

# Orchestral LPs

## Data

Berwald: *Sinfonie singulière*; Symphony in E flat. Sixten Ehrling conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. London stereo, CS 6602, \$5.98.

Glinka: *Jota Aragonesa*; *Summer Night in Madrid*; *Kamarinskaya*; *Valse-Fantaisie*; "Chernomor's March and Oriental Dances" (*Ruslan and Ludmila*). Yevgeny Svetlanov conducting the USSR Symphony Orchestra. Melodiya/Angel stereo, SR 40081, \$5.98.

Mozart: Concerto No. 15 in B flat and Concerto No. 17 in G. Robert Casadesu, piano; with George Szell conducting members of the Cleveland Orchestra. Columbia stereo, MS 7245, \$5.98.

Prokofiev: Symphony No. 5. Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. DGG stereo, 139040, \$5.79.

Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht*. Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis. Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting the New York Philharmonic. Odyssey stereo, 32 12 0298, \$2.98.

Smetana: *Ma Vlast*. Vaclav Neumann conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. London stereo, CSA 2222, \$11.98 (two discs).

Szymanowski: Concerto No. 1. Wieniawski: Concerto No. 2. Wanda Wilkomirska, violin; with the Warsaw Philharmonic conducted by Witold Rowicki. Heliodor stereo, HS 25087, \$2.49.

## Report

Those who have acquired a taste for one or the other of these works in other contexts are commended to these performances for the flexibility of the treatment, the unflinching sense of style with which Ehrling proceeds to his objective, and the excellence of the orchestral response to his direction. For others, the works of Franz Berwald may be described as occupying a symphonic terrain little known until the appearance

Of the scores of records produced through the international affiliation of Melodiya and Angel, this is one which fulfills all the premises, as well as the promises. That is to say, it provides a distinctive treatment of a specialized repertory and, in so doing, justifies all the things about Glinka's generative place in Russian music that are, for too many, lifeless words on the pages of the history books. In the *Jota Aragonesa* and *Summer Night in Madrid* he created prototypes

Perfection is a reasonable objective for any musical performance, and when there are two, back to back, which fall so well within that target area as these two do, the performers are entitled to the due they earn for two infinitely refined, closely meshed collaborations. Whether the refining and the meshing have also suppressed some of the friction which results in a spark being ignited and a glow being nurtured is a

The combination of Karajan and Prokofiev is such an unusual one that there is no other listing of their affiliation in the current Schwann Catalog. This does not preclude the possibility of a distinguished outcome, for his eye is as penetrating as his ear is discriminating. What distinguishes this effort, however, relates more to the manner in which the notes are converted into orchestral values than it does to the ordering of those values to a persuasive likeness of the

In the new hierarchy of values it may not be "forever" before all the best performances are for sale in the lower-price categories, and, as in the case of some other merchandise, paying top prices because they are the most expensive will be a symptom of snobism. That does not mean, of course, the *best-sounding* performances, for qualities of reproduced sound may continue to improve, in small marginal respects, indefinitely.

There is nothing in the least timid or reticent about Neumann's performance of this cycle of tone poems. Indeed, they may be the most assertive, and even heroic in scope, to be heard in many years. Some might attribute this to the German orchestra, but Neumann disciplines it to his will and that will was, of course, shaped in Prague. The sizableness of Neumann's treatment extends even to "Vlatava" (or "Die Moldau"), which grows to be a mighty big stream before he is ready to see it vanish into the dis-

At first contact after a lapse of years, the quantity of good music in the Szymanowski prompts some thoughts that it might be one of those works penalized by bearing the wrong name. It hardly has the structural strength to fulfill the implications of concerto, and might have better fare with a variant of Chausson's *Poème* idea. But a second hearing (and part of a third) tends to the conclusion that its real burden is the number of times in which, at a climax, Szymanowski turns

of the first Berwald symphony on records in the mid-Fifties. It combines some of the fluency and charm of Mendelssohn with instrumental procedures of Berlioz, for whose example Berwald obviously had a profound respect. It is, in short, a combination of elements that frequently results in modes of procedure distinctly Berwald's own, and Ehrling gives them both energetic and well disciplined re-creation.

for all the Spanish fantasy pieces to come, and in *Kamarinskaya* he set forth so much of eternal Russe in music to earn Tchaikovsky's statement: "All of the Russian symphonic school is contained in Glinka's *Kamarinskaya* just as all of an oak tree is in an acorn." Thus tempted, the reader will find as much, and more, to feed his curiosity in the colorful contents of Side 2. The performances are deft and invigorating, the processing first-class.

consideration each listener will have to determine for himself. My determination is that there is an excess of the intellectual in both instances, an undersupply of sheer enjoyment of the music for music's sake which deprives the listener (meaning this listener) of an element essential to its complete statement. In terms of the performer's objectives, the performance could hardly be more successfully accomplished.

composer's purpose. That is to say, Karajan realizes more of the color and excitement in certain outspoken aspects of the work than he does of its subsurface brooding, questing nature. On the whole, the recent Bernstein version with the New York Philharmonic fills the expanse of this score more convincingly than any other version of which I have knowledge. DGG's technicians have handled their problems well.

Insofar as these two works are concerned, the Mitropoulos shaping and ordering of them are as expressive and appropriate as any other now available, and more so than most. As for the allegation that the orchestra was on the raw edge of disintegration when Leonard Bernstein acquired responsibility, it cannot be related to the order of effort embodied in these instances.

Of the other five, only No. 3 ("Sarka") and possibly No. 4 ("From Bohemia's Fields and Streams") hold together through their length. For all the expressiveness of the ideas to be found in the others, they tend to the repetitious and the effortful. Should "Vlatava" be issued separately, it is worth investigation for the sweep and power Neumann imparts to it, also for the swish and swell of water he draws from the strings. Fine sound throughout.

to the formulations of others (Scriabin, Debussy, Stravinsky, etc.) rather than devising his own solution. Wilkomirska plays it superbly, with a tone of the proper color, and Rowicki is no less responsible to the opportunities in the orchestral score. In the Wieniawski, Wilkomirska is, if anything, a shade too refined for the best advantage to the work's surging momentum.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

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## Recordings Reports II

# Miscellaneous LPs

### Data

Brahms: "Wechselied zum Tanze," "Neckereien," and "Der Gang zum Liebchen" (Op. 31); "An die Heimat," "Der Abend," and "Fragen" (Op. 64); "O schöne Nacht," "Spätherbst," "Abendlied," and "Warum" (Op. 92); "Sehnsucht" and "Nächtens" (Op. 112). Mary Plakogiannis, soprano; Paula Gladwell, mezzo; Richard Levitt, tenor; and Edmund Najera, bass; with Myron Fink, piano; conducted by Gregg Smith. Everest stereo, 3249, \$4.98.

Brahms: Quintet in F minor, Amadeus Quartet; with Christoph Eschenbach, pianist. DGG stereo, 139397, \$5.79.

Diabelli: Sonata in A. Giuliani: Grand Overture (Op. 61); Allegro (Sonata in C, Op. 15). Sor: Introduction and Allegro (Op. 14). Mozart: Larghetto and Allegro (K. anh. 229). Julian Bream, guitar. RCA Victor stereo, LSC 3070, \$5.98.

Stockhausen: *Prozession*. Alfred Alings and Rolf Gehlhaar, tamtams; Johannes G. Fritsch, viola; Harald Bojé, elektronium; Aloys Kontarsky, piano; and Karlheinz Stockhausen, filters and potentiometers. Candide stereo, \$3.50.

Wagner: "Die Frist ist um" (*Der fliegende Holländer*); "Leb' wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind" (*Die Walküre*); "Wie duftet doch der Flieder" (*Die Meistersinger*); "Tat:st du's wirklich?" (*Tristan und Isolde*); and "Wehvolles Erbe, dem ich verfallen" (*Parsifal*). Theo Adam, baritone; with the Staatskapelle Berlin conducted by Otmar Suitner. London stereo, OS 26093, \$5.98.

Weber: *Der Freischütz*. Claire Watson (Agathe), Rudolf Schock (Max), Gottlob Frick (Caspar), Lotte Schädle (Annenchen), and Kurt Böhme (A Hermit); with Lovro von Matačić conducting the Orchestra and Chorus of the Berlin Opera. Everest stereo, S 468, \$8.98 (three discs).

### Report

The high level of anticipation that has been earned by prior recordings under the direction of Gregg Smith is equally fulfilled by the finely idiomatic and musical treatment of these beautiful songs. The voices are individually appropriate and collectively apt for the material, which intertwines a typically rich and sonorous Brahmsian piano part with his individual sense of part writing. However, the buyer should not take too seriously the large type proclaiming "The complete quartets for four voices and

As the senior members of this partnership, the Amadeus Quartet understandably should order this performance to its preference (assuming that Eschenbach has any alternate thoughts on the subject). The consideration arises because the performance resembles others by the quartet of Brahms, a composer whose characteristics strike me as less sympathetic to their style than, say, those of Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert. This relates especially to the volume of sound the group produces, which leaves the big moments of the first movement and the Scherzo somewhat

This is, possibly, the first time that Diabelli has been mentioned in these pages in some other context than Beethoven's variations. And part of the credit for the music's sound must go to Bream, whose idea it was to combine two movements from each of two works by Diabelli into the four-movement sequence heard here. It adds little to the known characterization of Diabelli as a composer proficient in the idioms of his time, and not much more. Indeed, the disc as a whole, though pleasurable enough, is thin in

Those who can take Stockhausen or leave him will find themselves disposed to both moods at various times in this two-sided exposition of his esthetic. In this creation of 1967, he offers a typical range of incidental, and accidental, interests with a kind of built-in hypnosis. One of its primary interests relates to Stockhausen's statement that such prior works of his as *Mikrophonie I*, *Gesang der Jünglinge*, *Kontakte*, and *Momente* are referred to by one performer

The variables in Adam's current status among Wagner performers are all too clearly mirrored in the two shining surfaces of this disc. At his best, which is unquestionably in Wotan's "Farewell" (whose prevailing range is favorable to him), he performs with the impetus and conviction to match the impassioned sentiments. At his least, which is in Marke's "Lament" (where the range is perilously low for him), Adam is engaged in the unfortunate task of undertaking to compete with people of the past whose vocal resources were more ample than his. In between, as Sachs or the Dutchman, Adam is intermit-

The promise of this addition to the recorded range of *Freischütz* material is hardly fulfilled by exposure to it. Von Matačić's conducting is idiomatic enough, and both Watson as Agathe and Schock as Max are vocally well suited to their assignments. But this was either taped from a radio performance or done with insufficient consideration for the vocal values, for there are more than occasional imperfections and

piano," which would reasonably include the *Zigeunerlieder*. And, the listener's interests are hardly well served by the omission of English texts for any of the songs.

short of the resonance desirable. Elsewhere, as in the slow movement—which would seem very suited both to Eschenbach and leader Norbert Brainin's suave violin sound—a curiously note-by-note procedure prevails, as if the work had been thoroughly (perhaps too thoroughly) restudied for this recording. In any case, it lacks the sweep, drive, and sheer sense of purpose that makes the relatively recent version of Artur Rubinstein and the Guarneri Quartet the preferable one, for my taste.

substance, exemplary of the problem that confronts the specialist once he has exhausted the smallish number of distinguished works for his instrument. The guitar being one of the few instruments for which Mozart did not write, Bream has dipped into some *Hausmusik* composed about 1783 (for two clarinets and bassoon) for his present pairing. It does not seriously overbalance the other matter of the record, all of it performed with Bream's typical skill and artistry.

or the other in the course of this one: "Thus," says Stockhausen, "in the moment of performance an 'aural tradition' is established between my earlier music and this *Prozession*, as well as among the players." Whether Stockhausen's idea works or not is less important to me than that the idea has occurred to him and that he feels the need for it. Where it leads will be absorbing to observe. The reproduction, incidentally, gives every detail its due.

tently comfortable and uncomfortable, depending on circumstances. In the *Parsifal* excerpt, he is again on high ground, thanks to its musical vocal layout. In all circumstances, Adam functions like a committed Wagnerian. The question for his future is, really, whether he triumphs over the challenges that commitment implies by taking them selectively, or is submerged by the temptation of taking them all, indiscriminately. Suitner does his work well, if with some leisurely tempi which add to the vocal problem from time to time. Big sound, a little over-favorable to the voice.

signs of strain which should hardly be part of a recorded presentation (especially when there is no indication of a "live" source). Of the other well known names, Frick's effort is creditable to him, but Böhme's voice is not what it used to be. Of the lesser-known names, Lotte Schädle (whose name is also spelled Schädle) sounds to have the most promise. —I.K.