

## Tania Miller conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Friday, November 27, 2015 at 8:00 pm

This is the 562nd concert in Koerner Hall

### Gustav Mahler: *Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp Minor*

#### PART ONE

1. Trauermarsch: In gemessenem Schritt. Streng. Wie ein Kondukt. (Funeral March: At a measured pace. Strict. Like a cortège)
2. Stürmisch bewegt. Mit grösser Vehemenz (Tempestuously. With utmost vehemence)

#### PART TWO

3. Scherzo: Kräftig, nicht zu schnell (Sturdy, not too fast)

#### PART THREE

4. Adagietto: Sehr langsam (Very slow)
5. Rondo-Finale: Allegro giocoso (Lively)

## Gustav Mahler

Born in Kalischt, nr. Iglau [now Kaliště, Jihlava], Czech Republic, July 7, 1860; died in Vienna, Austria, May 18, 1911

### *Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp Minor (1901-2)*

Born in Bohemia to a German-speaking Jewish family, Mahler gained entrance to the Vienna Conservatory by the age of 15. As an opera conductor he rapidly rose through the ranks from the smallest provincial houses to become music director in Budapest (1888) and Hamburg (1891). The pinnacle of his conducting fame came with the top jobs at the Vienna Court Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra, and in New York at the Metropolitan Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra. A perfectionist, with a driven personality and ferocious ambition, Mahler's unwillingness to compromise in musical performance brought unsurpassed results but also many enemies. Mahler described himself as "thrice homeless: as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the world." However, given that he was aware of being a member of a minority and, moreover, did not fit into that minority, Mahler generally moved from one city to another for reasons of prestige rather than persecution. In 1897, he converted to Catholicism.

Mahler composed during his summer holidays, which were generally spent in the Austrian countryside. His symphonies are permeated by the sounds of Austrian folk music, echoes of the music of the German classical composers, and military bands. As the first movement begins, a solemn trumpet fanfare rings out from the barracks. Echoes of this fanfare and the sounds of military band music are to recur. Violins and cellos poignantly express the heavy tread of a solemn funeral march over a steady, marching bass. A stormy, more passionate section recalls Mahler's description of this symphony as 'primaeval music – a foaming, roaring, raging sea of sound.' The cortège continues, the battle briefly ended with a dull pizzicato thud. An explosion opens the second movement. Stabbing strings and harsh brass chords punctuate the music's texture. In a reversal of the pattern of the *Funeral March*, the turmoil is this time twice relieved by reflections on the funeral cortège, played by cellos. A deliberately banal, brisk woodwind march, a strident, brassy reply, and eloquent pleading from the cellos are all immediately dismissed. The music suddenly plunges into a radiant D major chorale, seeming to offer hope for the future. But all is swept away by a stormy coda.

The scherzo is a transition from the darkness of the opening two movements to the light of the last two. Mahler builds a mighty structure, the backbone of the entire symphony, on the rhythm of an Austrian *Ländler* folkdance. The contrast to the calm, otherworldly peace of the *Adagietto* is stunning. Mahler had already drafted a substantially scored Fifth Symphony in four movements before marrying Alma Schindler, a renowned beauty. She inspired him to add the *Adagietto* for six-part strings and harp as a reflection (quoting Mahler) 'of their life of utter peace and concentration together.' Its music evokes deep nostalgia for a lost rustic simplicity. A horn call immediately launches the good-humoured finale. There are memories of the *Adagietto*, this

time dressed in crisp, no-nonsense rhythmic clothes. All is triumphantly crowned by a glorious reappearance of the blazing chorale from the second movement, ending with a final exhilarating flurry.

- Program note © Keith Horner, 2015

## [Tania Miller](#)

### **Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

#### **Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor**

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Through the RCO Guest Conductor Program, four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing GGS students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and performance conditions. The week culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Sir Roger Norrington, Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, Bramwell Tovey, Peter Oundjian, Ivars Taurins, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tito Muñoz, Andrés Keller, Lior Shambadal, Tania Miller, Andrei Feher, Johannes Debus, and Gábor Takács-Nagy. The RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of the Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Tafelmusik, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. The RCO has been heard repeatedly on the national broadcasts of the *CBC Radio*, has been invited to perform at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston, and toured China during the 2004-05 season.