



Concert programme £4

# CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA: MAHLER 5

**CBSO**

City of  
Birmingham  
Symphony  
Orchestra

CBSO Youth Orchestra: Mahler 5  
Symphony Hall  
Sunday 18 February, 2024  
3pm

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Jac van Steen  
Conductor

Tom Morris  
Theatre Director in Residence

# INTRODUCTION

A very warm welcome to Birmingham's Symphony Hall this afternoon as the brightest musical talents in the Midlands play epic Mahler.

In many of his letters to his friend, and protégé, Bruno Walter, Mahler reflects on how his music might be received by an audience. It is clear that Mahler was aware of the complex and demanding structures of his symphonic work: "In tantum quantum I can be really satisfied with my work, but I really feel sorry for those who have to listen to all the sad music I have created...". (Klagenfurt, 20 August 1901)

As he began to compose his Fifth Symphony, Mahler fell in love with "the most beautiful girl in Vienna": Alma Schindler - a young composer who was studying with Alexander Zemlinsky.

Gustav hoped that Alma would become Mrs Mahler as soon as possible, so - as an expression of his love - he composed one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written. This love letter, for strings only, plays a central role in the symphony.

The Adagietto is surrounded by enormously energetic, complex and often surprisingly contradictory sounds, orchestrated for large forces: from one extreme to the other, in short, Mahler in persona, expressing his adventurous life as conductor/composer/lover, trying to fulfil his desires in life.

This masterpiece undoubtedly shows his self-confidence, combining trivial aspects with more elevated and traditional elements of music history.

The presentation of this afternoon's concert comes from the orchestration of this extraordinary symphony, in which Mahler seems to summon the richest possible colours from each voice in the orchestra, with melodic ideas exchanged between musicians as though in conversation. Members of the youth orchestra have identified moments where Mahler most clearly brings their voices to the fore, and we have found ways to make some of these moments visible at the same time as we are hearing them.

We have also followed the emotional journey described in Mahler's annotations within the score, and those captured in many letters to Bruno Walter and elsewhere:

1. A funeral march
2. Moving like a storm with enormous force
3. Scherzo: a walk in the mountains
4. Adagietto: a love letter
5. Rondo: The world in perfect balance

The practice of standing in orchestras for moments like this, usually marked "espressivo" was well established in the nineteenth century - and often Mahler marks the points when he wants the horns, oboes, and clarinets to play with their bells up. Mahler was very used to audiences clapping, cheering, and sometimes hissing between movements. All the rules we now associate with classical music were invented after this symphony was composed - so for this piece, please feel free to clap whenever you like.



Honstein, Juvenalia, 25mins  
Interval  
Mahler, Symphony No.5, 72mins

Jac van Steen, Conductor  
Jordan Ashman, Percussion

Tom Morris, Director  
Alex Sutton, Associate Director  
Ben Ormerod, Lighting Designer  
Bethany Gupwell, Associate  
Lighting Designer  
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This concert has been made possible with generous support from The Leverhulme Trust, Birmingham Arts Society, Charles Brotherton Trust, Gwyn Williams Bursary Fund; and the Clive Richards Foundation, principal supporter of the CBSO's work with young people.

Sunday 18 February 2024  
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

# CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA: MAHLER 5

A song of love, struggle and delirious joy... there's a lifetime of emotion in Mahler's tremendous Fifth Symphony. The superb young musicians of the CBSO Youth Orchestra never hold back, and today they'll go straight to its deeply romantic heart. First, though, a shot of neat inspiration as BBC Young Musician 2022 winner Jordan Ashman conjures sounds from beyond the imagination in Robert Honstein's extraordinary percussion concerto.

Robert Honstein (born 1980)

## JUVENALIA

- I. Brash and raucous
- II. Contemplative
- III. With abandon

"Waves of colourful sounds" was how the New York Times described the music of Robert Honstein, an American composer who says that he comes from "Boston, by way of New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas, and New York City." A self-confessed musical omnivore with an irreverent sense of humour, Honstein has written chamber, vocal and orchestral music, with a particular passion for percussion. "I frequently make up elaborate contexts for my music - back story, narrative, images", he says. "I love the abstraction of music and how it can become a metaphor for an infinite possibility of ideas". Concerning Juvenalia,

the percussion concerto that he wrote for Colin Currie in 2019, he says:

"In Ancient Rome, Juvenalia were coming of age festivals featuring games, theatre and ritual celebrations. Ironically, these events were noted for the childish behaviour of their participants, youth and elders alike. Accounts from the time suggest wild, debaucherous display was not only encouraged but required. Anyone not acting sufficiently irreverent risked expulsion or worse.

In my concerto, Juvenalia, I seized on this idea of youthful carousing. At the same time, I considered the linguistically similar notion of juvenilia. Sometimes disowned, often discarded, these early works are at best a footnote to otherwise noteworthy catalogues. Yet these raw, unpolished efforts contain portentous kernels: seemingly insignificant ideas that may grow in surprising, beautiful ways. Looking back

at my own early compositional efforts, I'm convinced there are connections between my youthful creations and the music I write today. As I grow older, I listen to these first attempts and think perhaps there's more to discover. Maybe these capricious, unrefined pieces hold secrets yet to be revealed.

Tapping into both the wild energy of Juvenalia and the elusive premonitions of juvenilia, the concerto begins with music reminiscent of my high school garage band. Playing a modified drum kit, the soloist careens through a series of loud, bombastic episodes, overflowing with youthful energy and wild abandon. The second movement takes a step back. Moving from kit to vibraphone, the soloist leads the orchestra on a slow and spacious soliloquy. Lyrical and contemplative, the music evokes a restrained, classical sensibility. Finally, the third movement revisits the frenzied exuberance of the opening, but now with even greater urgency. A reckless, unrelenting momentum pushes the music forward as the soloist unleashes a torrent of semiquavers in a furious drive to the finish."

**Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)**

## SYMPHONY NO. 5

- I. Trauermarsch.  
Stürmisch bewegt, mit größter Vehemenz
- II. Scherzo.
- III. Adagietto - Rondo-Finale

### The hut in the woods

The village of Maiernigg in the Austrian province of Carinthia lies beneath wooded hills, on the shores of Lake Worthersee. In 1900 Gustav Mahler – music director, since 1897, of the Vienna Court Opera – built himself a lakeside villa. It was a place to spend summers; somewhere that he could swim, hike and study scores. And he arranged for the construction of a tiny single-room "composing cottage", buried in the forest above the lake. "The summer

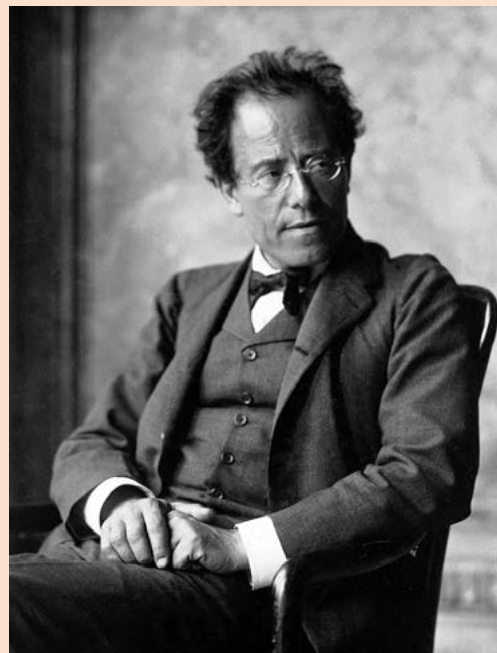
was lovely" he later recalled, and deep in the woods in his newly-built retreat, he completed his Fourth Symphony. The next summer, he wrote a series of songs. And some time before 5th August 1901 he told his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner that he was working on a new symphony, his fifth.

Back in Vienna, on 7th November 1901 he met the 22-year old Alma Schindler at a dinner party. (Gustav Klimt was among the guests) They disagreed over the music of Alma's teacher Alexander von Zemlinsky, and sparks flew. "He studied me long and searchingly through his spectacles" she remembered, and they agreed to meet again the following day. They became engaged, in secret, on 7th December 1901, and were married on 9th March 1902.

That summer, Gustav took Alma to Maiernigg – "a life of utter peace and concentration", she recalled. He resumed work on the new symphony – his first purely orchestral composition since his First Symphony, back in 1889 – and before they left Maiernigg at the end of August, Gustav played Alma the finished score on the piano in his hut. "It was the first time he had ever played a new work to me, and we walked, arm in arm up to his hut with all solemnity", she remembered, years later. Mahler conducted the world premiere of the Fifth Symphony with the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne, on 18th October 1904.

### The music

The symphony begins in darkness: with the call of a solitary trumpet. "The first three notes should be played somewhat hurriedly, in the manner of military fanfares", wrote Mahler, and what follows is a funeral march of the darkest kind. Two interludes break the sombre procession – an anguished outburst, and a quieter, pleading melody for the violins. With a thunder of cellos and basses, the second movement breaks over the scene like a mountain storm. Woodwinds shriek like fleeing birds; but from the tempest, new ideas begin to



PHOTOGRAPH OF GUSTAV MAHLER IN THE FOYER OF VIENNA'S OPERA HOUSE, 1907. MORITZ NÄHR, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

emerge: a long, yearning string melody (like a memory of the funeral march) and a noble hymn for the brass – the symphony's first real vision of hope. The storm sweeps back in, and blows itself out with a final, inconclusive thud.

That's the end of the first part of the symphony. Now, with a sudden horn-call, and a little tingle of joy and light, Mahler changes the scene completely. The symphony's big, exuberant central Scherzo is also its turning point – part country dance, part rough-cut Viennese waltz, topped by a spirited solo line for the orchestra's principal horn. Mahler said that this movement was "the tail of the comet" – "humanity in the full brightness of day, at the zenith of life". At its centre, it slows. The skies darken, and horns and trumpet call to each other as if across vast spaces; at once desolate and heroic.

The third part of the symphony begins with another transformation. Mahler dispenses with everything except strings and harp and

withdraws into a breathless and intimate new world. At first the melody of the Adagietto ("little Adagio") is hesitant; the harp plucks tentatively as a sense of deep peace and then growing passion spreads through the music. It seems almost certain that Gustav wrote this movement after meeting Alma, and the Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg – one of Mahler's most trusted colleagues – said that Mahler had sent the score to Alma, accompanied by the words of a love song:

How much I love you / You, my sun /  
I cannot find the words to say

Only my longing can I lament to you /  
And my love, and my delight.

The Adagietto melts into near-silence – or perhaps a place where even music cannot reach. Once again, the horn picks up the thread; the woodwinds respond and the orchestra rolls into a great sunlit Rondo – which finds time along the way to revisit the joys and terrors of the previous movements, to engage in vigorous musical debate, and to give a mischievous twist to the lovely melody of the Adagietto. Finally, amid cascading scales and fanfares, the brass crown the entire symphony with the hymn of triumph that had been glimpsed (and then lost) in the turmoil of the second movement. There's a final sideslip, and the symphony hurtles to a euphoric close. At the top of the score Mahler wrote the dedication: "To my beloved Alma, the true and courageous companion on all my life's journeys". "Because," writes Mahler's biographer Constantinos Floros, "he strongly believed he had found the greatest happiness of his life".

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# JAC VAN STEEN



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Jac van Steen was born in the Netherlands and studied orchestral and choral conducting at the Brabant Conservatory of Music. Since attending the BBC Conductors Seminar in 1985, he has enjoyed a busy career conducting some of Europe's finest orchestras, including positions as Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Netherlands' National Ballet, the Bochum and Nürnberg Orchestras, the Staatskapelle Weimar, the Dortmund Opera and Philharmonic, the Musikkollegium Winterthur and Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He is currently Honorary Principal Guest Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra and Guest Conductor of the Prague Symphony Orchestra. Jac van Steen built up a large opera repertoire during his long association with the opera houses of Weimar and Dortmund, where he was Principal Conductor and Musical Director. He returned to Opera North in 2015 and 2016, making his debut with Garsington Opera (Strauss, Intermezzo), followed by new productions of Pelleas and Melisande and Smetana's The Bartered Bride. The latter was such a success that it was repeated in 2023. In addition to his work as a conductor, he is Professor of Conducting at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague.

# JORDAN ASHMAN

Jordan is a 19 year old percussionist from Cambridge. In 2022 Jordan won the Grand Final of BBC Young Musician at The Bridgwater Hall accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth. His performance of Jennifer Higdon's percussion concerto was described by Alexis Ffrench as having "riotous power but also sublime tenderness". In the previous round, Anna Lapwood said "all 3 of the judges came off the stage in tears" at his performance described by Paul Filbert as "exquisite". Jordan is currently in his second year of study at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with a scholarship award, where he won the Winifred Micklam prize in his first year. More recently he won critical acclaim at the 2023 Cheltenham Festival where Ivan Hewett (Telegraph) described him as a "real star in the making" for his solo recital and was described as "exceptional" by Jeremy Pound (BBC Music Magazine) for his Mixtape performance. Forthcoming performances include a European premier of Robert Honstein's "Juvenalia" with the City of Birmingham Youth Symphony Orchestra, and solo recitals at St David's Hall Cardiff and The Leeds International Festival.



# TOM MORRIS



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Tom Morris is a theatre director, writer, and producer. He was Artistic Director of the Bristol Old Vic from 2009-2022 where he worked closely with Emma Stenning on many projects including The Bristol Proms. This was a ground-breaking partnership between Bristol Old Vic and Universal Music which presented classical repertoire performed by Nicola Benedetti, Daniel Hope, Bryn Terfel, Pumeza, Milos, Lisa Batiashvili, Hakon and Mari, Charles Hazelwood and many others without musical compromise, with the production values of theatre, the digital expertise of The Pervasive Media Studio and an atmosphere of complete informality and welcome.

Tom's notable productions in theatre and opera include *Dr Semmelweis* (Bristol Old Vic and West End) *Breaking the Waves* (Edinburgh International Festival and World tour), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (ENO and the Met), *L'Orfeo* (Vienna Staatsoper), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (NT) and *War Horse*.

# ALEX SUTTON

Alex trained at Bristol University, VGIK (Moscow) with Lab Ky Mo, Irina Brown and Elen Bowman. He was the resident director on Andrew Lloyd Webbers *Cinderella* from 2021 - 2022. He was also resident director at the National Theatre New Work Department in 2017. Work as director and adaptor includes *Million Dollar Quartet* (Barn Theatre), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Manchester Cathedral, NYMT, Offcom award), *Preludes* (Stage Debut nomination: best director 2020), & *The Night Before Christmas* (Southwark Playhouse), *Spring Awakening* (Birmingham Hippodrome), *Twelfth Night* (Parkteatern, Stockholm - 2nd Place Broadwayworld best production), *A Flea in her Ear* (Chiswick Playhouse), *My Swordhand is Singing* (Festival of Stories, London). Alex has previously assisted Simon McBurney, Peter Gill, Melly Still, Lonny Price and Laurent Pelly at places such as the Barbican, NT, Royal Opera House, ENO and Sadlers Wells. As a performer Alex was in the original and revival casts of *Coram Boy* (National Theatre), *Messiah* (ENO) and is a backing singer for transgender legend (and Drag Race regular) *Our Lady J*.





Lighting Designer

## BEN ORMEROD



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Theatre includes: *Manon Lescaut*, *The Rake's Progress* (English Touring Opera); *Carmen* (Into Opera Festival); *Wuthering Heights* (Royal & Derngate/Tour); *Farm Hall* (Theatre Royal Bath/Jermyn Street Theatre); *Charlotte and Theodore* (Ustinov); *Kidnapped* (National Theatre of Scotland/Tour); *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, *Assassins* (Nottingham Playhouse/Tour); *Joyce's Women* (Abbey Theatre); *The Sex Party* (Menier Chocolate Factory); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *A Long Day's Journey Into The Night*, *The Oresteia*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* (Citizens Theatre); *Don Juan* (Perth Theatre); *Prism* (Birmingham Rep/UK Tour); *Uncle Vanya*, *Loyalty* (Hampstead Theatre); *All's Well That Ends Well* (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Zorro* (West End/US/Netherlands/Japan); *Mrs Henderson Presents* (Bath/West End/Canada).

Associate Lighting Designer

## BETHANY GUPWELL



Recent work includes: *Larmes de Couteau/Full Moon in March* (Royal Opera House); *Shed: Exploded View* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *The Earthworks* (Young Vic); *This Much I Know, To Have and To Hold* (Hampstead Theatre); *You Heard Me* (ARC Stockton/UK Tour); *Brown Girls Do It Too: Mama Told Me Not To Come* (Soho Theatre); *War and Culture*, *Little Scratch, Keep Watching* (New Diorama); *La Voix Humane* (Opéra National du Rhin); *A Rice, Little Baby Jesus* (Orange Tree); *Wickies, When Darkness Falls* (Park 200); *Here, The Woods* (Southwark Playhouse); *Talking Heads* (Watford Palace); *Ignition* (Frantic Assembly); *The Pirate, The Princess and the Platypus* (Polka); *A-Typical Rainbow* (Turbine Theatre – Best Lighting Design Offies nomination 2022); *Fitter, Wonder Winterland* (Soho Theatre); *Trade* (UK Tour); *The Last Harvest* (National Youth Theatre); *Queen of the Mist* (Charing Cross Theatre – Best Lighting Design Offies nomination – 2019); *I'd Rather Go Blind* (Omnibus Theatre); *Dracula* (Leicester Curve).

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# THE CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Ambitious, dynamic and creative, the CBSO Youth Orchestra is a collective of incredible young musicians from Birmingham and beyond. As the leading youth orchestra in the West Midlands, the programme is designed to give talented orchestral players a real-world experience of playing in a professional symphony orchestra.

Founded in 2004 as the successor to the famous Midlands Youth Orchestra, the CBSO Youth Orchestra meets throughout a year, giving concerts in Birmingham at Symphony Hall, Town Hall and the CBSO Centre. The 100+ members are aged between 13 to 21 and come from across the Midlands region. There is also a generous bursary scheme to ensure that membership is open to musicians from all backgrounds.

Young musicians work directly with CBSO players, staff and acclaimed conductors, and the orchestra aims high, playing demanding repertoire to critical acclaim.

With a commitment to new music, the CBSO Youth Orchestra also seeks to prepare its members for a world of musicmaking that goes beyond the concert hall.

Over its first decade, the CBSO Youth Orchestra has helped many musicians take a first step into the music profession. As well as giving hundreds more the social and personal benefits of working as part of an incredible artistic team. As an orchestra for the future, it continues to do so – through some of the liveliest, freshest and most inspirational music-making you'll ever hear.

Whether you get the chance to play in the CBSO Youth Orchestra, or simply hear the orchestra in concert, it has a habit of changing the way people think about the future of orchestral music.

Sunday 18 February, 2024

## PERFORMERS

### VIOLIN I

Sophie Jobanputra  
(Leader)  
George Boyes  
Zinnia Smart  
Gabriela Borges  
Tian Chen  
Mimi Howson  
Isabella Worster  
Sharon Li  
Jindy Xiang  
Olivia Willoughby  
Arun Mattu  
Ruoqi Lim  
Nate Bomans\*

### VIOLIN II

Elizabeth Nunn  
(Section Leader)  
Lydia Greenwood  
Emmy Jin  
David Harris  
Daisy Jones  
Felix Chatham  
Joel Skaria  
Priyamvada Agarwal  
Sophia Erben  
Mark Bo  
Richard Thomas\*  
Heather Bradshaw

### VIOLA

Erin Vinter  
(Section Leader)  
Aaron Le Maistre  
Evelyn Newey  
Sagnik Mukherjee#  
Rosie Stubbs  
Hannah Maxwell  
Ahrum Dutton  
Maria Antunes#  
Jessica Tickle\*  
Sarah Malcolm\*

### CELLO

Jake Ryan  
(Section Leader)  
Aidan Hopkins  
Tyler Wood  
Matthew Le Maistre  
Edie Bott  
Cara van der Berg  
Sum-Yi Wong  
Martha Jones  
Arthur Boutillier\*  
Helen Edgar\*

### DOUBLE BASS

Rufus Stanier  
(Section Leader)  
Sara Banks  
Joana Moura#  
William Bosson  
Anish Franklin  
Sophie Johnson  
Lei Huang

### FLUTE

Mate Bagi  
Charlotte Mahoney  
Adelaide Starling  
Ailish Steele  
Maia Roberts

### OBOE

Seren Armstrong  
Caitlin Miller  
Natasha Painter  
Lauren Parnell  
Hui-Tung Wong

### CLARINET

Gemma Andrews  
Jess Hannah  
Melia Lovegrove  
James Smith  
Anna Thirkettle

### BASSOON

Alexander Hillary  
Connor Huss  
Nikolaj Henriques\*

### FRENCH HORN

Michelle Amezcua  
Jack Bloomer  
Jhih-Yi Chang  
William Hulbert  
Patrick Lloyd  
Owen McClay  
Jennie Robson

### TRUMPET

Crispin Brown  
Charlie Cooper  
Matthew Osborne  
Dylan Savage  
Juliet White

### TROMBONE

Carl Davis  
Samuel Franks  
Thomas Hall  
Emily Watson

### TUBA

Thomas Stevenson

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Diego Villarreal  
Narvaez

### PERCUSSION

Sana Abu-Jabir  
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