



The conductor **Rémy Ballot** has been described by music critics as a rising star among today's young and aspiring conductors, thanks largely to the overwhelmingly positive reception of his recordings of the symphonies of Anton Bruckner. Much of the praise and honour given to his work in the music press has approached the reverential. His first recording, of Bruckner's 3rd Symphony (2014), was awarded the prestigious French diapason d'or découverte and the highly coveted Pizzicato Supersonic Award, which has been given three times in succession for the latest volumes in the series. Other accolades have included Record of the Month (8th Symphony, 2015) from the American magazine *Stereophile*. Rémy Ballot was born in Paris and studied the violin, music theory and pedagogy at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. At the early age of 16 he met the legendary conductor Sergiu Celibidache, who later became his mentor, guiding him and inspiring him to develop his own personal style. While still a student in Paris, Ballot founded his first orchestra made up of highly gifted young musicians, providing him with a platform to develop his talent for the first time in public.

In 2004, Ballot moved to Vienna to develop his musical career. Soon after arriving he established himself as a regular first violin in the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra, performing under the most prominent conductors. He also gained the opportunity to work as assistant conductor for several projects, including Massenet's 'Manon' and Hindemith's 'Mathis der Maler' with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna at the Vienna Konzerthaus, and Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde' at the Opéra in Nantes. Through working and performing with various ensembles such as the Stage Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, the Altomonte Orchestra St. Florian, the Academic Orchestra Association Vienna as well as the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, Ballot continually extended his artistic repertoire. One unique result of these fruitful collaborations was a recording of Oliver Graber's Concertino for piano and orchestra performed under Ballot's baton at the Vienna State Opera in 2013.



After having created a great stir conducting the Altomonte Orchestra in performances of Bruckner's Third and Ninth symphonies at the 2011 Bruckner Festival in St. Florian (Upper Austria), Ballot was made Artist-in-Residence of the 2013 festival. He continues as Conductor-in-Residence at the Brucknertage summer music festival in St. Florian, where he is engaged in performing and recording the complete symphonies of Anton Bruckner for Gramola Records in the Basilika Church of St. Florian - for many years the "spiritual home" of the composer, who is now buried in the crypt beneath the famous Bruckner Organ. The next volume, of the Fifth Symphony, recorded in August 2017 during the Brucknertage, was released in March 2018. Beginning in spring 2018 Rémy Ballot collaborates as artistic partner with the newly founded chamber orchestra KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN.

Planing this recording we decided to reach both analog and digital fans. The setup with Sonodore RCM 402, DPA 2006 and Neumann

U87 microphones was mixed "live" through Sonosax SX-T console directly to two Studer A 80 half inch stereo master recorders at 30 ips without any additional processing. The scissor-edited master is used for tape replication and vinyl cutting. For the digital media we recorded the same microphone setup to multichannel HR Sequoia DAW with Focusrite converters, digitally edited, mixed and mastered for CD and SACD. Downloads in HR made from analog and digital source are available on Sepea Audio web page. Analogue and digital domain were strictly separated.



FRANZ SCHUBERT SINFONIEN 1 & 8 DIRIGENT RÉMY BALLOT UNVOLLENDETE

KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN

When the first bars of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony reached the recording equipment in March of 2018, it wasn't merely the musicians' "daily grind" but rather the birth of an ensemble: the chamber orchestra KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN. The mission of the KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN is to perform the music of the Viennese Classical era with care and love, beyond mere routine. This is why we - musicians from Vienna's leading orchestras - came together for the first time. This music, which was at the onset of the development of the modern orchestra - with which we handle a diverse program of works from all different eras every day - becomes ever more an oasis of tranquility through its clear form and inner beauty, the epicenter of our lives as musicians. Our goal is to give these works the attention they deserve, to communicate their message to listeners. This first document of our common passion came about in collaboration with the conductor Rémy Ballot and the record label Gramola, who were involved in this project's development from the very beginning. With deep respect for the greatness of these works by Franz Schubert,

KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN
Norbert Täubl



VIENNESE SCHUBERT SPIRIT

Vienna, as the city of Haydn (close enough), Mozart and Schubert should be the locale where you find the finest performances of classical period composers: imbued with the spirit, lightness, and burst of the time. Or so you would think. The sad truth is that 'classical - classical' composers get short shrift across concert halls across the world, from symphonic and philharmonic orchestras on any continent, in country and city. In Vienna no less than elsewhere... and perhaps they are even worse off in that town, being taken for granted and being given - when they are performed at all - a careless, often sloppy treatment: Played as the warmup overture or performed as thick as Shostakovich (which even a reduced number of violin desks can't make up for) or executed with visible routine bordering boredom, neither these composers nor the audiences are being served well. If that's roughly the critical consensus among lovers of this music, it's backed by personal experience: In the last five years of concert - going in that town, the far-and-away best, most riveting, most alive performances of either Haydn or Mozart have come courtesy of the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Historically informed performance groups have of course taken up the mantle in the classical repertoire where the established orchestras have dropped it: be it Nikolaus Harnoncourt (with his hybrid - style performances), René Jacobs (albeit not in Schubert, yet), Marc Minkowski, Jos van Immerseel, or the wonderful Frans Brüggen - the latter three all with complete "HIP" Schubert cycles to their name ¹. For all the joy they bring and gratitude they deserve, it's still not quite satisfactory to see these composers, who make up the very core of classical music and are so vitally important to performing and hearing any classical music well, exit the main concert halls and find refuge only among specialist period ensembles. It's a situation that led Dennis Russel Davies to declare - hardly in jest - that it is his intention to "snatch Haydn from the jaws of the period performers" with his performances of classical period composers with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra.



This neglect of Haydn-Mozart-Schubert ², both in quantity and quality, hasn't gone unnoticed among musicians in Vienna. Consequently a group of musicians, the core of which comes from Vienna's most famous orchestras, got together in order to perform exactly this music with the spirit, the love and devotion they think it deserves and agree has been lacking. They are the KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN (The Vienna Sound Collective). Not necessarily interested in joining the ranks of the historical performance movement and without any intention of performing any particular music yet still faster, still more forcefully, or more unconventionally, they simply want to play this music exceedingly well which - incidentally - isn't simple at all. This dedication to-, identification with-, and enthusiasm for the Viennese spirit brought them to Schubert for their first project. When it came to picking a conductor to guide their adventures in musical classicism, they turned to the Celibidache - student Rémy Ballot.

Rémy Ballot has been making Vienna his home for 13 years and occasionally performs in the Vienna State Opera's and Vienna Philharmonic's violin sections. Not yet a known

quantity on the circuit, he has come to the notice of a wider audience with a budding, audaciously successful Bruckner cycle from St. Florian, particularly impressive for the enthralling, professional-standard performances he coaxed from the Upper Austrian Youth Orchestra ³. Where the particularly tricky acoustic of the St. Florian cathedral - more bathtubby in most places than even many other cathedrals - demanded extraordinarily slow tempos lest the notes had become an indistinguishable mess, the 120 year old, 300 m² "Lorely Hall" in the Penzing part of Vienna, with its 25 foot ceilings, provides for an ideal acoustic that's easily controlled, neither dry nor overly reverberant. If the spirit of Schubert, well - imbued in Ballot's vision of Bruckner, may have been slightly obscured by the cathedral - setting, here, in the actual Schubert, it should come to the fore.

¹ Nikolaus Harnoncourt has recorded much of the classical - classical repertoire - including two cycles of Schubert symphonies - not with his Concentus Musicus Wien but with traditional philharmonic or chamber orchestras.

² If you are missing Beethoven here, it's because he can't be said to be neglected in any way, shape or form and gets an abundance of performances across the whole spectrum, from old-fashioned to lush-romantic to modern - with - a - kick to 'electrocuted racehorse'.

³ Symphonies 8 and 6 (on Gramola 99054 and 99127, respectively) are performed with this orchestra of young students. Symphonies 3, 9, and 5 (Gramola 99044, 99089 and 99162) are performed with the professional pick - up Alto Monte Orchestra. They have been showered with praise and music magazine awards so far, as well as the odd amount of detraction that highly individual interpretations are prone to receive.



For its first recording, the **KLANKOLLEKTIV WIEN** opted for Schubert's First Symphony in D major D. 82 and his "Unfinished" Symphony traditionally considered the "Eighth", although the latest among musicological trends is to re-christen it the "Seventh" ⁴. The First Symphony ⁵, written by an adolescent Schubert in 1813 (Beethoven had just pre-miered his Seventh and just finished writing his Eighth), feels like it is a bit of a pretender; the little symphony that (wanted to show that it) could and in doing so pretends to be bigger, somehow more symphonic than it is: Like a little songbird that puffs himself up, but at the first few whistles of his charming melodies reveals himself not to have all that much bluster, after all. It makes for a heartwarming combination of charm and ambitious-ness, the core not unlike Mendelssohn's equally youthful String Symphonies and the surface sheen of the admired model Beethoven. As much as Schubert's symphonies - especially the early ones - radiate sheer light, they also contain a degree of darkness and occasional melancholy... notably the middle movements. Unlike the martial Adagio introduction of the opening, which only slowly opens up to an Allegro drenched in bird-song, the Finale - Allegro vivace - hops right into the happy mix with music of a lightness and coyness that reminds of Haydn. The First is dedicated to Franz Innocenz Lang, director of the Imperial Seminary (Stadtkonvikt), where Schubert studied and got to conduct the school orchestra - including, likely, in this symphony. Presumably, he brought it in for show-and-tell - and one may wonder how his fellow student on trumpet felt about his tough, very high parts.



The "Unfinished" Symphony begins and ends in a question mark. The first is of course why there are only two (finished) movements. For four years after his Sixth Symphony (1818) Schubert had not completed a symphony anymore. He made several attempts only to abort them at various stages of incomple-tion. Finally, having received an honorary diploma from the Styrian Music Society, Schubert allege-dly sent them "the score of one of my symphonies" in grateful return. But all that the package was to have included were the two movements (and maybe a teaser of the Scherzo ⁶) we know as the "Unfinished" Symphony. When Johann Ritter von Herbeck (a wonderful composer in his own right, especially of masses) found the movements at Schubert's friend Anselm Hüttenbrenner, he figured, quite rightly, that something is better than nothing and performed the work on 17 December 1865 in Vienna, patching it with the Finale of the Third Symphony.

The symphony ends again in a question mark, some twenty to twenty-five minutes later, when it peters out softly, wistfully, indefinitely. If there were hints of melancholy amid the general joy in his earlier works, Schubert's "Unfinished" is brimming with grief - especially the first movement. Both movements defy an exact definition of fast or slow. They seem to hover and be able to make time stand still. Dramatic like no (finished) symphony of his before, the symphony communicates a vague sense of greatness to the listener and it remains awe - inspiring, no matter how often it has been heard. Schubert dares: he has cast off restraint - but also, chillingly, all optimism. "My output exists because of a knowledge of music and because of my pain..." Schubert jotted down in his diary in March of 1824. This symphony sounds like the synthesis of exactly that: The summation of Schubert's vast compositional skill and his equally enormous suffering. Following that earlier sentence, Schubert added that those works borne largely out of pain were apparently his least popular. It's probably too late now to cheer him up, but he turned out to be quite wrong about that.

Jens F. Laurson



⁴ In this text, I shall refer to the B minor Symphony D 759 as the "Eighth" all the same, not the least to leave room for the never - orchestrated but certainly completed Symphony in E major, D 729, which may want to eek its way back into the Schubert lineup as the rightful Seventh... even if that slot had been kept open for the elusive "Gastein" Symphony which has - most likely - turned out to be the "Great C major" Symphony, after all. The Bärenreiter Edition by Werner Aderhold that used for these performances does, however, refer to the D 759 as the "Seventh".

⁵ This First was preceded only by an attempt at a symphony, the 30 - bar aban - doned fragment known as "Symphony, D 2B/997".

⁶ The extant first two pages may well not have been in said package and the authenticity of the letter that was to have accompanied the parts is questionable. The rest of that Scherzo exists, albeit only in short score... a fourth movement, however, has never been found to date... unless it is contained in the entr'acte from the incidental music to Rosamunde. Knowing that, the Eighth Symphony might best be thought of as 'two symphonic movements, but perhaps that is splitting hairs in light of such wonderful music of which we are glad just to have any.