

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM  
*The ABC Blue Network Concerts, Volume 1*

Pristine  
XR

NBC expanded so rapidly that by 1927 it found itself with an excess of affiliates in the same cities, so it split its programming into two separate networks, called the Red and the Blue networks. After the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) declared in 1941 that no company could own more than one radio network, NBC in 1943 sold the less-lucrative Blue Network to Edward J. Noble, the millionaire maker of Life Savers candy, who initially renamed it the American Broadcasting System before settling on the name the American Broadcasting Company, Inc. (ABC). ABC was the smallest of the major radio networks and distinguished itself by hiring popular singer Bing Crosby to perform on a weekly variety series. As a precondition for his employment, Crosby required that he be allowed to prerecord the program for later broadcast; as a result, ABC became a pioneer in the field of magnetic recording.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes on the birth of the American Broadcasting Company

A major priority of the Blue Network was to form a new identity, one that would mark a break with the past. In December, 1945 [*sic*], the FCC approved the transfer of The Blue Network, Inc.'s broadcast licenses to American Broadcasting Company. Beginning on January 22, 1945, the network's opening and closing announcements changed to "The Blue Network of the American Broadcasting Company"; starting February 18, the same wording was instituted as the network outcue for station breaks. On June 15, 1945, the Blue Network formally changed its name to the American Broadcasting Company. They were not alone in desiring this catchy acronym. Two prior claimants were bought out prior to June 1945, and in negotiations with the Associated Broadcasting Corp. in December 1945, it acquired the rights to the name "ABC" from yet a third party. From June 1945 forward, the entity has been known generally as the American Broadcasting Company.

*Wikipedia* notes on the birth of the American Broadcasting Company

*Producer's Note*

As indicated in our notes here, ABC, the American Broadcasting Company, had a somewhat unusual and protracted birth. The company and, in particular, its radio network, were still in a state of transition when, in April 1945, it acquired the services of Sir Thomas Beecham to conduct a series of four concerts with a little-known orchestra billed on air as the "Blue Network Symphony Orchestra", and more prosaically in the New York Times radio listings as simply "Sir Thomas Beecham, conducting a Symphonic Orchestra". Quite from where the members of this orchestra were drawn is open to some guesswork: the members of the New York Philharmonic were engaged on the morning of the first broadcast in an 11am youth concert at Carnegie Hall - could some of these players also have made it to the 4pm live broadcast for ABC? Toscanini had no engagements with his NBC Symphony Orchestra that month - might some of them moonlighted on the very same Blue Network which had traditionally been their home when it was under the NBC umbrella? Beecham, meanwhile, was in New York to conduct the Rochester Orchestra in two concerts at Carnegie Hall in March and a third (a ballet) on 6th April 1945, at the Met. Might he have run through with them the twenty various shorter items which made up these four broadcasts? And would the players go on to form the same "ABC Symphony Orchestra" that composer Roy Harris conducted in his own music three years later? Maybe answers will be unearthed as this series continues. And it's certainly an interesting collection of music, including "radio premières" of music credited to Handel-Beecham, one of which features the then Lady Beecham, Betty Humby, on piano. Of particular historic interest is the second in the series, which was hastily converted into a memorial concert for the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose funeral service was taking place at the White House as the broadcast proceeded, something which entailed leaving the Unfinished Symphony literally unfinished as the station cut to a live commentator on the event. Sonically the recordings are more than adequate for AM radio broadcasts of the era, if largely lacking in the upper frequencies one might wish for in a hi-fi recording. They were preserved on 33rpm acetate discs from which these restorations were drawn.

Andrew Rose

**BEECHAM**  
**The ABC Blue Network Concerts**  
Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

**VOLUME ONE: 7 APRIL 1945**

**NICOLAI** Overture to The Merry Wives of Windsor

**ELGAR** Serenade For Strings

**HANDEL-BEECHAM** The Great Elopement

**DELIUS** The Walk to the Paradise Garden

**J. STRAUSS II** Voices of Spring Waltz

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Previously unissued live broadcast recordings

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BEECHAM The ABC Blue Network Concerts, Volume I  
BEECHAM, Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

## BEECHAM *The ABC Blue Network Concerts, Volume 1*

COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO  
PASC 461

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Sir Thomas Beecham

Total duration: 54:43

- 1 Introduction (0:54)
- 2 NICOLAI The Merry Wives of Windsor - Overture (9:04)

### ELGAR *Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20*

- 3 1st mvt. - Allegro piacevole (3:23)
- 4 2nd mvt. - Larghetto (6:17)
- 5 3rd mvt. - Allegretto (3:32)

### 6 HANDEL-BEECHAM The Great Elopement - Selections (14:38)

### 7 DELIUS The Walk to the Paradise Garden (9:45)

### 8 J STRAUSS II Frühlingsstimmen (Voices of Spring Waltz) Op. 410 (7:10)

Live broadcast on ABC/Blue Network, 4pm, 7 April 1945

Announcer: Milton Cross

Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

*Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor*

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