

Heifetz

Three Violin Concertos



When Jascha Heifetz performed these two concertos on 1 April 1949 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky he almost certainly did not know that he was being recorded. The regular broadcasts of the BSO had been transferred from the NBC Blue to the new ABC network in 1945, but this arrangement only lasted a season. BSO concerts were not broadcast nationally again until 1954 when NBC was looking for a ready replacement for its own NBCSO broadcasts after Toscanini's retirement. So, who recorded this concert, and several others from the 1948-9 season? It turns out this was an early 'bootleg' recording made by the owner of a Boston recording studio who set up a microphone in a ventilating grill on the right of the stage, with a link to his disc-cutting machines. There was apparently no thought of exploiting the recordings for commercial gain, but copies gradually began to circulate among enthusiasts. As direct line recordings, albeit with less than optimum microphone placings, they do not suffer from the limitations of an aircheck and offer surprisingly clear and detailed reproduction.

The Bell Telephone Hour began in 1940 and continued on NBC radio until 1958. The usual format was to have a guest artist perform alongside the resident orchestra. The 30 minute format (despite the name of the show!) did not really allow for long pieces to be played, so singers or instrumentalists performed a number of shorter items, while the orchestra played equally short pieces in between. Jascha Heifetz was a very frequent guest on the programme and played a wide variety of popular music. Over the course of two programmes, separated by two years, he played the entire Mendelssohn violin concerto which is presented here, finally united, for the first time.

Jascha Heifetz was one of the twentieth century's finest violinists and reviews of his concert performances in the American press had little but unrelenting praise to offer. He was 'the king of the violinists' whose 'impeccable virtuosity' was unmatched. In 1937 he even attracted a record audience to a New York Philharmonic concert held at Lewishon Stadium of 18,294. These three concertos showcase the sheer breadth of Heifetz's talent. Mozart's Violin Concerto No.4 was composed in 1775, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto was finished in 1844, while Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No.2 was written in 1935. Heifetz is easily able to transition between the classical, romantic and modern styles and, of course, each concerto offers him the chance to display the virtuosity he was famed for. The beauty of these live recordings is that we can appreciate Heifetz caught in the moment, and in the case of the BSO recordings, completely uninhibited by the thought of a microphone. We can hear precisely what he wanted his audience to hear that night.



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heifetz

three violin concertos

mozart
violin concerto no. 4

prokofiev
violin concerto no. 2

mendelssohn
violin concerto

boston symphony orchestra
conducted by serge koussevitzky

bell telephone orchestra
conducted by donald voorhees

live recordings, 1947 & 1949



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MOZART, PROKOFIEV, MENDELSSOHN VIOLIN CONCERTOS
HEIFETZ, BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Koussevitzky, Bell Telephone Orchestra, Voorhees

heifetz

three violin concertos

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Jascha Heifetz

Mozart & Prokofiev Concertos
Recorded 1 April 1949
Symphony Hall, Boston

Mendelssohn Concerto
1st mvt.: Recorded 26 June 1949
2nd & 3rd mvts: Recorded 20 January 1947
NBC Studio 6B(?), Radio City, New York

Total duration: 68:30

MOZART Violin Concerto No. 4 in D, K.218

1. 1st mvt - Allegro (8:01)
2. 2nd mvt - Andante cantabile (6:26)
3. 3rd mvt - Rondeau: Andante grazioso (6:45)

PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 63

4. 1st mvt - Allegro moderato (9:16)
5. 2nd mvt - Andante assai (8:05)
6. 3rd mvt - Allegro ben marcato (5:55)

Boston Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Serge Koussevitzky

MENDELSSOHN Violin Concerto, Op. 64

7. 1st mvt - Allegro molto appassionato (11:02)
8. 2nd mvt - Andante (7:01)
9. 3rd mvt - Allegretto non troppo - Allegro molto vivace (5:59)

Bell Telephone Orchestra
conducted by Donald Voorhees

Jascha Heifetz, violin

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