

E-CONCERT PROGRAMME

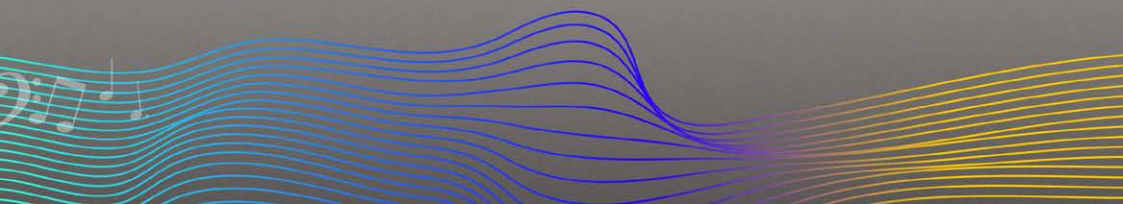
Malaysian
Philharmonic
Orchestra



Symphony No. 4

2025 SEASON

PERFORMANCE AT
DEWAN FILHARMONIK PETRONAS





MALAYSIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) gave its inaugural performance at Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS (DFP) on 17 August 1998. With the initial search for outstanding musicians involving a worldwide audition tour, the MPO today is made up of many talented Malaysian musicians and musicians from other nations, a beautiful example of harmony among different cultures and nationalities.

With each new season, the MPO continues to present an exciting programme of orchestral music drawn from over three centuries, as well as the crowd-pleasing concert series. Its versatility transcends genres, from classical masterpieces to film music, pop, jazz, traditional, contemporary and commissioned works.

Among renowned Malaysian artists who have mesmerized audiences with the MPO include SM Salim, Sheila Majid, M.Nasir, Siti Nurhaliza, Jamal Abdillah, Ella, Dayang Nurfaizah, Aishah, Jaclyn Victor and Aubrey Suwito.

A host of internationally acclaimed musicians have performed with the MPO including Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner, Yehudi Menuhin, Joshua Bell, Harry Connick Jr., José Carreras, Andrea Bocelli, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Chris Botti, Branford Marsalis and Judika, many of whom have praised the MPO for its fine musical qualities and vitality.

The MPO regularly performs in major cities of Malaysia such as in Alor Setar, George Town, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kuantan, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and many more. Internationally, it has toured Singapore (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2018), Japan (2001, 2009 and 2017), Korea (2001), Australia (2004), China (2006 and 2019), Taiwan (2007) and Vietnam (2013). The MPO has also released 21 CDs.

The MPO remains steadfast in its mission to be the premier Malaysian orchestra, providing the ultimate music experience through the power of live music that educates, entertains and inspires. Its main benefactor is PETRONAS, and its patron is YABhg. Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Haji Mohd Ali.

Mahler Symphony No. 4

Sat 8 November 2025, 8:00 pm

- 03 Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
05 Junichi Hirokami, conductor
06 Hera Hyesang Park, soprano

PROGRAMME

ROSSINI

The Barber of Seville: Overture 7 mins

ROSSINI

The Barber of Seville: Una voce poco fa 5 mins

ROSSINI

L'assedio di Corinto: Giusto Ciel! 3 mins

ROSSINI

Guillaume Tell: Overture 12 mins

ROSSINI

Guillaume Tell: Sombre forêt 7 mins

ROSSINI

Il Turco in Italia: Non si da follia maggiore 4 mins

20-mins intermission

MAHLER

Symphony No. 4 60 mins

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conductor

Junichi Hirokami

Born in Tokyo, Junichi Hirokami studied piano, composition and music under Atsutada Otaka before studying conducting at and graduating from Tokyo College of Music. At 26, he became the winner at the first Kondrashin International Conducting Competition in Amsterdam in 1984.

Since 1990, Hirokami has conducted the major orchestras around the world including the Orchestre National de France, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal, London Symphony Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, L'Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig.

Apart from guest appearances, he has served as Chief Conductor of Sweden's Norrköping Symphony Orchestra and the Limburg Symphony Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Principal Conductor of Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra.

In Japan, he has conducted all the major orchestras including the NHK Symphony Orchestra and Saito Kinen Orchestra. He received great acclaim for his appearance with the Mito Chamber Orchestra. He is prolific in opera, having led celebrated performances of *Un ballo in maschera* and *Rigoletto* at the Sydney Opera House. Other triumphs include *La Traviata* at the Fujiwara Opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Ainadamar* at the Nissay Theatre, and *La Traviata* and *Aida* at the New National Theatre Tokyo.

From 2008 to 2022, he created a golden era as Chief Conductor as well as Music and Artistic Advisor of the Kyoto Symphony Orchestra. In 2015, he received an award at the Suntory Music Award with the orchestra.

Currently, he serves as Artistic Leader of the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, Friend of JPO / Artistic Advisor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, and Friendship Conductor of the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra. The City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra bestowed on him a special title after his name, 'Junichi Hirokami', in recognition of his years of service to the orchestra. He also serves as professor of conducting at Tokyo College of Music. Most recently, he became Music Director of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

soprano

Hera Hyesang Park

Praised for her “radiant, seemingly effortless singing” (*The Times*) with “a sense of pure joy and excitement” (*OperaWire*), soprano Hera Hyesang Park is celebrated not only for her exquisite voice and stagecraft but the profound ideas embodied in her work. Hailing from South Korea and trained at the Juilliard School, she blends her Korean roots and Western life experience in a cosmopolitan approach to life and art. Her lyric coloratura voice carries both immaculate technique and a seemingly infinite variety of tonal colors, combining in a fearless and captivating stage presence.

Park’s 2024/2025 season highlights include debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* led by Gustavo Dudamel, and with Boston Baroque in Haydn’s *The Creation* led by Martin Pearlman. She performs with the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo, appears with Wiener Symphoniker in *Mozart and Mahler*, the Hungarian State Opera, the Orchestre National de Bordeaux Aquitaine, and takes on the role of ‘Zerlina’ in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at Staatsoper Hamburg. She returns to the Metropolitan Opera as ‘Pamina’ in *The Magic Flute*, performs in South Korea for a Gangneung album and returns to London’s Barbican

Centre. In 2024, she released her second album, *Breathe*, on Deutsche Grammophon and performed at 2024 Seoul Fashion Week and in a recital at Seoul’s Lotte Concert Hall.

Park has appeared in opera roles at the Metropolitan Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, Opera de Paris, Berlin Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper and Münchner Rundfunkorchester. She has also performed as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Opera. Her first album, *I am Hera*, was released on Deutsche Grammophon in 2020.

Park studied at Seoul National University before earning her two-year Artist Diploma in Opera Studies at the Juilliard School in 2015.



PROGRAMME NOTES

The lives of the two composers on this programme overlapped by just eight years, and they had little in common esthetically or stylistically. Rossini wrote no symphonies (aside from some juvenilia for strings alone) and Mahler no operas. But they both belonged in the opera house – Rossini as composer, and Mahler as one of the greatest conductors of his time. “The secret of success” is an expression much bandied about these days, with many self-appointed experts claiming to have discovered the magic formula that will work for you too. Whatever the secret, Rossini certainly found it for himself, turning out hit after hit for the operatic stage. Nearly every one of his nearly forty operas was a big success in its day. On the other hand, most of Mahler’s huge symphonies took years to be fully appreciated. Tonight we hear the one that appealed to just about everyone right from the start.

GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792 - 1868)

The Barber of Seville: Overture (1816)

“Una voce poco fà”

The Siege of Corinth: “Giusto Ciel!” (1826)

William Tell: Overture (1829)

“Sombre forêt”

The Turk in Italy: “Non si dà follia maggiore” (1814)

Some composers just seem to have it all: talent, precocity, wealth, fame, popularity, flair, wit and fecundity. Such a man was Rossini. He was renowned on two continents by the time he was 21, and when he drew the curtains on his operatic career in 1829 at the young age of 37, he held the distinction of being the world’s most celebrated living composer (Beethoven having died two years previously). Tonight we hear six excerpts from four different operas – two comedies and two tragedies; two written for Italian stages, two for Paris; two from the earlier part of his operatic career, two from the later part.



The comedies are *The Barber of Seville* and *The Turk in Italy*, both by a composer still in his early twenties. Great operatic comedies are far less plentiful than operatic tragedies, but *The Barber of Seville* indubitably stands at the very pinnacle of this small repertory, and year after year ranks as one of the Top Ten most frequently performed operas of any kind, not surprisingly in view of its irrepressible high spirits, rich humour, and wealth of great tunes. So much unbounded gaiety, fun, lightness and effervescence infuse the Overture to this opera that it is difficult to believe it originally served to introduce two different, serious operas. The aria “Una voce poco fà” is sung by Rosina early in Act I, and captures to perfection the personality of the coy and clever heroine as she sings first of her secret love for the mysterious stranger Lindoro, then of her determination to pursue the object of her desire – and woe to anyone who tries to obstruct her! *The Turk in Italy* (*Il turco in Italia*) was Rossini’s twelfth opera, yet he was just 22 when he wrote it. The florid aria “Non si dà follia maggiore” is sung by the flirtatious, bored housewife Fiorilla, who expresses the belief that “there is no greater folly than to love just one person.”

The Siege of Corinth (*Le siège de Corinthe*) and *William Tell* (*Guillaume Tell*) were both premiered in Paris, hence, their original French titles. Both exist also in Italian versions; in fact, *The Siege of Corinth* is just a reworking of an earlier Rossini opera, *Maometto II*. Near the end of the opera, the invading Turks, led by Mahomet, are closing in on Corinth. Anna, daughter of the Governor of Corinth and the object of Mahomet's love, in her aria "Giusto Ciel!" exhorts the women of Corinth to join her in an appeal to heaven for the courage to go proudly to their deaths. *William Tell* was Rossini's last, longest, and grandest opera for any stage. "Sombre forêt" is sung by Mathilde in Act II. Alone in the forest, she eagerly awaits the arrival of her lover Arnoldo while enjoying the beauty of nature around her.

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860 - 1911)

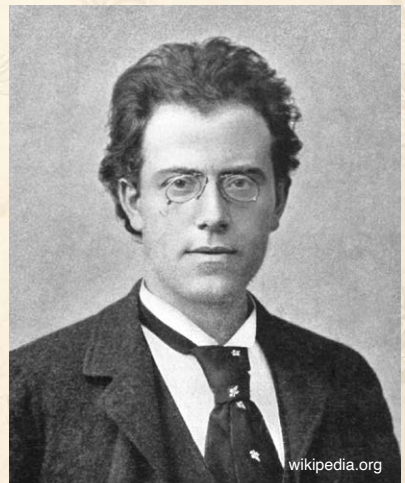
Symphony No. 4 in G major (1899 - 1901)

- I. Bedächtig. Nicht eilen - Recht gemächlich
[Deliberate. Not hurried - Quite genial]
- II. In gemächlicher Bewegung [With leisurely motion]
- III. Ruhevoll (poco adagio) [Serene]
- IV. Sehr behaglich [Very leisurely]

THE BACKGROUND

The Fourth is a special symphony in the Mahler canon for its general air of childlike charm and gentle radiance, the absence of spiritual turmoil, its transparent textures, modest orchestral forces (trombones and tuba are absent; horns are just four in number, percussion is used discreetly), relative brevity (under an hour) and use of a song as the concluding movement.

The Symphony's first three movements were written in the summers of 1899 and 1900. A song Mahler had written in 1892 for soprano and piano was orchestrated and became the symphony's finale, the subject of which (a child's view of heaven) is the goal to which the previous movements all aspire. Mahler himself led the Kaim Orchestra of Munich in the first performance of the Fourth Symphony on 25 November 1901.



THE MUSIC

Only a split second is needed to identify the composition that opens with flutes playing even, repeated notes a fifth apart accompanied by jangling sleigh bells; nothing else sounds remotely like it. The good-natured, *gemütlich* first theme slides in with sunny radiance in the fourth bar. The first theme alone contains three separate elements (the smiling violin tune, a rising bass line, a few chuckles from the horn). A brief, jaunty, martial tune in the clarinets leads immediately into the yearning melody sung by cellos.

The second movement (Scherzo) portrays a dance of death by Freund Hein, a popular character in German fairytales. His instrument is a country fiddle tuned a tone higher than normal in order to produce an unearthly, harsh sound. The music is sinister, to be sure, but at the same time it also retains a sense of humour. Mahler described the effect as “a grisly, sudden feeling which comes over us, just as one is often panic-stricken in broad daylight in a sunlit forest.” Two bucolic trios interrupt the dance, tempering its evil connotations and looking forward to the joys of a life in heaven.

The otherworldly serenity and ineffable beauty of the third movement bring us to the threshold of the heavenly life that awaits us in the finale. Mahler told his disciple, the conductor Bruno Walter, that his vision in this movement was that of a church sepulchre “showing a recumbent stone image of the deceased with his arms crossed in eternal sleep.” Mahler used the double variation form (developing two different melodic ideas in alternation), much as Beethoven had done in the *Adagio* of his Ninth Symphony. In a sudden outburst near the end of the movement, the full orchestra proclaims in brilliant colours a grandiose vision of heaven. The proclamation by the horns anticipates the melody the soprano will sing in the following movement.

The fourth movement is relatively short, but it perfectly and exquisitely fulfills its mission of depicting a child’s view of heaven as a place of serene delight, simple joys and quiet mystery. The child’s voice speaks to us in the words of a poem from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth’s Magic Horn), a famous nineteenth-century collection of German folk poetry. Interspersed between the verses are brief reminders of earthly life (the symphony’s opening flutes and bells motif is now transformed into a harshly aggressive figure), but each time the text returns us to comforting celestial visions. The final moments bring us to the realization that this music does not really end, but rather fades into the quietude of heavenly peace.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, Robert Markow has been writing programme notes for more than forty years for musical organizations in Canada, the USA, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. He taught at Montreal’s McGill University for many years, and as a Wagner specialist, has lectured at the Bayreuth Festival and the Wagner Society of New York. He writes regularly for the journals *Fanfare*, *Der neue Merker* (Vienna), *The Strad*, *Strings*, *Opera* (UK), and the website *classicalvoiceamerica.org*. Extra-musical interests include travel, film, literature and decadent desserts.

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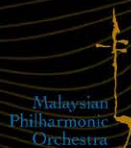
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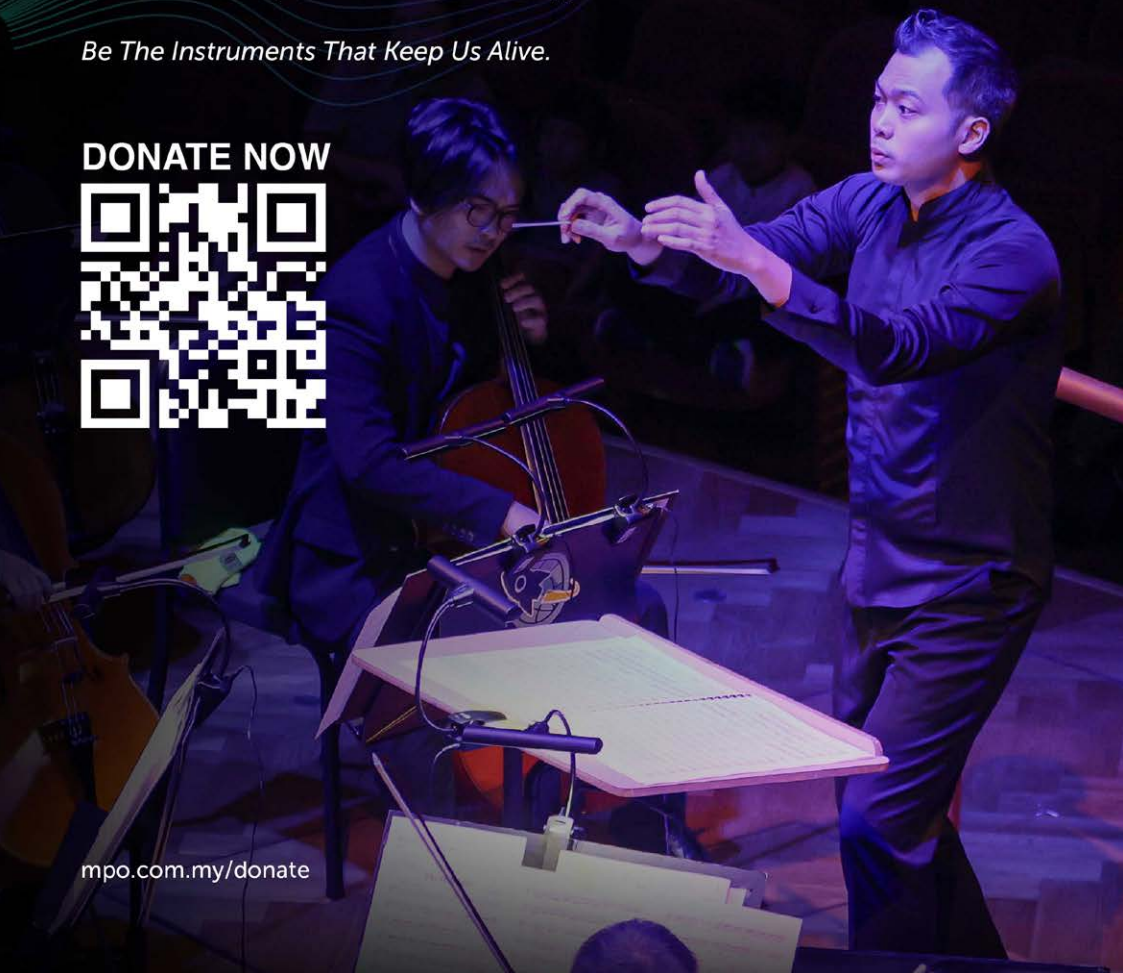
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