



F. Schubert: Symphony No. 8, D 944 & No. 3, D 200

aud 92.542



Audiophile Audition June 2005 (Gary Lemco - 2005.06.18)

These two performances of Schubert symphony staples feature the great Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) and his responsive Bavarian Radio Symphony, here taped 27 March 1969 (Ninth) and 24 February 1977 (Third). The booklet lists the C Major as No. 8, disallowing the usual count which makes room for the invisible Gastein Symphony. Besides the absolutely revived sound via multichannel DSD of these glowing performances is the astonishing warmth and roundedness of the phrasing, from the opening horn motif of The Great Symphony, to the infectious woodwind parts in the Menuetto of the D Major.

Schubert's tendency to have two distinct rhythms or pulses working together in the C Major produces some marvelous, contrapuntal effects; and the basses and cellos answered by the clarinet, flute and brass, introduce delicate timbres that linger well beyond the usual reverberations of a sound system. Kubelik builds to dynamically controlled climaxes; my only quibble that he neither retards nor crescendos for the coda's peroration after the mesmerizing and galloping riffs. I guess Mengelberg spoiled me in this moment. While Furtwaengler remains my idol in the Andante movement, there are striking moments in Kubelik's account, especially the warmth of the strings after the oboe's opening motive.

The D Major Symphony from 1977 has an earthy geniality and fluency, perhaps not so blithe in the Menuetto as was that of Carlos Kleiber, but effective nonetheless. The surround sound effects capture Schubert's weaving instrumentation gloriously, with antiphonal winds enjoying the comely breadth and generous intonation of the Bavarian players. With the volume high, these renditions make for a redoubtable Schubert of much lyric grandeur.

Classica-Répertoire Septembre 2005 (Francis Drésel - 2005.09.01)

Rafael Kubelik ne consacra hélas que peu de sessions d'enregistrement à Schubert, puisqu'elles furent limitées aux Symphonies nos 3,4 et 8 « Inachevée » avec le Philharmonique de Vienne au début des années 60 et à la « Grande » Symphonie en ut (la n° 9, numérotée n° 8 dans la présente publication) avec le Royal Philharmonic en 1958. Plus grave : ces témoignages EMI d'un artiste qui se montra souvent à son meilleur en public sont relativement décevants, la Troisième Symphonie, récemment rééditée dans le cadre de la collection « Great Conductors of the 20th Century », s'avérant relativement lourde et indifférente. Rien à voir, en tout cas, avec cet enthousiasmant concert de février 1977 avec « son » Orchestre de la Radio bavaroise, où le chef d'origine tchèque rivalise au contraire de souplesse, de lyrisme, de chaleur. On peut même lui trouver plus de charme qu'à l'interprétation légendaire de Carlos Kleiber (DG « The Originals »), certes fulgurante mais manquant sensiblement de tendresse. Kubelik se situe ici dans le sillage de Günter Wand (RCA), avec peut-être plus d'humanité encore. Remontant à un enregistrement public de mars 1969, la « Grande » Symphonie se révèle – désormais dans une parfaite qualité sonore – sans doute plus précieuse encore. La version de studio était en effet fort attachante, avec une vitalité et une sorte d'optimisme rarement de mise dans cette œuvre, mais une réalisation orchestrale pas vraiment à la

hauteur. Sans renoncer à cette approche radieuse, Kubelik lui confère ici une toute autre dimension, chantante et lumineuse, mais parcourue d'une singulière tension et d'envolées absolument superbes (fin du premier mouvement, Scherzo, Finale). La nécessaire introspection du mouvement lent n'étant pas en reste, on dispose d'une interprétation captivante, dynamique et profonde à la fois.

Sans la dimension tragique des gravures de Wilhelm Furtwängler, ni la veine spontanément viennoise de celles de Josef Krips, elle rappelle plutôt la désarmante simplicité à laquelle parvenait Bruno Walter (Sony), mais avec davantage d'énergie et de rebondissement rythmique. L'ensemble forme en tout cas un disque magnifique, une fois encore de nature à enrichir l'image que l'on peut avoir de cet immense chef d'orchestre.

Diapason Mai 2005 (Jean-Claude Hulot - 2005.05.01)

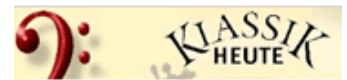
le magazine de la musique classique
diapason

Dans la vaste discographie laissée par Kubelik chez DG, Schubert ne figure pas. Il faut remonter à la charnière des années cinquante et soixante pour retrouver chez Emi cette Symphonie n° 3 gravée à Vienne, récemment rééditée dans la collection « grands chefs du XXe siècle » (cf. n° 519), la 4e et la 8e avec les Viennois également et une 9e avec le Royal Philharmonie de Londres. Il est donc d'autant plus intéressant de découvrir sur cet album deux enregistrements de la Radio bavaroise ; la 9e de 1969 vaut par son élan, son rebond rythmique sans relâche, dans une perspective dynamique et lumineuse, loin du tragique des lectures furtwängliennes ou des visions pré-brucknériennes de Giulini (curieusement, comme Giulini avec le même orchestre - Sony - Kubelik laisse s'évanouir l'accord final). Vision solaire, d'une allégresse conquérante, ivre de sa propre tension – impression qu'accentue l'absence de reprises –, qui méritait assurément d'être de nouveau disponible, dans un son de très belle qualité de surcroît. La 3e, plus tardive (1977), reflète bien le caractère foncièrement humain de Kubelik ; reposant sur des basses bien présentes, elle respire une bonhomie populaire pleine de charme, plus rustique qu'avec Wand (RCA) ou Böhm (DG), moins divinement fluide aussi qu'avec Carlos Kleiber (DG).

hifi & records 2/2005 (Ludwig Flich - 2005.04.01)

Um gute Ideen ist Audite-Chef Ludger Böckenhoff nicht verlegen. Abgesehen davon, dass er bei Neuheiten auf SACD (mit Hybrid-CD-Schicht) setzt, haben seine Übertragungen aus dem Archiv des Bayerischen Rundfunks mit Kubelik schon für vielfaches begeistertes Aufhorchen gesorgt. Nun zeigt der akribische Toningenieur, welchen Einfluss eine digitale Überspielung auf den Originalklang haben kann: Die SACD-Schicht bietet die beiden Werke auch in ihrer unbehandelten Masterband-Qualität an. Was klingt denn besser? Meiner Meinung nach das Original trotz leichten Rauschens und etlicher Zwischengeräusche; kurios etwa ein Hustenanfall im Andante der Neunten, das im Remaster zum beschönigenden elektronischen Summgeräusch – ähnlich dem Zensur-Signal im US-TV – entartet (0:26). Die subtile Bearbeitung mit intelligenter Störgeräusch-Beseitigung ist eben auch nicht die Welt. Die „Dritte“, präserter aufgenommen (1977) als die Große C-Dur (1969), ist interpretatorisch höchstklassig; die Neunte, hier mit der irrtümlichen alten Nummernbezeichnung „8“, wirkt impulsiv und drängend, wobei man am besten über den Beginn – Kubelik nimmt ihn traditionell (und falsch) langsam – hinweghört.

klassik-heute.com 2/2005 (Benjamin G. Cohrs - 2005.02.02)



Für mich liegt der eigentliche Wert dieser Produktion in der Grundidee; dank des SACD-Formates ist es möglich, auf einer zusätzlichen Spur (Tr. 9-16) den Originalzustand des zugrundegelegten Bandes vor dem Remastering wiederzugeben. So lässt sich nachvollziehen, welche hervorragende Arbeit die Tontechniker bei der Wiederherstellung solchen Materials leisten, das oft nicht mehr in bestem Zustand ist. So wird der dokumentarische Wert unterstrichen, derlei Mitschnitte dauerhaft zu bewahren. „Listen & Compare“ heißt diese neue Art der Präsentation, die die SACD-Technik innovativ nutzt. Ich möchte hier wenig dazu sagen – und ich kann nur empfehlen, nach Möglichkeit beide Versionen wirklich zu „hören und zu vergleichen“.

Die Mitschnitte vom 27. 3. 1969 (D 944) und 24. 2. 1977 klingen sehr unterschiedlich; das Remastering geht mir persönlich allerdings (abgesehen von notwendigen Aufbesserungen) bezüglich der Veränderungen der Klang-Atmosphäre ein bisschen zu weit. Die Aufführungen selbst sind von sehr unterschiedlicher Güte: Hervorragend finde ich die dritte Sinfonie, zupackend, geradezu hinreißend leidenschaftlich drängt sie unter den Händen Kubeliks nach vorne. Besonders gefällt das flüssig genommene, dennoch weit atmende Allegretto, da Kubelik die Musik in übergeordneten Einheiten schwingen lässt, ähnlich wie beispielsweise Celibidache in seinem legendären Mitschnitt von Schuberts fünfter Sinfonie (Stuttgart, 31. 10. 1979, DGG 445 473 2). Die „Große“ C-Dur-Sinfonie drängt ebenfalls nach vorn, ist aber schon beinahe fieberhaft überhastet. Auch 1969 war übrigens unter Schubert-Kennern schon bekannt, daß die Angabe 4/4-Takt zu Beginn der Andante-Einleitung auf eine Fehlinterpretation des ersten Herausgebers Johannes Brahms zurückgeht; im Original steht Alla Breve. Kubelik entschied sich für die traditionell pathetisch langsam beginnende Einleitung mit dem dann nötigen gewaltsamen Beschleunigen, was völlig die Proportionen des Satzes sprengt (hier: eine langsame Einleitung, die mit 3'24 völlig unverhältnismäßig gut ein Viertel der Gesamtlänge ausmacht). Dies war „nur“ eine recht gute, doch konventionelle Aufführung mit ein paar schönen Momenten, während Kubelik bei der dritten Sinfonie eine wahre Sternstunde hatte.

klassik.com September 2007 (Daniel Krause - 2007.09.08)



Einer der Ersten

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Le Monde de la Musique avril 2005 (Patrick Szersnovicz - 2005.04.01)



Plus courte et incisive que les deux premières, la Troisième Symphonie en ré majeur (mai-juillet 1815) témoigne d'une concentration plus grande. Schubert s'écarte du modèle mozartien et les crescendos « beethovéniens » commencent à jouer leur rôle. La Neuvième Symphonie en ut (1825-1828), dite « La Grande », offre une maîtrise du rythme, des procédés structurels dignes du dernier Beethoven et une rigueur de la forme qu'on ne retrouve dans aucun autre ouvrage de Schubert. La Grande Symphonie en ut est la pierre angulaire de toute la littérature orchestrale à venir (Schumann, Brahms et surtout Bruckner !). Exemple d'unité interne (seulement une demi-douzaine de motifs la gouverne), elle porte à son apogée la palette du compositeur.

Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) excellait dans un vaste répertoire (Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner, Verdi, Bruckner, Brahms, Dvorák, Mahler) correspondant idéalement à sa nature spontanée. Il fut aussi un ardent défenseur de la meilleur musique du XX siècle (Janáček,

Schoenberg, Bartók, Martinu, Hartmann, Britten). Privilégiant le travail en profondeur plutôt que la gestique, s'attachent à recréer la respiration primordiale de chaque œuvre, il est le champion, dans les classiques viennois et les romantiques, des tempos amples, de l'aération de la polyphonie et de la dynamique exaltée sur une longue période, mais il surprend ici.

Enregistrée « live » le 24 février 1977 par la Radio bavaroise – et, comme le cycle Mahler de Kubelik, publiée pour la première fois –, la Troisième Symphonie, à rebours des modes actuelles, fascine par ses phrasés péremptores, par sa continuité dramatique. Mais que dire de la Grande Symphonie en ut captée lors du concert du 27 mars 1969 ? Dans une qualité sonore inespérée, le chef, fondant son interprétation sur le rythme, éclaire à la pointe sèche la densité de l'écriture. Il dégage sans jamais forcer le texte une tension dramatique mais aussi une poésie incomparable, proche des élans visionnaires d'un Furtwängler, d'un Walter comme de l'architecture souple et implacable d'un Schuricht, d'un Krips, d'un Szell ou d'un Wand.

Pizzicato 2/2005 (Rémy Franck - 2005.02.01)



Vor allem wegen des alerten und wirklich mitreißenden zweiten Satzes der großen C-Dur Symphonie, aber auch wegen der Lebendigkeit der übrigen Teile des Werkes sowie der 3. Symphonie sollte man diese Produktion kennen. Die intuitiv geniale Tempoführung, die spürbare Spontaneität der Gestaltung und die Differenzierung der sich dennoch wunderbar zusammenfügenden Elemente des Andante con moto zeigen Rafael Kubelik einmal mehr als hundertprozentig effizienten Konzertdirigenten. Die wirklich Allegro vivace und fast ekstatisch rasant gespielten Scherzo und Finale machen aus der Aufnahme eine der packendsten Interpretationen, die ich kenne.

Stereoplay 2/2005 (Andreas Günther - 2005.02.01)



Eingefangen – das feinste Silber aus den goldenen Sälen

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www.ClassicsToday.com 10/2005 (David Hurwitz - 2005.10.27)



Audite annoyingly numbers "The Great" Symphony in C major "No. 8" instead of the more common No. 9. This may confuse prospective buyers, which is a pity because this is a gorgeous Schubert CD, with both works full of life, freshness, and drama. In the Third, Kubelik offers a perfectly proportioned, shapely reading with ideal tempos (in the second-movement Allegretto particularly) and a lovely interplay of strings and winds. The Ninth is just as fine. Kubelik keeps the music flowing purposefully forward in the opening movement despite his affectionate treatment of the lyrical second subject (wonderful woodwinds here, and throughout). The march-like Andante is swift, with a cataclysmic climax; the scherzo has great energy and ruggedness, and the fleet-footed finale goes like the wind. Only that dumb decrescendo on the very last chord diminishes what by any standard is a significant interpretive achievement. Beautifully restored sonics in both CD and SACD formats offer plenty of warmth, with really good balances between brass, strings, and winds, alongside just a touch of 1960s and '70s opacity. A very enjoyable and musicianly pair of performances, definitely worth preserving and issuing.

www.classicstodayfrance.com Février 2005 (Christophe Huss - 2005.02.08)



Eclaircissons d'abord le point technique: Il s'agit d'un SACD hybride stéréo présentant la "Grande" de Schubert (ici numérotée "8" et non "9") et la 3e Symphonie du même compositeur. Les concerts sont de 1969 (8e) et 1977 (3e). Le SACD hybride propose les deux oeuvres dans la mouture remastérisée par Audite. Ceux qui possèdent un lecteur SACD pourront entendre, en plus, en SACD seulement, la version originale non remastérisée. Les écarts sont faibles et le travail d'Audite pour faire un léger "focus" sur le son, qui apparaît aussi légèrement plus pur, est excellent. Les possesseurs de CD ne perdront donc rien à n'accéder qu'à la bande remastérisée. Question prise de son, les documents sont excellents, même si dans la "Grande" la prise est un peu proche et semble artificiellement élargie. Il y a peu de dérapages (un petit pépin de clarinette dans le 1er mouvement de la Grande et le hautbois hésitant dans l'Allegro de la 3e) et de bruits annexes -juste un étrange son au début de l'Andante, à 26 secondes, où on a l'impression que quelqu'un range des cymbales dans le fond de la salle! Le son de la 3e est un peu plus pur (mais pas totalement...), sans cette sensation d'élargissement de l'image, mais manque d'impact dynamique. La version CD est plus plate et sèche que le SACD; une différence traditionnelle.

Interprétativement on évolue à très haut niveau. La 3e Symphonie est mordante mais jamais brutale. Le Schubert de Kubelik est ici très chantant. Evidemment on est très loin de la version au scalpel, quasi irréaliste de Carlos Kleiber, qui semble venir d'un autre monde. Par contre, la Grande de Kubelik est très distinctive. Dans un discours pugnace comme ceux de Szell et Munch il souligne, encore davantage que ces deux chefs, le côté pré-brucknerien de la dernière symphonie de Schubert. Toute la démarche est conduite avec un absolutisme foudroyant. Voilà une nouvelle vision éminente de cette symphonie bénie qui s'ajoute à une discographie extrêmement riche. En plus elle ne double pas avec d'autres (on pense dans la griffe sonore à Knappertsbusch, mais Kubelik est bien plus allant). Un nouveau document majeur du chef tchèque, donc.

www.SA-CD.net November 2004 (Bernd Zoellner - 2004.11.23)

SA-CD.net

A fine, glowing performance of Schubert's C major Symphony ("the Great") and the lesser known Third Symphony. This is a stereo SACD which presents the recordings in two different versions - original and remastered. This means you can hear what is on the original tape without or with subsequent technical improvements. The differences appear to be not too striking, however (I have checked only the first movement of the "Great" so far).

Kubelik is ideal for this kind of repertoire, for he allows the music to breathe and brings out all the details of the score. Even so his approach is more vigorous and impassioned than I had expected. The sound is quite impressive given the age of these recordings (which date from the late 60s and 70s, respectively). The strings are smooth, there is much bloom on the woodwind, and the brass instruments (especially the trombones) also come into their own.

Kubelik recorded extensively with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, which he led for many years. There are many gems waiting to be released on SACD, e.g. Smetana's "Ma vlast" cycle, Bruckner's Romantic Symphony or Dvorak's Slavonic Dances.

There exist a handful of orchestral performances where after only a handful of bars, one realises one is in the presence of a truly superlative occasion; Toscanini's Eroica or 1936 Beethoven 7, Karajan's 1964 La Mer, any Mravinsky Tchaikovsky 5. Of course, this doesn't imply one agrees with all that follows, but the air of musical authority is ineluctable. The concert performance of the Schubert 9 under consideration (labelled here mischievously as '8' under a revisionist numbering scheme), isn't quite in this august company, because it took me exactly a minute of the first movement introduction to realise what a gem could be in the offing.

These appear to be unedited concert performances of D 944 recorded on March 27 1969, and No 3 in D D200 recorded on February 24 1977. The orchestral playing is remarkably secure, with no executive raspberries of any consequence. Of great interest in this hybrid stereo only SACD is the inclusion of the master tapes prior to any restoration, which gives the disc on SACD format a 142 minute duration. The recording has been processed by 24/88.2 PCM, but no details as to the interventions are detailed, though this is true of all other labels. However, with one glaring fault, the basic tapes for concerts presumably not recorded for commercial release are exemplary. The blot on this copybook is the premature truncation of the final chord, a truly sour final cherry considering the sublime performance of all that has preceded. The massed strings have their full say, but the tape is guillotined before the brass chord has fully sounded.

What is also worthy of note, is that this must be one of the first SACDs of concert broadcasts, not previously released in any format, and hence a bellweather of how the new high density formats can reproduce historic tapes. These are in good, reasonably spacious stereo. They preserve the antiphonal disposition of the violins which the conductor favoured, with basses towards left of centre. Being carping, there is some peak level limiting at fortissimo levels, so all ffs sound about the same, but there is good terracing of dynamics below this, and this dynamic compression is less than live tapes of contemporary vintage. Good German engineering. The sound is superior to many recordings appearing on the BBC Legends label, but in terms of colour and detail, it cannot compare with the live Wand Great C major of 1995 on BMG 68314, featuring the Berlin Philharmonic. The tape appears to have some form of noise reduction even in the unrestored section, for the tape hiss of D 944 is less than that of the 1962 Karajan Beethoven cycle on SACD. The concerts benefit from a reverberant acoustic which preserves the excitement of the performances, though the sound is somewhat homogenised with some internal murkiness. Nonetheless, it is preferable to the uningratiating dryness that the LSO Live engineers have to cope with in the Barbican. It preserves the ambience of sound as if from the back stalls, just under a balcony overhang which is partially limiting the high frequency response. This latter could be due in part to tape age, but the ear easily adjusts, compared to tizzy and etched digititis. The instrumental timbres strike as what the conductor achieved on the night, without the benefit of a multimiked extravaganza, and are naturally balanced. The rounded off sound is actually very pleasant to listen to. Compared to the CDs of the mid 90's from Davis's integral cycle and Wand, these latter two sparkle with more colour and brilliance, but they also suffer from the same handicaps of listening to 44.1 PCM at realistic levels for prolonged periods. The SACD may initially sound dull and subfusc, but is superior in the long run, in terms of offering a balance of reasonable detail yet avoiding the usual artefacts of low sampling rate digital. As should have been said of CD, all that glitters isn't gold.

The performance of the Great C major is surely one of the most inspired ever caught on stereo; on reflection, apart from Böhm, I cannot name a stereo performance which matches it for elucidating the balance of lyricism, drama and tragic darkness in this protean score. The performing tradition of this score stretches from on one pole, the sunny disposition of the Decca recordings of Krips/LSO and Solti/VPO. (Sidebar. Last week at a local literary festival, I attended the session featuring the English novelist Hollinghurst. The host rather lazily described his last novel as 'English comedy' for the only apparent reasons that he's English, and the book had comic episodes. Why when music is performed with a carefree insouciance, and the composer is Viennese, is the result labelled as 'Viennese' or more annoyingly, 'echt-Viennese'? This is how these two versions are often described, and is surely a manifestation of the 'traditional laziness' which Mahler rightly detested!) At the opposite pole sits Furtwängler's mighty psychodramas, where he transformed the poignant andante into the Schubertian version of the Eroica

funeral march.

Timings. Toscanini/Philadelphia 1941 12:55, 12:37, 8:38, 11:14
 Furtwängler 30 Aug 1953/ BPO concert 14:20, 16:32, 9:50, 10:57
 Furtwängler 15 Sep 1953/ VPO concert 14:26, 17:15, 10:05, 11:40
 KUBELIK 1969 concert 12:59, 13:19, 10:01, 11:10
 Wand March 1995 concert/ BPO 13:56, 15:46, 10:46, 12:12
 Davis 1996/ Dresden Staatskapelle 16:44, 13:54, 15:00, 16:05 (He takes lots of repeats in the last two movements)

The interpretative schema of Kubelik is closest to Furtwängler with the exception of the andante, and also Böhm in his early 60's BPO recording. In the slow introduction, his rhythmic elasticity is reminiscent more of the latter, where the former's changes of gear tend to be more sudden. The evocative beauty of the horn call is matched by the expressiveness of each other section as they enter, with each phrase beautifully transitioning to the next, as indeed it does for the entire work. He allows brass and timpani their due through the entire work, with the range of character caught by the former remarkable, from velvet legato playing, to brusqueness, without ever allowing them to over-dominate the texture.

The string playing is both supple and energetic. The chording of a massed string attack is the antithesis of the Toscanini/Carlos Kleiber ethos. Violins especially, instead of the maximum force being when the heels of their bows nearly collide with the strings, are sounded with a more rounded and fulsome manner, where the players sound the note at full force deeper into the bow stroke. This leads to a fuller though less brilliant and incisive sonority. Toscanini's martial zealotry in the first and especially the second movement is avoided. The sound doesn't become as congested as it is for Furtwängler, because Kubelik's chording is still more precise than the latter, and he also avoids the overbowing of the double basses which in the latter's performances could lead to a thick wodge of sound in the bass which enervated the beat. The timings show how close he is to Toscanini in the first movement, but the differences detailed above, plus his freer rein to the woodwind and horn soloists, are entirely beneficial compared to Toscanini. He achieves most of the Furtwängler ambience, while preserving more of the allegro drive and vitality; great conducting.

In the andante, he creates the adagio mood of Furtwängler, but with a proper andante con moto tread, without the latter's rendition of a world weary trudge across a King Lear style heath. Of the inexorable buildup to the great climax of this movement, followed by the dramatic pause; previously in my experience, Furtwängler and Giulini were the most coherent proponents of this romantic empathisation. Kubelik is very nearly as effective, even though his basic pulse is more propulsive, because of the masterly alterations in tempi building up to this climax, and his ability to energise the orchestra with such superlatively intense responsiveness on the night. He also allows the lower strings full expressive weight in the halting phrases just after the climax. The divided strings are highly moving in the section which follows, where pizzicati ripple through all the string sections. Solti's version in the early digital era was praised for its soundstaging here. The Kubelik version is not as clear, but this is largely to its benefit, because it is evident the conductor's balancing brings this out, whereas Solti received lots of help from the microphones, making the strings on this early CD appear too close.

The finale is a fitting send off to all the emotional terrain which has preceded. Significantly, the dancing triplet figurations are alertly executed, certainly more so than under Furtwängler, implying the slightly rolled chording of the first two movements were deliberately planned, rather than due to executive mustiness. The fanfare motif in this movement where brass sound with barking timpani strokes, is the most rousing and effective rendition I've ever encountered. The whirlwind finale probes far greater depths than Solti or even Toscanini, for the slightly rounded string chording is still present, and this, together with multiple small but cumulatively telling expressive nuances give the underlying mood a whiff of the Totentanz about it. One suspects that Furtwängler was also aiming for this, but his basic tempo is too sluggish to execute it.

The honesty of the label to present the flaw of the final note is commendable. The engineers perform a fast fade, which does ameliorate much of the blatancy. Intriguingly, even if the last note were preserved intact, it is evident Kubelik wasn't urging the orchestra into a cataclysmic final hammer blow. He was already tailing off some of the power, though not to the same extent as Solti, where the final note is anticlimactic. Apparently, this relates to a minor controversy regarding Schubert's handwriting, where there was

ambiguity as to whether a '>' stood either for an accent, or a hairpin decrescendo. This is the only interpretative choice I could question in the entire work under Kubelik's inspired baton.

SYMPHONY No. 3

This could seem a mere filler after the glories of the Great C major, but I am delighted to report it harbours one example of utter recreative genius, which I have not heard executed so well in the handful of performances I've encountered of this work. The benchmark for this symphony has generally been Beecham's inimitable 1958 performance, last on EMI 566984. Carlos Kleiber's interpretation smacks of a metamphetamine-fuelled high speed boogie through the central movements.

Although Kubelik in 1977 took the first movement in 9:15 minutes compared to Beecham's 7:38, all of Beecham's tempi in the four movements are slower. Kubelik and Davis observe the first movement exposition repeat which Beecham doesn't, accounting for the difference. Davis and Kubelik take about the same time over the first movement, but in the succeeding three, he is nearly half a minute quicker than Kubelik in each, and Beecham correspondingly broader.

What had always been distinguished in Beecham was the unaffected elegance of the phrasing, despite tempi which were in principle too slow for the composer's markings, namely : *adagio maestoso/ allegro con brio, allegretto, menuetto vivace and presto vivace*. (Kleiber's John Travolta *vivace* appears to have marooned Olivia Menuetto-John at the other end of the floor)

The slight drawback in Kubelik is the lush acoustic making the already large orchestra sound bigger. Nonetheless, after a somewhat portentous introduction, the freedom he offers his soloists amply compensates. The slightly greater elegance of Beecham's phrasing, abetted by the slower tempi, is really only noticable with a direct AB comparison.

The largish band is justified in the slow movement, where one would have generally believed otherwise. The miracle comes with the bucolic second subject, plus the short transition into it. It sounds irresistibly like a Dvorák Slavonic Dance coming in to steal the show, with the lilt and chasteness of the solo and string playing here, utterly infectious. Someone would have to possess a heart of stone not to be affected. Beecham's version, otherwise so cherishable, demonstrates how at his broader basic tempo, this gracious interlude doesn't have quite the same effect despite the inimitable playing he elicits from the orchestra. Davis's more modern tempi completely misses the lilting spirit of the dance, and is just too quick to register anything like the joyful graciousness which permeates Kubelik's *allegretto*. After listening to this rendition, one feels convinced no other tempo relationship is musically as convincing as the one Kubelik supplies. Beecham is superior to the other two in the finale, because of the relaxed phrasing he is able to milk from the score at his ambling speed, though it's not what the composer advised. Nevertheless, so extraordinary is the sublime rightness of the slow movement, that I have no hesitation of putting it alongside Beecham's as the finest interpretation of this charming and unassuming masterwork.

I would urge anyone with affection for Schubert to acquire this SACD. Though the recording isn't top drawer, it is as good a refurbishment of an analogue tape under non studio conditions of its vintage, as one is likely to get. This style of conducting, probably a product of the European high literary and musical culture transmitted from the nineteenth century, is essentially extinct. As I cannot see any current conductor even approaching this style of interpretation, there is no point hoping for a modern DSD state of the art recording, enshrining such performances.

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