

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART CONCERTS

December 1989 and January 1990

December

- 10 National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, *Conductor*
Beverly Benso, *contralto*
Works by Mahler and Brahms
- 17 The Maryland Camerata
Samuel Gordon, *Director*
Christmas Concert with audience caroling
- 24 No concert
- 31 No concert

January

- 7 National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, *Conductor*
Viennese gala New Year concert
- 14 Theodora Hanslowe, *mezzo-soprano*
Mark Markham, *piano*
Works by Poulenc, Schoenberg and Rossini
- 21 Coleman Blumfield, *piano*
Works by Mozart, Mendelssohn and Babin
- 28 The Charleston String Quartet
Works by Mozart, Castaldo and Schumann

Concerts at the National Gallery are open to the public, free of charge.

*The use of cameras or recording devices during the performance
is not allowed.*

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art

1950th Concert



NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA
GEORGE MANOS, *Conductor*
BEVERLY BENSO, *contralto, Guest Artist*

Sunday Evening, December 10, 1989
at Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

PROGRAM

Gustav Mahler Kindertotenlieder
(1860-1911) (1901-04)

1. Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehn
2. Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen
3. Wenn dein Mütterlein
4. Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen
5. In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus

INTERMISSION
(*Twelve minutes*)

Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 2, in D Major
(1833-1897) Opus 73 (1877)

Allegro non troppo
Adagio non troppo
Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino)
Allegro con spirito

BEVERLY BENSO is in great demand in the Washington area as a contralto soloist, and appears frequently in other parts of the country, as well. She is a member of the National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble, with which she has toured Europe twice; in addition, she has sung in the Bach Tricentennial in Leipzig and at the 1986 Mahler Festival in Canada. Locally, she has many solo engagements to her credit at the Kennedy Center, Wolf Trap, the Library of Congress and the Phillips Collection.

There is an uncanny correlation between the subject matter and symbolism of two of Mahler's musical works and subsequent events in his life. During the years 1901-04, he set to music five touching poems of Friedrich Rückert reflecting on the death of children, the *Kindertotenlieder*. In 1906, he composed his sixth symphony, a highly emotional work, later dubbed the "*Tragic*" *Symphony*, which carried for him heavy autobiographical overtones. It ends with a punctuated, pounding motive, played by the timpani, which Mahler described as the stroke of destiny, which fells a man like a tree. Little more than a year later, both musical prophecies came to tragic fulfillment: Mahler's daughter Maria, who was then just five years old, died of scarlet fever. On the heels of this tragedy, Mahler learned from his doctors that he had a heart condition for which there was no known cure. Contrary to their advice, he intensified his musical activities, and took on the musical direction of the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic in 1908 and 1909 respectively. His weak heart held out for only two seasons; he became too ill to conduct in February of 1911 and died at home in Vienna in May of that year.

The music of Brahms is by and large serious in tone, and his *Second Symphony* is certainly no exception. By contrast, the man himself was fond of jokes and jibes, which he aimed more often than not at himself. In the case of this work, when he submitted it to his publisher, Simrock, in 1878, he suggested that the score be printed with a black border, since the work was so like a dirge! Brahms worked and re-worked his *First Symphony* over a period of fifteen years until he finally felt it was ready for public hearing in 1876. Once he had crossed that watershed, however, he was able to complete his second in only four months, and it was premiered in Vienna in December of 1877.

*These concerts are broadcast live on Radio Station
WGMS, 570 AM and 103.5 FM.*

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