

COMPACT
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Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Pristine
XR

One's reasons for admiring the "Lied von der Erde" are doubtless generally shared. The lyricism of the poetry has an inspired parallel in the completely lyrical nature of the scoring both for voices and orchestra. Tenor and contralto — last evening the mezzo-soprano, Kathleen Ferrier — carry the burden of the song. But the orchestra also, with its remarkable devices of coloring and of dramatic accentuation, sings its song, and intersperses the final verses for the woman's voice with an interlude which is a "lied" of its own. The very melodic writing needs no translation or commentary to exert its immediate if sometimes obvious and sentimental appeal. Sentimental or not, the complete sincerity of the music is unquestionable and affecting.

Saying this, one adds reluctantly that the performance, for one reason or another, began to fall before it was over. This at least was the reaction of one listener who is not a perfect Mahlerite. Was this only due to certain characteristics of the performance? Both soloists were deficient in diction. Svanholm, the tenor, could only shout, in the opening verses, against heavy orchestra, and in this Mr. Walter did not spare him.

But Mr. Svanholm was prevailingly hard-voiced and lacking in variety of tone color. Miss Ferrier had but recently emerged from a bad cold. Her voice became freer as she went on. She could not, however, give the full significance to her text and music. Some time before the end was reached "Lied von der Erde" was becoming langweiling, lachrymose, old-fashioned.

New York Times, 16 January 1948 (review of concert of 15 January 1948)

A vital, controlled and incisive 1948 *Das Lied von der Erde* from Walter, with Kathleen Ferrier making her American debut. Set Svanholm tends to press ahead of the beat, but it is a rare pleasure to hear the tenor songs as resolutely conquered and characterized. As for Ferrier's contribution, there is little to choose between this and the famous Decca Vienna account made with a more relaxed Walter in 1952. The later recording perhaps presents the richer portrait of a unique vocal phenomenon, and a cathartic release of emotion in the final pages not matched in New York (where the manner is closer to the score's indication of something a little more serene and understated).

JS, Gramophone, January 1999 (review of recording of 18 January 1948 concert)

Producer's Note

This recording of Kathleen Ferrier's American debut first appeared on CD in 1999, when two different CD releases almost coincided. Both are now harder to come by. It was partly this and partly a desire to address the shortcomings of a "privately made recording on acetates" (*Gramophone*) which led to a request for me to see what might be done using today's digital restoration technology. After removing a great deal of surface noise and hiss I've been able to make great strides with the overall tonal quality, improving greatly the clarity of vocal delivery and ameliorating congestion in the lower orchestral ranges. I've also been able to both correct overall pitch and address problems with wow and pitch drift which were beyond the technologies of the late 1990s. The result is a highly memorable and enjoyable *Das Lied* - one can only assume that the three days that elapsed between the first performance, reviewed with some reservations expressed in the *New York Times*, and the present one made all the difference with regard to both performances and delivery. **Andrew Rose**

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mahler

das lied von der erde



kathleen ferrier
mezzo-soprano

set svanholm
tenor

philharmonic-symphony
orchestra of new york
bruno walter, conductor
live recording, 1948

"vital, controlled and incisive" - gramophone

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MAHLER DAS LIED VON DER ERDE
FERRIER, SVANHOLM, NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, WALTER

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Kathleen Ferrier

Live concert performance
Carnegie Hall, New York
18th January 1948

Total duration: 58:20

MAHLER *Das Lied von der Erde*

1. Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde (8:19)
2. Der Einsame im Herbst (8:50)
3. Von der Jugend (3:04)
4. Von der Schönheit (6:18)
5. Der Trunkene im Frühling (4:12)
6. Der Abscheid (27:37)

Kathleen Ferrier *mezzo-soprano*

Set Svanholm *tenor*

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York

Bruno Walter *conductor*

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