

FURTWÄNGLER, BRUCKNER INTERPRETER

C R I T I C A L D I S C O G R A P H Y

By Philippe Leduc



FOURTH SYMPHONY

The performance of 1941 (BPO) is for collectors only. Made on acetates, it sounds awful, with several cuts and dropouts (*Music Bridge* or *Delta Classics*).

The recording quality of the concert in Munich (VPO, 1951) was poor, with intrusive noise from the audience. Pirate releases, without any mastering, were unsatisfactory. This performance can be heard better in the recent issues of *Orfeo* and *Tahra*, with a better dynamic in the latter.

The concert in Stuttgart (VPO) was given a week earlier and recorded in better sound. The interpretation is similar to the one from Munich, but with a little bit more tension here. It is issued by *DG*.

FIFTH SYMPHONY

The magnificent concert in Berlin in 1942 (BPO) is available on *DG*. It is preferable to the one from Salzburg (VPO 1951). The *EMI* release sounds rather dull; the recent edition of *Orfeo* is much better. The interpretation is close similar to that of 1942, but with much less *rubato* and with some inaccuracies (particularly in the *finale*), probably due to a lack of rehearsals.

SIXTH SYMPHONY

Unfortunately the first movement of the concert in Berlin in 1943 (BPO) was either not recorded or has been lost. The *SWF* released the best issue available

SEVENTH SYMPHONY

Like the *Fourth*, this concert of 1941 (BPO) was recorded on acetates and sounds awful. There are also severe cuts in the first movement (*Music Bridge*).

It is regrettable that *Telefunken* recorded only the *adagio* in 1942, since the interpretation is sublime. Our *SWF* 963 was again the best issue, but a recent release on *Tahra* (FURT 1099-1100) sounds still better.

Among the three complete performances I prefer the 1949 one, which also has better sound than the recordings of 1951. The *EMI* issue is out of print. Our remastering is in progress – *SWF* 051.

The beautiful concert of Cairo (BPO 1951) is still available on *DG*, but sounds dull.

I find the Rome interpretation (BPO 1951) a little more inspired. Both of the pirate versions (*Arkadia* and *Music & Arts*) are awful. Happily *Tahra* recently released an excellent remastering, from a good copy tape of the original acetates.

EIGHTH SYMPHONY

The finest interpretation (*Magnetofonkonzert* of the VPO – 1944) is still available on *DG*, but the *Tahra* release has a greater respect for the contrasts in dynamics.

The concert of March 14 1949, again without audience, is splendid too. It is still available in an excellent remastering on *Testament*.

That of March 15 1949 is similar, but it suffers from the intrusive coughing of the audience, particularly in the *adagio*. Pirate releases (*Music & Arts*) were awful. Then came the *Wilhelm Furtwängler Gesellschaft* issue, which is still available. The sound is satisfactory despite some lack of dynamics.

The version of 1954 is handicapped by the score chosen : Schalk, instead of Haas. In addition, the pirate edition of *Arkadia* was almost inaudible. There is now a careful mastering by *Andante*, in a (somewhat expensive) box. The interpretation lacks tension in the fast movements, but the *adagio* is moving and worth hearing.

NINTH SYMPHONY

The only preserved interpretation (BPO 1944) is one of the most beautiful performances in history. This essential concert is still available on *DG*. But one might prefer our issue (*SWF* 041), more respectful of the dynamics.