

TOGETHER WE ARE

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

MAHLER 5 INSIDE OUT

AUDIO INTRODUCTION TRANSCRIPTION

KATE MOLLESON: Hello and welcome to The Warm Up, the all-you-need-to-know guide to this year's Edinburgh International Festival. I'm Kate Molleson. Along with the Festival Director Nicola Benedetti and special guests who were involved in the creation of the performance you're about to experience, I'm here to give you extra insights and context to help you enjoy it all the more.

The Edinburgh International Festival's theme this year is "Rituals That Unite Us", so our guests will be sharing their own rituals around the creative process that help to bring the performance you're about to witness to life. These can be habits or routines that they always touch on in the months and weeks leading up to this show, on the day of the performance, or maybe just that moment when they're about to step onto the stage. Join me and Nicola Benedetti as we guide you into the world of The Warm Up.

Today we zoom in on Mahler 5 Inside Out. It's on at the Usher Hall on 16 August. Before we hear more about the performance from the conductor Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé Leader Roberto Ruisi, here is our Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti.

NICOLA BENEDETTI: In reaction to a lot of requests that we had last year after the 'Inside Out' performance of Dvořák 8, where our conductor Iván Fischer took the audiences through a narrated version of the piece of music, allowing for demonstrations and insights, and it was extremely interactive, a lot of the audience then wanted to be able to hear the piece from beginning to end, so we have honoured that request this year.

We have a similar type of 'Inside Out' performance, which means that the audience will be interspersed in amongst the musicians on the flat in the Usher Hall. And the following day, those same audience members can come to a more formal setting in the Usher Hall and watch a full performance, from beginning to end, of Mahler 5.

So the performances that we have of Mahler 5 this year will be hugely emotional, poignant moments. They are the final performances of Sir Mark Elder with the Hallé Orchestra, an orchestra he has been Music Director of for 24 years. That relationship is golden and so special and beautiful, so we're honoured to be able to present that this year.

SIR MARK ELDER: Hello, I'm Sir Mark Elder. I'm the Music Director of the Hallé Orchestra, and we're going to do Mahler's Fifth Symphony, which is an enormous work, and it involves an enormous orchestra.

ROBERTO RUISI: Hi, I'm Roberto, and I'm the leader of the Hallé Orchestra, and I will be playing at Edinburgh International Festival this year.

SIR MARK ELDER: The idea is to strip the piece up, if you will, or strip it down, and expose it by not just playing it through, but by my talking about what sort of experience it is conceptually, emotionally, and technically, and demonstrating how Mahler's musical mind works. And I'll do that by just playing good chunks of it, but also taking a tiny little bit and just playing it with a few of the instruments, not with everybody, to show how he makes a kaleidoscope with all these different sounds. Then to play it again with everybody, so that people will begin to hear all the different colours. The way he writes for the strings is very different from the way he writes for the brass instruments. And if I take them apart and do them both by themselves, then put them together again, the first-time listener will hear much more clearly what the power and the attack of the emotion is. And that's fun.

To introduce everybody to Mahler's type of storytelling is the best way to express it. He was a very tortured man himself. He had an enormous number of emotional problems. I mean, just to give you one example, in order to be able to apply to run the Vienna Opera, he was Jewish, he had to renounce his Jewishness and become a Christian. A Jew was not allowed at that time to run the opera. And he did that. Now, that's a pretty interesting fact about somebody's life, isn't it? Tells you a lot about them and about the world in which they lived. I mean, this is very Austrian music. By that I mean that throughout the symphony there are gestures and rhythms and dances that come from the Austrian countryside and from the Austrian cultural background. But there are also deeply Jewish moments, where the melody, or the way he's clothed the melody in a particular colour, is very Jewish. Wonderful. It's very powerful. It's very emotional.

ROBERTO RUISI: I think it feels like many things to perform this piece. It's monumental, it's sort of chaotic, and violent and sweet. In my impression of the piece, it tries to encapsulate everything it means to be human. And it's in that sense a flawed work, and it very much reflects that which we are as well. I think the ritual that is sort of most important to our process, but also every process, is this feeling of collective discovery. And I think that rings really true for our rehearsal process, the way that we find a new work, the way that we piece it together. But specifically, to do with our beanbag concert in Edinburgh I think it becomes even more true, because we're also going through that process with the audience as well, with the people who are there, and we all feel, share this feeling of collective discovery together, which I think is a very special thing.

SIR MARK ELDER: If everybody came with open ears and an open heart, even if they'd never heard the piece before, or actually, particularly if they have heard the piece before, they should come open and not worrying about what the music means. Not worrying about what it stands for. The music is very complicated. It's very powerful. It's very organized and dramatic. Even in the quiet moments, it's still very powerfully complicated. But it's not emotionally complicated if you just let the emotion come to you. And everybody will feel different feelings as a result of listening to this music. It's very, I would say, big boned. It's not small and delicate. And everybody has to be ready to be swept away by it, but not worrying about understanding. This is really good for the heart and for the imagination, rather than for the intellect.

KATE MOLLESON: Sir Mark Elder, Roberta Ruisi and Nicola Benedetti speaking about Mahler 5 Inside Out. It's on at the Usher Hall on 16 August. The concert lasts for one hour 30 minutes with no interval. Go to eif.co.uk for more details. Mahler 5 Inside Out is part of the Beanbag Concert Series, and it's supported by Sir Ewan and Lady Brown.