

Subject: PRISTINE NEWS 3rd September, 2010: Stokowski's 1958 Chicago debut

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Pristine News: Friday 3rd September, 2010



Leopold Stokowski

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"...these are exciting performances and see Karajan weaving a little of his magic with an orchestra which is known for not taking any prisoners..."

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Editorial - Tales of the Unexpected

The onward march of what some online retailers like to call intangible goods – downloads of items which may once have been actual hard products but are now a chunk of computer data – seems unstoppable. In little over five years the music download has completely replaced any kind of hard 'product' for millions of people around the world. The modern teenager probably regards the CD as something suspicious, a rather pointless bulky antique of a bygone age, barely more practical than an 'album' of 78rpm discs.

Meanwhile the magazine and newspaper publishing industry is surely pinning its collective hopes on the success of the Apple iPad and its increasing numbers of imitators. Of course, Apple didn't actually invent the tablet computer; as before they used a winning combination of excellent design nous and astoundingly successful marketing to make it almost seem as if they had. And, just as with the iPod before it (far from being the first small, portable MP3 player), they've put a package together which integrates as never before and looks to be a winner, just as soon as someone figures out quite what an iPad is really there for.

It can therefore be no coincidence that, after the initial media frenzy began to subside, another online giant upped their own public relations game – Amazon's release of a newly upgraded, down-priced version of their electronic book device, the Kindle, coinciding with their happy discovery that more books were being bought as Kindle downloads in the US than were being bought in traditional, hardback printed paper format. One may raise an eyebrow at the precise figures and how they were obtained with such perfect timing, but the fact remains that with much less fanfare and visibility than the iPod has had, Amazon and its Kindle have quietly begun the process of remodelling perhaps a far

more conservative and certainly much older marketplace: books. Whilst this is likely to be a slower, more drawn out affair than the rush to the iPod, driven as it tends to be in the music industry by the teen market, ultimately the same economic pressures are likely to come to bear on the publishing industry and a gradual decline in 'hard' books is likely to characterise the coming years.

I must admit to being tempted by Amazon's device – but then the idea of paying out \$139 to get one shipped over from the States before even seeing it in action or having anything to read on it was enough to put me off. My trusty Netbook (on which I'm currently writing and listening to Debussy, sitting out in the warm afternoon air in our open-sided barn) is my electronic 'toy' purchase for this year, at least as far as my wife I concerned! As a result I've tended to steer away from the heavy advertising for the Kindle that's plastered all over Amazon's website right now.

But then, earlier this week, I got somewhat caught up in the media frenzy in the UK surrounding the publication of Tony Blair's political memoirs. I'd met Blair on a couple of occasions when I was working at the BBC: once when he was a young, rather over-fragranced shadow Home Secretary, and then later at an international political summit in Florence when he was Prime Minister. My work had also taken me to numerous party conferences during his term in office, as well as giving me access to all sorts of people who "moved and shook" during the Blair years. Of course I wanted to read the book! But how? It had been a typically stage-managed launch with oodles of hype and media coverage, and no doubt a copy would have been easily purchased had I still been in England, but it came as little surprise to find that here in the rural south-west of France there was little retail interest to be discerned in this particular memoir.

Of course I could order the book online and wait for it to be delivered – with its huge and efficient infrastructure a copy would surely arrive in a very few days if ordered from Amazon. I went to see how much the book cost and whether it was already available only an hour or two after the official launch – and was surprised to find that it was immediately also being offered as a Kindle download. If only I had a Kindle of my own, I thought – this would certainly have been an immediate impulse purchase!

Then I noticed something I'd not spotted before: Amazon were offering Kindle-book-reader software I could download for free to my PC (it's also available for a wide variety of other platforms, including the Mac, iPhone, iPad, iEverything...). With a little excitement starting to build I clicked, downloaded and installed the free Kindle reader onto my PC, hoping it might come with a book to test it with before I started spending real money.

Alas, no – but then I looked at the book listings at Amazon and realised they had a number of out-of-copyright books there which could be downloaded for free. One *Sherlock Holmes* and one *Alice In Wonderland* download (the first two in the list, in case you're wondering!) and I was convinced. The system worked well as did the reading experience – text

could be resized to suit, as could page width, colour, brightness and so on. A number of other features seem good too – the way it remembers where you are up to; the ability to annotate; the synchronisation of this between PCs (or, I suppose, Kindles) so you can read on an office machine and pick up where you leave off on a laptop or Netbook.

So a few minutes after beginning my investigation I took the plunge and bought the Blair e-book. By the end of the day I was thoroughly engrossed, and any worries about the computer screen creating an electronic barrier between me and the text had evaporated. It really worked, and in many ways is ideal when you live a very long way away from a book store which offers content in your own language - just as the MP3 or FLAC download compensates for a complete lack of record shops anywhere near here that sell anything I'd actually like to hear. I quickly snapped up a novel by Isabel Allende that I'd been looking forward to for some weeks to add to my meagre electronic book library...

Then this morning, after completing the update of our online PDF catalogue, my mind began to wander. Just how easy is it to convert documents into Kindle 'books'? And what else might be out there beyond Amazon? It turns out that the answer to the first question is 'pretty straightforward, really', and to the latter is 'a huge amount of classic literature for free'. The venerable Project Gutenberg has been busy converting its huge library of out-of-copyright books into the Kindle-readable .mobi format, and a simple listing of titles seems to stretch to more pages on my Kindle reader software than Tony Blair's 700-page tome in its entirety.

And so Pristine Classical has now added a .mobi – i.e. Kindle – version of our recordings catalogue to our website. It's something of a rough and ready document that could probably use some decent reformatting, but it's there, and in our very little way we've become a further part of the e-publishing world. The fact that the catalogue is updated on a weekly basis means it's never been practical to prepare it for print – but perhaps in the brave new world of eBooks this will never be necessary.

Of course there are downsides to all this electronic book revolution; many of the books I read are passed on from or to someone else, usually with a strong recommendation to get stuck in at the earliest opportunity – Amazon's DRM system aims to stop you sharing your digital books, though of course non-protected files from elsewhere can be easily e-mailed or otherwise sent to a friend with the appropriate means of reading them; meanwhile the paperback book, in particular, remains a masterpiece of durability and portability, and never runs out of batteries.

But I can see the strong possibility that a good chunk of my future reading will take place, one way or another, on some kind of electronic screen rather than from paper-and-ink books. There is perhaps only one special reading location where right now this seems unlikely, one small room in the house which gets regular but brief, solitary visits – one where a book of short, amusing reads is a valuable companion. And it's here where my well-thumbed copy of Roald Dahl's *Tales of the Unexpected* is unlikely to be replaced by a digital edition in the

foreseeable future...

Andrew Rose

New release today:

[STOKOWSKI Chicago Debut Concerts, January 1958](#)

Pristine Audio PASC 242



Chicago Symphony Orchestra
conducted by **Leopold Stokowski**

Recorded 1958

Transfers from the collections of Edward Johnson and John Kelly

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, August-September 2010

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Leopold Stokowski

Total duration: 2hr 37:58

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- **BACH** Chorale Preludes [[notes](#) / [scores](#)]
Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 599
Komm, susser Tod, BWV 478
Mein Jesu! was vor Seelenweh, BWV 487
Wir glauben all' an einen Gott, BWV 437
- **Boleslaw SZABELSKI** – Toccata (1938) [[notes](#)]
- **SHOSTAKOVICH** Prelude in E flat minor, 'Zoya', Op. 34, No. 14 (orch. Stokowski) [[notes](#)]
- **PROKOFIEV** Romeo and Juliet Suite [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
Suite No. 1, Op. 64bis: VI. Romeo and Juliet
Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter: VI. Dance of the Antilles Girls
Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter: VII. Romeo at the Grave of Juliet
- **TCHAIKOVSKY** Swan Lake Suite [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
 1. Act 1 Introduction - Moderato assai
 2. Act 1 No. 5 - Pas de deux
 3. Act 2, No. 10 - Scène
 4. Act 2, No. 13 - Danse des Cynges
 5. Act 3, No 20a - Danse Russe
 6. Act 3 No. 21 - Danse Espagnole
 7. Act 4, No. 27 - Danse des petits cygnes
 8. Act 4, No. 29 - Finale
- **BRAHMS** Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73 [[notes](#) / [score](#)]
- **GLIERE** Symphony No. 3 In B minor, Op. 42, "Il'ya Muromets" [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Live concert recordings from Orchestra Hall, Chicago:

2nd January 1958 - Bach, Brahms, Szabelski

9th January 1958 - Shostakovich, Glière, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

conductor **Leopold Stokowski**

STOKOWSKI Chicago Debut Concerts, January 1958

Two symphonies, two suites, something old,
something new, the well-known and the unknown, all
with the unmistakable touch of the great Leopold
Stokowski firmly planted upon them...

Astonishingly Stokowski, whose professional musical
career had begun back in 1905, was 75 years old

when he finally took to the podium at Chicago's Orchestra Hall to face its Symphony Orchestra for the first time ever - during the next decade he returned as guest conductor to the Windy City over six seasons.

This new XR transfer offers for the first time the music played at their first two concerts together - a truly historic moment for both parties!



**Brahms Symphony No. 2,
2nd mvt - Adagio non troppo**
(Ambient Stereo version)

Notes on the recordings:

Leopold Stokowski had for several decades been one of the world's most well-known and respected conductors when, on 2nd January 1958, he stepped onto the podium at Chicago's Orchestra Hall to conduct the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the first time as its guest conductor. Between 1958 and 1968 he was to appear with the orchestra in six seasons of concerts; this release brings out for the first time what has been preserved from his debut concerts at the beginning of 1958.

The recordings presented here are not, it would appear, actual live broadcasts from Chicago, but were taken from rebroadcasts shortly later from a New York radio station - despite the announcer's assertions that they are live in Orchestra Hall, these were probably voice-overs from the New York radio studio. The rebroadcasts omitted music by Wagner which had formed the bulk of the second part of the first concert, following the *Toccata* of the little-known Polish composer, Boleslaw Szabelski.

The first half of that opening concert (which was repeated on 3rd January) consisted of traditional fare - Stokowski's orchestrations of Bach's *Chorale Preludes* and the Brahms symphony. The second programme, again repeated over two concerts, was an all-Russian affair, beginning with the Shostakovich and Glière and continuing after the interval with the Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky suites.

As usual, the orchestra and audience got full value for money from Stokowski. In addition to his own orchestrations of the Bach, he was also responsible for the orchestration of Shostakovich's *Prelude in E flat minor* very shortly after its composition. The composer himself later orchestrated the piece for a 1944 film entitled *Zoya*, a name which has stuck to a degree to the prelude - however it is, of course, the conductor's orchestration we hear in this concert.

The selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* are somewhat skirted over by the announcer, as in fact they derive not from a single suite but from both the first and second suites. Meanwhile Stokowski has again gone his own way with his *Swan Lake Suite*, which does not correspond to the published suite. Indeed it took a certain amount of musical detective work to identify

precisely which parts of Tchaikovsky's music had been used for some of the sections presented here.

Finally, it has been suggested that without Stokowski's efforts, Glière's mighty *3rd Symphony* may well have been entirely forgotten. The full work runs to a sprawling 75 minutes or longer - by skilful editing, Stokowski reduced it to something more manageable and digestible and was thus able to programme it on several occasions and thus keep it alive.

Technically the sound quality of the recordings here is generally quite good to excellent, although there are some uneven areas. I have had to play with the running orders in order to fit all of the surviving material onto two discs, and have corrected an error by the announcer, who mistakenly introduced Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* as Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* - he himself had corrected this in the back-announcement to the piece.

Andrew Rose

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Moura Lympany, piano
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Karajan in New York - Vol.1

Ludwig van **BEETHOVEN** (1770 – 1827)

Symphony No.9 in D minor, op.125 (1824) [22:08]

Leontyne Price (soprano), Maureen Forrester (alto), Leopold Simoneau (tenor), Norman Scott (bass), Westminster Choir (director: Warren Martin), New York Philharmonic Orchestra/Herbert von Karajan
rec. 22 November 1958, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, ADD
PRISTINE AUDIO PASC 222 [66:35]

Karajan in New York - Vol.2

Anton von **WEBER** (1783 – 1845)

Fünf Sätze, op.5 (1909) [10:02]

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1757 – 1781)

Symphony No.41 in C, Jupiter, K551 (1788) [27:50]

Ludwig van **BEETHOVEN** (1770 – 1827)

Symphony No.1 in C, op.21 (1800) [22:08]

New York Philharmonic Orchestra/Herbert von Karajan
rec. 15 November 1958 (Mozart and Webern) and 22 November 1958 (Beethoven), Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, ADD
PRISTINE AUDIO PASC 224 [63:05]

The Complete Series:

[Karajan in NY Vol. 1: Beethoven 9th](#)

[Karajan in NY Vol. 2: Webern, Mozart 41st, Beethoven 1st](#)

[Karajan in NY Vol. 3: Strauss Ein Heldenleben](#)

[Karajan in Hollywood](#)

Karajan meets Murder Incorporated! What a meeting of minds and sensibilities! Hardly had Leonard Bernstein taken the helm in New York than along comes this European fellow to conduct it in Viennese classics – to be honest, the Webern hadn't yet become a classic, this was only 13 years after his death and he was still seen as a "difficult" composer. Karajan is totally at home in this repertoire, but he fails to bring to his performances an old world charm.

As can be expected these are, what we now see as, old fashioned. Mozart suffers the most with an orchestra which is far too big, compared to what we are now used to – although it must be said that the Webern Movements - Pristine calls the work Five Pieces, which would be Fünf Stücke, but the correct title is Fünf Sätze, Five Movements - gain in strength and weight for the use of a large string body. Throughout there is the heavy hand of "authority". The tempi are well chosen, even if the finale is brisk, and there's never a dull moment, but Mozart deserves more than this kind of treatment. One wonders if the inclusion of Ein Heldenleben, in the second half of this concert, prompted the use of such forces?

The Beethoven performances were given a week later, and what a change there is in the size of the orchestra and the interpretations for this concert! The 1st Symphony has well chosen tempi, and there's more of a classical feel to the performance, but it's still heavy-handed at times and too strict, with little give and take.

The Ninth is a very fine affair. Karajan has the New Yorkers breathless, as he launches a first movement of great power, with a fine Allegro which is a little maestoso; just what Beethoven ordered. There's little time for rest here and whilst Karajan ensures that he has a firm hand on the proceedings, there's still an element of real fantasy to the interpretation. He had me wondering what was going to happen next! The scherzo is another matter. Although the tempo is well chosen, Karajan ignores both repeats in the first half, which is odd considering the composer so obviously wanted the sections to be heard twice; he wrote twelve first time bars at the end of the second section, but you cannot play these without playing the first repeat. It's all to do with symmetry. In this performance the first movement plays for 15:07 and the scherzo for 10:40, whereas if Karajan observed the repeats it would have played for 13:46, balancing the allegro perfectly, which is what Beethoven intended. There is another, slight, problem. Once Karajan has chosen his tempo he's away but he keeps having to, almost imperceptibly, slow down to allow for clear woodwind articulation. You will feel this, and, because he does it often, you will begin to wonder where the momentum has gone. That said, this is a thrilling exposition of the scherzo and so good that it makes one weep at the two miscalculations listed here. The slow movement is a trifle hard-driven, Karajan refusing to let go and simply allow the music to play. He builds the climax well, but it is just a part of the whole, rather than the achievement of musical discussion. Then we come to the finale, which, for me, is a real problem. I have two niggles. First of all, Beethoven was not a vocal composer so his "big tune" works marvellously when played by the orchestra, but sounds cumbersome when sung. Second, the tune itself; it isn't strong enough to carry the kind of symphonic argument Beethoven is desperate to

achieve. As a symphonic finale it is a failure, for it contains no musical apotheosis, and after three magnificent movements if any Symphony needed a really satisfactory musical conclusion, this is the work. Here, the singers are good – the women are much better than the men – but never do I feel the sense of exaltation which is supposed to infuse the music.

Having said all that, these are exciting performances and see Karajan weaving a little of his magic with an orchestra which is known for not taking any prisoners; hence its nickname. The sound is very good, but there is little bloom on the upper string sound, and quite clear. These two disks are not for general listening but there is much to enjoy and admire and I am glad to have them in my collection, even if they couldn't be my first choice in any of the works, except, perhaps, the Webern. Well done, Pristine Audio for giving us the chance to hear a couple of Karajan's very rare American appearances.

Bob Briggs

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