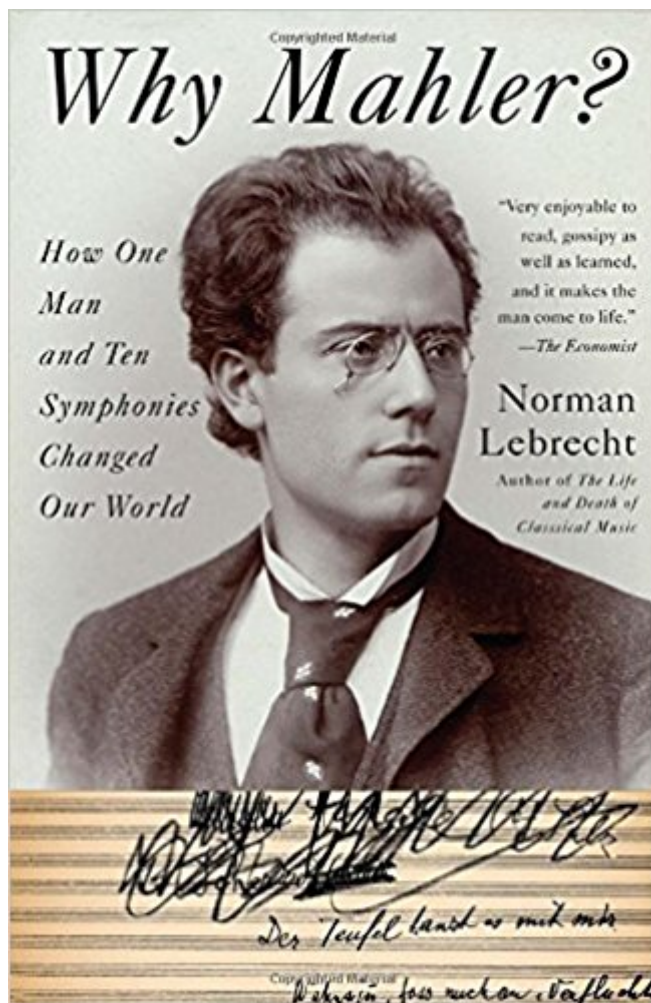


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# Why Mahler?: How One Man And Ten Symphonies Changed Our World



## Synopsis

Why Mahler? Why does his music affect us in the way it does? Å Norman Lebrecht, one of the world's most widely read cultural commentators, has been wrestling obsessively with Mahler for half his life. Following Mahler's every footstep from birthplace to grave, scrutinizing his manuscripts, talking to those who knew him, Lebrecht constructs a compelling new portrait of Mahler as a man who lived determinedly outside his own times. Mahler was along with Picasso, Einstein, Freud, Kafka, and Joyce a maker of our modern world. Why Mahler? is a book that shows how music can change our lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lebrecht, host of a BBC interview series on the arts, has a keen interest in Gustav Mahler dating back at least to his *Mahler Remembered* (1988), a collection of remembrances of Mahler by his contemporaries. Here Lebrecht leads readers through the composer's turbulent personal life, the anti-Semitic European political milieu in which he moved, and the music of his time, concluding with an examination of Mahler's 10 symphonies (one unfinished) and songs. So, why Mahler? Because he was at the center of seismic shifts in art, psychology, philosophy, politics, and music that still shape today's world, Lebrecht argues. The author discusses recordings of each symphony and set of songs, and he offers a thoughtful coda to help new listeners find an entry to those points "where the Mahler fortress becomes a private refuge." --Alan Moores --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A brisk, engaging journey through the life of a fascinating and enormously influential artist." • Kansas City Star "Very enjoyable to read, gossipy as well as learned, and it makes the man come to life." • The Economist "Lebrecht's book brings Mahler scholarship into the present by including interviews with conductors, visits to sites with Mahler connections and an excellent annotated discography." • The Star-Ledger "Readers of Why Mahler? will be grateful to Lebrecht for his enthusiasm and for his highly personal cultural history." • The Wall Street Journal "As a short introduction to the meaning of Mahler, this sympathetic biography will do very well." • The Times (London) "We could not put the book down. Mahler is boss." • Richmond Times-Dispatch

So, I bought the book needing a Mahler fix. I was about to travel into the desert for some much needed R & R and needed something to read. It could be digested in a few hours and probably someone less familiar with the subject would think, Hmmm, how interesting. My problem is that I had finished Henry de La Grange's massive tome on Gustav Mahler just a few months ago. So this little dashing had the feel of someone who was playing fast and loose, although it is heavily footnoted, to provide, I suppose, scholarly gravitas. What bothered me most was his contention that Mahler speaks to every listener differently; that one's life affects how a particular work of art is received. True enough. But then why spend so much time giving us the real meaning of the master's works? Why does he (accurately) accuse Alma of "cleaning up" the record, misstating, omitting - basically serving up a lot of self-aggrandizing claptrap, and then quoting her heavily throughout the book as being a credible source? This is repeated when he cites Mahler saying that conductors should be free to change, interpret, alter his own works if they feel so compelled. (After all, didn't he change Beethoven's scores?) Then, at the end, Mr. Lebrecht spends pages telling us which recorded version of each symphony is the "authorized by Lebrecht" version, hammering such noted stick men as Bernstein, Tilson-Thomas and Boulez, while extolling the personal stories of conductors like Klaus Tennstedt, who obviously winds up his favorite. Even Bruno Walter, Mahler's near-lifelong friend and protege, comes off as less than top rated! Von Karajan is an "unrepentant Nazi." Oy! Along the way, Lebrecht even takes some cheap shots at La Grange, who spent 21 years of his life documenting Mahler's daily goings and comings. All in all, I found the book pretty gossipy and not much more than personal opinion, which is fine, but, well, "Don't quote me!"

Mahler's symphonies inspire everything from condemnation to adoration. This book attempts to explore why that should be - much more so than any other late 19th/early 20th century symphonist.

A wonderful book that will make you fall in love with Gustav Mahler and his music

Extremely good book--thoughtful, gives information not previously know. came well packaged and on time.

Being read.

Magnificent, It made Mahler feel as immediate as last week's news. I might quibble with his choice of some recordings but that would be thankless and mean spirited. The book is a wonderful traversal of a life that makes Mahler flesh and blood and not simply a collection of facts.

1 for lebrecht; 5 for jonathan carr, mahler!

Let's start with the designation "Changed our world." One of the many hyperboles in this short, unsatisfying work. Mahler touched millions of intelligent, sensitive listeners who found themselves in his music. This is a far cry from changing our world. Lebrecht "is in favor of" the social media, so we can't look to him for scholarship. This work is at the bottom of the heap, in my view. Look to the superior bios by Carr, Franklin and Kennedy - and for the very serious Mahlerite, the gigantic and microcosmic multi-tome study by Henry Louis de la Grange (rare and expensive) - a work of genius. Unless you're passingly curious about GM, get one of the others works to read. Think of how many trees we could save if we left junk like this unprinted... ;-))

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