

Subject: [NEWS] PRISTINE CLASSICAL 26th November 2010: Furtwängler conducts Bruckner's Sixth; Mengelberg conducts Beethoven's Ninth
From: Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>
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Pristine News: Friday 26th November, 2010



Opening page of Beethoven's 9th Symphony manuscript

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Mengelberg conducts Beethoven's and Brahms's First Symphonies - Fanfare

"Altogether exceptional, and I eagerly anticipate further Pristine releases of Mengelberg's radio recordings."

Beecham's classic 1938 Magic Flute - Fanfare

'If you truly love this recording, I believe the difference is significant enough to warrant a replacement.'

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Editorial - A Return to Analogue?

It sometimes strikes me that perhaps I'm a little young for this historic remastering business. I'll reach the grand old age of 42 next Tuesday, which makes me still almost a decade younger than the public domain recordings that European law allows me to tackle in my remastering studio, and almost the same number of years younger than the last British 78s.

But I did grow up in the era of analogue audio, and I do remember my childish thoughts nearly echoing a sentiment expressed by early reviewers of LPs in 1950 – in my five-year-old mind a particularly up-tempo song by Lonnie Donegan could surely only exist on a 78 because it needed to go so fast to keep up with the music; in the reviewers' misunderstanding, the slow speed of an LP could surely not carry with it the full weight of a symphony orchestra as a 78 could. Both were of course wrong, as both soon discovered.

But I'm glad I grew up in an era where record players still had 78 rpm settings and

pile of old shellac was routinely offered to keep children amused, when the compact cassette was the new thing, when your week's pocket money might just buy you a 7-inch 45rpm hit single, and when digital recordings first appeared on Dad's classical LPs, whatever digital was.

My years at school and university passed as the beginnings of the move to digital were taking place. I had my first CDs some years before I had my own CD player; the music studios at City University boasted two big multitrack recorders, using 1-inch tape for 8-track and 2-inch tape for 16-track recording – with the finished product being mixed down to stereo digital tape, either on Sony F1 PCM Betamax video tapes, or the new young pretender, the DAT tape (again some psychology: the new medium was small, which made a lot of people very suspicious of it).

My years at the BBC spanned the full-scale adoption of digital recording and editing, but began with tape and razor-blade editing – certainly the hard way to take the clicks out of a recording, but not impossible at 15 inches per second. Today I retain two record decks in the studio, alongside a pair of open-reel tape recorders, a Nakamichi tape deck, and a store room full of arcane machinery designed to replay all sorts of fly-by-night recording formats – though I've still yet to find a use for Mike Oldfield's Sony Elcasette recorder or Hammond Innes's old tape dictation machine.

But what of the younger generation? One of the wonderful group of musicians I had the pleasure of meeting, hearing and playing with a couple of weeks ago at a music festival in the remote Shetland Islands was one Chris Scruggs (*right*). Fans of country and bluegrass music may recognise the name – his grandfather was country banjo legend Earl Scruggs. Musical connections don't end there – his mother, Gail Davies, was a major country singing star in her own right, and became the first female country music producer. According to his biography, Chris grew up in Nashville and on “a Silver Eagle tour bus” – and crucially for this story, was born in 1982 - the year the CD was launched and brought digital audio home to the masses.



Chris's music today is a curiously infectious mixture of the old and the new – his own songs seem to blend elements of John Lennon, Buddy Holly, Johnny Cash (and no doubt countless others of whom I'm ignorant) and his own undoubted musical skill and song-writing talent. But despite – or perhaps as a result of – growing up in the digital era, he seems to want to hanker back to an earlier age, tracking down studios for his most recent album where he too could record on analogue multi-track tape, for example.

With such musical heritage running through his veins, coupled with an encyclopaedic knowledge of his genre both musically and technically, as well as a repertoire which includes a lot of seriously old country songs, it's perhaps no surprise that Chris has looked for whatever it is that he finds present in analogue tape and lacking in pure digital sound. However, even I was surprised when he expressed his desire to issue his next record album as just that – an old-fashioned book-like album of 78rpm records. One has to wonder just quite how many people would be able to play the discs (outside of the recipients of this e-mail, of course!) -

but I sense this is more about the aesthetic, a response to the disappearance altogether of a tangible product to be replaced by bits and bytes on PCs, Macs and iPods. One could imagine an album of 78s being sold with a complimentary download of the album in full CD quality, perhaps – I don't think he's thinking about moving on to 78s for any superior sound reasons, however fast or loud he might play!

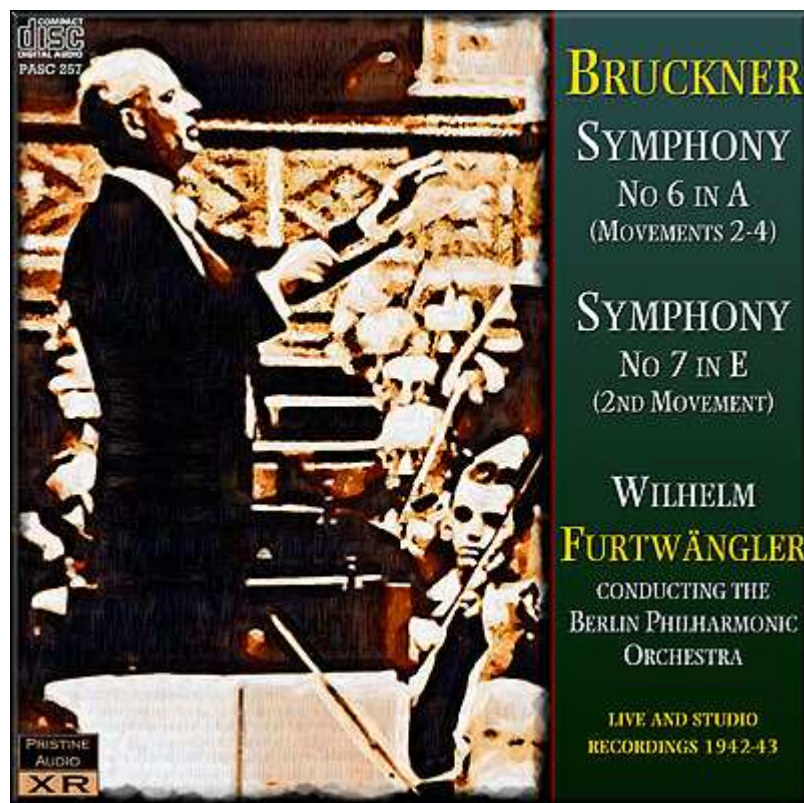
But I do wonder how many producers of audio-grade shellac he's likely to find in the 21st century. Could be tricky, Chris...

Andrew Rose

New release today:

[BRUCKNER Symphony No 6](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 257



Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
conductor **Wilhelm Furtwängler**
Recorded Berlin, 1943 and 1942

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, November 2010
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Furtwängler

Total duration: 59:33
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For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



- **BRUCKNER** Symphony No. 6 in A major, WAB106 - Mvts 2-4 only

(1881 Version Ed. Robert Haas [1935]) [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Recorded Alte Philharmonie, Berlin, 13-16 November, 1943

- **BRUCKNER** Symphony No. 7 in E major, WAB107 - Mvt 2 only

(1881 Version Ed. Robert Haas [1935]) [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Recorded Alte Philharmonie, Berlin, 1 April, 1942

Issued as Telefunken SK 3230-32

Matrix numbers 026378-83

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

conductor **Wilhelm Furtwängler**

BRUCKNER Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7

Despite the fact that the first movement of Furtwängler's only recorded Bruckner Six has been lost, many aficionados still regard what remains of his 1943 concert performance in Berlin to be perhaps the finest ever recorded. We think this new remastering is also the finest it's ever sounded.

We've coupled it with another truly historic Furtwängler fragment - his only commercial Bruckner recording. The second movement of the Seventh Symphony was, at the time, the most popular piece of Bruckner, and in April 1942 Furtwängler's solemn reading of it found favour at the highest levels in wartime Germany.

Together these make for a fascinating pairing, unusually musically satisfying despite their incomplete nature.



Symphony No 6 in A - Second movement

Adagio. Sehr feierlich

(Ambient Stereo version)

Notes on the transfers:

It is most unfortunate that no recording of the first movement of Furtwängler's performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 6 survives, as for many aficionados, what remains of it in the second, third and fourth movements add up to one of the greatest performances ever captured for posterity. As with many of Furtwängler's finest live wartime recordings, the symphony was taped for radio rebroadcast. These tapes went east after the fall of the Nazi regime at the end of the war, only to re-emerge some years later on Russian Melodiya LP releases. It is a reasonable assumption that a tape of the missing movement once existed - but alas it has never been found and must be assumed permanently lost or destroyed.

It seemed a reasonable idea to group this incomplete recording with another - Furtwängler's only studio recording of music by Bruckner, made the previous year for release on Telefunken 78s. The recording, through no fault either of conductor or composer, has a certain notoriety by association - the movement was a particular favourite of Hitler's, and it was this recording that was broadcast on German radio following his death in 1945.

From a restorer's point of view, the Sixth has a little more going for it than the Seventh, thanks to the medium in which it has been preserved. Although magnetic tape was still very much in its infancy in the early 1940s, and microphones of the era were rather inadequate for the sonic opportunities it offered, it still managed to capture and hold a wider frequency and dynamic range than the wartime Telefunken shellac discs, allowing for a brighter overall sound - though it is interesting to hear subtle differences in sound quality between the movements of the 6th, raising possible questions about precisely when each was recorded.

Andrew Rose

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

New release today:

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9

Pristine Audio PASC 258



To van der Sluys, soprano
Suze Luger, alto
Louis van Tulder, tenor
Willem Ravelli, baritone
Amsterdam Toonkunst Chorus
Royal Oratorio Society
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
conductor Willem Mengelberg
Recorded live in 1940, Amsterdam

For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, October-November 2010
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Willem Mengelberg at the Concertgebouw

Total duration: 68:47
©2010 Pristine Audio



The FLAC downloads:



- **BEETHOVEN:** [Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 "Choral"](#) [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Concert of 2nd May, 1940

To van der Sluys, soprano
Suze Luger, alto
Louis van Tulder, tenor
Willem Ravelli, baritone
Amsterdam Toonkunst Chorus
Royal Oratorio Society
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
conductor Willem Mengelberg

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9

We pick up our series of Mengelberg's 1940 Beethoven symphonies with this, the penultimate release, his magnificent Choral 9th of May 2nd. Again we've worked hard on the sound in order to live up to rave reviews of our previous issues:

"The sound does indeed leap from the speakers with a visceral, colorful tangibility for surpassing any previous remasterings I've heard. So if you have these performances in previous incarnations and are wondering if the new purchase is warranted, the answer is an emphatic yes...

...Altogether exceptional, and I eagerly anticipate further Pristine releases of Mengelberg's radio recordings."

- Boyd Pomeroy, Fanfare, Nov/Dec 2010 ([PASC221 Beethoven 1/Brahms 1](#))



BEETHOVEN Symphony No 9

1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso

(Ambient Stereo version)

Notes on the recordings:

Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra were recorded on a number of occasions by AVRO using high quality glass acetate discs, which produced significantly better results than those normally obtained by shellac discs of the era, with a much wider dynamic and frequency range than was usual at the time. Many of Mengelberg's AVRO recordings have long been available on LP and, later, CD, and their sonic advantages have been immediately clear to listeners for decades.

However, using standard flat replay systems to produce those LPs and CDs has only told perhaps half of the story - the recordings gently rolled off both higher and lower frequencies. However, these essential details are often still intact, buried in the recordings as if awaiting a remastering method capable of extracting them and restoring their original levels.

This is, of course, precisely what Pristine's XR remastering system excels at, and I've been able to bring out a pleasing amount of detail in the high treble, often extending right up to near 20kHz. At times this detail is astonishingly clean and clear, but elsewhere it is marred by a degree of hiss, requiring a delicate balance to be struck between the two.

Meanwhile the bottom end has seen considerable improvement, with a much fuller and richer sound than originally heard in the flat transfers. However much of the very lowest bass, below 100Hz, has been very poorly preserved where it exists at all, and these frequencies caused considerable problems in the restoration process. Indeed, much of what was present at these frequencies turned out to be rogue tones derived from interference at higher frequencies and had to be removed, along with a variety of unwanted bumps and thumps.

I was also required to carry out some judicious editing in the opening movement, where a small fragment of music was missing and a skip could be heard on my source discs which appeared to originate from the acetate masters. Fortunately I've been able to make a seamless repair by dropping in material from a repeated phrase, leaving the join hopefully undetectable.

Andrew Rose

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FLAC, Mono & Ambient Stereo CD**
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by Dr. John Duffy

in Ambient Stereo

Horowitz's legendary 1941 live
Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto



Vladimir Horowitz

Rachmaninoff

Piano Concerto No. 3
in D minor, Op 30

Vladimir Horowitz, *piano*
New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra
John Barbirolli, *conductor*

Off-air recording, live from Carnegie Hall, New York,
4th May 1941

Horowitz: [wiki](#)

Barbirolli: [wiki](#)

Rach PC3: [wiki](#)

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

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Pick of the reviews

Fanfare Magazine

'Altogether exceptional, and I eagerly anticipate further Pristine releases of Mengelberg's radio recordings.'



BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 1. BRAHMS Symphony No. 1

**Willem Mengelberg, cond;
Concertgebouw O**

Pristine Audio [PASC 221](#), 73:28

These performances have been previously available on other labels, often with confusingly different dates attributed: e.g., the Beethoven on Music & Arts, dated 4/14/1940; the Brahms on Lys, dated 12/13/1940. But they're certainly the same performances, easily verifiable by a quick spot-check of details. The AVRO radio recordings were very good for their time, and the question is how these new Pristine transfers measure up to previous releases. The appetite is whetted by Andrew Rose's high claims for his XR remastering's yielding "extended sections ... where we've been able to present a true full-frequency, 20–20,000 Hz frequency response, coupled with a dynamic range more befitting of a 1960s or 1970s analog recording—sound quality which is quite astonishing for its age. ... One will rarely get closer to hearing a 1940 concert than this." By and large, Rose's claims are justified: The sound does indeed leap from the speakers with a visceral, colorful tangibility far surpassing any previous remasterings I've heard. So if you have these performances in previous incarnations and are wondering if the new purchase is warranted, the answer is an emphatic yes.

The performances are vintage Mengelberg: a fiery, Classical approach that was decades ahead of its time in its radically light, pungent textures, hand-in-hand with a penchant for extremes of tempo modification that have earned him (wrongly, I think) his reputation for ultra-romantic subjectivity. The Beethoven is one of the most characterful performances of this symphony I've ever heard, dispatched with rare brio and often a Rossini-like bubble, a miracle of rhythmic pointing and nuanced subtlety; dynamics are differentiated with fine-tuned precision (e.g., the light, airy single forte at bars 69 ff. in the first movement—compare Toscanini's brutal assault here). Contrary to received wisdom, Mengelberg's tempo flexibility was often at the service of articulating formal structure rather than subjective expression. Consider, for example, the purely musical rationale for his various tempo modifications in the first-movement exposition: to accentuate the chromatic drama at bars 17–19, heighten the form-defining rhetorical gestures at bars 69 ff., and dramatize the modal contrast at bars 77 ff. (Interestingly, his 1930 studio recording with the NYPO [Biddulph] is much smoother, with less pronounced tempo manipulation.) There is an almost incredible level of attention to detail (in the closing-section material of the Andante, hear how persuasively he shapes the delicate violin triplets [bars 54 ff.] through subtly differentiated accents and note-lengths); yet always with the larger purpose in mind (e.g., in the Menuetto, the immensely powerful effect of long, supple phrasing in a

single breath). Unusually for its time, the outer-movement repeats are both observed (though not in the Andante).

Comparison with two live NBC versions from the previous year is instructive: Toscanini (Music & Arts or Naxos) is brightly lit and hard-driven, with little of Mengelberg's subtlety; Walter, on the other hand (Arbiter), intriguingly comes across as a "missing link" between the Italian and the Dutchman, marrying the bright, highly charged NBC sound to a surprising degree of tempo flexibility.

In the Brahms, the first-movement introduction has enormous plasticity of ebb and flow at an uncommonly brisk tempo for its time (like Stokowski and Weingartner, he didn't take un poco sostenuto to mean slow). The Allegro is characterized by a fanatical precision and rigor: Mengelberg invests the scherzando main theme with a "swung" rhythmic lift in common with other conductors—Walter (VPO, 1937/Opus Kura), Weingartner (LSO, 1939/EMI or Centaur), and Abendroth (BPO, 1941/Tahra); but none of these approach Mengelberg's ferocious bite. Projection of phrase structure is set in high relief by an "organ stop" edge to the wind choirs (Stokowski achieves a similar sculpted clarity in his Philadelphia version of 1936, available on Andante). In the exposition, the variation in tempo between primary and secondary material is extreme, the latter slowing down to near-immobility in the horn/clarinet dialogue, bars 149 ff. (interesting to hear the young Karajan emulating the Concertgebouw/Mengelberg tradition of tempo modification in his 1943 version with the orchestra [DG Collector's Edition]—but not very successfully, with surprisingly flaccid orchestral response).

The Andante is taken very moderately (at 10: 15, a halfway house between the speedy Toscanini at 8:39 [NBC, 1940/Music & Arts] and the very slow Walter at 12:57), and with an unusually solemn, sacramental quality. The autumnal third movement has more tension and point than usual, the B-Major Trio taken with a dashing, clipped precision that is quite unlike any other conductor. The finale is notable for its obsessive clarity—hear the extraordinarily sharp focus of the hocket-like passage for divided violins in the introduction (bars 24 ff.); the punctilious, indeed rather didactic, phrase articulation in the main theme; or the climax at bars 279 ff., delivered with an overwhelming ferocity and whiplash precision. But equally remarkable is its expressive spontaneity, from the amazingly vocal horn solo in the introduction to the soloistically singing massed strings in the second group. Compared to the first movement, the tempo range is surprisingly narrow.

Altogether exceptional, and I eagerly anticipate further Pristine releases of Mengelberg's radio recordings.

Boyd Pomeroy

[Fanfare Magazine](#)

'If you truly love this recording, I believe the difference is significant enough to warrant a replacement.'



MOZART Die Zauberflöte

Thomas Beecham, cond;



Helge Roswaenge (Tamino); Tiana Lemnitz (Pamina); Gerhard Hüsch (Papageno); Erna Berger (Queen of the Night); Favres Solisten Vereinigung; Berlin PO

Pristine Audio [PACO 045](#), 2 CDs: 129:56

Any serious Fanfare readers will not need me to tell them about the classic status of this recording, made in Berlin in 1937 and 1938. It omits all of the spoken dialogue, so it lacks the feel of a theatrical event and takes on the character of a concert. But what a concert! Thomas Beecham's conducting is propulsive, warmly inflected, dramatic, and surprisingly stylish for its time. (Clearly it is not HIP-influenced, but neither is it bloated.) The cast is just about as good as it got in the 1930s. This recording has been available in some form virtually without interruption since its initial release and is rightly considered one of the great Mozart opera recordings of the 20th century.

The issue for discussion here is Pristine's transfer—and the short answer is that it seems to me a significant improvement over previous ones. I have the recording on Seraphim LPs, EMI's "Great Recordings of the Century" CD series, and on Naxos. The latter has been the standard for me, the transfer being done by Mark Obert-Thorn.

Andrew Rose is responsible for Pristine's edition, and a direct A-B comparison with all of the above made clear that Pristine's is the most satisfying. The orchestral and choral sound is richer, and the voices more fully colored, than even on the Naxos edition. If you truly love this recording, I believe the difference is significant enough to warrant a replacement. As is always the case, Pristine releases are available as CDs or downloads, from their Web site.

Henry Fogel

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Andrew Rose
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