

DECCA
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC109

MAHLER

DAS LIED VON DER ERDE

KATHLEEN FERRIER, CONTRALTO
JULIUS PATZAK, TENOR
VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
CONDUCTED BY BRUNO WALTER

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde | 8:33 |
| 2 | Der Einsame im Herbst | 9:10 |
| 3 | Von der Jugend | 3:00 |
| 4 | Von der Schönheit | 6:43 |
| 5 | Der Trunkene im Frühling | 4:23 |
| 6 | Der Abschied | 28:09 |

Recorded in Vienna, May, 1952, issued as Decca L18, LXT 2721-2
Transfer from LP by Peter Harrison at *diva2llik*
Restoration and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, April 2008
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Kathleen Ferrier
Total duration: 59:58 ©2008 Pristine Audio.

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DAS LIED VON DER ERDE

KATHLEEN FERRIER - CHARLES KULLMANN

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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COMPACT
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FERRIER, PATZAK, VPO, WALTER (1952)

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Das Lied von der Erde ("The Song of the Earth") is a large-scale work for two vocal soloists and orchestra. Laid out in six separate movements, each of them an independent song, the work is described on the title-page as *Eine Symphonie für eine Tenor- und eine Alt- (oder Bariton-) Stimme und Orchester (nach Hans Bethges "Die chinesische Flöte")* ("A Symphony for Tenor and Alto (or Baritone) Voice and Orchestra (After Hans Bethge's The Chinese Flute)").

Mahler's copious use of 'Chinese' characteristics in the music marks the work as unique in his output. Composed in the years 1908–1909, it followed the Eighth Symphony. Mahler did not number it as a symphony, however, perhaps because of his superstitious fear of the supposedly "mortal significance" of a "ninth symphony", but more likely because of how much closer it seemed to him to be a song cycle. The work takes approximately sixty-five minutes in performance.

Mahler conceived the work in 1908. The preceding summer is likened to the three hammer blows of the Sixth Symphony (written in 1903–1904). First, Mahler was pressured into resigning from his post as Director of the Vienna Court Opera due to political intrigues within the administration, partly involving anti-semitism; next, his oldest daughter Maria died from scarlet fever and diphtheria; finally, Mahler himself was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect. "With one stroke," Mahler wrote to his friend Bruno Walter, "I have lost everything I have gained in terms of who I thought I was, and have to learn my first steps again like a newborn".

In his heightened awareness of his own mortality and rootlessness as a Jew, Mahler became interested in a volume of ancient Chinese poetry translated into German by Hans Bethge, titled, *Die Chinesische Flöte* ("The Chinese Flute"). The translation was based on a French translation of the original material. Mahler was very taken by the vision of earthly beauty and transience expressed in these verses and chose seven (two of them used in the finale) to set to music. The result was what some have termed a "song-symphony", a hybrid of the two forms that had occupied most of his creative life.

Having already finished his 8th Symphony, Mahler worried along at the "Curse of the Ninth". Convinced that a ninth symphony would kill him, Mahler proceeded to compose *Das Lied von der Erde*, which he subtitled "A Symphony for Tenor, Contralto and Large Orchestra" and left unnumbered. Thus he hoped to skirt around the curse, since his Ninth Symphony would actually be his tenth. Ultimately, however, Mahler did succumb to the "Curse": his next, instrumental symphony, which he numbered his Ninth, was the last work Mahler completed in full (only the first movement of the Tenth was orchestrated at his death).

Completed in 1908, *Das Lied von der Erde* is the first work of its kind, the first complete integration of song cycle and symphony, a form later imitated by other composers (notably Dmitri Shostakovich and Alexander von Zemlinsky). The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music refers to it as a "song-symphony". It is also regarded as one of Mahler's most personal works, a statement echoed in one of the composer's own letters.

The debut public performance was given on 20 November 1911 in the Tonhalle in Munich, with Bruno Walter conducting.

Notes from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Das_Lied_von_der_Erde

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