



**Yale
Symphony
Orchestra**

November 14, 2015

Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director

PROGRAM

This Old Place (World Premiere)

Eric Nathan

*Dedicated to Toshiyuki Shimada on his 10th Anniversary
as Music Director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra*

Symphony No. 6 in A minor, “Tragic”
Gustav Mahler

Allegro energico, ma non troppo. Heftig, aber markig.

Scherzo: Wuchtig

Andante moderato

Finale: Sostenuto – Allegro moderato – Allegro energico

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Toshiyuki Shimada, *Music Director*

Toshiyuki Shimada is Music Director and Conductor of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra in New London; Music Director and Conductor of the Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes; and has been



Photo by Harold Shapiro

Music Director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra of Yale University since 2005. He is also Music Director Laureate of the Portland Symphony Orchestra in Portland, Maine, for which he served as Music Director from 1986 to 2006. Prior to his Portland engagement he was Associate Conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra for six years. Since 1998, he has also served as Principal Conductor of the Vienna Modern Masters record label in Austria.

Maestro Shimada continues to be active with his three orchestras, as well as his teaching duties at Yale University. He will also be guest conducting for the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra in Ankara, Turkey; the Izmir State Orchestra in Izmir, Turkey; and the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra in Tennessee.

In May and June of 2010, the Yale Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Shimada made a highly successful tour to the Republic of Turkey, performing in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. The trip garnered extensive media coverage, including CNN and Turkish National Television. In 2008 the YSO toured Italy, performing in Rome, Florence, Bologna, and Milan. This past spring Maestro Shimada was invited to conduct the United States Coast Guard Band, following guest conductor Leonard Slatkin.

He has collaborated with distinguished artists such as Itzhak Perlman, Andre Watts, Peter Serkin, Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Idil Biret, Peter Frankl, Janos Starker, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Nadjia Salerno-Sonnenberg, Cho-Liang Lin, Sir James Galway, Evelyn Glennie, and Barry Tuckwell. In the Pops field he has performed with Doc Severinsen, Willie

Nelson, Johnny Cash, Marvin Hamlisch, and Toni Tennille.

Maestro Shimada has had the good fortune to study with many distinguished conductors of the past and the present, including Leonard Bernstein, Herbert von Karajan, Herbert Blomstedt, Hans Swarovsky, and Michael Tilson Thomas. He was a finalist in the 1979 Herbert von Karajan conducting competition in Berlin, and a Fellow Conductor in the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute in 1983. In addition, he was named Ariel Musician of the Year in 2003 by Ariel Records, and received the ASCAP award in 1989. He graduated from California State University, Northridge, studying with David Whitwell and Lawrence Christianson, and attended the University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Vienna, Austria.

He records with the Vienna Modern Masters label and with the Moravian Philharmonic, and currently has fifteen albums on the label. He also records for Capstone Records, Querstand-VKJK (Germany), and Albany Records. His recording of Gregory Hutter's *Skyscrapers* has been released through the Naxos label, and his Hindemith CD project with pianist Idil Biret was released in 2013. His *Music from the Vatican* with the Prague Chamber Orchestra and Chorus is available through iTunes and Rhapsody.

Maestro Shimada holds a teaching position at Yale University, as Associate Professor of Conducting with Yale School of Music and Department of Music. He has a strong commitment to music education, and has been a faculty member of Rice University, Houston, Texas; the University of Southern Maine; and served as Artist Faculty at the Houston Institute of Aesthetic Study. He is a favorite guest conductor with the orchestras of Ithaca College, Purchase College, and the University of Connecticut. He has conducted All State Honor and Regional Honor Orchestras for Connecticut, California, New York, Maine and Massachusetts. He was one of the distinguish speakers at the Chopin Symposium 2010, at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey.

He resides in Connecticut with his wife, concert pianist Eva Virsik.

Eric Nathan, *Composer*

Eric Nathan, a 2013 Rome Prize Fellow and 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, has garnered acclaim internationally through performances at the New York Philharmonic's 2014 Biennial, Carnegie Hall, Aldeburgh Music

Festival, Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, Aspen Music Festival, MATA Festival, Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Ravinia Festival Steans Institute, Yellow Barn, 2012 and 2013 World Music Days, Domaine Forget and Louvre Museum. His music has additionally been fea-



tured by the Berlin Philharmonic's Scharoun Ensemble, Boston Symphony Chamber Players, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, American Composers Orchestra, Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra, A Far Cry, JACK Quartet and performers including sopranos Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton, Tony Arnold, trombonist Joseph Alessi, pianist Gloria Cheng, and violists Samuel Rhodes and Roger Tapping.

Recent projects include commissions from the New York Philharmonic for its CONTACT! series, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center, a trio for sopranos Dawn Upshaw, Lucy Shelton and Tony Arnold to premiere at a season opening concert at Merkin Hall, and violinist Jennifer Koh for a new solo work to premiere at the New York Philharmonic's 2016 Biennial. Nathan has additionally been honored with awards including ASCAP's Rudolf Nissim Prize, four ASCAP Morton Gould Awards, BMI's William Schuman Prize, Aspen Music Festival's Jacob Druckman Prize, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Leonard Bernstein Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center.

In 2015, Albany Records releases a debut CD of Nathan's solo and chamber music, "Multitude, Solitude: Eric Nathan," produced by Grammy-winning producer Judith Sherman, featuring the Momenta Quartet, trombonist Joseph Alessi, violist Samuel Rhodes, oboist Peggy Pearson, pianist Mei Rui, and trumpeter Hugo Moreno. (Le) Poisson Rouge presents a CD release concert of Nathan's music in October 2015.

Nathan served as Composer-in-Residence at the 2013 Chelsea Music Festival (New York) and 2013 Chamber Music Campania (Italy). He received his doctorate from Cornell and holds degrees from Yale (B.A.) and Indiana University (M.M.). While a student at Yale, Nathan was principal trumpet of the Yale Concert Band and Yale Symphony Orchestra, and had works premiered by both ensembles, including the premiere of "Collage Ritmico" on the YSO's inaugural 2006 tour with music director Toshiyuki Shimada.

Nathan served as Visiting Assistant Professor at Williams College in 2014-15, and is currently Assistant Professor of Music in Composition-Theory at the Brown University Department of Music.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

This Old Place (World Premiere)

Eric Nathan

This Old Place is an homage to old places – those in the physical world, one’s personal life and also in music. I have frequently found inspiration from the sense of a physical place, trying to recapture my emotional reaction to its atmosphere. When I enter historic spaces, I am moved by the idea of being part of a shared past with those who have come before me. These feelings are different from those that I feel when I return to “personal” old places, which may not be as old but which feel like “home,” where a part of my identity was formed. And then there are places in pieces of music that can bring back memories more vibrantly than can anything in the physical world.

Yale University’s Woolsey Hall for me encapsulates these three kinds of old places. It has welcomed many students into its cavernous, resonant chamber, including me, when I was a student at Yale and a trumpeter in the Yale Symphony Orchestra. It was during this time that I deepened my love of Gustav Mahler’s music by having the chance to perform his symphonies both on Woolsey Hall’s stage and as one of the off-stage brass players.

This Old Place pays homage to Woolsey Hall’s reverberant acoustic and also to Mahler’s music. The piece aims to engage with the hall’s sense of space, which can be at once intimate and also intensely public, by creating

moments that listen intently to its quiet sounds and the simple beauty of its acoustics, but also to how its acoustic can surround and overwhelm us. As a nod to Mahler's frequent use of off-stage brass, I have written parts for two off-stage hornists that call antiphonally from the balcony, and who at one point quote from Mahler's Fifth Symphony, which I performed at Yale.

Symphony No. 6 in A minor, "Tragic" Gustav Mahler

When one thinks of Gustav Mahler, seldom does the word "happy" come to mind. Despite the intensity of his music, however, Mahler is rarely negative, as his works generally end either in triumph or in peaceful quietude, accepting the tragedy with grace. The exception to this is the Sixth Symphony, a work whose bleakness terrified the composer himself. Written during a happy period in Mahler's life, this dark music seems to have been an augury for the tragic events in Mahler's future: the death of his daughter, the loss of his conducting post due to prevalent anti-Semitism, and the discovery of his serious heart condition. The work was completed in 1904, but Mahler, as was his wont, made numerous revisions to the score that pose difficult artistic decisions for conductors to this day. While this seventy minute work hardly seems "classical," in fact it is one of Mahler's more conventional works with the traditional four movements, the outer two being fast movements in sonata form and the inner two a slow movement and a scherzo.

Mahler frequently used sonata form in symphonic movements, but the form of the first movement of the Sixth Symphony is considerably less distorted than in most of his others works. As in Beethoven's stormier movements, the rigidity of the sonata form holds in the chaotic emotions within. The first theme is an austere march accompanied by the militaristic snare drum. After a break between the first and second themes (a *medial caesura*), the music retreats to a different world with a woodwind chorale before being swept up into the second theme, a floridly lyrical melody in F major (a key relationship reminiscent of Beethoven). After Mahler's death, his wife Alma claimed that this theme was meant to express her, but in more recent years several Mahler scholars have determined that Alma was not necessarily the most reliable source. The very necessary repeat of the exposition, a

rare feature in Mahler, emphasizes the underlying form and enhances the movement's majestic scope.

The development section holds up the opening march to a funhouse distorting mirror, and for the first time in any symphony the spooky rattling of the xylophone is heard. The music suddenly dissolves into an eerie alpine mountain scene with the sounds of the celesta and offstage cowbells. Just as the listener begins to forget the world from which this has emerged, the march reenters and overthrows it. In the recapitulation the woodwind chorale is prolonged, its instrumentation echoing the alpine scene, while the lyrical second theme, in D major rather than the home key of A, is nihilistically truncated and even collapsed. As the exposition has been heard twice, these differences are striking. A coda nearly as long as the exposition is needed to resolve the movement, but it seems only to exacerbate the conflict until a sudden shift to A major. The final triumph, however, is hardly comforting: with excessive oscillating timpani and multiple triangle trills, it scorns the seriousness of what has come before and accuses the entire movement of absurdity.

While most conductors' scores, and most performances, give the Scherzo as the second movement, early on Mahler himself reversed the order of the middle movements so that the mitigating Andante comes after the first movement and before the Scherzo, thus providing faster relief from the A minor. While conductor and Mahler enthusiast Benjamin Zander offers compelling reasons to preserve the original order, Mahler scholar Gilbert Kaplan has concluded that once the composer decided to reverse the order of these two movements he never looked back. While this debate may be irresolvable, tonight Mahler's original order will be honored.

A "scherzo" literally is a "joke," and the Scherzo of the Sixth Symphony lives up to its name. The opening theme is coarse and sardonic, and its off-beat accents make the downbeat difficult to detect. The timpani and xylophone are given prominent roles. The irony of this movement is far from the annihilation of the bleak Scherzo of the Second Symphony or the abrasive Scherzo of the Ninth, as here the real tragedy is still yet to come. The substantial contrasting middle section, or trio, is an Austrian dance, but it evokes a cartoon image of dancing elephants rather than a Viennese ballroom. As with many later large-scale works of Beethoven, the trio section is stated a second time before the scherzo section reenters yet again to culminate in a burst of sound reminiscent of the "scream" in the Scherzo of

the Second Symphony. There is a ghostly echo of the trio, now deflated and negative, and the movement draws to a grotesque close with a quiet and mirthless laugh from the timpani and lowest strings.

Set in the distant key of E-flat major, the rondo-form *Andante moderato* begins almost as a Chopin Nocturne, with a lyrical melody over broken chords in the cellos. This melody, however, is interspersed with unexpected accidentals, darkening it and reminding the listener that the eye of the hurricane is still part of the storm. The cowbells return, now onstage, at the lightest and most exalted moments. This relief is threatened by the contrasting sections, which open with the exposed high strings hovering spectrally over the abyss, beneath them a plaintive oboe. The greatest moment of triumph emerges from an intense wailing of the full orchestra, and while the music strives upward toward a poignant climax the pain is never quite left behind. The music fades away and the movement comes to a placid close.

The Finale is so expansive (longer than most of Mozart's and Haydn's symphonies in their entirety) that its sonata form is barely recognizable. After its eerie introductory measures, an ominous theme stated in the tuba (the low brass takes on special significance in this movement) with eerily sparse instrumentation. Nervous and haunted string tremolos and distant low bells (and, later on, once again the cowbells) contribute to the spookiness of the music, but from this emerges a noble theme in the brass. The story of this movement is the struggle between this heroic theme and the demons that surround it, and which it attempts to transcend. The second theme of the first movement is heard throughout as well, as though the hero were desperately reaching out for his love. As the music alternates between grotesque battle marches and triumphant, even cinematic melodies in the high strings are the three famous "hammer blows" that thwart the heroic music before it can reach its climax. Mahler specified that these hammer blows are to be "short, mighty, but dull resounding impact not of a metallic character, like an axe blow." The composer himself had difficulty finding satisfying means to achieve this sound, but hopefully the large wooden box constructed for this performance, struck by a thick wooden slab, would have pleased him.

As the symphony draws to a close, victory seems to have been achieved as high woodwind trills and tremolos in the first violins soar upward. Just as the apotheosis is about to be complete, however, the music of the very

beginning cuts it short, and as first violins begin their questioning plea for the last time the final hammer blow silences all hope. As Zander notes, the tragedy of this so-called “Tragic Symphony” is not cemented until the last few pages of the 261-page score with this third hammer stroke and the solemn mourning of the four trombones and tuba that follow before the final A minor chord. Mahler found this irrevocable moment so terrible that he quite literally softened the blow, removing the hammer and reducing the dynamics and orchestration. Despite the composer’s best efforts to undo the horror of his music, however, nothing can reverse its fate, and so tonight the third hammer blow will be restored.

Andrew Kohler '06

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About the Orchestra

Founded in 1965 by a group of students, the Yale Symphony Orchestra (YSO) is one of the premier undergraduate ensembles in the United States. The largest orchestra in Yale College and the only one with a full time manager and music director, the YSO provides a means for students to perform orchestral music at a conservatory level while taking advantage of all Yale, as a liberal-arts institution, has to offer. Beyond its season concerts, the YSO is famous for its legendary Halloween Show, a student-directed and -produced silent movie, whose score the orchestra performs at midnight in full costume. Long a Yale tradition, the Halloween Show sells out Woolsey Hall days in advance, and the production remains a closely guarded secret until the night of performance; recent cameo appearances include James Franco, Woody Allen, John McCain, Rosa DeLauro, and Jimmy Kimmel.

The YSO numbers among its alumni members of the New York Philharmonic (Sharon Yamada, 1st violin), the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Haldan Martinson, principal 2nd violin, and Owen Young, cello), the Los Angeles Philharmonic (David Howard, clarinet), the San Francisco Symphony (the late William Bennett, oboe), and the Israel Philharmonic (Miriam Hartman, viola), as well as music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Marin Alsop, National Public Radio commentator Miles Hoffman, and others. Although the YSO is an extracurricular ensemble within a liberal arts university, its reputation and output rival those of conservatories worldwide.

Throughout its history the YSO has been committed to commissioning and performing new music. Notably, the YSO presented the European premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* in 1973, the world premiere of the



Photo by Harold Shapiro

definitive restoration of Charles Ives' *Three Places in New England*, the U.S. premiere of Debussy's *Khamma*, and the East Coast premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Building of the House*. In every season the YSO works with the Yale School of Music and the undergraduate Department of Music to program and perform orchestral works written by Yale faculty, graduate, and undergraduate composers.

The YSO has performed with internationally recognized soloists, including Yo-Yo Ma, Frederica von Stade, Emmanuel Ax, David Shifrin, Thomas Murray, and Idil Biret. Each year the YSO also performs with student winners of the William Waite Concerto Competition. Recent performance venues include New York City's Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, and St. Patrick's Cathedral. In 2011, the YSO joined the Yale Glee Club at Carnegie Hall in celebration of their 150th anniversary, and was hailed by New York Times music critic Zachary Woolfe as "the excellent Yale Symphony Orchestra."

Under the baton of music director Toshiyuki Shimada, the YSO has toured domestically and internationally, including a 2010 tour of Turkey with acclaimed pianist Idil Biret. Ms. Biret rejoined the orchestra for a recording of Paul Hindemith's piano concerti, which were released in 2013 on the Naxos label; the album is Ms. Biret's 100th. Past tours have brought the orchestra to Portugal, Korea, Central Europe, Italy, and most recently Brazil.

Former music directors include Richmond Browne, John Mauceri, C. William Harwood, Robert Kapilow, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, David Stern, James Ross, James Sinclair, Shinik Hahm, and George Rothman.

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April 2, 2016 at 8pm in Woolsey Hall

Ole Akahoshi, Cello

Scarlett Tong Zuo, Piano

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Air for Cello and Orchestra

Viktor Ullmann

Symphony No. 2

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Einojuhani Rautavaara

Piano Concerto No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 8

April 16, 2016 at 8pm in Woolsey Hall

April 21, 2016 at 8pm at Carnegie Hall

Idil Biret, Piano

John Mauceri, Guest Conductor

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