

Lecture Seven

Symphony No. 6, and *Das Lied von der Erde*

Scope: Mahler composed his dark Symphony No. 6 during the summers of 1903 and 1904, when he was never happier. Alma attributed the Sixth's tragic end to Mahler's premonition of the three events that would shatter their lives in 1907: his resignation from the Royal Vienna Opera, the death of their elder daughter, and the diagnosis of his heart disease. In 1908, Mahler threw himself into composing *Das Lied von der Erde* as his only solace from the grief of his daughter's death. The work is a symphonic song cycle about loss, grief, memory, disintegration, and transfiguration.

Outline

- I. Mahler composed his Symphony No. 6 during the summers of 1903 and 1904.
 - A. The piece is known as Mahler's "tragic" symphony because it is the only one that ends soberly, rather than triumphantly (as the First, Second, Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth do) or with a transfiguration (as the Third, Fourth, and Ninth do).
 - B. Remember that Mahler was never happier than he was during the summers of 1903 and 1904 when he composed the symphony. Perhaps, like Beethoven, Mahler was able to grapple most effectively with darkness, pessimism, and tragedy when he was actually most happy and could, therefore, deal with emotional issues objectively that might otherwise have torn him apart.
 - C. However, many commentators, including Alma, have ascribed the Sixth's tragic end to Mahler's premonition of the three events that would shatter their lives in 1907. According to Alma, Mahler said that he had tried to capture her in the second theme of the first movement. (Musical selection: Symphony No. 6, movement 1, second theme, "Alma" [1904].)
 - D. Again, Alma tells us, "In the last movement he describes himself and his downfall or, as he said later, the downfall of his hero. 'The hero who receives three blows from fate, the third of which fells him like a tree.' These are Mahler's words" (Floros, 163). (Musical selection: Symphony No. 6, movement 4, "hammer blows of fate.")
 - E. Alma concludes: "No other work has flowed so directly from his heart as this one. We both cried at the time; we felt so deeply what this music meant, what it forebodingly told us. The Sixth is his most personal work and is also a prophetic one" (Floros, 163). (Musical selection: Symphony No. 6, movement 4, conclusion.)

- II. The year 1907 was the beginning of the end for Mahler, the year of the three hammer blows: his resignation from the Royal Viennese Opera; the death of his elder daughter, Maria; and the diagnosis of his diseased heart.
- A. Mahler was appointed music director of the Royal Vienna Opera in October of 1897. The inevitable problems with the Viennese authorities began as early as 1898, when Mahler was but one year into his tenure.
 - 1. The problems began with money. Mahler was infuriated when the budget he submitted for the fall season of 1898 was rejected.
 - 2. He had reduced the deficit he had inherited and felt that the Viennese authorities were not showing proper respect for what he had already accomplished.
 - 3. Mahler also believed that the authorities were limiting the singers he could hire, in a sense, making artistic decisions, which Mahler could not abide.
 - B. In addition, although Mahler understood the importance of respecting the stagehands and rewarding their work, he was tyrannical with the performers. Hostility was building within the opera.
 - C. Despite Mahler's extraordinary success at the opera and his almost universal critical acclaim, his intransigence as a man and conductor and the "revolutionary" aspects of his own compositions provided constant grist for the anti-Semitic press.
 - D. Despite these tensions, Mahler continued to use his summer vacations to extraordinary creative advantage.
 - 1. The summers of 1904 and 1905 saw the composition of Symphony No. 7.
 - 2. In 1906 Symphony No. 8 was written.
 - E. Mahler's despotism and sheer fanaticism exhausted everyone around him, physically and emotionally.
 - 1. By 1907, his enemies outnumbered his friends at the Vienna Opera.
 - 2. A new wave of attacks in the press began on January 1, 1907, when a thoroughly negative summary of Mahler's recent activities was published in the *Deutsches Volksblatt*. A series of vicious articles then appeared in various papers.
 - F. Mahler was approaching forty-seven years old, was getting tired, and was finally slowing down.
 - 1. He was disgusted by what he perceived as an ungrateful public. Attendance at the opera house fell off precipitously and troublemakers began booing him from the promenade seats behind the orchestra.
 - 2. Mahler was weary of fighting with the musicians and singers in his never-ending battle against carelessness and mediocrity.
 - 3. He asked for a new contract and was humiliated when his request was publicly refused.

4. By the end of May, Mahler had decided to resign his position and, by the beginning of June, despite serious misgivings, he had decided to accept an offer from Heinrich Conrad, the director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, to conduct at the Met during the following season.
5. After having lived and worked in one place for ten years, Mahler once again became Ahaseurus, the Wandering Jew.
6. On June 29, 1907, Mahler and his family departed for their summer home at Maiernigg on Lake Werther. There, his life would go from bad to catastrophic.

III. Once again, we turn to Alma Mahler for a description of that summer: "On the third day of our holiday the older child (Marie/Putzi) was already beginning to show alarming symptoms. It was a combination of scarlet fever and diphtheria, and she was doomed from the start" (de La Grange, Volume 3, 690).

- A. Marie, whom Alma described as Mahler's favorite, lingered for two weeks. The pain of her illness was almost unbearable for Mahler.
- B. Almost immediately following Marie's death, doctors declared that both Alma and Gustav had serious heart conditions.
 1. We now know that Mahler's heart had a valve dysfunction that was not fatal. In 1907, however, Mahler's doctors couldn't make that distinction; they assumed the worst and turned Mahler into a cardiac invalid.
 2. According to Alma, doctors forbade Mahler to engage in the exercise and sports that he had always enjoyed.
- C. Mahler and his family fled the house at Maiernigg; they would never return, although it stands to this day.
 1. Apparently, Mahler never spoke to anyone about the death of his daughter. He even forbade Alma from wearing mourning clothes.
 2. People who knew him well saw the depth of Mahler's suffering.
 3. He coped by reading voraciously and composing.
- D. In Vienna, the authorities were having an impossible time finding and hiring a new conductor for the opera. No one wanted to risk being Mahler's successor. Ultimately, Felix Weingartner took the job, but he quit after two and a half years, even more discouraged and disgusted than Mahler had been.

IV. Mahler's four-year contract with New York's Metropolitan Opera called for him to conduct for three months a season, with all travel and housing expenses to be paid by the opera.

- A. Musically and financially, Mahler's first season in New York was a great success. Between January and late April 1908, he conducted twenty-seven performances in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

1. His accommodations, an eleventh-floor suite at the Majestic Hotel overlooking Central Park, were palatial, and he was making a lot of money.
 2. He and Alma were fascinated with New York, but of course, just beneath the surface was still raw grief.
- B. On returning to Europe, the Mahlers rented a home in the village of Tobloch. There, Mahler would compose *Das Lied von der Erde* and his ninth and tenth symphonies.
- V. The summer of 1908 began badly; the Mahlers were still grieving for their daughter and Mahler was in constant fear for his health and life.
- A. Alma reported, "This summer was the saddest we were to spend together. Every excursion, every attempt at distraction was a failure. Grief and anxiety pursued us wherever we went. Work was his one resource. He slaved at *Das Lied von der Erde*... These poems, and their infinite melancholy, answered his own" (Alma Mahler, 142).
- B. *Das Lied von der Erde* is one of the great masterworks of the repertoire. We will begin a brief exposition of this work now and continue it in Lecture Eight.
- C. *Das Lied von der Erde* is a symphonic song cycle, consisting of six songs for alto and tenor voice and orchestra. The texts come from Hans Bethge's translation of Chinese poems, *The Chinese Flute*. Mahler arranged the songs to create a progressive drama.
1. Mahler fully conceived of *Das Lied* as a "symphony" and, time permitting, we would examine the structural working of these songs and their parallels and analogues in the movements of a fully instrumental symphony.
 2. Mahler had originally intended to call *Das Lied von der Erde* his Symphony No. 9, but knowing that Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner, and Dvorak had all died either during or soon after composing their ninth symphonies, he decided not to tempt fate.
- VI. The six songs are about loss, grief, memory, disintegration, and ultimately, transfiguration.
- A. The first song, entitled *The Drinking Song of the Sorrow of the Earth*, is a toast, offered during the progress of a drinking party. The song runs the gamut of emotions from joy to abject grief. (Musical selection: *Das Lied von der Erde*, song one, verse one.)
1. The song starts with almost manic energy; the urgent, rather loose-tongued tone suggests that the speaker has already had a few drinks. By the third and fourth lines, "The song of sorrow shall burst out in laughter in your souls," we realize that this is not an ordinary toast. We are being told, bitterly and ironically, that we must laugh through our pain.

2. The mood of the speaker continues to spiral downward in lines five through seven: "When sorrow draws nigh, the gardens of the soul lie wasted, both joy and song wither away." This "wasted garden" is a metaphor for death that will pervade the entire cycle.
 3. We ask, as the speaker's mood spirals downward, what has wasted his "garden," his soul? Finally, the last, chilling line tells us: "Dark is life, dark is death."
 4. By the end of this song, we know that something terrible has happened to the speaker. He is enraged and he has lost faith. And why a drinking song? Because only the inhibition-destroying property of alcohol will allow the masculine side of our characters to feel and express the unbearable.
- B. The second song (*The Lonely One in Autumn*) would seem to be the opposite of the first: serene and controlled where the first is manic and barely under control; a female voice where the first is for a male. In reality, the second song is simply the flip side of the first. It is also about grief and incalculable loss, but expressed with heartbreaking sadness and directness, by the "eternal feminine." (Musical selection: *Das Lied von der Erde*, song two, verse one.)
1. A vaguely and stereotypically "Chinese" sound pervades this song, as befits the text.
 2. Note the opening oboe solo that underlines the mood of loneliness and lament that pervades the rest of the song.
 3. Once again, a fragile, wasted landscape—the "wasted garden of the soul"—is used as a metaphor for emotional and spiritual desolation.
 4. Finally, note the incredible, sigh-like descent when the voice enters; this is music of exquisite despair and resignation.
- C. In the third verse of this second song, we get an inkling of the source of the singer's despair.
1. The reason for this numb, autumnal music all at once becomes clear: "My little lamp went out..." a clear allusion to the death of a child.
 2. This line is stunningly like the line that concludes the first of Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder* poems, "A small lamp has gone out in my dwelling."
 3. These heartbreaking lines are delivered gently and directly, which redoubles their emotional punch.
 4. At the end of this second song, the singer asks, "Sun of love, will you never shine again,/And gently dry my bitter tears?" The audience knows that the sun cannot and will not shine again. The song ends, murmuring, quietly and forlorn.

Lecture Eight

Das Lied, Final Symphonies, and the End

Scope: *Das Lied von der Erde* continues, through an idealized past in which all things are possible, back to the deadened emotions of the present, and beyond, to the bittersweet realization that although life is reborn endlessly, there is no rebirth for the individual. Mahler next completed his Symphony No. 9, which is filled with contemplation of his own mortality, and began work on Symphony No. 10, which was left incomplete at his death. During this time, Mahler was working in New York and spending the off seasons in Europe. He discovered that Alma was having a love affair with Walter Gropius, a founding member of the Bauhaus school of architecture. In 1910, Mahler arrived back in New York, already ill. He died in Vienna in 1911, uttering, according to Alma, his last word, "Mozart!"

Outline

- I. Songs three, four, and five of *Das Lied von der Erde*, taken together, act like a symphonic scherzo; they are lighter in mood and considerably shorter than the first two movements and songs. Songs three and four delve into the past, when plants were green and all things were possible.
 - A. The third song is called *Of Youth*. It deals with an idealized past, a memory that is as stylized and fragile as the "porcelain pavilion" it evokes. (**Musical selection:** *Das Lied von der Erde*, Song Three, verse one.)
 1. Mahler's setting of this poem is brilliant. The quasi-oriental/ Chinese sound of this music is as quaint, unreal, and artificial as the romanticized memory evoked in the text.
 2. Note all the ringing and chattering in the instrumental introduction and the manner in which the introduction sets the glistening, fragile, "porcelain" mood of this song.
 - B. The fourth song is entitled *Of Beauty*. It is one of the crowning glories of Mahler's entire compositional output. We will listen to the first verse, but this brief introduction cannot possibly convey the joy, the heated sexuality, and ultimately, the exquisite and heartbreaking regret with which the song ends. (**Musical selection:** *Das Lied von der Erde*, Song Four, verse one.)
 1. Again, like the third, this fourth song takes place in the idealized and romanticized past, which seems almost like a painting.
 2. In the past, living things flourished. The world was verdant and alive, filled with light and color.

3. Like the third song, number four is a dreamlike evocation of youth and beauty; this song also uses images of light, water, and reflection to project the selective reality of memory.
- C. The fifth song, entitled *The Drunkard in Spring*, takes us back to the present. We again meet the toast-giver from song one who has, since we last met him, surrendered completely to the anesthetizing joys of the bottle. (**Musical selection:** *Das Lied von der Erde*, Song Five.)
1. For all its bubbly, upbeat energy, this fifth song is filled with incredible sadness and sorrow; again, as in the earlier songs, Mahler's subtlety and understatement are infinitely more powerful than if this setting had been filled with self-pity and melodrama.
 2. Although we never learn what "cares and worries" turned the singer into a drunk, we realize that his smiling, alcoholic haze is his last defense against some crippling emotional pain.
 3. Note the evocation of spring and, with it, the possibility of rebirth, new life, forgiveness, redemption, and physical and spiritual resurrection.
 4. But the emotions stirred by "Spring" and all it represents are too much; our drunk responds in the only way he knows—he drinks himself into a stupor.
 5. The song ends with a tilting, drunken "Salut!" in the orchestra.
- D. The sixth song is entitled, simply, *The Farewell*. It is as long as the other five songs put together. This so-called "song" is in reality a monodrama for alto and orchestra. (**Musical selection:** *Das Lied von der Erde*, Song Six, verse one.)
1. It is extraordinarily dramatic and fully operatic, displaying the operatic elements of recitative, aria, dialogue, and orchestral commentary throughout its thirty-minute length.
 2. James Hepokoski writes, "The increased transparency and emptiness of the orchestration [are a metaphor] that suggest that part of the body has already been left behind; the ecstatic experiences of life, love [and grief] exist only as memory."
 3. Indeed, we are in the twilight zone between life and death; the bleak, barren, autumnal landscape evoked in the second song returns here as eternal darkness approaches.
 4. Note the deep, tolling notes in the tam-tam that cast a funereal pall over the beginning of the song. Note as well the pungent, "shepherd's pipe-like," solo oboe that helps to create a bleak, rocky, windswept landscape at twilight.
 5. The last lines of the sixth song again invoke spring and rebirth. We hear a celesta—orchestral bells—distant glimmers of blue sky, the birth of a new day, or perhaps, an invocation of a heavenly canopy as our collective consciousness transcends the earth and drifts upward.

6. Life continues, is reborn, endlessly, although a deep existential sadness remains in this music. Mahler would seem to recognize, at this point of his life, that there is no rebirth for the individual man, woman, or child.
- E. The song doesn't really end; it expires. It hangs on a dissonance that never resolves. All pain is gone, all individuality is lost, and we are left with a feeling of awesome, profound acceptance and resignation to the inevitable. (Musical selection: *Das Lied von der Erde*, Song Six, conclusion.)
 - F. Mahler did not live to hear *Das Lied von der Erde* performed. It was premiered seven months after his death.
- II. Mahler's second season with the Metropolitan Opera—from January to April of 1909—was a rousing success.
- A. He only had to conduct three different operas for a total of nineteen performances; he was well paid; and he was acclaimed, this second season, as a conquering hero.
 - B. At about this same time, a committee of wealthy ladies formed to revamp the Philharmonic Society into a new orchestral organization called the New York Philharmonic, with the expressed aim of hiring Gustav Mahler to be its conductor. Mahler was intrigued and accepted the position, which was a mistake.
 1. Mahler had no way of knowing that by creating the New York Philharmonic, the rich ladies of the orchestra committee were wreaking havoc in the New York musical scene.
 2. They created a virtual civil war between musicians, who were torn between the old and new orchestras, and they split public and press opinion down the middle.
 3. Resident American conductors were insulted by the engagement of Mahler, who as far as American audiences were concerned, was an opera conductor, not a symphony orchestra conductor.
 4. The season, which began in November of 1909, was a failure, critically and financially. After a few months, the New York Philharmonic was \$90,000 in the red.
 5. Mahler, however, persevered. He signed on for another, longer season, for which he returned to New York in October 1910. By the time he returned to Europe in April 1911, after this second season at the Philharmonic, he was mortally ill and had but weeks to live.
 - C. Mahler's Symphony No. 9, completed in March 1910 in New York, is yet another masterwork we will touch on. It is filled with Mahler's premonitions and contemplations of his own death.
 1. The first movement begins with an introduction that depicts Mahler's heartbeat, followed by the "fluttering sound" of his

leaking heart valves. (Musical selection: Symphony No. 9, movement 1, introduction.)

2. This introduction is followed immediately by a theme that picks up where *Das Lied von der Erde* left off, opening with a drooping, unresolved dissonance. (Musical selection: Symphony No. 9, movement 1, theme 1.)
3. The message is that Mahler, at least at the outset of this symphony, is resigned to his heart disease. During the course of this first movement, the music projects a fatal heart attack. (Musical selection: Symphony No. 9, movement 1, "heart attack.")
4. During the course of the symphony, the music evokes a transcendental acceptance of one's fate. Truly, after the events of 1907, Mahler's music is no longer about triumph and transcendence; it's about resignation and acceptance.

III. In June of 1910, while taking a "rest cure" at the fashionable spa of Tobelbad, Alma began her affair with Walter Gropius, architect and soon-to-be founding member of the Bauhaus school.

- A. Gropius was twenty-seven, four years Alma's junior, single, smart, talented, attractive, and filled with good humor.
- B. By 1910, Alma was lonely, grieving, and unhappy. She was suffering from a number of psychosomatic illnesses and she had forgotten what it felt like to be beautiful and attractive to men. Alma had remained faithful to Mahler for almost nine years, but now she fell in love.
- C. Gropius, who would be Alma's husband from 1915–1920, reciprocated Alma's feelings entirely. In July of 1910, one month into the affair and after Alma had returned to Toblach to rejoin Mahler, Gropius decided to force the issue. He wrote Alma a letter begging her to join him and addressed it to "Herr Direktor Mahler."
- D. Mahler was devastated, and Alma, rather than begging forgiveness, went on the offensive: "I told him I had longed for his love year after year and that he, in his fanatical concentration on his own life, had simply overlooked me."
- E. Alma promised to end her affair with Gropius and, for all Mahler knew, she did. But in reality, she did not break it off, and it continued, on and off, until Mahler's death ten months later.
- F. Mahler fell apart. Alma reported that he would lie on the floor of his composing hut weeping for fear of losing her. Finally, at wits end, Mahler met with Sigmund Freud in the Dutch town of Leiden, where Freud was vacationing. Their "interview" took place on August 26, 1910, and lasted for a few hours while they strolled about the environs.
 1. According to Alma, Freud told Mahler that he should calm down. Alma was looking for a father figure and could only find one in a man Mahler's age. Too, Mahler looked for his mother in every

woman and unconsciously wished for his wife to be as “careworn and ailing” as Marie had been.

2. Alma believed that Freud was right on both counts, and Mahler, too, felt that the interview had done him some good.

- G. During this extraordinarily difficult time of his life, Mahler was working on his Symphony No. 10, a work left incomplete at his death.
1. We have no indication that Mahler ever worked on the tenth again after his visit with Freud.
 2. Almost immediately after his return from Holland, Mahler left for Munich to prepare and premiere his Symphony No. 8 on September 12, 1910.

IV. On October 25, 1910, Mahler arrived in New York for the fourth and last time.

- A. He was tired and had a sore throat that would not go away.
- B. He also faced problems at the Philharmonic, which could be reduced to a single word: deficit.
1. The deficit was blamed on Mahler’s programming, which was considered arcane and overly ambitious.
 2. A programming committee was created to “oversee” Mahler’s choice of repertoire, which resulted in more tension.
 3. The Philharmonic started looking for a new conductor.
 4. Nevertheless, the season was a success, with Mahler conducting in New York (at Carnegie Hall), Brooklyn, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica (New York).
- C. Mahler’s sore throat was still lingering and, on February 21, 1911, his body temperature suddenly spiked to 104 degrees.
1. Doctors were called in, Mahler’s blood was tested, and it was discovered that he was infected with the streptococcus bacteria.
 2. The diagnosis was subacute bacterial endocarditis—a serious ailment afflicting hearts that, like Mahler’s, have suffered valvular disease.
 3. Most likely Mahler had picked up the bug sometime during the summer of 1910.
 4. In those days, before antibiotics, subacute bacterial endocarditis was almost certainly fatal. This fact was kept from Mahler.
- D. From this point, it took Mahler three agonizing months to die.
1. Ultimately, it was decided that Mahler should return to Europe and be examined by the eminent bacteriologist Dr. Chantemesse in Paris. According to Alma, the doctor was delighted by the state of development of the streptococci but did nothing for Mahler.
 2. Of Mahler’s death, Alma wrote, “Then the end. Mahler lay with dazed eyes; one finger was conducting on the quilt. There was a

smile on his lips and twice he said: 'Mozart!'" (Alma Mahler, 197–200).

- V. Of all Mahler's contemporary critics, perhaps no one understood him better than William Ritter, the self-professed anti-Semitic, German-speaking, Swiss art critic.
- A. After hearing the premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 4 in Munich in November 1901, Ritter's assessment was that Mahler's Jewish heritage might be responsible for the vehemence, passion, and rebellious character of his music. Ritter also grudgingly admitted that against all his experience and convictions, he admired the music.
 - B. Ritter's only real mistake in his appraisal was that he saw Mahler as tearing down the traditions of the past, rather than anticipating the musical eclecticism and expressionistic tendencies of the future.
 - C. Mahler, the greatest opera conductor of his time, perhaps the greatest of all time, wrote no operas. His symphonies are his operas; his *Gesamtkunstwerke*, all-inclusive art works; his universal statements about life, death, love, redemption, religion, God, nature, resignation, and the human condition in all its glory and folly.
 - D. Mahler's symphonies are unique. No other body of work, by any composer, traverses such expressive range, so brilliantly combines absolute orchestral/symphonic music with vocal music, so clearly and profoundly defines its creator, and is so honest and deeply felt.
- VI. Mahler's Symphony No. 8, the so-called *Symphony of a Thousand*, was composed during the good times of 1906.
- A. It was premiered in Munich on September 12, 1910, three years after his daughter's death, two months after his discovery of Alma's affair, and two and a half weeks after his meeting with Freud.
 - B. The premiere was the single greatest triumph of Mahler's compositional life. It offered some small consolation for the terrible events that had occurred in the years since its composition.
 - C. Mahler's eighth symphony was premiered by an orchestra of 171 players and 858 vocalists, including an adult chorus, children's chorus, and soloists.
 - 1. Spiritually, the eighth symphony begins where the second leaves off. The opening movement, a setting of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, is a thanks to God for the peace and joy of resurrection and redemption. (**Musical selection:** Symphony No. 8, movement 1, opening [1907].)
 - 2. The work is dedicated to Alma, and Mahler wrote of it: "It is the biggest thing I have done... Imagine the universe beginning to ring and resound. It is no longer human voices. It is planets and suns revolving in their orbits..." (Cardis).

3. The premiere was an indescribable success and provoked Thomas Mann to pay homage to Mahler as “the man who, as I believe, expresses the art of our time in its profoundest and most sacred form.”

Vocal Texts

Lecture Two

Excerpt from *Das klagende Lied (The Song of Lament, 1878)*

German text by Gustav Mahler

Vom hohen Felsen erglänzt das Schloss	From the high cliff the castle shines
Die Zinken erschall'n und Drometten.	Cornetts and tabors ring out.
Dort sitzt der mutigen Ritter Tross,	There sits the band of brave knights,
Die Frauen mit goldenen Ketten.	And ladies with golden necklaces.
Was will wohl der jubelnde, fröhliche Schall?	Why these jubilant, merry sounds?
Was leuchtet and glänzt	What glows and gleams
In Königssaal?	In the great hall?
O Freude, heia! Freude!	Oh Joy! Hey-ho! Joy!

Lecture Three

Excerpts from *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfarer, 1883-5)*

German text by Gustav Mahler

Ging heut' morgen übers Feld.	This morning I went across the field.
Tau noch auf den Gräsern hing;	Dew still hung on the blades of grass;
Sprach zu mir der lust'ge Fink:	The merry finch spoke to me:
"Ei du! Gelt?	"Hey you there! Don't you think so?
Guten Morgen!	Good morning!
Ei gelt? Du!	Hey you! Don't you think so?
Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?	Isn't it a beautiful world?
Schöne Welt?	Beautiful world?
Zink! Zink!	Chirp! Chirp!
Schön und flink!	Beautiful and nimble!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!	How I love the world!"
Auch die Glockenblum' an Feld	Even the bluebells in the field
Hat mir lustig, gutter Ding'	Merrily rang their morning greeting for me
Mit den Glöckchen,	With their little bells,
Klinge, kling, klinge, kling,	Ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling;
Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?	Isn't it a beautiful world?
Kling, kling!	Ding-a-ling,
Kling, kling!	Ding-a-ling
Schönes Ding!	Pretty thing!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!	How I love the world!
Heia!	Hey-ho!
Und da fing im Sonnenschein	And right there, in the sunshine
Gleich die Welt zu funkeln an;	The world suddenly began to sparkle;
Alles, alles, Ton und Farbe gewann	Everything took on color and sound
Im Sonnenschein!	In the sunshine!

Blum' und Vogel
Gross und klein!
"Guten Tag, guten Tag!
Ist's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Ei du! Gelt?
Ei, du! Gelt?
Schöne Welt!"

Flower and bird
Big and small!
"Good day! Good day!
Isn't it a beautiful world?
Hey, you! Don't you think so?
Hey, you! Don't you think so?
Beautiful world!"

Nun fangt auch mein Glück wohl an?
Nun fangt auch mein Glück wohl an?
Nein! Nein!
Das ich mein',
Mir nimmer, nummer blühen kann!

So, will my happiness begin now?
So, will my happiness begin now?
No! No!
That, I fancy, will never, never
Be for me!

Antonius zur Predigt (St. Antony of Padua Preaches to the Fishes) from Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth's Magic Horn, 1888-9)

Edited and selected by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano (pub.1808)

Antonius zur Predigt
Die Kirche find't ledig.
Er geht zu den Flüssen
Und predigt den Fischen!
Sie schlag'n mit den Schwanz,
Im Sonnenschein glänzen.

When it's time for his sermon
Antony finds the church empty.
He goes to the river
And preaches to the fishes!
They clap with tails that
Gleam in the sunshine.

Die Karpfen mit Rogen
Sind all hierherzogen;
Hab'n d'Mauler aufrissen,
Sich Zuhör'n's beflissen,
Kein Predigt niemals
Des Fischen so g'fallen.

The carps with roe
Are all gathered here;
Their mouths agape,
They listen intently;
No sermon has ever
Pleased the fish more!

Spitzgoschete Hechte,
Die immerzu fechten,
Sind eilends herschwommen,
Zu hören den Frommen!
Auch jene Phantasten,
Die immerzu fasten:
Die Stockfisch ich meine,
Zur Predigt erscheinen
Kein Predigt niemals
Den Stockfisch so g'fallen.

Pointy-nosed pike,
That are always fencing,
Swim up in a hurry,
To hear the saint!
And those visionaries
Who constantly fast:
The cod, I mean,
Appear for the sermon.
No sermon has ever
Pleased the cod as much.

Gut Aale und Hause,
Die vornehme schmausen,
Die selbst sich bequemen,
Die Predigt vernehmen!

Fine eels and sturgeons
That feast like lords,
Deign to hear,
The sermon!

Auch Krebse. Schildkroten,
Sonst langsame Boten,
Steigen eilig vom Grund,
Zu hören diesen Mund!
Kein Predigt niemals
Den Krebsen so g'fallen!

Fisch' grosse, Fisch' kleine,
Vornehm' und gemeine,
Erheben die Kopfe
Wie verständ'ge Geschöpfe
Auf Gottes Begehre
Die Predigt anhören.

Die Predigt geendet
Ein jeder sich wendet.
Die Hechte bleiben Diebe,
Die Aale viel lieben;
Die Predigt hat g'fallen,
Sie bleiben wie Allen!

Die Krebs' geh'n zurücke,
Die Stockfisch bleib'n dicke,
Die Karpfen viel fressen,
Die Predigt vergessen!
Die Predigt hat g'fallen,
Sie bleiben wie Allen!

Even crabs. And turtles,
Usually slowpokes,
Climb up from the bottom,
To hear the talker!
No sermon has ever
Pleased the crabs more!

Big fish and small fish,
Noble and common,
Raise their heads
Like intelligent creatures,
At God's command,
To listen to the sermon.

The sermon over,
Each one wends his way.
The pikes remain thieves,
The eels, big lovers;
They liked the sermon, but
They don't change their ways!

The crabs still move backwards,
The cod are still fat,
The carp guzzle a lot,
The sermon forgotten!
They all liked the sermon, but
They don't change their ways!

Lecture Four, Vocal text from Symphony No. 2, movement 4
Urlicht (Primordial Light) from Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth's Magic Horn)

O Röschen rot!
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Not,
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pein
Ja lieber möcht ich im Himmel sein.

Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg,
Da kam ein Englein
Und wollt' mich abweisen
Ach nein! Ich liess mich nicht abweisen

Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott!
Der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtlein geben,
Wird leuchten mir
In das ewig selig' Leben

Oh, little red rose!
Man lies in the greatest need,
Man lies in great pain,
I would much rather be in heaven.

I came upon a broad highway,
An angel came
And wanted to turn me away.
Oh no! I would not be rebuffed.

I am from God and will return to God
Dear God will give me a light,
Will light my way
Into eternal blissful life.

Lecture Four, Vocal text from Symphony No. 2

Excerpts from *Aufersteh'n (Resurrection)*, German text by Friedrich Gottlieb Kopstock (1724-1803)

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du	Arisen, yea, arisen shall you be
Mein Staub, nach kurzer Ruh!	My dust, after a brief respite!
Unsterblich Leben	Will immortal life be given
Wird, der dich rief, dir geben?	To you, who sought it?

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du	Arisen, yea, arisen shall you be
Mein Herz in einem Nu!	My heart, in an instant!
Was du geschlagen	What you have overcome
Zu Gott wird es dich tragen.	Will carry you to God.

Lecture Six, Vocal text from Symphony No. 5, movement 1

Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehn (Now the sun will rise as brightly) from *Kindertotenlieder (Songs on the Death of Children, 1902)*

German text by Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866)

Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehn,	Now the sun will rise as brightly
Als sei kein Unglück	As if nothing bad happened
Die Nacht geschehn!	During the night!
Das Unglück geschah nur mir allein!	The tragedy only happened to me!
Die Sonne, sie scheint allgemein!	The sun shines regardless!
Du musst nicht die Nacht	You must not clasp the night
In dir verschränken,	In your arms,
Musst sie ins ew'ge Licht versenken!	You must steep it in eternal light!
Ein Lämplein verlosch in meinem Zelt!	A little lamp went out in my home!
Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt!	All hail to the joyous light of the world!

Lecture Seven

Excerpt from *Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde (The Drinking Song of the Sorrow of the Earth)* from *Das Lied von der Erde (The Song of the Earth, 1908)*

German text by Hans Bethge (1876-1946) after the Chinese of Li-Tai-Po

Schon winkt der Wein	The wine beckons
Im gold'nen Pokale,	From its golden goblet,
Doch trinkt noch nicht,	But don't drink,
Erst sing' ich euch ein Lied!	Before I sing you a song!
Das Lied vom Kummer	The song of sorrow
Soll auflachend	Shall burst out laughing
In die Seele euch klingen.	In your soul.
Wenn der Kummer naht,	When sorrow draws close,
Liegen wüst die Gärten der Seele,	The gardens of the soul are laid waste,
Welkt hin und stirbt die Freude, Der Gesang.	Joy and song wither and die.
Dunkel ist das Leben, ist der Tod.	It is a gloomy life, a gloomy death.

Excerpts from *Der Einsame im Herbst (The Lonely One in Autumn)* from *The Song of the Earth (Das Lied von der Erde)*

German text by Hans Bethge after the Chinese of Tchang-Tsi

Herbstnebel wallen	A blueish, autumnal haze wafts
Bläulich uferm See:	Over the lake:
Von Reif bezogen stehen all Gräser;	The grass is all covered with hoarfrost;
Man meint ein Künstler	It looks as if an artist
Habe Staub von Jade	Has strewn jade dust
• ber die feiner Blüten ausgestreut.	Over the lovely blossoms.

Mein Herz ist müde.	My heart is tired.
Meine kleine Lampe	My little lamp
Erlosch mit Knistern, es gemahnt	Went out with a sputter,
Mich an der Schlaf.	Reminding me to sleep.
Ich komm' zu dir, traute Ruhestätte!	I come to you, trusty resting place!
Ja, gib mir Ruh',	Yes, give me peace,
Ich hab' Erquickung not!	I am in need of respite!

Lecture Eight

Excerpts from *Von der Jugend (Of Youth)* from *The Song of the Earth (Das Lied von der Erde)*

German text by Hans Bethge after the Chinese of Li-Tai-Po

Mitten in dem kleinen Teiche	In the middle of the little pond
Steht ein Pavillon aus grünem	Stands a pavilion of green
Und aus weissen Porzellan	And white porcelain.
Wie der Rücken eines Tigers	Like a tiger's back
Wölbt die Brücke sich aus Jade	The bridge forms an arch of jade
Zu dem Pavillon hinüber.	Across to the pavilion.

Excerpt from *Von der Schönheit (Of Beauty)* from *Das Lied von der Erde (The Song of the Earth)*

German text by Hans Bethge after the Chinese of Li-Tai-Po

Junge Mädchen pflücken Blumen,	Young girls pick flowers,
Pflücken Lotosblumen an dem Uferande.	Pick lotus blossoms on the bank.
Zwischen Büschen and Blättern sitzen sie.	They sit among the bushes and leaves.
Sammeln Blüten in den Schoß und rufen	Collecting blossoms in their laps
Sich einander Neckereien zu.	They call out, teasing each other.

Der Trunkene im Frühling (The Drunkard in Spring) from *Das Lied von der Erde (The Song of the Earth)*

German text by Hans Bethge after the Chinese of Li-Tai-Po

Wenn nur ein Traum das Leben ist,
Warum denn Müh und Plag?
Ich trinke, bis ich nicht mehr kann,
Den ganzen, lieben Tag!

If life is only a dream,
What's the use of cares and woe?
I drink until I can drink no more,
The whole live-long day.

Und wenn ich nicht mehr trinken kann
Weil Kehl' und Seele voll,
So tauml' ich bis zu meiner Tür
Und schlafe wundervoll!

And when I can no longer drink
Because body and soul are full,
I stagger back home
And sleep wonderfully well.

Was hör' ich beim Erwachen? Horch!
Ein Vogel singt im Baum.
Ich frag' ihn, ob schon Frühling sei.
Mir ist als wie im Traum.

What do I hear upon awakening? Listen!
A bird is singing in the tree.
I ask it if spring is on its way.
It seems like a dream to me.

Der Vogel zwitschert: Ja!
Der Lenz ist da,
Sei 'kommen über Nacht!
Aus tiefstem Schauen lauscht' ich auf.
Der Vogel singt und lacht!

The bird warbles: Yes!
Spring has arrived,
It came overnight!
Aroused from deep contemplation, I listen.
The bird sings and laughs!

Ich fülle mir den Becher neu
Und leer' ihn bis zum Grund
Und singe, bis der Mond erglänzt
Am schwarzen Firmament!

I fill my beaker again
And empty it to the last drop
And sing until the moon glitters
In the black firmament!

Und wenn ich nicht mehr singen kann
So schlaf' ich wieder ein.
Was geht mich denn der Frühling an?
Lasst mich betrunken sein!

And when I can no longer sing,
I fall asleep again,
What do I care about spring?
Let me stay drunk!

Excerpts from *Der Abschied (The Farewell)* from *Das Lied von der Erde (The Song of the Earth)*

German text by Hans Bethge after the Chinese of Mong-Kao-Yen and Wang Wei

Die Sonne scheidt hinter dem Gebirge,
In alle Täler steigt der Abend nieder
Mit seinen Schatten, die voll Kühling sind.

The sun goes down behind the mountain,
Evening descends into all the valleys.
With its deep, cooling shadows.

Die liebe Erde allüberall
Blüht auf im Lenz und grünt aufs neu!
Allüberall und ewig
Blauen licht die Fernen!
Ewig! Ewig!

The good earth everywhere springs
Into blossom and turns green again!
Everywhere, and forever,
The far distance shines bright blue!
Forever! Forever!

(English translations by Maggie Lyons)

Timeline

- 1860.....Born July 7 in Kalischt, Bohemia (Czech Republic), to Bernard (1827–1889) and Marie Hermann (1837–1889).
- 1865.....The Mahler family moves to the nearest large town, Iglau, where Bernard opens a modest distillery/saloon. They live close to a military barracks; the trumpet calls and military march music Gustav hears influence him deeply.
- 1866.....Mahler begins piano lessons.
- 1870.....First public concert as a pianist.
- 1871.....Mahler moves in with teacher Alfred Grunefeld in Prague. He is abused by the Grunefeld family but bears it stoically.
- 1872.....Mahler returns to his family in Iglau.
- 1878–1879.....Attends the Vienna Conservatory.
- 1878–1880Writes his first significant composition, *Das klagende Lied*.
- 1880.....Takes a post conducting operettas in a summer theater in the northern Austrian town of Bad Hall. He has no experience as a conductor but desperately needs the work.
- 1881.....Mahler is denied the Beethoven Prize in Composition but is engaged as conductor at the Landestheatre in Laibach. He conducts his first opera, *Il Trovatore*, on October 3, 1881.
- 1883.....In January, Mahler is hired as conductor at the Stadttheatre in Olmutz. In October, he assumes the post of assistant conductor at the Kassel opera.
- 1883–1885.....Mahler falls in love with soprano Johanna Richter. The unhappy affair leads to the composition of Mahler's first masterpiece, *The Songs of a Wayfarer*. He also begins the first symphony.

- 1885.....Mahler assumes a one-year position as assistant conductor at the Landestheatre in Prague.
- 1886.....Mahler is engaged at the Neues Stadttheatre in Leipzig as one of three assistant conductors to the world-famous Arthur Nikisch.
- 1887–1888.....Nikisch falls ill, and Mahler takes on the duties of first conductor, along with his own assistant conductor responsibilities.
- 1888.....Mahler completes Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Die drei Pintos* and his own Symphony No. 1. He is appointed music director and first conductor of the Royal Hungarian Opera in Budapest.
- 1891.....Mahler assumes the post of conductor at the Hamburg Stadttheatre.
- 1892.....Mahler begins composing again after a hiatus of four years. He resumes work on the second symphony.
- 1894.....Symphony No. 2 is completed.
- 1896.....Symphony No. 3 is completed. In addition to his opera responsibilities, Mahler conducts the Hamburg Symphony during the 1895–1896 season.
- 1897.....Mahler applies for the position of conductor of the Vienna Opera. He converts to Catholicism and is hired; within a year, he is appointed music director as well.
- 1900.....Symphony No. 4 is completed.
- 1901.....Mahler falls in love with Alma Schindler (1879–1964).
- 1902.....Alma and Gustav are married. She is ten weeks pregnant. Symphony No. 5 is completed. Mahler's daughter, Maria Anna (1902–1907), is born.
- 1904.....Symphony No. 6 is completed. Mahler's second daughter, Anna Justine (1904–1988), is born.

- 1901–1905.....*Kindertotenlieder* are completed
- 1905.....Symphony No. 7 is completed.
- 1906.....A campaign against Mahler, led by the anti-Semitic press in Vienna, gains momentum.
- 1907.....Symphony No. 8 is completed. In June, Mahler submits his resignation as director of the Vienna Opera, effective in December. In July, his elder child, Maria Anna, dies of scarlet fever and in August, Mahler is diagnosed with a serious heart condition.
- 1908–1909.....Mahler assumes the position of conductor of the Metropolitan Opera in New York.
- 1909–1911.....Mahler becomes music director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The *Song of the Earth* is completed.
- 1910.....Symphony No. 9 is completed. Symphony No. 10 is begun; it will remain incomplete at Mahler's death.
- 1911.....In February, Mahler falls ill in New York. He arrives in Vienna on May 12 and dies on May 18. His last word: "Mozart."

Glossary

Atonality: The absence of an established tonality, or identifiable key.

Cadenza: Virtuoso music designed to show off a singer's or an instrumental soloist's technical ability.

Classical musical style: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music of Franz Joseph Haydn.

Concerto: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s), typically in three movements.

Consonance: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

Crescendo: Gradually increasing volume.

Dissonance: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

Exposition: Opening section of a fugue or sonata-form movement in which the main theme(s) are introduced.

Gesamtkunstwerk: Wagner's term for his music dramas; an all-inclusive musical work that combines drama, music, poetry, song, painting, and design.

Movement: Independent, self-standing piece of music within a larger work.

Musical form: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

Overture: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

Pedal note: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

Polyrhythm: The simultaneous use of contrasting rhythms.

Polytonality: The simultaneous use of two or more different keys (major and/or minor) or modes.

Requiem: Mass for the dead, traditionally in nine specific sections.

Rhythmic asymmetry: Rhythms that do not use regular accents.

Short score: Two- or three-staff score that can be played on the piano and serves as the basis for a full orchestral score.

Sonata: Piece of music typically in three or four movements, composed for a piano (piano sonata) or a piano plus one instrument (violin sonata, for example).

Sonata form: Structural formula characterized by thematic development; usually used for the first movement of a sonata, symphony, or concerto.

String quartet: (1) Ensemble of four stringed instruments: two violins, viola, and cello; (2) Composition for such an ensemble.

Symphony: Large-scale instrumental composition for orchestra, containing several movements. The Viennese classical symphony typically had four movements.

Voice: A range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

Biographical Notes

Bauer-Lechner, Natalie (1858–1921). Professional violist and friend of Gustav Mahler from their days at the Vienna Conservatory. She undoubtedly loved Mahler and was one of the first people to recognize his greatness. The journal she kept of her recollections and discussions with Mahler remains the primary source of information on his life up to 1901, the year he met Alma Schindler.

Epstein, Julius (1832–1926). Mahler's piano teacher and champion at the Vienna Conservatory. Mahler studied with him from 1875–1877.

Mahler (nee Schindler), Alma (1879–1964). Mahler's wife. Nineteen years Mahler's junior, she married him in March 1902, already ten weeks pregnant. A beautiful, petulant, intelligent, and gifted young woman, she was woefully unprepared for the demands her marriage placed on her. Nevertheless, she was Mahler's essential source of strength and inspiration during the last nine years of his life.

Mahler, Anna Justine (1904–1988). Mahler's younger daughter.

Mahler, Ernst (1861–1875). Mahler's brother. Of all the Mahler siblings, he was the closest to Gustav in both age and affection. His death at the age of fourteen permanently scarred his brother.

Mahler, Justine (Justi) (1868–1938). Mahler's sister. She managed Mahler's household affairs from 1889 until his marriage in 1902.

Mahler, Maria Anna (1902–1907). Mahler's daughter. Her death in 1907 devastated him.

Mildenburg, Anna von (1872–1947). Soprano. A passionate, hot-headed diva of the first order, she was, as a performer, Mahler's creation; he developed her talent at Hamburg between 1895–1897. They were also lovers. She went on to a brilliant career, specializing in Wagnerian roles.

Nikisch, Artur (1855–1922). Austro-Hungarian conductor. He was the principal conductor at the Neues Stadttheatre in Leipzig when Mahler was hired as one of the three assistant conductors, in 1886. When Nikisch fell ill, Mahler assumed his conducting duties.

Richter, Johanna (ca. 1860–?). Soprano at the Kassel Theater. An attractive woman, though a singer of only modest abilities. Mahler's infatuation with her in 1883–1884 led to his writing the poems and composing the music that became the *Songs of the Wayfarer*.

Schönberg, Arnold (1874–1951). Composer. Despite their generational and musical differences, Schönberg became one of Mahler's most ardent fans and supporters. Mahler, in turn, helped to support Schönberg both financially and emotionally.

von Bülow, Hans (1830–1904). German pianist and conductor. He used his considerable influence to help Mahler get the position of conductor of the Vienna Opera.

Walter, Bruno (1876–1962). At the age of eighteen, Walter became one of Mahler's assistant conductors at Hamburg and, in 1901, he joined Mahler in Vienna as his principal assistant. Walter was closer to Mahler than any other musician and conducted the posthumous premieres of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Symphony No. 9. Walter continued to champion Mahler's music for the remainder of his life, inspiring, along the way, a young Leonard Bernstein and the Mahler revival of the 1960s.

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*Denotes essential reading.