



Fritz Busch

conducts Brahms



Fritz Busch's (1890–1951) affinity to the music of Johannes Brahms gestated from early in his life. One of his teachers at the Cologne Conservatoire was Fritz Steinbach, a noted Brahmsian, who had closely collaborated with the composer from at least 1886. As Christopher Dymont, who has in detail compared the early recorded performances of the Brahms symphonies, wrote: "More than any other recording conductor he had the chance to observe and absorb the Steinbach method and style". Brahms's music featured regularly in Busch's orchestral concerts from as early as 1909. Busch was particularly interested in performing the Symphonies Nos. 1, 2 and 4 as well as the 'Haydn' Variations and the Violin Concerto, each of which works he conducted at least twenty times. While however renderings of neither the Violin Concerto nor the 'Haydn' Variations conducted by Busch have survived, so has a performance of the First Symphony, aired on 1 February 1942 from New York's Carnegie Hall, which has never before been issued on LP or CD. Christopher Dymont has stressed this performance to be "as remarkable as the 1931 broadcast performance of the Second Symphony"; Busch's second recording of Symphony No. 2 took place sixteen years later, in October 1947, for The Gramophone Company Ltd., the recording being hailed by the press as exceptional. Kai Flor (in the *Belingske Tidende*) described the performance of the symphony on 10 October 1946 as Busch "embracing the symphony and penetrating it with his warm musical feeling, educing strength, gentleness, grace, bright humour and eventually subdued mysticism from it, well into the radiant, percussive festiveness of the finale. What a richness, what a beauty of thoughts, of feeling, of soul!" And 'Schap.' in the *Børsen* wrote: "Under Busch's hands all the symphony's vitality and spontaneous zest for life were released – he can work with an orchestra so that it sings and sounds beautifully, and at the same time clarify the overall form, as if one has the feeling of the work just being created."

In September 1950 Busch conducted his last of a total of some 14 performances of Brahms's Tragic Overture at the Danish Radio Concert Hall. Grete Busch recalls that "a golden Danish autumn" was kind of reflected in the delighted and delighting concert, which apart from the Tragic Overture featured Brahms's *Nänie*, Op. 82 (which has survived only incomplete and appears here, in a reconstructed version, for the first time), and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the critics praising "noble lines" and "real Brahmsian temperament". The very same month Busch visited war-ravaged Vienna, where he, amongst other things, conducted some orchestral concerts, both with the Wiener Philharmoniker and with the Symphoniker. The latter concert, which was broadcast by Radio Rot-Weiß-Rot, took place at the Musikverein on 15 October, featuring Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in A, Op. 92, and Brahms's Fourth Symphony in E minor, Op. 98, giving us ample opportunity to admire Busch's conducting. The performance combines a great sense of authority with a deep understanding of the music. Harris Goldsmith describes the Brahms performance as "galvanic", the whole performance having "a wonderfully granitic firmness of outline, with plenty of sentiment but no trace of sentimentality. And, save for one or two ever-so-slightly idiosyncratic details (probably arising from the heat of the moment), the final Passacaglia is admirably steady."

Jürgen Schaarwächter
Max-Reger-Institut with BuschBrothersArchive, Karlsruhe



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disc one

BRAHMS Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

1. 1st mvt. - Un poco sostenuto - Allegro (13:23)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andante sostenuto (10:25)
3. 3rd mvt. - Un poco allegretto e grazioso (4:48)
4. 4th mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo, ma con brio (16:32)

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra
Carnegie Hall, New York, 1 February 1942

5. **BRAHMS** Tragic Overture, Op. 81 (13:07)

6. **BRAHMS** Nänie, Op. 82 (14:43)

Statsradiofonien Kor

Statsradiofonien Symfoniorkester
Danish Radio Concert Hall, Copenhagen, 7 September 1950

conducted by Fritz Busch

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of **Fritz Busch** in 1950

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Total duration: 2hr 25:36

disc two

BRAHMS Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (13:18)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio non troppo (8:40)
3. 3rd mvt. - Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino) (4:45)
4. 4th mvt. - Allegro con spirito (8:10)

Statsradiofonien Symfoniorkester

Danish Radio Concert Hall, Copenhagen, 20/21 October 1947

BRAHMS Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

5. 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (11:02)
6. 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (10:57)
7. 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso (5:55)
8. 4th mvt. - Allegro energico e passionato (9:53)

Wiener Symphoniker

Musikverein, Vienna, 15 October 1950