

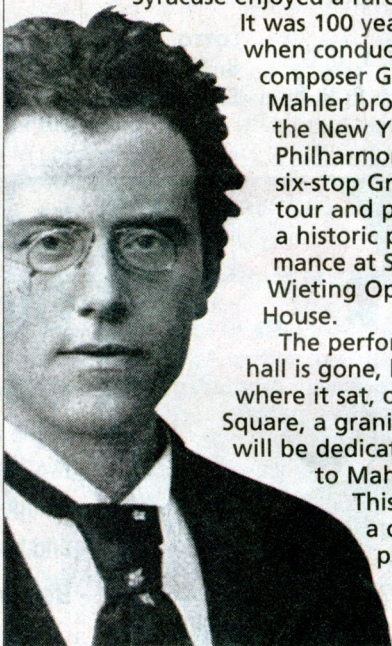
Music fans to remember when Mahler was here

Today in Clinton Square, music lovers will gather to recall another snowy day when Syracuse enjoyed a rare treat.

It was 100 years ago when conductor and composer Gustav Mahler brought the New York Philharmonic on a six-stop Great Lakes tour and presented a historic performance at Syracuse's Wieting Opera House.

The performance hall is gone, but near where it sat, on Clinton Square, a granite bench will be dedicated today to Mahler's visit.

This evening, a concert is planned. C-1





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ARTS

CNY

ENTERTAINMENT

CLASSIFIED ADS INSIDE

When Syracuse made MUSIC HISTORY



Gustav Mahler

INNOVATIVE COMPOSER AND CONDUCTOR GUSTAV MAHLER'S 1910 VISIT WITH NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC TO BE COMMEMORATED TODAY IN CLINTON SQUARE

By Melinda Johnson • Arts editor

*T*urn back the clock 100 years to this day. Syracuse was cloaked in 4 inches of snow. Conductor and composer Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic stepped off the train after having performed in Rochester on the evening of Dec. 8.

The conductor and his 85 musicians were nearing the end of their six-stop Great Lakes tour, which began in Pittsburgh, followed by Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Utica.

A concert was scheduled for Friday evening at the Wieting Opera House. The performance hall, which was demolished in 1930, sat on the southern side of Water Street on what is now Clinton Square.

The program featured Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. Mahler not only conducted but was soloist. He sat at a Steinway piano, reconfigured as a harpsichord, facing the audience and performed his arrangement of Bach's Suite for Orchestra.

The critic for the Syracuse Herald wrote: "From the musical point of view, the orchestral concert of the New York Philharmonic society at the Wieting last night, will rank among the great successes of its kind in the musical history of Syracuse."

This momentous occasion will not go unforgotten on the 100th anniversary. On a similarly snowy Syracuse day, music lovers and history buffs will converge on Clinton Square at 12:30 p.m. today to dedicate a bench commemorating Mahler's visit as a performer and conductor.

Mahler aficionado Hamilton Armstrong, of Manlius, is underwriting the purchase of the granite bench and its

MAHLER, PAGE C-3

THE 3,000-seat Wieting Opera House (dating to 1897) was on the south side of Water Street between Salina and Clinton streets.

Courtesy of Onondaga Historical Association

TODAY'S EVENTS

A formal ceremony will be today at Clinton Square to mark the 100-year anniversary of conductor Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic's concert in Syracuse. WCNY-FM also has planned an afternoon of programs. Here is the schedule for today's activities:

12:06 p.m. on WCNY-FM (91.3): Writer Norman Lebrecht will discuss the importance of Gustav Mahler and talk about his recent book, "Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed Our World."

12:30 p.m.: Dedication of the Gustav Mahler bench will be held in the warming room of the

Clinton Square Ice Rink because of the weather. (Enter the rink entrance of the Atrium Building at 2 Clinton Square.) WCNY's announcer Bill Baker will be master of ceremonies. Gregg Tripoli, executive director of Onondaga Historical Association, and Daniel Hege, music director of Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, will speak. It also will be broadcast live on WCNY-FM.

1 p.m. on WCNY-FM: Henry Fogel, vice president and program director of former classical music station WONO in Syracuse from 1963 to 1978, will introduce music selections

along with commentary on Mahler. The program will follow the order of compositions performed by Mahler and the New York Philharmonic on Dec. 9, 1910, in Syracuse. Mahler's tenure with the orchestra predates live recordings. Instead, WCNY is substituting recordings from several orchestras, conducted by renowned conductors.

Musical program:

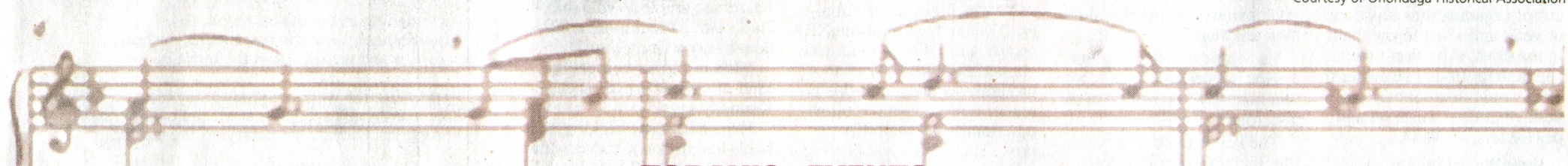
J.S. Bach, arranged by Gustav Mahler. Suite for Organ, Harpsichord and Orchestra. Performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen (2000).

Beethoven, Symphony No. 6. "Pastorale." Performed by the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Wilhelm Furtwangler (1953).

Wagner, Prelude and "Liebestod" from "Tristan and Isolde." Performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Otto Klemperer (1960).

Wagner, "Siegfried Idyll." Performed by the German Opera Orchestra, conducted by Christian Thielemann (1999).

Wagner, Prelude to "Die Meistersinger." Performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, conducted by Willem Mengelberg (1940).



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Mahler Concert in Syracuse Part of His Vision

Conductor had radical idea: take orchestra on road trips

MAHLER, FROM PAGE C-1
inscription. The Onondaga Historical Association is organizing the ceremony with WCNY-FM radio and the assistance of the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs, the New York State Historic Preservation Office and Karl Lutz Monument Co. It also will be broadcast live on WCNY-FM.

Weeks before, another ardent admirer of Mahler, writer Norman Lebrecht, flew from New York City to Syracuse.

"I set out to retrace Mahler's footsteps because he invented orchestral touring. Nobody remembers that. But Mahler was the first person to put a full orchestra on a train and to say 'that the things we're doing here in the middle of Manhattan are far too remarkable for eight city blocks. Let's get them out to the rest of the country,'" says Lebrecht, author of the recently published "Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed Our World" (see review below).

During his brief visit to Syracuse, Lebrecht stopped by Clinton Square and also recorded an interview at WCNY-FM to be aired at 12:06 p.m. today. The writer is back home in London's St. John's Wood, just around the corner from the Abbey Road Studio where the Beatles recorded their first albums. After finishing a U.S. book tour, he is "hunkering" down as London experiences heavy snowfall.

Lebrecht also felt compelled to follow Mahler's Upstate travels to remind people of the "extraordinary" orchestra tour and his incredible influence. During a phone interview, the author says Mahler "rewrote the rules of music in America," from introducing a subscription series at the New York Philharmonic as well as several series focused on contemporary music, the evolution of music from Bach to present time and an education program.

"He did all sorts of things that today seem challenging and at that time were beyond revolutionary," says Lebrecht. "Much of what he did in that short time — 1909 to 1911 — is still the basis of the way that orchestral music functions in America, still today."


The author describes Mahler as an "iconoclast" who spent his life trying to change what an orchestra can do and how the public perceives it. As conductor of the New York Philharmonic (1909-1911), he realized this dream. Mahler introduced "multi-directionality and spatial elements into music, so you're sitting in the hall and you don't know where it is coming from," says Lebrecht.

Mahler was intent on changing music from being "frontally delivered by an orchestra onstage to (a) passive audience in a hall" to a surround-sound experience.

As a composer, Mahler left

FRIDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 9th

The Philharmonic Orchestra
OF NEW YORK



Gustav Mahler
Conductor

Management: Loudon Charlton, 868 Carnegie Hall, New York

STEINWAY PIANO USED

Tickets, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00 and \$2.50. Seats on Sale

Courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association

A PROGRAM from the New York Philharmonic's performance, conducted by Gustav Mahler, at Syracuse's Wieting Opera House on Dec. 9, 1910.

Concert followed snowstorm in 1910

History appears to repeat itself with the circumstances surrounding the Gustav Mahler and New York Philharmonic concert in Syracuse 100 years ago. Here are a few facts about the time, place and conditions for the concert on Dec. 9, 1910.

■ "Storm Wraps Syracuse in Blanket of Snow," from the Syracuse Post-Standard, Dec. 10, 1910. With 4 inches of overnight snow on Dec. 8, 1910, Commissioner of Public Works Frank M. Westcott dispatched the "largest force of snow removal with 25 plows and 225 men with shovels."

■ Tickets for the concert cost 75 cents to \$2.50. The most expensive ticket for the Boston Symphony Orchestra concert at the Wieting was \$2.

■ The Wieting Opera House had 3,000 seats. Newspaper critics called attendance at the New York Philharmonic concert poor and blamed it on high ticket prices.

■ The Wieting Opera House, dating to 1897, was the fourth and last Wieting Opera House (earlier buildings had been destroyed by fire) before it was torn down in 1930.

■ The train station was across from the opera house, which was convenient for the arrival of musicians and performers.

■ The New York Philharmonic concert in 1910 at the Wieting Opera House was followed by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony on Jan. 17, 1911, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on Feb. 4, 1911.

Sources: "Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Tour America," by Mary H. Wagner (Scarecrow Press, 2006) and the Onondaga Historical Association.

11 major works that Lebrecht considers central to our understanding of the development of music, "a synthesis of much that came before and crucible of Modernism, the beginning of the modern age."

Lebrecht, who also wrote "Mahler Remembered" (W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), is surprised there is little public recognition in New York City of Mahler's tenure as conductor of the New York Philharmonic. He also has been overlooked in Europe. Mahler was director of Vienna's opera from 1897 to 1907.

"He's still a prophet pretty much without honor in Vienna."

Lebrecht only learned of the Mahler commemoration upon his arrival in Syracuse in mid-November.

"I was thrilled when I came to Syracuse and found that somebody else has remembered it and was putting up a monument on the ninth of December. I was really moved by that."

Lebrecht is effusive when discussing Mahler and shares many anecdotes about the

composer. Almost 100 years after Mahler's death in 1911 at the age of 50, Lebrecht believes Mahler's influence reverberates in mainstream music and in other delightful places.

"The language and syntax of the Hollywood soundtrack is rooted in Mahler through various disciples of Mahler who went to Hollywood in the 1930s," says Lebrecht.

"Every time you see Harry Potter lift off on his broomstick, what you hear is a phrase of Mahler as he takes off. The first time it happens it's from 'Resurrection' Symphony (aka Symphony No. 2). There's various other phrases from Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony."

"Without our knowing it, Mahler is there in our lives, without us every having been to a concert. He's there in movies and he's there in popular music. And, of course, he's there in classical and orchestral music. He may very well be in your ringtone."

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Critic loved concert, but unhappy with ticket prices

The following review appeared in the Syracuse Herald on Dec. 10, 1910, under the headline "Grand Concert of the New York Philharmonic." Its spelling and punctuation are as they appeared in the original.

From the musical point of view, the orchestral concert of the New York Philharmonic society at the Wieting last night will rank among the great successes of its kind in the musical history of Syracuse. As a business enterprise, be it said with regret, a similar claim cannot be made for it.

An entertainment of this superlative character deserved a crowded house. As it was, the audience was of only moderate size, say, of the third-night standard for a popular play.

For this the blame cannot fairly be attributed to the music-lovers of Syracuse, who on two occasions last year filled the theater at symphony concerts. It must rather be charged to an error of judgment on the part of the management of the Philharmonics' tour, which established a scale of prices for Syracuse that at once excited

resentment and repelled patronage. With a \$2 maximum for admission, a reasonable one even for so grand a performance in a city the size of Syracuse, the seating capacity of the opera house would probably have been exhausted.

From the pecuniary viewpoint, it was an unwise venture to advance arbitrarily the schedule for choice seats. The mistake was specially deplorable inasmuch as it was the means of keeping the local reception to Gustav Mahler and his accomplished artists within limits that fell short of their deserts.

But this was the only subject for regret or adverse criticism in connection with a concert that will long be recalled with profound pleasure and satisfaction by all who were privileged to hear it.

No small part of the public interest aroused by the appearance of the New York Philharmonic orchestra was directed to its famous conductor. Herr Mahler is short in stature and slight in build, and seemingly the very incarnation of nervous energy; and yet he is less eccentric in motion and lavish in gesture than the average maestro of his rank. One would say that his magnetic influence over his orchestra is that of the mind rather than of the physical man, for his leadership is clearly more thoughtful than demonstrative. His orchestra differs from others of equal celebrity that have appeared here in recent years, not only in the superior number of instrumental voices and the more marked preponderance of string over wind, but also in a finer precision of sheer technic, as, for example, in the rigorous uniformity of the bow movement among the first and second violins. Herr Mahler's strings are a magnificent aggregation of



Courtesy of Onondaga Historical Association

THE WIETING OPERA HOUSE was rebuilt several times over the years. This building, dating to 1897, was where Mahler performed; it stood where the Atrium Building now stands, on the south side of Clinton Square. The inscription on the granite bench being dedicated today will read: "Gustav Mahler: On December 9, 1910, the world-renowned composer, Gustav Mahler, brought the New York Philharmonic to Syracuse. They performed at the Wieting Opera House at the south side of this square. Commemorated by the Hamilton Armstrong family." The bench will be installed in the square at the corner of Salina and Water streets.

trained performers, and their work is perhaps the best example ever furnished in Syracuse of the unequalled adaptability of the king of instruments for all the variations of musical expression.

The program was something more than a classical feast. It was, in a broader aspect, a historic review — an educational study of orchestral composition in three stages of its development. The first number took the auditors back two centuries, to the days of old Johann Sebastian Bach, who with his harpsichord and strings and double-reed accessories, the primitive oboes and bassoons, laid the foundation of the present-day orchestra. From two of Bach's earlier compositions of this class, Herr Mahler has adopted a suite for the modern orchestra, which delighted the ears of his listeners last night with its archaic simplicity and touches of real genius, the whole quaint effect heightened by his own performance on the harpsichord.

Between the dates of Bach's compositions and the golden age of the Shakespeare of music nearly a century elapsed, and Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony," played last night, as the second number on the programme as well as in the chronological order, reveals to us the perfect fruit of that master's inspired faculty of musical invention. Beethoven always protested that his symphonies were intended to be suggestive rather than definitely descriptive in their awakening of emotions, and the distinction he thus makes is admirably illustrated by his Fifth symphony, indicative of Fate knocking at the door. Yet the Pastoral symphony, both in the andante and the final movement, is in an appreciable

degree real delineative music, with its subtle imitations of some of the nature's voices and its stirring simulation of the swell and break of a summer storm. But the master's power of suggestion has full scope, too, in his instrumental reflection of the glory and repose of the picturesque countryside and of the innocent merriment of rustic life.

The three Wagner numbers of the programme, bringing us fifty years nearer to our own day, and representing the last important work in orchestral evolution, completed the contrast and closed the historic retrospect. They were grouped with superb judgment to illustrate three phases of the Wagner contribution to musical art — its tragedy, its romance and its refined comedy.

In its interpretation of Wagner, the orchestra was technically at its best. It was a brilliant exhibition of artistic skill and enthusiasm and an eloquent tribute to the breadth and profundity of Herr Mahler's directive power. But the supreme delight of the evening was its masterly reading of the Beethoven symphony. The exuberant and versatile fancy of the greatest of all musical composers, with all its wealth of imagery and beauty of melody, was never before made articulate in Syracuse with such fervor and accuracy of execution as the Philharmonic devoted to it last night. If it was not perfection itself, it was so near perfection that the trained ear and mind that could detect a shortcoming must have been abnormally acute and sensitive. While the whole programme was rendered with consummate ability, the Beethoven symphony will linger longest, we believe in the memory of last night's audience.