

STOKOWSKI

CONDUCTS WAGNER

□ Götterdämmerung Synthesis :

Siegfried's Rhine Journey - Funeral March - Brünnhilde's Immolation (42:20)
Carnegie Hall, New York, 3rd April 1949

□ Parsifal - Good Friday Spell (10:40)

Carnegie Hall, New York, 6th April 1947

□ Radio Announcement (0:23)

□ Siegfried - Forest Murmurs (8:38)

□ Das Rheingold - Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla (6:47)

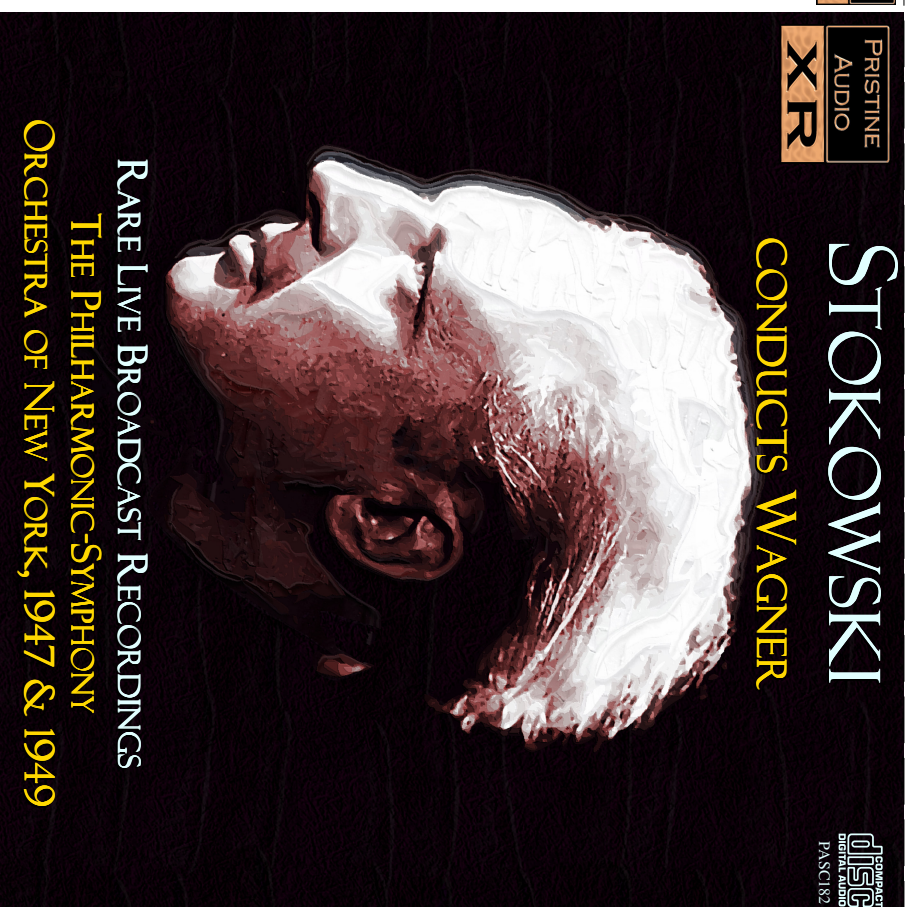
Municipal Auditorium, Birmingham, Alabama, 24th April 1949

The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York
Conducted by Leopold Stokowski

Sourced from tapes in the Jack Baumgarten archive from the collection of Edward Johnson
Tape transfers and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, August 2009
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Leopold Stokowski

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RARE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC RECORDINGS



PASC 182

The New York Philharmonic is the oldest active symphony orchestra in the United States, organized during 1842. Based in New York City, the Philharmonic performs most of its concerts at Avery Fisher Hall. It is one of the five American orchestras commonly referred to as the "Big Five".

In 1921 the Philharmonic merged with New York's National Symphony Orchestra (no relation to the present Washington, D.C. ensemble). With this merger it also acquired the imposing Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg. For the 1922-1923 season Stravinsky and Mengelberg shared the conducting duties, but Stravinsky left after the one shared season. For nine years Mengelberg dominated the scene, although other conductors, among them Bruno Walter, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Igor Stravinsky, and Arturo Toscanini, led about half of each season's concerts. During this period, the Philharmonic became one of the first American orchestras to boast an outdoor symphony series when it began playing low-priced summer concerts at Levisohn Stadium in upper Manhattan. In 1920 the orchestra hired Henry Hadley as "associate conductor" given specific responsibility for the "Americanization" of the orchestra: each of Hadley's concerts featured at least one work by an American-born composer.

In 1924, the Young People's Concerts were expanded into a substantial series of children's concerts under the direction of American pianist-composer-conductor Ernest Schelling. This series became the prototype for concerts of its kind around the country and grew by popular demand to 15 concerts per season by the end of the decade.

Mengelberg and Toscanini both led the Philharmonic in recording sessions for the Victor Talking Machine Company, initially in a recording studio and eventually in Carnegie Hall as electrical recording was improved. All of the early electrical recordings for Victor were made with a single microphone, usually placed near or above the conductor, a process called "Orthophonic." Mengelberg's most successful recording with the Philharmonic was a 1927 performance in Carnegie Hall of Richard Strauss' Ein Heldenleben. Toscanini's recordings with the Philharmonic actually began with a single disc for Brunswick Records in 1926, recorded in a rehearsal hall at Carnegie Hall. Additional Toscanini recordings with the Philharmonic, all for Victor, took place on Carnegie Hall's stage in 1929 and 1936. By the 1936 sessions Victor, now owned by RCA, began to experiment with multiple microphones to achieve more comprehensive reproductions of the orchestra.

The year 1928 marked the New York Philharmonic's last and most important merger: with the New York Symphony Society. The Symphony had been quite innovative in its 50 years prior to the merger. It made its first domestic tour in 1882, introduced educational concerts for young people in 1891, and gave the premieres of works such as Gershwin's Concerto in F and Holst's Egdon Heath. The merger of these two venerable institutions consolidated extraordinary financial and musical resources. At the first joint board meeting in 1928, the chairman, Clarence Mackay, expressed the opinion that "with the forces of the two Societies now united... the Philharmonic-Symphony Society could build up the greatest orchestra in this country if not in the world."

Of course, the merger had ramifications for the musicians of both orchestras. Winthrop Sargeant, a violinist with the Symphony Society and later a writer for The New Yorker, recalled the merger as "a sort of surgical operation in which twenty musicians were removed from the Philharmonic and their places taken by a small surviving band of twenty legionnaires from the New York Symphony. This operation was performed by Arturo Toscanini himself. Fifty-seventh Street wallowed in panic and recrimination." Toscanini, who had guest-conducted for several seasons, became the sole conductor and in 1930 led the group on a European tour that brought immediate international fame to the Orchestra.

That same year nationwide radio broadcasts began. The Orchestra was first heard on CBS directly from Carnegie Hall. To broadcast the Sunday afternoon concerts, CBS paid \$15,000 for the entire season. The radio broadcasts continued without interruption for 38 years. A legend in his own time, Toscanini would prove to be a tough act to follow as the country headed into war.

After an unsuccessful attempt to hire the German conductor, Wilhelm Furtwängler, the English conductor John Barbirolli and the Polish conductor Artur Rodziński were joint replacements for Toscanini in 1936. The following year Barbirolli was given the full conductorship, a post he held until the spring of 1941. In 1943, Rodziński, who had conducted the Orchestra's centennial concert at Carnegie Hall in the preceding year, was appointed Musical Director. He had also conducted the Sunday afternoon radio broadcast when CBS listeners around the country heard the announcer break in on Arthur Rubinstein's performance of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto to update them about the attack on Pearl Harbor. (The initial word of the attack was forwarded by CBS News Correspondent John Charles Daly on his own show before the Philharmonic broadcast.) Soon after the United States entered World War II, Aaron Copland wrote A Lincoln Portrait for the Philharmonic at the request of conductor Andre Kostelanetz as a tribute to and expression of the "magnificent spirit of our country."

Artur Rodziński, Bruno Walter, and Sir Thomas Beecham made a series of recordings with the Philharmonic for Columbia Records during the 1940s. Many of the sessions were held in Liederkranz Hall, a building formerly belonging to a German cultural and musical society. Sony Records later digitally remastered the Beecham recordings for reissue on CD.

Leopold Stokowski and Dimitri Mitropoulos were appointed co-principal conductors in 1949, with Mitropoulos becoming Musical Director in 1951. Mitropoulos, known for championing new composers and obscure operas-in-concert, pioneered in other ways; adding live Philharmonic performances between movies at the Roxy Theatre and taking Edward R. Murrow and the See it Now television audience on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Orchestra. Mitropoulos made a series of recordings for Columbia Records, mostly in mono; near the end of his tenure, he recorded excerpts from Prokofiev's ballet Romeo and Juliet in stereo. In 1957, Mitropoulos and Leonard Bernstein served together as Principal Conductors until, in the course of the season, Bernstein was appointed Music Director, becoming the first American-born-and-trained conductor to head the Philharmonic.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM