

Münchener MotettenChor



G. Mahler: Symphony No. 8

Gustav Mahler

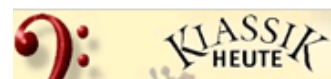
SACD aud 92.551

Pizzicato 3/2005 (Rémy Franck - 01.03.2005)

pizzicato

Am 25. & 26. Juni 1970 nahm Rafael Kubelik die Achte Mahler im Studio für die Deutsche Grammophon auf. Am 24 Juni entstand mit demselben hochkarätigen Solistenensemble diese Live-Aufnahme: was an Perfektion fehlt, wird, wie immer bei Kubelik, durch die Spontaneität des Dirigierens mehr als nur wettgemacht. Und so hört man auf dieser Platte eine der zügigsten, lebendigsten pulsierendsten und kontrastreichsten Interpretationen dieser Symphonie, die ich kenne.

klassik-heute.com Februar 2005 (Sixtus König - 08.02.2005)



Die Aufführung von Gustav Mahlers achter Sinfonie im Juni 1970 bildete nicht nur den Höhepunkt von Rafael Kubeliks Münchner Mahler-Zyklus, sondern stellte ein herausragendes Ereignis in der langen und überaus erfolgreichen Zusammenarbeit des Dirigenten mit dem Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks dar. Eine Aufführung der „Sinfonie der Tausend“ besaß damals durchaus noch die Aura des Sensationellen, die illustre Sänger-Riege und der Umstand, daß mit dem Konzert eine Schallplatten-Produktion verbunden war, taten das Ihrige, um die Erwartungen hochzuschrauben. Das Münchner Publikum und die von weit her angereisten Mahler-Enthusiasten wurden nicht enttäuscht: Kubelik war genau der rechte Mann, um die disparaten Elemente des gewaltigen Werkes zusammenzufassen, um die Massen der Chöre zu bändigen und den acht hervorragenden Gesangssolisten den nötigen Raum zur Entfaltung zu lassen, um jedes Detail mit Leben zu erfüllen und gleichzeitig den großen Bogen herzustellen. Seine sorgfältig vorbereitete und doch spontan und impulsiv wirkende Wiedergabe hinterließ bei allen, die sie miterleben durften, einen tiefen Eindruck.

Etwas von der außergewöhnlichen Atmosphäre dieses Konzertes teilt sich auch in der Live-Aufnahme mit, die dank dem vorzüglichen Remastering in frischem Glanz erstrahlt. Besitzern eines SACD-Players bietet sich die interessante Möglichkeit, die restaurierte Fassung mit der lediglich digitalisierten, ansonsten aber unbearbeiteten historischen Archiv-Aufnahme zu vergleichen. Sie ist in dieser Hybrid-SACD aus der neuen „Listen & Compare“-Serie von Audite der remasterten Version angehängt, womit der Hörer Gelegenheit erhält, die Arbeit des Tonmeisters zu überprüfen. Dem „Nur-CD-Hörer“, der auf diesen Vergleich verzichten muss, sei versichert, daß das Remastering keine Wünsche offen lässt und die musikalische Qualität der Aufnahme in jedem Fall die Anschaffung lohnt.

klassik.com April 2005 (Miquel Cabruja - 18.04.2005)



Mehrkanaligkeit

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht angezeigt.

Diapason Mai 2005 (Jean-Charles Hoffele - 01.05.2005)



Ce n'est pas la relative méforme de Norma Procter qui fragilisera le geste épique de Kubelik dans ce concert inédit, enregistré en même temps que la fameuse gravure de studio pour DG (et avec exactement la même équipe). Les ingénieurs de la Radio bavaroise ont réalisé une prise de son exemplaire de réalisme, supérieure à celle, plus sèche, du disque DG, saisissante dès les premiers accords du *Veni creator*, emporté d'un seul souffle (vingt et une minutes !). Cette exaltation, seul Bernstein l'a fait entendre. Mais là où il marque les épisodes, Kubelik tient le tempo : l'avancée, inexorable, vers la jubilation de la coda gagne en puissance mesure après mesure, laissant éclater les polyphonies circulaires du chœur – la fameuse rotation des astres que Mahler voulait illustrer.

La Seconde scène de Faust est ici un opéra : les chanteurs incarnent les personnages idéaux voulus par Goethe avec un sens dramatique que certains trouveront trop prononcé. Lorsqu'on entend la coda soulevée par Kubelik, galvanisée, on comprend que la 8e est une symphonie sans ombre, un chant du cosmos radieux avec l'être humain en son centre. Elle célèbre les noces de la vie et de l'univers avant que ne revienne le peuple de fantômes qui n'a presque jamais quitté le compositeur.

www.ClassicsToday.com May 2005 (David Hurwitz - 01.05.2005)



This live Mahler Symphony No. 8, made the same month as Rafael Kubelik's recording for DG, has all of the musicality of his studio effort, with markedly more excitement and spontaneity as well as a feeling of grandeur and commitment critical to the success of any performance of this piece. Kubelik also has what likely is the finest group of soloists on disc, led by the stunning Gretchen of Edith Mathis (incomparable in her second-movement solo before the appearance of the *Mater gloriosa*) and tenor Donald Grobe's superb Dr. Marianus (a part that defeats almost everyone who attempts it). The choirs rank among the best that have ever recorded this work, singing with great feeling as well as discipline, right down to the children's voices of the Regensburger Domspatzen. This makes for a particularly thrilling first movement, with a hair-raising central double fugue and a coda as glorious as any on disc. All of this stands in stark contrast to the DG recording, which is merely tidy and rather small-scale.

Kubelik's interpretation, outwardly very similar to the studio version (indeed within a few seconds overall), shows markedly more flexibility in matters of tempo and phrasing. He shapes the big moments in the first movement with natural impulsiveness, always responsive to the sense of the text. The vicious choral cries of "*Hostem repellas*" are particularly startling, even if the brass come to grief in their descending scales. In Part 2, particularly in the luminous passages involving the women and boys, this performance captures more orchestral detail and reveals a greater willingness to luxuriate in the sheer lushness of Mahler's aural palette. In fact, the only thing that prevents this interpretation from getting a highest rating is the curious fact that although Kubelik achieves miracles of ensemble coordination in the contrapuntal thickets of Part 1, there's some strangely sloppy ensemble at comparatively simple moments in Part 2 (listen to the confusion before the boys' choir enters with "*Er überwächst uns schon*"). It's not terribly serious, but it's quite noticeable.

When played on an SACD player, this disc allows you the opportunity to hear both the unprocessed original master and the performance as remastered for SACD stereo. Audite's sonic restoration is remarkable in comparison, creating a vivid soundstage that favors the voices just a bit, with the organ very well integrated. Most of the live performances in Audite's Kubelik Mahler cycle have been preferable to the conductor's studio recordings, and this one certainly is no exception. Even though the soloists are the same as on the DG release, there's no question that this effort better captures both the work as a whole and Kubelik's conception of it. Minor mishaps notwithstanding, this is a major event.

www.classicstodayfrance.com Mai 2005 (Christophe Huss - 01.05.2005)



Quel incroyable contraste avec la version Nagano qui paraît en même temps. Autant le chef américain intellectualise la partition et cherche à l'anoblir en une sorte de cérémonial mystique, autant Kubelik, capté ici le même mois que dans son enregistrement officiel, en traque la viscéralité et les éruptions.

Il est évident que la vision de Kubelik est plus immédiate, nettement plus conforme à ce qu'on attend traditionnellement de la 8e de Mahler. On remarquera aussi à quel point le concert transcende le chef, plus vif, plus exalté que dans son enregistrement officiel. La limite de ce disque est la somme de petits dérapages inhérents au concert. Ceux-ci sont davantage orchestraux (les trompettes, parfois vulgaires) que vocaux, puisque on trouve ici, à l'exception de Norma Procter aux sons assez tubés, une superbe brochette de solistes, emmenés par la soprano Edith Mathis et le ténor Donald Grobe, habitué des causes difficiles (il fut un excellent ténor dans Carmina Burana). Il y a aussi quelques incertitudes et chutes de tension d'ensemble dans la seconde partie, curieusement dans des endroits peu difficiles.

Kubelik avait également rassemblé dès ce concert la crème des chœurs de radios allemandes, chœur magnifiquement préparés et sur des charbons ardents, d'où un volet initial quasiment délirant et très significatif de cette liberté gagnée en concert par Kubelik, par opposition au disque. De facto, ce SACD (stéréo et non multicanal) au son excellent s'avère fort intéressant pour qui cherche la "Urkraft" de cette symphonie dans une version de concert de haut vol; un complément d'écoute intéressant par rapport aux références discographiques.

Le Monde de la Musique Juin 2005 (Patrick Szersnovicz - 01.06.2005)



Œuvre « officielle » chantant la joie de créer, vocale d'un bout à l'autre, la Huitième Symphonie « des Mille » (1906) est gagnée par l'illusion que des sujets sublimes – l'hymne Veni Creator, la scène finale du Second Faust de Goethe – garantiront la sublimité du contenu. Mais la structure fermée de son premier mouvement – une stricte forme sonate – et sa polyphonie serrée sauvent l'hymne de son caractère platement édifiant.

Si toute interprétation doit venir en aide à l'insuffisance des œuvres, la Huitième Symphonie requiert une interprétation parfaite. Enregistré « live » le 24 juin 1970 à Munich, à la tête d'un orchestre et de chanteurs exemplaires, Rafael Kubelik offre une vision puissante, « moderniste » et très proche de sa – magnifique – version officielle réalisée pour DG à la même époque. Si l'on demeure assez loin de l'exaltation d'un Bernstein ou de l'enthousiasme d'un Ozawa, l'équilibre et la rapidité des tempos, l'absence de pathos donnent la priorité au tissu musical. Le chef souligne dans le « Veni Creator » tout l'acquis des symphonies instrumentales précédentes et évite, dans la « Scène de Faust », l'écueil d'une simple succession d'airs et de chœurs. La prise de son, malgré l'excellence du report, n'est pas parfaite, mais la qualité des solistes vocaux est unique dans la discographie.

Classica-Répertoire Juin 2005 (Stéphane Friédérich - 01.06.2005)

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www.ionarts.org Friday, July 08, 2005 (- 08.07.2005)

Speaking of such a performance, Rafael Kubelik's 8th on Audite was also captured on one night (June 24th, 1970, to be precise). There are truly glorious moments in it, especially among the chorus and the singers, which surge without bounds. Martina Arroyo, Erna Spoorenberg, Edith Mathis, Julia Hamari, Norma Procter, Donald Grobe, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and Franz Crass certainly help. Vocally, this may be the most impressive 8th yet - unfortunately repeat listening is marred by some flat woodwinds and off brass. The first time it is hardly noticeable, but knowing the moments of slight failure has me cringe in anticipation. It's not a debilitating flaw, but a flaw nonetheless.

www.SA-CD.net August 26, 2005 (Mark Wagner - 06.08.2005)

SA-CD.net

Hmmmm.....

First, I will say that I have never heard a recording or performance taken at such a break neck speed....in fact, there are places in the first movement where the poor brass cannot keep up. I do not understand what the rush is, unless the engineer told Kubelik to keep it moving. As a veteran of the Telarc Mahler 8 recording with Robert Shaw and Atlanta (I was in one of the choirs from Ohio State), I cannot quite come to grips with the rapid pace. Also, the pace is way faster than my reference Mahler 8 with Solti/Chicago...and everyone always says that Solti took everything at light speed: even Solti at his fastest does not even come this close!!!!

Other than that, the sound is pretty nice overall, with the soloists spread nicely across the soundstage. The

boy's choir sounds fine and easy to identify, as opposed to other recordings of the 8th that I have heard. Also, the choirs are well represented, and actually a bit better than the other SACD of Mahler's 8th (listed below).

Brass playing is decent, though not up to what I heard in Atlanta nor on my Solti redbook or the RCA SACD with Colin Davis (RCA 82876 62834-2 also a live recording) which interestingly enough also features the Bayerischen Rundfunk Orchestra!!!!

Despite the brisk tempo, it is certainly an exciting performance!!!

Not the end all SACD of Mahler's 8th, but if you are a fanatical Mahlerite, then this is a good buy and worth checking out!!!!

www.SA-CD.net June 9, 2005 (Oscar Gil - 09.06.2005)



Kubelik is one of the truly great Mahler conductors. He focuses on the more lyric and descriptive aspects of the works, never over-emphasizing the theatrical and dramatic sections. His Audite live recordings, with the Bayerisches Rundfunks Orchester are more successful than the DG studio recordings, made roughly at the same time. A case in point is this Mahler 8 Symphony, taped at a live concert, just prior to the DG recording, made with the same soloists.

Given the huge forces involved, the performance is a miracle of perfection, and the only glitch could be the under-the-note attacks of one of the soprano soloists in the last section of the work.

By contrast, Kubelik's work is much more immediate and "alive" than on the DG recording, resulting in one of the outstanding M 8 recordings available. The sound is fine, not overly spacious but with sufficient detail.

www.musicweb-international.com September 2006 (Anne Ozorio - 22.09.2006)



Conceivably, many people own the Kubelik set of Mahler symphonies on DG. But being a live performance, and in remastered sound, this is still an excellent introduction to Mahler's monumental Eighth Symphony. Kubelik is a reliable, no frills conductor, who will always give a balanced, thoughtful reading without extremes of temperament. You could do a lot worse than to learn Mahler from this undoubted master.

This recording also benefits from an excellent set of soloists, whose voices are clearly differentiated: an important consideration in a symphony where the singers so often sing in a group, and where clarity helps bring out the interplay of individual voices. It is also live, as most recordings of this massive symphony are, given the logistics of putting together any performance. If you've got the "thousand" performers together, tape them for the moment may never come again! More seriously, a symphony like this is an event in itself, and an experience so unique that it generates its own atmosphere. The sheer dynamic of coordinating such vast numbers creates a sense of occasion which further inspires the performers to give their best. Even performances where there are elements not quite up to scratch retain this feeling of immediacy. If ever there was a symphony that needs to be listened to for total impact, this is it. It's churlish, I think, to expect utter perfection at all times, especially given the size of the forces involved. After all, the text is about the redemption of Faust and his being accepted into Heaven despite having sinned. Love transcends death, and redeems the flawed soul. Miss that, and you miss a fundamental aspect of Mahler's entire outlook on life, replicated in different forms in the Second, the Fourth, the Ninth and Das Lied von der Erde, if not more subtly elsewhere.

The main minus with this reissue, particularly for newcomers, is the poor booklet notes. On the other hand, that's no disqualification. Listen with your ears and soul, don't bury your nose in the booklet. Then, learn all

you can from other sources and recordings.

The opening movement, Veni, creator spiritus is particularly animated. With a powerful surge of the great organ, the symphony gets off the ground, soloists and choruses right on the mark. From an almost silent background, individual soloists rise, their voices weaving and blending together. The soloists are well chosen, as each voice is so distinctive it's easy to track them: there's no mistaking Fischer-Dieskau, for example, though his lines are less spectacular, perhaps, than those of the sopranos. Kubelik's characteristic light touch is persuasive in the non vocal passages. It mirrors the surprising delicacy of the vocal writing. Other conductors can get away with darker textures, perhaps because their singers aren't as transcendently clear as Kubelik's.

Even the rather over-bright recording has its merits, adding to the sense of heightened spiritual illumination. This isn't reality, it's technicolour Heaven, where various manifestations of the Virgin Mary, Gretchen, Faust and other symbolic figures sing, watched, presumably by anchorites in caves - as described in Goethe's original text.

Kubelik bathes the next movement with similar light. Behind the songs of the contraltos and Magna peccatrix, for example, you can hear details like plucked strings and harp. Overall, the singing is good, despite occasional strained notes pitched too ambitiously. In the penultimate chorus, the brass repeats the notes behind the words "Blicket auf!" and the sounds fade away, as if dissolving into space. Then, led by the Chorus mysticus and sopranos, themes from Veni, creator spiritus return rousingly, and in full force. Redeemed by love, Faust is transmuted into eternity and taken into Heaven. "Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan".

Wiener Zeitung Samstag, 05. Februar 2005 (Edwin Baumgartner - 05.02.2005)

Rafael Kubelik war der Prototyp des hochintelligenten und dabei grundehrlichen Musikers, einer von jenen, die von Stars à la Karajan in den Schatten gestellt wurden, die das Instrument der Publicity virtuos beherrschten, ihm aber an Tiefenschau das Wasser nicht reichen konnten. Nur als Mahler-Interpret ist Kubelik auch bei seinen Anhängern umstritten: Zu geradlinig, zu nur-musikantisch wären seine Interpretationen. Dieses Urteil gründet sich dabei auf Kubeliks Gesamteinspielung der Symphonien für die Deutsche Grammophongesellschaft.

Nun ist bei audite ein weiterer Mahler-Zyklus unter Kubelik erschienen, der wie ein Gegenentwurf zu den DG-Aufnahmen wirkt. Die audite-Aufnahmen, ebenfalls mit Kubeliks Symphonie-Orchester des bayerischen Rundfunks, basieren auf Live-Mitschnitten, die technisch glänzend überarbeitet wurden. Zu befürchten ist, dass der Zyklus mit den eben erschienen Symphonien 6, 7 und 8 abgeschlossen ist – das Band mit der Vierten dürfte verloren sein.

Kubeliks Mahler ist in den audite-Aufnahmen frei von der musikantischen Freundlichkeit, die in den DG-Aufnahmen befremdend wirkte. Die Sechste, bei der DG als nettes Stück Nachromantik aufgefasst, mutiert in der audite-Aufnahme zu einer wie von Furien gehetzten Alptraummusik, in der die Nacht von Blitzen grellen Lichts zerrissen wird. Nur Bernstein, Boulez und Szell haben ähnlich kompromisslose Deutungen vorgelegt.

Bei der Siebenten ist Kubelik sogar konkurrenzlos, lässt man Bernard Haitinks frühe Philips-Aufnahme und die extrem analytische Wiedergabe durch Michael Gielen einmal außer Acht. Die Balance von Schattenhaftem und Pompösem gelingt Kubelik ideal, die Nachtmusiken verströmen Leichtigkeit und Duft, und das Finale verliert dank überlegener Tempodramaturgie seine Problematik.

Ein Triumph ist auch die Achte: Ich wage zu behaupten, die Kubelik-Aufnahme sei die beste derzeit erhältliche. Wunderbare Klangbalance und kammermusikalische Durchhörbarkeit stehen im Dienst des

grandiosen Gesamtaufbaus. Sanftheit, letzte Zärtlichkeit und eine nahezu besessene Freude am strahlenden Klang weht durch diese Interpretation: Ein inneres Feuer lodert hier, das nur mit dem nicht adäquat wiederzugebenden jiddischen Ausdruck "der Brenn" zu beschreiben ist. Solisten und Chor fügen sich ideal in Kubeliks Konzept.

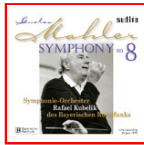
Eine Beigabe für Audiophile gibt's obendrein, nämlich eine unbearbeitete Version des Originaltonbandes, die man allerdings nur über SACD-Player abspielen kann.

Muzyka21 maj 2005 (Michał Szulakowski - 01.05.2005)

„Wszystkie moje wcześniejsze symfonie były tylko preludium do tej właśnie. W tamtych dziełach panuje jeszcze całkowicie subiektywny tragizm, to zaś jest jednym wielkim dawcą radości". Tak sam Gustav Mahler wypowiedział się o swojej VIII Symfonii i tak ją przedstawił Rafael Kubelik, jako „Universum" - to również Mahlerowskie jej określenie - niosące radość. Potężny utwór wymykał się jakimkolwiek istniejącym standardom i w swojej formie przypomina raczej dwuczęściową kantatę, której wykonanie angażuje ogromny zespół muzyków, 8 solistów, dwa chóry mieszane i jeden chłopięcy (w niniejszej interpretacji Kubelik posługuje się trzema chórami mieszanymi!), rozbudowaną sekcją smyczków i instrumentów dętych, do tego 5 harf, organy, fortepian, fisharmonia, czelesta, mandolina i perkusja - również niespotykanych rozmiarów. Premiera Symfonii tysiąca, bo takie miano otrzymała 8 Mahlera, przyniosła swojemu twórcy wielki sukces i święci go właściwie do dziś jako bodaj najbardziej znane dzieło tego wspaniałego kompozytora i dyrygenta.

www.allmusic.com 01.12.2005 (Blair Sanderson - 01.12.2005)

Rafael Kubelik made this live recording of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in E flat major with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on June 24, 1970, and it is certainly one of the most exciting on disc, if not quite the most exacting performance. Kubelik has enthusiastic soloists, choirs, and orchestral players who take on the so-called "Symphony of a Thousand" with great energy and heaven-storming power, and the force of the performance compels rapt listening. Yet this is perhaps a recording best enjoyed by people who know the work extremely well, and who understand the difficulties of keeping all these musicians together at the barline. Listeners who don't know the Symphony No. 8 may be puzzled at what seem to be disjointed tempos and some misalignments of rhythms, which are natural problems one might expect in a live performance of this sprawling symphony. Because of the large distances between the multiple choirs, eight singers, organ, and orchestra, to say nothing of the offstage brass, there are slight delays in response that can only be controlled in a studio setting. Newcomers to the work might opt instead for Georg Solti's classic 1971 recording on Decca, which is as accurate and thrilling a rendition as can be found anywhere. But connoisseurs who can forgive the minor inaccuracies of Kubelik's performance will still be impressed with its vitality and moved by its majesty.



G. Mahler: Symphony No. 8

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CD aud 95.551

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diapason la magazine de la musique classique

Ce n'est pas la relative méforme de Norma Procter qui fragilisera le geste épique de Kubelik dans ce concert inédit, enregistré en même temps que la fameuse gravure de studio pour DG (et avec exactement la même équipe). Les ingénieurs de la Radio bavaroise ont réalisé une prise de son exemplaire de réalisme, supérieure à celle, plus sèche, du disque DG, saisissante dès les premiers accords du Veni creator, emporté d'un seul souffle (vingt et une minutes !). Cette exaltation, seul Bernstein l'a fait entendre. Mais là où il marque les épisodes, Kubelik tient le tempo : l'avancée, inexorable, vers la jubilation de la coda gagne en puissance mesure après mesure, laissant éclater les polyphonies circulaires du chœur – la fameuse rotation des astres que Mahler voulait illustrer.

La Seconde scène de Faust est ici un opéra : les chanteurs incarnent les personnages idéaux voulus par Goethe avec un sens dramatique que certains trouveront trop prononcé. Lorsqu'on entend la coda soulevée par Kubelik, galvanisée, on comprend que la 8e est une symphonie sans ombre, un chant du

cosmos radieux avec l'être humain en son centre. Elle célèbre les noces de la vie et de l'univers avant que ne revienne le peuple de fantômes qui n'a presque jamais quitté le compositeur.

klassik-heute.com Februar 2005 (Sixtus König - 08.02.2005)



Die Aufführung von Gustav Mahlers achter Sinfonie im Juni 1970 bildete nicht nur den Höhepunkt von Rafael Kubeliks Münchner Mahler-Zyklus, sondern stellte ein herausragendes Ereignis in der langen und überaus erfolgreichen Zusammenarbeit des Dirigenten mit dem Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks dar. Eine Aufführung der „Sinfonie der Tausend“ besaß damals durchaus noch die Aura des Sensationellen, die illustre Sänger-Riege und der Umstand, daß mit dem Konzert eine Schallplatten-Produktion verbunden war, taten das Ihrige, um die Erwartungen hochzuschrauben. Das Münchner Publikum und die von weit her angereisten Mahler-Enthusiasten wurden nicht enttäuscht: Kubelik war genau der rechte Mann, um die disparaten Elemente des gewaltigen Werkes zusammenzufassen, um die Massen der Chöre zu bändigen und den acht hervorragenden Gesangssolisten den nötigen Raum zur Entfaltung zu lassen, um jedes Detail mit Leben zu erfüllen und gleichzeitig den großen Bogen herzustellen. Seine sorgfältig vorbereitete und doch spontan und impulsiv wirkende Wiedergabe hinterließ bei allen, die sie miterleben durften, einen tiefen Eindruck.

Etwas von der außergewöhnlichen Atmosphäre dieses Konzertes teilt sich auch in der Live-Aufnahme mit, die dank dem vorzüglichen Remastering in frischem Glanz erstrahlt. Besitzern eines SACD-Players bietet sich die interessante Möglichkeit, die restaurierte Fassung mit der lediglich digitalisierten, ansonsten aber unbearbeiteten historischen Archiv-Aufnahme zu vergleichen. Sie ist in dieser Hybrid-SACD aus der neuen „Listen & Compare“-Serie von Audite der remasterten Version angehängt, womit der Hörer Gelegenheit erhält, die Arbeit des Tonmeisters zu überprüfen. Dem „Nur-CD-Hörer“, der auf diesen Vergleich verzichten muss, sei versichert, daß das Remastering keine Wünsche offen lässt und die musikalische Qualität der Aufnahme in jedem Fall die Anschaffung lohnt.

klassik.com April 2005 (Miquel Cabruja - 18.04.2005)



Mehrkanaligkeit

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht angezeigt.

Le Monde de la Musique Juin 2005 (Patrick Szersnovicz - 01.06.2005)



Œuvre « officielle » chantant la joie de créer, vocale d'un bout à l'autre, la Huitième Symphonie « des Mille » (1906) est gagnée par l'illusion que des sujets sublimes – l'hymne Veni Creator, la scène finale du Second Faust de Goethe – garantiront la sublimité du contenu. Mais la structure fermée de son premier mouvement – une stricte forme sonate – et sa polyphonie serrée sauvent l'hymne de son caractère platement édifiant.

Si toute interprétation doit venir en aide à l'insuffisance des œuvres, la Huitième Symphonie requiert une interprétation parfaite. Enregistré « live » le 24 juin 1970 à Munich, à la tête d'un orchestre et de chanteurs exemplaires, Rafael Kubelik offre une vision puissante, « moderniste » et très proche de sa – magnifique – version officielle réalisée pour DG à la même époque. Si l'on demeure assez loin de l'exaltation d'un Bernstein ou de l'enthousiasme d'un Ozawa, l'équilibre et la rapidité des tempos, l'absence de pathos donnent la priorité au tissu musical. Le chef souligne dans le « Veni Creator » tout l'acquis des symphonies

instrumentales précédentes et évite, dans la « Scène de Faust », l'écueil d'une simple succession d'airs et de chœurs. La prise de son, malgré l'excellence du report, n'est pas parfaite, mais la qualité des solistes vocaux est unique dans la discographie.

Muzyka21 maj 2005 (Michał Szulakowski - 01.05.2005)

„Wszystkie moje wcześniejsze symfonie były tylko preludium do tej właśnie. W tamtych dziełach panuje jeszcze całkowicie subiektywny tragizm, to zaś jest jednym wielkim dawcą radości". Tak sam Gustav Mahler wypowiedział się o swojej VIII Symfonii i tak ją przedstawił Rafael Kubelik, jako „Universum" - to również Mahlerowskie jej określenie - niosące radość. Potężny utwór wymykał się jakimkolwiek istniejącym standardom i w swojej formie przypomina raczej dwuczęściową kantatę, której wykonanie angażuje ogromny zespół muzyków, 8 solistów, dwa chóry mieszane i jeden chłopięcy (w niniejszej interpretacji Kubelik posługuje się trzema chórami mieszanymi!), rozbudowaną sekcją smyczków i instrumentów dętych, do tego 5 harf, organy, fortepian, fisharmonia, czelesta, mandolina i perkusja - również niespotykanych rozmiarów. Premiera Symfonii tysiąca, bo takie miano otrzymała 8 Mahlera, przyniosła swojemu twórcy wielki sukces i święci go właściwie do dziś jako bodaj najbardziej znane dzieło tego wspaniałego kompozytora i dyrygenta.

Pizzicato 3/2005 (Rémy Franck - 01.03.2005)



Am 25. & 26. Juni 1970 nahm Rafael Kubelik die Achte Mahler im Studio für die Deutsche Grammophon auf. Am 24 Juni entstand mit demselben hochkarätigen Solistenensemble diese Live-Aufnahme: was an Perfektion fehlt, wird, wie immer bei Kubelik, durch die Spontaneität des Dirigierens mehr als nur wettgemacht. Und so hört man auf dieser Platte eine der zügigsten, lebendigsten pulsierendsten und kontrastreichsten Interpretationen dieser Symphonie, die ich kenne.

Wiener Zeitung Samstag, 05. Februar 2005 (Edwin Baumgartner - 05.02.2005)

Rafael Kubelik war der Prototyp des hochintelligenten und dabei grundehrlichen Musikers, einer von jenen, die von Stars à la Karajan in den Schatten gestellt wurden, die das Instrument der Publicity virtuos beherrschten, ihm aber an Tiefenschau das Wasser nicht reichen konnten. Nur als Mahler-Interpret ist Kubelik auch bei seinen Anhängern umstritten: Zu geradlinig, zu nur-musikantisch wären seine Interpretationen. Dieses Urteil gründet sich dabei auf Kubeliks Gesamteinspielung der Symphonien für die Deutsche Grammophongesellschaft.

Nun ist bei audite ein weiterer Mahler-Zyklus unter Kubelik erschienen, der wie ein Gegenentwurf zu den DG-Aufnahmen wirkt. Die audite-Aufnahmen, ebenfalls mit Kubeliks Symphonie-Orchester des bayerischen Rundfunks, basieren auf Live-Mitschnitten, die technisch glänzend überarbeitet wurden. Zu befürchten ist, dass der Zyklus mit den eben erschienen Symphonien 6, 7 und 8 abgeschlossen ist – das Band mit der Vierten dürfte verloren sein.

Kubeliks Mahler ist in den audite-Aufnahmen frei von der musikantischen Freundlichkeit, die in den DG-Aufnahmen befremdend wirkte. Die Sechste, bei der DG als nettes Stück Nachromantik aufgefasst, mutiert in der audite-Aufnahme zu einer wie von Furien gehetzten Albtraummusik, in der die Nacht von Blitzen grellen Lichts zerrissen wird. Nur Bernstein, Boulez und Szell haben ähnlich kompromisslose Deutungen vorgelegt.

Bei der Siebenten ist Kubelik sogar konkurrenzlos, lässt man Bernard Haitinks frühe Philips-Aufnahme und die extrem analytische Wiedergabe durch Michael Gielen einmal außer Acht. Die Balance von Schattenhaftem und Pompösem gelingt Kubelik ideal, die Nachtmusiken verströmen Leichtigkeit und Duft, und das Finale verliert dank überlegener Tempodramaturgie seine Problematik.

Ein Triumph ist auch die Achte: Ich wage zu behaupten, die Kubelik-Aufnahme sei die beste derzeit erhältliche. Wunderbare Klangbalance und kammermusikalische Durchhörbarkeit stehen im Dienst des grandiosen Gesamtaufbaus. Sanftheit, letzte Zärtlichkeit und eine nahezu besessene Freude am strahlenden Klang weht durch diese Interpretation: Ein inneres Feuer lodert hier, das nur mit dem nicht adäquat wiederzugebenden jiddischen Ausdruck "der Brenn" zu beschreiben ist. Solisten und Chor fügen sich ideal in Kubeliks Konzept.

Eine Beigabe für Audiophile gibt's obendrein, nämlich eine unbearbeitete Version des Originaltonbandes, die man allerdings nur über SACD-Player abspielen kann.

www.ClassicsToday.com May 2005 (David Hurwitz - 01.05.2005)



This live Mahler Symphony No. 8, made the same month as Rafael Kubelik's recording for DG, has all of the musicality of his studio effort, with markedly more excitement and spontaneity as well as a feeling of grandeur and commitment critical to the success of any performance of this piece. Kubelik also has what likely is the finest group of soloists on disc, led by the stunning Gretchen of Edith Mathis (incomparable in her second-movement solo before the appearance of the Mater gloriosa) and tenor Donald Grobe's superb Dr. Marianus (a part that defeats almost everyone who attempts it). The choirs rank among the best that have ever recorded this work, singing with great feeling as well as discipline, right down to the children's voices of the Regensburger Domspatzen. This makes for a particularly thrilling first movement, with a hair-raising central double fugue and a coda as glorious as any on disc. All of this stands in stark contrast to the DG recording, which is merely tidy and rather small-scale.

Kubelik's interpretation, outwardly very similar to the studio version (indeed within a few seconds overall), shows markedly more flexibility in matters of tempo and phrasing. He shapes the big moments in the first movement with natural impulsiveness, always responsive to the sense of the text. The vicious choral cries of "Hostem repellas" are particularly startling, even if the brass come to grief in their descending scales. In Part 2, particularly in the luminous passages involving the women and boys, this performance captures more orchestral detail and reveals a greater willingness to luxuriate in the sheer lushness of Mahler's aural palette. In fact, the only thing that prevents this interpretation from getting a highest rating is the curious fact that although Kubelik achieves miracles of ensemble coordination in the contrapuntal thickets of Part 1, there's some strangely sloppy ensemble at comparatively simple moments in Part 2 (listen to the confusion before the boys' choir enters with "Er überwächst uns schon"). It's not terribly serious, but it's quite noticeable.

When played on an SACD player, this disc allows you the opportunity to hear both the unprocessed original master and the performance as remastered for SACD stereo. Audite's sonic restoration is remarkable in comparison, creating a vivid soundstage that favors the voices just a bit, with the organ very well integrated. Most of the live performances in Audite's Kubelik Mahler cycle have been preferable to the conductor's studio recordings, and this one certainly is no exception. Even though the soloists are the same as on the DG release, there's no question that this effort better captures both the work as a whole and Kubelik's conception of it. Minor mishaps notwithstanding, this is a major event.

www.classicstodayfrance.com Mai 2005 (Christophe Huss - 01.05.2005)



Quel incroyable contraste avec la version Nagano qui paraît en même temps. Autant le chef américain intellectualise la partition et cherche à l'anoblir en une sorte de cérémonial mystique, autant Kubelik, capté ici le même mois que dans son enregistrement officiel, en traque la viscéralité et les éruptions.

Il est évident que la vision de Kubelik est plus immédiate, nettement plus conforme à ce qu'on attend traditionnellement de la 8e de Mahler. On remarquera aussi à quel point le concert transcende le chef, plus vif, plus exalté que dans son enregistrement officiel. La limite de ce disque est la somme de petits dérapages inhérents au concert. Ceux-ci sont davantage orchestraux (les trompettes, parfois vulgaires) que vocaux, puisque on trouve ici, à l'exception de Norma Procter aux sons assez tubés, une superbe brochette de solistes, emmenés par la soprano Edith Mathis et le ténor Donald Grobe, habitué des causes difficiles (il fut un excellent ténor dans Carmina Burana). Il y a aussi quelques incertitudes et chutes de tension d'ensemble dans la seconde partie, curieusement dans des endroits peu difficiles.

Kubelik avait également rassemblé dès ce concert la crème des chœurs de radios allemandes, chœur magnifiquement préparés et sur des charbons ardents, d'où un volet initial quasiment délirant et très significatif de cette liberté gagnée en concert par Kubelik, par opposition au disque. De facto, ce SACD (stéréo et non multicanal) au son excellent s'avère fort intéressant pour qui cherche la "Urkraft" de cette symphonie dans une version de concert de haut vol; un complément d'écoute intéressant par rapport aux références discographiques.

www.ionarts.org Friday, July 08, 2005 (- 08.07.2005)

Speaking of such a performance, Rafael Kubelik's 8th on Audite was also captured on one night (June 24th, 1970, to be precise). There are truly glorious moments in it, especially among the chorus and the singers, which surge without bounds. Martina Arroyo, Erna Spoorenberg, Edith Mathis, Julia Hamari, Norma Procter, Donald Grobe, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and Franz Crass certainly help. Vocally, this may be the most impressive 8th yet - unfortunately repeat listening is marred by some flat woodwinds and off brass. The first time it is hardly noticeable, but knowing the moments of slight failure has me cringe in anticipation. It's not a debilitating flaw, but a flaw nonetheless.

www.SA-CD.net August 26, 2005 (Mark Wagner - 06.08.2005)



Hmmmm.....

First, I will say that I have never heard a recording or performance taken at such a break neck speed...in fact, there are places in the first movement where the poor brass cannot keep up. I do not understand what the rush is, unless the engineer told Kubelik to keep it moving. As a veteran of the Telarc Mahler 8 recording with Robert Shaw and Atlanta (I was in one of the choirs from Ohio State), I cannot quite come to grips with the rapid pace. Also, the pace is way faster than my reference Mahler 8 with Solti/Chicago...and everyone always says that Solti took everything at light speed: even Solti at his fastest does not even come this close!!!!

Other than that, the sound is pretty nice overall, with the soloists spread nicely across the soundstage. The boy's choir sounds fine and easy to identify, as opposed to other recordings of the 8th that I have heard. Also, the choirs are well represented, and actually a bit better than the other SACD of Mahler's 8th (listed below).

Brass playing is decent, though not up to what I heard in Atlanta nor on my Solti redbook or the RCA SACD with Colin Davis (RCA 82876 62834-2 also a live recording) which interestingly enough also features the Bayerischen Rundfunk Orchestra!!!!

Despite the brisk tempo, it is certainly an exciting performance!!!

Not the end all SACD of Mahler's 8th, but if you are a fanatical Mahlerite, then this is a good buy and worth checking out!!!!

www.SA-CD.net June 9, 2005 (Oscar Gil - 09.06.2005)

SA-CD.net

Kubelik is one of the truly great Mahler conductors. He focuses on the more lyric and descriptive aspects of the works, never over-emphasizing the theatrical and dramatic sections. His Audite live recordings, with the Bayerisches Rundfunks Orchester are more succesfull than the DG studio recordings, made roughly at the same time. A case in point is this Mahler 8 Symphony, taped at a live concert, just prior to the DG recording, made with the same soloists.

Given the huge forces involved, the performance is a miracle of perfection, and the only glitch could be the under-the-note attacks of one of the soprano soloists in tha last section of the work.

By contrast, Kubeliks work is much more inmediate and "alive" than on the DG recording, resulting in one of the outstanding M 8 recordings available. The sound is fine, not overly spacious but with suficient detail.

Audiophile Audition July 2, 2010 (Patrick P.L. Lam - 02.07.2010)

"I have just completed my 8th – it is the greatest I've ever done. And so particular in content and form that it is impossible to write about it. – Imagine that the universe starts sounding and ringing. It is no longer human voices but the planets and suns that are circling." These were the words Mahler wrote on his newly created powerhouse to one of his protégés, Willem Mengelberg, in 1906. In this live performance of Mahler's Eighth Symphony from Munich on June 24th 1970, Rafael Kubelik and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO) attest to this Mahlerian vision through a combination of technical command and musical coherency.

Kubelik takes Part 1 of this work on a rather fast pace. Along with the live performances from Bernstein (1962, Sony), Gergiev (2008, LSO Live) and the studio performance of Bertini (1991, EMI), his is one of the selected few who takes this section under 22 minutes. The tonal E Flat chord from Eberhard Kraus on the organ gave a platform to the mighty proclamation introduced by the forces of the vocal choruses and soloists. Together with the instrumentalists, they add to weight the text's spiritual profundity.

Part I is often viewed as a mass-oratorio, and the choral expertise of these soloists (especially with Edith Mathis and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau) and those of Rafael Kubelik's craftsmanship of delivering an emphatic invocation to the spirit of the Creator that paves the soft cantabile that presents the vocalists with soft tranquility is particularly uplifting. Although one may feel that the final "Gloria Patri Domino" sounds restrained from a full rejoice, the projection by the vocalists and unison of the orchestra and Kraus in accelerated tempo does appeal as to bring this "crowning apotheosis" onto a new dimension of this finite universe.

Part II is set to poetry on Goethe's "Faust," and has been dubbed as Mahler's closest rendition to an operatic composition that he never realized in his lifetime. Here, the soloists each take on a different personality: Arroyo as Magna peccatrix, Sporeenberg as Mater gloriosa, Mathis as Una poenitentium

(Gretchen), Hamari as Mulier Samaritana, Procter as Maria Aegyptiaca, Grober as Doctor Marianus, Fischer-Dieskau as Pater ecstaticus, and Crass as Pater profundus. In this Part, Donald Grobe and the Erna Spoorenberg each give ethereal demonstrations in their roles, with poignant sensitivity and a powerful grip to the lasting emotions from the score. Somewhat disappointing is the final segment of this 52-minute section, where one of the sopranos misses the mark in a high note. This aside, Kubelik together with the musicians of the BRSO provide sympathetic accompaniment throughout, and in the final last minute, they over-triumph the human voices with their gigantic ending like thunders descended from the heavens.

Excellent notes from Erich Mauermann accompanies this Audite disc, made available from the archives of the Bavarian Radio.

Fanfare Issue 34:2 (Nov/Dec 2010) (Lynn René Bayley - 01.11.2010)

fanfare

It's really a pity that this disc is just a reissue of a performance previously available in DGG's set of complete Mahler symphonies conducted by Kubelík, as there's so much I'd like to say about it that's probably already been said, so I shall reduce my comments to the minimum.

Being personally very fussy in regard to symphonies including singers, I'll automatically reject performances with defective voices even if the conducting is considered to be the best ever. For this reason, I don't own the otherwise fantastic performances by Jascha Horenstein and Klaus Tennstedt, and never will, just as I don't own or even listen to most recordings of the Beethoven Ninth made after, say, 1980. Solti's famous studio recording of this Mahler symphony had, perhaps, the best eight singers amassed in one place, but they were recorded separately from the orchestra, which created a flat, two-dimensional sound I find offensive. That being said, I am partial to the recordings by Leopold Stokowski (1950), Bernard Haitink (the earlier recording with Cotrubas, Harper, and Prey), and Antoni Wit, in which the defective voices are, to my ears, less annoying than in the others, and generally just one bad voice per ensemble.

The fact that Kubelík, who never pushed his name or fame and in fact retreated from a publicity machine, was able to entice these eight outstanding singers to Munich for this performance says a lot for how much he was respected as a musician. The one name not universally feted at the time was tenor Donald Grobe, and ironically he produces the finest singing of this very difficult music I've ever heard (James King with Solti notwithstanding). Kubelík also managed to get truly involved and exciting singing out of Martina Arroyo, and that in itself is a miracle. (He did the same with Gundula Janowitz in his studio recording of *Die Meistersinger*, though overall his conducting on that set, like most of his conducting in a studio environment, lacks the full power and emotional commitment of his live work). Sometimes the singers are a little off-mike, coming only out of the left or right speakers, but that's a condition of the original microphone setup and can't be changed.

Undoubtedly the most controversial aspect of this performance is its full-speed-ahead tempos, particularly in "Veni, Creator Spiritus," which Kubelík dispatches in a mere 21 minutes. (Don't believe the designation of 21:30 on the CD box; 25 seconds of that is silence with audience coughing before part II.) But, shockingly, it doesn't sound terribly rushed most of the time, there are few dropped notes, and the whole thing has the ecstatic quality of a satori. If you happen to be allergic to fast tempos in Mahler, then, this recording is not for you, but if that's not a problem you'll find this the greatest Mahler Eighth ever issued. I've hereby retired the Haitink recording from my collection; good as it is, it doesn't have Kubelík's overwhelming emotional impact. Since not every performance in the Kubelík set is of equal quality (no conductor's integral set is consistently great), I encourage you to add this disc to your collection. Audite's 24-bit remastering brings out every detail of this performance with stunning warmth and clarity. I'd compare the sound favorably to any all-digital Eighth on the market.

<http://transcentury.blogspot.com> June 24, 2010 (- 24.06.2010)

With Mahler's music now so popular – with a veritable flood of recordings emerging as the 100th anniversary of his death in 1911 approaches – it is all too easy to forget that his symphonies and song cycles were esoteric just a few decades ago. When Mahler himself famously said, “My time will come when his is over,” he was referring to Johann Strauss Jr. – but the quotation nowadays is usually abbreviated to “my time will come” and used to indicate Mahler's expectation that it would take many years for his music to be widely accepted. And so it did: despite the early advocacy of conductors who knew Mahler personally (notably Bruno Walter), it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that Mahler's music was “discovered” by audiences at large and widely accepted as part of the standard orchestral and vocal repertoire.

Mahler's music's progress came in fits and starts, as historic recordings make clear. It was Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) who first performed a complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, in Munich, and Kubelik's way with Mahler – set firmly in the central European and Germanic tradition – is impressive even today. But for 21st-century listeners, his historic recordings have nearly as many low points as high ones. Audite is selling the live recording of Kubelik's November 2, 1979 performance of Mahler's First at a low price because the CD is packaged as an insert with the Audite 2010 recording catalogue: listeners are essentially paying for the catalogue and getting the disc as a bonus (there is not a shred of information presented about the performance except what is printed on the CD). Despite the irritating packaging strategy, there is a great deal to like in this performance. It flows gorgeously, with the smoothness of a fine wine, and Kubelik shows extraordinary sensitivity to Mahler's mood shifts – naïveté, drama, preciousness, vulgarity and passion all get their full due. But Kubelik, like Walter, came from a tradition in which conductors seeking a work's emotional center played fast and loose with what the composer actually wrote. This does not go down well in Mahler, who was a famed conductor himself and knew perfectly well what forms of expression and tempos he wanted (his scores are filled with instructions for conductors). Mahler wanted the exposition of the first movement of Symphony No. 1 repeated; Kubelik does not repeat it. Mahler wanted consistent tempos within sections; Kubelik varies them constantly, with rubato so frequent that it becomes an integral part of the performance. The tempo changes are usually slight but always noticeable, as Kubelik extends a phrase here and compresses one there in attempting to get to the heart of the music. It has to be said that this is often effective: the contrast between the storms and beauties of the finale is brought out particularly well. But it also has to be said that this approach becomes annoying when it is so pervasive a part of a presentation. There is vigor in this recording, and beauty; but it does not ultimately sound like Mahler – at least not Mahler as the composer wanted his music to sound.

There are similar strengths and weaknesses in Kubelik's Mahler Eighth, another live recording and an earlier one – dating to June 24, 1970. Some parts of the performance are simply extraordinary. The very opening, for example, strides so boldly that the phrase “Veni, creator spiritus” becomes not a plea for an infusion of the Holy Spirit but a command for it to appear and do Mahler's bidding. In fact, the entire first part of the symphony is quick and intense – the tempo marking *Allegro impetuoso* certainly gets its due here. Yet some of the beauty of this first section is missing: Kubelik pushes the music just a little too feverishly at times. In Part II of the symphony, the finale scene from Goethe's *Faust*, Kubelik presents some of the most wonderful voices ever to perform this work. What vocal talent! Arroyo, Mathis, Grobe, Fischer-Dieskau – the lineup of stars sparkles, surmounting Mahler's difficult vocal lines with apparent ease. At the same time, this is a very operatic conception of Part II: instead of being a cantata (or part of a work that is a symphony-cantata hybrid), this section is highly dramatic – and frequently quite speedy (the boys' chorus does keep up, but it is a near thing a few times). The transcendent message tends to disappear behind the vocal brilliance – although it is certainly a joy to hear such first-rate singers in this music. At the end, when everything resounds – surely even the concert hall in Munich – Kubelik produces a truly overwhelming conclusion. But for all its excitement, the performance lacks a touch of the ineffable. (And on a mundane level, the CD lacks translations of the Latin and German texts, although it provides them in full in the original languages.)

www.allmusic.com 01.12.2005 (Blair Sanderson - 01.12.2005)

Rafael Kubelik made this live recording of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in E flat major with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on June 24, 1970, and it is certainly one of the most exciting on disc, if not quite the most exacting performance. Kubelik has enthusiastic soloists, choirs, and orchestral players who take on the so-called "Symphony of a Thousand" with great energy and heaven-storming power, and the force of the performance compels rapt listening. Yet this is perhaps a recording best enjoyed by people who know the work extremely well, and who understand the difficulties of keeping all these musicians together at the barline. Listeners who don't know the Symphony No. 8 may be puzzled at what seem to be disjointed tempos and some misalignments of rhythms, which are natural problems one might expect in a live performance of this sprawling symphony. Because of the large distances between the multiple choirs, eight singers, organ, and orchestra, to say nothing of the offstage brass, there are slight delays in response that can only be controlled in a studio setting. Newcomers to the work might opt instead for Georg Solti's classic 1971 recording on Decca, which is as accurate and thrilling a rendition as can be found anywhere. But connoisseurs who can forgive the minor inaccuracies of Kubelik's performance will still be impressed with its vitality and moved by its majesty.

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With Mahler's music now so popular – with a veritable flood of recordings emerging as the 100th anniversary of his death in 1911 approaches – it is all too easy to forget that his symphonies and song cycles were esoteric just a few decades ago. When Mahler himself famously said, "My time will come when his is over," he was referring to Johann Strauss Jr. – but the quotation nowadays is usually abbreviated to "my time will come" and used to indicate Mahler's expectation that it would take many years for his music to be widely accepted. And so it did: despite the early advocacy of conductors who knew Mahler personally (notably Bruno Walter), it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that Mahler's music was "discovered" by audiences at large and widely accepted as part of the standard orchestral and vocal repertoire. Mahler's music's progress came in fits and starts, as historic recordings make clear. It was Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) who first performed a complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, in Munich, and Kubelik's way with Mahler – set firmly in the central European and Germanic tradition – is impressive even today. But for 21st-century listeners, his historic recordings have nearly as many low points as high ones. Audite is selling the live recording of Kubelik's November 2, 1979 performance of Mahler's First at a low price because the CD is packaged as an insert with the Audite 2010 recording catalogue: listeners are essentially paying for the catalogue and getting the disc as a bonus (there is not a shred of information presented about the performance except what is printed on the CD). Despite the irritating packaging strategy, there is a great deal to like in this performance. It flows gorgeously, with the smoothness of a fine wine, and Kubelik shows extraordinary sensitivity to Mahler's mood shifts – naïveté, drama, preciousness, vulgarity and passion all get their full due. But Kubelik, like Walter, came from a tradition in which conductors seeking a work's emotional center played fast and loose with what the composer actually wrote. This does not go down well in Mahler, who was a famed conductor himself and knew perfectly well what forms of expression and tempos he wanted (his scores are filled with instructions for conductors). Mahler wanted the exposition of the first movement of Symphony No. 1 repeated; Kubelik does not repeat it. Mahler wanted consistent tempos within sections; Kubelik varies them constantly, with rubato so frequent that it becomes an integral part of the performance. The tempo changes are usually slight but always noticeable, as Kubelik extends a phrase here and compresses one there in attempting to get to the heart of the music. It has to be said that this is often effective: the contrast between the storms and beauties of the finale is brought out particularly well. But it also has to be said that this approach becomes annoying when it is so pervasive a part of a presentation. There is vigor in this recording, and beauty; but it does not ultimately sound like Mahler – at least not Mahler as the composer wanted his music to sound. There are similar strengths and weaknesses in Kubelik's Mahler Eighth, another live recording and an earlier one – dating to June 24, 1970. Some parts of the performance are simply extraordinary. The very opening, for example, strides so boldly that the

phrase “Veni, creator spiritus” becomes not a plea for an infusion of the Holy Spirit but a command for it to appear and do Mahler’s bidding. In fact, the entire first part of the symphony is quick and intense – the tempo marking Allegro impetuoso certainly gets its due here. Yet some of the beauty of this first section is missing: Kubelik pushes the music just a little too feverishly at times. In Part II of the symphony, the finale scene from Goethe’s Faust, Kubelik presents some of the most wonderful voices ever to perform this work. What vocal talent! Arroyo, Mathis, Grobe, Fischer-Dieskau – the lineup of stars sparkles, surmounting Mahler’s difficult vocal lines with apparent ease. At the same time, this is a very operatic conception of Part II: instead of being a cantata (or part of a work that is a symphony-cantata hybrid), this section is highly dramatic – and frequently quite speedy (the boys’ chorus does keep up, but it is a near thing a few times). The transcendent message tends to disappear behind the vocal brilliance – although it is certainly a joy to hear such first-rate singers in this music. At the end, when everything resounds – surely even the concert hall in Munich – Kubelik produces a truly overwhelming conclusion. But for all its excitement, the performance lacks a touch of the ineffable. (And on a mundane level, the CD lacks translations of the Latin and German texts, although it provides them in full in the original languages.)