

In the summer of 2007, having recently developed the basic techniques behind Pristine's XR remastering system, and also recently received an exceptional donation of several hundred tape reels, I set to work remastering the 1948 broadcast performance of Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, as played by Vladimir Horowitz with Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

The release was well-received:

"The two Horowitz performances I truly loved were his 1930 Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 3, a relatively weak piece which he makes sparkle and sing, probably because he had recently coached it with the composer himself and because the conductor was the great Albert Coates, and the 1943 Red Cross concert performance of the Tchaikovsky First with Toscanini. That 1943 Tchaikovsky sings and flows in a way that the May 1941 recording cannot even begin to equal.

Now I've added a third performance to that brief list: this February 1948 concert version of the Brahms Second. It bears the same resemblance to the April 1940 recording of the work as the 1943 Tchaikovsky does to its 1941 counterpart. It's not so much a matter of tempo as of phrasing, of tension and release in all the right spots, where the studio recording was all about tension without much release. Even in the piano's first entrance, which is supposed to sound relaxed and warm, Horowitz in 1940 jumps the beat and cranks up the volume. Here, in this 1948 concert version, he does not.

And the difference doesn't stop there. Toscanini, obviously inspired, brings the first movement to new dramatic heights without overreaching or compressing the tempo too much. The electrical charge that both men put into the music is palpable; one can easily envision the NBC audience sitting on the edge of their seats. At the end of the movement, though directed not to applaud in the printed program, the audience breaks into a convulsive frenzy ...

This performance has, of course, surfaced on CD before, but it is safe to say that Pristine Classical's remastering is by far the best. Though there is still a bad moment in the middle of the first movement, undoubtedly the result of a permanently damaged acetate, the sound is generally full and vibrant. Restoration engineer Andrew Rose has also managed to bring a fullness of tone out of Horowitz's Steinway missing from the studio recording. After hearing this performance, I feel I can safely discard all my other recordings of the work, save the similarly excellent 1929 reading by Arthur Rubinstein, playing with Albert Coates and the London Symphony." — *Fanfare* magazine, 2008

That was quite a while ago. In 2011 I returned to the recording with newly-available pitch stabilisation software to make further improvements to it. Now, 12 years later, I'm afraid that release is now rendered completely obsolete. Thanks to access to previously unheard, immaculate source material this recording leaps into an entirely new dimension, as do the rest of the recording in this series. Toscanini's Twelfth NBC season, regarded as perhaps his finest with the orchestra, began on 23 October, 1948, with the first of a six-programme Brahms cycle, of which the first broadcast featured the 2nd Piano Concerto with Horowitz. This first volume of that cycle brings you the first two broadcasts in full — the lengthy introductions and final applause and pay-offs are unedited but tracked separately should you wish to skip them.

You're hearing the programmes as they might have sounded in the control room — and in far better sound quality than was available to radio listeners in 1948. In fact, that XR remastering has almost certainly rendered the sound quality better than those 1948 sound booths could have managed — conveying instead something far closer to the sound heard by the studio audiences than ever before. Truly a special treat — and with two more volumes to come, one that I am sure will prove essential listening for many over months and years to come.

Andrew Rose



PRISTINE  
AUDIO

PASC 701

BRAHMS THE 1948 TOSCANINI NBC CYCLE, VOLUME ONE  
TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# toscanini

## the 1948 brahms cycle, vol. 1

COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO  
PASC 701

BRAHMS THE 1948 TOSCANINI NBC CYCLE, VOLUME ONE  
TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PASC 701

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

disc one (59:32)

1. Introduction to Brahms Cycle Programme 1 (1:55)

2. BRAHMS Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11

1st mvt. - Allegro molto (10:22)

BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 83

3. 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (16:23)

4. 2nd mvt. - Allegro appassionato (8:19)

5. 3rd mvt. - Andante (10:40)

6. 4th mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (8:29)

Vladimir Horowitz, piano

7. Conclusion to Brahms Cycle Programme 1 (3:24)

Broadcast of 23 October, 1948

NBC Symphony Orchestra

conducted by Arturo Toscanini

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

disc two (59:31)

1. Introduction to Brahms Cycle Programme 2 (0:50)

2. BRAHMS Tragic Overture, Op. 81 (14:27)

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

3. 1st mvt. - Un poco sostenuto - Allegro (12:09)

4. 2nd mvt. - Andante sostenuto (8:18)

5. 3rd mvt. - Un poco allegretto e grazioso (4:32)

6. 4th mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo, ma con brio (16:24)

7. Conclusion to Brahms Cycle Programme 2 (2:51)

Broadcast of 30 October, 1948

Broadcasts from Studio 8H, NBC Radio City, New York

Introduced by Ben Grauer

XR remastered by Andrew Rose

Artwork based on photographs of Brahms and Toscanini

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