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BUDAPEST QUARTET REISSUES

THE BUDAPEST QUARTET - THE EARLY EMI RECORDINGS (1932-1936). COLUMBIA-ODYSSEY Y 34643, 4-disc set, mono. (Joseph Roisman, Alexander Schneider, violinists; Istvan Ipolyi, violist; Mischa Schneider, cellist).

Mozart: String Quartet No. 20, D major, K. 499 (4/5/34); Beethoven: String Quartet No. 8, E minor, Op. 59, No. 2 (4/24/36); String Quartet No. 13, B flat, Op. 130 (4/4-5/34, 8/10/33); Schubert: Quartettsatz, C minor, D. 703 (4/5/34); Mendelssohn: String Quartet No. 1, D major, Op. 12 (4/29/35); Brahms: String Quartet No. 3, B flat, Op. 67 (11/15, 17-18/33); Wolf: Italian Serenade, G major (11/18/32); Bartók: String Quartet No. 2, A minor, Op. 17 (4/25/36).

THE ART OF BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET (sic). TOSHIBA-EMI ANGEL EAC 60055-59, 5-disc set, mono. (Emil Hauser, Joseph Roisman, Alexander Schneider, violinists; Istvan Ipolyi, Boris Kroyt, violists; Harry Son, Mischa Schneider, cellists).

Mozart: String Quartet No. 20, D major, K. 499 (4/5/34); Beethoven: String Quartet No. 8, E minor, Op. 59, No. 2 (4/24/36); String Quartet No. 13, B flat, Op. 130 (4/4-5/34, 8/10/33); Gross Fuge, B flat, Op. 133 (2/21/27); Mendelssohn: String Quartet No. 1, D major, Op. 12 (4/29/35); Brahms: String Quartet No. 3, B flat, Op. 67 (11/15, 17-18/33); Grieg: String Quartet, G minor, Op. 27 (2/5/37); Sibelius: String Quartet, D minor, Op. 56, "Voces Intimae" (8/8/33); Bartók: String Quartet No. 2, A minor, Op. 17 (4/25/36); Schubert: Quartettsatz, C minor, D. 703 (4/5/34); Tchaikovsky: String Quartet No. 1, D major, Op. 11 - Andante cantabile only (2nd movement) (4/5/34); Wolf: Italian Serenade, G major (11/18/32); Borodin: String Quartet No. 2, D major - Notturmo only (2nd movement) (1/23/28).

BEETHOVEN: THE LATE QUARTETS - THE HISTORIC 1952 RECORDINGS. COLUMBIA-ODYSSEY Y 34644, 4 disc set, mono. (Joseph Roisman, Jac Gorodetzky, violinists; Boris Kroyt, violist; Mischa Schneider, cellist).

String Quartet No. 12, E flat, Op. 127; String Quartet No. 13, B flat, Op. 130; String Quartet No. 14, C # minor, Op. 131; String Quartet No. 15, A minor, Op. 132; Grosse Fuge, B flat, Op. 133; String Quartet No. 16, F major, Op. 135.

THE ODYSSEY SET: It was precisely this group of players that brought the standard quartet repertoire to life for vast numbers of people in the 1930's. Those who remember their performances, live and recorded, are no longer in the majority, but this reminder is salutary, as must be the revelation to those who discovered the Budapest Quartet later in their long career, when the group was an aged ghost of what had been.

Of recorded quartet ensembles, others had their partisans: the

older Flonzaley Quartet, passionate and precise, but sparsely recorded; the Busch Quartet, holding high the banner of Sacred German Art in the Joachim tradition; the Lener Quartet, spreading over each of their copious recordings an indiscriminate veil of thin, sweet tone, rubato, and constant portamento; second-rate obscurities too numerous to mention. The Budapest Quartet illuminated a far broader selection of pieces than any of the aforementioned quartets, and to much greater effect.

For this listener, the gems in this set are Beethoven's E minor Quartet and Wolf's Italian Serenade. The former is a polished, glowing, superbly balanced performance, full of fire and irresistible rhythmic impulse; the latter, simply the most sprightly and affectionate performance ever recorded of this minor masterpiece. Also worthy of special mention is the Brahms B flat Quartet, a performance of breathtaking velocity and accuracy, proportioned with full understanding. The Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Schubert quartets receive cool and moderate performances of consistent technical excellence. The only dubious reading transferred here is the Bartók 2nd Quartet, a cautious, insufficiently impulsive treatment.

The transfers are utilitarian, made from commercially issued shellacs rather than from newly-made pressings from existing metal parts; the only severe technical flaw is a pitch waver at the end of the first movement of the Mendelssohn quartet (side 2 of the 78 set, not present in my copy). Leslie Gerber's liner notes dispatch the history of the quartet with precision and impressive brevity.

THE TOSHIBA SET: It contains all the material to be found in the Odyssey set, and significantly more. The Japanese have chosen to extend their range of consideration to recordings both earlier and later than those in the Odyssey set, and they have not confined themselves to one quartet-personnel configuration. Beethoven's Grosse Fuge (recorded on February 21, 1927) involves violinists Emil Hauser and Joseph Roisman, violist Istvan Ipolyi, and cellist Harry Son - as does the Borodin Nocturne, recorded on January 23, 1928. The Grieg Quartet (recorded on February 5, 1937), substitutes violist Boris Kroyt for Ipolyi, who departed from the group the previous year. The remaining additional pieces - Sibelius and Tchaikovsky - are played by the personnel in the Odyssey set.

The most important of these additional performances are the Grieg Quartet, played in a manner that almost convinces one that it is a tolerable piece of chamber music, and the Sibelius Quartet, quite possibly the best performance ever recorded - burnished, dead-accurate in intonation, full of impulse.

Notes are, regrettably, in Japanese only; recording dates for everything are mercifully listed in English. Pressings are phenomenally clean. The transfers from 78's to tape are by the redoubtable Anthony Griffith, and there is no question about their superiority to those generated by Ward Marston for Columbia Records' Odyssey set. This reviewer has received hearsay reports, stemming from a former Columbia

retainer, that "the powers that are" found "imperfections" in Mr. Griffith's tapes, and consequently proceeded to initiate their own transfers. As to the underlying reasons for this patently unaccountable behavior, one's speculations are at best unflattering; at worst, libelous. The net result is that the American consumer of records is once more left holding a product of less than the highest quality, while the manufacturer continues to rake in his revenues at a constant rate.

THE LATE BEETHOVEN QUARTETS: These were originally issued as Columbia ML 4583-87. They were recorded in 1952 at the Library of Congress, with the players using the Stradivari instruments owned by the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation. The recording space is quite presentable, the instruments are very fine, and the players all of long experience and extreme interpretive wisdom. The fact remains that nothing of really exceptional quality was recorded here. There are flashes of the old Budapest intellectual/emotional congruence (try the first movement of Op. 131), but the median of these performances is routine, with great stretches of painfully dry tone and no shortage of intonational lapses. The players did not age gracefully, and the legends initiated by the Budapest Quartet to be found in the Odyssey set of EMI recordings no longer applied.

John D. Wiser

DAVID OISTRAKH IN PRAGUE

Mozart: Concerto, violin and orchestra, G major, K. 216 (Cadenzas by David Oistrakh); Shostakovich: Trio No. 2, for violin, cello, and piano, E minor, Op. 67; Brahms: Concerto, violin, cello, and orchestra, A minor, Op. 102; Beethoven: Romance, violin and orchestra, F major, Op. 50. David Oistrakh, violin; Miloš Sádlo, cello (in Shostakovich & Brahms); Dmitri Shostakovich, piano (in Shostakovich); Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (in Mozart & Beethoven); Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra (in Brahms), conducted by Karel Ančerl.
SUPRAPHON 0 10 2371-2, two discs (mono), \$17.96

Violinist David Oistrakh (1908-1974) was a remarkably consistent player throughout his career. He rarely departed from a high level of musicianship, and displayed a versatility and musical understanding given to very few executors. Recorded memorials issued in the half-decade since his departure have been regrettably few, and in the exigencies of the marketplace, the bulk of his many recordings remain out of print.

This set from Prague is as welcome as it is unexpected. Oistrakh was popular in the Czech capitol as he was everywhere in the world, but somehow one expects small nations to confine their historical releases to their own nationals. While there is nothing not previously available in the reissue, these recordings were last to be found in print a generation ago.

The Mozart G major Concerto was the first of at least three recordings Oistrakh made of the piece, in the spring of 1954. A thoroughly Gemütlich solo performance is set off somewhat disconcertingly by Ančerl's stolid accompaniment. The orchestral playing is adequate, but the recorded sound is dry and lacking in detail. This and the Beethoven F major Romance both originated on tape. The remaining music was originally recorded on 78 r.p.m. discs, and the transfer to LP is credited to one František Burda.

The Oistrakh/Sádlo collaboration on Brahms is a splendid romantic conception, again hampered by stolid orchestral direction, this time with some noticeably substandard wind playing as well. The performance makes one regret that Sádlo never achieved more than national acclaim, although he was well known world-wide for this recording, issued in the USA as Classic Editions SR-8, Colosseum CRLP 10200, and Bruno BR 14039.

The inclusion of one of Dmitri Shostakovich's too-few recorded performances is the major side-benefit of the set. Liner note writer Jaroslav Holeček is at pains to let the world know why there is a high count of clinkers in this performance (Shostakovich was unwilling to hold still for more than single take of each 78 side), Schönheitsfehler he calls them in his English-language notes! They don't matter -- the performance is spacious, shapely, and well worth preserving on records.

The music was obviously well-ingrained in both string players, who are more than equal to its considerable demands.

The transfers from 78's are not elegant, being unnecessarily noisy and in the Shostakovich not entirely stable in pitch. Still, the information-to-noise ratio is high enough, the musical experience indefinitely repeatable.

John D. Wiser

CLAUDIO ARRAU - THE HISTORIC RECORDINGS

Balakirev: Islamey (recorded c. 1927); Busoni: Elegie nr. 5, "Die Nachtlichen"; Stravinsky: (3) Pieces from Petrouchka: No. 1 only, Danse russe; (recorded 1928); Liszt: Rhapsodie espagnole (recorded 1936); Transcendental Etudes after Paganini: No. 2 in E flat major, "Octave"; No. 5 in E major, "La Chasse"; No. 1 in G minor, "Tremolo"; No. 6 in A minor, "Theme and Variations"; Concert etude No. 2 in F minor, "La leggerezza"; Annees de pelerinage, 1st year: Switzerland: No. 4, "Au bord d'un source" (recorded 1928); Chopin: Waltz in F major, Op. 34, no. 3 (recorded c. 1930); Debussy: Preludes, Book II: No. 3, "La puerta del vino" (recorded 1951); Chopin-Liszt: Polish Song, "My Joys", Op. 74, no. 12 (recorded 1950); Chopin: Etude in F minor, Op. 25, no. 2; Etude in C sharp minor, Op. 10, no. 4; Prelude in F major, Op. 28, no. 23; Etude in A flat major, Op. 25, no. 1; (recorded c. 1930); Tarantelle in A flat major, Op. 43 (recorded c. 1932); Liszt: Annees de pelerinage; 3rd year: Italy: No. 4, "Jeux d'eaux a la Villa d'Este" (recorded 1929); Schubert-Liszt: Hark, Hark, the Lark, D. 889 (recorded c. 1930); Schubert: Fantasia in C major, "The Wanderer", D. 760 (recorded 1957). Claudio Arrau, pianist. DESMAR GHP 4001-2, 2 records.

Claudio Arrau is still with us--a pianist who, for whatever it may be worth, is only two teaching generations away from Franz Liszt. His major pianistic mentor was Martin Krause (1853-1918), a student and devotee of Liszt for the last three years of Liszt's life, 1883-1886. Time enough, one supposes, to learn as much of another artist's approach to music as one might need for a lifetime of teaching. Arrau is reported as saying that Krause "...always looked for poetry, drama and passion--Liszt's heritage." While this is far from an interpretive method, it seems a plausible source for Arrau's most salient characteristics as a keyboard technician and interpreter.

Those characteristics have been in evidence throughout a phenomenally long career, and the recordings restored to availability in this new Desmar set are an admirable selection from his copious discography. The previously mentioned specifics of Liszt's so-called heritage are given greater effect by Arrau with his technical fluency, respect for accuracy in rhythm, a fine sense of pianistic "color", consistent clarity of texture, and ever-present sense of spontaneity.

Perhaps in recent years, this last trait has fallen off in prominence, but in the recordings of Arrau in this third, fourth, and fifth decades of playing in public, it is most noticeable. Even Balakirev's brainless Islamey is invested with an eventfulness few pianists can bring to it. It was an act of unusual adventurousness in 1928 to record even a short original work by Ferruccio Busoni, whose Fifth Elegy is as hermetic to the casual listener today as it was then, in or out of its context. The Liszt and Chopin selections are in general executed with assurance,

strength, and a modicum of tasteful rhythmic inflection. The difficulties inherent in Liszt's Transcendental Etudes are overcome with total aplomb; and the single Debussy piece, La puerta del vino, is done with a vigorous transparency that should send many a listener haring off in search of his other Debussy recordings of the same period (early 1950's) - Books I and II of Images, recently announced for reissue by Columbia.

The absolute gem of the collection is the most recently recorded music - from 1957 - Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy, a performance of great propulsion, total textural clarity, and a moving articulation of the music's extremely intense melodic contents.

The transfers from 78's - which amounts to everything but the Wanderer Fantasy - are purely utilitarian. They are adequate in presence, body, and existing dynamic range, but surfaces are generally too obtrusive, and in several cases, the dubbing copies were of doubtful quality. The short Stravinsky selection from Petrouchka is severely afflicted by pitch waver, and no attempt was made to equalize out of it, or of the other Polydor recordings, the extreme mid-range bulge of the original recording characteristic. Later material generally comes off better.

Humphrey Searle's liner notes read not like annotations to the music, but just as if they were a Gramophone review. Of these cavils, only the pitch waver problem is major, and this should not distract the prospective buyer from the extreme value of the musical and documentary contents of the set. The flaw afflicts one band on one side. The rest is pure pleasure.

John D. Wiser

VILLA-LOBOS PAR LUI-MÊME. Bachianas brasileiras Nos. 1-9; Chôros Nos. 2, 5, 10 and 11; Deux Choros (bis) for violin and cello; Invocação em Defesa de Patria; Descobrimento do Brasil; Symphony No. 4, "Victory"; Momoprecoce; Piano Concerto No. 5; A Prole do Bebe, Suites 1 and 2. Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française conducted by the composer; Victoria de los Angeles, soprano (in Bachianas No. 5); Aline von Barentzen, piano (in Choros Nos. 5 and 11, A Prole do Bebe); Mancel Braune, piano (in Bachianas No. 3); Felicia Blumental, piano (in Concerto No. 5); Henri Bronschwak, violin (in Deux Chôros); Maurice Cluquennois, clarinet (in Chôros No. 2); Fernand Dufrene, flute (in Bachianas No. 6 and Chôros No. 2); Maria Kareska, soprano (in Invocação); Jacques Neitz, cello (in Deux Chôros); Rene Plessier, bassoon (in Bachianas No. 6); Magda Tagliaferro, piano (in Momoprecoce); Chorale J.M.F. conducted by Louis Martini (in Choros No. 10, Invocação). PATHE-MARCONI EMI 2C 153-14090-99, ten mono discs in boxed set.

Given the staggering bulk of Villa-Lobos' output of music, one expects any recorded overview of his music on records to be proportionately hefty. These ten records are a lovingly packaged souvenir of the last few years of his multifarious recording activity.

As they were originally issued, these recordings met with general acclaim in France, but mixed reviews elsewhere. Villa-Lobos' prime considerations were rhythm and instrumental color, but many reviewers evidently expected more and were disappointed when more was not forthcoming. Today, perhaps it is easier to regard Villa-Lobos more kindly as an isolated phenomenon, and to take his music for what it is.

On the evidence of the orchestral recordings in this set, the composer was a conductor of extreme rhythmic alertness. His superabundant scoring offers almost insuperable problems of balance (which are not aided by monaural sound), nor does the composer-conductor ever attempt to provide more than sectional unities of tempo. One is not tempted to speak well of the orchestral playing here, but there is nothing that is not at least utilitarian.

The Chôros No. 2 and Bachianas Brasileiras No. 6 are additionally useful as unequivocal examples of how French wind players believe their instruments ought to sound.

Veteran pianist Aline van Barentzen plays both sets of A Prole do Bebe, and while as series the pieces lack contrast, they are too short to become uncomfortably shapeless.

In many cases the original French issues possessed noisy surfaces. The new issues are in every respect of pressing a distinct improvement. In addition to a handsomely-illustrated 26-page booklet of notes for the set, there is a 45-rpm record of Villa-Lobos expounding on the Choros, in clear and vigorous French, and no little charm.

John D. Wiser

PIERRE AND IWAN D'ARCHAMBEAU PLAY DUOS FOR VIOLIN AND CELLO. ORION ORS 78318, \$8.98. Handel-Pochon: Chaconne; Joseph Jongen: Sonate-duo en une partie, Op. 109; Kodály: Duo, Op. 7, Adagio only; Martinů: Duo No. 1, Preludium and Rondo only.

Billed as "ORION Super Stereo Sound" - but a flick back and forth of the mode switch produces not the slightest change in aural perspective when this record is playing. The cover attributes the Chaconne to the arranger, Pochon, and omits to mention that the Kodály and Martinů Duos are not complete but isolated movements only. Deplorable!

Only the buyer with prior knowledge can be aware of the historical nature of this recording. String quartet buffs in particular will twig to the name of cellist Iwan D'Archambeau, a member of the Flonzaley Quartet from the time it was founded in 1903 until it was disbanded in 1929. Thereafter, D'Archambeau and the Flonzaley's 2nd violinist, Alfred Pochon, were for a time players in a better-than-respectable ensemble called the Stradivarius Quartet. D'Archambeau then had a relatively brief but distinguished solo career. He retired from public performance in 1950 and died in France in 1955.

Iwan D'Archambeau is a musician of such extremely high calibre that we should be overjoyed to have on records his performances of anything. One ought not to complain that we have single movements rather than complete works, but be content to have what is on this record - and on the three announced Orion releases containing the Six Suites for Cello Unaccompanied by J. S. Bach (ORION ORS 78319-21).

The only complete original work on the record to hand is the Jongen Sonata, a neo-post-Ravel exercise of the middle 1930's. Cleanly laid out and modest in scale, it is a pleasant, unmemorable diversion.

The Handel Chaconne was arranged by Alfred Pochon from a keyboard movement. This arranger was experienced at putting a high gloss on rather unpromising material. The effect is brilliant, while the technical demands are relatively modest - certainly rather more reasonable than Johan Halvorsen's celebrated scrubbing session of a Handel Passacaglia (for violin or viola). The Chaconne opens side one of the disc rather inauspiciously, for the music drives the violinist into some most unattractive and inaccurate playing.

The excerpts from Kodály's Op. 7 and from Martinů's first duo are better; the cellist is consistently beautiful in tone, rhythmically alert and flexible, and imperturbable in ensemble.

The recorded sound is restricted in range, with a boxy echo and really distant perspective - a "next room" job. There is detail for those who can listen for it and the musical interest quickly sets aside the technical defects. The pressing is adequate.

This issue and the forthcoming Bach set will be of major interest

to those who enjoy good string playing. Unlike many a quartet-cellist, Iwan D'Archambeau could hold his own in temperament and technique with many of his cello-playing contemporaries better-known for their solo playing. In this year of the centenary of his birth (September 28, 1879) it is especially fitting to have available these fine examples of sensitive, intelligent, and thoroughly involved playing.

MOZART: Concerto, piano and orchestra, D minor, K. 466; Concerto, piano and orchestra, C major, K. 503. Edwin Fischer, piano; orchestra conducted by Eugen Jochum (in K. 466); Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Edwin Fischer (in K. 503). I GRANDI INTERPRETI IGI 290. Available from Discocorp, PO Box 771, Berkeley, CA 94701.

The D minor Concerto receives here an highly inflected reading. Elegant in pianistic detail, the soloist's disregard for overall shaping is pervasive. The orchestral support is dutiful but downright unpleasant in many details from the wind players. The cadenzas committed upon this work by Fischer are romantic monstrosities. The recorded sound in this 1954 aircheck is restricted in range but clean and reasonably detailed. An earlier Fischer performance exists: HMV DB 2118-21, Victor set M 223, recorded in the early 1930's and reissued in various LP editions. It is wayward in the same fashion, but to a lesser degree.

Originating at the 1946 Salzburg Festival, the C major Concerto receives a rather more straightforward performance, and Fischer cadenzas are less offensive. The sound quality is abominable - afflicted with constant distortion, boomy, undefined bass, pitch instability, acetate noise and severe blasting. Little detail is perceptible from the soloist or the orchestra. This broadcast is roughly contemporaneous with Fischer's commercial recording (with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Josef Krips), which may be found on HMV 78's (DB 6604-07 manual sequence, DB 9287-90 automatic sequence), and transferred to LP on HMV FALP 375, RCA Victor LHMV 1004 and Vox Turnabout THS 65094, among others. The latter remains an entirely adequate document of Edwin Fischer's treatment of K. 503, which this IGI release for purely technical reasons cannot.

WAXMAN: Sinfonietta, strings and timpani (1955); FOSS: Concerto No. 2, piano and orchestra (1950-51). Lukas Foss, piano; Los Angeles Festival Orchestra conducted by Franz Waxman. VARESE SARABANDE VC 81052, mono.

The film music/film composer/film conductor lode so industriously worked in recent times by a host of small record manufacturers (and most of the big ones) is finally playing out, perhaps. In any event, Franz Waxman's Sinfonietta, a gory gobbet of film-score tissue intended for concert use, is notably scant fare in a generally undernourishing field. Turgidly scored, melodically banal, rhythmically stodgy and formally simpleminded, even the Sinfonietta's relative brevity proves insufficient, severely overstaying its subject matter in twelve-and-a-half minutes.

Lukas Foss' Second Piano Concerto is in every way a better piece of music than its companion piece, but it still doesn't work very well. The piano solo part is effectively written (as one would expect) but in style it is a slanging match between Copland and Stravinsky, refereed by Hindemith (a draw). The orchestral layout is varied, sonorous and always transparent, but wasted on these derivative nugatories. The piece plays just over half an hour, but it is subjectively interminable.

Foss is a pianist of uncommonly good taste, musicianship and technical accomplishment, and plays his solo part splendidly. The orchestral playing in both works is merely utilitarian. The recorded sound is solid and detailed, wide in range but quite unreverberant. Surfaces are unobtrusive.

Perhaps now Varese Sarabande may be called upon to tap MCA for further Foss recordings. I remember with pleasure his performance with the Zimbler Sinfonietta of Hindemith's The Four Temperaments (DL 7501), a poised and elegant negotiation of a cruelly demanding piano part, and J. S. Bach's Concertos in D minor and F minor, anachronistic but exciting (DL 9601).

ALIABIEV: Trio in A minor, for violin, cello and piano (1834); Sonata in E minor, for violin and piano (1834). Dmitri Tsyganov, violin; Sergei Shirinsky, cello; Emil Gilels, piano. MELODIYA D 035449-50, \$5.50.

Among the more entertaining results of determined Soviet efforts in back-and-fill musicology has been the exhumation of a modest number of orchestral and chamber music works by Alexander Alexandrovich Aliabiev (1787-1851), an amateur composer long known only for a few attractive songs. He led the proverbial checkered career as a cavalry officer, during the War of 1812 visiting Dresden and Paris with the Russian Army. For a time he was exiled to his birthplace, Tobolsk, in Siberia. There is some speculation (on evidence internal to his piano music) that he may have had some study with John Field.

In the early 1950's, the Soviet State Music Publisher disgorged the bulk of Aliabiev's instrumental music, most of it edited by one B. Dobrokhotov. The editorial emendations sprinkled liberally throughout those scores would seem to indicate that the composer often ran into elementary problems in musical notation. In spite of this, all the music of Aliabiev that I have seen and heard is more than nominally coherent and controlled in form and texture, however derivative of non-Russian models it may be. It is refreshing to make the acquaintance of early 19th century music by a Russian composer who has not been overrun by operatic models, and with far more character and internal contrast than one is accustomed to finding in creative efforts "from the provinces." Both works are in clear-cut three-movement sonata forms, closely imitative of pre-1810 Beethoven except for the finale of the violin sonata, a rondo heavily indebted to Carl Maria von Weber.

One would find it interesting (even comforting) to know to what extent the editors have had at Aliabiev's music. Russia, after all, is the land where Rimsky-Korsakov felt compelled to radically overhaul Mussorgsky, where Glazounov could resurrect music of Borodin on the basis of decades-old memories of the composer's piano playing, and where a 19th-century Ukrainian composer (Nikolas Dmitrievich Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky) could be invented from whole cloth.

Violinist Dmitri Tsyganov and cellist Sergei Shirinsky were at the time of these recordings, and still are, among the best and most prominent chamber music players in the Soviet Union. Members of the Beethoven Quartet of Moscow since 1923 (!), they are not particularly elegant in tone quality, but compensate amply in their comprehension of musical style. Emil Gilels dependably fulfills his part, and the recording is balanced with impartiality remarkable for its day. The sound is unusually bright for a Soviet recording of the period, with plenty of detail. The only real age-betrayal lies in the near-total absence of resonance. The transfers are relatively noise-free, with clean side-joins.

The trio was first issued in the late 1940's on six ten-inch 78 sides (Aperlevskii Zavod 16324-29); the Sonata appeared in the early 1950's on a ten-inch LP (Aperlevskii Zavod D 1125-26). There can be no doubt that this reissue is a vast improvement over the recordings as originally issued, for they came out at a time when Soviet pressing technology was primitive indeed.

John D. Wiser

DVORÁK: Concerto, violoncello and orchestra, No. 2, B minor, Op. 104. Mstislav Rostropovich, cello; Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Boris Khaikin. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 7035, mono.

Evidently, MHS in their newsletter tried to tout off this issue as a stereo record, but uncharacteristically caught their error. So, enclosed in my review copy was a printed letter of apology, correction, and irrepressible salesmanship from one Robert Nissim "for the Society." In his first paragraph, incidentally but emphatically, he describes the record as being the first Rostropovich made of the work.

Let all concerned be hereby put on notice that it is no such thing. It is at least the third of at least six commercially-issued recordings that Rostropovich has made of this marvelous old crock. Preceding the issue at hand (which dates from the late 1950's or very early 1960's) is an older Soviet issue, 0566-7, with an unidentified orchestra conducted by Nathan Rakhlin. More important is a performance recorded in 1952 by Supraphon, in which Rostropovich is joined by the Czech Philharmonic conducted by the redoubtable Václav Talich. This recording is currently available in a reissue by Rediffusion, in their Heritage series as HCN 8004. No matter what improvements in recording technology may have been effected since 1952, this is considered by many, including yours truly, to be Rostropovich's finest performance of the Dvorak concerto.

Although the cellist approaches the high-tension playing evident in his Czech performance, the orchestra in the Soviet recording reissued by MHS is third-rate even by Soviet standards (you should only hear the celebrated horn solo!) and Khaikin's conducting is purely utilitarian. Furthermore, the processing is grossly defective, with tape hiss the like of which I haven't heard since the Broadcast Foundation of America last cleaned its duplicator heads. Given the availability of Heritage HCN 8004, MHS is once more incubating a loser.

GLAZOUNOV: Piano Sonata No. 2, E minor, Op. 75; MEDTNER: Piano Sonata (No. 5), G minor, Op. 22. Emil Gilels, piano (recorded 1950, 1952). (1) Melodiya 33SM 04331-32. (2) Columbia-Odyssey Y 34611.

Emil Gilels remains today much the same kind of pianist he was in his mid-30's - one of the most reliable Soviet keyboard performers of his generation. While he may not often offer much in the way of extraordinary insight or virtuoso excitement, he almost invariably provides technically secure, instinctively musical, and interpretively conventional readings of a wide range of keyboard repertoire.

Glazounov's sole pair of piano sonatas were produced at the turn of the century. Invoking Mendelssohn in figuration and Schumann in melodic pattern, the E minor Sonata does not weather repeated hearing very well. The central scherzo does have a fair amount of rhythmic interest, and the whole work is expertly laid out for the pianist.

In contrast, Nikolai Medtner's G minor Sonata of 1911 richly rewards repetition. Ostensibly in one movement, the piece may be construed as being in two main flanking movements with a central slow interlude, or in three movements, or in six episodes defined by the establishment of tonal centers. Whatever one chooses, the entire work has an abundance of high-order rhythmic and melodic invention.

Evidently there was a quantum jump in Soviet recording technology between 1950 and 1952. The Glazounov recording is woodenly unresonant and fuzzy in definition. The Medtner piece comes off much more cleanly, is good in detail and merely lacks body. There are some pitch instabilities which indicate that time has not been kind to the master tape, for those flaws were not present in the first U.S. issue of the Medtner (Westminster XWN 18180).

Columbia's mastering is excellent, but there is nothing to choose from as regards pressing - both are noisy, but not distracting. Philip Ramey's jacket notes for the domestic issue are genuinely informative. The notes on the Soviet LP fall all over themselves to say nothing much.

VLADIGEROV: Concerto No. 4, G major, Op. 58, for piano and orchestra (1953); Classic and Romantic Cycle, Op. 24 (1931); Bulgarian Songs and Dances, Op. 25 (1932). Pancho Vladigerov, piano; Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nathan Rakhlin (In the Concerto). MELODIYA M10-39759-60, mono, \$5.50.

Pancho (or Panchu) Vladigerov (b. 1899), the Grand Old Man of Bulgarian Composers, is the subject of one of Nicolas Slonimsky's more amusing (or exasperating) entries (Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Fifth Edition with Supplement, New York, G. Schirmer, 1971, supplement page 247).

Not strictly a home-grown product, Vladigerov took his advanced musical training and more than a decade of his early musical activities in Germany, where he studied with Paul Juon and became a musical associate of that most original and inventive stage director, Max Reinhardt. Unlike his French-oriented slightly younger contemporaries Lubomir Pipkov and Marin Goleminov, Vladigerov puts no particular gloss on his folkloristic leanings. At the same time, he seems to have produced music in a wide range of styles, from the neo-classic to the Socialist-realistic. Very little of his music has reached the west, although several early works were published by Universal Edition in Vienna.

The Piano Concerto No. 4 turns out to be a rather attractive piece, not at all overblown, and with considerable melodic distinction. The scoring is not always light but remains constantly clean; the keyboard writing is grateful, sonorous, and effective. Only the second movement, hewing close to the lines of a Bulgarian balladic folksong, overstays its material slightly.

The solo piano works display less personality and distinction, the

Classic and Romantic Cycle in particular being lumpy in piano texture and not very inventive in melodic terms. Nor does this set show much in the way of unity. The Bulgarian Songs and Dances are on attractive subjects but short-winded and opaque in piano texture.

Vladigerov is not among virtuoso composer-pianists. He negotiates the solo part of the concerto without major problems and with appropriate brio. Rakhlin's orchestral support is anachronistically clean and forward-moving, making one wish this fine conductor was still an active recording artist. He is worth ten Svetlanovs! Less involved and accomplished is Vladigerov's playing in the solo piano music (none of it particularly difficult stuff), where his articulation is unclear, his tone colorless and his rhythm generally unsteady. Fast pieces are rushed, slow ones static.

With a recently issued stereo recording of his Fifth Concerto, this record appears to be the only available LP documentation of Vladigerov's playing. The Fourth Concerto is a reissue, formerly available on an always grotty pressed ten-inch LP, Melodiya D 4842-43. I can find no previous issue for the solo works. The sound is adequate in detail, distant and not overbright in the concerto, better in perspective but sharply limited in range and somewhat disembodied in the solo piano side. The pressing is up to current Soviet standards.

Vladigerov made some 78's for Polydor in the late 1920's, including several violin-and-piano ditties with his (fraternal twin) brother Luben, and a few for Ultraphon two decades later. These early records are uncommon and unlikely to see reissue outside of Bulgaria.

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