

George Szell

As conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra for almost a quarter-century, Hungarian-born George Szell (1897-1970) built the ensemble into one of the world's greatest symphony orchestras. For sheer precision and accuracy of interaction, the Cleveland Orchestra under Szell was unmatched.

In many ways, Szell lived up to the image of European conductors that Americans frequently had and enjoyed. He was an absolute authoritarian who drilled his players relentlessly in order to produce the detailed and fully thought-out interpretations of classical works he demanded. An imposing figure who stood six feet tall on the podium, he loomed larger than life for the orchestra's players, who often feared his withering stare and chilly personality. Szell was the kind of figure around whom anecdotes circulate, each more outrageous than the last. It was said that when a member of the orchestra's violin section suffered a serious fall, Szell phoned the dressing room solely to ask whether the man's violin had been damaged. But the end result of Szell's single-mindedness was an orchestra that could match any other in the world and that excelled those in other medium-sized U.S. cities by far.

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**Text from last movement  
Heaven's Life  
(From Des Knaben Wunderhorn)**

We enjoy heavenly pleasures  
and therefore avoid earthy ones.

No worldly tumult  
is to be heard in heaven.  
All live in greatest peace.

We lead angelic lives,  
yet have a merry time of it besides.

We dance and we spring,

We skip and we sing.

Saint Peter in heaven looks on.

John lets the lambkin out,  
and Herod the Butcher lies in wait for it

We find a patient,  
an innocent, patient,  
dear little lamb to its death.

Saint Luke slaughters the ox  
without any thought or concern.

Wine doesn't cost a penny  
in the heavenly cellars;

The angels bake the bread.

Good greens of every sort  
grow in the heavenly vegetable patch,

good asparagus, string beans,  
and whatever we want.

Whole dishfuls are set for us!  
Good apples, good pears and good grapes,  
and gardeners who allow everything!

If you want roebuck or hare,  
on the public streets

they come running right up.  
Should a fastday come along,

all the fishes at once come swimming with joy.

There goes Saint Peter running

with his net and his bait  
to the heavenly pond.

Saint Martha must be the cook.

There is just no music on earth  
that can compare to ours.

Even the eleven thousand virgins  
venture to dance,  
and Saint Ursula herself has to laugh.

There is just no music on earth  
that can compare to ours.

Cecelia and all her relations  
make excellent court musicians.

The angelic voices  
gladden our senses,  
so that all awaken for joy.



# MAHLER SYMPHONY No. 4



**GEORGE SZELL**  
**THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA**  
**JUDITH RASKIN SOPRANO**

This symphony represents a culmination and distillation of the previous three. It is the shortest of Mahler's symphonies, with a reduced orchestra, and a style consciously archaic in its evocation of classical models. Yet it is redolent of the Wunderhorn aesthetic that imbues this entire period of Mahler's career. The entire symphony, in fact, grew out of the final movement, which Mahler originally composed for his orchestral song collection on poems from Das Knaben Wunderhorn (The Young Boys' Magic Horn). Mahler originally planned to use this song, "Das himmlische Leben" (Heavenly Life), as the Finale for his Third Symphony, but withdrew it, probably because its theme was so similar to that of the fifth movement. At any rate, the other three movements were extrapolated from this long and joyful folk song and were calculated to culminate in its childlike vision of heaven. This in part explains the relatively lighter mood of the symphony as a whole as well as its tendency toward a more classical balance in its style, proportions, and scoring. In spite of the greater popularity of the Second Symphony, which in some ways is more typically Mahlerian, the Fourth Symphony, although lacking the barn-storming climaxes and extremes of emotion, was his best composition to date and entirely more refined and subtle in expression and technique.

Bedächtig. Nicht eilen. (Moderately, not rushed). From the very outset we have Mahler's evocation of nature, with sleigh bells and bird calls leading into a flirtatious melody, so unlike the pretentious horns of the Third. There are dark moments later in the movement, but they appear as if through the veil of childhood's vision, unreal and imagined. The movement is in a clear sonata form.

In gemächlicher Bewegung. (Leisurely moving). This was originally called "Freund Hein spielt auf" (Friend Hein strikes up), representing a sinister character out of German folklore roughly analogous to the "Pied Piper." His fiddle (as opposed to a pipe) is brilliantly depicted by Mahler with the use of a violin purposely tuned a full step up to give it a fiddle sound. The movement itself is a wryly grotesque Scherzo alternating with more earthy Ländler-like Trios.

Ruhevoll. (Peacefully). Beginning as a gentle lullaby, the principal form of the movement is an alternation of this peaceful opening with a more searching and anguished theme. An impassioned variant of this theme leads to a series of brief variations in quickening tempos followed by a reprise of the opening. A sudden and ecstatic climax ensues and leads directly to the quiet coda.

Sehr behaglich. (Comfortably). The song for soprano is "Das himmlische Leben," and depicts a child's view of heaven in this folk-like setting. Ingenuous melodies alternate with a hymnlike stanza representing the child's occasional awe. An animated interlude that recurs between many of the stanzas is the source for the opening of the first movement, but in the symphonic context it functions as a cyclic reference backward to that movement.

# Mahler Symphony No. 4

George Szell conducting  
The Cleveland Orchestra  
Judith Raskin Soprano

- 1) Bedächtig, nicht eilen (Moderately, not rushed) 17:20
- 2) In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast (Leisurely moving, without haste) 9:12
- 3) Ruhevoll, poco adagio (Peacefully, somewhat slowly) 20:40
- 4) Sehr behaglich (Very comfortably) 10:10

Total Time: 57:48

Transferred from a Columbia 4-track Tape  
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Engineer – John A. Johnson Producer – Paul Meyers



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