

Kenneth Woods:
a committed
performance

Gál's revival CONTINUES

More treats from the Viennese Scot

Gál · Schumann

Gál Symphony No 3, Op 62

Schumann Symphony No 3, 'Rhenish', Op 97

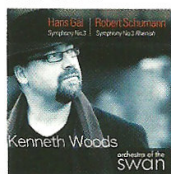
Orchestra of the Swan / Kenneth Woods

Avie © AV2230 (67' • DDD)

Schumann – selected comparison:

Zürich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman (5/04) (ARTN)

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Hard on the heels of Avie's premiere recording of Gál's First Symphony (coupled with Schubert's Sixth and conducted by Thomas

Zehetmair, 8/11) comes – with almost indecent haste – No 3 (1951-52). Yet curiously, Woods's Third is the first volume in a Gál symphony cycle: No 2, again under Zehetmair's direction, will have been released already by the time you read this. It is unclear if he will complete the set but Kenneth Woods will record all four for Avie over the next few years.

The Third Symphony is one of Gál's more unusual designs, its three movements concealing beneath their conventional-sounding exteriors some thoughtful re-takes on Classical models, for example the extremes of moods – lyrical, pastoral and passionate – in the opening span, a fine example incidentally of Gál's innate structural genius. Passion of a different sort

informs the final *Allegro molto moderato*, where the composer's contrapuntal mastery is once again manifest. In between comes a lovely *Andante tranquillo e placido*, the perfect foil for the outer movements. Kenneth Woods, who provided exemplary support to Annette-Barbara Vogel in the concertos and Suite (9/10), shows equal sympathy in a committed performance of a work that grows on me with each hearing.

Schumann's *Rhenish* provides both effective contrast and context for the tradition Gál was exploring and extending

100 years on. It also provides a surer measure of the quality of the Orchestra of the Swan's capabilities, especially when compared with any of the many rival accounts in the repertoire. My favourite remains Zinman's, stronger in profile (compare the opening *Lebhaft* and the penultimate *Feierlich*) and with just that much more depth and power. None the less, Woods provides a strong reading and the disc as a whole, with splendid sound, is warmly recommended.

Guy Rickards

INTERVIEW

Kenneth Woods

There was a sense 30 or 40 years ago, towards the end of Gál's career, that it wasn't OK for him to be writing the music that he was writing. This sort of lyricism and melodiousness wasn't just out of fashion, it was *verboten*. If you look back at the 20th century now, you can see that the opposite seems true. What makes it an interesting period is the diversity of what was going on in every decade... You had Rachmaninov and Schoenberg, Messiaen and Shostakovich, Boulez and Hans Gál all writing at the same time. Gál's music is so unapologetically what it is, it doesn't concede anything to the trends of the time.

There are certainly 'Gállisms', yes – he has a way of reminding you who you're listening to that all great composers have. When you hear his music for the first time it's easy to label it post-Romantic – a language we know. But actually, very much

like Haydn, he makes you think you know the language but the next chord is often not the one you were expecting or the repetition of a phrase is harmonised in a way that you would never have guessed.

If you look at the middle movements of the two Third symphonies by Gál and Schumann, you can see a lot of similarities. At the heart of the Schumann there's music that's very delicate and wistful; there's a lot of deep emotion in it but it's not anguished and it's not extroverted. It's the same in the Gál. That sense of being able to say very personal things in the character of a miniature or intermezzo is something that they share. And both composers write for the orchestra as chamber music – all Gál is chamber music and that's why it works so well with a chamber orchestra like the Orchestra of the Swan.

Interview by Andrew Mellor

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

- R** Reissue
- H** Historic
- 2** Compact disc (number of discs in set)
- T** Text(s) included
- t** translation(s) included

- S** Synopsis included
- N** Notes included
- s** subtitles included
- SACD** SACD
- DVD audio** DVD audio
- DVD video** DVD video
- Blu-ray** Blu-ray
- Download** Download

- VHS cassette** VHS cassette
- nia** no longer available
- aas** all available separately
- oas** only available separately
- F** £11 and over
- M** £8 to £10.99
- B** £6 to £7.99
- S** £5.99 and below



Editor's Choice
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