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DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 487

Charles Mackerras at Edinburgh, 1962

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ORCHESTRAL concerts at the festival continue to give us music which is variable in substance and quality. The programme of the Polish Radio Orchestra's second concert contained the piano concerto in F sharp minor of Scriabin, an almost unheard of composer in most parts of the musical world nowadays. This is a young man's composition dating from 1897; and a prize might be awarded to any critic who, discussing and describing it, is able to avoid mention of the name Chopin. The solo part is obviously derivative, and the orchestral scoring too. It was played to a not overcrowded audience by Paul Badura-Skoda, and played brilliantly. But why couldn't his gifted fingers have been occupied with notes of more account? The concerto is pleasant enough, nostalgic with reminiscences, and an old faded aroma. It was, in fact, the original "Warsaw" Concerto.

The Polish orchestra at its second concert was conducted by none other than the young Australian Charles Mackerras, who directed these expert instrumentalists through a smart-cracking performance of Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony. Though the playing here was generally excellent, I could not recognise the full tone and precision which impressed me so much at Saturday's concert. Maybe Mr Mackerras, for all his skill, had been unable at rehearsal to achieve complete communication of his ideas. None the less, the Polish orchestra maintained a standard of execution equal to Britain's best. The woodwind, especially, revelled in Shostakovich's cock-a-hoop wit. I expected, at the end of the performance, Mr Mackerras to indicate to these virtuoso players to rise and share prominently the audience's applause; but he did not, not obviously, at any rate.

The Ninth Symphony of Shostakovich is really one of symphonic music's best jokes. Apart from one strange, almost bodeful visitation, the work guys the pomposity of the traditional symphony or rather the post-Beethoven. "Middle German" symphony. Possibly Mahler gave Shostakovich the irreverent cue; but Mahler was never as arrogantly and rampantly on the symphonic "bummel", so to say—on the spree—as Shostakovich in his short Ninth Symphony. Mahler's humour is usually wry, with a touch of the grotesque in it. Shostakovich cracked his jokes with relish. The tunes are Till Eulenspiegelish. The trombone in the first movement has a musical guffaw and yawp all to itself. The pace of the music, and its "spin," suggests that Shostakovich, who is becoming an image of his country's aloofness with rather inimical implications is at times the Rossini of contemporary Russian music. Which is saying much.

Neville Cardus The Guardian, 29 August, 1962 (*excerpt*)

Producer's Note

Although this stereo concert recording, complete with full announcements, was made by the BBC at the Edinburgh Festival of 1962, it was never broadcast in the United Kingdom. Instead it would appear that it was one of a handful of recordings which were instead pressed onto vinyl and sent to radio station(s) in United States for broadcast there. It is not clear how many copies of each disc were made, nor to where they were sent - or indeed how they were financed. What we do know is that the three discs which made up this broadcast were clearly marked "expires 3.9.66" and probably should have been destroyed after use. Happily they fell instead into the hands of a collector who was able to preserve them for posterity and, finally now, release. The recordings were of course very well made, and have been very well preserved, and my interventions as a result have been unusually minimal. This brings Charles Mackerras to Pristine for the first time, captured at a point in his stellar career when the BBC's accompanying notes could still describe him as "the brilliant young conductor". **Andrew Rose**



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SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY No. 9 - DVORAK SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS
MACKERRAS, BADURA-SKODA, POLISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

1 Radio Introduction (0:55)

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 70

2 1st mvt. - Allegro (5:01)

3 2nd mvt. - Moderato (6:04)

4 3rd mvt. - Presto (2:33)

5 4th mvt. - Largo (2:27)

6 5th mvt. - Allegretto - Allegro (5:55)

7 Radio applause and announcements (1:17)

SCRIABIN Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20

8 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:56)

9 2nd mvt. - Andante (7:54)

10 3rd mvt. - Allegro moderato (10:53)

Paul Badura-Skoda, piano

11 Radio applause and announcements (1:36)

DVORÁK Symphonic Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 78

12 Theme and Variations 1-4 (4:59)

13 Variations 5-9 (2:40)

14 Variations 10-13 (3:12)

15 Variations 14-17 (2:20)

16 Variations 18-21 (2:54)

17 Variations 22-24 (1:59)

18 Variations 25-27 (3:35)

19 Radio applause and closing announcement (0:37)

Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Charles Mackerras, conductor

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

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photograph of Edinburgh

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Usher Hall, Edinburgh
27 August, 1962

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Total duration: 74:47

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