Penn Symphony Orchestra Performs

Mahler, Symphony No. 1

& Mozart Symphony No. 40
Saturday, December 4, 2021

IRVINE AUDITORIUM
3401 SPRUCE STREET
University of Pennsylvania

The Department of Music and the Student Activities Council present

PENN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Thomas Hong, Conductor & Director

With thanks to the University of Pennsylvania Music Department

Dr. Timothy Rommen, Chair
Dr. Michael Ketner, Director of Performance
Maddie Hewitt, Performance and Communications Coordinator
Eugene Lew, Director of Sound and Music Technology
PROGRAM

Symphony No. 40 in G Minor................................................. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
   I. Molto allegro
   II. Andante
   III. Menuetto. Allegretto
   IV. Finale. Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 1 in D Major ................................................. Gustav Mahler
   I. Langsam, schleppend (Slowly, dragging) Immer sehr gemächlich (very restrained throughout) D major
   II. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (Moving strongly, but not too quickly),
       Recht gemächlich (restrained), a Trio—a Ländler
   III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen (Solemnly and measured, without dragging),
       Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise (very simple, like a folk-tune), and Wieder etwas bewegter, wie im Anfang (once again somewhat more agitated, as at the start)
   IV. Stürmisch bewegt – Energisch (Stormily agitated – Energetic)
Founded in 1878, the Penn Symphony Orchestra exists to provide the Penn community with orchestra concerts. Consisting of primarily undergraduate student members, the ensemble performs music ranging from the early Baroque styles to modern living composers. The Penn Symphony Orchestra rehearses and performs in historic Irvine Auditorium on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Hailed by Kurt Masur as “one of the most talented young conductors of his generation,” Thomas Hong enjoys the distinction of being one of many successful protégés of the great Maestro. Having won titled positions with the Dallas, Pittsburgh, and Seattle Symphony Orchestras as well as Orchestre National de France, Hong has conducted countless concerts with those orchestras, ranging from classical, community, education and pops concerts. Presently, he is the artistic director and conductor of the University of Pennsylvania Orchestras. Recent activities include being principal conductor for the inaugural season of the DSO on the “GO” series with the Dallas Symphony, performing in neighboring venues of the North Texas area, and a re-engagement with the Utah Symphony, where he was the conductor for the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition in Salt Lake City.

Hong was born in Incheon, Korea and immigrated to the United States with his family. He began his musical training as a pianist with Dr. Samuel Hsu at Cairn University. Later, he went on to earn a Master’s degree in choral conducting at Temple University and an artist diploma in orchestral conducting from The Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Maestros Alan Harler and Otto Werner Meuller, respectively. He concluded his artistic training with Larry Rachleff at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. Currently, Hong lives in Philadelphia with his wife Rachel Ku and their daughter Esther.
VIOLIN 1
Stand 1 – Elliot Kim / Hannah Chang
Stand 1.5 – Bonnie Li / Yuxuan Liu
Stand 2 – Helena Munoz / Zoe Patterson
Stand 3 – William Qi / Jonah Baer
Stand 4 – Wenxin Liu / Linlin Yang
Stand 5 – Daphne Nie / Daniel Da
Stand 6 – Daniel Hwang / Heewon Kim
Stand 7 – Joey Wu / Hannah Tsai
Stand 8 – Maggie Yuan / Alea Zone

VIOLIN 2
Stand 1 – Hannah Goldberg, Principal / Talia Coopersmith
Stand 1.5 – Alison Royce / Laura Weiner
Stand 2 – Jason Ren, Co-principal / Hyejin Lee
Stand 3 – Jason (Jaemyoung) Lee / Lucas Schrier
Stand 4 – Michelle Wen / Anthony Lee
Stand 5 – Tianhao Luo / Joy Onawola
Stand 6 – Susan Zhang / Anna Nguyen
Stand 7 – Annie Wu / Mallory Peters
Stand 8 – Victor Tsao / Wendi Song

VIOLA
Stand 1 – Ella Cho, Principal / Gavin Lee
Stand 1.5 – Cecilia Wright / Autumn Cortright
Stand 2 – William Krasnow / Savannah Mueller
Stand 3 – Anna Chung / Sahana Sundar
Stand 4 – Kyle Huang / Evan Qiang
Stand 5 – Greg Kraynak / Peter Proenca
Stand 6 – Henry Sywulak-Herr / Kevin Chen
Stand 7 – Nancy Drye / Eric Tao

CELLO
Stand 1 – Deborah Zhang, Principal / Jason Shu
Stand 1.5 – Lianghuan Huang / Gabrielle Ryu
Stand 2 – Angela Youn, Co-principal / Christine Kong
Stand 3 – Michael Tu / Sophie Sax
Stand 4 – Sierra Wei / Andy Liu
Stand 5 – Samantha Martinez / Edward Kim
Stand 6 – Evan Jiang / Melanie Hilman

BASS
Stand 1 – Berk Soykan / Jonathan Kim
Stand 2 – John Wallison / William Stewart
Stand 3 – Sarah Ramadan / Alex Kalbach

NEW VIOLIN MEMBERS: Joy Gong, Eric Liu and Kevin Xu
FLUTE / PICCOLO
Sherry Shi
Michael Han
Elle Kirsch
Alyssia Liu
Nadia Awad
Sara Takenaka*

OBOE
Daniel Koropeckyj-Cox
Justin Wang

CLARINET
Will Wang
Greg Ferrey
Eric Yang
Christian Sun
Michelle Yoon
Xandro Xu

BASSOON
Mikael Habib

HORN
Harold Litt
Jeremy Middleman
Johnny (Jaeheon) Jeong
Anagha Gouru
Armando Chardiet
Aidan Lewis
Evan Bretz

TRUMPET
Adrian Wang
Matthew Bloomfield
Seamus Wang
Celeste Adler
Eli Harrison
Ryan Dahn

TUBA
Santino Lo

TROMBONE
Lance Lunceford
Justin Amgott
Tyler Jenkins-Wong
Hunter Stufflebeam, Bass
Rishi Patel*

PERCUSSION
Tammy Yang

HARP
Elizabeth Vo-Phamhi

PIANO
Eliza Keefe

GUEST MUSICIAN
Dana Newcomb, oboe
Jamison Hillian, oboe / english horn
Alison Herz, e-flat clarinet
Sara Han, clarinet / bass clarinet
Martina Adams, horn
Hannah Culbreth, horn
Davey Heister, bassoon
Hanul Park, bassoon / contrabassoon
Joelle Walker, percussion
Karen Xu, percussion
Austin Andrulis, timpani
Vincent Luciano, double bass
Markus Lang, double bass

* Alternate

Some members of the Penn Symphony Orchestra have met the University’s requirements to perform on this evening’s concert without masks. Masks are still required for all audience members throughout the evening.
While Mozart had enjoyed some degree of success with his operas during the years leading up to 1788, by then he was again in deep financial trouble. His income from time to time was evidently encouraging, but he was notorious for his over-spending. So, there are extant some heart-rending letters to his friends, literally begging for money. It is in this context that he moved his family from the inner city of Vienna out to the suburbs for that summer. There he had at his disposal a quite large apartment adjacent to an attractive garden. In this pleasant atmosphere, in less than two months, working at what must have been a feverish pace, Mozart wrote three of his most important works: his last three symphonies—the Eb, the G minor, and the “Jupiter.” We don’t know his motivation for turning out these masterpieces in so short a time, although there is some evidence that he was preparing for performances called “Concerts in the Casino”—a rather modern sounding affair! In any case, they are a significant part of his musical legacy.

The following andante in Eb major takes us away from the turmoil and crepuscular atmosphere of the first movement. The first theme begins smoothly stepwise, followed by an expressive droop over a throbbing bass. The second theme features a birdlike “chirping” rhythm—easy to spot and becomes a signal motive in the movement. A third theme closes out the beginning. Development of these ideas begins with an intensification of the pounding bass, and the main ideas are, again, clear, as Mozart works with them. In his maturity Mozart gained a mastery of orchestra color, even with the somewhat limited resources of the classical orchestra. That skill comes to the fore in this section in the imaginative contrasts of color and mass.
NOTES ON MAHLER
Yoonjae Lee

Gustav Mahler (1860 – 1911) was a late-Romantic composer and one of the leading conductors of his generation. He was born to a Jewish family in the village of Kalisch in Bohemia, in what was then the Austrian Empire, now Kaliště in the Czech Republic. His family later moved to nearby Iglau (now Jihlava), where Mahler grew up. One of 14 children born to an abusive and non-nurturing household, many biographers have suggested he suffered from a traumatic childhood.

Mahler’s life was full of tragedy. He had suffered a terrible losses; many of his siblings died in infancy, his daughter, Maria, died of scarlet fever in 1907, and his marriage to Alma was at best rocky. She was actually nineteen years younger than he was. Incidentally, she was to outlive him by some 50 years, married Walter Gropius, and died in New York in 1964. Their second daughter, Anna, was a sculptor, and died in England in 1988.

Mahler actually never really understood the enmity his music aroused in his audiences. It seems that every biographer has also noted that Mahler, in 1910 (one year before he died) had one or more visitations to Sigmund Freud, who interpreted Mahler’s odd and bizarre popular songs and dances in his symphonies “which may have had something with his unfortunate upbringing.”

It was not exactly known when Mahler began composing his first symphony. He may have begun it as early as 1884 which is the year he wrote his song cycle Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen or Songs of a Wayfarer which the symphony shares related themes with. Mahler told Natalie Bauer-Lechner his close friend that he composed the entire symphony within six weeks in the Spring of 1888 most likely
between January 20 and the end of March 1888. There is an element of an autobiographical nature to the program with the wayfarer or the hero, being Mahler himself.

Mahler became Music Director of the Royal Hungarian Opera in Pest (Budapest) in the Fall of 1888. One year later he was given the opportunity to conduct the world premiere in Budapest a year later on November 20, 1889. The world première was an utter fiasco. It was greeted with bewilderment, confusion, and indifference and even hostility. An overwhelming majority of the critics condemned the piece. Mahler later recalled that his friends avoided him afterwards and no one dared to talk about the performance. He was treated like an outcast.

Mahler’s first symphony began life as a symphonic tone poem in two parts and five movements subtitled “Titan” which was complete with a detailed program (although not at the premiere). The 1st movement was originally described as “Spring with No End” (Introduction and Allegro commodo) depicting the awakening of nature from winter hibernation. Eventually, Mahler discarded one of the movements and dropped all the programmatic descriptions of the work and simply called it Symphony No. 1 in D Major.

The symphony begins in a completely different way from what one might expect from the period as the strings play 7 octaves of “A natural” in a subdued opening. Many critics say that it suggests a “springboard” for life to come. After the woodwinds join in, an immediate contrast occurs with a military-type theme played by off-stage trumpets and shortly after the clarinet plays some cuckoo birdsong followed by an airy melody played by the cellos and bassoon.

The melody is quoted from the 2nd song from Songs of a Wayfarer cited earlier and talks about a walker in the woods in the emergence of spring. The exposition section of the first movement is repeated here as is typical of many sonata-allegro form movements from symphonies.

In the development section, the sustained note A's returns in the violins. But as the music modulates into the minor mode, the sounds of nature are threatened by a low F in the basses and heart pounding thuds of the bass drum. The bass drum begins to roll as the flute and clarinet continue the cuckoo calls and muted brass enter ever so quietly leading back into D Major signaling the recapitulation. The music starts to modulate to F Minor and a sense of foreboding foreshadows the music which will be heard in the finale. The climatic fanfare theme signals the return to D Major and the movement builds momentum to the end.

The second movement is a Scherzo, with the cuckoo theme (descending interval of 4ths) played again by cellos and basses in clomping-type dance, all building toward an exciting fanfare. When Mahler originally had programmatic titles to each movement, this movement was titled “Mit vollen Segeln” (With Full Sail). The trio in the key of F Major is actually a Ländler, a folk dance in 3/4 time which was popular in Austria, southern Germany, Switzerland, and Slovenia at the end of the 18th century. It is a dance for couples which strongly features hopping and stamping. It was sometimes purely instrumental and sometimes had a vocal part, sometimes featuring yodeling. The scherzo concludes with a capricious climax, but it is the third movement that caused controversy at the premiere.

The third movement uses many trademarks of Mahler’s style. Irony, parody, the funeral march, and novel orchestration. It uses as its main melody the tune “Frere Jacques,” but in the minor mode and was known in Austria by Mahler as the folk song “Bruder Martin” played in a canon starting with a solo bass. The inspiration for this movement came from the picture known to all Austrian children at the time called “The Hunter’s Funeral Procession” where all the animals of the forest accompany the
hunter’s body to the grave. In this next section, Mahler features pairs of oboes, clarinets, and trumpets playing a gypsy-like tune. Some amusing dance-band music over the beat of cymbals and bass drum. The violins also make use of wild violent gestures using glissando effects.

A series of repeated D’s in the flutes and harp lead to a new section in the key of G Major, full of blissful tranquility. Here Mahler uses the melody from the last movement of Songs of a Wayfarer “Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz” (“The Two Blue Eyes of my Beloved”) which describes the wayfarer lying down under a linden tree wishing to return to his life before his travels. The music from the opening of the movement now returns but played a half tone higher in the key of E Flat Minor. The gypsy music and pairs of trumpets return following a quick modulation to the home key of D Minor in which the tempo suddenly surges ahead but is immediately slowed back down. The movement dies away as the pitches get lower and the orchestration thinner and thinner until we are left with 2 pizzicato notes in the bass and bass drum. The finale follows immediately without pause.

This final movement was originally titled “Dall’Inferno al Paradiso” (Allegro furioso and Molto appassionato) and begins with a new theme in F Minor marked Energisch (Energetic) where the entire orchestra relentlessly plays in full force for about 3 minutes. Mahler described to Natalie Bauer-Lechner that the hero is completely abandoned, battling all the sorrows of the world. He is dealt a blow by fate and only in death does he gain victory. Then the allusion to his youth rings out again in victory. An intense chromatic line played by the violins leads into a luxuriant romantic second theme group in D Flat Major where the strings (the violins and cellos) are predominantly featured. A sudden brass fanfare interrupts and the “allegro section” reappears.

The brass fanfare that interrupted the nature calls earlier now is transformed into a soft piano fanfare in C Major with violins playing spiccato eight notes and scale passages. Following a slight luftpause, the music abruptly modulates to D Major, the home key of the symphony not heard since the first movement. This triumphant theme is strikingly similar to “And He Shall Reign Forever and ever,” from Handel’s Messiah, indicating what one critic said was a “recovery from the heartbreak.” The nature theme heard at the very opening of the symphony appears one last time which represents the allusion to the hero’s youth.

Instead of starting the recapitulation in the exact same manner, Mahler does the opposite stating the theme this time softly in piano and pianissimo. We now hear the foreboding music we first heard in the first movement. This will lead into the same climatic fanfare theme and return to the key of D Major as it in the first movement. The brass fanfare heard in C Major the first time is now played in the “correct” key of D Major and leads into the triumphant conclusion of the symphony again featuring the quote from Handel’s Messiah. ☺
Upcoming Concerts

December 6 | 7:30 PM
Penn Samba

December 6 | 7:30 PM
Philadelphia Student Composers Project with the PRISM Quartet

December 9 | 8:00 PM
Penn Arab Music Ensemble

For more information visit music.sas.upenn.edu/events