2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, January 9, at 7:30
Saturday, January 11, at 8:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor
Charlotte Blake Alston Speaker
Joshua Hopkins Baritone

Heggie *Songs for Murdered Sisters*
I. Empty Chair—
II. Enchantment
III. Anger
IV. Dream
V. Bird Soul
VI. Lost
VII. Rage
VIII. Coda: Song
United States premiere of orchestral version

Intermission

Mahler Symphony No. 9 in D major
I. Andante comodo
II. Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers. Etwas täppisch und sehr derb
III. Rondo—Burleske: Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig
IV. Adagio: Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend

This program runs approximately two hours, 30 minutes.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

Jeff Fusco

The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united. Today, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts brings the greatest performances and most impactful education and community programs to audiences in Philadelphia and beyond.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 13th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community. In addition to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers, Yannick and the Orchestra are committed to performing and recording the works of previously overlooked composers.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and around the community, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. The Kimmel Center has been the ensemble's home since 2001, and in 2024 Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; the free annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert; School Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; All-City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 14 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award–winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Music and Artistic Director

London Nordeman

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 13th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty "Philadelphia Sound" in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became the third-ever honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers and by performing the music of under-appreciated composers of the past. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 14 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductors, most notably Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America*'s 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Speaker

Charlotte Blake Alston is an internationally acclaimed storyteller, narrator, and librettist. In July 2021 she was named The Philadelphia Orchestra's Imasogie Storyteller, Narrator, and Host. She has appeared as host and narrator on the Orchestra's School and Family concerts since 1991 and was the host of Sound All Around, the Orchestra's preschool concert series, from 1994 to 2024. She has also appeared on each of the Orchestra's Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concerts since 2003.

Committed to keeping alive African and African-American oral traditions, Ms. Alston has performed on national and regional stages including the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. She has been a featured artist at the National Storytelling Festival; the National Festival of Black Storytelling; and festivals in Ireland, Switzerland, South Africa, and Brazil. She has performed at Presidential inaugural festivities in Washington, D.C., and the Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Children's Inaugural Celebrations in Harrisburg. She was also one of two storytellers selected to present at the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. She has been guest narrator for several orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. During a 20-year association with Carnegie Hall, she was the featured preconcert artist, host, and narrator on the Family, School, and Global Encounters concert series and represented the Hall in Miyazaki, Japan. She has also performed as a touring artist for Lincoln Center Institute.

Ms. Alston has produced several commissioned texts for orchestras and choirs including original narration for Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade.* Her honors include two honorary Ph.Ds, a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, and the Circle of Excellence Award from the National Storytelling Association. She is the recipient of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Artist of the Year Award and the Zora Neale Hurston Award, the highest award bestowed by the National Association of Black Storytellers. In 2023 she received the Distinguished Artist Award at the New Jersey Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts in Education. In May 2024 she was inducted into her alma mater South Philadelphia High School's Cultural Hall of Fame, joining the ranks of such artists as Marian Anderson.

Soloist

Simon Pauly

JUNO Award-winning and GRAMMY-nominated Canadian baritone **Joshua Hopkins** began his 2024–25 season with a debut at the Semperoper Dresden performing one of his signature roles, Figaro in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville,* and returns later in the season to sing Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Maximilian in a new production of Bernstein's *Candide*. For his debut at the Berlin State Opera, he reprises the roles of Apollo and Angry Audience Member in Bernard Foccroulle's *Cassandra*. He also returns to the Metropolitan Opera to portray another signature role, Count Almaviva in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro,* which will be featured on a worldwide simulcast on April 26, 2025, as part of the Met's *Live in HD* series.

Mr. Hopkins makes his Philadelphia Orchestra subscription debut with these performances of his most personal project, *Songs for Murdered Sisters*, which he also performs with the Naples Philharmonic under Alexander Shelley. Written by composer Jake Heggie and author Margaret Atwood, *Songs for Murdered Sisters* was conceived by Mr. Hopkins in remembrance of his sister, Nathalie Warmerdam, to bring awareness to ending intimate partner violence. A critically acclaimed film of the piece, directed by James Niebuhr, is available to watch on YouTube and the JUNO-nominated digital album, released on the Pentatone label, is available on all streaming platforms. Elsewhere on the concert stage, Mr. Hopkins performs Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain under Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He also joins Manfred Honeck for performances with the Chicago Symphony of Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* and with the Pittsburgh Symphony for Fauré's Requiem and Handel's *Messiah*.

Mr. Hopkins appears regularly at the Metropolitan Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, the Canadian Opera Company, and the Santa Fe Opera, among many others. His latest role debuts include Zurga in Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris with Les Grandes Voix; Cavaliere di Belfiore in a new Christopher Alden production of Verdi's *Un giorno di regno* at Garsington Opera; and Athanaël in a concert version of Massenet's *Thaïs* with the Toronto Symphony, conducted by Andrew Davis and recorded for Chandos Records, for which he won a JUNO Award. He created the role of Orpheus in the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* for his company debut at LA Opera and reprised the role at the Met; he received his first GRAMMY nomination in 2023 when the Met's live recording of *Eurydice* was nominated for Best Opera Recording.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1909
Mahler
Symphony No. 9

Music
Vaughan Williams
Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis
Literature
Maeterlinck
L'Oiseau bleu
Art
Picasso
Harlequin
History
Perry reaches the North Pole

Jake Heggie's *Songs for Murdered Sisters* was born of tragedy: the deaths within hours one morning in 2015 of three women at the hands of a former partner. One of the victims was the sister of our soloist tonight, baritone Joshua Hopkins. Heggie, in partnership with the celebrated Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, composed eight songs addressing the pain of loss for Hopkins to perform.

Gustav Mahler, during the final three summers of his life, composed *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth), his Ninth Symphony, and the beginning of a Tenth Symphony. These works have long been considered a kind of valedictory trilogy. Death haunted Mahler's life, beginning with those of many of his siblings and later of his beloved elder daughter.

Death also haunted Mahler's music. It did so in extraordinary ways during his final years as he coped with a serious heart condition. In the Ninth Symphony, one colleague noted, he bid "Farewell to all whom he loved": to the world, art, and his life. The Ninth Symphony resonated only within the inner ears of Mahler's imagination—he did not live to rehearse or premiere his last completed work and died in Vienna at age 50.

The Music

Songs for Murdered Sisters

Jake Heggie
Born in West Palm Beach, Florida, March 31, 1961
Now living in San Francisco

James Niebuhr

History is filled with music of protest, defiance, confrontation, even calls for revolution: from Jean Sibelius's *Finlandia* with its stance against Russian control of Finland to Fred Rzewski's *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* with its anti-fascist sentiment. These works often grow from personal loss: John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 ("Of Rage and Remembrance") is both a lament for lost friends and a condemnation of the Reagan administration's disastrous response to the AIDS crisis.

A Cry of Sorrow and Call to Action Jake Heggie's *Songs for Murdered Sisters,* likewise, is at once a cry of sorrow and a call for social and political action. It grew from a real-life tragedy that took place in 2015 at the hands of a Canadian assassin who, in a single morning, took the lives of three of his ex-partners: Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam.

This brutal act shocked the world and focused attention on the global femicide epidemic. It became known that Warmerdam was the sister of world-renowned Canadian baritone Joshua Hopkins, who resolved to use his grief to challenge men worldwide to take the White Ribbon Pledge—promising "never to commit, condone, or remain silent about all forms of gender-based violence." (The White Ribbon Campaign was founded in Canada in 1991 as a response to the massacre of female students at Montreal's École Polytechnique.)

Hopkins's plight came to the attention of Jake Heggie, who proposed a musical response. Marshaling the talents of the Canadian author and poet Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*), Heggie composed eight exquisite songs that addressed, in strikingly intimate terms, the pain of loss. The protagonist here often sings to the lost loved one directly, evoking a poignancy reminiscent of Schubert's *Winterreise*. ("I was too late, too late to save you / I feel the rage and pain in my own fingers / Why should he be here still and not you?")

A Door Opens "I felt so numb after Nathalie's murder," said Hopkins, a veteran of stages worldwide and a favorite at the Metropolitan Opera. "It was … almost impossible to comprehend. But Margaret's words and Jake's music have opened

a door, and stepping through it has allowed me to access all my complicated feelings surrounding Nathalie's death."

Atwood, too, felt the impact. "I have known two women who were murdered, both by jealous former romantic partners, so the killing of Joshua's sister resonated with me." Still, she added, "I could not promise anything. With songs and poems, they either arrive or they don't. … Then I wrote the sequence in one session. I made the 'sisters' plural because they are indeed—unhappily—very plural. Sisters, daughters, mothers. So many."

The eight poems Atwood crafted were included in a volume of verse published in November 2020 as *Dearly: New Poems.* "Margaret sent a perfect, complete set of eight texts and asked, 'How about something like this?'" Heggie said. "Josh and I were stunned and deeply moved. … It was a great honor and privilege to explore every corner of her poems to shape this musical, emotional journey for Josh." The songs follow a path from dazed disbelief and denial ("If this were a story") to nightmares, rage, and frantic reflection.

A Composer for the Voice Heggie has become one of the most significant composers of vocal music today. Among his works are no fewer than 18 operas (including *Dead Man Walking, The End of the Affair, Moby-Dick, It's a Wonderful Life*); some 30 cycles comprising more than 300 songs; large-scale vocal-orchestral compositions; and chamber and orchestral music.

Raised in Florida and in Columbus, Ohio, Heggie studied privately with Ernst Bacon during high school and, after two years of study in Paris, continued as an undergraduate at the University of California-Los Angeles. Among his teachers were Roger Bourland, Paul Des Maris, David Raksin, and Johana Harris. Carlisle Floyd, the late American opera composer, was a mentor.

After an early career in public relations, Heggie explored opportunities in song composition and opera. During the late 1990s, San Francisco Opera General Director Lofti Mansouri approached him about composing an opera with playwright Terrence McNally. The result was *Dead Man Walking,* which since its premiere in October 2000 has received more than 70 productions worldwide.

Written on commission from Houston Grand Opera and Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, the *Songs for Murdered Sisters* was given its first live performance by Joshua Hopkins in March 2022 at Houston's Rothko Chapel, with the composer at the piano. In its orchestrated form it received its premiere in February 2023 at Ottawa's National Arts Centre with conductor Alexander Shelley and Hopkins, again, as soloist. These current performances mark the United States premiere of the orchestral version.

"You don't process grief in a linear fashion," Hopkins has said. "Any emotion can come up any time you're experiencing an emotional influx. But *meaning* transforms grief in a more peaceful and hopeful experience. These songs have

provided that meaning for me."

—Paul J. Horsley

Paul J. Horsley is performing arts editor for the Independent *in Kansas City. Previously he was program annotator and musicologist for The Philadelphia Orchestra and music and dance critic for the* Kansas City Star.

Songs for Murdered Sisters *was composed in 2020.*

These are the United States premiere performances of the orchestral version.

The score calls for baritone vocalist, two flutes (II doubling piccolo), oboe, English horn, two clarinets (II doubling bass clarinet), bassoon, two horns, trumpet, trombone, bass trombone, percussion (bass drum, castanets, chimes, crotales, glockenspiel, hi-hat, small wood block, suspended cymbal, tam-tams, tom-toms, triangle, vibraphone [with bow]), harp, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 30 minutes.

Songs for Murdered Sisters
(Margaret Atwood, from *Dearly, New Poems*)

I. Empty Chair
Who was my sister
Is now an empty chair

Is no longer,
Is no longer there

She is now emptiness
She is now air

II. Enchantment
If this were a story
I was telling my sister

A troll from the mountain
Would have stolen her

Or else a twisted magician
Turned her to stone

Or locked her in a tower
Or hidden her deep inside a golden flower

I would have to travel
West of the moon, east of the sun

To find the answer;
I'd speak the charm
And she'd be standing there
Alive and happy, come to no harm

But this is not a story.
Not that kind of story ...

III. Anger
Anger is red
The colour of spilled blood

He was all anger,
The man you tried to love

You opened the door
And death was standing there

Red death, red anger
Anger at you

For being so alive
And not destroyed by fear

What do you want? you said.
Red was the answer.

IV. Dream
When I sleep you appear
I am a child then
And you are young and still my sister

And it is summer;
I don't know the future,
Not in my dream

I'm going away, you tell me
On a long journey.
I have to go away.

No, stay, I call to you
As you grow smaller:
Stay here with me and play!

But suddenly I'm older
And it's cold and moonless
And it is winter …

V. Bird Soul
If birds are human souls
What bird are you?
A spring bird with a joyful song?
A high flyer?

Are you an evening bird
Watching the moon
Singing Alone, Alone,
Singing Dead Too Soon?

Are you an owl,
Soft-feathered predator?
Are you hunting, restlessly hunting
The soul of your murderer?

I know you are not a bird,
Though I know you've flown
So far, so far away …
I need you to be somewhere …

VI. Lost
So many sisters lost
So many lost sisters

Over the years, thousands of years
So many sent away

Too soon into the night
By men who thought they had the right

Rage and hatred
Jealousy and fear

So many sisters killed
Over the years, thousands of years
Killed by fearful men
Who wanted to be taller

Over the years, thousands of years
So many sisters lost

So many tears

VII. Rage
I was too late,
Too late to save you.

I feel the rage and pain
In my own fingers,

In my own hands
I feel the red command

To kill the man who killed you:
That would be only fair:

Him stopped, him nevermore,
In fragments on the floor,

Him shattered.
Why should he be here still

And not you?
Is that what you wish me to do,

Ghost of my sister?
Or would you let him live?

Would you instead forgive?

VIII. Coda: Song
If you were a song
What song would you be?

Would you be the voice that sings,
Would you be the music?

When I am singing this song for you
You are not empty air

You are here,
One breath and then another:

You are here with me.

The Music

Symphony No. 9

Gustav Mahler
Born in Kalischt (Kaliště), Bohemia, July 7, 1860
Died in Vienna, May 18, 1911

"Gustav Mahler was a Saint." With these words Arnold Schoenberg began his 1912 memorial address honoring the composer, who had died the previous year at age 50. A younger generation of Viennese composers, including Anton von Webern and Alban Berg, shared his passion for Mahler's music. Admirers sent a funeral wreath reading, "Bereft of the saintly human being Gustav Mahler, we are left forever with a never-to-be-lost example of his life and impact." Berg spoke repeatedly of the "Holy Mahler," and Schoenberg dedicated his important treatise on harmony "to the memory of Gustav Mahler … this martyr, this saint." One might add yet another characterization: prophet. For many, Mahler's music prophesized not only his own life, but also foretold the future of music and even of the 20th century.

Saint, Martyr, Prophet—such images have vast implications for an understanding of Mahler's life and his music, especially his three final compositions: *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth) and the Ninth and Tenth symphonies. These works explore shared musical and philosophical issues, and they are all, in a certain sense, unfinished. Mahler did not live to perform them, and he invariably continued to revise a piece through the stages of bringing it to the public as well as afterward. While the Tenth Symphony is clearly unfinished (even its first movement, which reached the most advanced stage and is frequently performed separately), both *Das Lied* and the Ninth would surely have undergone further refinements had Mahler lived to conduct them. His friend and protégé, Bruno Walter, led the first performances in 1911 and 1912 respectively.

Numbering the Ninth "It seems that the Ninth is the limit. He who wants to go beyond it must pass away. It seems as if something might be imparted to us in the Tenth for which we are not yet ready. Those who have written a Ninth have stood too near to the hereafter." Mahler supposedly shared these superstitions of Schoenberg's about composing a ninth symphony, as had concluded the careers of Beethoven and Bruckner. (Schubert and Dvořák might now appear to be candidates for this list as well, although their symphonies were not so numbered in Mahler's time.)

Alma Schindler Mahler, the composer's widow and an often-unreliable source, reported that her husband tried to cheat fate after the uplifting Eighth Symphony by initially calling *Das Lied* the Ninth, but that he later "crossed the number out." *Das Lied,* left unnumbered, was titled a "Symphony for Tenor and Alto Voice and Orchestra," and sets Hans Bethge's German adaptations of Chinese poetry. After completing the Symphony we hear tonight, the official Ninth, Mahler allegedly told her, "Actually, of course, it's the Tenth, because *Das Lied von der Erde* was really the Ninth." When he began what he evidently intended to be a five-movement Tenth Symphony in F-sharp, he remarked: "Now the danger is past." The Ninth is a work that begins where the haunting final song of *Das Lied,* "Der Abschied" (The Farewell), ended. Mahler composed most of the Ninth Symphony during the summer of 1909. The following one, his last, he sketched the Tenth.

A Farewell Trilogy? The connections between and among these pieces, as well as their ultimate place in the composer's output, have made it all too tempting to view them as pointing toward death, a "farewell" trilogy, the artistic testament of a dying man. Mahler had, after all, received serious personal blows in 1907: His beloved elder daughter, Maria Anna, died at the age of four; he resigned an untenable position, aggravated by anti-Semitism, at the Vienna Court Opera; and he was diagnosed with a serious heart condition. Mahler accepted a lucrative offer from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, but returned to Europe each summer, when he always did most of his composing. By 1909, the year of the Ninth Symphony, his professional situation in New York had become more complicated, as had his marriage to the nearly 20-year-younger Alma, who was soon to begin an affair with the young architect Walter Gropius (later her second husband). Mahler eventually learned of this liaison and sought relief from Sigmund Freud in the summer of 1910. There was to be no next summer. The fatally ill Mahler left New York for Vienna, where he died on May 18.

The blows of 1907 left their mark on his last four years. Mahler commented in some of his most personal letters that he had to "start a new life." In 1908, while composing *Das Lied,* he remarked on trying to settle into a different location (he refused to return to the site of his daughter's death the previous summer): "This time it is not only a change of place but also a change in a whole way of life. You can imagine how hard the latter comes to me. For many years I have been used to constant and vigorous exercise—roaming about in the mountains and woods, and then, like a kind of jaunty bandit, bearing home my drafts." The doctors advised that he curtail not only the long walks that he so treasured, but also some of his taxing conducting activities. "I stand *vis-a-vis de rien*" (face to face with nothing), he wrote to Bruno Walter, "and now, at the end of my life, I have to begin to learn to walk and stand."

Mahler and Death And yet we might want to resist what may be too simple a connection between Mahler's late works and death. He had, after all, dealt with the subject extensively in his earlier music. His first known composition,

supposedly written at around the age of six (and now lost), was a "Polka with Introductory Funeral March." Funeral marches abound in his symphonies, beginning with the third movement of his First. He wrote his haunting *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children) before the death of his own child. Moreover, whatever his frustrations, Mahler enjoyed considerable success in New York. (The final devastating blow of his life was personal, not professional: learning of Alma's infidelity.) And, despite the initial warnings from his doctors, he gradually became more active, conducting the New York Philharmonic, of which he was music director from 1909 to 1911, in a large number of concerts. The year of the Ninth he wrote to Walter: "I am experiencing so much more now (in the last eighteen months [since Maria's death]), I can hardly talk about it. How should I attempt to describe such a tremendous crisis! I see everything in such a new light—am in such a state of flux, sometimes I should hardly be surprised suddenly to find myself in a new body. (Like Faust in the last scene.) I am thirstier for life than ever before."

Mahler provided few comments about the intent or meaning of his last compositions. Concerning the Ninth, he informed Walter that "the work itself (insofar as I know it, for I have been writing away at it blindly, and now that I have begun to orchestrate the last movement I have forgotten the first) is a very satisfactory addition to my little family." This is an interesting metaphor, given the recent loss of his daughter, and may indicate how successfully Mahler sublimated a wide range of feelings into his music. "In it something is said that I have had on the tip of my tongue for some time." His nearly daily letters to Alma, who was at a spa, speak little about the composition and dwell on more mundane matters.

Mahler's Private Messages Also revealing are some indications that he scribbled in the sketches and manuscript. In the first movement of the Ninth he wrote: "O Youth! Lost! O Love! Vanished!" and in the finale: "O Beauty, Love! Farewell! Farewell!" (He made similar annotations in the Tenth: "Farewell, my music! Farewell. Farewell. Farewell" and at the end of the finale: "To live for you! To die for you, Almschi!") These were personal notes, not meant for public consumption. Although they do not appear in the published score, colleagues such as Berg (to whom Alma gave the draft manuscript of the first three movements in 1923) and the conductor Willem Mengelberg learned of them and it no doubt influenced their interpretations. The latter noted in his score: "The Ninth Symphony is: Farewell from all whom he loved—and from the world!—and from his art, his life, his music."

Mahler's view about divulging "extra-musical" information concerning his works changed over the course of his career. His early symphonies initially carried intricate programs and descriptive titles, some of which he later withdrew. His middle trilogy of purely instrumental ones (Nos. 5–7) furthered the retreat. With regard to his last works, it has primarily been musicians, critics, and listeners who have invented their own "programs," especially ones that make connections with

farewell and death. A similar situation applies to Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, premiered just nine days before the Russian composer's death in 1893, and a piece, like Mahler's Ninth, that ends with an emotional slow movement. (Mahler allegedly did not much care for Tchaikovsky's final symphony, although he conducted it six times in 1910–11.)

More recent biographers and commentators have continued to make the connections. The British musicologist Deryck Cooke, who constructed the most frequently performed edition of the Tenth Symphony, remarked that Mahler's earlier works project "images" of mortality, while the late ones have the "taste" of death. Since the Mahler revival of the 1960s, in which he played a commanding role, Leonard Bernstein's views of the Ninth Symphony have been particularly influential. "The Ninth is the ultimate farewell," the conductor noted. The end of the Ninth is "the closest we have ever come, in any work of art, to experiencing the very act of dying, of giving it all up." The Ninth was Mahler's "last will and testament," a sonic presentation of death itself. But Bernstein saw more than prophesies of Mahler's "own imminent death," extending to "the death of tonality" and, finally, "the death of society." After recounting a list of 20th-century horrors, he remarked that "only after all this can we finally listen to Mahler's music and understand that it foretold all."

A Closer Look The opening of the first movement (**Andante comodo**) picks up harmonically and thematically from the end of *Das Lied,* with its nine-fold repetition of the word *ewig* (forever). The rhythm, presented by cellos and a horn repeated on the pitch A, returns at crucial structural moments in the movement, including at the climax "with utmost force." As early as 1912 (and taken up by Cooke and Bernstein later), the rhythm was likened to "a very slow heartbeat, irregular, fractured." A nostalgic D-major theme gradually emerges in the second violins, accumulating force through a series of fragments played by strings, harp, clarinets, and muted horns. The organic growth of the themes marks one of Mahler's greatest compositional achievements. Over the past century commentators have discerned various allusions in this movement, not just to Mahler's own music, but also to other compositions, including Johann Strauss, Jr.'s waltz "Freuet euch des Lebens" (Enjoy Life) and, more tellingly, Beethoven's "Les Adieux" (Farewell) Piano Sonata in E-flat, Op. 81a. (This allusion comes at the point where Mahler wrote "Leb' wol" [Farewell] in the draft score.) Berg believed that "The whole movement is permeated with the premonition of death. … Again and again it occurs, all the elements of worldly dreaming culminate in it … which is why the tenderest passages are followed by tremendous climaxes like new eruptions of a volcano."

The slow first and last movements frame two fast, more ironic central ones. The marking for the second is **Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers** (in the tempo of a relaxed *Ländler*). Although it starts innocently, it takes on the flavor of a "Dance of Death," as T.W. Adorno observed. The following **Rondo-Burleske**

likewise offers a wide range of moods, including the gestures of popular music of the sort that brought charges of banality against Mahler. The movement shows Mahler's increasing interest in counterpoint, taking his studies of Bach to new extremes. Fugato mixes with marches, grotesque and angry passages with more tender moments. A quieter, phantasmagorical middle section looks forward to the final movement. Adorno called this movement the first major work of new music.

The concluding **Adagio** opens with a forceful unison violin theme reminiscent of two other final works: the slow movement of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and Wagner's *Parsifal,* both of which also project lush, hymn-like meditations. The music plunges into the key of D-flat major. Whereas in some of his earlier symphonies the tonality progressed upward, for example, in the Fifth Symphony from C-sharp minor in the first movement to D major in the finale, here the tonality is regressive, from D major to D-flat. All the Ninth's movements, except for the furious coda of the third, end in disintegration, approaching the state of chamber music. The incredible final page of the Ninth offers the least rousing finale in the history of music, but undoubtedly one of the most moving. Mahler provides one further self-allusion, played by the first violins, to the fourth of his *Kindertotenlieder.* The unsung song, heard in the first violins, originally accompanied the words "Der Tag ist schön auf jenen Höh'n" (The day is beautiful on those heights), telling of the parents' vision of their dead children at play on a distant mountain. The music becomes ever softer and stiller, almost more silence than sound, until we may be reminded of the heartbeat that opened the Symphony, but now realize it is the consciousness of our own heartbeat. In this extraordinary way Mahler implicates his listeners in the work, which ends *ersterbend*—dying away.

Psychologists, notably the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, have explored the various stages of dealing with death, including denial, anger, and acceptance, and one might argue that all these and more are conveyed in Mahler's final three works. One finds denial in *Das Lied* through the ecstatic celebration of nature and life, but also rage, and ultimately peace. The Rondo-Burleske in the Ninth Symphony is an even more terrifying expression of rage, while the last moments of the work transcend acceptance so as to suggest some sort of visionary state. The sketches for the Tenth Symphony indicate similar moments of extreme, dissonant anger, although they suggest that Mahler aimed for acceptance at the end. These works not only ponder death, but also bid farewell to the passing of a musical and artistic world, the end of Romanticism, tonality, and perhaps even the genre of the symphony. At the same time Mahler looks forward, offering a prophetic vision of music that we are still trying to understand.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Christopher H. Gibbs is James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College and has been the program annotator for The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2000. He is the author of several books on Schubert and Liszt, and the co-author, with Richard Taruskin, of The Oxford History of Western Music, College Edition.

Mahler composed his Symphony No. 9 in 1909.

William Smith conducted The Philadelphia Orchestra's first performances of Mahler's Ninth, in December 1969. The most recent subscription performances were in May 2019, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Orchestra recorded the Symphony in 1979 with James Levine for RCA.

Mahler scored the work for piccolo, four flutes, four oboes (IV doubling English horn), three clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, four bassoons (IV doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, large bells [in A, B, and F-sharp], snare drum, tam-tam, triangle), two harps, and strings.

The Ninth Symphony runs approximately one hour and 30 minutes in performance.

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