

**Subject:** PRISTINE NEWS 24th September 2010: Casals classics XR remastered, Koussevitzky conducts Tchaikovsky in Boston

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

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 2010 16:15:07 +0200

## Pristine News: Friday 24th September, 2010



**Pablo Casals**

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- 'These discs recapture the first appearances of Leopold Stokowski with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in 1958.'

### **Fournier, Janigro, Badura-Skoda play Haydn - MusicWeb International**

- 'This welcome retrieval brings back to the catalogue an unjustly overlooked trio whose collaborations merit admiration.'

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## **Editorial - The strange genesis of this week's Casals release**

It's been a funny old week here at Pristine, one which began with me contracting a rather nasty cold – something most parents seem to go through when their children return to school after the long summer break, ready to bring home fresh germs incubated in the classroom! Still, this wasn't going to be a major problem – Mark Obert-Thorn's Koussevitzky masters had arrived electronically overnight, and my Casals master was ready to go. I anticipated a gentle morning of CD design, dosed up with paracetamol and decongestants, and an afternoon in bed.

While I was working away an e-mail arrived from Edward Johnson, discussing recording dates for some forthcoming recordings, and as I wasn't sure of the precise date of one of the Casals recordings I asked him if he might have any information on it – or perhaps knew someone who would?

The recording in question had been an interesting one to work on, and

as so often, an educational one too. I had a Philips white label test pressing of Boccherini's Cello Concerto No. 9, a stereo recording which had Casals conducting rather than playing, with soloist Maurice Gendron accompanied by the Lamoureux Orchestra. The label is indeed simply a white sticker with a hole in the middle, with the information hand-written in blue biro, so there's not really much to go on.

Late last week it had given me some trouble, in that I'd been searching for a modern equivalent to compare it to – only to find that almost every recording of it was a rather horrible version concocted in 1895 by a German cellist named Friedrich Grützmacher, in which he took major liberties with the score, including replacing the entire middle movement. The Gendron/Casals disc turned out to be the first recorded outing of Boccherini's original and, in my opinion, much finer original composition.

Finally I managed to track down a more recent copy, having got to the bottom of the mystery as to why all the newer recordings were so different, and a remastered copy was duly prepared. I'd noted a few weeks ago in the corner of the sleeve that this was a 1958 recording, information gleaned from some sleeve notes written for a different recording quite recently by a very well-respected British musicologist. I had resolved to track down a more precise date at the time, but somehow never quite got around to it.

Back to Monday. I was putting the finishing touches on the front cover text when an e-mail arrived back from Edward. Rather confusingly it was a discography entry which stated correctly the name of the work and artists involved, but claimed this to be the Grützmacher arrangement. Rather more worrying was the recording date, 5-7 October 1960, and the release year, 1961. With little real hope I asked Edward to confirm this was the correct recording, given the question mark around the version of the piece. A few minutes later came the discographer's reply: "I have that date from the Philips engineering database in Baarn - they also did the Haydn on the same day..."

European copyright law currently states that a recording enters the public domain at the turn of the year, 50 years after it was originally published. Thus the recording which I was about to issue would be legally unavailable to me until 2012 – unless I could negotiate a licence and turn this around in under four days. Previous investigations down this road led me firmly to believe that it was unlikely to happen in the time allowed, and even if it was possible, the restrictions and costs involved would make it an economically pointless venture. I had half a release, a streaming cold, and not much time to find something else quick.

First thoughts turned to a couple of near-complete future releases, and I spent some time on Monday afternoon carrying out further work on one of these, but I kept coming back to the desire to release the Casals Dvorák, which had been so long in preparation and anticipation, and I had an inkling that I had more Casals tucked away in the 78rpm archive here.

Wishing I was lying in bed with a good book rather than dusting off 80-year-old record albums, I scanned the shelves for the set I knew was in there somewhere, the Brahms Double Concerto with Thibaud and Cortot and what the HMV cover proudly refers to as “The Pablo Casals Orchestra of Barcelona” in gold-tooled lettering. The work began...

I had a rotten night that night – awake at 2am and unable to sleep, I spent a couple of hours with a book and then returned to the studio, still unsure about whether the Casals would be viable or not. There are some restoration tasks which can be undertaken at 5am whilst wearing headphones, so I thought I might as well settle down with a box of tissues and get on with it, resolving to go back to bed when I felt ready to do so.

By 1pm that afternoon the Brahms was just about complete. I had a little light lunch then retired to a darkened room but, unable to sleep, eventually wandered back to the studio, another germ of an idea incubating in the back of my mind. Our archivist had recently added to her painstakingly-built database of our 78s a selection of mixed albums of assorted discs. Could there possibly be anything short in here from Casals, knowing that he had recorded a number of short pieces over the years. I popped into her office, fired up the database and ran a search on Casals. There wasn't a huge amount (though I spotted some discs I've thus far managed to overlook), but there was one possibility – a single disc of Boccherini. Time-wise it should be just right, but would it work?

I dug out the album – it was the last-but-one to be catalogued to date – and looked at the disc. I couldn't believe it – the matrix numbers were of the same unusual sequence (with the prefix “CJ”) seen in the Barcelona Brahms recording. Could this be its contemporary? A quick check confirmed that yes, indeed, it was recorded just a few weeks later, again in Barcelona. Perfect! I got straight down to work...

P. S. Following my editorial last week, I was contacted by remastering engineer Paul Baily (a man to whom I'm eternally grateful for introducing me to a certain record company six years ago), who asked me to make something clear regarding a Testament release I had referred to and correct an error in my text: “I would point out that the Mahler 2 to which you refer does in fact have 2 versions in the box ie mono and ambient mastering, so wondered whether you could remove the sentence you have in brackets, as the listener does have a choice. Also, Testament are being very careful not to use the word 'stereo' anywhere, so perhaps you could call it ambient mastering (or something which doesn't imply it is stereo)?”

It is interesting to me, and I can fully understand the thinking behind it, that Testament have decided to avoid the 'S-word' when referring to the process we've chosen to call Ambient Stereo, something I came very close to doing myself. In a way it goes straight to the heart of last week's call for an honest and open re-evaluation of the long-held bêtes-noires

of the remastering business – the use of equalisation, reverberation and “stereo”. While the demand is clearly there for the sonic advances the most modern digital versions of these processes can bring, nobody wants to risk implying verbally any connection with their primitive 1960s ancestors.

*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.**

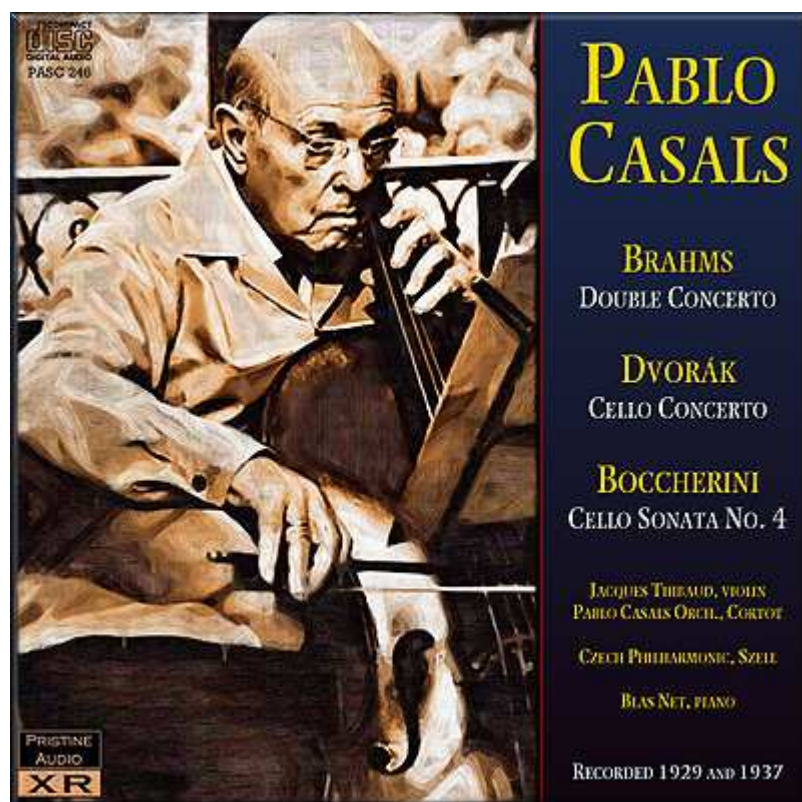
Contact [barry.iring@recordreview.co.uk](mailto:barry.iring@recordreview.co.uk) and he will set up the subscription for you.



## New release today:

### CASALS plays Brahms, Dvorák, Boccherini

Pristine Audio PASC 246



**Pablo Casals, cello**

**Jacques Thibaud, violin**

**Pablo Casals Orch., cond. Cortot**

**Blas Net, piano**

**Czech Philharmonic Orch., cond. Szell**

Recorded Barcelona 1929 and Prague 1937

Transfer & XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Pablo Casals

Total duration: 75:27

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### The FLAC downloads:



*Classic cello recordings from one of the all-time greats  
Casals sounds incredibly fresh in these new XR-remastered transfers*

- **BRAHMS** Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op. 102 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

**Jacques Thibaud**, violin

**Pablo Casals Orchestra**

conductor **Alfred Cortot**

Recorded in Barcelona, 10-11 May, 1929. First issued as HMV DB1311014, matrices CJ2156-63

- **BOCCHERINI** Cello Sonata No. 4 in A, G4 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

**Blas Net**, piano

Recorded in Barcelona, 16-17 June, 1929. First issued as HMV DB1392, matrices CJ2275-6

- **DVORAK** Cello Concerto in B minor, B191 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

**Czech Philharmonic Orchestra**

conductor **George Szell**

Recorded in Prague, 28 April, 1937. First issued as HMV DB3288-92, matrices 2HC220-9

**Pablo Casals**, cello

## BRAHMS · DVORAK · BOCCHERINI

Some recordings should need no introduction to serious music lovers, and the two concerto recordings presented here are surely among them - definitive readings of Brahms and Dvorák featuring one of the greatest cellists of all time.

Here they are presented for the first time in stunning new XR remasterings, bringing out the full, glorious tone of Casals' instrument as never before - cleaner, clearer and utterly thrilling.

Coupled with a short Boccherini sonata, these recordings sound at least 20 years younger than they really are - a real delight for the ears!



### **Brahms Double Concerto**

2nd mvt. - Andante

*(Ambient Stereo version)*

### Notes on the transfers:

The major concerto recordings of Pablo Casals, in particular that of the Dvorák *Cello Concerto* of 1937, have been staples of the classical catalogue ever since their original releases. At the time of writing there are several issues available in different transfers by different labels, and it is surely fair, therefore, to ask why the world needs yet another transfer.

The truth of the matter is that this release came out of an instance of pure curiosity on my part. I had received, in amongst a major collection of LP records, a vinyl transcription of the Dvorák on a white-label test pressing that appeared to have been barely, if ever, played. I confess I have no idea whether this transfer was released, and if so, when - it was simply to serve as a quick and easy means of subjecting the recording to an XR remastering test - I certainly was not expecting the results of this to merit issue.

However, the LP transfer turned out to be much better than I had expected, and the XR remastering brought such new life to it that I decided to persevere with it, needing only to drop in a couple of short sections from alternative sources where top-end quality was less than excellent. Sitting close by was another test pressing, this time the Boccherini *Cello Concerto No 9* with Casals conducting and Maurice Gendron playing. Investigations suggested that this was the first time Boccherini's original - rather than Grützmacher's bastardised version - had been recorded, and that it dated from 1958 but appeared since to have disappeared from the catalogue. I quickly got to work on this stereo recording with the intention of partnering it with the Dvorák, only to discover at the last minute that the erudite and well-respected author of the notes from which I'd taken the recording date

was out by a matter of two years, and that the recording itself would remain in copyright until 2012.

Turning - in need of some other recording to add to this release - to the Pristine Audio collection of 78s, I dug out the older recording of Brahms's *Double Concerto*. As it dates from 1929 my hopes were less high than for the Dvorák, but despite some noisier sides I was extremely impressed with how these came out. The XR process not only opened out upper frequencies and harmonics beyond those normally heard, it also unleashed an unusually rich acoustic from the recording venue which had been somewhat squashed before.

The *Double Concerto* recording contains clues as to why the XR process can be so successful in reviving older cello recordings - whereas the cello's harmonics are generally quite well represented in the limited frequency range of 1929 recording equipment, there are points where Thibaud's highest harmonics have a tendency to distort and thus produce a less pleasant sound. That said, it's still a remarkably clear and balanced recording for its day, and now far clearer and cleaner than ever before.

Finally, as a result of recent diligent cataloguing work of the darker recesses of our collection by our archivist, I discovered the Boccherini disc tucked away in a large album of mixed 78s and in very good condition. As it was recorded in Barcelona shortly after the Brahms I decided to add it to the concerto recordings as a kind of musical stepping stone between the larger works. Again the remastering process brought out much clarity, warmth and a lovely reverberant acoustic to complement the instruments.

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:

### [KOUSSEVITZKY conducts Tchaikovsky](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 247



**Boston Symphony Orchestra**  
conducted by **Serge Koussevitzky**  
Recorded 1949

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

Total duration: 78:37  
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The FLAC downloads:



## *Koussevitzky magnificent in late-career Tchaikovsky*

*Boston Symphony's first taped recordings - new transfers by Mark Obert-Thorn*

- **TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36** [[notes](#) / [score](#)]  
Recorded 26th April, 1949 in Symphony Hall, Boston  
Matrix nos.: D9-RC-1708-2A, 1709-2, 1710-2, 1711-1, 1712-1, 1713-1, 1714-1, 1715-1B, 1716-1  
First issued on RCA Victor 12-0972 through 12-0976 in album DM-1318 (LP: LM-1008; 45 rpm: WDM-1318)
- **TCHAIKOVSKY: Serenade for Strings in C - 2nd mvt. - Waltz: Moderato** [[notes](#) / [score](#)]  
Recorded 27th April, 1949 in Symphony Hall, Boston  
Matrix no.: D9-RC-1717-1B  
First issued on RCA Victor 12-0972 in album DM-1318 (45 rpm: 49-0510 in album WDM-1318)
- **TCHAIKOVSKY: Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48** [[notes](#) / [score](#)]  
Recorded 16th August, 1949 in the Theatre-Concert Hall, Tanglewood  
Matrix nos.: D9-RC-1870-2, 1871-1, 1872-2D, 1873-1A, 1874-2, 1889-1 and 1890-1  
First issued on RCA Victor 12-1070 through 12-1073 in album DM-1346 (LP: LM-1056; 45 rpm: WDM-1346)

**Boston Symphony Orchestra**  
**Serge Koussevitzky**, conductor

**Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn**  
**Special thanks to Don Tait for providing source material**

### **TCHAIKOVSKY 4th Symphony · Serenade for Strings**

When Koussevitzky, in his last year with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a partnership that stretched back a quarter of a century, took up his baton in April 1949 to record the Fourth Symphony of Tchaikovsky, it was the first time the orchestra had recorded onto the new medium of magnetic tape.

Perhaps rising to the challenge, a decade later this was still regarded as the finest performance of the work on disc, despite many subsequent issues from other orchestras and conductors.

Reissued for the first time since its deletion from the

RCA catalogue sometime around 1960 it can now be enjoyed again, thanks to this marvellous new transfer by Mark Obert-Thorn.



**Symphony No. 4**

3rd mvt. - Scherzo: *Allegro*  
(*Ambient Stereo version*)

**Notes on the recording:**

Koussevitzky's 1949 recording of the Tchaikovsky Fourth was the first made by the Boston Symphony using the new medium of magnetic tape. It was initially released on 78 and 45 rpm discs, the two formats favored by RCA Victor during the "speed wars". After succumbing to the long playing format developed by Columbia, the performance was reissued on 33 1/3 rpm discs. However, as was the label's custom at the time, its original "filler" side, the *Serenade for Strings* Waltz, was dropped from the LP release and not subsequently reissued.[1]

Four months later, Koussevitzky and the BSO reassembled at Tanglewood to record the entire *Serenade*. Unlike the Symphony and the Waltz, which had previously been recorded by the conductor and ensemble in 1936, the *Serenade* was Koussevitzky's first and only complete recording of the work. It is interesting to compare the drier, more detailed, but somewhat harsher sound RCA achieved here in comparison to the earlier Waltz recorded in Symphony Hall.

The sources for the transfer of the Symphony were the best portions of two late 1950s red "shaded dog" label pressings. The Waltz filler came from the 45 rpm set, and the *Serenade* was sourced from an early '50s plum "plain dog" LP. Longtime collectors may be familiar with several flaws in the original LP appearance of the Symphony, including a very noticeable join between the original Sides 1 and 2 in the first movement (RCA was still recording in four- to five-minute segments at this time), as well as sudden volume fluctuations in the first two movements. While I have been able to ameliorate these problems using digital editing techniques not available to the original engineers, I have been unable to undo the inherent compression that afflicts the louder passages of the performance.

Despite a *HiFi/Stereo Review* survey at the end of the 1950s that placed this recording of the Fourth Symphony at the top of an already-crowded field, RCA deleted the disc sometime around 1960, and has never reissued it in the subsequent half century. I am very pleased to be able to present it now for new generations to discover.

**Mark Obert-Thorn, reissue producer**

[1] An unpublished alternate take of the Waltz from this session was issued by BMG in 2001 on a compilation CD set.

Available as **320kbps mono MP3, 16-bit mono & Ambient Stereo FLAC, Mono & Ambient Stereo CD**  
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## New MP3 transfers only at PADA Exclusives

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

### Feuermann in Concert, 1940/41



Emanuel Feuermann

#### **Bloch**

Schelomo Rhapsody

#### **Dvorák**

Silent Woods

#### **Dvorák**

Rondo in G minor

#### **d'Albert**

Concerto in D, Op. 20

**National Orchestra Association**  
**Conductor Leon Barzin**

Recorded at Carnegie Hall, NY  
22nd April 1940 (d'Albert)  
10th November 1941 (rest)

This transfer is presented with Ambient Stereo remastering by Dr. John Duffy.

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## Pick of the reviews

### [Audiophile Audition](#)

**'These discs recapture the first appearances of Leopold Stokowski with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in 1958.'**



#### **Stokowski Chicago Debut Concerts**

- BACH: Four Chorale-Preludes (orch. Stokowski)
- SZABELSKI: Toccata
- SHOSTAKOVICH: Prelude in E-flat Minor, Op. 34, No. 14 (arr. Stokowski)
- PROKOFIEV: Three Scenes from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64
- TCHAIKOVSKY: Swan Lake Suite
- BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73
- GLIERE: Symphony No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 42 "Ilya Mourometz"

#### **Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Leopold Stokowski**

**PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 242](#)** (2-CDs) TT: 2 hrs. 38 min.

These discs recapture the first appearances of Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra--2 January 1958 and 9 January 1958--only after some forty-six years since he led the Cincinnati Symphony and had established himself among the world's great orchestral conductors. The source of these performances lies in a series of New York rebroadcasts of the original concerts--minus various Wagner selections--with dubbed-over narration. Typically, Stokowski manages to adjust the cool linear sound of the Fritz Reiner Chicago Symphony to suit his own acoustical requirements, and we can hear the lushly romantic results in the chorale, "Mein Jesu was vor Seelenweh," BWV 478, a string dirge of

somber power and lachrymose color. Woodwind colors in fugal style announce “Wir glauben all’an einen Gott,” BWV 437, whose bass tones provide a mighty upon which the assertion of universal belief proceeds in layered, jubilant affirmation. The two prior chorale-preludes, “Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,” and “Komm susser Tod,” luxuriant in that same Stokowski mist and irradiated glow that characterize all his orchestrations of Bach.

Notable for the Stokowski catalogue comes the 1938 Toccata by Boleslaw Szabelski (1896-1979), a purveyor of an atonal style that influenced the “New Polish School” of the 1950s. The Toccata proves a colorfully kaleidoscopic affair, busy in its many choirs, especially in the bass and percussion, though exerting an air of light playfulness to suit itself. In the militant gestures, the music acquires a feverish determination, reminiscent of Shostakovich or inflamed Prokofiev, with piano percussion, snare, trumpet, and agitated strings. The resounding thump of the last chord instigates vigorous audience applause for this Chicago premier. The fatal Prelude in E-flat Minor by Shostakovich reverberates with the gloom of Mussorgsky, especially from his *Khovantschina*, urgent pageantry in tragically grueling gestures.

Stokowski offers three moments from Prokofiev’s tender score to *Romeo and Juliet*, the longest being the first: *Romeo and Juliet’s Balcony Scene*, a night of magical love and ardent tenderness. The chamber-music intimacy that the Chicago strings invoke quite haunts our collective imagination. The oboe of Ray Still makes its fine points of color and pathos. The *Dance of the Girls with the Lilies* proceeds rather quickly, a diaphanous dance for various instruments, including the CSO saxophone and the concertmaster. Stokowski concludes with *Romeo at the Grave of Juliet*, a chromatic study in emotional anguish and epic tragedy. The pungency of the CSO brass quite electrifies our senses, the strings rising in throes that remind us that there never was a tale of more woe.

Stokowski chooses eight excerpts from Tchaikovsky’s ballet *Swan Lake*, Op. 20, making an excellent live supplement for his extended recording (LM 1894) for RCA Victor. The *Pas de deux* (Act I, 5) starts explosively and then melts into a solo violin meditation with assorted accompaniment in winds (Donald Peck, flute) and harp. The famed *Scene* (Act II, 10) achieves a vibrant intensity, lush and haunting at once. The most extended scene, the harp-laden *Danse des Cygnes* (Act II, 13) plays like an extended fantasia for violin and various combinations and the cello. The two ethnic dances, the *Danse Russe* and the *Danse Espagnole*, throb with natural flair and vivid jarring abandon. Delicate mysteries pervade the *Danse des petits cygnes* (Act IV, 27), sporting Stokowski’s canny use of *diminuendi* and *ritards*. Stokowski takes the woodwind-string entry to the finale, with its diminished version of the *Scene* music, the whole rising up as an apotheosis reminiscent of the conclusion of the composer’s *Polish Symphony*.

From the opening French horns of the Brahms D Major Symphony, we know Stokowski intends both a luxuriant and effulgent reading, the CSO particularly responsive in providing a warm aura over the expansive proceedings. That we have no parallel document from the period with Fritz Reiner makes the intensely lyrical performance so much more valuable as an indication of the gorgeously homogeneous tone the Chicago Symphony could achieve under a plastic, holistic vision. The second movement alone resounds with monumental passion and bucolic nostalgia in shifting metrics, a fine testament to orchestral discipline and balmy sonority. The proximity in spirit to a Mozart cassation at the movement’s conclusion proves quite remarkable.

More bucolic reverie from the *Allegretto grazioso*, interrupted momentarily by a burst of hustling energy. Stokowski’s final movement remains expansive, this despite the startling tumult that he invokes from the outset, a real showpiece for the CSO and any devotee of this most happy of the Brahms symphonies. Many would argue that Stokowski’s scrupulous cuts revived the otherwise massive Gliere Third Symphony from near oblivion. Collectors, however, know that the *Scherchen* performance of the uncut version still ranks among the great records. Stokowski

has extant versions of the Gliere with the Boston Symphony, Houston Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra. The first movement looms with power and ominous designs, in the manner of Tchaikovsky's Manfred, plus mysterious forest sounds. The second movement, Solvei the Brigand, takes its vibrantly pantheistic cues from Wagner's Forest Murmurs without embarrassment, as Rimsky-Korsakov had for his Tsar Saltan. With Vladimir Fair Sun, the brilliantly kaleidoscopic scherzo, receives more excerpting per pound than any other part of this otherwise massive symphony. The last movement, Feats of Valor and Petrification of Ilya Mourometz, abounds with liturgical counterpoint and the cyclic recollection of earlier themes, again ploys Tchaikovsky utilized in his Manfred Symphony. Armed the CSO brass and battery, Stokowski can elicit granite colossi at every turn. An appreciative audience rallies to the cause. [There's also a pretty good Telarc SACD - the London Symphony/Leon Botstein - of this work, which cries out for hi-res surround sound reproduction...Ed.]

--Gary Lemco

### [MusicWeb International](#)

**'This welcome retrieval brings back to the catalogue an unjustly overlooked trio whose collaborations merit admiration.'**



#### **Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)**

Piano Trio No.39 in G major Hob XV:25 [16:13]

Piano Trio No.18 in G major Hob XV:5 [14:09]

Piano Trio No.28 in D major Hob XV:16 [14:02]

Piano Trio No.23 in E flat major Hob XV:10 [9:22]

**Jean Fournier (violin); Antonio Janigro (cello); Paul Badura-Skoda (piano)**

rec. c.1957

**PRISTINE AUDIO [PACM 070](#) [53:56]**

I note - it's a pompous start but bear with me - that Pristine Audio has had the first-rate idea to delve into the discography of the Fournier - Janigro - Badura-Skoda trio. Of the threesome it's Fournier who's the least well remembered but the elegant Frenchman, older brother of the more famous Pierre - who himself played in stellar chamber groups, not least taking Casals' place alongside Thibaud and Cortot - made a raft of interesting trio and solo recordings well worthy of restoration. Janigro's career as a cellist and later conductor is quite well documented on CD, whilst Badura-Skoda's eminence still continues to be admired in recital and on disc.

PA has already released a number of their collaborations on Westminster; Brahms, the Beethoven Archduke, Mozart and Schubert. The repertoire may be standard but the performances are good and the reproduction here, via excellent, clean pressings and equally good engineering by the PA team, alerts one to the richness of the mid to late 1950s catalogues.

The trio was relatively well entrenched by the time these recordings were made. Around the same time, in addition - as collectors will know - the two string players recorded the Brahms Double Concerto with Scherchen. An earlier effort with the two Fournier brothers conducted in wartime by Bigot, was never issued. Perhaps PA can be persuaded to release the cycle of Beethoven sonatas that Jean Fournier recorded with his wife Ginette Doyen?

The performances, as I say, are fine ones, refined, elegant and songful, and enhanced by the Gallic portamenti of Fournier, Janigro's august rapport and the sympathetic tonal allure of the pianist. This is especially true of the central movement of the G major Trio [Hob XV:25] even if its finale's ebullience is somewhat held in check. Precision and elegance does not mean that trenchancy is ignored, as the finale of the companion G major [Hob XV:5] plainly shows. There's a good sense of anticipation and eager development in the Allegro of the D major too. Badura-Skoda's articulation in the same trio's central movement is refined and prefaces Fournier's sensuous legato; fine dynamics, a romanticised impress.

In fact this welcome retrieval brings back to the catalogue an unjustly overlooked trio whose collaborations merit admiration. The copies used for transfer are extremely clean and sound terrific in this restoration.

***Jonathan Woolf***

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