



Stokowski

conducts Brahms Symphonies 2 & 4



This release completes the reissue of the Brahms Symphony cycle by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, begun with their 1927 recording of the First Symphony (Pristine PACO 500) and continued with the Third Symphony from the following year (PACO 540). The Second was next to be recorded, followed by the Fourth; but both proved problematic, requiring additional takes ranging from a single side to an entire remake.

After recording the Second Symphony over two consecutive days in April, 1929, Stokowski decided to remake Side 6, the second side of the second movement, eleven months later. Apparently, neither producer nor conductor remembered where the original take began, and the remake started twelve measures late, leaving out nearly a minute of music. Incredibly, no one noticed the missing bars before the recording was released. When the gap was discovered, a take from the earlier sessions was quickly substituted. The remake can be heard as a free download on the webpage for this release on Pristine's website, while the take from the original sessions is presented here.

In his book, *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies*, critic Christopher Dymont had a mixed verdict regarding the performance, saying that while it contains "a Classically balanced first movement," it is "succeeded by an overripe Adagio and two further movements markedly lacking in rhythmic lift and forward impetus," a charge similar to that levied against the last movement of Stokowski's 1928 Brahms Third. Dymont goes on to note that Stokowski later revised his approach to the last three movements: "[T]he 1950 New York Philharmonic [issued on Pristine PASC 215] and Bavarian Radio broadcasts replace the early, somewhat turgid style with something altogether fleeter and, in the finale, with a drive that tests both orchestras to their limits."

More successful as an interpretation was Stokowski's approach to the Brahms Fourth; but here, he was undercut by substandard recorded sound. During the early years of the Depression, Victor recorded the Philadelphia Orchestra in a Camden, New Jersey church converted to a studio in order to avoid having to rent the Academy of Music. Reduced forces were used, cutting the strings from 18-18-12-12-10 to 6-6-4-5-3. By 1934, sessions were held in the larger area of the church's nave, listed on the ledgers as "Church Studio No. 2"; but in the period from 1931 through 1933, most were made in what orchestra harpist Edna Phillips' described to her biographer as "a Sunday school room on the second floor," devoid of reverberation (which has been added in this transfer).

Added to this is another anomaly. The Fourth Symphony had initially been recorded in April, 1931 on 14 10-inch sides. Album number M-108 was allocated to this version, but it was apparently never released. (Transfers of this version from test pressings have been issued on LP and CD.) Nearly two years later, the present recording was made in the same venue, with similarly reduced forces. While Stokowski would go on to re-record the Second Symphony only once in 1977, at the very end of his career, he made two further recordings of the Fourth, one with the All-American Youth Orchestra in 1940, and a second with the New Philharmonia, following its appearance in his final London concert in 1974.

Mark Obert-Thorn



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BRAHMS SYMPHONIES 2 AND 4
STOKOWSKI, THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

stokowski

conducts brahms

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 562

Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Stokowski

Total duration: 79:54

BRAHMS Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

1. 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (14:38)
2. 2nd Mvt. - Adagio non troppo (10:34)
3. 3rd Mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino) (6:12)
4. 4th Mvt. - Allegro con spirito (9:58)

Recorded 29-30 April 1929 in the Academy of Music, Philadelphia

Matrix nos.: CVE 47951-3, 47952-2, 47953-2, 47954-2, 47955-3, 47956-2 47957-2, 47959-1, 47960-2, 47961-2, 47962-2 & 47963-4
First issued on Victor 7277/82 in album M-82

BRAHMS: Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

5. 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (11:19)
6. 2nd Mvt. - Andante moderato (11:39)
7. 3rd Mvt. - Allegro giocoso (6:03)
8. 4th Mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (9:31)

Recorded 4 March and 29 April 1933 in Church Studio No. 1, Camden

Matrix nos.: CS 75162-1, 75163-1, 75165-1, 75167-2, 75168-1, 75169-1, 75171-1, 75172-1, 75174-2 & 75175-2
First issued on Victor 7825/9 in album M-185

The Philadelphia Orchestra
conducted by Leopold Stokowski

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