

Free the life and works of gustav mahler essay sample

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Music is the art of arranging sounds that flows in a unified melody, taking into consideration rhythm and harmony. It is not something that can be seen, but rather is expressed and felt through the soul. For some, music is an expression of anger, love, melancholy, and other feelings and ideas of various cultures and societies. Gustav Mahler was one of the most celebrated composers during his time and was best known as an operatic conductor of symphonies and orchestras.

Born in Bohemia which was then part of Austria, Mahler descended from a family of Jewish origins. Soon after, the family also lived in Jihlava, which was the place where he spent most of his childhood days, and which introduced him to various kinds of music through street and folk songs and danceable tunes (Kamien & Kamien 350). During this time, Mahler also discovered the piano, thus, at the age of six years, he began his first-ever piano lessons (Gustav Mahler (Composer, Arranger)). Mahler's musical background was accentuated by lessons from the Vienna Conservatoire and Vienna University (Kamien & Kamien 350) under the tutelage of Julius Epstein, Robert Fuchs, Franz Krenn, and Anton Bruckner. Apart from music, Mahler also studied History and Philosophy, and taught music at the university, which paved the way for his first " attempt at composition with cantata *Das klagende Lied*" (Gustav Mahler (Composer, Arranger)).

Mahler took on jobs as a conductor at Bad Hall, a summer theater, and other bigger opera houses in the succeeding years, such as Ljubljana, Olomouc, Vienna, Kassel, Prague, and Budapest from 1880 to 1888. Such was Mahler's reputation as a conductor that he was offered to be the conductor for Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1887, after Arthur Nikisch fell ill. This

was then followed by another offer to conduct Carl Maria von Weber's unfinished opera *Die drei Pintos*, which paved the way for financial gain and popularity for Mahler (Gustav Mahler (Composer, Arranger)).

At the age of 37, Mahler was offered to handle what was considered as the most prominent musical position in the Austrian Empire, the directorship of the Vienna Opera. However, because Mahler was a Jew, he had to renounce his religion and convert to Catholicism because according to Austro-Hungarian laws, Jews are not allowed to handle such positions. This was an easy thing to do for Mahler because he was never a devout member of the Jewish rights, but was rather more partial to the Catholic religion as his growing up years, he spent most of his time as a choir member for the Catholic church. Thus, hints of Catholicism influences were very much apparent in many of his works.

Vienna was then one of the world's biggest cities and was known as a place where various artistic and entertainment expressions can be seen. With Mahler as the director of the Vienna Opera house, he was able to raise the standards of the Opera. He changed the Opera's music selection from *Lohengrin*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, and *Manon* to operas of Gluck and Mozart. In addition, the Opera house also had " productions [such as] *Fidelio*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*" (Gustav Mahler (Composer, Arranger)).

Mahler soon wedded Alma Schindler, who was younger by 20 years and was a musical composer herself. However, Mahler prohibited Schindler from engaging in any of her creative pursuits, other than working on some of his manuscripts. The union produced two children, Maria Anna and Anna Justine.

At the age of four, Maria Anna passed away due to diphtheria, while the younger daughter became a renowned sculptor (Christy et al., 1971, p. 204). This incident has affected Mahler so much and to add to Mahler's grief, he was also diagnosed with different kinds of illnesses such as heart disease, which prohibited him from engaging with his regular exercises (Christy et al., 1971, p. 204). He was also said to suffer from rheumatic heart disease, which run in his family, pharyngitis throughout most of his life, heart murmur, and other heart related illnesses (Christy et al., 1971, p. 211). Mahler also had sessions with the distinguished Sigmund Freud in order to help him deal with his emotional and mental issues that aroused from learning that his wife Alma was carrying an illicit affair with a young architect (Christy et al., 1971, p. 206).

Mahler was predominantly known as a conductor during his lifetime, although he was also known for his symphonic and vocal music. Experts claim that Mahler was more of a romanticist rather than an innovator in music. He made use of various musical instruments such as brass, woodwinds, percussions, and strings (Stefan, 1912, p. 51). Mahler believed in the use of various musical ingenious such as cowbells, wind instruments, guitars and mandolins, and military band music. One of his symphonies, "Symphony of a Thousand", also known as the 8th symphony, was famous for the huge number of musicians required to complete the piece and the use of various instruments, while his other pieces are known to induce tenderness and intimacy despite chaotic situations (Christy et al., p. 205).

His style was more on the use of folksongs that often had extra beats to add variation to the traditional feel of the song. The music was melodious but

always had a tendency towards distinct music as nothing occurs exactly as the others. There were frequent modulations in musical scale, producing melodious music. The lyrics he used were simple, but homely, and were said to be “ never silly, never trivial, or playfully ironical” (Stefan, 1912, p. 80).

Most of his lyrics come from poems that are popular.

Mahler’s first symphony, plainly called the First Symphony, was initially referred to as “ Titan”. It was said Mahler was probably influenced by European ideas that spoke of sufferings, struggles, heroes, and destiny.

However, because people kept on asking Mahler to explain the significance of the title as it relates to music, the title “ Titan”, was dropped in favor of the more simple First Symphony title (Oster, p. 7). There was also rumor saying that the symphony was the result of an affair that happened between Mahler and Frau von Weber, considering that Mahler often mentioned the First Symphony was about a passionate love that ended. Thus, those who studied Mahler’s life and works often said that his music was a reflection of his life because he wrote music using his experiences (Oster, p. 7).

The Second Symphony and the Third Symphony were a study in contrast considering that one had Christian doctrines incorporated within the music and lyrics, while the other one was more about worshipping nature.

Resurrection, or the Second Symphony, contained references to the Holy Bible towards the end of the music as it contained redeeming messages that reflected his life (Oster, p. 8). On the other hand, the Third Symphony did not receive a favorable response from music enthusiasts because of its theme relating to eternal love that was aimed for plants and animals, among others (Oster, p. 13).

Mahler's Fourth Symphony was considered as the most famous of all of Mahler's symphonic work. The difference could be attributed to the fact that previous symphonies were much longer than the others, while the Fourth Symphony was relatively shorter than the others. Mahler's works often required huge orchestras, but the Fourth Symphony was the only one that used only a few musicians. In addition, the Fourth Symphony did not receive a good response from the listeners as most of them were disappointed by the very melodious beginning, which as in contrast with what people were used to hear from Mahler's previous compositions (Oster, p. 16).

What is very much evident in Mahler's works was how he was able to connect all symphonies with one another. His works displayed a relatedness to one another that was evident from the First Symphony up to the Ninth Symphony. Although the symphonies do not necessarily show a synchronized connectedness between the musical scores, the symphonies displayed a correlation with the other symphonies just the same. For instance, some of the parts of the Third Symphony recurred in the latter parts of the Fourth Symphony. The same thing happens in the sixth symphony which also made an appearance in the seventh symphony. Mahler may not have achieved stellar recognition during his time, but definitely, he is reaping the rewards of his efforts now.

Works Cited

Christy, Nicholas, P., Christy, Beverly, M., & Wood, Barry, G. "Gustav Mahler and His Illnesses". NCBI Resources. Web. 7 November 2013. .

"Gustav Mahler (Composer, Arranger)". Bach Cantatas Website. Web. 7 November 2013. .

<https://assignbuster.com/free-the-life-and-works-of-gustav-mahler-essay-sample/>

Kamien, Roger, and Kamien, Anita. Roger Kamien Music An Appreciation. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. Print.

Oster, Nathanael, J. (2001). " Gustav Mahler – The Meaning Behind the Symphonies." Web. 7 November 2013. .

Stefan, Paul. (1912). " Gustav Mahler – A Study of His Personality & Work." PDF. 7 November 2013. .

Bibliography

All Music Guide [AMG]. Gustav Mahler. Classical Archives. n. d. Web. .

Botstein, Leon. Gustav Mahler. Acfny. org. n. d. Web. .

Cooke, Deryck V. Gustav Mahler. Encyclopedia Britannica. n. d. Web. .

Freeze, Timothy David. Gustav Mahler's Third Symphony: Program, Reception, and Evocations of the Popular. Diss. The University of Michigan, 2010. Web. .