



Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 5

aud 95.465

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Gramophone (Rob Cowan - 01.06.2000)

GRAMOPHONE

... A more recent vintage of comparison was provided by two Audite releases of Mahler symphonies featuring the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rafael Kubelik. Knowing David Gutman's hard line on Mahler performances. I was delighted to read his closing remarks. 'All in all, a breath of fresh Moravian air' he wrote, '... and a wonderfully civilised alternative to the hi-tech histrionics of today's market leaders.' Too true. 'That the pulse has slowed just a little is all to the good...' says DG and again I'd concur, although the timing difference between the 1967 First Symphony (DG, 5/90) and this 1979 live version is more marked than you might at first expect. Listening (and looking) reveals 50'00'' for Deutsche Grammophon and 51'33'' for Audite, but the addition of the first-movement repeat in 1968 cuts the DG timing by a further two minutes (at least in theory). The new Fifth is marked by the sort of 'rocketing' dynamic inflexions (notably among the woodwinds) that were typical of Kubelik's Munich heyday. You notice them, especially, at the start of the finale, but the birdsong characterisations in the first movement of the First Symphony are hardly less striking. Both Performances are deeply poetic (I second DG's positive response to the Adagietto), less dramatic, perhaps, in orchestral attack than their studio predecessors, but kindlier, softerhued and - in the closing minutes of the Fifth's stormy second movement - markedly more grand. ...