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STEREO

Solomon

Beethoven Piano Concertos 1 & 2

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It may be that Solomon gives slightly the more elegant performance of the concerto, Rubinstein slightly the more powerful. But it is quite Certainly the case that both solo performances are in the very first class; less certainly the case that both orchestral performances are, for the New York orchestra does here and there lack something of both the poetry and the precision the Philharmonia do unfailingly bring to the music.

A predisposition on these grounds in favour of the H.M.V. version is further strengthened on consideration of other factors; for though both stereo records offer excellent sound in the quieter passages of the music, the fuller tuttis are more richly as well as more clearly handled by the H.M.V. Both soloists use Beethoven's own cadenzas to the first movement: Rubinstein a version of No. 3, Solomon No. 2, which I hope it will not seem too much of a backhanded compliment to say has the great advantage of being very much shorter...

M.M. The Gramophone, December 1959 - *excerpt from review of Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 1*

Any new recording of the B flat Concerto actually the first of Beethoven's five for piano, despite its numbering — is up against stiff competition from the Decca version by Backhaus and the Vienna Phil, which M.M. praised in the February issue for its sobriety, its avoidance of any striving after effect, and its fine full recording... Solomon, while still making it clear that this is early Beethoven and not Mozart, takes the work less weightily, with what might almost be thought a "period" sense of proportion. The first movement is taken rather faster than in the Decca issue, and both soloist and orchestra give us admirably alert playing which stresses the *con brio* part of the tempo-indication. This care over authentic tempi - observed again in the following movement, which already, in this his first major orchestral work, foreshadows Beethoven's later "pathetic" style; the slow speed adopted is a true *Adagio*. It is unfortunate that the recording does not match the quality of the performance: the orchestral opening is rather flimsy in tone, and the piano's first entry sounds almost as if its microphone is not properly "up" — in general, indeed, the soloist seems rather distant, and he is at times almost concealed by the strings. In the cadenza there is some distortion, while in forte passages of the Adagio the tone is congested, and long sustained piano notes suffer a faint but persistent "wow". A pity, for this is a performance worth better presentation.

L.S. The Gramophone, September 1953 - *excerpt from review of Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 2*

Transfer notes

These two recordings, made just four years apart, seemed on first hearing to belong to different eras. The stereo 1956 recording of the *Concerto No. 1* was excellently made; this remastering serves only to enhance an already fine sound and breathe a little more life into it. By contrast the 1952 *Concerto No. 2*, made at Kingsway Hall rather than Abbey Road, has been greatly revived from its dim and dull origins, and cured of the majority of the flaws identified in its first review in 1953 as a result. I've also been able to cure the wow and flutter issues referred to in the review, and despite the mono sound, this Ambient Stereo presentation, retaining the central mono image but allowing reverberant space around the performers, goes along way to bringing the older recording up toward the very high technical standards set by the first concerto. **AR**

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Solomon

Beethoven

Piano Concerto No. 1
Piano Concerto No. 2

Philharmonia Orchestra
Herbert Menges/André Cluytens

London studio recordings, 1953 and 1952

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