

The recordings presented in this series will document most of Jascha Horenstein's appearances with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela (OSV). These took place during three visits to Caracas in 1954, 1955 & 1957. Venezuela was Horenstein's eighth Latin American country after having toured the region extensively, and with great success, from the mid-1940s on. However of all the countries he visited, including Mexico and Argentina where he appeared most often, it was only in Venezuela and tiny Uruguay that recordings of his concerts were made and preserved, some of which are included in this series. Aside from the quality of the performances, criteria for inclusion included works that he recorded nowhere else, others that appear in stereo for the first time and others still that were first performances in Venezuela of now standard repertory, events always worthy of preservation no matter who the conductor. In Horenstein's case these included the Venezuelan premieres of Mahler's First Symphony, Bruckner's Third, Mahler's Fourth, Prokofiev's Fifth, Strauss's Metamorphosen and Schoenberg's Verklärte Nacht. Four of these premieres occurred during a single two week period in February 1957! Not fluent in Spanish nor always the most patient of men, Horenstein's fifteen closed-door rehearsals must have been intense. The recordings in this series document most, but not all of his Venezuelan concerts.

CD1: The coupling of Sibelius and the two works by Wagner, in the order published here, was Horenstein's choice of program. It was the first OSV concert of his 1957 visit and the rapport between him and the orchestra was immediate, as is evident from the darkly majestic performance of Sibelius's Second Symphony. Limitations of space prevented the inclusion of the Meistersinger Overture that concluded the concert. Of the four items played on that evening only the Lohengrin Prelude has been preserved in stereo.

CD2: This collection reproduces in full Horenstein's second OSV 1957 concert, given in Caracas a week after the first. The performance of Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, notable for the orchestra's spirited playing and great flexibility, was a premiere for Venezuela and a Horenstein favourite. It is one of four recordings he made of the work, all highly expressionistic in style, and the only one preserved in stereo, as are all of the other items in this collection. The exception is the opening few bars of the slow introduction to the Mozart symphony. These were missing in the original source material and have been inserted by Pristine from another Horenstein recording in mono with quite remarkable results. Listeners will not easily identify the exact and subtly disguised moment of transition. We have justified this procedure by considering the interpretation of the rest of the symphony, fearless, feisty and dramatic even in the lyrical sections and a recording that deserves a place in any collection of Horenstein's most successful performances. Its preservation in reasonably decent, well defined stereo sound was another consideration in its favour.

One might justifiably ask what possible value or interest could there be in a series of rather average recordings with a third tier orchestra lacking the refinements of sound and execution expected by today's listeners, in works of now standard repertoire that are available in dozens of better sounding, better played versions, including some conducted by Horenstein himself? The answer is that his views of all these works, especially when captured live as here, remain engaging and highly absorbing no matter when or with whom he performed them, while his ability to inspire an orchestra he did not know well to cooperate with one mind and one heart, sometimes in music they did not know at all, is awe inspiring. There is a world-class feel to some of these performances that would make a good impression anywhere, and one readily forgives the mistakes and ragged execution, both musical and technical, when so much else is of such intense vitality and inspiration.

Misha Horenstein



PASC 711

horenstein

in venezuela, vol. 1

mozart
symphony no. 39
prokofiev
symphony no. 5
(venezuela premiere)
sibelius
symphony no. 2
beethoven
egmont overture
wagner
lohengrin: prelude
tristan und isolde:
prelude and liebestod

orquesta sinfónica de venezuela

live recordings, 1957

Pristine
XR

horenstein

in venezuela, vol. 1



PASC 711

disc one (61:35)

SIBELIUS Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43

- 1st mvt. - Allegretto (10:00)
- 2nd mvt. - Tempo andante, ma rubato (14:50)
- 3rd mvt. - Vivacissimo (5:47)
- 4th mvt. - Finale: Allegro moderato (14:04)

5. WAGNER Lohengrin

Prelude to Act 1 (9:30)

6. WAGNER Tristan und Isolde

Prelude and Liebestod (17:25)

Concert of 25 January 1957

Concerts recorded in Caracas, Venezuela

XR remastered by Andrew Rose

Artwork based on photograph of Jascha Horenstein

Very special thanks to Misha Horenstein for source recordings, artwork, notes and other assistance.

N.B. Insert at introduction of Mozart Symphony No. 39 taken from concert of Orchestre National de France, Paris, 24 February 1971

Total duration: 2hr 29:07

disc two (77:32)

1. BEETHOVEN Egmont, Op. 84

Overture (9:05)

MOZART Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major, K.543

- 1st mvt - Adagio; Allegro (8:29)
- 2nd mvt - Andante con moto (9:03)
- 3rd mvt - Menuetto e Trio (3:56)
- 4th mvt - Allegro (4:20)

PROKOFIEV Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100

- 1st mvt - Andante (11:20)
- 2nd mvt - Allegro marcato (8:43)
- 3rd mvt - Adagio (12:25)
- 4th mvt - Allegro giocoso (10:11)

Concert of 1 February 1957

Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela
conducted by Jascha Horenstein