SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1337

Gustav Mahler – Lieder – Early Recordings 1915-1949

Some composers find it necessary to express themselves through a variety of musical forms; others work almost exclusively in one; Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven are in the first category; Chopin, Wolf and Puccini in the second. Mahler composed for the human voice and for the symphony orchestra.

Quotation and self-quotation amongst composers is a happy hunting ground for music lovers and musicologists. Mahler, from the first, used self-quotation with such frequency as to lend his works a unifying aspect, perhaps unparalleled, of continuity and connectedness. Thus, the very first of the *Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit* has a theme in common with *Das klagende Lied*.

Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit was written in the period 1880 to 1890 and is thus, as the name implies, of the composer's early years. In the Summer of 1879 Mahler gave some piano lessons to two daughters of a postman at Iglau named Poisl: Josephine, born at Neusatz, Hungary the same year as Mahler, and Anna. A relationship, probably his first, developed between Josephine and Mahler, though she married a professor at Iglau named Julius Wallner, twenty years her senior. A set of five songs was started early in 1880 for Josephine, but only two were completed. Fourteen songs, which appeared in three volumes in 1892, followed. Of these 'Ich ging mit Lust' is the seventh, though the ninth overall. These songs were published with piano accompaniments, though it is very likely that an orchestra was intended, as Mahler began to score at least one of them.

Numbers 8 to 16 (overall numbering) are settings of texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, an anthology of German folk poetry with which Mahler was familiar from his earliest years, and which exerted a great fascination for him.

Piano accompaniments on early records were often arranged for orchestra as the more continuous sound to some extent masked surface noise. The unknown arranger of the first two pieces had a good grasp of Mahler's idiom.

Des Knaben Wunderhorn is also the title of a group of twelve poems from this anthology set by Mahler in the years 1892 to 1901. 'Urlicht' from 1892/1893 is sometimes included as a thirteenth. It reappears in the second symphony, but with revised orchestration. In each song a vivid drama in miniature is heard, the voice being used at once to convey the text and as an instrument of the orchestra. 'Der Tambourg'sell' calls to mind the setting of Kipling's 'Danny Deever' by Walter Damrosch, born Breslau 1862, though it is unlikely either knew of the other.

Kindertotenlieder, settings of five poems by Rückert, cannot be other than a pained memorial to various of the composer's siblings who died in childhood, and one cannot help wondering what the deeply superstitious Mahler thought when his elder daughter died three years after the work was finished. It is musically a world away from Schubert's 'Erlkönig', but in horror and sadness they are close. Both are for the male voice, but there are a number of fine versions by female singers.

Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit and Des Knaben Wunderhorn are collections of songs, but Kindertotenlieder is a song-cycle. The orchestral sound is well captured, and Rehkemper and Szell bring out every nuance. For many this first recording remains unsurpassed.

Lieder nach Rückert can be performed as a group of five songs of love, though their degree of coherence scarcely qualifies them as a cycle. For 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' Charles-Cahier's elderly voice is a perfect vehicle. 'Ich atmet einen linden Duft' has a strange affinity with the 'Le Rêve' from Massenet's *Manon*; Mahler perhaps quoting for once from another composer. In this English production from *The Columbia History of Music in Sound* the American Kullman sings in English, though as Kullmann in Austria he certainly had excellent German, and on the reverse Erica Storm's Schoenberg is in German.

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen is from the years 1883 to 1885, thus written mid-way through Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit. The words, by Mahler himself, though they might well be from Des Knaben Wunderhorn, reflect an unhappy relationship, and melodies recur in the first symphony. Again, the texts suggest a male performer, though versions by women have been excellent.

As one performing style follow another, followers of each believe theirs to be the final truth. Some know how Haydn's symphonies were performed by Haydn, others know better than composers how to conduct their works, one claimed to know direct from Beethoven how his works should be heard.

Sound recording goes back to around 1900; around 1850 if we believe that artists nearing the ends of their careers in 1900 had not changed their views. Through recordings of Mahler's Lieder from the first half of the 20th century this album offers a glimpse of performing practice in the life-time of Mahler and immediately after.

GRETE STÜCKGOLD [London 1895-Falls Village, Connecticut 1977] was of German-English parentage. She was educated in England, but moved to Munich in 1913 to study with Jacques Stückgold, whom she later married. She was initially an oratorio and concert singer, but in 1917 appeared on the stage at Nuremberg thus starting a parallel stage career. In 1922 she moved to Berlin, appearing also in Dresden and Leipzig. In the late 1920s she sang in Barcelona and London. Work took her increasingly to North America and she eventually settled in New York.

EMMY LEISNER [Flensburg 1885-Flensburg 1958] made her début aged 16 standing in for an artist who was ill. She then studied in Berlin for a career as an oratorio and Lieder singer, and in 1911 her first recitals were highly acclaimed. In 1912 she was persuaded to sing in opera and was successful here too, especially in roles such as Amneris, Azucena and Dalila. Her opera career was almost entirely in Berlin, but she was Erda at Bayreuth in 1925. However, she travelled widely giving concerts, and appeared even until 1951.

OSCAR FRIED [Berlin 1871-Moscow 1941] had to leave Gymnasium early to earn a living, which he did as a dog breeder and by playing horn and violin in a municipal band. In 1889 he moved to Frankfurt as a horn player in the opera house. He was able to study composition there with Humperdinck, for whom he prepared a piano score of *Hänsel und Gretel*, and with Philipp Scharwenka, brother of the pianist, in Berlin. He also played at Bayreuth. He composed Lieder including three large-scale orchestral Lieder; one of which was performed by Karl Muck in 1905. In 1904 he began to conduct, his repertoire being mainly of contemporary composers including Delius, Sibelius, Strauss and Stravinsky. He was befriended by Mahler, many of whose works he conducted with Mahler's approval. In 1934 he left Germany for Russia, conducting at Tbilisi. He married a Russian and became a Russian citizen in 1941. His recording of Mahler's second symphony on twenty-two 78rpm sides in c.1924 is now very hard to find, for the work was scarcely popular and with the advent of electric recording in 1925 it was soon deleted.

HEINRICH REHKEMPER [Schwerte, Westphalia 1894-Munich 1949] was a skilled fitter, but left to study singing in Hagen, Düsseldorf and Munich. In 1919 he was engaged at Coburg, in 1921 he moved to Stuttgart and in 1925 to Munich. Here he earned enormous popularity as Don Giovanni, Figaro, Papageno, Amfortas and Wolfram. His career as a Lieder singer began in 1924 and matched in importance the operatic side. From 1940 to 1945 he also taught at Salzburg.

GEORGE SZELL [Budapest 1897-Cleveland, Ohio 1970] studied in Vienna. His teachers included Reger for composition. His début in 1911 was as a pianist in a concert of his own compositions. His first conducting appointment was with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in 1913. He became assistant conductor to Richard Strauss in Berlin in 1915 and moved on to various other appointments, including a professorship at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin from 1927 to 1930. 1929 to 1937 he was in charge of concerts and opera in Prague. After two years with the Scottish Orchestra he moved to North America. From 1946 he was with the Cleveland Orchestra, raising it through strict discipline to an international level of ensemble and balance of tone. His sharp remarks did not generate affection; to the comment, "He is his own worst enemy." came the reply from Rudolf Bing of the Metropolitan Opera, "Not while I'm alive."

SARAH JANE CHARLES-CAHIER née Walker [Nashville, Tennessee 1870-near Los Angeles 1971] was the daughter of an American general. She studied first in Indianapolis and then in Paris with Jean de Reszke and Victor Capoul, and in Berlin with Amalie Joachim. Her début was as Orpheus at Nice in 1904. In 1906 she was engaged by Mahler for Vienna. She sang in many European centres of music in opera, concert and oratorio, and was very successful in America. She retired from opera in 1927 and taught. Her pupils included Marian Anderson, Rosette Anday and Göta Ljunberg, and she advised Lauritz Melchior to move from baritone to tenor. She sang in the premier of *Das Lied von der Erde* under Bruno

Walter at Munich in 1911 and in the Mahler Festival organised by Willem Mengelberg in Amsterdam in 1920.

HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS [Braubach am Rhein 1888-Frankfurt am Main 1952] had his first lessons whilst employed as a postman and gave a concert in Frankfurt in 1912. In August 1914, the very first month of the war, he was injured in Belgium and decided to be an opera singer. From his début as the herald in *Lohengrin* in 1915 until he retired in 1951 he had an immensely successful career in opera and as a concert and Lieder singer.

CHARLES KULLMAN(N) [Newhaven, Connecticut 1903-Newhaven 1983] came from a family of German extraction. He sang in a church choir as a child and in a glee club whilst a student at Yale. Winning a singing contest led him to study singing at the Juillard School. He appeared as a baritone, but further studies at Fontainbleu confirmed him as a tenor. After a concert début in Berlin in 1928 he sang for two years with a touring opera company in America. In 1931 he returned to Berlin, appearing at the Kroll Oper and the Staatsoper. He sang in the premières of *Das Unaufhörliche* [Hindemith] and *Das Herz* [Pfitzner]. He sang also in Vienna, Salzburg and Covent Garden. He was at the Metropolitan Opera from 1935 until he retired in 1962.

KARIN BRANZELL [Stockholm 1891-Altadena/Los Angeles 1974] studied with Thelma Hofer in Stockholm whilst working as an organist, then in Berlin with Mantler and Bachner, and in New York with Rosati. In 1912 she returned to Stockholm for her début as Prinz Sarvilaka in *Izeyl* (D'Albert). In 1918 she moved to the Staatsoper, Berlin where she remained until 1933, appearing in the premières of *Palestrina* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In 1930 and 1931 she sang Fricka and Waltraute at Bayreuth and from 1935 to 1939 she took part in the Munich Festival. She sang in many seasons at the Metropolitan Opera from 1924 until she retired in 1951. Her roles there included Amneris, Dalila, Fricka and Herodias [Strauss].

EUGENIA ZARESKA [Lemberg/Lwów 1910-Paris 1979] studied in Lwów with Adamo Didur and in Vienna with Anna Bahr-Mildenburg. The year after her début in 1939 she moved to Milan where she studied further and appeared at La Scala in 1941 and in Rome in 1942. After the war she appeared frequently in Paris and Glyndebourne [1948]; London [Cambridge Theatre, 1948/53; Covent Garden, 1957/58]. Her roles included Carmen, Dorabella [Cosi fan Tutte], Gräfin Geschwitz [Lulu], Marina [Boris Godunov] and Rosina. As a Lieder singer she was celebrated in many countries.

EDUARD van BEINUM [Arnhem 1901-Amsterdam 1959] studied composition, piano and viola, but became a conductor at Arnhem in 1927. In 1931 he became second conductor to Willem Mengelberg at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and later assistant conductor. He conducted in Leningrad in 1937. On Mengelberg's summary dismissal in 1945 he became principal conductor and rapidly acquired

international renown. He was in London in 1946 to deputise for Albert Coates and he was principal conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra from 1949 to 1951. From 1956 he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. He championed modern Dutch composers and he was encouraged by Malcolm Arnold and Benjamin Britten. His early death was a great loss to music.

Tracks 1 to 8 and 10 to 14 are believed to be first recordings.

Acknowledgements: Symposium Records thanks John Hughes for track 14, and Paul Lewis and Adrian Tuddenham for assistance with the production.

Cover design by Malcolm McLean.

Copyright Notice: This digitally transferred compilation with its notes is copyright, it may not be broadcast, copied, hired out, publicly performed or stored in a retrieval system without written permission.