

THE WAYFARER

BBC Radio 3 - Building a Library, 6 February 2023

ED SECKERSON *makes a Mahler 6 Library Choice*; KEVIN CAREY *reports*

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Mahler's current condition, his view of the future, or his role as a protagonist in the music as he was in the 1st.

Seckerson began, unaccountably as he never returned to the recording, with Chailly's rather gummy (my word) opening, but he then turned to the Barbirolli with which he was much more impressed, although he noted that from the very beginning he was setting himself a speed problem that he ultimately did not solve; he also omits repeats (as does Rosbaud), seriously altering the balance of the architecture.

Introducing Currentzis, he said that he "nails" the proper mood of the first subject. Moving to the second subject, the supposed 'Alma' theme, he found Ivan Fischer a little too lively and thought that "Alma would have preferred Currentzis' lushness". If, I have often said, there is one Mahler Symphony which aligns with Bernstein (the later VPO rather than the earlier NYPO) it is surely this, where the string playing is very beautiful.

Answering a question from Andrew McGregor he dismissed "impressive" recordings by Karajan, Abbado, Rattle and others as not representing the music in intense life and death terms. He then moved on to the Tennstedt Proms LPO recording to close the movement, at which point I almost reached for Normal Lebrecht's Tennstedt panegyric in *Why Mahler?*

As we have noted, Mahler changed his mind about the ordering of the middle movements and Seckerson largely stayed with those performances where the *Scherzo* comes before the *Andante*, citing Tennstedt and Bernstein.

Whatever else it did, Ed Seckerson's *Building a Library* on Mahler's 6th saw off three issues that have, if anything, rather got in the way of considering the underlying merits of the work. First, it was never dubbed "Tragic" by Mahler. Secondly, Mahler was not decisive in his ordering of the inner movements. Seckerson reports that de La Grange showed him a handbill for a performance in Mahler's lifetime which restored his "first thoughts": of putting the *Scherzo* before the *Andante*. Seckerson says that this ordering is more radical but more musically coherent - he metaphorically "donned the boxing gloves" for it - a view shared by Bernstein in his VPO recording, Tennstedt in his Proms recording (not to be confused with his 1979 LPO studio recording) and Rosbaud in a broadcast.

Thirdly, there is no evidence whatsoever that the supposed 'three hammer blows' related in any way to Mahler's contemporaneous personal crises; it was written during one of the happiest periods of his life; but Alma tended to see art as a reflection of life; and, in any case, Mahler left the score with only two such blows.

No doubt the Symphony is unremittingly bleak, except for the 'Alma' second subject in the First Movement, but there is no evidence that this referred either to

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He couldn't, however, resist sampling Petrenko's recording which he thought much less powerful than his later 7th because, he said, Petrenko was, like Currentzis, too concerned with the process rather than the emotion; but, he said, Tennstedt: "Plunges us into the underbelly of a Landler" which Cardus described as being "danced by polar bears".

Turning to the *Andante* he said that Bernstein "lends it an unmatched inwardness" with such intimacy in the string playing which makes it so personal. Towards the end of the slow movement Mahler marks a passage "nicht schleppen" but Currentzis is so involved in minor detail that he misses the bigger picture; he is fastidious, very beautiful but rather sterile. This movement is unsettling even in repose, so he reverts to Tennstedt who conducts "from the heart".

The *Finale* plunges us into what "almost sounds like a parallel universe" where, Seckerson says: "I can hear Berg's *Three Orchestral Pieces* emerging from the shadows." He starts with Bernstein and the "jaws of hell". Barbirolli, Currentzis and Tennstedt also take the music to the edge of possibility, of uncompromising defiance; but at this point he parts with Currentzis because the sound and fury does not seem to signify, it is not desperate enough. In spite of his weight and gravitas Barbirolli also goes because although Seckerson has a "huge admiration" for this often thrilling account, it is "glorious, relishing the music just too much" so that it is just too slow.

This leaves us with Bernstein and Tennstedt and, as this is the *Finale*, the infamous 'hammer blows' where Bernstein commits the sin of moving one of them to suit his own reading. Seckerson says he can, on the whole, forgive this and other minor blemishes for the overall weight of the performance but, in the end, Tennstedt's performance is played as if life depends on it: "unmatched in the high stakes of every moment in every bar and not a scintilla of hope in the bleakest of codas."

It's difficult to argue with Seckerson if you accept the life and death scenario which is by no means the only way of viewing the work. Mahler was to write the 7th and 8th before returning to the harrowing 9th, and it cannot therefore be said to be some sort of harbinger of doom. There is a lot to be said for viewing this symphony as Mahler's most classical, one of the issues rather overlooked because of the meretricious issues I have mentioned. This is why the Fischer reading is so effective and, therefore, is why it should have been given more attention.



I personally favour a less dramatic approach to this, as to all Mahler Symphonies, so I would have given much more thought to the contributions of Boulez and Zinman.

But if you adopt Seckerson's premise, which honours the dramatic in spite of questioning the biographical, it's not easy to disagree with Tennstedt live.

My redoubtable *Library* correspondent, Mark Siner, largely agrees with Seckerson although, like me, he dislikes the premature audience response; surely EMI could have put in a few seconds of silence! He also has a good deal of time for Currentzis and mentions Boulez.

Surely this is a case of denouncing Alma while falling straight into her trap!



Barbirolli: New Philharmonia, EMI, 1964
 Bernstein: VPO, DG, 1988
 Boulez: VPO, DG, 1994
 Chailly: Concertgebouw, Decca, 2005
 Currentzis: Musica Aeterna, Sony, 2018
 Fischer I: Budapest Festival Orchestra, Challenge, 2005
 Petrenko K: Berlin Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, 2021
 Rosbaud: SWRSO, SWRSO Classics, 1961
 Tennstedt: LPO (Prom), LPO, 1983
 Zinman: Zurich Tonhalle, RCA, 2007

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To Live for You! To Die for You!

In the fourth part of his series ANTHONY CANTLE focuses on the lead-up to the Mahler Marriage

Discussion of the Mahler marriage too often rests, it seems to me, on the conviction that as a couple they were entirely incompatible but I do not subscribe to this view. As Ronald Britton reminded us in his 1999 Enid Balint Memorial Lecture: "Incompatibility is one of the oldest terms used in discussion of marital problems but, as marital therapists and analysts know, it is not as simple as it sounds.

By the time we reach the stage in life where we might marry, we carry our most basic conflicts within ourselves. Some of us bring the incompatibilities we have inside ourselves to our marriages and then visit these on the other half of the partnership." Synonymous with other descriptions of the Mahler marriage will be the idea that Alma had a monopoly of narcissism and demandingness, and that her own difficulties inhibited her from being sufficiently grateful for her good fortune in being married to a genius. The casualty of this distortion follows from the rather lazy assumption that the possession of distinctive talent in whatever field of human endeavour, and the accomplishment of huge artistic and creative achievement, automatically exonerates someone from an obligation to consider the impact of their activities and interests on those close to them.

I have previously made a similar point about Richard Wagner: "Because someone writes quintessentially the most epic of operas, and bestows a lasting legacy to us all that defied the limitations of what musically and dramatically had gone before and in so doing defined the shape of things to come, doesn't mean for a moment that they're in any way free of flaws or exempt from projecting these characteristics into others and identifying and attacking such features as if originating only beyond themselves."

Mahler is said to have once described his marriage as "the highest bliss and deepest despair", but one wonders if he attributed both states only to the vicissitudes of his wife's character. Rather than consider a world where some people are automatically exempt from the task of better understanding themselves and their impact on others because of



their creative achievements, it seems more in keeping with the ordinary in all of us to tolerate sharing these contradictions with a trusted other.

For most of us it is usually quite painful to face the discrepancy between the kind of person we would ideally like to be and the one we actually are, and this applies whether someone has written a whole symphony or who can barely write a postcard. Yeats so helpfully captures this discrepancy when remarking on the inevitability of the contradictions and personal difficulty found in the gifted and the genius as: "still the same bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast".

Their courtship, such as it was, between the 22 year old Alma and the 41 year old Gustav, lasted less than a month and comprised a mutual intensity of arousal and longing that will be very familiar to couple therapists learning from their sometimes angry and disillusioned patients of just how well things had gone at the beginning. Alma's diary entry describing their first evening together at a November dinner party in 1901 affirms the sense of excitement and idealisation involved when they were left as she says: "In the kind of vacuum that instantly envelops people who have found each other.", As with other diary entries by Alma, her state of mind contrasted with that of Gustav. The picture is of a man who did not recognise ambivalence; he was known for being single minded and determined; once he decided on what he wanted he did not brook indecisiveness and, could, with orchestras and singers alike, be swiftly impatient.

So it was with Alma too. After the dinner party Mahler had written to Alma saying: "God had already willed then that we should become one."

Later she writes: "He kissed me and started to talk of an early wedding, as if it were a matter of course". Like the closed mind of the husband described by Guy de Maupassant in his novel *A Parisian Affair*: "It was like a house all of the doors and windows of which are firmly shut". For Alma the infatuation was problematic.

She was still in a sexual relationship with Zemlinsky and she writes in her diary: "Conflicting emotions are at war inside me. Here Alex, here Mahler. But my feelings are for him and against Alex."

Just as she had been critical of Zemlinsky's body, she was immediately critical of the 63 kilo Mahler: "So many things about him annoy me; his smell, the way he sings, something in the way he speaks." Alma gives some further indication of her perception of the man she was soon to marry: "I must say I liked him immensely, although he's dreadfully restless. He stormed around the room like a savage. The fellow is made entirely of oxygen. When you go near him you get burnt".

Three weeks after they met, Mahler gave Alma an early indication of the shape of things to come in terms of his unyielding requirements for their future partnership. He told her: "It's not so simple to marry a man like me. I am quite free; I have to be. I can assume no material obligations."

Their age difference was a source of concern both to Alma's mother and step-father and to Mahler himself. During a time early in their courtship when he was working in Berlin, the question of age played on his mind.

Presciently, Mahler writes:

"There's only one thing that worries me: whether a man who's reached the threshold of old age has the right to tie his extreme maturity to so much youth and freshness, to chain spring to autumn, missing out summer? For the time being, of course, all is well, but what will happen when winter follows my fruitful autumn."

Notwithstanding Mahler's reservations about the age difference between him and Alma, it seems he was sincere in feeling differently about Alma than he had felt towards his previous lovers. What was not going to be different, perhaps in common with others who in midlife seek and feel narcissistically revived by acquiring 'so much youth and freshness' through the so-called 'younger model', was his need to "chain spring to autumn" by controlling his object. For Alma, so exacting were his demands and so depleting of the couple's 'oxygen' that he so narcissistically and claustrophobically monopolised, that it served to undermine the integrity of her own growth and development.

Couple therapists frequently encounter relationships that are brought to them when following a 'fruitful autumn' the chill of winter sees the frost set in and cracks start to appear; the relationships that start life built on the shifting sands of idealisation and the illusion of early magical repair later turn into silos of resentment.

Mahler's own words prior to marriage guide us to infer that beneath his surface excitement about having Alma in his life, and all that she might represent by way of the illusion of guaranteed psychic safety, he nevertheless remained fearful of the losses and instability of his early life being repeated and revealed. For the composer who bequeathed to us his beautiful song *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, we might see a glimpse of his search for the safety of a reliable object that would quench his infantile longing to be rescued, fed, sustained and above all left certain. In a letter to Alma he writes: "I feel the bliss, and can say it too, of loving for the first time. I can never be free of the dread that this lovely dream may dissolve, and can hardly wait for the moment when your own mouth and breath will breathe into me certainty and inmost consciousness that my life has reached port after storm." For the older and mature Mahler, anchored in his belief that Alma was indeed the personification of his "lovely dream" and that through an unconscious fusion she might allay his ontological anxiety,



thereby saving him from succumbing to the fate of so many of his siblings, we might say so far so good, but for Alma the problems were only just beginning. First, because she did not want to be a midwife to someone else's dream but secondly, and more importantly, because she had a competing dream of her own.

This was that in marriage to Mahler she would find a revival and continuation of her first great love: a much admired, deeply missed and longed-for object that would invisibly heal the father-shaped hole in her own life. There was another and crucially very basic problem for Alma: the insurmountable reality of being only 22!

Some six weeks after they first met, while conducting in Dresden, and with the prospect of marriage now very close, Mahler wrote a letter to Alma, a very long letter in fact, some three thousand words, which some have referred to as a kind of pre-nuptial contract. In it, as if assembling the leasehold clauses for married life, he sets out his unequivocal and non-negotiable demands for their future as a couple.

For psychoanalytic clinicians it can read as a tour de force of Mahler's own psychopathology. In places its arrogance and brutality appear breathtaking in their disregard for Alma's mind and her accomplishments and creativity.

One has to wonder about the impact of this marriage prospect on a young woman, age appropriately confused about her direction of travel in life and enormously aroused and flattered by the prospect of marrying a man of Mahler's reputation, together with the triumph, both oedipally and circumstantially, of succeeding where other women had failed.

Were these rewards, along with her own unconscious needs, sufficient to anaesthetise Alma against the erasure of self that was to become the price of marriage? One can only speculate as to the palate of Alma's own vulnerability that Mahler was so successfully to recruit when attempting to manage his own.

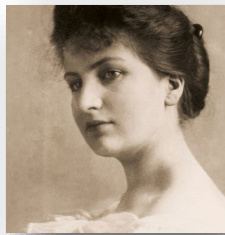
Alma's story, under the guise of devotion, is often an essay in the art of strategic surrender: an abject compliance to Mahler's need to use her to accessorise his own reputation and, as with his conversion from exiled Jew to acceptable Roman Catholic, to acquire and consolidate a particular and approved-of image. In return Alma derived through marriage enrichment of her own narcissism and a reinforcement of her own social status. As Britton has remarked: "Marrying well takes on a special meaning when artistic genius might be acquired, at least in phantasy, simply by co-habitation."

I will cite three sections of Mahler's letter and elaborate on one aspect in particular. I suspect the reader will very naturally reach for formulations of their own about Mahler's pathology when imagining what the 22-year-old Alma may have experienced when opening and reading this letter from her soon-to-be husband: "What do you understand by a personality? Do you consider yourself a personality? Everything in you is as yet unformed, unspoken and undeveloped. Although you're an adorable, infinitely adorable and enchanting young girl with an upright soul and a richly talented, frank and already self-assured person, you're still not a personality."

Men "have constantly flattered you, not because you enriched their lives with your own but because you exchanged big-sounding words with them - because you all intoxicate each other with verbosity and because you're beautiful and attractive to men who, without realising it, instinctively pay homage to charm. Just imagine if you were ugly, my Alma.

During their courtship Alma had written to Mahler referring to her compositions and had quite benignly used the phrase "you and my music". Mahler found the phrase inflammatory and uses his letter to familiarise Alma with his very clear requirements that were to lie behind his famous remark that he "wanted a wife not a colleague":

"The point that is the real heart and core of all my anxieties, fears and misgivings, the real reason why every detail that points to it has acquired such significance; you write 'you and my music' - Forgive me, but this has to be discussed too! In this matter, my Alma, it's absolutely imperative that we understand one another clearly at once, before we see each other again! Unfortunately, I have to begin with you and am indeed, in the strange position of having, in a sense, to set my music against yours ... would it be possible for you, from now on, to regard my music as yours?"



Don't misunderstand me and start imagining that I hold the bourgeois view of the relationship between husband and wife, which regards the latter as a sort of plaything for her husband and, at the same time, as his housekeeper ... but one thing is certain and that is that you must become 'what I need' if we are to be happy together. Would it mean the destruction of your existence if you were to give up your music entirely in order to possess and also to be mine instead? You, however, have only one profession from now on: to make me happy. You must give yourself to me unconditionally, shape your future life, in every detail, entirely in accordance with my needs and desire nothing in return save my love"

Understandably Alma was enormously resentful about the tyrannical tone and content of Mahler's letter but, significantly, not enough to use her late adolescent resentment to think with and protest.

Mahler had made it abundantly clear that her refusal to comply would see her forfeit any future with him.



In Search of Mahler's London

PENNY YOUNG *looks for Mahler in the streets of London but finds him to be elusive*

It's said, rightly or wrongly, that the Chinese character for "crisis" is the same as that for "opportunity". The rail strike on the Saturday having scuppered my original plan to travel down then to attend Sunday's lecture meant that I came down a day earlier which gave me an opportunity for my own mini-tour of Mahler's London.

A stone's throw away from Euston Road, with its brash modern architecture on an inhuman scale, lies institutional Victorian Gothic rubbing shoulders with genteel Georgian town houses in nearby Gower Street. Bloomsbury is the kind of place you could fall in love with, an architectural feast for the eye, affluent, dripping with history and culture. It's the London familiar from innumerable Hollywood movies, the London of Mary Poppins (and Saving Mr Banks), Sherlock Holmes, Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle.



Opening the curtains of my hotel room on Saturday morning I was greeted by a wonderful sight; Ridgmount Gardens, a fine example of a Victorian mansion bloc but what was that blue plaque on one of the flats? A brief investigation revealed that it was dedicated to one "Robert Nesta Marley, Rastafarian icon, singer and lyricist" who lived there in 1972. Bob Marley is a name surely more associated with the sunny Caribbean than damp London in November. Sadly, no plaque exists commemorating Mahler's visit to London; yet!

On the opposite side of Gower Street, the jaw-droppingly vast Art Deco Senate House, the inspiration for George Orwell's Ministry of Truth, dominates the skyline of an otherwise bleak Torrington Square adjacent to Birkbeck College. The square's central garden is long gone and, again, nothing remains of the house Mahler stayed in, with only a handful of similar Georgian houses on the same side of the square. However, it seems quite possible to me that Mahler sat in nearby Gordon Square in summer when the park would have been at its most beautiful, throwing crumbs to the pigeons and watching well-fed squirrels scamper up the pollarded limes. Writer Rabindranath Tagore and the British-Indian agent Noor Imrat Khan are both commemorated with monuments in this garden.

Since architect and lecturer Keith Clarke made his original video of Mahler's London in 2009, Alfred Place has been pedestrianised and is only really recognisable from the unusually-shaped windows of the furniture shop seen in the DVD. Sadly, no trace remains of the house Mahler stayed in. We know where it was because he put the address on some of his letters.

Unfortunately, there wasn't time for me to visit Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatre where Mahler conducted although I did manage a trip to the grave of his daughter Anna Mahler in Highgate Cemetery. However, that's another story!



Fast forward to the following morning, the 27th November 2022, at the Lancaster Hall Hotel where Keith Clarke, ably assisted by actor Richard Burnip, revisited his 2009 lecture and DVD to mark the 130th Anniversary year of Mahler's one and only visit to London. This updated version, illustrated with pictures and maps, goes into more detail about Mahler's singers and the scene is set with background information from Richard about famous actors and actresses of that era.

Keith added an architectural dimension with observations on the design and construction of St. Paul's cathedral which Mahler must surely have seen, as well as Tower Bridge which was then under construction.



So what had the ocean got to do with it? As Mahler himself said: "(London) is comparable to what one feels upon seeing the ocean for the first time. The spectacle is so imposing that suddenly one understands what has happened to humanity." I find this statement ambiguous. What exactly did Mahler mean? Was he overwhelmed by the city's awesome vastness, its variety, its mystery? (I suspect I'm not alone in being none the wiser about what had happened to humanity!)

Although it will have changed since Mahler's time, the view from the Golden Jubilee Footbridge down the Thames toward Tower Bridge is indeed imposing.

In preparation for his trip to London, Mahler had taken English lessons. His letter in English to Arnold Berliner, a friend of his in Hamburg, as quoted by Keith, never fails to produce a smile: "I shall only give you the address of my residence because I hope to hear by you upon your life and other circumstances in Hamburg. I myself am too tired and excited and not able to write a letter only that I found the circumstances of orchestra here bader than thought and the cast better than hoped." Mahler's command of English, however rudimentary, perhaps on a par with my German, would doubtless have been useful during his latter years in New York, probably enabling him to find his way around the subway and order a Budweiser, a pizza, maybe a pastrami on rye. It seems we shall have to leave such speculation at least until some brave soul produces the definitive version of "Mahler's New York"!

Review

*Mahler: Symphony 9, LPO/
Jurowski, RFH 3/12/2022*

This was rather strange. I don't mean the music, in essence, but the way the occasion settled itself darkly over my awareness of what was to be, for me, a fateful night. As my old school friend Ken Ward and I climbed up to our RFH balcony seats, I had already told him of a family emergency which had almost prevented my attendance; for the day before, my loving stepdaughter had collapsed at work and was now fighting for her life in hospital. The family, bless them, told me to go to the South Bank as planned. There was nothing useful I could do otherwise.

Ken offered me a nervous smile. "Perhaps this is not the best choice of music for you, in the circumstances," he suggested cautiously, or words to that effect. I had to concede his point. What might have been worse? Shostakovich 8? *Tod und Verklarung*? I shrugged and tried to put the irony out of my mind. The music, perhaps, would calm my anxiety.

Mahler's 9th, I believe, is not absolutely about the darkness of death. In 1909, when most of the Symphony was composed, Mahler was aware of his death's relentless approach but probably not physically or spiritually overwhelmed by its imminence. Within this masterpiece and beyond, there was much work still to be done. At the final *Adagio*'s close, I feel we are guided to that other-worldly silence by a man who has found a way to embrace the idea of death in calm resignation. In this valedictory moment of rest, there is something unutterably beautiful.

I knew nothing of Vladimir Jurowski's prowess with Mahler, I admit. Having heard him in other areas, I suspected him of a degree of bombast which in that night's Symphony might obliterate the textures; but I need not have worried.

He and the LPO's 112 players in immaculate form were disciplined and glorious. The subtlety and nuances of Mahler's enormous score were brilliantly delivered by an orchestra playing with quite remarkable articulation, often darkly chromatic, always displaying flawless ensemble.

The First Movement, I confess, I found hard to assimilate but that was not Jurowski's fault; already I was struggling with my personal apprehensions and they, inevitably, threatened to cloud my concentration. I had switched my phone off, of course, and could not know, as the music began, that my daughter was just then passing away. I doubt I will ever listen to Mahler's 9th without foreboding in the future.



Interestingly, Jurowski had placed his instrumentalists in unfamiliar on-stage locations which, to my knowledge, represented his own wishes rather than the composer's.

We had double timpani (not regularly a Mahler 9th feature) and much of the string section was effectively reversed, with double basses in tight formation back left and violins and cellos repositioned. It worked, for sure, delivering a richly harmonious string sound throughout.

At the end of the opening *Andante*, Jurowski put down his baton and took a short break, sitting on a chair in front of the podium. This was unusual but I rather liked it. I could almost have imagined him producing a Costa coffee and a Snackpot, relaxing in a mood of 'so far, so good' contentment. After all, there was still a long way to go.

Sometimes, I fear, there is a tendency when writing a music review to over-analyse and embark upon a feverish search for some perhaps miniscule element of the total performance that displeased or disappointed. On this occasion, rather to my relief, it came to me instinctively that such small-minded punctiliousness was wholly redundant; what we were given was a quite magnificent Mahler 9th, brave, heartfelt and deeply committed. Within the framework of the whole structure, there were, too, some splendid individual displays: golden sonority from the principal horn; lyrical fluidity from the woodwind, the flutes in particular; and some immensely powerful timpani. How well all this had surely been rehearsed.

The power of that final great *Adagio* lies not merely, superficially, within its hymn-like structure but in its over-arching symbolism, a metaphor for Mahler's - and our - pathway towards death. The beauty of the journey is that the approaching end comes to us not as a dark and dreadful chasm but as a warm and peaceful repose at the close of all our days. Confounding any ill-judged theories I may have had about Jurowski's heaviness of hand, his oh-so-sensitive winding down of those last bars was profoundly affecting, as he leaned over the strings with outstretched hands, asking for hush hush hush, until there was nothing more to convey but an electrifying silence.

Then he stood with one arm raised over the orchestra, suspending sound and animation, for what seemed a long time. The audience, bless them all, respected his message and nobody moved, understanding that this was a moment for waiting with bated breath. Nearly a minute later, the applause came, the cheers too, and once again the hall was filled with a different kind of music.

As Mahler's journey ended, so, almost simultaneously, my step-daughter's life slipped away.

I received the confirmation on the train going home. What to make of these converging events, these moments of mortality? Perhaps not so very much. I settled into my Thameslink seat, shed a tear, and remembered the wonderful music. It said all there was to say. If it was fateful, it could also have been an epitaph. - **Craig Brown.**

The Universal Mahlerian Message

GARY BALDWIN *argues for Mahler's equivalence with Beethoven*

As we all know, Mahler said "My time will come." He knew instinctively that his music was on a far higher level than most of society at his time could understand and assimilate. He made no excuses for it, and in fact he would often relish this reality in his own superiority regarding his art. As he continued on his compositional journey, he not only stretched the musical geography which he was working on but would often admit to his closest friends that what he had created was beyond his own complete understanding, as sometimes much of his creative genius flowed sometimes out of his control. What he would start was never perceived by him as having an ending, as only he would know when it was completed. Perhaps, though, he was not trying to teach us at all. Perhaps he only wanted to show us the world as a reflection through his music.

What is this struggle inherent in the Mahlerian style? The death marches, the macabre, the sensual love, the reaching beyond the earthly realms into the heavens, the long personal goodbyes, the farewells to life, the blunt sounds of forces out of control, the exuberance of life, the seemingly endless need to make the journey so difficult and long, pushing the limits to the point of exhaustion for both the performer and the audience?

Why indeed, does he ask so much from us? Why do we hang around to find out? Why don't we just go home and listen to our beloved Mozart?

There always exists in Mahler's work that point at which he is trying to tell us something important. It has been described and labelled by musicologists, historians and psychologists but without consensus. The listener, as Mahler would have it, approaches his work with diverse backgrounds, education and life experiences; but at some point, there is an emotional connection that lifts the listener above the normal realms of musical experience. If this does not happen, then the individual will never understand or accept what the composer has to offer. There are individuals who will say: "No, Mr. Mahler. You ask too much of me and I am not going to spend any more of my time listening to your messages!"

"But we in the 21st Century have seen great calamities and colossal human sacrifices beyond our imagination, leading to a loss of self, so now, according to his grand-daughter Marina, is the time for Mahler. We need him more than ever to shield us from our worst selves, for Mahler supplies the hope that only great humanitarian art can provide. Stockhausen made it clear that if an 'alien civilization' wanted to know what the human race was about on the planet earth, they would only need to listen to Mahler!"

We now live in an age where we can surround ourselves with recordings from all around the world with great artists, orchestras and conductors. One must first somehow discover Mahler before being interested in investigating his music further. For those of us who consider ourselves true Mahlerians there is no substitute for live performances. It is the only practical vehicle for listening to the great Master. There are significant roadblocks to achieving this.

First, there is finance: most of Mahler's Symphonies require an augmented orchestra, simply because he composed the works with significant additions to the standard orchestra. The works cannot be performed adequately or artistically correctly without them.

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**THE GUSTAV
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Financial considerations come into play when planning to perform one of Mahler's works. During Mahler's time he had the discretion of rehearsing his orchestra as much as was needed. He was not saddled with union contracts. Because his works were new, avant-garde, and extremely difficult to perform, he needed the extra time for rehearsal. Mahler always made it clear that performances of 'new' works must be at their absolute best if the audience was ever going to find them approachable and meaningful.

Secondly, not all orchestras possess the musicians that can traverse the difficulties of the score. Conducting a Mahler work takes a considerable amount of study and preparation, if not also experience, which is very time-consuming.

Thirdly, there is a geographical prejudice for performing Mahler. Only in Metropolitan areas where a significant arts environment exists will you have the type of orchestra you need to perform Mahler. Much of the globe simply does not have access to these resources. I am aware of a Mahler 9th performance in Costa Rica and, in this case, I know that the conductor budgeted for rehearsing the work for two weeks. This is rare indeed! For myself, I know that it has taken me several years to hear live performances of all of the Mahler symphonies and I have heard the 7th only three times. This creates a significant dilemma in the need to spread the news of the Mahlerian aesthetic and what he has to offer for our own humanity.

Cultural ties in the United States have been transferred from the European arena, and are therefore automatically devalued by the American populace. That does not necessarily hold true with nations like Italy from where so much of our great art stems, and which takes seriously its own art because it is an 'everyday' experience for its people.

Let us return to Mahler's music to discuss what kinds of musical experiences he asks us to interpret as a compendium of our own life experiences.

There is Death! Mahler faced death during his lifetime almost perpetually. As a child his living room was constantly inhabited by coffins filled with siblings. The military barracks in Jihlava was a constant reminder of the death associated with war. His own health was the playground of the macabre as he realised that he had less and less time to compose.

His student days were plagued with classmates who were either institutionalised or who committed suicide, and as a father he was of course devastated by the death of his daughter from scarlet fever! In his music we are bombarded continually by the 'death march', the macabre, the violence and terror of war both on a grand and an individual scale. The intensity of clashing forces repeatedly fills his compositions. He does not make it easy for us to listen; in fact he goes out of his way to put it 'in our faces'.

There are Disruptions! As individuals we move through our days having made plans. There is a certain flow to our lives that we have come to expect. And then, without warning, there comes a disruption in that flow. Sometimes the disruption is small and can be remedied through small adjustments. Sometimes the disruptions are much more major, which may affect the course of an entire day or week. We learn to live with them and adjust our path. Sometimes the disruption can be life-threatening, and we wonder if we are going to be able to find our way back to some solid ground! This is the Mahlerian aesthetic and musical style. The disruption in the perceived musical flow of the composition is deliberately disrupted by musical elements that seem foreign and out of place to the current context or the musical drama.

Mahler might insert within a tragic death march a moment of frivolity. In a peaceful interlude of seamless melodic bliss he will suddenly bring down a harsh clashing orchestral scream! Mahler has not intentionally decided to do this in advance. The vacillation of his genius in composing steers him in these bold abrupt changes. He challenges us as listeners to keep up with him. If you have not listened to much Mahler before, these disruptions can be most distressing and anxiety-producing. Mahler would respond by saying "Good. I want to challenge your expectations."

There is TENSION! From the very first note of a Mahler Symphony the tension progresses throughout, and does not abate until the work is over. This is a matter of self-expression for Mahler the man. This is who he was! A very tense and pensive and intensive human being. The very fibre of his being was held together by the strands of tension in his body and brain.

(TO BE CONCLUDED
IN THE NEXT EDITION)