

The present release is the fifth and last in a series devoted to Eugene Ormandy's early recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra for the Victor and World's Greatest Music labels from 1936 through 1942, with one additional Victor recording from 1945. While the recordings he made during this period with such legendary soloists as Rachmaninov, Kreisler, Heifetz, Feuermann, Rubinstein, Flagstad, Melchior and others have deservedly remained in the catalog for decades, this series has focused on his purely orchestral recordings, which have been rather overlooked in reissues. Among the items included in the present program, only the Brahms has seen a previous LP reissue, while none of the recordings have been released on CD.

The "World's Greatest Music" label was begun by the Publishers Service Company (a distribution arm of the New York Post) to market recordings of standard Classical repertoire at prices which substantially undercut the majors. Neither the conductors nor the orchestras were named on the labels; but subsequent research has identified albums recorded by Fritz Reiner and the New York Philharmonic and Artur Rodziński with the NBC Symphony, among others. The recordings were made by RCA Victor and were pressed by them as well, with nothing on the discs or packaging to betray their origins. The recordings were phenomenally successful, with *Time* magazine reporting in 1940 that over one million records in the symphonic series had been sold.

In order to keep production costs down, reduced forces were used for the sessions (here, 49 players for the Bach and Mozart works, and 74 for the remainder). The chamber-sized forces work to the advantage of the earlier music, with the Bach in particular losing the bloated, Romanticized approach of Stokowski's 1928 recording of the Second Brandenburg with the same ensemble. While no one will confuse Ormandy's Bach with an "H.I.P." reading, the approach here was part of an interim step (exemplified by the Busch Chamber Players' 1935 set of the Brandenburgs) to move past the slow tempi and massive sound that characterized many orchestral Bach performances up through the early 1930s. Alone among the standard repertoire "greatest hits" on this release, the Bach items were never later re-recorded by Ormandy during his long career.

Although he inherited Stokowski's orchestra with its lush sound, Ormandy's conducting idol was Toscanini; and that connection informs his approach to the Classical and Romantic era works here. The Mozart (even with its slight portamento on the opening phrase, heard also in some Toscanini performances), Beethoven and Schubert might almost be mistaken for the work of The Maestro, save for a reluctance to fully press the vehemence of the louder passages, opting instead for a more rounded, "beautiful" sound. In some of the recordings (the first movement of the Beethoven and the Brandenburg Second in particular), the lack of rehearsal for the sessions can occasionally be heard in slight off-beat ensemble irregularities, albeit ones from which the orchestra quickly recovers.

The Brahms is a particularly successful interpretation in this series – a glowing, full-hearted reading which finds Ormandy avoiding the temptation to accelerate toward the ending. It was re-recorded for release on Victor nine months later, in a version lavishly spread over twelve sides (as opposed to the ten for WGM), a reading which was actually a few seconds faster than the one presented here. (The later one has been reissued in Volume Three of this series, PASC 634). As one might expect, there are no great differences between the two; yet, oddly, the WGM version was chosen by RCA for reissue in its Camden LP series (CAL-236), where it was credited to the "Claridge Symphony Orchestra", the only such attribution given.

Prefacing the WGM releases here is a Victor recording inadvertently left out of previous volumes in our series. The arranger, Charles O'Connell, was Victor's Red Seal director, and made recordings as a conductor and organist for the label. As producer for the Philadelphia Orchestra's sessions, he was intimately familiar with Stokowski's Bach orchestrations, and was able to replicate his "formula" of introducing various orchestral choirs in succession very closely in the excerpt from the *St. Matthew Passion* presented here. O'Connell also persuaded other conductors to record his transcriptions, including Monteux and Stokowski himself.

Mark Obert-Thorn

# ormandy

and the philadelphia orchestra

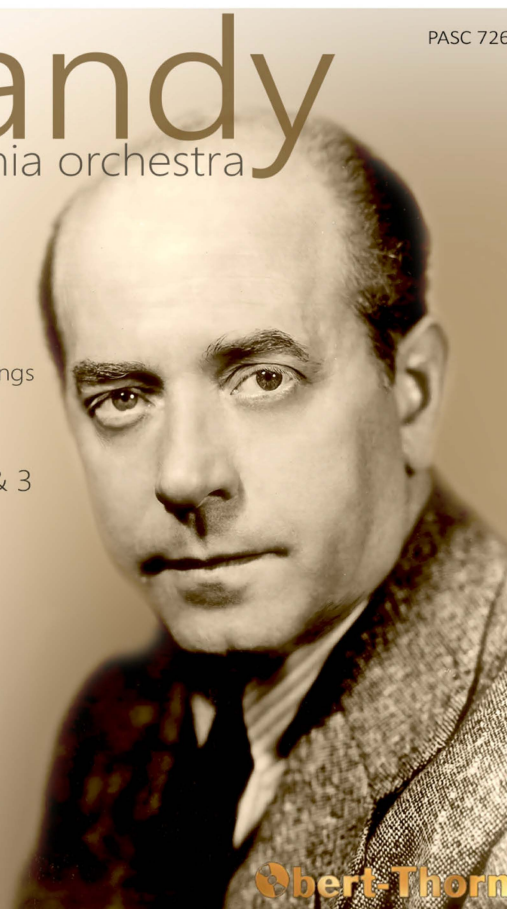
PASC 726

## the early years volume 5

the "world's greatest music" recordings

**bach**  
brandenburg concertos 2 & 3  
**mozart**  
symphony no. 40  
**beethoven**  
symphony no. 5  
**schubert**  
"unfinished" symphony  
**brahms**  
symphony no. 2

studio recordings · 1938 - 1940



bert-Thorn

disc one  
(79:45)

1. J. S. BACH (arr. O'Connell) "Herzliebster Jesu" from St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244 (3:05)  
Recorded 27 March 1940 · Matrix: CS 047825-1 · First issued on Victor 18166

J. S. BACH Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F major, BWV 1047

2. 1st Mvt. - [Allegro] (4:47)  
3. 2nd Mvt. - Andante (4:40)  
4. 3rd Mvt. - Allegro assai (2:50)

Alexander Hilsberg, solo violin; Saul Caston, solo trumpet; William Kincaid, solo flute; Marcel Tabuteau, solo oboe  
Recorded 12 November 1938 · Matrices: CS 028831-2, 028832-1 & 028833-1 · First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-14/15

J. S. BACH Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048

5. 1st Mvt. - [Allegro] (6:24)  
6. 3rd Mvt. - Allegro (3:23)

Recorded 12 November 1938 · Matrices: CS 028840-1, 028841-1 & 028842-1 · First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-15/16

MOZART Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K.550

7. 1st Mvt. - Molto allegro (7:14)  
8. 2nd Mvt. - Andante (7:50)  
9. 3rd Mvt. - Menuetto, Allegro - Trio (4:00)  
10. 4th Mvt. - Finale. Allegro assai (4:25)

Recorded 12 November 1938 · Matrices: CS 028834-1, 028835-1, 028836-1, 028837-1, 028838-1 & 028839-1  
First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-8/10

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

11. 1st Mvt. - Allegro con brio (7:39)  
12. 2nd Mvt. - Andante con moto (9:46)  
13. 3rd Mvt. - Scherzo: Allegro (5:07)  
14. 4th Mvt. - Allegro - Presto (8:34)

Recorded 17 October 1938 · Matrices: CS 027814-2, 027815-1, 027816-1, 027817-1, 027818-1, 027819-1, 027820-1 & 027821-1  
First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-4/7

disc two  
(61:39)

SCHUBERT Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759 "Unfinished"

1. 1st Mvt. - Allegro moderato (10:51)  
2. 2nd Mvt. - Andante con moto (11:33)

Recorded 17 October 1938 · Matrices: CS 027808-2, 027809-1, 027810-1, 027811-1, 027812-1 & 027813-1  
First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-1/3

BRAHMS Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

3. 1st Mvt. - Allegro non troppo (14:32)  
4. 2nd Mvt. - Adagio non troppo (9:54)  
5. 3rd Mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino) (5:39)  
6. 4th Mvt. - Allegro con spirito (9:11)

Recorded 26 March 1939 · Matrices: CS 035400-1, 035401-2, 035402-1, 035403-2, 035404-2A, 035405-1, 035406-2, 035407-1, 035408-1 & 035409-1 · First issued on World's Greatest Music SR-28/32

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

PASC 726

Producer and Audio  
Restoration Engineer:  
Mark Obert-Thorn

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All recordings made in the  
Academy of Music,  
Philadelphia

Total duration: 2hr 21:24

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