

# The Works of Gustav Mahler

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Seed  
Learning





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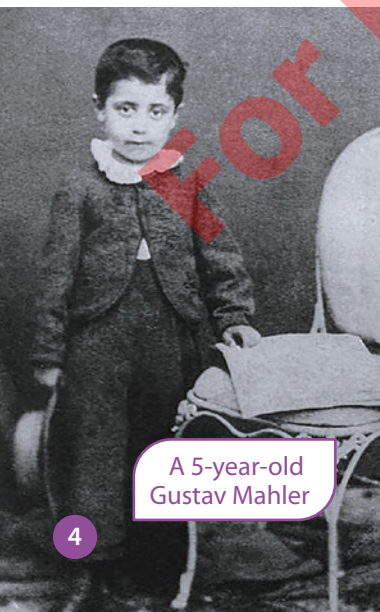
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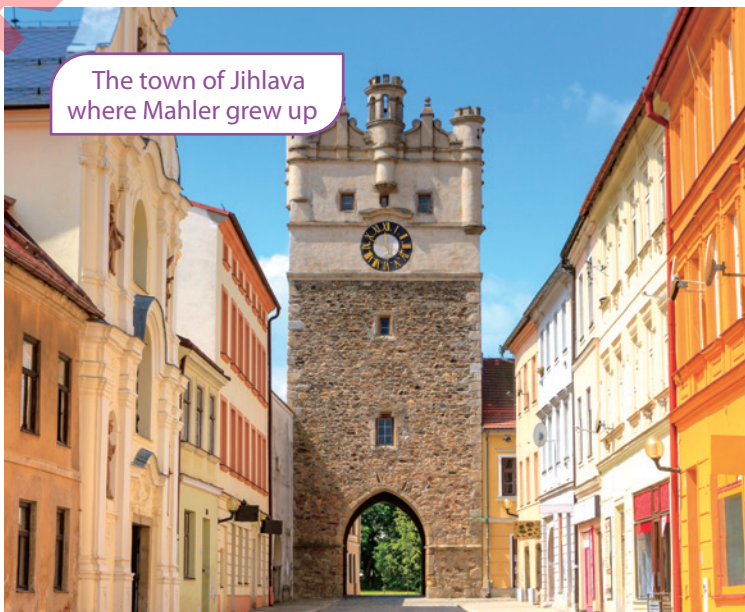
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## Who was Gustav Mahler?

Gustav Mahler was born in Bohemia in 1860 and was raised in the town of Jihlava. There, he heard a lot of music: military music and folk music, among others. When he was four years old, he found his grandparents' piano, and it changed his life! Mahler learned to play the instrument and began performing in public when he was ten years old. At the age of fifteen, he went to Vienna to study the piano. However, two years later, he decided to concentrate on composing and conducting, which remained his two great loves throughout his life.



A 5-year-old Gustav Mahler



The town of Jihlava where Mahler grew up

Austria-Hungary was  
a European power  
between 1867 and 1918.



After completing his studies of composing and conducting, Mahler worked as a conductor in opera houses in Germany and Austria-Hungary. However, he was not happy with the quality of the singers. The singers didn't like Mahler because he had a very demanding reputation. He was extremely difficult to work with. Mahler finally rose to become artistic director of the Vienna State Opera in 1897 at age thirty-seven. He held this position for ten years.

The Vienna State Opera opened in  
1869 and is still in use today.





An outdoor portrait of Mahler



Perfectionists like Mahler have very high standards and don't accept mistakes.

As director, Mahler had very high standards of performance. He was an idealist and a perfectionist. He pushed himself and his artists with an energy that was inspiring to them. However, he did not care about the personal lives of the people he worked with. Many people found Mahler a hard and uncaring man. So, he had many enemies who tried to get him removed from his positions.

Mahler often conducted his own works. When he conducted pieces by other composers, he did it according to his own ideas. He was not the kind of conductor who tried to make the music as close as possible to what the original composer had wanted. Mahler always wanted the music to sound how he thought it should sound.



↑ A cartoon of Mahler's energetic conducting style, 1901

A passionate conductor!



Mahler worked hard and his job took most of his time and energy. However, Mahler spent his summer vacations in the Austrian mountains. He spent his vacations composing. During the theater season, he would review and orchestrate the works he wrote over the summer.

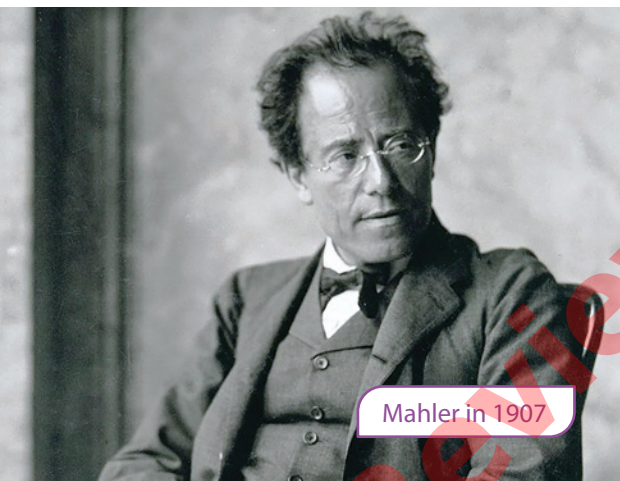
Mahler composed music in this hut each summer.



Mahler spent summers in an area known as Steinbach am Attersee.



A conductor at work



Mahler in 1907



↗ The Metropolitan Opera in New York, during Mahler's time there (1908–1909)

In the end, the Vienna State Opera felt that he was spending too much time on his own music. In 1907, he found a job as a conductor in New York. He still returned to the Austrian mountains every summer, and finally returned to Vienna, to die, in 1911.



Mahler's grave  
in Vienna



During his life and in the years after his death, Mahler was mainly seen as an amazing conductor, not as a composer. It has only been in the last sixty years or so that his importance and genius as a composer have been fully understood.



German folk musicians today

As a composer, Mahler found something new to say in his music. His symphonies often have long melodies and he used folk songs as well as new sounds in the orchestra. His music switches from emotion to emotion in the same way that people do in real life.

Mahler's star of fame in the Opera District in Vienna

