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Sony Classical Releases Two Box Sets in February
Juilliard String Quartet: Beethoven String Quartets - The 1964-1970
Recordings

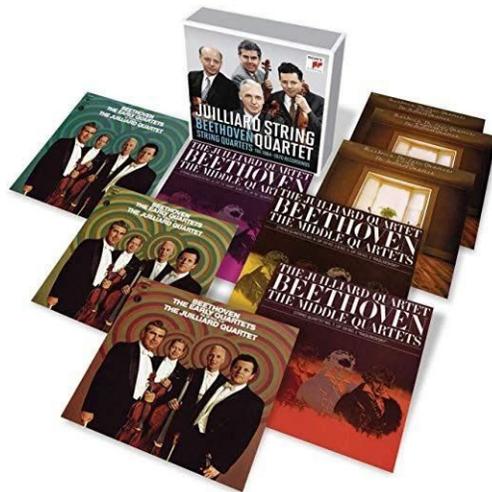
Release Date: February 14, 2020

Reviewer Rate: \$30.01

John Barbirolli and The New York Philharmonic: The Complete RCA and
Columbia Album Collection

Release Date: February 21, 2020

Reviewer Rate: \$31.26



Juilliard String Quartet
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It was in 1964 – a few years after an early foray into Beethoven with four of the works for RCA Victor’s Red Seal label – that the Juilliard String Quartet embarked on this complete Beethoven set. They started out with the three “Razumovsky” and “Harp” quartets, which Columbia released the next year on its subsidiary Epic label (previously released in: Juilliard String Quartet – The Complete Epic Recordings 1956-66). The six “Early Quartets”, op. 18, followed in 1968–69; the “Late Quartets” in 1969–70, along

with op. 95 to complete the set of “Middle Quartets”. By now all the Juilliard recordings were appearing on Columbia Masterworks, including their Beethoven in three separate volumes.

In celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth, Sony Classical is pleased to present the Juilliard’s complete cycle in a single box, with 6 LPs appearing for the first time on CD, newly remastered from the original analog masters using 24 bit / 192 kHz technology. And writing in 1979 about a limited LP release of their complete Beethoven cycle, *Gramophone* observed: “There is impeccable intonation, everywhere, and a standard of ensemble playing which is second to none and shows why the Juilliard enjoys a reputation as one of the world’s most renowned quartets.”



**Sir John Barbirolli and The New York Philharmonic
The Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection
Release Date: February 21, 2020
Reviewer Rate: \$31.26**

The young John Barbirolli was hardly known in America when the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra chose him to be Arturo Toscanini’s successor starting in 1937. The 36-year-old Londoner’s first season was a triumph with both players and audiences, and although his years in New York would be increasingly marred by unfair rivalry with Toscanini – lured back to lead a specially created NBC Symphony – and by partisan hostility from two influential critics, Barbirolli’s tenure can now be looked back on as a real success.

From 1938 until 1943, when he returned to the UK to take over Manchester’s Hallé Orchestra, Sir John made a series of recordings in New York for American Columbia and RCA Victor which are still essential for a full appreciation of this revered conductor’s career, “performances that are as competitive today as they were when initially released” (*Fanfare*). Sony Classical is pleased to reissue them in a newly remastered six-CD set.

Among the treasures here are Debussy’s *Iberia* and Tchaikovsky’s *Francesca da Rimini* (both recorded in 1938) and the first-ever recording of Schubert’s Fourth (“Tragic”) Symphony (from 1939), together cited by *Gramophone* as “a demonstration that the Philharmonic-Symphony had few rivals in the world at the time as a recording orchestra ... A forceful, high-powered reading [of the symphony] which yet has a Schubertian smile ... The crisp attack in the Tchaikovsky, even tauter than in Barbirolli’s superb 1969

HMV New Philharmonia version, is thrillingly caught. The Debussy brings the most vivid sound of all, weighty and full of presence, with castanets and brass leaping out from the speakers. This is a white-hot performance, every bit as exciting as those of Toscanini, and with a moving vein of tenderness in the slow second movement.”

There are several works by Mozart, among them the Clarinet Concerto with Benny Goodman (from 1940) and the Symphony No. 25 and Piano Concerto No. 27 with Robert Casadesus (both from 1941). The Piano Concerto’s opening Allegro “is beautifully shaped with an almost palpable sense of wonder in the music and the pianist is definitely having a ball of time,” said *Classical Net*. “The final Allegro is also very commendable for its grand sense of pomp and majesty ... The exquisite symphony also receives wonderful attention and care from Barbirolli and the NYPSO. Here one can sense the conductor’s love for Mozart’s inspired melodies ... Benny Goodman is a characterful interpreter of the Clarinet Concerto.”

“The generous flavor of Barbirolli’s Brahms comes through in the *Academic Festival Overture* and the Second Symphony [both from 1940],” wrote *Audiophile Audition*’s reviewer. “The Overture is rife with ceremonial grandeur and jolly spirits. The D major Symphony has a debonair airiness and bucolic relaxation about it.” And Sibelius’s First Symphony (from 1942) “should delight fans of Barbirolli’s 1960s complete traversal of the symphonies ... The conductor’s warmth, vision, and emotional urgency has lost none of its appeal in the more than half century that has passed” (*Fanfare*).

Also from 1942 is Nathan Milstein playing the Bruch Concerto with “the Philharmonic-Symphony in tremendous form,” exclaimed *MusicWeb International*’s critic. “Barbirolli opens powerfully and Milstein responds in kind; not over emoted and with vibrato perfectly scaled to the demands of the music. He is really quite withdrawn and introspective in the Adagio, powerfully so indeed, and Barbirolli brings out the horn harmonies in a way that seems to reveal them for the first time. There is romantic fervour but also passagework clarity and digital cleanliness in the finale ... a model of concerto accompaniment and creative collaboration.”