



HERBERT VON KARAJAN Vol. 19

Herbert von Karajan, cond; Vienna P

St. Laurent Studio 1224 (80:04)

Live: Paris 4/9/1962

LOCATELLI Concerto Grosso in E1, op. 4/10. SCHUBERT Symphony No. 8, "Unfinished." STRAUSS Also sprach Zarathustra. JOSEF STRAUSS Delirium Waltz

"Great music-making is its own reward, as evidenced by this excellent addition to St. Laurent Studio's ongoing Karajan Edition. I've never liked the phrase 'needless duplication', because without duplication there would be virtually no record collecting. But many would draw the line at Karajan's sixth account of ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA. Besides this live performance from the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris in 1962, DG released two studio recordings, in analog and stereo, with the Berlin Philharmonic, Testament added a live performance from Salzburg with the Berliners in 1970, supplemented by another Salzburg account from 1964 on Orfeo, and perhaps best of all was Decca's classic recording from 1959 with the Vienna Philharmonic, which was used for the soundtrack of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY.

To be an avid collector means that you relish small differences that others would call insignificant. Therefore, I welcome another ZARATHUSTRA from Karajan the way I'd greet another 'Eroica' Symphony from Furtwängler. This Paris performance is not to be judged by the opening fanfare, where even the quite good broadcast stereo sound can't equal studio engineering (I can offer reassurance that the sound, in a fine remastering by producer Yves St.-Laurent, has a full dynamic range and satisfying orchestral balance). But once the organ chord that ends 'Sunrise' dies away,

the magic begins, in the form of ravishing string playing from the Vienna Philharmonic, and the miking is close enough to bring out the individual voice of the concertmaster in the ensemble.

Karajan's involvement is made clear even earlier, in the flexibility of his phrasing in the prelude, and which continues with utmost sensitivity throughout. This is phrase-shaping that serves the music's expression first and foremost. The excitement of a live performance comes through in the urgency of the pacing, the added emphasis of the timpani interjections, and the intensity of a great orchestra playing with total commitment. No one else quite achieves such an astonishing combination of virtuosity, sweetness of sound, and personal expression - the last-named quality belies Karajan's reputation, wrongly applied here, for focusing too much on surface sheen.

The allure of the Vienna sound plays a significant part in the major work before intermission, Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony, of which Karajan has at least four recordings; the most recent release, also part of St. Laurent Studio's Karajan series, comes from Salzburg in 1987. It and all the other accounts, as far as I know, are with the Berliners. What catches the ear in this Paris performance is the characteristic sound of the Viennese woodwinds, which somehow sound even more Viennese in 1962 (I was strongly reminded of the Decca recordings by the Vienna Octet from the same era). The subtlety and intensity of Karajan's conducting add another dimension to a performance that could be anyone's first choice. I count it his best.

As part of a Christmas Adagio album for DG, Karajan included the 'Pastorale' from a Concerto Grosso by Pietro Locatelli (1695–1764), so this new CD doesn't bring a new composer to his discography. I don't have a Karajan discography to consult, but I imagine that the Concerto Grosso in E-flat, op. 4/10 heard here is

a new addition. Locatelli, who was born in Bergamo and died in Amsterdam, traveled widely throughout Italy and Germany as a violinist-composer before ending his days primarily teaching violin and edited his numerous Concerti Grossi gathered under nine opus numbers. Karajan performs this Concerto Grosso in such a lush and lavish manner that one is amazed to hear the microphones picking up the harpsichord continuo. As authenticity the performance is a non-starter, but as an occasion to bathe in Viennese string sound, it is delightful.

The encore, Josef Strauss' 'Delirium Waltz', doesn't surprise by being an almost automatic choice for the Vienna Philharmonic on tour, but I think many will be surprised by how affectionately phrased Karajan's performance is, and by the intensity a great conductor can bring to light classics. The Strauss family played a constant role in Karajan's recorded output in every decade, and few have surpassed those recordings, or this single performance.

St. Laurent Studio has added to the reputation of dozens of artists from the past, and if Karajan needs neither reviving nor reminding, these live recordings are superb. For anyone who hasn't dipped into the series, Vol. 19 is an excellent way to begin."

Huntley Dent, FANFARE