

John

You asked for details of performances that led people to discovering Bruckner's works. In my own case this started over 40 years ago when I was a teenager and I was limited by what I could afford and what recordings were available in Australia at that time (late 1960s and 1970s).

The first work I discovered was Symphony No.4 in a performance by the London SO conducted by Istvan Kertesz. Barry Tuckwell's horn playing in the opening bars is superb, Kertesz conducts with all his usual charisma, and the Decca recording (probably made in the old Kingsway Hall) puts a lot of more recent ones to shame. I subsequently acquired the Bruno Walter performance with the Columbia SO but never really liked it, largely because of the shrill CBS sound. Karajan in this symphony has never appealed to me much (it always seems as though he is on a continuous ego trip) but Jochum definitely does, in both his DG and EMI recordings. Recently I discovered a live Munich PO performance conducted by Günter Wand and this has become my definite favourite. He seems to handle the waywardness of much of this symphony better than anyone else, even Furtwängler, who to me is too inclined to stop completely and this ruins the flow.

I think my next discovery was Symphony No.2, with the Berlin PO conducted by Eugen Jochum. This is still my favourite even though I now have a number of other performances in my collection.

After that came Symphony No.7 with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer. Despite the cuts he made in the finale I still think it is a great performance. Sometime later I acquired Klemperer's reading of Symphony No.6 which is still my favourite. I also have several other recordings of both these works and my preference in No.7 is a Denon CD with the Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Herbert Blomstedt, made in the 1980s. The tempi are beautifully judged, textures are transparent without sacrificing the power of this wonderful work, and the orchestral playing and recording are right up there with the best.

The next work I discovered – one of my favourites – is the Mass No.3 in F minor, a Berlin performance including the St Hedwig's Cathedral Choir in great form, conducted by Laurence Forster. It is on cassette and the sound is fading but it is still my preferred performance even though I have since acquired the Eugen Jochum and Colin Davis recordings. I came to Bruckner's other choral works via Bavarian RSO recordings conducted by Jochum and the Corydon Singers conducted by Matthew Best.

I think Symphony No.8 came next, with the Berlin PO conducted by Eugen Jochum. His tempi and rubato are a bit wayward in parts but I still find it deeply moving. Karajan – either Berlin PO or Vienna PO – is good too but I do think that Günter Wand is best, in either his DG or RCA recordings. There is also a very good DVD of him conducting this work. I also have Bernard Haitink's recording of this symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, less overtly emotional than the others but very satisfying just the same.

Bruno Walter's Columbia SO recording was my introduction to Symphony No.9 and like No.4 I did not enjoy it particularly, again because of the sound. Later I obtained performances conducted by Jochum, Karajan and Wand and I like them all, with a slight preference for Günter Wand. I also have a

Furtwängler performance but find it a bit too deliberate for such an intense work. on the other hand, Barenboim with the Chicago SO, coupled with the Te Deum, is pretty good.

Symphony No.5 was a problem; I first acquired Karajan's Berlin PO recording in a very uneconomical 2-LP set. I recognised immediately the unusual power of this work, seeming to be always in a state of beginning, but did not really care for Karajan's self-conscious way of conducting it. The problem was not really solved until quite recently when I acquired a superb reading (and Decca recording) conducted by Riccardo Chailly. It captures the essence of this work much better than the recent recording by Philippe Herreweghe.

Another problem was Symphony No.3. My first recording of it was a rather ordinary performance conducted by Eliahu Inbal, but Haitink's reading, coupled with No.8 on a Philips 'twofer', eventually led me to appreciate this early work.

My introduction to works like Symphony No.'0' and '00', and the original finale of Symphony No.4, all came from Naxos CDs, with Georg Tintner conducting. These are generally excellent readings but the orchestral playing is often wanting. I have Symphony No.1 with the Berlin PO conducted by Karajan and unlike other of his performances find it very enjoyable.

I do hope these comments – rather more extended than I intended – will be of some use. Keep up the great work.

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