

Richard Wetz - Symphony No. 1 in C minor Op. 40 (1994)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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1 *Ruhig Bewegt (Anfangs Etwas Gehalten)* 19:43 2 *Scherzo. Leicht Bewegt, Aber Nicht Zu Schnell* 11:11 3 *Sehr Langsam Und Ausdrucksvoll* 13:36 4 *Finale. Kräftig Und Entschieden Bewegt* 17:56 Cracow Philharmonia Orchestra Roland Bader - conductor

The CPO label recorded a number of works by Richard Wetz back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the Requiem (review) and these orchestral works, of which the Second Symphony was reviewed on these pages (review). Wetz is still by no means a household name, and if you look him up on Wikipedia almost the first sentence is a quote from John Williamson regarding the symphonies, in which Wetz “seems to have aimed to be an immediate continuation of Bruckner, as a result of which he actually ended up on the margin of music history.” The composer’s profile was somewhat restricted in his adopted provincial home town of Erfurt, and his reputation not aided by an identification with National Socialist ideology between the wars. There are many neglected composers ripe for re-evaluation these days however, and seeing these symphonies and other works together in a complete set invites the innocent ear to see what’s on offer here.

Wetz was already 40 years old when he embarked on composing his First Symphony and the Brucknerian influence is clear from the start, with expansive themes, leisurely transitions and an architectural building of climaxes all descending from that master’s technical toolbox. You might mistake this for Bruckner if you don’t really know Bruckner, but even with the master’s fingerprints in evidence all over the place you have to admit there is a talent at work with some steps made towards finding a more original voice. The orchestration is effective, and there is thematic richness with a clear facility for invention. The slow movement, *Sehr langsam und ausdrucksvoll* is indeed deeply expressive and has some nice harmonic twists, though lacks a melody that would stick in the memory. The finale is full of drama and sometimes brooding passion. The booklet notes suggest autobiographical intentions, and there are indeed some powerful moments. The performance throughout is serviceable, but there are passages in which the brass section sounds a bit uncomfortable particularly in the first movement, and wind

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intonation is not particularly special. ---Dominy Clements, musicweb-international.com

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