

THE ART OF KARAJAN
AND THE
VIENNA PHILHARMONIC

- Vol. 1: Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 "Choral" with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Soprano, Elisabeth Höngen, Mezzo-soprano, Julius Patzak, Tenor, and Hans Hotter, Bass and the Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien (Recorded November 3-5, December 10, 12 & 14, 1947)
- Vol. 2: Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 (Recorded November 11, 15, 16 & 17, 1948) and Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93 (Recorded September, 13, 14 & 15, 1946)
- Vol. 3: Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45 with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Soprano, and Hans Hotter, Baritone and the Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien (Recorded October 20-22 & 27-29, 1947)
- Vol. 4: Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C Major, D. 944 "The Great" (Recording date not given)
- Vol. 5: Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 "Pathétique" (Recorded November 4-6 & 8-10, 1948)
- Vol. 6: Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 (Recorded December 12, 1949 & January 3, 1950)
- Vol. 7: Mozart: Symphony No. 33 in B-flat Major, K. 319 (Recorded October 18 & 19, 1946), Symphony No. 39 in E-flat Major, K. 543 (Recorded December 7, 1949 & January 31, 1950) and Le Nozze di Figaro, K. 492: Overture (Recording date not given)
- Vol. 8: Mozart: Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622 with Leopold Wlach, clarinet (Recorded December 7, 1949), Eine kleine Nachtmusik in G Major, K. 525 (Recorded October 21 & 22, 1946), Maureische Trauermusik, L. 477 (Recorded December 13, 1947) and Adagio and Fugue in C Minor, K. 546 (Recorded December 3, 1947)
- Vol. 9: Wagner: Tannhäuser: March and Entry of the Guests (Act II) (Recorded December 12, 1949), Lohengrin: Introduction and Bridal Chorus (Act III) (December 9, 1949) and "Da zu dir der Heiland kam" (Act I) (Recorded December 2, 1949), Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg: "Wach auf" (Act III) (Recorded December 2, 1949) and "Summ' und Brum'" with Gertrude Schuster, Contralto (Recorded November 19, 1948) and Der Fliegende Holländer: Introduction and "Matrosen Chor" (Recorded December 2, 1949) All of the above with the

Vienna State Opera Chorus. R. Strauss: Metamorphosen (1946) "Studie für 23 Solostreicher" (Recorded October 27-8 & November 3, 1947)

- Vol. 10: J. Strauss, Jr: "Ander schönen blauen Donau", Op. 314 (Recorded October 30, 1946), "Tritsch-Tratsch-Polka", Op. 214 (Recorded October 20, 1949), "Die Fledermaus: Overture (Recorded November 30, 1948), "Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald", Op. 325 (Recorded November 23, 1948), "Perpetuum mobile" Op. 257 (Recorded November 23, 1948) and "Der Zigeunerbaron: Overture (Recorded October 29-30, 1946)
- Vol. 11: J. Strauss, Jr: "Kaiser-Walzer", Op. 437 (Recorded October 30, 1946), "Wein, Weib, und Gesang", Op. 333 (Recorded November 29, 1949), "Wiener Blut", Op. 354 (Recorded November 29, 1949) and "Künstlerleben", Op. 316 (Recorded October 30, 1946) Josef Strauss: "Delirien", Op. 212 (Recorded November 29, 1949) Reznick: "Donna Diana: Overture (Recorded December 8, 1947)
- Vol. 12: Mozart: "Le Nozze di Figaro", K. 492: Overture (Recording date not given) "Die Zauberflöte", K. 620: Overture (Recording date not given) Puccini: "Manon Lescaut: Intermezzo (Recording date not given) and "Gianni Schicchi: "O mio babbino caro" with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Soprano (Recording date not given) Tchaikovsky: "Romeo and Juliet" (Recorded October 28-29, 1946)

Japanese EMI EAC-30101-12 (Available separately)

This fascinating and intriguing collection from Japan fills in an almost forgotten gap in the career of one of this century's most celebrated and controversial musicians. These recordings give us a glimpse of this uniquely challenging interpreter immediately after World War II. In 1946, when Karajan was still forbidden by the Allies from conducting in Austria or Germany, Walter Legge persuaded the authorities to let him record Karajan with the Vienna Philharmonic. Later, Karajan did conduct the VPO in public and continued recording and appearing in public with them until 1950, when he was denied further appearances because of Furtwaengler's return to the orchestra. Then Karajan turned his attention to the Vienna Symphony and to Walter Legge's recently formed Philharmonia.

In these recordings we can hear Karajan clearly under the influence of Toscanini, though one must quickly point out that even at this time Karajan was no mere imitator of the Italian maestro, but was a conductor of considerable individuality. No

doubt, there are some who will regard these performances as vastly superior to their re-makes, especially those made with the Berlin Philharmonic. To such people, Karajan's present-day interpretations are hopelessly idiosyncratic in their over-refinement, extreme dynamic contrast, seamless phrasing, and bloated orchestral textures. Often, such a viewpoint is summed up by saying that Karajan has smoothed out all the edges and that there is no personal involvement in his work. Occasionally, these detractors will cite his recordings of the early 1950's with the Philharmonia, especially that memorable Cosi with Schwarzkopf, Merriman, Simoneau, and Panerai, now available from Italian Odeon, as examples of what he is capable of doing, and continue to bemoan Karajan's (alleged) sloppy self-indulgence. Such feelings are, no doubt, often sincere; just as they often, I strongly suspect, reflect a certain jealousy over someone who has reached the ultimate summit of his profession.

Also, these feelings have no doubt been encouraged by the opaque, overresonant, and bass-heavy recording quality on most of his recent work with EMI. Even listening on imported HMV's or Electrolas, the very definite improvement over the domestic Angels is still not sufficient to overcome the abysmal engineering accorded many of these performances. Perhaps Karajan's quick re-makes for DG in stunning fidelity of two works he recorded for EMI around 1971, the Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 and the Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 (The latter has not yet been released in the U. S. as of this writing) reflect his own dissatisfaction with this recording quality, which certainly represents a nadir for orchestral engineering in the 1970's.

The Karajan that one hears on these discs is certainly a less distinctive artist (or idiosyncratic, depending on your point of view) than the one so well documented on literally hundreds of recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic. The Toscanini influence that moulded and influenced so many others is clearly present in these straight-forward, objective, and often very exciting Beethoven performances with their lean textures, fast tempi, and eschewment of rhetorical gear changes in the manner of Mengelberg or Stokowski. (Though the latter is present to some extent in both of these early Tchaikovsky performances.) But Toscanini never dominated Karajan completely the way he did so many others. The influence of the Italian is clearly absent in this recording of the Brahms Second Symphony with its absence of forward thrust, and the Mozart performances present here, with the possible exception of the Figaro Overture, clearly show that he steered himself away from Toscanini's often bizarre approach. However, Karajan was deeply influenced by Toscanini, as he himself has admitted, and this influence has never been entirely discarded; but it has been modified and refined in the way that any great artist, creator or recreator, makes use of his own heritage. The impact of Toscanini simply could not be ignored by a conductor

of Karajan's generation, just as Debussy could not ignore Wagner no matter how much he tried and all of the former's claims to the contrary, not withstanding.

This series is available separately, and for the most part, one must give Japanese EMI praise and thanks for making this material, which has not been in print since the mid-1950's, available, though admittedly still difficult for the Western collector to obtain. The transfers were done by Anthony Griffith, which as many readers know, is a virtual guarantee of the highest quality. The pressings are absolutely first-rate with surfaces infinitely quieter than what one finds on most DG's today. (Though I must report a small series of "pops" on one side of the Brahms: Symphony No. 2.) Anyone afraid of ordering these records and being saddled with several defective pressings, which can only be exchanged with great delay and expense, need not worry, at least on the basis of my copies.

However, several small complaints must be expressed about this production. First, this series contains all of Karajan's recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic, except for the somewhat understandable omissions of the complete recordings of Figaro and Der Zauberfloete (which are readily available as imports anyway) and two other short works, whose omission is rather puzzling: the Intermezzo from Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana and Liu's aria, "Tu che di gel sei cinta," from Puccini's Turandot with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. There is ample room for these two works, since several of the sides contain only about twenty minutes of music! While these two works may seem insignificant, their absence does harm to the documentary aspect of this project. Secondly, if a side break in the slow movement of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony could not be avoided, and it obviously could have with clever rearranging without increasing the over-all number of discs in the series, in view of the previously mentioned short sides, surely something better could have been provided than the hideous fade-in and fade-out provided here. Thirdly, the sound on the Brahms Second is notably inferior to that on the rest of the discs, which I suspect is related to the tape-to-disc cutting process, though I am not certain. Fourthly and finally, recording dates are not given for all of the performances, though they are given for most.

One should not make too much of such reservations. This collection is highly recommended, and I urge anyone interested in this extraordinary musician to make every effort to obtain, or at least hear, these discs. If I often favor the later Berlin re-makes, that is not to say that these performances are not highly rewarding and enjoyable in their right.

Walter M. Pate