



Paul Kletzki conducts Brahms, Schubert & Beethoven

aud 95.642

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[American Record Guide](#) (David Radcliffe - 2016.11.01)

This is a particularly interesting broadcast concert, recorded 7 September 1946 with an ad hoc orchestra which the Vienna-bound Walter Legge had just been recording. Kletzki (1900–73) had spent the war years in Switzerland and must have got on well with the ensemble, for the musicians, if a little ragged sometimes, play their hearts out. His extreme interpretations sound remarkably unlike EMI productions—except perhaps their Furtwänglers. There is something to be said for provincial performances—one thinks of all the “bad” Homeric manuscripts from out of the way places now being diligently examined for traces of an earlier Homer than what came down through Athens. Kletzki and his Swiss musicians play in a manner which might be described not only as pre-war but pre-electric, with outrageously fluctuating tempos, rubato, massive dramatic contrasts, and eccentric phrasing.

This would be all for naught if the results were not musical, but I find these highly-charged performances persuasive, particularly the Brahms symphony. Subtle they are not, but if you enjoy unfiltered, late-romantic, expressionist modernism you will find it here, captured with a thrilling dynamic range not obtainable when this mode of performance was still in vogue. One thinks of over-the-top Russian 78s—it may be that the conductor, who had been in the Soviet Union before migrating to Switzerland, was inspired by Golovanov as well as by Furtwängler (who had once played his compositions in Berlin). It must have been a great release for Paul Kletzki to be able to travel in the West after all those difficult years, but this late outburst of Nikisch-Mahler sensibility is a worthy memorial of what he left behind. The production is first-rate.