

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

*Michael Tilson Thomas
Conducts Mahler*

Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Emily D'Angelo, mezzo-soprano

(2023/24 TSO Spotlight Artist)

Alban Berg
Seven Early Songs

- I. "Nacht" (Night) – Text by Carl Hauptmann
- II. "Schilflied" (Song amid the Reeds)
 - Text by Nikolaus Lenau
- III. "Die Nachtigall" (The Nightingale)
 - Text by Theodor Storm
- IV. "Traumgekrönt" (Crowned in Dream)
 - Text by Rainer Maria Rilke
- V. "Im Zimmer" (Indoors) – Text by Johannes Schlaf
- VI. "Liebesode" (Ode to Love) – Text by Otto Erich Hartleben
- VII. "Sommertage" (Summer Days) – Text by Paul Hohenberg

Intermission

Gustav Mahler
Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp Minor

Part I

- 1. Trauermarsch (Funeral march)
- 2. Stürmisch bewegt, mit größter Vehemenz
(Moving stormily, with the greatest vehemence)

Part II

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

Part III

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

Program 3

Wednesday,
November 22, 2023

8:00pm

Friday,
November 24, 2023

7:30pm

Saturday,
November 25, 2023

8:00pm

*Emily D'Angelo's
appearance is generously
supported by
John Goodhew and
Jeffrey Axelrod.*

Alban Berg (1885–1935)

Seven Early Songs

Composed 1905–1908

17 min

BERG'S FIRST COMPOSITIONS were dozens of songs that he created from 1900 to 1905. He wrote them without having received any kind of musical training. He began taking lessons with composer Arnold Schoenberg in 1904, when Berg was 19 and Schoenberg was 30. Schoenberg was immediately struck by the younger man's potential, and Berg found in Schoenberg not only a composition teacher but a model, mentor, and surrogate father. When Berg began to compose the music that he later referred to as the *Seven Early Songs*, he and Schoenberg had known each other for only a year, but the stimulating lessons Schoenberg was giving him were already helping him to compose more sophisticated and more individual music.

While Berg was composing the *Seven Early Songs*, Schoenberg underwent radical changes in style, from the late-Romanticism of Brahms, Mahler, and Strauss to the first examples of a new and brutally dramatic "expressionist" style. His pupils, Berg and Anton Webern, would later follow him along the path to abandoning traditional ideas of

key signatures (atonality) and relationships between notes (serialism).

In 1928, by which time Berg had fully adopted serial technique, he looked back to his early works and selected the pieces that make up the *Seven Early Songs*. He revised them and orchestrated the original piano accompaniments. As Mahler had done with many of his own songs, Berg imaginatively varied the size and constitution of the scoring, from full orchestra to strings or winds alone. Composed 20 or more years

previously, they lie on the cusp that straddles traditional late-Romanticism and Modernism.

He didn't consider them a cycle but at least one idea runs through them: they are all passionate, dream-like love songs. The first two pieces, "Nacht" ("Night") and "Schilflied" ("Song amid the Reeds"), are melancholy nocturnes, while "Die Nachtigall" ("The Nightingale") adopts a warmer tone to portray a lover.

Berg's use of a string orchestra heightens

the emotional glow. "Im Zimmer" ("Indoors") shows a contented pair of lovers by the fireside. The final song, "Sommertage" ("Summer Days"), is the most ecstatic of the set, rising to a grandly emotional climax.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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Alban Berg—by Dane Thibeault

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp Minor

Composed 1901–1903

74 min

IN HIS FIFTH SYMPHONY, Mahler returned to “absolute” symphonic music that did not rely on vocal parts, descriptive titles, or tone-painting. The five movements are arranged symmetrically: two slow-fast pairs (Parts I and III) frame a central *Scherzo* (Part II). The paired movements are intimately related: the second is effectively a development of the first, and the *Finale* draws a theme from the *Adagietto*. But the framing parts are polar opposites: Part I is a profound two-act tragedy in which every effort to dispel the prevailing grief and torment fails, while Part III is so genial that it can seem contrived or incongruous. Part II is transitional, hinting at both the anguish of Part I’s *Trauermarsch* (*Funeral March*) and the resolution of the *Finale*.

The *Trauermarsch* is based on two ideas, both featuring the dotted rhythms traditionally associated with funeral marches. Grim, ceremonial fanfares (trumpet) lead to a long, mournful melody (strings) that has been dubbed a “song of sorrow.” The second movement revisits the life-and-death struggles of the *Trauermarsch* in a turbulent new setting. The music is unstable, forever being wrenched in new directions, surging up furiously only to collapse in frustration and exhaustion.



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Gustav Mahler—by Dane Thibeault

The astonishingly novel *Scherzo* is explicitly Austrian in character, though without Mahler’s usual unmistakable whiff of parody or caricature. Mahler offers dances both rustic and urbane: the opening theme is a homely *ländler*, to which a little fugato is appended; later, the violins introduce a slower, gentler Viennese waltz. As the movement unfolds, all three ideas crop up unpredictably, invading each other’s territory, ceaselessly varied, fragmented, and distorted, often in dense, harmonically unstable counterpoint. A series of innocent dances eventually becomes a savage Dance of Death.

The tender *Adagietto* has long been misconstrued as funereal or valedictory. In fact, it is a kind of “song without words” apparently conceived as a token of love: in the fall of 1901, Mahler sent the score to Alma Schindler, with whom he had recently fallen in love (they married in March 1902). The *Finale*, though episodic, is far more ambitious and powerful than its modest title, *Rondo*, suggests. Near the end of this good-natured movement, a chorale melody that had been hinted at in the second movement reappears in a blaze of brass—the affirmation to which the symphony has aspired. This accomplished, the work comes quickly to a close with a final display of contrapuntal ingenuity and a few bars of what sounds suspiciously like raucous laughter.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor

Michael Tilson Thomas made his TSO début in January 1978.

Michael Tilson Thomas is the Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony, Conductor Laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra, and Co-Founder and Artistic Director Laureate of the New World Symphony. He is a 12-time GRAMMY® Award winner and has conducted the major orchestras of Europe and the United States.

Born in Los Angeles, he studied conducting and composition with Ingolf Dahl at the University of Southern California and, as a young musician, worked with artists including Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland. In his mid-20s, he became Assistant Conductor—and later Principal Guest Conductor—of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He subsequently served as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

In 1987, he co-founded the New World Symphony, a postgraduate orchestral academy in Miami Beach dedicated to preparing young musicians of diverse backgrounds for leadership roles in classical music. He became Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony in 1995, ushering in a period of significant growth and heightened international recognition for the orchestra. He led SFS in championing contemporary and American composers alongside classical masters, and, as Music Director Laureate, he returns to conduct the orchestra each season.

His discography includes more than 120 recordings, and his television work includes series for the BBC and PBS, the New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts, and numerous televised performances. He is an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France, member of the American Academies of Arts & Sciences and Arts & Letters, National Medal of Arts recipient, and 2019 Kennedy Center Honoree.



Emily D'Angelo, mezzo-soprano (2023/24 TSO Spotlight Artist)

Emily D'Angelo made her TSO début in February 2011.

Hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the world's special young singers," Emily D'Angelo has continued her meteoric rise and firmly established herself as one of the most exciting and critically acclaimed artists of her generation. Called "wondrous and powerful" by *The New York Times* for her recent US recital début, the mezzo-soprano is the first and only vocalist to have been presented with the Leonard Bernstein Award from the Schleswig-Holstein Festival. A 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist, one of CBC's "Top 30 Under 30" Canadian

classical musicians, and among WQXR NYC Public Radio's "40 Under 40" singers to watch, D'Angelo made her stage début, at only 21 years of age, as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Spoleto's Festival dei Due Mondi, where she was awarded the 2016 Monini Prize.

In past seasons, Emily D'Angelo made a string of widely acclaimed role and house débuts, further cementing her status as one of today's most sought-after performers. As a Deutsche Grammophon exclusive recording artist, her début album, *enargeia*, was named one of the 50 best albums of 2021 by NPR and the best Canadian classical album of 2021 by the CBC, and received JUNO and Gramophone Awards in 2022.