



Bayerisches Staatsorchester Kirill Petrenko

Friday 1 June 2018 7.30pm, Hall

Mahler Symphony No 7

Bayerisches Staatsorchester
Kirill Petrenko conductor

Pre-concert talk 6.30pm, Hall
Guido Gärtner in conversation with
Huw Humphreys

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Welcome

A warm welcome to this evening's concert, given by the Bayerisches Staatsorchester under its Music Director Kirill Petrenko. We are delighted to welcome the orchestra and Maestro Petrenko for their long-overdue UK debut together.

We have a single mighty work on the programme: Mahler's Seventh Symphony. Mahler's music fell out of fashion for several decades after his death, but even after his works' true worth began to be recognised, the Seventh Symphony remained largely unplayed.

Was this due to the great range of instruments it demanded – including

a guitar, mandolin, tenor horn and an unwieldy array of percussion? Was it sheer length? Neither of these aspects are exactly unique to this symphony, so perhaps it's more about the fact that the Seventh Symphony gives up its secrets less readily than, say, the Sixth. Structurally, the inclusion of two 'Nachtmusik' movements gives it an unorthodox layout.

Whatever the challenges, it is now rightly regarded as one of the finest of all Romantic symphonies and this promises to be a very special evening.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Huw Humphreys, Head of Music, Barbican

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Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No 7 (1904–5)

1 Langsam (Adagio) – Allegro con fuoco

2 Nachtmusik 1: Allegro moderato

3 Scherzo: Schattenhaft [Shadowy]

4 Nachtmusik 2: Andante amoroso

5 Rondo–Finale: Allegro ordinario

Mahler's Seventh is no longer the Cinderella of his symphonic output. Performances and recordings have grown impressively in number, and among Mahler devotees it is now one of the most enthusiastically discussed and argued-over of the nine complete symphonies.

However, it remains a challenge for the newcomer – far less easy to grasp on one hearing than the instantly compelling and clearly proportioned Sixth. Granted, when Schoenberg heard the Seventh in 1909 (the year after the first performance), he wrote enthusiastically of its 'perfect repose based on perfect harmony'. But few others have used such phrases to describe this symphony. The middle three movements can seem to belong to a world of their own – nocturnal, fantastic, sometimes sinister – a world from which the outer movements, impressive as they are, appear radically divergent.

Some writers, looking to explain the apparent dividedness of the Seventh Symphony, point to a letter Mahler wrote to his wife, Alma, in 1910, describing the work's difficult birth:

In the summer before [1905], I had planned to finish the Seventh, of which the two Andante [Nachtmusik] movements were already completed. Two weeks long I tortured myself to distraction, as you'll well remember – until I ran away to the Dolomites! There the same struggle, until finally I gave up and went home convinced that the summer had been wasted. At

Krumpendorf ... I climbed into the boat to be rowed across the lake. At the first stroke of the oars I found the theme (or rather the rhythm and the character) of the introduction to the first movement ... and in four weeks' time the first, third and fifth movements were absolutely complete!

But the story a piece of music tells in itself is often very different from the story of how it came into being. Many of the finest works in the symphonic repertoire have had difficult births. Sibelius's magnificent Fifth Symphony took nearly seven years to arrive at its final familiar form; and yet the music feels so organic in its growth that it's hard to believe it wasn't conceived in a single flash of inspiration. Mahler's Seventh Symphony may be enigmatic but, performed with conviction, it can also be uniquely fascinating – uncomfortable sometimes, but far more compelling than many a more conventionally 'perfect' symphony.

And there is no work of Mahler's in which the orchestral imagination is more highly charged. It isn't simply that the score includes instruments rarely seen in the symphony orchestra – tenor horn (a relative of the euphonium), mandolin, guitar, cowbells and deep-pitched bells; even the familiar instruments are made to produce surprising new colours and effects: the clarinet shrieks and cello and bass 'snap' pizzicatos (the strings plucked so hard that they spring back and hit the fingerboard) in the Scherzo; the dense polyphonic chorus of woodwind trills and arabesques near the start of the first

Nachtmusik (Night Music); the deep bell-like harp tones in the second; the headlong timpani fanfare that sets the Finale in motion. It is also extremely challenging to play, with every section of the orchestra given its moment in the spotlight. If any of Mahler's symphonies deserves to be described as a 'Concerto for Orchestra', it is the Seventh.

The Seventh Symphony begins with one of Mahler's most unforgettable sound-pictures: a slow, dragging rhythm (the 'stroke of the oars' in the letter quoted above) for low strings, wind and bass drum, then the shout of the tenor horn – 'Nature roars!' was how Mahler described it. There's a steady build-up in intensity, eventually accelerating into the Allegro con fuoco, with its energetically striding first theme. A contrasting song-like second theme led by violins echoes the 'Alma' theme in the Sixth Symphony, but more briefly, and hesitantly. Yet more strikingly contrasted is the magical still section at the heart of the movement – one of Mahler's most vivid 'Alpine interludes'. But the ultimate impression is one of fierce, driving energy, ultimately flowering in raucous triumph.

The first Nachtmusik movement begins in rapt nocturnal stillness, but eventually a slow march tempo emerges, haunted by distant fanfares

and weird birdcalls. The music swings from ghostly processional to cosy, folksy songs and back again. The compact central Scherzo then passes through still more disturbing territory. This is unmistakably a dance of death, with schmaltzy Viennese waltz-figures bizarrely or horrifically distorted. At first the second Nachtmusik seems utterly removed from this mortality-fixated thinking. It radiates easy charm, the sound of mandolin and guitar suggesting a warmly moonlit Mediterranean serenade; but there are hints of malice lurking behind the smiling mask. The Finale then strives to banish all these shadows – the glare of day after the disquieting dreams of night. But this is perhaps the most divided movement in the whole symphony. One moment it seems determined to rejoice energetically, the next the dance tunes seem to take on a lurid, possibly mocking quality. At the end the first movement's Allegro theme returns in brassy major-key splendour, through a clangour of bells, and the final pages echo the jubilant ending of the Fifth Symphony. And yet we are left with a curiously ambiguous aftertaste, not least in the sudden hush just before the emphatic final chord. Mahler's Seventh Symphony is never more inscrutable than in its close.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

About the performers



Kirill Petrenko

Kirill Petrenko conductor

Kirill Petrenko was born in Omsk in 1972 and studied piano at the city's music college. At the age of 11 he gave his first public performance as a pianist with the Omsk Symphony Orchestra. In 1990 his family relocated to Vorarlberg where his father worked as an orchestral violinist and teacher. Kirill Petrenko continued his studies in Feldkirch before moving to Vienna to study conducting at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts.

His first job after graduation took him to the Vienna Volksoper, where he was hired as Kapellmeister. From 1999 to 2002 he was General Music Director at the Meiningen Theatre. It was here that he first came to international recognition, conducting Wagner's *Ring* cycle in a 2001 production by Christine Mielitz. The following year he became General Music Director of the Komische Oper Berlin where, until 2007, he conducted a series of highly acclaimed productions.

Significant debuts include the Maggio Musicale in Florence (2000); Vienna Staatsoper and Dresden Semperoper (2001); Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Opéra National de Paris, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Bayerische Staatsoper and New York's Metropolitan Opera (2003); and Oper Frankfurt (2005). In Lyon he

has conducted Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa*, Eugene O'Neill and *The Queen of Spades*.

After moving on from the Komische Oper Berlin, Kirill Petrenko worked as a freelance conductor on projects such as Janáček's *Jenůfa* at the Bayerische Staatsoper; *Tosca* and Pfitzner's *Palestrina* in Frankfurt; and *Tristan and Isolde* at the Opéra National de Lyon and at the Ruhrtriennale.

He has worked with many leading orchestras, including the Berlin, Hamburg, Israel, London and Oslo Philharmonic orchestras, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the BR, Chicago, Hamburg, RAI National, Vienna, Vienna Radio and WDR Cologne Symphony orchestras, Bayerisches Staatsorchester, the Cleveland Orchestra and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. He has also appeared at the Bregenz and Salzburg festivals. From 2013 to 2015 he conducted *The Ring* at the Bayreuth Festival.

In September 2013 he became General Music Director at the Bayerische Staatsoper, a position he will hold until the 2019–20 season. While there, he has conducted *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Die Soldaten*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Lulu*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsenk District* and *Tannhäuser*, as well as the world premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *South Pole* and a revival of Wagner's *Ring* cycle, among other works.

In June 2015, he was named Chief Conductor designate of the Berlin Philharmonic, a position he takes up in the autumn of 2019.

Recent and current highlights at the Bayerische Staatsoper include a new production of Puccini's *Il trittico* and, opening the Munich Opera Festival, *Parsifal*. Kirill Petrenko also conducts revivals of *Der Rosenkavalier* and three complete *Ring* cycles, as well as three Academy Concerts with the Bayerisches Staatsorchester.



Bayerisches Staatsorchester

Bayerisches Staatsorchester

The Bayerisches Staatsorchester, resident orchestra at the Bayerische Staatsoper, has been named Orchestra of the Year by 50 international critics in the journal *Opernwelt* in four consecutive years since the 2013–14 season. In addition, last year the orchestra was given the accolade Orchestra of the Year by the national radio station Deutschlandfunk Kultur.

The orchestra is equally at home in the opera house and the concert hall. Carlos Kleiber – a frequent guest on the rostrum between 1968 and 1997 and a close associate of the orchestra – admired the ease with which the Bayerisches Staatsorchester could master challenging symphonic music as well as its huge operatic repertoire.

The Bayerisches Staatsorchester is one of the world's oldest orchestras and grew out of the Munich Court Orchestra. Its origins can be traced back almost half a millennium, dating back to 1523. The first famous leader of the ensemble was the composer Orlando di Lasso who directed it from 1563. Initially, the ensemble focused on church music, but secular concerts and opera performances became increasingly frequent during the 17th century. In the middle of the 18th century, the orchestra began playing regularly for the opera house, and this is still a major part of its work today. Early highlights include the premieres of Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* and *Idomeneo*.

In 1811, the musicians of the Court Orchestra founded the the Musical Academy of Munich, on the instructions of King Maximilian Joseph I. The Academy initiated the Academy Concerts – Munich's first concert series – at which composers

such as Brahms, Grieg and Richard Strauss conducted their own works. Since that time, the Academy has played a vital part in the musical life of Munich, through symphonic and chamber-music concerts and its educational activities.

The Bayerisches Staatsorchester has borne its current name since 1918. It regularly confirms its reputation as one of world's leading orchestras through guest performances in Germany and internationally, most recently, under the baton of Kirill Petrenko, at leading international concert venues such as Lucerne, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, Taipei, Seoul, Tokyo and New York – to the delight of audiences and critics alike.

The orchestra enjoys a particularly close relationship with the music of Wagner. In 1865, Hans von Bülow conducted the first performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in the National Theatre. Wagner's operas *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* were also first performed in Munich.

Many leading conductors through the ages have worked with the Bayerisches Staatsorchester, including Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter, Hans Knappertsbusch, Georg Solti, Joseph Keilberth, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Zubin Mehta and Kent Nagano.

Kirill Petrenko was appointed Bavarian General Music Director in the 2013/14 season.

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Bayerisches Staatsorchester

Violin 1

David Schultheiss
first concertmaster
Barbara Burgdorf
concertmaster
So-Young Kim
Meghan Nenniger
Cäcilie Spross
Dorothea Ebert
Felix Gargerle
Susanne Gargerle
Corinna Desch
Rita Rozsa
Verena-Maria Fitz
Ginshi Saito
Michele Torressetti
Felix Key Weber
Ursula Fingerle-Pfeffer
Julia Ungureanu

Violin 2

Matjaz Bogataj*
Daniela Huber
Martin Klepper
Sylvie Bachhuber
Traudi Pauer-Frey
Isolde Lehrmann
Anna Maria
Heichele-Paatz
José Montón
Julia Pfister
Hanna Asieieva
Verena Knappe
Verena Kurz
Katharina Scheld
Anna Wiedemann

Viola

Adrian Mustea*
Florian Ruf
Andreas Grote
Christiane Arnold
Tilo Widenmeyer
Johannes Zahlten
Monika Hettinger
David Ott
Christine Leipold
Alice Weber
Cornelius Mayer
Taissa Lysy-Refardt

Cello

Emanuel Graf*
Allan Bergius†
Benedikt Don
Strohmeier†
Christoph Hellmann
Oliver Göske
Roswitha Timm
Dietrich von Kaltenborn
Anja Fabricius
Clemens Müllner
Min Suk Cho

Double Bass

Florian Gmelin*
Alexandra
Hengstebeck†
Reinhard Schmid
Thorsten Lawrenz
Thomas Herbst
Andreas Riepl
Alexander Önce
Ertug Torun

Flute

Olivier Tardy*
Christoph Bachhuber
Andrea Ikker
Luc Mangholz
Stephanie Pagitsch

Oboe

Giorgi Gvantseladze*
Gottfried Sirotek
Heike Steinbrecher
Simeon Overbeck

Cor anglais

Heike Steinbrecher

Clarinet

Andreas Schablas*
Jürgen Key
Martina
Beck-Stegemann
Julia Puls
Oliver Klenk

Bass Clarinet

Martina
Beck-Stegemann

Bassoon

Holger Schinköthe*
Martynas Sedbaras
Katrin Kittlaus
Gernot Friedrich

Horn

Johannes Dengler*
Rainer Schmitz
Wolfram Sirotek
Stefan Böhning

Trumpet

Andreas Öttl*
Friedemann Schuck
Frank Bloedhorn

Trombone

Sven Strunkheit*
Thomas Klotz
Jonas Burow
Hans-Ulrich Pförttsch

Tenor Horn

Hans-Ulrich Pförttsch

Tuba

Steffen Schmid

Timpani

Ernst-Wilhelm Hilgers*

Percussion

Pieter Roijen†
Thomas März
Claudio Estay
Carlos Vera Larrucea
Maxime Pidoux

Harp

Birgit Hellmann
Gaël Gandino

Guitar

Gregor Holzapfel

Mandolin

Antje Wolff-
Strömsdörfer

Offstage Musicians

Conductor

Gregor Raquet

Percussion

Thomas Würfflein

* principal

† assistant principal

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