



The Music Room
Conversations about Music
With Zoë Beyers

Episode One

Kenneth Woods

Conductor, Writer, Cellist

(First broadcast 19th June 2020)

Programme Notes



Gustav Mahler

Mahler's Journeyman Songs

We begin this episode in the world of Mahler, with the second movement of his song cycle *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in Arnold Schoenberg's 1920 arrangement for small ensemble. This work is not only intensely personal, but also semi-autobiographical. At the time of writing (1884-1885), Mahler was a young, itinerant composer. He was also heartbroken in the wake of a failed romance with the singer Johanna Richter.

Ging heut 'Morgen über's Feld
Gustav Mahler

I Walked Across the Fields This Morning
English translation © Richard Stokes

Ging heut 'morgen über's Feld,
Tau noch auf den Gräsern hing;
Sprach zu mir der lust'ge Fink:
„Ei du! Gelt?
Guten Morgen! Ei, Gelt? Du!
Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Zink! Zink! Schön und flink!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!“

Auch die Glockenblum 'am Feld
Hat mir lustig, guter Ding',
Mit den Glöckchen, klinge, kling,
Ihren Morgengruß geschellt:
„Wird's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Kling! Kling! Schönes Ding!
Wie mir doch die Welt gefällt!

Und da fing im Sonnenschein
Gleich die Welt zu funkeln an;
Alles, alles, Ton und Farbe gewann!
Im Sonnenschein!
Blum 'und Vogel, groß und klein!
„Guten Tag! Guten Tag!
Ist's nicht eine schöne Welt?
Ei, du! Gelt? Schöne Welt!“

Nun fängt auch mein Glück wohl an?
Nein! Nein! Das ich mein',
Mir nimmer, nimmer blühen kann!

I walked across the fields this morning,
Dew still hung on the grass,
The merry finch said to me:
'You there, hey -
Good morning! Hey, you there!
Isn't it a lovely world?
Tweet! Tweet! Bright and sweet!
O how I love the world!'

And the harebell at the field's edge,
Merrily and in good spirits,
Ding-ding with its tiny bell
Rang out its morning greeting:
'Isn't it a lovely world?
Ding-ding! Beautiful thing!
O how I love the world!'

And then in the gleaming sun
The world at once began to sparkle;
All things gained in tone and colour!
In the sunshine!
Flower and bird, great and small.
'Good day! Good day!
Isn't it a lovely world?
Hey, you there?! A lovely world!'

Will my happiness now begin?
No! No! The happiness I mean
Can never bloom for me!

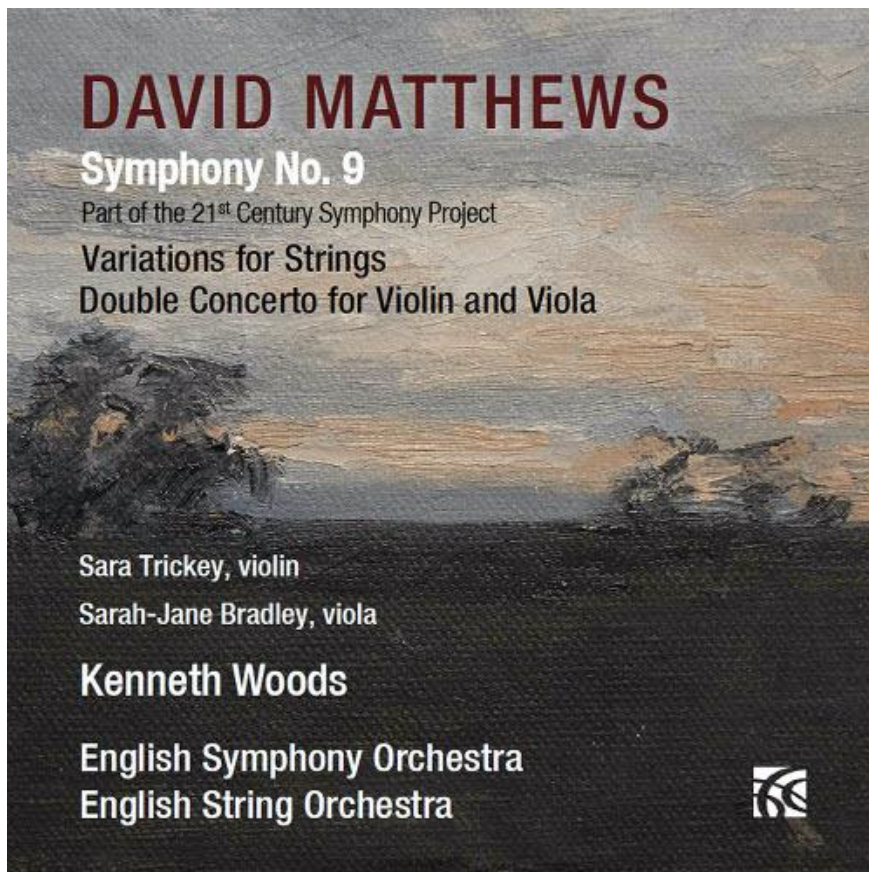
Mahler reused much of the musical material of this song in the first movement of his First Symphony, completed a few years later in 1888. However, without the melancholy-tinged lyrics, the cheerful innocence of the theme takes on an entirely different meaning. Schoenberg's arrangement for flute, clarinet, horn, string quintet, harp, piano, harmonium and percussion brings the intimacy of these songs to the fore without losing any of Mahler's vivid, vibrant orchestration. This performance was filmed live at Colorado MahlerFest XXXII in 2019 and features Kenneth Woods conducting the MahlerFest Chamber Orchestra with baritone Joshua DeVane.

Famous recordings of this work include Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau with Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Philharmonia Orchestra (listen [here](#) and watch [here](#)) and Janet Baker with John Barbirolli and the Hallé (listen [here](#)).

Later on in the programme, Kenneth Woods delves deeper into the tradition of arranging and describes an upcoming project with the English Symphony Orchestra which features the fifth *lied* from another of Mahler's song cycles, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ('The Boy's Magic Horn'). The movement, *Das irdische Leben* ('The Earthly Life') was composed in 1892 and can be heard sung by Maureen Forrester with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Heinz Rehfuss. The 1968 recording featuring Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by George Szell is deservedly one of EMI's Great Recordings of the Century.

You will also hear a clip of the finale of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, sung by Frederica von Stade with the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Claudio Abbado. Mahler's Fourth (completed in 1900) is yet another of his works that exists in chamber arrangement, which poses some interesting challenges for the first violinist, who has to swap rapidly between a conventionally tuned violin and a *scordatura* (de-tuned) violin in the second movement. This juggling act certainly adds to the already-present adrenaline in performance!

Symphonies for the 21st Century



The English Symphony Orchestra has a long and proud tradition of commissioning and performing music by British composers; a tradition that Kenneth Woods is actively furthering and building with the 21st Century Symphony project. The project began in 2017 with Philip Sawyers' Third Symphony and continued with David Matthews' Ninth Symphony in 2019. It will see the commissioning of nine symphonies by nine different composers and represents a hugely significant contribution to the genre. Both Sawyers and Matthews have close associations with the ESO (Sawyers is the Composer Laureate) and the ESO's recordings of their works have garnered high praise, with Matthews' Ninth being named a 2019 Symphonist Record of the Year.

The Lost Generation



Henry Meyer

Kenneth Woods is a tireless champion of the music of the composers whose lives were ended, disrupted and effectively destroyed by World War II: Hans Gál, Viktor Ullman and Hans Krása are names that spring immediately to mind, but there are many more (visit [this website](#) for more information on musicians in the Holocaust). Woods has [recorded](#) the complete symphonies of Hans Gál and a significant tranche of this generation's long-overlooked output. Watch [this video](#) to hear the extraordinary story of violinist Henry Meyer (pictured above), survivor of four concentration camps - and Kenneth Woods' chamber music coach.

Links to follow...

You might like to visit Kenneth Woods' blog, '[A View from the Podium](#)'. Ken's insightful and witty writing makes reading this a delight. If you enjoyed the storytelling, visit Auricolae's [website here](#) - and we are featuring Auricolae later on in the series in an episode dedicated to storytelling in music, which promises to be an absolute treat.

Episode Playlist

- Mahler: *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*: II. "Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld" (Joshua DeVane, baritone; MahlerFest Chamber Orchestra/Kenneth Woods)
- Schumann: Violin Concerto in D minor: I. *In kräftigem, nicht zu schnellem Tempo* (Henryk Szeryng, violin; London Symphony Orchestra/Antal Dorati; Mercury Living Presence)
- Wagner: Siegfried Idyll (Philharmonia Orchestra/Otto Klemperer; HMV)
- Humperdinck: *Abendsegen* from *Hänsel und Gretel* (Kathleen Battle; Frederica von Stade; Orchestra of St Luke's/André Previn; Sony)
- Mahler: *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*: V. *Das irdische Leben* (Maureen Forrester; Vienna Symphony Orchestra/Heinz Rehfuss; Vanguard Classics)
- Mahler: Symphony No. 4 in G major: IV. *Sehr behaglich* (Frederica von Stade; Vienna Philharmonic/Claudio Abbado; Deutsche Grammophon)
- David Matthews: Symphony No. 9: I. *Allegro moderato* (English Symphony Orchestra/Kenneth Woods; Nimbus Alliance)
- Thomas Whitman: The Princess and the Man with the Pure Heart (Auricolae)
- Penderecki: String Trio (Ensemble Epomeo; Avie Records)
- Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47: IV. *Allegro non troppo* (Leningrad Philharmonic/Yevgeny Mravinsky; Erato)
- The Kingston Trio: Where Have All the Flowers Gone? (Capitol Records)
- Watchmen: You're Not God
- Bruckner: String Quintet in F major: I. *Gemässigt* (Melos Quartet; Enrique Santiago; Harmonia Mundi)
- Korngold: Violin Concerto in D major Op. 35: I. *Moderato nobile* (Zoë Beyers, violin; MahlerFest Orchestra/Kenneth Woods)
- Philip Sawyers: Symphony No. 3: II. *Adagio* (English Symphony Orchestra/Kenneth Woods; Nimbus Alliance)
- Schumann: Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 97: I. *Lebhaft* (Orchestra of the Swan/Kenneth Woods)