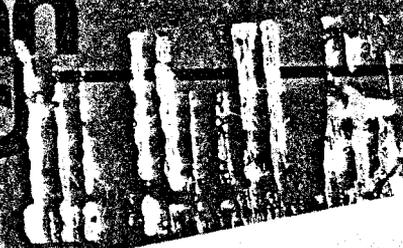


# American Record Guide



Ciccolini—Satie—and A Cabaret  
Sutherland, Sullivan et. al  
Solti's Ariadne auf Naxos  
Fresh Approaches to Old Favorites





By Ifan Payne

## SONIC SPECTACULARS OF THE LAST 25 YEARS

'this is not so much a top 10, as a select 10 records of outstanding merit as regards the recorded sound. They fall into two broad categories: first, those records that seek to reproduce a "natural" sonic ambience, and second, those records that seek to utilize the full creative potential of the recording medium. The order in which the records are discussed is generally chronological.

**WAGNER:** *Das Rheingold*. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Georg Solti. Decca SXL 2101-3, currently available on London 1309. From the first firm opening bass pedal onward, this is a true sonic spectacular. The balance of the soloists with the orchestra is exemplary, and there is atmospheric and creative use of movement backwards and forwards as well as from side to side. This recording was the state-of-the-art when it was released in 1959, and it remains spectacular by today's standards. Donner's thunderclap on the last side still justifies the excitement it caused 20 years ago.

**MAULER:** *Des Lied von der Erde*. Forrester, Lewis, Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. RCA Victor LSC 6087. Heaven only knows why this performance is not currently available. It is a model of a natural, life-like recording of a difficult work. The soloists, both vocal and instrumental, are beautifully integrated with

the orchestral sound. Even the flute, bane of many orchestral recordings, is placed within a natural perspective: in fact there is line depth perspective to every section of the orchestra. Only the too-prominent mandolin at the end of the *Abschied* spoils the illusion.

**BRITTEN:** *War Requiem*. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Benjamin Britten. Decca SET 252-3, currently available on London 1255. A most successful display of overlapping acoustic ambiances and creative use of distancing. Like the *Rheingold*, this recording shows a creative--and tasteful--use of the full range of recording technology.

**WILLIAMS:** *Symphony No. 6*. New Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Adrian Borth. EMI ASI 2329, currently available on Angel S-36469. Can this really have been issued 12 years ago? The overwhelming impact of the opening and the magnificent reproduction of the bass drum still thrill despite the new standards set by digital recordings. The recorded sound is a judicious balance of a life-like ambience and an immediacy of impact.

**CRUMB:** *Ancient Voices of Children*. DeGaetani, Contemporary Chamber Ensemble conducted by Arthur Weisburg. Nonesuch H-71255. It was a toss-up between this record and the equally fine *Music for a Summer Evening* (Nonesuch 11-71311). Both recordings provide a wonderful fusion of

the modern. The moving "Fodas las trades Cr. Granada" from the *Ancient Voices* won me over. An interesting realization in sound of a poignant movement.

**RAVEL:** *Orchestral Works*. Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stanislaw Skrowaciewski 4-Vox SVBX 5113. One of the great bargains in sound. They do not come much cheaper or much better. Excellent perspective and depth with solid, precisely focused sound placed within a fine, reverberant ambience.

**PROKOFIEV:** *Romeo and Juliet*, excerpts. Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Sheffield Lab LAB-8. The start of side two of this disc has possibly the most hair-raising crescendo ever put on record. Despite the huge dynamic range, this disc is most distinguished for its complete naturalness of sound. The only complaint concerns the dry acoustics of the recording studio.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Capriccio Italien*. Pops conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Crystal Clear CCS-7003. The opening of this work captures the feel of Boston Symphony Hall like no other record that I have heard and the recorded sound throughout gives unalloyed pleasure because of its lifelike quality. As with the Prokofiev-Sheffield Lab direct to disc, this is a limited edition record. Because of the recording system used, one (this edition), sold out, that's it!

**A CUE ABOVE.** The New Brubeck Quartet. Direct-Disk. DD-106. I reviewed this recently in ARG. I have nothing to add except to say that anyone interested in the reproduction of sound should buy this while stocks last, which will not be very long. Possibly the finest reproduction of drum on record.

**BACH-MALLOCH:** *Time Art (if Fuguing)*. Orchestra conducted by Lukas Foss. Town Hall S-2(1 (multiple microphone version), 5-21 (single microphone version). Not only is this wonderful music-making, but it is also a fascinating demonstration of the opposing sides of recording philosophies: multi-mike versus single mike. Record collectors interested in recording techniques should own both, both are beautifully recorded. A comparison of the discs speaks for itself.

suggested in your recent editorial, we need to tap and channel the corporate arts giving in this country into recording projects and by all means the National Endowment of the Arts (a source of nearly \$200 million) should start sponsoring recordings of American music! Much more needs to be done, and *American Record Guide* has certainly pointed the way with its fine coverage of the American Music Scene.

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Director, Public Relations  
the Roy Harris Archive  
Sherman Oaks, CA.

There is no commercial recording of the Franck Symphony by Toscanini. I wish you could find space in ARG to set the record straight . . .

Regarding Mr. Gerber's review of the music of Grieg and Grainger recently issued on RCA records (ARG, June 1979), Percy Grainger "was the pianist in *Handel in the Strand*, *Country Gardens* and *Shepherd's Hey* . . ." He was piano soloist in the first of these pieces and "appeared as an instrumentalist within the orchestra" in the other two. Although he was in the studio when the other music in this series was recorded, he did not play.

The arrangements of the Grainger pieces were made especially for the recording sessions by Grainger at the request of Stokowski. According to Grainger's biographer, John Bird, "the orchestrations are quite the best he ever did of these pieces for large orchestra, and Stokowski's sympathetic conducting contributes no small part to the project's success. The arrangement of *Early One Morning*, the only work which was built up completely from scratch especially for the recording, is a beautifully conceived exercise in sliding chromaticism between consonance and dissonance."

The recording of the *Grieg Concerto* is genuine stereo (not mono as reported by Gerber); that of the Grainger pieces on side B is in mono (as he did report).

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