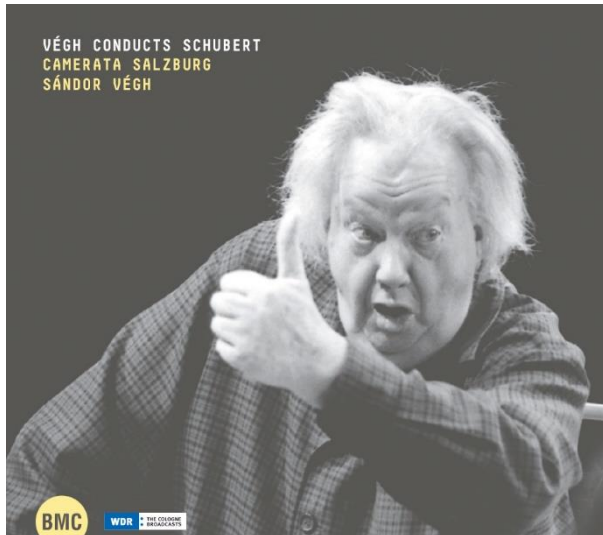


“Végh’s vivaciousness in old age offers hope to us all”

by [Graham Rickson](#) Saturday, 19 November 2016



Schubert: Symphonies 1-4 *Camerata Salzburg/Sándor Végh* (BMC)

The Hungarian violinist Sandor Végh’s long career included encounters with many 20th century greats; his New Hungarian String Quartet gave the premiere of Bartok’s 5th Quartet. He studied composition under Kodály, and performed regularly with the likes of Casals, Serkin and Menuhin. Health issues affected Végh’s violin playing in the final decades, so he turned increasingly to conducting, though he referred to himself as, “Not a conductor: I am a musician who conducts because he cannot live without music.” Végh led the Camerata Salzburg from 1978, moulding the group into one of the world’s leading chamber orchestras – undoubtedly helped by filling the ensemble’s string section with his own pupils. These [Schubert](#) symphonies were recorded live in 1996, a year before his death. The orchestral playing is glorious – Végh’s phrasing always teasing out enough detail without interrupting the flow. It’s impossible to listen without grinning. Take the quizzical slow introduction to Symphony No. 2, a sequence of simple flute trills transformed into something enchanting. Végh makes us savour the moment, and we almost fail to notice when the movement’s fast main section kicks off. And what delicate, precise string playing, Végh’s lively speeds offering nowhere to hide.

Schubert’s Symphony No. 3 is the real treasure here. An unpretentious, effervescent joy, it’s wonderfully served by the Salzburg players. Oboes and bassoons are peerless in the first movement’s second subject, and Végh’s tempo in the finale is ideal. The mysterious opening to No. 4 sounds marvellous, the faster section’s stormy main theme buoyant thanks to the conductor’s rhythmic zest. This is another great, underrated work, with the musicians making a brilliant case for it. The sound is warm and well-balanced: Végh’s vivaciousness in old age offers hope to us all.

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