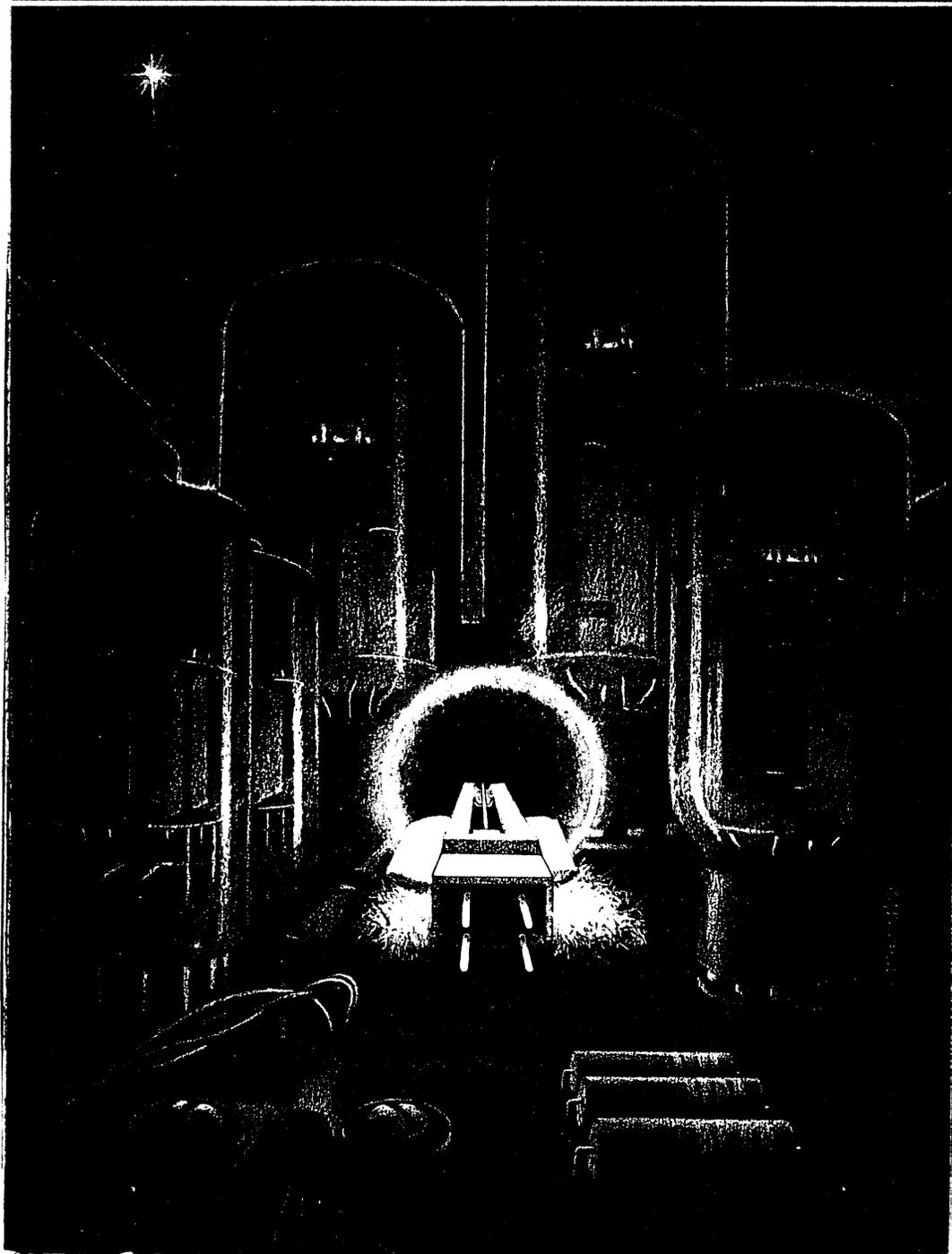


the absolute sound

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Dominus: One Winner, One Loser

French Popular Music Anthology, Volume 1: Wedding. Chorale Franco-Allemande, Ensemble Instrumental de L'III de France, Bernard Lallement (cond.). [Bernard Neveu (eng.)]. Dominus D 45101-DR (Dominus Records, 745 Dowd Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201.)

Well, get those happy feet a-tapping again. Here comes a second installment of this wonderful French series. Or, rather, this is the first installment, and I received them in the wrong order. Whatever. It does not matter as long as you get out and buy this 45 rpm record. We owe a debt to Bernard Neveu, as we do to the rest of the small handful of engineers who clearly also love the music that they record.

I sang the praises of Volume Two of this series in the last issue of *TAS*, so no need to go into much detail here. Needless to say, this is a gentle and lovely record of choral songs, mostly unaccompanied that are performed with a smoothness and liveliness, as necessary, that is most expressive. Some of the songs, such as *La-Bas, Dans Ces Bois* and *J'Etends Dans le Bocage* are accompanied by a variety of old instruments and an organ.

The soundstage is so natural, there is so much a sense of being there, that one hardly even notices it. The imaging is fine—listen, for example, to the realistic balance between the chorus and a solo guitar. The dynamic range extends from the merest whisper to a realistic *fortissimo* and the sonic cohesion is just superb.

BACH: *Concerto for violin and oboe, BWV 1060*; VIVALDI: *Concerto for two violins, Op. 3, No. 8*; LECLAIR: *Concerto for violin and orchestra, Op. 7, No. 4*. Various soloists, Orchestra Chambre Bernard Thomas, Bernard Thomas (cond.). Gravure

Universelle LPL 2640 (also available from Dominus Records).

I had enjoyed the two previous releases from Dominus Records so much that I was eager to hear the kind of sound that could be achieved for a quite different repertoire. This album, however, is a major disappointment. I do not even know whether the same engineer was used on this recording as was used for the *French Popular Music Anthology* since no information regarding this, or little else, is provided on the sleeve—not even the record number is printed on the sleeve.

The first sound to greet the listener of this disc is the sound of pre-echo. This is followed by three rather pedestrian performances which could have used a great deal more sensitivity of conducting and of solo playing. Nuance of dynamics and of the relationships of the inner lines of the music are missing. Don't get me wrong: These are not bad performances, just disappointing ones.

I know that those who run Dominus Records feel very strongly about the need for quality sound, which in their case means, among other things, the use of a minimum number of microphones, but this is, unfortunately, not a recording to demonstrate those feelings. Both imaging and dimensionality are poor. I cannot, for instance, place the soloists in space in relation to the other performers. The acoustic envelope is good, but the ambient information is weak even though the sonic cohesion is good. Bass response is loose but the midrange frequencies are well-captured.

I wish that this recording were a great deal better because it seems to me that what Dominique Boniface is trying to do with Dominus Records is something that many of those who read *TAS* are in sympathy with, and it is this type of effort that should be supported by all those who believe in audio and music quality. But not this time, I'm afraid.