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“Everything is a dream and reality at once.”

**Press Text: Terrace Talk about the
Staged New Production
*One Morning Turns Into An Eternity***



From left: Ausrine Stundyte, director Peter Sellars and Wiebke Lehmkuhl

(SF, 16 July 2025) Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and Gustav Mahler's *Der Abschied* from *Das Lied von der Erde*, combined with Anton Webern's Five Pieces for Orchestra Op. 10, are the foundation of the staged new production *One Morning Turns Into An Eternity*. Rehearsals have begun; the premiere is scheduled for 27 July, and director Peter Sellars said about the title of the piece: "The title is derived from the German words *Ein Morgen wandelt sich in Ewigkeit*, a line from a poem by Wang Wei, whose verse was recreated in German by Hans Bethge and set to music by Mahler."

Asked about the difference between performing Mahler either as part of the regular concert repertoire or in this developing staged production, Wiebke Lehmkuhl, the soloist in *Der Abschied*, said: "Compared to a concert, the images seem to be painted with a much broader brush here. Mahler's music conceals an entire universe. And in Peter Sellars' staging, the images and the music fill the entire space of the Felsenreitschule. To me, this is the most

sensitive process of directing I have ever witnessed, and the one that has affected me most. It is interwoven with the content in the most authentic way possible.”

Ausrine Stundyte, the soloist in Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*, was equally full of praise for their work with Sellars: “So far, it has been going very well. His work is driven by very clear ideas – a characteristic all truly great directors share. His concept allows me to develop everything organically from within – a rare experience, and a great artistic stroke of good fortune for me.”

Asked about his interpretation, Sellars said: “Mahler and Schoenberg, who knew each other well, were enduring personal crises at the time they wrote their works, and they were at low points of their lives. I therefore view both works as the emotional expressions of two people who had to go through terrible experiences and were at a point where they could no longer continue like that. This is also reflected in the music, which its frequent interruptions. I also see parallels with our world today.” Both compositions have in common, he continued, that they were ground-breaking, rupturing the boundaries of tonality and awakening their own times to new artistic movements. “With his references to Japanese and Chinese art, Mahler opened new spaces, beyond western thought. His style marks the end of symphonic music as it was. Schoenberg created a new musical language and then rang in an era which was already on the path to the expressionist tonal idiom of a *Wozzeck*. At the same time, they both created works that were almost prophetic, in that they portend the calamities of a future era.”



Ausrine Stundyte, Regisseur Peter Sellars and Wiebke Lehmkuhl

To Wiebke Lehmkuhl, Mahler’s music feels particularly familiar: “I just feel very comfortable singing Mahler. His music suits my musical constitution; it’s like coming home – the feeling of being in the right place, musically, a place where I can portray a great array of colours.” She added that finding the multi-faceted subtext in Mahler’s music is also part of Sellars’s concept of directing, in that he consciously creates references to current world events and history.

Questioned about the characteristics of her role in *Erwartung* and Sellars’s treatment of the piece, Ausrine Stundyte said: “Despite all the emotional fragmentation, the concept of this staging builds strongly on the aspect of humanity. For us, the point is to touch the people in the audience.” Peter Sellars added: “Both pieces express the personal loss of another person. This gives rise to many thoughts and memories that touch our hearts – it’s about things we

all feel, everything is a dream and reality at once." About the stage sets, he says: "George Tsy-pin knows the Felsenreitschule very well from previous works. He brings something magical to this stage built into the mountain. There are reflecting trees whose branches draw on the Chinese characters of the literary original texts".

About the conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, with whom he has worked once before on *Erwartung*, he said: "He is a conducting composer. His musical approach is very creative. He has the ability to open up the composition with all its orchestral colours, and he is more than equal to the special challenges of the work, with all its changing rhythms. At the same time, his approach to the work is highly structured, and he is conscious of every musical change, be it ever so tiny."

Especially in Mahler, it is important to Sellars to portray the fragile and vulnerable aspects of the work within a musical space "where emotional life and transcendence are possible".

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