



Gustav Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde

aud 95.491

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Gramophone (Richard Fairman - 2002.09.01)

GRAMOPHONE

Das Lied live from two great Mahler conductors, more spontaneous sounding than their studio versions

Audite is in the process of assembling a complete Mahler cycle with Kubelík and the Bavarian RSO from radio relays. So far the recordings date across a period of 15 years, with this *Das Lied von der Erde*, broadcast in February 1970, among the earliest. Kubelík's Mahler is heard here at its most typical, so much at ease with the sound-world and tempo of the music that other conductors can seem heavy-handed by comparison. It is at the other extreme from the explosive collision of emotions that makes Bernstein's recordings so intense and choppy: Kubelík is natural, easy-going, fresh in his delight at the score's exquisite detail. Although the poems of *Das Lied* refer to several seasons, this performance surely belongs to the spring, when 'the dear earth everywhere blooms... and grows green again'. Waldemar Kmentt is strong and sure in the tenor songs but rather pedestrian. There is not much sense of wide-eyed wonder at the arrival of spring or uninhibited hedonism as the wine is being poured. Dame Janet Baker already features on several other recordings, including a live broadcast on BBC Legends, but no two of her performances of this work were the same. Here, in 1970, she sings with much pure, vocal beauty and a desire for intimacy that is remarkable in a large concert-hall. In the second song the close to each rising phrase is beautifully handled. The fourth song is graceful, though less sensuous than on her Philips recording under Haitink. In the final 'Abschied' the voice truly sails 'wie eine Silberbarke' on hushed legato lines shimmering with intensity.

Some may prefer to stick with studio recordings of *Das Lied*, where the orchestra has had the luxury of extra takes to polish every detail, but there are no complaints about the Bavarian orchestra here. There are also a few studio recordings (Karajan and the Solti among them) that perform technical somersaults to end up with a recorded balance less satisfying than here.