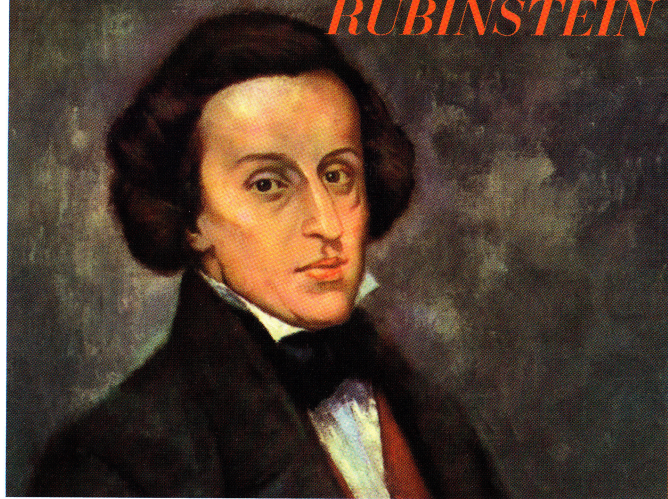




**SUPER AUDIO CD**

*The Chopin Ballades & Scherzos*  
**RUBINSTEIN**





## FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

### Ballades

- 1 No. 1, Op. 23 in G Minor 9:22
- 2 No. 2, Op. 38 in F 6:42
- 3 No. 3, Op. 47 in A-Flat 7:19
- 4 No. 4, Op. 52 in F Minor 10:42

*(Recorded April 28 & 29, 1959)*

### Scherzos

- 5 No. 1, Op. 20 in B Minor 9:07
- 6 No. 2, Op. 31 in B-Flat Minor 9:46
- 7 No. 3, Op. 39 in C-Sharp Minor 7:17
- 8 No. 4, Op. 54 in E 10:58

*(Recorded March 25 & 26, 1959)*



**Arthur Rubinstein**, piano

*(Recorded Manhattan Center, New York City)*

Produced by John Pfeiffer

Recording Engineer: John Crawford

Mastering Engineer: Mark Donahue

DSD Engineer: Philipp Nedel

Remastering Supervisor: John Newton

Reissue Producer: Daniel Guss

Series Coordination: Tim Schumacher

Editorial Supervision: Elizabeth A. Wright

Design: Red Herring Design

Photography: Sara Foldenauer

**These were original three-track stereo recordings; in SACD surround mode, the music will be heard only from the front left, center and right channels.**

For more information about Living Stereo and other Living Stereo SACDs, please visit [www.livingstereo-sacd.com](http://www.livingstereo-sacd.com)

One or another of the Chopin ballades has long been a customary part of a typical recital by Arthur Rubinstein, but the appearance of the four together marks another broad stride along the recorded road that the interpreter has marked out for himself. In certain other categories of Chopin's writing, Rubinstein has offered a second consideration recently, after a pioneering venture that was initiated with the release of his scherzos (RCA Victor M-189) in the mid-thirties. That the anniversary of that release a quarter century ago coincides with the anniversary, in 1960, of Chopin's birth a hundred and fifty years ago attests to two things: the interpreter's long devotion to the greatest musician of his native Poland, and his own enterprise, which has since become a formula for filling one or more long-play records.

Whether or not Rubinstein will succeed in encompassing *all* the categories of

Chopin's writings (of which the ballades are now added to the scherzos, waltzes, mazurkas, nocturnes, polonaises, preludes and impromptus), only the future can determine. But he has given us a sufficiently rounded sense of these many expressions as seen through the same heart and mind to make us aware that within the whole of Chopin, there are many other wholes. The most fascinating, to me, of the many possibilities presented is the balance and contrast—within each type of piece—of ideas which might well have been used in another type. If in the scherzos, the motivation is plainly a dramatic one, in the ballades it seems to me as plainly a *narrative* one, whether or not a specific story is alleged.

If one should examine the contents page of an edition of the ballades, in which the beginning of each is quoted for purposes of identification, one might be surprised to observe that three of the four are in 6/8. If one went beyond the

contents page to the music itself, one would be further struck by the fact that the sole exception, beginning with the common time signature of C, is so marked only for the introduction, and that the total following piece is in 6/4. This is not to suggest that Chopin fell into some kind of slavish practice from which he could not escape, but rather to reason out his motivation for writing the ballades in 6/8 (the 6/4 alters the scheme of notation, but not the prevailing emphasis). I think it has to do with the long-short, long-short pulse of 6/8, which conforms to the long-short, long-short of a familiar poetic "foot" (trochee).

### No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23

Whether or not Chopin had a specific work of the Polish poet Mickiewicz in mind for each of his ballades, as some have suggested, there is no way of telling. It is sufficient for me to see in this opening introduction (the one in

common time mentioned above) a kind of preliminary scene setting, and in the ebb and flow of the following music a strong continuity leading to a climax, to be aware of a tale being told *musically*. A note of suspense, so to speak, is imparted by a clash of tones in the last chord of the introduction (D in the bass, E-flat in the alto) which some writers, even of this century, thought might be a misprint. Clearly it is a mixture of G minor and E-flat, the two keys which come and go in the body of the work.

That body is torn between supplication (at the outset) and rejection (the following *agitato*), more tender appeals (the E-flat section that comes next) in which the triplet figure of the introduction makes an insinuating reappearance, a stormy outburst of adamancy, a rather hopeless resort to other arguments (marked *scherzando*), then a return to the opening supplication, angrily pushed aside in the *presto con fuoco*, and finally crushed

for good and all at the end. (In opera, this is what would be known as the Argument.)

### **No. 2 in F, Op. 38**

The F major ballade (dedicated to "Monsieur Robert Schumann") is, pre-vaillingly, of a more tender character, beginning with a pensive *andantino*, in the basic long-short, long-short rhythm, followed by a blustering *presto con fuoco*. The dedicatee, being something of a musician and critic himself, noted a pertinent fact in his review of it, upon publication: "I recollect very well when Chopin played the 'Ballade' here ... He then said that he had been inspired by some poems of Mickiewicz to write this Ballade. On the other hand, his music would inspire a poet to write words to it." Could there be a more perfect summation of what a great creative artist does in sublimating the matter of one medium into another?

The end is in the mood of the beginning (marked, if there should be any doubt of his intent, *Tempo I*).

### **No. 3 in A-Flat, Op. 47**

Contrary to some impressions that may be conveyed by its popularity, this famous piece does not play itself (except, perhaps, badly). Its surface attractions are so many, its lyricism so apparent, that a certain underlying strength may be overlooked in the seductive appeal of its soft-contoured surface. Feminine it may be said to be also, but only if the female in question is possessed (as more than a few have been known to be) of a whim of iron. One of the fascinations of the piece is its special demonstration of the ways in which Chopin could wander in and out of keys, flat and sharp, major and minor (as he does in the main summing-up section), with a completely certain knowledge of where he is going all

the time yet with a tremendous sense of satisfied homecoming when he gets there. Even the listener who has traveled the same way a dozen times before finds the journey an ever-new experience.

### **No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 52**

Whatever the narrative scheme of its predecessors, it must be recognized that in the last of the four ballades Chopin is dealing with emotions on a heroic scale. Like the man who, though slow to anger, can rise to a rage beyond the reach of the quick-tempered, his recitation begins simply, almost unwillingly, guards its comments carefully, and only eventually attains the release to declare itself completely. But what a tide of eloquence it commands when it does, in the keyboard-sweeping arpeggios in both hands, as if Chopin wished it were possible to take the strings themselves, bodily, and wring the sonorities from them! The effect comes

back again, in a more angry, dissonant pattern before the end, when the sense of an individual, musical outline gives way to a fine frenzy of sheer sonority. Like its predecessors, it utilizes the long-short, long-short "foot," but these feet never take the same way twice, let alone tread in tracks they have left behind them.



## THE SCHERZOS

NOTES BY IRVING KOLODIN (1960)

Not one, but two anniversaries are comprehended in the release of this edition of the Chopin Scherzos by Arthur Rubinstein in 1960: a hundred and fifty years since the birth of the great composer who gave so much to the piano, and a full quarter century since Rubinstein began his series of complete recordings of Chopin's works which have given so much to the world of music, and pianism in particular. The coincidence also completes a cycle, for it was Rubinstein's performance of the scherzos issued in the mid-thirties (RCA Victor M-189), which initiated the age of the "complete" Chopin issue, long before the LP made it a convenient formula for a musical "package."

What Rubinstein presented was a rounded view of a segment of the composer's personality and works, a whole within a larger whole which enabled his listeners to consider them a musical totality, rather than an isolated example

of writing selected to demonstrate the performer's prowess. In moving steadily through the categories of Chopin's other "totalities" since—polonaises, nocturnes, mazurkas, waltzes, preludes, impromptus, ballades—Rubinstein has made a contribution of incalculable value to the literature of his instrument. For a rarity, too, a pioneer has endured to retrace his own blazed trail, now a broad highway for all to travel. I daresay that in this second view of the scherzos, posterity will find not only a far clearer likeness of the instrument than was possible in the thirties, but also some fresh insights and illuminations.

It is basic to an appreciation of Chopin's purpose in grouping his ideas under this heading or that to bear one central fact in mind. Titles, as such, had a quite different meaning to him than they did to others. In the case of the ones he invented himself—prelude, etude, impromptu, fantaisie-impromptu, etc.—that is plain enough. But it would be a mistake, in approaching

those he borrowed from his predecessors, to expect his sonatas to be like Beethoven's, or in the case of the scherzos, like anything known previously.

Perhaps the simplest distinction to be made is that Chopin's titles had to do with external, rather than internal, factors. Or, in terms we have learned from the U.N., that they are concerned with procedural, rather than substantive, matters. In its literal derivation from the Italian, *scherzo* implies something light, humorous, joking. In its musical elaboration, however (by Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann), *scherzo* describes a succession of ideas (derived from the minuet-with-trio) in contrasting moods.

Inasmuch as Chopin's scherzos are anything but light, humorous or joking, it is clear that he was talking about the other kind of thing—the musical procedure embodying a succession of ideas in contrasting moods. And as Beethoven, in his later symphonies, quartets and sonatas,

expanded the simple idea of scherzo-with-trio into an elaborate sequence of scherzo-trio-scherzo-second trio-new varied form of the scherzo, so Chopin derived from these examples the framework for a separate piece in itself.

What he put into that framework was, of course, something completely his own. Taken individually, the ideas might well suggest the material for an etude, a prelude, a nocturne. It is the combination of them on a grand scale and in an invariably *dramatic* context that makes for the kind of totality we associate with the title. There are, within the scope of Chopin's cosmos, works that can be well fulfilled by a pianist who is primarily a miniaturist, or a lyricist, or a colorist. But if he is not to some extent a Thespian, he had better leave the scherzos alone.

**No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 20** (*Presto con fuoco*). In this masterful work of 1831 (he has already written some of his finest

etudes, nocturnes, mazurkas, waltzes, etc.) the 21-year-old Chopin defined the grand plan of all the scherzos to come. In common with the others, it is in 3/4 (an interesting link to the primitive minuet-with-trio of the previous century), and it ranges widely through a variety of soul-states yet observes a formal discipline as satisfying as it is rigorous. Looked at in large components, it consists of a main scherzo section interrupted by a *molto più lento*, followed by a reprise of the scherzo. However, this is akin to saying that a man has two arms, a torso and two legs. What makes these divisions distinctive is the surging current of music that flows from start to finish. From the "ready, set" of the first two chords it "goes" compellingly, save for the middle, barcarolle-like section which functions as a trio. It is worth noting that the scherzo section has its own built-in lyric contrast (divided between the two hands), as well as an *agitato* foil to the opening

statement, which also serves as a breathtaking conclusion. Nor is there anything in the least accidental about the bridge chords that lead the "trio" back to the opening: they are clearly derived from the "ready, set" opening of the scherzo.

#### **No. 2 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 31** (*Presto*).

The time when this piece was popularly known as the "Governess" scherzo is now somewhat remote, suggesting two things: there are fewer family governesses than there used to be, and even fewer of them count the performance of Chopin, however muddling, among their graces. It is, in any case, a much harder piece to play than the mere notes suggest, for it takes as much talent and concentration to "play" the silences which are so urgent a part of its total effect. Moreover, its argument of dramatic and lyric elements is so heated that it is a great temptation to overstate the case before all the evidence is in. Altogether it is written on a broader,

more varied plane than its predecessor, especially where the "trio" is concerned: that consists of two elements (an opening *sostenuto* in a conciliatory vein and a more active figure in a flightier spirit) which engage in a contest of wills before the scherzo, as originally heard, resumes. In the end, when all the evidence has been assembled, it is clear that impulse will not be dissuaded by an appeal to sweet reasonableness.

#### **No. 3 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 39**

(*Presto con fuoco*). Though neither the first, last nor most popular of the four, this work is in some musical ways the most remarkable of all. Certainly for compactness of statement and economical usage of materials it is in a class of its own. Even the chorale-like trio grows out of a fragment embedded in the scherzo. However, it is barely recognizable, as developed, through Chopin's vast command of pianistic sonorities, into a section of such

lingering beauty that one can well understand his reluctance to give it up without reverting to it a second time, and then spinning it out through minor and major transformations that bring about the return of the scherzo almost before the listener realizes what is happening. When he has acquired sufficient acquaintance with it to observe, as well as experience, what is happening, he may be pardoned a small obeisance to Chopin's genius for elaborating what is one of the basic phrases of music—it begins with the *Larghetto* of Beethoven's Second Symphony; it was transformed by Lehár into his *Merry Widow* waltz as well as being sung to the words "How dry I am"—into a shimmering cascade of sonority.

#### **No. 4 in E, Op. 54** (*Presto*).

Rather than laboring the scheme which he had exploited so brilliantly in the three preceding scherzos—minor tension, major relief—Chopin digresses here to a con-



cept more capricious, more playful. It has not only a major beginning, but also a trio in which the same tonal order prevails. The "intellectual refinement and jesting of a superior sort" to which Huneker pays tribute may not be so immediate in their appeal as the passionate proclamations of the first three scherzos, but they lead us toward some tonal territory not normally considered to border on Chopin's—not only the caprice of Saint-Saëns' *G Minor Concerto*, but even the rococo elegance of Richard Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*.

## THE HISTORY OF LIVING STEREO

On October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental "binaural" recordings. At New York's Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's *Waltz from Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston's Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two-track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world's greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4" 7 1/2ips stereophonic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.

RCA Victor's first two-track sessions in late 1953 and early 1954 were captured on proprietary RCA RT-21 1/4" 30ips tape machines, wired to a pair of mono mixers, each dedicated to one tape track. Neumann U-47 cardioid and M-49/50 omnidirectional microphones were favored, as were RCA-designed LC-1A 15" duo-cone speakers in the control room. Three track recordings were realized on tube amplifier Ampex 300-3 1/2" machines running at 15ips and in later years at 30ips, and were mixed down to 1/4" two-track masters. No equalization was used in the original tracking process; the microphone signals were summed through passive electronics and printed straight to tape. In addition, no equalization was used to alter playback takes for artist approval.



## TECHNICAL NOTES

JOHN NEWTON, *SOUNDMIRROR INC.*

Since the earliest days of recording, engineers have strived to make recorded sound as immediate and thrilling as natural sound. The earliest electrical recordings were made with a single microphone positioned in the hall for optimum balance. The signal was fed to a cutting lathe, and with the advent of magnetic recording, to a monaural tape recorder; a copy of that tape was used to produce the LPs which consumers listened to at home.

With stereo, two microphones were placed in the hall. Signals were fed to a stereo tape recorder and consumers, listening back on two speakers, heard a new "depth" of sound. By placing microphones in the left, center, and right of the hall, engineers progressed to 3-channel recordings, which afforded them greater control over the musical balances that ended up in the stereo mix. Even as CDs replaced LPs,

this same process was often followed.

Today, with the advent of SACD and multi-channel playback, the listener can hear the left, center, and right channels exactly as the engineers heard them at the original recording sessions. In this series of Living Stereo reissues on hybrid SACDs, we have used the 3-channel original tapes whenever they existed; when the material was recorded only in stereo, we used that tape. Some of the SACDs will therefore contain 2-channel, or a combination of 2- and 3-channel material. We used only two or three of the available six channels on the SACD disc because that was the vision of the original producers.

In remastering these tapes, we kept the signal path as short as possible. A Studer-Aria analog tape recorder was connected with premium Siltech cabling directly to specifically chosen dCS converters. This DSD data is directly encoded on the

SACD. Thus the listener is able to hear the output of these converters exactly as we heard it in the studio. The DSD program is essentially identical to the analog tape. What you hear are faithful copies of each historic recording—the pure performance, presented in its original splendor. No signal processing was necessary to "improve" these extraordinary tapes.

Throughout this very exciting project, history came alive as we heard the voices of legendary engineers verbally slating the tapes with the location and date of each session. We were greatly impressed not only with how little the original tapes were edited, but how skillfully engineers edited with their high-tech tool of the day, namely, a razor blade! Applying the best in 21st-century remastering technology, we believe we have done justice to the best in 20th-century recording technology for a new generation of listeners.

Seit Beginn der Aufnahmetechnologie streben Tontechniker danach, den Klang der Aufnahme so unmittelbar und ergreifend zu erzeugen, wie der natürliche Klang selbst. Die frühesten elektronischen Aufnahmen wurden mit einem einzigen Mikrophon durchgeführt, das in der Mitte des Aufnahmesaals positioniert war, um eine optimal ausgewogene Balance zu erzeugen. Das Signal wurde zu einer Schnittmaschine, und nach der Einführung von magnetischen Aufnahmen zu einer Bandmaschine geleitet. Eine Kopie dieses Bandes wurde dann für die Produktion der LPs verwendet, welche die Käufer zuhause abspielten.

Seit dem Stereozeitalter wurden zwei Mikrophone im Aufnahmesaal platziert. Die Signale wurden zu einer Stereobandmaschine geleitet, und die Konsumenten, die die LP auf zwei Lautsprechern abspielten, bekamen einen neuen

Eindruck der „Tiefe“ des Klanges. Durch eine Anordnung der Mikrophone links, mittig und rechts im Aufnahmesaal, gelangten die Tontechniker zu 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Diese erlaubten ihnen eine größere Kontrolle über die musikalische Balance, was im Stereo Mix aufging. Noch als CDs die LPs ersetzten, wurde dieses Verfahren oft verwendet.

Heute, seit der Einführung der SACD und Multi-Kanal Wiedergabe, kann der Konsument den linken, mittleren und rechten Kanal exakt so wahrnehmen und hören, wie der Tontechniker sie während der ursprünglichen Aufnahmesitzung gehört hat. Für diese Serie von Living Stereo Wiederveröffentlichungen auf hybrid SACDs haben wir die originalen 3-Kanal Bänder verwendet, wann immer diese existent waren. Sofern nur in Stereo aufgenommen wurde, haben wir diese Bänder verwendet. Deshalb enthalten einige dieser SACDs nur 2-Kanal oder

eine Kombination aus 2-Kanal und 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Wir haben darum auch nur zwei oder drei der sechs auf einer SACD verfügbaren Kanäle benutzt, da dies die Vision der ursprünglichen Produzenten war.

Während des Remastering Prozesses dieser Bänder haben wir den Weg des Signals so kurz wie möglich gehalten. Eine analoge Studer-Aria Bandmaschine wurde durch hochwertige Siltech Kabel direkt mit speziell ausgewählten dCS Konvertern verbunden. Dieses DSD Datenmaterial wurde direkt auf die SACD kodiert. Dadurch ist der Konsument in der Lage, das Ergebnis dieser Konverter exakt so zu hören, wie wir es im Studio gehört haben. Das DSD Programm ist im Wesentlichen identisch mit den analogen Originalbändern. Was Sie hören sind genaue Kopien von jeder der historischen Aufnahmen—die pure Aufführung, präsentiert in ihrem ursprüng-

lichen Glanz. Keine Aufbereitung der Signale war erforderlich, um diese herausragenden Bänder zu „verbessern“.

Im Verlauf dieses außerordentlich reizvollen Projekts wurde Geschichte lebendig, während wir die Stimmen legendärer Tontechniker gehört haben, wie sie den Ort und das Datum der jeweiligen Aufnahmesitzung auf die Bänder gesprochen haben. Wir waren höchst beeindruckt, nicht nur darüber wie wenig die Originalbänder bearbeitet worden waren, sondern auch wie gekonnt die Tontechniker mit dem High-Tech Gerät ihrer Tage gearbeitet haben: einer Rasierklinge! Für eine neue Generation von Hörern glauben wir der Aufnahmetechnologie des 20. Jahrhunderts gerecht geworden zu sein, unter Verwendung der besten Remastering Technologie des 21. Jahrhunderts.

## NOTE TECHNIQUE

JOHN NEWTON, *SOUNDMIRROR INC.*

**D**epuis les tout débuts de l'enregistrement discographique, les ingénieurs rivalisent d'efforts pour que le son enregistré soit aussi immédiat et électrisant que le son naturel. Les premiers enregistrements électriques étaient réalisés avec un seul micro placé dans la salle pour une balance optimale. Le signal était transmis à un graveur, et, avec l'avènement de l'enregistrement magnétique, à un magnétophone monophonique ; une copie de cette bande magnétique était utilisée pour produire les microsillons que le consommateur écoutait chez lui.

Pour la stéréophonie, on a installé deux microphones dans la salle. Les signaux étaient transmis à un magnétophone stéréophonique, ce qui conférait un nouveau « relief » sonore à l'enregistrement écouté par le consommateur sur ses deux haut-parleurs. En positionnant des micros à gauche, au milieu et à droite

de la salle, les ingénieurs ont évolué vers un enregistrement à trois canaux leur assurant un meilleur contrôle de l'équilibre musical du mixage stéréophonique final. Ce procédé a souvent continué à être utilisé alors même que le CD remplaçait progressivement le disque noir.

Aujourd'hui, avec l'avènement du SACD et de la restitution multicanaux, l'auditeur entend les canaux gauche, central et droite exactement comme les entendaient les ingénieurs lors des séances d'enregistrement originales. Dans cette collection de rééditions « Living Stereo » sur SACD hybrides, nous avons utilisé les bandes originales à trois canaux chaque fois qu'elles existaient ; lorsque le matériau n'était enregistré qu'en stéréophonie, c'est cette bande que nous avons utilisée. Certains de ces SACD contiennent donc des enregistrements à deux canaux, ou une combinaison

de matériau à deux et trois canaux. Nous n'avons utilisé que deux ou trois des six canaux disponibles sur les SACD, car telle était la conception des producteurs de l'époque.

Lors du rematriçage des ces enregistrements, nous avons veillé à ce que le parcours du signal soit aussi court que possible. Nous avons directement connecté un magnétophone analogique Studer-Aria à des convertisseurs dCS spécifiquement choisis, au moyen de câbles Siltech haut de gamme. Ce matériau DSD est encodé directement sur le SACD. L'auditeur peut ainsi entendre la sortie de ces convertisseurs exactement telle que nous l'avons entendue en studio. Le flux DSD est essentiellement identique à la bande analogique. Ce que vous entendez est une copie fidèle de chacun des enregistrements historiques : l'interprétation à l'état pur, présentée dans sa splendeur

originelle. Aucun traitement du signal n'a été nécessaire pour « améliorer » ces bandes extraordinaires.

Tout au long de ce projet enthousiasmant, l'histoire est redevenue vivante pour nous grâce à la voix de ces ingénieurs de légende repérant verbalement les bandes en indiquant le lieu et la date de chaque séance d'enregistrement. Nous avons été très impressionnés non seulement par le petit nombre d'interventions sur les bandes originales, mais aussi par le talent avec lequel ces ingénieurs réalisaient le montage nécessaire à l'aide de l'outil de pointe de l'époque : la lame de rasoir ! Utilisant le meilleur de la technologie de mixage numérique du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, nous pensons avoir rendu justice au meilleur de la technologie d'enregistrement du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour une nouvelle génération d'auditeurs.