



G. Mahler: Symphony No. 8

aud 95.551

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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.