

Anne Chen

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Extra Credit

“Resurrection”

Between the years 1888 and 1894, Mahler composed his Symphony No. 2 in C minor; this long span of years indicates the difficulty with which this symphony came to life. The long, first movement possesses two development sections devoted entirely to this symphonic poem which is expressed in a novel sonata-form structure. The grave first movement was appropriately dubbed as “Totenfeier” or “Funeral Rites.” From the first movement, Mahler expanded his thoughts and expressions, and he used this first movement to fuel his creativity and imagination in order to create his whole five movement symphony. However, the road of genius is never smooth. Mahler ran into some trouble composing the finale of his symphony. Despite the fact that he knew he was inviting comparison to Beethoven, Mahler wanted a vocal final movement. After hearing Klopstock’s Resurrection Ode at Mahler’s friend’s funeral, Mahler knew that he wanted to incorporate the vocals of the ode into his closing movement. Mahler had finally completed his audacious piece of concert hall theatre, part choral symphony, and part oratorio.

I listened to Neeme Jarvi conducting members of the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Detroit and New Jersey Symphonies, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Choral Artists, and soloists Susanne Mentser and Twyla Robinson. The symphonic piece was amazing. The first movement is hugely dramatic; it aims to convey a wandering and meaningless search for the motives of life. The second movement portrays a graceful, old-fashioned waltz in *andante moderato*; however, the serenity becomes disrupted by encroaching shadows of sinister means. As the audience transitions to the third movement, the tranquility vanishes, and anguished outcries surround the audience. The movement depicts a grotesque and wickedly sarcastic waltz. Between the third and fourth movement, Mahler allows for a break as to emphasize the difference between the two movements. The fourth movement comes from a child’s song. The naïve, pure, and innocent aura claim the climax towards the finale. Finally during the finale, Mahler depicts the full dread and magnificence of a pagan’s last judgment and resurrection. The quivering tension, funeral odes, and extraordinary instrumental effects help build this powerful climax of the end. Using his music, Mahler dramatized the struggle of mankind towards eternal salvation. In his music, Mahler answered his own questions: What was the purpose of struggling through life whilst alive? After death would any meaning for life be revealed? Was there salvation or damnation awaiting?