## A Welcome for Warenskjold

GRIEG AND DVORAK: *Songs. Dorothy Warenskjold, soprano, with the Concerts Arts Orchestra conducted by George Greeley.* (Capitol P 8247, $5.70.)

AS CONCERTGOERS and radio listeners (also operagoers in San Francisco) on the West Coast know, Dorothy Warenskjold is one of the most accomplished American sopranos of the day. That she is content, thus far, with regional celebrity is a tribute to her modesty. Also it reflects the sensible view that there are other ways to make a career than by coming to New York prematurely.

In her introductory recording she shows a fine lyric soprano voice, even and lustrous, admirably controlled throughout its range, and especially suitable to such Grieg items as "Solveig's Song," "Tides of Spring" (as "The Last Spring" is described in this English vocal version), and "A Swan." If there is an adverse comment to be made, it would concern the unvarying silken sound she produces, whatever the mood or emotion of the song. It makes for beautifully ear-caressing tone, but also for mind-fatiguing sameness. Included in the Dvorak sequence are the "Gypsy Songs" (with the inescapable "Songs That My Mother Taught Me") and the "Love Songs" (Opus 83). She sings everything in English texts clearly enunciated, but no more authentic for that.

Considering that Capitol has invested this effort on Miss Warenskjold's behalf (the approved pronunciation, I believe, is "Warrenshold"), it might have seen to it that she had livelier, better disciplined accompaniments than George Greeley provides. Also, by some misguided miracle of acoustics, it has managed to provide a bright clean resonance for her voice, a dull fuzzy one for the orchestra, especially where the low end and the timpani are concerned.

## The Soviet's Gilels

LISZT: *Concerto No. 1 in E flat. Emil Gilels, piano, with orchestra conducted by K. Kondrashin;* also SAINT SAËNS: *Concerto No. 2 in G minor. The same.* (Vanguard VRS 6015, $5.95.)

TO judge by the choice of Emil Gilels to join David Oistrakh in a musical performance during the recent Berlin meetings, he is the considered choice as the No. 1 pianist of the Soviet Union. To judge by these examples of his skill—neither very well recorded—he is an iron-fingered young man with a style made to order for the late works of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, etc.

However, since he is playing Liszt and Saint Saëns, those abilities are not altogether relevant. Of his ability to play glissandi like glass, runs like rivets, and arpeggios as glittering as arctic ice, there can be no question. But the kind of artistry that distinguishes between effects and expression is hard to find in these performances. There is a suggestion of it in the opening movement of the Saint-Saëns, but the invitation to charm in the allegro scherzando is brusquely rejected. As for the finale, it is hardly the Presto indicated: something more of a vivacissimo. The Liszt performance is glib, tonally metallic, and temperamentally limited.

Vanguard has a sound reputation for high standards in processing, so it must be considered that this tape is a defective one. The orchestral sound is sharp and clear, but the pitch is never quite exact, and the piano tends to waver in sustained passages.

## All the Mazurkas

CHOPIN: *Mazurkas (Opus 6, 7, 17, 24, 30, 33, 41, 50, 56, 59, 63, 67, and 68);* also *"Fantaisie Polonaise" (Opus 61) and "Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise" (Opus 22). Artur Rubinstein, piano.* (RCA Victor LM 6109, $17.16.)

IT is rare that any performer has a second chance at so substantial a segment of his chosen instrument's repertory as Rubinstein has here; it is, necessarily, rarer still that one manages not only to equal but even exceed a previous high standard of quality. By some inherent discipline rather hard to analyze but nevertheless plainly evident to recognize, Rubinstein manages to preserve a straightforward line to his objective, yielding neither to emotional exaggeration nor musical understatement.

As a symptom of phonographic progress, it may be noted that Rubinstein's first impressive, if cumbersome, treatment of the Mazurkas (on uncountable 78-rpm discs) utilized a sequence of his own, designed for listening "interest." This time the listener is deemed sufficiently interested in the material itself and sufficiently mature, musically, to take the pieces as they were written, thus providing a special kind of utility—in the area of historical perspective—for Rubinstein's mastery.

It is absorbing to note that the purity, grace, and rhythmic accent of Rubinstein's playing is constant in the little as well as the much-played Mazurkas, that his concern for the second of Opus 33 is no more than his attention to Opus 50, No. 1. In both—as in the many between—the piano sound is of this artist's own distinctive sonority, and though the sequence must have involved physical effort spread over many weeks' time, it can be heard straight through as the expression of a single underlying impulse which few could muster on any given occasion.

In respect to sound, it is interesting to hear that Rubinstein favors for the two Polonaises a fuller, more resonant quality, doubtless related to the more "concerty" expressions they embody. He plays both with a solid balance of dramatic and musical elements, the rewarding "Andante spianato" with especial art in the interlacing figures that pass from right hand to left.

## Kleiber's Beethoven No. 5

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 5 in C minor. Erich Kleiber conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.* (London LL 912, $5.95.)

THIS is certainly the best-sounding version of this taxing work now available, and one that is so well performed as to challenge comparison with any other. This is particularly true of the first movement, launched in tremendously impressive vigor by Kleiber and sustained without lapse for its taut, concentrated length. The conductor's preference throughout the work is for tempi that move rather than meditate, but his concentration is not quite firm enough to sustain what he has set in motion. Thus the scherzo has its moments of lax control, and the finale, though beautifully prepared, loses momentum.

However, what Kleiber attempts is of sufficient stature to invite a revaluation of the most recent Toscanini effort (LM 1757). Here is no such considerate concern for mere sonority (it is taken from a broadcast), but the driving force of the conductor is never relaxed, even when it is concealed (in the andante). Moreover, London provides its superior richness of sound and accuracy of detail at more than small cost to the consumer; two sides are utilized for the single work, whereas the Toscanini offers the Symphony No. 8 on the second side.

—IRVING KOLODIN.