

BARTOK:

**The Miraculous Mandarin
Concerto for Orchestra**

Junge Deutsche Philharmonie/Gustav
Mahler Jügendorchester/Eotvos
Budapest Music Center CD 058
69m 40s

The two most eagerly anticipated concerts at this years Proms were both with youth orchestras: Rattle in Mahler 8; Argerich with Abbado, conducting the Mahler Jügendorchester which he founded in 1986. Here, under composer-conductor Peter Eotvos they are recorded live in Concerto for Orchestra (albeit a decade ago). But the more electrifying performance on the disc is the complete Miraculous Mandarin, also live (1994).

This is partly a question of sound quality, which in Concerto for Orchestra is rather constricted in ambience, with close focus on, for instance, timpani. But if there are sonically preferable alternatives, in this version the Hungarian elements are wonderfully idiomatic. Consider it a bonus with an exceptional Mandarin — more spacious in sound, from a WDR studio, though there's some noise and coughs from the audience. Perhaps they were taken aback by the violence in the music, at its most ghoulish when the chorus enters (lost when conductors only do the Suite). The players are unabashed and unleash a torrent of noise where called for. The 32m ballet is presented as a single track.

Christopher Breunig

A-B: 1* B-C: 1

(A-B refers to sound quality - numbers refer to performance)