



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU Symphony Orchestra

Mahler, the Titan!

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

Generously sponsored by
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Friday, September 30, 2022
Cobb Great Hall, 8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Aere Perennius (2022)

Dinah Bianchi

*World Premiere:

(b. 1982)

The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project

Carrie Schafer and Joshua Harris, trumpet
Jennifer Omelas, horn; Nicolas Gonzalez, trombone
Ian Graves, tuba

something deeply hidden (2020)

David Biedenbender

(b. 1984)

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

Symphony No. 1 in D Major

Gustav Mahler

I. Langsam. Schleppend.

(1850–1911)

II. Kräftig, bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen

IV. Stürmisch bewegt

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project

***Aere Perennius*, Dinah Bianchi, world premiere:**

MSU Symphony Orchestra concerts will open with a newly written fanfare composed by a current composition student. The selected students are assigned to write short works for a diverse group of players giving them the opportunity to present their work with the Symphony Orchestra audience. The MSU Symphony Orchestra is grateful for this collaboration with the world-class MSU Composition Department and very thankful to all the composition faculty for their enthusiastic and unconditional support.

Originally written with the purpose of introducing Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*, *Aere Perennius* is an homage to the late composer's masterpiece. With the title meaning, more lasting than bronze, *Aere Perennius* reminds us all just how powerful and moving Verdi's music was and still is as it has undoubtedly withstood the test of time. If you listen closely slightly after the halfway point, you will hear the horn quote the opening bars of this magnificent work.

—Dinah Bianchi

***something deeply hidden*, David Biedenbender:**

something deeply hidden was commissioned by and written for Thomas Heuser and the San Juan Symphony with the support of The Durango Herald Newspaper to honor Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th Birthday. The title comes from a quote in Albert Einstein's *Autobiographical Notes*: "...Something deeply hidden had to be behind things." Music is a brief glimpse into our shared humanity, with all of its breathless beauty, all of its intense joy and deep sorrow, and all of its ugliness and violence too. In Beethoven's work, we get a glimpse of someone who felt especially deeply—a glimpse into a person whose passion and urgency and hope for what was possible in the world seemed to pour out of him like an endless fountain. One of my own first formative experiences with Classical music began with Beethoven, stumbling on to a dusty recording of his Fifth Symphony pulled from the discount bin of an electronics superstore that opened up a world of musical possibilities for me. In Beethoven's Third Symphony, *Eroica*, the heroic opening often gives way to music of heartrending melancholy, most notably in the funeral march of the second movement, revealing a darker meaning beneath the bright surface. I see Albert Einstein's pursuits in physics as related to Beethoven's—a continual searching for

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

something deeply hidden. For me, this piece is a parallel universe to *Eroica*—a musing that starts with some of the same musical material but takes it in a very different direction. The darker material of the funeral march opens the piece and is stretched and pulled, gradually revealing an even darker core that eventually churns and spins into light.

Symphony No. 1 in D Major, *Titan*, Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 1 in D Major is one of Mahler's most popular and frequently performed works. Mahler himself described the symphony as "the most spontaneous and daringly composed of my works". Mahler finished the original version of the symphony between late January 1887 and March 1888 and conducted its premiere himself in Budapest, where he was appointed Artistic Director of the Royal Hungarian Opera. The work was initially introduced as a "Symphonic Poem in two parts" and five movements. However, due to its sophisticated structure and progressive musical techniques, it received harsh criticism from the audience in the Budapest premier. Thus, Mahler started making alterations over the three following performances in Hamburg, Weimar, and Berlin. Inspired by the novel with the same name by Jean Paul Richter, he added the title "*Titan, a Tone Poem in Symphonic Form*", as well as subtitles and detailed program notes to each of the movements while also reworking some of the musical material. However, the composer eventually found the descriptive titles anti-musical and anti-artistic, removing them from the final version and cutting the original 2nd movement titled *Blumine*, and simply calling the work "Symphony in four movements in D Major for large orchestra" and published the work under this standard format.

As in many of Mahler's works, nature, human experience, and philosophical concepts abound in Mahler's 1st Symphony. In the symphony, he reused musical materials from his other works, prominently from his song cycle *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*) which he wrote in the wake of his unrequited love for the soprano Johanna Richter. Mahler even goes further with inspirational resources and quotes themes from other composers' works including Liszt's *Dante Symphony*, Wagner's *Parsifal*, and Handel's *Messiah*. According to the composer, "A symphony must be like the world. It must contain everything." The first symphony, with nature-like sounds, peaceful melodies that soon transform into terrifying musical gestures, parodical peasant

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

dances, ironic funeral marches, triumphant marches, and some of the most beautiful and delicate moments ever written, do contain everything humans can experience, a whole world in the form of a symphony.

The first movement begins with a slow and minimalist introduction in A Minor. On the first page of the score, it is written, “Like the sound of nature”, and according to the composer, this movement represents, “Nature’s awakening from its long winter sleep”. A sustained quiet tone (A), expanded over seven octaves through the string section, sets the scene. Through this morning mist gradually little motives come to life and become more visible as the morning haze settles: a repeated descending motif based on an interval of a fourth, a distant fanfare-like material and a cuckoo call, also based on the descending fourth interval. These short yet key ideas offer the building material for the rest of the movement as well for other melodies that appear later in the symphony. After a gentle chorale heard in the horns, the first theme gradually comes to life: A walking theme in the cello section adopted from the second song of his *Wayfarer cycle* opens the exposition in D Major. Fragments of this walking-like theme are passed through different sections and keys and after a brief climax the whole exposition is repeated again. Then the tempo subsides and the development section starts in much the same manner as the introduction while also introducing two new themes: A leisurely walking tune in horns followed by a lyrical sliding melody in the cellos. The tension gradually builds up, the texture gets thicker, the rhythm constant and persistent, leading to a frantic brass fanfare that announces the start of the recapitulation. After hearing the now-familiar tunes in the home key of D Major, ultimately, the kuku motif, this time wild and almost out of control, takes over in the final measures of the movement and a brief coda ends the movement energetically. In the composer’s own words: “My hero breaks out in laughter and runs away.” Presumably this hero refers to the “Titan” temporarily indicated by Mahler’s short-lived title for the symphony.

The second movement is a Scherzo and Trio and contains the briefest and simplest music of the symphony. Conventionally, the Scherzo would be the third movement and the slow movement the second, Mahler switched that order in his 1st Symphony as Beethoven did in his 9th Symphony. For the scherzo, Mahler uses a *Ländler*, a traditional Austrian waltz, instead of the traditional

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Viennese waltz. This robust peasant dance in A Major is based on the composer's previously written song, *Hans und Grethe* (1880), and was likely inspired by his rural Bohemian childhood. Soon the excitement of the dance increases by the clattering sounds of violas and cellos striking the strings with the wooden part of their bows, the tempo quickens, and a solo Horn melody connects the scherzo to the next slower trio section. Then the tempo quickens to a halt and a lonely solo horn melody, echoing the introduction, connects the Scherzo to the next slower Trio section. In contrast to the first dance, the second one is very sentimental in the key of F Major with coquettish glissandos in the strings and tipsy dissonant harmonies in the woodwinds. Another solo horn figure announces the return of the Scherzo and brings back the excitement of the Scherzo. The tempo accelerates again and the Ländler motive, shortened and orchestrated more heavily, is repeated six times to close the movement with huge cheers.

When it was first premiered, the third movement confused and outraged the audience. The composer took a well-known simple and innocent German nursing song *Brüder Martin* ("Are you sleeping") and transformed it into a funeral march. As if transforming this innocent song into a somber funeral dirge would not be enough, the melody first appears in a solo contrabass, one of the lowest instruments in the orchestra, and definitely not the one the audience expected. In the early program notes, this movement was titled a *Funeral march in Callot's style*, referring to a famous satirical anti-war painting by Jacques Callot in which the forest animals accompany a dead hunter's coffin to the grave with mocking sorrow. While the tune is imitated quietly by other low register instruments including cellos, solo bassoon, and solo tuba, a defying countermelody appears in the oboe and E-flat clarinet. The procession continues quietly over the rumblings of the tam-tam, and a crying melody in oboes, responded by trumpets, makes the funeral more mournful. The lamentation is, however, interrupted by an up-tempo tavern music marked "with parody" in the score which resembles the Jewish klezmer music Mahler was exposed to in his father's tavern as a kid. Then in the middle of all this chaos, Mahler offers a simple and pristine section in G Major based on another melody from his *Wayfarer* song collection called "The Two Blue Eyes of My Sweetheart" in which the unhappy lover finds peace and comfort under a linden tree. From the heart of this

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beautiful melody, the funeral music reappears smoothly and is interrupted by the Jewish dance two more times. Mahler nonetheless soon sorts things out, and the music fades away as if the procession was disappearing in the distance.

As the third movement imperceptibly fades away, a “bolt of lightning, ripping from a black cloud” gives way to the stormily agitated finale in the remote and dark key of F Minor. The strings continue frantically and soon we hear fragments of the first main theme appearing forcefully in the brass. Eventually, the main theme is presented fully by the woodwinds and horns: A modified version of a Gregorian chant named “Crux fidelis” (“Faithful Cross”) that Liszt frequently used in his music to symbolize the crucifix. After a huge climax which is reinforced with roaring brass fanfares, the exhausted storm fades out and a contrasting second theme appears in the strings: very songlike and lyrical in the key of D-flat Major. After introducing the main themes, the development section opens with another storm-like passage based on the first theme interwoven with a descending chromatic line taken from Liszt’s *Dante Symphony*. When the storm is gone, Mahler brings back memories of the nature theme, the kuku call and the fanfare from the first movement in the Beethovenian manner. By the end, paradise is reached through a brilliant coda in the key of D Major. Following Mahler’s instructions, the seven horn players rise to their feet to celebrate this triumph with another theme based on the now-famous interval of the fourth. According to the composer, “Only when the hero has triumphed over death, and when all the glorious memories of youth have returned with themes from the first movement, does he get the upper hand, and there is a great victorious chorale.”

–Asieh Mahyar

ARTIST-FACULTY BIOS

Octavio Más-Arocas is the Director of Orchestras at Michigan State University. He is the Music Director and Conductor of the Mansfield Symphony in Ohio, the Marquette Symphony in Michigan, the Clinton Symphony in New York, and Conductor-in-Residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California. Previous positions include Principal Conductor of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the Unicamp Symphony Orchestra in Brazil, Director of Orchestras at Ithaca College, Lawrence University, Baldwin Wallace University, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy. He has also been Resident-Conductor of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival and Assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra.

An award-winning conductor, Más-Arocas was chosen by Kurt Masur for the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Award working as Maestro Masur's assistant with the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Helsinki Radio orchestras. Más-Arocas is the winner of the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen, the Thelma A. Robinson Award from the Conductors Guild, Prize Winner of the Third European Conductors Competition, and winner of the National Youth Orchestra of Spain Conductors Competition, has appeared with orchestras across North and South America and Europe, and has taught workshops and masterclasses in the USA, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil.

COMPOSER BIOS

Composer **David Biedenbender** has written music for the concert stage as well as for dance and multimedia collaborations, and his work is often influenced by his diverse musical experiences in rock and jazz bands as a bassist, in wind, jazz, and New Orleans-style brass bands as a euphonium, trombone, and tuba player, and by study of Indian Carnatic Music. His present creative interests include working with everyone from classically trained musicians to improvisers, acoustic chamber music to large ensembles, and interactive electronic interfaces to live brain data. He has had the privilege of collaborating with and being commissioned by many renowned performers and ensembles, including Alarm Will Sound, the PRISM Saxophone Quartet, the Albany Symphony Orchestra, the Stenhammar String Quartet, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the U.S. Navy Band, Philharmonie Baden-Baden (Germany), VocalEssence, and the Eastman Wind Ensemble, among many others. He is currently Associate Professor of Composition in the College of Music at Michigan State University, and he holds degrees in composition from the University of Michigan and Central Michigan University. He has also studied at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, the Aspen Music Festival, and in India where he studied carnatic music. For more information, visit: www.davidbiedenbender.com

Michigan composer **Dinah Bianchi** seeks to create vibrantly exciting music; music that is sublime, beautiful and with the communicative power that drives the imaginative spirit of all artists. She is well versed in a variety of musical genres with a portfolio that includes music for orchestra, concert band, string ensemble, chamber ensemble, solo works, as well as electronic music. Bianchi's compositions have received numerous recognitions. Recently, her orchestral work, "Into the Sky", received a 2022 Global Music Award. Following in the same light, Bianchi's band work, "Snowflakes in April", received Honorable Mention in the Professional Division of the 2022 American Prize. Well received both nationally and internationally, Bianchi's music has been performed in concert halls located in Europe, Asia, and the United States. Recently, she completed a recording session for "Chasse Noir" with the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra in the Czech Republic. The recording was released in August of 2022.

PERSONNEL

Violin I

Xinyu Zhu *
Stefan Hubenov
Sage Rosales
Arianna Argentieri
Yuanmiao Li
Gerson Medina
Maria Skidmore
Geunyoung Kim
Farangiz Takhirova
Ethan Davidson
Xiaoding Shen
Wen-Yi Lo

Violin II

Natasha Kubit *
Ruilin Chen
Edgar Querales
Hsin-Jen Yang
Alirna Korieva
Yiwen Zhang
Colin Davidson
Thomas Shahbaghyan
Ashwin Innuganti
Tess Peckman
Chenxi Zhou
Hunter Shoemaker

Viola

Yi-Pei Lin *
Zhen Huang
Gafur Nartadjiev
Emmett Henry
Gabriela Saraí
Aboites Nuñez
Kunjie Chai
Aidan Chapman-Anderson
Ye Bai
Madison Hilborn
Jamie Kasper

Cello

Yukyung Na *
Mira Cheng
Imjeong Choi
Po-Chen Chang
Zhang Zhang
Yu-Chen Lin
Wenqi Ma
Yi-Chen Ke
Yu-Hsin Wu

Bass

Wen Peng *
Eli Hilborn
Albert Daschle
Shaun Rogers
Bakari Williams
Jake Weichert
Adrienne Evans
Zhenle Tao

Flute

Josean Delgado
Tzu-Shan Fu +
Ivo Shin *
Kim Stewart

Oboe

Chia-Yu Ko *
Lauren O'Connor +
Jones Sabal
Robin Vorkink

Clarinet

Andrew Buckley
Guangzhao Huang *
Taewoo Kim +
Lei Min

Bassoon

Aidan Binford
Olivia Fletcher *
Finn McCune +

Horn

Becca Frederick *
Dylan Grace
Dashon Haye
August Kuhlman +
Drew LaCommare
Jennifer Ornelas
Katherine Pilbeam
Jonah Weber

Trumpet

Chase Domke
Ryan Evans
Joshua Harris +
Carrie Schafer *
Spencer Clark

Trombone

Austin Blower +
Nicolas Gonzalez *
Elizabeth Simpson,
Bass
John Robinson

Tuba

Ian Graves

Percussion

Mei-Shyuan Chiou
Cory Doran
Catherine Lee *
Taryn Parry
Ethan Strickland

Harp

Katelynn Ehlert

Assistant Conductors

Asieh Mahyar
Sally Yu

Librarians

Ursula Glasmacher
Catherine Lee

*Denotes Principal

+Denotes Principal

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