

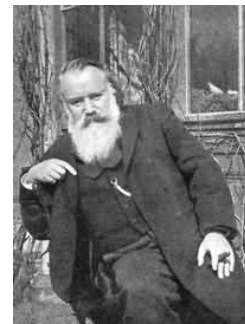
Ian's Top Ten Symphonies



Beethoven's Symphony no.7 in A major

An Apollonian master-class in rhythmic vitality and melodic zeal. A grand slow introduction and buoyant 1st movement, familiar (not too slow) 2nd movement, fast presto 3rd with repeated trio and an almost manic finale.

Karajan – BPO - 1985 – DG



Brahms's Symphony no.4 in E minor

Classic-Romantic maturity. Lyrical first 2 movements, boisterous scherzo (with triangle) and magnificent Passacaglia (variations) to crown the work.

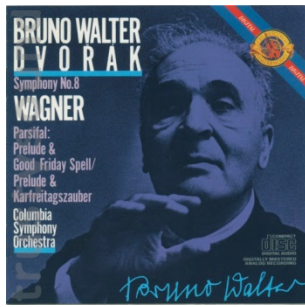
Karajan – BPO – 1964 – DG



Bruckner's Symphony no.8 in C minor

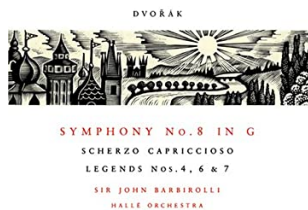
Epic journey from death to life with spiritual slow movement to savour

Giulini – VPO – 1985 – DG



Dvorak's Symphony no.8 in G major

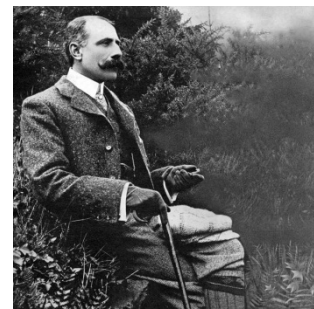
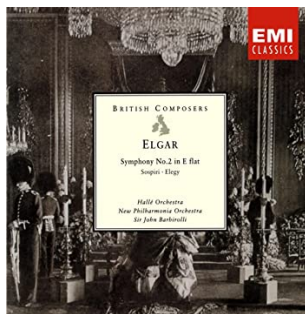
A genial trip to Bohemia with melodies to delight at every turn (3rd movement transports us to an elegant ballroom)



Bruno Walter – Columbia SO – 1962 – CBS or

John Barbirolli – Halle – 1957 – 1957 – EMI

(old recordings, but they tend to have more personality and character than some of the blander, more uniform modern ones)



Elgar's Symphony no.2 in Eb major

From its ebullient opening to the heartfelt resignation of its ending this symphony has many moods and it speaks for Elgar and for Edwardian England

Barbirolli – Halle – 1964 – EMI (I have many different recordings of this quixotic symphony but the Halle under Barbirolli seem to have the best approach)



Franck's Symphony in D minor



Maybe not the greatest music, but certainly great entertainment-from seriously gothic beginnings, via an attractive cor anglais solo to an, at times, almost jazzily syncopated finale flourish.

Pierre Monteux – Chicago SO – 1961 –RAC

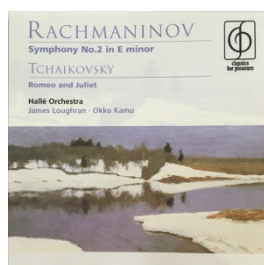


Mahler's Symphony no.6 in A minor



At one and the same time the most Classical (4 movements, no voices) and yet also the most Romantic of Mahler's Symphonies. After the dull military tread of the opening march, Mahler depicts his wife Alma in a gloriously sweeping 2nd theme. The finale seems to chart all the ups and many downs of the artist's struggle, but there are fleeting moments of spiritual exaltation to enjoy before the doom-laden ending.

Bernstein – New York Phil – 1967 – Sony



Rachmaninov's Symphony no.2 in E minor



Brooding Rachmaninov provides broodingly Romantic music, not far-removed from high quality film music-sit back and wallow, (especially 1st & 3rd movements).

James Loughran – Halle – 1974 – CFP (Classics for Pleasure)

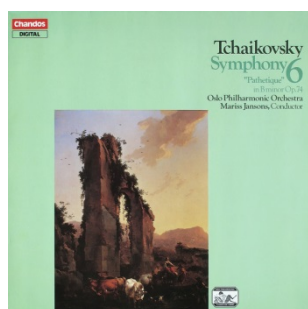


Sibelius's Symphony no.5 in Eb major



The music of Sibelius can be as melancholy and severe as some of his photographic portraits. No.5 is fashioned in a warmer, at times, heroic mould.

Stand-out moments include a super-charged bolt of electricity midway through the first movement, a singable, folklike 2nd movement and the famous 2nd theme of the finale, with which Sibelius depicts the migration of swans but Tovey memorably likened to Thor swinging his hammer. Unique finish.



Tchaikovsky's Symphony no.6 in B minor



Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" is not only his best symphony but probably his greatest single work. Its first movement tells a tragic tale in a tight symphonic structure including the memorable love theme and a Development which starts on the battlefield but also reveals some of Tchaikovsky's inner torments.

A 2nd movement of ballet music followed by a thrilling march scherzo leads to a desolate adagio finale-his final masterstroke.