

Come to Roger  
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# Roger Woodward — a new maturity

The wild, passionate opening of the recorded performance of Brahms's first piano concerto given by Roger Woodward (piano) and the New Philharmonia conducted by Kurt Masur (RCA RL-25031) is immediately convincing.

Never mind the "maestoso" marking of the first movement: this is the young, wounded, even reckless Brahms, the Brahms who would never again reveal himself quite so frankly in his music.

Once or twice, indeed, Masur encourages the orchestra to attack with a vehemence which momentarily unsettles the intonation of the playing; but the effect becomes part of that sense of stress which is essential to the music.

The prominence given by this new recording to the timpani part in the opening pages of the concerto is correct, I believe. This is also a characteristic of the various recordings of the concerto conducted by Szell.

When timpani part is overshadowed by other instruments (such as the low horns), as it is on the Barenboim/Barbirolli recording, the score loses

much of its aggressive fuel.

The piano's first entry is actually a calming influence; and here Woodward is cast — and cast convincingly — in the unaccustomed role of mediator and pacifier. When the time comes, however, he is more than ready to provoke the orchestra into sounding again those spitting and snarling trills which are so exciting in the orchestral opening.

Woodward exhibits a new kind of maturity in this recording. He does not rush, as Fleisher tends to do in the finale; he does not dawdle or become affected in tempo and phrasing as Barenboim does.

Like Serkin/Szell in their near-perfect reading of the work, Woodward/Masur never allow the slow movement to lose its sense of forward movement even while they are observing the spirit of the adagio marking.

Woodward/Masur hold back a little in overall tempo in the third movement. This is a shade too deliberate for my taste, though it is entirely defensible by reference to the "not too much" (non

## Classical

Records reviewed by ROGER COVELL

troppo) modification in Barham's making of the allegro.

This is probably Roger Woodward's most balanced and masterfully noble recording so far. Even if the New Philharmonia shows itself as less polished than Szell's Cleveland Orchestra, its players under Masur provide Woodward with exhilaratingly committed partnership.