

GOBS AND GOBBETS OF WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER: Sein Werk in dokumentarischen Aufnahmen

DIE FEEN: Overture (Bavarian State Opera Orchestra, Franz Konwitschny, cond.; 1951).

DAS LIEBESVERBOT: Overture (Bavarian State Opera Orchestra, Konwitschny, cond.; 1951).

RIENZI: Overture (Bavarian State Opera Orchestra, Konwitschny, cond.; 1951). ACT I: Rienzi! Ha, Rienzi!...Erstehe, hohe Roma neu (August Seider, Leipzig Radio Chorus & Orchestra, Hans Weisbach, cond.; 1937). ACT II: Finale excerpts (Hilde Scheppan, Margarete Klose, Max Lorenz, Jaro Prohaska et al., Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Johannes Schüler, cond.; 1941). ACT III: Gerechter Gott (Klose, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. Robert Heger[?]; 1942). ACT V: Allmächt'ger Vater (Lorenz, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. Heger[?]; 1942). ACT V: Finale (Scheppan, Klose, Lorenz, Berlin State Opera Chorus & Orchestra, Schüler, cond.

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER: Prelude (Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Richard Kraus, cond.; 1942). ACT I: Mit Gewitter und Sturm (Alfons Fügél, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Artur Rother, cond.; 1943). Die Frist ist um (Hans Hotter, Bavarian State Opera Orchestra, Clemens Krauss, cond.; 1944). ACT II: Sentas Ballade (Elisabeth Rethberg, orchestra; 1930). Bleib, Senta!...Fühlst du den Schmerz (Maria Müller, Franz Völker, Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Kraus, cond.; 1942). Wie aus der Ferne (Duet and Finale) (Müller, Prohaska, Josef Greindl, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1943). ACT III: Steuermann! lass die Wacht! (Erich Zimmermann, German Opera House Chorus & Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1943). Willst jenes Tages (Set Svanholm, "Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Kraus, cond.; 1942"). Verloren! Ach! verloren...Erfahre das Geschick (Müller, Lilo Asmus, Völker, Joel Berglund, Ludwig Hofmann, Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra, Kraus, cond.; 1942).

TANNHAUSER: Overture and Venusberg Music ("Paris" version) (La Scala Orchestra; Arturo Toscanini, cond.; 1946). Overture ("Dresden" version) (German Radio Orchestra & Berlin Radio Orchestra, Joseph Keilberth, cond.; 1940). ACT I: Dir töne Lob...Dank deiner Huld; Stets soll nur dir (Dresden version) (Inger Karén, Fritz Krauss, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Carl Leonhardt, cond.; 1937). ACT II: Introduction...Dich, teure Halle (Müller, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1943). O Fürstin! (Bernd Aldenhoff, Christel Goltz, Dresden State Orchestra, Kurt Striegler, cond.; 1946). Freudig begrüßen (to end of act; Dresden version) (Maria Reining, Lorenz, Karl Schmitt-Walter, Ludwig Hoffman, et al., German

Opera House Chorus, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1942). ACT III: Wie Todesahnung...O du mein holder Abendstern (Willi Domgraf-Fassbänder, Berliner Funkstunde Orchestra, Fritz Zweig, cond.; 1931). Ich hörte Harfenschlag (to end of opera) (Margarete Bäumer, Lorenz, Schmitt-Walter, Hofmann. German Opera House Chorus, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1942).

LOHENGRIN: ACT I: Prelude; Hört! Grafen, Edle, Freie von Brabant!...Gott grüss' euch...Dank, König, dir (Prohaska, Hofmann, Walter Grossman, Berlin State Opera Chorus & Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943). Einsam in trüben Tagen Reining, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1944). Wer hier im Gotteskampf...Nun sei bedankt...Nie sollst du mich befragen (Müller, Völker, Prohaska, Hofmann, Grossman, Berlin State Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Heger, cond.; 1943). Mein Herr und Gott (Wilhelm Strienz, Berlin Radio Chorus & Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1938). ACT II: Du wilde Seherin...Euch Lüften...Du Ärmste (Müller, Klose, Prohaska, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943). ACT III: Prelude... Bridal Chorus...Das süsse Lied verhallt (Müller, Völker, Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra, Wilhelm Furtwängler, cond.; 1936). Attest du nicht (Hans Hopf, Dresden State Orchestra, Striegler, cond.; 1946). Heil, König Heinrich...Habt Dank, ihr Lieben von Brabant! (Josef von Manowarda, Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1936). In fernem Land (Völker, Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1936). Mein lieber Schwan (Torsten Ralf, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Gustav Görlich, cond.; 1936).

DAS RHEINGOLD: SCENE 1: Prelude and Song of the Rhinedaughters; Lugt, Schwestern (Hilde Scheppan, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Marie-Luise Schilp, German Opera House Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1941 or 1943). SCENE 2: Immer ist Undank Loges Lohn (Zimmermann, Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Karl Elmendorff, cond.; 1942). SCENE 4: Schwüles Gedünst...Abendlich strahlt (Scheppan, Schwarzkopf, Schilp, Zimmermann, Aldenhoff, Georg Hann, Hanns-Heinz Nissen, German Opera House Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1941 or 1943).

DIE WALKÜRE: ACT I: Prelude...Ein fremder Mann; Friedmund darf ich nicht heissen...Ein trauriges Kind (Müller, Völker, Manowarda, Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Heinz Tietjen, cond.; 1941). Ich weiss ein wildes Geschlecht (to end of act) (Margarete Teschemacher, Lorenz, Kurt Böhme, Dresden State Orchestra, Elmendorff, cond.; 1944). ACT II: Was verlangst du?...Deiner ew'gen Gattin (Erna Schlüter, Helene Jung, Rudolf Bockelmann, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Leonhardt, cond.; 1938). Als junger Liebe (Gertrude Rüniger, Wilhelm Rode, Königsberg Opera House Orchestra, Wolfgang Brückner, cond.; 1938). Siegmund! sieh auf mich (to end of act) (Schlüter, Reining, Krauss, Bockelmann, Manowarda, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Leonhardt, cond.; 1938). ACT III: Nicht straf ich dich erst (Kirsten Flagstad, Bockelmann, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1937).

Leb wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind (Josef Herrmann, Dresden State Orchestra, Elmendorff, cond.; 1944).

SIEGFRIED: ACT I: Auf wolkigen Höh'n (Josef Herrmann, Dresden State Orchestra, Elmendorff, cond.; 1944). Nothung! Nothung! (Gunther Treptow, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1944). ACT III: Interlude (Berliner Funkstunde Orchestra, Siegfried Wagner, cond.; 1929). Wie weck ich die Maid (Treptow, German Opera House Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943).

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: PROLOGUE: Rhine Journey (Berliner Funkstunde Orchestra, Siegfried Wagner, cond. 1929). ACT I: Blühenden Lebens labendes Blut (Lorenz, Herrmann, Dresden State Orchestra, Striegler, cond.; 1944). Hier sitz ich zur Wacht (Greindl, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1944). ACT II: Heil dir, Gunther (to end of Scene 4) (Frida Leider, Anny von Stosch, Lauritz Melchior, Herbert Janssen, Wilhelm Schirp, Chorus of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1938). ACT III: Ich höre sein Horn...Mime hiess ein mürrischer Zwerg...Brunnhilde! Heilige Braut (Irmgard Langhammer, Scheppan, Klose, Lorenz, Prohaska, Hofmann, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1944). Siegfried's Funeral Music (Berliner Funkstunde Orchestra, Karl Muck, cond.; 1930). Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort (Marta Fuchs, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, Leonhardt, cond.; 1937).

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE: ACT I: Prelude (Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1931). War Morold dir so werth (to end of act). ACT II: Isolde! Tristan! Geliebter...O sink hernieder...Rette dich, Tristan! (Paula Buchner, Klose, Lorenz, Prohaska, Eugen Fuchs, Berlin State Opera Chorus & Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943). Tatest du's wirklich (Melchior, Alexander Kipnis, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf, cond.; 1941). Wohin nun Tristan scheidet (Lorenz, "Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Victor de Sabata, cond.; 1939"). ACT III: Prelude (La Scala Orchestra, de Sabata, cond.; 1948). Hei nun! Wie du kamst?...Dünkt dich das?; Bist du nun tot?...Ha, diese Sonne! (Buchner, Lorenz, Prohaska, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943). Todt denn alles! (Gottlob Frick, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1947). Mild und leise (Astrid Varnay, Niederösterreichisches Tonkünstler-orchester, Hermann Weigert, cond.; 1951).

DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG: ACT I: Prelude...Da zu dir der Heiland kam (Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra, Hermann Abendroth, cond.; 1943). Zu einer Freiung...(to end of act) (Lorenz, Prohaska, Greindl, Fuchs et al., Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Furtwängler, cond.; 1943). ACT II: Was duftet doch der Flieder (Paul Schöffler, Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Abendroth, cond.; 1943). Herr Stadtschreiber...Jerum! Jerum! (to end of act) (Thea Kempff, Schilp, Henk Noort, Hann, Erich Kunz, Schirp, German Opera House Chorus & Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1944). ACT III: Wahn! Wahn!;

Selig wie die Sonne; Wach auf!...Euch macht ihr's leicht (Tiana Lemnitz, Emilie Walther-Sachs, Aldenhoff, Gerhard Unger, Ferdinand Frantz, Heinrich Pflanzl, Böhme, Karl Paul, Dresden State Opera Chorus, Dresden State Orchestra, Rudolf Kempe, cond.; 1951). Morgenlich leuchtend (to end of opera) (Müller, Ludwig Suthaus, Prohaska, Hofmann et al., Berlin State Opera Chorus & Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1943).

PARSIFAL: ACT I: Prelude (Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Richard Strauss, cond.; 1933). O wunderwundervoller heil'ger Speer, Titurel, der fromme Held (Greindl, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1944). Nun achtet wohl und lass mich seh'n...Zum letzten Liebesmahle (Manowarda, Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra, Franz von Hoesslin, cond.; 1938). ACT II: Ich sah das Kind (Lilly Hafgren-Dinkela, orch.; 1921). Amfortas! Die Wunde! (Treptow, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rother, cond.; 1944). ACT III: Prelude...Von dorther kam das Stöhnen (Elsa Larcén, Ludwig Weber, German Opera House Orchestra, Hans Knappertsbusch, cond.; 1943). Heil mir, das ich dich wiederfinde; O Gnade! Höchstes Heil (Treptow, Greindl, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Heger, cond.; 1944). Wie dunkt mich doch die Aue...Das ist Karfreitagszauber (Lorenz, Kipnis, "Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Strauss, cond.; 1933"). Geleiten wir im bergendem Schrein (to end of opera) (Carl Hartmann, Hans Reinmar, German Opera House Chorus & Orchestra, Knappertsbusch, cond.; 1943).

SONGS: Wesendonk-Lieder (Flagstad, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, ðivin Fjeldstad, cond.; 1951). Lied der Soldaten, Branders Lied; Mephistopheles I (Bockelmann, Michael Raucheisen, piano; c. 1942). Mignonne, allons voir si la rose (in German) (Schmitt-Walter, Raucheisen, 1943). Les Adieux de Maria Stuart (in German); Meine Ruh' ist hin; Dors, mon enfant (in German) (Scheppan, Raucheisen; 1945).

Acanta 40.23502 (nineteen discs, mono; with illustrated booklet).

FURTWÄNGLER DIRIGIERT OPERN VON RICHARD WAGNER

TANNHAUSER: Overture (Berlin State Opera Orchestra; 1940). ACT II: Fragment from the Song Contest (Gotthelf Pistor, Alexander Sved, Vienna State Opera Orchestra; 1936).

LOHENGRIN: ACT III: Prelude...Bridal Chorus...Das süsse Lied verhallt. Heil, König Heinrich...Habt Dank, ihr Lieben von Brabant! In fernem Land. Mein lieber Schwan...(to end of opera) (Müller, Klose, Völker, Manowarda, Bayreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra; 1936).

DIE WALKÜRE: ACT III (complete) (Flagstad, Müller, Bockelmann et al. London Philharmonic Orchestra; 1937).

SIEGFRIED: ACT III: Interlude (Berlin State Orchestra; 1940).

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: PROLOGUE: Siegfried's Rhine Journey (Berlin State Orchestra; 1940). ACT II: Brünnhild', die hehrste Frau ("Leider, Maria Nezadal, Melchior, Janssen, Weber, Covent Garden Opera House Orchestra; 1936"). ACT III: Her den Ring...Schweigtes Jammers jauchzenden Schwall...Starke Scheite (Flagstad, Nezadal, Weber, London Philharmonic Orchestra; 1937).

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE: ACT I: Prelude (Bayreuth Festival Orchestra; 1931). ACT II: Introduction...Hörst du sie noch; Tatest du's wirklich (to end of act). ACT III: Prelude: Dünk dich das? Ich weiss es anders (with omissions, to death of Tristan) (Schlüter, Klose, Suthaus, Prohaska, Frick et al., Berlin State Opera Orchestra; October 3, 1947). Isoldes Liebestod (Stockholm Concert Association Orchestra; 1942).

DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG: ACT I: Halt! Meister! nicht so geeilt! ACT II: Was duftet doch der Flieder...Gut'n Abend, Meister (Lemnitz, Ruth Berglund, Bockelmann, Fuchs, Manowarda, Hann, Vienna State Opera Orchestra; 1938).

PARSIFAL: ACT I: Prelude (Berlin State Orchestra; 1940).

Various performers; Wilhelm Furtwängler, cond. Acanta 40.23520 (five discs, mono, with illustrated booklet).

For a decade or more, the FonoTeam Gmbh Hamburg have been producing vocal reissues, first for BASF and more recently for Acanta, drawing on an evidently substantial accumulation of old German radio recordings. To judge from the records, their recipe for getting maximum mileage out of this Nibelung's treasure must resemble the old phrase: "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something..."--well, "blue" isn't quite the word, but, as we shall see, some of the selections in FonoTeam's latest and largest anthology are not exactly above suspicion.

Acanta's nineteen-disc anthology of "documentary recordings" of Wagner's music purportedly aims "to give the interested listener some idea of the quality of the performances of Richard Wagner's works during the first half of the present century." To reinforce this stated aim, it comes with a stimulating and wide-ranging essay on Wagnerian singing by the excellent German critic Wolf Rosenberg. But the records don't range nearly as far as the essay: in fact, the first three decades of the century are represented by but a single recording: Lilly Hafgren-Dinkela's Parsifal aria! (If only

one, why that, of all things? Not that it's a bad piece of work--but with Nordica, Gadski, Fremstad, Schumann-Heink, Metzger, Burrian, Urlus, Pistor, van Rooy, Schorr, and quite a few others to choose from?) So, when Rosenberg singles out seven Isolde who recorded around 1930 for their sensitivity to soft consonants at the beginning of the "Liebestod," don't look to these records for an illustration of his point--the only "Liebestod" here is a 1951 version by Astrid Varnay.

Instead of serious history, this is really a packaging operation. Given the nature of FonoTeam's principal resources, their anthology actually epitomizes a rather narrower subject than claimed: Wagner performance in Germany during--and just before and after--the Nazi era, from about 1929 to 1951. True, a few tracks originated elsewhere, but even those generally focus on performers who were active in Germany during the Thirties. In any case, the bulk of these selections fall into the "something old" category; having turned up before on FonoTeam opera highlights discs and/or collections devoted to individual singers; most of them are now appearing for the second or third time in the series, while quite a few others have circulated elsewhere. However, the canny FonoTeam folks see to it that each shuffling-around brings with it enough specimens of "something new" to persuade dyed-in-the-wool collectors that the latest set is a necessary purchase, no matter how extensive the duplication.

Typically, the new Wagner set repeats about half the contents of BASF's four-disc Bayreuth centennial set (HB-22863). It also incorporates large chunks from complete or extensive radio recordings that most serious Wagnerian collections will already contain--e.g., 35 minutes from the abridged Berlin Rienzi (previously circulated on Top Classic H-657/8), more than an hour from the Rother abridged Tannhäuser (BASF 22-22119-3), a similar amount from the Heger Berlin Lohengrin (issued complete by Preiser), about half of the Elmendorff Walküre Act I and "Wotan's Farewell" (also published by Preiser), some 70 minutes of the 1943 Berlin Tristan led by Heger (about which more below), the complete Masters' scene from the first act of the Furtwängler 1943 Bayreuth Meistersinger (EMI/Electrola C-181-01797/801), and about half an hour of the Knappertsbusch 1943 Parsifal Act III (Acanta DE-23036)--not to mention "Die Frist ist um" from the Hotter/Krauss Munich Holländer (Mercury, more recently Acanta 40-23260).

Some other things had earlier commercial exposure: Rudolf Kempe's Dresden Meistersinger appeared on Urania (and later on Vox), and the same label first published Konwitschny's energetic, idiomatic, and slightly unkempt recordings of the early overtures (UR-7069; these latter are perhaps rare enough to justify republication--but then why not also some of Konwitschny's equally rare Tristan?). Otherwise in the "something borrowed" department, aside from the Hafgren only

one selection comes from commercial 78s: Rethberg's "Senta's Ballade."

What, then, is new and significant in this expensive set? At the age of 54, Fritz Krauss makes a surprisingly good stab at Tannhäuser's "Hymn to Venus." Portions of the 1943 Bayreuth Fliegende Holländer reveal Maria Müller and Joel Berglund in good form, but Franz Völker in vocal difficulties. In passages from the opening scenes of Die Walküre, allegedly from the 1941 Festival, Müller and Völker make a good effect despite soggy orchestral playing. Opposite the less impressive Helene Jung, Rudolf Bockelmann is imposing in part of the Fricka/Wotan spat, but the "Todesverkündigung" and end of Act II from the same 1938 broadcast depend too much on the uncertain Erna Schlüter and the uneven Krauss to be satisfactory. When the music lies well for her, Marta Fuchs makes an eloquent effect in the Immolation Scene, but the upper-register writing is very chancy indeed. The Meistersinger sides include a nice "Fliedermonolog" by Schöffler, and the Act II finale rejoices in Erich Kunz's deliciously precise Beckmesser, articulated so that it perfectly matches the scherzando orchestral writing; Georg Hann's Sachs, probably overbearing elsewhere in the role, here catches the humor fairly well, and Rother directs the riot efficiently and clearly. Some early songs are well rendered by Bockelmann, Schmitt-Walter, and Scheppan (who makes a particularly strong impression with Les Adieux de Maria Stuart, though she omits a particularly difficult page); all of these, even those composed to French texts, are sung in German.

Elsewhere, there is a good deal of uninteresting stuff, even some actively unpleasant music-making. Among the dominant presences, Maria Müller is the most consistently absorbing; though the top of the voice had grown edgy by the time of the latest selections here, her dramatic commitment is always intense and memorable. Equally compelling is Margarete Klose, not least when furnishing a firm "bass line" to the Rhinemaidens' trio in Götterdämmerung. The male side is less satisfactory. Max Lorenz's undoubted vocal prowess is frequently compromised by his approximate musicianship and tendency towards aimless shouting, and Jaro Prohaska, evidently a notable presence in the theater, sounds clumsy and overextended most of the time. As noted, Völker was undoubtedly past his prime by 1942; even so, his performance in the complete Lohengrin is worth hearing, and his earlier recordings (especially those under Furtwängler; see below) succeed in being at once heroic and expressive.

Maria Reining, Gunther Treptow, Torsten Ralf, Ludwig Weber, and Josef Greindl are others who give occasional pleasure. The period's greatest Wagnerian soprano, Kirsten Flagstad, is represented only by a bit of the Walküre Brunnhilde and a late performance of the Wesendonk Lieder--imposing in its proclamatory style, though a little edgy tonally. There's even less of her tenor counterpart, Lauritz

Melchior: just the confrontation from Act II of Götterdämmerung and a few words in the middle of Marke's monologue. And where are Lotte Lehmann, Friedrich Schorr, Karin Branzell,....?

Of the extensive recordings listed above, doubtless the least familiar is the Tristan with Lorenz, conducted by Heger. Isolde is sung by the ineffective Paula Buchner, a weak foil for the domineering Brangäne of Klose, and Prohaska makes a rough Kurvenal. This may be the most hysterical of Lorenz's recorded performances: even "O sink' hernieder" sounds sweaty--and is in fact quite unintelligible metrically in this performance. (As if to compensate for his rhythmic sloppiness, Lorenz occasionally indulges in a frenzy of double-dotting, to equally destructive effect). No example better illustrates the confusion engendered by FonoTeam's technique of ongoing fragmentary publication than this Tristan, which is evidently a Berlin stage performance of May 1943 (some earlier editions have given the date 1942). Between BASF/Acanta and an old East-German Eterna set, at least four-fifths of it have now been published, however; for the record. The following "road map," inspired by R.D. Darrell's celebrated accountings of Wagnerian 78s in the first edition of the Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia (1936), indicates how it may be most simply assembled (page references to the Schirmer vocal score indicated the missing portions):

ACT I: Prelude: Eterna 8-21-028/9 (a 2-disc Tristan set)
Scene 1, beginning of Scene 2: BASF 22-22316-7 (a 2-disc Tristan set)
Scenes 2/3: BASF HB-22963 (the Bayreuth centennial set)
[pages 35/45 not published]
Scene 3 (part): BASF 22-21484-2 (a Klose collection)
[pages 53-66 not published]
Scene 5: Eterna 8-21-028/9

ACT II: [pages 105-109 not published]
remainder of Scene 1: Eterna 8-21-028/9
Scene 2 [less the standard "Big Cut"] & 3, through Marke's monologue: BASF 22-22316/7
[a few lines not published]
Tristan's "Wohin nun Tristan scheidet": BASF HB-22863
[pages 211-215 not published]

ACT III: [Prelude & English horn solo not published]
Scene 1: pages 218-227: BASF 22-22316-7
pages 227-265: Eterna 8-21-028/9
pages 265-277: BASF 22-22120-2 (a Lorenz collection)
[from Tristan's death to Marke's "Todt denn alles!" not published]
Scene 3: "Todt denn alles!" to end of opera: BASF 222316-7

(Some, but not all, of the Act III material in the Eterna selection has also found its way piecemeal onto various BASF recitals).

Now, I submit that if this much of the performance is worth publishing, all of it--or at least all that's available--is probably worth bringing out in a coherent sequence. The new set fills in no gaps; rather, in effect, it tries to subtract something. Commenting on the imperfections of the early tape recordings, Acanta's booklet notes that:

Neither is the recording of 'Tristan' with Max Lorenz in the title role, part of the series of productions done between the 14th and 19th of May 1943, entirely free of distortion. This is all the more regrettable as in Max Lorenz we have a singer who, in the role of Tristan, was particularly admired by audiences and critics alike. For this reason we have included not only the scenes from the Robert Heger recording with Lorenz done for Berlin Radio, but also the short extract from the first [sic] act, 'Wohin nun Tristan scheidet', conducted by Victor de Sabata, which was recorded live at a Bayreuth Festival performance in 1939 with this great artist in the title role.

Well, as the table above shows, BASF included this passage from the Berlin performance in their Bayreuth centennial set, where it sounds of a piece with the rest of the Heger excerpts. The version of the same passage in the present set sounds fainter, as might befit a recording from 1939--but synchronized playback shows that it is in fact the identical performance, albeit sonically degraded.

Nor is that the only shady ascription in this set. As mentioned, several passages are included from the 1942 Bayreuth Fliegende Holländer, conducted by Richard Kraus, with Müller, Völker, and Berglund. The alternate Erik at that summer's Festival was Set Svanholm, represented here by what is billed as his 1942 Bayreuth performance of Erik's "Willst jenes Tages." Now the German Radio may well have recorded a second Holländer that summer, but this isn't from it--it's from the 1950 Met broadcast under Fritz Reiner. (All my assertions of identity in this review are based upon synchronized playback of the recordings in question).

And when we reach the Parsifal section of the set, we find the Good Friday episode with Kipnis and Lorenz, purportedly from the 1933 Bayreuth Festival, conducted by Richard Strauss. Not surprisingly, this turns out to be the same clumsy composite (of the 1927 Bayreuth Columbia recording with Kipnis and an as-yet unidentified Lorenz radio tape) that was issued by Discocorp in 1982. (See my review, "Misremembering Bayreuth," High Fidelity, April 1982, p. 58. The new Acanta set includes the missing 1944 Lorenz/Berlin recording of Siegfried's Narration from Götterdämmerung, confirming my hypothesis

about the original of Discocorp's "1937 Bayreuth" performance). One further insignificant discrepancy: in Rienzi, both Klose's "Gerechter Gott" and Lorenz's "Gebet," here ascribed to 1942 and Heger, are identical to the versions in the Top Classic Rienzi set, purportedly from the 1941 Johannes Schüler broadcast.

Especially when it comes to non-vocal material, the reputation of the producer is a major element in the credibility of attributions. The present set includes several orchestral selections of considerable potential historical significance--if the ascriptions can be trusted: two orchestral excerpts from the Ring attributed to Siegfried Wagner, Siegfried's "Funeral Music" led by Karl Muck (this was in the BASF centenary set as well), and the Parsifal Prelude led by Strauss at that 1933 Festival. However, on the basis of the above cited cases (one of them also purporting to be from that same Strauss-led Parsifal), FonoTeam's credibility might be described as shaky, and I urge collectors to compare all these recordings with as many likely sources as possible; it would not surprise me to find some spuriousities. Indeed, between this set and those earlier Discocorp issues, one begins to suspect that there's a Bayreuth recording forgery operation at work somewhere. (Peter Morse has already questioned, on internal grounds, the ascription to Strauss of the Parsifal finale in the BASF centenary set; see the correspondence in High Fidelity, August 1982, p. 4).

I doubt that much useful purpose would be served by a band-by-band review of this set; the listing of contents is probably sufficient to tell most collectors whether it is a necessary acquisition for them. Let me add that the pitching is not always accurate: in Walküre, for example, the opening of Act I is about a semitone high, the Elmendorff sequence later in the act is also sharp, the snippet from the Covent Garden ACT III is a semitone flat. The Siegfried Wagner tracks--very dim-sounding indeed--are both on the low side. Overall, the sound naturally varies, from the amazingly good (that Elmendorff Walküre material) to the weak and fuzzy, with some of the early tape stuff marred by overloading.

Among the major pleasures in this set was the remainder of how enthralling Furtwängler's 1943 Bayreuth Meistersinger remains, despite some casting limitations. And so I turned with anticipation to Acanta's six-disc set devoted to his conducting of Wagner. To be sure, the same FonoTeam formula is at work--but there's a higher percentage of material that hasn't previously appeared on commercial records, and even some that I hadn't encountered in any form. Into this last category falls more than an hour from the conductor's first postwar performance of Tristan, on October 3, 1947 in the Berlin Admiralspalast. The best of this is a stretch from the early part of the third act, where Ludwig Suthaus again proves himself the most convincing Tristan of mid-century, remarkably steady and musical, dramatically committed and vocally resourceful; his consistent

attention to Wagner's rhythms and dynamics yields direct expressive dividends, and Furtwängler reinforces him at all points in a performance more volatile and energetic than the famous 1952 EMI recording.

Later in the act, things become more hectic, less rewarding, while the second-act material is compromised by Schlüter's wobbly Isolde (like Buchner, she's overwhelmed by Klose's imperious Brangäne) and by an absent-minded bass clarinetist in Marke's monologue, which however finds Frick in splendid voice. (Two further snippets of Marke's music, from ACT III of this performance, are included in the nineteen-disc Acanta set, and also on a disc in Fonit-Cetra's Furtwängler Edition, FE-25, coupled with a 1954 Berlin "Prelude and Liebestod" and the recordings from the 1936 Bayreuth Lohengrin discussed below). If there's more of this performance in existence, it would be fascinating to hear. Also from Tristan, we have a 1942 Stockholm "Liebestod," wonderfully fluent and expressive, with telling emphasis on orchestral antiphony. Rather than anything as sensible as including the Prelude from that same concert, Acanta gives us yet another publication of the 1931 Bayreuth performance (found in the nineteen-disc set as well as in the BASF Bayreuth centenary set).

Several sequences are familiar from underground records. The excerpts from ACT III of the 1936 Bayreuth Lohengrin production show Völker and Müller superbly sustaining the lines of the Bridal Chamber duet at Furtwängler's very slow tempos and the tenor more vividly poetic than in any of his studio recordings of the Narration. (Some of this material is also in the big Wagner box, and all of it on Fonit-Cetra FE-25, as noted above). ACT III of Walküre and the final scene of Götterdämmerung come from a Ring cycle at Covent Garden in 1937; dominated by Bockelmann's authoritative Wotan and Flagstad's clarion Brunnhilde (and played rather scrappily by the London Philharmonic, despite some distinguished solo work from the winds), this is conducted on a less monumental scale than Furtwängler's familiar postwar recordings.

And, to uphold Acanta's record, there's a misattribution. The confrontation scene from ACT II of Götterdämmerung is ascribed to Covent Garden in 1936, with a cast including Leider, Nezadal, Melchior, Janssen, and Weber. The knowledgeable will immediately be suspicious: Furtwängler conducted the Ring at Covent Garden in 1937 and 1938, but the 1936 cycles were led by Beecham, so either the date or the conductor must be in error. Comparison confirms it to be the 1936 Beecham performance, with the listed cast except for Emanuel List instead of Weber. (Like most Covent Garden Wagner of this vintage, it proves to be an exciting if not always orderly affair, and purchasers will not be disappointed). My inclination is to ascribe this contretemps to mere carelessness--after all, it would have been just as easy to have included the 1937 performance

of the same passage, and the deception, if such were intended, is so easily uncovered. (But then I remember that someone thought he could get away with passing off Leider's famous studio recording of the "Immolation Scene" as part of the 1937 Bayreuth Festival without anyone noticing!)

Two Meistersinger excerpts, from a performance by Vienna State Opera forces (though the principals are mostly from Berlin) give us the slightly tremulous but very winning Eva of Tiana Lemnitz and the sturdy Sachs of Bockelmann. They also memorialize a less-than-happy facet of the conductor's equivocal political position, for this performance, in Nurnberg itself on September 5, 1938, celebrated a Nazi Party rally on the eve of the Czechoslovak crisis (the liner is silent on such matters). The sound is basically good, but the surfaces of the original source are badly worn. There's more of this performance around, and also more of the 1936 Vienna Tannhäuser from which Acanta offers merely a pointless fragment of the song contest, the sturdy Sved giving way to a strangulated assault on Tannhäuser's Hymn to Venus by Pistor, well past his prime.

Finally, there are four orchestral excerpts dated 1940, ascribed variously to the "Orchester der Staatsoper Berlin" (Tannhäuser Overture) and "Staatskapelle Berlin" (the others). All are strong performances, very well played and tolerably recorded; there's even, in the Tannhäuser Overture, what sounds like a characteristic Furtwängler foot-stomp. I wouldn't be surprised if they proved to be authentic, but the interpretations are distinctive only in their quality, not in their mannerisms, so internal evidence is not decisive. In line with my prior comments on FonoTeam's credibility, I'll feel more secure when I find them in Henning Olsen's next edition. (The Ring passages might come from stage performances, but the Parsifal Prelude uses the concert ending).

Both sets include trilingual booklets (German, English, French) and fairly detailed contents listings. In addition to Rosenberg's essay and some rather muddled (and muddling) notes on the origins of the recordings, the Wagner set includes brief biographies of all the solo performers. The unsigned essay in the Furtwängler set is less than informative about the recordings; three paragraphs are also quoted from the autobiography of Frida Leider, who was the director of that 1947 Admiralspalast Tristan.

David Hamilton