



George Szell
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra
Dvořák: Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88
(Bruno Belčík, first violin)

live recording: Kunsthhaus Lucerne, August 30, 1969


George Szell
Swiss Festival Orchestra
Brahms: Symphony No. I in C minor, Op. 68

live recording: Kunsthhaus Lucerne, August 29, 1962

Rhythmic precision, formal awareness, absolute faithfulness to the work and razor-sharp orchestral control: George Szell (1897-1970) is seen as one of the great “orchestral disciplinarians” of the twentieth century, as a superior musical director and an uncompromising perfectionist – a reputation which he gained, first and foremost, during his twenty-four years as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra, which he formed into one of the world’s finest ensembles. The musical roots of the Hungarian-born conductor, however, are in the “Old World”, and after the Second World War he was one of the first musicians in American exile to return to Europe for concerts.



During the Fifties and Sixties, George Szell regularly appeared at LUCERNE FESTIVAL. The concert recordings presented here – both of which are first releases – encompass two works central in his repertoire: in 1962, the “anti-romantic and master of precision” (Harold C. Schonberg), alongside the Swiss Festival Orchestra, achieved a powerful and intensely determined interpretation of Brahms’ First Symphony, whose transparently played, chamber-like middle movements are framed by outer movements full of suspense. In the summer of 1969 – one year after the violent defeat of the “Prague Spring” – Szell was reunited with the Czech Philharmonic in Lucerne. He had worked with the orchestra as early as the 1930s during his tenure at the New German Theatre in Prague. His thrillingly energetic reading of the Eighth Symphony by Antonín Dvořák enthused the audience and critics in equal measure – according to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* “Szell’s art of expressive tempo modification, preparing, building towards and resolving formal and dynamic tensions was demonstrated to such an extent that the entire symphony, from the beginning, seemed to have been lifted onto a higher level”. Both recordings demonstrate that Szell’s concert recordings are particularly appealing, thanks to their preparedness to take risks, lively musical flow and a heightened emotional content, in contrast to his perfectly balanced studio recordings.

This release is furnished with a “producer’s comment”  by producer Ludger Böckenhoff on www.audite.de/en/product/CD/95625/multimedia.

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