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Bruno Walter

conducts Brahms, Volume 2

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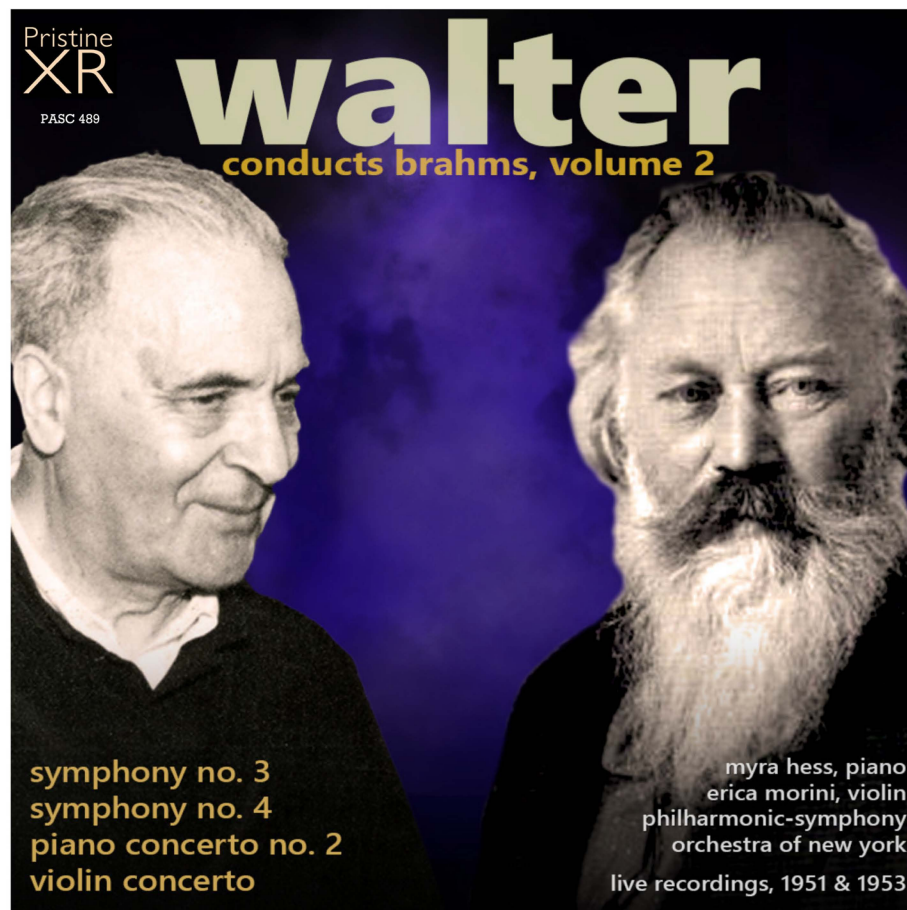
A pairing that has stirred some admiration over the years in previous appearances – Walter and Myra Hess in the Second Concerto. This is a spacious and noble reading of a work Hess had fought shy of performing – in that she was of course hardly unique – and indeed had first performed only thirteen years before, with Boult in London in 1938. She sounds thoroughly in control of its rhetoric though sometimes the runs are apt to be rather blurry – a deficiency she covers with quite a bit of pedal. It's a leonine, humane reading and the opposite of the Horowitz/Toscanini approach, as documented in their commercial and live performances (dismal experiences in the extreme). Two highlights here are the passionate traversal of the Allegro appassionato and the fusion of gracioso elegance of phrasing and the capricious timing that emboldens the finale. But these are two amongst many in a reading that has both humility and humanity in equal measure.

Walter was joined by another distinguished Brahmsian, Erica Morini, in the Violin Concerto, which was a work she'd recorded and of whose performances live broadcasts also exist. Her silvery tone, restrained vibrato and lyrical intimacy are all characteristic. As are indeed her pervasive Viennese portamenti, a number falling rather predictably toward the end of phrases. Sometimes the recording accentuates – or her relative lack of projection exacerbates – a tendency for her to be covered during wind passages and for small tuning clashes to occur (try around 5.50 in the slow movement). In the Adagio we have that feminine reticence at its most persuasive and in the finale there's a brisk elevation that is attractive without ever quite possessing that necessary gypsy spirit. The notes don't mention a brief but horrible mishap in the first movement from 10.40 when after some tough passagework Morini's intonation buckles, she loses composure, plays a bare approximation and in fact then misses a phrase altogether. She gets aboard though; these things do happen in concerts and sang froid prevails all round, Walter maintaining imperturbable professionalism in the same way that Hamilton Harty had once waited a couple of bars whilst Wilhelm Backhaus recovered himself in Manchester in the 1920s.

Jonathan Woolf MusicWeb International, 2005 (*Tahra CD review excerpt*)

Producer's Note

This series continues here with what survives of Bruno Walter's fabulous 1951 series of Brahms concerts with the New York Philharmonic, together with a later live performance of the Violin Concerto which fills the gap in the 1951 recordings left by the apparent loss of a performance with Zino Francescatti. Preparing this release has required some major technical innovation, both in the Symphony No. 3, previously unissued, and the Violin Concerto. As outlined in the quoted review of a previous issue of the latter, things went wrong during the first movement, culminating in a momentary silence from the soloist – the result of a broken string. Morini quickly borrowed the violin offered by the orchestra's leader, John Corigliano and carried on playing while he replaced her broken string. That gap here is filled by the seamless mixing in of Morini's 1956 studio recording for Westminster at around 11 minutes to patch the gap whilst instruments were exchanged. More challenging was the Symphony No. 3, where two source recordings were used for several sections of the recording. One was damaged in upper frequencies, the other in the lower frequencies. Following digital pitch and tempo stabilisation and synchronisation I was able to digitally copy and paste good upper frequencies over good lower frequencies to produce a perfectly matched and utterly convincing new whole, a technique I believe may never have been successfully attempted before, and which restores what would otherwise have been unusable sources to their full glory. **Andrew Rose**



walter

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CD1 BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 83

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (17:17)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Allegro appassionato (6:57)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Andante (12:42)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (9:21)

Myra Hess, piano

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

- 5 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (9:04)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Andante (7:57)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Poco allegretto (6:00)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegro (7:53)

CD2 BRAHMS Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (20:04)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Adagio (9:13)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace (7:55)

Erica Morini, violin

BRAHMS Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

- 4 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (11:54)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (11:52)
- 6 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso (5:54)
- 7 4th mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (11:03)

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York

Bruno Walter, conductor

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on
photographs of Walter & Brahms

Piano Concerto No. 2: 28 January 1951
Symphony No. 3: 28 January 1951
Violin Concerto: 20 December 1953
Symphony No. 4: 11 February 1951

All performed at Carnegie Hall, New York

Total duration: 2hr 35:06

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