



Artur Rodziński

The Early Recordings



Born in Split, Dalmatia in 1892, Artur Rodziński was raised in Poland and studied music there and in Vienna, where his teachers included Franz Schalk. After a stint as chorus master in Lwów, Poland, he graduated to conducting opera in that city in 1920. Five years later, while leading a performance of *Die Meistersinger* in Warsaw, he was "discovered" by Leopold Stokowski, who brought him to Philadelphia as his assistant.

In 1929, Rodziński became music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he stayed for four seasons. He went on to head the Cleveland Orchestra for a decade beginning in 1933. Conducting at the Salzburg Festival in 1936, Rodziński so impressed Toscanini that the Maestro requested that he be engaged to train the members of the orchestra that was being created for him, the NBC Symphony. Rodziński led their first concert on 2 November 1937 as well as ten more before making the two recordings which begin our program.

The "World's Greatest Music" label was begun by the New York *Post* to market recordings of standard Classical repertoire at prices which substantially undercut the majors. Neither the conductors nor the orchestras were named on the labels; but subsequent research has identified albums recorded by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and Fritz Reiner and the New York Philharmonic, among others. The recordings were made by RCA Victor and were pressed by them as well, using cheaper and noisier shellac than their Red Seal releases.

Although Rodziński had conducted on some operatic aria recordings in Poland (as well as being Stokowski's piano accompanist on two of his album "talk sides"), these 1939 NBC Symphony discs were his first as a symphonic conductor. He had led neither work previously with the ensemble; and while the orchestra had played the Franck once under Monteux in their first season, they were new to the Tchaikovsky. Perhaps due to this, each side of the Franck was able to be done in a single take, while two takes were required for three of the Tchaikovsky sides. Rodziński turns in solid performances which generate particular excitement at the ends of the first and last movements of each work.

Simultaneously with his work at NBC, Rodziński continued to lead the Cleveland Orchestra; and by the end of the year in which he made the NBC discs, he and the Cleveland were under contract to the Columbia label, where they made an extensive series of recordings over the next three seasons. The three works on the second half of our program date from that period. They were recorded directly onto wide-frequency range lacquer discs, from which the 78s and, later, LPs were dubbed.

Although George Szell is usually credited for the developing the Cleveland Orchestra into a virtuoso ensemble, one can hear from these recordings that Rodziński had already honed it into a formidable instrument. In the Tchaikovsky works, Rodziński presses forward with a Toscanini-like focus; yet, when the music calls for it, he slows down to make rhetorical emphases like Stokowski or Mengelberg, but without employing string portamenti, which was already fading from fashion by this time. The Sibelius Fifth, like his later recording of the Fourth with the New York Philharmonic, blazes with intensity, and makes one regret that he recorded no more of that composer's symphonies.

Rodziński would leave Cleveland for the New York Philharmonic in 1943, and subsequently move on to the Chicago Symphony in 1947 (Pristine PASC 569). After that last one-season appointment, he would no longer command an ensemble, and spent his remaining decade guest-conducting and recording primarily in Europe. He died in Boston in 1958, shortly after leading a triumphant production of *Tristan* at the Chicago Lyric Opera with Birgit Nilsson.

Mark Obert-Thorn

rodziński
early recordings

tchaikovsky
symphony no. 4
romeo & juliet
1812 overture

franck
symphony in d minor

sibelius
symphony no. 5

nbc symphony orchestra
the cleveland orchestra

studio recordings, 1939-1941

Obert-Thorn

PRISTINE AUDIO
PASC 619

rodziński

early recordings



disc one

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

1. 1st mvt. - Andante sostenuto - Moderato con anima (16:08)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andantino in modo di canzone (8:39)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato (Allegro) (5:26)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale (Allegro con fuoco) (9:19)

Recorded 2 January 1939 in Carnegie Hall, New York City
Matrices: CS 030868-1, 030869-2, 030870-2, 030871-1, 030872-1, 030873-1, 030874-2, 030875-1, 030876-1 & 030877-1
First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-23/27

FRANCK Symphony in D minor

5. 1st mvt - Lento (18:25)
6. 2nd mvt - Allegretto (10:45)
7. 3rd mvt - Allegro non troppo (11:03)

Recorded 2 January 1939 in Carnegie Hall, New York City
Matrices: CS 030878/89 (All Take 1)
First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-33/38

NBC Symphony Orchestra

conducted by Artur Rodziński

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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

Total duration: 2hr 20:33 CD1: 79:44 CD2: 60:49

disc two

1. TCHAIKOVSKY Romeo and Juliet - Fantasy Overture (18:16)

Recorded 14 December 1940 in Severance Hall, Cleveland
Matrices: XCO 29305/9
First issued on Columbia 11655/57-D in album M-478

2. TCHAIKOVSKY Ouverture solennelle '1812', Op. 49 (14:23)

Recorded 14 April 1941 in Severance Hall, Cleveland
Matrices: XCO 30559/62
First issued on Columbia 11630/31-D in album X-205

SIBELIUS Symphony No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 82

3. 1st mvt. - Tempo molto moderato (12:03)
4. 2nd mvt. - Andante mosso quasi allegretto (8:02)
5. 3rd mvt. - Allegro molto (8:05)

Recorded 28 December 1941 in Severance Hall, Cleveland
Matrices: XCO 32233/37 & 32290/91
First issued on Columbia 11832/35-D in album M-514

The Cleveland Orchestra

conducted by Artur Rodziński



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