



Horenstein

Beethoven: 'Eroica' Symphony & 2 Overtures



Three years ago, as many will remember, Horenstein and Vox stole a march on everybody by offering Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony, in a thrilling performance and an adequate recording, at half the normal price, and here they are at it again. The only competitor with their new *Eroica* in the sphere of economy, is Kleiber's version in Decca's Ace of Clubs series.

Horenstein fulfils his part of the bargain magnificently, and is well backed by an orchestra whose only weakness is a shrill first oboe. His present performance is quite different from the one he recorded for Vox in 1954; that was so super-titantic as to be unbelievable, but this is a beautifully classical interpretation, spacious and deeply felt, but strictly life-size. There are all the qualities here that one looks for in the *Eroica*—not only a splendid line but a tense rhythmic impulse; not only a savage strength but a sense of mystery—achieved by that rare thing in performances of this work, a real *pianissimo*. In the first movement, Horenstein pulls off a feat only previously achieved on disc, to my knowledge, by Van Kempen on a since-deleted Philips record: he preserves unswervingly a single tempo which lies nicely between the extremes of hustle and drag. In the absence of all those familiar changes of speed, this *Allegro con brio* emerges as what it really is—the most perfectly unified large-scale first movement Beethoven ever composed. The strongly rhythmic approach to the *Adagio* threw new light on it for me: I had never before been so conscious that it is, after all, a march, with all the awe-inspiring solemnity that a tramping slow march-rhythm conveys. An unusual and convincing feature is that the return to the main tempo, after the inevitable quickening in the fugal section, is effected by a *rallentando* during the restatement of the main theme, not by the usual gear-change when the music reaches E flat. The scherzo, like the first movement, steers surely between extremes of tempo, achieving both weight and drive, and in consequence, the Trio moves easily at the same speed (though there is one bad bit of ensemble). Unity of tempo is also the fulcrum of the finale, which is taken deliberately enough to allow it to counterbalance the weight of the rest of the symphony. This is done without any loss of vitality and without any bombast when the horns give out their slow fortissimo statement of the main theme. Some may find the very measured opening and the non-committal statement of the theme and first variation unacceptable, but this seems to me exactly the right treatment of what is in fact the bare ground-plan of the whole movement; it certainly removes that slightly comical oompah element from the wind and string antiphonies in the theme.

It's a pity that Vox can't do something about their engineering, though. This is one of their better recordings, by fits and starts—the sound is mainly clear and firm, if not of the highest quality, but it's difficult to understand why the level is so low in places, and why the wind suddenly rush into the foreground when they are playing on their own. My pressing has a bad surface at the beginning of the Scherzo, which doesn't clear until the first *fortissimo*.

Deryck Cooke, The Gramophone, April 1960

Producer's Note

These recordings, drawn from the archive of Misha Horenstein, date from a time when sound recording was undergoing a revolution - tape, the long playing vinyl record, the introduction of stereo, all were redefining high fidelity recording and reproduction. Some producers, engineers and record companies fared better than others and in some cases generally good recordings were marred by poor tonal balance. Here I've tried to redress that balance using XR remastering which, whilst it cannot fix everything, has proved here capable of making massive improvements to the sound quality, something that will add hugely to the enjoyment and appreciation of these excellent performances. Andrew Rose

PASC 505
STEREO

horenstein

conducts beethoven

symphony no. 3 'eroica'

the consecration of the house
the creatures of prometheus

orchestra of the southwest german radio (swdr)
vienna symphony orchestra

studio recordings, 1953/57

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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO. 3 'EROICA', CONSECRATION, PROMETHEUS OVERTURES
HORENSTEIN, ORCHESTRA OF THE SOUTHWEST GERMAN RADIO, VIENNA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

horenstein

conducts beethoven

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 505

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of
Jascha Horenstein

Creatures of Prometheus
Recorded 1953, Vienna
Issued on Vox PL8020

Symphony No. 3
Recorded May 1957, Loffenau
Issued on Vox STPL 10.700

Consecration of the House
Recorded 1953, Vienna
Issued on Vox PL10410

Total duration: 66:20

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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO. 3 'EROICA', CONSECRATION, PROMETHEUS OVERTURES
HORENSTEIN, ORCHESTRA OF THE SOUTHWEST GERMAN RADIO, VIENNA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PASC 505

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1 BEETHOVEN Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op.43* (5:19)

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 55, 'Eroica'

2 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (15:20)

3 2nd mvt. - Marcia funebre. Adagio assai (15:22)

4 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro vivace (6:09)

5 4th mvt. - Finale. Allegro molto (13:11)

6 BEETHOVEN Die Weihe des Hauses, Op.124* (10:59)

Orchestra of the Southwest German Radio (SWDR)

*Vienna Symphony Orchestra

Jascha Horenstein, conductor