

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chorusmaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.

In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.



BRAHMS SYMPHONY NO. 3



Mastered in DSD256



FRITZ REINER CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Brahm's Third Symphony, first performed at one of the concerts of the Vienna Philharmonic Society, December 2, 1883, is undoubtedly the most popular of the series for the reason that it is clearer in its general construction than the others. At the same time, while less complicated and elaborate in its development, it is not lacking in ideas of a thoroughly poetical kind and in great variety of color.

The first movement opens with a short prelude of powerful chords by the wind instruments, introducing the first theme, a majestic melody, which is given out by the violins, accompanied by the violas and cellos, and supported by the trombones. The theme, which is peculiarly brilliant and even heroic in its style, is treated with masterly skill as it progresses from a steady and peaceful flow to highest point of vigor and majesty. In the transition to the second theme, however, announced by the clarinets, occurs a more restful period; and the theme itself, which is graceful and pastoral in style, imparts a serious, earnest character to the movement, which is still further enforced by the skillfully constructed Coda.

The second movement might almost be termed a rhapsody, as it is very short and is not elaborated after the customary manner. The greater part of the movement indeed rests upon and grows out of the opening theme, which is a simple but graceful and joyous melody, in strong contrast with the epic character of the work. This theme is taken alternately by the wind instruments, violas, and cellos, and is freely treated in variations, which give beautiful tone-color to it. It has a brief rest while the clarinets and bassoons give out a resonant, stirring phrase as if foreshadowing what is to come. It is hardly pronounced

enough, however, to be called a second theme. The first subject at once returns and goes on to the end in a series of delightfully contrasted effects.

The third movement, which takes the place of the ordinary Scherzo, is mostly serious in its style, and really fixes the general character of the symphony. Its principal theme, a genuine sample of the Lied, is given out by the cellos, at first fanciful, tender, and full of simple grace, then reminiscent and contemplative, and at last dreamy; to which succeeds a passage for the wind instruments, soothing and almost suppliant.

The Allegretto dies away in soft chords which lead to the Finale -- a passionate, agitated, and sombre movement, yet heroic, elevated, and strong in its style. The theme with which it opens rushes past with all the haste and mystery of a vision in a dream, and then reappears in a new harmonic form, only to grow more sorrowful and gloomy with the entrance of the trombones preluding a new phrase, for now the sentiment changes and we have in its place a passionate conflict. Through the fierce and determined phrases of the violins, however, is heard the steady, jubilant song of the cellos. As they announce the victory the gloom disappears, and gives place to peace and rest once more, dignified and ennobled by the heroic theme of the first movement.

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1. Allegro Con Brio 9:20
 2. Andante 9:54
 3. Poco Allegretto 6:22
 4. Allegro 8:32
- Total Time 34:08

Recording Info: Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Producer - Richard Mohr

Recording Engineer - Lewis Layton

Recorded 1958 by RCA

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