

Another bad tape edit actually has resulted in the removal of one beat of music. Just before Gigli sings "Kyrie eleison", where the full chorus follows the basses singing "luceat eis," one beat of music has been excised, resulting in a measure of 3/4 time in this 4/4 section. What is more difficult to understand is the fact that this splice does not occur where 78 Sides 1 and 2 are joined. The missing beat has been removed a full two measures before the end of Side 1.

EMI has used the Cedar Audio Restoration Process on this reissue. Whether or not the somewhat muffled high frequencies are due to Cedar, or to another problem with these transfers is unknown. Keith Hardwick has produced many truly outstanding reissues for EMI. Bruno Walter's 1935 Act I of *Die Walküre*, with Lauritz Melchior, Lotte Lehmann, and Emanuel List, sounds absolutely astonishing on the EMI CD (CDH 7 61020 2); it nearly qualifies as a high fidelity recording. Mr. Hardwick undoubtedly prepared at least some of the disc-to-tape transfers for the Verdi *Requiem*. However, something went very seriously wrong between his work and the final production of this CD. One can only hope that this is not a preview of future EMI reissues. *Reviewed by Gary A. Galo*

### Simon Barere at the Carnegie Hall

Transcription disc recordings of works on Carnegie Hall recitals given by Simon Barere on: (a) May 17, 1946; (b) November 18, 1946; (c) March 9, 1947; (d) November 11, 1947; (e) February 7, 1949; (f) Date unknown. Previously unpublished recordings marked with an asterisk (\*). Appian Publications & Recordings.

Volume One: CDAPR 7007 (2 CDs). Liszt: Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major (a\*, with David Brockman conducting unnamed orchestra); *Sonetto 104 del Petrarca* (c\*); Sonata in B minor (d); *Rapsodie espagnole* (c); *Gnomenreigen* (e\*); *Valse de l'opéra Faust* (e\* & b\*); *Funérailles* (c); *Gnomenreigen* (b\*); *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 12 in C-sharp minor (c\*). Volume Two: CDAPR 7008 (2 CDs). J. S. Bach: Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903 (b\*); Schumann: Toccata in C major, Op. 7 (b); *Phantasiestücke*, Op. 12 No. 7: *Traumes Wirren* (d); Weber: Piano Sonata No. 1 in C major—Finale (Presto) (d\*); Godowsky: *Renaissance*: No. 8 (Pastorale after Corelli), No. 12 (Gigue after Loillet), No. 6 (Tambourin after Rameau) (d\*); Blumenfeld: Etude for the Left Hand (d); Glazunov: Etude in C major, Op. 31, No. 1 (b\*); Scriabin: Etudes in D-flat major, Op. 8, No. 10 (c) and in D-sharp minor, Op. 8, No. 12 (d); Rachmaninoff: Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18 (f\*, with unnamed conductor and orchestra); Preludes in G-sharp minor, Op. 32, No. 12, and in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5 (c); *Polka de W.R.* (d); Balakirev: *Islamey* (d).

Among the much sought piano treasures of the early LP era are the four Remington recordings featuring the playing of the legendary virtuoso Simon Barere (1896-1951). Although Remington's publicity at the time and the reputation of the recordings has never concealed the fact, it is perhaps worth emphasizing that only the first two of those discs (199-17 and 199-35) contained studio recordings made by Barere explicitly for Remington. The pianist had signed an exclusive contract with Remington that was terminated abruptly by Barere's tragically sudden death during a public performance of the Grieg Concerto at Carnegie Hall on April 2, 1951. Remington issued the second disc of the commercially-made recordings as a *Memorial Album*, but was reluctant to abandon this potentially profitable relationship. Consequently, upon learning that the pianist's son Boris had had acetate recordings made

during some of Barere's Carnegie Hall recitals of the late 1940s, the company convinced the younger Barere to allow the publication of a portion of that material. The results of this relationship were Remington 199-85, the first appearance of the now-famous recordings of Liszt's Sonata and *Funérailles* reissued in APR's Volume 1, and 199-141, a program which consisted of most of the remaining titles without asterisks listed in the contents above. Two later reissues of some of this material were Turnabout THS-65001, an electronic stereo version of 199-85 and three Liszt pieces from 199-17, and Varèse/Sarabande VC 81045, which, in addition to providing a blend of both the studio and "live" material issued by Remington, embodied the first release of the two Scriabin etudes which appear in APR's Volume 2.

The appearance of APR's two double-CD sets decisively wrests the legacy of Barere's live performance recordings at Carnegie Hall from the association with Remington which has so far seemed immutable. Thanks to a close relationship with Boris Barere, all recordings presented here are taken from the original acetates. Despite the audible evidence of some discreet filtering to minimize a usually low but sometimes moderate level of surface noise, and overlooking some off-center originals which make for seasickness in the *Rapsodie espagnole* and a few other spots, these recordings sound acceptable in APR's refurbishing, although some of them still blast and distort when Barere is playing at full throttle. In any case, this issue certainly supersedes Remington's four-decade-old efforts on behalf of these recordings, if only because Remington's pressings were far from ideal.

Of even greater interest than sonic improvement is the presence on these discs of many previously unpublished recordings. Upon his untimely death, Barere was eulogized by Olin Downes and others for "a prodigious repertory," and so it is a cause for some regret that many of the titles included here duplicate those found among Barere's HMV recordings of 1934-36 (a handsome complete edition of that series—APR 7001 [2 LPs]—marked APR's inaugural publication in 1985, and this set, now including two additional takes which Barere had originally rejected, has been issued on CD: CDAPR 7001 [2 CDs]) or even some of his studio Remingtons. But among a dozen previously unavailable performances there are six pieces which Barere apparently did not otherwise record, although this reviewer may not be aware of all his earlier Parlophone recordings. Pride of place must be given to the two concerti since often it is in such larger works that pianists of Barere's generation have gone unrepresented to posterity, and since these are his only concerto recordings released to date. To hear Barere in Bach is also an unexpected opportunity, and the pianist's renown as a Liszt player makes the *Hungarian Rhapsody* a welcome addition to his discography. The other new Barere pieces on these discs are the Weber and the Corelli-Godowsky. One eagerly awaits Volume 3 in this series, as it includes many works with which Barere has not been previously associated on records. Prominent among them are Beethoven's Sonata in E minor Op. 90, Schumann's *Carneval*, and a great deal of Chopin.

To piano buffs, these two recitals are self-recommending, since Barere's reputation as a technical superman of the piano in a generation renowned for great virtuosi seems not to be tarnishing as the years go by. And even in our day, when note-perfect renditions of difficult music have become commonplace, one must admit that Barere obviously possessed remarkable technical abilities. Important among these are extraordinary facility and enormous power—two qualities which do not invariably coincide in the same player—but also a clear, rounded melodic tone whose

prominence in relation to accompanying textures is just short of Hofmann's. Barere's repertory, however, tended to gravitate towards works in which he could display overt virtuosity. In music that is more reflective he often seems anxious to return to the athletic world of pianistic pyrotechnics. And at its best, Barere's playing in technically difficult and showy music possesses an energy and verve that provokes adjectives like "staggering" or "breathtaking." Such daring! Such drive! If the listener is in the right frame of mind, the elemental excitement of some of this playing can provide a powerful adrenaline rush.

All too often, however, Barere pushes his power and velocity to extremes that cause even his stupendous technical equipment to do less than justice to the details of the music he plays. Even, or especially, for a technician of Barere's caliber, the decision to play as fast as possible over long stretches of time means that some passages will be played more quickly than those which present more complicated technical demands. And, indeed, Barere unabashedly storms through some of the more aggressive pieces with fluctuations in tempo determined only by level of technical difficulty. When the going is easy (for him) he sprints; when it is more difficult he slows down and lets the labor show. This procedure not only seems rhythmically unsettled, but also leads the listener to believe that the pianist has little concern with making music out of the notes he is playing, since tempo is neither controlled nor consciously manipulated. Melodic lines and harmonic shaping are washed away in a muddy sea of noisy and often over-pedaled energy. In such instances, the sometimes blasty condition of the acetates (even at their best there is usually a subtle lack of clarity) renders climactic passages almost unlistenable. The interpretive results in such works as the Weber *moto perpetuo*, the Rachmaninoff G Minor Prelude, and the Glazunov etude are nightmarish throughout—noisy, hectic, carelessly voiced, uninflected, and as jerky as a bad player piano. Even in some of Barere's specialties, such as Schumann's Toccata and Balakirev's *Islamey*, the prevailing hyper-aggressive approach produces some of the same feeling. Despite the impression of formidable technical prowess, a sober examination of the playing at any moment in these pieces shows a performer whose pianism is consistently unpolished. Stated differently, Barere's virtuosity is an attitude, while his runaway tempi and large dynamic splashes are by-products of that frame of mind.

Thankfully, Barere's most successful performances here are in the largest works—the Liszt Sonata and the Rachmaninoff Concerto. Barere's Liszt Sonata has long been regarded as one of the most imposing recorded accounts of this much-abused score, and it is good to have it back in circulation. Here one hears some unruly playing, but in this grand conception such moments are clearly recognizable as occupying an emotional extreme; just as much weight is placed on more restrained, poetical elements. Further, Barere seems to be more aware of the expressive potential of silence here than anywhere else in his recorded output, and with its aid achieves an aristocratic, magisterial repose that usually eludes him. The Liszt Sonata is famous and important for its thematic transformations, and some performances project the fluidity and questing uncertainty of that process. Barere's interpretation, by contrast, is a more tangible affair which realizes a convincingly stylized drama based on theatrically appropriate treatments of the themes in their various manifestations.

The Rachmaninoff makes a worthy partner for this important performance. True, Barere suffers through a stretch of technical lapses for the first minute of the finale, a movement which brings out his baser exhibitionistic tendencies and finds

him leading the orchestra even in passages where the piano's material is subsidiary to the orchestra writing. The recorded balance strongly favors the piano throughout both concerti, and in this movement Barere's extroversion makes the piano's dominance seem especially unmusical. The first two movements, however, contain some of Barere's mellowest and most introspective playing, to which sustained lyricism and rich tone are prominent contributors. The Liszt Concerto, alas, receives the kind of shallow, frenetic performance that has unjustly given this work a bad name. Since Barere was trained in an environment in which the soloist was of paramount importance in concerto playing, it is appropriate that neither of the undistinguished-sounding orchestras recorded here has been identified.

The rest of the performances are also a mixed bag, but better appreciated when heard singly rather than consecutively—halfway through a whole recital of this playing one begins to be irritated by the persistent devil-may-care extroversion. The Bach is remarkably poised despite a tautness and coloristic sense which, especially in the *Fantasia*, suggests Liszt more than Bach. The fugue subject, however, is solemnly and carefully intoned, and its working out never lures Barere into uncontrolled pathos. The same cannot be said for the Godowsky arrangements, which hurtle forward with a brittleness completely foreign to the spirit of Godowsky's own leisurely, loving, elaborately colored renditions of his own music and arrangements. Barere's G-sharp Minor Prelude of Rachmaninoff, however, effectively captures the glacial nostalgia that is this piece's unique quality. The remarkable performance of the Blumenfeld left-hand study is so lovingly phrased and musically conceived that one almost forgets to revel in the astounding—but for once, unheralded—virtuosity Barere demonstrates. And although the right hand sounds hurried and unsettled in *Traumes Wirren*, the left-hand chords are warm and feathery in a way that considerably offsets the unseemly haste of the filigree. Of the Scriabin etude performances, that in D-flat is notable for a vigorously accented treatment of the staccato notes which customarily invite a lighter, more graceful response.

Liszt gives Barere the opportunity for some high-voltage playing that satisfies only in part. Neither performance of *Gnomensreigen* comes close to being witty or puckish—these gnomes chase each other grimly rather than dancing, and their pell-mell momentum causes the tempo to lurch noticeably when technical demands change. *Funérailles* receives a worthwhile rendition full of powerful tone and dramatic pacing, while the *Petrarch Sonetto* strives to make a grand statement rather than to establish the customary intimate and lyrical framework. The *Hungarian Rhapsody* and the *Rapsodie espagnole* have enormous climaxes and extended passages of quiet glitter. Barere's technical security is in turn overwhelming and overwhelmed; the results seem more sporting than aesthetic, despite the grandeur of the pianist's large-scale conception in each piece. The *Faust Waltz* begins thrillingly with unusual clarity and poise, but the ending, taken from an earlier performance, lapses into incomprehensible banging.

APR is now the leading source for Barere recordings. Its HMV set is probably the most worthwhile of the three so far released, since it presents the essential Barere repertory, seems more considered than the live performances from a technical standpoint, and possesses greater clarity of recorded sound. All of this makes it an ideal introduction to Barere's playing. But the two sets issued here, although three of the four discs run less than 50 minutes each including applause, do contain treasures. The Liszt Sonata and *Funérailles*, the Rachmaninoff G-sharp Minor Prel-

ude and part of the Concerto, and the Blumenfeld are played with real distinction. In these pieces, Barere's conception of the music harnesses his tendency toward overt technical display and causes his pianism to serve expressive ends.

Producer Brian Crimp writes at length and with glowing enthusiasm about Barere's playing as revealed on these and other recordings, and hopes for a reassessment of his reputation. As a reading of the foregoing comments makes clear, this reviewer is scarcely inclined to name Barere as worthy of a high place in any musical pantheon. But his is an individual and readily identifiable style, and perhaps some who are understandably starved for anything resembling the grand manner of Romantic pianism will find pleasure and satisfaction listening to these recordings. Others, who admire the great recorded mementos of Hofmann, Rachmaninoff, Godowsky, and Friedmann at their best, may find it difficult to avoid feeling outrage when confronted with Barere's musical insensitivity and unrelievedly visceral interpretive outlook. *Reviewed by David Breckbill*

### **Enrico Caruso**

**The Complete Caruso—Including the Original Victor Talking Machine Company Master Recordings.** RCA Victor Gold Seal 60495-2-RG. 12 CDs.

**The Caruso Edition, Vol. I, 1902-1908.** Pearl EVC I. 3 CDs.

**The Caruso Edition, Vol. II, 1908-1912.** Pearl EVC II. 3 CDs.

**Enrico Caruso—Opera Arias and Songs, Milan 1902-1904.** Angel/EMI Great Recordings of the Century CDH 7610462. 1 CD.

Since the LP record first appeared over 40 years ago, admirers of the vocal art of Enrico Caruso have been offered several collections of the legendary tenor's complete recordings, only to find they were neither complete nor consistently well-produced. Both RCA Victor and Pearl are now offering collections which hold the promise of filling that void. The RCA Victor set is packaged handsomely in a cardboard box holding three jewel cases which contain four CDs each, along with a 242 page booklet. The box is printed in gold on a maroon background in a style resembling the Victor Red Seal catalogs from the early 1920s. The CDs are printed with the red acoustic-style label used by the Victor Company after 1914, the Victor label most familiar to collectors of acoustical recordings. Altogether, the packaging is extremely well thought out and attractive. The booklet contains two informative articles, "Caruso in His Time" by Michael Scott, and "Caruso and the Victor Talking Machine Company" by William C. Moran. A bibliography also is provided, listing five excellent sources which were used in the preparation of this collection. The booklet's size is due, in part, to the inclusion of translations in German, Italian and French.

Cross-referencing of the Caruso recordings could not be more complete. In addition to the chronological contents of each CD, there are listings by composer, opera title, title of each selection, first line of each selection, as well as lyricist. There is also a list of assisting artists, including singers, instrumental soloists, and composers who served as accompanists. Only the chronological listing could be improved upon. Recording dates and matrix numbers are meticulously documented, but original Victor catalog numbers are not included. This will make it difficult for many collectors to distinguish between "published" recordings, that is, those shellac pressings which originally were issued by Victor with acoustic-style labels and catalog numbers, and those which were "unpublished," surfacing later as test pressings, electrical transcriptions on 78 rpm discs, and/or LP records.