

STEREO HI-FI CONCERT

Reviewed by

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● **BACH:** Clavier Concerto in D Minor; Clavier Concerto in A Major. Ruggero Gerlin (harpsichord) with the Canto Soli Orchestra of Paris. Victor Desarzens cond. Omega OSL-13 \$5.95

Musical Interest: Masterpieces
Performance: Done with gusto
Recording: Excellent
Stereo Directionality: Very good
Stereo Depth: Good

Don't be frightened away by the tasteless back cover of the jacket, with its garish yellow. This is a fine disc. The performances are direct and straightforward. There is no attempt here at any "museum recreation" of Bach. The orchestra sounds fairly full and the playing has body to it.

The soloist does a fine job, and his harpsichord has an appealing sound. Moreover, it is located squarely in the center of the group, with an amazing degree of presence. The recording is full-bodied.

The D Minor Concerto is, of course, one of Bach's finest, and the companion piece is an appealing work. **D. R.**

● **BACH:** Magnificat in D; Cantata No. 50—Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft. Mimi Coertse and Margaret Sjöstedt (sopranos), Hilde Rössl-Majdan (contralto), Anton Dermota (tenor), Frederick Guthrie (bass) with Choir and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, Felix Prohaska cond. Bach Guild BGS-5005 \$5.95

Musical Interest: Baroque staples
Performance: First rate
Recording: Excellent
Stereo Directionality: Fine
Stereo Depth: Good

As the above thumbnail descriptions might indicate, this disc can be highly recommended. If any fault can be found with it, it is the tendency of the tenor soloist to over-balance the alto in the beautiful *Ei misericordiu* duet. Otherwise the recording is nicely balanced throughout, and the stereo perspective is fine. Gratifying is the "bite" of the tone of the three trumpets, thanks to the excellent stereo recording.

All the soloists are good, but a special word should be said for the artistry of Mr. Dermota. The bass has a rather big voice, but he wisely keeps it within the bounds of the stylistic needs of the music.

The chorus, also, deserves commendation, despite the fact that the contraltos might be a little more prominent. This might be due to their placement, though, rather than to any inherent weakness on their part.

The Cantata No. 50 consists of a single

BEST OF THE MONTH

- London's flair for "stereo theater" recording pays off again with a near-definitive album of Lehar's immortal Viennese operetta, The Merry Widow. — "In this bubbling production . . . the over-all recorded sound is delightful." (see p. 56)
- Decca's stereo disc of the Richard Strauss Thus Spake Zarathustra is, under Karl Böhm's baton, a brilliant achievement. — "A magnificent addition to the recorded Strauss catalog . . . a vivid reading that bristles with energy." (see p. 60)
- Capitol's Music for Strings finds Leopold Stokowski achieving a remarkable re-creation of the glorious string sound of his Philadelphia days. — "Breathtaking . . . and from start to finish commands attention for the plastic beauty of the string choirs." (see p. 63)

movement, lasting less than four minutes. It is presumed to be part of a larger work, the remainder of which is lost. What it lacks in length, it makes up in strength. It is a powerful, almost angry work, for double chorus and orchestra. It is, with its antiphonal writing, a "natural" for stereo.

Prohaska has brought a fine sense of style to his readings of both works. **D. R.**

● **BEETHOVEN:** Overtures—Leonore No. 3; Egmont; Fidelio; Coriolan. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Karl Münchinger cond. London CS-6053 \$4.98

Musical Interest: High indeed
Performance: Dull
Recording: Slightly muffled
Stereo Directionality: Good
Stereo Depth: OK

These performances have very little to commend them. Münchinger's tempi, by and large, are plodding and dull. *Leonore No. 3* and *Egmont*, both of which should erupt into ecstasies of jubilation at their conclusion, are delivered in a very ho-hum manner and there are some ragged string attacks in the chords that open *Egmont* and *Coriolan*. The *Fidelio* Overture fares best of all, but here again the element of jubilation in the peroration is missing. Completing the sorry picture is recorded sound muffled in quality. Münchinger obviously was the wrong conductor to entrust with this heroic music. **M. B.**

● **BEETHOVEN:** Symphony No. 3 in E Flat, Op. 55 ("Eroica"). Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter cond. Stereo—Columbia MS-6036 \$5.98. Mono—Columbia ML-5320 \$4.98

Musical Interest: Olympian
Performance: Steady and assured
Recording: Bigger sound in the mono, with details better in stereo
Stereo Directionality: Excellent
Stereo Depth: OK

In the March issue I included a brief discussion of this performance in the Basic Repertoire article on the recorded *Eroicas*. Walter's is a broad, assured reading, slower than most but with its own particular brand of heroism. I would put it second to Klemperer's Angel disc in my own affections.

The recorded sound is, surprisingly, bolder and fuller in the monophonic recording, but there are details in the scoring which emerge more clearly in the stereo version. The directionality in the stereo version is especially well contrived, with good separation between the two channels. Walter's new Beethoven series is off to a good start with this release and the *Pastoral* Symphony of a few months ago. **M. B.**

● **BIZET:** Carmen Suite. RAVEL: Bolero. Virtuoso Symphony of London, Alfred Wallenstein cond. Audio Fidelity FGS 50,005 \$6.95

● **BIZET:** Carmen Suite; L'Arlesienne Suite. Suisse Romande Orchestra, Ernest Ansermet cond. London CS6062 \$4.98

● **BIZET:** L'Arlesienne Suites Nos. 1 and 2; Carmen Suite No. 1. Philharmonia Orchestra, Herbert Von Karajan cond. Angel Mono 35618 \$4.98

Musical Interest: Familiar all
Performance: Close race
Recording: London and Audio Fidelity, the winners
Stereo Directionality: Equal and good
Stereo Depth: Good throughout

The three recordings represented offer fascinating comparisons in technique and interpretation, and each offers something the others do not. Audio Fidelity has gathered a fine orchestra of many of England's leading players and given them a polished leader in Alfred Wallenstein. Ansermet, long an accomplished conductor, heads one of Europe's best orchestras, while