Edition von Karajan (III) – L. v. Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 ('Eroica') & No. 9

aud 23.414

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??? February 2009 (- 2009.02.01)

Rezension siehe PDF

Audiophile Audition January 2009
(Gary Lemco - 2009.01.16)

In his first post-war appearance before the Berlin Philharmonic (8 September...

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Diapason Juin 2009, N° 570 (Thierry Soveaux - 2009.06.01)

Ces documents témoignent d'un chef qui n'a pas encore forgé son idéal sonore et musical. En 1953, Furtwängler est toujours patron du Philharmonique, et rien ne laisse vraiment augurer de sa mort prochaine, qui surviendra pourtant une dizaine de mois plus tard. Déjà prétendant au poste suprême, Karajan choisit l'« Eroica » pour son premier concert berlinois d'après-guerre. Sa direction laisse perplexe par l'incertitude qui s'en dégage: comment concilier, en effet, l'esprit musical de Furtwängler avec une tradition plus latine héritière de Toscanini mais aussi de Victor De Sabata, son chef favori ? Il ne parvient pas encore à cette étonnante hybridation entre mysticisme extatique et précision. Les attaques manquent de franchise et ce, dès le premier accord en mi bémol, étrangement flou. D'autre part, on sait que Karajan dirigeait les yeux fermés et que cette absence de communication visuelle perturbait beaucoup l'orchestre ; cela explique les dérapages qui parcourent les mouvements successifs.

La 9e est plus affirmée, mais le discours musical manque encore de stabilité, de vraie ligne directrice; le phrasé se place davantage dans le registre de la séduction supposée plutôt que dans celui de l'émotion. Ainsi, le geste oscille entre une certaine nervosité qui frise parfois l'hystérie et une suavité trop calculée. Et puis vents et bois peu assurés font toujours preuve d'imprécision. Le chœur montre quelques insuffisances mais la voix lumineuse de Grümmer ne peut laisser indifférent. Böhm, Fricsay ou Jochum (DG), dans le même répertoire et à la même époque, tiraient un meilleur parti de cette sonorité, drue, toujours très dense de l'après-Furtwängler. Pour Karajan, il faudra attendre encore un peu.

»audite« Ludger Böckenhoff • Tel.: +49 (0)5231-870320 • Fax: +49 (0)5231-870321 • info@audite.de • www.audite.de

Die Tonkunst Jg. 20, Nr. 1, Januar 2026 (- 2026.01.01)

Die Berliner Philharmoniker und Herbert von Karajan: 1953-1969 live in Berlin

[…] So ist auf der audite-Veröffentichung (audite 23.414) des ersten Berliner Nachkriegs-Auftritts Karajans und der Philharmoniker am 8. September 1953 im Steglitzer Titania-Palast mit Beethovens Eroica (op. 55 I KWV 828), dem Auftakt dieser Box, die Reaktion des Publikums dokumentiert. Sie ist zu Beginn alles andere als enthusiastisch, sondern eher konsterniert und fast ablehnend, denn Karajan hatte es gewagt, die Sinfonie gegen den Strich zu bürsten, sich also als ein Anti-Furtwängler zu positionieren. Die damit einhergehende Provokation schlägt sich immer wieder in kleinen Unstimmigkeiten zwischen ihm und dem Orchester nieder und korrigiert (glücklicherweise?) das Bild des sachlich-kalten Perfektionisten Karajan. Diese faszinierende und lehrreiche, preislich leider elitäre Box ist Auftakt einer auf drei Teile angelegten Serie, die mit den Rundfunkmitschnitten der 1970er- und 1980er-Jahre fortgesetzt werden soll.

Die Welt 20. August 2008 (Manuel Brug - 2008.08.20)

Damit das voranschreitende Karajan-Jahr nicht ganz vergessen wird, gibt es noch...

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Fanfare Issue 32:6 (July/Aug 2009) (Mortimer H. Frank - 2009.07.01)

So many recorded concerts derived from radio tapes have proven disappointing, it comes as a refreshing surprise to hear each of these releases. Most striking in this regard is the Testament disc. Drawn from tapes made by the BBC, it offers stereo sound that is equal to that of studio efforts of the period. Indeed, in listening to the Strauss, it was hard to determine whether it was Karajan's conducting or the exceptional engineering that was so seductive. Not having heard the conductor's other recordings of the work, I cannot judge how this performance compares to them. But as an example of the brilliance of the Philharmonia Orchestra and a flair for color that Karajan did not always display, this performance makes this disc worth having. The account of the Beethoven Fourth is not nearly as distinguished. Shorn of repeats in outer movements and rather bland, it lacks the wallop of some of Karajan's studio efforts, the strongest among them the first of three he recorded for DG.

The Audite release, by contrast, is remarkable on a number of levels. For one thing, each of the symphonies it offers was recorded at a concert marking a historic event, the "Eroica" from one that comprised the first post-war public appearance of the Berlin Philharmonic, that of the Ninth occurring on the 75th anniversary of that orchestra. Musically, each is a defining point in Karajan's approach to Beethoven. The earliest of the conductor's surviving accounts of the "Eroica" is a 1944 performance with the Prussian State Orchestra of Berlin (possibly still available on Koch 1509). It is the broadest of the six Karajan versions that I have heard. This 1953 account is very different. In many respects it anticipates the lean, comparative fleetness of the conductor's last (all digital) effort for DG. Indeed, it is often a more incisive version than Karajan's recording from the previous year with the Philharmonia Orchestra. But it also

features occasional rhythmic ruptures that characterized Furtwängler's approach, albeit less extreme. Unfortunately, the sound, although ample in presence and free of tape hiss, is marred by an unpleasant metallic harshness in the strings that cannot be neutralized with a treble control. But a flexible equalizer should help to improve things. This Ninth Symphony from five years later is remarkable for the way it echoes Karajan's first studio effort (with the Vienna Philharmonic from 1947, still available on a single EMI CD). Particularly noteworthy are the cascading, explosive legatos of the first movement and, on the negative side, some undue haste in the finale. But this live account offers greater intensity in the second movement, where a first repeat (omitted in 1947) is included. Moreover, it is sonically better than that recording, and vastly superior in that regard to the strident "Eroica" included in this set. A few bloopers from the horns simply add to the "live" ethos. Certainly, for those who admire Karajan, this release should have great appeal.

Never having heard Karajan's EMI recording of Fidelio (1970), I cannot say how it compares to this live one of 13 years earlier. But having read unfavorable reviews of that later one, I doubt if they are similar. Put differently, this is a compelling production, laudable in several ways. The sound is better than that of many live Orfeo productions I have heard: wide in frequency response, sufficiently well balanced so that characters never seem to move too much off of the microphone, and encompassing a dynamic range, its only lack is the dimension that stereo can provide. It is the fifth live account of the opera in my collection. The others include two led by Bruno Walter at the Met (1941and 1951, both with Flagstad in a three-CD West Hill set sold only outside the U.S.), two led by Furtwängler at Salzburg (with Flagstad, 1950 and Martha Mödl in 1953, the latter on a now hard-to-find Virtuoso set, 2697272, where at one point the orchestra falls apart in the Leonore No. 3), and the fine 1961 Covent Garden production led by Klemperer, with Sena Jurinac in the title role, a kind of graduation from her many phonographic appearances as Marzelline.

This 1957 performance marked Karajan's first summer at Salzburg and is unlike any of the others just cited, less shapeless and better disciplined that either of Walter's, more propulsive, yet with a wider range of tempos than Klemperer's or either of those led by Furtwängler. It also features one oddity I've never previously encountered: in what (presumably) may have been an attempt to avoid applause at the end of the rousing Leonore No. 3, Karajan launches immediately into the courtyard finale by cutting its opening chords and choral "Heils." On first hearing, it comes as a shock, but it makes dramatic sense. So does the entire performance. The comparative lightness of the first act never drags, Nicola Zaccaria's projection of Leonore's "Abscheulicher" and "Komm, Hoffnung" aptly fierce and tender, the Prisoners' Chorus a poignant blend of tenderness and assertion. Florestan's act II opener, "In des Lebens Frülingstage," may be a bit too sweet-toned for one in a dungeon, but is nonetheless superbly sung. Ironically, the kind of dreary dankness suggested in some studio recordings through the use of echo is absent here, but the scene is still compelling. And the other singers are all more than adequate. Most of all, one hears this performance not as a recording, but as a dramatic theatrical experience. Even those who own some of the other live accounts cited here (Klemperer's is especially distinguished) would do well to investigate this one. Orfeo provides a plot summary but no libretto.

Journal de la Confédération musicale de France décembre 2008 (- 2008.12.01)

La grande époque de Karajan. Un orchestre charnu et tour à tour, selon...

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L'éducation musicale Lettre d'information n° 25 – Janvier 2009 (- 2009.01.01)

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Pizzicato Oktober 2008 (Rémy Franck - 2008.10.01)

Die Liveaufnahme der Eroica stammt aus Karajans erstem Konzert mit den Berliner Philharmonikern nach dem Krieg, im Jahre 1953. Sie ist kontrastreich, hier schon bereinigt, dort noch von Pathos geprägt, durchgehend aber von größter musikalischer Intensität. Der Mitschnitt der Neunten entstand 1957, zum 75. Geburtstag der Berliner Philharmoniker. Hier ist Karajan deutlicher auf dem Weg zu 'seinem' Beethoven, wenn er auch noch viel stärker differenziert und betont als in dem flüssigeren Beethoven der Sechziger- und Siebzigerjahre. Dem Spirituellen und Erhabenen von Beethovens Musik begegnet er hier noch emphatischer als in späteren Interpretationen. Herausragend ist das Solistenquartett!

Scherzo mayo 2009 (Enrique Pérez Adrián - 2009.05.01)

Fricsay,Karajan

Fricsay,Karajan

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www.classicstodayfrance.com Janvier 2009 (Christophe Huss - 2009.01.23)

J'aimerais bien savoir pourquoi, alors que tout semblait bloqué en termes...

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