

Guild

Guild GmbH
Switzerland

GHCD 2425

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Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op.35

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|---|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 16:26 |
| 2 | II. Canzonetta: Andante | 6:15 |
| 3 | III. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo | 9:17 |

RUGGIERO RICCI violin

NEW SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

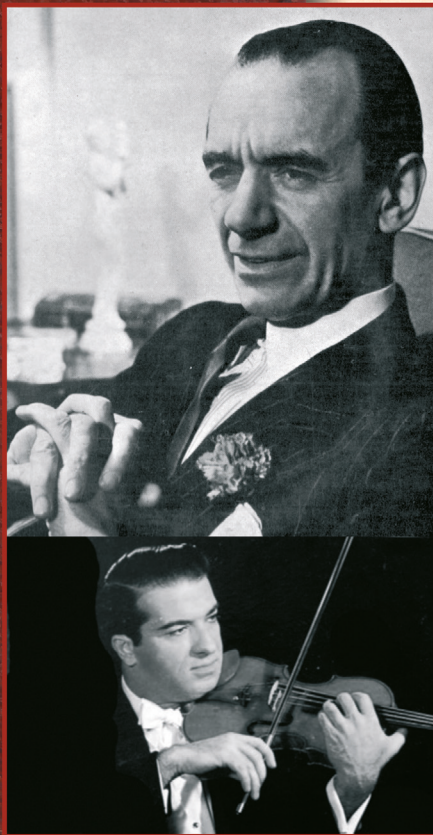
Recorded: 1950 (Decca LXT 2509)

Symphony No.5 in E minor, Op.64

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 4 | I. Andante - Allegro con anima | 15:36 |
| 5 | II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza | 13:18 |
| 6 | III. Valse: Allegro moderato | 6:38 |
| 7 | IV. Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace | 10:57 |

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Recorded: 1955 (HMV ALP 1236 - Published to celebrate Sir Malcolm's 60th birthday)



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HISTORICAL

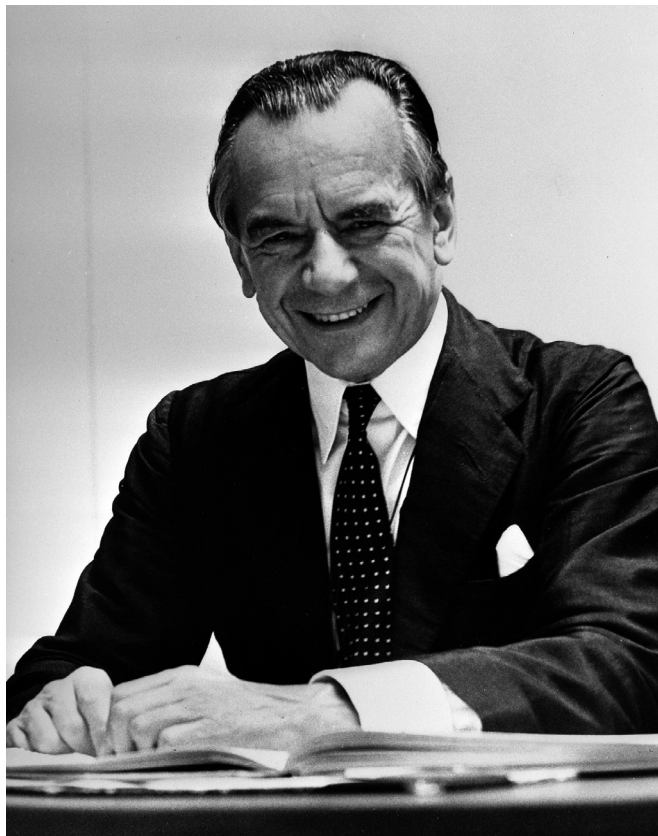
**SIR
MALCOLM
SARGENT**

TCHAIKOVSKY
Violin Concerto
RUGGIERO RICCI

Symphony No. 5

New Symphony Orchestra
BBC Symphony Orchestra

Recorded 1950 & 1955



A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE

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from the finale of Tchaikovsky's 'Manfred' Symphony, which indicates that these changes were not as unique as are claimed by later commentators.

In the case of the Violin Concerto, there is a succession of tiny cuts in the finale of that work (where Tchaikovsky repeats various 2- and 4-bar phrases). These were almost invariably made soon after the work first appeared, and are still often encountered. They stem from the Russian tradition headed by Leopold Auer, the great violin pedagogue and virtuoso to whom Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto was originally dedicated, and they were universally adopted in Russia. An indication of their later frequent observance was directly brought home to the present writer on producing a recording of the Concerto conducted by the great Russian-born musician Anatole Fistoulari thirty-five years ago, who took my score and, entirely from memory, indicated with pencil the cuts in the movement which are customarily observed – completing the task in less than forty seconds!

The American-born violinist Ruggiero Ricci (1918-2012) was a pupil of Louis Persinger (1887-1966), one of the finest American violinists, pianists and teachers of his generation. In the years immediately following World War II, Ricci himself became one of the leading international violin virtuosos, going on to make over five hundred recordings throughout his brilliant career, including this performance of the Tchaikovsky Concerto for the Decca Company in London in 1950 with Sargent conducting the New Symphony Orchestra.

This was the first long-playing 33½ rpm recording of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto to be issued in the UK, and consequently garnered considerable interest and enthusiasm, with Ricci being particularly finely partnered by the then recently-knighted (1947) Sir Malcolm directing the long-established New Symphony Orchestra, this orchestra having been founded in London over half a century before.

Guild is pleased to present this newly remastered disc which couples the greatly significant violinist and conductor in two of Tchaikovsky's most famous large-scale concert works in performances that capture the finest standards of music-making in the decade following the end of World War II.

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In September 1980, the United Kingdom Post Office issued four commemorative postage stamps, each bearing the face of a famous British conductor. Those commemorated were Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent. Of those four, at the time only Boult was still alive, at 91 approaching the end of his performing career.

All four conductors were well-known to the general public as well as music-lovers, and whilst it would be difficult to pick the most famous of the quartet, there is no doubt that Sargent's frequent appearances on television, as a result of his many years as chief conductor of the annual six-week season of Henry Wood Promenade Concerts (the 'Proms' as they are affectionately known) in succession to Wood, who had died in 1944, made Malcolm Sargent's name probably the best-known amongst native orchestral conductors in so far as the general public was concerned.

In the twenty years after World War II, when Sargent was at the height of his fame, the wide range of repertoire which had always been associated with the Proms very largely fell on his shoulders; it was perhaps the combination of his popular persona and being called upon to conduct orchestral music from Bach to Bartók at the Proms (Sargent had given the UK premiere of the latter's Concerto for Orchestra with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra at the end of World War II) that he was sometimes unfairly, and rather thoughtlessly, criticised for being on some occasions a rather superficial conductor.

But Sargent was a complete musician – indeed, rather more so than was generally realised. He had begun his career as an organist, and early on began to make his mark as a composer of orchestral music (the few works he did complete belong to what might be termed the English Impressionist school). He was also a fine pianist – performing concertos by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff in the 1920s – and a splendid arranger and orchestrator of other composers' music, of which his latter scores include a fine orchestration of Brahms's *Four Serious Songs*.

Yet it was as a conductor above all that Sargent excelled. In two areas – especially – even his detractors had to give him full credit; one was for his mastery of a large choir, the other being his superb partnership in accompanying a concerto. Not for nothing was Sargent chosen to partner Artur Schnabel in the pianist's groundbreaking integral recordings of the five Beethoven piano concertos in the 1930s, drawing from Schnabel the highest praise.

It may also come as something of a surprise to Sargent's later contemporaries to learn that he was greatly admired by Toscanini. As a demonstration of the Italian maestro's respect for the English conductor, Toscanini publicly embraced Sargent after a performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* at London's Queen's Hall in the late 1930s. Then, at the end of World War II, Toscanini was the prime mover in inviting Sargent to New York to conduct a series of concerts of British music with the conductor's own NBC Symphony, an orchestra which had been specially formed for him in 1937. Leopold Stokowski was a great admirer too, having returned to London in the 1950s to conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He considered Sargent's performances "very fiery" and invited him to conduct the Houston Symphony, Stokowski then having become its chief conductor.

Apart from his innate sympathy with English music, Sargent was also, within his wide repertoire range, a master of music from the Austro-Germanic tradition as well as of Russian music. It was Sargent who gave the British premieres of Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony (the score was withheld by the Russians as a result of a diplomatic spat, and was not delivered to the conductor until 72 hours before the performance) as well as of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto with Eileen Joyce, at the Proms. Both works were premiered in the same year of 1958, and it was Sargent who directed the stunning London premiere of Shostakovich's then-new Fourth Symphony in 1963.

Sargent had also conducted the UK premiere of Kabalevsky's Second Piano Concerto with Noel Mewton-Wood in 1948 (another Proms 'first'), and – apart from those important premieres of music by 20th-century Russian composers - he was frequently the preferred conductor of Tchaikovsky's works at the Proms in the twenty-odd years before his death, as well as in the many other concerts he conducted outside of the summer Proms season throughout Britain and abroad. An earlier all-Tchaikovsky CD on the Guild label conducted by Sargent [GHCD 2409 – containing the *1812* and *Romeo and Juliet Overtures*, the *Theme and Variations* from the *Third Suite*, *Marche Slave* and the Waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*] has demonstrated the conductor's empathy with and great understanding of Tchaikovsky's music for later generations of music lovers, having been met with considerable acclaim from the critics. On this second all-Tchaikovsky Sargent CD we can hear the conductor in two major works – the Fifth Symphony and the Violin Concerto with Ruggiero Ricci.

Sargent's recording of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony was made in 1955 and was issued to mark the conductor's 60th birthday. It remains one of Sargent's finest commercially recorded interpretations, of the one Tchaikovsky symphony he is believed to have revered above all others. In July 1955, comparing Sargent's performance with a recently-issued Philharmonia recording conducted by Herbert von Karajan, the EMG Monthly Letter asserted that: 'There are places where Sargent makes Karajan sound dull: the sudden return of the motto theme at bar 158 of the second movement, for instance, is quite shattering.' The writer of that comment was the British composer and musicologist Robert Simpson, who went on to note Sargent's cut of around 100 bars in the finale – with Simpson being unaware, as many who commented on this aspect of Sargent's (and other conductors') cut, of the authenticity that lies behind those who make this excision.

Tchaikovsky had conducted his Fifth Symphony in Hamburg on March 15 1889 (the third occasion on which he was to direct the work) having previously noted in his diary on February 24 that he had made that very cut in the Symphony's finale, correcting all of the orchestral parts personally, by hand.

Tchaikovsky's corrections in the finale were not made on his manuscript, as he directed the Hamburg performance from a printed score of the work. Any confusion regarding this cut has arisen because it appears Tchaikovsky did not bother to note the cut he had made in Hamburg on his original manuscript – if it was in his possession when he returned to Russia. Parenthetically, we may note that Brahms was staying in the same hotel as Tchaikovsky and delayed his departure from Hamburg in order to attend the work's first rehearsal.

However, it is highly significant that many conductors followed Tchaikovsky's example, and that a 1952 recording of the Symphony by the Hamburg Radio Symphony Orchestra under Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt makes an identical cut – very probably from the same parts used by the composer 63 years earlier. It is also interesting to note that very many earlier recordings of the Symphony also follow Tchaikovsky's precedent, including those conducted by Mengelberg and Furtwängler (the latter in a 'live' performance), so it was clearly common knowledge at that time that the alteration was made by the composer himself. So much for Sargent's so-called 'superficiality'! As an example of such common practice of the day, we might also mention Toscanini's excision of over 100 bars