

Subject: PRISTINE NEWS 30th July 2010: An astounding 1951 Verdi Requiem from Toscanini
- in STEREO!!!

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Pristine News: Friday 30th July, 2010



Arturo Toscanini

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Bernard Herrmann, Mengelberg and Vaughan Williams

- "The Vaughan Williams CD is essential" - R.E.B. at Classical CD Review

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Editorial - RIP CD

It's official: this week we finally lay to rest the venerable Compact Disc – well I am, anyway. For nearly 30 years it has done me great service, delivering high quality audio without the clicks, pops and surface noise of vinyl or the hiss, drop-outs, wow and flutter of tape.

My first experience of CD was a very early Akai player, billed as second generation but in reality barely out of the nursery: the fast forward control merely moved the laser along and started playing again when you let go of the button; your position on the disc was shown by a red lamp, presumably attached to the laser mechanism; worst of all, apparently inherent audio buffer problems meant it left tiny gaps in the audio every so often, despite us taking the machine back for a replacement two or three times. In its day it was regarded as one of the best on the market...

Since those first steps the CD has become ubiquitous. The £549 that the aforementioned player cost in 1983 is now the equivalent of perhaps £3000-£4000, for which you could either purchase a very expensive CD player indeed, or a container full of very cheap ones – and I'm certain that both ends of the 2010 quality scale would out-perform it on both audio and technical quality.

Since then we've seen what in 1983 appeared to be the impossible. The CD Walkman they said couldn't be done overcame the question of disc skipping with an ingenious on-board memory filled by reading ahead and analysing the errors to cut them out. Meanwhile CD writers – another 'impossible' gadget, not only appeared, but proceeded to get ever faster and ever cheaper (my first HP CD writer was one of the first to record at 2X speed – astonishing back then, snail-like today) – today the latest models will write at 52X, burn multi-format dual-layer DVDs and burn 50GB Blu-Ray discs, or so I gather.

And then the CD arrived in the car. Suddenly a humble cassette player (always good for chewing up tapes) was yesterday's essential automotive accessory. The modern man-about-town played his CDs in his car, either one at a time or in his 6CD changer unit, initially tucked away in the boot or glove compartment, later built into the dash.

And of course just as the rest of us caught up, new in-car players started reading MP3 data CDs, and suddenly you could put enough non-stop driving music on a single silver disc, burned for pennies on your PC's 52X internal CD writer, to get you from here to Minsk. Surely it doesn't get better than this?

But as always, today's cutting edge becomes yesterday's old news. You end up with a car full of barely notated CD-Rs stuffed in every available orifice, with little idea as to what each contains. Each is grinding sand and grit onto the playing surfaces of the one jammed in carelessly alongside it. 90 per cent of them skip somewhere; 45 per cent of them won't play at all, because they're not so much scratched as sandpapered to oblivion, their replay surfaces a curious matt texture where plastic was once shiny. Your vehicle is full of ex-CDs, and you're just glad that not all of them started life in a jewel case in a record store.

Meanwhile the kids, or the neighbour's kids, have nifty 160-zillion GB iPod gadget things with the entire works of the western hemisphere crammed inside something the size of a matchbox, and suddenly you start to feel ever such a little "last millennium". Your car replay system starts to remind you of a Laurel and Hardy short where they drive a car complete with wind-up gramophone under the hood. It's time to move on...

I'd already replaced my CD equipment and media with something just a little more modern. Gleaming new toys have been acquired, combining the computing power of five Space Shuttles with an HDMI video connector that fits into something that lurks at the back of the TV set. Life is transformed, again, the CDs were eventually boxed up and sent to the attic, everything's in high definition and a library of 70,000 music tracks sits under my fingertips.

Except for one place – the final resting place of the CD: the car stereo. Somehow I'd missed a quiet revolution in in-car audio, one which began with the appearance of USB connectors next to the CD slot – or perhaps it was a small stereo jack hole and an AUX setting on the dash?

Either way, this week the final refuge of the CD, my car, finally gave in to the new century. A moderately-priced in-car CD/MP3 player gave way to a ridiculously cheap machine which accepts SD RAM cards and USB sticks, is capable of taking total control of my iPod, but has no slot for CDs, cassettes or 8-track cartridges (and no, it doesn't play 78s either!). I say "ridiculously cheap" – having no moving parts, no lasers, no motors and so forth, I wouldn't be overly surprised if it merely contains one chip, costing a hundredth of the retail price of the unit – but by comparison to the units which are required to digest silver discs and turn them into music it cost peanuts. And the old SD RAM card I recovered from a defunct digital camera as a stop-gap manages to hold several times as much music as the MP3 CDs it's replacing did (29 albums to be precise), it doesn't scratch or skip, and is easily rewritten.

I look forward to assembling a collection of little USB sticks marked things like 'Chamber', 'Jazz', 'Piano', 'Toscanini' and 'Lonnie Donegan', all resting patiently in the ash-tray. In the meantime, a minute's silence in appreciation for the Compact Disc, please...

Andrew Rose

New release today:

[VERDI Requiem - new Stereo mix](#)

Pristine Audio PACO 048



Herva Nelli - soprano
Fedora Barbieri - mezzo-soprano
Giuseppe di Stefano - tenor
Cesare Siepi - bass
The Robert Shaw Chorale
NBC Symphony Orchestra
 conductor **Arturo Toscanini**

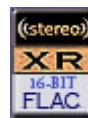
"Accidental stereo" reconstruction from NBC and Carnegie Hall recordings
 XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, June-July 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Toscanini

Total duration: 77:45 ©2010 Pristine Audio.

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Stereo FLAC downloads



Toscanini's award-winning concert in stereo for the first time

An astonishing milestone in 21st century digital remastering

"Toscanini conducts the work as if inspired by an apocalyptic vision of Death and Judgement and the result—neither operatic nor melodramatic—is indescribably thrilling."

The Gramophone, December 1956

- **VERDI** - *Messa da Requiem* [[notes](#) / [score](#) / [text](#)]
Recorded 27th January, 1951, Carnegie Hall, New York City

Herva Nelli - soprano

Fedora Barbieri - mezzo-soprano

Giuseppe di Stefano - tenor

Cesare Siepi - bass

The Robert Shaw Chorale

NBC Symphony Orchestra

conductor **Arturo Toscanini**

Source information:

Unedited NBC broadcast recording and "a tape made directly from the Hall" supplied by private collectors

VERDI Requiem - New full stereo remastering

"Toscanini conducts the work as if inspired by an apocalyptic vision of Death and Judgement, and the result—neither operatic nor melodramatic—is indescribably thrilling"

Thus wrote the Gramophone reviewer in 1956. If

only he were able to hear this new remastering. Nearly 60 years after the broadcast, the discovery that a second, high quality recording was made using a different microphone, and that if mixed together a stereo version of this all-time classic would be possible, has exciting Toscanini fans around the world.

After much painstaking work, the results are even better than we'd ever hoped or expected. A milestone recording for Pristine.



Opening:

1. Requiem Aeternam
2. Kyrie Eleison

(Actually at 320kbps for this release)

Technical notes:

In the notes which accompany a current reissue of this *Requiem* recording, as displayed on one eminent retailer's website, there is an error of which perhaps the writer was unaware:

“Seven hundred hours of editing went into the original lp release of this recording, caused by the fact that only NBC's radio recording was left from the performance in 1951. The balance was problematic and the end result included the original NBC tape relayed from Carnegie Hall with some fillings in from the rehearsal takes. The original release was highly acclaimed and won the Grand Prix du Disque as well as the Preise der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik.”

The error is a simple one to make – you see, the NBC tape was *not* the only recording left from the performance. A second recording was made inside the hall from a second microphone; it has been preserved these past 59 years, and arrived in better shape than the *unedited* NBC recording. This fact, however, is somewhat secondary to the most crucial, vital point about the second recording: it was made using a second microphone, positioned separately to the NBC's microphone. This means it is, in theory at least, possible to reconstruct a stereophonic recording using the two sources – or at least stereo of a kind.

A normal stereo recording, at it's most simple level, is best made using two microphones carefully placed and directed in order to create the most naturalistic stereophonic effect. The two outputs are recorded onto two tracks or channels which run concurrently – in 1951 this would have meant two tracks on one tape, had the technology been available at the time. Because the two tracks are physically side-by-side on a single tape and read by a single head, any fluctuation in tape speed will not cause a divergence in the juxtaposition of the two channels and the stereo image will remain absolutely stable.

By contrast, this Verdi recording begins with two microphones which have been placed independently of each other. Each was

positioned to record the performance, but it's safe to assume both aimed to record the entire ensemble, rather than concentrating on the left or right hand side of the stage. As such we almost certainly don't have what recording engineers term a 'coincident pair'. (Where they were actually positioned is anyone's guess.)

Next we have two independent recording machines, each with its own minute speed fluctuations, something which will be further exacerbated on replay. Without some kind of time-code locking, no two analogue recorders or replay machines will ever stay perfectly synchronised, so our ideal of two channels on one tape and one replay head is also lost.

To add another complication to this already complex picture, one of the two recordings appears to be 'straight', whereas the other has had some kind of 'gain riding' – raising the volume levels of the quieter sections and attenuating the levels of the louder sections.

Finally, and unsurprisingly, both have different tonal characteristics (different microphones and recording equipment) and both have emerged in differing states of disrepair some six decades after the event.

To attempt to deal with all of these issues would have perhaps been an insurmountable task until very recently indeed. The key technologies which have made the present release possible are only recently developed – and though no doubt further advances might at some day in the future make this kind of work simpler, and possibly produce better results, I think the results here are truly something to marvel at and savour. I try to remain modest here – I have been the mere manipulator of tools I could not hope to construct.

Work began on the project in much the same way as I would normally proceed. The recordings were re-pitched to a standard A440 following basic de-clicking. The issues of tonal differences between them become irrelevant during the XR process, as each is re-equalised to a common reference, and then to each other, in order produce as close a tonal match as possible. This is done using high resolution computer analyses of the average frequency responses of each recording across its entirety and using very precise equalisation tools to match the two.

Next comes the tricky part – mixing the two halves into a single 'stereo' track. I used an educated guess as to the relative position of the microphones in order to determine which was left and which was right. Then began the painstaking task of lining the two up. Speed fluctuations on each track meant that synchronisation was forever being lost: the two tracks went in and out of tune with each other, one galloped ahead as the other fell behind, and so on. After hundreds of edits and endless re-pitching and fine-tuning of short sections, often corresponding to a handful of notes or a few short seconds of music, some kind of result was achieved.

The resulting “stereo” mix was rather wild – voices and instruments lurched from one side to another thanks to the gain-riding applied to one track only. An automated procedure to centre the tracks seemed the best solution here, adjusting the two channels simultaneously in volume to balance out the discrepancies between them. This is inevitably a compromise, but it seems to work.

Now began the fine-tuning – thousands of manual corrections to deal with pops, clicks, crackles, slight shifts in synchronisation previously missed and so forth. One particular brass entry, for just two notes, suddenly diverged in pitch – for a moment the glass-like clarity NBC brass section became more like the sound of a drunken Oom-Pah band at the tail-end of a Munich beer festival.

Gradually these flaws were addressed and things began to fall together, and I was able to unleash another new 'secret weapon' – the automatic phase corrector. This analyses the two channels and looks for similarities and phase discrepancies between them, constantly adjusting their relative position in order to further fine-tune synchronisation. (A coarser version of the same would have saved me a huge amount of work, but this operates in the realms of milli- and micro-seconds.) The result is a further marriage of the two halves and a highly integrated stereo image – at least for much of the time.

Now although an 'accidental stereo' recording such as this cannot match an intentional one, it is clear by switching between the two individual mono channels and the stereo hybrid that a massive leap has been made on behalf of the listener. At its best, and this is true for long sections of the recording, the stereo is remarkably convincing and adds hugely to the experience of the listener. At its lesser moments there is some blurring of the picture, some apparent wandering of the image, but although the fine detail of soundstage is lost, the impact rarely diminishes.

One can but hope that the discovery of these two independent recordings of this concert may lead to other similar instances coming to light. In the meantime one can only marvel at the good fortune that such an important concert recording turned out to

have a long-hidden partner, ready to be reconstructed into the dramatic and thrilling musical document we present here. My thanks again go out to those who have freely contributed source recordings for this project, who discovered that such a reconstruction was possible, and took the first experimental steps in the realisation of this project.

Technical notes by Andrew Rose

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Artur Schnabel

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Artur Schnabel, piano
rec. Abbey Road, Jan 1939

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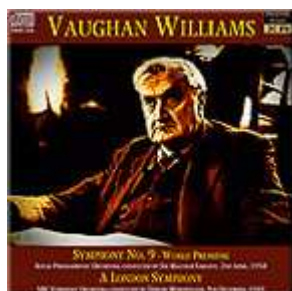
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Pick of the reviews

Classical CD Review



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Symphony No. 9 in E minor. Symphony No. 2 "London."

**Royal Philharmonic Orch/Sir Malcolm Sargent, cond. (No. 9); NBC Symphony Orch/Dimitri Mitropoulos, cond. (No. 2)
PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 234](#) TT: 77:50**

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36. Symphony No. 8 in F, Op. 93.

**Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orch/Willem Mengelberg, cond.
PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 229](#) TT: 71:09**

IVES: Symphony No. 2. BENNETT: Violin Concerto in A (Louis Kaufman, violin).

HERRMANN: Wells Raises Kane

London Symphony Orch. (Ives/Bennett); Columbia Broadcasting Symphony Orch. (Herrmann); Bernard Hermann, cond.

PRISTINE AUDIO [PASC 232](#) TT: 76:44

Pristine Audio continues their valuable reissues series with performances of major interest to collectors. The Vaughan Williams CD is essential. We have the world premiere of Symphony No. 9 from Royal Festival Hall April 2, 1958, with the Royal Philharmonic conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent as well as a performance of the London symphony with Dimitri Mitropoulos, and the NBC Symphony, a broadcast from Studio 8H December 9, 1945. The latter is available on a hard-to-find Italian CD but this is first issue of the premiere of No. 9. Audio quality is excellent for No. 9, less so for the London. Details of the reconstruction can be found on Pristine's WEBSITE. Willem Mengelberg and his Concertgebouw Orchestra gave frequent Beethoven festivals and the broadcast 1940 series is now being issued on Pristine. Their remastering brings new life to these superb performances, and these are preferable to the original releases on Philips.

Bernard Herrmann appeared often on American radio broadcasts with the CBS orchestra. Pristine's new CD contain's the conductor's own orchestral suite Wells Raises Kane, which consists of music he wrote for the films Citizen Kane and The Magnificent Ambersons, from a broadcast July 3, 1949. Also included are BBC studio broadcasts April 25, 1958 of Ives' Symphony No. 2 with the London Symphony, and May 20, 1956 of Robert Russell Bennett's Violin Concerto in A with Louis Kaufman as soloist, both UK premieres. Kaufman was a major violinist of the time both in movie studios and concert halls, and a major figure in renewed interest in music of Vivaldi; his recording of The Four Seasons in 1947 won a Grand Prix du Disque. Kaufman also played much American music and made the first recording of Barber's Violin Concerto. He gives a spectacular performance of Robert Russell Bennett's 1941 violin concerto, a brilliant work that is unjustly neglected. Another Pristine issue of Bernard Herrmann as conductor is Elgar's Falstaff coupled with the Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto (Mitch Miller as soloist) and the Harty arrangement of Handel's Water Music (PASC 202). Check out other historic reissues on Pristine WEBSITE

R.E.B. (July 2010)

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Andrew Rose
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