of the opening theme after the cadenza, incredibly well articulated. He uses the Kreisler cadenzas and makes of them everything the composer-violinist intended.

Dvořák: Symphony No. 8 (4) in G. Rafael Kubelik conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. DGG stereo, 139 181, \$5.79; mono, 39 181, \$5.79.

Kubelik shows not only the mastery of musical materials to deliver a convincing restatement of Dvořák's high-spirited ideas—something he already possessed in a pre-stereo version with the Philharmonia Orchestra—but also the command of orchestral means to shape the sound of the Berlin Philharmonic to the special needs of the score. These include a distinctive kind of string tone, richer brass, and more mellow reeds than tend to be their custom. It is, in this respect as well as others, superior to the recently issued Karajan version on London with the Vienna Philharmonic. Kubelik's treatment does not have the vein of sentiment favored by Bruno Walter and Barbirolli in their performances, nor quite the revelation of orchestral detail achieved by Szell with the Cleveland Orchestra, but it is forthright, emotionally outspoken, and full of relevant spirit.

Gade: Symphony No. 1 (Op. 5). Johan Hye-Knudsen conducting the Royal Danish Orchestra. Turnabout stereo, TV 34052S, \$2.50; mono, TV 4052, \$2.50.

The two contradictory facts of Gade's music—the high esteem in which it was held by Mendelssohn and Schumann, and the neglect into which it fell after his death—are illuminated by this product of his mid-twenties. It shows that he was not only very much of their own views as to how music should be written, but, spiritually, close kin to them also. However, as has happened to other men esteemed in their lifetime, his way of doing things differed too little from theirs to maintain the world's interest. Hye-Knudsen's direction conveys every suggestion of authenticity and the playing is not only spirited but solid in sound.

Mozart: Symphonies No. 36 (in C) and No. 39 (in E-flat). Karl Böhm conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. DGG stereo, 139 160, \$5.79; mono, 39 160, \$5.79.

Böhm and the orchestra produce more that is relevant to the E-flat than to the lighter, more volatile *Linz*. This is, at best, a matter of relative merit, for the treatment in both instances tends to be weightier than the best interests of the works dictate. Should anyone crave the particular combination of works offered on this disc, a more inviting exposition of them may be found on Columbia MS 6493, where Bruno Walter is the conductor (with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra).

Prokofiev: Concertos Nos. 1 and 2. John Browning, piano, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. RCA Victor stereo LSC 2897, \$5.79; mono, LM 2897, \$4.79.

Of the numerous "younger" pianists who have made a special province of Prokofievland, Browning is one who has claim to be a peer of the realm. For, in addition to the sharp rhythmic sense and the percussive strength required to articulate the composer's patterns, Browning has the richness and depth of sound to provide the necessary contrast. Add to this rather more emotional candor than is considered good form by some of his contemporaries, and the range of Browning's resources is clearly beyond the usual. In these two works he has the advantage also of strong and sympathetic collaboration from Leinsdorf, who clearly sees the music Browning's way. The high quality of orchestral performance leaves nothing wanting for outstanding results.

Rosetti: Concerto in D-minor. Erich Penzel, horn, with the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra directed by Jörg Faerber. Telemann: Suite in F. Alois Spach, Gottfried Roth, Joachim Schollmeyer, and Alfred Balser, horns; Alfred Sous and Hans Bogacchi, oboes; with the Mainz Chamber Orchestra directed by Günter Kehr. Vivaldi: Concerto in F. Spach and Roth, horns, with Kehr and Mainz Chamber Orchestra. Turnabout stereo, TV 34078S, \$2.50; mono, TV 4078, \$2.50.

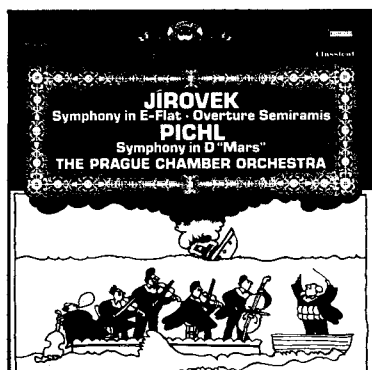
Those who are addicted to the noblest as well as the most perilous of instruments will find, in addition to quantities of fine horn playing, unsuspected dividends of musical quality on these two sides. They may not be so unsuspected in the cases of Telemann and Vivaldi, for the works were part of a previous issue on the Vox label. However, the work of Rosetti (born Rössler, in Bohemia) reveals a composer entitled not only to his nickname of "the German Boccherini" but also to esteem for his own individuality. It is demonstrated here in a work of considerable difficulty which might qualify Penzel for description as "the Scherbaum of the Baroque Horn." All the performances are animated, the recording satisfactory.

Walton: Symphony No. 1. André Previn conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor stereo, LSC 2927, \$5.79; mono, LM 2927, \$4.79.

Previn's performance sustains the sequence of quality interpretations that have accrued to this work on records since it was new in 1934, extending over efforts by Sir Hamilton Harty, Adrian Boult, and the composer. It adds to regard for such a fine section as the slow movement but it does not—because it cannot—erase or even mitigate those all-too-clear indebtednesses to Sibelius. A major manifestation of craftsmanship for a man of thirty-two, the First Symphony stands today as a way point on Walton's progress to the violin and viola concerti rather than an end accomplishment in itself. However, this is a verdict about which opinions will differ, and it is a worthy enlargement of the repertory that Previn has achieved with his excellent orchestra.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

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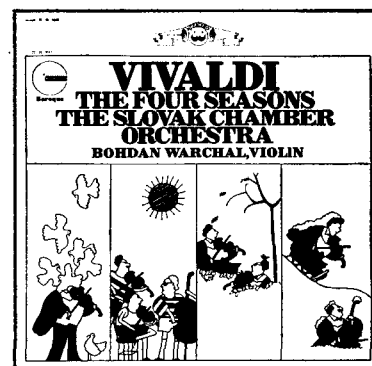
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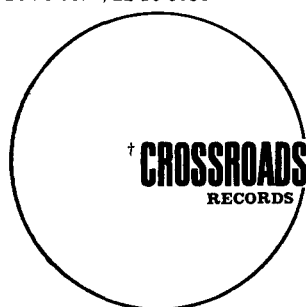
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RECORDINGS REPORTS II: Miscellaneous LPs

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

REPORT

Albéniz: *Iberia*; Navarra. Alicia de Larrocha, piano. Epic stereo, BSC 158, \$5.79; mono, SC 6058, \$4.79.

Casals: Six Songs. Olga Iglesias, soprano, with Mieczyslaw Horszowski, piano. Dvořák: Moravian Duets. Mary Burgess, soprano, and Jon Humphrey, tenor, with Luis Battle, piano. Mendelssohn: Six Duets, (Op. 63). Benita Valente and Ilona Kombrink, sopranos, with Battle, piano. Columbia stereo, MS 6936, \$5.79; mono, ML 6336, \$4.79.

Gluck: *Le Mariage du Diable*. Claude Boyer conducting the soloists and orchestra of Le Festival de Musique d'Autrefois. Baroque stereo, 2863, \$5.79; mono, 1863, \$4.79.

Leoncavallo: Prolog (*Bajazzo*). Bizet: Torelied (*Carmen*). Gounod: Serenade, "Ja, das Gold regiert die Welt" (*Margarethe*). Weber: "Hier im ird'schen Jammertal," "Schweig, schweig" (*Der Freischütz*). Smetana: "Weiss ich doch eine, die hat Dukaten" (*Verkaufte Braut*). Michael Bohnen, baritone (the Smetana with Joseph Schmidt, tenor). Wagner: "Wohl wusst ich hier sie im Gebet zu finden," "Oh, du mein holder Abendstern" (*Tannhäuser*). Herbert Janssen, baritone. Boito: "Ich, der Geist, der stets verneint" (*Mefistofele*). Verdi: "Credo" (*Otello*); "Zu dir führt mich ein ernster Grund" (*Aida*). Wilhelm Rode, baritone (with Eva Hadravoba, soprano). Telefunken HT 47, mono only, \$6.98.

Schubert: Mass in A-flat (D. 678). Maria Stader, soprano; Marga Höffgen, mezzo; Ernst Haefliger, tenor; and Hermann Uhde, bass; with Eberhard Kraus, organ, and Georg Ratzinger conducting the orchestra of the Bavarian Radio and the Regensburger Domchor. DGG stereo, 139 108, \$5.79; mono, 39 108, \$5.79.

Wagner: "Siegmund heiss ich," "Winterstürme" (*Die Walküre*); "Am stillen Herd" and "Preislied" (*Die Meistersinger*). Verdi: "Bei des Himmels" (*Otello*). Paul Kötter, tenor, with Paul Schoeffler, baritone (in Verdi). Verdi: "Otellos Tod" (*Otello*) and "Holde Aida" (*Aida*). Giordano: "Den Blick hab' ich einst erhoben" and "Gleich einem Frühlingsabend" (*Andrea Chénier*). Leoncavallo: "Hüll dich in Tand" (*Bajazzo*). Carl Martin Oehman, tenor. Leoncavallo: "Scherzet immer" (*Bajazzo*). Puccini: "Wie eiskalt ist dies Händchen" (*Bohème*). Bizet: "Blumenarie" (*Carmen*). Gounod: "Gegrüsst sei mir" (*Faust*). Wagner: "Atmest du nicht mit mir die süßen Düfte" (*Lohengrin*). Louis Graveure, tenor. Telefunken HT 46, mono only, \$6.98.

It was de Larrocha's prior recording of this compendium of melody and rhythm which announced her talents to the non-Spanish world (Columbia, ML 6003), and it was her performance of the sequence in concert lately in Philharmonic Hall that raised the candlepower of her personal star to its largest magnitude yet. Thus, there is nothing to be said now that wasn't said when the prior edition (mono only) appeared [SR, Aug., 1963]; save to add that, as with every artist of substance, time has added to Larrocha's insights and, as yet, not diminished her ability to make them audible. It may also be added that, unlike the concert experience, one may hear such a favored piece as "Triana" every hour on the hour for as long as one wishes. Having learned the secrets of the style literally from the source—the deceptively named Frank Marshall, a friend and disciple of the composer—Larrocha is this generation's living link to that great tradition. It is beautifully forged in these performances.

To judge from some communications received recently, what a number of admirers of the Catalan patriarch would like to have is a recording of *El Pesebre*, his "peace" offering to the world. But while that elaborate project awaits execution, the six songs recorded here for the first time will delight as well as surprise many who looked upon rumors of Casals as a composer with some indulgence. Scattered over a period of more than sixty years—the first was written in 1895, the last in 1959—the songs are consistent in their strong feeling for word values, imagery, sense of line and proportion. Iglesias has just the right vocal quality for them, and Horszowski performs his function in an equally admirable way. For those whose interest in this issue may be related to its other content, the report is equally affirmative. The quality of performance, whether or not the names are familiar, adheres to the high standard of the "Music from Marlboro" series, of which this is a continuation. The material is equally choice, whether there has been a previous recording (as with the Dvořák, though none is currently listed in Schwann) or not (as with the Mendelssohn). Excellent recording, too.

As those who encountered such works as *Pilgrims to Mecca* are aware, Gluck had quite another vein of musical materials than the nobly tragic one familiar from *Orfeo* and the *Iphigenias*. That is a bright, pliable kind in the French comic style of the 1760s. According to the unidentified comment on the sleeve of this record, this one dates from 1759, when it was given in Paris. How much it was revised for a later production in Vienna, or what happened when it was "touched up" again for the last time in 1951 by Messrs. Leibowitz and Gradwohl to suit the peculiarities of long-playing records" (the language is that of the source previously identified) is not clarified. However, as well performed by the (also unidentified) personnel directed by Boyer, it is enjoyable for itself, and interesting for the clear evidence that one of its far from tragic arias was later converted by Gluck into the personification of "Grecian" grief, "Che farò senza Euridice." The recording is not notable for volume, but the quality is passable.

For some, a full LP of Bohnen would hardly be too much. However, it is at least recognition of the unique combination of talent and personality that abided in him that he is granted a side of his own in this compilation of *Unvergessene Baritone*. In the seven excerpts from five works is abundant evidence of the qualities that made him, alternately, a joy and a despair in the Twenties. In the wide range of roles he commanded no two matched the evil Caspar in *Freischütz* and the scheming Kezal in *Verkaufte Braut*. Fortunately, vital moments from each are included in this compilation, and if those who cannot summon a mental vision of Bohnen's appearance must sacrifice something of the totality, the sound alone is a unique experience. On the other hand, the tedious excesses and latitudes he permitted himself in pursuit of his ambition to be the "deutsche Chaliapin" erupt with almost ludicrous predictability in the *Pagliacci* and *Faust* excerpts. Janssen's smooth sound courses beautifully through the *Tannhäuser* excerpts, and those chosen from Rode's catalogue are ample support for the high esteem he enjoyed in Central Europe in the Twenties and Thirties. Admirers of the diminutive Schmidt will find his Vasek an unexpected dividend on their investment. Selmar Meyrowitz's direction of the orchestra is in line with the standard he sustained in his own orchestral recordings.

All of Schubert's writings for the church, of which there are more than is generally realized, have their individual appeal, and this one is no exception. Those who take at face value his statement late in life that he was preparing to study counterpoint and fugue will find plentiful evidence herein that he possessed no small skills in such writing well before (1820 is a median date for the time in which the A-flat Mass was written). In this, its only stereo recording now available, the needs as well as the opportunities of the work are beautifully served by conductor Georg Ratzinger—a man previously unknown to me, but equipped with artistic impulses as well as technical skills—and his able associates. It would, in view of his limited representation on records, be rewarding to have a major example of the late Hermann Uhde's art, but the bass part of this work is largely confined to the ensembles. It all comes off very well, however—the "all" including recording in a big, resonant surrounding which might be the Regensburg Dom, or Cathedral.

A counterpart to the issue above to Bohnen, Janssen, and Rode, this *Historische Aufnahme* brings together three tenors of prominence in the Twenties and Thirties. Two of them—Graveure and Oehman—were known to American audiences of the time, the former, in particular, for a "miraculous transformation" from baritone to tenor, the latter for his participation in the American premiere of Janáček's *Jenufa* at the Metropolitan in 1924-1925. The work of both has interest, but the real curiosity is aroused by the fresh, free voice of Kötter, who flourished at Hamburg between 1928 and 1934, and is identified with such prominent conductors as Knappertsbusch, Böhm, and Bruno Walter, and also as the Kaiser in performances of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* directed by Strauss. Why he didn't get into the major Wagner recordings of the time is a mystery. All the reproductions have been subjected to technical upgrading, with generally listenable results. The Schoeffler of the *Otello* excerpt has quite another sound, as of 1930, than that of the singer heard here only a season or two ago.

—I.K.