This program will last approximately one and one-half hours. There will be no intermission.

Friday, May 19, 2023, 8:00 p.m.
16,895th Concert
Donor Rehearsal at 9:45 a.m.‡

Saturday, May 20, 2023, 8:00 p.m.
16,896th Concert

Sunday, May 21, 2023, 2:00 p.m.
16,897th Concert

Gustavo Dudamel, Conductor

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David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the New York Philharmonic
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MAHLER
(1860–1911)

Symphony No. 9 in D major (1908–10)
Andante comodo
Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Länders, etwas täppisch und sehr derb (In the tempo of a comfortable Ländler, somewhat clumsy and very coarse)
Rondo: Burleske (Allegro assai, sehr trotzig) (Allegro assai, very insolent)
Adagio (Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend) (Very slow and even holding back)

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO RECORDING ARE ONLY PERMITTED DURING APPLAUSE.
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 Webern and Alban Berg, shared Schoenberg’s 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 compositions prophesied not only his own life but the future of music and even of the 20th century more broadly.

Saint, martyr, prophet — such images have vast implications for an understanding of Mahler’s life and his music, especially his final three 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 had 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. It was left to Bruno Walter, his friend and protégé, to lead their first performances, in 1911 and 1912, respectively.

“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.” Schoenberg may have expressed this thought, but Mahler reportedly shared these superstitions about composing a ninth symphony, which had concluded the careers of Beethoven and Bruckner. Das Lied (1908), although unnumbered, was titled a “Symphony for Tenor and Alto Voice and Orchestra,” and sets...

Notes on the Program

Symphony No. 9 in D major
Gustav Mahler

In Short

Born: July 7, 1860, in Kalischt (Kaliště), Bohemia, near the town of Humpolec
Died: May 18, 1911, in Vienna, Austria
Work composed: late spring 1909–April 1, 1910, with sketches begun in the summer of 1908
World premiere: June 26, 1912, in Vienna, by the Vienna Philharmonic, Bruno Walter, conductor, at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde
New York Philharmonic premiere: December 20, 1945, Bruno Walter, conductor
Most recent New York Philharmonic performance: April 19, 2016, Bernard Haitink, conductor
Estimated duration: ca. 86 minutes
The Work at a Glance

The opening of the first movement of Mahler’s Symphony No. 9 picks up harmonically and thematically from the end of his *Das Lied von der Erde*, with a 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 this 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. Commentators have discerned various allusions in this movement, not just to Mahler’s own music, but also to Johann Strauss II’s waltz *Freuet euch des Lebens (Enjoy Life)* and Beethoven’s *Les Adieux (Farewell)* Piano Sonata in E flat major, Op. 81a, which comes at the point where Mahler wrote “Farewell” in the draft score.

The slow first and last movements frame two fast, more ironic ones. The tempo marking for the second is “In the tempo of a comfortable Ländler, somewhat clumsy and very coarse,” which alternates with a livelier waltz. The following Rondo: Burleske likewise offers a wide range of moods, including popular-music gestures that brought charges of banality. The movement shows Mahler’s increasing interest in counterpoint. Fugato mixes with marches, grotesque and angry passages with tender ones. A quieter, phantasmagorical middle section looks forward to the final movement.

The concluding Adagio opens with a forceful unison violin theme reminiscent of two other final works: Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony and Wagner’s *Parsifal*. All four movements, except the furious coda of the third, end in disintegration, approaching the scale of chamber music. The incredible final page offers the least rousing finale in the history of music, and undoubtedly one of the most moving. Mahler provides one further self-allusion, to 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, now realizing that it evokes the consciousness of one’s own heartbeat, implicating his listeners in the work, which ends ersterbend — “dying away.”
Hans Bethge’s German adaptations of ancient Chinese poetry. The Ninth is a work that begins thematically where Das Lied’s haunting final song, Der Abschied (The Farewell), ended. Mahler composed most of the Ninth during the summer of 1909. The following summer, his last, he sketched the Tenth.

The connections among these pieces, as well as their ultimate place in the composer’s output, have made it all too tempting to view them as a “farewell” trilogy, the artistic testament of a dying man. Mahler had, after all, received serious personal blows in 1907: His elder daughter, Maria Anna, died at the age of four; he resigned an untenable position as director of the Vienna Court Opera; and he was diagnosed with a heart condition. In that same year Mahler accepted a lucrative offer from The Metropolitan Opera in New York, returning to Europe each summer, when he always did most of his composing. By 1909, the year of the Ninth, his professional situation in New York had become more complicated (having begun his tenure as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic), as had his marriage to the nearly 20-years-younger Alma Schindler, who was soon to begin an affair with the young architect Walter Gropius (whom she would later marry). Mahler eventually learned of this 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 in May 1911.

Yet we should 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 composition, supposedly written 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, Mahler enjoyed considerable success in New York. Despite warnings from his doctors, he gradually became more active, conducting the New York Philharmonic in a large number of concerts and on tour. The year of the Ninth he wrote to Walter:

I am experiencing so much more now (in the last 18 months [since Maria’s death]), I can hardly talk about it. How

Dealing with Death

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 they are conveyed in Mahler’s final three works, both within and among the individual compositions. 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 contains an even more terrifying expression of rage, while the last moments of the work express a transcendent acceptance, a sort of visionary state. Sketches for the Tenth Symphony indicated similar moments of extreme, dissonant anger, although they, too, suggest that Mahler was aspiring to acceptance at the end. These works not only ponder death; they also bid farewell to the musical and artistic world of Romanticism, tonality, perhaps even the symphonic genre. At the same time, Mahler looks forward, offering a prophetic vision of music that we are still trying to understand.
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.”

Also revealing are some indications that he scribbled in the manuscript. In the first movement 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,” 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 of the first three movements) and the conductor Willem Mengelberg learned of them, and they 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.”

**Instrumentation:** four flutes and piccolo, four oboes (one doubling English horn), three clarinets plus E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, four bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, snare drum, bass drum, tam-tam, triangle, orchestra bells, chimes, two harps, and strings.

— Christopher H. Gibbs, James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College and co-author, with Richard Taruskin, of The Oxford History of Western Music, *College Edition*
The New York Philharmonic Connection

When Gustav Mahler assumed the post of Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic (a position now referred to as Music Director) in the fall of 1909, it marked his first and only experience as a director of a symphonic orchestra. During his brief tenure the Orchestra’s season expanded (from 18 concerts to 54), musicians’ salaries were guaranteed, and the scope of operations broadened — thus giving birth to the 20th-century orchestra.

On February 21, 1911, Mahler led an Italian-themed program that included Mendelssohn’s *Italian* Symphony and the premiere of Busoni’s *Berceuse élégiaque*. Although he was suffering from throat trouble and a severe headache, he managed to conduct the entire concert. However, he had to withdraw from the program’s second performance, scheduled for February 24. In a review of that concert, *The New York Times* reported:

Mr. Mahler was indisposed and did not conduct. He is said to have a light attack of grip. His place on the conductor’s stand was taken by concertmaster Theodore Spierling, who fulfilled his task with competence.

Mahler never conducted again. Physicians soon diagnosed bacterial endocarditis, a heart ailment that in the pre-antibiotic era was fatal. On April 8 Mahler sailed for France for a medical consultation; he then traveled to Vienna, where he died on May 18.

His friend Bruno Walter led the World Premiere of the Ninth Symphony in Vienna in 1912 and, three decades later, the New York Philharmonic’s first performance, in 1945; two years later he would succeed his mentor in a position at the Orchestra that was then titled Musical Advisor.

— The Editors

From top: the last program Mahler conducted at the Philharmonic; his final trans-Atlantic voyage, April 1911
New York Philharmonic

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**Gustavo Dudamel** is driven by the belief that music has the power to transform lives, to inspire, and to change the world. Currently serving as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Opéra National de Paris, and Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, his dynamic presence on the podium and his tireless advocacy for arts education have introduced classical music to new audiences around the globe and have helped to provide access to the arts for countless people in underserved communities.

In February 2023 the New York Philharmonic announced that Gustavo Dudamel would become the Orchestra’s Music and Artistic Director, beginning in the 2026–27 season, after serving as Music Director Designate in 2025–26. He will join a legacy that includes Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini, and Leonard Bernstein, building on a relationship that began with his NY Phil debut in 2007 (when he conducted works by Dvořák, Prokofiev, and Chávez) and continued through 2009 performances of Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 and, in 2022, *The Schumann Connection*, two weeks featuring the Romantic composer’s symphonic cycle coupled with premieres by Gabriela Ortiz and Andreia Pinto Correia.

One of the few classical musicians to become a bona fide pop culture phenomenon, Dudamel’s film credits include Steven Spielberg’s new adaptation of Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, and *The Simpsons*, and he led the LA Phil with Billie Eilish in the concert film *Happier Than Ever: A Love Letter to Los Angeles*. He has performed at the Super Bowl halftime show, the Academy Awards, the Nobel Prize Concert, and has worked with international superstars Christina Aguilera, Ricky Martin, Tyler, the Creator, Coldplay, and others. His extensive discography includes 67 releases and 4 Grammy Awards.

Inspired by his transformative experience as a youth in Venezuela’s immersive musical training program El Sistema, he created The Dudamel Foundation in 2012, which he co-chairs with his wife, actress and director María Valverde, with the goal “to expand access to music and the arts for young people by providing tools and opportunities to shape their creative futures.” In July and August 2022, The Dudamel Foundation brought its “Encuentros” initiative to the Hollywood Bowl as part of its 100th anniversary season, in a two-week intensive globalleadership and orchestral training program for young musicians from around the world that culminated in a concert at the Hollywood Bowl and a tour with the “Orquesta del Encuentro” to the legendary Greek Theatre in Berkeley, California.
Jaap van Zweden became Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in 2018; in the 2022–23 season he presides over the Orchestra’s return to the new David Geffen Hall. Season highlights include musical explorations of SPIRIT, featuring epic works by Messiaen and J.S. Bach, and EARTH, featuring premieres of works by Julia Wolfe and John Luther Adams. He is also Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, since 2012, and becomes Music Director of the Seoul Philharmonic in 2024. He has appeared as guest with the Orchestre de Paris; Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestras; Vienna, Berlin, and Los Angeles philharmonic orchestras; and London Symphony, Chicago Symphony, and Cleveland orchestras.

Jaap van Zweden’s NY Phil recordings include David Lang’s prisoner of the state and Julia Wolfe’s Grammy-nominated Fire in my mouth (Decca Gold). He conducted the first performances in Hong Kong of Wagner’s Ring Cycle, the Naxos recording of which led the Hong Kong Philharmonic to be named the 2019 Gramophone Orchestra of the Year. His performance of Wagner’s Parsifal received the Edison Award for Best Opera Recording in 2012.

Born in Amsterdam, Jaap van Zweden became the youngest-ever concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at age 19 and began his conducting career almost 20 years later. He was named Musical America’s 2012 Conductor of the Year, was profiled by CBS 60 Minutes on arriving at the NY Phil, and in the spring of 2023 received the prestigious Concertgebouw Prize. In 1997 he and his wife, Aaltje, established the Papageno Foundation to support families of children with autism.

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The Philharmonic has commissioned and / or premiered important works, from Dvořák’s New World Symphony to Tania León’s Pulitzer Prize–winning Stride. The Orchestra, which has released more than 2,000 recordings since 1917, recently announced a partnership with Apple Music Classical, the new standalone music streaming app designed to deliver classical music lovers the optimal listening experience. The NY Phil shares its extensive history free online through the Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives.

Founded in 1842, the New York Philharmonic is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and one of the oldest in the world. Jaap van Zweden became Music Director in 2018–19, following titans including Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler; he will be succeeded by Gustavo Dudamel (as Music Director Designate in 2025–26, Music and Artistic Director beginning in 2026–27).
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