

BLECH

CONDUCTS
TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

- 1 1st mvt. - Andante – Allegro con anima (12:28)
 - 2 2nd mvt. - Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza (12:11)
 - 3 3rd mvt. - Valse: Allegro moderato (5:16)
 - 4 4th mvt. - Andante maestoso—Allegro vivace (10:18)
- Recorded October, 1930 in the Beethoven-Saal, Berlin
Matrices: CD 9138-1, 9139-2, 9140-1, 9141-2, 9142-2, 9167-2, 9168-2, 9169-2, 9170-1, 9171-2
First issued on Electrola EH 718 through 722

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

- 5 2nd mvt. - Valse (4:00)
 - 6 4th mvt. - Finale – Tema Russo (4:23)
- Recorded March, 1929 in the Beethoven-Saal, Berlin
Matrices: CLR 5132-2 and 5133-2
First issued on Electrola EH 551

Capriccio Italien, Op. 45 (8:19)

- 7 Recorded 23rd March, 1928 in the Beethoven-Saal, Berlin
- Matrices: CLR 3991-2 and 3992-1
First issued on Electrola EJ 294

Berlin State Opera Orchestra
Leo Blech, *conductor*

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Ober-T Thorn
Special thanks to Don Tait for the loan of source material
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Leo Blech

Total duration: 57:25 ©2009 Pristine Audio.

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BLECH

CONDUCTS TCHAIKOVSKY



SYMPHONY NO. 5

SERENADE FOR STRINGS
CAPRICCIO ITALIEN

BERLIN STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTED BY LEO BLECH, 1928-1930

 bert-Thorn

PRISTINE
AUDIO

CONDUCTS
TCHAIKOVSKY**A Note on the Recordings**

Despite his being one of the most prolific recording artists of the 1920s and '30s, it is remarkable that Leo Blech set down so few extended symphonic works. Most of his discography is taken up with overtures, preludes and operatic accompaniments (largely Wagnerian). Of longer works, there are three concerto recordings, all with Fritz Kreisler; Strauss' *Tod und Verklärung*, and seven symphonies, nearly all of them Viennese Classical or Early Romantic: Haydn 88 and 94 (the latter, three times); Mozart 34; Schubert 5, 8 (twice) and 9; and the odd man out, the present Tchaikovsky.

But although it is an anomaly amongst his symphonic recordings, Blech's Tchaikovsky *Fifth* is, in my opinion, one of the great statements of this score from the 78 rpm era, ranking in the company of such other worthy performances as those of Mengelberg, Koussevitzky and Stock. Its combination of lyricism and inexorable momentum is unique, and it deserves to be more widely known.

A word is in order regarding cuts. Unlike earlier recordings of the symphony, Blech opens up the then-traditional big cut in the fourth movement development section. However, in order to bring the work in on the ten sides Electrola allotted, he was forced to make a number of small cuts on the final side. Regrettable though they are, the cuts are nonetheless done with intelligence, and work with the flow of the music well enough that the casual listener may not be aware of them.

In the *Serenade for Strings* finale, Blech cuts the introduction and the restatement of the work's opening theme before the coda in order to fit the work on one side. Played out of context as it is, it makes perfect sense. Less sensible is the idea of recording the *Capriccio Italien* on two sides with brutal cuts; yet, this seems to have been a tradition among German conductors, as there are also single-disc versions by Kleiber, Böhm and Schuricht during the electric 78 rpm era.

The sources for the transfers were the best portions of two German Electrola copies for the *Fifth Symphony*; an Australian HMV for the *Serenade* movements; and a British HMV for the *Capriccio*. A couple instances of blasting on the second side of this last work were present on all copies I could find and may be unavoidable. None of these performances (which comprise Blech's complete recorded Tchaikovsky repertoire) have ever been available on CD or even LP, and I am grateful for the opportunity to present them before a wider public now. - **Mark Obert-Thorn**

FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM