Bruckner - Symphony No 2 in C minor (1877 version, ed. William Carragan)

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande / Marek Janowski
Pentatone Classics PTC 5186 448

WITH THE latest tranche of issues from Pentatone Classics, Marek Janowski has now recorded all nine numbered Bruckner symphonies with the Suisse Romande Orchestra.

Belatedly catching up with this series, I am struck by the clarity of the sound and the care that has been taken over balance. The heavy brass is kept down so that wind lines can come through, and while brass dynamics do need to be controlled, in passages such as the big F minor tutti in the middle of the first movement the trombones are very discreet indeed. The effect is of a lighter Bruckner than usual, but to a large extent the approach suits this particular symphony, with its gently interweaving contrapuntal lines and placid-plaintive temperament.

Janowski’s tempi are flowing, the occasional broadenings giving the music shape. The steady pace for the Scherzo – which is in any case only Mäßig Schnell in the 1877 version – allows the Trio to unfold unhurriedly at the Gleiches Tempo Bruckner asks for.

There are however places (especially in the Finale) where one wants more drama and more power. One might also feel that other conductors have found greater depth in the slow movement (Janowski does take the option of including the passage at letter C). It’s still an agreeable and well-detailed performance which I suspect I will be coming back to.

Dermot Gault