

A SIR THOMAS BEECHAM PANORAMA 1910-1959

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H. (1879-1961) - A MUSICAL BIOGRAPHY. EMI World Records SHB 100 - Eight 12-inch Discs with book: Jefferson, Alan: Sir Thomas Beecham - A Centenary Tribute; Macdonald and Jane's, London, 1979; 256 pp. with foreword by Sir Robert Mayer; 24 pp. ill. + 2 jacket photographs.

SH 1001 - The Early Years (1910-1928). J. STRAUSS II: Die Fledermaus - Overture (abridged), recorded 7/28/10; D'ALBERT: Tiefland - Selection, recorded 8/31/10; MISSA: Muguette - Entr'acte, recorded ca. 1912; STRAVINSKY: The Firebird - Dance of the Firebird; Scherzo; Infernal Dance, recorded 1916; GERMAN: Have you news of my boy Jack? (Kipling) with Dame Clara Butt (contralto), recorded Feb/Mar 1917. Beecham Symphony Orchestra. OFFENBACH: Tales of Hoffmann - The Doll's Song, Caroline Hatchard (soprano), Beecham Opera Company, recorded 7/27/10. ATTERBERG: Symphony No. 6 in C Major, Op. 31. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 8/12/28.

SH 1002 - Shorter Works (1933-1948). BERLIOZ: Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9, recorded 11/27/36; HANDEL (arr. Beecham): The Origin of Design - Ballet Suite (Bourrée, Rondeau, Gigue, Musette, Battle and Finale), recorded 1/5/33; HANDEL: Solomon - Arrival of the Queen of Sheba, recorded 5/6/33; WEBER: Oberon - Overture, recorded 7/18, 10/3/38; BORODIN (arr. Rimsky-Korsakov & Glazunov): Prince Igor - Polovstian Dances, with Leeds Festival Choir, recorded 10/34. London Philharmonic Orchestra. HAYDN: Symphony No. 40 in F Major. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 4/20/48.

SH 1003 - The Post War Years (1947-1956). DVOŘÁK: The Golden Spinning Wheel - Symphonic Poem, Op. 109, recorded 9/15, 11/29/47; MASSENET: La Vierge - Sacred Drama - Le dernier sommeil de la Vierge, recorded 4/11/47; DEBUSSY: Printemps - Symphonic Suite, recorded 11/25/46, 4/14, 4/22/47; DELIUS: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring, recorded in stereo 10/31/56.

SH 1004 - Opera and Oratorio (1934-1948). MOZART: Die Zauberflöte - Act I: Schnelle Püsse. Tiana Lemnitz (soprano), Gerhard Hüsch (baritone), Heinrich Tessmer (tenor), Wilhelm Strienz (bass), Helge Roswaenge (tenor). Favres Solisten Vereinigung, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 11/8-9/37; HANDEL: Israel in Egypt - But as for His people; Moses and the children of Israel; The Lord is a man of war. Leeds Festival Choir, London Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 10/3/34; WAGNER: Die Götterdämmerung - Act II: Hoi-ho! Ludwig Weber (bass), Herbert Janssen (baritone), Covent Garden Royal Opera House Chorus, London Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded May 29, 1936; VERDI: Macbeth - Act IV: Sleep-walking Scene. Margherita Grandi (soprano), Vera Terry (soprano), Ernest Frank (baritone), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 1/16/48.

- SH 1005 - Concertos. MENDELSSOHN: Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64;
 BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 (Saint-Saens
 cadenzas). Jascha Heifetz (violin), Arthur Rubinstein (piano), Royal
 Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 6/8, 6/10/49 and 9/30/47 respectively.
- SH 1006 - Richard Strauss. R. STRAUSS: Ein Heldenleben - Symphonic
 Poem, Op. 40. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Oscar Lampe (violin solo),
 recorded 11/21, 11/28, 12/14/47.
- SH 1007 - Sibelius. SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43. BBC
 Symphony Orchestra, recorded 12/8/54.
- SH 1008 - The Pathfinder. MOZART: Symphony No. 39 in E-flat (K. 543) -
 3rd Movement, recorded 11/19/36 on magnetic tape, Ludwigshafen,
 Germany; MOZART: Symphony No. 41 in C Major (K. 551) ("Jupiter") -
 1st Movement (opening), recorded 1/19/34 in stereo. London Philhar-
 monic Orchestra. God Save The Queen, recorded 5/8/59 in stereo.
 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. BEECHAM: Lecture Highlights - Mozart
 and his Music, Coolidge Auditorium, The Library of Congress, Washing-
 ton, D.C., 2/6/56; The Changing World of Music, same locale, 2/25/57.

The five groups of LP's under consideration here include some 111 musical titles, excerpts from two lectures, given in 1956 and 1957 respectively at the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress, plus excerpts from pioneering recordings marking the debut of the symphony orchestra on magnetic tape (1936) and a bit of Alan Blumlein's early stereo efforts (1934). All told we have represented here on 47 LP discs about 25% of Sir Thomas Beecham's published output done for commercial labels between the years 1910 and 1959. If we bear in mind the existences of the massive Beecham Delius survey, issued in two volumes by World Record (SHB 32, SHB 54), plus a scattering of other significant reissues, we can count ourselves fortunate in what has come to us on British labels representing the harvest from the 1979 centennial celebration of England's uniquely great master of the baton. I do trust that at some point the few significant omissions from the Beecham reissue program will be rectified and that we shall have in LP format the 1935 LPO Dvořák Slavonic Rhapsody in A, the 1939 LPO Grieg Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, the LPO Tchaikovsky Francesca da Rimini from the same year, the 1945 LPO Beethoven Fourth Symphony, which was available for a time as an early RCA Victor LP, likewise the Mendelssohn Reformation Symphony from the same year with the same orchestra, the 1947 RPO Richard Strauss Burger als Edelmann music, the Tchaikovsky Polish Symphony from the same year with the same forces, the 1949 Mozart G Major Violin Concerto with Giocconda de Vito, and most importantly of all, two Sibelius recordings, the 1947 RPO reading of the Sixth Symphony which the composer himself greatly admired, and the full sequence as issued by Philips in 1955 in 10" LP format of extended excerpts from the music for Shakespeare's The Tempest. So much for omissions in LP coverage of the Beecham canon; let's see what we have in hand.

The 8-disc World Records survey of the Beecham career as documented on records is a most ambitious package and carries with when purchased in toto Alan Jefferson's highly entertaining and informative volume, Sir Thomas Beecham - A Centenary Tribute. Read in conjunction with Beecham's own autobiography up to 1925, A Mingled Chime (Hutchinson, London, 1944), Beecham the man certainly comes through strong and clear -- both as impassioned and impulsive activist and as an acutely sensitive human being, given more often than not to hiding this part of his nature behind a wall of persiflage and sometimes sarcasm. Together with lively accounts of Beecham as orchestra builder, operatic impressario, and touring guest conductor, we gain a wonderful picture of his early family life and the ups and downs of relations with his father, Sir Joseph, whose control of the Beecham's Pills enterprises made much of Sir Thomas's early career possible. We also get quite a running account of Beecham's love life, especially with the redoubtable Lady Cunard, and then a moving account of the marriage to Betty Humby and her tragic end. For myself, if I were to single out from Jefferson's book the most unexpected and oddly touching bit of information, at least so it struck me, it is the paragraph toward the end of page 102 describing Beecham's determination to establish a place in British musical life for Leopold Stokowski, whom he had befriended during the World War II period in the U.S.

In this general connection, especially when dealing with Beecham's special kind of music making, it is worth bearing in mind the names of some of his executant contemporaries, who besides Stokowski (1882-1977) included Pierre Monteux (1875-1964) - his only peer among French conductors - Bruno Walter (1876-1962), Pablo Casals (1876-1974), Wanda Landowska (1877-1959), and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). All were deeply humanistic, "organic" interpreters of the masters, and with the exception of Walter, all including Beecham himself were powerfully influenced by the more humanistic aspects of French culture, including in the instance of Casals the life and work of Henri Bergson and his concept of the elan vital.

Side 1 of SH 1001 (The Early Years) offers an interesting and sometimes curious sampling of Beecham's pre-electrical recordings. The Johann Strauss, d'Albert, Offenbach, and Edmond de Missa (1861-1910) bits are from his 1910-1912 period of intense operatic activity and grew out of performances in work. The Fledermaus Overture is ruthlessly abridged, as was the custom at the time, and only the hair-raising pace of the coda gives any indication of the Beecham to come. The Tiefland potpourri is of interest chiefly because of its use exclusively of the wind band (Beecham had taken to touring at the time with a 56-man Wind Symphony Orchestra). The Doll's Song (in English) and with choral background toward the close is a fine documentation for its time of the 1910 Beecham Opera Company. Not only does soprano Caroline Hatchard's enunciation come through better than one might expect, but she brings a lilt to the music that for me bespeaks something of the Beecham touch at work. After Missa's Gallic fluff, we get a sample of Beecham's association with the Diaghilev Ballet Russe, this from 1916 and as such

probably the first recording ever of Stravinsky's music and definitely the first of anything from The Firebird. Parts of the Firebird's Dance and the Scherzo come off passably, but the later pages of the Infernal Dance are something of a ludicrous scramble. While all of the above recordings are sonically no better and not too much worse than the norm for pre-electric recording of the time, the final track, featuring the redoubtable Dame Clara Butt in an Edward German song to Rudyard Kipling text, offers remarkable clear and full sound, including very clear delineation of the female-male dialogue implied in the words.

Side 2 of SH 1001 brings us what for many years was considered a choice collector's item from the early electrical era, Beecham's 1928 recording of the work that won the \$10,000 award given by Columbia Records to the contemporary composer who in the opinion of a distinguished jury had composed a new work best exemplifying the lyrical genius of Schubert. Kurt Atterberg of Sweden was the winner with his Symphony No. 6 (which had been started before announcement of the competition). Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of that day recorded the music on August 12, 1928, prior to the August 17 announcement of the winner and considerably in advance of the world concert premiere, which the Edwin A. Fleisher Music Collection catalog notes as being October 15, 1928 at Cologne under Hermann Abendroth. Atterberg himself recorded the work for DGG/Polydor subsequently with the Berlin Philharmonic and it appears in LP format in Volume 2 of Thomas L. Clear's Historical Anthology of Orchestral Music (From 78's). The Arturo Toscanini Society also has issued Maestro Toscanini's one and only performance of the Symphony (ATS-1009), as broadcast with the NBC Symphony Orchestra on November 21, 1943. I find it a shame that no authorized commercial release has been arranged for the Toscanini performance, which is brilliant and fares particularly well in the "midsummer night" slow movement. Beecham, however, is brilliant in the satirical finale. The English Columbia sonics are tolerably acceptable, certainly a good deal less muzzy than what emerged from the Clear LP transfer, which was done "direct from disc."

SH 1002 (Shorter Works) brings us much of the prime Beecham of the early London Philharmonic years. His music making with this wonderful orchestra, which at various times included the likes of oboist Léon Goossens and clarinetist Reginald Kell, I have found to be the most consistently vital and unfussy than at any other time in his recording career, and I wonder if the enforced discipline of having to fit musical segments onto 4-minute 78 rpm sides did not also bring with it a more straightforward handling on Beecham's part than was too many times the case when magnetic tape allowed limitless flexibility and/or license. Needless to say, my favorite on this is the astonishing rendition of the Entrance of the Queen of Sheba from Handel's Solomon. Clearly the crackling pace was dictated by the necessity of fitting it onto the last 2/3rd of Side 2 of the 1933 recording of Rossini's La Scala di Seta Overture. The 1936 and 1938 readings of the Berlioz Carnaval Romain Overture and Weber Oberon are fine ones, but the rather tight acoustic characteristic of Abbey Road Studio 1 is a little tough on today's ears.

At the opposite end of the sonic scale is the 1934 "live" performance from the Leeds Festival of the Polovstian Dances from Prince Igor. There are wide open spaces in evidence here and the kinesis achieved by chorus and orchestra under the Beecham baton is overwhelming. Nevertheless, the original 78's were pretty muzzy in sound, and even Anthony Griffith, bringing all his art to bear, has been unable to clarify the situation to any significant extent. The Handel-Beecham Origin of Design Suite has always been one of my favorite of the ballet pastiches, and it sounds very nearly as good here as it did on the 78's I used to own. Beecham's only recording of an early Haydn symphony, No. 40 in F Major, to which his post-World War II Royal Philharmonic brings a high gloss - no harpsichord continuo, of course - and on this level delivers a performance of great elegance. Excellent transfer work here.

SH 1003 (The Post War Years) is a mixed bag for me. On the one hand there is the magnificent recorded performance of Dvořák's The Golden Spinning Wheel (1947) and the 1956 On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring with Beecham in his best Delian vein. For all the care Beecham lavishes on Massenet's Le dernier sommeil de la Vierge and on Debussy's Printemps from his Prix de Rome days, I'm not able to respond to either. The Dvořák performance has been matched only by Talich in my view. Very good sound here, matching excellently my still vivid memory of the Dvorak as first heard on 78's.

SH 1004 (Opera and Oratorio) is full of choice goodies, the Act I finale from the classic 1937 Zauberflöte beginning at "Schnelle Füße", the 1934 Leeds Festival excerpts from Handel's Israel in Egypt, the Sleep Walking Scene from Verdi's Macbeth (1948), and the shattering "live" recording from Covent Garden (1936) of the Götterdämmerung Vassals' Scene with Ludwig Weber. The Zauberflöte needs no comment save to say that the transfer is altogether excellent. The Handel excerpts are afflicted with a combination of high surface noise from the source material as well as a variably muzzy sound. The Lord is a Man of War sung by the entire male chorus rather than in its usual duet format suffers less than the other episodes from sonic fuzz and fluctuating volume levels.

The 1948 Macbeth Sleepwalking Scene is distinguished not only by the deeply tragic portrayal by Margherita Grandi of Lady Macbeth, but is profoundly enhanced by the work of Beecham's Royal Philharmonic, with the first chair clarinet and the solo cor anglais being especially noteworthy. Judging from the sudden change of perspective evident at the moment of the concluding high D-flat assigned to Lady Macbeth, I am inclined to agree that another voice sings this particular note in this recorded performance. The transfer is eminently satisfactory, sonically speaking. Far more effective than I expected was the transfer of the 1936 Covent Garden "live" recording from Die Götterdämmerung. This is terrifically exciting stuff, complete with all the stage effects, clashing of shields, etc; and Beecham is in terrific form here, urging the music on with an almost primal savagery -- if one can imagine such things of a British Baronet. A record like this simply fills me with

regret that a representative selection of Beecham's opera performances recorded in the theater shows little or no chance of coming to pass in authorized and superbly processed commercial issues.

SH 1005 (Concertos), despite excellent transfer work, is for me a musical failure. With both Heifetz in the Mendelssohn and Rubinstein in the Beethoven G Major Piano Concerto, high gloss seems to be the order of the day. We can be grateful that the Szigeti-Beecham version of the Mendelssohn is still available as an example of what ideal concerto collaboration can be, in terms of both musical execution and meaningful interpretation. My reaction to the original 78 rpm issues was similar, and I have found no reason to change it in the interim.

SH 1006 (Richard Strauss) Ein Heldenleben is chosen as the one representative Richard Strauss work in the World Records package, this being the 1947 performance recorded in 78 rpm segments. It differs decidedly from the more expansive - sonically and interpretively - 1958 reading done in Kingsway Hall. Even with the tighter (but not uncomfortably so) acoustics of the Abbey Road No. 1 studio and the constraint imposed by working in terms of 4-minute segments, it is clear that it is the lyrical and introspective side of Ein Heldenleben to which Beecham responds rather than the ebullient ego-tripping cultivated by the Mengelberg of the 1920's or the Ormandy of the 1950's and 1960's. There is more spontaneity to be found in the 1958 performance, but also less intellectual discipline.

SH 1007 (Sibelius) confines itself to the 1954 concert performance of the Second Symphony recorded at the Royal Festival Hall on December 8, 1954. The initial issue (ALP 1947) was by EMI/HMV in 1962, with the American Arabesque label coming out in 1980 (8025) with a pressing from the identical source material. In any event, I am intrigued by the legend "compiled and transferred from 78's by Anthony Griffith" - inasmuch as one would assume that the BBC in 1954 was mastering onto magnetic tape. In any event, we have Beecham in full cry - vide midway in the first movement - in a turbulent, passionately lyrical, but not always well proportioned interpretation. The sound on the World Records mastering seems to me decidedly constricted when heard side for side with either ALP 1947 or the Arabesque issue.

SH 1008 (The Pathfinder) is the disc which in its own way establishes the psychic kinship between Beecham and Leopold Stokowski. Stokowski, seemingly the impetuous one, was actually the more calculating and rational -- based on my personal experiences; but Beecham willy-nilly shared many of the same concerns on a wide range of subjects related to music, audience response, acoustics, and recording technology. In the audience response area as represented on SH 1008, we have a studio performance of Britain's National Anthem which has no relation whatever to the usual perfunctory handling of the familiar tune. Beecham had a profound sense of occasion, and when it came to National Anthems, including The Star Spangled Banner, he could bring new life to the

whole business. So it is with the 1959 stereo taping with Royal Philharmonic in No. 1 Studio Abbey Road. The other musical bits on this disc are the pioneer 1936 taping done at Ludwigshafen in the course of a concert at the BASF Feierabendhaus of the Menuetto from Mozart's Symphony No. 39 and a bit of the first movement of the Mozart Jupiter Symphony from the January 1934 session at No. 1 Abbey Road Studio that produced the first and best Beecham reading for records of this music. The excerpt here was one of Alan D. Blumlein's early stereo disc efforts. I would guess, from the minimum element of stereo localization laterally that sum-and-difference microphoning was used. In the Bell Laboratories limited edition disc (BTL-7901) featuring Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1932 doing excerpts from the Mussorgsky-Ravel Pictures at an Exhibition the lateral localization is considerably more evident. The balance of SH 1008 is taken up with extended excerpts from Beecham discoursing at the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium on Mozart and his Music (1956) and The Changing World of Music (1957). For all the man's marvelous use of the English language and the wit and the charm, one cannot help but be aware of Beecham, approaching his 80th year, being profoundly out of sympathy with what modern communications technology and the international market place have done to the world in which he grew up before World War I and to which he brought between the wars a kind of elan vital, the like of which remains unique and distinctive -- totally apart from what I grew up with under Toscanini, Koussevitzky, and Stokowski, but perhaps a bit akin to what Monteux delivered in his own somewhat cooler way. I noted carefully in the Alan Jefferson biography that Beecham in 1932 in New York and in San Francisco in 1945 took on without fee orchestras of unemployed musicians and made them play so far above their heads that the reigning professionals had to look to their laurels. I regard it as a rare privilege that I was present at the 1941 concerts of the New York City Symphony WPA-sponsored concerts conducted by Beecham. The programs included Handel-Beecham: The Faithful Shepherd, Mozart: Symphony No. 31, Sibelius: Symphony No. 7, Tchaikovsky: Francesca da Rimini, Haydn: Symphony No. 102, Mozart: Symphony No. 36, Delius: Paris, Dvořák: Symphonic Variations. Quite simply, if I live to be 100, I shall never forget those concerts, which took place at a time when my wife and myself could hear in concert Toscanini, Koussevitzky, and Stokowski on the same weekend. On these particular occasions, Beecham wiped up the floor with the whole lot. Yet, hearing Beecham six months later with the super-pros of the Philadelphia Orchestra was a bitter disappointment by comparison, as was a Louisville tour concert with the Royal Philharmonic in the fall of 1950. I think this offers a clue to the Beecham paradox.

French Orchestral Showpieces. CHABRIER: España Rapsodie, recorded 11/30, 12/19/39; BIZET: Carmen - Suite: Prelude to Act I, Entr'acte, Aragonaise, Les Dragons d'Alcala, La garde montante, Intermezzo, Prelude to Act IV, Les Toréadors, Danse bohème, recorded 4/12/39; L'Arlésienne - Suite No. 1: Prelude, Adagietto, Minuetto, recorded 2/26/36; Suite No. 2: Ménéuet, Farandole, recorded 2/28, 6/19/36;

- La jolie fille de Perth - Suite: Prelude, Serenade, Aubade, Danse bohémienne, recorded 6/29/34; GRÉTRY: Zémire et Azor: Air de ballet, recorded 1/4/40; OFFENBACH: Les Contes d'Hoffmann - Excerpts: Barcarolle, Entr'acte (Epilogue), Duet from Act II (Giulietta and Hoffmann), Intermezzo from Act I; DEBUSSY: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, recorded 2/13/39; BERLIOZ: La Damnation de Faust - Excerpts: Hungarian March, Dance of the Sylphs, Minuet of the Will o' the Wisps, recorded 12/16/37, 2/1/38. EMI World Records SHB 55, (two discs).
- ROSSINI: Overtures - La Scala di seta, recorded 5/6/33; William Tell, recorded 10/20/34; La Gazza ladra, recorded 10/20/34; Semiramide, recorded 11/30/39; ROSSINI-RESPIGHI: Rossiniana - Suite: Barcarolle, Siciliana, Intermezzo, Tarantelle, recorded 3/2, 4/3, 4/17/35. EMI World Records SH 313.
- MOZART: Flute & Harp Concerto in C Major (K. 299), René LeRoy, Lili Laskine, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 7/10-11/47; Divertimento No. 2 in D Major (K. 131): 1. Allegro, 2. Adagio, 3. Menuetto (omitted), 4. Allegretto, 5. Menuetto, 5a. Menuetto from Divertimento No. 15 in B-flat (K. 287), 6. Adagio-Allegro molto-Allegro assai, recorded 11/28, 11/30/47, 1/4/48. EMI World Records SH 316.
- Romantic Symphonies. SCHUBERT: Symphony No. 5 in B-flat (D. 485), recorded 12/15/38, 1/11/39; Symphony No. 8 in B Minor (D. 759) ("Unfinished"), recorded 10/12, 11/1/37; BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73, recorded 3/14, 3/24/36; Tragic Overture, Op. 81, recorded 3/22/37; TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64, recorded 12/18/38, 1/4/40; FRANCK: Symphony in D Minor, recorded 1/3-4/40. London Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI His Master's Voice RLS 733 (four discs).
- Classical Symphonies. HAYDN: Symphony No. 93 in D Major, recorded 12/18/36; Symphony No. 99 in E-flat, recorded 10/4/35, 2/28/36; Symphony No. 104 in D Major ("London"), recorded 1/18, 2/13, 7/4/39; BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36, recorded 10/3, 11/27, 12/18/36. London Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI His Master's Voice RLS 734 (two discs).
- R. STRAUSS: Don Quixote, Op. 35. Alfred Wallenstein ('cello), René Pollain (viola), Michel Piastro (violin), New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, recorded 4/7/32; WAGNER: A Faust Overture. London Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 7/16/35, 2/28/36. EMI His Master's Voice HLM 7154.
- R. STRAUSS: Ariadne auf Naxos, Op. 60: Overture, Finale Scene. Maria Cebotari (soprano) - Ariadne; Karl Friedrich (tenor) - Bacchus; Margaret Field-Hyde (soprano) - Naiad & Zerbinetta; Edith Furmedge (soprano) - Echo; Gwladys Garside (contralto) - Dryad, recorded 10/15/47; Elektra Op. 58: Finale Scene (slightly abridged). Erna Schluter (soprano) - Elektra; Paul Schoeffler (baritone) - Orest; Ljuba

Welitsch (soprano) - Chrysothemis; Walter Widdop (tenor) - Aegisth; Ernest Erbach (bass) - Orest's Guardian; Gwladys Garside (mezzo-soprano), Sylvia Patris (contralto), Monica Warner (soprano), Maud Heaton (contralto) - Maids; Royal Philharmonic Chorus, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 10/27-29/47. RCA (England) RL 42821.

The dozen discs listed above cover for me what I regard as Beecham's prime years as a recording artist -- in essence encompassed by Beecham's establishment of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1932 up through the first years with the Royal Philharmonic, which he organized in 1946 after the LPO became a self-governing body, no longer "his" orchestra.

No one who grew up on the original 78 rpm issues, as I and many other veteran collectors did, need be reminded of the stunningly vital and humane musicianship represented in the finest of these recorded performances; and certainly, in terms of the facilities available during the period, no effort was spared by Beecham and his producers to achieve the best possible sonic results. This is apparent in spite of the wide variability in sonic ambience between, say, the Chabrier Espana of late 1939 and the Berlioz Damnation de Faust excerpts -- the former remarkably rich and spacious in its original 78 rpm format, the latter rather tight in sound but superbly detailed for its day. Interesting, too, is the start in 1938 of having recording sessions in Kingsway Hall, which has proven over the years to be a virtually ideal locale for symphonic recording. The celebrated Mozart Linz Symphony performance (Turnabout THS 65022/6) stands as one of the prize Kingsway Hall Beecham productions. I would hazard a further guess, at least as it pertains to the Espana and the Bizet Carmen Suite in the French Orchestral Showpieces set, namely that the Telefunken condenser microphone (U-47 or its prototype) became available to Beecham and EMI at around the time of completing the Zauberflote recordings in Berlin in early 1938. Certainly the sound of these discs in their original 78 rpm format and those done by Telefunken in Vienna with Clemens Krauss as represented by the Johann Strauss (Telefunken SK 3241) are remarkably similar in sound-characteristic -- great richness and tonal body, a mite shy of E-string brightness, and a low frequency transient capability (pp bass drum) hitherto unheard on discs. Which brings me to the one disappointing feature in the transfer work done with the Beecham Carmen Suite and Espana -- the failure to recapture the richness of the original. Evidently, the 6 db-per-octave pre-emphasis that has been pretty much the worldwide standard since the middle 1950's is simply not compatible when it comes to dealing with recordings of this type. Yet I have heard a number of highly successful LP transfers from this type of source material done by both American Columbia and EMI. I found the 1953 American Columbia transfer (ML 4771) of the Schubert Fifth Symphony considerably more true to the superb sound of the original 78's (surface noise notwithstanding) than what has been done in the Romantic Symphonies package under review here. On the other hand I have heard other EMI transfers from rather similar-type source material -- the Solomon-Susskind Liszt Hungarian Fantasia -- where the

best elements of the original sound are remarkably well retained.

Of the seven packages under review, I do find the French Orchestral Showpieces the most consistently enjoyable both musically and sonically: the Debussy Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune is by itself worth the entire album; but really there is nothing that doesn't come off with matchless flair and subtlety of nuance; and I am so pleased that the marvelous bit at the close of the Dance of the Sylphs from La Damnation was allowed to let stand from the 78's wherein Sir Thomas is heard expressing his thanks for a job well done. The Rossini album, needless to say, provides in its more jauntily lyrical approach to the overtures a wholly valid contrast to the highly-charged Toscanini manner. Schubert comes off for me with far greater success in the Romantic Symphonies collection than either Brahms or Tchaikovsky. The Second Symphony reading, save for the slow movement, has always seemed somewhat chill alongside, let us say, Pierre Monteux. The Tragic Overture has its points, but I always had a partiality for the Boult among the 78 rpm versions. As for Tchaikovsky, again it is the lyricism of the slow movement and the balletic aspect of the third movement that seem to evoke the most congenial response from Sir Thomas; but the frenetic elements inherent in the end movements seem tame indeed -- rather surprising in view of the dramatic eloquence achieved by Sir Thomas with Francesca da Rimini in the 1939 LPO recording (regrettably not yet transferred to LP) and in what I heard in New York on the evening of April 6, 1941 with Sir Thomas leading an aggregation of WPA players.

The Classical Symphonies package is prime Beecham of the thirties -- bluff yet warmly human Haydn (pre-Landon texts, of course) and splendidly virile, yet not over-driven Beethoven. The rather tight acoustic in Haydn 93, 99, and Beethoven, as well as in the Brahms No. 2 in the Romantic Symphonies package may seem somewhat uncomfortable for some ears.

I'm a little sorry that EMI has chosen to pair Beecham's superb reading and very-fine-for-the-period recording of the Wagner Faust Overture with the 1932 Richard Strauss Don Quixote recorded with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony following a guest conducting stint at Carnegie Hall. The Beecham keenness, wit, and flair communicate themselves, but rather dimly in sonic terms. Wallenstein's excellence as a 'cellist comes through rather more plainly to these ears. I was never very happy with the original 78's (not to mention the 12-inch 33.3 rpm discs that RCA Victor processed at the time from these same sessions); and to be quite honest, I don't find either this EMI issue or the special RCA pressing put out this past Christmas by Neiman-Marcus as part of a New York Philharmonic historical survey any major masterpiece of sound restoration. The original material does not provide enough to work with from an audio standpoint. If you want to check on what can be done with good basic source material, regardless of early vintage, lend an ear to what was accomplished with the 1927 Bach-Stokowski Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor with the Philadelphia Orchestra on RCA VCM-7101 (unfortunately no longer in print).

The last years of the pre-LP era, with its concomitant elements of recording with no break for each 4-minute side and the editing capability offered by magnetic tape, coincided with Beecham's founding and whipping into shape what appears to be, at least in terms of consistently fine playing, the best of all his orchestras. If I still prefer Beecham's LPO period musically, it is a matter of the conductorial rather than the orchestral element of the equation that tips the balance there. In any event, World Records SH 316 offers about the most scintillating and sharply honed reading of the Mozart Flute-and-Harp Concerto it has been my privilege to hear, thanks in no small measure to the eminent soloists, who were captured in top form. I remember being impressed by the 78's at the time of issue; but with a first-rate transfer job and no 78 rpm surface noise or 4-minute interruptions to deal with, I am more impressed than ever with what has been done with crackling vitality to liven what often can be a rather bland half hour's listening. From a music editing point-of-view the K. 131 Divertimento as presented here by Sir Thomas with transpositions, interpolations, and omissions, is an oddity indeed; but the playing as such is remarkable, especially in the horn department on which Mozart makes rather unusual demands. Sir Thomas did record K. 131, minus the tinkering some seven years later (issued over here as Angel 35459 paired with the Jupiter Symphony).

A major legacy of the Richard Strauss festival staged by Beecham in October 1947, at which the 83-year-old composer was present, was the recording of the Overture and Final Scene from Ariadne auf Naxos and the final scene from Elektra (with minor cuts to allow for accommodation on eight 78 rpm sides). The Ariadne, with Lady Beecham's permission, is published here for the first time; and while one can understand Sir Thomas's reservations concerning release, given the less-than-flawless vocal work on the part of all save the redoubtable Maria Cebotari, who is wonderfully expressive as Ariadne, it is the quality of the orchestral contribution and Beecham's remarkable command of balance between sensuality and the basic flow and architecture of the music that makes this recording an outstanding document. The sound ranges from adequate to excellent for its period. Soundwise, the Elektra is the more impressive, and again marked by superlative orchestral work. Beecham pays special attention to the tender elements wherever they occur, thus palliating to a welcome extent the grand guignol hysterical elements that can be a bit of a muchness at times. Regrettably, Erna Schluter is no Rose Pauly, let alone a Birgit Nilsson -- in short, she is not able to communicate in her singing of the role the air of relentlessness that Beecham brings to his reading. It is Paul Schoeffler who saves the day, imbuing the figure of Orestes with imposing presence upon his entrance and with great compassion in the Recognition Scene.

TCHAIKOVSKY: Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a, recorded 12/53, 12/2-3/54;
Symphony No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 17 ("Little Russian"), recorded 12/53.
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. CBS 61875.

SIBELIUS: Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47, recorded 11/7-8/51; Scenes Historiques: Festivo, Op. 25, No. 3, recorded 6/13, 8/13/52; The Chase, Op. 66, No. 1, recorded 8/13/52; Love Song, Op. 66, No. 2, recorded 9/28/50; At the Drawbridge, Op. 66, No. 3, recorded 6/13/52. Isaac Stern (violin), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. CBS 61876.

BIZET: Carmen Suite - Prelude, Aragonaise, Les Dragons d'Alcala, Les Toréadors, Intermezzo, La Garde montante, Danse Bohème, recorded 12/21/49, New York City, Columbia Symphony Orchestra. BIZET: La jolie fille de Perth Suite - Prelude, Serenade No. 1, March, Serenade No. 2, Danse Bohémienne, recorded 2/6/50; FRANCK: Le Chasseur maudit, recorded 3/9/51. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. CBS 61877.

ELGAR: Enigma Variations, Op. 36, recorded 11/26-27, 12/13-14/54; Cockaigne Overture, Op. 40, recorded 11/26-27, 12/13-14/54; Serenade in E Minor for String Orchestra, Op. 20, recorded 11/26-27/54. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. CBS 61878.

Of the thirteen items included in the British CBS listings above, five were recorded by Philips for Columbia following severance of the long-standing U.S. Columbia-EMI licensing arrangement, all of them post-dating 1952. Of the Philips group, by far the most interesting from an interpretive standpoint is the Elgar, a composer otherwise unrepresented in Beecham's recorded output. He sedulously avoids the over-ripe sentiment cultivated by the likes of Barbirolli and concentrates on both the red-blooded vigor of the more strenuous parts of Cockaigne and the Enigma Variations, whilst lavishing great care in the carefully controlled phrasing of the Elgarian melodic line. The result is a "different" but oddly stimulating view of Britain's Edwardian master. The Tchaikovsky disc, in common with most of Sir Thomas's other readings of the composer, fares best in balletic vein rather than in things like the end movements of the Little Russian Symphony. One can assume only that Beecham finds little congeniality in those aspects of Tchaikovsky that demand a fiercely urgent, even frenetic drive. The Bizet music, of course, finds Beecham wholly in his own element, and it is surprising how much he is able to make dramatically of what for me is the moth-eaten romantic moralism of Franck's tale of the Mad Huntsman. The Carmen Suite, by the way, is mislabelled on both jacket and disc as performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. It actually stems from a brief series of New York sessions with Columbia's picked house group, done in late December, 1949. The Sibelius disc is vintage Beecham in terms of the Scenes Historiques excerpts, while the Concerto reveals Isaac Stern in ebullient vein; but in any event, the end result (also available on U.S. Columbia's Odyssey label) is by no means in a class with the incomparable 1935 Beecham Heifetz collaboration -- also currently available in the U.S. on Seraphim.

In comparison with the original American Columbia issues, these British CBS remasterings are brighter and cleaner, and benefit from improved playing surfaces. Michael Gray's Beecham discography notes

that those portions of the Elgar scores calling for organ were recorded in a locale other than the Walthamstow Town Hall, a fact particularly evident in the finale of the Enigma Variations as heard on the CBS reissue.

MOZART: Die Entführung aus dem Serail (K. 384). Lois Marshall (soprano) - Blonde; Léopold Simoneau (tenor) - Belomonte; Gerhard Unger (tenor) - Pedrillo; Gottlob Frick (bass) - Osmin; Hansgeorg Laubenthal (speaking part) - Pasha Selim; Spoken dialogue roles: Hilde Volk - Costanze; Ilse Hollweg - Blonde; Manfred Schmidt - Belomonte; Gerhard Unger - Pedrillo; Fritz Hopper - Osmin; Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 5/9, 11, 14, 16-18, 24-25/56. EMI His Master's Voice SLS 51531 two discs/stereo.

HAYDN: The Seasons (sung in English). Elsie Morrison (soprano) - Nancy; Alexander Young (tenor) - Lucas; Michael Langdon (bass) - Simon; Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 11/16, 18-19, 21-22, 26-27/57, 3/22, 4/8/58. EMI His Master's Voice SLS 5158 three discs/stereo

HANDEL (ed. & rev. Beecham): Solomon. John Cameron (baritone) - Solomon, Elsie Morrison (soprano) - Queen; Alexander Young (tenor) - Zadok; Lois Marshall (soprano) - Queen of Sheba, Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 11/17-19, 21-22, 25, 11/15, 17, 11/22/55, 1/1, 5/16, 28/56. EMI His Master's Voice SLS 5163 two discs/stereo.

BEETHOVEN: Mass in C Major, Op. 86. Jennifer Vyvyan (soprano), Monica Sinclair (contralto), Richard Lewis (tenor), Marian Nowakowski (bass), Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 5/4, 7, 13, 11/30/56, 4/21/58. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30284/stereo.

HAYDN: Symphonies: No. 93 in D Major, No. 94 in G Major ("Surprise"). Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 10/4/57; 10/4-5/57; 4/8/58. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30285/stereo.

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded 10/20, 22, 31/58, 4/29, 7/14, 16/59. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30286/stereo.

SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 7 in C Major, Op. 105, recorded 11/19, 25, 12/18/55; Tapiola, Op. 112, recorded 12/15, 17-18/55; The Oceanides, Op. 73, recorded 12/18-19/55. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30290/Stereo.

R. STRAUSS: Ein Heldenleben - Symphonic Poem, Op. 40, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Steven Staryk (violin solo), recorded 4/17, 22/58. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30293/stereo.

BERLIOZ: Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14, recorded 11/30, 12/1-2/59;
French National Radio Orchestra. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30295/stereo.

FRENCH LOLLIPOPS - CHABRIER: Marche joyeuse, recorded 3/23/57; DEBUSSY:
L'Enfant prodigue - Cortege & Air de danse, recorded 10/5, 11/23/59;
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, recorded 3/25, 28/57; SAINT-SAËNS:
Samson et Dalila - Danse des preteresses de Dagon (Act I), Bacchanale
Act III), recorded 10/20/58, 11/23/59; Le Rouet d'Omphale, Op. 31,
recorded 3/25/57; GOUNOD: Roméo et Juliette - Le Sommeil de Juliette
Act V), recorded 10/5, 11/24/59. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.
FAURÉ: Dolly, Op. 56 for piano duet (arr. Rabaud), recorded 12/1-4/59;
Pavane, Op. 50, recorded 12/1-4/59. French National Radio Orchestra.
EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30299/stereo.

DELIUS: Florida Suite (rev. & ed. Beecham), recorded 11/10, 19, 21-22,
12/14/56; Dance Rhapsody No. 2, recorded 11/7/56; Over the Hills and
Far Away, recorded 4/2, 10/7/57. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP 30415/
stereo.

GRIEG: Peer Gynt - Incidental Music, Op. 23 - No. 2, Bridal Procession
(orch. Halvorsen); No. 4, Ingrid's Lament; No. 7, In the Hall of the
Mountain King; No. 12, Åse's Death; No. 13, Morning; No. 15, Arabian
Dance; No. 16, Anitra's Dance; No. 18, Solveig's Song; No. 19, Peer
Gynt's Return; No. 23, Solveig's Lullaby. Ilse Hollweg (soprano, in
German), Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded
12/5, 18, 21, 29/56, 3/22, 28, 4/1/57. EMI His Master's Voice SXLP
30423/stereo.

The dozen packages of EMI reissues, assigned variously to the
Beecham "Legend on Record" and Concert Classics series find the aging
Baronet variously in top form and in an exasperatingly wayward mood.
Die Entführung, whether or not one goes along with Sir Thomas's re-order-
ing of numbers, is sheer joy from the sizzling account of the Overture
to the marvelous reconciliation ensemble at the end. The stereo is early
vintage but adequate, and the sonics profit greatly vis-a-vis the U.S.
Angel release in terms of cleanliness and extended range.

There is much to be said for an English language recording of Haydn's
Die Jahreszeiten, based as it is on the English language poem by Scots-
man, James Thomson, and one would hope for a Philips Festivo release of
the 1969 Colin Davis taping. Beecham's is not without its moments,
especially when Elsie Morrison has the spotlight; but Sir Thomas's edi-
torial tinkering, most annoyingly the addition of an actual bell to the
horns at the "evening bell" episode at the end of summer, get in the
way of one's full enjoyment of the musical proceedings. The famous
Hunting Chorus in particular fails to make its full impact, largely
because of too rapid pacing. Alexander Young's solo tenor work is fine;
but Michael Langdon takes quite some time to warm up to his important
bass solos. The cleaned up sound emanating from the EMI remastering is
quite decent.

Solomon undergoes the most extensive editing on Beecham's part; but the sheer gorgeous sensuality he brings to bear on what he has chosen to reassemble from Handel's original remains irresistible, especially in this beautifully remastered pair of discs. I have not heard the Seraphim U.S. reissue; but I should be very much surprised if the sound were as fresh and transparent as what emerges from these grooves.

One finds it difficult upon listening to Beecham essaying the more heroic Beethoven to resist the feeling that the good Baronet was unable to take the Germanic view of the heaven-storming Prometheus of music at face value. Thus it has been in the even-numbered lyrical symphonies that Sir Thomas has found his metier as Beethoven interpreter. So too with the C Major Mass as against the cosmic aspirations of the Missa Solemnis. It is kinship with the late Haydn Masses that one senses in Beecham's finely honed middle 1950's reading in a most welcome return in refurbished sonics. Surprising it is that Beecham never did tackle the late Haydn masses, at least for recording!

The Beethoven Seventh here is for me a disaster comparable to that encountered in the Beecham-Rubinstein go-through of the Fourth Piano Concerto -- a rat-race all the way. Not even the finest remastering can redeem the unfortunate musical end result.

On the other hand, the Sibelius disc is a triumph on all counts, and I do prefer having the Tapiola in place of the Pelléas and Mélisande Incidental Music that came with the original U.S. Angel issue. The remastering is stunning, and the inner detail of the Oceanides is a particular beneficiary here. The Symphony gains also in power both by virtue of higher recording level and improved playing surfaces vis-a-vis U.S. Angel. Beecham's second time around with Ein Heldenleben presents a reading both more broadly expansive and lyrically introspective than was the case with the 1947 Abbey Road recording, which had to be tailored to 78 rpm side-breaks. The Kingsway Hall ambience here makes for a near cineramic sonic stage, with perhaps some resultant loss in subtle detail. Still the hero's reminiscences are communicated here with a unique and haunting loveliness rarely encountered elsewhere on or off records.

In the Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique, it is to the lyrical rather than to the obviously dramatic element to which Beecham responds most full, though he does give the latter its due - if not up to the point of a Monteux. The remastered sonics may not equal what has been accorded Bernstein or Martinon in two of the better recent readings of the Fantastique for discs, but they still convey with ample vividness the special qualities of Beecham's way with this difficult and elusive score.

In connection with these later Beecham EMI recordings, most especially those of the Berlioz, Bizet, Lalo, and Franck symphonies -- all of them recorded separately and issued separate in mono and stereo over a very short period of time -- one would love to have access to the correspondence and internal EMI memos that made for this procedure!

I have left out of consideration here the Haydn symphony disc, which will be touched on in connection with the German Electrola Horzu reissues of the Salomon Symphonies -- these performances being part of that series.

In his later years, Beecham cultivated more and more the lighter French repertoire in his recording programs, due in part, I'm sure, to the extensive periods he had to spend on French soil in order to avoid what he felt to be the depredations of the post-World War II British tax authorities (two 90-day periods per year was the limit imposed on any stay in England). Consequently, Beecham recorded not only with his own Royal Philharmonic at Abbey Road and in the Paris Salle Wagram, but also with the French National Radio Orchestra. The Michael Gray discography indicates parts of works being recorded variously in England and France - the Haydn Salomon Symphonies series being a particular instance in point (see below), and I would be most curious to see an editing history of some of these tapes in order to divine how the EMI engineering staff coped with variances in acoustic ambience, etc. Yet another aspect of Beecham as recording artist that emerges in the Gray discography is that the Baronet would think nothing of recording different movements, or even sections, of a given score months apart in time, and yet the end result would in almost every instance emerge as musically and aurally seamless.

In any event, the French Lollipops collection makes for most enjoyable listening with Debussy's "Faune" and Chabrier's wonderfully cheeky Marche joyeuse - at least in this reading - ranking as my special favorites. Most of the contents of this disc have been scattered over two Seraphim discs in U.S. releases currently available. Comparison of the Marche joyeuse in the original U.S. Angel issue with the EMI remastering shows the latter to be more extended in both frequency and dynamic range.

While I find Beecham's Delius a mite over-ripe in the later readings as compared to those of an earlier period (see the World Records comprehensive two-album collection), the one and only sound-documentation of the early Florida Suite in Beecham's editing retains its own special charm. A check of Over the Hills and Far Away against my 1960 Capitol-EMI pressing finds the EMI remastering decidedly richer in both body and inner detail. The identical contents are currently available in U.S. release on Seraphim, but I have had no opportunity for an A-B comparison.

The Grieg Peer Gynt collection remains a Beecham classic, though I retain a soft spot for the wonderful LPO 78's of Suite No. 1. I'm sorry Beecham saw fit to use German instead of English or Norwegian for the vocal episodes. The refurbished sonics represent a net gain; but the dyed-in-the-wool Griegian will opt for the British Unicorn two-disc set of the complete score in Norwegian with Per Dreier.

HAYDN: Symphonies: No. 93 in D Major, recorded 10/4/57; No. 94 in G Major ("Surprise"), recorded 10/4-5/57; No. 95 in C Minor, recorded 10/5/57; No. 96 in D Major ("Miracle"), recorded 10/5-6, 11/3/57; No. 97 in C Major, recorded 3/9, 26/57, 4/8/58; No. 98 in B-flat, recorded 10/7, 11/3/57, 4/8/58; No. 99 in E-flat, recorded 5/8, 15-16, 12/5/58, 4/30/59; No. 100 in G Major ("Military"), recorded 5/11, 16, 11/27, 12/16/58, 5/2,8/59; No. 101 in D Major ("Clock"), recorded 5/12, 16, 11/27, 12/11, 16, 18/58, 5/3, 8/59; No. 102 in B-flat, recorded 5/9, 16, 12/5/58; No. 103 in E-flat ("Drumroll"), recorded 5/9, 16, 12/16, 18/58, 5/4,8/59; No. 104 in D Major ("London"), recorded 5/10, 11/27/58, 5/7-8/59. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI Germany "Horzu" IC137-50238/43 three discs/electronic "stereo"/three discs/stereo.

MOZART: Bassoon Concerto in B-flat (K. 191) (cadenzas, Gwydion Brooke), recorded 12/18/58, 2/13/59; Clarinet Concerto in A Major (K. 622), recorded 5/14-15, 22/58, 5/8/59. Gwydion Brooke (bassoon), Jack Brymer (clarinet), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI Electrola (Germany) Die Stimme Seimes Herren IC037-00176/stereo.

If one doesn't mind putting up with the pre-Robbins-Landon texts, I think it's pretty safe to say, with minor reservations, that the Beecham readings of the Salomon Symphonies remain pretty much the definitive word for the B & H editions. The best of the performances are endowed with a warmth, vitality, humor, and sheer gutsy rhythmic pulse that leaves them in a class by themselves -- never mind the endless felicities of phrasing and niceties of orchestral coloration and balance. The entire Salomon series was recorded by Beecham over a two-year period, beginning in March of 1957 at Abbey Road with No. 97 and concluding in May of 1959, also at Abbey Road. As a matter of fact, however, with the exception of No. 97 which was done wholly in London, and Nos. 95 and 96 which were done wholly in Paris, all these others had divided recording venues between Abbey Road Studio 1 and the Salle Wagram in Paris. As noted earlier, one would love to do a detailed study of the tape editing histories of these sessions!

The first six symphonies of the series were never recorded in stereo; but all issues subsequent to the initial British and U.S. releases appear to have been subjected to the "electronic stereo" treatment -- discreetly, I'll allow; but essentially unnecessary for today's listeners. Fortunately, as I write this, Arabesque Records under Ward Botsford's guidance is issuing the first six Salomons in their original mono format, with the 1948 Symphony No. 40 performance thrown in as an extra.

Taking performances first for Symphonies 93 through 98, Nos. 93, 94 (Surprise), and 96 fare best. The first of these gets its third go-around by Beecham here and this is stuff he has in his bones. The Surprise gets its second outing here and with it a special new breath of life with a markedly lively minuet. No. 96 (Miracle) boasts marvelous solo oboe

work midway in the minuet and a simply dazzling finale. For Nos. 95, 97, and 98 I sense rather less sympathetic response on Beecham's part. I miss the element of tragic grandeur inherent in the C Minor and the heroic urgency called for in No. 97. The majestic No. 98 finds for me a more profound response from Toscanini in his great 1945 NBC Symphony recording which unaccountably has yet to become officially available in long-play format. The disc containing Symphonies 93 and 94 has come to me in both British and German issues. While the essential sonic quality is virtually identical as between the two, the German pressing is far less afflicted with pre-echo.

When we get to the last six of the Salomon series, we also get to genuine stereo -- and what a difference! Things very definitely open up, and there is no evidence of the somewhat constricted sound of the "electronic stereo" process. I'll be interested to lend an ear to Arabesque in its strictly mono reissue of Nos. 93-98. No. 99, again a Beecham favorite, gets its second recording under Sir Thomas' baton, and it's a dandy. The Military Symphony may raise a few eyebrows by dint of the brisk pace adopted for the second movement; but on repeated hearing, I must say that there is much to be said for a true Allegretto as opposed to the quasi-Andante usually heard. The sound, by the way, is just fine as it pertains to the Turkish department. The London Symphony -- No. 104 -- fares superbly here also, and while the 78 rpm recording from 1939 appears to offer a somewhat more taut reading in spots, the differences are marginal. The Clock Symphony comes off nicely, but not with quite the distinction of the best here. No. 102, like No. 97, could use more snap and urgency in the end movements, while the great Drumroll, No. 103, comes a cropper for me in the slow movement variations, which proceed at a lugubrious pace belying the Andante piu tosto allegretto designation.

The other German Electrola reissue brings us the 1959 Mozart concerto recordings of the early work for bassoon (K. 191) wherein Gwydion Brooke does lovely things for Mozart and treats us to some dazzling cadenza display work of his own devising. The late Clarinet Concerto I agree is one of the most sheerly lovely in the Mozart canon. Yet I have heard few soloists that can keep the sweetness from becoming merely bland. Jack Brymer for all his proficiency and conscientious musicianship does not surmount this problem in my estimation. The sound as such is fine.

To conclude, intelligible discussion of this massive Beecham treasury, let alone its organization, would have been all but impossible without Michael Gray's Beecham - A Centenary Discography at my elbow both prior to and during the writing process.

David Hall

Note: The EMI recordings reviewed here are imported by German News Company.