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PASC 401

Pablo Casals The Late Concerto Recordings

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Producer's Note

At the end of the Second World War, Pablo Casals hoped that the Allied forces which had just ousted Hitler would now turn their attention to removing the dictator Franco from Spain. When they showed no inclination to do so, he broke off a London recording session of the Haydn D Major Cello Concerto in October, 1945 and withdrew to his French home in Prades near the Spanish border, vowing not to perform publicly again until democracy was restored to his homeland.

He was drawn out of his self-imposed silence by Budapest Quartet violinist Alexander Schneider, who first approached him for coaching help with the Bach violin suites, and who later suggested holding a festival in Prades to mark the 200th anniversary of Bach's death in 1950. American Columbia was brought in to make recordings, a series which continued as the festival expanded its purview beyond Bach and moved to larger quarters in nearby Perpignan in 1951, returning to Prades the following year.

While Casals had conducted and played in chamber music performances, the Schumann from the 1953 festival was his first concerto recording as a soloist since the aborted Haydn set. Interestingly, master accompanist Eugene Ormandy was not credited on the original LP, nor on its first reissue in the budget-priced Odyssey series, probably for contractual reasons. In 1957, a new series of Casals festivals was begun in Puerto Rico, where the cellist had recently married and made his home. It was there that his final concerto recording was made.

The Dvořák has an interesting history. Recorded by Everest during the 1960 Puerto Rico festival, it remained unapproved when the label changed hands shortly thereafter. The new owners found the tape in a box and issued it, believing they owned the rights. Casals promptly sued to have the release withdrawn, claiming it damaged his reputation. It has never subsequently been reissued in any authorized edition from the Everest masters, although a couple European CD releases, apparently transferred from monaural sources, have appeared. The original suppressed LP is now a highly sought-after collector's item. I was fortunate to have two stereo pressings in good condition to work from for the present transfer. (The first note, incidentally, is clipped on the original recording.)

While Casals is admittedly not in top form, his performance brings to mind Dr. Johnson's famous Eighteenth Century witicism likening a woman preaching to a dog walking on its hind legs ("It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.") Considering that he was in his 84th year at the time, it is a remarkable achievement; and Schneider's heartfelt, sympathetic accompaniment matches his soloist like the veteran chamber player he was. It's an autumnal reading quite different from Casals's brisker 1937 recording with Szell (Pristine PASC 246), and one which despite its flaws deserves to be heard.

Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Pablo Casals The Late Concerto Recordings

SCHUMANN Cello Concerto

Eugene Ormandy
Prades Festival Orchestra

DVOŘÁK Cello Concerto

Alexander Schneider
Festival Casals Orchestra of Puerto Rico
(Stereo Recording)



Obert-Thorn

Studio and Live Recordings · 1953 and 1960

Producer & Audio
Restoration Engineer:
Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of **Pablo Casals**

Schumann Cello Concerto
Recorded 28 May 1953
in L'Eglise St-Pierre, Prades
First issued on Columbia ML-4926

Dvořák Cello Concerto
Live recording, Spring, 1960, in the Theatre
of the University of Puerto Rico, San Juan
First issued on Everest SDBR 3083

Special thanks to Peter Bay
for providing source material

Total duration: **64:30**

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CASALS *The Late Concerto Recordings*

SCHUMANN Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

- 1 1st mvt. - Nicht zu schnell (11:56)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Langsam (4:12)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Sehr lebhaft (9:13)

Prades Festival Orchestra *Eugene Ormandy*

DVOŘÁK Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104 (STEREO recording)

- 4 1st mvt. - Allegro (15:03)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Adagio ma non troppo (11:28)
- 6 3rd mvt. - Allegro moderato (12:38)

Festival Casals Orchestra of Puerto Rico *Alexander Schneider*

Pablo Casals *cello*