

# ...AND REMEMBERING TOSCANINI

## Pristine transfers of the great conductor in concert

Last year was of course also “Toscanini Year” and an earlier slice of Sibelian recorded history arrives courtesy of Pristine Audio in the shape of Toscanini’s April 1940 NBC relay of the Fourth Symphony, as heated a rendition as you’re ever likely to hear, though more a case of heated steel than even a semblance of sunshine. No other Sibelian Fourth that I have ever heard comes as close to



singing as this one does, and some of the playing is superb. The same well transferred programme includes a tightly bolted Enescu First *Romanian Rhapsody* (thrilling in part but far too uptight to dance to) and Toscanini’s swift and forceful accounts of Elgar’s *Introduction and Allegro* (1949, and now sounding good enough to detect a minor host of imperfections) and Vaughan Williams’s *Tallis Fantasia* (the 1945 version). Two concerts from the autumn of 1945 yield contrasting experiences. A programme



of Mendelssohn’s *Reformation* Symphony, Smetana’s *Vltava* and Cherubini’s *Anacreon* Overture from September 9 features performances that could happily rank as “Maestro’s best” in each case, whereas a coupling of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony and Tragic Overture from October 28 sounds brusque and impatient. Far better Toscanini versions exist of both works (especially the BBC Symphony Brahms Fourth of 1935).

How different an all-Mozart concert from November 3, 1946, Toscanini lavishing affection as I’ve never heard him do in this composer, especially in the trio to the *Haffner* Symphony’s Minuet. The other works programmed are the Divertimento No 15 in B flat (or most of it, and not unlike Toscanini’s commercial recording) and the *Magic Flute* Overture. Again, the transfers are absolutely AI.



And lastly, a return to Arthur Grumiaux and a short-play CD (or download) of Grumiaux, Jean Pougnet and the Philharmonia under **Walter Susskind** in Bach’s Double Concerto, feelingly played and shaped with the expected sensitivity to line. ●

### The Recordings

- **Sibelius, Elgar, Enescu** Orch Wks **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio (M) PASC087
  - **Mendelssohn, Smetana** Orch Wks **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio (M) PASC089
  - **Brahms** Sym No 4, Tragic Ov **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio (M) PASC090
  - **Mozart** Haffner Sym, etc **Toscanini**  
Pristine Audio (M) PASC097
  - **Bach** Double Conc **Grumiaux, Pougnet; Susskind**  
Pristine Audio (M) PASC093
- [www.pristineclassical.com](http://www.pristineclassical.com)