

Bayerisches Staatsorchester/ Vladimir Jurowski: Mahler 4

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate end time: 9.45pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Richard Wagner Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*

Robert Schumann Piano Concerto in A minor

1. Allegro affettuoso
2. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso
3. Allegro vivace

Gustav Mahler Symphony No 4

1. Bedächtig. Nicht eilen [Deliberate. Don't hurry] – Recht gemächlich [Very leisurely]
2. In gemächlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast [At a leisurely pace. Without haste]
3. Ruhevoll [Restful]
4. Sehr behaglich [Very cosy]

Vladimir Jurowski directs the Bayerisches Staatsorchester in three Romantic masterpieces: Wagner at his most erotic, Schumann's Piano Concerto, a love-letter to his wife Clara, and Mahler's glistening Fourth Symphony.

Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* was based partly on a romance by Gottfried von Strassburg but also inspired by Mathilde Wesendonck, of whom he wrote to Liszt: 'I shall erect a memorial to this loveliest of all dreams in which, from the first to the last, love shall, for once, find utter repletion. I have devised in my mind a *Tristan und Isolde*, the simplest, yet most full-blooded musical conception imaginable'. The work was first performed in 1865, by which time Wagner had taken up with Liszt's daughter, Cosima – the wife of the conductor of the premiere, Hans von Bülow. The Prelude establishes *Tristan's* erotic tone and sets up suspensions that remain unresolved until the end of the work, opening with the distinctive 'Tristan chord', which defies conventional harmony by 'resolving' onto another dissonance. In 1868, Nietzsche wrote of the Prelude: 'every nerve in me is atwiltch, and it has been a long time since I had such a lasting sense of ecstasy as with this overture'.

Robert Schumann began writing his A minor Piano Concerto in 1841. The previous September he had married his pianist-composer wife Clara, and duly set about writing a *Phantasie* for her, completed in 16 days and performed privately on 13 August 1841. No publisher could be found, however, so in 1845 Schumann added two more movements, and Clara Schumann gave the concerto's public premiere in Leipzig in 1846.

The work opens with a lyrical woodwind choir led by the oboe and answered by the piano, with blustery swells in the orchestra; the woodwinds heard at the outset – oboe and clarinet especially – continue to be prominent in their conversational exchanges with the soloist. Schumann wrote the cadenza himself, revealing an emphasis on musical poetry rather than virtuosity for its own sake. The Intermezzo and finale grow organically from the first movement's main theme. In the naïve Intermezzo Schumann builds on the opening movement's conversational nature with intimate dialogue enhanced by almost chamber-like sonorities. This then tumbles directly into the finale, a movement full of subtle touches: a marching second theme that tested Felix Mendelssohn's orchestra during rehearsals, irregular phrasing and a good-humoured fugato.

Schumann is said to have likened Beethoven's Fourth Symphony to 'a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants' – an image not inappropriate to Mahler's Fourth, which is characterised by an almost Neoclassical delicacy and brevity compared to the ambition of his preceding symphonies, and the immediacy of the Fifth.

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The Symphony No 4 was the last of Mahler's three 'Wunderhorn symphonies', so-called because of their relationships with his settings of the folk poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* – a treasure-trove compiled by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. In the finale of the Fourth Symphony Mahler makes use of the 1892 song 'Das himmlische Leben', which offers a child's vision of heaven.

The audience at the symphony's premiere in Munich in 1901 would not have been surprised by this spiritual focus – Mahler's Second Symphony, his *Resurrection*, had been premiered there – but the smaller scale left some feeling deflated. Why had Mahler changed gears? The answer stems from a wider shift in late-Romantic sensibilities, exploring alternatives to the Wagnerian orchestra that had dominated for so long and seeking refreshment in lighter textures. In Mahler's Fourth Symphony (1899–1900), a pared-down orchestra (triple woodwind, four horns and three trumpets) harks back to the earlier 19th century, and even to the 18th in omitting trombones altogether – the only time he excluded them from a symphony. Mahler would return to larger forces, but these experiments in refinement bore fruit at key points during the next three symphonies.

Even so, Mahler's original plan for the Fourth Symphony was rather grander: six movements, three of which were to include the voice, with inspiration drawn from Nietzsche as well as the *Wunderhorn* poems. In the end, he wrote just four, the first three of which contain material that returns in the finale. The first movement, with its jingling opening, begins in pastoral vein, but deteriorates into more sinister territory – including a motif that would launch the Fifth Symphony – before collapsing, after which the violins nonchalantly reprise the main theme as though nothing has happened. As Deryck Cooke, who realised Mahler's incomplete Tenth Symphony, argued that the Fourth is 'misunderstood: it is not that there are no shadows in this work – on the contrary, there are some very dark ones – but they are seen, from out of this innocent pastoral world, as figures moving behind a veil, which obscures their naked horror'. This description is borne out by Mahler's original subtitle for the darkly humorous scherzo, 'Friend Hein strikes up' – referencing a character from German folklore whose fiddle playing leads people to the Beyond, conjured up here by a solo violin retuned up a whole tone.

The serene variations of the third movement – still with an undercurrent of melancholy – reach a radiant E major in anticipation of the heavenly finale, in which the soprano transports us from the earthly realm of the preceding movements to a childlike heaven. This has its own darker moments before the symphony's blissful conclusion.

Symphony No 4

4. 'Das himmlische Leben'

Soprano

Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden,
D'rum tun wir das Irdische meiden.
Kein weltlich' Getümmel
Hört man nicht im Himmel!
Lebt Alles in sanftester Ruh'!

Wir führen ein englisches Leben!
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben!
Wir tanzen und springen,
Wir hüpfen und singen!
Sanct Peter im Himmel sieht zu!

Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
Der Metzger Herodes drauf passet!
Wir führen ein geduldig's,
Unschuldig's, geduldig's,
Ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod!

Sanct Lucas den Ochsen tät schlachten
Ohn' einig's Bedenken und Achten,
Der Wein kost kein Heller
Im himmlischen Keller,
Die Englein, die backen das Brot!

Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten,
Die wachsen im himmlischen Garten!
Gut' Spargel, Fisolen,
Und was wir nur wollen!
Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit!

Gut' Äpfel, gut' Birn' und gut' Trauben!
Die Gärtner, die Alles erlauben!
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen,
Auf offener Strassen
Sie laufen herbei!

Sollt ein Fasttag etwa kommen
Alle Fische gleich mit Freuden angeschwommen!
Dort läuft schon Sanct Peter
Mit Netz und mit Köder
Zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sanct Martha die Köchin muss sein!

Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
Die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
Zu tanzen sich trauen!
Sanct Ursula selbst dazu lacht!

Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
Sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
Ermuntern die Sinnen!
Dass Alles für Freuden erwacht.

Text from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

The heavenly life

Soprano

We taste the joys of heaven,
and care not for earthly life.
No worldly tumult
is heard in heaven:
all live in sweetest peace.

We lead an angelic life,
and a life of pleasure too;
we dance and jump,
we skip and sing,
Saint Peter in heaven looks on.

Saint John lets the lamb go a-running,
the butcher Herod is watching!
We lead a patient,
a guiltless, a patient,
a lovely lamb to death!

Saint Luke is slaughtering the oxen,
without any care or consideration;
the wine costs nothing
in the heavenly cellars;
the angels, they bake the bread!

Good vegetables of every kind,
they grow in the heavenly gardens!
Good asparagus, beans,
and all that we want!
Whole bowlfuls for us are prepared!

Good apples, good pears, and good grapes,
the gardeners let us take all;
you want roebuck, or hare?
In the open streets
they go running by!

When a festival comes,
all the fishes with joy come a-swimming!
Saint Peter goes running
with net and with bait
to the heavenly fish-pond.
Saint Martha has to be cook!

There is no music, no music on earth
that can be compared with ours.
Eleven thousand virgins
go happily dancing!
Saint Ursula laughs to see that!

Cecilia and her relations
are wonderful court musicians!
The angel voices
enliven our spirits!
So all things wake to joy.

Translation by Deryck Cooke

Performers

Vladimir Jurowski conductor

Yefim Bronfman piano

Louise Alder soprano

Bayerisches Staatsorchester

violin I

Markus Wolf
Barbara Burgdorf
So-Young Kim
Cäcilie Sproß
Dorothea Ebert
Michael Durner
Susanne Gargerle
Corinna Desch
Ginshi Saito
Yon Joo Kang
Clara Scholtès
Dasol Yun
Clemens Flieder
Geoffroy Schied

violin II

Michael Arlt
Matjaž Bogataj
Hanna Asieieva
Sylvie Heymann-Seidel
Katrin Fechter
Traudi Pauer
Markus Kern
Immanuel Drißner
Isolde Lehrmann
Sylvia Eisermann
Anna Heichele-Paatz
Heimhild Wolter
Anna Maija Hirvonen
Gyujeen Han
Verena Kurz

viola

Adrian Mustea
Stephan Finkentey
Clemens Gordon
Tilo Widenmeyer
Florian Ruf
David Ott
Wiebke Heidemeier
Johanna Maurer
Anna Lysenko
Andreas Grote

cello

Yves Savary
Benedikt Don Strohmeier
Rupert Buchner
Roswitha Timm
Dietrich von Kaltenborn
Clemens Müllner
Darima Tcyrempilova
Sarah Moser
Gerhard Zank
Stefan Trauer

double bass

Florian Gmelin
Alexander Rilling
Thomas Jauch
Reinhard Schmid
Thorsten Lawrenz
Thomas Herbst
Alexander Önce

flute

Herman van Kogelenberg
Christoph Bachhuber
Edoardo Silvi
Lisa Batzer

oboe

Frédéric Tardy
Marlene Gomes
Jeonghun Heo

clarinet

Andreas Schablas
Jürgen Key
Martin Fuchs

bassoon

Holger Schinköthe
Martynas Šedbaras
Gernot Friedrich

horn

Johannes Dengler
Éva Lilla Fröschl
Maximilian Hochwimmer
Stefan Böhning

trumpet

Andreas Öttl
Johannes Moritz
Andreas Kittlaus
Frank Bloedhorn

trombone

Sven Strunkeit
Thomas Klotz
Matthias Kamleiter

tuba

Steffen Schmid

timpani

Pieter Roijen

percussion

Dieter Pöll
Claudio Estay
Carlos Vera
Tomàs Toral Pons

harp

Gaël Gandino

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