

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 411

FRITZ REINER

conducts Richard Strauss

Pristine
XR

In 1953 the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was a potentially great orchestra but one in a low state of morale. CSO players remember that even in his first rehearsal as their Music Director Reiner took them apart and put them back together again, with spectacular results. The work they rehearsed was a party piece for both conductor and orchestra, Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and, appropriately enough, that was the first work they recorded together. It was the beginning of a great musical partnership and a series of great recordings.

Of course, a whole number of factors contribute to the success of Reiner's Chicago recordings, and not the least of these is the combination of conductor and orchestra operating—as one player puts it “on a hair trigger”. Much of Reiner's sinister reputation was founded on his systematic testing of players. He would often ask his first chair players to play a difficult passage repeatedly, perhaps paying special attention to the accompaniment of the solo instrument as a pretext. Especially during his first two or three seasons in Chicago, Reiner was seeing what he had.

Principal Trumpet Adolph Herseth remembers one rehearsal of Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* where Reiner made him go over the same passage—the octave leap to top C in the “Convalescent” section—up to a dozen times. Each time Reiner would say “I need to hear the violas/flutes/etc”. Eventually Reiner turned to Herseth himself and asked how many more times he could manage it. Herseth looked at his watch and said, “I've got till 12:30”.

When you listen to a Reiner disc, you are listening to a performance. RCA's recording schedule was worked into the programming of Reiner's concert season and so each piece that was recorded was preceded by four or five rehearsals and two performances, one on Thursday evening, and the other on Friday afternoon. So at the session, usually on the following Saturday, all Reiner had to do was play a few passages of extreme dynamics so the recording team could adjust microphones and levels where necessary, and then play through the piece. Recordings generally went smoothly and quickly. Producer Richard Mohr modestly explains the excellence of the recorded sound as being the result of engineer Layton's fondness for violins coupled with his own for cellos!

"The great leveller - Reiner in Chicago", by David Papp, Gramophone, October 1993 (excerpt)

Producer's Note

Fritz Reiner is of course closely associated with the music of Richard Strauss. His first stereo recordings, and the first conducted by RCA for what would become their legendary *Living Stereo* imprint featured Strauss, and it's from those first sessions that *Also Sprach* is taken. In fact the programme here was to an extent chosen for me - it mirrors precisely that of my first concert in New York at Carnegie Hall in April 1914, celebrating Strauss's 150th birthday. And how better to become intimately acquainted with the music than by presenting an XR remastering of the maestro at work in sound quality that conveys every fine detail better than ever before? **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Fritz Reiner

conducts
Richard Strauss

Also Sprach Zarathustra
Burleske
Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche

Pristine
XR
PASC 411
STEREO



Byron Janis, piano
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
NBC Symphony Orchestra

Studio & Live recordings, 1952-57

