



**Johannes Brahms & Henri Vieuxtemps:  
Symphony No. 1 & Violin Concerto No.  
5**

aud 95.592



**Audiophile Audition November 2007  
(Gary Lemco - 04.11.2007)**



Karl Boehm (1894-1981) still looms large in the annals of German music-making, a...

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**Diapason septembre 2007 (Rémy Louis - 01.09.2007)**



Ce deuxième volume du cycle Karl Böhm d'Audite (cf. n° 548) nous mène simultanément en terrain connu et inconnu. Connu en ce qui concerne la symphonie, dont la multiplicité dans la discographie du chef permet d'apprécier les métamorphoses. Si les gravures officielles de studio (dont la magistrale version berlinoise de 1959, DG) offrent déjà de nets contrastes, les versions en public de l'après-guerre (RIAS 1950/Tahra, Vienne 1954/Altus, Radio bavaroise 1969/Orfeo...) déclinent toutes cette lecture passionnée, au relief dramatique fulgurant. Inédit, ce concert de studio capté d'une traite au Funkhaus (Maison de la Radio) de Cologne en 1963 enrichit d'une nouvelle nuance cette vision dont la transparence et l'agilité tranchent avec la tradition austro-allemande dans lequel le chef autrichien s'inscrit pourtant naturellement. La tension, le lyrisme, l'expressivité des phrasés obéissent à une impétuosité qui rappelle irrésistiblement le Brahms de jeunesse.

Böhm met en lumière de façon presque psychologique l'état d'esprit de ce Brahms qui ose enfin cette Symphonie n° 1 si longtemps repoussée. Il en libère la force vitale avec une énergie irrésistible et pressante, pour engager le finale dans une apothéose borderline qui ne met pourtant jamais la forme en péril. Et si l'Orchestre de la Radio de Cologne ne possède pas la richesse de texture et de timbres qui sera, peu d'années après, celle de l'Orchestre symphonique de la Radio bavaroise (Diapason d'or, cf. n° 386), il ne peut que céder à un magnétisme aussi impérieux et agissant.

Jusque-là inconnu dans la discographie de Böhm, le Concerto pour violon n° 5 de Vieuxtemps, gravé le même jour (cf. l'introduction), le voit dialoguer avec Lola Bobesco. Loin d'être impeccable (intonation, précision), la violoniste roumaine imprègne l'oeuvre de sa forte personnalité, avec des phrasés très expressifs – sinon appuyés –, une riche sonorité, un vibrato généreux. Précisons enfin que L'Oiseau de feu chronique le mois dernier est issu de la même session.

## Mozartiano y antidivo

*Audite rescata grabaciones inéditas de Karl Böhm*

Nacido en Graz, Austria, Karl Böhm (1894-1981) siguió en principio los pasos de su padre, abogado, y se doctoró en derecho en 1919. Pero pronto pudo más la vocación musical y en 1920 debutó en su ciudad natal como director de ópera. Los primeros años de su carrera transcurrieron en Alemania, en Múnich, Darmstadt y Hamburgo, con el apoyo de Hans Richter, Karl Muck y Bruno Walter, hasta alcanzar en 1934 la titularidad de la Ópera de Dresde, en la que sucedió al exiliado Fritz Busch. Durante casi un decenio desarrolló allí una gran labor, en estrecha colaboración musical con Richard Strauss, de quien estrenó "La Mujer Silenciosa y Dafne". Su buena relación con el nazismo le pasó factura en la posguerra y hubo de sufrir un periodo de desnazificación de dos años, transcurrido el cual dió proyección internacional a su carrera: Austria y Alemania, por supuesto, pero también Milán y Nápoles, Londres y América, con especial presencia en Buenos Aires. Chicago y el Met lo acogieron a finales de los 50 y Bayreuth en 1962. Sus visitas a España fueron escasas.

Böhm alcanzó la cima de su carrera y el unánime reconocimiento internacional en los años 60 y 70, gracias a sus colaboraciones con las grandes orquestas de Berlín y Viena y la London Symphony, más las de los teatros de ópera de las ciudades citadas: todas ellas rendían al máximo guiadas por su batuta firme y segura, sus gestos sobrios pero eficaces y su infalible buen gusto. Pese a su rigor en los ensayos y su vivo genio, Böhm fue un director favorito de los Filarmónicos de Berlín y Viena, con quienes realizó magníficas grabaciones de los grandes clásicos, especialmente de las grandes óperas de Mozart y de los ciclos de sinfonías de éste, de Beethoven y de Schubert, además de muchas partituras de Richard Strauss, su autor preferido junto con Mozart. También brilló como intérprete de Haydn, Bruckner, Wagner y Alban Berg.

Audite nos lo presenta ahora al frente de la Orquesta de la Radio de Colonia, con dos significativas adiciones a su discografía, que hacen especialmente valiosos estos dos CDs: el "Concierto para violín no 5" de Vieuxtemps, con la interesante violinista Lola Bobesco - ¿recuerdan su CD Testament de música francesa, comentado en este Boletín? - y la "suite de El Pájaro de Fuego" de Stravinsky, registros procedentes de un concierto celebrado en Colonia el 5 de abril de 1963, que se completó con una notable "Primera Sinfonía" de Brahms de creciente intensidad (se advierte que la pista 3 del CD contiene no solo el tercer movimiento, sino también la introducción del cuarto; de ahí lo inhabitual de las duraciones). Pero lo más destacado de esta entrega son la "Sinfonía 28 K 200" de Mozart, de sobria elegancia y perfecta proporción y un sensacional "Don Juan" de Richard Strauss, obras ambas muy bien tocadas por la orquesta. Notable sonido.

Little need be said about this 1963 radio broadcast of the Brahms First with Karl Böhm, other than the fact that it is a quick-paced, no-nonsense, well-played, and quite decent sounding performance. But then this should come as no surprise. Böhm's Brahms has long been a proven quantity, well documented in recordings he made with the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, as well as with other first-rate ensembles. His reading of the score on this occasion gives us an urgent, forward-pressing first movement, a beautifully paced and lovingly shaped *Andante sostenuto*, and a bracing finale.

The more interesting item on the disc is Henri Vieuxtemps's Violin Concerto No. 5 with Romanian-Belgian violinist Lola Bobesco, also from a 1963 broadcast. Bobesco (1921-2003) gained international recognition after having won the Eugene Ysaÿe contest in 1937. In 1958 she founded the Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, and in 1971 and again in 1993 she was a jury member at the Queen Elizabeth competition. Bobesco's recording activities were not extensive, though she did commit to disc the violin sonatas of Beethoven, Brahms, Franck, Fauré, and Debussy.

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) was a famous violinist and composer who, like other Belgian musicians of the time (César Franck, for example, Vieuxtemps's exact contemporary) found French soil more fertile. Like a number of other virtuoso violinists competing for recognition and acclaim – Pierre Rode, Charles de Bériot, and Henryk Wieniawski – Vieuxtemps turned to composition, writing dazzling, death-defying works of derring-do. Much of his music, to be forgiving, is of interest mainly to violinists as contest pieces or as audience-wowing debut repertoire, and to students of the evolution of the violin and string-playing technique.

Of Vieuxtemps's seven concertos, the No. 5, however, has achieved a level of enduring popularity undeserved by its musical content, as a result of a jaw-dropping recording of it made in 1962 by Heifetz and Malcolm Sargent. Though the current catalog contains a number of recordings of other works by Vieuxtemps, I doubt that many are known beyond those with a keen interest in virtuoso violin music and its players. His Fifth Concerto, on the other hand, appears to have as many as 14 recordings, and I know for a fact there were once others, since the Philips CD I have with Arthur Grumiaux is no longer listed.

Bobesco was an accomplished fiddler – she would have to be to take on so technically challenging a work – but the reality is that she was technically challenged by it. Her playing can become labored and her bowing rough, as at 4:22 in the first movement; and her tone can turn abrasive in multi-stopped passages and pinched high on the G-string, the latter difficult for any violinist to make sound particularly alluring.

In short, Bobesco negotiates the treacheries of Vieuxtemps's high-wire act without any fatal slips or accidents, but not with a great deal of graceful ease. Personally, I've never found much grace in Heifetz's performance of the piece either, but if it's sailing through it with ease that you're looking for, he's your man. For grace, to the extent it's possible under such duress, I'll take Grumiaux, and for unperturbed, if a bit bland aplomb, I'll take Zukerman in his 1969 recording with Mackerras and the London Symphony Orchestra.

[muzica-etc.blogspot.com](http://muzica-etc.blogspot.com) joi, august 30, 2007 (George - 30.08.2007)

Lola Bobescu sub bagheta lui Karl Böhm

Imi amintesc mai mult cu nostalgie de...

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**Pizzicato Oktober 2007 (Rémy Franck - 01.10.2007)**



Schon die weiche Pauke in den Anfangstakten der Brahms-Symphonie zeigt, dass uns Böhm keinen norddeutsch-strengen und harten Brahms vorführen will. Und so entwickelt sich diese Erste zwar mit drängender Leidenschaft, aber zugleich lyrisch und heiter. Das Vieuxtemps-Konzert bietet die Gelegenheit zu einer beglückenden Begegnung mit der Ausnahmegeigerin Lola Bobesco, auch wenn das tonale Umfeld hier vielleicht etwas deutsch klingt.

**Scherzo Enero de 2008, Num. 226 (Enrique Pérez Adrián - 01.01.2008)**



Audite, el sello alemán que distribuye Diverdi, nos trae tres interesantes...

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**www.classicalcdreview.com August 2007 (R.E.B. - 01.08.2007)**



Admirers of Karl Böhm (1894-1981) will wish to investigate these April 5, 1963...

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**www.classicstodayfrance.com septembre 2007 (Christophe Huss - 11.09.2007)**



La 1re Symphonie est celle de Brahms qui convenait le plus, à mon sens, au...

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**www.concertonet.com Août 2007 (Sébastien Foucart - 13.08.2007)**

ConcertoNet.com

Cet enregistrement de la Première Symphonie de Brahms permet de retrouver Karl...

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**www.musicweb-international.com November 2007 (Jonathan Woolf - 01.11.2007)**



Audite's Cologne Broadcasts series has at its focus here Karl Böhm in performances given at the Funkhaus in April 1963. He conducted the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra, now better known as the WDR Symphony, in one work with which he was strongly associated – the Brahms – and in another with which he would have had, at best, only a fleeting acquaintance.

So let's start with the Vieuxtemps A minor concerto where he partners the Romanian violinist Lola Bobesco (1920-2003). Bobesco was best heard live when she brought a genuine intensity to her playing that even the best of her relatively small commercial performances could not quite reach. She left behind no studio recording of the Vieuxtemps which makes this survival all the more valuable to admirers. The sound can be a little congested and Böhm doesn't do all he could to clarify orchestral textures. One imagines him content with an all-purpose heavyweight sonority – and this he duly gets, one that lacks Mackerras's finesse for Zukerman and Sargent's for Heifetz (both recordings, 1947 and 1961). Some of Bobesco's passagework sounds a touch smeary under pressure but this is a live performance after all and compensation comes from her powerful commitment. In the final resort whilst Bobesco may lack the studio perfection of such as Perlman, Zukerman, Grumiaux or Menuhin (with Fistoulari) she digs deeply into the string and makes something valuable of the first movement cadenza. In a work that's barely eighteen minutes long there's not much time to stake one's claim but she assuredly does; and a rougher hewn one than all the players already noted. She plays the central movement with great lyric and tonal generosity – with more allure than the more aristocratic Zukerman for example – and is suitably dashing in the sliver of a finale.

There's not as much to be said about the Brahms. If you know Böhm's 1975 Berlin Philharmonic DG studio recording, or the contemporaneous Vienna traversal, then you will know what to expect. Maybe he relaxes just a fraction more in the Cologne opening movement but otherwise both tempi and more importantly tempo relationships are consistent. The BPO performance however is both better recorded and better played and various other performances – from Berlin in 1959 and the on-tour Vienna Philharmonic Tokyo reading - probably have as many claims on the collector as this one. Furthermore Audite blots its copybook by muddled banding. Band three includes the Scherzo and the Adagio opening of the finale, leaving band four to take over at the Piu Andante Allegretto of the finale. Bizarre!

The constituency for this will be mixed. Bobesco admirers have a new discographical entrant but it's conjoined with what will be for them an expendable Brahms symphony. Admirers of the conductor will find the performance of the symphony "straight down the middle" but will have an unexpected though not always insightfully conducted concerto adjunct to their discographies.



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