

## Beethoven - Christ on the Mount of Olives (Scherchen) [1962]

Written by bluesever

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Side 1 1 Introduction 2 Recitative and Aria (Jesus) 3 Recitative and Aria (seraph and Chorus) 4 Recitative (Seraph and Jesus) side 2 1 Duet (Seraph and Jesus) 2 Recitative (Jesus and Chorus) 3 Recitative (Jesus and chorus) 4 Recitative (Jesus and Peter) 5 Trio (Jesus, seraph and Peter) 6 Final Chorus

Jan Peerce - Jesus Maria Stader - Seraph Otto Wiener - Peter Vienna Academy Chorus and State Opera Orchestra Hermann Scherchen – conductor. (1962)

Beethoven's "Christ on a Mount of Olives" is an unusual composition for this composer. A dramatic, contemplative work, it does not, at face value, soar to the heights of excitement and inspiration of his symphonies, concertos or chamber music of the period. However, when removed from comparison to these works in question, Christ on the Mount of Olives tells the story of a moving moment in Christ's life as he was to journey from man to God in the final days of his mortal existence on earth.

I find it quite interesting that Scherchen provides a most satisfying recording of this complicated work as he presents it on its own terms. Though Scherchen was a socialist and believer in man's ability to shape the world in his image, it is quite amazing that he can relate and communicate these moments of reflection and change in Christ's life so vividly. A comparison to mind, well, in a different way, is Leonard's Bernstein's superior way with Haydn's masses, Catholic works, though Bernstein himself was a Jew. Fascinating, at least from where I sit. I'm sure that someone has written an analysis on the subject.

Scherchen has long been controversial in Beethoven, though I personally love his fresh approach, albeit with the characteristic orchestral sloppiness that he would gloss over because that was secondary to him. Scherchen has to be listened to on his own terms and accepted for what he is: a genius who had an exceptionally broad range of tastes, who believed that

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humanity held the key to its own survival. I suppose this is the underlying reason why his "Christ" works so well?

There are only 2 tracks for this performance, "sides 1 and 2" due to the very small breaks between scenes. --- Fred, Boston, MA, United States

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