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Horenstein

Mahler - Symphony No. 5

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The circumstances under which this recording was made are worth retelling. Between November 1957 and August 1958 George Mendelssohn of Vox Records was negotiating with the London Symphony Orchestra for a series of studio recordings with Horenstein, to be synchronized with concert appearances featuring the same works. In June 1958, as a result of these discussions, the LSO engaged Horenstein for two concerts, a performance of Mahler 5 in Leeds on Nov. 1st and another appearance in London on Nov. 9th featuring works by Bartók, Prokofiev and Berlioz. However by the end of August 1958, after equivocating for months, Mendelssohn had already pulled out of both projects leaving the LSO, at that time in dire financial straits, with no recordings and stuck with two concerts they could not afford nor wanted to promote alone. Following Mendelssohn's exit, repertoire and soloists were rapidly changed for Horenstein's Nov. 9th concert, but the Mahler symphony was kept in the program for Nov. 1st after the BBC, on the initiative of Robert Simpson, stepped into the time slots previously reserved for Vox. Following five rehearsals, the first for strings only, Mahler 5 was recorded by the BBC at a single session during the afternoon of 30th October 1958 and documents the first-ever LSO performance of the work. The recording of what was essentially a dress-rehearsal was followed by the concert in Leeds two days later, the orchestra's first public performance of the symphony (not broadcast or recorded) that attracted an enthusiastic crowd and favorable reviews. "At the end", a surprised Horenstein told Deryck Cooke, "the large audience acclaimed it as though it were some accepted masterpiece", which at that time was clearly not the case.

Mendelssohn's withdrawal from the project exacerbated an already strained relationship with Horenstein who some months later categorically refused to work with him or with Vox Records ever again, but there was another player in this saga: Everest Records. In August 1958 Everest began making a series of commercial recordings with the LSO that initially featured Walter Susskind and Eugene Goossens conducting contemporary music. Then in September the LSO's manager John Cruft wrote to Everest with more repertoire and conductor suggestions including, among others, a recording of Mahler's Fifth with Rudolf Schwarz. In his letter Cruft did not mention Horenstein, already one of the LSO's regular guest conductors and about to tackle the Fifth (and later the Eighth) with the orchestra. Whether this omission was accidental or deliberate is unknown, but, according to the LSO's official discography, Everest's recording of the Fifth Symphony with Schwarz, the orchestra's first commercial recording of any music by Mahler, was made on 10-11 Nov. 1958, just ten days after Horenstein rehearsed, recorded and performed it with the same orchestra in London and Leeds! Free from his obligations to Vox Records by the end of August 1958, there were no contractual issues nor any prior engagements to prevent him from accepting the Everest recording job had it been offered. Why the LSO and Everest chose Schwarz for their recording, fine effort though it is, remains a mystery, to be classified as another example of Horenstein's unfortunate career as a recording artist. Published here for the first time in any form and the first of three preserved recordings of Mahler's Fifth under his direction, this version, taken from its lone broadcast in June 1960, goes some way towards redressing that injustice.

Misha Horenstein



PASC 567

horenstein

conducts mahler

symphony no. 5

london symphony orchestra
bbc studio recording, 1958 - world première release

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MAHLER SYMPHONY No. 5
HORENSTEIN, LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Jascha Horenstein

Recording from the archive
of Misha Horenstein

Mahler Symphony No. 5
Recorded 30 October, 1958
BBC Maida Vale Studio 1
London

Total duration: 76:55

1. BBC RADIO Introduction (1:34)

MAHLER Symphony No. 5

PART I

2. 1st mvt. - Trauermarsch (12:41)
3. 2nd mvt. - Stürmisch bewegt, mit größter Vehemenz (16:06)

PART II

4. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo (19:49)
5. 4th mvt. - Adagietto (9:54)

PART III

6. 5th mvt. - Rondo-Finale (16:51)

London Symphony Orchestra
Solo Horn: Barry Tuckwell
conducted by Jascha Horenstein

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