

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C SHARP MINOR

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

transcribed and played by David Briggs on  
the Organ of Gloucester Cathedral

- |    |      |                         |         |
|----|------|-------------------------|---------|
| 1. | I)   | Trauermarsch            | [12:32] |
| 2. |      | Sturmisch bewegt        | [14:15] |
| 3. | II)  | Scherzo                 | [18:10] |
| 4. | III) | Adagietto               | [09:34] |
| 5. |      | Rondo - Finale. Allegro | [17:05] |

TOTAL MUSIC TIME: [71:39]

A Priory Records Digital Recording  
Recorded and Produced by Neil Collier  
Recorded in Gloucester Cathedral on 1st and 2nd April 1998  
Assisted by Luke Bond  
Front cover photograph by Alison Liddle  
Booklet and cover design by Caroline Paschalides

Priory Records Ltd, 3 Eden Court, Eden Way,  
Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 4FY  
Telephone: 01525 377566 Facsimile: 01525 371477  
Website: [www.priory.org.uk](http://www.priory.org.uk) E-mail: [sales@priory.org.uk](mailto:sales@priory.org.uk)



PRCD 649

# Gustav Mahler

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**Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)**  
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**Introduction by David Briggs**

There is a well-known saying, "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" For the purpose of this recording, the word 'orchestra' should be substituted for 'devil'! There is no doubt that really great music speaks for itself and can be effective in different guises. Many famous composers have made transcriptions of their own music (e.g. *La Valse*, Ravel, and *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Stravinsky, which also exist in piano duet form) J.S. Bach made many transcriptions for the organ (e.g. the six Schubler Chorales and Vivaldi's concerti.) The organ concert audience in the early years of this century (before the advent of LPs, CDs and cassettes) would have been used to hearing programmes consisting largely, if not entirely, of orchestral transcriptions and, particularly in the provinces, this would have been their main access to this music. A transcription, by its very nature, has to be something of an illusion, and has to be made to sound effective in its new guise. I would say, however, that a good transcription can heighten our awareness of the message behind the music: we can listen with new ears!

My own relationship with Mahler's Fifth Symphony started at the age of fourteen when, as a viola player in the National Youth Orchestra, I was completely overawed by the extraordinary intensity and excitement of this music. To make an organ transcription has long been a personal ambition and the process has taken well over three hundred hours.

The Fifth Symphony unfolds on a very large scale, commencing with the highly-charged *Funeral March*. This title is the only quasi-programmatic indication in the score and the famous opening trumpet fanfare engenders a mood full of pathos. The A minor *Allegro* which follows might be said to mark the beginning of a fresh life and is full of passion and energy. The forceful, often aggressive character of this music suggests that a grim conflict is to take place. However, given time this anger subsides and the divergent textural strands come together in a glorious chorale-like climax. The *Scherzo* is

the longest movement of the work, and is complex due to its elaborate, almost continual thematic development. There are four main themes and the movement is no dance or character piece in the traditional sense, but a play of musical forces. The famous *Adagietto* is one of Mahler's most ravishing movements and reintroduces sensitivity and contemplation after the previous domination of force and willpower. The last movement, which follows without a break, is full of a remarkable *joie de vivre* and, once again, is formally very complex. Mahler's use of counterpoint is nowhere more masterful than here and the overall effect is one of immense musical joy and exuberance.

© David Briggs

**THE ORGAN**

The long and complex saga of the Gloucester instrument almost reads like a potted history of English organ building with the majority of better known builders having worked on it at some stage, and consequently doing their best or worst as the case may be. In 1968 when major work of some kind needed to be done, suddenly all the musical, architectural and liturgical problems from the 16th to 20th century converged on the Cathedral authorities who received a bewildering number of solutions from many sources. Ralph Downes was employed as Consultant and he saw two possible courses of action:

1) keep the organ largely as it was except for a few 'modern touch-ups' in specification and renew the action 2) restore the 'Great' and 'Chaire' cases - as well as making the facade pipes speak again after some 80 years' silence - and devise a totally new design, using the remarkable number of surviving Harris pipes as an integral part. Excepting Bishop's pedal pipes (probably the largest scale stop of its kind in the country) which would be placed out of sight within the screen, all pipework would be housed in the two cases: this meant the removal of everything else including the Solo Box and the lower octave of the Double Open Wood 32' which Harrison placed in the triforium in 1920. The Dean and Chapter opted for this second solution and Hill, Norman and Beard were

awarded the contract.

The new design of the instrument had one important aspect, not applicable in the 17th century, to consider: sound for both Choir and Nave. The organ had to speak two ways and therefore the soundboards were reset, as in the original organ, with the Great in the centre - three divisions: one East, one West, reeds in the middle - and Pedal either side (excepting the large Flute pipes). The Swell was situated low down in the case with shutters to both East and West: the Choir obviously stayed in situ and a Positive division for the West side was accommodated at the front of the case on a level with the Swell. This ingenious layout effectively provided two 3 manual organs, one for the Choir and one for the Nave, as well as one larger whole instrument speaking both ways.

Herbert and John Norman said: "It is important to recognise that the design and voicing of the new organ has been conceived not only as an extension of the historic pipes remaining but as part of a modern instrument conceived on the classical principles of organ design laid down in the 17th and 18th centuries. It incorporates some features of the various national schools and provision for the performance of the more romantic music of the 19th and 20th centuries into an instrument which, although eclectic in its versatility, nevertheless speaks as with a single personality".

The specification quoted below was drawn up by Ralph Downes who also determined the pipe scales and voicing. The whole complex scheme was, and possibly still is, controversial, regarded by many who knew 'the old organ' as an outrage. However, there can be no comparison between the two: we are considering two totally different instruments. Not that there is a physical choice, of course, but bearing in mind the historical importance and a vast repertoire from all ages now recognised, the present musical instrument is a worthy one indeed.

## SPECIFICATION

Compass: Manuals C - A 58 notes. Pedals C - G 32 notes

Principals		Wide-Chorus		Narrow-scale and Reeds		
<b>GREAT</b>						
Open Diapason (East)	H	8	Gedecktpommer	16	Posaune	W 16
Open Diapason (West)	H	8	Spitzflute (West)	8	Trumpet	W 8
Octave (East)	H	4	Bourdon	h 8	Clarion	W 4
Prestant (West)	h	4	Stopped Flute	h 4		
Quartane, 12.15 (West)	h	2 2/3	Flageolet	2		
Mixture IV-VI	h	1 1/3	Cornet (middle C)	IV		
<b>CHOIR</b>						
Principal	H	4	Stopped Diapason	8	Cremona	8
Fifteenth		2	Chimney Flute	4	Tremulant	
Sesquialtera	II		Nazard	1 1/3		
Mixture III		1/2				
<b>SWELL</b>						
Principal		4	Chimney Flute	8	Salicional (conical)	8
Mixture IV		1	Open Flute	4	Celeste (conical)	8
Cimbel		1/5	Nazard (conical)	2 2/3	Fagotto	H&H 16
			Gemshorn	2	Trumpet	W 8
			Tierce	13/5	Hautboy (part W)	8
					Vox Humana (part W)	8
					Tremulant	
<b>WEST POSITIVE</b>						
Doublette		2	Gedecktpommer	8		
Cimbel III		1/2	Spitzflute	4		
			Nazard (stopped)	2 2/3	Tremulant	
			Tierce	1 3/5		
			Larigot	1 1/3		

## PEDAL

Principal (ext.)	WH	16	Flute	B	16	Bombarde	W	16
Octave	hW	8	Sub Bass	W	8	Trumpet	W	8
Choral bass	H&H	4	Stopped Flute		8	Shawm		4
Mixture IV		22/3	Open Flute		2			

H= Thomas Harris    h= small number of Harris pipes    B= Bishop 1831  
W= Willis                    H&H= Harrison 1920            All other pipework new.

Usual accessories including 4 pistons to West Positive, 4 Generals, 6 pistons to other departments, all available on four channels.

## DAVID BRIGGS

David Briggs became Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral in 1994 following appointments at Truro Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral and King's College, Cambridge. In August 1995 he conducted his first Three Choirs Festival to much critical acclaim. In August this year he conducts his second 'home' Festival, including the first performance of his own *Te Deum* for soloists, chorus and orchestra.

As one of the most notable organists of his generation, he circumnavigated the globe three times last year. He recently opened the prestigious Los Angeles Bach Festival, where he was compared with Dupré and Horowitz and nominated successor to Virgil Fox and Pierre Cochereau. He also led a highly successful tour of Australia and New Zealand with the Gloucester Cathedral Choir. Other recent engagements include a Summer recital at the Hallgrímskirkja, Reykjavik, and a solo tour of Australia and New Zealand including a recital on the largest organ in the Southern hemisphere, at Sydney Town Hall. A future three week tour of the USA is in preparation, under the auspices of Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Management, as well as a recording for Delos on the largest church organ in the world in Los Angeles.

He has made numerous commercial recordings and his recent recording from Gloucester Cathedral on Priory PRCD 568 won a 'Soundings' Award in Gramophone and a coveted place on the cover CD. This is his fourth solo commercial disc for Priory.

A leading exponent in the art of improvisation, he was the first Englishman ever to win the Tournemire Prize at the St. Alban's International Improvisation Competition and his CD of organ improvisations has broken new ground in this country. He is Visiting Tutor in Improvisation at the Royal Northern College of Music.

His greatest ambition is to gain his Private Pilot's Licence.