



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Sunday, February 25, 2018 at 2:00 P.M.
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland
Colonel Jason K. Fettig, conducting
Johan de Meij, guest conductor

A Symphonic Epic

Johan de Meij (b. 1953)

Symphony No. 1, *The Lord of the Rings*

Gandalf (The Wizard)
Lothlórien (The Elvenwood)
Gollum (Sméagol)
Journey in the Dark
 a. The Mines of Moria
 b. The Bridge of Khazad-Dûm
Hobbits

Johan de Meij, guest conductor

INTERMISSION

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Kräftig. Entschieden
 arranged by William Schaefer and MGySgt Donald Patterson*
Langsam (excerpts)
 arranged by Jimmie Reynolds

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

The Marine Chamber Orchestra will perform Sunday, March 4 at 2:00 P.M. at Warner Hall in Quantico, VA. The program will include works by Saint-Saëns, Copland, and Sousa.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 1, *The Lord of the Rings*

Johan de Meij (b. 1953)

Dutch composer and conductor Johan de Meij was born in Voorburg, Netherlands, and received his musical training at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, where he studied trombone and conducting. His award-winning oeuvre of original compositions, symphonic transcriptions, and film score arrangements has garnered him international acclaim, and the works have become permanent fixtures in the repertoire of renowned ensembles throughout the world. His significant contributions to the symphonic wind ensemble and band repertoire are particularly notable, including Symphony No. 1 (*The Lord of the Rings*), Symphony No. 2 (*The Big Apple*), Symphony No. 3 (*Planet Earth*), and Symphony No. 4 (*Sinfonie der Lieder*). He has also composed several concerti for solo instrument and band, including the T-Bone Concerto (trombone), UFO Concerto (euphonium), and *Casanova* (cello), which have been enthusiastically received at many of the world's finest venues.

Before devoting his time exclusively to composing and conducting, Johan de Meij enjoyed a successful professional career as a trombone and euphonium player, performing with major orchestras and ensembles in The Netherlands. He is in high demand as a guest conductor and lecturer, frequently invited to speak about and perform his own works. He currently maintains posts with both the New York Wind Symphony and the Kyushu Wind Orchestra in Fukuoka, Japan, as their principal guest conductor. He was also appointed regular guest conductor of the Simón Bolívar Youth Wind Orchestra in Caracas, Venezuela, part of the celebrated Venezuelan educational system El Sistema. He is founder and CEO of his own publishing company Amstel Music, established in 1989.

De Meij's first symphony, *The Lord of the Rings*, is based on the trilogy of the same name by J. R. R. Tolkien that has fascinated and inspired millions of readers since its publication in 1955. De Meij's symphony consists of five separate movements, each illustrating a personage or an important episode from Tolkien's masterpiece. The composer offers the following regarding this substantial work in the symphonic band repertoire:

The symphony was written in the period between March 1984 and December 1987, and had its première in Brussels on 15th March 1988, performed by the "Groot Harmonieorkest van de Gidsen" under the baton of Norbert Nozy. In 1989, The Symphony No. 1, *The Lord of the Rings*, was awarded a first prize in the Sudler International Wind Band Composition Competition in Chicago, and a year later, the symphony was awarded by the Dutch Composers Fund. In 2001, the orchestral version was premiered by the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra.

Although it is not simple to summarize Tolkien's extensive and complex work, the main outline is as follows: the central theme is the Ring, made by primeval forces that decide the safety or destruction of the World. For years it was the possession of the creature Gollum, but when the Ring falls into the hands of the Hobbits, the evil forces awake and the struggle for the Ring commences. There is but one solution to save the World from disaster: the Ring must be destroyed by the fire in which it was forged: Mount Doom in the heart of Mordor, the country of the evil Lord Sauron.

It is the Hobbit Frodo who is assigned to carry out this task, and to assist him a company, the Fellowship of the Ring, is formed under the leadership of Gandalf, the wizard, which includes the Hobbits Sam, Peregrin and Merin, the Dwarf Gimli, the Elf Legolas, Boromir, and Aragorn, the later King. The Companions are secretly followed by Gollum, who does not shun any means, however perfidious, to recover his priceless Ring. However, the Companions soon fall apart, and after many pernicious adventures and a surprising dénouement, Frodo and Sam can at last return to their familiar home, The Shire.

The Symphony's five movements are described as follows:

I. GANDALF (The Wizard)

The first movement is a musical portrait of the wizard Gandalf, one of the principal characters of the trilogy. His wise and noble personality is expressed by a stately motif which is used in a different form in movements IV and V. The sudden opening of the Allegro vivace is indicative of the unpredictability of the grey wizard, followed by a wild ride on his beautiful horse "Shadowfax."

II. LOTHLÓRIEN (The Elvenwood)

The second movement is an impression of Lothlórien, the elvenwood with its beautiful trees, plants, exotic birds, expressed through woodwind solos. The meeting of the Hobbit Frodo with the Lady Galadriel is embodied in a charming Allegretto; in the Mirror of Galadriel, a silver basin in the wood, Frodo glimpses three visions, the last of which, a large ominous Eye, greatly upsets him.

III. GOLLUM (Sméagol)

The third movement describes the monstrous creature Gollum, a slimy, shy being represented by the soprano saxophone. It mumbles and talks to itself, hisses and lisps, whines and snickers, is alternately pitiful and malicious, is continually fleeing and looking for his cherished treasure, the Ring.

IV. JOURNEY IN THE DARK

The fourth movement describes the laborious journey of the Fellowship of the Ring, headed by the wizard Gandalf, through the dark tunnels of the Mines of Moria. The slow walking cadenza and the fear are clearly audible in the monotonous rhythm of the low brass, piano and percussion. After a wild pursuit by hostile creatures, the Orks, Gandalf is engaged in battle with a horrible monster, the Balrog, and crashes from the subterranean bridge of Khazad-Dûm in a fathomless abyss. To the melancholy tones of a Marcia funèbre, the bewildered Companions trudge on, looking for the only way out of the Mines, the East Gate of Moria.

V. HOBBITS

The fifth movement expresses the carefree and optimistic character of the Hobbits in a happy folk dance; the hymn that follows emanates the determination and noblesse of the hobbit folk. The symphony does not end on an exuberant note, but is concluded peacefully and resigned, in keeping with the symbolic mood of the last chapter "The Grey Havens" in which Frodo and Gandalf sail away in a white ship and disappear slowly beyond the horizon.

Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Kräftig. Entschieden

arranged by William Schaefer and MGySgt Donald Patterson*

Langsam (excerpts)

arranged by Jimmie Reynolds

Gustav Mahler once told fellow composer Jean Sibelius, "The symphony must be like the world. It must embrace everything." True to this belief, a significant portion of Mahler's compositional energies were spent transforming the staid notion of the traditional symphony into a sound world of

gargantuan proportions. He completed nine numbered symphonies between 1889 and his premature death in 1911, all but a few of which were massive in their scope, concept, and orchestration. Few composers since have matched his grand idea of the symphony as an all-encompassing musical vessel.

By the time Mahler reached his mid-thirties, he was fully engaged in a successful conducting career. However, the relentless schedule and administrative duties that accompanied his posts during the season brought Mahler to the realization that his summers were the only time that he could fully commit himself to serious composing. Mahler had a small hut built in the summer of 1894 in Steinbach am Attersee, outside of the bustling city of Salzburg, Austria. The modest structure was immediately adjacent to the lake and a sprawling meadow, and in view of the magnificent mountains in the distance. There he could isolate himself from all distraction and focus only on composing. With strict instructions that he not be disturbed unless the door to the hut was open, he would awaken at 6:30 each morning, take his breakfast in the hut, and begin work, generally only taking breaks in the afternoon to read, nap, or walk in the idyllic countryside. The music brewing inside Mahler during this furtive time was deeply connected to these beautiful and peaceful surroundings and would form the foundation of his monumental Third Symphony.

Mahler had a grand vision for a work that would indeed encompass the world in a very literal sense, embodying all that made up both the physical and spiritual environment around him. The germ for the symphony began with a song, as was often the case for the composer. A few years earlier, Mahler had set the poem “Das himmlische Leben” (“The Heavenly Life”) from one of his favorite collection of German folk poems, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Youth’s Magic Horn*). He envisioned this song as the final movement of a symphony that explored the elements of nature before ending with this child’s vision of the heavens. This was the music in his ear as he retreated to his hut on the banks of the Attersee in the summer of 1895 to start his new symphony. He began that summer by composing a new tone picture of the meadow that sat next to his little abode, a gentle minuet the composer described as “the most carefree thing that I have ever written—as carefree as only flowers are. It all sways and waves in the air [. . .] like flowers bending on their stems in the wind.” Other movements then began to evolve that summer, and an unconventional symphonic shape emerged. As he wrote about the symphony to his close friend, violinist and violist Natalie Bauer-Lechner, “It’s not really appropriate to call it a symphony, for it doesn’t stick to the traditional form at all. But ‘symphony’ means to me building a world with all the resources of the available techniques.” Mahler’s emerging vision was that his symphony should follow the evolution and hierarchy of nature itself: from flowers, to animals, to man, to angels, and eventually, to God. Each of these elements of nature were to be represented in their own movement, and by the end of the summer of 1895, Mahler had settled on the following seven-movement structure:

Symphony No. 3

The Joyful Science (Die fröhliche Wissenschaft)

A Summer Morning’s Dream

- I. Summer marches in.
- II. What the flowers in the meadow tell me.
- III. What the beasts of the forest tell me.
- IV. What the night tells me. (Alto solo.) [Mankind]
- V. What the morning bells tell me. (Women’s chorus with alto solo.) [The Angels]
- VI. What love tells me. (Motto: “Father, behold these wounds of mine! Let no creature be unredeemed!” from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*)
- VII. Heavenly life. [*Das himmlische Leben.*] (Soprano solo, humorous.)

The proposed title of the symphony, *The Joyful Science*, came from Friedrich Nietzsche's book of the same name. Although Mahler had fussed quite a bit with the structure that summer, the order of the central movements and musical evolution of the entire piece had taken shape by August. However, Mahler had yet to compose the opening movement of the work. He set about that task the following summer, with a vision of Pan, the god of all nature and companion to the nymphs, marching in to awaken the natural forces that would be explored in the successive movements. He was reinvigorated by the start of his composing season and by revisiting his symphony in progress, and what resulted from that summer's labor was a symphonic movement on a scale unrivaled by any other in the repertoire. When Mahler finished composing his opening chapter to the Symphony No. 3, it was nearly a work unto itself. Beginning with a bold declaration by eight horns in unison and moving through an incredibly varied succession of brilliant marches and passionate interludes, the first movement alone clocked in at nearly thirty-five minutes and served as a detailed introduction to every aspect of the Symphony that followed. He wrote again to Bauer-Lechner about the movement:

It has almost ceased to be music; it is hardly anything but sounds of nature. I could equally well have called the movement "What the mountain tells me"—it's eerie, the way life gradually breaks through, out of soul-less, rigid matter. And, as this life rises from stage to stage, it takes on ever more highly developed forms: flowers, beasts, man, up to the sphere of the spirits, the "angels." Over the introduction to this movement, there lies again that atmosphere of brooding summer midday heat; not a breath stirs, all life is suspended, and the sun-drenched air trembles and vibrates. At intervals there come the moans of the youth—that is, captive life—struggling for release from the clutches of lifeless, rigid Nature. At last he breaks through and triumphs.

Although this opening movement was completed last, its inclusion changed Mahler's view of his entire symphony. It no longer seemed musically appropriate to end with the child's song that had begun his entire creative process; rather, the intensely emotional Adagio that now occupied the sixth chapter of the symphony became the perfect culmination of the movements that preceded it. The seventh movement was dropped from the symphony altogether, and the song "Das himmlische Leben" would eventually become the finale of the Symphony No. 4. Mahler subtitled the now-final Adagio movement "What love tells me," but would explain once again to Bauer-Lechner that he could have just as well entitled this music, "'What God tells me,' in the sense that God can only be comprehended as love." Both rapturous and elegiac at times, the deeply-felt lines within this movement are among the most emotionally charged of any of Mahler's individual symphonic movements, and by the end of that summer of 1896, it was the culmination of the thirty-six-year-old composer's intense feelings about the natural world around him and his own personal sense of spirituality.

Mahler's completed opus was the longest symphony of the nine he composed, a performance generally lasting nearly ninety minutes. It was finally cast in two main parts, with the colossal first movement serving as Part One, and the composer calling for a long break for both audience and musicians before continuing with Part Two, which encompassed the rest of the work. Shortly after he finished the symphony, Mahler decided to eliminate the title he borrowed from Nietzsche as well as all references to the specific elements of nature that had served as his compositional muses. He listed the movements only by their generic tempo markings; however, these descriptive dedications have since been restored, giving the listener a vivid glimpse into the composer's inspirational depths.

When the legendary conductor Bruno Walter went to visit Steinbach am Attersee in the summer of 1896, when Mahler was fully immersed in the composition of the symphony, Walter stopped to admire the beautiful mountains. Mahler said, "No need to look. I have composed all this already," and then played through the score for Walter at the piano. "His whole being seemed to breathe a mysterious affinity with the forces of nature," Walter later wrote, "I saw him as Pan."