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BRUNO WALTER
conducts Bruckner and R. Strauss

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Bruno Walter

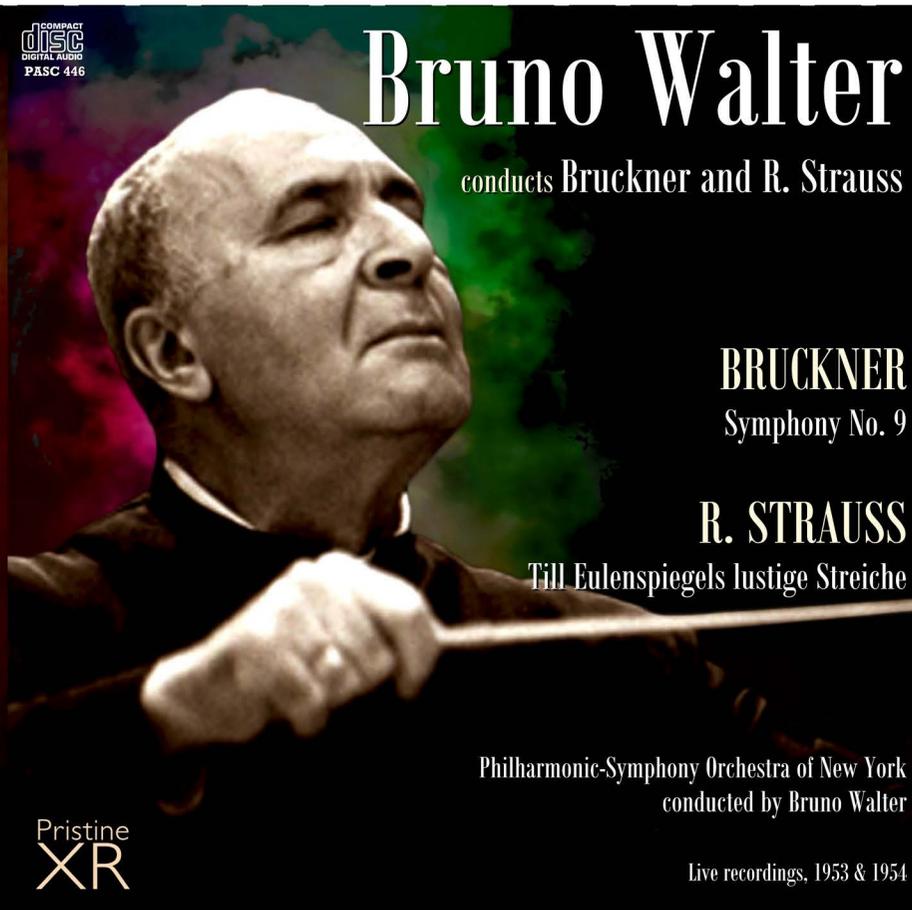
conducts Bruckner and R. Strauss

BRUCKNER
Symphony No. 9

R. STRAUSS
Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York
conducted by Bruno Walter

Live recordings, 1953 & 1954



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Bruno Walter returned as guest conductor to the Philharmonic-Symphony podium last night in Carnegie Hall, and he offered a program of the old-time sort, which had great favor with the audience. In past weeks Dimitri Mitropoulos has stressed the field of modern and contemporaneous music, and various have been the reactions to his program offerings. Last night's audience sat back in deep content, while Mr. Walter played them Handel, in the form of a Concerto Grosso; Mozart, in the instance of the incomparable G minor Symphony, and Bruckner—his unfinished Ninth.

What adjectives shall we apply to this, Bruckner's last symphony? It is the one of which he finished three movements, praying the Lord God to accept his Te Deum for the final movement, if he did not live to finish the score. And this has been followed on some occasions. But the better plan, as this incomplete symphony stands today, seems to be to perform the three instrumental movements as they are, without a finale. And we will discount adjectives about the work, pro or con, and content ourselves for the moment with a conditional clause: if we are to have Bruckner, let it be as he is interpreted by Mr. Walter.

Mr. Walter's performance of this symphony is throughout luminous, devout, prophetic in spirit. The shining radiance of Bruckner's vision he catches with the rarest sensitiveness and intuitive approach. And it is of course this quality of Bruckner's music, and the nobility of his thematic ideas per se, which preserve his poorly constructed symphonies in the repertory.

The Ninth Symphony is no exception to this rule. It is indeed the sheerest confirmation of it. For it is weaker in its structure and development, by far, than the strong movements of the Seventh, Eighth or Fourth symphonies, for example. The Ninth is more given than the earlier ones to the repetition of phrases, either just as they stand when first proclaimed or in sequence, mounting a tone or a half tone higher till this process becomes tiresome, and there is nothing culminative to say for a climax. Then the composer breaks off, at loss how to proceed further.

Soon there begin again the familiar tremolos of the strings, the horn calls, the chorale fragments of melody, over and over; and a theme, first in its upright position, then in inversion; counter phrases duly supplied; triplet figures against duplex patterns; all the familiar hallmarks. We repeat, the symphony succeeds in the extent that it does, and commands the support of the Bruckner devotees, not because of, but in spite of its defects. A perfectly celestial idea hypnotizes the listener; it is so good that it is able when it has petered out to wait till the next big place arrives. And so, last night, Mr. Walter most devoutly and, for a minority at least, successfully, conducted Bruckner's Ninth Symphony.

Concert review by **Olin Downes** (excerpt), **The New York Times**, 3 February 1950

N.B. When this album was released it was believed to be a recording of the February 1950 concert. It has since been confirmed as the December 1953 concert.

Producer's Note

The two recordings in this programme have remained in private hands since their recording from live Carnegie Hall concerts in the 1950s, and their provenance is unclear. Copies were donated by a private collector for this issue. Of the two, the Bruckner is by far the better, technically speaking: a full-frequency recording of remarkable quality for its age, it appeared at first to be unusually swift for a Walter performance of this work. Frequency analysis forced a revision of this, however - when properly pitched at the A440 used by the Philharmonic in the early 1950s it closely matches other Walter recordings. Nevertheless the collector who passed it to me still regards it as perhaps Bruno Walter's finest recorded performance of Bruckner's 9th Symphony. By contrast, the Strauss, a far rarer recording in the Walter discography (an earlier LA Philharmonic performance was issued on a Nuovo Era CD and a Japanese Bruno Walter Society LP), appears to have originated on a slightly swishy acetate disc recorded from an AM radio source, hence its limited frequency and dynamic range. Sonic shortcomings notwithstanding, it is a fabulous interpretation, outclassing the Los Angeles recording on a number of performance levels. It should be noted that neither of these recordings included applause or announcements, and movement joins in the Bruckner were silent, indicating probable 12" acetate side change points - I have preserved all that remains. **Andrew Rose**

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BRUCKNER SYMPHONY No. 9 - STRAUSS TILL EULENSPIEGELS LUSTIGE STREICHE
WALTER, PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Bruno Walter

Bruckner Symphony No. 9

Live performance

Carnegie Hall, New York City

27 December 1953

Strauss Till Eulenspiegel

Live performance

Carnegie Hall, New York City

Matinee Concert

26 December 1954

Total duration: 65:47

BRUNO WALTER *conducts Bruckner and Strauss*

BRUCKNER *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, WAB109*

- 1 1st mvt. - Feierlich, misterioso (20:46)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Bewegt, lebhaft; Trio. Schnell (10:17)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Adagio. Langsam, feierlich (19:53)

4 **R. STRAUSS** *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op.28* (14:51)

Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York

Bruno Walter, conductor

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