CHOPIN WALTZES
(complete)

ANTONIO BARBOSA
pianist
Antonio Barbosa was born in Brazil on December 9, 1943. He began to study the piano at the age of six, and his teachers were Bazzi da Sa and Albertina Estrella, a pupil of Alfred Cortot and Yves Nat. At the age of thirteen, upon winning first prize in the "Youth People's Competition" sponsored by the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, he performed the Mozart "Coronation" Concerto to great public and critical acclaim. In the following years Barbosa won many other first prizes and a full scholarship to complete his formal education in Brazil.

Mr. Barbosa is a college graduate and his postgraduate studies qualify him to be a member of the Brazilian Diplomatic Corps. In the winter of 1970 he came to the United States to study with the great Polish pianist Mieczyslaw Munz of the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

Antonio Barbosa currently resides in the United States where he is represented by the Judd Concert Artist Bureau and records exclusively for Connoisseur Society.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the waltz became a popular form for keyboard "miniatures." Such composers as Schubert, Weber, and Clementi found the still-new dance form as well suited to the characteristics of the still-new pianoforte, as the minuet, gavotte, etc. had been to those of the harpsichord. Schubert alone composed more than ten dozen waltzes for the piano; many of them have been all but forgotten now, but Weber's famous Invitation to the Dance, both in its original form and in the Berlin version, is probably the most frequently performed of all Weber's works. Neither Schubert nor Weber in their waltzes, however, so much as hinted at the level of poetry Chopin was to realize in this form, nor is there any evidence to suggest he was in any way influenced by them, any more than by the waltzes of Lanner and the elder Johann Strauss. Indeed, it seems probable that Chopin was not even exposed to the Invitation to the Dance until some time after he had conquered Paris with his own waltzes.

Not surprisingly, it was with the waltzes (and the nocturnes) that Chopin achieved his first great success in Paris. Robert Schumann wrote of the Opus 34 set, "So throbbing a life flows in them that they seem to have been actually improvised in the ballroom." Schumann also remarked, though, that if the Chopin waltzes were ever to be played for dancing "at least half the dancers would have to be countesses," and Arthur Hedley, in his masterly edition published by Collier Books, 1962, ruled out even countesses: "With Chopin the waltz forsook the noisy ballroom or beer-garden and became a salon piece, assuming the fine manners and arduors of the jeunesses dorées. In our time these dance poems have found something approaching their true illustration of "the plan generally adhered to" in the waltzes: "a suite of sixteen-bar waltz movements in contrasting character, purely rhythmic, coquettish or ardently sentimental, leading to a coda in which the excitement of the dance comes to a head." He singles out Opus 34, No. 1, in A-flat, however, as the waltz which "shows this form at its highest point: it is the Chopin waltz par excellence, full of gallantry and noblesse. At the end it is as though a door suddenly closes, and the listener begins to move away from the bustling scene; only fragments of the dance are heard and finally nothing but the tapping of the waltz rhythm."

It will be noted that the key of A-flat figures prominently in this group of works: four of the fourteen waltzes recorded here are in that key (as is yet another, composed in 1827), and all four are, for one reason or another, among the most interesting pieces in the series. One of the most appealing is Opus 64, No. 3, a work of "discreet, suave elegance and much more harmonic interest than its companions," according to Hedley, who notes that "the dance element disappears altogether in the C Major trio with its broad harmonic interest than its companions."