

WAGNER: Siegfried Idyll; TCHAIKOVSKY: Romeo and Juliet (World Records SH 287); TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphonies 5 and 6 (World Records SHB 52, 2 discs); MENDELSSOHN: Symphony No. 4 "Italian"; SCHUBERT: Symphony No. 8 (World Records SH 290); FRANCK: Symphony in D Minor (RCA Red Seal ARL 1-3005); BRAHMS: Symphony No. 3 (Seraphim S60325).

Guido Cantelli conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra (in the Wagner, Brahms, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky "Romeo" and Symphony 6), the NBC Symphony (in the Franck), and the Orchestra of La Scala (in the Tchaikovsky Symphony 5).

There seems to be a Guido Cantelli revival taking place, and it's about time. This writer became a Cantelli fan several years ago while copying all of the NBC Symphony broadcasts from acetate tape originals to mylar safety copies, a preservation project for the Library of Congress Recorded Sound Section. In all honesty, the Cantelli performances excited me more often than the Toscanini ones. In trying to analyze why I felt that way, I could only conclude that, to me, Cantelli displayed a delicate balance of insight, sheer musicality and humanity that were never obscured by utter showmanship. Like many other performers of the fateful Fifties, Cantelli's career could only remain a promise of greater things.

Fortunately for us he left a number of studio recordings, which, though tame in comparison to the live broadcasts, allow the listener special insights into Cantelli the man and musician. EMI, through World Records, has just re-issued four discs, with more, I understand, on the way. Simultaneously, RCA has re-issued Cantelli's performance of the Franck D Minor Symphony, recorded with the NBC Symphony, this time in stereo. It was made in Carnegie Hall, April 6, 1954, just two days after Toscanini's last performance with the orchestra he built.

A comparison of the old RCA mono disc (LM 1852) and the new stereo issue is startling. The mono disc is dull sounding, muffled, if you will. The stereo one has greater impact musically and sonically, with climaxes more brilliant, especially in the brass, and a depth achieved by placement of the violins on the left and right of the conductor. Musically, this is about the best performance of the Franck at any price. Cantelli's approach is that of an organist: he studied the instrument early in his music career, using the orchestra like a great French organ. It seems to me that this is what Franck unintentionally wrote into the music, and Cantelli understood that fact, interpreting the work as he would an organ composition.

Cantelli understood the Composer as fellow human being, with thoughts, feelings, and intentions, always injecting just enough of his own personality into the performance that the composer's personality remained in the limelight. This was the way I think he approached Tchaikovsky. What has bothered me about so much of Tchaikovsky's music is its overwhelming negativeness, its self-effacing, self-pitying bouts with anxiety and depression. To Cantelli's credit he softens these harsh emotions, and

allows the composer a strength that is ultimately positive. Of the two symphonies re-issued, the Fifth fares better than the Sixth, perhaps because the Orchestra of La Scala had worked for some time with Cantelli before coming to London to perform and record with him.

The Finale of the Fifth is not as electrifying as the NBC Symphony performance of March 1, 1952, but, as alluded to before, Cantelli's live performances tended to be powerhouses of concentration from start to finish, with all stops pulled out at the end. The sound of the two discs is substantially improved over the domestic issues (RCA LHMV 1003 and RCA LHMV 1047), with a slight loss of program material in the Fifth Symphony, perhaps due to a sticky splice in the original tape. Balances in the recording of the Fifth tend to highlight the woodwinds and brass, while the Sixth is very well balanced. Surfaces of the review copy were flawless.

The Wagner/Tchaikovsky coupling (recorded in October, 1951) is magnificent in every way. The playing that Cantelli received from the Philharmonia is inspired and very warm. The conductor is at his lyric best in the Wagner, and fiery in the Tchaikovsky, the remastering from HMV ALP 1086 is bright and more forward, the surfaces of the disc immaculate. In short a marvelous record.

My favorite of the lot is the Mendelssohn/Schubert re-issue, the Schubert appearing for the first time in stereo. In comparison with the domestic Seraphim issue, the World Records disc is stunning. All of the excitement of the opening of the Mendelssohn leaps at you, and the warmth of the Schubert Eighth is enhanced by the stereo sound. It's a pity that the Mendelssohn could not be pressed in stereo.

From the same recording period, August, 1955, comes a new Seraphim issue, the Brahms Third Symphony, again with the Philharmonia, and in stereo. Unless I am mistaken, this is the first domestic issue of this performance. As of this writing World Records has issued the Brahms Third coupled with a Schumann Fourth, so I feel a little cheated on this domestic disc. Neither can I arouse any enthusiastic feelings for this performance or the sound. In many ways the sound and the performance lack luster and life. Perhaps if I hear the World Records disc, I might change my opinion.

World Records has announced a Brahms First, to be issued shortly. Perhaps Debussy and Ravel as recorded by Cantelli will be forthcoming? Let's hope so.

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