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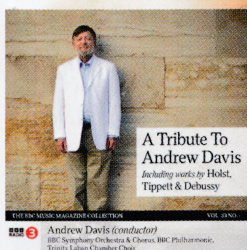
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ORCHESTRAL CHOICE



Spellbinding Bruckner from Järvi's peerless Swiss

Michael Jameson is blown away by this towering performance of the Ninth, captured in glorious sound



Winning ways: Paavo Järvi's vision of the Ninth Symphony is clear-sighted

Bruckner

Symphony No. 9

Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich/Paavo Järvi
Alpha Classics ALPHA1068 61:15 mins

This is the third recording of Bruckner's Ninth to have appeared recently, and the finest by a substantial margin. Indeed, as Paavo Järvi suggests, his peerless Swiss ensemble 'has everything needed for Bruckner's Symphony No. 9 – technically, musically, and in terms of sound,' and impressive as they both are, neither François-Xavier Roth's account with the Gurzenich-Orchester (Myrios) nor Jakub Hrůša's Bambergers (on Accentus) can eclipse this spellbinding orchestral playing, nor Järvi's clear-sighted yet spiritually chastening interpretation.

Amplly reverberant yet clinically detailed, the spatial realism of this recording, with its massive dynamic range and pin-sharp instrumental focus captures the majestic solemnity of the superlative Zurich orchestra – one of Europe's best, whatever they might think in Berlin or Vienna – to jaw-dropping

effect, and Paavo Järvi has demonstrably winning ways with Bruckner, as his accounts of Symphonies Nos 7 and 8 on Alpha have already affirmed.

Järvi's Ninth seems to penetrate new realms of consciousness in a reading as intellectually searing and musically uncompromising as any I've heard, Karajan, Wand and Giulini included. Like the greatest Bruckner Ninths on album, this one leaves the listener

Järvi's Ninth seems to penetrate new realms of consciousness

with the sense that the work is truly complete as it stands, despite being unfinished, and lacking the finale upon which Bruckner is known to have been working on the very

day he died. It's worth recalling that the Bruckner scholar Walter Weidringer maintained that the Ninth bespeaks 'a degree of completion which no longer seems capable of improvement.' A sobering, self-abasing, yet toweringly magnificent performance.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

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Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 1, 2 & 4

Orchestre Consuelo/
Victor Julien-Laferrière
B Records LBM066 88 mins



Does the world need another Beethoven symphony cycle on period instruments? On

the evidence of this first instalment of the First, Second and Fourth Symphonies, the answer is maybe, probably and yes!

The Orchestre Consuelo is a French ensemble founded in 2021 by the cellist Victor Julien-Laferrière, and it has all the shapely brilliance demonstrated by the best French old-instrument chamber music players (think Les Arts Florissants a century on from the Baroque). Their cycle was recorded live at La Chaise-Dieu Music Festival, and with a string strength of 25 players the technical achievement of the playing is stunning. Whether the musical achievement quite matches that we have yet to see.

The First is super-light, bustling but over chirpy – the witty jokes are there especially in the *Finale*, but is it all a touch too coy and held back? The Second certainly pushes things on, and the opening movement is exhaustingly driven, without quite capturing the impact of the trumpet entry at the climax. But its *Larghetto* is well shaped, gently phrased without losing sharpness, and the *Finale* is a thrilling daredevil stunt with some great effects – listen to how the ghostly string chord in bar 336 emerges stealthily from under the previous *fortissimo*.

Perhaps the expressive growth across the symphonies is deliberate, for the Fourth then emerges as a real winner. From an eerie *Adagio* opening which the old instruments make sound quite sinister, the *Allegro vivace* is now very forceful, nothing held back in the shooting semiquavers. The *Adagio* moves well with the dotted rhythms gently articulated. The finale is a knockout race, in danger of rushing but somehow kept under control, with ultra-crisp wind, a chattering bassoon and fiendishly agile strings. Quite a ride! *Nicholas Kenyon*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★
★★★★★