

**Beulah: Late 2020 Round-up**  
**By Brian Wilson**

The demise of the short reviews articles in June 2020 left us without an opening to report on Beulah's reissues of classic recordings. I included the releases for that month in [Spring 2020/3](#) and in the final Summer 2020 edition – [here](#), but there has been quite a spate of new releases since then.

*A propos* a reissue of Handel recordings from the 1950s, Jonathan Woolf recently wrote: 'Some listeners seem incapable of turning back the musical clock, so mired have they become in current performance practice. But these examples are hardly monolithic and stand in the continuum of Handel performance practice in Britain in the mid-point of the twentieth century. As such they have something to say and offer leading conductors, instrumentalists, and singers in full communicative flight'.

That's the case with Beulah reissues, all of which date from the early 1960s, 1950s or even earlier. Obviously, even early stereo recordings, from around 1955 onwards, need a little tolerance, but the sound which careful transcription produces can be amazingly good, with surface noise and even tape hiss reduced almost to inaudibility without loss of the musical quality. There are recordings of such early material on sale where very little care seems to have been taken, but Beulah are among a select band of providers of careful refurbishment. They and I always recommend purchasing or streaming from Qobuz in lossless sound – with a very few exceptions for longer recordings, they charge the same £7.99 that others ask for mp3.

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**Glenn Miller 1938-39** on **SPS39** [69:14] is self-recommending to any big-band fans in general and those of Glenn Miller in particular, which includes me. It can be found alongside the four earlier Beulah volumes – 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942-44 – for streaming or downloading in lossless sound from [Qobuz](http://Qobuz). That's Beulah's – and my – recommendation for streaming or downloading, offering their releases in lossless sound when others charge the same price – a reasonable £7.99 – for mp3.

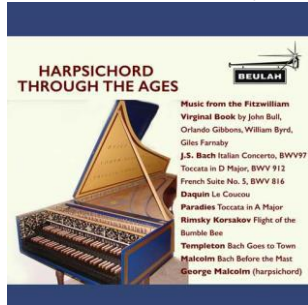


The sound is warm rather than bright, but that suits Miller's music-making very well. If you missed the earlier releases, this would be as good a place as any to start, but you will find yourself tempted to add some or all of the other volumes.

**Lady be good** is a 71-minute selection of music by **Erroll Garner** (piano) with Wyatt Ruther (bass), Eugene Heard (drums) and Cándido Camero (congo drums), recorded in Chicago in July 1954; solo in New York in March 1955, and with Eddie Calhoun (bass) and Kelley Martin (percussion) in New York in December 1959. Apart from the fact that the programme doesn't include Garner's best-known tune *Misty* – so famous that it became the title of a movie – everything here is very enjoyable, especially for late-night easy listening, Garner's technique so good that you could easily think the music was as easy to play with a swing as it is to listen to. The transfers, too, are easy on the ear. **1PS72** [70:39] From [Qobuz](http://Qobuz).



**Opus One**, the opening number on **1PS69**, introduces music by **Gene (Eugene Bertram) Krupa** (drums), recorded in 1956 with his Big Band, vocals by Anita O'Day; with the Gene Krupa Septet in 1955, and with Buddy Rich doubling on drums, with the Krupa Rich Band in 1962. If Erroll Garner's manner was to hide his considerable technique under an easy-going style, Krupa's was much more virtuoso. Though there's some swinging playing here and some smoochy singing on the early tracks, this is not for late-night listening – more like 'get up and dance'. There may have been better drummers along later, but Krupa first made the jazz drummer noticeable, having left Benny Goodman in 1938 to start his own band. Again, the transfers of all these recordings are smooth and listenable. From [Qobuz](http://Qobuz)

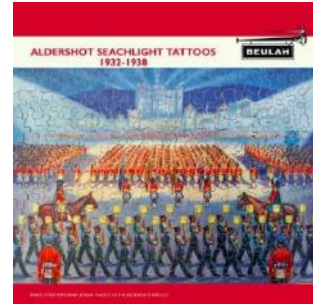


**Harpsichord through the Ages** contains performances by **George Malcolm** of music from the Elizabethan Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, **JS BACH** (*Italian Concerto*, BWV971; *Tocatta in D*, BWV912) and *French Suite No.5*, BWV816), **DAQUIN** (*Le Coucou*), **PARADIES** *Tocatta in A*, **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV** (an adaptation of *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*), **TEMPLETON** *Bach goes to Town* and **MALCOLM**'s own *Bach before the Mast*.

Some of this duplicates *The World of George Malcolm* (Decca Eloquence 4825181 – [review](#)). One of the Decca Eloquence reissues of Malcolm’s recordings, which I [reviewed collectively in 2017](#), I enjoyed that and I’ve enjoyed the rather different selection on Beulah **1PS68** [71:16]. George Malcolm’s harpsichord was state of the art in its day; it’s no longer so, sounding especially over-large for the earlier music, but that doesn’t detract from my enjoyment of both the Beulah and the Eloquence. The Beulah can be yours for £7.99 – choose [Qobuz](#) for lossless quality – the Eloquence costs around the same on CD but, totally illogically, almost £12 as a lossless download.

Military music is one of the specialities of the Beulah label. **Aldershot Searchlight Tattoos, 1932-1938**, continues that tradition, with a colourful jigsaw puzzle depiction of the event: **2PD9** [77:04].

All that I really need say is that I enjoyed hearing this recording of the Massed Bands of the Aldershot and Eastern Commands, and that it’s self-recommending for lovers of the genre. The track details and notes for the original CD can be found [online](#), together with the list of extra tracks included on the new release. Perhaps we need to take such music slightly more at arm’s length than in the 1930s, but you may find that you become more immersed than you intended.



These outdoor events can’t have been easy to record in the 78s era, but the 1938 event comes over especially well. W A Chislett, who seemed to go on for ever reviewing band music and light classics for Gramophone’s *Nights at the Round Table*, noted that that year’s recording captured the inner parts especially well – just don’t expect modern hi-fi, but those from the earlier years are more muffled. I’m very surprised to note that the Tattoo recorded in June 1938 was available for review the following month. That’s better than is achieved by modern digital technology. As always, I recommend the lossless download from [Qobuz](#).

**Recommended** **Beecham conducts French Music** is one of the highlights of these recent releases and, indeed, of the Beulah catalogue as a whole. Reviewing Beecham’s Brahms – the Violin Concerto and Symphony No.2 on Beulah **14PDR4** – I singled this French album out as more typical of Beecham at his best.

**CHABRIER** *España* with the LPO (1938), **BIZET** *Carmen Suite* with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra (1949), **FRANCK** *Le Chasseur maudit* and **MÉHUL** *La Chasse du jeune Henri Overture* with the RPO (1951-54) and **MASSENET** *Cendrillon Waltz* and **FAURÉ** *Dolly Suite*, Op.56, with the **Orchestre National de France** in stereo from 1959/61.



There’s not much more to say about Beecham’s ‘Lollipops’ at this late date, except that they still sound wonderful and that this is a representative sample recorded across a period of time. Beecham fans will want this, even though they already have some of the items in another form. The nearest equivalent, from Warner Great Recordings of the Century, is now download only and, at almost £12, a good deal more expensive than the Beulah. That includes the *Carmen Suite* which he recorded with the French National Orchestra; the alternative Columbia performance on Beulah, originally released in the UK on Columbia 33CX1037 – also on 78s, still being released in 1953 – though less well recorded, is reason enough in itself to go for the Beulah, perhaps in addition.

As usual, it’s best to obtain this from [Qobuz](#) in lossless sound for the recommended way to enjoy these very fine transfers – even the 1938 Chabrier sounds more than tolerable. **13PDR4** [71:49].

**Peter Katin** plays **MENDELSSOHN (Piano Concertos Nos. 1 in g minor, Op.24, and 2 in d minor Op.40**, with the **LSO** and **Anthony Collins**, rec. Kingsway Hall, 9/10 February 1956) and **RACHMANINOV (Piano Concerto No.1 in f-sharp minor, Op.1**, with **LPO** and **Sir Adrian Boult**, rec. Kingsway Hall, 17-19 February 1958) on **2PS71** [68:55]. Download in lossless sound from [Qobuz](#).



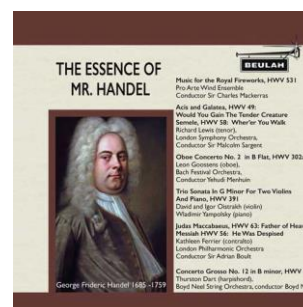
The choice is between this recording and a straight download-only reissue of the Decca LP of Katin and Collins in the two Mendelssohn concertos, with *Capriccio brilliant* and *Rondo brilliant*, recorded with Jean Martinon in 1954, for around the same price (4834047). The two shorter works have already been reissued by Beulah on *The Art of Peter Katin* (1PS71 – [Spring 2020/3](#), p.30); if you chose that, the new Beulah is your logical next choice, especially if the comparatively neglected Rachmaninov concerto appeals.

There are plenty of very good more recent recordings of the Mendelssohn, from the likes of Howard Shelley (Chandos) and Stephen Hough (Hyperion), but these sympathetic performances from Katin and Collins are still well worth considering.

When Katin's Rachmaninov (Concertos Nos. 1 and 2) was reissued on Decca SPA169, the authoritative Robert Layton confidently recommended his 'refreshingly unmannered ... unegotistic and straightforward' playing and the recording quality. That's better than I could have put it. David Wright thought Katin's Rachmaninov Concerto No.1 'still the best ... yet reviewers never seem to refer to it' – [review](#). Consider that omission amended now.

The SPA label was one of the least expensive, at £0.90 in 1972. That makes it at least £40 in today's money – the Beulah costs £7.99. QED. I wonder if Beulah have Katin's Rachmaninov No.2 up their sleeve? They have just given us John Ogdon's (with Tchaikovsky, 6PS58, [Spring 2020/3](#): Recommended).

**The Essence of Mr HANDEL: Music for the Royal Fireworks, HWV531 – Pro Arte Wind Ensemble/Sir Charles Mackerras** is a classic recording, worth the price of this album in its own right. Launched by Pye, then a big name in radios and gramophones, as well as a record label, with a party at Battersea Park in June 1958, this recording was made under very special circumstances – the only way to gather the top wind players under the 'Pro Arte' name meant recording overnight on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Handel's death, in a large warehouse. The result was one of the first of many successes for Sir Charles Mackerras, whose versatility meant that he was equally at home in Gilbert and Sullivan and Janáček. His two 2-CD sets of the late Mozart symphonies and the single CD of the *Requiem* have recently been reissued as a medium-price Linn 5-CD set, and that will be one of my Recordings of the Year for 2020. Some of the tempi in Handel seem deliberate by modern standards, but I enjoyed making the acquaintance of this recording again. My only reservation is that I would have preferred the reverse side of the original LP to have been included as well: the *Concerto a due cori* in F.



The **Boyd Neel Chamber Orchestra** recording of the **Concerto Grosso, Op.6/12**, represents another important step in the performance and recording of Handel, especially for the presence of Thurston Dart (harpichord), university musicologist and conductor, who prepared the way first for modern-instrument players with period sense, and later for period-instrument performance. The playing is

remarkably sprightly for its age (it was released in 1955) and the recording has come up remarkably well. **1PS75**: from [Qobuz](#).

**Decca ffr Recordings**: recent Beulah releases have featured several of these early attempts at full fidelity, many of which sounded even better when released on early LPs. Some of them survived well into the 1960s on the Ace of Clubs label and most of them can still be listened to without discomfort, as tidied up by Beulah. Volumes 1-4 were reviewed in Spring and Summer 2020.

If the Mackerras Fireworks Music is still hovering between tradition and innovation in recording the music of the period, another Beulah reissue is very much in the grand old tradition that I associate with elderly scores edited by Ebenezer Prout. **Johann Sebastian BACH St Matthew Passion**, almost complete, recorded in Kingsway Hall, London, in 1947 and 1948 and sung in English, as was then usual, is a real collector's item. It was advertised as 'authoritatively directed by Dr Jacques [and] capturing the atmosphere of the actual performance ... with a spaciousness and fidelity that prove conclusively the unchallenged superiority of Decca full frequency range recording'. Well, the way we judge the fidelity of recorded sound has certainly changed since then, but Beulah's series of early ffr recordings – this is No. 5 – reminds us what a huge advance the technique marked.



The edition employed was by Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Ivor Atkins – hardly 'authentic' by modern standards – and the performers were the cream of the time: the **Bach Choir**, with veteran soloists like **Elsa Suddaby** and **Bruce Boyce** joined by the young discovery, **Kathleen Ferrier**. It's especially for Ferrier fans that this release will be essential; I fear that I am not of their number, for reasons which I have often rationalised as having heard 'our Kath' so frequently lauded in my teens in Blackburn, where she had been a telephonist before her discovery. Her two contributions to the Handel recording above, for example, sound all too plummy for my liking.

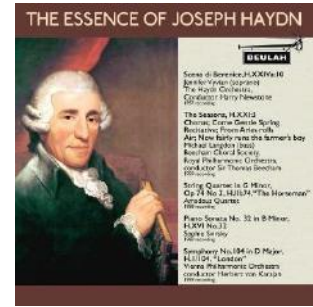
I can, however, happily echo Robert Hugill's [comment](#) on a Naxos reissue of her singing Bach and Handel, that Ferrier takes the music seriously, and I found myself warming to her on this recording, which I hadn't heard before, more than usual. **Reginald Jacques** takes her through *Grief for Sin* at a rather sprightlier pace than Boult on that Naxos reissue. If any recording could convert me to the Ferrier cause, I think this would be it.

There's material here in plenty for a PhD on the changes in performing style in Bach, right from the opening 'Come ye daughters' – very slow, over three minutes longer than Sir John Eliot Gardiner in 2016 (SDG725 – [review](#)), but that's how they liked it in 1947 – some still do – but it's dragged out far too long; maybe it's our short modern attention span that's at fault.

The original release, in two volumes, each of seven 78rpm records, was bizarre: a series of extracts, followed by a further set to (almost) complete the work, meaning that it would have been very difficult to play the whole in the right order, but Beulah have conveniently disentangled it all for us. The recording is surprisingly good for its age, even in the large-scale choruses. All in all, I enjoyed this more than I expected though, of course, I'd hardly place it near my top choices.

Stream or download from Qobuz – [part 1](#) – [part 2](#).

**The Essence of Joseph HAYDN** contains *Scena di Berenice*, H.XXIVa/10 (Jennifer Vyvyan, **The Haydn Orchestra** and **Harry Newstone**, 1957), excerpts from *The Seasons* H.XXI/3 (**Michael Langdon** [bass], **Beecham Choral Society**, **RPO/Sir Thomas Beecham**, 1959), **String Quartet No.74** in g minor, Op.74/3, 'Horseman' H.III/74 (**Amadeus Quartet**, 1958), **Piano Sonata No.32** in b minor, H.XVI/32, **Sophie Svirsky**, 1960) and **Symphony No.104, 'London'**, H.I/104 (**VPO/Herbert von Karajan**, 1959). **1PS77**: from [Qobuz](#).



No one recording can hope to encapsulate the music of Haydn, but there's something here from each of the forms in which he excelled – and, in the case of the string quartet and symphony, though no longer claimed as the 'father' of either, helped to perfect.

The Amadeus Quartet held the field in Haydn for many years, and their recording of String Quartet No.74, in a very acceptable transfer from an HMV recording of all three Op.74 quartets, is still well worth hearing. It seems not to have been generally realised in 1958 that chamber music benefits even more than orchestral from stereo, and this mono recording held sway for many years.

It's interesting that the Karajan recording of the 'London' symphony was chosen; Beecham would have been my choice for a recording of this vintage, but his classic recordings of the London symphonies are available elsewhere. The Karajan though released on RCA, was recorded – in first-class sound for the day – by Decca. I wouldn't call it that today – the slow introduction is enough to tell us that this isn't a recent recording – but the ear soon adjusts to a performance that only the historically obsessed would object to. Haydn's last symphonies are well suited to larger-scale performance, but hipp fans would be better served by Mark Minkowski and les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble (Naïve V5176, download only). The Decca Legends reissue of this VPO/Karajan 'London' symphony, with Beethoven Symphony No.7 is now download only, and more expensive than this Beulah.

**ffrr Pioneers Volume 6: Eduard van Beinum conducts**

**Joseph HAYDN**

Symphony No.96 in D ('Miracle')<sup>1</sup> [21:08]

**Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART**

Piano Concerto No.24 in c minor, K491<sup>2</sup> [29:35]

**George Frideric HANDEL**

*Messiah*: He was despised [6:17]

**Joseph HAYDN**

Symphony No.100 in G ('Military')<sup>3</sup> [12:33]

Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra/Eduard van Beinum  
rec. Concertgebouw 21 September 1946. ADD mono<sup>1</sup>  
Kathleen Long (piano)

Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra/Eduard van Beinum  
rec. Concertgebouw, 20-21 September 1948. ADD/mono<sup>2</sup>

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Eduard van Beinum  
rec. 26-27 November and 16 December 1947. ADD/mono<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> also included in *The Essence of Joseph Haydn*. *Messiah* excerpt also included in *The Essence of Mr Handel*

**BEULAH 7PS59** [69:34]



Decca were pioneers in the full-frequency recording stakes, with a series of releases on 78 rpm which are still well worth hearing in Beulah's excellent transfers. Volumes 1-4 have already been covered in earlier reviews: **1PS59 – 4PS59** in [March 2020](#) and Volume 5 is reviewed above.

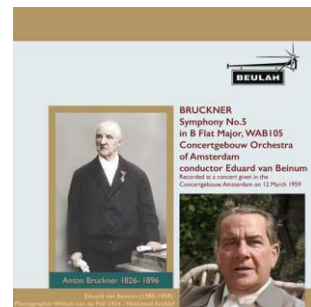
With the two Haydn ‘London’ symphonies here and the Karajan No.104 on *The Essence of Haydn*, above, we have a fair cross-section of 1950s recordings of the twelve symphonies which were presented in London. None of them would be a top recommendation today – and even for this vintage it would be Beecham that I would choose – but van Beinum in particular has much to offer, and the Beulah release complements the Decca Eloquence release of Nos. 94, 96 and 97, which he re-recorded for LP in 1951-53 (4768483).

The 1948 review dates from a time when it was still believed that No.96 was the symphony being played when a huge chandelier fell and, miraculously, no-one was hurt; we now believe that to have been No.102, but the rest of WRA’s enthusiastic review still holds good, including his approval of Beinum’s apparent reduction in the number of strings. Very unusually, a fair amount of surface crackle is apparent on this transfer – most will find it easier to blank this out, especially those of us who remember playing 78s with fibre needles, which needed to be regularly sharpened.

No.100 came off less well in the original review, with the speed of the *allegretto* second movement considered too fast. It’s considerably faster than from Colin Davis on a more recent Concertgebouw recording of the ‘London’ symphonies, one of the most highly regarded modern-instrument versions (Decca Duo 4426142, Nos. 93, 94, 97, 99-101, 2 CDs for the price of one). It’s even slightly faster than the recent period-instrument Handel and Haydn Society release with Harry Christophers (Coro COR16181, No.100 with ‘Nelson’ Mass). If you consider this to be aptly named the ‘Military’ symphony, however, a slightly brusque account of this movement is apt.

Between the two Haydn symphonies, there’s a welcome reminder of Kathleen Long in Mozart. The only reason to prefer the Dutton Historic CD would be the inclusion of another Mozart concerto (No.15), the Fauré *Ballade* and the Leigh Concertino. Another trip down Memory Lane – I remember this recording from Ace of Clubs, with a less recommendable Beethoven 4 from Clara Haskil – but worthwhile not just for that reason. Here, too, and in Haydn 100, there’s a hint of surface noise, but very much less than in Haydn 96.

There’s more from **van Beinum** and the **Concertgebouw Orchestra** on another Beulah reissue, a live recording from March 1959 of **Anton BRUCKNER Symphony No.5** in B-flat, WAB105, on **7PD17**. From [Qobuz](#).



I enjoyed Beinum’s earlier recording of Symphony No.8 (6PD17 – [review](#)); as I anticipated, I enjoyed this No.5 too, especially as the Decca Eloquence set of Nos. 5, 7-9 (4807068, 4 CDs) seems to be out of stock from some dealers at the moment. At 71:01, this is a no-nonsense performance – Gergiev, for example, recently released with the Munich Phil on their own label, takes 80 minutes, even longer than Klemperer.

Two volumes have been added to the **Music of England** series. **No.10** sports the lychgate of a country church on the cover, and most of the music fits the image, starting with three unexpected but welcome choices: **Hans Martin Linde** (flute) and the **Lucerne Festival Strings** directed by **Rudolf Baumgartner** perform **Michael FESTING Concerto in D** for two flutes, strings and continuo, Op.3/10, **Robert WOODCOCK Concerto in e minor** for recorder, strings and continuo and **John BASTON Concerto in D** for sixth-flute, strings and continuo, recorded in 1962. The DG Archiv label, on which these recordings first appeared, was a serious and scholarly affair; the early music which appeared on it was divided into Research Periods – these



concertos came from Period VII (1650-1800). On SAPM198196, they were coupled with three concertos from Geminiani's Op.3 set, of which there are preferable modern recordings, but not of the Festing, and none too many of the music of Woodcock or Baston. Baumgartner's LFS predated the historic instrument movement, but their performances of these three works remain shapely and attractive, and the recording has come up well.

**Gustav HOLST** takes us away from England to North Africa with his **Oriental Suite *Beni Mora***, Op. 29/1, recorded by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1958 (or, perhaps, in 1956). The performance is evocative – Sargent at close to his best, when much of his output was run-of-the-mill – and the sound has come up well, if a trifle bright.

**Sir Thomas Beecham's** 1954 recording of **Sir Edward ELGAR *Cockaigne Overture*** with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra sounds a little rougher, but the lively performance was well worth reviving – like so many of his recordings which were released on Philips in the UK and subsequently reissued by CBS/Sony it has disappeared from the catalogue. This recording even featured at one time on a CBS LP, *Elgar's Greatest Hits*, where it was *the* greatest hit in a collection of mediocre performances.

Finally, **Stanford Robinson** with the **New Symphony Orchestra of London**, recorded in 1954, signs out with four pieces by one of my favourite light music composers, **Albert KETÈLBY**. Chandos are gradually bringing us some very fine modern recordings of Eric Coates, but Ketèlby deserves attention, too. **10PD76** [66:26] From [Qobuz](#).

**Music of England 11** is altogether darker in tone: **Robert SIMPSON *Symphony No.1*** – London Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Adrian Boult, rec. 1954; **Benjamin BRITTEN *Sinfonia da Requiem***, Op.20 – Danish Radio Orchestra/Benjamin Britten, rec. 1953 and ***Peter Grimes: Four Sea Interludes***, Op.33a and ***Passacaglia***, Op.33b – Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam/Eduard van Beinum, rec. 1953. **11PD76**. From [Qobuz](#).



Robert Simpson's music is certainly not an easy listen, but it rewards perseverance. Though we think of Boult as an arch traditionalist, he championed the First Symphony shortly after its composition in 1951, and his recording still merits our attention alongside the more recent Vernon Handley, who recorded all the symphonies for Hyperion (1 and 8, CDA66890, complete CDS44191/7 – [review](#)). When I reviewed the single CD, it had fallen into Hyperion's unloved 'please buy me' category. If even a stick-in-the-mud like me enjoyed it – [August 2011/1](#) – you should at least give either the Beulah or the Hyperion a try.

Britten made a number of recordings of his music with the Danish Radio Orchestra; this account of his *Sinfonia da Requiem* is rather more successful than the *Ceremony of Carols*, recorded at the same time, so it's good to have it without the coupling with the latter. The highlight of this reissue, however, is the van Beinum recording of the *Sea Interludes* and *Passacaglia*, not in the 1940s recording which he and the Concertgebouw had made, but in a remake for LP, state of the art in its day and still sounding well in this refurbishment. In many ways this is the highlight for me of these reissues, not just for taking me back to Ace of Clubs ACL162, on which it was coupled with the Handel-Harty Water Music and Fireworks suites.



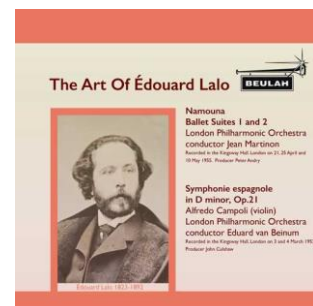
**The Young Yehudi Menuhin** contains music by **J S BACH**, his **Violin Concerto in a minor, BWV1041<sup>1</sup>**, recorded in 1936; **WIENIAWSKI *Légende***, from 1938<sup>2</sup>, **PAGANINI Violin Concerto No.1** in D, Op.6<sup>3</sup> (1934) and **CHAUSSON *Poème***<sup>4</sup>, the oldest recording here, from 1933, soon after his classic recording of the Elgar Violin Concerto, with the composer himself. The Paris Symphony Orchestra<sup>1,3,4</sup> and the Colonne Concerts Orchestra<sup>2</sup> are conducted by Georges Enesco<sup>1,2,4</sup> and Pierre Monteux<sup>3</sup>. **1PS79**: stream or download from [Qobuz](#).



Menuhin was thought by WRA, in 1934, to be best in the ‘broadest’ passages of the Chausson, but ‘not yet subtle enough’. By 1938, however, his technique seems almost to have been taken for granted in the Wieniawski. It’s interesting to note that as early as the review of Menuhin’s Bach, in 1937, the reviewer, though liking the recording overall, wondered if different bowing techniques might be appropriate – an early anticipation of period-instrument practice?

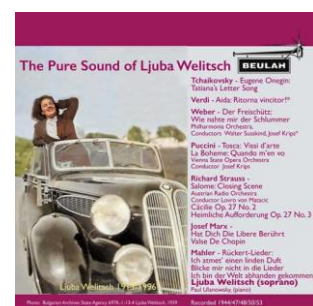
Menuhin was hailed as ‘the modern Paganini’, so it’s especially appropriate that we have his recording of the composer’s first Violin Concerto. Back in 1934 it was hailed as a novelty; I’m not sure that we don’t have too many recordings of this display work today. When released on 78s, it cost 30/-; I imagine that’s equivalent to over £50 today.

**The Art of Édouard LALO (1823-1892)** contains his **Ballet Suites Nos. 1 and 2** (London Philharmonic Orchestra/Jean Martinon, rec. Kingsway Hall, London, May 1955) and ***Symphonie Espagnole*** in d minor, Op.21 (Alfredo Campoli; LPO/Eduard van Beinum, rec. Kingsway Hall, March 1953) on **1PS78**. From [Qobuz](#).



Lalo’s ballets suites are rather neglected territory these days – only Yondani Butt’s ASV recording with the RPO seems to be generally available, as a download or as special CDR from [Presto](#). That’s a real find, but the main value of this recording comes in the form of the *Symphonie Espagnole*, the work that made the composer’s reputation, and still all that many listeners will know. Beulah have championed Campoli’s recordings over the years, and this, with van Beinum – who also makes many appearances on Beulah – was well worth reviving. The Decca sound was very good in its day, and still does justice to the very fine performance in this reissue. The *Symphonie* was all that you got for 36/5½, equivalent to over £50 today. Even when reissued on Ace of Clubs ACL124, with Falla, it cost 21/-, at least £40 in today’s values. The alternative release of the Campoli, a 2-CD set from Decca Eloquence, offers the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto and other works which you may not want, or may already have.

**The Pure Sound of Ljuba Welitsch (1PS81)** reminds us of the voice of a Bulgarian soprano almost forgotten today. The closing scene from **Richard STRAUSS *Salome***<sup>1</sup> starts very unpromisingly with very rough sound; matters improve, but this, the longest extract, requires tolerance. It’s worth persevering: Welitsch was one of the first singers to be associated with the role of Salome, for which she was coached by the composer – there’s a complete 1952 recording with Reiner conducting the NY Metropolitan Opera, but you may prefer a more modern account of the complete opera, perhaps even on DVD, so this scene was well worth preserving. Welitsch *is* Salome, for all the problems with the sound quality.



Matters improve for **VERDI *Aida: Ritorna Vincitor***<sup>2</sup> but the sound still requires some tolerance. **WEBER *Der Freischütz: Wie nahte mir die Schlummer***<sup>3</sup>, another product of the 78s era, sounds better still,

though the comparative lack of power in the *forte* passages is, perhaps, a result of holding back slightly for the limited technology of the day. Callas may be the near-universal choice for **PUCCHINI's** *Tosca*, but Welitsch's *Vissi d'arte*<sup>4</sup> would be my preferred choice; again, the sound is far from amenable, but this time it doesn't impede those top notes, here or in *Quando m'en vo* from *La Bohème*<sup>4</sup>. *Tatiana's* *Letter Song*<sup>3</sup> from **TCHAIKOVSKY** *Eugene Onegin*, sung in German and originally released on 78s, was reissued on an early 10" LP and the recording here is more amenable, *forte* notes comparatively loud and clear.

Thus far the recordings date from 1944 to 1950. The latest recordings (from 1953) with piano accompaniment round off a reissue which rewards the listener's tolerance of the sound. Everything in the **MAHLER** *Rückert Lieder*<sup>5</sup>, and throughout the varied programme, is beautifully – often powerfully – sung. The piano is a poor substitute for the orchestra in the Mahler, but the singing more than makes up. If the cover shot makes you think that all Welitsch's contributions are OTT, you will need to think again – though the *Salome* finale scene is, and deservedly so.

The accompanists are the Philharmonia with Walter Susskind<sup>3</sup> and Josef Krips<sup>2</sup>, the Vienna State Opera Orchestra with Josef Krips<sup>4</sup>, the Austrian Radio Orchestra with Lovro von Maticic<sup>1</sup> and Paul Ulanowsky (piano)<sup>5</sup>. From [Qobuz](#).

**Cello Sonatas** by **BEETHOVEN** (No.3 in A, Op.69), **BRAHMS** (No.1 in e minor, Op.38) and **RACHMANINOV** (in g minor, Op.19) are performed by **Emanuel Feuermann** and **Dame Myra Hess** (1937), **Pierre Fournier** and **Wilhelm Backhaus** (1955) and **Zara Nelsova** and **Artur Balsam** (1956) on **1PS83**. From [Qobuz](#).

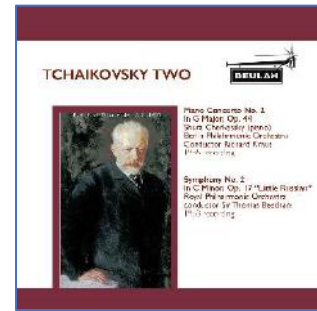
If I were to choose three of the best cellists of the twentieth century, these three would certainly be on my short list, and their pianist partners are up there with the best, also as solo sonata and concerto performers. You might not expect much from the 1937 recording of the Beethoven, but it's more than tolerable. Feuermann's reputation had already faded when EMI reissued this performance in 1967, 25 years after his death, but the recording was well worth reissuing then, as it was again by Pearl on LP and CD – and as it is now. The off-beat game in the second movement is especially worth hearing, though it's played without repeats to fit on a 78 side. You'd have to turn to the likes of Isserlis and Levin in the complete Beethoven sonatas, the latter on the fortepiano to do better (Hyperion CDA67981/2 – [Download News 2014/3](#), but not included in the Index) or Altstaedt and Lonquich, also on period instruments (Alpha 577 – [review](#)).

The Brahms sonata is a less cheerful, more serious affair, and it receives a performance to match. Backhaus in particular was never your man for frivolity, as witness his Brahms concerto recordings (Decca Eloquence 4800800, with Böhm, 2 CDs – [review](#)), but his seriousness is offset by Fournier's lyrical tone, and the recording is good for its age, with a credible piano tone.

Nelsova was (briefly) a student of Feuermann, and her account of the Rachmaninov is worthy of him. It's one of the highlights of a 6-CD Decca set of her recordings from 1950 to 1956, now download only, but the Rachmaninov is welcome in the more accessible single-album format – who buys these bumper boxes, anyway? If you just want the Rachmaninov, this performance has been reissued by Naxos Classical Archives, very inexpensively, but short value at 34 minutes (980319). Once again, the Beulah reissue of the recording requires little tolerance.



**TCHAIKOVSKY TWO** contains performances of his **Second Piano Concerto**, Op.44, from **Shura Cherkassky, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** and **Richard Krauss** (1955) and his **Second Symphony** ('Little Russian') from the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** and **Sir Thomas Beecham** (1953).



The second piano concerto is unjustly overshadowed by its big brother, but it has had its share of fine recordings. One of the best, from Stephen Hough, the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä, comes in tandem with Nos. 1 and 3 and the *Concert Fantasy* (Hyperion CDA67711/2: Recording of the Month – [review](#)). Hough, in common with most modern recordings, gives us the complete second movement, more than half as long again as the truncated Siloti version which Cherkassky recorded, in common with most pianists at the time. Hough also gives us two alternative versions of that movement, including the Siloti – take your pick.

The 1955 sound is dry and, especially at climaxes, makes us aware of its date, but in general it's very tolerable. If you don't mind the use of the Siloti version, Michael Cookson's preference for this recording, in his review of an Onyx release, is certainly not misplaced. For all its brevity in this form, the slow movement is especially beautiful.

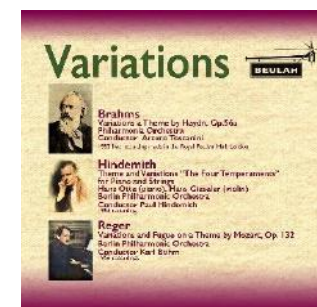
This Beecham recording was briefly available on a Sony CD, as [reviewed](#) – and enjoyed – by Jonathan Woolf. Though two years older than the Cherkassky, the recording has held up well in this transfer, and Beecham, as always, makes this tuneful symphony sound first-rate. I stopped reviewing and just sat back to enjoy. All in all, this Tchaikovsky offering is very welcome. **1PS84** [72:07] Due from [Qobuz](#).

Available just in time for Christmas – to be released on 17 December – for lovers of military music a stirring collection of music by **John Philip SOUSA**, recorded by the **Eastman Wind Ensemble** conducted by **Frederick Fennel**. Several of these have been available before, but it's good to see them gathered together, and transferred from Dutch pressings, generally superior to UK and US releases of these Mercury LPs, and very well spruced up. I tried comparing the lossless press preview with the comparable Mercury CD of much the same programme, now available only as a Presto special CDR or as a download, the latter more expensive in lossless guise than the £7.99 which Qobuz charge for Beulah, again in lossless sound.



These classic recordings hardly need any recommendation from me at this late stage. As I write, it's uncertain what the festive season 2020 will be like; whatever happens, this will get your feet tapping, or even marching around. **11PD82** [72:57] Due to be available from [Qobuz](#).

**Variations** contains music by **BRAHMS Variations on a Theme by Haydn**, 'St Anthony', Op.56a (Philharmonia Orchestra/Arturo Toscanini, rec. live Royal Festival Hall, London, 1952), **HINDEMITH Theme and Variations** for piano and strings '**The Four Temperaments**' (Hans Otte (piano), Hans Giesler (violin); Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Paul Hindemith, rec. 1955) and **REGER Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart**, Op.132 (Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Karl Böhm, rec. 1956). From [Qobuz](#).



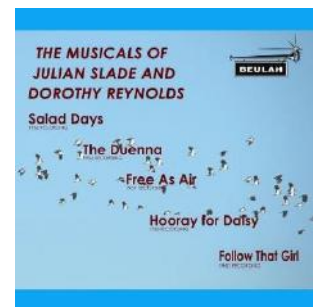
The Brahms contains a few audience noises – obviously the Beulah clean-up can't do anything about those – and the sound is dry and a little crumbly round the edges, but the performance was well worth rescuing. The only other available version of this recording, from Warner, comes as part of a 3-hour long download, but it does also contain the four symphonies which

Toscanini, aged 85, conducted in the RFH in a two-day marathon. Never released at the time, for contractual reasons, despite Walter Legge's advocacy, this memento of a most special occasion is very worthwhile. You should also check out Pierre Monteux's LSO recording of these variations, in much better, 1958 stereo, sound – available with his Vienna recording of Symphony No.2 (Decca Eloquence 4808913) or with Haydn Symphonies Nos. 94 and 101 (Eloquence 4804726). [NB: Monteux's VPO Symphony No.2 and the LSO Elgar *Enigma Variations* also on Beulah 1PDR39 – Recording of the Month: [Independent Labels 2017](#) – download from [Qobuz](#).]

Hindemith makes the strongest possible case for his own music, originally released by DG with his better-known Weber *Metamorphoses*. The recording may not seem as 'full and well balanced' as it did in 1957, but it has come up well in the Beulah transfer. The original coupling comes from Naxos Classical Archives, very inexpensively, but there are much better recordings of the *Metamorphoses*; the Beulah is the better buy.

The Mozart theme which Reger employs will be familiar to all the amateur pianists who have tried to play the 'easy' piano sonata in A, K331. Who better to conduct it than Karl Böhm, one of the great Mozartians of his time? It doesn't receive too many outings on record these days, but it's a beautiful work, and deserves to be heard more often. The DG reissue of this Böhm recording is now download only and more expensive than the Beulah in lossless sound. Neither offers a booklet. **1PS82** [77:29]

**The Musicals of Julian Slade and Dorothy Reynolds** contains excerpts from *Salad Days* (rec. 1962), *The Duenna* (rec. 1954), *Free as Air* (rec. 1957), *Hooray for Daisy* (rec. 1960) and *Follow that Girl* (rec. 1960).



Jan Waters and the Cliff Adams Chorus do the honours in *Salad Days*, which opened in the West End in 1954 and was recorded with the original cast by Oriole and available from Naxos, with *The Boy Friend* (8.120848). It's a jolly and tuneful evocation of student life but, while there is more of it on Naxos, the seven extracts on this Beulah release are probably enough for most listeners, and this 1962 recording presents it in much better sound.

Two numbers from *The Duenna* – another Oriole recording – are also attractively sung by Eleanor Drew. Even WA Chislett, who specialised in middle-of-the-road and musicals for many years in Gramophone, admitted that this was no masterpiece, but felt that it could make a small contribution to civilised living, which is spot on. *Hooray for Daisy* involves a group of villagers preparing to put on the pantomime *Jack and the Beanstalk* – Daisy is the cow, featured on the original LP cover – but never mind the plot. The cast features Eleanor Drew and Angus McKay, singing as if the 1920s had never ended. Dated, even in 1959, it's positively ante-diluvian now, but that's its charm, rather like all those television repeats.

*Follow that Girl* again features a silly plot and banal words, but the music – recorded, I believe, with the London cast – is very easy on the ear. Much the same applies to the nine extracts from *Free as Air* which conclude an enjoyable reminder of times past. **1PS76** [77:10] – stream or download from [Qobuz](#).

Last, but by no means least, Beulah have released the first recording of the music of **Richard STANBROOK**, a contemporary composer who defies being shoe-horned into any kind of 'ism', especially modernism. Equally, his works don't sound like a throwback to some imagined past golden age of music, though several of them are inspired by aspects of the English landscape (**1RF6** – from [Qobuz](#)).

I've given this a separate review – pending as I write – but, in summary, all concerned, composer, performers, and recording engineers deserve credit, as does Beulah for bringing it all to us. I hope that the experiment will be successful and that we have not heard the last of this enterprising partnership, which has brought us here some very worthwhile first recordings.

