

Beecham

at the Royal Festival Hall, Volume 1



SIR THOMAS BEECHAM returned to London's routine concert scene on Sunday night, and the crowded audience in the Festival Hall, falling at once under the old spell, was rejuvenated into a fresh awareness of unburdened musical delight. At the end of the programme, hardly anybody in the audience got up from his or her seat or showed the slightest intention of going home. Even the critics stayed on—and no conductor, no musician, alive or dead, has received a rarer tribute than that.

Sir Thomas spoke to us, saying, "I suppose you are all waiting for an encore?" In a single voice the packed multitude roared "Yes!" and then Sir Thomas said, "This is a matter requiring some thought. I know only a few pieces."

One of his secrets is that he draws the audience into his circle. Other great conductors work on another dimension, so to say, withdrawn to a level to which we dare not approach intimately. Sir Thomas is the beneficent host at a feast to which we have been invited. He is the connoisseur. Moreover, during this present age, in which music every day seems more and more in danger of becoming an austere science, or one of the many means of disseminating education and culture, he reminds us that the art originally was designed to give pleasure to civilised men and women. Sunday's audience went home happy. Seldom have I seen so many English people leaving a concert hall as happy.

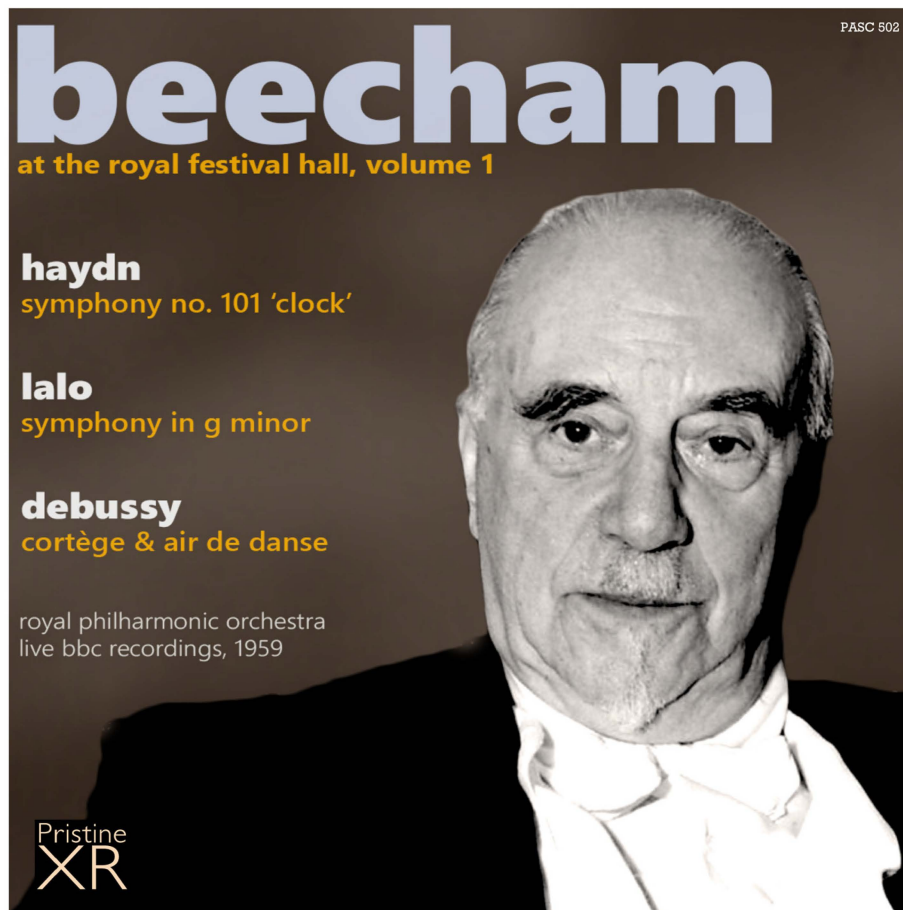
Even Sir Thomas's manner, his movements, changed as he modulated from Haydn to Lalo. In the Haydn symphony he bent down, stroking the music affectionately. For Lalo he became physically more upright and rhetorical. For an octogenarian he was wonderfully animated and active. No conductor equals him in the way he curves a melody, floats in on the orchestra's surface, passes it on to another instrumental group, all the time keeping the rhythm fluid and unbroken. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra plays constantly and always admirably in the Festival Hall; but under Sir Thomas it is enriched by a more luminous, more rounded texture which loses nothing, but gains, in distinction of inner parts.

Neville Cardus, The Guardian, 27 October 1959 (*excerpt*)

Producer's Note

This is the first of three volumes dedicated to the two concerts given on 25 October and 8 November 1959 by Sir Thomas Beecham and his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at London's Royal Festival Hall and captured in excellent mono by the BBC Transcription Service. Whilst these recordings preserved the main body of both concerts, it would appear that only the encores from the second concert have survived, which alas deprives us of the opportunity to hear Beecham's Delius one more time. Whilst some of these recordings have been previously issued on the BBC Legends label, the sound quality heard on the present releases is considerably improved thanks in no small part to XR remastering. Here the orchestral timbre is much more realistic, the hard, harsh edges of the original recordings have been softened, and a rich body of sound restored. Our series also includes recordings never previously issued. I have elected to remove the announcements dubbed on by the BBC for later rebroadcast. The length of both concerts has required a certain amount of juggling in order to fit three single-CD volumes.

Andrew Rose



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BEECHAM AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, VOL. I: HAYDN, LALO, DEBUSSY
BEECHAM, ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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royal festival hall, volume 1

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of
Sir Thomas Beecham

Haydn & Lalo
Recorded 25 October 1959

Debussy
Recorded 8 November 1959

Recorded at the Royal Festival Hall
London by BBC Transcription Services

HAYDN Symphony No. 101 in D major, Hob. I:101, "The Clock"

- 1 1st mvt. - Adagio - Presto (6:52)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante (8:06)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Menuet (Allegretto) - Trio (7:38)
- 4 4th mvt. - Finale (Vivace) (4:37)

LALO Symphony in G minor

- 5 1st mvt. - Andante - Allegro non troppo (8:19)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Vivace (5:37)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Adagio (7:04)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegro (5:44)

- 9 DEBUSSY L'enfant prodigue: Cortège et Air de Danse (4:45)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham

Total duration: 58:42

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