

MahlerFest

XVI



Boulder, Colorado
January 8-12, 2003

Robert Olson
Artistic Director & Conductor

MAHLERFEST XVI

Schedule of Events

CHAMBER CONCERTS

WEDNESDAY, January 8, 7:30 PM
Boulder Public Library Auditorium

FRIDAY, January 10, 7:30 PM
Rocky Mountain Center for Musical Arts, 200 E. Baseline Rd., Lafayette
Songs & Opera Scene, Alexander Zemlinsky
Songs by Alma & Gustav Mahler

SYMPOSIUM

SATURDAY, January 11, 1:00 PM
Imig Music Building, Room C199

Prof. Marilyn McCoy
Cowbells, Child's Play & Chaos: *The Many Contradictions of Mahler's Sixth Symphony*

Dr. Stuart Feder
The Tale of Three Hammer Blows

Prof. Stephen E. Hefling
The Tragic Dimensions of Mahler's Sixth

Jerry Bruck
Mahler's Sixth: The Inside Story

SYMPHONY CONCERTS

MahlerFest Orchestra, Robert Olson, conductor; Lucille Beer, mezzo-soprano

SATURDAY, 11 January
SUNDAY, 12 January

See page 3 for details

Funding for MahlerFest XVI has been provided in part by grants from:

The Boulder Arts Commission, an agency of the Boulder City Council
The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, Tier III, administered by the Boulder County Commissioners
The Boulder Library Foundation
The NEODATA Foundation, administered by the Arts and Humanities Assembly of Boulder (AHAB)
Visiting Scholar Program of the University of Colorado
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Many music lovers of the Boulder area and also from many states and countries
Special thanks to Peak Arts for their administrative assistance.



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MAHLERFEST XVI

Mahler's vision of the world, so clearly mirrored in his works, reflected the problems of life, of love, of achievement and failure, of happiness and fame, all from the viewpoint of death, common to all of us. Audiences of his time were utterly perplexed by both the emotional honesty and emotional complexity of this approach. However, today's generation of listeners finds itself increasingly in accord with a composer who does not spare them the trouble of stretching their emotional range. Not only has his music "begun to find a home", Mahler has become one of the most performed composers in the repertoire, and this almost unbelievable explosion of popularity in the last three decades has, at its core, a fundamental reason. With Mahler, music was a manifestation of the self, and listeners find a sympathetic connection with one who so honestly and simply explored the age-old questions of life and death, of love and loss, and the meaning of our existence, and who so nakedly exposed his soul in his musical creations. Mahler speaks to us directly of joy and finitude, courage and ordinariness, love and emptiness. In his music we are confronted with matters too momentous to grasp at once and too important to be allowed to slip away. Mahler's Sixth is just such a work — challenging us to absorb its many messages, and then rewarding us with some of Mahler's most triumphant and lyrical music.

Moreover, just considered simply as music, it contained gorgeous melodies; stunning climaxes; employed brilliant orchestration; was tender as well; and was written for the voice in ways unmatched by any other composer. The listener can just let the music transport her/himself to pure enjoyment.

When MahlerFest was founded in 1988, performances of Mahler symphonies were the exception rather than the rule; one was likely to hear only the popular *First* and *Fourth Symphonies* with all but the major orchestras. Thus came the idea to create a Mahler Festival — dedicated first to the performance and study of the entire repertoire and life of Mahler, and secondly to the devoted musicians and scholars who creatively share Mahler's vision of the world, of life, and of music. And, a Festival in which dedicated amateur and professional musicians, all volunteers, gather from different orchestras across the state and nation, and, as it has turned out, across the continents, to perform what are generally considered the greatest (and most difficult) symphonic creations in the repertoire.

Mahler performances are not all that rare anymore, but MahlerFest in Boulder, the only one of its kind in the world, continues to present his works in sequence, many of which are rarely heard. MahlerFest has become an event propelled by the artistic spirit which dwells in all its creative participants to be a part of this unique, "once-in-a-lifetime" experience. "A Symphony is like the world. It must embrace everything ..." Mahler once declared to Jan Sibelius.

Every early January the Colorado MahlerFest allows its participants and audiences to explore one of history's greatest musical prophets!



Robert Olson, Artistic Director and founder

Welcome to Mahler's Triumphant March to Tragedy

The young Gustav Mahler, second child of fourteen, saw many of his siblings die, most of them at an early age. One brother, Ernst, died while Gustav was holding him. Gustav was deeply grieved by that death and also that of one of his sisters, Leopoldine, taken off suddenly in her early twenties by a cerebral aneurysm, finally by brother Otto who committed suicide. Mahler's earliest composition, he told Alma, was a polka and funeral march for piano. Many of his symphonies contain some sort of funereal music, generally a march, but in the Sixth the marches seem to me to be more of a triumph over life's challenges, succumbing only to tragedy in a few sections in the last movement, as I explain in my essay in this book..

The songs featured in MahlerFest XVI, set to texts of Friedrich Rückert, are not of death, as opposed to those we heard at MahlerFest XV — *Kindertotenlieder*. These songs are mostly introspective, one is witty, and one is Mahler's private love song to Alma, never performed publicly in his lifetime, and one which he never set to orchestral accompaniment. We hear it in its original piano version in the chamber concert, and also in the orchestral concert in an orchestral version by another composer.

We invite you to be thrilled by one of Mahler's most powerful works — The *Sixth*— and by five of his wonderful, thought-provoking songs.



Stan Ruttenberg, President

MAHLERFEST XVI

Robert Olson, Artistic Director and Conductor

CONCERTS

**Dedicated to the Memory of Nancy Nixon, staunch supporter of the Arts
Chairperson, Boulder Country SCFD Tier III Citizen's Committee**

Saturday, January 11, 7:30 PM

Preceded by Lecture by Prof. Marilyn McCoy, 6:35 PM

Sunday, January 12, 3:30 PM

Preceded by Lecture by Prof. Marilyn McCoy, 2:30 PM

Mackay Auditorium, CU, Boulder

The Colorado MahlerFest Orchestra Robert Olson, conductor

Rückert Lieder

1. *Ich atmet' einem lindem Duft*
2. *Blick mir nicht in die Lieder*
3. *Liebst du um Schönheit*
(orchestration by Max Puttmann)
4. *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*
5. *Um Mitternacht*

Lucille Beer, mezzo-soprano

— Intermission —

Symphony No. 6, A minor

Saturday Performance: As first published

- I. *Allegro energico, ma non troppo*
- II. *Scherzo. Wuchtig*
- III. *Andante moderato*
- III. *Finale, Allegro moderato*

Sunday Performance: As Mahler always conducted it

- I. *Allegro energico, ma non troppo*
- II. *Andante moderato*
- III. *Scherzo. Wuchtig*
- IV. *Finale. Allegro moderato*

MahlerFest pays special thanks to so many of our listeners who donate funds to support these concerts, as well as to our community and foundation donors, without whose help MahlerFest could not continue to provide you, our audience, with the wonders of Mahler's music.

MAHLERFEST

Chamber Recital

January 8, 2003; Boulder Public Library; 7:30pm
January 10, 2003 RMCMA; 7:30pm

Kara Guggenmos, soprano
Jennifer DeDomenici, mezzo soprano
Jason Baldwin, tenor
Patrick Mason, baritone
Luiz Ballestero, piano

PROGRAM — “Alma”

Bei dir ist es traut — Alma Mahler
Patrick Mason

In meines Vaters Garten — Alma Mahler
Kara Guggenmos

Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht — Gustav Mahler
Da irdische Leben
Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen
Lob des hohen Verstands
Jennifer DeDomenici

From Lieder, Op. 2 Alexander Zemlinsky
Heilige Nacht
Geflüster der Nacht
Mailed
Frühlingstag
Altdeutsches Minnelied
Patrick Mason

Liebst du um Schönheit — Gustav Mahler
Patrick Mason

Der Erkennende — Alma Mahler
Kara Guggenmos

Final scene from the opera, *Der Zwerg* — Alexander
Zemlinsky
Kara Guggenmos
Jason Baldwin
Jennifer DeDomenici

*In loving and deeply fond memory of Terese (Terrie)
Stewart, our MahlerFest pianist for many years, who
succumbed to her third assault of breast cancer in
April 2002.*

Colorado Mahlerfest

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MahlerFest acknowledges with sincere thanks
collaboration with the University of Colorado's College of
Music, Dr. Daniel Sher, Dean, and administrative
assistance from Peak Arts.

Colorado MahlerFest XVI Orchestra

Violin I

Annamarie Karacson,
Boulder, concertmaster
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Violin II

Sayuri Lyons*, Pasadena CA
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Emily Fenwick, Berthoud
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Viola

Han Ling Oh*, Boulder
Ethan Hecht**, Boulder
Christine Arden, Boulder
Juliet Berzensyi Byerly

Judy Cole, Boulder
Debbie Corisis, Boulder
Elizabeth Dinwiddie, Boulder
Hannah Kuchar, Lafayette
Adwyn Lim, Berthoud
Elisabeth Ohly, Greeley
Eileen Saiki, Louisville
Dennis Riggin, Boulder
Dawn Whipp, Katy TX

Cello

Lara Turner*, Westminster
Yoriko Morita**, Louisville
Rowanna Bobo, Louisville
Eileen Farnsworth, Loveland
Nada Fisher, Berthoud
Rebecca Flintoff, Boulder
Richard von Foerster, Denver
Heather Plattenberger, Boulder
Tracie Price, Denver
Beth Rosbach, Boulder
Lauren Rowland, New York NY

Bass

Bob Adair*, New Zealand
Jennifer Motycka**, Longmont
Dale Day, Boulder
Erik Habbinga, Loveland
Nicolai Jacobsen, Kansas City KS
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Orchestra Affiliations (recent past and present) of the Members of the MahlerFest Orchestra

Alton (IL) Symphony • American Chamber Players • Anchorage Symphony • Ann Arbor Symphony • Arapaho Philharmonic • Aspen Chamber Ensemble • Austin Symphony • Bay Area Women's Orch. • Boulder Bach Festival • Boulder Philharmonic Orch. • Centennial Symphony Orch. • Central City Opera Orch. • Cheyenne Symphony Orch. • Chicago Symphony Orch. • Cincinnati Symphony and Pops • Civic Orch. of Chicago • Civic Orch. of KC • Colorado Ballet Orch. • Colorado Music Festival • Colorado Springs Symphony • Colorado Symphony Orch. • Columbine Chamber Orch. • Concord (MA) Orch. • Conservatory of Music, University of Missouri Kansas City • Corpus Christi Symphony • Des Moines Symphony • Estes Park Chamber Orch. • Evergreen Chamber Orch. • Fairbanks Symphony • Ft. Collins Symphony Orch. • Ft. Worth Symphony • Four Seasons Chamber Orch. • Fresno Philharmonic • Greeley Philharmonic • Greensboro Symphony Orch. • Illinois Philharmonic Orch. • Jefferson Symphony Orch. • Jerusalem Symphony • Kansas City Civic Orch. • Kansas City Symphony • Las Cruces Symphony • Liberty Symphony (MO) • Longmont Symphony Orch. • Lyric Opera of Chicago • Mansfield (OH) Symphony • Merced Symphony Orch. • Meridian (MS) Symphony Orch. • Midland-Odesa Symphony Orch. • Mississippi Symphony • Mostly Strauss Orch. • National Repertory Orch. • New England Philharmonic (Boston) • New Jersey Symphony • New Orleans Philharmonic • New Zealand Symphony • New World Symphony • North Carolina Symphony • Northeast Symphony Orch. (OK) • Northwest Indiana Symphony • Northwest Mahler Festival • Northland Symphony (MO) • Norwegian Chamber Orch. • Oberlin Conservatory Orch. • Pasadena Symphony • Portland (OR) Opera Orch. • Reno Philharmonic • Ridgewood Symphony (NJ) • Rocky Mountain Symphony • Salt Lake Symphony • Santa Fe Opera Orch. • Seattle Symphony • St. Joseph (MO) Symphony • St. Louis Symphony • St. Petersburg State Chamber Orch. (Russia) • Sinfonia of Colorado • Sioux City Symphony • Spokane Symphony • Spoleto Festival Orch. • Strauss Symphony of America • Timberline Orch. • Tucson Opera Orch. • Tucson Symphony • U.K. Philharmonic • University of Colorado Orch. • University of Northern Colorado Orch. • Utah Festival Opera • Westminster Symphony • Windsor (Ontario) Symphony

MAHLERFEST XVI

Mahler, Mahler, Everywhere

Colorado Symphony, May 30 & 31, June 1, 2003, Symphony No. 3, Marin Alsop conducting;
Marietta Simpson, mezzo-soprano; Pre-concert lectures by Stan Ruttenberg.

Colorado Music Festival – Boulder's summer music festival, no information available at press time.

Aspen Summer Music Program – No information available at press time.

Nation Repertory Orchestra, Breckenridge – No information available at press time.

MahlerFest Record of Works Performed

Aria from <i>Die Tote Stadt</i> (Korngold)	1999	Songs by Kurt Weil	2000
<i>Bei Mondaufgang</i> (Wolfes)	1998	Song by Roger Quilter	2000
<i>Brettli-lieder</i> (Schoenberg)	1995	Song by Sergei Rachmaninoff	2000
<i>Das Klagende Lied</i> (two-part version)	1991	Songs and Movie Songs (Korngold)	1999
<i>Das Lied von der Erde</i>	1998	Songs by Joseph Marx	1998, 1999
<i>Das Lied von der Erde, Abschied</i> , piano/voice version	1998	Songs from <i>Das Knaben Wunderhorn</i>	1989, 1994, 1997, 1999,
<i>Das Lied von der Erde</i> , VI (choreographed)	1994		2001, 2003
<i>Des Knaben Wunderhorn</i> , with orchestra	2001	Songs from <i>Land of Smiles</i> (Franz Lehar)	1998
Five Poems, Opus 10 (Griffes)	1998	Songs to Poems by Rückert	1989, 1997
Four Early Lieder (Gustav Mahler)	1996	Songs, Opus 3 (Grosz)	1998
<i>Lieder</i> (Alma Mahler)	1991, 1992, 2003	Songs, Opus 8 (Wellesz)	1998
<i>Galgenlieder</i> (Graener)	1995	<i>Non piu andrai</i> (Mozart)	2000
Greeting from <i>Arias and Bacarroles</i> (L. Bernstein)	1997	Rusalka's <i>Song to the Moon</i> (Dvorak)	2000
<i>Hochsommer</i> (Felix Weingartner)	1997	Symphony #1	1988
<i>Hütet euch!</i> (Zemlinsky)	1997	Symphony #1 (Hamburg Version)	1998
<i>Kindertotenlieder</i> , piano & voice	1990, 1996	Symphony #2	1989, 1999
<i>Kindertotenlieder</i> , orchestra & voice	2002	Symphony #3	1990, 2000
<i>Klaviertütch</i> , Opus 19, No. 6 (Schoenberg)	1997	Symphony #4	1991, 2001
<i>Lieder</i> (Berg)	1996	Symphony #4, IV, Mahler performing piano version	1994
<i>Lieder</i> (Brahms)	2000, 2001	Symphony #4, IV, (Schoenberg Society arrangement)	1991
<i>Lied</i> (Humperdinck)	2001	Symphony #5	1992
<i>Fuge</i> John David Lamb	2001	Symphony #6	1993, 2003
<i>Lied</i> (Josephine Lang)	2001	Symphony #6, two piano version (Zemlinsky)	1993
<i>Lied</i> (Mendelssohn)	2001	Symphony #7	1994
<i>Lieder</i> (Louise Riechart)	2001	Symphony #8	1995
<i>Lied</i> (Max Reger)	2001	Symphony #9	1996
<i>Lieder</i> (Schoenberg)	2001	Symphony #10, J. H. Wheeler version	1997
<i>Lieder</i> (Schubert)	2000, 2001	<i>Vier Lieder</i> , Op. 2 (Schoenberg)	1996
<i>Lied</i> (Schumann)	2001	<i>Vier Stück für Klarinette und Klavier</i> (Berg)	1990
<i>Lied</i> (Friedrich Silcher)	2001	<i>Der Zwerg final scene</i> , Alexander von Zemlinsky	2003
<i>Lieder</i> (Richard Strauss)	1993, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001		
<i>Lieder</i> (Wolf)	1995, 2000		
<i>Lieder</i> from Opus 2 (Zemlinsky)	1995, 2003		
Mahler, <i>Lieder und Gesänge</i>			
<i>auf den Jugendzeit</i>	1988, 1993, 1997, 1999		
Mahler, <i>Lieder eines</i>			
<i>fahrenden Gesellen</i>	1988, 1993, 1995		
Marches & Ländler by Schubert	2000		
Mahler, Piano Quartet in A minor	1988, 1997		
<i>Sieben Frühe Lieder</i> (Berg)	1990		
Suite from BWV 1067 and BWV 1068 (Bach/Mahler) ...	1989		
Song by Arnold Bax	2000		
Song by Claude Debussy	2000		

Thank You!

Presenting our annual MahlerFest is a labor of love for our volunteer MahlerFest Orchestra, Board of Directors and other Volunteers. However, not all expenses are met by ticket sales and grants, and audience donations are a crucial and significant component of our funding base.

**Your contributions of any amount are significant, and highly prized.
For those we offer our heartfelt thanks!**

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(Marketing consulting, printing)

Visualizing Mahler

In 2003, MahlerFest XVI includes a new project in its schedule: Outreach to Art and Music programs in Colorado schools with a DVD titled Visualizing Mahler.

Visualizing Mahler is a cooperative Boulder County wide project to enlist visual artists, including painters, sculptors, photographers, ceramicists, fiber artists, etc., to create a work of art inspired by the music of Gustav Mahler.

Mahler's music is so expressive of the unanswerable questions of life that it stimulates visual images and emotions in listeners. The project asked individual artists to express their own imagery provoked by Mahler's music. Mahler himself wrote "What is most important is not in the notes." Since Mahler was closely connected to the artists of the Secessionist period of cultural enrichment at the turn of the 19th century, and since we interpret his music as having a broad relationship to the other arts and life itself, it seems fitting that this project asks artists to illuminate what his music means to creative people of today.

The Colorado MahlerFest provided CD recordings of Mahler's 6th Symphony and the Rückertlieder for artists who wanted to participate in the project. The resulting artworks are exhibited at galleries throughout Boulder County, accompanied by Mahler's music, during the period of Friday, January 3 through Sunday, January 12, 2003. The MahlerFest Orchestra in rehearsal and in concert, the participating artists in their studios, and the gallery exhibits will be videotaped and presented on a DVD to be distributed free of charge to middle and high schools in the greater Denver Metro area of Colorado.

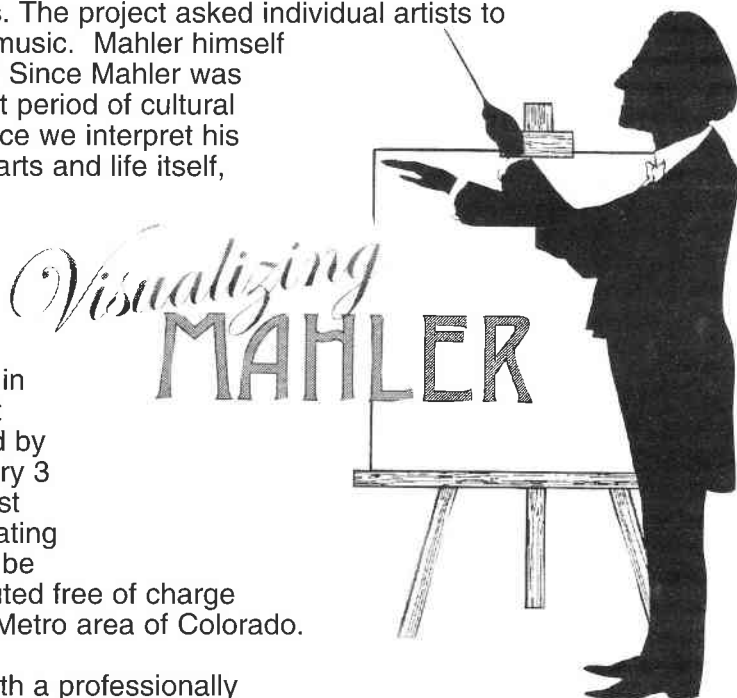
The object of the DVD is to provide schools with a professionally developed audio/visual project and suggested lesson plans that art and music departments can use to explore cooperative projects of their own within their schools and in their communities.

MahlerFest views the Visualizing Mahler project as way to educate young people about Mahler's music, bolster under-appreciated art and music programs in local schools, expand future audiences to younger people, draw visitors to local galleries, invite the community of artists to experiment with new inspiration and to jointly produce, with MahlerFest, this DVD for the benefit of the schools.

Media used by Visualizing Mahler artists include acrylic, oil, gouache, and watercolor painting; pastels, photography, sculpture, collage, glass, jewelry, and multimedia.

Artists and Galleries:

Art and Soul, 1615 Pearl, Boulder, 303-544 5803: *Susanna Richter, Daniel Kosharek, Jerry Baron, Gretchen Ewert, Mark Soppeland.* **Muse Gallery**, 521 Main, Longmont, 303-698 7869: *Dwayne Wolff, Valerie Albicker, Dot Pecina, Becky Everitt, Diane Wood, Paula Peacock, Alicia Jensen, Joe Kuzyk, Tammy Bality, Katie Metz, Clarice Neighbors, Elizabeth Nissley, Gerri Bradford, Bonnie Treece, Sara Brown, Ann Beaman, Gretel Wolniewicz, Darlene Dawson, Kay Knifer, Janice Sugg, Char Porter, Martha South, Ben 3Eagles.* **Temporary Contemporary Gallery**, 1750 30th Street, Suite 35, Boulder, 303-442 7163: *Donna Boyd, Karen Poulson.* **Mary Williams Fine Arts**, 2116 Pearl, Boulder, 303-938 1588: *Annette Parrish, Claire Evans, Carolyn Bradley, Linda Armatrout.* **Art Affaire**, 820 Main Street, Suite 102, Louisville, 303-665 2074: *Teresa Dunwell, Amy Broadhead, Jennifer Cash, Cynthia Romanski, "Annie O'Brien" (Lynn).* **Robert Feder Fine Art**, Boulder Public Library exhibit space, Canyon Blvd. at 9th Street, 303-441 3100: *Stefan Kleinschuster.* **Loft Art Studios**, 3980 Broadway, Boulder, 303-402 0330: *Mary Barron, Molly Davis, Mardie Dalzell Driftmier, Sally Kuslie, Nancy Volpe, Virginia Wood, Angela Daigle, Dodi Klutznick, Pat Kothe, Darlene Kuhne, Stephine Kuhne, Susan Albers, Dee Timms, Cathy Phelan, Sybilla Mathews, Lucy Burleson, Barb Christopherson, Elizabeth Jenny, Meesh Miller, Jan Tamm, Barb Demarlie.*



Robert Olson, MahlerFest Artistic Director

"Electrifying! The most exciting musical experience I've had in eight years here. Period." wrote the *Kansas City Star*;
"One of the major American conductors" wrote *Musique in Belgium*
"The orchestra loved you, the public loved you." Karolovy Vary Symphony Orchestra, Czech Republic
"Magnificent! A fine orchestra and an outstanding conductor." wrote the *Longmont Times-Call*

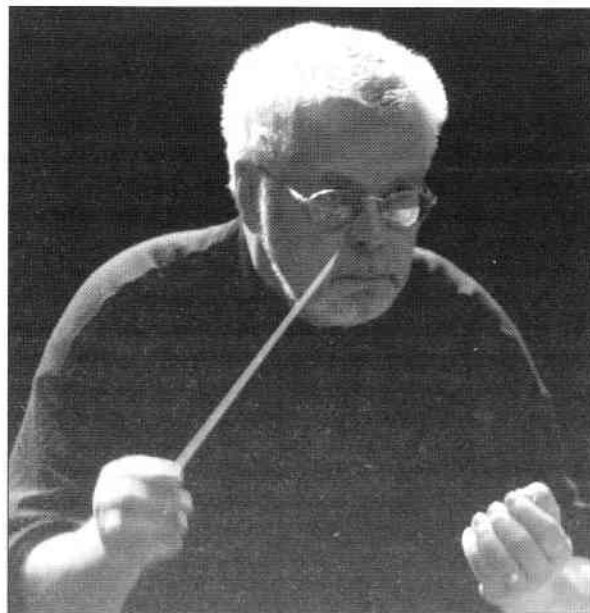
Such is a sampling of reviews of Maestro Robert Olson, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Colorado MahlerFest since its inception fourteen years ago. He brings an amazingly active and varied career to the podium, currently holding conducting posts with four different organizations, encompassing the entire spectrum of the concert stage—symphony, opera and ballet—and presenting sixty performances a year.

Currently a resident of Kansas City, Olson holds posts with three other orchestras. He is the conductor for the Kansas City Ballet, a post he has held since 1992, having conducted more than 400 performances with the Kansas City and St. Louis symphonies. He is Director of Orchestras/Opera at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where his two orchestras and, in particular, the opera productions consistently receive critical acclaim. With a repertoire of over 60 operas, recent productions include *Turandot*, *Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Manon*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and many others. He is also Music Director and Conductor of the Longmont Symphony in Colorado, an orchestra that has consistently received rave reviews from Colorado critics. During his 20-year tenure, the orchestra has flourished, presenting a eleven-concert season to capacity audiences.

Prior to his move to Kansas City he was on the faculty of the University of Colorado College of Music for sixteen years, where he was music director of the opera program and Associate Conductor of Orchestras. Local audiences also know him as conductor for years of the immensely popular Colorado Gilbert & Sullivan Festival.

He has held conducting posts with the Omaha Symphony, Boulder Baroque Chamber Orchestra, Boulder Civic Opera, Arapahoe Chamber Orchestra, Arvada Chamber Orchestra, the Colorado Lyric Theater, and the Rocky Ridge Music Festival.

An active guest conductor, he has guest conducted many orchestras in the United States and made his European debut in 1990 in Belgium. This resulted in engagements in Venezuela, return invitations to Belgium, Bergamo and Milan, Italy, the Czech Republic, the Ljubljana Music Festival, and the



National Symphony of China in Beijing. In February of 2001 he conducted four major Stravinsky works in a Stravinsky Festival sponsored by the Kansas City Symphony and last year conducted 5 performances for the Miami City Ballet.

In addition to the success of the *Mahler Eighth* CD, critiqued as "legendary" by several national publications, his concert recording of the Wheeler version of Mahler's *Tenth Symphony* was recently made available on CD from the Colorado MahlerFest. This work received its world premiere performance at MahlerFest X in 1997 after Olson and a small international team spent over a year editing and preparing the Wheeler realization. His recording of the same symphony for NAXOS records with the Polish National Radio Orchestra was released in May, 2002 to such reviews as "second only to Rattle and Berlin". He is also recorded on the CRS label.

He is married to Victoria Hagood-Olson and has two beautiful children, Tori (15) and Chelsea (12), both budding musicians.

The Colorado MahlerFest, initiated by Olson on a dream and \$400 fifteen years ago, has become nourished to become not only "one of Boulder's most valuable cultural assets", but a world class festival, dedicated to the cultivation of all things Mahlerian!

Robert Olson, Conductor
WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

"He may be more steeped in Mahler's music than any other American." Steven Kinzer, *New York Times*, Jan 17, 2002

"Small wonder that critics of previous MahlerFest performances rank Olson with Leonard Bernstein ... " Wes Blomster, *Boulder Daily Camera*

"This great performance is the equal of any Eighth I've ever heard" *FANFARE Magazine*

"This *Eighth* is in the same class as the best on records." Jerry Fox, *American Record Guide*

"Legendary" *FANFARE Magazine*

"Maybe the finest performance of this symphony (#8) ever put to disc". *Chicago Daily Herald*

"But the palm goes to Olson who chooses ideal tempi ... and has a real sense of the long line. How I look forward to hearing him in other Mahler." Jonathan Carr, author of biography *Mahler*

"Robert Olson strikes me as being one of those rare beings among conductor, a man who puts the music first. And so were some of the other greats: Szell, Mengelberg, Beecham". Tony Duggan, *Staffordshire, UK*

"Exquisite ... breathtaking ... spiritual ... noble" *American Record Guide*

"Olson, MahlerFest set new performance standards (headline)" *Boulder Daily Camera*

"A world class performance." *On the Air magazine*

"Spectacular results" "A triumph for Olson" *Denver Post*

"Robert Olson is now regarded as a major Mahler master both in this country and in Europe and the care with which he led over 300 musicians through the *Second Symphony* makes clear why." *Boulder Daily Camera*

"... The greatest musical event in Boulder to date!"
"Astonishing ability" *Boulder Daily Camera*

"The entire evening was a triumph for Olson, whose pacing and control of often tricky rhythms was expert and who personally corrected every page of the score." *Denver Post*

"Now that I have five complete works of Mahler conducted by Olson, I am more convinced than ever of his superiority over every other living Mahler conductor. He really understands the essentials of Mahler's unique creative world. And, most importantly, he makes the music sound fresh and new, not mainstream like Levine or Abbado." Remo Mazzetti, one of the seven musicians in the world who has prepared a "realization" of Mahler's *Tenth Symphony*.

"... the main hero has to be Robert Olson, whose note by note familiarity with the vast Mahler output and admirable taste in transforming his knowledge into orchestral splendor should earn him medals and decorations from the Boulder community." Blair Chotzinoff, *Boulder Planet*

"Olson has summoned a weight and poignancy that move one close to tears at the end of this farewell to life (*Symphony #10*)"

RECORDINGS

Symphony No. 6

John Barbirolli, Philharmonia Orchestra, EMI. For my taste, this is the finest version available. Some object to its slow tempo but it is anything but relaxed. It is powerful, well played and well recorded. Minus points are lack of the repeat in the first movement and weak hammer blows.

Jascha Horenstein, Stockholm Philharmonic, out-of-print on original labels, but worth looking for. Horenstein's tempo are more the norm, the concept is rugged and powerful, but the orchestra is not quite up to the task. This can be overlooked in the light of Horenstein's understanding of this music.

Leonard Bernstein, Vienna Philharmonic, DGG. For those who like Lennie's bravura, never mind the score, this is the better of his two recordings. The reading with the New York Philharmonic is even more manic-depressive.

Benjamin Zander, Philharmonia Orchestra, Telarc. A new release, very good performance, in good sound, with a full CD bonus of Zander expostulating on the music, and with the alternate finale movement with two hammer blows.

Harold Farberman, London Symphony Orchestra, VOX. A very good reading, good recording, re-issued on CD at a bargain price.

Pierre Boulez, Vienna Philharmonic, DGG. Fine, if somewhat cool, reading.

Herbert von Karajan, Berlin Philharmonic, DGG, with bonus of two song sets with Christ Ludwig. For admirers of HvK, this is, in my humble opinion, one of his best Mahler readings.

Rückert Lieder

My first prize for the female voice goes to **Janet Baker** with the Philharmonia, conducted by John Barbirolli, EMI, usually coupled with other Mahler song sets.

My first prize for the male voice goes to **Thomas Hampson**, with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

These two artists convey these masterful songs tastefully, with perfect ease, plenty of expression.

Christa Ludwig, on the von Karajan *Symphony No. 6* set, is very good except for some peculiar singing in the first song.

Also to be enjoyed are Dietrich Fischer-Diskau with Daniel Barenboim, piano, and **Thomas Hampson**, with Wolfram Reiger, piano.

Hampson has created the critical edition of the piano version of all of Mahler's songs, which has some significant differences with the version for orchestra.

Stan Ruttenberg

MAHLERFEST XVI

Our Principal Participants

Lucille Beer has been received enthusiastically at MahlerFest XII and XIII, and it is our greatest pleasure to welcome her back this year.



Receiving international acclaim for her performances in opera houses and concert stages around the world, Lucille Beer is noted by critics to possess a voice described as rare, memorable, rich, warm and ardent and is continually praised for her superb musicianship. She also embraces the contralto repertoire with ease and as a result sings a wide range of operatic and sym-

phonic works.

A native New Yorker, she is a graduate of the Mannes College of Music and received her Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School as a student of Daniel Ferro. Ms. Beer won the Metropolitan Opera Auditions in 1982 and made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1983 in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* followed by appearances in numerous other productions. She was recently heard at the Metropolitan in their production of *Elektra* under James Levine. Ms. Beer has also appeared with the New York City Opera as Nancy in *Martha*, Prince Charming in *Cendrillon* and Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly*, Opera de Nice as Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*, Opera Theatre of St. Louis as Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* and Opera de Nantes as Erda in *Siegfried*.

In addition to opera, Lucille Beer regularly performs in Lieder recitals and oratorios and has appeared with many of the world's leading symphony orchestras and conductors including the New York Philharmonic under Erich Leinsdorf, the St. Louis Symphony with Leonard Slatkin, the Houston Symphony conducted by Christoph Eschenbach in Mahler's *Eighth Symphony*, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg in Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* with Theodor Guschlbauer, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival under Robert Shaw. With Leonard Bernstein Ms. Beer performed his *Songfest* in Rome, Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. where the performance was broadcast live on the PBS television network. Ms. Beer appeared twice with the Colorado Symphony. Ms. Beer is also in great demand for the music of Gustav Mahler and has interpreted all of his major song cycles and symphonies with uncommon distinction. She gave a special Mahler recital for the Gustav Mahler Society, New York.

Marilyn L. McCoy is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of New Hampshire, Durham. Though primarily a "Mahler Scholar," she



worked at the Arnold Schoenberg Institute in Los Angeles for the last three years of its existence (1995-1998), serving as Assistant Archivist and co-author of *A Preliminary Inventory of Schoenberg Correspondence*. In addition to her contributions to *Schoenberg and His World*, edited by Walter Frisch, and *The Reader's Guide to Music: History, Theory, Criticism*, edited by Murray

Steib, she has also published articles on Mahler, Wolf, Wagner, Debussy, and musical time. Dr. McCoy presented an authoritative lecture on the *Mahler Symphony No. 5* at MahlerFest XV and we are delighted to welcome her back again for MahlerFest XVI, where she will also present the pre-concert lectures.



Stuart Feder, MD. is a graduate in music and medicine, and a practicing psychoanalyst, Einstein School of Medicine, New York. His Mahler publications are well known and his two books on Charles Ives are an important part of the literature on this American maverick composer. As Dr. Feder describes in his book on Ives, *My Father's Song*, Ives may well have heard Mahler conduct in New York but, notwithstanding many stories (myths), there is no evidence that the two ever met or that Mahler ever

saw scores of Ives. Dr. Feder gave lectures at MahlerFest XI, XII, and XV and we are delighted to welcome him again for MahlerFest XVI.

Stephen E. Hefling received the A. B. in music from Harvard and the Ph. D. from Yale, with a dissertation examining Mahler's *Totenfeier* movement from the dual perspectives of programmatic influence and compositional process as documented in Mahler's surviving sketches and drafts. Currently Professor of Music at Case Western Reserve University, he has also taught at Stanford and Yale Universities as well as Oberlin College Conservatory.

Prof. Hefling has written numerous articles and book chapters for *19th Century Music*, *Journal of Musicology*, *Journal of Music Theory*, *Performance Practice Review*,



the revised *New Grove Dictionary*, *A Mahler Companion* (Oxford, 1999), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York, 1997), etc. He rediscovered Mahler's manuscript version of *Das Lied von der Erde* for voices and piano, and edited that work for the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Vienna, 1989). He introduced the *Abschied* from the piano version which was performed at MahlerFest XI. His monograph on *Das Lied* appeared in the Cambridge Music

Handbooks series in 2000, and he has written program notes for Mahler recordings by leading conductors including Pierre Boulez and Lorin Maazel. Recently he has both edited and contributed to the volumes *Mahler Studies* (Cambridge, 1997) and *Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music* (New York, 1998).

For his work on Mahler, Prof. Hefling has been awarded grants from The Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation and the American Philosophical Society, as well as a Morse Junior Faculty Fellowship at Yale University; he has been a speaker at international conferences on the composer in Vienna, Paris, Hamburg, Rotterdam, New York, Montpellier, London, and Boulder. Also a specialist in baroque performance practice, Prof. Hefling has performed widely with early music ensembles in the northeastern US, and has served as

director of the Yale Collegium Musicum and the Cleveland Baroque Soloists; his book *Rhythmic Alteration in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Music* (New York, 1994) is widely regarded as the standard reference on that topic.

Prof. Hefling was one of our guest lecturers for the Symposium during MahlerFest XI, appeared in our MahlerFest XIV symposium and we are delighted to welcome him back for MahlerFest XVI.

Jerry Bruck presented in 1962 the first radio broadcast cycle of Mahler's music over New York City's WBAI-FM. These 14 two-hour programs included extensive biographical material and interviews with musicians and others who knew Mahler. This led him to Mahler's widow, Alma -



whom he helped convince to rescind her ban on completions of her husband's *Tenth Symphony* - and to a lasting friendship with Mahler's daughter, Anna. Since then, his researches have brought him into close contact with musicians and scholars who have further encouraged his avid interest in the music and life of the composer. He has a small collection of Mahler memorabilia, including several original

manuscript pages and letters, a copy of the death mask, and a library of books, scores, recordings, and various historical documents.

Jerry Bruck was directly responsible for the release of the suppressed first movement of Mahler's early cantata *Das klagende Lied* and his early *Piano Quartet-satz*. He also assisted with the American premieres of those works and of the *Symphony No. 10*. He produced and engineered the first commercial recording of Mahler's *Symphony No. 1* with its *Blumine* movement for CBS/Odyssey, and later co-engineered the same work with James Judd and the Florida Philharmonic for Harmonia Mundi.

In addition to records and CDs, Jerry Bruck has recorded sound for many music oriented film and video projects. Currently he is working with Jason Starr on a video documentary about the Mahler *Third Symphony*. His recording of Joe Wheeler's performing version of Mahler's *Symphony* is available from the Colorado MahlerFest, for whom he also recorded Mahler Symphonies 2, 3, 8 and 9 in concert. Other recent CD releases of Mahler's music include the *Third* and *Sixth Symphonies* for Titanic Records (the latter also with liner notes by Mr. Bruck). His most recent project has been the preparation of a "White Paper" for the Kaplan Foundation, intended to restore the correct order of its inner movements to performances and recordings of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*.

In 1971 he was awarded the Mahler Medal of the Bruckner Society of America.

Patrick Mason, a baritone on the faculty of the University of Colorado, performs operatic and concert repertoire throughout the world. Most recently he has been heard in recitals at the Library of Congress and in the Cairo Opera House in Egypt, in contemporary music at New York's Alice Tully Hall and in a leading role in the new opera *Sara McKinnon* in Las Cruces, New Mexico. In October of 2000



he sang the New York premiere of the opera, *Black Water*, by John Duffy and Joyce Carol Oates at the Cooper Union. Mr. Mason has been a guest soloist with the Syracuse Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic and the Colorado Springs Symphony. He has recorded music from tenth-century chant to songs by Stephen Sondheim for Sony, Vox, l'Oiseau Lyre and Erato. His two most recent CD releases on the Bridge Records label are Schubert's *Winterreise* (BCD 9053) and French Melodies (BCD 9058) by Ravel, Fauré, Dutilleux and Poulenc. Having been born and raised in the low clay hills above the Ohio River, his passions are (naturally) hiking and ceramics.

Mitch Friedfeld is a graduate of Denver's John F. Kennedy High School and the University of Northern Colorado, where he majored in Social Science. He now lives in Vienna, Virginia. Mr. Friedfeld attends concert performances in the East and contributes essays, e.g., an extensive essay on *Kindertotenlieder*, and many comments on Mahler performances to the Internet MahlerList.



Jeffrey Gantz is Arts Editor at the alternative weekly *The Boston Phoenix*, where his reviews of Mahler performances and recordings have appeared for the past 15 years. He has degrees from Amherst College (BA, English literature) and Harvard University (PhD, Celtic languages and literatures) and has translated two volumes of Celtic mythology, *The Mabinogion* and *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (both in Penguin Classics). For *Phoenix* he also writes about other classical music, art, ballet, film, theater, television, books and, very occasionally, popular music; he has won awards from the Association of Alternative Newspapers and the New England Press Association.

Therese (Terrie) Stewart's name has long appeared in our annual biographical summaries, since MahlerFest IX, in fact. Terries had braved several bouts of cancer, but finally succumbed in April 2002, after she and Patrick Mason presented a stirring and deeply felt *Winterreise* (Franz Schubert) last January at our MahlerFest chamber concert. Terrie's warm humanity and her superb musicianship will be sorely missed. At her memorial service, which the indomitable Terrie arranged herself in her last days, we learned of her broad interest in many things besides music, and of her dedication to music such that she willed funds to CU to found scholarships for young musicians. To honor Terrie, MahlerFest will dedicate the remaining Chamber concerts to her memory, and will make available her valedictory *Winterreise* as well as two other CDs of songs by Mahler and related composer, all performed by Terrie, with various soloists, at MahlerFest chamber concerts. All proceed from the sale of these three CDs will go to Terrie's scholarship fund at CU.



Five Songs After Friedrich Rückert

Mitch Friedfeld

The music of Mahler: too bombastic, too heavy, too much. This is an unfortunate reaction still prevalent among parts of the music-loving public, certainly not to most of the attendees of this weekend's concerts. The Rückert songs that we will hear this weekend refute the above stereotype in the strongest way. These songs – short, subtle, sometimes whimsical, always concerned with the human condition – are Mahler's introspective look at himself and the humanity of which he was a part. To be sure, there are big Mahlerian moments and sounds. The primary feeling, however, is of one person facing the vicissitudes of life. This "one person" is important, because these songs – unlike the *Kindertotenlieder* that we heard in last year's Colorado MahlerFest – do not make us take sides on the issue of male or female singer. Also in contrast to the *Kindertotenlieder*, these songs make no attempt to coalesce into a "cycle": there is no unifying thought, no journey, no story being told. They are intimate snapshots of the composer's personality.

Composed mostly during the summer of 1901 when the composer was turning 41, the Rückert songs are the archetype of what we now call "middle Mahler." Scored for a smaller orchestra whose instruments rarely all play at the same time, the songs have a chamber-like atmosphere that underscores their intimate nature. Mahler must have had frequent cause for introspection during this time, as this period was one of the most tumultuous in his life. The previous February, he nearly died of internal bleeding. He was conducting the Vienna Court Opera non-stop, which in turn contributed to his health crisis. He was finishing Symphony 4, and would soon begin the 5th, some of the *Kindertotenlieder*, and these Rückert songs. Most importantly for him personally, in a matter of months he would meet, court, and soon thereafter marry Alma Schindler. This latter event has direct relevance for one of the songs we will hear this weekend. It is no wonder that Mahler, who more than perhaps any other composer believed in his art as the answer to the problems of life, turned to music to express his innermost feelings.

There is no set order to the Rückert songs. In recordings, *Ich bin der Welt*, viewed by many to be Mahler's greatest song of all, is often placed last. In performance, *Um Mitternacht* often concludes the program, so as to take advantage of the song's triumphant, blazing ending. The following, except for the special case of *Liebst du um Schönheit*, is the order in which they were premiered in Vienna on Jan. 29, 1905, in a *Liederabend* that started with the

Kindertotenlieder, Mahler conducting.

Ich Atmet' einen linden Duft

An introductory upward swoop on celesta immediately transports us into Mahler's soundworld. Rückert makes word play on *Linden* and *linde* (Lime and gentle), but Mahler's literary talent, in restructuring the poem, should also be noted. The lullaby-like rhythm of the violins and the pianissimo dynamics give the song a soothing feeling, as does the lack of action: the singer does nothing but breathe the scent of a lime sprig and reflect on his or her beloved. A concluding celesta arpeggio brings us back to where we started, and we note how an entire male-female relationship has been captured although nothing has happened. This song, with its tone painting, lack of action, and *echt*-Mahlerian atmosphere and completeness, would not be out of place in *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder

Mahler often expressed his annoyance at having his works examined before they were complete, and this piece, "Don't look at my songs," reflects that. Mahler in fact told his diarist that he could have written the poem himself. Rückert puns on the words *Lieder* and *nieder* (songs and away), and a German speaker would inevitably also think of the word *Lider*, eyelids. Note the second verse, whose subject is the work of bees, who also do not allow others to view their work before it is done. Mahler has been criticized for setting a poem that compares artistic creation to the mindless work of bees, but the tone painting of such activity makes one believe that he has anticipated this as well. At only a minute and a half, this is the shortest of the songs. There are plenty of moments to savor, however, for instance the French horn passages and the pizzicato cello lines.

Liebst du um Schönheit

Liebst du is the odd man out. Mahler wrote it as a piano-only love song for Alma. On August 10, 1902, she opened her score of *Siegfried* and found what Mahler had left for her. She played it, and the intention was unmistakable. That's how they did things in the early twentieth century! Rückert's text must have made a big impression on Mahler, who was just entering into a marriage with a woman twenty years his junior, one of the most glamorous women in Vienna. The orchestration we will hear this weekend

was done by Max Puttmann, a music publisher employee. While the technical aspects of Puttmann's work has been criticized, there is no doubt that it at least feels Mahlerian, and the fact that he came so close to the Mahler style before the composer's work had been so thoroughly analyzed is remarkable. Only the piano version of the song was performed in Mahler's lifetime. As Puttmann's work dates from 1910, the year before Mahler died, it is at least possible to imagine that Mahler had seen and perhaps approved it. Some performers, feeling that *Liebst du* does not truly belong to the collection – which was published under the subtitle, "Four Songs after Rückert" – do not include it in their recordings of the Rückert songs.

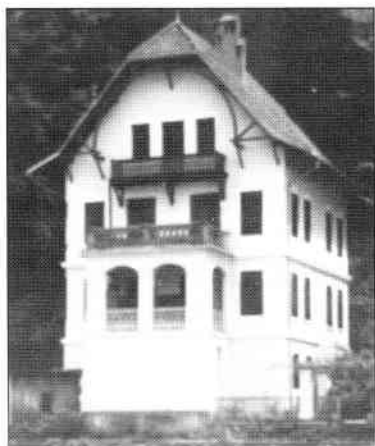
Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

This is the quintessential Mahler Lied, as emblematic of Middle Mahler – and of Mahler's personality – as any work can be. The song has everything: chamber-like scoring, introspection, brief spotlighted virtuoso passages for various instruments, unexpected modulations, and no less importantly, Mahler's view of himself and his relation to life. Most importantly, the song is built on the yearning four-note rising phrase that also appears in the 4th Symphony, movement three; the 5th, Adagietto; and the second of the *Kindertotenlieder*. According to Mahler's diarist, the composer said of this song, "It is a feeling that surges right up to the lips, but does not go beyond them. And that is precisely me." Indeed, it would be hard to find a single work that is more Mahlerian than this. Making some slight changes in a text that at least one analyst considers little better than doggerel, Mahler transforms it into a musical and psychological masterpiece. Of the many unforgettable passages in this song, here are only two at random: the first is a contrapuntal duet, about 1:15 into the song, in which the singer's upward line is echoed and then continued downward by the basses. The other is a shattering but pianissimo dissonant chord near the end, on the singer's phrase, "*In*

meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied." The dissonance in fact calls into question the protagonist's satisfaction at being "...alone, in my heaven, in my loving, in my song." This song is a test for the audience as well. Just like the finale of Mahler 9th, it is hard to believe that anyone can even take a breath as the song dies out.

Um Mitternacht

At last year's MahlerFest, Dr. Stuart Feder, who is speaking here this year as well, noted the autobiographical features of this song: the low registers and heartbeat rhythms that suggest anxiety, the downward spiraling passages that imply depression, and the fact that Mahler was just turning 41 and entering what was then considered middle-age. Mahler must also have been thinking of his own "midnight hour," his near-death experience that occurred only six months prior to the song's composition. There are 36 time changes in a piece 94 bars in length; does that indicate stress? But at the very end, a blazing affirmation of life: "Lord! Over life and death You keep guard at midnight." Note how the upward harp arpeggios – a signature Mahlerian symbol of light, as attendees of last year's *Kindertotenlieder* will recall – sweep away the midnight gloom. Rückert is in great form here, putting most of the song in the past tense but moving the affirmation into the present. Mahler emphasizes this with the most positive music of the song, but did he go too far? Some have found the conclusion unpersuasive compared to what has gone before, seeing it, as Henry-Louis de La Grange has said, "perhaps a little too loud to be as convincing as the luminous resignation" at the end of works such as the *Kindertotenlieder* and *Das Lied*. As a heartfelt expression of his philosophy of life, however, no one can doubt Mahler's intellectual honesty and artistic integrity...in this song and in the collection as a whole.



Villa at Maiernigg



Composing Hut at Maiernigg

Five Rückertlieder

Poems by Friedrich Rückert

I Breathed A Gentle Fragrance

I breathed a gentle fragrance!
In the room stood
a branch of lime [tree]
a present
from a dear hand.
How lovely was the fragrance of lime!
How lovely is the fragrance of lime!
The lime-twigg
was gently plucked by you.
I softly breathe,
in the fragrance of lime,
love's gentle fragrance.

Do Not Look At My Songs

Do not look at my songs.
I cast my eyes down
as if caught in a misdeed.
I cannot even trust myself
to watch them grow.
Your inquisitiveness is treason!
Bees, when they build cells,
do not let one observe them either,
and do not observe themselves.
When the rich honeycombs
have been brought to daylight
then, before anybody, you shall taste them.

Do You Love For Beauty

If you love beauty's sake, do not love me;
love the sun, it wears hair of gold.
If you love for youth's sake, do not love me;
love the spring, which is young every year.

If you love for treasure's sake, do not love me;
love the mermaid, who owns many lucent pearls.

If you love for love's sake, yes, then love me;
love me always, as I love you always forever.

Ich Atmet Einen Linden Duft

Ich atmet' einen linden Duft!
Im Zimmer stand
Em Zweigg der Linde,
Em Angebinde
Von lieber Hand.
Wie lieblich war der Lindenduft!
Wie lieblich ist der Lindenduft!
Das Lindenreis
Brachst du gelinde!
Ich atme leis
Im Duft der Linde
Der Liebe linden Duft.

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!
Meine Augen schlag' ich nieder,
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat.
Selber dad ich nicht getrauen,
Ihrem Wachsen zuzuschauen.
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!
Bienen, wenn sie Zellen bauen,
Lassen auch nicht zu sich schauen.
Schauen selbst auch nicht zu.
Wenn die reichen Honigwaben
Sie zu Tag gefördert haben,
Dann vor allen nasche du!

Liebst du um Schönheit?

Liebst du um Schönheit, o nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne, sie trägt ein goldnes Haar!
Liebst du um Jugend, o nicht mich liebe!
Liebe den Frühling, der jung ist jedes Jahr!

Liebst du um Schätze, o nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Meerfrau, sie hat viel Perlen klar!

Liebst du um Liebe, o ja, mich liebe!
Liebe mich immer, dich lieb' ich immerdar.

I am Misplaced In The World

I am misplaced in the world
with which I used to waste much time;
it has heard nothing of me for so long,
it may well think I am dead.
And for me it is of no concern at all
if it treats me as dead.
Nor can I say anything at all against it,
for in truth I am dead to the world.
I am dead to the hurly-burly of the world
and repose in a place of quietness!
I live alone in my heaven,
in my loving, in my song.

At Midnight

At midnight
I awoke
and looked up at the sky.
Not a star In the galaxy
smiled at me
at midnight.
At midnight
my thought went
out to the limits of darkness,
There was no thought of light
to bring me comfort
at midnight.
At midnight
I paid heed
to the beating of my heart.

One single pulse of pain
caught fire
at midnight.
At midnight
I fought the fight
of your sorrows, humanity.
I could not decide it
for all my power
at midnight.
At midnight
I gave my power
into your hands,
Lord! Over life and death
You keep guard
at midnight.

In bin in die Welt abhanden gekommen

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, Ich sei gestorben!
Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben halt,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.
Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetummel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!

Um Mitternacht

Um Mitternacht
Hab' ich gewacht
Und aufgeblickt zum Himmel;
Kein Stern vom Sterngewimmel
Hat mir gelacht
Um Mitternacht.
Um Mitternacht
hab' ich gedacht
Hinaus in dunkle Schranken.
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken
Mir Trost gebracht
Um Mitternacht.
Um Mitternacht
Nahm ich in acht
Die Schläge meines Herzens;

Em einz'ger Puls des Schmerzes
War angefacht
Um Mitternacht.
Um Mitternacht
Kämpf' ich die Schlacht,
O Menschheit, deiner Leiden;
Nicht konnt' Ich sie entscheiden
Mit meiner Macht
Um Mitternacht.
Um Mitternacht
Hab' ich die Macht
in deinem Hand gegeben!
Herr! Über Tod und Leben
Du hältst die Wacht
Um Mitternacht!

**A Jubilant March to Tragedy:
A Listener's Guide to Mahler's Sixth Symphony
Kelly Dean Hansen**

When filling the commission to write program notes for the Mahler Fifth for last year's MahlerFest, I titled them "A Funeral March to Joy," certainly an apt description of the emotional trajectory of that work. With the Sixth we are confronted with a motion in the opposite direction, so the reversal in the title certainly seems appropriate! Although the first movement begins with a frantic march in the minor mode, the overall effect of the movement, especially the secondary theme (which Mahler described as a musical portrait of his wife, Alma) is one of triumph and jubilation, particularly the unrestrained exuberance at the very end. This is in stark contrast to the funeral march that opens the Fifth, which remains desolate from beginning to end. Here as in the Fifth Mahler also provides a rather wild Scherzo, but one that is far more demonic, in which the "happier" moments are marred by unsettling metrical shifts. An intensely beautiful slow movement provides temporary respite, but has inescapable connections to the more fateful elements of the other movements. Finally, the Finale, perhaps the most complex and awesome purely instrumental movement in the symphonies, begins with a tragic gesture and, despite encountering some of the most joyous music that ever flowed from his pen along the way, ends in the deepest despair and gloom. In the Sixth, Mahler's tendency toward thematic unity across movements reached a new high point, incorporating not only melodic gestures, but important symbolic timbres and rhythms. I would like to draw your attention to the two most significant of these. One of them is a harmonic gesture. It consists of a loud major triad whose middle note slips down a semitone, creating a minor triad. This is most often heard in the trumpets, but also appears in the oboes and clarinets in certain instances. The major-minor triad figure is highly symbolic, indicating the motion from joy to tragedy that the symphony will inevitably follow. Because of its sense of inevitability, the effect is that of a "seal" on the work's emotional journey. Throughout this guide, I will call the gesture the "major-minor seal," a wonderful term coined by Constantin Floros. The other gesture is rhythmic. Since it is usually heard from the timpani, there is a pitch element too. It consists of an unmistakable and distinctive "fate rhythm": DUM pause DUM pause DA-DUM DUM DUM! This important rhythm is often heard in tandem with the major-minor seal, as at their first introduction in the first movement, one of the most dramatic moments in the symphony. The two gestures are also heard independently of each other. Again following Floros, I will label this the "lead rhythm." These two elements appear in all the movements except the Andante, although the "major-minor" aspect of the seal is certainly present in that movement as well. They appear regularly in the first movement, where fate is only hinted at, but really come into their own in the Finale. The other element of unity is the cowbells. These ideophones, unheard before in a major symphony, provide an aural connection between all of the movements except for the Scherzo. In the Andante, they reach their apotheosis, sounding in the orchestra, whereas in the outer movements they are heard in the distance. The First Movement and Scherzo have a thematic connection involving another unusual ideophone, the xylophone. The orchestra is as large as Mahler ever used: four

flutes (two doubling on piccolo); four oboes and English horn; piccolo clarinet, three regular clarinets and bass clarinet; four bassoons and contrabassoon; eight horns; six trumpets; three trombones, bass trombone and tuba; two pairs of timpani; two harps; celesta; a full complement of strings; and an amazingly diverse percussion battery (glockenspiel, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, tam-tam, whip, bass drum, xylophone, cowbells, low bells [in the finale] and the famous and problematic "hammer"). In the following notes, my goal is to give listeners a true guide to what they are hearing as the symphony progresses. There is some specialized musical language, particularly involving keys, but I have tried to avoid anything too difficult to understand. This is a complex and lengthy work, and I hope that by my outlining the structure, your appreciation of this masterpiece can be enhanced.

FIRST MOVEMENT: *Allegro energico, ma non troppo. Heftig, aber markig.*
4/4 Meter. A Minor/Major.

The first movement is very large, but it is in one of the most clear-cut of all Mahler's sonata forms. The boundaries between exposition, development, and recapitulation are very distinct, as are those between the principal and second themes. The development section falls in four distinct sections. This can be contrasted with the sonata form of the Finale, which, as we shall see, is far more ambiguous. As if to make the point that he is consciously writing the movement to be in a clear "classical" form, Mahler famously marks the entire exposition section to be repeated, a convention that was normal in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but was abandoned, the first three symphonies of Brahms being the last major works to include such a repeat. Mahler had already marked a highly effective exposition repeat in his First Symphony. Mahler was a composer who generally hated direct and unvaried repetitions of any kind, so his inclusion of the repeat here must have a solid musical purpose. Not only does it underscore the classical formal structure, but it also helps to bring the movement in balance with the 30-minute Finale. With the repeat, the movement lasts around 22-24 minutes. The entire orchestra is utilized except for the low bells and the hammer that show up in the Finale.

The German terms describing the movement are somewhat contradictory. "Heftig" implies fierceness or violence, while "markig" implies a sense of vulnerability. This could apply to the movement's two major theme groups. Few movements of Mahler begin in such a determined and forward-moving manner. The low strings begin a persistent steady hammering on a low A, with the snare drum quickly joining before the upper strings quickly lead to the statement of the powerful main theme from the full orchestra. Everything is in the character of a manic march. The components of the theme include the rhetorical opening gesture, beginning with a descending octave, a series of gish figures, and a descending chromatic figure in a clipped dotted rhythm (which will later gain great importance in this movement and the Scherzo). The hammering beats of the low strings lead to a second huge statement

from the full orchestra of a new variant of the opening gesture. This second half of the main subject introduces the distinctive figure that appears to be a quotation from Liszt's First Piano Concerto. It is stated by three different brass instruments in succession. The trumpet first plays it in a somewhat veiled form as the strings begin rapid figuration, and then the trombone and horn play it in almost the exact form that Liszt used. Whether or not it is a quotation, it becomes a major component of the movement. The horn statement precedes a large climax using the opening gesture before a tremendous dissonance leads to complete dissipation. As the winds begin this dissipation, the trumpet takes the "Liszt" theme one more time. The instruments collapse into murmuring trills, until the cellos and bassoons, then the basses and contrabassoon, are all that is left preceding a brief pause.

This is a highly dramatic moment, preceding the first statement of the symphony's most important unifying threads: the "lead rhythm" and the "major-minor seal." Mahler makes sure we will notice these gestures, as they occur in isolation and with great drama. The timpani, as usual, present the lead rhythm, but this first time, the snare drum adds to the effect. Trumpets and oboes state the major-minor seal, the major chord loudly and the minor chord much more softly. These are the instruments that will usually be associated with the seal. This grand gesture precedes the subdued and mysterious transition passage. It consists of the wind instruments stating a ghostly chorale over the strings, which now quietly pluck the formerly powerful opening gesture.

The second thematic group could not be introduced more grandly. The music abruptly switches to F major, and the famous "Alma" theme begins on the heels of the quiet chorale. Mahler marks that the theme should be played with great sweep, and indeed, "sweeping" is the best way to describe the tune itself. It has a connection with a figure from the main theme, but this is almost impossible to notice since the character is so different. Here the harps enter for the first time, as well as the triangle. The winds accompany with rushing figures. The opening gesture is repeated three times with increasing intensity before a climax is aborted. There now enters a strange interruption of main theme material, including the "Liszt figure," primarily on the trombones and high winds. The glockenspiel enters here, with plucked violins, giving the material a sort of playfulness it did not have before. It does not last long, however, before the second theme reasserts itself with even more force. Now the celesta joins the harps, and the trumpet imitates the strings with the opening gesture. There are again three statements, and now the third one reaches even higher, leading to a truly grand and joyous climax. After this, the music settles down for a short and quiet epilogue based on the "Alma" theme over oscillations in the cello and harps. The music dies completely away, leading directly to the "lead rhythm" on the snare drum, introducing the immediate return of the opening and the direct repetition of



all that we have just heard.

After the complete repeat, the snare drum's statement of the lead rhythm leads to the large, but clearly articulated, four-part development section. Matching the exposition repeat, it begins on A, and the first large section of the development largely remains in that key. This first part itself is bisected by a large statement of the opening gesture in E minor before quickly returning to A. This first section is primarily based on this main theme. The two most notable aspects are the pervasive presence of the "lead rhythm" and the transformation of the clipped descending chromatic figure. The lead rhythm is heard a total of fourteen times in the timpani and snare drum, more pervasively in the second half of the section. The descending chromatic figure is now reinforced with the xylophone, and the figure itself threatens to dominate the proceedings. This is the first appearance of the xylophone, and it certainly lends the figure a certain eerie character, confirming the frequent association of the instrument with death and the macabre. The second major section of the development is introduced by punctuating wind trills, and brings in material from the second subject, the "Alma" theme, on trombones and tubas at first. The theme is stated in the low strings, and in the minor mode, completely transforming its character, while the xylophone remains a distinctive presence. The brass also play fragments of the "Alma" theme. The section is mostly in D minor. As the music reaches to a high point, it is suddenly and strangely interrupted.

Here is the most fascinating passage of the movement, the third part of the development. A high A-minor chord on winds and tremolo violins, along with a triangle beat, interrupts a statement of the "Alma" theme, which the winds complete, dying away and slowing down as they do. Mahler indicates that the music should gradually slow down here, and everything becomes quiet very quickly. The section is unlike anything else in the movement as far as character and sound quality is concerned. Everything is at a subdued level, and for the first time, an important sonority is heard. This is the sound of cowbells in the distance, which enter as the statement of the "Alma" theme finishes and are to be played in the distance without any regularity. Mahler directs that the bells should realistically imitate a grazing herd, but is careful to point out that this has no programmatic meaning, even though they are told to become gradually closer and then distance themselves again! At any rate, the cowbells are joined by the celesta, which, along with violins playing in tremolo, presents a series of high chords over a low D in the cellos and basses. Joining all of this is a signal-like figure first heard in the flutes and timpani, the flutes playing in the "wrong" key of C (the music is still basically in D minor/major, moving to G minor). The major-minor seal is also clearly heard twice, first in the horns and then in the clarinets. These are separated by a fragment of the chorale transition, following the seal, in the horns. The entire passage has a strange and otherworldly effect. The celesta, signal call, and eventually cowbells die away, and we hear a magical transformation of the "Alma" theme first in G major and immediately thereafter in E-flat major. Alma's tune is now sweet and tender rather than full-hearted and sweeping. The key of E-flat remains in force until the end of the section, providing an anticipation of the Andante movement, which is in that tonality. The cowbells, celesta chords, signal figures, and chorale motifs return after the E-flat statement, but the music remains centered there and dies down to nothing. This passage is truly extraordinary, and its maverick nature almost works against the move-

ment's otherwise clear-cut form.

The final section of the development rudely interrupts the reverie and is primarily concerned with the brass theme we have called the "Liszt" figure. Here Mahler becomes harmonically more adventurous, touching keys such as B, F-sharp, and B-flat major in preparation for a dramatic return to A for the recapitulation. The Liszt figure is developed very extensively, leading to a massive crescendo and a bass drum roll. The relationship between the brass figure and the opening gesture is exploited as the moment of return arrives, not, as expected, in A minor, but in A major! The harmonic progressions are slippery here, and the motion to A is almost oblique rather than decisive.

Nonetheless, the statement of the main theme in A major *is* decisive, and we have clearly arrived at the reprise. The long development section has been adventurous enough that the arrival is very satisfying. The major mode only lasts for four measures, however, before the main subject corrects itself and moves to the minor. Although for Mahler this is an unusually regular recapitulation, there are several very important alterations from the exposition. A completely regular recapitulation would be monotonous, since we heard the exposition twice. Logically, this recapitulation is somewhat abbreviated. The major differences are these: The hammering steady march beats of the low strings, when they are heard, are now always on E rather than A, which adds harmonic instability. The lead rhythm, which occurs with the major-minor seal at the appropriate analogous moment, is also heard with the timpani tuned to E rather than A (although the actual A-minor tonality is the same). This appearance of the lead rhythm sets in a bit earlier, without the dramatic pause heard before, and now the timpani is heard not together with the snare drum, but with the strange sound of the string basses hitting the strings with the back of their bows. The snare drum is only heard after the rhythm has sounded. The chorale-like transition is now rhythmically diminished, the note-values being halved, creating a rather hurried effect for this previously languorous passage. The celesta is now heard along with the winds, which makes the passage sound more ethereal. The plucked strings are still there, but they do not play the main subject material. The secondary "Alma" theme is not nearly as dramatically introduced, its opening gesture emerging organically from the chorale passage. The theme itself, now in D major, is greatly curtailed, with only one complete statement of the opening gesture where there had been six, and without the celesta, harps, or rushing winds. The final epilogue in D major is, however, largely unaltered from the exposition.

The abbreviated recapitulation is followed by an extremely large coda, which can be placed alongside the "distant" third section of the development as the most remarkable aspects of the movement. Indeed, the word "coda" is almost inappropriate, since we really have a second development. It begins with two funereal statements of the opening of the main theme in E minor and F-sharp minor, with the hammering low strings now on F sharp, in the tempo of the closing epilogue of the reprise. Suddenly, the funeral march is interrupted by a wild outburst. Mahler directs that the music should be suddenly faster and "entering furiously." A long developmental march in E minor follows, using all of the figures from the main thematic section. The main theme is presented together with its melodic inversion, a contrapuntal technique thus far not used. Three statements of the lead rhythm by the snare

drum are heard at the beginning. As the music reaches a feverish climax, it turns to the very remote key of E-flat minor. The glockenspiel and triangle enter, and the ensuing passage with prominent trombones is similar to the "interruption" of the "Alma" theme in the exposition. An abrupt turn to C-major follows, and we briefly hear the "distant" music again, with prominent celesta tremolos. The opening motive of the main theme is heard, but there follows a huge crescendo, during which the "Alma" theme tries to assert itself in the trumpet. The music must eventually move to A, but when it arrives there, a huge climactic moment, we are in the major mode. Perhaps the brief A-major moment at the beginning of the recapitulation has foreshadowed this, for it is in A major where the music will remain until the end. The arrival is marked with the entry of the entire percussion battery, with a huge flourish on the timpani. The "Alma" theme is now heard in all its glory, its first appearance rhythmically augmented so that it sounds especially grand. The "Liszt" theme is also transformed into a jubilant outburst, and the music rushes toward its close, becoming gradually faster, as Mahler directs. This final passage was surely intended as an apotheosis to Mahler's wife, as Alma's theme has the last word. Right before the end, there is one final slowing before a huge chord marks the high point of a statement of the melody. The cymbal, triangle, timpani, and bass drum, all ring out in joy before the sudden sprint toward a truly triumphant close.

ANDANTE: Andante moderato

4/4 Meter. E-Flat Major

For many fans of Mahler's music, his greatest accomplishments are his slow movements. Indeed, it is difficult to cite any Mahlerian Adagio or Andante movement from the symphonies that is not a masterpiece. One thinks of the heavenly Adagio of the Fourth, the melting beauty of the Fifth's Adagietto, or the monumental finales of the Third and Ninth symphonies. Even the parodistic funeral march of the First and the more genre-oriented "Nachtmusik" movements of the Seventh are among the composer's most beloved creations. Among these companions, this Andante holds a worthy place, having the spirit of the Adagietto belonging to the previous symphony, but containing richer and deeper content, as it must to provide the most extended passage of serenity among the violent storms of the Sixth.

The form is simple, and the melodies are artfully crafted so that they generate just the right amount of pathos to be believable in a "tragic" symphony while remaining achingly beautiful and serene. A case in point is the opening string melody, whose lines are easily singable, accompanied by a rocking motive from the celli. The gesture of the rising sixth lends the theme much of its character. The melody is notable for a reference to the first of the recently-composed *Kindertotenlieder* ("Nun will die Sonn so hell aufgeh'n") in its cadential gesture. The beauty of the melody is disturbed by several chromatic inflections, including the notes G-flat and C-flat, which are instrumental in defining the key of E-flat minor. The melody is clearly in the major mode, but these inflections provide just the right amount of ambiguity. They also provide an important connection to the other movements. The "major-minor" seal is absent here, and this is the only movement where this is the case. The frequent use of chromatic notes that belong to the parallel minor key, however, is certainly in the spirit of the seal. G and G-flat, C and C-flat, and other notes and

their flatted versions often appear in close proximity to each other, sometimes within the same motive, sometimes as an alteration in an immediate repetition of the same figure. Major and minor sixths, as well as major and minor thirds, are closely juxtaposed. This causes the main theme to lean strongly toward the minor mode. While the minor-key note often precedes the major one, unlike the chordal seal, the connection is still clear. Two extremely important motives, which will dominate much of the movement, become prominent. One is a gently rocking four-note "cradle" figure, initially played by oboe, where the second and third notes are the same, the contour moving either down-up before and after the repeated notes or vice versa. The repeated middle notes are given special notation to indicate that they are detached, which makes the figure easily recognizable. It is usually played by wind or low string instruments. The other common figure is four descending notes, usually a skip followed by or following two steps. The major-minor conflicts are often associated with these two figures, which could be called the "leading motives" of the movement.

The form and key structure of the movement are quite clear. It resembles a rondo with the scheme A-A'-B-C-A-B'-A''-A'. This creates a symmetrical structure with the exact midpoint coming between sections C and the central A, bar 100 of the 200-bar movement. These central sections are also about half the length of the other sections, which are close to the same length. The first two "A" sections, both entirely in the home key of E-flat, are separated by a brief melancholy theme in G minor, which is first played by the English horn. The return of the main melody is begun by the horn, with many alterations, notably the contour of the opening, which does not include the characteristic rising sixth, as well as changes in orchestration. It is rounded off by an internal coda, which dies away over a low E-flat and emphasizes the two important motives described above. A completely closed a-b-a song form is thus defined by the opening, which makes up a bit more than a fourth of the movement. The central G minor episode, which is similar to the main theme but more elegiac in character, will assume great importance in the "B" sections, which actually develop previously heard material. The developmental nature of the "B" sections contrasts with the stable opening three-part song. The first of these begins after the main theme dies out with a rising octave in string harmonics and a piercing high E-G third, signaling a motion to E minor. That key is the primary center of this section, although A minor and B minor are also very prominent. After the oboe again plays the cradle figure, the music is concerned with development of the "elegiac" theme. The descending four-note figure is also very extensively worked out. After a small climax, the music suddenly turns from E minor to E major, and the horns enter with a typical Mahlerian nature call. This suddenly bright moment is the "C" section. Its pastoral nature is emphasized by the entry of the cowbells, now in the orchestra instead of in the distance. The cowbells provide the clearest connection to the other movements, but their use in the foreground contrasts greatly with their use in the "distant" music of the first movement and Finale. The brilliant orchestration also includes harps and celesta, with trills and other "natural" sounds. The two important motives are present here as well.

The pastoral dies away and the music returns to E-flat for an abbreviated return of the main theme, introducing the second half of the movement. Again, there are

changes in orchestration, but the rising sixth is again present. The second "B" section follows, and is quite different from the first one. It begins in the open key of C major and is marked "Misterioso." The dynamic level is very quiet, and the strings are even marked "without expression." The material is primarily derived from the descending four-note motive, which had been prominent at the end of the first "B" section. An extended section centered on the symphony's home key of A follows, beginning with a serene passage in A major that continues the four-note descending figure while the "cradle" motive is played by the horn. Celesta and harp enter, as in the pastoral "C" section which also featured horns. The last remaining element of the previous "B" section is the elegiac theme, which occurred at the beginning of that section. It is now heard at the end of this one as the music moves from A major to A minor. The previous "B" section began after the music of the main section died away. This one also began quietly and mysteriously, and it ends that way as well, with the elegiac theme quietly played by the oboe and clarinet.

After the A minor music fades into the distance, Mahler introduces a dramatic shift to the key of C-sharp minor, important as the relative key of E major, where the pastoral section was heard, both keys being quite remote from the central key of E-flat. This key change accompanies a sudden outburst of sound following a very quiet passage (a gesture quite typical of the entire symphony). The material remains the elegiac theme, which is now stated in full and accompanied by a powerful new counterpoint in the upper strings and wind. This leads to the climax of the movement as the key moves to B minor and B major. The entire orchestra enters and reaches a dynamic level of triple forte as the cowbells are heard again, playing strongly for the only time in the symphony. This occurs right before the main theme is suddenly heard in B major in the bass. The music continues strongly, with joyous utterances of the "cradle" figure. The main theme material builds to another, smaller climax as a deft harmonic shift moves the music back to the long absent home key of E-flat. This entire section beginning with the shift to C-sharp minor constitutes the A'' section. The elegiac theme is again a part of a section including two statements of the main theme, but it precedes them rather than coming between them. The first statement of the main theme is the climactic B-major entry in the bass. The move back to E-flat introduces the final section and rounds off the symmetrical form. This final section resembles the music that brought the first main section to a close, making much of both leading motives. It continues strongly at length over several timpani rolls, an instrument first heard at the motion to the climax. Finally, the cadential figures begin to die away. The figure that dominates the ending is a combination of the two leading motives—a step down, a leap up, and a larger leap (often an octave) back down. Mahler has yet one more curve to throw the listener, however: eight measures before the end, the bassoons and low strings play a mildly accented diminished seventh chord, a disturbing sonority that almost upsets the serenity of the ending. Harp and celesta enter at the very end, with the low strings playing the motive just described before the final sounds of a quiet chord on the horns and a low plucked E-flat. The movement is both profound and gorgeous, both unified and varied. Many extended tonal centers feature in the movement. Among these are both E major and minor; B major and minor; and A major and minor, along with the main key of E-flat and C-sharp minor, the key that led to the climax. The appear-

ance of the major and minor versions of E, B, and A emphasizes the major-minor conflict of the symphony. The movement's serenity and beauty is disturbed by inescapable connections to the drama of the other movements, emphasized by the troubling chord eight measures from the end.

SCHERZO: Wuchtig

3/8 Meter (often alternating with mainly 4/8 and 2/4, but also 3/4 and 2/8). A Minor

In terms of real time, the Scherzo is by far the shortest movement of the Sixth, although it has twice as many bars as the slow Andante. Its form is also clear, like the first movement, and far more straightforward than that of the Scherzo of the Fifth (which is that work's longest movement). Not only that, but the tonal structure is less fluid. The scherzo sections all remain in A minor, and the two trio sections are in the related keys of F major and D major (analogous to the "Alma" theme in the first movement). Despite its formal clarity, the movement has aspects that make it one of the strangest Mahlerian symphonic movements. Most obviously, the composer had never experimented with the flexibility of meter that the Scherzo shows. In the two contrasting trio sections, the time signature changes at virtually every bar. Not only that, but in the main scherzo sections themselves, there is enough ambiguity of accent to create the effect of 4/8 meter superimposed upon the prevailing 3/8. This is the case in the first six bars, where the timpanist enters a beat "early" with an accented upbeat. The timpanist continues with groups of three accenting the third beat of each measure. After the first stroke, the low strings enter on the same pitch, A, but accenting the "correct" downbeat. This dissonance between accented groups of three in the timpani and low strings obscures the meter and anticipates the more overt shifts later on. The Scherzo retains most of the orchestra of the first movement, but adds the tam-tam gong (which will also appear in the Finale). The cowbells are absent (this is the only movement without them), as are the snare drum (also missing in the Andante) and celesta, but the xylophone and glockenspiel are retained from the first movement. This is the last appearance of the xylophone, but the glockenspiel returns in the Finale. In this movement, the small E-flat clarinet, always associated with the grotesque, is used to great effect.

The movement has an eerie and frightening effect in certain passages, and uses both the "lead rhythm" and "major-minor seal" from the first movement. The trio sections contrast greatly in mood, despite the fact that thematic material is shared with the main scherzo sections. The rhythmic dissonance at the beginning gives the music the character of both the march style of the first movement and the more overt German dance, or Ländler, implied by the 3/8 meter. There are many points of contact with the first movement, most clearly the prominent A-minor tonality. The opening drum and low-string reiterations of the note A are a direct reference, as is the opening theme itself, which has a similar contour to the first movement's opening subject. Most notable is the trill on strings and woodwinds followed by two rapidly descending notes, all doubled by the harsh xylophone, which creates a direct aural link to the similar gesture in the opening movement. One memorable gesture is a fast four-note ascending upbeat, which will play an important role in transition passages later on. A memorable high piccolo note follows the last of

these in the first subsection. Another wonderful Mahlerian direction accompanies a long note preceded by two quick grace notes an octave higher: "wie gepeitscht" ("as if whipped").

There are three statements of the scherzo section, each one slightly shorter than the last, alternating with the two versions of the trio. The first of these has three subsections, the second two, and the third only one. The middle part of the first main scherzo section contains an anticipation of the trio theme with its alternating 3/8 and 4/8 bars, while the third part is similar to the first. Toward the end of the first and third parts is a distinctive oscillation between parallel chords in the brass instruments, with the tuba in its very lowest register. The scherzo proper ends with a sort of disintegration. The percussion battery enters with a flourish against the rapid chromatic descent of the other instruments and the first appearance of the major-minor seal in the trumpets. This quickly quiets down, and we are left with bare repetitions of the notes A and C, the clarinet, flute, and then oboe continuing on the latter note, which leads to the first trio.

The trio itself in the new key of F major is quite different in character. It is marked "Altväterisch," a curious German word which has been translated in numerous and varied ways. It is often rendered as "old-fashioned," but the most direct translation would probably be "grandfatherly." Perhaps Mahler was intending to imitate the gait of an limping old man with the quickly changing time signatures. Alma's suggestion that the trio suggests the playing of the children on the beach is contradicted by the fact that their second child was not yet born when the Scherzo was composed. At any rate, Mahler marks "grazioso" (gracefully), a characteristic that might conflict with the clumsy effect of the time signature change at virtually every bar. The tune itself, originally played by the oboe, continuing from the end of the main section, is certainly rather naïve in character. The placement of the shifts between 3/8 and 4/8 is often more visual than aural. The 4/8 measures usually contain an accented upbeat on their fourth beat that leads to the same repeated note in the following 3/8 bar, which certainly creates confusion. Aurally, it can sound as if the shifts come in different places than they actually do if the conductor is not skilled at conveying the actual changes. There are also isolated bars of 3/4, which combine the aspects of the other two meters. There are four distinct sections in the first trio, but all of them consist of the same basic material. The markers come with a temporary break in the shifting meter and a "natural" speeding of the tempo toward the end of each subsection. These quicker passages are marked by the entrance of the timpani, and they vaguely recall the main scherzo section. At the end of the second of these passages, the opening rhythm of the scherzo section, with the accented third beat, appears in the timpani. Throughout the trio, the repeated notes of the 3/8 measures recall the main section, and the connection is unusually strong despite the naïve, "grandfatherly" nature of the trio theme. The fourth "naturally" quick passage leads to a quick dissipation, and the transition back to the second statement of the main scherzo section.

This transition is unusually long. It is in two parts, the first introduced by the familiar "off-beat" timpani, while the repeated notes enter heavily in the horns, now with dissonant, sliding grace notes, and the winds play in parallel thirds. The second part is a strange interlude, in a tempo even slower than that of the trio, and retaining the F tonality of the trio, but moving to minor. This passage utilizes the

rapid four-note upbeat figure noted in the scherzo section, played by clarinet and oboe. It is the most eerie part of the movement. In addition to the return of the xylophone, the strings now play with the back of the bow. This technique has always been associated with the fantastic or the demonic, and it is quite overt here. After the repeated notes with their grace notes briefly reappear, the ghostly reverie is suddenly interrupted by a return of the fast scherzo tempo and the main theme along with the A-minor tonality.

This second statement of the scherzo section is only in two parts, and considerably shorter, but it is also somewhat more frenetic in its pace and goals. The two parts are separated by the most shattering moment thus far. For the first time, the tam-tam gong enters, and it is accompanied by none other than the lead rhythm from the first movement. It is obscured by the 3/8 meter, but it is nonetheless there in the timpani. The material of this second statement is much the same as it was the first time, but it is of course greatly altered. The anticipation of the trio and its shifting meters is also dispensed with, since we have now already heard the trio itself. At the end, the major-minor seal in the trumpets again accompanies the disintegration, but this is altered, incorporating pizzicato strings. The repeated notes become thin much faster than before, and now are only on the note A, and the piccolo is included.

The second trio statement is again introduced by the oboe, but is now in the key of D major, more closely related to A minor. This trio section is radically different from the first statement, but the differences are extremely subtle. The meter changes are entirely different. The 4/8 bars are completely absent, now usually replaced by 2/4. The number of eighth notes is the same in each, but the 2/4 bars seem to imply a slightly slower tempo, and indeed Mahler hints at this in the vague direction "Like the first time, notably slower." What is unclear is the comparison: slower than what? Slower than the scherzo proper would already be the implication, but perhaps Mahler meant slower than the first trio. The substitution of 2/4 for 4/8 would certainly imply that, and indeed, the second trio seems smoother and more soothing than the first one. In addition to the 2/4 bars, 3/4 bars become much more common than they were in the first trio. Often they replace 3/8 bars, but original 4/8 bars are also replaced. This also has a "lengthening," slowing effect and it removes some of the ambiguity of the four repeated notes beginning with the last beat of a 4/8 bar that were present before. We now expect to hear four notes, but often we only hear three at the end of a 3/4 measure. These very subtle changes in the trio are perhaps the most skillful transformations in the movement. Again, there are four subsections marked by the "natural" speeding of the tempo at the end, with the entrance of the timpani recalling the scherzo section.

The long transition is again present, but the "eerie" interlude is now in the rather remote and harsh key of E-flat minor. It is also greatly altered, however. The clarinet sounds more lugubrious in the four-note upbeat figure, and instead of the repeated notes with grace notes, we have reminiscences of the trill/xylophone figure from the scherzo proper. The main theme itself is also hinted at where it was not before, by the oboe and bass clarinet. Thus, the return of the main tempo and the third statement of the scherzo proper is not as jarring as it was before. This last main scherzo section is much shorter than the previous ones and it moves at an even more frantic pace. It now incorporates the grace notes from the transition passages in the

repeated notes. At its climax, the shattering tam-tam is heard again, but now the entire percussion section joins it, along with blasts from the horns and trombones. It leads not to more of the scherzo section, but to the coda of the entire movement.

The coda is based on both the scherzo and trio sections. As the tam-tam and percussion are sounding their interruption, the trumpets and oboes blast out the trio theme, complete with changing meters. A long chromatic scale on the strings and flute (the latter playing with flutter tongue), as well as grace-note passages on the horn, rapidly die away and lead to the first part, which is based on the trio theme, but it is now devoid of its charm and naïveté. The entire coda is hushed and desolate. Motives from the scherzo proper appear, and the four-note ascending upbeat introduces six (!) statements of the major-minor seal, the first three by the trumpets and flutes and the last three by the clarinets. These must be the most quiet statements of the seal in the symphony. The fact that there are six of them in the brief coda, whereas the rest of the movement only has two, at the end of the first two scherzo sections, places the "seal" on the fact that this Scherzo is indeed a tragic movement of the tragic symphony. The transformation of the trio theme also confirms this. The six major-minor statements accompany motives from both the scherzo and the trio, and the meter changes occur until the end (2/4 as in the second trio is used rather than 4/8). After the final statement of the seal by the clarinets, the last words are left to four rather unlikely instruments. The small E-flat clarinet plays the thematic fragments of the main scherzo over the last two statements of the seal in the regular clarinets. It is followed by the low string basses without cellos, and then by the bass clarinet, giving importance to the entire section of clarinets. The final instrument to play the theme is the unlikely contrabassoon, which is completely exposed by itself for two measures before the basses and timpani play a ghostly shadow of the main motive to end the proceedings. Although it is short, this is one of the most famous solo passages for contrabassoon. The context makes it clear as to why this is the case. The entire movement is perhaps the most tragic and desolate of the four, lacking the shouts of jubilation of the Finale and first movement or any of the soothing warmth of the Andante. The clumsy naïveté and rather false sweetness of the trio sections are a poor substitute.

FINALE: Allegro moderato—Allegro energico 2/2—4/4 Meter. C Minor—A Minor

The finale is rightly regarded as one of Mahler's most magnificent creations. At 822 bars and over 30 minutes in length, it is surpassed only by the first movement of the Third Symphony as Mahler's longest purely instrumental movement. As large and impressive as the three previous movements are, they are nearly dwarfed by this intense and diverse piece, which includes some of the most wildly jubilant and the most shatteringly tragic music the composer ever wrote. Here Mahler uses his full complement of wind and percussion instruments, not including the xylophone used in the first movement and the Scherzo, but bringing in the previously unheard whip and the so called distant "low bell noise," two or three very low bells of uncertain pitch to be played in an irregular manner, similar to the cowbells, which are also included here. And of course, there is the hammer, whose two (or three) blows help to mark important structural points near the center of

the movement and which may be the most famous aspect of the entire symphony.

Such a lengthy and complex movement would be expected to generate animated discussion among Mahler enthusiasts. Many of the greatest scholars, including Adorno, Floros, and Redlich, disagree on the formal structure of the movement, although it actually seems quite clear. All agree that the movement is in a sonata form, like the first movement, but the boundaries between exposition, development, and recapitulation are disputed. The primary stumbling block is the presence of an introduction, whose theme and tempo occur not just at the beginning of the movement, but also three more times. The simplest way to follow the movement's form is to consider each recurrence of the introduction as a prelude to the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda of the movement. These "introductory" passages should not be considered as belonging to the sections they introduce. This makes the movement's form very clear and symmetrical. The whole is basically built out of this introductory material plus only three other thematic elements. The development section consists of four obvious parts. The first two hammer blows come at the beginning of the second and fourth parts of the development. Midway between the blows, then, is the center of the development, which is also the center of the entire movement.

The introduction begins not in the main key of the movement (and the symphony), A minor, but in C minor, which is the relative key of the Andante's E-flat major (providing an argument for placing the Andante directly before it). An initial low C is followed by sweeping harp and celesta arpeggios and a dissonant chord from the winds. The sweeping introductory theme itself begins with an ascending octave on the violins. The second phrase moves quickly to A minor, and is accompanied by both the "lead rhythm" on the timpani and the "major-minor" seal in the brass. This provides a clear connection to the first movement. The other theme belonging to the introduction follows, a dirge-like tune seeming to come from a distance and beginning with an ascending octave played by the tuba in a slower tempo. Distinctive rapid figures are heard, and it is here that the "low bell sounds" are played for the first time. The remainder of the introduction consists of motives and themes that come from the main subjects of the movement, beginning with the eventual second subject in the horns combined with a tune from the first subject in the low winds. More combinations of these motives in the slower tempo again lead to C minor and to a solemn wind and brass chorale. This passage is derived from the chorale-like transitional theme, the third primary element of the symphony's main section. The chorale passage is interrupted by the major-minor seal and the lead rhythm, now heard in G minor. The "distant" music with elements from the main themes returns and gradually speeds up, leading to the main tempo, *Allegro energico*. The faster tempo is reached, but the key is again C minor, and what is actually heard is a bridge passage to the exposition, characterized by a dotted-rhythm figure in the low strings.

This transition again speeds up and intensifies, and the exposition begins with the strong arrival of A minor, which is heralded by brass fanfares. The first subject begins strongly, with the full orchestra playing two half-note chords followed by the same dotted rhythm, upon which the first theme is based. Rhythmically, this is clearly related to the lugubrious tuba theme in the introduction. A long and frantic march begins, solidly in the home key of A

minor, and becoming more and more agitated, leading eventually to eight heavy chords on the trombones, four A-major triads followed by four in A minor, and thus articulating the major-minor seal again. These chords introduce the horn chorale whose seeds were also heard in the introduction. It is characterized by a descending octave followed by an ascending octave a half-step lower. This chorale continues at length and is later passed to the strings. It is often considered to be part of the first subject, since it remains in A minor, but it is clearly transitional in nature and constitutes one of the three main thematic elements of the exposition. It reaches moments of jubilation that anticipate the pure joy of the second subject. Rapid string figuration and motives from the first subject briefly return, and the music very quickly decreases in volume. There is a clear modulation to D major, the key of the second subject. It begins with distinctive and ethereal rapid, quiet repeated chords in the flutes and clarinets. The horn then intones the second subject melody, which will be familiar from the introduction. This D-major second subject material begins quietly, but it very quickly rises to heights of jubilation that constitute some of the most joyous music Mahler ever wrote. The theme is similar in character to the first movement's "Alma" theme. The horn tune is continued on winds and leads to the second part of the subject, beginning with an ascending octave in the strings reminiscent of the introduction but entirely different in mood. These two elements reach a feverish climax—which is rudely cut off by a low D, a heavy timpani and bass drum stroke, and a dissonant outburst. The key remains D, but the mode is suddenly minor, and we have reached the end of the exposition.

The arrival of the minor mode heralds the return of the introduction, which will now introduce the huge four-part development section. Again, we hear harp and celesta, but the introduction theme itself, after the initial ascending octave, is inverted and now plunges downward. This D-minor statement of the "introduction" is quite different from the C/A-minor one that began the movement. It features prominent chords on the celesta, and before the "low bell sounds," the return of the cowbells from a distance. It is also considerably shorter. A sudden turn to F-sharp major begins the first formal section of the development. At first, the mood of the introduction continues, but motives from the second subject are prominent, and the music moves from F-sharp through B-flat, and quickly again to D major. This was the key of the second subject, and it is that subject that dominates this first part of the development. It now reaches even more feverish and jubilant heights than it had in the exposition. Just as the music approaches a grand cadence, **it happens** — the first blow of the hammer, which Mahler directed should be powerful, but dull, like the chopping of an ax. The major-minor seal is also heard here. The hammer blow signals the return of the minor mode, but the music does not slow down as at the end of the exposition. Instead, the trumpet plays a passage from the transitional chorale theme. The hammer blow has introduced the second part of the development section, which returns to the second subject material in A major, an important structural return to the long-absent main tonal center. This time the music leads to a dramatic battle scene in the remote key of F minor, introduced by powerful blasts from the horns. The rest of the instruments continue in the rhythm of the horns. The battle music is intense, but short-lived, and it is abruptly cut short by a sudden grand pause and the entry of the percussion, including the first beat of the tam-tam, along with another

playing of the major-minor seal by the trumpets. The second beat of the tam-tam and another seal follow very shortly thereafter.

This is the third part of the development, and the exact midpoint of the movement, appropriately returning to C minor, the key in which it began. For the first time, the first subject is used for development. The only appearance of the whip in the entire symphony occurs here. The music moves to a "fiery" section in C major, still using the first subject material. The major mode continues, modulating to G before another important return to A. The second subject is again used, this time in combination with the introduction theme in a short hymn-like passage that leads to a joyous and familiar cadence. It is the same cadence that was interrupted with the first hammer blow, and on cue, the second blow occurs. The preceding triumphant music is somewhat less exuberant than it was before, and this second hammer blow is appropriately somewhat less strong, although it is reinforced by a third tam-tam stroke. The chorale melody follows in the trumpets as before, and the final portion of the development section, beginning with a B-flat chord, is devoted to that theme. It is not especially long, but for the fourth time in the movement, a climax is abruptly interrupted. The introduction again returns, ending the massive development section.

The four "interruptions" of exuberant climactic cadences have marked the introductory section preceding the development, the two hammer blows, and now the introduction again, this time preceding the recapitulation. This third version of the introduction seems to combine aspects of the first two. It begins in C minor, as at the beginning, but unlike the first introduction, it stays in that key. Curiously, the cadence leading to the introduction is not in C, but in D, as at the second statement before the development. The initial note D is held as a dissonant pedal point well after the music has moved to C. This initial note is for the first time underscored by a tam-tam beat, the fourth of the movement. These tam-tam beats, all occurring in the second half of the movement, seem through their placement to have a structural importance underscoring the increasing sense of tragedy and hopelessness as the movement progresses. The second phrase of the introductory theme occurs as at the beginning but without moving to A, and is again underscored by the lead rhythm and the major-minor seal in C. The distant tuba theme, along with the motives from the main subjects, are heard as at the beginning, but this time the "low bells" and the cowbells are both heard in the distance, as before the development (though their order is reversed). Although perhaps more similar to the first introduction, it is brief like the second, omitting the long chorale passage.

The recapitulation uses all of the themes, but their order is reversed, which causes confusion among analysts. Following precedents from the romantic period, it is the second subject that is now heard first. Beginning with the second subject allows Mahler to introduce more variety to the huge movement. It also provides a link to the development, which was largely based on second subject material. It begins in the key of B-flat, which had been foreshadowed at the end of the development. The music quickly moves to A, however, and the rest of the movement will mostly remain in this home key, major or minor. The second subject is expanded, and it is now combined with motives from the first subject and the chorale, and even the lead rhythm is heard at the climax. Finally, the first subject itself is heard with a motion to the minor

mode, signaled by the characteristic dotted rhythms of that theme. As in the exposition, the first subject leads to the trombone blasts and the major-minor seal, which would indicate that the transitory chorale will follow. Unlike the corresponding passage in the exposition, the lead rhythm is combined with the seal. This increasing frequency of the lead rhythm also contributes to the increasing sense of foreboding toward the end of the movement. The chorale theme does indeed follow but this time it is combined with motives from the first and second subjects and is more elaborate. It briefly moves to B-flat, where the second subject had begun. This is the last motion away from A that will be heard. Since the second subject has already been heard, the transition needs to lead somewhere else, and this is to a new and hymn-like version of the introduction in A major, completely transformed from its original context. It plays the role of an epilogue to the recapitulation. The transformed introduction leads to a final heroic struggle using the jubilant second part of the second subject. It begins against the lead rhythm in the drums, an ominous sign. Having heard a joyous climax cut off four times before, this seems inevitable now. The march to tragedy is inexorable.

It is again the introduction music that cuts off the cadence, and for the first time, it is in A minor throughout. As with the third appearance, a final tam-tam beat accompanies the initial low A. This final statement of the introduction is also the darkest, and it serves as a grim coda to the movement. It is with the second phrase that the third hammer blow was originally included (and will be heard here on Saturday night) with the penultimate appearance of the lead rhythm and the final appearance of the major-minor seal. With or without the hammer blow, all hope is now lost. The timpani of the lead rhythm continues to beat and die gradually away with the horns and low strings. The remaining music is devoted to a somber elegy from the tuba and trombones, an imitative treatment of music related to the distant tuba theme of the introduction, and characterized by rising and falling octaves. The whole is underscored by a soft rolled A on the timpani. At the end, it becomes still slower and the low strings enter, closing the elegy with the contrabassoon, bassoon, and bass clarinet taking over for the trombones. As it dies to nothingness, a final tragic blast of an A-minor chord, significantly not preceded by the major chord of the seal, is played by the entire orchestra, along with the embellished final, shattering statement of the lead rhythm

on the timpani, which quickly fades away with the minor chord of the trumpets. Only a low and hopeless



Myth & Reality in Mahler's Sixth Symphony

Jeffry Gantz

Composed in the summers of 1903 and 1904, and premiered at Essen on May 27, 1906, Gustav Mahler's Sixth Symphony, which has become known as the "Tragic," remains a minefield. The revisions that Mahler made in the summer of 1906 have created one level of controversy; statements that his wife, Alma, made in her memoirs have added another. Which order should the two inner movements be played in? Why did Mahler remove the last hammer blow from the Finale? And how did the symphony become the "Tragische"?

Introduction: That "Tragische" subtitle

In his "Undoing a 'Tragic' Mistake," the Mahler Sixth "white paper" that the Gilbert Kaplan Foundation will publish this spring, Jerry Bruck — who was among those who back in 1964 persuaded Alma to allow Mahler's Tenth Symphony to be performed reproduces the program for the symphony's Vienna premiere, which Mahler himself conducted on January 4, 1907, and we see the "Tragische" subtitle. On page 814 (note 44) of the English translation of Volume Three of his ongoing Mahler biography, *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*, Henry-Louis de La Grange states that this subtitle first turned up on the program for the performance that Mahler conducted, on November 8, 1906, in Munich, but there is no sign of it on the reproduction of that program that Bruck provides. We do not have the program for the Berlin premiere, which Otto Fried conducted on October 15, 1906; this is the first performance at which the subtitle might have been appended, but the absence of "Tragische" in Munich a month later suggests that it first appeared at the Vienna premiere the following January. Jerry Bruck adds that "Tragische" does not appear on any of the scores that Kahnt published, or in Richard Specht's thematic analysis.

Who was responsible for this subtitle? In his *Gustav Mahler* memoir (page 123 in the 1975 reprint of the 1937 English translation), Bruno Walter states that "Mahler called it his *Tragic Symphony*." It's nonetheless odd to think that in 1907 Mahler would be returning to titles and programs. For its 1893 Hamburg performance, he gave his First Symphony (which at the time was still a "tone poem in symphonic form") the name "Titan," after the Romantic novel by Jean Paul, and a detailed program, but by 1896 he had withdrawn it. The "Auferstehung" subtitle for No. 2 comes from the Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock text, but Mahler was not responsible for "Lied der Nacht" (No. 7) or "Sinfonie der Tausend" (No. 8), and in any case he had disavowed subtitles and programs by 1900. One can imagine his acceding to the suggestion of a plausible and promotable name like "Tragische" for the Vienna premiere, but the fact remains that he did not so title this symphony when he composed it.

Allegro energico: Does Mahler appropriate a motif from Liszt's E-flat Piano Concerto?

At bar 35 of the Allegro energico, Mahler quotes a seven-note motif from bar 17 of the third movement of Liszt's E-flat Piano Concerto. The motif goes on to play a major role in the Allegro that culminates with its peroration in the horns at bar 466.

On page 557 (note 93) of *Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897-1904)*, Henry-Louis de La Grange records that Mahler conducted the piano concerto, with Eugen d'Albert as soloist, in a program with his own Fourth Symphony on January 23, 1903. Perhaps the motif stuck in his mind. He finished the Allegro in the summer of 1904, but he appears to have made sketches in the summer of 1903.

What this does not explain is why the Liszt concerto appears in the second half of the Munich program of November 8, 1906, where the Sixth made up the first half of the evening. It is hard to believe that at this point Mahler was not aware of having borrowed the Liszt motif, and likewise hard to understand why he would then call attention to what he'd done unless he had a point

to make. But what was that point? It would be interesting to know whether any of the Munich concert's reviewers observed the appearance of the concerto theme in the symphony.

Allegro energico: Is the F-major theme Mahler's expression of Alma?

At bar 76 of the Allegro energico, after the chorale, a soaring F-major theme appears; it serves as the movement's second subject and dominates the A-major coda. On page 70 of the 1975 American edition of her *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, Alma tells us that this theme was intended as a portrait of her: "After he had drafted the first movement, he came down from the wood 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.' "Alma's memory in such matters tends to be flattering to herself. It would be unkind — and probably just plain wrong — to suggest that she made up this charming story, but we should remember that we do not have it from Mahler himself. It's not inconceivable that he told Alma he had written her into a theme to please her and make her feel she was part of his work.

Scherzo: Does the "Altväterisch" Trio represent the "unrhythmical games" of Maria and Anna?

Again on page 70 of *Memories and Letters*, Alma tells us: "In the third movement he represented the unrhythmic games of the two little children, tottering in zigzags over the sand." The first thing to note here is that by "third movement" Alma (who according to Henry-Louis de La Grange began writing around 1920) means the Scherzo; this point will be relevant when we consider her position on whether the Scherzo is meant to precede the Andante or vice versa. She's talking about the Scherzo's "Altväterisch" Trio, where the time signature keeps switching from 4/8 to 3/8 to 3/4. The problem is that the Scherzo was composed in the summer of 1903. Maria Anna was born November 3, 1902; Anna Justine was born in July 15, 1904. So they weren't both running about when Mahler wrote this music.

On page 825 of *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*, Henry-Louis de La Grange attempts to rescue Alma from her predicament by suggesting that she "wrongly wrote 'children'" and meant only Maria Anna. Such an argument does not inspire confidence in her accuracy or in the reliability of her memory.

The inner movements: "First Scherzo, then Andante"?

This must be the most vexing question facing Mahler scholars today (unless it's the matter of the hammer blows — see below). To most Mahler listeners, it's not even an issue: the Critical Edition published by the Internationale Gustav Mahler Gesellschaft in 1963 has the Scherzo second and the Andante third, and with few exceptions, that's how the Sixth Symphony has been performed since.

But is that how Mahler wanted it? The facts do not support the decision that editor Erwin Ratz made. True, Mahler did conceive his Sixth Symphony with the Scherzo second and the Andante third. The usual practice in symphonic writing was lyrical movement second and dance movement third — but Beethoven reverses it in his Ninth Symphony, and Mahler himself did the same in his Fourth. He appears to have been uncertain about the Sixth, since as Jerry Bruck observes in "Undoing a 'Tragic' Mistake," at some point he switched the Roman numerals in his autograph, marking the Scherzo III instead of II and the Andante II instead of III. What we don't know is whether he made this change sometime during the composition process or not until the summer of 1906, and then merely to bring the autograph into line with the second edition of the published score.

If Mahler did in fact contemplate placing the Andante before the Scherzo at some point before he sent the symphony off to the

publishers, he did not act on that impulse: the version that C.F. Kahnt published in March 1906, and that Mahler took with him to Essen, has the Scherzo preceding the Andante. During the Essen rehearsals, however, Mahler decided that the Andante should precede the Scherzo, and he instructed Kahnt to prepare a second edition and to insert errata slips into unsold copies of the first edition. That is how the symphony was performed in his lifetime, and that is how his friend Willem Mengelberg performed it with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in 1916.

Then in 1919, as Mengelberg was preparing for an October 5 performance of the symphony, it appears that he telegraphed Alma to ask what the order should be. On page 815 of *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*, Henry-Louis de La Grange concludes that Mahler and Mengelberg “probably” discussed the matter in October of 1909, when Mengelberg conducted Mahler’s Seventh. In “Undoing a ‘Tragic’ Mistake,” however, Jerry Bruck points out that in a letter postmarked July 6, 1909, Mahler “asked Mengelberg to send him his score of the Sixth, presumably so that Mahler could enter some further changes. Mengelberg’s conducting score shows Mahler’s last known changes to the Sixth, neatly entered in red ink.” These changes do not include reverting to the Scherzo/Andante order of movements. And if Mahler expressed doubts about the inner-movement order orally to Mengelberg in October 1909, why didn’t Mengelberg raise the question with Alma when he conducted the symphony in 1916?

More plausible is the notion that post-1916 Mengelberg came across a first-edition score that had been sold before Mahler made his errata-slip request, or else one whose errata slip had fallen out. The first and second editions bore the same plate numbers, so his confusion would be understandable. Alma replied to his telegram, “First Scherzo, then Andante,” and that’s how Mengelberg did it in 1919 and again in 1920 during the Amsterdam Mahler Fest. Also in 1919 and 1920, however, Oskar Fried conducted the Sixth in Vienna with the Andante preceding the Scherzo, and that remained the norm. Neither was there a peep out of Alma in 1947 when Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic played it that way at the symphony’s American première, or when recordings with the revised order began to appear in the ’50s.

In 1963, the Critical Edition of the Sixth came out from the IGMG, and lo and behold the Scherzo was back in its original second position, Erwin Ratz explaining that some time before his death Mahler had changed his mind. Ratz provided no evidence for this statement; he didn’t even cite Alma’s telegram. Nonetheless, few conductors challenged his edition. John Barbirolli continued to perform the piece with the Andante preceding the Scherzo, but when his recording appeared, EMI switched the movements (apparently without his approval) to conform to the Critical Edition. (In the most recent release of this performance, in its Double Forte series, EMI has reswitched them so they’re back to the Andante/Scherzo order Barbirolli favored.) Harold Farberman, from 1950 to 1963 a BSO percussionist, stuck with the Andante/Scherzo order on his MMG LP with the London Symphony in 1982; when Vox released this performance on CD in 2000, however, the label switched the movements to conform to the Critical Edition (here again the conductor was not consulted). Benjamin Zander’s first performance with the Boston Philharmonic (briefly available on tape in the mid ’80s) had the Andante preceding the Scherzo, but on both his 1994 live BPO recording and his 2001 Philharmonia effort, he’s reverted to the Critical Edition. Simon Rattle has been the most outspoken advocate of the Andante/Scherzo order, and his 1989 recording of the Sixth has become the whipping boy of uninformed reviewers.

There is, it turns out, not a shred of evidence that Mahler changed his mind about wanting the Andante to precede the Scherzo. Back in 1998, Jerry Bruck’s arguments moved Glen Cortese to adopt the Andante/Scherzo order in his recording with the Manhattan School of Music Symphony; Leonard Slatkin and James Judd have done so since, Leon Botstein conducted it that way this past August at the Bard Music Festival, Mariss Jansons did so in Pittsburgh in September, and Charles Mackerras likewise with the BBC Symphony in November. The IGMG supported Erwin Ratz’s decision in the Critical Edition revision of 1998, but

editor-in-chief Reinhold Kubik has since expressed doubts in the light of Bruck’s evidence.

What is the case for placing the Scherzo before the Andante? The most obvious argument is that this is how Mahler conceived the work. It also seems the more “modern” arrangement, conjuring not only Beethoven’s Ninth and Mahler’s own Fourth but also Bruckner’s Eighth and Ninth. On page 373 of his essay on the Sixth Symphony for *The Mahler Companion*, David Matthews asks us to “note just how carefully Mahler has avoided A minor in the second half of the first movement [the “Garden” section is in E-flat, and the movement ends in A major] . . . so that the plunge back into A minor at the beginning of the Scherzo comes as a shock.” He notes that the Scherzo’s “Altväterisch” Trio is, like the Alma theme, in F major. And like every adherent of the Scherzo/Andante order, he stresses the importance of the transition between the conclusion of the Andante and the beginning of the Finale, since E-flat major and C minor share the same key signature, three flats. He argues (again on page 373) that the A minor that emerges in the Finale “makes very little impact if we have just heard the Scherzo” and that “the C minor of the [Finale’s] introduction makes little sense as a bridge from A minor back again to A minor in a few bars.”

Why, then, did Mahler switch the movements? Matthews assures us (on page 372), “It is quite possible to argue that the chief, perhaps even the only reason that Mahler reversed the order of the two movements was the same as that which led him to remove the third hammer blow in the Finale: fear of the Symphony’s prophetic power, and an instinctive wish to diminish it.” In the end, he believes that Mahler saw the light. “Alma’s telegram,” he contends (again on page 372), “would seem to imply that, some time after the Vienna performance, and possibly near the end of his life (when he worked on new versions of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies), Mahler had expressed to her a wish to revert to the original order; unless (which is unlikely but not inconceivable) Alma had made her own independent decision based on her preference for Mahler’s original concept of the symphony.” On page 815 of *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*, Henry-Louis de La Grange seconds this view: “I see every reason here to believe she was passing on Mahler’s final decision.”

Do these arguments justify replacing Scherzo before the Andante? The decision at Essen was not made lightly. A composer who premières his symphony Andante/Scherzo immediately after publishing it Scherzo/Andante can expect a degree of public ridicule, and in his January 6, 1907, *Neues Wiener Journal* review of the Vienna première, “H.R.” — probably Heinrich Reinhardt — didn’t spare the sarcasm. What’s more, the revised version makes its own sense in the way it moves from the A-minor Allegro energico to the E-flat-major (the heroic, redemptive key of Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony and “Emperor” Concerto and Mahler’s own “Auferstehung” Symphony) Andante to the A-minor Scherzo to, finally, an attempt at E-flat major (from C minor, just like the “Auferstehung”) that fails. After the Allegro energico’s triumphant A-major conclusion, you might expect the next movement to be in the dominant, E major (just as the First Symphony goes from the D-major first movement to the A-major Scherzo), but instead, as if that were too much Heaven to expect, it slips down a half-step to the E-flat that the “Garden” section of the Allegro energico has prepared. When the Andante briefly achieves E major, we’re reminded what its key signature should have been. In the end the Andante’s anguish (with its *Kindertotenlieder* allusions) prepares us for the Scherzo’s A minor and its intimations of mortality, particularly the children’s. As for the link between the Andante and the Finale, it’s a clever transition, but it doesn’t do much for the symphony’s teleology. Where is the Finale trying to go? Its goal as announced by those first few bars has to be E-flat major, but that makes no sense when the previous movement has been in E-flat. The Finale is, moreover, not fated to end in A minor: it strives for both E-flat and A major.

David Matthews’s contention that Mahler reversed the order of the two inner movements out of a desire to diminish the Symphony’s “prophetic power” is perplexing: surely the Sixth is

less rather than more “tragic” when the comforting Andante follows the discomfiting Scherzo instead of preceding it. (Just as surely it is Mahler’s conductors who have sought to diminish the Sixth’s negative aura by putting the Andante in the weightier third position.) As for Alma’s 1919 telegram, it raises a host of awkward questions. Would Mahler really have reverted to the Scherzo/Andante order without an opportunity to hear the symphony performed that way? Why would what Henry-Louis de La Grange calls Mahler’s “final decision” have been communicated to Alma and not to C.F. Kahnt as well? How did Mahler expect Alma to carry out this “decision”? When was she planning to speak out? If in 1919 her opinion had not been sought, would we ever have heard from her? If it was clear in her mind that the Scherzo was to precede the Andante, why in *Memories and Letters* does she refer to the Scherzo as the third movement? And why did she never protest the Andante/Scherzo Dimitri Mitropoulos New York Philharmonic performances of the Sixth in 1947 and 1955, or the recordings that were made by F. Charles Adler (in 1952) and Eduard Flipse (in 1955)?

Jerry Bruck suggests that Alma’s clearest memories of the symphony were those of its inception, when the Scherzo did precede the Andante. He also directs our attention to the liner note for the F. Charles Adler SPA LP release of the Third Symphony, where Alma “describes in vivid detail the furnishings and surroundings of Mahler’s composing *Häuschen* at Maiernigg” when in fact “Mahler had composed the Third at his lakeside cottage in Steinbach, long before summering in Maiernigg or having known Alma.” Matthews thinks it “unlikely but not inconceivable” that Alma’s telegram expressed her own view and not Mahler’s; to me it seems all too likely that she spoke her mind and not her husband’s. If the matter had been important to her, she would have spoken out earlier — and later.

The revised version of the Sixth Symphony, with the Andante preceding the Scherzo, is the only one that Mahler actually conducted. In changing the order of the middle movements immediately after having the symphony published, he incurred no little expense and made himself look ridiculous in the bargain. The revised version has its own logic, and Mahler was, of course, well aware that he was discarding the logic of the original (including the transition from the Andante to the Finale). This version should be our starting point.

Given that Mahler did conceive the Sixth with the Scherzo preceding the Andante, that he agonized over switching these movements at Essen, and that he left no explanation as to why he made the switch, it’s understandable that a conductor might want to maintain the Scherzo/Andante order. One reason for Mahler’s ambivalence is that the symphony itself can’t decide whether its redemption lies in A major or E-flat major, and that ambivalence is partly responsible for its failure to escape from A minor. If you hear the Sixth as making for A major, then there’s a logic to the Scherzo/Andante order; if E-flat seems the key, then Andante/Scherzo makes more sense. But any conductor who wishes to perform or record the symphony Scherzo/Andante should be prepared to write a *detailed* program or liner note that acknowledges the facts and adduces evidence as to why A major and not E-flat is the Sixth’s unachieved Heaven.

Finale: Two hammer blows? Three? Five?

Almost as controversial as the order of the inner movements in this symphony is the number of hammer blows. At the Essen première, there were three, at bars 336, 479, and 783. When he revised the symphony in the summer of 1906, Mahler deleted the hammer blow at bar 783, so that there were just the two at 336 and 479 when the symphony was performed in Berlin, Munich, and Vienna; and both Critical Editions (1963 and 1998) have just those two. On page 70 of *Memories and Letters*, however, Alma writes, “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.’ Those were his words.” This reminiscence has prompted Norman Del Mar and David Matthews to argue for the restoration of the bar 783 hammer blow; as Del Mar contends on page 152 of *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony — A Study*, “Fate cannot still be felt

to stand threateningly over the composer who has been dead and beyond her menace, real or imaginary, for over sixty years. Superstition must play no further part in what is now primarily an artistic decision.” Some conductors — notably Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti, Leif Segerstam, and Benjamin Zander — have restored this hammer blow in their performances.

The truth is somewhat more complicated. Mahler’s autograph shows a note for percussion instrument written in with blue pencil at five places in the score, bars 9, 336, 479, 530, and 783. These are not identified as hammer blows, but since the three at bars 336, 479, and 783 were marked “Hammer” in the Kahnt score that Mahler conducted from at Essen, it seems reasonable to infer, as Hans-Peter Jülg does on pages 30 and 41 of his 1986 monograph *Mahlers Sechste Symphonie*, that the two at bars 9 and 530 were for hammer also. These two were never heard in performance because Mahler deleted them before the Essen première. But as Henry-Louis de La Grange points out on page 813 of *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*, the existence of five blows in the autograph undermines the argument that Mahler intended the three that were heard at Essen to have a mystical significance. Throughout the composition of the symphony, there were no hammer blows. For some period after its completion, in the summer of 1904, there were five; then there were three. By the summer of 1906, there were two. Three hammer blows were not an integral part of the Finale’s conception, and they may not have been part of the MS for very long.

What’s more, the placement of these five hammer blows helps explain why Mahler eventually deleted three of them. The Finale begins with an “*einleitung*” in which the first violins rise hopefully before the “fate” rhythm and the major-to-minor triad of the first movement crash in at bar 9. This “introduction” recurs three times in the Finale, at the beginning of the development (bar 229), at the beginning of the recapitulation (bar 520), and at the beginning of the coda (bar 773). At the beginning of the development, the first-violin melody is inverted, turning downward, so that there is no occasion for the “fate” rhythm or the major-to-minor triad to appear; the beginning of the recapitulation, however, echoes the beginning of the movement, and so does the beginning of the coda. And in each of these three cases, at bars 9, 530, and 783, Mahler wrote in a hammer blow to reinforce the “fate” rhythm and the major-to-minor triad. The other two blows, at bars 336 and 479, mark the collapse of optimistic sections in the development. It makes sense that once Mahler had decided to delete the two blows at bars 9 and 530, he would also delete the one at bar 783, since all three served the same function. The mystery is why he didn’t remove this last one before the Essen première.

Was Mahler so superstitious that he allowed his fear of this symphony’s “prophetic power” to override his musical judgment? He did not, after all, delete the third hammer blow in the emotional heat of Essen. He removed it in the course of revising the symphony in the summer of 1906; the scoring of bar 783 and environs is reworked to heighten the impact of that moment, even without the hammer. It’s hard to see why this change should have been any less thought out than the many others he made.

One puzzle remains. In his 1968 Eulenburg edition of the Sixth, on page XXV of the Preface, Hans Redlich claims that Mahler decided, possibly as late as 1910, to reinstate the third hammer blow. He offers no evidence. His edition rejects most of Mahler’s revisions, including the transposition of the middle movements and the deletion of the third hammer blow, but he reproduces, on page XXXI, what purports to be the Critical Edition version of bar 783. What’s perplexing is that on this page, a note has been written in below the snare-drum stave — a note that looks like one of Mahler’s hammer-blow notations. What score is this page from? Who wrote in the note? And when?

Arthur D. Walker, who was the Manchester University Music Librarian when Redlich was head of music there, has provided this explanation to David Pickett: “The source appears to be a hire copy, there are numerous markings by conductors. . . . Redlich died before the first issue of the Eulenburg score came out. . . . The addition of the hammer will have been made by a conductor who used the score for a performance.” Pickett adds,

"I think that Redlich wanted to reproduce this page of what was presumably his source for Mahler's last printed version only to show the differences between it and his own edition of the first version. I do not think that he intended the pencilled-in marks to be reproduced, since he does not refer to them in the preface." Although at first it might seem that Redlich intended this reproduction to support his claim that Mahler had decided to reinstate the third hammer blow, it turns out to have been a confusing accident: the hammer blow on page XXI was not pencilled in by Mahler, and Redlich never meant to suggest it had been, indeed assumed it would not be visible on the page. Had he lived to see his edition into print, he doubtless would have corrected the mistake.

Finale: Was Mahler struck down by the three hammer blows of fate?

You can scarcely read a liner note to a recording of the Sixth without being told that despite Mahler's attempt to ward off "the three hammer blows of fate" by deleting the one at bar 783, they fell on him all the same. These three hammer blows of fate are said to have been his dismissal as director from the Vienna State Opera, the death of his beloved elder daughter, Maria Anna, and the death sentence that he himself came under after being diagnosed with a fatal heart defect. In fact, Mahler was not dismissed from his position; he made the decision to leave Vienna, though it would be naive to believe that Viennese anti-Semitism wasn't a factor. Maria's death, from diphtheria and scarlet fever, was a tragedy but not an extraordinary one; seven of Mahler's 13 siblings died before reaching the age of three. As for his heart, which had been scarred by numerous childhood infections, it was flawed but not fatally so. Penicillin, which was not developed until 1941, would have saved him.

Coda: A "Tragic" symphony?

Commentators perhaps looking to Mahler to confirm their own view of existence have not hesitated to accept the Sixth's "Tragic" subtitle. Wilhelm Furtwängler labeled this symphony "the first nihilist work in the history of music." Bruno Walter argued that it "ends in hopelessness and the dark night of the soul . . . the 'other world' is not glimpsed for a moment." Leonard Bernstein described the Finale as the "catastrophe of *homo sapiens* himself."

Bernstein was being his usual hyperbolic self: the Finale might affirm the mortality of humankind, but it doesn't invent the atom bomb. And someone must have torn the E-flat pages out of Walter's score. The real tragedy of the Sixth is not its cataclysmic A-minor demise but rather the dotted "fate" rhythm that infects the symphony. This rhythm is palpable in the funeral-march openings of Mahler's Second and Fifth Symphonies, and it dominates the Allegro energico here — not even the Alma theme is immune. At the beginning of the Finale, the first violins appear to be rising free of it, but when in bar 5 they fall victim, the struggle is over.

At least, it's over in terms of human time. But if you see the universe as recursive, then that E-flat "Garden" episode is a vision out of time, untouched by mortal transience. And even on the Finale's own time = death terms, there's that section in the A-minor section of the recapitulation where the themes twice (at bars 668 and 686) deny the dominion of the "fate" rhythm and the major-to-minor triad. The moment of truth comes not at bar 783, where Mahler deleted the final hammer blow, but at bar 773, after the dotted-rhythm theme from bar 69 rises to a high A and then attempts to fall through the A-major scale. With just one note left, victory seems within reach, but then the trombones fall silent, and though the rest of the orchestra takes up the A, there's no major-key triad waiting, only that naked A, with the bass drum and the tam-tam announcing the mystery of death. Like Faust, the Symphony dies, and there's no guarantee that God (if God exists) will intervene to save it. If that's a tragic stance, then Mahler's Sixth Symphony is indeed "Tragic."

Symphony No. Six, An Overview

Stan Ruttenberg

The Sixth is often called the "Tragic." However, it is not clear that Mahler named it himself (as claimed by Bruno Walter), or that someone else did and he accepted the name. Kelly Hansen's Notes explain why many commentators feel that the name, "Tragic," is appropriate. For example, Donald Mitchell says it is the only one of his symphonies in which Mahler lets Death win at the end. Alma wrote that "it was his most personal work." Alma quotes Mahler as saying that in the final movement, the hammer blows represent fate, the third blow felling a hero as an axe does a tree. This symphony poses intriguing enigmas, as do many other Mahler works. Jeffrey Gantz treats many of these enigmas, or perhaps better to say, uncertainties.

Mahler composed the symphony at his little composing hut hidden in the woods up a hill from his villa at Maiernigg, in the years 1903-4, and had it published first in 1906. He had married Alma Schindler, the "Belle of Vienna," and Alma had presented him on November 3, 1902, with a beautiful daughter, Maria (Putzi), of whom Mahler was deeply fond. On June 15, 1904 Anna, (Gücki) was born. Mahler had become a happily married man and father, with a lovely young and vivacious wife who was also his musical companion. He was at the height of his career at the Court Opera in Vienna. At least two of his works, Symphonies 2 and 3, had had enthusiastic public reception, never mind the critics who did not understand his new music. He had made friends with his future champion, Willem Mengelberg of Amsterdam. Yet, his creative spirit drove him to compose a work with obviously tragic overtones. While almost all of Mahler's symphonies have some dark elements, in the end they rise to joyous finales or peaceful resignation to Fate, but in the Sixth he struggles with Fate, and apparently loses, or does he? Notwithstanding, there are many exuberant and joyous passages in this symphony, and one of Mahler's loveliest *Andantes*.

Mahler conducted a trial rehearsal in Vienna with the Vienna Philharmonic in March or April 1906 (different dates are quoted), in preparation for its première in Essen, Germany on May 27, 1906. The matter of the order of the two inner movements has been debated hotly, ever since Mahler changed his mind at the first Essen rehearsal. Jeffrey Gantz discusses some of the important facts in hand, based on the research on this matter by Jerry Bruck, one of our distinguished lecturers in our Symposium.

Another matter of contention is the third hammer blow. Jeffrey Gantz treats the hammer blows in his essay so I will only add here that from his own letters and reported discussions with Alma, Mahler wanted the hammer blow to be non-metallic, a dull wooden thud, e.g., as an axe hitting a tree. Anyone who has tried to fell a tree with an axe, however, knows that the sound, no matter how mightily the axe is swung, is not very loud. Some conductors have actually used a large stump placed near the front of the orchestra and an axe — not very effective aurally, though very effective visually. Mahler himself never achieved the sound he wanted. The famous MahlerFest carnival "Test Your Strength" large wooden hammer (borrowed a few years ago and again this past summer by the National Repertory Orchestra at Breckenridge, and also last season by the Colorado Symphony Orchestra), will provide a satisfying visual image of the strokes of fate on a large tree trunk, producing a *satisfyingly loud but dull THUD*. Mahler would have liked it!

Back to the Music! As noted above, this symphony is usually called the “Tragic,” and in its Vienna performance the play bill listed it as Gustav Mahler, Symfonie No. 6, “Tragische.” Evidently Mahler did not object to this name. I had always thought of it myself as dark and tragic, until one day a Mahler friend related this story. He asked his two teen-age daughters to listen, for their first time. They did, attentively, and seemed to like it. After it was finished, father asked, “What did you think of this symphony? The girls unhesitatingly answered: “What a wonderfully happy symphony!” Out of the mouths of innocence, as it were.

With this new insight I began to listen, and especially this year, after some 100 hearings of maybe 20 performances, I concluded that I had changed my mind. Considering the events in Mahler’s life up till the Sixth, as related above, I decided to agree with the girls. For me this can be played and listened to as basically a symphony of proud conquest, of happy moments, but clouded in a few places. What great person never had any setbacks?

Take the first movement, an inexorable march. Is it a march to death, or a triumphant march of accomplishment? Mahler marks it fast and energetic (but not too much). Does one march energetically to death? Mahler was not a neurotic, as is so often claimed, but a well-balanced, highly intellectual person. I feel that he was expressing his pride and joy at achieving his life’s objectives — the High Priesthood of Opera as Director of Europe’s most highly regarded house, able to serve the best intentions of the world’s greatest composers, as well as having become the proud husband of “The Belle of Vienna” and happy father of a dear daughter.

The *Scherzo*, to me, crazy-quilted as Kelly Hansen describes in his notes, represents Mahler’s crazy-quilted career — director of a country music hall where one of his duties was to take the children for outings in their perambulators, conducting assignments in houses with imperious impresarios where he had to play politics, and resist much politics, and on-again off-again love affairs. He endured clashes with most music critics, who hated his “new music,” and even clashes with the public, only a small portion of whom understood what Mahler was aiming at in his “new music.” Kelly writes of the section where the horns have a powerful passage with sliding grace notes. To me these braying horns represent Mahler giving the Viennese equivalent of the “Bronx Cheer” to those critics, who now had to endure him as Chief of the most advanced opera house on the continent.

The *Andante* could represent the bucolic life Mahler now enjoyed, at least in the summers, in his comfortable villa on the shores of the Wörthersee, in beautiful southern Austria, and the peaceful solitude of his little composing hut, secluded up hill in deep woods.

The *Finale* is where the elements of darkness make themselves known in this work — the three hammer strokes. As Kelly remarks in his notes, some of Mahler’s most joyous music is to be found here; a triumphant march-like section appears four times, each introduced by four dark and possibly threatening passages. Each hammer blow is introduced by an almost frantically up-beat section, only to be cut short by the sharp and powerful strokes of — what? Fate? A Near-Death Experience? Or are they admonitions from the Gods — be careful, we’re not done with you yet, Little Jewish Boy from the provinces. You may think that you have achieved your highest ambitions, Europe’s Highest Music Point, but watch out, the price is coming?

Much is made of the hammer blows by commentators, perhaps inspired by Alma saying that she feared that Mahler was tempting fate with his three hammer blows, and also tempting fate with his *Kindertotenlieder* — foretelling the death of his beloved Maria in 1907. Alma felt

that that incident was also foretold by the first hammer blow. Alma further felt that the second blow foretold the diagnosis of his “fatal” heart condition shortly thereafter, and that the third presaged his dismissal from the Vienna Opera.

The first event was surely a difficult blow to both Alma and Gustav, and may indeed have been the moment when their marriage began to flounder. Mahler never got over Maria’s tragic and traumatic death. Maria was buried in Maiernigg and the Mahlers immediately sold the villa, never to return to the inspiration of some of Mahler’s greatest works — the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and the Eighth symphonies, song cycle *Kindertotenlieder*, the song set *Rückert Lieder*, and the two last songs for the song set *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*.

The second important event, Mahler’s heart condition, was overreacted to by Alma and Gustav’s sister Justine, and eventually by Mahler himself. One doctor advised Mahler to stop his swimming, biking and hiking, and take only a prescribed number of steps each day. Another doctor, a cardiac specialist, told him that his heart condition (mitral valve defect) was entirely compensated and that he should lead a normal (for him very vigorous) life, only taking care not to exhaust himself. However, he did not heed that good advice and the women around him didn’t either. That heart defect, however, non-fatal by itself, was the reason why the streptococcus infection of Spring 1911 traveled to his heart and did actually fell him.

The third blow of fate, dismissal from Vienna, bears close scrutiny. Mahler, at age 47 in 1907, had borne up well under the furious and often anti-Semitic criticism of his management of the opera and his own music. But he was a tough personality, used to meeting challenges and overcoming set-backs. He was naturally worried about his heart and perhaps he did feel mortality lurking in his near future. However, Mahler was also a practical man. He had always been underpaid and had not been able to provide a safe financial future for his wife and surviving daughter. And his work load — conducting, coaching, producing new operas, management, politics, composing — was fearsome. Then, *good* fate intervened. He received a most generous offer from New York’s Metropolitan Opera — a generous salary (three times that of Vienna) and a sensible work load. He had done his bit for Vienna, now it was time to think of himself and his family. It was as simple as that — financial freedom, more time for his composing, and new challenges!

The final four measures of the last movement, as Kelly describes — a loud and violent chord followed by strong tympani cadences fading out to a low wail of brass and winds — signifies what? Defeat? Or, in my view, picking himself up once again to face new challenges. Mahler signals this to me by a subtle modification of the strikingly powerful tympani cadences, indicating in this music that this is not the end, but a new beginning. Is this work basically one of confidence, laced here and there with near defeat (as was Mahler’s own life), or one of marching, perhaps bravely, to inevitable death all along? I prefer the former, as Mahler’s story of his lifelong struggle devoted to the perfection of musical expression, in performance as well as in composing. You make your own choice.

With thanks to Kelly Hansen, Jeffrey Gantz, Jerry Bruck and Henry-Louis de La Grange for many thought-provoking ideas, and to Robert Olson, whose stirring performance of this work in 1993 inspired these off-beat thoughts.

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