

ST. DAVID'S HALL, CARDIFF
(March 28, 1984)

BBC WELSH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Erich Bergel. Soloist: Walter Klien (piano)

I am looking forward to hearing Erich Bergel conduct the music of Anton Bruckner again. Mr. Bergel has a fine grasp of the complexities of tempi and dynamics and is able to communicate the music as an organic, vital whole.

Despite the surface power of the music, Bruckner's symphonies can seem like hesitant foreplay or teasing arousal which leads only after many promises and delays to musical orgasm. The erotic imagery is deliberate because there is much that is physical, visceral if you will, about one's response to the large scale romanticism of the works. But the complex interweaving of motivic fragments can under less able direction seem like musical clarihews: crescendi that led only to a let-down.

In this performance of Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7*, Erich Bergel let one feel from the beginning the relationship of the music to its musical roots, especially to the landler. He went on to draw particularly refined sounds from the strings during an impressively played *adagio*. Once over a hesitant start by the brass to the *scherzo* the conductor caught nicely the joy of the Meistersanger apprentices' feeling of music and the *finale* had a fine 'snap' to the basic tempo and rhythm.

The BBC Welsh brass may have been overwhelmed somewhat by the music but the strings, in particular, rose to the occasion and sounded positively lush at times.

The previous evening in St. David's Hall the choral music of Bruckner was heard in the context of Schubert. This evening it was Mozart who provided the musical links. This is a pity. In presenting Bruckner two nights in a row surely someone might have taken the opportunity to show Bruckner's music in its relationship to the music that followed: Schmidt, Zemlinsky or Schoenberg? Even, because of Bruckner's use of repeated fragments, the relationship to contemporary minimalist music. (Come to think of it, Steve Reich's glorious *Tehellim* would have made a superb vocal partner to the Bruckner *Te Deum* the previous evening).

As it was, the concert opened with the overture to *Don Giovanni* and was followed by Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 27* in which Walter Klien was the soloist. Both works were well performed but I fail to see what connection makes them suitable concert-fellows.

IFAN PAYNE.