



# The Golden Ear

Newsletter of the *Chicago Audio Society*

June 2000

## Meeting Notice

*Sunday, June 25th - 2:00pm*

### General Meeting:

#### Music Listening, Bring and Brag, etc.

Tom Ronan has just expressed his regrets not being able to visit us this month to show his Hedlund horn speakers and directly heated triode electronics, since he will be in Pakistan by the time you read this. We will try to reschedule him in the not too distant future.

Meanwhile, you're invited to bring interesting music, audio gear, tweaks, fish stories (not really, just trying to see if you're paying attention), and so on, to share with the group. Say a few words about some music you like and care to put on (we'll have CD and LP playback), concert you attended, some nifty gear you own and want to show off, whatever. Say why you like or dislike [insert product or other here]. Debate hot topics and what directions the industry may be going. Talk about things audiophiles (audiofools?) pay too much attention to while overlooking other aspects.

## Last Month

The visit by **Paul McGowan** and **Peter Rudy** of **PS Audio** was a very memorable one. Not only did we hear about Paul's storied history in the business of audio (we didn't mean to make you feel old, Paul!), we heard all about the technology behind the Power Plant products and a glimpse at the future.

We auditioned the Power Plant 300 on the front end of the system, at synthesized frequencies throughout the output range of 50 to 120 Hz, listening for differences. Paul explained that rather than using the nominal 60 Hz coming out of the wall, with all of the line noise, the Power Plant has the capability of varying the AC frequency which it synthesizes, through front panel

controls. Most all audio gear is tolerant of varied line frequency, and at higher frequencies it is stated that some benefits such as increased depth of image, greater definition, and so on may be perceived. This is due to several reasons including effectively higher power supply capacitance, giving better control and lower noise. Of course the sonic differences you may notice are system dependent, and there's no guarantee that you'll prefer any one thing. While the idea of having to experiment doesn't sit well with some people wanting a ready solution, the long term benefits can be a whole lot more musical enjoyment and fun playing your records and CDs. And that's what it's about.

As invited by Paul, we tried various competitors' units, including line conditioners and power distribution products by Tice, Chang Lightspeed, Virtual Mode, and Custom Power Cord Co. The PS Audio unit fared very well in the system used, ranking at or near the top when informal opinions were expressed by a few members. Your mileage will vary, so if you're inclined to try such a device in your system, it's a good idea to try others.

The system: Stan Warren (Paul's former partner and the "S" of PS Audio) modified Aiwa CD changer (used as a transport) and MSB Link DAC connected with proprietary interface cable, Linn Sondek/Ittok/Asak turntable combo, Vendetta phono stage, BAT VK-5i preamp, Lazarus h1a amp, and Ohm 250 speakers, with interconnects by Lectrafile, Purist, and homebrew, and MIT speaker cables.

## Next Month, etc.

July 16th - **Marantz** - showing their new **Super Audio CD** player. Demonstrated at the CES this year, the unit impressed! Come hear it for yourself.

August 20th - **Ron Welborne** of **Welborne Labs**, demonstrating the Oris 150 horn speakers, and of course their fine electronics.

## Audio Fair

We discussed this last month, and we seem to be in agreement to make a go of it in September, subject to a membership vote at this month's meeting following any further questions and discussion.

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website: [www.chicagoaudio.org](http://www.chicagoaudio.org)

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, nonprofit organization of audio and music enthusiasts dedicated to having fun. Our constitution and bylaws are available on our website at <http://www.chicagoaudio.org> or in printed form upon request.

## Website

We've moved! Our new location is much easier to remember:  
[www.chicagoaudio.org](http://www.chicagoaudio.org)

Visit our site for news and up to date information on meetings, industry happenings, etc. as well as fun filled links to other interesting sites and discussion areas. Your suggestions and criticisms are invited.

## Classical Music

Len Cronin

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-color 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 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 how long it will stay in print. [Editor's note: Wait a second. Which is it, in print or out of print? In any case, it sounds as though I should find it!] This album is almost as good as "Sea Shanties", so when you go to buy one, buy the other and enjoy.

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