

CRQ Editions: Spring 2018

The Spring release schedule of CRQ Editions includes for the first time two recordings of complete operas. The first of these is one of the landmark events in New York's operatic history: the historic performance of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* which took place in November 1966 at Carnegie Hall. Leading the phenomenal cast is the Greek soprano Elena Souliotos. This is probably her finest recorded performance, representing her at the peak of her very considerable powers before her 'blow-up' the following month at La Scala, Milan. Singing opposite her is the equally wonderful Marilyn Horne, who matches Souliotos inch for inch – a true meeting of two operatic titans! The casting of the smaller roles is equally interesting: Janet Baker takes the role of Smeaton, clearly demonstrating her international calibre, while Placido Domingo makes his New York debut in the role of Riccardo, acquitting himself with distinction. Carlo Cava invests the role of Henry VIII with dignity. Conducting is Marilyn Horne's husband of the time, Henry Lewis, a tremendously underestimated conductor, of opera in particular. He directs with great fire, while allowing all the members of this fabulous cast to shine. Not unexpectedly the audience goes wild. Certainly a night to remember.

In contrast our second opera is something completely different: a very rare French radio recording of Benjamin Britten's masterly chamber opera *The Turn of the Screw*. This dates from the early 1980s and features the Austro-American musician Julius Rudel as conductor. At first sight this work might seem to be completely outside Rudel's normal repertoire, but the fact is that he delivers a wholly convincing and highly atmospheric performance. The two leading roles are taken by British tenor Ian Partridge as The Prologue and Pete Quint, and the American soprano Peggy Bouveret as The Governess. Both are completely inside their respective roles, as is the American mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle as Mrs. Gross. French Radio's sound recording is excellent, and altogether this is a fine alternative recording of this eerie masterpiece to set against more familiar ones.

Our most recent release devoted to the British conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent, conducting Elgar's *The Apostles* and *The Music Makers* (CRQ CD310-311), has been extremely popular and we are pleased to be able to follow this with another two CD set, assembled Mark Hood, devoted to Sir Malcolm's appearances at the BBC Promenade concerts. This set is interesting for including the first two movements of Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony* in excellent sound from 1957, as well as Rachmaninov's *Third Piano Concerto* (with the inimitable Shura Cherkassky as soloist) from 1962 – neither are works that figure in Sargent's traditional discography and both receive very strong performances indeed. Also on the bill are Joan Sutherland singing three operatic arias, Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* and a Sargent party piece, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*.

Another great conductor of Sargent's vintage was the Czech maestro Zdeněk Chalabala. In 2001 the Czech company Arcamedia published a CD of Smetana's *Ma Vlast*, performed by the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra and credited to Chalabala as conductor. This very fine performance displays many of the key characteristics of Chalabala's conducting style: terrific drive and energy, as well as virtuoso orchestral playing.

Willi Boskovsky gradually moved from his post as leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra to that of world-renowned director of Viennese dance music, conducting the *New Year's Day Concert* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra many times. Part of this transition was the publication by Vanguard Records from the late 1950s onwards of Boskovsky directing a small Viennese chamber ensemble in a fascinating series of programmes reflecting the repertoire and style of the nineteenth century Viennese dance halls. Graham Silcock has now brought together for the first time the contents of all these LPs into 3 CD set (sold for the price of 2 CDs), in which this irresistible repertoire is matched by an extremely atmospheric recorded sound. It would be hard today to hear playing such as this.

The Haydn Society, founded by the indefatigable scholar H.C. Robbins Landon, brought to the young LP catalogue many of Haydn's greatest works, often in performances conducted by the American musician (still alive today) Jonathan Sternberg. We have now restored several of these recordings to the CD catalogue in our survey of the Haydn Society's early years. Pride of place goes to Sternberg's first and most monumental account of Haydn's Nelson Mass, with a quartet of soloists led by the great Lisa della Casa, at the time of recording, 1949, a principal singer with the Vienna State Opera. Other soloists of note in this performance are the mezzo-soprano Elisabeth Höngen and the bass George London. Completing this CD are two first recordings of Haydn symphonies with Sternberg once again conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra: Nos. 22 The Philosopher and 35. (Sternberg's second recording of the Mass, made for the Club Français du Disque has been previously released on CRQ CD 029).

The Spring 2018 release schedule features the work of two outstanding twentieth century British pianists: Denis Matthews and Maurice Cole. Denis Matthews is already well-known to CRQ Editions' customers. To date we have mainly reissued his recordings for EMI but now we move to his outstanding accounts for Vanguard Records of the two minor key piano concertos by Mozart: Nos. 20 in D minor and 24 in C minor. Aided by powerful support from the conductor Hans Swarowsky and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and Vanguard's usual fine recorded sound, Matthews goes absolutely to the heart of these extraordinary works. Rarely has traditional English restraint been combined to such powerful effect with central European angst.

The second English pianist of note to be featured this quarter is Maurice Cole, who died in 1990. In 1961 Cole was commissioned by Marcel Rodd of Saga Records to record the whole of J. S. Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues, constituting his Well-Tempered Clavier, over 6 LPs. We will be releasing the whole of this major undertaking during 2018 in fine transfers by Damian Rogan, and commence with the first book, presented on 2 CDs. Cole's performance of Bach's music was praised by The Gramophone on its initial release for its 'unfailing musicality, control of part-playing, complete accuracy, admirably firm rhythm, and an avoidance of all posturing and pretentiousness'. This fine set was probably one of Saga's most ambitious undertakings and is definitely worthy of note.

Another UK recording of the early 1950s to be released in the Spring is the rare recording of Max Rostal and Noel Mewton-Wood performing Busoni's Second Sonata for Violin and Piano. Originally recorded and released by the young Argo Record Company in the early 1950s, before it was absorbed by Decca, this is a pioneering account of a fascinating late romantic masterwork. It is paired with another, slightly later, Argo recording of Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion – this is a surprisingly blistering performance from the two pianists Wilfred Parry and Iris Loveridge and percussion forces, directed by Richard Austin.

Last but by no means least, and with the co-operation of Classical Recordings Quarterly's founder and sometime editor Alan Sanders we have been able to transfer to CD the exceptionally rare Ducretet-Thomson LPs of Arthur Honegger conducting his Symphonic Psalm, Le Roi David. Honegger was a fine conductor as well as well as an exceptional composer, so his realisation of this exceptional work, very much direct and to the point, made with the forces of French Radio, must be considered authoritative.