

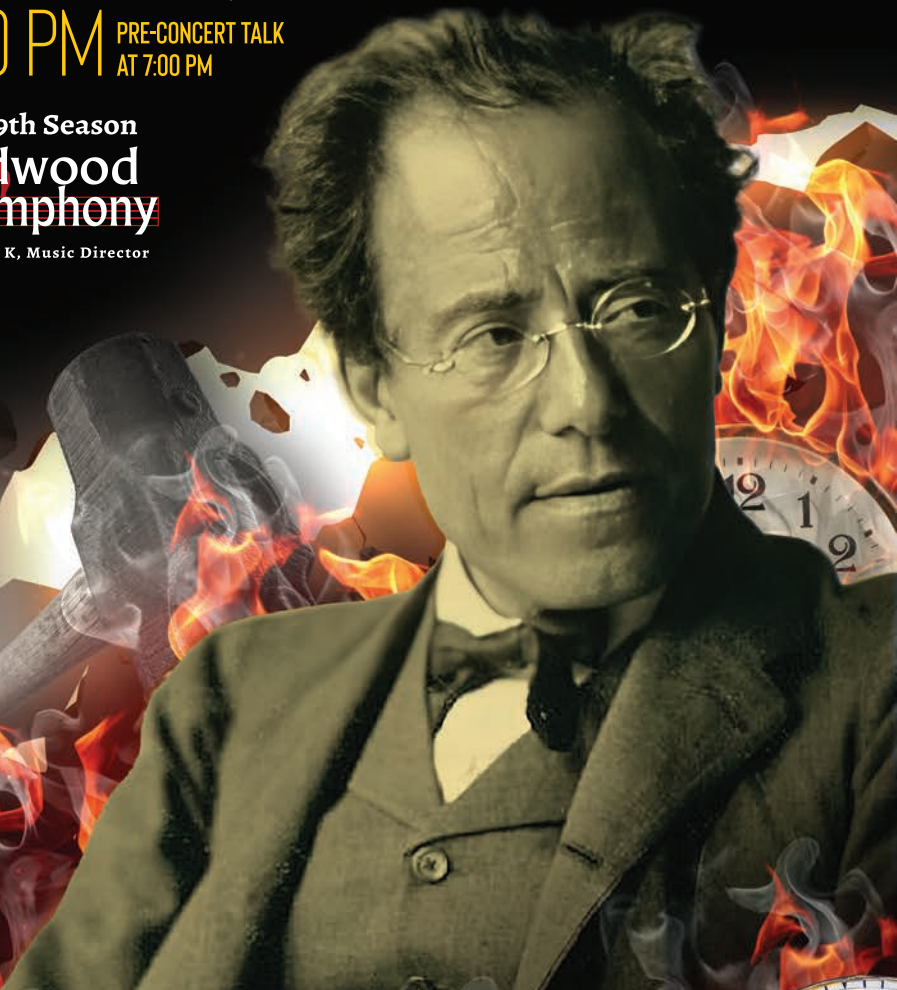
MAHLER'S "TRAGIC" SYMPHONY

MAHLER:
SYMPHONY NO. 6
ERIC K., CONDUCTOR

FEBRUARY 10, 2024

8:00 PM PRE-CONCERT TALK
AT 7:00 PM

39th Season
**Redwood
Symphony**
Eric K., Music Director



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REDWOOD SYMPHONY

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 Greer Hoffmann
 Kathy Kaufmann L
 Karen Kenrick
 Benjamin Ko L
 Tommy Kuo
 Leah Lader
 Sarah Lee A
 Jason Lin
 Koki Nishimura
 Franky Ohlinger A
 Shira Sanghvi
 Caren Shapiro
 Leslie Xu A
 Chris Yeh
 Victor Zhang A

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Celestine B. Jones Chair
 Kathrin Berkner-Cieslicki
 Katie Clark A
 Ayaka Enomoto A
 Catherine Habiger L
 Diane Honda
 Romain Kang
 Jennifer Lawry L
 Kristin Link
 Joyce Malick
 Navid Mir A
 Sebastian Pollack A
 Grace Reim
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 Ann Yvonne Walker

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Brian Swager

Celesta

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* = principal
 L = on leave
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 Skyler Litz
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 Kim Williams
 James Woodward A

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 Lynda Bloomquist L
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 Ismael Jaffri
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Woo Zanoni Family Chair
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 Lynn Lightsey
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 Ann Wharton A

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Michael Odynski *
 David Allan A
 Gianna Colombo A
 Momo Hashi A
 Kurtis Kaminishi L
 Peter Stahl English Horn

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Diane F. Ingalls Chair

Joan Hebert

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 Alia Schoen A
 Lani Cliff A Eb Clarinet
 David Miller Bass Clarinet

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Doug McCracken Chair
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 Jordan Terry A
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— 39th Season —



Eric K, Music Director

Gustav Mahler
 1860-1911

Symphony No. 6 in A Minor "Tragic"
 1906

- I. *Allegro energico, ma non troppo.*
Heftig, aber markig
- II. *Scherzo: Wuchtig*
- III. *Andante moderato*
- IV. *Finale: Sostenuto*
Allegro moderato-Allegro energico

The symphony will be performed without an intermission.

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The Music Director



Redwood Symphony founder and Music Director **Eric K** (formerly Kujawsky) is recognized as one of the foremost conductors in the Bay Area. A graduate of UCLA, Eric K established Redwood Symphony in 1985 after receiving his doctorate in conducting from Stanford University. His teachers include Samuel Krachmalnick, Paul Vermel, and Andor Toth. Dr. K has performed with the Palo Alto Philharmonic, San Jose Chamber Orchestra, Diablo Symphony, Saratoga Symphony, Aspen Music Festival, TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, and orchestras and choruses throughout the West.

Equally at home with symphony, opera, musical comedy, and jazz, Dr. K has served as music director for Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park with George*, *My Fair Lady*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Cabaret*. He has won both the Bay Area Theater Critics' Circle Award and the Hollywood Dramalogue Award. With Redwood Symphony, he has conducted numerous operas, including *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Candide*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Don Giovanni*.

As a conductor, Dr. K strives for a clear, expressive, and energetic baton technique and for a willingness to depart creatively from accepted orthodoxies of interpretation and programming. Maestro K has conducted most of the standard orchestral repertoire, including all of Mahler's symphonies and the major works of Stravinsky, Bartók, Sibelius, and Brahms, as well as a large number of contemporary composers, including Mason Bates, John Adams, Corigliano, Daugherty, Messiaen, and Elvis Costello. He distinguishes himself as a communicator about music by delivering pre-concert lectures and incisive concert demonstrations with commentary about the music. He is Director of Music Ministries at Ladera Community Church, Portola Valley. Besides music, Eric K is devoted to wife and son, Valerie and Aaron Sarfaty, dog Max and cat Penny, books, humor, movies, liberal politics, and Balkan folk dancing.

The Assistant Conductor



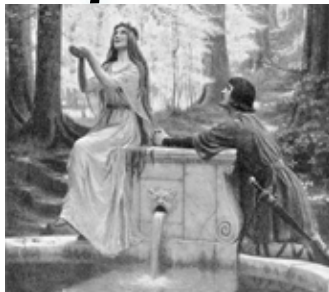
Kyle Baldwin, a conductor and a percussionist, is also the music director for the Rainbow Chamber Orchestra, as well as the assistant to the director for the Morrison Chamber Music Center. He has also served as the assistant conductor for the Bay Area Rainbow Symphony. Baldwin is dedicated to building community by recognizing diversity, fostering inclusion and promoting excellence.

He has a diverse background in conducting that includes symphony orchestras, wind ensembles, opera, chamber ensembles, and dance ensembles. Baldwin conducted the music of Dennis Tobenski with Tobenski singing, and played percussion in the West Coast premiere of Tobenski's piece *Only Air*. He was instrumental in preparing the world premieres of Andrew Lipka's *I Am Harvey Milk* and June Bonacich's *Concerto for String Trio* written for the Little Stars Trio.

Outside of music, he enjoys computer programming. He currently lives in San Francisco.

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Since 1985, Redwood Symphony's innovative programs have featured major modern works by Adams, Adès, Bartók, Copland, Lutoslawski, Mahler, Messiaen, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky, as well as the great classics of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms. This ambitious, contemporary programming has drawn a high number of volunteer professionals to Redwood Symphony's ranks. The orchestra has performed throughout the Bay Area, including Davies Symphony Hall, Flint Center, Cañada College Main Theater, the San Mateo Performing Arts Center, and the Fox Theater in Redwood City. Redwood Symphony has recorded seven CDs, including the newest featuring Brahms's First Symphony and the world premiere of Mark Starr's *Johannes Brahms Rag for Banjo and Orchestra*. Our CDs are available from Amazon.com and via iTunes. Redwood Symphony proudly welcomes children for free with an adult to most performances, a tradition it pioneered in the Bay Area.

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Call for Musicians

Redwood Symphony specializes in performing music traditionally considered off-limits for amateur players. We have an urgent need for violists, cellists, bassists, and harpists, and urge interested musicians of high proficiency to email maestroek@sbcglobal.net.

Gustav Mahler



"The symphony must be like the world.
It must embrace everything." –GM

Gustav Mahler had indeed embraced fame in his own world by the time he wrote his *Sixth Symphony*. From early positions at regional operatic and theatrical companies in his native Bohemia and Germany to music director of the Vienna Court Opera (1897), then the Vienna Philharmonic (1898), the composer would hear his early symphonies performed by the major orchestras of Europe: his *First Symphony* ("Titan") in Budapest in 1889, his *Second Symphony* ("Resurrection") in 1895 with the Berlin Philharmonic, and his *Fifth Symphony* with the Orchestra Cologne in 1904. With this fame came notoriety as a flamboyant, autocratic, temperamental music director, not always endearing him to his orchestras nor his critics.

The composer began work on his *Sixth Symphony* in 1903, while summering at his lakeside villa near Maiernigg in the southern Austrian province of Carinthia. As he had just married the beautiful Austrian composer, author, and socialite Alma Schindler the year before in 1902, this was an exceptionally happy time in his personal life, further amplified by the birth of two daughters while he was composing his *Sixth Symphony*. The family's initial sojourn in southern Austria had seen the completion of the short score of the symphony's two inner movements and sketches for its opening *Allegro*. Leaving the score incomplete, Mahler returned to Vienna and his conducting duties at the Vienna Hofoper (Court Opera). He had put behind him his resignation as Music Director of the Vienna Philharmonic, where a stormy relationship with the orchestra and their board stemmed from his prolonged absences while composing and disagreements over his re-orchestrations of Beethoven. Throughout the following summer he reviewed the scores of the *Andante* and *Scherzo*, completed the first movement, and composed the extensive *Finale*, finishing the score in September of 1904 and completing the orchestration that winter.

His *Sixth Symphony* was to become his most powerful, but at the same time his least popular work.

While the *Sixth Symphony* has come down to us subtitled the "*Tragic Symphony*," Mahler decisively rejected subtitles for his symphonies. The original score is titled only with the words "*Sechste Sinfonie*," which also appeared in the program. However, in his memoir on Gustav Mahler, the conductor and colleague Bruno Walter wrote that "Mahler called [the work] his *Tragic Symphony*," which was the printed title for the first Vienna performance (1907), "*Sechste Sinfonie (Tragische)*."

The work is scored for a typical expanded Mahlerian orchestra: piccolo, four flutes (one on second piccolo), four oboes (one on second English horn), English horn, E-flat clarinet, three clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns, six trumpets, three trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel, cowbells (onstage and offstage), low-pitched bells (offstage), xylophone, bass drum, triangle, snare drum, cymbals,

tam-tam, rute, "Hammer Blow," two harps (one for this performance), celesta, and strings

Allegro energico, the opening movement, pits a massive, dark military march with funereal overtones against an aspiring lyrical second theme. Often termed the "Alma Theme," the latter was Mahler's depiction of his wife: "I have tried to capture you in a theme; I do not know whether I have been successful. You will have to put up with it." The sensuously beautiful, slightly Italianate melody in F major was one of Mahler's most passionate melodies. However enraptured and hopeful that melody is, though, the ending of the *Allegro energico* movement suggests an optimism that will not persist through the *Finale*. As an analog to a Greek tragedy, the *Allegro* movement becomes the high point by which one can follow the downward spiral of the fall, or tragedy, at the end. The ending of the *Allegro* climaxes with the triumphs of the "hero" (using the symbolic language so beloved of Mahler—and his critics) with a triumphant restatement of the Alma Theme, delaying the ultimate pessimism that we experience at the end.

The Second movement, *Scherzo: Wuchtig* (in Mahler's original order) has been called, by the musicologist Deryck Cooke, a "relentless, devilish, stomping dance." It marks a return to the unrelenting march rhythms of the first movement, though in triple-time, with the tympani pounding the opening funeral march, a death march redone in dance form. The middle section, marked *Altväterisch* (old-fashioned), is rhythmically irregular, (4/8 switching to 3/8 and 3/4) and of a gentler character. Alma Mahler describes a discussion of the *Scherzo* movement with her husband "as the arrhythmic playing of their two children, staggering through the sand. Horrible! Those children's voices become more and more tragic, and at the end there is one fading little voice, whimpering." The gentler invocations melt away as the innocent play of children is unable to halt the fateful destiny that culminates the final movement.

The third movement, *Andante Moderato*, portrays a spiritual state of deep and lasting peace, and is perhaps more unworldly than that depicted in the *Adagietto* in his *Fifth Symphony*, offering a respite from the intensity and relentlessness of the rest of the symphony. Musicologist Theodore Adorno felt compelled to write about the *Andante Moderato* as a musical creation so serene that it "would be dangerous written by someone else," but by Mahler "cliche is turned into event." The orchestration here is more gentle and serene, offering a calming melody in E-flat major against lofty counterpoint in the violins, making it all the more passionate and touching when compared to the other three movements. Mahler uses cowbells as a symbol to express the feeling one has on a far-away mountain, far from the struggle and strife of humanity. The last sound one hears in these heights is the soft tinkling of cowbells from a wandering herd. The slow movement embodies sublime calm, underlined by the

heart-wrenching tragic mood of grim determination and defiance, one of Mahler's most recognizable moods echoed in so many of his other symphonies.

Finale: Sostenuto—Allegro Moderato—Allegro energico. The feeling of fate is inescapable. Symbolized in the clear, and unmistakable gesture, also used in his Second Symphony – an A-major triad dropping to A-minor—no harmonic movement could be more telling, none more expressive nor offering no hope of resurrection. Themes appear in battle dress, march-like and chorale-like, reminiscent of the first movement (octave leap and dotted rhythm). The *Finale* is an extended sonata form with an introduction and coda, characterized by abrupt and drastic changes in mood and tempo, the sudden change of glorious soaring melody to deep agony. Ultimately, it is a music both tragic and joyous, simultaneously grim and optimistic.

Famously, the *Finale* is punctuated by three heart-stopping hammer blows. The original score had five such blows, which Mahler subsequently reduced to three, and eventually to two. For our performance, honoring current convention, Maestro Eric K will be reinstating the third hammer blow, which Mahler had deleted, as Eric opines “perhaps for superstitious reasons.” Mahler specified that they should be “short, powerful, but dull in sound ... not of metallic character (like the fall of an axe),” marking major emotional climaxes in the *Finale*.

Alma quoted her husband as stating that these were mighty blows of fate experienced by the hero, “the third of which fells him like a tree.” It has been written that they forebode coming events in Gustav Mahler's life: the death of his eldest daughter Maria Anna Mahler from diphtheria, the diagnosis of an eventually fatal heart condition, and his forced resignation from the Vienna Opera and departure from Vienna. Indeed, Alma Mahler believed that her husband had tempted fate with his *Sixth Symphony* and his completion of the *Kindertotenlieder* (*Songs on the Deaths of Children*) during this time.

The piece ends with the same rhythmic motif that appeared in the first movement, but the chord above it is a simple A minor triad, rather than A major turning into A minor. After the third “hammer-blow” passage, the music gropes in darkness until the trombones and horns begin to offer consolation. However, after the brass momentarily return briefly to the major key, this gesture fades away as the final bars erupt with a final shattering *fortissimo* in A minor. The *Sixth* is the only one of Mahler's symphonies that does not end in a major key.

A discussion of the sequence of the movements for this performance is in order:

As Maestro K will discuss in his pre-concert talk, Mahler's initial idea was to place the *Scherzo* following the *Allegro* movement, which is how the first edition of the score was published. In that

order, the atmosphere of the funeral march of the first movement is carried over into the next movement, after which the soothing *Andante* arrives, providing relief before the onslaught of the *Finale*. However, at the final rehearsal before the premiere in 1906 in Essen, Germany, Mahler reversed the order, instructing his publisher to insert an erratum slip in the unsold copies of the scores, showing his corrected ordering: *Allegro/Andante/Scherzo/Finale*, and to republish the score with the corrected middle-movement order. Biographer Gilbert Kaplan writes of this decision, “Perhaps he felt that the opening of the *Scherzo* was a bit too similar to the first movement. Perhaps he came to prefer the gentle *Andante* as a change of pace before returning to the turmoil of the *Scherzo*. It's unlikely we'll ever know why Mahler made the switch, but no one questions that he did so, and at his instruction, a new score was published. This was the only way Mahler ever performed the symphony. With only a few exceptions, this was also the order followed by conductors for more than 50 years.”

Maestro K has written that “logically and emotionally, the reverse order, *Scherzo/Andante*, Mahler's original choice, works better dramatically and tonally, and the immediate pairing of the *Allegro* and its parody movement *Scherzo* has precedent in Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*.”

Conductors have expressed opinions on both sides of the ordering discussion. For example, Anton Webern, one of Mahler's earliest and most passionate devotees and a much admired conductor of Mahler's music, programmed the original order of movements in the two performances he conducted in Vienna in the early 1930s. It should be noted, however, that Mahler never conducted his *Sixth Symphony* with the middle-movement order *Scherzo/Andante*. This issue rages on today in the International Gustav Mahler Society. Musicologists (and conductors)—well, they live to argue and interpret!

Mahler is quoted as saying, “My *Sixth* seems to be yet another hard nut, one that our critics' feeble little teeth cannot crack.” His forecast was prophetic. Mahler biographer Gilbert Kaplan has commented:

The *Sixth* has continued to puzzle scholars and shock listeners. It is his only symphony to end in utter despair. All others conclude in joy, victory, serenity or at least calm resignation. Here, naked death triumphs. When the philosopher Albert Camus wrote, “When I describe what the catastrophe of man looks like, music comes into my mind—the music of Gustav Mahler,” he surely must have been thinking about the *Sixth*.

–Stephen Ruppenthal

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— 39th Season —



Eric K, Music Director

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April 6, 2024: The Planets

Ellington: *The Giggling Rapids*

Kyle Baldwin, conductor

Glass: *Violin Concerto*

Julian Brown, violin

Holst: *The Planets*

June 1, 2024: Catch It Tonight!

John Williams: *Liberty Fanfare*

Bernstein: *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*

Williams: *Escapades from "Catch Me If You Can"*

Michael Hernandez, alto saxophone

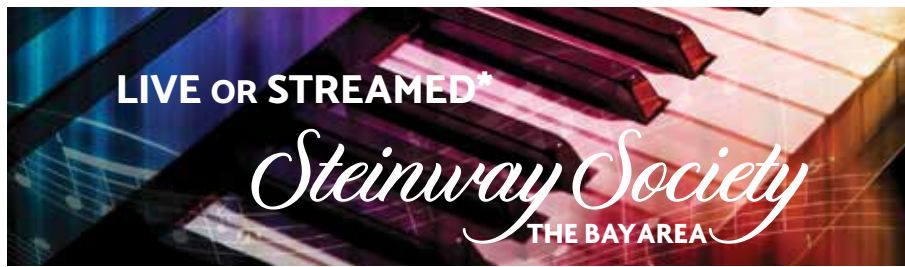
Mark Goldstein, vibraphone

July 27, 2024: Summer Chamber Concert

Ravel: *Pavane for a Dead Princess*

Handel: *Concerto a dui cori*

Bizet: *Symphony in C*



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39th Season
**Redwood
Symphony**

Eric K, Music Director

THE PLANETS

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2024

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