

compact
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 323
STEREO

Leonard Bernstein

Liszt A Faust Symphony

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Bernstein's is a marvelously convincing performance that in its uninhibited way blows any cobwebs off one's impressions of this romantic masterpiece. Under Bernstein there is never boredom: only freshness and much excitement. But that said one does have to tackle the inevitable question: how does Bernstein compare with Beecham? Most of my detailed comparisons reveal exactly the contrast one would expect. In the grand enunciations of Faust's martial theme in the first movement Beecham has more swagger and panache; by comparison Bernstein seems to be driving too hard. In the delicate little passage near the beginning of the second movement where Gretchen counts the peaks (*"He loves me, he loves me not"*), Bernstein sounds perfect until you hear Beecham. Beecham with his daring but controlled rubato conveys so much more the tenderness, the expectancy of joy, and it is the same throughout much of that slow movement. The second subject, marked dolce amoroso, is so very tender in Beecham's hands, that Bernstein's idea of amoroso sounds comparatively extrovert afterwards. The latter's account of the Mephistophelian finale opens with more diabolical drive, but Beecham conveys more clearly that the first bars are a mere introduction (he comes closer to observing the instruction *ironico*) and when the gallumphing scherzando distortions of the Faust themes appear the Beecham panache again triumphs.

All of which suggests a clear preference in Beecham's favour, and there is no doubt that anyone who has grown to love the Beecham performance should remain with him. But Bernstein's freshness and directness have a cumulative effect whatever the detailed comparisons, and the choral ending is more expansive than with Beecham. Particularly if one does not trouble too much about what Bernstein did at a particular bar, it is a hair-raising experience he provides, and the recording, very reverberant but brilliant as well, is recognizably more modern than the Beecham.

One final comparison between Beecham and Bernstein at the very opening when violas and cellos enunciate Faust's mystic theme (ranging over all twelve notes of the scale as Stockhausen has pointed out) Beecham conveys a sense of reverie. This is Faust the philosopher, where Bernstein's reading conveys less of mysticism and more than a confident magician after the manner of Dukas. But to go to the same theme when it returns after the development: there curiously the contrast is quite different. After the frenzy of the development Beecham somehow fails to relax completely, where Bernstein's extra tautness in the preceding argument allows a deeper sense of calm in the return to the home idea. But then when in the finale that same theme is hinted at, pizzicato over mysterious muted horns, it is Beecham who again shows a clear supremacy. It is a marvellous work whichever version you choose.

E.G. *The Gramophone*, November 1964 (*excerpt*)

Transfer notes

The original discs from which this transfer were made were in near-mint condition and the transfer process was straightforward. Although sound quality was acceptable for its day, it had a certain veiled boxiness to it which has been entirely lifted by XR remastering. I've also been able to remove a considerable amount of hiss and rumble present on the original recording. **AR**

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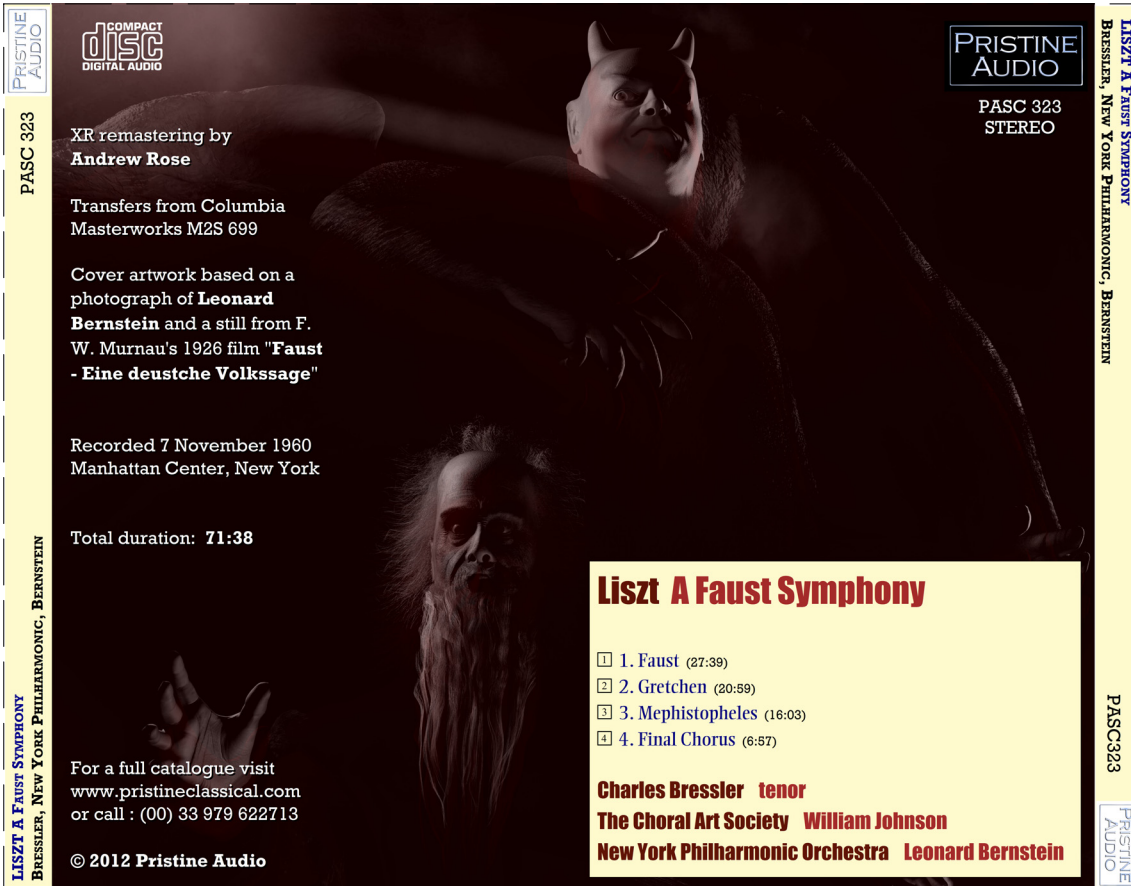
A Faust Symphony

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR



Charles Bressler, tenor
New York Philharmonic
Leonard Bernstein

stereo studio recording, 1960



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PASC 323

LISZT A FAUST SYMPHONY
BRESSLER, NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, BERNSTEIN

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Transfers from Columbia
Masterworks M2S 699

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Leonard
Bernstein** and a still from F.
W. Murnau's 1926 film "**Faust
- Eine deutsche Volkssage**"

Recorded 7 November 1960
Manhattan Center, New York

Total duration: **71:38**

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BRESSLER, NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, BERNSTEIN

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Liszt A Faust Symphony

- 1. Faust (27:39)
- 2. Gretchen (20:59)
- 3. Mephistopheles (16:03)
- 4. Final Chorus (6:57)

Charles Bressler tenor
The Choral Art Society **William Johnson**
New York Philharmonic Orchestra **Leonard Bernstein**