

## Gigantic forces in Mahler's 8th

THE composer Gustav Mahler is particularly cherished for his epic 10 Symphonies and of them the greatest, by sheer number of performers, is the *8th Symphony*, nicknamed 'Symphony of a Thousand'.

The scoring is staggering: two large mixed voice choirs, a children's choir, eight soloists, an augmented orchestra, complete with quadruple woodwind and nine horns, a piano, a harmonium, a full organ, and an off-stage brass band!

These gigantic forces assembled at Guildford Cathedral for a performance conducted by Jeremy Backhouse.

The symphony is divided into two movements, the first based on the Whitsuntide hymn *Veni, creator spiritus*. In this movement the composer illustrates his debt to the fugal style of earlier composers in the church tradition. In the second movement, a setting of the final scene from Goethe's *Faust*, Mahler utilises the themes from the first movement but this time giving it an operatic nature.

Joining Guildford Philharmonic Choir, were Lewisham Choral Society and South West Essex Choir, The Greycoat Hospital Chamber Choir and the Forest Philharmonic Orchestra.

*Contributed*