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Hanson conducts American Music

Harris Griffes Barber

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"If I had pickers who could pitch as strongly as you do in your Symphony, my worries would be over." So wrote the manager of a baseball team, to Roy Harris, after a performance of the Third Symphony. This remarkable work, still pitching as strongly as ever, dates from 1937, and was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky, who thought it the greatest orchestral work written in America. Its strength, like its greatness, derives from its originality, and from its ability to say new things in an intelligible way. Now that Koussevitzky is no longer with us, it could have no better an interpreter than Howard Hanson, who has long been responsible for the encouragement of American composers and the performance of their music.

Harris's Third Symphony, although perhaps not as monumental a work as his Fifth, has been an orchestral classic both within and outside America for seventeen years. It now appears for the first time in LP form, and is well served by the Mercury "Living Presence" recording technique, which is a new and eminently valid claim as far as the present reviewer is concerned. The acoustic is very satisfactory, having ample glow when it is needed (the brass sonorities in the fugal section) yet never giving the listener the impression of unreality or trick balance. True, one sometimes feels that a guiding hand is reaching out to lead us into a particular section of the orchestra; but the hand does guide rather than shove, and that is a distinct advantage. The essence of all good sound control is to avoid the obvious and eschew the artificial — *à la* est celer artem. Mercury have achieved this, with radiant success.

D.S. - The Gramophone, February 1955 (*review of original Harris LP issue*)

Transfer notes

A radio broadcast the weekend before the release of these recordings on Pristine Audio succeeded in reminding me that I had some unfinished business with the American music recordings of Howard Hanson, and I'm glad it did. The presenter and critic Rob Cowan introduced this recording of Harris's Third Symphony, which had been specially transferred from LP for his broadcast, as "the greatest American symphony", and pointedly reminded me (and his other listeners) that it had never appeared on CD.

As with the previous issues in this short series, the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra has been very well recorded by Mercury, leaving me in the happy position of some excellent starting points for my remastering work. The release coincides with work I've been doing on trying to recapture some of the sub-bass which was often heavily filtered on LP recordings in the 1950s - the almost subsonic underpinning of many a modern recording which is rarely to be heard on older recordings (these are frequencies that early LPs in particular struggled with), but which when present can bring a fabulous extra dimension of realism to a symphony orchestra recording. **AR**

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

American Music, Volume 4

HARRIS Symphony No. 3

GRIFFES The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan

The White Peacock • Clouds • Bacchanale

BARBER Symphony No. 1



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Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra Howard Hanson
Studio recordings 1953 - 1955

Hanson American Music Vol. 4

- 1 **HARRIS** Symphony No. 3 (16:11)
- 2 **GRIFFES** The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan (9:48)
- 3 **GRIFFES** The White Peacock, Op. 7, No. 1 (5:28)
- 4 **GRIFFES** Clouds, Op. 7, No. 4 (4:34)
- 5 **GRIFFES** Bacchanale, Op. 6, No. 3 (4:25)

BARBER Symphony No. 1 in One Movement, Op. 9

- 6 Allegro ma non troppo (6:51)
- 7 Allegro molto (4:22)
- 8 Andante tranquillo (8:20)

Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra Howard Hanson

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of **Howard Hanson**

Harris Symphony No 3
Recorded 11-13 May 1953
Issued as Mercury MG-40004

Griffes
Recorded 29 October 1954
Issued as Mercury MG-40012

Barber Symphony No. 1
Recorded 9 May 1955
Issued as Mercury MG-40014

Total duration: 59:59

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