



L. v. Beethoven: Symphony No. 4 & No. 5

aud 95.493

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American Record Guide (Haldeman - 2003.11.01)

Around the time this Symphony 4 was recorded in October 1979, I saw this same ensemble strict unison bowing and all, deliver a very robust Dvorak 8. I was struck by the discipline and intensity of the musicians, but I don't recall the unrelenting sobriety that is so dominant here. I share my affection for Szell's Cleveland recording of Beethoven 4 with my colleague Steven Richter, and if that should supply a touchstone, it also offers an antidote in the Cleveland's joyousness, rhythmic freedom, and unfailing beauty. By comparison, Kubelik and his Bavarians are more like portly gentlemen shipping wine and thinking too hard. This is not the Fourth I want.

If you would like to know how this conductor and orchestra played Symphony 5 on November 20, 1969, the sound of the remastering is good. The performance is straightforward, nicely played, somewhat wearisome and hence outclassed. Along with Reiner's terrific RCA, Carlos Kleiber on DG makes a first choice for whiplash energy, while I'd direct those preferring an emphasis on weight and grandeur to the recent Barenboim on Teldec.