
Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde (Arr.)



Title	Das Lied von der Erde von Gustav Mahler gesetzt für kleines Ensemble
Time of Origin	around 1920
Premiere	July 1983
Duration	ca. 60 min.

1. Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde
2. Der Einsame im Herbst
3. Von der Jugend
4. Von der Schönheit
5. Der Trunkene im Frühling
6. Der Abschied

While staying in Toblach during the late summer of 1907, Gustav Mahler started reading the anthology "Die chinesische Flöte" (The Chinese Flute) edited by Hans Bethge. In 1908 at the latest, he began setting selected poems from the anthology to music. In Mahler's cyclical conception of the "Symphony for a Tenor and Alto (or Baritone) Voice and Orchestra" entitled "Das Lied von der Erde" (The Song of the Earth), the final song "Abschied" (Farewell) occupies a central position: a textual creation by Mahler – he combines two poems by different authors with his own poetic verses – it incorporates recitative and arioso elements in a formal conception that transcends traditional schemas. For the concerts of the "Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen" (Society for Private Musical Performances), Arnold Schönberg arranged not only waltzes by Strauss but also his own Orchestral Pieces, op. 16, and the "Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen" (Songs of a Wayfarer) by Gustav Mahler. All other arrangements were assigned to students, including the arrangement of Mahler's "Lied von der Erde" begun by Schönberg. Anton Webern was originally commissioned with its completion, which in the end could no longer be realized due to the Society's financial situation. It was not until the early 1980s that Rainer Riehn completed Schönberg's unfinished arrangement of the "Lied von der Erde" for a Mahler festival in Toblach. Riehn left Schönberg's instrumentation intact, with the exception of the (optional) addition of a celesta for the end of "Abschied" and the omission of a 3rd violin. The premiere of the Mahler-Schönberg-Riehn project took place in July 1983. "Schönberg's ambition [...] was not aimed in advance at a 'new interpretation' but at the humbly respectful, yet exceedingly difficult technical attempt to preserve the original sound with incomparably more economical, even drastically reduced means without loss. That he succeeded in this to such an incredible degree makes his arrangement a masterpiece of its kind that, precisely because of its reverence, endows the original with a new quality: the compositional structure and melodic line as a whole, many instrumental

details that are absorbed in the smoother orchestral sound, and also particular traits [...] become more apparent; the individual lines become sharper and more transparent throughout – indeed, for the most part, only partial lines, which pierce through the large orchestra, migrating from instrument to instrument, are joined together again into a common line.” (R. Riehn)

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