

*Candide Suite*

by Leonard Bernstein (1918- 1990)

Arranged by Charlie Harmon (1950- )

*Duration: Approximately 18 minutes**First Performance: December 1, 1956 in New York**Last ESO Performance: These are the first ESO performances of the work*

*Candide* opened on Broadway on December 1, 1956, and closed a scant two months later as a well publicized, expensive, and resounding flop. Despite the considerable talents of librettist Lillian Hellman, lyricist Richard Wilbur, composer Leonard Bernstein, and director Tyrone Guthrie, not to mention Voltaire himself, on whose classic satire the whole affair was based, the script had serious dramatic problems and the music was deemed too sophisticated for Broadway tastes. It was Bernstein's first experience of failure on Broadway.

Even many of the naysayers, however, recognized that the show had great potential and that Bernstein's brilliant score in particular was too good to waste. Over the next three decades a number of theatrical surgeons would try to resuscitate the patient, ultimately producing versions that succeeded both on Broadway as well as in the opera house.

Bernstein's score, now widely considered to have some of his best writing for the theater, is a delightfully sophisticated romp through a variety of styles, ranging from tango and jazz riffs to European dances such as the gavotte, mazurka, schottische, and waltz. Quotations abound from opera and operetta composers such as Rossini, Gounod, and Gilbert and Sullivan, with good-natured spoofs of the conventions of high European culture. The whole manages brilliantly to capture the cynical tone of Voltaire's original satire, which gleefully derides those who smugly believe this to be "the best of all possible worlds."

While the Overture to *Candide* has always traveled well by itself and has long been standard repertoire on symphony programs, the suite heard today adds a new dimension by providing a well-constructed instrumental survey of a number of selections from the show, illustrating the composer's vast lyrical and dramatic skill. Charlie Harmon worked as Leonard Bernstein's assistant, archivist, and editor for a number of years and became especially well acquainted with *Candide* when he served as editor of the final version of the score, which Bernstein recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra not long before his death. The suite was arranged by Harmon in 1998 and dedicated to the conductor Eiji Oue and the Minnesota Orchestra. Oue, a former protégé of Bernstein, was then conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and recorded the work on a CD, released in 1999.

The opening number, *You Were Dead, You Know*, is one of a number of operatic parodies in the show. This is followed by the easily recognizable waltz rhythms of the *Paris Waltz*, which segues into the rambunctious *Bon Voyage*. A brief interlude

consisting of *Drowning Music* (Candide is shipwrecked in the Atlantic), and *The Kings' Barcarolle* (five deposed kings floating on a log in the ocean greet the shipwrecked Candide), prepares the way for *Eldorado*, a lyrical number featuring an expressive cello solo. After the brilliantly Spanish flavor of *I Am Easily Assimilated*, an *Entr'acte* featuring a fanfare that will be familiar to those who know the Overture to the show leads into *The Best of All Possible Worlds*, a summary of Doctor Pangloss's irritatingly smug philosophy. An atmospheric horn solo then prepares the way for *Make our Garden Grow*, one of Bernstein's most noble and inspired moments and one which ends the show with a feeling of philosophical acceptance and some hope that life is worth living. The music of *Candide* is a fitting tribute to Leonard Bernstein, this remarkable musician who so strongly influenced America's musical life and whose 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary the world celebrates this year.

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Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor  
by Gustav Mahler (1860 -1911)

*Duration: Approximately 68 minutes*

*First Performance: October 18, 1904 in Cologne*

*Last ESO Performance: June, 2008; Robert Hanson, conductor*

Mahler wrote his Fifth Symphony primarily during the summers of 1901 and 1902 in a small "composing hut" in the hamlet of Maiernigg on the shores of Lake Wörth in southern Austria. The rural atmosphere provided him the necessary tranquility to forget his hectic winter season life as conductor in Vienna, with its inevitable endless artistic and political battles. If most of Mahler's life might be characterized as turbulent, this period had its own particularly eventful moments. In April of 1901 he resigned his position as conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic's orchestral concerts after a stormy few years. Just a few months earlier in February of 1901, he had suffered a health crisis, a nearly fatal hemorrhage whose effects he described as follows: "I lost a third of my blood that night. I shall certainly recover, but the illness will still have cost ten years of my life." (He would die ten years later at the premature age of fifty-one.)

On a more pleasant note, in March of 1902 Mahler married the redoubtable Alma Schindler, one of the finest flowers of Viennese womanhood and nearly half the 41 year old composer's age. Much has been written about this remarkable woman who, incidentally, continued her good taste in men after Mahler's early death by marrying two other men touched with genius, the architect Walter Gropius and the poet, playwright, and novelist Franz Werfel. (Fans of the brilliant satirist Tom Lehrer might remember his song, *Alma*, with its racy lyrics probing the title character's stormy love life.) The Mahlers' first child was born in November of 1902.

If this period marked a change in Mahler's personal life, so too did the Fifth Symphony mark a change in his symphonic output. His three previous symphonies had

been unorthodox, all using the human voice with much use of folk song material from the famous *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Magic Horn*), an early nineteenth century collection of German folk songs. The Fifth Symphony marked the end of this so-called *Wunderhorn* period as the composer turned to something closer to the traditional orchestral symphonic structure. But the new work also marked a change in Mahler's musical language. As the perceptive critic Michael Steinberg put it, his music became "leaner and harder." An important new development also came as a result of Mahler's study of the music of J. S. Bach, inevitably leading to a more contrapuntal style, i.e. the use of more than one melodic idea at a time.

Traditional symphonies are laid out in four movements, and Mahler does approximate that but does it in his own way. In the score are marked three large sections, each indicated by a Roman numeral. The first part begins with a funeral march of epic grandeur, opening with the famous lugubrious trumpet fanfare. Mahler's well known obsession with death had already been demonstrated in earlier works: whether the extraordinary intensity of this movement was stimulated by his health crisis is a matter for speculation. The funeral march actually functions as an introduction to the second, faster portion, which shares many features with the opening section and continues the emotional intensity in a style marked "stormy" and "with vehemence." Near the end of this movement we hear a brief chorale-like section in the key of D major which might seem to suggest a feeling of triumph over the prevailing darkness but soon relapses back into the somber atmosphere already established. This chorale section will reappear importantly in the finale.

At the end of this portion Mahler indicates in the score that there should be a long pause before proceeding to the section marked as number two. The wisdom of this clearing of the air becomes apparent with the dramatic change of mood in the scherzo, which by itself forms the second and pivotal part of the symphony. Although dark sentiment appears occasionally, this movement contains some of Mahler's most joyous music and has been viewed by some commentators as a "song of thanksgiving of one restored to health," a reference to a movement of a Beethoven string quartet of the same name.

Part Three comprises the radiantly beautiful *Adagietto*, scored only for strings and harp, and the triumphant finale. The *Adagietto* has long been one of Mahler's greatest hits, having been often performed as a separate work in the days when Mahler symphonies were considered too long to be performed in their entirety. It also made its way into the popular culture through its use in Luchino Visconti's film, *Death in Venice* (1971). There is reason to believe that this movement was intended as a declaration of love for the composer's new bride, a claim that seems to be substantiated by its deeply emotional quality.

As the last sounds of the *Adagietto* die away, we are led into the wonderful finale, surely one of the most life-affirming movements in all of Mahler. Here folk-like tunes and sentimental melody are combined with learned counterpoint, yet despite its complexity the music never loses its exuberance. The listener will recognize a parody of the *Adagietto* played in double time, an effect that is somehow both comic and poignant. The triumphant chorale section from the first movement returns and the symphony ends with a gesture that might be taken as a shout of boisterous laughter as the tragedy of the opening of the work is forgotten.

A postscript: It is entirely appropriate to include Gustav Mahler in a celebration of Leonard Bernstein's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Among his many contributions to our musical life was his advocacy of Mahler's music, which was a major factor in moving Mahler from the edge of the standard repertoire to the central place that it now occupies. Bernstein led a particularly memorable performance of the *Adagietto* at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York at the memorial service for Robert Kennedy on June 8, 1968.

Alma Mahler spent her last years in New York, where she had contact with Leonard Bernstein, including attendance at his rehearsals of Mahler's Eighth symphony with the New York Philharmonic. It was a poetic closing of the circle, for Mahler himself had served as conductor of the Philharmonic from 1909 to 1911, a time when he was considered a great conductor but a composer whose music was highly controversial and dismissed by many. The famous prophecy attributed to Mahler, "my time will come," came true in the deepest sense. Leonard Bernstein, who did a great deal to bring that prophecy to fruition, was buried with a copy of the score of Mahler's Fifth Symphony in his casket.

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