

# Quarter Notes

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WINTER, 1988

Equating the percussion sound captured by Telarc in April 1978 with the historic shot at Concord two centuries ago may seem like an exaggeration until you remember that these two events triggered a revolution. Of the recording sessions that resulted in the very first commercially available digital recording of classical music in the United States, Telarc's chairman Jack Renner says, "It was an event. It was unlike anything that has happened since in Telarc recording sessions. There was just something in the air. You knew something special was happening."

The repertoire for the recording included a transcription of Bach's *Fantasia in G Major*, Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and the two *Suites for Military Band* by Holst (CD-80038). The bass

engineer for the recording, Fennell experimented with the placement of the bass drum. "We tried all kinds of things," he says. "I would play the bass drum while Stan listened out in the house, and then he went up and listened on the equipment." The solution was to turn the drum so that the head was facing forward and hit it from the rear, allowing the strong signal to come straight out at the microphone ahead of any reflected signals. "That gave us the sound we were looking for," says Fennell, "a wonderfully overpowering direct sound that would not distort. And, of course, the digital recorder was able to receive it."

The beater used to hit the drum was as unorthodox as the placement of the instrument. Fennell, frustrated with more usual bass drum beaters ("nothing but powder puffs") and the sound

## The Bass Drum Heard 'Round The World

by Jan C. Snow



DECADE OF DIGITAL

drum in question is especially prominent in the third movement of the first suite. "It was the use of the bass drum that was incredibly demonstrative in terms of its dynamic range," explains Robert Woods, Telarc's president. "It was exactly what we were looking for."

The forces assembled for the project were awesome. On stage were the reed, brass and percussion sections of the great Cleveland Orchestra, augmented by the additional personnel needed to realize the scores. At the podium was the acknowledged master of modern wind ensemble music, Frederick Fennell. And to snare every bit of sound from the bass drum to the piccolo, there was the cutting edge technology of the Soundstream recording system, developed by digital sound pioneer, Thomas Stockham.

The bass drum itself was the resident instrument of Severance Hall, home of The Cleveland Orchestra, where the recording took place. "We did 'audition' several other bass drums in the area," says Renner, "but this one had the best sound."

In a usual concert situation, the bass drummer stands behind the instrument facing the conductor, and the drum head is turned toward the side wall of the stage. "The sound," says Cleveland Orchestra percussionist Don Miller, who played the bass drum for the recording, "shoots off to the side and around the shell and out." However, when the drum is recorded that way, the sound reflecting off the wall conflicts with the sound that reaches the microphone directly.

Working with Stan Ricker, technical consultant and mastering



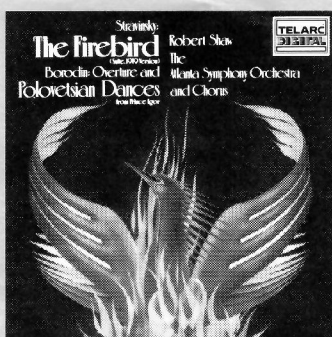
(L to R) Robert Woods, Rudolf Serkin, Seiji Ozawa and Jack Renner toast the completion of Beethoven's *Five Piano Concertos*, on October 5, 1983.

they produced, had concocted it about a year before the session. "I bought a round, wooden furniture ball — a finial — at the lumber yard and took it home to my little shop," he says. There he glued it to a 19-inch-long piece of bamboo left over from another project, and covered the ball with two layers of ordinary chamois. "I was intending to cut the handle off, but the more I put it in my hand, the more I knew I should leave it as long as it was because it gave great leverage," he says. "I wanted that weight."

Miller admits to some initial skepticism. (continued on page 7)

# A Decade of Audio Achievement

by Bill Baxter



Ten years ago in a small office in Cleveland, Jack Renner and Robert Woods, working with Dr. Thomas Stockham, the developer of the Soundstream digital recorder, started what has become one of the most respected and best-loved record labels in the world.

Since Telarc's humble beginning a decade ago, many Telarc titles have had a resounding impact on the world of audio recording. From the "bass drum heard 'round the world" to the famous voice of Liza Minnelli, Telarc has been THE leader in pioneering digital recording technology. Following are "Profiles in Audio" of some of Telarc's history-making titles.



## 1st Commercially-Released Digital Recording of Classical Music in the U.S.

HOLST: *Suites for Military Band Nos. 1 & 2.*  
 HANDEL: *Music for the Royal Fireworks.*  
 BACH: *Fantasia in G.* Frederick Fennell / Cleveland Symphonic Winds. (CD-80038).

Telarc's first digital release immediately impressed the entire industry (and consumers!) with its unprecedented dynamic range, detail and definition. The fact that the musical performance was unsurpassed only added to its fame. (The story of this recording, which started the audio revolution in quality, is featured on page one of this issue.)

*Stereo Review:* (David Hall) "... a significant landmark in the art and science of

sound recording ... an extraordinary satisfying musical experience ... musically, technically ... the collector's item of the year."

*Fanfare:* (John Bauman) "... the whole disc is awesome."

## 1st Digital Recording of a Symphony Orchestra in the U.S.

STRAVINSKY: *Firebird Suite.*  
 BORODIN: *Overture and Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor.* Robert Shaw / Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus. (CD-80039).

During a recession in the record market, when classical music was in danger at the major labels, and it was thought that the public would not recognize or pay for quality recordings, this record sold 75,000 copies in its first two

years — about ten times what the majors consider to be respectable for such a release.

*Stereo Review:* "virtually unrestricted dynamic range ... an impressive demonstration ... absolutely first rate."

*Hi-Fi Buyer's Review:* (Larry Blakely) "I find this recording musically and technically one of the most exciting I have heard in a long time ... the bass drum is hit and your listening chair moves back two inches ... one of the most superb musical listening experiences I have ever had ... when a recording can provide this kind of listening experience, isn't that really what it's all about?"

## 1st Digitally-Mixed Classical Recording

TCHAIKOVSKY: "1812" *Overture. Cossack Dance from Mazeppa. Capriccio Italien.* Erich

Kunzel / *Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra*. (CD-80041).

This now famous recording of the *1812 Overture*, complete with authentic cannons (that knocked out windows over 100 yards away at the recording site!) which, along with real carillon bells, were digitally recorded separately and then mixed into the orchestral recording entirely in the digital domain using digital mixing techniques, really thrust Telarc into the international limelight. The first all-digital "1812", and Telarc's first in what would become a long, successful association with Erich Kunzel, is now an audiophile "cult classic".

*Gramophone*: "recorded impressively ..."

*Digital Audio*: "utterly enjoyable ..."

*Palladium-Times*: "the cannon shots from the three nineteenth-century cannons will knock you out of your chair."

Since its release, there have been many imitations, but none have matched the sonic splendor and authority of Telarc's "1812". Having had a record-breaking run on the *Billboard* charts, Telarc's "1812" is well on its way to becoming a rare *classical* gold record.

## 1st Digital Recording in the World of a Recognized "World Class" Orchestra

MOUSSORGSKY: *Pictures at an Exhibition. Night on Bald Mountain*. Lorin Maazel / *The Cleveland Orchestra*. (CD-80042).

With two famous demonstration pieces, played by the world-famous Cleveland Orchestra, this release sent waves through the audio world, garnering rave reviews. The reviews speak for themselves:

*Billboard*: "... it's very easy to call this sonically the best orchestral recording ever released ... in terms of accurate reproduction of everything contained in the imaginative score you'll find no equal for this new production."

*Stereo Review*: "... true loving care lavished on every stage of the recording process ... Telarc's new digitally recorded Moussorgsky disc comes the closest yet, in my experience, to realizing the fabulous potential of the latest recording technology."

*Sensible Sound*: "The sound is among the most opulent I have ever heard outside a concert hall, yet with no loss of detail or definition."

*Audio*: "an absolute gem, one of those rare recordings where everything was right ..."

## 1st Recording Released on CD Before LP

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37. "Choral" Fantasy in C, Op. 80*. Rudolf Serkin, piano / Seiji Ozawa / *Boston Symphony Orchestra*. (CD-80063).

Founded on digital recording techniques, Telarc was quick to take advantage of the new digital reproduction medium, the compact disc. Scooping the majors, they released most of their catalog on CD while other labels were still fence-sitting. Along with the other four Beethoven Concertos, this set had a number of "firsts":

Mr. Serkin's first digital recording, his first recording with the Boston Symphony and Seiji Ozawa, and his first recording in over 40 years for a label other than Columbia. (See photo on page 1.)

*Ovation*, (Allan Kozinn)

"Telarc ... has even scooped the giants by becoming the first label to issue material on CD that has not yet hit the market in LP form."

*Gramophone*: (Trevor Harvey) "... I have seldom had greater pleasure in listening to all five Beethoven piano concertos than I had from Serkin and Ozawa."

*Opus*: (Peter G. Davis) "Telarc's brilliant digital recording — spacious, immediate, and sensitively balanced — should convert those who doubt the sonic potential of CDs."

*Digital Audio*: (Tom Vernier) "... a satisfying feast for ear and spirit alike."

## The Grammy Winner

BERLIOZ: *Requiem*. John Aler, tenor / Robert Shaw / *Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus*. (CD-80109).

1986 — the year that "little" Telarc "swept" the Grammy Awards. Six of twelve classical Grammy awards went to Telarc recordings, artists, engineers and producers, with this recording receiving four itself: Best Choral Performance (Non-Opera), Best Classical Vocal Soloist Performance, John Aler, tenor, Best Engineered Recording, Classical, Jack Renner, engineer, and Best Classical Album. In addition, Robert Woods won Classical Producer of the Year (his third). This was a major feat — rare for any classical record label to win that many Grammy Awards in a single year, let alone a label as small as Telarc. This distinction gave Telarc the kind of national prominence it had long deserved. Spear-headed by this recording, 1986 was a year to remember in the history of Telarc.

*American Record Guide*: "... an impressive achievement ..."

*Gramophone*: "... sonically, this recording of the Requiem is a stunner."

*Stereophile*: (J. Gordon Holt) "reproducing the sound of the large performing force in its large space as realistically as any recording I've heard ... the performance on this recording is about as satisfying as I can imagine."

## Telarc's First Major Pop Artist Recording

LIZA MINNELLI: *At Carnegie Hall*. (CD-85502).

With most of the possible digital recording "firsts" already under their belt, and as the rest of the recording industry was playing catch-up, Telarc was already looking in new directions. They found that direction by crossing traditional boundaries and bringing the Telarc sound to pop music with their first recording of a major pop artist — Liza Minnelli. As the first small, primarily classical, label to record such an international popular music superstar, Telarc was proud to be chosen for Liza's first all-digital recording. Released in September 1987, Liza's two-disc live Carnegie Hall concert recording has challenged Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson for attention in record stores. The enthusiastic reviews have already come in from the major markets:

*New York Post*: (Bob Harrington) "Liza's new record is flawless ..."

*Cincinnati Enquirer*: (Cliff Radel) "the discs so faithfully capture Minnelli's in-concert presence that even the applause is electrifying ..."

The recording was featured in many publications, such as *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, and on television on CNN. But perhaps *Digital Audio's* David Vernier put it best: "... when Liza started to sing the first notes of *I Happen to Like New York*, I was astonished. The clarity and presence of her voice were stunning. No one expects live concert pop recordings to sound as good as studio recordings. Well, folks, this one does." He went on to say that "the concert itself was a masterpiece" and "few performers can sustain the kind of energy Liza puts into every song." He summed it up, saying "this recording is a testimony to the ability and willingness of a record company to be flexible while maintaining its integrity and high production standards."

*Through the past ten years, Telarc has made history again and again by leading the recording industry into new recording techniques, reproduction media (i.e., the compact disc), and unprecedented levels of quality. What will the future hold for Telarc and the world of audio? No one can say for sure. But whatever path audio takes in the next ten years — be it CD, DAT, or some not-yet-conceived technology — you can bet that Telarc will be at the forefront, leading the way.*

# Publisher's corner

by Robert Woods

As I wrote this article, partner Jack Renner was on his way to Europe to the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna to record the prestigious Vienna Philharmonic with André Previn conducting Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Tod und Verklärung*. Immediately upon conclusion of those sessions it was off to Berlin to record the equally prestigious Berlin Philharmonic in a performance of orchestral excerpts from Wagner's *Ring Cycle* under the direction of Lorin Maazel.

While my British friend and counterpart, James Mallinson, was with Jack producing those sessions, I was in Cincinnati working with Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pops on *Rhapsody in Blue* (see at right).

When we grabbed the digital tiger by the tail ten years ago, we had dreams of recording the major orchestras and classical artists of the world. At the conclusion of the first decade many wonderful dreams have become a reality. Some of the biggest challenges we met did not revolve around the making of the recordings, but rather the production of the product and management of the business. When our first digital recording was made, the company had two employees, Jack Renner and myself. Whatever needed to be done, we did it, including packing the first records and delivering them in the trunk of an aging Lincoln Continental.

Our early years saw a wonderfully close and satisfying business relationship with Tom Stockham and his Soundstream equipment. It was years ahead of its time; sadly, it was the victim of the odds that weigh against a fledgling business. Our goal to try to reach perfection in the manufacture of vinyl recordings damned-near killed us. In 1978 we knew that something like the CD would be forthcoming and for us, it couldn't come too soon.

In early 1982, we were in Japan on the doorstep of a number of manufacturers who were planning to produce CD's. Of the many companies with whom we had discussions, only two had a firm production schedule, (continued on page 6)

# previews by John Eustace

## A 1924 Experiment in Modern Music

### Rhapsody In Blue

The Original Jazz Band Version

GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue* (original 1924 version); *Concerto in F*; *I Got Rhythm variations*; "Rialto Ripples" Rag. William Tritt, piano | Erich Kunzel | Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. (CD-80166) March 1988.

**Includes 48 bars that Gershwin cut before the first performance.**

Classical purists may regard his music as jazz with a heavy dose of naive pretension. Jazz purists may find his music too structured to be called true jazz. Yet nobody can deny that George Gershwin's music is distinctly American, or that it has found a solid foothold in both musical worlds. Today, 50 years after his untimely death, he has gained unofficial acceptance as America's "National Composer". As this acceptance spread and his reputation was reinforced, scholars were busy discovering new works and new versions of works, many of which haven't been heard in over 50 years. Telarc's new recording of *Rhapsody in Blue* is one result of all this new research.

*Rhapsody in Blue* was originally written for two pianos with one as the solo part and the other as the orchestral accompaniment. Gershwin's popular music background had not given him much exposure to the art of orchestration. In the pit orchestras he normally used, there was usually a staff arranger who took care of orchestrations. Paul Whiteman, who had commissioned the work, supplied his arranger, Ferdé Grofé. Grofé orchestrated the accompaniment for a small ensemble of about 20-24 players. The first performance was on February 12, 1924 as part of Whiteman's famous "Experiment in Modern Music" in which jazz compositions shared the stage with classical works. Gershwin himself was the soloist. *Rhapsody in*



*Blue* was an immediate hit, and led to Gershwin being commissioned for several more works.

Later, Grofé re-orchestrated the work for larger symphonic forces, once in 1926 and again in 1942. It is the latter version that we are familiar with today. Telarc has chosen to record this work in the original "Jazz Band" version as it was written by Gershwin and cut before its premiere. The leaner accompaniment emphasizes the "jazzier" qualities of the work, whereas the 1942 version emphasizes the symphonic elements. The result of hearing this version is much like hearing baroque music on original instruments — even those very familiar with the work will hear new details. Forty-four "lost" measures for solo piano have been restored. We believe ours to be the only all-digital recording of the original version.

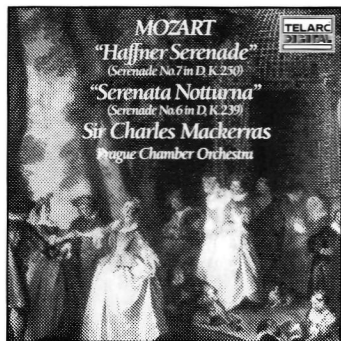
Because of the success of *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin received a commission for a concerto which became the *Concerto in F*. This work, as well as the "I Got Rhythm" Variations, are also included. Rounding out the disc is "Rialto Ripples" Rag, a delightful solo piano piece which was Gershwin's first published work. Orchestrated by Erich Kunzel for this recording; William Tritt is the piano soloist. 🎹

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.

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## previews

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MOZART: "Haffner" Serenade; "Serenata notturna". Sir Charles Mackerras | Prague Chamber Orchestra. (CD-80161) February 1988.

With all the seriousness with which we approach classical music, it is easy to forget that while music has served many purposes including religious, ceremonial, and, of course, artistic, it was primarily composed for entertainment. Mozart dabbled in all those territories, but he was especially interested in entertainment. In fact, his main dream was to be accepted as an opera composer, a career goal which, at the time, was somewhere on the level of being a rock star. He didn't seem to be worried about reaching any lofty artistic goals. Perhaps he just left that to his (infallible) artistic instincts.

We treat all classical music with reverence, but in Mozart's day, certain forms were considered serious, and others were considered informal. The serious forms included masses, symphonies, string quartets and some concertos (other concertos were show-off pieces that belong in the entertainment category). Less serious forms included operas, many vocal and piano works, and numerous obsolete forms such as cassations, divertimenti and serenades. These latter three forms were multi-movement works, similar to baroque orchestral suites. They were generally performed at parties, receptions, weddings and other festive or informal occasions. Because of Mozart's love of the night life in any city he was in at the time, he had plenty of opportunity to compose these works, and even though they were written for entertainment and fun, his innate artistic sense still puts them on a level far above similar works by other composers.

Telarc has previously released two of Mozart's serenades, the "Posthorn" Serenade and the very popular *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (CD-80108). Now Telarc has recorded two more serenades with the Prague Chamber Orchestra: The "Haffner" Serenade, and the *Serenata*

## Second in a Series — Don Dorsey Returns

### Beethoven or Bust

DON DORSEY: *Beethoven or Bust*. The music of Beethoven as realized by Don Dorsey on Digital and Other Authentic Period Synthesizers. (CD-80153) February 1988.

"Dynamic, controversial, satirical, blasphemous," and especially, "fun" were all words used to describe *Bachbusters*, Don Dorsey's first recording for Telarc. After reaching number one on *Billboard's* Classical Compact Disc chart in 1986 and becoming one of the most popular test discs in audio showrooms around the country, *Bachbusters* (CD-80123) has become an electronic classic on the level of Walter Carlos' *Switched-On-Bach*. Now Telarc and Don Dorsey team up again to bust the classics with *Beethoven or Bust*.

Beethoven's music has been virtually untouched by synthesists. This is partially because early synthesizers were not "polyphonic", that is, they could only play one note at a time. This meant that the instruments were best suited for linear music, such as that of J.S. Bach. With the advent of digital technology, electronic keyboards have become much more flexible. Under the talented hands of Don Dorsey, any music is within the realm of possibility, even the very multi-textured music of Beethoven.

*Beethoven or Bust*, like *Bachbusters*, includes a generous assortment of works and styles, from the gentle washes of color in the "Moonlight"

*notturna*. Like the "Posthorn" and *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, these works are light-hearted and very accessible. Because they were never intended to be serious art, Mozart emphasized the melodic elements, even borrowing from popular tunes of the times. Since their original intention was often background music, they are wonderful listening while reading, dining or relaxing, but more importantly they were made to be entertaining, so enjoy.

*Hollywood's Greatest Hits, Vol. I*. Erich Kunzel | Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. (CD-80168) December 1987.

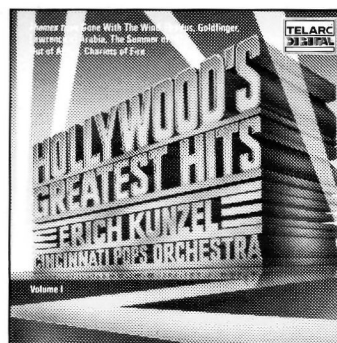
While film music has undergone many stylistic changes, the traditional movie score, with a large orchestra and emotional melodies, still exists and still



Sonata to the sheer virtuosic exhilaration in "Rage Over a Lost Penny". The fresh arrangements run from straight experimental, to fun — including Dorsey's own brief arrangement of the fourth movement of the main theme of the "Ode to Joy" from the Ninth Symphony. If you liked *Bachbusters*, you'll love *Beethoven or Bust*.

All these interpretations are recorded in the same pristine digital sound that made *Bachbusters* one of the finest demonstration discs available. The showy dynamics, clever and intricate arrangements will also make *Beethoven or Bust* a lively and attention-getting demonstration disc.

Since the recording was produced by playing digital electronic keyboards, patching them directly into a digital recording console, and finally playing it back on a digital compact disc player, you will be hearing the pure digital chain with the customary Telarc quality. ☺



works. After many years of experiencing movies, making them a part of our lives and memories, we have come to expect this. A disco or rock-n-roll score may have immediate acceptance, but does not seem to have the lasting power of an orchestral score. (continued on page 6)

## previews

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Erich Kunzel has shown himself to be the consummate interpreter of film music. His recordings of space music on *Time Warp* (CD-80106), *Star Tracks* (CD-80094), and *Star Tracks II* (CD-80146) showed his grasp of modern film scores. His interpretations on *Round-Up* (CD-80141) proved that he was equally adept at older, more classic scores.

Conducting the famous Cincinnati Pops, his recording of *Hollywood's Greatest Hits* offers a large selection of movie music covering several decades of film.

Starting with the famous 20th Century Fox Fanfare, *Hollywood's Greatest Hits* presents the monumental film themes that have elevated films from "excellent" to "classic". Included are the themes from *Captain Blood*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Goldfinger*, *Exodus*, *Gone With the Wind* (Tara's Theme), *Jaws*, *Rocky*, *Ben Hur*, *Doctor Zhivago* (Lara's Theme), *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Love Story*, *A Summer Place*, *Summer of '42*, *Terms of Endearment*, *Out of Africa* and *Chariots of Fire*. Over 60 minutes of memorable music, *Hollywood's Greatest Hits* proves to be a satisfying listening experience that is guaranteed to stir memories of movie fans regardless of their ages.

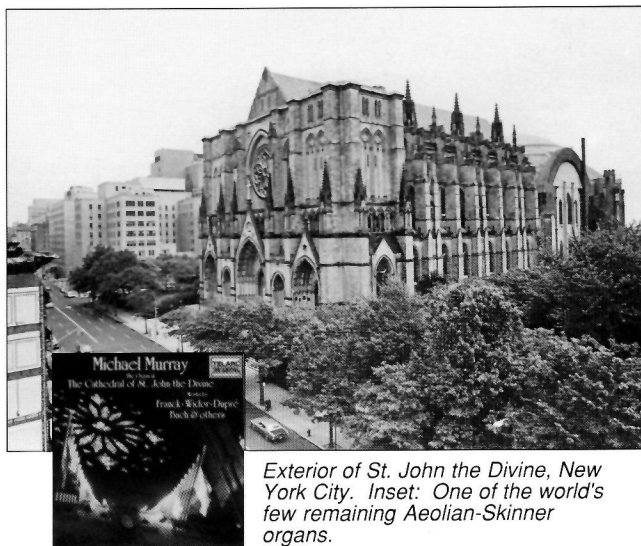


**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphonies No. 5 & No. 7.* Christoph von Dohnányi / The Cleveland Orchestra. (CD-80163) February 1988.

There are masterpieces that seem to define their genre. When considering painting, for example, the Mona Lisa immediately comes to mind. When considering classical music, it's Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The opening movement must have startled it's first audience, but its simplicity and immediate impact made it forever memorable. It took the genius of Beethoven to develop such a simple theme into what is unquestionably the world's most famous classical work. Today, despite countless live performances and recordings, conductors still find new ways to interpret it.

In a cycle of the Beethoven symphonies, The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Christoph von Dohnányi, shows again why it has become one of the world's foremost orchestras. Ever since their monumental recordings of the Beethoven symphonies under George Szell, The Cleveland Orchestra has been closely associated with this music. The combination of Beethoven's compositionally lean style, a virtuoso orchestra, and brilliant architecture of Maestro Dohnányi's interpretation, makes for a rock-solid, stirring performance.

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is just as beautiful and exciting as the Fifth. It receives a brilliant interpretation here. The second movement, a sublime theme and variations, is so captivating that it had to be played as an encore for the wildly enthusiastic premiere audience. Even today, it is considered to be one of Beethoven's most accessible compositions. Combined with the Fifth Symphony, this disc offers more than 66 minutes of Beethoven — a superb value.



Exterior of St. John the Divine, New York City. Inset: One of the world's few remaining Aeolian-Skinner organs.

**FRANCK / WIDOR / DUPRÉ / BACH & others.** *The Organ at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.* Michael Murray, organ. (CD-80169) March 1988.

From the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, St. John the Divine in New York City, Michael Murray's artistry brings us music from Dunstable to Dupré on the great 5,650-pipe, 143-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ. Michael Murray has performed in virtually every major city in Europe and North America to rave reviews. This recording represents his ninth successful collaboration with Telarc on CD and consists of all never-before-released selections.

In an acoustic space twelve stories high and two football fields in length, Mr. Murray presents a recital of organ music that spans six centuries and makes full use of all the stops of that famous instrument (including the state trumpet — a horizontal reed trumpet mounted under the rose window at the far end of the cathedral), performing music of Purcell, Marcello, Bach, Soler, Franck,

Widor, Vierne and Dupré. Ernest M. Skinner said of his great creation: "As for completeness in regard to tone color and volume, it will have no superior in the world, and possibly no equal. There are no compromises or abbreviations of any description." This statement could also be applied to Telarc's recording, which means an exceptional listening experience. The 32-foot pipes are guaranteed to rattle the windows!

## Publisher's Corner

(continued from page 4)

Sony and Matsushita Electric (Panasonic). In June 1983, with the help of the domestic Sony Corporation, Telarc released the first compact discs in the United States. At last the quality of the digital recordings we had been making since 1978 could be heard by the consumer as we could hear them — no veiled sound, no snap, crackle and pop, no pre-echo, no "wow", no hiss and no mistracking of the "1812 Overture"! It was heaven; at last we could breathe easier and enjoy the fruits of our labor.

It is a pleasure to reflect on the many special moments we had making our first

one hundred recordings in our first ten years. For example, there are not many people of the musical calibre of Rudolf Serkin walking this earth. The recording of the Beethoven Fifth Piano Concerto was close to a religious experience for me. I had heard Serkin was a kind and gentle man, but if he was unhappy with the results of a recording, moving Gibraltar would be easier than getting his approval. The chemistry was good, and I shall forever hold working with him near and dear.

We made only one recording with Eugene Ormandy, the Saint-Saëns "Organ Symphony" with the fabulous Philadelphians and longtime Telarc artist Michael

## Bass Drum ...

(continued from page 1)

"When Fennell said this was what he wanted me to use, I thought, 'Really?' Up close it didn't sound very good at all," says Miller, "but he assured us it would sound good on the recording. And it did. It was terrific."

The recording, released in September 1978, was an instant hit in the marketplace and had an immediate impact on the recording industry. "In a matter of months after the recording was made, companies that had previously been disinterested in digital recording began calling," says Stockham. "They'd had their heads turned, so to speak." The rest of the industry scrambled to follow the lead of the little label from Cleveland.

What was to become a landmark recording was born during the January 1978 mega-blizzard that buried the Midwest. Winds off Lake Erie were clocked at 70 mph and normal activity was at a complete standstill for several days. "I had cabin fever, so I bundled up and wandered over to Renner's," says Woods. Sitting in front of the fireplace, the partners brainstormed about their next project.

The direct-to-disc recording made with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1977 received mixed reviews, but it moved the fledgling enterprise beyond a custom and vanity recording company that comprised its previous activity. Now, Telarc was a name known around the world. However, Renner and Woods knew the limited life of master discs, and other problems associated with the direct-to-disc technique, would not take them where they wanted to go. The sound of the future, they were certain, was digital.

In October 1977, at a meeting of the Audio Engineering Society Convention in New York, they had heard a demonstra-

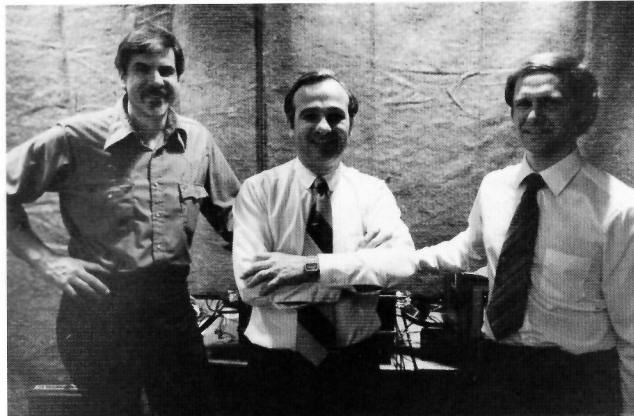
tion of the new Soundstream system. Listening to it, they were very impressed, but felt something was lacking. At dinner with Tom, says Renner, we "had the audacity to say we really liked what we heard but it had to be improved before we would use it."

At issue was the upper frequency response cut-off, then at 17kHz. "Even though you don't hear anything above that, there are overtones above 17kHz, even above 20kHz, that give the resultant characteristic sound of certain instruments," maintains Renner. "Too, there is a sense of air and space (ambience) that goes on up there. You take it away and the sound changes." Stockham agreed to expand the system to 22kHz, completing the work in January 1978. "He called," says Renner, "and said, 'it's done. Now, where's the project?'"

The trek through the snow and the resulting hearthside conference, of course, provided the answer. "There was no question who our market would be," says Woods. "We were going straight for the audiophile."

They called Fennell cold. Although the famed conductor had never met or talked with them before, he was immediately receptive to the idea. "I knew this was going to be a threshold recording," says Fennell. "I wouldn't have passed it up for anything." It offered, first of all, a chance to work with a superb group of musicians, fine players who were used to playing together. There was also the promise of technical excellence. "I'd been aware of the quality of Jack's recordings for many years," he says.

Upon coming back to listen to the first



(L to R) Jack Renner, Tom Stockham and Robert Woods at an early Telarc recording session, in 1978.

playbacks, the musicians were awed by what they heard. The complete recording was even more convincing. "We've all been around enough to know that what you get in the playback room is not necessarily what comes out on the record or the CD," says Miller. "When we finally heard the record, we were very impressed with the sound."

All concerned agree that a rare atmosphere surrounded this event. "That was the most special occasion of my life, both in the art of recording and of making music," says Fennell. There was an electricity in the sessions based on the knowledge that this was going to be of great significance to the recording industry. And there was something more, something difficult to define and even harder to measure that was captured in the final results.

"I've gone back to that recording and listened, trying to articulate what it is about the playing that gives it that excitement and I can't," says Woods. "But there's no question that it's there." ☺

Arts writer Jan C. Snow is a frequent contributor to Quarter Notes.

Murray. The only concert prior to the recording was a "run-out" to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and, quite honestly, the performance was very rough. I encountered the Maestro in his room after the performance and was greeted with a generous smile, indicating his pleasure with what had transpired. He posed the undoubtedly rhetorical question "How did you like it?" Being a little younger and not quite as suave-tongued as I am today, I blurted out, "I thought it was terrible." I wished I could have rewound that brief second in my life. Though his smile faded and his jaw dropped, he was apparently not thin skinned for he immediately took the

posture of considerable concern for my feelings about the performance. It ended with the two of us, at his bidding, spending the following afternoon going over every page of the score in detail in his studio. Thank God I'd studied the score!

So many of the recordings we've made have had their moments of charm and challenge. And then there are the unexpected pleasures, such as the incredible success of our Kunzel / Cincinnati Pops recordings and our ability to "crossover" the boundaries from classical to pop and work with the likes of Liza Minnelli. If it weren't for the "tough" side of running a business, it would seem like a crime to

get paid for what we do.

So, what about the next ten years? Short of promising that we will never abandon our efforts to record the serious classics, to produce only quality recordings and to pledge to stay on top of all new technological advances — that's a good question. We can tell you that we love what we do and we're willing to bet that some exciting things we can't even conjure up today will come our way in the next decade. "Was a lot of your success luck?", Jack and I are often asked. "Absolutely not", we reply, "You make your own luck." ☺

# Musings

by Jack Renner

## The Telarc Sound

"... to recreate in as convincing and realistic manner as possible that which takes place in time and space during a musical performance ... to not intrude between the conductor and his intentions with the performing group, to let him set balance, to control the dynamic range, to let the musical performance breathe ..." This excerpted statement describes the Telarc philosophy of recorded sound.

In order to accomplish the "mission" just stated, a great many years of experience have led me to choose particular combinations of microphones and cables, mixing consoles, microphone placement, digital processors, and recording locations. The Telarc approach is a basic "less is better" philosophy.

Three carefully chosen small diaphragm omni-directional microphones form the basis for the Telarc sound. Placed behind the conductor in a carefully formulated position which combines a judicious blend of direct sound with natural hall sound, this setup allows the characteristic sound of the performing forces to develop naturally in the acoustic. The Telarc approach allows everything to evolve normally under the careful control of the conductor, not of the recording engineer. This is unlike approaches which use a large number of microphones placed close to sections of instruments, negating to a large extent the effect of allowing the natural sound to develop.

The particular microphones in use at Telarc have *extremely* wide frequency response (usable response down to 5 Hz and well beyond 20 kHz), very wide dynamic range capability (up to 140 dB), and unusually low noise and distortion figures. The small size of the microphone diaphragm affords superior transient response and the "punch" which is so much a part of the dynamic experience of live music and Telarc recordings. The extended low frequency response allows us to recreate the feeling of size and weight of a full symphony orchestra; the extended high frequency response provides vital detail, "air", and transparency. Technical specifications would be meaningless if the microphones did not sound as smooth and natural as those we have chosen.

We have a nice variety of choices available and depending on the particular work and the acoustic, we will use the latest models from either Schoeps, Sennheiser, or Bruel and Kjaer. I am pleased to say that I have had input into the development of several models which we use on a regular basis.

I mentioned earlier that the acoustic is very important to the success of the Telarc sound. While I have successfully used this "minimalist" system in many different acoustics, the ideal acoustic has from 1.7 to 2.2 seconds of reverb with a well-distributed frequency balance (not bright, harsh, boomy), a nice even decay to the reverb and enough cubic air space to accommodate the volume of sound on peaks which is so essential to our wide dynamic range.

All of the above guidelines, while primarily describing orchestra recordings, apply to the natural recording re-creation of *any* musical performance.

To summarize, I will mention what two internationally known orchestra conductors with whom we work on a regular basis have said about the Telarc sound:

"... it's so un-fussy, so natural, so much like the real performance, always quite beautiful ..."

"... your sound is *exactly* what I imagine the audience is hearing in the concert hall behind me. I hear detail with your technique that I never have heard with any other approach ..."



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## COMING IN OUR SPRING ISSUE

### New Releases:

- Telarc's first musical:  
The Sound of Music
- RICHARD STRAUSS:  
Also sprach Zarathustra
- BEETHOVEN:  
Missa solemnis
- MOZART:  
Great Mass in C minor
- WAGNER:  
Excerpts from The Ring  
(Without Words)
- BERLIOZ:  
La Marseillaise, Overture to  
Benvenuto Cellini, more.
- MOZART:  
Symphonies No. 25, No. 28  
and No. 29
- Star Spangled Spectacular
- RAVEL:  
Bolero, La Valse

*Plus...* an interview with Don Dorsey on *Beethoven or Bust* and more on Telarc's Decade of Digital

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