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PACO 117

KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD

Beethoven - Fidelio

Pristine
XR

A red letter night at the Metropolitan Opera! You may not feel as some of us do that "Fidelio" is the most beautiful lyric drama since "Don Giovanni", but neither you nor anybody else possessed of a grain of artistic feeling could fail to respond to the performance of Beethoven's only stage work that the Metropolitan musicians afforded us last evening. As for the audience which tested the capacity of the house, it may well be cheering and clapping still.

In the first place, this "Fidelio" was relieved of the clogging, boring recitatives that had long weighed it down at the Metropolitan. Then, it had as conductor an artist of the caliber of Bruno Walter. Often as Mr. Walter has conducted concerts here, never before had he led an opera for us. May he now do so ad infinitum! His feeling for every phrase of the music and his understanding of its large design were a perpetual delight. For a single detail, what it was to hear at last the simple, but classical measures that introduce the Canon Quartet. And the interval between the two scenes of the second act he filled with an overwhelmingly dramatic reading of the Third Leonore Overture. Thrice familiar as that work is, this performance wrought the audience to such a pitch of enthusiasm that one trembled for the safety of the august house.

Pitts Sanborn, *The New York World Telegram*, 15 February 1941 (*review of first of three performances*)

Producer's Note

February 22, 1941 was a good day to be an opera-lover in the USA blessed with a radio and a good signal. An incredible evening in the hands of Toscanini and his NBC Symphony Orchestra, broadcasting an all-Wagner concert from Carnegie Hall with soloists Lauritz Melchior and Helen Traubel (as heard to brilliant effect on Pristine PACO 105), was merely the dessert course that followed the main meal of the day: Bruno Walter conducting Kirsten Flagstad in the Metropolitan Opera's full stage production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. In the words of Mark Obert-Thorn: "Toscanini's first choice to sing Siegmund and Siegfried in his broadcast was Rene Maison; but Maison was already committed to Bruno Walter's Met *Fidelio* on the same day. So, the Maestro had so settle for his second choice . . . some guy named Melchior(!) It shows what a high opinion Toscanini had of Maison. (He later did get to work with him in Buenos Aires on a performance of the Beethoven 9th from the Teatro Colon in July of that year, a performance which has been issued on CD.)"

The star of the show here is of course Kirsten Flagstad, and never has she been heard so well in this performance as in this new XR-remastered edition. Taken from transfers supplied by the same (alas, anonymous) source as the Toscanini recordings of the same day, this is the full broadcast, including commentaries by Milton Cross (with sponsor messages edited), in unprecendented sound quality from original acetate masters in generally excellent condition. An unforgettable experience on the night - and once again today: an all-time classic. **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

Kirsten Flagstad

in Beethoven's FIDELIO

RENÉ MAISON
JULIUS HUEHN
ALEXANDER KIPNIS
MARITA FARELL
KARL LAUFKÖTTER
HERBERT JANSSEN
EMERY DARCY
JOHN GURNEY

CHORUS & ORCHESTRA
OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA
CONDUCTED BY BRUNO WALTER

Live broadcast recording, 22 February 1941

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BEETHOVEN *Fidelio*

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CAST

Leonore - Kirsten Flagstad
Florestan - René Maison
Don Pizarro - Julius Huehn
Rocco - Alexander Kipnis
Marzelline - Marita Farell
Jaquino - Karl Laufkötter
Don Fernando - Herbert Janssen
First Prisoner - Emery Darcy
Second Prisoner - John Gurney

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Kirsten Flagstad
Recorded live by NBC Radio, 22 February 1941
Metropolitan Opera, New York City

Total duration: 2 hr 25:01

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- 1 Milton Cross - Radio Introduction (5:35)
- 2 ACT 1 - Ouverture (6:13)
- 3 No. 1 Duett - Jetzt, Schätzchen (4:36)
- 4 No. 2 Arie - O wär ich schon (5:05)
- 5 No. 3 Quartett - Mir ist so wunderbar (4:38)
- 6 No. 4 Arie - Hat man nicht (3:59)
- 7 No. 5 Terzett - Gut, Söhnchen (6:32)
- 8 No. 6 Marsch (2:51)
- 9 No. 7 Arie mit Chor (3:26)
- 10 No. 8 Duett - Jetzt, Alter, hat es Eile! (4:24)
- 11 No. 9 Rezitativ und Arie - Abscheulicher! (9:02)
- 12 No. 10 Finale - O welche Lust, in freier Luft (5:59)
- 13 Nun spricht, wie ging's (4:41)
- 14 Ach! Vater, eilt! (6:36)
- 15 Milton Cross - End of Act 1 (2:03)

- 1 Milton Cross - Introduction to Act 2 (3:09)
- 2 ACT 2 - No. 11 Introduktion (2:58)
- 3 No. 11 Arie - Gott! Welch Dunkel hier! (6:45)
- 4 No. 12 Melodram - Wie kalt ist es hier! (1:52)
- 5 No. 12 Duett - Nur hurtig fort (6:09)
- 6 No. 13 Terzett - Euch werde Lohn in besser'n Welten (6:11)
- 7 No. 14 Quartett - Er sterbe! Doch er soll erst wissen (3:10)
- 8 No. 14 Recitative - Vater Rocco! (1:37)
- 9 No. 15 Duett - O namenlose Freude! (2:30)
- 10 Ouverture - Leonore III in C, Op. 72a (14:06)
- 11 No. 16 Finale - Heil sei dem Tag (2:04)
- 12 No. 16 Finale - Des besten Königs (3:24)
- 13 No. 16 Finale - Du schlossest auf des Edlen Grab (3:40)
- 14 No. 16 Finale - Wer ein holdes Weib errungen (4:10)
- 15 Milton Cross - Curtain calls and programme end (7:36)

Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera
Bruno Walter, conductor