Berlioz - Requiem (Bernstein)

1. Requiem et Kyrie 2. Dies Irae; Moderato 3. Dies Irae; Andante maestoso. (Tuba mirum) 4. Sum Miser 5. Rex tremendae 6. Quaerens me 7. Lacrymosa 8. Offertorium 9. Hostias play 10. Sanctus 11. Agnus Dei 12. Te Deum I - Te Deum - II - Tibi omnes 13. Te Deum III - Dignare, Domine 14. Te Deum IV - Christe, Rex Gloriae 15. Te Deum V - Te ergo quaesumus 16. Te Deum VI - Judes crederis Orchestre National de France Leonard Bernstein - conductor

Berlioz' Requiem needs a performance of spontaneous brilliance and almost manic intensity to come off. The reason is simple. The big movements--the Dies Irae sequence and Lachrymosa--use a huge chorus and a full orchestra including four brass bands (stationed in the four corners of the concert hall), eight sets of timpani (10 players), and additional percussion. After that, everything else sounds anti-climatic, unless the conductor somehow manages to keep the tension flowing through the quiet (and, let's not kid ourselves, dull) bits. Leonard Bernstein certainly manages the impossible, though God only knows how he does it. The recording helps--it really captures a sense of large forces in a big space, while projecting the aura of mystery that the intimate moments need if they're going to work. ---David Hurwitz

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