



Toscanini

Beethoven Symphonies, Volume 1



This set of three volumes (two double CDs and a single) brings together the official RCA releases of Toscanini's late 1940s and early 1950s Beethoven symphonies, with one notable substitution. The 1952 recording of the Ninth Symphony was released on Pristine as PASC120 in 2008. Rather than revisit it we decided instead to use the 1948 recording that was broadcast as an early telecast. It's a less well-known performance, and one which has benefited greatly from the Pristine XR treatment, as indeed have many of the official RCA releases.

I have attempted across these volumes to find a continuity of orchestral sound quality that is audibly missing in the RCA issues. In each case, with the exception of the substituted Ninth, the symphonies were recorded by Toscanini with his NBC Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, either in live or studio recording situations, and as such one might expect a consistency of timbre. XR remastering allows for this, using the concept of tonal re-balancing to iron out the inconsistencies of the original recordings.

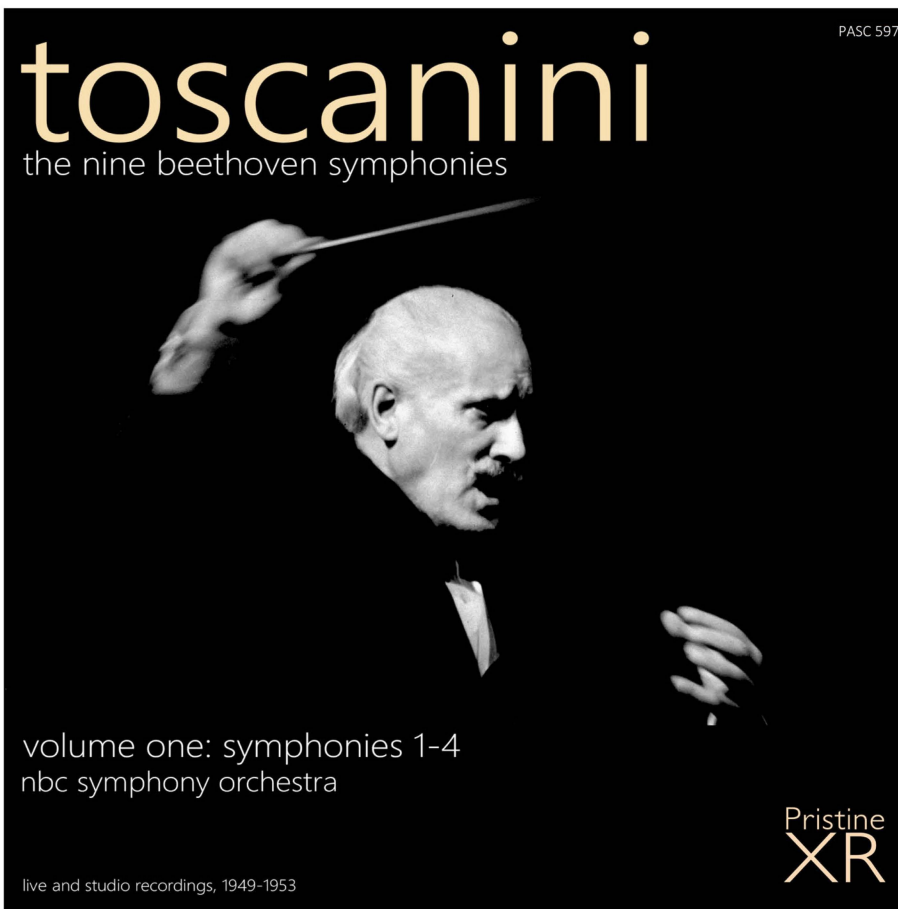
The recordings and performances – that Ninths excepted – are very well-known, and it's hard to hear or describe them anew. Rather than attempt to do so, I came across this review in *The Gramophone* of July 1958, which covers the entire vinyl series as issued in the UK. Due to the limited space available this will by necessity be reproduced across the three CD inserts, but can be read in full on our website at the page dedicated to each volume's release:

Toscanini's Beethoven

The Beethoven symphonies are the staple of the gramophone repertory no less than of the concert hall. Over the years the Toscanini versions have achieved a classic stature rivalling that of the old Weingartner set. And with good reason: for the forcefulness, sometimes almost the ruthlessness, of the Toscanini style is ideally suited for Beethoven. Where, in other music, the style sometimes seems distinctly less suitable, it is easy to be discovered muttering darkly that he is playing it "like a Beethoven symphony".

The integral LP set was made entirely with the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, a body of fine and finely disciplined players who responded to their conductor with tremendous verve and precision, but not always with any very great winning individuality of solo playing. This, no doubt, was all part of the Toscanini style, with which it is most certainly compatible. Less obviously compatible with the style was another general defect of the series that at times seemed, at least on this side of the Atlantic, incomprehensible: the maintenance over a long period of a standard of recording well below the current average.

The series has now been reissued, complete but with each disc separately available, by R.C.A. In general, substantial improvement in sound has proved possible. Each sleeve, indeed, is labelled "A New Orthophonic High Fidelity Recording"; but this description (if it means anything at all) is surely over-optimistic. Certainly the new surfaces are everywhere first-class; yet many of the tapes have a heavy background, not helped by an emphasis of the bass in reproduction usually made necessary by a lightness here in the original sound. And the fidelity of this sound in itself still varies substantially from one symphony to another. At its best, it offers what is probably the richest and most compelling version of Toscanini's Beethoven we have ever been able to hear on disc. At its worst, it is distinctly less happy. [continues in Volume 2]



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PASC 597

toscanini

the nine beethoven symphonies - volume 1

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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES, NOS 1-4
TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

disc one

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 1 in C, Op. 21

1. 1st mvt. - Adagio molto – Allegro con brio (8:34)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andante cantabile con moto (6:33)
3. 3rd mvt. - Minuet. Allegro molto e vivace - Trio (3:30)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale. Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace (5:57)

Recorded 21 December 1951

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36

5. 1st mvt. - Adagio molto - Allegro con brio (9:34)
6. 2nd mvt. - Larghetto (10:05)
7. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro - Trio (3:20)
8. 4th mvt. - Allegro molto (6:12)

Recorded 7 November 1949 & 5 October 1951

disc two

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

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (14:14)
2. 2nd mvt. - Marcia funebre. Adagio assai (15:26)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro vivace - Trio (5:27)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale. Allegro molto (11:44)

Concert of 6 December 1953

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4 in B flat, Op. 60

5. 1st mvt. - Adagio - Allegro vivace (10:01)
6. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (8:53)
7. 3rd mvt. - Allegro vivace (5:03)
8. 4th mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (7:04)

Concert of 3 February 1951

NBC Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Arturo Toscanini

XR Remastered by **Andrew Rose**
Recorded at Carnegie Hall, New York City
Cover artwork based on a photograph of **Arturo Toscanini**

Total duration: **2hr 11:36**

CD1: 53:44 CD2: 77:52

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BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES, NOS 1-4
TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA