

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 7 in E (ed. Nowak) • Eduardo Chibás, cond; O Sinfónica Venezuela • MOUSIKE 1014 (63:12)

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 8 in c (1890, ed. Nowak) • Eduardo Chibás, cond; O Sinfónica Venezuela • MOUSIKE 1015 (77:55)

These excellent recordings are not available through the usual channels. John F. Berky, Bruckner collector *extraordinaire* and keeper of the on-line Bruckner Symphony Discography, has secured a stock, from which he will sell copies at an extremely reasonable price, as noted at the end of this review. My pleasant task is to describe as well as possible why these discs are excellent. Although strictly speaking an amateur—his day job is being president of an advertising agency—Eduardo Chibás proves a thoroughly sympathetic and powerful interpreter of Anton Bruckner's music. His vision is distinctly his own, but it rivals in quality those of legendary conductors whose names come up most often when we think of great interpreters of Bruckner, for example Furtwängler, Jochum, Karajan, Klemperer, Knappertsbusch, Tintner, and Wand. Less astonishing, but essential to the results, is the responsive and idiomatic playing of the Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela. Fine stereo sound allows the orchestra to spread out across the sound-stage with stable placement of solos and choirs. Rich and full-bodied in tone, the sound is also clear enough to reveal the important subordinate parts and counter-melodies in which these symphonies abound. Those who keep track of timings will note that both are slightly, though not unusually faster than the average performance of these symphonies in the current era.

Chibás understands that Bruckner requires contrasts from movement to movement and within movements, so when appropriate he has his musicians being playful, ethereal, solemn, forceful, excited, or calm. The contrasts always make sense, and make these long statements hold one's attention from beginning to end. Yes, I did spot a couple of places—one in each symphony—where I thought the playing a bit shaky; these are live performances. My only big surprise, apart from the overall excellence, is the coda of the first movement of the Seventh Symphony. I have never heard it sound so solemn and imposing. Both discs are very strongly recommended. And now for that ordering information.

Terms, \$10.00 each, postpaid. Send orders to John F. Berky, 21 Juniper Road, Windsor, CT 06095, or order (using Paypal) from his website, www.abruckner.com. **Robert McColley**