

that has largely fallen out of popularity in our time, so their archival recordings in particular give us a valuable link with the past.

No texts, but most who would be interested in these historic recordings will probably not find that a problem.

R MOORE

**SMETANA: *The Bartered Bride***

Irmgard Seefried (Marie), Waldemar Kmentt (Hans), Oskar Czerwenka (Kecal), Hilde Konetzni (Ludmilla), Murray Dickie (Wenzel);

Vienna Opera/ Borislav Klobucar  
Orfeo 785092 [2CD] 130 minutes

Recordings of *The Bartered Bride* come in three languages: Czech, German, and English. This is a 1960 Vienna State Opera broadcast in German. The sound varies in quality but it's better than adequate most of the time. The three most important roles in this cheerful work are taken by excellent singers who are also very fine vocal actors. In fact, Marie was one of Irmgard Seefried's most admired roles, and here she is in top vocal form. She not only sings beautifully, without exaggeration and sentimentality; but she also conveys Marie's spunk and charm naturally and lovingly. She's certainly as good as any recorded Marie and far better than most. She was then at or near the peak of her career, but her voice was still youthful and fresh.

The Austrian bass Oskar Czerwenka sang bass roles as varied as Rocco and Baron Ochs, but he was most effective in comic roles. He was sometimes accused of overacting, vocally, in some of his comic roles; but that's not the case here. He's not as powerful an actor nor does he have the vocal goods of Gottlob Frick, but he is still one of the better recorded Kecals. His voice is firm and steady, with a fine range of vocal colors. Waldemar Kmentt does well as Hans; he and Seefried make a fine (vocal) couple. His lyric tenor is also still fresh and youthful, and he sings ardently but with good taste. The rest of the cast includes veteran artists like Hilde Konetzni as Ludmilla and Rosette Anday as Hata, Micha's second wife. The Scottish tenor Murray Dickie sings Wenzel straightforwardly without exaggerating his afflictions.

Klobucar's tempos are conventional; he conducts a steady performance that allows his cast plenty of breathing room. The sound isn't top quality (even for 1960) but the cast makes this still one of the better *Bartered Brides*. No texts but a good synopsis.

MOSES

**SMETANA: *Quartet 1*;**

**DOHNANYI: *Quartet 2*;**

***Spirituals & Traditional Melodies***

Flonzaley Quartet

Pristine 68—70 minutes

These two quartets are among the gems of the 78 rpm catalog: seldom are such archaic performance practices encountered in substantial chamber works (but cut) recorded in good electrical sound. For this reason, one supposes, they have been reissued both on LP and CD. They sound less like music from another era than music from another planet, thrilling the antiquarian with the dubious fantasy that he is overhearing music as it really was performed in the 19th Century. In place of vibrato the Flonzaleys create presence by means of rhythmic fluctuations and dramatic portamento. Nor are such things done out of custom or habit, but they are carefully thought out and skillfully executed. And then there are the encore pieces: 'Go Down Moses', 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot', 'Deep River', 'Turkey in the Straw', and the rest—popular music performed in a manner anything but traditional. Were these intended for the American market? The restorations are carefully done.

RADCLIFFE

**STRAUSS, J: *Fledermaus* excerpts**

Regina Resnik, Patrice Munsel, Rise Stevens, Jan Peerce, James Melton, Robert Merrill; Orchestra/  
Fritz Reiner

Pristine 37—59 minutes

Another set of *Fledermaus* highlights? Help! This was RCA's answer to the huge success of the Metropolitan Opera revival of Strauss's operetta in December 1950, when strict recording contracts made an "original cast" recording impossible. Thus we have several Met singers contracted to RCA—Regina Resnik, Patrice Munsel, Jan Peerce, and Rise Stevens—singing Ruth and Thomas Martin's rival English translation. Fritz Reiner conducted. (That translation, incidentally, was done for an NBC television production in the 1949-50 season.)

The Columbia recording from the same year had Lily Pons, Ljuba Welitsch, Richard Tucker, Charles Kullman, and Eugene Ormandy with the Met orchestra, singing the Howard Dietz translation used at the Met.

Between the two recordings, that's quite an array of talent. I have always had a soft spot for the Columbia, mainly because of the ridiculous contortions made by Welitsch of the English language, and for Dietz's sometimes ludicrous translation—'You Call Me an Improper Noun' is just one example, in the trio in Act III. The Martins' translation is possibly more judi-

cious, and certainly more lasting, but not nearly as perversely enjoyable.

Hearing Munsel and Stevens as Adele and Prince Orlofsky—not to mention the plummy Rosalinda of Resnik and the incredibly luxurious Alfred of Jan Peerce—is quite a thrill. And Robert Merrill does his 'Bruederlein' part very sonorously. Orlofsky gets only one verse of her solo. What a great era the early 1950s was for the Met, especially considering the number of native singers. The RCA is on the whole a stronger cast than the Columbia, and one wishes it had been able to record the Met production, Dietz and all.

Fritz Reiner was probably more of an opera conductor than Eugene Ormandy, but the overture starts out extremely slow and stays that way until the waltz from the second-act finale is quoted. He then slows down again in the 'So muss allein ich bleiben' section. This may make it more interesting for some listeners used to much more rapid tempos.

Remember that this is monaural sound. The transfer is fine, the notes brief and in the tiniest type (more are available from an indicated website). No libretto. I didn't enjoy this quite as much as the Ferenc Fricsay-Peter Anders I recently reviewed, but that had the advantage of the original German.

TRAUBNER

**WAGNER: *Flying Dutchman***

George London (Dutchman), Leonie Rysanek (Senta), Josef Greindl (Daland), Fritz Uhl (Erik), Georg Paskuda (Steersman), Res Fischer (Mary); Bayreuth/ Wolfgang Sawallisch

Myto 232 [2CD] 129 minutes

This 1959 Bayreuth Festival recording has been hanging around the peripheries of the recording world for quite a while. It last appeared in the pages of *ARG* July/August 1988. With Sawallisch and this prime Bayreuth cast, what is there to say? Praise, lots of it. With brisk, intense tempos, dramatic involvement, grand singing from the principals, and a hearty robust chorus, it all adds up to the way the Dutchman should be performed. Rysanek and London were particularly noted for their roles. It is performed in three acts with the appropriate concert endings for the overture and each act finale. The sound is on the tight, boxy side, but what a performance!

No libretto.

PARSONS

**WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger***

Otto Wiener (Sachs), Josef Greindl (Pogner), Rudolf Schock (Walther), Elisabeth Grümmer (Eva), Gerhard Stolze (David), Elisabeth Scharrel (Magdalene), Toni Blankenheim (Beckmesser), Donald Bell (Nightwatchman); 1959 Bayreuth Festival/ Erich Leinsdorf

Myto 233 [4CD] 264 minutes

Well, another Myto minimal production, substandard in every way. Leinsdorf is not my favorite conductor, either. He's intelligent, learned, civilized, and communicative. But his technique is awkward, and his performances are often painfully accurate, straightforward, well played—and terminally boring.

OK, on this one I was wrong. This set is actually spontaneous, communicative, well played and decently recorded—an interesting, vital, thrilling account of a work where many conductors have to work hard to keep the audience awake. Moreover, the recording, though mono, is way above the usual Myto standard: clear, undistorted, fairly detailed, well balanced, and, well, in all respects quite satisfactory if not outstanding. The crucial internal balance of brass, usually tilted toward the yellow color of the trumpets, in this recording places the emphasis solidly on the golden bronze of horns and trombones. In this respect it sounds a lot like the classic 1938 Staatskapelle Dresden Act III under Karl Bohm, as preserved by Profil.

The singing cast is at least satisfactory, at best excellent. The star of the show is Elisabeth Grummer as Elsa, a glowing, radiant presentation whose only fault is that it's sometimes a little too much so. The rest of the cast is largely satisfactory, though not always outstanding. I don't regard Otto Wiener as quite in the class of Theo Adam or Hans-Hermann Nissen as Sachs, nor Rudolf Schock as fine as Torsten Ralf, for example, as Walther, though Toni Blankenheim gives a virtuoso performance of Beckmesser. There are, as usual with Myto, no notes, track times, or other musical or historical information. Nevertheless, this is way above their customary standards, and they are encouraged to try to maintain this level of musical and technical excellence in future offerings.

MCKELVEY

**WAGNER: *Parsifal***

Gottlob Frick (Gurnemanz), Gerda Lammers (Kundry), Eberhard Waechter (Amfortas), Karl Liebl (Parsifal), Forbes Robinson (Titurel), Otakar Kraus (Klingsor), Edgar Evans (First Knight), Joseph Rouleau (Second Knight), Royal Opera/ Rudolf Kempe

Testament 1455 [4CD] 245 minutes

The main problem—though not the only one—with this release, recorded rather poorly