A busy Austrian conductor, Mahler became conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic in 1898, at his age of 38, only to give up that position three years later to concentrate upon his many guest conducting appearances and the composition of symphonic music. So where do composers actually write stuff like this? Well, in this period of Mahler's life, the answer was a four-story lakeside villa in the foothills of the Alps, on the shore of the largest lake in Carinthia, about 150 miles southwest of Vienna. The Mahler family spent their summers there during the first decade of the 20th century. Let's focus especially upon the summer of 1904. In the United States, the presidential election was just getting underway, to be won in November by Teddy Roosevelt; the Olympics (the first held in the U.S.) were in St. Louis; Ty Cobb played his first baseball season; in New York City, construction of the Grand Central Station began and the first subway line was opened; and in Milan, Puccini’s opera Madame Butterfly premiered. That summer in the lakeside villa, Mahler completed his 6th Symphony and began composing the 7th, completing it at the villa during the following summer. And Mahler’s works were being performed: his 5th Symphony would be heard for the first time in Cologne, in October 1904, while the 6th was premiered in 1906.

Mahler’s spectacular, thrilling 7th Symphony was heard for the first time in Prague, in September, 1908, where the audience heard its classical orchestration but also cowbells, tambourine, glockenspiel, mandolin, and even guitar. The basic theme involves various manifestations of nature, as we move from dusk to dawn.

Of course, the early critics got it all wrong, the New York Tribune writing, “We cannot see how any of his music can long survive him.” It was new music, after all, which means we need only call upon Jeremy Bentham:

_To say that all things new are bad is to say that all old things were bad in their commencement: for of all the old things ever seen or heard of there is not one that was not once new. Whatever is now establishment was once innovation._

— Bentham, Fallacies of Anti-Reformers, 1824

Mahler’s 7th Symphony, now well established in the literature, was indeed “once innovation,” in so many different ways. It is an extraordinary experience. You won't have a chance to hear a live performance of it very often, but we invite you to hear ours. A very generous donor, who wishes to remain anonymous for now, is sponsoring the May 18 concert as a memorial tribute to a loved one. This is a wonderful act that other friends of the Orchestra may wish to consider for future concerts. What a way to acknowledge and honor a cherished life — a memorable performance of a great classical work by our wonderfully accomplished Music Director and DSO musicians, in Wilmington’s historic Grand Opera House, before family, friends and neighbors. Please join us on Friday, May 18, at 7:30 p.m.

—Charles W. Babcock, President
My mother was a professional musician. In that capacity, through one of her countless connections, she received a small shipment of LPs stamped in important gold embossing “Promotional Copy”. There was a Hungarian orchestra playing Richard Strauss, Istomán playing Tchaikovsky 1, Entremont playing Rachmaninoff 4th piano concerto, Messiaen’s Turangalila Symphony (Previn), and finally, Mahler’s 7th with Haitink. Each of these recordings, made lasting grooves on my brain and my spirit. I loved them.

When he first arrived at the DSO, Alan Jordan asked me for my ‘wish list’ of works. Among them are the pieces from these records. As yet unplayed by the DSO—and me—are Turangalila, Rachmaninoff 4th Piano Concerto, and Mahler 7. That is, of course, about to change in May when we play Mahler 7 for the first time in DSO’s 111 year history (the symphony was written right around the time of the founding of the Tankopanicum Orchestra).

The 7th was the first Mahler symphony I heard, and I felt it inscrutable. It was long, complex, and unpredictable. But it is not a piece for a kid. It is both violent and tender; manufactured and natural; purposeful and lost. It is a work of extremes. (NC-17: mood swings, adult content, overt passion, psychological instability)

Called ‘Song of the Night’, though not by Mahler, it unfolds in a dream-like, associative way. The large-scale structure is chastic, with the first and fifth movements, and the second and fourth, providing a symmetrical frame around the central scherzo which, though brief, holds much of the dark, mysterious energy that I must have found hard to digest as a kid. But as a teen, then adult, the piece began to speak clearly to me. Being willing, as a listener, to let the piece take control was key. No longer did I need to feel constantly tethered to formal rationalism. On the contrary, being pushed and pulled by the tides of the piece is the joy of listening to it. Relinquishing intellectual control, and being sucked in to Mahler’s world is a terrifying, tender, joyful journey. Mahler’s symphonies are not a respite from the world, but an encapsulation of it. Mahler is not the kind of music that washes over a listener. Instead, it is the kind of music that engulfs a listener, and inhabits them. The piece eventually became part of me. Evidence of this is that when I am quiet, and the noise and clutter of my brain clears out, what is left is the horn calls at the opening of the second movement of Mahler 7, which is both wonderful and annoying like only a dear, close friend can be. It is in me. It will be in you too. It is a remarkable, moving, and startlingly affecting work that will continue to reverberate well after the end of the performance. Mahler said ‘the symphony must be like the world. It must contain everything’. And the 7th does.

—David Amado

The Delaware Symphony Orchestra, led by David Amado and featuring dazzling violinist Jennifer Koh will perform an evening of Mendelssohn and Brahms. Known for her intense and commanding performances, Koh will join the DSO on Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, one of the greatest violin concertos of all time and his last major orchestral work. Concert ticket and dinner packages will also be available to members of the DSO 110 Club. Watch for more information on this upcoming event, coming soon! For tickets, go to: longwoodgardens.org
On January 26th, the DSO performed Igor Stravinsky’s earth-shaking *The Rite of Spring* to a capacity crowd in Copeland Hall. The Herculean work requires an orchestra of 104 players, including two sets of tympani, a wind section of twenty, two Wagner tuben, and more strings than could fit on our extended stage. Rite compresses more notes and drama into 33 minutes than many Wagner operas, and Wilmington was unique for hosting a rarely-heard live performance of this composition. Indeed, other than a little orchestra up I-95 that plays weekly on Broad Street in Philadelphia all season long, the Delaware Symphony Orchestra is possibly the only ensemble within a 70-mile radius that is capable of mounting such a presentation. And, as noted elsewhere in this edition by Charles Babcock and David Amado, the DSO will take on another gargantuan work in May: Mahler’s *Symphony No. 7*. This is one of the things that sets the DSO apart.

I was drawn to this organization by its desire to tackle big literature and regularly feature a large ensemble. Most orchestras with budgets the size of the DSO play with a string section totaling between 30 and 40 musicians. (A recent Wilmington performance by a visiting European orchestra featured only 35 strings.) The DSO regularly carries 55 string players. Indeed, composer Christopher Theofanidis was blown away upon entering The Tatnall School auditorium three seasons ago for the first rehearsal of his *Dreamtime Ancestors* and seeing eight double basses on stage. Even the other DSO, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, doesn’t regularly use a section that big.

So, does size matter? Well, it does if an orchestra wants to expose its community to the full breadth of the symphonic canon. And it also makes a huge difference in the effect of any orchestral composition when it is performed by a full and rich string section. But with large numbers come bigger price tags. Even with a full house, the Classics Series Concert 3 still cost $75,000 more than all the ticket proceeds and corporate sponsorship. The DSO’s primary product is high-quality, but expensive.

So, as usual, my message includes a plea for support. We have a “home hall” in Wilmington that only fits 1,140 patrons at most (less when we need the stage extension). The average Classics Series concert price tag would require every seat in the hall to be sold for $94 to achieve a break-even result. Even those paying full price for the best seats in the house are enjoying a subsidized admission.

We have been doing pretty well this season in securing new and increased gifts for our One-Twelve Fund Drive (in honor of our one hundred and twelfth season), which was launched to help us manage the nearly $500,000 in increased costs associated with our core activities and expansion plans. At this writing, we are a little more than $66,000 from achieving our goal.

If you value the unique musical opportunities that the DSO provides to people across Delaware; if you have personally experienced a transformational concert like the recent one featuring *The Rite of Spring*, please help us keep the music and momentum going with a new or additional tax-deductible contribution. Your support will make possible the DSO’s continued growth, engagement, and championship-level performances throughout The First State. Thank you.

—Alan Jordan, Executive Director alanj@delawaresymphony.org
UPCOMING CONCERTS:

TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2018, 8:00 PM
Gold Ballroom, Hotel du Pont, Wilmington

CHAMBER SERIES CONCERT 4
Schnittke Happens!
SCHNITTKE: Moz-Art á la Haydn
HAYDN: Cello Concerto No. 1
BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 4

DSO Chamber Orchestra
David Amado, conductor
Philo Lee, cello

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2018, 7:30 PM
Copeland Hall, The Grand Opera House, Wilmington

CLASSIC SERIES CONCERT 5
Mahler 7
MAHLER: Symphony No. 7

David Amado, conductor

SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2018, 7:30 PM
Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square

Jennifer Koh with the DSO
MENDELSSOHN: March from Fair Melusine, Op. 32
MENDELSSOHN: Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64
BRAHMS: Serenade No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11

David Amado, conductor
Jennifer Koh, violin

Tickets: longwoodgardens.org

This organization is supported, in part, by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The Division promotes Delaware arts events on www.DelawareScene.com.