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Bruno Walter

conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 2

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In good time for next year's Mahler centenary comes a recording which is certain to make a strong appeal to all real Mahler enthusiasts, all the more since it is conducted by the composer's distinguished disciple, Bruno Walter, whose reading may be accepted as authentic and who clearly loves this music. The Second Symphony, provided by Mahler with a weighty "programme" about life and death, the Last Trump and the resurrection of the dead, and the assurance of a life hereafter ("Sterben werd' ich, um zu leben"), is nevertheless a work which takes a good deal of stomaching. Faced with concepts of such magnitude, Mahler becomes merely grandiloquent: the enormous apparatus he demands—a huge orchestra, with large reserves of extra brass and percussion, organ, chorus and soloists—ends by becoming unwieldy; the suspicion increases, as the symphony's vast length unfolds, that it would have been the better for more matter and less art; and it cannot be denied that at the very point where nobility of thought is needed, Mahler (like Strauss in a similar context) falls dangerously near bathos. For all that, beneath all the pomp there lie some characteristically striking and beautiful ideas, and when Mahler, for contrast, reverts to the vein of childhood innocence and naïveté—as in the Ländler movement - (based on one of the *Knaben Wunderborn* songs)—he is at his most charming. Indeed, there may be more of heaven here, as seen through the eyes of a child, than in all the alarums and excursions later...

It is Walter's interpretation, however, which is the real joy of this issue: not only is he more apocalyptic than Klemperer, but in the lyrical passages he brings far more grace to the music. The second subject of the opening movement, for example, has more Viennese charm, without, as in the previous recording, turning into mere goo at the recapitulation; the Ländler flows more easily (what lovely singing tone from the 'cellos, incidentally!); and the Scherzo, which before seemed unduly protracted, is taken at a better speed and is more pointed rhythmically. Though one should not forget the wonderfully steady singing of Hilde Rössl-Majdan in the earlier set, the soloists and chorus here are very good, and complete the attraction of this admirable issue.

L. S. The Gramophone, June 1959 - *excerpt, review of Philips LP issue*

Transfer notes

As with other issues in this series of Bruno Walter's Mahler recordings, Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering system has succeeded in delving deep into the original recording to reveal new depths and new heights. Where previously the brass sounded perhaps a little veiled, now they can be heard in all their blazing glory. Meanwhile the choir opens out wonderfully, making previous issues sound perhaps a little strangled by comparison. Finally the full rumbling majesty of the lowest organ stops can be felt as well as heard to marvellous effect. The Gramophone's reviewer talks about an "apocalyptic" performance - now we can hear it in sound to match that artistic vision. **A.R.**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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STEREO



Bruno Walter

conducts MAHLER

Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection"

New York Philharmonic Orchestra
Emilia Cundari • Maureen Forrester • Westminster Choir
Studio recording, 1957/58

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MAHLER SYMPHONY No. 2 'RESURRECTION'
WALTER, NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of
Bruno Walter

Additional photographs taken from the Hubble
Space Telescope and by Andrew Rose

Symphony No. 2

1st mvt. recorded 17 February 1958
2nd & 3rd mvts. recorded 21 February 1958
4th & 5th mvts. recorded 18 February 1957
Carnegie Hall, New York
First issued as Columbia M2L 256

Total duration: **79:40**

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Mahler Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection"

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro maestoso (21:37)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante moderato (10:37)
- 3 3rd mvt. - In ruhig fließender Bewegung (10:46)
- 4 4th mvt. - Urlicht - Sehr feierlich, aber schlicht (4:11)
- 5 5th mvt. pt. 1 - Im Tempo des Scherzos - Wild herausfahrend (13:28)
- 6 5th mvt. pt. 2 - Wieder zurueckhaltend - Langsam - Misterioso (19:01)

Emilia Cundari soprano

Maureen Forrester contralto

Westminster Choir

John Finlay Williamson chorus master

New York Philharmonic Orchestra **Bruno Walter**

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