

Toscanini

The 1939 Beethoven Cycle, Volume 6

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Mr. Toscanini accomplished two more of his marvels when he led the NBC Symphony Orchestra last night in Carnegie Hall in performances of Beethoven's Choral Fantasia and Ninth symphony, for the

benefit of the New York Junior League Welfare Fund. The thrilling effect of the Ninth symphony was anticipated, especially by those who had heard Mr. Toscanini direct the same work with the same orchestra two seasons ago in the same hall. What had not been anticipated was the astonishing vitality and significance which he conferred upon the Choral Fantasia.

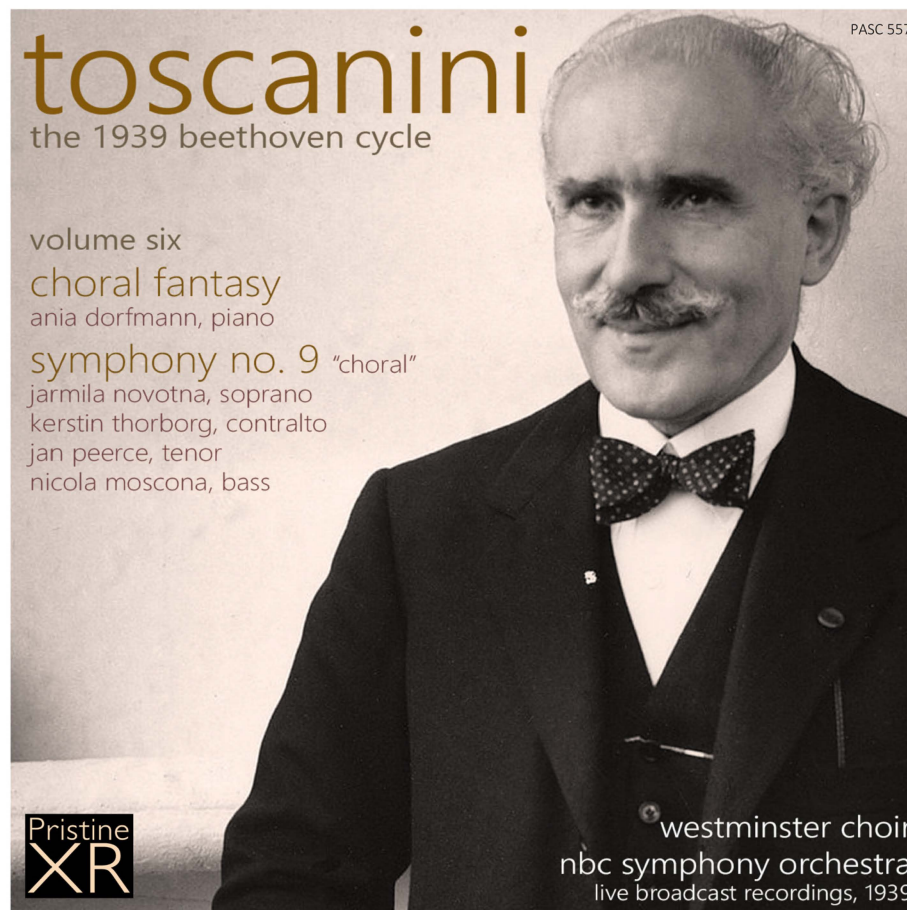
That work, scored for piano, orchestra and chorus, in a curious form which wavers between classic design and contents that anticipate, thematically as also, in a degree, structurally, the last Beethoven symphony, is usually hailed as a historic curiosity, or billed as a piece which hires a pianist as well as a chorus and a symphony orchestra to give the audience the worth of its money. And there may have been those present last night who were attracted by the array of talent involved—Miss Ania Dorfmann, pianist, and the hosts of the Westminster Choir, to augment the orchestral scheme.

The thing that happened and which in happening conveyed, as Mr. Toscanini is apt to do, the sense of sheer wonder was the rebirth of this relatively early Beethoven music, so that the audience was for the nonce a gathering in 1808, hearing for the first time this new and fascinating music. Every element in the score took its place as part of one thought and design. Every idea glowed with life and beauty. The passage work and the flourishes of the piano were just as germane to the musical scheme as anything done by the singers or gentlemen of the orchestra. Miss Dorfmann played admirably in the style of the period and in perfect taste. This also held for the chorus and the orchestra. Each element was merged in the conception of a single despotic spirit—that of Toscanini—and, together with Toscanini, glorified Beethoven.

We had heard no such performance of the Choral Fantasia, had never before perceived the music in its real light, nor had we attached very much importance to it anyhow. Well, it was shown again that Beethoven was seldom unimportant; that, like other composers, even great masters, he needs constantly the insight and the passion of a worthy interpreter.

The Ninth symphony, given with the assisting quartet of Jarmila Novotna, Kerstin Thorborg, Jan Peerce and Nicola Moscona, was of course the capstone of the occasion, and for everyone involved a towering experience. It is extremely possible that when a performance of such music, as great as the previous one that Mr. Toscanini had given in the same hall, is repeated, its significance is more fully grasped by the listener. It may also be the case that Mr. Toscanini, who never, whatever he attains, stands still as an artist, sculptured more mightily than ever before the shape of the great tone-poem. The result appeared as a further evolution on the part of an artist whose intuition and faith bring him always nearer the very center of Beethoven's thought. Certainly the last movement surpassed anything the conductor had previously done with the passage. For its ecstasy was cosmic. There was a scene of wild enthusiasm following this performance.

Olin Downes, The New York Times, 3 December 1939



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TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, DORFMANN, NOVOTNA, THORBORG, PIERCE, MOSCONA, WESTMINSTER CHOIR

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BEETHOVEN Fantasia for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra, Op. 80

1. Adagio (2:57)
2. Finale. Allegro (5:44)
3. Adagio ma non troppo (1:57)
4. Marcia assai vivace (1:59)
5. Allegretto ma non troppo quasi andante con moto (2:06)
6. Presto (2:10)

Ania Dorfmann, *piano*

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 "Choral"

7. 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso (12:36)
8. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Molto vivace - Presto (12:42)
9. 3rd mvt. - Adagio molto e cantabile (13:00)
10. 4th mvt. - Presto - Allegro assai (24:35)

Jarmila Novotna, *soprano*

Kerstin Thorborg, *alto*

Jan Pierce, *tenor*

Nicola Moscona, *bass*

The Westminster Choir
NBC Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Arturo Toscanini

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Toscanini

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Carnegie Hall, New York

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