

2023–2024

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Wednesday, May 1, at 8:00

Simon Rattle Conductor

Mahler Symphony No. 6 in A minor
I. Allegro energico, ma non troppo
II. Andante moderato
III. Scherzo: Wuchtig
IV. Finale: Allegro moderato

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 20 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra gratefully thanks **Lyon & Healy** for supporting its concerts.

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MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
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Photos: Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Photo by Landon Nordeman; violinist Davyd Booth at Tattooed Mom. Photo by Jessica Griffin; Principal Tuba Carol Jantsch at Philadelphia's Magic Gardens. Photo by Neal Santos; Principal Bass Joseph Conyers at Cherry Street Pier. Photo by Kriston Jae Bethel; Principal Harp Elizabeth Hainen on Broad Street. Photo by Neal Santos.

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Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

With the 2023–24 season the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO) welcomes its new principal conductor, Simon Rattle. Mr. Rattle is the sixth chief conductor in a line of important orchestra leaders—Eugen Jochum, Rafael Kubelik, Colin Davis, Lorin Maazel, and Mariss Jansons—and brings to the position a conductor personality of great openness to new artistic paths.

The BRSO, which celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, developed into an internationally renowned orchestra soon after its founding in 1949. In addition to the interpretation of the Classical-Romantic repertoire, the orchestra's central concern from the beginning was to cultivate contemporary music within the framework of the *musica viva* series, founded by Karl Amadeus Hartmann in 1945. Since its beginnings, the orchestra has welcomed many renowned guest conductors who have left their mark, including Erich and Carlos Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti, Carlo Maria Giulini, Kurt Sanderling, and Wolfgang Sawallisch. Today, Yannick

Nézet-Séguin, Riccardo Muti, Herbert Blomstedt, Franz Welser-Möst, Daniel Harding, and Iván Fischer are important partners.

The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra tours regularly throughout Europe, Asia, and North and South America. Japanese music critics voted the BRSO's concerts under the direction of Zubin Mehta the No. 1 best concerts in 2018. The ensemble's numerous CD recordings have repeatedly won national and international awards, including a GRAMMY Award in 2006. Most recently, in 2023, their recording of Mahler's Ninth Symphony under the baton of Mr. Rattle was awarded the Diapason d'Or. In an orchestra ranking by internationally renowned music critics for Bachtrack, the world's leading website for classical music events, the BRSO took third place on a list of the world's greatest orchestras.

Chief Conductor

Oliver Helbig



Since the start of the 2023–24 season, **Simon Rattle** has been the new chief conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO). Convincing charisma, a love for experimentation, commitment to contemporary music, great social and pedagogical engagement, and unreserved artistic seriousness—all this makes the Liverpool native one of the most fascinating conducting personalities of our time.

Mr. Rattle gained an international reputation during his time with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1980–98), which he led to world fame. He was the chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic from 2002 to 2018 and music director of the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) from 2017 to 2023. As conductor emeritus, the 68-year-old Briton with a German passport will remain associated with the LSO. He also works closely with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, where he is principal artist. He regularly tours throughout Europe and Asia and maintains long-standing relationships with leading orchestras worldwide, including the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Staatskapelle, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Czech Philharmonic. He is a sought-after guest at major opera houses, including the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in London; the Berlin and Vienna state operas; the Metropolitan Opera; and the Aix-en-Provence Festival, where he most recently appeared with the LSO in a new production of Berg's *Wozzeck*. During his time as principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, he made regular guest appearances at the Salzburg Easter Festival, in Baden-Baden, and in Aix-en-Provence.

Mr. Rattle was highly committed to the Berlin Philharmonic's education program Zukunft@BPhil, for which he has also received several awards. In London he founded the LSO East London Academy in 2019, a collaboration between the LSO and 10 districts in the east of the city to promote exceptional musical talents regardless of social background. His 70 recordings have received the highest honors and awards. Recordings with the BRSO include Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, and *Siegfried*; Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* and Ninth Symphony; and a musica viva CD with works by Ondřej Adámek. The Ninth Symphony was awarded a Diapason d'Or, a Supersonic Pizzicato, and a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice. A live recording from September 2023 of Mahler's Symphony No. 6 was released in March 2024.

Mr. Rattle was awarded a knighthood by Queen Elizabeth II in 1994 and received the Order of Merit in 2014. He received the Order of Merit in Berlin in 2018, and in 2019 was given the Freedom of the City of London.

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

First Violins

Radoslaw Szulc*
Anton Barakhovsky*
Tobias Steymans*
Thomas Reif*
Savitri Grier
Julita Smoleń
Peter Riehm
Corinna Clauser-Falk
Franz Scheuerer
Michael Friedrich
Andrea Karpinski
Daniel Nodel
Marije Grevink
Nicola Birkhan
Karin Löffler-Hunziker
Anne Schoenholtz
Daniela Jung
Andrea Eun-Jeong Kim
Stefano Farulli
N.N.

Second Violins

Korbinian Altenberger*
Jehye Lee*
N.N.*
Yi Li
Angela Koeppen
Leopold Lercher
Key-Thomas Märkl
Bettina Bernklau
Valérie Gillard
Stephan Hoever
David van Dijk
Susanna Baumgartner
Celina Bäumer
Amelie Böckheler-
Kharadze
Alexander Kisch
Lorenz Chen

Violas

Hermann Menninghaus*
Emiko Yuasa*
N.N.*
Benedict Hames
Anja Kreynacke
Mathias Schessl
Inka Ameln-Schilling
Klaus-Peter Werani
Christiane Hörr-Kalmer
Véronique Bastian
Giovanni Menna

Alice Marie Weber
N.N.
N.N.

Cellos

Sebastian Klinger*
N.N.*
N.N.*
Hanno Simons
Eva-Christiane Laßmann
Jan Mischlich
Uta Zenke-Vogelmann
Jaka Stadler
Frederike Jehkul-Sadler
Samuel Lutzker
Katharina Jäckle
N.N.

Basses

Philipp Stubenrauch*
Wies de Boevé*
José Sebastiao Trigo
N.N.
Frank Reinecke
Piotr Stefaniak
Teja Andresen
Lukas Richter
David Santos Luque

Flutes

Henrik Wiese*
N.N.*
Petra Schiessel
Natalie Schwaabe
Ivanna Ternay

Oboes

Stefan Schilli*
Ramón Ortega Quero*
Tobias Vogelmann
Emma Schied
Melanie Rothman

Clarinets

Stefan Schilling*
Christopher Patrick
Corbett*
Bettina Faiss
Werner Mittelbach
Heinrich Treydte

Bassoons

Marco Postinghel*
N.N.*
Susanne Sonntag
Francisco Esteban Rubio
Jesús Villa Ordóñez

Horns

Carsten Carey Duffin*
N.N.*
Ursula Kepser
Thomas Ruh
Ralf Springmann
Norbert Dausacker
François Bastian

Trumpets

Martin Angerer*
Johannes Moritz*
Wolfgang Läubin
Thomas Kiechle
Herbert Zimmermann

Trombones

Felix Eckert*
N.N.*
Uwe Schrodi
Thomas Horch
Lukas Gassner
Csaba Wagner

Tuba

Stefan Tischler*

Timpani

Raymond Curfs*
N.N.

Percussion

Guido Marggrander
Christian Pilz
Jürgen Leitner

Harp

Magdalena Hoffmann*

Keyboards

Lukas Maria Kuen*

* Concertmasters,
Principals, Soloists

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1904

Mahler
Symphony
No. 6

Music

Puccini
*Madame
Butterfly*

Literature

Chekhov
*The Cherry
Orchard*

Art

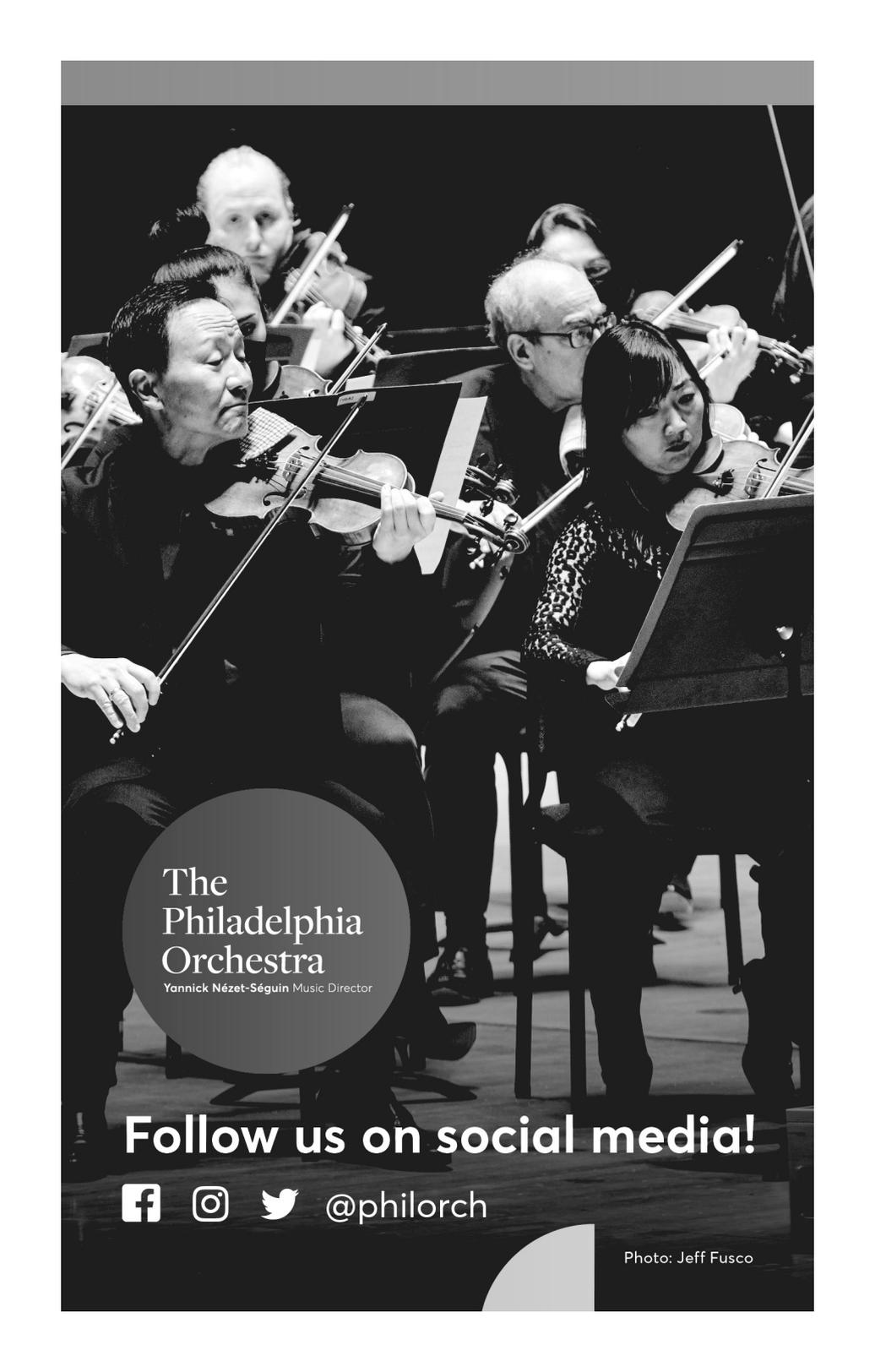
Rousseau
The Wedding

History

Work begins
on the Panama
Canal

Gustav Mahler conducted his Sixth Symphony just three times and on the final occasion, in 1907 in Vienna, it carried the title "Tragic." Composed during one of the happiest periods of his life—recently married, newly a father, and at the height of his professional career—the massive Symphony seems fatefully to anticipate tragic traumas that would unfold in his life not long afterward.

At least that is what his widow later explained. Alma Schindler Mahler, herself a composer, recounted elaborate stories about autobiographical elements in the Sixth Symphony, which culminates with "blows of fate" sounded by a hammer in the final movement. The meanings this Symphony may have held for Mahler can never be determined, but its passion, integrity, and innovations remain extraordinarily powerful for performers and audiences alike more than a century after its composition.



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Photo: Jeff Fusco

The Music

Symphony No. 6

Gustav Mahler

Born in Kalischt (Kaliště), Bohemia, July 7, 1860

Died in Vienna, May 18, 1911



The Sixth Symphony is widely viewed as one of Gustav Mahler's most personal and darkest creations. There is, admittedly, a good deal of competition in this regard among his compositions and what we know (or think we know) about his music is often based on accounts by others rather than on what Mahler said himself or indicated in sketches and manuscripts. He wrote this Symphony during the summers of 1903 and 1904, by which time he had decisively moved away from explicit

extra-musical programs that would guide audiences. In his first four symphonies Mahler had called upon material from his own earlier songs or had actually incorporated songs and choruses within them. Between 1901 and 1905, however, he produced a trilogy of purely instrumental works that mark his ostensible retreat from programs explicit and vocal components.

Summer Composition Pressing administrative and performance duties forced Mahler to do most of his composing during summers. In June 1901 he moved to a new house on the Wörthersee—the idyllic mountain resort where Brahms had loved to vacation—and started work on his Fifth Symphony. It had been a harrowing winter, marked by a near fatal medical emergency in February and by his resignation as principal conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic soon thereafter. (He remained as director of the Court Opera, arguably the most powerful musical position in Europe.)

Mahler composed some of his Fifth Symphony that summer, as well as magnificent songs, and upon his return to Vienna for the new season, he met, and four months later married, the beautiful Alma Schindler, also a composer, who at 22 was nearly half his age. By the time he could finish the work the following summer they were expecting their first child, Maria. The Sixth Symphony followed over the course of the next two summers, written amid the same inspiring natural surroundings and as the couple saw the birth in June 1904 of their second child, Anna. In what would later seem to Alma to be tempting fate, Mahler completed his haunting *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs of Dead Children) that summer as well. He continued working on the orchestration of the Sixth Symphony during the winter and dated the manuscript May 1, 1905.

The apparent change in Mahler's compositional strategies in his middle symphonies therefore coincided with crucial developments in his personal life. At age 41 he was starting his own family—another kind of bid for immortality, as the psychoanalyst Stuart Feder observed. The range of emotions in the Fifth Symphony, beginning with the opening funeral march, to the "love song" of the famous Adagietto, to the blazing triumph of the last movement, may give some indication of his hopes. The Sixth charts a decidedly different course.

First Hearings of a "Tragic" Symphony Mahler premiered the Sixth Symphony in May 1906 at the Essen Festival of Contemporary Music. The critical response there and in Berlin (where Oskar Fried conducted it in October) was largely negative, as it was when Mahler presented it in Munich in November 1906, notwithstanding enthusiasm from many audience members. Mahler remarked, "I gave up reading the reviews after one critic. ... These little people are always the same. Now all at once they like my first five symphonies. The Sixth must just wait until my Seventh appears."

Mahler revised the Sixth several times, beginning after preliminary reading rehearsals in April with the Vienna Philharmonic before the Essen premiere. The changes—principally a lightening of the orchestration at various points, the alteration of tempo indications, and the elimination of the third hammer blow in the final movement—were incorporated into the second edition of the published score.

Mahler performed his Sixth just three times. The printed program for the last performance in Vienna carried the title "Tragic." (It was not so titled in the manuscript, at the premiere, or in the published editions released during his lifetime.) Title or not, colleagues and critics alike remarked on its mood. "It reeks of the bitter cup of human life," wrote the conductor Bruno Walter, a close colleague of Mahler's. "In contrast with the Fifth, the Sixth says 'No,' above all in its last movement, where something resembling the inexorable strife of 'all against all' is translated into music. 'Existence is a burden; death is desirable and life hateful' might be its motto."

What Alma Tells Us Much of what we know (or think we know) about the Sixth Symphony comes from Mahler's long-lived widow. (Mahler died in 1911, Alma in 1964.) While Mahler had sought to suppress explanations as to its meanings, her stories helped to construct a "program." She relates in her memoirs: "Not one of his works came so directly from his heart as this one. We both wept that day [when he finished writing it]. The music and what it foretold touched us so deeply. The Sixth is the most completely personal of his works and a prophetic one also. ... In the Sixth he anticipated his own life in music."

Many commentators have mused about how Mahler's music anticipates the future. What is usually meant is the future of music, the path, for example, pursued by such ardent young admirers as Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg,

and Anton von Webern. Leonard Bernstein went further when he argued that Mahler foresaw the future in broader cultural and historical ways, foretelling the cataclysms of the 20th century. Alma was the one who cast the Sixth as specifically prophetic of Mahler's own life, turning it into a "fate symphony" in the tradition of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and others. There is even a musical fate motto (a major triad changing one note to shift to minor) combined with a distinctive fate rhythm. But unlike the heroic affirmations with which earlier fate symphonies conclude, Mahler's Sixth ends in defeat. The final movement, according to Alma, traces the hero's decline with three mighty hammer blows: "In the last movement he described himself and his downfall or, as he later said, that of his hero—it is the hero on whom fall three blows of fate, the last of which fells him as a tree is felled."

Mahler had hoped to keep ideas about the Symphony abstract. The published score offers a telling comment in this regard with respect to the marvelous effect of using cowbells in three of the four movements. He indicates that they "must be treated very discreetly—in realistic imitation of the higher and lower bells of a grazing herd, sounding from afar, sometimes combined, sometimes singly," and then tellingly adds: "It must be expressly stated that this technical remark allows no programmatic interpretation."

There are reasons, moreover, for some skepticism concerning Alma's interpretation of the Symphony. For one thing, Mahler apparently originally planned five hammer blows in the last movement, then reduced them to three, which he ultimately cut back to two. Moreover, there is often little or no connection between the kind of music that a composer writes and the external circumstances in his or her life at the time. Cheerful music is written in sad times, as well as the reverse, which would seem to be the case in this instance with Mahler. He composed the Sixth at the height of his professional fame and personal happiness. Newly married, Alma was pregnant when he began the Symphony and his second daughter had been born by the time it was finished. It was only a few years later that this joyous world was indeed shattered by devastating professional and personal blows: leaving the Vienna Court Opera in 1907, Maria's death at age four that summer, and the diagnosis of a dangerous heart condition. As biographer Henry-Louis de La Grange has noted, Alma fails to mention a fourth blow: her love affair with the young architect Walter Gropius, which Mahler learned of and consulted Sigmund Freud about.

Much as we may wish to resist (or at least question) the idea of Mahler as musical prophet, there is a good bit of accuracy to a remark he made himself in a letter to the critic Richard Specht: "My Sixth will pose puzzles which can only be broached by a generation which has imbibed and digested my first five." The Symphony indeed took quite some time to appeal to audiences. The American premiere, with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, only came in 1947. In recent years, however, it has emerged as one of the composer's most admired

and frequently performed pieces.

A Closer Look The Sixth is one of Mahler's most Classical compositions. As published, it is his only symphony arranged in the "normal" four-movement order, and it is clearly centered in the key of A minor. There are also cyclical elements—musical ideas that appear in different movements and that unify the whole—as Beethoven had done most overtly in his Fifth and Ninth symphonies. Except for the opening movement of the First Symphony, the Sixth is the only one in which Mahler indicates that the exposition should be repeated (about the first four minutes of the work).

The opening movement (**Allegro energico, ma non troppo**) is built from various ideas, beginning, as do many of Mahler's symphonies, with a march. The fate motto—a loud A-major triad that dies away to a soft A-minor one—is sounded by the trumpets at the same time as the fundamental fate rhythm is pounded out by the timpani. After a chorale-like bridge (but one that does not modulate—it has been called a "negative" chorale), there is a passionate theme marked *schwungvoll* (with vigor). According to Alma, this was intended as her theme: "After [Mahler] had drafted the first movement, he came down from the woods to tell me he had tried to express me in a theme. 'Whether I've succeeded, I don't know; but you'll have to put up with it.' This is the great soaring theme of the first movement." Cowbells, which will return in later movements, evoke an eerie dream world of distance and memory. The movement ends with a passionate affirmation of the "Alma" theme.

For nearly a century there has been debate concerning the order of the middle two movements, about which Mahler changed his mind, perhaps several times. We hear it tonight as he performed it—the *Andante* followed by the *Scherzo*, which reverses the order he originally wrote in the manuscript. After finishing the Symphony and having it published, but before the first performance, Mahler decided to flip the order and that was how it was presented the three times he conducted the work during his lifetime and how the revised version of the score, as well as a four-hand piano arrangement by Alexander Zemlinsky, was published in 1906. Alma later told the conductor Willem Mengelberg after Mahler's death that he had changed his mind again, and that the original order should be reinstated, which is how the piece has usually been performed. There are musical and interpretative arguments to be made for both orderings, which is probably why Mahler was conflicted about the matter.

Arnold Schoenberg praised the "curious structure" of the beautiful melody that opens the **Andante moderato**. The movement does not allude to the common thematic material found in the other ones and therefore stands more on its own. The *Scherzo* (**Wuchtig**) is one of Mahler's darker dances, a distorted *Ländler*. The trio section, with frequent meter changes, is marked *altväterisch* (grandfatherly or old-fashioned). What Alma tells us about this movement, once again, does not

quite align with the facts. Here, she writes, Mahler “represented the unrhythmic games of the two little children, tottering in zigzags over the sand. Ominously, the childish voices became more and more tragic, and at the end died out in a whimper.” The summer he wrote the music, however, only Maria was born.

The finale (**Allegro moderato**) is the longest movement and one of Mahler’s most complex. It opens with a fantastic Expressionist outburst, the fate rhythm, and a series of fragmentary themes that take some time to coalesce. When Mahler revised the Symphony, he pared down some of the rich orchestration and, as mentioned, eliminated the third hammer blow. (Mahler was specific about how he wanted them to sound: “short, mighty, but dull in resonance, with a non-metallic character, like the stroke of an ax.”)

Bruno Walter saw the movement as “the mounting tensions and climaxes [that] resemble, in their grim power, the mountainous waves of a sea that will overwhelm and destroy the ship. ... The work ends in hopelessness and the dark night of the soul. *Non placet* is his verdict on this world; the ‘other world’ is not glimpsed for a moment.” Indeed, the fate motifs—the major/minor triad and rhythm—reappear for the terrifying conclusion of this tragic Symphony.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Mahler composed his Symphony No. 6 from 1903 to 1905.

The work is scored for piccolo, four flutes (third and fourth doubling piccolo), four oboes (third and fourth doubling English horn), English horn, four clarinets (fourth doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, four bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cowbells, cymbals, glockenspiel, hammer, low-pitched bells, rute, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle, xylophone), two harps, celesta, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 80 minutes.



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Photos: Jeff Fusco, Bowie Verschuuren



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Musical Terms

Cadence: The conclusion to a phrase, movement, or piece based on a recognizable melodic formula, harmonic progression, or dissonance resolution

Chorale: A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Chromatic: Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

Exposition: See sonata form

Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Ländler: An Austrian folk dance in triple time

Legato: Smooth, even, without any break between notes

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Minuet: A dance in triple time commonly used up to the beginning of the 19th century as the lightest movement of a symphony

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section

called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

Sonata form: The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development, and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda.

The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated with modifications.

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

Triad: A three-tone chord composed of a given tone (the "root") with its third and fifth in ascending order in the scale

Trio: A division set between the first section of a minuet or scherzo and its repetition, and contrasting with it by a more tranquil movement and style

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagietto: A tempo somewhat faster than adagio

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Energico: With vigor, powerfully

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Wuchtig: Ponderous, slow, emphatic

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Ma non troppo: But not too much

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Music and Artistic Director

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