



Gustav Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde

aud 95.491



Badische Zeitung 18.11.2003 (Heinz W. Koch - 18.11.2003)

Badische  Zeitung

... Wie spezifisch, ja wie radikal sich Gielens Mahler ausnimmt, erhellt schlagartig, wenn man Rafael Kubeliks dreieinhalb Jahrzehnte alte und vor einer Weile wiederveröffentlichte Einspielung dagegenhält.

Eine gehörige Überraschung gab's schon einmal – als nämlich die nie veröffentlichten Münchner Funk-„Meistersinger“ von 1967 plötzlich zu haben waren. Jetzt ist es Gustav Mahlers drei Jahre später eingespieltes „Lied von der Erde“, das erstmals über die Ladentische geht. Es gehört zu einer Mahler Gesamtaufnahme, die offenbar vor der rühmlich bekannten bei der Deutschen Grammophon entstand. Zumindest bei den hier behandelten Sinfonien Nr. 3 und Nr. 6 war das der Fall. Beim „Lied von der Erde“ offeriert das Symphonie-Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, dessen Chef Kubelik damals war, ein erstaunlich präsentes, erstaunlich aufgesplittertes Klangbild, das sowohl das Idyllisch-Graziöse hervorkehrt wie das Schwerblütig-Ausdrucksgesättigte mit großem liedsinfonischem Atem erfüllt – eine erstrangige Wiedergabe.

Auch die beiden 1967/68 erarbeiteten Sinfonien erweisen sich als bestechend durchhörbar. Vielleicht geht Kubelik eine Spur naiver vor als die beim Sezieren der Partitur schärfer verfahrenen Dirigenten wie Gielens, bricht sich, wo es geht, das ererbte böhmische Musikantentum zumindest für Momente Bahn. Da staunt einer eher vor Mahler, als dass er ihn zu zerlegen sucht. Wenn es eine Verwandtschaft gibt, dann ist es die zu Bernstein. Das Triumphale der „Dritten“, das Nostalgische an ihr wird nicht als Artefakt betrachtet, sondern „wie es ist“: Emotion zur Analyse. ...

(aus einer Besprechung mit den Mahler-Interpretationen Michael Gielens)

CD Compact n° 169 (octobre 2003) (Benjamín Fontvelia - 01.10.2003)

Rafael Kubelik/Audite

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Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.



The German firm Audite has given us not only this near complete live cycle of Mahler symphonies (sans 4 or 8), but valuable Kubelik/Curzon readings of four Mozart and two Beethoven concertos. Of particular interest here is 'Das Lied von der Erde', since Kubelik did not record it for DG. Janet Baker fans will welcome a third CD version: and she sounds truly inspired by her conductor. 'Der Einsame im Herbst' may not have the sheer beauty of the version with Haitink but the finale surpasses most on records, with a real sense of the transcendental at the close. Kmentt too makes the most of his words; and the reedy Munich winds suit this score.

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Some critics feel that Kubelik gives us 'Mahler-lite', which may seem in comparison with, say, Chailly's Decca cycle or the recent BPO/Abbado Third on DG – not to mention Bernstein's. But there is plenty of energy here, and the divided strings with basses set to the rear left give openness to textures. However, the strings are not opulent and the trumpets are often piercing. It would be fair to say that Kubelik conducted Mahler as if it were Mozart!

As it happens, in the most controversial of his readings, No. 6, the DG is preferable to the Audite, where Kubelik projects little empathy with its slow movement and where the Scherzo is less cohesive. The real problem is that the very fast speed for (I) affects all subsequent tempo relationships. Nor does the finale on No. 3, one of the glories of the DG cycle, quite have the same radiance; the singers are the same, the Tölz Boys making a sound one imagines Mahler must have heard in his head, and this performance predates the DG by one month. Nevertheless, these newer issues of Nos 2 and 3 are worth hearing, the 'Resurrection' not least for Brigitte Fassbaender's account of 'Urlicht'.

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ClicMag N° 10s Novembre 2013 (Jérôme Angouillant - 01.11.2013)

Clic Musique !

Votre disquaire classique, jazz, world

Deux figures légendaires de l'interprétation mahlérienne réunies à l'occasion d'un concert à Munich pour l'oeuvre peut-être la plus intime et douloureuse de Mahler: « Le chant de la terre ».

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

[Das Orchester](#) 3/2003 (Johannes Killyen - 01.03.2003)



Um eines von Gustav Mahlers großen Werken neu auf dem übersättigten...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

Diapason Septembre 2002 (Jean-Charles Hoffele - 01.09.2002)

Deutsche Gramophon ne permit pas à Kubelik d'enregistrer « Le Chant de la terre », qui aurait constitué le point d'orgue de son cycle Mahler ; la firme hambourgeoise avait confié l'oeuvre en 1962 à Jochum (sa seule gravure mahlérienne) et au Concertgebouw, avec Merriman et Haefliger. Dans ce concert de février 1970, Kubelik, selon un parti pris qu'il soutint tout au long de son intégrale, refuse tout pathos, tout morbidité ; il expose la partition en pleine lumière, radiographiant les mises en abyme de l'orchestre mahlérien avec une précision expressive qui donne le vertige. A ce titre, le vaste interlude du lied ultime est exemplaire par sa parfaite limpidité ; l'émotion qu'il dégage ne provient pas d'une surcharge d'affect (comme chez Bernstein ou Walter) mais d'un regard lucide, implacable et néanmoins compatissant.

Porté par cet orchestre éclairé, l'alto de Baker ose un chant rayonnant, débarrassé de toute tentation d'assombrir le timbre (ce qu'elle réussissait admirablement avec Haitink, Philips), magnifié par une petite harmonie et des violons tenus par la direction sostenuto de Kubelik, qui semble omniprésente dans toutes les pupitres de l'orchestre, à tous les instants, distillant une immense musique du chambre. Kmentt, en grande voix, tranchant, héroïque, impressionne durablement et ne pâlit ni devant la beauté absolue de Wunderlich ni devant le « sprechgesang » enflammé de Patzak. Dans la plénitude de son geste, Kubelik entend « Le Chant de la terre » comme une partition ouverture sur l'avenir, tournant les dos aux vastes thrènes funèbres des grandes versions de l'oeuvre, sentimentaux et étreignant (Walter, Bernstein, Haitink), minéraux et tragiques (Reiner, Klemperer). Il renouvelle totalement notre vision d'une partition-clé du début du siècle.

Die Rheinpfalz 12.02.2003 (Gerhard Tetzlaff - 12.02.2003)

DIE RHEINPFALZ

Idealer Interpret – Livemitschnitte unter Rafael Kubelik

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El País 19.04.2003 (Javier Pérez Senz - 19.04.2003)

El País

Kubelik, en el corazón de Mahler

Dos sinfonías de Gustav Mahler grabadas en vivo abren la edición que el sello Audite dedica al director checo Rafael Kubelik, uno de los grandes mahlerianos de la historia.

[...] dirige el célebre adagietto con un encendido lirismo y una intensidad que hipnotiza al oyente –, situándose entre las mejores de la discografía.

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

Flensburg Avis 09.04.2003 (Lars Geerdes - 09.04.2003)

**FL ENS B O R G
AVIS**

Skelsættende tysk Mahlerindspilning genudgivet

Live-optagelse fra 1970 kan nu købes på cd

Skelsættende tysk Mahlerindspilning genudgivet

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Fono Forum 11/02 (Christian Wildhagen - 01.11.2002)

FONO FORUM
KLASSIK JAZZ HIFI

Glücksgriff

Dieser Live-Mitschnitt stellt eine echte Erweiterung der Kubelik-Diskographie dar, denn "Das Lied von der Erde" fehlt in seinem Studio-Mahler-Zyklus. Kubeliks Lesart zählt fraglos zu den bleibenden Einspielungen dieses bewegenden Werks. Ihm standen in Janet Baker und Waldemar Kmentt zwei ausgezeichnete Solisten zur Verfügung. Zwar reicht Kmentt nicht an Fritz Wunderlich heran, doch für eine unretuschierte Live-Aufnahme bewältigt er den schwierigen Tenorpart mehr als achtbar und überzeugt auch durch sensible dynamische Schattierungen. Janet Baker kann sich dagegen durchaus mit Kathleen Ferrier und Christa Ludwig messen, einige wenige Schärfen in der Höhe nicht gerechnet.

Gramophone 9/2002 (Richard Fairman - 01.09.2002)

GRAMOPHONE
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Das Lied live from two great Mahler conductors, more spontaneous sounding than their studio versions

Audite is in the process of assembling a complete Mahler cycle with Kubelík and the Bavarian RSO from radio relays. So far the recordings date across a period of 15 years, with this Das Lied von der Erde, broadcast in February 1970, among the earliest. Kubelík's Mahler is heard here at its most typical, so much at ease with the sound-world and tempo of the music that other conductors can seem heavy-handed by comparison. It is at the other extreme from the explosive collision of emotions that makes Bernstein's recordings so intense and choppy: Kubelík is natural, easy-going, fresh in his delight at the score's exquisite detail. Although the poems of Das Lied refer to several seasons, this performance surely belongs to the spring, when 'the dear earth everywhere blooms... and grows green again'. Waldemar Kmentt is strong and sure in the tenor songs but rather pedestrian. There is not much sense of wide-eyed wonder at the arrival of spring or uninhibited hedonism as the wine is being poured. Dame Janet Baker already features on several other recordings, including a live broadcast on BBC Legends, but no two of her performances of this work were the same. Here, in 1970, she sings with much pure, vocal beauty and a desire for intimacy that is remarkable in a large concert-hall. In the second song the close to each rising phrase is beautifully handled. The fourth song is graceful, though less sensuous than on her Philips recording under Haitink. In the final 'Abschied' the voice truly sails 'wie eine Silberbarke' on hushed legato lines shimmering with intensity.

Some may prefer to stick with studio recordings of Das Lied, where the orchestra has had the luxury of extra takes to polish every detail, but there are no complaints about the Bavarian orchestra here. There are also a few studio recordings (Karajan and the Solti among them) that perform technical somersaults to end up with a recorded balance less satisfying than here.

Gramophone October 2003 (Rob Cowan - 01.10.2003)

GRAMOPHONE
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Kubelik takes the Stage

Some years ago I was involved in a discussion concerning Wilhelm Furtwängler's potential artistic heir. Who might he be? There was no lack of candidates. My suggestion, for the following reasons, was Rafael Kubelik. Both were composers; both preferred an old-fashioned orchestral layout (violins divided, etc) and achieved weight of sonority by allowing a chord to fall naturally rather than slamming it shut. Both favoured flexibility within the bar, an often orgiastic excitability and, most important in this particular context, an overall preference for live performance over recording.

For example, compare Kubelik's 1975 DG studio recording of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony with the Israel Philharmonic with the live Bavarian RSO Audite version of four years later. The IPO account is taut and incisive, with an explosive fortissimo just before the coda (at 5'52", i.e. bar 312) that sounds as if it has been aided from the control desk. Turn then to the BRSO version, the lead-up at around 4'25" to that same passage (here sounding wholly natural), so much more gripping, where second fiddles, violas and cellos thrust their responses to tremolando first fiddles. The energy level is still laudably high but the sense of intense engagement is almost palpable. Again, with the Boston recording of the Fifth, handsome and well played as it undoubtedly is (and with the finale's repeat intact, which isn't the case on Audite), there is little comparison with the freer, airier and more responsive live relay. I'm thinking especially the slow movement, so humble and expressive, almost hymn-like in places – for example, the Bachian string counterpoint from 4'27". Also, the Boston recording places first and second violins on the left: the Audite option has them divided, as per Kubelik's preferred norm.

Audite's Tchaikovsky coupling is an out-and-out winner. Kubelik made two studio recordings of the Fourth Symphony (with the Chicago SO and Vienna PO), both set around a lyrical axis, but this live version has a unique emotive impetuosity, especially in the development section of the first movement. The Andantino relates a burning nostalgia without exaggeration, whereas the scherzo – taken at a real lick – becomes a quiet choir of balalaikas. The April 1969 performance of the Violin Concerto was also Pinchas Zukerman's German début and aside from Kubelik's facilitating responsiveness, there's the warmth and immediacy of the youthful Zukerman's tone and the precision of his bowing. Both performances confirm Kubelik as among the most sympathetic of Tchaikovsky conductors, a genuine listener who relates what he hears, not what he wants to confess through the music.

Much the same might be said of Kubelik's Mahler, whether for DG or the various live alternatives currently appearing on Audite. In the case of 'Das Lied von der Erde' there is no DG predecessor, but even if there was, I doubt that it would surpass the live relay of February 1970 with Waldemar Kmentt and Dame Janet Baker, so dashing, pliant and deeply felt, whether in the subtly traced clarinet counterpoint near the start of 'Von der Jugend' or the way Baker re-emerges after the funereal processional in 'Der Abschied', as if altered forever by a profound visitation.

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klassik-heute.com 02.12.2002 (Mario Gerteis - 02.12.2002)



In der ersten Mahler-Welle auf (Stereo-)Schallplatten spielte der sinfonische...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

klassik.com 19.12.2002 (Erik Daumann - 19.12.2002)

Quelle: <http://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/revie...>



Von Böhme zu Böhme

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Lippische Landeszeitung 05.02.2004 (fla - 05.02.2004)



Historische Aufnahme ausgezeichnet

Label aus Hiddesen bekommt Cannes Classical Award

Historische Aufnahme ausgezeichnet

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Nordsee-Zeitung Nr. 57/2003 (Sebastian Luskant - 08.03.2003)



Es war ein Tscheche, der den Münchenern den Spätromantiker Gustav Mahler...

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Pizzicato 10.2002 (Rémy Franck - 01.10.2002)



Optimistisches 'Lied von der Erde'

Kubelik hat für die Deutsche Grammophon die Mahler-Symphonien aufgenommen, nicht aber 'Das Lied von der Erde'. Nachdem uns etliche der Liveproduktionen der Symphonien bei 'audite' bereits weitaus mehr begeistert hatten als die Studio-Einspielungen der DG, warteten wir gespannt auf dieses für unsere Ohren nun wirklich neue Tondokument. Und die Begeisterung könnte nicht größer sein: so prächtig hat das Mahler-Orchester in dieser Partitur selten geklungen. Kubelik taucht die Musik völlig unpathetisch in ein gleißendes Licht. Das 'Lied von der Erde' klingt daher unerhört neu: das Orchester ist von stupender Klarheit, fast kammermusikalisch fein ziseliert, von bestechender Reinheit und ohne jede dunkeln Gedanken. Gerade dadurch wirkt Kubeliks Interpretation so anders, so neu: frei von jeglicher Sentimentalität zelebriert er keinen Trauerdienst, sondern gibt Mahlers Musik einen eher optimistischen, in die Zukunft weisenden Charakter. Erstaunlicherweise bleibt sogar Janet Bakers Stimme hier hell und lichtstark, und Waldemar Kmentt - in großer Form - singt ohne Anstrengung, ohne theatralische Geste, sehr stilvoll und ohne jede störende Akzentuierung, weil er in diesem kammermusikalisch transparenten orchestralen Umfeld einen sicheren Platz hat.

Audite legt also mit dieser CD eine in der Interpretationsgeschichte vom 'Lied von der Erde' eine essentielle Interpretation vor, die unsere Sicht auf dieses von Mahler als sein persönlichstes Werk bezeichnete Komposition völlig erneuert.

Répertoire No 161 (Gérard Belvire - 01.10.2002)

Avec Bernstein, Solti et Haitink, Kubelik fait partie des chefs « historiques...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

Rondo 17.10.2002 (Matthias Kornemann - 17.10.2002)



Viele Dirigenten hat es am Jahrhundertende angezogen, dieses "Lied von der...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

Scherzo N° 178, Septiembre 2003 (Enrique Pérez Adrián - 01.09.2003)

sch~~er~~zo

Una gran versión que sin duda hará mella espiritual en cualquier oyente sensible que se acerque a ella

Mathis, Brendel, Kmentt, Baker y Kubelik - Dos nuevas dianas

Una gran versión que sin duda hará mella espiritual en cualquier oyente sensible que se acerque a ella

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Stereoplay 1/2003 (Ulrich Schreiber - 01.01.2003)

stereoplay

Marktpolitisch mag der Audite-Versuch, dem von der DG im Studio fixierten...

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[The Jewish Daily Forward](#) July 28, 2010 (Benjamin Ivry - 28.07.2010)

THE JEWISH DAILY
FORWARD

A Lively Musical Corpus

Gustav Mahler, *Almost a Century Dead and Still Kicking*

A Lively Musical Corpus

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

The New York Sun April 16, 2008 (Benjamin Ivry - 16.04.2008)

The NEW YORK Sun

In Stephen Sondheim's 1970 musical "Company," Elaine Stritch raspily sang a...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

WDR 3 03.12.2002 (Michael Schwalb - 03.12.2002)



Hörproben-Neue CDs, am Mikrophon Michael Schwalb. Mitgebracht habe ich Ihnen...

Rezensionstext wird aus urheberrechtlichen Gründen nicht vollständig angezeigt.

www.amazon.de 1. Oktober 2002 (- 01.10.2002)

Quelle: <https://www.amazon.de/gp/customer-review...>



Fernöstliche Musik ganz nah!

Rafael Kubelik beschreitet sicher den Grat zwischen romantisch üppigem Klang und klassischer Genauigkeit, lässt die Musik weit schwingen, das Orchester großartig ausspielen. Die Solisten sind für diese Partien ideal und mit genauem Gespür besetzt. Ergreifend, aber nie sentimental.

www.amazon.de 6. August 2019 (- 06.08.2019)

Quelle: <https://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/B0...>



Completely outstanding

This is now my favourite Lied von der Erde. Everything seems right: soloists just superb, orchestra wonderfully transparent, ideal recording, with the advantage of being live. Don't miss it.

www.amazon.de 8. Mai 2019 (- 08.05.2019)

Quelle: <https://www.amazon.de/product-reviews/B0...>



Could this be the only Das Lied you'll ever need? Probably!

Please allow me to get the caveats out of the way before I say why I think this might be the only Das Lied you'll ever need: I'm very much a lay person when comes to appreciating classical music so I can only speak from the perspective of how I experience the music rather than being able to comment on the technical merit of the performance; and, I'm a relative newcomer when it comes to Mahler. I only came across Mahler a few years ago and although I regard his 2nd and 3rd symphonies as the joint-best symphonies I've ever heard, I've barely scratched the surface when it comes to listening to symphonies by any other composer, and I've barely scratched the surface when it comes to exploring the many reading of this particular symphony of songs (I've only heard six or seven).

So why do I think this might be the only Das Lied you'll ever need? The answer is simple: intimacy. This is the only version of this piece of music I've heard that seems to have been played to and for the listener rather than at the listener. Whether that's because of how it was recorded or performed I couldn't say. Perhaps it's a combination of both. All I know is, is that when Janet Baker and Waldemar Kmentt sing,

although especially when Janet is singing, I feel as though though they're singing to and for the listener, which in my case, is me. The goes for the orchestra: when they play, I feel as though they're playing to and for me.

There are probably many other recordings out there that sound better, clearer, less polluted by background noise. But I really feel that what is lost in audio quality with it being a live recording is gained in spades in musicality.

Like I say, I don't have the knowledge and experience to critique this performance from a technical point of view. I just want to confirm what others have said: that this is a genuine 5-star version of Das Lied... and probably the only one you'll ever need!

I should add, that although Herreweghe's reading (the Schoenberg-Riehn transcription) comes close in terms of that sense of intimacy, without Janet Baker on vocals, however, it just can't compete with this under-appreciated masterpiece.



www.buch.de 08.07.2002 (Olaf Behrens - 08.07.2002)



Bisher sind nur Live-Einspielungen der Werke Mahlers unter Rafael Kubelik...

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www.ClassicsToday.com 01.01.1000 (David Hurwitz - 01.01.2002)



Rafael Kubelik never made a studio recording of Das Lied von der Erde, but even...

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www.musicweb-international.com 01.04.2003 (Tony Duggan - 01.04.2003)



Here is one of the great "lost" Mahler recordings now properly restored. When Rafael Kubelik made his outstanding studio Mahler cycle in Munich for DG in the 1970s (463 738-2) he made no version of "Das Lied Von Der Erde" to go with it. This was puzzling for such a great Mahlerian who even went to the trouble of recording the Adagio from the Tenth Symphony as part of his cycle. We knew Kubelik played the work because this performance had taken place in Munich in February 1970 with Kubelik's Bavarian Radio Orchestra and first appeared, minus a minute or two in the fourth movement and in poor sound, on a pirate label in the 1980s. A number of Kubelik's studio Mahler recordings were made after "live" performances in the same hall at this very time (as other Audite releases have shown) so why didn't Kubelik, the orchestra and his two soloists go on to record it for DG under studio conditions? I wonder if the answer lies in the presence of Janet Baker. At that time Baker was an exclusive EMI artist. Were plans afoot for her to record it with Kubelik but these came to nothing because of that? I know she later recorded the work with Bernard

Haitink for Philips but that was some years later when perhaps contract problems were resolvable. Whatever, I know that ever since I heard the pirate version of this performance I had hoped that at some point someone would gain access to the Bavarian Radio master tapes and release them. That is what has now happened and this recording of Mahler's late masterpiece now joins a nearly-completed "live" Mahler cycle conducted by Kubelik from various times during his Munich tenure released by Audite.

For me Janet Baker has always been the greatest interpreter of the female/baritone songs in this work. Her Philips recording with Haitink on Eloquence (468 182-2) was long awaited even when it appeared and did not disappoint her admirers. In my survey of recordings of this work I believe I paid that version the attention it deserved singling out Baker for special praise. However even then I felt her interpretation on a BBC Radio Classics release taken from a later "live" performance in Manchester and conducted by Raymond Leppard was even better – deeper, more profound. The problem was that in no way could the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra compare with the Concertgebouw, or her conductor Raymond Leppard compare with Bernard Haitink even though hearing Baker "live" seemed to add something to her interpretation. This was partly why when I heard the "pirate" of this Munich version I hoped for an official release. This too is "live" with all the benefit that brings but this time we have in Kubelik a Mahlerian of equal stature to Haitink and in the Bavarian Radio an orchestra that comes close to the Concertgebouw in depth of response to Mahler's sound world. Matched with Waldemar Kmentt she also appears with a tenor who is, for me, superior to James King on the Haitink version and John Mitchinson on the Leppard, fine though both are.

The key to the greatness of Janet Baker in this work is her total identification with the words. Her care for every detail of them means she lives the part where some merely describe it. Her view of the music seems from the inside out. In these movements one thinks of Baker, Ludwig and Fassbaender among the women and Fischer-Dieskau among the men. In the second song you are made to feel what it is to be lonely rather than simply have loneliness described to you. Technically too she is on top form as the wild horses passage in "Von der Schönheit" proves. At no point in this crazy music does Baker ever give the impression that she will come to grief, even though the tempo adopted by her and Kubelik is suitably swift. They had one shot at this in front of an audience and it comes off triumphantly. Listen also to the delicacy of the description of the young girls swimming in the same movement. Finally in the "Abschied" her range, emotional and musical is total. Everything is covered here from the passages of sterile enunciation to the overwhelming emotional grandeur of the climaxes and all points between subtly graded. Overall this is one of those interpretations that contain depths that will take years to plumb.

Of all the great recordings of this work I know there has, for me, so far only been one where I feel that two of the greatest interpreters are matched on the same recording. These are Christa Ludwig and Fritz Wunderlich for Klemperer on EMI. But now with this release I think there is a second since Waldemar Kmentt is just as convincing in his songs as Janet Baker is in hers. In fact I believe Kmentt can be compared with Wunderlich, Peter Schreier and Julius Patzak as the finest interpreters in the tenor songs on record. In "Das Trinklied" Kmentt is towering, challenging the music to break him in the dramatic sections, but emerging unscathed from them. The "Dark is life, is death" refrain has a world-weary depth that few save Schreier and Wunderlich can match and the "ape on the grave" climax is fearless in his nightmarish delivery. Like Baker, Kmentt can also walk the delicate passages of this work with equal effect. His description of the arrival of spring in "Der Trunkene im Fruhling" is magical and his word painting in "Von Der Jugend" piquant and sharp.

Kubelik's greatness as a Mahler conductor was his ability to cover the whole range of the music from uncomplicated nature painting to calculated high drama and seem equally at home everywhere. He attends to all details of this music with care and discretion, always taking care of the bigger picture too, balancing it with the inner detail. Notice the woodwinds during the funeral march in "Der Abschied" where every strand is clearly delineated, or the effect of getting his mandolin to play tremolo in the same movement marking up the chinoiserie in a most evocative and unique way. He also recognises what I have always believed to be

a crucial aspect of this work. That the two soloists are the equal partners with the conductor and that he is there to support them. With great soloists like these, that is easier. But countless examples of his support for his soloists are apparent in this performance along with the preparation of his orchestra to act almost as a third soloist. The purely instrumental passages in "Der Abschied" reveal Mahler conducting of the highest order. Listen to the birds passage and also to the deep bass growls before the funeral march.

The sound recording leaves little to be desired. It is hard to tell it was made over thirty years ago for radio broadcast. I like the balances between woodwind and strings and the warmth of the acoustic around the orchestra and soloists in the chamber-like sections. The balance between soloists and orchestra are exemplary also. Even the distinctive acoustic of the Herkulessaal is made to sound perfectly suited to the music. You can hear everything and with solo players in the orchestra as eloquent as the two singers are this is important and adds another plus to this disc. In sound terms this more than matches the best versions of this work and musically it is the equal of Klemperer on EMI (5 66892 2), Sanderling on Berlin Classics (0094022BC) and Horenstein on BBC Legends (BBCL 4042-2). All very different though each one of those comparable versions are in their interpretative approach. Indeed, this Kubelik recording has the effect of taking many of the virtues of all those great recordings and stitching them into a new and deeply satisfying whole.

This is one of the all-time great Mahler recordings: a classic version of this inexhaustible masterpiece in every way. Indeed I think there are none to surpass it, perhaps only to equal it. You will be moved, delighted and changed by it. I cannot recommend it too highly as it goes to the top of my list for this work.

www.new-classics.co.uk January 2005 (- 01.01.2005)

new classics

In this outstanding live recording dating from 1970, Rafael Kubelik conducts the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde ('The Song of the Earth'). In this exciting performance of the symphony for tenor and alto voices, the soloists are the superb Janet Baker and Waldemar Kmentt. A full English text is included with the CD. 'The polyphony of timbres at the work's conclusion will be remembered as one of the greatest and most moving achievements of Rafael Kubelik and his orchestra' - Suddeutsche Zeitung.

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