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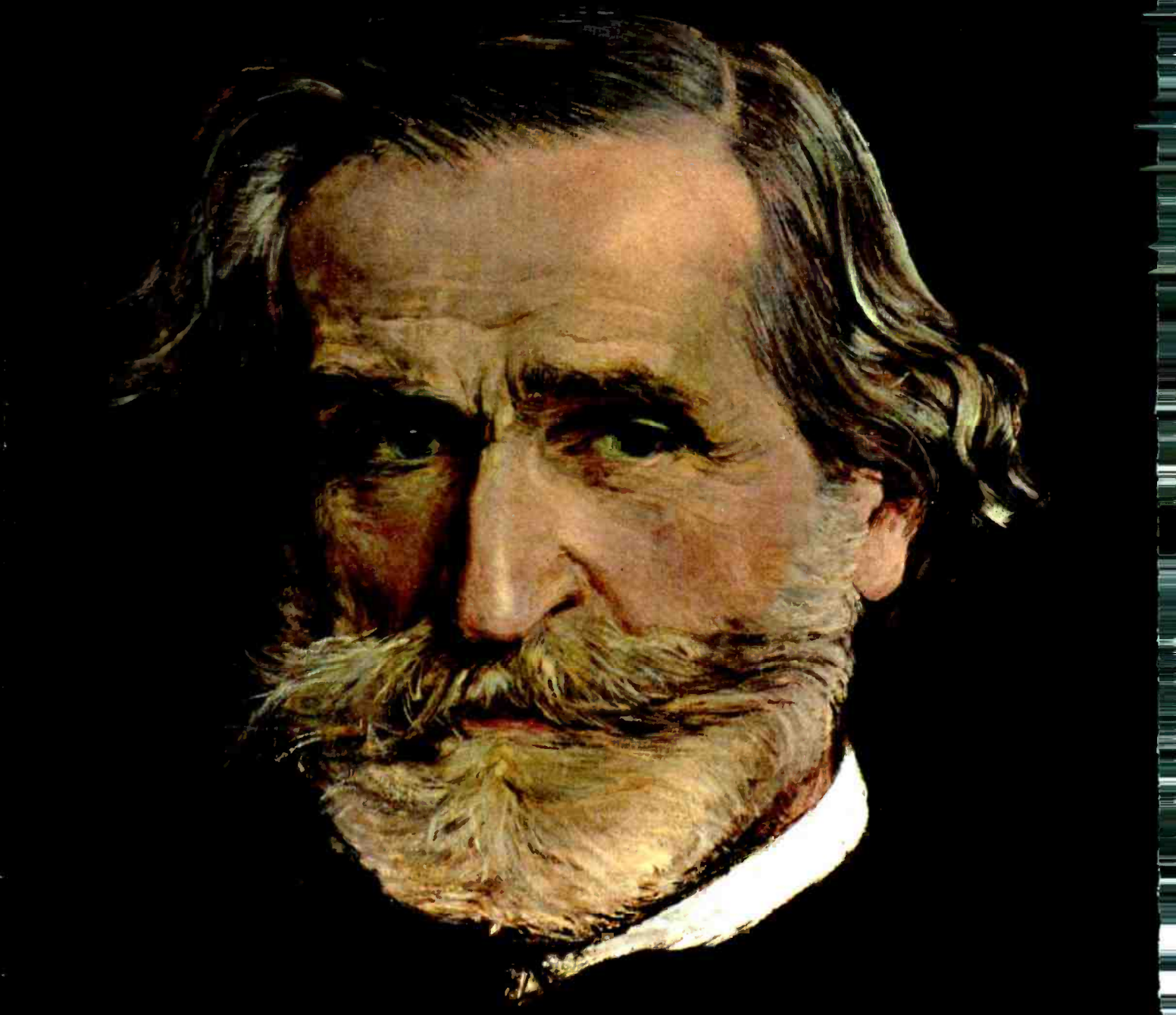

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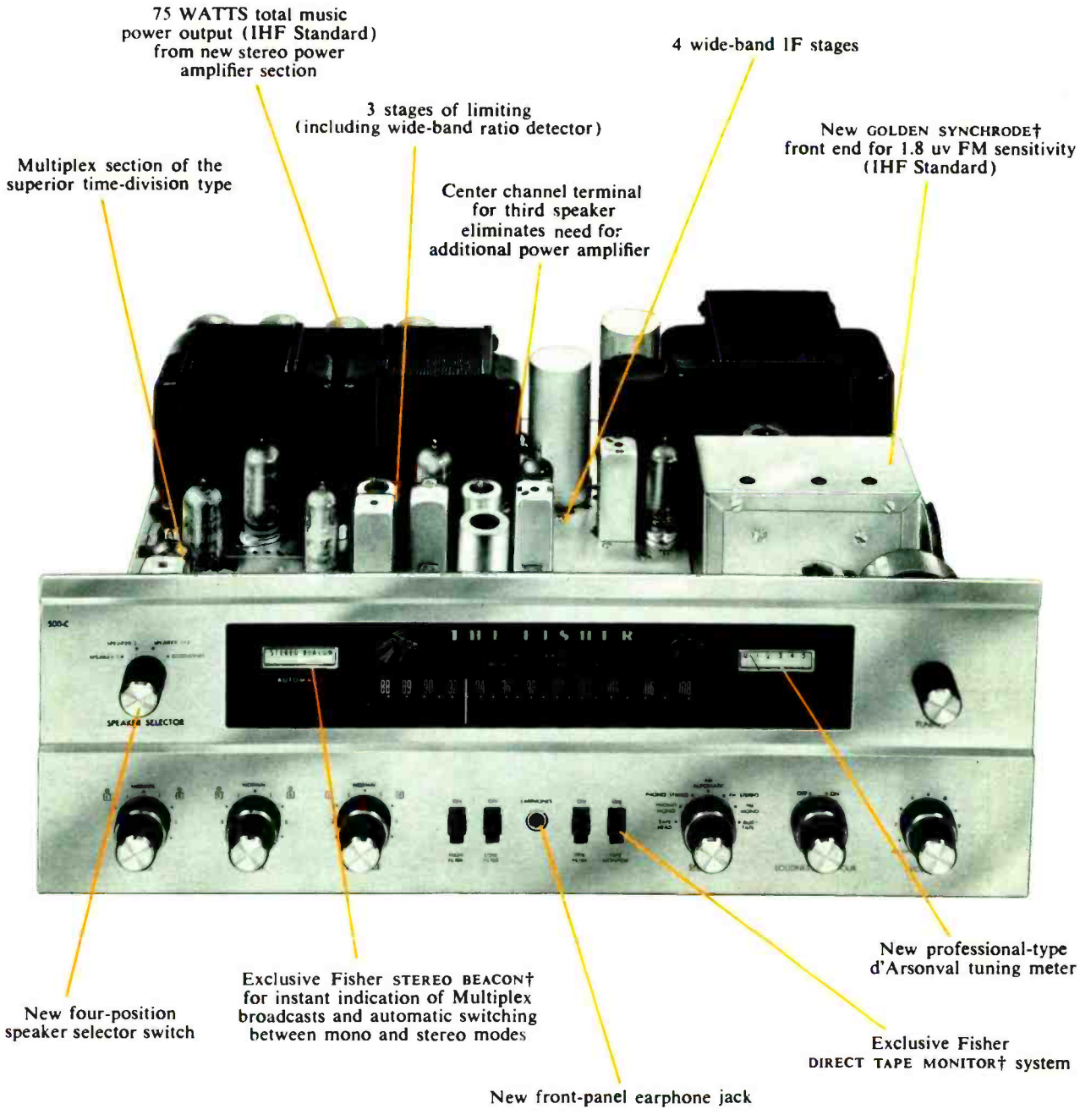

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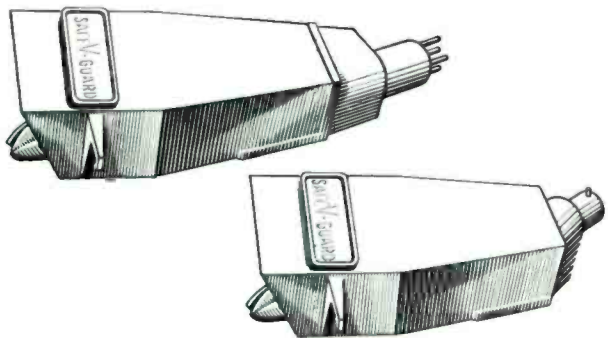

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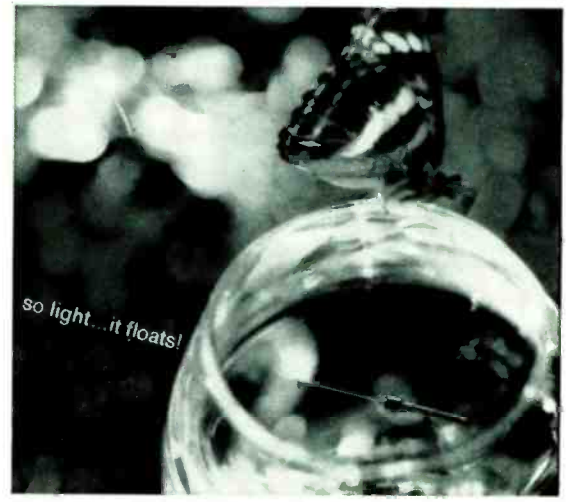

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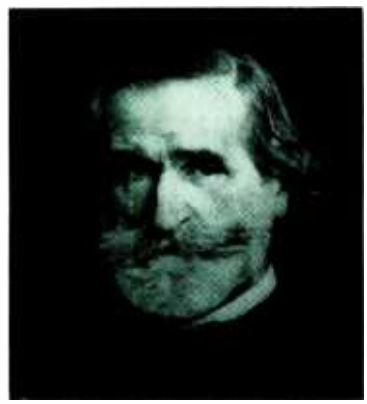

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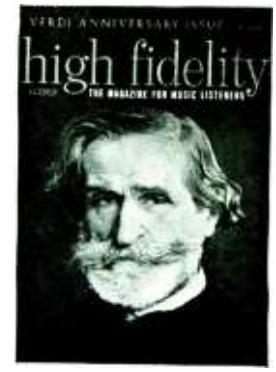

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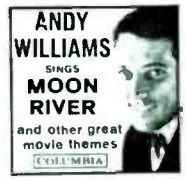

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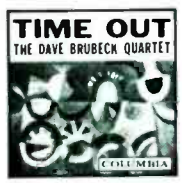

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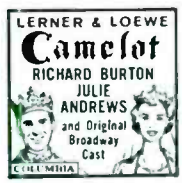

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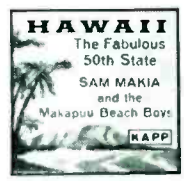

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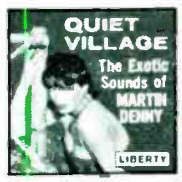

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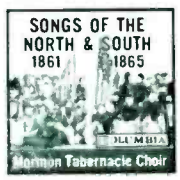

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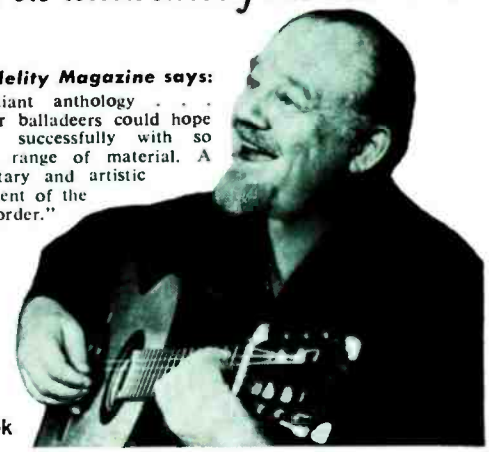

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CIRCLE 52 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

AUTHORitatively Speaking

When we asked Editor in Chief **Roland Gelatt**, whose account of a visit to the places Verdi frequented appears on p. 70, what we were to be allowed to say about him in this column, he informed us we could announce that he was really *there*. We regard this statement as remarkably unhelpful. To anyone who reads "A Discursive Tour of Verdi's Italy" it will be perfectly obvious that its author was there—and not only as a corporeal presence. In fact, we would have liked to title this article "A Passionate Pilgrim," à la Henry James, but Mr. G. disapproved. We're going to risk a private confiteor, though: we strongly suspect that all who labored for this gala anniversary issue were animated by a profound and personal commitment to the legacy of Verdi.

With special pleasure we present among this month's roster of authors the distinguished Italian novelist **Alberto Moravia** (see "The Anachronism of Verdi," p. 79). Born in 1907, Mr. Moravia became an outspoken critic of the Fascist regime, which banned the sale of most of his books in Italy, and in 1943 forced him to flee from Rome. Since the war his work has become widely known to English-speaking readers with the publication in this country (by Farrar, Straus, and Co.) of such works as *The Woman of Rome*, *The Time of Indifference*, and, most recently, *The Empty Canvas*. He now makes his home in Rome, writing regularly on music and films as well as producing fiction.

The translation of Mr. Moravia's article was done for us by **William Weaver**, frequent contributor to these pages and editor of Italy's leading record magazine, *Discoteca*. We also owe to Mr. Weaver the article on Verdi's librettists which appears herein on p. 109 and our obligations are further compounded by the help he gave us in planning this issue, in acting as liaison with various persons and institutions in Italy, and in acquiring many of the photographs which enhance these pages. HIGH FIDELITY's readers will be interested in knowing that Mr. Weaver's translation of five Verdi librettos was published by Doubleday-Anchor Books this summer.

To Assistant Editor **Shirley Fleming** goes credit for "A Noisy Bantling in Old New York," p. 82, but Miss Fleming asks that we make acknowledgement here to **Leo Lerman**, an authority on New York's theatrical history, who had originally planned to write this account of America's early Verdi productions but who was prevented by illness. Though his doctors forbade his putting pen to paper, Mr. Lerman was allowed to give us much helpful documentary material and good advice. Our thanks to him and to Miss Fleming—who became an authority herself on said history in remarkably short order.

Verdi was born 150 years ago, and it seemed to us appropriate to juxtapose with him that other operatic giant who shares the same anniversary—Richard Wagner. For "Class of 1813," by **Peter J. Pirie**, turn to p. 90. Those who recall Mr. Pirie's essay on Falstaff in music (January 1963) will welcome from him an expanded treatment of the Italian composer and will be prepared for the fresh enlightenment he brings to the German.

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

ROME

In the oppressive heat of June and July in Rome, the spacious air-conditioned studios of RCA Italiana, just outside the city on the Via Tiburtina, were a welcome and relaxing haven—a haven, that is, for the visitor. For recording engineer Richard Mohr and his staff, for the artists gathered there, for the Rome Symphony Orchestra (an amalgam of the Radio Italiana orchestra, Rome's best, with elements from the city's other two orchestras, the Santa Cecilia and the Opera's) the atmosphere was almost as feverish indoors as in the sun outside. Georg Solti had flown in like a lion from Covent Garden to conduct two Verdi operas. A relentless perfectionist, Solti was bent on getting crisp performances out of the sweating musicians; and he did, thanks in part to frequent, multilingual admonitions (*"Cari, ce C sharp est troppo forte!"*). With this kind of impetus, the first scene of *Falstaff*, for example, was recorded in one take. Naturally, that take came after patient, exhaustive rehearsal.

New Verdi Recordings. *Falstaff* was the second of the two operas recorded. The first was a new *Rigoletto*, with Robert Merrill in the title role. Anna Moffo was Gilda; Alfredo Kraus (still unheard at the Metropolitan, but a regular at La Scala) was the Duke; Rosalind Elias, the Maddalena; Ezio Flagello, the Sparafucile. Following the new and laudable trend in record making, the *Rigoletto* (like the later *Falstaff*) was done absolutely complete. A number of ensemble passages which are usually cut will be heard here, and tenor Kraus sings both verses of *"Possente amor,"* the cabaletta that comes after *"Parmi veder le lagrime."* Too bad that we can't have a record of Solti's whistling this cabaletta, as he did during rehearsal, complete with vivid coloratura.

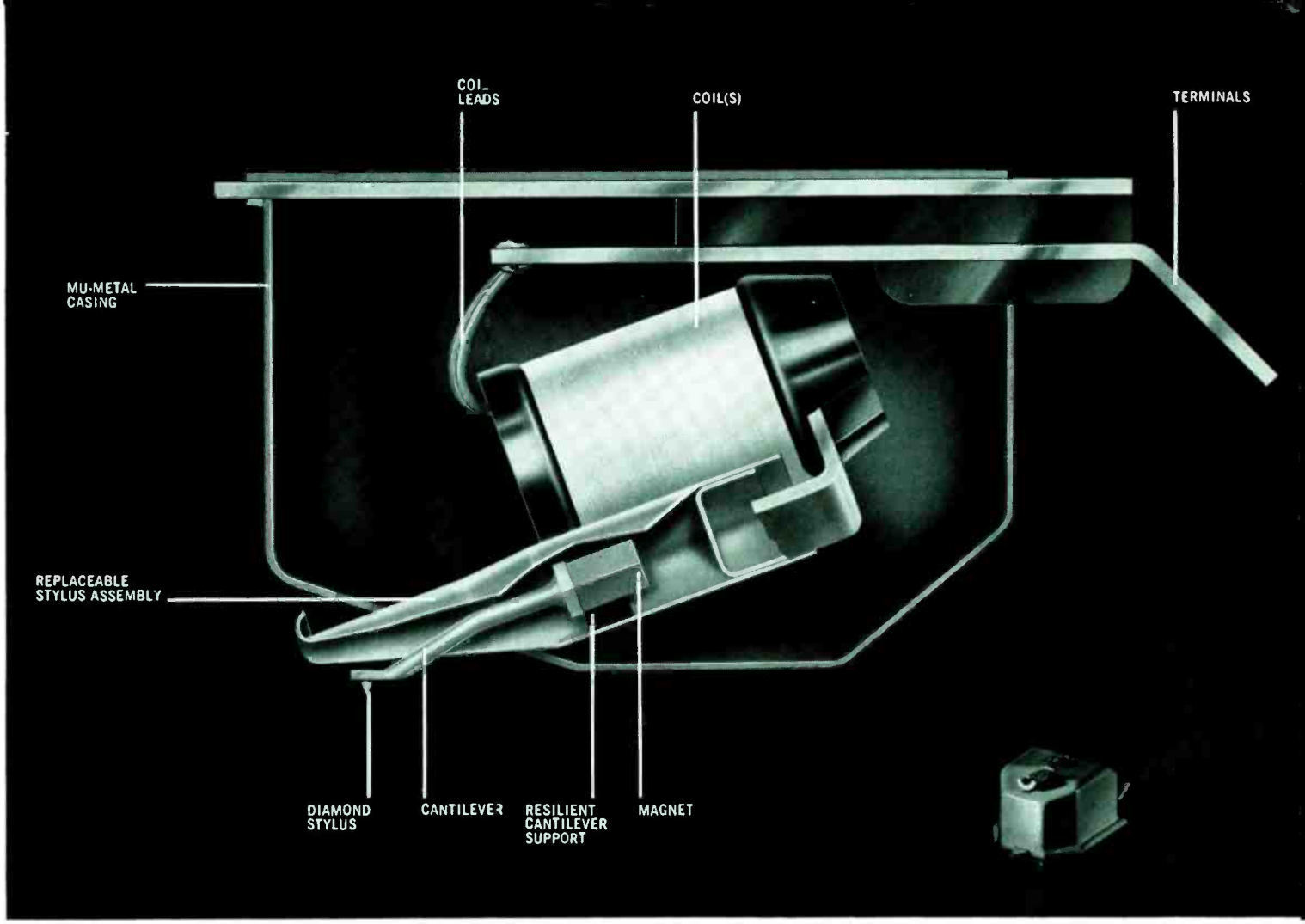
When *Rigoletto* ended, Miss Moffo went off to Vienna for more recording [see Kurt Blaukopf's report from Austria in this issue, p. 26] but Solti and most of the cast stayed on for the *Falstaff*. Robert Merrill was Ford, a role he has never sung in the theatre (and which is all too often sung by singers of less than star quality, though the part is a pivotal one). Kraus went from being the Duke of Mantua to the amorous, and more faithful, Fenton. Rosalind Elias was Meg. For the title role, Welsh baritone Geraint Evans came from Covent Garden, where he has often sung the role with Solti, in the Franco Zeffirelli production. Also from Covent Garden came conductor Edward Downes, an assistant of Solti's, to take rehearsals and mold the ensemble. Another member of the London company was tenor John Lanigan, who was Dr. Cajus.

The rest of the cast was Italian (though, as it happens, all are Covent Garden favorites too): Giulietta Simionato, an unforgettable, rakish Mistress Quickly; Ilva Ligabue, a stately Alice; and Mirella Freni, a fresh and moving Nannetta. Miss Freni, after a successful season in London two years ago, made a triumphant return to La Scala last year in the Karajan-Zeffirelli *Bohème*.

With *Falstaff* representing late Verdi and *Rigoletto* the Verdi of the middle years, an unusual and pleasant *omaggio* to the very earliest Verdi was recorded for RCA Italiana by soprano Licia Albanese, who devoted one side of a recital disc to six Verdi songs. These include one (*Non t' accostare all' urna*) which was published in 1838, the year before Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*, was performed at La Scala; another song, *L'Esule*, is from 1839; the other four (*Lo Spazzacamino, La Zingara, Ad una stella*, and *Il Tramonto*) all belong to the year 1845, which makes them contemporaries of *Giovanna d'Arco* and *Alzira*.

Verdian Byways. Except for Miss Albanese's songs, the Verdi recordings last summer were on the beaten track; Italian opera houses, on the other hand, have been exploring the byways. After a brilliantly successful revival of *Attila* last winter, Florence revived *I Masnadieri* during the Maggio Musicale (with an expressionist production—which some people deplored as hideous—by Erwin Piscator). At the end of August a group of youngsters at Venice's "Vacanze musicali" put on *Il Corsaro*, and in September the Umbrian festival, the Sagra Umbra, mounted *Gerusalemme* (Verdi's revised version of *I Lombardi*). Probably

Continued on page 14



COMPLIANCE: can there be too much of a good thing?

Have you any idea of the quality you would hear from a record if the cartridge produced a perfect waveform of the sound groove? Yet, from all the talk you hear, you'd think *stylus compliance* were the only criterion of cartridge performance.

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As stylus compliance is increased, the tone arm also plays a more critical role. If arm friction is high with relation to the compliance of the stylus or—putting it another way—if stylus compliance is so high as to be greater than the arm's own compliance or responsiveness to the spiral action of the groove, the resultant 'drag' will prevent proper tracking. And if stylus force is increased to correct for this condition, the greater force is likely to compress or decenter the cantilever. In either case, distortion is inevitable.

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The stylus has a compliance in the order of 14 x 10^{-6} cm/dyne. Recommended tracking force with most arms ranges from 1.5 to 3 grams. It will, however, track at 1 gram with some arms. A magnesium cantilever is used because of its lighter weight and greater rigidity than aluminum, the material most often used in stylus assemblies.

Price of the Elac 322 stereo cartridge with .52 mil diamond stylus is $49.50. Also available: Elac 222 compatable mono/stereo cartridge with .7 mil diamond stylus at $39.50. At your hi-fi dealer. For further details, write to:

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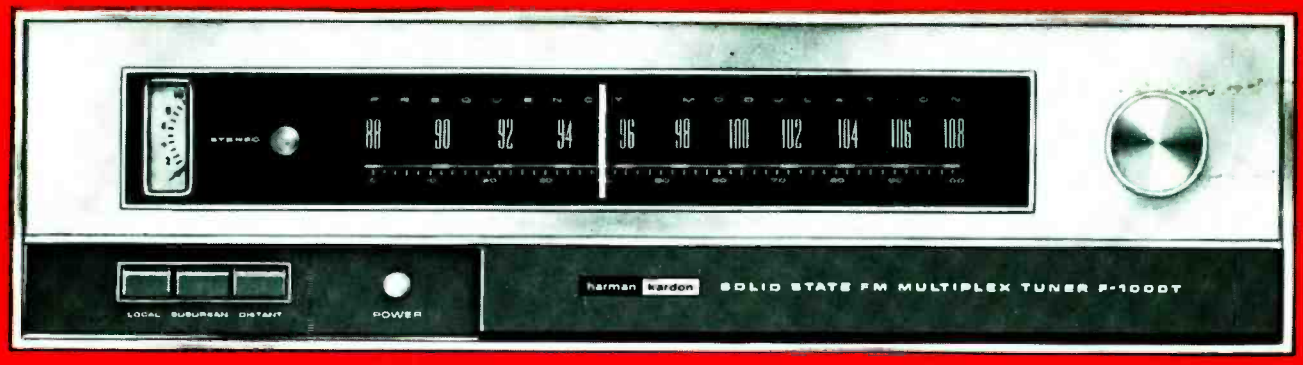

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 10

none of these works has sufficient commercial potential to interest a large record company, but the fact that they are now creeping back towards the repertoire might encourage RCA or EMI or Decca-London to venture at least as far afield as *Ernani* or *Luisa Miller*, which are virtually standard operas in Italy and deserve to be everywhere.

And Non-Verdian Projects. EMI's recordings were post-Verdian. First came sessions for an *Andrea Chénier* starring Franco Corelli, Antonietta Stella, and Mario Sereni (conductor Gabriele Santini), and then a new *Bohème*, with Mirella Freni, Nicolai Gedda, Sereni, and conductor Thomas Schippers. The *Bohème* project had a long and sad history. Originally scheduled several years ago, it was canceled because of the death of Jussi Bjoerling, who was to have been the Rodolfo. Again, in the summer of '62, it was canceled because of the indisposition of Victoria de los Angeles. Mme. de los Angeles was to have participated this year but was prevented by pregnancy. All ended happily, however, with Miss Freni (who should be a revelation as Mimi) taking over for the Spanish soprano and the recording being brought successfully into port.

While EMI was devoting its summer sessions to Verdi's successors, Decca-London was having a pre-Verdi season. In the Teatro della Pergola in Florence, with the orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Erik Smith and Christopher Raeburn of the London staff recorded two Rossini operas (*Cenerentola* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*) and one Bellini (*I Puritani*) wth three of the company's *prime donne*: Giulietta Simionato, as Cenerentola; Joan Sutherland, as Elvira in *I Puritani*; and Teresa Berganza, as the enterprising Italian girl who goes to the Barbary coast. There is, meanwhile, talk of Decca-London Verdi recordings for 1964: rumor mentions a *Nabucco* (probably with Birgit Nilsson) and a *Don Carlo*.

WILLIAM WEAVER

LONDON

In Joan Sutherland's theatrical wardrobe at home hang three luscious Cleopatra costumes and one Cleopatra crown with swan-neck motifs, so designed that a second crown, Ptolemy's, can be fitted into it after Ptolemy's death. I will come back in a moment to the costumes. . . . The Cleopatra in question, Miss Sutherland's latest role for home consumption (and, as she purposes, for export), is heroine of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (1724). Only a limited number of people have had an opportunity to see the Australian-born soprano as the Egyptian queen (and of that more later, too) but a good many persons will soon be able to hear her in the part.

Continued on page 20

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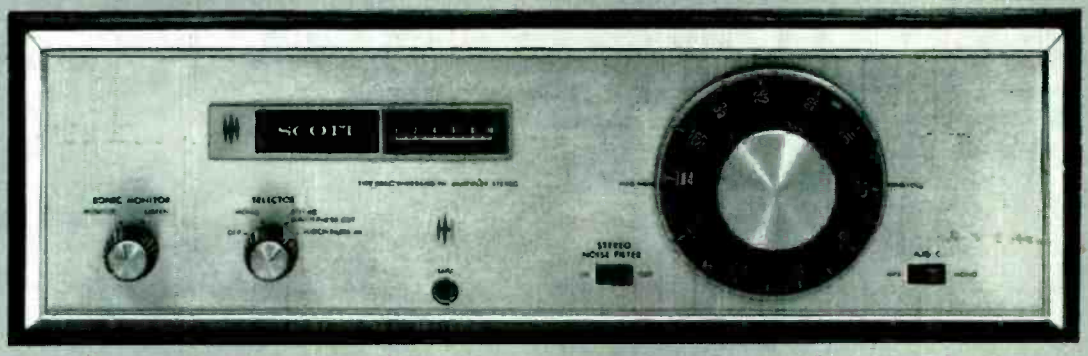
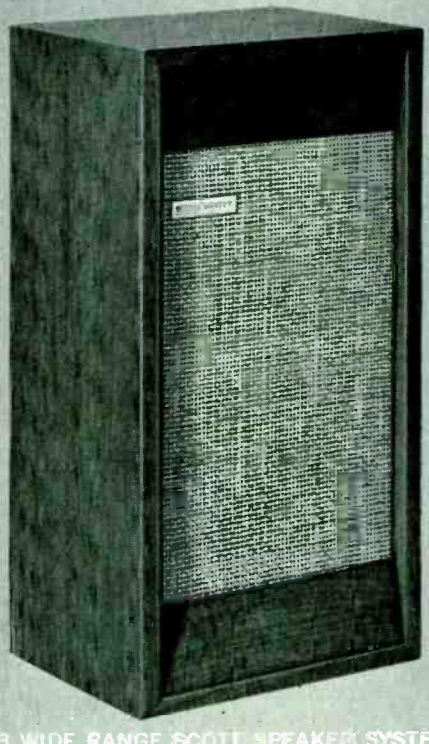


350-C WIDE BAND FM STEREO TUNER

340-B FM STEREO TUNER/70 WATT AMPLIFIER



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NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 14

Not long ago she and her husband Richard Bonynge, the latter with conductor's score under his arm, reported at Decca-London's studio, Broadhurst Gardens, to make a disc of twelve "highlights" from the opera.

I arrived at one of the recording sessions—six were scheduled, all of them in the afternoon in accordance with Miss Sutherland's well-known preference—during a lull before the first take. Not only was the chamber orchestra (including lute, viola da gamba, and viola d'amore) tuning up, but a distinctly non-Handelian voice could be heard, this from a transistor radio on the second bassoonist's knee (telling us that England was 104 for four wickets in Test cricket against the West Indies team at Edgbaston, Birmingham). The alien instrument quieted, the men in their places, and the microphones adjusted, work began in earnest. In sports shirt, slacks, and sandals, Mr. Bonynge took his place on a podium with the orchestra in front of him and a stage for the principals behind—to the eyes of a visitor an unusual arrangement, to say the least, but one having something to do with the acoustics of Decca-London's big and splendid Studio 3. In any case, Mr. Bonynge wasn't troubled by this setup at all; he simply turned sideways and conducted with his left profile towards the band, his right towards the singers.

Coming Back to Handel. "*Venire, bella, per un istante*," opened Miss Sutherland. She was in ringing, incisive form. She wore an exceedingly un-Cleopatrian, beautifully tailored black dress. The black and her pallor and the red of her hair were sheer theatre in themselves (not Handel's theatre, perhaps; Ibsen's, possibly). Out of the six numbers she was to sing, four were done in entirety, the other two cut to first sections only. Ptolemy's single aria was sung full out by Monica Sinclair. Of the "highlights" assigned to Marilyn Horne (Cornelia) and Richard Conrad (Sesto)—both Americans, by the way—Miss Horne's one number was cut, Mr. Conrad's two presented complete. Cuts were made in the sections for Margreta Elkin, the mezzo Caesar. Repeat: mezzo. Handelian opera is one of those odd worlds. Written originally for a *castrato*, Caesar is nowadays a baritone, a mezzo, or a contralto as whim takes or spirit moves.

At the end of her second aria, I intercepted Miss Sutherland in midflight to the control room for playbacks. She carried a green thermos flask. It contained her favorite pick-me-up: strong black coffee, unlaced and unsweetened. She said: "Coming back to Handel is a marvelous tonic for my voice. And not for my voice only. It's a tonic for my voice and me. It helps me to sing the Bellini-Donizetti repertory better."

When Miss Sutherland spoke of "coming back" what she had in mind was her early success (1957) in Handel's *Alcina*

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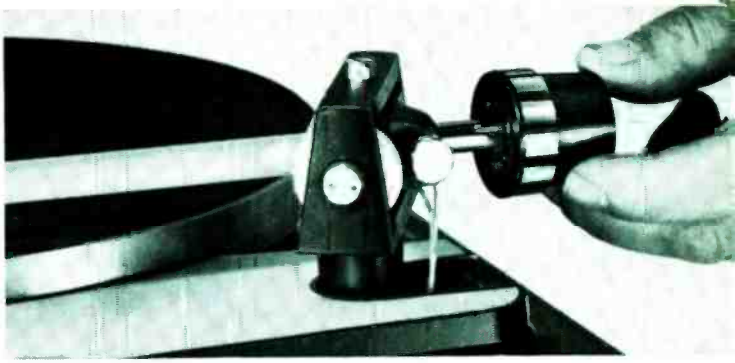

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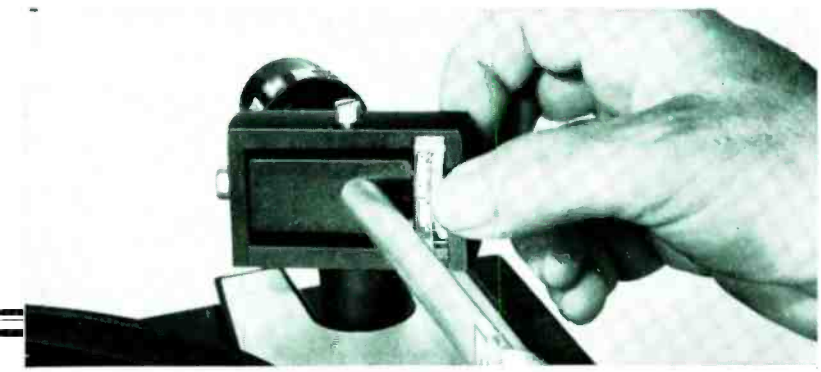

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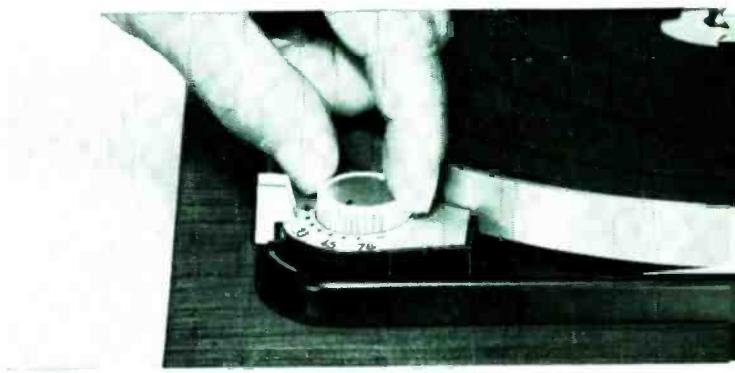

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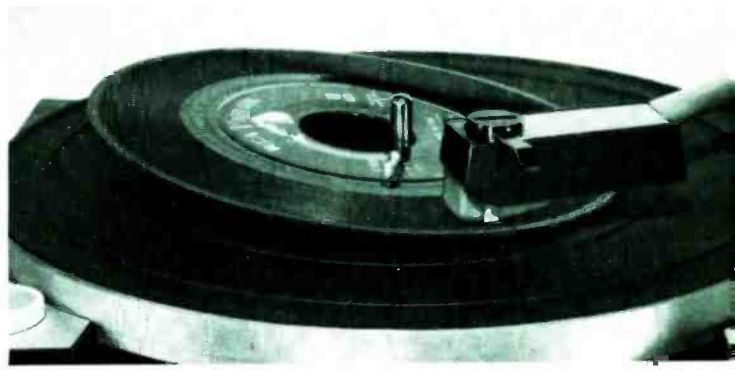

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 20

staged by the new-fledged Handel Opera Society in an exasperating makeshift opera house, the concert room of St. Pancras Town Hall. At that time Charles Farncombe, the Society's musical director, already enormously enthused by the phenomenal brightness and fluency of the Sutherland voice, had to work hard on his committee "to make them realize such a person existed." Her talents had thus far percolated through to only a handful. The *Alcina* first night was precarious. Miss Sutherland had not lived herself into the role. She just about knew the notes but wasn't as happy as she would have liked even about some of those. For her biggest aria, "*Ombre pallide*," at the end of Act II, Bonynge stood in the wings beating out the notes and modeling the phrases, while Farncombe did the same from in front. Next morning several critics and music's outer as well as inner rings were in a rapt state.

Cleopatra's Price. Ever since, Miss Sutherland has had it in mind to do something for the Handel Opera Society in return for what it did for her. When Farncombe started preparing *Giulio Cesare* (which has had strikingly successful revivals in Germany) for production at Sadler's Wells earlier this year, she saw in the Cleopatra role a heaven-sent opportunity. Mr. Farncombe had done a painstaking musicological job. He had collated his working edition from the original score in the British Museum, the original conducting scores in Hamburg, and the original word-books in the Huntington Library in Los Angeles. The score was in Miss Sutherland's hands by November last. Her conclusion: "I'll do the Handel Opera Society three performances of Cleopatra, in production, for nothing. But if I like my Cleopatra costumes, please may I have them for keeps?"

Miss Sutherland liked her Cleopatra costumes very much and, according to bargain, claimed them in fee simple.

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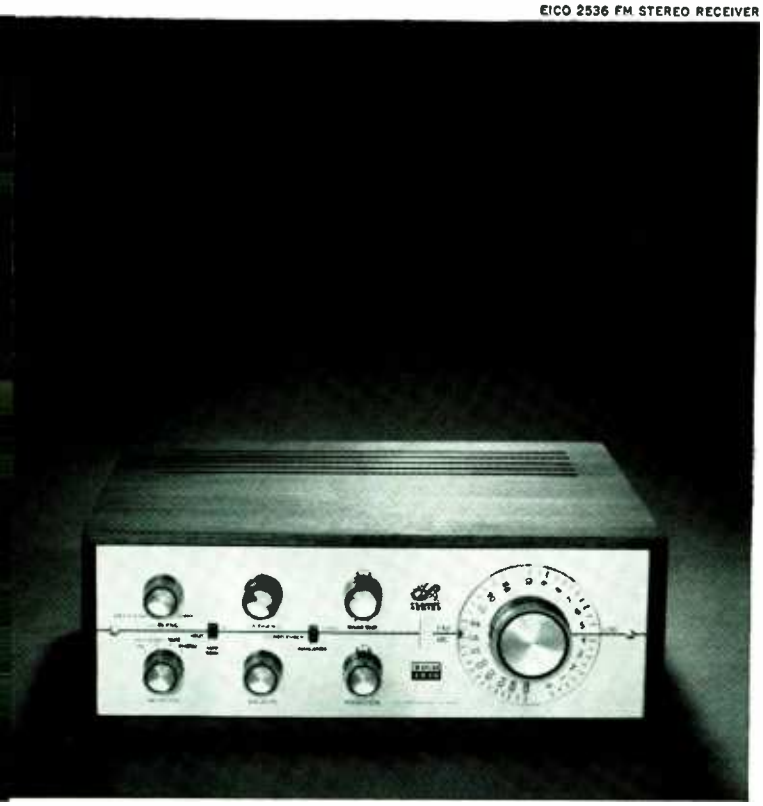

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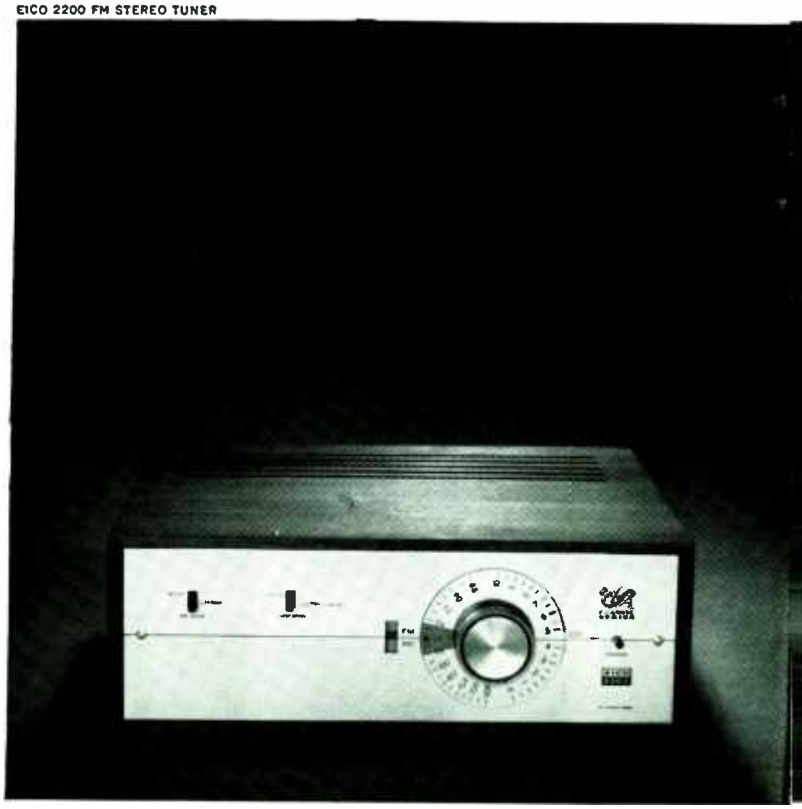

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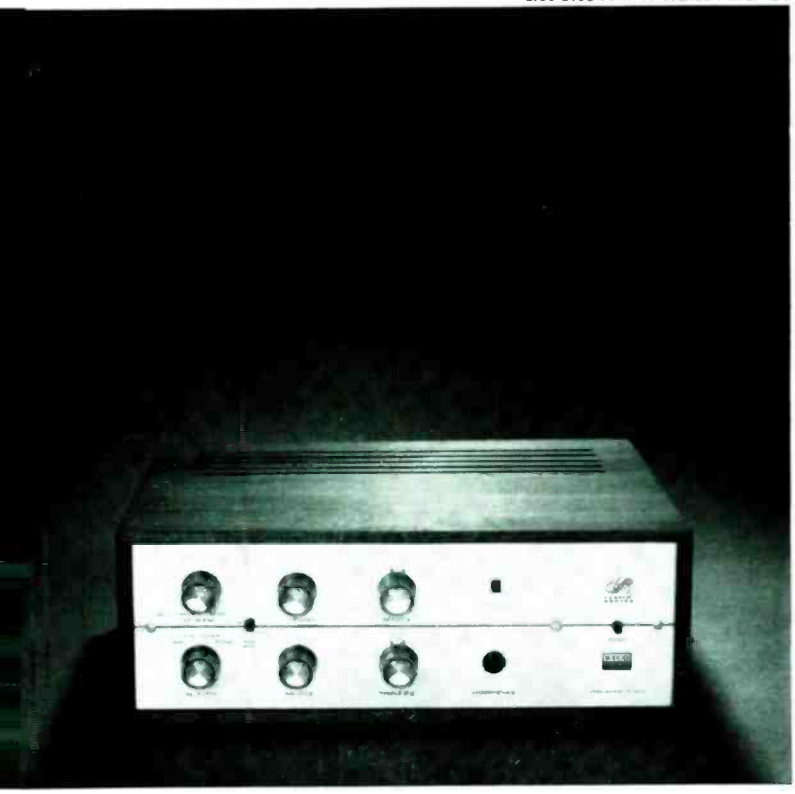

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EICO CLASSIC 2200 STEREO FM TUNER Identical with the tuner section of the 2536 Receiver. Audio output 1.5 volt. Kit: $92.50. Wired: $119.95. Optional: Walnut Cabinet WE-72, $19.95. Metal cover, E-11, $7.50.

EICO CLASSIC 2036 36-WATT STEREO AMPLIFIER Identical with the amplifier section of the 2536 Receiver, plus speaker system switch, headphone jack. Kit: $79.95. Wired: $109.95. Optional: Walnut Cabinet WE-72, $19.95. Metal cover, E-11, $7.50.

EICO CLASSIC 2050 50-WATT STEREO AMPLIFIER Same control facilities as amplifier section of 2536 receiver, plus speaker system switch, headphone jack, and high filter switch. *Power:* 50 w IHFM, 44 w cont. (total). *Power bandwidth at rated power, 0.8% harmonic distortion:* 30 cps—20 kc. *IM distortion* (each channel): 2% at 22 w, 1% at 17 w, 0.1% at 2 w. *Harmonic distortion* (each channel): 0.5% at 17 w, 40 cps—20 kc. 0.3% at 5 w, 30 cps—20 kc. *Response:* ±1 db 10 cps—40 kc. *Noise:* −65 db at 10 mv, mag phono; −80 db, others. *Sensitivity:* 1.7 mv mag phono, 190 mv others. *Outputs:* 8, 16 ohms. Kit: $92.50. Wired: $129.95. Optional Walnut Cabinet,WE-72,$19.95. Metal cover,E-11, $7.50. See the Eico Classic Series at your high fidelity dealer. Write for new catalog. Eico Electronic Instrument Co., Inc., 3300 Northern Blvd., L.I.C. 1, N. Y. Export: Roburn Agencies Inc., 431 Greenwich St., N.Y. 13.

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CIRCLE 40 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 22

There were gowns in emerald-and-gold brocade, in gold-and-lime brocade, in unadorned white nylon, in two-tone scarlet brocade; there were cloaks, flowing scarves, headdresses to match. In accordance with Cleopatra's ups, downs, and amours, one of her costumes was called her Go-to-Prison outfit, another her Go-to-Bed outfit. Who invented these tags should be obvious. The orchestra boys, of course. In the players' pit there's never a yawn, even during those plinkety-plonk early eighteenth-century recitatives. CHARLES REID

VIENNA

Die Fledermaus, issued for the first time more than half a century ago in an "almost complete" version on twenty-one G & T discs and at present available in three monophonic and two stereo versions, was the object of a recent series of spectacular recording sessions held in Vienna's Sofiensaal. Involved were two Rosalindas, two Adeles, two Eisensteins. The old question had come up as to whether a work of this kind should be recorded in the original language or whether some of the sparkling wit of the libretto should be made accessible to the English-speaking music lover. The answer was provided by RCA Victor's Vice-President George Marek: it was decided to record *Die Fledermaus* both in English and in German.

Rumors of the impending realization of this project were already circulating last year when Mr. Marek was known to be visiting European libraries and second-hand music shops in search of a copy of the first printed edition of the score. Though he was able to inspect the autograph just recently acquired by the Music Division of Vienna's Town Hall Library, he failed to trace a single copy of the first printed edition in Strauss's homeland. "I finally realized that I could have saved much of my energy by going to the Library of Congress, which turns out to have such a copy," he told me during our conversation at one of the recording sessions.

Marek had himself undertaken to shorten the spoken dialogue of the German version. "Some of the dialogue we've retained, however," he commented. "It's necessary not only in order to make the plot intelligible but, paradoxically, it is also required from the musical point of view: i.e., to separate numbers in different keys from each other." Otherwise there are no changes, except for the elimination of the part of Dr. Blind and the role of Frosche.

Strauss, Echt-Wien. The German version, to be issued on three discs, boasts a stellar cast. Eberhard Wächter, the Eisenstein, was, at the time of the recording, also appearing as Don Giovanni

Continued on page 28

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 26

in Karajan's new production at the Staatsoper, and once more I had to admire this artist's extraordinary ability to adapt himself to the vocal requirements of two scores so utterly different from each other. The part of Adele is sung by Anneliese Rothenberger, whose interpretation is calculated to reinforce Marek's intention of recapturing something of the opera's original lightness and gaiety. "*Die Fledermaus*," he had said to me, "has in the course of time acquired a kind of patina. We should like to restore some of the original *Lebenslust*." In fact, a good many people feel that the tempos usually adopted in Vienna today are either too slow and *gemütlich* or else much too fast—with an eye to the speed of transatlantic musicals, which more and more are setting the standard. For RCA's recording, conductor Oscar Danon (borrowed from the Belgrade Opera House) steers the Vienna Volksoper Orchestra in a middle course, with the hope of reviving the carefree spirit of the first performance.

At one point in my visit I heard a singer on the stage addressed with "Let us try again, Adele"—and much to my surprise the lady so requested began to sing the famous Csardas, which I had always thought belonged to Rosalinde. It does, of course. This Adele was not *Die Fledermaus*' Adele, but Adele Leigh, a soprano from Covent Garden who is also known to the Viennese public. Also surprising to me was Miss Leigh's ability to render the German words with a Hungarian accent, a feat demanded of Rosalinde by the plot. The explanation: Miss Leigh is of Hungarian descent.

So is Sandor Konya, who could not, however, put his knowledge of Hungarian to use in the role of Alfred. Erich Kunz is Frank, the director of the gay prison. Two other members of the cast will also be heard in the English edition: Risë Stevens as Orlofsky and George London as Falke.

Strauss, New Style. The version in English will consist of a disc of highlights, with new English lyrics especially written for this recording by Mel Mandel and Norman Sachs. In my opinion the new words somehow seem to catch the rhythm of the music better than the original German, which the composer occasionally had to bend to the flow of his melodies. Even for the onomatopoeia of the F major waltz in the second finale—the untranslatable "*Dui-du*"—Strauss's new libretto-partners have found an ingenious solution which it would be unfair to betray in advance.

Apart from Risë Stevens and George London the following singers are to be heard in the English version: Richard Lewis, whose Eisenstein combines Mozartean intonation with an operetta-know-how revealing the singer's intimate knowledge of Gilbert and Sullivan; Anna Moffo, Rosalinda; Jeanette Scovotti, Adele; John Hauxvell, Frank; and Sergio

Continued on page 30

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BY HEATHKIT

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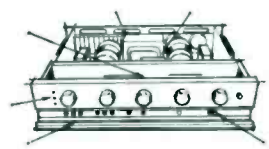

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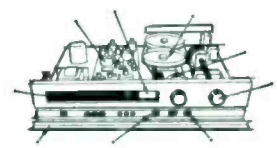

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 28

Franchi, who aims at a caricature, both witty and schmaltzy, of Alfred the singing teacher. Chorus, orchestra, and conductor are the same as in the German version.

KURT BLAUKOPF

PRAGUE

Czechoslovakia has been called the most "Western" of the Communist-bloc nations, and to judge by what can be observed in a short visit here this generalization would seem to apply in many ways to the record industry. More and more, the Czechs seem to be projecting themselves into a competitive position in the whole field of serious music—using their extensive native repertory as a kind of commercial and artistic launching pad. Officials of Artia, the export branch of Supraphon (the Czechoslovak state recording firm), said that serious or "classical" music accounted for more than ninety per cent of exports.

Anyone familiar with Czech recordings knows that giant strides have been made in technical improvement in recent years, and—aside from certain small-scale pieces and contemporary works—most Artia items are now available in stereo. The artistic credentials of the Czech Philharmonic and the other ensembles and soloists available to Supraphon/Artia go without saying, and of late the company is presenting its discs tastefully packaged and with informative notes (and in some cases English translations).

On Native Grounds. Supraphon/Artia of course records the standard repertoire, and its catalogue also includes such rarities as the just issued Haydn Cello Concerto in C, rediscovered in Prague archives and given its first modern performance at the 1961 Prague Spring Festival. In the recording Miloš Sádlo is soloist, with the Prague Radio Symphony under Alois Klíma. The backbone of the firm's list, however, remains its storehouse of native works. A number of this season's releases represent a stereophonic updating, but many new titles will also be added to the catalogue. Opera lovers especially can look forward to a varied expansion of the repertory—five complete operas from as many composers. Only one of these—Dvořák's *Rusalka*—has ever been recorded in its entirety before (on a mono set of some years ago). The others are Smetana's *The Devil's Wall*, the composer's last complete opera, conceived in total deafness and encroaching insanity and a work of dark lyricism quite removed from his folk comedies; Leoš Janáček's *Excursions of Mr. Brouček*, a fantasy about an ordinary man's adventures in space and time; Eugen Suchon's *Svätopluk*, a work on a historic-legendary theme with a text in the Slovak tongue; and Ján Cikker's *The Resurrection*. The last two are very recent works, given their premieres in 1960

Continued on page 34

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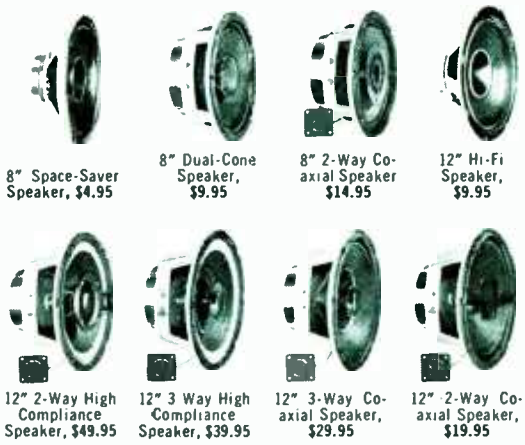

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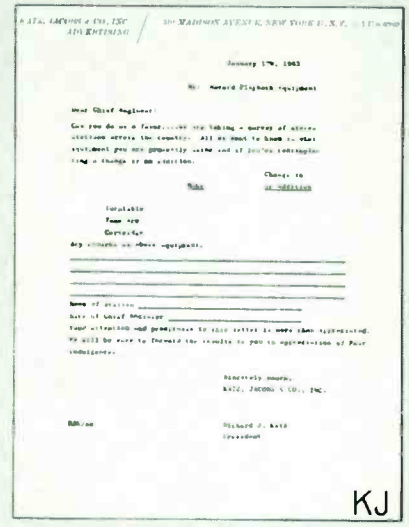
Aim of Survey

To determine the kinds of record playback equipment used by stereo stations across the country — in order to compare the frequency of use of Empire equipment with that of other manufacturers.


KJ

Method

A survey form requesting information on the kinds of turntables, phono arms and cartridges presently in use was sent to the chief engineers of all 186 stereo stations across the country (as listed in Sound Industry Directory).

Results

1. Completed survey forms were returned by 130 stations. More than two thirds of those contacted responded, representing 23 states and Canada.

2. A tally was made of the number of different manufacturers whose equipment was being used in one of three categories, turntables, arms and cartridges. The chief engineers indicate in their comments that they experiment a good deal with many makes and this is borne out in the totals. The 130 stations are presently using the equipment of 27 different manufacturers.

3. Only four of the major manufacturers are represented in all three of the categories, turntables, arms and cartridges. Of the four companies Empire ranked first in the total number of components used by the 130 stations. In fact, Empire's total of 49 components was greater than that of any of the other 26 manufacturers whose equipment is presently in use at these stations.

4. Empire was the only company that was represented ten or more times in each of the categories. And one of the three companies whose tone arms are in use in more than 20 of the 130 stereo stations in the sample.

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Note: Survey forms prepared and mailed by Katz, Jacobs & Co. Inc. Auditing performed by Ernest S. Katz, Public Accountant.

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CIRCLE 44 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

HIGH FIDELITY NEWSFRONTS

BY NORMAN EISENBERG

A (Sound) Room with a View. It had been about four years since we last visited the Music Room operated by Acoustic Research, Inc., on the west balcony of Grand Central Station, New York City, and intrigued by an invitation from AR—not to a sound exhibit but to an art exhibit—we stopped by recently. This room is unique on many counts. To begin with, it is (aside from a similar room maintained by AR in Cambridge, Massachusetts), as far as we know the only "permanent exhibit" of high fidelity sound that is not part of a dealer's sales room. In fact, the attendants here are instructed not to breathe a hint of sales talk, and not to approach a visitor. They will answer questions if asked—but no more than that. Inasmuch as nothing is sold here, and no admission charged, the whole operation is sheer expense on AR's part, but one the company feels is justified. In any case, the very idea of setting up a sonic oasis in the midst of one of the busiest rail terminals in the world always has struck us as a most ambitious project that took a good deal of nerve and knowledge.

But the current interest at the AR Music Room is visual as well as aural. By way of making a point about how closely high fidelity sound reproduction resembles the original live sound, Edgar Villchur has collected a series of original paintings and hung them alongside excellent reproductions in identical frames. The art comparison, says Villchur, points up both the goal of, and a manner of judging, high fidelity: the former being "accurate rather than exaggerated," the latter being "by comparison of the reproduction with the original (or memory of the original)"—such as the "live versus recorded" concerts in which AR has participated for several years.

The sound in the room itself is, of course, all reproduced—and one can only hope that visitors listening to it carry good memories of the last concert attended. At that, the point implied by the paintings in the windows—that just as fine art reproduction is virtually indistinguishable from the original, so too is fine music reproduction—cannot help but impress a listener as he stands before a battery of speakers playing a stereo rendition of (appropriately enough) Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* or the Ravel Quartet in F.

The room itself was built by the late Milton Sleeper and opened to the public in mid-1958. Named "High Fidelity House," it originally served as a setting for exhibits of audio equipment from all manufacturers, a sort of "living museum" of high quality sound reproduction. The following year, it was purchased from Sleeper by Acoustic Research and renamed the AR Music Room. "We virtually rebuilt the place," explains AR's president Edgar Villchur. "Among the changes we made were new walls, improvements in sound-proofing against outside noises, the addition of windows, and the removal of so-called acoustical materials that were deadening the sound." Villchur estimates that the cost of the building, plus the repairs, came to over $30,000. Since then, Villchur has put up draperies, painted the interior, and added "our own inside plumbing." Although AR owns the building itself, the space on which it is located is leased from the New York Central System. "I have the dubious honor," quips Villchur, "of thus being landlord and tenant at the same time."

Although visitors to the AR room are never approached by a salesman (not even to be asked "May I help you?"), they are carefully counted by machine.

Visual A-B test makes audio point.

The last annual count came to 88,727, but Villchur points out that some of these are "regulars who stop in twice a week or daily on their way to or from a train." The average visitor spends fifteen minutes in the room—time enough, says Villchur, to listen to different selections and to different models of AR speakers.

Currently, the installation in the room uses the AR turntables and various AR speakers as well as the Stanton 481A cartridge and Dynakit amplifiers. From time to time, other manufacturers are invited to show their cartridges and amplifiers too. In addition to normal stereo systems, the visitor also can examine cutaway models of AR speakers, marvel at a specially rigged woofer pumping out three cycles per second, and —of course—play the game of comparing original paintings and reproductions on display in the windows.

Zero Tracking Error? At least one of the questions we asked last month—that about true radial tone arms for stereo records—has been answered by inventor Jacob Rabinow, president of Rabinow Engineering, Rockville, Maryland. From his creative imagination (responsible also for the magnetic fluid clutch used in automobiles, part of the "automated post office," and data-reading machinery for feeding computers) has come the new "Servo-Line" tone arm. An elaborate and costly ($200) device, the new arm is designed to move a cartridge across a record in a perfectly straight radius, which—inasmuch as the record was cut that way—is, by definition, the theoretically ideal way to track it in playback. Attempts to produce such an arm have been made in the past; for one reason or another—excessive bearing friction, resonances, and assorted mechanical difficulties—they proved unsuccessful. In any event, the "Servo-Line" arm is the first of its kind to be introduced since the advent of stereo discs and, judging from what its designer says, it took an awareness of the special problems of the stereo groove, such as the need for high-compliance tracing of both groove walls with equal and utterly light pressure, to trigger what Rabinow feels is the perfect solution.

The new arm resembles a sliding T-square. The larger section—or carriage—is affixed to the turntable mounting board, and the smaller section—the arm proper—is free to move across the record. It is suspended on a pivot gimbal and employs a rear counterweight in an oil bath. Its other end holds the cartridge which is moved across the record in a path that duplicates the radius originally described by the record cutter. To assure accuracy in accomplishing this chore, the arm uses a photo-electric cell and servomotor system. The cell constantly measures the angle between the carriage and the arm, and controls the servomotor which then corrects the movement of the arm as needed to maintain the correct tangency between stylus and record groove. Such tracking, in turn, is claimed to lower distortion, preserve the stereo effect, and reduce record wear.

According to a company spokesman, five years of research and experimentation have gone into the new arm—which, as demonstrated for us in Mr. Rabinow's laboratory, is so finely poised that the mere weight of a business card, placed on it, provided enough vertical force for accurate tracking. At this writing, Rabinow plans to make an initial dozen arms; more probably will be released later.

NOTES FROM ABROAD

Continued from page 30

and 1962 respectively. All use the forces of the Prague National Theatre.

The Smetana, Suchon, and Dvořák operas actually were taped some time ago—before the death of the National Theatre's chief conductor, Zdeněk Chalabala—as was the current Supraphon/Artia *Bartered Bride*. Oddly, American record collectors got first crack at the *Bartered Bride* set. When manufacturing problems delayed the pressing of these discs in Czechoslovakia, Supraphon made the tapes of the opera available to Artia in New York, which had stereo pressings made in the United States.

Two other large-scale works are worth noting. One is a new recording, already on tape, of Janáček's *Glagolitic* Mass, with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under Ančerl. The other, planned for later this year or early 1964, is Dvořák's oratorio, *Saint Ludmila*, with the same orchestra and chorus and a conductor not yet named.

"Theatres of Music." Czech record collectors are particularly fortunate in having a varied and extensive domestic catalogue inasmuch as there are no Western recordings in the (state-owned) shops—a situation resulting from economic policy rather than political bias. The government has not yet allowed hard currency to leave the country to put Western records in the stores, and thus only persons who have connections outside the Iron Curtain can procure them. One phenomenon that has resulted partly from this state of affairs is establishment of "Theatres of Music" in Prague, and on a less elaborate scale, other cities. The Prague Theatre is a 135-seat listening room with a stage and elaborate lighting and record-playing apparatus. While it is an ancillary operation of Supraphon, its vast record library is made up in large part of Western-made recordings. The programs range from the simple playing of records with accompanying spoken annotation (delivered, on one of my visits, by a lovely blonde actress) to theatrical presentations using live dancers, film, or other program material—all built around the music. The Prague Theatre now is more than ten years old, but its popularity is still strong. One of the main reasons seems to be that this is the only place where the average music-loving Czech can hear Louis Armstrong. Toscanini's readings of Verdi, or George Szell's interpretations of Dvořák.

DAVID STEVENS

The Collector's Verdi BY CONRAD L. OSBORNE

THIS SURVEY of six Verdi operas—the ones most frequently recorded—differs from past HIGH FIDELITY discographies in that it is intended chiefly as a critical commentary on certain significant individual performances, and not as a general consumer's guide. It assumes that relatively few record collectors are "average" —that most of us have highly personal reasons for our interest in one or another recording—and further that the proliferation of complete recordings of the Verdi operas has rendered almost capricious any attempt to define this or that *Aida* or *Rigoletto* as "the best."

It has been my aim to investigate the recorded interpretations of these six operas to see what light they may throw on the works. The points of reference in all cases have been the texts of the operas themselves: i.e., the scores. Because it was my wish to consider the more interesting interpretations in reasonable detail, I have given some performances—not necessarily poor ones—short shrift, or have even omitted them. Some perfectly acceptable performances by respected singers and conductors have thus been accorded very little space because I felt that, capable as they might be, they do little to bring us closer to the heart of Verdi.

In "the heart of Verdi" the reader will recognize one of those useful phrases which can be made to cover anything from certain traditional stylistic obscenities to a literal reading of notes. Perhaps I can indicate my meaning by saying that Verdi's music deals with people, in a very direct way. The more carefully one studies his operas, the more one is amazed at the simplicity and honesty with which he presents his characters, and at the consistency with which he rejects all possibilities other than that of portraying human reactions to dramatic situations. The purification of this approach to operatic composition is the key to Verdi's development. The final scene of *La Forza del destino* takes place before a grotto in a wild, isolated spot in the mountains. Few composers would have eschewed the opportunity for musical scene setting or mood setting. Yet Verdi's only introduction is the motif identified with the woes of the house of Calatrava—we are with Leonora from the first bar. That is "the heart of Verdi" —the creation through music of people who lay their whole beings before us, who beg no extenuation beyond their humanity. For such challenges, a significant voice and a workable technique are by far not enough, and in reconsidering these recordings I have looked for the performances that afford us those flashes of recognition telling us the artist has hit home, has made us experience the emotional truth of the moment.

Of the six works I discuss—and my single regret with regard to this project is that space precluded treatment of all the Verdi operas and of the many single excerpts hidden on recital or potpourri discs—I have tried to bring into consideration all the complete recordings that have been pressed onto commercially marketed LP, the sole exceptions being a handful of performances sung in languages other than Italian. I have also directed attention to what seem to me to be the really illuminating interpretations of excerpts, many of them in foreign languages and many of them now missing from the catalogue. No one (to take an example) should be unaware of the existence of Claudia Muzio's recordings of the two great *Otello* duets, though they are poorly recorded and not generally available—they offer values not found in any other interpretation. (Just about *any* recording, I should add, can be obtained through certain dealers who specialize in out-of-print items, or through the services of the many private collectors whose avocation it is to sell or swap such recordings through societies or by means of lists.) It goes without saying that in the case of some of the more popular excerpts I have had to select rather arbitrarily. I hope readers will not hesitate to defend their own choices among the many fine items excluded.

Where the same company has recorded an opera more than once, I have adopted a little code for the purpose of conciseness: thus "RCA Victor I" means the earliest of the RCA Victor editions of the work in question. The reader can consult the Schwann catalogue to learn which are generally available. There are frequent references to the scores themselves, by way of illustration—I have been careful to key the page numbers to commonly available editions of the vocal scores.

I should like to express here my thanks to David Smith, Roy Koch, and HIGH FIDELITY's Editor in Chief, Roland Gelatt, all of whom directed my attention to and loaned me copies of recordings not in my own library (including many out-of-print discs), and to Warren Michon, who patiently did without his copy of the full score to *La Traviata* while I followed it through ten complete recordings and a number of single items.

PICTURE CREDITS, Pages 93 to 108

Page 93:	Photo by Carlo Bavagnoli
Page 94:	Photo by John Ross, painting from La Scala Museum
Page 95:	Photos by Roland Gelatt and John Ross; painting from La Scala Museum
Page 96:	Engraving from Bertarelli Archive, Milan; paintings from La Scala Museum
Page 97:	Engraving from Bertarelli Archive
Page 98:	Engravings from Bertarelli Archive and La Scala Museum, photo by Piero Malvisi
Page 99:	Engraving from La Fenice Archive; photo by Ferruccio Nuzzo
Page 100-101:	Contemporary photos by Piero Malvisi, Guilia Niccolai, and John Ross; old photo from Ricordi Archive
Page 103:	Engravings from **Illustrazione Italiana**
Page 104:	Photos from Bertarelli Archive
Page 105:	Engravings from Bertarelli Archive and La Scala Museum
Page 106:	Engravings from Bertarelli Archive and **Illustrazione Italiana**
Page 107:	Contemporary photo by Roland Gelatt; old photos from Ricordi Archive
Page 108:	Engravings from Bertarelli Archive; photo from Ricordi Archive

RIGOLETTO (1851)

One of the few artistic dividing lines that makes any sense to me is that between "early period" and "middle period" Verdi. It's true, of course, that a composer's development has to be a gradual and sometimes roundabout thing; still, if he is to make a memorable contribution, there has to be a leap somewhere, a point of break-through. With Verdi, it is quite clear that in Piave's adaptation of *Le Roi s'amuse* he found the subject with which to make his leap. In *Rigoletto* we see for the first time that the formal structures of Italian romantic opera can be made to serve drama through the full and continuous development of character. It was this at which Hugo marveled when he first heard the quartet; it is this, in fact, that constitutes Verdi's greatest achievement.

So far as attempts to get close to the letter of the score are concerned, the interpretations of Sanzogno (London) and Gavazzeni (Mercury) have their interest. The London is the only truly complete *Rigoletto* on records, and Mercury's cuts are fewer than those made in any of the others. Sanzogno is most meticulous; though he has his points of departure from the current Ricordi edition, most of them are defensible, and I see no cause for fussing about them. And although Sanzogno is in general a bit slow in relation to Verdi's metronome markings, the sections are in proportion (this is the one reading, for example, to define the tempo indications that divide Rigoletto's monologue; there are seven of them!).

Sanzogno's reading has two failings: 1) he has allowed Sutherland to distend certain passages of recitative, and has also failed to keep her to the rhythmic mark, so that the underlying pulse of a scene is sometimes compromised (as in the *allegro vivo* beginning with Gilda's first entrance); 2) he has neither adjusted his own literal concept to fit the strengths of his singers, nor shown them a way in which to infuse life and variety into measures where they are robbed of their traditional *accelerandos* and *ritardandos*. An instance: if Rigoletto's passage beginning *"Culto, famiglia, la*

patria" (p. 98 of the Ricordi vocal score) is not to be given the *poco più* which most conductors will allow (but which is not marked), then the singer and/or orchestra must find some other means of bringing at least a gentle kind of life to this almost fiercely affectionate passage. But Sutherland and MacNeil sing along pleasantly in their soft, round voices, and the orchestra sticks to its rather plodding *allegro* begun two pages earlier, and the little section falls on its face. Obviously, Sanzogno has tried to adhere tightly to the construction suggested by the tempo markings, while allowing the usual liberties in cadenzas, or with interpolated high notes (of which there are plenty). A sound enough principle—but a bonfire would have to be built beneath it to avoid the great shortcoming of this performance, which is that it sounds like a very careful reading, the singers taking great care to score all sorts of little musical points and thus having small attention left to worry about whether or not what they're doing all adds up to *Rigoletto*.

Gavazzeni has employed the same principle, but has interpreted it differently; he elicits more color from his musicians. In the Prelude, for example (which is taken at a real *andante* rather than the *adagio* or *larghetto* often heard), there is a bite in the trumpet sound and a firmness to the strings' tremolando beginning on the third line that immediately establish a dramatic key. There are many instances of happy and unusual musical decisions, of which pp. 121-22 are representative: first, the Duke (Alfredo Kraus) does not take the traditional but unmarked slowdown on his line, *"Ah, inseparabile d'amore e il Dio"*; instead, he takes it where it is indicated, with the beginning of the 3/8 *andantino* at *"E il sol dell' anima,"* which is then sung with unusual attention to musical detail, particularly with regard to the dynamic instructions and staccato markings. It's refreshing. However, Gavazzeni does encounter some of the difficulties that beset Sanzogno. His Rigoletto (Bastianini) is clearly unhappy at having to sustain *"Deh, non parlare al misero"* at such a slow tempo (though the metronome marking justifies it); and while the Rigoletto/Sparafucile dialogue that opens the second scene benefits from the full value accorded its quarters and eighths, it needs much more interpretative filling-out—the singers here merely stretch their straight reading over a longer time period, and the result is unimaginative. And so on. Still, this is a reading to be respected, and one which carries greater impact than Sanzogno's.

Of the more permissive and "traditional" readings, Serafin's (Angel) and Molajoli's (Entré EL 2, now deleted, but available from Italy on Italian Columbia QCX 10091/92) are the most successful. Serafin "breathes" with his singers in a way which neither Sanzogno nor Gavazzeni does (at least on these recordings); this sometimes softens the edges, but also makes for a welcome smoothness and grace. In at least one scene, he stands out from the lot. This is the Rigoletto/Sparafucile dialogue, wherein for once the *ppp* —marked at the beginning of the scene and not altered until *"Pari siamo!"*—is observed, so that the whole dialogue catches the feeling of an almost whispered conversation. (That Verdi meant what he wrote is underlined at the bottom of p. 77, at the lines *"e muor (Demonio!),"* where the *height* of a crescendo is marked *"estremamente p."*) The least satisfactory feature of Serafin's reading is that it is not always filled out. In the first scene, for instance, there is no sense of change with Rigoletto's first lines (except in Gobbi's declamation), the chorus is lifeless, and there is no new impetus with the return to Tempo I (p. 18). The whole scene with Marullo and the chorus is lacking in animation, and this happens to other "unimportant" sections along the way. In justice to Serafin, it should be noted that part of this occasional limpness can be attributed to Angel's curiously subdued sound, particularly where the chorus is involved—perhaps some needless monitoring was done.

Molajoli is more permissive yet, but with him this seems a matter of belief; one has the feeling that he has *commanded* his singers to do as they do. At times, the line is too much distended—particularly where the vocal elegance of the tenor, Dino Borgioli, is on display—but at others Molajoli's way seems highly sensitive and "right." Refer to the pacing of the Rigoletto/Gilda conversation on p. 89, or the phrasing of their duets, or the playing of the English horn solo just before *"Tutte le feste"* (the treatment is peculiarly Italian, in that it is vocally conceived—the player is really singing his lines), and you will hear what I mean. Molajoli's interpretation is difficult to describe, because it depends very directly on the performers' personal feelings for the emotional content of the music. It is perhaps the most likable of all the recorded readings, and always executed with conviction (the prelude really follows the instruction, *sostenuto*). Unhappily, this version is the most liberally cut of all.

Now to the singers. The title role is, of course, the most interesting and most challenging in the opera, and constitutes one of the greatest interpretative opportunities in the lyric repertory. Vocally, it is demanding in that it requires both the capacity for long-phrased, high-lying cantabile singing and that for highly inflected dramatic declamation. Only one baritone on records really fills the vocal bill—Stracciari of the Entré set. His voice is at once brighter and darker, softer and more biting, than those of his competitors. *"Pari siamo!"* is enough to demonstrate his virtues: he captures the crescendo/descrescendo of *"Quel vecchio maledivami!,"* the mutterings of *"Questo padrone mio,"* the full rage of the outburst at *"Oh, dannazione!,"* and the melting legato of *"Ma in altr' uomo qui mi cangio"*; then he tops it all with a brilliant high G on *"E follia!"* Throughout the opera, he sings with a command of true legato, a shrewd sense of the importance of words, a noble strength of declamation—a great performance.

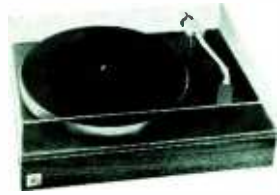
The three Americans—Warren (RCA Victor I), MacNeil (London II), and Merrill (RCA Victor II)—are worth listening to simply for the lovely sounds they make; all of them handle the cantabile portions with more suavity and ease than any of the Italians save Stracciari. Both Warren and MacNeil, however, fall down somewhat in the moments of fury or wild despair, and neither has all the punch or color wanted in such moments as Rigoletto's fear-struck mumbling just before he summons Giovanna in the second scene (p. 101). They end by being touching, which is not a strong enough effect. Warren is the more authoritative of the two, and in the final scene projects the character's emotions more strongly (his interpretation deepened in the years after he recorded the role). Merrill also sings smoothly and richly, but does little with the part's dramatic possibilities; when he does strive for color and inflection, the results are unconvincing.

Bastianini (Mercury) is at the opposite pole, producing much exciting, rich tone in the more dramatic portions of the score, but hacking his way shamefully through practically anything that demands a really sustained legato and bringing very little imagination to his interpretation. Taddei (Cetra) falls somewhere between these extremes. He has a rich voice and good stylistic grasp; he handles the cantabiles well, but is a bit muffled and effortful by comparison with Warren or MacNeil. He brings more bite and authority to the dramatic sections of the score, though—the first scene, for instance, is excellent, and so are such moments as his commands to the courtiers (*"Ite di qua,"* etc.) or the recitative over what he assumes to be the Duke's body (*"E là, morto,"* etc.). A good, solid performance.

This leaves Capecchi (Columbia) and Gobbi (Angel), who are from a purely interpretative point of view the most interesting Rigolettos on records (Stracciari again excepted). Capecchi is especially remarkable, in that he accomplishes his characterization with a voice not at all notable for size, beauty, or freedom. He is therefore at his least interesting where straight legato singing is called for, as in the opening of his first scene with Gilda (pp. 86-87), or the following *"Deh, non parlare al misero,"* where his approach is sensitive and intelligent, his handling easy enough, but his tone just not beautiful or expansive enough to fill out the music. But his *"Pari siamo!"* is excellent, particularly in its central section (the *"Questo padrone mio"* on p. 83, and *"Oh, dannazione!"* etc. on 84), where the pointing of the words is brilliant. He is magnificent just before his interestingly done *"Cortigiani,"* with a wonderfully mirthless laugh during the *"La ra, la ra"* sequence; and just after the aria, where his realization of the quickly changing emotions of Rigoletto's lines beginning *"Signori, in essa"* (fawning to the courtiers, poignant and comforting with Gilda) is an instance of pure genius in vocal acting. He is immense throughout the last act.

Gobbi brings a more solid, dramatic instrument to the role, though the hooted production of his high notes robs him of many a potential effect, and he is forced to resort to a crooning sound to attain a *piano* in the *"Piangi, fanciulla"* duet. But he is outstanding in his setting forth of the recitative and the character's many asides (in other words, at those points where Warren, Merrill, and MacNeil fail). A fine example of his ability to color appropriately is the little section that marks the division in *"Cortigiani"*; here, Gobbi's dead, hopeless sound while he coaxes with Marullo is memorable. The *"Vendetta"* duet and most of the last act are also superbly dramatic.

There are a number of recorded individual baritone excerpts that are worth seeking out. Scotti's *"Pari siamo!"* (Rococo 35) is dark and authoritative, wonderfully clear in its declamation, though the top tones are a bit pinched. Domenico Villione Borghese's (Eterna 717) is musically sloppy, but vocally impressive. There are two interesting historical versions of *"Cortigiani"*: Amato's (Eterna 482, now deleted) and De Luca's (RCA Camden CAL 320, now deleted but available in England as RCA Camden CDN 1012)—both including the preceding scene, beginning with *"Povero Rigoletto!"* Both are absorbing, with De



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Luca's the better recorded and more easily sung—an exemplary rendition, in fact. In a wildly accelerated version of *"Si, vendetta"* (Eterna O 462, now deleted but reissued as part of Eterna 752) the amazing Battistini snarls his music out with extraordinary high Fs. His partner is someone named Lulu Hayes, who starts well enough, but disappears in the scramble. It doesn't matter. And the excellent German baritone Joseph Schwarz is heard partnering Claire Dux on Rococo 25 in the two duets *"Son gia tre lune"* and *"Ah, sol per me l'infamia."* These are rendered in German, and in a very expansive style, but extremely well sung, particularly by Schwarz.

Gilda is a much less interesting character than Rigoletto, but not the ninny she is widely assumed to be. Her motives are perfectly clear, her actions absolutely logical, if one only assumes that she is genuinely innocent, in every sense of the word. Alas, innocence, which does not mean vapidness or emotional blandness (a naïve person's reactions are liable to be *more* extreme than those of a sophisticated person), seems to be the one quality despised of operatic sopranos; it is missing altogether from the urbane, mannered singing of London's Sutherland (lovely as that often is in terms of sound) and only hinted at here and there in the work of Angel's Callas (where, for example, is the impulsive girlishness of *"Signor ne principe"*?). Callas at least lends rhythmic strength to her music, and realizes such moments as the change in mood when Gilda tells of her abduction in *"Tutte le feste"* (. . . *quando improvvisi apparvero"* at the bottom of p. 232). D'Angelo (Columbia) makes limpid sounds and contributes a most beautiful *"Caro nome,"* but delivers much too much of her music in a lifeless, meaningless way, as if she did not appreciate the character's emotional situation—*"Tutte le feste"* could not be less interesting, though part of the blame must fall on Molinari-Pradelli's slackness. Peters (RCA Victor II) is betrayed by much thin, wiry tone and by a lack of distinction in phrasing. Pagliughi (Cetra) knows how to make the music move and projects a pleasant, conventional Gilda of some charm, though she was well past her prime at the time of recording and suffers some vocal contretemps. The same can be said of Entré's Capsir, also a good stylist and understanding musician, but a vocalist of such shrill, edgy tone and such messy articulation that one can only respect, not enjoy, her work. Mercury's Scotto is satisfactory where bite and punch are called for, as in the *"Addio"* duet with the Duke, or the last-act trio; she also does a good job in building *"Tutte le feste."* But her tone is often hard, the ends of phrases often labored, her treatment of recitative usually four-square. Gueden, on the older London set, contributed an efficient, musicianly characterization without much charm or warmth.

If one wants a real Gilda, one must turn to Erna Berger (RCA Victor I). It is not merely that her voice stays fresh, round, and free throughout the role, or that her musical taste and sense of phrasing are impeccable. Berger is the only singer on records to take Gilda's feelings seriously throughout the score and to place them ahead of vocal idiosyncrasies. She alone captures the girlishness of the character, without becoming insipid; she alone sounds as if she means it when she cries *"Iniquo!"* at the Duke's pass at Maddalena. Gilda's sacrifice becomes believable, her death extremely moving.

"Caro nome" has been recorded innumerable times, and I can here only mention a few of the more interesting. Sutherland's on London OSA 1214 is a bit brighter and more cleanly enunciated, if not quite as round-toned as her singing of the aria on the complete set; I think it is preferable. Among historical recordings, Boronat's (Rococo 28) is interesting for its fragile, floated sound and beautifully clear vowels. Kurz's gorgeous vocalism and surprisingly literal reading are worth having, even though her version is cut and rushed towards the end, where her final little run on the cadenza is identical with Sutherland's in the complete set. Don't overlook Pons (RCA Victor LM 6705), who captures the pulse and contributes a beautifully controlled high ending.

The Duke is in some respects the most problematic of all the leading characters. Both vocally and dramatically, he is something of a contradiction. Much of his music (*"Questa o quella," "La donna è mobile," "E il sol dell' anima"*) is best handled by a light, elegant voice, such as Schipa's; but some of it demands a more imposing caliber (he must, for instance, lead the quartet, and there is nothing more discouraging to hear than the sound of an undernourished lyric tenor emerging from the ensemble for the reprise of *"Bella figlia dell' amore"*). Dramatically, he would be no paradox—just an amoral, rather adolescent adventurer—were it not for *"Parmi veder,"* which unfortunately sounds dead sincere. About the only way I can think of to get around this is to treat the recitative and aria as a fatuous expression of the Duke's obvious capacity for self-deception; not that he's pretending, but merely that he is incapable of a genuine feeling of love (*"quasi spinto a virtu talor mi credea,"* he sings in the recitative, and the key word is *"quasi"*). This would be perfectly consistent with his actions before and after his seduction of Gilda, and in fact the music of the aria carries no great conviction, being just a nice, lilting statement which even has a vaguely oily air about it. The cabaletta, *"Possente amor,"* is Verdi's one inconsistency; it would not have been out of place in any of his earlier operas (or with any of their tenor heroes), and is such a wretched tune that it really is better left out, though its inclusion on some of these recordings is of course welcome for reference purposes.

None of the tenors involved goes to any great pains over creating an individual. Of greatest interest are Borgioli (Entré) and Kraus (Mercury), both of whom have the sort of pinpoint control over their decidedly lyric instruments that assures many beautiful moments. Borgioli is the more assured stylist, and

is allowed much greater expansion of the music (Kraus is kept to an almost metronomic *"Questa o quella"* by Gavazzeni); he also has moments of preciosity, indulging in dozens of spun-out little diminuendos—but, like Molajoli, he takes liberties with conviction. Both these tenors have splendidly free upper registers, and encounter no problems with D flat or, in the case of Kraus, D natural.

Peerce (RCA Victor I) and Tucker (Columbia) are both relatively stolid, though the voices are significant ones and often exciting in the upper reaches. They are also both American, so that Peerce's *"Voi"* is likely to be *"Voih,"* and Tucker's *"In un remoto calle"* emerges as *"In emoto calle."* It all adds up to a certain feeling of imprecision and routine, abetted in both cases by the bumpy conducting. Cioni, like everyone else on the second London set, is musically quite precise (he is the only Duke, surprisingly, to execute all the turns indicated in the duet with Gilda), but often sounds tight and thin above the staff and comes out badly under the pitch in more than one instance. If only Di Stefano's (Angel) upper tones were not so blatant and driven, one could recommend his Duke, for the sound elsewhere is very attractive and his delivery of the text often interesting; his opening colloquy with Borsa, for instance is unusually well defined. Tagliavini's is a competent, rather pedestrian job, not objectionable, but in no way out of the ordinary. Bjoerling's Duke (RCA Victor II) is one of his least satisfactory efforts—often rather constricted in tone, and full of linguistic peculiarities, *"pugne"* for *"punge," "scielo"* for *"cielo."* Naturally, there is still much good vocalism: *"Parmi veder"* is particularly fine.

All three tenor arias, plus the tenor-led quartet, are available in myriad versions, though many are out-of-catalogue historical records. Tito Schipa offers an especially interesting *"Questa o quella"* and *"Parmi veder"* (on Eterna 734), both conveying an air of elegance and a hint of narcissism that set them apart from other interpretations; grace and control mark the vocalism. Caruso's *"Questa o quella"* is the richest and most exuberant (the Victor 1908 version, LCT 1006, now deleted, that is; the earlier piano-accompanied edition—available on Rococo 2 and Angel COLH 119—is actually more careful and restrained). Bjoerling's (Capitol G 7239, recorded considerably earlier than the complete recording) is the closest to the literal text, particularly in observance of the *acciaccature*. Of primarily historical interest are the performances of Marconi (Rococo 22), De Lucia (Eterna 753), and Smirnov (Sienna S-100-3).

Sandor Konya's recent German-language version of *"Parmi veder"* (Deutsche Grammophon LPEM 19214 or SLPEM 136214), fairly well sung, is of interest in that it follows the written cadenza note for note.

Among the many *"La donna è mobiles"* I must direct attention to Caruso's (several versions on several labels) for the creamy legato and the caressing of the words, as on *"non liba amore"*; Bjoerling's early Swedish version (Rococo 31), for an incomparable bounce and lilt; McCormack's (Eterna 731), for clarity of enunciation and omission of the high ending; and Smirnov's (Siena S-100-3), for an example of the advantages and disadvantages of extreme permissiveness with tempo.

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"Bella figlia dell' amore" (the fourth, with Tetrazzini, has not, to my knowledge, been made available on LP in this country) are of interest, with the earliest (1907, with Abott et al., Rococo 36) the easiest and most lyrical, and with the tenor most prominent. The latest (1917, with Galli-Curci et al., RCA Victor LCT 1003, deleted, is the best recorded, though Victor has added some echo), and boasts excellent partners. The version led by Roswaenge (Telefunken TH 97014) is in German; a fine performance, vintage Roswaenge, with a particularly good baritone (Reinmar) and contralto (Kindermann). Unfortunately, the recording sounds monitored.

The only Sparafuciles to meet the test of the last-act trio are Tajo (RCA Victor I) and Siepi (London I and II); both are good singers, but neither is very murderous-sounding. (Tozzi, of RCA Victor II, sounds very fine, barring one or two low tones, but the recording submerges him in the ensemble.) Neri (Cetra) has the right timbre (tough and black), but sings ponderously. Perhaps the best compromise is Zaccaria (Angel), who, as already noted, does the second-scene dialogue extremely well. Dominici on Entré is also above average. Among Maddalenas, the most interesting is Merriman (RCA Victor I), who really makes us understand the girl's motives; Cossotto (Mercury) sings the role extremely well.

Everyone should own the "Verdi and Toscanini" album (RCA Victor LM 6041), whose final side is devoted to the last act of *Rigoletto*. Here is musical precision illuminated by passion—even *"La donna"* has a new lift and lilt. The soloists—Milanov, whose dramatic voice and temperament are welcome, Merriman, Peerce, Warren, and Moscona—are all first-rate, and the retention of the original sequence of notes for Rigoletto's final *"Ah, La maledizione!"* is tremendously effective, since it recalls the sequence at the end of Scene 2.

IL TROVATORE (1853)

Nearly everyone likes *The Troubadour*, but nearly everyone finds only critical or condescending things to say of it: of all Verdi's post-*Rigoletto* operas (with the obvious exception of *I Vespri siciliani*), it is held in lowest repute.

It's assuredly an easy piece to pick on, with its flagrantly circumstantial plot, its persistently loping rhythms, its splashy set of characters, and its unforgivable wealth of damnably memorable tunes, and a critic can't be blamed for feeling that Verdi mustn't be allowed to get away with it. But with a sorrowful glance at all the points I might have made about crude orchestration or carelessly set recitative, I'm going to get in one or two small plugs for *Il Trovatore*, knowing full well that the next time there's a promising-looking cast, I'll be down at the theatre to hear it again.

So far as the plot itself is concerned, allow me to refer readers to Francis Toye's splendidly sane clarification of the story, drawn in part from Prime-Stevenson's essay (Toye's *Verdi: His Life and Works*, currently in print as a Vintage paperback, is still far and away the best English-language source of information and elucidation on all the composer's operas).

We tend to reproach *Trovatore* for its failure to be a different sort of opera than it is. If we look to it for revelation of the nature of a complex, three-dimensional character, like Violetta, Simon, Philip, Otello, or even Macbeth, then we will indeed be forced to conclude that the opera is a flop. The characters in *Trovatore* act under a set of imperatives which modern audiences will not find credible—imperatives which focus mainly on certain social positions and the codes of honor deemed fit for them. Counts are most decidedly supposed to act in certain ways (any and all counts, that is), and so are loyal old retainers, ladies of high birth, etc. Thus, when Di Luna knowingly transcends the rights accorded him by the Prince, that fact is revealed to the audience—if the audience accepts the implied premises, the dramatic situation is heightened, and the Count's villainy established. (By the same token, the fact that it is amorous passion which leads the Count to such a pass is a mitigating circumstance, and makes him a somewhat sympathetic, or at least understandable, figure.)

It is also assumed that the audience will accept the proposition that "blood always tells." Manrico has been raised as a gypsy, but his courtliness sticks out all over him. Manrico hates Di Luna as a rival in love; yet, he tells Azucena, when Di Luna's life lay within his power, a voice from Heaven commanded him not to strike—clearly, the instinct of a knight for an unknown brother. And it is Di Luna's unquestioning acceptance of the honor code that keeps him from summoning his men at their first encounter—single combat is the honorable way of settling the matter.

It is around such questions that the entire opera revolves. They were once taken with utmost seriousness (as was the subject of literal witchcraft, which also figures importantly in the story), and are very much a part of our own mythology (Hollywood detectives don't call in the cops, and when the showdown comes in any real Western, the hero will wave the posse back with an "Ah'll take care o' this ma' se'f").

The matter of individual character becomes almost irrelevant. These people are absolutely bound to behave in certain ways in certain situations, regardless of their private peculiarities, about which we learn nothing. The libretto's function is to maneuver these figures into situations that will force them to fulfill their tragic destinies. This it does, and along the way it provides Verdi with a whole string of theatrical setups that play directly to his strengths as a composer during this period. Not such a poor job. I think most people will get the point if they will read the titles given to each of the acts: Act I: "The Duel"; Act II: "The Gypsy"; Act III: "The Gypsy's Son"; Act IV: "The Torture." And next week . . . .

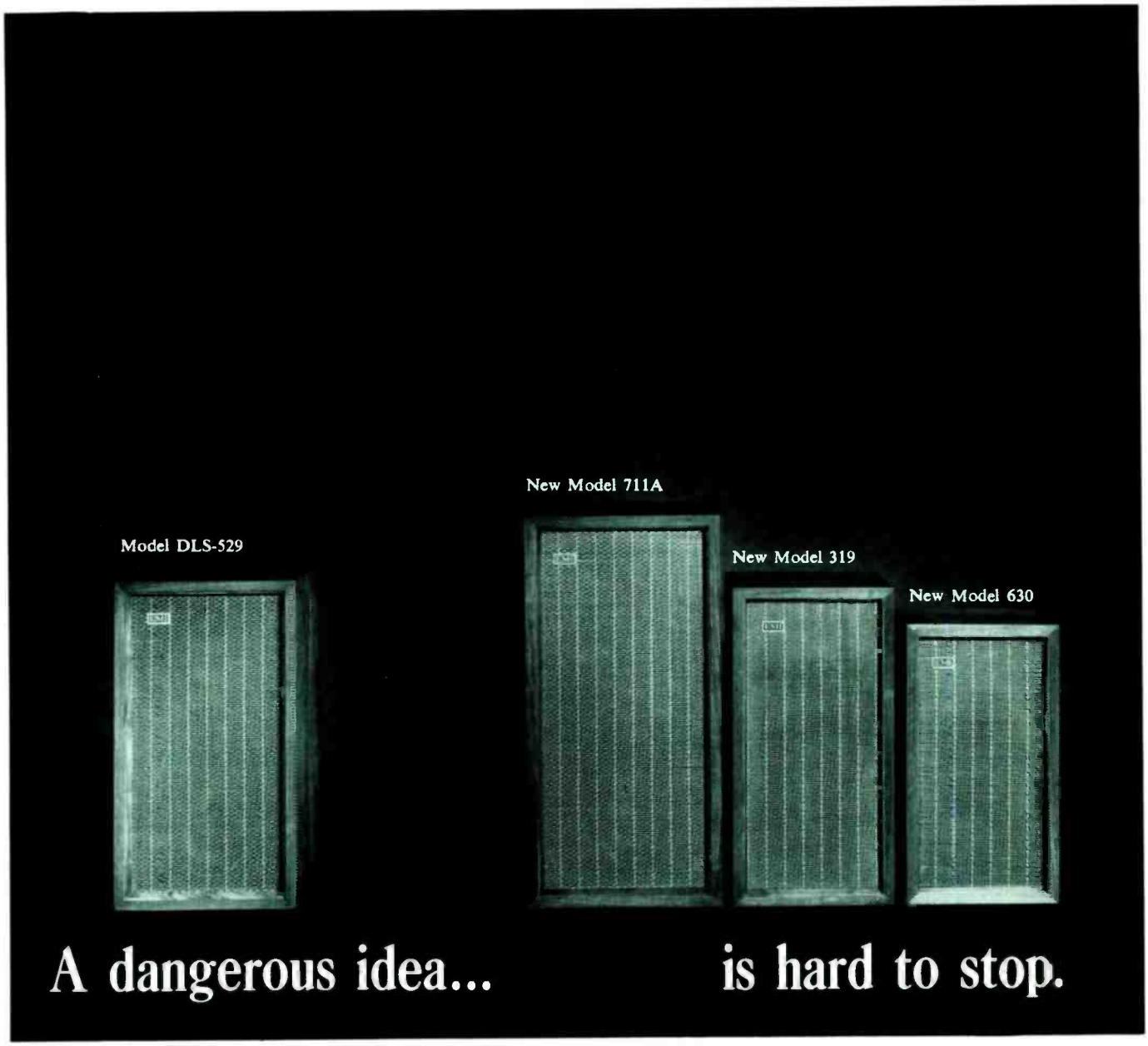
Trovatore has not been accorded extraordinary leadership on records. Of the seven complete sets under consideration here, only two benefit from outstanding conducting—the Angel set (Karajan) and the DGG set (Serafin)—and only Karajan can be said to find anything new in the score.

The new things he finds are, in part, dozens of bars of music omitted from the other recorded performances. Among the cuts customarily made in this opera are the following (page numbers refer to the Schirmer edition of the vocal score): the repeat in Leonora's cabaletta *"Di tal' amor"* (bottom of p. 28 to bottom of p. 30); a silly little ten-bar cut in the conclusion of the Scene 2 trio (pp. 46-47); another brief cut near the end of the Azucena/Manrico scene in Act II (pp. 96-98); a four-bar cut in the *"Squilli, e echeggi"* chorus (p. 139); the repeat of Manrico's *"Di quella pira"* (pp. 172-74); and the entirety of Leonora's cabaletta *"Tu vedrai che amore"* (pp. 191-97). In addition, the little wedding duet between *"Ah si, ben mio"* and *"Di quella pira"* is often deleted.

The Karajan performance sticks to the usual practice with the first two cuts, but restores all the others. (The London and DGG recordings all restore Leonora's *"Tu vedrai,"* though in all three cases only one verse is sung.) The restorations are not, in my judgment, pure gain. Much of *"Di quella pira's"* impact is due to its brevity, and to repeat it is to dilute it; moreover, the lines written in for Leonora as a bridge between the two verses are simply terrible. In any case, it's a feeling of mine that such repeats are better dropped unless the performer is not only an exciting one, but one who is willing and able to introduce some variants the second time round, and modern singers and conductors seem to regard this as profanation. (It is true that Di Stefano, the Angel tenor, interpolates Cs where A's are written in the second verse of *"Di quella pira"*—but of course these are normally introduced into the one-verse version, anyway. The baritone, Panerai, sings the repeat of his cabaletta as a carbon copy of the first verse, and I think the tune loses its sense of bite and lift in mere repetition.) For the record, though (not a pun), this is the most nearly complete edition of the opera, and in my own view the restoration of *"Tu vedrai,"* a conventional but sweeping, fairly appropriate tune, is all to the good, as is the inclusion of the snippets so often dropped—cuts of that sort are sheer pedanticism.

In addition to reinstating these banished sections, Karajan does a great deal to raise the performance above the usual level. His tempos incline to the slow side here, but the playing has a tautness and clarity which bring the score alive in a way that mere velocity cannot achieve. To cite two examples from the first act: the string staccatos in the last two lines on p. 19, as the first scene draws to a close, are wonderfully lucid and bouncy—one can see the bows springing off the instruments; and the violins wing through the *allegro agitato* beginning on the last line of p. 35 (when Leonora realizes she has mistaken Di Luna for Manrico) with a rhythmic precision and lucidity which carry the scene right along. (This last is more than just good technical execution—it is brilliant accompanying, for it supplies the singers with the springboard they need to bring the scene alive.)

The big ensemble finale after Manrico's appearance at the convent serves as excellent illustration of the virtues of Karajan's reading. The ensemble proper begins with the second stave on p. 116. From here to the end of the scene, Karajan's pace is more deliberate than that of most conductors, yet it has a pulse and strength that keep it interesting. Actually, there is a lot going on in the music here, from Leonora's strongly accented top line (marked *"Leggierissimo*



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e brillantissimo") down to the bass pizzicato in the accompaniment; Karajan makes us hear more of it than is customary, so that it actually seems to move along more quickly, to build more logically, than in a faster but less transparent performance. The orchestra and chorus (La Scala's) do splendid work for him throughout, and the soloists are unusually careful of musical values.

It's a shame that *Trovatore* was not given the Toscanini treatment, for it is encrusted with the accumulation of decades of practice at unwritten *allargandos* and *accelerandos*. Karajan at least gives us glimpses of what it might sound like afresh—it is nice, for instance, to hear Leonora sing her final bars before Manrico's entrance in the *Miserere* ("*palpiti al cor*," top of p. 184) directly *a tempo*. The inevitable (unmarked, of course) slowdown sounds downright corny by comparison.

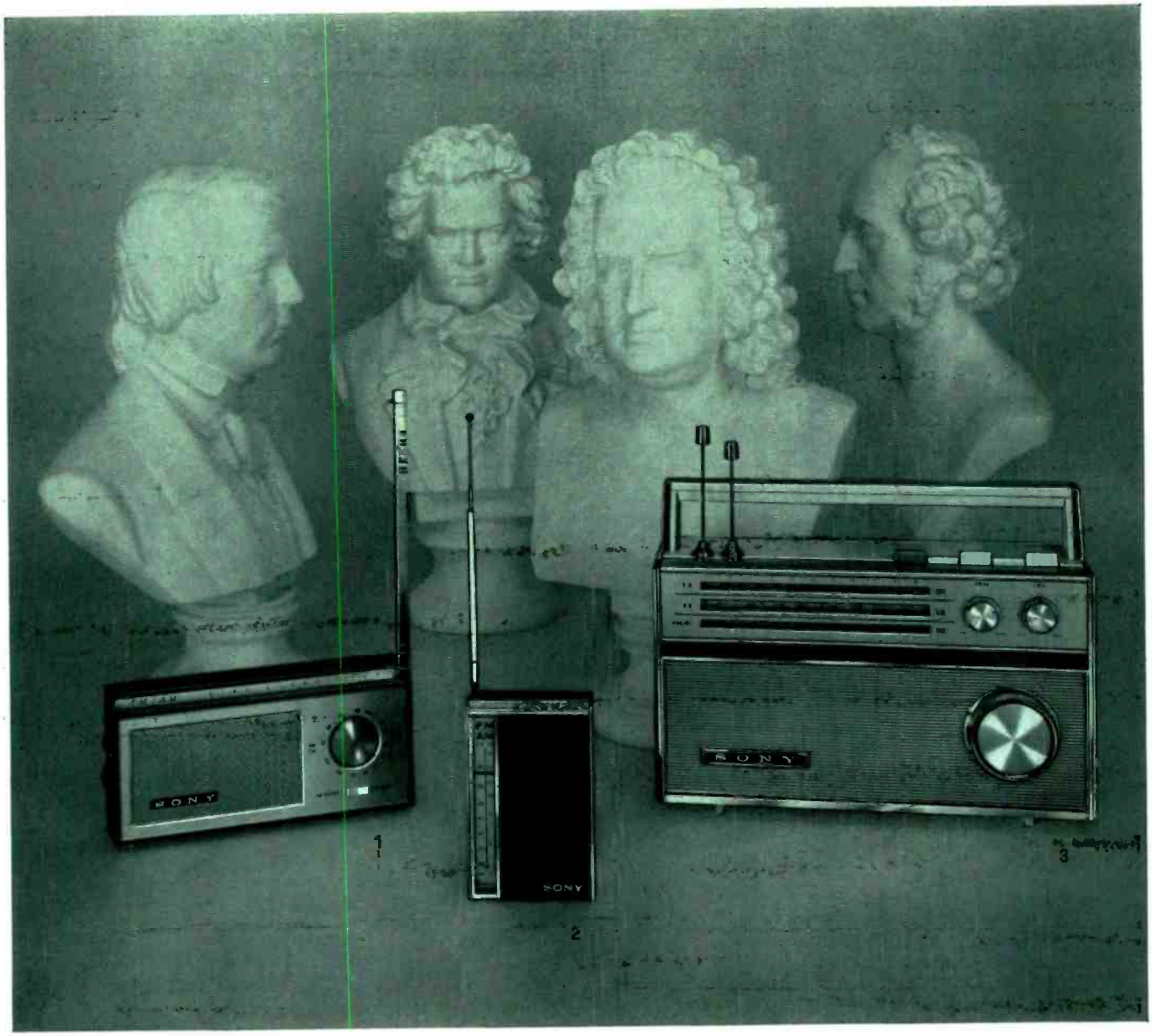
Serafin's reading is in one respect surprising—it is very quick. At times, it almost sounds as if the conductor were determined to prove that he can still keep pace with the most impetuous of them, and in some instances, he seems to run ahead of the pace at which his singers would really like to be operating. The choral *allegro assai* on p. 15 ("*Sull' orlo dei tetti*"), for example, is very close to a *presto*, and Bastianini, whose baritone is certainly not the world's most flexible, sounds rushed during the second-scene trio. But the performance as a whole is firm, crisp, and fiery. There is nothing really new in it, I suppose, but then, the virtues of a good Serafin performance consist in the sensitivity of the accompanying, the balance of one section against another (nothing ever seems wrenched out of shape), and the idiomatic authority with regard to matters of phrasing. Such virtues might not make a great symphonic conductor, but in an opera conductor they are cardinal. The La Scala forces perform admirably for him, as for Karajan.

Previtali (Cetra) is a conductor for whom I have a great deal of respect, and there are many things in his reading which I like (he keeps the recitatives alive and meaningful; listen to the first Manrico/Di Luna encounter—pp. 39-40—which is so excitingly pointed). Many of his tempos are very deliberate, but others are not kept in proportion: the allegro for the Gypsy Chorus (p. 49), for instance, is on the slow side, and when a very quick "*Stride la vampa!*" bursts upon us (it is marked *allegretto*), the contrast is jarring. The *allegro vivo* on p. 125 ("*Urgel viva!*" etc.) is another instance of an extreme, oversudden shifting. But very seldom do things sound limp or perfunctory, and I have a hunch that some of the more deliberate pacing is out of consideration for his decidedly veteran tenor, Giacomo Lauri-Volpi.

It is often pointed out that the real protagonist of *Il Trovatore* is Azucena, and there is no doubt that she is the focus of the drama. The role is full of wonderful opportunities, many of which become pitfalls—I can't think of another role, even in the Wagner gallery, that is so consistently subject to wild lurchings and staggerings, or that is so conducive to bad singing in the name of dramatic effect. On records, though, we have several good accounts of the role. Two of the mezzos, Elias (RCA Victor II) and Cossotto (DGG), seem to me a bit vocally undernourished. Both handle the music well, both have ample temperament, both handle the turns in "*Stride la vampa!*" with unusual clarity—but neither has that dark-sounding mezzo which gets the most out of the music, and Elias' low register is especially weak.

Miriam Pirazzini (Cetra) brings authority and dignity to the role. Her voice is not as steady or as focused as one could wish, but it is the right sort of instrument, and is used most musically. (The "*Stride la vampa!*," as I've noted above, is too fast, and she sounds uncomfortable in it; she soon warms up, though.) Fedora Barbieri, who recorded the part twice (for RCA Victor I and Angel) also brought the right sort of voice to it—big, wide-ranging, and full-bodied. She was in better voice for the Victor recording (earlier than Angel's); the breaks between registers were there, but not yet causing unsteadiness and pitch difficulties in the rest of her range. Her interpretation is broad and perhaps rhythmically exaggerated at some points, but strongly sung and full of temperament. In the Angel version, she is more careful of musical values, more thoughtful in her interpretation (particularly in the last act), but less reliable vocally.

Simionato's work (London) is very fine, but I feel about it as I have about some of her other recorded efforts—that the dignity and musicality which make her singing so impressive in the theatre sometimes emerge as a lack of involvement on records. Azucena's great narrative "*Condotta ell' era in ceppi*" is extremely well sung here, with some stunning high A's and B flats, but somehow it doesn't seem to capture the horror of the story as do some other more elemental interpretations. In the more restrained sections, she is splendid (her



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entrance with *"Ai nostri monti"* during the trio in the final scene is perfect), and the recitative is always full of interest. Admirable singing, after a somewhat ragged-sounding *"Stride la vampa!"*

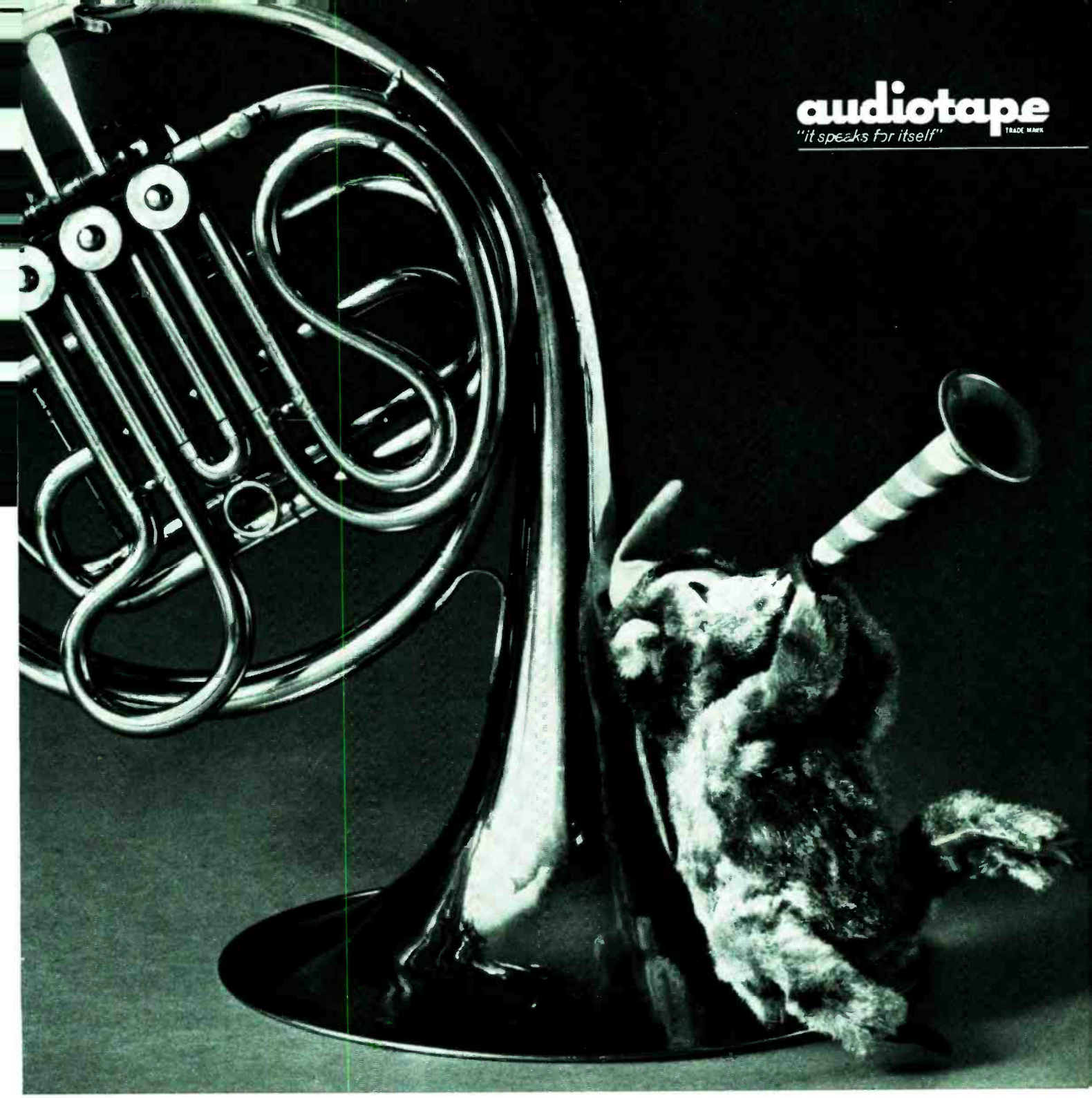
Minghini-Cattaneo, of the ancient RCA Camden set (CAL 289/90, available in Italy as Voce del Padrone QALP 10104/06 and soon—perhaps already—to be available here on the Odeon label), is in some ways the most impressive Azucena of all. Her huge voice is not even in scale, but it is vibrant and full from top to bottom, and like Schumann-Heink, she turns the breaks to advantage. She launches into the music with tremendous conviction (the *"Condotta"* narrative is full of blood and thunder), tears off thrilling phrases above the staff, yet is able to adopt an almost childlike, dreamy tone for *"Ai nostri monti."*

There is very little music of Azucena's available in individual excerpts (*"Ai nostri monti"* is included among the tenor excerpts, below). There are several versions of *"Condotta ell' era,"* but the only major singers to have made modern recordings of it are Resnik and Gorr, and neither is at her best, Resnik being tremulous and spread-sounding, Gorr surprisingly undramatic.

Leonora is the opera's "official" leading lady—she is the love interest and the girl with the set arias and cabalettas. As a dramatic figure, she is pretty lifeless (what sort of person *is* she, anyhow?), but she has some wonderful melodies to sing, and can create a memorable effect with vocal equipment of the required caliber and flexibility. Undoubtedly, it is Milanov (RCA Victor I) and Callas (Angel) who stand out from the rest of the field. For sustained beauty of sound and finish of style, Milanov's performance has no peer. With her first little cantabile passage, *"Come d'aurato sogno,"* on p. 21), it is obvious that the creamy tone, the limpid legato, the ravishing *piano* tones of her prime years are all there. This is the sort of music that fits her velvety instrument to perfection: *"Tacea la notte," "D' amor sull' ali," "Prima che d'altri vivera"*—magnificent moments, all of them. Especially noteworthy, I think, is the way in which phrases are caressingly rounded off, completely finished, before the next one is started, lending a continuity and poise to the vocalism. One example among many is the final line on p. 23—*"Corsi al veron sollecita, Egli era, egli era desso,"* where the hold on the final syllable leads to a lovely portamento and then into the next phrase, *"Gioja provai che agl'angeli,"* which is started at the same dynamic and then expanded. This is mastery.

Callas' Leonora is impressive in a different way. Vocally, it is admirable, with a few throbbing high tones excepted—the line of *"Tacea la notte"* is firmly traced, and the restored cabaletta, *"Tu vedrai,"* is swept through with the singer's peculiar brand of fire and accuracy in passage work. But by and large, it is the incisiveness of her attack, the honest rendering of the notes, which is so memorable (this role does not offer Callas the opportunity for a profound character study). The *Miserere* really becomes a new piece of music when it is sung, as it is here, without gustiness, jerkiness, or phony drama. And if one listens to the soprano part in the second-scene trio (particularly the loping unison passage with the tenor beginning at the bottom of p. 42), one will realize that all the notes are there, on pitch and in time (this is one of the few passages in the score that finds Milanov wanting). In general Callas is aided by Karajan's frequently slow tempos—she is able to articulate things with extraordinary clarity. In terms of sheer sound, her Leonora must rank behind Milanov's and possibly some others as well; but where realization of musical values is concerned, it is the best on records.

The remaining Leonoras are Price (RCA Victor II), Tebaldi (London), Stella (DGG), and Mancini (Cetra). In a sense, Mancini's is the most interesting of them all, though far from the most accomplished vocally. The voice is of considerable caliber and quality, though not by any means under the best of control—there are some wild-sounding high notes, some ragged runs, some precarious *pianos*. But Mancini has a genuinely dramatic temperament; the recitatives emerge with unusual life and authority (e.g., the passage beginning with *"Timor di me?"* on p. 179—she shows the kind of singer she can be when her voice is under control), and there is never any doubt about the singer's involvement in the emotional situation. Price has many exciting moments, especially in passages where the music moves along above the staff, as in the last-act duet with Di Luna—her high tones have focus and that quick spin which makes for a rousing effect in such music. She has good emotional ideas too (her *"lo salvas"* to Di Luna are real pleas), but occasionally she overshoots the mark a bit, as with *"E deggio e posso crederlo?"* (p. 113), where she gets in the way of the music with her attempts at dramatic projection. Such moments are rare, and



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the only other complaint is in the lack of fullness in her lower register.

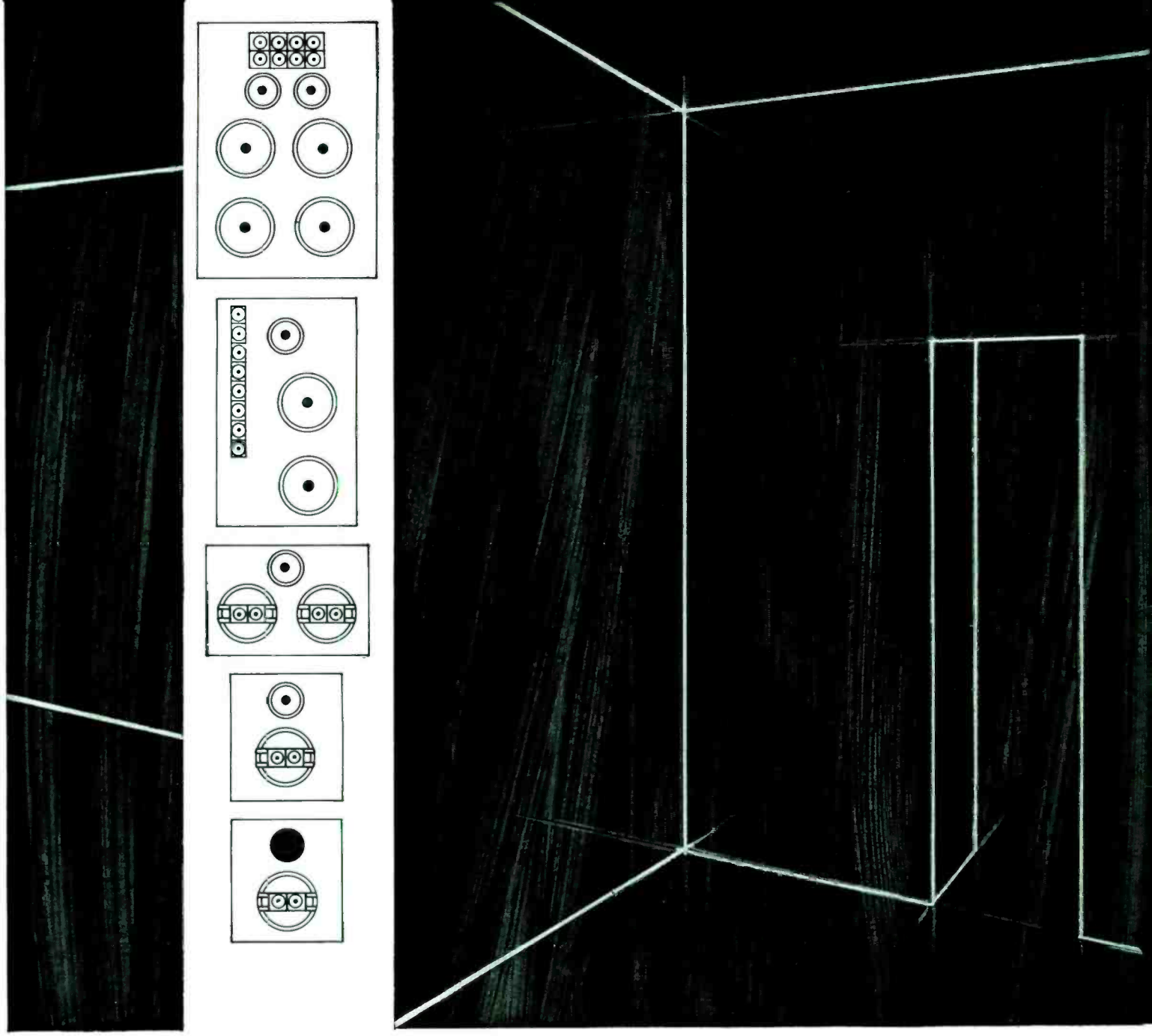
Tebaldi reveals her customary vocal lushness, along with a certain sluggishness partly traceable to the elastic Signor Erede—*"D'amor sull' ali"* just isn't interestingly handled and the *Miserere* is downright dull. The wealth of lovely, round tone and the polish of the singing (except in some of the runs) only partially compensate for a rather indifferent treatment of the music. Stella is in a similar boat. Vocally, she is more consistent than she has been on many of her recent recordings—and basically, the voice is a very beautiful one—but she frequently seems to have no idea just why the music is going where it is going; she's just along for the ride. Good moments, but too often clumsy and neutral in color.

Among the many recordings of the main soprano arias, those by Bonisegna (Eterna 745) and Ponselle (ASCO A 125) are especially interesting. Bonisegna was another singer whose severe division of registers did not apparently impair the vitality or flexibility of the voice. Her *"D'amor sull'ali,"* with its beautifully suspended high phrases, is particularly lovely. Ponselle's version of the same aria is a model of evenness and control of high tones—and if you are interested in hearing what a genuine trill sounds like in a dramatic voice, this recording is the place to find out. Also worthy of investigation is the *"D'amor sull'ali"* of Margarethe Siems, sung in German on Rococo R 20. The controlled legato and dark tone are especially remarkable in a singer who encompassed such roles as Philine and Zerbinetta (and she was the original Marschallin).

There are two historical recordings of the *Miserere* which should be investigated, the Alda/Caruso (RCA Victor LCT 1003, deleted) and Nordica/Reseninil (Rococo 21). The latter is poorly recorded, especially where Nordica is concerned, but Reseninil sings the tenor lines with wonderful smoothness and clarity. The Alda/Caruso version is of course a classic and justifiably so, if only for Caruso's seemingly endless legato in the tenor melody. Alda's contribution, though, is also quite fine, despite some Americanized Italian. Both versions offer an interesting stylistic sidelight, in that Nordica and Alda both interpolate Cs for the A's in one of the repetitions of *"Di te, di te scordarmi?"*; very effective, I think.

Now for the tenors. Manrico is often classified as a dramatic role, presumably because *"Di quella pira"* is regarded as the big challenge—if the tenor can make it with this two-minute song, an entire evening of aural torture can be forgotten. Actually, very little of Manrico's music is of this sort; the role calls for smoothness above all else (*"Deserto sulla terra," "Ah! si ben mio,"* the *Miserere, "Ai nostri monti"*). The dominant quality of the music is melancholy, and I should say that the perfect voice for it was Caruso's, with its dark flow and that habitual little downward glide. On the complete recordings, it is certainly Bjoerling (RCA Victor I) who walks away from the field. His *"Mal reggendo"* is an object lesson in legato singing, his *"Ah! si ben mio"* a model of balance and ease (even without the trill). And on the other hand, he flings out a ringing *"Di quella pira."* Every phrase is free and silvery, and of course his musicality, his sense of how to steer a phrase, was incomparable.

Bergonzi (DGG) doesn't have the



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variety of color or the ring on top to be an ideal Manrico, but he has admirable vocal control, good taste, and intelligence. His *"Ah! si ben mio"* is excellent (he refrains, incidentally, from the usual high option on *"e solo in ciel precederti"*) and *does* include the indicated trills; most of the other lyrical moments are very ingratiating, and he makes an interesting effect in *"Di quella pira"* by waiting for the chorus to finish its lines before taking the last C.

The others fall into line in rapidly descending order, roughly as follows: Tucker (RCA Victor II) is very solid and reliable, but a little stiff and thick-sounding, with many aspirated Hs and not much caressing of the legato passages. A note of mine says that Tucker "stops singing between the lines," if that conveys something (it is a feeling one never gets with Bjoerling, who maintains continuity always). His *"Di quella pira"* is transposed, for which there is ample precedent. Di Stefano (Angel) has a voice that is basically no lighter than Bjoerling's, the difference being that Di Stefano is not content to use it in a relaxed, lyrical manner. He is very clear and definite with the words, which is welcome, and marks the rhythms well, but simply doesn't make pleasant sounds above the staff. Lauri-Volpi (Cetra) is something of a special case, in that he was well past the age when most tenors retire when he recorded his Manrico. He really still had quite a bit to offer; the essential ring of the voice (one of the great ones) is still there, and so is the command and stylistic knowledge marking the extraordinary performer. He is unable to sustain a real legato line (*"Deserto sulla terra,"* for instance, is just a series of small explosions), and his *piano* tone is a croon. But at many points, the voice catches hold and drops its years—the high Cs in *"Di quella pira"* are quite remarkable, and he even launches a D flat at the end of the second scene that is in much better focus than Di Stefano's on the Angel set. At other moments, Lauri-Volpi offers inflections that are interestingly different from the norm—his treatment of the recitative just before *"Di quella pira,"* for example, really tells us something about Manrico's feelings. I am sure he is the only Italian tenor ever to pronounce *"Castellor"* in the Castilian way.

The familiar tenor excerpts have been recorded so many times that I can only scratch the surface in this survey. (TAP Records, by the way, has issued a disc on which no fewer than forty tenors, from the great to the rancid, offer *"Di quella pira."* A prize item for the collector of operatic morbidia.) I feel I should mention Josef Schmidt's *"Ah! si ben mio"* and *"Di quella pira"* (Eterna 737). The former, in German, has unusual ease and wonderful, cantorial trills; the latter is rendered twice, once in Italian, once in German, both with chorus, and both with no fewer than three high Cs—six in all, each of them hair-raising. Martinelli's *"Di quella pira"* (ASCO A 116) is stentorian, with a fine use of vowel and consonant sounds for dramatic effect. Among recent versions, that of Sandor Konya (DGG LPEM 19214 or SLPEM 136214) is quite exciting, with excellent observance of the staccato markings. Tamagno's recording is of historical importance, and is amazingly fresh-sounding (the *"con forza"* turns are thrilling). The Olympus transfer (ORL 211) is excellent.

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Homer and Caruso (RCA Victor SP 3375, a disc once briefly offered as a bonus with a recording by Mario Lanza entitled "Caruso Favorites," RCA Victor LM 2393). Homer sounds a bit hollow on this recording, but it is worth having for the ease with which Caruso spins out the long-breathed phrase *"Riposa, o madre,"* etc. Zenatello recorded it with Parsi-Pettinella (Olympus 209); again the contralto is not heard to advantage (the recording is poor in any case, and piano-accompanied), but the tenor contributes smooth, even vocalism. (There is a striking similarity between the Caruso and Zenatello treatments.)

We have quite a roster of baritones for Di Luna, one of the great singing roles in the baritone literature, and one of the most demanding in its use of sustained high tessitura. The man who coped with this most easily was Leonard Warren, who on RCA Victor I sent his voice soaring through these lines with wonderful freedom and abandon. No other baritone copes with *"Il balen"* so suavely, or tosses off the Fs (staccato eighth notes) in the scene with Leonora so nonchalantly. On RCA Victor II, the voice is shaky and frequently husky, the treatment verging on the fussy—*"Il balen,"* though, is even finer on the later recording, with beautifully soft, relaxed high notes.

Apollo Granforte, appearing with Minghini-Cattaneo on the Voce del Padrone set, gives the music a fine, dramatic treatment, occasionally a little labored (as at the conclusion of *"Il balen"*) but always firm and alive; he is particularly good in his cabaletta, *"Per me ora fatale,"* and in the big Act IV scene with Leonora. Tagliabue's work (Cetra) is similar—a dark, round voice, a bit muffled on top and sometimes inclined to flatness, but steady and handled in a stylish fashion. The unpredictable Bastianini (DGG) turns in one of his better recorded performances, still a bit stiff and leathery-sounding, but with relatively little of the sort of burly stomping that disfigures his Germont. He is excellent in the declamatory moments, such as Di Luna's attempt to abduct Leonora from the convent (*"No, giammai!"* etc).

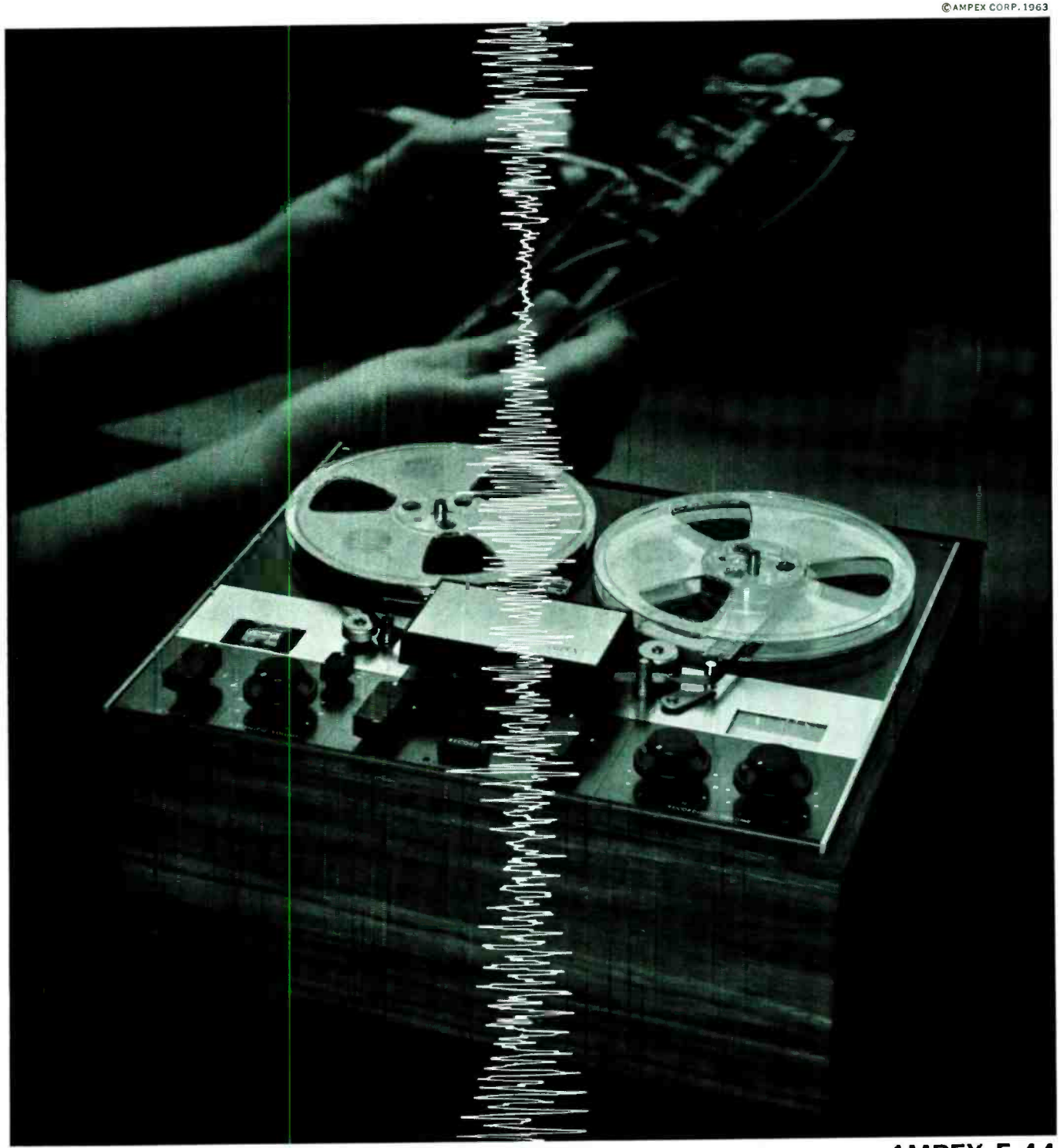
De Luca's *"Il balen"* and *"Per me ora fatale"* (RCA Camden CAL 320, deleted, but in print in England as RCA Camden CDN 1012) are worth looking up—both are straightforward, open-throated performances with lots of fat, rich tone and no nonsense. There are also two fine versions of the Di Luna/Leonora scene from Act IV: one, on Eterna 745, is sung in German by Frida Leider and Schlusnus. There are big slowdowns every time Mme. Leider arrives at a high-lying phrase, but both voices are fresh and full, and the results are exciting. Battistini propels his varicolored voice through the scene (with a good many musical liberties and interpolations) in almost debonair fashion on Eterna 709, leaving his partner (someone named E. Barbieri) behind in the dust.

Two of the Ferrandos—Vinco (DGG) and Moscona (RCA Victor I) have the right combination of dark, true bass tone and fairly easy handling (somewhat mouthy in Moscona's case) for this difficult role. What problematic writing it is for a heavy voice! Tozzi (London and RCA Victor II) sings it well, but is rather too light-voiced and young-sounding, and on the Victor recording distorts the music badly by shouting most of the downbeats for "dramatic emphasis." Zaccaria (Angel) offers an interestingly restrained account of the narrative. On RCA Camden CAL 401, deleted, Ezio Pinza sings most of Ferrando's scene in exemplary fashion, with his usual dark, rolling tone and crystal-clear enunciation.

LA TRAVIATA (1853)

Traviata stands in no need of analysis or praise; yet, after several weeks of studying it and rehearing it, I find myself more than ever struck by its dissimilarity to its companion works. It is the composer's most remarkable pre-*Otello* opera. Here Verdi sets himself the task of dealing with characters who, if they are not commonplace, at least embody no extremes. Compare them with the figures of *Rigoletto*, who, believably human as they are, are nonetheless very much beyond the bounds of everyday experience, existing on a highly colored theatrical level. Violetta, of course, must have seemed a shocking character to the audiences of the day, but there is nothing abnormal about her, save for her possession of that mandatory romantic ailment, consumption. Alfredo is a young fellow of moderately high social position whose most dramatic moment occurs when he disgraces himself at a party. His father is a goodhearted, somewhat hidebound gentleman, intent on keeping his family headed along an uneventful course. And these are the only characters of any consequence or dimension, all the sharply drawn subsidiary characters of *La Dame aux camélias* being either dispensed with entirely or reduced (as with the Baron) to the status of plot pawns. Every happening in the opera grows directly and naturally from the confrontations of these characters—no empires tottering, funeral pyres flaming, or assassins assassinating.

That Verdi succeeded with these materials is beyond discussion, though it was, I think, a bit of an effort for him. I'm sure it's not generally realized how liberally *Traviata* is always cut, and one's over-all picture of the score is a bit different when the deleted passages are considered (page reference numbers are to the Schirmer vocal score): one verse of *"Ah! fors' è lui"* (pp. 61-62); Alfredo's cabaletta, *"Oh, mio rimorso!"* (pp. 76-80); Germont's cabaletta, *"No, non udrai rimproveri"* (pp. 116-20); and sometimes the dialogue beginning with Alfredo's *"Mille serpi"* that precedes it; one verse of *"Addio del passato"* (pp. 200-01); frequently, the repeat of the second section of *"Parigi, o cara"* (pp. 213-15); and frequently some or all of the vocal lines between Violetta's final *"Oh gioia!"* (p. 231) and the end of the opera (p. 232). This amounts to fifteen to twenty minutes of music normally cut in performance. London's second recording of the opera, under Pritchard (which I shall call London II), restores all these cuts. It is good to have a really complete recording, and listeners can decide for themselves whether the inclusion of the two cabalettas in their places (instead of, let us say, on supplemental bands) constitutes an obstacle to enjoyment of the opera. My own impression, based on limited listening to this



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version, is that a supplemental band would have been preferable—the cabalettas are not only uninspired tunes, they are the opera's only passages which throw believable character motivation to the winds in favor of what was then traditional structure. Apart from London II there are only three instances of restoration on the complete recordings: London I includes one verse of Alfredo's cabaletta; while Capitol and Angel—the Serafin performances—restore the repeat in *"Parigi, o cara."*

So—to the performances. Four of the conductors turn in readings that are well removed from routine—Toscanini (RCA Victor I), Monteux (RCA Victor II), Serafin (originally Capitol GCR 7221, now in the catalogue as Angel 3623 C/L), and Previtali (RCA Victor III). It is worth noting from the start that Toscanini, while not benefiting from modern studio recording, has the NBC Symphony and the Robert Shaw Chorale to work with, while all three of the others have the Rome Opera chorus and orchestra.

It goes without saying that the dominant features of Toscanini's performance are its dramatic strength and its selection of fairly fast tempos. Certain scenes that are sometimes sloughed off come wonderfully alive—the two little dialogues in Act II, Scene 1 between Alfredo and Annina, and Violetta and Annina (pp. 74-75 and p. 81, respectively) take on a whole new dramatic coloring because of the sharpness of attack in the strings; things are happening, even in such comparatively bland passages of recitative. The orchestral execution is, of course, superior—once you have heard the tight, absolutely unanimous trills in the strings during the Prelude, or in the woodwinds during the opening *Allegro brillantissimo* of the first scene (p. 3), you will realize that all other such trills are relatively loose and sloppy.

Still, this seems to me far from Toscanini's happiest opera recording. Two things bother me—first, a tendency to overdo the incisiveness; and an insistence on maintaining certain rhythmic strides, whether or not the soloists are really capable of the pace. As an instance of the first habit, I would cite the entrance of Germont (p. 82). The baritone is introduced by a dignified-sounding theme in the strings, marked *"allegro"* and *"mf." Allegro* it certainly is, if not more, but it is a good deal louder than *mf*, and actually vicious in attack—we expect Orestes with his ax, not Germont with his walking stick. There are other examples, but this one makes the point. For all his wonderful feeling for the shape of a Verdian phrase (listen to the lilting rise and fall of the Brindisi), the conductor has overstated the case at some points—"exciting" is not the right word for *every* passage.

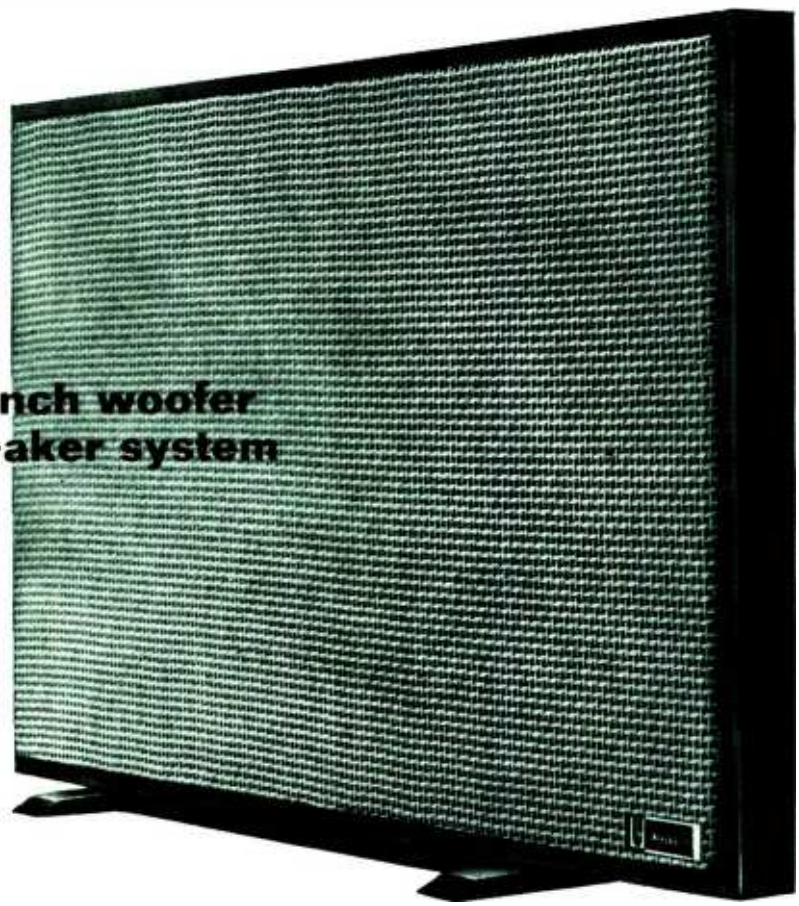
And I don't like the feeling of all but hearing the whip crack over the singer's heads. Toscanini did not make the mistake of hiring poor singers (he reserved that error for other occasions), but he did make demands on the very good singers he did secure. *"Un dì felice"* is just quick enough to sound a shade breathless; so is the soprano's big scene in Act I; so is *"Pura siccome un angelo."* I know it will be argued that it is not Toscanini's fault if the singers can't quite finish the race, but I can't see the point of insisting on a given tempo, however appropriate, if it only means uncomfortable execution.

Monteux's very different reading was at one time my decided favorite, and I think I still prefer this performance as a whole, since it is cast with artists who are not only good singers but are ideally suited to bringing Monteux's conception of the score to convincing life. Monteux strives for grace and clarity, sometimes at the expense of impetus. It now seems to me that the Act I party theme (p. 3) is really just too slow to be exhilarating; that *"Sempre libera"* is too slow to sound at all feverish or abandoned; that some passages in the Violetta/Germont scene need a more urgent pulse (as with the *allegro* beginning at line 1, p. 98—*"Tra breve ei vi fia reso"*); and that the *allegro agitato* on p. 144, as the card playing commences, seems neither *allegro* nor agitated enough. But there are compensations. Several solo obbligato passages are rendered with much more point and clarity than they are usually accorded—take the oboe's statement of the "cocktail music" theme previously carried by the solo violins (p. 11, line 1), or another little oboe passage, under *"Dite alla giovine"* (p. 94, line 3) for examples. The delicious little Act I chorus *"Si ridesti in ciel l'aurora,"* sung as the guests bustle through their leave-taking, is rendered with wonderful lightness and humor.

But the real miracle of the Monteux performance is the Act II finale, beginning with the Violetta/Alfredo interview (p. 154). This is marked with a very strong rhythmic underpinning, which carries through Alfredo's accusation and the chorus' denunciation of him—all beautifully built to the point of Germont's entrance. The tremendous concerted section beginning on p. 167—one of the greatest ensemble-finales in all opera—is a true model of lucidity and balance. Virtually every individual character can be heard voicing his lines, yet Monteux never loses command over the movement of the entire line—the basic direction is always kept in sight. Part of the credit must be given the engineers, for the effect has not been surpassed even in more recent stereo editions.

Serafin (in Angel 3623 C/L) and Previtali are less distinctive, but still noteworthy in their handling of the music. Serafin seems to have been able to secure a sweeter, more affectionate sound from the Rome players than any other leader on records; the playing is always smooth, always singing. The tempos incline to the slow side, though not so slow as Monteux's and by no means lacking in tension. As with Monteux, the transparency of the reading is admirable—the very opening orchestral run in Scene 1 (p. 3) is representative, and so is the orchestral conclusion to the Act I stretta (p. 57), which has a real lift. Serafin does allow the gypsy chorus in the second scene of Act II to go rather shoddily, but the lapse is temporary—the reading picks up again with the matadors' chorus that follows. Curiously, Serafin obtains less interesting results with a better orchestra (La Scala's) on Angel 3545 B/L, which has such a smooth, comfortable air as to be lacking in lift. The tempos are slow, as they are on the other Angel (one-time Capitol) version, and the pulse has even less urgency to it at certain key points—Violetta's *"Così alla misera"* (bottom of p. 92), or her *"Conosca il sacrifizio"* at the top of 100, where the marking *"animando con molta passione"* is unrealized. In addition, the soloists' work is sometimes musically slovenly; this is a reading which I would describe as "weak."

Previtali's tempos (RCA Victor III)



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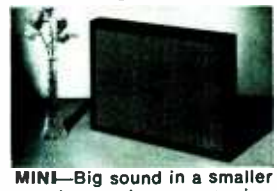

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are faster; his reading is brisk, full of strong pulses. The Prelude is representative—faster than most, not at all lugubrious, perhaps not lingering enough for some tastes, and with excellent observance of dynamic markings, such as the sudden *f* to *pp* change in the first bar of line 3 on page 2. Once in a while, Previtali works a trace too hard to inject excitement into his reading, and stretches the frame a bit; one example is the stirring-up of the orchestra for Germont's *"Sia pure, ma volubile sorvente e l'uom"* (p. 90), which becomes too much of a climax. In general, a likable, firm, not terribly individual reading.

The other conductors are Votto (Deutsche Grammophon), Molinari-Pradelli (London I), Pritchard, and Santini (Cetra). Votto's performance is undoubtedly the best executed of the four, the Scala orchestra and chorus (the women of the Rome chorus are quite weak) showing its quality. Votto is careful enough (the Prelude is really a beautifully balanced performance), and his selection of slow tempos is not in itself troublesome. But he gives in so frequently to traditional, meaningless holds and showy options that the reading loses what we might term its honesty—it is operatic in the stodgy sense of the word.

The role of Violetta has, as one would expect, been cast from among the world's leading sopranos, and there is not one of them whose portrayal is really poorly sung or uninterestingly conceived. The most satisfying in my view are (more or less in order) Carteri, Moffo, Albanese, and Tebaldi.

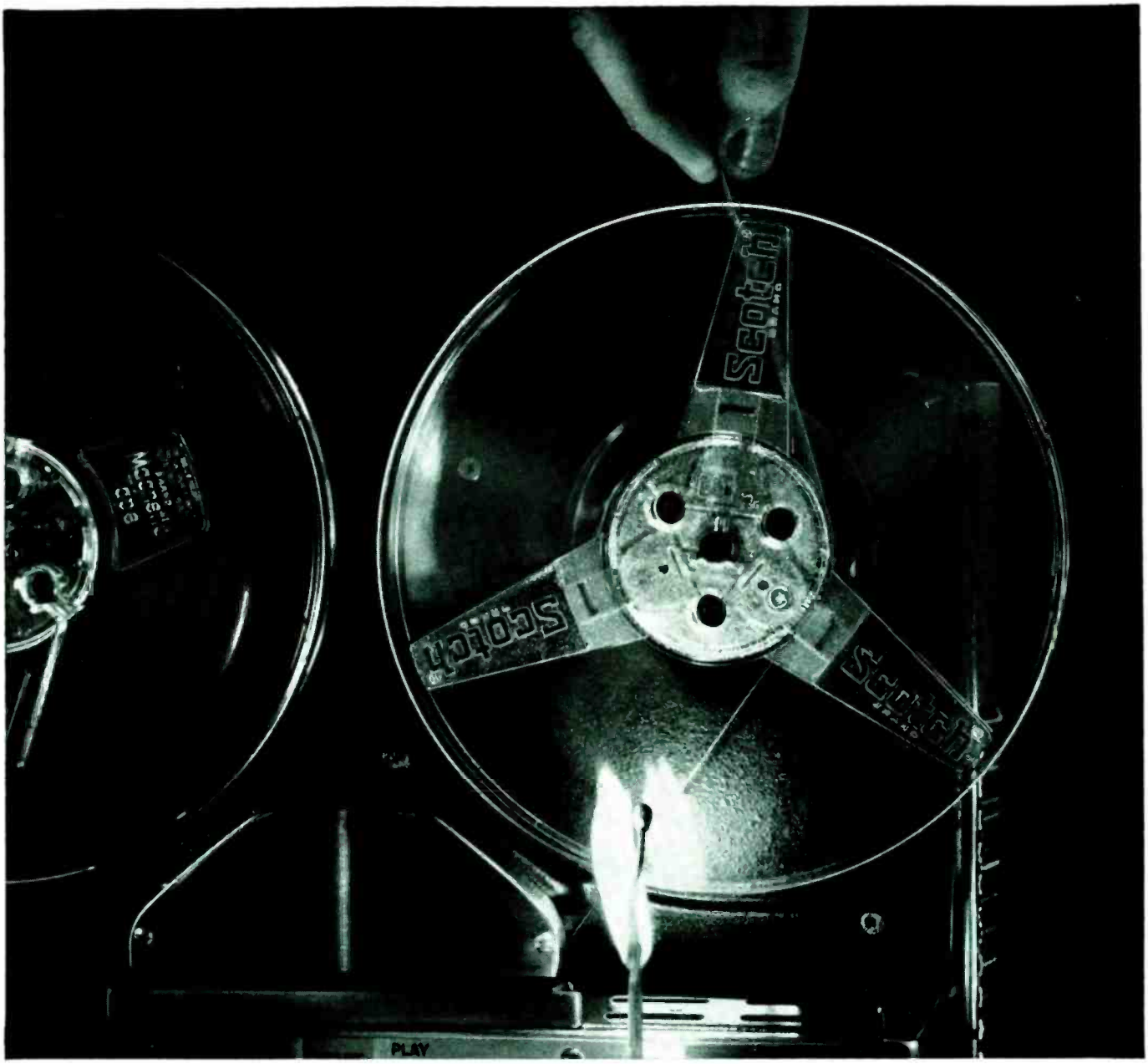
Carteri (RCA Victor II) and Moffo (RCA Victor III) have voices of what seems to me the right timbre for the part, particularly on records, where sheer volume is not so much of a consideration. Their sopranos are pronouncedly lyric, lightly handled, but without the thinness of the coloratura timbre which used to be favored for the role. Carteri gains in conviction as the performance progresses. Her *"Ah! fors' è lui"* is a shade careful, and the *"Sempre libera"* (as already noted) a trifle slow (observe, though, that her voice stays soft and round on the runs, and that the difficult attacks on high B flat for *"Gioir!"* are precisely right—mezzo-forte, with distinct pronunciation of the word). In the second act she is consistently good, her voice remaining round and lovely, her approach honest and idiomatic. The final scene finds her at her best, with her voice in its most beautiful estate—fragile and feminine-sounding, yet full of conviction. Her *"Addio del passato"* (after an interestingly matter-of-fact, almost naturalistic reading of the letter) is very nearly perfect.

Moffo's voice has this same soft, true lyric quality, and gives *"Ah! fors' è lui"* its best performance on records; it is quiet and tender, marked with exquisitely poised high A flats and a fine expansion on *"Ah, quell' amor."* Occasionally during the early scenes, I get the impression that she is making an effort to sound stylistically fluent, and I wish she would not slide into tones in the upper-middle register, as she does with the Fs in the Brindisi. But the closing moments of *"Sempre libera"* are wonderfully free and accurate, and the second act is splendid, barring a few moments of artificial emotion (like the sob at the end of *"Amami, Alfredo"*). Her instinct always goes *with* the music—the anguished pleading of *"Non sapete quale affetto,"* for instance (p. 87 ff.) is well realized through purely musical means. Her *"Addio"* is also excellent, though the reading is so quietly whispered that it is practically inaudible. A bit more body and focus in the voice just above the staff would improve the performance at several points.

Albanese's voice (RCA Victor I), even at this fairly early point in her career, was showing signs of unevenness; the high register is splendidly firm and free, but there are moments of weakness and dryness farther down the scale. (It is perhaps unfair to expect a vocalist to be as free under the tension of a live performance as in a recording session—but one must consider what is on the records.) Much of the first act sounds as if she wished it were just a shade slower, though she sails into it all bravely and knocks out some beautiful Cs in *"Sempre libera."* In Act II she is a bit overemotional at several points, but her farewell to Germont (*"Conosca il sacrifizio,"* etc., p. 103) is most moving—she sounds as if the voice has really been choked by tears. The last act is affecting throughout, not perfectly vocalized, but extremely full and sincere interpretatively (she is the one Violetta, by the way, who sounds genuinely consumptive).

It is hard to deny that Tebaldi's instrument (London I) is really several shades too hefty for ideal results in some of this music, especially in Act I. She is intelligent in her handling of it, maintaining the legato at all costs, and taking the *"Sempre libera"* in its downward transposition, where she can sing it without harshness. All the same, much of it sounds clumsy: the passages over high A in the second part of *"Un dì felice"* (p. 42) are not good—heavy-sounding and disfigured with puffs of Hs at the top. There is a dreadfully ungainly run just before *"Sempre libera"* (p. 63), and that incredible cackle that is Mme. Tebaldi's representation of a carefree laugh pops out every few pages in Act I. All the same, Tebaldi gives us moments of beauty supplied by no other singer. *"Dite alla giovine"* holds the listener breathless; it is a genuine *"fil di voce,"* perfectly intoned. Other sopranos can sing softly, of course, but it takes a voice of this caliber to scale down to such a round, resonant *pianissimo*. Again, the voice tells on *"Morrò! la mia memoria"* (p. 99) and on the tremendous outpouring of *"Amami, Alfredo,"* and in the rising entrances during the scene at Flora's (*"Ah, perche venni, incauta!"* etc.). The size and beauty of the voice (which was at its best at the time of this recording), the openness of the temperament, make for magnificent moments which are hard to relinquish, even in favor of a better-proportioned performance.

We have also Mmes. de los Angeles, Sutherland, and Callas. There is no doubt that De los Angeles (Angel 3623 C/L) sings well; I just find the performance difficult to warm up to. Contrast *"Non sapete quale affetto"* with Carteri's or Moffo's—De los Angeles seems intent on executing it cleanly, rather than with getting to the heart of the lines. Her singing is balanced, careful, sometimes suppressed-sounding and calculating, as if she cares more about focused tone and pure vowels than about Violetta. (The curiously closed-in, vibratoless sound of the F flats on p. 227, *"Le porgi quest' effigie,"* for example, is almost maddeningly cold.) One interesting point, small though it is: she renders the upward



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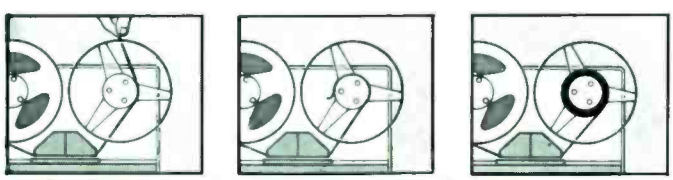

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scales of *"De volare"* in *"Sempre libera"* (p. 68 ff.) in a genuine staccato, as marked—most unusual.

Sutherland (London II) is a singer of such attainments that it seems hard to rank her behind lesser vocalists—yet her Violetta does not strike me as convincing. Her round tone and amazing coloratura facility are certainly welcome in *"Sempre libera,"* and I have no objection to the extra turns and embellishments which she takes in emulation of some of her high soprano predecessors (the chromatic run at the end of *"Ah! fors' è lui,"* though, sounds to me like something Verdi would never have devised). But so much of her singing sounds affected and tricky that we really get a picture only of the singer, not of Violetta. Her mannerism of gliding onto and off of notes is especially annoying (and even more noticeable in the complete recording than in her previous recital version, London OSA 1274). This reaches an almost ridiculous climax during the run at the top of p. 67, where she selects a high option, then swoops on and off it as if she were singing Adele. Again, in *"Addio del passato"* she adopts the mannerism of letting the notes fall off into a *parlando,* as if Violetta's strength were failing. Other singers have used this device very movingly, but Sutherland executes it so perfectly and consistently that it sounds mechanical. There are passages where she slashes through these peculiarities, to good effect—*"Non sapete quale affetto"* and the succeeding *"Ah, il supplizio è si spietato"* (pp. 87-89) or the *allegro assai mosso* on p. 106 (where Violetta begs for Alfredo's reassurance) are examples; if the whole interpretation were this direct, this emotionally honest, it would be a great one.

Callas' early effort (Cetra) is simply not as penetrating or exciting as her later ones—certainly her Violetta acquired an interpretative stature only suggested here. She is, of course, double-crossed by the faint, dull sound, and by Santini's limp leadership. Vocally, her performance is interesting in that it bears only very occasional marks of the rawness and wobbliness which later invaded her singing.

There have been innumerable recordings of Violetta's big Act I scene. Moffo's Angel recital version (Angel 35861) of the scene is quite different from that on the complete recording (RCA Victor LM 6154), which came later (by about two years). Her voice has more body and, it seems, size in the Angel version, and the vowels are noticeably darker in color. I'm not sure I don't prefer this performance to the later one. Eleanor Steber's version on her Verdi recital for Columbia (ML 2157, a 10-inch LP long deleted and never reissued or transferred), in most respects dispensable, is, however, noteworthy for its musical accuracy—the precise articulation of the staccato sixteenths in *"Ah! fors' è lui"* (p. 59); good execution of the runs, which have accuracy and velocity; and observance of genuine trills where marked in *"Sempre libera,"* are all admirable instances of a rare fidelity to the text.

Three historical versions: Sembrich's, Melba's, and Galli-Curci's. I like Sembrich's (of *"Ah! fors' è lui"* only) much the best—they are all in a tradition which opts for pure vocal display, and which seems wrong in terms of present stylistic conceptions, but Sembrich goes through it all with such panache and vigor that it wins me over. Columbia (M2L 283) makes use of its own 1903 version with piano, while Olympus and Rococo use the later orchestral edition. My choice is Columbia, for the recording is much more alive and forward, giving us a real idea of the singer's ease and power in the high range. Melba's recording (Angel COLH 125) does her such scant justice as to be almost unpleasant to listen to, but the authority and speed of her runs in *"Sempre libera"* are worth hearing. (Both Sembrich and Melba, incidentally, make use of a high variant in the melody on *"Ah, quell' amor"*—it is quite lovely.) Galli-Curci (RCA Victor LCT 1037, deleted) is clearly recorded, and one can marvel at the voice's flexibility and relaxed poise, though her rendition is almost in the nature of a vocalise. Muzio's incomparable performance of *"Addio del passato"* (Angel COLC 101) is a must in the library of anyone who cares about great vocal acting—listening to the reading of the letter alone is a tremendous experience. And the Bori/McCormack *"Parigi o cara"* (RCA Victor LCT 1037, deleted) gives us two lyric-voiced virtuosos who can sing the music with relaxed tone and absolute clarity.

Alfredo is usually regarded as an uninteresting part, but—to recoin a phrase—there are no uninteresting parts, only uninteresting tenors. Granted, certain lines are difficult to put across. When, after the emotional climax of *"Amami, Alfredo,"* Violetta rushes away from Alfredo, her voice trembling and her eyes brimming with tears, and Alfredo is left alone with a line which, under the circumstances, could be uttered only by an insensitive dunce ("Ah, her heart lives only for my love!") we do wonder just what could be done to make the situation believable. However, the dramatic opportunities of the scene at Flora's are certainly considerable, and if the rest of the role were invested with a real, old-fashioned romantic ardor, it would be live enough.

One tenor stands head and shoulders above his competitors in terms of making something meaningful of his music—Cesare Valletti (RCA Victor II). He seems to share Monteux's views as to tempos and phrasing, and etches moments of great beauty out of passages which, for other tenors, would be much too slow. *"Un dì felice"* is exemplary in the musicality of its phrasing, the inflection of the text, the coloring of the tone. He actually observes dynamic markings (e.g., the sudden *ppp* on p. 73, line 1 and again line 3, during *"De' miei bollenti,"* which I've never heard taken by any other tenor), and during the accusation scene he achieves through sharpness of attack and clear declamation of the text what other tenors of more generous voice cannot attain. I would wish only for a more solid tone in the high-lying phrases of the last scene (p. 225, *"No, non morrai!"* etc.), where he does sound thin.

Next to this sort of treatment, I like best the firmness and security of Tucker (RCA Victor III) and Peerce (RCA Victor I). It is certainly a pleasure to hear the Brindisi, *"De' miei bollenti,"* and other easy-flowing passages rendered with the sense of ease and reserve strength that Tucker is able to bring to them; and the sheer ring and power of the voice make the accusation exciting. Peerce's performance is similar; his voice was fresh and spinning on top, his treatment is straightforward and musical. In both cases, more elegance and, par-

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ticularly, an ability to sing at truly soft dynamics would upgrade matters.

Bergonzi (London II) turns in a very likable, well-shaped piece of singing, sometimes marred by slurring and by a rather showy use of high *piano* tone—as with the held *piano* A flat on *"ho disfogato,"* p. 166. By and large, however, his work is most idiomatic and tasteful. Unfortunately, he does not have the ringing B flat and C necessary for making something out of his restored cabaletta. Di Stefano's effort (Angel) is one of his more enjoyable ones—the music does not lie so high as in some of the other Verdi tenor parts and does not make excessive dramatic demands. Musically, he is sloppy, particularly with lines of recitative (refer to *"I'ho già in cor,"* on p. 16, or to *"d'amor regenerato,"* p. 71), and he tends to take the easy way out (omitting the *acciaccature* in the Brindisi, for instance). But he phrases well and enunciates well, and—despite the unpleasant openness of his upper register—is fairly satisfying vocally.

Among versions of the tenor aria, I recommend Helge Roswaenge's German-language performance (Telefunken TH 97014)—suave, clean, secure. Schmidt's, also in German (Telefunken 97007), is more perfunctory-sounding; Gigli's singing of the aria (RCA Victor LM 6705) is sumptuous, but not especially well-phrased, with a really tasteless botch of the preceding recitative.

There are no great characterizations of Germont on records, but there are several performances that are very well sung, among which I rank Warren's (RCA Victor II) and Merrill's (RCA Victor III) as especially interesting. Warren is shuddery on some of the more declamatory lines (his opening *"Si, dell' incauto,"* for example, and part of the address in the scene at Flora's). But he is unsurpassed in the ease and polish of his singing of the long-lined melodies in the great scene with Violetta; *"Pura siccome un angelo," "Un dì, quando le veneri,"* and, of course, *"Di Provenza"* are all ravishingly sung, with every phrase finished off, every turn rendered with all the smoothness of that plump, soft voice. Merrill's second try is almost the equal of Warren's performance—in fact, in warmth and steadiness of tone, it is the best-sung Germont on records. Merrill is much more knowing and flexible in his handling of the music than he was in the Toscanini performance, the phrases are much more sensitively rounded off, the dynamic shading far more varied (he sings a genuine *piano* during the *"Dite alla giovine"* duet). His performance for Pritchard on London is marginally inferior, the words being given less careful attention, and a somewhat mean sound being allowed to invade the voice at times.

I'd like to enter a word on behalf of the very effective Germont of Paolo Silveri, the only outstanding feature of the Columbia recording under Vincenzo Bellezza (SL 103, long departed from the domestic catalogue but available on Italian Columbia QXC 100008/09). His voice is steadier and brighter than on any of his Cetra recordings, and his handling of the music truly beautiful—listen to the sensitively molded *piano* of the duet portion of *"Dite alla giovine"* or the fine phrasing in *"Di Provenza,"* especially on the climactic *"Dio m'esaudì."* I must also not omit mention of two versions of *"Di Provenza"*: De Luca's (RCA Camden CAL 320, deleted but available in England as RCA Camden CDN 1012), which is splendidly open-throated and steady, and Schlusnus' (Urania URLP 7027, deleted), which, although somewhat cut up by the German text, is sung with brilliance, richness, and excellent control of dynamics.

There are several good Gastones—Garris (RCA Victor I), De Palma (RCA Victor II, London I and II, on the last of which he sings the *"E Piquillo"* chorus as a solo), Ricciardi (Deutsche Grammophon); several good Floras—Vercelli (London I), Anne Reynolds (RCA Victor III), and Tavolaccini (DGG); two good Marcheses—Monreale (RCA Victor II) and Zaccaria (Angel); a good Baron—Calabrese (RCA Victor III); and even a mentionable Doctor—Ventriglia (RCA Victor III). Curiously, there is only one adequate Annina—Dora Carral (London II). This character has only a few simple, *parlando* lines within a narrow range, which should be clearly stated; but apart from Miss Carral, recording companies seem to have engaged in a successful, world-wide search for singers who are incapable of doing just that.

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO (1862)

No one seems satisfied with *Forza*—least of all the gentlemen hired to design, conduct, and produce it. They cut it to ribbons, they transpose scenes, they omit key arias and duets. One can't blame them—*Forza* is a poor construction job, and there *are* passages of very ordinary music. The Inn Scene (not performed at the Metropolitan) is simply a paste-up, what with Preziosilla's undistinguished song in praise of war, the passing pilgrims dragged into the story just for the sake of an effective ensemble (and it is effective, particularly in the soaring lines given to Leonora as she pleads for salvation from her vengeful brother), Carlo's uninspired entrance song, and the fairly silly *"Buona notte"* business being strung together in an unnatural progression. And the series of fragments that constitutes the latter half of Act III (from the chorus *"Lorchè pifferi e tamburi"* through the *"Rataplan"* chorus) is open to the same criticism: it seems dashed together and overextended.

Forza underwent extensive revision after its St. Petersburg premiere, and several of the problems date from the revision. The key scene between Alvaro and Carlo, *"Sleale! Il segreto fu dunque violato?,"* originally ending Act III (and Alvaro's *". . . l'oblio, la pace chiegga il guerrier"* is an obvious tag line), was shoved forward into the middle of the act, which thus ends with the focus off the personal drama and on a badly written chorus led by a secondary character, apropos of very little. Moreover, Melitone's two principal scenes are now placed practically side by side; in the opera house, they are separated by an intermission, but on records they are very closely spaced. Perhaps the discovery of the manuscript of the original (one of roughly two hundred Italian opera manuscripts found in neglected ar-

chives of the Leningrad opera house) will lead to a new edition.

The recordings of *Forza* reflect the wide variety of opinion as to which sections should be omitted or shortened, and I feel it important to note the cuts here, since they may, to some collectors, represent a key consideration. Page numbers here refer to the Boosey & Hawkes edition of the vocal score.

ANGEL: A brief cut in Preziosilla's first song; a one-page cut in the cabaletta of Carlo's aria (p. 213); a cut of the second verse of Preziosilla's *"Venite all' indovina"* (pp. 246–47); omission of Preziosilla's toast to Alvaro and Carlo (by their pseudonyms, Don Federico de Herreros and Don Felice de Bornos) and the choral responses (pp. 250–51)—this omission makes sense, for with the big duel duet left in, it's absurd to have the chorus toast these "worthy friends" when they have just finished trying to kill each other; and the entire first scene of the last act, including Melitone's scene and comic aria with the mendicants and the Guardiano/Melitone duet (pp. 301–30).

URANIA: A cut in Preziosilla's first song; a cut of the second verse of Carlo's *"Son Pereda"*; a cut-and-paste job on the final chorus of the Inn Scene (several skips between pp. 107 and 115); omission of the reprise of *"E questo il porto"* in the Leonora/Guardiano duet (pp. 145-46); a similar cut at the end of the next section (152–54); a peculiar little cut in the off-stage card-game chorus, *"Attenti al gioco"* (174-75) and another in the instrumental introduction to Alvaro's recitative and aria (176–77); a cut in Carlo's cabaletta (p. 213); a cut in the choral rondo *"Compagne, sostiamo"* (p. 215); omission of the *"Sleale!"* duet (pp. 221–40); a cut in the chorus from the top of 250 to Trabucco's entrance on 252; cut of the *"Pane, pan per carita"* chorus with Preziosilla's lines (pp. 258–64); a cut of roughly three pages near the end of Melitone's scene with the chorus, ending on p. 321. This recording makes more small internal cuts than any other, though only one important scene is left out entirely.

RCA VICTOR: Cut in Carlo's cabaletta; omission of the *"Sleale!"* duet (pp. 221–40); otherwise complete.

LONDON: Cut in Carlo's cabaletta; otherwise complete.

CETRA: Cut at the conclusion of the Leonora/Guardiano scene (152-54): cut in Carlo's cabaletta; omission of the *"Sleale!"* duet (pp. 221–40); brief cut near the end of Melitone's Act IV scene with the mendicants.

Clearly, London's version is the most nearly complete; only it and the Angel recording offer the *"Sleale"* scene, and the Angel has made room for it by cutting the whole first scene of the fourth act. Cetra's edition is often assumed to be severely cut (perhaps because a shorter version was at one point issued), but in fact it is as nearly complete as any other version except London's.

In comparing the performances of the conductors (all of them Italian), I will use the overture as an easy point of reference; it contains most of the contrasts to be found in the opera itself and, like the opera, consists of a succession of sections very simply and unsymphonically dovetailed. While on the subject of the overture, I must direct attention to the Toscanini performance contained on RCA Victor LM 6041. Those in search of evidence of this conductor's and this orchestra's superiority need go no further than the three brass chords that open the work, for they have a unanimity and balance that no other group seems able to capture. But there is plenty of further evidence: the real chill invested in the string *tremolando* at the beginning of Section C, the blood-and-thunder impetus of Section D (one of the few purely "developmental" passages in the score), and above all, the proud sweep of the *grandioso* return of the theme from Leonora's *"Deh, non m'abbandonar"* (p. 9). Toscanini's genius for making us believe that every soul in his orchestra is passionately involved in the music was never more evident. Among other separate recordings of the overture, I am most interested by the Charles Mackerras/Philharmonia performance on Angel S 357510. It is distinguished by very crisp, clear orchestral playing, careful observance of dynamics (the changes from *f* to *mf marc.* to *ff* in Section G, p. 7, for example) and unusually long held rests between sections (between B and C, F and G, J and N). Mackerras is the only conductor I can remember hearing who takes the conclusion of Section J (bottom of p. 9) strictly *a tempo*—most, including Toscanini, introduce an unmarked *accelerando*.

Marinuzzi (Cetra) and Serafin (Angel) seem to me to have the best of it among leaders of the complete recordings. Marinuzzi inclines to briskness, and there are moments throughout the score when his forces tend to sound rushed—the short scene of the Marchese's entrance and death (from *"Vil seduttor!!"* p. 42, to the end of the scene) is a good example. Most of the time, though, the vigor is most welcome, and it is coupled with splendid rhythmic steadiness and an admirable respect for the score's instructions. A sample of the former occurs in the overture at the third bar of line 2, page 4: in the melody, the bar consists of six eighths, a dotted eighth, and a sixteenth; and of these eight notes, three are marked with accents. And that is just what we hear from Marinuzzi—the very common failure to bring out these accents flattens out the passage, even if the dynamic markings are otherwise observed. The conductor's rhythmic steadiness pays off at any number of points, of which I might cite the well-maintained *allegro brillante* of Section G of the overture, the Leonora/Alvaro duet in Scene 1, and the beautifully phrased, strictly timed clarinet solo just before Alvaro's aria (p. 177). Marinuzzi also secures an unusually attentive reading of the score from his singers, and surely deserves partial credit for the air of authority and good style which clings to this excellent wartime performance.

Some of that same air surrounds the Serafin effort, although it does not seem to me as consistently fine as Marinuzzi's. He shapes most of the bigger or more vigorous passages admirably: the *grandioso* marking on p. 9 of the overture elicits a response that almost rivals Toscanini's, as does the *più animato* of the overture's final bars (p. 12). Another passage in which I noted a special command was the entire Convent Scene—and almost any line calling for real momentum (as with the little motor figure under Carlo's *"Non si placa il mio furor,"* on pp. 339–40) gets its due. But Serafin tends to go slack with markings of *andante* or slower, as with the 2/4 *andante* in Section B of the overture, or the introduction to Alvaro's aria (pp. 176–77), or Alvaro's *"Le minaccie, i fieri accenti"* (pp. 336–37). It is this tendency to let down that places Serafin's reading a notch below Marinuzzi's; several splendid pages will be followed by

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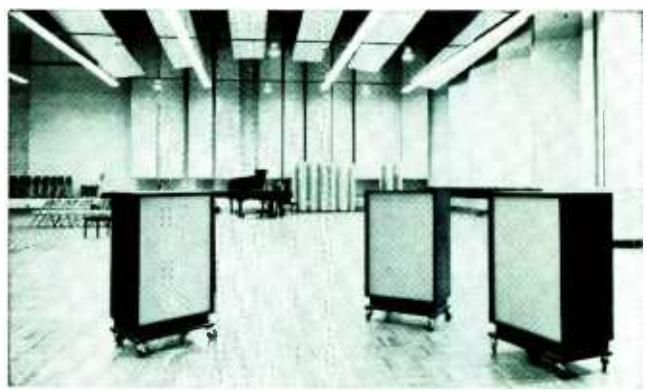

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a passage in which the participants don't seem much interested. Never, though, does the performance sound uncomfortable or unpolished, and the orchestral execution (La Scala) is better than that of the London, Victor, or Urania.

Molinari-Pradelli's reading (London) is just plain sloppy—the overture, for instance, will disclose some very approximate runs from the strings, murky sound from the brass at the beginning of Section O. In general, there is too little sparkle and precision in this performance, and very little imagination. (From the purely technical point of view, Molinari-Pradelli is not entirely to blame, for his orchestra—that of L'Accademia di Santa Cecilia—is by no means of La Scala quality.) Victor's Previtali, working with the same orchestra, gets slightly cleaner results, though the execution falls down at some of the same points as it does on the London recording—the violins in Section H of the overture, for instance (p. 7). The performance has, on the whole, more life than Molinari-Pradelli's, but still tends to go limp at some important points (the return to Tempo I in the Leonora/Guardiano scene, p. 145; or the Alvaro/Carlo duet in Act IV, which has no drive at all). I have the impression that this album has not received the most careful editing ever done by Victor's engineers: there are odd little gaps between certain sections, and some spots really should have been given another take—the chorus (a good one, it must be said) is terribly inaccurate in the scene of Melitone's sermon in Act III, and should have had a chance to correct itself.

There is not a great deal that can be said about La Rosa Parodi's effort (Urania), since it was obviously made under adverse conditions (I know that some of the Urania complete operas were recorded with no retakes at all, and this sounds like the case here). Parodi seems to have some interesting ideas about the music—in the overture, he gets a good, firm effect at relatively slow tempos, and observes the accent markings carefully. His singers, though, are not an accomplished group (the soprano's very first line, *"Oh angoscia,"* is musically incorrect, the second and third syllables being rendered as two flabby eighths instead of a dotted eighth and a sixteenth), and he undoubtedly had all he could do to get them safely through in a fairly traditional, often spirited way. Much of the performance sounds precarious.

Three of the five recorded Leonoras are quite fine. There is no doubt that Callas' (Angel) is in most respects the most interesting, though no one could be blamed for preferring Caniglia or Tebaldi. A point-by-point analysis of the Callas performance would be much too space-consuming, but we can certainly note a few passages as representative of her way with the role. There is an interesting section in the first scene (pp. 31–33) which shows Leonora's confusion as she is torn between the wish to leave with Alvaro and the wish to see her father again. The lines are set in fits and starts, marked by an impulsive leap to A flat (*"io t'amo"*) and by a characteristic rhythmic pattern which has Leonora jumping in on the second half of the final beat of the measure (this happens in eleven of the sixteen measures in which she sings, from the top of p. 32 to Alvaro's entrance on p. 33). It's a brilliant piece of writing, precisely illustrating the character's feeling: Callas, by virtue of musical exactitude and a use of coloring that shows she knows what is happening, makes sense of it—with other sopranos, it is nearly always gusty and whoopy-sounding. Then, when Leonora decides to follow Alvaro, Callas sails into *"Seguirti fino agl' ultimi"* with an abandon which is, again, compounded of musical rightness and a glow of emotional comprehension. It is really *con slancio.*

There are, to be sure, occasional vocal contretemps, which one can view as being compounded or partially compensated for by the singer's extraordinary tenaciousness. The high B flat on *"invan la pace"* in *"Pace, pace, mio Dio"* (top of p. 350) is perfectly excruciating (two parts wiry tension to one part wobble), but she hangs on and even gives us a hint of *messa da voce,* though the tone remains ugly to the end. Such moments are actually few, for Callas was still in good vocal form when the recording was made, and there is much singing in the Convent Scene that is very beautiful to listen to.

Caniglia and Tebaldi share certain positive and negative qualities—both give us good examples of the grand diva approach to the part. Though Caniglia was perhaps a shade past her best when the Cetra edition was cut, she was in far better estate than was her lot on the Gigli *Andrea Chénier* and *Aida* recordings, or on her postwar Cetras. In addition, the part suits her almost perfectly. Her big voice sounds bright and steady, with some occasional flatness (as on the difficult high entrances over the chorus in the Inn Scene) or shrillness (as on that same B flat in *"Pace,"* which is an extremely tough note to approach, necessitating an octave leap at a *pp* dynamic) as the only vocal drawbacks. As always with this singer, there is ample evidence of a genuinely dramatic temperament. Her treatment of *"Pace"* is most distinguished, filled with authority and passion, and she pours it on at all the big moments, though without illuminating lines in the specific Callas manner.

Tebaldi's voice is rounder and lusher in quality than Caniglia's, but the sense of drama not quite so keen. Her treatment of the demanding *"Me pellegrina ed orfana,"* for instance, is ravishing, yet doesn't hang together quite as well as some (we must remember that she is working with Molinari-Pradelli, and not Marinuzzi or Serafin). Hers is the most satisfying *"Pace"* of those on the complete recordings, and in the repeated *"maledizioni"* at the aria's end, she projects real excitement. In the final scene too, her work is vocally lustrous and quite sensitive. I have the feeling that a more demanding conductor might have drawn an even better performance from her.

I cannot dwell lengthily on the work of Milanov. Leonora was once one of her finest roles, but she recorded it too late in her career, and at points sounds almost like a parody of her former grand self. Certain lines of recitative still have the ring of authority and the last act goes fairly well, but by and large this is a poor memento of what was once a thrilling presentation. Fortunately, Milanov also recorded several of Leonora's excerpts on her "Milanov Sings" recital (RCA Victor LM 1777, Cellini again conducting, recently deleted). These included the recitative and aria *"Madre pietosa Vergine"*; the section of the Leonora/Guardiano scene beginning with *"Il santo nome di Dio sia benedetto"* (p. 157) and continuing through *"La Vergine degl' angeli,"* with Lubomir Viche-

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gonov the adequate bass; and *"Pace, pace, mio Dio."* This is representative of early-50s Milanov; *"Son giunta!"* sounds a bit whoopy, as it always did, but with the high B on *"Ah! ohimè, non reggo a tant' ambasicia,"* the voice is soaring out with all its old power and beauty. Her contribution to *"La Vergine"* is superb, and her *"Pace"* very beautiful in its somewhat glidy way, with thrilling expansion on the final *"Maledizione!"* Regrettably, Cellini's leadership is very unimaginative, and the orchestra and chorus just thud along.

This is perhaps as good a spot as any to discuss the important available excerpts, since a group of them are built around Rosa Ponselle, perhaps the greatest of Leonoras, with the admirable Martinelli and Pinza as partners (RCA Camden CBL 100, now regrettably deleted but obtainable in England on RCA Camden CDN 1006/07). These include the finale of Act II, *"La Vergine degl' angeli"*; *"Pace, pace, mio Dio"*; and the entire final scene, beginning with Carlo's off-stage calls for absolution and continuing through the concluding trio. The recording of *"La Vergine"* is a very famous one, and for good reason. The dark, easy roll of Pinza's bass (distinctly heard carrying the low line through the chorus) combines with the effortless legato of Ponselle to give us an exemplary version of the great scene, which is one of those pieces of simple Verdian song whose beauty belittles analysis. The *"Pace"* is not my own choice version (see below), and has several drawbacks: it sounds rushed, particularly in the instrumental bridges, and the orchestra resembles a typical Palm Court contingent. Still, Ponselle's vocalism is so even and unruffled that *she* does not seem rushed, and that high B flat is incredibly relaxed and lovely. The final scene receives by far its finest performance on records, for all three principals have voices of the right dimension and quality, and bring the same authority and command of true legato to these immortal pages.

There are two interesting versions of the Act IV Alvaro/Carlo scene—one by Martinelli and De Luca (RCA Camden CAL 320, a deleted De Luca recital, available in England as RCA Camden CDN 1012), and the other by Caruso and Amato (Rococo 36). De Luca and Martinelli were both veteran singers even at the time of these recordings, and to me there is a rather unpleasant harshness in Martinelli's steely tone. But this is a master singing—listen to the breath control that enables him to carry through three phrases beginning at the bottom of p. 358 (*"Ve lo giuro,"* etc.), while most singers could be excused one or even two gulps of breath (and Martinelli not only sustains the lines, but shapes and colors them, seemingly at leisure). In addition, his articulation has magnificent clarity and weight. De Luca sounds weak on some low phrases, but the high voice is brilliant and open (his *"Finalmente!,"* on E flat and E natural, p. 343, is tremendous), the phrasing and sense of movement in the music classic. The acoustically recorded Caruso/Amato version gives us a tenor of darker, more compact, more beautiful tone, but a baritone who, in truth, sounds hollow and pinched in the high range. Both these artists handle their music well, and with a somewhat more aristocratic air than we are now accustomed to—there is no shouting to make a dramatic point, just more emphatic singing.

At least two other versions of *"Pace"* attain a very high level: Muzio's (Angel COLC 101) and Farrell's (Columbia ML 5654). Muzio has the most feminine, floating *piano* of all sopranos, and offers an object lesson in the inflection of words for dramatic effect. She is a bit under pitch on the troublesome B flat, but makes us forgive it. Her version, incidentally, does not include the little postlude, starting with *"Misero pane,"* which was not originally part of the aria. Farrell makes two mistakes: she simply roars *"invan la pace,"* presumably to avoid the difficulties encountered by other sopranos, and she overdramatizes the first part of the postlude, indicating an overweening fury at the provisions Guardiano has left her, rather than the flat acceptance that is clearly intended. Otherwise, her performance is full-toned and warm, nicely phrased, and altogether a pleasure to listen to.

An extended selection of the tenor-baritone music was contained on the long deleted Urania URLP 7027, and featured Helge Roswaenge and Heinrich Schlusnus, who of course sang the music in German. The first and second of the three Alvaro/Carlo scenes are included on this recording, the first starting with the off-stage fight over card playing (p. 184) and continuing through *"Amici, in vita e in morte,"* the battle scene, and *"Solenne in quest' ora"*; the second comprising the entire *"Sleale!"* duet, pp. 221-39. The recordings date from the Thirties, the transfers are harsh-sounding, and the use of German frequently chops the line. All the same, both these great singers are in prime form, especially Schlusnus; there is not much subtlety in what they do (though both sing genuine legato, and Roswaenge does *"No, d'un imene il vincolo"* very smoothly), but when both these ringing voices get going during the *"Sleale!"* scene the results are most exciting.

We must mention the best-known of all *Forza* recordings, the Caruso/Scotti *"Solenne in quest' ora"* (RCA Victor LM 6056). It has been called the perfect example of duet singing, and so it seems to me. The voices are perfectly matched, and I know that many listeners have shared my own experience on first hearing the recording (before, of course, becoming at all well acquainted with the opera as a whole)—that of not ever being quite sure which of these two remarkable vocalists is singing. Caruso's treatment of the phrase *"Or muoio tranquillo,"* is a model of velvety tone and perfect legato, and the final *"addios"* are perfectly declaimed by both singers. The Gigli/De Luca version of the same duet (RCA Victor LM 2337) is lushly vocalized, but Gigli's legato is not as firm as Caruso's, nor his style as unaffected.

Now to return to our consideration of the complete recordings. The role of Alvaro is, potentially, one of the most interesting in the tenor repertory. One's view of the character can become bogged down in farfetched detail—"Son of the Last of the Incas," his case might be titled. But he is an intriguing figure—a half-breed of noble blood who aspires to the hand of the daughter of a Spanish Marquis, feels both pride and shame at his origins, and is powerfully afflicted by the idea that Destiny is arranging things rather badly for him and that there is nothing he can do but stick things out, waiting and wishing for death. *"La vita è un inferno all' infelice*

Continued on page 146

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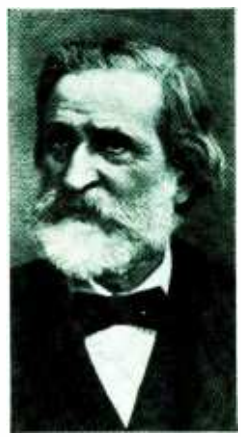


GIUSEPPE VERDI

A special issue on the 150th anniversary of his birth

BY ROLAND GELATT

A Discursive Tour of Verdi's Italy

LOGICALLY AND IDEALLY, the Verdi itinerary should begin in the flat country northwest of Parma, where the composer was born and bred and to which he returned with obstinate devotion during the whole of his long and crowded life. The focal point of Verdi's Italy is the little market town of Busseto deep in the Plain of Parma. But one cannot fly directly from New York to Busseto, or even to Parma. The choice for the jet-borne traveler is between a flight to Milan or to Rome. I opted for Rome and arrived there early in April, 118 years and six months after Verdi's first visit to that city.

He had gone to Rome, in the autumn of 1844, for the first performance of his sixth opera, *I due Foscari*, a gloomy entertainment based on a gloomy tragedy by Byron. The trip from Milan took five days—over miserable roads in cramped and stuffy diligences, with tedious delays at the borders of all the intervening states and principalities (Italy was not yet a nation—merely, as Metternich observed, "a geographical expression") and with vexing overnight stops at indifferent wayside inns. By comparison, the Alitalia DC-8 in which I traveled touched down in Milan after an eight-hour hop from New York and then completed the flight to Rome in seventy minutes. The disparity of traveling times is symptomatic of other radical contrasts. Rome in 1844 was a city of 180,000 population (today it is about two million), as backward in its civic amenities as in its ideas of liberty and justice. Its resident Jewish population was still compelled to live in the Ghetto, near the Portico of Ottavia—"a barbarous system," according to *Murray's Handbook for Travellers* of 1856, "only now to be met with in the states of the Church, although a relaxation of that rigid rule has been recently made, by allowing some of the most respectable Jews to have shops and countinghouses beyond the precincts of their filthy quarter." Every office of importance—diplomatic, financial, judicial—was in the hands of the clergy, a succession of Baron Scarpias ruled the police force, and the administration of justice knew few mercies. Capital punishment in the form of *morte esemplare* still flourished. A particularly vile murderer would be flogged and hanged in the Piazza del Popolo, then cut into quarters and his dismembered body displayed upon stakes. Charles Dickens in *Pictures from Italy* describes a Roman beheading in that very year of 1844—a chilling vignette of indifferent spectators, of monks carrying a black-canopied effigy of Christ, of a pale-faced prisoner kneeling down under the knife with a leathern bag immediately below

to catch his head. Before Dickens quite knew what had happened, the decapitation was over. "The executioner was holding it [the head] by the hair, and walking with it round the scaffold, showing it to the people. . . . When it had travelled round the four sides of the scaffold, it was set upon a pole in front—a little patch of black and white, for the long street to stare at, and the flies to settle on." And this was a fairly tame affair. As late as 1854 six robbers were executed on the Piazza del Popolo by being beaten to death before the crowd. All this seems a far cry from the *dolce vita* of contemporary Rome, and it requires now a considerable effort of the imagination to think of this splendidly sybaritic city in terms of despotic injustices and barbaric cruelties. It required no effort for Verdi 118 years ago. When he composed the last act of *Rigoletto,* when he invoked that vein of harsh severity which runs right through his early and middle periods, Verdi was writing of things he knew.

The premiere of *I due Foscari*, at the Teatro Argentina on November 3, 1844, was—in Verdi's own words—a "*mezzo-fiasco*," a half-failure, though the dissatisfactions on opening night were apparently more with the mediocre production than with the music itself. Nevertheless, Verdi returned to Milan without the tumult of a Roman success echoing in his ears. That came a little more than four years later with his second premiere at the Teatro Argentina, *La Battaglia di Legnano*. The circumstances were extraordinary. Italy was seething with resurgent patriotism in 1848, the year of revolutions, and the fever had infected even the Papal States. On November 24 the Pope had fled Rome in disguise to the Kingdom of Naples, and after ten weeks of dizzying uncertainty the short-lived Roman Republic was proclaimed on February 8, 1849. It was at just this period that Verdi came to Rome, carrying with him a new opera bursting with patriotic connotations —the victory of the Lombard League over Frederick Barbarossa at Legnano in 1176. The first performance took place on January 27 in an atmosphere of delirious enthusiasm. The interior of the Argentina Theatre had been festooned with the national colors. Most of the spectators were wearing them too—the men in their buttonholes, the women in their coiffures—and from the very first words of the opera, "*Viva l'Italia*," the audience went into a frenzy as only an Italian throng can. The entire fourth act had to be repeated, and at the end the composer was recalled time and again.

The Teatro Argentina is no longer festooned with anything. It is a shabby derelict, but it still stands and—with the application of a little time and determination—can still be seen. The Argentina first opened its doors in 1732 and is now the only surviving eighteenth-century theatre in Rome. Probably the one most significant musical event in its long history was the first (and unsuccessful) performance of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1816, though throughout much of the nineteenth century it played a notable role in Rome's operatic affairs. With the opening of the larger and more sumptuous Teatro Costanzi (now Teatro dell' Opera) in 1880, the Argentina went into decline—a secondary opera house for secondary productions. It had a brief renascence after World War II as a concert hall, but a few years ago the city authorities closed it down altogether. When we entered the building this spring, via the stage door on a back street, we had the sense of intruding on a once great lady, now very old and infirm. The air had a moldering and earthy smell; the paint and upholstery had grown dingy with neglect; the handsomely decorated ceiling was peeling away. And yet in its dim illumination the old Argentina possessed a noble aspect, and it was easy to believe that the faded yellow velvet drapes in the corridors had been fingered by the thirty-one-year-old Verdi as he stole into a box to await the verdict of a Roman audience.

Just now the Teatro Argentina is the scene of excavations. A plank has been thrown across the orchestra pit, and below it gapes a hole about twenty feet deep. At the bottom are Roman walls, perhaps of an ancient theatre. Eventually, after the archaeologists have taken their photographs, the pit will be filled in, and one of these days a restored and modernized Argentina will open its doors again, not as an opera house but as a repertory theatre. The plans and the timetable seem somewhat vague. Meanwhile, the Argentina slumbers peacefully, a silent repository of far-off memories.

To gain admission to the inside of the Argentina requires special dispensation, but anyone can view the façade, which looks out onto a busy thoroughfare, the Largo Argentina. Except for being dirtier and dingier, the façade is as Verdi knew it. The surroundings, however, would surprise him greatly. In the 1840s the theatre was hemmed within a maze of narrow streets. Since then, the wide Corso Vittorio Emanuele has been opened up to its left, and directly in front of it there is now a large piazza encompassing some extensive excavations of Roman temples. Literally hundreds of cats—black cats and white cats, calicoes, tabbies, even some Siamese—have made their homes in and amid these ancient ruins. Wherever one looks there are cats, stretched out across fallen columns, crouching under stone ledges, or sauntering through brick foundations. Verdi, who entertained a passionate affection for animals, would surely have been pleased at the Argentina's new neighbors.

Two more Verdi premieres took place in Rome, of operas that are still very much in the repertoire—*Il Trovatore*, in 1853, and *Un Ballo in maschera*, in 1859—but the house in which they were given, the Teatro Apollo, no longer exists. Old photographs show it to have been a bizarre, patchwork structure rising precipitously from the banks of the Tiber almost directly opposite the Castel Sant' Angelo. Theatres had occupied the site since 1671. The Teatro Apollo, erected in 1795, was the last of them, and its demolition came about, in 1888, because it stood in the way of a new river embankment that

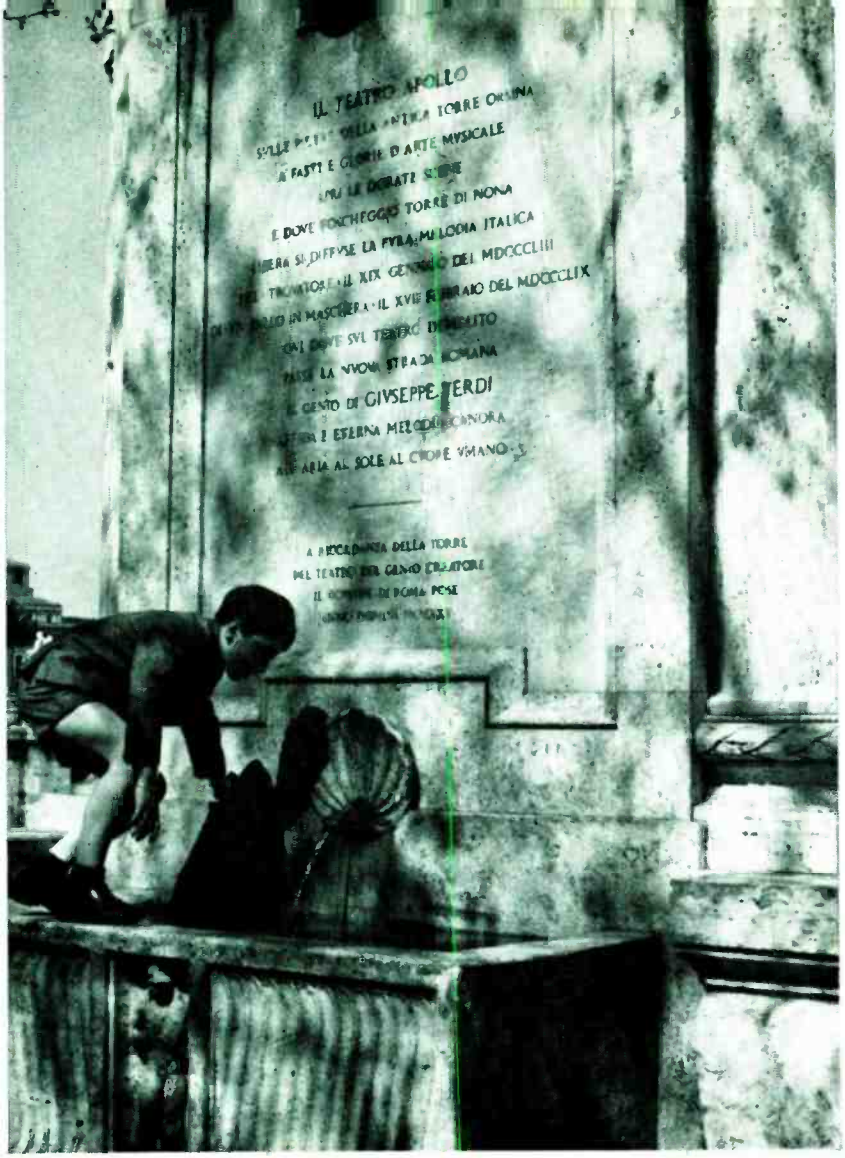
was to be put up. The embankment was badly needed, for the Tiber used to inundate the lower parts of Rome with depressing regularity; as a matter of fact, the streets near the Teatro Apollo were inundated on the very night of *Il Trovatore*'s first performance. Nevertheless, it is sad that the Apollo had to bow to progress. All that remains are some old pictures, and a stone fountain on the present Lungotevere Tor di Nona commemorating the spot on which the building stood. It was on a radiantly soft spring morning that I strolled down the Lungotevere to pay my respects to the departed Teatro Apollo and to photograph its commemorative plaque. Just as I was taking the picture, a handsome *ragazzino* climbed up on the fountain for a quick drink of water on his way to school. He seemed equally oblivious of my presence and of the fountain's awesome historical associations.

IT IS TIME for a side trip to Naples. In truth, Naples is not much of a Verdi city, but any excuse to go there will do when the sun is shining and the air still cool. The composer's first visit took place in 1845 for the premiere of *Alzira*, a now forgotten work which had been commissioned by the Teatro San Carlo. It is, by all accounts, a thoroughly bad opera (even Verdi, in later life, called it "downright ugly") and its reception was not especially cordial. One critic suggested that Verdi was writing too much and too quickly: "No human talent is capable of producing two or three grand operas a year." He was undoubtedly right, but Verdi was not the first impecunious artist to keep on striking while the iron was hot. At all events, the Neapolitan press took a lively interest in the composer's comings and goings, much to his annoyance. The papers reported on the cafés he frequented, the singers he visited, the clothes he wore, and "a thousand other trifles unworthy"—Verdi later complained—"of a serious public or a great city." Despite his initial dislike of Naples (which he never got over), Verdi returned five years later with a much finer work—*Luisa Miller*, a domestic tragedy that presages *Rigoletto*. To the credit of the San Carlo audience, the opera was applauded with rapturous enthusiasm. Nine years later, in 1858, Verdi was in Naples again, this time with the manuscript of *Un Ballo in maschera*. He arrived in January and immediately became engaged in a four-month struggle with the Neapolitan censors. The Kingdom of Naples, ruled by a branch of the Bourbons, was an absolute monarchy of the most reactionary temper, and a work depicting a conspiracy against the life of a king abounded with obvious perils. An instructive account of Verdi's wrangles with King Ferdinand's officials can be found in the 1960 *Bulletin of the Institute of Verdi Studies*. Suffice it to say here that the composer eventually gave up in disgust, and offered the opera instead to Rome. But by that time Verdi's wife Peppina, who liked a warm climate, had had her winter in Naples.

The Verdis stayed—as most tourists do—on the sea front, at the Hôtel de Rome facing the bay of Santa Lucia. The bay has since been filled in to form the Rione Santa Lucia, but otherwise the landmarks are pretty much as they were in the mid-nineteenth century. It is a short walk from the sea front to the Teatro San Carlo, the oldest major opera house in Italy still in active use. Since Charles III of Bourbon erected it in 1737 as an imposing adjunct to his palace (a private corridor connecting it to the royal quarters still exists), the San Carlo has never ceased to dominate the city's operatic life. Dickens visited the theatre in 1844 and seemed particularly intrigued by the professional letter writers "perched behind their little desks and inkstands" who regularly congregated under its graceful portico. "Here is a Galley-slave in chains who wants a letter written to a friend. He approaches a clerkly-looking man, sitting under the corner arch, and makes his bargain. He has obtained permission of the Sentinel who guards him: who stands near, leaning against the wall and cracking nuts. The Galley-slave dictates in the ear of the letter writer, what he desires to say; and as he can't read writing, looks intently in his face, to read there whether he sets down faithfully what he is told." A galley slave? But this is Naples before the fall of the Bourbons, where—*Murray's Handbook* informs us—the public park is open to "the lower classes, peasants, and servants in livery" only once a year, on September 8.

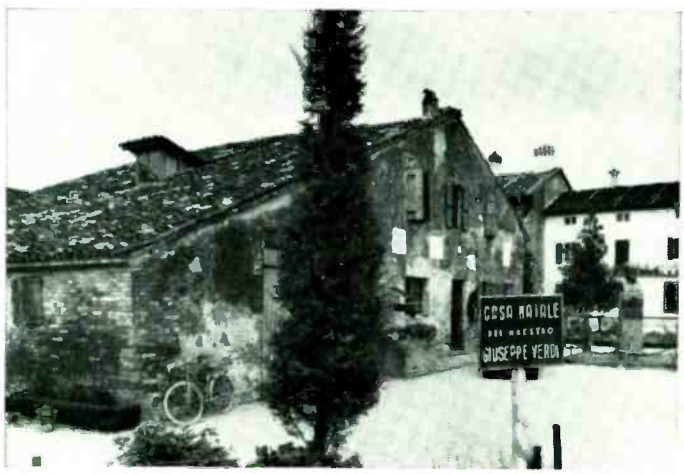
As late as 1912, according to Baedeker's *Southern Italy* (it will be evident that we spurn such modern cicerones as Fielding or Fodor), the public writers gathered under the San Carlo's arches "ready to commit to paper the pleading of the lover or the expostulation of the creditor." I regret to say that they gather there no longer. Otherwise the theatre remains as Verdi saw it, a model of handsome simplicity inside and out. Everything about the house bespeaks elegance and restraint, even the backstage area, with its profusion of marble and its large, tastefully appointed dressing rooms. The Neapolitan Bourbons may have been indifferent monarchs, but they knew good architecture. It is certain that Charles III would be immensely gratified at the care with which his lovely theatre is being maintained. But if he had approached the theatre, as I did six months ago, from across the Piazza Trento e Trieste, he might have been seized with sudden apoplexy. Emblazoned across the aristocratic façade of the Bourbon's royal theatre was a strident banner exhorting the populace to "Vota Communista."

BUSSETO beckons. The temptation must be resisted to tarry, Peppina-fashion, in the south, just as the heart must be hardened against contriving a stopover in Florence, en route to the north. Florence, with only one premiere to its credit, is even less of a Verdi town than Naples. So the hired Fiat 1300 is driven ruthlessly past Giotto's Campanile and Michelangelo's New Sacristy, only a cursory divagation being allowed for a nod at the Teatro della Pergola, scene of the first performance of *Macbeth* in 1847. The Apennines are traversed, not on



The fountain commemorating Verdi's departed Teatro Apollo on the Tiber embankment (left) provides a Roman schoolboy with a morning drink. Other important Verdi theatres are still standing: for example, the San Carlo in Naples (below, left) and the Argentina in Rome.

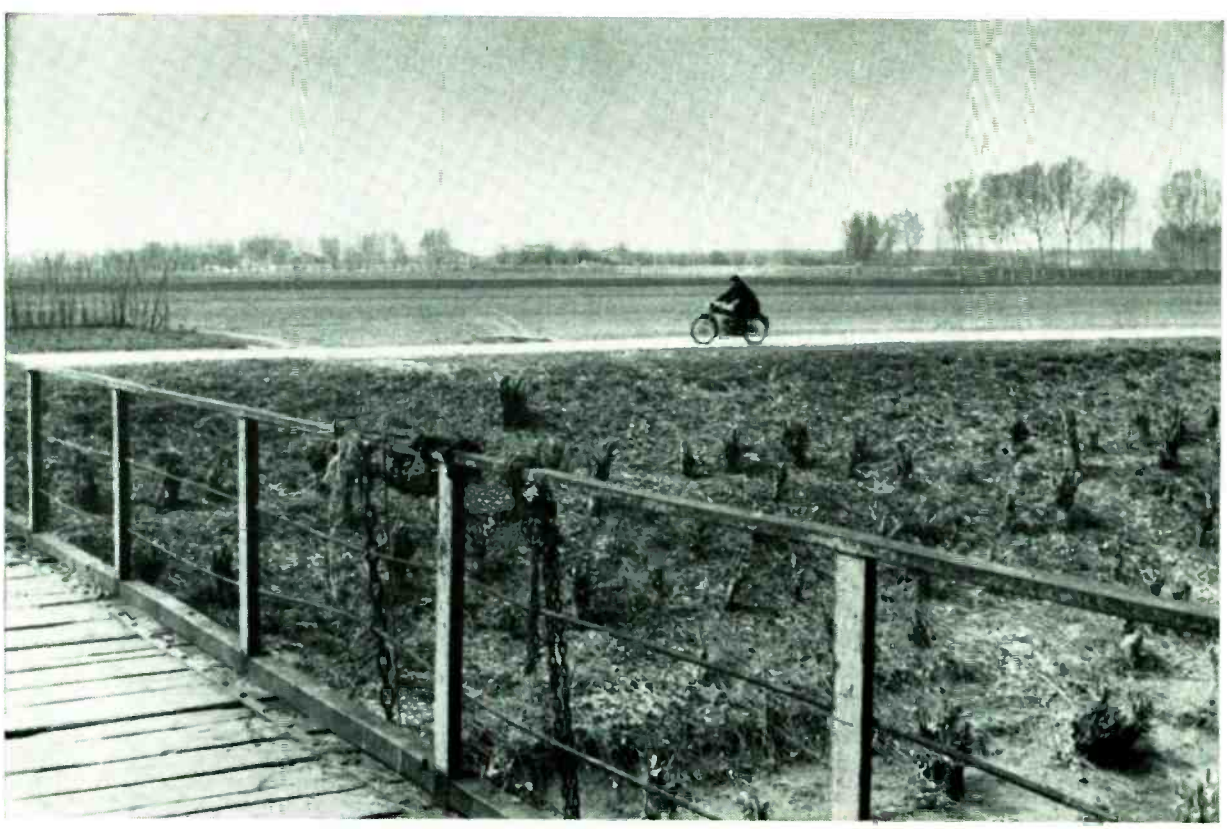
Photographs by the author except as noted.



John Ross

John Ross

Verdi's birthplace in Le Roncole (above, left) looks out onto the town's main square and the parish church of San Michele, where he served as village organist from the age of twelve. The flatlands near Sant' Agata are pictured below.



Verdi's rutted post roads, but via the spanking new Autostrada del Sole, past Bologna and on to Parma, which is to be headquarters for an exploration of the Verdi heartland. Until the unification of Italy, Verdi was a citizen of the Duchy of Parma, and he seems never to have outgrown his awe of its charming capital. "Parma," writes Frank Walker in his invaluable and fascinating book *The Man Verdi,* "called up in him always a vein of fierce local patriotism. He once sent to Parma for a double-bass player, to show the musicians of the Scala orchestra how a certain passage should be performed, and in 1846 he sent word to Antonio Barezzi that he should not come to Milan, which was 'no place for doctors,' but should rather go for treatment to Parma, where he would be cured." For our purposes, however, Parma is a separate story (see page 123), and for the nonce it can be left behind. The time has come to head northwest towards the tiny hamlet of Le Roncole, where Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born at about 8 p.m. on October 10, 1813.

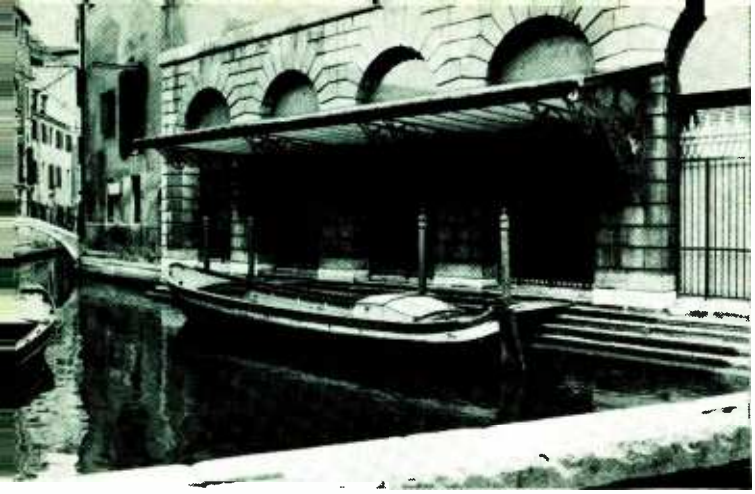
Much has been made of the monotony and drabness of the Emilian flatlands. "The Verdi countryside," says Vincent Sheean, "is about as uninteresting as any to be found in the whole of Italy." Even the composer himself, writing to Clarina Maffei from Busseto in 1858, stated that "it would be impossible to find an uglier place than this." Perhaps it is every bit that desolate in the autumn when leaden rainfall inundates the fields, or in winter as bitter winds howl across the barren expanses, or in summer when a torrid sun parches the earth and blisters the stucco buildings. But in mid-April, with an occasional fruit tree in full blossom and the foliage shimmering in the leafy softness of early spring, the vast landscape—trailing off to a serene and limitless horizon—has much to recommend it. Or so at least it seemed on the road to Le Roncole with expectations high and the intoxication of new sights tingling the senses.

The *casa natale* is a disappointment, as the birthplaces of famous men usually are. The tavern-*cum*-grocery shop in which Verdi spent his early years is now bereft of furnishings, and one walks through the empty rooms feeling little contact with the illiterate family that produced a musical genius a century and a half ago. There is the inevitable selection of postcards for sale and the inevitable guest book, replete with signatures of celebrated visitors; the lady in charge is pleased to show these off, including the flamboyant autograph of Benito Mussolini. Even the outside of the house defies a calling-up of things past, for the wall is pocked with a profusion of commemorative plaques and the garden blemished by a mediocre bust. Across the village square is the church of San Michele, erected in the eleventh century and rebuilt in the sixteenth, where Verdi was baptized and where at the age of twelve he was appointed village organist. This is more satisfactory, for the church—though singularly unattractive—is a functioning institution and not an empty shell. The village priest, Father Rossi, who looks as if he ought to be the captain of a soccer team, lives in quarters attached to the church. He will gladly show you around the interior and conduct you up the perilously narrow steps that lead to Verdi's organ, a dilapidated little instrument whose 780 pipes nevertheless give off a bright and cheery sound.

Busseto lies three miles to the west. Verdi was sent there at the age of ten in order to attend the local *ginnasio,* lodging first with a cobbler and later with Antonio Barezzi, the kindly and generous musical enthusiast who was both patron and second father to the fledgling composer. Barezzi's commodious house still stands in Busseto's main square; down the street one finds the Monte di Pietà, a local benevolent institution which helped defray the cost of Verdi's studies in Milan; nearby is the Palazzo Orlandi, in which Verdi and Peppina lived from 1849 to 1851, scandalizing the neighbors by flaunting a union outside the sanctity of marriage.

The Bussetani would probably be equally scandalized today. Busseto was and is a small town. You can cover it all by foot in half an hour. Our party wandered through its quiet streets in the company of Busseto's genial young mayor. We had looked at the Palazzo Tedaldi—the building (now in poor repair) where Verdi and his first wife, Margherita Barezzi, lived immediately after their marriage in 1836—and were strolling down the Via della Biblioteca. As we passed the entrance of the Biblioteca, a face appeared at one of the upper windows and hailed the mayor. It was the chief librarian, who craved a word with His Honor. We walked up the stairs into a tranquil and muffled reading room, lined with stately gold-tooled volumes and decorated—like so much else in the Duchy of Parma—in the well-ordered style of French Empire. When the librarian learned of our interest in Verdi, he turned us over to one of his assistants—a little man in a gray muslin duster—while he and the mayor went off to confer. The assistant led us into another room, also lined with cupboards and shelves of a rich patina. Here, he told us, were housed the libraries of Don Pietro Seletti and Ferdinando Provesi. Seletti schooled Verdi in Latin and Italian grammar at the Busseto *ginnasio*; Provesi, *maestro di cappella* at the collegiate church of San Bartolomeo and director of the Philharmonic Society, supervised the boy's musical studies. For a time the two were in dispute over Verdi's future, Seletti wanting him to become a priest, Provesi a musician. Now, in this side street of Busseto, are gathered together their books, some of which Verdi undoubtedly consulted. The cupboards were filled with Provesi's compositions—hundreds of manuscripts written for the local orchestra, all neatly arranged in sturdy boxes and tied together with old silk ribbon. Here at last the past began to come alive. Leafing through this music so diligently accumulated by Maestro Provesi, one could build a bridge across the decades to Verdi's youth.

The house and farmlands of Sant' Agata, two miles to the north of Busseto, were purchased by



Ferruccio Nuzzo

La Fenice's gondola entrance—"sets...typewriters...potables."

Verdi in 1848 with the earnings from his early operatic successes. He and Peppina went there to live in 1851, and it remained Verdi's headquarters for half a century. He was constantly improving the property—planting trees, creating an artificial lake, enlarging and modernizing the villa—but he could do nothing to improve the climate. "You know Sant' Agata topographically," the librettist Piave wrote to a friend, "and you can imagine whether I am here for my amusement. . . . When it rains, I assure you, it's a case of looking at oneself in the mirror to see if one is still in human form or whether one hasn't been transmuted into that of a toad or a frog." Verdi warned a journalist, Filippo Filippi, that he would "find little satisfaction in narrating the marvels of Sant' Agata. Four walls in which to take refuge from the sun and inclement weather, amid the vastness of the fields; a few dozen trees planted in large part by my own hands; a dirty pool which I shall honor with the pompous title of lake when I can get the water to fill it. All that without plan, without architectural order, not because I don't love architecture, but because I detest discordances, and it would be a bad one to set up anything artistic in so unpoetical a place." Peppina had some particularly severe things to say about Sant' Agata. And yet she loved the place with that peculiar love-hate which so often afflicts city people in the country.

At Verdi's death the property of Sant' Agata passed to Maria Verdi, his second cousin and adopted heir, who had grown up at the villa and had married Dr. Carrara, Verdi's solicitor. The Carrara Verdi family still owns Sant' Agata and opens it to the public between June and September. My visit in mid-April was out of season. Nevertheless, various people of importance had written to Dr. Alberto Carrara Verdi of my impending arrival and had assured me that the doors of Sant' Agata would surely be opened. Like his ancestors, Dr. Carrara Verdi is a solicitor, and shortly before noon I presented myself at the door of the house which serves as his office and home in Busseto. Yes, he had heard from our mutual friends; yes, he well understood the importance of the publication I represented; nevertheless, it was quite impossible to allow anyone to see Sant' Agata in its present condition, with all the drapes drawn and all the furniture covered with sheets. Come back in six weeks, he suggested, and everything would be at my disposition. I explained—in halting and ungrammatical Italian—that in six weeks I would be back in America and that pressing affairs would prohibit another transatlantic trip to Busseto. Then, waxing as rhetorical as I could in an alien tongue, I went on to say that I had traveled three thousand miles for the sole purpose of seeing Sant' Agata, that I would make due allowances for the drawn curtains and the shrouded furniture, but that I could not possibly leave Italy without witnessing the surroundings in which the immortal pages of *Otello* and *Falstaff* were composed. Dr. Carrara Verdi was unmoved. Smilingly but implacably, he assured me that a visit to Sant' Agata at this time of year was out of the question. I began to comprehend that streak of stubbornness in the good citizenry of Busseto which so infuriated Verdi—and which he himself possessed to an alarming degree.

One could at least gaze at the villa from outside the gate and snatch a leaf from a tree planted by Verdi. After that there was nothing to do but continue along Verdi's road for a few kilometers to the Trattoria Ongina, a simple country restaurant named after the little stream which flows past the Villa Sant' Agata and which provided Verdi with the water for his lake. The region of Parma is celebrated for its cooking. After a lunch of culatello (the sweetest, most succulent ham in the world), tortelli (envelopes of pasta filled with cream cheese and spinach), faraone (roast guinea hen), and a bottle of Lambrusco, the disappointment of missing Sant' Agata began to seem rather more supportable.

TIME was running out. The itinerary stipulated attendance at a new Scala production of *Aida* four days thence. In the interim should one journey west to Genoa, where the Verdis regularly spent the coldest months of winter, or east to Venice, where five Verdi operas had their first performance? An absurd question. Genoa is a great seaport blessed with a marvelously equable climate, but Venice is one of the wonders of the world.

When Verdi first went there—in 1843, for a production of *I Lombardi*—many inhabitants were still about who could remember the dying days of the Serenissima, the independent Venetian Republic which had endured for a thousand years until Napoleon put a sudden end to it at the close of the eighteenth century. Since then the Austrians had moved in, but Venice was still Venice. No city has remained more immune to the ravages of progress. In its external aspect at least, it looks now very much as it did when Verdi first rode down the Grand Canal, indeed as it did when Canaletto and Guardi detailed it all on canvas two hundred years ago. The Venetian interiors are something else. Verdi was wont to stay at the Albergo dell' Europa, formerly a Giustiniani palace and today a hostelry still very much in evidence. Viewed from a passing *vaporetto*, the Europa-Brittania seems redolent with mid-

nineteenth-century charm, but the interior, alas, has been renovated to shiny perfection—doubtless more comfortable and efficient than what had gone before, but frustrating to the traveler following in the footsteps of Verdi.

There is nothing out of character about the Teatro La Fenice. "The first sight of the interior of the Fenice," says Spike Hughes in his chatty survey of *Great Opera Houses,* "is a breath-taking moment, for surely this is the most beautiful theatre in the world." Nobody who has been there would dispute the superlative. Like everything in Venice, it is a confection of uninhibited fantasy, a wondrously filigreed jewel of an opera house, with a color scheme—bluish green, cream, and gold—distinctively its own. And of course it is the only opera house in the world that receives all its supplies—sets for the stage, typewriters for the offices, potables for the bar—by water. On one of my days in Venice, I went around to inspect the gondola entrance (now used only on gala occasions) and found there a crew of stagehands unloading sets from the Fenice's own barge for that evening's performance.

The house was opened in 1792 and rebuilt in 1837 after a damaging conflagration. Verdi's first opera written to order for the Fenice came seven years later. This was *Ernani,* whose music—the *Gazzetta di Venezia* reported—"made such an impression that even on Sunday people came out of the theatre already humming the tunes." With this opera, which soon traveled all over Europe, Verdi began to secure an international reputation. His next work for the Fenice, *Attila,* is the only one of his Venetian commissions that has fallen into neglect, though the revivals in Italy earlier this year gave many commentators reason to believe that its neglect is unmerited. *Attila*'s premiere took place in 1846, an important date in the city's history, for in that year the railway causeway linking Venice to the mainland was opened. *Murray's Handbook* for 1846 found it terribly impressive. "It may give some idea of the magnitude of the work to mention that, amongst other materials, 80 thousand larch piles were used in the foundations, and in the bridge itself 21 millions of bricks, and 176,437 cubic feet of Istrian stone; and that, on an average, 1,000 men were employed daily." In 1846 the railway had been built only as far as Vicenza. There were three trains a day, the journey took two hours and twenty minutes (it is covered now in half an hour), and the first-class fare was 8 Austrian Lira (about $1.50) not including luggage. The effect of the railway was to deinsularize Venice and to force the aloof city at least part way into the modern world.

Verdi returned in 1851 with an opera based on Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse.* It occasioned a great commotion from the Austrian censors, who were more than usually sensitive after the revolution of 1848, in which the Venetian populace rose in arms, expelled the occupying Austrian forces, and held out in a state of siege for many months. Verdi and the censors had much difficulty coming to terms, but eventually—with a change of title, locale, and characters—*Rigoletto* was allowed to go into rehearsal. The story of its jaunty aria *"La donna è mobile"* is well known. As Francis Toye tells it in his deliciously literate biography, Verdi "had not given the music to the tenor until the very last moment, and then only under the strictest injunctions to neither sing nor whistle it outside the theatre, whereof the whole staff had also been sworn to secrecy. Everything went according to plan. People came out of the theatre singing both words and music, and within a few days every Venetian gallant was teasingly humming them into the ear of his lady-love."

La Fenice had the honor of ushering in Verdi's great middle period with resounding and unblemished éclat. Two years later the composer was back in Venice with another masterpiece, but this time the launching fizzled. The premiere of *La Traviata* elicited from the exigent Fenice audience more laughter than applause. Verdi, at his desk in the Albergo dell' Europa, wrote to his erstwhile pupil Muzio: *"La Traviata* last night a fiasco. Is the fault mine or the singers? Time will show." A year later the impresario of another Venetian opera house, the Teatro San Benedetto, had the idea of reviving *La Traviata* in costumes of the Louis XIII period. This time it was a riotous success. To a friend, Verdi wrote: "Everything that was heard at the Fenice is now being heard at the San Benedetto. Last time it was a fiasco; this time it is a furore. Draw your own conclusion!" Since then the San Benedetto has had its name changed to the Teatro Rossini; bereft of a stage, it has defected to the films.

One more time Verdi responded to a commission from the Fenice, with *Simon Boccanegra* in 1857. This too was a failure on opening night, the audience showing an "almost bitter" indifference to the efforts on stage. Thereafter Verdi composed no more for Venice. When the president of the Fenice invited him in 1858 to write another opera for the theatre, Verdi replied that "it would be better for me to leave this honor to somebody more fortunate and more deserving than I of the approval of the Fenice's public." This letter, along with scores of others from Verdi written neatly on the fashionable Bath paper of the period, is filed away in the theatre's archives. The Fenice, unlike most other Italian opera houses, seems never to have discarded the slightest scrap of paper. Even the fire of 1836 spared the room in which its records and correspondence were stored. As a result, the Fenice has a mine of precious documents. The studious archivist who presides over this material in a cheerful room behind the top gallery pulled out for me all the material relating to Verdi. There are his letters to the Fenice management from the early 1840s on, working manuscript scores of all the operas, and draft versions of Piave's librettos showing his various changes made in an attempt to placate the censors (*"libertà"* crossed out and *"verità"* substituted in its place, for one example). From this repository of ancient aspirations and long-extinguished controversies you can look out over the

rooftops of Venice and hazily re-create in the mind's eye the distant, gas-lit Lombardy-Venetia of Verdi's middle years.

THE ROUTE from Venice to Milan is dotted with beguilements—Padua's arcaded streets, Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico, Verona's church of San Zeno Maggiore—but the *prima rappresentazione* at La Scala is inexorable. It is necessary to push on, past vast acres of pink-blossomed orchards glowing in the early sun, to our final destination: the bustlingly prosperous city in which Verdi tasted his first and last triumphs and in which he experienced his fondest hopes and his blackest despair.

Nowhere, not even in Rome, is the contrast between our day and Verdi's more acute. The motorized, skyscrapered, efficiently paced Milan of 1963 bears only the scantiest kinship to the city of Verdi's youth—a provincial outpost of the Austrian Empire whose oil-lit streets were habitually filled with prostitutes, thieves, and drunken revelers. Verdi was eighteen when he first took up lodgings there, a shy but determined student of music from Busseto. He returned seven years later, in 1839, with his young wife Margherita and their surviving infant son (a baby girl had died the year before). The boy died in Milan that same fall; Margherita lived long enough to see her husband's first opera, *Oberto*, produced at La Scala; then she too died. Verdi stayed on, dejected and discouraged; saw his second opera fail miserably; and then found himself suddenly the toast of Milan following the production of *Nabucco* in 1842. In the next few years he journeyed, as we have seen, to Rome and Naples and Venice, but his home base was Milan, and he invariably scurried back with all possible speed. The city was—then as now—Italy's musical headquarters and the place par excellence for a rising young composer to manage his affairs. But Verdi was never an enthusiastic Milanese. The standards of the much-vaunted Teatro alla Scala impressed him not at all; and after the Scala's slipshod production of *Giovanna d'Arco* in 1845 he was to wait more than a quarter century before writing another note for that theatre. By 1848 he had had enough of Milan. He bought his property at Sant' Agata and did not set foot in the city again for twenty years.

When Verdi came back in 1868, on a short visit to meet his idol Alessandro Manzoni, Milan had changed spectacularly. The Austrians were gone and the city had spread far beyond the sixteenth-century walls which had still enclosed it in 1848. The Scala no longer fronted on a narrow, cobblestoned street; now it looked out on a wide piazza and was connected to the Duomo by the impressive Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. Verdi liked the transformations, as is clear from a letter he wrote at the time to his publisher and agent in Paris. Little by little Milan won him back. The masterpieces of his old age—*Otello* and *Falstaff*—were entrusted to its theatre. And there he died, in his permanent suite at the Grand Hotel, on January 27, 1901, at ten minutes to three in the morning.

The Grand Hotel still stands, at the corner of the Via Manzoni and Via Borgonuovo, and its *portiere* will willingly show the rooms Verdi occupied—unless the hotel is fully booked and the hallowed quarters pressed into service ("Business is business," he smilingly explains). The furnishings throughout the Grand are authentically turn-of-the-century, though the rates—as I discovered on the morning of reckoning—are depressingly up-to-date. Near the hotel is the Via Bigli, where Verdi's and Peppina's devoted friend Countess Maffei held court for the intellectual and artistic leaders of the Risorgimento. Near and yet so far. It is hard to recapture the ambience of nineteenth-century Milan amid the clatter of the Common Market. Prosperity has made this city the envy of all Italy, but it is no place for nostalgia.

The Verdis—Giuseppe and Peppina—are buried in a crypt in the Rest Home for Musicians, which the composer founded in the last decade of his life and which has existed ever since on the generous endowment he left. It is a noble undertaking and the worthiest of memorials, but it is a not very attractive building in a not very attractive quarter. Though the Verdi traveler should pay it a visit, the object of his wanderings is not there. For that he must go to La Scala, to the theatre which first discovered Verdi and ultimately glorified his name.

Nothing but the outer walls remain of the structure Verdi knew. On August 15, 1943, an RAF attack on Milan turned La Scala into a shambles. But it was rebuilt soon enough, according to the original plans of 1778, and its spirit rekindled in a gala dedication concert under the direction of Arturo Toscanini—a living link with the Verdi of the 1880s and 1890s. By 1963 the living links had become exceedingly tenuous: a few old men who as boys had received a kindly pat or word of greeting from the aged composer. But the essential link, the musical one, was as strong as ever.

The *prima rappresentazione* began on the dot of 8:45. Up from the huge pit floated the prelude to *Aida*. those seventeen bars high in the strings which so often sound feeble in volume and wiry in tone. There was nothing feeble or wiry about the sound at La Scala that night. The finish and precision of the orchestral playing were such as is rarely met with in the opera house. Then the curtain went up to reveal a plushy Victorian extravaganza—an Egypt of tasseled and brocaded elegance, bathed in a dusty, golden glow. Against this sumptuous backdrop the young director Franco Zeffirelli deployed his forces to emphasize the central conflict in *Aida*—man versus society, private passion colliding with unyielding ritual. Everyone on stage—the magnificent cast, the hordes of supernumeraries, even the horses—knew precisely what to do. Nothing had been left to chance; evidences of imagination and forethought were everywhere. Afterwards, walking down the Via Manzoni to the Grand Hotel, one realized that a Verdi pilgrimage could not have ended on a more fitting note. Better than all the plaques and statues, Verdi would have thought, is an evening of opera illuminated with affection and care.

THE ANACHRONISM OF VERDI

...a reinterpretation from the pen of a distinguished Italian novelist.

BY ALBERTO MORAVIA

THERE IS SOMETHING petty, provincial, worn-out about the Italian nineteenth century. It's a bourgeois century, but the Italian *bourgeoisie*—unlike the French or the English—was not, properly speaking, a true middle class. Its forebears had not cut off a king's head or sparked a Reformation or worshiped the Goddess of Reason. What we see, then as now, is a timid, cautious, servile class, bowing and scraping before the nobility and falling at the feet of the clergy. It is a fact, of course, that under the inspiration of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars this Italian middle class made a superhuman effort and brought off the Risorgimento; but even the Risorgimento—undermanned, characterized by embarrassing contradictions, a latter-day tempest in Europe's history—was basically a petty affair. In any country but Italy the Risorgimento would have meant an immense upheaval; in Italy this nineteenth-century upheaval becomes small-scale. The men who made the Risorgimento were middle-class provincials; their nationalism and their liberalism are blended in a solution of low alcoholic content. Their Romantic intoxication is only a foretaste of the bombastic drunkenness of Fascism and today's Demochristian *petit-bourgeois* camomile.

To confirm this statement, you have only to take a look at Italian provincial cities and their architecture. Next to the medieval palaces of stone and iron stand the massive buildings of the Renaissance, the spacious residences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among them huddle the little neoclassic houses of the middle-class nineteenth century: niggardly, cold, cramped, looking as if a local drawing master had designed them. In these houses of the petty and less petty bourgeois of the last century, there is a withdrawn, apprehensive, taciturn atmosphere. You feel, in such houses, that Italy has bartered her monumental vices and her unconventional virtues for a decorum in which everything from religion to art, from morality to literature, is reduced to the level of a timorous provincial society.

In the Italian provincial cities that have not yet been attacked by the prosperity of the industrial revolution, often some of the illustrious palaces, now decaying, are inhabited by families of workers and artisans. These humble tenants underline the decline of those once splendid houses, now in the throes of an inevitable death agony. But in this decay, this slow dying, there is something natural. Between the humble people of today and the great lords of the past there is a mysterious but undeniable connection.

THE ANACHRONISM OF VERDI

The gap becomes unbridgeable, however, when these palaces are smartened up and restored, divided into small luxury apartments for would-be aesthetes of the middle class, on the lookout for "historic" surroundings. Between them and the ancient masters of the palaces, the break is complete and irrevocable.

GIUSEPPE Verdi's presence in the Italian nineteenth century is a little like the existence of those distinguished but decrepit palaces in the center of the now bourgeois cities of our provinces. In Italy's mean, impoverished *Ottocento*, the personality of Verdi—sanguine, passionate, robust, explosive—seems incredible. For that matter, it's enough to compare Verdi to other celebrated nineteenth-century Italians to realize that he is not only an exception but an anachronism. Take Manzoni and Leopardi, for example. Both come straight from the Italian governing classes. Both are provincial noblemen, in situations typical of the Italian society of the time. But Verdi comes from peasant stock. Manzoni and Leopardi are artists of a stature not inferior to Verdi's, and yet with what a difference! The artistic temperament of Manzoni and Leopardi is colored, in a negative sense, by the timid provincial society to which they belong. Manzoni accepted in part the pettiness of that society; Leopardi rebelled against it. But in either acceptance or revolt, and despite the loftiness of their art, both men bear the mark of what they have accepted or rejected: a mark of prudence in Manzoni, of desperation in Leopardi. In addition, both Manzoni and Leopardi are "modern" artists, completely at home in the culture of their time. And finally, Manzoni and Leopardi are both artists of rigorous, impeccable, aristocratic taste.

There is none of this in Verdi. With an origin neither noble nor bourgeois, he has nothing to accept or reject. His genius is not one that submits or rebels. His is a genius that identifies itself and expresses itself in its own creations. Abundant and impetuous, Verdi's art is not disciplined by prudence or deflected by rebellion. At most, it is sustained by an exceptional, instinctive, artisanlike cleverness. And, the contrary of Manzoni and Leopardi, Verdi is "vulgar."

We consider this vulgarity the most mysterious, the most problematical aspect of Verdi's personality. At first sight it seems obvious, of no great interest. There are plenty of artists who are not vulgar, but others—in no way inferior—who are. Stendhal, for example, is never vulgar; Balzac, an equally great novelist, is. For Stendhal and Balzac, however, we have a ready-made explanation: between the former and the latter came a profound social revolution, hence a change in style. This is not true for Verdi. With no social revolution comparable to France's, nineteenth-century Italian society is expressed in Leopardi's desperation and in Manzoni's prudence rather than in the rich, spontaneous "vulgarity" of Verdi.

Verdi's vulgarity, moreover, isn't at all the same as that of the Romantics—of a Victor Hugo, for example. Any resemblance between the two artists is only superficial. Hugo was a true European Romantic, and from him it was easy to arrive at the decadents, at Baudelaire, Rimbaud. But it is impossible to go on from Verdi's apparent Romanticism to decadence. Another difference between Verdi and Hugo: the latter believed in history, or rather he believed that men's behavior could change according to history, that it was historically determined. The result of this belief is that Hugo's dramas, in which the characters are only secondly men and primarily men of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, are unreadable and unplayable today. Verdi didn't believe in history at all, either as reconstruction or as escape. This attitude, if nothing else, distinguishes him from the Romantics. His characters exist outside of history, even in his costume pieces. Verdi's concept of history is static, humanistic, Plutarchian. In fact, Verdi's characters interest us today precisely because they are primarily men, and only secondly men of the Middle Ages or of the Renaissance.

WHAT IS, THEN, this vulgarity of Verdi? To go back to our earlier metaphor: it is the illustrious, ancient, now decaying palace, inhabited by workers and artisans. In other terms: it is the humanistic concept of our Renaissance, betrayed by the Italian ruling class after the Counter-Reformation but preserved by the common people. This explains the difference between Verdi and other Italians of the *Ottocento*: Manzoni, Leopardi, Cavour, Mazzini. And it explains Verdi's resemblance to Garibaldi, who was also a man of another age. It explains too the analogies between Verdi and Shakespeare.

Let us look at these analogies. They offer another key to the understanding of the true nature of Verdi's vulgarity. The comparison between Shakespeare and Verdi has been made often, and it is substantially correct. We find in both of them the same idea of man, the same prodigious knowledge of the human heart, the same love of life, the same remarkable capacity for splitting themselves up into innumerable different characters, dividing their autobiographies out among a thousand existences until their real lives become unrecogniz-

able. And yet this familiar comparison should be amended with an important footnote: Shakespeare is never vulgar. Unlike Verdi, the playwright is not a plebeian in whom the values of a vanished age survive as part of the folk heritage. Shakespeare is a man of his time and of the society of his time, like Manzoni and like Leopardi. The beauty that Shakespeare creates has nothing popular, rustic, or naïve about it: his is an aristocratic beauty.

But, like Shakespeare's, Verdi's characters are Renaissance, not Romantic. We recognize Renaissance humanism in the wholeness of the image of man that Verdi gives us. Beneath Renaissance abstractions there is always a respect for the full man, with his vices and his virtues—a respect we would never find behind the Romantic's emphasis, which anticipates the amputations and reductions of the decadents. Verdi offers us a Plutarchian—or if you prefer, a Shakespearean—idea of man, an idea which came to him not from the decorous, God-fearing bourgeois culture of his own time but from the poor people of the Po valley. Even today, in their colorful, winning vitality, these peasants retain a glimmer of the Italy that existed before the Counter-Reformation. We can imagine that the glimmer must have been even greater in Verdi's day. Anyone who knows that region of the Po valley around Parma can easily find a Verdian aura in the monuments, the landscape, the people. Verdi is a close relation to those peasants, who knew the octaves of Ariosto by heart, or to the gondoliers who could recite strophes of Tasso. With Verdi dies the great Italy, and what Italy gave to the world, its best and most characteristic product: humanism. After Verdi, Italy becomes, once and for all, *petit-bourgeois*.

ALONG WITH the Verdi-Shakespeare comparison, another analogy comes to mind: that between the Duke Valentino described in Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the Duke of Mantua depicted by Verdi in *Rigoletto* (even though the opera's libretto was drawn from a drama of such pure Romantic character as Hugo's). If you look at the two characters closely, the one literary and the other musical, you see that both are cut from the same Renaissance cloth; and they are probably the two strongest, most complete, and most beautiful characters ever created in Italy. But even here, as in the comparison between Shakespeare and Verdi, there is an essential difference; and again it must be traced to Verdi's vulgarity.

The Duke Valentino is a full-length portrait painted with incomparable vigor. He is the Renaissance man seen by a Renaissance intellectual. There is no vulgarity in him; everything about him bespeaks the paradoxical but noble wickedness which was to please Stendhal so much, two centuries later.

The Duke of Mantua is the Verdian equivalent of Duke Valentino. But in *Rigoletto* the great political enterprises of the Borgias are replaced by the mean intrigues of a little Italian court; the great soldiers of fortune are now courtly wastrels, the hero, a provincial playboy. And yet this degraded world is filled with a Renaissance air, for it is seen in admiration, envy, amazement by a citified peasant still ignorant of modern European civilization, an artist whose touchstone remains the Renaissance. In the Duke of Mantua, Verdi has given us his Duke Valentino. If the composer had been born in the *Cinquecento* he would have given us the real Valentino, with his rapacious nobility and his animal energy. But, two centuries after his time, a man of the people, Verdi instead has created a provincial Casanova. If we listen carefully, however, and analyze the staggering vitality and subtlety of the character, we must admit that this Casanova has dimensions, vigor, profundity equal to those of the character created by Machiavelli.

So Verdi is our plebeian, folklike, "vulgar" Shakespeare. Stravinsky is supposed to have said that he would give a great many of his works to have written the notes of *"La donna è mobile."* If this is true, it confirms the comparison to Shakespeare, even with the important footnote concerning "vulgarity." In fact, in their immediate placement, their evocative strength, those notes are the equivalent of Macbeth's famous soliloquy after he is told of Lady Macbeth's death. You will look in vain for such things in the nineteenth-century Romantics. The Romantics aspired to these things, but never achieved them.

Renaissance man that he is, Verdi is still performed and will be performed always, because his knowledge of man goes back to an age when, for the last time, man loved himself, nothing but himself, and nothing less than himself. "Vulgarity" cannot alter the excitement of this concept however historically outmoded it may be. Thus the revival of interest in Verdi today is based on a fundamental misunderstanding: an attempt to discover and reevaluate his modernity. Verdi isn't in the least modern: he was an anachronism in the last century, and is even more of one now. His timeliness is the timeliness of poetry. This talk of a "revival" has a curious ring. It would be like talking of a "Shakespeare revival." Verdi must be considered, instead, with the admiration and the comprehension due to the phenomena of culture—no less mysterious or powerful than the phenomena of nature.

(TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM WEAVER.)

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A Noisy Bantling in Old New York

~~ being an account of some remarkable Verdi productions in the New World.

By Shirley Fleming

WHEN THE FIRST PERFORMANCE of *I Lombardi*, in New York, introduced the music of Verdi to these shores on March 3, 1847, it could safely be said that of all the business ventures possible in a prosperous, expanding, vigorous nation, the business of producing Italian opera was the one least likely to succeed. It may as well be stated at once that the advent of works by Italy's new musical spokesman did very little, at first, to disprove the maxim.

Nearly a quarter of a century previously, Italian opera had been set off to a promising start with the arrival in New York in 1825 of Manuel Garcia's famous troupe, a family affair including, besides himself and his wife, his son (who became the celebrated teacher) and his daughter Maria Felicita, then seventeen and destined to become known to the world as Mme. Malibran. Among the most enthusiastic of New World inhabitants to greet them was Lorenzo da Ponte, who called upon the elder Garcia forthwith, announced himself as Mozart's librettist, and was treated, so the story goes, to a jubilant rendition of Don Giovanni's *"Finch' han del vino."* Da Ponte mentions in his *Memoirs* his joy over Garcia's having come to establish Italian opera in New York, and it did indeed appear that Garcia might accomplish just that. After opening at the Park Theatre (on Park Row near Ann Street) in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, he managed a successful run of almost a year before going on to Mexico. But there were, of course, the critics to contend with. *The New York Gazette and Phi Beta Kappa Repository* of December 17, 1825, reported as follows: "The Italian opera has lately been introduced into this country; from what we had previously read of it, we always esteemed it a forced and unnatural bantling; seeing it has not changed our opinion."

Da Ponte, however, continued to encourage attempts at establishing this "unnatural bantling" in

America. It was due in part to his influence that in 1832 an Italian troupe under the direction of French tenor Jacques Montrésor settled at the old Richmond Hill Theatre and, leaning heavily on a repertoire of Rossini, eked out an existence there for thirty-five performances. On the heels of this inauspicious experiment, Da Ponte persuaded several friends of his, gentlemen of wealth, to build a bona fide opera house to provide the wandering art a permanent shelter and in 1833 an elegant new building, decorated in white and gold and furnished in blue damask, was erected on the corner of Church and Leonard streets. Da Ponte and a partner sponsored an opera company there for eight months and emerged with a deficit of over $29,000; their successors escaped financial ruin only by the fortuitous departure of their prima donna, without warning, for parts unknown. Da Ponte died in 1838, and his fine house burned to the ground the following year.

The next abortive effort to establish Italian opera in New York came in 1844, with the opening of an opera house on Broadway near Duane Street. Its entrepreneur, a restaurant owner named Ferdinand Palmo, considerately furnished his patrons not only with coach service as far up as 42nd Street but police protection as well (fashion and crime were moving northward by this time), but even these conveniences were not enough. In less than a year the sheriff was at his doors, thus ending the career of the restauranteur as impresario, but not quite that of his opera house. It was here, under other management, that the first of Verdi's operas to be heard in America made its appearance.

In spite of the doubtful auguries, *I Lombardi* did very well for itself. (It was competing, at the time, with Barnum's new Mexican War exhibit of Santa Anna's wooden leg, "taken by the American Army and brought to the city by a gentleman direct from the city of Veracruz.") The cast included Salvatore Patti (Adelina's father), a step-daughter of his, Clotilda Barili, and a basso named Sanquirico, all of them well-established singers. The opera, according to the custom of the time, ran for as many consecutive nights as the traffic would bear—in this case, nine straight performances, which was no mean record. The *New York Evening Post* deemed the work "likely, from its showy character, and from the appeal to the popular taste in its construction, to be a favorite"; but the *Albion* (maintaining a hauteur consistent with its full title of "British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette") dissented: "The melodies do not possess the catching popular qualities of a Bellini or a Donizetti. . . . Verdi's music, or rather his melodies, seem to us as though they were written under restraint . . . [he], like all modern Italian writers, is a victim to a passion for instruments of brass and percussion." The last is a complaint of which we are to hear much.

But there was more to be heard from Verdi before the year 1847 reached its close. Barely had the sets been dismantled after *I Lombardi*'s initial run, when the steamer from Cuba deposited at the pier the Havana Opera Company, a troupe whose impetus to Italian opera in this country was to prove considerable. Managing the company was one Don Francisco Marty y Torrens, whose past endeavors as pirate, fishing-fleet tycoon, slave trader, financier, and government benefactor seemed, in view of operatic conditions in New York, reasonable prerequisites for success as an impresario. Signor Marty installed his troupe at the old Park Theatre under what must have been trying circumstances, to judge by the reminiscences of Richard Grantland White (father of the architect Stanford White) appearing in the *Century Magazine* of 1882. "No public building," he wrote, "could have been less suited for the assemblage of elegant people for elegant pleasure. . . . Its boxes were like pens for beasts. . . . The place was pervaded with evil smells; and not uncommonly rats ran out of the holes in the floor and across into the orchestra." The building also harbored "a sort of booth, in which vile fluids and viler solids were sold."

Against such odds the Havana company—a very acceptable assortment of artists, including Fortunata Tedesco—held its own, presenting not only the already familiar *Norma*, *Somnambula*, and *Moses in Egypt*, but two New York premieres: *Ernani* on April 15, and *I due Foscari* on June 9. For *Ernani* society turned out in force and, to judge from the frequency of the opera's subsequent repetitions, took very kindly to it. But the reporter from the *Courier and Enquirer* did not: "We can only say that it is a pity such singing and such appointments should be lavished on such bad music." The gentleman from the *Albion* remarked on the "splendid bust and exquisitely molded arms" of Signorina Tedesco, but in general enjoyed the audience more than the opera. He did, however, manage a faint hope for the composer: "His orchestral arrangements are brilliant and effective. They are still trammeled by the conventionalities and puerilities, the prettiness of the modern Italian school, but we continue to observe approaches to a purer and more severe style. We could wish Verdi to be saved, for there is more in him than is yet developed."

Ernani was not defeated by the press, but it appears to have come close to being defeated by some later performances under managers less astute than Marty. One such presentation, which took place two years later, deserves description here in the words of a participant who became very much a part of the operatic scene in New York—the redoubtable conductor and impresario Max Maratzek. (So heroic a figure was he in the annals of opera that he became known, according to the American soprano Clara Louise Kellogg, as "Maratzek the Magnificent.") At the time of which he writes, in the first volume of his memoirs *Crotchets and Quavers*, Maratzek had recently arrived from Europe to take up the post of conductor at the new Astor Place Opera House for the '48-'49 season, under the man-

agement of E. R. Fry. On the closing night of the season the unfortunate Mr. Fry conceived the notion of presenting *Ernani* with four new principals who had never sung together and were making their first appearances in America. It was to be a memorable affair:

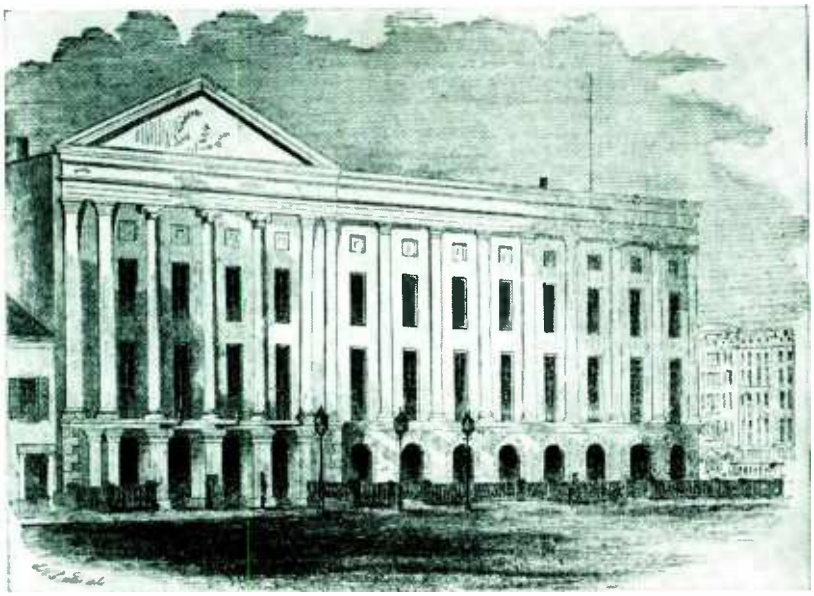
> The house was crowded almost to suffocation, when the curtain drew up. In order not to appear too late, I should presume, upon the stage, the tenor, Signor Ferrari, appeared five full minutes before his cue was given. Here he waited. . . . When he attempted to sing, his throat refused him its service; the perspiration washed out his painted face, and trickled over it in red and brown drops. . . .
>
> All might yet have gone smoothly but for the appearance of the new basso. This was the vocalist rejoicing in the name of Signor Castrone. Very evidently he had never before been upon any stage. On his entrance, he tumbled over his own sword, and rolled into a terrified group of chorus singers. After this, he managed to get his spurs entangled in the dress of the prima donna, and when released by the intervention of her lady in waiting, found his way to the prompter's box. Thence, no incident of the plot and no suggestion of the conductor could induce him to move. . . .
>
> Unfortunately, the worst . . . was reserved for the last Act . . . Sylvia rushed upon the stage . . . to demand the fulfillment of the vow which Ernani had sworn. But can you imagine in what guise the unhappy Castrone brought him before the audience? No! You cannot. . . . He had forgotten what the Erse or Northern Scotch, though which it is I have suffered myself to forget, call their "gallygaskins." In our own more fastidiously refined language, upon this continent, they are more generally and generically classified as the "unmentionables." There he stood, representing the Spanish idea of an inexorable Fate, clad in a black velvet doublet, but with a pair of flesh-colored and closely woven silk inexpressibles upon his nether man. The horn, that fatal horn, hung from his neck, in a position which it would be absolutely impossible for me consistently with propriety to indicate upon paper.

This was, Maratzek adds, the last night of Mr. Fry's tenure as manager of Astor Place.

This fateful *Ernani*, however, was fortunately not typical of the general run of Astor Place performances, and the house itself was for several years the most attractive home of Italian opera in the city. It had been built in 1847 under financial agreement with one hundred and fifty citizens who were pledged to support seventy-five evenings of opera for five years; the prospectus issued to subscribers announced, in that spirit of optimism so familiar and, one is tempted to say, so foolhardy, that the building was dedicated to the "permanent establishment of Italian opera." It survived barely its allotted five-year span, the greater part of which fell under the management of the Magnificent Maratzek, who apparently recovered sufficiently from his predecessor's disaster to step into the directorship shortly afterwards. Astor Place had opened (with a production of the ever-present *Ernani*) on November 22, 1847, with most promising attendance and a "generally diffused air of good breeding," as one reporter murmured in print next day. Presumably the attendees followed the directions displayed outside that "Carriages will set down with the horses' heads from Broadway, and take up in the reverse order," and once inside the ladies in particular were doubtless appreciative of what Maratzek called the house's principal feature, ". . . that everybody could see, and what is of infinitely greater consequence, could be seen. Never, perhaps, was any theatre built that afforded a better opportunity for the display of dress." The seating capacity was 1,800, and prices ranged from 50¢ to $1.00.

After opening night *Ernani* ran continuously for several weeks on end, interrupted by a brief and unsuccessful staging of *Beatrice di Tenda*. (By this time Verdi's opera had become so permanent a fixture that a burlesque called *Herr Nanny* was drawing good business at one of the local theatres.) But the first season, under Sanquirico and Patti, closed, probably to no one's surprise, in bankruptcy—a situation which had been relieved not at all by the first American presentation (poorly attended) of *Nabucco* on April 4, 1848. There was considerable distress on the part of one gentleman of the press because the opera had a Biblical subject, and the *Albion* was once again offended by "noise": "The Overture . . . is literally beneath criticism; it is all pastiches, and the material is worthless. It is fury versus sense, and fury carries everything before it. Verdi loves noise, he revels in a row, and everything is sacrificed for bluster and confusion. . . . The voicing, both for solos and choruses, is outrageous; it is tearing to every voice and is productive of nothing but consumption." The performance itself evidently was not one to raise the spirits, and it is not difficult to detect a rather forced generosity in the observation that "Signorina Patti [this was Amalia, Adelina's older sister] is an improving singer, and she had made much progress in overcoming her stage fright and awkwardness."

WHEN THE Astor Place Opera House finally closed its doors, there was common agreement among the operagoers of New York that it had been killed by competition. The competition came from none other than the formidable Signor Marty, back in town in 1850 with the finest operatic troupe yet heard in this country (Balbina Steffanone, Angiolina Bosio, and Tedesco were the *prime donne*), accompanied by an impressive orchestra under Luigi Arditi, he of *Il Bacio*. "At last we have the grand Italian opera in New York, and no, no, no mistake," crowed the *Herald* with rare abandon. "They came not to make money but to make mischief," was Maratzek's dour but admiring comment. Their first stopping place was Niblo's Gardens—an amusement spot at Broadway and Prince Street where a theatre was set amid spacious grounds laid out in a labyrinth of walks and groves with a fine fountain at the center. Music, ice cream, and cherry cobblers were Niblo's special



The Astor Place Opera House.

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Palmo's, on Broadway near Duane.

attractions, and the drinks were "various and good." Here on April 15, 1850, the Havana Opera company presented Verdi's *Attila,* following it on April 24 with *Macbeth.*

Despite New York's warm welcome to the troupe, *Attila* was not a success. The first performance was crowded, but the audience next night was sparse. "Verdi's compositions," said the *Albion* somewhat bitterly, "have all the prestige of foreign fashionable sanction (a mighty dictum here); but we suppose we are not refined enough to understand all their beauties." There was, according to this paper, "not one pleasing melody" in the opera.

Macbeth fared much better, and was "rapturously received," according to the *Post,* which continued rather diffidently: "As we have our ideas of this play chiefly from the tragedy of Shakespeare it is of course difficult for us fully to appreciate a foreign version, and particularly when it is made subservient to the designs of a musical composer." (But how much more so when to the designs of an unmusical composer, one is tempted to add.) The *Post*'s humility was not emulated by the *Albion,* which resorted to insult: "*Macbeth* is generally considered to be the best work Verdi has written. We acknowledge for our own part that we expected little and that we were not disappointed. We felt certain that the subject was too grand for his mental capacity, and we soon found out that he was floundering about helplessly in his endeavors to reach its level. . . . It is not sublime, because it is not thoughtful; it is not grand, because it is simply noisy." Mme. Bosio, as Lady Macbeth, was judged a charming woman and a most delightful singer.

Business was good for the Havana Company and when the hot weather settled upon New York that summer the troupe shifted operations to the coolest spot in town, Castle Garden—the great circular fort off the Battery which had been turned into a theatre five years before (and was later to

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"Maratzek the Magnificent" and two of the opera houses over which he presided: above, the Academy of Music: at left, Castle Garden, for summer.

become New York's Aquarium). Castle Garden was connected to Battery Park by a wooden footbridge, and the plentifulness of lemonade, cakes, and ice cream made this one of the pleasantest places for an outing to be found in the city. The Havana company made good use of the 5,000 seating capacity, and presented operas there from July until September at fifty cents a ticket. (The company vacated Castle Garden to make way for one of the most spectacular presentations of P. T. Barnum's career—the American debut of Jenny Lind, on September 11.)

IN THE MEANTIME, the presence of the Havana company had stirred discomfort in the breast of Max Maratzek, and soon afterwards he succeeded in hiring away most of Marty's principals. He was not, however, able to borrow Marty's success. After three months at Castle Garden, he had managed to lose $22,000. Yet the summer of 1854 saw him back, if this time with a far less distinguished roster of artists, and to him goes the credit for the first New York performance of *Luisa Miller*.

Luisa Miller was never popular, but its relative failure was symptomatic of the precarious state of opera in New York. When the Academy of Music, at 14th Street and Irving Place, opened on October 2, 1854, with a performance of *Norma*, the audience was disappointing and enthusiasm low even in spite of the participation of the renowned Giulia Grisi and her husband Giovanni Mario, fresh from spectacular success at Castle Garden two months before. This rather bad omen was borne out in the year to come: within the first fifteen months of the Academy's operation, five different managers fell before the fates of finance.

One of the most prominent of these casualties was Ole Bull, who for reasons difficult to fathom had laid away his fiddle temporarily in favor of a turn at management. His "season" at the Academy lasted two weeks, though he started it off promisingly enough with the first American performance of *Rigoletto*. His cast was a very presentable one, including, as Gilda, Mme. Bertucca-Maratzek (a soprano who had succumbed to Max's charms after coming to America under his management), and a newcomer, Ettore Barili (half-brother and teacher of Adelina Patti), as Rigoletto. Ole Bull had picked as

the date for the premiere the very evening on which Grisi and Mario were giving their farewell concert in another part of town (a fact which perhaps explains something of the briefness of his reign as manager), but the house was reasonably well filled and the critical response to the music was, for once, on the favorable side. But the New York public seems suddenly to have suffered an attack of squeamishness. According to one report, "Rumors prejudicial to the *morale* of *Rigoletto* have been most freely circulated throughout the city, inducing many, who would otherwise gladly have heard the new opera, to bide their time until the press should have pronounced its dictum upon the nature of the plot." The press conceded that the plot, despite a "superabundance of horrors," was no worse than that of *Don Giovanni* or *Ernani*. The public gathered its courage and proceeded to attend three subsequent performances in quick succession.

Rigoletto became a regular feature of opera seasons to follow, but distaste for its plot did not die out immediately. When Clara Louise Kellogg made her operatic debut as Gilda at the Academy in 1861, she had intended to sing the role the following week in Boston. But Boston would have none of it, and *Linda di Chamounix* was substituted.

Less than three months after Ole Bull's retirement from the field, Max Maratzek was at the helm of the Academy and another Verdi opera was launched—this one to prove the most popular to date. *Il Trovatore* was produced on May 2, 1855, with Balbina Steffanone as Leonora, Pasquale Brignoli "unmatchable" as Manrico, and Amodio as Conte di Luna, appearing in America for the first time. Praise for the singers was high, and the *Post* liked the music, even though it was "of the well-known Verdi type." The *Albion* dragged its well-scuffed feet: "Verdi is the composer of the day—the interpreter of Young Italy's music—simply for want of a better. . . . We wondered for a long time why Verdi should have omitted the finale, but a pert and pretty Miss at our side suggested that Verdi would have had nobody left to sing it, as all the people were killed." *Trovatore* became so popular that by 1857 someone ventured the opinion that it was "hackneyed."

On December 3, 1856, Maratzek introduced *La Traviata*, and no doubt enjoyed to the hilt the furor that ensued. The Dumas story, of course, was already known to the more literate portion of his clientele, and there had been much buzzing in society in advance of the opening. On the morning after, the *Post* was indignant:

> The morality of this plot has been sharply discussed and it has been urged that it is reprehensible to introduce the reader, or audience, in the opening scene, to the revels of a brothel, and after interesting us throughout the evening in the fortunes of a prostitute, to represent her dying in the odor of sanctity. We have hardly any room [to speak of the music]; but indeed it is not needed. We can hardly say too little in its praise. . . . The airs were flat and unmusical to a degree. . . .

The *Albion*, contrary to the end, took a favorable view, and pointed out that the opera had been viewed "without driving anybody out of the house or seriously affecting the next morning's calendar of crimes in the daily papers."

In 1858, the Italian soprano Marietta Picco'omini, whose Violetta had taken London by storm, carried her triumph across the Atlantic in 1858 and opened at the Academy on the evening of October 20—an occurrence which the *Herald* bannered on page one as the Grand Operatic Event of the Season. Expectations were at a feverish pitch, helped along, no doubt, by her manager's gratuitous divulgence to the press that the singer was a direct descendant of Charlemagne. Tickets sold at flattering black market rates, and on the evening of the performance 14th Street was choked with carriages long before curtain time and Irving Place "fairly floated in crinoline." But the truth was inescapable: Piccolomini's attractions were to a large extent other than vocal. According to one observer, "Her performances at times approached offense against maidenly reticence and delicacy," and it was said that when she sang Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* the Don himself seemed a model of rectitude in comparison. The New York public, though notified of her faulty vocal production, succumbed completely to her powers as an actress and was "charmed, fascinated, dazzled, led captive by her."

Two years later another famous Violetta came to town—one whose success in the role was of quite the opposite nature from the alluring Marietta's. This was Adelina Patti, of whom her rival Miss Kellogg said, "She never acted, and she never, never felt. As Violetta, she did express some slight emotion, to be sure. Her '*Gran Dio*' in the last act was sung with something like passion, at least with more passion than she ever sang anything else."

Although the popularity of *Traviata* was by this time well established in New York and all scruples as to its morality appear to have been forgotten, doubts still lingered in the suburb across the river: the Brooklyn Academy, which opened its doors on January 15, 1861, had scheduled *Traviata* for the 22nd, but objections ran so strong that another opera (Mercadante's *Il Giuramento*) was substituted at the last minute. It was a full year before Brooklyn brought itself to permit the work, and when it was finally produced Miss Kellogg, who took part, assures us that every clergyman within traveling distance was in the house.

The next Verdi opera to come before the American public was *I Vespri siciliani* which, while never as popular as some of its forerunners, did much to brighten a dull New York season in 1859. It was first presented at the Academy on November 7, with Pauline Colson as Elena, Brignoli as Arrigo, and Gaetano Ferri as the Governor, and ran for five nights in succession.

Early in February of 1861, speculation over the likelihood of attack on Fort Sumter was running side by side in the Northern newspapers with reports of

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American soprano Clara Louise Kellogg and Adelina Patti (who, said Miss Kellog, "never, never felt").

Jeff Davis' triumphal tour through the South and President-elect Lincoln's slow trip by train from Illinois to Washington for the Inauguration. (There was also an additional small item in the *Post*: "Verdi, the composer, will, according to the Milan journals, be elected a deputy for Turin to the new Italian Parliament.") Concern over what might come had not dampened New Yorkers' appetite for entertainment, and on February 11 they attended in high fashion and high spirits a glittering premiere of *Ballo in maschera*, with Mme. Colson as Amelia, Adelaide Philips as the Witch, and Isabella Hinckley as the Page. During the masquerade scene "those patrons of the opera who may wish to be upon the stage" were invited to join the company in dancing a galop composed especially for the occasion by the conductor, who was none other than Emmanuele Muzio. Verdi's only pupil and lifelong friend and apostle. It was a gala evening, though at least one patron of the opera seems to have been ill at ease: Rufus Choate, the well-known lawyer, noted that he had taken the precaution of requesting his daughter to "interpret for me the libretto, lest I dilate with the wrong emotion." The *Post* gave high praise to the opera, though "it contains much that is heavy. It is a labored work, but then the labor has achieved a grand result. . . . Played as it was last night it ought to draw for a month at least."

It was still drawing to capacity on February 20 when Mr. Lincoln attended (wearing, it was observed, the only pair of black kid gloves in the white-gloved house). He arrived late and left early, but when the curtain fell at the end of the first act the audience went wild with applause, which he finally rose to acknowledge. At the beginning of Act II, the whole company came on stage and sang *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and there was a deluge of "waving handkerchiefs, and cheers for Lincoln, for the Union, and for the Constitution."

Maratzek undertook two new Verdi productions during the war years. The first was *Aroldo* on May 4, 1863. But response was apathetic. The war had given rise to a new element in opera-going society, "a certain class of men," as one historian puts it, who got rich overnight. "The sensuous side of the nature of these people began to clamor for adequate food," which was apparently more bountifully supplied by Offenbach than by Verdi.

As the war dragged on, however, the old society returned to the theatres in substantial numbers—it was a welcome diversion—and on February 24, 1865, Maratzek presented *La Forza del destino*. It was an immediate success, and now even the critics had come to take Verdi in stride. The *Albion* must have had a new man on the music staff by this time, for he pronounced the opera a mature work of unquestionable merit and admired the German-French style as opposed to the Italian style of *Rigoletto* and *Ballo in maschera*. *Forza* ran with many repetitions to the close of the season.

Eight years were to pass before another new Verdi opera made its appearance, but when it came it proved worth waiting for. *Aida* was presented on November 26, 1873, and the company, under the management of Maurice Strakosch with Muzio conducting, gave a memorable performance. Ottavia Torriani was Aida, and was praised particularly for her duets with Italo Campanini; but the palm of the evening went to Annie Louise Cary as Amneris. The scenes for this lavish production had been painted at the Parma Royal Theatre, and the *corps de ballet* included "a rather undisciplined force of Ethiopian juveniles." All thoughts of Verdi as a "noisy" orchestrator were banished at last, and the *Times* made a point of the fact that the score was "rich in beauties perceptible at once to the practiced ear. . . . The orchestration, while full, is wherever the situation suggests it of the most delicate kind."

Max Maratzek was once again associated with a Verdi first run (not, this time, as manager, but as conductor) when *Don Carlo* was presented at the Academy on April 12, 1877. The directors prepared the opera in one week and announced with a somewhat martyred air that they had "given unwearied attention and the most liberal outlay absolutely necessary for this great work." The *Herald* reported that the opera roused "unbounded enthusiasm" on opening night, but the phrase did not apply to the critic from the *Daily Tribune*, whose enthusiasm was decidedly bounded. He praised the third-act finale, but found much else that was trivial and commonplace. "*Don Carlos*," wrote he, "belongs to that period of Verdi's career when he was robbing Meyerbeer and had not yet begun to pilfer from Wagner. . . . On the whole it cannot be said that the music expressed any poetic sentiment. . . . The principal artists were not in good voice last night and it is impossible to compliment any of them." A reduction in prices after the second performance failed to improve the singing, and after three more presentations *Rigoletto* was brought in to finish the season.

Great changes were to take place in New York's operatic life—or at least in the exterior arrangement of it—before another new Verdi opera was put upon the boards. By 1883 the capacity of the Academy of Music was beginning to prove inadequate—that is, the people who had acquired the means of leasing boxes were becoming increasingly irritated at the lack of any available boxes to lease. The old familiar urge to build an opera house, dormant for thirty years, rose to the fore once again, and in the summer of 1883 the Metropolitan Opera House was built at a cost of $1,732,978.71. Enough of the auditorium was completed by October 22 to permit a grand opening under the management of Henry E. Abbey. (The opera was Gounod's *Faust*.) Mr. Abbey lost nearly $600,000 that first season; what Colonel James Henry Mapleson, the English impresario then in his third year as director of the Academy, may have lost to the rival house is not known, but the opening of the Metropolitan was to signal the decline of the Academy.

The old house was to see one last Verdi premiere, however, when *Otello* was staged there on April 16, 1888. The impresario was the tenor Italo Campanini, who had secured rights for its first American performance following the Scala premiere on February 5, 1887. A tenor named Marconi sang the title role, Campanini's sister-in-law, Eva Tetrazzini (decidedly not to be confused with her sister Luisa) was Desdemona, and his brother Cleofonte Campanini conducted. Attendance was poor, and the following week Campanini took over the role of Otello himself, hoping to draw the public on the strength of his own reputation, which was considerable. But even he failed to enliven the production, and the public, possibly somewhat jaded at the tag end of the season, refused to be enticed back to the old opera house in any substantial numbers. *Otello* waited for New York recognition until March 24, 1891, when Abbey and Maurice Grau launched it at the Metropolitan with Francesco Tamagno, Verdi's chosen Otello, in his most celebrated role.

There yet remained one new Verdi opera that the Metropolitan might claim for premiere performance in the United States. With the production of *Falstaff* on February 4, 1895, a phase of operatic history came to a close. (There were still, at this date, eight earlier Verdi works unproduced in America.) The *Falstaff* performance was worthy of the occasion: Emma Eames was Mistress Ford, Sofia Scalchi was Mistress Quickly, Victor Maurel was Falstaff, and Giuseppe Campanari was Ford. As for the critics, they were swept with delight. The *Tribune* (the writer was the distinguished critic H. E. Krehbiel) sang that the story had been "plunged into a perfect sea of melodic champagne."

The hand of the clock had turned far, and the art of criticism with it, since the first newspaperman had ventured into the Park Theatre seventy years before to take a look at that "unnatural bantling," Italian opera.

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As Verdi heroines they graced New York Stages: Marietta Piccolomini, Angiolina Bosio, Fortunata Tedesco.

Class of 1813

Reflections on Verdi vs. Wagner.

by Peter J. Pirie

THEIR RESEMBLANCES are no less striking than their differences. They were both born in 1813, in humble circumstances, and both rose to great heights, though one needed an extra eighteen years of life to achieve his full stature. Both learned rapidly and victoriously from experience, beginning in a not very distinguished way and ending in supreme mastery: both ended their careers with an opera different from anything they had done before, casting unexpected light on their true personalities. Both were concerned in the national destinies of their countries, the Italian taking part, at least as a symbol, in the Risorgimento, and the German dabbling disastrously in the mounting nationalism of *Das Vaterland*. Both were individualists, cranky and stubborn; but while Richard Wagner inspired the most characteristic stream of modern music, Giuseppe Verdi's influence has been much more subtle, working almost unconsciously in the music of later composers. Wagner was fiercely German, Verdi pungently Italian, both in their lives and their art.

Let us consider first their musical beginnings. Verdi was born into a flourishing operatic tradition which had for many years lived on a great school of singing; behind him stand Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini. Although the orchestra was a secondary consideration in the native Italian school of opera, Rossini had already cautiously begun to extend its role, and Verdi was to develop it still further. German opera was beginning to emerge, slowly and awkwardly, out of Italian domination; Mozart had died sighing for a German opera, Weber was presiding over its foundations, and Marschner and Lortzing were in their teens. In his student days Wagner heard the celebrated soprano Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient in Italian opera, and was impressed; Verdi as a boy composed a quantity of concert music (excelling—mark this fact—in fugue). Both quickly outlived their early experiments, and started upon the path of national opera. It is typical of their polarity, however, that Wagner's early career was vague and directionless, his first operas windy and unstageable dreams which no one wanted, while Verdi's introduction to his life's work was eminently practical.

Wagner's first attempt was *Die Hochzeit*, and even the libretto, which already at nineteen he very typically wrote himself, was unfeasible. He followed it with *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot*, the first a watery nothing, the second garish and erotic. The first of his operas to contain music that is still heard today was the very Meyerbeer-ish *Rienzi*, which he wrote in 1840 at the age of twenty-seven. Contrast Verdi. While his first opera, finished in 1836 and called *Rocester*, was rejected at Parma, his second, *Oberto*, with a libretto by the same Antonio Piazza responsible for *Rocester*, was accepted by the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, and after some postponements was produced there, with a moderate success, in 1839. For the son of a poor tavern keeper, whose highest aspiration might have been the role of provincial music master, this achievement was staggering.

Verdi had his setbacks. Between 1838 and June 1840 first his baby son and daughter, and then his wife died, and the comic opera which he had contracted to write and which he grimly completed was a flat failure. Verdi's whole nature demanded the practical consideration of success, not as a right, but because he was a good craftsman who judged

success or failure as a verdict on his work. The fate of his opera buffa led him to resolve abruptly and firmly to compose no more. Few stories are more touching than that of how Bartolomeo Merelli, director of La Scala and Verdi's friend, tactfully and tenderly wooed the black-visaged young man back to composition. He presented Verdi with a libretto by Solera which Nicolai had previously rejected. Verdi glanced at it against his will, happened to read, "*Va, pensiero, sull' ali dorate*," and the golden wings of the deathless melody we know began to beat at the cage until he had to open the door and take out his foresworn pen. Thus was born the opera he always knew affectionately by a diminutive: *Nabucco*.

During the years that followed, right up to 1851 and *Rigoletto*, Verdi established himself in Italy, with many an incidental success. Very different in style from the works of Donizetti and Bellini, these early operas of his are rarely decisively better: they have the dark seriousness which Verdi was always to retain, and a dramatic and direct vocal style aimed at the sudden telling stroke, but it was not for some years that his full stature made itself felt. Merelli, at any rate, was convinced of the young composer's potentialities—and how rightly, as it turned out! Verdi was a great self-educator. But so was Wagner. His *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot* are nonsense far below the very competent *Nabucco*; after a brief transition of one work—*Rienzi*—one is astounded at the prophetic nature and sheer quality of *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Der fliegende Holländer*. Verdi was to write nothing as good as these until well into middle age.

WAGNER found his direction suddenly. One can almost hear the purposeful mechanism of his spirit at last gripping the road and recognizing it, and the whole complex concern that was Richard Wagner leaping forward. *Rienzi* had achieved a certain success, and he had been freed from the worst of his poverty; he had obtained a second conductorship at Dresden, which provided for him fairly well, but which, with his perfectionist standards, caused him constant irritation. Then he took part in the political rising of 1849, typically precipitating a wanted change with action that was needlessly violent and that seemed at first disastrous. He rid himself of his hated employment, his income, his fatherland, and his hopes, in one emotional spasm. With a warrant out for his arrest he fled to Switzerland, with his querulous wife Minna after him. These facts are well known; they are mentioned here to mark the contrast with the practical, patient Verdi, and also to illustrate an important aspect of Wagner's character that I will develop later. There is, however, a curious moment in which the two composers come very close together: the preludes to *Lohengrin* (1846-48) and *La Traviata* (1853). They seem to have arrived at this new sound independently of each other—the sound of divided strings high in the E string. Verdi makes the effect ache with compassion; Wagner uses it for a vision of the more than human splendor of the Holy Grail. How typical of both!

Lohengrin is prophetic in a general way; *Tannhäuser* and *Der fliegende Holländer* are very different from each other, and illustrate dramatically a further aspect of Wagner's complicated psychology. Although erotic implications are covertly present in a number of Wagner's operas, aside from the very youthful *Liebesverbot* he wrote only two frankly erotic works: *Tannhäuser*—especially the Paris version, contemporary with *Tristan*—and *Tristan* itself. *Der fliegende Holländer* is quite unlike. It owes so much to Weber that one can almost say it is a continuation of that most poetic spirit, but it also establishes Wagner the consciously German and Wagner the nature poet. While *Tannhäuser* looks forward to *Tristan*, *Fliegende Holländer* anticipates *The Ring* (The Dutchman himself might be a sketch for Wotan); together they illustrate something that looks very like a cleavage in Wagner's psychological make-up. There is on one side the erotic—and on the other atavistic—nature music, primitive and dark, often the back cloth for merciless human struggle. Few great artists have ever revealed themselves so completely in their music as Wagner. It is easy to see the libidinous Wagner in *Tristan*, the megalomaniac and the political meddler in Siegfried and Wotan. But Verdi tends to hide behind his characters; it is not easy to see him as Simon Boccanegra, Otello, or Rigoletto.

Nor as anyone in *La Traviata*. But he sometimes gives himself away in his attitude towards his characters. Wagner draws huge archetypal figures that are extensions of his own odd complex character; Verdi's characters are much more human, and he was nearly as good a musical psychologist, in the end, as Mozart. Compassion is the key to *La Traviata*—compassion in the tenderly drawn figure of Violetta Valery, compassion in the way the music comments on the story, even compassion for that stilted prig, Germont *père*, who gets the lovely melody "*Di Provenza*." How surely Verdi draws the contrast between the true love of Alfredo and the glitteringly corrupt surroundings of the salon at the opera's opening. Wagner is the great master of the erotic, but even in *Tannhäuser* the contrast between the two forces is not so surely drawn.

But I would like to discuss one or two lesser-known Verdi operas of this period, chiefly *Simon Boccanegra* and *Don Carlo*. *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, and even *Il Trovatore* to a certain extent, form a pattern of the popular Verdi. In spite of tragedy and dark doings common to all, an infectious tunefulness, a certain extrovert vigor, account both for their popularity and their difference from *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Carlo*, *Un Ballo in maschera*, *La Forza del destino*. These latter have a quality difficult to describe, the tragedy is darker, hinting at things below the surface of events, and the musical means, though lacking the glorious abandon of the

more popular Verdi, is more subtle. It may be said that whereas the darkness in his more popular operas is imposed from without, in those we are discussing it comes from within. Moreover, the music contains a concern with nature painting that was something almost new; Verdi had never used a natural background before as he uses the sea in *Simon Boccanegra*. The darkness that pervades *Don Carlo* is a spiritual darkness; one sometimes has the feeling that it emanates from the Grand Inquisitor, who seems to exude it. The claustrophobic atmosphere and relationships of the Spanish court add to the effect—one is reminded of the dwarfs of Velasquez, and the faces of a later Spanish royalty painted by Goya. Verdi has caught very well the sinister atmosphere of the Spanish court of Philip II, and he has done it with means that were unusual for him.

In 1865, the year before completion of *Don Carlo*, Wagner had just produced *Tristan* for the first time. This was a mighty landmark, and for a time it left Verdi quite behind. The effects of this drama were to be enormous; perhaps no other work has so changed the face of music for good or bad. Out of it came Arnold Schoenberg and the whole atonal revolution. Wagner was not yet fifty; *Tristan* is by no means a late work. Its placing in time is crucial, for two reasons: first, it marked the second high watermark of Wagner's political meddling; and second, it interrupted one of the most fantastic projects in the whole history of art, *The Ring*. The situation is central to the drama of Richard Wagner.

The idea of a music drama on Siegfried's Death had occurred to Wagner in 1848, but he soon realized that Siegfried's death was incomplete in itself, and expanded the initial idea into the vast concept of *The Ring*—three linked music dramas with a prologue that was itself a great dramatic opera. By 1857, however, he had taken this mammoth project only as far as the middle of *Siegfried*. Here he became resoundingly stuck, and with his amorous and financial affairs also in a muddle, he abandoned *The Ring*, ostensibly forever. He flung himself into *Tristan und Isolde*. *The Ring* was an act of faith so great that it looks like supreme folly. A penniless man heavily in debt, with many enemies and a reputation as a dangerous lunatic, starts on a sixteen-hour opera demanding resources wildly beyond those of any opera house in Europe. One might say, no wonder he abandoned it; this was the dawn of sense. Moreover, the lyric drama of *Tristan* had a far better chance of production somewhere, and there is no doubt that the prospect of earning a little money was in Wagner's mind. But this is only part of the truth, and the belief that Wagner had repented of the sheer scale of *The Ring* is quite mistaken. Inadequate too is the explanation that he needed to sublimate his love for Mathilde Wesendonck, and therefore poured it into *Tristan*. As Ernest Newman has pointed out, none of Wagner's love affairs was real at all. He needed the stimulus to set that highly charged machine, his brain, working. The truth is that *Tristan* (and *Die Meistersinger*, which followed it) were necessary to Wagner because he had to make a technical break-through in order to proceed with *The Ring*. His musical language was inadequate for his last operas until he had forged it anew in the furnace of *Tristan*. *Tristan* was also needed because of the strange polarity of his nature, the erotic and the political. *Tristan* is erotic, *The Ring* political; he had been running the political vein for a long time, and needed a swing of the pendulum. So he completed *Tristan*, and sought performance. At that moment there arrived at his door the officers of a king prepared to lay his kingdom at Richard Wagner's feet. *Tristan* would be performed; *The Ring* saved.

One would think that Ludwig of Bavaria's provisions to satisfy all the composer's needs, personal and musical, would have been quite enough for anyone. But not for Wagner. No sooner was he settled and *The Ring* taken up again, than he started interfering in the politics of Bavaria in a way that not even his generous benefactor could tolerate. He had sated his erotic side in *Tristan*, and now he had to return to his unfulfilled political ambitions. For *The Ring* is a tough and merciless political battle waged against a back cloth of nature in all her moods. Wagner's fantasy world was never clearly marked off from the real one; and it is probable that for him the fantasy world was the more concrete. In *The Ring* he could give vent to his most maniacal political ambitions, making himself both god (Wotan) and hero (Siegfried). The trouble was that his fantasy spilled over into real life, and he intrigued shamelessly against Ludwig's admittedly not very inspiring ministers. In the middle of the whole imbroglio, when his interference and extravagance had placed him in such jeopardy that only the king's favor stood between him and expulsion from Bavaria, Wagner started an affair with Liszt's daughter, who was Hans von Bülow's wife. Somehow, he got away with everything: he disillusioned Ludwig, but he kept his pension, Bülow's wife, and his place in German musical life, and went on (since there was no theatre in Germany capable of staging *The Ring*) to build his own.

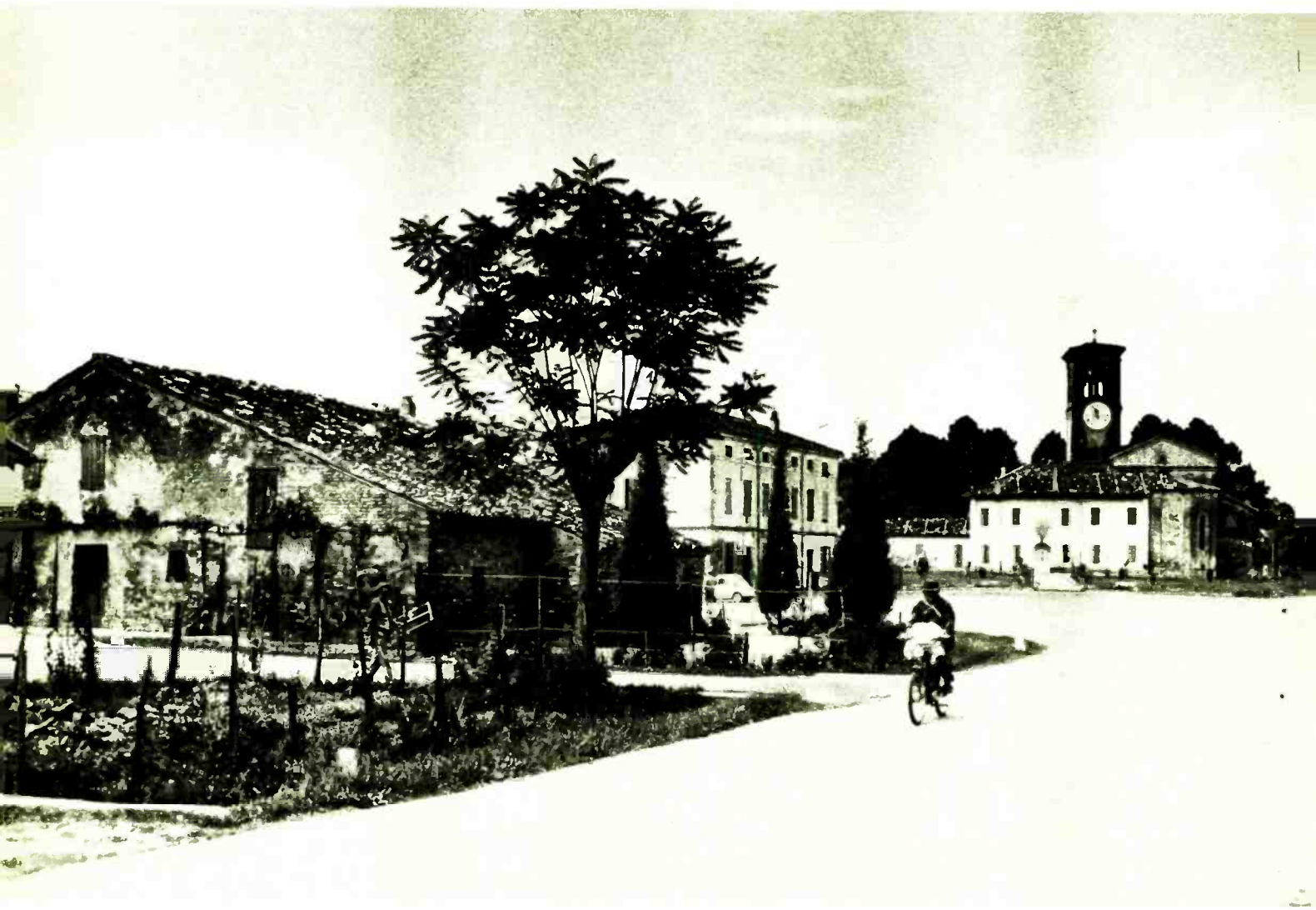
When Wagner married Cosima in 1870, he was fifty-seven. So of course was Verdi, who had just received the libretto of *Aida*. He finished the music of this spectacular opera a year later, and before he was to write another opera fourteen years were to elapse and Wagner was to die. Thus far their careers had run true to form. Through tempest and disaster, selfish, incredibly tough, trusting to an instinct that was more than uncanny, Wagner had pursued his gigantic plans, and in 1870, with turmoil and destruction all around him, was on the brink of his last great *Continued on page 170*

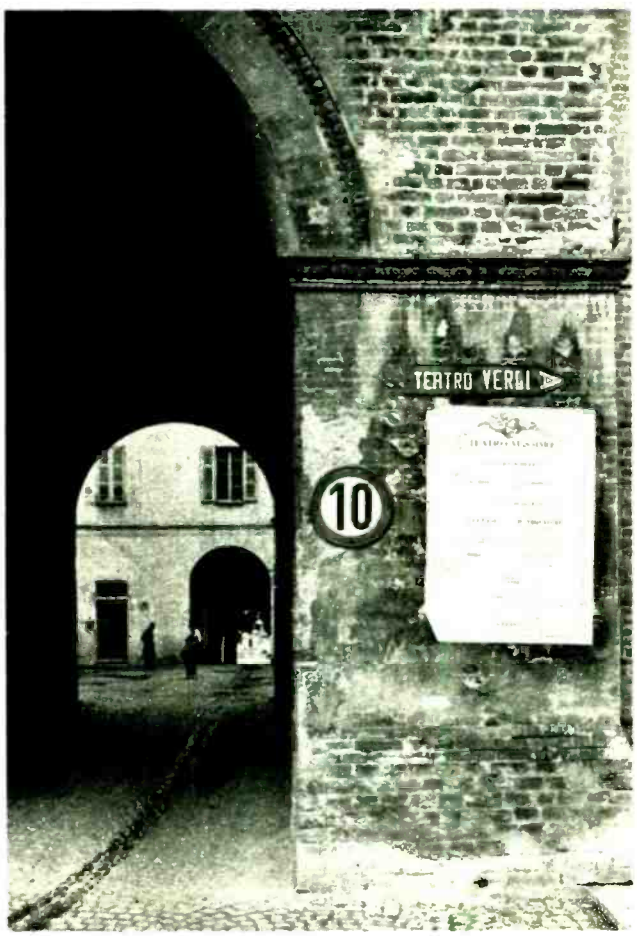
GIUSEPPE

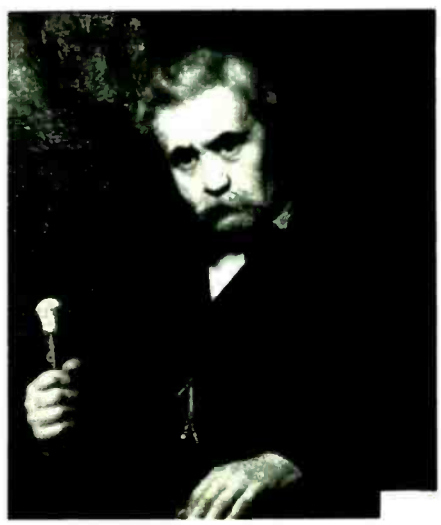
VERDI

... his life and times in pictures

THE hamlet of Le Roncole lies deep in the flat Po valley. Giuseppe Verdi was born there on October 10, 1813, in the squat brick house which served as the village tavern and grocery shop. It can be seen at the left of the photo below. Across the square is the village church, where Giuseppe received his first music lessons. The painting at right shows the tavern as it appeared in the early nineteenth century.

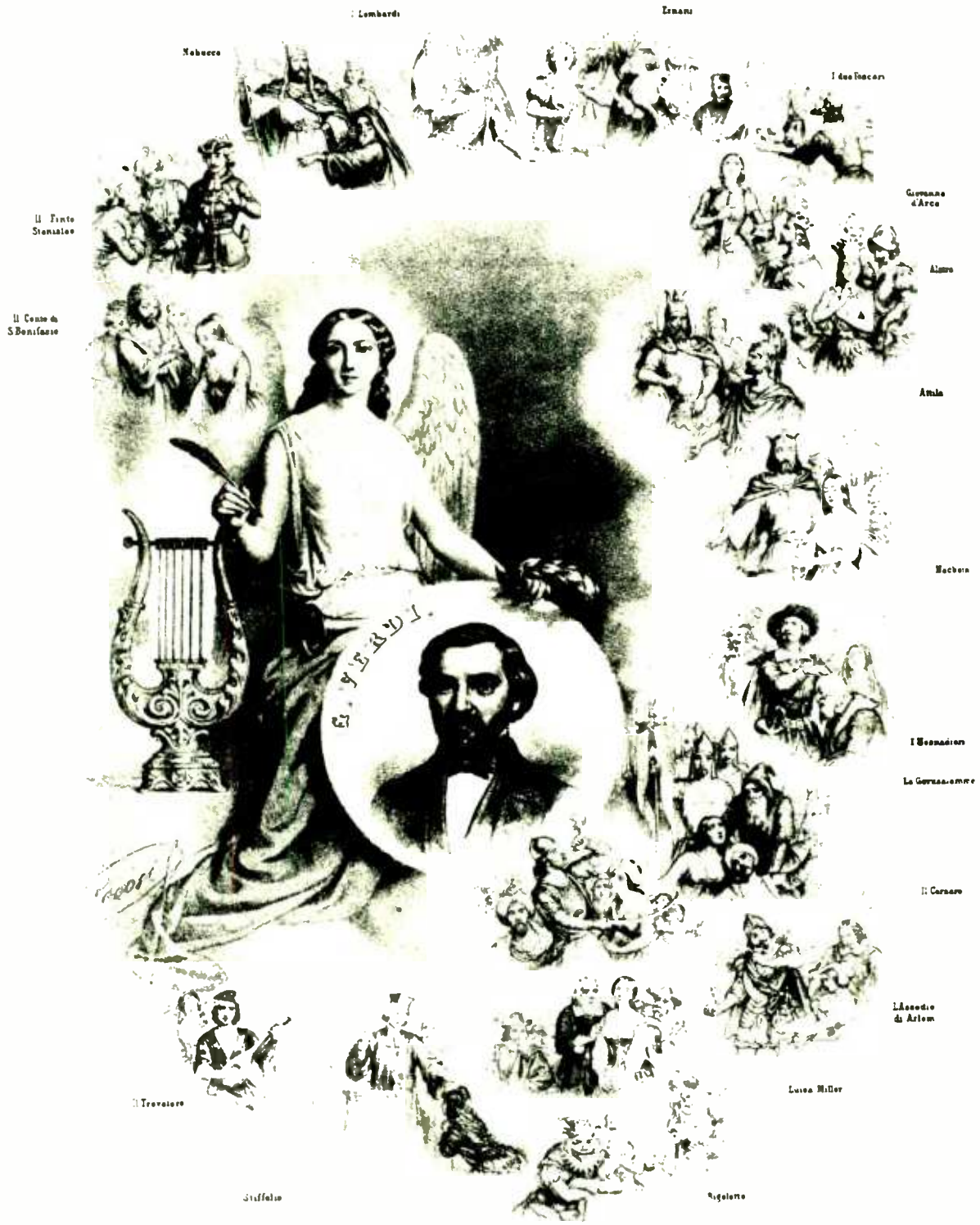






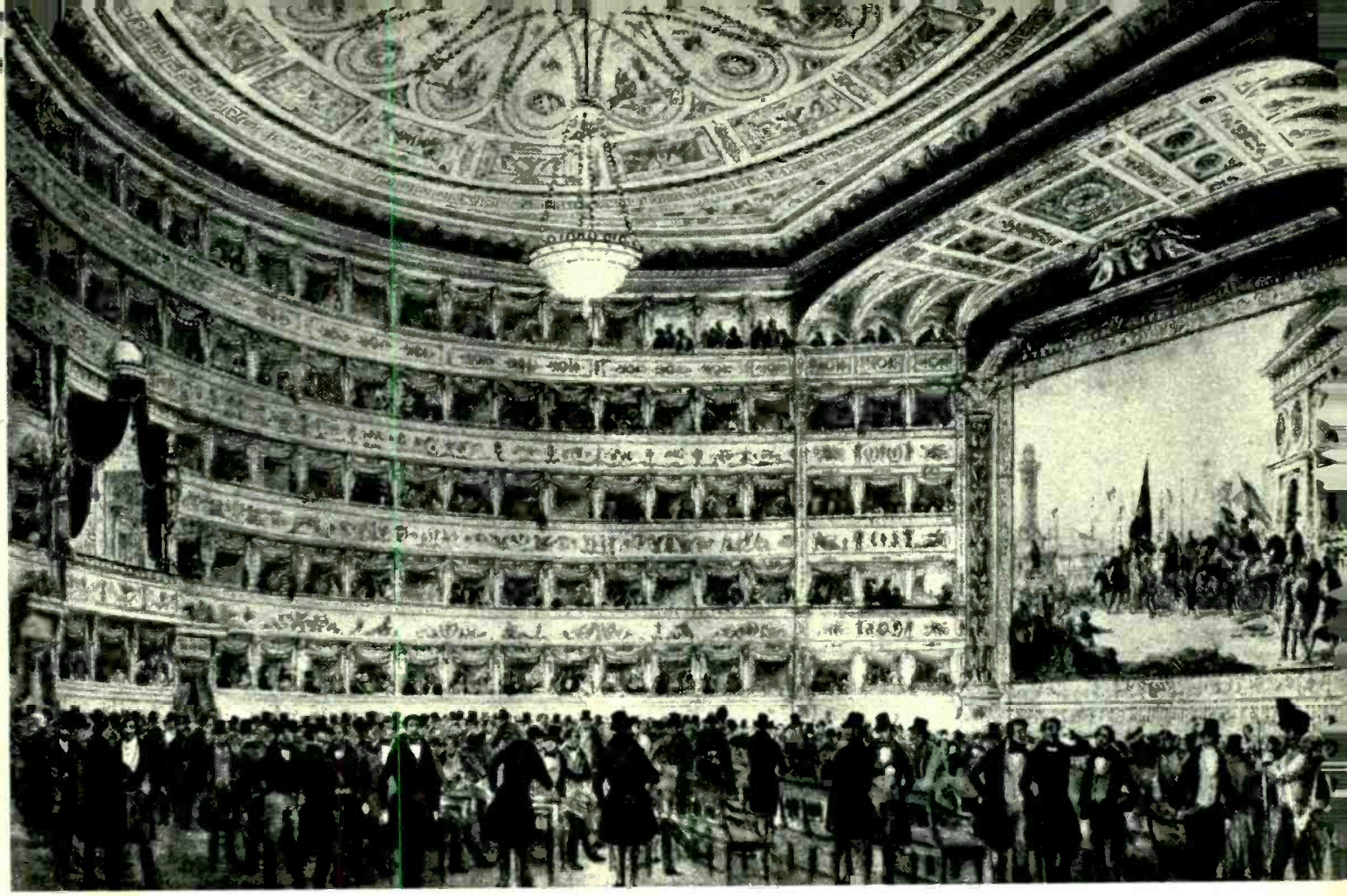
At ten Verdi was sent to school in the nearby market town of Busseto. A local merchant and musical amateur, Antonio Barezzi (above), interested himself in young Verdi's education and took him into his home. The Barezzi house (top) still overlooks the main square of this little town in which Verdian associations abound at every turn.

In 1836 Verdi married Barezzi's eldest daughter, Margherita (below, right), and settled down as Busseto's *maestro di musica*. But his thoughts turned to Milan and its celebrated Teatro alla Scala (above). There, in 1839, the impresario Bartolomeo Merelli (below, left) put on Verdi's first surviving opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*. By then Verdi's two children had already died, and his wife was to follow them to the grave soon after. The young composer stayed on in Milan and became famous overnight with the Scala production of *Nabucco* in 1842.



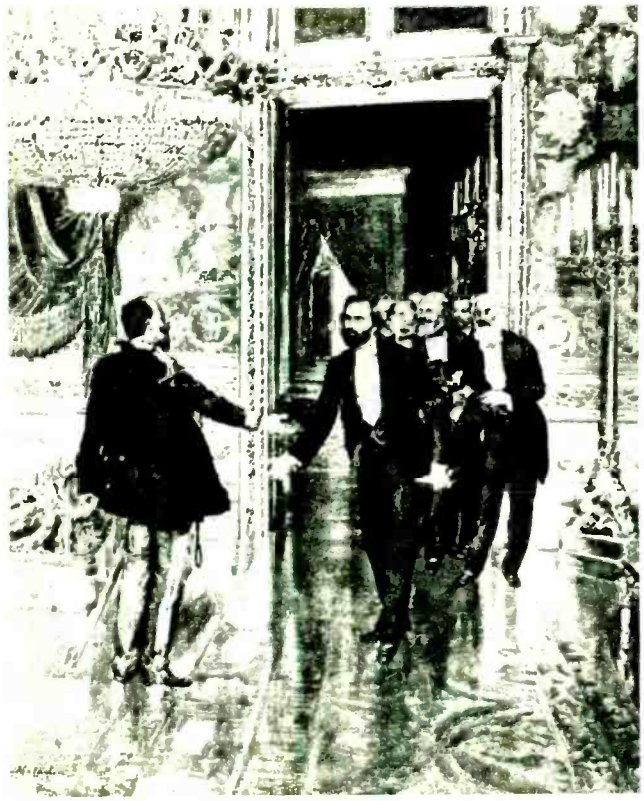
The composer himself referred to the period following *Nabucco* as his "years in the galleys." In nine years he turned out a dozen operas, of varying quality. They are all pictured here in this frontispiece to a collection of Verdi arias published in the early 1850s. (Also shown are scenes from *Rigoletto* and *Trovatore*, which came immediately after the "galley years.")

The ringleted lady above is Giuseppina Strepponi, a soprano whom Verdi first met in 1841. She was then the mistress of a well-known tenor, Napoleone Moriani (left). Verdi and Strepponi met again in Paris in 1847 (the engraving of the composer at right was made that year). They were to live together — at first without benefit of matrimony — until Peppina's death fifty years later. The photo below shows their first home: the Palazzo Orlandi in Busseto.



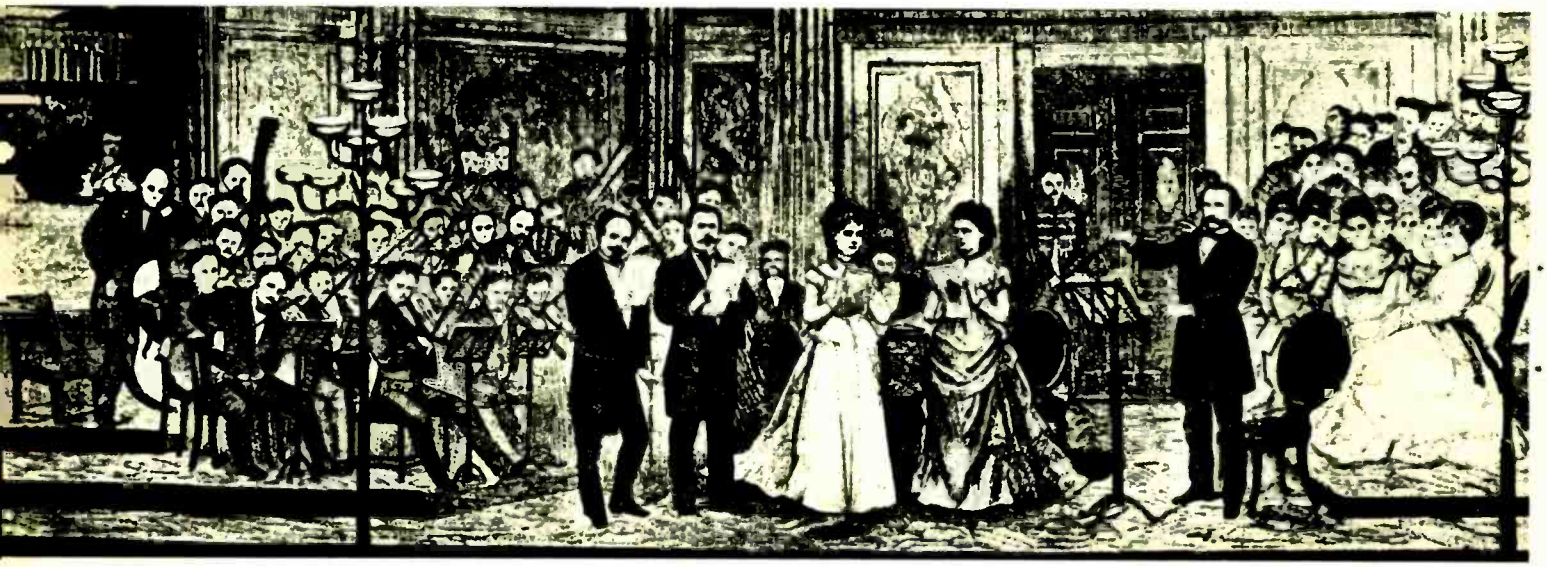
La Fenice, the dazzlingly graceful opera house in Venice, commissioned five operas from Verdi, including *Rigoletto,* the earliest of his works that remain constantly in the repertory. Its premiere in 1851 was a riotous success. The print above shows the Fenice interior as it looked then—not very different from the way it looks now, though today upholstered seats have replaced the wooden settees. Venice does not much believe in change, as witness the handsome oil lamp over the Fenice's gallery entrance (left). The costume sketches below were drawn for *Rigoletto*'s first production.

Melchiorre Delfico was a popular Neapolitan cartoonist with whom Verdi struck up a long friendship during a four-month sojourn in Naples in 1858. Delfico's cartoons of Verdi drawn at this period portray the composer in an ambience of genial relaxation. Going clockwise from top left, we find Verdi attending patiently to the edicts of the censor, sharing a sofa with his Maltese spaniel Loulou, cowering under a deluge of requests for autographs and offers from impresarios, peering at the Bay of Naples from his hotel balcony, and slumbering in peaceful repose while Delfico plays a composition of his own.

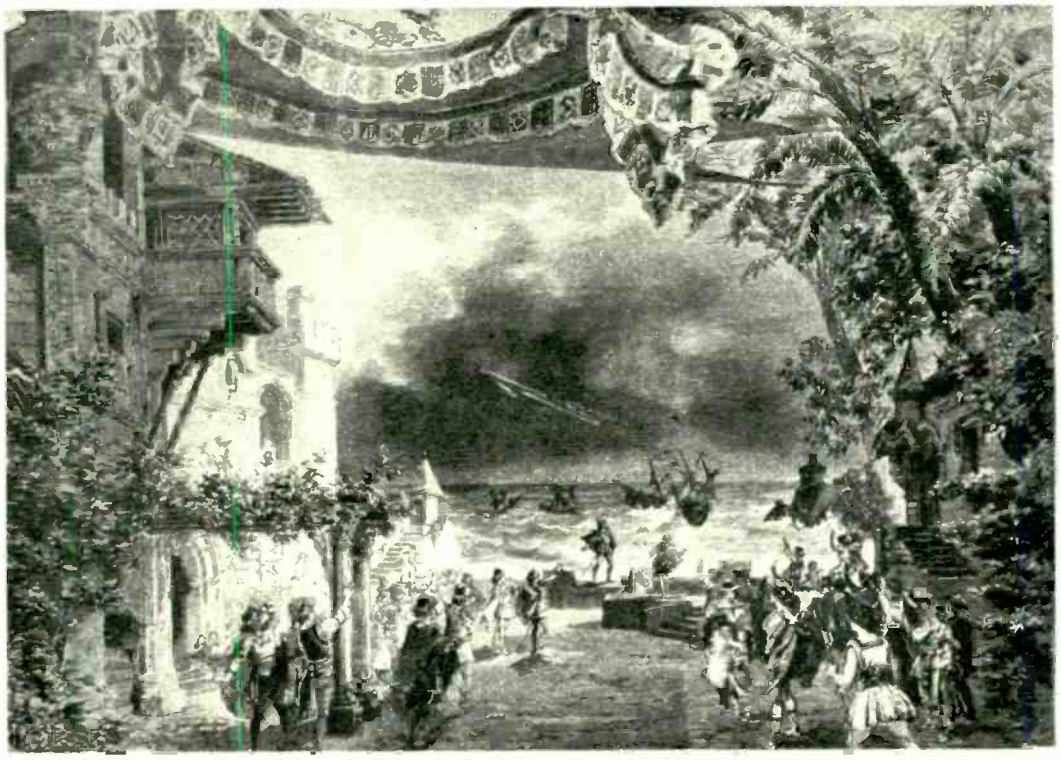


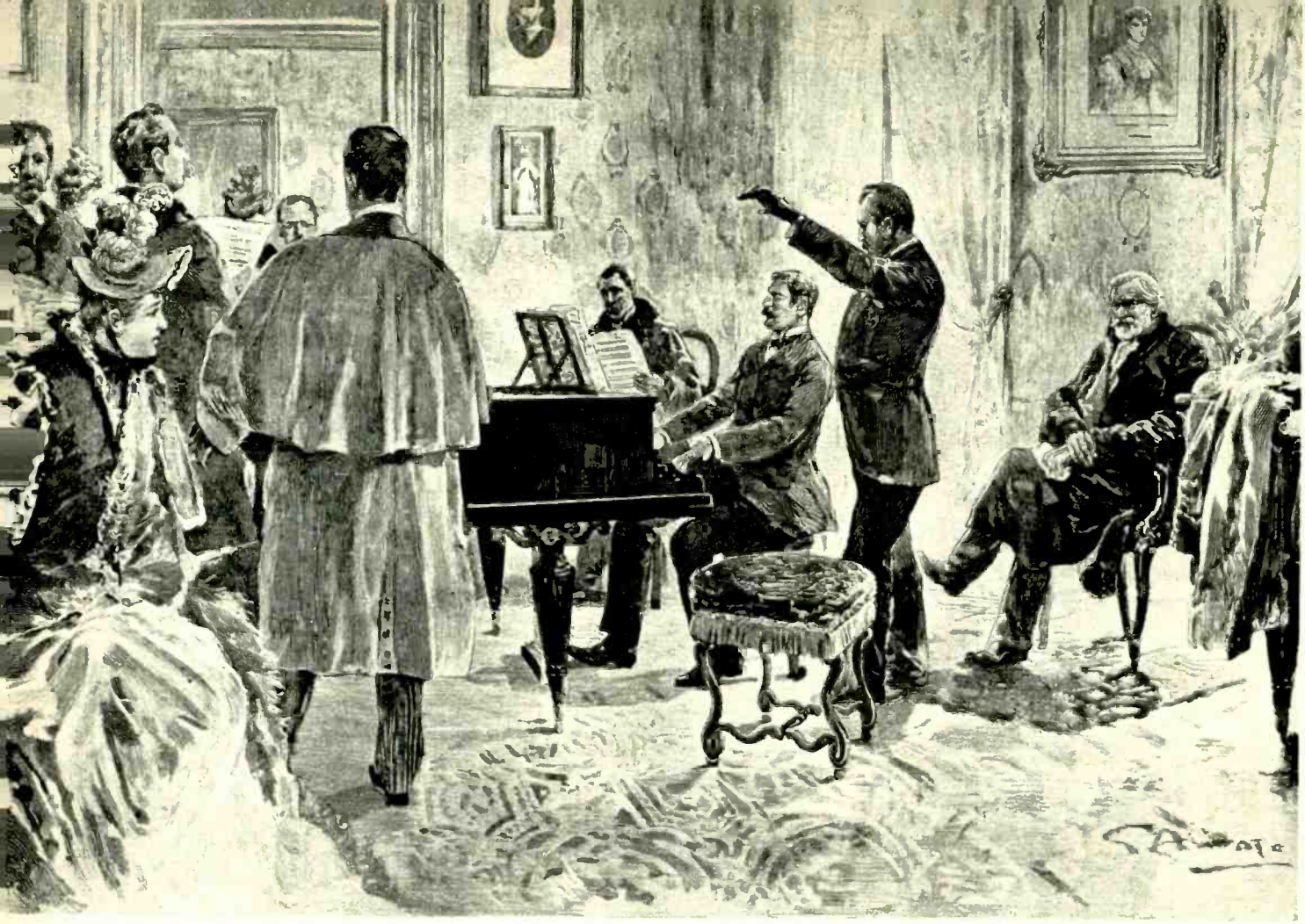
Throughout the 1840s and '50s, when Italy was merely "a geographical expression," performances of Verdi's operas were often the occasion for patriotic demonstrations. Later, the composer's name took on an added connotation. The initials V.E.R.D.I. stood for Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia. Thus, "Viva Verdi" scrawled on a wall was understood as a rallying slogan for the Piedmontese king under whom Italy would shortly become unified. Verdi and V.E.R.D.I. met in September 1859 (left), shortly after the composer's own Duchy of Parma had voted for union with Piedmont.

Verdi composed *La Forza del destino* for the Court Opera in St. Petersburg, where he went—suitably accoutered in furs—for the first performance in 1862. The opera was given at La Scala in 1869, with the soprano Teresa Stolz (below) as Leonora. La Stolz became a great friend of Verdi's—though just how great is a matter of dispute. She sang in the first performance of the *Manzoni* Requiem under Verdi's direction in 1874 (bottom of page).

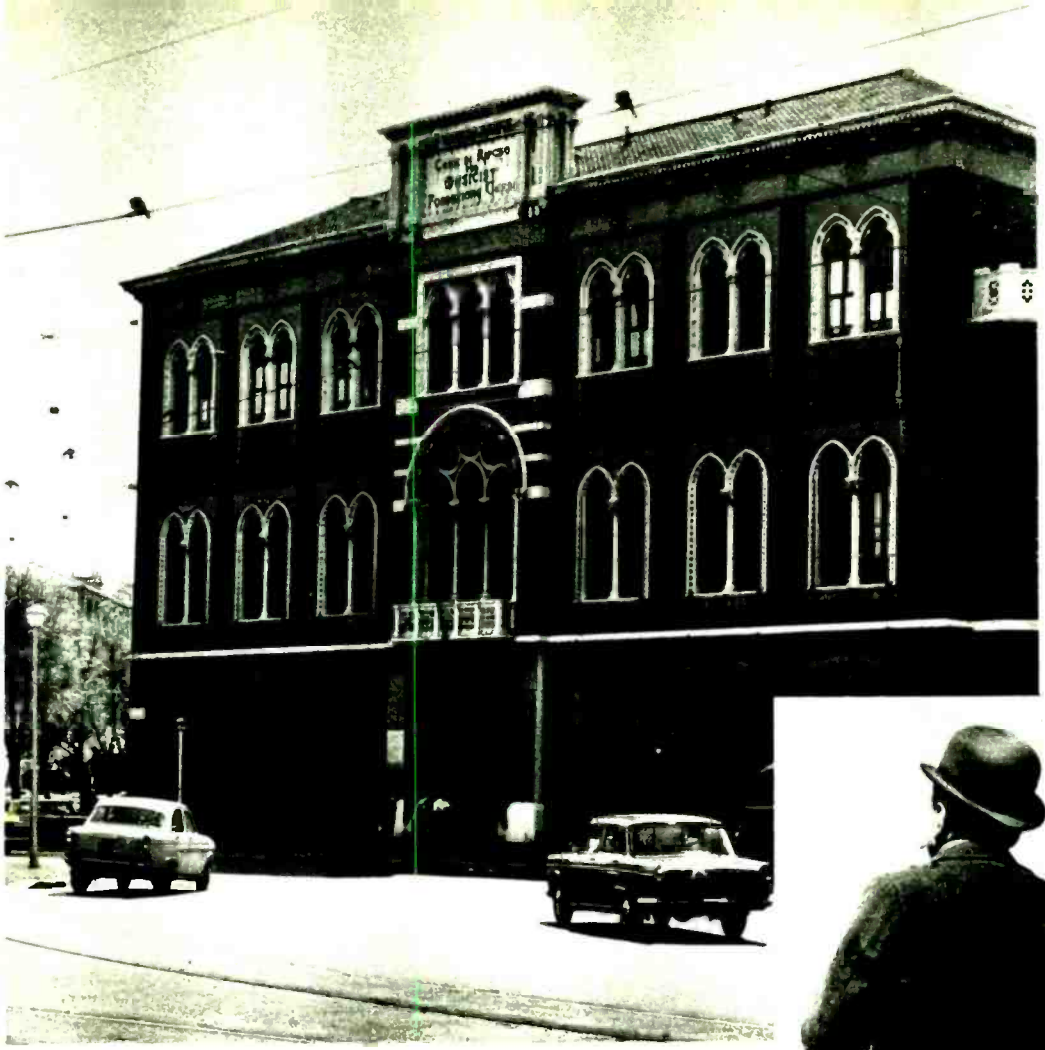


The "years in the galleys" were now far behind, and Verdi felt inclined to retire. But the force of destiny exacted from him two more masterpieces, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, to librettos by Arrigo Boito (above, with Verdi). The Act I set from the first Scala production of *Otello* (1887) is shown below.





In his apartment at the Grand Hotel, Milan, Verdi supervised the rehearsals for *Falstaff* (above). Its first performance, with Victor Maurel in the title role, took place at La Scala in 1893. In his eightieth year Verdi had created a work of sunlit gaiety and grace, totally unlike anything that had gone before. The world clamored for more, but Verdi knew better. *Falstaff* could never be surpassed.



Verdi's last years were largely occupied with the founding of the Rest Home for Musicians in Milan, which appears today as in the photo above. The inset shows Verdi and the architect, Camillo Boito, on its terrace. Peppina died in 1897, but the old man did not lack for guests at Sant' Agata. Among those pictured below are Teresa Stolz (standing) and Giulio Ricordi (second from right).

His death in Milan on January 27, 1901, was cause for national mourning. Arturo Toscanini led a chorus of 800 voices in *"Va, pensiero"* from *Nabucco* (top of page). Then seemingly the entire populace of Milan poured out into the streets and followed their beloved Verdi to his final resting place next to Peppina in the chapel of the Rest Home for Musicians.

BY WILLIAM WEAVER

Of Poets and Poetasters

Verdi and his librettists—from Solera to Boito.

THE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE towards the librettists of Verdi's operas can best be summed up by some quotations from the composer's two excellent biographers, Francis Toye and the late Frank Walker.

"It may be debated whether the annals of opera contain a more uncouth libretto . . . ." This is Toye (*Verdi*, Knopf, 1946, p. 208) on the subject of Temistocle Solera's *I Lombardi*. Walker, discussing Verdi's so called "galley years" of early success, writes (*Grove's Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, Vol. VIII, p. 731): ". . . he accepted far too many contracts for new operas and turned out much hasty work on unworthy librettos . . . ." A few pages later Walker says of *Il Trovatore:* "The text is really indefensible, ludicrous in general conception and detail . . . ." Toye, again (p. 315): "Many of the lines of *Un Ballo in maschera* are sheer doggerel . . . ."

Toye, whose study first appeared in 1930, was (along with Franz Werfel) one of the then few crusading spirits who took Verdi's operas—aside from the generally respected *Otello* and *Falstaff*—seriously, as something worthy of critical consideration. Yet, except for those last two Boito librettos, Toye found little to praise in the texts of Verdi's operas. And Walker, whose recent *The Man Verdi* is a milestone in Verdian scholarship, also regards Boito as Verdi's literary savior. But, now that Verdi's early, little-known operas are gradually being reconsidered, can't the "poets" who served the composer be reëxamined in the context of their time?

Even in Verdi's own day his librettos came in for sharp criticism, especially the ones by Francesco Maria Piave. When *Simon Boccanegra* was performed in Venice in 1857, rumors attributed authorship of the libretto to Verdi himself. The composer, quick to spring to his librettist's defense, wrote to a Venetian friend: "All we needed was the invention that the libretto was of my writing!!! A libretto that bears Piave's name is condemned in advance as terrible poetry. But frankly I would be quite happy if I were capable of writing strophes like: *'Vieni a mirar la cerula. . . . Delle faci festanti al barlume . . .'* and many, many others like so many of his verses here and there. I confess my ignorance; I'm not capable of it . . . ."

Nowadays the texts that Verdi set to music, if divorced from that music, make admittedly dreary reading. Of course, the verses were never meant to be read alone; they were pretexts for music, for scenes. And for that matter, few of Piave's modern critics take the trouble to read the Italian theatre of the nineteenth century. The hit plays of Verdi's time—in the long theatrical gap between Alfieri and Pirandello—are unreadable: bombastic, long-winded, artificial, they seem librettos with the notes missing. Piave, Cammarano, Somma, the maligned librettists, were no worse than most of their now forgotten contemporaries, and even the great Manzoni, when he turned to the theatre and wrote *Adelchi*, created a fairly turgid piece (though it is officially regarded in Italy as a classic).

Very early in his career Verdi was in a position to choose his librettists, just as he dictated his financial terms; and if he continued to work with

In caricature, librettists Solera and Piave; treated seriously, Salvatore Cammarano.

writers like Piave and Salvatore Cammarano, he had his reasons. These men, as the Italian critic Gabriele Baldini has pointed out, were not librettists in the sense that Da Ponte or Calzabigi had been; they were more like secretaries, turning Verdi's dramatic ideas into singable verses, using plots drawn from successful playwrights, mostly from outside Italy. But, first and foremost, these librettists were men of the theatre, they were "professionals" —despite the financial precariousness of the theatre in Verdi's time.

In fact, the colorful Temistocle Solera, after revising the first Verdi opera to be produced, a work called *Oberto* (apparently written first by one Antonio Piazza, government employee and part-time journalist), and after inflaming Verdi's patriotism with *Nabucco, I Lombardi*, and *Attila*, gave up the theatre. He had been a composer as well as a writer, but he turned to politics, served Napoleon III as a spy, then became police chief of Florence, organizer of the Khedive's police force in Cairo, an antique dealer in Paris and finally in Milan, where he died in poverty in 1878. In the current revival of Verdi's early operas, Solera's librettos are being heard again. *Nabucco* can now almost be considered a repertory opera, and modern audiences are as inspired as the dejected Verdi was by the elegiac *"Va, pensiero."* A recent Florentine revival of *Attila* proved that opera equally arresting and viable. The plot—like that of *Nabucco* and, even more so, of *I Lombardi*—is full of coincidences and unlikelihoods; but again and again the verses have a convincing ring, the catchiness of a good political slogan, a rallying cry like the historic *"Resti l'Italia a me!"*

Solera was born in poverty, son of a political prisoner in the hated Austrian Spielberg; Piave—Verdi's second librettist—had poverty thrust upon him. Son of a well-to-do glass manufacturer from the island of Murano, Piave suddenly found himself, when his father's fortune vanished, with the necessity of making a living. Apparently the prospect didn't alarm him. Piave seems to have been the most affable of men; he got a job as a proofreader, but spent many of his working hours composing verses and songs, which were sung by Venice's gondoliers. Among Piave's many friends was Brenna, secretary of the Fenice theatre, and when Verdi signed a contract to write an opera there, Brenna suggested Piave as librettist.

Verdi immediately made it clear who was going to lead the team. He wrote to Brenna: "In your letter I read that Piave would like to come to a decision with me so as to avoid as far as possible the necessity for changes when the work is finished. For my part I would never like to bother a poet by asking him to change a verse, and I set three of Solera's librettos in which, if you compare the original manuscripts which I still have with the printed texts, you will find only a very few verses changed, and these by Solera's own request. But Solera has already written fifty librettos and knows the theatre, theatrical effects, and musical forms. Piave has never written [for the theatre] and it is therefore natural that he should be lacking in these qualities . . . ."

The opera was *Ernani*. Verdi was forgetting that, as a novice, he had been in no position to ask the experienced Solera for many changes (Solera, notorious for his laziness, would probably not have satisfied him). Actually, according to Verdi's not always reliable biographer Abbiati, Solera did make changes even in the rapidly composed *Nabucco*.

If Solera was Verdi's "revolutionary" librettist, Piave served the composer for a different kind of text. The young Venetian was Verdi's "domestic" librettist. In fact, even in the stirring *Ernani* with its rousing choruses, we find Verdi beginning to take more of an interest in his character's inner lives: Ernani and Leonora are fairly conventional figures, but Silva and Carlo—with their great monologues—are a step in the direction of *Rigoletto* and *Simon Boccanegra*.

Even in the "galley years," when Verdi was

writing operas almost as fast as he could drive his pen, he spent precious time in selecting and rejecting librettos, adjusting verses, arranging a scene so that it would have musical, if not dramatic, logic. In 1844 he wrote to Piave about the rough draft of *I due Foscari*: "In the Tenor's cavatina there are two things wrong. The first is that, when the cavatina is over, Jacopo remains on stage and this is always bad for the effect. Secondly, there is no shift of thought after the adagio. Write some very brief dialogue between the attendant and Jacopo, then have an officer come in and say: 'Bring on the prisoner,' then a cabaletta. Make this forceful, because we're writing for Rome; and besides we must make the character of Foscari more vigorous. . . . In the third act, do as we agreed, try to insert the gondolier's song, mingling with the chorus of the populace. Couldn't it be arranged for this to happen towards evening, so we could have a sunset, which is so beautiful?"

The word effect (which sometimes has to be translated as effectiveness) occurs again and again in Verdi's letters to his librettists during these busy years. It gives us a clue to what he sought in his librettos. Other favorite words are positions (or situations) and colors. "Everything is too much the same color," he wrote of *I due Foscari* later.

At that time, Verdi was not much concerned with the over-all construction of the drama, with comprehensive coherence; he was after scene-for-scene effectiveness, thinking of how the cabaletta would come off, of whether the tenor would leave the stage in a storm of wild, Roman applause or equally boisterous Roman whistling of disapproval. He was writing, as he said himself afterwards, "with one eye on the public and one on art." For that matter, he kept an eye on the public even in the later years of his career, but it was a public whose tastes he himself had gradually changed.

VERDI'S TASTES were also to change: the immediate effect was no longer to be gained merely by introducing a messenger and striking the spark of a lively cabaletta, or by setting a scene at sunset rather than at a less romantic hour. It was character contrast that Verdi was to seek: contrast between characters and within them. The most interesting figure in *I due Foscari* (the opera which immediately followed *Ernani*) is the old Doge, a father torn between love and duty. A similar father appears in *Giovanna d'Arco* (by Solera), and in *Alzira*, Verdi's next opera, there are two torn fathers, a Spanish governor (we are in Peru at the time of the conquistadores) and a noble Inca chieftain.

Andrea Maffei

The librettist of *Alzira* was the Neapolitan Salvatore Cammarano, twelve years Verdi's senior and already the highly esteemed author of librettos like Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Belisario* and Pacini's now forgotten hit *Saffo*. At this first stage, Verdi's letters to Cammarano were extremely deferential—unlike his brusque handling of the docile Piave—out of respect for the older man's long theatrical experience. A fascinating figure, Cammarano came from a long line of actors, playwrights, painters; he also worked at the Teatro San Carlo as a stage manager (ancestor of today's director) and general literary handyman. When Verdi's *Macbeth* was being performed at the San Carlo a few years later, the composer entrusted the production to Cammarano, writing him a letter of instructions, including the famous definition of what Lady Macbeth's voice should be: "Harsh, stifled, grim . . . ."

Alzira was a failure (though after its Neapolitan premiere in the summer of 1845 it was performed in other Italian theatres), and it is the only opera of Verdi's that hasn't been revived in this century. Verdi himself called it *proprio brutta*, "downright ugly"; but he apparently didn't blame its failure on the libretto, since he returned to Cammarano for *Luisa Miller* and, eight years after *Alzira*, for *Il Trovatore*.

After *Alzira* and *Attila* (Solera's last libretto for Verdi), the composer turned, in 1846, to his most ambitious project up till then: *Macbeth*. Piave was commissioned to fashion a libretto from an extensive prose draft made by Verdi. Piave was also conscious of the importance that Verdi attached to the new work and he obviously echoed Verdi's words in a letter to Lanari, the Florence impresario who was to put it on: "I believe that this opera, if the public likes it, will give new trends to our music and will open new avenues to composers of the present and the future . . . ." And Verdi chose this, of his now ten operas, to dedicate to his benefactor Barezzi, writing: "Here is this *Macbeth*, which I love more than my other operas and which I therefore believe more worthy of being dedicated to you . . . ."

For once Verdi worried about the quality of the text as poetry and, with Piave's consent, he turned the libretto over to a friend, the eminent poet Andrea Maffei, twenty-five years older than Verdi, well known as translator of Byron, Milton, Goethe, and Schiller. Maffei revised the choruses of the witches and the sleepwalking scene. The libretto was printed with only Piave's name, and the very scenes written by Maffei were the ones the critics treated most brutally.

This harsh treatment didn't

discourage Verdi; he asked Maffei for a full-length libretto, *I Masnadieri*. This was the first time Verdi had had a really respected poet for his collaborator (excepting Felice Romani, author of the early and disastrous *Un Giorno di regno*; but this was no real collaboration since Verdi took the libretto ready-made and set it hastily and against his will). Maffei's product is surely one of Verdi's worst librettos, with an ending in which the hero kills the heroine on the most absurd of pretexts, merely to ring down the curtain. After *I Masnadieri* (a failure at its London premiere, despite the presence of Jenny Lind as prima donna), Verdi went straight back to Piave and Cammarano, the former for *Il Corsaro* and the latter for *La Battaglia di Legnano*.

Neither of these two operas represents anything new in Verdi's production, though both have excellent scenes. But the operas that immediately followed—*Luisa Miller* by Cammarano and *Stiffelio* by Piave—show Verdi again widening his range. *Luisa Miller* is a domestic tragedy (though there is a background of rebellion against oppression), the story of a tormented father, betrayed daughter, and noble seducer, which in some ways suggests the *Rigoletto* of eighteen months later. The super-villain, appropriately named Wurm, particularly aroused Verdi's interest. "There will be a fine contrast between the terror and despair of Eloisa and the infernal coldness of Wurm. In fact, it seems to me that if you give Wurm's character a certain hint of comicality, the position will become still more fearsome." *Position* again; but here the conflict is an inner one, a conflict of characters.

And *Stiffelio* is an even bolder step: it is a modern-dress story, another domestic tragedy, this time a betrayed husband (a Protestant clergyman), who at the end forgives his erring wife. As in *La Battaglia di Legnano*, the drama is one of conjugal love; but in this case the wife falls through a temporary lapse. She really loves her husband, and it is clear that Verdi agreed in his pardoning her. This was a risky subject for an Italian audience in 1850 (it could be risky in Italy even today), and the opera failed. Verdi later revised it and fitted it to a changed and—mutilated—libretto as *Aroldo*. The second version has been revived occasionally in recent years, but it would be interesting to hear the first and more dramatic version.

VERDI WAS NOW nearing forty. He was well-off, happy, famous. He had written fifteen operas. His great Italian rivals were dead or silent, and Wagner, his supreme German rival, was not to be heard in Italy for another twenty years. If Verdi had wanted to rest on his laurels, evolve a formula from his successes and go on repeating it, nothing would have been easier or more profitable. But the search for new challenges, a new kind of opera, was only begun. *Stiffelio* was presented to the public (in Trieste) on November 16, 1850. On March 11, 1851, in Venice, Verdi unveiled *Rigoletto*.

In this one work he created his three most vivid and deeply felt characters up till then: the grotesque yet human hunchback, the libertine Duke, the innocent and passionate Gilda. A little less than two years later came *Il Trovatore*, whose protagonist —for Verdi—was the crazed Azucena, a female counterpart of his Rigoletto. And six weeks after *Il Trovatore*'s triumph: *La Traviata*, whose initial failure can be attributed to many reasons, including the boldness of the libretto—a modern-dress story again, this time dealing with prostitution.

At this point a new librettist comes into Verdi's life: Antonio Somma, a Venetian lawyer (born in 1810), a member of Verdi's little circle of friends in Venice which included the distinguished alienist Cesare Vigna and the impresario and music dealer Antonio Gallo (responsible for the successful second production of *La Traviata*, a few months after the fiasco of the first). Somma at this time was a well-known playwright, author of a successful play titled *La Parisina*.

The writer indicated his willingness to do a libretto for Verdi. The composer, on his way to Paris to write *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (to a text from the Scribe "libretto factory"), found time to send a long letter to Somma, the beginning of a correspondence which reveals Verdi's concept of his art: "Long experience has confirmed the ideas I have always had about effectiveness in the theatre, though at the beginning of my career I had the courage to reveal them only in part. (For example, ten years ago I would never have risked writing *Rigoletto*.) I find that our operas err on the side of too great monotony, and therefore I would refuse today to set stories like *Nabucco*, *Foscari*, etc. etc. They provide interesting scenes, but lack variety. It is a single string—lofty, if you like, but still always the same. I'll explain myself more clearly: Tasso's poem may be better, but I prefer Ariosto a thousand times over. For the same reason I prefer Shakespeare to all other dramatists, not excluding the Greeks. As far as effect is concerned, I believe the best story I have so far composed (without referring to the question of literary or poetic merit) is *Rigoletto*. There are very powerful situations, there is variety, pathos, *brio*. All the developments come from the carefree, libertine character of the Duke; from it come the fears of Rigoletto, Gilda's passion, etc. etc., which create many dramatic points, among them the scene of the Quartet which, in effectiveness, will always be one of the best that our theatre boasts. Many composers have set *Ruy Blas*, omitting the part of Don César. If I were to set that story, it would appeal to me chiefly for the contrast that this highly original character affords . . . ." And at the end of the letter Verdi suggested that Somma take a look at *King Lear*.

For the next three years Somma worked on the libretto of *Lear*, while Verdi bombarded him with suggestions. The libretto was completed, Verdi paid for it and kept it in his drawer for years, toying with the idea of setting it to music. As usual, the

text was as much his work as it was Somma's: every letter contains admonitions, advice, the fruit of the composer's years in the opera house. "Bear in mind only the necessary brevity," was Verdi's first reminder. "The public is easily bored!" And again in a later letter: "In the theatre *long* is the synonym of boring; and the boring is the worst of all genres."

At the same time Verdi was working away from the closed forms—*romanza, cabaletta, stretta finale*—to freer construction: "As to the recitatives, if the moment is interesting, they can even be a bit long. I have written some very long ones, for example the soliloquy in the duet of the first act of *Macbeth*, and the other soliloquy in the duet of the first act of *Rigoletto*." *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto*—still his two favorite operas.

In the projected *Re Lear*, again the villain's character interested Verdi more than the hero's: "Develop this aria well [Edmondo's] and give it a new shape, alternating recitative with rhymed strophes, etc. etc. Let there be a great variety of hues: irony, contempt, wrath—all well depicted, so that in the music, not being able to give a *cantabile* to such a character, I can find different colors. . . . For my part, I wouldn't make an Edmondo who feels a twinge of remorse. I'd make him an outright scoundrel, not a repulsive scoundrel like Francesco in *I Masnadieri* . . . but one who laughs and mocks at everything and commits the most atrocious crimes with the maximum indifference . . . ." In the same letter Verdi asks Somma to omit a chorus which he says would create not variety, but monotony. The variety he is seeking must be in the *hues*, the shadings of character, not in external changes.

For one reason or another Verdi never set Somma's *Lear*, but instead, in 1857, the composer employed Somma to make an adaptation, little more than a straight translation, of Scribe's *Gustave III*, rebaptized eventually *Un Ballo in maschera*. Again the collaboration between Verdi and a "respected" writer proved fatal. This libretto, concocted in haste and mauled by the censors, has become a byword for foolishness; but in Somma's defense it should be said that he was aware of the text's shortcomings and refused to have his name printed on the title page.

Except for his French librettists, the next "poet" to come into Verdi's life was Antonio Ghislanzoni, the versifier of *Aida*. After *La Traviata*, Verdi wrote less and less frequently and only when an occasion—or a libretto—inspired him. The offer from the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg was too attractive to resist, so he composed *La Forza del destino* (Piave's last libretto). *Don Carlo* was written for Paris, and *Aida* for Cairo. Italy was unified, a full-fledged European nation; and Verdi was increasingly conscious of being that nation's leading cultural representative abroad.

THE PERIOD of revisions had begun: *Forza* was revised between Russia and La Scala. A new *Macbeth* was made for performance in Paris. *Simon Boccanegra* was modified to help save La Scala from closing its doors and perhaps—one suspects—to test still another aspiring librettist, Verdi's last, Arrigo Boito.

But before Boito there was Ghislanzoni, the last of the "secretary" librettists. Born in 1823, Ghislanzoni was another man of the theatre, though he had originally studied medicine. He was a baritone for a while, but lost his voice and took up writing. His melodramatic novel *Gli Artisti da teatro* is a mine of information about backstage life in Italian opera houses in the first part of the nineteenth century. He was also a music critic and an accomplished journalist, and an article of his describing a visit to the composer at Sant' Agata is a splendid word portrait of the aging Verdi.

Aida, dramatically, doesn't represent a radical departure from the librettos that preceded it; but it is nonetheless an unusual blend of familiar Verdian elements. Du Locle—who wrote the prose sketch—and Verdi and *Continued on page 171*

Librettists of the later years: Antonio Somma, Antonio Ghislanzoni, and the last ally—Boito.

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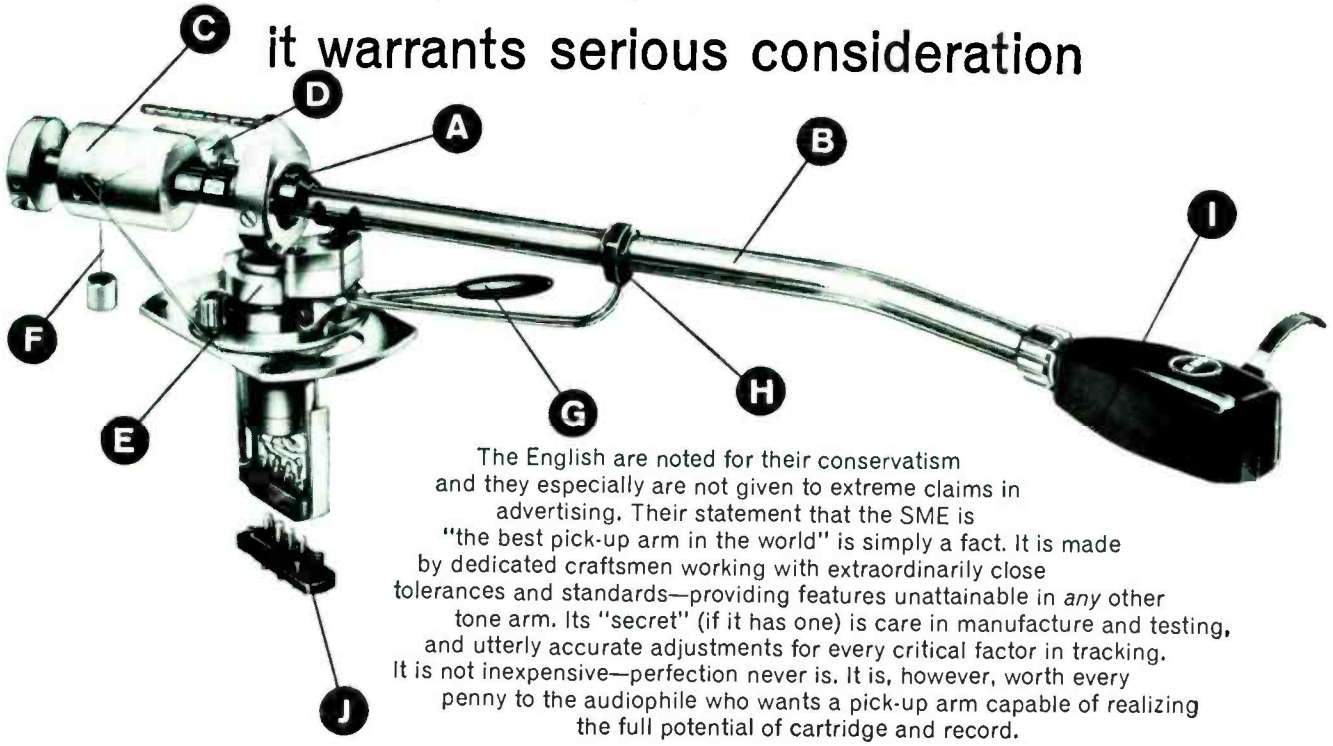

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CIRCLE 97 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

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high fidelity

EQUIPMENT REPORTS

Fairchild Model 412-1BK Turntable Kit

AT A GLANCE: The Model 412-1BK is a single-speed (33⅓ rpm) turntable in kit form. Tests of a kit-built model, conducted at United States Testing Company, Inc., indicate that the 412-1BK is a high quality unit, capable of excellent performance. Dimensions, installed on the motor board supplied in the kit, are 16¾ inches by 14¼ inches. The kit price is $79.95. An optional wooden wrap-around, shock-mounted base costs $12.95. Alternately, the turntable may be installed in one's own base or in a suitable cut-out well in a cabinet. Manufacturer: Fairchild Recording Equipment Co., 10-40 45th Ave., Long Island City 1, N.Y.

IN DETAIL: The Fairchild 412-1BK is a sturdy, well-engineered, and reliable turntable. Its appearance is neat and unobtrusive. Black formica covers half of the exposed portion of the mounting board, while a contrasting brushed aluminum plate covers the rest of the unit. This dress plate may be removed to gain access to the speed adjustment as well as to drill the holes needed for mounting a tone arm. The mounting board itself is made of one-inch-thick pressed wood, and fastened to its underside is a steel plate that serves as a mounting chassis for the motor and other parts.

The 412-1BK uses a hysteresis-synchronous motor that is shock-mounted below the chassis plate. It rotates the platter through a double-belt drive system. That is to say, one belt runs between the motor and a shock-mounted speed-reduction pulley, and a second belt runs between this pulley and the platter itself. According to the manufacturer, this system provides double isolation between the platter and the motor, resulting in very low rumble, as well as—because of the two gradual step-down speed ratios—very low flutter and wow.

The platter itself is an aluminum casting, the outer rim of which is filled, during manufacture, with a heavy substance known as "densite" that brings the weight up to eight pounds. The finely machined shaft of the platter sits on a hardened steel spherical thrust bearing in its well. The diameter of the platter tapers from 12½ inches on its underside to 11¼ inches across its top surface. This allows just enough of the outer edge of a 12-inch disc to project over the platter to facilitate lifting it off after play. The turntable is covered with a rubber mat, and a strobe card is supplied for checking speed accuracy. The card is removed during actual use.

The performance of the Fairchild 412-1BK, as measured in the laboratory and evaluated in listening tests through wide-range stereo systems, was among the finest and should satisfy the needs of top quality music reproduction. To begin with, speed error after assembly was extremely small (measured as 0.4% fast) and insignificant from a musical pitch standpoint. At that, it could be reduced to virtually zero error—using the strobe

REPORT POLICY

Equipment reports are based on laboratory measurements and listening tests. Data for the reports, on equipment other than loudspeakers, is obtained by the United States Testing Company, Inc., of Hoboken, New Jersey, a completely independent organization not affiliated with the United States Government which, since 1880, has been a leader in product evaluation. Speaker reports are based on controlled listening tests. Occasionally, a supplementary agency may be invited to contribute to the testing program. The choice of equipment to be tested rests with the editors of HIGH FIDELITY.

disc supplied—by a simple turn of the screw beneath the motor board. Wow and flutter were also very low and completely undetectable by ear. Actual values measured by USTC were 0.08% and 0.04% respectively. The rumble frequency was well below the audible range, and was measured (unweighted) 35 db down from the NAB standard of 1.4 cm/sec at 100 cps, which generally agrees with the specified figure (47 db down from a 1-kc reference tone). Listening tests, at high volume levels and through wide-range speakers, revealed no audible rumble. Finally, the base supplied by Fairchild provides ample shock mounting that isolates the entire assembly from external vibrations. In a word, the Model 412-1BK is another superior turntable which, when fitted with a suitable arm and cartridge, will permit full musical response to emerge against a silent background.

Assembling the unit, from the instructions provided, took about three hours and consisted mainly of assembling mechanical parts, and very little actual wiring. The instructions were clear and quite easy to follow.

Lafayette KT-900
Stereo Control Amplifier

AT A GLANCE: The Model KT-900 by Lafayette is a transistorized stereo preamp-power amplifier sold only in kit form. It is characterized by United States Testing Company, Inc., as a compact unit that meets its important performance specifications and will provide the kind of adequate service for which it has been designed. Dimensions are: 13 3/8 inches by 3 5/16 inches (with legs) by 11 7/8 inches (with knobs). Cost is $134.50. Manufacturer: Lafayette Radio Electronics, 111 Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, L.I., N.Y.

IN DETAIL: The KT-900 is a solid-state control amplifier of handsome design. Its front panel, including all control knobs, is made of gold anodized aluminum, and the metal cover for the chassis has a simulated walnut wood appearance. This represents a "new look" for Lafayette. The controls begin with a group of four slide switches at the left of the panel. These are for the AC power, the rumble and scratch filters, and the loudness contour. To the right of this group, running across the panel, are knobs for dual concentric volume control, dual concentric bass tone control, dual concentric treble tone control, mode selector (stereo, left, right, stereo reverse), and program selector (tape head, phono, tuner, and auxiliary input). Input jacks for the sources noted on the selector switch are on the rear of the chassis, and provision is made for using either a magnetic phono cartridge or a ceramic type. Also found on the rear are tape output jacks for feeding to a tape recorder any of the program material going through the amplifier. A pair of speaker terminals for each channel is used for hooking up to 4-, 8-, or 16-ohm speakers. However, when using 4-ohm speakers, the owner must make a small circuit change within the chassis as instructed (this places a 3-ohm, 20-watt resistor in series with the speaker to prevent damage to the output transistors). Two switched AC convenience outlets also are found on the rear of the chassis.

Each channel of the KT-900 uses ten transistors. There is no output transformer, but an interstage transformer is used between the driver stage and the push-pull power output stage. The power supply consists of eight silicon diodes, and voltage regulation is provided by two additional transistors.

In USTC's performance tests, the kit-built KT-900 met its response, power output, and harmonic distortion specifications with ease. From a performance standpoint, the KT-900 falls in the category of "medium-high"-powered control amplifiers. It provided an output of 38.7 watts on both channels at its 1-kc clipping point. Total harmonic distortion at clipping was only 0.42% on the left channel, and 0.4% on the right channel. With both channels operating together, the power at clipping was—as is usual in control amplifiers—lower, although still adequate to drive most speakers. Thus, the left channel clipped at 28.8 watts with 0.4% THD, and the right channel clipped at 32.8 watts with the same low amount of distortion. The amplifier's actual rated harmonic distortion is 0.5%. At this figure, the amplifier provided better than 40 watts at 1 kc on the left channel.

The power bandwidth, referred to rated distortion, was measured between 20 cps and 5,500 cps. Below 20 cps, the 0.5% distortion level was estimated on an oscilloscope and found to extend down to 7 cps, indicating very good bass response. (This is also shown on the 50-cps square wave photo, which has—for an amplifier in this price class—only a moderate amount of "tilt" or low-frequency phase distortion.)

Above 5,500 cps, the distortion level increased, so that for the same amount of rated distortion (0.5%), the total available power would be a few decibels less, or conversely, for the same power, distortion would be more. Thus, at 35 watts output, the harmonic distortion on the left channel rose to 2% at 20 kc. At half that power, 17.5 watts, the distortion was 1.3% at 20 kc. In practical terms, this means that the higher overtones—especially when the amplifier is being driven "hard," as for instance when playing very loudly or when driving low-efficiency speakers—would not be reproduced as "purely" as all the other tones in the musical spectrum. Whether this would be readily discernible in listening is hard to predict. Distortion already present in a program source or in the speaker's high-frequency response might be aggravated somewhat as a "hardness" in the sound; on the other hand, some of it might be masked.

Frequency response for a normal average one-watt output level was found to vary somewhat with different settings of the volume control, but was essentially flat across the 20-cps to 20-kc range.

The Lafayette KT-900's intermodulation (IM) dis-

tortion was found to be higher than specified, which USTC points out is not uncommon in the transistor amplifiers it has thus far encountered. The IM values for different speaker loads varied in the manner characteristic for "class B" amplifiers, and the exact amounts are plotted on an accompanying chart.

The RIAA disc equalization and the NAB tape head equalization characteristics—shown on an accompanying chart—are, in sum, satisfactory for reproducing records and prerecorded tapes. The tone control and loudness characteristics were measured with the volume control at the "9 o'clock" position. As shown here, the curves indicate that the controls are quite effective for their intended use.

The sensitivity of the amplifier, for full output, was generally better than specified on all inputs, indicating that the amplifier will develop ample output from any program source. The input impedance of the auxiliary input was very low, and found to be 9,590 ohms as long as the volume control was not placed beyond the "2 o'clock" position. Beyond this setting the input impedance was affected and fell off to a minimum of 4,480 ohms with the control in the full clockwise position. Due to this very low input impedance, the auxiliary input should be fed from a source of low output impedance (cathode follower output). A high impedance source fed to the auxiliary input will cause a loss in bass response. The signal-to-noise ratio of the amplifier was 70 db on the auxiliary and tuner inputs, 58 db on the phono inputs, and 54 db on the tape head input, all adequate.

The square-wave response of the amplifier (a measure of its transient response) was fair and generally typical of this class of equipment. The 10-kc square-wave response had slow rise time, some overshoot, but no ringing. When checked for stability with capacitive loading, the amplifier had no tendency toward oscillation, and did remain stable.

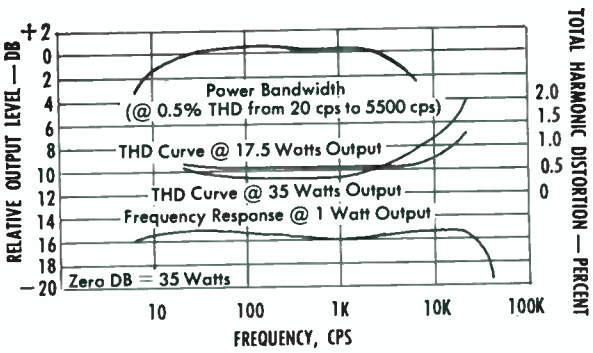
The damping factor of the KT-900 was found to be less than 1 for either 8-ohm or 4-ohm loads. Despite this low measurement and the relatively high IM measured, the KT-900—used with high quality program sources and wide-range speakers which themselves have good internal damping—did furnish acceptably clean sound. It can be characterized as a good "budget type" amplifier for use with fairly efficient speakers.

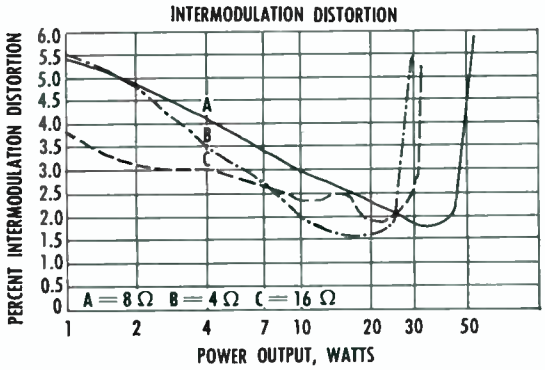
How It Went Together

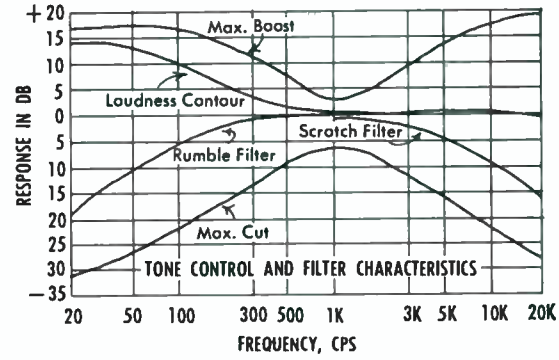
Though not as lavishly packaged as some kits, the KT-900 is carefully boxed and supplies everything—including a metal case—needed to complete this stereo amplifier. The pictorials supplied with the kit are large and clear, giving a step-by-step picture of the over-all wiring. The instruction manual itself is carefully laid out and has clear and concise directions for installing the transistors. Ample room is provided on the heavy-gauge chassis for all wiring procedures.

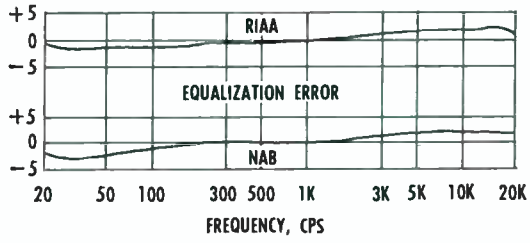
The right and left preamp and driver sections are mounted on separate printed circuit boards. The transistors are soldered directly to the board and do not use sockets. When soldering the transistors, some form of "heat sink," such as alligator clips or long-nose pliers, should be used to prevent damage to them. The power and output transistors are mounted to the underside of the chassis which itself serves as a permanent heat sink.

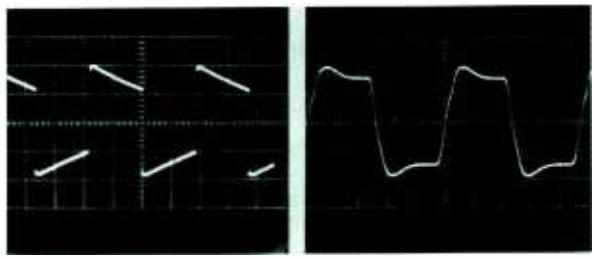
The function and stereo mode switches are laid out in such a way as to simplify the procedure of wiring the complicated circuits. The kit should go together successfully at the hands of anyone who is willing to work slowly and carefully. Our experienced kit builder completed the unit in about sixteen hours.



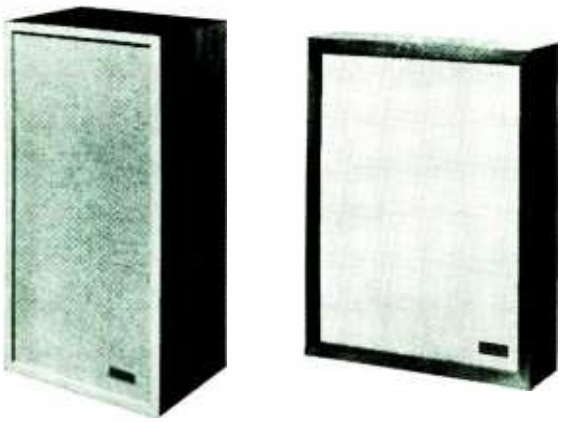








Square-wave response to 50-cps, left, and to 10-kc test signals.



KLH-10 and KLH-14 Speaker Systems

AT A GLANCE: The Models 10 and 14 by KLH are full-range speaker systems. Each employs its own method of providing high fidelity response within compact dimensions. The Model 10 is 23 5/32 inches high, 11 25/32 inches wide, and 8 3/4 inches deep. Cost, unfinished, is $86; in mahogany, $89; in satin or oiled walnut, $94. The Model 14 is 18 inches high, 14 inches wide, and 3 3/4 inches deep. Cost, in satin or oiled walnut, is $49.50. Manufacturer: KLH Research and Development Corp., 30 Cross St., Cambridge 39, Mass.

IN DETAIL: A number of recent products from KLH demonstrate, in sum, that compactness need not be synonymous with poor acoustic performance. While costlier and larger systems—such as those made by KLH itself—offer more heft in the deep bass, and possibly more of that elusive quality that has come to be known as "air" in the extreme highs, the present models are no less clean-sounding within their admittedly more modest over-all ranges. At that, the range of either the Model 10 or the Model 14 is wider than we may have dared expect from such relatively small units, and this feature is combined with fine musical balance, smoothness, and freedom from audible distortion. These qualities, noted in a previous report on the KLH-8 FM/Amplifier/Speaker System (HIGH FIDELITY, August 1961) were summed up as "rather like an excellent reproduction of a good painting—smaller and less thrilling than the original canvas, but enjoyable nonetheless in its reduced proportions."

The Model 10, to begin with, is a full-range, two-way speaker system. A ten-inch, high-compliance woofer is housed together with a small cone tweeter and a frequency-dividing network (nominal crossover is at 1,500 cps) in a cabinet which, except for a small port opening, is completely sealed. Both speakers face forward from behind a neutral-tint grille cloth. A particularly handsome feature of this cabinet is its white front frame that contrasts with the dark patina of the wood. Impedance of the Model 10 is 8 ohms, and connections are made to it by knurled-nut screw terminals that are marked for polarity.

Response of the Model 10 was found to be among the smoothest yet encountered, with no significant peaks or dips across its range. At the bass end, there was a slight rise just below 100 cps, then a gradual rolloff to below 50 cps. The bass was still clean at 45 cps, and just seemd to drop out at 40 cps. There were virtually no audible signs of distortion or frequency doubling even when the speaker was driven "very hard"—which would confirm the manufacturer's recommendation for using it with any power amplifier, including those that are rated as high as 60 watts output. Yet, the Model 10 is fairly efficient, and it will produce ample sound when driven with low-powered amplifiers. The midrange was outstandingly smooth. There was a slight rise at about 2 kc, and another at about 8 to 9 kc. The extreme high end extended to beyond audibility, with an apparent slope downward from about 14 kc. The Model 10 was moderately, but not overly, directive at its upper end, and had a smooth white noise pattern, again indicating its very low distortion. Reproducing music, the Model 10 sounded less "boxy" than some systems costing more, and did have an astonishing amount of impact in the bass for a system of its size. Its reproduction in general sounded exemplary, with remarkable transient response that not only helped define musical tones, but also—in our view—tended to mollify a tendency to emphasize record surface noise, such as "ticks," because of the rise near 9 kc. In any case, the most decisive impression of listening to the Model 10 is one of clean, eminently musical sound—a sound which would be very easy to live with.

The smaller Model 14 uses two 3-inch speakers, both covering the full range, and housed within a ducted enclosure. Also in the enclosure is a special network, used—not for frequency dividing—but for "frequency contouring." This technique, briefly, regulates the amount of signal voltage entering the speaker's voice coil according to a predetermined frequency selection. In general, more signal is used for the bass tones (the rate of effective boost is reportedly 4 db per octave). It is, in sum, a kind of "post-equalization" that shapes the signal leaving the amplifier so that the diminutive speakers employed can "make the most of it." The speakers themselves are specially designed to complement this electronic technique (which would not normally be used with "regular" speakers). They are small for good high-frequency reproduction and dispersion, but—at the same time—are capable of unusually wide excursions for good bass reproduction. Precise control of cone movement is achieved by combining the small diaphragm with an unusually powerful magnet. Ordinarily, such a magnet would increase the damping of the speaker's movements and thereby tend to restrict its bass output. The "contouring" introduced by the network compensates for this effect and permits the speaker to respond more deeply than it otherwise would. The network and the speaker, thus, are symbiotically related or integrated.

The Model 14 has two input connections. One is a pair of regular 8-ohm speaker terminals, similar to those found on other speakers. These terminals, which feed into the contouring network, are for connection to any high fidelity amplifier in the 12- to 25-watt power class. Additionally, there is a phono jack for connecting to an amplifier that has the contouring built into its own circuit, such as the one found in the KLH-11 phonograph. In this instance, the frequency compensation occurs before the signal enters the speaker system, and so the phono jack bypasses this network in the Model 14 and leads directly to the two speakers. Unless one is adding the Model 14 to an existing KLH-11 phonograph, he would normally use the regular 8-ohm terminals.

While not as full-throated as the Model 10, the response of the Model 14 was, again, exceptionally clean, smooth, and well-balanced. At the bass end, there was a gradual rolloff from just below 100 cps to about 70 cps. Doubling began just below 70 cps. The midrange and highs had no significant peaks or dips and

extended to beyond audibility, with a slope apparent at just below 15 kc. Directivity was moderate but by no means excessive or unpleasant, and most of the clean highs could be perceived well off axis of the system. The Model 14's reproduction of white noise was among the smoothest yet encountered in a speaker of its size, with virtually no trace of harshness.

As with the Model 10, the Model 14—reproducing high quality program sources—provided an honest, musical sound. Despite its relatively modest bass end, it did furnish a sense of the bigness of orchestral sound and, again, because of its fine transient response, enabled listeners to perceive full instrumental timbres, even when played in massed ensemble works. Like the Model 10, the Model 14 was a revealer of surface ticks on records, but again, its excellent transient characteristics did not prolong those noises. In general, the sound from the Model 10 had no trace of "boxiness" and seemed, in comparison with the Model 14, limited mainly by a sense of ultimate bass response; in other words, the impact and heft contributed by the deepest bass tones are suggested rather than actually projected. The Model 10 reaches somewhat deeper into the lowest part of the musical spectrum and can be driven to greater volume by high-powered amplifiers. Either system is well suited for a variety of installation needs in different size rooms, although the Model 10 is—as expected—more at home in a larger room.

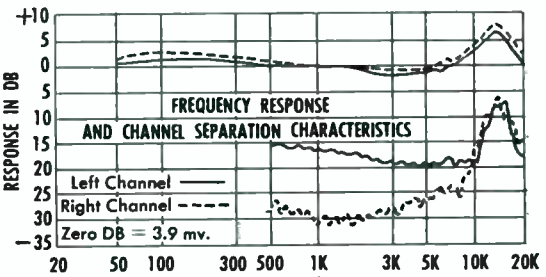
Benjamin/ELAC Model 322-D Stereo Cartridge

AT A GLANCE: The 322-D is the newest model of the ELAC stereo cartridge introduced some time ago. Tests conducted at United States Testing Company, Inc., indicate that the 322's performance has been improved over earlier versions, with noticeably smoother response and better channel separation. Price is $49.50. The cartridge is manufactured by Electroacoustic (ELAC) in Western Germany, by the same company which produces the Miracord automatic turntables. Both products are distributed in the U.S.A. by Benjamin Electronic Sound Corp., 80 Swalm St., Westbury, L.I., N.Y.

IN DETAIL: The ELAC 322—a moving magnet type of cartridge—has a rated compliance of 14 x 10^{-6} cm/dyne, which represents a considerable improvement over that of the older Model 310, which was rated at 5.1 x 10^{-6} cm/dyne. This increased compliance, combined with the 0.52-mil diamond stylus with which the pickup is fitted (and which can be replaced without tools by the owner), is intended to permit better tracing of stereo discs and, at the same time, result in decreased record wear. It should be noted that this stylus is too narrow for best playback of monophonic records, and the owner of a 322 cartridge is advised to get a Model DM-222 stylus ($12.50) for mono use. It can be inserted into the cartridge very easily. Recommended tracking force of the 322 is 1.5 to 3 grams, which would suggest its primary intended use in professional-type tone arms or in the arms of the new, improved changers. The cartridge is supplied with instructions and mounting hardware, including a special bracket which is fastened into the tone arm's shell. The cartridge then clips onto the bracket, and can be removed very easily for inspection or replacement. It will fit any standard tone arm and may be wired to mate with either a three- or four-wire pickup lead system, whichever is found in the tone arm.

USTC's tests were run with a 2.25-gram tracking force, and with the cartridge terminated in the standard 47K-ohm load on each channel. Tracking ability was very good at the 2.25-gram force and, in fact, remained fair down to a force as low as 0.8-gram. Needle talk and hum sensitivity were both very low.

The response on each channel was measured from 50 cps to 20 kc. Except for the peak at 13 kc, the over-all response was quite smooth and much more uniform than that measured in older ELAC pickups. Distortion was found to be low across most of the pickup's range, and the effect—if any—of the 13-kc peak (which showed up on a 1-kc square wave as "ringing") could not be discerned in listening tests using ordinary stereo discs. The output signal level measured (left channel, at 1 kc with a 5 cm/sec peak recorded velocity) was 3.9 millivolts which is adequate to drive any preamp or combination amplifier available. Channel separation was, in general, superior to that found in former ELAC cartridges: the left channel remained above 14 db out to 20 kc, and the right channel remained better than 13 db out to 20 kc, both figures being better than specified and more than adequate for reproducing modern stereo discs. Over-all balance between both channels was very good. In listening tests, the new ELAC demonstrated a clean, well-balanced response throughout the musical range, with full bass, clear midrange, and some welcome "air" about the extreme highs.



REPORTS IN PROGRESS

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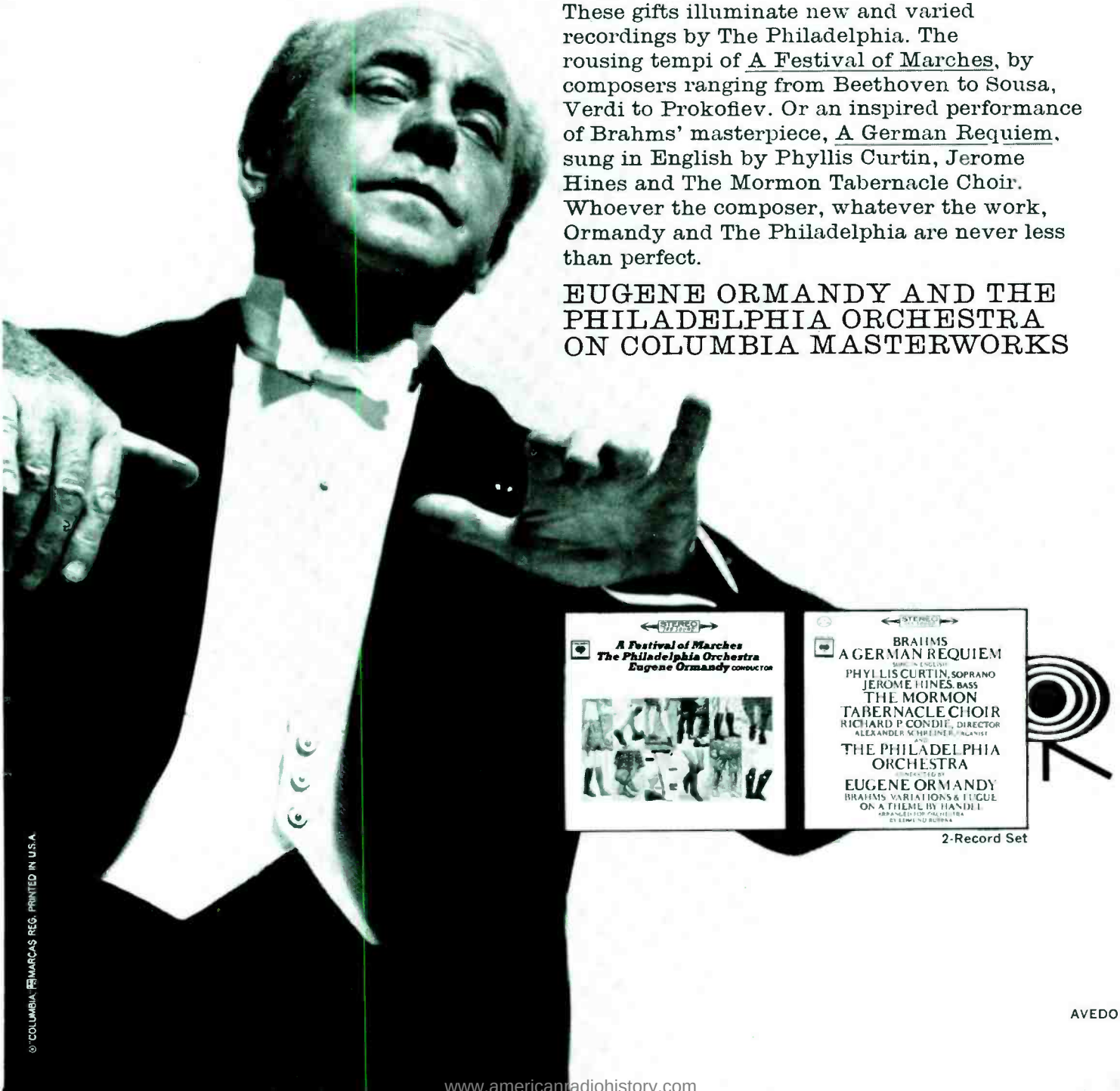

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CIRCLE 12 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

Music Makers

by ROLAND GELATT

PARMA, the charming capital of Verdi's native duchy, merits the attention of any traveler wandering off the beaten path in Italy—not only for its food (the justly celebrated Parmesan ham and cheese), its architecture, its unsurpassed collection of paintings by Correggio (that most Mozartean of Renaissance masters), and its ambience of slightly decayed elegance, but also for its abundant musical associations. Parma has been spawning music and musicians for at least four hundred years. Arturo Toscanini was born there and attended its famed conservatory (so did Ildebrando Pizzetti and Renata Tebaldi, among many others), and the audience that fills its beautiful opera house, the Teatro Regio, is reputed to be the most exigent and knowledgeable in all Italy. Soon Parma will have even stronger claims to musical attention—for the town is destined to become for Verdi what Salzburg is for Mozart and Bayreuth for Wagner: a festival site for music lovers and a center for scholars. At least such are the hopes and plans of Mario Medici, the devoted and farseeing director of Parma's Institute of Verdi Studies (and a tireless, ever helpful host during the Parmesan lap of our tour of Verdi's Italy).

At the Institute's inception four years ago, Mario Medici laid down these objectives: "to systematically study the life and works of Giuseppe Verdi; to propagate these studies through publications, as well as through opera and concert performances; to establish and transmit the traditions of Verdian style; to collect, catalogue, and preserve everything concerning Verdi, his work and his times; to restore and conserve those places identified with his name." Two further projects were also defined, even though their realization appeared—and remains—far from fulfillment. "The first would render available to the Institute (and, in turn, to all scholars) facsimiles of Verdi's musical and nonmusical autographs. The second would see the publication of a critical edition of Verdi's complete works."

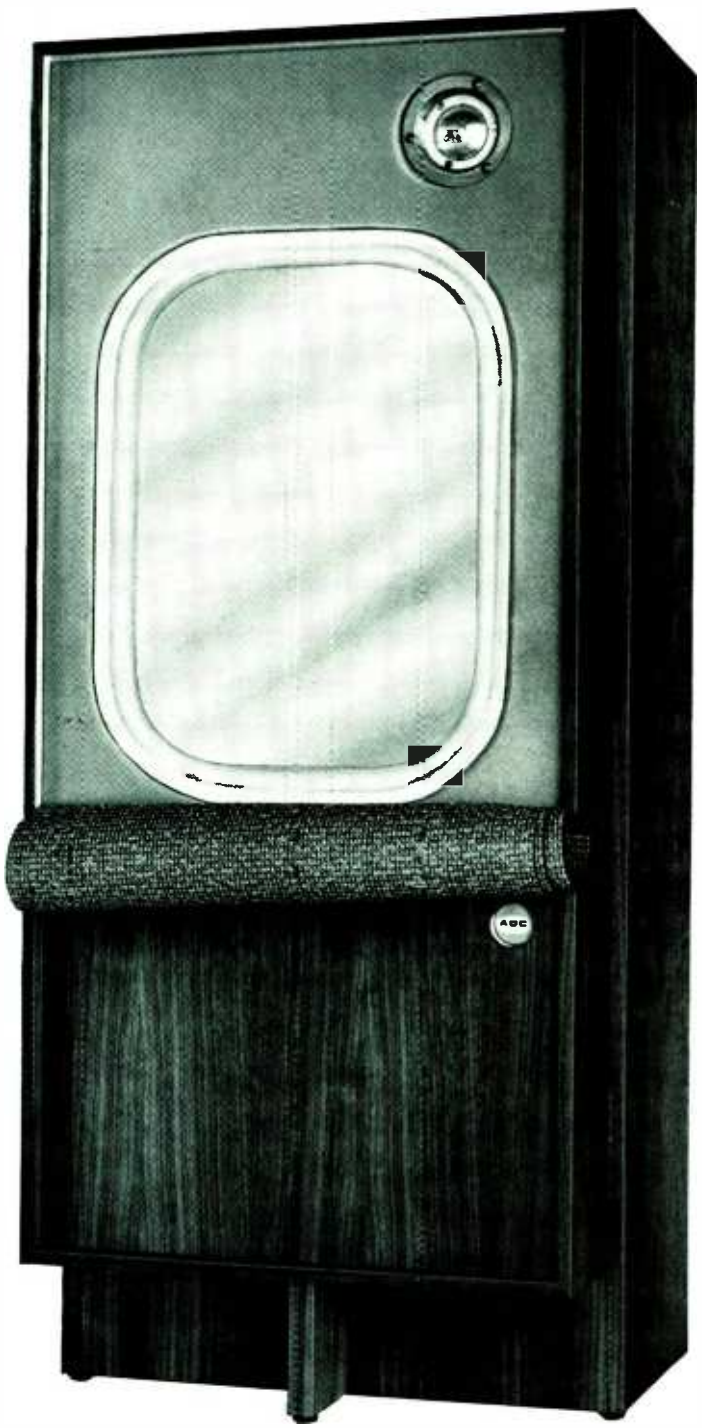
The Institute's first major publication appeared in 1960—a three-volume *Bulletin* devoted principally to *Un Ballo in maschera* and that period of Verdi's life (roughly from 1857 to 1860) relative to the opera's gestation and production. This was a dazzlingly copious demonstration of what could be accomplished in the way of Verdian exegesis and interpretation: more than 1,800 pages crammed with an enticing variety of articles (each published in Italian, English, and German). Mario Medici, a onetime music critic in Bologna and cofounder of the brilliant (and, alas, short-lived) monthly magazine *Melodramma*, gave persuasive evidence in the 1960 *Bulletin* of his critical acumen and editorial skill.

The conception and publication of these three volumes—indeed, the launching of the Institute itself—was largely an act of faith on Maestro Medici's part. In the intervening years that act of faith has begun to engender some heartening consequences. This year the Institute has been granted a "juridical personality"—which means that it is now entitled to a State grant (of roughly $50,000 a year) for the administration of its programs. With this liberal subvention the Institute can now resume publication of its *Bulletin*. Three volumes dedicated to the study of *La Forza del destino* will appear this fall (the advance table of contents looks fascinating), and three more on *Rigoletto* will come out next year. Other special publications—for instance, a chronological index of the complete Verdi correspondence—are also in progress. Very shortly the Institute's headquarters will be transferred from present temporary offices in the Conservatory to one of the largest palazzos in Parma, and there it will be possible to organize the library, the microfilm archive, and the record and tape collection. The Institute intends to amass not only as complete a collection as possible of published Verdi recordings but also of unpublished material—private tapes of broadcast performances, rehearsals by Toscanini and other celebrated Verdi interpreters, etc.

Mario Medici, in the Teatro Farnese.

In time, Maestro Medici would like to see Parma become a Verdi festival town on the order of Salzburg and Bayreuth. As an earnest of future intentions, the Institute is sponsoring a performance on September 26 of Verdi's rarely heard *Gerusalemme*, conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni and directed by Jean Vilar. This will be given in the Teatro Regio, old as opera houses go (it was opened in 1829) but a mere youngster compared to Parma's Teatro Farnese, which—dating from the early seventeenth century—remains the earliest extant theatre designed for mobile scenery. It is here that Mario Medici hopes eventually to stage the festival performances.

The Teatro Farnese, a vast auditorium accommodating at least four thousand spectators, was inaugurated in 1628 with an extravagant spectacle—part opera, part ballet—entitled *Mercurio e Marte*, for which Monteverdi (summoned to Parma for the occasion) contributed the music. It was used fitfully thereafter until 1732, but the theatre proved too monumental for ordinary entertainments, and its baroque lines went counter to the taste of *Continued on page 168*



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Records in Review

by Harris Goldsmith

With the Philadelphians in 1941—Toscanini's Schubert Ninth

THE RECENT REVIVAL of interest in the work of Toscanini is a heartening thing to witness, and one can take particular pleasure in observing that it seems in large part due to the fact that the younger generation of music lovers—who have known his artistry solely from recordings currently listed in the Schwann catalogue—are now discovering, by way of the "tape underground" and sundry FM broadcasts, a greatness far more diverse and communicative than they had ever suspected.

As a result of the recirculation of the Maestro's performances, many of the fallacious notions surrounding him are rapidly disappearing. Others are at least being revised—including, happily, the myth of the relentless machine, the ruthlessly hard-driving automaton. In fact, in his younger days Toscanini was a true romantic, an interpreter who often freely rode the crest of a surging line and was not loath to letting a melody sing with luxuriant indulgence. His deleted 1929 and 1936 recordings with the New York Philharmonic give ample evidence of that, evidence supplemented by other (unreleased) performances from that era. It is true that in later years the conductor was apt to subordinate freedom to discipline and that his style became more economical—perhaps, in a sense, less *creative*—but to deny the existence of emotion in his music is simply not to hear Toscanini's art.

For years the public has been hearing about the series of performances Toscanini recorded with the Philadelphia Orchestra, but has not been allowed to listen to them. As might be expected, the truth about these discs has been considerably blurred. For one thing (and I speak as one who has heard nearly the entire series—which includes Debussy's *La Mer* and *Ibéria*, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, Respighi's *Feste Romane*, Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, Berlioz's *Queen Mab*, and Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, in addition to the Schubert under review), not all of the performances are as consummate as legend would suggest. On the other hand, the over-all sound quality is really far better than tales of mishaps in the electroplating process would lead one to fear. Indeed, for 1941–42 these reproductions are, without exception, quite remarkably fine. In my opinion the surface noise on even the worst of them is hardly severe enough to preclude their release.

The Schubert Symphony, however, seems to me the best thing in the Philadelphia series, and its release is nothing less than a major event in phonographic history. This vast piece of music always played a central role in the Maestro's career (in fact, it appeared on his very first orchestral concert, in Turin in 1896). Until now, record collectors have had two Toscanini versions of the work available to them. Both are with the NBC Symphony, one made in February 1947 and one in February 1953, immediately after his final two concert performances of the score. The 1953 version is a fine performance, well recorded, and ranks as an indispensable documentation of his work. The 1947 edition, tensely directed and tightly recorded, can be eliminated from this discussion. More instructive, I believe, is a scrutiny of the 1941 Philadelphia reading now at hand and the 1953 NBC disc, together with an air-check of a 1936 New York Philharmonic concert which I am privileged to have available for reference. These three performances not only give one the opportunity of comparing how three highly individual and equally distinguished ensembles responded to Toscanini's direction, but they are sufficiently separated in time to provide reasonably reliable evidence with which to document the conductor's changing attitude towards the music.

The 1936 performance is one in which there is great elasticity of tempo. Details of phrasing are often accompanied by slight changes of speed, slowing, as a rule, on *pianos*, accelerating on *fortissi-*

mo. The first movement introduction, for example, gathers immense impetus towards its conclusion and broadens greatly at meas. 77. The speed of the lyrical second subject, characteristically, is slightly slower than that of the stormy first, and there is a violent *accelerando* at meas. 568 in order to provide headlong momentum for the *Più moto* coda beginning at meas. 570. All of these details are consistent with what we know from Toscanini's other recorded performances of this era. In the 1953 version, these features are wholly absent: the tempo is slower and more static, the transitions accomplished with far less elaboration. One can argue as to whether the earlier or later reading is more effective, but certainly the earlier one contains more surprises.

The Philadelphia performance on the whole adheres more closely to the 1936 rendition. The tempo adjustments for the first movement introduction, second subject, and coda are present here too. Nevertheless, there is, already in 1941, less tendency to change speeds for the purpose of delineating orchestral tone color. One striking feature, strangely, is confined to the Philadelphia version only. This is the treatment of the end of the Finale. The scanning of phrases in the Philadelphia performance gathers a breath-taking force which is arrested momentarily by a huge holding back on the groups of unison *sforzando* Cs (meas. 1058 *et seq.*) only to be unleashed again on the answering fanfares. The entire fourth movement, in fact, differs from the 1936 and 1953 performances which are exceedingly, and rather surprisingly, similar in their faster, bouncing locomotion.

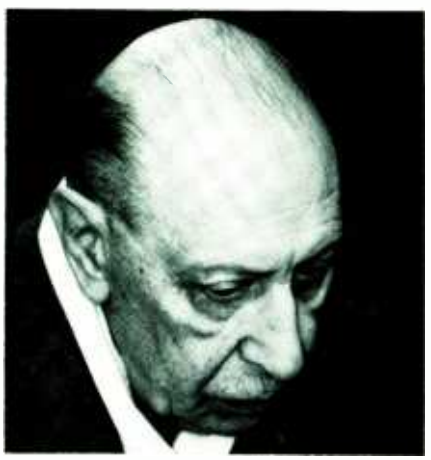
In terms of sonority, the NBC Orchestra produces sounds of the utmost precision and refinement, although the various instrumental choirs seldom blend with the easy melodiousness of the Philharmonic's or Philadelphia's. Everything remains razor-sharp, and just a mite impersonal. (The high clarity of the reproduction tends to throw the brilliant characteristics of the orchestra into even sharper relief.) The Philadelphia ensemble is smoother, more subtle, and less rugged than the Philharmonic's, but the wide color of its tonal palette and the intertwining of its various instrumental sections is much more akin to that orchestra's than to the mirrorlike gloss of the NBC's forces. A prime illustration of the typical quality of each aggregation is provided by the transitional passage, with the French horn against the strings, starting at meas. 145 in the slow movement. In the NBC version, hornist Arthur Berv plays with a "white," almost muted restraint, and the prevailing mood is one of detachment, even aloofness. The most superficial of comparisons will reveal the greater warmth and golden tonal glow of Bruno Jaenicke's playing in the 1936 Philharmonic performance. Mason Jones, the Philadelphia soloist, is no less warm than Mr. Jaenicke, but far more curvaceous in his treatment of the passage, and in the Philadelphia performance the strings make more of the throbbing counterdialogue to the horn's insistent statement. The Philadelphia execution gives the effect of a silvery moon shining over a serene lake. It is a beautiful effect, and one which Furtwängler also evoked. But while the German conductor consistently sacrificed cohesion for beauties of this sort, in the Toscanini-Philadelphia recording such incidental niceties are incorporated into a total design of unfailing plasticity and infallible "rightness." Toscanini's 1936 reading is sometimes a shade too loose, that of 1953 too studied; the 1941 performance strikes the perfect mean. I think, indeed, that it is the finest statement of this music ever to reach records.

Much interest, of course, revolves around the reprocessed sound. As I mentioned above, the Philadelphia series as a whole is much better than we had reason to anticipate. The present disc bears comparison nobly with more modern recordings of the Symphony. There is an occasional trace of "grit" or background noise, but for the most part the sonics are vivid and well balanced. Indeed, I can well understand why many people will actually prefer it to the more self-consciously brassy impact of the 1953 reproduction: the music is more atmospheric, more Schubertean.

I cannot praise this masterpiece of interpretation too highly. If this release, elegantly packaged in the Soria series, has the reception it so obviously deserves, perhaps in time we will also get the complete Berlioz *Romeo and Juliet*, the sublime Verdi Requiem and Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* from 1940 (with soloists Milanov, Castagna, Bjoerling, Moscona, and Kipnis), the eloquent New York Philharmonic Beethoven Fifth (1933, but very decently reproduced), the Sibelius Second and Fourth Symphonies, and a representative Brahms Third. In the meantime (before greed overtakes me completely!), a grateful thanks to RCA Victor and Walter Toscanini for a job superlatively well done.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 9, in C ("The Great")*

Philadelphia Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini, cond.
• RCA VICTOR LD 2663. LP. $5.98.



An unmistakable accent . . .

by Eric Salzman

A New *Oedipus Rex* Brings More of Stravinsky's Stravinsky

IT IS REALLY ASTONISHING to realize how much of Stravinsky's music comes out of the theatre or is closely related to theatrical-dramatic experience. There are, of course, the ballets—a dozen or so from *Firebird* to *Agon*. There are two full-fledged operas, *The Nightingale* and *The Rake's Progress*, and two chamber operas, *Mavra* and *Renard*. Closely related to the last-named are the special dramatic works that mingle song, speech, mime, and dance—*L'Histoire du Soldat*, *Les Noces*, *Perséphone*, *The Flood*. To this typically Stravinskyan kind of theatre *Oedipus Rex*, described as an "opera-oratorio," is closely related, although its static, monumental character also links it up with another group of works of a semidramatic character, the big religious vocal pieces—*Symphony of Psalms*, the Mass, *Canticum Sacrum*, *Threni*, and, in a sense, the new *Abraham and Isaac*.

Oedipus was written in 1926 and 1927 to a text of Jean Cocteau "after Sophocles." The idea is that of a mythic-ritual drama with the dramatic and theatrical content utterly conventionalized

and reduced to a bare narrative structure. Everything is translated into Latin except the words of the narrator, a kind of pitchman's spiel recounting the wonderful and tragic events in the vernacular. The simplest possible diction is everywhere employed, and this laconic declamation is organized into blocked-out set speeches and choruses. The narrator stands outside of the scene and is dressed in evening clothes. The characters of the drama, although they should be costumed and masked, have neither individuality nor power to act. They are not even symbolic in the conventional sense but are, rather, merely abstracted and particular manifestations of a human condition. There is no motion and no action because whatever transpires is preordained; all that is necessary is to reveal it.

Stravinsky responds perfectly to the implications of all this. If there is no action on the stage, then the music takes up the functions of rhetorical gesture. Almost every gesture—like the myth itself—is a familiar one; we recognize the figures of musical speech without difficulty. This is assertive and prideful music (why not? Stravinsky knows what *hubris* means) and it constantly suggests search and exploration without ever losing its sense of fatality. Certainly these are characteristics of musical thought consonant with the Oedipus legend.

Because the musical ideas themselves derive from preëxisting gestures, Stravinsky need not become involved at all in the problem of getting music to "express" something specific. The very conventionality of the figures (Creon's trombone triad tune, the Verdiana in Jocasta's aria and the following duet with Oedipus, the grand opera *Gloria* music and so forth) suggests a quality of detachment and of generalized statement; but these materials and inventions also gain a new kind of expressivity through their context. Context (what Stravinsky himself calls "manner") is everything, and it is this context, this musical environment, that gives the familiar gestures their new and powerful meaning. When this is understood, one suddenly realizes that the often noted grandeur and marble monumentality are really the least of it; they also are conventionalized gestures—or rather the sum of known and borrowed gestures. What is important and new and striking and powerful is the controlled technique of reinterpreting conventional gestures in new and invented ways, so that even the most trivial material becomes part of a true, "sublime," and terrifying inevitability.

A performance of *Oedipus* should reinforce this conception; in a sense, the players and singers must also put on musical masks. While the principals here, George Shirley and Shirley Verrett, both have voices that are almost too warm, rich, and personal for the abstractions they must represent, certainly their artistic realizations are first-rate, and the chorus and orchestra are skilled and responsive. Most important, however, is the fact that this is the composer's own realization of the work.

The older Stravinsky recording of *Oedipus*, long since vanished, offered Cocteau himself reading the original French narration, but it is otherwise superseded by this new version. The major competition to the present disc is the recent Angel performance from England with Colin Davis conducting a capable group of performing forces. In general, the orchestral and choral work there is smoother and more polished than on the recording at hand, and the Angel sound is richer and warmer. I myself feel that Columbia's drier, closer sound is perhaps more appropriate to the music; and while many listeners will be impressed by Ralph Richardson's narrating for Angel, John Westbrook's stiff, pompous reading seems to me just exactly to the point. And, of course, Stravinsky's own reading of his music has a special intensity and accent which is unmistakable; one would opt for it even without knowing the conductor's name.

STRAVINSKY: *Oedipus Rex*

John Westbrook, narrator; Shirley Verrett (ms), Jocasta; George Shirley (t), Oedipus; Loren Driscoll (t), Shepherd; Donald Gramm (b), Creon; John Reardon (b), Messenger; Chester Watson (bs), Tiresias; Chorus and Orchestra of the Opera Society of Washington, Igor Stravinsky, cond.

• COLUMBIA ML 5872. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6472. SD. $5.98.

"The Badmen"—Fable Bows to Fact

by O. B. Brummell

THE MYTH of the American West—the brawling nineteenth-century frontier—seems to have caught the imagination of the entire world. In Paris, every Sunday in good weather, a group of sober Frenchmen don cowboy garb, mount the Gallic equivalent of broncos, and canter solemnly through the Bois de Boulogne. In Budapest, chic young Communists favor tight, low-slung blue jeans. Any cobbler in Hong Kong can knock out a pair of Texas boots. And week after week, the old heroes stride tall and true across television screens. What matter that the nocturnal activities of Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp in Dodge City won them the title of "the fighting pimps," that Wild Bill Hickok had a penchant for shooting unarmed men in the back, that Calamity Jane was a sordid whore? The fables have routed the facts.

Yet truth occasionally fights a rear-guard action, and here in Columbia Records Legacy Collection is mounted a brilliant—indeed an awesome—counter-attack on the gunmen and their silly legends. In a superb marriage of song and story, pictures and text, this two-record album provides a haunting glimpse of the American past. This is history unfolded in the most graphic form.

On one disc, a battery of top-drawer folk singers, backed by two guitarists, imparts sparkling life to the ballads spawned by stories of Billy the Kid, Sam Bass, Cole Younger, et al. The songs are vital and often moving. They are also a sobering lesson in the evolution of folklore, for few of them relate in any way to reality. The murderous, cold-hearted Confederate guerrilla Quantrell, for example, is enshrined as a dashing Robin Hood—even though his song memorializes his slaughter of almost two hundred hapless citizens of Lawrence, Kansas. Only in *Gregorio Cortez*, exquisitely sung in Spanish and English by Jacques Menahem and Carolyn Hester, does something of the true character of the hero emerge. After justifiably gunning down a brace of Texas sheriffs in 1901, Gregorio Cortez Lira

managed to elude a massive manhunt for ten days and almost six hundred miles. The border *corrido,* faintly mocking, recalls the dignity and ingenuity of one Mexican who, if he didn't win, at least broke even. Also bearing some relation to the facts is Woody Guthrie's slyly cynical *Belle Starr,* in which the amorous proclivities of that gun-slinging harridan are catalogued in true, if incomplete, detail. Incidentally, Belle is the reputed author of *My Love Is a Rider,* perhaps the most delightfully lyrical ballad in the present collection.

The second record, a documentary of enormous significance, contains four interviews. Sophie Poe, whose late husband Sheriff John Poe was with Pat Garrett when he killed Billy the Kid in 1881, provides every detail of the grisly episode—even to describing the candles that sorrowing Mexicans placed around the outlaw's laid-out body. Billy, it seems—and Mrs. Poe inadvertently says the only good word I have ever heard uttered on behalf of that vicious adenoidal youth—was in the habit of sharing with Mexicans the loot he reaped from "white people."

Author Homer Croy, who grew up in the shadow of the James farm in Maryville, Missouri, and knew the family well, not only reminisces about America's most famous outlaw, Jesse James, but offers an impassioned rationale for Jesse's sins. (They were, by the way, legion.) Zoe Tilghman, widow of Dodge City Marshal Bill Tilghman, gives some fascinating, first-hand insights into the life of an honest, fearless lawman in the West's wildest town.

The *pièce de résistance,* however, is a long narration by George Bolds—taped in 1953 when he was a very lucid, witty eighty-nine—of his youth in Dodge City with Masterson, Earp, and Tilghman. Bolds eventually fired a sixgun in anger more than once and also caught a generous dose of lead, but his recollections of his first "green as a gourd" days preserve the wonder of a perceptive boy face to face with his heroes. His anecdotes are amusing, incisive, and pointed. Two of the best describe how clever outlaws twice conned the young Bolds out of his gun. Every lusty word re-creates that lost era.

A handsome, outsize book accompanies the album. Authoritative, zestful essays, pictures of the badmen, their press clippings, and eyewitness accounts of their deeds place the old desperadoes in true perspective. On every count, this is an instructive, entertaining set. A brilliant exploitation of the enormous documentary potential of the phonograph, it can be called, and I do not use the term lightly, an unqualified triumph of the recording art.

"THE BADMEN"

Carolyn Hester, Ed McCurdy, Pete Seeger, Jack Elliott, Harry Jackson, Jacques Menahem, singers; Charlie Byrd, Sandy Bull, guitars; various speakers.
• COLUMBIA L2L 1011. Two LP. $10.00.
• • COLUMBIA L2S 1202. Two SD. $11.00.

CLASSICAL

BACH: *Cantata No. 78, Jesu, der du meine Seele; Magnificat in D, S. 243*

Ursula Buckel, soprano, John van Kesteren, tenor, Kieth Engen, bass, Soloists Ensemble of the Bach Festival Ansbach, (in the Cantata); Maria Stader, soprano, Ernst Häfliger, tenor, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone, Munich Bach Orchestra (in the Magnificat); Hertha Töpper, contralto, Munich Bach Choir, Karl Richter, cond. (in both).
• ARCHIVE ARC 3197. LP. $5.98.
• • ARCHIVE ARC 73197. SD. $6.98.

A magnificent coupling. The Cantata has a highly chromatic and expressive opening chorus and a delightful duet among its plums. The two ladies do the duet nicely—Miss Töpper, indeed, is steadier here than I have ever heard her. Van Kesteren slips into falsetto for some of the high notes in his recitative but avoids this in his aria; and Engen gets considerable feeling into his accompanied recitative and aria. In the quality of the sound as well as in the general quality of the performance, this version of the Cantata is, I think, superior to the only other available edition, on Vanguard.

The great Magnificat is given a performance that is very fine in some respects. Miss Töpper is at the top of her form here too, singing the long phrases of "*Esurientes*" without a break. Miss Stader and Fischer-Dieskau turn in the first-class work they have led us to expect of them, and Richter has added one or two telling touches, like the bassoon in the continuo of "*Esurientes.*" But in other respects the performance is less impressive. The chorus aspirates its vowels in lively passages, a German trait that Quantz complained about more than two centuries ago, and so does the otherwise excellent Häfliger in "*Deposuit.*" This aria is neither as slashing nor as dramatic as in some other recordings. Finally, the first trumpet, well played, is permitted at times to drown out most of the other instruments. The Bernstein recording on Columbia is in general a more satisfactory performance. N.B.

Bernstein: a Beethoven Fifth, with all the repeats and much else besides.

BACH: *Sonatas: for Flute and Harpsichord, S. 1020, 1030-32; for Flute and Continuo: S. 1033-35; for Unaccompanied Flute, S. 1013*

Jean-Pierre Rampal, flute; Robert Veyron-Lacroix, harpsichord; Jean Huchot, cello.
• EPIC SC 6045. Two LP. $9.98.
• • EPIC BSC 145. Two SD. $11.98.

Some years ago London Records brought out a set of these works recorded by the same artists for Ducretet-Thomson. It was an excellent set, marred only by a bit of imbalance here and there. The present recording is free from any such defect. Rampal plays with his customary lovely tone, he seems never to have to breathe, and he negotiates the trickiest passages with no perceptible effort. Veyron-Lacroix is a worthy partner. If he is responsible for the continuo realizations in S. 1033 through 1035, he should also be credited with considerable imagination and good taste. Only in the Presto and Allegro of the C major Sonata, S. 1033, did the harpsichord give me the impression of being a little *too* busy. Together the two artists make a fine team, thoroughly at home in the Bach style. Except for a sudden slowing up and softening for no perceptible reason twice in the Andante of S. 1030 and a big retard at the end of the Siciliano of S. 1031, the performances seem to me entirely convincing. From the standpoint of performance this set seems to me inferior only to the Wummer-Valenti recording. N.B.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet for Piano and Strings, No. 4, in E flat, Op. 16*—See Schubert: *Quintet for Piano and Strings, in A, Op. 114 ("Trout").*

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 5, in C minor, Op. 67*

New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, cond.
• COLUMBIA ML 5868. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6468. SD. $5.98.

On November 14, 1954, Leonard Bernstein first gave us his telecast on Beethoven's alternate sketches for the first movement of the Fifth Symphony. It remains one of his best programs. Somewhat edited to accord with the lack of the visual element, the Bernstein talk became a partner for the Bruno Walter-New York Philharmonic recording of the score on Columbia CL 918. Now it appears as a seven-inch LP accompanying a Bernstein reading of the Fifth, "one of the rare complete performances [in which] all repeats are observed."

The result is a very praiseworthy package. Not even Walter observed all those repeats when he made the stereo version he regarded as the definitive documentation of his performance of the work. And quite apart from double bars, there has been a surprising lack of really satisfactory editions of this score from the start of the stereo era. In my opinion at least, the Beethoven Fifth wants some breadth of phrase, a touch of rhetoric, and a sense of majesty. Bernstein takes this approach, and I find the results wonderfully convincing. Unlike many German conductors who strive for these effects, Bernstein never bogs down. The line is always firm, the meter clear, and the thrust of

Continued on page 132

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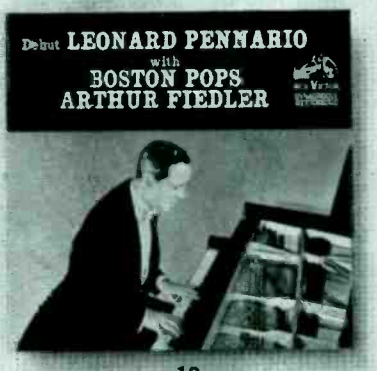

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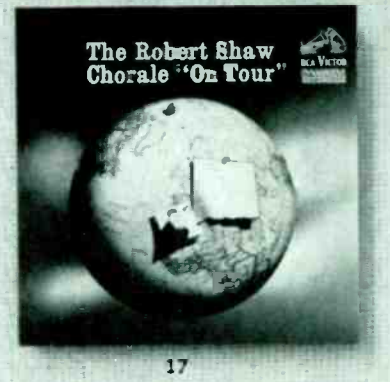

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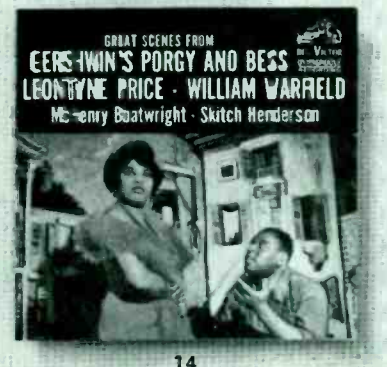

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Continued from page 128

the phrase evident. (There are some fresh scansions of meter too, especially in the opening bars of the Scherzo; they invite study.) I would have liked the slow movement a little slower, but not at the cost of any soggy passages, and perhaps Bernstein's course is the wiser one. The finale (where the often neglected repeat is really telling) carries a particularly strong sense of resolution.

The recording makes use of fairly long reverberation time, but it is handled with taste and does not muddy the ensemble to any great degree. Mono and stereo versions are equally good in their respective media. In short, this is as attractive a Beethoven Fifth as you can find today. R.C.M.

BRAHMS: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, in D, Op. 77*

Zino Francescatti, violin; New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, cond.
• COLUMBIA ML 5871. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6471. SD. $5.98.

This performance of the Brahms Violin Concerto has temperament, virtuosity, and beautiful tone, but it is not a reading I would care to own. Francescatti, alas, seems to have become enamored of his fiddling; and while that is understandable—his execution is truly elegant—there are times when Brahms asks that the soloist play roughly, indeed, unviolinistically. This, Francescatti (along with Heifetz, Milstein, Kogan, Szeryng, Stern, and any number of virtuosos) is often unwilling to do. Take, for example, those awkwardly divided phrases which begin at meas. 343 in the first movement development: played as Brahms instructed, these sequences create a mounting sense of excitement leading up to the recapitulation section. To be sure, it is a strain on the performer to sustain these phrases which scan intervals larger than an octave. Furthermore, the difficulty is increased because the phrases run counter to the bar line. Faithful execution of what Brahms wrote here would probably result in strident tone—but the content of the music would soar.

Szigeti is the only artist to have recorded the Concerto who seems adventurous enough (or sufficiently self-effacing) to take the risk. Naturally, his performance sounds rough: he is bowing and fingering against the violinistic grain. What the unwary listener does not realize is that suaver-sounding soloists are taking the easy way out (by shifting the division of these phrases so that they fall effortlessly *on* the bar line).

There are, of course, many places in the music where the performer can sound "beautiful" and still be correct. Francescatti's version is undeniably a good one, and can be confidently recommended to lovers of luscious fiddling (as can the editions by Szeryng, Milstein, and Heifetz, not to mention the deleted discs by Kogan/Kondrashin and Grumiaux). If, however, you want the largest measure of Brahmsian fire, Szigeti's version is the clear choice, distantly followed by the roughhewn but strong-minded Oistrakh/Klemperer collaboration.

Bernstein leads with a good deal of vitality and a firm sense of rhythm. The Philharmonic's strings, however, sound sloppy and opaque. Columbia's reproduction is bright and well balanced. H.G.

BRAHMS: *Liebeslieder Waltzer, Op. 52*
†Schumann: *Spanische Liebes-Lieder, Op. 138*

Veronica Tyler, soprano, Regina Sarfaty, mezzo, Charles Bressler, tenor, John Boyden, baritone (in the Brahms); Lois Marshall, soprano, Regina Sarfaty, mezzo, Léopold Simoneau, tenor, William Warfield, baritone (in the Schumann); Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, pianos.
• COLUMBIA ML 5861. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6461. SD. $5.98.

With one excellent version of the Brahms (with vocalists Benita Valente, Marlena Kleinman, Wayne Conner, Martial Singher and pianists Rudolf Serkin and Leon Fleisher) already to its credit, Columbia has gone and issued another which is even better. Indeed, scarcely anything in the present performance—ideally lively, expressively passionate and beautifully organized vocally—could be improved upon. The close-to recorded sound is a decided asset too: the four vocalists emerge with lucid clarity (the stereo places two of the singers in one channel, the other two on the opposite side, thereby creating some choice antiphonal effects) and the muddiness which slightly blemished the earlier Columbia disc (made under more improvised conditions at Serkin's music settlement in Marlboro, Vermont) is quite lacking. I would also place the present edition above a very good one by a group of British singers and Vronsky and Babin on the Capitol label. The present team seems just a shade more forthright and emotionally involved.

The Schumann cycle, which receives its initial recorded performance on the overside of this disc, is a lovely work, comparable to the Brahms in every way. Although both composers use individual singers for some of the songs, I feel one could say that Schumann's narrative is the more intimate and personal, depending, as it does, on individual voices *primarily*. As in the Brahms, the performance is all that one could want, and the recorded sound here too is superbly realistic. H.G.

BRAHMS: *Quintet for Piano and Strings, in F minor, Op. 34*

Leon Fleisher, piano; Juilliard String Quartet.
• EPIC LC 3865. LP. $4.98.
• • EPIC BC 1265. SD. $5.98.

This is definitely "jet age" music making. Fleisher and the Juilliard ensemble are of that new breed of players who feel that expansiveness and sentiment should be minimized, and their reading here is about as direct and tightly knit as possible. All of the complex rhythmic patterns emerge with awesome technical precision and razor-sharp clarity; indeed, even the slow movement and the *poco sostenuto* introduction to the finale are kept moving ahead with hairspring tautness. If you require emotional warmth in your Brahms, you will undoubtedly find the present performance rather severe, if not downright unsympathetic. Taken on its own terms, however, it is superbly judged, and magnificently integrated as ensemble playing.

Fleisher: Brahms for the jet age.

There are advantages as well as liabilities with an approach such as this. For one thing, the formal structure of the music is apt to emerge with greater clarity and simplicity than it would in a more leisurely rendition. Also, a kinetic reading tends to eliminate the occasional flabbiness of Brahms's writing. Both things happen in the present version: rubato is used sparingly—and usually only at important structural joints in the music—while the ensemble tone, albeit a trifle slick and lacking in nuance, is pruned to classical proportions. Solo bits, though marvelously well played, are always subordinated to the over-all ensemble outlook. There is absolutely no lingering over beautiful melodies here. Significant motifs are always brought to the foreground so that their structural importance can be readily discerned.

Everything considered, this seems to me the most satisfactory LP recording of the Quintet. Richter and the Borodin Quartet (Artia-MK) project a higher emotional temperature, but at the expense of cumulative impact. The aging Curzon-Budapest performance (Columbia) is a fine reading, without any particular interpretative Achilles' heel, but it lacks the verve and dynamism of the Fleisher-Juilliard combination. Eva Barnathova (DGG) fails to match the warmth and flow of the Janáček Quartet's playing, and at any rate that disc is temporarily out of the catalogue. Demus-Vienna Konzerthaus (Westminster—out-of-print but announced for reissue as this goes to press) is an admirably played version but stolid and unadventurous. To the other merits of the new Epic disc can be added brilliantly lifelike reproduction. H.G.

CHANLER: *The Pot of Fat*

Dixie Stewart, soprano; Arthur Burrows, baritone; Bruce Abel, baritone; CRI Chamber Orchestra, Jorge Mester, cond.
• COMPOSERS RECORDINGS CRI 162. LP. $5.95.

Cat marries mouse. Mouse finds pot of fat and stashes it away against hard times. Cat keeps going to mysterious christening parties for new-born Manx and Persian relatives. Comes winter. Mouse finds pot of fat *kaput*. Cat has final meal: squee, squee!

Such is the outline of Theodore Chanler's chamber opera, to a text by his sister, Hester Pickman, after a Grimm fairy tale. It may seem silly, but it isn't. The score is one of the most adroitly written of all American operas, with a genuine vocal line, some exceedingly ingenious writing for a chamber orchestra, and—most unusual of all for an American work in this genre—a professional's grace in the vocal give-and-take between the characters. The characters are real, too. I suppose it would be zoologically incorrect to say that cat is a natural-born SOB, but he is as close to

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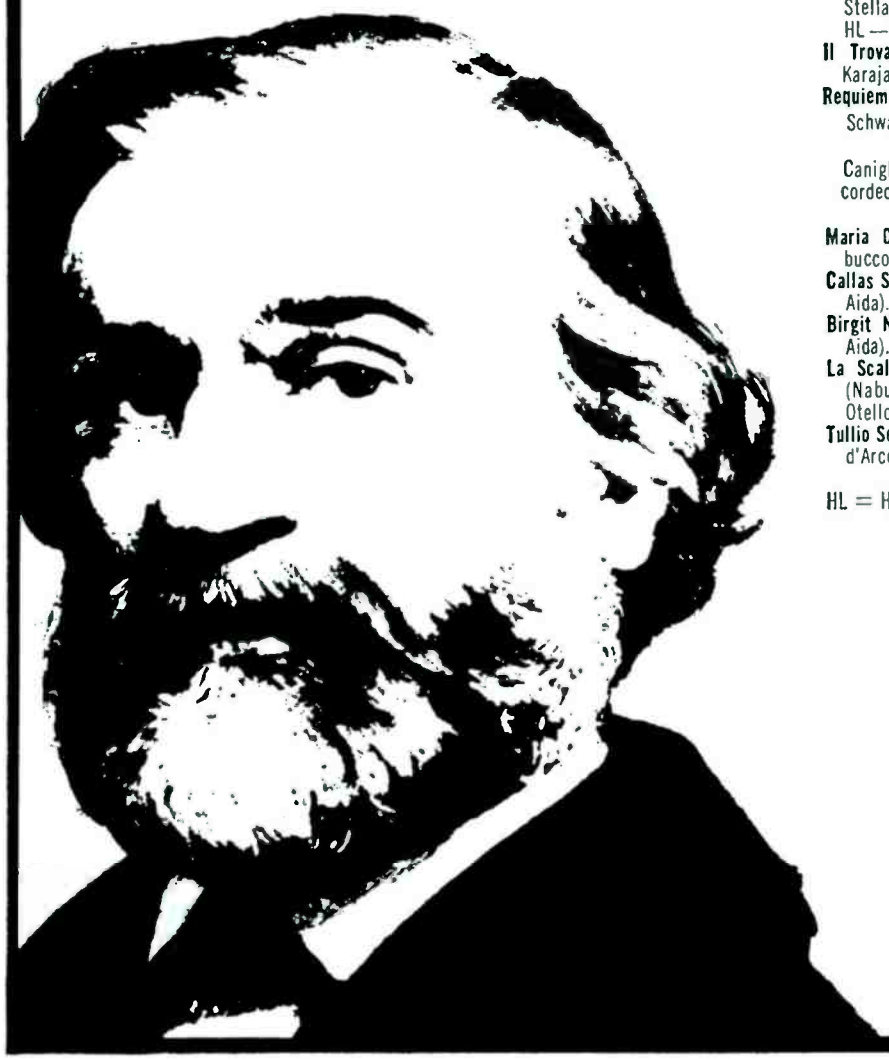

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it as a cat can come. Mouse is a truly good wife to him—and also a bit of a fool. A narrator fills in gaps and makes trios where only duets could otherwise exist.

No inconsiderable part of the charm of this production lies in its elegant performance. There may be a bit of wobble in Dixie Stewart's voice, but she is such a sweet, nice, stupid, forgiving mouse that it doesn't matter. Arthur Burrows is the last yowl in vocal felines, and Bruce Abel—who is billed as a baritone but sounds like a tenor most of the time—is one of those innately gifted people who cannot sing an unmusical phrase. Mester and the orchestra are full partners in the collaboration, and the recording is excellent. A.F.

DEBUSSY: *La Mer*
†Ravel: *Daphnis et Chloë, Suite No. 2; Pavane pour une infante défunte*

Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell, cond.
• EPIC LC 3863. LP. $4.98.
• • EPIC BC 1263. SD. $5.98.

Szell's *La Mer* is soundly conceived, tautly directed, and superbly played. The conductor's tempos are on the fast side and he obviously concurs with the Toscanini principle that whatever is in the score must be heard. No hazy impressionism for him: detail is revealed in a masterful and, occasionally, a razor-sharp way. (The violins, in particular, sound like they were bowing with military precision—to judge from the sharply defined and rather unflowing sound they produce.) In the main, though, this is not a slashing or unpoetic reading. Within the tightly organized, forward-pressing framework, there is considerable interplay of light and dark sonority and there is admirable plasticity of phrasing. In fact, to my mind this is the finest statement of the music to be had in stereo, and, indeed, I find that I prefer it to the 1950 monophonic record by Toscanini.

The Cleveland ensemble continues to do wonderful things in the two Ravel works overside, but here Szell is too blunt and dogmatic in his treatment of the music. The "Daybreak" section of *Daphnis et Chloë* arrives with jet streamers. This *scena* should be treated leisurely or not at all. Similarly, the *Danse générale* lacks true rhythmic swirl and orgiastic atmosphere, while the little Princess sounds as if she were dancing her pavane in wooden shoes. The Cantelli versions of both Ravel works are to be preferred, and a Monteux-LSO edition of the *Pavane* is fine also.

Epic has lavished beautiful engineering on all three pieces. H.G.

DEBUSSY: *Préludes, Book I: No. 6, Des pas sur la neige; No. 9, La Sérénade interrompue; No. 10, La Cathédrale engloutie; No. 11, La Danse de Puck*
†Haydn: *Sonata for Piano, No. 49, in E flat, Op. 66*
†Prokofiev: *Suggestion diabolique, Op. 4, No. 4*

Sviatoslav Richter, piano.
• VANGUARD VRS 1102. LP. $4.98.
• • VANGUARD VSD 2140. SD. $5.95.

What with live-recital recordings from New York, Bucharest, Sofia, Moscow, and various points in Italy (I may, to be sure, have missed a few other locations) Richter certainly leads the field in this particular area of the phonographic art. Now we have "Richter in Paris," a collection as good as any of its predecessors and much better than most of them.

For one thing, the repertoire on this new disc is especially welcome. All of the compositions here are first-rate, and none of them has been previously recorded by Richter. The four Debussy *Préludes* supplement the three which the pianist recorded for DGG, and with that disc they afford recorded documentation to the magnificent group of seven which Richter played in London last year. That program I heard via FM radio in a BBC transcription, and I am happy to report that the splendor of those performances is fully equaled in the present recording. Richter's color palette is an immensely varied one: indeed, no other pianist since Gieseking has made so much of the sensuous aspect of Debussy's piano writing. The Soviet pianist, however, is much freer and more dramatic in his handling of the music. Less masterful players than he might, in fact, be courting disaster if they were to allow themselves the leeway Richter permits himself here. It would, for example, be very easy for the *Sérénade interrompue* to become unbearably misshapen with the exaggerated tempo changes given to it in the present performance, while the *Cathédrale* would most certainly become uncohesive (and ultimately boring) were the amazingly broad pace not colored and spaced so intensely. In this *Prélude*, Richter also dramatizes the bell tones on the first build-up, at the start of p. 2, with the result that they toll with unusual resoluteness.

Nobody, I expect, needs to be informed at this late date of Richter's affinity for the music of Prokofiev. His account of the *Suggestion diabolique* is technically brilliant, and the interpretative excitement is intensified by the unbelievable elegance of Richter's execution. The rhythmic finesse and the perfectly judged balance between his two hands are of a transcendental order of pianism. I also like the slightly *gris* quality of the artist's tonal color. Surely, he evokes a Mephisto with a smoothness and *savoir faire* to outsmart anyone.

The Haydn Sonata is played lucidly, with ideal balance between form and content. Richter doesn't seek to overpower the essentially *galant* framework of the piece, and his crisp but always singing fingerwork is a constant delight.

Vanguard's recording is rather distantly miked, but exceedingly transparent and realistic. Only the Prokofiev loses quality, but the deterioration is hardly serious. The few audience noises heard during the music are actually less obtrusive than the shuffling and throat-clearing between selections. I find a trace more vividness in the stereo, but the difference between the two formats is not significant. H.G.

FAURE: *La Bonne Chanson, Op. 61*—See Schumann: *Dichterliebe, Op. 48.*

GIBBONS: *Excerpts from the Short Service*—See Monteverdi: *Missa a 4 voci da cappella.*

HAYDN: *Sonata for Piano, No. 49, in E flat, Op. 66*—See Debussy: *Préludes, Book I.*

HAYDN, MICHAEL: *Divertimento in G*—See Mozart: *Divertimento No. 15, in B flat, K. 287.*

MONTEVERDI: *Missa a 4 voci da cappella*
†Gibbons: *Excerpts from the Short Service*

The Old North Singers, John Fesperman, cond.
• CAMBRIDGE CRM 415. LP. $4.98.
• • CAMBRIDGE CRS 1415. SD. $5.98.

Although the Monteverdi Mass was first published in 1650, seven years after the master's death, it is in the late sixteenth-century style of flowing polyphony with only occasional chordal passages. The lines curve expressively, and they are smoothly joined together. The result is lovely music that avoids the drama and passion of Monteverdi's operas and madrigals but seems admirably suited to its purpose. Equally functional, just as conservative, and almost as beautiful are the four movements—Te Deum, Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc dimittis—from the first of the two Services by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625). This is considerably more chordal than the Monteverdi, but there is enough counterpoint to keep things lively. The chorus sings with flexibility and good tone. Care has been taken to achieve proper balances—the tenors, for example, have some strong entrances—but more could have been done, to bring up the altos and to keep the sopranos from ruling the roost. Clearer projection of the words would have helped, too, particularly in the Gibbons. No texts are supplied. The sound, except in the matter of balance, is good in both versions. N.B.

MOZART: *Concertos for Piano and Orchestra: No. 22, in E flat, K. 482; No. 6, in B flat, K. 238*

Géza Anda, piano; Camerata Academica of the Salzburg Mozarteum, Géza Anda, cond.
• DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON LPM 18824. LP. $5.98.
• • DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON SLPM 138824. SD. $6.98.

The special qualities required to do justice to the Mozart piano concertos are here in abundance. Insight into the musical structure, passion well controlled but not hidden, the right apposition of tenderness and strength—these are present, as are singing tone, a faultless technique, and lovely sound. The profound tragedy of the great slow movement of K. 482 is conveyed with its full poignancy, and the first and last movements lead up to and away from this peak with proper breadth. Anda is as proficient a conductor here as he is a pianist. There are a few flyspecks: moments when the *pianos* could be softer, when the soloist covers an important motif in the orchestra, but these are rare. I know of no better all-round version of this masterpiece on records. Anda has no competition at all with respect to K. 238. It is good to have that attractive little work restored to the catalogue in so excellent a performance and recording. N.B.

MOZART: *Divertimento No. 15, in B flat, K. 287*
†Haydn, Michael: *Divertimento in G*

Members of the Vienna Octet.
• LONDON CM 9352. LP. $4.98.
• • LONDON CS 6352. SD. $5.98.

Although the Mozart is scored for strings and two horns, it features the first violin

in each of the six movements. Even in the second movement, a theme and variations, the violin bears the melody in every variation. Much, therefore, depends on the quality of the first violinist. It is a pleasure to report that Anton Fietz, who plays that part here, performs like a topnotch artist. His tone is lovely and finely shaded, his intonation exact even in the highest reaches, and his phrasing thoroughly musical. He sings the poetic Adagio with eloquence, and conveys with a properly grand and tragic gesture the portentous recitative that serves to introduce—a fast little folklike tune. He is ably seconded by his colleagues. The horns are pointed, precise, clean; the other three strings first-rate in every respect. So too is the sound, realistic and alive. The work is on the borderline between chamber and orchestral music. If you prefer it played by an orchestra, you might choose the Karajan reading on Angel; but if, like me, you find the chamber version richly satisfying, this is the disc for you. The Divertimento for strings by the younger Haydn is no great shakes, but it's only half a side. N.B.

OVERTON: *Symphony No. 2, in One Movement*—See Piston: *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra.*

PALESTRINA: *The Song of Songs*

Prague Madrigal Choir, Miroslav Venhoda, cond.
• VANGUARD BG 647. LP. $4.98.
• • VANGUARD BGS 5059. SD. $5.95.

This is a recording of twenty-one of the twenty-nine works on texts from the Song of Solomon that Palestrina published in 1584 as Book IV of his five-voiced motets. The composer adopted the mystical interpretation given by the Church to these most sensuous of verses (he dedicated the set to Pope Gregory XIII), but there is a good deal of feeling in this music, along with finely chiseled workmanship. Neither of these qualities, unfortunately, is noticeable in the present performance. The choir, which from the photo on the sleeve consists of twelve people, seems to be an excellent one: it is solid in each division, with rich Slavic basses; it sings with precision and, most of the time, with accurate intonation; and it is capable of a wide range of dynamics. Such nuances as are employed here fail, however, to make up for a complete lack of poetry. Tempos, when they are not too fast, as in the first two motets, are maintained relentlessly, as though Palestrina had written odes to a conveyor belt. Somehow the performance reminded me of the old story about the Russian who meets a pretty girl in a railway compartment and after a remark about the weather and a few questions about where she is going, says "Enough of this love making!" Despite the ensemble's small size, the polyphony is not as clear as it should be. Latin texts and English translations are provided. N.B.

PISTON: *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*
†Overton: *Symphony No. 2, in One Movement*

Paul Doktor, viola; Louisville Orchestra, Robert Whitney, cond.
• LOUISVILLE LOU 633. LP. $7.95. (Available on special order only, from 830 S. Fourth St., Louisville, Ky.)

The first two movements of the Piston are in the composer's richest, most flowing, flexible style; nothing startling, but everything warm and attractively in place. The busy last movement strikes me as a good deal weaker in conception and realization. Doktor is a superb soloist and the orchestra is in excellent form.

The Symphony by Hall Overton is an interesting work by a talented composer. It uses a range of striking material built up in a kind of arch form which takes its shape from rhythmic, chordal, and accentual impulses rather than from melodic, thematic ideas as such. It contains many imaginative touches along with a few old and familiar problems of coherence. The orchestra has a few troubles here—admittedly this is much more difficult music to play than the Piston. At any rate the over-all result is communicative, and the recorded sound is, if not exceptional, good enough. E.S.

PROKOFIEV: *Suggestion diabolique, Op. 4, No. 4*—See Debussy: *Préludes, Book I.*

PUCCINI: *Tosca*

Leontyne Price (s), Floria Tosca; Herbert Weiss (boy soprano), Shepherd Boy; Giuseppe di Stefano (t), Mario Cavaradossi; Piero de Palma (t), Spoletta; Giuseppe Taddei (b), Baron Scarpia; Fernando Corena (bs), Sacristan; Leonardo Monreale (bs), Sciarrone; Alfredo Mariotti (bs), Jailer. Vienna State Opera Chorus. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan, cond.
• RCA VICTOR LD 7022. Two LP. $9.96.
• • RCA VICTOR LDS 7022. Two SD. $11.96.

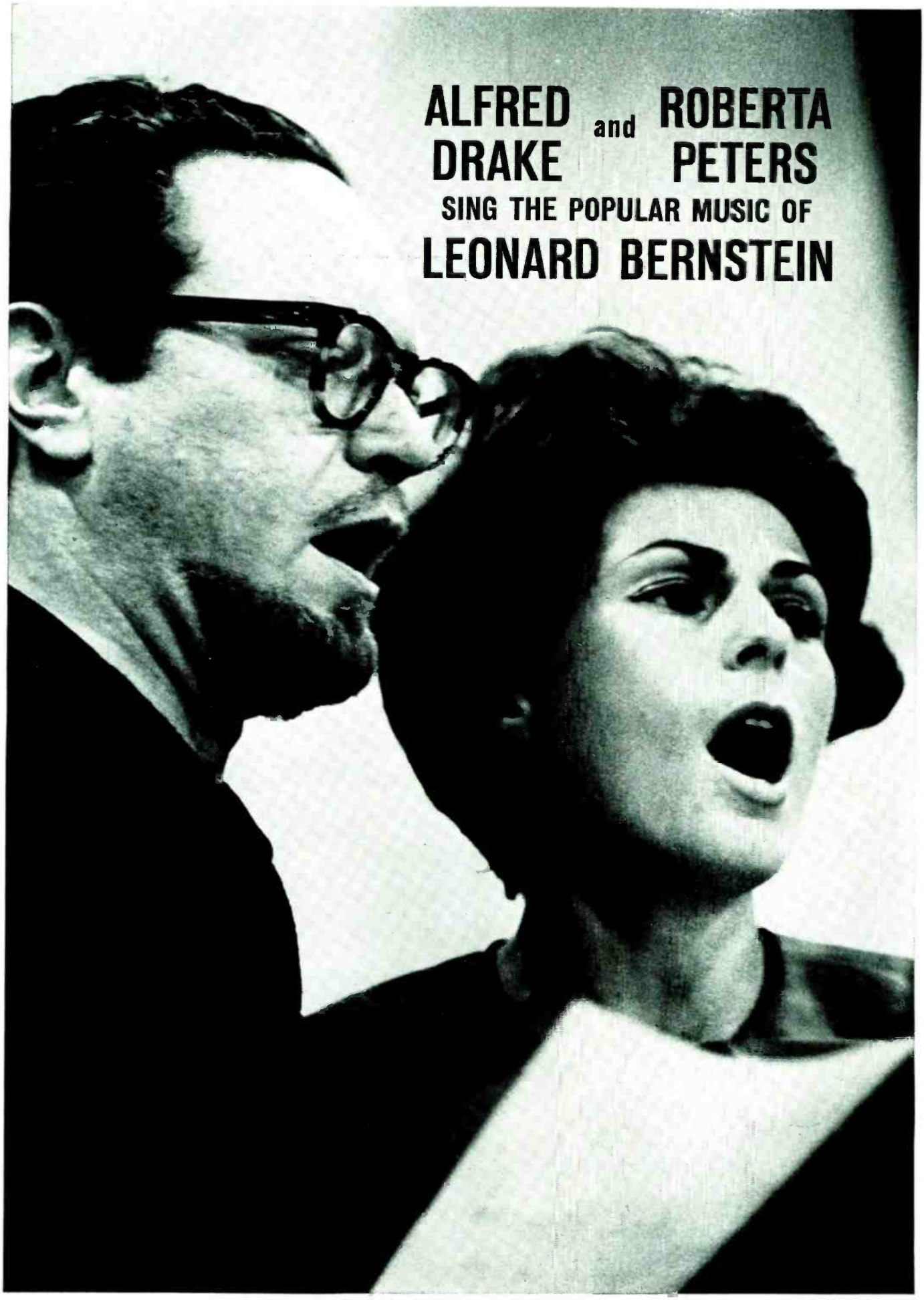
This is one of the better *Toscas* in the catalogue, and surely preferable to the heavy-handed London performance, which is the only other stereo version.

It will come as a surprise to no one that Von Karajan and his orchestra produce some splendid sound and turn up some interesting detail. There is wonderful power and weight in the statement of the opening chords, and the whole sequence at the beginning of Act III—the breaking of dawn and the orchestral playing of *"E lucevan le stelle"*—is so gorgeous that I have gone back to it several times already. Yet I wonder if *Tosca* should sound quite this neatly and perfectly articulated, and I wonder if the tempos should be as deliberate as they are—there are many points where it seems to me that the singers are held to a speed which robs the drama of its urgency and point. The Tosca/Scarpia dialogue in Act I is an excellent place to check on this—the whole scene strikes me as too slow. On the whole, the De Sabata reading on the Angel set still seems to me almost ideal—strongly structured and controlled but violently inflected and rapidly paced.

Two of the three principals stand up very well to the competition. Price is in good form, producing much round, full-bodied tone and building an intelligent, believable characterization. She is especially compelling in some of the lighter moments, as with her splendidly free and easy handling of *"Non la sospiri la nostra casetta?"* in Act I. Callas is more consistently dramatic, Caniglia grander of temperament (though not as lovely of voice), Tebaldi lusher and larger of tone. But of course one can't have all the virtues in one singer, and there are places where Price is the best of the lot.

Taddei must be ranked with Gobbi as the finest of recorded Scarpias. He is becoming increasingly unsteady on top, but that matters only once or twice in this role, which does not lie high. Taddei's baritone has the power and the dark color needed, and an exciting open roll and fatness in the upper-middle range. In welcome contrast to many Scarpias, he is able to sing suavely and beautifully, though his voice can turn to a cutting snarl or a bloodthirsty shout. I do wish he would tone down the nastiness in Act I; one of the points about this character, I believe, is that he is entirely secure in his power—he does not need to rant at the Sacristan to terrify him. A more controlled interpretation of the first act would lend extra impact to Taddei's altogether admirable performance of the second, where Scarpia flies into uncontrollable rages at not being able to bend people to his will. This reservation aside, Taddei's is a very imposing performance.

Alas, there is the tenor to consider. The basically beautiful quality of Di Stefano's voice can still be heard in lines that do not carry him above the staff, and when the music lies well for him, he still phrases with some elegance and individuality. But the years of ramming his voice into the high range in wide-open, puffed position have taken a sad toll of his remarkable gift. He sounds ready to explode on most tones above A flat (though he pulls himself together to a degree in *"E lucevan le stelle"*), and the vowel formation is so open as to sound blatty and vulgar. The once beautiful *piano* tone has become a detached, wispy shadow with which he fakes his way through *"O dolci mani"*; and the once exciting, if precarious, *forte* high tones have turned tight and have lost their ring, their juice. The high B



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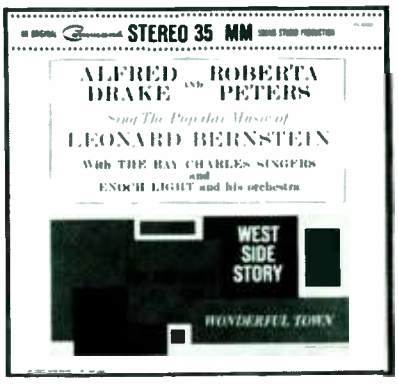

Selections Include: NEW YORK, NEW YORK (On the Town); LUCKY TO BE ME (On the Town); TONIGHT (West Side Story); THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS (Candide); I FEEL PRETTY (West Side Story); MARIA (West Side Story); GEE, OFFICER KRUPKE (West Side Story); GLITTER AND BE GAY (Candide); LONELY TOWN (On the Town); IT'S LOVE (Wonderful Town); FINALE (West Side Story). **ALBUM NO. 855**

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natural on *"Armonie di canti diffonderem"* in Act II takes my nomination for the most disastrous single tone recorded by a major singer.

Piero de Palma is a first-rate Spoletta, and Carlo Cava a better than usual Angelotti. Corena's Sacristan has succumbed so completely to traditional buffo japery as to be no longer enjoyable, even though the voice is in good condition.

In sum, a *Tosca* to be seriously considered if one's chief interest does not lie with the tenor—in which case Gigli, Bjoerling, the younger Di Stefano of the Angel set, and even Campora must be given preference.

This is a Soria Series production with a big, handsome booklet containing libretto, notes, photos, set and costume reproductions, and so forth. The sound is a little overbright and brassy; though the recording was supervised by John Culshaw, it is not up to the level established by the better London recordings. There are some fine effects with the bells in Acts I and III, and lots of real cannon shots (it you like real cannon shots). C.L.O.

RAVEL: *Daphnis et Chloë, Suite No. 2; Pavane pour une infante défunte* —See Debussy: *La Mer.*

SAINT-SAENS: *Symphony No. 3, in C minor, Op. 78*

E. Power Biggs, organ; Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, cond.
• COLUMBIA ML 5869. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6469. SD. $5.98.

Ormandy and Biggs have waited too long to provide a stereo replacement of their 1958 mono version, for some years the most popular choice, of the *Organ* Symphony. Now that we have a diversified stereo selection (the Gallic Paray/Dupré edition from Mercury, the grandiloquently expansive one by Munch and Zamkochian for RCA Victor, the poetic "miniaturization" by Ansermet and Segon for London), the Ormandy/Biggs treatment tends to seem self-consciously deliberate, suave, and contrived. The performance itself is highly virtuoso, of course; the recording ultrabrilliant, with less extreme spread and reverberance than RCA Victor's but apparently more closely miked—giving slightly more prominence to the organ but also contributing an unnatural edginess to the Philadelphian strings' high-register *ff* passages. There are mightily impressive moments here, but except to Ormandy/Biggs devotees this version is likely to seem more rhetorical, less idiomatic, and less convincing than its rivals. R.D.D.

SCHUBERT: *Quintet for Piano and Strings, in A, Op. 114 ("Trout")*
†Beethoven: *Quartet for Piano and Strings, No. 4, in E flat, Op. 16*

Mieczyslaw Horszowski, piano; Julius Levine, bass; members of the Budapest String Quartet.
• COLUMBIA ML 5873. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6473. SD. $5.98.

As a bargain package this release can hardly be bettered. The playing time runs to an hour, and both works are beautifully set forth with the aplomb of our number-one chamber music group. The Beethoven exists in an alternate form for piano and wind instruments, and I always have thought that the thematic material fitted winds better than strings; but when it is heard played as well as it is here, one has no real grounds for complaint.

The *Trout*, of course, is Schubert's most popular piece of chamber music. Generally it's sentimentalized. In this instance it's performed with feeling—there's a nice warm, romantic aura about it all—but artistic discipline keeps the structure tight and the whole thing under control. I like the results, and I am sure other listeners will too. R.C.M.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 9, in C ("The Great")*

Philadelphia Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini, cond.

For a feature review of this recording, see page 125.

SCHUMANN: *Dichterliebe, Op. 48*
†Fauré: *La Bonne Chanson, Op. 61*

Charles Panzéra, baritone; Alfred Cortot, piano (in the Schumann); Magdeleine Panzéra-Baillot, piano (in the Fauré).
• PATHE FALP 50008. LP. $5.98.

These re-releases of two famous recordings by the eminent French baritone date from the 1930s and sound good for their age. The *Dichterliebe* was in the LP catalogue for a time, backed by Aksel Schiøtz's version of the same cycle; I believe this is the first microgroove cutting of the Fauré performance.

Panzéra had a very high reputation as a Lieder singer, and his singing of the Schumann cycle has been long admired. But it is the Fauré that makes the record desirable; from the opening of the first song, *Une Sainte en son auréole*, he sings with a legato naturalness that, to my ears, eludes him in the German songs. Panzéra's voice, as heard on recordings, is warm, steady, very well controlled, but somewhat lacking in punch—when sustained strength is called for, it occasionally sounds weak. His handling of the Fauré cycle is straightforward. There is ample attention to nuance, but less fussiness, less use of *mezza voce* than in Souzay's attractive account of this music for Epic. It seems to me that Panzéra pulls the whole opus together better than Souzay, and I should think his interpretation might wear better, too. The Souzay disc, though, offers a number of other fine Fauré pieces, and for this reason those who have a satisfying *Dichterliebe* might well pick Souzay's rendition of the French songs.

As I have already implied, I don't much care for the Panzéra/Cortot *Dichterliebe*, though perhaps continued exposure to it might change my view. Certainly, there are fine things about it. I can't remember hearing any other performance that kept the rhythm so clearly marked in *Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome*, and the last two songs (*Aus alten Märchen* and *Die alten, bösen Lieder*) are both extremely good. And Cortot has wonderful moments, particularly where crispness and fast movement are called for, as in *Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen*. But Panzéra's treatment of the more lyrical songs strikes me as choppy, as if he were taking too much care to "speak" each word on the note, and not enough in connecting them into phrases and the phrases into songs. He takes breaths in awfully strange places (just before "*tauchen*" in *Ich will meine Selle tauchen*, for instance, neatly dissecting what is obviously a single phrase), and even cheats on note values. Cortot frequently stretches the rhythmic frame to the breaking point, too. Most of these details are of small matter in themselves, but they are symptomatic of an approach to the cycle that seems to me not smooth enough vocally and not tough-minded enough musically. Try Valletti or Häfliger among tenors, Fischer-Dieskau or Souzay among baritones. Pathé provides notes, but no texts. C.L.O.

SCHUMANN: *Spanische Liebes-Lieder, Op. 138*—See Brahms: *Liebeslieder Waltzer, Op. 52.*

STRAVINSKY: *Oedipus Rex*

Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of the Opera Society of Washington, Igor Stravinsky, cond.

For a feature review of this recording, see page 126.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Capriccio italien, Op. 45; Marche slave, Op. 31; 1812 Overture, Op. 49*

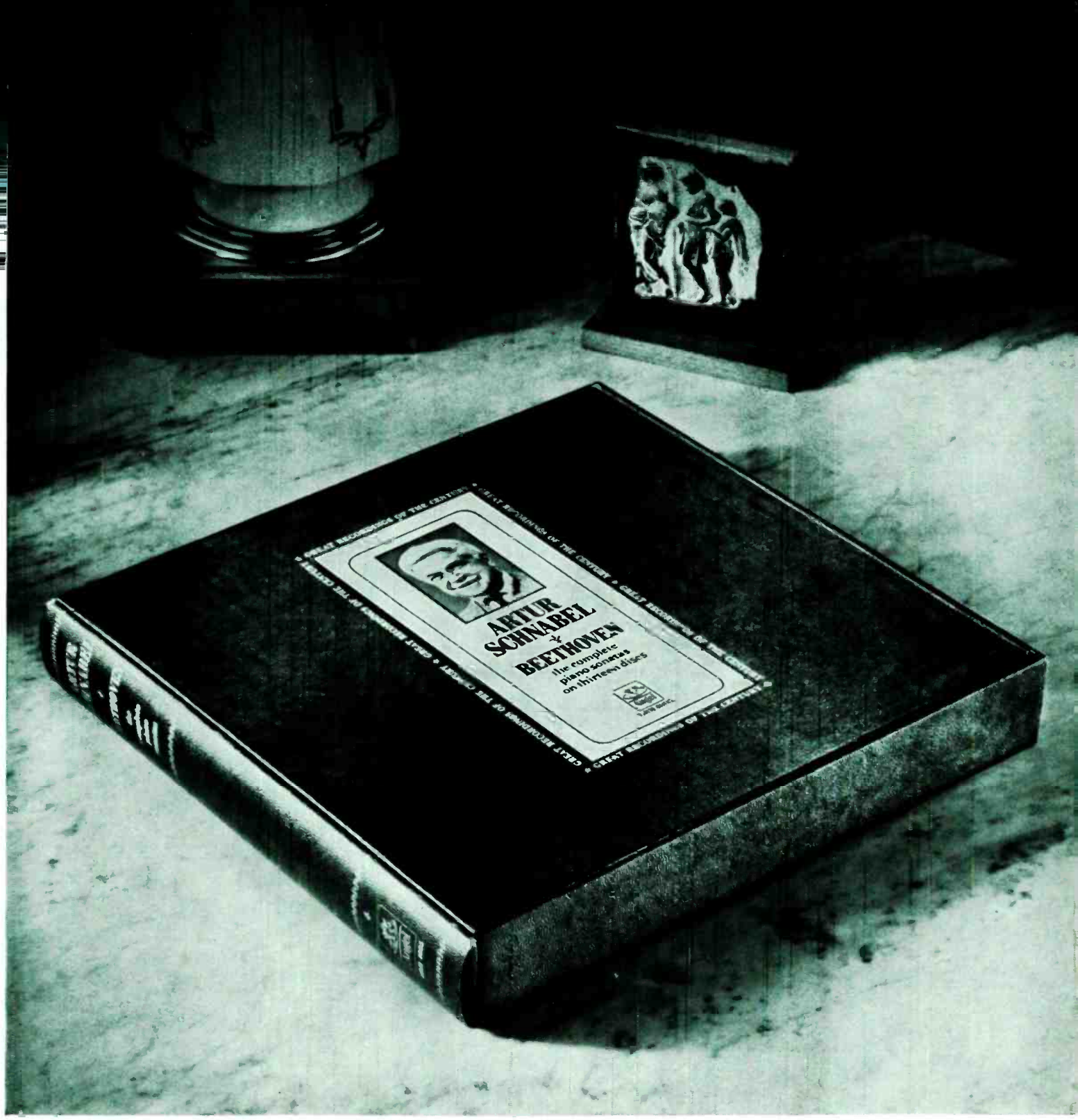
New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, cond.
• COLUMBIA ML 5877. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6477. SD. $5.98.

". . . and when he's good, he's very, very good!"—which statement is wholly applicable to the Bernstein we hear in this release. His fierily enthusiastic yet always tautly reined performance of the *Capriccio italien* already is known—and widely admired—in its late 1961 release (MS 6258), where it was coupled with *Francesca da Rimini*; the new *Marche slave* and *1812* performances have exactly the same merits of interpretative gusto and executant forcefulness—which give the overture in particular a freshness and exultancy notable even among the best of the other high-powered versions available today. Audio connoisseurs will find considerable fascination in comparing the differences between the *Capriccio* recording made at the Hotel St. George in Brooklyn and the other two works miked in New York's Philharmonic Hall. The warmer reverberance of the former locale seems to do better by the Philharmonic strings (they occasionally sound to me a bit tonally pinched in the March and Overture), but in other respects the sound is thrillingly vivid throughout. And I might add that the tremendous impact of the "cannon" in the Overture is a valuable reminder that the highly publicized utilization of real artillery in other recordings is no more sonically authentic than the "effects" supplied for Columbia by the Carroll Musical Instrument Service. My only dissatisfaction here is with what seems in my review copy like more than normal background hum or noise (the disc surfaces themselves are excellent) in the quieter musical passages—and Tchaikovsky has seen to it that there aren't very many such moments. R.D.D.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, No. 1, in B flat minor, Op. 23*

Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano; London Symphony Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond.
• LONDON CM 9360. LP. $4.98.
• • LONDON CS 6360. SD. $5.98.

The partnership here seems more like a



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corporative merger than an artistic collaboration. Both artists are musicians of taste, but the juxtaposition of the whimsical Ashkenazy and the objective Maazel produces a strangely flavorless interpretation.

This is a supremely well-played version, but the impressive clarity and detail somehow impede the flow and poetic impulse of the music. Take, for example, the very opening of the work: I can scarcely remember ever hearing another performance so painstakingly articulated and so closely observant of the composer's instructions, yet the result is constrained, perfectly dispassionate. A similar aura pervades the entire reading; one is conscious of machinery in motion rather than of music making.

The sound is excellent, but my recommendation for this Concerto goes to Janis (Mercury), Horowitz-Toscanini (RCA Victor), and Richter-Ančerl (Parliament—just recently deleted). H.G.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 6, in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique")*

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Charles Munch, cond.
• RCA VICTOR LM 2683. LP. $4.98.
• • RCA VICTOR LSC 2683. SD. $5.98.

Munch's interpretation of the perennial Tchaikovsky favorite is lusty and spirited rather than poignant; and while the Bostonians produce some red-blooded sonorities on this disc, subtlety and rhythmic finesse are often in short supply. This is especially noticeable in the opening movement, where a crisper attack and release is not only desirable but mandatory. To be sure, the present reading lacks some of the mannerisms of tempo which blemished Dorati's recent account for Mercury, but missing too, most regrettably, are the poise and *élan* of that performance. Also on the debit side is RCA's Dynagroove engineering here, which flattens the dynamic range of the performance and throws the instrumental balance into unrealistic perspective. (Why, for example, must that gong be right on top of us in the fourth movement?)

Until EMI-Angel releases the magnificent Giulini-Philharmonia "*Pathétique*" made in England in 1961 or RCA lets us have its electrifying 1954 Toscanini dress rehearsal tape of this work, the choice must be among Reiner, the 1947 Toscanini, and Monteux (all RCA Victor releases) for the taut, whiplash approach or Talich (Parliament—just deleted) for something richer and more passionate. Dorati's edition is also worth considering despite occasional capricious details in that performance. H.G.

VERDI: *Choruses and Orchestral Excerpts*

Nabucco: Sinfonia; Va, pensiero. I Vespri siciliani: Sinfonia. I Lombardi: O Signori, dal tetto natio. Ernani: Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia. Giovanna d'Arco: Sinfonia. Macbeth: Patria oppressa! La Battaglia di Legnano: Sinfonia.

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Arturo Basile, cond.
• RCA ITALIANA ML 20165. LP. $5.98.
• • RCA ITALIANA SL 20165. SD. $5.98.

As the album title ("Viva V.E.R.D.I.") would indicate, this record puts together excerpts from operas which were popular in Italy at least partly because of the patriotic fervor which their most famous numbers aroused in the patriots of the Risorgimento. "*Va, pensiero*" is the most widely known example, having been a theme song of the nationalistic movement, in addition to being a chorus of strikingly beautiful and simple inspiration.

But the other selections here were, in their day, almost equally revered for their inflammatory, or at least supportive, sentiments, and so the motif is a valid one; if further justification is needed, there is the fact that a number of these selections are not often heard—I know of no other commercial recording of the *Giovanna d'Arco* Overture, and I believe that the *Battaglia di Legnano* piece is available only on the complete Cetra recording of the opera. The *Giovanna d'Arco "Sinfonia"* is an uncommonly interesting one. Like most of Verdi's overtures, it makes its effect through repetition and juxtaposition of elements, rather than through a blending or "development" of them. All the usual Verdian effects are here—the martial trumpet melody, for instance—but the remarkable feature of the piece is an extended section for the woodwinds, first each in a solo turn, and then in various duet and ensemble combinations. An interestingly worked and quite atypical passage.

La Battaglia's overture follows a similar pattern and even has another passage for the woodwinds, but it is more conventional and workmanlike in over-all effect. To those unacquainted with it, I must commend the overture to *I Vespri siciliani*. This is "middle Verdi," and with the arrival of the violin melody suspended over strings *tremolando*, the listener will recognize the touch of the man who was soon to produce *Ballo*. And the overture's main theme, an expansive tune taken from the tenor/baritone duet, is from the composer's top drawer. The choruses are, of course, among the most effective ever written by Verdi.

Unfortunately, neither performance nor recording is good enough to make the collection more than a stopgap. Basile is a solid enough conductor, and in the Italian repertory sometimes more than that, but the orchestra is ordinary, with some fairly crisp execution alternating with patches of shoddiness, and the chorus is downright poor, with that artificially darkened "*cupo*" tone to which some Italian directors are inexplicably dedicated, and a glee-clubbish habit of thudding down on each accent. These affectations do not quite conceal the fact that there is a good deal of insecurity above the staff for everyone, and a lot of frayed tone at key points. The sound is all right in "close-ups," but is somewhat restricted and shallow when the full orchestra comes into play.

Recommended to those interested in filling the gaps in their Verdi collections—it may be a while before we see these numbers again. C.L.O.

VERDI: *La Traviata*

Joan Sutherland (s), Violetta; Dora Carral (s), Annina; Miti Truccato Pace (ms), Flora; Carlo Bergonzi (t), Alfredo; Piero de Palma (t), Gastone; Angelo Mercuriali (t), Giuseppe; Robert Merrill (b), Germont; Silvio Maionica (b), Douphol; Giovanni Foiani (bs), Doctor; Paolo Pedani (bs), D'Obigny. Chorus and Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, John Pritchard, cond.
• LONDON A 4366. Three LP. $14.94.
• • LONDON OS 25779. Three SD. $17.94.

The work of the three principals in this set is taken up in the *Traviata* section of the Verdi discography elsewhere in this issue. In considering the performance as a whole, I should make it clear that it is in most ways a fine effort, which merits serious consideration in choosing among the available complete recordings.

The restoration of the cuts is a very important—perhaps decisive—factor. I have already indicated my own feeling about the tenor and baritone cabalettas: they seem to me such dreary pieces of writing that I really think we are better off without them, especially if we plan to play the recording often. An esteemed English colleague, Phillip Hope-Wallace, points out in *The Gramophone* that inclusion of the cabalettas makes for better proportion of the act, better timing of the curtain, and avoidance of letdown after Violetta's exit. But this seems to me true only in theory—what good is a balanced structure if half the ingredients are of substandard quality? From the standpoint of characterization, Alfredo's cabaletta is a good *idea*, because he badly needs something that will indicate the presence of some mettle in his make-up. But the slogging little tune that the composer produced doesn't achieve this end at all. The baritone piece is just as bad if not quite so predictable, and poses an intrusion on the dramatic situation which I find very difficult to justify.

But collectors should listen to these sections. I think they are uninspired and inappropriate; Mr. Hope-Wallace, I gather, does not, and it may be that a substantial number of people will take to them. Restoration of the repeats (in "*Ah! fors' è lui*," "*Addio del passato*," and "*Parigi, o cara*") is, I think, a different matter—these numbers take on a shape and importance they don't possess when truncated. Here, though, I wish performers would be a bit more adventurous—even in a work as late as *Traviata*, the insertion of embellishment and melodic options the second time round is stylistically justified, and can add greatly to our picture of the performer's conception of the role. But apart from one or two little turns and an unusual cadenza in "*Ah! fors' è lui*," nothing of this nature is attempted—surely Merrill need not have sung the two sections of his cabaletta with no musical alterations (or even changes in inflection) whatever. (Of course, the minute performers do exercise some inventiveness, we take issue with their choices of embellishment. But why not live dangerously?)

Pritchard's performance really doesn't strike me as much above the ordinary (the ordinary recorded performance, I mean, and not the ordinary, week-to-week opera house performance) either in conception or execution. His recording has ample vigor, and manages to be fairly flexible with the soloists without allowing things to become shapeless. But it

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Serafin: an instinctive way with Verdi.

offers little that is unusual or exciting, and occasionally goes a bit far in pepping up certain sections (the Act I chorus "*Si ridesti in ciel l'aurora*," for instance, is awfully precipitous in relation to the surrounding tempos, and sounds souped-up and tense).

The three principals taken together form a very strong group, despite any critical reservations about individual performances. For sheer vocal richness, it is possibly the finest *Traviata* cast yet recorded, though the Moffo/Tucker/Merrill combination has plenty of luster, and on a somewhat smaller scale the Carteri/Valleti/Warren trio is very fine. The *comprimari* are also excellent, and one is grateful that, with Gastone assigned additional solo lines in the Act III chorus, there is on hand a musicianly tenor with a genuinely attractive lyric voice—the admirable Piero de Palma.

The sound is very fine, and the aural "staging" sensible, even if London continues to indulge in Rainbow Room sound effects for all social occasions.

C.L.O.

VERDI: *Il Trovatore*

Antonietta Stella (s), Leonora; Armanda Bonato (s), Inez; Fiorenza Cossotto (ms), Azucena; Carlo Bergonzi (t), Manrico; Franco Ricciardi (t), Ruiz; Ettore Bastianini (b), Count di Luna; Ivo Vinco (bs), Ferrando. Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala (Milan), Tullio Serafin, cond.

• DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON LPM 18835/37. Three LP. $17.94.
• • DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON SLPM 138835/37. Three SD. $20.94.

As with the new London *Traviata* recording, comment on DGG's new *Trovatore* is included in the Verdi discography appearing elsewhere in this issue, to which I refer readers for discussion of the principals and conductor as compared with those of other recorded versions. On the whole, this is a strong set—decidedly one of the better products of the DGG/La Scala collaboration.

It is also a very heartening performance on the part of Serafin, whose reading sounds anything but routine or "old." The tempos are surprisingly quick, the accents strong—listen to the surge and thrust with which the strings launch "*Mal reggendo*." This performance is not quite so careful of detail, or so glossy technically, as Von Karajan's. Yet there are things about Serafin's way of phrasing and of tying one section into another that somehow sound more natural, more instinctive than Von Karajan's—and the execution is far more scrupulous than is the case with Cellini, or Erede, or Basile, or even Previtali. Orchestra and chorus both live up to their reputations.

Stella is in much better form in this *Trovatore* than on the recent *Don Carlo*. She never quite sounds like a distinguished singer, but at her best she is an enjoyable one who can be counted on for much good, round tone and at least idiomatic styling. Those qualities are in evidence here, and the undeniable weakness in her lower-middle range is the only obtrusive vocal fault. Cossotto is most musical, and her voice moves freely; in view of her great success at La Scala as Azucena (and as Eboli), my feeling that she sounds too young and lightweight may be unfair to her as an opera house performer—but the feeling persists.

Bergonzi seems wanting only if compared with Bjoerling. He does a smooth, poised job, not terribly colorful or dramatic. Bastianini's "*Il balen*" is anything but suave, but is far better than his exhibition of *brutto canto* on the recent *Traviata* would indicate. It's a long way from the Battistinis and Stracciaris and De Lucas to this sort of roughhousing, but there's a lot of rich sound and plenty of vocal excitement in the dramatic passages. Vinco is excellent on all counts.

The sound is good in a DGG way—very clear, with the soloists singing right in your ear. This can be quite unpleasant if the singer is like Bastianini, who needs a bit of distance to soften the cutting edge, and it brings us too close to passages such as the Act II finale, where things just don't seem to blend into a single movement.

My own preference is the Cellini set (RCA Victor, monophonic only), with its opulent vocal display, as the choice all-round *Trovatore*, and I would pick the Karajan (Angel) as possessing certain unusual qualities despite some pretty wild vocalism from the male side of the cast. After this, the field is a jumble, with the new DGG set offering as well-balanced a performance as any. In view of the excellence of the leadership and the general spirit of the performance, it's a good selection.

C.L.O.

RECITALS AND MISCELLANY

ABBEY SINGERS: "*Five Centuries of Song*"

Abbey Singers.
• DECCA DL 10073. LP. $4.98.
• • DECCA DL 710073. SD. $5.98.

There is certainly no dearth of madrigal groups, but we can never have too many of high quality. The Abbey Singers belong among the best of those I have heard. Moreover, their repertory is not restricted: in addition to madrigals and sixteenth-century *chansons* they record here eighteenth- and twentieth-century American pieces, among others. These five young singers are well trained (by Noah Greenberg, who also chooses and prepares their programs); the individual voices are all of good quality; and they blend together beautifully. The result is a collection of stylish performances, brimming with vitality, of unhackneyed and delightful music. I particularly enjoyed Weelkes's *Hark all ye lovely saints*, with its curious progressions; the dark coloring of the *Salve Regina* by Rivaflecha (d. 1528); the very beautiful *Mignonne* of Guillaume Costeley (about 1531–1606); the amusing *chansons* by Lassus and Passereau (early sixteenth century); *I Am a Rose of Sharon* by William Billings, here in a lusty but finely chiseled performance; the rhythmic interest of a Christmas piece by the young American David Kraehenbuehl; Ernst Toch's tour de force, his *Geographical Fugue*, a four-part piece with a text consisting of place names—a fugue in every respect except that no specific pitches are used; and the charming children's song *I bought me a cat* as arranged by Aaron Copland and Irving Fine. The diction is quite clear throughout, except in *Madame has lost her cat*, which has beeen attributed to Mozart (K. Anh. 188) and is here sung in an English translation ("Madame," by the way, hardly seems the perfect translation for "*d'Bäurin*"—the peasant woman or farmer's wife). The sound is first-class, but no texts are supplied.

N.B.

"THE BADMEN"

Singers; guitarists; speakers.

For a feature review of this recording, see page 127.

JULIAN BREAM CONSORT: "*An Evening of Elizabethan Music*"

Byrd: *Mounsiers Alamine, Pavin; My Lord of Oxenfords Maske.* Anonymous: *Kemps Jig; Le Rossignol.* Dowland: *Lachrimae Pavin; Fantaisie; Dowlands Adew; Tarletons Resurrection; Galliard, "Can She Excuse."* Allison: *The Bachelor's Delight; De la Tromba Pavin.* Campian: *It Fell on a Summer's Day.* Morley: *O Mistresse Mine; Fantaisie, La Rondinella; Joyne Hands; The Frog Galliard.* Phillips: *Phillips Pavin.*

Julian Bream Consort.
• RCA VICTOR LD 2656. LP. $5.98.
• • RCA VICTOR LDS 2656. SD. $6.98.

All of the selections recorded here come from Morley's anthology *First Book of Consort Lessons*, which does not identify the composers of the pieces included. That information (arrived at by speculation, intensive research, and astute musicological detective work) is provided for this Soria Series production by Sidney Beck, Head of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection of the New York Public Library. Mr. Beck, an authority on Elizabethan music, has also furnished program notes and the arrangements used in the present performances.

This is a superb program, and one that strikes a perfect balance between historical authenticity and latter-day considerations of musicality. Although the members of the Julian Bream Consort (who include, in addition to Mr. Bream, Desmond Dupré, cittern and lute, Joy Hall, bass viol, David Sandeman, flute, Robert Spencer, pandora and lute, and Olive Zorian, violin) play with obvious awareness of style and ornamentation, they completely avoid the archaic stiffness which sometimes hampers exponents

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of this music. And their decision to use a modern flute and violin in place of the predecessor recorder and treble viol is one that I, at least, can wholeheartedly applaud. The players are all excellent, with Olive Zorian and Joy Hall, in particular, demonstrating a fine tonal and phraseological eloquence. Mr. Spencer, in addition to his instrumental contributions, sings *O Mistresse Mine* and *It Fell on a Summer's Day* with admirable poise, in a clear baritone voice.

The recorded sound in both versions (the monophonic disc is a little more intimate) is absolutely flawless, and RCA's Soria packaging (with a box album far more convenient than the "slip-in" folders of last year) adds further adornment to one of the most refreshing and pleasurable discs ever to come my way. H.G.

ERICK FRIEDMAN: *"Virtuoso Favorites"*

Castelnuovo-Tedesco: *Sea Murmurs.* Dinicu: *Hora staccato.* Falla: *La Vida breve: Danse espagnole.* Kreisler: *Menuet.* Mozart: *Rondo in C, K. 373.* Paganini: *Caprices, Op. 1: No. 17; No. 21.* Rimsky-Korsakov: *Flight of the Bumblebee.* Szymanowski: *Romance in D, Op. 23.* Tartini: *Variations on a Theme by Corelli.* Tchaikovsky: *Sérénade mélancolique, in B flat minor, Op. 26.* Wieniawski: *Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op. 16.*

Erick Friedman, violin; Brooks Smith, piano.
• RCA VICTOR LM 2671. LP. $4.98.
• • RCA VICTOR LSC 2671. SD. $5.98.

As one might expect from a Heifetz pupil, Erick Friedman is an exponent of the motoric school of violin playing. His approach to the instrument features a lean rather than lush tone, and a marked emphasis on the pyrotechnical aspect of execution. Even granted that none of the works on this record (save, perhaps, the Mozart Rondo) is really more than a display piece, the young violinist's accounts here appear to be primarily concerned with the abstract craftsmanship of violinism. He is at his best in pieces like the Wieniawski which demand the tightly coiled impetus and steely glitter that he can provide in abundance. He does not, on the other hand, let a simple melodic line unfold with spontaneity. I found his statement of the Tchaikovsky *Sérénade mélancolique*, for example, to be a rather tortured, contrived affair.

Some stretches of harsh or thin tone and his slightly forced articulation (not to mention occasionally wayward intonation) lead me to suspect that Friedman is not yet really an incandescent technician. He seems to work too hard at playing "effortlessly." In the *Hora staccato*, for instance, the charm of the piece is largely put to rout by the strenuous effort apparently involved in merely playing the notes. Yet Friedman certainly gives evidence of intelligence and temperament, and it will be extremely interesting to hear him when he liberates himself from the influence of his illustrious teacher.

Brooks Smith performs his duties with reticent efficiency, and the recorded sound—edgy and studio-bound though it undeniably is—is highly realistic. H.G.

NICOLAI GEDDA: *"Great Tenor Arias from French Opera"*

Adam: *Le Postillon de Longjumeau: Mes amis, écoutez l'histoire.* Massenet: *Werther: J'aurais sur ma poitrine; Pourquoi me réveiller.* Manon: *Ah! Fuyez, douce image; En fermant les yeux.* Thomas: *Mignon: Elle ne croyait pas; Adieu, Mignon, courage.* Berlioz: *Benvenuto Cellini: Seul pour lutter; Une heure encore et ma belle maîtresse.* Gounod: *Mireille: Anges du Paradis.* Lalo: *Le Roi d'Ys: Vainement, ma bien aimée.*

Nicolai Gedda, tenor; Orchestre de la Radiodiffusion Française, Georges Prêtre, cond.
• ANGEL 36106. LP. $4.98.
• • ANGEL S 36106. SD. $5.98.

Gedda is possibly the most efficient tenor singing today—certainly I can think of no one who gets more mileage from his equipment than he. The tone is always clean, clear, and resonant, the enunciation extraordinarily good, the pitch right on center. His high range is wonderfully free and focused, and anyone who can maneuver well and with strength in the B natural to D region has to produce some exciting sounds.

For this well-chosen program, Gedda has the additional advantage of being one of the few tenors of today with a good grasp of French language and style. Still, one looks in vain for any trace of personal magnetism or charm in his singing; it all sounds intelligently calculated, brilliantly executed, but not emotionally compelling. There is really almost no feeling of tenderness in *"Adieu, Mignon, courage,"* very little of the romantic spirit that should invest the *Werther* arias.

The *Postillon* excerpt is intended as a tour de force and comes off, since Gedda flings his voice into the vocal stratosphere with remarkable accuracy and brilliance. There is, however, nothing inimitable about his narration of the three verses. The *Cellini* excerpts are moderately interesting. Unless there is much more to the dramatic situation of *"Seul pour lutter"* than I can gather, it seems a bombastic piece of writing—a pretentiously grand expression of what seems a very simple, nostalgic longing for the life of a plain shepherd.

Perhaps I'm ungrateful. Here, after all, is a selection of French arias, most of them unhackneyed, sung with consistently fine technique and better than average style, and at a time when serviceable French tenors are nearly as scarce as the *Helden* variety. For many collectors, that will undoubtedly be enough. The sound is good, and Angel has provided notes, texts, and translations. C.L.O.

GREGORIAN CHANT

Chorus of Monks from the Abbey of En-Calcat.
• MUSIC GUILD M 25. LP. $5.50.
• • MUSIC GUILD S 25. SD. $6.50.

This is a collection of eighteen chants, mostly from the Proper of the Mass (the Ordinary is represented only by Sanctus IX). They are for various seasons of the year and range from syllabic hymns to the elaborate responsory *Collegerunt*, for Palm Sunday, and highly melismatic pieces like the Graduals *Qui sedes* and *Haec dies* and the Offertory *Jubilate Deo universa terra.* The choir of this Benedictine monastery in the south of France sings with considerable rhythmic flexibility. There is a good deal of reverberation but not enough to be annoying. Latin texts and English translations are provided. N.B.

VLADIMIR HOROWITZ: *"The Horowitz Collection"*

Barber: *Sonata for Piano.* Chopin: *Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, in E flat, Op. 22.* Clementi: *Sonata for Piano, Op. 47, No. 2: Rondo.* Czerny: *La Ricordanza.* Mendelssohn: *Songs Without Words (3).* Moszkowski: *Etude in A flat.* Mozart: *Sonata for Piano, No. 12, in F, K. 332.* Prokofiev: *Sonata for Piano, No. 7, in B flat, Op. 83.* Saint-Saëns: *Danse macabre, Op. 40.* Schumann: *Variations on a Theme by Clara Wieck; Kinderszenen, Op. 15; Träumerei.* Scriabin: *Sonata for Piano, No. 9, Op. 68.*

Vladimir Horowitz, piano.
• RCA VICTOR LD 7021. Two LP. $10.96.

This handsome offering from Victor's Soria Series—included in the package are reproductions of some beautiful Degas, Roualt, Manet, and Picasso paintings from Horowitz's personal art collection—is actually a discographic patchwork. All of the performances are either transfers of 78-rpm recordings or reissues of miscellaneous sides of discontinued LPs. For such a rich-looking album, the percentage of bona fide musical masterpieces is, unfortunately, low: it is the pianist's art for the most part, rather than the composer's art, which stands out.

But let there be no mistake: the playing, as such, is uniformly breath-taking. Horowitz's performance of the Prokofiev Sonata remains the most individualistic that I have ever heard. In contrast to the crisp staccato and perfectly balanced transparency of the standard approach (best exemplified by Richter's dancing rendition) Horowitz is much weightier, more brooding and granitic. As he plays the piece, it sounds more neurotic perhaps, but certainly more serious.

Barber's Sonata was new in 1950 when Horowitz premiered it and made the present recording. Now, it turns up on just about every debut recital. In my opinion the piece is basically synthetic, but Horowitz's masterful account of it is fraught with true pianistic voltage. The Scriabin, a genuinely creative little work, appeared on Horowitz's last public recital, and that performance is the one preserved on this disc. When it comes to febrile, indeed, spasmodic changes of emotion such as are encountered here, Horowitz is absolutely in a class by himself: the manner in which he negotiates the repeated notes in the central section is slightly hair-raising.

The Mozart Sonata, however, poses a problem to this artist (as, indeed, it does to so many). Horowitz's solution is to view the work in purely abstract, pianistic terms—a test for evenly placed fingers, properly positioned wrists, and cunningly balanced arm muscles. Everything is articulated with beautiful clarity and singing tone, but the music is not nearly so innocent and passionless as this pianist would have us believe. There are similar features in the other "classical" pieces in the album, but the Czerny is more frankly technical and therefore less inhibited-sounding in performance.

I wish that some of the inhibition had been maintained in the Schumann *Träumerei*. Here Horowitz lets his showmanship get the best of him in a rendering which is "romantic" in a fashion more in keeping with Hollywood than with Düsseldorf. The longer *Variations*

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The Collector's Verdi

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. . . *invan morte des'io.*" Verdi's music for this character is strong and gloomy, and includes what is surely one of his most probing, finished pieces of writing —the great Act III recitative and aria, "*O tu che in seno agl' angeli.*"

None of the complete-edition Alvaros does much to plumb this figure, but two at least offer a great deal of satisfying vocalism—Galliano Masini (Cetra) and Richard Tucker (Angel). I like Masini's portrayal best. His tenor has a good ring, without sacrificing the ability to sing softly or bring a variety of color into play. Consequently, he is able to observe Verdi's directions more closely than most tenors; note his almost exact reproduction of Verdi's dynamic markings in "*O tu che in seno,*" for example, or his sensitive phrasing in the final trio. He also brings plenty of temperament to the more strenuous pages, and works extremely well with Marinuzzi in giving some real pulse to his music, even in recitative.

Tucker sings with an excellent command of line and much exciting tone, and does some of his best work in the big Act III scene so often omitted, so that its inclusion constitutes real gain. There is a certain stiffness in his vocalism, and the softer dynamics are absent, but he sings with sufficient musicality to conceal this most of the time. What really disfigures his portrayal is a rather juvenile projection of what he conceives to be the emotional content of several of his scenes. This takes the form of exaggerated inflections and repeated sobs—Alvaro loses our sympathy if he seems to wallow in self-pity. Tucker is at his best in the first scene, which is relatively straightforward exposition; in many climactic passages (the close of "*O tu che in seno*"; "*No, d'un imene il vincolo*") he drenches the music with a sort of artificial emotionalism.

The remaining tenors evince graver weaknesses. Del Monaco (London) makes quite an effort at singing legato, but often fails (as in "*Solenne in quest' ora,*" where he scoops and leaps in a ruinous way), and even when he succeeds it sounds as if it is costing him pain. He's quite vital in some of the declamatory outbursts, but in general is too monotonously loud and metallic to do the music justice. Di Stefano (RCA Victor) marks the rhythms well, and gets more out of the words than most tenors. But his voice is blatantly ugly above the staff, sounds tight and tired, and goes flat on many high tones, and some not so high. Campora (Urania), with an excellent basic vocal quality, is all too obviously a young lyric tenor with register-separation problems trying to sound like a *tenore robusto.*

Don Carlo is not much of a character study, being presented so consistently as a single-minded thirster-after-revenge, but the role contains tremendous opportunity for display of the Italian dramatic baritone voice. Carlo Tagliabue recorded the role twice, and the second time (for Angel) was far past his prime, only partially making up with stylistic command for what was lost in unfocused, muffled tone. His first effort (for Cetra) is top-flight—his steady, warm tone has bite and brightness, his grasp of the style is thorough, his musical accuracy average high (he actually follows the *sotto voce* instruction on the line "*Una chiave!*" in "*Solenne in quest' ora,*" for example, which so many baritones render as if it were some sort of public announcement).

Bastianini (London) does a good, stock job with his rich, firm voice, which was somewhat freer and less heavy when this recording was made (about five years ago) than it is now. He tends, though, to let his voice do all the work for him, and is not graceful in his handling of some of the higher-lying passages (his lumpen treatment of the cantabile lines "*Disperso vada il mal pensiero*" in the midst of his principal aria, pp. 207-08, is an example). Leonard Warren (RCA Victor) is in some ways the most exciting of all the Carlos; he alone has the free, smooth handling of the upper voice, capped by a ringing high A (most remarkably used at the conclusion of his first song, "*Son Pereda,*" where he sails up to it, holds it for the quarter-note value indicated for the C sharp in the score, then drops it—a fine climax for the song, without sounding overblown). And only he seems aware of the value of *piano* singing, again most cleverly used in "*Son Pereda,*" which attains the required *eleganza,* captured by no other baritone. On the other hand, Warren quavers a great deal of his music; there is a noticeable shake as early on as p. 90, on the seemingly unproblematic line "*Salute qui, l'eterna gloria poi.*" Many moments are thus deprived of their punch and steadiness. The contribution of Urania's Anselmo Colzani is by no means negligible. His singing has much life and presence, much intelligent pointing of words, good realization of musical values—as with the turns in "*Urna fatale.*" He is splendid at all the more dramatic points (see his final insult to Alvaro on p. 343 for an example), and needs only greater smoothness and ease around the E flat to F transition to be very satisfying vocally.

Three of the Guardianos—Pasero (Cetra), Tozzi (RCA Victor), and Siepi (London)—are superb, and it's hard to pick over them. My own preference is Pasero, primarily because his voice is of the dark, absolutely steady sort, and his aural presence tremendously imposing. He is also superior in small ways: refer, for example, to the section beginning "*Del mondo i disinganni*" (p. 326). Pasero is here the only bass to render successfully the staccato sixteenths (Siepi simply ignores the sign and slurs everything together, while Tozzi manages a self-concious-sounding staccato), and then to give us a real crescendo-decrescendo on the half-note at the beginning of the next measure. Tozzi's reading is perhaps the most easily vocalized of all, but his voice is a shade lighter than either Pasero's or Siepi's.

The only outstanding Preziosilla is Cetra's Stignani. This is a fiendishly difficult role, written in what is really soprano territory, and with a dash that demands a lighter touch than most mezzos can command. In addition, it must be admitted that a share of her music is of an emptily "effective" sort, and not specifically suggestive of any character —she just leads some conventional set numbers. Although Stignani lacks the trill on high G called for, she at least sings her notes in rhythm and in tune, and of course with that vocal lushness for which she was famous. Simionato (London) is the best of the other Preziosillas, and even she produces some ragged runs, and flats badly on several high tones.

Corena (London and Urania) and Capecchi (Angel) are the interesting Melitones; the role is too conventional to call for much discussion. Corena's vocal weight lends a welcome pompousness to his Act III "sermon"; Capecchi, though, being a baritone, copes better with the tessitura, which lies punishingly high for a bass (take a look at Melitone's lines on p. 278—"*E finche il mondo puzzi di tal pece, non isperi la terra alcuna pace*"—and you will see phrases calculated to make any real bass shudder with apprehension).

Among the many *comprimari* represented on these sets, I should like to call attention to the following outstanding performers: Luisa Gioia and Gabriella Carturan, the Curras of the RCA Victor and London sets respectively; Ernesto Dominici, the Marquis of the Cetra set; and Giuseppe Nessi and Piero de Palma, the Trabuccos for Cetra and London, respectively. The Accademia chorus sounds particularly good on the London set (Angel's Scala chorus does excellent work, but is not so vibrantly recorded), and Urania's chorus, which I suspect was relatively small, is to be commended for getting plenty of life into its pages.

It's interesting, by the way, to hear the Requiem a-borning in the Convent Scene, particularly in the outburst "*Il cielo fulmini incenerisca*" (p. 161) and in the subsequent hushed muttering on "*L'immonda cenere*" (p. 163)—a contrast which has *Dies Irae* written all over it.

AIDA (1871)

One can approach a discussion of *Aida* from so many directions that a decision as to what use to make of very limited space is a hard one. There is a remark of Toye's that will serve, I think, as springboard for one little excursion: "Granted . . . the full importance of the human factors in the drama, it remains first and foremost an expression of theatricalism, generally, though not always, objective rather than subjective."

These last terms are dangerous ones to use, but their meaning in relation to this work is clear enough; it is the relationship of what we may as well call the subjective and objective elements—now

juxtaposed, now fused—that I find so interesting. There is no doubt that, from a structural point of view, *Aida* is formalistic—on paper, almost rigidly so. If one chose, one could find striking parallels with *Le Nozze di Figaro* or *Don Giovanni*, in that every note assigned is aimed at the filling of what looks like a prefabricated musical mold. It is also true that the music is more descriptive of situation than of specific character: Aida, for example, is given two extended solo scenes, neither of which explores any personal peculiarities. They deal—most dynamically and tellingly, of course—with the awful predicaments in which she finds herself; her reactions are strong, and set in brilliant contrast, but of her they tell us only that she is a proud, sensitive princess—they specify no more. The same is true of the other characters—they are definite and clear as theatrical figures, and we can apply certain general adjectives to each (e.g., Amonasro, "savage and proud," or Radames, "moralistic" and maybe "muddleheaded"), but this is all.

Yet that is the point. We have four people who are normal in psychology (none can be described as warped), reasonably intelligent, reasonably high-minded, each of whom does the best he can to carry out what he conceives as his life role or duty, despite the imposition of tremendous emotional pressure. (We might even say the same for Ramfis. He, like the king, is primarily a public figure, and his motives aren't explored; still, he is, after all, doing nothing beyond conscientious performance of his duties, even if he is the one major character for whom no audience sympathy is invited.)

It is the consistency and strength with which the reaction of these characters to the dramatic situations are painted that is so remarkable. The concerted piece in Scene 1—a small-scaled model for the Act II finale—is a simple illustration. It starts with the King's big, four-square tune *"Sul del Nilo al sacro lido,"* followed by a brief melodic variation for Ramfis, then a choral restatement of the tune with parts for the King and Ramfis. Then come eight extraordinary bars for Aida and Radames. Radames, thinking for the moment of nothing but the military glory he hopes to win, sings the *"Sul del Nilo,"* a minor third up from the A major tonic on which it is introduced. Against this, Aida sings a variation (*"Per chi piango? per chi prego?"*) concerning her torn feelings with regard to her lover's new post as destroyer of her father's army. Then Amneris breaks in on the dominant to hand Radames the standard; then the chorus returns with the tune, Aida singing over it, which carries into the brief coda (*"Guerra!"* etc.).

With the eight bars for Aida and Radames, Verdi accomplishes all sorts of things: a harmonic variation, what sounds like a rhythmic variation (the whole scene is in common time—as is, indeed, everything in Acts I and II except *"Celeste Aida"*—but the alternated accents of the two voices make the difference), and an expression of the two characters' predicaments. (The halting, off-beat effect also expresses the cross purposes at which the lovers are, for the moment, operating.) And it fits snugly into the scene's grand-opera structure—choral statement, followed by expression of each character's reaction in turn, then choral recapitulation with the soloists added. This is the scheme employed, in more complex form, in the so-called

Triumphal Scene, where Verdi somehow contrives to keep even the inner parts among the soloists expressive of the characters' emotional conditions, and forces them to serve their roles as building blocks at the same time.

This illustration hardly serves as an analysis of Verdi's methodology, let alone as an explanation of the opera's almost unprecedented hold on its hearers. One can view the work as a study in contrasts, or as the culmination of nineteenth-century operatic tradition, or as one of the three works of Verdi's "last period," by means of which he wrote some sort of last word on all operatic traditions—the grand, the tragic, the comic. It is the most perfect grand opera ever written; as such, it will succeed, in a general way, with even a poor performance, yet is one of the most difficult of all operas to stage (or record) at anything close to its potential.

The recorded efforts have been in the hands of some of our century's finest operatic conductors. (I should note that an old Columbia recording was available briefly on Entré EL 3; I have not been able to find a copy. Under Molajoli, it had a promising-looking cast including Arrangi-Lombardi, Armando Borgioli, Pasero, and Baccaloni.) Since there is so much to discuss with regard to the readings of Toscanini (RCA Victor II), Von Karajan (London II), Solti (RCA Victor IV), and Serafin (Angel), I am going to be a bit cavalier with the work of Gui (Cetra I), Questa (Cetra II), Erede (London I), Perlea (RCA Victor III), and the Serafin of RCA Victor I. Only two of these performances strike me as actually poor—Erede's (his usual faults) and Serafin's (a disjointedness at least partly traceable to an abysmal job of editing. I assume from 78 masters). Gui and Questa are both estimable musicians (Gui's effort. incidentally, is now about a dozen years old) with perfectly solid. traditional ideas about the score; in both cases. however. there are enough slips of choral and orchestral execution. enough uningratiating tone. to leave the performances short of the highest musical level. Perlea's reading is brisk and well executed (some of the best work on records from the Rome Opera orchestra and chorus). and well above routine. I like it. but can't say it provides much food for thought.

The Toscanini/Karajan comparison is, as one would expect. fascinating. Both men had the collaboration of superb orchestras and choruses. both have deserved reputations as sticklers for technical perfection. They are by no means poles apart in their conductorial viewpoints—indeed. some class Karajan in the "Toscanini school"—yet they have come up with radically different executions of the score. Perhaps it is stretching the point too far to say that Toscanini and Karajan represent. respectively, the subjective and objective approaches to the opera; but there is no doubt that the emphasis of the Toscanini reading is on the tensions and agonies of the personal drama. while Karajan tends to present the score as a structured series of portentous state occasions—the steady swinging open of a series of massive doors.

Unhappily, Toscanini defeated himself before ever raising his baton by assembling a group of singers who are not only of mediocre quality or worse (with the exception of Tucker), but who are peculiarly ill adapted to bringing any special imagination or interpretative insight

to bear. Their performances range from the cataclysmic to the workmanlike, never breaking through to the enlightening or the magnetic. Naturally, there is much in Toscanini's own performance that is admirable and even thrilling, though one almost has to decide to listen to Toscanini rather than to *Aida* to find the total effect compelling. Most of the unique moments in Toscanini's reading are instances of his way of suddenly lighting up the dramatic situation for us. The sudden tremolando on p. 14, line 2 of the Schirmer vocal score (as Amneris sings *"Non hai tu in Menfi desiderii—speranze?"*) comes as a startling flash, as the insinuation must to Radames. The heavy, accented chords that break into the opening section of *"Ritorna vincitor"* (second and last lines, p. 52) have a terrific weight—they seem to lash Aida from one awful thought to another. Amonasro's entrance is electrifying (somehow the single timpani shot in the last bar of p. 151 is sharper, more startling here than in any other account); so is Radames' realization of his betrayal (*"Tu! Amonasro! tu! il Re?"*—top of p. 251), where the strings flash like lightning and the sudden dynamic contrasts are uncanny. There are many other such moments, and there is excitement in the dash and accuracy with which even a section like the Dance of the Moorish Slaves (pp. 85-87) is executed. Some of it is certainly quick, and conceivably a little too tightly wound; it seems to me, for example, that the opening of Act II (the scene in which Amneris' female attendants prepare her for the feast), whose chief quality surely ought to be an expansive voluptuousness, could well relax a bit more. But every bar of the reading is full of vigor and purposefulness, even if the singers are frequently incapable of seeing the concept through.

Brilliant execution also marks the Karajan performance. Here we have an orchestra of very different attributes (the Vienna Philharmonic) and a Viennese chorus. The brass sounds mellower, rounder, less thrusting, than that of the NBC; the woodwinds have a sensuous softness—listen to the flute weave through the Sacred Dance of the Priestesses in the Temple Scene (p. 65). We also have a very different method of recording—carefully staged 1959 stereophony as against monophonic off-the-line recording dated 1949. The differences in recording method cannot fail to become part and parcel of the differences in the conductors' and orchestras' work, no matter how carefully one tries to separate them: is it, for instance, due to conscious design on Karajan's part that we hear the harp articulated under the women's chorus at the beginning of Act II (I found myself actively listening to this part for the first time),

or is this the result of the engineer's idea of balance? Beyond that, is it desirable? (An honest question—I can't quite decide for myself.) The chorus (the Vienna Singverein) is bothersome, its quality notwithstanding. It is not so much a matter of rather unidiomatic Italian (very closed "e" on "*ciel*," a failure ever really to roll the rs, etc.) as it is of a tone color that just doesn't seem right—bright, clear, rather hard, with particularly light-sounding basses. The grand choruses do not have the solidity and depth that are wanted, the sacred ones lack softness and mystery—all this despite choral musicianship of the highest order. (Toscanini's chorus is not Italian, either; but to my ears, at least, offers a much more satisfying sound.)

This is, as I've indicated, a stately reading, never slack, but slower than most. It works well in the big ensembles, and in the final scene, and there is enough snap in the orchestral playing to maintain tension during Amneris' grand scene. Sometimes, though, the bottom sags; again, one does not quite know where to fix the blame. The first-scene trio flops badly; instead of pulling us into the dramatic situation, it simply stands as a gap between "*Celeste Aida*" and the King's entrance. Curiously, this failure seems to stem from an eagerness to stage the scene intelligibly and dramatically. Many of the lines in this scene are asides—each character is expressing his thoughts and feelings to himself. The London recording tries to convey this in aural terms—the lines are sung inwardly. The logic of this approach is fine, but the results aren't. When we add this overcareful approach to the asides to the relatively deliberate tempos, and then to London's habit of stationing the soloists at a distance, we realize why the scene produces so little effect, has so little presence.

These are the things one must accept with this very consistent carrying-out of Karajan's concept. Perhaps one or two of the observations relative to Toscanini's *Traviata* are not irrelevant; that is, granted that Karajan's general approach is perfectly valid, it is still not well suited to the singers, or the singers to it. Tebaldi, for example, is precisely not the soprano to carry this out—one would want a specialist in tonal shading, in textual nuance, in rhythmic precision, to keep a sense of movement in the lines. All the same, a reading to respect, and to listen to for the sheer beauty of the playing.

I was most impressed by Solti's performance when I first heard it, and still find it dynamic. The more closely I listen to it and compare it with the other significant readings on records, however, the less satisfying it seems—it is a trifle edgy and wearisome, not easy to live with. The Rome orchestra is, of course, a healthy cut below either the NBC or the Vienna Philharmonic. Still, does the brass have to sound quite this harsh throughout the performance, and must the crescendos in the Prelude sound quite so blatant? It is good to hear the dances rendered with such fire and point, and to hear so distinctly the choral commentary on pp. 167-69, where the soloists are recapitulating "*Ma tu, Re.*" On the other hand, the precipitate fashion in which some of the climaxes are built seems to me a rather artificial way of producing excitement—two small examples are the last three staves on p. 111, leading into the opening chorus of the Triumphal Scene, and the final bars of

this same chorus (*"Gloria al Re', Inni festosi"* on pp. 114-15). In both cases, the instruction is *"cresc. e stringendo poco a poco,"* which I think Solti has exaggerated. Again, though, we have a conductor with quite definite and recognizable ideas about the score, consistently carried out and well executed, and it might be added that he has secured fine work from his strong cast.

In Serafin's performance for Angel, the corners are not so sharp. The tempos sound moderate, the playing is smooth and polished. There is occasional limpness in the choral attack—the entrance of the first tenors on p. 71 (*"Nume, custode vindice"*) is weak (the Scala tenors in general do not make an especially good showing), and the choral return to *"Gloria all' Egitto"* on p. 180 is somewhat sloppy and feeble. I find that most of my uneasy feelings about the performance center around the Triumphal Scene—Amonasro's *"Ma tu, Re"* does not flow quite naturally into the succeeding ensemble, for instance (p. 154), and the playing and choral singing in this scene are not quite as tightly pulled together as elsewhere. (The ballet is an exception—it is beautifully played.) But of how many readings can it be said that the conductor almost never seems to intrude between the music and the listener? That, I think, is the virtue of Serafin's performance.

There are no extensive cuts on any of these recordings, though both Cetra I and II omit some of the ballet music, and various practices are followed for the little double-time section at the end of the Radames/Amneris duet (p. 275, line 2). Cetra II makes the unforgivable omission of all the vocal lines between Amonasro's *"Muori!"* and Radames' *"Sacerdote, io resto a te!"* at the end of the Nile Scene, thereby dropping some of the most effective declamatory lines ever written by the composer. Filippeschi does not sing *"Dessa!"* at Aida's first entrance, probably simply because he missed his cue; in the Judgment Scene, Norman Scott, the Ramfis of the Toscanini recording, sings the third accusation in place of the second, then repeats it—also a simple mistake, I suppose.

Although a number of the world's best sopranos have recorded the title role, it really has not fared too well on complete recordings; in several instances, the singers have been below their best, and the role allows no leeway for vocal problems of any sort. The one big exception is Price (RCA Victor IV), whose account of the part is so satisfactory—vocally, musically, and interpretatively—as to seem almost ideal. The only vocal weakness lies in the low register, which is lacking in richness and often sounds dry—it is the danger signal in her singing at present. Otherwise, hers is the model Aida voice—fragile and soft, yet dark and strong when it needs to be. The freedom of the upper voice allows her a choice of effects, and enables her to follow the dynamic instructions—listen to the stunning ascent to B flat on *"Fuggire!"* at the end of the Nile Scene duet. Musically, she is impeccable—and here I do not mean merely that she recognizes note values and renders them. She is one of those rare singers who sends her voice straight to the target; when she must sing *"padre, pietà!"* F sharp, B natural—this is precisely what she does, exactly on pitch and in time. It is really most unusual: there are any number of sopranos of whom you cannot say that they are off pitch or out of time, or that the vocal quality is poor—yet somehow they are not really quite 100 per cent. With Price, there seems to be no gap between the concept and the execution of a sound—it seems that her voice can operate right along with her mind. Of course, we cannot separate the musical from the vocal. Callas has this same ability, except that her vocal problems are constantly interposing themselves at exposed points.

Nor can we separate the musical and vocal from the interpretative talents of a singer. In Price's case, these are remarkably adapted to the role of Aida, and her recorded Aida is much superior to her recorded Leonora. When she sings *"Fuggire!"* to Radames (p. 239), the inflection is truly that of a woman planting a suggestion; she is equally specific and personal when she almost contemptuously asks Radames how he plans to outmaneuver Amneris, the King, the people, and the priests (p. 235). She also has the gift of simplicity, as in her beautifully defined carrying of the melody in the *"Ma tu, Re"* ensemble. Just what it is about all this that makes it add up to a great performance is difficult to define, but it is apparent in the most direct, uncomplicated line in the score—*"Ciel! mio padre!"* (p. 216).

Three other sopranos—Callas, Milanov, and Tebaldi—bring unusual qualities to this part, though I think none of them reaches Price's level. Callas' strengths and weaknesses (Angel) are evident right from the start. Her entrance line (*"Ohimè! di guerra fremere,"* p. 19) is an extreme example of the hooded, somewhat gummy vocal quality so typical of her middle range. But hooded tone or no, it is a most unusual soprano who takes the top line in the ensuing trio with such marked rhythmic pulse, such firm line, who recognizes that a quick, clean rendering of the descending quarter-note figure (top line, p. 28) is the key to the number's conclusion. Her *"Ritorna vincitor!"* is amply dramatic; one could wish for a prettier, rounder tone for *"Numi, pietà,"* but the feeling is always right, and lines such as *"Sventurata, che dissi?"* are most moving. (Her tone color when she asks Amonasro who might be able to discover the path the Egyptians will take—*"Chi mai?"* bottom of p. 222—is ingenious in its projection of the idea that Aida really has no notion who it could be.) In general, she is in healthy enough voice to meet the role's demands, if some harsh, wobbly high notes can be excused.

Among Milanov's complete recordings, Aida (RCA Victor III) is one of her better-sung roles, but the set was made, I should say, just a couple of years late to catch her at her best—or perhaps she simply was not in top form at the recording sessions. The *"O patria mia"* is the highlight of her performance here, and it is almost worth the album's price to hear the wonderful little swerve up to the final *pianissimo* A; the whole aria, in fact, is an expertly controlled piece of singing. There is, though, a good deal of mouthy tone, particularly in the lower range, and a lot that is rather spread and unfocused—the same line that Callas etches so firmly in the Act I trio is badly smudged here. Milanov also tends to hang back on the tempo, especially in the interview with Amneris; fortunately, Perlea keeps things moving. It is not by any means bad vocalism, but it is not Milanov at her very best.

Tebaldi has recorded the role twice, on London I (now Richmond) and London II. Her first effort found her in consid-

erably fresher voice than her second. Only once or twice does she catch a high note by its underside, and she creates many limpid, lovely effects—a wonderfully sweet tone where she carries the voice onto *"o verdi colli"* (top of 212), for instance, and an exquisite floating of *"Là tra le foreste vergini."* For consistently beautiful sound, this is the finest Aida recorded; interpretatively, it is somewhat generalized, and musically it is not especially sharp, though I think some of the blame may be charged to Erede. The second version offers a more dynamic approach to some of the dramatic sections, such as the opening of *"Ritorna vincitor!"* or the beginning of the Nile duet with Radames (pp. 233-36). But the voice is not so free, nor the pitch so secure, and too much of her work is mere good-sounding vocalization, without any special point and sometimes tired, as in the *"Numi, pietà"* prayer at the close of the first scene. This is not, I think, invariably her fault; the passage beginning with *"Amore, amore"* in the scene with Amneris (p. 93) would be difficult for anyone to animate at the pace Karajan has chosen, which hardly seems an *allegro animato* even in relation to the surrounding sections.

The other Aidas on record with at least some moments of interest are Caniglia and Mancini. Caniglia had slipped by the date of the RCA Victor recording (1946, LCT 6400, later reissued as LVT 4000—both deleted but available in Italy on Voce del Padrone QALP 10010/13), and it is hard to warm up to a performance in which nearly every note from A upward is well below pitch, the *piano* tone usually precarious, and the declamatory passages rendered in a jerky, pecking fashion. On occasion, though, the solid, bright tone of the singer's younger voice cuts through, and her sense of dramatic projection illumines passages where the vocal demands are not too great—the *"Qui Radames verrà"* recitative before *"O patria mia"* (pp. 209-10) is an example. Mancini (Cetra 1) is very uneven vocally, with a poorly controlled top. But she does everything with great conviction, and turns up some interesting inflections as in her *"Che parli?"* to Amneris (p. 96, where she manages to suggest that Aida already senses she is being betrayed). Mancini's is not what one could call an Aida of first caliber, but it is one that can be respected and enjoyed.

Among the recorded excerpts from this role, I should like to call attention to the interpretations of Rethberg and Ponselle, either of whose instruments might justifiably be regarded as the "perfect" Aida voice. Rethberg's was gleaming, even, splendidly focused; it had the flexibility and purity to deal with Handel and Bach, the size and thrust for Wagner. Her *"Ritorna vincitor!"* has been issued on ASCO A115, a good cross section of her early recordings. Its middle section is rushed, and the *"I sacri nomi"* passage is omitted, but if you wish to hear some perfect legato singing, I refer you to the section beginning *"E l'amor mio? Dunque scordar poss' io?"* It couldn't be better. Two versions of her *"O patria mia"* have been transferred to LP. The earlier one, on the same ASCO disc, is acoustical, and begins with the aria itself; the second, electrical, on RCA Victor LCT 1006 (deleted), includes the recitative but only one verse of the aria. Both are very fine. They offer an interesting contrast in the approach to the high C: on the earlier version, she takes a bit off the top of the phrase, producing a very well

controlled sound at a moderate dynamic; on the electrical version, she opens it out for a *forte* climax, and an exciting one. Her voicing of the recitative, incidentally, is exemplary. Her splendid Nile Scene 78s (with De Luca and Lauri-Volpi) have not, as far as I know, been pressed on LP.

Ponselle actually did not sing Aida often at the Metropolitan, which seems strange, since the timbre and range of her voice suited her so well to the part. She did, however, record the Nile Scene duet and the final scene with Martinelli. The Nile duet has been available on both RCA Camden CBL 100 (the two-disc Ponselle album) and RCA Victor LCT 1035, deleted (the "Aida of Yesterday" collection). Recorded in 1924, it finds Martinelli in fresh, ringing voice, and Ponselle in similar prime condition. Her *"Là tra le foreste,"* round and even, is especially fine. In the final duet (available for a time on RCA Victor LCT 1004 and still to be had as an import from England, RCA Camden CDN 5105) both artists sing with an incomparable legato flow and amazing ease in molding of the line. Though Martinelli's tone is, as usual, somewhat steely, he has amazing control over it—listen to the clarity of the enunciation on the repeated A flats of *"degli anni tuoi nel fiore"* (p. 299). These recordings are classics.

The role of Amneris, Verdi's greatest for the mezzo-soprano voice and nearly an equal to the title role in terms of its challenges and opportunities, has, surprisingly, been coped with most successfully on most of the complete recordings. I will pass quickly over the abortive effort of Eva Gustafson in the Toscanini performance, and over that of Miriam Pirazzini (Cetra II), which is adequate and musicianly, but not quite top-drawer. The best Amneris of them all is also the most recent—Rita Gorr's (RCA Victor IV). She is, in fact, the only recorded Amneris who can maintain a perfectly even scale from one end of the role's compass to the other, with no artificial-sounding adjustments of position or breaks between registers. The imperious, rich sound of the voice, with its gleaming dramatic soprano top, is wedded to the sort of temperament that can convey the role's nobility—she can, for instance, project the Judgment Scene as a tragic grand scene in the classical tradition rather than as twenty minutes of scenery chewing. The sheer solidity of the voice, combined with her magisterial concept of the music, makes all the difference in a moment like *"Trema, vil schiava!"* (p. 101) or that of the simple command *"Guardie! Radames qui venga"* (p. 261). On the other hand, she can project the broken, feminine quality of *"E in poter di costoro io stesso lo gettai"* (p. 279). There is never a moment when she seems extended; she does not have to rant, she can merely unloose the flood.

Three prominent mezzos have each recorded Amneris twice: Stignani (RCA Victor I and London I), Simionato (Cetra I and London II), and Barbieri (RCA Victor III and Angel). Since I am a great admirer of Stignani's, I am a bit surprised to find myself relatively unimpressed by either of her attempts. Curiously, the voice, which was a great one, does not seem of sufficient caliber, especially in the middle range; these recordings compare very poorly with her prewar 78s. I do not mean that she actually *sings* badly—few veterans of her

years could summon so much fresh, round tone for the Judgment Scene. But the role needs more bite, more body, and fewer tricks—I, for one, grow very tired of listening to the vowel "*a*" blandly substituted for "*e*" on all but a few selected pitches and of hearing the words mouthed as if they contained no consonants. All this comes under the heading of "technique," I suppose, and if it enabled her to extend her career, well and good. But it smacks of what the Army would term "field expedient." By and large, she sounds a shade fresher, less gimmicky, and more even on the earlier Victor recording than on the London—but only a shade.

Simionato is always intelligent, musical, and vocally impressive, except for some wobbliness in the lower-middle area of her range. Her high voice is expertly focused, and serves her well at places like "*e apprenderai se lottar tu puoi con me*" at the end of the Amneris/Aida scene (p. 109). On both recordings, she is immensely effective in the duet with Radames—she has a fine sense for capturing the pulse of a phrase and keeping it going. There is remarkably little vocal difference in the two recordings (which are separated by eight or nine years); musically and interpretatively, I think she is a bit more refined in the London edition, though she is not always served well by the recording (we cannot even hear the important line "*In poter nostro!*" at Amonasro's entrance, p. 151).

Barbieri does not always sound terribly regal, with her booming raw chest tones, but her voice has power and punch, and the right sort of lush quality. She uses the chest tone for good effect at points where venom or weight are called for (e.g., "*Trema! in cor ti lessi!*"); and on the Victor recording (which is the better of her two efforts) she brings to the "*Ah, vieni*" lines at the opening of Act II the kind of voluptuous expansion that has always seemed right to me, but which is so seldom attempted—with the billowy choral lines in the background, the passage creates a languorous *Samson et Dalila* feeling. In general, a strong, dynamic unsubtle performance that carries considerable conviction.

The only section of the role to have received much attention as an excerpt is the Act IV duet with Radames. Three of the transferred recordings are interesting in that they afford an idea of what the role used to sound like when it was sung by true contraltos. These are the Louise Homer/Caruso (RCA Victor LCT 1035, deleted), Emmy Leisner/Roswaenge (Classic Editions (CE 8), and Margarete Ober/Melchior (ASCO A121) versions. A version with Sabine Kalter and Richard Tauber, in German, has also been available on Eterna's Tauber recital (Eterna 742); I have not heard it for several years, and do not feel qualified to comment on it. Contraltos are few and far between these days, and such as they are, they do not sing Amneris. From my observation, many modern listeners do not care for the sound of these older recordings: a contralto, even a good one, begins to falter around the high A flat, and of course acoustical recordings did not do well by the high female range. However, I think there is something to be said for the dark, full sound of a well-trained contralto, who does not have to push to make an effect in the lower register. Homer's virtues are well known to collectors; this is not one of her best record-

ings—her high voice, in particular, has sounded better elsewhere—but her smooth legato and sumptuous tone are here and of course tenor partners don't come much better than Caruso. (It may be that a copy of the 78 original would produce better results—transfers frequently filter the high frequencies.)

The other two versions are in German, and both first-rate. Both these contraltos are a bit shy at the top, but both have voices of real caliber; Leisner's sounds the lusher of the two here. Both Roswaenge and Melchior are very fine—Melchior's noble, virile, smooth account of the music (from his pre-Siegfried days, of course) is especially exciting. The use of German does not seem very obtrusive on these recordings.

There is also a version with Jeanne Gordon and Martinelli, in Italian, on ASCO A116. Gordon is more of a mezzo, competent but not exceptional; Martinelli is really vibrant and heroic. The recording is quite poor. The dark, dramatic voice of Zenatello serves the music well on Olympus ORL 209. Like so many tenors of his time he is able to produce heroic tone without sacrificing smoothness of line or clarity of enunciation. This edition is somewhat cut and is piano-accompanied; the mezzo, Frascani, is uneven but able to encompass the music.

To the tenors. *"Celeste Aida"* is such a famous "test" aria—and is representative enough of Radames' music—that some fairly close comparisons are in order. I should begin by saying that the Gigli and Corelli renditions of the aria are not fair bases for judging these singers' performances as a whole. Gigli (RCA Victor I) does by far his best work in the aria, where only a certain heaviness and a tendency to open vowels indicate that a fifty-six-year-old tenor is singing. The rest of his interpretation is sadly below his prewar standard vocally, and it is disfigured by some of his annoying mannerisms (the use of a syrupy croon in the final duet, a really dislikable snicker after *"Fuggire!"* in the Nile Scene). In the case of Corelli (Cetra II, made several years ago), the aria is the least impressive example of his work, heavy and uncertain technically. His is really the most suitable Radames tenor recorded, and the recording is worth its price just to hear his ringing, healthy dramatic voice ranging easily over the music. (Don't let them tell you he can't sing legato—his vocalism has a very firm line, and he controls the final duet extremely well.)

One more note: I do not find it apposite to give tenors low grades for singing the final B flat loudly. I know it is marked *pppp* and I know that is appropriate; but I also know that this is practically impossible for a dramatic tenor without his lapsing into an unconvincing half-voice. If the singer can approach it smoothly, without leaping at it, the results will not be ruinous. For those more insistent than I, there is the early piano-accompanied Caruso version (Angel COLH 119), with a really remarkable soft B flat.

"Celeste Aida" is a lyrical daydream, as is indicated not only by the text but by the gently rising line of the melody and the murmuring of the accompaniment. Three of the tenors seem to understand this and to convey some of that feeling: Bjoerling, Bergonzi, and Vickers. Bjoerling's (RCA Victor III) is the most satisfactory all-round account; the melody is given a lovely, tender treatment, with particularly beautiful handling of the F sharps at the top of the third phrase. The voice moves easily, flowingly, turns no sharp corners. My only objections are to the permissive handling of the recitative (*"Se quel guerrier io fossi"* is quite out of time, the *"Se"* being held much too long, and the A flat on *"vinto"* is held for roughly three times its value—unnecessary departures) and to the rather determined way of going into the Gs on *"Tu sei regina,"* which momentarily disturbs the lyrical grace of his approach. Bergonzi's treatment (London II) is also smooth and sensitive. The sheer quality of his voice is not as fine as Bjoerling's, but it's certainly pleasant. I am more bothered by occasional stylistic lapses: e.g., after making a lovely effect with the difficult attack on *"E a te mia dolce Aida"* in the recitative, he loses the gained ground by smearing the downward line into a series of slurred notes—he does it again with *"un regal serto sul crin posarti,"* on p. 11, line 2. Interestingly, the same note is involved each time—F sharp in the recitative, G flat in the aria, just on the upper edge of the tenor "break." This kind of thing is not criminal, but disappointing from a singer of Bergonzi's ability and taste.

Vickers (RCA Victor IV) captures the feeling of the aria well, though the voice is a trifle mushy and not very Italianate. Perhaps he tries a bit too hard for a careful, sensitive treatment; he is reluctant to follow the crescendo marking at *"sei lo splendor."* Like most tenors, he is not overly comfortable on the Fs at the top of the phrase. His final B flat is interesting—a very heady tone at moderate volume.

Tucker (RCA Victor II and Angel) is firm, reliable, secure, and rather lacking in charm or any sense of romantic lyricism—his resonant, well-schooled voice moves in a four-square, no-nonsense fashion from note to note. His voice is a bit brighter and freer on the Victor recording; in both cases, the upper register has its usual invigorating ring. Del Monaco (London I, now Richmond) sings three fine, stentorian B flats.

These comments will, I think, serve to characterize fairly the complete presentations of these tenors. Bjoerling's is incomparably smooth and beautiful in sound, and impeccable in taste if a shade light in caliber. His *dolcissimo* B flat on *"il ciel de' nostri amori"* (top of p. 242) is one of the most stunning bits of singing on records, and the final duet is just about perfect. Vickers' big, somewhat spread tone sounds odd in much of this music—he cannot cut through the ensembles, and does not sing a real Italian legato in the duet with Amneris. But he is imaginative, musical, and controlled—the last scene contains some very poised singing. Bergonzi, not

ideally endowed for the heroic passages, marshals his resources cleverly and phrases well. Tucker is solid and often exciting on top. He is somewhat better on the Toscanini edition; the final scene, especially, is superior to the later recording, which is less lyrically vocalized and more generously emotionalized in an exaggerated fashion.

In addition to the tenor excerpts already noted above, there are scores of versions of *"Celeste Aida."* Those of Caruso and Martinelli possess those singers' familiar qualities—I refer now to the later, orchestrally accompanied Caruso version, with the *forte* B flat (RCA Victor SP 3375, the bonus disc cited in the discussion of *Trovatore* excerpts); and Bjoerling's 1936 performance (Capitol G 7248) is even more flowing and more brilliant than that on the complete set (but what a remarkable similarity over a twenty-year span!).

I should like to call attention also to the interesting McCormack performance (Eterna 731) with its bell-like enunciation and absolute clarity of tone—the voice of the young McCormack does not sound as light as one might suppose. Leo Slezak's version (Eterna 733), in German, is somewhat heavy-sounding for my taste, and afflicted on sustained tones with a slight slow beat; but his rendition of the return to the melody, taken in a melting mezza-voce, is superb.

The rather short but extremely important role of Amonasro is not vocally overdemanding for a generous-voiced baritone, but the dramatic aspects of the part are so important that even a very well-sung interpretation can fall considerably short of the desired effect. That of Cornell MacNeil (London II), for example, though quite sumptuously vocalized, has no dramatic vitality at all. (Again, Karajan's deliberate approach does the singer no good. But listen to *"E trono, e patria, e amor, tutto avrai,"* bottom of p. 217, where a singer is bound to indicate his interpretative tendencies—MacNeil is completely neutral, inflectionless.) The only really gripping Amonasro is Angel's Gobbi, and he is immense. Since the role does not lie high in relation to the other Verdi baritone parts, it creates only one or two uncomfortable moments for this singer, and he makes us forget them with his impassioned, almost terrifying voicing of the great Nile Scene duet. Since Callas is also excellent in this passage, the father/daughter scene takes on the air of reality and builds to wonderful climaxes at *"De' Faraoni tu sei la schiava!"* and *"O patria, quanto mi costi!"*

Gino Bechi (RCA Victor I) is not long on musical or interpretative niceties, but when this set was recorded he still owned one of the great Italian baritone voices, with a rock-steady, wide-open high range as its special glory. He sometimes sounds mean when he should not (*"Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate,"* for instance), but he thunders through the big moments most impressively. He is the genuine article, as opposed to Guelfi (Cetra II), who labors hard with his big voice but produces a weighted sort of tone.

Leonard Warren (RCA Victor III) gets off on the wrong foot by misreading his first line, *"Non mi tradir,"* which he distorts musically so as to put the emphasis on *"mi."* He also sounds fussy and shaky in some of the declamatory moments—*"D'Aida il padre e degli Ethiopii il Re"* (p. 250) is so exaggeratedly enunciated as to sound like a

denture problem. But when the line moves along in a cantabile way, he is superb—*"Ma tu, Re"* has a wonderful velvety ease. Merrill (RCA Victor IV) sings through the role easily, richly, and fairly straightforwardly, barring an occasional bit of poorly judged hectoring (one can indicate rage or defiance by coloring the tone rather than shouting, as Gobbi demonstrates). The other Amonasros do not seem to me really to fill out the role, though I like the way Aldo Protti (London I) renders *"Intendi?"* when suggesting that Aida pry the secret from Radames—it is a softly spoken question. And Giuseppe Valdengo (RCA Victor II) is smooth and professional, if not quite dominating enough.

Scotti has a dark, noble-sounding version of Amonasro's entrance, starting with *"Suo padre!"* and continuing through *"Ma tu, Re"* and preceded by a spoken announcement (Rococo R 35). This excerpt was taken from an Edison original. Pasquale Amato recorded the Nile Scene duet twice, once with Esther Mazzoleni (Eterna 482) and once with Johanna Gadski (RCA Victor LCT 1035, deleted). These are among his finest recordings, brilliant vocally, powerful interpretatively. He is in marginally better form on the Mazzoleni version, but Gadski is much the better partner.

Ramfis has been rather consistently ill cast, with even front-rank singers somehow not achieving their best for the role. Christoff (RCA Victor III), for example, pushes his gravelly voice mercilessly; Tozzi (RCA Victor IV), possibly a shade light in any case, is often merely maddeningly close to the proper pitch, and he makes some very ill-advised efforts at "dramatic emphasis" during the accusations. Modesti (Angel), by and large no more than adequate, offers an interestingly restrained reading of the accusations, as if he were speaking them directly to Radames. It is Tancredi Pasero (RCA Victor I), with his fine sense of phrasing and his dark, absolutely even true bass, who shows us how the role should be done; listen to the magnificent, resonant legato of his *"Nume, custode vindice"* with its fine sense of expansion in the phrasing (*"Larga la frase,"* reads the instruction).

The Pinza/Martinelli recording of the Temple Scene (minus the dance) is available on import from England (RCA Camden CDN 5105). Martinelli is not heard to any special advantage, but Pinza's dark, rolling sonority is something to hear. I might point out that if one is able to assemble the various Martinelli excerpts, one can reconstruct practically his entire Radames.

There are several good Kings: Zaccaria (Angel) is possibly the best, but Antonio Massaria (Cetra I) and Clabassi (RCA Victor III and IV—somewhat more throaty on the latter) are very solid. Tajo (RCA Victor I) sounds light, but his handsome bass-baritone is welcome in this role. Another light, almost baritonal King is Denis Harbour (RCA Victor II); his singing has freedom and vitality, and is a definite asset to a vocally impoverished edition. Corena (London I and II) has dignity, but a fairly approximate way with the notes and no real smoothness of phrasing. It is surprising, by the way, what a large proportion of these basses do not possess a really secure low B, which is in the arsenal of any competent high baritone.

"The Collector's Verdi" will be continued in a forthcoming issue.

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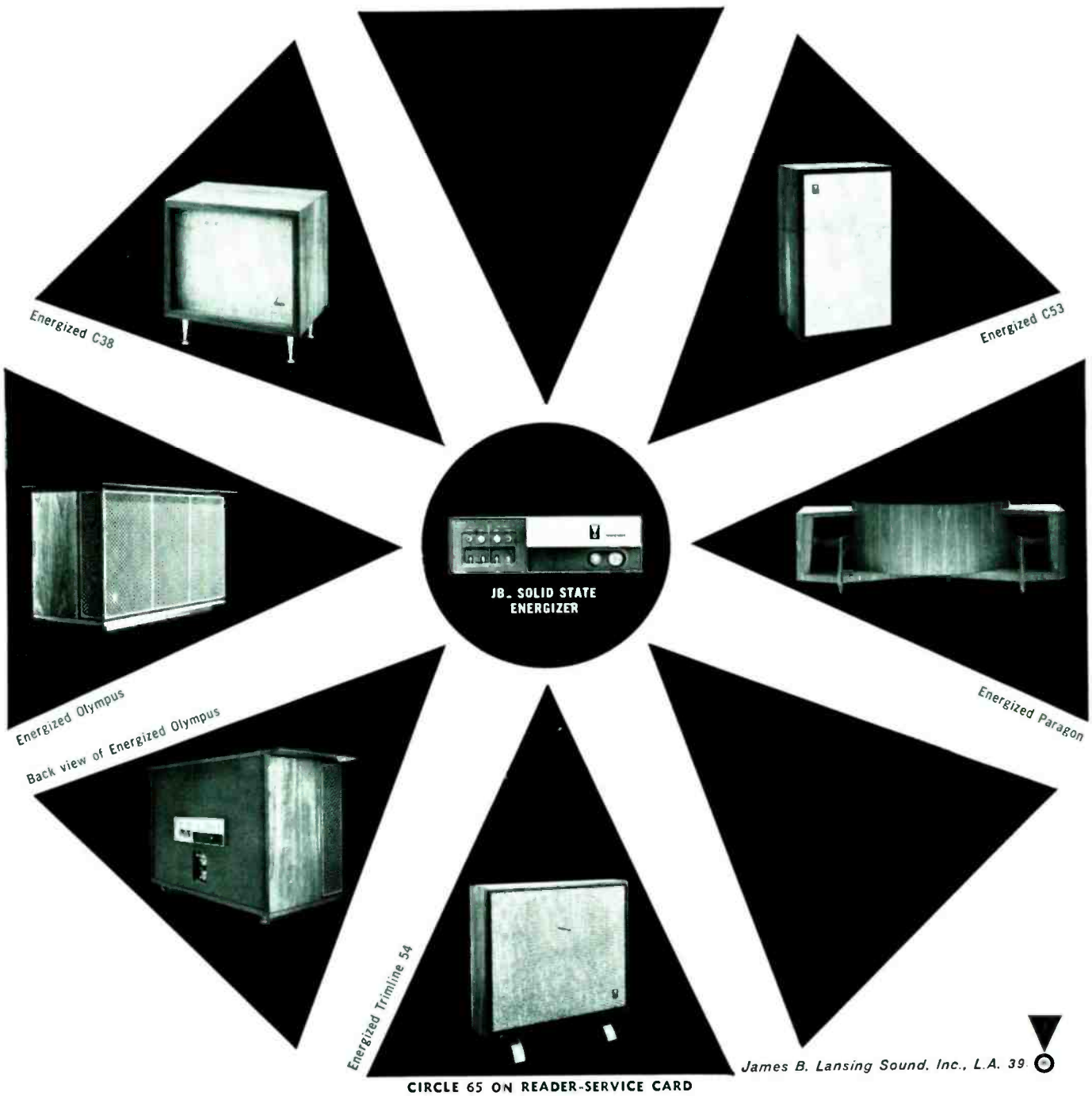


CIRCLE 65 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

RECORDS IN REVIEW

Continued from page 145

on a Theme by Clara Wieck, however, is beautifully—and simply—stated. I have nothing but praise, too, for the crystalline delivery of the Mendelssohn *Songs Without Words*, the florid, early Chopin work, and the innocuous little Moszkowski Etude.

Horowitz is, perhaps, the last of the great pianist-transcribers. True to the tradition of Beethoven and Liszt, his adaptation of the Saint-Saëns *Danse macabre* has freely altered various passages so that they may make their maximum impact in pianistic terms. His phrasing here is extremely flamboyant, and anyone looking for musical fulfillment had better be forewarned: this rendition is for external use only. On its own terms, it is a lot of fun.

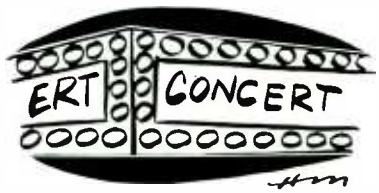
The recordings vary in time from 1942 (for the Saint-Saëns) to 1955 (for the Schumann Variations), with the bulk of the album dating from the mid- and late Forties. The majority of the items sound very respectable, and only the Barber selection is really badly reproduced. H.G.

BERNARD KRAINIS: *"Sweet Pipes"*

Bernard Krainis, recorder; Krainis Consort and Baroque Ensemble, Bernard Krainis, cond.

• COLUMBIA ML 5875. LP. $4.98.
• • COLUMBIA MS 6475. SD. $5.98.

Mr. Krainis, besides being a first-rate recorder player, is a canny program maker. He has got together here a collection of pieces extremely varied in form, in style, and in instrumentation. Since some of them are also of high quality, the disc will give, I think, a good deal of pleasure. The three longest works are from the baroque period: a Concerto in C for "flautino" by Vivaldi (P. 79), a Sonata *a 4* by Telemann, and a *Sonata pro Tabula* by Heinrich Biber. Of these, the Telemann, with two happy fast movements and an engaging slow one, and the Biber, for the interesting combination of five recorders and five strings, are especially attractive. The oldest pieces on the disc are a set of villancicos dating from the end of the fifteenth century, the youngest ones a Song for Unaccompanied Recorder by Edward Miller and *Eons Ago Blue* by Robert Dorough, both written recently. The Miller is a pleasantly meandering work; the Dorough starts out promisingly as a kind of "third stream" piece but then turns into a rather ordinary blues, cliché-ridden except for the delicate instrumentation. Other composers represented are John Bull, Frescobaldi, Johann Rosenmüller, and Orlando Gibbons. Mr. Krainis is ably assisted by an assortment of players (the bassoonist in the Rosenmüller does a particularly fine job), and the sound is excellent. N.B.



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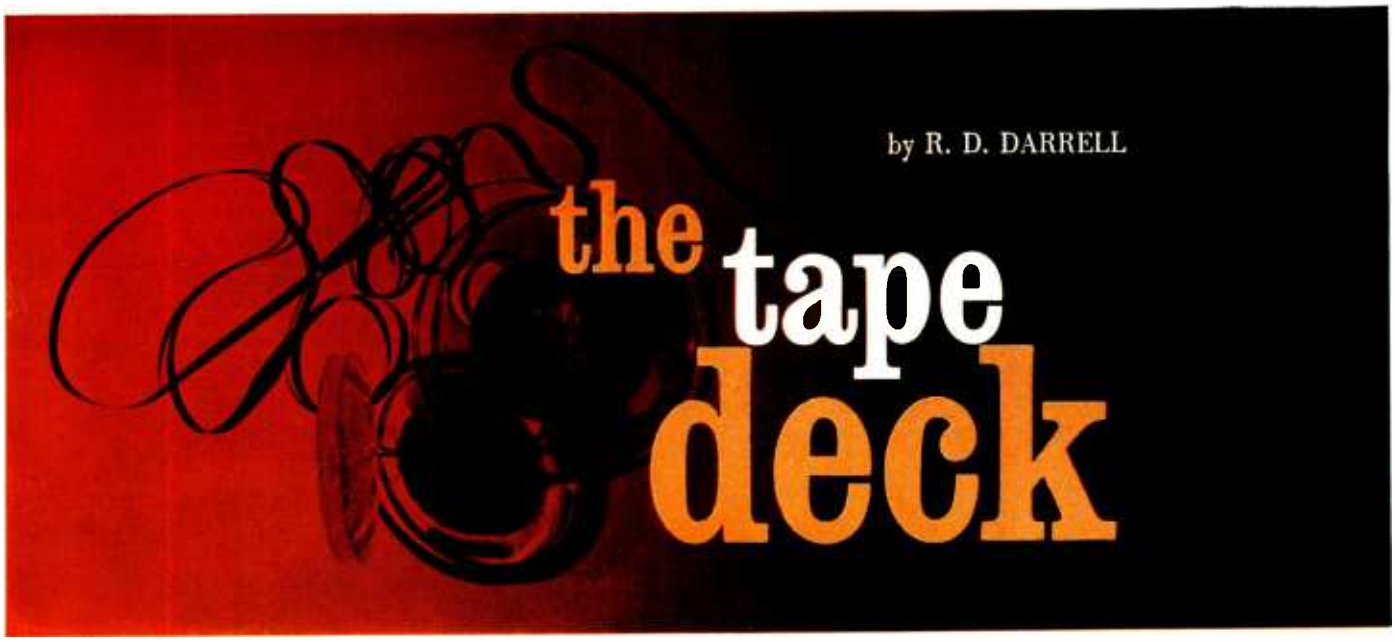

The following reviews are of 4-track 7.5-ips stereo tapes in normal reel form.

BEETHOVEN: *Christus am Oelberge, Op. 85*

Maria Stader, soprano; Jan Peerce, tenor; Otto Wiener, bass; Vienna Academy Chorus and State Opera Orchestra, Hermann Scherchen, cond.
• • WESTMINSTER WTC 160. 60 min. $7.95.

Apart from some fascinating foreshadowings of *Fidelio* here, and a very few moments of dramatic tension, this score—with which the composer himself was never satisfied—remains a museum curio. Scherchen and his extremely able soloists do their best to bring it to life; their performance may be a bit too emotional at times, but it hardly could be bettered. The recording is excellent for its stereo spacings and lucidity, though not outstanding otherwise; and the tape processing, except for the faintest possible suggestion of spill-over at the very beginning, is irreproachable. But unless you are an omnivorous Beethovenian, all the executant and technical merits here are scant compensation for the pervading dullness of the music itself.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Piano: No. 15, in D, Op. 28 ("Pastoral"); No. 26, in E flat, Op. 26 ("Les Adieux"); No. 30, in E, Op. 109; No. 32, in C minor, Op. 111*

Wilhelm Backhaus, piano.
• • LONDON LCK 80121 (twin-pack). 73 min. $11.95.

The scanty list of Beethoven sonatas on tape is now expanded by two fresh additions. The present twin-pack provides impressive testimony to the miraculously unimpaired pianistic skills of the nearly eighty-year-old soloist. And if Backhaus' robust, coolly objective readings may seem, to devout Schnabelites, somewhat lacking in romantic eloquence, they are always dramatically noble in the traditional grand manner. Best of all, the expertly controlled tonal qualities of these performances are captured with superb sonic authenticity in recordings which are notable in stereo for the genuine solidity and ring of a full (yet never over life-sized) concert grand piano. The tape processing is marred by a couple of perceptible spill-over whispers between selections on each side, but it is otherwise praiseworthy for minimal surface noise and absence of preëchoes.

COPLAND: *Appalachian Spring; Dance from "Music for the Theatre"; Danzón Cubano; El Salón México*

New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, cond.
• • COLUMBIA MQ 559. 46 min. $7.95.

Even tape collectors already familiar with Bernstein's affinity for Copland's music may be surprised by the warmth and restraint, in addition to the expected zest, he brings to the present diversified program. It is vividly recorded and admirably processed, and it boasts the attractions not only of the long awaited first taping of the popular *El Salón México* but those of two relatively unfamiliar dances, also hitherto untaped. The jaunty first dance may seem a bit dated now, but the longer, very piquantly rhythmed *Danzón Cubano* is a special bonus for tape collectors. (It apparently was not included in the disc version, released just a year ago, of the other works in the present program.) The great *Appalachian Spring* ballet has been taped before (by Susskind for Everest/Alphatape, July 1959), but although that version remains a fine one and is by no means technically outdated, Bernstein's is both more idiomatic and less self-consciously expressive.

HINDEMITH: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*
†Bruch: *Scottish Fantasia, Op. 46*

David Oistrakh, violin; London Symphony Orchestra, Paul Hindemith, cond. (in the Hindemith); Jascha Horenstein, cond. (in the Bruch).
• • LONDON LCL 80119. 60 min. $7.95.

In the past, Hindemith's music has more often commanded my respect than genuine liking, but now that the composer has become less austere as a conductor of his own works he convinces me for the first time that his violin concerto of 1939-40 is not the intellectual exercise I once thought it to be—not, at least, when it is performed with such grace, tenderness, and dramatic tension.

There is, of course, more overt romanticism in the familiar Bruch divertissement, though far less originality. Oistrakh makes the most of the expressive elements, and so do the engineers, who have recorded both works with the most translucent of stereoism and an ideal equilibrium between orchestra and soloist. The only adverse criticism possible here is that the otherwise well-processed tape admits a couple of spill-over intrusions in the Hindemith side of my review copy.

As for comparisons between Oistrakh's Bruch and that by Heifetz for RCA Victor last January: how could anybody possibly label one of these supreme virtuosos "better" than the other? I still prefer the Heifetz version because of its greater animation and less nearly overripe expressiveness, but the Oistrakh performance is matchless of its more romantic kind. In any case, no connoisseur of violin concertos can afford to miss the present tape, if only for its inclusion of Hindemith's contribution to the genre.

HOLST: *Hymn of Jesus, Op. 37; Ballet music from "The Perfect Fool," Op. 39; Egdon Heath, Op. 47*

BBC Chorus and BBC Symphony Orchestra (in Op. 37); London Philharmonic (in Op. 39 and Op. 47), Sir Adrian Boult, cond.
• • LONDON LCL 80117. 45 min. $7.95.

Apart from *The Planets, The Perfect Fool* ballet music, and the folk-song suites, the music of Gustav Holst has never caught on in this country. But its admirers may find this representative reel a powerful magnet for attracting new converts. To any listener acute enough to recognize the originality un-

Continued on next page

THE TAPE DECK

Continued from preceding page

derlying idioms that no longer seem as modern as they did in the post-World War I era, *The Hymn of Jesus* can be a profoundly moving experience. The less ambitious *Egdon Heath*, too, is an evocative tone poem which captures the brooding atmosphere of Thomas Hardy's countryside. Except for some unintelligibility in the choral enunciation (particularly unfortunate because the hymn text drawn from the Apochryphal Acts of St. John is not included here), the performances could scarcely be bettered. Neither could the spaciously stereogenic recording or flawless tape processing. The program, with fine notes by Holst's daughter, fills several important gaps in the tape catalogue. It may well provide venturesome American listeners with an entirely new appreciation of a composer who has been justly honored, so far, only in his own country.

MOZART: *Maurerische Trauermusik, K. 477. Overtures: Così fan tutte, Le Nozze di Figaro, Der Schauspiel-direktor, Die Zauberflöte. Serenade for Strings, No. 15, in G, K. 525 ("Eine kleine Nachtmusik")*

Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter, cond.
• • COLUMBIA MQ 543. 45 min. $7.95.

Everything blends miraculously to make this reel a matchless memorial to the personality as well as to the artistry of the late Bruno Walter. Except for his ingratiating *Kleine Nachtmusik* (the finest full-string-choir version), all the works here were recorded at his last studio session in Hollywood, in March 1961. But more significantly, this last appearance before the microphones found Dr. Walter's players at the very peak of their powers—enthusiastic and communicative, and (as always under Walter's direction) warmly expressive. Moreover, the recording engineers served him better than ever before in providing spaciously authentic re-creations of the graciously colored performances. Apart from a few slight preëchoes, the tape processing is first-rate. Walter was unexcelled in persuading audiences to share his love for these small Mozartean gems. Besides the familiar Serenade, there are four blithe overtures. plus the poignant *Masonic Funeral Music*. This alone, perhaps even more than most of the bigger works in Walter's recorded legacy, serves as a living remembrance of one of the most endearing musical mentors of our time.

PERGOLESI: *Concertini for Strings: No. 2, in G; No. 3, in A; No. 4, in F minor. Concerto for Flute and Strings, in F*

André Jaunet, flute (in the Concerto); Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Edmond de Stoutz, cond.
• • VANGUARD VTC 1665. 47 min. $7.95.

This is Volume I of a two-disc series devoted to the six concertini most conveniently attributed to Pergolesi and to two flute concertos by the same composer. Of the present installment, only the Concertino No. 2 has been taped before (in the current "Notturno" reel by I Solisti di Zagreb, also for Vanguard). If De Stoutz's approach to it and to the other works here is more romantically expressive, and at times more nervously tense, than Janigro's, his performance is engagingly songful throughout and often blithely exhilarating in beautifully pure, sweet, and "live" recording. Even the lightweight flute concerto has zestfulness in its livelier moments and haunting loveliness in its *Adagio*—qualities captured to perfection in Jaunet's cool-toned playing of the solo part. The musical magic here may be a bit too delicate and thin-spun for some tastes, but every connoisseur of baroque music will treasure it.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval, Op. 9; Fantasiestücke, Op. 12*

Artur Rubinstein, piano.
• • RCA VICTOR FTC 2150. 58 min. $8.95.

Since neither of these works has been available on tape before, and since the performance and the Dynagroove recording have been rapturously praised by disc reviewers, it might be enough here merely to note that the tape version is aurally indistinguishable from the disc counterpart, even down to a couple of very slight Side A preëchoes. (Curiously, a Side B disc preëcho has been eliminated on the second tape side; on the other hand there may be a fractional bit more background noise in the quietest passages than there was in a first disc playing.) But I can't help voicing a mild, wholly subjective minority demurrer regarding performance and quality of sound: the tremendously virtuosic and extroverted Schumann heard here reveals little of his more characteristic dreaminess and sheer fancifulness; and while the closely miked, extremely powerful recording is indeed mightily impressive, either it or Rubinstein's own vehemence is responsible for a certain hardness in piano tone—which *rings* much more than it *sings*. Even so, I myself find it hard to resist Rubinstein's éclat in *Traumeswirren*, *In der Nacht*, and the showier moments of *Carnaval*.

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 4, in D minor, Op. 120*
†Beethoven: *Symphony No. 8, in F, Op. 93*

Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell, cond.
• • EPIC EC 831. 52 min. $7.95.

Even before my plea for Szell's Schumann Fourth appeared in print (August 1963), this reel arrived to meet the long felt need for a first tape edition. The performance is one fully worthy of the finest contemporary exponent of Schumann's orchestral works (and, of course, the music itself makes the liveliest immediate appeal of any of the four symphonies). The recording is satisfactorily robust, if sometimes italicizing a slight edginess of string tone; and the tape processing is competent, if not quite as quiet-surfaced and preëcho-free as that of the Second Symphony. The Beethoven Eighth, however, while perhaps superior technically, is treated so boldly and resoundingly that it is likely to please those who like all their Beethoven "big" rather than those who, like myself, prefer a lighter, more humorous touch in this delectable "little" symphony. In any case, its choice as a Schumann coupling is not particularly appropriate.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 5, in D, Op. 47*

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Istvan Kertesz, cond.
• • LONDON LCL 80113. 42 min. $7.95.

Kertesz's reading makes much of the brooding elegiac qualities of the first movement, but not of the eloquent depths of the long Largo or the galvanic excitements of the finale. The richly colored timbres and sonorities of the Swiss orchestra are very beautifully recorded (if perhaps with not quite as much reverberance as the score warrants). But against the advantages of purer sonics, minimal surface noise, and complete freedom from the slight spill-overs that flawed both the earlier Bernstein/Columbia and Stokowski/Everest tapings, one must weigh Bernstein's far greater dramatic forcefulness and overwhelming impact. Listeners with a tendency toward introversion may find the new performance more immediately acceptable than the others, but if they choose it they will inevitably miss many of the work's most distinctive profundities and thrills.

WAGNER: *"The Glorious Sound of Wagner"*

Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, cond.
• • COLUMBIA MQ 552. 49 min. $7.95.

If ever a come-on program title were fully justified, it is here. The Philadelphian string and brass choirs are captured in incandescent and panoramically broad-spread stereoism. Unfortunately, Wagner connoisseurs will be unlikely to share the enthusiasm of sheer sound-fanciers—at least in the *Tannhäuser* Overture and Venusberg Music (without voices) and the *Siegfried* "Forest Murmurs." For the former they will cling steadfastly to the January 1961 Stokowski/RCA Victor taping; for the latter, the July 1963 Klemperer for Angel. Everyone, however, should welcome the present first tape edition of the Act III Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and prefer Ormandy's Act III *Lohengrin* Prelude and *Meistersinger* Dance of the Apprentices and Entry of the Mastersingers to those by Leinsdorf in a Capitol 4-track reissue of a 1958 2-track release. But whatever your tastes may be, the luscious aural appeals of the recorded performances here can't be minimized.

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM: *"Lollipops," Vol. II*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham, cond.
• • ANGEL ZS 35865. 40 min. $7.98.

This miscellany of Beecham's favorite encore pieces (only the second representation of the conductor on tape) is an ideal addition, musically and programmatically, to every reel library. Here are four tape firsts: an Entr'acte from Mozart's *Thamos*, the brooding *Sommeil de Juliette* from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, the superbly lilting *Menuet des Follets* from Berlioz's *Damnation de Faust*, and the piquant *Cortège et Air de Danse* from Debussy's *L'Enfant prodigue*. And while the Waltz from Tchaikovsky's *Eugen Onegin*, the *Marche troyenne* from Berlioz's *Troyens*, and the Saint-Saëns *Samson et Dalila* Bacchanale have been taped before, no other conductor has ever endowed them with such distinction. The recordings must date back a few years, but one never would guess that from the transparency and concert-hall authenticity of this well-processed, if not completely preëcho-free, reel. A delectable remembrance of Beecham's unique insights and some forty minutes of incomparably satisfying musical entertainment.

ANTONIO JANIGRO: *"Notturno"*

Solisti di Zagreb, Antonio Janigro, cond.
• • VANGUARD VTC 1663. 57 min. $7.95.

Janigro's chamber orchestra gives us some of its finest performances here, all recorded in the loveliest imaginable stereoism. Every timbre nuance is delicately but precisely differentiated, and the string sonorities float buoyantly heavenward. A delight to one's ears (unflawed by any suggestion of either preëcho or spill-over in the quiet-surfaced tape processing), most of the contents are exceptionally appealing: first 4-track tape editions of the lilting Suite No. 3 in Respighi's *Ancient Airs and Dances* series, and the Concerto in G commonly attributed to Pergolesi; the most attractive (and least stilted) recorded performance of Vaughan Williams' familiar *Greensleeves* Fantasia, with Julius Baker as superb flute soloist; and a fresh recapturing of the even more familiar *Kleine Nachtmusik* of Mozart, more elastic and zestful in this properly small-sized ensemble version than even the best performance (Walter's for Columbia) by a full symphonic string choir. Even the two final selections, which I consider superfluous, are scarcely less well played, but Janigro is too fastidious to give the necessary melodrama to Sibelius' *Valse triste* or the yearning romanticism essential to Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. And in both cases these works demand a larger complement of strings.

"Cleopatra." Original Sound Track Recording. Alex North, cond. 20th Century-Fox (via Bel Canto) SXT 5008, 40 min., $7.95.

"The Longest Day." Original Sound Track Condensation. Lowell Thomas, narrator. 20th Century-Fox (via Bel Canto) SXT 5007, 31 min., $7.95.

Alex North's score may have been overshadowed by other aspects of the fabulous Taylor/Burton spectacular, but it is surely one of the best, and most imaginative, ever provided for a film epic. North has solved most effectively the problem of suggesting the music of antiquity without resorting to superficial exoticisms or forbidding dissonances. Like most large-scale film scores, even this one tends to seem a bit choppily episodic when heard in isolation: undoubtedly it will interest most of those who have seen the film. But anyone will be delighted here by the exceptionally fine orchestral scoring and playing, the glowingly warm and lucid stereo recording, and the first-rate tape processing.

Music plays a relatively small role in "The Longest Day" reel, which is primarily a condensed version of the

Continued from preceding page

quasi-documentary film itself, represented in a series of Allied and German armed forces vignettes linked by Lowell Thomas' voice-of-doom narration. It's all done dramatically enough and recorded vividly, though with excessively close miking and oversharp brilliance. Much of the action itself is simply talked about, in anticipation or retrospect, rather than directly depicted. Undoubtedly a fine memento for those who have seen the film, but it's unlikely to satisfy others.

"Film Spectacular." London Festival Chorus and Orchestra, Stanley Black, cond. London LPL 74025, 43 min., $7.95.

As a tape proponent I find it rather disconcerting to have to admit that the present reel, impressive as it is in many ways, fails by a slight margin to match the outstanding technical qualities of the disc version I praised so warmly in the September issue. It has been processed at a markedly lower modulation level, and when playback volume is equalized for proper A/B comparisons some tape-motion noise is evident, whereas the disc (on a first playing at least) is astonishingly silent. The sonics themselves are reasonably identical, but there is just enough more bite and impact in the disc's climaxes to establish its slight superiority in both frequency and dynamic ranges. And there's an unmistakable trace of reverse-channel spillover at the very beginning of the tape. But such flaws can't detract seriously from the musical attractions and Black's superb performances—at their best in Walton's *Henry V* excerpts and the Bernstein *West Side Story*, Moross' *The Big Country*, and Anka's *The Longest Day* scores; notable also in the more conventional themes from *Exodus*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Samson and Dalilah*, and *Around the World in 80 Days*.

"The Giants of Jazz." Various artists. Columbia CQ 548, 59 min., $7.95.

This is a sampler anthology of recordings made in 1962, for the most part, representing less the all-time giants of jazz than the leading stars in Columbia's permanent or temporary stable. It ranges widely from the avant-garde styles of Thelonious Monk and Jimmy Giuffre, through Eddie Condon and the Dukes of Dixieland, all the way to the attractive but certainly not jazz-styled singing of Carmen McRae. Apart from Miles Davis' bouncily rhapsodic *Devil May Care* and perhaps one of Duke Ellington's less original essays in exoticism, *Turkish Coffee*, the honors go, curiously enough, to the oldest recording, that of Quincy Jones and the All-Stars playing *Grasshopper*, dating back to 1955 and here "rechanneled in stereo" from the original monophony. An excitingly virtuosic performance, its sounds just as robust technically as the others. The tape processing, especially on the first side, is plagued with preëchoes.

"In Action." The Chad Mitchell Trio. Kapp KTL 41055, 36 min., $7.95.

The trio's apt sense of topical humor provides a worthy successor to their famous *John Birch Society* satire ("At the Bitter End" program of last January) in an even more amusing ballad, *The Ides of Texas*, celebrating the exploits of Billy Sol Estes. The group's professional deftness is evident again in such vivacious airs as *The Ballad of the Greenland Whalers* and *Run, Run, Run*, and such lyrical ones as *Green Grow the Lilacs*, *Blowing in the Wind*, and *Adiós Mi Corazón*. And if the quasi-spiritual *One Day When I Was Lost* isn't quite convincing, and the multi-installment *Story of Alice* is sophomorically silly, one can't expect even these talented youngsters to have infallibly good taste. As in their previous reel, the recording and processing are first-rate, the mike placements never uncomfortably close.

"Inspiration and Meditation." 101 Strings and Organ. Bel Canto ST 188, 38 min., $6.95.

I haven't heard the oversize string orchestra for some time, and I am impressed all over again by its sumptuous sound. It is augmented here by unadvertised wind and percussion choirs, plus pipe organ, all captured in broadspread, rich stereoism and a warm big-hall acoustical ambience. Musically there is less distinction to the anonymous conductor's performances of elaborately scored transcriptions of familiar hymns and religioso heart-throbbers (not excluding the Hallelujah Chorus, *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere*, and Malotte's *Lord's Prayer*.) But in a fine martial setting of *Onward Christian Soldiers* the sonic potentials are exploited with genuine interpretative drama.

"It Happened at the World's Fair." Original Sound Track. Elvis Presley; the Mello Men and Orchestra. RCA Victor FTP 1199, 21 min., $7.95.

If you're not incorrigibly prejudiced, you'll find that Elvis is learning both how to sing and how to relax. His present *Cotton Candy Land*, *How Would You Like To Be Me*, and *Relax* are engagingly jaunty. Elsewhere, however, as in the hit *One Broken Heart for Sale*, there is harder plugging. The recording itself tends to be harshly overpowering, and there is a good deal of background hum or noise on the "A" side of this uncommonly short reel.

"Jazz Samba Encore." Stan Getz, saxophone; Luiz Bonfa, guitar; Maria Toledo, vocals; Ensemble. Verve VSTC 293, 40 min., $7.95.

Unlike most sequels, this one is *almost* as good as the now famous "Jazz Samba." The only respect in which it falls a trifle short is in the percussion playing which, while first-rate by all normal standards, just can't match the incomparable delicacy and subtlety of the earlier release. Otherwise, Getz is more eloquent and assured than ever; Luiz Bonfa's guitar solos are perhaps more coolly expressive than Charlie Byrd's and even more imaginative; and there are brand-new attractions in the enchanting singing of Maria Toledo and a piano solo by composer Antonio Carlos Jobim in his own *Insesatez*. The selections (mostly by Bonfa or Jobim) are superbly lilting, with top honors perhaps going to Bonfa's *Tribute to Getz, Ebony Samba*, and *Samba de duas notas*. And many of the others have hypnotic charms of their own. Add flawless recording and tape processing, and again we have a reel of exceptional merit.

"The Gary McFarland Orchestra." Featuring Bill Evans, piano. Verve VSTC 292, 36 min., $7.95.

Most attempts at jazz impressionism have struck me as far too precious, but the present series of McFarland originals

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Continued from page 164

boasts atmospheric attractiveness, occasionally quite haunting lyricism (especially in *Peach Tree*), and often genuine jazz vivacity. Even the longer pieces on the second side (*Misplaced Cow Poke* and *Almost Alone*) reveal considerable inventiveness, if perhaps not enough to sustain lively interest throughout. Very clean stereoism and flawless tape processing do full justice to both the music and the beautifully controlled and colored performances. Featured here are Evans' rhapsodic pianism, McFarland's poetic vibes, Jim Hall's guitar, Phil Woods's flute, and a somewhat overexpressive string quartet.

"Raise a Ruckus and Have a Hootenanny." Alan Lomax and the Dupree Family. Kapp KTL 41054, 29 min., $7.95.

The sweetness and lucidity of this recording is impressive, as is the unaffected zest Lomax and the Duprees bring to their uncommercialized folk materials. I relished particularly *That's All Right Darlin'*, *Railroad Bill*, *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Little Bird*, *Lazy John*, and *Raise a Ruckus*. But I find it hard to believe that the same recording director who planned the effectively stereogenic spacings of the banjo and guitar accompaniments could also have been responsible for the irritating and frequent final fade-outs.

Samplers: "The Best of Liberty" and "The Best of Philips." Various artists. Liberty (via Bel Canto) LTRX and Philips (via Bel Canto) PHSTX, 32 min., $3.95 each.

Two new pops sampler reels. Liberty's has quite attractive selections, although perhaps only Slatkin's *Lawrence of Arabia* Theme, Zentner's *Desafinado*, Garrett's *La Bamba*, and the Dave Pell Octet's *Days of Wine and Roses* are particularly distinctive. There is more variety in Philips', but also more recording gimmickry and less musically interesting materials. The best are Michel Legrand's *Milord*, Gerry Mulligan's *Open Country*, Dizzy Gillespie's *A Shanty in Old Shanty Town*, and Malando's *Noche de Estrellas*. This reel, however, is the better processed in its freedom from the preëchoes, or possibly spill-overs, that plague the "A" side of the Liberty sampler.

"This Is My Country." Mormon Tabernacle Choir; Alexander Schreiner, organ; Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, cond. Columbia MQ 533, 40 min., $7.95.

Rehearing this often thrilling program of world-wide patriotic songs, which I reviewed in its disc edition last June, I am more impressed than ever by Schreiner's martial and ingenious setting of *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean* and the fervent *Israeli Hatikva*. The other pieces (representing England, France, Finland, and Canada, as well as the United States) are more conventional in both musical interest and execution but —as always—the choir is richly sonorous, if seldom outstandingly intelligible, and the tremendous tone masses, authentic big-hall acoustics, and panoramic stereogenics are reproduced even more satisfactorily here than in the much more heavily modulated and noisy-surfaced disc edition.

"Touch Me Softly." George Shearing Quintet with String Choir, Milton Raskin, cond. Capitol ZT 1874, 35 min., $7.98.

"Where Did Everyone Go?" Nat King Cole; Orchestra, Gordon Jenkins, cond. Capitol ZW 1859, 38 min., $7.98.

I reluctantly pass up for review a good many mood music and torch song tapes by frequently represented pop stars, simply because there is nothing new to say about them. Yet, while there are no special surprises in the present reels, each is so good of its kind that it should have a wider appeal than to Shearing and Cole devotees only. The former's richly romantic *Lollipops and Roses*, *In a Sentimental Mood*, *Just Imagine*, *Try a Little Tenderness*, and the latter's relaxed but poignant title song, *I Keep Going Back to Joe's*, *Am I Blue?* are seductive throughout. For once Cole is not too closely miked; both reels are luminously recorded and—apart from a few slight preëchoes—ideally processed.

"The Trio, Live from Chicago" and "The Sound of the Trio." Oscar Peterson Trio. Verve VSTP 287 (twin-pack), 90 min., $11.95.

Both of these live sessions at the London House, Chicago, are as ideally recorded (at just the right distance, with only a suggestion of background crowd murmur, and the purest of sonic qualities) as any on-the-spot program I've ever heard. The tape processing is close to ideal too, and if the second side includes too much of Peterson's overfluent and rhetorical pianism, it also includes his far more imaginative *Kadota's Blues*, and some fine bass solo bits by Ray Brown. The first side reveals both leader and sidemen in bursts of sheer inspiration. Their *In the Wee Small Hours* and *The Night We Called It a Day* are little masterpieces, and Peterson, throughout, surpasses all his previous recorded efforts. This is a tape both to enrapture his admirers and win over those who have long thought him too facile.

"Yours Is My Heart Alone" and "All-Time Favorites." Robert Shaw Chorale and Orchestra, Robert Shaw, cond. RCA Victor FTC 2140, 96 min., $8.95.

Although not so labeled (or priced!), this is a twin-pack anthology of earlier Shaw albums, including several not previously represented on tape, and a dozen operetta selections, superbly rescored by Robert Russell Bennett. Most of the latter are presumably new recordings, but I suspect that at least some of them have appeared before. In any case, they are all worth hearing, for Shaw and his fresh-voiced choristers (and first-rate orchestra) rejuvenate these favorite Herbert, Kern, Romberg, Friml, Lehár, and Oscar Straus melodies quite triumphantly. And in the generally more serious anthology it is evident anew that the Shaw Chorale is simply *hors concours* among all recording choruses. This whole reel should be well worth its cost if only for its ineffably moving unaccompanied *What Wondrous Love* and *Deep River*. Only the interpolated *Messiah* Hallelujah (in which Shaw leads the Cleveland Orchestra and Chorus) falls below the ideal in choral singing. And only in the fancy and excessively Dynagrooved *Battle Hymn of the Republic* is the recording anything less than magical for its spacious, smoothly broadspread, acoustically warm authenticity. An impressive summing up of Shaw's versatile achievements.

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CIRCLE 5 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

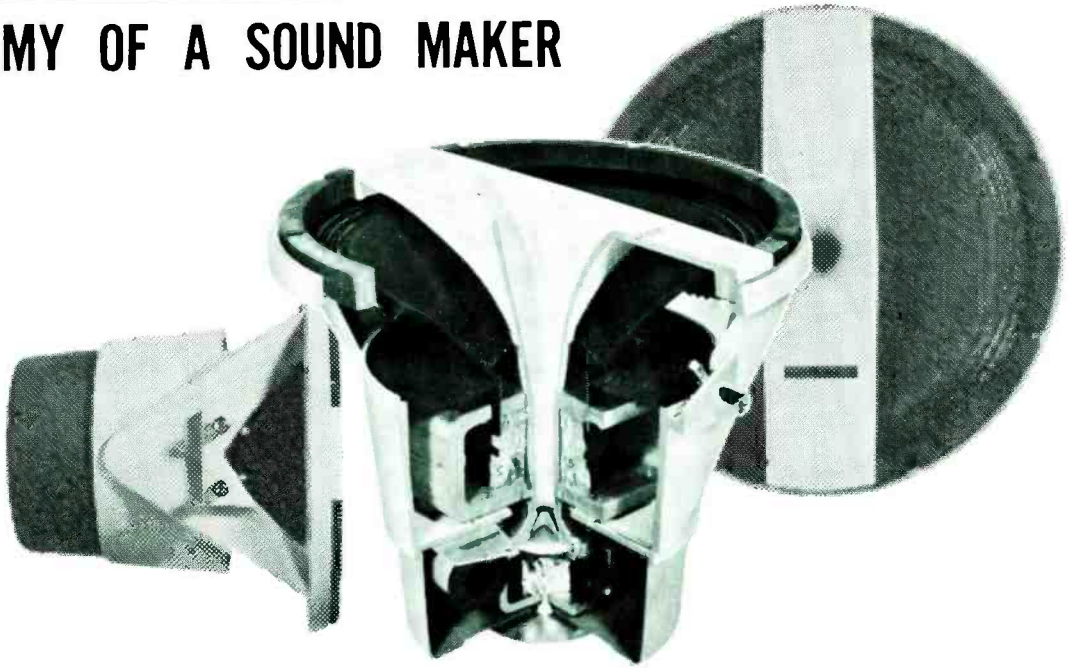
Continued from page 123

the Bourbon rulers who, in the eighteenth century, succeeded the Farnesi as Parma's overlords. The abandoned theatre slowly deteriorated and in 1944 was almost destroyed during an Allied bombing attack. But the structure survived, and its interior is now in process of being restored. This spring Maestro Medici showed us the work in progress. We found that just to breathe the air and hear the reverberations in a hall more than three centuries old was a thrilling experience. Surely, no more fitting environment for festival performances could be imagined than a theatre with such ancient operatic roots.

Readers who would like to be kept apprised of the Institute's activities and to receive its publications should address inquiries to the Istituto di Studi Verdiani, Via del Conservatorio 27, Parma, Italy.

THIS COLUMN is the final piece of "copy" being written for the Verdi Anniversary Issue, and it is fitting that we conclude with a word of thanks to the many people who aided us in its preparation. Here at home we received valuable advice and letters of introduction from Walter Toscanini, Dario Soria, and Mrs. Manolita Doelger of the Italian State Tourist Office. From Rome we had the close collaboration of William Weaver, who not only contributed one article and translated another but also tracked down innumerable rare pictures, checked a profusion of factual queries, and accompanied us through much of Verdi's Italy. In Parma, as noted above, we had the good fortune to have as guide and companion Mario Medici, abetted by Signora Franca Medioli, an accomplished and delightful linguistic intermediary. In Venice the artistic director of La Fenice, Mo. Mario Labroca, gave us free access to the theatre's archives, and in Milan we had the help of Dott. Clelia Alberici (of the Bertarelli Archives), Signorina Elena Vitale (of Casa Ricordi), Signorina Floriana de Martino (of Edizione Garzanti), and Dott. Stefano Vittadini and Signorina Carla Bettei (of the Museo della Scala). Our thanks to them all and to the many others who have helped—far beyond the call of duty—to honor Verdi in this special issue.

ANATOMY OF A SOUND MAKER



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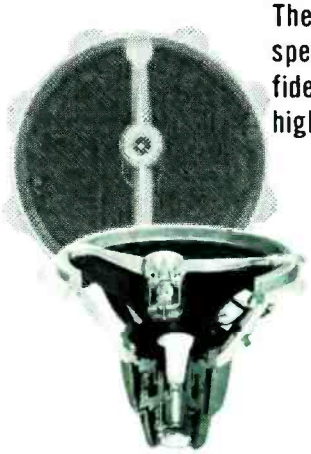

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Sensitivity 99 db watt
Crossover Frequency 3,500 cps
Equivalent Mass 14 g
Total Flux Woofer 85,000 maxwell
Tweeter 13,000 maxwell
Flux Density Woofer 9,100 gauss
Tweeter 9,000 gauss

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CIRCLE 78 ON READER-SERVICE CARD

CLASS OF 1813

Continued from page 92

triumph; Verdi had toiled in the most practical fashion possible, keeping his eye on what he called "the infallible barometer"—the box office—and had scored a solid success. The fourteen years of Verdi's operatic abstention were broken only by the great *Manzoni* Requiem and talk of retirement.

The Requiem, written in memory of the author of *I Promessi Sposi*, had begun life, at least in part, as a memorial to Rossini; but its scope was so obviously more universal that one wonders whether Verdi had not also in mind the dead and the achievements of a century of revolutions. Those who think Verdi's orchestration grossly inferior to Wagner's should study the Requiem. The orchestra has a field day in this work, and from the delicacy of the opening to the tremendous impact of the *Dies Irae*—a climax that for shattering power was never excelled by Wagner—it is handled with intense imagination and dazzling mastery. It was Verdi's finest work to date, and showed a further cautious advance; the old professional was still learning.

While Verdi lived through these years of desultory work, comforted by his achievements, Wagner toiled at the practical details of his ideal theatre in Bayreuth. He watched it being built with money that existed only in his imagination; his fund-raising schemes limped, in spite of every device. Then at the last moment the almost estranged Ludwig sent him 100,000 thalers, and the great work was saved. With Bayreuth, *The Ring*, and *Tristan* safe, Wagner conceived the idea of a sacred festival drama to be given only at Bayreuth (it was, in fact, not staged elsewhere until Cosima Wagner sanctioned its performance at the Metropolitan in 1903). *Parsifal* was completed in Palermo in 1882, after which Wagner returned for a brief while to Bayreuth for its production, and then departed in September for Venice.

Parsifal is a strangely resigned and world-weary work for so dynamic a man as Wagner, and Venice is by no means always the city of sunlight and sparkling water depicted by Canaletto; in winter it is often dark and dank. Wagner was depressed, and his malaise affected his old friend Liszt greatly. Liszt wrote some extraordinary piano pieces to express the sense of foreboding and gloom he felt: *Sinister!*, *Gray Clouds*, *The Funeral Gondola*—the titles are expressive enough. Over the shadowed waters of the city of waters the gondolas glided, themselves like shadows, while Wagner, alone a great deal, fought both his depression

and a serious heart complaint—and waited for returning strength so that he could start writing symphonies! Before that winter had ended, on February 13, 1883, he was dead. "When I read the news yesterday, I was, I must tell you, overcome with grief. Let there be no mistake; a great personality has disappeared—a name that will leave a very deep mark upon the history of art!" So Verdi greeted the announcement.

About this time, Verdi decided to revise *Simon Boccanegra*, and engaged a new librettist, himself a powerful composer, for the job. Working with Boito and savoring contact with that fine mind, Verdi began to hanker after opera again; the two began in great secret on an opera on the subject of Othello. It was finished in 1886, and given for the first time the following year at La Scala. This time Verdi's success was not solid; it was sensational. The venerable composer had surpassed everything he had ever done before. He was seventy-four; and destiny had still not yet done with him. With Boito he prepared yet another Shakespearean drama and the world heard it five years later.

Falstaff: Parsifal. These were the last works of the two great rivals, who had worked apart with so little acknowledgement of each other. *Parsifal* is a work of religious resignation. Strange, one might think, from such as Wagner! Yet there is a sinister hint of something of the kind in *Tristan*, in which the lovers express their passion in terms of death. It is almost as if that furious egoist had been only a tool, giving voice to the as yet almost unconscious explosive rising of German national aspirations. The whole of *The Ring* seems to proclaim this. When that mighty impersonal force had done with the mighty impersonal force that was Richard Wagner, it cast the mortal man aside. How different with Verdi! He had portrayed always not impersonal forces but human beings, inhabiting a world that, however remote, is always recognizable as our own. It was natural that at the close of his life he should turn to the great poet who is ever concerned, in compassion, with people. Verdi's own mighty humanity found a fellow spirit, and the collaboration of Shakespeare and Verdi marks the highest point of Italian opera. Verdi's farewell was more even than the all-embracing pity of *Otello;* it was a shout of joy, a great cry of affirmation. *Falstaff* proclaims to our tortured world that it is still good to live.

The two final operas need fear no comparison with Wagner. They are truly Shakespearean in their clear Mediterranean light. Indeed, they have something of a Vergilian quality, a sense of immemorial and sunlit wisdom. Verdi did not long survive their completion. His beloved second wife, Peppina, passed away; "he for a little tried to live without her, liked it not, and died." The school of 1813 was a tough one, Wagner and Verdi were among the toughest. How different the men! How great the achievement!

Continued from page 113

Ghislanzoni managed to fuse the heroic, pageantlike style of *Nabucco* and *Attila* with the intimate "disordered passions" (to quote Verdi on the subject of *Ballo*) of the domestic operas like *Luisa Miller* and *Stiffelio*. Choruses and triumphs, ritual and splendor on the one hand; and on the other, a suffering father, a daughter torn between love and duty, a woman made wicked by overweening jealousy.

More than any of his earlier operas, except perhaps for *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata, Aida* has an over-all dramatic coherence. In nearly all of Verdi's librettos, even the earliest, there is a scene-to-scene logic, the characters act understandably towards one another, though we may not understand their behavior as a whole. The Count di Luna, for example, behaves logically when we see him on stage, challenging his rival, trying to kidnap his beloved. But we will never understand why (when off stage) he didn't burn Azucena on that pyre we saw flaming up. What happened between the scenes bothered Verdi little in those years. But with *Aida* all motivations are clear and consistent. Verdi's dramatic art had reached a climax. *Aida* could logically have been the composer's last opera. And, in fact, it was followed by a long silence, broken chiefly by the *Messa da Requiem*.

Then in June 1879 Verdi went to Milan, and while he was there, Giulio Ricordi brought Boito to dinner and slyly introduced Shakespeare's *Othello* into the conversation. Again—as so many years ago with *Nabucco*—it was a libretto that brought Verdi back to the opera house.

Boito was then approaching forty. His *Mefistofele*, after a clamorous fiasco at La Scala in 1868, had been revived with success in 1875, and he was now financially independent with an artistic reputation unusually great for the author of a single opera. He had written librettos for other composers and published criticism and verses. After a youthful period of rather tame Bohemianism, he was settling into respectability, a charming dinner partner, excellent friend, gifted author of *vers de société*. Since 1862 he had been contemplating another opera, *Nerone*; he was to work at it, off and on, till his death in 1918. Already in 1879, the youthful, rebellious vigor that had fired Boito's poetry and music seemed to be flagging; and if the libretto of *Otello* was a powerful stimulus to Verdi, the thought of working with Verdi was an equally necessary catalyst for Boito.

Verdi was, at this time, fond of calling attention to his age; he may have emphasized the number of his years also because he now felt the world of music was leaving him behind. Boito himself had been, for a while, in the vanguard of the pro-German forces. Wagner (translated by Boito) was now performed in Italy, and a whole school of younger composers was calling for a renovation of Italian opera. Verdi felt this challenge, but obviously he couldn't meet it with a librettist of the Piave-Cammarano school. Times had changed, he had changed. Italian culture was becoming sophisticated; Boito—like Maffei a generation earlier—was a respected part of this culture, he was young, an aesthete but a man of the theatre. Against the new, outspoken opposition Verdi needed an ally, not a secretary. Boito was the ideal choice.

Verdi's admirers can never be too grateful to Boito for his contribution in bringing Verdi back to the theatre. But gratitude has led many critics and musicologists to misinterpret that contribution. As a poet, to unbiased, twentieth-century ears, Boito is often no better than Piave or Solera. On a small scale, Boito could write deft verses; but he also had typically Victorian taste for rhetoric, for quaint archaisms, for tricky metrics. The critics now who praise the poetry of *Otello* conveniently forget that Boito also wrote *La Gioconda*. And if one reads the revised *Simon Boccanegra*, it is hard to tell where Piave leaves off and Boito begins. *Otello* undeniably has moments of effective poetry, but these are the moments closest to Shakespeare. When Boito invents—as in the choruses of sailors, children, etc., in Act II or in the *"Credo"* with its cheap diabolism—he falls back on his Victorian tricks. *Falstaff*, less demanding dramatically, allowed Boito to use his skill to better advantage; the verses of Nannetta and Fenton, for example, resemble the billets-doux in verse that the poet sent to his Milan hostesses or to his mistress Eleonora Duse. *Falstaff* may or may not be Verdi's greatest achievement; it is certainly Boito's.

Somma's plays have now vanished into that limbo which houses Dion Boucicault and Helmine von Chezy. Maffei's volumes of verse, Solera's cantatas are there too. Though a mammoth volume of Boito's *Collected Works* exists, it is read only by students, and students of Verdi at that. *Nabucco* is still alive; so are *Ballo, Forza, Otello*. Verdi remains the chief artificer of his works. Others helped him, but the real librettist of Verdi's operas is Verdi.

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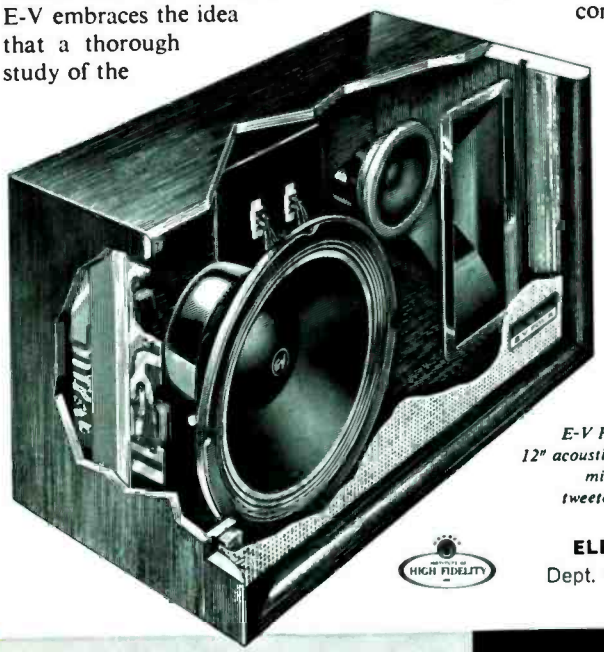
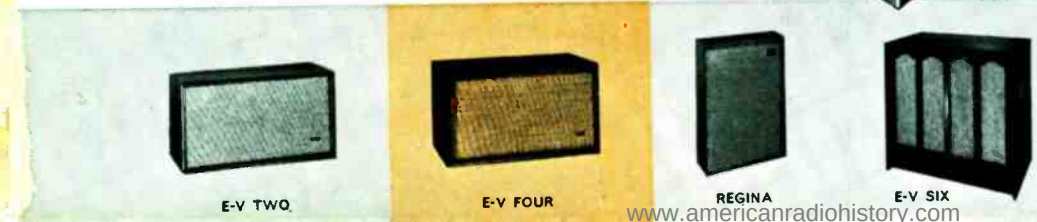
Of course, it is one thing to design an outstanding prototype—and something else to produce an acoustic suspension system in quantity at a fair price. It is here that extensive production facilities, combined with creative engineering approaches, guarantee the performance of each E-V FOUR. And these same facilities ensure reasonable value. For instance, the E-V FOUR sells for but $136.00 with oiled walnut or mahogany finish and just $122.00 in unfinished birch. Yet, in judging its sound qualities, it was successfully compared with speaker systems costing as much as $200.00.

We urge you to join in the analysis of E-V FOUR compact speaker performance. Visit your E-V high fidelity showroom and compare, carefully, this new system. We feel certain that you will agree with the engineers and the critics that the new E-V FOUR offers a truly full measure of high fidelity satisfaction.



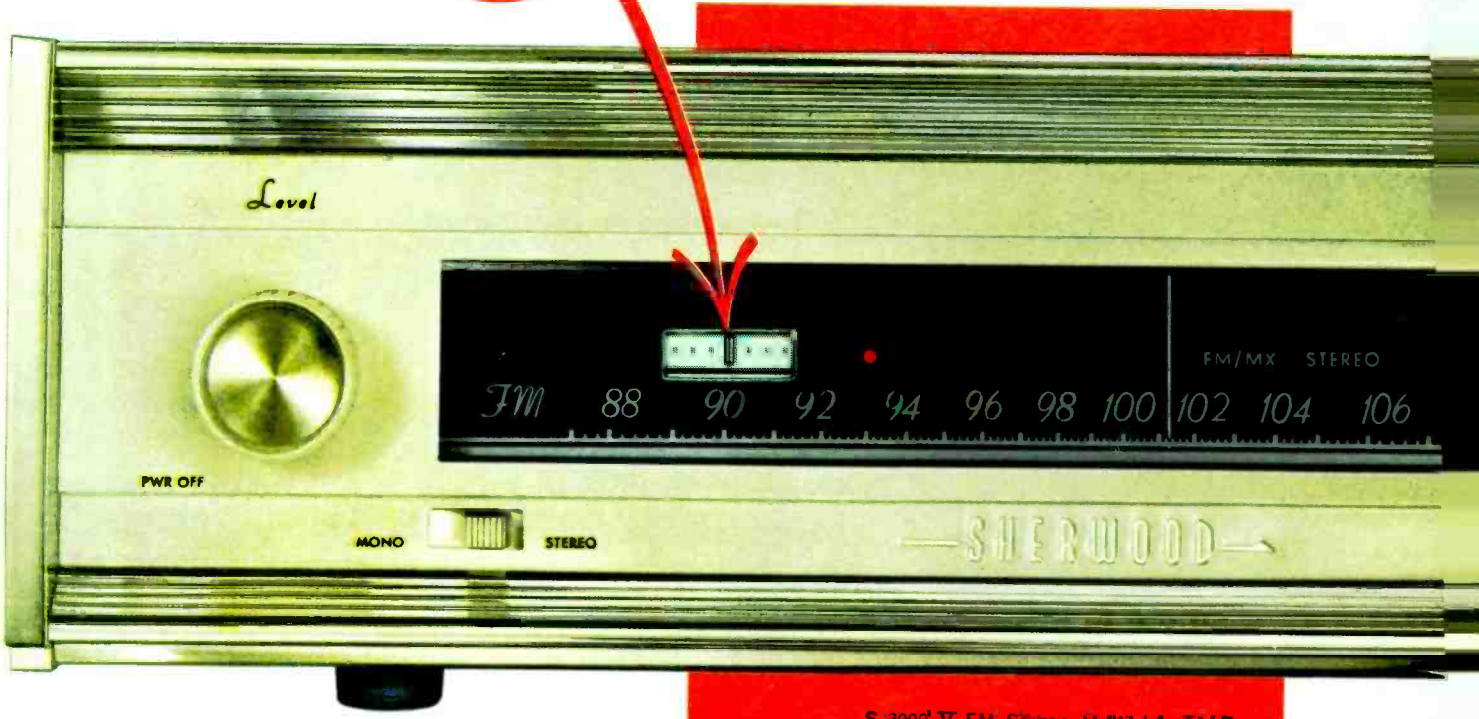
E-V FOUR components include:
12" acoustic suspension woofer / Ring-diaphragm mid-range driver / 5" dynamic cone tweeter / Etched circuit crossover

ELECTRO-VOICE, INC.
Dept. 1034H, Buchanan, Michigan



Electro-Voice
SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN SOUND

Why did Sherwood zero-in on the problem of tuning accuracy?



S-3000 V FM Stereo Multiplex Tuner with professional zero-centered tuning meter and Stereo Indicator Light.

It takes wider bands to broadcast the multiple information for stereo FM multiplex, and the most precise "dead-on-center" tuning to receive it . . . with maximum stereo separation and minimum distortion.

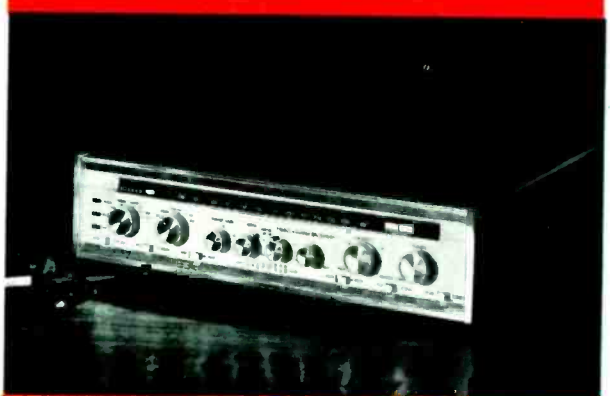
This is why in the new S-3000 V Tuner, Sherwood engineers incorporated a professional zero-centered tuning meter. Superior to tuning eyes, better than peak meters, it uses the same D'Arsonval meter needed to design, align and test FM tuner circuits. When the meter reads "zero". . . you're right on. No guesswork. No maybe's.

Gain three tuning advantages

- Tune accurately, the first time.
- Tune low-power Class "A" stations interspaced between more powerful broadcasts.
- Tune with professional surety.

Added value features of the S-3000 V

- Stereo Indicator Light: identifies stereo broadcasts.
- Superb sensitivity: 1.8μv (IHF) for —30db. noise and distortion.
- No background noise: pace-setting 2.4db. capture effect.
- FM Interchannel Hush: suppresses between-station noises.
- Flywheel tuning: smooth as silk.
- 20% longer dial scales: professional accuracy.
- Price: $165.00. (Leatherette case optional at $7.50.)



New S-8000 III FM Stereo MX Receiver. Combines above tuner features with an 80-watt stereo amplifier. Price: $319.50. (Leatherette case optional at $9.50.)

Prices slightly higher in the Far West

Sherwood
HIGH FIDELITY
Stereo Receivers • Tuners
Amplifiers • Stereo Indicator Lights
Speaker Systems • Contemporary Cabinetry

For complete information write Dept. H-10, Sherwood Electronic Laboratories, Inc., 4300 North California Ave., Chicago 18, Ill.

CIRCLE 89 ON READER-SERVICE CARD