

GUSTAV MAHLER - Symphony No. 3 - Sara Mingardo (Contralto) - Women's choir of Schola Heidelberg - Young singers of the Kölner Dom - Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne - François-Xavier Roth (Conductor) - 3149020936658 - Released: February 2019 - [Harmonia mundi HMM905314.15](#)

The music of **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) speaks for itself with an eloquence unmatched in music literature, and communicates directly with the listener at a highly intimate level. And nowhere is this eloquence as potent, as tangible, as it is in his *Symphony No. 3 in D minor*, Mahler's paean to life and nature in all its forms, from the implacable inertia and stoic power of forests and mountains to the ethereal beauty of the spiritual world. Gustav Mahler was also very meticulous and generous with his tempo indications, and expressive and dynamic markings, so much so that any competent orchestra and conductor can usually get the music right. The trick is to generate the distinctive "Mahler" sound, a sonic world unique to this composer's orchestration. Something that the **Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne** and conductor **François-Xavier Roth** put across extremely well in this spectacular recording.

The Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne established their roots back in 1827, and their title is derived from the Gürzenich concert hall they adopted in 1857. They moved into their present day building, the Kölner Philharmonie in 1986. A long and distinguished list of conductors have stood on their podium, including Gustav Mahler himself who conducted the première of his Symphony No. 5 there in 1904. And as a matter of fact, his Symphony No. 3 was also premièred by the Gürzenich Orchestra in 1902 under a different conductor. They've recently concluded a recording cycle of all the Mahler symphonies on the Oehms label under the direction of Markus Stenz, some of which are well reviewed on this site. So I guess it would be safe to assume that the music of Gustav Mahler has been marked with a branding iron on this institution and that his creative spirit roams through their halls.

From the powerful opening statement salvo by 8 French horns, to the incisive declamations by the solo principal trombonist, to the seismic tremors induced by the ranks of percussion instruments in the first movement, to the graceful interplay between woodwinds and strings in the second, to the beautifully alluring and deceptive (turns out to be a hunting horn) solo horn passages in the third, to the appropriately grim and heartfelt singing by contralto **Sara Mingardo** in the fourth, to the joyous bimm bamms by the children's choir in the fifth, to the highly emotional, quasi-hymnic extended crescendo that builds to celestial proportions that is the final movement, all aspects of the "Mahler" sound are laid bare in this intense account, and presented with demonstration quality engineering. Add to all this the number of finer expressive details benefitting from conductor **François-Xavier Roth's** focus along the way and I could go on and on ...

Jean-Yves Duperron - January 2019