



Mengelberg



Concertgebouw Columbia Recordings Vol. 2

This release, along with our first volume (Pristine PASC 595) and the Tchaikovsky works featured on PASC 511, present Willem Mengelberg's complete recordings with his Concertgebouw Orchestra for the Columbia label. Mengelberg's Columbias are significant in several respects: they include his earliest recordings with the Concertgebouw, an ensemble whose partnership with the conductor dated back to 1895; they feature the works of some contemporary composers with whom Mengelberg had personal friendships and special insights, such as Mahler; and they present some classic interpretations, like Liszt's *Les Préludes* in our previous volume, which have never been bettered on disc.

The present collection focuses on works from the Romantic era through the music of the conductor's contemporaries. Mengelberg only recorded a handful of Wagner orchestral works; yet the *Tannhäuser* Overture which opens our program stands among the finest ever made. Critic Rob Cowan has written that it "vies with *Les Préludes* as the perfect show-case for Mengelberg's striking personality." Aided by Columbia's superb engineering in one of his last recordings for the label, Mengelberg achieves in the final pages the same overwhelming sense of glory he evoked in the Liszt tone poem. Hardly less noteworthy is the *Lohengrin* Prelude, which highlights the string portamenti that were a hallmark of Mengelberg's interpretations.

Mengelberg only recorded three of the Brahms symphonies – the Second and Fourth for Telefunken, and this Columbia version of the Third. (A live broadcast of the First, on PASC 221, was released after his death.) As there was already a recent Weingartner recording of the First in the Columbia catalog, Mengelberg had to make do with only a single movement as a filler side for his expansive performance of the *Academic Festival* Overture. In the Third Symphony, the *Andante* is taken at a surprisingly fast tempo. But lest one think this was done solely to fit the movement onto a side and a half, he takes a similar approach in a 1944 broadcast.

The next selections display Mengelberg's deft touch with lighter music. A highlight of the Suppé overture is the beautifully played solo by longtime Concertgebouw principal cellist Marix Loevensohn. The Johann Strauss work is a showcase for the various sections of the orchestra, each displaying a memorable individuality. The Bizet again draws attention to the portamenti of the Concertgebouw strings, as they work up to an expertly paced crescendo.

Three composers Mengelberg knew personally follow in our program. Both Grieg and Ravel expressed admiration for the conductor; and Mahler was a close friend whose works Mengelberg championed for years, both before and after the composer's death. The *Adagietto* from Mahler's Fifth presented here is perhaps the most important document in this set; for in addition to being the conductor's only commercial recording of a Mahler work, its notably faster pacing reveals it in a much different light than that of subsequent interpreters.

The Ravel was one of the four earliest recordings of the work, made between January and May of 1930, after those of Piero Coppola, the composer himself and Serge Koussevitzky. Though it drives to an impressively loud conclusion, the performance is somewhat hobbled by the players' requirement to stop every four minutes to start a new matrix, with tempi and volume levels becoming inconsistent from side to side.

The final work is an unpublished take of the Waltz from Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, which was omitted from our earlier all-Tchaikovsky set. There is some untidy ensemble around 2:50, which may have been the reason Mengelberg recorded another two takes before he approved the result. Such was his sense of perfectionism, even in a seemingly minor filler side like this.

Mark Obert-Thorn



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concertgebouw columbia recordings, volume 2



disc one

1. WAGNER Tannhäuser - Overture (Dresden version) (13:32)

Recorded 9 May 1932 · Matrices: WAX 6413-3, 6414-3, 6415-2 & 6416-1
First issued on Columbia LX 170/1

2. WAGNER Lohengrin - Prelude to Act 1 (8:38)

Recorded 10 June 1927 · Matrices: WAX 2839-1 & 2840-2
First issued on Columbia L 1948

3. BRAHMS Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80 (11:13)

Recorded 30 May 1930 · Matrices: WAX 5596-1, 5597-2 & 5598-2
First issued on Columbia LX 58/9

4. BRAHMS Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

3rd Mvt. - Un poco allegretto e grazioso (4:33)

Recorded 31 May 1930 · Matrix: WAX 5608-2 · First issued on Columbia LX 59

BRAHMS Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

5. 1st Mvt. - Allegro con brio (13:04)

6. 2nd Mvt. - Andante (7:07)

7. 3rd Mvt. - Poco allegretto (5:38)

8. 4th Mvt. - Allegro (9:23)

Recorded 10 May 1931 · Matrices: WAX 6417-2, 6418-1, 6419-2, 6420-1, 6421-2, 6422-2, 6423-3 & 6424-2 · First issued on Columbia LX 220/3

Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam

conducted by Willem Mengelberg

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Special thanks to Nathan Brown, Frank Forman and Charles Niss for providing source material

All recordings made in the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

Total duration: **2hr 18:29** CD1: 73:07 CD2: 65:22

disc two

1. SUPPÉ Poet and Peasant - Overture (8:52)

Recorded 11 May 1932 · Matrices: WAX 6425-2 & 6426-2 · First issued on Columbia LX 179

2. J. STRAUSS II Perpetuum Mobile, Op. 257 (4:04)

Recorded 11 May 1932 · Matrix: WAX 6428-1 · First issued on Columbia LX 240

3. BIZET L'Arlésienne - Adagietto (4:01)

Recorded 11 June 1929 · Matrix: WAX 5048-3 · First issued on Columbia DX 6

GRIEG Two Elegiac Melodies, Op. 34

4. No. 1 - Heart Wounds (Hjertesår) (3:44)

5. No. 2 - The Last Spring (Våren) (4:51)

Recorded 3 June 1931 · Matrices: WAX 6140-2 & 6141-1 · First issued on Columbia LX 168

6. MAHLER Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor

4th Mvt. Adagietto: Sehr langsam (7:15)

Recorded May, 1926 · Matrices: WAX 1548-2 & 1549-2 · First issued on Columbia L 1768

7. RAVEL Boléro (14:40)

Recorded 31 May 1930 · Matrices: WAX 5603-1, 5604-1, 5605-1 & 5606-2

First issued on Columbia LX 48/9

Early Versions and Alternate Takes

8. WAGNER Tannhäuser - Overture (Dresden version) (14:00)

Recorded May, 1926 · Matrices: WAX 1538-1, 1539-3, 1540-2 & 1541-3

First issued on Columbia L 1770/1

9. TCHAIKOVSKY Serenade for Strings - 2nd Mvt. - Waltz (3:54)

Recorded 12 May 1928 · Matrix: WAX 3646-1 · Take unissued on 78 rpm



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