

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Mahler's Tenth
Symphony Hall
Thursday 18 May, 2023
7:30pm

CBSO.CO.UK



MAHLER'S TENTH

Concert programme £4



Principal Funders:

PROGRAMME

Mahler Symphony No. 10 (ed. Deryck Cooke) 80 mins

Robert Treviño Conductor

Unfortunately, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla is unwell and has had to withdraw from conducting tonight's concert. We are hugely grateful to Robert Treviño for stepping in to conduct this performance at such short notice.

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MAHLER'S TENTH



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Thursday 18 May 2023, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MAHLER'S TENTH SYMPHONY

It was the musical equivalent of raising the Titanic. When musicologist Deryck Cooke rescued Mahler's only-just-incomplete Tenth Symphony, he salvaged one of the landmarks of 20th-century music: a huge, heartfelt meditation on the meaning of life itself. If you don't know the Tenth Symphony, you don't know Mahler; tonight, Robert Treviño brings his own insight and passion.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

SYMPHONY NO.10 IN F SHARP MAJOR (1910)

1. Andante–Adagio
2. Scherzo
3. Purgatorio
4. Scherzo
5. Finale

Mahler was preoccupied with death throughout his life and across his output, and the events of 1907, including the tragic death of his eldest daughter and his own diagnosis with a heart condition, have been interpreted as the “beginning of the end”, presaging the ebbing away of his life force. Yet by the time his Tenth Symphony was begun in 1910, Mahler was planning

further tours in Europe and America, and some of the work's composition coincided with the successful premiere of his Eighth Symphony. All was not lost.

Even so, while Mahler was looking to the future, he was painfully aware that Beethoven, Schubert and Bruckner had all died before completing their tenth symphonies, and there is no denying the valedictory tone of much of his last two. Then, after he started composing the Tenth Symphony at his summer residence near Toblach in the Dolomites in July 1910, there came another blow: the young architect Walter Gropius revealed that he was having an affair with Mahler's wife, Alma. Mahler broke off composition and sought advice from Sigmund Freud before he was able to finish preliminary work on the Symphony. That winter, he worked on revising the Ninth rather than fleshing out the Tenth. With a raging temperature, Mahler gave

his last concert on 21 February 1911, after which his health steadily worsened; he died on 18 May with the Tenth Symphony in an unfinished state.

That we can hear the Tenth Symphony at all is thanks to the “Performing Version” prepared by Deryck Cooke in collaboration with Berthold Goldschmidt, Colin Matthews and David Matthews. Mahler left orchestral drafts of just the first two movements and a segment of the third. In 1920 Alma Mahler had two pages of the short score published, resolving to publish more. She needed a playable version, which was produced by Krenek – but this was received coolly at its Vienna premiere, conducted by Schalk in 1924. In 1951 Alma found a New York publisher to reissue Krenek’s version with amendments by Berg and possibly Zemlinsky or Schalk, after which both



GUSTAV MAHLER

Joseph Wheeler and Clinton Carpenter made arrangements but failed to get them performed. They were beaten to it by Deryck Cooke, a British musicologist who prepared the score with commentary for a BBC broadcast of 1960 marking Mahler’s centenary. Cooke consulted with composer and conductor Berthold Goldschmidt, who advised on instrumentation.

Alma Mahler, who had not permitted this endeavour, initially distanced herself from it, but was later convinced and gave Cooke and Goldschmidt further original materials to work with. The result was performed in 1964, after which Cooke revised the score with the help of composers and musicologists Colin and David Matthews; the result was published in 1976. Other arrangements have been made, but this remains the most established.

As Colin Matthews writes, there are purists who “maintain not only that it is impossible to ‘complete’ the Symphony, but that such a completion is unethical”. Yet “the alternative is to leave the music unheard”. Cooke acknowledged that: “If Mahler had lived to complete the work, he would have elaborated the music considerably, refined and perfected it in a thousand details ... and of course clothed it in orchestral sound of a subtlety and vividness beyond all our conjectures.” In response to those who dismissed their work, Cooke argued that “the only valid question is this: given that there can never be such a thing as Mahler’s own final, definitive score of his Tenth Symphony, does his fairly comprehensive sketch of it, put into score by other hands, provide a Mahlerian experience of any real value? My own belief is that it does, simply because Mahler’s actual *music*, even in its unrevised and unelaborated state, has such strength and beauty that it dwarfs into insignificance the few momentary uncertainties about notes and the subsidiary additions ... After all, the leading

thematic line throughout, and something like 90 percent of the counterpoint and harmony, are pure Mahler, and vintage Mahler at that.”

Mahler made five folders for each of the Symphony’s movements, and considered different configurations before settling on a scheme in which two slow movements are contrasted with two scherzos, followed by the finale. Mahler distilled his hopes and fears ‘into one great song’ in this work. The first movement’s intense main theme, which starts on violas, features irregular rhythmic groupings and wide intervals that allow for mesmerising harmonic ambiguity. The secondary material is more muted but with outbursts culminating in a vast, organ-like passage that builds to a searing, clashing nine-note chord. Exhausted after this climax, the music becomes more resigned and contemplative.

The first scherzo is purposeful, with a radiantly pastoral *Ländler* (a lilting dance form to which Mahler was particularly attached). At times reminiscent of earlier works such as the First Symphony, the life-affirming nature of the music suggests a composer looking forwards – focussing on life rather than death.

The *Purgatorio* (originally *Purgatorio oder Inferno* – ‘Purgatory or Hell’ – until ‘Inferno’ was crossed out), probably refers to a poem about betrayal by Mahler’s friend Siegfried Lipiner (whom Alma disliked). This and scrawls such as *Erbarmen!!* (‘Have pity!!’) connect the movement to Mahler’s marital turmoil. Mahler juxtaposes sunny passages with bleak, imploring moments, underpinned by a ‘perpetuum mobile’ ostinato derived from his *Wunderhorn* song *Das irdische Leben* (‘Mother, ah mother, I am starving. Give me bread or I shall die’). The *Purgatorio* is deceptively brief but contains ideas that will crop up in the next two movements.

The score of the second scherzo is also riddled with revealing scribbles. “The Devil dances it with me...” is an image conjured up by a full-throated lament and lopsided waltz. Above the final bass drum stroke, Mahler wrote to Alma: “You alone knows what this means’, referring to a haunting funeral procession they had watched in New York, described by Alma: ‘There was a brief pause and then a stroke on the muffled drum, followed by dead silence. The procession then moved forward and all was over”.

Berg said of Mahler’s Ninth that it “is permeated with premonitions of death. Again and again it crops up”. These premonitions seem to become reality in the almost nihilistic darkness that initially characterises the finale of the Tenth, from which emerges an other-worldly flute solo (Goldschmidt argued that this alone was sufficient to justify the reconstruction of the Symphony). The psychological torment continues with a return of the shattering chord of the first movement, but this dissonance slowly resolves into an exquisitely tender love song to Alma, concluding in a great orchestral sigh over which Mahler wrote: “To live for you, to die for you!”

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ROBERT TREVIÑO

Robert Treviño has rapidly emerged as one of the most exciting American conductors performing today, equally thrilling in his titanic interpretations of the core repertoire as in his explorations of new music. He is Music Director of the Basque National Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI. In recent seasons, European engagements have included the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre De Paris, Orchestre National de Toulouse, La Scala Philharmonic, Tonhalle Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, Vienna Symphony and Helsinki Philharmonic. In North America he has conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, San Francisco, Utah, Toronto, Cincinnati and Detroit. Elsewhere he has conducted the Sao Paulo Symphony, NHK Symphony and St Petersburg Philharmonic. Treviño was Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra. He has commissioned and worked closely with many leading composers, among them John Adams, Philip Glass, Sofia Gubaidulina, Jennifer Higdon, Andre Previn, George Walker, Augusta Read Thomas, Shulamit Ran, Ramon Lazkano and John Zorn.



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 Philip Mills
 The late Peter and Moyra
 Monahan
 The late Arthur Mould
 The late June North
 Stephen Osborne
 Gill Powell
 Dr and Mrs K Randle
 In memory of David Reeve,
 a true music lover
 The late Mrs Edith Roberts
 Martyn and Kathryn Roberts
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 The late Mr Andrew Roulstone
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