

Like so many Russian musicians, Mravinsky seemed first headed toward a career in the sciences. He studied biology at St. Petersburg University, but had to quit in 1920 after his father's death. To support himself, he signed on with the Imperial Ballet as a rehearsal pianist. In 1923, he finally enrolled in the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied composition with Vladimir Shcherbachov and conducting with Alexander Gauk and Nikolai Malko. He graduated in 1931, and left his Imperial Ballet job to become a musical assistant and ballet conductor at the Bolshoi Opera from 1931 to 1937, with a stint at the Kirov from 1934. Mravinsky gave up these posts in 1938, after winning first prize in the All-Union Conductors' Competition in Moscow, to become principal conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic. He remained there until his death, long ignoring many guest-conducting offers from abroad. Under Mravinsky's direction the Leningrad Philharmonic came to be regarded as one of the finest orchestras in the world, although the world had comparatively few opportunities to hear it aside from the rare tour (about 30 performances in 25 years, starting in 1956), some dim Soviet recordings, and a very few highly acclaimed records for such Western European companies as Deutsche Grammophon and, in the end, Erato. Mravinsky was made People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. in 1954, and in 1973, he received the order of Hero of Socialist Labor. But his more lasting international acclaim came for his performances of Mozart, Beethoven, Bruckner, Wagner, Sibelius, Bartók, Stravinsky, and anything Russian or Soviet. His reputation only rose upon his retirement from the Leningrad Philharmonic.



Mravinsky's rehearsal manner was said to be autocratic and brutal, and the resulting performances were tightly clenched. Yet they were also technically precise, finely detailed, subtly colored, and highly dramatic -- and this not always because he was in the habit of whipping fast finales into a frenzy. His readings had an intensity, concentration, and -- despite the arduous rehearsal -- spontaneity comparable to those of Wilhelm Furtwängler. In the West, Mravinsky was particularly noted as an interpreter of Shostakovich, whose Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth symphonies he premiered, and of Tchaikovsky. His recordings of the Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies, made in 1960 for Deutsche Grammophon while the orchestra was on tour in London, are touchstones of the Russian repertory.



# Evgeny Mravinsky conducts the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

## Honegger Symphony No. 3 "Liturgique"

## Hindemith Die Harmonie Der Welt



Mastered in DSD256

Symphonie Liturgique is the Third Symphony by the Swiss composer Arthur Honegger.

Composed in the aftermath of World War II, it is one of Honegger's best-known works. It is in three movements, each of which (following the symphony's subtitle) is named after part of the Requiem Mass. The first movement, *Dies irae*, is marked *allegro marcato*, and has an aggressive, storm-like quality. The slow movement, *De profundis clamavi*, is in contrast meditative and lyrical. The finale, *Dona nobis pacem*, is more episodic, with an insistent, brutal marching rhythm building to a dissonant climax, before a long, lyrical coda concludes the work. A melody resembling the robin song from *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher*, can be heard towards the end of each movement.

Honegger himself wrote an extensive commentary on the work, making explicit the music's connection with the horrors of the War, and the desire for peace.

Written in 1945–46 on a commission from the Foundation Pro Helvetia, Honegger's Third was first performed in Zürich on 17 August 1946 with Charles Munch conducting the Suisse Romande Orchestra. Munch made a live recording of the work in Prague with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1956, which has been released by the Multisonic label. The symphony has been performed and recorded many times and was a specialty of Herbert von Karajan,

who made a recording of it (with Honegger's Second Symphony) in 1969, which is still widely regarded as one of its finest interpretations.

The *Symphonie Liturgique* has strong thematic similarities with Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* written in 1940, although it is in no sense imitative or a reworking of the earlier piece.

Symphony, "Die Harmonie der Welt" (The Music of the Spheres)  
This symphony is drawn from an opera about Johannes Kepler, the great astronomer who deduced the laws of orbital motion. Kepler was looking for the exact, perfect geometrical forms -- circles, squares, equilateral triangles, and the like, that he believed must describe planetary motion. He called concept "The Harmony of the Universe, " (in German, *Harmonie der Welt*). Ironically, he discovered that there are no such relationships concerning spacing of the planets, and also that they move not in circular but in elliptical orbits, and not even at constant speeds. The symphony has three movements, "Machine Music, " "Human Music, " and "World Music." The three movements progressively seek to illuminate higher and higher spheres of musical/astrological imagery and musical purity. The music itself is high-minded and seeks to be free from human passions (except the passion for enlightenment), and seems at times to glow with an inner radiance.

# Honegger - Symphony No. 3 “Liturgique”

## Hindemith – Die Harmonie Der Welt

Evgeny Mravinsky Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

### **Symphony No. 3 “Liturgique” (27:06)**

1. Dies Irae. Allegro Marcato 6:40
2. De Profundis Clamavi. Adagio 10:45
3. Dona Nobis Pacem. Andante 9:41

### **Symphony “Die Harmonie Der Welt” (34:23)**

4. Musica Instrumentalis 10:58
  5. Musica Humana 9:22
  6. Musica Mundana 14:02
- Total Time 61:29

Recorded by Melyodia Live at the Grand Hall of Leningrad Philharmonic  
Recorded 1965 Transferred from a 15ips tape



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