

HISTORICAL REISSUES

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE COVENT GARDEN, HISTORICAL RECORDINGS OF ACTUAL PERFORMANCES:

PUCCINI: Bohème (4 June 1926)--Gioventù mia (Finale, Act 2); Dorme? ripose? (Finale, Act 4). Margaret Sheridan, soprano (Mimi); Aurora Rettore, soprano (Musetta); Angelo Minghetti, tenor (Rodolfo); Giuseppe Noto, baritone (Marcello); Eduard Cottreuil, basso (Colline); Ernesto Badini, baritone (Schaunard); Pompilio Malatesta, basso (Alcindoro); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. MELBA'S FAREWELL (8 June 1926): VERDI: Otello--Piangea cantando; Ave Maria. Dame Nellie Melba, soprano (Desdemona); Jane Bourguignon, mezzo-soprano (Emilia); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. PUCCINI: Bohème--Entrate...C'è Rodolfo?; D'onde lieta usci; Addio, dolce svegliare. Dame Nellie Melba, soprano (Mimi); Aurora Rettore, soprano (Musetta); Browning Mummery, tenor (Rodolfo); John Brownlee, baritone (Marcello); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. Melba's farewell speech. BOITO: Mefistofele (31 May 1926)--Ave, Signore; So lo spirito che nega; Sabba, Sabba, Saboe! Feodor Chaliapin, basso (Mefistofele); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. GOUNOD: Faust (22 June 1928)--Act 1 complete; Allons, amis, point de vaines alarmes!... Le veau d'or; Nous nous retrouverons, mes amis... Ainsi que la brise; Salut, demeure chaste et pure; Il était temps; Qu'attendez-vous encore... Vous qui faites l'endormie. Joseph Hislop, tenor (Faust); Feodor Chaliapin, basso (Mephistopheles); Franklyn Kelsey, baritone (Wagner); Jane Laugier, mezzo-soprano (Siebel); Sir Eugene Goossens, conductor. VERDI: Otello (17 June 1926)--Inaffia l'ugola; Mio signore... Che brami?; Atroce!... Ora e per sempre addio; Ah! mille vite... Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro; Dio! mi potevi scagliar; Tutto è spento... Quest'è una ragna; Niun mi tema. Giovanni Zenatello, tenor (Otello); Giuseppe Noto, baritone (Iago); Luigi Cilla, tenor (Cassio); Octave Dua, tenor (Roderigo); Eduard Cottreuil, basso (Ludovico); Michele Sampieri, basso (Montano); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. MUSORGSKI: Boris Godounow (4 July 1928)--Coronation Scene, Part 1; And you, my son; Ouf! I suffocate!; Well, shall we vote; Leave us alone. Feodor Chaliapin, basso (Boris); Margherita Carosio, soprano (Feodor); Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor. WAGNER: Meistersinger (20 May 1936)--Da zu dir der Heiland kam; Wach auf, es naht gen den Tag; Morgenlich leuchtend im rosigen Schein. Torsten Ralf, tenor (Walther); Tiana Lemnitz, soprano (Eva); Rudolf Bockelmann, baritone (Hans Sachs); Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor. Götterdämmerung (29 May 1936)--Hier sitz' ich zur Wacht. Ludwig Weber, basso (Hagen); Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor. EMI RLS 742, 3 discs. ("Proceeds from the sale of these records will go to the Royal Opera House Development Appeal.") Imported by Bremen House, 218 E. 86th St., NYC 10028.

The idea of recording complete operas is almost as old as the phonograph itself. We remember the prophecy, dating from the dark ages, that we would one day be listening to Die Meistersinger (of all operas) in our own home -- on cylinders! Fred Gaisberg, as far back as 1902,

played with the possibilities of recording (acoustically, of course) in La Scala (whether or not he meant to catch the operas complete) and of course there was Lionel Mapelson recording snippets at the Metropolitan in 1900. With the introduction of the microphone in 1925, Gaisberg was not slow to realize that his dream might now come true. A committee was formed to represent the Gramophone Company in negotiations with Covent Garden, and it was agreed that 10 or more operas would be recorded each season. There were complications. There had to be contracts with all the performers - some of whom did not come to terms easily - there were copyright restrictions on recent operas, and not least, there were technical problems in those pre-tape days. Each recording was a one-shot deal. Nothing could be repeated. Editing as it is done today was an impossibility. As it happened, many of the sides recorded could not be used. Complete operas thus proved impractical, aside from the matter of contracts. At Melba's farewell the balcony scene from Romeo et Juliette had to be skipped because the Romeo, Charles Hackett, was a Columbia artist. Many teeth have been gnashed because the Desdemona to Zenatello's Otello, Lotte Lehmann, enjoying one of her great triumphs, was under contract to Parlophone-Odeon. Of course nothing like the 10 performances a season ever materialized, and all that most of us have known about the whole project was that a few sides were commercially issued, and they were exciting enough to make us wish for more.

The first attempt was made on 31 May 1926, when Chaliapin was singing in Mefistofele. Of that four sides have survived, two of which were issued as DB 940. Of Melba's farewell, 8 June 1926, one side from Bohème and her farewell speech are well known (DB 943). Three more sides from Bohème and two from Otello are now added (though noted as "unpublished as 78 rpm," half of the Willow song has been known as IRCC2). Even Keith Hardwick, whose introductory notes set the stage for these recordings, did not know of a Bohème performance on 4 June starring Margaret Sheridan, Angelo Minghetti and Giuseppe Noto, of which two quite realistic sides survive. Of Faust on 22 June we have for the first time the entire first act with Chaliapin and Hislop. One side from the second act has been a sort of collectors' item as DB 1189 because although the voice of Chaliapin is unmistakable, his name is not on the label. It was coupled with Hislop's admirable Salut, demeure. We now have Le veau d'or, Mephistopheles' Invocation and the Serenade in Chaliapin's inimitable, if not so admirable, performance. Of seven sides from Zenatello's Otello (17 June 1926), we have had six before, and of the Chaliapin Boris (4 July 1928) eight of the nine sides included here were issued as DB 1181-3 and 3464. We now skip to 20 May 1936 for the chorale, Wach auf chorus and Prize Song from the Beecham performance of Meistersinger, featuring Torsten Ralf, with Tiana Lemnitz and Rudolf Bockelmann also in evidence. These four sides once made up American Columbia's album X-87, and Hagen's Watch from Götterdämmerung sung by Ludwig Weber (29 May 1936) was included X-83 (along with Hagen's Call from the same performance, not included here).

Certainly there is no need to labor the point that these are priceless historic documents. And remembering that the earliest of them

were among the first fruits of electrical recording provides a special thrill. I can never forget the excitement of the first demonstration I heard of the Orthophonic Victrola and the new process, but it was nothing like an actual performance in the opera house. I can imagine how Gaisberg and his engineers must have felt at their first playback.

Aside from that we have a testimonial to the phenomenally long career of Melba, the greatness of Chaliapin's Boris and Mefistofeles as well as the outrageous treatment he gave to Gounod's Mephistopheles, and Zenatello's Otello, which may not have been equaled since. To compare the death scene from Boris with Chaliapin's studio recordings is to realize what it meant to him to live the part before an audience.

The transfers, attributed to Keith Hardwick, Bryan Crimp and A.C. Griffith, have brought these performances vividly back to life. I doubt if more could be done.

ARIEN UND SZENEN: MOZART: Die Entführung aus dem Serail--Wer ein Leibchen hat gefunden; ...O wie will ich triumphiren; Nozze di Figaro--Süsse Rache, ja, süsse Rache; Zauberflöte--O Isis und Osiris; ...In diesen heil'gen Hallen; BEETHOVEN: Fidelio--Hat man nicht auch Gold beineben; ROSSINI: Barbieri di Siviglia--Die Verleumdung, sie ist ein Lüftchen; ...Einen Doktor meinesgleichen; HALÉVY: La Juive--Wenn ew'ger Hass; LORTZING: Zar und Zimmermann--O sancta Justitia; ...Den hohen Herrscher würdig zu empfangen...Heil sei dem Tag; Wildschütz--Fünftausend Taler; Waffenschmied--Auch ich war ein Jungling; CORNELIUS: Barbier von Bagdad--Ergreift den Alten...Heil diesem Haus, denn du tratst ein, Salam aleikum (with Ernst Krukowski, baritone); NICOLAI: Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor--Als Büblein klein; VERDI: Nabucco--Warum klagt ihr und seid so verzweifelt?; Vepres siciliennes--O Heimat... O main Palermo; Simon Boccanegra--Leb wohl auf ewig... Palast der Väter; Don Carlos--Sie hat mich nie geliebt; TCHAIKOVSKI: Eugen Onegin--Ein jeder kennt die Lieb' auf Erden; WAGNER: Lohengrin--Mein Herr und Gott (with Maud Cunitz, soprano; Margarete Klose, contralto; Rudolf Schock, tenor; Josef Metternich, baritone; Horst Günter, baritone); Meistersinger--Das schöne Fest, Johannistag (with Ferdinand Frantz, baritone; Horst Wilhelm, baritone; Walter Stoll, basso; Benno Kusche, baritone; Gustav Neidlinger, bass-baritone; Manfred Schmidt, tenor; Leopold Clam, tenor; Harold Kraus, tenor; Robert Koffmane, basso; Anton Metternich, basso; Hans Pick, basso); Rheingold--Halt, du Gieriger!... Göñne mir auch was (with Josef Greindl, basso; Wolfgang Windgassen, tenor); Walküre--Müd' am Herd fand' ich den Mann (with Hilde Konetzki, soprano; Wolfgang Windgassen, tenor); Götterdämmerung--Hoiho! Hoiho! Ihr Gibschmannen, machet euch auf! Gottlob Frick, basso. EMI Electrola IC 147-30 135/6, 2 discs. Imported by Bremen House, 218 E. 86th St., NYC 10028.

Black, black, black is the color of Gottlob Frick's huge voice - is there another word to describe it? But there was much more to Frick

than color, size and a remarkably even range from a high E down to a wonderfully solid low D. Born in a Swabian forester's house, 28 July 1906, he was not intended for a musical career until a group of hunters one day happened to hear him sing. One of them was a member of the Württemberg State Opera, and he arranged for the young man, untrained as he was, to join the company for chorus and small roles while studying voice and acting with Fritz Windgassen, father of the famous tenor. Frick's formal debut was in Coburg in 1934, as Daland in The Flying Dutchman. In 1938, after stints in Freiburg and Königsburg, he was engaged by Karl Böhm for Dresden. During the forties he was heard in Vienna, Hamburg and Munich; in 1951 he went to Bayreuth, where he became a fixture in Wieland Wagner's productions. And he made the international rounds - La Scala, Covent Garden, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam. He did not, however, come to the Met in 1950 as Karl Schumann states in the introductory notes (perhaps carrying over the error from Kutsch and Riemens) but made his debut there on 27 December 1961. The roles of his single season in New York were Fafner in Rheingold and Siegfried, Hunding and Hagen. Although his extensive list of recordings includes some folk and hunting songs (he is still an enthusiastic hunter) Schumann tells us he sang no lieder except ballads - "the color and sheer power of his voice made him avoid piano-accompanied songs." He did not hold with the recent trend in Europe to sing operas in the original languages though he had a number of Verdi roles in his repertoire.

This program, with recording dates ranging from 1953 to 1960, is neatly grouped to show various facets of his art. Beginning with Mozart he makes it clear why Osmin was one of his most famous roles. If we miss the woebegone tone of Kipnis in Wer ein Liebchen hat gefunden, the sheer weight of the voice is terrific; after that the nimbleness of his O wie will ich triumphiren, with its octave skips, fairly takes the breath away. He spits out the patter in Bartolo's vengeance aria from Figaro (in German, of course); as Basilio in Rossini's Barber he describes the power of scandal with the greatest of uncton, then transforms himself into a flexible-lipped Bartolo. I am less happy with the two Sarastro arias - I miss the sheer nobility of a Kipnis. But his singing of them here is more solid and smooth than in the later Klemperer Zauberflöte set. His genial Rocco is familiar from at least four Fidelio recordings, and of course he has the vocal weight needed for the Cardinal's aria from La Juive.

But the four Lortzing selections and the Cornelius finale are his real tours de force. The various characters are masterfully differentiated. A comparison with Erich Kunz, particularly in the Wildschütz scene, is quite fascinating. With his greater vocal resources Frick also applies a lively imagination, making the most of every tone, inflection and shading. Here is a really great performance alongside a very fine one. Both basses have great fun giving a singing lesson to the chorus in O sancta justitia. In Auch ich war ein Jüngling Kunz may be a little smoother, but there is not much to choose. Rounding out this group, Frick is splendid in the rousing Salam Aleikum from the Cornelius comedy, with assisting baritone and chorus.

The role of Falstaff in Nicolai's Merry Wives of Windsor was another natural for Frick, and we are not likely to hear the drinking song done with greater relish. Whether or not one accepts the singer's preference for Verdi in German the singing is certainly impressive. We are told that in Eugen Onegin, appearing only in the last act, he used to dwarf the other performers by his singing of his aria.

Both the prayer from Lohengrin and Pogner's address from Meister-singer are excerpted from well-known sets, and in both the opening solos are followed by big ensembles with notable casts. Here Frick establishes himself as a great Wagnerian, without rivals in his particular roles. A short bit from Rheingold, and the scene of Hunding's homecoming in Walküre, stopping just short of Siegmund's narration, are from the famous Furtwängler broadcasts from Radio Italiana. Hagen's summoning of the vassals brings the program to an exciting end. Could even such impressive artists as Kurt Bohme, Georg Hann or Ludwig Weber match Frick's Pogner, his Hunding or his Hagen?

In sum, throughout the program the singing is of a very high order. The tone has just enough vibrato to keep it vital at all times, and the diction is very telling. There is never a doubt what Frick is singing about. And for all its size and weight the tone can be lightened at will. Happily he seems invariably to have recorded well, and the work of transfer could hardly be improved.

THE ART OF TITO GOBBI: (1942) CILÈA: L'Arlesiana--Come due tizzi accesi; LEONCAVALLO: Zazà--Buona Zazà; Zazà, piccolo zingara; PUCCINI: Fanciulla del West--Minnie, della mia casa; VERDI: Don Carlos--O Carlo ascolta...Io morro; (1948) Otello--Era la notte; (1950) Forza del destino--Urna fatale; MOZART: Nozze di Figaro--Aprite un po' quegli occhi; VERDI: Otello--Vanne...Credo in un dio crudel; (1952) Macbeth--Pietà, rispetto, amore; Ballo in maschera--Alzati, là tuo figlio...Eri tu; (1953) DONIZETTI: Elisir d'amore--La donna e un animale...Venti scudi!; (w. Nicola Monti, tenor); (1948) VALENTE: Torna!; TOSTI: 'A vucchella; DENZA: Occhi di fata; FALVO: Diciten-cello vuje; (1950) ROTA: Take the sun; Song of the mountains (from film, The glass mountain); SADERO: Gondoliera veneziana; Amuri, amuri; (1952) COTTRAU: Santa Lucia (arr. Gibilaro); CAPUA: O sole mio; TOSTI: Marechiare; BELLINI: Fenesta che lucive (arr. Meglio); (1953) OLIVIERI: Nenia d'amore (from film, Canzone a due voci); (1955) BERLIOZ: Damnation de Faust--Song of the flea; ROSSINI: Guillaume Tell--La valanga che volge; Resta immobile; VERDI: Nabucco--Ah prigioniero io son... Dio di guida; Macbeth--Pietà, rispetto, amore!; GIORDANO: Andrea Chenier--Nemico della patria; Fedora--La donna russa; PUCCINI: Fanciulla del West--Minnie, della mia casa; WOLF-FERRARI: Gioielli della Madonna--Aprile, o bella; TOSTI: Malià; Donna, vorrei morir; 'A vucchella; Ideale; GASTALDON: Musica Proibita; RESPIGHI: Nebbie; WOLF-FERRARI: Se gli alberi; Serenata; Commiato. EMI RLS 738, 3 discs.

Along with an earlier LP - HLM 7018 - this anthology purports to contain all of Gobbi's 78's. However, a letter to the editor of The Gramophone (September 1979) tells of one disc that has escaped the discographers - Italian HMV AV 51 - Musica Proibita (Gastaldon) and Famme sunne cu'tte (Ruccione).

Gobbi was the great singing actor of his day, with a repertoire of 99 operatic roles, and some 26 films to his credit. Like the still unforgotten Antonio Scotti he was incomparable as Scarpia and equally distinguished in a variety of impersonations, from Don Giovanni to Rigoletto, from Falstaff to Figaro, from Belcore to Tonio. If his voice was not the most melifluous of baritones it was certainly one of the most expressive. This program begins at the beginning. He made his debut in 1937, before he was ready, he himself has confessed, as the elder Germont in Traviata. His earliest recordings date from July 1942; by this time he obviously was ready.

One is immediately struck by the young baritone's selections. No Largo al factotum, no Di Provenza, but to begin with Baldassare's narrative from Cilea's L'Arlesiana. The old shepherd is telling a tale about a wolf to a dim-witted child. The difference between Gobbi and the typical Italian baritone may be pointed by a comparison of this youthful performance with the old Mario Basiola record, or with Afro Poli in the Colosseum set. As Gobbi tells the story one can see the child sitting up. The two pieces from Zazà reveal how he could, even in those early days, combine a lyric line with a conversational tone. Then as the rough sheriff Jack Rance he is making himself as agreeable as he can for Minnie. If we turn now to the 1955 version of this scene we find him even more in the character. A similar comparison may be made in the case of his two versions of the Macbeth aria. The second includes the powerfully delivered recitative, missing in the first.

But surely it is unnecessary to go on about Gobbi the dramatic singer, so well known in his many complete opera sets. I find myself fascinated by his two groups of songs, the first made with orchestra in 1948, the second with Gerald Moore at the piano in 1964. The selections in the first are typical, not notably different from performances of some of his compatriots. But compare 'A vucchella with the later version and note how much more intimate and expressive even such a song can be made with piano accompaniment. And venturing out of the so familiar field of "Neapolitan" songs, he gives a stunning performance of Respighi's Nebbie and three unfamiliar pieces by Wolf-Ferrari. One is impressed throughout by the polish and subtlety of this master of diction and tone color.

A word must be added about the songs from films, sung partly in English. They are important only in rounding out our portrait of the artist.

OPER, OPERETTE UND WIENER LIEDER: MOZART: Zauberflöte--Der Vogel-
fänger bin ich ja; ...Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen; ...Papagena! Papa-
gena! (with Emmy Loose, soprano; Hermine Steinmassi, soprano; Eleonore
Dörpinghaus, mezzo-soprano; Annelies Scuckl, contralto); Così fan
tutte--Questa piccola offerta... Il core vi dono, bell'idol mio (with
Blanche Thebom, mezzo-soprano); Nozze di Figaro--Se vuol ballare;
Non più andrai; Don Giovanni--Madamina, il catalogo e questo!
LORTZING: Wildschütz--Fünftausend Taler; Zar und Zimmermann--O sancta
justitia; Waffenschmied--Auch ich war ein Jüngling! WAGNER: Meister-
singer--Ein Werbelied? Von Sachs! Ist's wahr? (with Otto Edelmann,
bass-baritone); STRAUSS: Eine Nacht in Venedig--Komm in die Gondel;
...Ach, wie so herrlich zu schau'm, Fledermaus--Kommt mit mir zum
Souper (with Nicolai Gedda, tenor), Der lustige Krieg--Nur für Natur;
Zigeunerbaron--Ja, das Schreiben und das Lesen; Wiener Blut--Wünsch'
gut'n Morgen, Herr von Pepi! (with Emmy Loose, soprano); ZELLER:
Vogelhändler--Wie mein Ahnl zwanzig Jahr'; LEHAR: Die lustige Witwe--
O Vaterland... Da geh ich zu Maxim; Das Land des Lachelns--Als Gott
die Welt erschuf... Meine Liebe, deine Liebe (with Emmy Loose, soprano);
EYSLER: Die Schützenliesel--Mutterl, lieb's Mutterl; GRUBER: Mei
Muatterl war a Weanerin; FIEBRICH: Das silberne Kanderln; FELLNER-
SCHNEIDER: 's Nussdorfer Sterndl; FÖDERL-HOCHMT-WERNER: In Grinzing
gibt's a Himmelstrass'n; DOMANIG-ROLL-ALLMEDER: Seht's Leut'in, do
war's anno dreissig in Wien; KRATZL-BICZO: Das Glück is' a Vogerl;
KRAKAUER: Du guater Himmelvater; ARNOLD: Wenn der Herrgott net will;
PICK: Fiakerlied. Erich Kunz, bass-baritone. EMI HMV 1C 147-03
580/81, 2 discs. Imported by Bremen House, 218 E. 86th St., NYC 10028.

Erich Kunz was a very special singer. Famous for his buffo and character roles, his voice had a considerable appeal if it was not a great one, and he could sing Mozart with the best of them. His diction was crystal clear. Born in Vienna, 20 May 1909, he studied with Theodor Lierhammer and Hans Duhan, and he made his debut in Troppan in 1933 as Osmin in Die Entführung. Coming to the Vienna Staatsoper in 1941, he became one of the most popular singers in the company. In 1942 he sang at the Salzburg Festival, and in 1943 at Bayreuth. After the war he was heard in Edinburgh, Glyndebourne, La Scala, Covent Garden, the Colon in Buenos Aires and the Metropolitan. He was two seasons in New York, making his debut as Leporello on 20 November 1952. This program touches on various of his specialities - Mozart, Lortzing, Wagner, operettas and Viennese songs. Some of us still treasure his six Vanguard discs of German university and folk songs, but that is another story.

Beginning with Papageno, one of his favorite parts, Kunz brings a light touch which somehow reminds me of Rehkemper, though his voice was quite different. Rehkemper was a higher baritone. The first and third Zauberflöte selections are extracted from Karajan's 1950 recording. The second was recorded as a single under Moralt in 1947. The assisting artists in the Papagena scene are all excellent, especially the dulcet-voiced Emmy Loose. The duet with Thebom is from a set of excerpts from Così fan tutte made at Glyndebourne under Fritz Busch in July 1950. This

is straight and beautiful singing. Of the two Figaro selections, Se vuol ballare is from Karajan's 1962 set. It is a real character study, cynical and shrewd. Non più andrai, another single made with Moralt in 1947, is swift and spirited. To cap the group Kunz gives us a genuine, not a caricature, Leporello, recorded with Ackermann in 1949.

The three Lortzing numbers, favorites with German bass-baritones, make one regret that these operas have never transported well, and to hear them in performance one has to go to Germany at just the right time. With this kind of singing there should be an audience for them anywhere. The situation in Der Wildschutz is amusing. Kobbé remarks "there can be no other poaching schoolmaster in operatic annals." In this scene Baculus is finding it impossible to resist the offer of 5000 thalers for renouncing his fiancée to the unprincipled Count. In the so-called Singschule from Zar und Zimmermann the Burgomeister von Bett is rehearsing his choir to do honor to the Tsar. In contrast, the more familiar Auch ich war ein Jüngling from Waffenschmied is almost a folksong.

Kunz was the most famous Beckmesser in the post-war era, and the excerpt from Meistersinger is taken from the 1951 Karajan recording. It is the scene in which Beckmesser discovers the song that Hans Sachs has taken down in dictation from Walther. When Sachs tells him he is welcome to take it he can hardly believe his good fortune - here is a full-length portrait of the wily town clerk.

The rest is strictly Viennese music, and it is surely not necessary to describe it in detail. Several of the Johann Strauss and Lehár numbers are extracted from the Ackermann-Karajan series of operettas recently reissued and reviewed in these pages (Vol. XI, No. I). A notable addition to these is the Zeller Nightingale song, perhaps best remembered in recordings by Alma Gluck and Elisabeth Schumann. It is a rather different thing in the baritone voice. The Viennese songs are accompanied by a Schrammel orchestra and sung in dialect, but every word emerges clearly whether or not one understands it. Certainly no singer can make more of these ditties. An LP side given over to nine of them may seem a lot, but taken individually they have great charm.

The original recordings were all good, and the transfer does them justice.

TAUBER SINGS LEHÁR: Frasquita--Hab' ein blaues Himmelbett (2 takes); Paganini--Schones Italien; Was ich denke, was ich fühle (with Carlotta Vanconti); Gern hab' ich die Frau'n geküsst; Einmal möcht ich was Närrisches tun (with Vanconti); Niemand liebt ich so wie ich (with Vanconti); SONGS: Wenn eine schöne Frau befiehlt; Erste Liebe; Ging da nicht eben das Glück vorbei; Der Zarewitsch--Wolgalied; Hab' nur dich allein (with Vanconti); Warum hat jeder Frühling; Willst du? Richard Tauber, tenor. EMI HLM 7172.

A note signed by Bryan Crimp introduces this disc as "the first in a series devoted to the Lehár recordings of Richard Tauber." It is planned to include not only the published performances but "alternate takes where they exist." And so we begin at the beginning; this is a historical document, not a disc of Tauber's - or Lehár's - "greatest hits."

As we know, Tauber made his debut in 1913, and he was a well-established favorite at the Vienna opera before he met Lehár in 1922. This happened after a performance of Frasquita which the tenor had attended. The two realized at once that they were destined to work together. Tauber took over the leading role in Frasquita, and according to Vivian Liff's program notes, transformed the Serenade, "which had been considered unexceptional in the hands of its creator into a smash hit to be heard on the lips of almost the entire population of Vienna." In this country, of course, it was to be known as My little nest of heavenly blue, and in violin transcription as a Kreisler encore. The rest is history. Tauber not only became the official tenor in the later Lehár operettas, but he collaborated with the composer in a way suggestive of the Britten-Pears association, or the Poulenc-Bernac.

Not surprisingly the opening number is the aforementioned Serenade, recorded acoustically in January 1924. Two other operettas are represented in recordings contemporary with their premieres, Paganini (1925) and Der Zarewitsch (1927) as well as three songs, recorded 1924 and 1926. That was, we remember, the transition period, and the last recordings are electric.

The Serenade is heard twice, first in an unpublished take, discarded, no doubt, because of a weak beginning. The second version is better balanced, the singer more at ease. Still, the soft repeat in the first take is worth hearing for its own sake. As we know, Tauber went on singing this first "grosses Tauberlied" to the end of his career, and later performances were tossed off as by second nature. But here is where it all began. Of interest, too, is the presence of Erich Wolfgang Korngold as conductor. Paganini contained not only the great hit Gern hab' ich die Frau'n geküsst, but four other selections hardly less attractive. In three of them he is joined by Carlotta Vanconti, who was for a time his wife. She strikes me as one of those Viennese operetta prima donnas, a cut or two above the best of their American counterparts, but hardly in a class with her husband.

Among the songs I found the third intriguing, first because its chief melody reminded me of the tenor aria from Napravnik's Dubrovsky, and then because of its similarity to the Wolgalied that follows. Could there be any meaning in this apparent Russian influence, and was there any connection between the song and the operetta number? The Wolgalied was, of course, another in the great line of Tauberlieder, and here it is done handsomely, complete with balalaikas.

The Tauber-Lehár series promises further discoveries as well as many of the tenor's memorable successes. Tauber was one of those unique

singers - like Caruso or Chaliapin - whose art was inimitable though the temptation to emulate it, like the Loreley, has led many to destruction.

CÉSAR VEZZANI: HALEVY: La Juive--Dieu, que ma voix tremblante; Rachel quand du Seigneur; MEYERBEER: Huguenots--Plus blanche que la blanche hermine; Africaine--O paradis; Combien tu m'es chère (with Odette Ricquier, mezzo-soprano); Erreur fatal (with Ricquier); Prophète--Roi du ciel; Pour Bertha, moi je soupire; Le Pardon de Ploërmel (Dinorah) --Les bles sont beaux a faucher; REYER: Sigurd--Prince du Rhin; J'ai gardé mon âme ingenu; Oui, Sigurd est vainqueur; Esprits gardiens; Un souvenir Poignant. César Vezzani, tenor. EMI (Pathé-Marconi) 2C 051-16367.

Vezzani was first known to Americans as Faust in the historic recording of Gounod's opera, available on the Victor label in pre-LP days. Not the tenderest of lovers, he was a virile tenor with ringing high tones and an authentic French style. A Corsican, born in 1886 in Bastia, he made his debut at the Opéra-Comique in 1911 in a revival of Gretry's Richard Coeur de Lion. He was still a student at the Conservatoire. His success was immediate, but in 1914, according to Kutsch and Riemens, after a disagreement with the management, he left Paris and pursued his career in the provinces. A contract to come to America was cancelled on account of the war. He was active until 1948, when he suffered a stroke which left him crippled. He died in 1951.

This is the fourth Vezzani LP to come my way - there was one from French Odeon some years ago, ODX 126, and two from Rococo, R 5209 and R 5234. There is remarkably little overlap among these recitals - he was a prolific recorder. On the other hand, there is little to say about his singing beyond that it was manly, firm and high flying, and that it has a good deal of the grand manner. Perhaps of the four recitals this is the most powerfully dubbed - I seem to detect an echo chamber. Indeed, there is little evidence here that Vezzani had anything less than a strong forte. Nevertheless, taken individually some of the arias are exciting. One such is the triumphal hymn from Le Prophète, taken at a brisker tempo than the older recordings I know - Tamagno, Slezak, Paoli, Dalmores - indeed, quite overpowering. The two duets from L'Africaine, with the rich voiced Odette Ricquier, are both novel and interesting. But perhaps best of all are the several selections from Reyer's Sigurd, especially Esprits gardiens and Un souvenir poignant. Recording dates are given on the jacket, and it is interesting to hear the voice range between 1922 and 1932 - not chronologically but back and forth, from acoustic to electric recording and back. He may have been a stentorian singer, but obviously he did not wear his voice out.

This leaves us with the question, which of the four recitals should one choose - if one had to choose? The Odeon is to me the most interesting; the recordings are all early, made between 1912 and 1918. We begin with his first success and one of his best offerings, Richard Coeur de Lion,

the aria Si l'univers entier. Two selections from Werther follow, showing his treatment of recitative and cantilena. And in those days he could modulate his voice in the dream aria from Manon. My own particular favorite is the appealing little song from Bazin's Maitre Pathelin, but the air from Gounod's Mireille is a runner-up. Both Rococos contain Asile héréditaire from Guillaume Tell; another field day for a heroic tenor. No. 5209 has the first act meeting of Louise and Julien from Charpentier's opera and several selections from Herodiade assisted by Suzanne Guyla. No. 5234 has the scene leading up to Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix from Samson et Dalila with Maria Duchêne, but unaccountably it stops short of the big moment, though the scene was recorded complete. There is also Samson's lament at the mill, the duet (with Louis Musy) and the aria from Pêcheurs de perles, the Aubade and a duet from Le Roi d'Ys, among other things. My choice, then, would be the Odeon, which is probably impossible to find nowadays. But for the repertory it contains this new issue will do as well as any.

BIZET: Carmen. Solange Michel, mezzo-soprano (Carmen); Martha Angelici, soprano (Micaela); Germaine Chellet, soprano (Frasquita); Raymonde Notti, mezzo-soprano (Mercedes); Raoul Jobin, tenor (Don José); Michel Dens, baritone (Escamillo); Julien Thirache, baritone (Morales); Xavier Smati, basso (Zuniga); Frederic Leprin, tenor (Remendado); Jean Vieuille, baritone (Le Doncaire); Arschodt, baritone (Lillas Pastia); Paris Opera Chorus and Orchestra; Andre Cluytens, conductor. Trianon TRI 33308-10, 3 discs.

The "thing" about this recording, first reviewed in 1951, was the Opéra-Comique version, which meant reversion to spoken dialogue in place of the familiar recitatives added by Guiraud after Bizet's death. We have since had other performances in this tradition - one starring Grace Bumbry, conducted by Frühbeck de Burgos (Angel SCL 3767), one with Anna Moffo under Maazel (Eurodisc 80489-XR) and the controversial Metropolitan Opera production with Marilyn Horne, led by Bernstein (DG 2709.043). All these differ in details, according to the editions used.

When it appeared as Columbia SL 109 this set was considered mechanically superior; atmospheric and stage effects were particularly admired. Needless to say, we have come a long way since that time, but in this reissue the sound is still bright and open, though the voices are rather too close to us, and, for one piece of "atmosphere," the chorus of cigarette girls lacks clarity. But on the whole the recording is still respectable enough.

But of all operas Carmen depends on its prima donna. Solange Michel emerges as first and foremost a vocalist of appealing voice and admirable method. She is a smooth singer who, like a good Frenchwoman, makes herself understood, but she does not project a very strong character. Raoul Jobin, remembered for his ten years at the Metropolitan, proves a rather throaty Don José, more effective in the dramatic ending than in

the lyrical flower song. Michel Dens is a smooth-voiced Toreador, but he lacks the panache we look for in the role. Best of the principals is Martha Angelici, a genuinely lyrical Micaela. But all the voices are satisfactory, and the way in which these French singers deliver their lines might be used as a model in this country. Of course the overall responsibility is with the conductor, and "businesslike" is the word for Cluytens. The tempi are on the brisk side - sometimes perhaps the singers would have liked more leeway - as though the maestro were saying "Let's get on with it." And so this Carmen is pleasant but rather mild.

SAINT-SAËNS: Samson et Dalila. Hélène Bouvier, mezzo-soprano (Dalila); José Luccioni, tenor (Samson); Paul Cabanel, basso (High Priest); Charles Cambon, baritone (Abimélech); Henri Medus, basso (Old Hebrew); Paris Opera Chorus; Orchestre National de L'Opera; Louis Fourestier, conductor (17-27 September 1946). EMI 2C 153-10617-19, 3 discs.

The perennial Samson et Dalila recording is with us again. It seems the competition over the years has not been strong enough to kill it. Recorded in 1946, it first appeared in France as Pathé PDT 116/30 (78rpm) and it reached this country in 1948 as Columbia MOP 28. With transfer to LP in 1951, it became Columbia SL 107. After some reorganization of international affiliations it turned up again in 1954 as Vox PL 8323. It was reviewed once more in American publications in 1959 as an importation, Pathé PCX 5007/9.

When the recording was new it was greeted with moderate enthusiasm. Peter Hugh Reed, writing in The American Record Guide, found it "representative of the type of performance prevailing today in most opera houses." He called the conducting "efficient and judiciously paced," the recording "good, though more spaciousness in sound would have been appreciated... Mme. Bouvier has a lovely voice which she smoothly produces at all times, but she lacks impelling emotion and sensuous expression... Mr. Luccioni suggests a youthful tenor of Italianate extraction though his French is quite good, but his singing is more open than we associate with French artists."

My own impression of the Vox reissue was that the sonics had been somewhat improved. "The performance," I noted, "might be called 'typical' in the sense that it could have been taken directly from the repertoire without extra preparation for recording. There is neither great animation nor a notable standard of precision in the choral singing (so important in this oratorio-opera). Bouvier, a good artist with a rich, but hardly sinuous, voice, is musically well suited to the leading female role, though she does not delineate much of a character. For this the conductor may well be to blame... Jose Luccioni, as his name suggests, seems to combine the salient features of the Italian singing with the French; his Samson has stature and power."

Considering the Pathé issue of 1960, I noted it as "the only complete

performance of the work, the only really French one, and certainly in all respects the preferred one..." The sound still seemed a bit thick, and I blamed the conductor for a lack of fire.

So here we are again. This is certainly the smoothest, quietest pressing I have heard; though the sound is improved it still leaves a good deal to be desired in clarity. We have only to remember conditions in Paris so soon after the end of hostilities to realize that the recording was made under difficulties. But my reaction to the performance as a whole is considerably more favorable. If the choral singing is not of the most finished it makes up for this in enthusiasm. True, the balance is by no means ideal. The voices are too close to us, which accounts for a lack of refinement.

Bouvier's rich voice lacks only a certain suggestiveness to be completely convincing. It is a fine instrument, to my ears reminiscent of the great Dalila Gerville-Réache. Her Printemps aria is beautifully sung but unhappily overamplified. She has the range, if not quite the venom, to make the most of Amour, viens aider. The voice has line, is completely steady, never overflows. All in all, one has to go back several decades at the Met to find a comparable Dalila. And Luccioni (a Corsican trained in France who made his career in Paris) delivers his lines with fine conviction, rather in the manner of Georges Thill. Indeed, the cast is strong, down to the unidentified Philistines. All have impressive voices and beautifully forward diction. And so, if we can take the somewhat tubby sound, the overamplification and the lack of dynamic contrasts, the set is still listenable. As a performance it has yet to be surpassed.

GOUNOD: Mireille. Janette Vivalda, soprano (Mireille); Nicolai Gedda, tenor (Vincent); Michel Dens, baritone (Ourrias); Christiane Gayraud, mezzo-soprano (Taven); Andre Vessieres, basso (Ramon); Marcello Cortis, basso (Ambroise); Madeleine Ignal, soprano (Vincenette); Christiane Jacquin, soprano (Clemence); Robert Tropin, basso (Le passeur); Aix-en-Provence Festival Chorus (Elisabeth Brasseur, director); Conservatory Orchestra; Andre Cluytens, conductor. (1954) EMI C 153-10613-5, 3 discs.

Mireille was first performed at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris on 19 March 1864, with the famous, and formidable, Mme. Miolan-Carvalho (who had created Marguerite in Faust in 1859 and was to create Juliette in 1867) in the title role. The opera, based on a poem of the Provençal poet Mistral, was a peasant tragedy with some attempt at local color, and it had nothing to do with the life of Paris. After six performances it was withdrawn. Gounod was taken in hand by Madame and her husband, who was the manager, and talked him into making changes. The five acts were to be reduced to three, there had to be a happy ending, and above all there had to be a brilliant number for Madame. (In our day of added embellishments it is amusing to read what Reynaldo Hahn has written about the liberties Miolan-Carvalho allowed herself in everything she sang,

even to Mozart. It was her bright idea when singing Cherubino, when the letter duet was encored, to take over Susanna's part in the repeat!) Unfortunately, as Hahn puts it, Gounod let himself be persuaded, and we have Madame to thank for the interpolation of the famous waltz. What an irony that over the years, if the name Mireille has meant anything, it has been that waltz!

Alas for Gounod, who was never again to hear his opera as he had conceived it. Even so it was not one of his great successes. The only Metropolitan production was in February 1919, with Pierre Monteux conducting and a cast headed by Maria Barrientos, Charles Hackett and Clarence Whitehill. It lasted four performances. Needless to say, it was given in the three-act, happy-ending version. A couple of decades later, at the behest of the composer's daughter, Mme. la baronne de Lassus-Saint Genies, Reynaldo Hahn and Henri Busser undertook to restore Gounod's original Mireille. Oddly, one of their tasks was to replace spoken dialogue with the original recitatives (the reverse of the Carmen case) and it fell to Busser to restore parts of the score that had been destroyed when the theater burned. And so, in 1939, Gounod's opera was heard again as he intended it. We are not told in the interesting background material furnished with this recording, but the even more elaborate brochure that came with the original release does give credit to Busser. The opera is in five acts, it ends tragically, and the infamous waltz is grudgingly added as an "appendix" at the end of the sixth side.

The recording (the only one the opera has had) is historic in another way. The action takes place in the country near Arles, partly in a region called Le Val d'Enfer. Gounod spotted the site as a great potential stage, and that is just what it became for the Aix Festival of 1954. The recording was made with the cast of that production a few days later. Whether Mireille is a great opera is a question I would rather not answer. But there can be no question it contains some lovely music. The Magoli song, which makes a kind of love motive, the sweet chanson of the shepherd, here charmingly sung by an unnamed boy, Mireille's air in which she declares her constancy, Vincent's Anges du paradis, and more. Amusingly, in the last act there is a chorus that comes perilously near to Oh Susanna. It may not be very echt Provençal in tone, but we know that Gounod and Mistral became good friends over it.

As for the performance, it can be described as generally admirable. Chief interest centers in the youthful Gedda, already one of the most stylish of French tenors. Dens, a seasoned artist, plays the villain Ourrias to the hilt. As to Vivalda, of whom at the time great things were expected, her voice is pleasant, very French if not very individual. Not having Mme. Miolan-Carvalho's facility she makes rather heavy going of the waltz when she does get to sing it. The recording, very good in its day, stands up well in this reissue.

WAGNER: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. Ferdinand Frantz, bass-baritone (Hans Sachs); Gottlob Frick, basso (Pogner); Horst Wilhelm,

tenor (Vogelgesang); Walter Stoll, basso (Nachtigall); Benno Kusche, baritone (Beckmesser); Gustav Neidlinger, basso (Kothner); Manfred Schmidt, tenor (Zorn); Leopold Clam, tenor (Eislinger); Herold Kraus, tenor (Moser); Robert Koffmane, basso (Ortel); Anton Metternich, basso (Schwarz); Hans Pick, basso (Foltz); Rudolf Schock, tenor (Walther); Gerhard Unger, tenor (David); Elisabeth Grümmer, soprano (Eva); Marga Höffgen, mezzo-soprano (Magdalene); Hermann Prey, baritone (Night watchman); Chorus of the Municipal Opera and German State Opera, Berlin; Choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral; Berline Philharmonic Orchestra; Rudolf Kempe, conductor. EMI RLS 740. 5 discs.

Released as Angel 3572 in 1958, according to ratings in the Myers Index to record reviews this recording very favorably reviewed. My own brief note in Library journal read as follows: "This is the fourth complete Meistersinger, the second conducted by Kempe, the second with Frantz as Hans Sachs and the third with Unger as David. Each of its predecessors had its strong points, but taken all round this is certainly the best so far of this opera. The cast is generally excellent. The recording could be better in matters of balance - the singers are too much in the spotlight - but it is not bad."

Of the recordings available at that time two are still to be found in Schwann 2 (Karajan, Bayreuth - Seraphim 6030 - and Knappertsbusch, Vienna - Richmond 65002). I cannot claim to have heard all the more recent versions, but I doubt that any of them presents a stronger cast than this. Frantz, who sang three seasons at the Met at the turn of the fifties, was except for Schoeffler (the Sachs of the Knappertsbusch performance) easily the best Wagnerian baritone in the post-war years. He died in 1959. Trained in the old school, he had developed the richness and nobility of the lower voice at the expense of an occasional high note. If we have such a Heldenbariton today I have not heard him. His Hans Sachs has much of the warmth and humanity we admired in Schorr and which we have not heard approached since Schoeffler bowed out in 1956. I find Grümmer's Eva particularly appealing because of the girlish quality of her limpid voice. Schock may not be the ideal Walther (who has ever heard that paragon?) but he is among the better ones. The quality of his voice is pleasing; what he lacks is perfect smoothness. He delivers the text convincingly. Another very positive strength in the cast is the Pogner of Gottlob Frick, a man of dignity and character. As already noted, in his time Gerhard Unger was more or less the standard David, and few have suggested the youthful enthusiasm of the part so convincingly. And praise be, the Beckmesser of Benno Kusche is not the too usual caricature. And so on through the cast to the Night Watchman sung by no less than the young Hermann Prey.

I find the recording still definitely acceptable if not the equal of the more recent issues. The orchestra is clean and solid in tone, and when it has the field to itself it sounds splendid, but it drops too much into the background when the singers are at work. I know some listeners still prefer this, for it makes it possible to revel in the qualities of the voices themselves, and also to hear distinctly every word that is

sung. But it does not make for stage illusion, and sometimes in the big ensembles - and in the Quintet - the sound is overloaded. Still, there are plenty of lovely spots where the atmosphere has been nicely caught, such as Eva's Geliebte, sparre dein Zorn in the second act. But if we must take some things on faith, the set is treasurable for its superior cast, and I think it is safe to say that of the more recent Solti, Karajan and Jochum, none has a firmer grasp of the score than Kempe.

MOZART: Idomeneo (Highlights). Sena Jurinac, soprano (Ilia); Dorothy McNeil, soprano (Electra); Richard Lewis, tenor (Idomeneo); Alexander Young, tenor (Idamante); Glyndebourne Festival Chorus and Orchestra; Fritz Busch, conductor. World Records SH 294.

Interest in this recording centers on Fritz Busch, for it was made on the 2nd and 3rd of July 1951. The Glyndebourne production opened on 20 June, and it turned out to be Busch's last: he died on 14 September. Unfortunately it amounts to no more than a series of individual arias and scenes, in no sense a performance of the opera. One of its chief attractions is Busch's account of the overture. The singers in general set no standards. Richard Lewis copes valiantly with his difficult assignment, especially the aria Fuor del mar, without making it sound easy. Jurinac's Zeffiretti lusinghieri has been very much admired, and certainly it is the high spot. But even here, to my taste, the tempo seems a little rushed. The superb chorus, Placido e il mar, of which Busch was particularly fond, still sounds quite good if not as fresh as when the set was new. But the recording has been remastered and on the whole the sound is improved.

PURCELL: Dido and Aeneas. Kirsten Flagstad, soprano (Dido); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano (Belinda); Eilidh McNab, soprano (1st Lady); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano (2nd Lady); Arda Mandikian, mezzo-soprano (Sorceress); Sheila Rex, soprano (1st Witch); Anna Pollak, soprano (2nd Witch); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano (Attendant Spirit); Thomas Hemsley, baritone (Aeneas); David Lloyd, tenor (Sailor); The Mermaid Singers and Orchestra; Geraint Jones, conductor; Raymond Clark, continuo. EMI 2C 051-03613.

This record, I need hardly say, is a classic, and classics should be periodically revived if they cannot be maintained in the catalogs. The story of the Mermaid production of Purcell's little masterpiece has been many times told. In 1951 Flagstad, very near the end of her career, assumed the role of Dido as a friendly gesture to producer Bernard Miles. The recording, made later in the year, preserves the performance except for the substitution of Schwarzkopf for Maggie Teyte in the role of Belinda. There have, of course, been a number of recordings of Dido since that time, and in many respects this one has been surpassed: aside from the sonics, Hemsley is hardly the ideal Aeneas and others in the

cast have been outshone. And for myself I prefer the Dido of young Janet Baker in the Anthony Lewis performance to all others on record (Oiseau Lyre 60047) but still Flagstad's noble voice and the admirable precision of her singing remain a model. One wishes she had been more spaciouly recorded. This was one of Flagstad's problems from her first days in the American studios - the voice seemed cabin'd, cribb'd, confined. This reissue has made it to sound as well as it can. There are program notes in French which are quite remarkable in the English translation.

SULLIVAN: Iolanthe. George Baker, baritone (Lord Chancellor); Darrell Francourt, baritone (Earl of Mountarat); Derek Oldham, tenor (Earl Telleller); Sydney Granville, basso (Private Willis); Leslie Rands, baritone (Strephen); Bertha Lewis, contralto (Queen of the Fairies); Nellie Brierccliffe, mezzo-soprano (Iolanthe); Alice Moxon, soprano (Celia); Nellie Walker, contralto (Leila); Winifred Lawson, soprano (Phyllis); Beatrice Elburn, speaker (Fleta); Orchestra & Chorus; Sir Malcolm Sargent, conductor. Trial by Jury. Leo Sheffield, baritone (The Learned Judge); Winifred Lawson, soprano (The Plaintiff); Derek Oldham, tenor (The Defendant); Arthur Hosking, baritone (Counsel for the Plaintiff); Chorus of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company; Harry Norris, conductor. (Recorded under the supervision of Rupert D'Oyly Carte.) World Records, Ltd. SHB 64, 2 discs.

This is not the original D'Oyly Carte Iolanthe - the first recording goes back to the acoustic period (HMV D 632-41). But some of the same singers are in the cast - George Baker, Darrell Francourt, Derek Oldham, Nellie Walker (in the title role) and Sydney Granville (as Strephen). The conductor was George W. Byng. This first electric recording was issued in this country as Victor C-10 in September 1930; Trial by Jury preceded it as C-4 in June 1929. Those were the days when Winthrop Ames had been showing New Yorkers that there were other G & S operas than The Mikado, H M S Pinafore and The Pirates of Penzance. The Ames Iolanthe, which started the revival, had a memorable cast - Ernest Lawford as the Lord Chancellor, Vera Ross as the Fairy Queen, John Barclay as the Earl of Mountarat, etc. - it was so successful that Patience, The Gondoliers and others followed. But in that Golden Age of Gilbert and Sullivan the Savoy in London was still the Bayreuth of light opera, and the visits of the D'Oyly Carte Company, beginning in 1934, were highlights of the New York season. The D'Oyly Carte recordings have been successful down the years, and there have been periodic re-makes. The 1952 Iolanthe was issued both with and without dialogue (respectively, London A 4242, LLP 469/70 - later Richmond R S 62005). The conductor was the veteran Isidore Godfrey but the cast was of a new generation. A still later performance, under Royston Nash, appeared in 1974 (London OSA 12104) and is still listed in Schwann. A rival G & S series has been offered on the Angel label. Conducted by Sargent, the aim is principally musical polish, and some of the most eminent British singers are in the casts. Iolanthe in this version (Angel 3597, 1960) finds George Baker in his familiar role, along with Ian Wallace, Alexander Young, Owen Brannigan, John Cameron, Monica Sinclair, Marjorie Thomas, April Cantelo,

Elsie Morison and Heather Harper (as Leila!). Iolanthe is a singing opera, and first rate vocalism never hurts, but here some of the fun is missing.

What, then, does this old recording have that more recent performances don't have? For those with long memories the names listed in the cast will have an appeal, which quickly proves to be more than sentimental. These singers do not, of course, match the vocalism of the latest Sargent cast, but their voices are respectable enough and they have the traditions as we remember them. If there is a weak member it is the leading lady who inclines to shrillness. My only other quibble concerns a certain businesslike approach, undoubtedly due to the old bugbear of 78rpm timing. Moving from musical number to musical number without the dialogue, the whole becomes rather a concert than a theatrical performance. Not the least of the singers' virtues, needless to say, is their impeccable diction. It is a pleasure to understand without making an effort. The original recording is from a period when clarity was achieved by rather dead studio acoustics. Fortunately no effort has been made to enrich the sound, and the transfer is very successful.

Trial by Jury, once reissued as a pendant to Pinafore (Victor LCT 6008), being a somewhat earlier recording, is not quite so clean in sound, but the broad humor comes through in grand style.

MOZART: Requiem. Irmgard Seefried, soprano; Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano; Leopold Simoneau, tenor; William Warfield, baritone; The Westminster Choir (John Finley Williamson, director); New York Philharmonic; Bruno Walter, conductor. Odyssey Y 34619, mono, \$4.98.

Since Bruno Walter was one of the great Mozarteans of his age, his performance of the Requiem is ipso facto something of a document. The recording was released in 1956, six years before Walter died. Thus it represents the last period of his career, when he could budget his work on his own terms. His relations with the Philharmonic were happy, and the Westminster Choir was a group of old friends. The soloists were a distinguished quartet. Yet, reviewing the original release in The American Record Guide I expressed disappointment because of the acoustics of the recording. Excessive reverberation defeats the clarity of the choral performance and surely does no service to Walter's intentions. Among the soloists Seefried stands out with her pure and limpid tones, and Simoneau sings with admirable fervor. Tourel, whom we remember most fondly as a singer of songs, seems not quite at home, and Warfield is not the genuine solid bass the music calls for. When this is said, it is still likely that Walter's admirers listening below the surface, will sense the mellowness and affection of the conductor's reading. And faute de mieux the recording was worth reviving.

Philip L. Miller