



Constantin Silvestri

in Philadelphia, 1961



Constantin-Nicolae Silvestri (31 May 1913, Bucharest – 23 February 1969, London) was a Romanian conductor and composer. Born of Austro-Italian-Romanian stock, was brought up mostly by his mother, his father dying from alcoholism, and his stepfather dying when the boy was 16. He had learnt how to play the piano and organ before the age of six. He played the piano in public at 10 and was a skilled improviser. He studied at the Târgu Mures Conservatoire, and later at the Bucharest Conservatoire. Despite not having taken conducting classes, he was already appearing as conductor in his teens, making his debut in 1930 with the Bucharest Radio Symphony Orchestra in a concert which included The Rite of Spring and his own composition Prelude and Fugue (Toccata).

Silvestri's success in this 1930 National Radio Orchestra of Romania concert persuaded him to follow conducting as a career. He conducted at the Romanian National Opera from 1935 on, and, following the brief tenures of two caretakers, he also directed the Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra for six years as successor to George Georgescu, in disgrace as a Nazi collaborator. Georgescu, ironically, assumed directorship of the Radio Orchestra; following Silvestri's emigration to the West, Georgescu would resume his place at the head of the Philharmonic, shortly thereafter renamed the George Enescu Philharmonic. From 1948 to 1956, Silvestri taught at the Bucharest Conservatoire (Conservatorul din Bucureşti), where he founded its Conducting Department. Among Silvestri's students were Sergiu Comissiona, Marius Constant, Anatol Vieru, Iosif Conta, Edgar Cosma. By the 1950s Silvestri was accepting guest engagements in the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. His career in Romania came to a climax in 1958 with the highly successful Romanian premiere of Oedipe in Bucharest.

After leaving his home country Silvestri made Paris his domicile in 1959, also travelling to Australia that year, and appearing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra in 1960-61, and making a number of recordings in Paris, London and Vienna for EMI.

Having made his UK début with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1957 at the Royal Albert Hall, Silvestri defected to Great Britain in 1961 and assumed the post of Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He raised the standard and prestige of the orchestra to one of international standing. He was demanding and meticulous in rehearsal, his scores marked in different colours; however, his performances often differed from one concert to the next.

He became a British citizen in 1967 shortly before his growing reputation was cut short by increasing ill health, and he died of cancer at the age of 55. His last concert was in Exeter on 29 November 1968, and there is a memorial at St Peter's Church in Bournemouth.

Biography from [Wikipedia](#)

Producer's Note

Constantin Silvestri was best remembered for his work in England, most specifically the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, a fine ensemble with which he made a number of recordings. Here we find him with what was at the time one of the greatest orchestras in the world: The Philadelphia Orchestra. This superb stereo recording captures his only broadcast with the orchestra and may therefore be the only recording of him in Philadelphia. Culled from perfectly preserved master tapes, it follows previous Pristine releases featuring the orchestra in this era under the batons of Stokowski and Klemperer in offering the outstanding playing of the Philadelphia in stunning performances - most particularly of the *Manfred* Symphony - recorded in superb high quality stereo sound and requiring minimal intervention from the restorer to present the present programme with superlative sonics.

The programme on 25 November 1961, 55 years to the day prior to this issue, also included a short work by Silvestri himself: *Prelude and Fugue Toccata*, Op. 17a, No. 2. Alas this makes for a recording just a couple of minutes too long for a single CD - you can instead find it as a free download from our website. **Andrew Rose**



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TCHAIKOVSKY MANFRED SYMPHONY
SILVESTRI, THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
BRITTEN YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE

silvestri

in philadplehia, 1961

COMPACT
disc
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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Silvestri

Total duration: 74:37

TCHAIKOVSKY Manfred Symphony in B minor, Op. 58

- 1 1st mvt. - Lento lugubre (16:50)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Vivace con spirito (9:13)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Pastorale. Andante con moto (11:32)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro con fuoco (19:39)

BRITTEN The Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra, Op. 34

(Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell) (17:23)

Recorded live in the Academy of Music, Philadelphia on November 25, 1961

The Philadelphia Orchestra
Constantin Silvestri, conductor

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