

# MAHLER

Gustav Mahler, A Bohemian, was born in 1860. He was educated at Prague and at Vienna. At the latter place he studied both at the Conservatoire and at the University. From his twentieth year he held, in turn, many conductorships of orchestras and opera houses in Central and Northern Europe, succeeding Seidl at Prague when he was 25 and serving as colleague to Nikisch at Leipzig at 26. In 1892 he conducted a London German Opera Season At Drury Lane; in 1897, aged 37, he began a 10 year period, of greater importance, as conductor and reformer of the Vienna Opera. From 1908 he was often in America. In 1911 he returned from that country to Vienna, very ill, and shortly died - only 51 years of age. He left ten symphonies and like Bruckner may be called a 'classical-romantic'.



---

Mahler was influenced by Wagner. This is evident in his earlier works. However even in his first symphonies he began to introduce foreign elements. He was one of the most literate of composers, and his first four symphonies cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the musical and extra-musical references which he makes in them.

The spare textures and modality in Um Mitternacht LAM 86, are characteristic of his mature style. They point in the way forward to Debussy's late chamber works. The near atonal chromatic polyphony of the second section is echoed by similar textures in the works of Alban Berg (LAM 103). Indeed his influence throughout the century can be traced in the works of composers as diverse as Schoenberg, Shostakovich, Britten and Berio.

Mahler's stylistic roots lie in Romanticism.

## **Find out about the following and comment upon:**

1. The breadth of his intellectual interests.
2. His use of classical techniques.
3. The importance of song in his work, in relation to the symphonies.
4. The 'popular' element in his music. [The use of marches etc.]
5. His use of counterpoint and polyphony.
6. The other composers who helped to shape his style.
7. His harmonic style.
8. His methods as an orchestrator.
9. His reputation as a conductor.
10. The composers with whom he associated in his mature years.