

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 275

TOSCANINI AT NBC

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

I was a violinist in that orchestra, and we were awaiting the first appearance of our conductor. There was no audience. The men, instruments in hand, sat nervously rigid, scarcely breathing. Suddenly, from a door on the right side of the stage, a small, solidly built man emerged. Immediately discernible were the crowning white hair and impassive, squat, high-cheekboned mustached face. He was dressed in a severely cut black alpaca jacket, with a high clerical collar, formal striped trousers, and pointed, slipperlike shoes. In his hand he carried a baton. In awed stillness we watched covertly as he walked up the few steps leading to the stage.

As he stepped up to the podium, by prearranged signal, we all rose, like puppets suddenly propelled to life by a pent-up tension. We had been warned in advance not to make any vocal demonstration and we stood silent, eagerly and anxiously staring.

He looked around, apparently bewildered by our unexpected action, and gestured a faint greeting with both arms, a mechanical smile lighting his pale face for an instant. Somewhat embarrassed, we sat down again. Then, in a rough hoarse voice he called out, "Brahms!" He looked at us piercingly for the briefest moment, then raised his arms. In one smashing stroke, the baton came down. A vibrant sound suddenly gushed forth from the tense players like blood from an artery.

With each heart-pounding timpani stroke in the opening bars of the Brahms First Symphony his baton beat became more powerfully insistent, his shoulders more strained and hunched as though buffeting a giant wind. His outstretched left arm spasmodically flailed the air, the cupped fingers pleading like a beseeching beggar. His face reddened, his muscles tightened, eyes and eyebrows constantly moving. As we in the violin section tore with our bows against our strings, I felt I was being sucked into a roaring maelstrom of sound—every bit of strength and skill called upon and strained into being. Bits of breath, muscle, and blood, never before used, were being drained from me. Like ships torn from their mooring in a stormy ocean, we bobbed and tossed, responding to these earnest, importuning gestures. With what a fierce new joy we played!

Playing with Toscanini was a musical rebirth. The clarity, intensity, and honesty of his musical vision—his own torment—was like a cleansing baptismal pool. Caught up in his force, your own indifference was washed away. You were not just a player, another musician, but an artist once more searching for long forgotten ideals and truths. You were curiously alive, and there was a purpose and self-fulfillment in your work. It was not a job, it was a calling.

From "This Was Toscanini" by Samuel Antek & Robert Hupka (Vanguard, 1963)

Restoration notes

This first ever broadcast by Toscanini and the orchestra created for him by NBC radio is presented here in its entirety, including all preserved applause and announcements. This decision was made both on historic grounds and also because the musical content alone was slightly too long for a single CD issue. Sonically the concert is reasonably well preserved for a broadcast of its vintage, and though I have had to battle for long sections an almost ever-present disc surface noise, it is a battle that has largely been won. As well as a full XR remastering filling out the original, highly constricted sound considerably, I also took the opportunity to soften the hard 8H acoustic with a touch of convolution reverberation, using the perhaps appropriate acoustic one finds in the concert hall at La Scala, Milan. **AR**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

SARL Pristine Audio, Le Bourq, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France - Tel. (00) 33 553 821857
Internet: www.pristineclassical.com



Toscanini at NBC: The Early Years

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 275

NBC CONCERT No. 1

VIVALDI
CONCERTO GROSSO
IN D MINOR, OP. 3 No. 11

MOZART
SYMPHONY No. 40
IN G MINOR, K550

BRAHMS
SYMPHONY No. 1
IN C MINOR, OP. 68

NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTED BY
ARTURO TOSCANINI

25TH DECEMBER
1937

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

Toscanini at NBC: Concert No. 1

CD One

- 1 Introduction to programme (3:03)

VIVALDI Concerto Grosso in D minor Op. 11, No. 3

- 2 1st mvt. - Allegro (4:46)
3 2nd mvt. - Largo e spiccato (4:39)
4 3rd mvt. - Allegro (3:30)

Mischa Mischakoff, Edwin Bachman - violin
Oswaldo Mazzuchi - cello

MOZART Symphony No. 40 in C minor K550

- 5 1st mvt. - Allegro molto (7:39)
6 2nd mvt. - Andante (7:54)
7 3rd mvt. - Menuetto (4:00)
8 4th mvt. - Allegro assai (4:02)
9 Applause and back announcement (2:42)

CD Two

- 1 Introduction to Brahms (7:46)

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1 in C minor Op. 68

- 2 1st mvt. - Un poco sostenuto - Allegro (12:35)
3 2nd mvt. - Andante sostenuto (8:55)
4 3rd mvt. - Un poco Allegretto e grazioso (4:33)
5 4th mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo, ma con brio (16:44)
6 Final applause and back announcement (1:23)

NBC Symphony Orchestra
conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**

Broadcast of 25th December, 1937 from Studio 8H, NBC Radio City, New York
Introduced by **Howard Clancy**



PASC 275

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**Transfers from tapes in the
Pristine Audio collectionCover artwork based on a
photograph of **Toscanini**,
coupled with a 1930s-era NBC
radio logoTotal duration: **1hr 34:09**For a full catalogue visit
www.pristineclassical.com
or call : (00) 33 979 622713© 2011 **Pristine Audio**