

*Aszure Barton*

Music is often the precipice from which I leap into the unknown of the creative process. It fuels my imagination and helps me define the framework of the piece. Collaboration with the dancers however, is the driving force that breathes life into each creation and makes it unique to the group of dancers that perform it.

*Mahler 10* began with a love affair with Gustav Mahler's *Tenth Symphony* (Adagio). When I first heard it I was profoundly moved by its all inclusive nature and years later, when I was invited to Milan to work with La Scala, I was reminded of this powerful music. Upon meeting the artists it was clear that this was a lovely match. Soon after I embarked on a deep journey into understanding Mahler himself to learn about his life, his career, and his relationship to his work. I then began to get to know the dancers at La Scala. I learned about their unique life experiences, movement instincts, strengths and sensitivities. It is this human connection, this conversation between choreographer and dancer, that feeds my choices and becomes the language of the dance.

While deepening this conversation with the dancers I continued my discovery of Mahler and realized a kindred spirit in him. I learned that despite the hand wringing by the critics about what the Tenth Symphony means, Mahler himself did not intend for his music to convey a finite message or make any particular statement. I feel that it was his belief, as it is mine, that art can simply be a world unto itself where all the disparate parts of life combine into the experience of the individual audience member.

We spend so much time seeking answers in this life where there are none to be provided. It is uncomfortable to simply be and trust our own experiences without the influence of others whether we are at a ballet or walking down the street. Yet I believe that this is where the beauty lies in life. And so while *Mahler 10* is guided by the *Tenth Symphony* and my collaboration with the creative team and dancers, what it means is ultimately up to you, the audience member. There is no right answer, there is nothing to understand, there is only your unique experience in witnessing this dance in this beautiful theater.

Milan, Teatro alla Scala, February 2018