

QUARTER NOTES

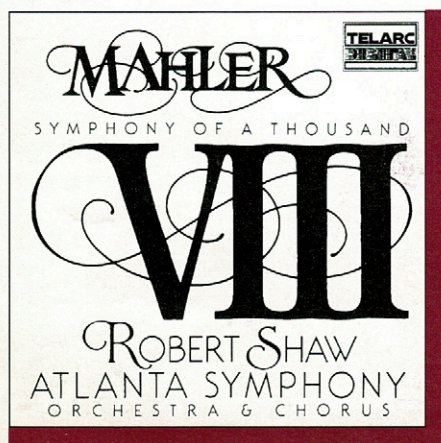
VOLUME 5, NO. 3

THE TELARC INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

FALL/HOLIDAY 1991

SHAW'S "SYMPHONY OF A THOUSAND" IS FIRST DIGITAL RECORDING ON SINGLE CD

by Nick Jones



▲ MAHLER: *Symphony No. 8 in E-flat, "Symphony of a Thousand"*, Robert Shaw Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus/Voight Wray/Grant/Ziegler/Simpson/Sylvester/Stone/Cox (CD-80267) Available Oct. 28 [79:39]

Few composers have been as sure-handed as Mahler when it comes to marshaling large performing forces, and his Eighth Symphony is his most mammoth creation, requiring an enlarged orchestra, eight vocal soloists, children's choir, and not one, but two large mixed choruses. Though Berlioz envisioned massed forces for the performance of his *Requiem* and other works, he never wrote music of such complexity, nor of such thematic unity. Mahler's vision was cosmic: "Just imagine that the universe is beginning to sound and to ring. It is no longer human voices, but circling planets and suns."

He conducted more than a thousand performers in the work's 1910 premiere, and his music brilliantly justifies the use of such unprecedented numbers. His philosophical conception embraces the invocation of divine fire on the part of all humankind in the first movement, a heaven-storming setting of the old Latin text "Veni, Creator Spiritus." In reply, the second and final movement portrays the opening of heaven in all its glory, through an hour-long realization of the closing scene from Goethe's German epic poem, *Faust*. Composer matches poet at each stage in the journey from earth-bound darkness to blinding celestial radiance. Mahler's music builds in majesty and

AVAILABLE NOW!

ASK YOUR DEALER
FOR YOUR 1992
COMPLETE CATALOG

ecstasy as divine love rescues Faust's soul from damnation and elevates it to the highest level of blessedness. The symphony concludes with all the massed forces united in an overwhelming hymn of praise for ever-increasing love.

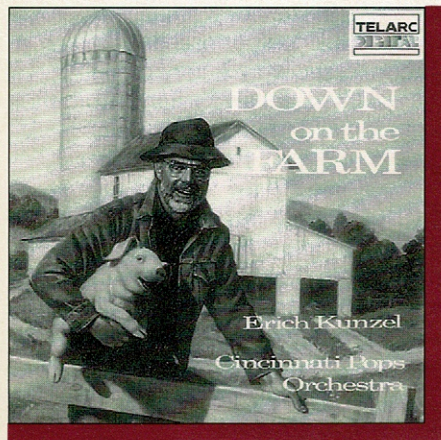
Robert Shaw assembled nearly seven hundred performers to realize Mahler's mighty vision last April in Atlanta. Mandolin, organ and additional brass were among the instruments added as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra was enlarged to about 120 players. The Atlanta Boy Choir was engaged, along with veteran Atlanta/Telarc soloists Marietta Simpson, Delores Ziegler and William Stone and newcomers Deborah Voigt, Margaret Jane

(continued on page 4)

For a behind-the-scenes look at the Mahler Eight sessions, please see Publisher's Corner, page 12. —Ed.

DOWN ON THE FARM

by Jan C. Snow



▲ DOWN ON THE FARM: Erich Kunzel Cincinnati Pops Orchestra/Roy Clark/Tom Wopat (CD-80263, CS-30263) Available Oct. 28 [75:20]

Look at a map and you'll see the geographical heart of America is smack in the middle of farm country, the left ventricle sitting somewhere along the Nebraska-Kansas border. And though we be life-long urban dwellers, our emotional hearts occupy similar territory, a mental geography that places "down home" and "old-fashioned" squarely on the mythic American family farm.

"This farm could be in Idaho or it could be in Maine," says Erich Kunzel, whose new Cincinnati Pops release *Down on the Farm* (CD-80263, CD-30263) celebrates our country/folk traditions. "It doesn't matter. It's Americana and it's wonderful music."

Much of it is music we've known all our lives, tunes we sang in elementary school or at summer camp such as "On Top of Old Smokey," "Turkey in the Straw," "Clementine" and "Down in the Valley." Veteran Roy Clark joins the Pops to contribute a little front-porch style pickin', fiddlin' and singin'. Stephen Foster's

familiar "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Oh Susanna" add a touch of the old South.

More modern manifestations of the rural ideal include John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads," and "Thank God, I'm a Country Boy," sung by Tom Wopat, one of television's "Dukes of Hazzard." Small-screen interpretations of bucolic life are represented by a TV medley including themes from "Green Acres," "Petticoat Junction," "The Real McCoys," "The Andy Griffith Show" and others.

"The big challenge with this recording," says producer Robert Woods, "was deciding what was country. We're not talking about the Country and Western genre. It was an opportunity to tap into a more old-fashioned idiom."

It was also an opportunity to digitally record ducks. "And chickens and hogs and lots of other things," says Telarc's Michael Bishop who captured the necessary sounds of domesticated fauna for a show-stopping rendition of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

(continued on page 4)

TELARC'S OPERATIC DEBUT IS MAGICAL

by Valerie D. Thorson



▲ MOZART: *The Magic Flute* Sir Charles Mackerras/Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Allen/Anderson/Hadley Hendricks/Hornick/Lloyd/Schnitzer/Sima Steinsky/Svensson/Wildhaber (2CD-80302). Available Nov. 15 [2 Hours, 32 Minutes]

The Magic Flute provides entertainment on so many different levels—including those of comedy, fantasy and drama—that it holds a unique place in the history of the *genre* of opera. Technically, the work is termed a *Singspiel* (literally, “sing play”), a kind of German comic opera in which the dialogue is spoken as well as sung. It probably more nearly resembles today’s extravagant Broadway musicals (such as Stephen Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd*) than any other modern staged musical form we could think of.

No wonder that Telarc has chosen this marvelously inventive work for its first full-length operatic recording, with a stunning cast, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Chorus, and conductor Sir Charles Mackerras. (Mackerras’ recently-completed Mozart Symphony cycle with the Prague Chamber Orchestra on Telarc has won tremendous kudos from the critics.)

Pamina is sung by one of the most acclaimed sopranos of our day, Barbara Hendricks; Tamino is brought to glorious life by tenor Jerry Hadley (who can also be heard in the Verdi and Mozart *Requiem*s on Telarc); celebrated *coloratura* soprano June Anderson sings the Queen of the Night; and Papageno and Sarastro are brilliantly sung by British

singers Thomas Allen and Robert Lloyd, respectively.

Sir Charles went to great lengths to achieve the sound and style of performance in *The Magic Flute* that would accord with those of Mozart’s time. “Although the orchestra consists of modern instruments, we have also made use of certain period-type instruments, simply because they blended better in Mozart’s music,” he commented. These include the timpani, which are copies of small late eighteenth century timpani played with wooden sticks, the three trombones (whose symbolic music contributes to the Masonic flavor of the opera) which “are narrow-bore instruments similar to those used in Mozart’s time,” and the fanciful instrument used for Papageno’s magic bells, the Glockenspiel, which “is modern, but a copy of the kind of instrument which we think Mozart used in *The Magic Flute*,” according to Sir Charles.

Sir Charles also was careful to employ tempos which most “express the sense of the text being sung. The most noticeable example of this is Pamina’s aria, *Ach, ich fühl’s* (‘Ah, I feel’ . . .) traditionally taken slowly. The aria thus has a lugubrious feel but it quite lacks the desperate passion expressed by the young Pamina.” Sir Charles believes that the singers “found it easier to express the right feeling,” at the faster tempos he employed, which research has established as being closest to Mozart’s own.

The opera is sung (and spoken) in its original German for this recording, and, says Sir Charles, “as much of the (original) dialogue is spoken as is necessary to make the plot comprehensible.” He believes that “With the music of opera, listeners throughout the world appear to prefer the *sound* of the original language; a very experienced singer of many roles in *The Magic Flute*, Gottfried Hornik, was a tremendous help to the American and British members of the cast in giving exactly the right expression to the German dialogue.” Telarc has provided an excellent translation of the text into English, so that we may all understand every word.

The plot and characters are fantastical enough to sound as though they were invented for a new and particularly intriguing Nintendo game: Prince Tamino falls in love with Pamina, the daughter of the evil Queen of the Night. The Queen and her three Ladies persuade him to seek out Pamina, who is

being held in the temple of the High Priest, Sarastro (representing the Forces of Light). The prince’s companion along the way is to be the Queen’s itinerant bird-catcher, Papageno, who provides most of the comedy in the opera. The Ladies provide Tamino with a magic flute, and Papageno with magic bells to aid them in their quest. When Tamino and Papageno reach the court of Sarastro, they are forced to undergo several trials, including those of silence (which is fearfully hard for poor Papageno), fire, and water. In the end, the forces of light triumph, as Tamino and Pamina are able to prove their love and loyalty to one another by surviving each ordeal, thereby vanquishing the Queen of the Night.

Much has been made of the wealth of symbolism in *The Magic Flute*. Both Mozart and his librettist, Emanuel Schikaneder, were members of the Order of Free Masons, a secret society (still in existence today) which was later banned, along with all other such societies, by the ruler Leopold II of Austria in 1795. It has been suggested that Mozart and Schikaneder wrote the opera in defense of the Masons—it has even been suggested that because so many of the society’s rituals were revealed by the opera, the Masons took their revenge upon Mozart by killing him! Since Schikaneder (who was equally responsible for the opera’s symbolism) did *not* die, but lived on until 1812, this theory has not been given much credence.

Whatever the reasons Mozart may have had for writing the opera, it is obvious that he relished every note. His music (as Sir Charles Mackerras writes in his notes on the new Telarc recording) is “of such diversity and originality that one looks in vain for a parallel in Mozart’s own output or indeed in any other operatic work before or since.” The contrasts are astonishing, from the charming and utterly unassuming “folk-like” melodies for the bird-catcher, Papageno, to the rage of fiery high notes for the Queen of the Night, (she must sing an “F” in the third octave above middle “C”!) the sonorous and moving arias for Sarastro, the bass, to the compelling lyricism of the two young lovers, Tamino (tenor) and Pamina (soprano).

This recording promises to be a landmark in every way—for Telarc, for the world of opera, and for every listener to enjoy. □

THE WORLD'S BEST-KNOWN ART EXHIBIT

by Jan C. Snow

It is the most familiar exhibition of art of our time, even though most of us have never laid eyes on any of the works included in it. There is no doubt, however, that we know them when we hear them.

Modest Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a brilliant star in the firmament of symphonic repertoire. "It is an extremely virtuosic piece for an orchestra, and for a conductor," says Yoel Levi who has newly recorded the dazzling work with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (CD-80296).

Much played and much loved, *Pictures* is a translation to the musical medium of a visual experience that profoundly affected the composer. Its inspiration was a collection of sketches, watercolors and architectural designs by Moussorgsky's close friend Victor Hartman that was exhibited in 1874 upon the artist's untimely death at the age of thirty-nine.

The foremost appeal of the composition is its emotional directness. "This is one of the most accessible pieces in the literature," says Levi of the work's extraordinary popularity. "Even people hearing it for the first time become involved. It's so moving you can't resist."

Originally written for solo piano, *Pictures at an Exhibition* has been subjected to untold numbers of orchestrations and transcriptions. It has been arranged for guitar, brass ensemble, organ, wind band, piano duet, and synthesizer. There is even a version by Keith Emerson of the rock group, Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

In 1886, after Moussorgsky's death, the original piano score was edited by Rimsky-Korsakov. The earliest orchestral rendering was done by

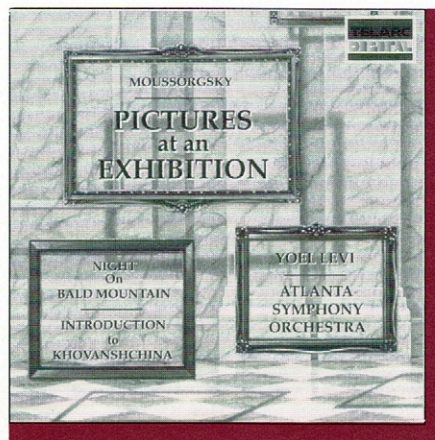
Mikhail Tushmalov in 1891. Orchestrations by Leopold Stokowski, Walter Goehr, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Sergei Gorchakov, among others, followed, but the one that our twentieth-century ears recognize as the "real" *Pictures at an Exhibition* is the orchestration of composer Maurice Ravel.

A marvel of instrumental colors and textures, Ravel's orchestration was commissioned by conductor Serge Koussevitsky and premiered in Paris in May 1923. The next year Koussevitsky directed the American premiere with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Moussorgsky-Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition* assumed its place as one of the undisputed favorites of the modern orchestra.

The piece abounds with bizarre and interesting characters. Chicks, still in their shells, perform pirouettes. A grotesque gnome shrieks, and a troubadour croons a pastel lament. A weary peasant drives a cumbersome ox cart down a rutted mud path and overhead, Baba Yaga, the infamous witch of Russian folklore, streaks through the skies of our worst nightmares.

With vivid sonorities, we are transported to exotic and fanciful settings: a ruined castle, eerie Roman catacombs, a Parisian garden, the Warsaw ghetto, a lively French marketplace, and finally, to the Ukrainian city of Kiev, where a triumphal procession passes beneath the magnificent arches of a richly adorned and non-existent portal. These sharply drawn musical pictures are strung like shiny beads on the thread of an off-balance but oddly dignified theme that represents the ambling progress of a lone viewer through the gallery.

(continued on page 11)



▲ MOUSSORGSKY: (orch. RAVEL) *Introduction to Khovanshchina* (*Dawn on the Moscow River*)/*Night on Bald Mountain* (arr. RIMSKY-KORSAKOV) *Pictures at an Exhibition* Yoel Levi/Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (CD-80296) Available Sept. 23 [49:53]

A STELLAR REUNION

by Donald Elfman



▲ **LIONEL HAMPTON AND THE GOLDEN MEN OF JAZZ LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE**
Lionel Hampton, Vibes/Clark Terry & Harry "Sweets" Edison, Trumpets/James Moody & Buddy Tate, Saxophones/Al Grey, Trombone Hank Jones, Piano/Milt Hinton, Bass/Grady Tate, Drums. (CD-83308,CS-33308) Available Sept. 23 [58:07]


The Oscar Peterson recordings have amply demonstrated Telarc's great flair for catching the spontaneous delights of live jazz. With this new outing, it also becomes clear that New York's Blue Note is a great place to hear world-class jazz musicians creating a very special brand of excitement.

Lionel Hampton, now eighty three, has long been a living, breathing, swing machine. He has brought a sense of joy and boundless energy to every era of jazz playing and has constantly attracted the kinds of players who have made this music unique and perennial.

The "Golden Men" is a specially assembled group of jazz's most respected elder citizens. But elder doesn't mean inactive or stagnant. These men have continued to grow and change without ever losing the individual artistry which has brought them acclaim throughout the world. They have essentially created the music that serves as the base for jazz

in the twentieth century, and have each made a lasting and vital contribution. And, between them, they have played with the most significant jazzmen in history—Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk. And, of course, Lionel Hampton.

These players are: Clark Terry and Harry "Sweets" Edison on trumpets; James Moody and Buddy Tate on saxophones, Al Grey on trombone; Hank Jones on piano; Milt Hinton on bass; and Grady Tate on drums. These venerable all-stars bring a natural and flowing sense of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic swing to this special week at the Blue Note. They play music for which Hamp is celebrated as well as songs which showcase their original and individual sounds and styles. And you can share their magic with the wildly enthusiastic Blue Note audience.

Jazz lives, indeed. 

JAZZ

SHAW'S SYMPHONY

(continued from page 1)

Wray, Heidi Grant, Michael Sylvester, and Kenneth Cox. Added to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, itself more than two hundred voices strong were the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, Florida (with additional singers from the University of South Florida chorus), and combined choruses from Ohio State University. To accommodate such numbers, the acoustic shell on the stage at Symphony Hall in Atlanta had to be pulled back and its sections separated. The ceiling of the shell was also raised, and extra risers were built for the choristers.

From the first combined rehearsal of all the choruses, Robert Shaw could tell that something special was happening: "Everything went together so fast. . . so fast it was incredible." Three large choruses from different parts of the country and trained by three different directors were mixed together, and the sound was immediately disciplined and unified. Shaw says, "It has never happened before in my experience."

The public performances were an overwhelming success, but when Telarc's recording team set up for the taping, the weather began to change. Thunderstorms occasionally made enough noise to be heard over the microphones. Humidity and atmospheric pressure fluctuated through-


out the weekend, constantly altering the acoustic properties of Symphony Hall.

Because of the large number of performers on stage, Jack Renner did not have the customary five or more feet of separation between orchestra and choruses. His chorus mikes were forced to be a little closer to the brass and percussion than was comfortable. The sheer volume of sound made by that many musicians in a hall seating fewer than 1,700 was also a problem. Frequent adjustments were required in microphone types and placement. Renner recalls that weekend as the toughest 72 hours in his life.

After two sessions, most of what had been recorded was deemed unusable; the majority of this huge and taxing work would have to be taped in the remaining session. Robert Shaw gave his choral forces an encouraging pep talk, the instrumentalists warmed up and settled in for a long evening, and everyone set about creating a miracle.

When it was all over the performers went their separate ways, the Ohio State University students traveling all night by bus, faced with final exams the next day! Many of them sported colorful T-shirts proclaiming "I Survived the Great Mahler Holler."


The proof that they were successful is in the finished CD, about eighty-five percent of which comes from that final evening. Renner was delighted with the finished product, and Shaw, after sending

sincere praise to the visiting choruses, wrote jubilantly to his own singers, "You all not only successfully circumnavigated Mr. Mahler's mammoth musical mouse-traps, but you carried nearly half a thousand *ad hoc* [Southerners] with you, including one aging semi-conductor. *Mirabile dictu*, after two full recording sessions which were substantially voided by technical problems, you sailed through the third with the grace of gazelles, the hearts of lions, the stamina of oxen and the daze of wine and roses." 

ON THE FARM

(continued from page 1)

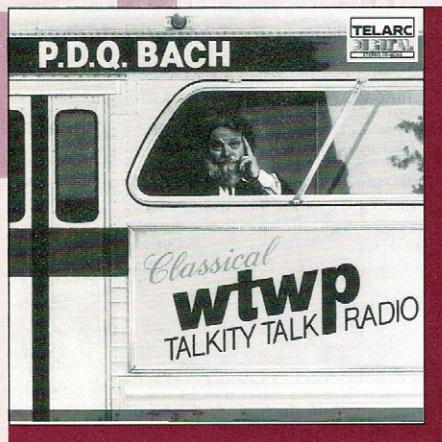
"I isolated the animal sounds that I needed by way of editing and sampled them to an E-Max sampling synthesizer," says Bishop. "The whole keyboard was filled with various animal sounds." The Cincinnati School for Creative and Performing Arts Children's Chorus sang the beloved ditty, dropping out at the animal sounds which were provided from the E-Max by Cincinnati Pops Principal Keyboardist, Julie Spangler.

As for the actual recording of the animals, Bishop says it wasn't really that difficult. "You just get them at feeding time. If they think they're getting fed, they start grunting or clucking or gobbling as the case may be. The best encouragement is always food." 

TALK ABOUT TALK RADIO. . .

by Jan C. Snow

Whoever came up with that thing about life imitating art (or is it the other way around?) was on to something. In the case of Peter Schickele's latest Telarc recording, *PDQ Bach: WTWP Classical Talky-Talk Radio* (CD-80295, CS-30295), there's plenty of room for debate as to whether or not this is art, but there's no question about it being genuine imitation.



▲ *P.D.Q. BACH: WTWP Classical Talky-Talk Radio/Prof. Peter Schickele assisted by Donna Brown as Blondie and Elliott Forrest as Jocko* (CD-80295, CS-30295) Available Oct. 1 [61:39]

"I was being interviewed on a radio station in Indianapolis where instead of there being one DJ, they had a couple of personalities who bantered between the music—that's become a very common thing on rock stations and I thought I should do that in a classical context," says Schickele. Like a true back-of-the-pack runner, Schickele was lapped by real life before he got his

idea off the starting block. "The way things are these days, it's hard to stay ahead. Now there are classical stations actually doing this," he says, referring to the tag-team DJ concept.

For this recording, Schickele, aka Professor Pete, completed his team with actress Donna Brown and Elliott Forrest, classical music jock with New York's WNCN. The two understandably didn't want to use their real names and are heard as Blondie and Jocko respectively. Professor Pete and his cohorts broadcast on the highly fictitious radio station, WTWP (Wall-to-wall Pachelbel), which, speaking of imitation, uses as a theme that all-too-familiar Canon by Pachelbel.

As Professor Pete says, it would hardly be the Pachelbel Canon if it weren't arranged for something. In this case, the inordinately familiar piece was recorded by Calliope: A Renaissance Band, who inexplicably did not want to use their real name. The instrumentation is rebec (a precursor of the violin), cornetto (an early version of the trumpet), bass crumhorn (a double-reed), straw fiddle (a xylophone), and, believe it or not, a bass drum played with an apple on a stick.

"It occurred to me just as we got to the session that it would be great to have a big drum at the beginning of every pattern of the Canon," says Schickele. Producer Robert Woods spotted a huge bass drum providentially lodged overhead in the theater. The drum was retrieved by some crew people, "but since we hadn't planned to use it," says Schickele, "we didn't have a bass drum beater."

Fortunately, piano technician Barbara Pease had brought a basket of apples to share with everyone. Impaled on a snare drum-stick, one on them provided a workable, if unorthodox, solution. "It's probably pretty safe to say that this is the only recording that features a bass drum being played by an apple on a stick," says Schickele.

Apace with the idea of safe statements is the inclusion on WTWP's playlist of P.D.Q. Bach's "Safe" Sextet, a best-forgotten work for six of the sort of forgotten instruments of the orchestra: piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet, contra-bassoon, harp and celesta.

Less safe, perhaps, is *Canzon Per Sonar*, a work for brass ensemble which Schickele, the world's only and therefore most respected authority on the music of P.D.Q. Bach, describes as involving a kind of "cozy antiphonalism." Also for brass, the programmatic work *Canzonetta "La Hoop-lina"* is decidedly unsafe, incorporating as it does the kisses of an ardent suitor and the slap his advances provoke.

P.D.Q. Bach wrote frequently for the voice, appropriating material from the public domain whenever possible. *The Four Folk Song Upsettings* for mezzanine soprano, devious instruments and piano include "Little Bunny Hop, Hop, Hop," "Oft of an E'en ere Night is Nigh," "He Came From Over Yonder Ridge," and "The Farmer on the Dole." Each is enhanced by a different obbligato instrument, the last being the very different pasta-phone, a simple but elegant instrument consisting of two pieces of uncooked manicotti.

(continued on page 11)



Photo: Barbara Pease

"It's probably safe to say that this is the only recording that features a bass drum being played by an apple on a stick."

—Professor Peter Schickele

ARTIST PROFILE

SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

by Jan C. Snow



MOZART: *The Symphonies/Sir Charles Mackerras/Prague Chamber Orchestra* (10CD-80300) Specially packaged ten CD set with slip case. Available Sept. 23 [12 Hours, 25 Minutes, 35 Seconds]

"Beethoven reaches the heavens," the late conductor Josef Krips once said, "but it is Mozart who lives there." Despite evidence that many aspects of his earthly life were less than Elysian, there does seem to be something of the divine in Mozart's music.

In commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Mozart's death (1791), Telarc has released three discs to complete its Mozart symphony cycle: Symphonies K.19a, 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and "55" (CD-80256); Symphonies 8, 9, "44," "45" and 11 (CD-80272); and Symphonies 10, "42," 12, "46" and 13 (CD-80273) in June.

Played by the Prague Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Sir Charles Mackerras, the completed series comprises ten compact discs with a slip case, the first of which was released in 1986 (see photo at top of page 9). It includes forty-three symphonies, those which, in light of the best available musicological scholarship, were undisputably written by Wolfgang Amadeus.

"We have recorded all the symphonies which we consider authentic," says Sir Charles, "all those that are entirely by Wolfgang."

Perhaps history's most celebrated child prodigy, Mozart produced his first compositions at an age when most

children are just beginning to learn to read. He appears to have written his first complete symphony when he was eight years old.

"When Mozart was a child, his symphonies and those of his father, Leopold, were sometimes confused," says Sir Charles, "and there are some symphonies that are partly the work of Leopold and partly the work of Wolfgang. That's why we've not recorded Symphonies 2 and 3."

Mozart's symphonies, particularly the earlier ones, were not composed in their customarily numbered order. Those numbers tend to reflect the sequence in which they were published rather than the sequence in which they were created. Although there are other potential candidates, the composer's most likely Symphony No. 1, according to musicologist William Malloch, series note writer, seems to be the one in E-flat major, K. 16, written in London in 1764.

"With few exceptions," says Sir Charles, "we worked backwards. We actually started with the last symphonies and worked in reverse order of composition. We finished last summer with Symphony No. 1. And, as a matter of fact," he says, "the very first symphony we recorded in the city of Prague was the 'Prague' Symphony."

The series was begun in a nineteenth-century concert hall on the banks of the Moldau River. Known as the Rudolfinum (for the Emperor Rudolf), it was dubbed "The Hall of Artists" by the Communists. Described by Sir Charles as "the traditional place to record orchestras," the hall ceased to be available for recording before the project was completed. "The hall was

in urgent need of renovation, and is still under renovation," he says, "so we had to find another venue, which turned out to be especially suitable to the work we had to do."

The new location was Dobřis Castle, a Baroque castle in the countryside not far from Prague. "It is rather like a miniature Versailles," says Sir Charles, adding that during the Communist years the castle was used as a club for a writers' society. "It has a nice banquet hall that proved to be quite suitable, particularly for the earlier symphonies, which have a smaller orchestra."

Even for the later symphonies, the orchestra is on a smaller scale than the typical modern ensemble. "This is a chamber orchestra," says Sir Charles. "The musicians in Eastern Europe are superb and they're really working as a chamber group."

The Czech musicians are also, according to Malloch, particularly qualified to interpret the works of Mozart. "The Prague musicians have a tradition of playing Mozart," he says, "that goes straight in an unbroken path from the composer's lifetime to the present day."

Although Sir Charles chose to use modern rather than period instruments for the recordings, it was his goal to capture the spirit of the Mozartian age. "Eighteenth-century instruments were less mellow and blended less well than modern instruments, so you would hear the various strands, the voices within the orchestration, more clearly with period instruments," he explains. "If, as we did, you use modern instruments, you can use techniques, such as shorter strokes for the strings, to aim for that clarity."

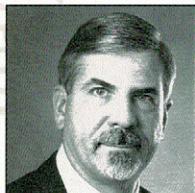
The timpani of Mozart's time were smaller than those used today, with, of course, calf skin rather than plastic heads. The mallets, says Sir Charles, were either completely wooden or of extremely hard felt. "The timpani sticks used in our recordings have been wood, so they're much harder than the modern ones," he says. "It makes the sound crisper and lighter."

The instruments used were calf skin-headed, pre-World War II timpani. "They are not exactly what Mozart would have used," says Sir Charles, "but they are somewhat smaller than modern timpani." Had plastic-headed timpani been used, he adds, they would

(continued on page 8)

MUSINGS

BY JACK L. RENNER
CHAIRMAN



Recording Mozart in Prague—From Communism To Democracy Without Missing A Beat!

The decision to record Mozart's orchestral works in Prague was made—in 1985—when Telarc started a planned program to increase its visibility in Europe. We considered, for quite a long time, what the perfect combination would be in order to record outstanding Mozart. In retrospect, the decision seems easy. We knew we wanted to work with Sir Charles Mackerras, considered by many to be the foremost Mozart conductor and scholar of our time. Through Sir Charles, we were led to Prague, a city where Mozart spent some of his most productive years, and where there still exists a strong Eastern European tradition of Mozart performance practices. Matters were made much easier by the fact that Sir Charles had studied at the Prague Conservatory as a young music student. Added to all this were two other important elements: the excellent Prague Chamber Orchestra and the great interest on the part of Supraphon, the (then) state-owned record company, to do coproductions with prominent Western classical labels.

There are many vivid memories of my first trip to Prague to make arrangements: the impossibly small SKODA cabs, most of them in very poor condition and with drivers who earned a very nice living selling money on the black market (not just cab drivers, but many people on the street whose most practiced English phrase was "You want change money?"); meeting in the middle of one of the many bridges crossing the Moldau River with a high-ranking officer of Supraphon, himself a non-communist, and listening to him describe conditions in the country; negotiating a deal with very proud, yet needy Czechs, which would provide

precious Western hard currency to their shaky economy; seeing enormous scaffolding with no workers in sight around many large decaying buildings in what many consider the most beautiful city in Europe; and seeing people in the streets who never smiled, many in long lines at markets.

The hall I was presented with, Dvořák Hall in the House of Artists, posed a real problem. A reverberation time of around three seconds was not what I consider an ideal acoustic for Mozart. However, when session time arrived, the engineering staff from Supraphon produced some drapes which were hung in the hall to great (although not perfect) advantage. Also, the control room was five-sided! This proved to be really interesting in working out the speaker placement.

Since we brought in most of our own equipment, especially the Soundstream Digital Recorder and Schoeps and B&K microphones, we were viewed with great interest by the recording staff from Supraphon who had not had experience with a lot of the up-to-date equipment we brought. They were extremely eager, not only to be helpful, but also to study my methods. The fellows on the staff had received their training under, and indeed, still worked for Dr. Kuhlhan, one of the most respected *Tonmeisters* in all of Europe. Believe me, they did things strictly by the book; if the math and physics of microphone choice and placement were

not according to formula, they didn't do it. In setting my microphones for the first session, I was firmly but kindly criticized by Dr. Kuhlhan for "not following the book." His criticism soon changed to praise when he heard the sound produced by the microphone set-up which was "all wrong!" We quickly developed a high regard for and friendship with each other and still exchange Christmas cards.

The first week of sessions went very smoothly after we got the sound of the hall to our liking. I felt a bit like I was working in a fish bowl since everyone on the Supraphon staff was eager to see how we worked, to assist in any way, and to provide an ample supply of strong (and thick) black coffee.

The musical results were quite pleasing with the Prague Chamber Orchestra responding to Sir Charles with great sensitivity and enthusiasm. The orchestra normally performs "conductorless" (led by the concert-master), but their respect and enjoyment of playing for Sir Charles was quickly evident.

One of the most vivid visual memories I have of working in the House of Artists was the view from the control room windows across the Moldau to the Cathedral of St. Vitas and the Wenceslas Castle towering over the medieval city. Absolutely breathtaking!

(continued on page 8)



SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

(continued from page 6)

not have survived intact. "If you played them with hard sticks the way I wanted in the Mozart, you'd go right through them."

In keeping with the most up-to-date scholarly opinion, Sir Charles observed all of the repeats indicated in Mozart's original manuscripts. Tempi are, for the most part, quite vigorous. "In recent years an attempt has been made to get back to the authentic tempi that were used in the eighteenth century," says Sir Charles. "There is a certain amount of proof as to what those tempi were, and they're very much faster than what we have become accustomed to with the great romantic conductors of the recent past."

This is especially true for the minuet movements, says Malloch, who has done a great deal of research on historical tempi. Studies of mechanical instruments and metronome markings left by Carl Czerny and others contribute to his conclusion. "They all indicate," says Malloch, "that the minuets, particularly of the late Haydn and Mozart symphonies, were taken at much more of a clip, giving a feeling of one [beat] to a bar." "In a way, I think this is a unique kind of

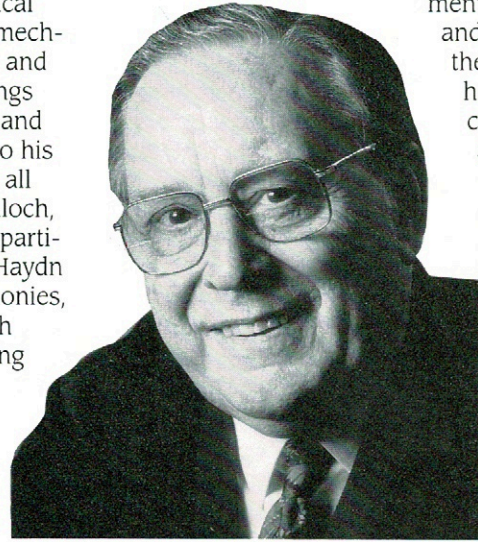



PHOTO: Clive Barda

series," Sir Charles concludes, "in that it offers something in between the very sleek, mellow, modern instrument symphony orchestra and the thinner sound of the period orchestra. We have the eighteenth-century style of playing and at the same time the benefits of the beautiful sound of modern instruments. In a sense," he adds, "what I've tried to do is get the best of both worlds." 

MUSINGS

(continued from page 7)

Early in the first week, Sir Charles established a tradition which continued throughout our trips there. I call it the Czech equivalent of "Miller Time." The recording hall was a lovely five-minute walk from our hotel, and after a long day of recording (often eight to ten hours), Sir Charles would suggest unwinding by inquiring, "How about a Pivo?" Pivo (Czech for beer) is a special treat in Czechoslovakia since it is the birthplace of the pilsner style of beer, in this case the famous Czech beer, Pilsner Urquell.

After the great success of our first release, "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" (CD-80108), we decided to begin the complete cycle of Mozart symphonies, and while we didn't know it at the time, we were destined to finish the project in time for release in 1991—the 200th anniversary of Mozart's death.

After our second year recording in the House of Artists, we were informed that at long last, the hall was to be closed for rebuilding and would in fact be closed for an indefinite length of time. This, naturally, left us and Supraphon without a recording home, and a search was undertaken to find a suitable venue for continuing the project. After looking at a number of halls in Prague without success, we left feeling rather uncertain about the

future of the project. James Mallinson, the British producer who was producing the project for us, returned later and spent one more long day searching until at last finding the Castle at Dobřís, a small village 50 km south of Prague. The ballroom in this seventeenth-century building seemed to be very much like what we imagined Mozart's music would have been performed in during his time. And most of all, it was in a very quiet area—highly unusual these days. The room, while breathtaking to look at with beautiful hand-painted friezes and moldings on the ceilings and walls, and stunning crystal chandeliers, presented a real challenge acoustically since it had a very bright top end and thick, poorly-defined upper-bass response.

Having little in the way of acoustic material to work with that first year, I created the most workable acoustic I could through a combination of placement of the orchestra, using the heavy carpets from the floor rolled up as bass traps and using some (not all) directional microphones to provide detail and minimize the acoustic problems. Our new venue brought with it a memorable control room as well. Not only did this room have a breathtaking view of sculpted hedges, gardens and statues dating from ca. 1720, but also contained a fascinating interior. Hand-painted canvas wall coverings

depicting seventeenth-century hunting scenes from the area (some of them rather gory) contrasted wonderfully with the hand-crafted multi-colored chandelier made of Italian glass.

Having determined that if we were to continue the series, it would have to be in the castle and that being the case, rather drastic acoustic correction would have to take place in the hall. Enter RPG.

Shortly after finishing the first set of symphonies in our second recording venue, in Dobřís (CD-80161) I became acquainted with Dr. Peter D'Antonio and came to appreciate the excellent work he was doing in developing materials and devices to help control problem acoustics (see QN, Volume 4, No. 3, dated Fall/Holiday 1990). As we began to use his RPG Diffusers and Abffusors to create "controllable" control rooms, I started to realize how valuable these devices could be in helping create a more manageable acoustic in recording halls. With that in mind, I had thirty units shipped to Prague in 1989 for use during our next set of symphony sessions at the castle.

Following a general plan of placement worked out with Dr. D'Antonio and in combination with repositioning the orchestra, the hall at Dobřís became very workable, and we were then able to relax and enjoy the fine music-making. The engineering staff

(continued on page 9)



(continued from page 8)

of Supraphon was so impressed with the results obtained using the RPGs that they persuaded the company to purchase them. That, of course, pleased me a great deal since I could now have access to the materials any time I was recording in the country.

During the recording projects in 1988 and '89, it was becoming increasingly apparent that "something was happening" in the country. Work was actually being done on the scaffold-covered buildings; people were starting to smile and were more friendly each year; the security checks at the gloomy airport were not nearly as unpleasant; there were more Western tourists each year, and there was a sense in the air that things were changing. Further evidence of this was the increasing scarcity of Czech crystal, among the finest in the world, in stores. Buying high quality crystal inexpensively had been one of the advantages of working in the country!

Our last set of recordings occurred in September of 1990, only short months after the opening of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent rapid change to democracy in most of the Eastern Bloc countries. Who can forget the TV pictures of the rallies in Wenceslas

Square in Prague, which led to freedom less than a year after similar rallies resulted in a lot of police brutality and imprisonment for many participants.

What changes awaited us this time! No stern-faced armed security police. (I actually saw a few smiles.) No entry visa required, no mandatory exchange of money, gone was the endless probing questioning by the customs police; we were actually made to feel quite welcome after five trips filled with uneasiness! Gone also was the question from the cab driver regarding money changing, since the hotels were now offering a very favorable rate. And the city! Restoration of valuable, significant beautiful buildings was proceeding rapidly. For the first time the streets were filled with happy people, especially at night. Bands were playing, people were dancing and singing *and* lined up to buy Western newspapers. For the first time in generations, people could read the truth. Imagine my surprise and delight at being able to get a *USA Today* each day, to be able to watch CNN in my hotel room, and to make phone calls, which you could rest assured were not monitored.

But what about music-making? The standard remained as high as ever with the players eager as always to work long hours to produce excellent Mozart. Further fine-tuning of the RPG set-up and my microphones produced the finest results ever (CD-80256, CD-80272, CD-80273) released as the final three recordings in the eleven disc series this past June.

Recorded during a five-year period, The Mozart Symphonies are also available on eleven individual discs.

And what of the future? At the moment things are very uncertain for us. We met with at least four "new" record companies while there, each promising great success at reasonable prices for our continued recording in the country. However, the record companies there face a very uncertain future because of a severe shortage of capital. They are caught in a real bind because everyone working there expected the advent of democracy to immediately bring with it the ability to charge considerably higher prices and that the "good times would start to roll." The reality is that higher prices and certain concessions expected from the Western record labels (such as dual distribution of the product all over Europe) have created a serious and doubtful future in the short term.

We will follow the progress and development of the free-enterprise, free-market economy with great interest, and hopefully, we can return under circumstances favorable to both parties. It was thrilling to be a witness to historic political changes taking place while experiencing world-class music-making. I dare say Mozart in Prague was a once-in-a-lifetime event!


PREVIEWS

MAHLER

The compositions Mahler left us were in only two forms: symphonies and songs. Mahler's beautiful and tragic song cycles—the Songs of a Wayfarer, five "Rückert-Lieder," and Kindertotenlieder—represent the lesser-known side of this sometimes impenetrable composer. Unrequited love and death are the themes of these



▲ **MAHLER:** *Songs of a Wayfarer Kindertotenlieder/"Rückert-Lieder"* Andreas Schmidt, Baritone/Jésus López-Cobos/Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (CD-80269) Available Nov. 15 [55:58]

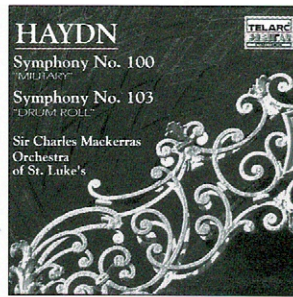
songs (Mahler was not a very cheerful fellow), and they convey a very powerful gut-wrenching emotional effect. But their impact cannot be denied. Or ignored. Baritone Andreas Schmidt, often compared to his teacher, the great Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, has performed these works to great acclaim the world over, and lends his considerable vocal talents to this recording. 

—WCB


HAYDN

Hot on the heels of the completion of his critically acclaimed recordings of Mozart's symphonies, Sir Charles Mackerras goes before Telarc's microphones again, this time leading the highly-acclaimed New York-based Orchestra of St. Luke's in music of Haydn.

This recording of Haydn symphonies is the second in a series begun with the release of Symphonies No. 31 "Hornsignal" & No. 45 "Farewell" in May 1989 (CD-80156). Here, Sir Charles conducts two more of Haydn's "nickname" symphonies: No. 100 "Military" and No. 103 "Drumroll." These ever-popular works



▲ **HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 100, "Military" Symphony No. 103, "Drumroll"* Sir Charles Mackerras/Orchestra of St. Luke's (CD-80282) Available Nov. 15 [51:12]

were composed between 1792-5 for Haydn's second London stay in 1794-5. Haydn liked to use startling, attention-getting devices in his music, such as the famous "Surprise" Symphony chord. This was due to his keen observation that English audiences "took a comfortable seat in the concert room and were so gripped by the magic of the music that they went fast to sleep." These symphonies are full of techniques designed to produce the desired effect of keeping the audience delightedly on the edge of their seats, as they will you, too. 

—WCB

RACHMANINOFF

Horacio Guitérrez gives a stunning performance to Rachmaninoff's two most famous concertos for the piano.

Both have their inspiration in very unusual areas. Suffering from "composer's block," the normally reserved Rachmaninoff sought the assistance of a hypnotist to free him from his difficulty. The result was the Second Piano Concerto, which "may be the most popular piano concerto of all time," according to Ethan Mordden. Rhapsodic and full of tragedy, the second



▲ **RACHMANINOFF:** *Piano Concertos No. 2 & No. 3/Horacio Gutiérrez, Piano Lorin Maazel/Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra* (CD-80259) Available Oct. 28 [73:11]

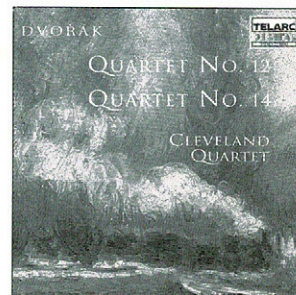
sodic and full of tragedy, the second theme of its final movement was once even in the Top Forty as "Full Moon and Empty Arms!" Which goes to show that great music is great music, in any form.

The Third Concerto was inspired by a car. Actually, Rachmaninoff composed it for a trip to America in 1909, for which the composer was not initially enthusiastic. "I don't want to go," he said, "But then perhaps, after America I'll be able to buy myself that automobile. . . It may not be so bad after all!" The Third is a BIG concerto, in the Romantic sense of the word. The finale has been called "one of the most dashing and exciting pieces of music ever composed for piano and orchestra." It has become a personal favorite of thousands. 


—WCB

DVOŘÁK

Upon his arrival in America in 1892, Antonin Dvořák showed the way for American composers, both as Director of the short-lived National Conservatory, and by utilizing folk elements native to America in his compositions.



▲ **DVOŘÁK:** *Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96 "American"/Quartet No. 14 in A-flat, Op. 105/Cleveland Quartet* (CD-80283) Available Oct. 28 [56:57]

Like the beloved "New World" Symphony, Dvořák's "American" Quartet has enjoyed lasting popularity for its tunefulness, its rhythmic verve, and its happy interplay of the four instruments. This is the second Telarc release of the "new" Cleveland Quartet, with William Preucil as first violinist. Having established a worldwide reputation for its beautiful music-making, the Cleveland Quartet, through this latest Dvořák recording, confirms the critics' accolades, and affords the pleasure of returning to their unique sound, again and again. 

—WCB


PETER SCHICKELE

(continued from page 5)

Additional audio treats on *Classical Talkity-Talk Radio* are a surprise by a legendary rockabilly singer with the initials E.P., a tasty (not tasteful, but tasty) French cooking lesson, and a musical joke or two, which is one way of looking at the entire recording.

As we pointed out when Schickele won a Grammy award for his 1989 Telarc release, *P.D.Q. Bach: 1712 Overture and Other Musical Assaults* (CD-80210, CS-30210), the people who give these things away ought to have more sense. It would, we said, only encourage him, and we were right.

Nobody stopped him, and Schickele made a second Telarc recording in 1990, *Oedipus Tex and Other Choral Calamities* (CD-80239, CS-30239). Not having learned a thing the year before, the Grammy folks went and gave him the award for Best Comedy Recording of the Year again, making it two in a row.

Has all this official adulation changed life for the unassuming and unaccountable musician? "Well," he admits, "there is a little less room on my mantle piece than there used to be." 



▲ Peter Schickele's releases won Grammy awards for Best Comedy Recording two successive years: *1712 Overture & Other Musical Assaults* (CD-80210, CS-30210) released in 1989 and *Oedipus Tex & Other Choral Calamities* (CD-80239, CS-30239) released in 1990.

ART EXHIBIT

(continued from page 3)

"Every picture has a different character, a completely different atmosphere," says Levi. "You have to portray so many characters, so many moods, your conducting has to change so quickly and so completely, it's almost like acting."

Telarc previously recorded *Pictures at an Exhibition* and its companion piece, *Night on Bald Mountain*, with The Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Lorin Maazel in 1979. The new release also includes the introduction to Moussorgsky's unfinished opera, *Khovanshchina* (entitled *Dawn on the Moscow River*).

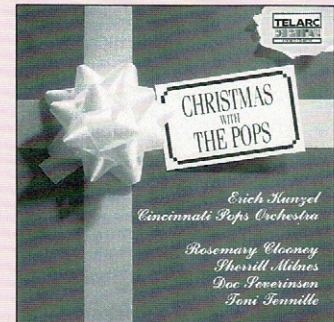
"This is a risky proposition," says producer Robert Woods. "That's one of the most famous recordings we made in our early digital days and every review written about this release will inevitably compare it to the first recording. But being able to compare is the interesting part, and there certainly is justification for different interpretations and different views."

Having first played *Pictures at an Exhibition* as a percussionist with Israel's National Youth Orchestra when he was a teenager, Levi feels he has grown up with the piece. "I played it as an orchestra musician with many conductors, and I've come to know it so well that when the opportunity came to record it and to put my stamp on the piece, I was very pleased."

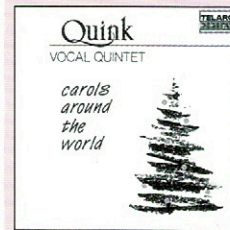
He did not, however, want to turn out "just another recording" of *Pictures*. "Because this piece is so well known, I felt that unless we could come up with a great recording, there was no point," says Levi. "And I think we've done it. I sincerely believe we have one of the most exciting interpretations of the work in this recording." 



• • •



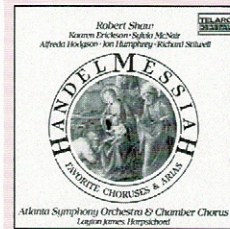
CD-80226, CS-30226



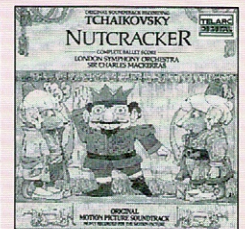
CD-80202, CS-30202



CD-80087, CS-30087



CD-80103, CS-30103
2CD-80093 (Complete)



CD-80140, CS-30140
2CD-80137, 2CS-30137 (Complete Ballet)

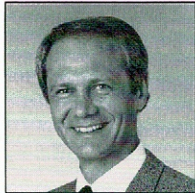
EVERYTHING YOU HEAR IS TRUE 

This newsletter is published to keep Telarc customers informed. We welcome your questions regarding this newsletter. Address inquiries to: Editor, **Quarter Notes**, TELARC International Corporation, 23307 Commerce Park Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44122

EDITOR: Gary T. Reider
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: William C. Baxter, Donald Elfman, Nick Jones, Jan C. Snow and Valerie D. Thorson
DESIGN: Nottingham-Spirk Design Associates, Inc.
© 1991 Telarc International Corporation

PUBLISHER'S CORNER

BY ROBERT E. WOODS
PRESIDENT



Taking Recording to New Heights

The scope of the Mahler Eighth took this project out of the ordinary right from the start (see page 1). Figuring out how to capture the sound of 688 performers in a way that would meet our standards for a natural recording was like squeezing the members of a family reunion together to get a good snapshot. Session breaks were a nightmare because it took a half hour to get everybody on or off stage.

Saturday, at the first session, we worked primarily on the first movement. The next day we worked on the second movement, and while things went very well, what we were really looking for in a performance wasn't quite realized. We had one session left.

My children had been in Atlanta with me, and I took them home to Cleveland on Sunday. Monday I got a late morning flight back to Atlanta. I was reading away when the pilot an-

nounced that there was a Class 3 thunderstorm sitting on top of Atlanta's Hartsfield Airport.

We circled for about two hours and then were diverted to Birmingham with the warning that the weather there wasn't much better. And, yes, it was terrible! When we landed, an announcement was made (at 4:30 p.m.) informing us that planes were not taking off for Atlanta due to unacceptable weather conditions.

I checked the driving time: three hours in good weather. Then I called Peachtree-DeKalb, a private airport north of Atlanta. South of the city at Hartsfield, thunderstorms were severe, but Peachtree-DeKalb was still open.

When I reached the only charter operator in Birmingham, his two pilots were just leaving, and I stayed on the

phone while he ran out to catch them. "Well," he said when he returned to the phone, "if you don't mind that your pilots are wearing jeans and cowboy boots, they're ready." In a pouring rain, we got into a small Citation jet (even for Mahler I wasn't going up in a propeller aircraft in that weather!) and took off less than two hours before the session was to begin.

That was the ride of my life. Despite having the seat belt tightly drawn, my head hit the top of the cabin a number of times.

Since I'd already had my white knuckles for the day, I wasn't as uptight as I might otherwise have been over the fact that we had an entire Mahler symphony to record in one evening. Despite the tremendous demands on everyone concerned, we

captured what is probably the first truly spontaneous, almost-live recording of this piece. Since the next day was Shaw's 75th birthday, the experience ended with the incredible sound of "Happy Birthday" sung by that massed force at midnight. **ON**

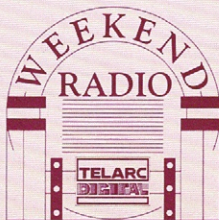


Photo: Jack Renner

Large numbers: Eight days, three recording sessions, and 688 voices and instruments were assembled for the recording of Mahler's Eighth Symphony.

ARE YOU MOVING?

We kindly ask your help to save paper and postal expenses. To continue receiving your newsletter without interruption, please clip your mailing label with the address corrected and send it to Telarc. **Thank you.**



Tune in to the national broadcasts of "Weekend Radio," produced by Cleveland station WCLV-FM, and sponsored by Telarc. The program, featuring a mixture of crossover, light classical and comedy, is hosted by Robert Conrad, commentator for The Cleveland Orchestra broadcasts. Hear Jan C. Snow, contributing editor to **Quarter Notes**, on her regular feature, *Marginal Considerations*, a weekly humorous commentary. Please consult your local listing for time in your area.

TO RECEIVE YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO



WRITE TO:



TELARC INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION

Dept. 200

23307 Commerce Park Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

WATCH FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IN MARCH