

Artur Rodziński was engaged by NBC to recruit, rehearse and generally prepare the NBC Symphony Orchestra for the eventual arrival of Toscanini as its primary conductor in the autumn of 1937. Although he had conducted a 'pilot' broadcast on 2 November 1937, the first official broadcasts were taken by Pierre Monteux, beginning 13 November 1937. Thereafter Rodziński conducted a further three broadcasts immediately prior to Toscanini's debut on Christmas Day, 1937.

After Toscanini's NBC first concert season was completed, on 5 March 1938, the orchestral concerts continued to be broadcast with a series of guest conductors, including Monteux, Boult, Mitropoulos, Molinari, Howard Hanson and, for three further engagements, Rodziński. In total, Rodziński conducted the orchestra for seven concerts in 1938 – four more were scheduled in December of that year during the orchestra's second season, culminating in his final performance of the year on New Year's Eve.

This release brings you the first two Rodziński NBC concerts of 1938, broadcast live on 2 and 9 April 1938 from NBC's Studio 8H, each scheduled to run for 90 minutes, and each offering a pretty packed programme – so much so that you may just make out the words of Milton Cross at the beginning of the final item on disc two, excerpts from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, which were still being announced when the orchestra began playing, no doubt starting to a carefully worked-out timing schedule.

Rodziński's second broadcast of the year brought with it a real coup – for the conductor, the orchestra, the NBC and indeed the nation: Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. Premiered in Leningrad in November 1937 and played elsewhere within the Soviet Union, and after the debacle of the composer's Fourth Symphony, withdrawn at the last minute under intense political pressure, there was no shortage of orchestras and conductors wishing to take up and premiere the new work outside of the country.

As Halina Rodzińska, the conductor's wife, would later recall in her memoirs: "Artur, thanks to his good connections with the composer, was awarded the prize. NBC's John Royal, through the American ambassador in Moscow, made the arrangements - at a huge price. The Soviet government demanded the then unheard of sum of \$5,000 for the premiere. Since introducing the piece would be as much of a coup for the radio network as for Artur, NBC's management did not object to the cost.

After all the expense and effort in acquiring the score and parts, Artur was a bit concerned the piece might not be all that was expected of it. His reactions when he first examined it were far from favorable. There was a coarseness to the sound of the scoring. The piece seemed overlong. Indeed, Artur was not altogether sure he cared for it. In discussion with NBC, it was decided to perform the work just as it had been delivered - without cuts, without reservations. If the critics did not care for it, no one could blame Rodziński.

Gradually, in rehearsals, the work began to take Artur's imagination, and soon enough he even was in love with it. The piece entered his repertoire and became one of his specialties."

Mrs. Rodziński's memory here fails her somewhat. The version heard on 9 April, 1938, as revealed in this recording, was far from the complete work, with substantial cuts that reduced the symphony from about fifty minutes in duration to a little over thirty. Nevertheless, the new work made a favourable impression, and would go on to become one of Shostakovich's most played symphonies.

Whilst the present Shostakovich performance has been referred to in various texts and discussions over the years, we believe this is the first time any of these recordings have been made publicly available (it is interesting to note that the recordings reveal several errors in Mortimer H. Frank's reference work charting the Toscanini's career with the NBC orchestra, suggesting he had not had access to them). Because of the length of the broadcasts, once again I have been forced to cut announcements and other speech content in order to fit each one onto a single Compact Disc. Sound quality of these exceptionally rare discs, although generally good for their age, is not uniformly perfect; at times the listener will have to make some accommodations for slightly damaged sections, though I'm relieved to report that the concerts themselves survive intact.

Andrew Rose

rodziński  
nbc 1938, volume 1

Pristine  
XR  
PASC 731

albéniz ibéria: el corpus en sevilla  
barber symphony in one movement  
beethoven coriolan overture  
debussy prélude à l'après midi d'un faune  
dohnányi suite for orchestra  
prokofiev symphony no. 1  
respighi ancient airs and dances  
shostakovich symphony no. 5  
wagner die meistersinger - excerpts  
weber oberon overture

nbc symphony orchestra  
conducted by artur rodziński

live broadcast recordings, 1938

# rodziński

## nbc 1938 vol. 1

disc one (77:09)

1. BEETHOVEN Coriolan Overture, Op. 62 (7:45)
2. BARBER Symphony in One Movement, Op. 9 (20:13)

PROKOFIEV Symphony No. 1 in D major, Op. 25, "Classical"

3. 1st mvt. - Allegro (3:14)
4. 2nd mvt. - Larghetto (3:39)
5. 3rd mvt. - Gavotta (1:26)
6. 4th mvt. - Molto vivace (2:58)

7. DEBUSSY Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune (10:40)

DOHNÁNYI Suite for Orchestra, Op. 19

8. 1. Andante con variazioni (10:06)
9. 2. Scherzo (4:06)
10. 3. Romance (4:54)
11. 4. Rondo (8:08)

XR remastering by: Andrew Rose  
Live broadcast recordings, 2 & 9 April 1938  
Studio 8H, NBC Radio City, New York  
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Artur Rodziński

Total duration: 2hr 35:56

disc two (78:48)

1. WEBER Oberon - Overture (8:52)

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

First performance outside the Soviet Union

2. 1st mvt. - Moderato (10:53)
3. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (5:22)
4. 3rd mvt. - Largo (9:58)
5. 4th mvt. - Allegro non troppo (6:52)

RESPIGHI Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1

6. 1. Balletto detto 'Il Conte Orlando' (*Molinaro*) (2:40)
7. 2. Gagliarda (*Galilei*) (3:57)
8. 3. Villanella (*Ignoto*) (5:38)
9. 4. Passo mezzo e Mascherada (*Ignoto*) (3:44)

10. ALBÉNIZ Ibéria - 3. El Corpus en Sevilla (8:46)

11. WAGNER Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg  
Prelude to Act III - Dance of the Apprentices - Finale (12:07)

NBC Symphony Orchestra  
conducted by Artur Rodziński