

Backstage Access: Why Live? Insight into the LIVE Classical Music Journey  
Jennifer Teisinger, Executive Director of Bravo! Vail

My most memorable experience of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 was a live performance by the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. The performance was part of a recording cycle of all the Mahler symphonies, which gave the concert a heightened level of importance and pronounced energy. What I remember most was the end of the 70-minute musical journey. I had this feeling of buoyancy, almost of being lifted up, as the music neared the end. The closing choral text makes the title, "Resurrection" seem inevitable: "I shall die so as to live," and the words soar with the sound of bells and brass fanfares.

With our mobile devices in easy reach at all times, we can listen to the latest Taylor Swift single (yes, I've done that), look up the population of Denver, read a review for a nearby restaurant or get directions to just about anywhere in the world. You can also download Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and listen to it through your wireless Bluetooth speakers or earbuds in any location you choose. But instead, we will choose to gather together on July 16 at the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater to hear Maestro Yannick Nezet-Seguin's interpretation of Mahler's masterpiece with The Philadelphia Orchestra performed LIVE.

Recordings are less expensive and more convenient than attending a concert, and with the high quality of today's studio productions, they sound fantastic. So, why do we choose a live performance over a recorded one? Here is my 'why live performance rocks' short list:

- 1) Community: Performances are a communal event. Sure, we want to hear the music, but the concert experience is heightened when we share it with others.
- 2) Visual: We now have access to astounding high quality video production in live concert performances like Met Opera Live or the Berlin Philharmonic's digital concert hall. But, at a live performance, you get to choose which musician you watch in any given moment. You decide if you want to focus in on the principal cellist, the bass section, or the timpanist – or close your eyes, and just feel the energy of the moment. You create your own visual experience.
- 3) Social: It's fun to see friends at concerts and to share your favorite moments with them at intermission or at dinner afterward. And, we all feel the energy of the moment with each other as we listen to a live performance together. By the way, it's ok if you want to Tweet about the great time you had or post a selfie on Facebook or Instagram. These days, sharing your experience on the web counts as part of the experience.
- 4) Beautiful Setting: Whether you are listening in a concert hall or in the spectacular setting of the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, the listening environment is an essential part of the experience. When I am hearing an orchestra live at the Ford Amphitheater, I am linking the beauty of the flowers, trees, and clouds with the music leaping off the stage. And, every once in a while, nature becomes an inexplicable part of the performance – a gentle breeze, thunder, birds or squirrels!

*Jennifer Teisinger is the executive director of Bravo! Vail. The Bravo! Vail music festival runs through Aug. 6. For more information about the season and to purchase tickets, visit [www.bravovail.org](http://www.bravovail.org) and call 970-827-5700.*