



Rewarding loyalty: Neeme Järvi with (far right) his Chandos producer Brian Couzens

◀ From the archives

Andrew McGregor revisits the riches of Estonian conductor Neeme Järvi's impressive Chandos catalogue



Neeme Järvi is a particular type of modern maestro: one who fosters long relationships with a variety of orchestras and helps them better themselves, while they repay him with a willingness to explore unusual repertoire, and follow him into the recording studio to make a permanent record

of their work. There are maybe 500 Järvi recordings out there, over 200 of them on Chandos, of which one of the earliest starts its celebratory set *A Lifetime on Chandos* (CHAN 20088; 25 CDs): his award-winning Prokofiev's Symphony No. 6 with the Scottish National Orchestra from 1986 still impresses with its dynamic impact and grasp of structure. The set continues in roughly chronological order through to 2017's infectiously lively *Strauss in St Petersburg* album. Here are just a few highlights in this wide-ranging set: the Scottish Dvořák cycle is represented by the *New World Symphony*, a warmly rewarding recording, while Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* shows Järvi's cragily imposing side alongside the detail and impact of Chandos's sound, and a handful of Strauss's orchestral songs from the complete series with Felicity Lott – a delicious bonus. I'd forgotten how well this account of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony works; Brahms's complete *Hungarian Dances* with the LSO are charming but never undersold, and the album of Weber Overtures is an exuberant delight. The two Barber symphonies are highlights of Järvi's Detroit recordings, while in Bergen Järvi's Halvorsen album brings a persuasive Symphony No. 1, and in Gothenburg there's the first volume of their Kurt Atterberg series, bringing the Swedish composer to new audiences. Chabrier with the Suisse Romande Orchestra is pure entertainment, and the recent Fučík album is a revelation for anyone unfamiliar with the Czech composer. The notes include tributes from the producers who work with Järvi, who note his trust, loyalty, and inquisitiveness, and that extraordinary ability to absorb a score with remarkable rapidity, and to persuade an orchestra to follow him as though they've known it all their lives.

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Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday morning from 9am until 12.15pm

that he was also a compulsively prolix, wildly inconsistent composer in ways that, even on his works' own terms, far too often don't convince.

Symphony No. 2, *Vaarbrud* (The Awakening of Spring), opens with nearly 20 minutes of cloned Richard Strauss, fluent yet unmemorable; the finale sets Emil Rittershaus's poem in a high-flying Straussian line that taxes Anu Komsis' excellent soprano skills. By far the most striking is the central *Lento religioso*'s opening strings chorale, offset by musical flights of Ives-like visionary abandon. The Sixth Symphony, *Det Himmelrivende* (The Heaven-Rending), is a set of variations on two themes, based on the Christ/Antichrist duality that was a Langgaard obsession; while the conception is coherent, the level of invention is not. 'Unnoticed morning stars', the 14th Symphony's slow movement, is another chorale-like, strings-based statement.

Jacob Gade's *Tango jalousie*, its opening violin solo sparkingly played by Oramo, represents the kind of pleasure-garden material that succeeded where Langgaard himself could not. *Malcolm Hayes*
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Mozart

Symphonies Nos 40 & 41
 Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Herbert Blomstedt
BR Klassik 900164 72:39 mins



Herbert Blomstedt and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra offer attractive, if

unspectacular, performances of the two most famous of all 18th-century

symphonies. Blomstedt makes large edifices out of them by observing every single repeat, even in the *da capo* of the minuets. The *Jupiter* runs just shy of 40 minutes this way, and the finale's long second-half repeat brings with it the advantage of throwing the spotlight onto the coda, with its famous counterpoint combining all five themes. It was this work that began the notion of shifting the weight of the symphonic design firmly onto the finale – a process Beethoven carried further in his last two symphonies.

Elsewhere, it's sometimes harder to justify Blomstedt's plethora of repeats since he seems to have little new to offer the second (or in the case of the minuets, third or fourth) time through. He gives a lively account of the *Jupiter* Symphony's first movement, and he's no slouch in the *Andante* of No. 40, either, which emerges as something closer to an *Allegretto*. So generally stylish performances – it's just a pity they lack that extra degree of personality and imagination that could have lifted them onto a higher plane.

Misha Donat

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Scriabin

Symphony No. 1; Prometheus: The Poem of Fire

Alisa Kolosova (mezzo-soprano), Alexey Dolgov (tenor), Kirill Gerstein (piano); Oslo Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra/Vasily Petrenko
LAWOLWC1160 69:38 mins



It was canny planning on Vasily Petrenko's part to begin his Scriabin symphony series



BACKGROUND TO...

Rued Langgaard (1893-1952)

Born in Copenhagen to parents who were both musicians, Langgaard showed prodigious musical talent from an early age, first as a pianist and then as an organist, making his debut on the latter instrument aged 11. His First Symphony was performed in Berlin in 1913. Initially his main influences were Liszt and Bruckner, but in 1916 he entered a new,

experimental phase and composed his most radical work, *Music of the Spheres*, which involves an orchestra, organ and choir, a piano played directly on its strings, and an 'off-stage' orchestra and soprano.