



Premier CD Release



SOMM-BEECHAM 25

MONO ADD

The Beecham Collection

FRANZ LISZT (1811 - 1886)
A FAUST SYMPHONY

Beecham Choral Society
Alexander Young, Tenor
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Conductor, Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart., C.H.



1	1. Faust	26:20	3	3. Mephistopheles	17:11
2	2. Gretchen	19:38	4	4. Chorus mysticus (TTB) *	6:54

Total duration 70:06

* Chorus mysticus (from Goethe's *Faust*)

Alles Vergängliche Ist nu rein Gleichnis: das Unzulängliche, hier wird's Ereignis: das Unbeschreibliche, hier ist es getan; das Ewigweibliche zieht uns hinan.	Everything that passes is only a reflection; what is incomplete here comes to pass; what no-one could describe, is here brought into existence; the Eternal Feminine raises us aloft.
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Live recording: Royal Festival Hall, 14th November 1956

Released in collaboration with the Sir Thomas Beecham Trust in support of the Scholarship Fund.

Executive Producer and Transfers: Arthur Ridgwell
Digital re-mastering: Gary Moore

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BEECHAM AND LISZT

The music of Franz [Ferenc] Liszt (1811-1886) featured selectively in the programmes of Sir Thomas Beecham, with a handful of works appearing in the first thirty years of his long conducting life, while the *Faust Symphony* had to wait until 1956, nearly five years before his death, to attract his attention.

Of the earlier selection, it was Liszt's setting of Heine's *Die Loreley* in his third version, now with orchestral accompaniment, that the young Beecham conducted in only his third concert, which took place in his home town of St. Helens on 18th December 1899 with the St. Helens Choral and Orchestral Society. The ever popular orchestral version of the *Hungarian Rhapsody No.2* appeared in his programmes from 1908 with eighteen performances in 1926-7 before a final outing (with the Hallé Orchestra for its Pension Fund) in March 1939. Sir Thomas's attention to Liszt's more substantial orchestral works came in November 1911 when he played the first of seventeen concert performances of the *Symphonic Poem: Orpheus* of 1853-4, the seventh of Liszt's thirteen symphonic poems, a work which he also recorded twice with his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (1947 and 1958). Of Liszt's other symphonic poems, *Tasso* appeared in his programmes just eleven times between 1912 and 1947, *Hunnenschlacht* just twice in 1915, with the more popular *Les Preludes* finding favour on twenty-five occasions especially in 1925 and again in 1942.

Both *Piano Concerto No.1 in Eb* and *Piano Concerto No.2 in A* appeared in Beecham programmes, the first on nine occasions between 1912 and 1951, with soloists ranging from Irene Scharrer to Claudio Arrau, while the second had just five airings between 1914 and 1948. Sir Thomas scheduled the *Hungarian Fantasia* in just three programmes (1913, 1914 and 1931), the last two occasions having Moritz Rosenthal and Mark Hambourg respectively as soloists. One other Liszt work attracted Beecham before turning his attention to the *Faust Symphony* – the setting of *Psalm XIII* in its second version of 1859-63 for tenor, chorus and orchestra. This work he first performed with the Hallé Chorus and Orchestra and the tenor Frank Mullings in November 1915, visiting it again in 1928, with two further performances in 1947 and three in 1951-2 before lavishing great care on the work in recording it with his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Beecham Choral Society and the tenor Walter Mingly at the end of 1955.

Once Sir Thomas Beecham was attracted to a particular work of a composer, he lavished great care and attention on that work, demonstrating his total belief in it and often finding new beauty, drama and excitement while also throwing light into previously obscured corners of a piece. Of the few Liszt

works which were to attract him, the recordings of both *Orpheus* and *Psalm XIII* demonstrate this well. The same may be said for *Eine Faust-Symphonie* based on three character studies in Goethe, first written by Liszt for orchestra in 1854, with a choral finale added in 1857. Sir Thomas first took the work in to the Royal Festival Hall for a Royal Philharmonic Society concert on 14th November 1956, with the tenor Alexander Young, the Beecham Choral Society and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. A week later he took the same soloist and choir to the BBC Studio No.1 at Maida Vale and broadcast the work, this time with the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 21st and 22nd December. Convinced by the work, he made clear his intentions to EMI that he wished to record it and this was arranged for 1958 when, in the April and May he held three rehearse-record sessions, with the same forces as for the Royal Philharmonic Society concert, at Kingsway Hall with the final session there on 31st October after, in the intervening period, he had recorded Bizet's *Carmen* in Paris and returned from conducting a season of opera at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires (Beethoven: *Fidelio*, Bizet: *Carmen*, Mozart: *The Magic Flute*, Saint-Saëns: *Samson and Delilah* and Verdi: *Otello*) plus a number of other public concerts and recording sessions in Paris and London – all at the age of seventy-nine! It is the Royal Philharmonic Society concert of 14th November 1956, (which also included the Mendelssohn: *Overture: A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Beethoven: *Symphony No.2 in D*) which is preserved here.

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