

Trevor Croucher (compiler), Early Music Discography: From Plainsong to the Sons of Bach. Volume 1: Record Index. Volume 2: Composer, Plainsong, Anonymous Work and Performer Indexes. Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press, 1981. Pp. xviii + 273 + 302. \$67.50.

Bibliographic control of recordings in the LP era copes with major works of known composers much better than brief works and anonymous pieces. It's easier to look up a Beethoven symphony in Schwann, Gramophone, Bielefelder, Diapason, or the Myers or Maleady indexes (reviewed in this Journal, XIII:1) than to find a motet from the Montpellier Codex. The first attempt since WERM to cope with this problem as it affects the earlier centuries of Western art music was James Coover and Richard Colvig's Medieval and Renaissance Music on Long-Playing Records (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1964, 1973), which in two successive volumes provided more thorough and specialized indexing of the music before 1600 than could be found in the LP catalogues of that time.

The present work is a new attempt to cover early music, this time extending the time span to 1750 and even later. Volume 1 identifies the contents of each LP. It's sensibly divided into seven eras: Plainsong, Ars Antiqua, Ars Nova, Early and Late Renaissance, Early and Late Baroque (but note that Late Baroque alone doubles the size of the work). Each of these eras is divided into two to seven sections, and these are subdivided. The divisions are clearly calculated to deal with the material at hand, so they are arbitrary yet practical. Volume 2 indexes composers and sources in one alphabet (with Montpellier Codex under M), followed by a chant index, an index of anonymous titles, and an index of performers. The index citations are the code numbers assigned to each record in Volume 1, which forces the user to look up every item.

The compilation has been carefully and accurately done, the typesetting and printing are excellent, and the two softcover volumes are quite handy. There is a major limitation: the 3,164 records indexed here are solely those currently available in England (with many American and continental issue numbers added for them). I am informed that the compiler is considering a broader approach in both of these directions in future editions. Meanwhile an associate of James Coover is contemplating a new MRMLPR which will correct, cumulate, and update the earlier volumes.

Like MRMLPR, this compilation gives short shrift to Plainsong. One record may have a full list of titles, another will have three or four lines broadly describing the contents, and a third will settle for a vague phrase like "Chants for the Rosary." Good thing there's still a need for a comprehensive chant discography! This set is too good to miss but not as satisfactory as it could have been.

J. F. Weber

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, On and Off the Record: a Memoir of Walter Legge. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982. Pp. xi + 292. \$17.95.

John Culshaw, Putting the Record Straight. New York: The Viking Press, 1981. Pp. 362. \$17.50.

Walter Legge's first assignment at HMV in 1927 was writing album notes. In 1931 he developed the idea of recording marginal repertoire by selling subscriptions in advance. By the 1950s he was one of the best-known record producers in the business. He retired in 1964, although he worked occasionally after that, and died in 1979 with a projected autobiography scarcely begun.

John Culshaw started at Decca in 1946 writing album notes but moved up a year later to producing records (part-time at first). By 1960 his operatic recordings, above all the first complete Ring cycle, established him firmly in the public consciousness as a record producer, at a time when the profession was gaining its identity. He resigned in 1967 to join the BBC, although he made a few recordings later, and died in 1980 with his autobiography almost finished.

One remark links these two lives and these accounts, published almost simultaneously. Walter Legge, in a speech at Montreux in 1979 which is reproduced in his book, said: ". . . John Culshaw and I would have to be induced to return to record-making because, as far as I can see, we two have no successors!" The remark is more significant coming from the senior member of the pair.

The few men who made any real impact in the field known earlier as Artists and Repertoire have reported their activities already. Legge's predecessor at HMV, Fred Gaisberg, left an account of his life and work in 1943 in The Music Goes Round (or Music on Record in its British edition), but it was loosely organized and vague as documentation. Charles O'Connell, RCA's classical producer from 1934 to 1944, left a precious memoir of those years in The Other Side of the Record in 1947. Goddard Lieberson was the best-known American record producer of the 1950s, and his untimely death undoubtedly deprived us of a memoir that would have matched O'Connell's for readability.

Culshaw's is the better organized of the two books. He had already told much of what happened during the seven years it took to make the Ring and the eight earlier years starting with the abortive Bayreuth Ring recording in 1951 in his earlier book, Ring Resounding. The rest of the story is filled in here, going back to the beginning and filling in later gaps without duplication. Erik Smith, the Decca producer who tidied up the manuscript for the press, assures us that Culshaw would have stopped in 1967 and anyway, he says, nothing much happened in the last couple of years not covered here.

Legge, on the other hand, collected material and talked about an autobiography, but never really got down to it. Chapter 2 is titled "An Autobiography," but it actually consists of an 18-page article padded out with a lot of other material. For the rest, previously published articles, such as a useful account of the early days of the Philharmonia Orchestra which appeared in The Times of London in 1975, are collected and stitched together with running commentary in Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's words but ghosted by Gustl Breuer. Whole chapters are contributed by Edward Greenfield and Dorle Soria, as well as an Introduction by Herbert von Karajan. Most of the book consists of Legge's previously published articles on Ruffo, Lehmann, Ponselle, Schwarzkopf, Beecham, Klemperer, and Callas (as well as a new piece on Karajan) which reveal Legge primarily in the reflection of his views on the artists. The compilation, then, is something between a memoir by Schwarzkopf and an autobiography by Legge without being much of either. A selected discography by Alan Sanders will be superseded by a complete treatment now in preparation.

As the more finished work, Culshaw's book is extremely readable, just as his earlier volume was. He seems to be making a significant point in his careful recital of the idiocies he suffered from the Decca hierarchy, making his departure in 1967 at the height of his career more understandable. The policies which plagued him as early as the 1950s, policies of an aging regime resistant to change, can be seen as the seeds of Decca's downfall in January 1980 (when it was sold to PolyGram), just days before the death of its superannuated Chairman, Sir Edward Lewis, and, ironically, just two months before Culshaw's own untimely death. Record collectors whose image of Decca was formed in the 1940s by a forward-looking Decca management (the same people, only younger) shaking up a larger, stodgier EMI with full frequency-range recording and the prompt embrace of LP may be forgiven for not noticing the quiet decline of Decca until the end came.

Legge and Culshaw shared the one thing that makes a great record producer: a passionate love for music, or whatever else they're recording. This may best be deduced from a line in which Legge explains how he guided Schwarzkopf (his wife) on stage from his box in the opera house during rehearsals and performances:

We tried for years and once or twice succeeded in achieving Pamina's "Ach, ich fühl's" so heartbreakingly that there was no applause. The length of the silence after Strauss's "Morgen" is more eloquent than clapping.

It's reminiscent of Charles O'Connell's converse reaction to a Toscanini performance of the final chorus from Bach's St. Matthew Passion which ". . . drew salvos of applause and hysterical bravoos which in themselves damned it." Such men produce records which endure.

J. F. Weber