

Take a Closer Listen:

I. Andante Comodo:

At the beginning of the movement, there is a syncopated (off the regular beat of the measure) motif (repetitive pattern) carried by the cello and french horn under the orchestra that may be a reference to Mahler's irregular heartbeat. This motif is passed around between different instruments throughout the movement. It is also very unusual to hear the harp featured so prominently as a key player in the orchestra. The slow, thudding harp melody is passed from section to section of the orchestra, creating a fearful and solemn tone for the movement. Most of this movement alternates between the sweet, beautiful sections of music and the forceful, sadness filled sections. One could say that Mahler was having an internal struggle with himself: trying to overcome his illness and go about his daily life, but having thoughts of impending doom creep into his thoughts every so often.

II. Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländler. Etwas tappisch und sehr derb:

This movement starts as a lively and fun Ländler dance (folk dance that was popular in Austria at the end of the 18th century), started by the bassoon and then ebbing and flowing through the orchestra. After dancing the Ländler for a while, the strings introduce a different style of dance, although this dance doesn't seem as lively and fun as the first. One could say that the string section of the dance represents a flashback or a dream sequence, unlike the Ländler before. The strings carry a "sighing" motif, bringing back Mahler's thoughts of death mixed in with his everyday life. Mahler is well known for his use of unconventional instruments in his symphonies, including the E-flat clarinet, contrabassoon, and the piccolo. Listen for these instruments being featured as soloists throughout the movement.

III: Rondo-Burleske: Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig

The third movement of this piece is very strong and chaotic, with the different sections of the orchestra performing a double fugue. A fugue is musical idea where a short melody is passed through sections of the orchestra, building on the melody as they go along. As the fugue is passed from section to section, it morphs into a more complex melody every time it gets passed along. The softer, more peaceful burlesque melodies of this movement appear suddenly, like a calm break in the storm, before starting up the raging fugue again. This movement sounds very villainous, like the march of Darth Vader from Star Wars. The chaos of this movement could represent Mahler's struggle with the inevitability of his heart condition leading to his eventual death.

IV: Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zuruckhaltend

The final movement of this symphony opens with just the string sections, playing a melody that sounds a bit like a hymn. The lovely, lush sound of the strings is reminiscent of what may be played during a funeral service to celebrate someone's life. This hymn alternates with slow, sad sections of music that represents Mahler's last breaths before passing. The last two pages of music go on for six minutes, which is a large amount of time for so few notes. One could say that this large extended passage could represent Mahler's slow dying process from diagnosis to death, or the stages of grief that he has experienced as a result of his beloved daughter's sudden passing very shortly before writing this piece. The quietest moment of the whole symphony happens at the very end, as Mahler is finally laid to rest.



Program Notes for kids

Mahler's Ninth Symphony
Saturday, October 27, 2018
8:00 p.m.
Michigan Theater

Mahler

Symphony No. 9 in D major



Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
Music in the Key of A².

Gustav Mahler



About the Composer

Gustav Mahler | Born July 7, 1860 in Kalischt, Bohemia | Died May 18, 1911 in Vienna, Austria

Family & Career

Gustav Mahler was born to a Jewish family in what is now known as the Czech Republic. When Mahler was four years old, he discovered his grandparents' piano and took to it immediately. Mahler had such talent that he became a local wonder in his small Bohemian town, giving his first public performance when he was only ten years old. Though he didn't come from a musical family, his parents supported him and encouraged him to audition for

the Vienna Conservatory.

Mahler was recognized as a conductor during his lifetime, but did not have much success as a composer until after his death. His music was even banned for a short time during World War II. He directed the Vienna Court Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. At the end of his life he relocated to New York to conduct The Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Mahler married his wife, Alma, in 1902. They had two daughters, one of whom died in childhood.

Music

Aside from some of his earlier works, Mahler rarely wrote a small piece of music. His works are almost all for large orchestras, symphonic choruses, and operatic soloists. He wrote 10 symphonies and a number of song cycles with orchestral accompaniment.



Alma Mahler

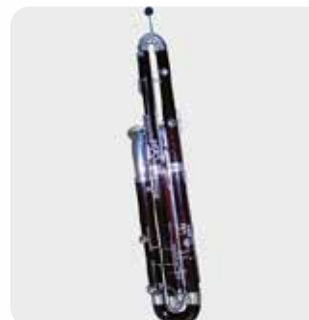
Unconventional Instruments

Mahler is known for using many unconventional instruments in his symphonies, which often leads to a larger than normal orchestra. These are some of the unconventional instruments that will be featured tonight:



Piccolo: very small flute, producing the highest sounds in the orchestra

Contrabassoon:
very large bassoon,
one of the lowest
instruments in the
orchestra



E-flat Clarinet:
a smaller, more
high pitched
clarinet



Symphony No. 9 in D major

What kind of piece is this?

A *Symphony* is a long piece of music containing four movements. These *movements*, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some movements may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more song-like.

Mahler's Ninth Symphony is actually the tenth symphony he wrote and was the last complete symphony he ever created.

When was it written?

This piece was written between 1908-1909.

What is it about?

Before writing the symphony, he had witnessed the death of one of his daughters and he found out his life would be cut short due to his heart condition. Because of this, there is a tone of death throughout the piece. Even on the last page, there is a bar marked *pianississimo* (very very quiet) followed by a long pause marked "ersterbend" which means dying. This symphony is often seen as his farewell and his most personal score. He died of heart disease just after writing this symphony at the age of 50. He died before he could hear his Ninth Symphony performed.



Mahler's wife, Alma, and their two daughters.

About the Music

The Movements:

Movement 1: Andante comodo

-Comfortable tempo.

Movement 2: Im Tempo eines gemachlichen Ländlers. Etwas tappisch und sehr derb

-At a quicker pace than the first movement.

Movement 3: Rondo-Burleske: Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig

-Very defiant.

Movement 4: Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend

-Very slow and reserved.

Fun Facts

Mahler's music is featured on more than 100 film soundtracks including *Death in Venice*, *Shutter Island*, *Children of Men* and *The Tree of Life*.