

Nikolaj Lund



Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Wednesday 20 February 2019 7.30pm, Hall

Mahler Symphony No 9

There will be no interval

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
Adam Fischer conductor

Part of Barbican Presents 2018–19

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Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra



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Welcome

A warm welcome to this evening's concert, given by one of the world's most esteemed orchestras: the Vienna Philharmonic. It's an ensemble that needs no introduction, famed for the finesse and warmth of its playing and for its respect of tradition. That tradition dates back to 1842, when the orchestra was first established in a city that had long enjoyed a reputation as the centre of classical music.

Mahler was born 18 years after the orchestra's inception but he was to have a close, if sometimes fraught, relationship with it. In 1898 he was named as the Vienna Philharmonic's conductor and he inaugurated an important tradition when he led the orchestra on its first international tour.

Today that honour falls to Hungarian conductor Ádám Fischer. It's apt that the single work on the programme tonight should be Mahler's last complete symphony, his Ninth, for it was the Vienna Philharmonic that gave its posthumous premiere, under Bruno Walter, in 1912.

Even by Mahler's standards, it's a work of extraordinary power, which is expressed within a very unorthodox formal structure. And, as ever with this composer, we're taken on a remarkable emotional journey, through a vast range of moods; yet the overwhelming sensation as we reach the end is one of resolution, and a hard-won sense of peace.

It promises to be an extraordinary concert.

Huw Humphreys
Head of Music, Barbican

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No 9 (1908–9)

1 Andante comodo – Allegro

2 Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers. Etwas täppisch und sehr derb

[In the tempo of an easy-going country waltz. Somewhat clumsy and very rough]

3 Rondo-Burleske. Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig [Very defiant]

4 Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend [Very slow and even held back]

In April 1909, after a successful winter spent conducting in New York, Mahler returned to Austria for his usual summer holiday of hard work on a new composition. Two years earlier his life had been hit by a series of body blows – the death of his oldest daughter from scarlet fever, the intrigue-ridden end of his reign as artistic director of the Vienna Court Opera and the diagnosis of a heart condition which, in theory at least, was supposed to restrict his hyperactive lifestyle. His marriage to a much younger wife, too, had become unhappy. Given their two impossibly intense natures, the 19-year age gap between them and the tragedy of their daughter's death, the emotional impasse that had resulted was really the fault of neither. But it was causing both Gustav and Alma much pain.

They took up residence on the upper floor of a farmhouse near Toblach (now Dobbiaco), among the Dolomite mountain peaks of South Tyrol. They had spent the previous summer here, with Mahler retreating to a nearby hut to compose. Alma now left her husband to his own devices, however, and took herself and their surviving daughter to stay with her mother in another town. The Ninth Symphony duly took shape against this background of distraught memories, frustrated love and a life about to be cut short.

Musical history has since given Mahler's last completed work a special place among the

symphonic masterworks of the Austro-German tradition. Great symphonies were to be written in the future, of course, but not in the direct line of descent from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as Mahler's were. In that sense his Ninth is truly the end of something. But if despair and anguish are harrowingly present in the music, they coexist with other Mahlerian qualities also – a passionate love of life and nature; an idealistic instinct to confront despair with heroic endeavour; and a magnificent pride in creative powers which, despite his illness, remained undiminished.

The Ninth Symphony's orchestra is modest by Mahlerian standards: woodwind in groups of four or five but a standard-size brass section, with percussion (including deep bells), harp and strings. The design is much more unusual. The layout of two large, slow movements enclosing two shorter, quicker ones has an obvious symmetry and the symphony does indeed end as quietly as it begins. Yet, on another level, it proceeds in a different way from that of symphonic tradition, where the finale represents the goal and summing-up of the entire musical journey. Here, the response to the first movement's yearning questioning is the nihilistic negation of the second-movement scherzo, followed by the manic hyperactivity of the Rondo-Burleske. Far from drawing the twin musical strands together, the closing Adagio widens the gulf between them, answering the first movement's key of D major with its own resigned, lower D flat major.

First Movement

The symphony's understated opening, lasting only a few seconds, presents a complex of ideas out of which the entire first movement is built: a rhythmic figure articulated across the main beat by cellos and a low horn; a four-note theme in the harp's bass register; a fanfare on a muted horn; and a quivering two-note figure on violas. With the tempo now set in motion, the second violins sing the beautiful main theme, supported by a solo horn. They are soon joined by the first violins in a mood of ecstatic serenity, which is promptly darkened by a second theme in a restless D minor. A quickening of pace and a flurry of fanfares lead to the hushed start of the development (the cross-beat rhythm on horns, repeated on trombones) and an epic journey through extremes of emotionalism and wild unease. A huge climax, with the trombones hurling out the cross-beat rhythm, gives way to a bleak funeral march, followed by a passionate reprise of the movement's main themes. This eventually leads to a coda, signalled by the last and loveliest of all Mahler's horn calls. A solo flute, hovering alone in mid-air, and a solo violin lead the movement to its serene ending.

Second Movement

The scherzo's response is wilfully grotesque: a crude country Ländler (or slow waltz), dry and expressionless, with pattering bassoons and violas answered by clarinets and horns. The music's directionless course gives no sense of why one particular idea should follow another, nor why the entire movement might not continue like this indefinitely. A quick, frenetic waltz suddenly bursts in on the strings; a third

idea, wistful and lilting, introduced by the violins and oboe, alternates with the other two. Eventually, having made a point of going on too long, the movement gutters to a close.

Third Movement

The Rondo-Burleske is launched by solo trumpet, strings and horns. Groups of ideas fly past the ear in a virtuoso *tour de force* but can't conceal a sense of hollowness behind all the feverish activity. A sudden slowing of the pace transforms the music's cackling demons into angels but their serene song is shrilly mocked by the clarinets, and the movement's course resumes even more frantically than before, chasing its tail in ever-decreasing circles.

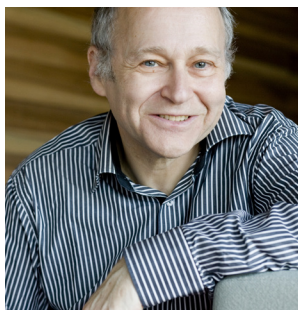
Fourth Movement

Strings begin the Adagio with an intense, richly harmonised theme, out of which Mahler builds an immense set of slow variations. The tune's first statement is momentarily interrupted by a quiet solo on low bassoon but already the passionate string harmonies seem to be pushing further out into the vast spaces around them. An interlude of calm arrives, with high violins and a subterranean contra-bassoon exploring new and haunting regions, before the strings and a solo horn renew the variation sequence. A quiet, rocking figure on clarinets and harp introduces a second interlude. The third and final phase of variations then leads the symphony to its climax, after which the music seems not so much to end as to dissolve into a sky which, while vast and empty, is at least calm and cloudless.

Programme note © Malcolm Hayes

About the performers

Szilvia Csibi



Ádám Fischer

Ádám Fischer conductor

Hungarian conductor Ádám Fischer is the founder of two internationally renowned festivals. He started Budapest Wagner Days in 2006 and under his direction it explores the composer's music dramas at the highest artistic level. In 1987 he founded Haydn Tage in Eisenstadt, which established itself as a leading centre for the promotion of Haydn's music. At the same time he also set up an orchestra to perform at the festival – the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic – setting new standards in Haydn interpretation during his decades as its Chief Conductor. Together, they recorded an award-winning cycle of the composer's symphonies. He is now the orchestra's Honorary Conductor.

Since 1998 he has been Chief Conductor of the Danish Chamber Orchestra, with which he has made an award-winning recording of all Mozart symphonies. Their complete Beethoven cycle will be released in the spring.

Equally in demand in the opera house, he has worked closely since 1973 with the Vienna State Opera, where he has conducted a series of new productions and a total of 26 different operas.

He has a large repertoire of operas in German and Italian and has been appearing at the world's leading opera houses for over 30 years, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York, Bavarian State Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opéra de Bastille in Paris and Opera Zurich. This season he conducts new productions

of *Ernani* and *Gianni Schicchi* at La Scala, Milan. He has also conducted for a number of years at the Bayreuth Festival and in 2002 was voted Conductor of the Year by the magazine *Opernwelt* for his *Ring* cycle.

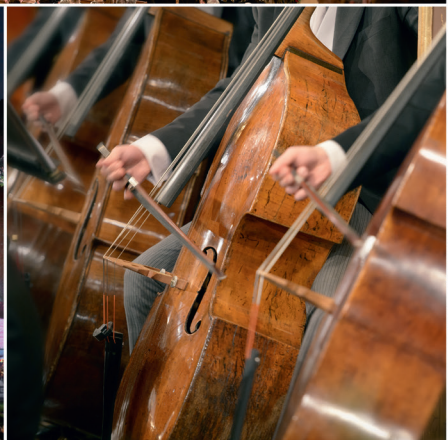
In concert he regularly performs with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg. He also works with other leading orchestras worldwide, including the Berlin and Munich Philharmonic orchestras, Bamberg, Boston, Chicago, London and NHK Symphony orchestras, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and the Orchestre de Paris.

A major recent project has been the complete symphonies of Mahler, which he has performed and recorded live with the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra, whose Principal Conductor he has been since 2015. Their recording of Mahler's First Symphony has been nominated for a 2019 BBC Music Magazine Award.

He originally studied composition and conducting in his hometown of Budapest and in Vienna with Hans Swarowsky. He was Music Director in Freiburg, Kassel and Mannheim; in 2007 he returned to his hometown as Artistic Director of the Budapest Opera, a post he held until 2010.

He has a wide-ranging discography and has won two ECHO Klassik Awards for his Haydn symphonies, an International Classical Music Award in 2015 for his Mozart symphony cycle and a Grand Prix du Disque for both Goldmark's *The Queen of Sheba* and Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*.

Ádám Fischer is an honorary member of the Vienna State Opera and the Musikverein für Steiermark in Graz. He is the bearer of the Order of Dannebrog, awarded by the Danish Queen, and was given an honorary professorship by the Austrian Federal President. Last year he was awarded Israel's Wolf Prize for his outstanding artistic achievements and humanitarian work.





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CELLINI MOONPHASE


ROLEX



Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

There is perhaps no other musical ensemble more closely associated with the tradition of European classical music than the Vienna Philharmonic. Over the course of its 177-year existence, it has played a major role thanks in part to being based in a city central to the history of classical music. Here, it has enjoyed a close relationship with an abundance of uniquely gifted composers and performers.

The orchestra's close association with this rich musical history is best illustrated by the statements of countless pre-eminent musical personalities of the past. Wagner described the orchestra as one of the most outstanding in the world; Bruckner called it 'the very best musical association'; Brahms counted himself as a 'friend and admirer; while Richard Strauss summarised these sentiments when he declared: 'All praise of the Vienna Philharmonic reveals itself as understatement'.

When the great conductor Hans Knappertsbusch described the Philharmonic as 'incomparable', he was correct in more ways than one. One notable aspect of this incomparability is the unique relationship between the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and the private association known as the Vienna Philharmonic. In accordance with Philharmonic statutes, only a member of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra can become a member of the Vienna Philharmonic. Before joining the Philharmonic, therefore, a musician must first successfully audition for a position with the State Opera Orchestra and prove him- or herself capable over a period of three years before becoming eligible to submit an application for membership of the Vienna Philharmonic association.

Playing in both the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra provides a mutually complementary and enriching experience. Without the Vienna State Opera there would be no Vienna Philharmonic as we know it, and in Vienna it is common knowledge that this symbiosis is

advantageous for both institutions, and that it greatly enhances the city's musical life.

Since it was established by Otto Nicolai in 1842, the orchestra has exerted a fascination over prominent composers and conductors, as well as audiences from around the world: a fascination based not only on a homogenous musical style which is bequeathed from one generation to the next, but also on the orchestra's unique structure and history. The desire to provide artistically worthy performances of the symphonic works of Mozart and Beethoven in their own city led to the decision on the part of the court opera musicians to present a Philharmonic concert series independent of their work at the opera, and upon their own responsibility and risk. The organisational form chosen for this new enterprise was democracy, a concept which in the political arena was the subject of bloody battles only six years later in 1848.

Today the orchestra gives approximately 40 concerts annually in Vienna, also presenting

'Vienna Philharmonic weeks' in New York and Japan. It has performed at the Salzburg Festival since 1922. As well as giving the famous New Year's Concert each year (broadcast to more than 90 countries and this year conducted for the first time by Christian Thielemann), it presents the free Schönbrunn Summer Night Concert, attended annually by up to 100,000 people. In addition, the orchestra gives more than 50 concerts at prestigious concert halls and festivals around the world each year.

The Vienna Philharmonic has made it its mission to bring the humanitarian message of music into the daily lives of its listeners. In 2012 the orchestra became the first Goodwill Ambassador for the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

The musicians endeavour to implement the motto with which Ludwig von Beethoven, whose symphonic works served as a catalyst for the creation of the orchestra, prefaced his *Missa solemnis*: 'From the heart, to the heart'.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Concertmaster

Rainer Honeck
Volkhard Steude
Albena Danailova

Violin I

Hubert Kroisamer
Josef Hell
Jun Keller
Daniel Froschauer
Maxim Brilinsky
Martin Kubik
Milan Šetena
Martin Zalodek
Kirill Kobantschenko
Wilfried Hedenborg
Johannes Tomböck
Pavel Kuzmichev
Isabelle Ballot
Andreas Grossbauer
Olesya Kurylyak
Thomas Küblböck
Alina Pinchas
Alexandr Sorokov
Ekaterina Frolova
Petra Kovačič *
Benjamin Morrison

Violin II

Raimund Lissy
Tibor Kovác
Christoph Koncz
Gerald Schubert
Helmut Zehetner
Patricia Hood-Koll
George Fritthum
Alexander Steinberger
Harald Krumpöck
Michal Kostka
Benedict Lea
Marian Lesko
Johannes Kostner
Martin Klimek
Jewgenij Andrusenko
Shkëlzen Doli
Holger Groh
Adela Frasinéanu

Viola

Tobias Lea
Christian Frohn
Gerhard Marschner
Wolf-Dieter Rath
Robert Bauerstatter
Heinrich Koll
Mario Karwan
Martin Lemberg
Elmar Landerer
Innokenti Grabko
Michael Strasser
Ursula Ruppe
Thilo Fechner
Thomas Hajek
Daniela Ivanova
Sebastian Führlinger
Tilman Kühn

Cello

Tamás Varga
Robert Nagy
Peter Somodari
Raphael Flieder
Csaba Bornemisza
Gerhard Iberer
Wolfgang Härtel
Eckart Schwarz-Schulz
Stefan Gartmayer
Ursula Wex
Sebastian Bru
Edison Pashko
Bernhard Hedenborg
David Pennetzdorfer

Double Bass

Herbert Mayr
Christoph Wimmer
Ódön Rácz
Jerzy (Jurek) Dybal
Iztok Hraštnik
Filip Waldmann
Alexander
Matschinegg
Michael Bladerer
Bartosz Sikorski
Jan-Georg Leser

Jędrzej Górski
Elias Mai

Flute

Walter Auer
Karl-Heinz Schütz
Günter Federsel
Wolfgang Breinschmid
Karin Bonelli

Oboe

Martin Gabriel
Clemens Horak
Herbert Maderthaner
Alexander Öhlberger
Harald Hörth
Wolfgang Plank

Clarinet

Matthias Schorn
Daniel Ottensamer
Norbert Täubl
Andreas Wieser
Gregor Hinterreiter *

Bassoon

Štěpán Turnovský
Harald Müller
Sophie Dervaux
Michael Werba
Wolfgang Koblitiz
Benedikt Dinkhauser

Horn

Ronald Janezic
Manuel Huber
Josef Reif
Sebastian Mayr
Wolfgang Lintner
Jan Janković
Wolfgang Vldar
Thomas Jöbstl
Wolfgang Tomböck
Lars Michael Stransky

Trumpet

Martin Mühlfellner
Stefan Haimel
Jürgen Pöchlhammer
Hans Peter Schuh
Reinhold Ambros
Gotthard Eder

Trombone

Dietmar Küblböck
Wolfgang Strasser
Mark Gaal
Johann Ströcker

Tuba

Paul Halwax
Christoph Gigler

Percussion

Anton Mittermayr
Erwin Falk
Thomas Lechner
Klaus Zauner
Oliver Madas
Benjamin Schmidinger

Harp

Charlotte Balzereit
Anneleen Lenaerts

** denotes confirmed members of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra who do not yet belong to the association of the Vienna Philharmonic.*

Retired

Volker Altmann
Roland Baar
Franz Bartolomey
Walter Barylli
Georg Bedry
Roland Berger
Bernhard Biberauer
Walter Blovsky
Gottfried Boisits
Wolfgang Brand
Reinhard Dürner
Rudolf Degen
Alfons Egger
Fritz Falil
Dieter Flury
Jörgen Fog
Gerhard Formanek
Wolfram Görner
Peter Götzel

Dietfried Gürtler
Wolfgang Gürtler
Heinz Hanke
Bruno Hartl
Richard Heintzinger
Clemens Hellsberg
Wolfgang Herzer
Johann Hindler
Werner Hink
Roland Horvath
Josef Hummel
Willibald Janezic
Karl Jeitler
Rudolf Josel
Erich Kaufmann
Gerhard Kaufmann
Harald Kautzky
Burkhard Kräutler
Edward Kudlak
Rainer Küchl

Manfred Kuhn
Walter Lehmayr
Anna Lelkes
Gerhard Libensky
Erhard Litschauer
Günter Lorenz
Gabriel Madas
William McElheney
Horst Münster
Rudolf J. Nekvasil
Hans P. Ochsenhofer
Reinhard Öhlberger
Ortwin Ottmaier
Peter Pecha
Friedrich Pfeiffer
Josef Pomberger
Kurt Prihoda
Helmuth Puffler
Reinhard Repp
Werner Resel

Milan Sagat
Erich Schagerl
Herbert Schmid
Rudolf Schmidinger
Peter Schmidl
Wolfgang Schuster
Eckhard Seifert
Günter Seifert
Reinhold Siegl
Walter Singer
Helmut Skalar
Franz Söllner
René Staar
Anton Straka
Gerhard Turetschek
Martin Unger
Peter Wächter
Hans Wolfgang Weihs
Helmut Weis
Ewald Winkler
Dietmar Zeman



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Mahler
Symphony No 6



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