

Subject: PRISTINE NEWS 10th September 2010: Robert Casadesus plays Beethoven Concertos and de Falla - and even more Moura Lympny
From: Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>
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Pristine News: Friday 10th September, 2010



Thomas Fraser
Shetland country blues icon

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Helmut Walcha's Bach - a MusicWeb International Recording of the Month
- "It's good to have these classic and interpretatively superb recordings of one of Bach's most compelling organ works available. The transfer quality is almost as satisfying as the performance."

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Editorial - Long Gone Lonesome Blues - a little Pristine history

In the early summer of 2002 my life was in many ways completely different to what it is today. I was living in England, commuting every day to London and working full time for the BBC. Six months earlier I'd put a spare LP up for sale on eBay, and to help it sell, included with it a transfer I'd prepared for my own listening pleasure on CD.

The chap who bought it was clearly impressed with the CD and contacted me to see if I wouldn't mind copying half a dozen of his own LPs to CD and cleaning them up a bit. To clinch the deal, he offered me £20 a disc to do so. Thus was born the seed of an idea which, a few months later, became Pristine Audio. (That first LP, by the way, was Boult conducting Moeran's Symphony in G minor on Lyrita, a recording now available on CD but then something of an LP collector's item.)

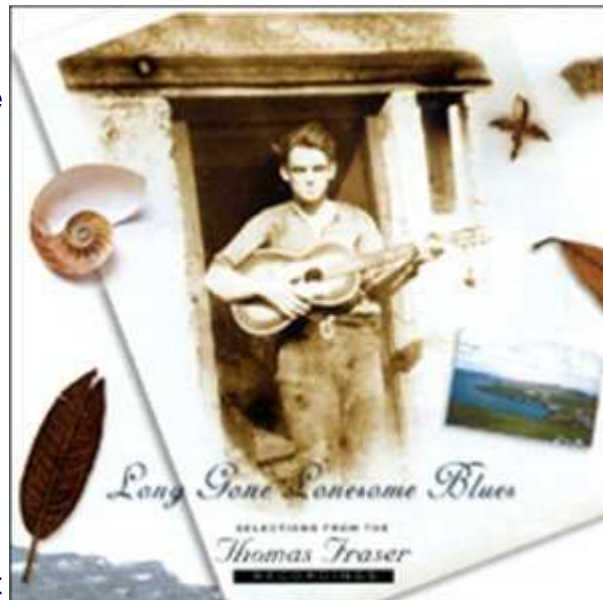
By June of the following year the first handful of orders had come in, thanks to a small ad in Gramophone, a basic website, and possibly a little Google advertising (though my memory is hazy as to exactly when that started). We had taken a two-week holiday with our baby son,

staying about an hour and a half from where we now live in the south-west of France, and I'd kept a mobile phone switched on in the off-chance that someone might have an LP or tape for me to transfer on our return.

That's when I took my first call from the Shetland Isles. If your knowledge of the British Isles is hazy, then let me explain: the Shetlands are a set of remote but inhabited islands in the North Sea, very roughly midway between the northern tip of Scotland and the Norwegian coast. Until fairly recently they were something of an economic backwater of sheep crofters and fishermen, but today it's an economy transformed by off-shore oil, the revenues of which have been pumped back into the local economy and infrastructure. To get there from Bordeaux Airport involves around 9 hours of flights, with changes at London and then either Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen, at which point you enter a tiny little aircraft, with rows of one and two seats and a roof too low to allow a six-footer like me to stand up straight. This usually spends an alarmingly long time being tossed about over an endless near-black sea while a stewardess plies you with exceptionally generous quantities of hard liquor poured without measure from 1.5 litre bottles. Whatever gets you there, I suppose...

All of this I know now, but when I took a call on a French campsite back in 2002 I had only the vaguest knowledge of the islands' general location, and nothing more. The caller in question was putting together some recordings of his late grandfather, a local fisherman and crofter who had recorded a few songs at home with his guitar. Most of these were on half-track open-reel tape, and the caller had bought a Revox machine to transfer these himself to CD, but a handful were recorded onto quarter-track tape. Could I help?

To cut a long story short, I took the job and thus began a thread which runs through the story of Pristine Audio almost since the beginning, and continues to be a remarkable story. After some discussion it was decided that I would carry out all of the tape transfers, and work on remastering the recordings for a CD release, 'Long Gone Lonesome Blues' (right), pencilled in for that November. I think I'm correct in saying that this was the first commercial release of any of my remastering work. I was invited up to the islands for a launch party and tribute concert (which I ended up doing the sound engineering for when it transpired that they didn't have anyone). A good time was had, some good food eaten and excellent malt whisky drunk, and I saw for the only time in my life the Northern Lights, stretching out over a bay on one of the western islands.



The CD was an unexpected success, not just locally but slowly, and by word of mouth, right around the world. For aficionados of country blues in the style of Jimmy Rodgers and others, this was (it turned out) manna from heaven. Somehow this fisherman, with his Grundig reel to reel - purchased when he finally got electricity on his island in 1953, a quarter of a century before they got any kind of a bridge - had laid down musical gold.

A couple of years later a second CD was compiled, and then a third. Visits to the Shetlands became almost annual, and the one-off tribute concert grew, added days to become a festival, started attracting musicians from around the world, and began getting mainstream media attention. Articles in the specialist press were followed by national newspapers, radio and TV. Shortly after the fourth CD someone wrote a play about the life of this musical marvel and toured it with the Scottish National Theatre to high acclaim (I think it's still touring a year on). All around the islands people have dug out long-forgotten reels of tape, each of which has been sent to me for transfer and possible inclusion in future CDs, and the list of recordings grew from dozens to hundreds to thousands. And now this week, some eight years on, I've just completed work on a fifth CD to be launched this November.

From my point of view, each CD has been technically better than the last, and the five discs demonstrate clearly the rapid development of restoration and remastering technology and concepts over the last eight years. CD four was a revelation for the family, as for the first time I was able to tackle it using the XR method. Since then I've remastered over 150 CDs for Pristine Classical using the same techniques, learning and refining as I've gone and always on the look out for new ways of getting the very best out of a recording. Thus the newest remastering builds considerably on what was possible in 2008, and has further astonished and delighted my friends in the far north.

Every CD has been the culmination of all my efforts and experience at the time, coupled with the very best technology then available, and yet each one has been a clear step forward over the previous. I'd like to predict that the sixth, should it materialise in another couple of years' time, will continue this upward trajectory - though, as before, right now I cannot imagine how it possibly could.

Over the years I've done a lot of work for other people and other labels; this is the sole remaining outside project today. I do look forward to seeing what might be possible next time, I'm still amazed at what was possible this time, and I'm just beginning to get that urge to migrate northwards again in November...

Andrew Rose

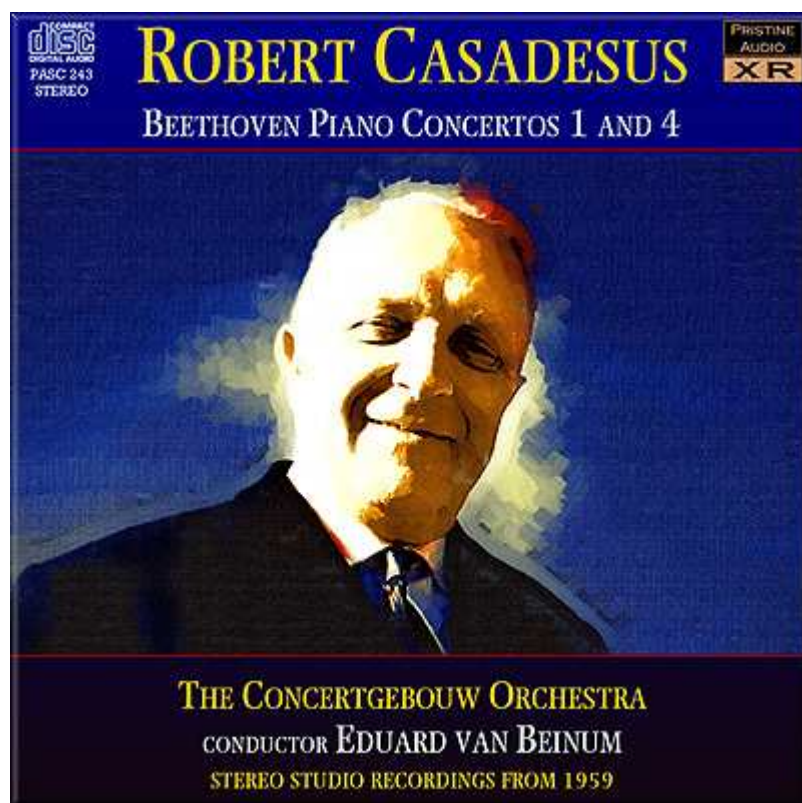
You can find out all about the artist, the story and the music at <http://www.thomasfraser.com>

'Just Call me Lonesome', the fifth Thomas Fraser CD, is due for launch at the 8th Annual

Thomas Fraser Memorial Festival at Hamnavoe Hall, Burra, Shetland on 11th November 2010. Other CDs of music recorded by Thomas Fraser are widely available internationally.

New release today:

[BEETHOVEN Piano Concertos 1 and 4](#) Pristine Audio PASC 243



Robert Casadesus, piano
Concertgebouw Orchestra
conducted by Eduard van Beinum
Recorded 1959 in stereo

Transfers by Andrew Rose from stereo test pressings for Philips LP SABL 118
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2010
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Robert Casadesus

Total duration: 61:48
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The FLAC downloads



Casadesus is excellent in his only recorded Beethoven First
These stereo recordings were the last of van Beinum's illustrious studio career

- **BEETHOVEN** Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Recorded 1st March, 1959

NB. This was Casadesus' only studio recording of this work

- **BEETHOVEN** Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Recorded 2nd March, 1959

NB. This was Casadesus' only stereo studio recording of this work

All cadenzas by Robert Casadesus

Robert Casadesus, piano

The Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam

conductor **Eduard van Beinum**

BEETHOVEN Piano Concertos 1 & 4

Robert Casadesus recorded Beethoven's 1st Piano Concerto only once, and his 4th only twice (and only once in stereo). They just happened to be Eduard van Beinum's final studio recordings - within 6 weeks he was dead of a heart attack whilst conducting his beloved Concertgebouw Orchestra in rehearsal.

So we are lucky that these recordings even exist - and more so because they are so good in every respect, with excellent performances from both soloist and orchestra.

This essential new XR transfer and remastering plugs an otherwise inexplicable gap in the current catalogue.



**Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4,
4th mvt - Rondo: Vivace**

Notes on the recordings:

These two recordings are notable for a number of reasons. They were Eduard van Beinum's final studio recordings – within six weeks he was dead. The recording of the *First Concerto* is the only one Casadesus made, the recording of the *Fourth* is the second of two, and the only one in stereo (he had recorded it in December 1947 with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra,

also for Columbia). They were reissued by Sony Classical on CD in 2002 but already copies are almost impossible to find, except at highly inflated prices – at the time of writing all three copies available through Amazon.com sellers are priced at over \$70.

The disc I worked from was a Philips test pressing, barely played and in near-mint condition. Apart from some very mild (and easily rectified) surface swish at the beginning of side two it was as ideal a source as one could hope for from this era. What it did reveal (and I don't know whether this affected the Sony reissue) was a rather nasty tape dropout in the finale of the first movement, where the left hand channel was rather severely mangled for a second or to. Extensive repair work on this short section has improved things dramatically. XR remastering has lifted a veil from the top end, and I've also been able to reduce residual tape hiss to a considerable extent, especially on the *Fourth Concerto*. Overall they are excellent recordings – of excellent and rare performances from one of the great pianists of the 20th century.

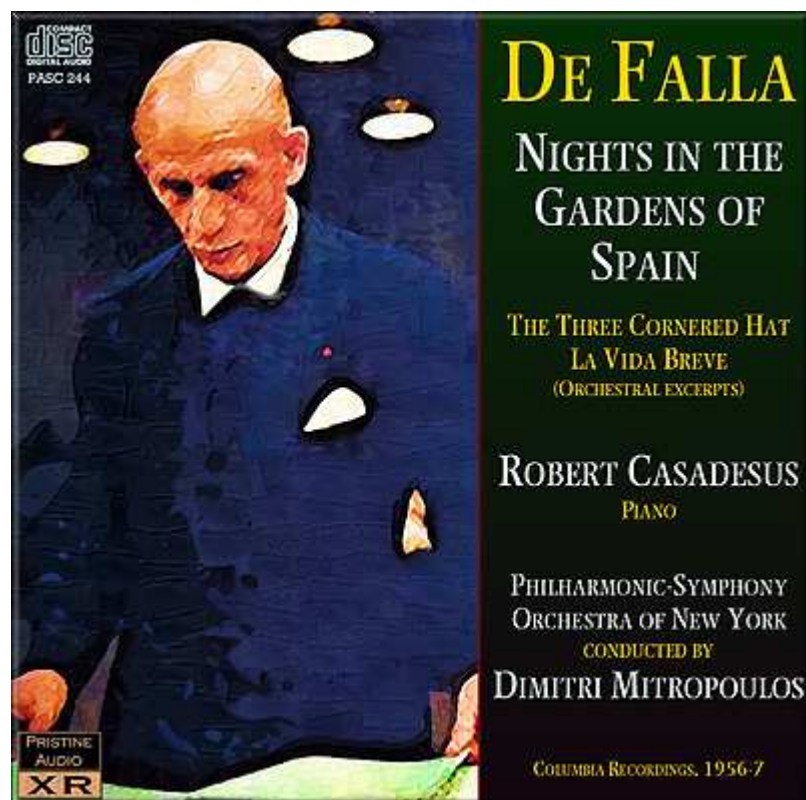
Andrew Rose

Available as **320kbps stereo MP3, 16-bit stereo FLAC, 24-bit stereo FLAC, stereo CD**
or listen on demand with [Pristine Audio Direct Access](#) (PADA)

New release today:

[DE FALLA Nights in the Gardens of Spain](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 244



Robert Casadesus, piano

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York

conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos

Recorded 1956 & 1957

Recorded 2nd November 1956 and 3rd June 1957, Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York

Transfers from Columbia Masterworks ML 5172 by Andrew Rose

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Dimitri Mitropoulos

Total duration: 42:23

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Casadesus' only studio recording of Spanish music
Mitropoulos and the NY Phil masterful in a superb XR remastering

- **DE FALLA** Nights in the Gardens of Spain [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
 - **DE FALLA** Three Dances from 'The Three Cornered Hat' [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
 - **DE FALLA** 'La Vida Breve' - Interlude and Dance [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
- Recorded 2nd November 1956 and 3rd June 1957, Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York Transfers from Issued as Columbia Masterworks ML 5172

Robert Casadesus, piano
The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York
conductor **Dimiti Mitropoulos**

DE FALLA Nights in the Gardens of Spain, et
al

Sticking with Casadesus for our second release of this week, this stunning rendition of Nights in the Gardens of Spain constitutes his entire commercially-recorded canon of Spanish music!

Fortunately we also have Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic, who perform sterling service in justly famous excerpts from other works by Manuel de Falla in these very well-made mid-50s Columbia recordings.

In new XR-remastered transfers from near-mint sources this is an unmissable chance to hear these fine musicians working together to produce literally brilliant results.



**Nights in the Gardens of Spain,
3rd mvt - En los jardines de la Sierra de Córdoba**
(Ambient Stereo version)

Notes on the recordings:

Robert Casadesus isn't particularly well-known for his interpretations of the music of Manuel de Falla. This recording of *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* is the only studio recording he made of any of the Spanish composer's music (a live concert recording made around the same time has also been issued on CD). Indeed, it would appear to be the only recording he ever made of any music by a Spanish composer – as a lover of Spanish music myself this is a great pity, as he is very, very good with what little of it we have! *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* requires exceptional skill from a pianist, and Casadesus passes its various tests with flying colours.

Likewise Mitropoulos doesn't appear to have spent much time recording de Falla over his lengthy career. I have yet to track down a copy of his full discography, but extensive searching reveals very little beyond the present recordings. The source for this release was a near-mint copy of the original Columbia release, sent to Philips as a sample for possible licensing and one of a considerable number of similar discs in the Pristine collection. I've followed the annotation of the Casadesus website which gives two recording dates for this – what exactly was recorded when I have been unable to discover. XR remastering has opened out beautifully what was already a very good, clean recording. The somewhat short programme for this release merely reflects the dearth of suitable material with which to pair it.

Andrew Rose

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New MP3 transfers only at PADA Exclusives

by Dr. John Duffy
in Ambient Stereo

Moura Lympany's 1951 Rachmaninoff Preludes



Moura Lympny

Rachmaninoff

Preludes Op. 3, No 2; Op. 23; Op. 32

**Moura Lympny, piano
rec. 9 & 11 January 1951
West Hampstead Studios,
London**

First issued as Decca LXT2579-80 and London LLP328-29,

Transferred from Everest 3198-3202

"Moura Lympny plays, in my view, superbly; she gives us the music with the pianistic conviction of the person who has written it. Is it splendour, verve, you want?—No. 3 hits it exactly, with rhythmic exactitude never interrupting the flow. Her measure of excellence may be gauged from her convincing handling of the three hackneyed pieces, Nos. 1, 7, and 16. Solo passage work, is luminous (No. 2), range of colour wide (No. 4), serenity and a living peace irradiated (Nos. 5, 8, 11 and 22), large scale playing like that of a powerful man (what wrists she must have!) (Nos. 6, 10, 13, 17, 21, and 24). It would not be more difficult to continue writing in a complimentary vein than it is to listen to her playing."

- Excerpt from **Review**,

The Gramophone, July 1951.

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

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Pick of the reviews

MusicWeb International

RECORDING OF THE MONTH - "It's good to have these classic and interpretatively superb recordings of one of Bach's most compelling organ works available. The transfer quality is almost as satisfying as the performance."



Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Orgel-Büchlein

Chorale Preludes Nos 1-45, BWV 599-644 [83:06] *

Canonic Variations on 'Von Himmel hoch, da komm ich her', BWV 769a [11:05] **

Meine Seele erhabt den Herren (Magnificat), BWV 733 [4:20] **

Helmut Walcha (organ)

rec. Schnitger Organ, Cappel, Germany. ADD: June 1950, September 1952, *, 9, 20-21

June 1950 **

PRISTINE AUDIO [PAKM 036](#) [52:06 + 46:03]

Helmut Walcha's (1907-1991) recordings of the Bach organ repertoire are amongst the most celebrated of the twentieth century for their magnificence, eloquence and perception. Walcha recorded more or less the entire repertoire twice, for DG ... in mono from 1947 to 1952 and again in stereo between 1956 and 1971. It is the former, the mono series on the splendid Schnitger Organ in the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Cappel (the CD and Pristine Audio's website are inconsistent with the town's spelling) in Lower Saxony, which has been expertly transferred to two CDs by Andrew Rose of Pristine Audio.

In fact, the lively, resonant and full sound is likely to be the first thing you notice. It's quite remarkable. True, there are moments of slight wow and flutter. But they really are very, very slight. There are no other 'artefacts', distortion or interference with our enjoyment of the music.

The Orgel-Büchlein, or Little Organ Book, was a product of Bach's years at the court in Weimar (1708-1714). Originally there were to have been 164 chorale preludes suited to all times of the liturgical year. Although there are traces of the 47th, only 46 were ever completed. The Orgel-Büchlein should be considered a collection in its own right of music for the instrument (chorale preludes are small-scale works based on chorale melodies), music for church services with implied religious affirmation, an exploration of compositional techniques, and even a teaching aid. CD 1 contains the first 28 chorale preludes of the Orgel-Büchlein, that is BWV 599 to 626; CD 2 the last 18, BWV 627 to 644. The three versions of *Christ ist erstanden*, BWV 627 are recorded.

Walcha's understanding of Bach's purpose is evident in every note and bar. He plays with a dignity and detachment that eschew romantic overlay or intonation. That's not to say that the performances lack colour. They do not. His tempi and phrasing, for example, are full of meaning. Such a number as *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 625 [CD.1 tr.27], for example, is typical of the immense emotion (in this case a weighty and inescapable pain) which Walcha packs into less than a minute and a half ... several of the chorale preludes in the Orgel-Büchlein last under a minute, many under two and few are longer than three.

It's thus necessary for a sensitive interpreter to understand the overall direction, and the

traditions of Baroque provincial organ composition for that matter, in which Bach was working. The chorale preludes in the Orgel-Büchlein will not sound well if treated as an unrelated series of one-offs. Continuity, which is not the same as uniformity, is important. It's Walcha's immense experience of Bach and the organ as well as great insight into the religious purpose behind the Orgel-Büchlein that make these such valuable interpretations. And the fact that this understanding leads to a degree of variety whereby the particular import and impact of each prelude is fully communicated such that each is a delight on its own - despite forming part of a whole.

In a way this comes - paradoxically - from a refusal by Walcha to 'editorialise', to impose his own conception on Bach's music. When Bach was subdued (as in *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*, BWV 614 [CD.1 tr.16], for example), Walcha is subdued; when exuberant (as in *In Dir ist Freude*, BWV 615, the very next prelude), Walcha is exuberant. This is classic and ultimately very satisfying playing.

No standalone CDs of Walcha's recordings of the Orgel-Büchlein alone seem to be available. Even if they were, these two Pristine Audio CDs retail for a price less than what they would cost. Even then, it's the stately and perceptive interpretation that truly recommends these recordings. When you consider the excellent sound quality, they're hard to resist.

Mark Sealey

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Andrew Rose
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