

Great Conductors of the 20th Century Vol.14 - Carl Schuricht



- CD1 1. *Mendelssohn: Overture "The Hebrides"* (10:03) Schubert: Symphony No.8 "Unfinished"
2. *I. Allegro moderato* (10:33) 3. *II. Andante con moto* (11:50)
Mozart: Symphony No.35 "Haffner"
4. *I. Allegro con spirito* (05:59) 5. *II. Andante* (04:43) 6. *III. Menuetto* (03:11) 7. *IV. Finale (Presto)* (04:15)
Beethoven: Symphony No.1
8. *I. Adagio molto - Allegro con brio* (08:16) 9. *II. Andante cantabile con moto* (06:00) 10. *III. Menuetto (Allegro molto e vivace)* (03:30) 11. *IV. Finale (Adagio - Allegro molto e vivace)* (05:58)
Wiener Philharmoniker (1-7) Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire (8-11)
Carl Schuricht – conductor CD2 Bruckner - Symphony No. 8 in C minor
1. *I. Allegro moderato* (15:40) 2. *II. Scherzo. Allegro moderato. Trio, Langsam* (14:08) 3. *III. Adagio. Feierlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend* (21:46) 4. *IV. Finale. Feierlich, nicht schnell* (19:46)
Wiener Philharmoniker Carl Schuricht – conductor

Carl Schuricht was the kind of conductor that gives the term "Kappelmeister" a positive spin. Like many of the Austro-German timebeaters we associate with what has become a pejorative title, he spent decades in the provinces playing central-German music, emerging after World War II as a skilled exponent of his chosen repertoire. His sturdy, straightforward interpretations and brisk tempos must have seemed refreshing amid the period's angst. Today we are conscious of a bracing urgency in his readings, an energy that seemed to intensify as he aged.

Schuricht's typical no-nonsense approach sometimes can seem too much of a good thing, however. Thus, we ideally want more brooding color effects at the start of Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture, a touch more warmth in the Beethoven First, slightly more charm in the Mozart Haffner Symphony, and any expression at all in the stolid Schubert "Unfinished", whose inclusion here is something of a mystery. On the other hand, the Mendelssohn picks up steam

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and really rocks in its closing pages, a well-merited reissue; the zippy Mozart is very 21st century with its resolute, high-energy interpretation; and the Beethoven too, is a performance full of life and zest. All but the Mendelssohn, which is in good mono from 1954, is in stereo, presented here with a welcome freshness and immediacy in EMI's remastering.

The best item here, and worth the price of the set, is Schuricht's 1963 Bruckner Eighth. He uses his own edition with some minor extra cuts in the finale. Pacing is brisk, but that's all to the good as the momentum and structural clarity sustain interest while the monumentality of this giant work comes through even without rhetorical emphasis. And lest my comments about Schuricht's relatively straightforward interpretations mislead, there are countless moments where his phrasing and detailing catch the ear. Not least of these is his phrasing of the Andante's wrenching theme, exemplifying how emotion can be conveyed without excessive underlining or externally imposed feeling.

The Vienna Philharmonic is the orchestra in all but the lively Beethoven, well-played by the Paris Conservatory orchestra in its 1958 heyday. The Viennese are good throughout, if boringly plain in the Schubert, and wonderfully matched in the Bruckner, where the lower brass and strings shine. This well-filled two-disc set is part of EMI's Great Conductors of the 20th Century series, and one of the better ones, too. --- Dan Davis, classicstoday.com

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