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The Columbia Beethoven Centennial Series Volume Three

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Producer's Note

This volume is the third of five which will reissue, for the first time in one series, the complete symphony cycle which English Columbia commissioned to commemorate the centennial of Beethoven's death in 1927. The first four symphonies were assigned to British conductors (Henschel, Beecham, Wood and the Northern Irish Harty) while the remainder were given to Weingartner, already generally acknowledged as a Beethoven specialist.

Oddly, even though he had already recorded a complete acoustic version of the Fifth Symphony three years earlier, Weingartner was not Columbia's first choice for their Centennial series. On November 19th and 22nd of 1926, Bruno Walter led the (old, pre-Beecham) Royal Philharmonic in their first electrical version. Copies of the shells were even shipped to Columbia's American affiliate before the recording was cancelled on January 24th of the following year and the matrices destroyed. Four days later, Weingartner began recording the version heard here.

As he did in his 1932 set with the British Symphony Orchestra (but not in his recordings of 1924 and 1933), Weingartner here omits the first movement repeat. But the most anomalous feature of the present version is the incredibly swift tempo of the second movement, which starts at $\text{♩} = 96$, faster even than Beethoven's metronome marking of $\text{♩} = 92$. This movement beats his final recording by nearly two and a half minutes – 7:30 vs. 9:55 (not counting the pauses after the tracks). Almost certainly, this was due to Columbia's enforcement of a four-minute limit on the duration of the sides of their early electrical recordings.

That same reason would account for the *Pastoral's* 33 minutes being lavishly spread over ten 12-inch sides. The brief duration of the symphony is due not only to similarly fast tempi, but also to the omission of all repeats. Although Weingartner had begun an acoustic recording of the symphony in 1924, it was never completed; and, alone among his 1926/27 series of the Fifth through the Ninth, this one was not re-recorded by him in the 1930s. Of particular note is his handling of the brass in the last movement, bringing it to the fore in passages where most conductors keep it as accompaniment.

The sources for the present transfers were American Columbia "Viva-Tonal" pressings. While these are usually the quietest versions available, a higher-than-average amount of surface noise will be noticeable, particularly in the Fifth Symphony. The best portions of multiple copies of the recordings were used for transfer, so it is possible the noise may be inherent in the masters. The severe speed fluctuations of the originals have been corrected through the application of Celemony *Capstan*, allowing the performances to be heard with rock-solid pitch for the first time since the original recording sessions.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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

The Columbia Beethoven Centennial Series



Felix Weingartner
conducts Volume 3

Symphony No. 5
in C minor, Op. 67

Symphony No. 6
in F major, Op. 68
"Pastoral"

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Studio Recordings, 1927

PASC 399

Producer & Audio
Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of **Felix Weingartner**

**THE COLUMBIA BEETHOVEN
CENTENNIAL SERIES**
Volume Three

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (6:21)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (7:36)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Allegro (4:42)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro (8:35)

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68

"Pastoral"

- 5 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (9:03)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Andante molto mosso (10:57)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Allegro (2:44)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegro (3:05)
- 9 5th mvt. - Allegretto (7:49)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Felix Weingartner, conductor

Beethoven Symphony No. 5

Recorded 28 – 29 January 1927 in the Scala Theatre, London
Matrix nos.: WRAX 2414-2, 2415-2, 2417-2, 2418-2, 2419-2,
2420-2, 2421-2 & 2422-3
First issued on Columbia L 1880 through 1883

Beethoven Symphony No. 6

Recorded 18 – 19 January 1927 in the Scala Theatre, London
Matrix nos.: WRAX 2363-1, 2364-2, 2365-1, 2366-2, 2377-3,
2378-1, 2379-2, 2380-2, 2381-2 & 2382-1
First issued on Columbia 1893 through 1897

Pitch stabilisation: Andrew Rose
Special thanks to Nathan Brown and Charles Niss for
providing source material

Total duration: **60:52**

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