

2023–2024 | 124th Season

# The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, April 11, at 7:30

Saturday, April 13, at 8:00

Sunday, April 14, at 2:00

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Conductor

**Karen Cargill** Mezzo-Soprano

**Schindler-Mahler/orch. Colin and David Matthews** Select Songs

1. Die stille Stadt

2. In meines Vaters Garten

3. Laue Sommernacht

4. Bei dir ist es traut

*First Philadelphia Orchestra performances*

## Intermission

**Mahler** Symphony No. 7 in E minor

I. Langsam (Adagio)—Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo

II. Nachtmusik: Allegro moderato

III. Scherzo: Schattenhaft

IV. Nachtmusik: Andante amoroso

V. Rondo-Finale. Tempo I (Allegro ordinario)—Tempo II  
(Allegro moderato ma energico)

This program runs approximately 2 hours, 5 minutes.

These concerts are sponsored by **Neal Krouse**.

The April 13 concert celebrates our 58-year partnership with the **Saratoga Performing Arts Center**.

The April 13 concert is dedicated with gratitude to **David Devan** on the upcoming conclusion of his transformative tenure as general director and president of Opera Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit [www.wrti.org](http://www.wrti.org) to listen live or for more details.

Celebrating our partnership with

## The Saratoga Performing Arts Center

The Philadelphia Orchestra is a proud longtime partner of the annual summer music festival at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in New York.

We are thankful to SPAC President and CEO Elizabeth Sobol and the SPAC Board of Directors, and are pleased to welcome them and their special guests to **Saratoga Day at The Philadelphia Orchestra on April 13, 2024.**

Join Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, guest conductors, and the Orchestra this summer for our SPAC residency from **July 31–August 17**, featuring soloists John Legend, Yo-Yo Ma, Angélique Kidjo, and more!



Photo: Francesco D'Amico

The  
Philadelphia  
Orchestra  
Yannick Nézet-Séguin  
Music and Artistic Director

For full program details, please visit [spac.org](https://spac.org).



## The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, in Verizon Hall and around the community, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; School

Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; All City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad. The Orchestra's free online video series, Our City, Your Orchestra (OCYO), uncovers and amplifies the voices, stories, and causes championed by unique Philadelphia organizations and businesses. Joining OCYO in connecting with the community is HearTOGETHER, a free monthly podcast featuring artists and activists who discuss music, social justice, and the lived experiences that inform the drive to create a more equitable and inclusive future for the arts.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 13 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Music and Artistic Director

London Nordeman



**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is currently in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty "Philadelphia Sound" in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers and by performing the music of under-appreciated composers of the past. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 13 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit [philorch.org/conductor](http://philorch.org/conductor).

# Soloist

Nadine Boyd



Scottish mezzo-soprano **Karen Cargill** made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2013. Winner of the 2002 Kathleen Ferrier Award, she was nominated for a GRAMMY Award for Best Operatic Recording for Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with the Metropolitan Opera. In 2018 she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Her operatic roles include Geneviève in Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande*, Judith in Bartók's

*Bluebeard's Castle*, Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Dryade in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Anna in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*. Famed for her interpretation of Wagner, she regularly sings Erda in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, Fricka in *Das Rheingold*, Brangäne in *Tristan and Isolde*, Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*, and Magdalena in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Last season she made her role debut as Zia Principessa in Puccini's *Il trittico* for Scottish Opera directed by David McVicar and returned to Glyndebourne as Mother Marie in a new Barrie Kosky production of *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Ms. Cargill enjoys longstanding relationships with several conductors. In addition to these current performances, her collaborations with Yannick Nézet-Séguin this season include her return to the Metropolitan Opera for Verdi's Requiem, Lili Boulanger's Psalm 130 with Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain, and Fricka in Wagner's *Die Walküre* in a concert tour with the Rotterdam Philharmonic. With Robin Ticciati and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin she appears in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. She also sings Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Chicago Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Opera engagements this season include a return to Glyndebourne as Brangäne and Judith in concert performances of *Bluebeard's Castle* with the Boston Symphony. Future engagements include her return to the Metropolitan Opera and her house debut with the Berlin State Opera.

With her recital partner, pianist Simon Lepper, Ms. Cargill has performed at Wigmore Hall in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. She regularly gives recitals for BBC Radio 3. She and Mr. Lepper also recently recorded a critically acclaimed recital of lieder by Alma and Gustav Mahler for Linn Records, for which she previously recorded Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été* and *La Mort de Cléopâtre* with Mr. Ticciati and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. She is patron of the National Girls' Choir of Scotland and sang in the National Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication for King Charles III following his coronation.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1900**  
**Schindler-**  
**Mahler**  
Select Songs

**Music**  
Rachmaninoff  
Piano Concerto  
No. 2

**Literature**  
Chekov  
*Uncle Vanya*

**Art**  
Sargent  
*The Sitwell*  
*Family*

**History**  
Boxer Rebellion  
in China

**1904**  
**Mahler**  
Symphony  
No. 7

**Music**  
Puccini  
*Madame*  
*Butterfly*

**Literature**  
James  
*The Golden*  
*Bowl*

**Art**  
Matisse  
*Luxe, calme, et*  
*volupté*

**History**  
Work begins  
on Panama  
Canal

The concert today presents works by Alma and Gustav Mahler, who had a legendary and tumultuous marriage.

Alma Schindler, her name when she wrote the songs that open the program, composed most of her pieces as a teenager, before she married Mahler when she was 22. He demanded that she give up composing to concentrate on the marriage and his career. We hear the first four of her *Fünf Lieder* in orchestrations by Colin and David Matthews.

Mahler began composing his Seventh Symphony during the unusually productive summer of 1904, just after completing his Sixth. He started with the evocative "Night Music" movements, eventually the second and fourth of the five-movement piece, but found himself creatively blocked when he tried to pick up the thread the following summer. Inspired by the sound of the oars of a boat, he eventually found a solution that allowed him to write the remaining three movements.

The Seventh, the last of Mahler's trilogy of purely instrumental middle-period symphonies, has long been considered one of his most poetic, but also elusive, compositions. Unlike the overt programs and scattered clues that he provided for most of his earlier symphonies, Mahler said little about this fascinating piece, leaving a wide range of interpretations open to performers and audiences alike.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

# The Music

## Select Songs (orchestrated by Colin and David Matthews)

**Alma Schindler-Mahler**

**Born in Vienna, August 31, 1879**

**Died in New York City, December 11, 1964**



Alma Schindler—the composer's name when she wrote the songs we hear today—was notorious in Vienna as a teenager and became ever more so after marriages to Gustav Mahler, the architect Walter Gropius, and the writer Franz Werfel. She documented her long life in diaries, letters, and two memoirs. Her story has proved irresistible, which is why she and so many others have told it, including biographers, novelists, playwrights, and filmmakers (and even inspiring operatic treatments).

She reveled in the challenge: "No one will ever succeed in completely describing me, not even I myself succeeded. I am full of enigmas that can't be solved."

Biographies run the gamut from condemning to supportive with titles including *Passionate Spirit*, *Muse to Genius*, *The Art of Being Loved*, *The Malevolent Muse*, and *Bride of the Wind*, the last also the title of a painting of her with, and by, another lover, Oskar Kokoschka. For many her life is comically encapsulated in a song the humorist Tom Lehrer wrote upon her death in 1964, including the lines "Alma, tell us! All modern women are jealous, Which of your magical wands, Got you Gustav and Walter and Franz?" But as Schindler's music has become better known, and her story been better told, it is clear that the prevailing image trivializes the life and achievements of an independent woman who deftly negotiated a cultural landscape in fin-de-siècle Vienna inhospitable to creative women.

**A Young Composer** Particularly revealing are the published diaries Schindler kept between the ages of 18 and 22 that convey her intelligence, ambition, frustrations, and passions. Music was at the core of her life; she was an accomplished pianist who started composing as a child, later studying with Josef Labor and Alexander von Zemlinsky. She came from a distinguished artistic Viennese family. Her father, whom she adored, was the landscape painter Emil Schindler. He died when she was 12, and three years later her mother, Anna, a former singer, married one of his pupils, Carl Moll, a founding member of the Secessionist movement.

The family milieu gave access to a wide array of prominent cultural figures, many of whom became infatuated with her and she with them. Her first significant

romantic relationship was at 17 with the painter Gustav Klimt, then considered a subversive Secessionist radical. Other older men appear throughout her teen years, with several proposals of marriage, before she met Mahler when she was 22. The most important relationship was with Zemlinsky, her principal teacher. Although she considered him horribly ugly, her comments frequently exhibiting the vicious strain of anti-Semitism that ran throughout her life, they fell in love. He taught her well and supported her talent.

Schindler attended concerts and operas many nights each week and it was where, from afar, she first encountered Mahler, the director of the Court Opera. She thought him a great conductor, although she wrote "I don't believe in him as a composer." They met in November 1901, started a whirlwind romance, married in March, and had their first child in November. Mahler was 41, nearly two decades older than Schindler, and had recently survived a life-threatening medical crisis. He wanted to settle down and start a family. He also set down his non-negotiable terms.

**A Marriage Demand** On December 19, four days before announcing their engagement to family, Mahler sent a 20-page letter demanding that Schindler give up composing and tend entirely to his needs: "You have only *one* profession from now on: *to make me happy!*" We don't know her exact response as she destroyed her letters to him while doctoring and suppressing some of his, including this crucial one. In a recent article in the leading American musicological journal "[#AlmaToo: The Art of Being Believed](#)," musicologist Nancy Newman examines Mahler's imperious demands. Schindler lamented "how full my life was once, how empty now!" On another occasion she wrote that "he thinks nothing of my art and much of his, while I think nothing of his and much of mine."

Even though Schindler composed the songs we hear today before her marriage, Mahler is relevant to their later history. In 1910 he learned she was having an affair with Gropius and sought help from Sigmund Freud. The couple seem to have worked things out for a while and Mahler began to support her music. He arranged for his publisher to release her *Fünf Lieder* from 1900–01 (of which we hear the first four today in orchestrations by Colin and David Matthews from 1995). They were credited to Alma Maria Schindler-Mahler and the cover matched that of his own Eighth Symphony, which he dedicated to her. (Two more sets appeared after his death, in 1915 and 1924, for a total of 14 published songs; little else survived her emigration during World War II.)

In March 1911, two months before Mahler died, soprano Frances Alda sang "Laue Sommernacht" in New York. Already deathly ill, Mahler, who was the music director of the New York Philharmonic, could not attend the event. Schindler later recalled how eager he was to hear how it went: "He said he had never been in such a state of excitement over any performance of his own works. When I told him it had been encored he said: 'Thank God!' over and over again. He was quite



beside himself with joy." Arnold Schoenberg had heard some of her songs a few months earlier in Vienna and wrote to her: "I liked them very much. You really have a lot of talent. A pity you didn't continue that work. It would certainly have led somewhere." She went on to become an important advocate for new music, supporting Schoenberg and others personally, financially, and through her salons.

**A Closer Look** In her dozens of songs, most now lost, Schindler set classical German poets such as Goethe, Heine, and Novalis as well as contemporary ones. (So far as we know, all were male.) She particularly admired Richard Dehmel, an avant-garde figure now most remembered for writing the poem on which Schoenberg based his landmark *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night). **"Die Stille Stadt"** (The Silent Town) shows Schindler as a passionate Wagnerian—she considered his opera *Tristan and Isolde* "the greatest work of art of all times"—and it is not surprising that she begins with an allusion to the "Tristan chord." Like most of her songs, it is richly chromatic, filled with lush chords, and tends to avoid obvious word painting in favor of capturing the general mood of the text.

The longest song of the set is **"In meines Vaters Garten"** (In My Father's Garden) to a poem by Otto Erich Hartleben that may well resonate with her own happy memories of her father. She wrote it in November 1901, the month she met Mahler. **"Laue Sommernacht"** (Warm Summer Night), to a text by Otto Julius Bierbaum, follows before the peaceful **"Bei dir ist es traut"** (With You I Feel at Ease) to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

*The songs were composed between 1900 and 1901 and were orchestrated in 1995.*

*These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the songs and the first time anything by the composer has been played by the ensemble.*

*The score calls for vocal soloist (medium voice), two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes (II doubling English horn), two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (tam-tam, triangle), harp, and strings.*

*Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.*

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### **"Die stille Stadt"**

(Richard Dehmel)

*Liegt eine Stadt im Tale,  
ein blasser Tag vergeht,  
es wird nicht lang mehr dauern,  
bis weder Mond noch Sterne,  
nur Nacht am Himmel steht.*

*Von allen Bergen drücken  
Nebel auf die Stadt,  
es dringt kein Dach nicht Hof noch Haus,  
kein Laut aus ihrem Rauch heraus,  
kaum Türme noch und Brücken*

### **"The Silent Town"**

A town lies in the valley,  
a pale day fades;  
it will not be long  
before neither moon nor stars  
but only night is in the skies.

From every mountain  
mists descend on the town;  
no roof, no courtyard, no house,  
no sound can penetrate the fog,  
scarcely even towers or bridges

doch als der Wanderer graute,  
da ging ein Lichtlein auf im Grund  
und aus dem Rauch und Nebel  
begann ein Lobgesang  
aus Kindermund.

### **"In meines Vaters Garten"**

(Otto Erich Hartleben)

In meines Vaters Garten—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf—  
in meines Vaters Garten  
stand ein schattender Apfelbaum—  
süßer Traum, süßer Traum!—  
stand ein schattiger Apfelbaum.

Drei blonde Königstöchter—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf—  
drei wunderschöne Mädchen  
schliefen unter dem Apfelbaum—  
süßer Traum, süßer Traum!—  
Schliefen unter dem Apfelbaum.

Die allerjüngste Feine—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf!—  
Die allerjüngste Feine  
blinzelte und erwachte kaum.—  
Süßer Traum—  
blinzelte und erwachte kaum—  
süßer Traum—

Die Zweite fuhr sich über  
das Haar—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf—  
sah den roten Morgensaum.—  
Süßer Traum, süßer Traum!—  
Sie sprach: Hört ihr die Trommel nicht?—  
Blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf!—  
Süßer Traum, süßer Traum—  
hell durch den dämmernden Raum!

Mein Liebster zieht in den Kampf—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf.—  
Mein Liebster zieht in den Kampf hinaus,  
küßt mir als Sieger des Kleides Saum—  
Süßer Traum, süßer Traum—  
küßt mir des Kleides Saum.

Die Dritte sprach und sprach so leis—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf!—  
Die Dritte sprach und sprach so leis:  
Ich küsse dem Liebsten des Kleides  
Saum—  
süßer Traum—  
Ich küsse dem Liebsten des Kleides Saum.

but as the wanderer shuddered,  
a little light appeared below  
and through the fog and mist  
began a song of praise  
from the mouth of a child.

### **"In My Father's Garden"**

In my father's garden—  
blossom, my heart, blossom—  
in my father's garden  
stood a shadowy apple tree—  
sweet dream, sweet dream!—  
stood a shady apple tree.

The King's three blond daughters—  
blossom, my heart, blossom—  
three beautiful girls  
slept under the apple tree—  
sweet dream, sweet dream!—  
Slept under the apple tree.

The youngest beauty—  
blossom, my heart, blossom!—  
The youngest beauty  
blinked and barely awoke.—  
Sweet dream—  
blinked and barely awoke—  
sweet dream—

The second ran her fingers through  
her hair—  
blossom, my heart, blossom—  
saw the red morning fringe.—  
Sweet dream, sweet dream!—  
She said: "Don't you hear the drum?"—  
Blossom, my heart, blossom!—  
Sweet dream, sweet dream—  
clearly through the twilight!

My beloved is going to battle—  
blossom, my heart, blossom.—  
My beloved is going out to battle,  
as victor he kisses the hem of my dress—  
Sweet dream, sweet dream—  
kisses the hem of my dress.

The third spoke and spoke so quietly—  
blossom, my heart, blossom!—  
The third spoke and spoke so quietly:  
I kiss the hem of my beloved's  
garment—  
sweet dream—  
I kiss the hem of my beloved's garment.

*In meines Vaters Garten—  
blühe, mein Herz, blüh' auf—  
in meines Vaters Garten  
steht ein sonniger Apfelbaum—  
süßer Traum, süßer Traum—  
steht ein sonniger Apfelbaum!*

**"Laue Sommernacht"**

(Otto Julius Bierbaum)

*Laue Sommernacht,  
am Himmel stand kein Stern,  
im weiten Walde suchten wir uns  
tief im Dunkel, und wir fanden  
uns.*

*Fanden uns im weiten Walde  
in der Nacht, der sternenlosen,  
hielten staunend uns im Arme  
in der dunklen Nacht.*

*War nicht unser ganzes Leben  
nur ein Tappen, nur ein Suchen,  
da in seine Finsternisse, Liebe,  
fiel dein Licht, fiel dein Licht!*

**"Bei dir ist es traut"**

(Rainer Maria Rilke)

*Bei dir ist es traut,  
zage Uhren schlagen  
wie aus weiten Tagen,  
komm mir ein Liebes sagen,  
aber nur nicht laut!*

*Ein Tor geht irgendwo  
draußen im Blütentreiben,  
der Abend horcht an  
den Scheiben,  
laß uns leise bleiben,  
keiner weiß uns so!*

*In my father's garden—  
blossom, my heart, blossom—  
in my father's garden  
stands a sunny apple tree—  
sweet dream, sweet dream—  
stands a sunny apple tree!*

**"Warm Summer Night"**

*Warm summer night;  
in the sky not a star,  
in the vast forest we sought one another,  
in the deep darkness, and found  
each other.*

*Found each other in the deep forest  
in the night, the starless night,  
we embraced in amazement  
in the dark night.*

*Was not our whole life  
just a stumbling, just a searching,  
there into the darkness, Love,  
fell your light, fell your light!*

**"With You I Feel at Ease"**

*With you I feel at ease,  
clocks strike hesitantly,  
as if from days gone by,  
come, tell your love to me,  
but not too loudly.*

*A gate opens somewhere  
outside in the blossoms;  
the evening listens at  
the windowpanes,  
let us stay quiet,  
so no one knows of us.*

Alma Mahler's settings occasionally deviate from the original texts.

English translations by Darrin T. Britting

# The Music

## Symphony No. 7

**Gustav Mahler**

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

**Died in Vienna, May 18, 1911**



It is inevitable that among the works of the symphonic masters some are ignored or considered problematic. With more than 100, Joseph Haydn, the so-called father of the symphony, occasionally produced routine ones to please an employer. Truth be told, Mozart's first 20 or so symphonies, composed when he was a teenager (and earlier), would scarcely be remembered today had he not written his magnificent mature ones. And even among Beethoven's mighty nine there are

some odd ones out—or, more accurately, even ones: The Second and Fourth turn up most often as part of cycles for the sake of completeness. Schubert apparently viewed all but his last symphony (the "Great" C major) as student efforts and left many unfinished (not just *the* "Unfinished").

Over the course of the 19th century there was a marked decline in the total number of symphonies composers produced, continuing the path from Haydn to Mozart to Beethoven. The glib answer as to which of Brahms's four is the best may be "the last one I heard," but nevertheless the Third, with its subdued ending, is now the least often presented. Bruckner endlessly revised his symphonies, causing performers all sorts of problems. Dvořák thought his First Symphony was lost and published other ones out of order, which led to considerable confusion in their numbering. Then there are the one-hit wonders: Georges Bizet with his teenage Symphony in C major and César Franck with his old-age effort in D minor.

**Separate Symphonies or One World** In this context Mahler proves an interesting case, worth setting against the symphonic tradition that he inherited. On the one hand, each of his symphonies has a special character, unique musical profile, and distinctive trajectory. As he commented while writing the Fourth: "It is so utterly different from my other symphonies. But that *must be*; I could never repeat a state of mind, and as life progresses I follow new paths in each new work." This individuality has elicited an enormous amount of critical commentary, beginning in his own time. On the other hand, one could argue that Mahler ultimately created just one vast symphonic universe and that his symphonies (and songs) are interconnected. The famous remark he allegedly made to Jean Sibelius seems relevant: "A symphony must be like the world, it must embrace everything."

The Seventh has traditionally been viewed as Mahler's "problem" symphony, although not for any of the reasons previously mentioned. It is a mature work, not significantly revised, and not disowned or in any way rejected. Indeed, Mahler wrote in a letter: "It is my best work and predominantly of a cheerful character." Yet it is the least frequently performed of his purely instrumental symphonies. (The Second, Third, and Eighth place far greater practical demands on the performing forces.) The Seventh was the last of Mahler's symphonies to enter the repertory of The Philadelphia Orchestra, coming only in 1978, a delay of more than 70 years. Commentators, including some of Mahler's most sympathetic and passionate advocates, have sometimes been at a loss to explain the work, especially its final movement.

**The Genesis of the Seventh Symphony** We can gain some perspective on the piece by looking at its genesis. Mahler's position as music director of the Vienna Court Opera, arguably the most powerful post in Europe, restricted most of his composing to the summer; that of 1904 proved unusually fruitful. He wrote three of his haunting *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children), completed the Sixth Symphony, and started work on the Seventh, for which he composed two *Nachtmusiken* or Night Music pieces, eventually the second and fourth of the Seventh's five movements.

It appears that Mahler did not have a clear vision of the entire piece when he began writing it in 1904 and was seriously blocked when he tried to resume work the following summer. After a couple of frustrating weeks in which, by his own admission, he "sank into gloom," he decided to take a break to recharge by going hiking in the Dolomite mountains. It was on his return to the house he had built in Maiernigg, on the Wörthersee, that the solution came to him. As he later recounted in a letter to his wife, Alma: "You were not at Krumpendorf to meet me, because I had not let you know the time of my arrival. I got into the boat to be rowed across. At the first stroke of the oars the theme (or rather the rhythm and character) of the introduction to the first movement came into my head—and in four weeks the first, third, and fifth movements were done." By mid-August he could write (in Latin!) to his friend Guido Adler: "My Seventh is finished. I believe it has been well conceived and born under favorable auspices." This still meant that much of the orchestration and revision would continue during the season.

Mahler held off the premiere of the Seventh Symphony for more than three years. For one thing, the Sixth had yet to be unveiled first, which happened in May 1906 at the Essen Festival of Contemporary Music. The official critical response there, as well as in Berlin and Munich later that year, was largely negative. These disappointments only compounded the critical reaction that had greeted the premiere in Cologne of the Fifth Symphony in 1904. Mahler remarked that he had given up "reading the reviews. ... 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."

**Initial Reactions** Mahler premiered the Seventh in Prague in September 1908 during celebrations honoring the 60th year of Emperor Franz Joseph's reign. Although that concert is often portrayed as yet another failure, reviews suggest that the audience's response was in fact extremely positive. Critic Felix Adler reported in a German-language Prague newspaper:

A surprise: yesterday, after the final notes of his Seventh had faded, Gustav Mahler was celebrated with all imaginable signs of sincere, honest, and unfeigned admiration. Frankly, not even his greatest supporters and friends expected this. The history of Mahler premieres has a great abundance of failures and embarrassing errors; each symphony precipitated a "clash" between his advocates and his enemies. Anyone who understands the nature of Mahler's creative works cannot be surprised by this aspect of their reception: it lies in the nature of true novelty to evoke negative first impressions. Philistines are always offended by what they do not understand. ...

Mahler conducted the work four more times over the next 13 months, in Munich, the Hague, and Amsterdam. He considered presenting it in New York, but decided against it, saying, "For an audience that does not yet know anything I have written, the work is too complicated." This remark points to another of the work's challenges: It is a decidedly more Modernist piece than most of his earlier music. The Symphony proved particularly attractive to Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, and other younger Modernists, all of whom revered Mahler.

By the time Mahler composed the Seventh he had decisively moved away from explicit programs, from giving listeners "crutches," as he once dismissively called them, to guide their hearing. He had based his first four symphonies partly on his own earlier songs or had actually incorporated songs and choruses within them, for the most part drawn from the folk poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (From the Youth's Magic Horn). Symphonies Five, Six, and Seven are a trilogy of purely instrumental works that mark his ostensible retreat from overt programs. During this time as well, he stopped using the folk *Wunderhorn* poetry and began writing songs based on the more elevated poetry of Friedrich Rückert. Even though songs are no longer boldly sung or plainly quoted in his middle symphonies, they go "underground," as Mahler scholar Donald Mitchell has put it, and nonetheless leave traces.

**A New Life** The change in Mahler's compositional strategies coincided with crucial developments in his personal life. A medical crisis in early 1901 brought the 40-year-old composer close to death. Soon after he resigned his position with the Vienna Philharmonic, and by the end of the year was engaged to be married and starting his own family—another kind of bid for immortality, as psychoanalyst Stuart Feder has 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 Mahler's hopes. The Sixth Symphony, which briefly carried the title "Tragic," charts a very different course. The Seventh, like the Fifth, seems a journey from darkness to light, but the work is more poetic and eclectic in mood, and has proved more baffling. The Seventh does not have the relatively clear narrative scheme found in earlier Mahler symphonies, let alone in ones by Beethoven, Berlioz, and Tchaikovsky.

Mahler's own rare comments about the Seventh are not very revealing, which leaves us with conflicting reports from Alma, friends, colleagues, and commentators. Alma says he found inspiration from the German Romantic writer Joseph von Eichendorff, whose poems had earlier captivated Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, and others. Conductor Willem Mengelberg states that Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* inspired Mahler, while another colleague says the composer "cited the painting only as a point of comparison."

There are intriguing musical emblems within the Symphony itself. The eminent Mahler biographer Henry-Louis de La Grange comments: "The various symbolic sounds—cowbells (pastoral), deep bells (religious), birdsong, military signals—are puzzling because they appear at random, out of context, and thus apparently devoid of any symbolic meaning. Even the main 'themes' of the work, nature, day, and night, are far more complex and ambiguous than they appear at first sight." These ambiguities posed challenges from the start. Felix Adler's sympathetic review noted: "The value and significance of the Symphony lie in the purely musical. The work does not describe, narrate, or illustrate; nor is it written merely for the sake of combining sonorities. Rather, it harkens back to the original purpose of music—to express moods, feelings, and emotions for which there are no words." Yet exactly these qualities frustrated others in 1908, as it has some listeners since. Critic Richard Batka, writing in another Prague German newspaper, remarked of the premiere:

Mahler unfortunately pays tribute to the principle of hidden programs, so we do not know why the marchlike night music of the second movement is followed by a somber Scherzo-capriccio, which is in turn succeeded by a night music with the character of a serenade. We must guess why or mindlessly accept these facts. Likewise, we do not know why in the second and last movement cow bells suddenly ring, etc. I understand that an artist like Mahler objects to the excessively literal use that the public often makes of detailed programs. But his opposition—avoiding even the briefest of hints that could point to the work's overall sense and coherence—only pushes us from an erroneous understanding into a complete lack of one.

**A Closer Look** The rhythm of the oars on the boat trip that broke Mahler's creative block mark the opening of the work (**Langsam**), against which the tenor horn, an instrument associated more with military bands than symphony

orchestras, intones an angular, disjointed melody. A funereal and spectral mood eventually gives way to a fast tempo (**Allegro risoluto**) and to a more lyrical and yearning theme in the strings. The lengthy movement masterfully alternates between the deathly and the celebratory, traversing other states as well.

The form of the Symphony is symmetrical—two large framing movements enclose the two “Night Music” movements that in turn surround the central Scherzo. Mahler at one point referred to all three of the middle movements as “night music,” one reason the work has been called the “Song of the Night.” The first of these movements (**Nachtmusik: Allegro moderato**) opens with a distinctive horn solo that is answered by a muted horn—their dialogue is interrupted by sounds of nature, such as the trilling of bird calls and later the sound of cowbells. The central **Scherzo**, marked **Schattenhaft** (Shadowy), introduces a more sinister and grotesque element, one into which Mahler mixed the kind of popular gestures that so baffled many of his contemporaries. The second **Nachtmusik (Andante amoroso)** is scored for reduced orchestra. As Mahler was well aware, the idea of “night music” was historically associated with the genre of the serenade and that spirit is brought out in this movement with the distinctive use of the harp and two less common orchestral instruments: mandolin and guitar.

The triumphant C major of the **Rondo-Finale (Allegro ordinario)** harkens back to the victorious finale of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, and even more to Wagner’s lone mature comic opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, to which Mahler seems to allude. (He programmed the Prelude to Wagner’s work together with the Symphony at an Amsterdam concert in 1909 as if to highlight the connection.) Like the first movement, this finale juggles a wide variety of moods, allusions, and musical symbols, including a *grazioso* section and one that seems to evoke Turkish music, as Beethoven had done in his Ninth. Mahler ends the work by bringing back the opening theme of the first movement, together with orchestral bells and a final appearance of the cowbells.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

*Mahler composed his Symphony No. 7 from 1904 to 1905.*

*The Seventh Symphony was the last of Mahler’s symphonies to be played by The Philadelphia Orchestra, which first performed the work with conductor William Smith in January 1978. Christoph Eschenbach led the most recent performances, in November 2009.*

*The Symphony is scored for piccolo, four flutes (IV doubling piccolo II), three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tenor trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cowbell, cymbals, glockenspiel, orchestra bells, small bells, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle), two harps, mandolin, guitar, and strings.*

*Performance time is approximately 80 minutes.*

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