

The background of the page is a photograph of an ornate interior wall. It features several vertical decorative panels. On the left, there is a panel with a repeating floral pattern. In the center, a large, intricate floral and scrollwork motif is painted on a light-colored background, featuring a central diamond shape with a red and gold design. To the right of the center, there are two more panels: one with a repeating diamond pattern and another with a repeating floral pattern. The overall aesthetic is classical and highly decorative.

**Mahler** Symphony No. 1  
Czech Philharmonic  
Semyon Bychkov

Album cover photography:

**Detail of Rudolfinum interior**

© **Pavel Barták**

Booklet cover photography:

**Semyon Bychkov**

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**Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)**

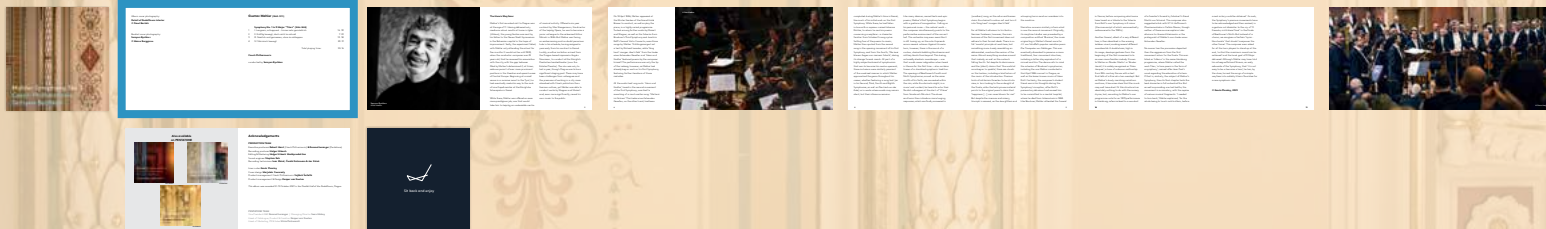
**Symphony No. 1 in D Major "Titan" (1884-1888)**

1	I. Langsam, schleppend - Immer sehr gemächlich	16. 39
2	II. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell	7. 29
3	III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen	10. 34
4	IV. Stürmisch bewegt	20. 31

Total playing time: 55. 16

**Czech Philharmonic**

conducted by **Semyon Bychkov**







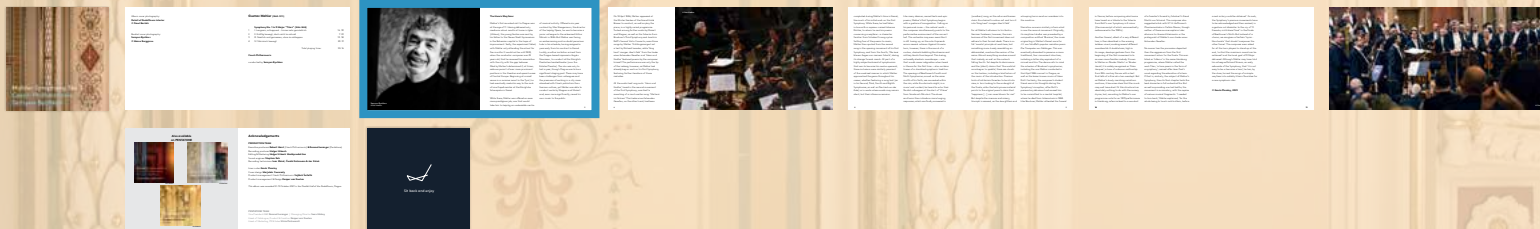
Semyon Bychkov  
© Petr Kadlec

### The Heroic Wayfarer

Mahler's first recorded visit to Prague was at the age of 11. Having delivered only mediocre school results at home in Iglau (Jihlava), the young Gustav was sent by his father to the Neues Stadt Gymnasium in the Bohemian capital in the hope of improvement. Sadly, the experiment failed, with Mahler only attending the school for five months. It would not be until 1885, when the conductor-composer was 25 years old, that he renewed his association with the city, with the gap between filled by Mahler's determined if, at times, arduous pursuit of ever more prominent positions in the theatres and opera houses of Central Europe. Beginning at a small venue in a summer resort in the Tyrol, he had eventually made his way to the rank of vice-Kapellmeister at the Königliche Schauspiele in Kassel.

While there, Mahler was offered an even more prestigious job; one that would take him to Leipzig, an undeniable centre

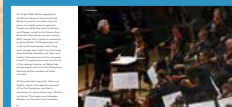
of musical activity. Offered a six-year contract by Max Staegemann, the director of the Leipzig Opera, he was to become a junior colleague to the esteemed Arthur Nikisch in 1886. But Mahler was facing an embarrassing and no doubt penurious hole in his schedule, having resigned a year early from his contract in Kassel. Luckily, another invitation arrived from the Prague-based impresario Angelo Neumann, to conduct at the Königlich Deutsches Landestheater (now the Estates Theatre). The role was only to last a year, though Prague was to be a significant staging post. There may have been challenges from colleagues and the pressures of working in a city more absorbed with Czech patriotism than German culture, yet Mahler was able to conduct works by Wagner and Mozart and, even more significantly, reveal his own music to the public.



On 18 April 1886, Mahler appeared at the Winter Garden of the Grand Hotel Brauer to conduct, as well as play the piano, in a highly varied programme. Tucked among further works by Mozart and Wagner, as well as the Scherzo from Bruckner's Third Symphony and Joachim Raff's Second Violin Concerto, were three songs by Mahler. 'Frühlingsmorgen' set a text by Richard Leander, while 'Ging heut' morgen über's Feld' from the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and 'Hans und Grethe' featured poems by the composer himself. The performance was only the tip of the iceberg, however, as Mahler had already begun work on his First Symphony, featuring further iterations of those melodies.

All the works had long roots. 'Hans und Grethe', heard in the second movement of the First Symphony, was itself a reworking of a much earlier song: 'Maitanz im Grünen'. The *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, on the other hand, had been

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completed during Mahler's time in Kassel, like much of his initial work on the First Symphony. While there, he had fallen in love with a soprano named Johanna Richter, to whom he sent six poems concerning a wayfarer – a character familiar from Schubert's song cycles. Setting four of the poems to music, Mahler then quoted from the second song in the opening movement of his First Symphony, and from the fourth, 'Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz', during its strange funeral march. All part of a highly subjective brand of symphonism that was to become his *modus operandi*, these inclusions were similarly prescient of the vocalised manner in which Mahler approached the genre throughout his career, whether featuring a sung text (as in his Second, Third, Fourth and Eighth Symphonies, as well as *Das Lied von der Erde*) or in works where words may remain silent, but their inference remains.

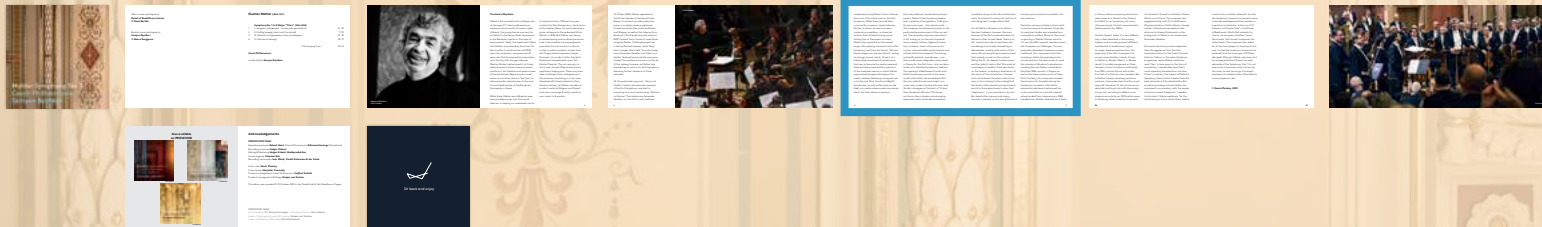
Like many dramas, sacred texts and epic poems, Mahler's First Symphony begins with a gesture of inauguration. Calling on his personal muse – the natural world – the composer simultaneously points to the performative environment of the concert hall. The orchestra may even seem like it is still tuning up, as the note A spreads across several octaves. Against its eerie hum, however, there is the sound of a cuckoo, clarinets bubbling like streams and military blasts from beyond. This daring, outwardly aleatoric soundscape – one that would cause indignation when heard in Vienna for the first time – also contains traces of a cherished symphonic tradition. The openings of Beethoven's Fourth and Ninth Symphonies, as well as the avian motifs of his Sixth, are concealed within the mix, while the clarinets might, in a more local context, be heard to echo their flautist colleagues at the start of 'Vltava' from Smetana's *Má vlast*. The oboes and horns then introduce more longing responses, which are finally answered in

(wordless) song, as the cellos and basses claim the clarinet's cuckoo call and turn it into 'Ging heut' morgen über's Feld'.

For all Mahler's allusions to his Austro-German forebears, however, the main business of the first movement does not adhere to their formal ideals. There is no full 'sonata' principle at work here, but something more closely resembling an abbreviated, overture-like version of the same. Almost everything revolves around that melody, as well as the cuckoo's falling fourth. Yet despite its dominance and the (silent) claims that 'the world at once began to sparkle', there are clouds on the horizon, including a brief return of the music of the introduction. Previous hints of militarism threaten to burst into view, in turn looking to the onslaught of the Finale, while the lachrymose material points to the original poem's claim that 'happiness [...] can never bloom for me!' But despite the menace and misery, triumph is assured, as the dew glitters and

whooping horns send our wanderer into the sunshine.

Narrative concerns similarly inform what is now the second movement. Originally, its maytime Ländler was preceded by a composition entitled 'Blumine', the music originating in Mahler's Kassel score for J.V. von Scheffel's popular narrative poem *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*. This was eventually discarded to preserve a more traditional, four-movement structure, including a latter-day equivalent of a minuet and trio. The dance calls to mind the scherzos of Bruckner's symphonies, including the one Mahler conducted in that April 1886 concert in Prague, as well as the lesser-known music of Hans Rott. Certainly, the composer's student friend was in his thoughts during the Symphony's inception, after Rott's persecutory delusions had caused him to be committed to a mental hospital, where he died from tuberculosis in 1884. Like Bruckner, Mahler attended the funeral



in Vienna, before composing what some have heard as a tribute to the Scherzo from Rott's own Symphony in E minor (the manuscript of which was eventually rediscovered in the 1980s).

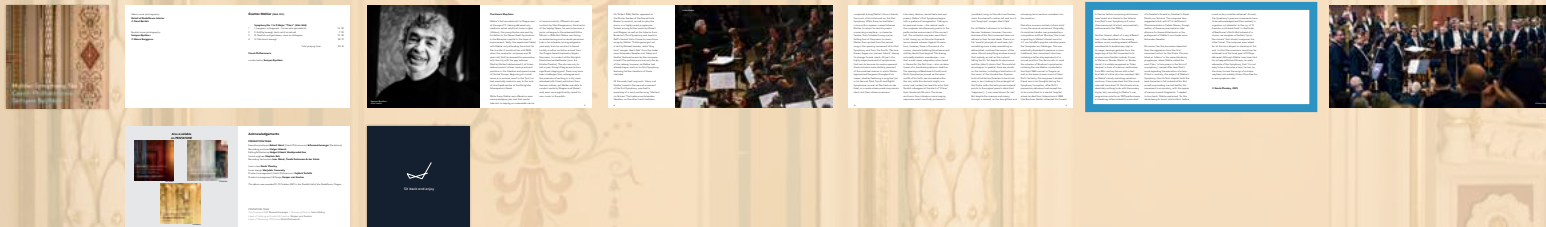
Another funeral, albeit of a very different hue, is then described in the ensuing *tableau vivant*, evoking several different soundworlds. A double bass, high in its range, develops gestures from the beginning of the first movement into an even more familiar melody. Known to Mahler as 'Bruder Martin' or 'Bruder Jacob', it is widely recognised as 'Frère Jacques', a tune of unknown authorship from 18th-century France with a text that tells of a friar who has overslept. But as Mahler's slowly marching variations continue, it becomes clear that the monk may well have died. Or this structure has absolutely nothing to do with the nursery rhyme, but, according to Mahler's own programme note for an 1893 performance in Hamburg, refers instead to a woodcut

of a forester's funeral by Schubert's friend Moritz von Schwind. The composer also suggested a link with E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, though neither of these sources explains later allusions to itinerant klezmer or the protagonist of Mahler's own *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*.

No sooner has the procession departed than the aggressors from the first movement return for the Finale. This was listed as 'Inferno' in the same Hamburg programme, where Mahler called the work *Titan*, 'a tone poem in the form of a symphony', named after Jean Paul's novel regarding the education of a hero. If that is, similarly, the subject of Mahler's Symphony, then its final chapter tests the lead character in full orchestral fire. But as well as providing one last battle, the movement is summatory, with the reprise of various musical fragments. 'I needed to turn back,' Mahler explained, 'for the whole being to touch rock bottom, before

a real victory could be obtained.' As such, the Symphony's previous movements have to be acknowledged and then excised, in a gesture not dissimilar to the cry of 'O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!' in the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth. But instead of a chorus, we are given a fanfaric 'hymn-like chorale' that should 'overpower the other forces'. The composer even asked for all the horn players to stand up at the end, 'so that the maximum sound can be achieved' and the tonal goal of D Major delivered. Although Mahler may have told his colleague Richard Strauss, an early advocate of the Symphony, that 'it is not easy to be or become a hero', he has, by the close, turned the songs of a simple wayfarer into suitably titanic flourishes for a new symphonic star.

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© Petra Hasjká



**Programme**  
Symphony No. 10  
Symphony No. 9  
Symphony No. 8  
Symphony No. 7  
Symphony No. 6  
Symphony No. 5  
Symphony No. 4  
Symphony No. 3  
Symphony No. 2  
Symphony No. 1



**Conductor**  
The conductor is responsible for leading the orchestra and ensuring that the music is performed as intended.

**Orchestra**  
The orchestra consists of various instruments, including strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.



**Music**  
The music is a collection of symphonies, each with its own unique style and themes.

**Performance**  
The performance is a live event, capturing the energy and emotion of the music.

**Recording**  
The recording is a high-quality audio production, capturing the sound of the orchestra.

**Release**  
The release is a collection of tracks, each representing a different symphony.

**Artwork**  
The artwork is a visual representation of the music, featuring a portrait of the conductor.



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Track 7: Symphony No. 4  
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Track 10: Symphony No. 1



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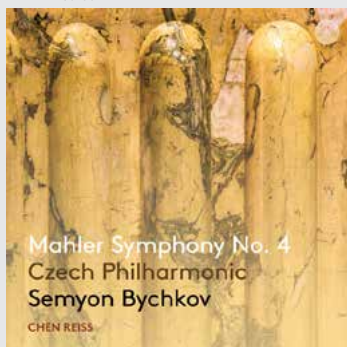
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Executive producers **Robert Hanč** (Czech Philharmonic) & **Renaud Loranger** (Pentatone)

Recording producer **Holger Urbach**

Editing & Mastering **Holger Urbach Musikproduktion**

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Cover design **Marjolein Coenrady**

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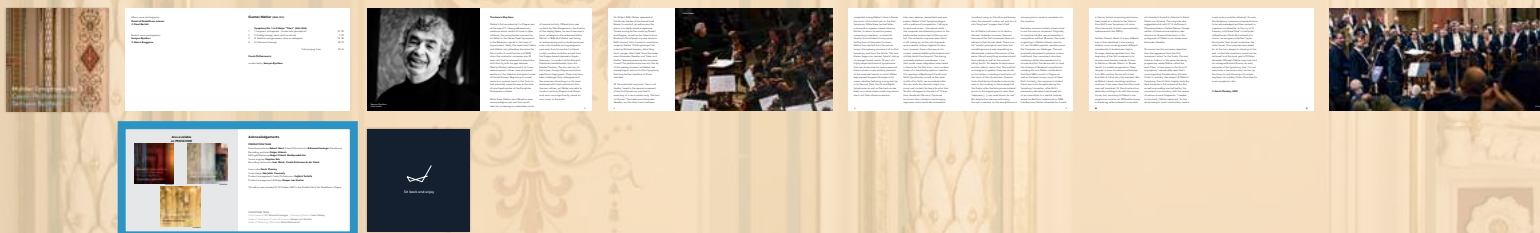
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