

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM

The ABC Blue Network Concerts, Volume 2

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In his explanatory notes, producer and editor Andrew Rose traces the history of the Red and Blue Networks, subsidiaries of the original NBC ownership, forced by FCC regulations to break up a possible monopoly of radio networks. In June 1945 the Blue Network became the ABC Network; prior, in April, Sir Thomas Beecham had accepted a contract for four concerts: "Sir Thomas Beecham conducting a Symphonic Orchestra."

Likely, these responsive players derived from assorted members of both the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony. This concert of 7 April 1945 had been preserved on acetate 33 rpm records. The broadcasts originated at the Ritz (now Walter Kerr) Theater, 219 W. 48th Street, in Manhattan. Milton Cross does the introductory honors for this broadcast. The popular "lollipop" by Nicolai, his *Overture to The Merry Wives of Windsor*, enjoys an easy brio and aerial resonance. Of more innate note, we have some live Elgar, his youthful *Serenade for Strings*, whose lovely Larghetto movement elicits applause for its own sake. An incident on the life of the British dramatist Sheridan gave rise to Sir Thomas Beecham's selected suite from Handel, *The Great Elopement*, here in its first radio performance. The sonics for this AM radio broadcast seem a mite constricted at the top – I mean the horns – but the bass registers and the quality of perkiness in the ABC strings and winds more than warrants our musical diversion. A passing hompipe frolics and huffs with "Rule Britannia" not much hidden in its figures.

Rare is the Beecham pops concert that does not contain at least one item from his favored Frederick Delius. The composer's *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* (1906) serves as an orchestral addition to his opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (1901). The locale will provide the doomed lovers an eternal source of solace after their love-death. We hear more than a fair shade of Wagner's "Forest Murmurs" as the music evolves into the lovers' main theme, here set in a radiant B Major. With the alternately thunderous and lilting *Voices of Spring* – one of the few Strauss waltzes he led on records as far back as 1933 with the London Philharmonic (CAX 8565) – Sir Thomas concludes a thoroughly charming hour of music that "leaves the memory with difficulty." We from time to time hear Beecham's guttural encouragements to his spry ensemble.

Gary Lemco Audiophile Audition - review of Volume 1 of this series (PASC461)

Producer's Note

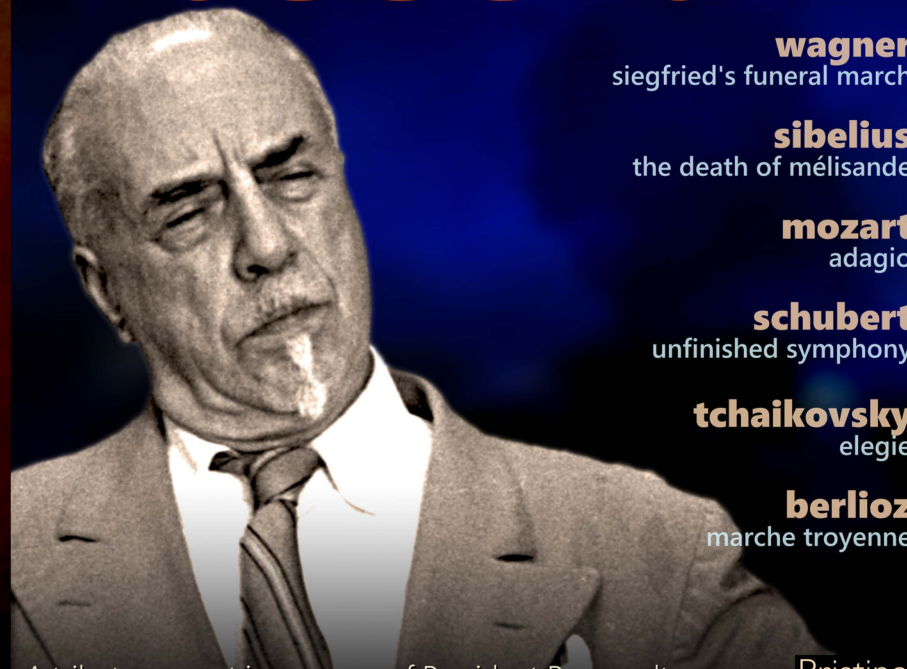
Sir Thomas Beecham's second of four scheduled live concert broadcasts with ABC's "Blue Network Symphony Orchestra" must have given the new station's controllers any number of headaches, primarily because of the sudden death in office of President Roosevelt two days before the concert, scheduled to coincide with the funeral service at the White House. We do not know what music Beecham had planned for that concert, but one assumes it would have been considerably different to the more solemn affair delivered on the day. In preparing this previously-unreleased broadcast for issue I've had to make several unusual interventions. The broadcast began with a minute's silence, which I've faded. A section of about 50 seconds of music was missing from the Sibelius - this I've patched in from another recording which I've "aged" to match the Beecham. A much shorter section in the Schubert had to be similarly patched. The latter, interrupted by the broadcaster for a live report from the White House (audio of which doesn't apparently survive) is quite literally unfinished - but we have most of it. Thereafter the concert is complete, though the announcement of a Berlioz *Intermezzo and Serenade* lead into a faded-in Tchaikovsky *Elegie*, indicating that the concert, before a largely silent audience, continued without a break. It's a remarkably historic document with some fabulous playing. Sound quality again is good AM radio; I've been able to deal largely with some interference from other radio stations, whilst some disc surface noise is occasionally audible.

Andrew Rose

beecham

abc blue network concerts vol 2

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wagner
siegfried's funeral march

sibelius
the death of mélisande

mozart
adagio

schubert
unfinished symphony

tchaikovsky
elegie

berlioz
marche troyenne

A tribute concert in memory of President Roosevelt
Blue Network Symphony Orchestra • Sir Thomas Beecham
ABC Radio broadcast, 14 April 1945

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BEECHAM The ABC Blue Network Concerts, Volume 2
BEECHAM, Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on
a photograph of
Sir Thomas Beecham

Total duration: 57:50

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1 ABC Radio - Introduction (0:57)

2 WAGNER Götterdämmerung, WWV 86D - Siegfried's Funeral March (7:33)

3 SIBELIUS Pelléas et Mélisande, Suite, Op. 46 - 9. The Death of Mélisande (12:44)

4 MOZART Divertimento in D, K.131 - 2nd mvt. - Adagio (4:34)

SCHUBERT Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759 "Unfinished"

5 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (10:10)

6 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (8:30)

7 ABC Radio - Interruption for White House funeral report (0:21)

8 TCHAIKOVSKY Serenade for Strings, Op. 48 - 3rd mvt. - Elegie (8:25)

9 BERLIOZ The Trojans, H.133 - Marche Troyenne (4:20)

10 ABC Radio - Closing announcement (0:16)

Live broadcast on ABC/Blue Network, 4pm, 14 April 1945

Ritz Theater, W. 48th Street, New York City

Announcer: Milton Cross

Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor

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BEECHAM, Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

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