

## MAVERICK EXPLORER

A trio of reissues that showcase the breadth of Stokowski's art

Recent months have witnessed a positive deluge of CDs devoted to the art of **Leopold Stokowski**, especially significant given (as Simon Callow recently noted in these pages) the unfortunate demise of the Stokowski Society. EMI has brought out a 10-CD Icon set (698555-2) of mostly Capitol recordings (maddeningly omitting an elegant and



beautifully played *Blue Danube* waltz that used to be on the "Landmarks of a Distinguished Career" LP, which is otherwise represented complete) and Andrew Rose's Pristine label has been especially productive (and his fine transfers are available as CD, or in either MP3 or FLAC formats for downloading). One of my own favourites among Pristine's Stokowski releases is a stunning live New York PO recording of Falla's *El Amor brujo* from 1948 with mezzo-soprano Nan Merriman on terrific form (sounding far more dramatic than on Stokowski's less combustible RCA commercial recording), and coupled with *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with pianist William Kapell.

Pristine is also reissuing Stokowski's acoustic recordings (1917-24) with the Philadelphia Orchestra (PASC192), which are among the most characterful orchestral discs of the period, and there's a fine Tchaikovsky Fifth with the NBC Symphony from 1953 – not quite as exciting as the earlier (wartime) live version recently put out by Guild, but characteristic in style and with a sequence of couplings that sum up the Stokowski ethos at its most outrageous and extreme: "transcriptions" of Tchaikovsky, Handel, Ippolitov-Ivanov and, especially controversial, a pair of Chopin Preludes. You also get a *Blue Danube*, albeit "abridged", as is *Tales from the Vienna Woods*. It is wonderful to have these mementos which years ago few of us anticipated would ever enjoy wide circulation.

Even more remarkably characterful is a programme put out by Guild where Stokowski – ever the maverick explorer – conducts 20th-century symphonies. The least successful here is a rather tentative performance



of Copland's Second, or *Short*, Symphony, whereas the First Symphonies of Alan Hovhaness (1936) and Darius Milhaud (1939), both of them strong pieces that Stokowski and his wartime NBC Symphony respond well to, fare far better. Perhaps the programme's most remarkable item is the 18-minute, single-movement First Symphony by the teenage Jose Serebrier – a Stokowski protege – which, although cast rather in the shadow of Shostakovich (or so it seems to these ears) leaves a powerful impression. On that occasion Stokowski conducted the Houston Symphony Orchestra.

### The Recordings

- **Falla** *El Amor brujo*, etc **Stokowski**  
Pristine © PASC174 (CD, MP3 or FLAC)
- **Tchaikovsky**, etc **Orch Wks Stokowski**  
Pristine © PASC188 (CD or MP3 or FLAC)
- **Various Cpsrs** **Syms Stokowski**  
Guild © GHCD2347

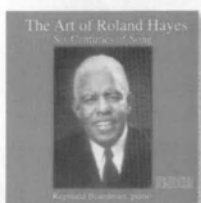
## JEWELS OF SONG AND OPERA

Three treasures from the vocal archives

One of the happiest of recent historical releases presents a two-CD sequence of shellac recordings devoted to the music of **Peter Warlock**, records loaned from the John Bishop Collection and that include some treasurable performances that would otherwise be extremely difficult to track down.



For me the highlight of the set is a memorable 1950 recording of *The Curlew* where the eloquent tenor René Soames is supported by oboist Leon Goossens and the Aeolian String Quartet; music-making that is both intimate and intense. There are no fewer than three versions of the *Capriol Suite* included – by the London Chamber Orchestra under Anthony Bernard, the Constant Lambert String Orchestra, and Joseph Szigeti with Nikita Magaloff at the piano – as well as the *Serenade* (Barbirolli), Purcell arranged Warlock (Pasquier Trio, Griller Quartet),



and a whole host of songs (featuring Peter Dawson, John Goss, John Armstrong, Parry Jones, Roy Henderson, Nancy Evans, Oscar Natzke, the English Singers and others). The transfers are good and so are the notes.

From Preiser comes another double-pack, equally special: "The Art of **Roland Hayes**", recordings that although made at the tail-end of this noble singer's long career have a magic about them, a degree of sincere musicality, that I for one would happily trade for the more easeful efforts of Hayes's many successors, or at least some of them.

Hayes was the son of one-time slaves and aside from offering us affecting renditions of early music, Lieder and art songs, also programmes some spirituals. If "O Mary don't you weep" doesn't get you (it's sung unaccompanied), then nothing will.



On the opera front Profil have accessed a 1955 Aix-en-Provence Festival recording of Gluck's *Orphée et Euridice* in the Antoine Geoffroy-Dechaume edition, previously out on EMI and featuring Nicolai Gedda in his early prime as Orphée and Janine Micheau as Euridice, though some of the most seductive singing on the set is from the *Amour* of Liliane Berton. **Louis de Froment** conducts the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra and Chorus. ©

### The Recordings

- **Warlock** Collected 78rpm Recs **Various artists**  
Divine Art © ② DDH27811
- **Various Cpsrs** **Voc Wks Hayes**  
Preiser © ② 93462
- **Gluck** *Orphée et Euridice* **de Froment**  
Profil Medien © ② PH09021