

Boult

conducts the NBC Symphony Orchestra

Pristine
XR

Arturo Toscanini visited Britain in 1935 to conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The BBCSO, created in 1930, was the only full-time professional orchestra in the country and had naturally attracted the best musicians. Toscanini was impressed: '... one of the best orchestras I have ever conducted' he declared, and would return to conduct the orchestra in 1937, 1938 and 1939, as well as making some notable recordings with them [see PASC 066, PASC 352]. Adrian Boult, the BBCSO's 46-year-old conductor, was the man responsible for its excellence so when Toscanini created his own symphony orchestra for NBC in late 1937, Boult was one of the first people he invited as guest conductor.

Boult arrived in New York on Cunard's MV *Britannic* on 8 May 1938 and conducted two Saturday night live broadcasts with the NBCSO on 14 May and 21 May. BBC managers, or perhaps Boult himself, were sufficiently interested in the concerts to order that the NBC shortwave signal be partially recorded in London. Maybe Toscanini, himself in London at the time of the second concert, heard the shortwave transmission. The original discs are in the British Library but with the inevitable sonic problems of shortwave. Fortunately for us, NBC recorded its own set of reference discs direct from the studio, preserving both concerts in excellent sound.

For reasons for timing the two concerts cannot be presented in performance order in this release. The concert of 14 May featured works by Busoni, Beethoven, Walton and Copland; 21 May was an all-English programme with works by Holst, Vaughan Williams, Butterworth and Elgar. According to the New York Times, this was the US premiere of both Copland's *El Salón México* and Walton's *Viola Concerto*. Fortunately, Scottish-born William Primrose, now one of the viola players in the NBCSO, knew Walton's viola concerto well, and had even re-written some of the music with Walton's agreement. The New York Times thought he was the 'ideal interpreter' of the music, with 'a technique that made light of its tremendous difficulty, and a musicianship that clarified many complexities.' As for Adrian Boult, the concert had shown him to be 'a master of his craft and an artist of real perception.'

The centrepiece of the second concert was Vaughan-Williams' *Fourth Symphony*. Although not a US premiere, this nationwide broadcast confirmed it to be, according to the critic of the New York Times, 'one of the most significant in recent years... the instrumental color is rich and bold, the harmonic flavor has salty freshness and bite'. The other works on this all-English programme were Holst's 'pleasantly unpretentious' Fugal Concerto, Butterworth's poetic *Shropshire Lad*, and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, a piece that Toscanini had conducted in his very first concert with the BBCSO in 1935. These were the only times Boult conducted the NBCSO, despite him having a 40-year career ahead of him. His 'matured and knowing hand' won him many US admirers and he returned to the US several times to conduct both the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony before concentrating his remaining energy on British audiences. His last public performances took place at the age of eighty-nine in 1978.

N.B. For timing reasons the Busoni *Comedy Overture* has been excluded from the CD release of this album. If you purchased the CD from Pristine you'll find an MP3 copy of this recording included with your free downloads as a bonus track.

boult

the nbc recordings

PASC 626

beethoven
symphony no. 7
vaughan williams
symphony no. 4
elgar
enigma variations
walton
viola concerto
william primrose, viola
copland
el salón méxico
butterworth
a shropshire lad
holst
fugal concerto

broadcast recordings, 1938



boult the nbc recordings

DISC ONE

1. BUTTERWORTH A Shropshire Lad, Rhapsody (9:37)

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 7 in A, Op. 92

2. 1st mvt. - Poco sostenuto - Vivace (11:56)
3. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (9:28)
4. 3rd mvt. - Presto (8:22)
5. 4th mvt. - Allegro con brio (8:51)

ELGAR Variations on an Original Theme, 'Enigma', Op. 36

6. Theme (Andante) (1:15)
7. Variation I. L'istesso tempo 'C.A.E.' (1:46)
8. Variation II. Allegro 'H.D.S-P.' (0:46)
9. Variation III. Allegretto 'R.B.T.' (1:28)
10. Variation IV. Allegro di molto 'W.M.B.' (0:28)
11. Variation V. Moderato 'R.P.A.' (1:52)
12. Variation VI. Andantino 'Ysobel' (1:16)
13. Variation VII. Presto 'Troyte' (0:57)
14. Variation VIII. Allegretto 'W.N.' (1:42)
15. Variation IX. Adagio 'Nimrod' (4:11)
16. Variation X. Intermezzo: Allegretto 'Dorabella' (2:40)
17. Variation XI. Allegro di molto 'G.R.S.' (0:54)
18. Variation XII. Andante 'B.G.N.' (2:18)
19. Variation XIII. Romanza: Moderato '* * *' (2:38)
20. Variation XIV. Finale: Allegro Presto 'E.D.U.' (5:48)

XR Remastered by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Sir Adrian Boult

Broadcasts of 14 May (Busoni, Beethoven, Walton, Copland) & 21 May 1938 (Vaughan Williams, Holst, Butterworth, Elgar). Busoni's *A Comedy Overture* is a bonus track with your free MP3 download.

Total duration: **2hr 34:04**

CD1: 78:11 CD2: 75:53

DISC TWO

HOLST A Fugal Concerto, Op. 40, No. 2

1. 1st mvt. - Moderato (2:32)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (3:02)
3. 3rd mvt. - Allegro (3:27)

WALTON Viola Concerto*

4. 1st mvt. - Andante comodo (7:37)
5. 2nd mvt. - Vivo, con molto preciso (3:39)
6. 3rd mvt. - Allegro moderato (12:11)

William Primrose, viola

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Symphony No. 4 in F minor

7. 1st mvt. - Allegro (8:32)
8. 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (10:33)
9. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Allegro molto (5:10)
10. 4th mvt. - Finale con epilogo fugato: Allegro molto (8:40)

11. COPLAND El Salón México* (10:30)

NBC Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

*U.S. Première performances