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**Edition Sergiu Celibidache | The complete RIAS recordings**

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RECORD REVIEW

## New, Reissues and Historic Round-up

**Klemperer, Mitropoulos, Celibidache and Van Otterloo**

Otto Klemperer's live Beethoven cycle with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the 1960 Vienna Festival has been available before but now comes in a new transfer by Aaron Z. Snyder with appreciable gains in clarity. Unless sound is apriority, this set is an ideal way to experience Klemperer's Beethoven: there's far more fire than in his studio recordings of the period but no loss of the rugged integrity that gives his Beethoven such an individual stamp. The Philharmonia plays with tremendous conviction, these performances are generally swifter than the stereo studio accounts, and they have an unquenchable zest and intensity (Music & Arts CD886-890, five discs, 6 hours 30 minutes).

A box of live Mahler conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos is more mixed. The best performances come from the 1960 Mahler Festival in New York: Symphonies Nos. 1, 5, 9 and the Adagio from No. 10. The First is direct, fiery and elemental, especially in the finale. Curiously, the booklet notes claim that Mitropoulos's speed for the Scherzo of the Fifth Symphony leaves the work 'fatally wounded' because 'the music is never allowed to breathe and dance'. I don't agree – it’s most exciting once it gets into its stride, though some comment on the shaky ensemble might have been in order. The Ninth is one of the quicker accounts on record , but it's very expressive too, while the Adagio from the Tenth is a highlight: vibrant and flowing (though the audience is irritatingly restless). The normally reliable Cologne Radio SO is not at its best in the Sixth Symphony (1960) and some of Mitropoulos's tempo adjustments seem arbitrary, though the conclusion is properly numbing. This is nowhere near as coherent as his New York performance of No.6 from a few years earlier. The 1956 NYPO Third is a curio: it's cut, and the vocal movements are sung in English. For a stronger (and complete) Mitropoulos reading, the Cologne Radio Third on ICA is the one to hear. Mitropoulos's Salzburg Festival Eighth Symphony is marred by approximate choral singing and some tentative playing from the Vienna Philharmonic (clearly unfamiliar with the work in 1960). This set's real value is the group of New York performances from 1960 (Music & Arts CD1021 , six discs, 7 hours 34 minutes).

Sergiu Celibidache's Berlin Radio broadcasts (between 1948 and 1957, with the Berlin Philharmonic and RIAS SO) included some rare repertoire, and the sound from the original RIAS sources is astonishingly good on a new box from Audite. Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue with Gerhardt Puchelt as the soloist is hugely enjoyable and surprisingly stylish. Ravel's Rhapsodie espagnole is ideal Celibidache territory: this 1948 performance is beautifully moulded, with the most delicately



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etched colours. Busoni's Violin Concert is compromised by an insecure start from the soloists, but Siegfried Borries gets into his stride later on. Cherubini's Anacréon Overture ends the first disc. The second opens with the German premiere of Hindemith's Piano Concerto (1945), brilliantly played by Puchelt with the Berlin PO in 1949. The lively Flute Concerto by Hindemith's pupil Harald Genzmer is given an excellent performance by Gustav Scheck, and Copland's Appalachian Spring is most sensitively done – Celibidache's ear for detail pays dividends here and he catches the elation of the music superbly. The last disc includes music by Heinz Thiessen, Celibidache's own composition teacher: suites from Hamlet and Salambo, and the Symphony No. 2 (subtitled 'Die and Become'). The final work is another rarity: the Introduction and Fugue for string orchestra by Reinhard Schwarz-Schilling. This is a beautifully presented set, in superbly refurbished sound (Audite 21.406, three discs, 3 hours 36 minutes).

Challenge Classics issued a box of Willem van Otterloo's recordings with the Hague Residentie Orchestra a couple of years ago, and now it's turned to his discs with the Royal Concertgebouw, Hague Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras. The first disc includes an outstanding 1964 stereo recording of Franck's Symphony with the Concertgebouw: strongly propelled, unmannered and utterly convincing. Les Éolides from the same sessions is just as good. With the Hague PO, Otterloo recorded the Overture (hitherto unreleased) and dances from Smetana's Bartered Bride and Schubert's Fifth Symphony in stereo, as well as several earlier mono records, including Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony, Franck's Psyche and Weber's Second Symphony. Among the Vienna Symphony records, Bruckner's Seventh Symphony is particularly fine, and the set also has Vienna SO versions of Beethoven's Fifth (in stereo) and a serene Sixth , while the sole recording with the Berlin Philharmonic is Wagner's Siegfried Idyll. Otterloo also collaborated several times with the pianist Cor de Groot, and this box includes the First and Second Rachmaninov Concertos and Beethoven's Third . There are shorter works, including overtures – Beethoven's Fidelio, Brahms's Academic Festival Overture, Schubert's Rosamunde and Weber's Freischütz – along with Grieg's Elegiac Melodies and some marches: Meyerbeer's Coronation ,March, Berlioz's Hungarian March, Beethoven's Turkish March and Prokofiev's from The Love of Three Oranges, as well as the two violin Romances by Beethoven (with Theo Olof and Herman Krebbers).

Otterloo gives consistently fine performances: his approach is unfussy, scrupulously prepared (some of the most polished playing I've ever heard from the Vienna SO in a beautiful Bruckner Seventh), rhythmically clear and carefully balanced. Otterloo's conducting has real individuality and conviction too, without eccentricity, and this set is an ideal way to discover the quality and depth of his work. Presentation is exemplary, with detailed notes, photographs of the original sleeves and wonderful remastering from the original tapes that allows these recordings to sound their best. I was thrilled by several of the performances in this set and I would urge any collector of historical orchestral material to explore it (Challenge Classics CC72383, seven discs, 8 hours 26 minutes).



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