

Louisville Orchestra Presents:

MAHLER'S FIFTH

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 5





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The Composer
Gustav Mahler

BORN: July 7, 1860. Kalischt (Kaliště), Bohemia
DIED: May 18, 1911. Vienna, Austria

A PIECE OF HISTORY

- 1901: Mahler **BEGINS** the composition of his Fifth Symphony in the villa Maiernigg (in Austria).
- 1902: Mahler **COMPLETES** the Fifth Symphony.
- 1903: Mahler conducts the **FIRST READ-THROUGH** with the Vienna Philharmonic
- 1904 October 18: The **WORLD PREMIERE** is conducted by Mahler with the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne.
- 1905 March 25: The **NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE** is conducted by Frank van der Stucken

ACROSS THE POND IN AMERICA

- 1901 August 4: Louis Armstrong, jazz trumpeter is born.
- 1902: The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.
- 1903: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded.
- 1904: The New York City subway opens.
- 1905: The first movie theater opens in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

MUSIC GEOGRAPHY

1882 Bohemia was the largest region of historical Czech lands in the present-day Czech Republic.



Present day Czech Republic



Present day Austria



ABOUT THE PIECE

MAHLER + SONG

Mahler symphonies often reference other vocal compositions and feature singers.

The songs referenced in the Fifth Symphony are brief highlights of works that are set to the words of the poet Rückert, in his [Kindertotenlieder](#) vocal composition.

Take a listen!

KEY TERMS

Variations: a variation is music repeated and altered by changes in the melody, rhythm, harmony, counterpoint or timbre.

Funeral march: music usually in a minor key, composed to imitate the serious and slow pace of a funeral procession.

Key signature: a key signature is a collection of sharps or flats found at the beginning of a line of music that lets a musician know what notes to play.

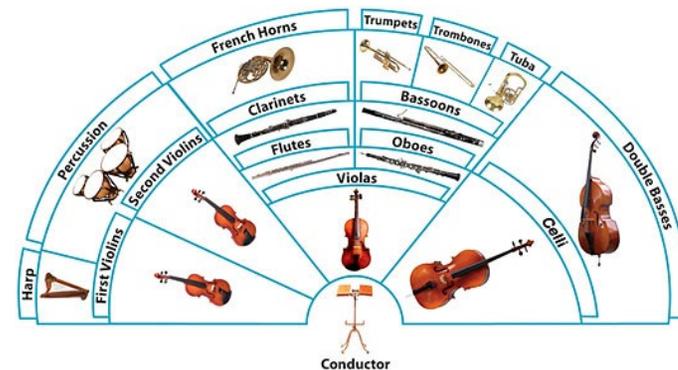


An example of a key signature

THE SIZE OF MAHLER

Standing at just 5'4, Mahler was six inches shorter than the average height of a 19th century man. Small in stature only, Mahler played an instrumental role in increasing the amount of players required to perform on today's stage. Mahler's Fifth Symphony is orchestrated for an impressive roster of four flutes, two piccolos, three oboes and english horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, and tuba, triangle, and strings.

The large orchestra typical of the late 19th through the mid-20th century that Mahler help establish incorporated an average of 100 performers, and included a wide variety of traditional and nontraditional instruments.





BREAKING TRADITION

LISTENING GUIDE

Symphony No. 5

Part I (one)

- 1 Funeral March: With measure step, Strict, Like a cortege
- 2 Stormily. With greatest vehemence

Part II (two)

- 3 Scherzo: Vigorously, not too fast

Part III (three)

- 4 Adagietto: Very slow
- 5 Rondo-Finale: Allegro giocoso. Lively

BREAKING TRADITION

Mahler's Fifth Symphony begins in the key of C-sharp minor and ends in the key of D major. His choice of key signatures broke the long tradition of typically starting and ending a symphony in the same key. Though the piece is presented in a nontraditional five movement format; the score references three standard sections with large roman numerals throughout the score.

Mahler often disliked the difference in the sounds he imagined in his head when he composed the piece, and the actual sounds being made by the orchestra when it was performed. Mahler repeatedly complained the percussion parts were often too complex and too overwhelming for Mahler's taste. This misalignment of imagination and reality instigated Mahler to make revisions to the symphony every time he heard the piece for almost a decade.

"I cannot understand how I could have written so much like a beginner....Clearly the routine I had acquired in the first four symphonies had deserted me altogether, as though a totally new message demanded a new "

- Gustav Mahler