

## Good example

The off-campus concert I chose to attend was Mahler's *Symphony No. 3 in D Minor* performed by The San Diego Symphony, on November 3, 2007. The venue was the Copley Symphony Hall in San Diego, CA. I arrived early and was cautioned several times that there would be no intermission. As I sat down, I immediately noticed just a few musicians on the stage starting to warm up in this beautiful room decorated with renaissance touches. Listening to the various individual instruments being tuned was the perfect backdrop to reading through the program.

I learned that the composer, Gustav Mahler, wrote this symphony in the summer of 1896. Mahler essentially said this symphony reflected the magnificent scenery of the Alps and was born out of his love of nature. This symphony was written in six movements, which surprised me as I expected it to have four movements. I also noted the first and last movements would be quite long with shorter movements in the middle. Much to my delight, the fourth and fifth movements would include singing. As more musicians entered the stage, I sensed this would be a very interesting and complicated symphony.

The symphony was announced with two requests; that the audience was to hold all applause until the very end of the entire symphony and that we not leave our seats during the very short breaks between the movements. The first movement began with horns calling out with strings joining in a plucking sound like "ZZZ" along with a steady beat of a drum which reminded me of the rhythm of a "heartbeat." As this continued, various instruments would enter into the music, as though they were being introduced individually until all the instruments were playing together. As I watched this long frenzy of both the conductor and musicians moving so quickly, I felt a bit overwhelmed and relieved by the ending *crescendo*. Knowing that Mahler

indicated this first movement is symbolic of Pan (a god) awakening, I heard and understood his idea of how the elements of nature combine over time to create a very noisy and chaotic world.

The second and third movements were somewhat similar in timbre. The minor key and color of the music were much more subdued. There were quite a few solos throughout these movements by horn and violins. Again, the violins were often plucked with the bow as opposed to the long smooth strokes I have seen in the past. I also heard some alternating repeating melodies that sound like the “call” and “answer” pattern. The third movement also ended in a very loud *crescendo*.

At the start of the fourth movement, a children’s choir and soloist entered and took their places on the stage. A women’s choir entered the hall and about 50 women stood on each side of aisles next to the audience. This set up of vocalists added a very interesting, almost interactive element to the concert. The songs were sung in German but English words were shown. The song titled *Midnight Song* sung in the fourth movement spoke primarily of man’s pain in this world and the soloist was outstanding.

In the fifth movement, the song sung by the children’s and women’s choirs was a happy response about loving God and receiving joy for all time. The sixth and final movement was very slow and long with terraced dynamics, the music would start soft and graduate to a loud climate and then start again. The complexity and length of this final movement truly captured Mahler’s main theme of redemption as the symphony climaxes with every instrument playing the final note.

The overall texture of this whole symphony was very complex with only short breaks of instrumental solos or vocal solos. By the end of this concert, I completely understood why the conductor, Jahja Ling, noted that he had waited for the orchestra to develop to a mature point

before “testing them with this superb and moving music.” It was a remarkable achievement by all the musicians and singers. It was clear to me that each participant understood their role in the overall community and sacrificed any personal discomfort for the sake of the music. I could see their love of the music as each person performed. I loved this concert and was blessed to hear it.