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HORENSTEIN

Brahms Symphony No. 3

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STEREO

There is little doubt that Horenstein's Vox records of the 1950s did much to foster his recording career, but it remains the case that, of mainstream Austro-German classic repertoire, comparatively little remains on disc to provide more than a passing glimpse of this great conductor's best interpretive gifts at work. Born on May 6, 1898, Horenstein moved with his parents from Kiev following the 1905 uprising; via Königsberg, they finally found their way to Vienna. Jascha Horenstein's formative musical education was rooted solidly in the Viennese classics, but it is not hard to imagine the tremendous effect of early exposure to the music of Strauss, Mahler, and the New Viennese masters then gaining ascendancy. Such was the backdrop to Horenstein's much-vaunted musical catholicity, a fact in itself born out by the breadth, if not the extent, of his recorded heritage. But with the growth of National Socialism in the late 1920s and early 30s, it was the rising tide of anti-Semitism that threatened to divert and obfuscate a brilliant career. Following Horenstein's 1928 appointment to the General Music Directorship of the Düsseldorf Opera, the management began to receive letters that read "we want a true German and not a Semitic stranger, one who has no artistic nor racial purity. . . ." As the Nazi death-grip systematically forbade Jews from all official positions, so Horenstein's future role became increasingly untenable, with the result that he fled Germany in 1933, destined to spend the rest of his career as an itinerant guest conductor.

These Brahms recordings date from 1958, the year in which he returned to postwar Germany for the first time. Writing at the time to a friend, he opined, "It is now clear that, under no circumstances can I live in Germany, save in a luxury hotel and working as a guest for a week, a month or perhaps longer, but never otherwise. Even then, my life would be monastic, confined to a retreat; the orchestra would almost become a laboratory in which one did one's work, and then, safely back to the hotel." [...]

In the Third Symphony, Horenstein seems somewhat more measured and considered in his approach, no bad thing, it might be said, in this most serene and cerebral of Brahms symphonies. In this regard, I found this flexible, reflective, but never self-indulgently nostalgic performance deeply satisfying, and the countless, perhaps slightly dated felicities of orchestral playing—the usual string portamentos and the highly characterful sonorities of the SWF SO's winds and horns—that one might usually associate with the golden epoch are certainly nowhere out of place in this performance. In this regard especially, it put me in mind of one of my favorite vintage Brahms Threes, that by Felix Weingartner and the London Philharmonic, recorded exactly 20 years before Horenstein's, and in many regards actively prefiguring its mood and gesture. Midway between the two, of course, came the celebrated Mengelberg/Concertgebouw performance of 1944, which could hardly provide stronger or more arresting contrast. In every sense, Mengelberg saw this as pulsing, vital music, and so how much more motoric, urgent, and impulsive his account seems alongside the other two is hard to put adequately into words; but what matters is that each, in its different ways, is a truly great performance, even if none may be said to wholly stand on its own.

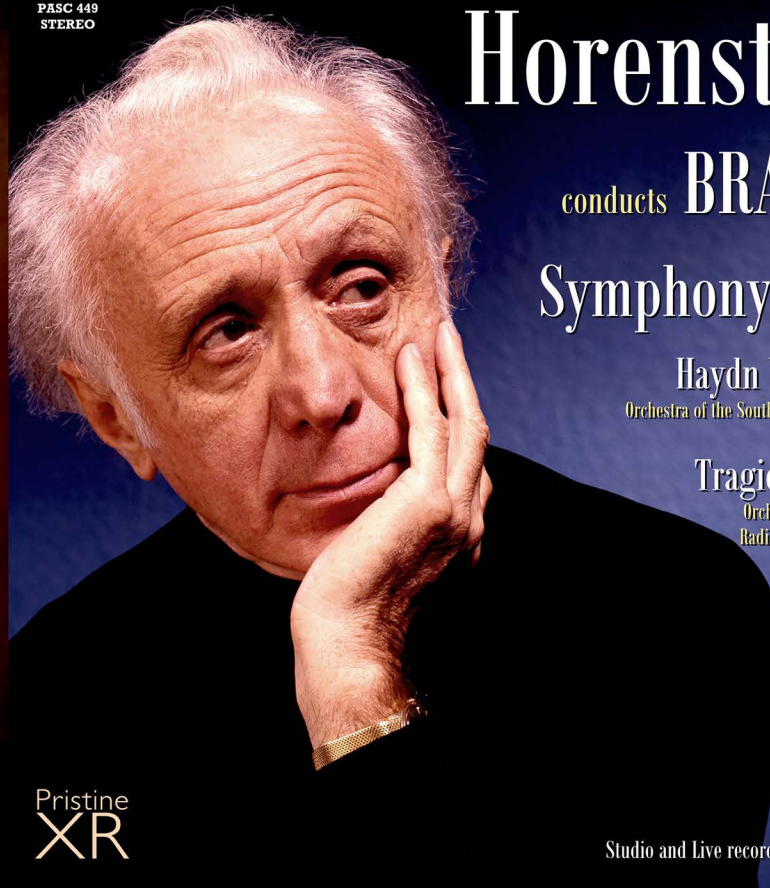
Michael Jameson, *Fanfare* magazine, Sept/Oct 2000 (excerpts)

Producer's Note

As I suggested in the notes to Horenstein's 1957 Vox recordings of music by Berg and Schoenberg (*PASC 445*), these earliest of Vox's stereo recordings indicate a degree of experimentation with the new concept of soundstage and twin-channel recording. Both the Symphony and the Variations demonstrated an exceptionally wide image with a distinct "hole in the middle" as a result. A combination of digital phase alignment and a slight stereo narrowing (to about 85% of the original width) has done much to produce a far more satisfying and coherent sound picture in the two German recordings.

XR remastering has, once again, done wonders for the tonal balance of the orchestras in all three of these recordings, though at times it proved tricky to find an acceptable balance between full clarity in the upper woodwinds and a tendency in the violins to a somewhat wiry tone, almost certainly as a result of microphone placement during recording the Vox sessions. The Paris orchestra was considerably more "forward" in tone and this has been somewhat ameliorated. This mono broadcast recording has been presented here in Ambient Stereo, preserving the mono image whilst allowing a degree of ambient "air" around it. Once again I'm grateful to Misha Horenstein for source recordings and help and advice on repertoire and background information.

Andrew Rose



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Horenstein

conducts **BRAHMS**

Symphony No. 3

Haydn Variations

Orchestra of the Southwest German Radio

Tragic Overture

Orchestre National de la
Radiodiffusion Française

Studio and Live recordings, 1956 - 1957

HORENSTEIN *conducts Brahms*

BRAHMS Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (9:18)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante (9:34)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Poco allegretto (7:27)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro (9:45)

5 BRAHMS Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op.56 (19:58)

Orchestra of the Southwest German Radio (SWDR)

6 BRAHMS Tragic Overture, Op.81 (12:51)

Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française

Jascha Horenstein *conductor*



PASC 449

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Jascha Horenstein

Symphony No. 3, Haydn Variations
Recorded 20-30 October 1957
First issued (mono) on Vox PL10620

Tragic Overture
Live broadcast, 19 November, 1956

Total duration: 68:53

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