

## *SYMPOSIUM RECORDS*

*CD 1032 Carl Flesch, violin – Volume 1*

*CD 1033 Carl Flesch, violin – Volume 2*

*CD 1034 Carl Flesch, violin – Volume 3*

## CARL FLESCH 1873-1944

I met Carl Flesch only once during the course of a stroll in Baden-Baden. That was May 1929 and I well remember his amiable, charming manner. Our conversation was not long; I was 13 at the time and already committed to my great teachers Georges Enesco and Adolf Busch. So the moment that might have led to interesting insights into the musical mind of Carl Flesch passed without having a future. However, so many of my beloved contemporaries, such as Ida Haendel, Henryk Szeryng, Yfrah Neaman, Max Rostal and Henri Temianka - literally a whole generation of great string players - are testimony to the profound understanding and the genius of a great master.

Sir Yehudi Menuhin

### A NOTE ABOUT THESE RECORDINGS by Carl F. Flesch

It was at a concert arranged by ESTA to commemorate the 100th anniversary of my father's birth that the idea of examples of his playing being published first came to me. On that occasion a live recording of the third movement of the Brahms concerto evoked spontaneous and prolonged applause from an audience mainly of professional string players. I realized the importance of this project when I read what Joachim Hartnack, one of the foremost German experts, says in his book *Great Violinists in our Time*: 'The Gramophone industry has missed the opportunity of recording some fundamental interpretations by this artist and giving the public of today the means of acquainting itself, through an historical series, with his few and interesting recordings. This is particularly regrettable, because these could establish the point of departure of the European and American method of playing dominant today . . . Without the living example of his playing, posterity can do justice only up to a point to this man's work through his writings and the successes of many of his pupils. But this is not enough, for Flesch has become the key figure for modern violin playing.'

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But what is an Historical Record?

- (i) A record which has never been commercially available or not for a long time.
- (ii) One whose reproduction is technically below that achievable with present-day equipment, or which has deteriorated.
- (iii) Something which is interesting as a collector's piece.
- (iv) An example of an important artist's technique and interpretation of value mainly to professional musicians and scholars and which has therefore not been "cleaned" at the expense of the quality of the artist's original tone or voice production.

I believe that my father's records qualify by any of these criteria.

For various reasons in no way connected with his standard as a performer, his commercial issues were few, yet, considering his many outstanding pupils, knowledge of his own playing must be of importance. The technical reproduction is anything but perfect; some recordings were made more than three-quarters of a century ago, others have survived only as acetates with all the technical imperfections of the 1920s and '30s, and these appear to have been stored in very unfavourable conditions during the Second World War. Nevertheless, thanks to the excellent restorative work of the recording company, his art and personality can once again be heard by all. However I regret that the start of the Brahms Concerto and a few bars elsewhere are missing.

The *Fantasia* by Josef Suk is undoubtedly a superb work; its comparative neglect is probably due to its awkward length which makes it difficult to programme. Our reproduction, I am afraid, is poor in places, but its inclusion was a matter of course for the interpretation can be regarded as coming as near as humanly possible to the composer's intentions. Suk himself attended a performance by my father under Nikisch in 1911 and wrote, 'I can still hear your violin in my memory. It is unforgettable and I shall always think of you with gratitude'. Concern was expressed by some of those who heard him in real life that in some cases the standard of playing and reproduction does not do him complete justice and was therefore presenting an unnecessarily unfavourable picture. Of course, it would have been great - indeed a miracle - if all of the performances we happen to possess were the best he ever gave. But it is a fact of artistic life that an interpreter puts his reputation on the line every time he gives a concert. No two performances can ever be the same. The true artist must be content to be judged however adverse the circumstances. If you want clinical perfection you need a studio recording where every bar can be replayed, if necessary umpteen times. Here we are not producing records designed to obtain concert engagements, but a real picture. The correction of a mistake, a short-cut to mask a technical imperfection, a lapse of memory, a disagreement with the conductor - these are precisely what makes a live performance so much more interesting and gives a true measure of the artist himself, warts and all. I am reminded of the well-worn story attributed to Heifetz. It was suggested after a recording session, that he should re-do one bar where he had been playing a little flat. 'No', he replied, 'leave it as it is. It will give pleasure and satisfaction to countless people'.

## SOME TRIBUTES TO CARL FLESCH FROM HIS PUPILS

I had the good fortune to study under the great master Carl Flesch from 1930 to 1932, with brief intervals, in Britain and at Baden-Baden.

To know so exceptional a violinist, a master, a person!!! Studying with him 'created' my concert and teaching career for my entire life, a career in which I have thought always of what Flesch taught me. And Carl Flesch has improved the 'Violin School' worldwide. In my heart there is always immense gratitude to my great teacher! Whilst I was with Flesch there came also from Italy Arrigo Pelliccia who also had a brilliant career, dedicating himself particularly to chamber music and to teaching, and Brero and Schinina who became teachers.

Lilia d'Albore

During the last decade of his life, Carl Flesch, in exile from Germany, concentrated on teaching rather than playing in public. But his demonstrations during lessons virtually equalled concert performances and were a constant source of admiration for us, his students, who were privileged to hear them.

The present issue of historical recordings is a fortunate event - a welcome reminder of the accomplishments of this great and consummate artist.

Norbert Brainin

Carl Flesch's achievements as a performing virtuoso were as impressive as his powers as a teacher. Out of his vast repertoire encompassing practically all styles - from Baroque to twentieth century - his performances of concerti by Bach, Beethoven and Brahms stood out with an inimitable authority that made them uniquely inspiring.

Szymon Goldberg

Apart from the respect and admiration which we pupils had for Professor Carl Flesch as a superb teacher, we were all quite in awe whenever he took up the violin and accorded us the privilege of listening to his playing. He was a violinist par excellence and, when we were sometimes late in entering his studio and were listening behind closed doors, there was no need to guess whether it was he or the pupil who was playing. There was no mistaking the brilliance of his technique, the sheer cleanliness of sound and the extremely serious and intelligent concept of style and interpretation.

Ida Haendel

What a wonderful privilege for us all - quite especially for the younger generation - to be able to hear the fabulous playing and meticulous musical integrity of the great Carl Flesch - hitherto mostly known to them through his fame as a great teacher, the Father of modern violin playing.

A very warm welcome to this historic issue of recordings.

Nannie Jamieson

These recordings, some issued for the very first time and some not available for decades, are for me, personally, a dream come true. I had never heard Carl Flesch in concert nor over the radio, only in demonstrations during my lessons with him and other students' lessons. At that time as a very young teenager, I was too much in awe of Carl Flesch even to think of listening to his playing critically or of assessing him as a performer. But as I hear these performances, I find myself reliving those precious hours spent near him, during which time it was as if he had drawn aside a curtain and opened up to me new instrumental and musical horizons.

I have heard it said, mostly by people who did not know Carl Flesch, that he was an academic and rigid teacher and pedantic musician. Nothing could be further from the truth, and these performances, authoritative, noble, flexible and warm show him as the great and broadly based artist that he was. No matter what inevitable mechanical blemishes of reproduction may be found in these recordings, they are a musical monument that will prove an enriching and beneficial experience to all musicians.

Yfrah Neaman

The years of my youth in which I was formed by Professor Carl Flesch, man and master pedagogue, in Berlin and Baden-Baden are unforgettable, he instructed me not only in playing, but also in discipline and logical thinking. The lessons he gave were exemplary demonstrations, he being equally ready to explain, analyse and play any work which a student might bring. This seemed to us miraculous and for me it was a main thread of building up my repertoire. What struck us greatly as students was his incredible apportionment of time - with whatever piece one presented oneself, a short one or of a full concerto, it was invariably covered in a lesson of exactly the same duration.

All who came in contact with him were deeply impressed by his personality and authority and remain grateful to him for life.

Ricardo Odnoposoff

I had the opportunity of working for four years with Carl Flesch and to him I owe my formation as a violinist. Often I recall the unforgettable hours of lessons attended in the company of Szeryng, Ginette Neveu and Ida Haendel in which the Master's invariable habit was to replay the entire work presented by the student.

I retain unforgettable memories of him as a violinist as well as a teacher. I have still in my ears certain public performances of the concertos of Beethoven and Brahms of an instrumental beauty only achieved by the great ones and a great profundity and nobility of expression.

With emotion and gratitude I treasure memories of a man whose sensibility, humanity and highest intelligence accord with the artist.

Corrado Romano

Carl Flesch - For the violinist of our day the name itself is synonymous with deep pedagogic and scientific understanding of our art, at the service of the highest goals of artistry and musicianship.

But aside from all that, on a very personal level, all of us who had the privilege of studying with the great master, have our own individual memories and treasured recollections. For this student there was especially the overwhelming awe felt when our teacher performed any repertoire piece presented by any student in the course of all lessons and the deeply moving quality of those intimate performances. The incredibly enlightening observations and advice that came from the lessons, and the unique encouragement to the student to express himself left a lifelong mark on each of us. What incomparable experiences!

Eric Rosenblith

Carl Flesch, even more than 40 years after his death, remains a towering name in the violinistic world. Evolution and drastic development have taken place, but such discoveries and new aspects as have appeared are all based on the foundations of Flesch's monumental work. Violin playing of today - in spite of many alterations of evolutionary character - is absolutely unthinkable without the powerful and lasting influence which Carl Flesch exercised through his researches, writings and teaching. He was a man who took great interest in the various opinions of other Musicians, Violinists and Teachers so that he was always aware of what was going on in the art of violin playing, which sometimes led him to revise one or another point in his teaching.

For more than three years I worked with Flesch as his official Assistant. He would surprise me frequently by discussing in a kind and warm-hearted manner a lesson in which some poor chap had just been dealt with in a particularly violent and sarcastic way. The wretched victim was sometimes crushed right into the dust, and in many cases this treatment made such an impression that (to my amazement) at the next lesson, there was in fact obvious and easily recognisable progress. It was clear that a number of pupils could not stand up to this tempestuous treatment, but Flesch was well aware of this - he firmly believed in Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest. Many of us would strongly deny the necessity of such an approach, partly because we think we are more progressive, partly because we are children of our own time, but I must reiterate the well-known fact that Flesch was one of the most successful teachers of all times.

What may be of particular interest is an objective description of Carl Flesch as a concert violinist. I heard the Master very often indeed, privately, at lessons and in the concert-hall. His style was very noble and aristocratic, always in good taste, but rarely spontaneous. His outbursts and tempestuous behaviour in his teaching were not to be found in his playing. This was always under control and extremely disciplined. Neither a technical nor a musical fault could be detected, it was in other words perfect in its own way. Sometimes one could discern in his playing that he was lecturing as to the right and correct way, which accounts for the exaggerated idea of some musicians and critics in his time, that Flesch's playing was cold and too analytical. In fact it was, in my opinion, never really detached or

cold, but people were not (and are still not) used to the idea that a violinist could also have intellectual power. It was probably one of his greatest virtues that he could combine intellect, spirit and (maybe too controlled) emotions. It is a truism to say that our characters are often formed by the surroundings of youth and we either emulate or oppose these influences. Perhaps the Hungarian Carl Flesch did not appreciate the Gipsy-way of violin playing and chose as a reaction this more restrained classical style, which led to the belief that he was emotionally aloof. In his case Grandeur and Noblesse possibly stood more in the foreground and that was not always or fully understood. Considering the strong authoritarian self-confidence he projected, the most astonishing aspect of his character remains for me the frankness and objectivity which he evinced towards his own abilities, limitations and difficulties. It reminds me of the handwritten letter Bartok wrote to me some 50 years ago, admitting to his erroneous Metronome-markings in some of his String Quartets. Only a truly great man could have both the insight as well as the courage to make such admissions.

I strongly believe that Carl Flesch will for ever remain the Father of the scientific approach to Violin teaching and we, as well as future generations, should be grateful for his outstanding achievement.

Max Rostal

We, his disciples in Europe, all grew up with the erroneous idea, which probably he consciously fomented, of his being a rather strict, highly disciplined, didactic personality. A vibrato, slightly on the slow side, and exaggerated glissandi helped the spreading of such an image. Nothing could have been further from the truth! His country of birth left an indelible mark on his character and his approach to violin-playing. His rather severe and rigorous appearance was belied in reality by his passionate and sentimental involvement. His involvement in teaching, which was instrumental in his accepting a special professorship at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, had marked consequences on his career as a concert violinist. Seldom in my life have I heard a more dazzling or brilliant performance of the fiendishly difficult Ernst Concerto in F sharp. The same is true of his unforgettable rendition of Sarasate's *Bohemian Airs* and Wieniawski's Polonaise in D. Yet he rose to international fame performing concertos by Bach, Brahms and Beethoven, works he also edited, revealing most remarkable fingerings and bowings. If ever there was a stunning and surprising personality during the last century, it certainly was Carl Flesch's.

Henryk Szeryng

It is with the greatest pleasure that I learn that a set of three historical Compact Discs of Carl Flesch is in the process of being issued. This is a project of major importance, which will fill a vacuum that has lasted for far too many years. Carl Flesch was a giant in the history of the violin, endowed with a towering intellect and an analytical capacity which have earned him for all time a major place in the pantheon of the great masters of the violin.

Henri Temianka

Becoming a student of Carl Flesch at the Berlin Hochschule was probably the most exciting event of my youthful years.

The master, who was able and willing to perform practically any composition assigned to his students, created enormous admiration and awe in all of us. And even today, some 60 years later, I seem to be able to hear him as he played in class, as well as in concert, the great violin concerti, sonatas and virtuoso pieces.

The publication of records of some of the performances of the master should be a cherished memento and inspiration to violinists of all ages.

The memories of chamber music concerts in Baden-Baden where Carl Flesch was joined by Gregor Piatigorsky and Carl Friedberg, and those times when Arigo Pelicia and I were invited to play in quintets, still stand out as the most wonderful and instructive musical experiences of my career.

I think that Flesch was the rare example of a musician who could combine the German and French traditions in his interpretations.

I am grateful for this opportunity to express my gratitude for his teaching and for the privilege of knowing this great master who left such and indelible imprint on musical thinking which still persists strongly today.

Roman Totenberg

In his time Carl Flesch was recognised the world over as a great violinist, but the present generation knows little of this. However his name is universally recognised for his *The Art of Violin Playing*, for his *Scale System* and for his editions of the standard works of the violin literature. These belong today and for always to the equipment of every violinist.

This new production of the recordings of Carl Flesch is of the greatest musical-historical importance. It will bring grateful memories to his former students and be greeted with interest and attention by today's violinists throughout the world.

The publisher is to be thanked for this.

Berta Volmer

From these tributes and the names of those who wrote them it is clear that many of the talented violinists of the time were his pupils. Three others who, alas, died very young should be mentioned.

Joseph Wolfsthal came to Flesch at the age of ten and stayed six years. By the end of his short life (born 1899-died of influenza 1931) he was already considered one of the finest violinists in Germany with a bowing technique near to Flesch's ideal.

Ginette Neveu was born in 1919. She showed enormous talent extremely early. The sensitive and kindly side of Flesch is shown in his offer to teach her 'without any thought of personal gain'. Her successes were immediate, her concerts acclaimed by audiences and critics. During the occupation she appeared occasionally in France but refused even the most tempting terms for concerts in Germany. The moment France was liberated she played in England and

Switzerland. Her career developed rapidly all over the world until her death, with her brother who was her accompanist, in an air disaster in 1949.

Joseph Hassid was born in Suwalki, Poland, in 1923 and studied with Flesch in the late '30s. On the testimony of Kreisler and Szigeti, and on the evidence of his few records he was undoubtedly one of the most talented players of the century. After giving a few concerts in England in 1939 and 40 severe mental illness developed. He died after an operation in 1950.

## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CARL FLESCH

Carl Flesch is one of the most influential figures in the history of violin playing. His contribution to modern violin technique is before us constantly in his writings and the playing of his pupils. Now, nearly half a century after his death, that he was highly acclaimed as a performer is less well known. The purpose of this album is to revive his reputation as a player and to set it alongside his fame as a teacher.

He was born on 9th October 1873 in Moson (German: Wieselburg, now Mosonmagyaróvár), a small Hungarian market town. His father was a general practitioner and army surgeon, a kind-hearted, but stern man with a very analytical mind, not given to expressions of affection in public. His mother was very spirited and energetic - she could even be quite hot-tempered on occasion. These basically different personalities may have been the cause, as he wrote later, of the 'essential dualism of my character, which had both an impelling and an inhibiting influence on both my artistic and personal development.' His first public appearance was on the last day of 1883. He played Alard's *Faust Fantasy*.

He spent seven years in Vienna. His teachers there included Jakob Grün (1837-1916), an important teacher whose solo career was cut short owing partly to his generally nervous disposition, but partly also to his lack of a truly reliable technique. However, Flesch considered his training as a violinist during this period to have been 'dilettantish at the outset, mechanical at a later stage and finally, just when it should have become artistic, it ended in pedantic narrow-mindedness. He admitted nevertheless to 'signs of a favourable inner development', but seeing no future for himself in Vienna he journeyed to Paris, where he auditioned for the Conservatoire in September 1890.

The six years that he spent there were of far more significance in his development. Ostensibly he was a pupil of Eugène Sauzay at the Conservatoire. More realistically he was a private pupil of Martin Marsick. Sauzay was rich in experience, but Flesch found him an ineffectual and primitive educator. Marsick was a fine teacher and much nearer in age and outlook to Flesch than any other of his mentors. Marsick, who also taught Thibaud and Enesco, 'played a decisive role in my development as a violinist'. From him he learnt logical analysis, the perception of a work of art as a continuing living thing, and true nobility in the art of teaching.

A very successful concert appearance in Vienna in 1896 was followed by appearances in most European capitals. Paris, Berlin (where he was to spend much of his life), London (where he first appeared briefly in November 1901), Bucharest and Amsterdam. These all helped establish him in the forefront of central European musical life. Between 1903 and 1908 he broadened his touring activities to include Scandinavia and Russia and in 1913-14 he visited America for the first time, but because of the outbreak of the First World War he was unable to follow up his success there. His concert activities were not confined to solo performances. Duo recitals with Schnabel and trio recitals with Schnabel and Becker were very highly acclaimed, but in the early 1920s their interests and careers diverged. Nor did his busy concert life prevent him from establishing himself as an outstanding writer and teacher. His earliest known efforts were somewhat inauspicious: at the age of ten he took as a pupil a fellow school-boy in his home-town. Both boys apparently sabotaged the lessons a good deal, Flesch often played instead of his pupil in order that the boy's parents, in an adjoining room, might be impressed by their son's progress! The fee after each lesson was a plate of home-made jam .... Rather later than this, however, he held posts at the Conservatoire in Bucharest for two years at the turn of the century, then with great success in Amsterdam. In 1924, during a second tour of the USA, he was offered and accepted a post as head of the violin department of the newly formed Curtis Institute. He occupied this post for five years.

In 1928, he realised a dream of many years by buying a house in the German spa of Baden-Baden where, during the summer months, he gave courses which attracted not only many active pupils but also a great number of listeners. Baden-Baden has recently revived these courses as the 'Carl Flesch Akademie'. The winter months were spent, as had long been his practice, holding master classes at the Berlin Hochschule. Concert life was by no means neglected; as well as many solo engagements, he returned to his old love of chamber music, organising 'Chamber Music Weeks' in Baden-Baden with the pianist Carl Friedberg and the cellist Felix Salmond, later with Gregor Piatigorsky.

The political upheaval in Germany brought all these activities to a halt and he moved to London where, following an initial settling-in period, he attracted a considerable circle of friends and pupils. Shortly after the start of the Second World War he obtained permission to go to Holland, partly to fulfil engagements contracted there before the war and partly because Holland's neutrality appeared to offer safety - an illusion soon rudely shattered. He and his wife were arrested twice. On both occasions they were released on the strength of a letter from the great German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler. With the help of friends, who included Ernst von Dohnányi, he regained his Hungarian nationality and managed to return to Hungary. He busied himself with a new edition of the 'Kreutzer' Études (published subsequently in Switzerland and still in constant demand) and also gave a concert in Budapest which included the Beethoven and Brahms concerti. This was a great success, but following complaints and threats concerning Jews being permitted to perform in public, a second concert was cancelled. He was, as late as 1943, fortunately able to reach safety in Switzerland. In this and in obtaining a

work permit he was helped by Ernest Ansermet. He was invited to become the first head of the newly formed Luzern Akademie violin department. He died in November 1944 of a heart condition, aggravated no doubt by his wartime experiences and a heavy working schedule. It was a source of great pride to him that right to the very end his technical powers remained unimpaired.

His contribution to violin pedagogy is well known. His writings include *Art of Violin Playing*, *Basic Studies*, *Scale System* and *The Art of Fingering on the Violin* and last, but certainly not least, his uniquely valuable *Memoirs*. Then there is his prodigious work as a teacher. He influences and will continue to influence generations born long after ours.

The life of Carl Flesch was one of contradictions. There was constant intellectual unrest, but that, the common fate of thinking people, ensured, in his case, continuous development. He could be fierce and aloof, indeed his teaching methods would raise eyebrows if not dismissal in many lands today. Yet many, including his pupils, testify to his comradeship and warmth. Some felt he was arrogant; perhaps his firmness over questions to which he had found answers gave this impression. However the constancy of his search for improvement, for truth, implies an awareness of his own limitations which can scarcely come under the notion of arrogance. His personal and public lives were morally fine so that the attitude of his adopted country, which he had dutifully and patriotically supported during the First War, must have been especially painful during the Second - a further contradiction.

Many artists fancy that their biographies will be much admired accounts of their own much admired doings. Flesch is a notable exception. His *Memoirs*, translated by Hans Keller and his son, Carl F. Flesch, are 'an attempt at a new approach of evaluation', he eschews 'personal bias' and 'narrow-minded technical prejudice', he is concerned rather to chronicle the times and to report on the qualities of his colleagues, than to describe himself. Many prefaces contain such high-minded promises; Flesch truly observes them. The objectivity of description and logical analysis of the playing of others, Joachim, Sarasate, Kreisler, Heifetz ... is matched by the identical techniques turned, with equal force, upon his own playing.

## THE RECORDINGS OF CARL FLESCH

The *Memoirs* forms an apposite bridge passage to the recordings, for he is keenly aware that the gramophone has altered the shape of the landscape. Perhaps in this one area time has shewn his judgement to be imperfect.

Imperfect, too, is the word with which one must describe the commercially recorded part of his legacy. In both quantity and content there are many gaps. Like his great and near contemporary Kreisler (born 1875) his output over the first quarter of this century was almost entirely of morceau de genre. With the advent of electric recording in 1925 Kreisler went on to record three or four great concerti, the complete Beethoven sonatas and other notable works. Flesch, however, did

almost nothing. The reason is not clear; true he disliked recording, but so did Kreisler. We do, however, have recordings of two major concerti and of a couple of extended pieces. He seems to have had acetate recordings made privately in the mid '30s. They were found in his estate. They are in a dilapidated condition and we have little data with them but we are fortunate that they have survived as through them his teaching can continue.

The album opens with Beethoven's violin concerto. Flesch adopts a broad leisurely pace with purposeful lyricism. Technical problems do not arise for him, but neither is it in his nature to take risks. He is adept at bringing out subtleties of a score e.g. Beethoven's new expressive use of the trill as a link. His judgement is invariably nicely exercised - one is never made aware of such techniques. Rhythmically, he displays a calculated irregularity, as for instance in many of the runs in the first movement. (Lack of definition in some of the middle portions of some of these is due to the imperfect balance, as recorded, between soloist and orchestra). The tone is adequate in size and 'Germanic' in a way similar to those of Busch and Burmester. The vibrato is accurately varied according to the mood of the passage. The cadenza by Hubert Léonard (1819-1890, famous violinist and teacher) is a thoughtful distillation of the melodic and rhythmic content of the movement. This is true also of that in the third movement. (The cadenzas may well have come to Flesch via Marsick who was a pupil of Léonard.) It is a superb rendition. Clearly Flesch perceives the concerto on a broad sweep and brings to it eloquence and grandeur.

The first disc, A, is completed by studio recordings of two sonatas - No.5, in A major by Handel and K.378 in Bb by Mozart. They are magnificent performances. Flesch displays poise, delicacy, great beauty of tone and forceful purpose, and these qualities are captured admirably.

Brahms's violin concerto which opens disc B is a performance very much in the vein of the Beethoven. (The recording commences with bar 111.) This work is well suited to Flesch's romantic inclinations - again a performance of rare majesty and authority, with the same excellent and highly individual technique. He plays Joachim's cadenza, which again gives him opportunity to display effectively subtly modulated tone and accurate finger work. He adds fingered octaves which, his son recalls, was a rare instance of him showing off.

The performance of the Suk 'Fantasie' is of particular historical interest, since after hearing a rendition of it, Suk wrote to Flesch lauding his conception of the work as ideal. As the title suggests, the work is broadly rhapsodic in structure, allowing much opportunity for the soloist to display both the lyrical and virtuosic facets of his character. He is technically immaculate, and the absence of cheap sentimentality is all the more welcome in such a late romantic piece.

In Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise* Flesch achieves the élan and poise necessary to the opening, and proceeds to match it with the requisite virtuosity for the second section - the runs in parallel 3rds and 6ths in the concluding measures of the work form an exciting coda to the major portion of this album.

The third disc, C, is of short pieces arranged approximately in order of recording. The two earliest were made on a Stroh violin. This resulted from an

alliance, arranged in 1899 by one Augustus Stroh, between an aluminium trumpet and a silent violin, née dancing-master's kit. The sound, as we hear eight decades later, is remarkably vivid, with depth and range suggesting a normal instrument. In the Tenaglia and Tartini pieces Flesch is at his most pure, with the tone firm and true.

The next group is a representative selection from the years 1914 to 1928 recorded for Thomas Edison with whom Flesch was friendly. The Fiorillo, Hubay and Sarasate stand out as superb virtuoso displays, balanced by the many more lyrical pieces. The Tchaikovsky Canzonetta is regarded by some as his finest recording. Certainly the control and evenness, purity of tone and balance are remarkable. Flesch did not like recording - one imagines he suffered from the same misgivings as do most artists - yet when listening to these records one would never imagine this - they give an impression of exuberant pleasure and pride in his abilities.

Finally we come to Flesch's Electrola records. The electrical process allows us to hear far more closely Flesch's firm, pure and very individual tone. The two Handel pieces are performances of great beauty and calmness. The Paganini Caprice, probably the most impressive of the recorded show pieces, displays in its allegro section superb bow-control. The intonation is so perfect as to be unnoticed even in the 'extra' high harmonics to which Flesch converts the last three notes of each phrase. His son tells of him showing slight signs of irritation and procrastination on being confronted with the newly arrived test pressings of these discs after a hard day's work.

The sound of Carl Flesch can be known to our and future generations only through his recordings. We think that all students of the violin, professional, amateur and manqué, will agree that the benefits to us of their availability greatly outweigh any limitations of sound quality and repertoire.

## ABOUT THE TRANSFERS

This is the most extensive collection of recordings of Carl Flesch ever published, but nevertheless it is incomplete. All of his records with the exception of a duet with Szigeti, are now hard to come by, whilst some are so rare that no copies could be found at all. Two or three items which were available were omitted as they were not only in very poor sound, but they seemed to add nothing to our knowledge of the artist. Two or three more were not included as it was felt that had he been recording today he would not himself have sanctioned them for publication. Nevertheless this edition comprises of three well-filled Compact Discs, all but three and a half hours of music.

With the exceptions of the Electrola and Polydor recordings, much of the material presented here is in technical quality well below average for its age. SYMOSIUM RECORDS has adhered to its firm belief that the prime aim in a transfer should be naturalness of musical sound; reduction of extraneous noises is an important, but definitely secondary aim. The two concerti originally extended

over many 78 sides. Due to poor storage and wear the sound quality now obtainable varies considerably. We have sought to reproduce each section at its best, the consequent inconsistencies in sound quality being considered preferable to reduction of all to a lowish common denominator.

The opening of the Brahms concerto and a bar or two elsewhere and the first phrase of the Beethoven concerto's 2nd movement are missing. As with Beethoven's 5th (Furtwängler; Symposium LP 1003 nla), adaptations of portions of other recordings to repair these gaps were eschewed.

It is customary for surface noise and other noise which remains after restoration to be faded in and out before and after the wanted signal. In a surprisingly large number of cases in this compilation this was just not possible. (Music starting in the outermost groove; damaged or heavily worn or severely noisy outer grooves; music into last groove etc.) Considering that the silence of the Compact Disc medium is held to enhance the impact of a piece of music starting one asks whether this is equally applicable to recordings with inherent noise. We feel that a positive answer is acceptable, the more so with repeated hearing.

However unwisely, certain artists are regarded as paradigm examples of this or that quality. Heifetz - technique; Kreisler - tone; Schnabel - Innigkeit and Toscanini - faithfulness to the score. The two major works in this production because both of their lengths and the conditions of their sources, absorbed many hours in detailed work of restoration so that the artist's performances became familiar, phrase by phrase. These are also, presumably, the two most recorded concerti for the instrument yet phrase after phrase of Flesch's performances remains in the mind. One is bound to seek reasons. Of what is he a paradigm example? His technique is more than adequate but not sensational; his tone, where adequately captured, is more than good though not sensuously beautiful; his style is remarkably modern though there are points which do not accord with the taste of today. What then? It is that phrase after phrase is illuminated with musical insight, the continuous and simultaneous exposition and balancing of intellectual and emotional content of music. *Quod qui tetivit ornavit.*

As an appendix we have included a brief recording of Carl Flesch's voice. French was not his native tongue, but several years of his youth were passed in Paris. Not surprisingly, therefore, he speaks with an excellent command of French; perfect grammar and an accent, such as it is, sounding Hungarian rather than German. He remarks on his pleasure in playing in the Lucerne Music Festival but each time he plays the Beethoven concerto is a festival for him. At the end of the festival he will give a course of lectures. He refers to the Choral Symphony and hopes that the next Festival will be held in peace time when 'All men will be brothers'.

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It gives us great pleasure to couple this issue with the name of Baden-Baden where Carl Flesch lived and worked before being forced to leave Germany, and which has honoured his memory by establishing an international annual summer seminar for string players - the Carl Flesch Akademie.

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