

Recording of the week: keep calm and carry on rehearsing

This week's selection comes from Lucia Cavorsi, Audio Project Cataloguer.

There is no doubt Arturo Toscanini was a one-of-a-kind conductor. Renowned for his mastery, Toscanini was obsessed with the most minute details of a performance. But such a quest for perfection, whose outcome would undoubtedly delight listeners, came at a price for orchestra members: shouting, swearing, and humiliation.

Here is the conductor in New York during a seemingly frustrated rehearsal with the NBC Symphony Orchestra of Alfredo Catalini's *Dance of the Water Nymphs* from the opera *Loreley*. The tension in the room is almost palpable as Toscanini delivers his fiery tirade in a mixture of English & Italian before storming off in disgust.

[Toscanini's outburst during rehearsals_New York, 1953 \(1LS0002055\)](#)

Toscanini was a man who believed music was a religious ritual to be enjoyed in absolute silence. It was he who transformed his favourite love, Milan's La Scala theatre, turning it into an autonomous body, banning encores and putting an end to the shame of risottos being served in the balconies during

performances.

Intransigent both in music and in life, it is no surprise that Toscanini's favourite motto was: 'Your back bends when your soul does'.

2017 is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Arturo Toscanini and is being marked through a series of international celebrations including concerts, exhibitions, lectures and special releases.

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