

Tossy
SPIVAKOVSKY

BACH Solo Sonata No.1

BEETHOVEN Sonata No.8

with Robert Cornman

MENOTTI Concerto

with Charles Munch conducting
the Boston Symphony Orchestra

short pieces by

PAGANINI,

TCHAIKOVSKY,

SARASATE & KREISLER

with Artur Balsam

Biddulph
RECORDINGS



TRACKS 1 - 4, 8:

UNACCOMPANIED

TRACKS 5 - 7:

WITH ROBERT CORNMAN (PIANO)

TRACKS 9 - 11:

WITH ARTUR BALSAM (PIANO)

J. S. BACH SOLO VIOLIN SONATA NO.1 IN G MINOR

10 June 1949; Columbia ML 2089 (matrix 39999/41001)

1	I	ADAGIO	4:03
2	II	FUGA: ALLEGRO	5:07
3	III	SICILIANO	2:44
4	IV	PRESTO	3:20

BEETHOVEN VIOLIN SONATA NO.8 IN G, OP.30 NO.3

15 May 1949; Columbia ML 2089 (matrix 41253/56)

5	I	ALLEGRO ASSAI	4:38
6	II	TEMPO DI MENUETTO, MA MOLTO MODERATO E GRAZIOSO	7:50
7	III	ALLEGRO VIVACE	3:42

8	PAGANINI CAPRICE IN A MINOR, OP.1 NO.24	4:53
---	--	------

9 May 1950; Columbia ML 4402 (matrix 43415)

9	TCHAIKOVSKY VALSE-SCHERZO, OP.34	7:20
---	---	------

9 May 1950; Columbia ML 4402 (matrix 43416/17)

10	SARASATE INTRODUCTION AND TARANTELLA, OP.43	4:44
----	--	------

25 May 1950; Columbia ML 4402 (matrix 43457)

11	KREISLER CAPRICE VIENNOIS, OP.2	3:36
----	--	------

29 May 1950; Columbia ML 4402 (matrix 43460)

TRACKS 12 - 14:

WITH CHARLES MUNCH
CONDUCTING THE BOSTON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MENOTTI VIOLIN CONCERTO IN A MINOR
8 November 1954; RCA LM 1868

12	I	ALLEGRO MODERATO	11:54
13	II	ADAGIO	8:04
14	III	ALLEGRO VIVACE	6:51

The Ukrainian violinist Tossy Spivakovsky became a legend in the profession and gained much acclaim in the public arena, despite living through two world wars and other turbulent events. Born Nathan Davidovich Spivak in Odessa on 23 December 1906, youngest of nine children, he had four musical brothers, two of whom – Albert and Adolf – were singers. The family previously lived in Kiev, where elder brother Jascha, a piano prodigy, was born in 1896. When Tossy was 18 months old, the Spivakovskys moved to Berlin so that Jascha could study at the Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatory. At six Tossy began violin studies and he made such rapid progress that he soon became a pupil of Arrigo Serato, making his debut in the German capital in 1917. He then studied with Willy Hess – teacher of Adolf Busch and Georg Kulenkampff – at the Hochschule für Musik. From 1920 to 1933 he toured Europe and Scandinavia as a prodigy, sometimes playing obbligati for his brother Albert, although in 1924 he was still studying privately with Hess – this writer possesses a historic photograph which commemorates the occasion when the professor’s students prepared Bach’s Double Concerto, with soloists Kulenkampff and Spivakovsky, for Hess’s 65th birthday and played it to him at 7 a.m., only to be admonished for using a faulty edition.

In February 1926 Spivakovsky was engaged by Wilhelm Furtwängler as concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic but he resigned at the end of the 1926-27 season to pursue his solo career; and he did not appear as a soloist with the Philharmonic until 1959, when he played the Brahms Concerto under Richard Kraus. In 1932 he formed a piano trio with brother Jascha and the

cellist Edmund Kurtz. The coming to power of the Nazis found the threesome touring Australia – where Jascha had been working regularly since 1921 – and they opted to stay, teaching at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium. (Brother Adolf Spivakovsky, a well-known baritone, also ended up in Australia and taught many singers there.) In 1936 Kurtz emigrated to the United States and in 1939 Tossy Spivakovsky followed with his wife Erika – a historian whom he had married in Melbourne – and their daughter Ruth, eventually taking American nationality.

The country was chock full of refugee musicians and Spivakovsky was virtually unknown there. His debut recital at Town Hall in 1940 and his first Carnegie Hall recital in 1942 were critical successes but war and a two-year union ban on recording did not make it easy for musicians to thrive. In 1942-45 he led the Cleveland Orchestra, often featuring as soloist. On 21 January 1943 he and the orchestra under Artur Rodzinski introduced Bartók's Second Concerto to America at Severance Hall in Cleveland, giving a repeat performance two days later. On 14, 15 and 17 October that year Spivakovsky took the work to Carnegie Hall, with Rodzinski conducting the New York Philharmonic-Symphony. The composer was present on the 14th, hearing his own work for the first time, and wrote: 'The performance was excellent: soloist, conductor, orchestra were first rate.' After the war Spivakovsky gradually built up his solo career, appearing with all the major U.S. orchestras and from 1950 regularly visiting Europe. In London he made his Royal Festival Hall debut on 30 January 1957; he had meant to play the Bartók but a change of conductor meant that he, Sir Eugène

Goossens and the RPO performed the Sibelius instead. 'Has it had a more thrilling interpretation here since Ginette Neveu played it?' wondered the critic of *The Times*. 'Mr Spivakovsky has a luxuriant and penetrating tone in every register, his technique is as clean as a whistle, even to harmonics which sound as beautiful as the cantabile tone that he produces on the G string; and he can lift an already eloquent phrase, by his interpretative imagination, so that it sounds completely new.' Spivakovsky gave an equally well received recital in the same hall and later that year was back for the Beethoven Concerto under Klemperer.

Tossy Spivakovsky played all the classics and in the U.S. he was admired in the concertos by Roger Sessions, Leroy Robertson, Frank Martin, Gian Carlo Menotti, Leon Kirchner, Miklós Rózsa, Nielsen, Karl Hartmann, Bartók and Stravinsky, as well as Leonard Bernstein's *Serenade*. In recital he played pieces by Kirchner, Ives and Diamond. But his two finest interpretations were probably the Tchaikovsky and Sibelius Concertos. Blessed with dark good looks, he had a quiet, almost diffident platform manner until he started playing. 'When the fiddle goes under the chin a transformation happens,' wrote the *Daily Mail* critic after his 1957 recital. 'The playing Spivakovsky, with the intense face, the proud and alert bearing, the unfailing elegance of style which is like the drawings in the violin books come to life, is worlds removed from the shy and ordinary-looking figure that came on. I have never seen a fiddler whose attitudes and method conformed more closely to the ideal manner, more graceful movement more naturally maintained.' In his later years Tossy Spivakovsky lived in Westport, Connecticut, and as recently as 1989 he played the Beethoven Concerto (with

his own cadenzas) in Vermont to a standing ovation. He taught at Fairfield University, Connecticut, until 1974, then at the Juilliard School for a time. He died in Westport on 20 July 1998, just three weeks after Erika.

He used a violin by G. B. Cerutti in the 1920s and 1930s but in 1943 acquired a 1721 Strad, the 'Macmillan.' His technique had unique features which led Gaylord Yost to write a book called *The Spivakovsky Way of Bowing*. The violinist was also featured in the first volume of *The Way They Play*. He made many records of short pieces for Parlophone in the 78rpm era but did not make a lot of LPs. Our programme is mainly drawn from his time with American Columbia, but the Menotti Concerto was done for RCA Victor. Spivakovsky gave much thought to performing Bach's solo works and wrote two articles on the subject. This recording of the G minor Sonata was made before his discovery, in 1957, of the Bach-Vega curved bow – having heard the recordings by Emil Telmányi, he obtained a curved bow from Knud Vestergaard in Denmark and thereafter appeared in recital with two bows when a Bach solo work was on the programme. He used his normal bow for the faster movements, in which articulation was paramount, and the curved bow for the slow movements, the fugues and the *Chaconne*. Such experiments have now been rendered redundant by the revival of the true Baroque bow.

For his Columbia records Spivakovsky was paired with first-rate artists. In Beethoven's 'Little G major' Sonata, a favourite of his, he was partnered by the Brooklyn-born pianist and conductor Robert Cornman (1924-2008). He worked with the versatile Polish pianist Artur Balsam (1906-1994) for the shorter pieces.

None of these needs comment except perhaps the Tchaikovsky *Valse-Scherzo*, which appears to be Tossy Spivakovsky's own edition.

The Menotti Concerto was composed in 1952 to a commission from Efreim Zimbalist, who was consulted as the work proceeded – rather too slowly. 'I received the last movement only two weeks before the performance,' Zimbalist recalled. He gave the première in Philadelphia, where he was director of the Curtis Institute, with a local orchestra under Eugene Ormandy on 9 December. Zimbalist hoped other violinists would take it up but for years Spivakovsky was its sole champion, performing it all over America. In the *Allegro moderato* the soloist enters almost immediately, as in the Mendelssohn E minor, and the two main themes reflect Menotti's skill as an opera composer, the first very catchy, the second more lyrical. The orchestra has a few vigorous interventions and the movement ends dramatically. The beautifully lyrical *Adagio* – in which the violin enters straight away – is interrupted by the soloist's cadenza, several times featuring a galloping theme which sounds as if the violin may dive into the Finale at any moment. The actual Finale, *Allegro vivace*, begins with a dramatic tutti after which the violin darts off into a main theme that is pure opera buffa; although the shortest of the three movements, this Finale packs in a wealth of incident.

© Tully Potter





Reissue producer: Eric Wen
Transfer engineer: David Hermann
Digital mastering: Dennis Patterson

WWW.BIDDULPHRECORDINGS.CO.UK

J. S. BACH
 Sonata No. 1 in G Minor
 for Violin Unaccompanied
 TOSSY SPIVAKOVSKY, *Violin*



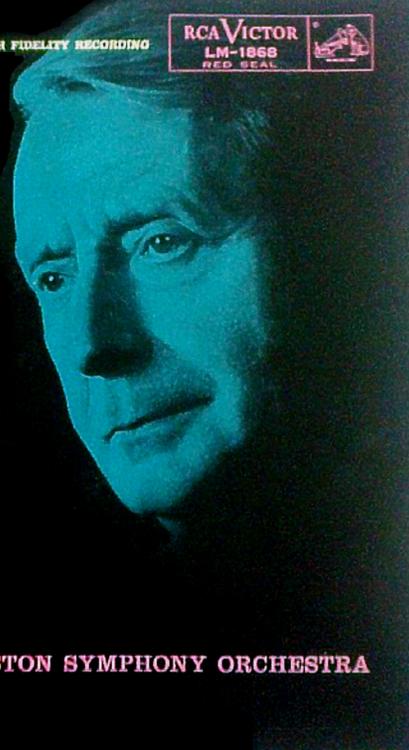
BEETHOVEN
 Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, No. 3
 TOSSY SPIVAKOVSKY, *Violin*,
 and ROBERT CORNMAN, *Piano*



Lp

columbia Masterworks
 Long Playing Microgroove
 Nonbreakable Record ● ML 2089

A "NEW ORTHOPHONIC" HIGH FIDELITY RECORDING



RCA VICTOR
 LM-1868
 RED SEAL

Menotti
VIOLIN CONCERTO
 Tossy Spivakovsky - VIOLINIST

Honegger
SYMPHONY No. 2

CHARLES MUNCH - BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Biddulph
 RECORDINGS