

“Better late than never, we have here a wholly admirable Bruckner Nine recorded in September 1956 by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under the late Eduard van Beinum: the great Concertgebouw Bruckner tradition at its unaffected best. For though van Beinum encompasses the Symphony's several contrasted moods, giving each its own distinctive cut and contour, there is a simplicity (an inevitability, if you like) about the way paragraph is matched with paragraph. The accelerando is here as sparingly used as, under Jochum it is freely indulged. When it comes, building rapidly, for instance, towards the first great climax after what has been an extraordinarily simple, dignified start to the symphony, the motion is swift, eager, clear cut. And that, in turn, is of a piece with van Beinum's wonderfully keen handling of the music's quicker, demonic subjects.

Nobility rather than splendour, grief assuaged rather than pity openly registered: these are the qualities which distinguish van Beinum's account of Bruckner's last symphony, and its Adagio in particular. In the Scherzo a sufficiently ominous note is struck, and the Trio is superb, glintingly quick.”

— R. O., The Gramophone, December 1977

The curious opening phrase to this British LP review — “better late than never” — reveals that this fabulous 1956 recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 9 was not originally issued in the United Kingdom, nor indeed that widely as far as I've been able to tell. It appeared in Germany in 1956 and in Canada the following year, with a Dutch issue following in 1959. Only by the 1970s did it start to appear further afield — “stereo” versions appeared in Britain in 1971 and in Italy in 1973, almost certainly using the notorious fake stereo effect of the time.

This review from 1977 therefore refers to the first proper UK release of the original mono recording, and one can only assume that, for a work such as this, the folly of not recording it in stereo probably led to its relative obscurity for so many years. Indeed the reviewer goes on to express the benefit to the work of a full stereo sound as he discusses other, more recent issues, and you read between the lines his disappointment that such a wonderful interpretation lacks this finishing touch.

Pristine's Ambient Stereo XR remastering does not, of course, attempt to create a fake stereo soundfield. Instead it brings a sense of dimensional space around the orchestra, as well as bringing greater depth and a sonority closer to the true sound of the orchestra as heard in the Concertgebouw Hall in Amsterdam. The dramatic effect here is astonishing — a side-by-side comparison of the middle movement between the original and the XR remastered version might have you believing you were listening to an entirely different recording!

Andrew Rose



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BRUCKNER SYMPHONY No. 9
VAN BEINUM, CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA OF AMSTERDAM

van beinum

conducts the concertgebouw orchestra

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XR Remastered by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Eduard van Beinum

Recorded 17-19 September 1956
Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

Total duration: 59:05

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 9 in D minor

1894 Original Version. Ed. Leopold Nowak [1951]

1. 1st mvt. - Feierlich, misterioso (22:34)
2. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Bewegt, lebhaft; Trio. Schnell (10:02)
3. 3rd mvt. - Adagio. Langsam, feierlich (26:29)

Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam
conducted by Eduard van Beinum

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