

Subject: PRISTINE NEWS 6th August 2010: Beecham in Seattle conducts Dvorak and Mendelssohn; Cantelli's Brahms and Vivaldi

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Pristine News: Friday 6th August, 2010



Sir Thomas Beecham

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Editorial - Hard drives for audio – a cautionary tale

I considered calling this column "Why I wouldn't buy a [Brennan JB7](#)" - and there are a number of reasons for that - but ultimately I realised this would be unfair on the manufacturers and purchasers of a piece of hi-fi gear I suddenly keep reading about but have never seen nor heard in action.

So instead I'll concentrate right now on a single aspect of great importance, and with relevance far beyond any particular device to cover just about all the current crop of hard-disk-based all-in-one music centres (in a kind of 1970s sense some of them do indeed seem to resemble music centres in many respects).

You see, I had something of a near-calamity strike my music collection this week. It's the kind of thing which could happen to anyone who chooses to put their faith in the latest technology to store their precious audio or video: the demise of the hard drive on which everything is stored.

I must admit I hadn't actually looked at it for a while. It seemed to be starting up a bit slower than usual, and had developed a curious habit of going to sleep that I put down to overheating before I moved it to a

cooler place. The LED display was doing something a little out of the ordinary, it turned out, but as the device has spent most of its life in a room I rarely visit, this hadn't been noticed.

Then yesterday morning I heard a curious scratching sound coming from the general direction of the window. I ignored it for a while, expecting it to go away and imagining it to be outside, but eventually curiosity got the better of me and I decided to investigate what kind of creature might be making such a sound.

To my alarm, it was my main storage drive, and it was coming from inside! Quickly I started up the Western Digital configuration and diagnosis software on my PC, scrabbling around to try and find the right password to access the utility, and started finding alarming messages on my screen. A few minutes later I finally discovered what it all meant – one of the two drives inside the device had stopped working. By the sound of things it had literally scratched itself to death.

Almost all hard drives do this, or something like it, eventually. They're full of mechanical things whizzing around at very high speeds in very close proximity and operating at microscopic levels of accuracy. That they work at all is remarkable – in this case each drive has around 2TB of data stored inside it, a figure unthinkable just a few short years ago.

Fortunately this is one of the rare occasions where I'd taken my own advice and bought a RAID server for storing all my music. In the mirrored configuration I chose when setting it up, each of the two drives inside the box holds an identical copy of my data; when I save something it's written to both drives at the same time – likewise when I delete something, or rename it, or whatever. There are two copies of everything - everything is mirrored.

Except now there is only one copy of everything, together with a dead drive and an order placed with Amazon for a replacement. According to the instruction manual, replacing a drive should be a piece of cake. Push down the button on the top of the outer casing to open the lid; undo a thumbscrew, lift the metal lid inside the case and slide out the old drive, then slide in the new one. Reassemble, switch on and leave well alone for up to 12 hours while it unit formats the new drive and copies over the contents of the existing, good drive.

Because all of this only happened yesterday I can't yet report on how well this works in practise. I can tell you that the removal of the old drive was as easy as suggested, and I certainly anticipate that sliding in the new one will be equally straightforward. I can't vouch for the duplication bit yet, but I do still have a single working drive, which I'm tending to leave powered down as much as I can until the replacement arrives and is installed. Then I hope I'll be able to breathe easy again – I've heard scary tales of twin drives failing at the same time, and I don't want that to happen to me!

But getting back to the Brennan and its cousins – a music player based around quality electronics and a big (well, rather modest actually) hard

disk drive. It seems like a great solution – feed it with CDs at the front and it will add them to the drive as MP3s to a quality level you select. Then you press play and it'll play them for you through its built-in amplifier and out of your loudspeakers. It'll digitise a feed from your tape or record player too. Marvellous!

But what happens if you've spent months or years gradually working through your collection, perhaps in order to create space within your home, and eventually ditched the CDs, if one day the hard drive starts making funny noises rather than lovely music? Well if you've been a good, responsible owner you will have regularly used its back-up facility to your external hard drive (not included) attached to the USB port. But isn't that the kind of inconvenience that this sort of thing is supposed to do away with? Just how diligent would you be? Less than regular, perhaps, just like me?

At least the option is there, though I wonder how many make use of it. Other media players are less helpful in this respect and make it even harder for you to back up your music. Some portable players get so bogged down with digital rights management (DRM) that it's almost impossible.

No thanks, that's not for me. A huge great whopping 2TB drive costs little more than €100 retail – surely a player containing a 320GB drive might be able to squeeze a second in, as an option, and handle its own data security internally? Once you've invested thousands in a music collection and spent hundreds of hours getting it into such a device, it surely wouldn't be too much to ask of it, would it?

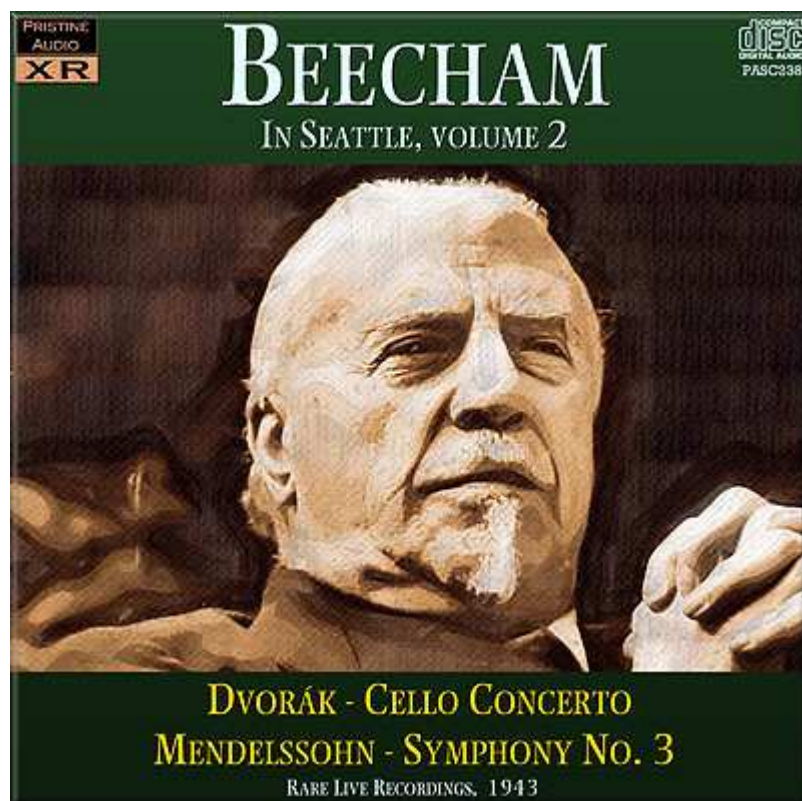
And since you ask: why else wouldn't I buy a Brennan JB7? Simple: it doesn't play FLAC - which appears to be a monumentally short-sighted decision on the part of a manufacturer aiming at a modestly hi-fi market. It makes me wonder what other decisions might have been made over which I, as a consumer, have no control. They can keep their music centre – and I'll keep my 'separates' system. You see, not only do I value security, I also like to be the one who thinks he's in charge...

Andrew Rose

New release today:

[BEECHAM in Seattle, Volume 2](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 238



Mischel Cherniavsky, cello
 Seattle Symphony
 conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham
 Recorded 1943

Transcribed from tape copies of Beecham's own original acetates
 XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, August 2010
 Cover artwork based on a photograph of Sir Thomas Beecham

Total duration: 77:21
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For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



Beecham in Seattle - the unheard live recordings, continued!

"I was informed there was an emergency, so I emerged..."

- **DVORAK** Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104, B. 191 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
 Mischel Cherniavsky, cello
 Evening concert, October 18th, 1943
 Music Hall Theatre, Seattle
- **MENDELSSOHN** Symphony No. 3 "Scottish" in A Minor, op. 56 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
 Evening concert, October 11th, 1943
 Music Hall Theatre, Seattle

Played by [Seattle Symphony](#)
 conductor **Sir Thomas Beecham**

Transcribed from tape copies of Beecham's own original acetates

DVORAK Cello

Concerto · **MENDELSSOHN** 3rd Symphony

When Beecham left Britain during the war years he ended up for a time in Seattle, attempting to turn a

relatively small provincial orchestra into something more suited to his generous ego.

In typical Beecham style he managed to delight and wow audiences whilst getting right up the noses of local critics. A recording ban at the time meant that no commercial discs exist of Beecham's time in Seattle, but a few concerts have been partially preserved.

It seems the great conductor himself had these discs made, most likely to silence his critics. Sound quality is astonishingly good for the era - this is a truly rare Beecham collector's dream!



Dvorák Cello Concerto
3rd mvt. - Allegro moderato
(*Ambient Stereo version*)

Notes on the recordings:

We are lucky to have any recordings whatsoever of Beecham in Seattle - union disputes precluded any commercial recordings during Beecham's time with the orchestra. To the best of our knowledge there remain three CDs-worth of live material, captured at the start of the 1943 season and preserved first on acetate discs (since melted down), then open-reel tape (since lost), backed up onto more open reel tape (now almost unplayable) and cassette tape. Thus the humble cassette proves the best remaining source of these historic recordings, and it is from excellent transfers of these, supplied by a collector who wishes to remain anonymous, that I have worked.

Since our first volume was issued, and the recording credited to a local radio station, further information has come to light which suggests that it was Beecham himself who commissioned the recordings in order to silence his critics locally. This may go some way to explaining the lack of continuity in the present volume, where non-overlapped side changes have resulted in a number of short gaps. My guess is that these were planned for between-movement intervals, but on more than one occasion here the recording time ran out before the movement had ended.

That said, the overall recording quality, post-XR remastering, is astonishing in both works, specially given the provenance of these recordings, with clarity, frequency and dynamic ranges, and up-front vitality that any commercial producer in 1943 would have been more than proud of..

Andrew Rose

For further background information on the source recordings, see the notes to Volume One, [here](#).

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)

New release today:

[CANTELLI'S 26th NBC Concert](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 237



NBC Symphony Orchestra

conductor **Guido Cantelli**

Recorded live in 1952, New York City

Live NBC broadcast from Carnegie Hall, 6th December, 1952
Transfer tape from the collection of Keith Bennett
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, August 2010
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Guido Cantelli

Total duration: 57:48
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For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



Superb concert recording from Toscanini's 'anointed' successor

Crowned by a marvellous Brahms 1st - in superb sound quality throughout

- **VIVALDI** Concerto Grosso in A minor, Op.3, No. 8 (from L'Estro Armonico) [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Daniel Guilet, Remo Bolognini, solo violins

- **BRAHMS** Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

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

Live NBC broadcast from Carnegie Hall, 6th December, 1952

VIVALDI Concerto Grosso · BRAHMS 1st Symphony

Had it not been for his tragic death in a plane crash, Cantelli was shaping up just fine as the conductor most likely to carry Toscanini's flame well into the second half of the 20th century.

As it is he remains something of a footnote in history, with just eight short years of real fame. In another of our NBC Concerts series, this recording shows Cantelli at his best - introducing new audiences to the then rather obscure Italian baroque composer, Vivaldi, then knocking them out with a work he performed more often than any other, Brahms's First Symphony.

Sound quality here is excellent, the orchestra as well-drilled as ever, and Cantelli's on top form.



Brahms Symphony No. 1

1st mvt. - Un poco sostenuto - Allegro
(*Ambient Stereo version*)

Notes on the transfers:

These transfers were taken from a high quality open-reel tape copy preserved by Cantelli specialist and author Keith Bennett, whose comprehensive notes on this concert can be found on our website, a condensed version of which is also available on the CD cover. The tape preserved a BBC rebroadcast of the concert, which omitted the opening and closing announcements of the

original but included Ben Grauer's commentary between the Vivaldi and Brahms. Additional BBC announcements have been removed from this reissue, but Grauer's words have been preserved.

Overall sound quality of the originals was generally excellent for its era, and the recordings have responded very well indeed to XR remastering, producing a fuller and more vivid sound where it had perhaps been just a little flat and overly strident in the upper registers.

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)

New MP3 transfers at PADA Exclusives

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

Shure plays Beethoven



Leonard Shure

Diabelli Variations, Op. 120 Beethoven

**Leonard Shure, piano
rec. 1948
from Vox 78rpm album 636**

One of Leonard Shure's signature pieces, this recording originated in the collection of Richard Bloesch, a pupil of Shure.

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

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In Your Own Words



Herva Nelli - soprano
Fedora Barbieri - mezzo-soprano
Giuseppe di Stefano - tenor
Cesare Siepi - bass
The Robert Shaw Chorale
NBC Symphony Orchestra
conductor **Arturo Toscanini**
Recorded in 1951

"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
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"I just heard the wonderful release of Verdi's Requiem with Toscanini in real stereo: marvellous!!!

Then I had the idea, that there exist two different versions of Schuberts 9th Symphony played by the Vienna Philharmonic under Wilhelm Furtwängler in Salzburg 30.VIII.1953.

The first version is the official broadcast from Austrian Radio (released by EMI), the second is a private high quality recording in different acoustic (released by Tahra FURT 1095-97 together with a private recording of Weber's "Freischütz"). Perhaps there is a possibility to reconstruct a real stereo-recording of Wilhelm Furtwängler. The soundquality of the private recordings is very good!"

"I really must congratulate you on the fabulous exhumation of the verdi/ toscanini requiem, an account I have always rated above all others even if listening has been something of a trial due to the fierce mono on my old RCA discs.

It's interesting how some of the apparent fierceness of the performance was in the recorded quality and your recreation has added a degree of nuance and humanity, whilst retaining or enhancing the passion/spiritual aspect.

thank you again!"

"Big thanks to you, Andrew for doing this. I listened to my copy last night and was thrilled. The sound of that thrice familiar recording had suddenly blossomed into wonderfully natural airy unstrained stereo."

"The U.S. "National Public Radio" had a program on this sometime in the late 1970s or early 80s. As you may already know, it appears to have been NBC's policy in the 1940s and early 50s to use separate microphone setups for the English and Spanish versions of all their music broadcasts, classical and popular. NPR played a little bit of a jazz group (I've forgotten which one) that had been combined 'by hand' using the analog tools that were then available.

Clyde J. Key of the Arturo Toscanini Society promised to issue some stereo broadcasts from this source. At the time, I thought that he underestimated the task; certainly, the Society issued nothing.

So, there would seem to be in potential a large number of possible 'accidental stereo' recordings of a variety of musical programs. The big question is, how many such still exist in sufficient quality of sound and performance to make joining the two tapes into one stereo recording worth the investment in time.

I am amazed at what you accomplished. Keep up the good work!!"

"The Toscanini announcement was a bombshell and certainly an industry 'first' as restorations go. You'll be criticized, of course, for tampering, but then your competition will imitate such two-channel constructs as best they can. Your own XR technology has its clones already. Testament has just brought out a Klemperer Mahler 2nd, live May, 1951, from Vienna, using "ambient remastering" at the hands of Paul Baily, and I'm not the only one to detect a comparable aural reworking by Aaron Snyder in Music & Arts's set of Bruckner Sym. 4-9 with Furtwangler.

I know the Toscanini Requiem recording intimately. The commercial RCA release omitted the second 'libera me' sung by the soprano at the very end. This has always bothered me – I presume it would have vexed Toscanini even more, and I fixed the matter in my own way on a private dub by adding the final 'libera me' from Guido Cantelli's New York Philharmonic recording, in which the soprano was Herva Nelli, so the voice doesn't change. (It makes a poignant end, given the Cantelli-Toscanini relationship). I can't wait to hear, on your CD of the unedited live performance, if she actually sings the second 'libera me.'

I'm not in the least concerned by your two-tracking because I trust your taste from numerous previous purchases. Indeed, if you could find a second miking of Toscanini's Beethoven "Eroica" on Dec. 6, 1953, that would be a great improvement on RCA's dim sound from that great live performance, also in Carnegie Hall. [As a young graduate student, I wrote my

master's thesis in 1966 on the Maestro and the NBC with help from Walter Toscanini, and truly, you wouldn't hear much huffing from either Walter or his father about improving sound quality.]

It will be fun to read the critics, because you have done that rare thing: something no one has done before."

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Andrew Rose
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