Every Little Voiceprint Has a Meaning All Its Own

BY RAYMOND ERICSON

NOW you can see your voice. The Voiceprint, a device that makes the voice visible, has arrived on the scene, supplementing disk and tape recorders.

Voiceprints are sound spectrographs (illustrated below), produced by Voiceprint Laboratories in Somerville, N. J. They came into prominence a few years ago when it was proved possible to identify voices by comparing prints. Prints were found to be unique for each individual. According to the company, "attempts to disguise one’s own voice or imitate another’s have been easily discerned. Whispering, sniffing, nose-holding—even the smooth with mascara—are readily detected."

So far, Voiceprints have been used in police and legal proceedings to identify criminals. Recently, however, two of America’s leading singers decided to have their voices printed, just out of curiosity. They were Leontyne Price and James McCracken. The soprano sang a Puccini song, the tenor sang the aria “Vesti la giubba” from “Pagliacci.”

As the excerpt below from “Vesti la giubba” shows, the print is quite decorative. One expert ventured the opinion that it resembled Viennese expressionism. It could also be made into a pattern for curtains or upholstery.

Other uses for singers’ Voiceprints have been suggested. If a file of all singers’ prints were on hand, it would be possible to identify the singers on bootleg operatic recordings where pseudonyms are used. Voiceprints have been used in the medical field to ferret out and help correct vocal deficiencies, a service that might be applied to certain professional singers. Among avant-garde composers it is conceivable that a spectograph might be turned— as graphs have been—in to a piece of music or used to indicate the performance of one.

THAT TIME OF YEAR

A recent classified ad began startlingly. “Joan Sutherland lost vicinity 9th Ave. & 55 St. It turned out not to be such a big news, but it was a ten-year-old light brown poodle, with red eyes. The finder hopes that her eyes, very gentle and shy of strangers. Joan is still missing, and to say, although Paul Swanson, its owner, thinks she’s worth a $200 reward. She was lost in the neighborhood because of her owner’s adoration for the soprano and because at birth she was able to bank an E above high C. If anyone hears her bark a wish, please communicate with Mrs. Swanson at 345 West 55th Street.

Charlotte Moorman, the American cellist who dunks herself in water as part of her way of playing her Variations on a Theme of Saint-Saëns, performed the work in a gondola in Venice near the Rialto Bridge at midnight. Yen, she jumped into the canal, Miss Moorman threatened to give one of her “happenings” in Central Park with her Korean colleague Nam June Paik, what will she jump in the lake?

The current airline strike has made some travelers getting from New York to San Francisco via London. The New York Chamber Solists, with a date at Music at the Vineyards, outside of the city, may be forced into anything so drastic.

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The commissioned work to be paid for out of the $20,000 appropriated by the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation in its first Chamber Music Award, to the Beaux-Arts String Quartet, is being written by Leon Kirchner. It will be given its premiere by the quartet at Town Hall on Jan. 27. in the third of its concerts sponsored by the foundation.

Alfredo Salamillo, who has been presenting popular-priced opera over the years, will take it into the Fox Theater in Brooklyn and the Coliseum in Manhattan next season. Opening date at the Fox is Sept. 7; “Aida” is the opera; Eric Balzam has received a month-long grant from the West German government as lecturer and observer in that country.

Quinto Maganini will observe his 25th anniversary as conductor of the Norwalk (Conn.) Symphony next November.

The Boston Symphony will premiere three works next season, a Piano Concerto by Elliott Carter, Robert Moer's "Incidentals for chorus and orchestra, and a commission in memory of President Kennedy by William Sydeman. One of the oldest music festivals held annually in Worcester, Mass., will reach its 107th year next fall. It will be held from Oct. 24 to 28.