

Programme Notes

**Mahler 4 with Yannick
Nézet-Séguin**

Sun 1 May 2022 • 14.15

PROGRAMME

conductor **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**
mezzo-soprano **Karen Cargill**
soprano **Christiane Karg**

Valentin Silvestrov 1937
Prayer for Ukraine [2014];
orchestration Eduard Resatsch 2022

Alma Mahler 1879-1964
Songs for voice and piano [1900-01];
orchestration David and Colin
Matthews

- Die stille Stadt (Richard Dehmel)
- In meines Vaters Garten (Erich Otto Hartleben)
- Laue Sommernacht (Otto Julius Bierbaum)
- Bei dir ist es traut (Rainer Maria Rilke)

Gustav Mahler 1860-1911
Symphony No. 4 in G major [1899-1900]

- Bedächtig. Nicht eilen
- In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast
- Ruhevoll
- Sehr behaglich

Concert ends at about 15.45

Most recent performances by our orchestra:

Silvestrov *Prayer for Ukraine: first performance*

Alma Mahler *Songs: Aug-Sep 2016, mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly, conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin (Summer Tour 2016)*

Gustav Mahler *Symphony No. 4: Oct 2015, soprano Sally Matthews, conductor Robin Ticciati*

One hour before the start of the concert, musicologist Eveline Nikkels will give an introduction to the programme, admission €5. Tickets are available at the hall, payment by debit card. The introduction is free for 'Vrienden'. The introduction is in Dutch.



Alma and Gustav Mahler in the Dolomites, summer 1909 - Österreichische Nationalbibliothek collection

Finding time to write music

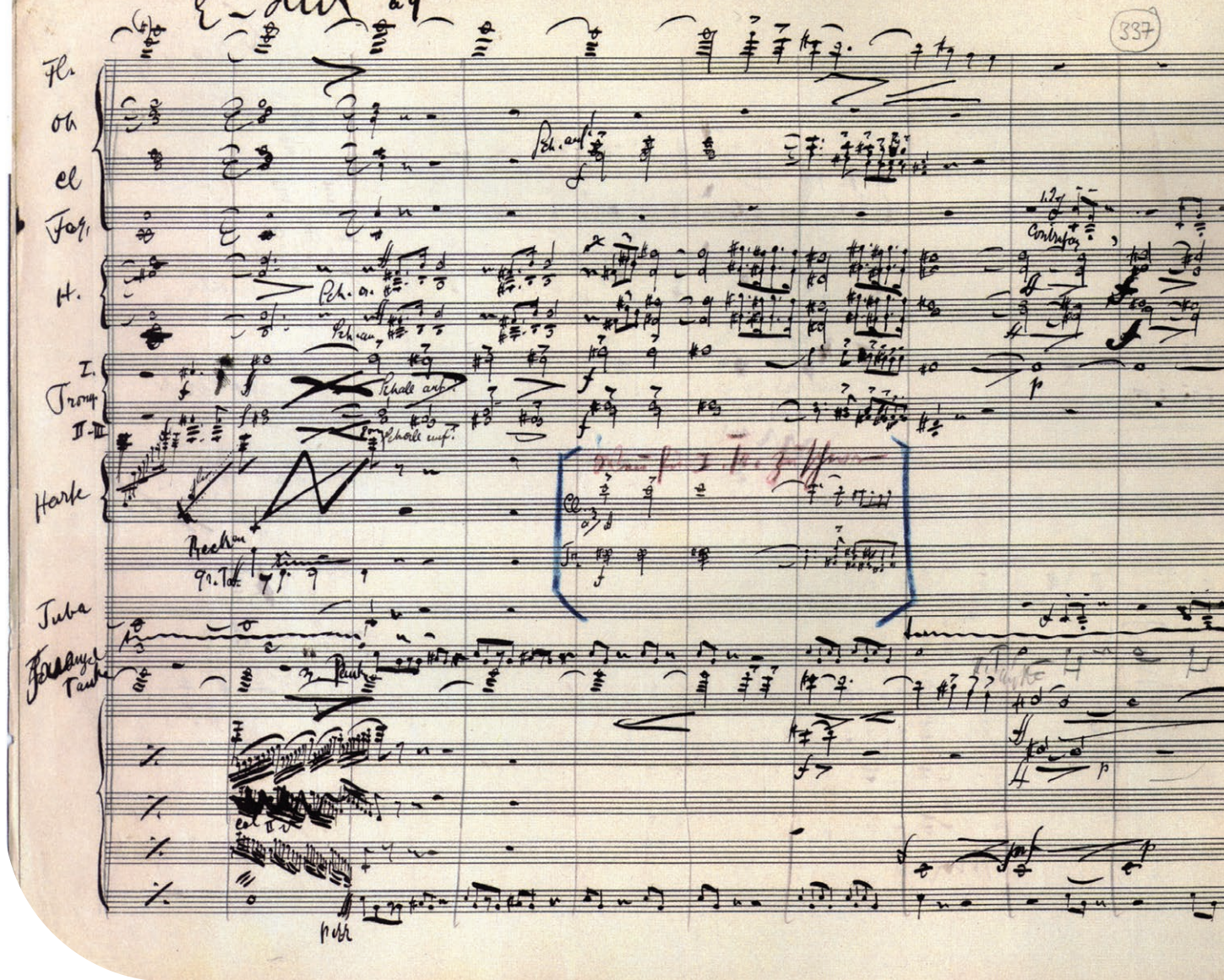
Married couple Gustav and Alma Mahler were both part-time composers. Gustav composed only during the summer months, alongside his conducting duties. Alma combined composing with her tasks as wife and mother.

Due to social pressures – married women were not supposed to compose – and Gustav's own aversion to his wife's musical ambitions, very little of the music composed by Alma Mahler was ever published. Just seventeen songs - that's all. Which is a pity, because her music is well worth listening to. The published work of Gustav Mahler is also modest in size: at its core are just nine completed symphonies and a handful of song cycles with orchestral accompaniment. Nevertheless, the music is so grandiose – each work creates its own universe - that Mahler is now regarded as one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century.

Marriage difficulties

In the early years of the twentieth century Alma Schindler was one of the most eligible single women in Vienna. She had a string of relationships and affairs with artists, writers and intellectuals.

Painters Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka, composer Alexander Zemlinsky, architect Walter Gropius, and writer Franz Werfel: she could wrap them around her little finger with ease. In 1902 she married Gustav Mahler. But even though the marriage held together till Gustav's death in 1911, it was a rather stormy affair. So stormy, in fact, that it drove Mahler to despair and caused him medical and physical problems. And to exorcise these, he needed the help of Sigmund Freud. Even though Freud and Mahler lived in the same city, circumstances conspired to prevent Mahler reclining on Freud's famous chaise longue at home in Vienna. In the first place, they both had full diaries. But secondly, Mahler had a fear of delving into his own psyche, afraid that this would harm his musical creativity. In the summer of 1910, however, the two did meet, in the university town of Leiden. Freud was holidaying in Noordwijk and made time for a four-hour stroll along the Breestraat, over



Gustav Mahler's Fourth Symphony,
page from the manuscript

The Fourth Symphony is indeed
a world in itself, a world that
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the Rapenburg and through the botanical gardens. We don't know what Freud and Mahler discussed exactly, but undoubtedly Mahler would have mentioned his wife's recently discovered infidelity with architect Walter Gropius. Mahler found this discussion with Freud to have been useful and he returned to Vienna in good spirits, having telegraphed Alma in advance with the message: 'I am happy. The check-up proved

interesting. Great things come from small beginnings.' Sadly, there would be no strong revival in their marriage, and Gustav Mahler died just a few months later. Alma never did end her affair with Gropius, and the two married in 1915. Nevertheless, the meeting between Freud and Mahler was significant in one respect: whilst Mahler had always remained opposed to Alma's work as a composer, as a peace offering

he proposed to publish five of her songs. Four of these will be performed during this concert. The songs are of the highest quality and reveal a direct link via her teacher Alexander Zemlinsky to his great mentor Johannes Brahms. Whilst intimate and charming they are also, at times, refreshingly modern, such as in the declamatory passage in *Die stille Stadt*, for example, and in the chromatic score for *Laue Sommernacht*. It is unfortunate that even the career of a headstrong *femme fatale* such as Alma Mahler could be defeated by the strong undercurrent of misogyny throughout twentieth century society.

Summertime composer

It was impossible for Gustav Mahler to compose at any time except during the summer months. His career as one of the most in-demand conductors in the world prevented him from writing music outside the holiday period. However, composition was much more than a holiday job for Mahler. His symphonic ambitions knew no limits ('a symphony must be like the world, and encompass everything') and he was extremely self-critical ('anything that is not perfect down to the finest detail is doomed to decay'). This certainly applied to Mahler's Fourth Symphony, which he largely composed during the summers of 1899 and 1900 in the resorts of Bad Aussee and Maiernigg respectively. Mahler lost himself entirely in the symphony, and fell into depression once he had completed the work. The Fourth Symphony is indeed a world in itself, a world that Mahler struggled to let go. Musicologist and Mahler expert Deryck Cooke describes the first movement as a walk through the countryside. The opening sleigh bells give the movement a wintery character, whilst the neo-classical

melody suggests the sound of a simple uncomplicated life. The 'eternal now' is how Mahler described this music. But a simple life is not eternal. The original title of the second movement, that Mahler would later scrap, is a clear indication that here we enter the kingdom of the dead: *Freund Hein spielt auf* ('Grim Reaper strikes up the dance'). Mahler expresses this idea with a violin solo on an instrument tuned a whole tone higher to create a cynical and slightly sinister sound. Death portrayed as a skeleton playing a violin is a well-known image of mediaeval iconography. However, here Mahler depicts death not as evil or scary, but rather as good-natured.

Sleigh bells

The third movement is a double variation form: two contrasting themes and variations. The song-like first theme played by the strings, a kind of lullaby, stands in opposition to the second theme, a slower lament. The music builds to a glowing climax in which the timpani have an important role, after which Mahler harks back to the 'eternity motif' from the final movement of his Second Symphony. The final movement presents a child's vision of heaven. The song begins with a bright, radiant sound to accompany the text 'Wir genießen die himmlischen Freuden' (we delight in heavenly joys), whereupon the sleigh bells from the opening movement return to join in a feast of heavenly proportions. In this way, Mahler not only ties together the beginning and end of his symphony, but also links the idea of a simple life and the beauty of the countryside and nature to the perfection of heaven.

Alexander Klapwijk

Photo: George Etheredge

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor

Born: Montreal, Canada

Current position: music director Metropolitan Opera New York, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain of Montreal; honorary conductor Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra (music director from 2008 to 2018), honorary member Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Education: Conservatoire de musique du Québec in Montréal; orchestra conducting with Carlo Maria Giulini

Awards: Royal Philharmonic Society Award (2008); Canada's National Arts Centre Award (2010); Prix Denise-Pelletier (2011); Companion of the Order of Canada (2012); Officer of the Order of Québec (2015); Cultuurpenning Rotterdam (2018)

Breakthrough: 2004, debut Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse

Guest conductor: Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera New York, Salzburg Festival, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Dutch National Opera

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2005

Karen Cargill, mezzo-soprano

Born: Abroath, Scotland

Education: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Glasgow; University of Toronto; National Opera Studio, London

Awards: Kathleen Ferrier Award (2002)

Debut: 2007 Scottish Opera, as Rosina in *Rossini's Il barbiere di Siviglia*

Other roles: Waltraute and Erda in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Anna in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, Judith in Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, Isabella in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Suzuki Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Brangäne in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Mère Marie in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*

Soloist with: London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

CD release: *Lieder*, songs by Alma and Gustav Mahler, with pianist Simon Lepper

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2010



Photo: Nadine Boyd

Christiane Karg, soprano

Born: Feuchtwangen, Germany

Education: Mozarteum University Salzburg with Heiner Hopfner and Wolfgang Holzmaier; International Opera Studio Staatsoper Hamburg

Awards: Internationaler Johannes Brahms Wettbewerb (2018)

Debut: 2006, Salzburg Festival as Melia in Mozart's *Apollo et Hyacinthus*

Other roles: Mélisande in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Blanche in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Susanna and Gräfin Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Zdenka in Strauss' *Arabella*, Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen*

Soloist with: Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2012



Photo: Gisela Schenker

Agenda

Fri 13 May 2022 • 20.15

Sun 15 May 2022 • 14.15

conductor **Lahav Shani**

violin **Michael Barenboim**

Mahler Tenth Symphony (Adagio)

Roustom First Violin Concerto

Ben-Haim First Symphony

Sa 14 May • 2022 • 13.27 (!)

Jurriaanse Hall

piano **Lahav Shani**

violin **Michael Barenboim**,

Cecilia Ziano & Saskia Otten

viola **Galahad Samson**

cello **Daniel Petrovitsch &**

Pepijn Meeuws

Schönberg Verklärte Nacht

(piano trio)

Shostakovich Piano Quintet

Thu 19 May 2022 • 20.15

Fri 20 May 2022 • 20.15

conductor **Tarmo Peltokoski**

piano **Yuja Wang**

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 1

Rachmaninoff Paganini Rhapsody

Sibelius Symphony No. 2

Sun 29 May 2022 • 10.30

Jurriaanse Hall

violin **Eefje Habraken** and **Victor**

Andrey

viola **Rosalinde Kluck**

cello **Daniel Petrovitch**

presentation **Milou Adjanga**

Ravel Sonate for Violin and Cello

Debussy String Quartet

Thu 23 June 2022 • 20.15

conductor and piano **Lahav Shani**

Mendelssohn Meeresstille und

glückliche Fahrt

Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23

Mendelssohn Symphony No. 3

'Scottish'

Musicians

Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

First violin

Igor Gruppman,

concertmeester

Marieke Blankestijn,

concertmeester

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Shelly Greenberg

Cor van der Linden

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrenga

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van

Beveren

Koen Stapert

Second violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yi Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Sumire Hara

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Maartje van Rheeden

Galahad Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yi-Ting Fang

Double bass

Matthew Midgley

Ying Lai Green

Jonathan Focquaert

Robert Franenberg

Harke Wiersma

Arjen Leendertz

Ricardo Neto

Flute

Juliette Hurel

Joséphine Olech

Désirée Woudenberg

Oboe

Remco de Vries

Karel Schoofs

Hans Cartigny

Anja van der Maten

Oboe/cor anglais

Ron Tijhuis

Clarinet

Julien Hervé

Bruno Bonansea

Jan Jansen

Clarinet/ bass clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten

Lola Descours

Marianne Prommel

Bassoon/ contra bassoon

Hans Wisse

Horn

David Fernández

Alonso

Wendy Leliveld

Richard Speetjens

Laurens Otto

Pierre Buizer

Trumpet

Giuliano

Sommerhalder

Alex Elia

Simon Wierenga

Jos Verspagen

Trombone

Pierre Volders

Alexander Verbeek

Remko de Jager

Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

Timpani/ percussion

Randy Max

Danny van de Wal

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels