

"This is a very welcome first appearance indeed. It will certainly give deep satisfaction to the Brucknerians, and it will enable those who have not yet taken to this composer to introduce themselves to a lovely symphony. On the rare occasions when we hear a Bruckner symphony in the concert hall, it is usually the 4th: this one seems to me to be no less easy to enjoy and it is, indeed, very friendly music to approach.

The performance is admirable. In any case, one would scarcely presume to question the interpretation of Bruckner by this orchestra and conductor. Those powerful full orchestral passages throw into enchanting relief the melting Viennese moments (such as the ravishing 2nd subject of the opening movement). I said "ravishing", but that is not quite as true of the sound on this record as it ought to be, for the string tone does lack that rich, warm quality which Bruckner's music needs so much and which we know the Viennese players to possess. A lesser defect is the resonance of the recording. This does not affect the music while it is going on (except that an empty hall may account for the lack of warmth in the strings) but it is tiresome whenever there is a sudden silence after a big orchestral sound.

These things one could wish were better. They do not, however, greatly detract from the value of the performance and I hope no one will be put off acquiring this disc. It is definitely a record to add to the library."

T.H., *The Gramophone*, Review of Bruckner's Symphony No. 3, December 1954

Hans Knappertsbusch recorded a relatively small number of recordings for Decca, of which the majority were the music of Wagner. However, at the beginning of April 1954 he turned his attention to the first of three recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra of symphonies by Bruckner, as a series of sessions at Vienna's Musikverein which would also yield a recording with Clifford Curzon of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (Pristine PASC318).

He would return almost exactly a year later to continue with Bruckner's 4th Symphony, the "Romantic", which was coupled for twelve-inch LP release with Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* on a Decca double set. Finally, as far as his Decca Bruckner was concerned, Knappertsbusch switched venues and was working in stereo by June of the following year, 1956, for one final symphony – the Fifth – this time recorded in the Sofiensaal where a few weeks earlier he'd recorded Wagner with Kirsten Flagstad and the VPO. It will come as no surprise to learn that the "extra" this time to the Bruckner was, once again, Wagner.

As one might expect, the recording quality of these mid-fifties Decca discs was a cut above the average for the time. Nevertheless, all can now be significantly improved upon, as these Pristine XR remasters amply demonstrate. Seventy years after they were first recorded, and in time for Bruckner's 200th anniversary, they now sound as good as new.

Andrew Rose



PRISTINE
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BRUCKNER SYMPHONIES NOS 3, 4 & 5
KNAPPERTSBUSCH, VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

knappertsbusch

conducts bruckner

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PASC 723

XR remastering by: Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Bruckner

Total duration: 2hr 54:10

disc one
(53:51)

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 3 in D minor, WAB 103

1. 1st mvt. - Mäßig bewegt (19:08)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio (etwas bewegt), quasi Andante (14:03)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Ziemlich schnell (7:20)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale. Allegro (13:20)

Recorded 1-3 April 1954, Grosser Saal, Musikverein, Vienna
Producer: Victor Olof. Engineer: Cyril Windebank
Presented in Ambient Stereo

disc two
(59:56)

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major, WAB 104 'Romantic'

1. 1st mvt. - Bewegt, nicht zu schnell (17:55)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andante quasi Allegretto (14:28)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Bewegt; Trio. Nicht zu schnell. Keinesfalls schleppend (9:59)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale. Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (17:33)

Recorded 29-31 March 1955, Grosser Saal, Musikverein, Vienna
Producer: Victor Olof & Peter Andry. Engineer: Cyril Windebank
Presented in Ambient Stereo

disc three
(60:23)

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, WAB 105

1. 1st mvt. - Introduktion: Adagio - Allegro (18:45)
2. 2nd mvt. - Adagio: Sehr langsam (13:20)
3. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Molto vivace (schnell) - Trio: Im gleichen Tempo (9:33)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale: Adagio - Allegro moderato (18:45)

Recorded 3-6 June 1956, Sofiensaal, Vienna
Producer: Peter Andry. Engineer: James Brown
Presented in Stereo

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch

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