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Beecham

MOZART Requiem SCHUBERT Symphony 5

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XR

In THE GRAMOPHONE, for January, 1957, A.P. hinted that the best thing to do with this tiresome Requiem situation was to persuade Philips to release the Bruno Walter version, available for some time in America. Philips have done better: they have given us an English recording, with a fine team of soloists, the R.P.O., and the B.B.C. Chorus under Sir Thomas Beecham's mercurious baton. The recording is remarkably vivid and sonorous, with just enough reverberation to add dignity, though not too much to impair clarity—at least in the orchestral part. I find the chorus less satisfactory in this respect, for, although they produce a good body of tone, the usual faults of balance are there (loud sopranos and tenors, reticent contraltos and basses) and the words are not too clear. Even the Vienna Opera Chorus in D.G.G.'s version, for all its subdued wooliness, manages to get some of the words across. After all, the one common and constant factor in all these performances is the Latin text, and it should moreover be a decisive factor. If the text is even slightly inaudible, the loss to the general quality of the performance is great. Happily, the four soloists chosen by Sir Thomas have excellent diction and an ability to blend well in ensemble.

Beecham's "Tuba mirum" is a resounding and remarkable triumph. Instead of the usual feeble apology for the last rumpty, sounding for all the world like a solitary and henpecked trombones practising in a railway tunnel, we have all the spinechilling, blazing brass that we normally associate with Beethoven. The effect is truly magnificent. What is more, the obligato trombone accompanying the bass soloist is here replaced by a more decorous violincello—unauthentic perhaps, but the only way to avoid the kind of batios that one usually associates with this noble number. Indeed, on replaying this passage, I am sure that if Mozart had ever corrected proofs of the Requiem, he would have switched the trombone solo elsewhere, just as Beecham has done.

I have hinted that Sir Thomas takes liberties with the score, but in nearly every case they are entirely justifiable liberties, and they add immeasurably to the power of the music. The organ's choral support in " Rex tremendae " is an example of an eminently effective addition to the score, though I wondered whether this number coincided with the beginning of a new session, for a slight sharpening of pitch appears to take place at the beginning of this band.

In summing up, I have no hesitation in dismissing any small defects, for the performance as a whole is majestic and compelling, and the recording is throughout of excellent quality. Let us hope that Signor Fontana gives us more of the same kind.

D.S. The Gramophone, February 1958 (Review of Fonana CH11000, Mozart *Requiem*, *excerpts*)

Transfer notes

This recording of Mozart's *Requiem* is one of those happy instances which demonstrates the merits of Pristine Audio's 32-bit XR remastering system at its best, lifting what was a dull-sounding and indistinct choir into a degree of brilliance and clarity one would never have suspected from the original recording. Indeed, the entire recording has been transformed to an extent one can only really appreciate by hearing "before" and "after" side-by-side—especially in the Ambient Stereo version I wholeheartedly recommend here. The later Schubert recording was far more successful in its original incarnation, but this, too, has been brought into even finer focus by the XR process, with additional use of phase alignment software helping to produce a more sharply-defined stereo soundstage than before. Together they're a superb-sounding record of Beecham at his very best. **A.R.**

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MOZART Requiem

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**Elsie Morison
Monica Sinclair
Alexander Young
Marian Nowakowski**
BBC Chorus
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

SCHUBERT
Symphony No. 5 in D major
SIR THOMAS BEECHAM
Studio recordings, 1954-1959

Beecham Mozart & Schubert

MOZART Requiem Mass in D minor, K626 (rev. Beecham)

- 1 Introit - Requiem aeternam (4:42)
- 2 Kyrie eleison (2:54)
- 3 Sequence No. 1 - Dies Irae (1:37)
- 4 Sequence No. 2 - Tuba mirum (3:52)
- 5 Sequence No. 3 - Rex tremendae majestatis (2:13)
- 6 Sequence No. 4 - Recordare, Jesu pie (6:17)
- 7 Sequence No. 5 - Confutatis maledictis (2:22)
- 8 Sequence No. 6 - Lacrimosa dies illa (2:40)
- 9 Offertory No. 1 - Domine Jesu Christe (4:43)
- 10 Offertory No. 2 - Hostias et preces (4:32)
- 11 Sanctus (1:40)
- 12 Benedictus (6:04)
- 13 Agnus Dei (2:15)
- 14 Communion - Lux aeterna (6:09)

Elsie Morison soprano

Monica Sinclair contralto

Alexander Young tenor

Marian Nowakowski bass

BBC Chorus dir. **Leslie Woodgate**

SCHUBERT Symphony No. 5 in B flat major, D485

- 15 1st mvt. - Allegro (5:50)
- 16 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (8:56)
- 17 3rd mvt. - Minuet (Allegro molto) and Trio (5:18)
- 18 4th mvt. - Allegro vivace (5:47)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra **Sir Thomas Beecham**

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of **Sir Thomas Beecham**

Mozart Requiem

Recorded 13-14 December 1954
and 29 May 1956
Walthamstow Assembly Hall
First issued on Columbia ML-S160
Transfer from Fonata CFL 1000

Schubert Symphony No. 5

Recorded 14/16 May 1958
Salle Wagram, Paris
and 18 December 1958 & 7 May 1959
Abbey Road Studio 1, London
First issued on EMI ASD345/ALP1743
Transfer from EMI SXL P 30204

Total duration: **77:52**

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