Leinsdorf gives Czech works

By Steven Shladover

The Boston Symphony Orchestra’s recent week of concerts consisted of a program of works by three Czech composers in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Czech republic. The opening selection was the section of Bedrich Smetana’s symphonic cycle, “Ma Vlast” (My Country), entitled “From Bohemian Mountains and Forest.” This received a break and dynamic performance which was also loud. Somehow, the feeling of the music got lost under an impressively dexterous version of sound. It was almost as if Leinsdorf used this work as a rather perfunctory opening exercise to prepare the orchestra for the rest of the evening’s work. The orchestra certainly was prepared to cope with the challenges posed by the second work on the program, Lvis Janacek’s “Sinfonietta.” Op. 60, being given for the first time by the Boston Symphony. The unusual piece, actually a suite of fanfares based on Moravian speech rhythms, calls for a large orchestra, including fourteen trumpets, three tubas, and four trombones. When the orchestra found all the extra horn players is a mystery, considering the uniformly excellent quality of the sound they produced. The entire orchestra traveled in this magnificent, shows given, and Leinsdorf kept things moving quite efficiently throughout. A program of Czech symphonic Tovejnak Dvorak music without a selection by Dvorak could be unachievable, as Maestro Leinsdorf obliged by concluding his program with the popular Dvorak Symphony No. 8 (formerly known as Op. 88). Although this reading was not on a level with that of the Tovejnak Dvorak, it was quite disappointing. Late romantic music like this should be “up” technically, and sonorities do it in a kinrnesly manner. Leinsdorf concerned himself with technical precision and crisp attacks.

Grateful Dead-a winner

By Tony Lima

For those of you who haven’t heard, “Anthem of the Sun” is an annual record. It begins to trend such past hits as “Sargent Pepper” and the Electric Fumes “Mons in F Minor.” Basically, the structure of the record comes across as a mini-opera, with individual numbers having distinction only in the ears of the listener. There is literally no separation, either on the grooves in the sound. However, the changes can be heard, even if only gradually. The record can be seen, even from a jam and casual playing—it often seems as if the group is not trying hard enough, or is just without a focus, and the band can appear more and more, occasionally using the form as a means to an end.

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