

Thomas L. Clear, a noted collector of rare recordings, has just published the latest in his series of limited edition reissues, "Historical Anthology of Orchestral Music (from 78s), Volume One." The four records are available only from the publisher (at 579 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016), for \$16.00 a set. These are very definitely reissues for people who like to listen to 78s. While the basic sound of most of the dubbings is acceptable enough, Clear has eschewed such niceties as de-clicking, filtering of surface noise (or even use of variable width styli to minimize it), proper splicing between sides, and correct pitch. Needless to say, I personally am appalled by some of this, but there are those who like their pleasure mixed with pain.

Anyway, here's what you get for your sixteen bucks:

One side is devoted to Mengelberg, and two of his scarcest recordings, the Bach "Double" Concerto and Mozart's "Eine kleine Nachtmusik." The Bach, a legendary rarity on 78s, proves as predictably horrible as most "golden age" conductors' Bach—bloated and insensitive. The "Nachtmusik," while hardly my ideal of Mozart, is more tolerable. The Bach is marred by the side break in the middle of the slow movement, after which several seconds' worth of music is repeated.

Side two is devoted to Leo Blech, conducting overtures by Cimarosa and Cherubini and Mozart's Symphony No. 34. Sound quality on these is OK and the performances are all quite well worth hearing, but the surface noise is pretty fearsome.

The next three sides are devoted to Mozart symphonies. No. 36 is very nicely conducted by Otto Matzerath, a fine musician who certainly does not deserve his obscurity. The following

"Jupiter" by Albert Coates is a horror. The first movement is so fast as to be ludicrous, and the whole performance seems to me utterly lacking in any sense of style. Recorded sound is also particularly unclear. Again the surface noise is bad—this from a set issued in the U.S., and presumably available in good condition somehow—and there is even a groove skip in the third movement. Finally, No. 40 is presented in what Clear states is the earlier of two recorded performances by Richard Strauss. I wonder if this may be the performance which George Szell stated he had conducted for recordings which was issued under Strauss's name, although Szell claimed that was an acoustic recording. At any rate, it's a good but not thrilling performance, recorded with clarity if very limited frequency range.

Strauss is also represented by a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, which is for me marred beyond redemption by a horrendous cut in the recapitulation of the finale. It seems vital enough otherwise, but the recording is so dull that much orchestral detail is simply inaudible.

On side 7 we have, of all people, Hidemaro Konoye, who conducts the orchestra of La Scala, Milan, in Beethoven's First Symphony. If this performance has any virtue beyond the sheer unlikeliness of the combination of musicians and repertoire, I'm afraid I'll never know it. The recording is dubbed from a set of 78s so badly worn that I could not force myself to listen to it past the first movement, which seems totally undistinguished in interpretation and markedly sloppy in execution.

For a finale, we are treated to one of Oswald Kabasta's few recordings, a loving and warm performance of Schubert's Third Symphony, well recorded and dubbed. For me, this is one of the highlights of the set, along with the Matzerath Mozart.

I've tried to give a detailed enough rundown to help the reader decide whether this set is worth investing in. I personally feel too many of the recordings are more noteworthy for their rarity than for their musical value, but my copy of the set is still not for sale.

Leslie Gerber