

# Montgomery Philharmonic

## Intersecting with the Community

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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 Kaliště 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 Kaliště, 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 \(1887–1888\)](#)

#### *Symphony No. 1 (1887–1888)*

It is thought that this symphony was not really Mahler's first symphony. Most of the work was composed during late 1887 and March 1888, while Mahler was the second conductor of the Leipzig Opera in Germany. An archive of Mahler's early work fragments was found in Dresden, Germany, shortly before World War II, but was lost during the bombing in that war. One can only speculate as to what led to the actual composition of such a mature work for his first symphony.

There are strong connections to the other piece included in this program—*Songs of a Wayfarer*. Themes from this song cycle are heard in both the first and third movements of the symphony. The symphony had four beginning performances—Budapest in 1889, Hamburg in 1893, Weimar in 1894, and Berlin in 1896. During these first performances, Mahler revised the symphony, and what started as a symphonic poem of five movements eventually ended up as a traditional four-movement symphony as Mahler envisioned it. Letters show that Mahler's first performance was met with lots of questions, so he felt obligated to include some descriptive language in the program to clarify his work, eventually calling the work "Titan." At the 1896 Berlin performance, he finally settled on the music that is traditionally played today.

- *Langsam, schleppend* (slowly, dragging), *Immer sehr gemächlich* (very restrained throughout) D major
- *Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell* (moving strongly, but not too quickly), *Recht gemächlich* (restrained), a Trio—a Ländler
- *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen* (solemnly and measured, without dragging), *Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise* (very simple, like a folk-tune), and *Wieder etwas bewegter, wie im Anfang* (somewhat stronger, as at the start)—a funeral march in the minor mode based on the song Bruder Martin
- *Stürmisch bewegt – Energisch* (stormily agitated – energetic)

Mahler stretches the forms of the traditional symphony, yet still gives a veiled version of these forms. The first movement can be analyzed as a loosely constructed sonata allegro form. The second movement is a rustic scherzo in the minuet-trio form and incorporates new techniques in the strings and the horns, including the use of the mute in the horns loudly for the first time ever. This sound was met with scorn, as it was very unpleasant for concertgoers to hear. Movement three is a funeral march said to have been inspired by an illustration of a hunter's funeral and a procession of animals that follows the procession from a woodcut by Moritz von Schwind. The fourth movement is an expansive movement that brings back themes from the first movement to tie it all together. The storminess of the writing is startling and contains many fits and starts as it tries to conclude the piece. Several times it sounds as if the brass will play its final fanfare to end the piece, but then the music ventures back to other thematic material before the brass makes its final resounding fanfare to end the piece.

**Instrumentation** – 4 flutes (flute 4 doubles piccolo), 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets in Bb, A, & C, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 7 horns in F, 5 trumpets in Bb and F, 4 trombones, tuba, timpani 1 & 2, triangle, tam-tam, cymbals, bass drum, harp, violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass

#### Artifact –

The conductor score used and marked by Gustav Mahler, Bruno Walter, and Leonard Bernstein.

#### About the creation of Mahler's Symphony No. 1


1. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 - Berlin Philharmonic & Claudio Abbado
2. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 - Valery Gergiev & London Symphony Orchestra
3. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 (Live) - New York Philharmonic & Lorin Maazel
4. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 "Titan", Adagio from Symphony No. 10 - Leonard Bernstein & New York Philharmonic
5. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 in D Major, Blumine & Songs of a Wayfarer (Live) - Vladimir Ashkenazy & Sydney Symphony Orchestra
6. Mahler: Symphony No. 1 - Lieder eines fahrenden gesellen - Marilyn Horne, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf, Los Angeles Philharmonic & Zubin Mehta

1. The Mahler Symphonies: An Owner's Manual (includes 1 CD)
2. Mahler: Symphony No. 1- Titan / Symphony No. 10 (Adagio)
3. Mahler: Symphony No. 1
4. Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 in Full Score (Dover Music Scores)
5. Lucerne Festival 2009 (Mahler: Symphony 1 / Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3)
6. Symphony 1

**Here's a link for the Digital Concert Hall Free Mahler Concert !**

#### YouTube Video Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQFjDBFXN58>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQFjDBFXN58>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6pPk-j7vXQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6foa1U74In4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwZYB6TGTxQ>