

Markus Poschner and Christian Gerhaher: Mahler, Diepenbrock and Schubert's Great C major

Thursday, February 18, 2027 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin
Markus Poschner, conductor · Christian Gerhaher, baritone

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MAHLER 1860–1911 <i>Das Lied von der Erde: Der Einsame im Herbst</i>	10'
2	DIEPENBROCK 1862–1921 <i>Im großen Schweigen</i>	
3	SCHUBERT 1797–1828 <i>Symphony No. 9 in C major, D. 944 ('Great')</i>	55'
TOTAL MUSIC		65'

Gustav Mahler

10 minutes

1860–1911

Das Lied von der Erde: Der Einsame im Herbst

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The poem is an autumn landscape that turns inward. Mist drifts over a lake, the grass is covered in frost, the scent of the flowers has gone and the lotus leaves will soon be floating on the water. Then the speaker turns to himself: “My heart is tired. My little lamp has gone out with a crackle.”

Mahler marks the opening “somewhat dragging, exhausted”. Muted violins keep up a murmuring line that hardly ever stops, and over it a solo oboe plays a thin, drooping melody before the voice enters, almost in a monotone. The scoring is sparse, closer to chamber music than to a symphony orchestra, with solo woodwinds spinning long independent lines.

Listen for the one moment when the restraint breaks. Near the end the singer asks, “Sun of love, will you never shine again and gently dry my bitter tears?”, and for a few bars the music swells. It does not last, and the song sinks back into the exhaustion in which it began.

Alphons Diepenbrock

1862–1921

Im großen Schweigen

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The preface describes three sections. In the first the walker arrives at the shore and leaves behind the restless noise of the town, above all its bells. The second begins with the image of the sea itself: “The sea lies there pale and shining, it cannot speak.” Diepenbrock called the piece a tone poem for orchestra and baritone, in that order, and a good deal of the telling is left to the instruments.

An orchestral interlude leads to the third section, and here the chant melody of “Ave maris stella” appears for the first time. The baritone’s last lines, as the silence deepens and his heart swells once more, are followed by the chant once more, now at full strength, and it is the orchestra that has the last word.

Franz Schubert

1797–1828

55 minutes

Symphony No. 9 in C major, D. 944 ('Great')

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Andante, Allegro ma non troppo. Two horns, alone and quiet, play the opening melody. It sounds like a slow introduction, but Schubert builds the whole movement on it, and its first three rising notes turn up throughout the symphony. The fast section arrives without a break, driven by dotted rhythms in the strings and chattering triplets in the woodwinds. Listen for the trombones, which Schubert treats as melody instruments: a soft, mysterious call from them sits at the heart of the movement. At the very end the horn theme returns, shouted out by the full orchestra.

II. Andante con moto. A walking movement in A minor. Over a steady tread in the strings the oboe sings a tune that is half march, half folk song. It alternates with a warmer, consoling melody in the major. The plan could not be simpler, the two ideas heard in turn and then in turn again, but the second time round the passage that links them is drawn out and developed at length.

III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace. A big, stamping dance, worked out at much greater length than a scherzo usually is: it is a complete sonata-form movement in itself. Several of its tunes really waltz. The broad central trio moves to A major.

IV. Finale: Allegro vivace. Two calls to attention, one dotted and one in triplets, launch a movement of enormous span and energy. The second theme starts from four repeated notes in the horns and turns into a swinging march, and those four notes come to dominate everything that follows. In the middle of the movement the woodwinds briefly recall the "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, first performed in Vienna in 1824. The return of the opening comes in the wrong key, E-flat, before the music works its way home, and the long coda moves from darkness into a blaze of C major.



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