



YSL T-821

Tennstedt Vol. 22

“A powerful reading of the Mahler Ninth remains an event, but I doubt that the audience in Avery Fisher Hall in February 1982 anticipated how extraordinary Klaus Tennstedt’s Mahler Ninth would be....After Tennstedt’s death in 1998, a cottage industry arose to circulate private recordings of his concerts, and it quickly became apparent that he, even more than Wilhelm Furtwängler, achieved his greatest performances in the concert hall rather than in the studio....The present release is Vol. 22 in St. Laurent’s ever-growing Tennstedt edition, and it stands as one of the most valuable.

What the audience heard at this concert was an incandescent Mahler Ninth that ranks among Tennstedt’s greatest Mahler performances for intensity and sustained passion. Like Bernstein, he was a conductor who could wring everything out of the score by wringing himself, physically and emotionally. There is no comparison with the EMI/Warner set, whatever its good points. Through the mysterious chemistry that connects a great conductor with an orchestra, the New York Philharmonic plays with total commitment, passion, and virtuosic execution. In a word, this reading has an immediate 'wow' factor that never lets the listener go until the final bars of the sublime Adagio finale. The first movement is quite measured at 31:23 min., but the pace never lags because Tennstedt puts maximum expressive pressure on every note....

Perhaps Tennstedt was being a canny strategist because no one could have been prepared for the wild ride of his Rondo-Burleske, a hair-raising display of fearless speed, frenetic turmoil, and incredibly precise playing - the Philharmonic leapt at the opportunity to relive their glory days under Bernstein. The Adagio finale has a moderate timing of 26:41, but the passage of time is beside the point in this transcendent music. Tennstedt had a special affinity for Mahler’s slow movements, taking the listener to a level of soul-searching few conductors can attain. Suffice to say that here he rises to just the right fervor to stir us deeply, followed by a slow tapering off into the ethereal.

St. Laurent Studio doesn’t document the source for this recording, but it is in stereo with a satisfying dynamic range, so I presume the source came from an FM broadcast. There are acoustic deficits, however, mainly the distant miking and some blurring of orchestral textures. Nothing is muddy, but in the Rondo-Burleske, for example, you almost have to know where the glockenspiel enters in order to detect its faint presence. Also, the string sound isn’t full and realistic. Finally, cold season brought out some inveterate coughers, and one or two have the uncanny ability to interrupt some of Mahler’s loveliest quiet passages. Fortunately the intrusions into the score’s final pages are few, not enough to break the spell.

In sum, this treasurable performance is Tennstedt's best Mahler Ninth by far and makes an invaluable contribution to his discography. The previous 21 installments in St. Laurent's Tennstedt edition have been only partially reviewed in FANFARE, so eager collectors have much more to explore, including the broadcasts by the Boston Symphony, with which Tennstedt was closely associated."

- Huntley Dent, FANFARE

TENNSTEDT Vol. 22



Klaus Tennstedt
conducts
Mahler no. 9
New York Philharmonic Orchestra
February 18, 1982

St-Laurent Studio 