

HISTORISCHE AUFNAHMEN

STRAVINSKY: Oedipus Rex. Martha Mödl, mezzo-soprano (Jocasta); Peter Pears (Oedipus), Helmut Krebs (Shepherd), tenors; Heinz Rehfuss, baritone (Creon & Messenger); Otto von Rohr, bass (Tiresias); Jean Cocteau, narrator; Igor Stravinsky cond. Cologne Radio Cho. & SO. Columbia Odyssey Y 33789.

MILHAUD: Cantate de l'enfant et de la mère. Madeleine Milhaud, narrator; Darius Milhaud cond. Juilliard Quartet; Leonid Hambro, pianist. La Muse ménagère. Darius Milhaud, pianist. Columbia Odyssey Y 33790.

SCHOENBERG: Pierrot Lunaire. Erika Stiedry-Wagner, narrator; Arnold Schoenberg cond. ensemble (Rudolf Kolisch, violin & viola; Stefan Auber, cello; Eduard Steuermann, piano; Leonard Posella, flute & piccolo; Kalman Bloch, clarinet & bass clarinet). Columbia Odyssey Y 33791.

POULENC: Mouvements perpetuels; Nocturne in D; Suite française; SATIE: Descriptions automatiques; Gymnopédie No. 1; Sarabande No.2; Gnossienne No. 3; Avant-dernières Pensées; Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bon homme en bois. Francis Poulenc, pianist. Columbia Odyssey Y 33792.

HINDEMITH: A Requiem for Those We Love, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." Louise Parker, contralto; George London, bass-baritone. Paul Hindemith cond. Schola Cantorum of New York (Hugh Ross, director) & New York Philharmonic. Columbia Odyssey Stereo Y 33821.

These five simultaneous releases, issued under the collective title "The Composer as Performer Series," bring us a highly worthwhile grouping of material which I welcome back into the catalogues, especially at the budget label price. Evidently this new series was inspired by Columbia's old "Meet the Performer" series first issued a quarter of a century ago. Half of one of those records, a collection of Bartók playing excerpts from his Mikrokosmos (ML 4419), has since been reissued as Odyssey 32 16 0220. (Unfortunately, the other half has evidently been consigned to limbo by replacing it with Bartók's Contrasts. The latter was an important performance well worth restoring, but the remaining Mikrokosmos excerpts had not even been published as 78s and could have also been included on the Odyssey LP. A pity!)

Of the new releases, the Schoenberg and Poulenc items were in the "Meet the Performer" series, as ML 4471 and ML 4399 respectively. Stravinsky's contribution to the earlier series was a collection of short works dubbed from 78 rpm masters (ML 4398), although not all of them had been published in that format. It would be nice to have these recordings back and I hope we may look

forward to them eventually, but nobody can deny the importance of the replacement. The Milhaud collection (originally ML 4305) was published before the MtC series started, and the stereo Hindemith is a much later interloper.

Stravinsky re-recorded Oedipus Rex in stereo, and the newer version remains available (Columbia M 31129). Not being one of those collectors who automatically assumes that "older is better," I have never subscribed to the theory that Stravinsky's later recordings of his works are superior to the early versions. Nevertheless, despite the excellences of the stereo recording, this is one case where I feel an earlier version is superior. In fact, the original Oedipus performance remains one of the greatest surviving testimonials to Stravinsky's powers as a conductor, as well as preserving the work of the outstanding team of soloists. Cocteau's narration remains a controversial element, some listeners finding it pretentious. So do I, but it certainly does not obliterate the virtues of the performance. This release is a "must" for any serious collection of 20th century music.

As much may be said for Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, his only commercially recorded performance. (Other recordings of Schoenberg performances exist, but they remain in private hands; I certainly hope they can be published before the original discs deteriorate beyond redemption.) Again, the composer's efforts are abetted by some outstanding musicians, including Kolisch and Steuermann for whom several of Schoenberg's works were written. (Steuermann's recording of Schoenberg's piano music remains disgracefully absent from Columbia's catalogue.)

Milhaud was one of the more prolific recording artists among composers. The two performances we have here are excellent representations of the works involved (and certainly their only representations in American catalogues, if not in the world), but I cannot work up much enthusiasm for either composition. Those who can will find here the most substantial example of Milhaud as solo pianist. Poulenc also recorded quite a bit, especially for one who was so self-admittedly a weak pianist. To me, the side of Poulenc playing Satie is even more interesting than the reverse. There are plenty of examples of Poulenc playing Poulenc (among which these do rate as excellent ones), but only one other LP of Poulenc playing Satie, a Boite a Musique release issued only in France. Satie himself made no recordings, so Poulenc remains as close to the source as we can expect to hear, and the lack of pretense and "effect" in his performance is illuminating. The Hindemith qualifies as a transfer rather than a reissue, since it has been continuously available since its original publication. This recording surpasses in every way the earlier Hindemith version (currently Everest 3215, in fake stereo). Unfortunately, since I lack much appreciation of Hindemith's later music, there is nothing more I can add as illumination.

Not very much effort has gone into production of this new series.

In all cases the program notes have been taken over from the original releases with only minor modifications if any. I have few complaints about the notes themselves, but we still have no texts for Pierrot Lunaire, the Milhaud "cantata," or Oedipus Rex. I find these omissions shameful, especially since the inclusion of a complete text for the Hindemith Requiem (sung in English) indicates that the texts could have been provided for the others. No discographic information is included for any release except original LP numbers, not even recording dates. While the records have been remastered, the only one dubbed from 78s (the Schoenberg) is still taken from the same old tape, which could have been improved. And I must note one curious flaw, an odd intermittent surface noise present in the outer grooves of all of my review copies. I presume this means my specific records were exposed to some heat in transit, but I'd still advise purchasers to check their copies.

Still, in the end, "The Composer as Performer Series" restores some very valuable material to the catalogues at quite a reasonable price. While I hope Columbia may remedy deficiencies in production in any future releases, I also hope the records will have a good enough sale to justify future releases.

RCA has just handed record collectors their bicentennial gift in the form of a series of eight Victrola records, the series entitled "Victrola America." I hate to be churlish, but not all of them are tremendously valuable. Least so, for my taste, is AVM1-1737, on which Toscanini conducts Grofé's Grand Canyon Suite and Gershwin's An American in Paris. Both were recorded in 1945, and the sound quality is quite acceptable, although there is some background rumble in the Grofé. This seems to be nearly all the American music Toscanini recorded; a cursory search of catalogs shows only Barber's Adagio for Strings missing. I find this a sad commentary on what American audiences demanded from a conductor who had a major career in America for nearly thirty years.

I don't think you can do much one way or the other with Grofé's masterpiece of kitsch, so if you want to hear Toscanini conduct it, it won't hurt you. The Gershwin isn't particularly wrong or offensive, but it's pretty flat. I think this piece is much better music than Toscanini shows it to be.

On AVM1-1739, we have all of Serge Koussevitzky's recordings of music by Aaron Copland: Appalachian Spring Suite (1945); A Lincoln Portrait, with Melvyn Douglas as narrator (1946); and El Salón México (1938). The association between composer and conductor was historic and productive, and deserves to be documented. All the performances have been on LP before, but the earlier editions are quite scarce, and these recordings were divided between two issues.

We may credit Koussevitzky with remarkably effective performances

of works he was presenting for the first time. However, I must say that El Salón México is done with more care than verve; a number of recent performances have been more effectively vulgar. And for my taste, A Lincoln Portrait is ruined by Douglas's melodramatic delivery, which sometimes verges on hysteria. That leaves the ballet suite, which is utterly lovely.

To me, the gem of the series (in the non-vocal department) is AVMI-1740, "Gershwin Plays Gershwin." Here we have, for the first time on LP, the world premiere recording of the Rhapsody in Blue, recorded acoustically in 1924. Like the electrical version of 1927 (most recently available on LP as LPV-555, a Whiteman collection), this performance was abridged to fit on two 12" 78rpm sides. The interesting difference is that the 1924 version used the original scoring for Whiteman's jazz band, while by 1927 the music had been rescored for a larger ensemble. (Both versions were arranged by Grofé.) I greatly prefer the original scoring, which is "jazzier" and seems more appropriate for the music. So, although Gershwin's piano is heard far more clearly in the electrical recording, this premiere recording is very much welcome.

The next item is An American in Paris, with the "RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra" conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret, a close associate of the composer. This too was a world premiere. It hasn't been on LP since 10" LPT 29. Maybe Shilkret was no Toscanini, but he knew how the music should go—and if he had any trouble, Gershwin was present at the recording to advise him. (The composer also plays the tiny celeste solo.) This is one of those "just right" interpretations, and I find it a corrective not only to Toscanini's noncommitment but also to the overblown and overrated Bernstein performance. The sound quality is still remarkably good.

Side 2 presents Gershwin solos: the Three Preludes, and arrangements of four songs each from the shows Oh, Kay! and Tip-Toes. (I am a bit disappointed that Victrola left off the brief solo excerpt from Rhapsody in Blue which originally filled out the Preludes disc. This fragment has yet to appear on LP.) Oddly enough, these solos are English Columbia recordings; they appear on RCA through some complicated licensing arrangement which ran from EMI in England to Monmouth-Evergreen in the U. S. No matter; at least we have them. Gershwin was a superb pianist; his feeling for the jazz rhythms of his music (some of the song arrangements are excellent ragtime) is no more important than the unsentimental approach. The famous Prelude No. 2 is not the gushy nocturne we have sometimes heard but a charming little piece. In short, for what it reveals of the composer's intentions as well as the musical pleasure it offers, this is a very important release.

Many other music lovers sharing my dismay, will have felt that of the half-dozen famous conductors who died in 1962 the

death of Max Goberman was one of our greatest deprivations. At the time of his death, Goberman was plowing the accumulated income from his Broadway musical comedy conducting into a tremendously ambitious series of recordings, which would have included the complete works of Vivaldi and Corelli and all the symphonies of Haydn. The Vivaldi still seems a monstrous project (one wonders if it will ever be done, or indeed if it ever should be done), but these days with two complete sets of Haydn's symphonies accomplished it is easy to take such a project lightly. Imagine instead the determination of a man attempting the feat for the first time, with no financial backing but his own. Just how feasible it actually was at the time, we may deduct from the success of the project—or lack thereof. The recordings were licensed by Columbia, which brought out the first 22 symphonies on the budget Odyssey label. The one gap in Goberman's series up to that number, No. 18, was newly recorded by Charles Mackerras, who was supposedly to complete the recordings; but after the first eight records the series ended abruptly. Fortunately, they remain available, but there were evidently not enough sales for Columbia to continue the series.

Now two of the middle symphonies, Nos. 48 and 56, have suddenly appeared from a most unlikely source: CBS Classics, in England (61661). This seems particularly odd since those of the Goberman Haydn symphonies which were previously issued by CBS Classics have long since been deleted. The explanation is the enthusiasm of Christopher Dymont, who wrote the program notes for the new release, including a tribute to Goberman.

Well, the record is a marvel. Right from the beginning of No. 48, the famed "Maria Theresa" Symphony, we hear the fabulous horn playing which led Goberman to choose the Vienna State Opera Orchestra for his Haydn series, and the performance takes off from there. Comparing it with the superb old Wöldike recording (London LL-844), I am surprised to find the few points of discernable difference in Goberman's favor, particularly his taking of repeats omitted by Wöldike. The recording, too, is marvellous, with excellent clarity and the delicious capturing of dialogue between Goberman's divided first and second violins. As for the overside No. 56, with no nickname and nothing but its superb content to recommend it, the performance is simply unrivalled in my experience. The record is well worth the trouble of ordering from England, where as I write its price is about the same as the normal selling price for a U. S. budget label record. But if you're interested, act fast; these odd English releases have a way of disappearing from the lists extremely fast.

I was not too surprised to see Alfred Cortot's famous recordings of the Liszt Sonata and the Chopin Third Sonata reissued, at last, on LP in Germany. I was a bit surprised, though, when the same

material turned up in the U.S. (Seraphim 60241). Of the many Cortot LP reissues published in Europe, this is only the third one EMI has chosen to publish here.

It is a welcome release, if not consistently Cortot at his greatest. I regard the Liszt Sonata, recorded in 1929, as a noble failure. The pianist's conception is obviously heroic and worthy, but too often technical limitations get in his way, crippling some of the big moments and thereby reducing the scale of the music. The Chopin, recorded four years later, is as secure technically as it is musically, and certainly stands as one of the finest realizations of this music on records. Sound quality of the dubbings is typically inhibited, with both the highs and the body of the piano tone somewhat reduced along with the surface noise, but it's a listenable enough sample of the genre, sufficient to convey the interpretations.

Vox's licensing arrangement with EMI has just provided us with a delectable collection of Mozart by the Busch Chamber Players under Adolf Busch's direction (Turnabout THS 65058). The works are the Serenata Notturna, K. 239; Adagio and Fugue in c, K. 546; and Concerto No. 14, in E flat, K. 449, with Rudolf Serkin as soloist. The serenade is elegant and charming, if a trifle aggressive at moments, and the Adagio and Fugue is wonderfully dramatic. Still, I think Serkin's playing of the concerto, with Busch's alert collaboration, is the highlight of the disc.

The dubbed sound, while not free from surface noise, is thoroughly listenable and seems to have been re-equalized with some expertise. Apparently this record, like Szigeti's Bloch Concerto (THS 65007), was dubbed especially for Vox and has not been issued elsewhere on LP. I'd say we are lucky to have it.

Two recent LP releases have brought the discography of Artur Schnabel on LP closer to completion. The first of these, Rococo 5370, brings together the entire series of Lieder by Brahms, Schumann and Schubert recorded by Schnabel and his wife, Therese Behr Schnabel. These were nearly Artur Schnabel's first recordings (he recorded two Beethoven concerti earlier in the year), but they were the last by Mrs. Schnabel, who was a decade older than her husband and had already retired from active concertizing. Her voice is already that of an old woman, and its lack of support will give the listener some painful moments. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the magnificent artistry of both Schnabels here. In Schubert's Der Doppelgänger, for example, we hear how the singer's magnificent conception overcomes her lack of vocal resources, and how her husband's playing "with the ears" transforms a simple sequence of chords into a frightening experience. This level of musicianship beggars description.

The record is filled out with some interesting material. One of Therese Behr's 1904 G&T records, D'Albert's trivial song Zur Drossel

sprach der Fink, gives evidence that while the basic quality of the voice remained unchanged through the years, it was a far better controlled instrument when she made her reputation. The accompanist on this record is not named, and collectors have been wondering for years whether it is Artur Schnabel or not. There is no firm evidence either way, but the couple was already concertizing together in 1904. The way the accompanist rushes an upward-moving figure which appears between the stanzas and again in the postlude does suggest Schnabel, but it is only a suggestion. After all this Schnabel material, who do we get but Felix Weingartner! He is accompanying his then wife, Lucille Marcel, in two of his own songs, and dull music they are indeed. Still, it is a rare opportunity to hear Marcel, with her husband conducting, in these very early recordings; Schäfers Sonntaglied is Weingartner's very first recording, made in Vienna in 1910, while Du bist ein Kind was made in New York in 1913.

Rococo's sound is considerably above average for this label, but unfortunately all the recordings by the Schnabels are made from fibred copies, with resultingly high surface hiss. I can testify that the weakness of sound on these recordings stems from the originals; the dubbings are good, if you can stand the noise.

A.G. Ross's notes are strange. He devotes much of his discussion of Schnabel to denigrating his musicianship and promoting his compositions! The notes on Mrs. Schnabel give only sketchy details of her career, and the date given for the recordings is wrong (1933 is given, but they were made in November of 1932). Ross also refers to other 1904 records by Mrs. Schnabel as rumors, and states that "so far no definite proof has been received that such recordings exist or who has them!" I see no reason to doubt the G&T catalog listings for a total of 6 titles, all complete with issue numbers; and I myself have heard one additional record at Historical Sound Recordings, Yale University Library. These Behr's records are very scarce, but they did exist!

Even more newsworthy than the Rococo release is a new item from the Bruno Walter Society, BWS-724, which presents four recordings by Schnabel that have never before been published in any form! The Beethoven Polonaise in C and Andante Favori are unpublished HMV recordings, which were listed in my Schnabel discography (PIANO QUARTERLY, Winter 1973-4). The Beethoven Bagatelle, Op. 126, No. 4, comes from an Armed Forces Radio transcription; and so, I presume, does the finale of Schubert's Sonata in a, Op. 42, D. 845. (The Bagatelle is not mentioned on the jacket, but it's there on the label and record.) None of these will have much lasting influence on Schnabel's reputation, perhaps, but those of us who love his art will be extremely pleased to hear them since all are entirely characteristic. (It may be heart-breaking to have only the Schubert finale, but that was all that was broadcast.)

The record is filled with a live performance of the Schumann Piano Concerto, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by

Wallenstein. This performance is already familiar from a previous release on the MJA label. In neither case is the sound quality outstanding, nor is the performance Schnabel's greatest achievement, but it is still worthy of attention. I find BWS's sound marginally cleaner, but the Schnabel collector will need both records, since more live performances of Schubert pieces occupy the reverse of the MJA.

Another BWS release of Schnabel material formerly published by MJA appears as BWS-723. Here we have the same coupling of Mozart Concertos Schnabel was to record at his last sessions in 1950, No. 20, K. 466, and No. 24, K. 491. In K. 466, George Szell conducts the New York Philharmonic; in K. 491 the Los Angeles Philharmonic is again conducted by Wallenstein. Only the Schnabel completist will feel he needs either the MJA or BWS releases, since the studio performances of these works by Schnabel have been recently reissued in the Turnabout Historical Series, and they are among the most magnificent performances Schnabel ever committed to discs. But these performances are magnificent, too.

In K. 466, MJA's sound is actually somewhat better in quality than BWS's, but the MJA is afflicted with an electronic buzz through much of its length which is absent in the BWS. In K. 491, the situation is reversed, the BWS sound having somewhat more depth and clarity than the MJA. In neither case do these begin to approach high fidelity (another reason for preferring the Turnabout as a first choice), but the sound is adequate to convey the interpretations.

The Bruno Walter Society has provided us with a momento of Serge Koussevitzky in its album SID-730 (2 records), devoted to Tchaikovsky's 4th and 6th Symphonies. Although not credited, the orchestra is undoubtedly the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Koussevitzky devotees will undoubtedly snap up copies of this album without waiting for the rest of this review. Others are advised to proceed with extreme caution. Not being a member of the Koussevitzky cult, I don't see much to get excited about in these performances, although I realize I have my biases in other directions. They seem to me rather straightforward, for the most part lacking in any outstanding qualities whether positive or negative. I don't like the very fast tempo for the second theme of the first movement of No. 4, but for that matter just last week I heard a broadcast of this work with the same orchestra conducted by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski which seemed far more exciting throughout, so now you know what's wrong with my ears.

Unfortunately, there is much more wrong with the sonics of this album than with the performances. The date given is 1946, but the opening of the 4th Symphony sounds as though it could just as well

be from 1926. Throughout the album the sound quality is so dull that I played it with my treble control up to maximum, and even that was of only minor assistance. (On my equipment I more often find it necessary to reduce treble than to raise it.) Other variables typical of broadcast transcriptions also intrude from time to time. I can tolerate the abrupt change of surface noise from one transcription side to the next, but not the horrible pitch wobble heard in the "Pathétique" at the end of the first movement and the beginning of the finale. There are also some enormous changes of volume in the first movement of No. 4 which I doubt are the conductor's conception.

All of the flaws described to date may well be inherent in the source material, although the volume changes could have been controlled. However, I wonder if the original transcription had the artificial echo heard throughout the Fourth Symphony. This is disturbing, and in the finale it is increased to the point where I found it unlistenable. (This movement sounds like the right channel of some early rechannelled stereo records, more reverberation than sound.) The producers might also have spared us the long pauses between some movements as well as the abrupt cutoff of the applause after the Sixth Symphony. In short, these records don't seem very useful or enjoyable to me.

Also new from BWS is a coupling of two of Walter Gieseking's pre-war recordings with Hans Rosbaud, the Concerto No. 9 by Mozart and Beethoven's First (RR-411). The playing of the Berlin State Opera Orchestra is not always the finest, but the performances are otherwise superb in every way. The recorded sound is pretty good—as it should be, since the recordings are copied directly from my own earlier issue of the same performances, Parnassus 7, on which the transfers were engineered by David Hancock.

Another BWS set of two records devoted to a famous conductor is RR-443, a Willem Mengelberg collection offering over two hours of material. Contents are Bach's Suite No. 2, Beethoven's Coriolan Overture, Weber's Oberon Overture, Brahms's Tragic Overture, Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, Ravel's Bolero, and Wagner's Tannhäuser and Meistersinger Overtures. The recordings were made from 1928 to 1942 and come from published Columbia and Telefunken originals. The superb acoustics of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw are always evident in these recordings, and surface noise is usually not bad (although it's worse on the later Telefunken records than on the earlier Columbias). Unfortunately, the sound as equalized here tends to favor the upper frequencies at the expense of the lower, so that some of the recordings sound shrill and none have the solid impact of the originals. They remain listenable nonetheless, but I suspect they will please best listeners who have flexible tone controls on their amplifiers.

As for the performances, they are quite characteristic of

Mengelberg throughout, with the positive and negative factors that implies. Playing of the orchestra is always superb, and some of the performances are full of proper fury. The Ravel is surprisingly well controlled, with a moderate tempo and not a trace of hysteria. I would as soon eat nutshells as listen to Mengelberg's Bach, but that's a personal reaction which I know many people do not share.

Incidentally, for those to whom such things matter, none of these BWS releases comes with a single word of annotation. They are available directly from Educational Media, P.O. Box 921, Berkeley, Ca. 94701.

The Bruno Walter Society continues its tributes to Joseph Szigeti with a record labelled, "The Art of Joseph Szigeti, Vol. 5" (WSA-704). These are all transfers from Columbia 78s. My own feeling is that only a Szigeti completist will want this record. The performance of Bach's Sonata No. 2, in a, BWV 1003, is excellent. My own feeling, though, is that Szigeti's late recording of all the Bach unaccompanied violin works (Bach Guild BG-627/9), despite some decline in the violinist's technique, provides more profound and rhythmically alert performances than his earlier recordings. And while I am a great admirer of pianist Andor Földes, his accompaniment for the Debussy Violin Sonata is certainly out-classed by that of Béla Bartók in the live performance by Szigeti and Bartók (Vanguard Everyman SRV-304/5, still in real mono despite Schwann's mistaken listening).

This leaves us with Mozart's Divertimento in B flat, K. 287, which is somewhat rewritten to feature Szigeti's violin solos. This is not the most important music Mozart wrote, and the presentation is obviously somewhat authentic, but Szigeti's musicianship deserves its featured position, and the late Max Goberman conducts a chamber orchestra with his usual expertise. The transfers of all items from 78s are better than adequate in sound and relatively untroubled by surface noise.

The Bruno Walter Society has recently been turning its attention to the work of other conductors. Among these, we now have an all-Beethoven collection of performances by Fritz Busch (RR-396), labelled "The Art of Fritz Busch, Volume 1." One side is occupied by a performance of the Fifth Symphony, recorded in 1950, with "Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra" (of New York?). The performance is excellent overall and adds a new item to the Busch discography, but there are moments where the orchestra has a bit of trouble following Busch's direction and there is a rather odd cut in the finale. The recorded sound is far from outstanding, restricted in both frequency and dynamics and plagued by occasional volume drops, but it does convey the performance adequately.

Side two begins with the Egmont Overture, from 1946, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This superb performance was previously issued on a limited circulation disc sponsored by the Friends of Fritz Busch Society, but the BWS issue is obviously taken from a different original source with far better sound and less surface noise. Finally we have the finale only from the Ninth Symphony, from 1934, with the Danish State Radio Orchestra and Chorus. Apparently only this movement was preserved from the broadcast, and even it is not quite complete, opening with a fade-in a few notes into the movement. The sound is not at all bad for the vintage, and the performance is quite outstanding. We do have a complete Beethoven Ninth with Busch (from 1950, once available on German Heliodor) which pretty well supercedes this movement, except for the magnificent singing of Alexander Kipnis. In short, an oddly mixed release with a strange variety of unmatched sound quality, but a recommendable sampling of Busch's art.

I am not so enthusiastic about "The Art of Erich Kleiber, Volume 1" (IGI-330), although the sound quality of this 1955 concert is excellent. In it, Kleiber conducts the Berlin State Opera Orchestra in Handel's Berenice Overture and yet another Beethoven Fifth. As everybody knows, we already have a Kleiber Beethoven Fifth, with an even better orchestra (the Concertgebouw) and in even better sound; furthermore, the Concertgebouw recording remains currently available on one side of Decca Eclipse ECS 518. My personal response to Kleiber's conception of this work grows less favorable as time passes; while still responding to the superb energy he evokes, I find his relentless drive and lack of rhetoric ultimately stifling. In short, I would consider this release essential only for completists and fanatics.

Since Rococo Records doesn't send the ARSC review copies, the only records of theirs reviewed here are the few I actually go out and buy. One such item I couldn't resist was Rococo 2049. "Famous Pianists." This lists one item, the Liszt Rigoletto Paraphrase, played by Annette Essipova (1851-1914), pupil and wife of Leschetizky and teacher of, among others, Prokofieff. I checked the program note booklet (by Leo Riemens) and read, "Her records are of extreme rarity, and will be quite new to the majority of collectors." I hadn't known she made any. Unfortunately, I was right. The selection is just a piano roll, and very poorly recorded at that.

There are some other interesting items on the LP, but it's the usual Rococo mish-mash, some good, some terrible. First we have four recordings by Saint-Saëns; I believe these are all of his piano solos. They are in varying qualities of sound, but fortunately, my favorite, the Marche militaire française from the Suite Algérienne, sounds excellent. This is amazing playing for an 83-year-old pianist. Saint-Saëns is followed by another famous French pianist, Louis Diémer, who plays his own Valse de concert. Unfortunately, it is a stupefyingly trivial piece, all but drowned in surface noise.

Next we hear Wilhelm Kienzl, composer of the famous opera Der Evangelimann, in his only piano solo recordings. They are two of his own little piano pieces, sweet music played with marvellous Viennese charm. These are the only electrical recordings on the LP (except for Essipova). Kienzl is followed by Ethel Leginska, a personal favorite of mine. Riemans says, "Even her 78 discs (though recorded electrically) were neglected by collectors," but what we have are two acoustics, part of Liszt's 13th Hungarian Rhapsody and a Gavotte by Leschetizky. (I wonder if this latter is a transcription.) Some of Leginska's vitality comes across, but the recording is painful, so faint and disfigured by rumble I could hardly listen to it. It sounds like a 78 played with a stereo cartridge and an LP stylus, and I wouldn't bet that isn't the case.

The recital concludes with four recordings by Xavier Scharwenka. These apparently appear on LP for the first time, which I find surprising. Riemans says Scharwenka recorded seven sides, so where are the other three? Fortunately, Scharwenka's own Polish Dance is included. I don't think these are great performances, but the dance is the best of them. Sound on these selections is reasonably faithful to the old Columbia originals, and quite listenable.

Collector and private producer Thomas Clear has just reissued the first of his LP reissue sets, TLC 2580, with a new, fourth record. The set now sells for \$15 a copy, but owners of the original edition can order the new record alone for \$5 (from Thomas L. Clear, 579 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016). The new release contains some of the most interesting and worthwhile material Clear has so far reissued. I was most impressed with the opening selection, a somewhat abridged performance of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2 played by Vasa Prihoda, with an unnamed conductor and orchestra, taken from acoustic Polydor originals. Limited sound or not (and the sound isn't bad), this is fabulous fiddling. A few other highlights are a "Carmen Fantásie" (not Sarasate's) brilliantly played by the eleven-year-old Ferenc von Vecsey; Isidor Lotto's La Fileuse, a silly imitation of Paganini's Moto Perpetuo, dashed off by one Carlos Sedano; and half of Vieuxtemps' Fantasia Appassionata beautifully played by the Belgian virtuoso Hector Clockers. I share neither Clear's love of Mischa Elman's playing nor his admiration for Sarasate's silly Jota de Pablo even though it is well played by Duci de Kerekjarto, but that's show biz, I guess.

As usual, one has to put up with various crudities in the dubbing, like the pitch waver at the opening of selections by Harry Solloway and Ovide Musin, the abrupt cutoff at the end of the Solloway selection, and the excessive surface noise on some of the acoustic material. We get limited range recorded sound on these but wide-range hiss and scratch which could have been filtered. But everything on the LP is at least listenable, and the best of the performances are superb.

As nearly anyone who walks into a record store knows these days, nostalgia records are becoming very popular, particularly material from old radio broadcasts and movie soundtracks. Hundreds of these LPs are being published, mostly by companies with erratic distribution and no Schwann listings. Recently I've had the chance to sample material from two of these labels.

Memorabilia Records gives a California address (Box 24, Northridge, Ca. 91324), but the records are pressed and distributed by Springboard International of New Jersey. The record I obtained, MLP-732, is a collection of W.C. Fields material. There are no program notes, just a listing of 35 Memorabilia releases with the catalog numbers for records, cassettes, and eight-track cartridges. I hope the other 34 records are better and more worthwhile productions than the Fields release. All of the broadcast material has been published on previous LPs (by Columbia and Mark 56). In addition, Fields's 78 rpm studio recording of the famous "Temperance Lecture" is worked into one of the radio programs as if it were part of the broadcast, obviously a deliberate fraud since the label reads "ORIGINAL Radio Shows."

I can say a bit more in favor of four releases from Mar-Bren Sound Co. (420 Pelham Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14610). These records, available directly from the company at \$6.48 each, are at least excellently processed, and the sound quality is much better than that on the miserable Memorabilia record. Further, I greatly enjoyed MBR 741, two Fred Allen broadcasts which prove that Allen's reputation is not at all exaggerated. They are excellent.

But what is one to say of MBR 743, a Spike Jones record with hardly a laugh to be had? There is some very lame humor (the jokes based around a guest appearance by Tex Williams are positively painful), but most of the selections aren't even intended to be funny; they are just mediocre pop band music. I have memories of Jones doing fabulous things in broadcasts, and I wish some of them were here. MBR 742 presents two old Amos 'n Andy programs. I am sure that I will not be the only listener to find them not only racist but unfunny. Finally, on MBR 747, we have a one-hour dramatized version of National Velvet with Mickey Rooney and Elizabeth Taylor. I must be too cynical for such stuff; I couldn't listen through the entire record even once. Mar-Bren, like some other producers of such records, makes much of the fact that they include the original commercials with their programs. Why this is thought to be a virtue I will certainly never understand.

I don't mean to be too negative about these records. They are decently produced and they will certainly appeal to collectors of the appropriate types of radio material. Perhaps it's just my jaded ears that find most of the material hopelessly dated and uninteresting.

Yet another "nostalgia" label enters the rather vast competition for our attention with the publication of Legends 1000/1, a tribute to Marilyn Monroe (\$6.50 from Legends, P.O. Box 448, New York, N.Y. 10008). Included among the 23 selections are a few complete musical numbers, snatches of song and dialogue from movie sound tracks (including an excerpt from the last, unfinished film, "Something's Gotta Give,") and bits from broadcasts. A few of the items are so fragmentary they seem hardly worth preserving, but the collection does have a wonderful cumulative effect, especially since every single item is accompanied by an appropriate photo of the actual scene or event. Sound quality is naturally variable, but considerable work seems to have gone into the engineering to make the collection listenable straight through.

I make no pretense to objectivity. Like most teenaged American boys of my generation, I was hopelessly in love with Marilyn Monroe, and the infatuation is hardly diminished in the decade and a half since her death. Sure, the singing in the opening three numbers (complete songs from studio sessions) isn't the greatest in the world, although it is attractive and thoroughly professional. And perhaps some listeners with less emotional attachment will be less impressed by the wit shown in a 1956 interview or in some of the sound track excerpts. But I don't care. I finished this record with a lump in my throat, and I'm sure there are millions who will join me. Many thanks to Legends for the beautiful production, including a front cover photo which is enough in itself to break my heart.

Leslie Gerber