

**Subject:** [NEWS] PRISTINE CLASSICAL 5th Novemberr 2010: Furtwängler conducts Bruckner 4; Ward Marston's wonderful 1928 Aida  
**From:** Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>  
**Date:** Fri, 05 Nov 2010 16:03:44 +0100

## Pristine News: Friday 5th November, 2010



**Giannina Arangi-Lombardi**

### **In this week's newsletter:**

- [New this week](#) - Furtwängler's 1951 Stuttgart performance of Bruckner's 4th, transformed by XR
- [New this week](#) - Columbia's excellent 1928 La Scala Aida, courtesy of Ward Marston
- [Editorial](#) - XR remastering and The Chain of Five
- [PADA](#) - Stanislas Niedzielski plays a selection of Chopin Mazurkas, recorded in 1930
- [Recent Reviews:](#)

## The New Music Quartet's Mendelssohn and Boccherini - MusicWeb International

"The PA engineering is top class as well, and we can listen with enthusiasm and admiration to these highly accomplished performances. "

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## Editorial - XR remastering and The Chain of Five

Last week I wrote a rather lengthy article which, among other questions, delved into the merits or otherwise of high resolution recording formats, and there was one line in the middle of the piece which I'd like to use as a spring-board for my thoughts today: "What can and must continue to improve is the equipment which captures the sound and the equipment which reproduces it – but it's far, far easier to double your sampling rate (which looks great on paper) than it is to make real, let alone dramatic, advances in sound recordings and reproduction quality, and so we carry on playing the numbers game."

I first would like to break down the chain of events in making, storing and reproducing a recording into five distinct sections:

**1 – Capturing the sound.** This is exceptionally difficult to do well – a microphone has to be incredibly yet evenly responsive across both a wide frequency range and

a wide dynamic range. It needs to be able to convert sound waves (glorified wind, if you like) into tiny electrical signals. It needs to be positioned in such a way as to make the very best conversion of vibrating air into alternating current, gathering not just the direct sound of one or more musicians, but a sense of the space around them, which is inevitably also captured. This is potentially one of the very weakest links in the “chain of five” and remains to this day something of an esoteric art.

**2 – Transferring the sound to a recorded medium.** This has, through the history of recorded sound, gone through several incarnations. The first cylinder recordings were made directly into the wax of the cylinder itself, which could then be replayed. Duplication was difficult. Disc recordings, again cut straight onto a master, went through a series of electro-chemical processes to produce master stampers which made the finished product. Later the adoption of tape served to interrupt this process, and the role of the mastering engineer grew up. We now enter an era where recordings exist in two media – the tape and the (normally vinyl) disc. Getting it onto either involves quite tricky electronics and mechanics, especially if it is to be an accurate transfer, and both inevitably are, to a degree, flawed and will cause some signal degradation. The modern era sees these electro-magnetic and electro-mechanical processes replaced by an entirely digital device, the analogue-to-digital converter. Now working at the edges of what is possible electronically and unhindered by moving parts, we are better able now than ever before to set down an ideal and accurate representation of what the microphone provides us with onto a storage medium.

**3 – Storing the sound.** Here lies the really big divide between analogue and digital. I argued strongly last week my assertion that in this particular sphere we've pretty much got the problem licked. I'd qualify this though – some digital media are better at long-term storage than others. But that's actually irrelevant, for once a recording enters the digital domain, the ability to clone it perfectly, something impossible in the analogue sound world, means that any physical manifestation of it is secondary to the content itself. The zeros and ones which make up a digital recording may exist in a tangible object or may be transmitted around the world by any number of means – and one can question then whether at this point they actually exist. The point is that we have a means of storing sound up to and beyond our ability to perceive it. The medium ceases to matter – given a “perfect” input, we can now perfectly represent it in a perfectly-repeatable format. Ultimately this is the big difference between digital and analogue sound – but I'd also argue that the older formats of tape and disc did a better job that they're sometimes given credit for, and it's to that idea that I'll return in a moment.

**4 – Extracting the sound from storage.** Here's another very difficult interface in the analogue world, and a very easy one in the modern digital world. It's one that is exacerbated by the fact that it happens in the domestic environment, using equipment of highly variable quality, and in the analogue world is dealing with some very difficult tasks. Consider the microscopic wiggle of a tiny morsel of finely-ground diamond as it careers through the barely-visible plastic grooves stamped into an LP, or the minuscule magnetic variations to be lifted from a piece of oxide-coated plastic. Each generates barely-readable electric currents in tiny coils of copper wire thanks to the effects of electromagnetism. Each current has to be hugely, colossally amplified just to reach the same level as the standard output of a CD player (for example), and then massively further amplified in order to move the cones in a set of loudspeakers. This is hard to do at all, let alone to do well. Investment in the very best equipment to achieve this costs hundreds or thousands of Dollars, Pounds or Euros. Because it's so difficult each piece of analogue replay equipment will have

its shortcomings, each its strengths. It's kept audiophiles busy and hi-fi companies in business for decades. By comparison, a bog-standard Digital to Audio converter costs pennies; a really, really good one comes on a chip that can wholesale for less than \$15. It is capable of doing a better job of turning those musical zeros and ones into an alternating current of good strength than the most astronomically-priced high-end analogue equipment can ever achieve.

**5 – Reproducing the electrical signal as sound.** Here's where we get back to stage one. It's almost certainly today the weakest link in the chain. The loudspeaker is an endless series of compromises. Almost no two designs sound the same – often they don't sound remotely the same. The acoustics of the room in which the signal is reproduced plays a dramatic effect too. Everything, right down to the position of a chair for listening, makes a difference. We're back into the realms of the black art of sound reproduction, and for as long as we expect big sheets of wobbling cardboard and plastic to reproduce exactly the sound of a symphony orchestra in our living rooms, we'll stay right there. It's frankly amazing just how good we are at this, but until every loudspeaker design produces the same results, and each is perfect, we will remain in an imperfect audio world.

Back now to point three, the storage of sound. My role as a restoration and remastering engineer is to make the best of what has been stored in a wide variety of media over the last century or so, recorded in all sorts of locations and in all sorts of ways. Steps 1 and 2 have already taken place, Step 4 is in my hands, and as for Step 5 – well I'm happy with the BBC monitoring speakers I've been using all my professional life. I'm also very much used to them, which helps! I won't have any control over your Step 5, but thanks to digital audio I'm reasonably confident in your Step 4. I'll provide you with a new Step 3 either as a download or on a CD or a hard drive.

What has happened over the last 20-25 years is that we've got better and better at separating the sound of what went onto the recorded media in Step 3 from the inherent sound of the media itself. In other words, as we've developed ever better methods of reducing or removing clicks, scratches, pops, crackle, hiss, and all the other tangible shortcomings of analogue discs and tapes, we've started to get ever closer to Step 2.

Until recently I'd argue that this was the goal of all remastering engineers: to try and reposition a virtual analogue-to-digital converter somewhere around the beginning of stage two – or at least at the end of it (this being the difference between remastering from LP and from master tapes). This week's Aida transfer by Ward Marston is a stunningly-good example of the near-return to the beginning of Step 2 – a combination of super-quiet replay surfaces and very advanced declipping software gets us to a point where we are sonically at the mercy of the original microphones, amplifiers and disc cutters. It's a remarkable place to be and represents the very best which can be hoped for in treating the shortcomings of the media used for Step 3.

But where I've been exploring over the last two or three years is an approach to the realm of Step 1 and beyond. And increasingly, as I've developed XR remastering to try to overcome the shortcomings of historic microphones, and more recently their positioning, I've come to appreciate just how good the storage mediums of shellac, vinyl and tape really were for retaining sound information that had been rendered

practically inaudible by poor quality microphones.

One might visualise captured sound as a kind of exoskeleton, sitting atop the body of the recording medium. It needs to be gently and carefully teased away from that body until it can be held and fixed in a new digital medium where it is effectively self-supporting. Thereafter we need to see where it's been mangled or crushed and where we might straighten it out a little, and effect some discreet repairs to the damage it has suffered through steps one, two and three. The ultimate aim is both simple and impossible – to reposition our virtual analogue-to-digital converter directly in front of the original microphone; to get back to Step Zero. A bit like bringing dinosaurs back to life in the movie Jurassic Park through DNA held in amber, there's a remarkable amount of information stored in our analogue recordings which, if carefully treated, can be used to better reconstruct the sound of a musical performance than is immediately obvious.

This week we return to Furtwängler's Bruckner, an excellent case in point. The concert recordings which make up the various recordings made of Bruckner's symphonies in the 1940s and 1950s by Furtwängler, when XR remastered, constantly reveal how far ahead the recording medium – Step 3 – was of the means to record – Steps 1 and 2. The sound information has been captured and stored for 60 years or more, but because the microphones were relatively poor at achieving the incredibly difficult tasks asked of them, recordings sound dull, or hard, or coarse, or simply “old”. They sound more like recordings than concerts. They produce a sonic divide between listener and performer that is hard to bridge. They've done a great job of mangling up the sonic exoskeleton before it was deposited on the storage medium.

Yet because so much information is there, perhaps obscured or hidden, it is possible to get much closer to the sound of the performances, much closer to what went into the microphones, than the electrical signal which came out of the microphones ever suggested to previous listeners.

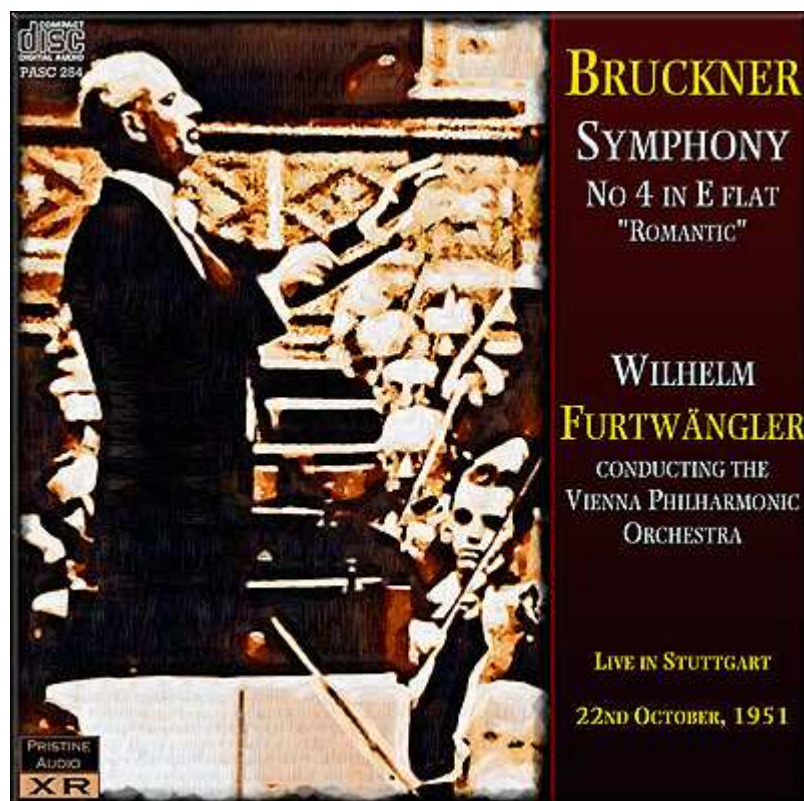
This technique is by no means perfect – but then Jurassic Park is nothing other than science fiction, and it's better than any real-world equivalent of that particular work of fiction at resurrecting the dead. And I hope an explanation of where I believe we're heading and why will point to a better understanding of what I've been aiming to achieve in my work. As the tools and the techniques advance the results they produce slowly improve, and I hope they'll continue to do so. I hope too that by examining the most difficult stages in recording and reproduction today – the very beginning and very end – I've demonstrated why there's still a long way to go in the realm of recorded music, and why arguments will continue to rage between devotees. It is useful though to focus on the the five basic stages outlined above and how they might apply to any particular recording and its reproduction if you're trying to work out how it might better be achieved for you – and not to let yourself get side-tracked into the irrelevant and nonsensical back-alleys of “hi-fi” sound, where dwell sellers of *huile de vipère*.

*Andrew Rose*

## New release today:

### [BRUCKNER Symphony No 4 'Romantic'](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 254



**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**  
conductor **Wilhelm Furtwängler**

Recorded Stuttgart, 1951

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio,  
October=November 2010  
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Furtwängler

Total duration: 65:29  
©2010 Pristine Audio.

For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

### The FLAC downloads:



- **BRUCKNER** BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4 (ed. Haas, 2nd ver.) [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**  
conductor **Wilhelm Furtwängler**

Recorded Stuttgart, 22nd October, 1951

### **BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4 'Romantic'**

Following our recent issues of Furtwängler's wartime "Ninths", Pristine Classical now moves on to his superlative live recordings of the symphonies of

Anton Bruckner.

We're selecting the finest recordings and performances and effecting an astounding sonic rejuvenation of each, as can be heard here in the Stuttgart performance of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony from October 1951.

In sound quality that will astonish anyone familiar with previous issues of this brilliant performance, and with literally hundreds of coughs and extraneous noises excised or diminished, this will surely come to be seen as the definitive issue of this wonderful concert.



**Symphony No 4, Third movement**

Scherzo: Bewegt; Trio: Nicht zu schnell

*(Ambient Stereo version)*

#### Notes on the transfers:

My main aims with this recording were two-fold. First and foremost the sound, although clear for its age, suffered from quite a hard 'edge' and as a result a certain flatness or lack of dimension. I suspected rightly that this would be alleviated by XR remastering as it would almost certainly have been caused by an uneven frequency response in the recording equipment (most probably the microphone) rather than any shortcomings in the tape medium itself. Thus by correcting the frequency response as a part of the XR process I was able to solve this hardness, as well as extending the previously-constricted bottom end of the recording. The effect is to open out the whole recording and give a real sense of air and space around the instruments, something further experienced in our Ambient Stereo version.

The second issue anyone listening to this recording would surely have with it in its original form would be the almost constant intrusion from audience coughs and other noises. It seemed the good people of Stuttgart were having a particularly bronchial evening during this concert, especially during the quieter sections, and I've worked hard to either eliminate completely or reduce considerably hundreds of these unwanted interruptions. Unfortunately not all could be excised without risking damage to the musical content - thus you will not hear a completely cough-free performance, but certainly a much quieter audience than was actually the case on the night in question.

*Andrew Rose*

**Available as 320kbps mono MP3, 16-bit mono & Ambient Stereo FLAC, 24-bit Ambient Stereo FLAC, Mono & Ambient Stereo CD**

or listen on demand with [Pristine Audio Direct Access \(PADA\)](#)

## New release today:

### [VERDI Aida](#)

Pristine Audio PACO 054



**Chorus of La Scala, Milan**  
**Directed by Vittore Veneziani**  
**Milan Symphony Orchestra**  
**Conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli**

Studio recording from 1928 For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

Recorded in Milan, 1928, issued as Italian Columbia 9726-9743  
Transferred and remastered by Ward Marston, September-  
November 2010  
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Aroldo Lindi as  
Radamès

Total duration: 2hr 17:19  
©2010 Pristine Audio.

### The downloads:



- [VERDI - Aida](#) [[notes](#) / [score](#) / [libretto](#)]

### Cast

Aida - **Giannina Arangi-Lombardi**  
Amneris - **Maria Capuana**  
Radamès - **Aroldo Lindi**  
Amonasro - **Armando Borgioli**  
Ramfis - **Tancredi Pasero**  
Il re - **Salvatore Baccaloni**  
Un messaggero - **Giuseppe Nessi**

**Chorus of La Scala, Milan**

Directed by **Vittore Veneziani**

**Milan Symphony Orchestra**

Conducted by **Lorenzo Molajoli**

Recorded on 36 sides by Italian Columbia, Milan: 8, 10, 12-17, 19-21, 23, 26, 28 November, and 1 December 1928.

**Matrices in side order:** WBX422, 398, 375, 384, 414, 385, 394, 410, 412, 411, 386, 387, 407, 396, 391, 389, 392, 415, 413, 397, 393, 403, 400, 406, 408, 399, 416 402, 401, 423, 424, 404, 405, 390, 388, 395

**First issued on Italian Columbia 9726-9743**

CD, MP3 and FLAC information:

**CDs:** Double set - Acts 1 & 2= CD1, Acts 3 & 4 = CD2.

**FLACs:** Continuous tracks with a short pause between acts. Download includes covers, artwork and vocal score.

**MP3:** Two MP3s in a Zip filed which correspond to the two CDs as outlined above, complete with individual cue sheets. Download includes covers, artwork and vocal score.

Please check our help section for help with FLAC, MP3, Cue and Zip files. Downloads also include PDF files with printable covers and JPG files with front cover artwork, which is also embedded into individual music files

"The Columbia version has also been executed in Milan and sung in Italian by Italian artists. The latter in the present instance are Giannina ArangiLombardi (Aida), Maria Capuana (Amneris), Aroldo Lindi (Raclames), Armando Borgioli (Amonasro), Tancredi Pasero (Ramphis), Salvatore Baccaloni (The King), and Giuseppe Nessi (Messenger). The conductor is Cav. Lorenzo Molajoli. Taken as a whole, the performance maintains a high standard of merit. Its vocal quality does this in a notable degree, the singers being not merely artists of ability and experience, familiar with every point and tradition in the opera, but thoroughly at home in up-to-date gramophone work. I am glad, also, to be able to say that I find here no evidence of excessive amplification, the result being that the parts stand out clearly in all the ensembles, while that of the great finale to Act II. is particularly good, in spite of the huge body of combined musical timbres. I tried the solos with various needles, and a Columbia " de luxe " is what I recommend for this album...

...As I have already suggested, the most notable feature of the Columbia Aida is the equality of its execution. If I were to select any special artist for praise it would be Signora Capuana. Her voice and style both remind me in their consistent purity and smoothness of Scalehi, the first and finest Amneris I ever heard. In the duets with Aida and Radames she sings with splendid dramatic force, yet without in the least exaggerating or spoiling the timbre of a lovely tone. Arangi-Lombardi is also a fine singer, and if she takes rather longer to get into her true stride she happily does so in time for a worthy rendering of Ritorna vineitor, while the high notes in the Ceti azzurri sound exceptionally beautiful. Aroldo Lindi does full justice to the robust demands of the part of Radames, and is at his best in the final duet with Aida. For the other soloists and for the chorus and orchestra unqualified admiration may be expressed. Moreover, for the clarity and skill shown in the recording no praise could be too high."

From "[The Gramophone and The Singer](#)" by Herman Klein in **The Gramophone**, May 1929

## VERDI Aida

Pristine Classical is delighted this week to welcome back the talents of multiple award-winning historic transfer producer Ward Marston for this excellent and authoritative new transfer of Verdi's Aida.

The cast contains the cream of 1920s Italian opera and, given the constraints of the recording equipment of the day, was remarkably well recorded by Columbia's engineers, working in Milan in November and December 1928.

The performances by Giannina Arangi-Lombardi, Maria Capuana and Tancredo Pasero stand out particularly well, and the conducting of Lorenzo Molajoli is excellent throughout. A real historic treat for all opera-lovers!



### Act 3:

Qui Radamès verrà!...Che vorrà dirmi? (*Aida*)  
(*Ambient Stereo version*)

### A note from Ward Marston:

In the fall of 1928, His Master's Voice and Columbia each embarked on recordings of Verdi's Aida, HMV in October followed by Columbia in November. Both were recorded in Milan, and each could boast a cast of singers with well-established careers. Both were also in the hands of excellent conductors. About 12 years ago, I produced a digitally remastered transfer of the HMV recording for the Romophone CD label, but until now, the Columbia recording has not had a proper digital reissue.

This recording gives one a very clear idea of a typical 1920s Aida performance which could have been heard at any number of Italian houses during the 1920s. It features the outstanding soprano, Giannina Arangi-Lombardi, 1891- 1951. Having made her debut in 1921 as a mezzo, Arangi-Lombardi was advised to switch to soprano roles, and she made her La scala debut in 1924 as Elena in Mefistofele. During the following 15 years, she appeared throughout Europe and South America, though she never sang in London or Paris. Fortunately, one can hear her in three other complete operas recorded by Columbia: Cavalleria Rusticana, Mefistofile, and La Gioconda. Aida was one of her most important roles, and she gives it a most individual approach. Her high C in "O patria mia" is lovely. Her only flaw is that she has some intonation difficulty at the top of her range during forte passages. She is joined by the equally renowned mezzo, Maria Capuana who gives a sensational 1920s rendering of Amneris. The Radamès here is the Swedish tenor, Aroldo Lindi, born Gustav Harald Lindau, 1888-1944. The possessor of a loud dramatic voice, he sadly is not up to the rest of this cast. The other singers all sing well, especially Tancredi Pasero as Ramfis. The conducting by Lorenzo Molajoli is up to his usual excellent standard.

This recording was made in what sounds like a rehearsal studio with very dead acoustics. I have added a small amount of

artificial reverberation in order to give it a bit of ambiance. The orchestral and voices are usually well-balanced, although there is a noticeable degradation of the sound at the ends of some of the longer sides. The voices are well-recorded except during the most intense passages where the recording equipment was simply incapable of handling the high levels. During these moments, there occurs severe distortion which is only slightly remediable.

This transfer was made using two excellent condition sets of American Columbia pressings, which yield quieter surfaces than any of the European editions. In order to achieve the best possible sound, each side was tested using a variety of stylus sizes and shapes. I used CEDAR de-clicking and de-crackling, but did not need to use any digital de-noising software. It should be noted that in the American edition, side 27 is a dubbing and not the original master recording. For this side, I used an Italian pressing which was pressed from the master.

November 2010

Available as **320kbps mono MP3, 16-bit mono FLAC, Mono CD**  
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## New MP3 transfers only at PADA Exclusives

by **Dr. John Duffy**  
in Ambient Stereo

### Chopin Mazurkas from Niedzielski



Stanislas Niedzielski

**Chopin**  
8 Mazurkas

**Strauss**  
1001 Nacht (waltz)

Stanislas Niedzielski, piano

Recorded:

**C Studio**, Small Queen's Hall, London, 6th and 10th June, 1930. Issued as HMV C2008-10

Stanislas Niedzielski: [wiki](#)

This transfer is presented with Ambient Stereo remastering by Dr. John Duffy.

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## Pick of the reviews

### [MusicWeb International](#)

**'We can listen with enthusiasm and admiration to these highly accomplished performances.'**



#### **Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)**

Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 13 (1827) [29:01]

Quartet No. 5 in E flat, Op. 44, No. 3 (1838) [32:33]

#### **Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805)**

Quartet in B minor, Op.58, No.4, G.245 [14:30]

Quartet in B-flat, Op.2, No.2, G.160 [11:05]

Quartet in E-flat, Op.53, No.1, G.236 [10:22]

Quartet in E-flat, Op.58, No.2, G.243 [15:43]

New Music Quartet - Broadus Erle (violin): Matthew Raimondi (violin): Walter Trampler (viola):  
Claus Adam (cello - Mendelssohn) or David Soyer (cello - Boccherini)  
rec. 1954-55

Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York

**PRISTINE AUDIO XR [PACM069](#) [61:34 + 51:40]**

It's the early 1950s and you're a devotee of Mendelssohn's chamber music. Maybe you're an amateur cellist. You want to listen to one of the quartets on disc and you scan the catalogues,

possibly venture to your record emporium of choice. What do you find? You find, for a start, that the Budapest Quartet has recorded No.1 for HMV/Victor. You also find things are somewhat better in the case of No.3 where the Guilet has set down a version for Vox, and the Stradivarius for Columbia. Of the others there is no sign of a complete recording though there are isolated movements around.

This must also have struck Columbia in New York, therefore, as a good opportunity to expand into a depleted market. In May 1954 the company engaged the New Music Quartet to record the Second and Fifth Quartets, at a stroke expanding the discography to splendid effect, and furnishing us with excellent examples of this particular quartet's art on disc. Now, over half a century later these, and other performances, are reinstated by Pristine Audio.

The group was in existence only from 1948 to 1955. Its members were Broadus Erle (1918-1977), Matthew Raimondi (whose dates I've not been able to ascertain), the experienced émigré violist Walter Trampler (1915-1997), and cellists Claus Adam (1917-1983) and David Soyer, born in 1923, and who died earlier this year (2010).

The performances are excellent throughout. The playing catches the pious intensity of the writing – see the Adagio introduction to the A minor – as well as the rapt intensity of the slow movements. So too they gauge the vehement quasi-Beethovenian writing of the same quartet's finale, and the crisp resilience and rhythmic vitality of the opening of the E flat quartet. The playing is crisp, textures remaining clean, clear, orientated in the best post-war manner. Tonally well scaled, these Mendelssohn performances exude warmth but also precision.

If one found the Mendelssohn quartet locker curiously empty, the state of play with Boccherini was oddly not so bad. True, there was a lot of ground to cover, but we had already heard 78 recordings of the Op.1 No.2 by the Pascal, Op.33/5 by the Roth, and its opus mate Op.33 No.6 by a trio of groups; Kreiner, York (on Royale and hard to track down) as well as the Belardinelli. When it came to Op.6 No.1 we were spoilt for choice; New Italian, Rome, Poltronieri, and the ICBS. I know nothing about the last named. Of these groups it's the New Italian, or rather the Quartetto Italiano, as it subsequently became known, that has exerted a strong hold on 'historic' performances of some of the Boccherini quartets. Nevertheless this New World, New Music survey of four of the works represented a real step forward, given that they set down three of the Op.58 set, and one of the Op.2 set into the bargain. They catch the lissomness of the writing, the affectionate nobility of it. Unanimity of attack is admirable, unison weight excellent. The zesty lines for Erle and for Trampler in the witty and energetic first movement of the brief two-movement Op.53 No. 1 are a real highpoint.

The LPs from which this transfer derives were clearly in fine condition. The PA engineering is top class as well, and we can listen with enthusiasm and admiration to these highly accomplished performances.

***Jonathan Woolf***

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