

'How we made Das Lied von der Erde' with Justin Brown pianist, Claudia Huckle contralto and Alexander van Ingen, Executive Producer of Champs Hill Records.

Claudia Huckle contralto, Justin Brown piano and Nicky Spence tenor used the Lockdown to research, rehearse and record Mahler's manuscript piano version of Das Lied von der Erde with Champs Hill records.

Claudia spoke of first conceiving of the project during her daily 'Lockdown walks' when she had time to focus on nature. As the idea developed she chose the cover for the CD - Gustav Klimt's painting of a birch forest.

The painting was appropriate in several ways: Klimt and Mahler were contemporaries in Vienna; the painter greatly admired the musician; Claudia's walks focused her attention on nature, the earth and the positive impact of reduced traffic noise and pollution, and Mahler as we know loved long walks in the countryside when he listened to the sounds of nature.

Justin spoke about the challenges of playing the piano version with only two hands while yet making it sound orchestral. Our assessment is that he completely succeeded!

Darren Niman takes up the story:

Members from London and the North enjoyed this wonderful evening of Justin, Claudia and Alexander in conversation discussing the CD of Mahler's own piano version of his wonderful masterpiece Das Lied von der Erde, written at the same time as the full orchestral version.

GMS UK was one of the sponsors of the CD. What made the production special and out of the normal run of GMS UK projects was the music itself - Mahler's own piano score remained unpublished until re-discovered in the late 1980s.

Our members who bought the CD will be aware of the musical learning and technical adjustments involved in coming to terms with this familiar music in a radically different form.

In his review of the CD in the Gramophone magazine (March 2023) Hugo Shirley concluded: 'This is a welcome recording that will, one hopes, bring a new audience to this rewarding version of this wonderful work!'

Kevin Carey, editor of the GMS UK journal The Wayfarer, concludes that if he could only have one of the three available recordings of the piano version, he would take this one.

GMS UK was proud to sponsor the performers for the recording and to offer the CD to our members.