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DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 459

YEHUDI MENUHIN

Elgar and Bruch Violin Concertos

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The concerto has the great boon of Elgar's direction ; and it is no small pleasure to mark the youthful zest of Menuhin ... The first thing that strikes me is the remarkable strength of the lad. Some of his high notes flute, under my fibre, but they never fluff. He is strong rhythmically, too. I think he makes rather too heavy going of some of the decoration—as if it were material being developed. If you may feel, as on the whole I do, that the emotion is not quite purely from within, that need not spoil a lot of your pleasure in the way in which the soloist goes it with all his power ... There is so much fine ripe fiddling that one can well sit back, add the glamour of imagination, and wish the youth a long life in which to ripen in heart and spirit. If that ripening grows as surely as his fiddling skill, he will be a great man...

W.R.A., The Gramophone, November 1932 (excerpt)

Producer's Note

When the fifteen year-old Yehudi Menuhin stepped into the newly-opened Abbey Road studios to make his first concerto recording in November, 1931, he was already not only a seasoned recording veteran, but also a celebrated international phenomenon – a violin prodigy whose performances had amazed musicians and audiences alike, not merely by his technical abilities, but also by the emotional depth and maturity he was able to convey in his performances.

Legendary producer Fred Gaisberg was sufficiently impressed by the success of the Bruch sessions that he hit upon an idea of pairing him with Elgar for a recording of the latter's violin concerto. Gaisberg had tried unsuccessfully for years to get Fritz Kreisler to record the concerto he had premièred with the composer in 1910, even offering to send Elgar to Berlin to conduct it. With the composer's advancing age and the sense that time was running out, he passed the score on to Menuhin, seeing the violinist as "a youthful and pliant performer without prejudice, who would respond best to [Elgar's] instruction."

Menuhin quickly fell in love with the work. After trying it out before his mentor George Enescu, he travelled to London in July of 1932 to rehearse and record it with the composer, who was already an admirer of his artistry. The story of that meeting is well-known, with Elgar so pleased that he cut the rehearsal short to go off to the races. The recording which followed has attained a legendary status, rarely going out of the catalogue.

The Elgar was first reissued on LP for the composer's centenary in 1957, after which EMI destroyed their metal masters, per the practice of the time, believing they had preserved the recording in the ultimate listening format. For a 1972 LP reissue, Anthony Griffith had to fall back on crackly British HMV shellac 78s for source material. EMI deemed this unacceptably noisy for their first CD reissue in 1989, and the quieter but less vivid 1957 transfer was revived.

By the time of its second CD reissue in 1992, EMI had learned that superior copies existed on the Victor label, and engineer Andrew Walter borrowed a "Z" pressing set from an American collector for his transfer. The same copy was later lent to me for my Naxos restoration in 1999. For the present release, I drew upon three Victor copies (one "Z" and two "Gold" label pressings), filtering minimally in order to present what I believe to be the most open sound yet for this classic recording. (The occasional recurring squeaking noises on the first sides of the first and last movements are in the original masters.)

The Bruch was not first issued on LP until 1976, when EMI brought out a box of early Menuhin recordings for the violinist's 60th birthday. As far as I have been able to determine, there has never been an "official" CD transfer of the recording, although several labels have reissued it from commercial 78 pressings, including one I did for Naxos. I have newly transferred it here from the best sides of one "Z" and two "Gold" label Victor pressings, again making minimal adjustments to the original sound.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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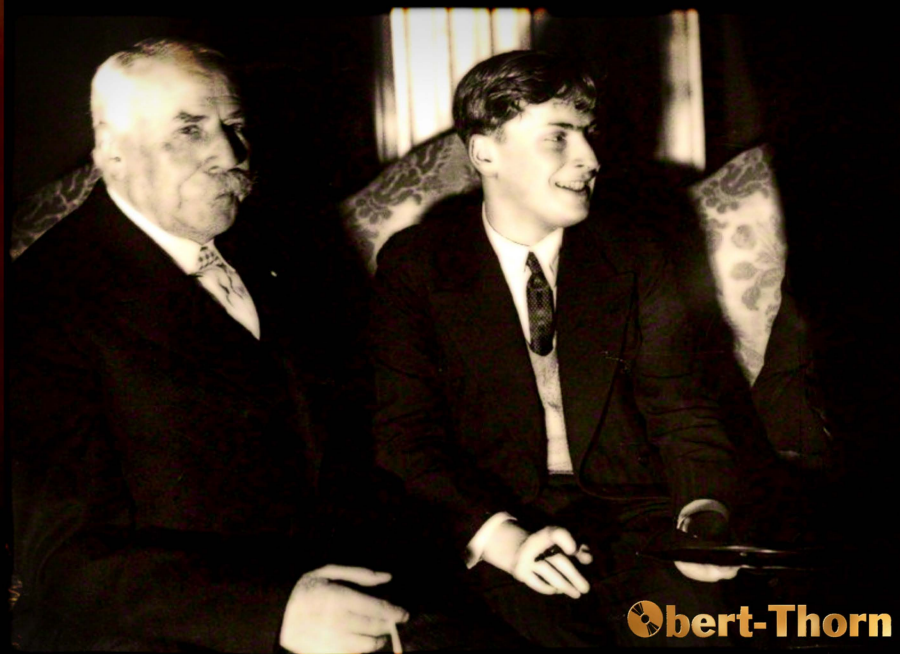
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YEHUDI MENUHIN

The First Concerto Recordings, 1931/32

ELGAR Violin Concerto in B minor
BRUCH Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor

London Symphony Orchestra
Sir Edward Elgar • Sir Landon Ronald



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YEHUDI MENUHIN *The First Concerto Recordings*

BRUCH Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

- 1 1st mvt. - Prelude: Allegro moderato (7:38)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Adagio (8:13)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Finale: Allegro energico (6:51)

London Symphony Orchestra *Sir Landon Ronald*

Recorded 25-26 November 1931 in Abbey Road Studio 1, London
Matrix nos.: 2B 2022-2, 2023-2, 2024-3, 2025-1A, 2026-2 & 2027-2
First issued on HMV DB 161 1/3

ELGAR Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro (17:28)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante (13:07)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro molto - (10:08)
- 4 3rd mvt. - Cadenza (accompagnata: Lento) - Allegro molto (9:11)

London Symphony Orchestra *Sir Edward Elgar*

Recorded 14-15 July 1932 in Abbey Road Studio 1, London
Matrix nos: 2B 2968-2A, 2969-2A, 2970-1A, 2971-2A, 2972-1A, 2973-2A,
2974-1A, 2975-1A, 2976-2A, 2977-1A, 2978-1 & 2979-2
First issued on HMV DB 175 1/6

Yehudi Menuhin *violin*

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Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn

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on a photograph of
Elgar and Menuhin

Total duration: 72:36

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