Eleventh Subscription Program
of the 116th Season, 2010–2011
THURS FEB 3, 7:30 pm | SAT FEB 5, 8 pm
Music Hall

PAAVO JÄRVI, conductor

JÕRG WIDMANN *Souvenir bavarois* **("Remembering Bavaria")**

MAHLER (1860–1911) **Symphony Number 7 in E Minor**
Langsam; Allegro risoluto ma non troppo
Nachtmusik I: Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Schattenhaft
Nachtmusik II: Andante amoroso
Rondo-Finale: Allegro ordinario

There will be no intermission during this concert.

90.9 WGUC broadcast date: March 20, 7:30 pm

■ JÖRG WIDMANN
***Souvenir bavarois* ("Remembering Bavaria")**

TIMING: *approx. 3 min.*
INSTRUMENTATION: *3 flutes, piccolo, 4 oboes, 3 B-flat clarinets (including bass clarinet), E-flat clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, Arabian drum with jingles, bass drum with attached cymbal, glockenspiel, side drum, snare drum, suspended cymbals, very high cup cymbals, strings*
CSO SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE HISTORY
Premiere: *These concerts are the world premiere of* Souvenir bavarois.

Jörg Widmann was born in Munich on June 19, 1973. Souvenir bavarois *was commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra as part of its Anniversary Fanfares series, to celebrate Paavo Järvi's 10th season as CSO Music Director and WGUC's 50th anniversary.*

A virtuoso clarenetist as well as a composer, Jörg Widmann studied the clarinet at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich with Gerd Starke and later with Charles Neidich at the Juilliard School in New York (1994–1995). He took composition lessons at age 11 with Kay Westermann and continued his studies with Wilfried Hiller and Hans Werner Henze (1994–1996), as well as Heiner Goebbels and Wolfgang Rihm (1997–1999). Widmann's great passion as a clarinetist is chamber music, and he regularly performs with partners such as Tabea Zimmermann, Heinz Holliger, András Schiff, Kim Kashkashian and Hélène Grimaud. He has also achieved great success as a soloist in orchestral concerts in Germany and abroad. Fellow composers have dedicated several works to Widmann, works he also premiered, including *Music for Clarinet and Orchestra* by Wolfgang Rihm, *Cantus* by Aribert Reimann and *Rechant* by Heinz Holliger. In 2001, Widmann was appointed as the successor to Dieter Klöcker as professor of clarinet at the Freiburg Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, where, in 2009, he also took up the post of professor of composition.

String quartets form the core of Widmann's oeuvre and include String Quartet No. I (1997), *Choralquartett* (2003/2006) and *Jagdquartett*, which was premiered by the Arditti Quartet in 2003. This series was completed in 2005 by String Quartet No. IV, permiered by the Vogler Quartet, and Quartet No. V with soprano, *Versuch über die Fuge* ("Attempt at a Fugue"), premiered by Juliane Banse and the Artemis Quartet. The five string quartets are intended as a large cycle, with each individual work following a traditional form.

Widmann has composed a trilogy of works for large orchestra on the transformation of vocal forms for instrumental forces, including *Lied* (2003/2007), *Chor* (2004) and *Messe* (2005). In 2007, Christian Tetzlaff and the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie gave the premiere of Widmann's first Violin Concerto. The same year, Pierre Boulez and the Vienna Philharmonic gave the first performance of *Armonica* for orchestra, in which the tonal colors of a glass harmonica combine with orchestra to produce a homogenous, breathing body of sounds and sound effects. This was followed by *Con brio*, an homage to Beethoven, premiered by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Mariss Jansons.

His stage works include the opera *Das Gesicht im Spiegel*, which was chosen by *Opernwelt* as the most

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significant first performance of the season 2003–2004. *Am Anfang* (2009) is the result of a unique collaboration between a visual artist (Anselm Kiefer) and a composer (Widmann); Widmann led its world premiere on the 20th anniversary of the Opéra Bastille in Paris.

Widmann has received numerous prizes for his compositions: the Belmont Prize for contemporary music from the Forberg-Schneider Foundation (1998), the Schneider-Schott Music Prize, the Paul Hindemith Prize (both in 2002), the Encouragement Award from the Ernst-von-Siemens Music Foundation, the Achievement Award from the Munich Opera Festival (both in 2003) and the Arnold Schönberg Prize (2004). In 2006, Widmann received the Composition Prize from the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg as well as the Claudio Abbado Composition Prize from the Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He is a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin and a full member of the Bavarian Academy of the Fine Arts, the Free Academy of the Arts in Hamburg and the German Academy of Dramatic Arts. He was composer-in-residence of the Berlin German Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival, the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna Konzerthaus.

keynote

Widmann writes:

> I got to know Paavo Järvi personally in 2006 and met him again in early 2008 when he premiered my piece *Antiphon* with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. I was deeply impressed with how seriously he studied this complex and challenging, sometimes rough, piece and how he conveyed it to the orchestra. But Paavo also has a good sense of humor. That's why on the occasion of his 10th anniversary with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra I wanted to write something completely different than before. That's how this *Souvenir bavarois* ("Remembering Bavaria") came to be: A cheerful greeting in Eastern garb from my southern German/Munich homeland to a grand conductor and his wonderful orchestra in the new world. In addition, I am happy that this work also celebrates the 50th Anniversary of WGUC, an important fixture in the city of Cincinnati. Its deep commitment to programming classical music makes me proud to be part of this momentous anniversary.

■ GUSTAV MAHLER
Symphony Number 7 in E Minor

TIMING: *approx. 77 min.*
INSTRUMENTATION: *5 flutes (incl. 2 piccolos), 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, guitar, mandolin, tenor horn, timpani, 2 harps, bass drum, bass drum with attached cymbal, cowbell, cymbals, deep bells, glockenspiel, 2 Herdbells/Herdenglocken, rute, small bells, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, strings*
CSO SUBSCRIPTION PERFORMANCE HISTORY
Premiere: *March 1931, Fritz Reiner conducting*
Most Recent Performances: *November 2007, Paavo Järvi conducting*

Mahler was born on July 7, 1860 in Kal-ischt, Bohemia; he died on May 18, 1911 in Vienna. The Seventh Symphony was composed in the summers of 1904 and 1905. Mahler conducted the first performance on September 19, 1908 in Prague.

"My time will yet come," Mahler said. Many composers who fail to reach their contemporary audiences pin their hopes on posterity, of course, but Mahler was right. His time did indeed come, a half century after his death. During his life his works were met with indifference or hostility. After his death there were occasional performances by devoted conductors, but it was not until the mid-20th century that audiences were really ready for Mahler's monumental, varied, impassioned, contradictory, even neurotic symphonies. Today performances are frequent, recordings are numerous and people have sported T-shirts that declare to the world "Mahler Grooves" and "Mahler Lives."

This kind of popular acceptance may not be exactly what Mahler wanted, but there is no denying that his time has come. His music is as full of contradictions as is life in our complex culture. His symphonies place the emotional next to the commonplace, the religious alongside the sentimental, the complex against the simple, abstract structures with folk dances, and psychological introspection opposite mundane trivialities. The real appeal to our age is in the combination of such opposites and in the way the music changes unexpectedly and dramatically from one pole to the other. Mahler's music thrives on contradictions. Today's listeners understand well the power of its oppositions.

Mahler had his private reasons for writing this kind of music. He was a deeply troubled man, insecure and self-confident at the same time, convinced of his immortality yet doubting his humanity. He knew he was living at the end of an era, that a great cultural line from the renaissance to the age of modernism was reaching its dénouement. The romantic aesthetic was the final expression of this culture. Mahler's art was a product of romanticism's dying gasp. It could express the opulent, the overripe and even the decadent. He would not live

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to see World War I bring to a final demise the romantic age, but he understood the impending doom of the values he had known. The contradictions of his time became the source of his music, as did the contradictions within himself.

Shortly before his death, Mahler spent an afternoon with Freud, trying to make some sense of his life. The composer and the psychoanalyst probed for the reasons behind Mahler's neuroses. They discovered one interesting source. In a classic Freudian encounter with his past, Mahler remembered a long forgotten incident from his childhood. His parents frequently quarreled. One day the fighting became too much for the sensitive child. He escaped into the street, where he found a hurdy-gurdy playing an incongruously happy folk tune. This confrontation between the impassioned and the commonplace became a source of his musical aesthetic.

Mahler, a man of contradictions that stemmed from deep-rooted personal and cultural conflicts, created a music that has found its widest audience among those who live in today's age of contradictions. Of all the Mahler symphonies, the Seventh surely has the greatest range of expression, the highest degree of discontinuity and the greatest conflicts. It is not surprising that the Seventh was the last to become popular, the last to yield its secrets to audiences. But now even its time has come. Today it is understood as a work of great vision, an uncompromising statement on the conflict between two cultures: the dying romanticism of 19th-century Europe and the irrational world of the new century. The Seventh is a panorama of human emotions. It contains terror, joy, excitement, grief and innocence, often within a few seconds of one another.

keynote

Let us consider some examples of the juxtapositions of contradictory moods in the symphony. The massive first movement begins with strings and winds playing the slow march rhythm that is destined to pervade the movement. The first march is funereal. Its melody is a tortured, irregular theme in the tenor horn. This instrument, rarely called for in symphony orchestras, is like the baritone horn or euphonium in this country. Thus it is an instrument associated more with outdoor brass bands than with orchestras in concert halls. More march-like figures are added as the music builds.

After a return to the opening, the tempo quickens for the main *allegro.* The music becomes dense and demonic. Then, incongruously, the violins play a lyrical, almost sentimental, sweeping theme against a countermelody in the horns. After that, the march resumes as if there had been no interruption. From this point on the various themes, with their very different characters, are developed, juxtaposed and combined. The music becomes frenzied. Then, a further incongruity: trumpet fanfares announce an almost pastoral treatment of the basic materials. Soon thereafter comes a return of the opening of the movement, but with everything transformed. This recapitulation is the most unsettling part of the movement, because nothing goes on for long before a wrenching contrast. This music of discontinuity drives toward a forceful conclusion, but with no real feeling of resolution.

The next three movements form a unit. The three character pieces comprise two "Night Music" movements flanking a scherzo. The second movement starts innocently with horn calls, but other-worldly elements soon enter. Clarinet fanfares, flute trills, string *pizzicati* and sticks or branches in the percussion section all lead to an enormous downward splash. The horns relaunch the movement's opening, now even more shadowy in character. A new theme eventually arrives in the cellos, with extreme contrast. This lyrical, sophisticated tune is far removed from the haunted scherzo. Echoes of the opening bring back the first theme, now transformed under the influence of the second into a lyrical statement. The first theme dominates the movement, as it goes through an incredible variety of moods.

The third movement, the keystone of the symphony's arch form, is the true scherzo. It begins in a fragmented manner, with a different instrumental group on each beat of the 3/4 measure. It seems as if the orchestra is trying to establish a waltz-like continuity but cannot seem to get it together. Other fragments join in and the texture becomes so elaborate that we do not realize it is essentially an accompaniment. Its function is clarified when a simple melody appears in the flutes and oboes. A contrasting theme, even more suggestive of a waltz, enters in the strings. These ideas are developed at length, until the trio section brings a slower waltz. Throughout the movement the melodies approach closer and closer to the popular music of Mahler's day, yet always maintaining contact with the symphonic world by the use of fragmentary or dense accompaniments. The result is a troubled amalgamation of two musical cultures.

The fourth movement, "Night Music II," introduces two non-symphonic instruments into the orchestra: guitar and mandolin. This movement is delicately scored so that these instruments can be heard. It contains many fragments, some scherzo-like, some as shadowy as anything in earlier movements, some frankly sentimental. Much of the movement is an ever-changing mosaic of fragments. New ones are occasionally added and old ones are transformed, but only rarely is a long, uninterrupted melodic line heard. Close to the end, the orchestra

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becomes unexpectedly forceful. Then, as if to excuse itself for intruding on such a delicate movement, it settles back to chamber music.

The finale leaves behind the shadowy world of the three scherzos. It is the most problematic movement of this most problematic Mahler symphony. Its banalities, its frequent discontinuities and its dissonant counterpoint have made it a challenging puzzle for performers and audiences alike. It asks our total involvement and it asks that we accept whatever it throws at us next. Marked *allegro ordinario,* it presents a mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar, jumbled together in a seemingly haphazard way. In reality it has a subtle logic, but the logic is not linear: new events do not necessarily grow out of earlier passages. The movement demands to be met on its own terms. It compromises nothing to expectation. As unusual as the symphony has been up to this point, it has not prepared us for such a powerful and unique conclusion.

It would be impossible to trace here all the interruptions, all the juxtapositions of the vernacular with the sublime, all the vastly different kinds of music that come together in this movement. It is a veritable pageant of life. Some of its tunes and orchestrations sound close to the world of operetta, while others are of the most magnificent complexity. But what counts in all of this is the way these different moods come together. The context, even more than the extraordinary selection of materials, is what makes this movement uniquely challenging.

The finale in particular, although to some extent the entire symphony, brings to mind the late string quartets of Beethoven, which Mahler knew and admired. The quartets were slow to gain acceptance, not so much because of their alleged abstraction but, on the contrary, because of their use of familiar materials in unfamiliar contexts. And so the essence of the Seventh, particularly in its last movement, is the confrontation of vastly different kinds of music and musical values.

This extraordinary juxtaposition of opposites was unprecedented in 1905. But today it has become common, if not the norm, not only in art but also in popular culture and in our very lives. Thus Mahler's music can be understood as wonderfully, even fearfully, prophetic. And that is why a work like the Seventh Symphony, with all its contradictions and deliberate *non sequiturs*, can be deeply meaningful to us. Indeed, Mahler's time has come.

—Jonathan D. Kramer

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