



Edition Otto Klemperer

aud 21.408

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International Record Review (2012.02.01)

RECORD REVIEW

Klemperer and Talich

EMI France has issued Otto Klemperer's EMI Mahler recordings with the Philharmonia and New Philharmonia, made between 1961 and 1968. Klemperer's implacable but visionary 'Resurrection' Symphony with Schwarzkopf and Rössl-Majdan as the soloists is still one of its outstanding recordings and the sound holds up very well. The first movement of the Fourth is spacious but never sluggish, the slow movement flows quite freely and in the finale Klemperer captures the mood beautifully, even if Schwarzkopf sounds too knowing for the soprano solo. The Seventh Symphony is the oddest of Klemperer's Mahler records, with vastly spacious speeds for the outer movements, but in its idiosyncratic way this is an imposing alternative view, especially the finale, blazing with rough-hewn splendour. Filled with cathartic nobility, Klemperer's Ninth is one of his supreme late achievements. So, too, is *Das Lied von der Erde*, with Ludwig and Fritz Wunderlich as surpassingly eloquent soloists: Ludwig's 'Abschied' is unforgettable. Lastly, there are five orchestral songs, all with Ludwig. The new (2011) mastering sounds as full and open as any I've heard of these records. EMI France deserves credit for including German texts, though the only translations are in French. These historically important and life-affirming performances come in an attractive budget box and represent an amazing bargain (EMI Classics 0 83365-2, six discs, 6 hours 48 minutes).

By the time Klemperer first worked with the Berlin RIAS SO in 1950, the orchestra was steeped in Mozart thanks to Ferenc Fricsay. Klemperer recorded Symphonies Nos. 25, 29 and 38, the Overture to *Don Giovanni* and the *Serenata notturna* and the similarities with Fricsay's transparent, rhythmical Mozart are clear from the direct, vital performances here. Klemperer next worked with the RIAS in February 1954: a glowing recording of Hindemith's *Nobilissima visione* and live versions of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with Hans-Erich Riebensahm and the 'Pastoral' Symphony. Another Beethoven concert followed in 1958: the *Egmont Overture*, Second Symphony and the 'Eroica' – rigorous, energized and illuminating. The same can be said of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, live in 1956 with Elfride Trötschel as the beguiling soprano soloist. This scrupulously presented set uses original tapes and the sound is admirable (Audite 21.408, five discs, 5 hours 28 minutes).

Thanks to Norwegian Radio and its Philips-Miller tape machine, two concerts given by Václav Talich and the Czech Philharmonic at the Prague Festival in June 1939 were recorded. Three months earlier, Hitler had visited Prague Castle to proclaim Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate, so Smetana's *Má vlast* has a heart-rending relevance for the musicians and audience. The performance is one of

such searing passion and intensity that it brought me close to tears on several occasions. Keeping the superlatives under control is difficult: I know of no other account of this work that is delivered with such unflinching power. The circumstances were unique, something underlined with heart-stopping poignancy at the end when the whole audience begins to sing the Czechoslovak national anthem. A week later Talich and the Czech PO played the second series (Op. 72) of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances with an incomparable feeling for the style and pathos of the music. With original spoken introductions for each broadcast, this is an unforgettable document. Sound has been restored with great skill and the annotations are fascinating. Supraphon is to be congratulated on a historic release of the highest artistic value (Supraphon SU4065-2, two discs, 2 hours 10 minutes).

