

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

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

1860–1911

Das Lied von der Erde: Der Einsame im Herbst

10 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

“Der Einsame im Herbst” (The Lonely One in Autumn) is the second of the six movements of *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth), the symphony for two voices and orchestra that Gustav Mahler wrote in the summer of 1908. It is heard here on its own, as a single orchestral song.

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

ABOUT THE WORK

Im großen Schweigen (In the Great Silence) is a tone poem with a voice in it. Alphons Diepenbrock wrote it in 1905 for baritone and orchestra, and the first performance was given in Amsterdam on 20 May 1906 by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Willem Mengelberg. The singer was the baritone Gerard Zalsman. According to the preface to the published study score, the piece was so well received that it was played twice that evening, before and after the interval.

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

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

55 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Franz Schubert never heard this symphony in public, and for years after his death almost nobody knew it existed. He sketched most of it in the summer of 1825 and had the score finished in 1826. Unable to pay for a performance himself, he sent it with a dedication to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna’s Society of Friends of Music. The society gave him a small fee and had the parts copied, and its orchestra read the piece through at a rehearsal. It was then put aside as too long and too hard.

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.

Tonight's artists

Christian Gerhaher *baritone*

Christian Gerhaher sings both vocal works in the first half, and they belong together: two solitary figures in front of a landscape, one by a lake in autumn and one by the sea at dusk. Mahler's score expressly allows a baritone to take the alto's part in "Der Einsame im Herbst". The Diepenbrock, written three years earlier by a friend of Mahler's, is presented by the orchestra as a discovery. Both pieces depend on what Gerhaher is known for as a song recitalist: quiet singing in which every word registers. These concerts are also Markus Poschner's first with the Berliner Philharmoniker.

Christian Gerhaher is a German baritone regarded as one of the supreme song interpreters of his generation, celebrated above all in Schubert and Schumann with his longtime pianist Gerold Huber, and equally distinguished on the opera stage. Trained in Munich (he also studied medicine), he is prized for the searching intelligence and tonal beauty he brings to text. In the War Requiem he joins the tenor for Owen's English poems set against the chamber orchestra, duets in which two soldiers' voices, German and English, recall the carnage and finally, as the dead, reconcile in 'Strange Meeting.'

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2027-02-18-poschner>

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