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SIR THOMAS BEECHAM

Strauss Don Quixote • Bloch Violin Concerto

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Producer's Note

This release brings together two world première recordings of concertante works made by Sir Thomas Beecham in the 1930s. The studio recording of *Don Quixote* has an interesting pedigree. Recorded by Victor at the behest of EMI in 1932 and issued on that label in the USA, it was released on Columbia in Europe, perhaps the only recording to appear simultaneously on these two rival imprints. This was most likely a result of the then-recent merger of English Columbia and HMV, Victor's British affiliate, into EMI. Beecham was a Columbia artist, so the apparent reasoning was that he had to continue to appear on that label in the UK. Within a few years, however, his name was on both labels interchangeably.

Beecham is heard here conducting the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, an ensemble with which he had first appeared four years earlier along with another debutant, Vladimir Horowitz, in a notorious performance of the Tchaikovsky B-flat minor concerto which saw the two taking divergent interpretive paths. Apparently, he had no similar difficulties working with the orchestra's first desk players, which included future conductor Alfred Wallenstein handling the pivotal cello part. The recording is rather curiously balanced, with the brass and winds seeming to overpower the strings, and Wallenstein sounding rather recessed – probably playing in his usual place in the orchestra rather than up front. This recording was simultaneously made for Victor's Program Transcription series, an early attempt at long-playing records. Each 33 1/3 rpm side was the equivalent of two 78 rpm sides, which accounts for the skipped number every third matrix.

While Beecham would go on to re-record the Strauss with his own Royal Philharmonic and Paul Tortelier as soloist fifteen years later, he never re-recorded (or indeed made an official studio recording) of the Bloch Violin Concerto, even though he had already made three classic concerto recordings with the soloist, Joseph Szigeti. Szigeti premièred the Bloch in Cleveland under Mitropoulos in December, 1938. The present recording of the first British performance with Beecham dates from the following March. Later that month, he performed and recorded it in Paris with Munch, and followed up with a further broadcast under Mengelberg in Amsterdam that November.

While the Munch recording and Mengelberg broadcast have been reissued several times on CD, the Beecham performance has curiously been unavailable since a single American Beecham Society LP release in 1973. That transfer, which was the basis for what Andrew Rose used for his present XR restoration, filled in four gaps in the original acetates (two in the first movement, and one each in the others), each lasting about 30 seconds, with the Munch studio recording. A slight difference in sound demarcates each patch. Although some disc noise and distortion remain and the first note of the third movement is clipped, the recording is valuable not only in preserving a historic collaboration, but also in presenting an infrequent recorded instance of Sir Thomas conducting contemporary music. **Mark Obert-Thorn**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

Obert-Thorn

Beecham conducts

R. Strauss
Don Quixote

Alfred Wallenstein, cello
Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra
of New York

Bloch
Violin Concerto

Joseph Szigeti, violin
London Philharmonic Orchestra

Studio and Live Recordings • 1932/1939

BEECHAM *conducts* Strauss & Bloch

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R. STRAUSS *Don Quixote*

(Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character), Op. 35

- [1] Introduction (6:17)
- [2] Theme: Don Quixote, the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance (0:56)
- [3] Sancho Panza (1:06)
- [4] Variation I: The Adventure with the Windmills (2:27)
- [5] Variation II: The Battle with the Sheep (1:34)
- [6] Variation III: Dialogue of Knight and Squire (7:32)
- [7] Variation IV: The Adventure with the Penitents (1:57)
- [8] Variation V: The Knight's Vigil (3:59)
- [9] Variation VI: The False Dulcinea (1:09)
- [10] Variation VII: The Ride through the Air (0:59)
- [11] Variation VIII: The Adventure of the Enchanted Boat (1:43)
- [12] Variation IX: The Combat with the Two Magicians (1:05)
- [13] Variation X: The Defeat of Don Quixote by the Knight of the White Moon (3:50)
- [14] Finale: The Death of Don Quixote (4:18)

Alfred Wallenstein (*cello*); René Pollain (*viola*); Michel Piastro (*violin*)

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York

BLOCH Violin Concerto

- [15] 1st Mvt. - Allegro deciso (18:10)
- [16] 2nd Mvt. - Andante (6:25)
- [17] 3rd Mvt. - Deciso (10:05)

Joseph Szigeti (*violin*)

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Sir Thomas Beecham *conductor*

Producers and Audio Restoration Engineers:
Mark Obert-Thorn (R. Strauss)
and Andrew Rose (Bloch)

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Cover artwork based on a photograph
of Sir Thomas Beecham

Strauss Don Quixote
Recorded 7 April 1932 in Carnegie Hall, New York
Matrix nos.: CSHQ 71658-1, 71659-1, 71661-2,
71663-1, 71665-2, 71666-2, 71668-1, 71669-1,
71671-1 and 71672-2
First issued as Victor 7589/93 in album M-144 (USA)
and as Columbia LX 186/90 (UK)

Bloch Violin Concerto
Live recording, 9 March 1939 in Queen's Hall, London
First issued on The Sir Thomas Beecham Society (USA)
LP WSA-5

Total duration: 73:32

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