

**Subject:** PRISTINE NEWS 2nd July 2010: Sargent premières Vaughan Williams 9th, Mitropoulis conducts Vaughan Williams 92nd, Puccini's Tosca - 1929 Sabajno from Ward Marston

**From:** Pristine Classical <music@pristineclassical.com>

**Date:** Fri, 02 Jul 2010 13:59:08 +0200

## Pristine News: Friday 2nd July, 2010



Ralph Vaughan Williams

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Possibly the best review we've ever had!  
- "This "Eroica" is the finest historical transfer I have ever experienced" - James North in Fanfare
-

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### **Editorial - Reasons to be cheerful**

There's been quite a lot of doom and gloom surrounding the classical recordings industry lately – I'm not the only one who's highlighted tumbling CD sales, the decimation of record shops and the classical sections of those which survive, and the demise of classical labels working in our own field of historic recordings (anyone spotted any BBC Legends releases this year?).

I recently read Alan Sanders' editorial in the new Summer issue of Classic Record Collector, which covers similar ground and announces the intention to change the magazine's name to Classical Recordings Quarterly, as well as starting publishing online. There'll be more on this in due course, but if you're not a subscriber (and if not, why not?), then I'd certainly recommend checking out the online offering when it arrives in the Autumn.

But it's not all doom and gloom. I firmly believe we are currently passing through a period of increasingly rapid and, for some, rather painful metamorphosis, where a whole raft of assumptions and expectations are being questioned. What probably began back in the 1970s, with the first commercial digital recordings, continues to evolve, bringing with it the ability of the general public to store, manipulate, copy and transfer their recordings (which of course are no more than a string of numbers) ever more easily, and offers all sorts of new possibilities to the listener. But the domestication of digital music is not the only cause for optimism.

This week's release of the world première of Vaughan Williams' 9th Symphony comes, at least in part, thanks to an earlier revolution, begun in the 1950s, at which time consumers gained the ability to make their own recordings. Skip forward a decade to the 1960s and we stand on

the cusp of what will surely be a wealth of great but forgotten material – high quality recordings of stereo radio broadcasts made in the "swinging" decade will surely yield all sorts of as-yet unknown treasures, just so long as EU proposals on sound copyrights remain as stalled as they have for the last year or so.

There are, of course, a raft of excellent commercial recordings which, likewise, look set to fall into the public domain over the coming years, and if the majors neglect them we do now have a means of keeping them alive ourselves, through much smaller online ventures such as Pristine Classical and others.

Talking of online ventures, and returning for a moment to Classic Record Collector, in the latest issue there's the first of a fascinating trio of articles by Nick Morgan, who is investigating the various online options for those interested in historic recordings. In his first article, Nick explores a wide variety of offerings from public and educational institutes – often bodies with vast collections previously held under lock and key, now busy digitising them (that word again...) and placing them online. It's usually a very different offering to our own – you may or may not get any cleaning up of old material, and if you do there's no guarantee that it's had anything like the kind of time and effort which goes into a Pristine release. A quick zap of an old disc with some basic automatic declipping and a spot of noise reduction (which may or may not be a bit too fierce) is possible, but don't expect sonic miracles – for most institutions this is first and foremost about making their archives recordings more accessible. I'm off to the launch next week of CHARM's online project at the University of London, and hope to find out for myself a little more of what they've been up to while I'm there.

For those who want to listen in the highest quality possible to historic recordings (and let's just hope this isn't an ever-depleting audience) the prospects for further technological developments are tremendous. Again, the key to all of this lies in the digital world – as computers become ever more powerful and digital signal processing ideas, often originating in more well-financed area such as film, video and digital imagery, are applied to sound recordings, we can expect to hear continued improvements in all aspects of remastered recordings.

Things may be a bit precarious for a number of businesses directly or indirectly involved in music right now, but as technological hurdles are overcome both online and in terms of new devices and gizmos to play, store, and catalogue recordings acquired online mature, and people of all ages and tastes become more attuned to new ways of listening, there's no reason to believe that the outcome of all this change should be anything less than encouraging. The move away from CDs and record shops may be being driven by a vast pop market increasingly dominated by iTunes, Spotify and the like, but the technology it carried along in its wake it puts companies like ours in a position to issue recordings online which would probably never have been considered economically viable for CD issue before.

The ultimate winner will be the curious, the adventurous, and the passionate music-lover, whose tastes look destined to be catered for as

perhaps never before. The only question for the fully-online, gizmo-laden listener will surely be “where do I start”?

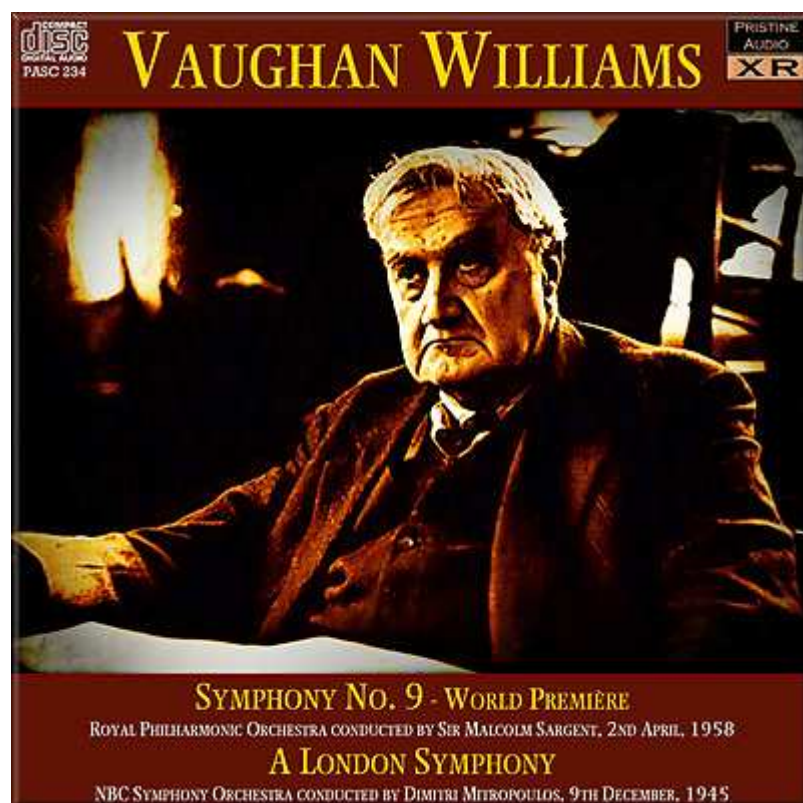
*Andrew Rose*

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New release today:

**VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Symphonies 2 and 9**

Pristine Audio PASC 234



**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**  
conducted by **Sir Malcolm Sargent**  
**NBC Symphony Orchestra**  
conducted by **Dimitri Mitropoulos**  
Recorded in 1958 and 1945

Special thanks to Lewis Foreman for these transfers from his private collection  
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, February-June 2010  
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Vaughan Williams

Total duration: 7750  
©2010 Pristine Audio.

For more download and CD options, see our [website](#)

The FLAC downloads:



*World première of the Ninth - Rare recording of the Second*

*Two very special Vaughan Williams symphony recordings newly remastered*

- **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** Symphony No. 9 in E minor (1956-7) (*World Première*) [[notes](#)]

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**

conducted by **Sir Malcolm Sargent**

Royal Festival Hall, 2nd April, 1958

- **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** A London Symphony (Symphony No. 2) (1913) [[notes/score](#)]

**NBC Symphony Orchestra**

conducted by **Dimitri Mitropoulos**

Studio 8H, New York, 9th December, 1945

**VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** Symphony 9 • A  
London Symphony

Regarded by many as perhaps his finest symphonic achievement, Vaughan Williams' 9th Symphony received its world première in London in 1958 under the baton of Sir Malcolm Sargent. This superbly preserved recording, fully XR remastered, allows you to relive the magic of that first night, broadcast live by the BBC from the Royal Festival Hall.

Another rare recording presented here is Mitropoulos' terrific 1945 NBC Symphony performance of Vaughan Williams' "A London Symphony", meticulously restored from tapes in the Lewis Foreman collection by Pristine's Andrew Rose and XR remastered. Together they make an essential must-have for all lovers of English music.



**Vaughan Williams** Symphony No. 9 in E minor

1st mvt. - Moderato maestoso

*(Ambient Stereo)*

**Notes on the recordings:**

I first received copies of these two remarkable and rare concerts back in February of this year in cassette form from Edward Johnson. We were both enthusiastic about the performances but just a little sceptical about the medium. I began by transferring the Ninth Symphony and set about its restoration, but soon realised that despite the finest Nakamichi replay equipment and all the digital restoration tools at my disposal, I would be unable to do full justice to the original recording from this particular copy. And so began the hunt for a better source.

A few weeks later, Edward came back to me with the suggestion that the renowned writer, musicologist and expert on British

classical music, Lewis Foreman, thought he might have copies of these on tapes stored "in his shed", and would we like him to dig them out? One likes to hope that, tucked away in attics and sheds around the world are carefully preserved gems like this, as when Mr. Foreman's own tape-to-CD transfer of the 9th arrived I immediately knew we were on track for an excellent-sounding release.

The recording was taken from a later BBC FM rebroadcast, and I've been able to add in announcements from the original broadcast, preserved in a second transfer by Mr. Foreman of discs prepared for overseas broadcasts by the BBC in the 1950s, but of lower overall sound quality. Aside from very occasional bursts of static, which have been largely eradicated, the sound quality was excellent throughout, and it is a pleasure and privilege to be able to make this historic world première recording available to the public.

The Mitropoulos is another stunning and very rare recorded performance, and again Mr. Foreman's source has been used almost throughout (some small patches from Edward Johnson's cassette were required for the opening announcement). However, this originated in another era, and suffered a wide range of faults originating in the acetate 78s onto which it would have been first recorded. I have dealt as best I can with thousands of ticks, pops and scratches, aimed to reduce or eliminate where possible peak distortion, corrected multiple pitch variation problems and kept the sound as open and vital as I possibly can. Sonically, after the 9th; it takes a moment or two for the ears to adjust, but the listener will soon find him or herself drawn into Mitropoulos' magical recreation of Vaughan Williams' London. It really is a superb rendition of this classic English symphony, one which easily transcends the limitations placed upon it by the shortcomings of the original recording.

*Andrew Rose*

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

## New release today:

### [PUCCINI Tosca](#)

Pristine Audio PACO 047



#### Featuring:

**Carmen Melis**

**Piero Pauli**

**Apollo Granforte**

Full list of soloists below

**Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan**

**conducted by Carlo Sabajno**

Studio recording from 1929-30

Recorded in Milan, 1929-30, issued as HMV C1920-1915  
Transferred and remastered by Ward Marston, May-June 2010  
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Granforte as Scarpio, early 1930s

Total duration: 1hr 47:06  
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The downloads:



## *Sabajno's classic 1929 Tosca - one of the all-time greats*

*Superb new high-quality transfer by Ward Marston*

- **PUCCINI** - Tosca [[notes](#) / [score](#)]

Tosca - **Carmen Melis** [s]

Cavaradossi - **Piero Pauli** [t]

Scarpia - **Apollo Granforte** [b]

Angelotti - **Giovanni Azzimonti** [b]

Il Sagrestano - **Antonio Gelli** [bs]

Spoletta - **Nello Palai** [t]

Sciarrone - **Giovanni Azzimonti** [b]

Shepherd Boy - Uncredited

### **Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan**

Conducted by **Carlo Sabajno**

Chorus Master, **Vittore Veneziani**

"...To go serially, through the fourteen double-sided records (Nos. C1902-1915) would involve the repetition of an oft-told tale. Suffice it to say that the calibre of the workmanship and artistry revealed in them is of the highest order. Consequently, there is no need for comparisons. I cannot perceive any shortcomings either in the interpretation of the score or the quality of the recording. Each scene stands out clearly, strongly, effectively; and let me add that the necessary interruptions or divisions have been extremely well devised. It should, therefore, be easy to provide with this material a thoroughly realistic and comprehensible musical representation of Puccini's opera..."

From "THE H.M.V. ALBUM OF "TOSCA" by Herman Klein in **The Gramophone**, July 1930

### **PUCCINI** Tosca

Carlo Sabajno conducted the first complete recording of Tosca, back in 1919. He

returned in 1929 to re-record the opera for HMV in Milan using the now-maturing new electrical process, bringing with him some of the finest singers of the era to make an all-time classic.

Legendary remastering engineer Ward Marston, working with meticulous care from three sets of near-silent US Victor 'Z' pressings, has produced what must undoubtedly be the finest transfer of this wonderful performance, in this new release for Pristine Classical.

Apollo Granforte delivers one of the finest Scarpios on disc, Carmen Melis is superb as Tosca - an all-round operatic triumph!



**Act II:**

Tosca's aria "Vissi d'arte"

#### Notes on the recordings:

This recording of Puccini's *Tosca* features the highly regarded dramatic soprano, Carmen Melis (1885-1957) in her only electric recording, and her only complete opera on disc. She studied with Jean de Reszke and made her operatic debut in 1905 as Thais. Over her 30 year career, *Tosca* was one of her most important roles, and one for which she was duly praised. Heard here also is the incomparable Apollo Granforte (1886-1975) as Scarpia, whose portrayal of the role is still considered perhaps the best on record. The conducting of Carlo Sabajno, 1874-1938, is up to his usual high standard of excellence. Tenor, Piero Pauli, is sadly this recording's only disappointment. His unattractive treatment of Cavaradossi's music is all too evident, and his unappealing vocal timbre is often accentuated by his proximity to the microphone. The sonic quality of the recording is amazingly vivid for its time, especially for the orchestra. The voices too are well-recorded except during the most intense passages where the recording equipment was not capable of handling the high levels. During these moments, there occurs severe distortion which is only slightly remediable.

The present transfer was made using three excellent condition sets, pressed during the mid-1930s on quiet Z-shellac by U.S. RCA Victor. For each side, I chose the best of the three, but often patched short problematic passages from the other two copies.

Since this recording was made over a number of sessions spanning four months, the sound obtained on some days was definitely superior to sound from other sessions. In order to achieve the best possible sound, each side was tested using a variety of stylus sizes and shapes. I used CEDAR declipping and decrackling, but did not use any digital denoising.

*Ward Marston*

*June 2010*

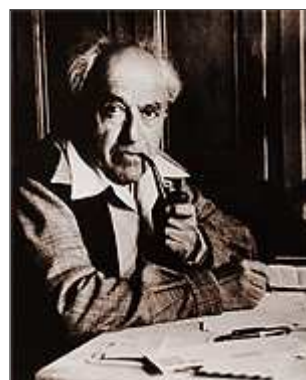
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## New MP3 transfers at PADA Exclusives

by **Dr. John Duffy**  
in Ambient Stereo

Scherman conducts Bloch



Ernest Bloch

### Four Episodes for Small Orchestra

Bloch

**Radio Zurich Symphony Orchestra**  
**Cond. Thomas Scherman**  
**rec. 1950s**

1st mvt: Humoresque macabre  
2nd mvt. - Obsession  
3rd mvt. - Calm  
4th mvt. - Chinese

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

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Dr John Duffy  
**In Ambient Stereo**

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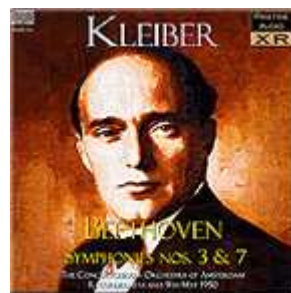
Hundreds of historic recordings are available for listening and **free MP3 download** to subscribers to [PADA Exclusives](#), our €1/week streamed audio service.

*Other subscription offers give you full access to our entire online catalogue*

## Pick of the reviews

NB. There are a raft of Pristine reviews in the latest Fanfare, but it seemed unlikely that anything could possibly top this one! I recommend you seek out a copy of the magazine and see what else they've been saying about our releases in this issue - AR

### [Fanfare, July/August 2010](#)



**BEETHOVEN Symphonies:  
No. 3, "Eroica"; No. 7**  
Erich Kleiber, cond;  
Amsterdam Concertgebouw O  
PRISTINE [PASC 154](#) (78:20)

Available at [pristineclassical.com](http://pristineclassical.com)

Erich Kleiber's 1953 Concertgebouw recordings of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies were regarded as instant classics, but these two 1950 Decca recordings stayed under the critical radar. Being a big fan of the Concertgebouw, then as now, I rushed out and bought both as soon as they appeared (1951). I was much disappointed by this "Eroica." With recent Walter and Mengelberg LPs on the shelf, and Weingartner and Toscanini 78s from the college library, Kleiber seemed like weak tea. Furtwängler and Klemperer would soon bury him even deeper. Perhaps because I played it so rarely, I still have a pristine (oops!) copy of London LL 239. Pristine's Andrew Rose had a theory: Decca had screwed up the recording, which lacked punch because it was deficient at the low end, as well as being too reverberant; he felt he could cure it by exercising his well-known magic on it. The results are sensational. The performance proves vital and thrilling after all; it is as if Mengelberg (then sequestered in his Alpine cabin) had returned and was given even better recorded sound than for his superb 1940 Telefunks. Better yet, the Scherzo is not cut here, as it was by Telefunken, and Kleiber nails the final variations, which were the Achilles heel of Mengelberg's performance. This is as crisp, as potent a finale as you will ever hear, with woodwind playing that outdoes even other Concertgebouw performances. The opening Allegro con brio of the "Eroica" has always been for me the *summa plus ultra* of all music; Kleiber now makes the finale a rival.

On the other hand, I do not possess a copy of LL 240, because I wore out two of them. I loved the Kleiber Seventh from the first moment, only later realizing that it was the Concertgebouw Seventh that was so fine, that this orchestra owned the piece. Mengelberg, Kleiber, his son Carlos, Jochum, Sawallisch (twice), Haitink—it didn't matter who was in charge. In a review of all the recordings of all the Beethoven symphonies about 1970, the musicologist Paul Henry Lang proclaimed the Jochum/Concertgebouw Seventh to be the only completely satisfactory

recording of any of the symphonies. Among other touches, this orchestra plays the fanfares that rule the finale more cleanly than any other outfit—there are four chords to each measure, not the three one usually hears. Part of the secret is not to rush it: Most performances treat the finale as a mad dash to the finish line; the Concertgebouw savors the music. I had no problem with the sound of Decca/London's LP, because I preferred a light touch in the Seventh. If this realization is less spectacular than Rose's "Eroica," it is mainly because there was less wrong in the first place; perhaps he also had cleaner sources for the "Eroica"—there is less punch to his Seventh and more distortion; the bass line is stronger but not as clean as it was on the London LP. The sweet sound of the Concertgebouw is still here, too sweet for major Beethoven, perhaps, as Toscanini demonstrated with the New York Philharmonic. Mort Frank knows that I am not a fan, but there are things "The Maestro" did to perfection, and that recording heads the list. Kleiber's first three movements now sound a bit soft by comparison, but I still like the measured tread of the finale, with its myriad of details.

I had read all of Lynn René Bayley's encomiums of Pristine's work on historical material with great interest, but—life being what it is—I only got to hear its stuff from the 1920s, which it at least made listenable. Now I've joined the club: This "Eroica" is the finest historical transfer I have ever experienced.

**James H. North**

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