

# *Life of Mahler*

## SYNOPSIS

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It's 1912 and a young journalist named Franz Kurtzman has been invited to write an authorized biography of one of the greatest composers of the age – Gustav Mahler. Mahler recently died and his widow – the beautiful and captivating Alma – wants to cement his legacy before others get the chance to potentially mar the reputation of the famously difficult composer. As a journalist, Franz has one main expectation – that Alma reveal everything to him about her husband and hold nothing back.

Traveling to the Mahler villa in Maiernigg, Austria, Franz leaps wholeheartedly into his assignment, combing through boxes of Mahler's letters, but nevertheless finding himself rather disappointed in their contents – piles upon piles of letters about business matters, but very little about Gustav Mahler the man.

On the verge of heading back to his home in London to continue his research, Franz is called to the Mahler villa the night before his departure, with Alma in a panic. An animal from the surrounding lake is loose in the attic. Seeing Alma alone and scared, Franz takes care of the matter – but not before tripping over a box of letters that Alma did not reveal to him. When confronted by the additional box, Alma admits there are two more boxes in addition. Upset that he has been deceived, Franz plans to resign from the project – but Alma begs him to stay, so her husband's story can be told – and Franz agrees.

Over the succeeding weeks, Franz combs through the new letters, which paint a very different picture of the great composer from what Alma has portrayed – how difficult he was and how cruel he was to his wife. Franz also learns that Alma was a budding composer herself, until she met Mahler, who insisted she give up composing to take care of his needs and those of their children, claiming that Alma will live through his work rather than her own and proclaiming Alma to be his great muse and inspiration.

As Franz grows frustrated with Alma's attempts to cover for her husband, he becomes evermore emboldened to ensure that Alma Mahler is not erased from history and that she is recognized for who she is – the sacrificial wife who gave up so much for love and whose light has been hidden for so long. However, just when Franz is about to put pen to paper to this vision, another startling revelation comes to pass, proving that things are not always as they seem and prompting Franz to wonder... whose life of Mahler is he truly writing?