

# American Record Guide



**Allan Pettersson:**

## **Music of Tragedy and Triumph**

**Walter Hautzig:**

## **An American in China**

**The Philadelphia Orchestra's  
Debut On A New Label**

**Peter Grimes — Superbly Done**

**What the Assistant  
Kappelmeister Wrought**

**Sweeney Todd On stage/On Records**

*Concerto for String Quartet, Wind Instruments and Percussion*, one of his last completed works, was premiered in 1976 just three weeks before he died. Consisting of one compact 10 minute movement, a concise series of variations allows a neo-Baroque fast-slow-fast construction, noteworthy for its syncopated wit within an outwardly stoic demeanor. The performance by the Emerson Quartet and Juilliard Orchestra is sensitively

sculpted in Sixten Ehrlich's experienced hands, though the contrapuntal inner details in this busy, intricate score, are occasionally hidden by the less than perfectly lucid engineering.

Taken on their own, the music and performances on this record are attractive; as a tribute to Serge Koussevitzky and his wife Olga, who died in 1978, they are something more.

—Lange

## Critics Choice

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like Karajan can't equal; his wind section has a quality of generosity that's breathtaking. Horenstein unquestionably deserves a place high in the pantheon of modern conductors.

8. Shostakovich: *Seven Preludes and Fugues* (Hall of Fame S517). I bought this LP for one dollar through a mail order book catalog, and few piano records have touched me more. For the *E minor Prelude* alone the disc is invaluable. Shostakovich plays it with an emotionally dark eloquence that never fails to move me. The D major dances and glitters, with a hint of shadow at its edge; the fugue is masterfully alert and militant. The composer isn't often the best interpreter of his own music, but this disc proves a marvelous exception.

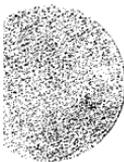
9. Chopin: *Etudes* (DC 2530 291).

I thought it a knockout the first time I heard it and I still do. Maurizio Pollini is, of course, an astounding technician. But more than that, he imbues his diamond-like virtuosity with resounding intelligence. There is nothing glib or facile in a single one of these etudes. They're absolutely honest, yet absolutely brilliant.

10. Bruckner: *Symphony No. 8* (DG 2707 085). This recording came as a sort of annunciation of Herbert von Karajan's renaissance; at last, a Karajan and Berlin Philharmonic who melded their seamless perfection of sound with a potent musical message. I still treasure the Eighth of Horenstein, Haitink and Jochum, but Karajan's is so much the grander, more heavenly inspired; the adagio has never soared quite so divinely, the scherzo has never wedded potency and stylishness so effectively. Karajan and the Berlin, when their sensibilities are fully engaged, are the wonders of the musical world.

are pleasant enough. The works contained on this record are not listed on the front, and the layout of the type on the back makes it difficult to work out the contents. It seems initially as though there are three works listed instead of only the two which are actually on the disc. The inner sleeve is vinyl which hugs the disc as though reluctant to let you extract it. Considerable static is generated between disc and sleeve, and the disc itself is thinner than that usually expected from direct-to-disc labels.

From here on matters get better. There are reasonable liner notes on a grey sheet insert, and one can get quite good at reading the transliteration without too much annoyance. The anonymous note writer (and translator?) states: "The former piece in particular made (Barber's) name widely known in the U.S.A. and which his



## Direct or Digital

By Ifan Payne

**SUGIYAMA:** *Bukyoku for strings* (1978); **BARBER:** *Adagio for strings*. Tokyo String Ensemble, conducted by Naoto Otomo. Direct-to-disc. Toshiba LF-95021, \$15.98.

The packaging for this record does not bode well. It comes shrink-wrapped, guaranteed to aid warping. This says little for the degree of care one would expect from an audiophile label producing a direct-to-disc record. The record cover itself is of reasonably heavy card stock and the graphics

conservative style and harmony inherited from titter (*sic*) Romantics, he gained renown

The sonic quality of the record is technologically outstanding. The full string sound is rich and big-toned, the cal (solo and tutti) being particularly impressive. The stereo location of each instrument and groups of instruments is clearly "placed" and precisely focused. The sound is close, impactful and well equalized throughout the frequency range. The recording was multi but there is a good sense of air and space around the instruments and the ambience is pleasantly reverberant.

By Carl Bauman

IMPORTS

ORFF: *Prometheus*. Josef Greindl (Kratos); Heinz Cramer (Hephaistos); Roland Hermann (Prometheus); Kieth Engen (Okeanos); Colette Lorand (Io); Fritz Uhl (Hermes); Edda Moser, Sophia van Sante, Raili Kostia (Leaders of the Chorus of Oceanides); Women's Chorus of The West German Radio conducted by Herbert Schernus; Cologne Radio Orchestra conducted by Ferdinand Leitner. Acanta 21345, 3 LPs, \$32.94.

Music lovers and record collectors usually come to know Carl Orff's music through his ever popular *Carmina Burana*, one of the earliest of his compositions—the composer was in his 40s when it was premiered in 1937. They usually then move to the other parts of the trilogy now known as *Trionfi* and expand to some of his operas such as *Die Kluge* and *Der Mond*. They will also usually become familiar with some of the *Musica Poetica* series which he has jointly produced with Gunild Keetman. Few, at least of my acquaintance, have moved on to Orff's later works on which, I suspect, he'd like to have his future reputation based. These are the operas based on the

The Tokyo ensemble under Ootomoto plays a virtuoso performance of Koich Sugiyania's *Buliyokii* and a lovely performance of the *Adagio for strings*. The performance lacks only truly hushed pianissimos and that extra bit of yielding rubato. As far as I can make out, this is Toshiba's first classical record in its direct-to-disc "

Series." The sonic splendor of this one makes me look forward to their future issues.

Equipment used: Shure V15 III, Tnoren TO 125 II, Rabco SL8E, Crown IC150, Oahlquist DOLP1, Crown OC300, Southwest Technical Tiger 01, Maynarplanar I-U's, Hartley 25" in Jastak transmission line enclosure.

dramatic texts of classical Greek writers beginning with two works of Sophocles: in their translations into German by Friedrich Hölderlein: *Antigone* (1949) and *Oedipus the Tyrant* (1959). In both cases Hölderlein attempted to carry over into German the feeling of the Greek intonation, surely a difficult task. Orff forsook usual operatic and theatrical conventions and attempted—with a considerable degree of success—to translate this feeling into his musical settings. He emphasized rhythm and percussive effects much more so than melodic lines, something that seems to come naturally to him. At one time DG had superb recordings of both of these available (*Antigone* conducted by Ferdinand Leitner, 2709 009; *Oedipus* conducted by Rafael Kubelik, 2709 025). Both are deleted but are worth searching for.

In 1969 Orff went even further in his creation of *Prometheus*. For this, he set the original Greek text of Aeschylus and attempted to capture completely the essence of the classical Greek drama. For extended periods, the soloists are completely unaccompanied and often they almost speak rather than sing their lines. Do not assume that this is in a Schönbergian *Sprechstimme*, for it is not. The scoring is generally sparse and relies heavily on the percussion. There are no big arias in the traditional sense, and there are no ensemble scenes other than the choral appearances. At most there are two characters on stage at one time, as is traditional in classical Greek drama. If this sounds slow moving and boring, it emphatically is