

Toscanini took the NBC Symphony Orchestra on two lengthy tours during his time with the orchestra. In June and July 1940 they travelled to South America, giving a total of fifteen concerts in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

Ten years later, in April and May of 1950, Toscanini and the NBC orchestra ventured out on their only US tour, playing a total of 22 concerts across the country. Only in Pasadena, California, did the tour take a short travel stop to play two consecutive concerts at the same venue, on Wednesday 3rd and Friday 5th May, before continuing nearly 400 miles north to San Francisco, then proceeding north to Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington before slowly heading back east.

The logistics of the tour do sound quite something. The bulk of the orchestra, with its instruments, travelled on a specially-commissioned 15-carriage train which was pulled around the country by diesel-engined locomotives. This special train served as accommodation for the orchestra, as well as an entertainment venue for post-concert parties when not in motion. Not everyone took the train, of course, and newspaper records of the day related airport incidents as the main stars arrived by plane at their destinations – no doubt a far more convenient way to travel than the lengthy journeys by rail.

It seems little audio record survives of the actual concerts, and I'm not sure whether any surviving recordings have ever been widely heard. An encore of "Dixie" from one of the concerts is known to circulate amongst collectors and may appear in the second of two volumes in this set as a bonus track.

But happily two concerts were recorded, and in very good sound, onto acetate discs. Acetate discs, which deteriorate rapidly after their first play, were certainly not expected to survive for seventy-five years, and it is therefore quite astonishing to be able to restore these fragile recordings back to life. The first half of the present concert, comprising the Beethoven and Brahms, was by far the more damaged of the two, though restoration work has made a massive difference to the listening experience here, and only in a handful of quieter sections might the listener pick up on residual surface noise that has proved impossible to entirely eliminate. By contrast, the second disc, from the Debussy onwards, proved generally a much better-preserved set, the sides remaining remarkable clean and quiet for most of the second half of the concert.

It is not clear how these recordings came to be made and for what purpose. There is no broadcast commentary to suggest any radio transmissions, and the concerts are thus presented here as heard on the night, with just a modicum of editing where applause was lengthy (and very enthusiastic) – it's my personal opinion that little is to be gained today by hearing *all* of the two minutes and nine seconds of rapturous applause needed to bring Toscanini back for the evening's encore!

The second Pasadena concert has been similarly preserved, and will appear at Pristine later this year, featuring music by Beethoven, Rossini, Smetana, Tchaikovsky and Wagner, with no music repeated from the first concert. But for now, let's go back some 75 years in time to that first Pasadena concert, with its star-studded audience, and relive a world where Bob Hope would wait for ten minutes *outside* the main star's dressing-room door – to catch a moment or two with Arturo Toscanini in Pasadena...

Andrew Rose

PASC 740

# toscanini

in pasadena, volume one

- beethoven  
egmont overture
- brahms  
symphony no. 4
- debussy  
ibèria
- glinka  
jota aragonesa
- wagner  
seigfried: forest murmurs  
die meistersinger: prelude
- sousa  
the stars and stripes forever

nbc symphony orchestra

live spring tour recording, 3 may, 1950

Pristine  
XR

# toscanini

## in pasadena, volume one

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

PASC 740

TOSCANINI IN PASADENA, VOLUME 1: BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS, DEBUSSY, WAGNER  
TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PASC 740

PRISTINE  
AUDIO

disc one  
(48:00)

1. BEETHOVEN Egmont Overture, Op. 84 (9:39)

BRAHMS Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

2. 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (11:28)

3. 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (10:36)

4. 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso (6:17)

5. 4th mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (10:00)

disc two  
(51:08)

DEBUSSY Images pour orchestre: 2. Ibèria

1. I. Par les rues et les chemins (7:26)

2. II. Les parfums de la nuit (6:45)

3. III. Le matin d'un jour de fête (5:03)

4. GLINKA Jota Aragonesa (8:43)

5. WAGNER Siegfried - Forest Murmurs (9:11)

6. WAGNER Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg - Prelude (9:13)

7. SOUSA The Stars and Stripes Forever (*encore*) (4:46)

NBC Symphony Orchestra  
conducted by Arturo Toscanini

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Toscanini

Live concert recording,  
3 May 1950,  
Pasadena Civic Auditorium

Total duration: 1hr 39:08

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