Concert Program
NEC Philharmonia

Hugh Wolff conductor
Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras

Wednesday, May 1, 2024
7:30 p.m.
NEC’s Jordan Hall
Gustav Mahler  
(1860–1911)  

**Symphony No. 7** (1904–06)  
Langsam – Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo  
Nachtmusik I: Allegro moderato – Molto moderato  
Scherzo: Schattenhaft – Fließend aber nicht zu schnell  
Nachtmusik II: Andante amoroso  
Rondo – Finale
The last of three purely instrumental symphonies Gustav Mahler wrote between 1901 and 1905, the Seventh Symphony is perhaps the least performed and most misunderstood. Mahler composed it inside out, writing two inner Andante movements he called Nachtmusik (night-music or nocturnes) in the summer of 1904. The following summer he struggled to integrate these two movements into a larger structure. A scherzo labeled Schattenhaft (shadowy or spectral) found its way to the center of a symmetrical structure; the giant bookends of the first movement and finale were composed last.

The first movement was particularly problematic for Mahler. Devoid of inspiration, he took long solo hikes through the Dolomite mountains and boat rides on Alpine lakes. The lapping of water and the gentle rhythm of the oars caught his attention, and the pulsating pianissimo of the symphony’s opening was born. This ostinato is interrupted by the anguished plea of a “tenor horn,” played today on a euphonium. The jagged dotted rhythms become the foundation of a dark and militant march, mixed with wild dances and gentler yearnings. The elaborate canvas—it is the longest of the five movements—is in sonata form with a slow introduction. The intensity and complexity of the introduction and exposition are offset by a more lyrical development section that culminates in an ecstatic passage, cut off abruptly by the return of the hushed introduction and the tenor horn, now in dialogue with the bass trombone.

The second movement, the first of the two Nachtmusik, is another march—a walk in the night. Mahler called it a “patrol.” Birdcalls and off-stage cowbells put nature at its center. The music oscillates uneasily between major and minor, full of ambiguity and chiaroscuro. A lyrical cello melody provides contrast, as does a mournful, Klezmer-style duet for oboes, later joined by two cellos.

The macabre scherzo, the shortest movement, is ghostly, wind-whipped night music, a witches’ Sabbath of parody and grotesquerie.

The second Nachtmusik is a serenade—perhaps an earnest young lover wooing his beloved. The large orchestra is reduced to a more intimate ensemble. Brass and percussion—except for two horns—are silent, while guitar and mandolin, two instruments associated with serenading, are added.

The sweet romance of this movement—welcome after the darker first three movements—opens the door to a finale Mahler called “bright day.” This is the most radical music Mahler had ever composed. Titled Rondo-Finale, it is an exuberant amalgam of tempi, motifs, styles, and colors—marches, minuets, and waltzes—jump-cutting from one to the next without apparent logic or preparation. It can be considered a giant mosaic, each tile juxtaposed against something completely different. The similarity with the quasi-mosaic style of Gustav Klimt and the Vienna Secession movement—visual artists with whom Mahler had strong ties—is striking. As an emotional journey, it is more like a carnival: lots of dancing, shouting, eating, arguing, and embracing (maybe some jugglers and a magician?). There’s wild excess everywhere, and, above all, the sheer joy and utter messiness of being human on our fragile, fertile planet.

– Hugh Wolff
NEC Philharmonia
Hugh Wolff, conductor

First Violin
Hyun Ji Lee
Mitsuru Yonezaki
Rachel Yi
Tsubasa Muramatsu
SooBeen Lee
Anatol Toth
Min-Han Hanks Tsai
Jisoo Kim
Nathan do Amaral Oliveira
Passacaglia Mason
Chloe Hong
Darwin Chang
Sarah McGuire
Rachel Wang
Jusun Kim

Cello
Claire Deokyoung Kim
GaYeon Jenny Kim
Hayoung Moon
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Jonah Kernis
Joanne Hwang
Xinyue Zhu
Bennet Huang
Shannon Ross
Andres Sanchez
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English horn
Alexander Lenser
Clarinet
Phoebe Kuan
Cole Turkel
Xianyi Ji
E-flat Clarinet
Yi-Ting Ma
Bass Clarinet
Chasity Thompson

Bass
Misha Bjerken
Shion Kim
Colby Heimburger
Gregory Padilla
Yu-Cih Chang
Yihan Wu
Cailin Singleton

Bassoon
Evan Judson
Zoe Beck
Garrett Comrie

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Ching Shan Helen Yu
Michael Fisher
Thompson Wang
Byeol Claire Kim
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Mandolin
Clay Hancock

French horn
Graham Lovely
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Dermot Gleeson

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Special thanks to Jason Horowitz, Noriko Futagami, Mickey Katz, and Anthony D’Amico for their work in preparing the orchestra for this evening’s concert.
Hugh Wolff

Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras; Chair, Orchestral Conducting

Hugh Wolff joined the New England Conservatory faculty in 2008 and has conducted a large share of NEC’s orchestral concerts every year since then. He has taught graduate students in an elite training program for orchestral conductors since 2009.

Wolff has appeared with all the major American orchestras, including those of Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Cleveland. He is much in demand in Europe, where he has conducted the London Symphony, the Philharmonia, the City of Birmingham Symphony, the Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Philharmonic, and the Bavarian and Berlin Radio Orchestras. A regular guest conductor with orchestras in Japan, Korea, Scandinavia, Canada and Australia, he is also a frequent conductor at summer festivals.

Currently Laureate Conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra, Wolff was principal conductor of the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra from 1997 to 2006 and maintains a close relationship with that ensemble. He led it on tours of Europe, Japan, and China, and at the Salzburg Festival. Wolff was principal conductor and then music director of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (1988-2000), with which he recorded twenty discs and toured the United States, Europe, and Japan. Performances with the Boston Symphony have included the world premiere of Ned Rorem’s Swords and Ploughshares in Symphony Hall. Wolff was music director of the New Jersey Symphony (1986-1993) and principal conductor of Chicago’s Grant Park Music Festival (1994-1997). He began his professional career in 1979 as associate conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra under Mstislav Rostropovich.

Wolff’s extensive discography includes the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra and music from the baroque to the present. He has recorded or premiered works by John Adams, Stephen Albert, John Corigliano, Brett Dean, Lukas Foss, John Harbison, Aaron Jay Kernis, Edgar Meyer, Rodion Shchedrin, Bright Sheng, Michael Torke, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Joan Tower and has collaborated on CD with Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma, Steven Isserlis, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Dawn Upshaw, Jennifer Larmore, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and jazz guitarist John Scofield. Three times nominated for a Grammy Award, Wolff won the 2001 Cannes Classical Award.

A graduate of Harvard College, Wolff studied piano with George Crumb, Leon Fleisher and Leonard Shure, composition with Leon Kirchner and Olivier Messiaen, and conducting with Charles Bruck. In 1985, Wolff was awarded one of the first Seaver/ National Endowment for the Arts Conducting Prizes.

A gift from the Calderwood Charitable Foundation endowed the Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras chair now occupied by Hugh Wolff. He and his wife, harpist and radio journalist Judith Kogan, have three sons.
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Friday, May 3, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

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Charles Berofsky, piano; Nicholas Hammel, violin; Yi-I Stephanie Yang, cello
Sunday, May 5, 2023 at 8:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

FIRST MONDAY IN JORDAN HALL, Laurence Lesser, artistic director
Brahms Trio in C Minor, op. 101; Chausson Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet, op. 21; Miriam Fried, David McCarroll, violin; Angela Park, cello; Ieva Jokubaviciute, Marc-André Hamelin, piano; Terra String Quartet
Monday, May 6, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

TUESDAY NIGHT NEW MUSIC
New music by NEC composers, performed by their peers
Tuesday, May 7, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC HONORS ENSEMBLE: KROMA QUARTET
Clayton Hancock, Arun Asthagiri, violin; Nathan Emans, viola;
Sophia Knappe, cello
Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC CMA HONORS ENSEMBLE: RED BIRD
Karl Henry, voice, cello; Yifei Marine Zhou, voice; Adrian Chabla, voice, piano,
Jacqui Armbruster, voice, viola; Evan Haskin, guitar
Tuesday, May 14, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

NEC COMMENCEMENT CONCERT
Saturday, May 18, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall
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Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall, and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited. Assistive listening devices are available for all Jordan Hall concerts; contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room. Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

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