

A collaboration of giants:

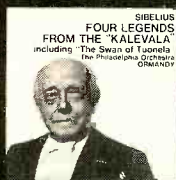
Performances by The Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy and Muti. Recordings by Angel. Acoustics by Oscar Hammerstein I.

In 1977, we signed a long-sought contract to record The Philadelphia. The next challenge: how to capture its glorious sound.

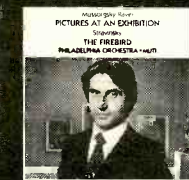
After a long search, we located a hall whose acoustics delighted our engineers. The reasons proved fascinating. Oscar Hammerstein I had built it in 1908 as the Philadelphia Opera House. Melba, Garden, and McCormack all sang here.

Despite the ravages of time and misfortune, even fire, it retained the acoustics Tetrassini had called "absolutely perfect."

Both Maestros Ormandy and Muti have applauded the recordings made here. We also feel Mr. Hammerstein would be most gratified.



S-37537



S-37539



S-37538



S-37608
(Coming in June)



added. The front of this record reads, "Matthew Locke—Incidental Music to *The Tempest*." In fact, Locke's contributions are only the instrumentals. The vocal numbers, scenes, and songs—in the style we associate with Purcell—are by Locke's contemporaries Pelham Humfrey, Pietro Reggion, John Banister, and James Hart.

Locke's music—including a reconstruction of some sonorous brass pieces he wrote for King Charles II (possibly even for his coronation procession in 1661)—makes by far the deepest impression here. Judging by the beauties captured on this disc, Locke was a composer in Purcell's class; listen to the Curtain Tune from side one for a sample of the healthy state of English music before Handel. What a pity that Locke wasn't given a chance to compose the whole score for *The Tempest*! The vocal music recorded here is much lighter and less unified in effect, although there are many pleasures to be found. I particularly like James Hart's very traditional English version of *Adieu to the Pleasures* and Pelham Humfrey's *Where the Bee Sucks*.

The Academy of Ancient Music performs, as might be expected, on ancient, authentic instruments, and very well, too, under the direction of harpsichordist Christopher Hogwood. However, there is something of a discrepancy between the very vigorous and warm instrumental playing and the quality of the singing, which is quite charming but a bit wan—delicate and tasteful pre-Raphaelite rather than lusty, robust Restoration. E.S.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MASCAGNI: *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Julia Varady (soprano), Santuzza; Luciano Pavarotti (tenor), Turiddu; Ida Bormida (contralto), Lucia; Piero Cappuccilli (baritone), Alfio; Carmen Gonzales (mezzo-soprano), Lola. London Voices; National Philharmonic Orchestra, Gianandrea Gavazzeni cond. **LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci*.** Luciano Pavarotti (tenor), Canio; Mirella Freni (soprano), Nedda; Lorenzo Saccomano (baritone), Silvio; Ingvar Wixell (baritone), Tonio; Vincenzo Bello (tenor), Beppe; others. London Voices; National Philharmonic Orchestra, Giuseppe Patané cond. LONDON OSAD 13125 three discs \$23.94.

Performance: **Outstanding Pagliacci**
Recording: **Excellent**

It is a safe bet that by the time this review appears, this album—the first combined release of the familiar verismo twins to appear in about a dozen years—will be riding high among the bestsellers. Pavarotti is, of course, the main drawing card here, and I imagine that there will be some debate about whether such roles as Turiddu and Canio are good for the popular tenor's essentially lyric voice. Such discussions, however, are rather pointless since, first, Pavarotti evidently *wants* to sing these roles, and, second, his public can hardly wait to hear his interpretations. Furthermore, such predecessors as Gigli, Bjorling, and Bergonzi—all lyric tenors—mastered the very same roles at an even earlier stage of their careers. What matters now is that Pavarotti sings both parts magnificently, combining passion with generous and always beautiful tone and musical phrasing. There are urgency and commitment in his singing, and he projects his lines with admirably pointed articulation. There are other praiseworthy

elements in the set, but Pavarotti alone amply justifies its acquisition.

Giuseppe Patané's superior conducting makes *Pagliacci* the more attractive of the two. In a very few instances he favors broader tempos than is customary, but he never fails to get effective results. He supports his singers admirably in this intense and vividly theatrical performance. And the *Pagliacci* cast is excellent. Mirella Freni departs from the overtly sluttish characterization of Nedda that is currently in vogue to emphasize the girl's vulnerability and tragic helplessness. Vocally she is exquisite, absolutely radiant in the "*Tutto scordiam*" ending of her duet with Silvio. That latter role is impeccably sung by Lorenzo Saccomani, who is little known here but quite eminent in Italy. Vincenzo Bello's Beppe is also first-rate, as is the Tonio of Ingvar Wixell—vocally solid, forceful and vibrant in character. If only his tones were more purely focused!

In comparison with this outstanding *Pagliacci*, the *Cavalleria* suffers from conductor Gianandrea Gavazzeni's rather prosaic direction, which permits some unrefined orchestral playing and rough choral work as well. In an opera that tempts many conductors to dawdle, Gavazzeni's brisk approach is welcome, and he does propel the music excitingly to its conclusion, but he does not match the sustained momentum and theatrical intensity of Patané's *Pagliacci*. Nor is Gavazzeni's cast on the same level. Piero Cappuccilli is a good/average Alfio, not entirely comfortable with the tricky rhythms of his "*Il cavallo scalpita*." Julia Varady seems a surprising choice for Santuzza, adhering neither to the Simonato/Cossotto mezzo prototype nor to the Milanov/Tebaldi "luscious soprano" one. This Santuzza has a limpid tone, phrases tastefully and expressively, and radiates contained passion. I enjoyed her musicality and pure intonation but missed a certain element of earthiness in her singing. The Lola and Lucia, artists heretofore unknown to me, are good. The recorded sound in both operas is above reproach. G.J.

MENOTTI: *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore*. Paul Hill Chorale and Orchestra, Paul Hill cond. GOLDEN CREST CRS 4180 \$7.98.

Performance: **Fluent**
Recording: **Good**

This "madrigal fable" by Gian Carlo Menotti centers about a poet, known to the people of his town as "the Man in the Castle," who doesn't take part in any community or social functions but is seen one Sunday afternoon with a pet unicorn. Immediately the townspeople, prompted by the countess who serves as social arbiter, get unicorns for themselves. But the next Sunday the poet is seen with a gorgon; so the townspeople kill their unicorns and get themselves gorgons. The next Sunday the poet appears with a manticore, a beast which "often as if in jest inadvertently . . . kills the people he loves best." and the process is repeated. Finally there comes a Sunday on which the poet fails to appear at all. Urged on by the countess, the people rush to his castle to punish him for what he has evidently done to his own pets and "made" them do to theirs—but they find him on his deathbed, in the company of all three grieving pets. "Oh foolish people who feign to feel what other men have suffered," he tells them.

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