

Wunderhorn



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From the President

Gerald S. Fox

**IN MEMORIAM: EDWARD R. REILLY,
SEPTEMBER 10, 1929 – FEBRUARY 28, 2004**

It is with a deep sense of loss that I write this memorial tribute about Edward R. Reilly (better known to his friends as Ted Reilly). Ted was probably the world's foremost authority on Mahler manuscripts. As a modest man, he eschewed effusiveness. But he had an illustrious career as a pedagogue, having taught at Converse College from 1957 to 1962, as an associate and later as a full professor; San Francisco State College, during the summer of 1962, as visiting professor; the University of Georgia, from 1962 to 1972, as associate and full professor; Vassar College, first as visiting professor from 1970 to 1972, and then as a full professor until his retirement in 1996; and Boston University, during the summer of 1980, as visiting professor.

His list of publications – books and monographs – is lengthy. Two of his many works on music of special interest to our society members are: *Gustav Mahler and Guido Adler: Records of a Friendship*; *Mahler and Guido Adler (The Musical Quarterly, XVIII, 1972)*; "A Brief History of the Manuscripts" in the facsimile of the autograph of Gustav Mahler, *Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection,"* The Kaplan Foundation, 1986. At Ted's death, he left unfinished an important work-in-progress, a catalog of Mahler manuscripts, the material for which has been turned over to noted Mahler authority, Professor Stephen Hefling, for completion.

Ted was an important player in the recent litigation regarding the ownership of Mahler's original manuscript of his song, "I Am Lost to the World." Here is a synopsis of the case: Guido Adler was an eminent Austrian musicologist and a very close friend of Mahler, who, in 1905, gave Adler the original score of *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* ("I Am Lost to the World"), perhaps Mahler's greatest song. (Marilyn Horne told me she considers it the most beautiful song she knows, and wants it sung at her funeral!) The occasion for the gift was Adler's 50th birthday. The University of Georgia had acquired from Adler's son all that could be recovered of Adler's library and papers. Ted participated in organizing and cataloging this material and undertook to organize and prepare an inventory of the papers. This project took over ten

years, and required examination of every one of the numerous papers. In perusing the materials, Ted discovered an unpublished epilogue in which Adler mentioned that Mahler gave him the autograph score of the song "with embrace, kiss and the dedication 'to my dear friend Guido Adler (who will never be lost to me) as a memento of his fiftieth birthday.'" For 95 years, no one knew where the manuscript was, but about five years ago, Tom Adler, Guido Adler's grandson, discovered the manuscript at Sothebys auction house in Vienna, where it had been placed for sale by the son of a Nazi lawyer who had taken it from Guido Adler's estate. Four years of litigation followed over the ownership of the score (Tom Adler is an attorney), and Tom called on Ted to help counter the assertion of the Nazi lawyer's son that his father had received the manuscript from Guido Adler in lieu of paying a legal fee. Ted prepared a legal declaration for the trial, because no one knew more than he did about the relationship between Guido and Gustav. Tom Adler later wrote a book about the odyssey of the manuscript, in which Ted is acknowledged for his help. Ted's documentary evidence was undoubtedly most instrumental in having the case resolved in Tom Adler's favor, i.e., the manuscript was declared to be Tom Adler's property.

Ted Reilly is considered one of a triumvirate of world renowned Mahler scholars (the others being Donald Mitchell and Henry-Louis de La Grange), whose scholarly writings are invaluable in the rise of popular interest in Mahler's music. Ted was a very tall man who cut an imposing figure, but his personality better perfectly suited him to the epithet "gentle giant." His modest demeanor belied his importance in the musical world. I always found him to be kind, helpful, and ready and willing to generously give of his vast knowledge of music. I am proud that he was a member of our Gustav Mahler Society. He was not only a fount of musical knowledge, but also a good friend whom I miss greatly.

Ted is survived by his charming wife, Evangeline, (known to all as Van), who continues her membership in our Society, their two sons, Christopher and Sean, and Sean's wife, Linda. ♦

MAHLER'S SEVENTH SYMPHONY: INSCRUTIBLE ENIGMA OR OBVIOUS PARODY

Lewis M. Smoley

For all too long since its far less than successful premiere in Prague on September 19, 1909, Mahler's Seventh Symphony has been subjected to more scathing criticism than possibly any of his other works. Otherwise unwavering Mahlerian Deryck Cooke called it "uninspired" and denigrated the finale as mere "kapellmeistermusik"; noted Mahler scholar Hans Redlich found it too repetitious and overloaded with references to earlier works; and both Donald Mitchell and Henry-Louis de La Grange, while recognizing the wealth of fascinating musical material, find the symphony as a whole lacks cohesiveness. Most troublesome to less knowledgeable commentators is the symphony's apparent lack of an overriding dramatic subject. Given the nature of the preceding symphonies, critics and audiences alike came to expect some ostensible dramatic orientation and felt seriously put out when none was apparent in the Seventh. Consequently, commentators sought to impose upon the symphony an overriding subject predicated upon the titles for the second and fourth movements (written before the others): *Nachtmusik*. Given Mahler's own comments, referring to Rembrandt's *Night Watch* as the inspiration for the first *Nachtmusik* and his suggestion that the finale follows the second *Nachtmusik* as day follows night, Mahlerians were quite satisfied to label the entire symphony as a "Song of the Night" and let the matter rest with that.

Yet the Seventh remains for so many an enigma. Most troublesome, it is said, is the finale with its "persistent diatonicism" in which C major predominates, its oppressive jockeying back and forth between march and minuet subjects and its "meager content". And so the criticism remains unabated, despite the "Night-Day" topos and the general recognition of the wealth of fascinating musical ideas and forward-looking compositional techniques the symphony contains.

In this paper I would like to offer what I believe to be an important aspect of the Seventh that is rarely considered and plays a significant role in orienting the symphony in a certain direction: that of parody. Few composers have indulged in musical parody more than Gustav Mahler. From his doleful minor-key transformation of the children's rhyme *Frere Jacques* into a funeral march in the First Symphony to his mockingly distorted treatment of the first movement march rhythm in the scherzo of the Sixth Symphony, Mahler evidences a remarkably creative penchant for parodistic references, sometimes with a sardonic twist and sometimes just for the sheer fun of it. He even made a flippant remark upon how he would have to deal with the instrumentation to fit the musical material: "I have to figure out how to make a sausage-barrel into a drum, a rusty funnel into a trumpet, and a beer-garden into a concert-hall."

The immense length of the 7th makes it impossible in the

space allotted to cover all of the ironic and humorous aspects of the most parodistic of Mahler symphonies. But I will touch upon a good number of examples that I hope will make the argument by their sheer number and significance.

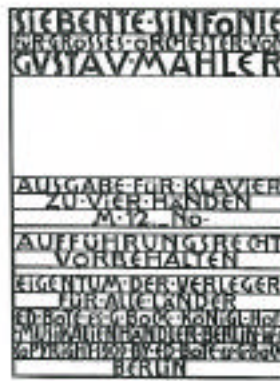
Although it may be simpler to begin at the beginning, the parodistic aspect of the Seventh is most obvious in the finale. Mahler indulges in one of his favorite musical pastimes: contrasting march and dance subjects as if they were either embattled or confused. Mahler made it quite clear that one of the themes of the march subject with which the movement begins is a direct reference to the well known *Meistersinger* march from Wagner's ever-popular opera of the same name. He confessed that he concluded the concert in which the symphony was premiered with the opera's prelude to make the thematic connection even more obvious to his audience. But a paraphrase need not be a parody. So what is parodistic about the way that Mahler treats this majestic march tune? Notice that he excises from the original a few bars of music. After replicating the falling fourth that opens the *Meistersingemarch* tune, Mahler cuts out the dotted rhythm and the rising figure that follows, retaining the rising scale that begins the third bar of Wagner's march. But I suggest that these five beats of music eliminated contain the very core of the original's majestic bearing; without

them the theme becomes trite, boisterous and devoid of nobility, a perfect example of "kapellmeistermusik" as Cooke suggested. Donald Mitchell points out that the finale is firmly rooted in Wagner's opera, dispelling and dissolving the shadows of the great "night" scene that preceded it, just as Act III does with respect to Act II.

More evidence of the connection between *Die Meistersinger* and the Seventh is brought to bear as the finale progresses. When the first subject reaches its conclusion, Mahler para-

phrases a concluding passage of another popular Wagner opera he conducted to great acclaim in Vienna: *Tristan und Isolde*. Wagner ends Act I with a majestic C major brass flourish, heralding the appearance of King Marke at the close of the act, that ends with a bright C major chord. Mahler offers a similar wind flourish to close his "Wagnerian" march sequence: also ending with a strong C major chord, but immediately deflating its dramatic bearing by having the woodwinds intrude with a rather strange sounding A-flat major chord that cuts of the C major chord and completely nullifies the heroic bearing of the closing flourish. One might easily think that Mahler is thumbing his nose at Wagner here. But I suggest that, as is Mahler's wont, all references to other music than Mahler's own in the Seventh has a parodistic aspect that is not far short of outright mockery.

Take as another example the music that follows that obtrusive A-flat chord and begins the second subject. The woodwinds give us a diminutive version of the beautiful *Merry Widow* waltz by Franz Lehar.¹ In Mahler's hands, the slow, languid lyricism of this sensuous tune is transformed into a perky little ditty, puckish in character. To complete the parody, Mahler then introduces a mimetic treatment of a typical Haydnesque minuet, complete with rococo decorations and flitting upward swoops and downward plunges; how wonderfully droll. But as the mu-



sic develops, minuet and march subject become confused, as one takes on the tempo and rhythmic bearing of the other (e.g., at mm. 186-7, where the minuet theme steps to the tempo of the march subject). As the finale progresses, Mahler draws us toward what would readily be expected to be a grand climax, only to stop short of it and suddenly divert us back to the contrasting subject, as if to poke fun at grandiose symphonic climaxes in general. The frequencies of these aborted climaxes can become quite wearing on one's patience, unless one sees the humor in this musical brinkmanship.

We move now to the middle movements, where Mahler's humorous use of parody is at its most focused and extensive. Mahler opens the second movement (Nachtmusik I) with a horn "call" and "answer" on 2 horns that might easily have been created under the influence of Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (to which Mahler made reference in a direct connection with this movement). But what is not sufficiently brought out is that the first call is sounded in the major key and the corresponding 'answer' in the minor. So we have at the outset a duality of modes that I suggest symbolize "day" and "night". In fact, through the Seventh, Mahler frequently conflates major and minor, not to interject a note of tragedy (as he does, for example, at the end of the Second Symphony's first movement or more frequently in the Sixth Symphony). But, in this movement, Mahler uses the major-to-minor shift playfully, as if parodying its more serious appearances in earlier symphonies. When Mahler returns to the main theme, he conflates major and minor even more grotesquely than before by playing the theme in the minor key in snarling trumpet and tuba against a chord in the corresponding major key, which is then forced to conform by itself shifting to the minor. In effect, it sounds like the brass have simply played a wrong note! Notice also that this passage is preceded by a flourish that anticipates the Tristanesque passage that ends the exposition of the march subject in the finale. In fact, wrong notes intrude elsewhere; ghostly strains haunt the atmosphere; and frequent use of baroque ornamentation adds to the motley array of styles caricatured here. Nachtmusik I is replete with comical references to Mahler's Wunderhorn songs, harkening back to the fantastical imagery of the early romantic era of Eichendorff, Fontaine, Richter and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Yet the general atmosphere is less terrifying than Halloween-like, as if a play on "things that go bump in the night."

As with the finale, much of this movement consists of a delightfully witty interplay between march and dance music of the type extremely popular in the Vienna of Mahler's day. After using military marches in dead earnest in his Fifth & Sixth Symphonies, Mahler now introduces them here as witticisms, occasionally giving them a wryly amusing quality as if tongue-in-cheek. Sometimes the contrasting of march and dance tunes becomes virtually abusive, but in doing so elicit some marvelously witty passages. For instance, in the 1st Trio Mahler forces the march theme to dance to a waltz rhythm (yet still in 4/4 time instead of triple meter) to be played in march time & meter (4 to the bar instead of 3). Then this 4-square waltz takes on the characteristically sauntering step of a march once again. Marches recall the military songs of the Wunderhorn collection, and more obviously the Pan March from the 3rd Symphony, particularly by emphasizing dotted rhythms. Notice that Mahler's treatment of this march music in the Seventh is softer, slower and much wittier than merely exuberant (1 bar after R80 to R82).

But the march also harkens back to the second part of the first subject of the Seventh's first movement, which emphasizes

dotted rhythms. Mahler closes *Nachtmusik I* in a manner similar to the end of the Second Symphony's scherzo movement (which is sourced in the ending of Schumann's song from *Dichterliebe*: "Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen"). During the closing measures, there is a major-to-minor shift over the descending phrase ending with soft gong sounds, but the descending legato phrase of the Second Symphony's Scherzo is not played pizzicato making it sound anything but serious. Mahler tweaks us a bit at the very end by following the soft last chord, quietly punctuated with gong strokes, with a high plucked tone on cello and harp.

The middle movement also contains some of Mahler's most phantasmagorical images. The sinister, shadowy apparitions conjured up by the weaving triplets of the first subject are contrasted with the second subject's lighthearted waltz. Once again, Mahler contrasts and conflates dance music in witty fashion. The opening subject with its weaving and darting triplet runs is rhythmically akin to a Tarantella, but it is comically miscast by being made to sound mysterious and ghostly instead of bright and cheery. Notice also that between the whirling triplet subject and the waltz, a curiously bittersweet tune marked *klagend* (plaintive) appears in the solo oboe. We might also consider the hopping rhythm of timpani and celli pizzicato that opens this movement as a diminutive version of the strong timpani snap that opens the Scherzo from of the Second Symphony. Might Mahler have been deliberately spoofing fashionable Viennese *gemütlichkeit* by contrasting familiar waltzes with sinister and goblinsque music?

Mahler adds another comical touch by interjecting brief rapid flourishes into the lilting music of the Trio, recalling his use of the same technique in the Trio of the Sixth's Scherzo, where the minuet theme is deflowered of its grace by audaciously abrupt interjections of silly figuration. The most outrageous pun is what I believe to be a sly reference to the hammer blows of the Sixth: an enormous pizzicato played so forcefully (fffff) that it rebounds off the fingerboard. It appears at the end of the passage that recalls the descending phrase that leads to the last tones of the preceding movement. During the Coda, Mahler quotes himself again, this time forcing the exuberant dotted figure from the first movement's march to sound limp and laggard. Jack Diether was certainly right when he called this movement "a masterpiece of diabolic humor."

The otherwise seemingly benign and amorous fourth movement (Nachtmusik II) contains many parodistic elements that play an important part there and in the finale. As with virtually every movement of this symphony, this one starts with a witticism: it begins with what is really a closing cadence, as if beginning with an ending! Moreover, the only direct source of this phrase that I can discover in Mahler's music seems worlds apart from this tender Schumannesque phrase. For this very same cadence closes the heroic theme during the closing measures of the First symphony's finale!

Then notice that after the serenade's lilting theme begins, the music that accompanies it has a contrastingly flitting, almost flip-pant character, like the audacious chirping of birds or crickets. The movement opens with this chirping figure as background, but this figure soon infiltrates the main theme itself, as we will later see the opening rhythm that begins both outer movements infiltrates their main themes. This chirping phrase seems to undercut the gentle lyricism of the main theme. I suggest that though the chirping figure is certainly less intrusive than Hans Sachs' hammering during Beckmesser's increasingly desperate serenade to Eva during Act II of *Meistersinger* it has a similar effect.

The contrast between the lyrical and the playful is most apparent at the end of the movement, when the bassoon flippantly asserts the chirping figure between luscious string chords and a hint of the serenade theme. Occasionally a dark cloud of minor tonality seeks to cast a shadow over the music (e.g., at R183), only to quickly shift to the warmth of the major key.

Another interesting example of parody is in the passage in which double notes on a broken diminished chord are said to caricature the “tuning-up” process of guitar players (also used by Haydn in his Symphony No. 60 “*Il Distratto*”). Again one recalls Beckmesser’s tuning-up of his mandolin before he begins to serenade Eva. But let me suggest something different here: for I hear much more than a reference to “tuning-up” in this rising double-noted phrase. Might this double-note phrase suggest a famous nursery rhyme that we all knew as children? So many composers have used this theme before Mahler: Mozart’s variations (“*Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman*”); Haydn had fun with it as the central theme of the Andante in C from his *Surprise Symphony*. But I think of this tune in its American incarnation: “*Twinkle, twinkle, little star*”. Notice that this phrase appears first in *Nachtmusik II*, where it is played in a diminished minor key, recalling Mahler’s use of the minor for another famous nursery rhythm always sung in the major, *Frere Jacques*, in his First Symphony.

This phrase also appears in the finale, but there its first double-noted couplet is used frequently at the beginning of both march and minuet themes. The full phrase reaches a climax which to my ears is clearly a parody on “*Twinkle, twinkle, little star*”. Of course, the British version of this nursery song has a different text (*Baa Baa Black Sheep*) than the French version, and Mahler might not have known the American version. Ah, but then again he might have. We simply don’t know. Yet what appears to be a prominent use of it here as the only link between the last two movements gives one pause. I might suggest that the Twinkle phrase adds an element of childlike innocence that recalls another Finale, that of the Fourth Symphony.

I have left the first movement for last because so many different views have been expressed about its “meaning” in the context of the entire Symphony. Mengelberg called it “the dark night of the soul” in a strained effort to relate the movement to the theme of Night. One possible clue to the movement’s underlying subtext may be the fact that Mahler wrote it last. Given the parodistic orientation of the other movements, a serious opening movement would miss the point. Yet some of the symphony’s most dramatic moments are found here. So where is the parody to be found?

Let’s examine the movement and see whether we can find examples of parody and what are the subject of these examples. The movement begins with what could certainly be described as a funeral march. Dirge-like baroque rhythmic figures accompany a doleful tenor horn theme. These figures recall a motive that appears in various manifestations in several Verdi operas whenever tragic death is about to happen. This “death motif” enhances the finale tragic moments of such operas as *La Traviata* and *La Forza del Destino* and is the principal rhythmic underpinning of the *Miserere* from the last act of *Il Trovatore*. Certainly, Mahler conducted all of these Verdi operas. He also used this same rhythm in the dark music he wrote for the first subject of his Third Symphony’s opening movement. But compare the character of Mahler’s treatment of this rhythmic motive in the opening of the Seventh Symphony with his use of it in the Third Symphony’s first movement. In the latter, it sounds black as night, even terrifying; in the former, rather subdued,

grayish and mysterious, but hardly dark and tragic or frightening (just listen to the *Miserere* to see how horrific this motive can sound). Even the tenor horn theme sounds morose rather than tragic; possibly generated from the added major-6ths (G#) in the key of B minor; the grotesque falling 7th interval; and the unflattering mimicry of the accompanying rhythmic figures in the theme itself. Giving the tenor horn theme to woodwinds and trumpet also makes it sound bolder and more assertive than funereal. Even this otherwise tragic rhythm is later broken down and transformed during the long introduction by the use of false relations and dissonant intervals.

Even Mahler’s comments (to Natalie Bauer-Lechner) that the opening rhythm came to him while rowing and that it reminded him of stones pummeling through the water hardly evoke tragedy. So what is Mahler up to here? Given these circumstances, might one consider the introduction of the Seventh’s opening movement as a self-parody on Mahler’s penchant for funeral music?

Another Mahlerian trait is his switching from major to minor in a single chord, such as he frequently does in the outer movements of the Sixth Symphony to symbolize the fatalism of tragedy. In the Seventh’s first movement, major-to-minor switches occurs frequently. For example, in passage of trumpet military signals, first stated in the major key and later repeated in the minor. Numerous examples of this modal conversion appear throughout the symphony but whether because of their context, orchestration or general demeanor, they simply don’t evoke the slightest feeling of tragedy. Again a parodistic treatment of a Mahlerian stylistic trait?

Now we make a switch of our own and take you to very end of the symphony. How will Mahler close a symphony in which so many puns, witticisms and parodistic events occur? Given the nature of the finale itself, Mahler would miss a golden opportunity if he failed to carry forward his penchant for parody to the very end. But it is here that Mahler gives us one of his most delightfully witty ending. He first brings back the Tristanesque wind flourish that closed the march subject. But instead of ending it with a C major chord that is forced out by an A-flat major chord, he ends the flourish with an enharmonic minor treatment of the A-flat chord in the brass played *diminuendo* until it is shattered by a final stroke on – you guessed it! – a C major chord! Thus he reverses the typical closing of a romantic symphony (a sustained chord that crescendos into a final stroke all in the same key). Mahler inversion of this traditional closing procedure should elicit guffaws from the audience. But few seems to get the joke!

So why all these contrarities, distortions, mimicries, divergences and digressions, all presented in a delightfully humorous vein? Might Mahler have needed to purge himself from the inner torments he felt in composing the Sixth Symphony by engaging in a wealth of parody in the Seventh? For nowhere in his entire output does Mahler revel so unreservedly in parody and witticism. The symphony stands as an excellent example of a side of Mahler’s musical persona too often ignored. Perhaps Mahler took to heart the comment of Nietzsche when describing “a great tragedian”: he said that such an artist “arrives at the ultimate pinnacle of his greatness only when he comes to see himself and his art as beneath him – when he knows how to laugh at himself.” ♦

1. There is some controversy about whether this reference could have been intentional, given the fact that the operetta received its premiere in Vienna at the very end of the year in which Mahler wrote the finale. However, as was customary with opera premieres in Europe during the nineteenth century, Lehar probably released sheet music of this important tune long before the premiere of the operetta in hopes of generating excitement and enhancing ticket sales.

MOUNT MAHLER

Gerald S. Fox

The Board of Geographic Names of the United States Department of The Interior is considering naming a mountain peak in the Never Summer Range on the northwestern boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park in Jackson County, Colorado, as "Mount Mahler".

In 1968, three climber friends planned a climb of 12,940 foot Mt. Richthoven, the highest point of the Never Summer Range. Due to the difficulty of achieving the peak in the ice and snow, they gave up on conquering Richthoven; instead, they reached the summit of the slightly lower and somewhat easier western neighbor, a then nameless peak which, in its own right, is a handsome and worthy summit in a spectacular setting. One of the climbers, Robert C. Michael, thought that peak worthy to bear the name of Gustav Mahler. (In 1968, Michael was a geology graduate student as well as a Mahlerite.) Mahler's music is often nature-oriented -- more than once, he wrote in his scores "wie ein naturlaut" (like a sound of nature). Michael knew of no mountain in the United States named for a composer. Mountains bore the names of artists, scientists, politicians, generals, and even Mount Silverheels near Fairplay, Colorado was named after a dance hall girl (who during an epidemic of smallpox, was the only woman who stayed in town and took care of the ailing miners), but no Mount Bach, Beethoven, or even the American, Gershwin! Michael felt that Mahler captured the essence of the high mountain experience, with its joy, awe and occasional terror, better than any other composer.

And so, Michael wrote to the Board of Geographic Names, formally proposing that the peak be named after Mahler. He received a letter back from them denying his request, stating, "we can find no connection between Mr. Mahler and this mountain". Robert Michael's friend, Chris Mohr, also petitioned the Board in 1980 to name a different mountain after Mahler. He, too, was met with refusal.

Many years later, in 2003, Michael was visiting Mohr and casually browsed a recreation map (constructed from U. S. Geological Survey Topographic maps.) He was greatly surprised to find Mount Mahler on the map! (at N 40° 28' 18", W 105° 54' 32"), to be precise. The UTM NAD 27 grid lining numbers are 13T 04229954480296. However, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names has never sanctioned this informal naming, but appears to be close to accepting our efforts if we can demonstrate a Mahler-America connection to their satisfaction. That should be easy: Mahler lived in New York from late December, 1907 until just before his death in Austria, in May, 1911; Mahler conducted at the New York Metropolitan Opera House, making his debut there on January 1, 1908. After severing his connection with the Metropolitan Opera, he accepted a three-year contract with the New York Philharmonic, which lasted until his death. It is not an overstatement to say that, of all American orchestras, the New York Philharmonic could, by its history, be called America's orchestra.

We now have word that the Mount Mahler effort will be supported by the Metropolitan Opera and the N. Y. Philharmonic. With agreement from our board, I hope that we can also support this worthy endeavor.

P. S. A bit of irony: Mount Mahler would be in The Never Summer Range. Mahler called himself "a summer composer"! ♦

RECENT RECORDINGS OF NOTE

Lewis M. Smoley

Since the last issue of *Wunderhorn*, a substantial number of new Mahler recordings have been released, quite a few of which are notable. The allotted space in this issue being insufficient to cover all these new recordings, I have chosen to concentrate on a few that are of particular interest, if no longer in the category of "new" releases: three substantially different approaches to the increasingly popular Sixth; three recordings from Abbado with the Berlin Philharmonic; and two Seconds issued as part of complete cycles.

Michael Gielen's Sixth (with the combined SWR Orchestras of Baden-Baden and Freiburg on Hänssler 2CD 93.029) will seem extremely provocative to many listeners who react adversely to more than incidental and often over-emphasized mannerisms. Although some of Gielen's affectations may be unduly extreme, his approach is adventurous and replete with interesting characterizations. The risks he takes in diverging from the letter of the score are not mere gimmickry, but evidence a thoughtful approach to Mahler's idiom. A weighty march tempo starts things off. But there is hint of revisionism in the imposition of a diminuendo forced upon the timpani's Fate motive at the end of its first statement, as if hinting that Fate itself has yet to be determined. Gielen stretches the line at the height of impassioned phrases more often here than in any of his other Mahler recordings (e.g., at 3:50 and around 9:00). But his nuances work more often than not. For the most part, Gielen's sense of how to create just the right dramatic effect is unflinching. How ferocious the march theme becomes when the trumpet roar angrily at 11:00; how unusually demonic the hushed chorale segments that form a bridge between the two main themes sound when accompanying wispy string slides are highlighted; how warm and tender the horn and violin duet comes across during the reprise of the second subject (at 14:22). Just a little hesitation in the oboe's mournful three-note phrase at 16:28 makes it sound like a whimpering cry of "Woe!"

No punches are pulled here or hard-etched characters smoothed over. Brass play the march theme in such a disquietingly blatant and confrontational manner as to send chills down the spine. A whack on the timpani that shuts them down feels like a blow to the head! Gradually increasing urgency gives the impression that the hero has instinctively understood the inevitability of his own impending doom and makes an instinctive but desperate attempt to run from it in terror. Thus, the final climax (on the opening of the Alma theme that recalls a passage at the end of Liszt's First Piano Concerto) sounds more frightening than triumphant.

Gielen keeps the same tempo for the lame-footed triple-time march of the scherzo movement, which he places second, an order now given greater evidentiary weight by the diligent research of Jerry Bruck. Gielen's forceful reading does not spare us from the full effect of winds' grotesque mimicry of the hero's noble character expressed as depicted in the first movement. By contrast, the parodistic trio sounds nasty, coquettish and inane by turns. Slightly elongated grace-notes in the horn passages from 5:20 add an element of strident cynicism to their lumbering buffoonery. During the scherzo's reprise, Gielen adds considerable weight to the already slow brass chorale (c. 7:20), making it seem more malevolent. When the trio returns, he takes an even slower, groping pace (at 11:17), giving the impression of a slithering

snake winding around its prey. The scherzo subject's final appearance sounds almost triumphant! A dark cloud passes over the music toward the close on the major-to-minor Fate motive, forcing us to realize that all this mockery is but a portent of doom. In the last measures, Gielen eschews the *Langsam* tempo marking (added in the Critical Edition) for the last 3 pizzicato notes, playing them in tempo.

After the *Andante* tries to divert the hero's (and our) attention from the terrors of the preceding movements with nostalgic memories of past happiness and peace, the huge finale takes us to the depths of the abyss. An eerie atmosphere immediately sweeps us into a nether region; the mysterious aura engendered here is quickly shattered by the mighty blows of the Fate motive. During the lengthy introduction, bellowing horns, sneering trumpets and raw-throated trombones and tuba befoul the atmosphere with satanic malevolence. A rather sluggish statement of the woodwinds' theme at 2:45 only momentarily detracts from the otherwise steady tempo progression that leads to the allegro march theme, which is properly coordinated with its relative, the main march theme of the first movement. Gielen doesn't establish the principal tempo immediately when the march theme arrives, but works into it over the first few bars. Antiphonal placement of first and second violins enhances their interplay. But the hard edge and dynamic thrust so impressive in the first two movements seems to have abated.

Gielen's diligent efforts to maintain control become noticeable and temper forward motion at times. Even the orchestra becomes less precise and articulate, and sometimes sounds strained. The build-up to the second hammer blow is simply terrifying, although in its aftermath the brass buries the wildly raging strings.

Gielen eschews the third hammer stroke. But the timpani's *fff* statement of the pounding Fate motto is played with such force that it almost sounds like hammer blows. The sudden reprise of the march theme soon thereafter comes as a bit of a shock (even for those who know it is about to happen!). After the brass chorale from the introduction returns at the close, a horrific orchestra outburst finally fells the hero. The pizzicato plucks that end the symphony do seem to sound (as suggested by Neville Cardus) like bits of earth tossed on his coffin as the grave closes over it.

Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony open their complete symphony cycle with the *Sixth* (issued on the SFS's own label 821936-0001-2), an indication of the increasing popularity of this disconcerting, if not downright upsetting, work. Thomas' approach is less detailed than Gielen's, yet like Gielen he sometimes indulges in stretching out a lyrical phrase to enhance its emotive effect. Only a severe slow-up at the close of the march theme's last appearance seems excessive (23:10). As one might expect, the "Alma" theme is extremely effusive, Thomas holding back at its height in a heart-stopping moment. During the development, the brass growl and bellow sounding like grotesque monsters from the nether world. A broad tempo for the wind chorale adds an aura of mystery.

The scherzo movement is a jot faster than the first movement. Thomas' energetic pacing seems to ignore (or underplay) the "wuchtig" (weighty) marking for the main tempo. He plays up the contrast between the scherzo subject and the minuet-like trio by giving the latter an unusually slow tempo. Yet the sense of Mephistophelian mimicry that should pervade, particularly in the trio, seems significantly downplayed. Brass holds on to the first note of their rising 32nd-note phrases (c. 5:00) that return in

the finale, making them sound morose. Soft, murky growls in winds (7:00) are only moderately disconcerting. Unlike Gielen, Thomas does take the last pizzicato notes in a slow tempo, but adds a *ritard* to approach them.

In the *Andante*, Thomas shapes phrases with delicacy, slightly lingering occasionally, as if lost in a nostalgic dream-world. Climaxes are poignant as well as passionate. When dark clouds interrupt, Thomas lets the increasingly impassioned music pour forth gently rather than ardently, as if to imply that the hero's realization of Fate's inevitability does not burst forth like a cataclysm but comes upon him like the tender caress of a caring angel.

A sense of timelessness pervades the dark abyss evoked during the finale's lengthy introduction. Brass creates a cavernous effect, while horns rear up mightily with the rising 32nd-note figure foreshadowed in the Scherzo. Thomas's tempi are again full of vitality. There is no hint of the tragic fate that awaits the hero until the first hammer strikes its devastating blow. After a rather weighty galloping sequence (to 14:30), the buildup to the second blow is stretched out to give the climactic thud greater impact. Brass sound doom-laden after the violins restate their arching phrase that opened the movement. A mad dash ending on a crescendo leads to the point where the unplayed third hammer blow was originally placed. Completely drained of energy, the music devolves into the lugubrious brass segment that precedes the final orchestral outburst, what Joseph Hurwitz calls a "twilight zone". The cataclysmic A minor outburst that explodes from the depths of this eerie, disquieting passage (sourced in the introduction) provides the harmonic background for the timpani's pronouncement the hero's tragic Fate.

Benjamin Zander (a GMSNY member) gives us his second recording of the *Sixth*, this time with the Philharmonia Orchestra on Telarc 3CD-80586. Not only does he include an almost 80-minute discussion of the work on a third disc (as he does for all his recordings of the Mahler symphony cycle on Telarc), but he offers both the original and revised versions of the finale. In his commentary, Zander offers his take on why he believes the Scherzo should precede and not follow the *Andante*. As with his previous discussion discs, Zander balances personal thoughts with interesting and provocative musical analyses. For the most part, I agree with his conclusions, although I have always suspected that the close of the first movement is not, as Zander suggests, really as triumphant as it is a forced effort to remain stalwart in the face of adversity. I find his exploration of the inflections in the main theme of the *Andante* most interesting. He also suggests a basis for Mahler's change of mind concerning both the order of movements and the deletion of the third hammer blow: that in making these decisions, Mahler was acting not as composer but as performer.

As for the performance itself, the initial appearance of the timpani's Fate motif in the first movement is pounded out so forcefully that its effect is only a notch below that of the finale's hammer blows. Yet some moderation in the orchestral playing might indicate that the LPO did not give Zander all that he wanted. The trumpets often seem too reserved. But they come to the fore during the development, wailing out grotesqueries to the accompaniment of rattling xylophone and tortuous cries from the strings. Zander's overall approach is well-conceived. Mahler's many subtle nuances are carefully observed, tempi kept under control without seeming stilted and dynamics given their full measure. The chorale section after 13:00 is extremely slow, giving it an air of mystery.

I must diverge from Zander's approach to tempo in the Scherzo. He takes it much faster than the march subject of the first movement, which I believe should be in the same tempo, thus enhancing the notion that the former is a parody of the latter. Strong timpani whacks on virtually each upbeat of the scherzo's lame march tread reinforce its parodistic character. Grotesqueries in the winds are appropriately brash and basses especially clear and crisp. The *altvaterisch* (old-fashioned) minuet has an impish quality that conjures up a Mephisto pirouetting and posturing about the stage in mocking imitation of the hero, and interrupting his mean-spirited mimicry with inane rapid flourishes to further torment him. How marvelously gruesome are those growling tubas at 6:04, first played softly and then defiantly, as if flaunting their meanness in the hero's face. Zander's reading may also play into Alma's claim that the movement depicts their children at play, sometimes teasing each other or raucously complaining when caught at a particularly mean trick. A huge timpani whack before the coda brings this tomfoolery to an abrupt end.

Zander handles the flowing lyricism of the Andante beautifully, shaping each lyrical phrase expressively yet without affectation. During the climaxes, the cowbells project through the orchestral texture more audibly than in most recordings. At the beginning of the finale, the arching violin theme seems somewhat underdone. Zander creates an ominously mysterious atmosphere after the first pronouncement of Fate. His slow pacing of the horn call segment that follows enhances a sense of anticipation that is rarely evoked here. But sometimes cautiousness deflates the music's spirit. For the hammer blows, Zander uses a large wooden box open on one side struck with a large hollow pipe. Mahler, who was never satisfied with his attempts to create the intended effect, might have been pleased with Zander's solution; it produces a most tremendous noise. Although the hammer blows are devastating, frequently the rest of movement seems rather tame, lacking sufficient bite and intensity, while at other times the orchestra wells up with passion and presses forward with great urgency. Zander slows down for the march theme at c. 15:30, producing an unusual if interesting effect. A prolonged approach to the second blow intensifies its anticipation, and contrasts handily with the maddening rush of strings that follows. But the timpani's *fff* statement of the Fate motive before the closing section does not rise above the orchestra as it should. As for the 3rd hammer blow, Zander rightly explains that its shock value is increased by its unexpected placement (coming not at a climax as do the other blows, but in mid-phrase).

The **Abbado/Berlin Philharmonic 'trio'** includes three Mahler symphonies: **No. 3** (2DG 289 471 502), **No. 7** (DG 289 471 623) and **No. 9** (DG 289 471 624). These are excellent performances, even if they sometimes suffer from occasionally ragged playing and inappropriate ensemble balancing. Abbado's mastery of Mahler idiom is always evident and his approach to these symphonies has not changed over the years. Yet I believe that in his recordings of Nos. 3 and 9 with the VPO and No. 7 with the CSO, he elicited more top-notch and involved playing than from the BPO in these performances, especially from the brass that playing is sometimes ragged and perfunctory.

The BPO **Third** suffers most from these detractions. A rather bland opening horn call followed by jagged-edged trumpet calls does not bode well. Only the timpani make a stupendous noise as it punctuates the extension of these horn calls during the opening. The dark first section sounds more like a patch-

work of molecular motives than a cohesive subject; inconsistent rhythmic treatment (e.g., sharply clipped dotted rhythms contrast with legato treatment of military signals) and rough-hewn brass is distracting. The Pan march seems restrained, bordering on routine, and at 8:30 sounds almost as solemn as a funeral march!

The second movement has a pale hue that does not complement the colorful 'flowers'. Nor does routine playing and hurried tempos create the appropriate relaxed, summery atmosphere. Better is the spry and perky Scherzo. Here Abbado keeps dynamic levels at bay and the winds sometime appear overly restrained and uninvolved. Anna Larsson is a good choice for the Nietzsche movement, with her clear, well-rounded timbre. But the atmosphere is simply calm rather than mysterious; emotions are held in reserve in what should be an impassioned middle section. Oboe lip slurs on the rising-third motive (an important Mahlerian motif) are played differently each time. After a rather long pause (which contradicts the score), the 'angels' enter, sounding more in the shadows of repentant humility than in the sunlight of redemptive faith. From the heavenly string theme that opens the finale, one senses greater involvement in the orchestra. Unlike other conductors, Abbado does not rush through the three climactic segments that recall the dark terrors of the first movement, but they are no less chilling for the usually weighty tempo. The magnificent closing section is masterfully wrought.

At a time when successful performances of the **Seventh** were a rarity, Abbado's 1985 recording with the CSO was an important addition to the catalogue. In this BPO performance, Abbado again leads a masterful performance of this difficult symphony. One does notice some differences from his earlier recording. The first movement seems a shade darker than with the CSO. Lyrical passages have more plasticity and nuance than before. Emphasis on creating an underlying sense of impulse and urgency sometimes causes more lyrical passages to whiz by dispassionately. A serious glitch occurs when the cymbals fail to appear at the climax before the subito reprise of the opening (at 12:55), and enter early at a later climax.

Nachtmusik I opens with good spatial separation of rufen and antworten horn calls. While the many diverse elements are properly integrated and spotlighted, one senses a mildness of accentuation that detracts somewhat from what should sound like 'things that go bump in the night.' In the Scherzo, Abbado rarely lets the orchestra catch its collective breath. Subtlety of nuance is not a strong suit here. Like Horenstein and others, Abbado sets a relatively brisk pace for *Nachtmusik II*, yet lyrical melodies are no less captivating and musical flow does not seem unduly hurried. Abbado knows how to handle the many abrupt shifts between march to minuet in the finale, many others' attempts to smooth them over or rush through them causing either awkwardness or deflating the humorous side of the movement. Energy and enthusiasm never flag from the boisterous timpani flourish that opens the movement to the grandiose climax that ushers in its conclusion.

Appropriate balancing of inner voices and contrapuntally interwoven motives presented in a multi-dimensional depth-of-field is a prerequisite for a well-rendered **Ninth**. Multiple miking of a live performance trades one problem for another. For example, a spacious sound-field for the opening section is spoiled by an overbalanced harp and excessively prominent trumpets in later passages are disturbing. Abbado's reading is contemplative at first, but becomes increasingly blatant, even

angry. A pity that the explosion on the Fate motto toward the close of the development (17:10) falls flat. In the second movement, Abbado treads heavily on the opening notes of the *ländler* theme, giving it a strident character that makes it seem more of a worthy opponent for the antagonistic waltz music than usually presumed. Although the waltz is ultimately victorious in its battle with the *ländler*, a wink from a sheepish flute seems to imply that it was all in good fun. The Burleska runs riot in full of vigor and with riveting intensity. Then Abbado delivers a deeply moving finale. How creepy the contrabassoon sounds on its meandering phrase that follows the first appearance of the main theme. One senses an underlying sense of urgency that is rarely abated. How forcefully the music builds to the climax of the development, as if its life depended upon reaching its goal. A pause of no less than 40 seconds intervenes between the last sounds of the final note and tentative beginning of the applause, indicating how transfixed the audience was during the closing moments.

The pair of **Seconds** reviewed here are further entries in complete cycles by **Riccardo Chailly** with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Prague Philharmonic Choir (Decca 289 470 283) and **Yoel Levi** conducting the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (Telarc 80548). Both performances are superbly played and recorded. **Chailly** gives majestic weight to the first movement's funeral march and expressive tenderness to the lyrical second theme. His masterful ability to maintain control, whether over a steady march rhythm or a cataclysmic orchestral explosion, never seems constricted or lacking in emotive depth or linear flexibility. Chailly's innate sense of timing climaxes is also impressive: he deftly gradates the forward motion into the reprise of the funereal first subject (from 9:15) so that its return seems inevitable. The *molto pesante* lead-in to the recap is taken very slowly, in the same manner as did Rattle in his recording. Chailly takes the orchestral descent that ends this movement in Tempo I rather than *allegro* that others do.

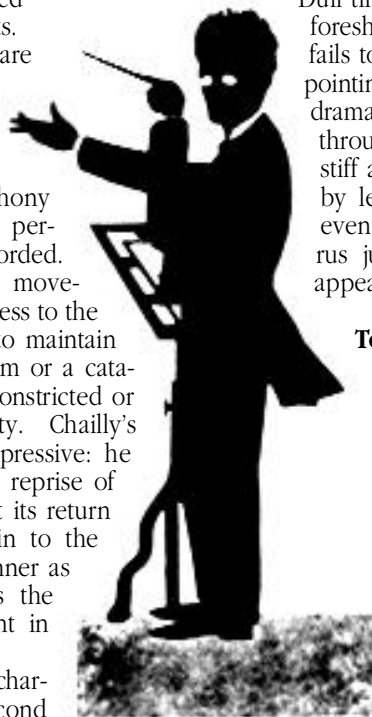
How gently woodwinds shape and add character to their melodic phrases in the second movement. But occasionally orchestral choirs seem out of sync. An evenly paced tempo for the scherzo movement still leaves room for flexibility. The cataclysmic outburst that foreshadows the opening of the finale is overwhelming. Petra Lang has a lovely, rich voice perfectly suited to the *Urlicht*'s devotional aesthetic. Lackluster playing sometimes detracts from an otherwise well-conceived Finale. One senses that Chailly is in a hurry to move through certain segments (e.g., the Cry in the Wilderness and the grave-opening scene) on his way to a magnificent closing section. Some glitches are noticeable: a messy trumpet duet during the Last Trump and unfocused choral singing in softer passages. Male voices should sing "Bereite dich!" with greater command. From their call to readiness for the ascent heavenward, urgency begins to wane. Although the choral *Auferstehens* moderately strong, it doesn't convey the sense that the entire symphony reaches both its culmination and resolution here. Of course, the great final climax is thrilling, but others have done as well and with a greater sense of inevitability. A fine performance of *Totenfeier* included, only marred by a rather bland close.

Yoel Levi begins his **Second** with rapid, sharp sixteenth-note runs that proceed to a noble, demonstrative funeral march. A caressing treatment of the second theme is a perfect foil for the mournful nature of the first subject. But the reading becomes increasingly cautious as it proceeds, robbing the performance of spontaneity and mitigating against full-blown dynamic levels, thus weakening the contrasts between diverse subjects. Soon the march loses any sense of majesty (after all, a hero has died here). Levi tries to compensate by picking up the tempo, but fails to create sufficient dramatic sweep to satisfy in the closing section. Propulsive underlying motion energizes the second movement, but detracts from its *grazioso* quality. The ASO sounds pale and characterless in this charming music. A reverberant echo of the opening timpani snap at the beginning of the Scherzo should have been edited out. Emphasis on precision causes stiffness in the underlying sixteenth-note figuration.

Dull timpani thuds undermine the orchestral outburst that foreshadows the finale's opening. In *Urlicht*, Mary Phillips fails to communicate any particular emotion. Most disappointing is the finale. Levi seems far removed from the dramatic core of this music. Each segment is played through without any special effect, the orchestra sounds stiff and constricted. Levi tries to manufacture emotions by lengthening ritards, but without much success. He even adds a crescendo on the long-held note in the chorus just before its part ends. Barbara Bonney's brief appearance here is the only compensating factor.

Telarc includes the **Adagio from the unfinished Tenth** as filler. Levi is much more consistently successful here in capturing the depth of feeling expressed in this musical image of a 'dark corner of the soul'. Levi sets up a strong contrast between the two slow tempos: that of the opening *Andante* theme and the *Adagio* theme that follows. He doesn't increase the tempo for the scherzando music as others do, making it emerge naturally from within the context of the mournful *Adagio*. How emphatically the strings accent the *Adagio* theme (c. 6:50) and how urgently it builds to a seething climax (at 8:25). Pacing the approach to the A-flat minor outburst slowly makes this huge chord sound even more devastating (at 18:50). Brass sound like one enormous monster emerging from the depths during the overpowering segment of piled-up chordal dissonance. In all, a moving performance that is both well played and intelligently conceived.

Speaking of the Tenth, Naxos (8.554811) offers the **first commercial release of Joe Wheeler's completion**, conducted and edited by **Robert Olson**, the music director of the Boulder, Colorado MahlerFest. Olson and the MahlerFest Orchestra premiered the Wheeler version on disc a few years ago. Like Deryck Cooke, Wheeler tries to be faithful to the sketches more than elaborate upon them whenever possible and is more consistent in this approach than Cooke. Olson adds a few touches of his own. But for the most part his reading rarely gets below the surface of the music, concentrating upon technical precision and eliciting details rather than creating an especially powerful statement. Although we owe Olson a debt of gratitude for unearthing this early attempt at a performing version of a complete Tenth, his straight-forward, emotively detached reading is simply too temperate to do justice to this



profound expression of the tortures of human existence. An objectified reading of the opening movement fails to plumb its depths, while the inner movements come across as mere note-spinning. Most disappointing is the finale. From the outset, it moves along so briskly that there is little time to engender much emotion. During the opening section, muffled drum strokes follow each other so quickly that they make virtually no impact. Because of this brisk pacing, a tempo adjustment becomes necessary for the entrance of the beautiful flute theme (what I refer to as the "Love" theme). Violins simply do not have the sonic fullness and vibrancy that this music demands, particularly in their ff statement of the Love theme at around 13:00. Unfortunately, I do not have the Wheeler score, for I would like to know whether certain seemingly awkward ritards were inserted by him or Olson (e.g., at 10:30). I do agree that giving the flute the reprise of the Love theme makes infinite sense, if the addition of a cymbal crash during its last appearance (18:44) does not. While competent and structurally sound, Olson's reading is too cautious and comes across as lacking sufficient dramatic intensity and emotive expression to satisfy.

Space does not permit a detailed account of two releases of **chamber versions of four Mahler works** that I suspect will be of greater interest to the aficionado and scholar than to the general listener. Erwin Stein's chamber version of the Fourth was written in 1921, one year after Arnold Schoenberg completed his chamber version of the Gesellen lieder. Both are offered by the conductorless Linos Ensemble, with Alison Browner, the soprano in the Fourth, and Olaf Bär, the baritone in the Gesellen cycle, on a Capriccio recording (10 863). These are fine performances that occasionally bring to light inner parts that are not always audible in the full orchestra version. It should go without saying that these chamber versions could not and were not intended to replace the originals.

Lastly, a **DVD release of chamber versions of Das Lied von der Erde** (by Schoenberg, edited by Raine Reiner) and **Kindertotenlieder** (arranged by conductor Amaury Du Closel) becomes one of the few Mahler works to be released in this medium. Das Lied is given a fully staged dramatic rendering that has the tenor play the role of Mahler himself and the mezzo-soprano that of Alma. They are on the deck of the ship that is taking them back to Europe and Gustav is engaged in what appears to be a vain effort to compose. The song "On Beauty" is sung by him as he fondles the clothes and playthings of a young girl (obviously his first child, affectionately called Putzi, who died before Mahler began composing Das Lied), whose image is projected onto the streamer truck from which these objects are taken. In Der Abschied, Alma tries to comfort her disillusioned husband. The tenor, Vincent de Rooster doesn't make much of an impression vocally or as an actor, not for want of trying, but mezzo Héléne Jossoud gives a stronger performance without making much of an effort to act out her role. The Bass-Normandy Orchestral Ensemble, conducted by Dominique Debart, underplays much of the music and ragged ensemble work is noticeable at times. Mezzo Claire Brua with the Atelier Lyrique et Symphonique du Centre, conducted by Amaury Du Closel, presents Kindertotenlieder in a more traditional concert setting. Ms. Brua is unknown to me, but certainly a treat for the eye as well as the ear. In keeping with Mahler's intention to avoid excessive emotive display, she maintains a reserved demeanor but sings expressively. We look forward to more creative DVD releases in future. ♦



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BOOK REVIEW

Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis

By Stuart Feder

Yale University Press, 353 pages.

The subtitle of this biography, "A Life in Crisis," is the vantage point from which this book is written and, indeed, Mahler's life was punctuated by a multiplicity of crises. After the deaths of his parents in 1889, Mahler was left as the reluctant head of a household of siblings. Two years later, he nearly met his own death from a serious medical condition, at the age of 31. In 1907, his beloved eldest daughter died and, in that same year Mahler resigned as director of the Vienna Court Opera under pressure from the management. Finally, in 1910, the revelation that his wife, Alma, was having an affair with the young architect, Walter Gropius, left Mahler so terrified that she might leave him that he suffered a breakdown while working on his Tenth Symphony. His anguish is codified in the desperate notes he scrawled in parts of this unfinished symphony's manuscript. Author Stuart Feder is qualified to cover these crises in greater detail than most biographers; he is a physician, a practicing psychiatrist (both teaching and attending), and is on the faculty of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. He is also a musicologist and is on the faculty of the Juilliard School. He is the author of many published articles on Mahler and has written two books about his other musical love: *The Life of Charles Ives* and *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*.

Feder presents details scarcely noticed by other biographers who do not have this unique combination of musical and psychological expertise and which give richness, warmth and humanity to this biography. For example, Mahler's early family life is examined with more insight than many other Mahler biographers can proffer. Unsurprisingly, Feder gives a psychological spin to things that other writers do not (and probably could not) grasp. Yet, there is a minimum of the "psychobabble" that I find so offensive in many psychological writings on Mahler.

Leonard Bernstein (and others) often commented on the strange dualities that seemed so frequently to occur in Mahler's life. Feder skillfully ties events together to emphasize these dualities. In Chapter 3, Feder explores this phenomenon. In 1888, Mahler was appointed director of the newly built Budapest Opera. The good news was that, although he was a relatively unknown 28-year-old, German-speaking Jew in a notably anti-Semitic city, he was awarded a 10-year contract with "absolutely unlimited powers," with an annual salary of a considerable sum. Mahler was so elated that he promised the nationalistic Hungarian Opera that all operatic performances would be sung exclusively in Hungarian, including a Wagner Ring cycle! The duality manifested itself with the bad news that in this time of his glory, both of Mahler's parents and his sister, Leopoldine, died, and Mahler had surgery that almost cost him his life. These familial and personal pressures caused a creative block, and the summer of 1889 was one of the most dismal in Mahler's life, and the block persisted into the following summer as well.

Feder recounts in great detail Mahler's single sessions with Sigmund Freud in 1910. Again, not surprising, considering Dr. Feder's background. Also detailed in greater profusion than in other biographies are Mahler's personal relationships, including new information about Mahler's "several" encounters with Alma, "prior" to the famous dinner party, at which most biographers

erroneously claim to be their first encounter. Feder also examines Mahler's relationship with violist Natalie Bauer-Lechner (a close friend, at least before his marriage). The reason for their breakup is still not clear despite the details Feder delineates (who instigated the breakup: Gustav? Natalie? Alma?).

The book explores the strange relationship between Anna Moll (Alma's mother) and Gustav. Feder suggests that even though they got along famously, she betrayed Mahler by blessing and encouraging Alma's affair with Gropius. When the chips were down, evidently she and her husband Carl later justified their behavior under the guise of their Nazi sympathies, whereby the Jewish Mahler was "back-stabbed" and the Aryan Gropius honored. (Alma denied that her mother was a Nazi and attributed her Hitler worship to Carl's influence.)

A particularly interesting and useful facet of the book is that it contains an epilogue from which the above material was gleaned. Feder realized that Mahler died before the deaths of all the major figures in this biography. (Alma survived him by more than half a century.) Thus, Feder's epilogue gives a more comprehensive closure to "the Mahler story." It provides a collection of mini-biographies of the major figures in Mahler's life: daughter Anna Mahler; Anna and Carl Moll; Walter Gropius; Doctors Emanuel Libman, George Baehr, Joseph Frankel and Sigmund Freud.

A caveat: the book is carelessly edited at times, so typos and misspellings sometimes pull the reader up short. Poor editing resulted in one error of fact, regarding Marie Bonaparte, an erstwhile patient of Freud, who later became a colleague and confidante of his. She was the great-granddaughter of Napoleon's brother, Lucien, and the wife of Prince George of Greece. I leave it to the reader to locate the inadvertent error.

There are many biographies of Mahler. However, Feder's is strongly recommended even to those who have read one or many of the others. It is very reader-friendly and offers many shafts of illumination, which are not to be found in the others.

Gerald Fox

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We were saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Stuart Feder on July 29, 2005. Dr. Feder was a long-time active member of the Society. We extend our sympathy to his family and friends.

CONCERT NEWS & REVIEWS

**MAHLER'S SIXTH-
THE DEATH OF THE SYMPHONY?**

Robert C. Comeau

In 1882, Friedrich Nietzsche famously declared "God is dead." He was not taking credit for the killing, nor was he expressing his own atheism, he was merely announcing the news of what he considered to be the greatest event in modern history. In 1906, Gustav Mahler, no mean student of Nietzsche's writings, announced, much less overtly, that the symphony was dead. While he, in his Sixth Symphony, seems to illustrate the absolute limits, while forecasting the death, of the 19th century symphony, we must, perhaps, give him more credit for its demise than Nietzsche was willing to claim for God's.

This rumination and reflection arrives on the heels of what was **probably the finest performance of the Sixth Symphony** I have ever heard, that given by Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic on June 25, 2005. I have a few quibbles about this performance, of course, but must note that I have, in these very pages, waxed rhapsodic about Giuseppe Sinopoli and the Staatskapelle Dresden, complained about Pierre Boulez and the London Symphony Orchestra, and questioned James Levine and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra's very competency in performances of this work. I have enjoyed performances conducted by Gergiev, Dohnanyi, Eschenbach, Macal and many others, and relish recordings by Barbirolli, Bernstein, Chailly, Tilson Thomas, and Zander. I actually came to love the Sixth through the televised Bernstein/VPO concert from the 1970s. This night's performance just trumps them all.

The quibbles are few, but important. Mr. Maazel's choice for the order of the inner movements followed the new and current fashion of Andante – Scherzo. One can only hope this fashion passes quickly, as little of the "scholarship" in its defense has convinced me. I am most convinced by arguments condensed by David Matthews, for example, in *The Mahler Companion*, noting the logical pattern of key relationships between the movements when the scherzo is placed second, which is violated in the other ordering. Plus, it seems to make more dramatic sense to have the scherzo, which grotesquely parodies the militaristic first movement, follow that movement immediately, allowing the profound beauty of the andante to provide much needed repose before the horrors of the Finale. If there is an "Alma" love theme in the Allegro, it has its analog in the Trio of the Scherzo, in which the irregular rhythms of childish play are portrayed, completing the picture of family life in the face of early 20th century horrors, and preparing us for the reflective beauties of the Andante. In Maazel's performance, the exquisitely judged dynamics, the extraordinarily soulful horn solos of Philip Myers, and the swooning of the strings were undercut by the reversion to the world of the scherzo, a transition which would have been better served thematically by the stark visions presented by the Finale.

All of this was played brilliantly, by the way, and with very careful attention to dynamics, phrasing, and instrumental timbre. The Allegro march was vigorous, without any sign of the false profundity that plagues so many performances. The basses emerged from very dark places, and snarled appropriately, the brass loud and assertive, the woodwinds snaking around each other in elegant counterpoint and harmony where necessary, and the percussionists banging their various implements of destruc-

tion with obvious relish; all in all, a performance to be cherished and remembered for a very long time; a benchmark for the comparison with future evenings at the symphony.

It has been remarked, in a variety of places, that the Sixth Symphony is Mahler's most rigorously classical in form. It is also his most audacious in terms of subject matter, and is generally considered to be, despite its classicism, programmatic, containing the story of a hero, and his love, and his family, and his struggle, and his ultimate demise at the hands of fate. Since Beethoven the symphony had incorporated programmatic elements, usually adding up to a *per aspera ad astra* kind of design, of which the famous Fifth Symphony is a paradigm. The symphony's place at the end of an orchestral concert was an uplifting and inspirational thing, especially after the audience had seen the titanic struggles between soloist and orchestra and/or instrument in the concerto before the interval. There was no struggle too severe for the romantic hero/composer to overcome. The notable exception to all this is Tchaikovsky, who, in his Sixth symphony, gave away the secret that life was actually quite difficult and ended sadly in most cases, and even, perhaps, prophesied his own sad end while reflecting on his own sad life.

Mahler took the program symphony to its end with the Sixth, writing letters to friends and his wife about what each passage meant, giving biographers and musicologists the fodder for entire careers of telling us what it is all about. He also drove his musical materials as far as they would go within the four movement symphonic structure, culminating in the astonishing tone poem which is the Finale, a movement which never allows its musical materials to fully develop before being brought to a rude and crashing end by explosions of percussion and perorations of brass, and, of course, the notorious hammer blows, the last percussion instrument at the end of the last symphony bringing the hero to his knees and lower just as he seems to be marching off toward some kind of détente, if not actual victory.

One of the other problems vexing editors, performers and commentators on this symphony is the number of hammer blows. Mahler, it seems, used three in the first performance, then superstitiously deleted the third and altered the score when he grew too agitated conducting the work, believing, if Alma's word is to be trusted, that the symphony was way too personal an utterance and he would be tempting fate itself by allowing his original conception to stand, leading, undoubtedly, to personal disaster for all involved. Thus, most subsequent performances have left out the delicious period placed near the end of the symphony by the third hammer blow. One expects it, doesn't get it, than is shocked when it appears where it ought not to be, right after we think our hero has gotten away with it and might survive. Mahler chose, upon second thought, to leave the ending more ambiguous, rather than truly indicate the belief he had in the power of fate and its ability to destroy any hero.

The Sixth Symphony is the last symphony, and I wonder if Mahler didn't know that. An unbroken line from Mozart and Haydn, through Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Brahms ended with Mahler, perhaps as a result of Wagnerism, which freed the composer from the rigidities imposed by classical form. As much a Wagnerian as a Classicist, maybe Mahler intuited the position his Sixth Symphony might occupy, and superstitiously declined to put the last nail in the coffin of the symphony with the third hammer blow. Without the third hammer blow, the symphony trails off into unknown music; with it, the music stops, as does the hero, all being nothing but reminiscence of what has come before.

Mahler wrote no more great classical symphonies, though he did stretch and re-define the boundaries of the romantic symphony in his subsequent efforts in the genre. Throughout the Twentieth Century, the symphony has been forgotten by composers more interested in color and sound than melody and formal development. Much great music has been written, one need only think of Bartok, Debussy and Messaien, among many others, but the Symphony is gone. The exceptions are Prokofiev and Shostakovich, composers working within the restrictions of the Soviet totalitarian state and paying lip service to state sanctioned ideas of socialist realism, requiring them to work within the old forms. Prokofiev was at his most interesting before his return to Russia, and structure, and Shostakovich is simply the greatest, and only, true symphonist of the Twentieth Century, an anachronistic god. ♦

MAHLERFEST XVIII

Stan Ruttenberg, President MahlerFest, USA

MAHLERFEST XVIII, January 12-16, 2005, opened with a chamber concert (voice and piano) that was all Mahler: the tenor arias from *Das Lied von der Erde*, the complete *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and selections from *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*.

The Symposium talks were addressed, as usual, to the music programmed. Kelly Dean Hansen (graduate musicology student at the College of Music, Colorado University; member of MahlerFest Board and writer of our program notes) described his views on what made a symphony "tragic." Prof. Stephen E. Hefling (Case Western Reserve University) presented his case on why the Mahler Ninth is a "Farewell Symphony." Board member Prof. Steven Bruns (Colorado University) read Dr. Stuart Feder's paper "Mahler: Mourning and Consolation." (the text of this paper will appear on the Mahlerfest website (www.mahlerfest.org). Marilyn McCoy then talked about her analysis of the first movement of the Ninth: "Stepping, Sliding and Soaring into Mahler's Ninth." Robert Olson, our conductor, music director and founder of MahlerFest, then discussed how he confronted and solved, to his own musical satisfaction, many of the problems presented by the score of the Ninth.

The orchestral concert opened with Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, a work deemed by us to be an appropriate complement to the Ninth. Incidentally, Maestro Olson has found that opening our concerts with a short work, as related as possible to a Mahler symphony to follow, helps the orchestra warm up before jumping cold into a Mahler symphony that presents so many challenges to the performers.

As a "heads-up" for MahlerFest XIX, January 11-15, 2006, we plan a chamber concert probably focusing on early Mahler songs, a symposium of course, and the orchestral concert featuring "Blumine", *Leider eines fahrenden Gesellen* with Margaret Lattimore (faculty member of Colorado University's College of Music and a winner of the annual Metropolitan Opera Auditions), and Mahler's Symphony No. 1, using the 1992 Critical Edition with later corrections. Check the MahlerFest website (www.mahlerfest.org) for complete details, or call (303) 447-0513 for information. ♦

UPCOMING MAHLER PERFORMANCES IN THE NEW YORK AREA

September 22-27, 2005 - Avery Fisher Hall

New York Philharmonic/Maazel -
Symphony No. 1

November 4-6, 2005 - NJPAC, Newark, NJ

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra/Jarvi -
Symphony No. 1

November 5, 2005 - Carnegie Hall

Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Barenboim -
Symphony No. 5

November 15, 2005 - Carnegie Hall

Philadelphia Orchestra/Eschenbach -
Symphony No. 6

November 19, 2005 - Carnegie Hall

St Louis Symphony Orchestra/Robertson -
Das Lied von der Erde

November 28, 2005 - Carnegie Hall

Boston Symphony Orchestra/Levine/Lieberson -
Symphony No. 4

December 11, 2005 - Carnegie Hall

Juilliard Orchestra/Conlon -
Symphony No. 3

January 20, 2006 - Carnegie Hall

Budapest Festival Orchestra/Fischer -
Symphony No. 1

January 26, 2006 - Carnegie Hall

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Rattle/Kozena -
Symphony No. 4

March 26, 2006 - Avery Fisher Hall

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Mazur -
Symphony No. 1

April 19, 2006 - Carnegie Hall

San Francisco Symphony/Thomas -
Adagio from Symphony No. 10

April 20, 2006 - Carnegie Hall

San Francisco Symphony/Thomas/Lieberson -
Ruckert Lieder

April 21, 2006 - Carnegie Hall

Philadelphia Orchestra/Eschenbach/Groves/Hampson -
Das Lied von der Erde

Compiled by Sid Pollack