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Mahler

Symphony no. 7

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*Iván
Fischer*



SUPER AUDIO CD



Iván Fischer

Iván Fischer is the founder and Music Director of the Budapest Festival Orchestra since 1983 and Honorary Conductor of Berlin's Konzerthaus and Konzerthausorchester, after six years as Music Director of the Konzerthaus Berlin (2012-2018). In 2018 he became Artistic Director of the Vicenza Opera Festival. In recent years, he has also gained renown as a composer, with his works being performed in the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, Germany and Austria.

The Budapest Festival Orchestra's frequent worldwide tours and a series of critically acclaimed recordings, which have been awarded prestigious international prizes, released first by Philips Classics and later by Channel Classics, have contributed to Iván Fischer's reputation as one of the world's most visionary Music Directors. In Budapest and Berlin he introduced innovative concerts including cocoa concerts for small children, autism friendly concerts, midnight music for students and a variety of outreach activities.

A regular presence on the podium with leading orchestras of the world, Mr. Fischer has guest conducted the Berlin Philharmonic more than ten times and spends two weeks each year with Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He is a frequent guest of the Cleveland Orchestra and New York Philharmonic, and held the position of Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. from 2006 to 2010. Mr. Fischer has conducted operas in the Staatsoper Vienna, the Royal Opera House in London, the Opera de Paris, and in opera houses in Zurich, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Brussels, Berlin and Budapest. He has held music director posts with both the Kent Opera and the Opera National de Lyon. Since 2013, he has worked exclusively with the Iván Fischer Opera Company, with whom he has directed a number of successful 'staged concerts' in Budapest, New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Bruges and in the Abu Dhabi and Edinburgh Festivals.

Iván Fischer is a founder of the Hungarian Mahler Society and Patron of the British Kodaly Academy. He has received the Golden Medal Award from the President of the Republic of Hungary and the Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum for his services in promoting international cultural relations. The government of the French Republic made him Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres. In 2006 he was honored with the Kossuth Prize, Hungary's most prestigious arts award. In 2011 he received the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award, Hungary's Prima

Primissima Prize and the Dutch Ovatie Prize. In 2013 he was accorded Honorary Membership to the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2015, he was presented with the Abu Dhabi Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement and in 2016, he won the Association of Music Critics of Argentina's award for Best Foreign Conductor.

Mr. Fischer studied piano, violin, and later the cello and composition in Budapest, before continuing his education in Vienna and Salzburg where he studied conducting under Hans Swarowsky and Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

Budapest Festival Orchestra

When Iván Fischer founded the Budapest Festival Orchestra together with pianist Zoltán Kocsis in 1983, he made a personal dream come true. The orchestra's core philosophy has been to form a team of creative, risk-taking musicians who continue to develop their musicianship in orchestral, chamber music and solo repertoire. Mr. Fischer introduced many reforms ranging from an intense, individual rehearsal technique to encouraging and promoting each musician's creative activities. It is the innovative approach to music, the musicians' complete dedication and their permanent striving for excellence that rocketed the Budapest Festival Orchestra into the group of the world's top orchestras. This young orchestra is now a frequent guest of the major international festivals; its recordings (first with Philips Classics, then with Channel Classics) have won numerous awards. Gramophone Magazine's international survey in 2009 listed the BFO among the ten best orchestras in the world.

At home in Budapest the BFO has become the most popular Hungarian orchestra, playing usually to capacity audiences in the Müpa Budapest concert hall and in the Franz Liszt Academy. Every season, three weeks are devoted to community programs, where groups of the orchestra take music to schools, nursing homes, churches and community centers. They organize a tour of Hungary's abandoned synagogues in order to bring life and attention to these buildings and promote tolerance.

A number of innovative concerts have made headlines all over the world. The autism-friendly cocoa concerts bring the joy of music to the whole family. Audience choice concerts have been

presented with great success in Hungary and internationally, including at the London Proms. The Music Marathon at Müpa Budapest features one composer in 11 concerts on a single day. The Midnight Music cycle attracts a young audience that sits among the orchestra musicians on beanbags. 500 Hungarian children – of Roma and non-Roma origins – dance together every June at Budapest's Hero Square. The orchestra's own Bridging Europe festival, co-organized with Müpa Budapest focuses on presenting the culture of a different European nation every September.

The BFO's opera productions are usually directed by Iván Fischer as staged concerts designed for concert halls. In New York Magazine's 2013 list of the city's top classical music events, the BFO's Marriage of Figaro was voted the best of the year. Other successful productions have been invited to major music centers, including the Mostly Mozart Festival, the Edinburgh Festival and the Abu Dhabi Festival. From 2018 the BFO will be the resident orchestra of the yearly Vicenza Opera Festival in the unique Teatro Olimpico.

The BFO has commissioned and premiered many new compositions. In order to educate young talents, the orchestra has developed an apprentice scheme in collaboration with the European Union Youth Orchestra and the Verbier Festival. Its first principal guest conductors were Sir Georg Solti and Sir Yehudi Menuhin. Now this position is held by Gábor Takács-Nagy. Since its foundation over thirty years ago, the BFO's Music Director has been Iván Fischer. The Budapest Festival Orchestra is a foundation governed by a Board of Directors and receives subsidy from the Hungarian State and the Municipality of Budapest. Friends and Supporters' Clubs of the Budapest Festival Orchestra have been formed in Hungary, the US, the UK and Germany.



Recording session
(Photo: Channel Classics)

Mahler 7

I am happy that the Dutch TV company VPRO made a documentary of our recording of this great symphony. This film is available on the internet. [YouTube/Mahler 7/Iván Fischer] It documents my efforts in proving that the last movement of Mahler's seventh symphony — despite some doubts of Mahler experts — is a masterpiece. This work is often seen as enigmatic, fragmented, less accessible than the other, beloved Mahler Symphonies. May this recording contribute to a revalidation!

Mahler returns here to a perfect balance. He ended the 6th Symphony in a tragic minor key. Here he offers us the full journey from darkness to light. And what a journey it is! Please note the most magnificent scherzo framed between the two unique night music episodes! I love this symphony.

Iván Fischer

From darkness into light

Gustav Mahler's Seventh Symphony was first performed in 1908 in Prague, when the composer conducted the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. This stupendous work, built up symmetrically in five movements, lasts some eighty minutes and is considered, despite its 'night music' and funeral march, to be an 'optimistic' sequel to Mahler's pessimistic Sixth. Members of the orchestra, audience and critics took some getting used to the modern sounds of this music, on the border between late romanticism and early atonality. Mahler said of the symphony: 'It is my best work and it has a cheerful character'. In writing it the composer threw no few conventions overboard. With an enormous orchestra, including novel instruments such as the tenor horn, mandolin, guitar, gong, tambourine and cow bells, Mahler presents his 'song of the night' to the listener, though this title was not of his own making.

The creative process of the Seventh Symphony went through various stages and even came to a standstill when Mahler suffered a composer's block — all quite unlike his other symphonies. Composition is not something that can easily be planned or forced; as he said himself: 'in this art, as in normal life, I am dependent on thoughts and ideas. If I *had* to compose, I would not produce a single note'. In the summer of 1904, before finishing his Sixth Symphony, he completed the two 'night music' movements for the Seventh. He planned to finish the other movements during the following summer. For this purpose Mahler made a special trip from Vienna to the family's summer home on the Wörthersee. But precisely because of his strong inner compulsion

to complete the work, he did not succeed. Writing to his wife Alma, he said 'I absolutely intended to complete the Seventh, for which I had already finished the two Andantes. I tormented myself on and on for two weeks until it depressed me ... then I left for the Dolomites. There exactly the same thing happened again, so in the end I gave up and went back home ... I got into the boat to be taken to the opposite shore. At the very first pull of the oars the theme (or rather its rhythm and character) for the beginning of the first movement flashed through my mind – and within four weeks I had finished the first, third and fifth movements'.

Premiere in Prague

Mahler was granted twenty-four rehearsals to prepare the work with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, enabling him to experience at length the effect of his creation. Full of doubts about the piece, he continually changed the instrumentation, even up to a few days before the premiere. After the first performances too (including three in the Netherlands), he continued to polish the work. Fortunately Mahler found support in the Bohemian capital from several young musicians, including Alban Berg and Otto Klemperer, who had also come to Prague to hear the symphony in what was one of the cultural highlights of the season. This first performance of the Seventh Symphony, on 19 September 1908, took place in the concert hall of the Prague Jubileum Exhibition; it was the tenth philharmonic concert marking the sixtieth anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I.

From funeral march to jubilant finish

The opening movement, in which so much happens amid profuse variation, bursts into action as if things had already started and all would be explained to the listener at a later stage. The march rhythm, so typical of Mahler, is immediately discernible in the slow introduction. It reminds one of the dotted rhythms of French overtures of the Baroque era, like those of Bach with which he was very familiar. Mahler also evokes associations with his childhood in the Bohemian garrison town of Iglau, where he was surrounded by the sounds of military signals and march music. As the 'messenger of the story' he employs the tenor horn for the main theme: 'here nature screams', as he said. Notable as the movement proceeds are the whole-tone scale (which he rarely used), the estranging leaps of a fourth, and the often sharp sounding instrumentation. After a

large-scale development section, the main theme appears at the close in the radiant key of E major, bringing this sonata-form first movement to a jubilant finish.

Night music and a waltz full of suspense

The opening movement and the Finale form the frame of the symphony. At its heart are two intriguing 'night music' movements, separated by a strange and macabre Scherzo, which is more like a dance of death in the shape of a waltz. The first night music is imbued with the mood of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs, with the sound of cow bells in the distance – which according to the composer are symbolic of 'far-from-the-world loneliness'. They are 'the fading sound of earth in the face of eternity, as the final greeting of living beings'. The beginning, with a dialogue between the first and third horns, is reminiscent of the *scène aux champs* from the *Symphonie Fantastique* by Hector Berlioz, a work which Mahler was fond of conducting.

According to his wife Alma, when Mahler was composing *Nachtmusik 2* he had charming visions similar to those in the poems of Joseph von Eichendorff, the poet of the romantic German landscape: peaceful meadows, rustling trees and murmuring brooks. The association with the classical serenades of the age of Haydn and Mozart is completed by the presence of instruments never heard before in a symphony, including the mandolin and guitar, not to forget the nocturnal mood provided by the harp, solo violin and horn. The conductor Bruno Walter thought this serenade to be perhaps 'the most beautiful piece ever written by Mahler, there lurks a tender and sweet eroticism, the only erotic note, as far as I am aware, in any of Mahler's music'.

After the enthusiastic reception at the Prague premiere of the Seventh Symphony, the considerably more critical and conservative Viennese audience showed little appreciation for the Finale in particular. Had Mahler written a jubilant fanfare for a new victory here? Or was it rather a huge parody of the pompous musical style of the turn of the century, a grotesque succession of orchestral effects? What was more, the clear reference to Wagner's overture to the *Meistersinger* gave offence in Vienna. Was Mahler festively and jubilantly ridiculing the master of Bayreuth? Was it a parody? Whatever the case may be, after the nocturnal moods of the preceding movements, the clear light of day, of life itself, shines out in this exuberant and unfathomable finale. In his Seventh Symphony Mahler seems, once again, to have followed the principal of 'per aspera ad astra' – through hardships to the stars.

Clemens Romijn Translation: Stephen Taylor

Mahler 7

Ich freue mich sehr, dass der niederländische Sender VPRO eine Dokumentation über unsere Aufnahme dieser großartigen Sinfonie gemacht hat. [YouTube/Mahler 7/Iván Fischer] Er dokumentiert meine Bemühungen, einigen Mahler-Experten zum Trotz zu beweisen, dass der letzte Satz ein Meisterwerk ist. Die siebte gilt als rätselhaft, fragmentarisch und weniger zugänglich als die anderen, beliebten Mahler-Sinfonien. Möge diese Aufnahme zu einer Neubeurteilung beitragen!

Mahler kehrt in seiner siebten zu einem perfekten Gleichgewicht zurück. Endete die sechste Sinfonie in einer tragischen Molltonart, nimmt er uns hier mit auf eine Reise von der Dunkelheit zum Licht. Und was für eine Reise das ist! Bitte beachten Sie das wunderbare Scherzo, das von den beiden einzigartigen Nachtmusiken umrahmt ist. Ich liebe diese Sinfonie.

Iván Fischer

Vom Dunkel ins Licht

Gustav Mahlers Siebte Sinfonie wurde 1908 in Prag uraufgeführt, der Komponist selbst dirigierte die Tschechische Philharmonie. Das imposante Werk mit seinem symmetrischen fünfsätzigen Aufbau dauert etwa achtzig Minuten und gilt trotz der Nachtmusiken und des Trauermarschs als „optimistische“ Fortsetzung von Mahlers pessimistischer Sechster. Orchestermusiker, Zuhörer und Kritiker mussten sich zunächst allerdings an die modernen Klänge dieser Musik auf der Grenze zwischen Spätromantik und früher Atonalität gewöhnen. Mahler selbst meinte: „Es ist mein bestes Werk und vorwiegend heiteren Charakters.“ In seiner Siebten brach der Komponist gleich mit mehreren Konventionen und bot einen riesigen Orchesterapparat samt Spezialinstrumenten wie Tenorhorn, Mandoline, Gitarre, Gong, Tamburin und Kuhglocken auf, um dem Publikum sein „Lied der Nacht“ zu spielen – ein Titel, der übrigens nicht von Mahler selbst stammt.

Anders als bei den anderen Sinfonien verlief die Arbeit an der Siebten in mehreren Etappen und kam durch eine kreative Blockade vorübergehend sogar zum Erliegen. Komponieren lässt sich weder planen noch erzwingen, oder wie Mahler sagte: „In der Kunst, genau wie im Alltag, bin ich auf Einfälle angewiesen. Wenn ich gezwungen wäre zu komponieren, würde ich keine Note zustande bringen.“ Noch bevor Mahler im Sommer 1904 seine Sechste Sinfonie vollendete, hatte er bereits die beiden Nachtmusiken für die Siebte fertiggestellt. Die anderen Sätze plante er im nächsten Sommer zu schreiben. Dafür begab er sich extra von Wien in das Feriendomizil seiner

Familie am Wörthersee. Doch just sein starker innerer Drang, das Werk zu vollenden, stand ihm im Weg. Mahler schrieb an seine Frau Alma: „Nun wollte ich gleich die 7. fertig machen, derer beide Andanten schon vollendet waren. Zwei Wochen quälte ich mich bis zum Trübsinn, bis ich wieder in die Dolomiten ausriß! Dort derselbe Tanz, und endlich gab ich es auf und fuhr nach Hause mit der Überzeugung, daß der Sommer verloren sein wird. In Krumpendorf erwartete mich Alma nicht, weil ich meine Ankunft nicht angezeigt hatte. Ich stieg in das Boot, um mich hinüberfahren zu lassen. Beim ersten Ruderschlag fiel mir das Thema (oder vielmehr der Rhythmus und die Art) der Einleitung zum 1. Satz ein – und in etwa 4 Wochen waren der 1., 3. und 5. Satz fix und fertig!“

Uraufführung in Prag

Für die Uraufführung mit der Tschechischen Philharmonie waren vierundzwanzig Proben angesetzt, sodass Mahler umfangreiche Erfahrungen mit der Wirkung seines Werk sammeln konnte. Doch von Zweifeln an seinem Werk geplagt, änderte er die Orchestrierung ständig, sogar noch wenige Tage vor der Uraufführung; und auch noch nach den ersten Aufführungen nahm er weitere Korrekturen vor. In der böhmischen Hauptstadt wurde Mahler glücklicherweise von jungen Musikern wie Alban Berg und Otto Klemperer unterstützt, die eigens angereist waren, um das Werk, ein kultureller Höhepunkt der Saison, zu hören. Die Aufführung der Siebten Sinfonie am 19. September 1908 fand im Konzertsaal der Jubiläumsausstellung in Prag statt und gehörte zum zehnten Philharmonischen Konzert zum sechzigsten Regierungsjubiläum Kaiser Franz Josephs I.

Vom Trauermarsch zum jubelnden Finale

Der bewegte und ereignisreiche erste Satz beginnt, als ob die Handlung bereits im Gange wäre und der Zuhörer erst später eine Erklärung erhielt. In der langsamen Einleitung ist sofort Mahlers typischer Marschrhythmus zu erkennen, der an die punktierten Rhythmen der französischen Ouvertüren aus der Barockzeit erinnern, wie Mahler sie von Bach kannte. Außerdem weckt er hier Assoziationen an seine Kindheit in der böhmischen Garnisonsstadt Iglau, wo er täglich militärische Signale und Marschmusik hörte. Das Tenorhorn als „Bote der Geschichte“ stellt das Hauptthema vor – „hier röhrt die Natur“, so Mahler. Auffällig sind im Folgenden die von Mahler selten verwendete Ganztonleiter, die verfremdenden Quartsprünge und die teilweise grelle Instrumentierung. Nach einer großangelegten Durchführung erklingt das Hauptthema

Recording session
(Photo: Channel Classics)



in strahlendem E-Dur, was den ersten Satz – der übrigens in Sonatensatzform steht – in Jubelenden lässt.

Nachtmusik und spannungsreicher Walzer

Der erste Satz und das Finale bildet den Rahmen der Sinfonie. Das Herzstück sind die beiden faszinierenden Nachtmusiken, die durch ein merkwürdiges und makaberes Scherzo getrennt sind, eher ein Totentanz in Form eines Walzers. Die erste Nachtmusik atmet die Atmosphäre von Mahlers Wunderhornliedern, mit fernem Kuhglockenklang, laut Mahler das Symbol „weltfernster Einsamkeit“ und „verhallendes Erdengeräusch im Angesicht der Ewigkeit, als letzten Gruß lebender Wesen.“ Der Anfang mit seinem Dialog zwischen dem ersten und dritten Horn erinnert an die „Scène aux champs“ aus der *Symphonie fantastique* von Hector Berlioz, die Mahler gerne dirigierte.

Die zweite Nachtmusik assoziierte Mahler, so seine Frau Alma, mit einer Lieblichkeit wie in den Gedichten von Eichendorff, dem Dichter der romantischen deutschen Landschaft: friedliche Wiesen, rauschende Bäume und murmelnde Bäche. Die Verbindung zu den klassischen Serenaden aus der Zeit Haydns und Mozarts wird durch Instrumente wie Mandoline und Gitarre vervollständigt, die in einer Symphonie noch nie zuvor zu hören waren. Nächtliche Stimmung erzeugen außerdem Harfe, Solovioline und Solohorn. Dirigent Bruno Walter fand die Serenade „vielleicht das Schönste, das Mahler je geschrieben hat: eine süß-zarte Erotik lebt darin als einziger erotischer Laut, der meines Wissens in Mahlers Werken vorkommt.“

Nachdem die Siebte Sinfonie in Prag begeistert empfangen worden war, störte sich das viel kritischere und konservativere Publikum in Wien vor allem an dem Finale. Hatte Mahler die Blechbläser hier einen neuen Sieg bejubeln lassen? Oder war es eher eine Persiflage auf den prunkvollen Musikstil der Jahrhundertwende, eine bizarre Abfolge von Orchestereffekten? Vor allem der klare Verweis auf das Vorspiel zu Wagners *Meistersingern* missfiel den Wienern. Hatte Mahler hier schlichtweg den Meister von Bayreuth verspottet? War es eine Parodie? Wie dem auch sei, nach der vorangegangenen nächtlichen Atmosphäre bricht in diesem überschwänglichen und unergründlichen Finale das helle Licht des Tages, des Lebens hervor. In seiner Siebten Sinfonie schien Mahler – wie so oft – dem Prinzip „per aspera ad astra“ zu folgen: über raue Pfade zu den Sternen.

Clemens Romijn Übersetzung Anne Habermann

Mahler 7

La chaîne de télévision VPRO a fait un documentaire sur notre enregistrement de cette grande symphonie. J'en suis heureux. Ce film peut être vu via internet. [YouTube/Mahler 7/Iván Fischer] Il montre mes efforts pour prouver que le dernier mouvement de la septième symphonie de Mahler – malgré les doutes émis par certains experts – est un chef d'œuvre. Cette œuvre est souvent considérée comme énigmatique, fragmentée, moins accessible que les autres symphonies de Mahler tant aimées. Que cet enregistrement contribue à sa réhabilitation !

Mahler revient là à un équilibre parfait. Il termine sa sixième symphonie dans une tonalité mineure tragique. Dans la septième, il nous offre le voyage entier, de l'obscurité à la lumière. Et quel voyage ! Notez le magnifique scherzo encadré par les deux remarquables nocturnes ! J'aime cette symphonie.

Iván Fischer

De l'obscurité à la lumière

La septième symphonie de Gustav Mahler a été créée en 1908 à Prague par l'Orchestre Philharmonique Tchéque sous la baguette de Mahler. Cette puissante œuvre musicale à l'organisation symétrique en cinq mouvements dure environ quatre-vingt minutes. Malgré ses « Nachtmusiken » et une marche funèbre, elle est considérée comme la continuation « optimiste » de la pessimiste Sixième symphonie de Mahler. Les membres de l'orchestre, le public et les critiques ont toutefois eu besoin d'un peu de temps pour s'habituer à ses sonorités modernes, à une musique se situant entre le romantisme tardif et le début de l'atonalité. Mahler a dit à son propos : « C'est mon œuvre la plus réussie (...) elle possède un caractère essentiellement enjoué. » Pour la composition de ce « Lied der Nacht » ou « Chant de la Nuit » – titre dont il n'est en réalité pas l'auteur –, il a mis de côté un certain nombre de conventions, et choisi de faire exécuter cette œuvre par un immense orchestre intégrant des instruments peu habituels tels que le cor ténor, la mandoline, la guitare, le gong, le tambourin et les cloches de vaches.

Le processus de création de la Septième symphonie a connu différentes phases. Il est même resté stationnaire le temps d'un blocage créatif, à la différence des autres symphonies. Composer est un acte qu'il est difficile de planifier et d'exécuter sous la contrainte, ou comme Mahler le disait lui-même : « Dans l'art comme dans la vie, j'ai été assigné à la spontanéité. Si j'avais eu l'obligation de composer, je n'aurais pas pu écrire une note. » Mahler avait déjà achevé ses deux

Nachtmusiken pour sa Septième symphonie, avant même d'avoir achevé durant l'été 1904 sa Sixième symphonie. Son objectif était de composer les autres mouvements l'été suivant. Il s'est spécialement rendu pour cela dans sa maison secondaire, sur le bord du Wörthersee. Mais son fort désir intérieur d'achever l'œuvre a justement pour lui été un obstacle. À son épouse Alma, il a écrit ce qui suit : « J'avais vraiment le projet d'achever la septième symphonie dont les deux andantes étaient déjà terminés. Je me suis torturé l'esprit deux semaines jusqu'à en devenir dépressif... Je suis allé dans les Dolomites. La situation s'est reproduite. J'ai alors abandonné et suis rentré à la maison... Je suis monté dans la barque pour pouvoir traverser. Au premier coup de rame, en un éclair, le thème (ou plutôt le rythme et le caractère) de l'introduction du premier mouvement m'est venu à l'esprit – et en quatre semaines, le premier, le troisième et le cinquième mouvement étaient achevés. »

Création à Prague

Pour son travail avec l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Tchéquie, Mahler avait obtenu vingt-quatre répétitions et a largement pu expérimenter l'effet de sa création. Tourmenté par ses doutes, Mahler apportait constamment des modifications à l'instrumentation, et cela même jusque quelques jours avant la création. Après les premières exécutions publiques (dont trois aux Pays-Bas), il a continué de la peaufiner. Par chance, dans la capitale bohémienne, Mahler a trouvé le soutien de quelques jeunes musiciens tels qu'Alban Berg et Otto Klemperer, qui s'étaient également rendus à Prague pour entendre la symphonie, climax culturel de la saison. La création de la Septième symphonie a eu lieu le 19 septembre 1908 dans le Pavillon « salle de concert » de l'Exposition de la Chambre de Commerce et des Métiers – organisée à Prague à l'occasion du sixantième anniversaire de l'accession au pouvoir de l'empereur Franz Joseph Ier. Cet événement a constitué le dixième et dernier concert philharmonique de cette exposition anniversaire.

De la marche funèbre à la conclusion pleine d'allégresse

Le premier mouvement, changeant et riche en événements, débute comme si l'action était déjà en train, et comme si l'auditeur allait plus loin en obtenir l'explication. Dans l'introduction lente, un rythme de marche particulièrement caractéristique de l'écriture de Mahler se fait immédiatement entendre. Il évoque le geste pointé des ouvertures à la française de l'époque

baroque – et Mahler, ayant étudié la musique de Bach, les connaissait bien. On note également des associations avec l'enfance du compositeur à Jihlava (Iglau), petite ville de garnison bohémienne, où sonneries et marches militaires faisaient partie de l'environnement. Le cor ténor – « messenger de la narration » – introduit le thème principal : « Ici crie la nature », disait Mahler. On entend ensuite des gammes par ton – rares chez lui –, des sauts de quarte et une instrumentation aux sonorités « très caustiques ». Après un développement de grande envergure, le thème principal réapparaît pour finir dans un rayonnant mi majeur qui conduit à la conclusion pleine d'allégresse de ce mouvement de forme sonate.

Musique de nuit et valse avec suspens

Le premier mouvement et le mouvement final constituent le cadre de la symphonie. Son cœur est constitué par deux nocturnes intrigants, séparés par un scherzo étrange et lugubre aux allures de danse macabre en forme de valse. Il règne sur ces nocturnes l'atmosphère des lieder du Knaben Wunderhorn, avec ces sons de cloches de vache qui résonnent au loin et qui symbolisent selon Mahler la « solitude la plus éloignée du monde ». Ce sont les « sons de la terre qui expirent face à l'éternité, tels le dernier salut d'un être vivant ». Cela commence par un dialogue entre le premier et le troisième cor, rappelant la « scène aux champs » de la Symphonie Fantastique d'Hector Berlioz que Mahler aimait tant diriger.

Quand Mahler a composé son deuxième nocturne, il a eu selon son épouse Alma de charmantes visions du type de celles que l'on trouve dans les poèmes d'Eichendorff, poète du paysage romantique allemand : prés paisibles, bruissement d'arbres et murmure de ruisseaux. L'introduction d'instruments encore jamais entendus dans une symphonie, tels que la mandoline et la guitare, rend complète l'association avec les sérénades classiques de l'époque de Haydn et de Mozart. L'utilisation d'une harpe, d'un solo de violon et d'un solo de cor sont d'autres éléments participant à l'élaboration de cette atmosphère nocturne. Pour Bruno Walter, chef d'orchestre, cette sérénade était peut-être « ce que Mahler a composé de plus beau : il s'y cache un érotisme tendre et doux, le seul son érotique, à ce que je sache, présent dans la musique de Mahler. »

Après l'accueil enthousiaste à Prague de la Septième symphonie, le public plus critique et conservateur de Vienne a surtout contesté le Finale. Mahler a-t-il voulu composer ici une fanfare joyeuse saluant une nouvelle victoire ? S'agissait-il plutôt d'un persiflage monumental du style

pomposo – caractéristique en cette époque de changement de siècle – ou d’une succession bizarre d’effets orchestraux ? Les références claires à l’ouverture des Maîtres Chanteurs de Wagner a particulièrement déplu à Vienne. Mahler s’est-il moqué de manière festive et joyeuse du maître de Bayreuth ? Était-ce une parodie ? Quoi qu’il en fût, après les atmosphères nocturnes des mouvements précédents, la lumière claire du jour et de la vie résonne dans ce Finale exubérant. Comme souvent, Mahler a semblé suivre dans sa Septième symphonie l’adage suivant : « per aspera ad astra » – par des sentiers ardues jusqu’aux étoiles.

Clemens Romijn *Traduction : Clémence Comte*



CCS SA 25207 **Beethoven / Symphony no.7**

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE, sound & performance 5* • (...) *A spring-heeled conductor such as Iván Fischer was born for Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and this account with his Budapest Festival Orchestra is a bubbling delight. ... Fischer whips up tremendous excitement, but still gives us playing of shining finesse. Rossini, Weber and a lesser light, Wilms, offer novel fillers.* (...) THE TIMES ONLINE



CCS SA 26109 **Mahler / Symphony no.4, with Miah Persson, soprano**

AUDIOPHILE EDITION 5* • Opus d'Or • VOLKSKRANT 5* • KLASSIEK CENTRAAL Gouden Label • DE MORGEN 5* • RONDO (Finland) CD of the Month • SA-CD NET 5*, Performance/Recording 5* • Diapason d'Or • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • BBC MUSIC 5* • GRAMOPHONE Editors choice of the Month 'Fischer and his brilliant Budapest band give us Mahler with the personal Touch. What no one will deny is the amazing unanimity and precision of the playing here and the superlative quality of the sound engineering. This is just one of the countless imaginative touches on an exceptional hybrid SACD which must surely be an Awards candidate for 2009.' GRAMOPHONE



CCS SA 27708 **Rossini / Instrumental Music**

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE orchestra CD of the month • (...) *'The opening moments of this disc leave no doubt that it's going to be a enormous fun, and from a virtuoso orchestra with a superb conductor (...) Fischer has shown, in a wide repertoire, that he has deep understanding not only of the glittering surfaces of music we find here, but also of its deeper meanings. (...) Can Rossini have imagined any of this music would receive such impeccable performances?'* BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE



CCS SA 28309 **Brahms / Symphony no. 1 in C minor, Variations on a theme by Haydn**

CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • THE GUARDIAN 5* • FONOFORUM Empfehlung des Monats • LUISTER 10 • IRR (INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW) Outstanding • (...) *for anyone seeking an imaginative new performance (...) enthusiastically recommended. (...) Channel Classics has provided, as we've come to expect from this company, full-bodied sound with an excellent sense of space — especially on the surround tracks. A winner.* FANFARE



CCS SA 30010 **Dvórák / Symphony no. 7 in D minor; Suite in A major**

THE SUNDAY TIMES CD of the Week • *Fischer maintains the momentum throughout, giving his woodwind soloists plenty of time to luxuriate in Dvorak's inexhaustible stream of melodic ideas, yet never driving the music* THE SUNDAY TIMES



CCS SA 30710 **Beethoven / Symphony no. 4 in B flat major op. 60, Symphony no 6 in F major op. 68 'Pastoral' (1806-1808)**

(...) *I give this disc five stars — it hits on all cylinders, and the performances are every bit the equal of the superb sound. You'll be hard pressed to find a more emotionally involving, yet technically perfect performance. Very highly recommended sound* (...) AUDIOPHILE EDITION



CCS SA 31111 **Franz Schubert / Symphony no. 9 ('Great') in C major [D 944], Five German Dances and Seven Trios with Coda [D89]**
 AUDIOPHILE EDITION 5* • BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 5/5* • BBC RADIO 3 Disc of the Week • CLASSICAL-MUSIC.COM 5/5* • CLASSICS TODAY 9/9 • *You will not find a more loving impeccable performance of Schubert's masterpiece than this splendid reading.* CLASSICAL CD REVIEW



CCS SA 32112 **Igor Stravinsky / Rite of Spring, Firebird Suite, Scherzo, Tango**
 SA-CD NET 5/5* • THE SUNDAY TIMES CD of the Week • BBC RADIO 3's BUILDING A LIBRARY • KNACK (Belgium) 4* • CLASSICS TODAY 9/10 • STEREOPLAY: CD des Monats • LUISTER 10 • ONLY THE MUSIC Record of the Month • RONDO 5* • PIZZICATO Supersonic Award • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION Multichannel Disc of the Month 5* • (...) *This is one of the earthiest, most pagan accounts of the ballet around... before you play it, warn the neighbours.* (...) *an ear-stretching interpretation* THE TIMES



CCS SA 32713 **Richard Wagner / Götterdämmerung, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (excerpts), Siegfried-Idyll, Petra Lang, soprano**
 BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE sound & performance 5* • UK SPECIALIST CLASSICAL CHARTS #1 • SA-CD NET 4.5/5* • DAGBLAD DE LIMBURGER 5* • (...) *Thanks to Channel's superb recording we can relish the piquancy of the Budapest woodwind, the smoothness of the strings and especially the bite of the brass.* (...) SA-CD-net



CCS SA 33112 **Mahler / Symphony no.1 in D major**
 GRAMMY 2013 domination • CLASSICS TODAY FRANCE 10/10 • PREIS DER DEUTSCHEN SCHALLPLATTENKRITIK • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION 5* • Multichannel Disc of the Month • KLARA 10 • MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL Download of the Month • Diapason d'Or • SACD-NET 4/5* • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • KLASSIK.COM 5/5* • MUSIQ3 CD of the Week • AUDIOSTREAM Best HD Albums of 2012 • (...) *The playing on this disc is so beautiful that it will take your breath away.* (...) CLASSICS TODAY 10/10



CCS SA 34213 **Mahler / Symphony no. 5 in C sharp minor**
 IOWA PUBLIC RADIO Best CD's of 2013 • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION 5/5* • ENJOY THE MUSIC 5* • SACD-NET 5/5* • KNACK 5* • KLASSIK.COM 5/5* • CBC RADIO Disc Of The Week • PAROOL 5* • MAHLER REVIEW 5* • (...) *better than any recording of the Fifth, including the Bernstein, Rattle and Abbado.* AUDIOPHILE AUDITION •



CCS SA 33714 **Bruckner / Symphony no. 7 in E major**
 'Pick of the Month's' Releases GRAMOPHONE • (...) *a superb performance* (...) AUDIOPHILE AUDITION • *The playing of the Budapest Festival Orchestra throughout is breathtaking* (...) SACD-NET 4.5/5*



CCS SA 33514 **Brahms / Symphony no. 2, Tragic & Academic Festival Overture**
 Diapason D'Or • (...) *intense freshness and lyricism from Fischer and his Budapest forces.* (...) THE GUARDIAN • (...) *In short, this is a disc with impressive performances so thoroughly prepared, expertly executed and superbly recorded that one could not reasonably ask for more.* Unreservedly recommended. CD-CHOICE



CCS SA 36115 **Mahler / Symphony no. 9**
 SACD-NET 5/5* • GRAMOPHONE Editors Choice • NRC 5* • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • OPUS HD d'Or • *A very special class, a sonic dazzler* (...) GRAMOPHONE • *For those who can't have too much of this masterpiece, Fischer is essential for further enlightenment.* (...) BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 4/4* (...) *a Mahler Ninth that's not to be missed.* CLASSICS TODAY 4/5*



CCS SA 35315 **Brahms / Symphony no.4, Hungarian Dances 3, 7 & 11**
 (...) *Intimacy on a grand scale* (...) *This is an orchestra whose players listen to each other intently.* (...) *Iván Fischer keeps the larger picture in focus.* BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 5/5*



CCS SA 37016 **Tchaikovsky, Symphony no. 6 / Borodin, Polovtsian Dances**
 (...) *intelligently-paced and emotionally powerful Tchaikovsky* (...) PRESTO CLASSICAL



CCS 34516 **Fischer, Composer's portrait I**
In music that is concentrated, lyrical, acerbic and often dazzling, Fischer brings together eclectic influences from Bach to weill, from Yiddish traditions to the Indian tabla and Japanese Noh theatre. (...) *Soprano Nora Fischer proves a revelation* (...) BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 5/4*



CCS SA 38817 **Mahler / Symphony no. 3**
Here for once is a Mahler symphony release that feels different from the outset. (...) *I doubt whether there has ever been a more precisely focused, more sheerly beautiful recording of any Mahler work.* (...) *Reluctant to parade its roughest edges and disinclined to hurry, Fischer instead elicits a range of pristine, jewel-like colour that leaves its fabric refreshed.* (...) *This Third is a must-have.* GRAMOPHONE [EDITOR'S CHOICE - JUNE 2017]



CCS SA 37418 **Mendelssohn / Incidental music to 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' by Shakespeare**
 (...) *a conscientious, joyous reading that delights in Bottom's donkey effects, a drunken Funeral March, effervescent textures, and light graciousness of heart.* (...) AUDIOPHILE AUDITION 5*

Colophon

Production

Channel Classics Records bv

Producer

Hein Dekker

Recording engineers

Hein Dekker, Jared Sacks

Editing

Jared Sacks

Cover design

Ad van der Kouwe, Manifesta, Rotterdam

Cover photo

Ian Douglas

Liner notes

Clemens Romijn, Iván Fischer

Translators

Stephen Taylor, Clémence Comte,

Anne Habermann

Recording location

Palace of Arts, Budapest

Recording date

September 2015

Technical information

Microphones

Bruel & Kjaer 4006, Schoeps

Digital converter

DSD Super Audio/Grimm Audio

Pyramix Editing/Merging Technologies

Speakers

Audio Lab, Holland

Amplifiers

van Medevoort, Holland

Mixing board

Rens Heijnis, custom design

Mastering Room

Speakers

Grimm LS1

Amplifier

Classe 5200

Cables

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March 2019

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BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

Iván Fischer, conductor

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Symphony no. 7 in E minor (1904-1909)

1	Langsam – Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo	20.45
2	Nachtmusik I: Allegro moderato	14.29
3	Scherzo: Schattenhaft	9.05
4	Nachtmusik II: Andante amoroso	12.29
5	Rondo – Finale	17.57

total time 75.17