

Recordings in Review

I Musici in Brandenburg

BACH: *Concerto No. 1 in F. I Musici; with Felix Ayo, violino piccolo; Heinz Holliger, Maurice Bourgue, and Hans Kull, oboes; Erich Penzel and Gerd Haucke, horns; Karl Weihs, bassoon. Concerto No. 2 in F. I Musici; with Ayo, violin; Severino Gazzelloni, flute; Holliger, oboe; and Maurice André, trumpet. Concerto No. 3 in G. I Musici. Concerto No. 4 in G. I Musici; with Ayo, violin; Frans Brüggen and Jeanette Van Wingerden, recorders. Concerto No. 5 in D. I Musici; with Ayo, violin; Maxence Larrieu, flute; and Maria Teresa Garatti, harpsichord. Concerto No. 6 in B flat, with János Scholz, viola da gamba. Philips stereo, PHS 2-912, \$11.96 (two discs).*

RARELY have so many names been assembled on behalf of a project so worthy as the combination of Italy's finest string ensemble and one of the greatest glories of Germanic musical production. The outcome suggests, to this taste at least, that only one name was omitted—that of a wholly qualified conductor who would have formed all the promising elements into a formidably functional entity.

This may strike at the very heart of the philosophic premise on which this undertaking is founded: to channel the great skill and ensemble background of I Musici into the execution of what the nameless annotator describes as "merely *concerti grossi* of a type Vivaldi and Handel would have instantly recognized," possessed of "no formal mystique." Possibly, but there is, after all, the question of style, content, flow, syntax—which may, in a manner of speaking, not be as readily translatable into satisfactory results where a barrier (of language or temperament) intrudes.

That, of course, is where a wise and experienced conductor could have been utilized: to control the phrase endings, choices of tempi, accentuations, etc., which now and again fall short of ideal in these performances. There is, prevailingly, a warmer, freer, more elastic and resilient result in the slow movements than in the fast. This I attribute to a greater sympathy, in I Musici, on behalf of such songfulness than for the structural design of the contrapuntal *allegros*. I note, without further comment, that the liveliest and most unified of the performances is accorded No. 3 in G—which is, of course, written for strings alone.

Otherwise, there are some patches of cloudy (if not foggy) intonation in both Nos. 1 and 2 (which may relate to Ayo's violino piccolo in No. 1 and definitely does relate to André's high trumpet in No. 2); a good deal of lovely sound in No. 5, much of it contributed by Larrieu's flute (see entry under Beethoven Serenade, on page 52); and a well-controlled viola da gamba stint from Scholz (an original member, as cellist, of the Roth Quartet). Compliments are also in order to Brüggen and Van Wingerden for making their recorder passages a model of clarity and consonance. The other "recorder"—unnamed, but obviously of high skill—deserves compliments also for the excellent reproduction.

Schubertiad, 1969 Style

SCHUBERT: "*Seligkeit*"; "*Gretchen am Spinnrade*"; "*Du liebst mich nicht*"; "*Heimliches Lieben*"; "*Im Frühling*"; "*Die Vögel*"; "*Der Jüngling an der Quelle*"; and "*Der Musensohn*." Elly Ameling, soprano; with Jörg Demus, pianist. "*Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*." Ameling, soprano; Jörg Demus, piano; and Hans Deinzer, clarinet. *Twelve Ländler, Op. Posth. 171. Demus, piano. Victrola stereo, VICS 1405, \$2.50.*

SOMEONE up there had a good idea in the creation of a phonographic parallel to those celebrated events of Viennese life which began, as Philip Miller's excellent notes advise us, on the night of January 29, 1821, in the home of Franz Schober, and endured as long as Schubert did. The Schubertiad was no more nor less than an evening devoted entirely to the music of his friends' favorite composer, in which the participants ranged from intimate friends to lawyers and government officials, to the number of a dozen and a half or twenty. After a couple of hours of music, punch was provided, and there might be more music till 2 or 3 a.m.

This suggestion of such a sequence begins well with a lovely and loving performance of "*Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*," by the Dutch-descended Elly Ameling, who has just the fluently lyric voice desirable for this music, and the aptest kind of style. Demus is a discreetly contributory pianist, and Hans Deinzer (no identification is provided) makes a vocal match for Ameling in his beautifully phrased, tonally liquid treatment of the clarinet part.

No display here by this virtuoso; he is all collaborator, all artist, and the less forgettable for both traits.

It progresses well, and typically, with Demus taking over at a Viennese piano (vintage 1835) to tread his way, with admirable finesse and lack of insistence, through a dozen dance pieces that range from exhilarating to melancholy. And as only Schubert can be, he is sometimes at his most exhilarating when he is also at his most melancholy.

However, things do not go so typically from then on. Ameling finishes Side 1 with a charming "*Seligkeit*," with Side 2 devoted entirely to her singing of seven songs. Along about here one gets the impression that the party might have adjoined to a nearby ballroom or theater, for the acoustical frame tends to broaden and verge on a resonance beyond that suitable for the claimed description of a recording done "in the intimate style of the historic 'Schubertiad.'" Moreover, Miss Ameling has not yet the maturity of style or depth of feeling for "*Gretchen am Spinnrade*." Both may very well come in time, when she could be ready for another Schubertiad.

The Heart of Dorothy Maynor

BACH: "*Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee*."* HANDEL: "*Oh, Sleep! Why Dost Thou Leave Me*" (*Semele*).** MOZART: "*Ach, ich fühl's*" (*The Magic Flute*),** "*Alleluja*" (*Exsultate jubilate*).*** DVORAK: "*O Lovely Moon*" (*Rusalka*).**** CHARPENTIER: "*Depuis le jour*" (*Louise*).* DEBUSSY: "*Air de Lia*" (*L'Enfant prodigue*).* DUPARC: "*Phidylè*."***** "*L'Invitation au voyage*."***** SCHUBERT: "*Liebesbotschaft*."*****; "*Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*."***** SPIRITUAL: "*Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*"; and "*In Dat Great Gittin' Up Morning*." Dorothy Maynor, soprano; with *Eugene Ormandy conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra; **Serge Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra; ***Sylvan Levin conducting, ****Erich Leinsdorf conducting, *****with George Schick, piano,***** with Schick, piano, and David Oppenheim, clarinet. (*Spirituals with male choir*). RCA, LM 3086, \$5.98 (mono only).

THE most recently recorded of these items (the two Duparc songs and the Dvorák aria) date to 1949, which means that more than twenty years have since passed, and brought with them a new generation of music lovers to whom Dorothy Maynor can hardly be more than a name. If they are enticed, by the promise of some extra-

ordinarily beautiful singing, to sample this disc, they will readily recognize why it can rightfully bear the title *The Art of Dorothy Maynor*. If they go on to savor its contents, live with them, and understand the kind of qualities they convey, they will then comprehend that it was not alone the art, but the heart of Dorothy Maynor that made her outstanding in her time of greatness.

That was, on the whole, not as long a span as one might have supposed, for she burst into promise in the late Thirties when Serge Koussevitzky introduced her to an astonished audience at Tanglewood late in the summer of 1939. But it was not as easy then as it has since become for a first-rate talent of her race to make a career, and it took her rather longer to attain the position to which she was entitled. Operatic opportunities were, of course, completely circumscribed.

There is a lingering impression that her voice was at its most beautiful, as well as at its greatest expressivity, in the earliest records she made, those including the hardly surpassable *Semele* excerpt, the "Air de Lia," and, of course, the still exquisite "Depuis le jour" (all made in 1939-1940). But there is exceptional flexibility in her "Hirt auf dem Felsen" (though German was never a language in which she seemed wholly comfortable), and the *Rusalka* selection rivals any version of which there is general knowledge.

A vocalist of perception once made a distinction between singers of top quality by dividing them between "singers who sing the music" and "singers who sing the voice." That is to say, grading in the highest terms those whose concern is not with showing off the beautiful sounds they can make, but with how they can best serve the beautiful material they are privileged to perform. Dorothy Maynor was one of the select who always sang the music, not the voice, which is why it still goes from the heart to the heart.



Dorothy Maynor—"extraordinarily beautiful singing."

—RCA.

Davis's English-Speaking "Seasons"

FROM its first word, Colin Davis's version of Haydn's "The Seasons" (Philips stereo, PHS 3-911, \$17.94) is different from any other now available. For that first word is "Behold!"—not the German equivalent ("Seht") of the versions by Böhm and Goehr that constitute its current competition. This defines it as, in truth, "The Seasons," rather than merely *Die Jahreszeiten* with a more manageable name.

For my taste, there is an equally good case to be made for either procedure. To be sure, Haydn set a German translation made from the original; but that original was written by James Thomson many decades before the composition of this work, and has an independent identity as a work of art. Thus, for the English-speaking listener there are unquestionable gains, provided the vernacular text is made with an expert's skill and a poet's taste.

There is skill and there is taste in the translation utilized by Davis and his vocalists: baritone John Shirley-Quirk, soprano Heather Harper, tenor Ryland Davies, and the BBC chorus. But whose skill and whose taste? Unlike the earlier instance of "The Seasons" in English (on Capitol SGCR 7184), there is no visible identification of a translator or editor. In that earlier instance, the late Sir Thomas Beecham went to considerable lengths to obtain a new version by Dennis Arundell. He, in turn, went to considerable pains to explain exactly what he had done: translated into English the text by Baron Gottfried Van Swieten that Haydn had set, inserting original expressions of Thomson wherever possible. Who has done what in the Davis version is, as of this moment, unclarified.

This point aside, the new version, performed with great zest and animation under the direction of the most able new conductor to appear in England since the war, has much to commend it. It has now become almost expected that Davis will scrub clean from any score he undertakes the accumulated blemishes and encrusted procedures that have accrued to it in decades of usage. "The Seasons" is no exception. It fairly glows with the clarity and sheen that Davis has restored to its decades-old patina by the polish of his treatment. Verbally, it is a delight, especially when the words are articulated through the resonance of Shirley-Quirk's voice. Davies is almost as clear, though not as resonant,



—S. Hurok.

John Shirley-Quirk —
"Verbally . . . a delight."

and Miss Harper performs on even terms with her colleagues save when the range climbs high and a chill invades her sound.

At moments, indeed, one is persuaded that this is the best all-round "Seasons" recently available, in whatever language. These are the blither, more spirited moments—some at the very beginning and again in the "Hunt of Autumn"—in which Davis's springy rhythmic accentuation, his feeling for pace and momentum urge the music along in a way befitting his privilege of being perhaps the youngest conductor ever to undertake it phonographically. In every case, Davis deals justly with the musical symbols, not always with equal responsiveness to the poetic images they are meant to convey.

There are, however, considerable stretches of other kinds of music in "The Seasons"—more reflective, less active expressions that call for another kind of aptitude and sympathy. In these Davis is invariably considerate and musically subtle, but one senses now and then either a bit of ennui in the conductor's tolerance of the lengths at which Haydn had expressed himself, or, at the least, an involuntary slackening of attention. Thus I would suggest as the best balanced of all current versions the Böhm (on DGG stereo, 159 254/6) with Gundula Janowitz, Peter Schreier, and Martti Talvela as the vocal trio. Those who own the Beecham version are advised to keep it; but others, with a taste for the English translation, can be safely commended to Davis and his assorted associates. Very clear, very just recording.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

Orchestral LPs

Data

Chabrier: Overture to *Gwendoline*; *España*; *Joyeuse Marche*; "Fête polonaise" (*Le Roi malgré lui*); *Habanera*; and *Bourrée fantasque*. Pierre Dervaux conducting the Orchestra of the Paris Conservatory, with the René Duclos Chorus. Seraphim stereo, S-60108, \$2.49.

Goldmark: *Rustic Wedding Symphony*. Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. Columbia stereo, MS 7261, \$5.98.

Haydn: Symphonies Nos. 88 in G and 102 in B flat. Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. Columbia stereo, MS 7259, \$5.98.

Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2. **Dvorák:** *Scherzo Capriccioso*. **Smetana:** Overture, Polka, and "Furiant" (*The Bartered Bride*). Eugene Ormandy conducting The Philadelphia Orchestra. RCA stereo, LSC 3085, \$5.98.

Stravinsky: *Pulcinella*; *Apollon Musagète*. Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, directed by Neville Marriner. Argo stereo, ZRG 575, \$5.95.

Weber, Ben: Concerto (Op. 52). William Masselos, piano; with The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gerhard Samuel. **Wuorinen Charles:** Concerto. The composer at the piano; with James Dixon conducting. CRI stereo, USD 239, \$5.95.

Report

For those to whom no amount of Chabrier can be in excess of the tolerable, this collection—not previously circulated in the U.S.A.—will be full of rewards, in sum as in its parts. The possible exception is the Overture to *Gwendoline*, which is more of a curio than a bijou, but diverting in its own way. For the rest, there is "Fête polonaise" complete with its choral elements (likely to be omitted on its rare appearances in the concert hall), which play a more consequential part in its sometimes stuttering rhythmic accents than is revealed in

While this version will hardly displace the Beecham-Royal Philharmonic performance in the affections of those who have the good fortune to be acquainted with it (and might well be worth consideration as an Odyssey release), it is very much to Bernstein's credit and certainly the best the catalogue now offers. The first four of the five movements are beautifully re-created, with a nice blend of affection for their content and sym-

In the long succession of worthy performances of No. 88 in G, Bernstein's may be the latest, but it is far from the least. Indeed, it belongs with the best of the last decade (which is to say, with Szell's mono version and Bruno Walter's). It misses standing in a category of its own only because the slow movement, as Bernstein conceives it, is drawn out to lengths hard to justify even in terms of Haydn's choice of *largo* ("broad, slow") for its tempo marking. On the other hand, the kind of figuration Haydn develops as the slow movement of No. 102

The Philadelphia Orchestra plays these works like the great orchestra it is, but it does not always sound that way. That is to say, in terms of ensemble, discipline, and a virtuosity that is safe at all speeds, it earns honors; but the tonal output, as reproduced, tends to lack vibrance, the richness of string patina which is the rightful mark of this old master of an orchestra. It strikes me that there has been an overconcentration on clarity, definition, and distinc-

The chances of any independent group, such as Marriner's, surpassing the quality results accessible to ensembles of greater resources and enduring existence are at best marginal. When they invade territory assiduously cultivated by the composer himself (and contemporary specialists), the margin becomes slender indeed. These performances are satisfactory enough so far as impulse is con-

Ben Weber, who is old-fashioned enough to use opus numbers as an index to the sequence of his works, is also old-fashioned enough to use his tonal materials in a way that provides an index for them in the mind of his listener. That may be an invidious compliment in some circles, but it is also designed to identify Weber with the ability to convey mood, context, and some degree of meaning in his self-devised kind of serialism. Masselos works hard on behalf of the work for which he was responsible (by a commission through the Ford Foundation), and Samuel demonstrates—again—his com-

the orchestral version alone; a romping performance of the *Joyeuse Marche*; a deftly inflected *España*; and a languorously insinuating *Habanera*. A timpanist with the Orchestre Pasdeloup for eleven years (1934-1945) before he conducted for the first time at the war's end, Dervaux has not only the rhythmic sense that background suggests, but also a keenly discriminating ear for subtle shadings of woodwind and brass values. This applies also to his perceptive version of the *Bourrée fantasque* (as orchestrated by Felix Mottl).

pathy for the manner of their expression. Bernstein makes a little more of a production of the finale than suits its best interests, but the musical matter is, on the whole, warmly, truly, creatively conveyed. It also shows the Philharmonic and its solo instrumentalists to excellent advantage, not only through their skills alone, but also through the high quality of the recording.

evolves is not merely well served by Bernstein's leisurely pace, but very much in need of it. This makes it a perfect point of rest in a work whose humors and moods are beautifully judged by Bernstein, and affectingly re-created. What he brings to it in vigor of thought and of spirit are in the best vein of his Haydn conducting generally, as hitherto exemplified in the set of the six "Paris" Symphonies (Nos. 82-87). The resonant, well-balanced recording is among the best examples of the Philharmonic's contemporary sound on discs.

tion (the solo instruments are uniformly better in quality than the total ensemble), with some sacrifice of resonance and blend. The performances, per se, are in every instance highly polished, to a degree, indeed, that the amount of effort expended exceeds the amount of enjoyment conveyed . . . especially in the relaxed, folksy Smetana pieces, which are put through their paces over-strenuously for my taste. The Rhapsody No. 1 is the most successful of the four.

cerned (better in *Apollon Musagète* than in *Pulcinella*), but the sound quotient in the execution is less than satisfactory. *Pulcinella* demands more precision, finesse, and dynamic differentiations than are provided, and, though *Apollon* swings off at an attractively sustained pace, it doesn't hold it steadily. Good enough recording, but there are better versions of both works.

mand of clear means for getting the results he desires. Wuorinen's work utilizes the piano more or less conventionally, but the orchestra (scored with triple winds) is dominated by a nine-man percussion section. It has its interests, but these tend to a repetitious pattern of drum beat, piano punctuation, brass interjection that renders the tonal argument static. Both works are twenty minutes in length, which may be the first and last time on LP that two concerti of precisely equal duration have been paired. P.S.: The Wuorinen sounds longer. —IRVING KOLODIN.