

The eminent Hungarian-born English conductor, Georg (actually György) Solti, studied piano and composition with Ernst von Dohnanyi, Zoltan Kodaly, Béla Bartók and Leó Weiner at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, giving his first concert at the age of 12.

Georg Solti began working as assistant at the Budapest Opera in 1930 and was director of music there from 1934 to 1939. In the summers of 1936 and 1937 he was assistant to Arturo Toscanini at the Salzburg Festival, an encounter that left a deep impression on the young musician. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he emigrated to Zurich, resuming his career as a pianist. He won first prize at the Geneva International Competition in 1942.

Georg Solti's career really began after the end of World War II. For almost 25 years, he concentrated entirely on conducting operas. He was chief musical director of the Munich Opera from 1947 to 1951 and of the Frankfurt Opera from 1952 to 1961. Covent Garden excelled during his tenure as musical director (1961-1971). In 1951 he conducted for the first time in Salzburg (Idomeneo by Mozart). At the end of the 1950's he made his first recordings e.g. Der Ring des Nibelungen by Wagner with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1961 he was appointed as musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, but hardly ever worked in this position since the orchestra's management had appointed an assistant without asking him.

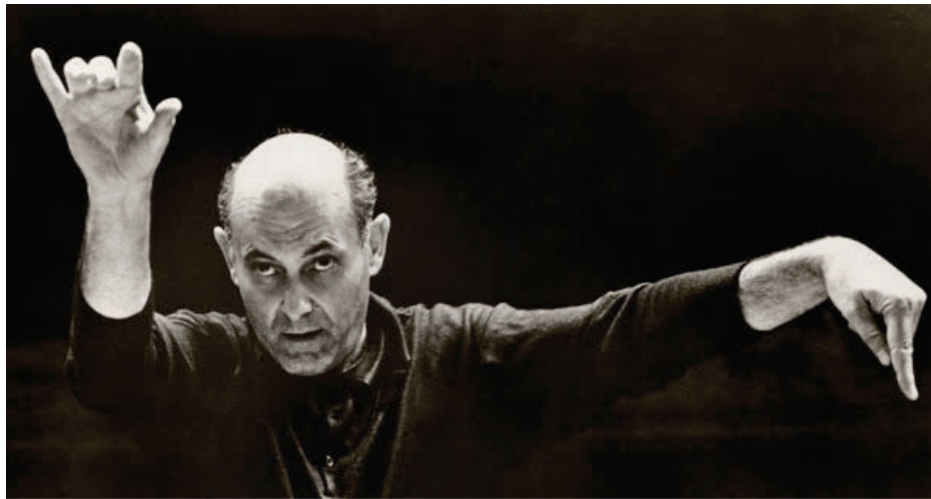
In 1969 Georg Solti took over as director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and his second career as a conductor of orchestral music began. He remained in this post until 1991. From 1972 to 1975 he was also director of the Orchestre de Paris. In 1973, Rolf Liebermann appointed him as musical adviser to the Paris Opera. From 1979 to 1983 he was director of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1983, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Richard Wagner, he conducted Der Ring des Nibelungen in Bayreuth but without achieving his customary high standard. He excels principally in the German and Austrian post-Romantic repertoire and in contemporary Hungarian music (Béla Bartók, Kodaly). In 1992 he took over from Herbert von Karajan as artistic director of the Salzburg Easter Festival (until 1994). In 1995 he was artistic adviser to the festival that replaced the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Georg Solti did a large number of first performances, including works by Gilbert Amy D'un espace déployé (1973), Boris Blacher Requiem (1959) and Collage for Orchestra (1968), David Del Tredici Final Alice (1976), Gottfried von Einem Philadelphia Symphony (1961), Hans Werner Henze Heliogabalus Imperator (1972), Rolf Liebermann L'Ecole des femmes (second version) (1957), Witold Lutoslawski Symphony no. 3 (1983), George Rochberg Symphony no. 5 (1986) and Iannis Xenakis Noomena (1976).

MAHLER

Symphony No. 1 in D major

GEORG SOLT / LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Mahler's First Symphony was originally conceived as a tone poem in two parts. Loosely based on Jean Paul's novel *Titan*, the structure was this: Part I: "From the Days of Youth," Music of Flowers, Fruit and Thorn -- 1. Spring and No End; 2. Flowers; 3. In Full Sail; Part II: "The Human Comedy" -- 4. "Stranded!" Funeral March in the Style of Callot; 5. D'all Inferno al'Paradiso (From Hell to Heaven). These titles were accompanied by more extensive programs describing the metaphorical content of each movement. In Jean Paul's *Titan* we have a youth gifted with a burning artistic desire that the world has no use for, and who, finding no outlet or ability to adapt, gives way to despair and suicide. Mahler apparently saw himself in this figure, as he described this work as autobiographical in a very loose sense. On the other hand the music, some of which Mahler actually accumulated from various earlier works, contradicts this program in so many ways, especially in the triumphant conclusion, that Mahler later withdrew it. He eventually came to scorn the application of specific programs to his symphonies in general.

Beyond Mahler's suppression of the program, there were other changes made before the symphony achieved its final form: the orchestra was expanded and the original second movement, entitled "Blumine" (Flowers) was dropped. This movement, the only surviving piece from Mahler's incidental music to Scheffel's *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, although having thematic ties to the rest of the symphony, is stylistically different, being scored for a much smaller orchestra.

The primary source material for the remaining movements of the First Symphony is Mahler's *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer). The material of these songs, specifically the first and second, is not only quoted but also used as

thematic material in the symphony, creating additional programmatic implications. Mahler's First Symphony is a stunning achievement for so young a composer, and despite its convoluted genesis is a fully mature, integrated and highly effective work.

The first movement, *Langsam Schleppend* (Slow and Dragging), opens with an introduction invoking nature, eventually with cuckoo calls and distant fanfares. The principal theme is from the song "Ging heut' morgens übers Feld" (I Went Out This Morning Through the Fields) and is developed in a standard sonata form. The second movement, *Kräftig bewegt* (Strongly moving), is a lusty and hearty Austrian *Ländler* replete with yodels and foot stomping. The slower and wistful Trio conjures feelings of nostalgia and longing. Based on a woodcut depicting animals carrying a hunter to his grave, the third-movement funeral march, *Feierlich und gemessen* (Solemnly and measured), is deeply ironic. Mahler uses the folk song "Frère Jacques" in a lugubrious minor, played by a muted double bass solo. The central Trio is an evocation of tawdry Viennese cabaret music.

Mahler's original program for the *Stürmisch bewegt* (Stormy) finale called the movement's dramatic opening "the sudden outburst of a wounded heart." After a long and violent beginning invoking the torments of hell, including a vehement march derived from the first movement, the music subsides into a yearning theme. After a return to the march, Mahler interrupts the mood with a transformative fanfare that eventually leads to a triumphant conclusion.

MAHLER

Symphony No. 1 in D major

GEORG SOLT / LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

1 Langsam, Schleppend, Wie Ein Naturlaut 15:40

2 Kräftig Bewegt, Doch Nicht Zu Schnell 7:01

3 Feierlich Und Gemessen, Ohne Zu Schleppen 11:00

4 Stürmisch Bewegt 20:20

Total Time: 54:01

Recorded by Decca February 1964 at Kingsway Hall, London

Producer: John Culshaw

Engineer: James Lock



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admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com

