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MAHLER
SYMPHONY No. 4
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HERLIOZ OVERTURES ~ MUNCH • BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
THAI WONDROUS LOVE ~ ROBERT SHAW CHORALE

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GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)

Symphony No. 4 in G

- 1 Bedächtig. Nicht eilen 15:58
- 2 In gemächerlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast 8:57
- 3 Ruhevoll 19:01
- 4 Sehr behaglich 9:40
Das himmlische Leben from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*
(Recorded December 6 & 8, 1958)



Lisa Della Casa, soprano
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Fritz Reiner, conductor
(Recorded Orchestra Hall, Chicago)

Produced by Richard Mohr
 Recording Engineer: Lewis Layton
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This was an original three-track stereo recording; in SACD multi-channel mode, the music will be heard only from the front left, center and right channels.

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NOTES BY JAY S. HARRISON (1960)

Creating—like being born or dying—is a lonely affair. The experience cannot be shared.

A man, out of the depths of what he is, paints a picture, composes a symphony, chisels a sculpture, writes a poem: while the technical means employed may be amenable to analysis, the processes of heart and mind that go into the act of creating are rarely clear even to the artist himself. He simply does what he has to, is at the mercy of his own genius and its drive. The artist is the victim of his personal demon, which can be appeased solely by the release of creativity. And that release, as I say, can only be effected alone and in communion with one's self. Making art is lonely work. Trying to interpret it with precision is the occupation of fools.

This is doubly so if the artist is of a black-and-white disposition, alternately sensitive, calculating, melancholic, high-spirited, morose, ebullient, withdrawn and

unashamedly sentimental. In the first place, he is generally—and with reason—misunderstood. In the second, such a man's awareness of the pangs of creation is intensified by his search for perfection and his inability to achieve it; by his desire to embrace humanity and his realization that he is different from all others; by his knowledge that his supreme gifts are so wildly dispersed through his personality that he cannot ever sift them, sort them, order them into a pattern over which he has total command. Such a figure is in constant battle with himself, as, indeed, was Gustav Mahler.

About Mahler, Ernest Newman, the late critic and the fraternity's acknowledged dean, once wrote that his music is "a personal matter; it is himself...into each successive work he poured virtually his self...and this being of his happened to be of a diversity without parallel in music." This said, it is no use to go further without pointing to some of these "diversities,"

if for no other cause than that they may shape in our mind the knot of complexities that was Mahler in the flesh. I make no attempt to arrange them, only to state them.

Consider: Mahler was born a Jew but became a Catholic. A good part of his life was taken up with his conducting and managerial duties in the opera house—at thirty-eight he was dictator of opera production in Central Europe—yet he did not compose a single lyric-drama that had the least significance to commend it. About his directorial capacities he was finicky and stern to the point of obsession, yet in his own music he was often loose-jointed and cavalier. The love of mother for child, brother for brother, ran as a leitmotif through his work, though in his own family there was hatred and jealousy, with some of his closest kin doomed to suicide or madness. The basic stuff of his music derives from short, simple folk song, yet his symphonies are gargantuan networks of an organizational

intricacy unequaled before him in the art of tone. Nature—a single leaf, a swath of meadow—was the toy that brought wonder to his imagination, yet the supernatural was the subject of some of his profoundest orchestral creations.

Frequently convivial, often sarcastic; sanguine on Sunday, bitter on Monday; full of fear in June, full of cheer in July—that was Gustav Mahler as his portrait has been painted in words since his death in Vienna on May 18, 1911.

At the time of his passing—he had burned himself out at fifty-one—Mahler left behind nine completed symphonies, sketches for a tenth, and a library of song cycles among which *Das Lied von der Erde* stands as one of the greatest of all time. And each of these works was wrung out of the man, chipped away pieces of his vitality, as though he were pouring into his scores all that there was of him. Not that his music, for lack of health, grew lame as he grew

old; the opposite, in fact, is true. His last numbers, far from revealing any disintegration of power, are generally acknowledged his finest contributions to the symphonic literature. It is only that Mahler lived so intensely in every new piece which he wrote that no one of them bears less than the unmistakable imprint of his being.

And that, for me at any rate, is the key to Mahler's greatness and the clue to understanding his music. Everything that Mahler touched became vividly personal. Historians are fond of pointing out that the typical Mahlerian urge was a product of later-Romanticism, that his roots feed into the soil of Bruckner, Schubert, Wagner, Berlioz, Beethoven and so on, that he was pathologically disturbed to the fringe of madness, that he was music's symbol of the wandering Jew. Myself, I am concerned with no such speculations nor convinced by them. I report only one basic fact—on hearing five measures of

any Mahler work I know who the composer is and give myself up entirely to what I am hearing. His influences?—what are they alongside of his originality? The era in which he wrote?—what has it to do with what he wrote? Was he mercurial of disposition? Yes, and why not; his music is also.

Mahler is one of the few composers whose music erases preconceptions. It is, of course, for the individual to decide whether he *likes* what he hears: tastes are not predictable and rarely correctable. But Mahler is one man who makes you take him on his own terms. For his music is a self-portrait. As in all good portraits the eyes follow you about the room.

It is the common habit to divide Mahler's compositions into three phases or stages. The first four symphonies are described as tracing Mahler from his youth to his maturity, with specific emphasis on nature and the clean air that surrounds it. Thereafter, in the symphonies

Five through Eight, according to Grove's dictionary, "vaster problems attracted him: the soul of man, its relation to the world of nature which had held him in earlier years, its battle with circumstances." And, assuredly, in his last symphony* and in *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mahler fell heir to the ache of resignation, to that vast feeling of loneliness that comes upon an artist when he perceives almost by intuition that the end is near and he must make peace with himself.

About all of these works, however, there linger two cardinal misconceptions—that they marshal huge instrumental forces merely as a means to making a big noise, and that they are long only because Mahler lacked the discipline to keep them short. Regarding the former there is this to be said: Mahler required out-size orchestras not for the obvious reason that they were able to build a rousing climax, though he was a master at that, too. He needed instruments by the regiment

because in solo (or in combination) he wished as many as possible to reflect their true and individual sonority, a condition feasible only if they were playing alone or with groups acting as a pedestal on which the solo might be set as a gem. To Mahler, each instrument had a personality, and personalities are hard to distinguish in a mob. Thus his scoring, apart from being excessively thick, is a model of balance, as any orchestral player will be pleased to tell you.

The claim that Mahler is overinflated in length is not so easy to counter—though doing so is far from impractical. The longest of Mahler's movements is simply an outgrowth of its thematic content. Mahler was never satisfied to develop one melodic idea or two and let it go at that. Each movement, in addition to containing full-fledged thematic inspiration, is also crammed with snatches or fragments of tune or color which the composer undertook to elaborate until



his ingenuity was exhausted. And that, you may be sure, took a bit of time, though who are we to begrudge it?

And now a final matter which it seems to me has been overemphasized in treatises on the subject: Mahler's recourse to poetic texts in his Second, Third, Fourth and Eighth Symphonies. It is one thing to believe that, like Beethoven in his Ninth, the composer had gone about as far with instrumental music as was possible without reliance on the printed word; it is another thing to prove it. For the truth is that Mahler never used a text in his life without first turning it into *music*. Words in Mahler are not independent jingling things at odds with the surrounding instrumental fabric. They are made snugly part of the symphonic texture, as, for example, in the last movement of the Fourth Symphony. Frankly, it would be unfortunate if this particular excerpt were not, for the verse—sung by a soprano and based on a folk

song from the collection entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Youth's Magic Horn*)—is a childlike view of the goods of Paradise. But what is said is not important: it is the way Mahler says it.

All in all, it is certain that the world has no use for dreamers who cannot recall their dreams. Mahler could. Working alone as all artists must, out of some inner resource as restless as the sea, he gave to posterity a universe of tone to remember him by. While, as I remarked earlier, we cannot re-create his act of creating—the jumble of his personality in itself precludes that—we can at least revel in the finished product. It is written in a language that is the common property of us all.

Mr. Harrison was Music Editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* at the time he wrote this piece.

*[Since these notes were written, performing versions of Mahler's Tenth Symphony have been completed by Deryck Cooke and Remo Mazzetti, Jr.]

NOTES BY FRITZ REINER

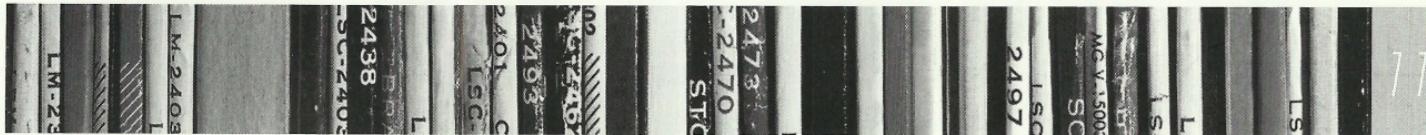
I never had any personal contact with Mahler, nor did I ever hear him conduct—therefore what I know of his character, of his emotional life, of his philosophy is purely second-hand knowledge, acquired by studying his scores, reading his letters and numerous biographies.

By coincidence he too started his conducting career in Ljubljana (Laibach in those days) where some thirty years later, in 1910, I made my first attempts at operatic conducting—and my opening opera there was the same *Dalibor* by Smetana with which Mahler inaugurated his directorship of the Vienna Opera in October 1897.

In my Dresden days I had the good fortune of becoming a friend of Richard Strauss who commented frequently during our interminable skat-marathons upon his relationship to Mahler. In the early years of his career Strauss was a protégé of

Mahler. It was Mahler who first produced *Feuersnot* in 1902 in the Vienna Opera House and later recognized the immortal genius of the composer of *Salomé*. There was, however, a huge abyss between the two in their approach to music making. The Strauss *bon mot* of being able to set a glass of beer to music is well known, while Mahler contended that his whole life could be translated in terms of the music that he wrote. Strauss was the realist, Mahler the eternal mystic; Strauss was the extrovert master of concentration, Mahler the introvert, pregnant with premonitions and misgivings. They respected each other's gigantic achievements, but this respect never created a deep-rooted friendship.

The fact that forty-eight years after Mahler's death many people are still alive who knew him—even if not intimately—plus the pro and con arguments about his position in contemporary



music, makes an attempted appraisal of his life's work difficult and almost impossible. Another generation will have a chance at a better and a clearer perspective.

In my long conducting career I have gone through various reactions to his enormous creative output, beginning with outright rejection (largely due to my youthful ignorance), then growing by degrees to respect and puzzled admiration, and ending with conversion to the group of "True Believers." This recorded interpretation of the Fourth Symphony should represent a proof of my conversion. The Fourth is an uneven work—"folksy" tunes are mixed with olympic grandiloquence and noble pathos; moods of heavenly peace are juxtaposed with diabolic sarcasm, the dissonant sounds of Death's fiddle—but there is no denying the fascination of this work's searching power, its naive religious feeling and

subconscious revelation of many traits of the composer's enigmatic personality. "My time will come," he said. I am convinced that his prophecy was right.

Fritz Reiner was internationally recognized as one of the foremost conductors of his time. Born in 1888 in Budapest, he received his basic music education there, graduating from the Academy of Music. In 1909 he became a vocal coach at Budapest's Opéra-Comique, but was soon called upon to take over a performance of *Carmen* without rehearsal, when the scheduled conductor fell ill. His career had started. After a year in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, he became conductor of the Budapest Volksoper, where, in 1914, he led the first Hungarian performance of *Parsifal*. That same year he was appointed principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden; while there he worked with Richard Strauss on productions of his early operas and conducted the German premiere of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In 1922 Reiner became conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; nine

years later he went to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia to head the orchestral department. After a decade (1938-48) as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, he joined the Metropolitan Opera. Then in 1953 he became music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he built into one of the world's great ensembles. Ill health forced him to resign that post in 1962, and he died the following year.

Reiner was extraordinary not only as an orchestra builder but also for his broad range of repertoire, both symphonic and operatic; he was equally the master of reproducing the delicately balanced sonorities of Mozart and the massive richness of Richard Strauss; he was a champion of 20th-century music, and he could give incomparably lilting performances of the waltzes of Johann Strauss.

Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden,
D'rüm tun wir das Irdische meiden.
Kein weltlich Getümmel
Hört man nicht im Himmel!
Lebt alles in sanftester Ruh'.
Wir führen ein englisches Leben,
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben,
Wir tanzen und springen,
Wir hüpfen und singen,
Sankt Peter im Himmel sieht zu!

Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
Der Metzger Herodes drauf passet!
Wir führen ein geduldig's, unschuldig's,
Ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod!
Sankt Lukas den Ochsen tät schlachten
Ohn' einig's Bedenken und Achten,
Der Wein kost kein Heller
Im himmlischen Keller,
Die Englein, die backen das Brot.

Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten,
die wachsen im himmlischen Garten!
Gut' Spargel, Fisolen
Und was wir nur wollen!
Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit!

So delightful are the joys of heaven
that we avoid the earthly ones.
No worldly turmoil
is heard in heaven!
There all live in gentlest peace.
We lead the life of an angel,
but we're quite merry nonetheless,
dancing and leaping,
skipping and singing,
Saint Peter in heaven looks on!

John gives up his little lamb,
the butcher Herod waylays it!
We lead a patient, innocent,
dear little lamb to its death!
Saint Luke slaughters the oxen
without a moment's thought or care.
The wine in heaven's cellar
costs not a penny,
the angels, they bake the bread.

Good herbs of every description
grow in heaven's garden—
asparagus, peas
and whatever we want!
Heaping platters are set for us!

Gut' Apfel, gut' Birn' und gut' Trauben,
Die Gärtner die alles erlauben!
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen
Auf offener Strassen
Sie laufen herbei!

Sollt ein Festtag etwa kommen
Alle Fische gleich mit Freuden
angeschwommen!
Dort läuft schon Sankt Peter
Mit Netz und mit Köder
Zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sankt Martha die Köchin muss sein!

Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
Die unsrer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
Zu tanzen sich trauen!
Sankt Ursula selbst dazu lacht!
Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
Sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
Ermuntern die Sinnen,
Dass alles für Freuden erwacht.

Good apples, good pears and good grapes—
the gardeners offer them all!
If you want roebuck or rabbit
they are running about
in the streets!

Should a fast day come along,
all the fish come swimming
gaily by!
There goes Saint Peter
with his net and bait,
running to the heavenly pond.
Saint Martha shall be the cook!

There's no music on earth
that can compare with ours.
Eleven thousand young maidens
devote themselves to dancing—
even Saint Ursula smiles!
Cecilia and her relations
are excellent court musicians!
The angelic voices
refresh our spirits,
and joy wakens in all.