

Horenstein

conducts Beethoven's Missa Solemnis



The late 1950s were good for Horenstein in the concert hall, less good in the recording studio. In January 1958 he conducted a memorable performance of Mahler's Ninth in London, followed later by the Fifth and the Eighth that first alerted British audiences of his affinity for this repertoire, and in February he made his long awaited return to Berlin after twenty-five years, substituting for another conductor at a concert without prior rehearsal that included Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Towards the end of 1958 he was called upon to take care of another emergency when Klemperer developed bronchitis and then, five days later, nearly died after an accident left severe second and third degree burns over large parts of his body.

Klemperer's misfortune, which put him out of action for around nine months, was Horenstein's gain after a frantic management begged him to take over from his disabled colleague for this live performance of the *Missa Solemnis*, one of the most difficult works in the repertoire and the opening event of the centenary edition of the Leeds Triennial Festival. At a press conference explaining the change of conductor, the Earl of Harewood, Director-General of the Festival, told disappointed members of the 320-strong Leeds Festival Chorus that Horenstein "knows the work well – one of the few conductors who do", an observation that might have amused or terrified him since he had never before conducted the piece! Horenstein accepted the engagement only nine days before the concert and during a period that also included two appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra in Swansea almost 300 miles away, which meant traveling back and forth between the two cities for rehearsals. Critical opinion of the *Missa* performance was generally favorable, more so in the regional newspapers of the north than in the national press from London, with particular praise directed at the chorus and the soloists, although all found the acoustics of the Victoria Hall in Leeds wanting for clarity and definition.

Horenstein's appearance at the festival, in the presence of several members of the Royal Family, brought him much-needed exposure and recognition, aided by extensive pre- and post-event media coverage that included a BBC relay of his first Swansea concert with the LSO, a nationwide broadcast of his Vox recording of Beethoven's Ninth as well as a live transmission of the *Missa Solemnis*, all within the space of a week.

The concert in Leeds raised his profile with the public (though not with the record companies), and at the BBC, which invited him to conduct the work again and then record it in London in February 1961. In his liner notes to the release of that recording on the BBC's "Legends" label, Joel Lazar, who served as Horenstein's assistant for two years, defined the qualities that enabled him to interpret the work with such conviction: "It called upon his ability to strike a balance between intensely defined episodes and long structural arcs, between formal organization and deeply felt pathos, and offered him the opportunity to elicit both textural refinement and powerful orchestral sonority. It was precisely the size, stylistic diversity and wide affective range of works such as the *Missa Solemnis* which attracted him due to the intellectual and artistic challenges they posed, as well as the profound satisfaction gained by leading performers and audience alike through the complex emotional, spiritual and philosophical voyages they offered. The power of Jascha Horenstein's performance of the *Missa Solemnis* lay in his ability to accept and characterize to the utmost all the different musics within it without losing track of long-range tonal movement, rhythmic and metric coherence and large-scale formal arch." – *Misha Horenstein*



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horenstein
conducts beethoven · missa solemnis

teresa stich-randall, norma procter, peter pears, kim borg
leeds festival chorus, philharmonia orchestra, jascha horenstein
live bbc broadcast recording, leeds festival, 1958



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BEETHOVEN MISSA SOLEMNIS
STICH-RANDALL, PROCTER, PEARS, BORG, PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA, HORENSTEIN

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BEETHOVEN Missa Solemnis in D major, Op. 123

1. Kyrie. Assai sostenuto (7:36)
2. Gloria. Allegro vivace (16:01)
3. Credo. Allegro ma non troppo (20:11)
4. Sanctus. Adagio (16:27)
5. Agnus Dei. Adagio (15:41)
6. RADIO Applause and conclusion (1:04)

Teresa Stich-Randall, soprano

Norma Procter, alto

Peter Pears, tenor

Kim Borg, bass

Leeds Festival Chorus

Philharmonia Orchestra (solo violin: Hugh Bean)

conducted by Jascha Horenstein

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of the concert

Live BBC recording, 11 October 1958, Victoria Hall, Leeds

Source recording from the Misha Horenstein archive collection

Total duration: 77:00

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