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2 SACD-60081

# GUSTAV MAHLER

(1860 - 1911)

## Symphony No. 2 in C minor "Resurrection"

Disc One

### PART ONE

- 1 I. Allegro maestoso [21:34]
- 2 II. Andante moderato [9:53]
- 3 III. In sehr ruhig fliessender Bewegung [10:28]

Disc Two

### PART TWO

- 1 IV. "Urlicht:" Sehr feierlich, aber schlicht [5:13]
- 2 V. Im Tempo des Scherzos – Wild herausfahrend –  
Allegro energico – Langsam – Misterioso [34:17]

LEONARD SLATKIN  
SAINT LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

KATHLEEN BATTLE, soprano  
MAUREEN FORRESTER, contralto  
SAINT LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS  
THOMAS PECK, Director

2 SACD Total Playing Time 2 hours, 21 minutes, 17 seconds

Originally released as CD-80081



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# MAHLER

## Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection"

KATHLEEN BATTLE  
MAUREEN FORRESTER

LEONARD SLATKIN  
Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra  
& Chorus

50kHz Master Transfer To DSD  
Direct Stream Digital



Mahler was always susceptible to the charms of femininity, especially when allied with musical talent. Some of his most famous works grew from emotional seeds planted in love affairs, requited or unrequited. He began work on what was to become his first two symphonies as an artistic release from a tempestuous and troubling affair with the wife of the grandson of composer Carl Maria von Weber, the creator of German romantic opera. Mahler found himself involved with the Weber family at the time of the composer's centennial, in 1886, when the Leipzig Opera revived an extended series of his works, many of them conducted by Mahler.

Impressed by Mahler's sympathetic understanding of his grandfather's music, Captain Carl von Weber approached him with a proposal: Weber had left a series of shorthand sketches for a comic opera entitled *Die drei Pintos*. The family had already tried—and failed—to interest Meyerbeer and Franz Lachner in completing the work. Mahler studied the almost incomprehensible sketches, deciphered the older composer's shorthand, and completed the score, borrowing tunes from little-known works of Weber to fill in the gaps. *Die drei Pintos* enjoyed a number of performances throughout Germany and provided Mahler with a useful source of income.

Naturally such intense labor on the manuscript required nearly constant contact with the Weber family, and Mahler found himself in love with Captain von Weber's wife, and she with him. Weber himself was aware of the situation, but discreetly avoided an open break that would surely cause a scandal ruinous to his military career. At one point Mahler and Marion Mathilda von Weber even planned to elope together. At the appointed hour, he was standing on the platform of the railroad station, waiting for her. But when she failed to appear, he returned home, probably with a sense of some relief at having avoided—through no merit of his own—a personal and professional abyss.

As happened so often in Mahler's life, the emotional upheaval generated by this situation expressed itself in an outburst of creativity. He composed two large works in 1888. The first he called a "symphonic poem," a description that he kept even up to its first performance. We know it today (after revisions and the excision of an entire movement) as the First Symphony. He followed this immediately with a single, gigantic march-like movement in C minor labelled *Todtenfeier* (*Funeral*),<sup>3</sup>



*Rites*); the first full score was completed by September 1888, barely six months after the huge "symphonic poem." Six years later it finally took its place as the opening movement of the Second Symphony.

Although the *Todtenfeier* by itself resembles a second symphonic poem, a companion piece to the work he had just completed, it was clear to Mahler from the beginning that the movement was not to stand alone, for he had already begun sketching a sharply contrasting *Andante*. But that movement remained unfinished for five years, during which the immediacy of Mahler's affair with Marion von Weber passed into memory, and the composer himself moved on to Budapest and then (in April 1891) to Hamburg.

Mahler's life as a composer during the next years was devoted largely to the composition of songs, some with piano accompaniment, others with orchestra. They drew their texts almost entirely from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*Youth's Magic Horn*), an anthology of German folk poetry published in 1805 under the editorship of Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. The collection preserved a legacy of traditional poems (though the editors were not above "improving" the originals) and sparked scholarly research into the field of folksong. As one who frequented literary circles, Mahler could hardly have been unfamiliar with the anthology even from his youth, and it is not surprising that his *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*), though set to texts of his own invention, betray the evident influence of the *Wunderhorn* collection.

But suddenly, late in 1887, it seems, he began concentrating on texts explicitly taken from the anthology. *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* was a book highly prized in the Weber household, and Mahler could not have escaped its influence there; this may partly explain his sudden interest. (He himself claimed later that he had written his first *Wunderhorn* settings for the Weber children). But more important is the evident fact that the texts themselves tapped a wellspring of creativity. For the next decade, the creation of all his works—from little songs with piano accompaniment to giant symphonies—was intricately intertwined with his passion for the anthology of Arnim and Brentano. He turned songs into symphony movements and symphonic writing into song accompaniments. So often did he cross the border between the "little" genre of the song and the "large" genre of the sym-

phony, that it is sometimes hard to tell from the musical sketches exactly what kind of piece he was working on. Because the Second, Third, and Fourth Symphonies draw so much of their substance from these texts, and their musical settings, they are often referred to as the "*Wunderhorn* symphonies."

Mahler's creative encounter with *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* began with nine songs for voice and piano composed between late 1887 and 1890, by which time he had already completed the massive opening movement of the Second Symphony and a few sketches for a slow movement. From 1892 his *Wunderhorn* settings all called for an orchestral accompaniment. He had completed at least five such songs by April 1892, and others continued to appear over the next half-dozen years.

During the summer of 1893, on vacation at Steinbach, Mahler returned to the Second Symphony while also composing a number of new *Wunderhorn* songs. One of them played a complex role in the creation of the symphony. Mahler completed a voice-and-piano draft of *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt* (*St. Anthony of Padua's Sermon to the Fishes*) on 8 July. The full score followed on 1 August—but by then he had already turned the song into a purely orchestral Scherzo, the score of which was completed on 16 July. The Scherzo ended up as the third movement of his symphony (though for a time he considered putting it second, to be followed by the as-yet-unfinished *Andante* for which he had made sketches in 1888). By 19 July Mahler had set another *Wunderhorn* poem, *Urlicht* (*Primeval light*), for voice and orchestra. He was not at first certain whether the song should stand by itself, but in the end it became the fourth movement of the Second Symphony.

At this point, Mahler found himself in a quandary: how to bring the symphony to a convincing conclusion. Unless he discovered a solution, the musically unrelated middle movements would simply be too different from the weighty *Todtenfeier*, too light in character to fit in the same work. And he knew he had to create a finale of sufficient weight to balance the huge opening movement. If he were able to find such a finale, the middle movements could function convincingly as intentional points of relaxation in the mighty scale of the whole. He seems to have made a few desultory sketches in the summer of 1893 and then to have abandoned them, despairing that he was only finding themes in 3/4 time, when he wanted to write a finale in 4/4.



He found his solution unexpectedly at a memorial service for his superior in Hamburg, Hans von Bülow. Von Bülow was famous both as conductor and pianist. For many years he had been intensely active with the "music of the future," the works of Liszt (his father-in-law) and Wagner, whose *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* he had conducted at their premieres. But he turned away from Wagner (after the latter stole his wife Cosima) and became a devotee of Brahms. By the time he met Mahler, von Bülow was no longer sympathetic to the latest musical trends. He greatly admired Mahler's conducting, but he himself refused to conduct any of the orchestral *Wunderhorn* songs, claiming that he could not make sense of them. And when Mahler played through some of the Second Symphony for him, he covered his ears and declared that it had surpassed all acceptable bounds of dissonance. How ironic, then, that it was through the death of this musician who was so antipathetic to his music that Mahler found the key to his conclusion.

Von Bülow died in Cairo on 12 January 1894; a memorial service was held in Hamburg on 29 March. Mahler's close friend, the Czech composer Josef Bohuslav Foerster, was also present on that occasion. He lost sight of Mahler in the crush of people at the service, but he was strangely moved the effect of a chorus of children singing a resurrection hymn to a text of Friedrich Klopstock, "Auferstehen, ja auferstehen." He described what happened next as follows:

I did not find Mahler. But that afternoon I could not restrain my restlessness, and hurried to him as if to obey a command. I opened the door and saw him sitting at his writing-desk, his head lowered and his hand holding a pen over some manuscript paper. I remained standing in the doorway. Mahler turned to me and said: "Dear friend, I have it!"

I understood. As if illuminated by a mysterious power I answered:

"Auferstehen, ja auferstehen wirst du nach kurzem Schlaf..."

Mahler looked at me with an expression of extreme surprise. I had guessed the secret he had as yet entrusted to no human soul: Klopstock's poem, which that morning we had heard from the mouths of children, was to be the basis for the closing movement of the Second Symphony.

Mahler's pent-up eagerness to compose a massive finale to balance the huge opening movement was suddenly released in the realization that Death (the theme of the first movement) could only be followed appropriately by Resurrection (a subject naturally enough stressed at von Bülow's memorial service). The service offered not only the idea for the symphony's close, but also a text that could give wings to the music—Friedrich Klopstock's resurrection hymn. (Actually Mahler ended up adapting the text so freely that, after the first two stanzas, it is basically his own work.) It must have been soon after 29 March when Mahler sketched a musical setting for Klopstock's text. From this point, he saw the way to the completion of the symphony, and he worked at the peak of his energy. By 29 June he wrote to a friend, "This is to announce the happy arrival of a strong and healthy last movement of the 2nd. Father and child are faring appropriately in the circumstances; the latter is not yet out of danger." By 10 July he was writing to another friend, "The sketches are complete down to the smallest detail and I am just on the point of writing out the score. It is a *bold* piece, of extremely powerful construction. The final climax is colossal." And on 25 July a letter announced the completion of the work with Mahler's satisfied assessment: "It is the most significant thing I have done up till now."

Mahler decided to organize and conduct the first complete performance himself (Richard Strauss had already conducted the first three movements in a performance that took place before the entire symphony was completed; one wonders what sense an audience could have made of such an unlikely torso). The premiere took place in Berlin on 13 December 1895. Mahler's enthusiasm during the rehearsals grew from day to day. On the 10th, when he finally heard the finale for the first time, he wrote to his mistress, soprano Anna von Mildenburg, "Yesterday, for the first time, everything turned to sound. All was far beyond my hopes. The performers were so transported and enthusiastic that they themselves found the appropriate expression....such grandeur and power have never been attained before.

Most of the tickets had to be given away to musicians and conservatory students. There was little expectation of popular acclaim; after all, Mahler's works had so far enjoyed little or no success with audiences, and some concerts had been outright catastrophes. Moreover, Mahler had been suffering from a headache from the moment of his arrival in Berlin, and on the day of the performance it turned into an in-



capacitating migraine. Bruno Walter recalled that when Mahler ascended the podium, he was deathly pale and had to pause to overcome his dizziness before beginning. But once the performance was under way, he felt more and more in control. The music gripped the audience more powerfully as movement succeeded movement. The reaction was overwhelming, and it was an audience that included such important personages as the composer Engelbert Humperdinck and the conductors Arthur Nikisch, Felix Weingartner, not to mention Bruno Walter, who found his calling as a conductor and a lifelong Mahler devotee that evening. For Walter, that concert marked the real beginning of Mahler's career as a composer.

As we have seen, the first movement of the Second Symphony was composed hard on the heels of the first, as if they were part of the same creative impulse. Indeed, Mahler remarked once that his title for the first movement, *Todtenfeier*, referred to the funeral rites of the "Titan" who was the hero of his First Symphony. As late as 1901, Mahler wrote out an extensive descriptive program for the symphony in which he explained the character of the Allegro maestoso as a recollection of the "life, struggles, passions, and aspirations" and of a "well-loved person" while standing by his coffin. The question that keeps intruding, says Mahler, is "What now? What is this life—and this death? Do we have an existence beyond it? Is all this only a confused dream, or do life and this death have a meaning?—And we must answer this question if we are to live on."

With or without programmatic aid, the movement overwhelms the listener with its vibrancy and variety. For all its novelty of form and content, the symphony still makes obeisance to the great traditions of 19th-century music. The opening key of C minor cannot fail to recall Beethoven's Fifth, and the stormy character of the first ideas conjures up perhaps Siegmund's arrival at Hunding's house in the opening of Wagner's *Die Walküre*. But the wonder of this opening is the range of ideas that Mahler develops, all in C minor, all redolent of the funeral march. Magically contrasted with this is a bright theme of utter simplicity in E major, a theme that no one but Mahler could have conceived. Its upward-striving character (though at first reticent) is a foreshadowing of the "Resurrection" theme of the finale. The material is exposed at considerable length, in two stages (corresponding in principle to the old repeated exposition in the classical symphony, though Mahler's

"repeat" is in fact a continuous and varied development). The many tiny thematic ideas that are created as offshoots of the march rhythm are intertwined in an elaborate extended development during the course of which the horns sing out a hymnlike melody that begins with the first four notes of the *Dies irae* from the *Requiem* service. But the recapitulation avoids resolving the questions raised by the movement: both of the principal ideas recur in the same keys in which we first heard them (C minor and E major respectively), so that the consolation of the major-key theme almost seems to arrive from another world entirely before being driven aside by a dark and mysterious C-minor coda.

In the score, Mahler asks for a five-minute pause between first and second movements, a request motivated in part, no doubt, because what follows is so different in character. The next three movements, all much shorter and to some extent lighter in character, function as intermezzi. Mahler described the Andante as "a happy moment from the life of his beloved departed one." In style it is a *Ländler*, an Austrian folk dance in 3/4 time, relaxed and bucolic, yet with an extraordinary finish and precision.

The third movement, related to the Wunderhorn song about St. Anthony of Padua's sermon to the fish, is a witty and sardonic Scherzo. Mahler's comment: "the spirit of unbelief, of presumption, has taken hold of him,...he despairs of himself and of God. The world and life become for him a disorderly apparition; disgust for all being and becoming lays hold of him with an iron grip and drives him to cry out in desperation." In the song, the text tells of the saint coming to a stream and assembling the fishes for a sermon on the thoughtlessness of their lives; they listen carefully, and then, when St. Anthony is finished, go on just as before. But it is not necessary to know the poem. The harshly acid orchestration and the downward-sinking whirling of the melodic line are unsettling in a movement that starts out like a rather straightforward and light-hearted dance.

After the Scherzo slithers heartlessly and chromatically to its conclusion, we suddenly encounter a human voice, and a surge of warmth. It is an unforgettable moment, the solemnity emphasized by the chorale-like harmonization. The poem itself is at once naive and profound, and Mahler constructs his setting to highlight



the words "I am from God and will return to God" with a musical phrase that is later worked into the finale. The voice dies away in Mahler's favorite rising arch, expressing a sublime and tranquil confidence scarcely heard heretofore.

The serene ending of the fourth movement is shattered by a horrendous orchestral outburst. The reference to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the last movement of which opens with what German writers have been pleased to call a "fanfare of terror," is unmistakable. Then comes a complex and very operatic orchestral passage (it is worth remembering that Mahler was intimately acquainted, from the conductor's podium, with the world of opera and its larger-than-life gestures). Offstage horn calls build to some of the most elaborate fanfares ever composed; if the dead are to be called to judgment through a musical fanfare, it will be one like this, which seems to fill the entire universe. It leads to a gigantic march of wild, and even vulgar, character, yielding eventually to a section of incredible stillness and unreality. Offstage brass instruments ("at the greatest possible distance," says the score) utter the definitive summons to judgment. As the sound of their fanfares dies away, there occurs the most breathtaking moment of the entire symphony: unheralded and unexpected, the chorus begins singing, very softly, the words of Klopstock's resurrection hymn: "Rise again, yes, thou shalt rise again, my dust, after a brief rest." The dead of all humankind seem to be stirring in answer to the summons. During the symphony's first performance, the audience actually gasped at the moment of the choral entrance. From this moment the symphony gradually becomes confident and affirmative. Mahler follows Klopstock's poem quite closely at first, but from the entrance of the alto solo ("O glaube, mein Herz"—"Believe, my heart, you were not born in vain") the text is Mahler's own. It is tempting to read into it a double meaning: the evident religious sentiment derived from Klopstock, as well as the composer's own confident assertion that, in spite of setbacks and failures, his music will live (You have not lived and suffered in vain"). The ringing choral finale moves to E-flat, relative major of the opening C minor, utterly casting aside the torments and doubts of the funeral march for a self-confident assertion of the utmost brilliance, a major point of arrival in Mahler's own personal voyage of self-discovery.

—Steven Ledbetter

### Kathleen Battle, Soprano

Kathleen Battle has emerged as a major international vocalist, receiving accolades for her performances in opera, recital and with orchestra. Last season she appeared with the Metropolitan Opera as Pamina in the Chagall production of *The Magic Flute*, as Despina in *Così Fan Tutte* and as Rosina in a new production of *The Barber of Seville*, also repeating her role from the previous season as Blonde in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. In addition, she gave her first solo New York recital at Lincoln Center, and was invited to open the New York Philharmonic season and take part in the celebration of the Philharmonic's 10,000th concert as soloist in performance of Mahler's Second Symphony conducted by Zubin Mehta.

A native of Portsmouth, Ohio, Miss Battle received her bachelor and master of music degrees from the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music. She was invited by Thomas Schippers, founding music director of the Spoleto Festival in Italy, to make her debut as soloist in performances of Brahms's *Requiem* at the Festival.

### Maureen Forrester, Contralto

Maureen Forrester, one of the foremost contraltos of our time, has distinguished herself as a soloist with virtually every major orchestra in the world. Her recent performances include concerts with the New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Jerusalem and National Symphony, as well as a second trip to China where she appeared in solo recitals with Claude Borbeil.

Born in Montreal, Miss Forrester gave her first public performance at the Montreal YWCA and was immediately engaged to sing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Montreal Symphony. Shortly thereafter, she was invited to make her Carnegie Hall debut as the contralto soloist in Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony. She has since become recognized as one of the great interpreters of works by Gustav Mahler.



## Urlicht

O Röschen rot!  
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Not!  
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pein!  
Je lieber möcht' ich im Himmel sein!

Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg:  
Da kam ein Engelein und wollt' mich  
abweisen.  
Ach nein! Ich liess mich nicht abweisen!  
Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott!  
Der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtchen geben,  
Wird leuchten mir bis in das ewig Leben!  
— from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du,  
Mein Staub, nach kurzer Ruh!  
Unsterblich Leben! Unsterblich Leben  
Wird der dich rief dir geben.

Wieder aufzublüh'n wirst du gesät!  
Der Herr der Ernte geht  
und sammelt Garben  
Uns ein, die starben!

O glaube, mein Herz, O glaube:  
Es geht dir nichts verloren!  
Dein ist, was du gesehnt!  
Dein, was du geliebt  
Was du gestritten!

## Primeval Light

Oh red rose!  
Man lies in deepest need,  
Man lies in deepest pain.  
Yes, I would rather be in heaven!

I came upon a broad path:  
An angel came and wanted to send me away.  
Ah no! I would not be sent away!  
I am from God and will return to God.  
The dear God will give me a light,  
Will illumine me to eternal blessed life!

Rise again, yes, thou shalt rise again,  
my dust, after brief rest!  
Immortal life! Immortal life  
will he who called thee give thee.

To bloom again art thou sown!  
The Lord of the Harvest goes  
and gathers sheaves —  
us, who died.

O believe, my heart, believe:  
Nothing is lost with thee!  
Thine is what thou hast desired!  
Thine, what thou hast loved,  
what thou hast fought for!

O glaube,  
Du wardst nicht umsonst geboren!  
Hast nicht umsonst gelebt,  
Gelitten!

Was entstanden ist  
Das muss vergehen!  
Was vergangen, auferstehen!  
Hör' auf zu beben!  
Bereite dich zu leben!

O Schmerz! Du Alldurchdringer!  
Dir bin ich entrungen!  
O Tod! Du Allbezwinger!  
Nun bist du bezwungen!

Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen,  
In heissem Liebesstreben,  
Werd' ich entschweben  
Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug' gedrungen!  
Sterben werd' ich, um zu leben!

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n  
Wirst du, mein Herz, in einem Nu!  
Was du geschlagen  
Zu Gott wird es dich tragen!  
— Klopstock/Mahler

O believe,  
Thou wert not born in vain!  
Hast not lived in vain,  
Suffered in vain!

What has come into being  
must perish.  
What has perished must rise again.  
Cease trembling!  
Prepare thyself to live!

O Pain, piercer of all things,  
From thee have I been wrested!  
O Death, thou master of all things,  
now art thou mastered!

With wings which I have won for myself,  
In love's fierce striving,  
I shall soar upwards  
to the light to which no one has penetrated!  
I shall die in order to live!

Rise again, yes, thou shalt rise again,  
my heart, in the twinkling of an eye!  
What thou has fought for  
shall lead thee to God!



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Recorded in Powell Symphony Hall, St. Louis, Missouri, October 10 and 12, 1982  
Microphones: Schoeps Colette Series  
Recorder: Soundstream Digital Tape Recorder  
Console: Neotek  
Monitor Speakers: ADS Model 1530 bi-amplified, ADS Model C2000 Crossover / ATC SCM-50S  
Power Amplifiers: Threshold Model S/500 Stasis  
Interconnecting Cables: Audio-Technica  
Control Room Acoustic Treatment: Sonex from illbruck/usa  
Digital Editing: Sonoma DSD

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Recording Engineer: Jack Renner  
Production Assistants: Elaine Martone, Ronald Whitaker  
Soundstream to DSD Transfer and Mastering: Paul Blakemore  
Editor: Paul Blakemore  
SACD Production Supervisor: Erica Brenner

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(1860 - 1911)

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