

Esa-Pekka talks with Percy after having seen the film Mahler auf der Couch.

*Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - The Chapel***

There's a long held note in the trumpet that is like a knife, digging deeper and deeper. And there are these chords in the orchestra that are no longer tonal, they are very resonant, very powerful, but you can't tell what key they belong to or where they come from. They're just, like, a pure expression of angst. And it's one of the most, if not *the* most, powerful expressions of utter desperation in all of music I know.

*Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - The Window***

This is a very particular and special way of using existing music in film, because in this case, it becomes like the voice of Mahler. It gives us a window into his mind and his soul. We see his face, we see him interact with other people and his face tells us sometimes very little or nothing, and then the music tells us something completely different. It is the true level of experiencing what's going on. The music doesn't lie. I was thinking about Wagner...the late Wagner operas especially. Sometimes we know from the music what's going to happen because of the leitmotifs. A character might be saying one thing but we already know what's going to happen because of the music. It's the same thing, you know there's going to be a catharsis, you know that eventually Mahler is going to get it and understand it. And all of this is made possible by this music; it's a unique case.

*Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - Genius***

I hate these kind of monumental films of great men...that are, like, designed by publicists. I like this approach of showing a genius with witnesses. A genius is human as much as everyone else is, maybe even more so. Maybe the weaknesses and strengths are more clearly delineated, and the weaknesses are greater and go deeper and therefore the genius shines clearer because of this distance between the low and the high. Also, I like the humor because it's downright funny to see these two great men kind of rather pompously approach each other, very aware of their positions and status. It is a hilarious image when

they fall asleep, heads touching, and then the maid comes to wake them up. It's the mythical iconic geniuses behaving like normal people...

Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - Our Alma**

Oh, our Alma is wonderful. I mean she's beautiful, very sexy, great, great actor, and even plays the piano well. What more is there to wish?

Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - Adagio 10th**

I think it's very clear that this movement is about deep personal pain, no question about that. And panic, and fear, and all those essentially negative, dark aspects of the soul and the human experience. There are moments of fantastic beauty and this movement seems to be hovering, suspended in the air between these two expressions. The utmost angst and most lyrical expressionist moments. Of course, apart from what the music is about, what it's telling, there's also the other aspect of Mahler's development as a composer. He's going further and further away from tonal music. His music is becoming freer and freer from the laws of composition. The gravity that bonds German romantic music into the very soil of German tradition is loosening up, that gravity is disappearing and the music is just flying.

Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - Two Narratives**

The music in this film simply adds another narrative. So there are two layers of narratives going on at the same time. There is the dramatic narrative and then the musical narrative. They sometimes go parallel and sometimes they are in slightly different places in time. It just becomes a very unusual experience. As a musician, I love the fact the music is not being messed with. It's being allowed to have its space and its place in the whole, without having to add any meaning to it. If the director is bold enough and is not intimidated by classical music, then there are lots of possibilities.

Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - How Modern is Mahler**

Mahler is in a very interesting place because he was exactly between the old and the new. He supported the new and there was a lot in his music that was new, but yet, at heart, he was a German romantic. However far from the hardcore of the German romanticism he would venture, he would always come back. There's this temptation with the otherness and he gets quite far drawn into it. That's a fascinating point in time where he was. I thought that of course Alma was exactly in that generation that really shook things for Vienna and for the world. And Mahler was the generation before. That must have been a big problem. The generation before, by definition, always is the one that wants to keep something in place and the new one is the one that wants to destroy what was there before. This must have been another problem in their relationship that they, culturally and philosophically, belong to a different generation and their thinking was completely different. If you compare the ideas of Gropius and with the ideas of Mahler, they are light years apart. And of course this is very obvious in the film, this "architecture for the masses" thing. Mahler was amused by it and utterly uninterested.

Clip Name: **Esa Pekka - Recommend the Film**

If you have never heard of Mahler in your life, you go and see this film and you come out not only deeply moved and also well entertained, but also you learn something.