

Albert Coates Beethoven • Bach

Among British conductors, few conveyed brute might and intellectual energy so clearly as Albert Coates (1882-1953), perhaps Beethoven's greatest contemporary--and rival--in the world of symphonic and operatic repertory. Born into an English-Russian heritage, Coates exhibited a penchant for Russian music: naturally enough, but no small leaning towards Wagner, whose music he realized with a fervent authority hardly matched by other conductors on record or in the concert hall. His Beethoven Ninth (14-19 October 1926) carries that same penchant for boundless potency, a physical dynamic and volcanic surfeit of which Coates was well aware: once, in a temper, he flared out, "I could really get destructive if I were a more diminutive Italian conductor we all know!"

Transferred from the 1926 shellacs, this Ninth moves with a peerless grace that sings well beyond the years that intervene between its creation and us. Despite the limits of electrical recording of the period, the interpretation vibrates with restless searching power, and the second movement--a psalm to the rhythmic impulse in and for itself--seems barely contained by the sound process that captured it. We detect only a slight tendency to Romantic exaggeration in the string portamento of the third movement; otherwise, an epic meditation unfolds in firm colors, always attuned to the harmonic bases of Beethoven's transitions. The forward propulsion of the tempo notwithstanding, we can savor individual touches among woodwinds, strings, and horns as the double-theme and variations ascends in majestic figures in Coates's equivalent of Gothic arches.

Excellent orchestral definition for the opening of the last movement, the double basses and woodwinds in high gloss, the musculature of the phrasing vividly impelled forward, only a step from the surge of Smetana's Moldau.

For this final movement vocal quartet--singing in English--Coates has the stellar talents both Elsie Suddaby (1893-1980) and Walter Widdop (1892-1949), who would help premier Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music in 1938. It claims us to hear "Freude" rendered "Gladness" by Stuart Robinson to retain the syllabication of the music, but the cumulative effect captures the Beethoven/Schiller concert of world brotherhood. Widdop communicates a joyful pomp in his janssary scherzo, the chorus brightly respondent and the ensuing fugal a hectic bundle of energetic sparks to light our way out of spiritual darkness. The slow movement conveys to us what Coates might have accomplished had he inscribed the Missa Solemnis, given the high vaulted arches of his phrases. The vocal quartet rushes into the last sequence with "Gladness, Daughter of Elysium," and the upward rockets and swooping strings of the orchestra--whom we must assume as the uncredited LSO--casts a warm swaddling cloth around the singers as they soar and dip simultaneously to exhort men to moral action. The coda bears fire and thunder, a Promethean gesture in the cause of an all-embracing Humanism.

Review of Coates conducting Beethoven 9th by **Gary Lemoine** at **Audiophile Audition**, slightly edited (three words removed) to remove reference to previous transfer on another label. (Original review here: <http://www.audiophile.com/articles.php?articleID=7767>)

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Albert Coates conducts

Beethoven & Bach

Beethoven

Symphony No. 9 "Choral"

Gratulations-Mennett

Creatures of Prometheus Overture

Bach (arr. Elgar)

Fantasy and Fugue in C minor

Transfers by Ward Marston

Electric HMV recordings 1925-1928

Coates Beethoven & Bach

- ❑ **BACH** (arr Elgar) - Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537 (7:30)
- ❑ **BEETHOVEN** - Gratulations-Menuett, WoO 3 (4:07)
- ❑ **BEETHOVEN** The Creatures of Prometheus - Overture, Op. 43 (4:24)

*BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 "CHORAL"

- ❑ 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso (13:36)
- ❑ 2nd mvt. - Molto vivace (12:00)
- ❑ 3rd mvt. - Adagio e cantabile - Andante moderato (12:56)
- ❑ 4th mvt. - Presto - Allegro assai (23:31)

Elsie Suddaby soprano

Nellie Walker contralto

Walter Widdop tenor

Stuart Robinson bass

Philharmonic Choir dir. **Charles Kennedy Scott**

London Symphony Orchestra **Albert Coates**

(*Credited to Symphony Orchestra, probably members of LSO)

Special thanks to **Richard Kaplan** for supply of original 78s used in this transfer

Cover artwork based on photographs of **Albert Coates**

Bach/Elgar

Recorded 11 and 12 October 1928

Issued on HMV D1580

Beethoven Gratulations

Recorded 22 October 1928

Issued on Victor 9048

Beethoven Overture

Recorded 6 January 1927

Issued on HMV D1163

Beethoven Symphony No. 9

Recorded 14, 15 and 19 October 1926

Transferred from Z shellac Victor pressings

9061-68 (except final disc, from a Victor

Orthographic pressing)

Total duration: **78:04**

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