

This volume is the third in a series of four which will reissue all of Sir Adrian Boult's orchestral recordings with the BBC Symphony from the 1930s, many for the first time since their appearance on 78 rpm discs. While his concerto recordings with the ensemble during this period have remained sporadically available, his purely orchestral discs have seen only a handful of reissues over the years, focusing on a small amount of repertoire. The present release features the only recordings of three Brahms Hungarian Dances, the Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings, Borodin Polovtsian March and Saint-Saëns Bacchanale that Boult made over his long career; and the *Parsifal*, *Samson* and *Hansel und Gretel* Dream Pantomime selections on this release have never previously been reissued on LP or CD.

Adrian Boult had been the music director of the City of Birmingham Orchestra since 1924 when he was approached by the British Broadcasting Company regarding the creation of a permanent orchestra for broadcasts and concerts. Its first appearance in October, 1930 revolutionized the London music scene with a standard of playing far above what had hitherto been the norm, an achievement that was soon rivaled by Beecham's creation of the London Philharmonic two years later. The BBC Symphony, which Boult led until he reached his mandatory retirement age in 1950, made its first recordings in May, 1932. He was knighted in 1937.

The present volume focuses on music from the late Romantic and early modern periods. Boult's recording of the Prelude to Act 1 of *Tristan und Isolde* with Wagner's own rarely-heard concert ending puts him in a select group of others who recorded it during the 78 rpm period (Muck, Richard Strauss and Klemperer), and was the last to be set down before the LP era. Boult had previously recorded both excerpts from Humperdinck's *Hansel und Gretel* presented here during the acoustic era, along with the Witch's Ride; but these electrical remakes would be the last time he assayed them on disc.

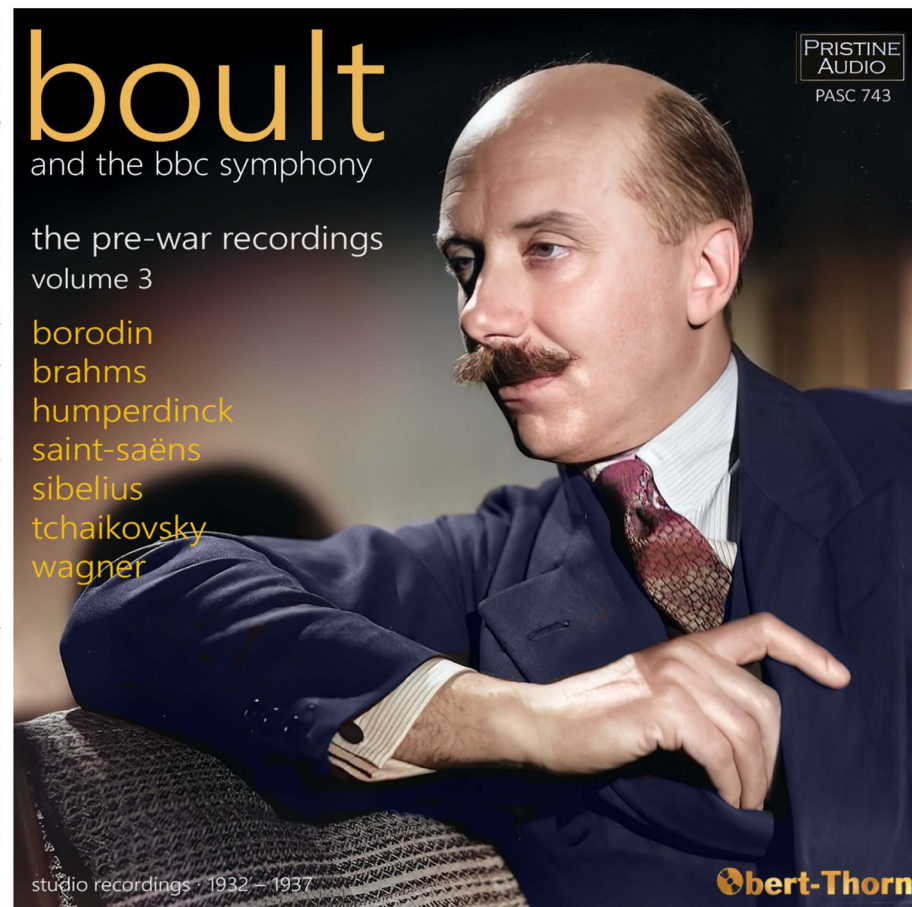
Boult greatly admired Toscanini (as can be heard in his radio interval talk during one of The Maestro's postwar Philharmonia Brahms concerts on PASC 377), and it is interesting to compare his version of the Brahms *Tragic* Overture to that of the Italian Maestro conducting Boult's orchestra five years later. His approach in this work mirrors the elder conductor's focus on clarity of instrumental lines, forward-moving tempi and avoidance of interpretational indulgence. On the other hand, Boult's sole recording of this group of three of Brahms' Hungarian Dances shows more rhythmic freedom and interpretational willfulness than he usually displayed, but it is entirely in service to the spirit of the music.

The Borodin Polovtsian March and Tchaikovsky Polonaise were originally issued as fillers to two three-sided Berlioz overtures, and display great energy and panache. His sole recorded version of Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings comes off as a bit rushed. This was perhaps due to its being limited to six sides, with the famous Waltz a casualty of having to allow room to start the *Élégie* on the same side. The finale, however, is exhilarating.

Boult's only recording of the Bacchanale from Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* benefits from bravura playing by the orchestra at the conductor's swift tempo. The two Sibelius works, recorded for HMV's Sibelius Society Series, show Boult to be a completely idiomatic interpreter of the Finn's music. It is interesting to note that at the same session, Boult recorded *The Bard*, which was approved but not released in favor of Beecham's recording, and remains unissued.

The sources for the transfers were American Victor "Z"-type shellac pressings for the *Hansel* Dream Pantomime and the Brahms and Sibelius items. The *Hansel* Overture, Borodin and Tchaikovsky items came from Victor "Gold" era pressings. The *Meistersinger*, *Tristan* and *Samson* tracks were transferred from British HMVs, and the *Parsifal* came from a German Electrola copy. None of these last items were issued on the quieter Victor pressings.

Mark Obert-Thorn



disc one (61:37)

1. **WAGNER** *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* - Overture (9:03)  
Recorded 6 April 1933 · Matrices: 2B 4170-1A & 4171-1A · First issued on HMV DB 1924
2. **WAGNER** *Tristan und Isolde* - Prelude to Act 1 (9:29)  
Recorded 25 July 1932 · Matrices: 2B 2991-2 & 2992-2 · First issued on HMV DB 1757
3. **WAGNER** *Parsifal* - Good Friday Spell (9:07)  
Recorded 6 April 1933 · Matrices: 2B 2853-5 & 2854-4 · First issued on HMV DB 1677
4. **HUMPERDINCK** *Hansel und Gretel* - Overture (7:38)  
Recorded 25 July 1932 · Matrices: 2B 2993-2 & 2994-2 · First issued on HMV DB 1758
5. **HUMPERDINCK** *Hansel und Gretel* - Dream Pantomime (9:02)  
Recorded 2 November 1934 · Matrices: 2B 4616-3A & 4617-3A  
First issued on HMV DB 2366
6. **BRAHMS** *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81 (12:55)  
Recorded 30 May 1932 · Matrices: 2B 2905-2B, 2906-2A & 2907-2B  
First issued on HMV DB 1803/4

**BRAHMS** (orch. Dvořák) *Hungarian Dances*

7. No. 19 in B minor (1:35)
8. No. 20 in E minor (1:32)
9. No. 21 in E minor (1:17)  
Recorded 7 October 1932 · Matrix: 2B 3457-2 · First issued on HMV DB 1804

**BBC Symphony Orchestra**  
conducted by **Sir Adrian Boult**

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Special thanks to the British Library, Nathan Brown, Michael Gartz, Richard A. Kaplan and Charles Niss for providing source material  
All recordings made at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London except for CD 1, Tracks 7-9, recorded in Kingsway Hall, London

Total duration: 2hr 4:45

disc two (63:08)

1. **BORODIN** *Prince Igor* - Polovtsian March (4:37)  
Recorded 28 January 1937 · Matrix: 2EA 4632-1A · First issued on HMV DB 3094
  2. **TCHAIKOVSKY** *Eugene Onegin* - Polonaise (4:16)  
Recorded 28 January 1937 · Matrix: 2EA 4629-1A · First issued on HMV DB 3132
- TCHAIKOVSKY** *Serenade for Strings*, Op. 48
3. 1st Mvt. - Pezzo in forma di sonatina:  
Andante non troppo - Allegro moderato (8:39)
  4. 2nd Mvt. - Valse: Moderato - Tempo di valse (3:17)
  5. 3rd Mvt. - Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco (6:46)
  6. 4th Mvt. - Finale (Tema russo):  
Andante - Allegro con spirito (6:42)  
Recorded 25 June 1937 · Matrices: 2EA 5265-1, 5266-1, 5267-1, 5268-1, 5269-1 & 5270-2A · First issued on HMV DB 3303/5
7. **SAINT-SAËNS** *Samson et Dalila* - Bacchanale (7:17)  
Recorded 20 October 1933 · Matrices: 2B 4691-1 & 4692-1  
First issued on HMV DB 2077
  8. **SIBELIUS** *The Oceanides*, Op. 73 (8:01)  
Recorded 23 January 1936 · Matrices: 2EA 2880-1 & 2881-2  
First issued on HMV DB 2797
  9. **SIBELIUS** *Night Ride and Sunrise*, Op. 55 (13:32)  
Recorded 23 January 1936 · Matrices: 2EA 2882-1, 2883-1, 2884-1 & 2885-1  
First issued on HMV DB 2795/6