

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Willem Mengelberg (28 March 1871), Pristine continues its series of releases surveying the conductor's recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra for Telefunken, the label for which he made the bulk of his commercial discs. They are being presented in roughly chronological order, with this fifth and penultimate volume featuring recordings Mengelberg made in 1941 and 1942. Due to timing limitations on the CD version of this release, *Death and Transfiguration* is presented following the Tchaikovsky symphony rather than just before the Beethoven, which was its original recording order.

Our present program begins the day following the recording session for Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* which concluded our previous release (PASC 719). The Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* was a remake of one of Mengelberg's earliest Telefunken sets (reissued in PASC 624). The biggest interpretational difference between this version from 1937 and the one presented here is in the final movement, which is nearly a minute longer in the later recording, and more appropriately "lamentoso". Another reason for wanting to remake the set may have been a prominent 50 Hz mains hum, removed from the Pristine restorations, which afflicted all of the conductor's 1937 Telefunken sessions.

The two days following the Tchaikovsky session were devoted to Mengelberg's only commercial recording of a work by Dvořák, the *New World* Symphony (although a 1943 air check exists of a live performance of the composer's Violin Concerto with soloist Maria Neuss). This very individualized interpretation features an extraordinarily expansive *Largo* movement. Unfortunately, it suffers from a higher-than-usual complement of surface noise, probably inherent in the masters, as it appears on all copies of which I am aware.

That defect may have been the reason for the non-release of two other tantalizing titles from this group of sessions: a complete recording of the Beethoven Second Symphony, made immediately following the Dvořák on April 24th; and what would have been Mengelberg's only Sibelius recording, *Finlandia*, set down the following day. Just before the Sibelius came the recording of Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, a title common on American Capitol's dubbed 78 rpm version, but rare in its original Telefunken appearance, used for transfer here.

It would be another year before Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra recorded for Telefunken again, and this time their efforts were more consistently successful from a technical point of view. The 1942 sessions began on April 14th with Richard Strauss' *Death and Transfiguration*. It is odd that one of Strauss' greatest interpreters, the one to whom the composer dedicated *Ein Heldenleben*, left so few recordings of his works. Besides two versions of *Heldenleben* (New York and Amsterdam), there was only a studio and a live version of *Don Juan* to attest to his abilities with this repertoire.

The following day, Mengelberg set down a remake of his first recording for Telefunken, the Beethoven Fifth Symphony (PASC 624). In addition to the hum in the 1937 version, there were also a couple ensemble issues that the conductor might have wanted to clean up. Like the previous year's Beethoven Second and *Finlandia*, Telefunken never issued it on 78 rpm; but unlike those lost recordings, a release was made by the American Capitol label in the early 1950s on all three formats then in use (78, 45 and LP), dubbed from vinyl test pressings.

However, there was no indication on the Capitol releases that it was the remake from 1942; and as late as 1994, it continued to be reissued on CD by Telefunken, erroneously identified as the 1937 recording. The confusion has only been sorted out in the past couple decades as correctly-attributed reissues of both versions have allowed for comparison. The present transfer has been made from the original Capitol LP, while all other restorations on this release have come from original Telefunken 78s.

Mark Obert-Thorn

mengelberg
concertgebouw orchestra

PRISTINE AUDIO
PASC 751

the telefunken recordings volume 5

beethoven
symphony no. 5

dvořák
symphony no. 9, 'from the new world'

r. strauss
death and transfiguration

tchaikovsky
symphony no. 6, 'pathétique'

studio recordings, 1941-42

Obert-Thorn

mengelberg

concertgebouw telefunken recordings vol. 5



disc one (67:40)

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 'Pathétique'

1. 1st mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo (16:59)
2. 2nd mvt. - Allegro con grazia (8:20)
3. 3rd mvt. - Allegro molto vivace (8:49)
4. 4th mvt. - Adagio lamentoso (9:36)

Recorded 22 April 1941

Matrices: 022666-IV, 022667-III, 022668-III, 022669-II, 022670-II, 022671-III, 022672-IV, 022673-III, 022674-II & 022675-III - First issued on Telefunken SK 3176/80

5. R. STRAUSS Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24 (23:55)

Recorded 14 April 1942 - Matrices: 026403/8 - First issued on Telefunken SK 3738/40

Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam
conducted by Willem Mengelberg

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

Special thanks to Nathan Brown and Charles Niss for providing source material
Cover Artwork based on a photograph of Willem Mengelberg
All recordings made in the Grote Zaal, Concertgebouw

Total duration: 2hr 25:28

disc two (77:48)

DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 'From the New World'

1. 1st mvt. - Adagio - Allegro molto (8:36)
2. 2nd mvt. - Largo (13:00)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Molto vivace (7:29)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale: Allegro con fuoco (10:26)

Recorded 23-24 April 1941 - Matrices: 025649/58

First issued on Telefunken SK 3190/4

5. BORODIN In the Steppes of Central Asia (7:12)

Recorded 25 April 1941 - Matrices: 025667/8

First issued on Telefunken SK 3198

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

6. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (7:52)
7. 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto (9:14)
8. 3rd mvt. - Allegro (5:12)
9. 4th mvt. - Allegro (8:48)

Recorded 15 April 1942

Matrices: 022110-II, 022111-II, 022112-II, 022113-I, 022114-I or VII, 022115-II or VI, 022116-I or X & 022117-I or III - First issued on Capitol P-8110 (LP)



© 2025 Pristine Audio