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STEREO

Sargent

conducts Beethoven & Schubert

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I should never have guessed Sargent as the conductor of this had I not known beforehand. It is a civilised, polished reading, lacking some drama and intensity, and in these qualities it reminded of Kempe's "eighteenth-century" reading of last month. But Sargent is less extreme in this view, and the playing is fresh, the musical argument consistently gripping one as it should. The opening of the slow movement illustrates the performance's qualities—as well as its shortcomings. The speed is extremely slow, but where with a Toscanini the tension is frightening Sargent caresses the music, giving it a velvet quality. Rarely have I felt the aptness so much of Coleridge's famous remark about this being a funeral procession in deep purple. The Royal Philharmonic woodwind respond superbly.

The scherzo is on the slow side too, and the finale is as slow as the music can stand (not quite so slow as Kempe however). The work loses some stature and certainly intensity, but the merits I have noted shine consistently through, and anyone wanting a bargain Eroica in very warm and ample stereo should be delighted with it. Maticic provides a possible stereo alternative on Whitehall (PLPS129), a more vigorous, dramatic performance, but the recording is sour by comparison. I have yet to hear the mono version of the Sargent. Unfortunately his slow speed for the Funeral March entails a tum-over in the middle.

Edward Greenfield, *The Gramophone*, November 1961 - *review of Beethoven Symphony No. 3*

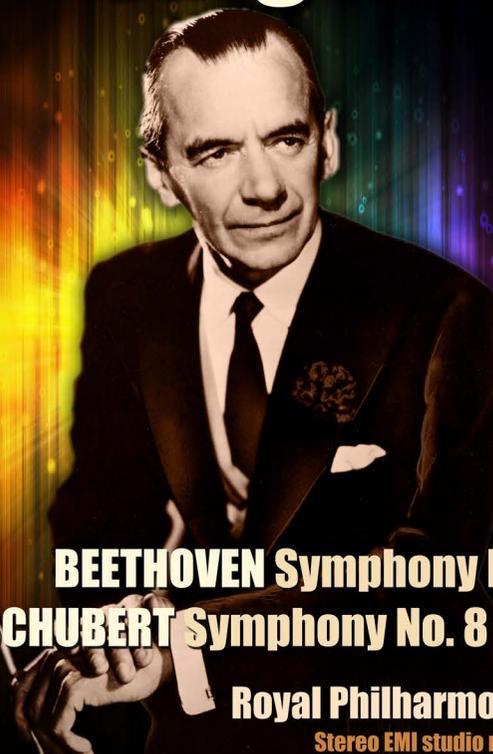
Transfer notes

For a conductor of Sir Malcolm Sargent's stature, and for one who was such a prolific recording artist, it seems odd that his recorded output includes so few of the "warhorses" of the mainstream symphonic repertoire. Sargent's studio work, on the whole, tended to concentrate on choral music (Beecham referred to him as "the greatest choirmaster we have ever produced"), concertos ("he seems to sense what the pianist wants of the music even before he begins to play it" - Cyril Smith), and English music. Thus the two recordings here represent, surprisingly, rare moments in his studio career. They were recorded seven months apart in 1960 and 1961, a time when the conductor was also engaged in trying to preserve the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the wake in March 1961 of the death of Sir Thomas Beecham. Despite their issue on the budget HMV Concert Classics label, they were of course well-recorded by EMI, and this new XR remasterings of transfers made for us by Edward Johnson has worked to clear out some of the boxiness of the original, adding clarity and focus as well as overall body to the orchestral sound. Pitch analysis suggests the orchestra tuned to A443 for both recordings - this has been retained for this release. **A.R.**

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

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BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 3 'Eroica'
SCHUBERT Symphony No. 8 'Unfinished'
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Stereo EMI studio recordings, 1960 & 1961

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Malcolm Sargent**

Beethoven Eroica Symphony
Recorded May 1961
Transfer from HMV SXLP 20040

Schubert Unfinished Symphony
Recorded October 1960
Transfer from HMV SXLP 20029

Total duration: **76:58**

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BEETHOVEN EROICA SYMPHONY - SCHUBERT UNFINISHED SYMPHONY
SARGENT, ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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Sargent Two Classics

BEETHOVEN

**Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 55
"EROICA"**

- 1 1st mvt. - *Allegro con brio* (15:03)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Marcia funebre: Adagio assai* (17:53)
- 3 3rd mvt. - *Scherzo: Allegro vivace* (9:47)
- 4 4th mvt. - *Allegro molto* (13:12)

SCHUBERT

**Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759
"UNFINISHED"**

- 1 1st mvt. - *Allegro moderato* (13:10)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Andante con moto* (11:53)

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Sir Malcolm Sargent**