

● **PONCHIELLI:** *La Gioconda* (complete opera). *Gioconda*—Anita Cerquetti (soprano); *La Cieca*—Franca Sacchi (contralto); Enzo Grimaldo—Mario del Monaco (tenor); Alvise Badoero—Cesare Siepi (bass); Laura—Giulietta Simionato (mezzo-soprano); Barnaba—Ettore Bastianini (baritone); and others. The Chorus and Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Giannandrea Gavazzeni cond. London OSA 1302 3 12" \$17.94

Musical Interest: Repertory standard
Performance: Excellent
Recording: Good but lacking in bass
Stereo Directionality: Realistic
Stereo Depth: Good

The monophonic version of this *Gioconda* was reviewed in the May, 1958 issue. While I share my colleague's admiration for the over-all enterprise, I found Siepi's performance below his best form and Franca Sacchi's *La Cieca* decidedly weak. Nothing but the highest praise befits the other principals, particularly Simionato and Bastianini.

London's stereo sound adds to the successful realization of the dramatic turns. Ensembles, off-stage effects, deployment of voices are all expertly handled. Deficiency in bass response, however, mars the otherwise excellent sound. G. J.

RAVEL: *Alborada del gracioso & Valses* (see p. 64)

RAVEL: *Daphnis and Chloe* (see p. 64)

● **ROSSINI:** *The Barber of Seville* (complete opera). *Almaviva*—Luigi Alva (tenor); Dr. Bartolo—Fritz Ollendorf (bass); Rosina—Maria Meneghini Callas (soprano); Figaro—Tito Gobbi (baritone); Don Basilio—Nicola Zaccaria (bass); and others. The Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus, Alceo Galliera cond. Angel S 3559 3 12" \$17.94

Musical Interest: Masterpiece
Performance: Excellent, with some flaws
Recording: Clear and resonant
Stereo Directionality: Not too much
Stereo Depth: Satisfactory

Martin Bookspan hailed the monophonic version of this set as "the finest of the available recordings of Rossini's sparkling opera" (July, 1958). No dissent here, even though Luigi Alva is a far from satisfactory *Almaviva* and Fritz Ollendorf, for all his vocal and histrionic excellence, stands out in this idiomatic cast like *Lederhosen* on the Piazza San Marco.



Some day opera producers will realize that the part of *Almaviva* need not have a vocally threadbare interpreter, as seems to be the unwritten law of the day. Then we shall discover a hint of manliness in the character who, believe it or not, is the same no account Count who philanders through Mozart's heavenly pages!

Angel's over-all sound is first class, but there is only a very slight suggestion of movement and stereo's advantages are not as immediately obvious as in other operatic recordings of recent origin. Stereo buyers might wish to hold off for a while, pending comparison with RCA Victor's new recording (Peters, Valletti, Merrill, Leinsdorf) which is now in the works. G. J.

● **SCHUBERT:** *Quintet in A Major, Op. 114* ("Trout"). Rolf Reinhardt (piano) with the Endres Quartet. Vox ST-PL 10890 \$5.98

Musical Interest: A gem
Performance: Ebullient
Recording: Good
Stereo Directionality: Good
Stereo Depth: Good

What a work of rollicking good spirits this is! And how well it sounds in stereo! The players apparently luxuriate in the music, for they give it a hearty, extroverted performance that is thoroughly contagious and the recording is meticulously clear and well-balanced. If you're wondering of what benefit stereo recording can be to chamber music, just listen to the fullness and even balance of this disc. M. B.

● **STRAVINSKY:** *Petrouchka*—Complete Ballet. Cento Soli Orchestra of Paris, Rudolph Albert cond. Omega OSL-8 \$5.95

Musical Interest: *Petrouchka* is a doll
Performance: Mediocre
Recording: Technically good
Stereo Directionality: Weak
Stereo Depth: Good

Omega competes here with London's tremendous Ansermet recording. There is no contest. Albert gets neither the playing nor the engineering of Omega's *Symphonic Fantastique* (see page TK) with the same orchestra but a different conductor. The performance as such is mediocre. Stereo directionality is weak; sound is generally good, but not nearly so stunning as in the Berlioz work.

The Cento Soli Orchestra is likely composed of players from a half dozen orchestras of Paris gathered for sessions with Omega engineers. The leading wind soloists just do not have it in comparison to the Suisse Romande musicians; and while the band plays together most of the time, everything still comes off a poor second to London's release, which may be the definitive choice for a long time to come. J. T.

● **VERDI:** *Il Trovatore* (complete opera). *Manrico*—Mario del Monaco (tenor); *Count di Luna*—Ugo Savarese (baritone); *Leonora*—Renata Tebaldi (soprano); *Azucena*—Giulietta Simionato (mezzo-soprano); *Ferrando*—Giorgio Tozzi (bass); and others. The Chorus of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Alberto Erede cond. London OSA 1304 3 12" \$17.94

Musical Interest: Sturdy Verdi
Performance: Imperfect but exciting
Recording: First rate
Stereo Directionality: Realistic
Stereo Depth: Fine

Blame it perhaps on the bloodthirsty libretto but the lusty, uninhibited vocal display of this impressive cast makes me think of an artillery barrage, unleashed on General Erede's command: "*Fire at will.*" When the tonal salvos reach their target (Verdi's notes, as written) the results are thrilling. But the marksmanship is—with the commendable exception of Tozzi's faultless Ferrando—often erratic. Del Monaco is one of the prime offenders, although he



redeems himself in moments of truly exciting vocalism. No such rewards are found in Savarese's routine *Luna*. Tebaldi sings with great tonal beauty if at times with all-too-obvious caution, particularly in the florid passages. Apart from insecurities of pitch, Simionato's *Azucena* is quite effective.

The sum total still adds up to a very idiomatic, high-spirited treatment of Verdi's turbulent score. This is one of Erede's best recorded achievements. The opera is given uncut, including *Leonora's* Act IV cabaletta "*Tu vedrai*" as well as other passages of lesser importance that are nearly always omitted in conventional stagings. This, by the way, is the only stereo *Trovatore* at this writing. The ensembles (particularly the trios in Act I and II) and much orchestral detail are now revealed in a clear definition no monophonic competitor can match. G. J.

VICTORIA: *Requiem Mass* (see p. 71)

● **WAGNER:** *Die Walküre*—Ride of the Valkyries and Magic Fire Music; *Die Meistersinger*—Dance of the Apprentices and Procession of the Mastersingers; *Die Götterdämmerung*—Siegfried's Funeral Music; *Lohengrin*—Prelude to Act III; *Tannhäuser*—Overture. Concert Arts Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf cond. Capitol SP-8411 \$5.98

Musical Interest: Indeed
Performances: Solid
Recording: Give me more bass
Stereo Directionality: Okay
Stereo Depth: Good

Familiar from their monophonic release of some months back, these performances are all sound and solid. The extra dimension of stereo provides good depth and directionality, but here is another disc which