



# The Golden Ear

Newsletter of the *Chicago Audio Society*

November 2000

## Meeting Notice

*Sunday, November 19th - 2:00pm*

### **Ralph Karsten - Atma-Sphere**

Atma-Sphere has been building output transformerless (OTL) amplifiers longer than any other manufacturer. Ralph will tell us some about the design of their electronics which also include preamplifiers. The demonstration will include the T-3 speakers from **Classic Audio Reproductions**, which **John Wolff** will be bringing. We'll have fine playback systems for LP and CD, so bring some of your favorite music to play.

## Last Month

Alan Kimmel demonstrated the "Grape Ox" cathode follower amplifiers and a customized version of a Welborne preamp. Photos of the meeting are linked from our website.

## Next Month

Christmas Party and Music.

## Classical Music

It's been a while since I've written a column, and a lot of good music has been released in the past several months. At the top of the list are two recent releases in the Naxos American Classics series. The two composers are Howard Hanson and Samuel Barber. At first, I was rather disappointed in Naxos having chosen these composers to include in the series, since both have

been well represented in the catalogue. There are many other under-recorded composers who could have been chosen.

Starting with the Barber disc, Volume 1 consists of his First and Second Symphonies, "The Overture to the School for Scandal," and "First Essay for Orchestra." I would have preferred the three essays on one disc, but you get both symphonies. This may be the best introduction to the music of Samuel Barber that is currently available today. The Royal Scottish National orchestra plays well, and the recorded sound is very good. As a bonus, the series is being conducted by Marin Alsop, one of the rising female conductors on the classical scene today.

The Hanson recordings get stiff competition from both Mercury with Howard Hansen conducting his own music and from Gerard Schwarz's recordings on Delos. This disc is also the first volume of a projected cycle of Hansen's orchestral music. Included on this disc is the First Symphony, "The Nordic" and the "Merry Mount Suite." The real bonuses of the symphonic poem, "Pan and the Priest" and "Rhythmic Variation on the Two Ancient Hymns." The Nashville Symphony Orchestra (I believe this is the first time Naxos has recorded an American Orchestra) is led by Kenneth Schermerhorn. I especially like the performance of the symphony and can only wish that some day this music will be performed downtown. This disc is a little gem and along with the Barber is highly recommended.

The next disc is Copland's Third Symphony on Reference Recordings with Eiji Oue conducting the Minnesota Orchestra. Oue takes the Symphony at a somewhat deliberate tempo that is miles away from Bernstein's classic performance on Sony. Despite the slow tempo, the performance really works and when you throw in the spectacular sound this becomes a "must have" disc.

However, the other two selections don't fare as well. The "Fanfare for the Common Man" and "Appalachian Spring Suite" just drag and never seem to come alive due to the slow tempos. This disc is a "must have" for the symphony with the remainder as a well recorded filler.

Next month I will be covering the re-issue of Bernard Haitink's complete cycle of the Schostakovich symphonies. Until then...good listening.

Chicago Audio Society, P.O. Box 313, Barrington IL 60011, tel. (847) 382-8433

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.

*President*

Brian Walsh

(847) 382-8433

*bpwalsh@speakeasy.net*

*Vice President*

Rich Sacks

(847) 843-2554

*rich2@mediaone.net*

*Treasurer*

Dennis Anderson

(630) 830-9142

*danders2@netzero.net*

*Secretary*

Bill Sweet

(847) 593-7790

*spindrif@xnet.com*