

# VOLKSLIEDER

A TREASURY OF GERMAN FOLKSONG



The early German folksongs are centuries older than the country we know as Germany. Their composers and poets are lost in obscurity. Others come from the great lieder repertoire of such composers as Brahms and Schubert, songs so simple and spontaneous in their appeal that they were adopted by the people. Here are 12 of the finest, beginning with an old song in dialect and ending with the lovely Brahms "Lullaby."

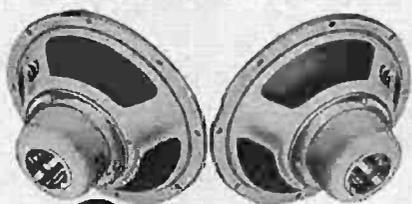
A Treasury of German Folksong—Vienna Radio Choir, Gottfried Preinfalk, Director ML 5344

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• **ROUSSEL:** The Spider's Feast—Symphonic Fragments Op. 17; Piano Concerto, Opus 36. Canto Soli Orchestra of Paris, Rudolf Albarth cond.; Claude Helffer, piano, Serge Baudo cond. Omega OSL-15 \$5.95

Musical Interest: Colorful and provocative scores

Performance: Expert

Recording: Excellent

Stereo Directionality: Good

Stereo Depth: First rate

In the two decades since his death, Roussel's music has suffered neglect in our concert halls. This is a shame, for much of his output has distinction and character of high quality. He was a true creator, and works like the Third and Fourth Symphonies, the music from his Ballet, *Bacchus et Ariane*, as well as the two works on this disc, deserve a place in the active concert repertoire.

*The Spider's Feast* is a ballet Roussel composed in 1913. The scene is laid in a lush garden and the action deals with a spider which gorges itself upon all the insects which come its way until conquered by a praying mantis. The Symphonic Fragments extracted by Roussel from his score for the ballet are colorful and exotic-sounding.

The Piano Concerto dates from fifteen years later. It is a more austere work, but certainly not forbidding. The first and last movements are characterized by nervous, propulsive energy, while the slow movement is a solemn meditation.

Both works are given superb performances and the quality of Omega's stereo recording is excellent. For anyone with a desire to investigate music slightly off-the-beaten path, this disc is highly recommended. **M. B.**

**SAINT-SAËNS:** Le Rouet d'Omphale (see COLLECTIONS)

**SCHUBERT:** Symphony No. 5 in B-flat (see p. 83)

• **SCHUBERT:** Symphony No. 9 in C ("Great"). Canto Soli Orchestra of Paris, Ataulfo Argenta cond. Omega OSL-12 \$5.95

• **SCHUBERT:** Symphony No. 9 in C ("Great"). Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Eugen Jochum cond. Decca D1-79993 \$5.98

Musical Interest: Heavenly not only of length, but also of inspiration

Performances: Both good, with Argenta's the more individualistic

Recordings: Close microphoning for Argenta, more distant for Jochum

Stereo Directionality: Both fine

Stereo Depth: Both good, with Jochum's slightly superior

Was Argenta under exclusive contract to English Decca (i.e. London Records in the U.S.A.) or was he not? His posthumous appearance on the Omega label is a major surprise, but the fact is that this recording of the "Great" Schubert C Major Symphony is a disc of which any record company would be proud. It's a stately, firm performance that captures the spirit of the music, at the same time that it discloses some rather personal ideas about it. Argenta feels, for example, that the slow introduction to the first movement ought to go

pretty slowly indeed, and that the coda in this same movement should likewise be given plenty of time in which to breathe. His pacing in the other three movements seems just right, especially in that marvelously Bunyanesque finale, which takes on a nice, easy swing in Argenta's performance. The microphoning is close-to and the sound is clean, with very natural directionality.

Jochum's performance is a typical Jochum performance: meticulously prepared along solid, traditional lines. There are no surprises here, but the whole is a generally satisfying account of an enduring masterpiece.

The German engineers have favored a more distant microphone set-up than that used in Argenta's recording, with a somewhat keener sense of depth resulting.

Neither Argenta nor Jochum succeeds in conveying that extra measure of exuberant elation which distinguishes Epic's monophonic recording by Szell (which may be available in stereo by the time these words appear), but both serve the music well. **M. B.**

• **SCHUMANN:** Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** Variations on a Roccoo Theme, Op. 33. Pierre Fournier with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Sir Malcolm Sargent cond. Angel S-35397 \$5.98

Musical Interest: Slight but of irresistible charm

Performance: Perceptive

Recording: Fine

Stereo Directionality: Good

Stereo Depth: Excellent

Here is a stereo re-issue of two performances which were widely hailed in their monophonic release some time ago. Fournier plays both works with an aristocratic élan which is just right for the rather modest musical framework of both pieces, while Sargent offers accompaniments in much the same vein.

The stereo qualities of the new release are excellent, marked by an especially fine sense of depth. **M. B.**

• **SCHUMANN:** Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54. Karl Engel with the Canto Soli Orchestra of Paris, Daniel Chabrun cond. Omega OSL-14 \$5.95

Musical Interest: A well-loved masterpiece

Performance: Fine

Recording: Excellent

Stereo Directionality: Fine

Stereo Depth: Superior

Engel is a pianist in his mid-thirties who has enjoyed considerable success in Europe as an interpreter of the Romantic literature. He has previously been represented on a couple of Epic discs in music by Schubert and Schumann.

This performance of the exacting Schumann Concerto is a bold and forthright one with very nimble finger work. It generates real kinetic excitement, with plenty of zing and genuine stylistic flair. If Omega chooses to give Engel more recording opportunities, he may yet emerge as a major artist.

The technical aspects of the recording are exceptional, with full, resonant sound, superb balance, and excellent stereo characteristics. **M. B.**

HiFi REVIEW