

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 472

TOSCANINI

Beethoven Symphony No. 3 - Coriolan Overture

Pristine
XR

PASC 472

Toscanini's NBC Eroica

With the Third, Eighth, and Ninth Symphonies, Toscanini has been well served by RCA. The company's release of three different performances of the "Eroica"—two from NBC broadcasts (1939 and 1953) and one from a 1949 recording session—are especially remarkable for the great variety of interpretive features they encompass. Each differs from the others in terms of tempo, application of rubato, and clarification of detail. Yet each is like the others in suggesting the young lion of a composer, playing the upstart in creating a path-breaking work that is still considered the doorway to nineteenth-century style. For all the symphony's revolutionary traits, however, it remains tied to the eighteenth century, most notably in its orchestra, which departs from the traditional one favored by Haydn and Mozart only to the extent of calling for a third horn. And the textural transparency of Toscanini's readings, where winds and brass are given their due and never swamped by the strings, reflects his grasp of this revolutionary work's roots in an earlier style.

One unique feature of Toscanini's approach occurs at the conclusion of the first movement's coda, where, in a grand peroration, the score's opening theme is repeated four times. Like many conductors, he favored a revision of Beethoven's Urtext in having the last repetition played throughout (rather than partially) by trumpets. And beginning with his 1939 NBC performance, he had the trumpets execute that theme with a sustained legato line unmatched in the work of the more than fifty other conductors whose performances of the music I have heard and reviewed. Not only is the dramatic power of this practice overwhelming, it is aesthetically right, echoing the phrasing of the theme when it is first stated by the cellos and clarifying how, in sonata-form movements, themes undergo radical changes of character.

Mortimer H. Frank "Arturo Toscanini - The NBC Years" (Amadeus Press, 2002)

Producer's Note

This 1949 *Eroica*, one of seven broadcast performances Toscanini conducted during his years with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, is regarded by the few who have heard it as one of his greatest performances of the work - possibly even his finest. We present the full broadcast here, complete with announcements and the preceding *Coriolan Overture*. My source material was drawn from two original recordings: whilst the first two announcements are of lower, perhaps AM radio quality, all of the music and the final announcement derive from near-mint full-frequency high fidelity discs which I would assume were cut directly by NBC. I've tried to minimise the effect of transitions between these two sources; suffice to say that the opening announcement does not faithfully represent the glorious sound quality of the music which follows, so don't be alarmed! As with previous NBC/Toscanini recordings, I've modified the dry studio acoustic using the sonic "fingerprint" of one of the world's finest symphony halls, something which greatly enhances the orchestral timbre in a completely natural manner. This really is a quite wonderful addition to our Toscanini catalogue.

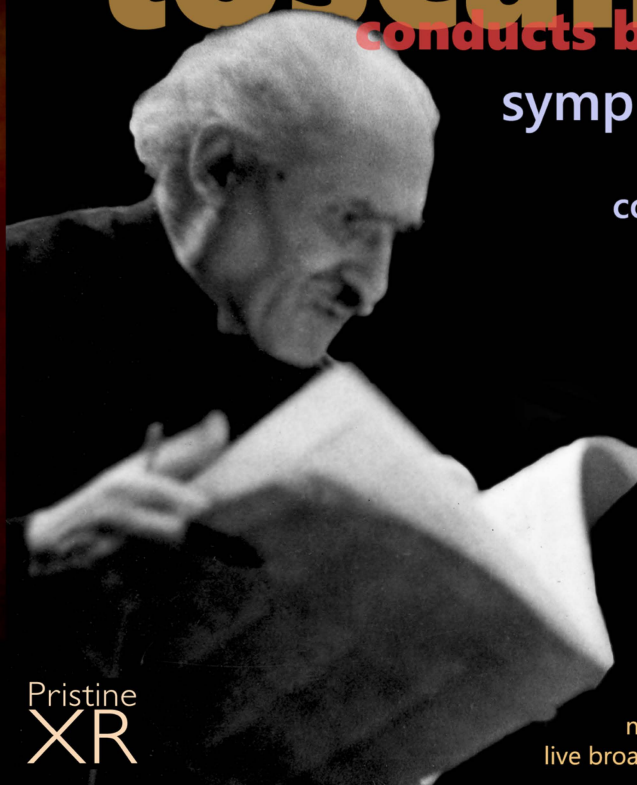
Andrew Rose

toscanini

conducts beethoven

symphony no. 3
"eroica"

coriolan overture



Pristine
XR

nbc symphony orchestra
live broadcast, 19 february 1949



XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a 1950 photograph of Arturo Toscanini

Broadcast of 19 February 1949
Cast list scanned from original Angel
Records insert

Total duration: 59:17

- 1 NBC Radio Introduction (1:28)
- 2 **BEETHOVEN** Coriolan Overture, Op. 62 (6:44)
- 3 NBC Radio applause and link (1:59)