

Records 1973: The Fall Collection

By Irving Kolodin

Contrary to the prophecies of decline and disaster periodically proclaimed for the production of long-playing records devoted to the more durable musical forms, quality has rarely been higher and variety never greater than in the past year. Quantity has, indeed, declined, largely because some manufacturers (including American) are not spending as much on new productions as they have in the past. But who is to say that the Chicago Symphony isn't making better records for London, under Sir Georg Solti, than it did for RCA in the past or that the Boston Symphony is hurting because of its affiliation with Deutsche Grammophon? For those who are versed in the ups and downs of domestic versus foreign record production in the Thirties: The more things change, the more they are the same.

Herewith is a two-part overview of the most interesting recordings offered this year: first, a summation of outstanding items offered in the preholiday season; second, a résumé of the year's production as sampled by *WORLD* and by *SATURDAY REVIEW*, prior to their merger.

BACH: WELL-TEMPERED CLAVICHORD, BOOK ONE. Sviatoslav Richter, piano. Melodiya/Angel, SRC-4119.

Some may condemn these performances as Russified or romanticized, but nobody could regard them as other than unquestionably Richter's own. That is to say, they are thoughtful, expressive, and intensely creative. Both the piano and the recorded space are excessively resonant and blurry.

BERIO: RECITAL I (FOR CATHY). Cathy Berberian, soprano, with the composer conducting the London Sinfonietta. RCA ARL1-0036.

It doesn't require much penetration to discern in this endeavor a reprise of the method used by Berio in his *Sinfonia*—spoken text, borrowings from other composers (Monteverdi to Bernstein), inside jokes, etc. He has thus, in a single stroke, converted an innovation into a cliché.

BOITO: MEFISTOFELE (EXCERPTS). Giuseppe di Stefano, Renata Tebaldi, and Cesare Siepi, with Tullio Serafin conducting. London OS 26274.



For all its billing as Tebaldi and di Stefano's first time together on records, this disk is of primary interest for other reasons. If "the first time together" were dated 1973, who would care? Rather more special, their collaboration dates from 1959, when di Stefano began a *Mefistofele*, from which he withdrew and was replaced by Mario del Monaco. The salvaged, previously unissued matter offers di Stefano in one of the most beautiful versions of the tenor aria (*Dal campo*) ever recorded, as well as some choice ensembles with Tebaldi.

BOULEZ: SONATAS NOS. 1 AND 3 (TROPE, CONSTELLATION). Charles Rosen, piano. **LE MARTEAU SANS MAÎTRE.** Yvonne Minton, mezzo, with the Ensemble Musique Vivante. **LIVRE POUR CORDES.** The composer conducting the strings of the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Columbia 32160-1.

Some might wish Boulez would take more time out from conducting for composing, rather than taking time out from conducting the music of others to conduct music of his own. But his past production has a special interest under his own direction. As for Rosen, those who type him a specialist on the basis of his fine book, *Classical Period in Music*, should recall that he has also recorded works of the Viennese composers of the recent past. This is by no means an irrelevant consideration here, for the early first sonata is very much of that background. The as yet unfinished Sonata No. 3 (of which "Trope" and "Constellation" are representative sections) isn't sufficiently defined to be evaluated. Minton is certainly the best vocalist yet to be heard in a recording of *Le Marteau sans maître*, the most of Boulez to date. *Livre* is the later, expanded version of the quartet movements of the same title.

DEBUSSY: PRELUDE À L'APRÈS-MIDI

D'UN FAUNE; PETITE SUITE. SATIE: TROIS MORCEAUX EN FORME DE POIRE. POULENC: CONCERTO IN D MINOR. Bracha Eden and Alexander Tamir, duo pianists. Sergiu Comissiona conducting L'Orchestre de la Suisse romande. London CS 6754.

Recorded performances of Ravel's version for two pianos of Debussy's aquarelle are by no means unknown, but Eden and Tamir are more successful with it than most. The performances of the more familiar works of the duo pianists' repertory are in keeping with the high standard of this partnership.

PROKOFIEV: ROMEO AND JULIET (COMPLETE BALLET). Lorin Maazel conducting the Cleveland Orchestra. London CSA 2312. Andre Previn conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. Angel SC 3802.

Either of these would have filled the long-existent need for a full-length version of Prokofiev's score (the "complete" Bolshoi Ballet version conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky was deficient in every aural requirement). Given a choice, I prefer the partnership of Maazel and the Cleveland Orchestra, for its flexibility and dynamic variety.

PUCCHINI: TURANDOT. Zubin Mehta conducting, with Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Montserrat Caballé, Tom Krause, Nicolai Ghiaurov, and Peter Pears. London OSA 13108.

The weak link in this chain of jewels is where it might be least (or most) expected: the choice of Joan Sutherland to sing Princess Turandot. However favored by the microphone, Sutherland's sound does not possess the thrust to penetrate the orchestral sound as a Turandot should. Her voice is deficient in the vibrance a performer of Puccini's greatest role should possess. All the others, of whom Pavarotti is the most outstanding, perform well; but the totality is less than the individual elements promise.

RACHMANINOFF: COMPLETE RECORDINGS. RCA ARM 1 (5 volumes).

All of the contents of this extraordinary anniversary issue (Rachmaninoff was born in 1873) are to some degree familiar to listeners, depending on their age and background. But no one has had the opportunity before to sample the range and diversity of this great composer-pianist's art contained in the works here (derived from the Edison as well

as the Victor catalogues). The result is thus the subject for a monograph rather than a footnote. All one can do here is call attention to the immense strength, decisiveness, and sensitivity of Rachmaninoff the performer, whether interpreting his own works or those of Chopin, Schubert, and Schumann. Incidentally, his art has never been reproduced as well as it is in these transfers, for which credit is not specified.

ROCHBERG: QUARTET No. 3; CONCORD STRING QUARTET. Nonesuch HQ-1283.

Rochberg's third quartet, written for and first performed by the Concord Ensemble in 1972, is by far the best work by him I have yet encountered. It has some of the dialectical disposition of Elliott Carter but a good deal more clarity, warmth, and balance. Some of the sections in which Rochberg evokes classical counterpoises to his own contemporary impulses are more than nominally worthy of Beethoven, Schubert, or whomever. The performance is superb, and it is beautifully reproduced. □

Recommended in '73

Comments on these recordings released in 1973 are derived from reviews published in SATURDAY REVIEW/WORLD, WORLD, or SATURDAY REVIEW. Key: Robert Craft (R.C.); Roland Gelatt (R.G.); Irving Kolodin (I.K.).

Chamber Music

MOZART: DIVERTIMENTO IN D (K.334); NOTTURNO (SERENADE) IN D (K.286). Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martins-in-the-Fields. Argo.

Despite the participation of a conductor, the results respect the chamber-music character of Mozart's conception. (I.K.)

SCHUMANN: QUINTET IN E FLAT. Flonzaley Quartet, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, piano. BRAHMS: QUINTET IN F MINOR. Flonzaley Quartet, Harold Bauer, piano. RCA, two LPs.

Rapturous and refined remembrances of one of the great chamber ensembles of the century. Early electrical recording. (R.G.)

STRAUSS: METAMORPHOSEN. Herbert von Karajan conducting strings of the Berlin Philharmonic. Deutsche Grammophon.

The first entirely convincing perfor-

mance of a work that is the *summa* of Strauss's incomparable instrumental expertise. With it is Beethoven's Grosse Fuge in its expanded form for multiple strings. (R.G.)

Choral Works

BEETHOVEN: MISSA SOLEMNIS. Eugene Jochum conducting the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, soloists, and the Netherlands Radio Chorus. Philips.

Imposing sobriety amid a spatial "ring" related to recording in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. (I.K.)

DAVIES, PETER MAXWELL: MISSA SUPER L'HOMME ARME, etc. The composer conducting, with Vanessa Redgrave, speaker. L'Oiseau-Lyre.

The values in this work suggest that Davies has achieved an emotional breakthrough to a larger audience than he has already won in his native Britain. (I.K.)

ELGAR: THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS. Benjamin Britten conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, Peter Pears, John Shirley-Quirk, and Yvonne Minton. London.

Compositional insights abound in the attention lavished by England's premier composer of today on the work of his great predecessor. (I.K.)

TCHAIKOVSKY: LITURGIE DE SAINT JEAN CHRYSOSTOME. Ensemble Choral Tchaikovsky. Philips.

A little-known but important work, offered for the first time on records. (R.C.)

VERDI: REQUIEM MASS. Herbert von Karajan, with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Wiener Singverein, and Mirella Freni, Christa Ludwig, Carlo Cossutta, and Nicolai Ghiaurov. Deutsche Grammophon.

The all-star elements are imposingly reproduced. (I.K.)

Opera

BERLIOZ: BENVENUTO CELLINI. Philips.

The revelation of a musical masterpiece, among the richest and most original of any opera of the time. (R.C.)

BIZET: CARMEN. Leonard Bernstein conducting, with Marilyn Horne, James McCracken, etc. Deutsche Grammophon.

A bronze rather than a gold medal for a performance whose reproduction is super. (R.C.)

DELIUS: A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET. Meredith Davies conducting the Royal

Philharmonic, with Robert Tear, Elizabeth Harwood, etc. Angel.

A full measure of Delian magic, performed by a who's who of today's outstanding British singers, in a lush and atmospheric recording. (R.G.)

POUND: LE TESTAMENT DE VILLON. Western Opera Theater. Fantasy.

An unqualified curio (Pound's chant-like tunes orchestrated by the late George Antheil), well performed by the San Francisco Opera affiliate, directed by Robert Hughes. (I.K.)



PUCCINI: LA BOHÈME. Von Karajan conducting a cast including Mirella Freni, Luciano Pavarotti, Nicolai Ghiaurov, etc. London.

Nothing in this effort can eclipse the ardent vitality of Toscanini's recording or the chiseled elegance of Beecham's, but von Karajan's is certainly the preferred version in stereo. (R.G.)

PUCCINI: TOSCA. Victor de Sabata conducting, with Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, Tito Gobbi, and the La Scala Orchestra. HMV.

An English reissue in "electronic" stereo, which gives the mono recording of the early Fifties a freshness akin to seeing a familiar old master with all the dull varnish removed. (R.G.)

SCARLATTI, A.: THE SPANISH LADY AND THE ROMAN CAVALIER. Richmond.

The birth of the buffo, with laughter rather than tears, thanks to Fiorenza Cossuto and Lorenzo Alvary. (I.K.)

WAGNER: PARSIFAL. Solti conducting the Vienna Philharmonic, René Kollo, Gottlob Frick, Christa Ludwig, D. Fischer-Dieskau, etc. London.

A temperate and conservative production, sustained by a marvelously spacious and limpid recording. (R.G.)

WAGNER: TRISTAN UND ISOLDE. Von