



## Mahler Here & Now

Saturday, February 11, 2023

### **| Daniel R. Martin Masterworks Series | Mahler Here & Now**

**Saturday, February 11, 2023**  
**William Saroyan Theatre**

**Rei Hotoda**, conductor  
**Awadagin Pratt**, piano

**Jessie Montgomery**

Rounds for piano and string orchestra

**Intermission**

**Mahler**

Symphony No. 5

Part I

1. Trauermarsch
2. Stürmisch bewegt

Part II

3. Scherzo

Part III

4. Adagietto
5. Rondo-Finale

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Leon S. Peters Foundation and Sahm Family Foundation**

## **| Orchestra Roster**

### **VIOLIN I**

Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio, *Concertmaster*

Jay Zhong

Calvin Lewis

Lianna Elmore

John Morrice

Amy Lindsey

Rudolfina Sjostrand

Erin Adams

David Haskins

Alise Ewan

Claire Tatman

### **VIOLIN II**

Caitlin McSherry, *Principal*

Cynthia Stuart

Darren Sagawa

Joseph Galamba

Barbara Schaefer

Julie Metz

Lisa Lhee

William Chen

Daniel Zuckerman

Araksia Nazlikian

### **VIOLA**

Dustin Budish, *Acting Principal*

Jennifer Wu

Martha Brody

Terry Paul

Matthew Smoke

Tianna Heppner

Miguel Gonzalez

Mitso Floor

### **CELLO**

Matthew Linaman, *Acting Principal*

Isaac Pastor-Chermak

Alicja Blanquart

Judy Robinson

Drew Ford

Alana Shannon

Dieter Wulforst

Kelvin Diaz Inoa

**BASS**

Andy Butler, *Principal*  
Nicholas Vegas  
Heidi Franklin  
Keith Biondi  
Benjamin Green  
Sheldon Schlesinger

**FLUTE**

Janette Erickson, *Principal*  
Pam Ellzey  
Colleen Fernandez  
Patricia Cloud

**OBOE**

Rong-Huey Liu, *Principal*  
Kathy Oh  
Neil Tatman

**CLARINET**

Peter Nevin, *Principal*  
Kathryn Nevin  
Lea Steffens

**BASSOON**

Jeff Robinson, *Acting Principal*  
Katherine Oliver  
Wendy LaTouche

**HORN**

Meredith Brown, *Principal*  
Amy Sanchez  
Lauren Varley  
Elisha Wells  
Jennie Blomster  
Alex Camphouse  
Sarah Ference

**TRUMPET**

John Freeman, *Principal*  
Ron Franklin  
Joseph Farkas  
Jennifer Locher

**TROMBONE**

Bruce Chrisp, *Principal*  
Steve Suminski  
Wayne Solomon

## **TUBA**

Rod Matthews, *Acting Principal*

## **TIMPANI**

Justin Gingrich, *Principal*

## **PERCUSSION**

Corey Ritter, *Principal*

Tammy van der Paardt

Craig Cory

Matthew Darling

## **HARP**

Laura Porter, *Principal*

### **Program Notes**



#### **JESSIE MONTGOMERY (B. 1981)**

Rounds for piano and string orchestra

The Concerto was commissioned by Art of the Piano Foundation for pianist Awadagin Pratt and co-commissioned by a number of symphony orchestras.

Montgomery explains:

"Rounds for solo piano and string orchestra is inspired by the imagery and themes from T.S. Eliot's epic poem *Four Quartets*. Early in the first poem, *Burnt Norton*, we find these evocative lines:

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

"In addition to this inspiration, while working on the piece, I became fascinated by fractals (infinite patterns found in nature that are self-similar across different scales) and also delved into the work of contemporary biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber who writes about the interdependency of all beings. Weber explores how every

living organism has a rhythm that interacts and impacts with all of the living things around it and results in a multitude of outcomes.

"Like Eliot in *Four Quartets*, beginning to understand this interconnectedness requires that we slow down, listen, and observe both the effect and the opposite effect caused by every single action and moment. I've found this is an exercise that lends itself very naturally towards musical gestural possibilities that I explore in the work – action and reaction, dark and light, stagnant and swift.

"Structurally, with these concepts in mind, I set the form of the work as a rondo, within a rondo, within a rondo. The five major sections are a rondo; section "A" is also a rondo in itself; and the cadenza – which is partially improvised by the soloist – breaks the pattern, yet, contains within it, the overall form of the work."

Montgomery is a violinist, composer and educator with a graduate degree in Composition and Multimedia from New York University. She is a member of the Catalyst Quartet, and is a collaborator touring with cellist Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. Among her many contributions to musical organizations in the New York area, she performs and composes for the Sphinx Organization. A review of her debut album, *Strum, Music for Strings*, sums up her eclectic musical style: "The album combines classical chamber music with elements of folk music, spirituals, improvisation, poetry and politics, crafting a unique and insightful new-music perspective on the cross-cultural intersections of American history."

Program notes by:

Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn  
[www.wordprosmusic.com](http://www.wordprosmusic.com)



### **GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)**

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#### **Symphony No. 5**

Gustav Mahler, one of the last great figures of the late Romantic Movement, was at the same time one of the harbingers of twentieth-century music. His volatile, complex personality and his display in his music of emotional and physical suffering, were out of sync with the mood in turn-of-the-century Europe, which hid behind a façade of political and emotional stability. The public revered him more as a conductor of the prestigious Vienna Opera, than as a composer. Most of Mahler's music expresses his ongoing battle with fate and the uncertainty of existence – which may explain how he could have written two of the *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children) immediately following the birth of his second daughter. Perhaps it is our uncertainty in the future that has made Mahler's music so popular since the mid twentieth century.

All of Mahler's symphonies are expansive, intense dramas, usually with specific musical references to events in the composer's life alongside the universal challenge to overcome grief and death. Until the Fifth Symphony, all of his instrumental music

contained at least one specific allusion to his previously composed vocal music, mostly his settings of songs from the folk anthology *Des Knabens Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn). The Fifth Symphony is the first one with neither singing nor song references; it was the first to which he refused to add a programmatic description, letting the music speak for itself. Yet he still maintains the musical imagery of the human struggle in some of his most evocative music, the tempo markings at the beginning of each movement – especially the first two – transparently substitute for the Symphony's plot.

Mahler completed his Symphony No. 5 in the summer of 1902, the final work in a burst of creativity that included the six *Rückert Songs*. It was the first composition following his marriage to the scintillating 22-year-old Alma Schindler, the daughter of a famous Austrian landscape painter and a talented pianist and composer in her own right. Gustav and Alma had met in Paris in November 1901 and were married four months later. This marriage – which lasted for 10 stormy years until the composer's death – was the subject of endless gossip. It was definitely considered a social advancement for Mahler, a Jew (although converted to Catholicism) from a small town in Bohemia, the backwater of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It gave him the long-sought introduction to the intellectual elite of Vienna, including theatrical producer Alfred Roller, who became Mahler's innovative designer at Vienna's *Hofoper*.

Alma wrote out much of the orchestration of the Symphony at Gustav's direction, and he considered it "their" music. As in all his previous symphonies, Mahler used a gigantic orchestra, although often interlaced with the subtle, chamber-music effects of small ensembles. However, the original orchestration was so percussion-heavy that, after a test run with the Vienna Philharmonic, Alma wrote, "...I could not hear [the themes] at all! Mahler had over-scored the percussion instruments and kettledrums so madly and persistently that little beyond the rhythm could be recognized." Mahler himself was aware of his musical blunder and immediately red-penciled much of the offending percussion and timpani parts before he premiered it in Cologne in 1904. But he was still dissatisfied with the orchestration and continued to make revisions at least until 1909. According to Alma, the symphony was re-orchestrated for nearly every performance he conducted.

Although funereal music was one of Mahler's signatures, there has been some speculation that the opening funeral march in the Fifth reflects the composer's brush with death from an abdominal hemorrhage, and the triumphant conclusion of the Symphony to the completion of his beautiful villa on the Wörthersee and his new wife. The Symphony is in three parts divided into five movements; the first and third parts comprise two movements each. The first two movements, however, are thematically related and can be seen as an expanded introduction and Allegro in classical sonata form. The fourth and fifth movements – also thematically related – fulfill the same function. The centerpiece of the Symphony is the expansive Scherzo – a novel concept for what is normally the most lightweight movement in the Classical symphonic literature.

While so many of Mahler's symphonies depict a journey from darkness into light, the specific qualities of the two extremes are quite different in each symphony. In Symphony No. 2, (the "Resurrection"), the passage is decidedly spiritual and universal. Here, the enlightenment of the final movement reflects the release from personal despair, yet without transcendence.

The first movement is marked "*Trauermarsch. In gemessenem Schritt. Streng, wie ein Kondukt*" (Funeral march. In measured step. Strict, like a cortège). The Symphony opens with a trumpet fanfare – although in the minor mode – which is used as a refrain throughout the movement. The funeral march proper begins as a grim melody in the strings. In the middle of the movement there is a sudden increase in tempo and complex counterpoint that seems like an outburst of grief that can no longer be contained by the tempo constraints of the march. Upon the return to the march, Mahler engages in a wonderful spinning out of the themes with new variations, harmonies and orchestration. The recapitulation contains a parallel outburst – although less strident and more controlled than the first – before the quiet relentlessly sad monotony of the march returns and the fanfare fades into the distance.

But grief has not finished running its course, witness the tempo marking of the second movement: "*Stürmisch bewegt, mit grösster Vehemenz*" (Stormy, with greatest vehemence). It begins with another outcry, this time a shriek in the woodwinds with cacophonous, stuttering accompaniment in the basses and a chaotic section of fragmented themes and ideas. A second theme is related to the funeral march from the first movement. With it comes a definite progressive softening of the mood that increasingly allows bright moments of sunlight through the gloom. The following storminess suggests determination, rather than emotional relief.

The Scherzo, the central and longest movement is a waltz, probably the longest scherzo in the literature, although still retaining the Classical ABA structure. It is one of music's greatest showpieces for the horns. It is also the emotional turning point of the Symphony, containing series of themes representing everything from heady euphoria to confused despair and more rational recovery. A fanfare for the horn introduces the waltz; yet already with the second strain of the dance, the waters become muddied with conflicting musical ideas and feelings. The trio section begins optimistically with a moment of extreme tenderness, but then descends into compulsive agitation. There follows the defining theme of the movement, a horn motive that later will literally call a halt to the whirling conflict of feeling, and come to represent a voice of moderation. The Scherzo is a signature example of Mahler's ability to continually transform and redefine the meaning of his themes – and rattle his own and his listeners' emotional chain.

Out of the emotional maelstrom of the Scherzo emerges the *Adagietto*, one of Mahler's most gentle and sublime utterances. Scored for strings and harp alone, it forms an instrumental and emotional counterpoint to the loud brassiness of the preceding three movements, supplying the comfort that has heretofore been lacking. The expansive melody, which Mahler spins out in free variations, redefines the emotional meaning of the Scherzo as a desperate fling, an attempt to divert grief rather than acceptance. Both Mahler and Alma had manuscripts of this movement, which many musicians



perceive as a love letter to Alma, expressing the composer's intense feelings for his new wife.

The Finale, marked *Allegro giocoso* (playful) is a rondo, albeit with the theme always returning in a modified form. It begins with another fanfare, this time a three-way conversation between solo horn, oboe and bassoon – the first appearance in this Symphony of Mahler's characteristic birdcalls, and a principal theme of the movement. The entire movement – while quixotic in its leaping back and forth among themes – is a series of dancing ideas, representing different facets of unattenuated joy. A huge buildup of complex counterpoint resembling a Bach chorale prelude, a symbol of salvation, concludes the Symphony.

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## Artist Biographies



**Rei Hotoda**

conductor

Now entering her sixth season as Music Director of the Fresno Philharmonic, conductor Rei Hotoda has been hailed as an inexhaustible dynamo with a deep commitment to reimagining the 21st century concert experience. Her vision can be seen through her thought-provoking programming, passionate allyship to marginalized artists, advocacy for arts education, and an unwavering commitment to presenting the music of our times.

Her success as the Music Director of the Fresno Philharmonic since 2017 has resulted in the extension of her tenure through the 2025 season. She has worked tirelessly to build first-time and unique connections with the Fresno community with an eye toward reaching different audiences with a new music concert series, *Proxima*, and special concerts at Bitwise South Stadium. She has reimagined the post-concert experience by creating the ever popular *Stay Tuned* series, and her programming continues to push through the preconceived notions of the classical concert-going experience, offering audiences works by often marginalized composers and today's leading voices in the field. Through her efforts, she has successfully broken down the barriers that often exist between artist and listener and reestablished the Fresno Philharmonic as a leader in the community it serves.

Rei has appeared as a guest conductor with many of today's leading ensembles, including the Symphony Orchestras of Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Detroit, Toronto, Winnipeg, Louisville, Hawaii and Utah as well as the Civic Orchestra of

Chicago, among others. Her interpretations of such epic centerpieces of the classical canon such as Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8 and Britten's War Requiem, make her one of the most sought-after conductors of today. She is a tireless advocate for the music of our time, and most recently conducted the world premieres of Derek Bermel, John Wineglass, Kenneth Froelich, Cynthia Lee Wong, Kevin Day, Dinuk Wijeratne as well as works by seminal composers such as Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate, Jessie Montgomery and Hawaiian composer, Michael-Thomas Fomai to much acclaim. As a champion of today's living composers and an artist that is dedicated to amplifying marginalized voices, Rei's innovative programming and interdisciplinary collaborations continue to position her as a leader in the industry.

Rei is also an active and critically acclaimed keyboardist and embraces her time conducting from the piano and harpsichord. One of her many recent highlights was leading the Fresno Philharmonic from the piano in Beethoven's monumental Triple Concerto as part of the orchestra's *Beethoven @250* celebration and from the harpsichord in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 as part of their Digital Masterworks series. In the 2021-22 season, she conducted both the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Fresno Philharmonic from the keyboard in Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos in E-flat major.

Rei is the proud recipient of several prestigious awards, including the 2006 Taki-Alsop Conducting Fellowship, created by Marin Alsop to mentor women conductors. Additionally, she has received a Peabody Career Development Grant, the Women's Philharmonic Scholarship, and an Illinois Arts Council International Arts Exchange Grant. Her teachers and mentors include Gustav Meier, Marin Alsop, Jaap van Zweden and Thierry Fischer.



### **Awadagin Pratt**

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piano

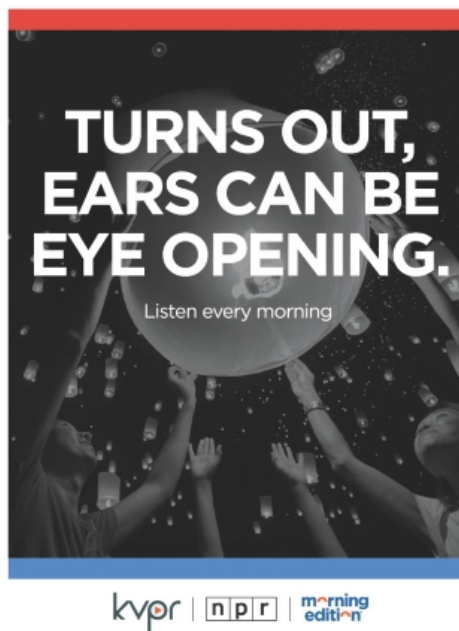
Among his generation of concert artists, pianist Awadagin Pratt is acclaimed for his musical insight and intensely involving performances in recital and with symphony orchestras.

Born in Pittsburgh, Awadagin Pratt began studying piano at the age of six. Three years later, having moved to Normal, Illinois with his family, he also began studying violin. At the age of 16 he entered the University of Illinois where he studied piano, violin, and conducting. He subsequently enrolled at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he became the first student in the school's history to receive diplomas in three performance areas – piano, violin and conducting. In recognition of this achievement and for his work in the field of classical music, Mr. Pratt received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Johns Hopkins as well as an honorary doctorate from Illinois Wesleyan University after delivering the commencement address in 2012.

In 1992 Mr. Pratt won the Naumburg International Piano Competition and two years later was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Since then, he has played numerous recitals throughout the US including performances at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles, Chicago's Orchestra Hall and the

NJ Performing Arts Center. His many orchestral performances include appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Baltimore, St. Louis, National, Detroit and New Jersey symphonies among many others. Summer festival engagements include appearances at Ravinia, Blossom, Wolftrap, Caramoor and Aspen and the Hollywood Bowl. Internationally, Mr. Pratt has toured Japan four times and performed in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Israel, Columbia and South Africa.

Recent and upcoming appearances include recital engagements in Baltimore, La Jolla, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Ravinia, Lewes, Delaware, Duke University and at Carnegie Hall for the Naumburg Foundation; as well as appearances with the orchestras of Cincinnati, Indianapolis, North Carolina, Utah, Richmond, Grand Rapids, Memphis, Fresno, Winston-Salem, New Mexico, Rockford, IL and Springfield, OH. He also serves on the faculty of the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, North Carolina where he coaches chamber music, teaches individual pianists and performs chamber music and concertos with the festival orchestra.



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