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Toscanini

Brahms in London, Volume 2

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This performance of the Third Symphony is the finest Toscanini has left us. As if to illuminate the point further, Manoug Parikian, the leader of the Philharmonia Orchestra for these Toscanini concerts, later said that for him the most sublime and unforgettable moment of the series was the third movement of the Third Symphony. The opening cello theme had, according to Parikian, an unusual tenderness to it that stirred the depths of human feeling. It was, he added, "...one of my most profoundly moving experiences, and a lasting reminder of Toscanini's undoubted genius".

Great recordings of this work are thin on the ground, possibly because it is Brahms' most misunderstood symphony. It is a work that combines passion and resignation in equal measure and few conductors have been able to unite those two contrasting facets into a workable performance. This is the symphony where Toscanini's tempi are most diverse - the first movement of this Philharmonia account is almost 1½ minutes faster than on his NBC recording. Because this symphony, the most unique of all Brahms' symphonies in that it ends all of its movements piano or pianissimo, is so emotionally complex it is surprising that Toscanini, ever the objectivist, is actually able to encourage the Philharmonia to play with such astonishing weight and passion. The first movement positively surges, the finale opens in an exhilarating fashion, with strings astoundingly fleet. In between, the contrasts between the melancholic phrasing and wild outbursts are laid bare. Pianissimos are here given suppleness, and the most fearsome fortes seem to come from the core of the earth, so shattering are they. No wonder this performance is one of the most memorable things Toscanini did in his last years.

Mark Bridle, MusicWeb International, 2000 - *excerpt from review of previous issue*

Transfer notes

This release quite literally picks up where Volume 1 left off - with the second of Toscanini's two London Brahms concerts, mixing archive BBC radio commentary and high quality EMI music recordings, all benefiting greatly from XR remastering to bring the finest possible sound quality from this historic evening of music. Great care has been taken to try and preserve continuity between the very different sound quality of the two sources and prevent any clunky sonic lurches between high and low fidelity. I've also worked hard on getting maximum clarity from Sir Adrian Boult's short interval talk. As for the music - well happily this has (post-remastering) a fine, open sound, with great frequency extension both in the high treble and in the rich, warm lower reaches of the orchestra. As with the first volume, the effect is totally transformative: from a constricted, boxed-in, congested and distant sound to something that's positively alive, and appears as a true musical narrative, vibrantly unfolding directly in front of you as you listen today. **A.R.**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Symphonies 3 & 4 Haydn Variations

The Philharmonia Orchestra

Royal Festival Hall, 1 October 1952

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BRAMHMS SYMPHONIES 3 AND 4
TOSCANINI, PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Toscanini**

Recorded 1 October 1952
Royal Festival Hall, London
BBC Announcer: Frank Phillips

Total duration: **1hr 40:39**

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Toscanini Brahms in London

- 1 Opening announcement and National Anthem (3:07)
- 2 Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a (16:45)

Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

- 3 1st mvt. - *Allegro con brio* (12:41)
- 4 2nd mvt. - *Andante* (8:39)
- 5 3rd mvt. - *Poco allegretto* (6:32)
- 6 4th mvt. - *Allegro* (9:26)

- 1 Interval talk, Sir Adrian Boult (3:34)

- 2 Opening announcement, 2nd half (0:53)

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

- 3 1st mvt. - *Allegro non troppo* (11:18)
- 4 2nd mvt. - *Andante moderato* (10:33)
- 5 3rd mvt. - *Allegro giocoso* (6:18)
- 6 4th mvt. - *Allegro energico e passionato* (9:10)
- 7 Applause and closing announcement (1:43)

The Philharmonia Orchestra Arturo Toscanini

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