

Steven Schick, Music Director
David Chase, Choral Director

HOPE

Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD
Saturday, June 6, 2009, 8PM
Sunday, June 7, 2009, 3PM

Steven Schick conducting

MAHLER **Symphony No. 2 in C Minor "Resurrection"**

Allegro maestoso

Andante moderato

In ruhig fliessender Bewegung

"Urlicht": Sehr feierlich, aber schlicht

Im Tempo des Scherzos. Wild herausfahrend

Laurinda Nikkel, soprano
Martha Jane Weaver, mezzo-soprano

This symphony, which lasts approximately 85 minutes, will be performed without intermission. Mahler asks for a pause of five minutes after the first movement, and this performance will observe that request.



Major funding provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.



During this performance, unauthorized audio and/or video recording are prohibited.

We gratefully acknowledge
Ida Houby & Bill Miller
for underwriting this concert.

FROM THE CONDUCTOR



I am in the middle of reading Alan Weisman's fascinating book, "The World Without Us." The book posits absorbing questions: What would happen to the constructions and objects of human civilization if we humans suddenly vanished?

How long would it take nature to reclaim its original space? The answers are thought provoking and maybe a little sobering. The average suburban house, for example, would topple within a few decades but the stainless steel cutlery in it would go on for millennia. In addition to prompting the thought that my set of steak knives might wind up in a museum a couple of hundred thousand years from now as a relic of an ancient civilization, Weisman's observations made me think again of the fragility of the material of music. In these final concerts of our 2008-2009 season we will fill Mandeville Auditorium with glorious sounds. Any acoustician can tell you that the hushed entrance of the chorus on the word "Auferstehen" (resurrection) will decay nearly instantly—the sound will be gone many thousands of times faster than a wisp of smoke or a newspaper left out in the rain. But in an inverse reaction to the fleetingness of the sounds themselves their effect on us will be indelible. Perhaps the truly lasting thing is not music itself but the impact of music.

The chain of musical DNA we have followed throughout this season has led us to the myriad and lasting ways music acts on us. We have seen music as a reminder of home, as an invitation to dance, as a measure of time and its passing, and now, most importantly, as a doorway to hope. And if ever there were a piece to give a body hope it would be Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No.2*, the "Resurrection Symphony." The work is expansive, truly music fitted to a full life. It is framed on either side by big statements: a complex and inexorable funeral march as its first movement and a grand apotheosis of orchestral and choral sound as a finale. These outer movements are often what come to mind with Mahler's *Second*. This is oceanic, life-changing music and outlines the biggest emotional and philosophical themes imaginable: death and resurrection; despair and hope. But for me it is the

STEVEN SCHICK

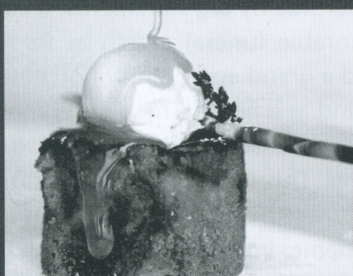
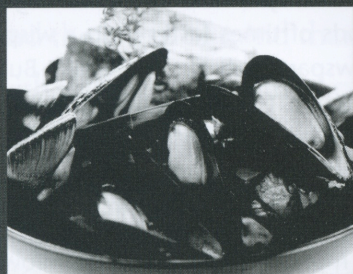
conductor

Steven Schick was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For the past thirty years he has championed contemporary percussion music as a performer and teacher, by commissioning and premiering more than one hundred new works for percussion. Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego and a Consulting Artist in Percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. In 2008 Schick received the "Distinguished Teaching Award" from UCSD. He was the percussionist of the Bang on a Can All-Stars of New York City from 1992-2002, and from 2000 to 2004 served as Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève in Geneva, Switzerland. Schick is founder and Artistic Director of the percussion group, "red fish blue fish," and in 2007 assumed the post of Music Director and conductor of the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus.

Steven Schick recently released three important publications. His book on solo percussion music, "The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams," was published by the University of Rochester Press; his recording of *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* by John Luther Adams was released by Cantaloupe Music; and, a 3 CD set of the complete percussion music of Iannis Xenakis, made in collaboration with red fish blue fish, was issued by Mode Records. Steven Schick has appeared as a percussion soloist in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Royal Albert Hall (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris), The Sydney Opera House and Disney Hall (Los Angeles) among many other national and international venues.

three smaller middle movements that carry the real poetry. Here we have the recollections of a life fully lived. These movements are dances of reminiscence: sometimes gay or humorous or tender, occasionally crude, bawdy, even grotesque. Always human. For the musicians this music is full of details. Some are important, while others are gritty, nagging, even annoying. This music is, in other words, exactly like life. It is here that Mahler reminds us that life happens between the grand bookends of birth and death (or in the case of this symphony between death and rebirth). So here's the tricky question in Mahler. In the final moments of the piece, precisely in the majesty of revelation when the upward sweeping sounds of chorus in full voice are buoyed heavenward by the rising tide of orchestral sound, in that moment of pure grace can you still hear the folksy, slightly clunky dance of the Ländler? When the church bells are pealing can you still hear the humoresque of the E-flat clarinet as it snipes at the refinements of the violins? In the singing of angels can you still hear the simple sounds of children at play? For me the answer is yes. In Mahler it's all there. To get glory you don't have to abandon life, but rather plunge fully into it.

Now there's a reason for hope. ■



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PROGRAM NOTES

BY ERIC BROMBERGER

Symphony No. 2 in C Minor "Resurrection"

GUSTAV MAHLER

Born July 7, 1860, Kalischt, Bohemia

Died May 18, 1911, Vienna



In 1888, Gustav Mahler, then 28 years old, was well-known as the talented second conductor of the Leipzig Opera but almost unknown as a composer: he had completed his *First Symphony* the year before, but that music remained in manuscript, unperformed. While at Leipzig, Mahler began composing a new work,

a huge symphonic movement. Always the most superstitious of composers, Mahler was assailed as he conceived the new work by visions of himself lying dead on his own bier, surrounded by funeral wreaths. He completed this long and dramatic movement in August 1888 and named it *Todtenfeier*: "Funeral Rite." But—unsure how to proceed after so vast a beginning—Mahler set the work aside for five years.

He took it up again in the summer of 1893. Using *Todtenfeier* as a first movement, he composed second and third movements but could not decide how to conclude the work, and once again he set it aside. It was at a memorial service for conductor Hans von Bülow in March 1894 that Mahler heard a chorus sing the hymn *Auferstehung* ("Resurrection") on a text by the German poet Friedrich Klopstock (1724-1803). At the moment he heard the chorus, Mahler felt his ideas for the conclusion of his symphony take shape—"It struck me like lightning, this thing, and everything was revealed to my soul clear and plain"—and quickly sketched the fourth and fifth movements, completing the symphony in 1894. Mahler conducted a performance of the first three movements in March 1895 and then of the entire symphony in December of that year. After a creative process lasting six years, the *Second Symphony* was finally presented to the public.

But that public had difficulty understanding the new work, which lasts eighty minutes and requires two soloists, a huge chorus, and a gigantic orchestra. At the request of a young admirer who had been mystified by the symphony, Mahler drew up a program for it. He wrote of the first three movements:

I have named the first movement "Todtenfeier"...there is the great question: "Why did you live? Why did you suffer? Is it all nothing but a huge, frightful joke?" We must answer these questions in some way, if we want to go on living—indeed, if we are to go on living! He into whose life this call has once sounded must give answer; and this answer I give in the final movement.

The second and third movements are conceived as an interlude. The second is a memory—a shaft of sunlight from out of the life of this hero. It has surely happened to you, that you have followed a loved one to the grave, and then per-

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haps, on the way back, there suddenly arose the image of a long-dead hour of happiness, which now enters your soul like a sunbeam that nothing can obscure—you could almost forget what has just happened. That is the second movement.

But when you awake from this wistful dream, and have to return into the confusion of life, it can easily happen that this ever-moving, never-resting, never-comprehensible bustle of existence becomes horrible to you, like the swaying of dancing figures in a brightly-lit ballroom, into which you look from the dark night outside—and from such a great distance that you can no longer hear the music. Life strikes you as meaningless, a frightful ghost, from which you perhaps start away with a cry of disgust. This is the third movement...

For a later performance, Mahler described the final movements:

Fourth movement: the morning voice of ingenuous faith strikes on our ears. Fifth movement: we are confronted once more with terrifying questions. A voice is heard crying aloud: "The end of all living things is come—the Last Judgment is at hand"...the trumpets of the Apocalypse ring out; in the eerie silence which follows, we can just catch the distant, barely audible song of a nightingale, a last tremulous echo of earthly life. A chorus of saints and heavenly beings softly breaks forth: "Thou shalt arise, surely thou shalt arise." Then appears the glory of God: a wondrous soft light penetrates us to the heart—all is holy calm.

And behold, it is no judgment; there are no sinners, no just. None is great, none small. There is no punishment and no reward. An overwhelming love illuminates our being. We know and *are*.

But Mahler quickly withdrew this program, denouncing it as "a crutch for a cripple" and claiming that it gave only "a superficial indication" of the meaning of the symphony.

What sense, then, are we to make of Mahler's elaborate program for his *Second Symphony*? Does it tell us what the symphony is "about"? Well, sort of. Mahler may have disavowed the verbal program, but the symphony *does* move from a death-haunted opening movement to resurrection in the finale, and the last two movements present texts that conform to and conclude Mahler's program. The "meaning" of this symphony, however, does not lie in Mahler's verbal description or even in the texts sung in the final movement, but in the entire music-drama itself, which cannot be reduced to simple verbal explanation. Though Mahler's program may offer a general guide, this symphony is *not* the attempt to reproduce those ideas in sound. Rather, the music takes us where words cannot: it creates its own vast and dramatic world, one that deals with violent and terrifying issues, full of pain, terror, and ecstasy.

For his model for this symphony, Mahler took one of the most imposing creations in music—Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*—in which three instrumental movements are followed by a choral finale that addresses a grand philosophical question. Mahler seems to be trying to out-do Beethoven, particularly in the vastness of his conception and the huge forces he employs: the *Resurrection Symphony* requires quadruple woodwind, ten horns, eight trumpets, four trombones, two harps, and a huge percussion battery. The opening *Allegro maestoso* is one of Mahler's most

dramatic creations, in darkest C minor and enveloped at times in furious violence. It is in sonata form only in the most general of senses, opposing material of ear-splitting violence with passages of luminous, rapturous calm. At its end, a grim funeral tread pushes the movement toward a final cataclysm before the movement vanishes on barely-audible pizzicato strokes. Mahler requests a pause of at least five minutes after this movement, not just for artistic reasons but for the emotional recovery of everyone involved.

After so violent an opening, the next movement seems an island of calm. It is a *ländler*, the ancient Austrian country dance, and it breathes a sort of nostalgia: "some lingering resonance of long past days," said Mahler. The third movement has a more sinister air. It is a kind of perpetual-motion scherzo in which ghostly music presses continually ahead, erupting at times in grotesque humor. Mahler based this movement on his own song "Saint Anthony of Padua's Sermon to the Fishes," in which the fish patiently hear out the sermon and then resume their sinful ways. The bitter humor of that song flows through this movement, and Mahler underlines this with some wonderful scoring, including the use of the *Rute* (a bundle of wooden twigs beaten on the back of the bass drum), a squealing E-flat clarinet, and an ominous close on a tam-tam stroke.

The brief fourth movement functions as a transition away from issues of life and death and toward resurrection. The alto soloist sings Mahler's setting of the German folk poem "Urlicht" ("Pri-

mal Light"), composed two years earlier, and her song leads us toward the finale: "I am from God and to God would I return!"

By far the longest of the five movements, the finale is virtually a piece of musical theater, depicting nothing less than a progression from the day of judgment to resurrection and requiring performers to move off and on stage, incorporating sounds that range from delicate birdcalls to the crack of doom, and employing a massive chorus in its final minutes. Like the opening of the last movement of Beethoven's *Ninth*, the finale of the *Resurrection Symphony* explodes, in this case with Mahler's vision of the day of judgment. The long and purely instrumental beginning presents a harrowing vision of that day, full of offstage brass calls and a grim and propulsive march based on the ancient *Dies Irae* motif: in Mahler's words, "The earth quakes, the graves burst open, the dead arise and stream on in endless procession...their cry for mercy, for grace, strikes fearfully on our ears." Finally, with the fury of Judgment Day spent, the sound of the nightingale floats above the trembling air and the chorus begins to sing Klopstock's *Resurrection* hymn with its message of rebirth and eternal life. Mahler, however, adds several verses of his own to the Klopstock, and these (beginning "O glaube") sharpen the text, suggesting that life does not pass in vain but that one can find meaning in earthly acts and still receive eternal life. As the souls make their passage to eternity, the *Resurrection Symphony* concludes with ringing brass and pealing bells, a triumphant sound that should rise up to shake the heavens. ■

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Laurinda Nikkel
soprano

Laurinda Nikkel, hailed by *Opera News* for her "consummate singing and acting technique," has excelled in a wide range of operatic roles with leading companies. For the past several seasons she has maintained a busy teaching and performing schedule concertizing throughout Southern California and giving critically acclaimed performances as the Countess in Opera Longview's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* with Shreveport Opera, and Mimi in *La bohème* with Opera Idaho. Ms. Nikkel's operatic credits include Micaela in *Carmen*, Musetta in *La bohème*, and Yum-Yum in *The Mikado* with New York City Opera; the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the New York City Opera and the New York City Opera National Touring Company, the New Israeli Opera, Knoxville Opera, and Opera Grand Rapids; among others. Since 2005, Ms. Nikkel has been the coordinator of the voice department at San Diego State University where she oversees vocal programs in both the School of Music and Dance and the prestigious MFA program in the SDSU School of Drama, Film and Television.



Martha Jane Weaver
mezzo-soprano

Martha Jane Weaver (Lownie) is an extremely versatile singer with repertoire ranging from Bach to Verdi to Copland, Gilbert & Sullivan, Broadway, Gospel and Spirituals. Her many guest-artist credits include the San Diego, Nevada-Reno, and Sacramento opera companies; the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; Los Angeles Bach Festival, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; Nevada, Utah and San Diego symphonies; Hollywood Bowl; William Hall Chorale; and dozens of other choral organizations throughout the Southwest. Ms. Weaver is a soloist and section leader at St. James by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in La Jolla, and a frequent guest recitalist at many San Diego-area churches and venues such as the Spreckles Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. In recent years she has also become a noted vocal coach and choral workshop director. Ms. Weaver last appeared with the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus as a soloist in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, February 2007.

Fourth Movement

Note: This text has been translated from the original German text from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* to English on a very literal and line-for-line basis, without regard for the preservation of meter or rhyming patterns.

Original German

Urlicht

O Röschen roth!
Der Mensch liegt in größter Noth!
Der Mensch liegt in größter Pein!
Je lieber möcht ich im Himmel sein.
Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg;
Da kam ein Engelein und wollt' mich abweisen.
Ach nein! Ich ließ mich nicht abweisen!
Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott!
Der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtchen geben,
Wird leuchten mir bis in das ewig selig Leben!

In English

Primeval Light

O red rosebud!
Man lies in deepest need!
Man lies in deepest pain!
Oh how I would rather be in heaven.
There, I came upon a broad path;
There, came a little angel and wanted to send me away.
Ah no! I would not let myself be sent away!
I am from God and will return to God!
The loving God will give me a little light,
Which will light me into that eternal blissful life!

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Fifth Movement

Note: The first eight lines were taken from the poem *Die Auferstehung* by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Mahler omitted the final four lines of this poem and wrote the rest himself (beginning at "O glaube").

Original German

Chorus

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n
Wirst du, Mein Staub,
Nach kurzer Ruh'!
Unsterblich Leben! Unsterblich Leben
wird der dich rief dir geben!
Wieder aufzublüh'n wirst du gesät!
Der Herr der Ernte geht
und sammelt Garben
uns ein, die starben!

Mezzo

O glaube, mein Herz, o glaube:
Es geht dir nichts verloren!
Dein ist, ja dein, was du gesehnt!
Dein, was du geliebt,
Was du gestritten!
O glaube
Du wardst nicht umsonst geboren!
Hast nicht umsonst gelebt, gelitten!

Chorus and Solo

Was entstanden ist
Das muß vergehen!
Was vergangen, auferstehen!
Hör' auf zu beben!
Bereite dich zu leben!

Duet

O Schmerz! Du Alldurchdringer!
Dir bin ich entrungen!
O Tod! Du Allbezwinger!
Nun bist du bezwungen!

Chorus

Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen,
In heißem Liebesstreben,
Werd'ich entschweben
Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'gedrungen!
Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen
Werde ich entschweben.
Sterben werd'ich, um zu leben!
Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n
wirst du, mein Herz, in einem Nu!
Was du geschlagen
zu Gott wird es dich tragen!

In English

Chorus

Rise again, yes, rise again,
Will you My dust,
After a brief rest!
Immortal life! Immortal life
Will He who called you, give you.
To bloom again were you created!
The Lord of the harvest goes
And gathers in, like sheaves,
Us together, who die.

Mezzo

O believe, my heart, O believe:
Nothing to you is lost!
Yours is, yes yours, is what you desired
Yours, what you have loved
What you have fought for!
O believe,
You were not born for nothing!
Have not for nothing, lived, suffered!

Chorus and Solo

What was created
Must perish,
What perished, rise again!
Cease from trembling!
Prepare yourself to live!

Duet

O Pain, You piercer of all things,
From you, I have been wrested!
O Death, You masterer of all things,
Now, are you conquered!

Chorus

With wings which I have won for myself,
In love's fierce striving,
I shall soar upwards
To the light which no eye has penetrated!
Its wing that I won is expanded,
and I fly up.
Die shall I in order to live.
Rise again, yes, rise again,
Will you, my heart, in an instant!
That for which you suffered,
To God will it lead you!

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