

Subject: PRISTINE NEWS 23rd July 2010: Mengelberg conducts Beethoven's 4th and 5th Symphonies; 1950s Rarities from Fritz Reiner
From: Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>
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Pristine News: Friday 23rd July, 2010



Fritz Reiner

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Bernard Herrmann conducts American Music

- "a charming and indubitably authentic homage to the greatest moment of American cinema" - Gary Lemco at Audiophile Audition

Paul Paray conducts Beethoven and Mozart Symphonies

- "balances finesse of execution, textural transparency, and real orchestral weight in quite remarkable fashion - altogether one of the great Seconds." - James North in Fanfare

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Editorial - Back to the future

Just a few quick thoughts this week: I've been busy catching up after a couple of weeks away on holiday, so have had little time to stop and think, let alone read and reply to every e-mail or get ahead with plans for future releases. However...

This week we see both a technological advance and something of a step into the past (or, as some might prefer, the present). To start with the latter, after five years and more of relying solely on PayPal, Pristine Classical is now able to take orders by credit card in more traditional manners, such as by post, e-mail and telephone. Because we'd prefer you to continue using our online service there may be a nominal handling charge for smaller orders for the time being, and without a dedicated staff of tele-sales operatives you might end up with our shiny new answering machine (but we'll call you back at a time convenient to you), but for those who have an aversion to paying online, can't use PayPal in their home country, or who read our reviews or magazine advertisements but don't have Internet access, our recordings are now far more easily accessible than before.

You'll find printable order forms and details of how to use these services in our Help section - the CD order form is also included in page 2 of our downloadable catalogue.

Meanwhile on the subject of technological advances, one of the most exciting things awaiting me on my return was some brand new, still in development, cutting-edge audio restoration software. I'm one of a team of testers helping to develop one of the key tools used in XR remastering, and it's now undergoing a major update, with all sorts of new features to help get the most out of difficult, damaged or otherwise imperfect recordings.

This has been an area of exceptionally rapid development over the last decade, and as digital signal processing advances alongside ever-increasing computing power, every year seems to bring further developments which can make significant improvements to the recordings we release. And because his week's Mengelberg release was in a part-incomplete state on my return to work, I saw able to start using this new software immediately - both to evaluate it and to bring the very latest and finest (to these ears, at least) in digital noise reduction to you, which, of the range of new tools now available to me, is the one I've concentrated on using for this recording.

The software boffins have long been busy adding further refinements to what was already probably the best noise reduction tool available. Sometimes these come in tiny increments, sometimes they change nothing in the sound but offer speed increases for engineers - but just occasionally they add a whole new method of extracting more music and leaving behind more noise that is so effective it immediately renders previous methods redundant, and that's what I've been using this week. Take a listen to the final movement of Mengelberg's Fourth Symphony, downloadable below, and you'll hear this for the first time, several months before the world in general gets its hands on the software tools to achieve this.

When step changes in quality such as this come along, there's always the feeling of 'if only' - if only I'd had this when tackling such-and-such a tricky recording, if only I could go back and try it out on that particular set of 78s, and so on. But with a catalogue that's taken over 5 years to put together, to embark on re-evaluations and re-remastering of recordings already released each time the technology gets better would leave us in an endless loop of repetition, and a packed schedule of new releases would surely have to be abandoned - not somewhere I'd like to go.

There's too much excellent music waiting to be discovered, dusted off and given new life - and as both a music-lover and a restorer, I remain in a state of near-perpetual excitement and anticipation: as soon as one project is finished, I can't wait to get started on the next!

Andrew Rose

New release today:

[BEETHOVEN Symphonies 4 and 5](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 236



Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
conductor **Willem Mengelberg**

Recorded live in 1940, Amsterdam

Recorded in April 1940 at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam by AVRO Radio
Transfers from mint Philips LPs 6597 012 and 6597 016 in the Pristine Audio collection

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, May-July 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Willem Mengelberg at the Concertgebouw

Total duration: 68:23
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For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



More superb Beethoven from Willem Mengelberg

Continuing the series in astonishing XR-remastered sound quality

- **BEETHOVEN** Symphony No. 4 in B flat major, Opus 60 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Concert of 25th April, 1940
- **BEETHOVEN** Symphony No. 5 in C major, Opus 67 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Concert of 18th April, 1940

Played by [Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra](#)
conductor **Willem Mengelberg**

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4 • Symphony No. 5

Willem Mengelberg's 1940 Beethoven cycle, recorded live at the Concertgebouw in a series of concerts by Dutch radio, have not only stood the test of time, but in these new XR remasterings, have revealed hidden depths some 60 years later which have made them some of our most popular releases of this year.

Here we present Beethoven's two central symphonies works, the Fourth, and of course, his mighty Fifth Symphony. As with previous issues, the sound is sumptuous, with a full frequency range and astonishingly clean, quiet backgrounds. In superlative performances from these top-flight performers, this is an essential addition to any serious music collection.



Beethoven Symphony No. 4

4th mvt. - Allegro molto

(Ambient Stereo)

Notes on the recordings:

Introduction

Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra were recorded on a number of occasions by AVRO using high quality glass acetate discs, which produced significantly better results than those normally obtained by shellac discs of the era, with a much wider dynamic and frequency range than was usual at the time.

Many of Mengelberg's AVRO recordings have long been available on LP and, later, CD, and their sonic advantages have been immediately clear to listeners for decades.

However, using standard flat replay systems to produce those LPs and CDs has only told perhaps half of the story - the recordings gently rolled off both higher and lower frequencies. However, these essential details are often still intact, buried in the recordings as if awaiting a remastering method capable of extracting them and restoring their original levels.

This is, of course, precisely what Pristine's XR remastering system excels at. There are extended sections in both 1940 concert recordings present here where we've been able to present a true full-frequency, 20-20,000 Hz frequency response, coupled with a dynamic range more befitting of a 1960s or 1970s analogue recording - sound quality which is quite astonishing for its age.

Elsewhere the bottom end has seen considerable improvement, with a much fuller and richer sound than originally heard in the flat transfers. The use of multiple references for the remastering of the recordings has ensured that the tonal balance is as natural and realistic as possible, and that the two recordings resulted in an orchestral sound which was consistent for both recordings. One will rarely get closer to hearing a 1940 concert than this.

These transfers

Although the Fourth Symphony appears to get off to a slightly rough start, thanks to damage to the original acetates, and misses the characteristic clicks of Mengelberg's baton, things soon settle down and once again in this series, excellent sound quality can be heard in both recordings. Opening up the top end frequencies of these recordings has revealed flaws previously buried in the original - distortion and swishing both had to be tamed or eliminated, with many thousands of individual manual restoration interventions required for each symphony. Inevitably the odd shortcoming will remain audible, but ultimately the sonic impact of these restorations has been hugely satisfying and enjoyable.

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:

[REINER Rarities](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 235



Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia
RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra
conducted by **Fritz Reiner**
Recorded 1950-1953

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Don Tait for providing source material
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Fritz Reiner
Additional Ambient Stereo processing by Andrew Rose

Total duration: 78:37
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The FLAC downloads:



Real 1950s rarities from Fritz Reiner

In superb new transfers by Mark Obert-Thorn

MENDELSSOHN: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Incidental Music [[notes/score](#)]

Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia

Recorded 30th June, 1951 in the Academy of Music, Philadelphia
First issued on RCA Victor LM-141

GLUCK: Orfeo ed Euridice – Dance of the Blessed Spirits [[notes/score](#)]

Julius Baker, solo flute

RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra

Recorded 16th June, 1953 in Manhattan Center, New York City
First issued on RCA Victor ERA-215

LISZT: Totentanz [[notes/score](#)]

Alexander Brailowsky, piano

RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra

Recorded 6th March, 1951 in Manhattan Center, New York City
First issued on RCA Victor LM-1195

TCHAIKOVSKY: Waltzes

Valse: Allegro moderato (from Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64) [[notes/score](#)]

Waltz from *Eugene Onegin* [[notes/score](#)]

Waltz from *Swan Lake** [[notes/score](#)]

Waltz from *Sleeping Beauty** [[notes/score](#)]

Waltz of the Flowers from *The Nutcracker** [[notes/score](#)]

RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra

Recorded 21st and *22 September, 1950 in Manhattan Center, New York City
First issued on RCA Victor LM-103

conductor Fritz Reiner

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Special thanks to Don Tait for providing source material

MENDELSSOHN • GLUCK • LISZT • TCHAIKOVSKY

Mark Obert-Thorn's habit of finding lost treasure seems to know no end. Here we have a real cornucopia of gems from the baton of Fritz Reiner, recorded in the early 1950s in excellent sound, and then forgotten for over half a century.

Reiner is joined by Brailowsky for a wonderfully realisted Totentanz - elsewhere he conducts a series of lavish Tchaikovsky Waltzes with real verve, as well as works by Gluck (originally made for 45rpm issue) and Mendelssohn. With the exception of the Liszt and a waltz these are Reiner's only recordings of these works. None has been reissued by RCA on LP or CD since the 1950s - but in Obert-Thorn's expert hands they have finally receives the attention they truly deserve.



TCHAIKOVSKY: Waltz from Eugene Onegin
(Ambient Stereo version)

Notes on the recordings:

This collection features rarities in more than one sense. First, these are Fritz Reiner's only commercial recordings of the works, save *Totentanz* and the "Waltz of the Flowers." In addition, none of them have received an "official" reissue from RCA, on LP or CD, in over half a century.

The Mendelssohn comes from a week in June, 1951 in which Reiner conducted a series of concerts at the Robin Hood Dell in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. RCA made three recordings with him at this time: the Brahms Double Concerto with Milstein and Piatigorsky; Rachmaninoff's *Paganini Rhapsody* with Kapell; and the present work. The orchestra was composed primarily of members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, but its name was not a contractual *nom du disque*. The ensemble performed under this name in their summer home well into the 1960s, and recorded under it for both RCA and Columbia.

The remaining items were made with RCA's pickup orchestra, composed mainly of members of the New York Philharmonic and the NBC Symphony with the addition of some freelance players. (Essentially, it was the same ensemble heard in the recordings of "Leopold Stokowski and His Symphony Orchestra.") The Gluck has an interesting history. Originally, it was released on a 45 rpm disc, coupled with the Air from Bach's Suite No. 3, from Reiner's complete set of Bach Suites. It was later reissued on a compilation album called "Enter the Ballet" (LM-2141), which was the source of the present transfer. The soloist, not identified on the LP, is most likely Julius Baker, who was also featured on Reiner's recording of the Bach Second Suite that same year.

The Liszt features the Russian-American pianist, Alexander Brailowsky, who was a frequent visitor to the RCA studios during the 1940s and 1950s. The work would later be re-recorded by Reiner in Chicago with Byron Janis. The Tchaikovsky waltzes were begun the day after Reiner recorded the *Fledermaus* highlights album (Pristine Audio PACO 037), which was his first session for RCA after leaving Columbia. These have been transferred from 45 rpm originals (set WDM-1539), while the remaining items have come from LPs: the Mendelssohn from its 12-inch reissue on LM-1724 (with some patches from the 45 rpm set to fix

problems in RCA's LP master tape), and the Liszt and Gluck from their only LP appearances.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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in Ambient Stereo

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Mozart

Isaac Stern, violin
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Perpignan Festival Orch
conductor Pablo Casals
rec. 1951

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Pick of the reviews

Audiophile Audition



Bernard Herrmann - A Concert of American Music

IVES: Symphony No. 2;

BENNETT: Violin Concerto in A "In the Popular Style";

HERRMANN: Welles Raises Kane--Suite

Louis Kaufman, violin/ London Symphony Orchestra/CBS Studio Orchestra (Kane Suite) /Bernard Herrmann

Pristine Audio [PASC 232](#), 76:44 [in various formats at www.pristineclassical.com] [Four Stars]:

While we tend to associate Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975) with Hollywood scores-- especially in high piercing string chords while Janet Leigh takes a shower at the Bates Motel--Herrmann enjoyed a flourishing radio career as host and leader of the CBS Orchestra in shows like *Invitation to Music and Exploring Music*, often introducing the public to new scores in quantities that exceeded the efforts of more flamboyant personalities like Leopold Stokowski.

Herrmann leads the London Symphony--which we can see in living color (different music) in Hitchcock's remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*--in the UK premier of the Charles Ives *Symphony No. 2* (1897-1901), a work long suppressed until Leonard Bernstein led his own cut edition in 1955. Herrmann (25 April 1956) offers a lush heartfelt rendition of this eclectic score, rife as it is with folk tunes hymn tunes and Bach chorales--like *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean, Bringing in the Sheaves, Camptown Races, America the Beautiful*--and passing references to Beethoven's *Fifth* and the Brahms *C Minor Symphony*. The effect rather recalls Twain's claim in *The Innocents Abroad*, that American culture resulted from selected piracies from Europe spliced to home-grown populism. In five luxuriant romantic movements, the score

segues directly from the *Lento maestoso* fourth movement into the *Allegro molto vivace finale*, with its rousing finale in jingoistic pageantry.

The studio performance of the four-movement concerto (1941) by Robert Russell Bennett (20 May 1956) proffers an airy good-natured work, folksy and pliant, the scoring often placing the solo violin against harp and transparent woodwinds. Some of the melodic tissue sounds like the Nielsen *Concerto*, but that is likely coincidental. Much of the first movement has an aggressive energy reminiscent of a good square dance. This performance also marks its UK broadcast premier, the kind of event at which solo Louis Kaufman excelled. Bennett's own penchant for movie sentiment infiltrates the *Andante moderato*, since Bennett (1894-1981) enjoyed a full arsenal of Southern United States rhetorical devices, and his melody can strut or sashay as it sees fit. The brief *Vivace* strikes us with brilliant and tumultuous battery effects against a wild banshee violin, shades of Stravinsky and Prokofiev. This flash of lightning leads to an ominous opening to the last movement, *Allegro non troppo*, but its high whines and clanky bass sound raucous on the outside but really craves for the lyric element that acts as a sweet foil to the hurly-burly that resumes and sweeps us along to the resounding coda.

The suite *Welles Raises Kane* (3 July 1949) has a subtitle, "A Divertissement of the Gay Nineties," and Herrmann called Orson Welles "the last of the great Victorians." The five sections derive from *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, the second movement a theme and variations on a tune by Waldteufel. This delicate music raises the specter of Joseph Cotten seated in a brougham with Dolores Costello. *A Ragtime* constitutes the third movement--the music from Kane's newspaper office and the famed part for former members *The Chronicle*--and the last movements insinuate the dances of the Gay Nineties. The opening *Overture* instantly recalls Kane's takeover of a provincial newspaper to turn it into the pride of Yellow Journalism. *The Meditation* could have been lifted from Massenet or an intermezzo from Bizet's *Carmen*. Altogether, a charming and indubitably authentic homage to the greatest moment of American cinema.

-- Gary Lemco

Fanfare



**BEETHOVEN Symphonies: No. 1; No. 2.
MOZART Symphony No. 35, "Haffner"
Paul Paray, cond;
Detroit SO**

Pristine Audio [PASC 209](#), (72:49). Available at [pristineclassical.com](#)

Pristine Classical's Paul Paray series continues to fill gaps left by Mercury's official reissues. This second installment is just as revelatory as the first, which coupled Beethoven's Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7.

Paray's sharply individual style is in evidence from the slow introduction to No. 1—brisk, punchy, acerbic in texture, leading to an Allegro of marvelous drive and snap. The faster-than-usual pace for its time (1959) results in a hint of fierceness in the second group—others

avoid this by virtue of a slightly more relaxed tempo and less relentlessly punchy articulation (among Paray's U.S. contemporaries, see Szell, Bernstein, and Reiner), or by charting a more flexible course through the music's harmonic and expressive contrasts (the "Old School," best represented in the late 1950s by Walter and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra). The Andante is beautifully balanced, with delicately pointed playing; in the Trio of the Scherzo, the violin counterpoint is thrown off with superb panache. The sheer discipline of the playing is consistently remarkable, a high point being the development section of the finale, with an exceptionally tight negotiation of those treacherous 16th-note scales, *sempre piano*, in staccato and legato combinations. But such impressive orchestral drill does not come at the expense of spontaneous living for the moment; in the subsequent dominant preparation for the recapitulation, Paray audibly whips his players into a frenzy with Beechamesque roars of encouragement—memorable!

The Second Symphony balances finesse of execution, textural transparency, and real orchestral weight in quite remarkable fashion—the latter the result of phenomenal rhythmic control rather than volume or force as such. Although Paray's tempos were often on the brisk side, he could go the other way, as in the surprisingly measured pace of the outer movements here. The results are all the more exciting for the sense of immense power held in check; both codas then really come to the boil (those crushing trumpet dissonances in the first-movement coda driven home with glorious *élan*). The slow movement is another high point, with fervently singing string playing and embellishing detail that really pulsates with life. Altogether one of the great Seconds.

The Mozart (1956), though very welcome, is less memorable, the full symphony orchestra textures rather heavy by today's standards. Although well played, the result is comparatively impersonal, missing that relishing of detail that makes his Beethoven so special.

Pristine's transfers, from Mercury LPs, are excellent as usual, though the results are better in the Beethoven than the rather thick-sounding Mozart, which lacks Mercury's customary textural transparency. All in all, another winner from Pristine.

- Boyd Pomeroy

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Andrew Rose
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