

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

Mahler's Ninth, with the Orchestra That First Played It

Thursday, February 18, 2027 · 19:30 · Wiener Konzerthaus

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor

approximately 85 minutes

Gustav Mahler

1860–1911

Symphony No. 9 in D major

85 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The Ninth is the last symphony Gustav Mahler finished, and he never heard it. He had been wary of the number. After his Eighth he wrote a symphony for two voices and orchestra and called it *Das Lied von der Erde* rather than give it a number, mindful that Beethoven, Schubert and Bruckner had not got beyond nine. Only then did he begin a Ninth in name.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement, *Andante comodo*, assembles itself out of fragments. Cellos and a horn exchange a halting rhythm, the harp adds a four-note figure, and then the second violins begin a melody built on a falling step of

two notes. Mahler associated that falling second with the word farewell, and it runs through the whole movement. Calm, songlike paragraphs alternate with darker ones that swell to violent climaxes and collapse. At the greatest of them the trombones and tuba hammer out the opening rhythm at full force, and a funeral march follows, marked to be played like a heavy procession. Near the end the texture thins to a few solo instruments, flute and others calling like birds, and the movement dissolves.

The second movement is a Ländler, the country cousin of the waltz, and Mahler asks for it to be somewhat clumsy and very coarse. It starts out good-humoured. Faster waltz music keeps breaking in, the dances are set against each other, and by the end the Ländler has been pulled apart.

The third movement is called Rondo-Burleske and marked “very defiant”. It is the most aggressive music in the symphony, a display of tangled fugal writing driven at speed. In the middle the noise clears for a calmer episode, whose melody the finale will take up and turn into an elegy. Then the opening music returns.

The finale, an Adagio, opens with the strings alone in a broad, hymn-like melody that keeps circling around a small turning figure. The music rises to several full-

hearted climaxes and each time falls back. In the last pages the music breaks into fragments, a few notes spread over a very long time, and the final bar is marked to die away.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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