

"To eclipse all these versions of the Mahler First would be a substantial achievement [*the review listed a number of alternatives in the heading – AR*]; but after hearing the first side of it I thought this new Philips disc was well in the running for bringing it off. For Bruno Walter has a special authority in this work, as in all of Mahler, and his handling of the first two movements is indeed wholly convincing. Every nuance of tempo and every slight gradation of dynamic is made with entirely natural effect, and an unwavering care for precise internal balance is fully rewarded in the result. But the third, and, in a less degree, the fourth movement do seem somewhat laboured; if this really is Mahler's intention—and certainly it very well may be—it does have the effect of weighting still further the already heavy humour of the mock funeral march and its interludes, and of postponing for still longer the already long put-off moment of coming to the point in the finale.

These are opinions admittedly based on the insecure foundations of rather less than complete sympathy with Mahler's music—in these two particular movements—in the first place. But the finale does suffer, too, from a more factual defect. Its effect depends, surely, largely on an overwhelming mass of sheer sound being built up—Mahler thought so, anyway, with his specification of extra *ad lib.* wind parts— and instead Philips allow the sound to recede somewhat. The recording has up to that point been extremely good, and sounding to very good advantage from a faultlessly surfaced disc; it never indeed becomes bad in quality, but it does become half-hearted in volume and brilliance towards the end.

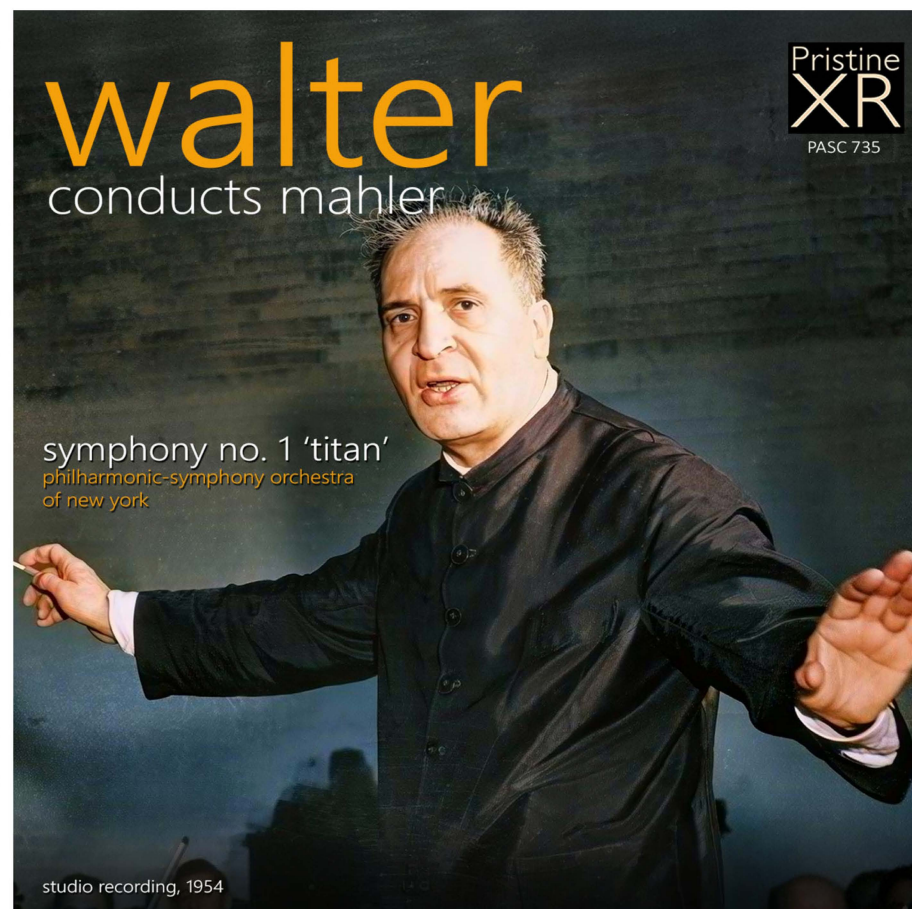
For brilliance in sound the Decca version, with Kubelik and the Vienna Philharmonic, is undoubtedly the version to have; but to enjoy it fully demands the ability to keep your temper while turning [*record sides*] in the middle of a movement..." Malcolm MacDonald, *The Gramophone*, July 1955

Bruno Walter's stereo 1961 recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 1, made in Hollywood with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra, has long been regarded as one of the greatest recorded interpretations of this work. However, it was suggested to me a short time ago that perhaps his 1954 recording with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York was, if anything, an even better performance.

It was taped at Carnegie Hall in New York in a single day in late January 1954, also by Columbia, for vinyl LP release. Although at this stage stereo was just around the corner, here we have a traditional mono recording, the central sound image aided in this Pristine XR remaster by a subtle Ambient Stereo treatment that brings a sense of acoustic space around with orchestra, without attempting to create a fake stereo image.

In his *Gramophone* review of a 1955 European Philips pressing, Malcolm MacDonald complained of a drop-off of sound quality on side two—in the third and final movements—something that is certainly not the case in this new remaster, which concludes with a full, brilliant and exceptionally powerful ending.

Andrew Rose



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MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 1 'TITAN'
WALTER, PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

walter

conducts mahler

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PASC 735

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Bruno Walter

Recorded at Carnegie Hall,
New York, 25 January 1954

Total duration: 48:48

MAHLER Symphony No. 1 in D major, "Titan"

1. 1st mvt. - Langsam. schleppend (12:34)
2. 2nd mvt. - Kräftig, bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (6:28)
3. 3rd mvt. - Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen (11:20)
4. 4th mvt. - Stürmisch bewegt (18:26)

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York
conducted by Bruno Walter

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