

again very correct and tame, with none of the exceptional inner voicing or singing arches of either earlier performance. This performance is not much different from generic 1950s Chopin playing.

With these various releases, we now have available a broad cross-section of the artistry of Moiseiwitsch. It would be nice to have some other concerto examples, like the Beethoven "Emperor" with Szell mentioned above, the Tchaikovsky First and Second, or the big-boned Delius Concerto (HMV C 3533/35). Also welcome would be reissues of the two Brahms Handel Variations recordings, both the version from 1930 and the 1953 performance originally coupled with the Schumann Fantasy, as well as more of his Chopin (the Preludes, Scherzos, and Ballades from the 1940s, for example), the 1951 Schumann *Fantasiestücke*, and some of the more unusual repertoire items such as his Medtner or the restrained performance of Kabalevsky's Third Sonata.

But what we have before us now is extremely important playing by one of the major artists of the century. Kudos and thanks to both IPAM and APR. *Reviewed by Jeffrey Hollander*

Benno Moiseiwitsch: Solo Piano Recordings (1938-1950).

Appian Publishings and Recordings APR 7005.

Benno Moiseiwitsch: An HMV Discography. by Bryan Crimp, Appian Publications and Recordings, 1989.

In many ways, this is APR's finest issue to date. After having given their recent Godovsky CDs a rather lukewarm welcome, this reviewer finds it a pleasure to recommend this Moiseiwitsch compilation with utmost enthusiasm.

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963) was a Russian-born pupil of Leschetitsky who later became a British citizen. He reached the height of his fame in the 1930s and 1940s. Like most of his contemporaries, he concentrated on the romantic repertoire, especially Chopin, Schumann and Rachmaninoff. He was noted, as these recordings most definitely confirm, for a formidable technique combined with an almost classical sense of color and poetry.

This reviewer must admit he was quite unprepared for the opening work in this collection, the Wagner-Liszt Tannhäuser Overture. This must certainly be one of the finest piano recordings ever made. Moiseiwitsch accomplishes what had previously seemed impossible in making this fiendishly challenging transcription come off successfully. Not only is the fingerwork dazzling but the pianist's sense of color and voicing, i.e., the ability to orchestrate at the keyboard, gives utter clarity to Liszt's seemingly impenetrably thick textures. The manner in which Moiseiwitsch is able to provide each stratum a color or sound of its own is an object lesson in the combination of musicality and virtuosity. The other Liszt items are equally impressive, with the ubiquitous Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 being treated as a genuinely beautiful piece of music. Moiseiwitsch uses his superbly lilting sense of rhythm and his ever-imaginative, yet subtle voicings to keep the final pages from sounding bangy and ponderous.

Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, one of the pianist's specialties, is also enjoyable. Note his delightful "Tuileries" and his memorable characterization of "Samual Goldenberg and Schuyle." Unfortunately, Moiseiwitsch plays what is pre-

sumably his own edition of the work which incorporates some cuts, reworkings, and harmonic alterations. While admittedly in the tradition of his time, this practice seems regrettable today, and mars an otherwise impressive recording.

The Romanze of Schumann suits the pianist perfectly; his rubati breathe without exaggeration. One would certainly like to hear more of his recordings of this composer. The Weber Perpetuum Mobile and Tausig's arrangement of Invitation to the Dance are, predictably, technically spectacular. But in the latter it is the pianist's elegance and style that are the most memorable. The work is presented as a wonderful dance, not an excuse for technical bombast. One should also mention the charm the artist brings to Beethoven's little rondo.

The Debussy and Ravel works certainly profit from Moiseiwitsch's technique and ear for color, though artistically he seems more at home in the nineteenth century. There are a few disappointments, such as the *Barcarolle*, which seems rather fast and uninflected, with an opaque tonal quality that is most unusual for this performer. Most surprisingly, Mendelssohn's delightful E Minor Scherzo is not under very good technical control. But these are minor complaints when compared with the overall quality of the collection.

APR provides their usual high level of documentation, featuring recording dates, original catalog and matrix numbers, and a most informative appreciation by Bryan Crimp. The transfer work is excellent. There is some surface noise, but fortunately the excessive filtering that has deadened the sound of so many historic recordings appears not to have been applied.

Also available from APR is Crimp's *Benno Moiseiwitsch: An HMV Discography*. This is a predictably exhaustive piece of research, though one wonders why the few items Moiseiwitsch made for American Decca at the end of his life were not included, as this would have made the discography complete. However, the main function of the book is to whet one's appetite for more releases from this wonderful musician's recorded legacy. Schumann's *Fantasiestucke*, Op. 12 and *Kinderszenen* seem especially enticing. *Reviewed by Walter Pate*

Blue Grass 1950-1958.

Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys.

Bear Family BCD 15423 (4 CDs, original mono, except final 4 cuts in stereo). Accompanying booklet includes discography, notes, photos.

This reviewer's comments have appeared earlier in these pages concerning the central role played by Bill Monroe in the creation, development, and maturing of bluegrass music over the past half century (*ARSC Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2-3, pp. 110-111). As far back as the mid-1930s, while still part of a duet with his older brother Charlie, Bill sensed that it was important to keep tradition alive and healthy in country music, while at the same time projecting excitement and novelty to attract younger audiences. The Monroe Brothers' versions of the old songs were enhanced (if you like) by tuning their instruments higher to raise the pitch of their voices and by increasing tempos to the point that old folk songs commanded renewed attention because of the Monroes' playing and singing virtuosity; these characteristics, in turn, have remained central to Bill's music and to bluegrass as a whole.

Bill Monroe, the youngest of seven, was forced to take up the mandolin because it was the only instrument in the family collection that no one else wanted to play. He taught himself and soon began to learn fiddle tunes from his uncle *Pendleton*