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Montgomery Philharmonic 2014 - 2015 Concert Season – SINGULARITY

Sunday, April 19, 2015

About Gustav Mahler –

Gustav Mahler was a late-Romantic composer and one of the leading conductors of his generation. He was born to a Jewish family in the village of Kalischt in Bohemia, in what was then the Austrian Empire, now Kalíšť in the Czech Republic.

As a composer, Gustav Mahler changed what we love to hear in music and bridged the Romantic period and Modernism. He reinvented the symphony to include operatic soloists, symphonic choruses, augmented orchestral forces, and longer and more developed movements. He was also the first composer who spent more time conducting than actually composing. Conducting was a necessity because just as he was beginning to make his way in the musical world his father and mother died. As the oldest in the family, he was left with the task of providing for his younger siblings. He felt a great responsibility to do so, and conducting brought in badly needed money to keep the family going.

We know that many of Mahler's early compositions were song cycles, but it is often said that his first symphony was much too mature to have really been the first symphonic work that he wrote. Although there has been much speculation about what early symphonic writing could have been lost or destroyed, we will never know for sure. An archive of music was identified in Dresden in 1938, but that music was destroyed in the bombing of Dresden in 1945.

Nevertheless, the music from Mahler that we do have is divided into three creative periods. The first period starts in 1880 with *Das klagend Lied* and ends with the *Wunderhorn* phase in 1901. During this time, he wrote four symphonies, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, and collections that would be the *Wunderhorn* songs. During each period, Mahler took music to the edge by breaking the common practices of that time with clarity and decisiveness. This wonderful music has enchanted audiences with the revolutionary orchestration, gripping harmony, and expansive melodies.

- **Born:** July 7, 1860, Bohemian town of Kalíšť, now in the Czech Republic
- **Died:** May 18, 1911, in Vienna, Austria
- **Spouse:** Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel (m. 1902 - 1911)
- **Compositions: (Selected List)** 10 symphonies, 1 symphonic poem, 8 song cycles with orchestra, 3 pieces for voices and orchestra, 4 chamber works, and numerous works for voice and piano
- **Film music credits: (Selected List)** Death in Venice, Mahler, Mahler auf der Couch, Boardwalk Empire: The Artist and the Model, Inside Llewyn Davis, Gloria
- **Children:** Anna Mahler and Maria Mahler

Songs of a Wayfarer (1884–1885) Symphony No. 1 (1887–1888)

Songs of a Wayfarer (1884–1885)

It is thought that Mahler began composing this piece in December 1884 and completed it in 1885, yet there is evidence of some work as early as 1881 and several revisions dated as late as 1886. The song cycle consists of four songs that depict Mahler's incredible sadness over the end of his romance with Johanna Richter, a soprano who sang for him while he was the conductor of the Kassel Opera House in Germany. Ms. Richter's father disapproved of the romance and, as the local postmaster, made sure that Mahler's letters to his daughter were returned unopened; he also insisted that Mahler end the romance.

Mahler orchestrated the work in the early 1890's, and the earliest performance of this version was with the Berlin Philharmonic on March 16, 1896. The performance featured Mahler conducting and Dutch baritone Anton Sijstermans . Mahler also wrote the lyrics, which were strongly influenced by *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn), a collection of German folk poetry. This book of poetry was one of Mahler's favorite books and the first song is closely based on the *Wunderhorn* poem.

Mahler wrote this piece shortly before his first symphony and there are close relationships between its themes and those found in the First Symphony.

Some background about each song and translations of the the original German and the titles:

I – "*Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht*" ("When My Sweetheart is Married")

The lyrics of the first movement discuss the Wayfarer's grief at losing his love to another. He remarks about the beauty of the surrounding world, but also says that it cannot keep him from having sad dreams. The orchestral texture is bittersweet, using **double reed** instruments, clarinets, and **strings**.

Original German

Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht, Fröhliche Hochzeit macht, Hab' ich meinen traurigen Tag! Geh' ich in mein Kämmerlein, Dunkles Kämmerlein, Weine, wein' um meinen Schatz, Um meinen lieben Schatz! Blümlein blau! Verdorre nicht! Vöglein süß! Du singst auf grüner Heide. Ach, wie ist die Welt so schön! Ziküth! Ziküth! Singet nicht! Blühet nicht! Lenz ist ja vorbei! Alles Singen ist nun aus! Des Abends, wenn ich schlafen geh', Denk'ich an mein Leide! An mein Leide!

When my darling has her wedding-day,
her joyous wedding-day,
I will have my day of mourning!
I will go to my little room,
my dark little room,
and weep, weep for my darling,
for my dear darling!

Blue flower! Do not wither!
Sweet little bird – you sing on the green heath!
Alas, how can the world be so fair?
Chirp! Chirp!
Do not sing; do not bloom!
Spring is over.
All singing must now be done.
At night when I go to sleep,
I think of my sorrow,
of my sorrow!

II – "*Ging heut Morgen übers Feld*" ("I Went This Morning over the Field")

The second movement contains the happiest music of the work. Indeed, it is a song of joy and wonder at the beauty of nature in simple actions like bird songs and dew on the grass. "Is it not a lovely world?" is a refrain. However, the Wayfarer is reminded at the end that, despite this beauty, his happiness will not blossom anymore now that his love is gone. This movement is orchestrated delicately with high strings and flutes, as well as a fair amount of music to be played on the triangle. The melody of this movement, as well as much of the orchestration, is developed into the "A" theme of the first movement of the **First Symphony**.

Original German

Ging heut Morgen übers Feld, Tau noch auf den Gräsern hing; Sprach zu mir der lust'ge Fink: "Ei du! Gelt? Guten Morgen! Ei gelt? Du! Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt? Zink! Zink! Schön und flink! Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!" Auch die Glockenblum' am Feld Hat mir lustig, guter Ding', Mit den Glöckchen, klinge, kling, Ihren Morgengruß geschellt: "Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt? Kling, kling! Schönes Ding! Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt! Heia!" Und da fing im Sonnenschein Gleich die Welt zu funkeln an; Alles Ton und Farbe gewann Im Sonnenschein! Blum' und Vogel, groß und Klein! "Guten Tag, ist's nicht eine schöne Welt? Ei du, gelt? Schöne Welt!" Nun fängt auch mein Glück wohl an? Nein, nein, das ich mein', Mir nimmer blühen kann!

I walked across the fields this morning;
dew still hung on every blade of grass.
The merry finch spoke to me:
"Hey! Isn't it? Good morning! Isn't it?
You! Isn't it becoming a fine world?
Chirp! Chirp! Fair and sharp!
How the world delights me!"

Also, the bluebells in the field
merrily with good spirits
toll'd out to me with bells (ding, ding)
their morning greeting:
"Isn't it becoming a fine world?
Ding, ding! Fair thing!
How the world delights me!"

And then, in the sunshine,
the world suddenly began to glitter;
everything gained sound and color
in the sunshine!
Flower and bird, great and small!
"Good day, is it not a fine world?
Hey, isn't it? A fair world?"

Now will my happiness also begin?
No, no - the happiness I mean
can never bloom!

III – "*Ich hab' ein glühend Messer*" ("I Have a Gleaming Knife")

The third movement is a full display of despair. In it, the Wayfarer likens his agony of lost love to having an actual metal blade pierce his heart. He obsesses to the point that everything in the environment reminds him of some aspect of his love, and wishes that he actually had the knife. The music is intense and driving, fitting the agonized nature of the Wayfarer's obsession.

Original German

Ich hab' ein glühend Messer, Ein Messer in meiner Brust, O weh! Das schneid't so tief in jede Freud' und jede Lust. Ach, was ist das für ein böser Gast! Nimmer hält er Ruh', nimmer hält er Rast, Nicht bei Tag, noch bei Nacht, wenn ich schliefe! O weh! Wenn ich den Himmel seh', Seh'ich zwei blaue Augen stehn! O weh! Wenn ich im gelben Felde geh', Seh'ich von fern das blonde Haar Im Winde weh'n! O weh! Wenn ich aus dem Traum auffahr' Und höre klingen ihr silbern Lachen, O weh! Ich wollt', ich läß auf der Schwarzen Bahr', Könn' nimmer die Augen aufmachen!

I have a red-hot knife,
a knife in my breast.
O woe! It cuts so deeply
into every joy and delight.
Alas, what an evil guest it is!
Never does it rest or relax,
not by day or by night, when I would sleep.
O woe!

When I gaze up into the sky
I see two blue eyes there.
O woe! When I walk in the yellow field,
I see from afar her blond hair
waving in the wind.
O woe!

When I start from a dream
and hear the tinkle of her silvery laugh,
O woe!
Would that I lay on my black bier –
Would that I could never again open my eyes!

IV – "*Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz*" ("The Two Blue Eyes of My Beloved")

The final movement culminates in a resolution. The music, also reused in the First Symphony (in the Scherzo "Funeral March in Callot's Manner"), is subdued and gentle, lyrical, and often reminiscent of a chorale in its harmonies. The title of the movement deals with how the image of those eyes has caused the Wayfarer so much grief that he can no longer stand to be in the environment. He describes lying down under a linden tree, allowing the flowers to fall on him. The Wayfarer wants to return to his life before his travels and wishes that the whole affair had never occurred: "Everything: love and grief, and world, and dreams!"

Original German

Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz, Die haben mich in die weite Welt geschickt. Da muß ich Abschied nehmen vom allerliebsten Platz! O Augen blau, warum habt ihr mich angeblickt? Nun hab' ich ewig Leid und Grämen! Ich bin ausgegangen in stiller Nacht wohl über die dunkle Heide. Hat mir niemand Ade gesagt Ade! Mein Gesell' war Lieb und Leide! Auf der Straße steht ein Lindenbaum, Da hab' ich zum ersten Mal im Schlaf geruht! Unter dem Lindenbaum, Der hat seine Blüten über mich geschneit, Da wußt' ich nicht, wie das Leben tut, War alles, alles wieder gut! Alles! Alles, Lieb und Leid Und Welt und Traum!

The two blue eyes of my darling –
they have sent me into the wide world.
I had to take my leave of this well-beloved place!
O blue eyes, why did you gaze on me?
Now I will have eternal sorrow and grief.

I went out into the quiet night
well across the dark heath.
To me no one bade farewell.
Farewell! My companions are love and sorrow!

On the road there stands a linden tree,
and there for the first time I found rest in sleep!
Under the linden tree
that snow'd its blossoms onto me –
I did not know how life went on,
and all was well again!
All! All, love and sorrow
and world and dream!

Instrumentation – 3 flutes (flute 3 doubles piccolo), 2 oboes (each doubles English horn), 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets in F, 3 trombones, timpani, bas drum, cymbals, triangle, tam-tam, glockenspiel, harp, violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass

Artifacts –

Gustav Mahler death mask

Gustav Mahler.com – photos during the life of Gustav Mahler

Available on  iTunes

1. Gustav Mahler: Symphonies 1 & 5 - Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen - Leonard Bernstein, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra & Thomas Hampson

2. Mahler: Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Kindertotenlieder & Fünf Rückertlieder - Leonard Bernstein, Thomas Hampson & Wiener Philharmoniker

3. Mahler: Des Knaben Wunderhorn & Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen - Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Berlin Philharmonic & Daniel Barenboim

4. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 - Lieder eines fahrenden gesellen - Marilyn Horne, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf, Los Angeles Philharmonic & Zubin Mehta



1. Mahler: Songs of the Wayfarer; Kindertotenlied

2. Songs of a Wayfarer and Kindertotenlieder in Full Score (Dover Music Scores)

3. SYMPHONY NO.1 IN D/ SONGS OF A WAYFARER/ TENNSTEDT by GUSTAV MAHLER [Korean Imported] (2006)

YouTube Video Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvZSzQ89M5k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSJnRFT4AX8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=espaKei0jQpE>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esp_0rsJ2Ymk

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