



2023-2024 SEASON

JAYCE OGREN, MUSIC DIRECTOR



PINNACLES

May 18 & 19, 2024

SUNSET CENTER, CARMEL

Jayce Ogren, Music Director and Conductor

Symphony No. 5
[running time 65']

Gustav Mahler
(1860-1911)

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

*The May concert will be rebroadcast on KAZU's HD2 Classical station on
June 8, 2024, and June 9, 2024, both at 4 PM.*

PROGRAM NOTES

By Dr. Alicia Mastromonaco
May 18 & 19, 2024

PINNACLES (Peak/Culmination)



The craggy ridges and valleys of Pinnacles National Park were formed around 23 million years ago, a product of eruption, cracking, stretching, and erosion. The landscape is otherworldly, something that is unique to the region. Austro-Bohemian composer Gustav Mahler said that “A symphony should be like the world. It must embrace everything.” If each of his nine completed symphonies is a world, then the fifth occupies the world of love. Mahler wrote the symphony during his brief courtship of Alma Schindler in 1901 before their marriage in 1902. It is dedicated to her. The symphony has moments of cragginess and melancholy, but finishes with ebullient moments of joy and celebration.

Symphony No. 5

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)



Gustav Mahler's (1860-1911) symphonies have found their place among the canonical symphonic repertoire, but only they after they were “rediscovered” in the middle of the 20th century. By the 1970s, Mahler was one of the most recorded symphonists. Gustav Mahler came from a Bohemian Jewish Family but later converted to Catholicism shortly before being appointed director of the Vienna

Hofoper in 1897. He served there from 1897-1907, when conflict at the Hofoper made him decide to move to the United States to take an appointment at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

He began the Fifth symphony in the summer of 1901, the first year Mahler spent the season at his villa on the Wörthersee, through the period in which he met and married Alma Schindler in 1902. Mahler put the piece through numerous revisions as late as 1907 and was fully satisfied with the work. He wrote, “The Fifth is finished. I have been forced to re-orchestrate it completely. I cannot understand how I could have written so much like a beginner ... Clearly the routine I had acquired in the first four symphonies completely deserted me, as though a totally new message demanded a new technique.” Despite his

qualms with the work, it is one of his most popular works.

The symphony is comprised of five movements, grouped into three parts. It was Mahler's first purely instrumental symphony since his First, in which he incorporated passages from his song cycle *Songs of a Wayfarer* in the orchestra. The Second, Third, and Fourth symphonies each have vocal parts, as does his Eighth (the "Symphony of a Thousand"). Mahler wrote, "the human voice would be utterly out of place here. There is no call for words, everything is said in purely musical terms." Still, there are instrumental allusions to three of Mahler's songs in this symphony.

The first movement, *Trauermarsch* ("funeral march"), opens with a militaresque trumpet fanfare, in C# minor. The opening solo forms a rhythmic tattoo for the movement. This minor third fanfare is borrowed from the first movement of the Fourth symphony, in which the trumpet plays the same theme, but the Fifth is a more insistent version of the motive.

The second movement is in some respects a continuation of the first movement and comprises the other half of the first part. There is not an enormous amount of thematic material, but Mahler spins these themes into the third movement, the *Scherzo*, which is the whole of the second part of the symphony, as well as the longest single movement. Mahler wrote that the movement "is intensely difficult to work out because of the structure and the supreme artistic mastery which it demands in all its relationships and details. The apparent confusion must resolve itself into perfect order and harmony, as in a Gothic cathedral." Like many of Mahler's scherzo movements, there is more than a passing resemblance to the *Ländler*, a German peasant country dance. Sometimes akin to a *Ländler*, other times more like a Viennese Waltz, the third movement is full of both geometry and *Schwung*. The horn obligato part in the scherzo soars above the orchestra and the horns seem to echo over Alpen lake where Mahler was composing.

Music scholars sometimes ascribe extramusical meaning to symphonies in the search for a deeper understanding of the work. In some cases, the composers deny any program but Mahler himself claimed to have sent the *Adagietto* as a musical love letter to his future wife. Composers both, Mahler and Schindler traveled in similar circles in Vienna. Alma Schindler wrote, "I had first met Zemlinsky at a small party and we went through the people around us with malicious sarcasm. Suddenly we looked at each other. 'If we can think of someone about whom only good can be said, we'll drain a glass to him!' And with one voice we cried: 'Mahler!'" After meeting at a party, Mahler and Schindler had a whirlwind courtship before Mahler proposed within a few months.

The *Adagietto* opens Part Three of the symphony and is perhaps the most famous of all of Mahler's works. The movement opens with only the strings and harp; a tender, beautiful passage that. The lush beauty of the movement belies the fact that the Mahlers' marriage was not always a happy one, not least of all because Mahler married Alma Schindler only after she agreed to abandon her own promising composition career. He was also nearly 20 years her senior. Despite any turmoil that might have been brewing beneath the surface, the movement floats above the fray of worldly concerns, an idyllic respite.

The *Rondo-Finale*, the closing movement of Part Three, alludes to a motif from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a song cycle that Mahler had been working on for years, *Lob des hohen Verstandes*. It reintroduces the brass chorale material from the second movement, as well as an enlivened version of the *Adagietto*. Transcending the *Trauermarsch* from the first movement, the *Rondo-Finale* ends in a burst of laughter, a raucous, joyous ending to the world that Mahler created in his Fifth Symphony.

DR. ALICIA MASTROMONACO

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL HORN

Program Notes Author



Alicia has played with the Monterey Symphony since 2007. She is also a member of the Carmel Bach Festival, Marin and California Symphonies and plays with orchestras across the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Berkeley Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, New Century Chamber orchestra, and other regional orchestras. She is Lecturer of Horn at Sonoma State University.

A San Francisco native, Alicia began her music studies at age seven on the piano and sang in the San Francisco Girls Chorus before taking up the

horn. Alicia earned Bachelor of Music degrees in Horn Performance and Musicology from Boston University, then did graduate work at the Universität der Künste Berlin before returning to California to continue her studies. She earned a Master of Music in horn performance at University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts and PhD in Musicology from University of California, Santa Barbara.

Alicia lives with her husband, daughter, and two cats in El Cerrito where she enjoys the many beautiful hiking trails just outside their door, baking sourdough bread, and gardening.