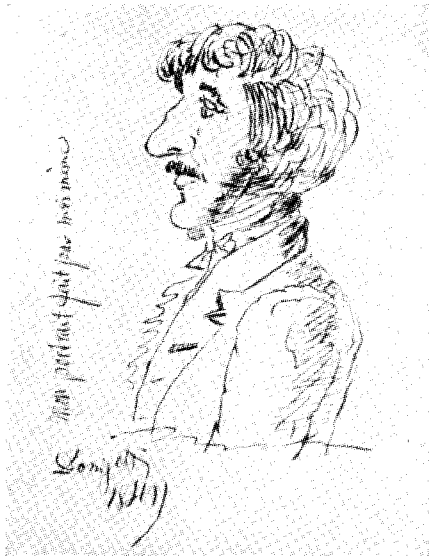


# Recordings in Review



Donizetti—"yet to be found wanting."

## The Further Perils of Donizetti's Donnas

DONIZETTI: "*Fatal Goffredo! Trono e corona*" (Torquato Tasso); "*Lascia, Guido, ch'io possa vendicare; Una voce al cor; Egli riede?*" (Gemma di Vergy); "*Plauso! Voci di gioia; Sin la tomba è a me negata!*" (Belisario); "*No, più salir non ponno; Ciel, sei tu che in tal momento; Ugo è spento*" (Parisina). Montserrat Caballé, soprano; with Margreta Elkins, soprano; Ermanno Mauro, tenor; Leslie Fyson, baritone; Tom McDonnell, bass; and Ambrosian Opera Chorus, John McCarthy, director; with Carlo Felice Cillario conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. RCA stereo, LSC-3164, \$5.98.

SO FAR has interest in, and exploitation of, the Donizetti literature advanced that awareness has progressed beyond the somewhat known, generally forgotten Lucrezia Borgia and Maria Stuarda to these generally unknown, wholly forgotten ones. Unlike some other composers whose reputation for being prolific is founded to some extent on a weakness for also being repetitious, Donizetti's resources have—to this point at least—not failed him in variety as well as abundance.

The obverse of this abundance is that the demands upon the interpreter are correspondingly extensive. For, if Donizetti's abilities to identify himself with his female characters are yet to be found wanting, this response was, in part, based on the abilities of his librettists to find new dilemmas in

which to involve them. Every one of the arias—*scene* is more nearly the appropriate title—finds the performers not merely on the horns of such a dilemma but all but devoid of hope of extricating themselves.

Inevitably, there is some element of desperation in the condition of their emotion, as well as of elaboration in the expression of it. So far as elaboration is concerned, Mme. Caballé is beautifully qualified to confront every requirement and to produce the facility that it requires. The vocal quality is homogeneous through her range with the special rarity—in a singer of such facility—of an appealing quality in the low range as well as the high. What she lacks is the ability to suggest desperation in any range, at any time, despite the extent to which the music that she sings is provided with it.

In this, of course, she is exactly the opposite of Maria Callas, to whose pioneering push the Donizetti revival owes much of its original propulsion and continuing momentum. Whereas Callas could, with a phrase, make one a willing convert to the dilemma of any character she espoused, she did have her problems in matching the florid means that Donizetti employed as a matter of course. What Caballé does leaves nothing but admiration for her as a singer; what she leaves undone is merely a reminder of the rare order of vocal bird for whom Donizetti wrote. The associated singers are respectable, but no more; the conducting of Cillario wanting in the kind of leadership that might urge Mme. Caballé to an involvement she cannot provide by herself.

## Stockhausen's Opus 1970

STOCKHAUSEN: *Opus 1970*. Aloys Kontarsky, piano; Johannes G. Fritsch, electric viola; Harald Bojë, *elektro-nium*; Rolf Gehlhaar, *tam-tam*; and Karlheinz Stockhausen, sound director. DGG stereo, 139 461 SLPM, \$5.98.

STOCKHAUSEN EARNS HONORS in ingenuity not so much for the effort he has expended to produce something worthy of both his art and Beethoven's in this bicentenary year, but for the designation "Opus 1970." Short of those who might suppose that he had actually produced 1,969 works prior to this one (after all, the numbers assigned by Otto Deutsch to the works of Schubert run to over 800), Stockhausen has shown a talent for combining, neatly, the older mode of the opus number

system with the newer trend for dating merely by years.

By contrast with the venture of Mauricio Kagel reviewed last month under the title of "Ludwig van," Stockhausen's is both more ingenious and vacuous. That is to say, it deals less in direct quotation from Beethoven's works for purposes of promoting a guessing game with the listener and more in electronic paraphrase for whatever response it may generate. There is a score, Stockhausen's commentary informs us, but use of the Beethoven quotations in it is optional with the performers.

However much this prospect may whet the appetite of the open-minded music lover, the actuality is likely to dull and discourage it. Passages that challenge as well as perplex are all too ephemeral; the stretches in which little or nothing—by my perception—happens, predominate. Anyone with a convincing argument to the contrary is invited to submit it. Optimistic note: The DGG package includes a four-colored, well-produced, multilanguage (German, French, and English) promotion piece for DGG's twelve-volume set of the complete Beethoven.

## Mozart, Strauss, and Sills

MOZART: "*Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio*" (K. 418). "*Martern aller Arten*" (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). "*Ruhe sanft, mein holdes Leben*" (*Zaide*). STRAUSS: "*Amor, Amor*" (Op. 68); "*Breit über mein Haupt*" (Op. 19, No. 2); *Final Scene from Daphne*. Beverly Sills, soprano; with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Aldo Ceccato. ABC stereo, ABC-ATS 20004, \$5.98.

DESPITE THE superficial polarity conveyed by the juxtaposition of the names of Mozart and Strauss, there is a far more fundamental kinship in much of their vocal music. This is a reflection not only of Strauss's oft-expressed admiration for his great predecessor, but also of their common bond as composers who had married sopranos. However, the question remains, for the singer who would undertake to build a bridge between them: Which Mozart? Which Strauss?

Miss Sills's choice of Mozart has, in itself, nothing but virtue. Who would not enjoy the opportunity to sing the excerpts from *Die Entführung* and *Zaide*, not to mention the seldom heard showpiece that he wrote as an interpolation for an opera by Pasquale Anfossi in 1783? Miss Sills plainly does, but the pleasure of her company is genuine only in the superb air from *Zaide*, which she sings with faultless control and clean articulation of the

text. "Martern aller Arten" is an exercise in dramatic (mind the word: dramatic) coloratura in which Constanze vows that no matter the tortures to which she is exposed, she will not yield to the Pasha who is wooing her. Miss Sills sings the lighter, florid line beautifully, but when the requirement is for defiance, she sounds merely petulant. As for the impressive "Vorrei spiegarti," it too asks for more tone and less vibrato.

The order of adjustment to the Strauss material is of much the same order. In "Amor," for which the Strauss of 1919 revived the Zerbinetta vocabulary of the Strauss of 1912, Miss Sills has a captivating command of mood, as well as facility, through its considerable range. But "Breit über mein Haupt" poses another kind of demand—described by Martin Bernheimer in his well-documented notes as "rapturous lyricism"—which is within Miss Sills's vocal means at low volume, but not at full voice. For that matter, the *Daphne* scene is written for a quantity of voice that Miss Sills can match only at full voice, where the sound is thin, the tone edgy. Ceccato shows admirable qualities in both repertoires, though the soaring ecstasy of the Straussian coda is guardedly treated. Miss Sills's well-miked treatment of the little echo at the end is perfectly done.

### Beethoven's Trios on the Sterling, and Gold, Standards

BEETHOVEN: *Trios* (Op. 1, Nos. 1, 2, and 3); *Trio* (Op. 11); *Trios* (Op. 70, Nos. 1 and 2); *Trio* (Op. 97, "Archduke"); *Trio in E flat* (WoO 38); *Trio in B flat* (WoO 39); "Kakadu" *Variations* (Op. 121a); *Fourteen Variations in E flat* (Op. 44). Eugene Istomin, piano; Isaac Stern, violin; and Leonard Rose, cello. Columbia stereo, M5-30065, \$29.98.

The same, plus *Trio in E flat* (1784). Daniel Barenboim, piano; Pinchas Zukerman, violin; and Jacqueline du Pré, cello; with Gervase de Peyer, clarinet (in *Trio*, Op. 11). Angel stereo, SE-3771, \$29.98.

RARELY have record buyers been presented with so delightful a dilemma as they are with the appearance, simultaneously, of these two exceptional efforts with all of Beethoven's mature trio literature (as well as some not so mature). Doubtless the players would have preferred that there were no dilemma, delightful or otherwise, to contest the unchallenged way each deserves for a difficult task well accomplished. But anniversaries, like time and tide, wait for no man, and record

companies have a way of thinking—sometimes independently—of comparable projects.

To deal with likenesses first: The groups are agreed that ten sides are the appropriate number for dealing with the range of desirable works. The Barenboim-Zukerman-du Pré ensemble has managed to smuggle into the same number of sides the very early (1784) trio of the fourteen-year-old Beethoven. It is well enough worth having, all three minutes and eighteen seconds of it, and its inclusion here saves the trouble of finding it in some other source. On the other hand, it is more a curio than an asset, and its absence is no deprivation. As a plus, the same ensemble offers hospitality to Gervase de Peyer for the clarinet part in Opus 11, whose performance by the violin Beethoven also sanctioned. This strikes me not so much as an option as a fulfillment of the composer's first purpose, and as any project gains from the participation of an artist of de Peyer's quality, so this version is more to Beethoven's point than the alternate one by the Istomin-Stern-Rose trio.

A comparative exposure to the two sets may be accomplished in a period of X hours (the number depending on whether they are laid end on end or stretched over more than one day), without risking either diminution of interest or aural fatigue. One could hardly find a more engrossing listening assignment, for no matter how well one knows one, two, or three of the trios, there are seven others (plus the accessory items) to stimulate the appetite and reward the attention. Particularly if one chooses to give the Barenboim-Zukerman-du Pré ensemble first exposure, as it is the nearly unknown element vis-à-vis the well-established Istomin-Stern-Rose "known."

From the first notes of Opus 1, No. 1, on, the cleanly articulated, beautifully blended performances are of a quality to bear out everything good that has been said about these performers, individually and as a group. But it is apparent almost at once that the center of animation, the brain power, and the motor drive are at the piano where Barenboim is situated. And so well does he do his work, not only in these early trios but in the Opus 11, the Opus 44, and the "Kakadu" Variations, that one can hardly resist the statement that of all seven players involved in these albums, Barenboim's achievement is of the highest individual merit.

Born chamber musician that he is, the flair, the refinement, and the insights he provides are almost more than the group of which he is a part can bear. Both Zukerman and Miss du Pré have superb sounds to contribute, and each is a musician of the first

quality. But they tend to be a little deferential and restrained vis-à-vis Barenboim, and the results are to that extent uneven.

Once the range of repertory shifts from the early and middle works—where the two trios play each other quite evenly—to the later ones, the differences begin to mount. What Barenboim-Zukerman-du Pré have to offer are sterling performances; but the coin in which Istomin-Stern-Rose deal is the pure gold standard and nothing else. It is not, in any case, a matter of whether they have more beautiful sounds to dispense or a bigger volume of it to command (which, as it happens, they do). It is rather that whereas Barenboim and his associates are still exploring the surface of such works as the "Geister" (Opus 70, No. 1) or the "Archduke" (Opus 97) or the superb E-flat (Opus 70, No. 2), Istomin et al. have moved on to the exposition of inner relationships and subtleties that glorify the already exalted.

It is, in a way, regrettable that this kind of confrontation has arisen, for each effort deserves consideration for its unique attributes. But even as the Barenboim-Zukerman-du Pré results could only be excelled by something super-special, so the Istomin-Stern-Rose accomplishments grow in magnitude by the quality of what they clearly exceed. The recording of the Barenboim-Zukerman-du Pré performances are a shade more consistent than those of Istomin-Stern-Rose. The commentator for the Angel issue is Burnett James, for the Columbia, the undersigned.

—IRVING KOLODIN.



—Wayne J. Shilkret

Barenboim — "of the highest individual merit."

# Orchestral LPs

## Data

## Report

**Beethoven:** Concerto No. 1. Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony; with Ania Dorfmann, piano. *Leonore* Overture No. 3. Toscanini and the NBC Symphony. RCA Victrola mono, VIC-1521, \$2.98.

**Beethoven:** Concerto No. 2 in B flat. William Kapell, piano; with Vladimir Golschmann conducting the NBC Symphony. **Prokofiev:** Concerto No. 3 in C. Kapell, piano; with the Dallas Symphony conducted by Antal Dorati. RCA Victrola mono, VIC-1520, \$2.98.

**Beethoven:** Concerto No. 5 in E flat. Bruno Leonardo Gelber, piano; with the New Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Ferdinand Leitner. Seraphim stereo, S-60131, \$2.98.

**Beethoven:** Triple Concerto (Op. 56 in C). David Oistrakh, violin; Mstislav Rostropovich, cello; and Sviatoslav Richter, piano; with Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Angel stereo, S-36727, \$5.98.

**Beethoven:** Symphony No. 5 in C minor (Op. 67). **Schubert:** Symphony No. 8 in B minor. Seiji Ozawa conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. RCA stereo, LSC-3132, \$5.98.

**Beethoven:** Symphonies complete; *Leonore* Overtures Nos. 1-3; *Fidelio* Overture. Eugen Jochum conducting the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. Philips stereo, SC71-AX900, \$49.34 (nine discs).

Ania Dorfmann and the Toscanini of both the Philharmonic and the NBC period had a famous rapport, especially in the *First Beethoven Concerto*. At this distance, the tempi for the fast movements strike the ear as inordinately fast, sometimes verging on overwrought. But Miss Dorfmann is, in the main, capable of meeting the maestro on his own terms and sustaining a pianistic discipline suitable to the subject matter. The outcome is a highly interesting version of the C-major Concerto, if hardly one

Despite the high rank he had achieved at the time of his lamentable death in a plane crash in the fall of 1953, Kapell's range of recordings is a relatively limited one. That was on no account a reflection on his talent, but rather a consequence of the measured pace at which recorded personalities were exploited. Here he is heard at very much his two-sided best, as a highly capable, thoroughly schooled musician with a flair for virtuosity (in the Beethoven) and as a virtuoso of the

The talents of Bruno Gelber are considerable, if, at this moment, not quite on the order required to master the physical requirements of the *Emperor*. As conveyed in this refined but rather light-fingered version by Gelber, the appropriate nickname would be something more like the "*Empress*." In any case, among the big-

This may very well be the best-sounding version of the Triple Concerto ever produced, which will be a point of irrefutable persuasion for those who are interested in the best-sounding version of the Triple Concerto they can find. For others, however, who feel that very good sound and unsurpassable Beethoven are preferable to the best possible sound and slightly surpassable Beethoven, the pros and cons will have to be weighed. The real problem in this combination of elements is that, to begin with the work itself, there is rather more impersonality present than makes for the most absorb-

Ozawa leads the members of the Chicago Symphony on a breathless chase through the Fifth Symphony (31:40 with the allotted repeats), which leaves no doubt of their ability to accommodate themselves to his demands, but some doubt of his comprehension of Beethoven's. The trouble with the kind of speed to which Ozawa commits himself—in all four movements, incidentally—is that once the die has been cast there is no choice but to live with it. All too often, however—even in the slow movement—what may be acceptable in a specific starting

The concurrent issue of the symphonies on single discs (or on such couplings as Nos. 1 and 2, where length permits) may encourage some to sample the Jochum style of performance prior to a large-scale investment. This is necessary because he has not had the American opportunities that have accrued to some others, and desirable because he possesses a comprehension of this music excelled by very few of his contemporaries. Those who are acquainted with it will also anticipate the size and power of the

to be recommended as a model for any other partnership. One of the special pleasures of the work is the Carnegie Hall sound, of 1945, which produces a resonance that belies its age. On the other hand, the dramatic version of the Overture (1939) is a constricted approach to anything like fidelity, a consequence of NBC's allegiance at the time to the dry, unresonant Studio 8-H. Toscanini's impulse fills the grooves, but not the ears.

first order with a livening scene of musicianship (in the Prokofiev). Neither reproduction would, at this time, earn an honorary mention for technical excellence in competition for a Prix de Disque. However, each has sufficient tonal amplitude to exhibit what is of the first importance: Kapell and the orchestra vis-à-vis the music, especially in the case of the none too frequently recorded Beethoven concerto.

ger and, in some demonstrable respects, better versions of the work, Gelber's must be accorded a respectable but not conspicuous place. The excellent orchestra could doubtless do more than Leitner asks of them, but a neutral role is the extent of his participation.

ing outcome. The Triple Concerto has its moments of high distinction, but they have to be sought out and exhibited in the midst of other values that are more involved with the difficult means Beethoven endeavored to reconcile in this score. This the solo performers and von Karajan are disinclined to do: they are more concerned with making the biggest, loudest, fattest sounds they can, at some slight cost to content. A good deal of virtuosity has been expended in a cause where less virtuosity and more commitment would have been desirable. Admirable sound, as previously suggested.

phrase becomes an uncomfortable limitation when the number of notes per measure mounts up and the tempo remains the same. It all sounds much too accelerated and lacking in breadth for me. The values are much better adjusted in the Schubert, though Ozawa has an unfortunate tendency to make his cadential ritards so broad that subtlety—let alone surprise—is sacrificed. The recorded sound is excellent, but the content of the annotation suggests a college thesis—and not of senior grade, either.

results he achieves in the *Eroica*, in No. 5, and No. 7—not to mention the Ninth—but even they are likely to be surprised by the spirit and animation he imparts to No. 2. The solo quartet for No. 9 offers Anna Reynolds, the English mezzo, and Liselotte Rebmann, soprano, two of the Karajan Rhine Maidens at the Met; Anton de Ridder, tenor; and Gerd Feldhoff, bass. The shorter sides are filled out by the *Fidelio* and three *Leonore* Overtures. The sound throughout is excellent.

—IRVING KOLODIN.