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THE WANT LIST—'81 Our Critics' Annual Summary

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It has been a bountiful year for lovers of the piano's Romantic and post-Romantic byways. Most intriguing, perhaps, is what A.C. and P.R. respectively called an "epoch-making release" and "an astonishing issue": the first recording of music by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. The record is interesting in part because it finally gives us a chance to hear a composer whom, until now, we've only heard *about*: although he is still alive and composing, Sorabji ceased performing and publishing (and all but banned performances of his music) nearly half a century ago. But it's not simply the partial resolution of a mystery that gives this disc its value: the music itself is rich and varied. If your tastes run to Busoni and Godowsky, if you revel in thick chromaticism and enjoy hearing keyboard technique pushed to (and beyond) human limits, you'll want this record.

Frank Bridge's biography is not as bizarre as Sorabji's; and hearing his music doesn't offer that special pleasure we get when we finally penetrate a hitherto locked room. Still, fascinating as the Sorabji disc is, I found the gripping Sonata Bridge wrote in response to World War I an even more powerful musical experience. Meral Güneyman's heartfelt performance (generously coupled with some "unopused" Webern and the complete works of one Abel-Marie Decaux) ought to win it a wide audience.

Chopin is hardly a novelty, but like these other discs, Ashkenazy's record of the First Sonata and 10 other early pieces manages to offer a great deal that's rarely encountered. True, the music is primarily of historical interest—there are certainly no masterpieces here. But it does give us a glimpse of the young composer groping toward his mature style; and the subtle but unfussy performances are as good as we're liable to hear. Nor are we likely to hear the bravura sweep of the rarely played Liszt-Busoni *Figaro Fantasy* more vividly conveyed than on the searing recording by Boris Bloch, part of a debut recital disc (Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Busoni) that marks him as one of the most brilliant of our young pianists.

Finally, it's worth noting the almost unpublicized arrival on these shores of a Russian reissue of some of Medtner's performances, from the '40s, of his own works—including the First Concerto.

SORABJI: *Piano Music*. Habermann. (MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 4271)

BRIDGE: *Sonata*. **DECAUX:** *Clairs de lune*. **WEBERN:** *Satz, Sonatensatz (Rondo), Kinderstück*. Güneyman. (FINNADAR SR 9031)

CHOPIN: *Piano Music, Volume 14*. Ashkenazy. (LONDON CS 7135)

LISZT-BUSONI: *Figaro Fantasy*. **BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata No. 6*. **BUSONI:** *Turandots Frauengemach*.

RACHMANINOFF: *Selected Works*. Bloch. (DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CONCOURS 2535 006)

MEDTNER: *Piano Concerto No. 1, Morning Song, Sonata Tragica*. Medtner/Weldon/London Philharmonic. (MELODIYA 33M 10-41169-70)