



Matthias Conducts Mahler: Symphony No. 7

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23**

**MATTHIAS PINTSCHER,
MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR**

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center
for the Performing Arts



**KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY**

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Matthias Conducts Mahler: Symphony No. 7



Friday, November 21, 2025 at 8 p.m. (SYMPHONIC PIAZZA)

Saturday, November 22, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 23, 2025 at 2 p.m.

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony No. 7 in E Minor

I. Langsam — Allegro

II. Nachtmusik I

III. Scherzo: Schattenhaft

IV. Nachtmusik II

V. Rondo-Finale

Matthias Pintscher

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Matthias Pintscher is the newly appointed music director of the Kansas City Symphony as of the 2024/25 season. He launched his tenure with a highly successful tour with the orchestra to Europe just before opening the season in Kansas City, with concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonie and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include the world premiere of Pintscher's new opera *Das kalte Herz* by the Berlin State Opera, which he composed and will conduct and which will reprise in a French version titled *Nuit sans aube* at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in the same season. He returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra and will be in his sixth year as creative partner at the Cincinnati Symphony.



Pintscher was formerly the music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and has held several titled positions, including nine seasons as BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-association, principal conductor of the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra, music director for the 2020 Ojai Festival and season creative chair with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Pintscher's music is championed by some of today's finest performing artists, orchestras and conductors, and has been performed by the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris, among many others. He has been on the composition faculty at the Juilliard School since 2014.

Matthias Pintscher is published exclusively by Bärenreiter and recordings of his works can be found on Kairos, EMI, Teldec, Wergo and Winter & Winter.

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY CLASSICAL CONCERTS

Brahms' Fourth Symphony

Friday, January 9, 2026 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, January 10, 2026 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Roderick Cox, guest conductor

Avery Gagliano, piano (Almy Legacy Fund)

SAMUEL BARBER Essay No. 2

CLARA SCHUMANN Piano Concerto

JOHANNES BRAHMS Symphony No. 4



Roderick Cox

Pines of Rome and Bruch's Second Violin Concerto



Jun Iwasaki

Friday, January 16, 2026 at 8 p.m. (SYMPHONIC PIAZZA)

Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Kevin John Edusei, guest conductor

Jun Iwasaki, violin

SAMY MOUSSA *Elysium*

MAX BRUCH Violin Concerto No. 2

OTTORINO RESPIGHI *Fountains of Rome*

OTTORINO RESPIGHI *Pines of Rome*

Beethoven and Beyond

Friday, January 30, 2026 at 8 p.m. (SYMPHONIC PIAZZA)

Saturday, January 31, 2026 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, February 1, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Tamara Stefanovich, piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 2

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4



Tamara Stefanovich

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Symphony No. 7 in E Minor (1905)

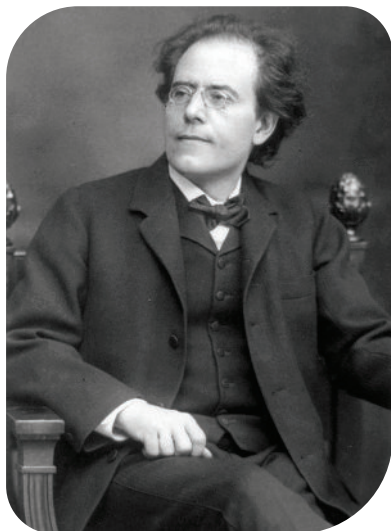
GUSTAV MAHLER
(1860-1911)

80 MINUTES

2 piccolos, 4 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, tenor horn, guitar, mandolin, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, deep bells, glockenspiel, herdbells, rute, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, 2 harps and strings.

THE STORY

Gustav Mahler's life story could have been a tale of two different men, with his Seventh Symphony, completed in 1906, as the linchpin.



While he was writing and orchestrating the Seventh Symphony, everything was going well. He was married with two young daughters. He was an international star as a conductor and had reached his ultimate goal of being appointed the music director at the Vienna Hofoper, one of the most prestigious conducting positions in the world at that time. He was finally starting to get recognition as a composer as well on the strength of his first five symphonies. Every summer he declined all conducting appointments in order to retreat to Maiernigg in the south Austrian countryside, where he had a composing hut (and a large villa) on the shores of a lake and could work uninterrupted all summer long in an idyllic setting.

In the summer of 1904 at Maiernigg, he completed the Sixth Symphony and sketched out the second and fourth movements of the Seventh (the *Nachtmusik* or night-music movements). In the summer of 1905, he worked intensively on the Seventh and completed the composition in August, with the full orchestration finished in the summer of 1906.

The following year was when the tide turned. The musical community in Vienna became increasingly anti-Semitic and increasingly vocal

against Mahler, who was Jewish (even though he had converted earlier, at least outwardly, to Catholicism in order to take the Hofoper post in the first place). They ran a press campaign to pressure him to step down, and between that hostility and his disputes with both the stagehands and the administrators of the theatre, Mahler resigned the post he prized so highly and conducted his final performance there in October 1907. That summer, he had taken his family to Maiernigg; both of his daughters came down with scarlet fever and diphtheria, and his first daughter, who was only 4 years old, died. Immediately after this, Mahler himself received the diagnosis that he had an incurable heart defect. (This defect led to the bacterial endocarditis that was to kill him four years later.)

The Seventh Symphony was premiered in Prague in September 1908.

Mahler conducted and the audience included noted conductors Artur Bodanzky, Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter. He was anxious about its reception, and his anxiety was well-founded, as not only the audience but even the musicians performing the symphony found it difficult and confusing. Without the benefit of a clear story or any vocal elements with words, the extreme contrasts and modernist harmonies left everyone not quite sure what to make of the new work.



Mahler's second composing hut, at Maiernigg (near Klagenfurt), on the shores of the Wörthersee in Carinthia. Image by OboeCrack - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10099937>.

Mahler did have one important admirer at a subsequent performance, though. The young composer Arnold Schoenberg heard the piece in 1909 and wrote to Mahler, "It was an extraordinarily great treat. I simply cannot understand how I was not won over to this before." Schoenberg, who was later to pioneer the twelve-tone technique of atonal music, appreciated Mahler's abandonment of both an explicit storyline and the hyperemotionalism of late Romantic music. But for quite some time, he was one of only a few who understood and applauded what Mahler accomplished in the Seventh Symphony.

THE MUSIC

Even to this day, the Seventh Symphony is one of Mahler's least-performed and least-recorded works. Disjointed contrasts of mood and tempo, ambiguous chords built on the interval of a fourth instead of the usual third, unusual and innovative orchestration, constant conflict between major and minor, complicated counterpoint with multiple melodies playing at once and high and low sounds at the extreme ends of the orchestra all contribute to the symphony's reputation. But they also add to the mystique and the atmosphere of a symphony nicknamed (though not by Mahler) the "Song of the Night".

The symphony has a symmetrical structure with the shortest movement in the middle, two slightly longer "Nachtmusik" movements on either side of it, and the longest movements in the first and last spots.

The first movement, described by Mahler as "a tragic night without stars or moonlight," begins with a slow introduction akin to a funeral march. The rhythm of the accompaniment and the atmosphere of the introduction allegedly came to him while rowing across the lake on the way to his Maiernigg villa. The harmonic ambiguity begins right away, with the first chord of the accompaniment and with the opening melody (originally written for an unusual instrument called a tenor horn and played today by a euphonium, like a small tuba). Sharp dynamic contrasts are also in evidence within the first minute of the piece.

The first theme proper, in a resolute E minor, is presented by four unison horns accompanied by high strings and woodwinds. The second theme is a meandering melody in the high violins, in a major key but with lots of chromatic inflections. The rest of the movement develops these themes, breaking them apart and combining and recombining them. In the middle of the movement, amidst horn and trumpet fanfares built on fourths (and reminiscent of the Star Trek theme), harp glissandos usher in a dreamy oasis of calm. But the calm does not last long and it ends abruptly in a recapitulation of the introduction and the main themes. The end of the movement comes rather abruptly as well and is in the unexpected key of E major.

The second movement, the first of the two titled "Nachtmusik," opens with hunting-horn calls, one marked "calling" and the other, muted, marked "answer," creating an echo effect. The idea of the movement is a night watchman on patrol, encountering indeterminate noises as well as distant cowbells, birdsong (played by the woodwind instruments) and an oom-pah-pah waltz (as the watchman pauses outside a ballroom window, perhaps?). Accordingly the movement has the character of a march. The music continually shifts between major and minor, often within the course of a single melodic phrase.

The “shadowy scherzo” features a ghostly waltz that also can’t seem to decide between major and minor. A contrasting center section is introduced by the oboes, but that lasts all of 45 seconds before a solo viola strikes up another dance. The waltz from the beginning returns and eventually sputters out. Some listeners hear this movement as Mahler morbidly and sarcastically mocking the Viennese waltz.

The fourth movement brings the “Nachtmusik” back, this time with the tempo marking “Andante amoroso.” The unusual additions of guitar and mandolin evoke the idea of a musician serenading a lover. The melody is sweeping and romantic (in both senses of the word), though there are still intrusions of dark minor chords that may suggest parody in a similar vein to the scherzo. The movement ends peacefully...

...which makes the spirited timpani solo at the start of the final movement almost startling. Mahler described this movement as “bright day,” and fanfares for drums and brass paint the picture vibrantly.

The movement is in the form of a rondo, in which the main section is repeated multiple times with “episodes” of contrasting material in between. Mahler alludes in the episodes to multiple other pieces of music, including three operas: Richard Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. The march from the first movement of the symphony also makes a reappearance. Even the main section comes back differently each time, as Mahler reorchestrates it, changes the rhythm and fragments it in different ways. He continually juxtaposes stark contrasts in instrumentation, tempo, key, mood, dynamics and more so you are kept on the edge of your seat.

Fittingly, this symphony that deals in constant contrasts has one last contrast and surprise in store at the very end. In the final return of the main theme, with brass blazing, bells clanking and strings whirling giddily, the chord the orchestra lands on is not the expected C major but instead C augmented, with a G-sharp instead of a G-natural. The brass alone hold this strange chord for a bar — and then with no further ado the full orchestra ends the movement and the symphony with a loud C major chord.

— AJ Harbison

INDIANA JONES

and the
**RAIDERS
OF THE LOST ARK**



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Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Nicholas Buc, guest conductor

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Kansas City Symphony

In only its 43rd season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians from around the world bring a diverse and dynamic range of musical experiences to our audiences in both orchestral and chamber music formats each season. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

Top international soloists perform with the Kansas City Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other creative performers. The Symphony also performs live soundtracks for a variety of fan-favorite films, with the movie projected on a giant screen above the stage.

Music connects us; it has the unique ability to draw us closer to our inner selves and also closer to one another, transcending our differences. Every Kansas City Symphony concert will take you on an emotional journey — a journey that's deeply personal but also a journey that we all experience together as one.

We're happy you are here. We are *your* Kansas City Symphony.

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