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## TAPE DECK

*Continued from preceding page*

Yet these very virtues make all the more glaring the innate sterility of the works (and perhaps the performances) themselves. I used to think there was considerable poetic atmosphere in the *Fountains* at least, but today I find it only somewhat less intolerable than the gaudy scene painting and bombastic emotionalism of the *Pines*.

### • • VERDI: "Requiem" Mass

Corry Bijster (s); Elisabeth Pritchard (ms); David Garen (t); Leonard Wolovsky (bs); Netherlands Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, Walter Goehr, cond. CONCERT HALL CHT/BN 18. Two 7-in. \$23.90.

At last I'm given tangible proof of my conviction that of all types of music it is the large-scale choral-and-orchestral form which most imperatively demands—and profits by—the stereo medium. Perhaps operas will exploit its potentialities even more dramatically, but at least they have fared better hitherto in single-channel recordings than choral works, which never have been fully satisfactorily captured. I can't imagine why stereo-tape manufacturers are so backward in demonstrating what now can be done in freeing choral textures from the cramped bondage to which disks have condemned them in seeming perpetuity. But don't take my word for it: just compare any LP of the *Mauzoni* Requiem with the present tape—and you'll find out for yourself what it means to add an entirely new dimension (in aesthetics as well as sonic technique) to your experience.

Granted that Goehr, for all the skillful musicianship and sincere feeling he exhibits here (more effectively than in any of his previous releases I know) can't achieve the interpretative stature of Toscanini or De Sabata. Granted too that the soloists here hardly can match many more famous singers who have essayed these roles on LP (although Pritchard's is one of the finest young voices I have come across since Ferrier's, while Bijster's is nearly as admirable and possesses more dramatic "personality"; only the tenor and bass are nondescriptly "adequate"). Nevertheless, this tape marks the first time I ever have wholeheartedly responded to Verdi's deeply moving music outside a concert hall, and I ascribe that less to the fine playing of the orchestra here and the even finer singing of its unfortunately rather small companion chorus than to the superb spaciousness and "lift" with which their composite sonorities are both integrated and differentiated in stereo reproduction.

Curiously enough, it is not necessarily the most obviously dramatic passages (like the almost Polovstian pounding rhythms of the "Dies Irae") which benefit most, but the more serene moments and such lilting ones as the dance-like double fugue of the Sanctus. No attempt has been made here (rather to my regret) to capitalize further on stereo possibilities by antiphonal placement of choir sections or the soloists

in concerted numbers, and (even more regrettably) there is an unimaginative reliance on bringing the soloists as close to the microphone as would be necessary in conventional recording. Hence, the latter sometimes sound disconcertingly "forward" and disengaged from the orchestral background, rather than as closely integrated in it as they can be in stereo and still maintain distinctive individual clarity.

But such quibblings are quite minor considerations, for future reference only. The vital fact is that the Requiem as a whole seems made for stereo—and stereo expressly designed to enable the Requiem to be heard and absorbed as never was possible before on records. I can't resolve the aesthetic dilemma in which a critic finds himself: caught between the choice of a Toscaninian performance, say, and the aural beatitudes of Goehr's stereo sound. I can only chronicle its existence—and hope that many other listeners find themselves in a predicament as fascinatingly delicious in practice as it is perplexing in theory.

### REEL MUSIC NOTES

ALPHATAPE: The difficulty of utilizing in a jazz manner a predominantly violin ensemble is indicated by the very title (*Music to What By?*) of a miscellany by Paul Nero and his Hi Fiddles. The livelier pieces, like *Scherzo-Phrenia* and *Just a Minuet* are diverting, escapist chamber-music fare (making the most of the bright, not-too-close recording), but the slower ones, for all their desperately ingenious arrangements, are hardly satisfactory for either background listening or actual dancing (AT 24, 5-in., \$3.95). *Four Moods for Orchestra* is more consistent in style, but here Herbert Pawlicki's attempt to emulate the glistening richness of a Kostelanetz or Mantovani isn't quite within the powers of his Vienna Amusement Orchestra. However, he should satisfy the romantic yearnings of listeners who can languish to the lush strains of Drigo's *Serenade*, Fibich's *Poème*, and the like (AT 13, 5-in., \$3.95).

BEL CANTO: I don't know Dave Remington's standing among jazz *cognoscenti*, and to my ears his band's *Chicago Jazz "Reborn"* sounds more like a modernized refinement of New Orleans styles. But whatever his authority and stylistic derivations, I found this surprisingly long program (for a 5-in. reel) consistently invigorating. There is a fine perky animation throughout, achieving a really jubilant drive in *China Boy* and *Mandy*; the arrangements are imaginative, with distinctive piano, fiddle, and percussion solos, brilliantly recorded; and the combination of rambunctious spirit and sophisticated treatment is for once effectively reconciled (503, 5-in., \$6.95).

CONCERT HALL: The effectiveness of a real barrelhouse piano or band used to depend—when heard *in situ*—as much on beer- and smoke-induced soddiness in its listeners as on its practitioners' lung power and muscularity. But now, thanks to stereo, the first two pieces in *Barrelhouse and Blues* by Sam Price and his Kaycee Stompers can batter even the