

numerical blocks are mentioned, though not the extremely rare 12-inch Y-prefix matrices--copies of which have been reported by collectors Bill Bryant and Paul Charosh. There are cross references to later series that contained remakes of the early matrices. Although nearly all information is taken from Victor's own files, the authors have made an effort to check entries against the actual discs and footnote discrepancies. The authors encourage the submission of corrections and additional information for publication as addenda in future volumes.

The 69 pages of introductory material should also be mentioned. There is a clear, concise explanation of the listing format, a brief history of the project, and a detailed discussion of Victor and its numbering practices during the period covered.

As a "special appendix" this volume includes a facsimile reprint of the rare book The Victor Talking Machine Company, by B.L. Aldridge. This was written by a Victor insider during the early 1960's, using company files and contains historical information available nowhere else; it is so revealing that Victor evidently decided against wide distribution and reportedly printed only 50 copies, only one of which is known to exist today.

Much to the dismay of authors Fagan and Moran, the present book's publisher decided to reduce the size of the facsimile's pages by more than 75%, in order to fit four (original) pages on to one page of the current volume. As a result you will need a magnifying glass to read this appendix. It is worth the effort, if you are interested in the first thirty years of the Victor Company. Charts of sales information, chronological highlights, and a short autobiography by Eldridge R. Johnson appear at the end of the facsimile.

In all, this first volume of The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings must be considered a major addition to the literature on recording history. For anyone interested in the period, or in eventually having the complete Victor files on their shelves, it is essential. One certainly hopes that sales will be sufficient to encourage the publication of subsequent volumes in the series. This is twenty years' worth of research that we don't want to lose.

Tim Brooks

CLYM'S WAGNER DISCOGRAPY

Clym, Wagner: La discographie idéale, des oeuvre de jeunesse à Parsifal. Editions Ramsay (9, Rue du Cherche-Midi, 75006 Paris)., n.d. 75 FF.

This review is admonitory in intent. To paraphrase a famous line of Dorothy Parker's, "la discographie idéale" is the book horrible. Clym, the back cover tells us, is a music critic, founder of the "Cercle national Richard Wagner," and vice-president of the "Académie du disque

lyrique." His book is a "discography" in the old High Fidelity sense--that is, a comparative survey of recordings--rather than a rigorous, exhaustive listing in the ARSC sense. Clym is an enthusiast, which is not a bad thing, but he effuses rather than communicating concrete reasons for his enthusiasm. He has little discrimination and admires most of what he hears, which means that his opinions, however well-meant, are not very helpful. Neither he nor his publisher can spell or proofread names or numbers, which means that you dare not trust much of the information here, and some of it is--no doubt unwittingly--sheer fiction, discographic phantoms that will take years to stamp out now that they have been given this printed breath of life.

From the Parsifal chapter--to pick a section at random--I was surprised to discover that Furtwängler recorded the Prelude not only with the Berlin Philharmonic, but also with the Philharmonia (p.241). Peter Morse will be equally surprised to learn of a Richard Strauss version of the same piece, on "Polydor-Electro-Polyfar," no number given (p.241). The history of technology as well as the Wagner discography may have to be revised if the data about the Muck Act III recording given on p.242 are correct: at 78 rpm, it evidently fit on a single disc ("His Masters Voice etiquette noire D 1539"), while the Preiser transfer of that is supposed to require two LPs! (Should you order the number given for the latter, however, you will get excerpts from Die Walküre instead.) The wartime Act III led by Knappertsbusch on Acanta sports two names hitherto unfamiliar to connoisseurs of Wagnerian singing (p.243): "l'excellent Parsifal de Chartmann" and "l'Amfortas torturé de H. Reimann" (father of the composer Aribert, perhaps?). And there's a new role for tenor in the first-act excerpt "Vom Bade kehrt der König heim," as "chanté magnifiquement par Ivar Andresen, Gurnemanz superbe, avec Gotthelf Pistor comme Fol." Who he? The next paragraph seems to be telling us that a Kipnis recording of the same excerpt is to be found on Preiser LV-166--but my copy of that is a Fernand Anseu recital, and I know of no such Kipnis recording; more's the pity. And so it goes, on and on and on and

At the end of the book, and possibly of slightly greater interest than these "discographic" maunderings, are interviews with Wolfgang Wagner and Herbert von Karajan. But interviews, like data processing, are subject to the "garbage in, garbage out" principle, so Karajan encouraged to preen himself, does little else, while Wolfgang is not disabused of his curious notion that the 1927 Bayreuth recording of the Parsifal "Good Friday Spell" was conducted by Karl Elmendorff--curious because it was conducted by his own father, Siegfried!

Your library will positively be enhanced by the absence of this book.

David Hamilton