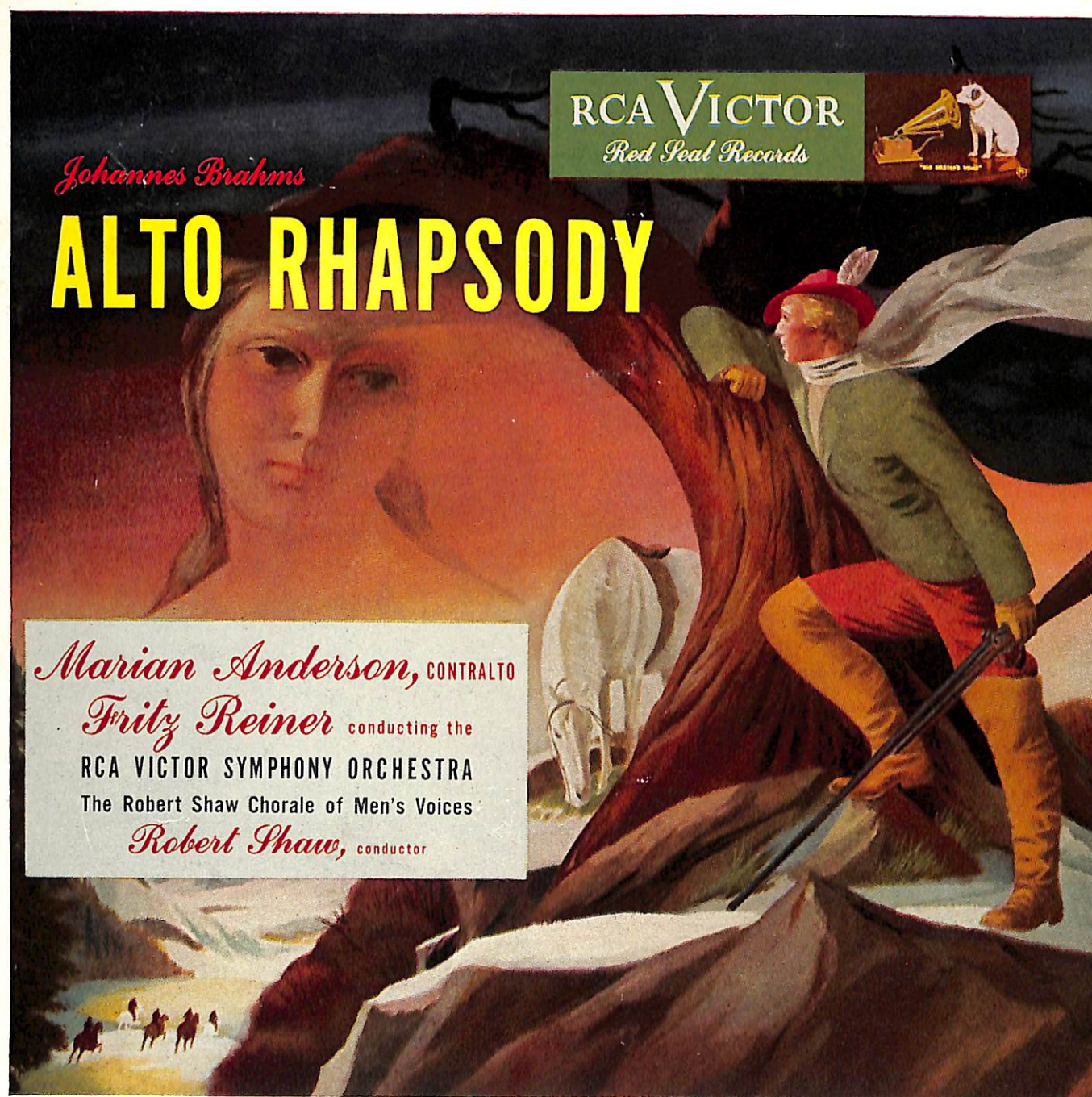


LM
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Brahms
Mahler

ALTO RHAPSODY
KINDERTOTENLIEDER



Form 2S-9232

Printed in U. S. A.

and MAHLER

KINDERTOTENLIEDER

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, PIERRE MONTEUX, Conductor

LONG

33 $\frac{1}{3}$

PLAY

Brahms ALTO RHAPSODY, Op. 53
Mahler KINDERTOTENLIEDER

Side 1 — ALTO RHAPSODY

with Fritz Reiner conducting

RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra

Robert Shaw Chorale of Men's Voices

Robert Shaw, Conductor

Loneliness has always been a favorite subject with creative artists. But few have put it into words and music as dramatically as Goethe in his poem, *Harzreise im Winter*, and Brahms in the musical setting he made for that poem, the *Alto Rhapsody*.

In his verses, Goethe described the bleak mountain journey of a solitary wanderer, mourning his faithless love in the exaggerated fashion of the young German romantics of the 1800's. Brahms decided to set the middle three stanzas. When he read them, he too was feeling unusually lonely and sorry for himself. During the summer of 1869 he had become attached to a young daughter of Clara Schumann's. She probably thought of him as her mother's friend, and had no idea that the announcement of her engagement to another man would affect him. But it did, and in the pain of losing what he had never possessed, he produced the *Alto Rhapsody*. Clara Schumann wrote of it, in her diary, "A few days ago, Johannes showed me a wonderful work for contralto, male voice chorus, and orchestra. He called it his bridal song. It is long since I received so profound an impression; it shook me by the deeply felt grief of its words and music."

Brahms was then in his thirty-sixth year. He had composed the *Deutsches Requiem*, and was about to complete the *Schicksalslied* and the *Triumphlied*. These magnificent three, with the *Alto Rhapsody*, all produced midway in his career, mark the high point of his choral writing.

In the *Alto Rhapsody* he portrays the agonies of loneliness with a vividness possible only to one who has suffered them. The poet asks "Aber abseits, wer ist's?" "What man apart is this? His trail is lost in the underbrush, behind him the branches of the trees spring together, the grass stands erect where he has passed, and solitude engulfs him." After an introductory melody in the strings, the solo voice urgently puts the poet's question, "What man is this?" To a rhythmic string accompaniment, the voice, now thrillingly passionate, goes on to the second stanza. "Ach, wer heilet die Schmerzen dess dem Balsam zu Gift ward?" (Ah, who can allay the anguish of one to whom balm has become a poison?) The music is somber in color, with unusual intervals and terse, challenging rhythms. But it is consistently melodious, and in the third stanza there is a gleam of comforting hope as the solo voice, in a soaring melody above the chorus, begins, "Ist auf deinem Psalter . . . ein Ton seinem Ohre vernehmlich" (Is there, in your Psalter, a tone that he can hear?) It goes on to beg the Almighty, "So erquickte sein Herz" (Then lift up his heart). The voice, chorus, and orchestra join in an overwhelming plea, and the *Rhapsody* comes to an end. The last stanza, with its glorious orchestral interludes, concludes the recording.

In the *Alto Rhapsody*, Marian Anderson employs her rare gifts in an outstanding interpretation of Brahms' setting of Goethe's poem, with the close cooperation of the RCA Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner, and the Men's Chorus from the Robert Shaw Chorale conducted by Robert Shaw.

Side 2 — KINDERTOTENLIEDER

with San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

Pierre Monteux, Conductor

Those who fall under the spell of Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody* will find a similar melancholy pleasure in Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, a cycle of five songs on the death of a child. It was written shortly after the birth of Mahler's first child, Maria Anna. Even so happy an event was clouded with foreboding

Marian Anderson

Contralto

for Mahler, who was a man with a singular capacity for unhappiness, real or imagined.

Reading in his study, he came upon a set of poems written by Friedrich Rückert in memory of the two children taken from him by scarlet fever. In Mahler, the poems evoked an agonized sympathy with the poet's loss, followed by the dread thought, "What if I too should lose my child?" That torturing imaginary grief had to be poured into music, and so, in 1902, he composed the *Kindertotenlieder*. A few years later, his little Maria Anna and her younger sister died, as had Rückert's children, of scarlet fever. "Perhaps to have written the *Kindertotenlieder* was to tempt Fate," mourned the composer.

Band 1: NUN WILL DIE SONN' SO HELL AUFGEH'N!
(Once More the Sun Would Gild the Morn)

The first song, "Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n" may be paraphrased as follows: "Now the sun will rise again in all its splendor, as though no tragedy had occurred during the night. Am I then the only one to whom misfortune has come? The sun shines on us all alike." The voice is heard in a sad, quiet melody, which is taken over by the orchestra. A shrill note of pain rends the air, then the plaintive, questioning song begins anew, accompanied by dark harmonies in the orchestra. The sun is about to rise. The child will not be here to greet it. "Why, O Why," asks the father. The Glockenspiel (chime) sounds a double stroke, a mournful reminder of loss which is repeated again and again. It dies away gently as the line "Hail, joyous light of all the world" greets the sun, which pierces the darkness of the night and the father's grief with its message of hope and renewal.

Band 2: NUN SEH' ICH WOHL, WARUM SO
DUNKLE FLAMMEN

(Ah, Now I Know Why Oft I Caught You Gazing)

The opening line of the second song in the cycle is "Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen,"—"Now I know why your eyes shone with so dark a flame. . . . Their light came from the source of all light. And now your eyes are transformed into stars, and shine with a new light." There is a strong reminder of *Tristan und Isolde* in the opening melody and its accompanying harmonies. Brasses and woodwinds are much in evidence, blended in large Wagnerian sequences. This song has less simplicity than the first, more philosophic depth, and great poignancy.

Band 3: WENN DEIN MÜTTERLEIN
(When Thy Mother Dear)

"Wenn dein Mütterlein" opens the third song. It alludes to a touching moment, when the father, seeing the mother entering the room, fancies incredulously, for a moment, that he sees the child at her side. "When your mother enters the door, I turn my head, not toward her, but toward the place on the threshold where I used to see your dear little face as you came dancing in from your play, Oh my little daughter!" After a soft introduction by the woodwinds, the voice enters, singing against their sorrowful melodies. A high-pitched cry of grief is uttered as the sense of loss wells up afresh, then the folklike melody returns, and the song ends quietly, on a note of resignation.

Band 4: OFT DENK' ICH, SIE SIND
NUR AUSGEGANGEN!

(I Think Oft, They've Only Gone a Journey)

"Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen," presents another of the fond imaginings with which the father beguiles his grief. "I often think they have only gone out for a while," he says. "They must be back soon. It's a nice day. There's nothing to worry about. They've been gone so long because they decided to take a longer walk than usual." Each stanza begins "Oft denk' ich,"—"I often think." The violins and horns open with an unhurried, restful melody. The music, quiet, tender, and meditative, conveys a sense of sadness, but does not shriek aloud in anguish.

Band 5: IN DIESEM WETTER!
(In Such a Tempest!)

"In diesem Wetter," the fifth and last of the cycle, is dramatic. A storm is raging. The father thinks frantically "I never allowed the children to go out of the house in such a storm. Yet they have gone! In this weather! In this weather!" His anxiety and the music mount at each repetition of the exclamation. The Glockenspiel again sounds its knell, bringing the bitter realization that not only are the children out in such a storm, but that they will not return. Over the sweet sound of celesta and violins, the voice now sings a cradle song. "They rest there, in the storm, as though they were in their mother's house," it says. Like a cool hand on his feverish head, it dissipates the father's anxiety, bringing solace, hope, and a measure of peace.

* * *

The man who composed this eloquent music, Gustav Mahler, was born in Kalischt, Czechoslovakia, in July, 1860. At the age of four, he played by ear, on the accordion, the military marches he heard in a neighboring garrison. His father, a small tradesman, then determined to have his musical talent developed at whatever sacrifice. Gustav was sent to the Conservatory of Vienna, where he speedily became known for his fine piano playing, for the fact that he walked in his sleep, and as a solitary sensitive seeker after truth and beauty. His teacher, Anton Bruckner, and his hero, Richard Wagner, were the most important influences on his creative development. He became a conductor, and rose rapidly, to find himself eventually the director of the Imperial Opera in Vienna, a much coveted post. But although he greatly improved the production of modern opera, he had many detractors, who envied him and intrigued against him until they had deprived him of his post, his health, and such self-confidence as he possessed. He went to New York, conducted the Metropolitan Opera there, and later the Philharmonic Orchestra. Although successful, he was perpetually unhappy. During a concert, in 1910, he collapsed on the platform. He was taken back to Vienna to die, and drew his last breath there on May 18, 1911.

Mahler is best known as a composer of symphonies. He wrote ten, of great weight, length, and austerity. A newspaper critic who dozed through the Eighth, the *Symphony of a Thousand*, which has an augmented orchestra, two mixed choruses, a boys' chorus, and eight soloists, wrote wearily, "Mahler was convinced that no symphony could be too long, provided he was the composer!"

The *Kindertotenlieder* can be interpreted only by a great artist, who has either herself suffered, or is gifted with the imaginative sensibility of a Mahler. Such an artist is Marian Anderson. She sings the bitter, masculine music penned by Mahler with the live understanding and intelligence it demands, and with a tonal richness that penetrates to one's heart. All the poetry in Rückert's lines is unfolded as she sings them in the original German. The San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, under the inspiring leadership of Pierre Monteux, does full justice to the sonorous orchestral score.

Mahler asked that there should be no applause when the *Kindertotenlieder* are sung, and concert audiences always have respected his wish.

Notes by HELEN L. KAUFMANN