



WARNER
CLASSICS

Respighi
THE PINES OF ROME

BERLIOZ
"Le Carnaval Romain" Overture

LISZT
Les Préludes

HERBERT VON KARAJAN
Philharmonia Orchestra

w. francis phillips.

Karajan and the EMI legacy

When Gaisberg's successor Walter Legge ascended the stairs to the eighth floor of an unheated and partly bomb-damaged block of flats in Vienna on a late winter's afternoon in January 1946 he had nothing with him other than a bottle of black-market whisky. Arriving in what was still technically 'enemy territory' with an enterprising array of documents and identities, Legge's mission was to secure for his company an exclusive contract with the most talked-about conductor among the new generation of Austro-German artists, the 37-year-old Herbert von Karajan. The two men struck up an instant rapport. When a contract was signed three months later Karajan refused to take a copy. 'I don't need it. I know you now.'

The recordings Legge made with Karajan between September 1946 and September 1960 – initially in Vienna, then mostly in London with Legge's own Philharmonia Orchestra, though with important sessions in Milan and Berlin – constitute one of the gramophone's most remarkable legacies. Quality was taken as read. Both men were perfectionists who never knowingly settled for second best. Both defined 'style' as an absence of vulgarity: the refusal to admit

to a performance any of those mannerisms or extraneous expressive gestures that become wearisome with repetition. Karajan already possessed a large across-the-board repertory acquired during his apprentice years in Ulm, Aachen and Berlin. Rooted in opera and choral music, it extended deep into the mainstream and contemporary orchestral repertory.

There is no doubt that Karajan lived through difficult times. He was born in Salzburg six years before the outbreak of the First World War and died only months before the fall of the Berlin Wall. But he was also lucky. Five years into his contract with EMI, LP appeared. As he put it: 'Once it had been resolved which form should be adopted, there began a recording activity that came upon us like an intoxication. It was the second, the great period of the gramophone.'

During the second phase of Karajan's association with EMI (1969–84), the music of Bruckner and Sibelius also featured strongly in these years. Anyone in search of the 'real' Karajan – the mountain man, solitary by nature, patient and far-seeing, as opposed to the sophisticated professional who conducted an astonishing array of music

astonishingly well – need look no further than his conducting of the music of these two composers. The fact that neither was much in fashion in the post-war world was of no concern to Karajan, so absorbed was he in music that was beyond time and fashion. His early Philharmonia recordings of Sibelius's Fourth and Fifth symphonies were greatly admired by the composer himself. There was no greater interpreter of either composer in the post-war era.

Richard Strauss famously venerated Mozart. Karajan venerated both: Strauss as a composer and as a conductor, Mozart as a fellow Salzburger and universal genius. Most conductors have a single Mozart style, Karajan had half a dozen. The urbanity of his 1953 *Così fan tutte* and his 1960 Berlin recording of Symphony No.29 contrasts interestingly with the full-bodied majesty of the recordings of the last six symphonies he made in Berlin in 1970, a widely acclaimed set that included a rare chance to hear Karajan at work in rehearsal. As for Strauss, no year went by when Karajan did not return to his music. In 1973, he brought the rarely played *Symphonia domestica* into his repertoire; two years later he made his second recording of *Don Quixote*, the Strauss tone poem he revered above all others.

The final two decades of Karajan's life were divided by two watersheds: the near-fatal spinal condition which required life-saving surgery in 1975, after which he returned to work with renewed dedication and intensity, and the disputes with the Berlin Philharmonic which followed the close of the orchestra's centenary year in 1982, from which he barely recovered. Indeed, it was with the Vienna Philharmonic – an old love newly rekindled – that Karajan made his last recording for EMI in 1984, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* with Anne-Sophie Mutter.

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Karajans EMI-Vermächtnis

Als Walter Legge an einem kalten Winternachmittag des Januar 1946 in den achten Stock eines ungeheizten, teils zerbombten Wiener Wohnblocks emporstieg, hatte er nichts weiter bei sich als eine Flasche Whisky vom Schwarzmarkt. Als er mit seinem abenteuerlichen Arsenal an Dokumenten und Ausweisen (technisch gesprochen auf „feindlichem Terrain“) ankam, da hatte Legge den Auftrag, für seine Firma einen exklusiven Aufnahmevertrag mit einem jungen Dirigenten zu schließen, der damals in aller Munde war – mit dem 37-jährigen Herbert von Karajan. Die beiden Männer verstanden sich auf Anhieb. Bei der Vertragsunterzeichnung verzichtete Karajan drei Monate später auf eine Kopie: „Brauche ich nicht. Ich kenne Sie jetzt ja.“

Die gemeinsamen Aufnahmen, die Legge und Karajan vom September 1946 bis zum September 1960 zunächst in Wien, dann meist mit Legges Philharmonia Orchestra in London sowie bei etlichen wichtigen Sitzungen in Mailand und Berlin machten – diese Aufnahmen gehören zu den bemerkenswertesten Tonträgerdokumenten überhaupt. Qualität verstand sich von selbst. Beide waren Perfektionisten und gaben sich freiwillig niemals mit dem Zweitbesten

zufrieden. Beide verstanden unter „Stil“ das Fehlen jeglicher Vulgarität, und das bedeutete: auf all jene Manierismen oder äußerlichen Ausdrucksgebärden zu verzichten, die auf die Dauer nur ermüden. Karajan hatte sich bereits während seiner Lehrjahre in Ulm, Aachen und Berlin ein großes, allumfassendes Repertoire angeeignet, das in der Oper und der Chormusik wurzelte, indessen es sich weit auf das Gebiet des orchestralen Mainstream und des zeitgenössischen Repertoires erstreckte.

Keine Frage, dass Karajan schwierige Zeiten miterlebt hat. Er wurde sechs Jahre vor dem Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges in Salzburg geboren und starb wenige Monate vor dem Fall der Berliner Mauer. Doch er war auch ein glücklicher Mensch. Fünf Jahre nach seinem Vertragsabschluss mit EMI kam die Langspielplatte: „Nachdem man sich erst einmal auf die Form geeinigt hatte“, sagte er, „begannen wir, wie im Rausch aufzunehmen. Es war die zweite, die große Zeit des Grammophons.“

Als Karajan dann zwischen 1969 und 1984 zum zweiten Male mit EMI zusammenarbeitete, spielte die Musik von Bruckner und Sibelius eine große Rolle. Wer immer den „wirklichen“ Karajan sucht: den

Mann der Berge, den geduldigen, weitsichtigen Einzelgänger, der er von Natur aus war und der sich so deutlich von dem geistreichen Profi unterschied, der eine erstaunliche Menge an Musik erstaunlich gut dirigieren konnte – diesen „wirklichen“ Karajan wird er finden, wenn er dessen Umgang mit den beiden genannten Komponisten betrachtet. Dass die beiden nach dem Krieg nicht besonders *en vogue* waren, hat Karajan nie gestört, so sehr war er mit Musik beschäftigt, die sich über Zeit und Moden erhob. Seine frühen Philharmonia-Aufnahmen der vierten und fünften Sinfonie von Sibelius hat der Meister selbst noch sehr bewundert. Es gab in der Zeit nach dem Krieg kaum einen, der die beiden Komponisten besser interpretiert hätte.

Richard Strauss hat bekanntlich Mozart verehrt. Karajan verehrte sie beide: Strauss als Komponisten und Dirigenten, Mozart als Salzburger und Universalgenie. Die meisten Dirigenten haben *einen* Mozart-Stil; Karajan hatte deren ein halbes Dutzend. Die Urbanität seiner *Così fan tutte* von 1953 und seiner 1960 in Berlin entstandenen Einspielung der Sinfonie Nr. 29 steht in einem interessanten Gegensatz zu der körpervollen Majestät der Aufnahmen, die er 1970 in Berlin von den letzten sechs Sinfonien machte – ein weithin

anerkanntes Set, das eine der seltenen Gelegenheiten bot, Karajan bei der Probe zu belauschen. Zum andern verging kein Jahr, in dem er sich nicht mit der Musik von Richard Strauss auseinandergesetzt hätte. 1973 nahm er die selten gespielte *Symphonia domestica* in sein Repertoire auf; zwei Jahre später machte er seine zweite Aufnahme von *Don Quixote*, den er von allen Strauss'schen Tondichtungen am meisten schätzte.

Die beiden letzten Jahrzehnte in Karajans Leben spielten sich zwischen zwei tiefen Einschnitten ab: Auf der einen Seite das schwere Rückenleiden, vor dessen tödlichen Folgen ihn 1975 nur eine Operation retten konnte, nach der er mit neuer Hingabe und Intensität weiterarbeitete, auf der andern die Auseinandersetzungen mit den Berliner Philharmonikern, die begannen, als sich das Jubiläumsjahr des Orchesters (1982) seinem Ende zuneigte. Davon hat sich Karajan nie wieder richtig erholt. Seine letzte Aufnahme machte er 1984 mit den Wiener Philharmonikern, zu denen die alte Liebe neu entbrannt war: *Die vier Jahreszeiten* von Antonio Vivaldi mit Anne-Sophie Mutter.

RICHARD OSBORNE

Übersetzung: Eckhardt van den Hoogen

Le legs discographique de Karajan chez EMI

Lorsque Walter Legge monta l'escalier jusqu'au huitième étage d'un immeuble non chauffé et endommagé par les bombes, à Vienne, un après-midi d'hiver en janvier 1946, il n'avait avec lui qu'une bouteille de whisky achetée au marché noir. Arrivant en ce qui était encore officiellement « territoire ennemi » avec une audacieuse panoplie de documents et d'identités, Legge avait pour mission d'obtenir pour sa firme un contrat exclusif avec le chef dont on parlait le plus parmi la nouvelle génération d'interprètes austro-allemands, le jeune Herbert von Karajan, âgé de trente-sept ans. Les deux hommes nouèrent aussitôt des liens. Lorsque le contrat fut signé trois mois plus tard, Karajan refusa d'en prendre une copie. « Je n'en ai pas besoin. Je vous connais maintenant. »

Les enregistrements que Legge fit avec Karajan entre septembre 1946 et septembre 1960 – d'abord à Vienne, puis, pour l'essentiel, à Londres, avec le Philharmonia Orchestra de Legge, mais avec d'importantes séances à Milan et à Berlin – sont l'un des legs discographiques les plus remarquables. La qualité était une exigence qui allait de soi. Les deux hommes étaient en effet des perfectionnistes qui ne se contentaient jamais

de pis-aller. Tous deux définissaient le « style » comme l'absence de vulgarité : le refus d'admettre dans une interprétation ces maniérismes ou ces gestes expressifs superflus qui deviennent fastidieux dès qu'ils sont répétés. Karajan possédait déjà un large répertoire général, acquis pendant ses années d'apprentissage à Ulm, Aix-la-Chapelle et Berlin. Enraciné dans l'opéra et la musique chorale, il s'étendait en profondeur dans le répertoire orchestral conventionnel et contemporain.

Il ne fait aucun doute que Karajan a vécu à une époque difficile. Né à Salzbourg six ans avant le début de la Première Guerre mondiale, il est mort quelques mois seulement avant la chute du mur de Berlin. Mais il a également eu de la chance. Cinq ans après la signature de son contrat avec EMI, le microsillon voyait le jour. « Une fois décidé quelle forme il fallait adopter, dit-il, une activité discographique a débuté qui nous a pris comme une espèce d'ivresse. C'était la deuxième, la grande période du disque. »

Pendant la deuxième phase de la collaboration de Karajan avec EMI (1969–1984), la musique de Bruckner et de Sibelius était très présente au cours de ces

années. Quiconque est en quête du « vrai » Karajan – le montagnard, solitaire par nature, patient et clairvoyant, par opposition au professionnel raffiné qui dirigeait un immense répertoire avec une égale perfection – n’a pas besoin de chercher plus loin que ses interprétations de Sibelius et de Bruckner. Le fait qu’aucun des deux compositeurs n’ait été très en vogue dans le monde de l’avant-guerre et de l’après-guerre lui importait peu, tellement il était absorbé dans la musique au-delà du temps et des modes. Ses anciens enregistrements Philharmonia des Quatrième et Cinquième Symphonies de Sibelius étaient vivement admirés par le compositeur lui-même. Et il n’y eut pas de plus grand interprète de l’un ou l’autre compositeur après la guerre.

Richard Strauss vénérât notoirement Mozart. Karajan vénérât les deux : Strauss en tant que compositeur et chef d’orchestre, Mozart en tant que compatriote salzbourgeois et génie universel. La plupart des chefs ont un seul style mozartien, Karajan en avait une demi-douzaine. L’urbanité de son *Così fan tutte* de 1953 et de sa Symphonie n°29 enregistrée en 1960 à Berlin forme un contraste intéressant avec l’ample majesté des six dernières symphonies qu’il grava à Berlin en 1970 – un coffret très acclamé qui offrait l’occasion rare d’entendre Karajan au travail

en répétition. Quant à Strauss, il ne se passait pas une année sans que Karajan retourne à sa musique. En 1973, il mit à son répertoire la *Symphonia domestica*, rarement jouée ; deux ans plus tard, il fit son deuxième enregistrement de *Don Quixote*, le poème symphonique de Strauss qu’il vénérât par-dessus tous les autres.

Les deux dernières décennies de la vie de Karajan furent marquées par deux événements majeurs : les problèmes de colonne vertébrale qui faillirent lui être fatals et qui nécessitèrent une intervention chirurgicale en 1975 pour lui sauver la vie, après quoi il retourna au travail avec un dévouement et une intensité renouvelés, et les disputes avec le Philharmonique de Berlin qui succédèrent à la fin de l’année du centenaire de l’orchestre, en 1982, et dont il se remit à peine. C’est du reste avec le Philharmonique de Vienne – un vieil amour nouvellement ravivé – que Karajan fit son dernier enregistrement pour EMI en 1984, *Les Quatre Saisons* de Vivaldi avec Anne-Sophie Mutter.

RICHARD OSBORNE

Traduction : Dennis Collins



Respighi: THE PINES OF ROME

Berlioz: "LE CARNAVAL ROMAIN" OVERTURE

Liszt: LES PRÉLUDES

Herbert von Karajan conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra

Respighi — "Pini di Roma" — Symphonic Poem (*"Pines of Rome"*)

- (a) I Pini di Villa Borghese (The Pines of the Villa Borghese).
- (b) I Pini presso una Catacomba (The Pines near a Catacomb).
- (c) I Pini del Gianicolo (The Pines of Janiculum).
- (d) I Pini della Via Appia (The Pines of the Appian Way).

It was in 1913 that Ottorino Respighi, who had been born a Bolognese, was appointed to the professional staff of the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome. He never left the capital except for short visits; it made the strongest impression on him, environmentally and creatively as well, and to its inspiration we owe three of Respighi's major orchestral works. They are *Fountains of Rome*, completed in 1917; *Pines of Rome*, dating from 1924; and *Roman Festivals*, dating from 1929.

The *Fountains of Rome*, after an initially poor reception, had begun to be well received at home and abroad when Respighi wrote to one of the managers of Ricordi, his publishers — Carlo Clausetti, who became a close friend and literary collaborator: "The Pines of Rome are sprouting, and already there are tiny saplings that are beginning to grow branches." The *Pines* had their first performance at the Augusteo in Rome, under Bernardo Molinari, on 14th December, 1924. The end of the first movement was greeted with uncomplimentary whistling at both first and second performances, but the poem as a whole was triumphantly successful.

The score is prefaced with a descriptive account of the music. This was written by Respighi in collaboration with Claudio Guastalla who recalls the occasion in his autobiography: assuring the reader that he wrote the preface after the music was composed, and not before, he continues: "I listened attentively while Respighi played the poem *Pines of Rome* on the piano, and then we sat down at the long table in that room on the corner of the Via Nazionale and Via Torino, on the top floor. Ottorino explained his four portraits to me, and I sat, pencil poised, ready to note down any word that seemed to me most significant: — Children playing by the pines at the Villa Borghese on a sunny morning . . . laughing, singing their nursery rhymes . . . playing soldiers . . . a little march . . . — That's good, I understand." And so almost exactly the printed description is worded. The children twitter and scream like swallows at evening, then they run away.

Respighi continued his explanation to Guastalla: "And then we plunge into another scene: the deserted Campagna, a solitary chapel; I've seen it, I don't know where . . . I don't know when . . . with a few pine trees behind it; and then there is a hymn which rises as if from under the earth and expands, and then turns and sinks below ground into a sort of

catacomb . . .

"Catacomb, you said. That's the word! Let's put: 'The pines near a catacomb' and all the world will understand."

And so the descriptions were formulated. For the third movement we are told; "There is a thrill in the air. The full moon reveals the profile of the pines of the Janiculum Hill. A nightingale is singing." And here Respighi realised, in his own words, "that no combination of wind instruments could quite counterfeited the real bird's song. Not even a coloratura soprano could have produced an effect other than artificial." And so he instructed a gramophone record of a nightingale to be played from the orchestra at this point.

The finale takes us to the Appian Way at dawn. Lonely pine trees guard the landscape. "Indistinctly, incessantly the rhythm of innumerable steps. The poet's imagination pictures a vision of past glories; trumpets bray (the score calls for six *bucine*, ancient Roman trumpets, represented by a sextet of flügelhorns) and the army of the Consul advances brilliantly in the grandeur of a newly risen sun towards the sacred way, and mounts in triumph the Capitoline Hill."

Berlioz — Overture "Le Carnaval romain", Op. 9

Rome too was the inspiration of Berlioz's first opera, *Benvenuto Cellini*. Berlioz read the Memoirs of the great 16th century sculptor when they were published in French in 1834; he thought back to the days when he had been a student at the Villa Medici in Rome, and like Respighi his inspiration flowered. His opera was unwillingly, carelessly, and disastrously mounted at the Opera in Paris on 10th September, 1838, though its later performances roused some admiration. In 1843 Berlioz wrote a second overture to it; like the first, it incorporates melodies from the opera. Its title Roman Carnival refers to the second act of *Cellini*, which the new overture was designed to preface. Liszt successfully revived the whole thing at Weimar in 1852, and London followed suit in the following year; but an Italian clique had been bribed to make *Cellini* a failure, and so it happened that the Roman Carnival, which had been encoined in a concert a fortnight previously, was now hissed and booed remorselessly.

Amends have been made since then, perhaps because the two brilliant overtures have made the tunes familiar. *Roman Carnival* has for long been a favourite orchestral showpiece. It falls roughly into two sections, the first based on a long melody for cor anglais (later Cellini uses it to address his beloved Teresa), the second a saltarello whose tune is sung by the chorus in the carnival scene. The revelry grows, and at its height the love theme returns as



if to remind us that Benvenuto and Teresa are planning to elope during the celebrations.

Liszt — "Les Préludes" — Symphonic Poem

Liszt was a confirmed champion of Berlioz's music, and felt its influence strongly in his own compositions. But unlike Berlioz it took him a long time to master the art of orchestration (perhaps because, unlike Berlioz, he was a pianist and thought naturally in terms of piano texture). His symphonic poems, thirteen in number, date from 1847 or so, but all the early ones were revised later, some of them several times, as Liszt became more adept at scoring. *Les Préludes*, the third in the list, is a case in point. In 1848 Liszt wrote it as a Prelude to a choral work, *The Four Elements*, from which its thematic material is drawn. At this time he was being assisted in orchestration by August Conradi, a competent hack who scored the choral piece and presumably also the Prelude. In succeeding years Liszt retouched it considerably, assisted by Joachim Raff (Conradi's successor in the Liszt workshop). It reached its final form around 1854, by which time Liszt was sufficiently expert to trust his own powers of scoring. Meanwhile *Les Quatre Elements* had been put back in the cupboard for good, and Liszt had to invent a new title and description. He settled on Alphonse Lamartine's 'poetic meditation' *Les Préludes*, which vaguely corresponded to the mood-content of the music, and wrote a poetic preface based on Lamartine.

The working method of the music is the episodic metamorphosis of the soft opening theme to suit linked sections in various contrasted moods. And so Liszt declares that the theme represents man, and the poem his life: "Our life," states the preface "what is it but a succession of preludes to that unknown aria whose first solemn note is sounded only by death?" And then the preface goes on to describe the various episodes: love, "the enchanted dawn of all existence," which is as ever assailed by "some tempest whose killing breath dispels lovely illusion." And then, after the storm, follows a pastoral interlude, where the wounded soul "resigns itself to the healing warmth of nature's lap." Finally the music moves into a martial section, wherein "man finds again his fully conscious self." And so the loud passage from the beginning of the poem returns to show man's self-realisation, and to round off the design. It rounds off too the content of this record; it began with children playing at soldiers, and ends with grown men doing the same. But perhaps that is a cynical notion.

WILLIAM MANN