



# Max Fiedler

## The Complete Studio Recordings

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The interest of these performances lies first and foremost — not to mention finally and most importantly — in the tempos: in the way they are chosen, established, and shrewdly modified by Fiedler in the course of performances which so interestingly live, move and have their being. There are other points of interest. The nature of the use of string portamentos: in the case of Fiedler and the Berlin Philharmonic, the selective and highly discriminating use of it. But it is tempo which is of paramount interest...

Richard Osborne, *Gramophone*, November 2000 (*excerpt*)

### Producer's Note

Max Fiedler (1859 – 1939) is one of only two conductors with a direct link to Brahms to have recorded his works; the other is Felix Weingartner. Yet, as Christopher Dymont pointed out in a pair of articles published in *Classical Record Collector* a decade ago (Summer and Autumn, 2002), it would be an overstatement to call him a protégé of the composer. Fiedler knew Brahms personally, and likely heard him conduct on a few occasions; however, it was as a follower of Hans von Bülow that Fiedler learned what he believed to be the authentic Brahms style, a highly subjective, rhythmically free approach that was at odds with the more restrained Classicism of Fritz Steinbach, who provided a model for the young Weingartner. Nevertheless, by early in the last century, Fiedler had earned the reputation in Germany as a Brahms specialist, and it was in that capacity that he made his only commercial records for Grammophon/Polydor, all of which are presented here.

The B flat concerto set has an interesting history. Originally recorded over three days in June of 1939 with four takes made for nearly every side, Ney was unhappy with some of the results, and wrote to the conductor in the fall of that year about scheduling a remake session. Fiedler was on tour in Stockholm at the time, and replied that it would have to wait until his return. However, his death there in December of that year appeared to doom the project.

Ultimately, Grammophon scheduled a session for April of the following year with a "ghost" conductor (who remains unknown, although Alois Melichar has been suggested as a likely suspect). Five of the twelve sides were done over, with the original Fiedler-conducted takes remaining on Side 3 of the first movement (CD 2, Track 3, 8:41 to 13:11), all of the second and third movements, and the first side of the fourth movement (to 3:18 on Track 6). As far as I am aware, this is the first release to acknowledge the extent of Fiedler's participation.

Multiple sources were assembled for each recording, and the best portions of each were used for transfer. The overture and the Fourth Symphony came from laminated American Brunswick's; the Second Symphony mostly from black label 1930s Polydor pressings; and the concerto from three different 1940s Grammophon and Polydor editions. Even so, some inescapable noise and distortion inherent in the original recordings remain.

Mark Obert-Thorn

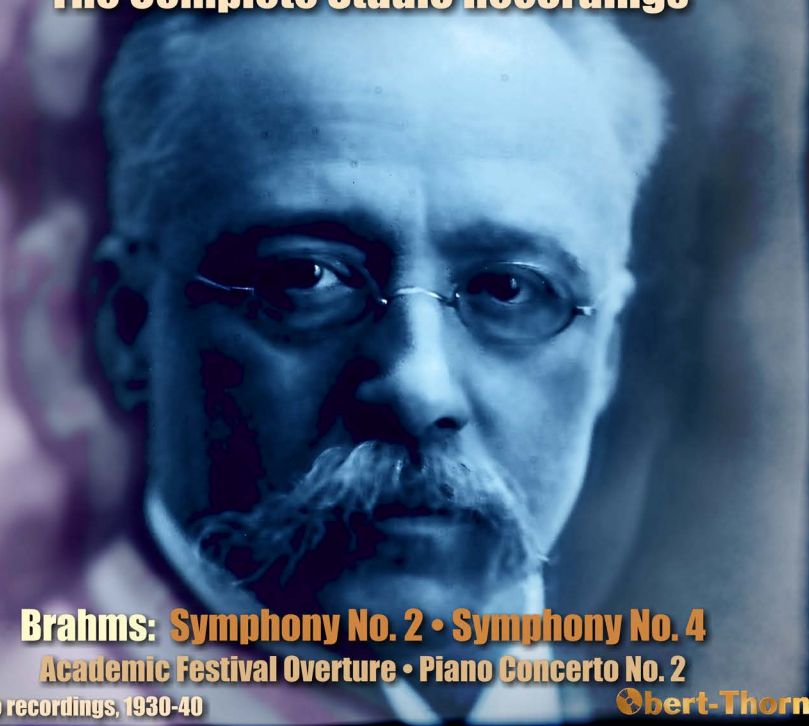
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# Max Fiedler

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**Brahms: Symphony No. 2 • Symphony No. 4**

**Academic Festival Overture • Piano Concerto No. 2**

Studio recordings, 1930-40

Obert-Thorn

## Fiedler conducts Brahms

### Disc One

- 1 Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80 (9:35)

### Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

- 2 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (14:57)  
3 2nd Mvt. - Adagio non troppo (9:25)  
4 3rd Mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino) (5:06)  
5 4th Mvt. - Allegro con spirito (9:01)

### Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98\*

- 6 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (12:37)  
7 2nd Mvt. - Andante moderato (12:00)

### Disc Two

- 1 3rd Mvt. - Allegro giocoso - poco meno presto (6:18)  
2 4th Mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (11:03)

### Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 83

- 3 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (17:42)  
4 2nd Mvt. - Allegro appassionato (9:05)  
5 3rd Mvt. - Andante (13:15) (Tibor de Machula, solo cello)  
6 4th Mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (9:42)

Elly Ney piano

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

\*Berlin State Opera Orchestra

Max Fiedler conductor

COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO  
PASC 363

Producer & Audio Restoration Engineer:  
Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Max Fiedler

### Academic Festival Overture

Recorded 1931 • Matrix nos: 1171 and 1172 bi • First  
published on Gramophon 27271

### Symphony No. 2

Recorded 1931 • Matrix nos.: 1162 ½, 1163 ½, 1164 ½,  
1165 ½, 1166, 1167 ½, 1168, 1169 and 1170 bi • First  
published on Gramophon 95453 through 95457

### Symphony No. 4

Recorded 1930 • Matrix nos.: 993, 994, 995 ½, 1001, 997  
½, 998 ½, 999, 1000, 1002 ½, 1003 ¾ and 1004 ½ bi •  
First issued on Gramophon 95356 through 95361.  
Additional pitch stabilisation: Andrew Rose

### Piano Concerto No. 2

Recorded 1, 2 & 5 June 1939 and 29 April 1940 • Matrix  
nos.: 1470<sup>4</sup>, 1471<sup>2</sup>, 1139<sup>3</sup>, 1474<sup>4</sup>, 1141<sup>4</sup>, 1142<sup>4</sup>, 1143<sup>3</sup>,  
1144<sup>3</sup>, 1145<sup>3</sup>, 1146<sup>4</sup>, 1472<sup>1</sup> and 1473<sup>4</sup> GS 9 • First issued  
on Gramophon 67566 through 67571

Total duration: 2hr 19:46

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