

has absorbed international currents without losing its nationalistic roots. His "Lament" is a musical setting for Federico Garcia Lorca's impassioned elegy on the death of the celebrated bullfighter Ignacio Sanchez Mejias. "Lament" is made up of four chants, each of which is given an entirely different character by its specific musical treatment. In the first (*Cogida e Muerte*) the tragedy is related by the baritone soloist, while the chorus solemnly intones the repeated phrase "a las cinco de la tarde" ("At five in the afternoon"). The second chant (*La sangre derramada*) alternates spoken narration and singing solo, to an exciting percussion accompaniment. The spoken voice (over a highly evocative orchestral background) dominates the third part (*Cuerpo presente*) while the fourth chant again confronts the chorus with the baritone soloist. An archaic quality, reminiscent of medieval chants, pervades the music, and it is faithfully captured in the vocal inflections of the soloist and chorus. Throughout, Argenta's authoritative hand is evident and the poem is movingly voiced by narrator Molho. Cottret displays a rough, almost unprofessional vocal quality which, on occasion, heightens the emotional appeal of the grief-stricken words.

The *Sarabande*, like the *Lament*, dates from 1950 and is the composer's transcription of his guitar concerto's slow movement—a stately, somber and somewhat static piece of music. The entire disc is well engineered—save an abrupt cut-off at the end of the *Sarabande*. It all adds up to a program of refreshing originality, though familiarity with the Spanish language or at least a special predilection for Spanish music is desirable for full enjoyment. **G. J.**

● **PACHELBEL:** 7 Chorale-Partitas—Christus, der ist mein Leben; Alle Menschen müssen sterben; Herzlich tut mich verlangen; Was Gott tut, ist wohl gefan; Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen?; Werde munter, mein Gemüte; Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele. Robert Owen (organ & harpsichord). Westminster XWN 18829 \$4.98

Musical Interest: For baroque organ fans
Performance: A wee bit dry
Recording: Good

I, for one, have always been singularly susceptible to the melodic charm of Johann Pachelbel's music; for this precursor (1653-1706) of the great Bach brought to his organ toccatas and fugues (Overtone 8) a singular thematic zest and rhythmic lilt. For this reason, I find him less interesting when working with melodies not his own, such as the Lutheran chorales. The chorale-partitas are treated generally in a somewhat florid figuration style and make pleasant enough listening; but one of the special features of this first complete recording is that Mr. Owen alternates between his modern classic organ (at Christ Church, Bronxville, N. Y.) and harpsichord when playing variations in each individual piece. I'll confess, I find it disturbing, and would prefer that he stick to one instrument or the other throughout the whole of each work.

The performances are done with loving care, but the general effect is just a trifle dry. Recorded sound is close and very clean. **D. H.**

● **PALESTRINA:** Mass — Assumpta est Maria. Les Chanteurs de Saint-Eustache, R. P. Émile Martin cond.; **JOSQUIN DES PRÉS:** Mass—Pange lingua. Philippe Caillard Vocal Ensemble, Philippe Caillard cond. Westminster XWN 18836 \$4.98

Musical Interest: Noble liturgical music
Performance: Excellent
Recording: Likewise

The refined lyrical polyphony of Palestrina, *Princeps musicae* of the Roman Renaissance, reaches perhaps its apogée in his *Assumpta est Maria* Mass, and seldom has its essence been more accurately and vitally communicated than in this recording. Émile Martin's singers have made some noble Palestrina records in the past for Westminster (XWN 18693) and others, but this seems to me their best yet—refined without being precious, and vital without resorting to emotional bad taste. The miking is a trifle distant, but not out of keeping with the "church acoustic" for which the music was written.

The more directly earthy-expressive utterance of Josquin des Prés (he died in 1521, a few years before Palestrina was born) receives closer miking and performance to match by the Caillard Vocal Ensemble. Here is music that communicates "from the heart to the heart," yet makes full use of all the subtle polyphonic techniques dear to the hearts of the early 16th century masters. This disc takes its place with the EMS recording of *Secular Songs* as the most vital representation on LP records of this great master.

The record as a whole offers a profoundly moving experience and we are much in Westminster's debt for its American release. **D. H.**

● **PROKOFIEV:** The Flaming Angel (complete opera). Jene Rhodes (soprano)—Renata; Xavier Depraz (bass)—Ruprecht; Irma Kolassi (mezzo-soprano)—The Sorceress, The Mother Superior; Jenina Collard (mezzo-soprano)—The Innkeeper; Jean Giraudeau (tenor)—Mephistopheles; André Vessières (bass)—Faust, The Inquisitor & others. Chorus of Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française and Orchestre du Théâtre National de l'Opéra de Paris, Charles Bruck cond. Westminster OPW 1304 3 12" \$14.94

Musical Interest: Rewarding
Performance: Excellent
Recording: Excellent

The Flaming Angel was the only opera composed by Prokofiev during his Paris sojourn in the Twenties, prior to his return to Russia. It was written between 1920 and 1923 (the dates suggested by Westminster's booklet are at variance with Prokofiev's own account) and remained unperformed during the composer's lifetime.

All of this makes the recording even more welcome. *The Flaming Angel* is a product of the "lyrical" side of Prokofiev's personality, in contrast to the satirical inspiration which produced *The Love For Three Oranges*, his best known operatic work (1919). The score has little in common with the experimental adventures of other Prokofiev works of this period—it is lavishly orchestrated, effusively written and abounds in weird and fascinating harmonic colors.

The story, based on a novel by the Russian poet Brussov, is rooted in vague reli-

gious mysticism. Renata, its central figure, is obsessed by an eternal yearning for Love and for an indefinable spiritual perfection which she sees in the image of a flaming angel, though in various guises. Set against the background of 16th century Germany—Faust and Mephistopheles make an appearance and there are some mystifying references to the Inquisition on the one hand and America on the other—the story is connected with reality by the filmiest of threads.

Prokofiev has succeeded in casting an atmosphere around these strange doings that somehow makes this nightmarish cavalcade of demons, sorcerers, curses and miracles convincing. A spell of eeriness hangs over the entire work, sustained by orchestral and vocal effects that are appropriately spine-chilling.

Conductor Bruck, for whom this must have been a labor of love, rates the highest praise for bringing to light this strange but undeniably masterful work and for presiding over such a striking performance. In the part of Renata, which in its own way is as demanding as Medea, Norma or Isolde, an amazing soprano named Jene Rhodes appears literally out of nowhere with a tour de force that is vocally and dramatically completely absorbing. Xavier Depraz, who has been heard previously in Paris disc productions, is also excellent as the gallant Ruprecht who vainly strives to save the heroine from the consequences of her insatiable yearning. (Ruprecht may be the symbol of mankind with its good intentions, bungling ways and essential helplessness.) The smaller parts are all in the hands of first rate singing actors and the entire performance has all the earmarks of a model presentation. This, most emphatically, includes the recorded sound. **G. J.**

RACHMANINOFF: Piano Concerto No. 3 (see p. 50)

RAVEL: Alborada del Gracioso; Pavane for a Dead Princess (see MOUSSORGSKY)

● **RAVEL:** Alborada del Gracioso; Mother Goose—Suite; Rapsodie Espagnole; Pavane For a Dead Princess. Cento Soli Orchestra of Paris, Ataúlfo Argenta cond. Omega OML 1032 \$4.98

Musical Interest: Famous Ravel works
Performance: Skilled
Recording: Above average

Ataúlfo Argenta presumably made this recording with Cento Soli Orchestra of Paris somewhat before the remarkable series of discs he did for London prior to his death. His interpretative sensitivity is clearly evident in this Omega release but he simply is not conducting L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and an orchestra of "100 Soloists" does not necessarily mean a great ensemble. The principal players are good enough but the ensemble dynamics are shallow and so is the entire recording from the viewpoint of sound.

The *Pavane* is straight forward, *Rapsodie Espagnole* is dynamically on too small a scale; "Mother Goose" emerges as the best effort of all because of the excellent first chair players. The sound is quite good but too close. **J. T.**

RAVEL: Piano Concerto (see p. 51)

HIFI REVIEW