

**Subject:** PRISTINE NEWS 17th September 2010: Toscanini's Brahms Requiem, Cantelli conducts Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphony

**From:** Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 2010 15:50:04 +0200

## Pristine News: Friday 17th September, 2010



### International Record Review

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#### In this week's newsletter:

- [New this week](#) - Probably the best-sounding 1943 recording you've ever heard: Toscanini's "A German Requiem"
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- "This historical document is as musical as it is "electric.""

**Badings: Double Violin Concerto, Symphony No 3** - MusicWeb International

- "A well carried through revival of two contrasted Badings works from a 1950s LP"

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**Editorial - Historic recordings and remastering for the 21st Century**

What do you want from a transfer of an historic recording and how should it be prepared for your liking? Sounds like a simple question, doesn't it? Once upon a time it probably was: find the very best quality source material; ensure that your replay equipment is as good as possible, correctly set up for the source with the correct equalisation, the most appropriate stylus or tape head; make the very best quality dub of this you can onto the best medium at your disposal.

Sometimes a degree of intervention might have been necessary – a little roll-off of the treble frequencies to reduce hiss, perhaps; the manual removal of bad clicks through tape editing, where a master at 15 inches per second allowed sufficient editing precision to allow this painstaking procedure to work to the extent that these edits were pretty well undetectable. This was more or less standard procedure as recently as 20 years ago when I started working at the BBC, though we did also have access to an Packburn analogue de-clicking device in one

specialist transfer suite, which produced results of varying and often rather dubious quality.

This was around the time of the first CEDAR digital audio restoration tools – they started making their commercial equipment in 1988 – which took the first steps in changing the game. Meanwhile, however, other “tricks” were in use, techniques to “improve” sound by attempting to mask tricky sonic problems or to try and make a scratchy old disc sound more appealing, techniques which quickly got themselves something of a bad name, particularly in the classical music world.

Here I'm referring to the world of electronically generated stereo, of heavy artificial echo or reverb, of ham-fisted re-equalisation, and other dubious means of manipulating old recordings to the tastes of the engineer, producer or record company, often with hit-and-miss results. Some of these practices have carried through well into the digital era, and one only has to trawl through the sound samples of vintage recordings at the likes of eMusic.com to hear all sorts of sonic horrors being committed today in the name of audio restoration. Indeed it was one such CD which convinced me to move into the field myself...

But since those early beginnings in the late 1980s things in the world of digital audio restoration and remastering have advanced at an almost unbelievable pace. Some sonic problems which simply couldn't be tackled five years ago – and hence might lead some engineers to consider the kind of “masking” solutions I've just alluded to – are now a breeze to fix. The output quality of today's de-clickers and noise reduction tools is not only light years away from what was available at the beginning of the decade, it's advancing in leaps and bounds, at a pace which mirrors the phenomenal increases in computing power available on your desktop and mine. Processes which take minutes today would have been infeasible in 2000 through lack of memory, drive space and processing power – instead of minutes they might have taken days or weeks to complete.

But hand-in-hand with this improvement are parallel developments in the very tools which have previously caused so much sonic damage, and as a result I wonder if it is necessary to begin to rethink entirely the final aims of a good transfer and restoration, and what should be “permitted” in order to achieve one. In fact, this week's Toscanini Brahms German Requiem is an ideal case in point, and an ideal way to examine what is now possible and how it sounds in application.

In an ideal world one starts, of course, with the best possible source material, and in the case of the Toscanini I've been exceptionally lucky with a source of remarkable quality. I've already made clear that today I can de-click that source much more quickly and effectively than I could have done a few short years ago, and indeed that's what I have done. After this is the re-equalisation – as with many XR remasters, this is a significant intervention, but unlike those of the past this is carried out not by subjective knob-twiddling but by objective analysis and precise adjustment by computer, albeit at the hands of a human being. The aim of this is to correct both small and major frequency anomalies in the microphones and other recording equipment used to make the original.

This is then followed by digital noise reduction, and I've been using technology so advanced it's still in the pre-release testing phase and won't be available commercially for several weeks yet. It is astonishingly effective.

I then carried out basic editing to join disc sides together, something I could just as easily have done with tape and razor blade, but then began some seriously advanced restoration work to deal with an assortment of the type of flaws often found on discs – the removal of swish, clunks, blips and so on - whatever is required. Again, this aspect of the technology is very recent, and in its latest incarnation is more powerful than ever before – I'm glad to say I've been in a position to shape the development and application of some of the tools I've been using to fit precisely the kind of work I do. Thus defects that others might previously have been tempted to make “disappear” under reverb can be dealt with directly and permanently.

Next in my remastering process is the application of Ambient Stereo. Ever since its introduction it has proved immensely popular, with a clear majority of our sales now in this format. It's a subtle intervention and produces very natural results which don't mess with the original sound as previous technologies have, and makes listening to mono source material far more comfortable, especially on headphones.

By this stage it is clear quite how a recording's inherent acoustic sounds. It was a great surprise to me, in the earliest days of XR development, to find that the re-equalisation process I had developed often revealed room or hall ambience and reverberation which had previously been buried almost inaudibly in the recording. I distinctly remember one recording, Weingartner's 1936 Vienna Eroica, having a huge buried reverberation – I think this was picked up by one reviewer – which nobody had ever suspected was there, to the extent that I had to go out of my way to imply that I had not added it myself.

But here in the Toscanini German Requiem we have a problem, to my ears, anyway. That problem is well-known to any aficionado of NBC broadcasts of the era, and it is the sound of Studio 8H. It's as dry as dust. It can make one of the finest orchestras in the world sound like a high school ensemble. It's almost painful to listen to for many people. If it has any redeeming feature it is that it can be incredibly revealing of inner detail, but at what cost to musical enjoyment?

And so we return to the thorny subject of reverberation – which I dismissed some paragraphs ago as one of the horrors used to mask problem transfers. But when we look to the tools available to the modern remastering engineer and find that, once again, the game has changed entirely. I've previously experimented with digital reverberation on 8H recordings, going to the extent of releasing one transfer both with and without it. The reception to the “reverbed” recording was at best mixed. It still didn't sound quite right. This is largely because traditional digital reverb is basically a randomisation of multiple delayed signals shaped by equalisation and lasting for a settable duration to create an impression of generic spaces. The software or unit to generate this offers

presets called 'large hall' or 'small room' and so forth, and they kind of sound like somewhere and nowhere at the same time. In short, they are most definitely artificial.

Convolution reverberation, as applied to this Requiem, is a different beast altogether. We now have the computing power and technology to record and encode the sound of a specific acoustic space, and then apply this to another recording – and as far as the source recording is concerned the drier and deader the better, making an 8H recording ideal. The results of this are so natural and unobtrusive as to be undetectable – unless of course you were expecting a bone dry acoustic because you read the notes that said “Studio 8H”. Nobody listening to the German Requiem will think “a-ha, he's added reverb to this then” unless they already know the recording from a previous issue or had expected something very acoustically dead. It sounds simply like a well-made, well-miked recording in a natural setting. Moreover, in combination with the other techniques I've described here, this particular recording now sounds like one that could almost have been made at any time between 1943 and today (though of course there is no stereo positioning information as it is in origin strictly mono).

So have I committed the same sins as some of my predecessors? Well, I've heavily re-equalised, I've created a kind of stereo ambience, and I've used artificial reverberation, all of which I'd already listed as some of the worst horrors of the past. But is this a sin today, given the very different approaches and reasons for doing so? I would counter that it is not – and suggest that perhaps it is time to re-examine some of the sacred cows of audio restoration and remastering in the light of recordings such as this. For while it is of course possible to use these ideas and techniques to do great damage to a recording, it is also now possible to use them in such a way that they become an intrinsic part of the restoration process, dealing with sonic issues beyond the clicks, scratches and hiss, and with an aim to complement the recording rather than mask problems within it.

The game therefore is changing, and I note that others are going along with that change – the latest Testament releases feature their take on Ambient Stereo (it's non-optional, by the way), and elsewhere the basic principles of XR remastering are being used by other restoration engineers to deal with the same issues for which I developed it. It's all powerful stuff, to be taken in moderate doses perhaps, but it seems to point to a future of continuing improvements in the results of restoration and remastering. As such I do think it's a very good time indeed to think again about what is and isn't “permissible” when preparing an historic recording for reissue, and hopefully a new audience, in the 21st century.

*Andrew Rose*

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**International Record Review - special mini-subscription offer**

[International Record Review](#) has again included a number of our recent releases in one of its features in the October 2010 issue. I understand that these are as follows:

Ives, Robert Russell Bennett and Herrmann  
**PASC232**

Henk Badings Symphony No. 3 and Concerto for Two Violins No. 1 **PASC230**

Stravinsky Rite of Spring and works by Ravel, Piero Coppola and Chabrier **PASC219**

Virgil Thomson, Brahms and Chabrier **PASC215**

Ives, Mozart, Wagner and Strauss **PASC227**

Mozart - Die Zauberflöte **PACO045**

By way of a special arrangement for devotees of the Pristine label IRR has produced a mini-subscription package of three issues of the magazine October, November and December 2010 at the post inclusive cost of: in the **UK £9, Europe £17, USA \$24 and the rest of the world £20.**

Contact [barry.iring@recordreview.co.uk](mailto:barry.iring@recordreview.co.uk) and he will set up the subscription for you.

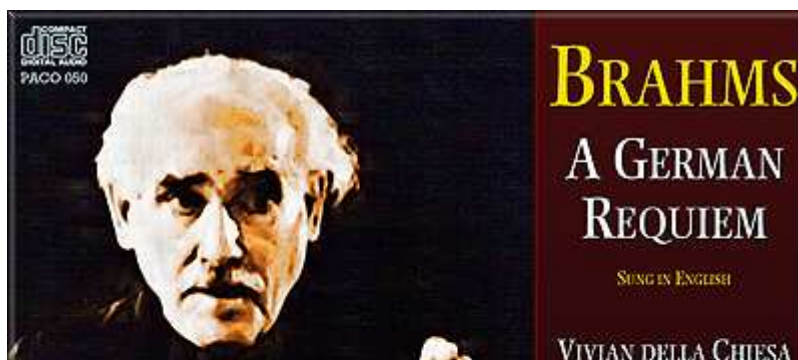


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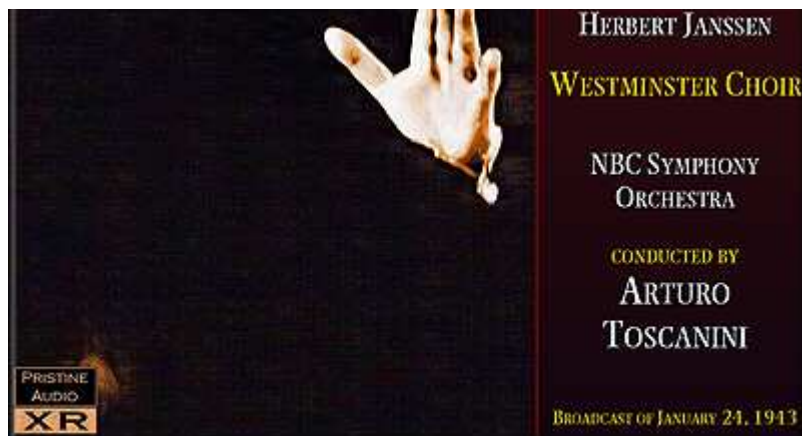
### [BRAHMS A German Requiem](#)

Pristine Audio PACO 050



Vivian della Chiesa, soprano  
Herbert Janssen, baritone  
The Westminster Choir  
Director: John Finlay Williamson  
NBC Symphony Orchestra  
conductor Arturo Toscanini

Broadcast of January 24th 1943  
Transfers from the private collection of Christophe Pizzutti  
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2010



Cover artwork based on a photograph of Arturo Toscanini

Total duration: 73:46  
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### The FLAC downloads:



*Toscanini's only recording of A German Requiem*

*Astounding sound quality from this 1943 radio broadcast*

- **BRAHMS - A German Requiem, Op.45** [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

**Vivian della Chiesa**, soprano

**Herbert Janssen**, baritone

**The Westminster Choir**

Director: John Finlay Williamson

**NBC Symphony Orchestra**

conductor **Arturo Toscanini**

Source information:

**Private transfers of original acetates from the collection of Christophe Pizzutti**

### **BRAHMS A German Requiem**

There's only one recording of Toscanini conducting Brahms' German Requiem, and it's a classic, broadcast live in 1943.

We've been lucky to find an astonishingly clean and clear source for this new restoration and XR remastering which has produced improvements in sound quality that are quite hard to believe possible.

Each bar is now crystal clear, with almost no background noise or hiss, superb dynamics and full frequency range - quite possibly the best recording you'll ever have heard from this era. Coupled with a

truly magnificent reading of one of the great works of the classical repertoire, this is essential listening.



**3. Lord, make me to know**  
(Ambient Stereo version)

#### Technical notes:

It is unfortunate for students of Toscanini this is the only recorded performance of Brahms' *A German Requiem* under his baton, as Mortimer H. Frank rightly comments in *Arturo Toscanini - The NBC Years*: "Not that it is an inferior account; on the contrary, it is magnificent." The question remains as to whether this would have been Toscanini's interpretation a decade later, or a decade earlier, prone as he was to the constant revision and reinterpretation of his readings.

Certainly this is one of those great performances which goes contrary to the received wisdom that Toscanini was often too inclined to faster tempi – Frank again: "some of his tempos here are considerably slower than the norm. The effect of this approach is to strip away the halo of Victorian sobriety that have hung over many accounts of this score...". He also notes the fact that the performance is in English and wonders whether this was due to wartime anti-German sentiment.

As the sole recording from Toscanini it is no great surprise that this specially-extended broadcast, the last in a six-programme Brahms season for NBC, has been made available on a number of issues, and one might question the need for another. I was strongly influenced in my decision to at least investigate this recording by the incredible quality of the original transfer supplied to me. For a 1943 broadcast it was exceptionally clean, clear and had a wonderfully extended frequency and dynamic range. It would appear that the transcription was a straight and high-quality dub of near-mint originals, with no interference whatsoever – even the side joins remained undone. In my experience it has been rare to have such strong source material to work on from this period.

But the fact remains that others may have started with similar sources. Thus I decided that it was worth going a step further than I might otherwise do. Naturally the recording received a full XR remastering; this performed wonders on the already clear sound quality, removing perhaps a decade or two from the perceived age of the recording. Then we come, inevitably, to the sound of NBC's Studio 8H. At the time it had recently been overhauled to try and improve the acoustic, and NBC's engineers were busy trying various microphone set-ups to bring out the best in it. But the recording here was rendered nearly dead by an acoustic as dry as the desert.

This is where convolution reverberation comes in, something I've written extensively about before. By effectively placing the recording in the acoustic of a real hall (as opposed to the artificial sound of generic digital reverb), it acquired a new and entirely natural life that was totally sympathetic to the recording. Indeed, I suggest that only the listener used to – and conditioned to – the dryness of 8H would even think for a moment that this is not what the audience experienced on the day (as indeed they might have – depending on how the microphones were hung we may have little real idea as to the actual sound as heard by those attending these concerts.)

The result is for me a particularly satisfying achievement, and one which allows me to be further absorbed in the music than

before, when subject to the constant irritant of the original sound and the way it to often made certain sections of the music sound raw and almost amateur in delivery. In short, I believe this is closer to how this performance would have sounded in a real concert hall than has ever been heard before, and is all the better for it.

*Technical notes by Andrew Rose*

Available as **320kbps mono MP3, 16-bit mono & Ambient Stereo FLAC, 24-bit mono FLAC, Mono & Ambient Stereo CD**  
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New release today:

**CANTELLI 39th NBC SO Concert**  
Pristine Audio PASC 245



**NBC Symphony Orchestra**

**conductor Guido Cantelli**

Recorded live in 1954, New York City

Live NBC broadcast from Carnegie Hall, 14th February, 1954  
Transfer tape from the collection of Keith Bennett  
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Guido Cantelli

Total duration: 49:04  
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For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



*Cantelli's penultimate NBC Symphony Orchestra concert*  
*A fine Tchaikovsky Fourth in superb sound quality*

- **ROSSINI** Overture from La Cenerentola [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
- **TCHAIKOVSKY** Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Played by **NBC Symphony Orchestra**  
conductor **Guido Cantelli**

Live NBC broadcast from Carnegie Hall, 14th February, 1954

### **ROSSINI** Overture · **TCHAIKOVSKY** 4th Symphony

Guido Cantelli's penultimate concert with the NBC Symphony Orchestra took place on St. Valentine's Day at Carnegie Hall in 1954. A month later, the renowned critic Bernard Haggin wrote:

"I was especially grateful for the repetition of Tchaikovsky's No.4 – the first in my forty years experience that gave me an accurate realization in sound what Tchaikovsky set down in his score, and one that showed him to be a better composer of his music than Stokowski, Koussevitzky, Mengelberg and all the others who have insisted on recomposing it for him."

Presented in excellent sound quality and newly XR remastered.



**Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4**  
4th mvt. - Allegro con fuoco  
(*Ambient Stereo version*)

Notes on the transfers:

This penultimate concert of Cantelli's with the NBC Symphony Orchestra was rebroadcast some years later by the BBC and a high quality open reel tape of that broadcast has been my source here. As with many of their rebroadcasts, the original commentary has been lost here. However, the sound quality of the source I was thus able to work on was markedly superior to anything other than the original master tapes, and thus any contemporary broadcast recordings from the 1950s.

Naturally I was, from this starting point, able to make considerable inroads on sound quality – after all, the BBC was still dealing with 1950s originals, and it is rare that such material cannot be improved upon by modern remastering. What emerged here following XR remastering was a live Cantelli recording of unusually high sound quality, one which ranks among the very best I've heard. I leave discussion of the performance to Keith Bennett, who I must thank once more for providing the source - you can read his notes online.

*Andrew Rose*

Available as **320kbps mono MP3, 16-bit mono & Ambient Stereo FLAC, 24-bit mono FLAC, Mono & Ambient Stereo CD**  
or listen on demand with [Pristine Audio Direct Access](#) (PADA)

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## New MP3 transfers only at PADA Exclusives

by **Dr. John Duffy**  
in Ambient Stereo

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Sir Henry Wood

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Ov fr. Don Giovanni

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Slavonic Dance in Gm,

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# 30 & #34, in A, & C

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Roman Carnival Ov.

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Fantasia on British Sea Songs (arr.Wood)

**New Queens Hall Orchestra  
London Symphony Orchestra  
British Symphony Orchestra**

**Conductor Sir Henry Wood**

For full details download the track listing [here](#)

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## Pick of the reviews

### [Audiophile Audition](#)

**'This historical document is as musical as it is "electric.'"**



**BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61  
MOZART: Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219 "Turkish"**



### Josef Wolfsthal, violin

Berlin Philharmonic/Manfred Gurlitt

Berlin State Opera Orchestra/Frieder Weissmann (Mozart)

PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 239](#) [67:21]

Josef Wolfsthal (1899-1931), like Dinu Lipatti, Dino Ciani, William Kapell, and Ginette Neveu, seemed bound for musical greatness until tragedy struck at an early age; in Wolfsthal's case, the influenza epidemic of 1931. Although many of Wolfsthal's 1920s shellacs comprised encore and showpieces, I do recall that in 1930 Wolfsthal played the solo violin for a recording of the Richard Strauss *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* Suite. Producer Mark Obert-Thorn has assembled the orchestral appearances by Wolfsthal cut for Parlophon and Grammophon, the former an inherently noisy source, given the state of Parlophon's generic recording technology--for the last three minutes of the *Tempo di menuetto*--in capturing the Mozart concerto.

For the Mozart "Turkish" Concerto (15, 19 September 1928 and 9 September 1929), Wolfsthal collaborates with veteran opera conductor Frieder Weissmann (1893-1984), who after 1926 gained increasing repute as an orchestral leader. Like most of the Carl Flesch pupils, Wolfsthal favors a sweet, linear drive and fast vibrato, his sound ringing and the intonation quite piercing. His upward scales and trilled cadences enjoy both fluency and striking power. Whatever of romantic portamento and "weeping" slides Wolfsthal favored earlier in his recording career, his maturer playing indicates a more "clean" approach, what most critics would call a "modern" style. The resonant Joachim cadenzas for both the Mozart and the Beethoven concertos might be construed as concessions to the tradition Wolfsthal innately favored. The strength of Wolfsthal's art shines in the splendid Adagio movement--which despite an orchestral cut of some length to fit eight shellac sides--boasts a potent sympathy between the principals and a strong sense of the Mozart style. An elegant courtly dance precedes the janissary flights in the last movement, an aristocrat leisure's infiltrating every bar. The Turkish elements themselves, crisp and operatically formidable in buffa accents, testify to a poised musical talent. We can hear the direct influence of Wolfsthal on his most devoted Mozart apostle, Szymon Goldberg, from the latter's own Mozart performances.

The Beethoven Violin Concerto from 1929 Berlin features composer-conductor Manfred Gurlitt (1890-1973) at the helm, a musician whose own story meanders politically and personally. Having tried both to benefit from and to escape from association with National Socialism, Gurlitt thought to improve his credentials in Japan, where he influenced the operatic and symphonic scene more or less successfully. His attention to details of the Beethoven Concerto, especially in the bass and woodwind parts, nicely juxtaposes the work's essential martial pulsation against timeless lyricism of the violin part, through which Wolfsthal moves like a hot knife through the proverbial butter. The musical periods move with a finely honed and compelling sense of architecture, the pedal points always preparatory of harmonic as well as melodic progression. Wonderful intimacy exists between Wolfsthal and the BPO French horn. The G Major theme-and-variations possesses its own lilted aura, and even the gentle thuds of the bass pizzicati have their dramatic weight. The taut line, its quiet transition to the Rondo: *Allegretto* by way of a short violin phrase, urges the music ineluctably to its appointed ritornelli, rife with buoyant energy. Wolfsthal's final cadenza bespeaks a savage temper that only promises still "fairer hopes." A pity we have no equivalent reading by the BPO under Furtwaengler from this same period, since Gurlitt's response proves so strong, the phraseology both muscularly pliant and lyrical. Feral, brisk entries by Wolfsthal, aided and abetted by his innate rhythmic thrust, make this historical document as musical as it is "electric."

--Gary Lemco

## [MusicWeb International](#)

### 'A well carried through revival of two contrasted Badings works from a 1950s LP '



**Henk BADINGS (1907-1987)**

**Concerto for Two Violins, No. 1 (1954) [25:44]**

**Symphony No. 3 (1934) [27:23]**

Herman Krebbers (violin); Theo Olof (violin)

Hague Philharmonic Orchestra/Willem van Otterloo

rec. 28-30 November 1955 (3); 1955 (concerto)

Issued as Philips LP A 00487 L

A Pristine Audio Natural Sound XR restoration by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, April-June 2010

**PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 232](#) [53:07]**

Had the Dutch composer Henk Badings been British he would have slotted rather snugly into that heterogeneous group known as the Cheltenham composers. But for the actions of Donemus in the past and very recently of CPO and David Porcelijn, he would have remained a footnote to a footnote. The present well executed revival at the hands of Andrew Rose and Pristine joins the brace of CPO CDs of the symphonies; there's more to come. The disc amounts to the reissue on CD and download of the 1955 Philips LP A 004871.

The Concerto for Two Violins is in three movements. The soloists are familiar names from the Decca and Philips stables. Krebbers is probably well remembered as the soloist in well loved Philips versions of the Beethoven and Brahms concertos with Dutch orchestras. If I recall correctly Krebbers was for many years Leader of the Concertgebouw. Theo Olof had many accomplishments but I recall him as the soloist in the Rawsthorne First Violin Concerto in which he was joined by BBC forces. His Rawsthorne 1 was issued in harness with the Second Concerto. His brother was a Philips recording engineer. As to Badings' music you should banish all thoughts of neo-classicism. The Double Concerto No. 1 is a passionate work with a very romantic concentrated Adagio. It's a little like the Walton but a shade more acerbic but not dissonant. The outer movements (of three) are tense, alive with rhythmic vitality and rife with splendidly lean ideas. The two soloists are left with little respite, constantly in flight yet with romantic gear engaged. If you love the Walton then this is for you. Another composer also comes to mind: Howard Ferguson. He never wrote a violin concerto though there are two sonatas the first of which was taken up and recorded by Heifetz. If Ferguson had tackled a violin concerto it might well have had quite an affinity with this one.

The Badings Third Symphony predates the Concerto by twenty years. It's in a quite different language - more dissonant, more caustic. It does not belong to any extreme avant-garde work but there's a Bergian turbulence about the emotional landscape as portrayed here - try the Adagio third movement. Grittily etched rhythmic facets are shared with the outer movements of the Concerto but there's not the romantic proclivity of the Concerto except passingly in the Adagio. One is sometimes reminded of the uproarious rhythmic life of the Weill symphonies. There's also some sternly satisfying French Horn playing at the start of the finale but this only serves to make way for a storm which recalls composers to the North of the Netherlands: Gosta Nystroem and Hilding Rosenberg.

Two contrasted works of considerable intrinsic attraction. The LP origins of the disc dictate a

playing time of 53:07 which may displease some collectors. If so the price should appease even the grumps.

Rob Barnett

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**Andrew Rose**

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