PETRE MUNTEANU

Petre Munteanu was born at Campina in Romania on November 26, 1919. [This year was given by the artist, other sources have 1916.] He studied singing and violin at the Bucharest Conservatory and received the first prize for his year. An engagement at the Bucharest State Opera followed immediately in 1940, but a year later he left to become a student of Professor Hermann Weissenborn at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. Weissenborn taught also Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Marga Höffgen, Elisabeth Höngen and Joseph Schmidt. With him he studied Lieder and oratorio. Presumably his contract with Bucharest still stood, for the first commercial records known of him, made in June 1943, refer to him as 'von der Staatsoper, Bukarest'. However, when Romania changed sides in August 1944, Romanian Nationals, including Munteanu and his fellow student in Berlin, Sergiu Celibidache, were interned. Thus his career really started after the second world war with his début at La Scala, Milan in *Cosi fan Tutte* in 1947. Further performances in that theatre included the *St. Matthew Passion*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, the "Choral" Symphony, Mahler's 8th Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*, Busoni's *Arlecchino*, and the La Scala premières of Cimarosa's opera *II Credulo*, Berg's *Wozzeck* and Stravinsky's *Persephone.*

He sang in most important opera houses of Italy, and at Festivals in Bregenz, Edinburgh, Maggio Fiorentino, Prades, Ravello, Sagra Musicale Umbra, Schwetzingen, Venice and Wexford. In an Australian tour with the A.B.C. in 1958 he gave over forty recitals and in the same year he appeared in India, Pakistan and Singapore. In 1961 he took part in the first performance of Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza 1960* at the Teatro Fenice, Venice. He sang in operas, oratorios and recitals, in virtually every country of Europe and the list of conductors under whom he appeared, which includes Böhm, Defauw, de Sabata, Dobrowen, Gui, Kubelik, Mataciic, Mitropoulos, Perlea, Rodzinski, Scherchen, Schmidt-Isserstedt, Schuricht, Serafin and Stokowski, testifies to the esteem in which he was held by professional colleagues.

Munteanu also conducted and composed, especially chamber music. He read linguistics and literature at Universita Bocconi in Milan, and Hugo Wolf was the subject of his doctoral. For a decade and a half he was a Professor of the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory, Milan with a chair in chamber and symphonic music. Later he was Director of the Accademia di Canto di Milano. He died at Milan in 1988.

The complete command of the voice, its evenness over the entire compass, and that it served him through a long and busy career resulted from sound training and careful use; and the all-embracing range of repertoire call to mind such names as Lilli Lehmann and Fischer-Dieskau.

A Note on the Records

Munteanu's versatility and sound vocal method are amply illustrated in this recital which spans three centuries of music, four decades of singing, five languages and six countries.

"Come nube", the finale of the oratorio, is for the soprano. Purists may not approve of it being sung by a tenor, but they can scarcely fail to admire the singer's ability in florid music.

The Schubert song is normally sung by a soprano, one thinks of Elisabeth Schumann and Margaret Ritchie for example, but the text and its title, "Der Berghirt", indicate the masculine gender. Munteanu certainly felt justified in treating it as a man's song and claimed with pride to have been the first male to have recorded it.

Dorfszenen (*Village Scenes*) A set of five movements constituting a balanced musical form, based on melodies from a county of Slovakia. I. Rake up the new mown hay, being so tired you broke the rake. II. A pretty girl collects peacocks' feathers for her lover's pillow. III. Your trousseau is in those smart cases on the wagon, drive fast to the bridegroom's village. IV. Sleep child. Will you take care of your mother when she is old? Well, until I get married. V. Dance lads, then collect the goats and get them home. Sure, if the wolf does not scare me.

Munteanu believed that he was the first, and probably the only person to have performed the Bartók's *Dorfszenen* outside Hungary and in Hungarian.

The Schubert and Bartók items stem from a recital. The recording seems to have been arranged hastily or informally, the microphone affected by a heating or ventilating system, regrettably this cannot now be undone.

The singer's first commercial recordings were labelled, "Petre Munteanu, Tenor (v. d. Staatsoper, Bukarest) Ltg. Kapellmstr. O. Dobrindt". Copies must be exceedingly rare as the record was deleted when Romania changed sides shortly after publication. [Apparently two further sides were made, Be 13395 and 6 on 10th Dec.43. They were Romanian songs, but although 'adoptiert', passed, they were probably not issued.]

Much of this recital was originally on Symposium LP 1008. The Compact Disc format has allowed inclusion of additional material, and all tracks benefit from the intervening advances in technology. The recordings are from the artist's collection.

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Dorfszenen is published by Universal.

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