



The Golden Ear

Newsletter of the *Chicago Audio Society*

March 2000

Meeting Notice

Sunday, March 19th - 2:00pm

Larry Hitch - Madisound

Larry will be demonstrating three of his best d'Appolito style (MTM) designs: the SEAS Odin, the Dynaudio Gemini, and the Scanspeak Solist. Joining Larry will be **John Stone**, North American operations rep from **SEAS**. Whether you're a do it yourselfer wanting to build your own or thinking of buying ready made ones, this is a good chance to find out about drivers and loudspeaker design.

Please bring music to play, and bring a friend.

Last Month

Jim Ricketts of **tmh audio**, importers of audio equipment by **Wavac**, **Kochel**, **PSC**, and **Miyabi** demonstrated the Wavac PR-X1 line stage preamp with remote, Wavac MD-811 SE triode amplifier, Kochel K200 horn speakers (95 dB sensitivity, 8 ohms), Kochel SW200 active subwoofer to extend to 25 Hz, and PSC silver cables in air dielectric. We enjoyed a variety of CDs and LPs played through the system, as Jim explained some of the design features of the products as well as the backgrounds of the companies represented.

The room didn't appear to favor the setup, as there were some anomalies including imaging and timing, different from the sound remembered from shows such as CES.

Nonetheless, things could have been much worse. The Wavac components certainly are are gorgeous to look at and well constructed. The \$4000 price of the 15 watts/channel MD-811 stereo amp, especially when used as an integrated amp thanks to its built in volume control and input selector switch, is within the range of many audiophiles. The lovely glossy piano black finish of the Kochel speakers shown is at additional cost, the K200 speakers in standard wood finishes being priced at \$4995 the

pair. The subwoofer has its own built in amplifier, filling in the bottom octave or so, freeing the SE amp to drive the main speakers alone (the K200s go down to the upper 50's).

Next Month

April 16th - **Soundline Speakers** demonstration.

Society Business

At long last, we held elections of officers at last month's meeting. We called for nominations, in addition to current officers. A motion was made to keep the same officers, voted by a show of hands, to include electing Bill Sweet as official Secretary (having already mailed newsletters for quite a few months).

We are discussing holding an audio fair this year, perhaps in the summer. We welcome suggestions and volunteers to help.

Classical Music

Len Cronin

I'm one of those people who believe that the twenty first century doesn't begin until January 1, 2001. Therefore I have a year to spout off about the state of classical music. Classical music has the dual problem of either being perceived as museum music that was written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or it is some sort of far out music that makes industrial rock sound like elevator music. Well, yes Virginia, there has been and still is good music being written in the twentieth century and may be the best composer of this century was Ralph Vaughan Williams.

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website: <http://www.xnet.com/~bpwalsh/cas.html>

We meet on the third Sunday of each month at 2pm at The Dance Building, 1330 Webford Ave., Des Plaines IL, nonmembers are welcome (\$5 fee, may be applied to \$30 annual dues, prorata). CAS is a volunteer, registered nonprofit organization of audiophiles and music lovers. Our constitution and bylaws are available on our website at <http://www.xnet.com/~bpwalsh/bylaws.htm> or in printed form upon request.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958) was one of the most prolific composers that ever lived. His last symphony was completed only four months before his death in 1958. Vaughan Williams combined English folksongs and Tudor polyphony into a style that was uniquely his own. Perhaps the best introduction to his music is an EMI disk D111735. Bernard Haitink leads the London Philharmonic in his Symphony No.5, Norfolk Rhapsody No.1, and The Lark Ascending with Sarah Chang as the violin soloist.

Symphony No.5 was premiered in London on June 24, 1943. It is music that reflects the times in which it was written. This is music that is introspective. It does not describe what is going on in the world at that moment. Rather it describes what might have been as one might reflect on the loss of a friend and the future that will never be. The Norfolk Rhapsody is an example of Vaughan Williams use of folk material and his Lark Ascending is one of the most popular pieces written in this century.

If you would like to give classical music a try or if you haven't discovered this composer give this disk a try. The sound is good, the music is first rate (the symphony is one of the great pieces of the twentieth century), and the performances are first rate.

(Another article)

I'd like to start by writing about three new releases on Naxos and two reissues on BMG. Naxos has released Bruckner's Symphony No. 3 (ed. Nowak) conducted by the late Georg Tintner and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Naxos 8.553454. As this series nears its completion, I don't know of a better introduction to the music of Bruckner. There is no other series that offers the combination of price, performance and sonics as these disks from Naxos. This is a really good performance of the 3rd and with some of the best sonics in this series, and at seventy-seven minutes and thirty-four seconds it certainly offers value. Naxos has also released the Bax 3rd Symphony under the same orchestra but under the

leadership of David Lloyd-Jones, Naxos 8.5533608. Bax was a master of tone-colour and this symphony along with its companion piece, 'The Happy Forest' are prime examples of his abilities. The symphony is in three movements, fast-slow-fast. It begins with a bassoon melody and ends with an epilogue that features an oboe and clarinet and in-between is some of the best music he wrote. As part of its American Classics series Naxos has released the three symphonies of Virgil Thomson on Naxos 8.55902. If you are familiar with his film music such as 'The Plow that Broke the Plains' or 'The River' you will have a pretty good idea of what to expect. His music was often based on simple tunes or melodies but interwoven with a wit and sophistication that could leave the listener wondering why he did that. Besides the earlier mentioned film scores this CD is probably the best way to make the acquaintance of Virgil Thomson's music. The sound on this disk ranges from good to excellent with my only real complaint being a little too much hall in some parts of the recording. Needless to say you don't have to be concerned with this being a dry recording.

And finally, if you are a lover of choral music there are two great reissues from BMG. Both feature Robert Shaw in folk music collections. On the Living Stereo label is 'Sea Shanties' 9026-63528-2 featuring the men of the Robert Shaw Chorale. This is the first release on CD of this album and it doesn't get any better than this. This CD is that rare combination of great material, great performances, and great sound. Do yourself a favor and buy this CD. The other reissue is The Robert Shaw Chorale in a program of Irish Folk Music (BMG 09026 6364666-2) this particular CD has been out of print for years and there's no guarantee on how long it will stay in print. This album is almost as good as 'Sea Shanties', so when you go to buy one, buy the other and enjoy.

Members are invited to contribute articles on music and audio.

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