



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

# HANDEL WATER MUSIC

Rafael Kubelik  
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra



The Berlin Philharmonic was founded in Berlin in 1882 by 54 musicians under the name Frühere Bilsesche Kapelle (literally, "Former Bils'e Band"); the group broke away from their previous conductor Benjamin Bilsle after he announced his intention of taking the band on a fourth-class train to Warsaw for a concert. The orchestra was renamed and reorganized under the financial management of Hermann Wolff in 1887. Their new conductor was Ludwig von Brenner; in 1887 Hans von Bülow, one of the most esteemed conductors in the world, took over the post. This helped to establish the orchestra's international reputation, and guests Hans Richter, Felix von Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and Edvard Grieg conducted the orchestra over the next few years. Programmes of this period show that the orchestra possessed only 46 strings, much less than the Wagnerian ideal of 64.

In 1895, Arthur Nikisch became chief conductor, and was succeeded in 1923 by Wilhelm Furtwängler. Despite several changes in leadership, the orchestra continued to perform throughout World War II. After Furtwängler fled to Switzerland in 1945, Leo Borchard became chief conductor. This arrangement lasted only a few months, as Borchard was accidentally shot and killed by the American forces occupying Berlin. Sergiu Celibidache then took over as chief conductor for seven years, from 1945 to 1952. Furtwängler returned in 1952 and conducted the orchestra until his death in 1954.

Sir Simon Rattle conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2006

His successor was Herbert von Karajan, who led the orchestra from 1955 until his resignation in April 1989, only months before his death. Under him, the orchestra made a vast number of recordings and toured widely, growing and gaining fame. When Karajan stepped down, the post was offered to Carlos Kleiber, but he declined.

Claudio Abbado became principal conductor after Karajan, expanding the orchestra's repertoire beyond the core classical and romantic works into more modern 20th-century works. He stepped down from this post in 2002 to conduct the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. During the post-unification period, the orchestra encountered financial problems resulting from budgetary stress in the city of Berlin.[3] In 2006, the Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic established the Claudio Abbado Composition Prize in Abbado's honour

In June 1999, the musicians elected Sir Simon Rattle as their next chief conductor. Rattle made it a condition of his signing with the Berlin Philharmonic that it be turned into a self-governing public foundation, with the power to make its own artistic and financial decisions. This required a change to state law, which was approved in 2001, allowing him to join the organization in 2002. Rattle's contract with the orchestra was initially through 2012. In April 2008, the BPO musicians voted in favour of retaining Rattle as their chief conductor. From 2006 to 2010 the general manager of the orchestra was Pamela Rosenberg (de). In April 2008, the orchestra announced that Rosenberg would not continue as general manager after her contract expires in 2010. As of September 2010 the new general manager will be German media manager Martin Hoffmann (de).

In 2006, the orchestra announced it would investigate its role during the Nazi regime.[9] In 2007, Misha Aster published *The Reich's Orchestra*, his study of the relationship of the Berlin Philharmonic to the rulers of the Third Reich.[10] Also in 2007, the documentary film *The Reichsorchester* by Enrique Sánchez Lansch was released.

UNICEF appointed the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Rattle as Goodwill Ambassadors in November 2007. On 10 January 2013 Simon Rattle announced that his tenure as artistic director and chief conductor would end in 2018.

Given the Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) centennial, we might consider the range of this conductor's contribution, particularly in the many styles he addressed, having achieved his most notable successes in opera, Mahler and Dvorak. A Czech by birth, Mr. Kubelik left his homeland after the Communist takeover in 1948 and lived in London for several years before settling in Switzerland. He became a Swiss citizen in 1973. Rafael Kubelik embodied a tradition of robust post-Romantic music-making that was ideally suited to the recording medium and concert hall. He was celebrated as a master of rich orchestral color, which was brought out most vividly in the late Romantic scores for which he was most popular. But he could apply his panache for string colors equally well to the occasional excursion he made into Baroque music.

Mr. Kubelik was a regular guest of the New York Philharmonic until heart disease and severe arthritis forced him to retire from conducting in 1985. His performances were considered highlights of the concert season by those who prized a warm, probing, grandly scaled style of music making that was quickly being eclipsed by a more streamlined, modern approach. Kubelik recorded the entire cycle of Mahler symphonies between 1967-1971 with the Bavarian Radio Symphony, an organization which permitted him ample rehearsal time and elegant response. He recorded the Handel suites of Water Music with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1963.

Rafael Kubelik takes the reigns of the Berlin Philharmonic in this Handel program from the early 1960s. There is no doubt that the orchestra plays with panache and a sense of life. The opening of the Water Music is grand and forceful but not stodgy. Once we get to the main allegro, the race truly takes off. This is glorious music played with conviction. The woodwinds are a little bit recessed or rather subdued behind the famous, decadently lush strings of the Berlin Philharmonic, honed by Herbert von Karajan. Kubelik doesn't

do much to restrain them on this occasion. The brass playing is also strong. If the performance cannot be called intimate, it projects a power the smaller ensemble recordings lack. Kubelik takes some of the repeats then skips others. You get all three suites played in the big boned manner. Kubelik keeps the music moving, even the slower movements, although he's rarely as brisk as many period instrument bands.

### **Wassermusik, HWV 351: (Orchesterkonzert Nr. 25)**

- 1. Ouverture**
- 2. Adagio E Staccato**
- 3. (Allegro) - Andante - (Allegro)**
- 4. Allegro**
- 5. Air**
- 6. Menuet**
- 7. Bourrée**
- 8. Hornpipe**
- 9. (Allegretto)**
- 10. (Allegro)**
- 11. Alla Hornpipe**
- 12. (Menuet)**
- 13. Rigaudon**
- 14. Lentement**
- 15. Bourrée**
- 16. (Menuet)**
- 17. (Allegro)**
- 18. Coro: Menuet**

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