

1 NYP 16-42: Mahler 9 Haitink

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3 (INSERT NATIONAL UNDERWRITERS 01)

4 (NYP THEME MUSIC UP AND UNDER)

5 (ROLL: NYPTW INTRO)

6 AB: **...and this week:**

7 (MUSIC UP AND UNDER)

8 AB: **We hear the Symphony No. 9 by Gustav Mahler.**

9 **This is Alec Baldwin, hoping that you'll stay**
10 **tuned as Bernard Haitink conducts...The New York**
11 **Philharmonic This Week.**

12 ACTUALITY: BH TBD)

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14 VO: **Considered by many to be the composer's most**
15 **intense and most brooding work, the Ninth**
16 **Symphony was composed between 1909 and 1910, in**
17 **the midst of many great tragedies on the part**
18 **of the composer: The infidelity of his wife**
19 **Alma had recently been revealed to him; it was**
20 **also about this time that Mahler was diagnosed**
21 **with the heart disease that would ultimately**
22 **kill him...and he was still dealing with the**
23 **death of his young daughter, Maria Anna, from**
24 **scarlet fever a few years earlier.**

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I should also probably mention that Mahler was considered to be (along with Arnold Schoenberg) a champion of the emerging avant-garde movement...which placed him in a rather awkward position of acting as a standard-bearer of the past while being acutely aware of the future of music...and more specifically, the future of tonality. The first movement of the Ninth in particular depicts this struggle between tonal stability and instability. Here's a sample:

(EXCERPT 01)

VO: This juxtaposition from major to minor modes may very well also represent something of an extended conflict between the elements of life and death: life being represented by the major key: [PLAY SAMPLE] and death by the minor key: [PLAY SAMPLE]. This is also links the Ninth Symphony to the tonal juxtaposition displayed in Mahler's earlier works—in particular, the 6th and 7th symphonies.

55 Mahler's contemporary, Alban Berg, wrote that
56 the first movement of the Ninth Symphony is
57 quote "...the greatest Mahler ever composed. It
58 is the expression of a tremendous love for this
59 earth, the longing to live on it peacefully and
60 to enjoy nature to its deepest depths."

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62 The Ninth opens with a hesitant, syncopated
63 motif which some—including Leonard Bernstein--
64 have suggested is a depiction of Mahler's
65 irregular heartbeat:

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67 (EXCERPT 02)

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69 VO: This motif returns at the height of the first
70 movement's development section as a sudden
71 intrusion of "death in the midst of life" as
72 announced by the trombones:

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74 (EXCERPT 03)

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82 VO: If the first movement of Mahler's Ninth
83 Symphony shows evidence of a acceptance of
84 death, then the second movement—cast in the
85 form of an expanded Austrian country-dance
86 called a "Ländler," seems to suggest some of
87 the bitterness Mahler must have been feeling at
88 the time of the work's composition. Mahler
89 first gives us this:

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91 (EXCERPT 04)

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93 VO: Simple enough. It sounds rather light and
94 playful as one might expect a country dance to
95 sound, right? Now listen to what he does with
96 it:

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98 (EXCERPT 05)

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109 VO: **Hear that? Mahler has distorted the Ländler to**
110 **the point that it no longer even resembles a**
111 **dance. We hear something quite similar in the**
112 **second movement of his Fourth Symphony, where a**
113 **traditional dance is mutated into a dance of**
114 **death: [PLAY SAMPLE]. Here, Mahler even goes**
115 **so far as to alter traditional chord sequences**
116 **such as these [PLAY SAMPLE] into near-**
117 **unrecognizable variations: [PLAY SAMPLE]. And**
118 **we believe that Mahler has done all of this**
119 **chiefly to serve his expressive intentions.**

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121 (EXCERPT 06)

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123 VO: **Mahler employs another dance form in the third**
124 **movement of his Ninth Symphony, but here he**
125 **puts it through a more fiery and energetic set**
126 **of exercises. The movement opens with a**
127 **dissonant theme in the trumpet and develops**
128 **into double fugue, exhibiting Mahler's final**
129 **mastery of the contrapuntal form. Let's**
130 **listen:**

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132 (EXCERPT 07)

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136 VO: You can hear how Mahler mixes dissonance with
137 Baroque counterpoint in that movement. The
138 autobiographical score is marked quote, "to my
139 brothers in Apollo" and more than one
140 musicologist has surmised that this movement
141 is, above all, intended as a sarcastic and
142 withering response to Mahler's critics.

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144 (EXCERPT 08)

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146 VO: Before I tell you about the last movement, it
147 should probably be stated that Mahler was very
148 superstitious about composing a ninth symphony.
149 He fixated on the fact that Beethoven,
150 Schubert, Dvorák, and Bruckner did not live to
151 write a Tenth...and even tried to "outsmart" fate
152 by giving his work, Das Lied von der Erde—
153 strictly speaking his ninth symphony—a title
154 instead of a number. Nevertheless, he
155 continued with what is today called the Ninth
156 Symphony. Depending on your perspective, one
157 might argue that Mahler succeeded in his ruse
158 against fate; he effectively completed two
159 "ninth" symphonies before his death and even
160 began a 10th, which is commonly performed in a
161 couple of reconstructions.

162

Arnold Schoenberg wrote in his essay about Mahler quote: "It seems that the ninth is a limit. He who wants to go beyond it must pass away. It seems as if something might be imparted to us in the Tenth which we ought not yet to know, for which we are not ready. Those who have written a Ninth stood too close to the hereafter."

And those words of Schoenberg perfectly introduce the fourth and final movement of the Mahler Ninth...for if the first three movements demonstrate Mahler trying to grapple with inexorable fate...the fourth movement indicates that perhaps he had already glimpsed "the beyond" before venturing there himself.

The final movement is in two sections. Strings open the first section and Sunday Church-goers might just notice the similarity of the opening theme to the hymn, Abide With Me. Here's the Hymn Tune: [PLAY SAMPLE] and here's it's "closely-related-cousin" as it sounds in the symphony:

(EXCERPT 09)

190 VO: This opening Adagio also seems to quote the
191 opening motif of Beethoven's piano sonata No.
192 26, sub-titled, "Les Adieux" or "Farewell."
193 Perhaps not-so-coincidentally, Les Adieux marked
194 a turning point in Mahler's early musical
195 career as he performed it during his graduation
196 recital in college. Here's Beethoven's
197 original: [PLAY SAMPLE] and here's that
198 material as it appears in Mahler's symphony:

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200 (EXCERPT 10)

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202 VO: After several impassioned climaxes the
203 increasingly fragmented final movement ends
204 quietly, but with what might be called a heart-
205 searching degree of poignancy. Mahler makes use
206 of one more quotation in the closing pages—this
207 time borrowing from his own song-cycle, the
208 Kindertotenlieder or "Songs on the Death of
209 Children." The first violin plays the vocal
210 line, of the fourth song in which the singer
211 remarks, "The day is fine on yonder heights; in
212 the ultimate destination, beyond life."

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214 (EXCERPT 11)

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216 VO: Mahler once said "A symphony must be like the
217 world—it must contain everything." Nothing
218 Mahler ever did was small or simple; his works
219 are grand, bold gestures. When his heart
220 disease was diagnosed, Mahler had been warned
221 by his doctor to slow down his frenetic pace of
222 conducting and composing, but he did not; he
223 wrote to his protégé Bruno Walter: "People of
224 our kind cannot but do thoroughly that which
225 they are doing. And that means, as I see it at
226 present, overworking one's self."

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228 (EXCERPT 12)

229 AB: Let's pause now for station ID. When we
230 return, we'll hear Mahler's Ninth Symphony
231 without interruption. I'm Alec Baldwin and
232 you're listening to the New York Philharmonic
233 This Week.

234 (ID)

235

236 ...and now we hear the Symphony No. 9 by Gustav
237 Mahler. Bernard Haitink conducts the New York
238 Philharmonic.

239 (MUSIC)

240 (APPLAUSE)

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243 AB: **Symphony No. 9 by Gustav Mahler. The New York**
244 **Philharmonic was led by Bernard Haitink.**

245 (ROLL CLOSERS/CREDITS)

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247 PROMO TBD.

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