

Here appears the article as it was published in High Fidelity Magazine, vol. 16, no. 4, April 1966, pp. 46-63, complete with the original quotes for each section

Part A

In the United States, Glenn Gould is known as a brilliant and provocative pianist and as an occasional author of brilliant and provocative musical commentary. In his native Canada he is known as well as a radio and television "personality", a magnetic educator of Bernsteinian skill and stature. One of his most talked-of shows for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was last year's wide-ranging report on "The Prospects of Recording," a 90-minute program which examined in some detail the profound effect of electronic technology on the whole panorama of music, viewed from the standpoint of the performer, the composer, and the listener. As soon as we heard it, we knew that this radio script contained the basis of a fascinating and important article, and we asked Mr. Gould to prepare it for this anniversary issue of *High Fidelity*. At it turns out, the adaptation delves into the subject far more thoroughly than the broadcast. "The Prospects of Recording" is a lengthy and occasionally difficult essay, but we consider it well worth our space and your attention.

Alongside the Gould article are marginal comments on its major themes from various key figures in the worlds of music, recordings, and mass communications: Milton Babbitt, America's leading composer of electronic music and a professor at Princeton University; Schuyler G. Chapin, vice-president in charge of programming at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Aaron Copland, a major force in the development of American music; John Culshaw, manager of classical recordings for Decca/London; B.H. Haggin, doyen of American record critics and author of the first over-all guide to music on records; Lord Harewood, former artistic director of the Edinburgh Festival and present artistic advisor of the New Philharmonia Orchestra; Goddard Lieberson, president of Columbia Records Inc.; Enoch Light, veteran bandleader and founder of Command Records; John McClure, director of Masterworks, Columbia Records; Marshall McLuhan, sociologist of mass communications and director of the Institute of Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto; George R. Marek, vice-president and general manager of RCA Victor Record Division; Richard Mohr, musical director of Red Seal Recordings, RCA Victor; Denis Stevens, musicologist-conductor-critic specializing in early music; Leopold Stokowski, conductor and long-time recordist. Their comments are excerpted from taped interviews.

IN AN UNGUARDED MOMENT some months ago, I predicted that the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by electronic media. It had not occurred to me that this statement represented a particularly radical pronouncement. Indeed, I regarded it almost as self-evident truth and, in any case, as defining only one of the peripheral effects occasioned by developments in the electronic

age. But never has a statement of mine been so widely quoted – or so hotly disputed.

The furor it occasioned is, I think, indicative of an endearing, if sometimes frustrating, human characteristic reluctance to accept the consequences of a new technology. I have no idea whether this trait is, on balance, an advantage or a liability, incurable or correctable.

Perhaps the escalation of invention must always be disciplined by some sort of emotional short-selling. Perhaps skepticism is the necessary obverse of progress. Perhaps, for that reason, the *idea* of progress is, as at no time in the past, today in question.

Certainly, this emotional short-selling has its good side. The afterthought of Alamogordo – the willingness to kill off a monster of their own creation – does more credit to the pioneers of the atomic age than all the blessings this generation can expect that breakthrough to give birth to. And, if protest against the ramifications of man's ingenuity is inevitable, and even essential to the function of his genius, then perhaps there really is no *bad* side – just amusement at and, ultimately, acceptance of that indecisiveness which proclaims the frailty of man's continuing humanity.

In any event, I can think of few areas of contemporary endeavor that better display the confusion with which technological man evaluates the implications of his own achievements than the great debate about music and its recorded future. As is true for most of those areas in which the effect of a new technology has yet to be evaluated, an examination of the influence of recording must pertain not only to speculations about the future but to an accommodation of the past as well. Recordings deal with concepts through which the past is reevaluated, and they concern notions about the future which will ultimately question even the validity of evaluation.

The preservative aspects of recording are, of course, by no means exclusively in the service of music. "The first thing we require of a machine is to have a memory," said a somnolently pontifical character in Jean Luc Godard's recent film *A Married Woman*. In the electronic age a caretaking comprehension of those encompassing chronicles of universal knowledge which were tended by the medieval scholastics – an encumbrance as well as an impossibility since the early Middle Ages – can be consigned to computer-repositories that file away the memories of mankind and leave us free to be inventive in spite of them. But in limiting our investigation to the effect of recordings upon music, we isolate an art inhibited by the hierarchical specialization of its immediate past, an art which has no clear recollection of its origins, and therefore an art much in need of both the preservative and translative aspects of recording. As a recent brief prepared by the University of Toronto's Department of Musicology proposing a computer-controlled phonographic information system succinctly noted, "Whether we recognize it or not, the long-playing record has come to embody the very reality of music."

As concerns its relations to the immediate past, the recording debate centers upon whether or not electronic media can present music in so viable a way as to threaten the survival of the public concert.

Notwithstanding the imposing array of statistics which testify to the contrary ("Ladies' Lyric League Boasts Box Office Boost 3rd Successive Year"), I herewith reaffirm my prediction that the habit of concert-going and concert-giving, both as a social institution and as chief symbol of musical mercantilism, will be as dormant in the twenty-first century as, with luck, will Tristan da Cunha's Volcano; and that, because of its extinction, music will be able to provide a more cogent experience than is now possible. The generation currently being subjected to the humiliation of public school solfège will be the last to attain their majority persuaded that the concert is the axis upon which the world of music revolves.

It is not. And considering for what a brief span the public concert has seemed predominant, the wonder is that pundits allowed it ever would be. To its perpetuation, however, a substantial managerial investment is currently committed ("For Rent: Complex of Six Caustically Charming Auditoria. Apply, J. Rockefeller."), and we must realize that to reckon with its obsolescence is to defy the very body of the musical establishment. It cannot be overemphasized, however, that the fate of the public event is incidental to the future of music – a future deserving of far greater concern than is the fiscal stability of the concert hall. The influence of recordings upon that future will affect not only the performer and concert impresario but composer and technical engineer, critic and historian, as well. Most important, it will affect the listener to whom all of this activity is ultimately directed. It is to an examination of some of these changes that this present anniversary issue of *High Fidelity* is devoted.

The concert is an antique form as it now stands. Most towns cannot afford the best concert artists and I don't see the advantage of seeing a second-rate artist over hearing a superb one. - LIEBERSON

With all the progress that we have made in the reproduction of sound, I have yet to hear on record what I hear in the concert hall or what I hear in my mind when I read a score. - MAREK

In a recording an artist can be encouraged to give a more immediately intense performance than he could under concert or theatre conditions. - CULSHAW

For me, the most important thing is the element of chance that is built into a live performance. The very great drawback of recorded sound is the fact that it is always the same. No matter how wonderful a recording is, I know that I couldn't live with it – even of my own music – with the same nuances forever. - COPLAND

I can't believe that people really prefer to go to the concert hall under intellectually trying, socially trying, physically trying conditions, unable to repeat something they have missed, when they can sit home under the most comfortable and stimulating circumstances and hear it as they want to hear it. I can't imagine what would happen to

literature today if one were obliged to congregate in an unpleasant hall and read novels projected on a screen. - BABBITT

Many people have come to the concert hall expecting to hear the glowing, glossy, beautiful performances they have heard on records only to be shocked by the natural acoustics. The Dvorák Cello Concerto on a recording can easily have the soloist as the absolute protagonist, with great presence, whereas he is often drowned out by the orchestra in the concert hall. But I also think that many more will feel that the adventure, the accidental excitement of a live performance is much more stimulating and satisfying than just listening constantly to a record. - CHAPIN

I think that records have already replaced concerts for a great many people and have affected a great number of others in their concert and operagoing. If you push this logically, to the complete replacement of concerts by recordings, you would have complete disaster. For then you would have no artists coming up, trying out in halls, making careers for themselves. It would be disastrous not only for live music but for the gramophone. - HAREWOOD

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Change of Acoustic

IF WE WERE TO TAKE an inventory of those musical predilections most characteristic of our generation, we would discover that almost every item on such a list could be attributed directly to the influence of the recording. First of all, today's listeners have come to associate musical performance with sounds possessed of characteristics which generations ago were neither available to the profession nor wanted by the public – characteristics such as analytic clarity, immediacy, and indeed almost tactile proximity. Within the last few decades the performance of music has ceased to be an occasion, requiring an excuse and tuxedo, and accorded, when encountered, an almost religious devotion; music has become a pervasive influence in our lives, and as our dependence upon it has increased, our reverence for it has, in a certain sense, declined. Two generations ago, concert-goers preferred that their occasional experience of music be fitted with an acoustic splendor, cavernously reverberant if possible, and pioneer recording ventures attempted to simulate the cathedral-like sound which the architects of that day tried to capture for the concert hall – the cathedral of the symphony. The more intimate terms of our experience with recordings have since suggested to us an acoustic with a direct and impartial presence, one with which we can live in our homes on rather casual terms.

Certainly I conduct a performance for a recording differently than I would for a live performance. In a recording what we are really striving for is to express the physical and emotional nature of the music in terms that will both be eloquent and convey the composer's ideas in the average living room. - STOKOWSKI

Apparently, we are also expected to live with it in the concert hall. Some of the much heralded links in that prodigious chain of postwar auditoria catastrophes (Philharmonic Hall of Lincoln Center, at Festival Hall, etc.) have simply appropriated characteristics of the recording studio intended to enhance microphone pickup, the special virtue of which becomes a detriment in the concert hall. Proof of this is that when the audience is sent home and the microphones moved in close and tight around the band, Philharmonic Hall – like many of these acoustical puzzles – can accommodate surprisingly successful recording sessions.

With today's multiple microphoning you really have to be careful not to achieve too surgical a line. I think it important to have touch-up microphones in front of the winds, or the basses, but most composers have written for instrumental sections rather than for individual instruments in the orchestra, and we must make sure that these sections are in the proper balance with each other. The microphone must not become too analytical. - LIGHT

Just how great a change has come about can be seen in a comparison between recordings made in North America and Western Europe and those originating in Central and Eastern Europe, where – for reasons both economic and geographic – the traditions of public concertgoing retain a social cachet which for North America's split-level suburbia has long since been transferred to twelve-tone doorbells, nursery intercom, and steam room stereo. One need only compare a typical Continental reverberation such as that present in the Konwitschny recordings from Leipzig or (though it somewhat contradicts the geographical assumptions of my argument) in Van Beinum's from the Concertgebouw with the Studio 8H sound of Toscanini's discs of the late Thirties and Forties or with the Severance Hall balances for George Szell's recent Epic recordings to appreciate the modifications that the North American attitude to recording can impose on even the most resolute martinet.

The ideal for a phonograph record is the concert hall illusion, or rather the illusion of the concert hall illusion, because you can't transfer the concert hall into the dimensions of a living room. What you can do is record a work so that you think you are in a concert hall when you listen to it at home. - MOHR

A more precise comparison can be found between the discs made by Herbert von Karajan with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London for EMI-Angel and the same maestro's recordings for DGG in Berlin. Any number of the latter (I am thinking now of such releases as the 1959 performance of *Ein Heldenleben* with a distant brass and all but inaudible timpani) suggest a production crew determined to provide for the listener the evocation of a concert experience. The EMI recordings, on the other hand, provide Karajan with an acoustic which, while hardly chamberlike, at least subscribes to that

philosophy of recording which admits the futility of emulating concert hall sonorities by a deliberate limitation of studio techniques. Further evidence of this curious anachronism can be found in some of the recitals recorded by Sviatoslav Richter in Eastern Europe, of which the magnificent performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, taped in Sofia, Bulgaria, is a good example. Here is a great artist with an incomparable interpretation transcribed by technicians who are determined that their microphones will in no way amplify, dissect, or intrude upon the occasion being preserved. Richter's superbly lucid playing is sabotaged by some obsequious miking which permits us, at best, a top-of-the-Gods half-earful. Unlike their colleagues in North America, who are aware of serving a public which to a considerable extent has discovered music through records and who evaluate their own presence in the booth as crucial to the success of the end product, the production crew in Sofia, off-stage in the wings of some palace of municipal amusement, made no such claims for the autonomy of their craft. They sought only to pursue it as an inconspicuous complement of Richter's performance. Personally, I don't like the present fashion of close-up miking, not even for the piano. I prefer perspective. I don't believe the engineer should intrude between the composer, or performer, and the listener and suddenly make you hear a flute or trumpet. I think the next step will be a regression back to the old days, with fewer microphones placed further away both to give perspective and to let the ears listen on their own. If a composer wants to write the other way, he should frankly call his piece a String Quartet for Four Instruments and Four Microphones; that is quite a different sound than for instruments alone. - LIEBERSON

The North American and Western European sound strives for an analytic detail which eludes the Central European displacement. By virtue of this Westernized sound, recording has developed its own conventions, which do not always conform to those traditions that derive from the acoustical limitations of the concert hall. We have, for instance, come to expect a Brünnhilde, blessed with amplification as well as amplitude, who can surmount without struggle the velvet diapason of the Wagnerian orchestra, to insist that a searching spotlight trace the filigreed path of a solo cello in concerto playing – demands which contravene the acoustical possibilities of the concert hall or opera house. For the analytical capacity of the microphones has exploited psychological circumstances implicit in the concerto dialogue, if not within the ability of the solo instrument itself, and the *Ring* cycle as produced by a master like John Culshaw for Decca/London attains a more effective unity between intensity of action and displacement of sound than could be afforded by the best of all seasons at Bayreuth.

An Untapped Repertoire

ANOTHER ITEM to be added to our catalogue of contemporary enthusiasms is the astonishing revival in recent years of music from preclassical times. Since the recording techniques of North America and Western Europe are designed for an audience which does most of its listening at home, it is not surprising that the creation of a recording archive has emphasized those areas which historically relate to a *hausmusik* tradition and has been responsible for the triumphant restoration of baroque forms in the years since World War II. This repertoire – with its contrapuntal extravaganzas, its antiphonal balances, its espousal of instruments that chuff and wheeze and speak directly to a microphone – was made for stereo. That prodigious catalogue of cantatas and concerti grossi, fugues and partitas has endowed the neobaroque enthusiasm of our day with a hard core of musical experience. A certain amount of this music has then found its way back into the concert hall and re-engaged the attention of the public audience – sometimes indeed through considerable musicological enterprise. New York's Jay Hoffman, perhaps the last concert impresario truly deserving of that once proud title, offered his audience on consecutive evenings during Christmas week, 1964, comparative versions of *Messiah* according to G.F. Handel and other editors. But this scholarly exactitude has come about by virtue of a recorded library which enables such works to be studied in great number, in great privacy, and in an acoustic that fits them to the proverbial T.

Now that people have such a vast command of the musical literature on records, they can compare more and see where the structural, and even the tonal, similarities lie between the old and the new. We hear a lot of talk about so-called "totally organized music", nowadays. But this is reflected in earlier disciplines to some extent, as in the totally isorhythmic motet, where the exact rhythms of a piece of music were specified. Similarly, one could say that early Stockhausen is closer to Dunstable than to anyone else in between. But to appreciate this, one needs good recordings of Dunstable and these are hard to find. -

STEVENS

From a musicological point of view the effort of the recording industry on behalf of Renaissance and pre-Renaissance music is of even greater value. For the first time, the musicologist, rather than the performer, has become the key figure in the realization of this untapped repertoire; and in place of sporadic and often as not historically inaccurate concert performances of a Palestrina Mass or a Josquin *chanson*, or whichever isolated items were heretofore considered approachable and not too offensively pretonal, the record archivists have documented a new perspective for the history of music.

Archive recordings must have a future one way or another. But a commercial record company can go on producing these albums for

only so long and I think that what must develop in the recording field is what has developed in the book business, where it has taken the form of the university press. I've already approached one of the large foundations to ask them to interest themselves in this problem. Some kind of central warehousing of all esoteric recordings would be an appropriate function for a foundation. - LIEBERSON

The performer is inevitably challenged by the stimulus of this unexplored repertoire. He is also encouraged by the nature of studio techniques to appropriate characteristics that have tended for a century or two to be outside his private preserve. His contact with the repertoire he records is often the result of an intense analysis from which he prepares an interpretation of the composition. Conceivably, for the rest of his life he will never again take up or come in contact with that particular work. In the course of a lifetime spent in the recording studio he will necessarily encounter a wider range of repertoire than could possibly be his lot in the concert hall. The current archival approach of many recording companies demands a complete survey of the works of a given composer, and performers are expected to undertake productions of enormous scope which they would be inclined to avoid in the concert hall, and in many cases to investigate repertoire economically or acoustically unsuitable for public audition – the complete piano works of Mozart which Walter Gieseking undertook for Angel, for instance.

In the presentation of early music the performance very often precedes knowledge of the score. Indeed there may be only a single manuscript somewhere. It would be difficult to make this manuscript available to the general public, but a recording can at least show what it sounded like. As a musicologist, I find recordings constantly a challenge, because they help me to hear scores which have not been performed since the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. But they also pose problems: record jackets very rarely give enough information. - STEVENS

But most important, this archival responsibility enables the performer to establish a contact with a work which is very much like that of the composer's own relation to it. It permits him to encounter a particular piece of music and to analyze and dissect it in a most thorough way, to make it a vital part of his life for a relatively brief period, and then to pass on to some other challenge and to the satisfaction of some other curiosity. Such a work will no longer confront him with a daily challenge. His analysis of the composition will not become distorted by overexposure, and his performance top-heavy with interpretative "niceties" intended to woo the upper balcony, as is almost inevitably the case with the overplayed piece of concert repertoire

It may be that these archival pursuits, especially where the cultivation of earlier literature is involved, recommend themselves both to the performer and his audience as a means of avoiding some of the problems inherent in the music of our own time. One is

sometimes inclined to suspect that such phenomena as the baroque revival provide refuge for those who find themselves displaced persons in the frantically metamorphosing world of modern music. Certainly, the performance traditions indigenous to those areas of repertoire revived by the microphone have had an enormous influence upon the way in which certain kinds of contemporary repertoire are performed, and have, indeed, bred a generation of performers whose interpretative inclinations respond to the microphone's special demands.

The recordings of Robert Craft, those prodigious undertakings on behalf of the Viennese trinity Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern – not to mention Don Carlo Gesualdo – tell us a good deal about the way in which performances prepared with the microphone in mind can be influenced by technological considerations. For Craft, the stop watch and the tape splice are tools of his trade as well as objects of that inspiration for which an earlier generation of stick-wielders found an outlet in the opera cape and temper tantrums. A comparison between Craft's readings of the large-scale orchestral studies of Schoenberg, especially the early post-romantic essays such as *Verklärte Nacht* or *Pelléas und Melisande*, with the interpretations of more venerable maestros – Winfried Zillig's glowingly romantic *Pelléas* of 1949, for instance – is instructive.

Craft applies a sculptor's chisel to these vast orchestral complexes of the youthful Schoenberg and gives them a determined series of plateaus on which to operate – a very baroque thing to do. He seems to feel that his audience – sitting at home, close up to the speaker – is prepared to allow him to dissect this music and to present it to them from a strongly biased conceptual viewpoint, which the private and concentrated circumstances of their listening make feasible. Craft's interpretation, then, is all power steering and air brakes. By comparison, in Zillig's reading of *Pelléas* (on a now withdrawn Capitol-Telefunken disc) the leisurely application of rubatos, the sensual haze with which he gilds the performance as though concerned that clarity could be an enemy of mystery, point clearly to the fact that his interpretation derived from a concert experience where such performance characteristics were intuitive compensations for an acoustic dilemma.

The example is productive of a larger issue with which the techniques of the recording studio confront us, and I have deliberately chosen to illustrate it with an example from that area of twentieth-century repertoire least indigenous to the medium. Whether Craft's analytic dissection of such repertoire is appropriate, whether there remain positive virtues to the presentation of late-romantic fare in the concert hall, is not really the point. We must be prepared to accept the fact that, for better or worse, recording will forever alter our notions about what is appropriate to the performance of music.

The Splendid Splice

OF ALL THE TECHNIQUES peculiar to the studio recording, none has been the subject of such controversy as the tape splice. With due regard to the not so unusual phenomenon of a recording comprised of single-take sonata or symphony movements, the great majority of present-day recordings consist of a collection of tape segments varying in duration upwards from one twentieth of a second. Superficially, the purpose of the splice is to rectify performance mishaps. Through its use, the wayward phrase, the insecure quaver can, except when prohibited by "overhang" or similar circumstances of acoustical imbalance, be remedied by minute retakes of the offending moment, or of a splice segment of which it forms a part. The anti-record lobby proclaims splicing a dishonest and dehumanizing technique that purportedly eliminates those conditions of chance and accident upon which, it can safely be conceded, certain of the more unsavory traditions of Western music are founded. The lobbyists also claim that the common splice sabotages some unified architectural conception which they assume the performer possesses. As for the morality of splicing, I suppose there should be no objection to Toscanini's not liking what an oboe did on the first take and not liking what a flute did in the second and then taking the best parts of each take to make a whole. It's still essentially Toscanini. Whatever moral uneasiness I have about such things is just a holdover from the past and perhaps I should adapt myself to the possibilities of the present. But I don't like the idea of Schwarzkopf putting her high C on Flagstad's recording. - HAGGIN

It seems to me that two facts challenge these objections. The first is that many of the supposed virtues of the performer's "unified conception" relate to nothing more inherently musical than the "running scared" and "go-for-broke" psychology built up through decades of exposure to the *loggione* of Parma and their like. Claudio Arrau was recently quoted by the English journal *Records and Recordings* to the effect that he would not authorize the release of records derived from a live performance since, in his opinion, public auditions provoke stratagems which, having been designed to fill acoustical and psychological requirements of the concert situation, are irritating and antiarchitectural when subjected to repeated playbacks. The second fact is that one cannot ever splice style – one can only splice segments which relate to a conviction about style. And whether one arrives at such a conviction pre-taping or post-taping (another of the time-transcending luxuries of recording: the post-taping reconsideration of performance), its existence is what matters, not the means by which it is effected.

Tape splicing isn't a moral question at all, any more than the number of stagehands used backstage at a play production is a moral question or the number of revisions of a book is a moral question. It's really the product that counts. The consumer's only concern should

be what he hears and how he reacts to what he hears. He has a legitimate complaint only when the splicing technique actually does affect the final product, when the impact or the over-all line is damaged because of obvious inserts. - McCLURE

A recent personal experience will perhaps illustrate an interpretative conviction obtained post-taping. A year or so ago, while recording the concluding fugues from Volume I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, I arrived at one of Bach's celebrated contrapuntal obstacle courses, the Fugue in A minor. This is a structure even more difficult to realize on the piano than are most of Bach's fugues, because it consists of four intense voices that determinedly occupy a register in the center octaves of the keyboard – the area of the instrument in which truly independent voice-leading is most difficult to establish. In the process of recording this fugue we attempted eight takes. Two of these at the time were regarded, according to the producer's notes, as satisfactory. Both of them, No. 6 and No. 8 respectively, were complete takes requiring no inserted splice – by no means a special achievement since the fugue's duration is only a bit over two minutes. Some weeks later, however, when the results of this session were surveyed in an editing cubicle and when Takes 6 and 8 were played several times in rapid alternation, it became apparent that both had a defect of which we had been quite unaware in the studio: both were monotonous.

Tape splicing borders on immorality because there are many artists today on the concert stage or in the opera house who cannot give you the performance in life that they can give you on records. - MOHR

Each take had used a different style of phrase delineation in dealing with the thirty-one-note subject of this fugue – a license entirely consistent with the improvisatory liberties of baroque style. Take 6 had treated it in a solemn, legato, rather pompous fashion, while in Take 8 the fugue subject was shaped in a prevailingly staccato manner which led to a general impression of skittishness. Now, the Fugue in A minor is given to concentrations of *stretti* and other devices for imitation at close quarters, so that the treatment of the subject determines the atmosphere of the entire fugue. Upon most sober reflection, it was agreed that neither the Teutonic severity of Take 6 nor the unwarranted jubilation of Take 8 could be permitted to represent our best thoughts on this fugue. At this point someone noted that, despite the vast differences in character between the two takes, they were performed at an almost identical tempo (a rather unusual circumstance, to be sure, since the prevailing tempo is almost always the result of phrase delineation) and it was decided to turn this to advantage by creating one performance to consist alternately of Takes 6 and 8.

Here's the dilemma. You get an extraordinarily beautiful take of a movement, but there are two or three flaws – a horn didn't quite

make it, or the pizzicati weren't together, or something. Now you go back and retake the movement, but somehow the men and the conductor can't recapture the same peak of expression. What do you do? If you're sensible and not involved in moral issues, you fix those few mistakes in the first take with inserts from the inferior take – using as little as possible, to be sure – and what you end up with is something far beyond what is normally possible at a concert. -
McCLURE

Once this decision had been made, it was a simple matter to expedite it. It was obvious that the somewhat overbearing posture of Take 6 was entirely suitable for the opening exposition as well as for the concluding statements of the fugue, while the more effervescent character of Take 8 was a welcome relief in the episodic modulations with which the center portion of the fugue is concerned. And so two rudimentary splices were made, one which jumps from Take 6 to Take 8 in bar 14 and another which at the return to A minor (I forget which measure, but you are invited to look for it) returns as well to Take 6. What had been achieved was a performance of this particular fugue far superior to anything that we could at the time have done in the studio. There is, of course, no reason why such a diversity of bowing styles could not have been applied to this fugue subject as part of a regulated a priori conception. But the necessity of such diversity is unlikely to become apparent during the studio session just as it is unlikely to occur to a performer operating under concert conditions. By taking advantage of the post-taping afterthought, however, one can very often transcend the limitations that performance imposes upon the imagination.

When the performer makes use of this postperformance editorial decision, his role is no longer compartmentalized. In a quest for perfection, he sets aside the hazards and compromises of his trade. As an interpreter, as a go-between serving both audience and composer, the performer has always been, after all, someone with a specialist's knowledge about the realization or actualization of notated sound symbols. It is, then, perfectly consistent with such experience that he should assume something of an editorial role. Inevitably, however, the functions of the performer and of the tape editor begin to overlap. Indeed, in regard to decisions such as that taken in the case of the above-mentioned A minor Fugue, it would be impossible for the listener to establish at which point the authority of the performer gave way to that of the producer and the tape editor, just as even the most observant cinema-goer cannot ever be sure whether a particular sequence of shots derives from circumstances occasioned by the actor's performance, from the exigencies of the cutting-room, or from the director's a priori scheme. That the judgment of the performer no longer solely determines the musical result is inevitable. It is, however, more than compensated by the

overwhelming sense of power which editorial control makes available to him.

Splicing presents a great temptation when you're putting something together and you know you can make it almost flawless. You can't help wanting to do it. I suppose it's the human aspiration to perfection. But there is always the possibility that you could get something absolutely perfect and it would be absolutely boring. - MOHR

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The "Live" Performance on Records

THE CHARACTERISTICS enumerated on our inventory represent the past rendered in terms that seem appropriate to the electronic age. Although they compile, by themselves, an impressive list of present-day convictions about the way in which music should be performed, they do not, except by implication, suggest a direction for recording to pursue. It is quite likely that these preferences engendered by phonographic reproduction – clarity of definition, analytic dissection by microphones, catholicity of repertoire, etc. – will determine to a considerable extent the kind of sound with which we shall want our musical experiences to be endowed. It is less likely that the recording industry will always concern itself primarily with an archival representation of the past, no matter how painstakingly embalmed, but for a long time to come some portion of the industry's activity will be devoted to merchandising the celebrated masterworks which form our musical tradition. Before examining the larger ramifications for the future of recording, I should like to consider here some hardy strains of argument that perennially decry the influence of recording upon standard items of the repertoire and upon the hierarchy of the musical profession. These arguments sometimes overlap each other, and it can become rather difficult to detect the area of protest with which each is concerned. However, under a general heading of "humanitarian idealism" one might list three distinguishable subspecies, which can be summarized as follows:

1. An argument for aesthetic morality: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf appends a missing high C to a tape of *Tristan* otherwise featuring Kirsten Flagstad, and indignant purists, for whom music is the last blood sport, howl her down, furious at being deprived a kill.
2. Eye versus ear orientation: a doctrine that celebrates the existence of a mystical communication between concert performer and public audience (the composer being seldom mentioned). There is a vaguely scientific pretention to this argument, and its proponents are given to pronouncements on "natural" acoustics and related phenomena.

3. Automation: a crusade which musicians' union leaders currently share with typesetters and which they affirm with the fine disdain of featherbedding firemen for the diesel locomotive. In the midst of a proliferation of recorded sound which virtually erases earlier listening patterns, the American Federation of Musicians promotes that challenging motto "LIVE MUSIC IS BEST" – A judgment with the validity of a "Win with Wilkie" sticker on the windshield of a well-preserved '39 LaSalle.

As noted, these arguments tend to overlap and are often joined together in celebration of occasions that afford opportunity for a rear-guard holding action. Among such occasions, none has proved more useful than the recent spate of recorded "live" performances – events which straddle two worlds and are at home in neither. These events affirm the humanistic ideal of performance; they eschew (so we are told!) splices and other mechanical adventures, and hence are decidedly "moral"; they usually manage to suppress a sufficient number of pianissimo chords by an outbreak of bronchitis from the floor to advertise their "live"-ness and confirm the faith of the heroically unautomated.

Even if I were to grant all the things that are possible in the making of a record, I would still want certain performances live. You get something there sometimes which you just can't achieve in the recording studios. The live concert hall performance, or even such a performance recorded, could very well have qualities that are preferable – with all their imperfections – to one assembled from recording studio takes. - HAGGIN

They have yet another function, which is, in fact, the essence of their appeal for the short-sellers: they provide documentation pertaining to a specific date. They are forever represented as occasions indisputably of and for their time. They spurn that elusive time-transcending objective which is always within the realization of recorded music. For all time, they can be examined, criticized, or praised as documents securely located in time, and about which, because of that assurance, a great deal of information and, in a certain sense, an emotional relation, is immediately available. With regard to the late Dutch craftsman who, having hankered to take upon himself the mantle of Vermeer, was martyred for a reluctance to live by the hypocrisy of this argument, I think of this fourth circumstance – this question of historical date – as the Van Meegeren syndrome.

Hans Van Meegeren was a forger and an artisan who, for a long time, has been high on my list of private heroes. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the magnificent morality play which was his trial perfectly epitomizes the confrontation between those values of identity and of personal-responsibility-for-authorship which post-Renaissance art has until recently accepted and those pluralistic

values which electronic forms assert. In the 1930s, Van Meegeren decided to apply himself to a study of Vermeer's techniques and – for reasons undoubtedly having more to do with an enhancement of his ego than with greed for guilders – distributed the works thus achieved as genuine, if long-lost, masterpieces. His prewar success was so encouraging that during the German occupation he continued apace with sales destined for private collectors in the Third Reich. With the coming of V.E. Day, he was charged with collaboration as well as with responsibility for the liquidation of national treasures. In his defense, Van Meegeren confessed that these treasures were but his own invention and, by the values this world applies, quite worthless – an admission which so enraged the critics and historians who had authenticated his collection in the first place that he was rearraigned on charges of forgery and some while later passed away in prison.

The determination of the value of a work of art according to the information available about it is a most delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal. Indeed, it strives to avoid appraisal on any ground other than that which has been prepared by previous appraisals. The moment this tyranny of appraisaldom is confronted by confused chronological evidence, the moment it is denied a predetermined historical niche in which to lock the object of its analysis, it becomes unserviceable and its proponents hysterical. The furor that greeted Van Meegeren's conflicting testimony, his alternate roles of hero and villain, scholar and fraud, decisively demonstrated the degree to which an aesthetic response was genuinely involved.

There is no excuse at all for recording live concerts. It's a lazy and cheap way to make records. Only if your artist – and he must be an important artist – is old or ill and there is no other chance to record him do I see any reason for these "live" recordings. Then you have a duty to preserve the concert as an historical document – warts, coughs, and all. I really doubt that anyone really plays better with an audience than without. They may think they do. But actually they only feel better. Listen to a transcription of a recorded concert that had the audience feeling "My God, that was wonderful" and you will find that it really wasn't that good. But it was an occasion, like a funeral, and one is excited and moved by having been part of the audience. When somebody buys the record he feels that he has been swindled if he doesn't go crazy like the audience of 2 000 or 3 000 that was present and so he doesn't apply his usual critical faculties... He is a conditioned dog. - CULSHAW

Some months ago, in an article in the *Saturday Review*, I ventured that the delinquency manifest by this sort of evaluation might be demonstrated if one were to imagine the critical response to an improvisation which, through its style and texture, suggested that it might have been composed by Joseph Haydn. (Let's assume it to be brilliantly done and most admirably Haydn-esque.) I suggested that if

one were to concoct such a piece, its value would remain at par – that is to say, at Haydn's value – only so long as some chicanery were involved in its presentation, enough at least to convince the listener that it was indeed by Haydn. If, however, one were to suggest that although it much resembled Haydn it was, rather, a youthful work of Mendelssohn, its value would decline; and if one chose to attribute it to a succession of authors, each of them closer to the present day, then – regardless of their talents or historical significance – the merits of this same little piece would diminish with each new identification. If, on the other hand, one were to suggest that this work of chance, of accident, of the here and now, was not by Haydn but by a master living some generation or two before his time (Vivaldi, perhaps), then this work would become – on the strength of that daring, that foresight, that futuristic anticipation landmark in musical composition.

It may be my imagination, but I sometimes think a live performance does have more electricity, more excitement. There are more mistakes, of course, but if the artist is really in the vein, it can be more authentic, more vital. Many musicians freeze up in the recording studio as soon as the red light goes on. - MOHR

And all of this would come to pass for no other reason than that we have never really become equipped to adjudicate music per se. Our sense of history is captive of an analytical method which seeks out isolated moments of stylistic upheaval – pivot points of idiomatic evolution – and our value judgments are largely based upon the degree to which we can assure ourselves that a particular artist participated in or, better yet, anticipated the nearest upheaval. Confusing evolution with accomplishment, we become blind to those values not explicit in an analogy with stylistic metamorphosis. The only justification for "live performance" recording is if it's a legitimately historic and unduplicatable occasion. Otherwise I don't advocate it. We find that the critics and the public are no longer willing to take recorded recitals or concerts in lieu of carefully prepared studio recordings, and I must agree with them. - McCLURE

The Van Meegeren syndrome is entirely apropos our subject because the arguments *contra* the prospects of recording are constructed upon identical criteria. They rely, most of all, upon a similar confirmation of historical data. Deprived of this confirmation, their system of evaluation is unable to function; it is at sea, derelict amidst an unsalvageable debris of evidence, and it casts about in search of a point by which to take a bearing. When recordings are at issue, such a point cannot readily be found. The inclination of electronic media is to extract its content from historic date. The moment we can force a work of art to conform to our notion of what was appropriate to its chronology, we can attribute to it, arbitrarily if necessary, background against which in our analysis it can be portrayed. Most aesthetic analysis confines itself to background description and avoids the

foreground manipulation of the object being analyzed. And this fact alone, discarding the idle propaganda of the public-relations machines, accounts for the endorsement of the recorded public event. Indirectly, the real object of this endorsement is a hopelessly outmoded system of aesthetic analysis – a system incapable of a contribution in the electronic age but the only system for which most spokesmen of the arts are trained.

Recordings produced in a studio resist a confirmation of such criteria. Here date is an elusive factor. Though a few companies solemnly inscribe the date of the studio sessions with each recorded package, and though the material released by most large companies can, except perhaps in the case of reissues, be related to a release number that will suggest an approximate date to the *aficionado*, it is possible that the music heard on that recording will have been obtained from sessions held weeks, months, or indeed years apart. Those sessions may easily have been held in different cities, different countries taped with different equipment and different technical personnel, and they may feature performers whose attitudes to the repertoire under consideration has metamorphosed dramatically between the taping of the first note and the last. Such a recording might currently pose insuperable contractual problems but its complicated gestation would be entirely consistent with the nature of the recording process.

It would also be consistent with that evolution of the performing musician which recording necessitates. As the performer's once sacrosanct privileges are merged with the responsibilities of the tape editor and the composer, the Van Meegeren syndrome can no longer be cited as an indictment but becomes rather an entirely appropriate description of the aesthetic condition in our time. The role of the forger, of the unknown maker of unauthenticated goods, is emblematic of electronic culture. And when the forger is done honor for his craft and no longer reviled for his acquisitiveness, the arts will have become a truly integral part of our civilization.