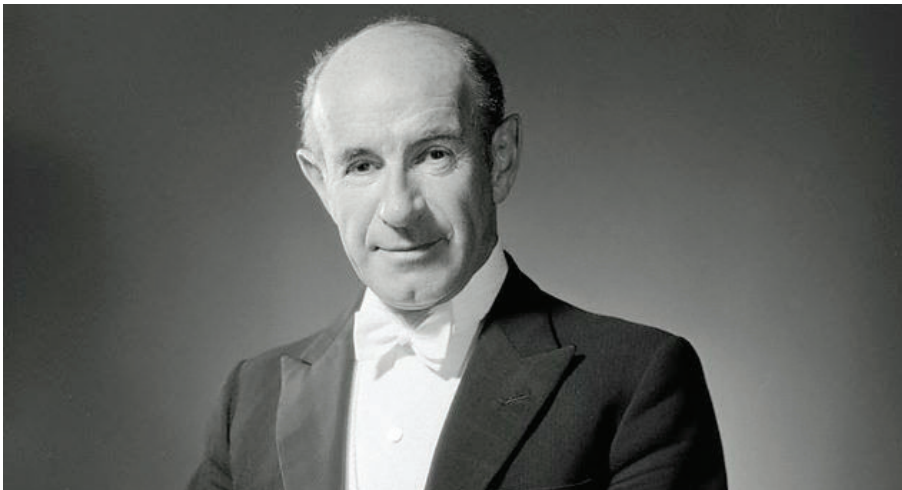


Mahler

Symphony No. 1 in D

ERICH LEINSDORF / BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



The Boston Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1881 by Henry Lee Higginson. Its first conductor was George Henschel, who was a noted baritone as well as conductor, and a close friend of Johannes Brahms. For the orchestra, Henschel devised innovative orchestral seating charts and sent them to Brahms, who replied approvingly and commented on the issues raised by horn and viola sections in a letter of mid-November 1881 .

The orchestra's four subsequent music directors were all trained in Austria, including the seminal and highly influential Hungarian-born conductor Arthur Nikisch, in accordance with the tastes of Higginson. Wilhelm Gericke served twice, from 1884 to 1889 and again from 1898, to 1906. According to Joseph Horowitz's review of correspondence, Higginson considered 25 candidates to replace Gericke after receiving notice in 1905. He decided not to offer the position to Gustav Mahler, Fritz Steinbach, and Willem Mengelberg but did not rule out the young Bruno Walter if nobody more senior were to accept. He offered the position to Hans Richter in February, 1905, who declined, to Felix Mottl in November, who was previously engaged, and then to previous director Nikisch, who declined; the post was finally offered to Karl Muck, who accepted and began his duties in October, 1906. He was conductor until 1908 and again from 1912-1918.

The music director 1908-12 was Max Fiedler. He conducted the premiere of Ignacy Jan Paderewski's Symphony in B minor "Polonia" in 1909.

During World War I, Muck (born in Germany but a Swiss citizen since childhood), was arrested, shortly before a performance of the St. Matthew Passion in 1918, and interned in a prison camp without trial or charge until the end of the war, when he was deported. He vowed never to return, and conducted thereafter only in Europe. Its next two music directors were French: Henri Rabaud, who took over from Muck for a season, and then Pierre Monteux from 1919 to 1924. Monteux, because of a musician's strike, was able to replace 30 players, thus changing the orchestra's sound; the orchestra developed a reputation for a "French" sound which persists to some degree to this day.

Mahler chose the title “Titan” as a reference to Jean Paul’s great novel of the same name. “Titan” was included in the title of the symphony’s second (Hamburg) and third (Weimar) performances, after which it was permanently removed. How significant the relationship between the program, Jean Paul and specifically his novel Titan remains a question open to debate. There is however, no doubt that Mahler was a great admirer of Jean Paul’s works: literary references can be found between the program notes and Jean Pauls’ novels.

The published version of Mahler’s first symphony consists of a four movement symphonic structure. Previous structures of the symphony can be viewed here. The first movement is in modified sonata form, the second is a scherzo and trio based on a ländler (folk dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ time), the third is a slow funeral march and the fourth serves as an expansive finale incorporating material from previous movements. Traditionally the second movement should be the slow movement followed by the Minuet-Trio, Mahler reversed this

order for his first symphony. The additional Blumine movement was originally the second movement before its removal. The keys for the movements are as follows: D major for the first movement, A major for the second, d minor for the third, f minor for the last with a grand finale ending in D major.

In a series of conversations Mahler had with Bauer-Lechners, he perceives each of the first four movements (Blumine version) as landmarks in the life of the symphony’s hero. “In the first movement we are carried away by a Dionysian, jubilant mood that has not yet been broken or dulled by anything.” The Blumine movement was described as a “love episode”. The scherzo: “the young lad still roaming around the world is much stronger, rougher, and more fit for life.” and the funeral march: “Now he (my hero) has found a hair in his soup, and his meal is spoiled.” Mahler described the finale to Bernhard Schuster as “The sudden outburst... of despair of a deeply wounded and broken heart.”

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1 Langsam, Schleppend. Wie Ein Naturlaut 15:11

2 Kräftig Bewegt, Doch Nicht Zu Schnell 7:51

3 Feierlich Und Gemessen, Ohne Zu Schleppen 11:33

4 Stürmisch Bewegt 18:32

Total Time 53:07

Recorded 1963 at Boston Symphony Hall by RCA Records
Engineer - Lewis Layton Producer - Richard Mohr

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