Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 3

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That's right, 115 minutes on one disc; but it's the same performance. One layer gives us a sonic restoration to bring the recording into the SACD era, and the other is the unrestored stereo broadcast from 1962. The listener is invited to compare the two and – presumably – observe how much more brilliant, colorful, and lifelike the reworked recording is. Actually, there isn't really all that much difference between the two. The SACD has perhaps a lower level of tape noise and a more solid and stable stereo image, but for me that's about it. I would be happier with an SACD recording of another of the composer's works – No. 4 or 9 would be fine. I suppose no appropriate source material is available.

The SACD Performance of No. 3 is nonetheless a very good one, with Kubelik and the fine BRSO in top form. An 1878 revision of the original score is employed, I suspect in an also reworked edition by Fritz Oeser, which Kubelik used in a 1985 recording of this same work on CBS Masterworks (that was also a good recording). This edition differs somewhat from the more concise Nowak score, particularly in I, where some rather interesting and invigorating material is retained at the expense of economy of means. The SACD sonic picture is smooth and rich in detail, with powerful bass response and good stereo imaging. This is a hybrid, and one layer can be played on a regular CD player with some slight loss of sonic quality.

This recording will obviously be expensive, and since it really offers only 58 minutes of program material, it is short on value-for-money. Though it is musically very good, it is not musically and sonically better than VPO/ Böhm on Decca (the standard edition). Nagano with the Deutsches Symphony on Harmonia Mundi is also a formidable rival that follows a much earlier (and longer) edition of the score. In this context, it is hard to issue a strong recommendation for this offering, except to listeners who prefer this particular edition or are avid admirers of Mr Kubelik.

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