



PASC 624

Mengelberg



Concertgebouw Telefunken Recordings · Volume 1

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Willem Mengelberg (28 March 1871), Pristine is pleased to present the first in a series of releases surveying the conductor's recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra for Telefunken, the label for which he made the bulk of his commercial discs. They will be presented in roughly chronological order, with the present volume featuring all the recordings Mengelberg made in 1937, along with the first he did the following year. (The conductor's Telefunken recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic have already been released on PASC 348.)

After the completion of his May, 1932 Columbia sessions (featured in PASC 616), Mengelberg found himself without a recording contract for the first time in a decade. Six sides made for Decca in June, 1935 did not lead to any further recordings with that label. In 1937, he was approached by the German electronics giant, Telefunken, which had launched its own recording subsidiary eight years earlier. Telefunken had established a reputation for being on the cutting edge of recording and reproducing technology; and the conductor released a statement lauding their "decisive commitment in placing all the resources of modern electro-acoustics at the service of music" which had produced "such convincing results."

The first sessions were held in May, 1937 not in the Grote Zaal (Great Hall) of the Concertgebouw, where concerts and previous recording sessions had taken place, but oddly in the Kleine Zaal, a smaller venue usually devoted to chamber music and recitals. Mengelberg was particularly keen to record works which he had not been able to set down while at Columbia. Beethoven was central to his repertoire; but although he had recorded the First and *Eroica* symphonies with the New York Philharmonic for Victor (PASC 412), he had not been allotted any by Columbia, which already had all nine in its catalog, conducted mainly by Weingartner.

Mengelberg began his cycle with a fiery reading of the Fifth. If the second movement seems a bit too brusque, perhaps it was due to trying to squeeze it onto two sides (his 1940 broadcast [PASC 236] is nearly a minute longer here), while the last two movements feature several brass errors which the conductor uncharacteristically allowed to pass. In the *Pastoral* from the following December, by which time the sessions had been moved to the Grote Zaal, Mengelberg puts his stamp on the second movement with a pronounced rubato at the outset, and causes time to stand still before the bird calls toward the end.

While Mengelberg was more successful in being able to record Tchaikovsky symphonies for Columbia (the Fourth and Fifth are on PASC 511), the label had assigned the *Pathétique* to Oskar Fried, so he was particularly eager to get his interpretation onto disc. After a recording in May was not passed, a second one was made in December. The biggest difference between this version and his 1941 remake is in the final movement, which is nearly a minute longer in the later recording, and more appropriately "lamentoso". In the composer's String Serenade, the Waltz is slower and has a bit less *élan* than the Columbia version of a decade earlier; but Mengelberg ends the work with a rousing finish, full of high spirits.

The two short French works are each successful, but for opposite reasons. In the Berlioz, Mengelberg turns in a straight, unexaggerated performance of great beauty and excitement; while in the Franck, his often-criticized indulgences of tempo variation and string portamenti are completely in the spirit of the piece, and create an ecstatic, passionate rhapsody which ranks among the conductor's finest realizations on disc.

Mark Obert-Thorn

mengelberg

concertgebouw orchestra



PASC 624

the telefunken recordings volume 1

beethoven
symphony no. 5
symphony no. 6 'pastoral'

tchaikovsky
symphony no. 6 'pathétique'
serenade for strings

berlioz roman carnival overture
franck psyché et eros

studio recordings, 1937-38

Obert-Thorn



mengelberg

concertgebouw telefunken recordings, vol. 1



disc one

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (8:00)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (9:13)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro (5:09)
4. 4th mvt. - Allegro (8:36)

Recorded 4 May 1937 · Matrices: 022110/7 · First issued on Telefunken SK 2210/3

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 'Pastoral'

5. 1st mvt. - *Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande*. Allegro ma non troppo (8:34)
6. 2nd mvt. - *Scene am Bach*. Andante molto moto (11:53)
7. 3rd mvt. - *Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute*. Allegro (5:37)
8. 4th mvt. - *Gewitter. Sturm*. Allegro (3:22)
9. 5th mvt. - *Hirtengesang. Frohe und dankbare Gefühle nach dem Sturm*. Allegretto (7:54)

Recorded 22 & 23 December 1937 · Matrices: 022708/17
First issued on Telefunken SK 2424/8

10. BERLIOZ Roman Carnival Overture (8:35)

Recorded 22 December 1937 · Matrices: 022676/7 · First issued on Telefunken SK 2489

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

Special thanks to Nathan Brown and Charles Niss for providing source material
Cover Artwork based on a photograph of Willem Mengelberg

Total duration: **2hr 33:44** CD1: 76:53 CD2: 76:51

disc two

1. FRANCK Psyché et Eros (7:36)

Recorded 23 December 1937 · Matrices: 022718/9 · First issued on Telefunken SK 2463

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 'Pathétique'

2. 1st mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo (17:23)
3. 2nd mvt. - Allegro con grazia (8:09)
4. 3rd mvt. - Allegro molto vivace (8:41)
5. 4th mvt. - Adagio lamentoso (8:40)

Recorded 20 & 22 December 1937 · Matrices: 022666/75 · First issued on Telefunken SK 2214/8

TCHAIKOVSKY Serenade for Strings, Op. 48

6. 1st mvt. - *Pezzo in forma di sonatina*: Andante non troppo - Allegro moderato (9:02)
7. 2nd mvt. - *Valse*: Moderato - Tempo di valse (4:02)
8. 3rd mvt. - *Élégie*: Larghetto elegiaco (7:31)
9. 4th mvt. - *Finale (Tema russo)* - Andante - Allegro con spirito (5:47)

Recorded 7 November 1938 · Matrices: 023643/8 · First issued on Telefunken SK 2901/3

All recordings made in the Grote Zaal, Concertgebouw, Amsterdam except Beethoven Symphony No. 5, made in the Kleine Zaal

Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam
conducted by Willem Mengelberg



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