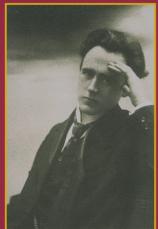
Great Conductors • Weingartner



BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9 "Choral"

Luise Helletsgruber Rosette Anday Georg Maikl Richard Mayr

Vienna State Opera Chorus Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Felix Weingartner

(Historical Recordings 1935 and 1938)

Great Conductors: Felix Weingartner (1863-1942)

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 9 "Choral" • Consecration of the House Overture

Weingartner made one of the first commercial recordings of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for Columbia in 1926 with the London Symphony for Columbia in 1926 with the London Symphony Orchestra and a team of British soloists and chorus singing the finale in English. A subsequent 1935 recording was the first in his famous series of Beethoven recordings made in Vienna before the Second World War and immediately established itself as a landmark performance that has rarely been out of the catalogue ever since. Its special qualities offer a vivid experience in terms of interpretative values, the performing style of the time, and the art of comprehensively communicating the very essence of a masterpiece with a spontaneous sense of renewal and discovery.

As ever with Weingartner, his control of pulse, the generation of line and tension throughout individual movements and the work as a whole, together with expressive flexibility and overall architectural span, emerge as distinctive hallmarks. The music lives and breathes with no distorting view or personality imposed upon it, to remain a naturally voiced, honest statement totally at the service of the composer's own inspiration. To create the illusion of no intermediary, a paradox of self-effacement stamping its own special character, is one of the pinnacles of the conductor's art, achieved by very few practitioners. Even within the exalted company of other great interpreters of the work, notably Furtwängler and Toscanini, this particular Weingartner recording remains an object lesson in how to present a difficult work in the best possible light irrespective and sometimes almost because of passing technical imperfections. This is especially true of the vocal contribution, which in this particular symphony could almost be viewed as a case of no strain, no gain. For both soloists and chorus. Beethoven's almost impossible demands to sustain phrasing, tone, intonation and diction are somehow an intrinsic part of the work's struggle and of pushing limits to extremes. Within the context of such an affirmative and uplifting finale, it seems futile to criticise Viennese tenors for a moment of ragged ensemble when confronted by a fugal entry of such fervour that it pins the listener to the wall with collective understanding of the spirit of Schiller's text.

It is interesting to watch Weingartner in action in a performance of Weber's Overture Der Freischütz filmed in the Salle Gaveau with the Paris Symphony Orchestra in 1932. The overriding impression is of great control achieved through a combination of mainly rigid posture, impassive facial expression, and sparing, but very precise and eloquent baton technique, in many ways reminiscent of the reserved style of Richard Strauss captured on film. His eyes, however, betray total engagement, flashing cues like lasers among the attentive players. At key moments, baton and body language suddenly erupt to galvanise the performance. most notably in the triumphant closing section. This sudden ignition at climactic points is key to Weingartner's pacing and marshalling of cumulative energy. He is the shrewdest judge of compelling attention while keeping his powder dry to then make the moments of release all the more powerful and overwhelming. The end of the Ninth's finale is kept almost dangerously contained until the very final bars. which suddenly produce the most thrilling rush of adrenalin in an exultant jump for joy.

Weingartner was respected as much for his musical scholarship as his conducting. With the publication of his treatise On Conducting in 1895, he had already led a reaction against the post-Wagnerian Von Bülow school of interpretation that played on flamboyant romanticism and wilful exaggeration whatever the period of a work's composition. This was followed in 1906 by a monograph on the performance of Beethoven symphonies that in some respects became the progenitor of new editorial research on the composer leading to the radical quests of period instrument performance in the latter part of the twentieth century. Despite his renown for exploring the veracity of

8.110863

Beethoven's scores, however, Weingartner was not beyond altering them himself. Although he gradually abandoned the practice, it is interesting to note the prominent modification of the trumpet line to double the first violins at the end of the first fortissimo outburst that launches the finale. It is repeated with even more cutting effect in the same passage preceding the entry of the solo bass. Fascinating too that in the film of the Weber no less than two timpanists are much in evidence playing together with no suggestion that their presence is for mere cinematic effect. In many instances these alterations, although much more sparingly deployed later in his career, serve as a reflection of interventionist sensitivity to enhance internal balance and as compensation for developments in sound resulting from changes in instrument manufacture.

Weingartner's mastery of instrumental balance is expertly demonstrated in the brief processional march following the opening ceremonies of the overture *The Consecration of the House*. Weaving through emphatic chordal interjections, the chattering bassoon commentary that is so often garbled or lost within the texture altogether, here very audibly urges the rest of

the orchestra on towards the main Allegro. The conductor transforms a passage of potential idiosyncrasy into something both apposite and wickedly jaunty, an insight perhaps not lost on Berlioz just a flew years later in a very similar passage in the Marche ou supplice from the Symphonie fantastique, where the bassoons fulfil exactly the same rôle. Composed to introduce a revised version of The Ruins of Athens incidental music for the opening of the Josephstadt Theater in 1822, not long before work began in earnest on the Missa Solemnis and the Ninth Symphony, it is dressed by Weingartner in suitably festive colours with much elan.

It is salutary, heartening and even a little humbling to reach the culmination of Beethoven's orchestral output in the company of a conductor of such integrity and vision. This nearly sevently-year old interpretation can still resound in a new century to offer a palliative to worldly struggles and strife with supremely musical vitality, love, and unquenchable spiritual joy. For once the word legendary is not tainted by hyperbols

Ian Julier

Mark Obert-Thorn

Mark Obert-Thorn is one of the world's most respected transfer artist/engineers. He has worked for a number of specialist labels, including Pearl, Biddulph, Romophone and Music & Arts. Three of his transfers have been nominated for Gramophone Awards. A pianist by training, his passions are music, history and working on projects. He has found a way to combine all three in the transfer of historical recordings. Obert-Thorn describes himself as a 'moderate interventionist' rather than a 'purist' or 're-processor', unlike those who apply significant additions and make major changes to the acoustical qualities of old recordings. His philosophy is that a good transfer should not call attention to itself, but rather allow the performances to be heard with the reatest clarity.

There is no over-reverberant 'cathedral sound' in an Obert-Thorn restoration, nor is there the timy bass and priering mid-range of many 'authorised' commercial issues. He works with the cleanest available 788, and consistently achieves better results than restoration engineers working with the metal parts from the archives of the modern corporate owners of the original recordings. His transfers preserve the original record of the old recordings, that is absent from any other commercially-released restorations.

Producer's Note

The present transfers were made from American Columbia discs: "Fall-Range" label pressings in the case of the Consecration Overture and a mixture of those and pre-war "Microphone" label shellacs for the symphony. The latter was originally set down over four days; the final four sides containing the choral portion of the finale were made at a separate session with a noticeably different recording balance from that used for the rest of the symphony.

Mark Obert-Thorn

8.110863 8.110863

Felix Weingartner - Beethoven

London Philharmonic Orchestra (track 1)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera Chorus (tracks 2-11)

1 The Consecration of the House Overture, Op. 124

10:46

Recorded 7th October 1938 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London Matrices: CAX 8354-1, 8355-1 and 8356-1 First issued on Columbia LX 811 and 812

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 "Choral"

63:18

	I	Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso	15:30
	II	Molto vivace	10:01
	Ш	Adagio molto e cantabile	14:47
-11	IV	Finale	22:53
		- Presto	5:47
		- Presto	3:37
		 Allegro assai vivace 	4:32
		- Andante maestoso	2:37
		- Allegro energico, sempre ben marcato	2:00
		- Allegro ma non tanto	2:39
		 Poco allegro stringendo il tempo, sempre più allegro 	1:39

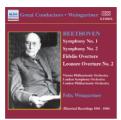
Luise Helletsgruber, Soprano • Rosette Anday, Contralto Georg Maikl, Tenor • Richard Mayr, Bass

Recorded 2nd - 4th February 1935 in the Mittlerer Konzerthaussaal, Vienna Matrices: CHAX 61-3A, 62-3A, 63-3A, 64-3A, 65-1A, 66-2A, 67-2A, 68-2A, 69-2, 70-2A, 71-4A, 72-3A, 73-2, 74-1, 75-2, 76-2A First issued on Columbia LX 413 through 420

The Naxos Historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recording in the field of historical recording the standards are standards and the standards are standards are standards and the standards are standards are standards and the standards are standards are standards are standards and the standards are standard

5 8.110863 8.110863

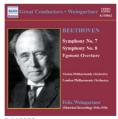
Also available in this series:



8.110856



8.110861



8.110862

6 8.110863

8.110863

BEETHOVEN

Vienna State Opera Chorus Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra London Philharmonic Or<u>chestra*</u>

15:30

10:01

14:47

22:53

5:47

3:37

4:32

2:37

2:00

2:39

1:39



Playing Time 74:04

Felix Weingartner (1863-1942)

The Consecration of the House Overture, Op. 124* 10:46 Recorded 7th October 1938 in EMI Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London Matrices: CAX 8354-1, 8355-1 and 8356-1 First issued on Columbia LX 811 and 812

First issued on Columbia LX 811 and 812 Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 "Choral"

I Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
II Molto vivace

III Adagio molto e cantabile

IV Finale
- Presto

PrestoAllegro assai vivace

Andante maestoso
 Allegro energico, sempre ben marcato

- Allegro ma non tanto

- Poco allegro stringendo il tempo, sempre più allegro

Luise Helletsgruber, Soprano • Rosette Anday, Contralto Georg Maikl, Tenor • Richard Mayr, Bass

Recorded 2nd - 4th February 1935 in the Mittlerer Konzerthaussaal, Vienna

Matrices: CHAX 61-3A, 62-3A, 63-3A, 64-3A, 65-1A, 66-2A, 67-2A, 68-2A, 69-2, 70-2A, 71-4A, 72-3A, 73-2, 74-1, 75-2, 76-2A First issued on Columbia LX 413 through 420 The legendary conductor Felix Weingartner was renowned for his expressive interpretation of the classical repertoire, particularly the music of Beethoven, and was the first to conduct all the Beethoven symphonies on record. This 1935 recording of the Ninth was instantly hailed as a landmark performance, and it has rarely been out of the catalogue ever since. Weingartner ably demonstrates the hallmark of a great conductor, allowing the music to breathe by creating the illusion of not imposing his own personality on it. Neville Cardus said of the maestro: "He belongs to the cultured epoch of music, the epoch of good manners and taste - and sound scholarship."

www.naxos.com



MADE IN

E.C.

Cover Photograph: Felix Weingartner (Lebrecht Collection)



