

ST. DAVID'S HALL, CARDIFF  
(October 15th, 1984)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Klaus Tennstedt.

Soloist: Jorge Bolet (piano).

From the first magical softly played horn entry for Weber's Overture to *Oberon*, it was clear that we were in for a very special concert and this indeed turned out to be the case; as Nicholas Busch, principal hornist, turned out also to be an exceptional player. The beautifully inflected and lithely swinging rhythms of that oft played overture made it for once something to be listened to and savoured.

The whole of the second half was devoted to the performance of Schubert's *Symphony No. 9*, full of wonderfully natural but telling tempo changes.

I have never been a Tennstedt 'groupy' — it seemed that when he first arrived on the Western scene in the early 1975s that he could do no wrong — though I had always admired his Mahler performances. But on the strength of this performance I have to add my praises to others where his conducting of a wider repertoire is concerned.

One of the more striking characteristics of his conducting is the way that he builds his interpretation from a *rhythmic* foundation. This was especially true during the second movement *Andante* which, in this performance, was decidedly *con moto* so that the marching woodland elfin army was very definitely 'on the move'. The movement became in Tennstedt's hands an enchanting proto-Mahlerian tone picture which also allowed for a telling relaxation during the centre section.

Another characteristic, which could be heard to great effect during this performance, is his gift of balancing inner voices so that all the strands of the music can be easily heard in a clear and seemingly natural perspective. In this, he is in sharp contrast to those who concentrate solely — to whatever effect — only on the melodic line.

Thus Schubert's 'Great' Symphony became an integrated, but ever stimulating kaleidoscope of musical colours and episodes. But above all, his music making breathed life . . . is vibrant. One could go on, but suffice it to say that here was music making of the very highest order. A gripping retelling of an overly familiar tale played superbly by the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

I confess that I was less happy with Bolet's interpretation of the Schumann Piano Concerto which seemed even-tempered to the point of blandness. On the other hand, I found myself transfixed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra sounding silken and sophisticated as Tennstedt mined the music for detailed riches that seemed on this evening at least beyond Bolet's grasp.

All too many visiting orchestras and well known conductors have passed through St. David's Hall as though through some junction with their eye on the express train back to London. This time one can only wonder at, and be thankful for, the integrity of Tennstedt's commitment to his art and for his extraordinary power to bring new life to old music.

IFAN PAYNE.