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Site review by [Castor](#) Yesterday 12:31 am

Performance: ★★★★★ Sonics: **Multi-ch** ★★★★★

This is an absolutely marvellous release both in terms of its thrilling performances and wonderful sound quality.

Manfred Honeck, as on his first disc for Reference Recordings of Strauss tone poems, [Strauss: Don Juan, Tod und Verklarung, Till Eulenspiegel - Honeck](#) has shown that he is not afraid to challenge conventional approaches to familiar works, and his account of Dvorak's sunny 8th Symphony that opens this disc once again evince a searching and perceptive mind at work. Thanks to his rapport with his top-class Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra he is able to communicate his ideas to the listener with absolute conviction.

In the fascinating notes accompanying this disc Manfred Honeck explains that, in his performance of this symphony, he has returned to Czech traditions both in style of playing and overall sonority. He does not hesitate to introduce some tasteful portamento where necessary, and his liberal use of rubato and tempo changes combined with attention to detail make one hear many passages in the symphony with fresh ears. It almost goes without saying that Honeck's strikingly individual interpretation will not suit all listeners, but I confess to being completely bowled over by it.

Maintaining the Czech theme of the disc, the Dvorak 8th Symphony is followed by an effective and well-constructed 23 minute 'Symphonic Suite' of music from Janáček's tragic opera 'Jenůfa'— described as 'Conceptualised by Manfred Honeck, realized by Tomáš Ille'. The Suite is in a continuous single movement, but falls into a number of clearly identifiable sections – energetic dances alternating with contrasting lyrical passages and linked by repeated

appearances of the soft xylophone passage that opens the opera. The Pittsburgh players really are on fire in this piece, delivering spine tingling orchestral playing in passages such as the dramatic final bars of Act 2 with its pounding timpani and brass fanfares.

The sound quality of this 5.1channel 64fs DSD recording made by the Soundmirror team is, as usual, first class in every possible way. The marvellous playing of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra is captured with thrilling realism in sound that does full justice to both the warmth of the Pittsburgh strings and their phenomenal brass section (the brilliance and confidence of the trumpet playing that opens the fourth movement of the Dvorak symphony is typical of the latter).

I recommend without hesitation this spectacular SACD and look forward keenly to future releases in this 'Pittsburgh Live!' series.

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