

production, and Ward Marston's tape transfers are generally good, save for a serious volume fluctuation in the Sonata's first movement coda.

A much warmer, improvisatory aspect of Backhaus' interpretive personality comes to the fore in the 1958 live taping of the Brahms Second Concerto. A few dropped notes are also present--as is to be expected from virtually any in-concert performance of this marathon work--but these, if anything, actually add to the feeling of spiritual involvement. My favorite Backhaus account of Brahms No. 2 remains the 1938 Dresden recording with its considerably faster tempos and really spectacular technical command, but this somewhat more discursive aircheck shows Backhaus to have been a more communicative player than many of us realized. The sound is standard off-the-line mono for the period: the period gains from its close microphoning, but the same proximity certainly doesn't flatter the scrappy, substandard orchestral playing. Schuricht's direction, per se, is authoritative.

Harris Goldsmith

**BRAHMS: Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68** (recorded April 11, 1928). **MOZART: Symphony No. 39 in E-flat, K. 543** (April 12, 1928). Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Felix Weingartner. Opal 828, \$12.95.

During the past ten years Weingartner's fortunes have changed. In the early '70s he was known to many modern collectors virtually only by repute, for the extensive US Columbia reissues had disappeared without replacement from elsewhere, save for the old Pathé transfers available from Vox and Japan of the Vienna Philharmonic Beethoven 8th and 9th. But then Parnassus and BWS started the modern revival in a modest way (let us ignore an appalling Electrola transfer of the Eroica). EMI followed in the UK with The Art of Felix Weingartner (ARSC Journal, VIII:2-3, p. 114), containing full discographic details and a critical assessment. Credit then passed to Japanese Angel for issuing Anthony Griffith's superb Beethoven transfers (ARSC Journal IX:2-3, p. 59), appreciatively reviewed in The Gramophone and elsewhere. A spate of Japanese unofficial issues duplicated and added to their Angel Beethoven set, and gave us as well all the Brahms symphonies and shorter works, including a reprint--unacknowledged--of the EMI discography. In the USA Past Masters put out a series of excellent transfers of less familiar material, all fully documented. And lately, even Melodiya in its series "The World's Leading Interpreters" has published a well-annotated disc of the Beethoven Second Symphony and the Rienzi Overture (33M 1043699-700). To

anyone with an interest in past performing styles, then, Weingartner's art has been available and is acknowledged in any serious discussion of the subject; while his most important writings, such as "On the Performance of Beethoven's Symphonies," have for long been kept in print, thanks to Dover's efforts.

Certainly British EMI, French Pathé, and US Angel have not been as active as they should have been in restoring to permanent availability Weingartner's art as they have, for example, in giving us Schnabel's Beethoven and Schubert. Nonetheless, with so much activity in the last decade, it is bewildering to read, on the otherwise generally excellent sleeve of this new Opal issue, that "the long-awaited reassessment of Felix Weingartner's very considerable art has still to materialize," and that his "day will surely come" some time in the future. The point is made because Opal is a series expressly devoted to specialist archival material, and one expects a standard of care in the transfer and presentation of material which in this instance has not in all respects been forthcoming.

The two performances chosen for transfer do not really show Weingartner at his best. The Brahms, of which this is the first LP transfer, is the second of his three recordings (not two, as the sleeve says) of the work. When it appeared The Gramophone remarked that Weingartner had become a "routinier" and it was undecided whether the Parlophone recording of the then junior and relatively unknown Klemperer might not be superior. British orchestras, of which the then RPO was a mere pickup bunch from the pool of London's best players, were not in their best estate and the distinguished and distinctive sound of Léon Goossens' oboe does point to the relative indifference of the other sections, particularly the strings, in regard to exact intonation. While the tempi, as ever with Weingartner, are justly chosen and adhered to without rigidity, the lack of dramatic attack and failure to address the climactic moments with any extra expansiveness of phrase and weighting do lead to a pervasive absence of tension; the feeling of an experienced hand at the tiller which knows all there is to know about the route but chooses not to disclose too much. Ten years later Weingartner's LSO recording showed his more impressive grasp of the recording medium, where even more enlivened tempi and a generally greater orchestral confidence resulted in one of the great recorded performances of Brahms No. 1.

In 1928, too, Columbia's recording process was not impressive. The painfully scrawny strings, as recorded, compare unfavorably with those of Weingartner's Beethoven sessions the previous year; the change of venue to the Central Hall, Westminster was seemingly for the worse. And the engineers clearly still had no confidence in their