Thursday, November 15, 8pm
Friday, November 16, 1:30pm
Saturday, November 17, 8pm
ANDRIS NELSONS conducting

HK GRUBER
“AERIAL,” CONCERTO FOR TRUMPET AND ORCHESTRA
Done with the compass—Done with the chart!
Gone Dancing
HÅKAN HARDENBERGER

{INTERMISSION}

MAHLER
SYMPHONY NO. 5
Part I
Funeral March: At a measured pace.
Strict. Like a cortège
Stormy, with utmost vehemence

Part II
Scherzo: Energetic, not too fast

Part III
Adagietto: Very slow
Rondo-Finale: Allegro giocoso. Lively

FRIDAY AFTERNOON’S APPEARANCE BY HÅKAN HARDENBERGER IS SUPPORTED BY A GIFT FROM
DEBORAH AND WILLIAM R. ELFERS.
SATURDAY EVENING’S PERFORMANCE OF MAHLER’S SYMPHONY NO. 5 IS SUPPORTED BY A GIFT FROM
RAYMOND AND JOAN GRENN.

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FRIDAY-AFTERNOON CONCERT SERIES SPONSORED BY THE BROOKE FAMILY
The evening concerts will end about 10:15, the afternoon concert about 3:45.
Concertmaster Malcolm Lowe performs on a Stradivarius violin, known as the “Lafont,” generously donated to the
Boston Symphony Orchestra by the O’Block Family.
First associate concertmaster Tamara Smirnova performs on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the “ex-Zazoňsky,” and
James Cooke performs on a 1778 Nicolò Gagliano violin, both generously donated to the orchestra by Michael L.
Nieland, M.D., in loving memory of Mischa Nieland, a member of the cello section from 1943 to 1988.
Steinway & Sons Pianos, selected exclusively for Symphony Hall.
The BSO’s Steinway & Sons pianos were purchased through a generous gift from Gabriella and Leo Beranek.
The program books for the Friday series are given in loving memory of Mrs. Hugh Bancroft by her daughters, the
late Mrs. A. Werk Cook and the late Mrs. William C. Cox.
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Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices, or taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs
or videos—is prohibited during concerts.

The Program in Brief...
The Viennese composer, conductor, and “chansonnier” HK Gruber—famous worldwide for his own performances of his work *Frankenstein!!*—wrote his trumpet concerto *Aerial* for the formidable virtuoso Håkan Hardenberger, who is called upon to play two different types of trumpet, use a rackful of mutes, and even play the cow’s horn in this wildly colorful but occasionally melancholy piece. Hardenberger gave the world premiere of *Aerial* with the BBC Orchestra at the London Proms in 1999. A frequent collaborator of Andris Nelsons, he has previously been soloist with the BSO in concertos by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Rolf Martinsson, and Brett Dean. *Aerial*’s title tells us that each of its two movements is meant to convey an aerial view of a landscape. The opening slow movement offers subtle and surprising flows of instrumental color. To the composer’s mind, the second movement suggests a planet whose inhabitants have disappeared and “Gone Dancing.” Drawing on Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, Gustav Mahler felt it his artistic duty to push the symphony beyond established tradition and into new realms of expression. He completed his first, purely instrumental symphony in 1888 and followed it with the startlingly expansive *Wunderhorn* triptych, symphonies 2, 3, and 4, all of which incorporated voice and cross-pollination with the composer’s songs on texts from the folk poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth’s Magic Horn). The purely instrumental Fifth Symphony set off in a new direction that continued with the Sixth and Seventh, both also purely instrumental. Composed in 1901-02, the Fifth benefited from Mahler’s study of Bach’s and Beethoven’s counterpoint, and also reflected a new emotional presence in his life: that of his future wife, Alma. The Fifth takes a unique approach to symphonic form. Mahler designates three large parts: Part I comprises the opening Funeral March and the stormy second movement, which is a kind of development of the first. Part II is a big, utterly Austrian, utterly Mahlerian scherzo. Part III encompasses the famously lovely Adagietto for harp and strings (sometimes heard alone, and suggested by some to be a declaration of Mahler’s love for Alma) and the Rondo-Finale, in which Mahler demonstrates his mastery of traditional counterpoint while providing a wide-ranging and delightful conclusion—including an idea that speeds up music from the Adagietto—to the work as a whole. Robert Kirzinger

HK Gruber

“Aerial,” *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra* (1999)

HK Gruber’s reputation as a composer of craft and imagination and a performer of irreverent energy is based in a lifetime of immersion in the musically saturated city of Vienna. As a child, he was a member of the famous Vienna Boys Choir for several years before a mentor suggested, given the size of his hands, that he should also take up the double bass. His professional career as a bassist began with Frederic Cerha’s new music ensemble, die reihe, and he was principal bass of Vienna’s Tonkünstler Orchester before starting his long tenure in the bass section of the Austrian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Forty years as a professional double bassist gave him the financial security to compose without the added complications of seeking and fulfilling commissions beyond those projects that really appealed to him.

Gruber has said that playing in an orchestra was the best education a composer could want, given that he could ask any of his accomplished colleagues about the nuances of their instruments, and could hear from within the ensemble the orchestral strategies employed by composers ranging from Haydn to Stravinsky. Gruber has also become a sought-after orchestral conductor, leading many of Europe’s important ensembles; in 2009 he was appointed composer/conductor of the BBC Philharmonic.

HK Gruber studied bass at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik along with composition and theory. His principal composition teachers included Alfred Uhl, the Schoenberg pupil Erwin Ratz, and Gottfried von Einem, and he was strongly drawn to Stravinsky’s music. Like many composers in the 1960s trying to find new avenues outside of the academy and traditional concert hall, in 1967 Gruber, Kurt Schwertsik, and others founded the MOB art & tone ART Group for performing their own work and that of the iconoclastic Argentine composer Mauricio Kagel. Much of its repertoire had strongly irreverent, theatrical leanings under the influence of older German melodrama (via such works as Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire*) as well as the performance art of the 1960s-era Fluxus movement and John Cage’s “happenings.” Gruber’s compositional style was indelibly marked by the music of Hanns Eisler and the Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht collaborations, especially *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera).

By the late 1960s Gruber had achieved recognition as both a composer and as a cabaret-style actor and singer, parallel pursuits that led to such works as his *Frankenstein-Suite* (1970) and his “musical spectacle” *Gomorra* (1976). He rewrote the former in 1978 as the orchestral “Pan-Dämonium” *Frankenstein!!*, which was premiered by Simon Rattle (just twenty-three at the time) and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic with the composer himself as “chansonnier.” Suddenly he found himself with an international hit on his hands. *Frankenstein!!* has been performed hundreds of times all over the world in both orchestral and chamber versions and has also been staged. Most performances, including one by the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra led by Gunther Schuller in August 1980,
have featured the composer as soloist.
For instrumental soloists seeking new concertos, Gruber’s penchant for theatricality in his music has been an irresistible draw. In the midst of fulfilling a commission for an ensemble work in the 1980s, Gruber received a message from Yo-Yo Ma, who told him that if the piece happened to be a cello concerto, he would be the soloist, and already had a premiere lined up—so how could the composer refuse? Ma gave that first performance of Gruber’s Cello Concerto with Boston Musica Viva, Richard Pittman conducting, at Tanglewood in August 1989.
Gruber wrote his percussion concerto into the open... for Colin Currie and the BBC Philharmonic; his Piano Concerto was commissioned for Emanuel Ax by the New York Philharmonic, who premiered it under Alan Gilbert’s direction in January 2017.
Gruber knew Håkan Hardenberger from a number of occasions when the trumpeter was soloist with the Austrian Radio Symphony Orchestra, but Hardenberger’s request for a commission seemed to come out of the blue. Hardenberger relates that when the two got together to discuss the piece, “Nali [Gruber’s nickname] was...particularly curious about deconstruction and alienation combined with beauty and poetry” in the trumpet’s sonic vocabulary. Gruber also asked if he’d be willing to play multiphonics—specifically singing and playing a note at the same time—and whether he’d play a cow’s horn, which Hardenberger had identified as the origin of the trumpet in Sweden (Hardenberger’s homeland). Hardenberger balked at the cow’s horn, but months later Gruber found a recording on his answering machine of Hardenberger playing that limited, raw-sounding instrument. Its archaic and unstable sound thus became part of the soloist’s arsenal in Aerial. It also lends further visual novelty to the live concert experience. Along with cow’s horn and standard trumpet (sometimes played in non-standard ways), Gruber also called for piccolo trumpet in B-flat.
Over four decades, Hardenberger, a frequent collaborator of BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons (himself a trumpet player), has been one of the most prolific composers of new works for his instrument, requesting concertos from such composers as Harrison Birtwistle, Toru Takemitsu, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Arvo Pärt, and many others. In addition to Aerial, Gruber also wrote Busking (2008), a concerto for trumpets, accordion, banjo, and string orchestra, for Hardenberger.
Aerial’s title comes from the idea that both movements are aerial views of a landscape. The first is the far north, a nod to Hardenberger’s homeland of Sweden. “Done with the compass—Done with the Chart!,” from Emily Dickinson’s poem “Wild nights—Wild nights!” (no. 269), suggests something unfettered and brilliant, but Gruber surprises us with a slow movement that lets the listener focus on the subtle and surprising flows of instrumental color, especially within the solo part. At the start of the concerto, the solo trumpet’s first sounds are multiphonics: the player plays a note while singing another pitch; by changing the sung pitch, yet another note emerges (via the magic of acoustics). Gruber asks for other actions seemingly designed to discomfit the virtuoso. Pitch bending and pulling slides to destabilize pitch and timber foreshadow the inevitably out-of-tune, raw sound of the cow’s horn. The delicate harmonic backdrop often has an almost jazzy, bluesy quality, unexpectedly heightened with the move to the cow’s horn, which is given a long, lyrical line, although its range is necessarily narrow. Moving from cow’s horn to piccolo trumpet, the solo part ratchets up in virtuosity, and the orchestra too becomes more active to the end of the movement.
The aerial view depicted in “Gone Dancing,” in Gruber’s mind, shows a planet from which all inhabitants have disappeared, leaving only a sign reading “Gone Dancing.” We’re asked to imagine Fred and Ginger for the lush but pointillized version of dance music from Hollywood’s golden era that begins the movement. The soloist leaps continually through an enormous pitch range while toggling rapidly between open and stopped notes with a plunger mute and negotiating a wide and subtle array of dynamics. This precision and accuracy are matched in the glittering, occasionally overpowering orchestral music.
The second half of the movement is marked Prestissimo, the trumpet (initially muted) and orchestra exchanging phrases of a clearly Middle Eastern melodic flavor. Shifting among several meters (7/8, 8/8, 10/8, etc.), the rhythm evokes the region’s dance music, and the vast orchestra calls forth an amazing array of color and texture. The soloist runs through a variety of mutes and plays the last several pages on piccolo trumpet. The solo part is marked ffff almost throughout these last pages, but the orchestra gradually dissipates and a final sustained note leaves the subdued trumpet entirely alone.
Robert Kirzinger
Composer/annotator ROBERT KIRZINGER is the BSO’s Associate Director of Program Publications.
THE FIRST UNITED STATES PERFORMANCE OF “AERIAL” was given by soloist Håkan Hardenberger with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Daniel Harding conducting, on March 8, 2002, in Los Angeles.

Gustav Mahler
Symphony No. 5
GUSTAV MAHLER was born at Kalischt (Kaliště) near the Moravian border of Bohemia on July 7, 1860, and died in Vienna on May 18, 1911. He began writing his Fifth Symphony in 1901 and completed it in 1902. Mahler himself conducted the premiere, on October 18, 1904, with the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne, having already led the Vienna Philharmonic in a read-through earlier that same year. He continued to revise details of the orchestration until 1907, and perhaps as late as 1909.

THE SCORE OF MAHLER’S SYMPHONY NO. 5 calls for four flutes (two doubling piccolo), three oboes and English horn, three clarinets, clarinet in D, and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, bass drum, bass drum with cymbals attached, snare drum, triangle, glockenspiel, tam-tam, slapstick, harp, and strings.

Mahler finished his “first period” with his Fourth Symphony right at the end of the 19th century. The music he wrote at the beginning of the new century pointed in a new direction. The first four symphonies were all inspired by or based upon songs, especially the songs he composed on texts from the German folk-poetry collection Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth’s Magic Horn). By the turn of the century, Mahler had stopped drawing upon that source for good, though with perhaps one last glimpse in the Fifth Symphony. His next songs were settings of the poet Rückert, including his cycle Kindertotenlieder (Songs on the Death of Children), three songs of which were completed before he began work on the symphony. Mahler’s songs make themselves felt here and there in the Fifth by way of brief reminiscences, but the symphony as a whole—like its two successors—is a purely orchestral work with no vocal parts and no hint of musical shapes dictated by song.

The group of three instrumental symphonies—Nos. 5, 6, and 7—belongs together in another respect. Mahler’s orchestration is notably different from that of the earlier works. The parts are now often more independent of one another in a highly contrapuntal texture, and he more frequently uses small subsections of the orchestra—as if the entire ensemble consisted of an immensely varied series of chamber groups. At first the novelty of this approach gave Mahler considerable trouble. At a reading rehearsal in Vienna before the Cologne premiere of the Fifth, he was horrified to discover that he had seriously over-orchestrated large sections of the score. He took a red pencil to his manuscript and crossed out many parts. Still unsatisfied after the official premiere, Mahler continued touching up the scoring of the Fifth Symphony almost until the day he died.

The distinction between works written before and after the turn of the century is not cut-and-dried, to be sure. The Fourth Symphony already shows more independent instrumental writing, and the scoring of the Kindertotenlieder and other Rückert songs grew out of it. It leads as naturally into the instrumental style of the Fifth. The novelty is more a matter of degree than of kind. Still, the Fifth marks a perceptible turning point in Mahler’s output, a determination to avoid programmatic elements (at least those of the kind inherent in the setting of a text or proclaimed to the public in a printed program note) and let the music speak for itself. Mahler anticipated the contrapuntal character of the Fifth in some conversations with his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner while recuperating, in March 1901, from surgery for an intestinal hemorrhage that very nearly killed him. He talked to Natalie about the late Beethoven string quartets, describing them as “far more polyphonic than his symphonies.” He was obsessed with the idea of different themes that would combine and “develop freely, side by side, each with its own impetus and purpose, so that people will always be able to distinguish them one from another.” And he plunged into hours of study of the Bachgesellschaft edition of Bach’s works. His illness, he decided, had been caused in large part by the strains of conducting the rebellious Vienna Philharmonic, with many of whose members he had deep-rooted differences of opinion on matters of musical interpretation, and by the need to withstand the endless attacks of an anti-Semitic press. On returning from a holiday on the Istrian peninsula, he submitted his resignation to the committee of the Philharmonic, retaining the music directorship of the opera, which brought him quite enough headaches.

But as summer approached, Mahler was able to look forward to a summer vacation dedicated largely to composing in a newly built retreat all his own, a large chalet at Maiernigg, a resort town in Carinthia on Lake Wörth. He had selected the site before the season of 1899 and followed the construction of the house whenever he was not actually working on the Fourth Symphony in the summer of 1900. By 1901 it was ready for occupancy. Villa Mahler was situated between the forest and the water, arranged so that all the rooms had panoramic lake views. He worked several hours a day in a “Häuschen” (“little house”) not far away but completely isolated, to give himself total silence while composing. He brought the Bach edition with him and spent hours studying in particular one of the eight-part motets. “The way the eight voices are led along in a polyphony which he alone masters is unbelievable!” In addition to Bach he studied some songs of Schumann, whom he regarded as second only to Schubert in that genre, and he arranged evening musicales in the house. At first he didn’t worry about composition. By July he started composing a few songs—the last of the Wunderhorn group (Tambours’ g’sell) and the first of his Rückert songs. He determined to give himself two weeks of complete rest, and ironically, just at that point, he found himself immersed in a large project
that was to become the Fifth Symphony.

There were others in the household—his sister Justine; the violinist Arnold Rose, with whom Justine was having an affair and whom she later married; and Natalie Bauer-Lechner, a musician friend who kept an informative journal of her encounters with Mahler and who clearly suffered pangs of unrequited love (she disappeared from his life within days of his engagement to Alma Schindler). To them he said nothing about the new work. But as he spent more and more hours in the Häuschen, no one doubted that he was involved in something extensive. In fact, he was composing two movements of the symphony (one of them the scherzo, which gave him an enormous amount of trouble) and turning now and then to further songs, including the finest of all, Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen. All too soon the summer was over, and the symphony had to remain unfinished as he took up his operatic duties in Vienna.

Mahler was not able to return to work on the symphony until the following summer, but in the meantime a casual encounter at a dinner on November 7 changed his life. Seated opposite him at the table was a young woman of spectacular beauty and considerable self-assurance. Her name was Alma Schindler, and she had been studying composition with Alexander Zemlinsky. After dinner Alma and Mahler got into a heated argument about a ballet score that Zemlinsky had submitted to Mahler for possible production. Mahler had never replied to the submission, and she taxed him with rudeness. Before the evening was over Mahler was clearly enchanted with the woman’s beauty, but also by her wit and her fiery disposition. He made her promise to bring samples of her own work to the Opera. In less than two weeks it was clear to all concerned that something serious was in the wind. By November 27 Mahler was already talking of marriage, and almost against her will Alma was realizing that “He’s the only man who can give meaning to my life, for he far surpasses all the men I’ve ever met.” Yet she was still confused, having recently been convinced that she was in love with Zemlinsky. But by December 9, when Mahler left for ten days in Berlin to conduct his Second and Fourth symphonies, she had made up her mind.

Before Christmas they officially celebrated their engagement. When they married on March 9, Alma was already pregnant. It was only the least of the complications in their life together. In some respects two people can hardly have been less well suited to each other, whether by age, temperament, character, or interests. Mahler was passionately in love with her but was overbearing in his demands that she entirely devote her attention to him, even to the point of giving up her study of composition. Alma was capricious, flirtatious, and conceited, though she was also very intelligent and witty, musical, capable of great generosity and petty meanness. Yet virtually everything Mahler wrote for the rest of his life was composed for her, beginning with the conclusion of the Fifth Symphony. And whatever difficulties they may have experienced in their life together, there is little question that she inspired him to vast compositional achievements—seven enormous symphonies (counting Das Lied von der Erde and the unfinished Tenth) in less than a decade, during the first five years of which he was also in charge of the Vienna Opera and later of the New York Philharmonic.

It is possible that Mahler wrote the famous Adagietto movement of the Fifth during the period before his marriage. At any rate, the conductor Willem Mengelberg wrote this note in his score:

NB: This Adagietto was Gustav Mahler’s declaration of love to Alma! Instead of a letter he confided it in this manuscript without a word of explanation. She understood it and replied: He should come!!! (I have this from both of them!) W.M.

Though Alma’s diary fails to mention such a musical missive, it is possible that the movement served in fact as a love letter (Mahler wrote her plenty of other letters, too, especially when he was away in Berlin). Since she was a musician and composition student herself, she could be expected to be able to read the music and sense its emotional import, especially since its scoring—just strings and harp—is the sparsest of any symphonic movement Mahler ever wrote.

After their wedding Mahler and Alma took their honeymoon in Russia, where he conducted some performances in St. Petersburg. Then, after a short time in their Vienna apartment, they went to Krefeld, where Mahler conducted the first complete performance of his Third Symphony on June 9. This performance, a great success, was the beginning of Mahler’s fame outside of Vienna. Elated, he and Alma went to Maiernigg for the summer, where they enjoyed swims and long walks. He worked on completing the Fifth in the seclusion of his Häuschen, while she remained in the house preparing a fair copy of the finished pages of score. The work was completed in short score by autumn. Mahler wrote out the detailed orchestration during the winter by rising before breakfast and working on it until it was time to go to the opera house.

One unusual aspect of the Fifth—the complete absence of a text or descriptive explanation from the composer—seems to have been motivated by the unhappy reaction of the audience at the premiere of the Fourth Symphony in November 1901, when Mahler conducted it in Munich to almost universal ridicule and misunderstanding. The success he had achieved with the Second so recently was completely undone. He attributed the critics’ lack of perception to their inability to follow an abstract musical argument. It was all the fault of Berlioz and Liszt, he said,
who began writing program music (though theirs had genius, he admitted, unlike the music of some later composers) so that the “plot” of the score had become a necessary crutch to listening. One result of this experience was Mahler’s determination to avoid giving any explanation of the “meaning” or “program” of his next symphony. Even when supportive musicians asked him for some guidance, he remained silent. He expressed himself with far greater vigor on the subject at a dinner in Munich following a performance of the Second Symphony. When someone mentioned program books, Mahler is reported to have leaped upon the table and exclaimed:

Down with program books, which spread false ideas! The audience should be left to its own thoughts over the work that is performed; it should not be forced to read during the performance; it should not be prejudiced in any manner. If a composer by his music forces on his hearers the sensations which streamed through his mind, then he reaches his goal. The speech of tones has then approached the language of words, but it is far more capable of expression and declaration.

He is then reported to have raised his glass, emptied it, and cried, “Pereat den Programmen!”—“Let the programs perish!” (When the Boston Symphony performed the Fifth for the first time in 1906, Philip Hale wrote in his program book essay, “Let us respect the wishes of Mr. Mahler.”)

Following such an outburst, the annotator proceeds with trepidation. Still, Mahler’s pique was aimed at first-time listeners whose reaction might be prejudiced one way or another by an explanation. Eventually listeners may desire some consideration of the music, especially because Mahler’s music is no less expressive for all his eschewing of programs, and in some respects it is a good deal more complicated.

The symphony is laid out in five movements, though Mahler grouped the first two and the last two together so that there are, in all, three “parts” tracing a progression from tragedy to an exuberant display of contrapuntal mastery and a harmonic progression from the opening C-sharp minor to D major. The keys of the intervening movements (A minor, D, and F) also outline a chord on D, which would therefore seem to be a more reasonable designation for the key of the symphony, with the opening C-sharp conceived as a leading tone. Nonetheless the Fifth is customarily described as being in the key of C-sharp minor.

The opening movement has the character of a funeral march, rather martial in character, given the opening trumpet fanfare (derived from the first movement of the Fourth Symphony*) and the drumlike tattoo of the strings and winds in the introductory passage. The main march theme is darkly somber, a melody related to the recently composed song Der Tamboursg’sell (a last echo of Des Knaben Wunderhorn). The Trio is a wild, almost hysterical outcry in B-flat minor gradually returning to the tempo and the rhythmic tattoo of the opening. The basic march returns and closes with a recollection of the first song from Kindertotenlieder, which Mahler was almost certainly composing while he worked on this movement as well. The second Trio, in A minor, is more subdued and given largely to the strings. Last echoes of the trumpet fanfare bring the movement to an end.

The second movement, marked “Stormy, with utmost vehemence,” has a number of links to the first. It takes the frenetic outbursts of the first movement as its basic character and contrasts them with a sorrowful march melody in the cellos and clarinets. They take turns three times (each varied and somewhat briefer than the one before). A premature shout of triumph is cut off, and the main material returns. The shout of triumph comes back briefly as a chorale in D (the key that will ultimately prevail), but for now the movement ends in hushed mystery.

According to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler had an idea for the character of the scherzo, though he chose not to reveal it to the public. Following the dark and emotional character of Part I, the second part was to represent “a human being in the full light of day, in the prime of his life.” The scherzo is on an unusually large scale, but it moves with great energy and speed, much of it as a lilting and whirling waltz with a featured solo horn. There are sardonic twists here and there, boisterous passages, even brutal ones, and some that have the lilt and verve of The Merry Widow.

The last part begins with the famous Adagietto, once almost the only movement of Mahler’s music that was heard with any frequency. When Mahler announced it he was recalling the musical worlds created for the second song of Kindertotenlieder and Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen, though he is not using either song to shape this exquisitely restrained movement. The melody grows in sweeping arches to a climactic peak that is not hammered with fortissimos but whispered as if with bated breath.

Mahler builds his finale as a grand rondo in which, after an opening horn call, a bassoon quotes a phrase from one of Mahler’s Wunderhorn songs, Lob des hohen Verstandes, which describes a singing contest the outcome of which is controlled by a donkey. Good-natured satire of academic pedantry is the point of the song, and Mahler here undertakes his own cheerful demonstration of counterpoint, the academic subject par excellence in music theory, treated in a wonderfully exuberant and freewheeling way. He is concerned to build up a symphonic structure, alluding to the theme of the Adagietto with music of very different spirit. The climax of the symphony brings back the chorale theme from the second movement, the one earlier passage in all that tragic realm that hinted at the
extroversion of D major, now finally achieved and celebrated with tremendous zest.

Steven Ledbetter

STEVEN LEDBETTER was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998

THE FIRST AMERICAN PERFORMANCE OF MAHLER’S SYMPHONY NO. 5 was given by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Frank van der Stucken on March 25, 1905.

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCES of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony—the BSO’s first of any Mahler symphony—took place on February 2 and 3, 1906, with Wilhelm Gericke conducting, followed later that same month by performances in Philadelphia, New York, and an additional pair of performances in Boston. Since then, the Mahler Fifth has been performed in BSO concerts under the direction of Karl Muck (April 1913; then in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston again during the 1913-14 season), Serge Koussevitzky (in October 1937, then again that same season in Boston and New York in March 1938, twenty-four years after Muck’s multiple performances in 1913-14, as well as a later subscription pair in March 1940), Richard Burgin, Erich Leinsdorf (who recorded the Mahler Fifth with the BSO in November 1963, and whose 1964 Tanglewood performance of the work, its first at Tanglewood, was played “in memory of Serge Koussevitzky”), Michael Tilson Thomas, Joseph Silverstein, Seiji Ozawa (on numerous occasions between 1975 and 1997, the last time as part of the Serge and Olga Koussevitzky Memorial Concert in August 1997), Christoph Eschenbach, Daniele Gatti. James Levine, Hans Graf, Charles Dutoit (April 2014, followed that May by tour performances in Beijing and Tokyo), and Michael Tilson Thomas again (at Tanglewood on July 25, 2015).

* Much has been written about the numerous internal references between one work and another in Mahler’s output, and the Fifth Symphony is very much a case in point. It is worth recalling that Mahler was frequently conducting one work while finishing the scoring of another and planning the composition of yet a third. It would be very surprising, under the circumstances, if the musical world of one such piece did not make itself felt in his imagination when he was working out the details of a new piece. A composer who either did not conduct at all or could rely on others to introduce his music and give most of the performances would be more easily able to put a finished work entirely behind him.

To Read and Hear More...

The publisher of HK Gruber’s music is Boosey & Hawkes, whose website features a wealth of information about the composer (boosey.com/composer/hk+gruber), including a short video interview/documentary, “HK Gruber on HK Gruber,” illuminating his vibrant personality. The site also includes up-to-date biographical information and a list of works. Though out of date, a 2001 article on Gruber by David Murray and Sigrid Wiesmann in The New Grove Dictionary includes useful information. Video footage of a 2015 rehearsal of Gruber’s trumpet concerto Aerial by Håkan Hardenberger and the Philharmonia Orchestra led by Andris Nelsons, interspersed with a conversation between Hardenberger and Nelsons, can be found at the Philharmonia’s website (philharmonia.co.uk/hakanhardenberger). Two audio recordings of the piece are available, both featuring soloist Håkan Hardenberger: with the Gothenburg Symphony led by Peter Eötvös (Deutsche Grammophon), and with the New York Philharmonic led by Alan Gilbert (on the Philharmonic’s own label—download or streaming only). Hardenberger has also recorded the composer’s Three MOB Pieces and Busking with the Swedish Chamber Ensemble under Gruber’s direction, and on a separate CD release, the solo work Exposed Throat (both BIS). Recordings of Gruber’s famous Frankenstei!! featuring the composer as chansonnier include those by the Salzburg Camerata Academica led by Franz Welser-Möst (EMI) and by the BBC Philharmonic, with Gruber as both vocalist and conductor (Chandos).

Robert Kirzinger

Deryck Cooke’s Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to his Music is a first-rate brief guide to the composer’s works (Cambridge University paperback). Other good starting points include Jonathan Carr’s Mahler (Overlook Press), Peter Franklin’s The life of Mahler in the series “Musical lives” (Cambridge paperback), and Michael Kennedy’s Mahler in the “Master Musicians” series (Oxford paperback). There are two big, multi-volume biographies of the composer, one by Henry-Louis de La Grange (Oxford), the other by Donald Mitchell (University of California). A good single-volume biography—though still by no means small—is Gustav Mahler by Jens Malte Fischer, translated by Stewart Spencer (Yale University paperback). Useful essay collections devoted to Mahler’s life, works, and milieu include The Mahler Companion, edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (Oxford), Mahler and his World, edited by Karen Painter (Princeton University paperback), and The Cambridge Companion to Mahler, edited by Jeffrey Barham (Cambridge paperback). A Guide to the Symphony, edited by Robert Layton,
includes a chapter on Mahler by Stephen Johnson (Oxford paperback). The late Mahler enthusiast and conductor Gilbert Kaplan saw to the publication of The Mahler Album with the aim of bringing together every known photograph of the composer (The Kaplan Foundation with Thames and Hudson). Also published by The Kaplan Foundation are Mahler’s Concerts by Knud Martner, which offers a detailed history of Mahler on the podium, including music performed, soloists, concert halls, etc., for each of more than 300 concerts (co-published with Overlook Press), and Mahler Discography, edited by Péter Fülöp, which remains valuable to anyone interested in Mahler recordings, despite its 1995 publication date. Michael Steinberg’s program notes on Mahler’s symphonies 1 through 10 are in his compilation volume The Symphony—A Listener’s Guide (Oxford paperback). Alma Mahler’s autobiography And the Bridge is Love (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and her Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters (University of Washington paperback) provide important if necessarily subjective source materials. Knud Martner’s Gustav Mahler: Selected Letters offers a useful volume of correspondence, including all of the letters published in Alma’s earlier collection (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Though now more than forty years old, Kurt Blaukopf’s extensively illustrated Mahler: A Documentary Study remains well worth seeking from second-hand sources (Oxford University Press).

The Boston Symphony Orchestra recorded Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 in 1963 with Erich Leinsdorf conducting (RCA) and in 1990 as part of its complete Mahler symphony cycle led by Seiji Ozawa (Philips). An August 2015 performance with Andris Nelsons conducting the Lucerne Festival Orchestra is available on DVD and Blu-Ray (Accentus). Noteworthy among the many other recordings are (alphabetically by conductor) Claudio Abbado’s with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon), Daniel Barenboim’s also with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Teldec), Leonard Bernstein’s with the New York Philharmonic (Sony) or Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Pierre Boulez’s with the Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Daniele Gatti’s with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Conifer), Manfred Honeck’s with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Exton), James Levine’s with the Philadelphia Orchestra (RCA), Georg Solti’s with the Chicago Symphony (Decca), Michael Tilson Thomas’s live from 2005 with the San Francisco Symphony (on the orchestra’s own label), Bruno Walter’s with the New York Philharmonic (Sony, monaural, the work’s first complete recording, from 1947), and Benjamin Zander’s with the Philharmonia Orchestra (Telarc). Bruno Walter’s 1938 recording of the Adagietto alone, with the Vienna Philharmonic, is in the excellent “Great Conductors of the 20th Century” volume devoted to that conductor (EMI/IMG Artists). At just eight minutes long, Walter’s approach to the Adagietto stands in sharp contrast to the much slower tempo so often favored today. Equally interesting—fascinating, even, given the difference in string-playing style from that of modern orchestras—is the recording of the Adagietto that Willem Mengelberg made with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam in 1926 (for a while available on budget-priced Naxos, with additional selections by Strauss, Wagner, and Humperdinck).

Marc Mandel

Andris Nelsons

The 2018–19 season is Andris Nelsons’ fifth as the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Ray and Maria Stata Music Director. Named Musical America’s 2018 Artist of the Year, Mr. Nelsons will lead fourteen of the BSO’s twenty-six subscription programs in 2018–19, ranging from orchestral works by Haydn, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Copland to concert collaborations with acclaimed soloists, as well as world and American premieres of pieces newly commissioned by the BSO from Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Andris Dzenitis, and Mark-Anthony Turnage; the continuation of his complete Shostakovich symphony cycle with the orchestra, and concert performances of Puccini’s one-act opera Suor Angelica. In summer 2015, following his first season as music director, Andris Nelsons’ contract with the BSO was extended through the 2021-22 season. In November 2017, he and the orchestra toured Japan together for the first time. In February 2018, he became Gewandhauskapellmeister of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, in which capacity he brings both orchestras together for a unique multi-dimensional alliance. Immediately following the 2018 Tanglewood season, Maestro Nelsons and the BSO made their third European tour together, playing concerts in London, Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, Lucerne, Paris, and Amsterdam. Their first European tour, following the 2015 Tanglewood season, took them to major European capitals and the Lucerne, Salzburg, and Grafenegg festivals; the second, in May 2016, took them to eight cities in Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg.

The fifteenth music director in the history of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons made his BSO debut at Carnegie Hall in March 2011, his Tanglewood debut in July 2012, and his BSO subscription series debut in January 2013. His recordings with the BSO, all made live in concert at Symphony Hall, include the complete Brahms symphonies on BSO Classics; Grammy-winning recordings on Deutsche Grammophon of Shostakovich’s symphonies 5, 8, 9, and 10, the initial releases in a complete Shostakovich symphony cycle for that label; and a new two-disc set pairing Shostakovich’s symphonies 4 and 11, The Year 1905. Under an exclusive contract with
Deutsche Grammophon, Andris Nelsons is also recording the complete Bruckner symphonies with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic. The 2018-19 season is Maestro Nelsons’ final season as artist-in-residence at the Konzerthaus Dortmund and marks his first season as artist-in-residence at Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie. In addition, he continues his regular collaborations with the Vienna Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic. Throughout his career, he has also established regular collaborations with Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and has been a regular guest at the Bayreuth Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Born in Riga in 1978 into a family of musicians, Andris Nelsons began his career as a trumpeter in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra before studying conducting. He was music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2015, principal conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Herford, Germany, from 2006 to 2009, and music director of Latvian National Opera from 2003 to 2007.

Guest Artist
Håkan Hardenberger

Håkan Hardenberger is esteemed for his performances of the classical repertoire and as a pioneer of noteworthy and virtuosic new trumpet works. Conducting has also become an integral part of his music-making. His close collaborations with such composers as Mark-Anthony Turnage and HK Gruber led him to explore both their works and related repertoire. Stravinsky became a key composer in Mr. Hardenberger’s evolution as a conductor. Having worked with his students in smaller formations, such as that of Stravinsky’s Soldier’s Tale, he took on projects with the brass sections of the BBC Philharmonic and Helsinki Philharmonic, leading programs featuring Stravinsky’s Symphonies of Wind Instruments, as well as concerts of orchestral works with the Swedish and Lapland chamber orchestras. Mr. Hardenberger enjoys creating programs inspired by his solo repertoire, spinning musical threads from Haydn to Prokofiev, Hummel to Beethoven to Brett Dean, Stravinsky to Gruber, and Takemitsu to Lutosławski. This new aspect of his craft is presented in his latest recording with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, “Both Sides Now,” which features new arrangements for trumpet and strings of music from films.

Residencies with the Philharmonia Orchestra, WDR Sinfonieorchester, and Dresden Philharmonic have encompassed both solo performances and conducting opportunities. Recent conducting engagements have included concerts as part of his residency with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France that featured him leading Lindberg’s Ottoni for brass ensemble and Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition arranged for brass ensemble; he also led the orchestra in Prokofiev’s Classical Symphony and Ravel’s Le Tombeau de Couperin and performed popular works for trumpet. He has led the Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi on tour in Spain, the RTÉ National Symphony Dublin with soloist Roland Pöntinen, and the Malmö Symphony Orchestra with soloist Baiba Skride. He has also conducted the brass sections of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra dell’Accademia di Santa Cecilia Roma, and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. Spring 2019 brings his debut with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. Håkan Hardenberger is artistic director of the Malmö Chamber Music Festival. Born in Malmö, Sweden, he began studying the trumpet at age eight with Bo Nilsson in Malmö and continued his studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Pierre Thibaud, and in Los Angeles with Thomas Stevens. He is a professor at the Malmö Conservatoire. Håkan Hardenberger made his BSO debut in January 2012 as soloist in the American premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage’s From the Wreckage with Marcelo Lehninger conducting, subsequently appearing with Andris Nelsons and the BSO as soloist in Rolf Martinsson’s Bridge (at Tanglewood in 2014) and the American premiere of Brett Dean’s Dramatis Personae (subscription performances in November 2014, followed by a 2015 Tanglewood performance and tour performances in London, Lucerne, and Cologne). In July 2017 at Tanglewood he was soloist with Andris Nelsons and the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in Turnage’s From the Wreckage and, joined by BSO principal trumpet Thomas Rolfs, Turnage’s Dispelling the Fears for two trumpets and orchestra.