

TOSCANINI CD DEBUTS

Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart, and Alfred Hertz in San Francisco

And the month's discoveries don't end there. Pristine Classics' Andrew Rose has tracked down a 1945 live recording of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto with Horowitz and his father-in-law **Arturo Toscanini** conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra, an interpretation already enshrined on both live and commercially recorded discs. The differences?



Very little from Toscanini's standpoint, but as for Horowitz, every shifting inflection brings with it a uniquely magical effect and I'd say that this particular account of the slow movement is the best we now have from him. Elsewhere it's like hearing a prize fight transcribed into concerto terms, with rather more give from Horowitz. The sound is good if not quite "pristine"; for that you need to turn to Rose's expert transfer of a quite spectacular Toscanini account of Brahms's Second Symphony, tape-recorded at Carnegie Hall in February 1951 and originally the privileged property of members of the Toscanini Society (on LP). Those who know the commercial RCA recording from a year or so later can expect an

extra rush of adrenalin, especially in the finale which, in addition to being superbly played, also lays claim to being one of the most impassioned versions of disc. A Toscanini/NBC Beethoven

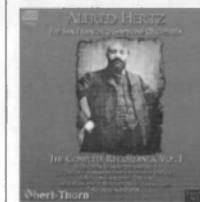


Fifth from 1944, a performance that's similar in all essentials to the two Toscanini Fifths from '39, is worth investigating, especially for the sake of a hell-for-leather (but always controlled) finale. Toscanini made no secret of his problems with Mozart and Pristine's truthful transfer of the 1944 NBC broadcast of Symphony No 29 focuses certain limitations in the maestro's approach, notably a tendency to hurry and a disinclination to savour the phrase,



though there is some tender string-playing in the *Andante*. The coupling is more interesting, though less well recorded: a cool last Piano Concerto recorded as part of a run of debut New York performances by Rudolf Serkin.

Turning to San Francisco, Pristine are usefully reissuing **Alfred Hertz's** recordings



with the city's Symphony Orchestra, Victor 78s of excellent quality. The performances have plenty of personality, especially Beethoven's *Leonore* No 3 from 1928 and a suite from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the previous year. The disc also includes music by Schubert and Weber. Mark Obert-Thorn has prepared the excellent basic transfers and the CD is billed as "Vol 1". I'm curious as to what the second volume might contain.

The Recordings

- **Brahms** Pf Conc No 2 **Horowitz, Toscanini**
Pristine (M) PASC171
- **Brahms** Sym No 2 **Toscanini**
Pristine (M) PASC157
- **Beethoven** Sym No 5 **Toscanini**
Pristine (M) PASC170
- **Mozart** Sym No 29. Pf Conc No 27 **Serkin, Toscanini**
Pristine (M) PASC164
- **Beethoven, Mendelssohn** Orch Wks **Hertz**
Pristine (M) PASC163