
SOUND RECORDING REVIEWS

Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First Hundred Years

CSO90/12 (12 CDs: monaural, stereo; ADD)¹ Available only from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 220 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL, for \$175 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

The Centennial Collection—Chicago Symphony Orchestra

RCA-Victor Gold Seal, GD 600206 (3 CDs; monaural, stereo, ADD and DDD). (total time 3:36:31²).

A “musical trivia” question: “Which American symphony orchestra was the first to record under its own name and conductor?” You will find the answer at the beginning of the 12-CD collection, *The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years*, issued by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO). The date was May 1, 1916, and the conductor was Frederick Stock.³ This is part of the orchestra’s celebration of the hundredth anniversary of its founding by Theodore Thomas in 1891. Thomas is represented here, not as a conductor (he died in 1904) but as the arranger of Wagner’s *Träume*. But all of the other conductors and music directors are represented, as well as many guests.

With one exception, the 3-CD set, *The Centennial Collection: Chicago Symphony Orchestra*, from RCA-Victor is drawn from the recordings that the Chicago Symphony made for that company. All were released previously, in various formats—mono and stereo, 78 rpm, 45 rpm, LPs, tapes, and CDs—as the technologies evolved. Although the present digital processing varies according to source, the sound is generally clear; the Reiner material is comparable to RCA-Victor’s on-going reissues on CD of the legendary recordings produced by Richard Mohr. Regrettably, RCA-Victor stingily extracts excerpts from several larger works.

Of considerably greater importance, though of more limited distribution, is the orchestra’s own collection, in which the skillful hand of Executive Director Henry Fogel is abundantly clear, although not fully and explicitly acknowledged. The collection opens with music recorded during the historic session on May 1, 1916, and includes a good hour and a half of rare performances conducted by Stock. The earlier recordings are generally studio sessions, but most of the later ones originate from radio broadcasts and telecasts. Where the sources were WBAI transmissions of the 1957-58 season and WFMT transcriptions for rebroadcast by the Voice of America and in stereo over its own syndication “network,” the performances were by the full orchestra from Orchestra Hall, the outdoor Ravinia Festival, or (in one case) Carnegie Hall. However, the annotations do not indicate that a few performances via WCGL, WGN, and WGN-TV usually employed but part of the orchestra’s personnel, sometimes only half of the players; both studio space and financial resources made the use of the full orchestra impractical.

All of the regular conductors or music directors from 1904 to 1991 are represented in each set: Frederick Stock (1904-1942), Désiré Defauw (1943-1947), Artur Rodzinski (1947-1948), Rafael Kubelik (1950-1953), Fritz Reiner (1953-1962), Jean Martinon (1961-1968), and Sir Georg Solti (1968-1991). Daniel Barenboim, who assumed the post in the fall of 1991, is in the CSO collection, as piano soloist and as guest conductor. Two of the orchestra's assistant conductors accompany soloists, Hans Lange (Josef Hofmann in the CSO set) and Walter Hendl (Jascha Heifetz in the RCA-Victor). Three artistic directors of the Ravinia Festival are included: Seiji Ozawa and James Levine (RCA-Victor and CSO), and István Kertész (CSO). Other guest conductors included are Erich Leinsdorf, Leopold Stokowski, and Carlo Maria Giulini in both sets; Morton Gould in the RCA-Victor; and, in the CSO collection, Paul Hindemith, Claudio Abbado, Pierre Monteux, and Leonard Slatkin. The Chicago Symphony Chorus, with Margaret Hillis as director, is heard in both sets.

In such a broad representation, it seems to this observer that both of the Principal Guest Conductors, who supplement the work of Sir Georg Solti, receive rather short shrift in the CSO collection. Carlo Maria Giulini is confined to accompanying Daniel Barenboim in a Brahms concerto. Claudio Abbado is heard in very uncharacteristic Wagner repertory and in a brief, though exciting, excerpt from *Boris Godunov*. Certainly the WFMT broadcasts presented these major conductors in more appropriate repertory. Similarly, the annotations for the CSO collection should have paid greater tribute to the contribution of the players in the orchestra. Although Philip Huscher's notes mention Ray Still's oboe solos in the Satie *Gymnopédies*, no credit is given to Adolf Herseth's trumpet playing in the Mussorgsky *Pictures* or to Frank Miller's solo in the slow movement of the Brahms concerto. There are scores of other fine musicians who have contributed as much to the greatness of this orchestra as have the celebrity conductors featured here. In either collection, there is not one solo featuring a principal player from the orchestra.

Since the rationale for selection in both collections leans so heavily on performers, it is not surprising that Mozart, the composer who shares the centenary year with the orchestra, is represented only by a brief early symphony.

Nevertheless, there are several important performances in these releases worth noting. One of the treasures of the RCA-Victor set is a superb reading of the entire Schumann "Spring" Symphony, a much better example of Stock than the Columbia Brahms Third in the CSO collection. On it we can hear something of a typical "German" sound of the time, a sonority seldom encountered today. Admirers of Josef Hofmann will be sadly disappointed in the unique performance of the Beethoven E-flat Concerto. Hofmann in his later years was increasingly idiosyncratic and sloppy, and the modest orchestra is unworthy of its name. Artur Rodzinski is well represented by a superb reading of the Mendelssohn "Scotch" Symphony, recorded by RCA-Victor, but included in the CSO collection; RCA-Victor gives only the "Liebestod" from *Tristan und Isolde*. The Mussorgsky-Ravel *Pictures* introduced Mercury's famous "Olympian" series; it was the first of *five* recordings by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra featuring the extraordinary trumpet playing of Herseth who joined the orchestra in 1948!

Unlike the RCA-Victor collection, the CSO does not duplicate any of Fritz Reiner's RCA-Victor repertory. In addition to Still's solos, the Satie displays Reiner's technical mastery of a slow tempo. The Prokofiev symphony remains one of Reiner's most brilliant and spontaneous performances, not least for his control of rhythm and phrasing in the slow movement. Stokowski's reading of the Shostokovich Tenth certainly must be one of the most extraordinary documentations of that extraordinary conductor. The CSO

collection avoids duplicating any of Solti's vast recorded repertory: the Lutoslawski Third Symphony, a world premiere, is of exceptional interest.

Obviously, the quality of sound varies according to the age and source of the performances, but the material from WFMT after 1960 is exceptionally vivid, as are the later RCA-Victor recordings.

The documentation of both collections ranges from adequate to excellent. Henry Fogel, the orchestra's Executive Director, and Philip Huscher, its program annotator, provide adequate commentary for the CSO set. Thomas Willis, a long-time Chicago journalist offers a livelier account in the RCA-Victor set. Both collections give dates of recording. The RCA-Victor set omits any information on catalog or matrix numbers, which the CSO includes where relevant. Neither offers credits to the producers and engineers of the original material. Nathaniel S. Johnson was supervisor of the RCA-Victor reissue and Marian Conaty the engineer. For the CSO collection Victor Muenser was production coordinator and Classic Digital, Inc., of Evanston, Illinois, was responsible for the digital mastering and production.

A few other American orchestras might have the resources to emulate these collections, but the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been the first to offer such historical surveys. (A recent Pearl collection honors the sesquicentennial of the New York Philharmonic.) The RCA-Victor collection is a regular commercial release on its medium-priced Gold Seal label. However, the CSO collection, if still available, must be ordered from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 220 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60604; the price is \$175 for the 12-CD set in a stout case, plus \$5.00 shipping and handling. A number of performers, broadcasters, publishers, and unions granted exceptional permissions, and a grant from the John Nuveen Company helped make this unique set of recordings possible.

Both collections are important documentations of a great orchestra worthy of inclusion in any sound recording archive. Some libraries may already have the RCA-Victor material in other formats, but the CSO collection contains many important performances not otherwise available. *Reviewed by Philip Hart*

Notes:

1. **Mendelssohn:** *Incidental Music to A Midsummernight's Dream*, Wedding March (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1916, Columbia A 5844); **Wagner:** (arr. Thomas) *Träume* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1928, Victor 7123 B); **Brahms** (arr. Dvo ák) *Hungarian Dances Nos. 17-21* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1926, Victor, previously unpublished, matrices CVE-372771-1, 37273-1); **Stock:** *Symphonic Waltz, Op. 8* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1941, Columbia previously unpublished, matrix XCO-30979-1); **Walton:** *Scapino, A Comedy Overture* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1941, Columbia 11945-D); **Toch:** *Pinocchio, A Merry Overture* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1941, Columbia 11665-D); **Brahms:** *Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1940, Columbia M/MM443).

Reznicek: *Donna Diana Overture* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1941, Columbia 11606-D); **R. Strauss:** *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op. 28* (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1940, WGN broadcast); **Prokofief:** *Scythian Suite, Op. 20* (Désiré Defauw, conductor, 1945, RCA Victor M/DM 1040); **Franck:** *Le chasseur maudit* (Désiré Defauw, conductor, 1946, RCA Victor M/DM 1122); **R. Strauss:** *Tod und Verklärung* (Désiré Defauw, conductor, 1947, WCFL broadcast).

Wagner: *Die Walküre*, "The Ride of the Valkyries" (Artur Rodzinski, conductor, 1948, WCFL broadcast); **Mendelssohn:** *Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56* (Artur Rodzinski, conductor, 1947, RCA Victor M/DM 1285); **Beethoven:** *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73* (Hans Lange, conductor, Josef Hofmann, piano, 1940; WCFL broadcast).

Hindemith: *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Weber* (Rafael Kubelik, conductor, 1953, Mercury MG 50024); **Rousset:** Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 42 (Rafael Kubelik, conductor, 1983, WFMT broadcast); **Mussorgsky** (arr. Ravel): *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Rafael Kubelik, conductor, 1951, Mercury MG 50000).

***Bartók:** Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, Op. 19 (István Kertész, conductor, 1968, WFMT broadcast); **Ginastera:** Dances from *Estancia* (Seija Ozawa, conductor, 1967, WFMT broadcast); **Stravinsky:** Symphony of Psalms (James Levine, conductor, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, 1989, WFMT broadcast); **Mahler:** Symphony No. 8, Part I, "Veni, Creator spiritus" (James Levine, conductor, Soloists, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, Glen Ellen Children's Chorus, 1979, WFMT broadcast).

***Brahms:** *Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80 (Paul Hindemith, conductor, 1963, WGN-TV telecast); **Ravel:** *La valse* (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1960, WFMT for Voice of America); **Satie** (arr. Debussy): *Gymnopédies* Nos. 1 and 3 (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1960, WFMT for Voice of America); **Prokofief:** Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100 (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1958, WBAI broadcast).

***Copland:** Suite from *The Tender Land* (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1958, WBAI broadcast); **Kodály:** *Dances of Galánta* (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1954, WGN-TV telecast); **Berlioz:** *Le carnaval romain* Overture (Pierre Monteux, conductor, 1961, WGN-TV telecast); **Bax:** *The Garden of Fand* (Leonard Slatkin, conductor, 1984, WFMT broadcast); **Miaskovsky:** Symphony No. 21 in F-sharp minor, Op. 51 (Morton Gould, conductor, 1968, RCA-Victor LM/LSC 3022).

***Martinon:** Overture for a Greek Tragedy (Jean Martinon, conductor, 1967, WFMT broadcast); **Mahler** (arr. Cooke): Symphony No. 10 in F-sharp minor (Jean Martinon, conductor, 1966, WFMT broadcast).

***Fisher:** *Chicago* (Benny Goodman, clarinet, Morton Gould, conductor, 1966, WFMT broadcast); **Weill:** Suite from *Little Three Penny Music* (Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, 1985, WFMT broadcast); **Ruggles:** *Angels* (Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, 1985, WFMT broadcast); **Wagner:** *A Faust Overture* (Claudio Abbado, conductor, 1983, WFMT broadcast); **Mussorgsky:** *Boris Godunov*, Coronation Scene (original version) (Claudio Abbado, conductor, soloists, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, 1964, WFMT broadcast); **Scriabin:** *The Poem of Ecstasy*, Op. 54 (Daniel Barenboim, conductor, 1984, WFMT broadcast).

***Brahms:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 83 (Carlo Maria Guilini, piano, Daniel Barenboim, conductor, 1977, WFMT broadcast); **Ran:** Concerto for Orchestra (Daniel Barenboim, conductor, 1988, WFMT broadcast).

***Shostakovich:** Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93 (Leopold Stokowski, conductor, 1966, WFMT broadcast); **Kodály:** *Psalmus hungaricus*, Op. 13 (Sir Georg Solti, conductor, soloists, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, 1982, WFMT broadcast).

***Wagner:** *Tannhäuser*, "Dich teure Halle" (Sir Georg Solti, conductor, Leontyne Price, soprano, 1980, WFMT broadcast from Carnegie Hall, New York); **Corigliano:** *Tournaments Overture* (Sir Georg Solti, conductor, 1984, WFMT broadcast); **Mozart:** Symphony No. 25 in G minor, K. 183 (Sir Georg Solti, conductor, 1984, WFMT broadcast); **Ravel:** Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé* (Sir Georg Solti, conductor, 1987, WFMT broadcast).

*NOTE: *Indicates previously unpublished performances.*

2. **Schumann:** Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 38 (Frederick Stock, conductor, 1929); **Frank:** *Rédemption: Poème symphonique* (Desiré Defauw, conductor, 1946); **Wagner:** *Tristan und Isolde*, "Liebestod" (Artur Rodzinski, conductor, 1947); **Smetana:** *Má Vlast*, "Vltava" (Rafael Kubelik, 1952, conductor, Mercury OL-2-100); **R. Strauss:** *Don Juan* (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1954); **Bartók:** Hungarian Sketches (Fritz Reiner, conductor, 1958);

Martin: Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments, Percussion and Strings (Jean Martinon, conductor, 1966); **Verdi:** *Requiem*, “Dies Irae” (Leontyne Price, Janet Baker, Verano Luchetti, José Van Dam, Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, Sir Georg Solti, conductor, 1977); **Rimsky-Korsakoff:** Overture, *Russian Easter* (Leopold Stokowski, conductor, 1966); **Ives** (arr. Schuman): Variations on *America* (Morton Gould, conductor, 1966); **Mussorgsky:** *A Night on Bare Mountain* (Seija Ozawa, conductor, 1966); **Tchaikovsky:** Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, Second Movement (James Levine, conductor, 1984); **Schumann:** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54, Third Movement (Artur Schnabel, piano, Carlo Maria Giulini, conductor, 1967); **Brahms:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 83, First Movement (Sviatoslav Richter, piano, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, 1960); **Sibelius:** Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47, Third Movement (Jascha Heifetz, violin, Walter Hendl, conductor, 1959).

Note: Except as noted, all recordings were originally released by Victor Talking Machine or RCA-Victor.

3. The unpublished Chicago Symphony Orchestra discography by Richard Oldberg and Don Tait lists 15 selections (many never released) recorded for the Columbia Phonograph Company at Aeolian Hall in New York City between May 1 and 9, 1916. Another 11 were recorded a year later. Both the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski and the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Karl Muck made their first recordings at Camden, New Jersey, for the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1917.

Royal Opera House Covent Garden: An Early History on Record.¹ Nimbus Records. Prima Voce NI 7819 (One CD: ADD/Mono) 1991. Time: 75:33.

Divas, Volume 2, 1909-1940.² Nimbus Records. Prima Voce NI 7818 (One CD: ADD/Mono) 1991. Time: 74:48.

The best sonic restorations of historic recordings should reproduce the original performances as authentically as possible. Nimbus Records’ goal in its Prima Voce series is to do just that. Nimbus, a British company, has attempted to recreate the performances of early 20th-century singers by using the company’s digital “ambisonic” rerecording technique and original 78-rpm discs in pristine condition. Whether or not Nimbus has achieved its desired result is a matter of controversy.

Even a casual listener will notice a difference in the sound coming from these CD transfers. Nimbus plays both acoustically- and electrically-recorded 78s on an Expert Horn acoustic gramophone which was hand-made around 1935. They removed the gramophone’s original turntable and replaced it with a transcription turntable to insure accurate speed. Nimbus favors the use of a natural thorn needle with the acoustic reproducer. The recordings were made in a reverberant room with the recording microphone (a Nimbus-Halliday ambisonic microphone with multi-directional heads) suspended from a boom near the large external horn of the gramophone.

According to Gwen Hughes writing in the November 1989 issue of *Opera Now*³, Nimbus’s acoustic system of natural ambisonic transfer may be regarded as a successor to stereo since it aims to provide an impression of complete spatial orientation. This orientation theoretically is supposed to duplicate the sound in a concert hall where a listener in the audience may distinguish between instruments on the left and right.

The ambisonic process does produce a resonance or reverberation around voices and instruments. Advocates call this resonance a “living presence.” They claim that this space is preferable and more authentic than traditionally transferred discs which can suffer from flat, dry sound and obtrusive surface noise sometimes cured only by excessive filtering. Critics of the ambisonic system call the sound “artificial” or “non-historical”

and claim that the massive reverberation found on the Nimbus transfers did not exist in the original grooves. Such sound also has been labelled the “bathroom” effect. In all fairness to these transfers, this reviewer did not find the reverberation annoying in the acoustic recordings, and, in a few instances, this reverberation is preferred. The electrics were another matter, however.

Keith Hardwick, one of the more respected names in transfers of historical recordings, wrote in *The Record Collector*,⁴ that the Nimbus transfers had a complete absence of any sound above 4 kHz; consequently, the upper harmonics of the human voice were absent. Other sonic restorers claim that unless heavy tonearms have scraped off the highs, 78s have treble response to 7 or 8 kHz although these upper frequencies may need boosting.⁵

Nimbus uses no hi-tech filtering on these acoustically played discs. There is minimal to non-existent surface noise. Even so, Hardwick noted that the mechanical (acoustic) system was full of resonances and built-in filtering which resulted in pleasant, but strange frequency responses. Hardwick admitted that the peaks and troughs of playback response can counteract those inherent in the acoustic recording process, but even this constituted a type of processing or filtering, albeit a mechanical one.⁶

Nimbus's natural process uses no electrical equalization either. Apparently, the aim is to duplicate the original condition of mechanical (acoustic) recording, with a theoretical constant velocity response. On the other hand, many sonic restorers consider the inherent mechanical equalization of acoustic recordings to be erratic and detrimental to the bass—always a problem in acoustic recordings.

Nimbus's process applied to electrically recorded discs is an anomaly. Many sonic specialists note that the inherent equalization in electrically recorded discs demands electrical reproduction: that is, during recording a treble boost and bass cut, and in playback, a treble cut and bass lift. Given this fact, how can Nimbus accurately reproduce electrics by playing them on an acoustic machine which does not supply the required electrical processing during playback?⁷

Nimbus's use of the acoustic playback process makes the electrics sound muffled and many of the lower tones are gone. The sound is not as loud or expansive as we have come to expect from electrically recorded discs.

When the first commercial electrical recordings were issued by Victor and Columbia in 1925, many people played them on existing acoustic machines because new machines were too expensive or not readily available. If it was no great treat to listen to the new electrics on old acoustic machines over 60 years ago, why should the same results enchant listeners today?

And why a thorn needle? That in itself gives discs a different sound from a metallic needle. Apparently, Nimbus preferred a thorn needle over more destructive metallic needles as well as hi-tech styli because thorn creates less surface noise. Thorn, cactus, or fiber needles were used a great deal and for a long time, even as late as World War II. They were popular and could be resharpened when dull. In spite of their popularity and wide-spread use, Morton Lee railed against the use of cactus needles in 1946 because they did not sound as good as steel needles. More importantly, he noted that cactus or thorn styli “...are apt to injure records beyond repair and will destroy the frequency response of the phonograph system.”⁸ In addition, these natural needles frequently were deemed unreliable and reported as being prone to failure especially on loud passages. If Nimbus has had any problems, there has been no mention of it.

The Covent Garden disc presents singers in the roles they sang there successfully, but these are not necessarily British recordings. The Melba, Caruso, Tetrizzini,

McCormack, Destinn, and Gadski are acoustics, the remainder electrics. Nellie Melba dominated the soprano repertoire at Covent Garden from 1888 until 1926. Her well-schooled, silvery sound is ideal for Marguerite's aria, but she hardly sounds impassioned. Moreover, there is much hollow resonance around the high notes. The orchestra is reduced to making vague sounds in the background.

The earliest recording on the disc features Caruso from 1904. It is the only selection on the disc with piano accompaniment; all other selections have orchestral accompaniment. In this recording the tenor sounds light and buoyant, benefitting from the bright Victor sound on the original recording. He truly sounds as if he were in a hall or, as critics might say, in a bathroom.

Coloratura soprano Tetrizzini demonstrates her smooth scale, trill and flute-like high notes in Lucia's aria. The oom-pah orchestra fades into the background and the excerpt is sung without the mezzo-soprano. The HMV sound is not as bright as the Victor recordings and the high notes resonate almost uncomfortably.

The McCormack transfer sounds pleasant with its clear voice and orchestra. Although emotionally satisfying, the Destinn aria suffers, as do most of the soprano transfers, from cutting high notes. The Gadski, on the other hand, reproduces the highs less harshly.

The Schorr excerpt heralds the beginning of electrically recorded discs. Suddenly the orchestra becomes a presence, though less of one than with traditionally transferred electrical recordings. Nimbus's process detracts most from electrically recorded lower voices. The Schorr, Chaliapine,⁹ and Tibbett transfers lack the darkness of timbre so essential in their voices. The tenors fare slightly better. Zanelli and Gigli give spirited performances not dampened by the transfers. Tauber, on the other hand, sounds as if he had a bad cold.

The lush voice of Dame Eva Turner sounds distant and is probably the most obvious example of the "bathroom effect." Mezzo-soprano Supervia performs the Carmen aria with castanets. The trio from *Der Rosenkavalier* is a classic as is the 1939 recording of Flagstad and Melchior in the *Tristan* love duet. These later recordings are difficult to listen to when played on an acoustic machine. Having heard traditional transfers of such wonderful electrically recorded performances, these pale imitations are just not satisfying.

The Divas disc offers similar joys and pains of the ambisonic process. Unlike the Covent Garden release there are fewer lower tones to lose. Of the 18 singers featured, only one is a mezzo-soprano. Still, lower tones are muffled and the high notes resonate greatly. As interesting as the collection and concept are, even the die-hard listener may become fatigued with the female voice after a complete uninterrupted sitting.

The 27-year-old Hempel gives a clean, accurate, and tasteful performance. Gallucurci sings a quick and uninspired Cherubino. Farrar presents a pure, intense *Vissi* which is not embarrassingly sentimental. Kurz's well-schooled voice handles ornaments accurately, produces a real trill and combines a solid middle and lower voice. Garrison even runs down as Olympia and we hear her being rewound. She is, like Kurz, a model of accuracy and taste. Alma Gluck reveals her smooth sustained lines. Ivogün, the teacher of Elizabeth Swartzkopf, sings a rousing *Marten aller Arten*. Mezzo Onegin sings the same aria from *Carmen* as Supervia in the Covent Garden disc, but without castanets.

Moving into the electrics, lyric soprano Schonen gives a charming performance of Rosalinde's *Mein Herr* without the other lines of tenor and baritone. Norwegian soprano Norena gives an eight minute display of runs and stratospheric high notes. Ponselle

provides a passionate and polished performance, but here again, the lower notes are not as glorious or vibrant on the acoustic reproducer.

The Wagner excerpts are muffled, although beautifully sung. Two excerpts from French operas offer some fine singing by English soprano Teyte and the Russian Koshetz. The 1940 recording by Italian soprano Favero from Mascagni's forgotten *Lodoletta* is well done, but the listener is forced to endure the acoustic transfer of a late electrical recording.

Whether the ambisonic process appeals to listeners may well become a matter of personal taste. While the packaging of the discs is well presented, nowhere is there a notice explaining the ambisonic process. The note on the container, where potential buyers would see it, reads: "Digital ambisonic transfers from 78-rpm discs." Information about the ambisonic process may be found in a variety of periodicals, but it is not explained on the releases themselves.

The accompanying booklets are lavishly illustrated, including short biographies of the singers and synopses of the arias in English, German, and French. Dates of recording, matrix numbers, and catalog numbers also are included. For such obvious attention to detail one may have had higher hopes for the end result. *Reviewed by Sharon Almquist*

Notes:

1. **Gounod:** *Faust*: The Jewel Song (Nellie Melba, August 24, 1910, Victor); **Verdi:** *Rigoletto*: Questa o quella (Enrico Caruso, Feb. 1, 1904, Victor); **Donizetti:** *Lucia di Lammermoor*: Quando rapita in estasi (Luisa Tetrizzini, May 25, 1909, HMV); **Verdi:** *La Traviata*: De' miei bollenti spiriti (John McCormack, March 10, 1910, Victor); **Puccini:** *Madama Butterfly*: Con onor muore (Emmy Destinn, 1908, HMV); Wagner: *Götterdämmerung*: Fliegt heim ihr Raben (Johanna Gadski, 1909, HMV); **Wagner:** *Die Meistersinger*: Was durftet doch der Flieder (Friedrich Schorr, May 10, 1930, HMV); **Puccini:** *Tosca*: Vissi d'arte (Eva Turner, 1928, Columbia); **Verdi:** *Otello*: Ora e per sempre (Renato Zanelli, June 24, 1929, HMV); **R. Strauss:** *Der Rosenkavalier*: Marie Theres' (Lotte Lehmann, Elisabeth Schumann, Maria Olczewska, September 1933, HMV); **Mussorgsky:** *Boris Godunov*: Prayer and Death (Feodor Chaliapine, July 4, 1928, HMV); **Giordano:** *Andrea Chénier*: Sì, fui soldato (Beniamino Gigli, May 3, 1933, HMV); **Bizet:** *Carmen*: Les tringles des sœurs (Cochita Supervia, 1930, Parlophone); **Puccini:** *Tosca*: Te Deum (Lawrence Tibbett, April 10, 1929, Victor); **Mozart:** *Don Giovanni*: Dalla sua pace (Richard Tauber, June 8, 1939, Odeon); **Wagner:** *Tristan und Isolde*: The Love Duet, Act 2 (Kirsten Flagstad, Lauritz Melchior, November 11, 1939, Victor).

2. **Bellini:** *I Puritani*: Vien, diletto (Frieda Hempel, April 9, 1912, HMV); **Mozart:** *Le Nozze di Figaro*: Non so più (Amelita Galli-Curci, September 12, 1917, Victor); **Puccini:** *Tosca*: Vissi d'arte (Geraldine Farrar, September 30, 1909, Victor); **Verdi:** *Rigoletto*: Caro nome (Selma Kurz, ca. 1919, Polydor); **Offenbach:** *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*: Les oiseaux dans la charmille (Mabel Farrison, June 6, 1916, Victor); **Godard:** *Jocelyn*: Berceuse (Alma Gluck, December 29, 1914, Victor); **Mozart:** *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*: Marten aller Arten (Maria Ivogün, 1923, Gramophone); **Bizet:** *Carmen*: Les tringles des sœurs (Sigrid Onegin, ca. 1924, Brunswick); **J. Strauss:** *Die Fledermaus*: Mein Herr (Lotte Schoene, ca. 1928, HMV); **Thomas:** *Hamlet*: Ophelia's Aria [Sa main depuis hier] (Eidé Norena, 1933, Disque Gramophone); **Verdi:** *La Forza del Destino*: Pace, pace mio Dio (Rosa Ponselle, January 17, 1928, Victor); **Wagner:** *Tristan und Isolde*: Liebeshod (Frida Leider, 1931, HMV); **Massenet:** *Werther*: Va! laisse couler mes larmes (Ninon Vallin, ca. 1928, Odeon); **Offenbach:** *La Perichole*: Tu n'es pas beau (Maggie Teyte, September 22, 1932, Decca); **Ponce:** *Estrellita* (Nina Koshetz, 1928, Victor); **Wagner:** *Die Walküre*: Du bist der Lenz (Kirsten Flagstad, October 17, 1937, Victor); **Wagner:** *Die Walküre*: Ho-jo-to-ho! (Kirsten Flagstad, October 9, 1935, Victor); **Mascagni:** *Lodoletta*: Flammen, perdonami (Mafalda Favero, ca. 1940, VDP).

3. Hughes, Gwen. "Armchair Opera: Nimbus Records," *Opera Now* (November 1989), pp. 63-64.
4. Hardwick, Keith, "Nimbus 'Prima Voce' Series," *The Record Collector*, 35 (March/April 1990), pp. 100-101.
5. Lane, Michael R. "Sonic Restoration of Historical Recordings, part 1," *Audio* (June 1991), p. 44, and pt. 2, *Audio* (July 1991).
6. Hardwick, p. 100-101.
7. Lane, p. 41.
8. Lee, Morton. "Design for Hearing, Part II," *Music Library Association Notes*, 2d ser. (December 1946), p. 111.
9. The Chaliapine excerpt was recorded live at Covent Garden on July 4, 1928, and cuts about three minutes off of the 11 minute complete Farewell, Prayer and Death of Boris issued elsewhere in conventional transfers. Even the less-than-perfect pressing on Seraphim (60211) gives more heft to the bass's voice and more of a presence to the orchestra than is found on the Nimbus release.

Billie Holiday: The Complete Decca Recordings.
GRP/MCA GRD2-601.

This collection comes in the form of a hard-cover 40-page book which contains two compact discs inside the 6" x 12" cover. Unless you are unhappy that the unconventional format means the package will not store conveniently alongside your other CDs, you will find that, in every other respect, this set is a model reissue.

The lovely binding, lavish photo displays, and thoughtful essays on Ms. Holiday's life and work during the period covered (1944-1950) may well mean that you will choose to keep this mixed media package on the bookshelf rather than with your records, though the superb quality of the digital transfers makes it just as desirable as a sound document.

The book includes a reminiscence by producer Milt Gabler, who recorded Holiday on his own Commodore label in the early 1940s, even after accepting a job at Decca Records in 1941. Holiday's reputation had been established in the 52nd Street jazz world of the 1930s and on her records, which had been casual, spontaneous affairs with all-star groups. The best of them have remained in print ever since and have tended to overshadow her later work, at least until now.

When Gabler first brought Holiday to Decca in the fall of 1944, both agreed to promote her as a romantic ballad singer with the company. Though topflight jazzmen were on hand for the accompaniments, strings and subdued tempos tend to dominate the ensembles, which rarely emerge from the background in any case. It was not a bad decision; Billie's voice was at the peak of its power, a mature contralto, fully developed and captured here in all its beauty before the ravages of drugs, alcohol, and time could make their presence felt. Singing stars like Frank Sinatra, Dick Haymes, and Bing Crosby had already established lush ballads as the dominant pop music form during the war years; though Holiday's career had been wedded to jazz, the move was entirely logical for a gifted singer whose voice was easily the equal of theirs, and whose personal qualities lent so much honesty to the often bland form.

This set is obviously a labor of love on the part of producers Andy McKaie and Steven Lasker while the original productions reveal the sensitive touch of Milt Gabler. Lasker performed the transfers from a variety of sources, fortunately including acetate safety masters which were vertically cut in the pre-tape era of the 1940s, at the same time as the

laterally cut acetates which were used for actual mastering. A few cases exist where Lasker had to resort to secondary sources (primarily for out-takes); for the most part, the sound of these transfers is extraordinary, especially in contrast to the noisy pressings Decca produced in the 1940s. Lasker has included notes which detail what his sources were; in the few instances where something less than perfect is heard, it means that extra effort was involved, both in accessing the material and in bringing it up to snuff. The results are both telling and stunning. The sound quality equals and sometimes surpasses any digital restoration from pre-tape era originals this reviewer has heard to date.

Steven Lasker also contributes a lengthy essay which details Billie Holiday's career and personal life during those troubled years and discusses details of each session. His discography includes session dates and times, personnel (as known), titles, composers, and original issues. His decision to include all available versions, including out-takes and breakdowns, is appropriate. It is always good to have truly complete works of major performers in CD compilations, especially when they are also great improvisors. Holiday's interpretations of melodic lines are always a joy to hear, with perhaps one exception. One song here is heard four times (five if you include one false start) because the composer of "Big Stuff," Leonard Bernstein, took exception to several versions. It was included as part of the cast album of his *Fancy Free*, which was held up for a year and a half until Billie got the song "right." Any weaknesses are due to the song rather than the singer!

Not all the Decca sessions featured strings and romantic ballads. Four pieces from the Bessie Smith songbook are done in appropriate small settings; Louis Armstrong appears as second singer and kibitzer on two related 1949 titles. Appropriately, perhaps, the Holiday Decca period ends with an over-ambitious chorus and strings remake of "God Bless the Child" in March 1950. By this time, the ballad era was coming to a close, and her voice was beginning to deteriorate. She was to spend the remaining decade of her life back in the congenial company of all-star groups, similar to those which had sustained and supported her singing in the 1930s.

MCA reissues from its Decca/Brunswick/Vocalion label holdings onto CD have usually been a cut above average, due in part to excellent transfers from early pressings or metal parts. With this set, the company has outdone itself, combining superb sound with authoritative notes, many photos, and attractive packaging. For others rushing to move material from the 78 era onto CDs, *Billie Holiday* should serve as a role model of thoroughness and excellence. *Reviewed by Dick Spottswood*

Judy Garland. The One and Only.

Capitol Masters, 1991. C2 96600. 3 CDs.

Few performers in the history of American entertainment have bred the sort of fanatical devotion that Judy Garland has elicited from her legions of followers both during her career and since her untimely death in 1969. Garland fans seem to be drawn in equal parts to her significant talents as a singer and actress and to the soap opera aspects of her turbulent off-stage life. Her performances in many musical films, most notably *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *A Star is Born* (1954) as well as her extraordinary career as a concert artist after 1950 have made Garland a legend.

The most popular and familiar Garland recordings have invariably been soundtracks to her films and live recordings of concerts, most notably Capitol's 1961 *Judy at Carnegie Hall*, unquestionably the essential Garland recording. During the 1950s and early

1960s, Garland made several popular studio recordings under contract to Capitol Records, some of which have become rare collector's items. Her fans have had to content themselves with often poorly transferred tracks of these recordings on later retrospective collections. Finally, Capitol Records has dug into its archives, restored its Garland holdings, and issued a first-rate three-CD collection of Garland's recordings aptly entitled *Judy Garland. The One and Only*. Also included are representative tracks from four Garland concert recordings along with cuts from her short-lived television variety series.

If nothing else, this elegantly packaged, well-edited collection should thrill Garland's fans. It seems more likely, however, that the collection will do much to create new devotees and to restore Garland's deserved place among the pantheon of top flight recording artists of her era. Some popular singers have excelled at particular kinds of songs, but Garland's special gift was her uncanny ability to deliver what seem to be definitive performances of songs from a staggeringly diverse array of genres, be they upbeat show biz numbers, torch songs, jazz, whimsical and comic tunes, and, of course, mature interpretations of the many memorable songs she introduced in her musical films.

The three CDs which make up *Judy Garland. The One and Only* are thematically divided. The first CD, "In the Studio," covers her earliest Capitol recordings. Garland's first Capitol album, *Miss Show Business*, was issued to coincide with her much-heralded first television appearance on the Ford Star Jubilee in 1955. This CD includes cuts from that album, along with her other 1950s Capitol albums, *Alone, Judy! That's Entertainment*, and *Judy*. Also included is her sole Capitol film soundtrack, *I Could Go On Singing*, from her final movie. The collection omits any cuts from Garland's "concept" album for Capitol, *The Letter*. Along with some of her proven standards, such as "Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart" and "That's Entertainment," this CD offers the least familiar Garland recordings in the collection, presenting a rare opportunity to perceive her talents freshly. The results are both startling and profoundly revealing. Al Jolson, the performer with whom she was most often compared, supplied her with some of her most perennial selections. But included here are some Jolson standards she rarely performed, and her treatments are a delight. Her buoyant takes of "Carolina in the Morning" and "April Showers," along with an unashamedly emotional treatment of the corny "Dirty Hands, Dirty Face," offer a Garland inspired by, yet also transcending, Jolson's style. Her strongest and most striking performances on this CD are, of course, the torchiest and most intimate: "By Myself," "Little Girl Blue," "I Get the Blues When It Rains" (released for the first time), "More Than You Know," and a surprisingly blue treatment of "Me and My Shadow." Her intimate emotional intensity is accentuated by the clarity of her diction, her staggering vocal power, and the uniqueness and sharp intelligence of her interpretations. In contrast to the generally bland pop recordings made by her contemporaries in the 1950s, Garland's style seems unaffected by the prevailing tastes of the time.

The second CD, "At the Footlights," offers a sampling of live recordings from her concerts and television work. Included are her first live recording *Garland at the Grove* (1958), the 1961 Carnegie Hall triumph, an aborted 1962 Manhattan Tower concert of contemporary Broadway songs (including a touching rendition of "The Party's Over" from *Bells Are Ringing*), excerpts from the 1963-64 television series, and a few previously unreleased tracks from a 1964 London Palladium concert with her daughter, Liza Minnelli (featuring a charming cut of "Just In Time" with Garland breaking up with laughter at her daughter's antics). This CD provides the listener with examples of the

changes in Garland's voice during this era. Her vocal power peaks with the Carnegie Hall cuts. While the later tracks give evidence of increasing imperfections in her voice, she more than made up for this by an expanding richness in her interpretations and an emotional depth. As the voice falters, Garland's skill as an actress, always present in her singing, takes over. Each song becomes something like a play with variant textures, climaxes, and soaringly dramatic moments. This is particularly evident in "Make Someone Happy" from the 1964 London concert; Garland's voice is hoarse and tired, but she builds this ordinary song into a memorable dramatic event.

As evidenced in Garland's Carnegie Hall recording, she transformed a live concert performance into a monumental drama of contrasting "scenes." The tragic and comic values are exposed in each song, along with her vital and kaleidoscopically fascinating personality. Disc space does not allow for inclusion of a complete concert performance, but the included excerpts offer telling glimpses of her close and masterful interaction with an audience. Her disarmingly ironic humor also is present, particularly as she introduces a segment of light jazz arrangements at Carnegie Hall. Succinctly describing her own style, she jokes, "I'm always known, if I'm known at all, ... I'm known for singing very sad, tragic songs or just... [she bellows] marches or holiday songs, and all kinds of songs, but I like to sing in between sometimes... I do like to sing jazz... and 'they' won't let me. I don't know who 'they' are..." She effortlessly clowns with the musicians and audience between songs with self-deprecating humor and infectious high spirits.

The tracks from her television series feature rare Garland interpretations of contemporary song hits. She is particularly effective in "As Long As He Needs Me" and "I Wish You Love." An especially unique track is her moving and full throttle rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," performed in tribute to John F. Kennedy following his assassination.

The third disc, "The London Sessions," is the most exciting in the collection. It contains many of her signature songs, most of which were permanent fixtures in her concert repertoire: "Swanee," "San Francisco," "Rockabye Your Baby With a Dixie Melody," "The Man That Got Away," and, of course, the inevitable "Over the Rainbow." These particular recordings, which have been little known and hard-to-find, were made in London in 1960, under the musical direction of Norrie Paramour as Garland prepared for her last great "comeback" in 1960, leading to triumphant tours of Europe and America that culminated in her now legendary Carnegie Hall concert the following year. Although the Carnegie Hall recording contains all of the excitement inherent in a Garland concert, these studio versions of her standards offer the singer's top form in more intimate readings with flawless musicianship. This disc includes studio versions of two familiar concert set pieces: "Judy at the Palace," written for Garland's 1951 Palace Theatre "comeback" in which she pays tribute to the vaudeville greats who preceded her on that stage, and her medley containing three of her early film hits, "You Made Me Love You," "For Me and My Gal," and "The Trolley Song." These, along with the familiar Jolson standards, again exemplify her way with an upbeat, show biz tune. Vibrant takes of her haunting "Stormy Weather" and electrifying "Come Rain or Come Shine" offer high drama, and "Do It Again" and "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" find Garland at her most intimate. Concluding with a typically moving rendition of "Over the Rainbow," the third disc convinces the listener that Garland's most extraordinary achievement was her ability to make virtually any song she sang her own. Only a Sinatra, Fitzgerald, or Jolson at their peaks rival Garland in this ability, reminding this listener, too, of the rarity of such artistry in American popular music.

Judy Garland. The One and Only is handsomely boxed and includes a 55-page booklet tracing Garland's stage and recording career, with considerable details about the history of each song, the recording sessions, and the live performances. The individual tracks are lovingly restored, with even the most familiar song sounding better here than in earlier incarnations (as a small bonus, a few cuts are preceded by brief flashes of Garland and the musicians warming up). For the Garland fanatic this set is a must. But those interested in the golden age of American popular music will find the superbly restored and unforgettably performed *Judy Garland. The One and Only* a welcome and essential collection. *Reviewed by James Fisher*

Bing Crosby. *That's Jazz.*

Pearl PAST CD9739, 1991. 1 CD.

This disc is part of Pearl's "Flapper" series of more "popular" recordings. I was immediately wary of this release upon reading the spine title, *Bing Crosby Sings Jazz*, and then finding songs like "Song of the Islands" and "Where the Blue of the Night (Meets the Gold of the Day)." Stated simply, this disc either lacks focus (as an attempt to document Crosby's jazz or scat singing) or is misleading about the goods it attempts to deliver.

That is not to say, however, that there is nothing of interest. Taken as a whole, this disc represents a good cross-section of the wide variety of material and styles Crosby recorded in the 1930s, shortly after he left Paul Whiteman to start his own remarkable solo career. All of the present titles apparently were taken from Brunswick recordings, regardless of whether or not they were original or reissues for that label. Hence, the CD starts with a recording of "St. Louis Blues" with Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra. The version here is the somewhat rarer A take of matrix BX-11263 (although matrix numbers are given, multiple takes such as BX-11263 are unclear from the liner notes). The A take was first issued by Brunswick, the more familiar B by Columbia. While it is a moot point which take is "better," A or B (the latter, a very different arrangement and performance, was released as Columbia 55003-B), Crosby's scat solo on the A take is one of his best. He seems inspired by the surrounding band, and Cootie Williams' trumpet and Lawrence Brown's trombone work are particularly noteworthy.

A fellow Whiteman alum, Lennie Hayton, backs Crosby on four titles ("Temptation", "Did You Ever See a Dream Walking", "The Last Round-Up," and "Our Big Love Scene"). Hayton will never be accused of having an outstanding band, but he did have competent musicians (and occasionally excellent soloists) and was himself an arranger of the first rank. Crosby recorded with Hayton numerous times in the 1930s, and I would have preferred some alternative selections, such as "Cabin in the Cotton" (mx JC-8635-1, Brunswick 6329) which has a fine solo by both Bing and Jimmy Dorsey, instead of, for example, "The Last Round-Up" which has little if anything to recommend it except perhaps as an example of Crosby's fantastic phrasing (which still is not enough to save such an insipid tune). The same can be said, of course, for all compilations that are not complete--any two people would choose different titles for inclusion.

The three pieces from Crosby's mid-1930s "Hawaiian Period" are probably his best known in this genre. They are exactly the kind of songs and arrangements (two accompanied by Lani McIntyre and his Hawaiians and one by Dick McIntyre and his Harmony Hawaiians) that one would expect. Crosby's vocal fluidity and easy manner are quite well-suited for this kind of material, and in fact "Sweet Leilani" was Crosby's first gold record. There are also some historically important recordings here, for example

his first recording of what would become his theme, "Where the Blue of the Night," and one of only two recordings he made with the Mills Brothers, a very fine recording of "Dinah". Chronologically, the earliest piece on this disc is "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," a song written for Crosby and recorded with Gus Arnheim and his Coconut Grove Orchestra. It was Arnheim who gave Crosby his first big solo break during broadcasts from the Coconut Grove, so it would have been nice to document some of these other early solo recordings. Nevertheless, this generously filled disc (almost 67 minutes) gives some sense of the breadth of Bing Crosby's abilities at the start of his solo career.

The quality of the transfers is typical of Pearl, which is to say not terribly impressive. I find the added reverb distracting, and producer Tony Watts fails to capture some of the subtleties and nuances in Crosby's vocal technique. Finally, the liner notes (by Watts, and which he actually had the nerve to copyright) are just a short rehash of what others have written about Crosby's career and which say nothing about the items presented on the disc. Only six of the band lineups are given, where in fact almost all could have been verified in any number of sources. A company which emphasizes historical reissues must document better than this. *Reviewed by Jim Farrington*

Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Quartet.
You Can Feel It in Your Soul.
County Records 111.

These recordings are from the 1950s, the golden era of the famous Bluegrass duo, Flatt and Scruggs. One often forgets that they wrote and recorded a great deal of gospel music in addition to their secular tunes. Despite the fact that these tunes are largely ignored by historians, Flatt and Scruggs made a conscious effort to create and perform these sacred songs because they had a great deal of audience appeal. Playing in small towns in the mid-South, this gospel music reached the ears and hearts of many folks. Several of these songs were composed by Flatt and Scruggs under pseudonyms (their wives' maiden names) due to contractual obligations to the Peer-Southern Company. Therefore, this collection has a few credits for G. Stacey (Lester's wife, Gladys) or Certain (Earl's wife). Not all the songs are Flatt and Scruggs originals; some are loosely adapted from older songs and several are composed by Troy Martin under various aliases.

There are a few surprises on this album, mostly in what is lacking. There is very little fiddle on these recordings, appearing on only two tracks. Also conspicuously absent in many of the songs is Earl Scrugg's trademark banjo playing. It only really shines in the bouncy tune "Joy Bells" (an Organ, Certain and Stacey composition recorded in 1956) where he even pulls out his famous Scruggs peg, detuning and retuning the banjo as an integral part of the solo break. Perhaps it was felt that the fiddle and banjo were too rowdy for such righteous music. Usually the band arrangements were very simple in order to spotlight the vocal harmonies.

The record starts off slowly with a subdued rendition of the Bolivar Lee Shook song "Cabin on the Hill" (1959). Originally written for the Vaughan songbook *Sacred Thoughts* and first recorded in 1949 by the Mullins Family gospel group, this tune is hymnlike in feeling. The lead vocals by Lester Flatt are answered by a six-voice chorus which is full of rich lower voices. This is accompanied by Earl Scruggs' subtle guitar playing. This song was one of their most popular religious tunes, staying on the charts for more than 30 weeks. The title track "You Can Feel It in Your Soul" (a G. Stacey tune from 1955), has an arrangement which highlights the effectiveness of good gospel vocal harmonies, once again sung over guitar chords in the background. The 1957 recording

of a George Sherry (otherwise known as Troy Martin) song, "Is There Room for Me?" is characterized by a mournful, bluesy melody reminiscent of a train whistle in the distance. In stark contrast, the bouncy, sing-song style of "Bubbling In My Soul," a Tom James and Jerry Organ (another Martin alias) cut from 1955, borders on the silly, but was a big crowd pleaser. Also present is the well-known song "Gone Home" (1955) ironically written by Bill Carlisle who was better known for writing novelty songs of the time.

The information in the liner notes is presented in chronological order which gives a good view of how the style evolved over time. However, the tracks are not in this same order, which can be a bit confusing. The sound is generally good and there are informative liner notes by Charles Wolfe in this solidly produced example of the Bluegrass Gospel sound. *Reviewed by Elaine Bradtke*

Hillbilly Music: Thank God!, Volume 1.

Michael Ruppli, Bug Records, C1-91346.

Hillbilly music is a slightly confusing title for this collection. The Carter family and other early country singers who were often given the moniker "hillbilly" are nowhere to be found. Instead, this is a very idiosyncratic two-record set of western swing, rockabilly, Hollywood cowboys, country flavored pop tunes, the Bakersfield sound, and a fair amount of hillbilly boogie and honky-tonk. In other words, this is "hillbilly" as it was promoted in the early pop-country era of the late 1940s through the 1960s. So how does such a disparate conglomeration work? Fortunately, there is some stylistic glue that holds it all together.

Most of the songs are marked by rather humorous lyrics, in a self consciously cornball style. A great example is the downright silly tune "Hog-tied Over You" written by Tennessee Ernie Ford and performed by Ford and Ella May Morse with Cliff Stone's Orchestra. This song is a wacky duet about a love affair characterized by such tender gestures as the girl dropping an anvil on her beau's little toe and chasing him around with a shotgun. Another trait these songs have in common are the central themes of crying, drinking, infidelity, and of course, religion, sometimes all in the same song.

Many of the songs tell a story. The duet by Rose Maddox and Buck Owens, "Mental Cruelty" (released in 1961 on Capitol 4450), casts Owens in the role of the beleaguered husband who suffers the indignities of being accused of mental cruelty in divorce court. This is a real tear-jerker sung with highly emotional strident voices characteristic of the style. Among the musical factors which connect these performances, one finds the ever present twang of the steel guitar and the bright, slightly nasal quality of the voices. There are also a few fiddles thrown into the mix. Marshall Crenshaw produced these gems for reissue and in doing so retained much of their original tone color. This can be slightly disconcerting when one's high-priced audio equipment comes off sounding like an AM radio, but it is true to the way they sounded in their heyday. There are some truly classic tracks, such as the immensely popular Faron Young performing Joe Allison's song, "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young" (released in 1955 on Capitol 6025) which was something of an anthem for self-styled country playboys. Buck Owens also has a solo performance in his own song, "You're for Me" (Capitol 4872 from 1962) which is bouncy and in a much lighter vein than "Mental Cruelty."

A nice diversion includes two tracks by the influential guitar picker, Merle Travis. These exemplify his traditionally-based, honky tonk guitar style, especially "Merle's Boogie Woogie" (Capitol 40026) which is flashy and full of lightning fast guitar runs. Also

included is his somewhat less frenetic rendition of the hit song "Nine Pound Hammer" (Capitol 15124) about a coal miner. In a slightly different vein are the Louvin Brothers whose close harmony singing hearkens back to a more traditional Appalachian style. Their high, mournful tenor voices are so similar that it is hard to tell them apart. On this recording, they sing their own compositions: "You're Learning" (Capitol 4255, released in 1959), the oddly religious "The Great Atomic Power" (Capitol 4686, released in 1962), and the lilting "I Wish it Had Been a Dream." The second record ends with a strange little cut which sounds like odd snippets from a tape from an unknown recording session. It appears to be the voice of Ken Nelson, the man who produced most of the recordings in this collection along with hordes of other country classics.

This is not a scholarly reissue, but rather something produced by and for the lover of country music from this era. It is fun, but not too serious. *Reviewed by Elaine Bradtke*

Cornet Solos—Herbert L. Clarke Crystal Record LP S-450.

Ten of the 11 selections on this LP are technical works, with "Ah! Cupid" from *Prince Ananias*¹ (Herbert) being the exception. "Caprice Brilliante" (*The Debutante*) is Clarke's most interesting and well-played solo. This is the only one on the LP to have been recorded on a 12-inch 78 rpm record. All of the solos have considerable merit. How much better it would have been to alternate the fast with the slow. The early (rare) recordings on the Victor label include "The Holy City," "Love's Own Sweet Songs," and "I Can't Tell You Why I Love You, But I Do."

Represented in the LP are the bulk of Clarke's compositions: "Rondo Caprice," "Valse Brilliante" (*Sounds from the Hudson*), "Showers of Gold," "Bride of the Waves," "La Veta Caprice," "The Southern Cross," his arrangement of "Carnival of Venice," and "Stars in the Velvety Sky," along with "Caprice Brilliante."

All but two of the recordings were made between 1907 and 1912 and all seem to be of even quality. "Valse Brilliante" is the earliest recording, made on December 22, 1904. However, it is listed as Victor #2073. This is amazing as it is an unissued test pressing, probably the only one in existence. It is listed erroneously by its matrix number. Since the record never was issued, it was not given a commercial number. Most of the original records used for this LP came from the Clarke Collection in the Music Department of the University of Illinois, Urbana. Presumably the Victor Company gave Mr. Clarke this test pressing. It is a mystery why this was not released commercially because it is an excellent recording.

The last recording, "Stars in a Velvety Sky," was issued by the Brunswick Company as #2367. The listing on the back of the second LP cover attributes it to the Victor Company #2376 with Sousa's Band. Yet, the Brunswick Company used an orchestra. It is surprising that the International Trumpet Guild, producers of the LP, did not check the information more carefully. It would have been helpful to list the exact dates of the recording. This information was readily accessible to the Guild members in James Smart's *The Sousa Band: A Discography*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970).

All the Victor records suffer from a muffled LP sound. The Victor originals are straightforward, but the engineer(s) have 'pulled a veil' of suppression in reproduction, possibly to eliminate noise. Even the Brunswick is subdued. It is surprising how well Clarke played on this record. His high notes, controlled triple tongue, technique in general, and lyrical passages indicate that he was just as good at age 50 as he was at 35.

In 1983, this reviewer questioned Peter Christ about the discographical data which was on the heels of inquiries from others about the incorrect pitches of the selections on the early issue of S-450. Happily that was changed around 1983.

Despite the problems, this record is worth owning. It evokes the spirit of being part of a crowd of 10,000 or so patrons who went to Willow Grove Park to hear the idol of the bandstand perform not one, not two, but often three encores on a Sousa Band program. *Reviewed by Frederick P. Williams*

Note:

1. Ananias is misspelled Arianias on the back of the second LP cover.

Jan Kubelik: *The Acoustic Recordings (1902-13)*. Biddulph Recordings LAB 033-34.
Zino Francescatti: *The Complete HMV Recordings (1922-28)*. Biddulph Recordings LAB 030.

Strauss: *Don Quixote*. Bloch: *Schelomo*. Emanuel Feuermann, cello. The Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy/Leopold Stokowski, conductors. Biddulph Recordings LAB 042.

Scholars of performance practice and students of string instrument performance will be pleased with these three offerings by Biddulph Recordings. Covering string instrument performances over a four-decade period, these releases yield a view of three of the most admired performers of the early twentieth century.

Jan Kubelik was a virtuoso phenomenon. Young, handsome, and possessing technical wizardry compared to Paganini, he exploded on the musical scene late in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Although his performances may sound rather "personal" by today's standards, one has but to sample the Paganini Variations on "God Saves the King" in order to determine that Kubelik's command of the violin was complete and compelling. Although the acoustically recorded lacquer masters by G & T, Fonotipia, and HMV are somewhat noisy on this restoration, with unfortunate high velocity signal problems as well, the instrumental sound is well focused and prominent. The pitch on these restorations may be a bit too close to A-440 for historical accuracy if indeed such determinations are possible. Altogether this is a very satisfying package which includes many lovely short pieces which have all but disappeared from the violin repertoire.

Zino Francescatti was one of the most revered and respected violinists of the twentieth century. The scope of his recording activity is extensive. This disc offers stunning performances by the nineteen-year-old Francescatti which reveal an already mature interpretive giant who went on to maintain the integrity of his artistry for over four decades. The discs which were recorded acoustically are somewhat noisy, as are those recorded electrically. High velocity signal problems are present and somewhat disturbing. However, the sound is very clear, revealing the quality, nuance, and sophistication which are some of the reasons Francescatti is beloved by so many. This disc should be a "must have" for serious students of the violin.

Emanuel Feuermann was something of a legend even before his premature death in 1942. The performances on this disc are two of his most famous. Feuermann is in absolutely blinding form in both performances, but perhaps more so in the Strauss. The Philadelphia Orchestra of 1940 is stunning. The sound of these restorations is breathtaking. Only two words are possible regarding this disc — buy it! *Reviewed by Reed Heagler.*