



# The Golden Ear

Newsletter of the *Chicago Audio Society*

December 2000

## Meeting Notice

*Sunday, December 17th - 2:00pm*

### Christmas Party and Music Listening

Please bring music to play, CDs and LPs, as we celebrate the holiday season and enjoy plenty of goodies.

At the January meeting we will have nominations and voting for club officers, as both Rich Sacks and Bill Sweet will be out of town for this meeting. We are looking for people to get actively involved in the group, as yours truly steps back to let others keep things rolling along. To this end, an Executive Committee has been proposed by all current officers. We will have some printed copies of the Society constitution and bylaws at this month's meeting for distribution and commentary at the January meeting.

## Last Month

Our meeting with Ralph Karsten and John Wolff, of Atma-Sphere and Classic Audio Reproductions, respectively, was extremely well attended, with crowded standing room only for latecomers. The system demonstrated used an Atma-Sphere MP-3 preamplifier (\$3800) and MA-1 Mk. II amplifiers (\$9800/pr), driving Classic Audio Reproductions Project T-3 loudspeakers (about \$10,000/pr?). Balanced interconnects were used throughout, including the Apogee D/A converter fed by a Proceed CD transport. Attempts to connect a turntable were plagued with hum problems, unfortunately.

Ralph's talk covered a wide variety of topics, ranging from the origin of the name Atma-Sphere (Atma coming from Sanscrit) to his firm belief in balanced cabling, and he demonstrated the stability of his OTL amplifiers by removing tubes while playing music (although you might be tempted, we suggest you don't try this at home, folks). John gave a talk after the break about his speakers, which in the case of the T-3 and the T-1, use TAD

drivers for the horns for clarity and sweetness without the harshness often associated with horns. Expensive yet definitely high value for those interested in efficient speakers.

A couple of things we've learned since the meeting. First, congratulations to Ralph and the gang at Atma-Sphere on yet another Golden Ear Award from The Absolute Sound for the MA-1 Mk II amplifiers (just like the ones you heard)! Second, Atma-Sphere is discontinuing the kit version of the M-60 amplifiers at the end of the year 2000. "As we have continued to refine the M-60 MkII over the years, the kit has become increasingly more difficult to build. This has resulted in quality control problems in the field; additionally some kit-built amps have been sold as factory assembled amps and have not been representative of the performance that we normally achieve. We are grateful for the support that the DIY folks have given us over the years and we hope that this is not too much of a disappointment."

Ralph mentioned they are working on introducing a turntable, a highly tweaked version of Empire turntable, which he maintains is as good as anything out there. Keep tuned. They're also still working on the MA-3 dual chassis monoblock amplifiers, which will have some 42 output tubes each. Get the marshmallows ready!

John and Ralph were intriguing, entertaining guests, seriously interested in music, not hi-fi. At least that's what we heard from those who attended. It seems everyone had fun, tinkerers and music lovers alike.

## Next Month

Jan. 21 - Consumer Electronics Show reports, by those who attended. Officer nominations and elections (no butterfly ballots or hanging chads here!). Executive Committee formation. Constitution and Bylaws discussion. Oh, and yes, music.

## News

Werner Klemperer, son of famed Los Angeles Philharmonic conductor Otto Klemperer, recently passed away at the age of 80. Best known as the bumbling Nazi Col. Klink in the 1960s television sitcom "Hogan's Heroes," he also acted in films including "The Goddess" (1958), "Operation Eichmann," in which

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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.

he played the title role, "Judgement at Nuremberg," (1961), and "Ship of Fools" (1965). He also often appeared in operas and as a narrator for concerts by symphony orchestras across the nation, including the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, whose "Impresario" was broadcast on PBS. Operatic roles included "Die Fledermaus," "The Sound of Music" and "The Abduction From the Seraglio."

Some years back, Jim Svejda interviewed Werner for an hour on a show called "The Record Shelf". Werner reminisced about his childhood in California, where his house almost always had guests such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg hanging around talking music. Even all those years later, he was still in awe of the musical giants he got to know intimately through his father.

The Consumer Electronics Show and T.H.E. Show will be held in Las Vegas January 6 through 9, 2001. It's interesting that industry sales figures indicate things are going very well in the high end, much better than a year ago. It's also interesting that the "outboard" show, T.H.E. [The High End] Show, organized by Mike Maloney, stands to equal or exceed the number of rooms rented by the official CES at the Alexis Park Hotel next door to T.H.E. Show's venue, the St. Tropez Hotel. In the current (#127) issue of The Absolute Sound, Dan Sweeney reflects on the past, present, and future of High End Audio being seen in Las Vegas every January, wondering what the likely consequences may be of having two exhibit venues. In any event, it's predicted that we'll again see companies that have been away from the show for a while.

## The Classical Corner

Len Cronin

Decca has recently reissued on its mid-priced Ovation label the complete symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich conducted by Bernard Haitnik with the Concertgebouw and The London Symphony Orchestras. Over the next three or four issues I will be listening and making recommendations on these and some other recordings of Shostakovich symphonies.

Probably my favorite symphony of Shostakovich is No. 11 and Decca 425 072-2 is my favorite performance. As pure symphony, this is probably not his best work; however, if you want your music to take you on an emotional roller coaster this is the piece for you. Premiered in 1957 for the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution this work commemorates the massacre of Russian workers who gathered at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg of Tsar Nicholas II. Subtitled "The Year 1905" the symphony is written in four movements meant to be played without interruption. The first movement, The Palace Square, depicts the cold, snow covered square in front of the palace. The second movement depicts the march of the workers on the palace and their slaughter by the palace guard. The third movement is an elegy to the dead. The final movement represents the ultimate victory of the people. Well anyway, this is the official program for the symphony; however, as in so much of Shostakovich's music there could be a hidden meaning. Remember this work was premiered in 1957 one year after the Hungarian Revolution was brutally crushed by Soviet troops and that this is a musical remembrance of all victims of oppression. Haitnek's performance does not take any prisoners and would be ideal except that in the symphonies closing moments the bells that should be featured prominently are almost drowned out by the orchestra. As I stated earlier this is my favorite performance. However, an alternative would be the EMI reissue of the Berglund/Bournemouth Symphony. This contains a performance that, while not in Haitink's league, is still very good. Sonically this is a knockout disc, and as a bonus it includes a very good Seventh Symphony.

Next month I'll cover some of the middle symphonies and if you would like to read a really good introduction to the symphonies of Shostakovich. The current issue of "Fanfare" devotes 14 pages to this cycle and is must reading for anyone interested in 20th century music. Good listening and happy holidays.

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