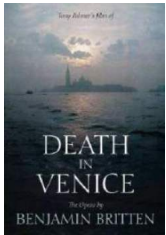


Britten

1. Death in Venice (Mp4)



520 MB

Robert Gard (Aschenbach), John Shirley-Quirk (baritone roles), James Bowman (Apollo)
English Chamber Orchestra Steuart Bedford - conductor

Tony Palmer's film of Benjamin Britten's opera *Death in Venice*, shot on location, is released on DVD for the first time on the director's own label. Based on Thomas Mann's masterly novella - also the source for Visconti's famous movie - it follows the last days of a writer, disillusioned, in despair and nearing death, in disease-ridden Venice. The cast includes Robert Gard as Gustav von Aschenbach, John Shirley-Quirk as The Traveller, James Bowman as The Voice of Apollo, Vincent Redman as Tazio, the object of Aschenbach's infatuation, and Deanne Bergsma as Tazio's Mother. Steuart Bedford conducts the English Chamber Orchestra, and Peter Pears makes a special appearance.

Death in Venice was to be Britten's last full-length opera, first performed at Snape Concert Hall on 16 June, 1973. The composer was already ill with heart problems, and completing the work at all had clearly been a struggle. But he was determined to write an opera and a leading part specifically for his long-time lover and inspiration, Peter Pears. And it was Pears who gave the triumphant American première in October the following year at his own debut in the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. It was soon after Britten had died, in December 1976, that Pears first

Britten (1)

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asked Tony Palmer to film the entire opera with all the original cast, if possible on location in Venice. After all, apart from Suffolk, Venice was the place which meant most to Britten. Despite a miniscule budget (less than £100,000), Palmer eventually managed to fulfil Pears' ambition in 1980 - but without the tenor himself as Aschenbach. By then, a couple of strokes had effectively ended his singing career, but the Australian tenor Robert Gard frequently looks (and sounds) almost more like Pears than Pears himself. ---prestoclassical.co.uk

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