

MAHLER

2 CDs

Symphony No. 8 'Symphony of a Thousand'

Kubiak • Kłosińska • Boberska • Rappé • Marciniec
Bentch • Drabowicz • Nowacki • Warsaw Boys Choir
Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra

Antoni Wit



**Gustav
MAHLER**

(1860-1911)

Symphony No. 8

‘Symphony of a Thousand’

Barbara Kubiak Soprano I (Magna Peccatrix)
Izabela Kłosińska Soprano II (Una Poenitentium)
Marta Boberska Soprano III (Mater Gloriosa)
Jadwiga Rappé Alto I (Mulier Samaritana)
Ewa Marciniak Alto II (Maria Aegyptiaca)
Timothy Bentch Tenor (Doctor Marianus)
Wojciech Drabowicz Baritone (Pater Ecstaticus)
Piotr Nowacki Bass (Pater Profundis)

Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra

Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir

(Henryk Wojnarowski, Choirmaster)

Polish Radio Choir in Kraków

(Włodzimierz Siedlik, Choirmaster)

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Choir

(Kazimierz Szymonik, Choirmaster)

The Warsaw Boys Choir

(Krzysztof Kusiel-Moroz, Choirmaster)

Antoni Wit

CD 1: Part One: Hymnus: Veni, Creator Spiritus**23:56**

- 1 Allegro impetuoso: *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Choir I/II) 1:26
- 2 A tempo. Etwas (aber unmerklich) gemäßigter; immer sehr fließend: *Imple superna gratia* (Soprano I, Tenor, Soprano II, Alto I/II, Baritone, Bass; Choir I/II) 4:05
- 3 Etwas drängend – Noch einmal so langsam. (Nicht schleppend): *Infirmi nostri corporis* (Choir II/I, Soprano I/II, Alto I/II, Tenor, Bass, Baritone) 2:21
- 4 Tempo I (Allegro, etwas hastig) 1:18
- 5 Sehr fließend – Noch einmal so langsam als vorher. Nicht schleppend: *Infirmi nostri corporis* (Bass, Tenor, Alto I/II, Baritone, Soprano I/II) 3:09
- 6 Plötzlich sehr breit und leidenschaftlichen Ausdrucks – Mit plötzlichem Aufschwung: *Accende lumen sensibus* (Soprano I/II, Alto I/II, Tenor, Baritone, Bass, Boys' Choir, Choir I/II) 5:01
- 7 *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Soprano I/II, Alto I/II, Tenor, Baritone, Bass, Choir I/II, Boys' Choir) 3:53
- 8 Wieder frisch: *Gloria sit Patri Domin* (Boys' Choir, Soprano I/II, Alto I/II, Tenor, Choir I/II, Baritone, Bass) 2:43

CD 2: Part Two: Final Scene from Goethe's "Faust Part II"**56:55**

- 1 Poco adagio 5:46
- 2 Più mosso (Allegro moderato) 2:57
- 3 Wieder langsam. Chor und Echo: *Waldung, sie schwankt heran* (Choir I/II) 4:14
- 4 Moderato. Pater ecstasticus: *Ewiger Wonnebrand* (Baritone) 1:28
- 5 Allegro (Allegro appassionato). Pater profundus: *Wie Felsenabgrund mir zu Füßen* (Bass) 4:27
- 6 Allegro deciso (Im Anfang noch nicht eilen). Chor der Engel: *Geretet ist das edle Glied der Geisterwelt vom Bösen. Chor seliger Knaben: Hände verschlinget euch* (Choir I/II, Soprano, Alto, Boys' Choir) 0:52
- 7 Molto leggiero. Chor der jüngeren Engel: *Jene Rosen aus den Händen* (Choir I, Soprano, Alto) 1:46
- 8 Schon etwas langsamer und immer noch mäßiger – Wie die gleiche Stelle im I. Teil. Die vollendeteren Engel: *Uns bleibt ein Erdenrest* (Choir II, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Alto II) 2:11
- 9 Im Anfang (die ersten vier Takte) noch etwas gehalten. Die jüngeren Engel: *Ich spür' soeben nebeind um Felsenhöh. Doctor Marianus: Hier ist die Aussicht frei. Chor Seligen Knaben: Freudig empfangen wir* (Choir I, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Boys' Choir) 1:09
- 10 Sempre l'istesso tempo. Doctor Marianus: *Höchste Herrscherin der Welt!* (Tenor, Choir I/II) 4:28
- 11 Äußerst langsam. Adagissimo: *Dir, der Unberührbaren* (Choir II/I). Chor der Bütnerinnen und Una poenitentium: *Du schwebst zu Höhen der ewigen Reiche* (Choir II, Soprano I) 3:51
- 12 Fließend. Magna Peccatrix: *Bei der Liebe, die den Füßen* (Soprano II) 0:55
- 13 Mulier Samaritana: *Bei dem Bronn, zu dem schon weiland* (Alto I) 1:24
- 14 Maria Aegyptiaca: *Bei dem hochgeweihten Orte* (Alto II) 2:34
- 15 Una poenitentium: *Neige, neige, du Ohnegleiche* (Soprano I) 0:52
- 16 Unmerklich frischer werden. Selige Knaben: *Er überwächst uns schon* Una poenitentium: *Vom edlen Geisterchor umgeben* (Blessed Boys, Choir II, Soprano, Soprano I) 3:26
- 17 Sehr langsam. Mater Gloriosa: *Komm! Hebe dich zu höhern Sphären!* (Soprano) Hymnenartig (Ungefähr im selben Zeitmaß weiter). Doctor Marianus: *Blicket auf zum Retterblick, alle reuig Zarten* (Tenor, Choir II/I, Boys' Choir) 8:10
- 18 Sehr langsam beginnend. Chorus mysticus: *Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis* (Choir I/II, Soprano I/II, Alto I/II, Tenor, Baritone, Bass, Boys' Choir) 6:25

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Symphony No. 8

Described by the composer as his “gift to the whole nation”, Mahler’s *Eighth Symphony* has had an equivocal reception even judged by the standards of his symphonies as a whole. Coming after three purely orchestral symphonies, each with its distinctive and provocative take on triumph and adversity, it might seem a throwback to his second and third symphonies, with their quirky though compelling hybrid of symphony and cantata. Yet the *Eighth Symphony*, in many respects, is the most integrated and organic symphony that Mahler had yet attempted - the result, in large part, of a genesis whose sheer suddenness and rapidity took even its composer by surprise.

The summer of 1906 found Mahler determined to avoid the intensive composing of previous years. Thus he arrived at his Maiernigg retreat with numerous themes for a four-movement work, but little intention of seeing them through to fruition. One such was for an orchestral movement inspired by, but not setting, the hymn *Veni creator spiritus* - and it was the words of this hymn (or, at least, Mahler’s recollection of them) that inspired him to set the text to music in a matter of days. The remaining movements of the original plan, corresponding to a symphonic slow movement, scherzo and finale, were not so much abandoned as redistributed across the setting of the final scene from Part Two of Goethe’s *Faust* that evolved over the ensuing weeks.

The choice of texts is significant. The Whitsuntide Vesper hymn *Veni creator spiritus*, generally attributed to the ninth century cleric Hrabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz, stems from a ‘Dark Age’ that was even more obscure a century ago than now: the Goethe text is the visionary conclusion to the philosophical second half of his greatest work; not so much a bridge from the Enlightenment to the Romantic eras as an abstraction relating to both but belonging to neither. The remoteness of both these texts from ‘contemporary’ aspirations made them communicable only through an all-embracing musical realisation such as Mahler was

ideally equipped to undertake.

Part One sees thunderous organ chords presage the opening lines, here resplendent on full chorus [1]. This dies down, whereupon the soloists introduce a supplicatory new theme [2], taken up quietly by the chorus, and leading to a forthright choral restatement of the opening theme. An ominous orchestral postlude leads into the depths [3], where anxious choral voices are met by a conciliatory response from the soloists. There is a brief pause [4], after which woodwind, brass and pizzicato strings have a crepuscular interlude, leading to a group of tranquil themes shared among the soloists [5]. A majestic orchestral response [6] sees the chorus launch an elaborate double fugue; an energetic development of the themes heard so far, joined at length by the soloists in the ascent, martial and fervent by turns, to an effulgent restatement of the opening chorus [7]; the beginning of a compact reprise that proceeds swiftly through the main themes so far heard. This reaches a brief climax, then robust strings [8] introduce the coda, in which all the musical forces are united in a final outpouring of triumph.

Part Two opens with a lengthy orchestral introduction, evoking the craggy outcrops and wild precipices described by Goethe. The two main themes (which will inform all of those subsequently heard), a questioning idea for upper woodwind over pizzicato strings and a glowing chorale-like melody for strings and lower woodwind, alternate as the music reaches a stark climax, the first theme re-emerging as a recession. A passionate third theme breaks in [2], bringing with it the second theme in intensified guise. This gradually returns to the first theme [3], joined by the chorus representing holy Anchorites who shelter among rocky clefts. The second theme reappears, also with chorus, before an abrupt change of expression brings the arrival of Pater Ecstasticus [4] in a glowing apostrophe to love attained through suffering. This latter is dwelt upon by Pater Profundus [5], in anguished tones that utilise the

third theme of the introduction.

A orchestral postlude leads to the joyful appearance of Angels and Blessed Boys [6], then the more reserved response of Younger Angels [7]. The ominous idea heard near the start of Part One is recalled [8], as More Perfect Angels (with solo mezzo-soprano) consider the unearthly union of Faust and Gretchen, then Younger Angels [9] join with Doctor Marianus [10] in anticipating the arrival of Faust's soul in its chrysalis state, there to await the benediction of the Queen of Heaven (Mater Gloriosa, or the Virgin Mary). The chorus, joined by Penitent Women and Una Poenitentium (Gretchen), similarly pay homage in the most beatific music of the whole work [11], upper strings underpinned by harp arpeggios and harmonium chords.

A sequence of solos now for three women who were present at Christ's crucifixion: Magna Peccatrix [12], Mulier Samaritana [13] and Maria Aegyptiaca [14], each considering the importance of repentance as the means to salvation. Una Poenitentium looks forward to the emergence of Faust in his cleansed condition [15], and Blessed Boys wistfully contrast their unformed state with the wisdom that Faust will impart [16]. Gretchen turns to await him [17], and Mater Gloriosa sends out her greeting from on high (the only appearance of the third soprano in the whole work). Doctor Marianus urges

those on earth to yield to the redeeming gaze of their heavenly queen. The exalted mood is intensified by the chorus, before an orchestral interlude, with its magical interplay of harp and celesta, plaintively fades to silence. Now the Chorus Mysticus [18] gradually builds in a vast crescendo of praise to the Eternal Feminine: drawing on themes from across the work, and culminating with the return of the very opening music in a coda of exultant affirmation.

"Try to imagine the whole universe beginning to ring and resound", was how Mahler himself described the impact of these closing pages. Such was conveyed to the audience at the first two performances, given in Munich on 12th and 13th September 1910, four years after the work's completion, and according to Mahler his greatest triumph as a composer, only eight months before his death. The size of the forces arrayed led to its being dubbed 'Symphony of a Thousand', a subtitle Mahler never sanctioned but which came to represent the symphony as a musical albatross to later generations. Yet this apparent excess is essential to its nature: one which uninhibitedly combines the sacred past and the secular present in an act of confidence toward the future.

Richard Whitehouse

Barbara Kubiak

A graduate of the Poznań Music Academy in Poznań, Barbara Kubiak made her stage début there in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in 1986, going on to a career in opera at home and abroad, with a series of leading rôles, as well as distinguished concert appearances. Her recordings include rôles in Verdi's *Nabucco* and *Il trovatore*, Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and Mahler's *Seventh Symphony*.

Izabela Kłosińska

Principal soloist of the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, Izabela Kłosińska graduated with honours from Warsaw's State Music School and received the Kazimierz Czekotowski Prize. While a third-year student she made her début at the Grand Theatre and remained with the theatre after graduation. She has appeared in numerous operas, with soprano rôles ranging from Handel to Szymanowski, and international appearances as far afield as the United States, Japan, and South Korea. She also enjoys a career in the concert hall, and has given recitals in Poland and abroad. She has taken part several times in the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music and the Wratislavia Cantans Oratorio and Cantata Festival, and has recorded for record companies, radio and television, with her arias recorded for Polish Radio chosen as best recording of 1990. In December 1996 she was chosen Diva of the Year in *Przegląd Tygodniowy* weekly's Top Artists ranking list. In March 1997, in the course of a busy international career, she was a soloist in the European première of Penderecki's *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw, and in February 1999 she performed in Penderecki's *Credo*. In October 2003 she was Queen Rosamund in the première performance of Penderecki's *Ubu Rex* at the Polish National Opera. She received the Polish Minister of Culture and Art's award for achievements in vocal music in October 1999.

Marta Boberska

In 1995 Marta Boberska completed with distinction her studies at the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw. She has been a soloist with the Warsaw Chamber Opera since 1994. Her many operatic rôles have included leading parts in works by Handel, Mozart and Monteverdi, with an appearance as the Queen of the Night in Jean-Claude Malgoire's Paris production of *Die Zauberflöte*. She is also very active in oratorio, chamber music and recitals, both at home and abroad, and has collaborated in a number of important recordings.

Jadwiga Rappé

Jadwiga Rappé is one of the greatest Polish singers. She is a graduate of Warsaw University (Slavic Philology) and of the Academy of Music in Wrocław, where she studied singing under Zofia Brégy and Jerzy Artysz. In 1980 she won first prize at the International Bach Competition in Leipzig, followed the next year by the Gold Medal at the International Festival of Young Soloists in Bordeaux. She specialises in oratorios and cantatas, with a repertoire that ranges from the baroque to the contemporary. She has collaborated with conductors of the highest international distinction, appearing in major concert halls throughout the world, and in leading festivals. Her many recordings include the principal contralto solo rôles in music from Bach to Mahler, Honegger, Szymanowski and Penderecki. Jadwiga Rappé's repertoire also includes rôles in operas by Handel, Tchaikovsky, Gluck, Verdi, Ponchielli, and Richard Strauss. She received great acclaim for her Erda in Wagner's *Ring* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Covent

Garden, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Festival d'Orange, the Vienna State Opera, Oper Frankfurt, and the Grand Théâtre de Genève. She has served as a member of the jury of the International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch.

Ewa Marcinieć

Ewa Marcinieć studied in Poland and abroad at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule and in master-courses elsewhere, winning prizes at home and abroad. She has appeared as a soloist in a wide range of music, ranging from Bach and Handel to Penderecki. Her operatic career has taken her to major theatres in Germany and Italy, and to leading international festivals, and she has collaborated with a number of leading conductors and distinguished colleagues.

Timothy Bentsch

Often referred to as the best Hungarian tenor, although he hails from the United States, Timothy Bentsch sings regularly with the Hungarian National Opera, where he can be heard singing major Mozart roles in addition to a wider repertoire from Donizetti to Stravinsky. With symphonic repertoire, he appears often with the Hungarian National Symphony, and most other major ensembles in Hungary where his performances have been acclaimed by critics. He has appeared throughout Europe and in the United States. Timothy Bentsch is a graduate of the celebrated Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Wojciech Drabowicz

Wojciech Drabowicz was born in Poznań and for ten years was a member of the Boys' and Mens' Choir *Poznań Nightingales*, performing in many countries in Europe and South America. A prize-winner in many competitions, he made his operatic début in Poznań as Eugene Onegin, going on to a busy and successful career in theatres in Poland and abroad. He has appeared in many world-renowned opera and music festivals, including Glyndebourne, Wexford, Brighton, London (Proms), Bregenz, Sarajevo, Bratislava Cantans in Wrocław, and KlangBogen in Vienna, and has worked with conductors of great international distinction. His recordings range from Bach to Szymanowski and Eötvös.

Piotr Nowacki

The Polish bass Piotr Nowacki graduated from the Łódź Academy of Music in 1985. He has won prizes at vocal competitions in Warsaw, Kudowa, Bytom and Krynica, and took part in the finals of the Belvedere International Vocal Competition in Vienna, a success that brought him to La Scala, Milan, where he made his début in 1987 in the title-rôle in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. He won a prize in the Luciano Pavarotti Competition in Philadelphia and was subsequently invited to sing the part of Wurm in Verdi's *Luisa Miller*. He has also performed in Washington and at the Pablo Casals Festival in Puerto Rico. Following his return from the United States in 1990, he has frequently sung at La Monnaie in Brussels. His operatic repertoire ranges from Monteverdi to Richard Strauss, and he has taken part in many concerts of oratorios, appearing as a guest at the international festivals in Edinburgh and Granada. He is a soloist of the Grand Theatre - National Opera in Warsaw.

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra: The National Philharmonic of Poland

The first performance of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra took place on 5th November 1901 in the newly opened Philharmonic Hall under the artistic director and principal conductor, Emil Młynarski. The soloist was the world-renowned pianist, composer and future statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski, and the programme included Paderewski's *Piano Concerto in A minor* and works of other Polish composers, Chopin, Moniuszko, Noskowski, Stojowski and Żeleński. In the succeeding years the orchestra won a high reputation, collaborating with leading conductors and soloists, until the outbreak of war in 1939, the destruction of the Philharmonic Hall and the loss of 39 of its 71 players. Resuming activity after the war, the orchestra was conducted by Straszyński and Panufnik, and in January 1950 Witold Rowicki was appointed director and principal conductor, organizing a new ensemble under difficult conditions. In 1955 the rebuilt Philharmonic Hall was re-opened, with a large hall of over a thousand seats and a 433-seat hall for chamber music, recognised as the National Philharmonic of Poland. Subsequent conductors included Bohdan Wodiczko, Arnold Rezler and Stanisław Skrowaczewski, and in 1958 Witold Rowicki was again appointed artistic director and principal conductor, a post he held until 1977, when he was succeeded by Kazimierz Kord, who served until the end of the centenary celebrations in 2001. In 2002 Antoni Wit became general and artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic – The National Orchestra and Choir of Poland. The orchestra has toured widely abroad, in addition to its busy schedule at home in symphony concerts, chamber concerts, educational work and other activities. It now has a complement of 112 players.

Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir

The Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir was founded in 1952 by Zbigniew Soja and gave its first concert in May 1953, under the then artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Witold Rowicki. The present chorus-master Henryk Wojnarowski has held this position since 1978. In its wide repertoire the choir has more than 150 oratorios and choral works ranging from the medieval to the contemporary. Each year the choir collaborates in some ten symphony and oratorio concerts with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the most important part of its artistic activity. The choir also performs regularly at the Warsaw Autumn Festival and in Wrocław at the Wratislavia Cantans Festival. Many of these concerts have been recorded. Polish music, in particular works of Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Wojciech Kilar, is a very important part of the choir's repertoire. The choir has performed all Penderecki's oratorios and a cappella works, as well as his opera *Paradise Lost*. The Warsaw Philharmonic Choir is also very active internationally, appearing throughout Europe and beyond. There have been collaborations with the most renowned orchestras, and participation in operas at La Scala, Milan, La Fenice, and in other major houses. In 1988 and 1990 the choir was invited to the Vatican to take part in celebrations of the successive anniversaries of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, concerts that were televised and broadcast throughout Europe. In December 2001 the choir, together with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, performed for John Paul II once again in a special concert commemorating the centenary of the Warsaw Philharmonic, this time presenting the *Missa pro pace* by Wojciech Kilar. Among the conductors who have performed with the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir have been Witold Rowicki, Jerzy Semkow, Kazimierz Kord, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Krzysztof Penderecki, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Leopold Stokowski, Gary Bertini, Sergiu Comissiona, Lorin Maazel, Seiji Ozawa, Giuseppe Sinopoli and Igor Stravinsky and, of course, Antoni Wit who is the Artistic Director of the Warsaw Philharmonic, the National Orchestra and Choir of Poland.

Henryk Wojnarowski

Henryk Wojnarowski, chorus-master of the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir since 1978, was previously conductor and chorus-master of the Warsaw Opera Chorus where he prepared over eighty premières. He studied symphony and opera conducting under Stanisław Wisłocki at the Warsaw Conservatory, and has appeared with the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir in numerous Polish Philharmonic centres, presenting both a cappella works and oratorios, the latter with local symphony orchestras. He has trained the choir for many recordings for Polish Radio and Television, and for Polish and foreign record companies, and has made numerous international tours with the choir, with performances under many outstanding conductors and symphony orchestras in Berlin, Milan, Munich, Paris and Rome. He has prepared all Krzysztof Penderecki's oratorios and a cappella works with the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir, and also serves as professor of choral conducting at the Warsaw Academy of Music.

Polish Radio Choir in Kraków

The Polish Radio Choir was founded by Jerzy Gert in 1947 and until 1993 was an integral part of the Orchestra and Choir of Polish Radio and Television. Since January 1995 the ensemble has existed independently as the Polish Radio Choir in Kraków with Włodzimierz Siedlik appointed as its director and artistic manager. The Polish Radio Choir has performed and recorded innumerable vocal and instrumental compositions under the baton of many distinguished Polish and foreign conductors, among them Stanisław Wisłocki, Jan Krenz, Jerzy Semkow, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Yuri Ahronovitch, and Bruno Bartoletti, as well as receiving Nadia Boulanger as a guest. The choir has a wide range of repertoire of unaccompanied and accompanied choral music from various periods, and has recorded many works for the archive of the Polish Radio and CDs for Polish and foreign companies. The choir has collaborated in staged performances of Schoenberg's opera *Moses und Aron* in various theatres, including Darmstadt, Palermo, Stuttgart, and Hamburg.

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Choir

The Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Choir in Warsaw was founded in 1968 and performed until October 1999 as the Choir of the Academy of Catholic Theology. During the 37 years of its activity, the choir has given numerous concerts in Poland as well as nearly all European countries, winning a number of awards. The choir has performed during numerous festivals in Poland and abroad, and has a repertoire that ranges from the Renaissance to contemporary music, focusing particularly on Polish sacred music. The choir has made numerous recordings for the radio and television in Poland, France, Germany, Italy, and the Vatican, and produced fifteen compact disc recordings. Father Kazimierz Szymonik is the artistic director and conductor of the UCSW Choir. Voice training and vocal tutors are Alicja Ogrodzińska and Barbara Szczerbaczewicz.

The Warsaw Boys Choir

The Warsaw Boys Choir was founded in 1990 at the Warsaw Music Academy upon the suggestion of the Academy Professor Andrzej Chorościński. Krzysztof Kusiel-Moroz, lecturer and assistant at the Department of Choral Conducting, was the founder, artistic director and the choirmaster. The Choir is composed of boys aged between eight and fourteen, all attending Warsaw primary schools. In 1998 a men's choir was founded, an integral part of the entire Choir composed of secondary school boys who had recently left the boys' choir. The Warsaw Boys' and Men's Choir give between thirty and forty concerts a year, both in Poland and abroad. The extensive repertoire ranges from Gregorian Chant to the contemporary, with performances of music by Polish composers, while recordings include music from Pergolesi, Schubert and Mendelssohn to Penderecki and George Crumb.

Antoni Wit

Antoni Wit, one of the most highly regarded Polish conductors, studied conducting with Henryk Czyz and composition with Krzysztof Penderecki at the Academy of Music in Kraków, subsequently continuing his studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He also graduated in law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Immediately after completing his studies he was engaged as an assistant at the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra by Witold Rowicki and was later appointed conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic. He collaborated with the Warsaw Grand Theatre, and from 1964 to 1977 was artistic director of the Pomeranian Philharmonic, before his appointment as director of the Polish Radio and Television Orchestra and Chorus in Kraków. From 1983 to 2000 he was the director of the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, and from 1987 to 1994 he was the chief conductor and then first guest conductor of Orquesta Filarmonica de Gran Canaria. In 2002 he became General and Artistic Director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. His international career has brought engagements with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas and the Near and Far East. He has made nearly a hundred records, including an acclaimed release for Naxos of the piano concertos of Prokofiev, awarded the *Diapason d'Or* and *Grand Prix du Disque de la Nouvelle Académie du Disque*. In January 2002 his recording of the *Turangalila Symphony* by Olivier Messiaen (Naxos 8.554478-79) was awarded the Cannes Classical Award in *Midem Classic* 2002. Antoni Wit is a professor at the F. Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw.

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphonie Nr. 8

Selbst im Kontext seines zwiespältig aufgenommenen symphonischen Gesamtwerks ist die Rezeption von Gustav Mahlers achter Symphonie – seinem „Geschenk an die ganze Nation“, wie er gesagt haben soll – besonders ambivalent. Sie folgte drei reinen Orchesterwerken, in denen sich der Komponist auf jeweils eigene und provozierende Weise mit Triumph und Niederlage auseinandergesetzt hatte und könnte vor diesem Hintergrund wie ein Schritt zurück zu den spitzfindigen, wenigleich bezwingenden Hybriden aus Symphonie und Kantate betrachtet werden, die Mahler mit seiner zweiten und dritten Symphonie gelungen waren. Tatsächlich aber ist die achte Symphonie in vieler Hinsicht die organischste und geschlossenste Symphonie, die Mahler je in Angriff genommen hat – das Resultat einer Genese, die selbst den Komponisten allein schon wegen ihrer Plötzlichkeit und Geschwindigkeit überraschte.

Mahler hatte im Sommer 1906 nicht so intensiv komponieren wollen wie die Jahre zuvor. Als er in seinem Ferienort Maiernigg eintraf, hatte er zahlreiche Themen für ein viersätziges Werk dabei, das er damals aber nicht unbedingt zur Vervollendung bringen wollte. Unter anderem hatte er die Idee zu seinem von dem Hymnus *Veni creator spiritus* inspirierten Orchestersatz, der allerdings ohne die Worte auskommen sollte. Und doch waren es die Worte eben dieses Hymnus, die Mahler dann in wenigen Tagen vertonte (oder zumindest der Teil des Textes, an den er sich erinnerte). Der langsame Satz, das Scherzo und das Finale der ursprünglich geplanten Symphonie wurden nicht eigentlich verworfen, sondern auf die Schluss-Szene aus Goethes *Faust II* verteilt, deren Vertonung in den nächsten Wochen entstand.

Die Textwahl ist bezeichnend. Der pfingstliche Vesperhymnus *Veni creator spiritus*, der dem Mainzer Erzbischof Hrabanus Maurus (um 780 – 856) zugeschrieben wird, stammt aus einem „finsternen Zeitalter“, über das man vor einem Jahrhundert noch

weniger wusste als heute. Der Text aus *Faust* hingegen beendet auf visionäre Weise die philosophische zweite Hälfte des größten Werkes, das Goethe geschrieben hat und bildet nicht so sehr eine Brücke von der Aufklärung zur Romantik als vielmehr eine Abstraktion, die sich auf beide Epochen bezieht, zugleich aber zu keiner von beiden gehört. Beide Texte stehen dem „zeitgenössischen“ Streben so fern, dass sie auf ideale Weise geeignet waren, sich durch eine allübergreifende musikalische Realisation wie diejenige Mahlers – und nur durch eine solche – kommunizieren zu lassen.

Ein donnernder Orgelakkord geht den ersten Zeilen des Textes voran, den der gesamte Chor erstahlen lässt [1]. Dieser erstirbt, und die Solisten stellen einen neuen, flehentlichen Gedanken vor [2], den der Chor leise übernimmt, um ihn zu einer direkten Wiederholung des ersten Themas zu führen. Ein bedrohliches Orchesternachspiel führt in die Tiefe [3], wo den ängstlichen Stimmen des Chores die versöhnlichen Antworten der Solisten gegenüberstehen. Die Bläser und die Pizzikato-Streicher liefern mit ihrem dämmrigen Zwischenspiel eine kurze Unterbrechung [4], die zu einer Gruppe ruhiger Themen führt, in die sich die Solisten teilen [5]. Einer majestätischen Antwort des Orchesters [6] folgt der Beginn einer kunstvollen Doppelfuge; es kommt zu einer energischen Durchführung der bislang vorgestellten Themen, wobei zuletzt auch die Solisten im Wechsel erhebend, martialisch und glühend einfallen, bis der Chor eine strahlende Wiederholung anstimmt [7] – den Anfang einer kompakten Reprise, die rasch alle bisherigen Themen durchnimmt. Nach einer kurzen Klimax beginnt in den kraftvollen Streichern die Coda [8], bei der sich alle beteiligten Kräfte in einer abschließenden Bejahung verströmen.

Der zweite Teil beginnt mit einer längeren Orchestereinleitung, die die Bergschluchten und wilden Klüfte beschwört, von denen Goethe spricht. Zwei Hauptthemen (von denen alles weitere beseelt wird)

wechseln einander ab: ein fragender Gedanke der hohen Holzbläser über Pizzikati sowie eine glühende, choralartige Melodie, die in den Streichern und dem tiefen Blech erklingt. Die Musik steigert sich zu einem mächtigen Höhepunkt, worauf sich rückblickend das erste Thema meldet. Ein leidenschaftliches drittes Thema bricht ein [2] und führt das zweite mit sich, das jetzt eindringlicher gestaltet ist und sich nach und nach seinerseits dem ersten Thema zuwendet [3]. Indessen fällt der Chor der Heiligen Anachoreten ein, die *gebirgauf verteilt* sind und *zwischen Klüften* lagern. Auch das zweite Thema erklingt im Chor, bevor mit einem plötzlichen Wechsel des Ausdrucks der Pater Ecstasticus [4] einsetzt, um sich lebhaft über das *glühende Liebeband* zu ergehen, das durch Leiden erreicht wird. Darüber sinnt dann der Pater Profundus [5] in schmerzlichen Tönen nach, die das dritte Thema der Einleitung nutzen.

Ein orchestrales Nachspiel führt zu dem fröhlichen Auftritt der Seligen Knaben [6], worauf die Jüngeren Engel zurückhaltender antworten [7]. Der bedrohliche Gedanke, der kurz nach dem Beginn des ersten Teils zu hören war, wird wieder aufgenommen [8], während die Vollendeteren Engel (mit einem Mezzosopran-Solo) die überirdische Einheit von Faust und Gretchen besingen. Die Jüngeren Engel [9] und der Doctor Marianus [10] fallen ein, um zu vermelden, dass *Faustens Unsterbliches* „im Puppenstand“ eingetroffen sei und nun die Seligsprechung durch die himmlische Königin, die Mater Gloriosa oder Jungfrau Maria, erwarte. Der Chor der Büberinnen sowie Una Poenitentium (*sonst Gretchen genannt*) erweisen derselben gleichfalls ihre Reverenz, wozu in hohen Streichern, Harfenarpeggien und Harmoniumakkorden die schönste Musik des gesamten Werkes erklingt [11].

Es schließen sich die Soli der drei Frauen an, die bei der Kreuzigung Christi zugegen waren: Magna Peccatrix [12], Mulier Samaritana [13] und Maria Aegyptiaca [14], die selbtritt über die Bedeutung der Reue als Mittel zum Seelenheile nachdenken. Una Poenitentium (die eine Büberin, *sonst Gretchen*

genannt) sieht freudig der Erscheinung Fausti in seinem ätherischen Gewande entgegen [15], und die Seligen Knaben betrachten sehnsüchtig den Gegensatz zwischen ihrem eigenen, ungebildeten Zustand und dem Wissen, das ihnen Faust vermitteln wird [16]. Die eine Büberin, Gretchen, wendet sich ihm erwartungsvoll zu [17], und die Mater Gloriosa sendet ihren Gruß aus der Höhe herab (es ist dies der einzige Auftritt des dritten Soprans im gesamten Werk). Nachdrücklich fordert der Doctor Marianus alle *reuiq Zarten* auf Erden auf, sich dem *Retterblick* der Himmelskönigin zu ergeben. Der Chor steigert die exaltierte Stimmung, bevor ein Interludium des Orchesters im magischen Wechselspiel von Harfe und Celesta nach und nach klagend verstummt. Der Chorus Mysticus [18] steigert sich allmählich in einem gewaltigen Crescendo zum Lobpreis des *Ewig-Weiblichen*: Dabei werden Themen des gesamten Werkes verwendet, und auf dem Höhepunkt erscheint erneut das *Veni creator spiritus* des Anfangs, um die Coda mit jubelnder Zuversicht zu krönen.

„Denken Sie sich, dass das Universum zu tönen und zu klingen beginnt,“ schrieb Mahler dem Dirigenten Willem Mengelberg nach dem Abschluss des Werkes. So erlebte es auch das Publikum der beiden ersten Aufführungen, die vier Jahre später, am 12. und 13. September 1910, in München stattfanden und dem Komponisten ganze acht Monate vor seinem Tod seinen größten zeitlichen Triumph bescherten. Die Größe der Besetzung trug dem Werk den Beinamen „Symphonie der Tausend“ ein, der zwar von Mahler nicht sanktioniert wurde, späteren Generationen aber zum Inbegriff dieses musikalischen Riesenvogels werden sollte. Der offensichtliche Exzess ist dieser Symphonie wesentlich: Sie ist ein Werk, das ohne Skrupel die spirituelle Vergangenheit und die weltliche Gegenwart in einem Akt des Vertrauens auf die Zukunft miteinander verbindet.

Richard Whitehouse

Deutsche Fassung: Cris Possalc

With its enormous vocal, choral and orchestral forces, Mahler's *Eighth Symphony*, later to be dubbed 'Symphony of a Thousand', is one of the largest and longest symphonies in the active repertoire. Part One, inspired by the Whitsuntide Vesper hymn *Veni creator spiritus*, is an invocation to the Creator Spirit. Part Two, a setting of the closing scene from Goethe's *Faust*, depicts Faust's redemption through wisdom and love. "Try to imagine the whole universe beginning to ring and resound", was how Mahler himself described the impact of the closing pages of the Symphony.



Gustav MAHLER

(1860-1911)

Symphony No. 8

Barbara Kubiak Soprano I (Magna Peccatrix)
 Izabela Kłosińska Soprano II (Una Poenitentium)
 Marta Boberska Soprano III (Mater Gloriosa)
 Jadwiga Rappé Alto I (Mulier Samaritana)
 Ewa Marciniak Alto II (Maria Aegyptiaca)
 Timothy Bentch Tenor (Doctor Marianus)
 Wojciech Drabowicz Baritone (Pater Ecstaticus)
 Piotr Nowacki Bass (Pater Profundus)

Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra

Polish Radio Choir in Cracow • Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Choir

Warsaw Boys Choir • Antoni Wit

A full track and artist list can be found in the booklet

Sung texts and translations can be found at www.naxos.com/libretti/mahler8.htm

Recorded at the Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall from 1st to 6th June, 2005.

Producers: Andrzej Sasin and Aleksandra Nagórko • Booklet Notes: Richard Whitehouse

Cover image: *The Bride* by Gustav Klimt (1862-1918)

(akg-images / Erich Lessing)



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Playing Time
1:20:51



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