

**A collection of Stan Ruttenberg's Reviews of  
Mahler Recordings from the Archives  
Of the Colorado MahlerFest  
(Symphonies 3 through 7 and Kindertotenlieder)**

Colorado MahlerFest XIII  
Recordings of the Mahler Third Symphony

Of the fifty recordings listed in Peter Fülöp's monumental discography (up to 1955, and many more have been added since then), I review here fifteen at my disposal, leaving out two by Boulez and one by Scherchen as not as worthy as the others. All of these fifteen are recommendable, all with fine points, all with some or more weaknesses. I cannot rank them in any numerical order, but I can say that there are four which I would rather hear more than the others — my desert island choices. I am glad to have the others for their own particular merits.

Getting ready for MFest XIII we discovered that the matter of score versions and parts is complex. I use the Dover score, no date but attributed to Universal Edition; my guess this is an early version. The Kalmus edition is copied from who knows which published version. Then there is the "Critical Edition," prepared by the Mahler Gesellschaft, Vienna. I can find two major discrepancies between the Dover/Universal and the Critical (I) the lack of horns at RN25-5, doubling the string riff and (ii) only two harp glissandi at the middle of RN28, whereas the Critical has three. Our first horn found another. Both the Dover and Critical have the horn doublings, written *ff* at RN 67, but only a few conductors observe them. My inexpert ears tell me that only Abravanel used the Critical edition and the parts that go with it. I find it odd that Adler, who worked under Mahler, Horenstein who is usually so careful, Haitink who has access to many editions in Amsterdam, and other conductors didn't make the effort to do better with the score and parts they used. For the MahlerFest, maestro Olson is doing his best to reconcile our score and parts with the Critical, where feasible.

Also, an important caveat, sometimes it is the recording engineer who is responsible for instruments not being heard, or being highlighted. Don't blame the conductor for everything!

#### DESERT ISLAND CHOICES

Jascha Horenstein, London Sym. Orch. Norma Procter, contralto, boys choir; UNICORN-KANCHANA 2006/7, LP 1970, CD 1988. The Master of Mahler here works magic. The recording does justice to the fine LSO and the reading. I characterize this as noble, not over-powered but certainly not wimpy; jaunty where needed; sensitive. I. Horn opening is good, maybe a little brisk. Very good pick-up of timps and bass drum; low brass excellent. First trombone solo well judged, not too expressive – GM didn't indicate any expression here -- yet far from flat. The march segments are rollicking, jaunty, even a little swaggering. The riff-raff section starting at about RN 55 well judged, a little faster but in perfect control. The tattoo on the side drum fades out well, bringing on the reprise, which is strong again. Second trombone solo very expressive, as GM marked. Here, after the trumpet cadences and entry of the horns, the upward riff in the strings is doubled in the horns. Horenstein, Barbirolli, and Abravanel are the only ones in my collection where this riff is heard *ff*, as GM wrote! It is either absent or too quiet on the others. The coda is magical – slight acceleration but in control and very powerful. All the voices are heard instead of a mush. II. JH treats this with gentleness, it breathes -- a lovely invocation of nature and fields. The section of increased beats is not too fast so that there is no abrupt putting on of brakes when it is over. The ruthe makes one think of the deadly Venus Fly Trap! III. Lovely winds evoking songs of birds.

Second section strong but not too much, with a fine extended horn trill. The lead in to the posthorn solos is well judged, and the posthorn, mimicked by the flügelhorn, has a rich, non-trumpet sound. The coda to the movement is perfectly judged, big tam-tam, good trombone, and one hears the tambourine beneath all of that. IV. Norma Procter is a fine musician, perhaps a little over her peak here, with wobble on sustained notes. JH disregards GM's markings for the oboe, as two-note upward bird call, GM writes "like a sound of nature." The notes are connected with a slur line, but NOT a portamento line. It may be hard for an oboe to play legato but that seems to be what GM wanted. Here the second note of the series is accented, or seems so, and one clearly hears the key being fingered. Oh well, even the Gods may have a little pinkie of clay! V. The Bimm Bamms are fine, and the boys choir well trained and strong. They articulate well. The women's chorus is fine and Procter seems better suited to the music, with fewer sustained notes. VI. Starts very quietly, but controlled, not at all hesitant. JH almost never lets the music get ahead of him, he knows how to build tension and feeling, as GM knew how to write it. The strings are sweet, as are the horn solos. The solo violin is very fine. The first climax is good, building well but with finely judged diminuendos and a little rubato. Then the fine brass and the cymbal clash lead to strong timps and horns (stuffed at the end). A quiet trumpet at about 19:28 brings in the main theme, leading to a tutti at 20:30, trombones at 20:39, a good diminuendo at 21:11, leading to the strong timps at 21:47 onwards to the coda, with timps, perhaps a little too powerful and loud. GM wrote here *f* for the timps, not striving for a Shostakovitch effect. But it must be difficult to be restrained in such a powerful sweep to the ending chord. ALL IN ALL, A MODEL PERFORMANCE, POWERFUL BUT TENDER, NEVER OVERDONE. THIS IS ECHT MAHLER! Some commentators complain of poor playing; I cannot hear any. I am thankful for tin ears!

Takesi Asahina, Osaka Philharmonic O. Kazuko Nagai, contralto; Canyon PCCL: 00344, 1995. This is a remarkable performance — powerful, aggressive, very Mahlerian. Asahina was 85 at this time, having founded this orchestra in 1945, and is still conducting, and thus bettering Mengelberg's longevity with the ACO. I. Strong opening with great cymbal & low brass, but trombone slide only so-so. Trombone solo very fine, march very spirited. No horns at RN25-5. Second trombone solo very expressive but uses too much vibrato. Third trombone solo better in this respect. Horns are there at RN 67 but not *ff*. Great coda, observes marking *sehr drägend* (pushed not necessarily fast) but in good control. II. Tempo maybe a little slow for GM's menuetto *gracioso*. Fine phrasing and rhythm. III. Nice winds, forceful aggressive performance. PH/trumpet good but not in distance. Very fine climax with great trombones. IV. Contralto too much vibrato; mezzo voice and not very Mahlerian, too emphatic at points. Weakness of this performance. V. Wonderful! Exuberant, clean. VI. Well judged, deep feeling, so much that TA sings. Great buildup to coda, with fine tempo but timpani too loud.

John Barbirolli, Hallé Orchestra, Kerstin Meyer, contralto, BBC Legends, 40004-7. Recorded in May 1969 for a BBC broadcast, thus not fussed over to correct many orchestral glitches. I. Opens with good horns; trombone portamento at 4:30 good (many conductors gloss over this marking); good percussion and solo trumpet (but some brass players complain here of sloppy playing). At 7:15 fine trombone solo, rich and full, with some edge to the sound. The wind and string march in jauntily; slight problem with trumpets; good string up riff, NO HORNS. At start of Track 4, tambourine is clear, often not heard; the "Mob" is well judged, powerful and not rushed, ending on good tattoo on side drum, fading out to distance. Track 5 begins reprise, very jaunty march at Track 6, At 6:01 HORNS double string riff. Only a few conductors do that! II is, lyrical but not light. JH doubles the beats but keeps the same tempo going, as Mahler directed. III. Good tempo, strong but not heavy phrasing. At 4:11 great climax with brass. Track 9 JH uses a trumpet instead of the *flügelhorn* and it is too loud, too close. Climaxes and coda to this movement are particularly fine. IV. Contralto OK but has quite a wobble. Oboe and English horn bird calls seem just what Mahler wanted. JB sings too much here. V. Boys are excellent, clear accents and exuberant. Chorus is good and pace is sprightly. Contralto OK but wobbles. VI. Slightly faster than average, but well judged, emotional but not sloppily sentimental. Climaxes well judged, but at coda JB

does speed up a touch. Despite some sloppy orchestra playing, this is a very well judged performance, and a delight to hear JB's sensitive approach.

Bernard Haitink, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, in boxed set, Phillips, Maureen Forester, 1966; also boxed special set of Kerstmatinees (Christmas matinees) from Phillips, Dutch Masters, this 3rd with Carolyn Watkinson, recorded 25 December 1983. While the studio recording (1966) is good, perhaps one of BH's better endeavors in the integral set, the Kerstmatinee performance is far superior, livelier, more powerful, even better recorded. Comments here mainly apply to the 1983 version. The opening is powerful with strong chords and low brass, good trombone slides, first trombone solo very good. No horns at RN25-5. Second trombone solo very good, no vibrato as opposed to 1966 version. Fine growling tuba! Riff raff section clean exciting, not rushed. Third trombone solo good, no horn riffs at RN67. The coda is just a little too fast. II. Very fine, with lovely winds beautiful strings. III. Very good, PH/trumpet good. IV. Ms. Watkinson seems better than Ms. Forester in the 1966 version, who is rather thick. Bird calls good but not legato/slurred as marked. V. Boys and bells fine, as is chorus. VI. Well phrased opening, rich clean strings. BH is more involved here than in 1966, good feeling but not drippy sentimental (as is LB). Big climax handled well with fine pacing, but timpani in coda too loud.

ALSO VERY GOOD (in alphabetical order)

F. Charles Adler, Vienna Symphony O. Hilde Rössl-Majdan, Conifer 75606 1279, 1951 (the first commercial recording). Original recording on SPA financed by Adler and a friend. Adler's reading, as the only M3 conductor who knew Mahler and worked under him (rehearsals of choruses for No. 8, Munich), has some historical interest. Adler, however, probably never attended a performance of the Third under Mahler. The recording shows its age, and the CD was made from a copy tape, the original having perished in a fire; it is slightly congested. I is one of the slowest, yet does not seem draggy, as Adler knows how to phrase and accent the music well. Opening horn chorus is strong but following chords are not – wimpy engineering?? The trombone has no portamento where Mahler marks it. First trombone solo good, played as Mahler marked. The march is measured but with a jaunty feeling. Later, the march is even more deliberate, where Mahler cautions: "don't hurry." The riff raff section is good but the recording lets down the inherent strength of the performance; At RN67 there are no horns, which are there even in the Dover. The coda picks up a little momentum, powerful and well controlled. II Average tempo, played cleanly. Follows GM's tempo markings well, e.g., does not speed p when meter doubles. III. Perhaps a little stodgy. PH/Trumpet well played but certainly "not in the distance." IV. Contralto very good, oboe bird calls seem just right. V. Good but not as sprightly and joyous as should be. VI. Noble, very slow. Builds up to a fine coda that seems just right. Worth listening to not only because of historical interest.

Maurice Abravanel, Utah S. O., Christina Krooks, Vanguard Classics, 4005/6, 1969, one of MA's best. Recorded in the Tabernacle, so much reverb yet sound is rich but also clear. I. Broad opening, but with less 'snap' than most others. Uses horns at RN25-5, observes the three harp glissandi in the Critical edition, and the *ff* horns at RN 67. Marches have nice accents. Trombone solos very good, maybe a little too smooth — could have used a little more edge to the tone. The big march riff raff section very measured but very effective, wonderful flutes & piccolos. March in reprise almost spooky, and goes into coda well, observes some acceleration but not too much, maintains good detail. II. A little too slow, not menuetto. MA holds tempo well when meter doubles, as GM asks. III. Good tempo and rhythm, PH/trumpet very good, as if in distance. Fine horn riffs. Second climax big with horns and trumpets. Coda has fine brass. IV. Contralto ok, a little vibrato. Oboe bird calls good. V. Boys and bells good, contralto OK at start, gets better. Fine trombone solo. VI. Fine opening, good phrasing, good string intensity, fine horn. Climax good, very good broad buildup to fine coda, with perfect timpani and amazing organ-like brass. BEST BUY if found as stand-alone set.

Leonard Bernstein, New York Phil, Christa Ludwig, contralto; DGG 427328-2. 1986. Many Mahlerites consider this to be one of the top ranking. Well, for me, yes and no. Its strengths are that the orchestra plays well, Bernstein has a good grasp of the structure (except when he is being Bernstein), and doesn't indulge in too many of his willful exaggerations. On the other hand, the recording lacks clarity — much of the quiet percussion — tambourine, triangle, etc.— are nearly inaudible, and sound is at times harsh. Bernstein's first recording, also with the NYPO, Martha Lipton, contralto, has the same faults but is even somewhat dimmer in sound, and is somewhat less convincing. I. The horn opening is impressive, as it must be. The slow introduction of timpani, bass drum, etc. is very effective. The long trombone solo is well played and, as Mahler indicated, nearly straight. In the reprise, Mahler provides many expression markings for the trombone and they are carried out well. The tone is solid and rich. The build up to the coda is good but LB speeds up too much for my taste. II This is lively, perhaps a little too much in the faster sections where the metric doubles but Mahler writes, keep the same tempo! LB cannot do this. III. Nicely played, with fine winds doing bird calls. Trumpet does fine posthorn solo, moving gradually closer. IV. Christa Ludwig is her usual splendid self. Accompaniment excellent, oboe and English horn bird calls fine, not exaggerated. V. Children and women's chorus fine. Ludwig again is perfect. She understands this music. VI. This is where LB shines, if one likes his heart on sleeve approach. — emotional, lots of feeling, glowing brass. LB makes a meal of this but goes too far for my taste. LB's first recording is some 3 minutes faster and to me less satisfactory.

Kirill Kondrashin, Moscow Phil, Valentina Leuko, contralto, LYS 521-526 1961. This is a special box of Symphonies 1,3,4,5 and 9, at special price of \$12 (plus shipping, another \$12). I. Opening good, the following chords sound a little congested. Good bassoons and wonderful double bases and low brass. Some surprising details. Kondrashin's trombones make the most of their portamentos. First trombone solo, a little too "Russian," (vibrato). At RN25-5 the horns may be there but if so are in the background. The riff raff section is exciting, big battery, piccolo, side drum. Second trombone solo has too much vibrato where GM asks for "expressive." Coda good. II. Well played, not rushed. Some lovely string details. III. Slightly brisk, good horns. Posthorn/trumpet too loud, followed by a section that seems too frantic. IV. Contralto is very good, dark but not mushy voice, singing in Russian. Oboe/English horn bird calls right on. V. Boys sing Bimm Bamm, German, but rest in Russian. Good bells, chorus very good. Well done. VI. Fine phrasing, richly sonorous, the final coda is very good.

Raphael Kubelik, Bavarian radio S. O., Majorie Thomas, DGG Box Set, 429 042-2, 1967. The opening is a little brisk, but good. Too much vibrato in first trombone solo, also second. Kubelik has horns at RN25-5, but not at RN67. Riff raff scene good with great tuba, works well. Third trombone solo has less vibrato. Strong timpani at coda, good trumpet, but maybe too fast. II. Rather measured opening, not *gracioso*, but nice phrasing and pastoral feeling, good coda. III. PH/trumpet good, played as if in distance, lovely coda. IV. Bird calls good, contralto pretty good. V. good, comes off well, nothing remarkable. VI. Well phrased, warm but not sentimental, good climax. Build-up to coda well paced, correct dynamics at end. BEST BUY if found as stand-alone set.

James Levine, Chicago S.O., Marilyn Horn, RCA RCD2-1757 (look for in cut-out bins), 1976 with excellent notes by Jack Diether who explains Mahler's changes of mind of trumpet, cornet and *flügelhorn*. I opens well with good horns and big chords, but not enough "punch." The recording seems a little distant but with some surprises, e.g. at 5:56 a wonderful contrabassoon grunting away. The first trombone solo is rich and full and has typical Chicago brass edge, almost raucous. I love it. The march is jaunty leading to the trumpet figures, which seem recessed. The string riff (no horns) could be stronger. Fine tuba playing starting at 20:25, At 29:43 the string riff is doubled with horns. The coda is good, not rushed. II. Great oboe opening (Ray Still?). JL holds tempo well when beats are doubled. III. Posthorn properly in distance, but played by trumpet with a hat for mute, and from the balcony, as explained by Diether. Coda fine, well judged, not rushed. IV. Ms. Horne is just OK, I never was a fan. Oboe, English

horn bird calls OK, not as legato as could be (see Solti version below). V. Children very accented and clean, and chorus fine. Again, Ms. Horne just OK. VI. Levine is rather slower than most and does seem draggy. JL must have had good time as he grunts audibly at 16:00. At 25:00 timpani come in with rich tone that Mahler stipulated, and at correct *f* dynamic. Levine's coda is one of the best, just as GM wrote it.

Giuseppe Sinopoli, Philharmonia Orchestra. Hanna Schwartz, DGG 447-051-2 1944 (hard to find). Opening is rather brisk with some good details in tam tam & low brass. Trombone slide so-so. First trombone solo good, big tone, well controlled. March Ok but jaunty. No horns at RN25-5. Second trombone solo expressive, as marked. The riff raff section is more disciplined at first rather than unruly but then does get a bit raucous later. Third trombone solo very good, very expressive, fine bottom notes. GS does allow himself a little too much retard just before last march and then takes the coda too fast, II. A little too slow, but with nice phrasing. III PH/trumpet plays loud, in distance, what GM wanted. Rest of movement OK. IV. Hanna Schwartz is excellent. Is she a granddaughter of the Gustav Schwartz who colluded with Mahler to persuade Bernard to send young Gustav to conservatory in Vienna? De la Grange remarks that Gustav Schwartz's daughter was an opera singer. I wrote to Hanna (whom I admire very much as Fricka and Brangäne) and her reply showed that she misunderstood my question. Worth following up?? V. Good, nothing special to remark on. VI. Also good, nice feeling and phrasing, good climaxes, good coda with fine brass and rich timpani.

George Solti, Chicago Symphony, Helge Dernesch, London Box Set, 1982 (1968 with LSO, a little slower in all). I. All in all, pretty good, fine brass but trombone solos maybe too much vibrato. Riff Raff good but not outstanding. Coda maybe too fast with lack of detail. II. Pretty good, nice atmosphere. III. Brisk, good PH/trumpet but not in distance. Good coda. IV. Dernesch is excellent! Fine horns. Very good oboe (Ray Still?) who knows how to play slurred/legato, without squawking as in Rattle, nor almost détaché as in most others. Excellent solo violin — best played in any of these sets. V. Boys good, very clear, good accents, bells OK. Chorus very good — the CSO has always been outstanding.. Dernesch is very fine. VI. Fine opening tempo and phrasing, seems slower than it really is; Levine's later recording is drawn out six minutes longer. Ray Still's oboe is outstanding. I would say that the tenderness and laid-back approach in the middle section is not typical Solti — good for him to be so sensitive. First climax is Soltian. Second climax & build-up to coda very good. Coda is a little accelerated, but timpani are right dynamics.

Klaus Tennstedt, London Philharmonic, Ortrud Wenkel, EMI Classics, box set, CMS 7644712, 1979, one of KT's best, for my taste. I. Good opening, very fine lower strings. Trombone slide OK. March very good, followed by fine first trombone solo, lots of edge to tone. No horns at RN25-5, neither at RN67. Second trombone solo little too much vibrato. Riff raff march not as impressive as most others. Third trombone solo also too much vibrato but ends on fine double bass note. Final march very good, coda good and not too fast. II. Good, but lets tempo increase at meter change, but not as much as Bernstein. Some nice playing and phrasing but not as GM marked, very moderate. III. Nice tempo, good phrasing, PH sound sounds like a flügelhorn, nice rich tone, in distance. Fine piano bass drum! Good climax with fine horns and good coda. IV. Wenkel is an outstanding contralto, one of the best, rich voice, a fine upper register, maybe a touch of vibrato. IV. Very good boys/chorus and bells. VI. Good tempo, moves along but with feeling & intensity. First climax good, second very good, and fine coda with rich tone to the timpani, not too loud.

Some afterthoughts. The new Simon Rattle is well recorded. My pianist friend says that it is well voiced, that is, Rattle knows how to make the melodic line clear. But, I find his incessant tempo changes annoying. His oboe/English horn in IV sounds like a peacock having its neck wrung! Horrible! The 1987 Michael-Tilson Thomas with the LSO is good, but his newer essays for San Francisco are far superior. If you like MTT, then wait till a new performance is released.

Klemperer and Bruno Walter almost never played the Third, surprising for Walter considering his own personal experience with this work when he visited Mahler at Steinbach am Attersee.

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## Recordings of Mahler Symphony No. 4

by Stan Ruttenberg, President, Colorado MahlerFest

### SUMMARY

After listening to each recording once or twice to get the general feel, on bike rides, car trips, while on the Internet etc, I then listened more carefully, with good headphones, following the score. They are listed in the survey in about the order in which I listened, and found to my delight, and disgust, that as I went on I noticed more and more details to which attention should be paid. Lack of time and adequate gray matter prevented me from going back and re-listening all over again, except for the Mengelberg and Horenstein recordings, and I did find a few points to change or add. I found that JH is the ONLY conductor to have the piccolos play out adequately in the second movement, and Claudio Abbado with the Vienna PO is the only conductor who insisted on the two horn portamenti in the third movement..

**Stan's prime picks:** Horenstein, Levine, Reiner, Szell, Skrowaczewski, von Karajan, Abravanel, in that order, but the rankings are very close. Also very good are Welser-Most, and Klemperer with Radio Orchestra Berlin, and Bertini at Cologne. Not one conductor met all my tests of faithfulness to the score in all the too many felicities therein, but these did the best and at the same time produced a fine overall performance. Mengelberg, in a class by himself, should be heard for reference.

**Stan's soloist picks:** Max Cencic (boy soprano with Nanut), in a class by himself. Then come, not in order, Davrath (Abravanel), Mathes (von Karajan), Trötschel (Klemperer BRSO), Raskin (Szell), Blegen (Levine), Della Casa (Reiner), Irmgard Seefried (Walter), Jo Vincent (Mengelberg), Ameling (Haitink RCOA), Ruth Zeisek (Gatti), Margaret Price with Horenstein, and Kiri Te Kanawa (Solti), Szell (Rattle broadcast), and Battle (Maazel). The only ones I really did not like are Bonney with Chailly or Ameling with Tennstedt. All the others are OK.

Mahler's Fourth has been recorded in full at least 85 times, with playing times ranging from 49 to 65 minutes. The opening tempo (or is it the Haupt tempo at measure4?) is indicated as "deliberate, don't hurry." There is a wide divergence of opinion as to just what this tempo should be. Mengelberg insists that Mahler told him M=69. Yet in his 1939 recording he opens at M=84. Bruno Walter, in his NYPO recording, 1953 on M&A, opens at M=69-72, close to what Mengelberg claimed Mahler wanted. Jascha Horenstein opens at 84-88, Benjamin Britten at 92, and Pierre Boulez (Cleveland) opens at 104, on of the fastest. All of these are the opening bars, not the Haupt tempo.

Mahler marked many changes of tempo, slight pauses (caesura), and string portamenti (slides). In the first movement, he marks two descending string passages as follows: the first one, at RN 5-1 or 3:15 (Szell), is "somewhat hurriedly," and the second one, RN 22 - 1 or 13:57 (Szell), ("hurriedly," with the upper strings dotted after the opening two notes (slurred). Some conductors totally ignore these instructions; others (e.g., Tennstedt, and a broadcast by Rattle with the BPO) speed up as fast as they can. In the second movement, a trumpet cadence is marked "blaring," but few conductors allow that; here Tennstedt and Van Beinum are best. Also in the second movement, only Horenstein allows the piccolo to play out at RN 12

+ 11, or about 8:30, but then in his recording a page later in the score the piccolos marked loud are hardly heard.

A few conductors observe nearly all of Mahler's markings, and some ignore most of them. My own favorites are those in which most of Mahler's intentions are observed. However, I have yet to hear a performance that does not have some redeeming features - the music is so sunny (for the most part), bright and optimistic that it does not need over-emphasis nor dramatizing, simply good taste and a feeling of geniality.

There are three recordings using a boy soprano. To me, the least successful is Bernstein (the boy struggles), the most successful is Anton Nanut, on various cheap labels such as Stradivari, Laserlight(?). The recording of the chamber version, also using a boy soprano, is well played and sung and interesting, but for me fails to capture the work adequately.

Mahler's sense of humor shows in the fourth movement, where the cattle "moo" seemingly contentedly as St. Lucas prepares to slaughter them for the table. Mahler's intentions, judged by his dynamic markings of pp and p, were to have the cattle "moo" in the background. Benjamin Britten brings out this passage more than any other conductor, but it is to be heard in all.

## HISTORICAL

I begin this survey with Mengelberg's November 1939 performance, recorded from a broadcast, released by Phillips (previously on LP and also in re-processed form on several other CD labels, e.g., Iron Needle). Of all conductors who left recorded legacies, Mengelberg was closest to Mahler (i.e., with him in rehearsals and discussions) with respect to the symphonies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7. Bruno Walter was next closest to Mahler, e. g., during the Hamburg performance of Symphony No. 1 and possibly during work and first performances of Symphony No. 2, and Mahler discussed the scores of the Third and Das Lied with Walter; otherwise Walter worked with Mahler mainly in opera. Oscar Fried worked with Mahler only on the Second, Otto Klemperer worked with Mahler on the Second and Eighth, and F. Charles Adler worked with Mahler only on the Eighth. Felix Weingartner was advised by Mahler on some symphonies (3 and 4) but he never recorded Mahler.

Mengelberg was with Mahler in Amsterdam during the rehearsals and performance of the première of the Fourth in Holland, took copious notes on his own score, and they discussed the score in detail. In the excellent new book, *The Mahler Companion*, edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, Eveline Nikkels notes in her article, *Mahler and Holland*, that on the flyleaves of Mengelberg's scores of the Fourth and Fifth are Mengelberg's words, often repeated and underlined "This was told to me by Mahler, Those were Mahler's very own words." Mengelberg himself was also the source of what is now the famous Mahler misquote, "The Best of music is not to be found in the notes." What Mengelberg actually wrote, in describing Mahler's rehearsals, was "Die Wichtigste steht nicht im dem noten", that is, "That which is the most important is not in the notes."

Mengelberg himself, in the more than 450 concerts in which he programmed a Mahler work, conducted the Fourth more than any other Mahler work, at least 150 times and perhaps even 250 times. Thus, we have to take Mengelberg's comments and his performance seriously.

With this background in mind, I looked at the score (Dover, taken from Universal Edition 1906). First of all, in the first movement alone, I counted (probably undercounted) in the score at least 35 tempo changes, at least 23 portamenti for the strings and 11 caesuri (slight pauses). I could follow much of what Mengelberg did. In my view, Mengelberg in his recording, many years after his personal connection with Mahler, is more faithful to these markings than not. He does overdo them and, of course, he does indulge in his own liberties, e.g., he takes a few unmarked ritards, and even a few unmarked portamenti. He observes the *col legno* (hitting the string with the wood of the bow) more than most others. Mahler marked *am steig*, or *sul ponticello* (played near to the bridge of the strings) a few times but I do not hear this on any recording thus far.

In my view, the sound on the Phillips (mono) is quite acceptable, but perhaps some of the later re-issues are even better. One hears clearly the high precision of the old Concertgebouw, the beautiful strings and woodwinds, biting trumpets, excellent horns. The harp shines, but the tam-tams are mostly missing. This is likely to be the fault of the recording engineer, not Mengelberg. In view of Mengelberg's close association with Mahler and especially the Fourth, this is the baseline version in my view. However, I also admit that it would not be my "desert island choice." The listener might not like what is heard, but it is possibly the closest record that we have of what the Amsterdam audiences heard on 23 October 1904, when they heard it twice under Mahler's baton.

**Willem Mengelberg, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Jo Vincent, soprano, 1939**  
**Phillips Historical Classics, 416 211-2**

*First Movement* - Right in the opening, measure 3, Mahler makes an unusual demand - he wants the clarinets and violins 1 to slow down a little against the steady tempo of the sleigh bells and flutes. Not many conductors attempt this trick. Mengelberg does not and bags it by slowing down everybody! WM also inserts several unmarked portamenti. At measure 13, the oboe seems to be entirely missing or is a victim of the miking, but the clarinets are heard. The horns are too recessed, at RN 2 + 3, marked *f* and *zu* 2. At about 2:20 in (RN 3 + 11 measures), the strings are marked with a slur mark, except for two notes marked with a horizontal bar over them, meaning *tenuto* (given full note value), all within a phrase marked *molto espressivo* (very expressive). Mengelberg plays it to the hilt but then ignores the caesura at the end of the phrase. He does take very well the caesura at RN 4. WM observes the marking *etwas eilend* somewhat well, just before RN 5. Ten measures later Mahler wants *poco rit.* But WM slows to a snail's pace, typical of his treatment. At about 5:50 (RN 8 - 3) Mahler marks *riten.*, or a gradual retard. Mengelberg makes the most of this and it sounds quite impressive, albeit rather exaggerated. At 6:40 or so (RN 9 +8, there is a delicious horn slur. At about 8:00, RN 12, the clarinets play their quadruplets, the fourth one being marked *staccato*, as no one else does. At one measure before RN 13, about 8:19, the contrabassoon growls menacingly. At about 9 minutes (RN 14 +3 and also +9) the wood of the bow is heard clearly on the strings for Mahler's *col legno*. The trumpets are very pronounced and accented in their famous passage starting at about 10:06, RN 16 + 4, and horns are heard very clearly, not always the case, at 10:42, RN 17 + 9. He observes the *luftpause* at RN 18 very well. The string passage at 13:58 or so is taken as Mahler marked, *eilend* but not overdone. Mengelberg takes Mahler's *allegro* seriously to end the movement, after a carefully judged slowing down starting at RN 24, and a *rit* 10 measures later. All in all, albeit much exaggerated in spots, a sensitive and poetic reading, but not everyone's dish of tea.



*Second Movement* - The horn opens well, and does his hairpin dynamic perfectly on the 5th and 11th notes. The scordatura violin (tuned one tone high and marked "to stand out strongly") could be more prominent, but it is well played. The horn is again quite good at RN 3, "blaring" as marked, with the right hairpin dynamics. The clarinets have much to do in this movement; the Concertgebouw clarinets were second to none in those days, and play their accents remarkably. In fact, one might protest that they over do it but at RN 3 + 22-25 their hesitations are marked with small rests. At RN 9 - 3, about 4:15, the brassy cutting-edge Concertgebouw trumpets, written *f* and "don't hurry," introduce the section marked "again easy," or *comodo*. At 5:46 (RN 11) a harp arpeggio introduces a sublime section, right down Mengelberg's alley, with lush violin portamenti - it's all (well, mostly all) in the score, but the *ff* ;piccolo is missing at 6:50, RN 12 + 11! At 7:18, RN 13 +1) we are treated to the solo violin pizzicati made famous by Mengelberg's orchestra, very sharp, quick, precise, but I believe that the miking preventing this from its full impact. Eight measures before the end, the cellos have glorious portamenti, heard here very clearly, and the movement ends bell-like in flutes, oboe, English horn, clarinet and glockenspiel. I have one complaint about this movement - it is far too brisk!

*Third Movement* - In the opening bars, marked *espressivo*, *sehr gesangvoll*, the cellos take several gentle portamenti while Mahler marks only one; Mengelberg is not alone here. He also ignores the nice caesura at the end of the 16th measure. In these passages WM observes all of Mahler's portamenti, and then some, converting many slur marks to portamenti. Mengelberg ignores the two caesuri at RN 1 + 14 & 16, which only Levine does perfectly. Also, WM converts slurs to portamenti. At RN 2 the oboe is not nearly lamenting enough, not observing the hairpin dynamics. Starting at about 6:00 there is a lovely passage for string and winds (RN 2 + 5) with horns entering at 7 before RN 3; the string portamenti are there but many others do it better and in the next measure the horns bag theirs, the first one being merely legato instead. Interestingly enough, at measures 5 & 6 after RN 3, WM ignores the two caesuri but the violins do observe their strong accents on the first notes following these marked caesuri. At RN 4, marked gracefully animated, WM does take it very gracefully. At 10:34, RN 6-4, Mahler writes *klagend* for oboe and then English horn, the first darker sign in this otherwise sunny work. At 18:40, RN 12) the strings slide (marked slur) nicely into the big *fff* chord with wildly rampaging strings and harp glissandi, timpani and trumpets with bells up, calling forth the opening of the pearly gates (or so it is often interpreted by commentators). WM pulls all the stops but of course the AM broadcast of the time does not do this exciting passage much justice. The movement ends peacefully in heaven.

*Fourth Movement.* - Here Mahler instructs the conductor to accompany the soloist extremely discretely, and the soloist to sing without any trace of parody. The opening tempo is "very comfortable," and the orchestra is indeed relaxed, so relaxed that the cello portamenti are not heard. Jo Vincent enters beautifully, with a gentle voice, maybe not that of a little child, but sweetly and carefully phrased. At RN 2, the mood changes to flowing and WM picks up the tempo slightly. Vincent sings the phrase, *Sanct Peter in Himmel sieht zu* marked "suddenly held back", very sweetly, making the first leap effortlessly. Then the next section marked "suddenly freshly comfortable" and "Here this tempo must be taken faster than at the corresponding passage in the first movement." WM judges this tempo change perfectly, to my taste - it is NOT a horserace, as some take it. The winds may take their portamenti but the horns do not. At RN 5, 2:30, Mahler marks "somewhat held back, don't hurry." At 3:09 Mahler indicates "still further held back" and WM does it right, and Jo Vincent is superb here. At RN7 Mahler calls for "again lively," again a place where too many conductors go for broke. At 4:03, RN 8 + 4, Mahler writes "keck!" or "bold." This is the fastest passage yet for soloist and orchestra but neither WM nor JV overdo it. At RN

10 we are back again to "again held back" with a lovely leap for the soloist, which Vincent does beautifully. Mahler uses many notations of caesura (slight pause) but at RN 11 he indicates also Luftpause. Needless to say WM knows how to do it just right, not glossed over but not exaggerated. T 5:30, RN 12, the tempo goes back to the beginning tempo, marked "very gentle and mysterious to the end." Flute and strings sing a lovely melody and the soloist enters soon singing that "no music is like this on earth," etc. She reaches at 7:30 RN 14 one of the most deliciously sung portamento in the literature, "St. Ursula herself laughs at it," done superbly here by Vincent. The music fades out to harp over held double basses, very mysterious and glorious.

**Bruno Walter, New York Philharmonic, Desi Halban, 1946 (studio)**  
**Bruno Walter Edition, SONY SMK 64450**

*First Movement* - Walter takes this movement 1 minute faster than WM. He ignores the rit. at measure 3 for clarinets and strings. Walter does not take the many portamenti seriously, neither does he observe the many caesuras. He does take the col legno passages but tends to ignore the many accent markings for the strings. At 13:23 or so, RN 22-1 he ignores the marking eilend (hurry), in fact he seems to adopt a deliberate tempo.

*Second Movement* - Walter moves along nicely, the solo violin is heard well, the winds and horns are fine. At 5:56, RN 11, Walter observes the striking string portamenti well and the following section is very sweet and flowing. The cello gliss. (portamenti) in the last 8 bars are delicious and the ending ends with the right bell-like upbeat.

*Third Movement.* - Walter is very gentle here, observing for the most part the string portamenti but at the same time ignoring the caesuri. At RN 3 - 6 the horn portamenti are barely heard. Even Mengelberg's great orchestra did not take these audibly. The great chord announcing the opening of the gates of heaven is fine, but in these climaxes the limitations of the 1946 recording are noticeable.

*Fourth Movement* - Walter paces this movement almost 2.5 minutes faster than does Mengelberg. Desi Halban (daughter of Selma Kurz, one of Mahler's protégés) sings with a rather fast vibrato, giving her voice a silvery edge. I rather like it but many do not. Her rendering of Sanct Peter in Himmel sieht zu is well phrased and accurate. Then follows the "suddenly vigorously animated" section, which Walter takes somewhat faster than Mengelberg but not too fast to lose the notes. I think that the major differences between BW and WM is that the latter slows down more for Mahler's marking "hold back." BW ignores the luftpause at RN 11, as seems to be his habit. Halban sings the last vocal section with grace and just the right amount of emphasis, and her portamento at RN 14 is right on. Her mother must have taught her some of the tricks of managing her voice that Mahler taught to Ms. Kurz.

**Bruno Walter, New York Philharmonic, Irmgard Seefried, 1954**  
**Music and Arts CD-656 (in concert, with much audience noise)**

*First Movement* - Walter's performance here is somewhat slower than the previous one discussed and, in my view, this is an improvement. Again, BW tends to ignore caesuri markings, and takes many but not all portamenti. At RN 18 BW observes the luftpause most emphatically, at the change in tempo, better than in the 1948 version. The rest of the movement to the end seems better controlled and played than the earlier one. The sound is better but is still congested in the climaxes.

*Second Movement* - Much the same as the earlier one. The harp is less prominent, but the trumpets are better. At RN 9, about 4:45. It is interesting that the solo violin at about 5:35 plays with portamento, unmarked at least in my Dover score. Also interesting is that at RN 11, starting at 6:10, Walter has the strings play the portamenti very sweetly, as he did earlier.

*Third Movement* - In the opening measures Walter has the cellos interpret the slur markings as slight portamenti and also they observe the portamento at measure 14 bridging measure 15. At RN 12, at about 16:00, the heavens open but the sound again here is congested, and does not give the full impact of this climax, not the fault of Walter, however.

*Fourth Movement* - Walter opens in good tempo but the cello portamenti are not heard. Irmgard Seefried is one of those ideal sopranos for this work - clean, clear, not operatic, child-like and attentive to phrasing. Her phrase Sanct Peter im Himmel ... is wonderful! Sanct Martha die Köchin muss sein! ... is perhaps a little overemphasized, as Mahler writes *pp* here, but is wonderfully sung. At RN 13, Seefried's entrance at Keine musik is ja ... clear and firm yet still gentle. Her phrasing of Elf tausend Jungfau ... is well accented but not overdone, and she ends in a beautiful sweet portamento. Excellent, except for Walter's wayward way with Mahler's scores, but not top.

**Otto Klemperer, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Elfreide Trötschel 1956**  
**Originals SH 824 (radio broadcast, very little audience noise)**

*First Movement* - If Klemperer takes the initial retard in clarinets and strings, it is too subtle to note. OK follows Mahler's markings pretty well, suppressing some of the portamenti but taking others, as with the caesuri. The cellos are excellent, with their portamenti at RN 8 - 4 to the beginning of Tempo I. As with Bruno Walter, OK has decided which marking to observe, which to slight, which to ignore. OK takes a strong *luftpause* at RN 18, at about 10:33, the best thus far. OK does not observe the marking *eilend* at RN 22-1, at 13:02, but rather, as did BW, was somewhat more emphatic but not much faster. All in all, with some charm, but more powerful than Walter.

*Second Movement* - The BRSO plays excellently for OK, observing most of the markings. The solo violin is very good, sometimes a little free but within the spirit. At RN 11, 6:10, the cellos are sweet and take their portamenti very well, but OK does not over sentimentalize this section. The movement ends with delicious portamenti for the cellos and the proper bell-like sound.

*Third Movement* - Very flowing, expressive. The BSRO plays excellently. Again, however, Mahler's portamento for the horn at RN 3-6 fails to get played or else is ignored. The solo violin at RN 17, and following measures, is very sweet and takes the marked portamenti. At RN 11, 14:50, OK helps the orchestra along with a great grunt as the climax is approached, then the orchestra quieting down to a tranquil closing, slowing down and dying away.

*Fourth Movement* - Klemperer opens well but cello portamenti are not heard, Elfreide Trötschel opens well, perhaps with a slightly less controlled voice than Seefried, but gentle and child-like. Her Sanct Martha leap is very good. OK takes the following fast section at a good pace, but slowly enough to hear the notes and the next vocal section, RN 5, marked somewhat held back, is at a very good pace so that the singer is not rushed and the words are clear, while BW did rush this section a little too much, for my taste. The stanza about the vegetables is good, the fast section not too fast, then back to the slower pace, at 4:00,

RN 10, Trötschel takes the Sanct Martha phrase very well. OK changes gears at RN 12, where Mahler marks Tempo I, and it is managed flawlessly. At RN Trötschel is very fine at Keine Musik. She sings the phrase Elf tausend Jungfrauen quite smoothly, as opposed to Seefried who gives it a somewhat jaunty aspect, and ends the phrase with another delicious portamento. Except for a little shakiness in the beginning, Trötschel's is another of those performances to be equaled but not surpassed.

**Otto Klemperer, Philharmonia, Elizabeth Schwartzkopf, 1981  
Angel, Seraphim LPs, Recently reissued on remastered CD**

*First Movement* - OK again seems to ignore the change in rhythm in measure 3. The tempo is relaxed, but controlled. Orchestra playing is excellent, as one would expect. There is plenty of Viennese gemütlichkeit even though OK tends to ignore the portamenti. OK again essentially ignores the "somewhat hurriedly" marking at 3:34 for the first descending string passage, and even gives it some emphasis. The bassoons are lovely starting at 4:10. Horn right after 6:00 must be one of the great British hornists, it is so well played. After the trumpet cadences there is a lovely retard and the tension builds nicely to a climax with brilliant trumpets. At 14:34 the "hurriedly" descending strings again hardly speed up. OK does very well the retard just before the coda and then the little-by-little accelerando is good, somewhat more measured than most, but that is the way with Klemperer. All in all, a fine reading - maybe a little stuffy - and well recorded.

*Second Movement* - Tempo is relaxed, as usual with OK. Scordatura violin is good. At 5:20 the trumpet is outspoken, almost as "blaring" as Mahler marked. The double basses right before the change in mood are excellent. The cellos at the end take their portamenti very gracefully, but perhaps not as well marked as in some performances.

*Third Movement* - The Philharmonia here plays for OK very lovingly and movingly. All is quite serene, beautifully phrased, and effectively catches the mood Mahler seems to have intended. The harp tolls through the orchestra very well, providing an unearthly mood. The lamenting oboe is good, introducing by contrast a sweet string passage. The horn section is again exemplary. The first climax at 5:33 or so is solid, not overdone. At 6:55 the counterpoint in the bass clarinet is very effective. At 8:20, fine bass clarinet. At 13:07 the tempo suddenly picks up but OK does not let it get away from him, and slows gracefully at 13:32. At 15:41 the heavenly gates open impressively, wonderful horns, solid timpani, but OK more slides into the climax than hitting it forcibly and he more or less ignores the slight pause indicated in the score. The movement fades away with strings sweetly ascending into the heights and then back to earth over harp and flutes.

*Fourth Movement* - OK begins with a relaxed tempo on clarinet, and Schwartzkopf opens perhaps a little too operatically, for this simple setting. However, she gets more relaxed soon and St. Peter is comfortably in heaven. OK takes the faster tempo just right, in my opinion, not in a big rush as some others do. When St. Lucas slaughters the oxen, they moo contentedly in the double basses and low horns. When Schwartzkopf sings that there is no music like it on earth, it is indeed heavenly. The 11,000 young virgins dance gracefully and St. Ursula laughs with them. The angelic voices close the song beautifully.

All in all, this is a most satisfying reading, Klemperer at his best, in my humble opinion.

## OUTSTANDING

### **Jascha Horenstein, London Philharmonic, Margaret Price, soprano Margaret Price, 1970, issued 1971 on LP; CD on Chief label CD2**

This was first issued in UK on LP, with quite indifferent sound. An American, Donald Clark, living in UK at the time, found a way to get authorization to have the original master tape re-mastered into a CD in quite good and clear sound. It is available from for \$10 plus shipping.

*First Movement* - JH takes the retard in measure 3 for the clarinets and violins, and also the flutes and bells, against Mahler's markings! At RN 1, 0:52, the cellos are heard clearly, even though marked pp. At 1:40 the exemplary horns of the LPO know how to take the horn swoops at RN 2 + 4 & 5, as in no other recording thus far. The cellos a few measures later play a delicious portamento. Just before RN 4 JH observes very carefully the caesura and the change in tempo Mahler indicates happens perfectly naturally. At RN 4 + 9, the marking eilend and the staccato markings over the violins are taken precisely as Mahler indicated. In the measures following soon, all the eleven(!) portamenti for the cellos are taken as written, but he does not observe as well as should be the caesura ending this section. In the four flute unison passage, JH brings out well the cello parts, often lost. The famous trumpet passages starting just before RN 16 are played beautifully and the LPO trumpets 2&3 are the only ones thus far who take the diminuendo accurately over three measures from p to ppp. At RN 18, JH observes the marked luftpause to start the change in tempo as in the beginning - very easy, comfortable. If any listener thinks, at the lead-in to the coda, that JH is exaggerating the several hesitations and tempo, they are all in the score, leading up to the final allegro. This is the most beautiful rendition of this movement ever.

*Second Movement*. - Beautifully played, following Mahler's indications to the "t," such as the horn hairpins on 5th and 11th notes. I might only remark that at RN 9 - 3, where Mahler marks "blaring" for the trumpet, JH is just a little reserved. At RN 11, at about 7:47, the clarinets are gorgeous, and the string portamenti are there, not prominent but well balanced with the winds. A few bars later, the portamenti are more pronounced. At RN 12, 8:50, the flute is lovely and 11 measures later, this is the one and only RECORDING WHERE THE PICCOLO is HEARD PROPERLY, at ff. At RN 13, at about 9:55, the harp pizzicatos are strong, but the piccolos, marked f, are heard only faintly. Needless to say the portamenti in the cellos at the end are wonderful. This is a rather dreamy reading, one of the slowest, but it works for me.

*Third Movement*. - JH is very atmospheric here, also dreamy as it were. He observes the many caesuri but discretely.; at least the strings lift their bows to make a definite break. At RN 2, the oboe is somewhat "lamenting," observing slightly the hairpin dynamics, but not overly so. It might even be said that it is sweetly lamenting, more wistful than bitter. At 5:39, RN 2 + 14, the horns do manage their downward portamenti, very discretely, but they are there. At 17:07, RN 12, the gates of heaven open quite brilliantly, brass is very good, harp arpeggios are heard clearly, the final portamento in the upper violins, accented by flutes, transitioning to the slow harp arpeggios is quite clear, and all is well with the world. The slow fading away is unearthly.

*Fourth Movement*. - The opening is fine and the cello portamenti are there, not overdone. If Margaret Price does not have the quintessential child-like voice, she more than makes up for it in her exquisite control and high musicianship. Her phrase Sanct Peter im Himmel sieht zu is fine except for a tiny artifact

at the pp Peter, which must be a tape splice. Then JH adopts a most sensible tempo for Plötzliche frisch bewegt, faster but not too fast. The wind and horn portamenti are fine. At 3:34, RN 7 + 5, Price begins the "vegetable" section well, and the tempo JH adopts, Tempo I, is such that her words can be articulated clearly. At RN 10, 4:37, Price is excellent. There is a caesura at RN 11, also marked luftpause and JH does not exaggerate it, but I could wish for just a little more pause. At 5:49, RN 12 + 4, the flutes enter with such gentleness that one knows that the remaining will be Sehr zart und geheimnisvoll as Mahler marks. Price's entrance at RN 13, Keine music ist ja ... could not be sung more sweetly, the elf tausend Jungfrauen dance gracefully, and Sanct Ursula laughs with a delightfully held portamento. Everything in the coda wakes for joy and the fadeout is perfect. Thank you Jascha Horenstein, and Donald Clark, for bringing this magic to us.

### **VERY GOOD TO EXCELLENT**

The following performances all have their merits. Some have more demerits than others, but all are worthy of hearing. I cannot rank them - that must be a personal judgement.

#### **Paul Kletski, Philharmonia Orchestra, Emmy Loose 1957 Re-issued on several labels and on CD in 1993**

*First Movement* - rather faster than Mahler's indication of "deliberate, do not hurry," fast enough so that the music does not breathe naturally. In the opening there is no "poco rit." Kletski observes some of the portamenti but he takes most of them, as do most other conductors, more-or-less as an extended legato. This is a good, albeit fast, performance, but Kletski does observe most of the tempo changes and dynamics, but it is not as genial as I think is called for in the writing.

*Second Movement* - This is taken at a better tempo, in my judgement, and most of it moves along well. At RN 9 -3 where the trumpets are marked "blaring" they are too gentle. At RN 11, the portamenti are better. At RN 13 the fff pizzicati in the solo violin are barely f. In the coda the portamenti for the cellos are barely there.

*Third Movement* - The movement opens in a very relaxed matter. At the close I concluded that this is the best played movement for Kletski. At RN 2, the klagend oboe is good. At RN 2 + 14, the first horn portamento is indeed fine, the best this far, while the second one is weaker. There is a lovely, rarely heard, horn pedal note at RN 6-9. RN 12, and the opening of the gates of heaven is very fine.

*Fourth Movement* - Emmy Loose is an excellent soloist, very controlled, and manages a child-like voice. Her phrasing at Sanct Peter is very fine. My one quibble with PK in this movement is that he takes the faster sections too fast, so that the music seems more rushed than sprightly. The changes to the slower tempi, however, are taken well. Loose is just fine for Ste. Ursula's laugh and the twelve thousand virgins dance well.

#### **Hans Swarowsky, Czech Philharmonic, Gerlinde Lorenz, 1972 Supraphon**

Robert Olson, founder and conductor of the MahlerFest, studied conducting with Maestro Swarowsky in Vienna 1973/74, not too long after this recording was made. Swarowsky had a stroke shortly after this

recording and his recording legacy is small. Zuban Mehta and Claudio Abbado are also distinguished students of HS.

*First Movement* - Swarowsky does not observe the "poco rit," in measure 3, nor does he observe many of the portamenti or caesuri. When he does, they are gentle, more legato than portamento. The opening tempo is somewhat brisker than JH but slower than PK. While this seems to be one of the more of the "straight" performances, HW does observe carefully the tempo changes and dynamics, e.g., the estwas eilend at RN 4 + 9 is taken and the strings play very accented as marked. The recording balance seems to be very close, as at RN 5 + 3, the English horn, marked ppp is quite prominent. The sound is excellent and clean. Near the end of this movement, at RN 14, Mahler marks poco a poco stringendo, little-by-little speed up, and WS controls it perfectly. This version is well played even if not observing the score as closely as I prefer, with feeling and also with precision, if not with the gemütlichkeit of Horenstein.

*Second Movement.* - One is immediately struck by the prominence of the solo scordatura violin, again arguing for my surmise that this is a closely miked recording. I rather like the way the solo contrasts so well with the rest of the violins. Also, I love the plaintive quality of the Czech Phil oboes. At RN 9 - 3 the trumpets are properly "blaring" but refined anyway, a lovely touch. RN 11, "more broad" enters very gracefully with beautiful clarinets. The strings glow with warmth, taking their portamenti gracefully. WS closes the movement with well judged portamenti in the cellos, getting slightly more prominent with each repeat. Again, a nice touch although not so indicated in the score. The final notes on upper winds are very bell-like.

*Third Movement* - This goes very well, beautiful oboe, warm strings, more legato to the strings than portamento in most cases, but effective. The horns do not even try to manage their portamento at RN 2 + 14. However, the strings do their portamenti well in the following passages and the portamenti for the solo violin starting at 4-6 are well done. RN 9 is marked andante. 15 measures later Mahler writes "don't hurry," and at +17 "Allegretto subito, BUT nicht eilen and also "without the slightest change suddenly to a new tempo." Confusing??. Here, WS seems more deliberate than allegretto. At RN 10, however WS follows well the marking Allegro subito but does not rush as some others do. Then he does speed up more at RN 16 at Allegro molto. Seems right. The gates of heaven open wide and forcefully at RN 12, and the good sound makes this an impressive moment.

*Fourth Movement.* - Gerlinde Lorenz is an effective soloist, good control but a slight vibrato on the longer notes, a child-like lightness in the voice, and she negotiates the jump at Sanct Peter effortlessly. WS does not over-rush the faster section, and the soloist comes in again at RN 5 in good tempo and the "hold back" at 7 - 4 is well judged. The stanza about the vegetables goes well, a little brisk but not so much that the soloist has trouble. "Sanct Martha" is well sung, perhaps not as sweetly as some other sopranos. Lorenz is under very good control at keine Musik and the thousands of young virgins dance sweetly. Perhaps the striking portamento at zu lacht, RN 14, could have been a little more pronounced and gracious, but it is OK.

**Herbert von Karajan, Berlin Philharmonic, Edith Mathis  
DGG 1979**

*First Movement* - HvK ignores more or less the rit in the opening clarinets and strings, or does it so subtly that I missed it. In this passage a port is marked between the third and fourth note in the first violins,

which HvK ignores, but then does do a port - unmarked in the score - between the fourth and fifth note; this will not be the first time that HvK "rewrites" the score. He does pay lip service to many of the portamenti, at least in the beginning of this movement, but improves later. At RN 3 + 11, he not only ignores the tenuto markings in the cellos but inserts a slur there, a rather typical HvK touch, I feel. At RN 4 + 9 (about 3:20) he takes the *etwas eilend* very well indeed, and one hears clearly the lower strings; this is one best rendition of this passage. In the measures following RN 7 the BPO play very nicely the portamenti in the cellos, with lovely flutes above. However, in most places the winds seem to be a little regressed; judging by their sound, they are playing to the marked dynamic but the end product is recessed - bad miking or bad mixing.

At RN 12 - 3, at 7:35, there is a horn swoop that is not in my Dover score, but Zychowicz shows a change here to introduce the horn swoop. At RN 14 + 7/8, at 9:05 or so, the BPO first violins play a very marked portamento, as marked. By now I conclude that HvK observes most of them, ignoring only a few, but also adding some of his own. The trumpets are quite good in the passages preceding and following RN 17. At 11:18, RN 18, nice luftpause. HvK observes the tempo and dynamics markings well, in my view, and ends with a nice flourish.

*Second Movement* - The BPO concertmaster seems not to want to play the scordatura violin "as a fidel", as Mahler marks. It seems a little too sweet. The "blaring" trumpet call at RN 9 - 3 is just too sweet. In the measures before RN 11, leading up to the big change in character, HvK inserts many portamenti for the double basses, nice but not what Mahler wrote. After RN 11 the BPO play the portamenti just as written, and very sweetly. The movement ends nicely with good portamenti on cellos.

*Third Movement* - HvK, never known for romantic excess, throws in many extra portamenti in the first few measures - none is marked until measure 13, and that is done, and HvK makes it sound very natural. The BPO horns do not attempt the portamenti at RN 3 - 6, at 6:37, though the preceding string portamenti are taken with great flourish. The gates of heaven open wide at RN 12, with a very good sharp orchestral attack, and good timps & trumpet, expressive horns, fine diminuendo. This is a very finely played movement, even if HvK knows better than Mahler at some spots, e.g., RN 11 - 5 where Mahler calls for *subito allegro molto* and HvK barely speeds up.

*Fourth Movement* - Karajan opens with a very relaxed tempo, *sehr behaglich*, and his cello portamenti are very discrete. Edith Mathis enters very lightly, perhaps not as legato as might be, but with a child-like demeanor. She gets a fine "breathless" quality to *Sanct Peter* ... At RN 3 HvK takes a very good *frisch* tempo, not too fast; horns and winds are very fine. The vegetable section is good, with the marked increase in tempo at RN 8 + 9, and Mathis articulates every word well. Her tone and breath control at RN 10, *Sanct Martha die Köchin* is exemplary. HvK ignores the luftpause at RN 11, but plows ahead. Horns at about 11 + 3 are particularly fine. At RN 13 Mathis is magical at *keine musik* and *at elf tausend*. To the end she maintains just the quality I think Mahler wanted. HvK offers excellent orchestral support, very discrete as Mahler requested. One could not want a better reading than this one movement and the orchestral playing and recording backs it up. On balance, this is a most enjoyable and admirable reading, notwithstanding some of HvK's idiosyncrasies. This is perhaps HvK's best of his several Mahler recordings.

**Leonard Bernstein, NYPO, Reri Grist soprano  
SONY SMK60733, 1960**



*First Movement* - This was recorded in a hotel in NY. The sound is close so much detail is heard. LB does not observe the asynchronous rhythm in measure 3. LB interprets "robustly" as meaning to speed up. At RN 4 + 9, marked "somewhat hurriedly," LB does speed up a little and gives the notes the accents called for. At RN 9 + 8, in spite of the great detail in the recording, the horns, marked for 2 and f, are weak. Through much of the next section LB races too much, there is too much febrile tension, not enough grace. The horns are much out of balance, compared with the trumpets and winds (not the recording engineers for in spots the horns are just right!). Then at RN 18 a delicious luftpause. Then he is off to the races again! At RN 20, Mahler marks "unrestrained," but LB is already there. At RN 22-1, again "hurriedly," LB does take it a little faster than the first time, when it is only "somewhat" hurriedly. At RN 24 - 7, Mahler marks "calm and always calmer," but LB does not know the meaning of calm; he does slow down but it is still too pressed. However, in the last measures, LB does observe the retard, then the little-by-little speeding up, then the allegro. All in all, this movement has its fine moments, but to me falls short of the gentleness and gemütlichkeit it needs.

*Second Movement* - The solo violin is good. At RN 9 - 3 the trumpet does wail a little, with a little but not too much vibrato. At RN 11 a wonderful transition, and LB makes the most of the portamenti. At the very end, he does not make as much of the portamenti in the cellos as some.

*Third Movement* - The opening poses no great interpretive problems - play peacefully and let the music flow, and LB does that well. He even observes some of the caesuri. At RN 2, the oboe is somewhat lamenting and the tempo slows according to the markings. The strings take their portamenti very gracefully and at RN 3 - 6 the horn does its slide very well. At RN 10 Mahler calls for sudden allegro, and LB does it, then at 16 measures later Mahler wants suddenly "very allegro" and LB goes for broke, and at RN 11 sudden andante. LB does it all so he cannot be criticized, but here I prefer a somewhat lighter touch, as we shall see in his later recording in Amsterdam. At RN 12, LB hits it right on the head, although the luftpause could have been slightly more. Trumpets blast, strong horns and fine, timpani are strong. The movement fades away nicely with a lovely string portamento.

*Fourth Movement* - Reri Grist - plucked out of the cast of West Side Story - has a light voice, appropriately "childlike," but also a fast vibrato that can sound at times like a "bleat." Her diction is good and phrasing is also good, not overdone. At RN 3, Mahler marks "suddenly lively animated, and must be taken at faster tempo than corresponding phase in Movement I, i.e., the opening sleigh bells, which is marked slow." LB is fast but not as fast as some others. At RN 5, it is "somewhat held back," and LB slows to a good tempo. The horns and double basses "moo" appropriately. He vegetable garden stanza opens in a relaxed tempo. Mahler writes gradually but "imperceptibly" more animated. LB speed up more, in my opinion, than necessary and Reri Grist has a hard time keeping up, till RN 10, suddenly held back, where St. Martha is in the kitchen. Then, again, "lively," but LB in my opinion goes too fast here, but he slows down for the wonderful phrase "No music is like this on earth." The 11,000 young virgins dance lightly, with an excellent portamento.

This is a mostly excellent reading and recording, one of his best Mahlers, in my opinion. LB does observe most of the portamenti, the two luftpausen, but hardly any of the caesuri. He has a good feel for the music, lyrical and relaxed where it really is called for, but perhaps is too energetic and nervous in other sections.

**Leonard Bernstein, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Halmut Wittek, soprano  
DGG 1987**

I shall not take the time to analyze this in detail. However, I credit LB here for observing the asynchronicity at measure 3. It is slower and more relaxed than LB's NYPO performance, and the orchestra is fine, as one would expect, having played this work more than any other orchestra in the world. The boy soprano is far less sure of himself than Max Cencic, reviewed below.

**Anton Nanut, Ljubljana Radio Symphony Orchestra, Max Cencic, soprano  
Low-price CD on many cheap labels, e.g., Laserlight, about 1989**

*First Movement* - Somewhat brisk opening tempo. String portamenti are there but very gentle. At 3:05 he ignores the marking "hurriedly." From then on the performance is good, not exemplary but with some fine winds and horns, and on occasion some fine accenting. However, the sound is a little congested in the loud passages. At 13:33 the descending string passage marked "hurriedly" is better than the first time. The retard at the end is good and so is the "little-by-little accelerando."

*Second Movement* - The scordatura violin is OK, not quite as prominent as should be. The pizzicati in the strings are a little weak. At 4:47 the "blaring" trumpet is pretty good.

*Third Movement* - The opening is quite restful, but most of the markings for portamento are ignored, indeed most of the portamenti are taken as slurs rather than slides. The slides in the horns are there but hardly. The many caesuri are ignored. At RN 4 the cello portamenti are there. One has to assume, therefore, that Nanut had considered carefully the markings and which ones to take and which to ignore. At RN 10, allegro subito Nanut is not as manic as Bernstein and lets the music flow quickly but it is not rushed. At RN 12, the luftpause is just right, held a little more than in the Bernstein, and hit on the head. Trumpets and timpani are very strong, but horns recessed. Phrasing is very positive and accented, resulting in one of the most powerful "Opening of the gates" of all recordings. The ending is peaceful and beautiful.

*Fourth Movement* - Restful, peaceful opening with discrete cello portamenti. Max Cencic, boy soprano, has a clear, unwavering voice, and is indisputably the most "childlike" of all the singers who essay this role. He is in perfect control and manages his leaps well. At RN 3, plötzlich frisch bewegt, Nanut takes a faster and most sensible tempo. Max is fine in the next stanza and again at RN 9 Nanut takes a sensible faster tempo. The vegetable garden is not raced through, and Max handles the enunciation very well. After again a sensible fast section max sings the "Keine Music ..." beautifully, the eleven thousand young virgins dance prettily, and St. Ursula herself laughs endearingly, with a very good portamento. The reprise of "keine music is as "gentle and mysterious" as the first time. All in all, this is a gem of a performance, and makes this set worth searching out, for a paltry few dollars. This is the best way to hear a fine boy soprano. Such a singer would get lost in the usual large concert hall.

**George Szell, Cleveland S. O. Judith Raskin, soprano  
Columbia, 1965; SONY 1987, '88, '89**

*First Movement* - Szell opens comfortably, observes some of the portamenti and some of the caesuri. He takes the "hurriedly" section at RN 5-1 well. From RN 7 to 8, Szell observes well the many portamenti,

giving a luscious Viennese flavor to the music. Just before 8, Szell observes the caesura but when there is a caesura for some of the instruments, but not all, he tends, like most others, to pass over it. Trumpets are good in their cadences, then at RN 18 Szell takes a good luftpause. At the end, Szell slows down nicely then speeds up little-by-little but does not get to Allegro. All in all a most satisfactory rendering of this movement.

*Second Movement* - The devil's violin is fine, horns are very good, all is carefully balanced and phrased. At RN 9 - 3 the "blaring" trumpet is good, with some character. The change in mood at RN 11 is good and the violas are sweet, with many portamenti. At 12 + 11, the piccolo marked ff is not there. Nice portamento swoops on the cellos at the end.

*Third Movement* - Good, peaceful opening. At RN 2, the oboe laments properly. Strings play sweetly, observe their portamenti, but the fine Cleveland horns ignore theirs at RN 2 + 14. At 4 - 9 the solo violin is excellent. Then the cellos enter, very beautifully, but not overdoing it, and GS goes into allegro molto at 11- 5 without losing control. At RN 12, Szell takes a small luftpause and hits the chord well, trumpets and timpani are strong, horns less so. Szell ends the movement peacefully.

*Fourth Movement* - Szell opens at a very relaxed tempo, with good cello portamenti and good wind playing. Raskin enters gently and with superb control. Her voice is obviously mature but she manages lightness. At RN 2, marked fliessend, Szell and Raskin speed up just enough. The leap on "Sanct Peter" is very good. Szell takes the fast section sensibly fast, not racing. The oxen moo quietly at RN 6 + 1 - the horns are written in pp while the double basses in p. Too many conductors make the mistake of having this touch of humor too loud (e.g., Britten). The vegetable section is not pressed, and Szell makes the intelligent decision to interpret keck! (bold) as spirited, not faster. Raskin is exemplary when she sings about Sanct Martha. "There is no music like this on earth" is sung properly gently and mysteriously and in almost a hushed voice. St. Ursula's eleven thousand young virgins dance very gently as if the memory of their martyrdom still lingers, and she laughs most gently at the sight. The closing phrases are magical!

**Maurice Abravanel, Utah S. O., Netania Davrath, soprano  
Vanguard, 1968; released recently on CDs**

*First Movement* - As with most Abravanel recordings made in the tabernacle, the strings sound a little anemic, but they are well played. Perhaps because of the very live acoustic in the Tabernacle, the miking is so close that the full string sections get swamped by the closer desks. However, the upside is that great inner detail is revealed. Abravanel adopts a moderate tempo for the opening, and observes most of the portamenti. At RN 5 - 1, the "somewhat hurriedly" marking is somewhat slighted. At RN 10 + 1 and following, Mahler wants four flutes, playing at f. This is the first recording on which it is distinctly heard that there is more than one flute. Trumpets are fine, cleanly articulated in the section purported to be the ancestor of the opening of the Fifth Symphony, and the horns come in strong later. At RN 18 the luftpause is very artfully taken with the change in tempo. At RN 20, marked wild, MA does adopt a slightly faster tempo and then Mahler wants big independent bow strokes on the chords in the first and second violins. MA brings it off well. At 24 + 10, the beginning of the coda, marked "big retard," MA changes gears well, and then begins the "little-by-little speed up, to a good conclusion, with plenty of inner string detail showing. The very live acoustic of the Tabernacle is demonstrated well in the slow decay (some 4 seconds) after the final chord.

*Second Movement* - The solo violin is good, but not "outspoken" enough. At RN 3 the winds enter with much fine playing and the sound is excellent. At RN 5 + 3 the devil is not as passionate on his violin as Mahler wants. At RN 9 - 3 the trumpet "blares" out leading to a nice broadening in tempo. The movement closes with good portamenti on the cellos.

*Third Movement* - A dreamlike mood prevails here and the strings do sound full and even lush, notwithstanding the acoustical problems of the Tabernacle. The oboe is fine at RN 2, against bassoon. Strings follow with golden portamenti, but horns make no attempt at theirs. MA manages quite well the tempo shifts starting at RN 9, andante, then allegretto subito at 9 + 17, then allegro subito at RN 10, then allegro molto at 10 + 16, then at RN 11 a andante subito. This is an exciting passage which can easily be overdone, a la Bernstein in his NYPO recording. Bassoons, horns and string of ethereal beauty introduce a mysterious passage leading to the big luftpause which, to my astonishment, MA ignores, at RN 12 and the gates of heaven, opening to fine trumpets, harp, timpani and horns (a little weak).

*Fourth Movement* - Opening tempo is a little brisk, not sehr behäglich, and the cello portamenti are good. Davrath is relaxed - her voice is pure and simple, with superb diction. She negotiates the leap at St. Peter beautifully. MA takes the faster section rather briskly, and does not slow down enough at RN 5 for the return of the soloist. Davrath's voice here is as childlike as any adult can get. The vegetable section is sung well, but MA misinterprets, in my opinion, keck! as indicating a speed up. Pity! Davrath, however, manages well with fine enunciation and never seems out of control. At RN 12 MA does slow down to his opening tempo, still a little too brisk for me. At RN 13, Davrath is magical at keine musik is ja nicht auf Erden... Her eleven thousand young virgins dance prettily, and St. Martha laughs with a slightly naughty twinkle to see it. The movement ends ethereally. Davrath is one of the few soloists able to convince the listener of being in the Child's Heaven.

**Wyn Morris, London SO. O. Patricia Rozario  
Collins 10442, 1988**

*First Movement* - While this is the slowest of the M4s, Morris opens rather briskly, I would guess at about M = 92, about the same as Benjamin Britten. Yet as the music goes along it does not seem too fast. Phrasings are good, and Morris does observe the portamenti. He flunks the etwas eilend marking at RN 5 = 1. In the strings starting at RN 7, Morris makes careful distinction between the slur marks and the portamento marking. Many conductors take slurs as if they were marked portamento. Trumpets are very good, leading up to the cadence at RN 17 + 4, and the low horn notes are very good. WM takes a good long luftpause at RN 18. Starting at RN 20, the playing is very strong, accented and well phrased. Just before RN 21, at a change of pace, Mahler marks a caesura and Morris observes it to accentuate the change of tempo. At the eilend marking at RN 22 - 1, Morris does observe a slight speed up, not as much as he should, in my opinion. Morris does the coda very well, building the tempo carefully and evenly.

*Second Movement.* - The opening is good and the devil's violin pretty good, could be somewhat more pronounced, and biting. The harp seems to be missing starting at RN 1 + 3, though it is marked ff. This misses the nice accenting of the violin passage. Later there seem to be some balance problems in the brass, and at RN 9 - 3 the trumpet is too weak. At RN 11 begins a wonderful passage of sweet strings with many portamenti against clarinets. Morris does it well. Again, as in most others, the fff piccolo is missing at RN 12 + 11. Morris lets the cellos have their portamenti at the close but does not exaggerate it,

*Third Movement* - Morris takes Mahler's marking "peaceful, calm" seriously and this is quite unhurried. Lovely string playing. The oboe at RN 2 is very expressive, but may not really "lament." Strings at 2 + 13, 14 are sweet and take lovely portamenti but the horns bag theirs. From RN 9 to 11, Mahler's marks ever increasing tempi, and Morris judges them well, not getting so fast at allegro molto so as to lose control. At RN 11 the tempo returns to andante which Morris does well. The break in tempo at RN 12, marked by a luftpause is taken very well, and the tutti chord hit on the head. Trumpet and horns not as strong as they need to be. Morris takes his time ending the movement, which is good.!

*Fourth Movement* - Opening is very comfortable. Rozario has a clear voice, not really "childlike" but well within acceptable boundaries. Her enunciation is good and she handles the fließend passage well. Morris takes the frisch bewegt section at a good clip, but not too fast. The oxen moo a little too loudly, and the vegetable section is taken at a good tempo. Morris does speed up a little for the "bold" passage, but Rozario takes it well. Morris slows down well at RN 12, to be ready for the final passages. The heavenly phrase, "There is no music like this on earth," is played and sung beautifully. Rosario endows the eleven thousand young virgins with the most tender dance. St. Ursula's laughing portamento is sung well, not overdone. The soloist and orchestra fade away wonderfully.

**John Barbirolli, BBC Symphony, Heather Harper, soprano  
Issued recently on BBC Legends, 1975 in concert in Prague**

*First Movement* - The sleigh bells in movement I are odd sounding, too metallic. The bells in IV are better. Opening is measured or deliberate, as Mahler marked, and Barbirolli seems to know how to do the retard in measure 3, although the bells at the end of their passage are dim so it is really hard to tell. JB accelerates a little, just right, at RN 2 frisch, and the cellos take a subtle tenuto in measure 11 after RN 3. Again at RN 4, plötzlich langsam, JB knew how to hit the right change of pace. At the etwas eilend marking he again knows how to hurry just a little bit. The flutes in 4 just after RN 10 do sound like more than one. From here on, all goes mostly well, portamenti are observed. The trumpets and horns are good. At RN 22 - 1, JB observes perfectly the eilend in the descending string passage. The slowing down and then the little-by-little build up in the coda towards the final allegro is well judged. The BBC orchestra, obviously on tour, and in concert, makes some mistakes, e.g., a noticeable horn clam near the end. My CD is a pirate edition and gritty but the new BBC Legends ought to have cleaner sound.

*Second Movement* - The devil's violin is OK, perhaps not biting enough, but strings, winds and horns play very well. JB takes a measured pace throughout. Earlier, Mahler had marked "blaring" for the horns, but they did not blare. At RN 9 - 3 the trumpets are marked to blare and they do so very well and with the correct accents as Mahler marked. The contrabasses are excellent leading up to RN 11, and from there the strings are very sweet and the clarinet good also. At the coda, the cellos do their portamenti at pp as Mahler indicated. JB was famous for his "Vienna Nights" in UK and in this movement he knew how to get the Viennese lilt and gentleness right.

*Third Movement* - JB opens very restfully, good expression and phrasing, an extra portamento, fine oboe at RN 2. Then some good portamenti in the violins, with a background of Sir John's non-melodious accompaniment. The BBC horns do not even try to give Mahler his portamenti at RN 2 + 14. The viola passage starting at RN 9 is lovingly played. JB does into the allegretto (but don't hurry!) at 9 + 16 very nicely, then speeds up sensibly at RN 10 to the tempo break at 11. Sir John sweeps up into the luftpause at

RN 12, and hits the tutti chord on the head, good trumpets, lovely well defined harp glissandi and strong timpani, played with both sticks as Mahler requests. JB opens the gates to heaven convincingly, and then brings the movement to a peaceful end with lovely harp arpeggios

*Fourth Movement* - This is the slowest of all the final movement of the M4s, by 2.5 to 3 minutes. However, his faster sections here are just about "normal" so it is in the slower sections where JB's timing is the longest. In my opinion, this movement can take this broad interpretation. Very slow opening but with feeling and nicely phrased. Harper's voice is full and adult, perhaps a little too dark for this role, but she is very musical. Her "Sanct Peter" is well phrased and lovely. JB takes the fast section at a sensible tempo, not rushing it but with plenty of contrast. Harper enunciates clearly but perhaps puts a little too much emphasis into the words starting with "Jonannes das Lämmlein ... " JB has the horns and contrabasses moo properly - not too obtrusively - and he observes carefully the slowing down of tempo for the final phrase where the angels bake the bread. The vegetable garden is described in good tempo, not too fast, with only a slight speed up where Mahler writes keck.. Harper's singing of Keine musik ... is quite magical, the eleven thousand young virgins dance with dignity and St. Ursula laughs at a well taken portamento. The movement closes quite peacefully.

**Ricardo Chailly, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra**  
**Barbara Bonney, soprano, Decca 298 466 720 1999**

*First Movement* - Good opening tempo, slower than Mengelberg! And the tempo seems to be about what Mengelberg said that Mahler wanted. Good detail in orchestra. Chailly does the passage marked etwas eilend very well, just right. RN 7, with many string portamenti, is played well. The four flutes in unison sound a little recessed. The build-up to the climax at RN 17 is good and horns and trumpets are quite fine from there on. The luftpause at RN 18 is observed very well. The second eilend passage is also taken well at a brisker tempo but not running wild. Lead in to the coda is good and RC takes the accelerando just where Mahler marks it and proceeds to as vigorous conclusion.

*Second Movement* - opening is good, perhaps a little fast but not rushed; the horn "hairpins" are just right and on the right note, and the devil's violin is very good. Trumpet blares fairly well at RN 9 - leading to a nice change of tempo. The lower strings lead up nicely to the magical change of pace at RN 11, and from there on the strings and clarinet are lovely. The movement ends with good cello portamenti, not overdone.

*Third Movement* - Opening is calm and well phrased. At RN 2 the oboe seems to lament properly. The strings do their portamenti well but the horns barely make it the first time and bag it the second. Maher wanted the horn portamenti but few conductors allow it there. At RN the tempo picks up and the string are very good. The gradual tempo buildup from allegretto to allegro molto is judged well and the Concertgebouw orchestra handles it very well. At RN 12 Chailly does a good up-beat into the luftpause which, regrettably, he barely takes. The trumpets and timpani open the gates of heaven but the horns also marked ff seem timid.

*Fourth Movement* - The opening is calm and peaceful, good tempo. Much to my regret I cannot praise Barbara Bonney, usually a fine Lieder singer. She is thin, pinched and nasal, and bleats like the little lämmlein later on. She is also miked too closely. Mahler marks many of these passages as pp or p! The soloist is not marked f till much later, at RN 8 + 4. Her Sanct Peter, however, is fine. Chailly takes the faster passages a little too briskly for my taste. The vegetable garden fleets by too quickly, but slows

down well for "St. Martha." At RN 13, the Keine musik ... is sung better, but there still is a "bleat" to the voice. Bonney rather over-interprets the eleven-thousand young virgins but gets back on track for the lovely laugh of St. Ursula. The movement ends with appropriate calm and peace.

All in all, a rather good performance, with some problems of balance, and less than good vocalizing in the last movement.

**Benjamin Britten, London Symphony Orchestra, Joan Carlyle, soprano  
BBC Music 8004-2, 1961, released in last few years**

Britten was an ardent Mahler admirer. He wrote glowingly about the beauty of Das Lied, arranged the third movement of the Third for small orchestra so that it could be played by smaller groups, and conducted the first performance of the then newly discovered Blumine movement of the First.

*First Movement* - As noted above, rather brisk opening, but not as brisk as a few others. Britten takes rather brisk tempos until RN 3, where he broadens out, following Mahler's marking, and continues with some lovely playing. At RN 5 - 1 he over-interprets the "somewhat hurriedly" instruction and goes very fast. At RN 7 BB takes a good tempo and the strings with their many portamenti play very lovingly. From RN 16 through to 18, BB rushes the music so that many inner details are lost. Also, the sound gets quite congested. At RN 18, BB does observe the luftpause well, and slows down to the opening tempo, but hardly as Mahler marks, "Very easy, comfortable." BB is certainly wild at RN 20, the preceding passages again seem too rushed. At RN 21, marked with a caesura, BB does adopt a sensible tempo as marked, and 10 measures later, at eilend he adopts the same tempo as he did the first time at etwas eilend. At RN 23 + 9 BB does calm down and we get some lovely playing here with well done string portamenti again. BB follows the markings well toward the end and achieves one of the fastest molto allegros. I could only wish he had taken the whole first movement in a much more relaxed tempo. At just over 15 minutes (the CD claims 15:21) but my player shows 15:09; this is not the fastest but among the contenders for this honor.

*Second Movement* - In the second measure, Mahler indicates a "hairpin" crescendo-decrescendo for the 5th note on the horn, and at the same time an accent. Some conductors emphasize the accent but here BB adopts a sensible compromise - the note is played well but not overdone. The devil's violin sounds a little "sour" but I suppose that that was the intention, but it is also too thin (perhaps an artifact of the miking). At the upbeat to RN 3 Mahler calls for "blaring" horn marked *f* and gets it here. The LSO trumpet does blare out at RN 9 - 3, one of the best. At RN 11 - 8 begins passage for the low strings, accented. BB has them play almost legato here. Then follows the lovely passage for stings and clarinet, played well with some fine portamenti. At RN 12 begins a passage for flute and other winds, devil's violin, and at measure 11 the *ff* passage for piccolo, which I never hear on any recording so far; is also not heard. BB then follows through to the end with fine playing and good cellos with their portamenti at the close.

*Third Movement* - Here BB adopts a restful, calm tempo. There are in the first two pages three caesuri and the strings observe them, along with the portamenti, and at RN 1 - 26 the violins observe very clearly and effectively the tenuto markings. At RN 2, the oboe is marked *klagende* and Mahler also marks hairpin crescendi-decrescendi for the first three notes (which I had not noticed heretofore). If observed, the oboe then "wails" and it does so quite effectively here. At RN 2 + 14, the horn makes a stab at his first portamento but ignores the second one. In the solo violin at RN 4 - 9, Mahler marks some portamenti and the LSO leader does his best but the portamenti are barely heard. Starting at RN 9 + 17 the tempos picks

up with sudden transitions to allegretto to allegro to molto allegro and BB ends up a full tilt, perhaps overdoing it somewhat. Also, the sound gets so congested that it loses clarity. At RN 11 the tempo returns to calm and things go well here. BB, as do most others, ignores the string caesuri against the steady beat of the horns. Must be difficult to manage. At the upbeat before RN 12, the two strong string notes are marked with slur, but BB separates them entirely, then takes the luftpause well, with a powerful tutti. The timpani is strong but the trumpets are weak; the horns are pretty good. BB ends the movement peacefully with a lovely string portamento.

*Fourth Movement* - The tempo is marked "very comfortable" but BB elects to be a little brisk. Joan Carlyle is adequate, with a slightly nasal sound, BB does not seem to take a change in tempo at RN 2 where Mahler asks for "flowing," As perhaps he started too fast to go even faster here. Mahler does not mark the solo voice with many instructions, but some soloists sing the words with much emphasis, as here. I prefer to hear the song with less stress and more peacefully sung, as an untrained singer (child) might do. Carlyle has to scoop a little to make the leap at "Sanct Peter." BB takes the faster section briskly but not too much so, and there is heard, for the first time for me, the portamenti in the English horn, bassoons, and horns, an unusual and stirring effect. The cattle moo perhaps a little too loudly, according to the marked dynamics, but it is effective. The vegetable strophe starts at a good tempo, and is sung well. There is a slight increase in tempo where Mahler writes "bold!" and from there on the strophe is faster but not too much for the clarity of the words. Carlyle negotiates the leap better at "Sanct Martha." At RN 12 the tempo reverts to the opening of the movement and from here on it is all peace and calm. BB takes it well. At RN 13 the Keine musik ist ja is well sung and played. Carlyle is at her best here, and the eleven thousand young virgins dance gracefully and so does St. Ursula laugh. BB ends the movement very well.

An interesting reading, with many surprising felicities but, for me, much too rushed in the first movement, and I found the second movement too laid back. The rest is well judged and played and worth a listen.

**Pierre Boulez, Cleveland Symphony, Juliane Banse, soprano  
DGG 289 463 257-2, 2000**

*First Movement* - Fast opening, and stays brisk until RN 3, breit gesungen. PG takes some of the markings, e.g., portamenti. RN 4, slow, is well played and accented and PB does observe the etwas eilend marking. RN 7 is taken calmly, as marked, with good phrasing and all the portamenti are observed. On the up-take to RN (Mahler cautions nicht eilen but PB maintains his brisk pace). Just after RN 10 the four flutes in unison are played so carefully that one cannot tell that there are more than one. Is this good? All is played from here accurately, with spirit but without any geniality. It is much too straight. PB takes a good luftpause at RN 18 and then is genial. In RN 20 PB shows that he can be flexible, observing rits and not driving too hard. At the second string passage this time marked eilend PB does it right. Leading into the coda PB is gentler and the strings play their portamenti well. PB judges the tempo increase well in the coda, much better than Britten and I much prefer Boulez's fast tempi more than Britten, as the orchestra is better and the recording cleaner and revealing of much inner detail, even at fast speed.

*Second Movement* - Good tempo, slower than Britten, better articulated, more feeling, much better devil's violin. Strings are lovely at RN 1. The horn is too gentle at RN 3 where Mahler asks that it blare. Violins



are lovely at RN 4. At 3 before RN 9 the trumpet is good, could "blare" a little more positively. RN 11 begins beautifully, with great clarinet and strings. Again, however, the piccolo is missing at RN 12 + 11. The coda is very well played, led into by resonant clarinets and then the wonderful portamenti on the cellos. This is one of the best played of this movement, but I still wonder why the piccolo is absent.

*Third Movement* - Good tempo, nice phrasing in lower strings, with good portamenti. Mahler marks two caesuri at RN 1 +14 and 16. The strings here not only do not observe them but in fact play near legato without a break in the tone. Boulez is not alone here either. At RN 2 the oboe does not observe the hairpin dynamics, so it is not as klagend as should be. Britten seems to do this best. Violins do lovely portamenti 10-11 measures later, but the horns bag theirs completely. RN 9 is well judged and played by violas. The allegretto comes in just right. At RN 10 the sudden allegro is good, not too fast, and at the allegro molto the tempo is very good, not diabolically fast as some others so. Then at RN 11 the tempo drops again, as marked, and the playing is ethereal. At RN 12 the uptake is right, the luftpause is taken well, and the tutti crashes in, with strong timpani, very strong trumpets and horns. The movement then ends quite peacefully.

*Fourth Movement* - Opening tempo is good, could be a touch slower. Juliane Banse sings well, with a mostly pure voice, does not over emphasize the words. At RN 2, fliessend, PB does speed up a touch and gets a little sprightly, and Banse is good. Her leap at Sanct Martha is handled well. At RN 3 PB takes a quite sensible tempo, speeded up but not too much, and the wonderful portamenti in winds and horns are clearly heard. At RN 5 Banse is quite good, and PB lets the cattle moo at the right dynamic. The vegetable garden is described very well, not too fast, and the next section keck is taken well without hurrying. Sanct Martha sits comfortably in her kitchen, and the cymbal mit Schwammschl sounds out clearly. At RN 13, after having slowed down to a good tempo, the phrase keine Musik is ja is sung perfectly with just a touch of breathlessness, and the eleven-thousand young virgins dance daintily and Sanct Ursula's laugh is at a lovely portamento. Banse is clearly a well trained soloist yet she manages to get a childlike, virginal aspect to her phrasing and tone. All in all a very fine rendition of this movement!

After hearing Britten and Boulez bring out the portamenti in winds and horns at RN 3 + 2 & 4, I went back to listen to the Horenstein. They are there, once one knows to listen for them, but quite recessed. I suspect that they are there in most of the others but they are most audible in Britten and Boulez.

**Michael Gielen, Southwest German Radio Orchestra, Christine Whitlesey, soprano  
Gielen Edition INT 860.900**

*First Movement* - Somewhat brisk opening, but slows to a good tempo at breit gesungen, RN 3. I cannot tell if he takes the rit for clarinets at the end of measure 3. MG does not pay enough attention to caesuri and tenuto markings. MG takes the etwas eilend passage well, with a noticeable but not large speed-up. At RN 7, "again very calm," Gielen adopts a very nice tempo and the winds and strings, with lovely portamenti are quite fine. The following passages are good, with lots of detail, trumpets firm and good, some fine horn playing, but the tam-tam seems to be entirely missing at the climax at RN 17, and it is marked ff. The trumpet cadences, à la the Fifth, even though marked mf and zu 2, and recessed. A good luftpause is taken at RN 18. At RN 22 - 1, Gielen does the eilend well. The violas and cellos are quite endearing in the passages leading up to RN 24, with some heart in the playing. At RN 8 the tempo slows down nicely just before the coda and then MG picks up the tempo as Mahler marked and ends well. This

reading is, to me, good, with some tenderness and heart in some of the slower passages, but the rest seems more kappelmeisterish than inspired.

*Second Movement* - The devil's violin is quite good. Some nice detail, not always heard, with string pizzicato starting at measure 28. Very nice phasing in clarinet at RN 3 + 3. The playing is very graceful at RN 5, with fine horns and strings. The trumpet enters boldly at 3 before RN 9, as Mahler indicates. At RN 9 + 10, the violins are marked "at the bridge" but I never hear the sound this should make. At RN 11, the magical change, MG is very tender, with good clarinet and fine strings with well played portamenti. Again, no piccolo at all at RN 12 + 11. The cellos and their good portamenti played gracefully. I have to give Gielen very good marks for this movement; he seems much more involved than in the previous one.

*Third Movement* - Opening tempo good. Gielen still ignores most of the caesuri. The oboe ignores the hairpins at RN 2 and therefore does not "lament" properly. At RN 3 - 7 the strings do lovely portamenti and in the next bar the horn does the first one nicely but then ignores the second one. The winds ignore entirely their tenuto markings. At RN 4 - 9 the violins observe their dotted notes well, and then observe the slurs in the next measure, indicating that Gielen knows what is in the score but is selective about what he observes. At RN 9 + 17 Gielen makes the sudden transition from andante to allegretto very well, and then proceeds well to allegro at RN 11, and finally to allegro molto. Gielen usually can be counted on to observe Mahler's tempo markings carefully, and he does so here, shifting easily into slow gear at RN 11. The uptake to RN 12 is not as smooth as some others and the luftpause, while there, is quite short. Trumpets and horns are good enough but not ff as marked.

*Fourth Movement* - Whitlesey seems rather pinched and thin, but handles the phrasing well, albeit Gielen is a little fast here. She does seem little-girl like but there is something not too smooth about her delivery, and she takes a slight scoop at the leap from Sanct to Peter. Gielen adopts a sensible tempo, not too fast, at RN 3, The portamenti in winds and horns are hardly there at RN 3 + 3 & 5. The cattle moo much too loudly (they are marked pp) but the vegetable garden starts at a good tempo, with good enunciation. There is not much breathless wonder at keine musik ist ja but Whitlesey describes the eleven thousand virgins well enough. All in all a commendable run through the song, but not near the top recommendations.

**Michael Gatti, Royal Phil., Ruth Ziesek, soprano**  
**Decca, 289 466 720, 2000**

This performances is liked by some Mahlerites, but at least one critic excoriated it for being far too interventionist. He wrote that this is a good example of how NOT to conduct Mahler - it is micro-managed, too interventionist, etc. Now, let us see what the score says and what Gatti does.

*First Movement* - Gatti manages the rhythmic asynchronism at measure 3 but makes it hard to hear for he has the bells dim. He then adopts a somewhat brisk tempo as many others do for what Mahler writes as "quite easy." At RN 3, Gatti accelerates where Mahler writes "vigorous, lively." Then at RN 3, where Mahler writes "broadly sung," Gatti broadens out. At RN 4, Mahler writes "slow and deliberate," and Gatti does just that. Six measures later Mahler wants "somewhat flowing" and Gatti speeds up a little. At the etwas eilend marking Gatti does overdo it a little, being rather hurried. Then, Mahler marks "little retard" at RN 6 - 1, to tempo I at 6, and Gatti does just that. At RN 7, Mahler wanted "very calm and somewhat held back," I believe that these examples show that in fact Gatti observes the score rather well, at least up till now - it is just not quite what we are used to, but Gatti is not at fault, he does what Mahler

indicates. The portamenti are well judged and effective. Where Gatti does slow significantly, it is where Mahler has marked "slow retard." Now I find that Gatti begins to deviate. At the return of Tempo I Gatti is much too fast, although the playing is quite clean and precise. Gatti does ride roughshod over the many caesura and he is sloppy at the big tutti at RN 18. Nice luftpause at RN 18! Gatti gets quite wild at RN 20, as marked, punctuated by a fine ff timpani stroke, followed by strings played with "big bows" as Mahler requests. The caesura at RN 21 is observed, almost like a luftpause. The pace Gatti takes at the next eilend is ridiculous! Only Rattle, in a broadcast from Berlin, does it this fast. The slow down before the coda is well judged and Gatti does the little-by-little accelerando just right, ending up at a good but not ridiculous tempo. All in all I judge Gatti quite successful in this movement, with its many changes of pace, dynamics and colorations. It is just a little too fast in the mid-section for my taste.

*Second Movement* - The tempo is good here, not too fast but moving along. The devil's violin is quite good, and well balanced with the rest of the orchestra. At RN 3, Mahler cautions "don't hurry" and then 4 measures later asks for "somewhat easy." Gatti does take a retard there which I feel is too exaggerated. RN 11 is one of the magical spots in this movement, with clarinets and sweet strings and Gatti does it well. The piccolos are there but barely. Soon thereafter at RN 12 + 11, there are some doublets in the violins, marked with a slur and going from p to f. Gatti does these to a turn. If one was not looking at the score, one would say, "wait a minute, what is this? But it is what Mahler asked for. Again, in this movement Gatti observes pretty well Mahler's intentions, only going overboard with, in my judgement, a slower pace in one section than Mahler indicated.

*Third Movement* - The tempo is calm and relaxed, with observances of most of the markings, even the caesura at RN 1 + 14 and a stab at the caesura at measure 16. At RN 2 the tempo request is "much slower" and Gatti does it. The oboe, "lamenting," does observe the hairpins in the dynamics, accentuating the "lamentation." Gatti has his horns take the first portamento at measure 5 but not the second, although Mahler, marking it ff, evidently wanted it to be heard. Horn slurs are heard elsewhere, so why not the port. here? The little rit at measure 10 is taken nicely. Starting at RN 4, the clarinet is melodious and the strings sweet, with well played portamenti. Gatti takes a good lead in with a fine portamento in the cellos to the andante at RN 9, and the passage proceeds smoothly. Gatti here indulges as do many others in making a slur into a portamento, but where it is marked the ports are taken. The transitions from andante allegretto to allegro to allegro molto follow Mahler but perhaps at the end get too fast, so that one cannot really hear the detail. The drop in tempo to andante is good and the horns are fine there. At RN 11 + 24, Mahler writes for horns molto portamento but the appropriate marking is not in the score. What did he intend? The portamenti in the strings however are lovely. The up-beat to RN 12 is good but could have been played with a more pronounced slur. The luftpause is fine but the trumpets and horns, marked ff, with bells up, are not as strong as needed. All in all, a fine reading, with a few small lapses, with good recording and good sound.

*Fourth Movement* - Good relaxed tempo, big bass clarinet even though marked p, and Ruth Ziesek opens with a pure and well controlled voice, adequate amount of feeling but not overdone, and child-like. At RN 2, fliessend, Gatti picks up a little. Ziesek sings her Sanct Peter's leap without a trace of scoop or problem, and Gatti takes a slight rit, as marked, before RN 3. He then goes for broke where Mahler asks for "suddenly lively", too fast in my opinion, so that while the portamenti in the horns are heard well, those in the winds are lost. At RN 5, marked "held back somewhat," Gatti keeps up the speed. The mooing of the cattle is too loud. Gatti does slow down when the angels bake the bread, as called for, but then takes a

rather reckless pace again, slowing down to Tempo I for the vegetable garden stanza. Gatti errs in my opinion, in interpreting *keck!* as meaning faster, rather than simply bold. Mahler does say "don't drag" but that does not have to mean speed up. Gatti and Ziesek are quite good at RN 10, *Sanct Martha die köchin muss sein*. At 2 before RN 11, Gatti takes the first caesura well but ignores the second one marked also *luftpause*. At RN 123 Gatti does slow to a sensible tempo and the playing is tender. Ziesek is pure magic at *Keine musik ...* and the young virgins dance prettily, but do not dance a quickstep nor a peasant's clog dance. Too many singers make too much out of this phrase, as St. Ursula laughs gently to see it, she does not guffaw! Ziesek's portamento at that point is exquisite. Ziesek stands with the best of the soloists in this movement; pity that Gatti was not a little more relaxed.

**Bernard Haitink, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Roberta Alexander, soprano  
Phillips 412 119-2. 1983**

Haitink made two studio records with the ACO, the first in 1967, with Elly Ameling. Then there is a concert performance as part of the Christmas series, with Maria Ewing. Haitink tends to be quite cautious in studio recordings but much freer in concert. I will review at least the final movements of these other recordings.

*First Movement.* - With this symphony etched into their bones - over 250 performances - the ACO plays very well. BH opts for a leisurely opening tempo, but the violins take the portamento on their fourth note more as a legato slur. BH does follow Mahler's several tempo changes. BH does increase tempo slightly at the *etwas eilend* marking, but it is subtle. All goes well from there, with the trumpets good but horns seem recessed at times. BH takes a healthy *luftpause* at RN 18, then builds nicely to the second climax. BH can usually be relied upon not to exaggerate, not to be over demonstrative, to the point, some complain, of being dull. But here he knows what he is doing and the music flows well. At the *eilend* marking, BH seems to take this, which should be a little brisker than the first time, at about the same tempo. BH leads up to the coda well, and adopts brisk, but sensibly brisk tempos for the final allegro. In all, a sound reading, with emphasis more on gentleness and good flow rather than excitement.

*Second Movement.* - Horns open well, devil's violin in good balance, winds and horns good. The trumpet blasses OK at RN 9 --3, but could have been more staccato as marked. Clarinet and string passage at RN 11 is played very smoothly. Once again the *ff piccolo* is absent at RN 12 + 10. The movement ends nicely with the lovely cellos.

*Third Movement* .- Mahler seems to have laid a trap in measure 7, as many conductors demonstrate, BH also; the four quarter notes in the cellos are marked with an arching slur, but many take a portamento between the third and fourth note. Sounds nice but not what Mahler wrote. BH observes the two caesuri at RN 14 & 16, and the playing there is quite calm and peaceful. At RN 2 the oboe laments but not as well as it would if the hairpin dynamics were observed. At RN 3 -7 the strings do their portamenti fairly well, but the horns only play the first as a legato and then bag the second. At RN 9 the violas play very well, and then 126 measures later the tempo picks up nicely to *allegretto*, and then becomes *allegro* at RN 120. BH judges his tempi here cautiously, leaving some room for more speed to go to *allegro molto*, and then to *andante* where Mahler marks "half speed." At RN 12, the up beat is pretty good, the *luftpause* is too short, but the timpani, horns and trumpets and good. The movement ends well.

*Fourth* Movement. - BH adopts a good tempo, winds are fine, and Alexander enters peacefully with a pure and easy voice. At RN 2, *fliessend*, BH does not take a marked increase in tempo, just enough. He does rather slide over the wonderful portamenti for winds and horns at RN 3 + 3 and 5. Alexander's leap at Saint Peter is very fine. BH takes a brisker tempo but not as fast as many. The next stanza is good and the cattle moo at the right dynamics. The vegetable garden stanza is fairly calm and does not get frenetic in the second part, as some are wont to do. BH ignores the *Luftpause* at RN 11. BH slows to a most sensible, gentle tempo at RN 12, to prepare for the heavenly ending. Alexander sings beautifully *Keine Musik ist ja nicht aus* and her rendition of the eleven thousand dancing virgins and St Ursula and her laugh is just fine. In all, a good traversal, Alexander is one of the better soloists.

**Haitink and Concertgebouw, Maria Ewing, soprano  
Christmas Concert, 1982**

I did not hear anything much different in the first three movements from the recording reviewed above, so I skip to the -

*Fourth* Movement - Good opening tempo. Ewing is OK, a little heavy and dark in the lower register. She does some phrasings well but has a tendency to add figurations. BH takes the wind and horn portamenti better than in his last studio recording. The vegetables fare well, and the fruit also, not too fast. *Keine Musik ist ja* is sung well and so is the description of eleven thousand virgins and the laugh of St. Ursula. In all, a pretty good rendition. Ewing fares better than one would expect if one has seen her high-charged Salome at San Francisco.

**Haitink, Concertgebouw, Elly Ameling, soprano  
Philips, 1967**

*Fourth* Movement - Good opening tempo with good cello portamenti, and Ameling opens very well, much better than her later recording with Previn; here her voice is more child-like and pure. She takes the leap at Saint Peter beautifully. Haitink also takes the wind and horn portamenti here the best of his three versions. The cattle moo in the right dynamics, and the angels bake the bread daintily. The vegetable garden is sung with an almost breathless wonder. Ameling is delicious at *Keine Musik ist ja*. The eleven-thousand young virgins are perfectly sung, as is the portamento for Ursula's laugh. Ameling, at this point in her career, ranks with the top soloists. Haitink admirers should have this version! In my opinion this is one his best studio Mahlers.

**Fritz Reiner, Chicago Symphony, Lisa della Casa, soprano  
RCA 5722-2 RC, 1958**

*First* Movement - Reiner too falls into Mahler's trap - he slows down the bells along with the clarinets and strings, and tempo is too brisk, but at RN 3 he slows down to the broad tempo requested. *etwas eilend* is taken a touch faster and then broadens out, but then FR speeds up to his initial tempo, too fast, with no marking in the score for justification. RN & is more genial with good portamenti. At RN 8, *Tempo I*, fast but not excessively so. The four flutes are good. There are some very interesting inner voicings here, first with low horn notes, then muted horns. The trumpet passages are good, and follow Mahler's dynamics well. Good *Luftpause* at RN 18. The *eilend* passage is taken better here, palpably faster but not a race to

the death a la Tennstedt. Reiner broadens out perfectly for the coda, and from sehr langsam to poco a poco stringendo to allegro he builds nicely, always under perfect control. Reiner shows here his ability to keep the orchestra under his control but also his warm Hungarian blood, and even a touch of gemütlichkeit, albeit here and there as touch too brisk. This is a far superior traversal than that of his Hungarian counterpart, much later, Georg Solti.

*Second Movement* - Good tempo and very good scordatura violin. Just before RN 3 the horns are good, if not exactly "blaring." FR motors along very well until he gets to RN 7 + 19 & 21, where the violins at p rise to ff with a good wail in many other readings. However, he makes up for this lapse when at 3 before RN 9 the trumpet blares effectively. The transition at RN 11 is beautiful, with singing Viennese strings, plenty of portamenti, as written. At RN 12 + 2 the piccolo is heard clearly, but not at ff. The cello portamenti at the close are very clear and balanced.

*Third Movement* - Opening is very broad, peaceful, fine oboe. FR takes the first string caesura at RN 1 + 14 but slides over the second two bars later. At RN 2 the oboe is plaintive but not exactly klagend. The string portamenti on the G string sound fine. The horn tries his portamento the first time, and succeeds, but fails the second time, not bagging it as most do, but it should be even more prominent than the first, as it is written ff against f. Reiner takes a good change of pace at RN 9 + 17, allegretto subito, leading to the allegro at RN 10, and speeding up to the allegro molto but never getting too fast for comfort. Then, disappointment! Reiner does the up beat well to RN 12 but bags the luftpause. The tutti is pretty good, not as powerful as many others get. The movement fades well.

*Fourth Movement* - Reiner opens in a most relaxed tempo; the cello portamenti are heard very discretely, as should be, as they are marked pp. Della Casa's voice is pure and well controlled as she opens. She has been criticized by some as singing well but not knowing the meaning of the words she sings. I find this hard to accept - the much beloved Mimi and many other heroines of opera surely knows how to put herself into a part. Moreover, Mahler didn't want this part to be "interpreted," but sung simply and innocently. Della Casa does just that. At RN 2, Reiner is fließend as marked and LdC sings beautifully, takes the leap at Sanct Peter beautifully. This experienced opera star certainly knew how to float a beautiful pianissimo! At RN 3 Reiner adopts a sensibly faster tempo and the wind and horn portamenti are there, not too loud. The next stanza is good, but perhaps the cattle moo a little too loudly but this recording has such good inner detail that I suspect that this might be an artifact of the sound engineers. At RN 7 + 5, at change of tempo back to tempo I, Reiner takes a delicious little pause, not in my score, but very charming, the first time I have heard this. The vegetable and fruit gardens are described perfectly, and Sanct Martha presides over her kitchen in breathless wonder. There is no doubt in my mind that LdC knows exactly what she is singing. The experienced opera singer even knows how to sound child-like, even girlish in spots. For the transition to the next section, Reiner plays the two bars before RN 11 perfectly, but again plows through the caesura/luftpause. He slows down just right at RN 12, to prepare for the heavenly final stanza. At RN 13, LdC is gentle and very good, not as good as a few others, and she mispronounces ja, perhaps not surprising for a singer steeped in the Italian opera repertory. The eleven thousand virgins dance gently and LdC and Reiner know how to take perfectly Mahler's riten. 10 measures after RN 13. Reiner and LdC close the work in a most beautiful peaceful mood.

If Reiner had been a little more relaxed and broad in movement I and had not ignored the two important luftpausen, I would have ranked this reading right along side the exalted Horenstein. The recording and

sound from the golden days of the Chicago SO makes this my first choice among easily obtained recordings now in the catalog, a far cry from what I expected of the "iron man," and sloppy conductor of my youth in Pittsburgh of the early 1940s. The filler of a fine Don Juan, a Reiner hallmark, is a worthy bonus.

**Georg Solti, Chicago Symphony, Kiri Te Kanawa, soprano  
London Box Set, 1983**

*First Movement* - Solti falls into Mahler's trap in measure 3 as do most others - the rit is taken for the bells as well as the clarinet and strings,. Moreover, Mahler writes a port between the third and fourth notes for the violins. This is seldom taken. However, the tempo is good and Solti does observe Mahler's markings well, maybe not all the portamenti but many. Solti is often criticized for driving Mahler too hard but thus far this is genial and well played. For example, at RN 5 - 1, etwas eilend he takes it gently with just a touch of speed up. At RN 7 the cellos play lovingly with fine portamenti. The first climactic section, up to RN 18, is not driven hard at all, in fact the trumpets are good but not overpowering, as I would have expected. Solti takes a good luftpause at RN 18 and the returns to a leisurely tempo till he picks up again at RN 19; the trumpets, marked ff, however are not overpowering (as I would have liked). Many other conductors drive this section harder than Solti does, to his credit. Solti then takes the next eilend section just right. From there he gets to the coda well, and takes the change of pace very well, and ends the movement as well or better than most. This is one Solti performance that has the requisite gentleness and gemütlichkeit that Solti is so often criticized for lacking but, on the other hand, it is also somewhat tame.

*Second Movement* - This is taken at a good tempo, the devil's violin OK but too genial, but could have been a little more devilish. Horns are good, but they do not "blare" at RN 3. The trumpet, too, is too gentle at RN 9 - 3. The change at RN 112 is good and the playing very loving. The fff piccolo is again missing at RN 12 + 1. Cellos are excellent at the end of the movement.

*Third Movement* -Quite calm and peaceful, and good phrasing but for second caesura at RN 1 + 16 where the strings fail to lift their bows, but play legato. Only a few conductors insist on this observance, so Solti is not alone. To my surprise, the CSO first oboe, I assume to be Ray Still, does not observe the hairpin dynamics at RN 2 and thus does not really "lament." The strings are fine in the following passage, observing all but one port and then the two big ports at RN 2 + 13. The horns do their first port well but bag the second. In the section at RN 9 the strings Solti calls for unwritten portamenti. At RN 10 he speeds up as marked and gets to the allegro molto well, but not too rushed, and the following andante is good. At RN 12, the upbeat is OK, the luftpause taken, but the big tutti is smeared. This is not as powerful as many other conductors here.

*Fourth Movement* - Solti opens with a relaxed tempo, about average, with good cello portamenti. Te Kanawa opens with a fresh, young-sounding voice, right in character. At RN 3 Solti Takes a brisk tempo, about average again, and the wind and horn portamenti are good. Te Kanawa is charmingly "breathless" at the next stanza, Sanct Johannes. The cattle moo at about the right dynamics. The vegetable garden is well sung, and not too speedy for the fruit section. The luftpause is ignored before the last fast section. Te Kanawa is excellent singing Keine musik ist ja and properly full of wonder at the eleven-thousand

dancing virgins. She sings the laugh of St. Ursula excellently and ends the song in quiet beauty. This is again one of those interpretations to beat!

Many Mahlerites were excited by the recent New York Phil's Radio Broadcast boxed set, in which the Fourth was done by Solti in a way that was said to be more genial and relaxed than his usual driven performances. I cannot see much improvement over this laid back CSO studio performance.

**James Levine, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Judith Blegen, soprano  
RCA, 1974**

*First Movement* - Levine opens with a relaxed tempo, one that I consider is about what Mahler asked for. He seems to understand the "counting" paradox in measure 3, but he does let the bells dim and I cannot hear the end of the clarinet phrase, so he like others might just be finessing. He takes the *frisch* well and broadens out nicely at *breit gesungen* with a fine portamento in the cellos as marked. Wonder of wonders, Levine observes the delicious little caesura at the upbeat to RN 4, and the tempo drops to *langsam*, leading to a perfectly taken *etwas eilend*. The passages starting at RN 7 are taken beautifully, leading to another observed, and delicious also, caesura at the upbeat to RN 8. The unison flute passage, with quiet strings and bassoon obbligato, is very well done. Nice cymbals hit with the sticks at RN 12 + 2. The trumpet passages are well done, with dynamics as marked, leading up to a very well judged *Luftpause* at RN 18. If I have a slight complaint is that the trumpet often is a little too legato. For example, at RN 18 + 4 it is marked *staccato* and played legato. Levine had up till now been playing such close attention to markings that I was disappointed here, small point that it is. The trumpet does not repeat this mistake at RN 19 + 2. The Chicago strings play very well after RN 20, with fine horns. Again, Levine shows his respect for the score when he observes the caesura just before RN 21. He takes the following *eilend* very well. I could bore the reader with many details from here on, but Levine shows absolute fidelity to the score, ending with a very broad slowing down, with delicious portamenti, first violins lifting the bows at each caesura, then the gradual speeding up to the impressive finale. All in all, Levine's reading of this movement ranks right along with JH as the finest so far, with near perfect fidelity to the score, at the same time not at all computer-like but full of warmth and understanding of what Mahler was attempting.

*Second Movement* - Opening is good and the horn plays exactly according to the score. The scordatura violin is excellent. Horn plays *schmetternd* just as marked at RN 3 - 1. All goes very well, all the score felicities are observed and at RN 7 + 10 the flute and piccolo are heard very clearly, even though they are *pp*. I do not recall hearing these figures before. The trumpet brays nicely at RN 9 - 3 but the *griffbrett* (*sol ponticello*) is not heard. The few bars before RN 11 the contrabasses are marked *ppp* but in many recordings, perhaps owing to the miking, they are too loud. Here they are just right. RN 11 opens magically with fine string playing, portamenti galore and fine clarinet. After the fine flute entry at RN 13, solo violin, lovely low winds, the piccolo is heard very clearly piping away at measure 11. The perhaps too close miking leads to the timpani, marked *pp* starting at RN 13 + 15, being somewhat too loud, probably not Levine's doing. The movement ends with well judged cello portamenti and ends up, in my judgement, the best played of all the recordings I have surveyed.

*Third Movement* - Fine opening with lush strings, the caesura at measure 16 is very slight but it does seem to be there, as the strings seem to lift their bows. The strings observe very well the caesuri at measures 14 and 16 after RN 1, the first time I have heard that lovely effect. At RN 2 Ray Still, oboe,



could have observed better the hairpin dynamics and provided the klangend mood Mahler wanted, but it is pretty good anyway. The strings take very lovely portamenti at RN 3 minus 7 but the horns fall down with theirs the following measures, barely making the first and ignoring the second. The andante at RN 9 is excellent, leading to the allegretto and then the allegro and the quite fast, molto allegro, but under full control, are all handled well with well judged tempo relationships, in my view. At RN 11 the andante is lovely and 18 and 20 measures later the upper strings do observe their lovely portamenti and passages of serene beauty presage the Big Climax at RN 12, where the luftpause is taken well, but the tutti is sort of slid into. PITY! However, the following passages are powerful and well balanced - biting trumpets, noble horns, harp glissandi, etc., fading away to an ethereal ending.

*Fourth Movement* - Levine takes a relaxed tempo to open. The cello portamenti are nicely played. Judith Blegen, one of my favorite light sopranos, opens well; some complain of her fast vibrato but the silvery edge to her voice pleases me. She sings with some legato but I do not find it overdone, definitely not in the "cute" category. Her leap at Sanct Peter is exquisite. Levine's tempo for the fast section is sensible and the portamenti in winds and horns sounds just right. The cattle "moo" at the right dynamics, and again Blegen handles beautifully the leap at Sanct Martha. The vegetable garden stanza is taken at a very well judged tempo and Blegen sounds just like a child extolling the vegetables and fruit. Sanct Martha then resides very comfortably in her kitchen. Levine adopts a broad tempo with good phrasing for the lead to Keine music ist ja , which Blegen sings heavenly. Her elf tausend jungfrau dance gracefully and Sanct Ursula laughs most prettily at the sight. The closing phrase is magically sung. The closing is as peaceful as one can imagine.

This recording and performance, with only a few minor blemishes, is one of the very top performances.

**Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Halle Orchestra, Alison Hargan, soprano  
IMP 1991**

*First Movement* - Skrowaczewski, cheats and puts Mahler's rit in the bells and flutes as well as in the clarinets and violins. SS then goes along better, and takes the eilend passage well. SS shapes phrases well, with judicious use of slight rubato and makes the music breath and sing. This amount of conductor's interpretation I can accept, especially when it is done with taste and works so well. The four unison flutes are recorded very well, four at f seems to equal about ff, and they have the sonority that Mahler apparently was after. The bassoon is good also. The following passages leading up to the trumpet calls is good and the trumpets are very good, leading up to a nice luftpause at RN 18. Thank you SS for the caesura at RN 21. SS takes the passage eilend at just the right pace, in relation to the preceding tempo, one of the best interpretations here. SS keeps the music flowing and slows down just right in preparation for the coda, where he then speeds up just right, as written. There is a fascinating passage for solo horn at RN 24 + 6, 7 and 8, where the player is asked to slow, accelerate, then slow, then slow down even more. The Hallé horn knows how to do this. All in all, this is one of the better played of this movement. The Hallé plays beautifully for SS. If it had been slightly broader, and if SS had not chickened out at measure 3, it would be one of the best.

*Second Movement* - The Hallé horn player knows how to do the hairpin dynamics on his fifth and eleventh note, without overdoing it, and the opening is very effective, but the solo violin is not as biting as it could be. Again, and the first time I noticed it, there is a delightful hairpin dynamic for the horn at

RN 3 measure 1 and 2, and the Hallé player does it perfectly. SS takes a strong rubato at measure 3 where Mahler calls for etwas gemächlicher so I suppose it is OK, and then adopts a broad tempo. I do not recall in other recordings such a deliberate tempo for this passage. But it seems fine to me. At RN 5 + 20 the Hallé trumpet also knows how to take the hairpin dynamic - very effective. And, he/she "blares" just right at RN 9 - 3, one of the best. SS really makes the following passages sing and breath - lovely! And at RN 11 the playing is quite heavenly, with lovely string portamenti. At RN 12 the playing is properly gehalten and the flute lovely, and one does hear the piccolo some 11 measures later, but not at the written dynamic. I suppose I have to conclude by now, with the exception of James Levine, who does let the piccolo pipe out, that most conductors are afraid of this "rude" sound amidst such lovely p background, but that is what Mahler wanted. The cellos are lovely at the end, and something else I just noticed, the oboe and English horn play ppp three and two measures before the end, then suddenly f with a decrescendo to the last note. I think that nobody does this as Mahler wrote, always too loud at the ppp. Nevertheless, this is a fine traversal of this movement. A little more bite in the solo violin would have made it a contender for top ranking. The playing of the Hallé ensemble is mostly exemplary!

*Third Movement* - SS opens dreamily with fine string playing by the Hallé. SS knows how to let the flow breath and the two caesuri in strings at RN 1 + 14 & 16 are taken perfectly. What a nice effect, which so many conductors ignore, at their loss, I might add. If the horn and trumpet players know how to do hairpin dynamics, the oboist does not, or is told by SS not to, so the fine oboe passage at RN 2 is not at all klagend. Pity! SS obviously likes this music, as in my headphones I hear him grunting and humming, almost in tune. The strings accomplish wonderful portamenti and the horn takes his first one beautifully, but the second one, which should be even more pronounced, is only hinted at but not ignored as in so many other readings. At RN 4 the strings do their hairpin dynamics well, followed by lovely portamenti. SS enters RN 9, andante, with a delicious portamento on cellos and proceeds with lovely playing in the cellos. He picks up the pace properly at allegretto and then again at allegro and gets some speed up, but well controlled, at allegro molto. The following andante is well judged and played, but the two caesuri are ignored. The uptake to RN 12 is excellent and the luftpause also, with a strong tutti and good brass thereafter. The music fades nicely.

*Fourth Movement* - SS opens in a very relaxed tempo. The cello portamenti are good. The winds are meticulous about their accents! Hargan sings well, nice legato style, but perhaps a little mature but not heavy, not as childlike as some others. SS is good at RN 2, fleissend. Hargan sings the rest well, and ends with a nice leap at St. Peter and floats the (pp) well. The faster sections are taken at a good tempo, not too fast. The portamenti in winds and horns are very good. Hargan begins St. Johannes well, but the cattle moo too loudly. The vegetable garden is described smoothly. The phrases describing the fruit are also good and well enunciated. St. Martha is comfortable in her kitchen. The luftpause at RN is ignored, Pity! SS slows to a very comfortable tempo to reach RN 13 and Hargan sings the Keine musik is ja exquisitely, the eleven-thousand young virgins dance daintily, and St. Ursula laughs deliciously. A lot of the charm here is not only Hargan but that SS takes such a fine broad tempo without dragging. The ending is ethereal. If SS had not ignored the luftpause I would rate this reading as one of the best. The Hallé shows that it can match just about any orchestra.

**André Previn, Pittsburgh Symphony, Elly Ameling, soprano**

*First Movement* - Good tempo, almost hear the portamento between the third and fourth violin note. All in all this moves along well until Previn gets to the *etwas eilend* marking where he not only does not speed up but plays very deliberately. However, the playing is marvelous with strong accents, just not quite what Mahler indicated. At the middle section the trumpets are properly strong and well played. The movement ends quite in accord with Mahler's intentions.

*Second Movement* - The horn hairpins are about right, could have been slightly more, and the violin is good, but perhaps not as ironic as others. The trumpet brays most adequately and the cellos are fine at the end.

*Third Movement* - The opening is calm and the playing superb. Wonder of wonders, the horns do their first portamento beautifully and the second is there but diminished. All goes very well and the *andante-allegro-allegro- molto-andante* is excellent. The big upbeat at RN 18 is fine and the *luftpause* is taken but could have been just a tiny bit more. The big tutti is good and the bass drum outstanding, with good trumpets and horns and the gates of heaven open impressively.

*Fourth Movement* - Here is the weakness. Previn does all things right - the wind-horn portamenti are good, the tempo relations are good. Ameling, however, compared with her performance many years before with Haitink, cannot manage to sound girl-like. She is heavy, operatic and makes too big a meal of the innocent text. When she tries to sound childlike she is merely cute.

The outstanding feature of the recording is the exemplary playing of the Pittsburgh ensemble - warm, lush strings but precise and articulated when needed, and I have never heard more beautiful cello playing. The winds, horns and percussion are also fine. What a far cry from the Pittsburgh SO of my youth in the season of '40-43, when they were a scrappy bunch even under the whip of Fritz Reiner. If you don't mind the mature Ameling, this is a fine choice.

**Franz Welser-Most, London Philharmonic, Felicity Lott, soprano  
Angel CDM7, 1988**

*First Movement* - WM finesses measure 3 by hardly taking any rit at all. The tempo is well judged, the recording seems clear and the playing is good. The cello passage at RN 3 + 9/10 is very well played, very expressive as requested by GM. WM observes most of GM's markings, the slight pick-up in tempo at RN 4 + 6 is good, but his *etwas eilend* is barely faster. RN 7 is played somewhat tenderly, not as broad as it could be. RN 9, *nicht eilen* is taken a little too fast. From the unison flute section on the playing is powerful, trumpets are good, timpani especially good, and at the end of this section the *luftpause* at RN 18 is very good. The build-up to wild at RN 20 is good and ends with a good timpani thwack, written *ff*. The changed of pace at RN 21 is good, with a nice observation of the caesura. The winds are very good here, leading to the *eilend* string passage which WM does take somewhat faster, as he should have taken the first one, and this one should have been even a little bit faster. At RN 23 +7-8, one thing that I didn't pick up before is that the string passages, from first violins, to violas, to cellos, to contrabasses, each start at *p* and then increase to *sf*. WM allows the dynamics to remain steady here. At RN 24, WM holds back as requested, then the tempo build up with several gear shifts and the horn at measure 7 knows how to handle his tricky tempo changes. WM knows how to hold back, a lot, then gradually pick up the tempo as requested and ends very well.

*Second Movement* - Opening is good, with good attention by the horn to the dynamics, a good cymbal hit by stick, and the solo violin is good. The harp, marked ff is too recessed. When it comes in later at p it is inaudible. Bad miking perhaps! Just before RN 3, the horn, schmetternd is a little weak but the player does observe the hairpin dynamics. The trumpet is quite good at 3 before RN 9, and the change in pace is also good. The contrabasses are excellent leading up to RN 11, where the harp, marked pp is heard clearly this time. Lovely clarinet and bassoons! The strings are very good. And starting at RN 12 all is quiet and well played, and one does hear the piccolo piping away at measure 11, but certainly not at ff. Good ending to this movement, played with lots of detail except for the occasionally timid harp.

*Third Movement* - Broad and calm, maybe a few unwritten portamenti, and gorgeous caesuri at RN 1 + 14 & 16. The best in all this survey! Such a lovely little touch by GM, too bad so often ignored. At RN 2 the oboe does make a stab at the hairpin dynamics, essential, in my opinion to give GM the klagende he requests. While the violins observe well their portamenti the horns completely ignore theirs. RN 7 starts a good build-up, the strings are wonderful, the timpanist observes his dynamics carefully, and the entire section is most satisfying, ending in a good trumpet cadence. The portamenti for violas and cellos that bridge to RN 9 are exquisite! The changes in tempo following are well handled, with a good resting pace at allegro molto and then a good sudden shift down to andante at RN 11. Then WM disappoints: he ignores the lovely caesuri for strings at measure 18 & 20. He makes amends with a good up-beat to RN 12w, a good luftpause and a powerful tutti, with this time audible harps, good trumpet an horns and timpani, and a fine fade to a quiet and restful close.

*Fourth Movement* - Opening is calm, good winds, discrete portamenti for cellos. Felicity Lott is properly child-like, pure voice, good phrasing, and takes the leap well at Sanct Peter and WM takes a sensible tempo increase at frisch. The winds do their portamenti well but I am not sure that I hear the horns following suit. At etwas zurückhalten WM barely slows down; Lott sings this section well, and the cattle do moo, but very discretely, in the background. At the end of this stanza, WM does slow down a little while the angels bake their bread. The vegetable and fruit garden is sung well, and Sanct Martha is comfortably in her kitchen, and this section ends well, BUT WM ignores the luftpause at RN 11. He does take well, however, the slowdown at RN 12, leading to a most peaceful flute passage. Lott is full of wonder at the lovely Keine musik ist ja and the eleven thousand virgins dance peacefully, Sanct Ursula laughing deliciously at the sight. The sing winds down beautifully, with fine phrasing by Lott. Her solo ranks well up with the best.

All in all, a mostly satisfying reading, some wonderful felicities, good playing and mostly good recording, but with a few disappointments which keep it from ranking among the best. While this is one of the slower versions, although two minutes faster than Morris, it does not drag at all.

**Raphael Kubelik, Bavarian State Radio Orchestra, Elsie Morison, soprano  
DGG boxed set, 1968**

*First Movement* - RK also falls into GM's trap at measure 3, and solves it by taking the rit for all voices. His tempo is somewhat brisk, and he speeds up to much at RN 2, frisch. At RN 3, + 10, I hear for the first time, with the lovely cello passage, the lovely clarinets piping away at mp, nice effect. At RN 4, + 5, etwas fliessender, RK takes a jump up in speed, a little too much for my taste, and at etwas eilend maintains this tempo instead of hurrying a little bit more, as if he was already there. At RN 7 he adopts a

sensible tempo and the string playing is fine. Along with the unison flutes, one hears nicely the cellos, and then violas. When the music gets a little exciting around RN 18, RK speeds up but there are no such indications in the score. The trumpets are good, and at the end of this passage RN does take the luftpause to introduce the change of pace at RN 18 Then RK really picks up the pace to end at wild, RN 20. The following section is playing, even at a brisk tempo, with glowing feeling, and drops in tempo at RN 21. RK seems to begin a gradual accelerando ending with the eilend passage, taken properly briskly. RK provides a very nice and unusual touch at RN 22 end of first measure, where against pp strings one hears an explosive pizz, f, on the contrabasses. Don't recall hearing this effect before. The lead in to the slowing down for the coda is well played, and the final gradual speeding up is done well. This is one of the faster traversals of this movement; it may work for some, but, for me, RK loses the Viennese quality in the process.

*Second Movement* - The pace is good, the horn good, and the scordatura violin outstandingly prominent, as GM asks. The playing proceeds very well, the pizzicato on the solo violin excellent, and at RN 9 - 3 the solo trumpet is very good. The next section is as relaxed at RK ever gets. The playing starting at RN 11 is fine, good winds, fine strings. The piccolo is indeed there but again not at the marked dynamic. Following some beautiful strong pizzicatos on the solo violin, the timpani enter at pp but sound very strange here at 8:12 minutes. The ending is good with fine cello portamenti. Well played, if a little brisk.

*Third Movement* - Fine opening, broad and calm. RK makes the distinction between the opening pp and the p in measure 3. His strings do take the two caesuri in RN 1 + 14 & 16 but not as nicely as Welser-Most. The oboe at RN 2 is very good, taking the hairpin dynamics just enough to get a feeling of klagend, and the following string passages are good. Both strings and horns bag their portamenti thus robbing these measures of their plaintiveness. RK indulges in his usual habit of accelerating when the music gets interesting. The playing is good but there is not much distinguishing the interpretation here until RK gets to the several stepped increases in tempo from andante to allegretto to allegro and then a very molto allegro molto. He does keep in control and slows down for the andante again at RN 11, with good strong horns. The poco adagio is good but he plays right through the caesuri. The upbeat to RN 12 is good with a good luftpause and good horns, timpani, but trumpets could be stronger.

*Fourth Movement* - Good tempo and portamenti in cellos. Morison's voice is not child-like but OK, but she emphasizes too much the dotted notes in the opening phrase where GM indicates an even legato. She gets through the rest of the stanza better. RK's next tempo is not too fast and the portamenti are heard. The cattle moo properly. The vegetables and fruit are OK, and Sanct Martha is comfortable in her kitchen. The luftpause at RN 11q is barely observed. Morison is at her best at Keine musik ist ja, described the eleven thousand virgins well, and Sanct Ursula laughs just right at the sight. She is good to the end of the stanza. She is a more than adequate soloist but not ranking with the child-like wonderment of the best.

This is a typical Kubelik Mahler - brisk and no nonsense, but he does observe many of the felicities, while he also ignores some. If that is how you like your Mahler then this is a good Fourth, but not outstanding, for my taste.

**Kirill Kondrashin, Moscow Phil harmonic, Galina Pissarenko, soprano  
Special boxed set on LYS, 1972 on Westminster Gold and Melodiya LP**

*First Movement* - KK also bags the trap at measure 3, slowing down both bells and flutes, but then continues on following the score quite well, with quite good playing from the Moscow orchestra. He observe the *etwas eilend* perfectly, and the *poco rit* leading back to tempo I at RN 6. The Muscovites do RN 7 very well, and even hint at the caesura just before RN 8. The four-flute unison passage is good, with lovely bass clarinet and some of the violas being heard. The bassoon is there also, at *pp*, as written. KK, as did Kubelik, interprets *fliessend* as being fast, and *nicht schleppen* as speeding up even more, so he is too fast for my taste from about RN 11 to RN 17! Then he takes a better tempo, and stays with it, till the *luftpause* at RN 18. At RN 20 + 1, the strings are strong and good. Nice slow down to RN 21, and observance of the caesura. KK takes the *eilend* well, nit a race to the death but quite hurriedly. The slowing and then gradual speed up to the end goes well. The total timing is close to that of Kubelik, too fast!

*Second Movement.* - The opening is good, good horn and the solo violin is good. The horn is good at RN 3. KK then proceeds well and the trumpet just before RN 9 is very good, maybe a touch too much vibrato and not enough staccato. The playing at RN 11 is quite fine, relaxed and lovely. The piccolo is right there at 11 measures after RN 12, still, however, not *ff*. good playing to the end, with well judged cello *portamenti*.

*Third Movement* - Fine broad and calm opening. KK ignores the two lovely caesuri but the playing is nevertheless lovely, just misses a nice touch. The oboe at RN 2 is not bad, a hint at the hairpin dynamics. Strings do their *portamenti* well, the horn does the first one, barely the second, better than bagging them altogether. KK does an odd thing at RN 3 + 6. First he ignores the first caesura and then instead of taking the second one he has the strings play a *portamento*! KK takes the *andante* well at RN 9, then the progression to *allegretto*, *allegro*, *molto allegro*, where for me, it gets a little too fast. KK then does slow nicely for the horn passage at RN 11. From there on it is more peaceful and he then completely ignores the two caesuri, before the preparation fore the big climax. He does a nice up-beat and then takes the *luftpause* at RN 12, with a good *tutti*, strong trumpets and *timpani*, good horns, and ends peacefully enough.

*Fourth Movement* - Fine opening with *portamenti* just audible in the cellos. Pissarenko, singing in Russian, is OK, maybe not enough *legato* as GM marked, with a typical fast Slavic vibrato. She takes the leap at St. Peter well. KK takes a sensible tempo then, but the *portamenti* for winds and horn seem to be drowned out. The cattle moo appropriately, and the angels bake their bread well. The vegetables and fruit seem to go well (my Russian is too poor to catch many of the words). KK ploughs through the caesura and also the *luftpause* at RN 11. KK slows to a good tempo at RN 12, and the soloist sings well about the music in heaven and the eleven thousand virgins and takes a good *portamento* for St. Ursula's laugh.

This is by and large a good reading, with sound that seems to have been transferred from LP discs, but is OK. The box set contains I, III, IV, V and IX, all for the special bargain price of about \$12, plus postage from Paris.

**Klaus Tennstedt, London Philharmonic, Lucia Popp  
Emi 1985, available in boxed sets or sometimes singly**

This is quite a mixed bag. The first movement is far too fast for comfort. The playing is good, the sound OK but KT simply rushes through too fast for the gentleness that Mahler marks. At the two sections

marked etwas eilend and eilend, KT races so fast the second time that it is a blur. The second movement is slightly better, and the solo violin is good. The trumpets blares better than on most other recordings. The third movement is the most relaxed of the others and is quite OK, except that he gets too fast in the allegro and allegro molto. The fourth movement opens with quite exaggerated portamenti in the cellos in measures 2, 3 and 4, sounding like a sick cat. Yet the wind and horn portamenti right after the first stanza of the song are not exaggerated. Lucia Popp is engaging enough and her musicality cannot be denied (she is an accomplished Lieder singer) but here she sometimes manages to sound somewhat "cute." She indulges in a slight scoop at Sanct Peter but is better later. Her voice is a bit heavy, operatic and too mature for this part at this time in her career. All in all I cannot recommend this performance.

### Late Additions

#### **Bruno Walter, Vienna Philharmonic, Hilde Guden DGG 150 Year VPO Anniversary Box**

*First Movement* - BW, as in his others, take the rit for all voices. He interprets frisch as faster," but broadens nicely at RN 3. At RN 4, plötzlich langsam he speeds up a little (!), but then at measure 6, etwas fließender, he speeds up a little more and then ignores the etwas eilend at measure 9. However, he does broaden at RN 7, as indicated, and the VPO play the portamenti very well. At RN 10, Mahler writes fließend, aber ohne Hast and this signals to me that by fließend he DOES NOT mean speed up, just let the music FLOW. At RN 11, measure 8, BW does observe a marking that is striking - while the horns are swooping the violins play ff staccato and in this recording it is a striking effect. He trumpet passage goes well with some very fine playing by the VPO trumpets, except that there is no distinction made between the f marking and the later ff for the damped trumpet, RN 17 + 12 and then + 14. The bBW surprises, delightfully (!) - he takes a good long long luftpause at RN 18, which he did not do in the NYPO performances. This is a most felicitous passage, where the recap takes place not at the beginning of the first theme but in the middle, and a conductor who misses this luftpause throws away the effect. The reprise builds to fine trumpet playing and a good wild string passage at RN 20. Then the VPO plays beautifully and nicely Schwungvoll at measure 6. However, when GM wants "suddenly slowly" BW does not and in fact seems to speed up some, at RN 21. He does observe, barely, the "hurriedly" direction at RN 21 + 10. In the next passage the clarinets do their little swoops or bird calls very well, the best I have heard. BW slows down very well for the build-up to the coda, and ends very well. Overall, a very felicitous rendition, the best of the three BWs I have heard.

*Second Movement* - Tempo just a touch brisk but it works. Solo violin very good. Horns weak at RN 3, "blaring," and weak again at RN 5 + 14, "merrily prominent!" Trumpet OK at RN 9, but not quite "blaring." The VPO strings are good at RN 11, "more broadening" but BW could have relaxed a little bit more. At RN 12, not quite gehalten enough but the piccolo does make itself heard 11 measures later. The movement ends with a nice flourish in the cellos.

*Third Movement* - Good tempo, nice cellos, a gratuitous port at measure 7, but the marked one at measure 21 is ignored. Oboe is OK at RN 2, could have observed the hairpin dynamics better. Horns at 14 after RN 2 legato rather than port. Things go smoothly from there and BW takes a nice allegretto subito at RN 9 + 17 then not really moving to allegro subito at RN 10 but he does go to allegro molto at 16 measures later. He essentially ignores the luftpause at RN 12 and goes right into the fortissimo, strongly and very

emphatically. The movement dies out as it should but ignoring the delicious port at measure 6-7 after RN 13.

*Fourth Movement* - HG opens a little insecure, I think, but gets on well. Her Sanct Peter is good but instead of taking the final word zu as a whole note she chops it off before the other voices stop. The wind and horn parts are good (if the horns could do it there, why did they bag them in III?). HG is better in next strophe and the cattle moo properly. The vegetable garden is good but BW speeds up too much for the fruit section, interpreting keck! and nicht schleppen as "speed up" BW slows to a good final tempo at RN 12. HG does well at Keine musik but she takes a slight slide up to Elf. St. Ursula laughs prettily to see her charges dance and the movement ends well.

This performance is slightly better musically than the BW NYPO with Halban, but HG is slight behind Imgard Seefried.

**Colin Davis, Bavarian Radio S. O., Angela Maria Blasi  
BMG**

*First Movement* - The opening temp is somewhat brisk, and CD allows all voices to rit but at least he does not dim the bells. Then at RN 1, he slows down, BUT James Zychowicz notes that Mahler had deleted the marking there of "Tempo I." Perhaps CD was using an earlier edition. His tempo is better at RN 3, Breit gesungen. At RN 4 + 6, CD picks up tempo for etwas fliegend and takes the etwas eilend string passage well, if a touch fast. This is quite a detailed recording, with lots of inner voices clearly heard, e.g., clarinets and horns in spots where one does not usually notice them. CD takes a slight rit to introduce the fine horn part at RN 8 + 8, and speeds up at RN 9, nicht eilen. He clearly is imposing some personal thoughts on Mahler's score, not egregiously, but noticeable. The tempo is good at RN 10, the four unison flutes, with fine cells in the background and beautiful bassoon. Again CD indulges himself with a gratuitous rit at RN 13. There is fine trumpet and horn playing and the luftpause at RN 18 is excellent. All goes along well with very fine playing by the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, especially the full tone on the horns. CD when he gets to the second downward fast passage, this time hurriedly not modified by the "somewhat," he takes it at the same tempo, maybe even slight SLOWER than the first time. Again, a little too much self-indulgence. The fine Bavarian horns play perfectly the passage starting at RN 24 +7, and CD takes the code very well.

*Second Movement* - The horns observe very well the dynamics in the opening measure, which gives the music a nice lilt. The solo violin could be more prominent. Horns are excellent at RN 3, properly prominent and observing the dynamics. Trumpet is also fine, and blaring, at RN 9 - 3. Violins and clarinets are good at RN 112, but compared with the VPO, BW just heard, the parts are too reserved., but CD does a proper gehalten at RN 12 for the solo flute and some measures later the piccolos are heard, but not at ff. At RN 13, the piccolos play at f and then trill at pp. No conductor plays this passage as written! The horns do a peculiar little riff at 10 measures before the end, where their last note is written pp but then a crescendo. The horns give this a flourish, almost a canine woof, not heard on any other recording. The cello parts are discrete, as they should beat the end.

*Third Movement* - Relaxed tempo and good playing, but the first several parts are ignored, taking away a little of the sweetness of the music. The horns come in exactly together (somewhat rare) at RN 1 measure 7, but CD ignores the two caesura soon thereafter, The oboe at RN 2 is expressive but ignores the



dynamics and therefore sounds somewhat bland, not klagende, and by ignoring the following ports the violins are also bland. At measure 13 after RN 2, the violins almost ignore the first port but take the second one well; the horns slur a little on their first port but bag the second. Pity, as their sound is so grand. Later, at RN 9, andante CD is broad enough but 7 measures later he inserts converts a slur to a port and 17 measures later he hardly changes tempo for allegretto subito. Next, at 9 measures before 10, nicht eilen he inserts a rather pronounced caesura and at RN 10, the allegro subito is rather spiritless. However, he accelerates somewhat and by the time he gets to allegro molto there is some spirit. He broadens out for the andante subito with some fine horn playing into the poco adagio. The up-beat to RN 12 is OK, and CD observes the luftpause but it could have been a little more pronounced, and the following tutti is good, with fine horns, so-so trumpets, and the timpani is too weak (written ff and for both hands). The luscious port bridging measures 6 and 7 after RN 13 is hardly noticeable. I have to rate this movement as much below the sensitivity of I and II.

*Fourth Movement* - Ports in cellos very good at opening. Blasi is excellent and floats a beautifully pp for Peter. Davis adopts a sensible frisch tempo at RN 3. The winds and horn ports are good. At RN 5 Blasi adopts a "breathless" quality to open the second stanza, very effectively. But then, Davis slows down, misinterpreting nicht eilen. The oxen passage is sung beautifully, perhaps one of the best yet, and the mooing is right. The tempo is then properly held back for the baking of the bread. Davis infuriates by taking an unmarked luftpause at measure 5 after RN 7 to return to Tempo. The vegetable section is sung beautifully. Another unmarked pause between Gut' and Äpfel! The luftpause at RN 11 is ignored but another unmarked big pause to start RN 12. Blasi is nearly incomparable at RN 13, Keine musik, and sings most tenderly of the eleven thousand virgins. St. Ursula laughs most wonderfully, and Blasi observes beautifully the fermata at zu and then takes a most delicious port to lacht. The following keine musik is beautifully phrased, even better than the first time. The final sentences are equally well sung.

If CD had not intervened into Mahler's flow by inserting bad pauses and ignoring those marked, this would have been one of the most beautiful Fourth movements of the collection. Blasi is obviously a well trained singer, not exactly as child-like as some others, but with exemplary musicianship, diction and pronunciation. She joins my select list of the best soloists. While there is much to admire in this recording, especially the horn playing, Davis falls well short of making my select list favorite conductors of this work. Davis consistently ignores caesuri but inserts some of his own at most inappropriate places. When he allows the Bavarians to play port they do so winningly but he ignores many and then inserts some of his own. These are the kinds of liberties that I cannot accept.

**Bernard Haitink, Berlin Philharmonic, Sylvia McNair  
Phillips 434 123-2, 1992**

*First Movement* - Haitink allows all voices to take the rit. Starting at RN 1 + 4 the ostinato horn staccato behind the fine violins is a wonderful effect, very clear in this recording. Starting at measure 13 the descending string figures, each with fp diminuendo, are also very effective. BH nicely observes the caesura just before RN 4, but he does not observe the etwas eilend at measure 9. The Berliners play very well the ports leading up to RN 8. The cello trills are clearly audible, leading up to RN 10, and the unison flutes sound very good over the cellos with fine bassoon obligatos. The passages leading up to the trumpet figures, played with exemplary articulation, are spirited and one can hear clearly the low horns at RN 17+ 6 and 7. The following trumpet passages are again very fine, leading to an exceptional luftpause

at RN 18, one of the longest. At 1 before RN 22, BH plays the eilend the way he should have played the similar earlier passage etwas eilend. Here it should have been a touch faster. The rest of the movement is fine, with appropriate tempo changes and ends on a brisk note. BH here seems somewhat less four-square than in his previous recordings and the Berliners play beautifully.

*Second Movement* - The movement opens with some fine horn playing, but the solo violin is not as prominent as called for. At RN 3 the horn could have been a little more prominent, as requested by GM. At RN 4 + 16 and following the horns are exemplary, observing the dynamics very well. The trumpet blares properly at 3 before RN 9. The passages following RN 11 are beautifully played, the Berliner strings second to none in sensitivity along with precision. At RN 12, BH does not become gehalten, playing the continuation of the flute passage at the same tempo as the upbeat. The piccolo is pretty good at measure 11 after RN 12, not as prominent as in the Horenstein but better than most others, and also is heard effectively following RN 13, a rarity among these recordings. There is a low stopped horn I had not heard before at RN 14 + 1, an interesting coloration of Mahler's that is seldom heard. The cellos are fine at the close.

*Third Movement* - The opening is peaceful and well played. At about 0:33, measure 7, between the second and third beat, the slur is exaggerated into a mild port, something which I have heard before but it is not in the score. BH does observe, carefully, the two caesuri an RN 1 + 14 & 16, providing a good breath to this passage. Levine does it better but at least BH does not play through them, as so many do. At RN 2 the oboe properly laments by observing the hairpin dynamics. At measure 13 the violins do their ports well, and the horns do their first one well, but more or less skip the second. Disappointment again! The horns are disappointingly weak at RN 7, 11:55. At RN 8 + 6 they are written ff but seem much weaker. The step-wise increase in temp from RN 9, andante to allegro molto at RN 11 - 5 is good, with the sudden change back to andante at RN 11. Here the horns sound better, at f than they did earlier, so it must be BH who hushed them. The upbeat to RN 12 is good, but the luftpause is barely observed. The tutti is OK, but the horns and trumpets could be louder, while the timpani are just right. The string port bridging measures 6 & 7 after RN 13 is barely heard.

*Fourth Movement* - The cello ports are discrete but heard. McNair opens well, sings evenly, the voice is light and child-like, but she is sometimes careless with dynamics. For example, starting at RN 2, the dynamic is pp but at the word tan zen she is too loud. However, she ends the stanza well. The ports for winds and horn are OK. The second stanza fares well, but not as well as Angela Blasi, above. The vegetable stanza goes well until the fruits are mention and McNair takes an unwritten slur between Gut' and Àpfel which sounds a little wrong. Keine musik is well sung, and St. Ursula laughs well, and the next phrases are also well sung. If McNair does not make my top list, she is nonetheless very good.

Having heard three traversals by BH, but having also not listened in detail to the concert Christmas performance, I would say that this is his best, though it falls short of making my top list.

**Michiyoshi Inoue, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Yvonne Kenny  
Impact CDRPO 5007, 1989**

*First Movement* - MI lets all voices take the rit and the bells and flutes seem also to dim before the end of measure 3. At RN 1 first three measures, while marked ppp At measure 3, MI lets the cello voice be heard at about 1:00, a nice touch of inner detail. MI seems to pay attention to Mahler's dynamics, e.g., at

measure 8 the slight crescendo in violins and bassoons, and then the descending string passages at 2 before RN 2. Nice touches! At RN 2 the clarinets are frisch, almost perky, without speeding up. He observes the caesura just before RN 4. I do not detect any *etwas fließender* at 6 after RN 4 but the *etwas eilend* is observed very well 4 measures later, about 3:40. MI observes very nicely the *poco rit* at the third repeat of the opening violin phrase at RN 6 - 1, about 4:18. The cellos are lovely at the end of RN 7, taking their parts just right. The horn *ff* entering at the end of 4 measures after RN 8 could be more pronounced. The passage starting at RN 10, four flutes in unison, has lovely cellos in the background. The passages starting at RN 16 or so, feature nice trumpet playing. The timpani, marked for a continuous roll, starting at *f*, then *mf* then *p* at measure J, Zychowicz, indulges at about 10:14, in an unmarked crescendo at measure 8, again in 9, and then does the marked one at measure 10, the first time I have heard this. Nice effect but not in the score! Nice *Luftpause* at RN 18. The next passages are fine and MI observes very well GM's markings, taking a nice gentle caesura just before the change of pace at RN 21. At 1 before RN 22, the *eilend* is taken somewhat briskly but not much faster than the *etwas eilend* earlier. At measure 5 after RN 22, the bells come in two beats late. As another indication of MI's concern with the score, the horns play measures 7 & 8 after RN 24 perfectly. The beginning of the coda, measure 11, where the initial violin phrase is repeated with slight variation, (and also heard just earlier in the oboe) is well done and the gradual acceleration to the end is fine. I have dwelt somewhat at length on this movement as I found it so genial, sunny and well played. I guess that the recording is a little laid-back, i.e., not "close," so that the mix is maybe 15th row orchestra rather than "conductor's" podium. MI does not strive for "effects," is rather faithful to the score (except for the spurious timpani effects mentioned above), and achieves a warm and pleasant reading that ranks among my top picks, at least for this movement.

*Second Movement* - MI continues his good work with good horn phrasing and dynamics. The solo violin has the right "fiddle" sound but is not as prominent as need be, perhaps the results of the recording set-up. The harp, marked *ff* at RN 1 + 4, is rather weak. Horn 1 at measure 1 before RN 3 and following, is also rather weak, though marked "blaring" - recording set-up again? Trumpet 1, 5:09, enters prominently as marked. The descending clarinet passages at RN 10 11-13 follow exactly the marked decrease in dynamics. The passages starting at RN 11 exhibit exemplary string playing, lovely clarinets, horns obeying the marked dynamics, and the piccolo is heard well enough, but they are not heard well at Measures following RN 13, and the solo violin *pizzicatos* marked *ff* are not loud enough. At 12 measures before the end, the slight crescendos in horns and clarinets are heard, but not as obtrusively as in the Colin Davis reading. The cellos do their thing well at the very end.

*Third Movement* - Opening tempo is calm, could be a touch slower, but playing is fine and the several caesuri are gently observed. Then oboe at RN 2 does observe the hairpin dynamics giving the *klagende* feeling asked for by GM. While the strings do observe their portamenti well, up to measure 13, again disappointment as the horns fail theirs in the next measure 5:55. At RN 6 measures 5 and 6, 11:03, the oboe gently observes the caesuri giving a nice breathing feeling to the flow. The step-wise increase in tempo from *andante* at RN 9 to *allegro molto* then slowing back to *andante* at RN 11 is very well handled, plenty of zip in the fastest section but not too fast to blur the notes. MI slides through the 4 caesuri leading to the up beat before RN 12, but takes that well with a good *Luftpause* and a solid *tutti*. The trumpets and timpani are fine, but the horns could be louder.

*Fourth Movement* - MI opens in a good relaxed tempo, the cello parts are heard as marked, *pp*. Yvonne Kenny has a slight tremolo, but the voice is clear and while not quite child-like, is more than suitable for

this song. She floats a beautiful pp "Peter" at 1:50, taking the leap perfectly and hitting the b right on the head. MI adopts a brisk but sensible tempo for the instrumental section, and the ports are heard well for winds and horns. St. Lucas slaughters the oxen to their gentle mooing, and the angels bake their bread peacefully. The vegetable and fruit section fare well, not too brisk to mask the words, and St. Martha reigns calmly in her kitchen. Kenny sings well, but not in the top class, keine musik and about the eleven thousand virgins. St Ursula laughs but the portamento is subdued. The last phrases are tenderly sung and the movement ends calmly. A very good rendition, approaching but not quite making, one of my top picks.

### **Leif Segerstam, Danish National Radio SO, ? Johanssen, soprano**

*First Movement* - Segerstam lets all voices rit in measure 3. After that he seems to follow GM's markings well, but perhaps overdoes the frisch marking at RN 2, as so many others also do. LS broadens out nicely At RN 3, observes the caesura just before RN 4, speeds up just a touch for fließender and then takes the etwas eilend just a touch faster still, observing the caesura at the end of this passage just before RN5. The Danish musicians play very well, LS following GM's markings well, and the unison flutes at RN 10 sound good and one can tell that there are more than one; the bass clarinet is good as are the cellos. The passages string at RN 16 are vigorous with fine trumpet playing. The long timpani roll has a few slight crescendi but not nearly as pronounced in the Inoue recording above. LS takes a very nice luftpause at RN 18. From here to the end of RN 21, I can find not much to comment on, it goes well, is very vigorous, LS follows the score well, perhaps with a little more rubato than some others, but it is not overdone. He ends the section with a good eilend and a nice transition to wieder gemächlich at 22. The interesting horn passages at 17:08, 24 + 7, sound different with a change in dynamic on the second note, not marked. The slow down and then build up to the end is good. This is a fine reading, and very good recording, closer than the Inoue described above, with some fine inner detail.

*Second Movement* - The opening is good, and then all goes well, but the solo violin could be more prominent. At RN 3 the horn could blare some more, but the player does observe well the two hairpin crescendos. All goes well again, with some fine wind and horn playing. The trumpet, "blares" quite effective at 3 before RN 9, 5:20, probably the best thus far, but LS does indulge in his usual rubato, leading into the wieder gemächlicher starting at 9. Strings and clarinets are lovely starting at RN 11 but the piccolo is subdued at measure 11 after RN 12, and also later behind the solo violin pizzicati. The movement ends well with good cellos.

*Third Movement* - The opening is fine, good string playing, many of the caesuri are observed, and the oboe at RN 2 is good. LS takes the two string portamenti well and the horns do the first of theirs very well but, for some reason, bag the second one. Is there a jinx here? Not a single conductor does this as written! Starting at RN 4, LS in my opinion misinterprets anmuthig bewegt (gracefully animated) by speeding up too much. It is not at all "graceful, but he does slow down again at RN 6. Starting at RN 9, a good andante, LS takes the stepwise increase in tempo to a very fast molto allegro, about as fast as they players can play, but still clear, and then the sudden drop to again a good andante at RN 11. LS ignores the several caesuri in the final measures of 11, takes as good upbeat to a very good luftpause at 12, with good trumpets and timpani, maybe slightly weak horns, leading to a barely audible port in the strings at measure 6-7 after RN 13 (but it is written ppp).

*Fourth Movement* - Opening good with good cellos, Ms Johanssen is not a suitable soloist - somewhat mannered, voice too mature, a touch of a "bleat." She is a little too forward, perhaps the close miking. The next section is a good tempo and the ports heard. The cattle moo perhaps a little loudly. LS to his credit does not speed up too much after the vegetable section when he gets to the fruit orchard, but the soloist has some pronunciation problems at Sanct Martha. Except for the maturity in her voice, she is better at keine musik and manages a good port when St. Ursula laughs. The little bleat reappears however, towards the end. All in all, I like LS's approach orchestrally, with perhaps a bit too many rubato episodes, restrained as they are.

**Esa-Pekka Salkonen, LA Philharmonic, Barbara Hendricks, soprano**  
**SONY SK 48 380 1992**

*First Movement* - The opening tempo is brisker than I like, but I believe that EPS does take the rit correctly, but the bells dim a little so that it is not 100% clear. Then he speeds up at frisch which I think is unwarranted. Then something new - at measure 4 before RN 4, a sudden swell in the horn, which has a grace note and then a second swell where there is an accent mark. I do not like it! - too much like the extraneous swell L. Bernstein always inserted in the penultimate chord of the end of the 7th. To EPS's credit, however, he then observes the caesura before beginning RN 4. He takes an increased in tempo for fließender but then takes the same tempo at etwas eilend. He slows a little for wieder gemächlicher but then gratuitously speeds up after the bassoon solo at measure 4 after RN 5 to go back to his too fast Tempo I, and then slows down again properly for poco rit just before RN 6. RN 7, sehr ruhig, is played well. The horn, ff, is good at RN 8 + 5 but at the up beat to RN 9, nicht eilen, it is too fast. Cellos and bass clarinet are good at RN 10, the unison flutes. It is just too fast! PS then unexpectedly slows down for RN 13. EPS moves along just too quickly through the trumpet passages but then takes a good luftpause at RN 18 and slows down, but not quite to sehr bemächlich. And, then he falls prey to the bad mistake of speeding up again when the music gets loud and exciting. At RN 21, introduced by a nice caesura, the tempo is relaxed until keck! and then a speed up and not at all eilend at the end of RN 21. I think that this young man needs to learn how to read German! The coda slows and then accelerates well. Notwithstanding some fine moments, and fine playing from the LA Phil, the conductor's waywardness and disrespect for GM's intentions mitigate against recommendation, for this movement. We'll see what new delights are in store next.

*Second Movement* - the movement opens well, but too fast again, and there is a strange buzz in the background at 0:07 and again somewhat later. Horn is good with a nice sf for stopped horn at 0:11. The solo violin is good. Horn 1 enters, not blaring enough, but with good hairpin dynamics, at RN 3, and EPS interprets nicht eilen as a drastic slowdown! It is almost lugubrious, not lustig, as marked for clarinet. This one passage is a good example of HOW NOT TO CONDUCT MAHLER! Trumpet 1 is quite good at 3 before RN 9. At RN 11 -5, 6:37, there is a strange "wail" in cellos instead of an accent. RN 11 is played very well, gorgeous clarinets and strings. The piccolo is repressed and it and flutes hardly to be heard over the solo violin pizzicati. The movement ends with swells on the horns instead of quick decrescendos but with good ports for cellos.

*Third Movement* - Good opening tempo, lovely string laying, horns enter sweetly, and the two caesuri are observed at RN 1 + 14 & 16. The oboe is not quite right at RN 2, taking the hairpin dynamics too slowly. Strings are fine in following passage and take their big ports very well, the horns take the first one well,

and then bag the second. Again, EPS takes the anmuthig bewegt too fast, not at all gracefully. At the end of RN 8, 13:53 there is a lovely viola port followed by a cello port leading to a good andante at RN 9. The allegretto 17 measures later is well judged and goes into an also well judged allegro but with a slight acceleration before the final allegro molto. At RN 11 the andante is again good. The upbeat to RN 18 is good, but the luftpause while there is too short. The great tutti I fine with strong trumpets and timpani, horns are OK.

*Fourth Movement* - Good cello ports, nice winds. Barbara Hendricks has the right voice and she uses it well, serene and childlike, as Mahler instructs. Some of her German diction leaves something to be desired and she does not quite nail the leap at St. Peter. The tempo is then a touch too brisk, but the ports are heard cleanly. The next section is good, maybe a little too fast where GM asks for etwas zurückhaltend and the oxen are being slaughtered to mooing that is too loud. The vegetable are good but the tempo then speeds up too much for the fruit but slows down for St. Martha in her kitchen, but Hendricks again fails to nail the leap accurately. Keine musik is well sung, the eleven thousand virgins dance gently and St. Ursula laughs well, perhaps slightly too demurely, The repeat of Keine musik is excellent. The Cäcilia phrase has a crescendo which does not belong, but is well sung. Hendricks ends nicely and the music fades away very well.

Notwithstanding some fine playing and touches, this is too wayward to recommend highly.

**Gary Bertini, Cologne Radio Orchestra, Lucia Popp, soprano  
EMI 1987**

*First Movement* - Bertini lets the bells dim before the violins enter so that it is hard to tell if he takes this correctly. Just after the repeat of the opening violin phrase, measure 17, 0:50, the cellos are heard nicely, and the horns are very good. GB takes a good caesura before RN 4, and the tempo drops to slow as marked. The etwas eilend section 3:15 is played perfectly, with a strong accent on the first note and ends on a good caesura. Again a nice caesura to end RN 7, after some lovely string playing with all the marked ports. Very good horn playing starting at end of 4 after RN 8 with a fine crescendo at measure 8. RN 10 is somewhat fast, in spite of the admonition ohne hast but background voices are good under the unison flutes. Starting at RN 11, fließend, Bertini is somewhat too fast for my taste, but well played and well articulated, but also ends well with a good luftpause before the change of pace at RN 18, but again a little too brisk for me. RN 21 is somewhat more relaxed, and ends with a brisk, as requested, eilend. RN 22 is again relaxed. RN 23 ends well, with fine string ports and good horn. RN 24 is very good and the modified opening violin phrase begins the coda, very well handled.

*Second Movement* - Tempo is good, horns just right, solo violin pretty good, and RN 1 is very good. Horn at RN 3 good, but does not take the hairpin dynamics here, but later does take them very well, at RN 4 + 16 and following. The trumpet is very good at 3 before RN 9, 5:05. At RN 10 + 11 the clarinets are strangely missing or very repressed. RN 11 is very good with fine clarinets and strings. The piccolo is good at RN 12 + 11, but missing later under the solo violin pizzicati. Bertini lets the horn take a "woof" at the end of their passage at 10 measures before the end. The cellos are good at the end.

*Third Movement* - The opening is broad, very carefully played, lost of expression, good observance of Mahler's dynamic markings. The caesuri at RN 1 + 12 & 14 are observed well, and also at 26 & 28. The oboe at RN 2 could be more klagende but the hairpin dynamics were not observed. At RN 2 + 12 the

violins are at pp and in measure 13, the first port is taken but is gentle, but the next one, crescendos to ff and this is very striking. In the next measure the first horn port is f and this is taken well; the second port is ff and is barely observed, as with all other conductors. I find this very mysterious. RN 4 is gracefully animated, as marked. Andante starting at RN 9, is well judged, then to allegretto then to allegro then to allegro molto are all judged well, ending up sprightly but not a race to the death. The return to andante at RN 11 is fine. The upbeat to RN 12 is good, there is a good luftpause but the tutti is not entirely together, but strong, with excellent trumpets, horns and timpani. The port at RN 13 + 6-7 is just as written and the movement ends quite peacefully, just as written gänzlich esterben.

*Fourth Movement* - Good broad opening tempo, with clear cello ports. Lucia Popp is a consummate artist here, with a voice that is pure and as child-like as a mature singer can manage, without mannerisms or exaggerations. She takes the leap effortlessly at St. Peter. Bertini adopts a sensible tempo for the faster section and the wind and horn ports are excellent. The little lamb is lead quietly, and the oxen moo at the right dynamics as they meet their ends. The angels bake their bread unhurriedly The vegetables are tender and the fruit phrase is sung at slight faster tempo at keck! St. Martha reigns serenely in her kitchen. The luftpause is taken at RN 11. Popp sings Keine musik ... very gently, the eleven thousand virgins dance gently, and St. Ursula laughs gently to see them. Keine musik again is very gently and a little mysterious, and Cäcilia is content to be the heavenly musician. The angel's voices are most gentle, and the music fades away perfectly.

If it were not for the rather too fast development in I, I would rank this among the best.

**Lorin Maazel, Vienna Philharmonic, Kathleen Battle, soprano  
SONY SK 14K 48198, 1983**

*First Movement* - Maazel allow the bells to rit somewhat and also dim. He adopts a fine broad tempo for the opening sections, but then speeds up some at frisch RN 2, but then slows down at RN 3. LM takes very well the etwas eilend followed by a caesura. From here to the luftpause at RN 18, the music flows along, but without much character or feeling. It is "laid back" as is the Salonen and Solti commented on above. The development is OK, with pretty good trumpets, but without the verve of the Bertini and many others. The next section seems more animated, ending in a good timpani thump at RN 20, with pretty good strings and horn. The caesura at RN 21 is observed and the next section has a little bounce to it. The eilend is taken briskly, as marked. At RN 24 + 1 the opening violin theme is repeated on oboe, then for the second time in horn, then for the 7th time on violins to start the coda, slowly. The build up in tempi is good and the movement ends vigorously. This is a peculiar, rather tame, rendering of this music, well played to be sure by the Wieners, but given little life by the conductor.

*Second Movement* - Opening is OK, somewhat bland, but solo violin very good. At RN 3 the horn is OK, not at all "blaring" and the dynamics changes are weak. The trumpet enters quite vigorously 3 before RN 9. Winds are quite fine - could any less be expected of Berlin? - at RN 10 m+ 7-13. RN 11 is played beautifully. The flute solo starting just before RN 12 is nicely played and the tempo is properly gehalten. The piccolo makes a good appearance 11 bars later. Piccolo again is distinct behind the solo violin's very fine and devilish pizzicati - Bravo Maazel! The horns do their dynamics correctly 12 measures before the end and the cellos are fine. Maazel is quite more successful here than he was in I; a fine traversal of this movement, albeit with a weak beginning.

*Third Movement* - Good opening, well phrased, very calm. The Wieners do lift their bows to observe the caesura at RN 1 + 14 & 16, and make a stab at this again measures 28 & 30. The oboe at RN 2 observes the hairpins giving a quite good lamentation effect. The strings do their parts perfectly at RN 2 + 13. The horns do their first one very well but then proceed to bag the second, more important one. Maazel takes RN 4 at a fine tempo, lots of feeling. At RN 6 the English horn is heard clearly as a countervoice to the oboe, not always easily discernable in most previous recordings. The andante at RN is taken beautifully, The allegretto (nicht eilen) is sprightly and just a little faster; Mahler cautions to keep in tempo till the allegro and LM keeps control. The allegro is somewhat slower than most other conductors but is lively enough. Same with the allegro molto. LM, as do most others, ignores the caesura at RN 11 + 18 & 20. If memory serves correctly, Levine did these properly. The upbeat to the luftpause is fine, and the pause itself very fine. The Wieners nail the tutti, with good timpani, a great cymbal, the harp is clearly heard good trumpet, somewhat weak horns. Interesting, at RN 13 + 7, the flutes are late, allowing the violin portamento to be heard fairly clearly. Everyone is playing ppp so it is not a big effect, but effective. Did LM do this on purpose? The movement ends in pure peace.

*Fourth Movement* - Tempo is very relaxed, what I think Mahler wanted. Cellos do their portamenti well. Battle enters very calmly, with clear and child-like mode. The tempo is relaxed enough so that a slight acceleration T RN 2, fliegend is right on. She nails the leap at St. Peter with a fine pp. ML adopts a sensible faster tempo and the wind and horn portamenti are fine. The section is played with good verve. Battle is fine in next section, the oxen moo properly, and angels bake their bread peacefully. Maazel's tempo for the vegetable section is fine, and does not speed up appreciably for the fruit trees, and there is a wonderful cymbal hit with the stick at RN 8 + 9. This is one of the best rendering of this often problematical section. St. Martha reigns comfortably in her kitchen. However, LM mostly ignores the caesura/luftpause at RN 11. He slows to a very calm tempo at RN 12. However, he then slows down a little more at RN 13 for Battle's fine keine musik. The eleven thousand virgins are very demure and St. Ursula laughs slowly to watch them. Mahler marks a fermata for "zu" but also says "kurz". Battle does not do it short but I find it most effective and in keeping with the poem and the music. The reprise of keine musik is mysterious as Mahler asked. The rest of the stanza is most relaxed but entirely engaging and fades away beautifully. This is the second slowest fourth movement and it entranced me. Maazel makes it work better than Wyn Morris and the slowest, John Barbirolli. Battle joins my list of the star soloists, and I'll rank this one movement with the best of the others. If the first movement had had more fire in its belly, and the second movement had started better, I would rank this entire performance with the best.

**Eduard van Beinum, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orch., Margaret Ritchie, soprano  
1951**

*First Movement* - VB comes close to doing it as written, with only a slight rit in the bells and one can hear the rit in the clarinets as they dim. The tempo is somewhat brisk, but within the range, not as fast as some others. VB takes the etwas eilend well at 1 before RN 5, Also he rides through the caesura here, as he did mostly up till now. Horns at ff are quite recessed, behind the strings, at RN 8 + 9, and again at RN 9 + 8. I suspect this is an artifact of the engineering. RN 10, fliegend ohne hast is perhaps a little too fast, considering GM's marking. The flutes are fine, the cellos in the background clearly heard. The vigorous section starting at about RN 16 is good, trumpets are excellent, horns again suffer from bad microphone placement (I now am not so sure. Later, horns at p sound much the same as when they were marked f, ff.



The luftpause at RN 18 to start the recap is barely there. Again, at eilend, which is taken well. At RN 24, the horns are there, and play well, but they are nearly solo, so I suspect that VB held them back earlier. The coda starts well, slowly, then picks up properly and ends well. A good rendition, maybe a little too fast, vigorous but lacking grace.

*Second Movement* - Good opening, perhaps a little fast, and solo violin very good. Here the horn is almost OK at RN 3. In contrast, the trumpet is marvelous at RN 9 -3, perhaps the best yet. Curious, oboe makes a good strong entrance at RN 10 + 8, though marked pp, then disappears for 9 & 10 and then clarinets take it up strongly at 11 at ff. RN 112 is played very sweetly. Piccolo is heard, faintly at RN 12 + 11, and then hardly at all behind the solo violin pizzicati. The horns are barely present towards the end but the cellos are fine.

*Third Movement* - Broad opening tempo and sweetly played. True to his form in I, VB nearly ignores the first and totally ignores the second caesura at RN 1 + 14 & 16. The ACO's oboist is good but the hairpins are ignored at RN 2 so that the klagende feeling Mahler wanted is lacking. VB also essentially ignores the two violin portamenti and those for the horns. The andante is sweetly played and goes into the allegretto well, sprightly played. Allegro is good and the allegro molto is not too rushed. VB takes a good upbeat to RN 18 and then bags completely the luftpause. The tutti is consequently somewhat smeared in attack. The trumpets are good but horns and timpani weak. However, the fine violin portamento is played sweetly and the movement ends well.

*Fourth Movement* - Opening tempo is about average, with good portamenti in cellos. Ritchie enters rather strongly and seems to over interpret a little. The voice is clear but not child-like. The diction is not always true to the German. The faster tempo is sensible and the portamenti are heard clearly. Ritchie is again too forward and too dramatic in the next stanza. She also is a little too much in the vegetable/fruit stanza. but her Sanct Martha is within acceptable bounds. Keine musik is also rather OK and the virgins dance sweetly, with St. Ursula laughing nicely. The ending sentences are better also. The opening and middle stanzas, however, are good examples of how not to sing this song.

In summary, Van Beinum is OK, but falls well short of making my favorite list. The recording is part of the problem.

**Claudio Abbado, Vienna Philharmonic, Frederick von Stade**  
**1977**

*First Movement* - Abbado lets the bells dim a little so it is hard to tell, but he seems to get the diverse tempos about right, at least there no overt rit for the bells. The tempo is a but brisk and speeds up too much for frisch, but slows nicely for "suddenly slow" at RN 4. The tempo five measures later for "somewhat flowing" is a little too fast but he then speeds up a little more for etwas eilend. For the third entry of the opening violin theme at 1 before RN 6, the bassoon is quite lovely and clear in the background. RN 7 is "very calm" and the Wieners play it well, very sweetly. RN 10 is also played very well. The development is done well, good trumpets, but a curious thing - at 7 before 18 the trumpet flourish is there, but not the trumpet answer, at ff 18 -5! Although the winds are certainly there, the trumpet was either asleep or Abbado excised the part. The luftpause at RN 18 is OK, not as good as many others. The rest of this section moves along well, with good trumpets and horns, and in the next section

Abbado takes the eilend very well. RN 24 is well played, the horns are good, and the slow down very good, the reprise of the first theme is very good sand the tempo picks up properly to the end.

*Second Movement* - Horns are good and the solo violin OK. There are many fine felicities in the conducting and playing of the VPO and finally at 3 before RN 9 the trumpet enters with its clarion call, but not as "blaring" as others, but not bad. As contrasted with the van Beinum above, the oboe and its trills are very apparent at RN 10 + 9-10. RN 11 is played very sweetly, very fine clarinets and strings. The piccolo is not to be heard at RN 12 + 11! However, they are there at RN 13 2-6. Cellos are fine at the close.

*Third Movement* - The Vienna strings are lovely and the mood is serene and calm. Horns are a little ragged at their entry at RN ! + 7. The two caesuri are observed OK. The oboe at RN 2 is more or less OK. The Vienna strings certainly know how to do it and they play their two caesuri beautifully at RN 2 + 13, and, FINALLY, Abbado has the horns do their two portamenti and they do it with elan! The anmuthig bewegt RN 4, is taken very well, charming! The oboe-English horn duet is nice, and the horn below very good. RN 7 is very good, fine horns, and the violins take a delicious portamento. RN 9 through RN 11 is done with well judged tempo steps from andante to allegro molto and then at 11 back to andante. Unfortunately, Abbado makes slight of the great luftpause at RN 12, but takes a good tutti just slightly smeared, but with great timpani, trumpets and horns. The portamento for violins is fine at RN 13 + 6-7, clearly audible. The VPO knows how to fade away to nothingness!

*Fourth Movement* - Tempo is OK, good portamenti in cellos, and Fredericka (Flicka) von Stade enters quietly, in very pure voice, fine diction and phrasing. Though usually singing mezzo roles she handles the soprano range here beautifully. She does a beautiful leap at St. Peter and ends the phrase perfectly with a slight coloration on "zu." The wind and horn portamenti next are heard well, and the tempo is not too fast. Flicka sings about the lamb and the oxen endearingly and the oxen moo appropriately. The angels bake their bread peacefully. There is no exaggeration but she sings with fine sensitivity and phrasing. The vegetables are described sweetly and the fruit section is not taken too fast, but with spirit. St. Martha reigns comfortably ion heaven's kitchen. No pause at RN 11! Keine musik is sung so gently that it nis also mysterious, as GM directed. The virgins dance with the slightest accenting and St. Ursula laughs well, without too much exaggeration. Actually, Flicka and Abbado are the only ones who do it as written a short fermata over an eighth note, portamento to a whole note. It is often drawn out and while it does sound great that way, that is not what Mahler wrote! The repeat of keine musik is fine, and Cäcilia and her relatives are the musicians of heaven. The ending phrase is beautifully child-like. Flicka here joins my list of star soloists!

This is, in my humble opinion, the best of the Vienna recordings, not quite making my all star list of conductors, but close. I can forgive the inattentive trumpeter and piccolo players, unless Abbado actually squelched them - that I could not forgive.

**Sir Simon Rattle, Berlin Philharmonic, Christine Shaefer, soprano  
Broadcast of 20 February 1998**

*First Movement* - SSR also cheats, letting the clarinets and bells rit. The opening tempo is very slow, but the *haupttempo* is faster, but faster than Mengelberg's  $M = 69$ . The playing is superb, with plenty of, maybe too much, fire and intensity. SSR does broaden out somewhat at RN 3, and takes the rest of this section with good phrasing. At RN 4 he does slow down for *langsam und bedächtlich* but it still seems a little brisk. The *etwas eilend*, RN 5b - 1 is taken very fast but here one can actually hear the first note, so often missed in other performances. (you have to look at the score to see what I mean for I cannot describe it musically, inadequate musician that I am.) RN 7 is played very well, almost calm. Fine string portamenti. The *ff* horn is perfect at RN 8 + 9 but SSR ignores Mahler's "don't hurry" at RN 9. RN 10 has fine cellos, maybe a little too loud, but this is a broadcast and no telling about microphone setup. Fine stopped horn at RN 12 + 4. The development is exciting but rather hard driven, good trumpets, and SSR has his timpanist make many little crescendos in the bars after RN 16, most of them indicated, but hard to tell it is so fleeting. Great low horn *sf* at bar 18. He takes quite a substantial *Luftpause* at RN 18 to start the recap and a good caesura at RN 21. SSR goes quite overboard with tempo, *prestissimo* rather than *eilend* 1 before RN 23. This is the fastest I have heard. SSR does not observe Mahler's late dictum not to take a tempo so fast that one cannot hear the notes. He does slow down to enter the codas and the reprise of the first violin there at 25 + 3 is good with fine dynamics, and the buildup is brisk and vigorous to the end. In my opinion, he drives a little too hard, but all his tempo changes are in the score, he just overdoes them.

*Second Movement* - The tempo is OK, horns are excellent, so is the solo violin. A truly blaring horn is heard at RN 3, and the tempo is good. At RN 8, "don't hurry", the horns have as god part, written as *p* but here they sound more like *f*. The trumpet is one of the best at 3 before 9. RN 11 is very fine with beautiful clarinets and sweet string portamenti. Piccolo is there adequately at RN 12 + 11. And can be heard with the solo violin *pizzicati*. The movement ends with good horns and cellos.

*Third Movement* - Broad and restful tempo opens this movement with fine string plating from the Berliners, as one would expect. Rattle takes the two portamenti at RN 1 + 14 & 26 beautifully, as good as Levine and the Chicago, He also has the violins observe the portamento at measure 28. The oboe more or less laments at RN 2. There are only a few who get this right. The Berlin strings do fine portamenti at measure 13, the horns do their first one very well, then bag the second. In all this survey, only the Viennese under Abbado do this measure correctly. RN 4 is well played with fine string portamenti. The stepped increase in tempo starting at RN 9, *andante*, goes well but the *allegro molto* is perhaps too fast. Rattle does a fine uptake to RN 18 and a good *Luftpause*, and the Berliners nail the tutti with good timpani, horns and trumpets.

*Fourth Movement* - Good tempo to begin with fine portamenti for cellos. Schaefer enters well, maybe a little overmiked. She is very very good. She hits the leap at St. Peter perfectly. Rattle's tempo next is OK, and the portamenti are heard well. Next, Schaefer sings well of the lamb and the oxen moo correctly, but I think that the tempo is a little too fast, so Schaefer cannot sing as smoothly as I think she is capable of. The vegetable section starts well, and Schaefer can sing smoothly, but SSR then speeds up at keck and Schaefer again has a little trouble. Fortunately SSR slows down for St. Martha and she is comfortably in her kitchen. No pause at RN 11! Kein musik is almost breathless in wonder and mystery. Very good! The virgins also are beautifully phrased, one of the best, and St. Ursula laughs charmingly. The repeat of the keine musik and the following phrases are wonderful! If Rattle had not driven the first part of this movement so much I would have ranked it high and I have to put Schaefer in among my select soloists. I hope to hear her sometime with a more relaxed reading. The audience, however, went wild!

## Back to History!

### **Gustav Mahler, Welte-Mignon Piano Roll, November 9, 1905 Yvonne Kenny, soprano, added**

*Fourth* Movement - Mahler made no attempt to mimic the voice so it is best to listen to this with a voice superimposed. Nice opening tempo, Kenny, interestingly enough, sings even better for Mahler than she did for Inoue! Perhaps this was Gilbert Kaplan's influence? Mahler does speed up for his marking *fliessend* at RN 2, but one must not judge this recording too closely, it was almost spur f the moment when he went to the studio to record four excerpts. Mahler takes the fast section rather fast. At RN 5, the tempo is held back, the little lamb is comfortable going to his death, Mahler tries to make the oxen moo, and the angels bake their bread without hurry. The vegetable garden is somewhat relaxed but Mahler does speed up at his keck so that Kenny is somewhat rushed for the fruit, and then St. Martha is very comfortable in her kitchen. Mahler himself forgets his luftpause at RN 11. Mahler is not gentle and mysterious at *Keine musik* but Kenny manages well enough. The virgins dance well, and St. Ursula laughs, and Mahler does observe his own fermata at "zu." The repeat of *Keine musik* is better.

This CD, "Mahler Plays Mahler," Golden Legacy, GLSR 101 belongs in every Mahler collection. It also contains 26 minutes of William Malloch's "Remembering Mahler." In this short abstract of Malloch's two-hour tape of memories - some 55 years after the fact, remember - one payer remembers how Mahler wanted the violins to make a strong portamento in the first theme of this symphony, between the fourth and fifth notes, and sang it the way he remembered Mahler explaining it. Well time have changed and very few conductors now get such a strong effect there. Mahler explained that the music must BREATHE, the way the human sings. Some examples are given. Perhaps that is why he sprinkled caesuri so liberally in this symphony. Henry-Louis de La Grange remarks in Chapter 5 of his biography, Volume III, that Mahler was accused in Vienna of having caesuramania! That is also perhaps why in my listening to these many conductors I have stressed their observance or not of this specific marking. I think that the caesuri adds the breathing that Mahler insisted must be in the musical flow.

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## Recordings of Mahler Symphony No. 5

**by Stan Ruttenberg, President, Colorado MahlerFest**

This review will commence with the historic recordings - Mahler's own piano roll of the first movement, Mengelberg's recording of the Adagietto and then Bruno Walter's 1947 78-rpm recording, now on CD. These set the stage, so to speak, for consideration of the more modern recordings. Not all available recordings will be discussed, only those which I personally feel have some special merit (or demerit).

### **Mahler Piano Roll, First Movement**

I use here the recording contained in the CD "Mahler Plays Mahler," Pickwick GLRS 101, produced by Gilbert Kaplan, with as much research as available into the actual play-back mechanism to reproduce as accurately as possible the recording condition. The CD booklet is a valuable source for information on the Welte-Mignon piano recording mechanism.

On November 9, 1905, Mahler entered the Leipzig studios of the Welte & Söhne company to record four of his works. While Mahler no doubt wanted to make sure that posterity could hear his own interpretations, he also may have been motivated by his interactions with Oskar Fried in the preceding days, when Mahler had to admonish Fried for taking much-too-fast tempi for the Second Symphony. Mahler wanted to make sure that at least some of his works represented the composer's own ideas. It is our great loss that Mahler agreed to only this one recording session; we also have to remember that Mahler had not prepared for this session, as far as we know, and his performances were essentially impromptu and it is thus dangerous to read too much into his tempi. Mahler marks the opening as "In marked tempo, strong, as a [funeral] cortege." Mahler titles the movement Trauermarsch, funeral march. After some cursory research into the other scores I do not find a single other movement of a Mahler symphony marked "funeral march," notwithstanding that that character is clearly evidenced in 1, 2 and 6. Mahler's opening is indeed deliberate, but Mahler himself departs from his score, e.g., his first five triplets (trumpets in full score) are even and deliberate, but the fifth set, rising notes, is noticeably faster. The triplets for full orchestra starting at measure #15 are faster also. From here on it is not useful to discuss details but the listener, especially following a score, will be astonished at how Mahler handles the tricky counterpoint, the string tremolos, the timpani & bass drum rolls, etc. At 12:50 this rendition is slower than the norm, so Mahler's admonition to Fried makes general sense. Too many conductors rush Mahler and rob the music of its nobility and inevitability. Having said that, however, we must make allowances for the Adagietto, which Mahler himself conducted faster than any modern conductor.

### **Adagietto, Willem Mengelberg, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, 1926**

The recording is rather old and noisy and details are lost, but one can hear clearly that WM inserts portamenti in many, many measures. However, he does not make a meal of the ONE portamento (glissando) that Mahler marked, at RN 3. At 7:05 (on my CD which cuts off the last moments, listed as 7:25 in Fülöp), this does not feel rushed, as it is played with great feeling, as if WM himself were himself writing Gus' love note to Alma, the love note that WM asserted was the intention of this movement.

### **Symphony Recordings**

#### **Bruno Walter & New York Philharmonic, SONY SMK 64451, 1947**

*First Movement - Wie ein Kondukt.* Opening is deliberate. However, Walter's trumpet player ignores the dynamic markings, i.e., p for opening note then crescendo to sf on the long note. Most conductors seem to let the trumpet player do what he/she wants, regardless of Mahler's markings. Pity, as it does make an even better effect when played as written. Except for that the phrasing is good and we hear a fine sf on the long notes after the triplets. In the first upward passage the notes are staccato and the temp is maintained, as marked, notwithstanding Mahler's own speeding up at the first upward moving passage. The trombones and horns sound out well, in quite good sound for this vintage recording, skillfully re-mastered. At RN 3 minus 7 and 5 the celli are nicely staccato as marked. The descending trombone passage at RN + 16 is excellent, At RN7 Walter gets "wild," without overdoing it into a frenzy. The rest of the movement proceeds as marked. While it is dangerous to say this, I can believe that this might have been the way Walter heard Mahler do this movement - everything in its place, nothing neglected nor overdone.

*Second Movement - Stürmisch bewegt. Mit grösster Vehemenz.* In a recording from 1947, one cannot expect the dynamic impact of *grösster Vehemenz* yet Walter manages to convey the spirit. The horns and trombones spit out their staccato notes and the vehement effect is there.

However, the two little retards at the very opening measures are ignored, though Mahler explicitly explains their purpose. But then, what does he actually mean? He marks *rit* over a half note, then a tempo at the next note. He explains that there should be a little pause (*kurzes Anhalten*) after the half note so as to make more marked the following one. Why not mark a *luftpause*? A 1/16 rest? It seems that this instruction is so obscure that few conductors try. Not a single conductor I have heard (maybe 22) actually takes a pause, however slight. It just might be a dramatic effect, as Mahler evidently wanted, but it is yet to be heard. Barshai lengthens the half note slightly, perhaps the most of all; others who make at least an attempt are Neuman with the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Leonard Bernstein with the Vienna, Herman Scherchen with La Scala, Chailly with the RACO, and Klaus Tennstedt with the new York Phil. All others simply play right though.

At RN 9, back to Tempo I, the vehemence is there again in most of the brass, but at RN 10 - 4 the trumpets wail (*legato*) rather than play accented as marked. Unfortunately in the great passage leading to the first chorale, about RN 29, the harp is buried so we do not hear those Mahlerian glissandos. The chorale is well paced. The harp does appear in a quieter passage at RN 33.

*Third Movement - Kräftig, nicht zu schnell.* Mahler feared that this movement would be spoiled by conductors taking it too fast. Walter does it in 15 minutes - the fastest (there is a Scherchen CD at under 6 minutes, but it is severely cut.). The norm is around 18 minutes. This movement is the closest Mahler ever came to writing a concerto - there are many beautiful and extended horn solos. Interestingly enough, Mahler marks the solo horn in Italian *Corno obbligato* in F. The horns are fine here, and Walter knows how to get the waltz flavor in the strings. This is too beautiful a movement to break up into details, so I will leave it that the NYPO plays it excellently, and the solo hornist was unflagging (of course at 78 rpm he did have many rests!), having some 31 (!) solos, as I counted them, or sequences of successive measures with no more than one bar of rest.

*Fourth Movement - Adagietto - Sehr langsam.* Walter comes in at 7:35 just 20 seconds faster than Mengelberg. Mahler's timings were reported to be around 8 minutes but in the 7 minute rages for a performance in St. Petersburg. Walter plays this very tenderly, without milking the phrases, but inserting many gentle portamenti where none is marked. In fact, in my Dover score, corroborated by the "critical" edition, there is only one, at RN 3. I like it best played in the 7-8 minute range; perhaps stretching it to 9 minutes is OK, but to me anything longer than that can seem dragged. Some conductors, however, see below, manage to make it sound lovely and tender at even longer duration.

*Fifth Movement - Allegro, attacca.* Walter takes this at a jaunty pace, the opening held notes followed by spirited horns and winds. The unison brass chords at RN 4 + 12 & 16 are impressive, repeated at RN 13 - 4 and at RN 13. The strings have a fine upward run at RN 12 - 6. The trombone solo at RN 13 + 3 is clear and what I like to call the quacking duck (oboe) at RN 13 + 8 is quite clear and well articulated. Walter moves right along, but never rushed, and at last, my favorite little passage just before RN 29, the lower strings digging in, marked *moto f* and then the swirling klesmer-like clarinets. I gasped when I first heard this passage in 1948, and insisted that my friend repeat that 78-rpm side over and over again. If a conductor does not do this passage with elan, no matter what else is brilliant, I hold it against that coward

forever! The reprise of the chorale heard in II appears At RN 33 + 7, marked *fff Pesante* and it must be played all out. This recording doesn't do Walter justice. Then, a slight rit and then *accelerando & allegro molto* to the end, with the delicious wind swirls and a joyous ending.

In summary, all Mahler Fifth lovers should have this CD!

### **Rudolph Schwarz, London Sym. Orchestra, 1958**

This was recorded using 35-mm magnetic tape and issued on LPs. I have always liked this recording, and was pleased when I saw a CD issued on the "Originals" label. That CD, however, had unsatisfactory sound, so when Everest remastered it using super bit mapping I snapped it up. Here is my current impression; after so many years I still find this the most satisfactory account of the Fifth that I have ever heard.

*First Movement.* The opening trumpets are sharp and clear, in almost perfect observance of the score beginning at *p*. The bit tutti at measure 14 is full and clean. The trombones are beautifully articulated at measure 21 *et sequia*. Behind the descending horns 8 measures before RN 2, one can hear the clarinet clearly. Many details are beautifully heard in the following measures clarinet and bassoon behind the strings, cellos behind the ominous trombone chords, etc. The tuba is voiced well behind the second set of trumpet triplets. At RN 3 + 16, the descending trumpets and then the blazing trombones are impressive. Under the third set of trumpet triplets, at RN 4 - 9 the descending string figures are clean and clear, followed by clarion trombones just before RN 4. The lovely flute solo starting just before RN 5 is underpinned by clear tuba. The second main theme at RN 7 starts suddenly, good contrast in tempo as Mahler calls for, but not too fast. Very impassioned playing here. The trumpets wail but are not overdone; trombones and tuba edgy, horns blast out, strings masterfully playing their runs, etc., and the tuba solo at 4 before RN 12 is impressive. The recap and coda and particularly fine, with well articulated triplets, fine *col legno* on strings, ominous bass drum rolls, the ascent on flute and the final *pizz*.

Schwarz gets tension in the brass yet yearning string playing, fine percussion, well-prepared crescendi, and all in all achieves the best concept for my money of I. The incomparable LSO of those days matches his drive and concept.

*Second Movement.* One cannot hope for a more vehement opening in the cellos and then the sharp cry of the trumpets at measures 3-6, followed by the staccato trombones, but the two little retards are ignored. Again, measures later, the tuba fills in the bottom range solidly. At RN 5, the staccato winds announce a change in tempo and a few measures later the cellos begin a solemn lamentation with beautiful winds and as fine clarinet obbligato. At RN 12 - 24 the cellos begin a beautifully articulated slow passage, underlain by *pp* timpani roll. The theme is taken up by horns marked *espress*. A magnificent contrast to the preceding turmoil. There is no way words can describe the overwhelming effect of a sensitive conductor and an outstanding orchestra in the passages starting at RN 27, leading to the two magnificent chorales, a joyous outcry in D Major, ending in the fine horns at RN 30 - not overdone, but perfectly voiced and magnificently recorded. Schwarz never overwhelms with sheer power, but the power and tension is there, in a perfectly balanced rendition. I use the word "perfectly" advisedly for there is no way to measure such an accolade, but for me, hearing how this passage plays, I cannot imagine anything more satisfying, and that to mean spells "perfection." If I had a wish to make this rendition ever better, I could ask that the engineers had better pick-up of the harp, the glissandos of which got a little lost at the measures following

RN 27. The ending measures are truly magical, measured, pointed, with a lovely tuba solo 3-4 measures before the final timpani note.

*Third Movement.* Again, beautifully voiced and phrased, with outstanding horns and solo horn (not too loud but balanced nicely). Schwarz captures well the Viennese flavor of the rhythms and at RN 6 goes into the etwas ruhiger section with good feeling, observing the many portamenti tastefully with a few judicious rubati (not marked but tasteful). The pizz passages following RN 11 are done delicately, with fine winds (bassoon, oboe, clarinet solos) and sensitive phrasing. Mahler's uncannily multi-thematic writing is done justice here, with inner voices clear, but never obtruding. Schwarz observes the two luftpausen delicately but surely, and deftly gets back into Tempo I at RN 30+ 8. He carries forward in complete control and steady tempo till the end.

*Fourth Movement.* Schwarz observes the pacing adopted by Bruno Walter. Mahler sprinkled caesuri liberally through this movement, but few conductors, Schwarz included, observe them. And most conductors add portamenti where none is marked - there is only one, at RN 3, marked ppp so it should not be overdone. The LSO does it beautifully and proceeds to the morendo, lang ending with excellent control and phrasing. This is a model of how this movement can be played with plenty of feeling but not overdone or milked.

*Fifth Movement.* Schwarz is one of the 9 conductors listed in Fülöp, 1995, who are in the 16 minute range - Barbirolli at 17:20 and Solti at 13:30. For me the timing is not the only measure of this jubilant movement, it is the phrasing and the tension that counts as well. Mahler directs Allegro at measure 3 but Zogernd at measure 7, and this is what Schwarz observes. Mahler also admonishes frequently nicht eilen. I let this movement play through without stopping to type in comments, so as to get a good feel for the whole structure. Schwarz and the LSO is anything but laggard, even though they are perhaps a minute slower than the norm. The voicings again are superb, everything in the complex passages in its place, no overdrawn voices, the oboe quacks nicely, the string playing leading up to the clarinet swirls at RN 29 excellent, the chorale before the coda nicely judged, and the last few bars controlled but as joyous as I could wish for.

This is a recording, concept and execution that ranks as high, for me, as I can imagine. As a footnote, Horenstein conducted the M5 with the LSO shortly before Schwarz recorded it, and it is sometimes written by people who should know better that therefore the Schwarz represents JH's take on this symphony, which he never recorded. He did play it again some time later for a BBC broadcast, which has been preserved in an amateur recording off the air and can be heard in London at the Barbican Library of Recorded Music. To my ears, that JH performance is miles apart from Schwarz's reading. JH also performed the M5 with the Berlin Philharmonic at an Edinburg Festival, which was later broadcast in Germany and France, but the broadcast tapes seem to be lost and the only tape of that performance known to exist is a very poor amateur recording.

### **Rudolph Barshai, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, 1999**

*First Movement.* The opening is certainly very good, high marks to the young musicians and the trumpeter who observes the p. The phrasing and accenting is not quite up to the Schwarz, but that is asking a lot. The trombones do not have the edge of those of the LSO, especially at RN 3 + 17, but that is asking a lot. Few trombone sections can match the trombone edge of the LSO in the 1950s, which



maintains that kind of playing from their days under Albert Coates in the 1930s, and that of Mengelberg's Concertgebouw of the 1930s. A bygone era, I fear; I am told that in those days trombones were of narrow bore, and easier to sound with an edge, whereas nowadays trombones have larger bores and are more mellow. At RN 4 the strings do not have quite the power or phrasing of Schwarz. And Barshai neglects to observe Mahler's marking *etwas gehaltener*. A nice touch is the observed portamento in first violins at RN 6 + 7, but there is an added portamento a few bars later. RN 7, suddenly faster, is handled well and the trumpet is excellent. The voicing of the brass is not as clear as in Schwarz, but perhaps that is an engineering artifact; in fact, I find that this recording is not as crystal clear as I like, a little too much hall or added reverb. On the other hand the big tutti's, even though slightly congested, have more impact, possibly owing to the difference between digital and analog recording; the dynamic range limitations of 1958 may have limited Schwarz's letting the orchestra play full out. In addition, the loudest passages get congested, perhaps as a fault of the recording venue. There also are, now and then, mistakes in observing Mahler's dynamics, especially in the brass, e.g., the trumpet at RN 18 8 is too loud, marked only *one f*. Trumpet is properly *pp* a few bars later accompanied by excellent string *col legno*. The timpani rolls at the end, however, are better than in Schwarz, which are too loud.

All in all, a remarkably good rendition. It speaks well for Barshai and his young musicians that they can approach so close to the old LSO under Schwarz.

*Second Movement.* Quite good opening, vehement but not as quite as in Schwarz. Barshai, however, makes a good attempt to observe the little *rit* markings which Mahler explains are only momentary to drive toward the following chord." But he does not pause, instead he simply lengthens the half notes. The following attacks are sharp, perhaps not quite as sharp as Schwarz. At RN 10 - 16 and following, the timpani are not as sharp as desired; later the trombones not as brazen as needed. The cellos before RN 12 are quite fine, and Barshai does observe the *drägend* and *crescendo* at the end of the cello solo. The vigorous development is vigorous enough, but, alas, the harp gets lost in the background in the passages leading to the two great chorales. The second chorale is fine indeed but some of the thick passages in this section suffer from loss of definition, not Barshai's intention I am sure. The trombones redeem themselves with their sharp chords in the passages following RN 30. There is a GREAT tam-tam at RN 32 + 6. And it rings as marked. The strings, especially the lower strings, acquit themselves with honor in the coda, there is a soulful tuba solo, and the final timpani, which Mahler directs to be well tuned!, is fine.

*Third Movement.* The horns open well, and the horn solo, trumpet and trombones are also well played, and in accordance with Mahler's markings. Barshai captures well the Viennese spirit. At RN 11, the JDP does very well indeed on the *pizz* passages, almost making their instruments sound like mandolins. The bassoon obbligato is good, the oboe plays maybe too loud and is not "timid" as Mahler indicates. No comment until RN 29 + 19, where Barshai observes very nicely the *luftpause*. In the intervening passages all goes very well. RN 31 - 12 Mahler marks *sehr wild* and Barshai and his young musicians give it their all, without losing control. The reverb after the last chord takes about 4 seconds to die away, indicating the very live acoustic of the recording hall.

*Fourth Movement.* Very expressive playing - Barshai turns many slurs into portamenti and ignores the "breath marks," as does everyone else thus far. The one portamento at RN 3 over the harp arpeggio, is well executed. One would not realize that Barshai is one-half minute slower than Schwarz, so nicely is this played.

*Fifth Movement.* Opening just as marked, then spirited interplay with winds and horns, then fine strings. Barshai keeps moving along, never rushed, steady tempo except when Mahler marks otherwise. The oboe quacks right on, trombones are good and then strings sing *grazioso*. At RN RN 24 + 11 the bass trombone and tuba play a fine chord that cuts through well. Just before RN 29, my touchstone for this movement, the strings do dig in nicely and the clarinets swirl, but here I give a slight nod to Schwarz. The coda is very fine, leading to a Bravo from the happy audience, which was remarkably quiet, no coughs that I could hear.

While I give second place to Barshai behind Schwarz, this is a good commendation, as highly as I think of the Schwarz. Some of the differences I note may well be due to the different recording styles and locations, but either of the two Rudys is a most satisfying performance.

### **Ben Zander, Philharmonia Orchestra, 2001**

*First Movement.* As Ben says in his discussion disc, the Philharmonia trumpet player does a fine job in the opening, observing the opening *p* and with good *sfs* on the half notes, good accenting. The *tutti* is fine with clean sound. Trombones and horns, marked *ff*, are not heard clearly behind the trumpets marked *f*, perhaps an artifact of the sound engineering. The first main theme on violins at RN 2 is lovingly played with, as Ben comments on in his talk, some light *rubato* so that the phrases "breath." Very nicely done. The lower brass buzz wonderfully at RN 3 + 7 & 8. Descending trombone figures 9 bars later are not as prominent as I like (Schwarz), but again the comparison with Schwarz may be mainly in the engineering. The reprise (with variations) of the main theme is good and the winds enter with a fine flute solo. I like it very much when the tuba, even though marked *pp*, is clearly heard - a most Mahlerian touch. The damped side drum is very effective and clearly articulated. The section marked *wild* at RN 7 is very well played and recorded with many inner details audible. Back to Tempo I, the brass are particularly fine, with a fine tuba cadence. If the Barshai had been recorded as well, his reading too may have been as satisfactory. The coda attains the right mysterious atmosphere but the final *pizz* is perhaps too loud, with clearly audible snap of the strings against the wood. The dynamics are open to interpretation, I suppose, with the only previous marking being *pp*, but with an *sf* at the end. Is this a dynamic indication or merely an accent? {Mahler did use an *sf* indication in passages in other works which were clearly marked *p* or even *pp*.) However, enough nit-pickling, this first movement is marvelously well conducted, played and recorded.

*Second Movement.* The opening is vehement enough, but Mahler's strange instructions at measure 2 and 4 are not observed. At RN +5 the cellos enter with their mournful melody; here the oboes are *p* (from the preceding marking) decreasing to *pp*, but they seem too loud - the engineers again? In measures 6 & 9 after RN 6 the oboes seem just right and the *decrescendos* are taken nicely. I find the brassy development leading to RN 27 somewhat tame, where Mahler marks *wild*. However, the outbreak with stirring brass chord and harp glissandi are very well heard, and magnificent. The second outbreak, climaxing at RN 29 - 1 (Mahler writes "climax") is even more impressive, the slight broadening out of tempo working well. The horn's *diminuendo* is quite under control, leading into the passage at RN 33, a quite mysterious entry into the coda. The final trombone damped chords from measure before the close are beautiful and the tuba properly mournful. This is quite a fine reading and performance.

*Third Movement.* The opening is lively, excellent horn playing, but perhaps a little too "straight." I don't get much Viennese feeling here. However, at RN 6, Zander does start to let the music breathe more clearly,

with excellent portamenti in the strings, as marked. RN 11 starts the pizz section. Here, Mahler's markings are well observed e.g., several rits, changes in dynamics, all to fine effect. At RN 14 + 11, the tempo again slows to *molto moderato* and Zander does slow markedly. A few bars later Mahler wants the tempo to gradually increase back to *Tempo I* and Zander speeds up but perhaps faster than he started the movement. Later Mahler admonishes "Don't hurry" which Zander appears to interpret as speed up some more. I feel it is a little too fast here, and that the slapstick loses its sharp rhythmic interjections. Just after the slapstick Mahler wants a little "push" and then back to *tempo I* at RN 17. This time Zander does get right back to his starting tempo and the solo horn enters powerfully. Nothing but praise for how the rest of this joyous movement goes. Zander lets it rip and the orchestra is fully up to it.

*Fourth Movement.* At 8:33 this is not too slow. While a few extraneous portamenti were allowed, or perhaps asked for, the strings observe carefully the caesuri; one can hear the start of a new bow stroke after each. BRAVO! After all, if this is a "song without words," as Mengelberg claimed, there have to be breath pauses. Even the tenuto markings are observed. Zander does it meticulously and excellently.

*Fifth Movement.* The CD says this movement is 16:03; my CD player said that the music stops at 15:53. A nit, it is true, but that places Zander's timing closer to the average. I think that he achieves all the joy and ebullience needed at that timing. It is hard to stop and start this movement, so relentlessly does it press on, so here are only some impressions. The opening is jaunty enough; the brass observe well their dynamic markings and have plenty of punch. The strings are beautiful; the oboe might have quacked from less of a distance. The build-up to the klesmer clarinets is fine and the clarinets swirl as at an eastern chassidic wedding. Zander observes the tempo changes, with one exception - at the second big chorale entry, Mahler marks "somewhat held back," but the orchestra presses right through it. I like this big moment held back as marked; even a slight exaggeration here doesn't hurt, as this moment too is a climax, as Mahler marked in the second movement. In his talk Zander remarks how the music doesn't end with a blazing chorale but sprightly, as if a joke. I agree, and he brings it off.

This is a most well thought-out conception, beautifully executed by a first rate orchestra, and quite well recorded. I find it a touch more responsive and closer to the spirit Mahler seems to have intended than the Barshai, but maybe not quite up to the power of the Schwarz.

All three of my top choices - Schwartz, Barshai, Zander - are first rate, all have their very strong points, and all are worth having.

## **Brief Reviews**

### **Herbert von Karajan, Berlin Philharmonic**

DGG "The Original" with image bit processing. First issued 1973. Recorded when HvK was not yet fully ossified, this is not too bad, in fact, it is mostly quite acceptable. Playing is exemplary, as one expects from BPO, but little "heart." Von K. tends to "slide" into a big tutti instead of really nailing it. First movement has plenty of punch, and the trumpets observe the dynamics carefully, i.e., *p* and getting louder, not usually observed. Second movement tends to lag in spots. The big outbreaks into D major, however, are splendid, especially No. 2! Third movement has dash and bravura, with fine horns, as to be expected. HvK drops to a crawl at the lead in to the coda and then takes it at a breakneck pace. Adagietto seems protracted at almost 12 minutes, but it is not dirge-like. He simply takes his time, milks the

phrasing, and introduces spurious portamenti, which he doesn't distinguish all the time from a simple legato. The harp arpeggio and the ensuing sole portamento are good, but then he really drags on to the end. Fifth movement is OK, perhaps a little less perky than I like. Clarinets swirls just OK - they get the notes but not the spirit. The D-major chorales are just OK; the coda is better, with fine trombones very clearly heard.

### **Riccardo Chailly, Royal Amsterdam Concertgebouw, 1998**

Quite well played, good sound, doesn't rise to any heights, but also neither does it sink to any lows. First movement not too rushed, trumpets are good. Second movement lacks bite and vehemence. Third movement nicely played, horns are excellent, coda is properly exciting without getting out of hand. Fourth movement is somewhat protracted at about 10 minutes, but at least Chailly and the highly experienced RCA knows the difference between portamento and legato. Fifth movement is perky, the lead-in to clarinets swirls is very good and the clarinets are just fine. The broadening out of the tempo at the D-major chorale could have been more impressive.

### **John Barbirolli, New Philharmonia Orchestra, 1980, re-issued ON e I Great Recordings of the Century**

Sir John is slow, deliberate and noble. He knows how to do this without dragging, or being turgid, but it just may not be everybody's cup of tea. To enjoy this reading, just relax and slow down your inner clock a few notches. The music flows inexorably, and you won't notice the actual speed. The playing is full of wonderful felicities with good voicing, and is very well recorded. The first movement is a stately funeral march, with plenty of rubato, which I find that he handles with good taste. His orchestra knows how to read the score - the opening trumpets are *p* then crescendo, as written; the upward figure later is quite well accented, as written. The closing string pizz is not a "snap". The opening of the second movement could have had more snap but is strong nonetheless. As Sir John begins at a slower than usual tempo, he must slow down even more for sections Mahler wanted slower. He makes up for it by some outstanding touches, e.g., two perfectly unearthly horn howls at about 9:32 - not to be heard like this on any other recording. The first D Major outbreak at 12:12, with glorious harp glissandi, is splendid, and the second, with fine horn and trumpet passages leading to it, just after 13:00 is held just right. The third movement is very Viennese, as were his "Viennese Nights" programs. The horn playing is splendid, not bravura but in very good taste and very well phrased with careful attention to dynamics. The slower section at about 2:30 is in excellent taste; the portamenti taken very lightly but clear. No need to go on, this movement is a gem, and Sir John's reading, by no means even near the slowest on record, certainly is in accord with Mahler's wishes for it not to be rushed. The Adagietto, at just under 10 minutes, is tender rather than maudlin. Sir John lets a few portamenti slip in, but they are gentle and not too many, and I do not hear the "breathing." Fifth movement is slower the most - There can be "slow" joy and I believe that Sir John achieves an uplifting performance without speed. My special passage ending with the klesmer clarinets is just fine even at Sir John's very measured pace, in fact one hears more at this pace. At 15:48 the D Major chorale is fine, and its repeat a 16:30 is good, but perhaps not broadening out as much as I like. The final few bars are exuberant, even at a slower than normal tempo.

### **Frank Shipway, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, 1997, Tring, TRP 096**

Most of know who are the Royal Philharmonic, but few know who is Frank Shipway. He has conducted widely in Europe, also in Japan, and in Cleveland. The notes say that he has recorded but I think that this is his only Mahler, and he certainly know how to conduct it! The sound is very good, the orchestra fine, and Shipway is energetic. The opening trumpet figures match the score markings, and the movement moves along with vigor. The opening of the second movement fails to observe the two rits and the ensuing big chords are not spit out as in the Schwarz. The slow section is perhaps a little too slow and Shipway's slows to a walk for some passages. The D-major outbreaks are good but not as exciting as some. The third movement is bright and has some Viennese flavor, albeit slightly faster than normal. The second theme enters very tenderly, with good portamenti. Shipway closes with a rousing coda. The fourth movement is rather slow, but tender, not overwrought or funereal. Mostly the strings observe the legato markings without making them into portamenti, but many of the caesuri are ignored. The big climax at just after 11 minutes is powerful but still tender. The fifth movement is spirited, faster than many, good brass, but Shipway just plays through the klesmer clarinet passage and its wonderful lead-in and also the two big D-major chorales. The coda is brilliant! This CD is hard to find but at a cheap price is a worthwhile addition to any Mahler 5 collection.

### **Gilbert Kaplan, London Symphony, Adagietto only**

It is difficult to judge the dynamics here, without any other movements. Kaplan lets the LSO indulge in a few very gentle portamenti, but some passages that sound like a portamenti are really grace notes. Until the last 10 measures, all the dynamics are ppp to p, at least if we do not count sf. Is this also a dynamic marking? The bottom line is that this is a fine rendition, much tenderness, some expressive yearning, and ending with strong feeling, the way Mahler marked it.

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## **Mahler Symphony No. 6 Recordings in Review**

**by Stan Ruttenberg**

Following are recordings I am listening to in preparation for MahlerFest XVI. *However, I must note that I am following the first edition (Dover) and also checking against the newest critical edition.* There are considerable discrepancies between these first and last scores and, in fact, I doubt that first edition was ever actually played, as Mahler started tinkering with the score immediately after it was published, e.g., removing all the winds in opening measures 2-5. I have not yet heard a recording in which the winds are playing there.

### **HISTORICAL**

**F. Charles Adler**, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, issued originally on LP; digitally remastered 1997. Rehearsal numbers quoted here are from the Dover score, and are continuous, not starting fresh at each movement. Notice also that the RNs are disparate between the *Scherzo* and *Andante*, as the Dover score has them in their original order, not as reversed by Mahler. Adler's recording of the Sixth is the only one with a conductor who had a personal relationship with Mahler, helping at the rehearsals of the Eighth.. However, it is not known if he ever attended a performance of the Sixth but he does play it in Mahler's own preferred mode, i.e., *Andante-Scherzo*. It seems that neither Bruno Walter nor Otto Klemperer could come to grips with the Sixth, as they seldom if ever performed it.

1. *Allegro*. Adler opens with a sensible tempo, but the mood is not exactly "vehement" as Mahler calls for. The low brass marked *ff* at RN 1 are there but repressed. At RN 2 + 1 and 3, the eighth-note trombones marked *mf* are OK, but they do not "spit" out as do the Stockholm players under Horenstein. Alma's there, entering in just before RN 8, is not exaggerated as some, but "suddenly back to tempo, as marked," after a slight *rit*. Soon, the celeste, marked *ff*, is inaudible. In general Adler moves right along, not taking the repeat, but the recording is so unfocussed, and harsh, that it is difficult to hear much of the inner voicing. At RN 41 + 3, one of my touchstones of the first movement, the jaunty trumpet is good. From RN 42 one, Mahler wants it *etwas drängend* (somewhat pushed) but Adler actually seems to slow down

2. *Andante*. Adler adopts a sensible tempo, not dragging it. The strings observe nicely the many *portamenti*. The winds and horns carry on their dialogs very sweetly, and the striking octave *portamento* in the first violins at RN 99 is exquisite.

3. *Scherzo*. Here at the opening I have found a wide variety of how the timpani are played. It is marked *f* (evidently in all scores until the latest IGMS corrected critical edition) but the 4th and 7th notes are marked *sf* etc. Adler plays it here as marked. I will note later how some conductors have their own way with these passages. Adler's xylophone seems to be far from any microphones as it is hardly heard, as also in the first movement. He moves the rhythm along nicely and it is a powerful performance. Adler slows down, just right it seems to be, for the *Áltväterisch* section starting at RN 56. At the return of the original tempo and style, the horns at RN 63 + 2, are weak, but soon the xylophone comes in, this time strong. I find this movement very well played.

4. *Finale*. The opening is mysterious, and at measure 8 the fine harp glissando is heard clearly, whereas in the preceding movements the harp tended to be much recessed, as it is a few measures later. The next section is admirably played by winds, low brass, tuba, etc., but the great timpani strokes at RN 107 are recessed. Building up the first blow, Adler does not quite get the manic exuberance others do, and the first hammer blow is weak, no doubt a result of the microphone set-up. The brass passages leading up to RN 134 - 3 are quite good and Adler does get a good syncopation in the timpani, as good as most, but nowhere near the most striking [Horenstein, Olson!]. The second hammer blow is somewhat better and, fascinatingly, the second tam-tam blow at RN 140 + 1 is quite clear. I am not sure I ever noticed it before. The build-up to where the third hammer blow was to be is good, but Adler does not take the third blow. I do think, however, that he does use the revised score for that measure. The final measures are fine but not done justice by the recording.

The booklet explains that the original tapes had been lost in a fire, but a copy tape was found for Symphony No. 3. Symphonies 6 and 10, however, had to be processed starting from proof masters of the LPs, so they do not have the dynamic range of No. 3 and the sound is quite congested and rough, as contrasted with that of No 3 which, for its day, has quite good sound. Pity, for Adler certainly had his grip on this symphony and the recording has its historic significance.

## MY TWO FAVORITES

**Jascha Horenstein**, Stockholm Phil. Music & Arts CD-785 (With Bruckner 9 & Mahler 9)

1. *Allegro*. JH, as usual, adopts a quite sensible tempo, fast enough to be "energetic" but not a galloping race. The orchestra is well balanced, the trombones at RN 1+ 5-7 are bright and cut through, and at RN 2+ 3 & 6 snap to attention. Trumpet at +10 could be more forceful, but this is a minor quibble. Mahler writes "forceful" for Alma's theme and JH plays it well, not overdoing any sentimentality. Mahlerites often complain about this orchestra being substandard. Up till RN 22 + 11, I heard no brass clams. Ok, there was then a break in ONE horn note, and here and there the strings are not voluptuous. But the orchestra plays with devotion to JH's leadership, - what more could be asked? I heard one more brass clam buried in thick texture. At RN 41 and following, my touchstone, the trumpet is jaunty, the damped horns fine and the celeste is clear. A very nicely played passage, leading into a strong ending. I don't ask for much more in this movement.

2. *Scherzo*. The Stockholm Phil's timpanist doesn't know how to read a score! He gets the accents and the dynamics all wrong in the opening. He's not alone, in the many recordings I have assayed. Outside of that JH moves along with a good steady pace, good trombones. The horns play their grace notes well. There is some contrast in the *Altväterisch* section, but this could have been a little more pronounced. Just before RN 63, the timpani player misreads totally the score (both Dover & the last Critical ed.); Either JH was asleep or just had to let it go. Soon afterwards we hear the horns with their repeated grace notes, not as emphatic as I think the music calls for. (Is this Mahler thumbing his nose at the critics who trashed so thoroughly his Fifth?) Upon hearing this movement again, with score, I must confess to some disappointment. As this recording stems from two concert performances, why didn't JH correct the timpanist for the repeat performance? Why was the recording not better edited?

3. *Andante*. Nicely played! JH observes carefully the *subito pp* markings, and the *portamenti*. The first horn redeems him(her)self with some lovely playing. The strings navigate well the passage at RN 95 + 4 and following, starting about 7:35; it seems that in this down-moving passage there are so many accidentals, plus tricky rhythm, that even some of the best orchestras never get it just right. When the MahlerFest orchestra struggled here ten years ago I winced, but since then have heard many name orchestras mess up also. The following passages with brass are well played, no clams, winds and strings fine. The coda, one of Mahler's most ethereal, leading to another of my touchstones, the chord at 9 measures before the end, 15:16, is well done, but I like Olson's better.

4. *Finale*. The opening is properly mysterious, good tuba, and the horn at 105 + 4-5, 2:05, does the *portamenti* beautifully, as does trumpet at 3 before 108, 2:17. The build-up to the first hammer blow (13:35) is excellent and the blow itself is strong and one can differentiate the thud of the hammer from the more resonant timpani stroke. Trombones are excellent, brassy, with bite, following the blow. The brass buildup to another of my touchstones at 134 - 3-2 is very well done and the strong rhythm in cymbal, bass drum, and snarling trombones, at 15:57 is excellent. Many conductors simply play through this striking passage but JH gives it its full due, the way he does a similar passage in the last movement of Bruckner 5. This passage alone proclaims, to me, JH's mastery of this movement. The second hammer blow is clear and good, with fine trombones

afterwards. JH does not take the third hammer blow, and I think that he does not use the revised orchestration, but I am not sure. The final measures are dark and brooding enough - Death wins!

There is another Horenstein "recording," actually an underground tape from a performance at Bournemouth, UK. (do not know date but think it is later than the commercial release). The reading is similar, but the first movement has more energy and the rhythm is more concentrated and sharp. The trombones of Stockholm, however, are better. The *Scherzo* opens quite differently from that at Stockholm - the first note is a *forte, f*, timpani note, and it is strong. Then the cellos and basses enter in over the continued *f* of the timpani also marked *forte* and with *sf* on the first note of triplets. However, after the opening solo note on timpani, they disappear into the background in favor of the sharply accented cellos and basses, etc. Quite a different effect and, IMHO, NOT in accordance with the score. This time at RN 63, the Bournemouth timpanist plays what is in the score, so I can only think that at Stockholm the player made a terrible mistake and JH could not correct it. That is very odd with a conductor of Horenstein's experience and skill. Horenstein's opening of the scherzo is not unique, either - that interpretation is also on several other recordings, e.g., Boulez and the VPO, and Abbado and the Cleveland (broadcast). In the MahlerFest performance of n1993, the timpani are as written but the cellos and basses are almost lost (owing, I think, to the geometry of how the microphones were placed). We'll see what Olson does next January.

**John Barbirolli**, New Philharmonia Orchestra, EMI 7 67816 2 (Note, Barbirolli performed in the order *Andante-Scherzo*, but the published reversed the inner movements, apparently to conform with the Critical Edition. It has since been re-issued in the order in which it was actually performed.)

1. *Allegro energico, ma non troppo*. Sir John takes a very measured approach, the tread of giants. Mahler's marking calls for some comment. Energetic need not be hasty, as Sir John and Otto Klemperer time after time demonstrated. Also, Mahler's admonition "but not too much" allows the conductor much leeway. For my taste, I find this opening the most powerful (vehement) of any performance I have ever heard. At RN 6 + 4 (2:18), the basses growl better than in any other recording. At 3:10 or so Alma's theme enters very powerfully. Just after RN 21 (8:20) the cowbells are "perfect," sounding as if from hills at a distance, just what Mahler must have heard on his hikes, as I myself have heard many, many times in Switzerland, France and Austria. They have the right timbre, and the right tonal range; in many recordings these bells sound "tinny." The quiet tremolo strings behind the bells are wonderfully atmospheric. Sir John slides gracefully into the transition at RN 41 (19:06) and does that passage very well. Sir John allows himself a graceful *rit*. Just before pressing on to the end, as Mahler directs, and takes the marked *rit* at 2 before 42 before the strong closing. The timing is just over 21 minutes, without the repeat. Adding the repeat would have brought the timing to maybe 26 1/2 minutes, not that much slower than Rattle, the slowest in Fülöp's catalog. Altogether, a powerful and sensitive performance, one that I would not be without, but I also can take it somewhat faster, but then I dislike those who rush it (e.g., Bernstein).

2. *Andante* (the way it was performed). This is a lovely reading, the strings are especially fine, and carry out their *portamenti* with grace. Starting at 7:52 the "dangerous" descending string



passage is negotiated well, to Sir John's non-mellifluous accompaniment. Another lovely portamento at RN 99 (11:11). The lovely chord (a diminished version of a similar chord heard in I, ?) at 15:00 fades into a gentle closing. One cannot wish for a more sensitive reading of this movement.

3. *Scherzo*. Sir John elects to diminish the timpani between the *sf* markings, and let the cellos and basses sound, but as I read those 8 measures, the timpani dynamics stay the same, *forte*. But his reading is in better balance than others who try this. One can still hear the timpani beats below the strings. Sir John pounds out the rhythm inexorably and the brass is excellent. JB slows down a little at the *Altväterisch* and is somewhat deliberate, as marked. Thus far, however, no conductor has made sufficient contrast here as I think Mahler intended. In his day, "old fashioned" must have meant something somewhat different from what modern conductors think. Mahler adjusts tempo often, between "old fashioned" and "pressing" so the conductor and orchestra has to be on their toes, as they are here! Needless to say, the timpanist gets it right at RN 63 (5:15) as do the horns just following. To the end, this is an altogether exemplary performance, JB in positive control and the orchestra brilliant.

4. *Finale*. From the beginning one senses JB's very deliberate but forceful approach. The horn and trumpet wail mightily, and the timpanist knows what *ff* means. No wimpy playing here! JB, deliberate but powerful, moves along to the first hammer blow, which seems a little too resonant, not the "dull thud" Mahler asked for, but followed by blazing trombones. The horns and trombones lead strongly into the magic moment at 134 - 3 & 2, and the rhythmic effect here is good, perhaps not quite as striking in Horenstein's Bournemouth performance. The second hammer blow is again a little resonant, and one wonders if JB (to placate the engineers) just used a bass drum whack instead of a hammer. These hammer blows are the one weakness I find thus far, maybe not the fault of JB. The "false" third hammer blow, RN 164 (29:47), is fine, and where the third blow should be 10 measures later, JB follows the revised orchestration. The trombones and tuba leading up to the final mournful cry of the double basses are good, but do not really prepare one for the tremendous timpani job at the end. I must believe that this was Mahler's own intention. No other recording is so stark and powerful.

Those who are followers of J. B. Tolkien will understand me when I assert that this performance is the "March of the Ents" - powerful in the extreme, deliberate but not dragging, resolutely driving forward to the pounding of the hammers of fate at the end. This would be my desert island Sixth, notwithstanding the missing repeat and hammer blows that are not the best.

**John Barbirolli**, Berlin Philharmonic. This is from a concert, and is slightly faster than his studio recording. It is very good but suffers from a metallic hammer blow, exactly what Mahler did NOT want.

#### **OTHER RECORDINGS OF INTEREST**

**Harold Farberman**, London Symphony Orchestra, VOX 2 7212, remastered from LP. This is another case where the publisher did the dubious favor to the conductor, without ever consulting him, of reversing the conductor's performance order of the inner movements, from A-S to S-A.

1. *Allegro*. The opening is ordinary, especially just after listening to the Barbirolli. The trombones at 2 + 2 & 4, however, are good, and very brassy. There is not enough contrast when the Alma theme enters (2:34). There are some remarkable trombones starting at 3:15, about RN 11. Most of this movement moves well. Horns obey Mahler's dynamics very well in one passage, but then, after a diminuendo, continue to play loud. The coda is OK. After hearing this performance on a cassette from the LP, I was very impressed. My evaluation has gone down to pretty good but nowhere near JH and JB. Farberman does nothing wrong, but there is a lack of urgency, drive, power, etc.

2. *Scherzo*. HF does emphasize the first timpani, and then the first note of the lower strings, but at the same time, the timpani disappears. I do not think that this is Mahler intended. But then, I have not yet heard this passage played as written. Is this another of Mahler's "jokes" as is measure 3 of the Fourth (i.e., tests of the conductor)? Also, I think that the tempo is a little too fast. Mahler wants "heavy" but not dragging. HF makes quite a contrast in tempo when he gets to the *Altväterisch* section, the best contrast thus far but without dragging the slow section. The timpani are quite good at RN 63, leading to the grace notes on the horns, which are played quite well, not as striking as JB. There are some lovely low tam-tams at RN 67 + 7 and following (6:15), and a fine growling tuba, not always heard on recordings. The *Altväterisch* section comes again, again in good contrast with the other sections, with some very nicely judged *ceasuras*. At RN 84 (12:10) there is a wonderful horn pedal note, not often heard so well. This is one of the most interesting version of this movement, with substantial contrasts, in keeping with the music.

3. *Andante*. Very lovely string and wind playing all along, with some marvelous horns, and the descending string passage at RN 96 - 4 (about 8:15) is played flawlessly by the LSO strings - best I have heard yet. However, the strings do not manage a smooth portamento at RN 99 (11:52).

4. *Finale*. HF opens appropriately mysteriously - the bass tuba growls, the horns and trumpets wail convincingly, and behind the trumpets at RN 106-3 (2:58) the horns (some of them stopped) play for the first time the jaunty tune that later on appears in a triumphal mode, and are heard clearly, which they are not in most recordings. The following passages develop the triumphal themes in brass and strings very well leading to the first hammer blow (13:59), quite pronounced and the hammer is delineated clearly, as opposed to the JB recording. The following trombones are not nearly as good as in JB. The following build up is good with horns and trombones and the climax of this section at RN 134 - 3 (16:04) is quite good. Horenstein, Bournemouth, still holds the gold star for these two measures. The swaggering, jaunty passages that follow lead nicely to the somewhat broadened out and quiet section that introduces the second hammer blow (18:56), where the cymbal (slightly out of synch.) and tam-tam add lots of bright upper partials. The trombones here are not as impressive as the New Philharmonia under JB. A few moments later, Mahler wants "somewhat pressed" (*drängend*) but HF seems to slow down to the point of almost seeming dragging (pun intended). At the end of this passage Mahler marked "Forwards," but HF does not obey. At RN 143 Mahler wants "somewhat held back) but HF maintains the previously too-slow tempo, as if he had started holding back too soon to anticipate Mahler's instruction. The build-up to the next climax is good, and the "false" hammer blow at measure 773 is resonant and impressive, then the real third blow at measure 783 (with the non-revised orchestration at 30:21)

is sharp, too sharp, in fact, as the hammer blow is a "thwack" not a "thud." The final timpani outcries are good, but not comparable to those of the JB recording.

All in all, a satisfactory and very good performance, rising to excellent in spots, with not too many disappointments. A bargain at the new VOX price.

**Thomas Sanderling**, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, RS label, available in USA via Amazon.com.

1. *Allegro*. TS takes a sensible tempo, forceful but not too fast. Trombones at RN1 + 5(00:19) excellent, but the following trombone notes are not as strong as JH-Stockholm. Alma's theme comes in with careful phrasing, the marked dynamics are observed well. The strings and brass acquit themselves very well in the following passages, and the chord at RN 13 + 4 (4:27) is nicely delineated. I always feel disappointed when this particular chord is not clear. In the repeat, the trombones are even better than before. At 11:06 the trombones, marked *p* are clearly heard, a nice touch, with nice horns and trombones following to the tam-tam low growl at 11:25 (19 + 4) followed by another a few seconds later. It is pleasant to hear these inner voices. The herdbells enter, a little distant, maybe the celeste a little too loud. At RN 24 (14:12) the duet between the bass clarinet and herdbells is very good, and clear, followed by a lovely duet between horns and celesta. At RN 25 (15:15) the tempo suddenly picks up in a solid march, good brass and winds, leading to the Alma reprise at 18:31. The opening march appears again, leading to the quick tempo at RN 37 (20:28)m The lovely passage of trumpet against celeste at 21:50 is good and Sanderling leads a triumphal march to the end. This is very well played, excellent in fact, if not quite as pointed as Horenstein or as powerful as Barbirolli.

2. *Scherzo*. A powerful opening with strong lower strings. The first timpani note, standing by itself, is strong, but the subsequent strokes are not *f* as marked. However, TS comes closer to the score than any thus far. *Altväterisch*, at 2:16, is quite good, with a good lilt and different character. It is hard to know just what Mahler meant here, but whatever it was, TS manages to make this section a good contrast with the preceding driving rhythms. At 4:27 the horns bray out unmistakably Mahler's opinion of his critics. The second *altväterisch* section, marked to be the same as the first time, is a little faster, with somewhat less contrast. At 9:19 this section mirrors, with different orchestration, the braying horns earlier. This time the horns are sarcastic and moaning, instead of braying. TS brings off this mood well. In the Dover score, there are no tempo changes in the following section, but in the latest critical edition there is a *ritenuto* at RN 82, which TS observes well (I assume that this marking is also in the earlier critical edition).

3. *Andante*. The tempo is moderate, as called for, the strings play lovingly, perhaps missing a few *portamenti* in the beginning, but the legato playing is excellent. Horn and winds are also excellent. At about 6 minutes, the strings take their *portamenti* very nicely. The herdbells, marked this time *im Orchester* are barely heard. The treacherous descending string passage starting at about 7:00 is negotiated very well, hardly any sign of "off tune," or lack of synchronicity. The following passage, string, horns and winds, is very tender leading to the delicate upper string *portamento* at 10:21, exquisitely played. Then follows somewhat stronger passages leading to the beautiful strings introducing the final passages, ethereal music, darkened somewhat by the wonderful chord at 14:00.

4. *Finale*. Strong opening, and wonder harp *glissando* with all the notes heard clearly, instead of a smear, followed by strong brass, mournful tuba. A fine bass tuba, then excellent horns against the celeste and harp. Horn, then trumpet, wail convincingly. A fine wind and horn chorale introduce the pounding rhythm in timpani and the bassoons introduce the swaggering theme that later becomes the triumphal march. It is enough to say that the next section, powerful brass playing, comes though just fine, leading to the exhilarating wind triplets at 7:35 introducing a long lyrical passage, is under perfect control and not exaggerated. The herdbells, over the tuba, are perhaps a little too prominent, as again they are to be heard in the distance, an artifact, perhaps, of the engineering not the conducting. The passage leading to the first blow at 12:42 is quite measured and successful, and the hammer blow is well balanced with the rest of the orchestration. Fierce trombones follow, then equally fierce trumpets, solid horns, etc. The strong syncopated passage at 14:31 does not come off strongly, the first major weakness I find in this performance. TS, however, recaptures the swagger in the march to the second hammer stroke at 17:32, good but hardly overpowering, as it should be (listen to Zander, in the review following). Again excellent trombones and trumpets/horns. At 18:47 the timpani pound mightily, as in the beginning of this movement, foretelling the even greater moment at the end. The section leading to the "false" third blow is indeed powerful, and the *tutti* is powerful. TS does not take the third blow, and the slowing down and quieting of the orchestra is well controlled. The passage leading to the coda could have been more foreboding and grim, and the big tutti three bars before the end is somewhat anti-climatic. The final menacing timpani bars seem too quick to have their full effect.

**Benjamin Zander**, Philharmonia Orchestra, new release on Telarc, with a full CD lecture.

1. *Allegro*. Very nice opening tempo, strong but not rushed. Brass is good, perhaps a little genteel British, not the bite of the Stockholm brass nor the power in Barbirolli. This, in fact, may be a matter of the sound engineering - all well balanced but insufficient "presence." The Alma theme enters strongly, as Mahler indicated, with a small grunt from someone - Zander? At RN 10 Zander gets some good jaunty playing from the Philharmonia. My favorite chord, RN 13 + 4, at 4:42 seems to have been just played through with no attention to its structural significance - or am I all wet here? The side drum, marked *p* to be sure, is hardly audible, but then its *crescendo* is impressive. In the repeat, the Alma theme is about the same, but "my" chord is better. However, the side drum is much less impressive the second time. The xylophone at about 11:00 seems weak and recessed, though marked *ff*, so maybe again that is the sound engineering. Just before RN 19, at 11:50; the Philharmonia strings execute perfectly Mahler's *spring Bogen*. At 12:43 the herdbells and celeste are just right. Zander judges well the next section, up to RN 25 at 16:61, *Gracioso, immer ruhig, ohne zu schleppen*, calmly but not dragging, and the solo horn against solo violin is very tender without being "milked." The return to tempo, very energetic, is well done, with some fine inner string voices displayed; however, the clear voicings here allow me to think that the recording was over-balanced in favor of the strings. Soon, trombones, however, are clear but always seem to be slightly in the background. The trumpets always shine through, so maybe there is much multi-miking here. The return of Alma at 19:00 is gentle. "My" chord at 21:00 is good, setting the stage for the return of the march rhythms in lower strings and the return of low trombones. Zander handles very well my little favorite passage at RN 41, 23:39, giving it a nice lilt, leading to a vigorous ending. All in all, this is a most satisfactory performance of this

movement, equal to Thomas Sanderling but not quite up to what I like to hear in the Horenstein and Barbirolli readings.

2. *Scherzo*. Zander's reading is almost to the score. The first timpani note is accented, then the lower basses come in with proper accenting, but the intermediate timpani notes, all marked *forte* simply disappear in between accents. I really wonder what Mahler himself did, or intended here. Van Beinum in his 1955 performance with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, seems to be the only one closest to the score - strong timpani, albeit all the beats seem to have the same dynamics and accents, and with the lower strings clearly below, accented as marked. I am left wondering how Bob Olson will "solve" this problem next January. Surely, suppressing the intermediate timpani notes is an incorrect, but common, solution. Back to the following music, Zander marches along well, and takes a nice contrast for the *altväterisch* section at 2:17. Zander seems to interpret, here, many *legato* markings as *portamenti*, which the strings do with gusto, which seems in the spirit of the music so I do not object, but, strictly speaking, is not called for in the score. At 4:31 the Philharmonia's horns bray well at Mahler's critics and observe well the dynamics. The winds obey well Mahler's change in tempo just before RN 64. The second appearance of *altväterisch* at 7:14, is as good as the first time. All in all, this is a fine, energetic reading, seemingly more energetic than the preceding movement. The *col legno* strings are fine, the winds exemplary, the brass also, and this is one of the best readings off this movement I have heard yet.

3. *Andante*. Good tempo, nice string and wind playing. Zander has the strings take the *portamenti* at RN 87 +7, which is voiced well so that it is clear, usually not in most recordings. Now I'll cease pontificating on details and relax and let this lovely music wash over my consciousness. This is as fine a reading as one could wish for. Needless to say, the Philharmonia strings negotiate flawlessly the descending string passage at RN 95 + 4, and the delicious *portamento* at RN 99. The slightly dark chord near the end is evident, but I have heard it better delineated. Just too bad that one must change CDs here so the magical segue into the *finale* is lost.

4. *Finale*. This set contains on the second CD, the *Finale* first with the three blows, as originally composed and premièred at Essen, and then in the revised version with the third blow eliminated. When Mahler eliminated the third blow, he also re-orchestrated that bar, so of course that version should be played. But, it is a disputed what score to use when the original version is played, with the third blow present. It would seem logical to use the Essen score, but that version does not exist any longer, as far as we know, as Mahler continued to tinker with changes and the marked-up score in the Vienna Society, according to experts, cannot be de-convoluted to know just which changes were made when. Anyway, I shall comment here only on the "original" version appearing first on this CD. I like Zander's opening tempo, and the sound quality - mysterious, portending. If one had never heard this music before, one would immediately suspect that important things would be coming! The first horn theme is atmospheric, and the horn then wails convincingly. followed by the trumpet, leading to a well judged chorale in winds and horns. The build to the first climax is good and the hammer blow at 13:26 is most impressive, much more in tune to my ears with Mahler's intentions, as best we can infer them from his written or quoted comments, than Zander's earlier recording with the Boston Philharmonic. The forceful passage at RN 134 - 3 at 15:20 do not stand out, in fact I missed this the first two times through, a big disappointment. Of course, the score does not give any special emphasis to this passage but

having heard Horenstein/Bournemouth and Olson/MahlerFest I expect a big moment here. The second blow at 18:18 is indeed magnificent, a standard by which others must be judged. The third blow, 29:16 is inserted in the revised orchestration, as far as I can tell, a mistaken judgement on Zander's part, I believe. The final measures are good, a big tutti but the final timpani strokes do not convey the terrible finality of Barbirolli's performance, in fact, the final measures are a letdown.

Overall, I would have to put this version behind JH, JB and Thomas Sanderling, in the class of quite good but with disappointments. There are great disappointments in Mr. Zander's lecture; his musical discussion is interesting and for the most part useful. What I do not find useful, however, is his allusion that Mahler may have "borrowed" from Strauss, e.g., *Domestic Symphony* and *Dance of the Seven Veils*.

Mr. Zander also flunks history. He repeats Alma's story about the *Scherzo* echoing the children in the yard, when, in fact, Mahler composed this movement before Anna was born and Marie was a babe in arms. Hard to figure out why Alma made up this story, but there it is, and needs to be squelched. Zander also repeats the canard that the violent anti-Semitism in Vienna "forced" him to resign from the Hofoper. In fact, he labored mightily with Prince Montenuovo, the representative of the Emperor to be relieved from his contract as Mahler had become sick and tired of the continuing administrative fights. Besides, he knew he had the heart defect (NOT FATAL) and a young family to care for. Thus, when he negotiated a contract with the Metropolitan Opera in New York at three times the salary and one-third the work he, being a practical husband, decided that that option was far better than staying in Vienna and continuing the enervating administrative haggling with the company. While I admire Mr. Zander's arguments in favor of re-installing the third hammer blow, I cavil at his examples of the "before" and "after." The example of the "original" hammer blow as Mahler composed it, does NOT include the celesta, but Mr. Zander's musical example does. I happen to admire Mr. Zander for his devotion to Mahler, his energetic performances, his ability to get wondrous playing from his Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, but I am dismayed that he makes such mistakes.

**Herbert von Karajan**, Berlin Philharmonic. I did listen to this with the score, but alas, did not take notes. I recall that it is a worthy performance, nothing at all to carp about, maybe slightly cool. To my taste, along with the Fourth, this is von K's best Mahler.

**Robert Olson**, MahlerFest VI, MahlerFest Orchestra, 1993, Boulder, Co. For this recording there was one set of crossed microphones, about 15 feet above the stage, about in the middle of the orchestra, i., e., behind most of the strings. Thus, the overall balance is biased against the strings.

1. *Allegro*. Olson's tempo is about like that of the Horenstein Stockholm performance. Very clean trumpet playing at RN 2 + 7-9. Ditto for trumpets a little later, and horns. Trombones at RN6 4 + 4 & following, marked *mf* sound a little recessed. Double basses are good at RN6 + 4, but not as good as in the Barbirolli. Olson plays the Alma theme with feeling but it is not overdone, with nice horns behind. The chord at RN 13 + 4, is sounded clearly, comes back again at RN 36 + 5 (and, to my ears, is transformed again in the *andante* near the end). At RN #36 - 8 the double basses begin a mysterious *ostenuto* with growling trombones that usher in the big tempo change at RN 37 with a fine bass tuba underneath. The jaunty "joke" at RN 41 is played deliciously, for

all its worth. Olson drives on to a deliberate and powerful coda, plenty of brass clams and string problems, but the orchestra is playing with full fervor.

2. *Andante*. (Note, this was the Sunday performance; on Saturday the inner movements were S-A, as first published). The movement starts out well, not dragging but tender, until the treacherous descending string passage at RN 95 + 4 and following, where the strings barely hang together, but many of the name orchestras also come a cropper here. However, the strings do very well in the next section leading to the delicious *portamento* at RN 99. The movement moves to a fine coda with my mysterious chord at 9 measures before the end.

3. *Scherzo*. The timpani measures are played well, with accents as marked, but the off-beat accents in the lower strings do not come through, possibly a result of how the microphones were placed. One can hear them playing but the sound is recessed. The horns do their grace notes well, and really rise to the occasion at RN 63 -Mahler thumbing his nose at the critics who so thoroughly trashed his Fourth and Fifth. There is too much going on, not that it is fast, but complex, with interplay between winds, brass and strings, to comment in detail. It is all deliciously played, ending in a fine bassoon cadence.

4. *Finale*. The opening is quite atmospheric-winds, brass (especially bass tuba) very fine, and the tempo is well judged, deliberate, not rushed but not dragged either. Leading up to RN 107, the conversation between winds, horn and bass tuba is very clean and clear, ending with a powerful chord at 107 and the *ff* timpani strokes leave no doubt about the strength of the playing to follow. The build to the first hammer blow is inexorable, not rushed, and at RN 129 the blow itself is palpable - though the hammer is a touch late, which gives the listener the chance to differentiate between it and the timpani stroke, not intentional, of course, but a useful mistake. The following trombones and tuba are brassy and fierce, maybe not quite up to the standard set by Barbirolli. The brass are outstanding in the passages that follow, especially the tuba at RN 134 -,7-8 (14:57) leading to the cataclysmic syncopated passage at 134 - 3, which thus far is only matched by Horenstein's Bournemouth performance. This passage is one of my *sine qua non* touchstones of this work. Olson and the MFest orchestra pass with flying colors. The following passages have a swagger and jauntiness; to me, this passage indicates that Mahler is saying "Oh, Ye Cruel Gods of Fate, do your worst, I shall prevail!" In such march-like passages Olson always seem to get the orchestra with him perfectly in a stirring rhythm that is seldom matched by any one else (strong personal opinion, of course). The triumphal march culminates in strong brass-string passages leading to the second blow at RN 140 (18:16), this time perfectly together, followed again by strong, fierce brass and horns. The intervening development is quite fierce, sometimes quite agitated (but never rushed) leading up to the calmer passages starting just before RN 163 (26:11), with noble horns and trombones leading to the "false" third hammer blow at RN 164 (29:34) and then the "virtual" third blow ( actually missing here but with Mahler's revised orchestration) ten measures later at 28:59. The tam-tam and bass tuba-trombones-horns announce the final "death sentence" (according to most commentators, and, and Donald Mitchell writes, "Mahler lets Death win," in the coda and pounding timpani. But I am not so sure. To me this is Mahler getting up again and shaking his fist yet one more time at fate (and his critics) and, after all, he does win, at least for a time. Olson and the MahlerFest orchestra here provide an ending equal in all ways to the shattering ending produced in the Barbirolli performance.

This ten-year old performance promises much to be anticipated at MahlerFest XVI, 2003.

### **Some brief first impressions, from listening in 2000**

**Simon Rattle**, CBSO. Bravo for playing the inner movements andante-scherzo, Mahler's own preference, but the performance is so mannered, even wayward, that it simply does not hang together. Sir Simon's motto seems to be, "slow 'er down, speed 'er up." The scherzo is particularly annoying in being so mannered. Sir Simon uses three hammer strokes. Interesting for its good effects but a failure as a coherent reading.

**Pierre Boulez**, Vienna. This one cranks along at a middle pace, with no extremes of tempo changes. Orchestra playing is good. PB lets the music speak for itself. However, I would wish for a touch more expression and shaping of phrases. Good reading for a first time listener, as it presents the music (notes) and not an interpretation. Then go on to JH or JB to hear the MUSIC (notes plus). Remember, Mahler is said to have said, "The most important [he does not specify what?] is not in the notes."

**Leif Segerstam**, Danish NRSO. I had given this one away to the library, as at first hearing I didn't care for it. On rehearing a tape I kept, I liked it better, but the scherzo is almost too mannered, not up to the excesses of the Bernstein NYPO or Simon Rattle, but a little excessive, with a slowdown almost to a stop at places near the end of the movement. I'll not comment further.

**Klaus Tennstedt**, LPO. This is not great but not bad, and has fewer of KT's usual mannerisms. I have been playing some of the KT multiple set lately and find this among the better ones. I'll not comment further.

**Claudio Abbado**, RAI orchestra of Rome, 15 April, 1967, FONITCETRA CDE 1061, recorded in concert at La Scala. Excellent opening tempo, even if slightly on the brisk side. The Italians under the young Abbado play with verve and precision, sounding like an experienced Mahler orchestra. This movement works very well. The *Scherzo* is rather brisk, but allows Abbado a good contrast with the *Altväterisch* sections. Abbado understood well Mahler's intentions in the off-set timpani/low string accents and gets it just right. The horns could bray with more irony and contempt at RN 63. The *Andante* is tenderly played, not over sentimental, just right. The *Finale* is strong, the brass good, the hammer blows quite acceptable, but Abbado quickens the tempo in the strong section between blows # 1 and #2, and the big moment at 2/3 measures before RN 134 is somewhat lost in the rush. This is a fine performance, a real sleeper, and worth looking for. There is also a performance at about the same time with the Vienna PO. Worth looking for.

**Claudio Abbado**, Cleveland Orchestra (in concert, broadcast). Similar reading to the Rome performance but falls far behind in intensity and care, a big surprise considering the excellence of the Cleveland Orchestra.

**Leonard Bernstein** and the New York Philharmonic. LB is much too fast, for my taste, in the opening and I think that the first movement, while exciting, fails to do justice to the wonderfully upbeat music. The *Scherzo* is brisk, and the lower accented strings are not heard. LB goes for broke with string *portamenti*, effective but I think he overdoes it. LB does not make too much of the braying horns, but he does slow to a walk as the cadences continue. The Adagio is lovely, milked somewhat, but within bounds. The *Finale* is manic-depressive, as was Bernstein himself, and possibly Mahler. The first hammer blow is very good and LB takes a broad tempo for the



following trombone passage. LB speeds up for the "battle" scene (horns, trombones in fast cadences) and then slows down for the big moment 2 measures before RN 134. It sort of works, albeit a little exaggerated. The build up to the third blow is rather frenetic, vintage Bernstein. He takes the third blow where it should be but it seems to be in the revised orchestration, instead of going back to the original orchestration. The final measures are good. All in all, this is a good performance if you like your Mahler very emotional and heart-on-sleeve. I slightly prefer LB's later reading, below.

**Leonard Bernstein** and the Vienna Philharmonic, DGG 427 697-2. LB is more relaxed here, and I think that the first movement works better, Except for the slow passages. There, Lennie slows down to a walk, milking the music and losing the structural coherence. The *Scherzo* opens well and Lennie gets it almost right, but the timpani beats between the accented beats fade away, even though the score says *forte*. The andante is well played albeit a little slow. The opening of the *Finale* is strong and well paced. Lennie plays this for drama, slow and ponderous, but it does work. Lennie, contrary to his usual habit, avoids speeding up for the exuberant section, and the build to the first hammer blow is good, the blow itself is excellent. Lennie does speed up for what Kelly Hansen, our Note Author, calls the "Battle Scene." Then he slows down almost lugubriously for the big moment at 2-3 measures before RN 134. Does not work, at least for me. The second hammer blow is fine, with a ringing tam-tam. Then it sounds as if Lennie does insert the third hammer at RN 164, where it should not be. However, it may be that the timpani and bass drum, both marked *f*, are really too loud and it sounds like the hammer. Ten measures later, where the original third hammer had been, it does sound as if LB uses the revised orchestration, without hammer. The big chord introducing the last timpani fate strokes is good, but the timpani strokes do not have the dread aspect of the Barbirolli recording. I regard this later effort as surpassing the earlier NYPO reading, and it is good, even very good if one likes the Bernstein approach.

**M. Inoue**, Royal Philharmonic. This is a good, solid Sixth, not reaching the excellence of the same conductor's Fifth. It is hard to find, usually coupled with the Fifth, which is worth having in any case.

**Günther Herbig**, Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra. Quite a good reading and recording. Never anything to be wary of, but then it never quite reaches the heights.

**Zubin Mehta**, Israel Philharmonic, broadcast of a concert in Tel Aviv. I heard Mehta do an ordinary Sixth in Los Angeles, but this one is a superior reading - quite vigorous and well paced. It should be released commercially, it is that good. The Israeli musicians seem to have this music in their hearts, perhaps reminding them of the dark times in Germany. Mehta gets exactly right the tricky opening of the *Scherzo*. He lets down only in the last two measures, which have no punch whatsoever. Pity, for that is the part that tends to leave the lasting impression.

**Lorin Maazel**, Vienna Philharmonic, notes by Jack Diether (1982). Diether, usually a reliable writer and researcher, makes several curious mistakes in his notes: first, that Mahler changed his mind twice about the order of the inner movements; second, that the Sixth is one of the most popular and most often played Mahler symphony; third, that Mahler died of rheumatic heart disease; fourth, that Mahler told Alma that he had composed her into the symphony (this was Alma writing this, NOT Mahler); and, fifth, that Mahler said that the *Scherzo* described the children running around the yard (This again is Alma, and besides Anna had not yet been born when Mahler composed the *Scherzo*). This is just how myths are promulgated. On the other hand Diether says, rightfully, that this is not a gloomy symphony.

Notwithstanding the notes, Maazel gives a fine performance. The first movement is straight and powerful, with a good tempo, and, none of the annoying tempo idiosyncrasies for which he is famous. The opening of the *Scherzo* is almost right - the off-accent timpani notes are too weak. The braying horns are excellent, and the slight slow-down when they finish is appropriate. The *Andante* (notice the inner movement order!) opens with a good tempo and of course the Viennese know how to play this lovely music. Nice bass clarinet below the strings. The diminished chord near the end is lovingly played.

**Pierre Boulez**, London Symphony Orchestra, in concert. This is an altogether excellent performance, ranking with the best. Boulez is evidently a conductor who does best in concert, as here he is totally involved with the music - nothing cool or cerebral about this reading. Quite different from the somewhat detached reading with the Vienna Philharmonic made recently. I cannot find out if this broadcast was ever released on a minor label.

**Vaclav Neuman**, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Berlin Classics. This was a pleasant surprise. The orchestra is excellent, the recording is very good, and the reading quite powerful, for the most part, with essentially nothing about which to complain. Not at the top but a commendable recording. A worth bonus are strong performances of *Fidelio* and *Leonore no. 2* overtures.

**Bernard Haitink**, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, Phillips box set. Contrary to some reports, who think that this is somewhat dull and held back, I found it an exciting performance, in Haitink's usual straight-forward but very-much-in-command style, and no extra Bernsteinian extravagances. The ACO has Mahler in its soul and heart, having played more Mahler than any other orchestra in the world, maybe more than the other top five combined! This box set of all the symphonies can sometimes be had for a good price and is highly recommended. As a bonus, the CD disks contain one of the best Mahler 20 *Adagios* I have heard.

## SUMMARY

Go for the John Barbirolli EMI or Great Recordings of the Century and the Horenstein Stockholm Orchestra recordings for the most searing and satisfactory (to me) account of the music. These are what I pull off the shelf when I need a Mahler 6 fix.

Other worthy recordings are by Thomas Sanderling, Harold Farberman, Herbert von Karajan, Benjamin Zander, Vaclav Neuman, Bernard Haitink and Pierre Boulez.

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## Mahler Symphony No. 7 Recordings in Review

by Stan Ruttenberg

**Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic.** First recording in 1965, Sony; and the second in 1986, DGG; and an underground recording of a broadcast in 1986 at the time of the DGG recording. The last is the best, in my opinion, but not readily available. Between the two commercial recordings I would choose the earlier one, on Sony, as it is less restrained. Here, Bernstein is at his best, less interventionist than in any other of his Mahler recordings, but full of life. In all three recordings, however, he cannot resist messing up the penultimate chord — always Bernstein, ruining Mahler's good idea with his better one.

**Jascha Horenstein**, concert performance with the New Philharmonia, 1969, with some brass clams and other warts, but a deeply thoughtful and wonderful performance. Possible still available on Descant label, but only from Berkshire Record Outlet ([www.broinc.com](http://www.broinc.com)), and recently on BBC Legends (a much less satisfactory transfer). This belongs in the library of every serious Mahler enthusiast.

**Vaclav Neuman** conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Berlin Classics, 1968. Aside from a weak timpani bang in the second movement, this is a fine reading, with a very exuberant final movement.

**Georg Solti** conducting the Chicago Symphony, London. This is one of Solti's most satisfying Mahler readings, tempo changes not extreme, well recorded and played. In fact, it is one of the few recordings where the 1/32nd notes in the lower strings can be heard in the first movement. Brass is strong, as expected, but not brash. Last movement opens briskly but well controlled, and the tumultuous coda is excellent.

**Otto Klemperer** conducting the Philharmonia, EMI, 1969. This is the slowest 7th on record, but it does not drag. Klemperer had a talent for moving very slowly but making it majestic and noble, and you get a chance to hear much music that flies by in faster performances

**Hermann Scherchen**, Toronto Symphony, concert performance. Avoid this one, even at a bargain price, as it is very uneven — speed'em up, slow'er down! Sound is uneven. Scherchen's recording with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra (Westminster), if you can find it, is much preferred.

**Michael Tilson-Thomas** conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, 1999. I cannot recommend this performance, though sound is quite good, as MTT divides the music up into episodes and loses the grand architecture.

Two recent recordings are recommended for sane, but invigorating performances in excellent sound:

**Claudio Abbado** conducting the Berlin Philharmonic, DGG, 2002. This must be similar to the Salzburg performance that Donald Mitchell admired. Well played and recorded, and has no faults.

**Michael Gielen** conducting the SWF-Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden, 1993. Much inner detail is heard and, in fact, this is one of the few recording I have heard where the 1/32 notes in the upper strings near the opening are heard clearly. Most conductors finesse these difficult passes by having the orchestra play tremolo instead. A sane but intense performance -- not a contradiction in this case!.

Two other performances, both slow but even so with momentum and style, are **Leif Stegerstam** and the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (Chandos) and **Lorin Mazaal** and the Vienna Philharmonic (CBS-SONY)).

As a footnote, if you want to hear the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* played to perfection, find a transfer of the performance by **Willem Mengelberg** and the **Concertgebouw Orchestra** of Amsterdam — a truly thrilling and powerful performance, in good sound for one made circa 1942! Failing to find that one, try Otto Klemperer with the Philharmonia on EMI.

Apologies to those whose favorite performances I have overlooked.

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## Recordings of Kindertotenlieder

by Stan Ruttenberg, President, Colorado MahlerFest

There are perhaps 60 recordings of this song cycle. Mahler preferred the male voice for most of his songs but, oddly enough, there are many more good interpretations of this work by female singers. In concert, female singers tend to project better than baritones through Mahler's orchestrations, even though he reduced the size of the orchestra for his songs. On recordings, however, the male singers hold their own and the several mentioned here certainly produce great interpretations.

The earliest is Heinrich Rehkemper, baritone, with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Jascha Horenstein, recorded on 78 rpm in 1928. It was available as a CD from Pearl and is available again in a new remastering on NAXOS (with the Oscar Fried No. 2).

Kathleen Ferrier, the incomparable British mezzo, recorded it in 1949 with Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic, now available on CD in a very fine performance. Ferrier also made it with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, conducted by Otto Klemperer, taken from a radio broadcast for the Holland Festival in 1951, also a fine performance.

Mitch Friedfeld in his essay recommends Thomas Hampson, Vienna Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein. While an admirer of Hampson, I find that Bernstein's tempos are too sluggish.

The American baritone, Norman Foster did an excellent performance with the Bamberg SO, Jascha Horenstein conducting, but the sound is a little dim, even on the remastered set available from VOX on CD.

My own favorites begin with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, who recorded it 3 times commercially, and there are others (airchecks.) His second recording was made weeks after his wife and infant died in childbirth. Karl Böhm, while not a noted Mahlerian, conducts the Berlin Philharmonic with power and understanding, and the recording is excellent. This CD is hard to find but is worth the search, for no one can match Fischer-Dieskau in the truly heartfelt sadness and resignation he put into this work after his own personal tragedy.

My favorite for the female voice is also recommended by Friedfeld, the Janet Baker, Hallé Orchestra, John Barbirolli conducting.

Other recommended versions are by Christa Ludwig (Philharmonia, Adré Vandernoot; also Berlin PO, Herbert von Karajan), Kirsten Flagstad (Vienna Philharmonic, Adrian Boult), Maureen Forester (Charles Munch, Boston SO), Jose van Dam (Lille National Orchestra, Jean-Claude Casadesus), and Catherine Robbin (Kitchner-Waterloo SO (Canada), Raffi Armenian). Two hard to find recordings are worth searching for, probably only on LP - Rita Gorr (French National Radio Orchestra, Desiré-Emile Inghelbrecht), and Vera Soukupova, Czech Philharmonic, Vaclav Neumann.