

There is, however, some playing on this CD that feels very tentative and uncertain, as if the musicians are feeling their way through the tunes for the first time as an ensemble (which they probably were). This is especially true on two of the faster tunes. "Dearest" feels like a first run-through, with Goodman playing very roughly, even getting apart from the chord changes briefly during his first improvised chorus. "Who Cares?" is also sloppy, as if it were a first take, with some awkward instrumental trading-off near the end. It should be kept firmly in mind that the material presented on this disc was either not intended for release, or was specifically rejected by Goodman and his colleagues. These performances were not intended to be finished products. What is presented, instead, is a fascinating illustration of the collective and individual musicianship of four jazz giants, working through new and less familiar material for possible use.

The recorded sound on this album differs from track to track, but is generally somewhat "boxy" and lacking in definition. At times, one is presented with a very artificial balance among the members of the quartet. Some tunes, especially "Just One of those Things", show tape wear and deterioration. Tape edge stretch is clearly evident in the "swishing" sound on this cut. The sound of the published recordings is far superior on the RCA release. With all the above taken into consideration, this is a significant addition to the Benny Goodman discography. While perhaps not directed toward the uninitiated Goodman listener, it is a valuable supplement to RCA's *Together Again!* album, which is indispensable to Goodman collectors. It is also a fitting tribute to the creative genius collectively known as The Original Benny Goodman Quartet.

Readers who wish to investigate some of Goodman's other small group ventures should consider *Benny Goodman Original Trio and Quartet Sessions, Vol. 1: After You've Gone* (RCA Bluebird CD 5631-2-RB, reissued in 1987), and *Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet, Vol. 2: Avalon - The Small Bands 1937-39* (RCA Bluebird CD 2273-2-RB, reissued in 1990). For further reading, the references listed below are highly recommended.<sup>2,3,4</sup> *Reviewed by Paul Buell.*

## Endnotes

1. **Dearest** (Davis/Akst); **Together** (DeSylva/Brown/Henderson); **Who Cares?** (Gershwin/Gershwin); **September Song** (Weill/Anderson); **Just One of Those Things** (Porter); **Love Sends a Little Gift of Roses** (Cook/Openshaw); **Oh, Gee!** **Oh, Joy!** (Gershwin/Gershwin); **Bernie's Tune** (Miller/Stoller/Lieber); **East of the Sun (and West of the Moon)** (Bowman); **Four Once More** (Goodman); **Liza** (Gershwin/Gershwin/Kahn); **But Not For Me** (Gershwin/Gershwin); **Somebody Loves Me** (Gershwin/MacDonald/DeSylva); **It's All Right With Me** (Porter).
2. Firestone, Ross. *Swing, Swing, Swing: The Life and times of Benny Goodman*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1993).
3. Collier, James Lincoln. *Benny Goodman and the Swing Era*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
4. Simon, George T. *The Big Bands*. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967).

**Willem Mengelberg: The Complete 1922-1925 New York Philharmonic Recordings.**<sup>1</sup> Biddulph WHL 025-26 (2 CDs).

The documentation of Willem Mengelberg's significant recorded legacy on Compact

Disc has reached a milestone with Biddulph's reissue of his complete acoustical recordings with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. With the release of this collection, Mengelberg's complete, issued New York Philharmonic recordings are now available on CD, all in excellent transfers. In the Spring, 1994 issue of the *ARSC Journal* (1994;25[1]:89-92), this reviewer briefly surveyed the Mengelberg/New York Philharmonic items which had been reissued at that time. Those comments were part of a review of his complete Columbia recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.<sup>2</sup> To summarize, Pearl CD-9474 contains overtures and shorter works recorded electrically between 1928 and 1930, transferred by Mark Obert-Thorn. Beethoven Symphonies 1 and 3, also transferred by Obert-Thorn, have been released by Biddulph, WHL-020. Mengelberg's 1928 recording of Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* is available in a Ward Marston transfer as part of RCA Victor's *Legendary Strauss Recordings*, a two-CD set, 60929-2. In addition to the recordings for Victor, Mengelberg cut five issued sides for Brunswick in 1925, all recorded electrically. Obert-Thorn transferred all of the issued Brunswicks for Pearl's *New York Philharmonic - A Sesquicentennial Celebration*, another two-disc set, CDS-9922. The Biddulph collection reviewed here contains Mengelberg's remaining New York Philharmonic recordings, all made for the Victor Talking Machine Company, and all in fine transfers by Ward Marston.<sup>3</sup>

As a group, Mengelberg's Victor acoustics are among the most successful orchestral recordings made prior to the introduction of electrical recording. Although the acoustical process captured only a primitive image of the sound of a symphony orchestra (and only a small portion of the orchestra could be used in acoustical sessions), Mengelberg's acoustics are remarkable for the strong musical statement made by each of them. For this writer, Weber's Overture to *Oberon* is perhaps the finest of all of these recordings. It is a remarkably exciting performance, easily the equal of Mengelberg's 1928 Columbia electric with the Concertgebouw. Rarely is such a high level of musical commitment evident on acoustical recordings. Liszt's *Les Preludes* was a Mengelberg specialty, and the Victor acoustic exhibits even greater intensity than the excellent 1929 Columbia. The 1922 acoustic version of Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* is less successful than the 1931 Columbia. The arpeggiated string passages in the development section are played with considerable effort, as if the musicians were struggling to make themselves heard. The dynamic contrasts indicated in the score are all but ignored, and the musical line is sacrificed. This was Mengelberg's first recording for Victor; perhaps he and the orchestra had not yet adapted themselves to the capabilities and limitations of the primitive recording process.

The two movements from Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony were each heavily cut, in order to accommodate them on single 78 rpm sides. Mengelberg's electrical recordings of the Tchaikovsky symphonies are characterized by extreme liberties with tempi, often bordering on eccentric. As a group, Mengelberg's New York Philharmonic recordings exhibit none of the mannerisms that are sometimes evident in his later work, the Tchaikovsky recordings being a strong case in point. One would never use the term "straight forward" to describe Mengelberg, but the flexibility of tempi in the New York recordings is always tasteful and judicious.

Mengelberg's first two electrical Victor recordings are also included on this disc. Both the Overture to Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and Schelling's *A Victory Ball* date from 1925, and reveal the electrical recording process in its infancy. Victor had yet to take advantage of the possibility of recording a full orchestra in a real concert hall. Both of these recordings were made in a cramped studio used for acoustical sessions, with reduced orchestral forces. The recorded sound is thin and dry. These

recordings also appeared in the Pearl New York Philharmonic collection cited above.

Mengelberg's December 1928 recording of *Ein Heldenleben* remains not only the finest performance of this work ever recorded, but one of the greatest recordings in phonograph history. By this time, the New York Philharmonic had merged with the New York Symphony, and was officially renamed the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York. As heard on Marston's transfer for RCA Victor, free of interruptions for side changes, his performance has greater intensity and coherence than any subsequent recording of this work. It is difficult to believe that this recording was made over the course of three days, in four and one half minute segments. Mengelberg's *Ein Heldenleben* demonstrates the New York Philharmonic's peerless virtuosity, perhaps equaled, but not surpassed even by Leopold Stokowski's Philadelphians. During the decade following the death of Gustav Mahler in 1911, the New York Philharmonic suffered under the minimal leadership of Josef Stransky. By 1928, however, the orchestra had achieved world-class stature, a result of their collaboration with three of this century's greatest conductors. Mengelberg had been principal conductor since 1922, and Arturo Toscanini had been conducting the orchestra regularly since 1926 (he would replace Mengelberg as principal conductor in 1929). Wilhelm Furtwängler guest conducted the Philharmonic extensively between 1925 and 1927, an association that is often overlooked.

For the present Biddulph CD, Marston has unearthed enough alternate takes from the 1928 sessions to assemble another complete *Ein Heldenleben*. In a conversation with this reviewer, Marston noted that multiple alternate takes exist of many of the ten 78 rpm sides; in choosing from the available discs, he has attempted to assemble the most musically coherent performance. The alternate performance is outstanding in its own right. Only when compared to the issued recording does it fall short in terms of energy, forward momentum and technical polish. For listeners unfamiliar with Victor's original 78 rpm set, M-44, the sound of Marston's transfer will be a revelation. The RCA Victor CD reissue of the published recording has been heavily filtered in the bass, probably to eliminate the subway rumblings clearly audible on the originals. Unfortunately, much of the weight and warmth of the original orchestral sound has been lost (RCA appears to have a habit of applying further processing to tapes submitted by Marston; his transfers on that label often sound quite different from his work for Pearl and Biddulph). The Biddulph transfer offers a much more accurate presentation of the sound of the original 78s. Mengelberg's *Ein Heldenleben* was sonically outstanding in its day, and many 78 rpm recordings made in the mid 1940s failed to equal, much less surpass, this effort. Subway rumblings can be heard in the distance, particularly during the unaccompanied passages for solo violin, though they never distract from the performance. The unissued *Ein Heldenleben* is well worth hearing, both from a sonic and musical standpoint.

There are a few errors in Biddulph's documentation. Liszt's *Les Préludes* was originally recorded on four sides, the first three being 12 inch and the last a 10 inch disc. The odd side was dubbed to a 12 inch master when Victor began issuing double-faced Red Seal records in 1923. In the *Victor Red Seal Records* catalog dated July 1923, nearly all recordings were offered in both single and double-faced formats. By this time Side 4 of *Les Préludes* was the 12 inch dubbing, even in the single-faced, four disc version.<sup>4</sup> It is worth remembering that Victor used "B" matrix numbers for 10 inch discs, and "C" numbers for 12 inch records. Dubbed sides of acoustical recordings can be identified by the S/8 designation in the run-out area. Biddulph lists "C" matrix numbers for each of the four sides, yet the catalog numbers indicate that Side 4 was

taken from the original 10 inch issue. In Ward Marston's transfer, the sound quality of Side 4 is not inferior to the others, and he has confirmed the use of the original 10 inch disc for this transfer. The second side of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is listed as matrix number B 26303, but this number belongs to side 1 of the Overture to *Oberon*, and is also listed as such. The correct number for the Beethoven is B 26305.

Mengelberg's own *Præludium on the Dutch National Anthem* is listed as a previously unpublished recording. Although this recording was not issued by Victor, it was included in the Pearl New York Philharmonic collection cited above.

There are a few unissued recordings by Mengelberg and the New York Philharmonic that have never surfaced. Hardie lists an acoustic version of *The Flying Dutchman* Overture made on April 14, 1924, but notes that the masters were destroyed. The matrix number for side 1 was re-used for the 1925 electrical version. Hardie also lists an unpublished Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony, on twelve sides, along with two Strauss waltzes, all recorded by Brunswick. None of the unpublished Brunswick recordings are known to exist.<sup>5</sup>

Collectors of historical recordings are clearly in the midst of a "golden age" of reissues. Only five years ago it seemed inconceivable that Mengelberg's complete recordings with the New York Philharmonic would one day be available, in consistently fine transfers. That day has now arrived, and collectors owe Biddulph a debt of gratitude for the completion of the project. Biddulph is also in the process of reissuing Mengelberg's Telefunken recordings, made between 1937 and 1942 with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam. When the Telefunken series is completed, all of Mengelberg's commercial 78 rpm recordings will be available on Compact Disc. Philips' series of live Concertgebouw broadcast recordings made between 1939 and 1941 are currently out of print. They were reissued on CD in the mid-1980s in transfers that were honest, if somewhat primitive. These reissues were followed by a few dreadful sounding CDs processed with the No-Noise system. Philips should reissue this entire series in new transfers worthy of the company of Biddulph and Pearl. *Reviewed by Gary A. Galo.*

## Endnotes

1. **Beethoven:** *Coriolan Overture*, Op. 62 (April 11, 1922); **Beethoven:** Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 - 1st Mvt. (April 11 & 14, 1922); **Weber:** *Oberon* - Overture (April 14, 1922); **Schubert:** *Rosamunde* - Overture (April 17, 1924); *Rosamunde* - Entr'acte (April 26, 1923); **Mendelssohn:** *Athalia* - War March of the Priests (April 16, 1924); **Liszt:** *Les Préludes* (April 18 & 20, 1922); **J. Strauss, Jr.:** *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (April 23, 1923); **Saint-Saëns:** *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, Op. 31 (April 23, 1923); **Tchaikovsky:** Serenade in C for Strings, Op. 48 - Valse (April 26, 1923); Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 "Pathétique" - Mvts. 2 & 4 (April 19 & 23, 1923); **Halvorsen:** *Festival March of the Boyars* (April 16, 1924); **Mengelberg:** *Præludium on the Dutch National Anthem* (April 14, 1924, unissued); **Wagner:** *The Flying Dutchman* - Overture (June 10, 1925); **Schelling:** *A Victory Ball* (Sept. 10, 1925); **R. Strauss:** *Ein Heldenleben*, Op. 40 (Dec. 11-13, 1928, all previously unissued takes).
2. Galo, Gary A. "Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra - The Complete Columbia Recordings" (*ARSC Journal*, 1994;25[1]:89-92).
3. Hardie, R. H. *The Recordings of Willem Mengelberg - A Discography* (Nashville, TN: R. H. Hardie, 1974).
4. *Victor Red Seal Records* (Camden, NJ: Victor Talking Machine Company, 1923).
5. Hardie.