

Mahler, Politicized:

Musical Diplomacy and Internationalism in the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler Festival

Justin T. Gregg

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Abstract

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The 1920 Amsterdam Mahler Festival (the Mahler-Feest) was cast simultaneously as a celebration of Gustav Mahler's life and works around a decade after his death, a jubilee honoring Willem Mengelberg on his twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and a grandiose return to public concert life following the First World War. In this dissertation, I argue that the festival's organizing committee had yet another lofty goal: to turn this musical event into an unofficial diplomatic gathering, bringing artistic representatives together from across the Western world under the shared belief that the festival—and specifically the music of Gustav Mahler—would pave the way toward a more unified Europe after the turbulent years of the 1910s.

Throughout this project, I analyze various elements of the Mahler-Feest through both musicological and political-historical frameworks, showing that every aspect of the festival was carefully designed to convey a spirit of internationalism and universality to those in attendance. Among these elements were the assembly of prominent guests from around the Western world, the performance of chamber music written by composers from various nations alongside the central program of Mahler's works, the signing of a Manifesto of Foreign Guests promoting similarly politicized festivals in the future, and the establishment of a global Mahler Union that

was to be headquartered in Amsterdam. I further demonstrate that the internationalistic aspects of the event also promoted an underlying nationalistic ideology, with the festival serving to support the diplomatic goals of the Dutch state, which sought to posit itself as a neutral site for dialogue and mediation among nations during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Among the central figures in this dissertation is Rudolf Mengelberg—the Concertgebouw’s program annotator and a distant cousin of Willem—who, through his expansive program book written for the festival, casts Mahler as the composer whose music best matched the political framing of the event. To further analyze the Mahler-Feest, I compare this Mengelberg’s characterizations of Mahler with the viewpoints and beliefs that the composer expressed during his own lifetime, showing that Mengelberg took advantage of historical ambiguities to promote his politicized interpretations of Mahler without directly contradicting the documentary evidence available at the time. At the end of the dissertation, I assess the impact that the perspectives advanced at the festival have had (and continue to have) on the broader realm of Mahler scholarship across the past century, and I briefly examine the evolution of the Mahler-centric festival from 1920 through the present day.

Methodologically, this study uses archival evidence to bring together lines of inquiry spanning the fields of musicology, political history, anthropology, and the emerging discipline of festival studies.

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For my parents

Introduction: The 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest

For a two-week period in May of 1920, one of the storied tram lines in the city of Amsterdam changed its route. Rather than traveling to the local stadium, these trams instead brought riders toward the “Mahler-Feest, Concertgebouw,” flying small pennants with the colors of the Dutch flag along the way.¹ After more than a year of planning, the Concertgebouw Orchestra welcomed audiences from near and far for an extravagant music festival that had three clearly publicized purposes: to celebrate the life and works of Gustav Mahler, to honor Willem Mengelberg on his twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the ensemble, and to mark a grandiose return to public concert life after the First World War. For the festival’s organizing committee, however, the stakes were even higher than this trio of goals would convey. Beyond serving these artistic and cultural purposes, the event was also designed to have a political and even diplomatic function. As I show throughout this dissertation, the organizing committee took great care to ensure that every aspect of the festival—both musical and non-musical—aligned with their conception of a uniquely internationalistic event that they truly believed would help to reunify the Western world after the turbulent years of the 1910s.

From the sixth through the twenty-first of that May, Willem Mengelberg led Amsterdam’s Concertgebouworkest through the complete cycle of Mahler’s symphonies in nine evening concerts, marking the first time in history that these works were performed in succession. In addition to the large works, the orchestra also performed *Das klagende Lied*, the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the *Kindertotenlieder*, and a selection of songs from Mahler’s

¹ See “Het Mahlerfeest,” *De Telegraaf*, May 7, 1920.

Wunderhorn and Rückert collections, with vocal soloists hailing from six different nations. To add to the splendor of the event, five afternoon concerts of contemporary chamber music were offered in the Concertgebouw's Recital Hall [*Kleine Zaal*], featuring works by a diverse array of composers including Reger, Schoenberg, Ravel, Debussy, Nielsen, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Mussorgsky, Alfredo Casella, and Florent Schmitt, among others.² The festival committee further organized a series of daytime lectures given by renowned Mahler experts of the era and complemented these musical events with a series of touristic excursions throughout Amsterdam, including a guided tour of the Rijksmuseum, boat trips through the region's famed waters, and visits to several prominent businesses in the capital city.³

By and large, those who attended the Mahler-Feest were impressed with it, perhaps even to a greater degree by its political implications than by its musical offerings (although, of course, the music generally received high praise as well). In a letter to her father after the first concert of the festival, the American musician Olga Samaroff-Stokowski remarked on the fact that "every few minutes some internationally famous musician would enter the hall... It was quite dramatic when Florent Schmitt, the Parisian composer...and Abendroth, the German conductor from Cologne, met in Mengelberg's dressing room and shook hands for the first time since 1914."⁴ In Samaroff-Stokowski's later memoirs, published in 1939, she wrote that the festival was "the first

² See the Appendix of this dissertation for a complete schedule of events (with full programs) during the festival.

³ For a detailed historical overview, see Johan Giskes and Ada Klarenbeek, "Het Mahler Feest 1920," in *Mahler in Amsterdam: van Mengelberg tot Chailly*, ed. Johan Giskes (Bussum, Netherlands: THOTH, 1995), 42-56; or Rob Overman, "The Mahler Festival of 1920," in *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, ed. Donald Mitchell (Haarlem, Netherlands: TEMA Uitgevers, 1995), 1.57-72.

⁴ Reproduced in Olga Samaroff-Stokowski, *An American Musician's Story* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1939), 166. Later, in the 1930s, Schmitt would go on to show sympathy for the ideas of the Nazi party, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he would have been open to shaking hands with Abendroth here, even if Samaroff-Stokowski found it to be a momentous occasion in 1920.

important international musical event after the war [and] it also deserved to be called, at least in a musical sense, ‘The Peace Conference of Amsterdam,’” using a label that had appeared in a newspaper article covering the event.⁵ Egon Wellesz, the Austrian musicologist, wrote a letter of thanks to Willem Mengelberg after the festival, expressing that “in these difficult times, you have gifted me several weeks that have wiped away all the injustice of the past and give courage for new work.”⁶ On a less political note, another attendee—who had traveled all the way from the Dutch East Indies—similarly wrote a letter to Mengelberg at the conclusion of the festival in which he asserted that the event “was a revelation for me, and this Mahler-Feest is, to me, unforgettable—I can now return back to the Indies [*Indië*] so happy and strengthened.”⁷ These are only several of many such letters written in the early summer of 1920.

The festival also received extensive coverage in newspapers and periodicals across the Western world both before and after it took place, spreading awareness of the event and its significance to a large readership. *Das Tagebuch* in Berlin, for example, printed an article on the festival that opened by stating that “a very strange dream became reality; utopia came down to earth, on Dutch soil”; the author (Rudolf Kastner) went on to compare the festival with the 1919 signing of the Treaty of Versailles.⁸ Across the continent, audiences in Rome read that the festival brought about “a supreme form of universal reconciliation and a true spiritual ‘peace’”

⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶ “Sie haben mir in dieser schweren Zeit einige Wochen geschenkt, die all die Unbill der Vergangenheit weggewischt haben und Mut zu neuer Arbeit geben.“ Letter from Egon Wellesz to Willem Mengelberg, June 1, 1920, collection 3184-01, box 423, Archief van Willem Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁷ “Het was voor mij een openbaring en dit Mahler-Feest is voor mij onvergetelijk—ik ga nu zoo gelukkig en gesterkt naar Indië terug.” Letter from E. Schurmann Van Den Bos to Willem Mengelberg, late May 1920, collection 3184-01, box 423, Archief van Willem Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁸ “Ein ganz seltsamer Traum wurde Wirklichkeit, Utopia nach Erden verlegt auf holländische Erde.” Rudolf Kastner, “Mahlerfest in Amsterdam,” *Das Tagebuch* 1 (1920): 703-706. See Ch. 2 of this dissertation for more.

after the war.⁹ On the other side of the Atlantic, the *New York Times* printed an article explaining that “Amsterdam has been living in a fever of musical excitement since the commencement of the Mahler festival,” going on to list some of the celebrities in attendance, including the Prince of the Netherlands.¹⁰ As with the first-hand accounts discussed in the preceding paragraph, these three journalistic examples hardly scratch the surface in terms of the sheer number of articles published internationally on the festival in the spring and early summer of 1920.

Like any event of its scale, the Mahler-Fest was complex and multi-faceted. Beyond serving as a grand commemoration of the life and works of Gustav Mahler, it arose through the combination of interests of a conductor (Willem Mengelberg), a scholar (Rudolf Mengelberg), and a performance institution (the Amsterdam Concertgebouw), as well as factors relating to the Dutch political tradition and the global societal effects of World War I. My goal, throughout this dissertation, is not to simplify this complex web of interrelations, but rather to approach and examine the festival as an object worthy of study in itself, analyzing its musical and non-musical aspects to come to a better understanding of its position in the history of music, the history of the Netherlands, and the history of Western society more broadly.

The organizing committee’s decision to perform the complete works of Gustav Mahler as the centerpiece of a music festival that they hoped would restore unity after the war may initially seem to have been an unusual choice. After all, Mahler was a composer from the Germanic

⁹ “...si sia potuto raggiungere una forma suprema di riconciliazione universale e di vera ‘pace’ spirituale.” Alfredo Casella, article in *Il Tempo*, reprinted in *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. C. Rudolf Mengelberg (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1920), 64.

¹⁰ “Throngs Hear Symphonies: Americans attend Mahler Festival in Amsterdam,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 1920.

world whose music was not particularly well received during his lifetime, and his Jewish heritage had made him a target of antisemitic attacks that continued even after his death. To address the question of “why Mahler” for festival attendees, Rudolf Mengelberg—the Concertgebouw’s program annotator and a distant cousin of Willem—wrote an extensive program book for the occasion, in which he casts Mahler as “the symphonist of our century—of this developing, emerging time,” and explains why such a label was not applicable to a host of other contemporary composers ranging from Reger to Debussy.¹¹ He argues that Mahler’s works truly embody a musical sense of democracy—and that by experiencing these works together, the audience would come to a greater understanding of the ways that humanity should proceed from the divisions wrought by the war, concluding with the statement that “the Mahler-Feest will unite us.”¹² While Mengelberg shares a number of ideas with other scholars writing on Mahler around this time, his explicitly political interpretations of Mahler’s life and music go beyond that seen in the contemporary literature, providing a perspective on the composer well outside of the norm.

In assessing the Mahler-Feest more broadly, it is clear that the festival itself—and not just the music at its core—was imagined and designed with the political sphere in mind. After being accused of profiting from the war by selling supplies to both sides, the Netherlands found itself in a relatively precarious position at the end of the 1910s. The nation had long prided itself on its neutrality in diplomatic affairs, but also sought to play a significant role on the world stage, which would require a sort of national rebranding after its controversial wartime position. Specifically, a number of Dutch political theorists during this time felt that their country should

¹¹ “Mahler is de symphonicus van onze eeuw, van den komenden, wordenden tijd.” C. Rudolf Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest: 6-18 Mei 1920* (Amsterdam, 1920), 48. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for further discussion. Here, and throughout this project, antiquated Dutch spellings and case endings are preserved as in the original sources.

¹² “Zoo zal ons het Mahler-Feest vereenigen.” *Ibid.*, 55.

serve as a mediator among nations—as a place where diverse groups of people could come together to address common the problems and objectives of humanity, inspired largely by the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the opening of the Peace Palace (also in The Hague) in 1913.¹³ While the Mahler-Feest was promoted primarily as a musical event rather than a political one, it was carried out in a variety of ways that would maximize its diplomatic potential in light of these contemporaneous ideas.

From the earliest planning in the summer of 1919, the festival was conceived as an international gathering of artists and intellectuals from across Europe and North America. The event may have been rooted in the cultural sphere of Amsterdam, but the committee went to great lengths to ensure that its list of attendees would include notable figures from a variety of nations. Along with spending enormous sums of money to provide lodging and local transportation for these guests, the festival committee also arranged their visas for entry into the Netherlands and provided first-class train transportation from the Dutch border into the city. With these incentives, it is no surprise that the guest list was filled with many of the most notable musical figures of the time; in addition to Alma Mahler, Justine Rosé-Mahler, and Arnold Schoenberg, the list of attendees also included Carl Nielsen, Alfredo Casella, Nadia Boulanger, and Otto Klemperer, among many others.¹⁴

By the end of the festival, two further initiatives arose in relation to the event's diplomatic orientation: the creation of a global *Mahler-Bond* [Mahler Union], and the signing of

¹³ See, for example, Cornelis van Vollenhoven, “*Roeping van Holland* [Holland's Calling].” *De Gids* 74, no. 4 (1910): 185-204. This mentality, which originated in Dutch political thought prior to the war, gained increasing traction in the late 1910s and early 1920s; I discuss this further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁴ Perhaps the most notable absence was that of Bruno Walter, likely due to interpersonal disagreements with Willem Mengelberg. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for a more in-depth discussion of this.

an international manifesto promoting the use of music as a unifying political tool. The former, which would be led by Willem Mengelberg and Arnold Schoenberg, was to be headquartered in Amsterdam with subsidiary chapters in all interested nations and was tasked with promoting Mahler's music throughout the world. The latter (the manifesto) was signed by representatives of nine countries, who expressed their hope "that a large, international music festival or congress could be held as soon as possible, at a suitable, hospitable, and neutral location," in which "all nations would have to be represented."¹⁵ For the organizers of the Mahler-Feest, Amsterdam would have been the obvious choice for such a "neutral location" on an ongoing basis; after all, it was due to this city's success in hosting the Mahler festival that the manifesto arose. Although neither of these initiatives got particularly far off the ground, they nonetheless remain important aspects of this festival and of the ideologies held by those who planned and attended it.¹⁶

With all of this in mind, it becomes clear that the 1920 Mahler-Feest was much more than an isolated occurrence in the history of music. The framing of the festival allowed the event to replicate a coming-together of nations after a turbulent historical epoch—in the ostensibly neutral nation of the Netherlands—and allowed its attendees to experience a type of soft power that one might refer to as "artistic diplomacy." Anne-Isabelle Richard has demonstrated that during the interwar period in the Netherlands, participation in the realm of international relations was not restricted to career diplomats, but rather was open to "a much broader foreign policy elite of businesspeople, intellectuals, journalists and the like."¹⁷ As I argue throughout this

¹⁵ The English-language manifesto is reproduced in full in *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. C. Rudolf Mengelberg (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1920), 71.

¹⁶ See Ch. 2 of this dissertation for a detailed discussion of these initiatives.

¹⁷ Anne-Isabelle Richard, "Between the League of Nations and Europe: Multiple Internationalisms and Interwar Dutch Civil Society," in *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands*, ed. Ruud van Dijk, Samuël Kruizinga, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, and Rimko van der Maar (London: Routledge, 2018), 97-98.

dissertation, the organizers of the Mahler-Feest became an integral part of this “foreign policy elite,” constructing the festival in a way that would honor both Mahler and Mengelberg while also shaping the global perception of the Netherlands and allowing the nation to serve in the role that would best promote its own political interests.

While the 1920 festival was unique to the socio-political circumstances of its time and place, the broader phenomenon of the Mahler-centric festival has persisted throughout the Western world over the past century. The Concertgebouw in particular has sought to commemorate the original festival itself—in addition to honoring Mahler, Mengelberg, and the orchestra—with a 1995 festival celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the initial festival, and a planned festival in 2020 to mark the centenary of the original event. When this latter festival was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it overlapped almost exactly with another similar festival planned by the Gewandhausorchester in Leipzig; both of these 2021 events were later cancelled due to the continued effects of the pandemic. As of this writing, the Concertgebouw has announced concrete plans for a festival in May of 2025 to make up for the earlier pandemic-related cancellations. While the aforementioned festivals have sought to recreate—and even expand—the internationalistic orientation of the 1920 event, drawing on a global list of guest orchestras connected to Mahler’s career in some way, multiple smaller-scale festivals are also regularly organized to celebrate various aspects of the composer’s life and works, each with varying degrees of connectedness to the composer himself. Thus, in a typical year, one might find Mahler festivals from Toblach (Dobbiaco), Italy, to Boulder, Colorado. The persistence and regularity of such Mahler festivals serve as a testament to the continued desire for such events in today’s world and provide further impetus for the study of this phenomenon.

Mahler in Amsterdam

During his lifetime, Gustav Mahler made four trips to the Netherlands, developing a close friendship with Willem Mengelberg (and several others in his artistic circle) as well as a strong professional bond with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and a great sense of admiration for its audiences, which was generally reciprocated in the high esteem that the Dutch public showed for him both as a composer and as a conductor. Historical details on Mahler's visits to the Netherlands can be found in a number of existing sources, but I will provide an overview of his trips in the following paragraphs to better contextualize this project.¹⁸

Mahler first traveled to Amsterdam in October of 1903 to conduct a performance of his Third Symphony with the Concertgebouworkest. He was initially unsure about the culture of this foreign land, but quickly became convinced of its merits after hearing the orchestra rehearse, exploring the city and some of the surrounding areas, and examining the paintings held in the Rijksmuseum. He stayed in the home of Willem and Tilly Mengelberg, who would go on to become his permanent hosts in the city (despite Mahler's persistent desires to stay on his own in a hotel), and who introduced him to many of Amsterdam's musical and intellectual leaders during his visits; among these was Alphons Diepenbrock, a composer and writer who would become another of Mahler's closest Dutch friends. The response to Mahler's Third Symphony was almost universally positive from both audiences and critics in the Netherlands. Though his First Symphony (which he directed the week thereafter) received a somewhat cooler reception, Mahler viewed the trip as a great success overall, writing to Mengelberg upon his return to

¹⁸ See, for example, Pauline Micheels, "Gustav Mahler in Amsterdam (1903-1909)," in *Mahler in Amsterdam: van Mengelberg tot Chailly*, 24-36; Eveline Nikkels, "Mahler in Holland," in *The Mahler Companion*, revised edition, ed. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 326-337; and the relevant sections of the Mahler biographies by Henry-Louis de La Grange. I also return to this topic in a bit more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Vienna that “I feel that Amsterdam has become a second homeland to me, thanks to your friendly care and deep artistic understanding.”¹⁹

Mahler returned to Amsterdam almost exactly one year later, in October 1904, to conduct his Second and Fourth Symphonies. The performance of the Fourth (on October 23) was especially notable because the concert’s program included *two* full iterations of the symphony—both before and after the intermission—directed by Mahler himself.²⁰ Despite the inherent risk of this program, it was another of Mahler’s great successes on Dutch soil; he wrote to Alma the following day that it had been “an extraordinary concert! ... Reactions were even more enthusiastic the second time around.”²¹ As before, reception among the public and in the Dutch press was largely positive (with a few dissenting voices), though the Second Symphony was not nearly as well received as the Fourth. Mahler spent more time with the Mengelbergs and Diepenbrock during this trip, exploring areas of the country to which he had not been on his first visit, and again wrote to Mengelberg upon his return to Vienna that Amsterdam had “quickly become a second musical homeland” to him.²²

Mahler next visited the Netherlands around eighteen months later, in March of 1906, at which point he conducted the Fifth Symphony as well as the *Kindertotenlieder* and *Das klagende*

¹⁹ “Ich [habe] das Gefühl, dass mir in Amsterdam eine zweite Heimath erstanden ist, dank Ihrer freundschaftlichen Fürsorge, und Ihres so innigen künstlerischen Verständnis.“ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, ca. Nov. 1, 1903, in *Gustav Mahler und Holland: Briefe*, ed. Eduard Reeser (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1980), 43.

²⁰ Several contemporaneous sources indicate that Mengelberg conducted the second iteration of the Fourth Symphony that evening, but the current scholarly consensus is that Mahler conducted both himself. See, for example, Henry Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler, Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39.

²¹ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Oct. 24, 1904, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, ed. Henry-Louis de La Grange and Günther Weiss, trans. Antony Beaumont (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 187.

²² “...Amsterdam, das mir so schnell eine 2. Musikalische Heimath geworden [ist].” Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, ca. Nov. 1, 1904, in *Gustav Mahler und Holland*, 52.

Lied. The performance of the Fifth and the *Kindertotenlieder* was not particularly successful—with Diepenbrock’s wife Elizabeth noting that some members of the audience left the theater after each song in the latter work—although reactions in the press were generally more positive than those among the live audience.²³ *Das klagende Lied*, on the other hand, was well received by the general public and critics alike, with many being particularly impressed that Mahler had written such a work at the age of 19 years old. Mahler’s next visit to the Netherlands would not take place until the Fall of 1909, more than three years later; during this period, the only performances of his works in Amsterdam were of the First Symphony (under Mengelberg) in January 1907 and the Fourth Symphony (under Diepenbrock) in March 1908.

After a plan for Mahler to perform the Sixth Symphony in the interim years had fallen through, the primary musical purpose of his trip to Amsterdam in 1909 was to perform the Seventh Symphony with the Concertgebouworkest. He conducted the work on two occasions during this visit—on October 3 and 7—and by the end of the second performance, both the audience and critics had been convinced of its merits. Mahler was perhaps even more impressed with the orchestra and with the Netherlands in general than he had been on his previous trips, writing to Alma that “once again, I’m thoroughly enjoying Holland... The orchestra is wonderful and has taken me very much to heart. This time it’s not work but pleasure.”²⁴ A few days later, he wrote to Alma that he had shared part of the Eighth Symphony (on piano) with Mengelberg and Diepenbrock; at the time, the three looked excitedly ahead to what they assumed would be a performance of the full symphony with the Concertgebouworkest under Mahler himself at some

²³ See *Alphons Diepenbrock: Brieven en Documenten*, vol. 5, ed. Eduard Reeser (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1981), 107-108.

²⁴ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Sept. 29, 1909, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 346. Emphasis original.

point, not knowing that his departure that week would mark the last time that he ever spent in Amsterdam.²⁵

During his four visits to the Netherlands—all in the last decade of his life—Mahler achieved greater public success as a composer than he had anywhere else in his career; he felt that Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouworkest were among the greatest interpreters of his music, and he viewed the Dutch concertgoing public as his most receptive audience. In late 1916, the German musicologist Otto Neitzel published an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* recalling an earlier conversation (which he refers to as “our last conversation”) in which Mahler had expressed the following sentiment:

I know a musical city in which I am completely understood—by the director [*Kapellmeister*], by the orchestra, and by the public: Amsterdam. Once I have taken care of myself and my family, I will settle there to dedicate myself solely to the performances of my works under Mengelberg with the Concertgebouworkest... And Amsterdam will then influence Germany: worthy concert halls will gradually arise in which my symphonies will take a leading position.²⁶

Thus, Amsterdam was clearly a special place for Mahler, and he even saw himself potentially living there later in life to better experience the city’s musical offerings. It is particularly notable that he casts Amsterdam as a model for the German world here, further solidifying the idea that the Dutch capital was perhaps the truest “musical homeland” he had known during his lifetime.²⁷

²⁵ Mahler would, however, return briefly to the Netherlands once more—to the city of Leiden—in the summer of 1910 for his infamous consultation with Sigmund Freud, who was vacationing there at the time. For more, see Nikkels, “Mahler and Holland,” 331-332; and Stuart Feder, *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

²⁶ “Ich weiß eine Musikstadt, in der ich restlos begriffen werde, vom Kapellmeister, vom Orchester, vom Publikum: Amsterdam. Habe ich erst mich und die Meinen versorgt, so siedle ich mich dort an, um nur den Aufführungen meiner Werke unter Mengelberg mit dem Concertgebouw-Orchester zu leben... Und Amsterdam wird auf Deutschland zurückwirken; würdige Konzerthäuser werden allmählich entstehen, in denen meine Sinfonien einen führenden Platz einnehmen werden.“ Otto Neitzel, “Gustav Mahler und das Amsterdamer Concertgebouw,” *Kölnische Zeitung*, Dec. 31, 1916. Neitzel does not provide a specific date for this conversation with Mahler.

²⁷ This positioning is further supported by Alma’s reporting of Mahler’s statement that he was “thrice homeless...as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout all the world.” Taking

When the Concertgebouw planned and hosted the 1920 Mahler-Feest, then, the event would have been seen as a logical extension of the tradition that had begun with Mahler's visits not long before.

Overview of the Dissertation

Given the rather complex circumstances surrounding the 1920 Mahler-Feest, as well as the fact that it was the first in a line of similar events that persists even today, it is somewhat surprising that this festival has received little scholarly attention beyond basic retellings of historical narrative. My dissertation aims to fill this void in the literature, treating the festival itself—and not just its music—as an object worthy of detailed analysis and engagement. My primary research questions involve the festival's political dimensions: how did the Mahler-Feest reflect contemporaneous political ideologies and objectives, and what role (if any) did it actually play in the realm of interwar diplomacy? How do the political and diplomatic aspects of this festival compare with those of other similar arts festivals during this time—most specifically the Salzburg Festival? Further, why was Mahler's music in particular selected for this event, and to what extent did the festival organizers promote an atypical (and perhaps biased and/or falsified) interpretation of Mahler's works to further their musical and/or extramusical goals? Looking retrospectively, how has the 1920 Mahler-Feest and its framing of the composer's music impacted and influenced the broader realm of scholarship on Mahler's life and works throughout the past century?

these two sentiments into consideration, it seems that Mahler did not feel at home in the Germanic world to the same extent as he did in the Netherlands, even if he referred to the latter as his "second" musical homeland. See Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), 98.

To address these questions, my study is divided into four chapters, each of which approaches the Mahler-Feest from a different perspective. In Chapter 1, I explore the existing literature on arts festivals and similar events, defining the theoretical frameworks that I will employ throughout the remainder of the project and situating them in the historical contexts of the early twentieth century and interwar period. Broadly, these frameworks revolve around ideas of nationalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, monumentality, and cultural memory in connection with arts festivals, primarily in the European world. I engage largely with recent sociological publications due to a relative lack of musicological literature on festivals, though Alexander Rehding's work on musical monumentality serves as one of my bridges between the two disciplines. I argue—along with Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and others—that all arts festivals carry political messaging of some sort, no matter how far removed from the realm of politics they may initially seem.

At the end of the chapter, I present a brief case study of the Salzburg Festival, which took place for the first time in the summer of 1920, serving as a relatively concurrent point of comparison for the Mahler-Feest. Here, I draw on existing literature on the festival—such as Michael P. Steinberg's seminal monograph, as well as more recent studies by John and Margaret Gold, Lisa Silverman, and others—to provide a comprehensive picture of the inherently political objectives and outcomes of this event. Steinberg's notion of Austrian "nationalist cosmopolitanism" in the Salzburg Festival provides a counterpoint to my own conceptions of post-war internationalism in the Mahler-Feest and serves as a lead-in to the following chapter.

In Chapter 2, I examine the political framing of the 1920 Mahler-Feest, focusing specifically on the ways that the festival intersected with notions of diplomacy and international relations during the early interwar years. Over the course of this chapter, I argue that the festival

itself should be interpreted as an unofficial diplomatic act which sought—at least in part—to promote the goals of the Dutch state on the global stage after the First World War. I begin with a directed exploration of Dutch political culture in the first two decades of the twentieth century, focusing primarily on the nation’s emergence as a center for international politics and mediation. Here, I use contemporaneous sources such as Cornelis von Vollenhoven’s 1913 essay “*Roeping van Holland*” [Holland’s Calling] to provide a window into the emergence of a new mode of Dutch political thought at this time, inspired to a large degree by the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the opening of the Peace Palace in The Hague in 1913. Further, I employ more recent scholarship by Pelle van Dijk, Anne-Isabelle Richard, Geert Somsen, and others to support the assertion that *all* aspects of Dutch society—not just official government channels—were viewed as key contributors to the nation’s diplomatic goals during this period.

With this, I connect four major aspects of the Mahler-Feest’s framing to the political ambitions of the Netherlands during the interwar years. First, I analyze the festival committee’s deliberate meddling in the international press as a parallel to the 1919 formation of the National Bureau for Documentation on the Netherlands, which aimed to ensure that the nation would be portrayed abroad in only the best possible light. Second, I assert that the festival’s dedication to assembling an international audience—as well as a thoroughly international selection of chamber music to accompany the main program—corresponds to the Netherlands’ goal of serving as a neutral meeting place for people of all nations after the war. This assertion is further supported by my third example, which is the signing of the Manifesto of Foreign Guests at the conclusion of the festival. Finally, I show that the establishment of an international ‘Mahler Union’—with Amsterdam as its headquarters, and subsidiary chapters in various nations across the Western

world—relates to the Dutch state’s desire not only to bring together representatives of other nations, but more importantly, to act as a central mediator among them.

In Chapter 3, I examine the 1920 Mahler-Feest through an explicitly musicological lens, focusing primarily on the expansive program book prepared for the event by Rudolf Mengelberg. Here, I argue that Mengelberg’s document promotes a uniquely politicized interpretation of Mahler’s life and works, allowing the festival’s content to be seen as a musical parallel to the event’s diplomatic framing as discussed in the previous chapter. I begin the chapter with an overview of the primary scholarly works on Mahler written in the decade after the composer’s death, in order to better contextualize Mengelberg’s interpretations and arguments; my central sources in this section are the monographs by Paul Stefan (1912), Richard Specht (1913), and Guido Adler (1914). I do not aim to present new research on these publications here; rather, I draw on the texts themselves, as well as on more recent interpretations thereof, to paint a broad picture of the literature on Mahler in the years leading up to the festival.

Following this, I construct an overview of Mengelberg’s relevant viewpoints and beliefs in a section called “Mengelberg’s Mentalities,” using letters, diary entries, and other writings from 1915 through 1920 to provide a framework for approaching his writings on the Mahler-Feest; this section is particularly significant since it shows the degree to which this Mengelberg singlehandedly shaped numerous aspects of the festival. From here, I examine the program book for the Mahler-Feest, beginning with Mengelberg’s essay on Mahler’s historical position and continuing with his detailed notes on the individual symphonies. In my exploration of Mengelberg’s arguments, I focus on his assertion that Mahler’s music embodies the “democratic” spirit of the twentieth century to a greater degree than the works of any of his contemporaries, and on his argument that Mahler’s complete symphonic works were the only

logical choice of repertoire for an interwar music festival seeking to promote values of European unity and internationalism. Although Mengelberg does occasionally engage with the writings of his predecessors and contemporaries, my analysis demonstrates that his overall approach to Mahler's life and works—which I refer to as his “diplomatic” interpretation of Mahler—differs significantly from the existing body of literature discussed above. To conclude, I examine Mengelberg's writings published after the festival—on Mahler and otherwise—showing that many of the ideas he expressed in 1920 remained with him in his later publications, and analyzing his lifelong belief that cultural entities truly could play a functional role in the realm of politics and diplomacy.

In Chapter 4, I return to the figure who lies at the center of this dissertation, but who did not live to participate directly in the events examined in the other chapters: Gustav Mahler. Broadly, I seek to reconsider Mahler's position in relation to the 1920 Mahler-Feest, addressing questions such as these: To what extent did Mahler view his own works through the same lenses promoted by Rudolf Mengelberg and the other festival organizers? How did Mahler's personal relationship with Willem Mengelberg influence the framing of his music during the festival? Over the past century since the festival, to what extent have its interpretations persisted in—and had influence on—the broader fields of Mahler reception and historiography?

To begin the chapter, I look retrospectively at Mahler's letters and other contemporaneous documentation, assessing his own descriptions of his works and his overarching mentalities on various topics in order to compare these with the descriptions found in Mengelberg's program book. Through this analysis, I demonstrate that the vast majority of Mengelberg's analyses of Mahler's life and works actually *can* be traced back to the composer's

own perspectives, even if Mengelberg takes liberties—and makes strategic use of historical ambiguities—to emphasize the specific viewpoints that he sought to advance.

In the second part of this chapter, I conduct an analysis of writings on Mahler and his works since the time of the Mahler-Feest, assessing the degree to which this scholarship has been affected by the event and its portrayal of the composer. I examine a wide scope of literature here, drawing on works from the various eras of Mahler scholarship over the past century, up to and including very recent literature. Here, my analysis shows that although explicit references to the festival largely disappeared from the literature on Mahler after the 1930s, several recent studies (since the turn of the twenty-first century) have demonstrated a renewed interest in the event, with scholars such as Matthew Mugmon arguing that the festival had significant repercussions on Mahler's international reception throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I summarize my study and its primary takeaways; I further suggest the ways in which this project may serve as a model for future scholarship. I argue that my analysis of the 1920 Mahler-Feest—in which I cast the event as an intersection point between a composer, a conductor, a scholar, a performance institution, a national tradition, and a global political shift—has scholarly ramifications well beyond this specific festival and provides a framework for further studies of similarly complex and multifaceted gatherings. Finally, I discuss the persistent entity of the Mahler-centric festival in Western society since 1920 and speculate as to the future position of such events in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Chapter 1: The Arts Festival as Political Entity

From Bayreuth to Burning Man, it is clear that music festivals are a significant element of Western culture and have been so for some time. In spite of the increasing digitalization of almost every aspect of life during the past few decades, music festivals have persisted as key elements in culture building and identity formation, bringing together performers and audience members for shared experiences grounded in a specific time and place. Even during the global COVID-19 pandemic, festivals of music across all genres—as well as festivals of other art forms—found creative solutions to remain operational and even exhilarating as day-to-day life underwent so many significant changes.¹ Simultaneously, recent years have seen great expansion in the academic field of festival studies, with scholars using innovative approaches and methodologies to examine these festivals as objects worth of study in and of themselves. It is in this spirit that I hope, throughout this dissertation, to analyze the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest.

In this preliminary chapter, I explore the theoretical frameworks that I will employ throughout the remainder of the project, developing working definitions for key terms and situating each in the historical context of the early twentieth century and interwar period. I engage with nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism in the first section, largely through writings on history and politics, allowing me to develop an ideology that I refer to as “post-war internationalism,” which will go on to underlie much of my analysis of the 1920 Mahler-Feest. The second section of this chapter revolves explicitly around arts festivals; here, I provide an overview of the burgeoning field of festival studies and assess the ways that arts

¹ For more on this, see *Managing Cultural Festivals: Tradition and Innovation in Europe*, ed. Elisa Salvador and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen (New York: Routledge, 2022).

festivals have been connected to political movements and developments across the past century. Given the focus of my project, I also introduce Joseph Nye's conception of "soft power" here as it relates to the potential diplomatic characteristics of such events. In the third section, I examine notions of monumentality and cultural memory, engaging with interdisciplinary writers such as Alexander Rehding and Rudy Koshar to develop a framework that will allow me to disentangle the complex picture of commemoration in the Mahler-Feest.

In the final section of the chapter, I present a relatively brief case study of the Salzburg Festival, which took place for the first time in the summer of 1920, serving as a logical point of comparison for the Mahler-Feest. Here, I draw on literature such as Michael P. Steinberg's seminal monograph, as well as more recent studies by Lisa Silverman and John and Margaret Gold, to provide a comprehensive picture of the inherently political objectives and outcomes of this event. Steinberg's notion of Austrian "nationalist cosmopolitanism" in relation to the Salzburg Festival provides a counterpoint to my own conceptions of post-war internationalism in the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest and serves as a lead-in to the following chapter. To conclude this chapter, I use the frameworks introduced throughout to argue—along with Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and others—that all arts festivals carry political messaging of some sort, no matter how far removed from the realm of politics they may at first seem.

1.1 Nationalism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism

Among the most essential conceptual frameworks for the purposes of this dissertation is the interplay between ideas of nationalism and those of internationalism in the years surrounding the First World War. For almost a century prior to the war, various forms of nationalism had been gaining strength and influence across Europe and elsewhere; indeed, this very factor is

often pointed to as one of the primary underlying causes of the war. Simultaneously, however, this same spirit of nationalism is also viewed by historians as one of the principal factors involved in the redrawing of Europe's borders after the war, with previously expansive empires being divided into constituent states that more closely resembled the cultural nations of their populations.² The turn of the twentieth century also brought with it a new spirit of *internationalism* among a portion of Europe's political and intellectual elites, with increased global cooperation being seen by many as the path to a more stable and prosperous world order (before, during, and after the war). Thus, the interactions between various nationalisms and internationalisms at this time were not simply an oppositional binary, but instead formed a complex network of overlapping actors and objectives. I do not aim to present new historical research in this section; rather, I work here with existing scholarship to formulate a framework of post-war internationalism that I will employ throughout the remainder of this project.

Nationalism is a term that may at first appear easy to define, yet it has presented a number of issues for recent scholars attempting to do just this. Paul Lawrence, for example, in his *Nationalism: History and Theory*, points to three possible interpretations of this -ism. The first is that nationalism refers to “an abstract ideology that has historically concerned itself with the belief that humanity is divided into nations and considered how they should be defined”; the second interpretation is as “a political doctrine—the belief not only that homogenous, identifiable nations exist, but that they should govern themselves”; and the third refers to “the sentiment felt by many people of belonging to a particular nation on a daily basis.”³ These three

² For example, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into separate states based largely on the cultural heritages of their populations. See Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 11.

³ Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (New York: Pearson Education, 2005), 3.

interpretations are relatively similar, on the whole, to the definition presented by John Breuilly in his introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, which is as follows: “the political ideology of nationalism [is] one which claims that there exists a unique nation, that this nation has a special value and therefore right to existence and recognition, and that to secure this right the nation must possess autonomy, often understood as a sovereign nation state.”⁴ Erika Harris, joining in on this discussion, writes that “the basic message of nationalism is that belonging to a nation, its existence and its survival are of supreme importance to its members and the right they share as members of humanity.”⁵ In considering all of these definitions together, then, it is clear that there exists a spectrum of nationalisms, with the mere recognition of a nation’s existence at one end, and active competition with other nations at the other.

Further compounding this problem of meaning is the inherent difficulty of defining the term “nation,” which is not explicitly examined in the above-quoted definitions. Groups of people may share similarities in terms of culture, language, history, geography, ancestry, politics, or any number of other traits, but it is not clear whether any of these alone (or in combination) are sufficient to define a group as a nation. Further, there is no general consensus as to whether a nation should be defined internally, by its own members, or externally, by some sort of non-member entity. The most relevant entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a nation as “a large aggregate of communities and individuals united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory, so as to form a distinct people.

⁴ John Breuilly, “Introduction: Concepts, Approaches, Theories,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁵ Erika Harris, *Nationalism: Theories and Cases* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 5.

Now also: such a people forming a political state.”⁶ This modern-day definition, however, introduces the confounding factor of the political state as a synonymous term. To remedy this, I would instead like to turn to Benedict Anderson’s oft-cited anthropological definition of nation as “an imagined political community”—imagined, as he writes, by those within it.⁷ The relative open-endedness of this definition provides a useful framing for the current project.

Given the focus of this dissertation, I will employ definitions of nation and nationalism that are primarily grounded in terms of culture. This is largely in alignment with Harris’s definition of nation as a group “defining itself as sharing a common culture and history which are less deterministic than descent, and which also possesses or claims to possess ‘its own homeland and the exercise of political rights therein.’”⁸ Cultural nationalism, then, would be the acknowledgement that a unique culture exists (whether related or unrelated to a political state), as well as the promotion of this culture’s survival and influence. For John Hutchinson, movements that can be labeled as cultural nationalist “typically precede or accompany political nationalism and take the form of ethno-historical ‘revivals’ that promote a national language, literature and the arts, educational activities and economic self-help... They do have political effects, but their aim is not so much political as the formation of a moral community.”⁹ He goes on to write that the leaders of such movements “in some contexts view themselves as giving

⁶ *OED Online*, "Nation, n.1," accessed Dec. 14, 2022. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125285>.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso Books, 2016), 6.

⁸ Harris, 13. The internal quote here is from Michael Mann, “Explaining murderous ethnic cleansing: the macro-level,” in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2001), 209.

⁹ John Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

authentic voice to a collective historical consciousness, but in others as *magi* constructing a new nation.”¹⁰

The origins of modern-day cultural nationalism are typically traced back to the eighteenth-century German Romantic thinker Johann Gottfried Herder, who, as Lawrence writes, believed that “the cultural bonds which linked members of a nation into a relational whole were not *things* or artefacts imposed from above but living energies (*Kräfte*) emanating from within, shared meanings and sentiments which in time form a people’s collective soul.”¹¹ Over the nineteenth century—the same era that saw the political unification of nations such as Italy and Germany—the enlightenment idealism evident in such views took on a stronger political bent, with increasing emphasis being placed on a (cultural) nation’s right to self-governance. Thus, notions of cultural nationalism became further intertwined with those of political nationalism, with Harris writing that, “ideas of nationalism reveal strong interdependence between politics and culture, whereby culture is thought to be best safeguarded through self-governance.”¹² It is sentiments like this which are typically identified as driving forces for the start of World War I.

Ideologies of internationalism had simultaneously been on the rise across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, intersecting in sometimes unexpected ways with those of nationalism. As Glenda Sluga writes in her *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, a new form of “objective internationalism” arose around the turn of the twentieth century, offering “an increasingly attractive political conception of modernity and progress” reliant on such distance-

¹⁰ Ibid., 76.

¹¹ Lawrence, 4. Emphasis original.

¹² Harris, 8.

spanning technologies as the telephone, the postal system, and steam-powered transportation.¹³

Sluga traces the origins of the first true international organizations and unions to the late nineteenth century (including such groups as the International Olympic Committee and the International Committee of the Red Cross), providing the impetus for the first Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in France in 1889 as well as the two Hague Conventions in 1899 and 1907, which I discuss extensively in the next chapter of this dissertation. Notably, Sluga argues that such international initiatives often fulfilled ostensibly nationalistic roles in tandem with their outwardly global orientations, writing that:

The Swiss government, for example, was extremely aware of the symbolic capital that could be accrued from the fact that its political capital Berne was the headquarters of many of these new public international unions. Swiss politicians made strategic use of the new internationalism to compensate for what the Swiss federal government lacked in foreign policy initiatives.¹⁴

Such confluences of nationalism and internationalism were far from the exception at this time; indeed, the political optimism of the early twentieth century created a circumstance in which these two -isms mutually reinforced one another, with membership in international organizations serving to strengthen a nation's individual identity, and with nationalistic aims ultimately driving the very business of (many of) these international organizations.

It is important to note that during this time, the term "international" was certainly not equivalent to "global" by any stretch of the imagination. John and Margaret Gold discuss this as follows:

At its broadest level, internationalism was a hegemonic force that privileged certain sets of values and propagated them at events that were nevertheless presented as having a dispassionate global outreach. The organizers of such gatherings devised carefully constructed rules of inclusion and exclusion for dealing with potential participants. By

¹³ Sluga, 12-13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

these means, they ensured as far as possible that only approved participants were attracted and that the *right* sort of internationalism prevailed.¹⁵

The ideologies of colonialism had been quite powerful among the major European powers for at least a century prior to the war, and it is not difficult to imagine the minimal degree to which the desires and welfare of colonized peoples (and other non-Western populations in general) would have been taken into account by so-called “global” organizations at this time.¹⁶ Given the intra-European focus of this project, however, I will only address colonialism hereafter when it relates directly to my analyses.

As with all aspects of life and politics in the Western world, the outbreak of the First World War brought with it significant changes to notions of nationalism and internationalism, both within the political sphere and among a more general population. One of the most significant effects was the rise of a new distaste for destructive nationalism (especially of the German variety), which many at this time believed had become a relic of a bygone era.¹⁷ Sluga points to surveys of the English-speaking public early in the war, with respondents largely believing that “nationalism was ‘no longer expressive of the age,’ and [that] ‘the present sovereignty of states is detrimental,’ even though a federation of the world, of the kind envisioned in the organization of the 1899 Hague conference, tended to be thought of as ‘not yet feasible.’”¹⁸

¹⁵ John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Festival Cities: Culture, Planning and Urban Life* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 67. Emphasis original.

¹⁶ See John Darwin, “Nationalism and Imperialism, c. 1880 – 1940,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, 340-358.

¹⁷ See Lawrence, 59-63.

¹⁸ Sluga, 43.

By the end of the war, however, intellectuals increasingly looked to such forms of internationalism as the path to a more stable world order. Writing in 1918, just as the hostilities were coming to a close, the British scholar Alfred Zimmern argued that:

The problems arising out of the contact of races and nations can never be adjusted either by the wise actions of individuals or by conflict and warfare; they can only be solved by fair and deliberate statesmanship [...] through the recognition by both parties of a higher claim than their own sectional interest—the claim of a common citizenship and the interest of civilization.¹⁹

A few years later, the American scholar Herbert Gibbons demonstrated similar ideas on the global value of internationalism, writing that:

There is no phenomenon more noticeable in the intellectual and political world today than the will to harmony. [...] That it is possible for all the nations of the world to live in harmony is now the accepted starting point of treaty negotiations, of economic schemes, of bankers' contracts. We assume that there can be peace and goodwill.²⁰

While this unbridled hopefulness may certainly look a bit naïve with the benefit of historical hindsight today, it was nevertheless a view espoused by many in the interwar years.

Among those who held such views at this time and who truly had the power to exert influence over world affairs was US President Woodrow Wilson, whose oft-cited “Fourteen Points” speech—delivered in January of 1918, prior to the signing of any armistice in Europe—is one of the clearest declarations of what I will refer to as post-war internationalism. Near the beginning of the speech, Wilson declared that “the day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by,” and from there he proceeded to outline his views on a new world order, stating that:

What we [i.e., the United States] demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples

¹⁹ Alfred Zimmern, *Nationality & Government, with Other Wartime Essays* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1918), 30.

²⁰ Herbert Gibbons, *Nationalism and Internationalism* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1930), x.

of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The programme of the world's peace, therefore, is our programme...²¹

Among Wilson's fourteen points, the most relevant to this particular study is the final one, in which he asserted that, "a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike"; he reinforced this idea in his concluding statement with the declaration that, "we cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end."²² While most of Wilson's fourteen points were never adopted by the European powers, this final point did indeed serve as the basis for the January 1920 inauguration of the League of Nations, which was perhaps the most significant real-world manifestation of the post-war spirit of internationalism.

In any discussion of nationalism and internationalism, it would be remiss not to add one other -ism to the mix: that of cosmopolitanism. This can certainly be a loaded term, and, like nationalism, is not particularly easy to define. In the introduction to the *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, Gerard Delanty writes that "in the broadest sense possible, cosmopolitanism is about the extension of the moral and political horizons of people, societies, organizations and institutions. It implies an attitude of openness as opposed to closure."²³ Stan van Hooff characterizes the term somewhat more strongly, writing that "cosmopolitanism is the

²¹ Woodrow Wilson, "War Aims and Peace Terms" (speech, Washington, DC, Jan. 8, 1918), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-woodrow-wilsons-14-points>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Gerard Delanty, "Introduction" in *The Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, ed. Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2.

view that the moral standing of all peoples and of each individual person around the globe is equal. Individuals should not give moral preference to their compatriots, their co-religionists or fellow members of their demographic identity groups.”²⁴ Almost all modern-day definitions of the term, including these two, seem to have their roots in Thomas Pogge’s 1992 essay on the topic, in which he defines it as follows:

Three elements are shared by all cosmopolitan positions. First, *individualism*: the ultimate units of concern are human beings, or persons—rather than, say, family lines, tribes, ethnic, cultural, or religious communities, nations, or states. The latter may be units of concern only indirectly, in virtue of their individual members or citizens. Second, *universality*: the status of ultimate unit of concern attaches to every living human being equally—not merely to some subset, such as men, aristocrats, Aryans, whites, or Muslims. Third, *generality*: this special status has global force. Persons are ultimate units of concern for everyone—not only for their compatriots, fellow religionists, or such like.²⁵

These ideas are summarized perhaps most succinctly by Lorena Cebolla and Francesco Ghia, who write that “cosmopolitanism is the idea of humanity as a single community or *polis*. Beyond particularities all human beings [...] are part of a community, and have responsibilities, rights and the power to decide on a common future.”²⁶ In essence, cosmopolitan views seek to remove functional differences between individuals, focusing on the universal aspects of humanity rather than on any factors that allow for differentiation or preference.

As Sluga has shown, the term “cosmopolitan” was generally not used in a positive sense during the years around the First World War. This is partially due to the pejorative use of the term to refer to Jews (who were accused of having no proper nation), but the word was also used

²⁴ Stan van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics* (Stocksfield, UK; Acumen, 2009), 4.

²⁵ Thomas W. Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” *Ethics* 103, no. 1 (Oct. 1992): 48-49. Emphasis original.

²⁶ Lorena Cebolla and Francesco Ghia, “Introduction” in *Cosmopolitanism: Between Ideals and Reality*, ed. Lorena Cebolla and Francisco Ghia (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 4.

at this time to represent what was then seen as an outdated, pre-war form of internationalism that sought to erase or minimize the differences between nations. Sluga writes that, “good or, as William McDougall put it [in 1924], ‘true internationalism’ was the complement of nationalism. Bad internationalism was antinationalist and took the specific name of cosmopolitan internationalism.”²⁷ Thus, internationalism without any sort of embedded national focus was considered to be harmful to the goals of those who sought to rectify the world’s ills after the war.

For the purposes of this project, then, I will employ a framework which I refer to as “post-war internationalism.” Like President Wilson and others quoted above, a proponent of post-war internationalism would recognize the importance both of individual nations and of supranational organizations and ties that bind these nations together, whether diplomatically, economically, politically, culturally, or otherwise. Membership in such an international organization would not diminish the distinct identity of a nation, but would rather permit various nations—or even all nations—to have a say in the global affairs that would impact them. Following in line with the interwar notions of cosmopolitanism discussed above, a post-war internationalist would not seek to bring together all of humanity under one global identity; rather, he or she would promote the goals of his or her own nation (or national culture), even while working with representatives of other nations to seek a more prosperous global order and to ensure that all (participating) nations maintain the right to self-determination. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, I believe that this very ideology formed the political basis of the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest.

²⁷ Sluga, 43. See William McDougall, *Ethics and Some Modern World Problems* (New York: Methuen, 1924), xiii.

1.2 Analyzing the Arts Festival

In the past decade or so, the sociocultural entity of the arts festival has garnered increasing attention in the academic world, most notably through the publication of edited collections such as *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (hereafter *FCPS*) in 2011, and *The Festivalization of Culture* (hereafter *FoC*) in 2014. Though the chapters contained in these volumes differ widely in terms of their analytical methods and objects of study, the primary frameworks employed across both collections are cultural identity, cosmopolitanism, and globalization. In addition to interpreting festivals as collective demonstrations of identity, the authors further argue that festivals play an active role in the shaping thereof, particularly as it relates to increasingly globalized identities in recent years. As Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli write in the introduction to *FCPS*:

[W]e study arts festivals as instances of communication and community-building, and we are also particularly interested in the ways in which they foster political opinion formation and political identities... Some festivals are explicitly defined as sites for contestation and democratic debate; almost all carry political messages one way or another. In addition, post-traditional festivals are channels for experiencing and reflecting on internationalism and cosmopolitanism.²⁸

Similarly, the editors of *FoC* write in their introduction that:

[T]he contemporary festival has developed in response to processes of cultural pluralization, mobility and globalization, while also communicating something meaningful about identity, community, locality and belonging... The contemporary festival therefore becomes a potential site for representing, encountering, incorporating and researching aspects of cultural difference.²⁹

²⁸ Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, "Introduction," in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1-2.

²⁹ Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, and Ian Woodward, "Introduction," in *The Festivalization of Culture*, ed. Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, and Ian Woodward (New York: Ashgate, 2014), 1.

Notably, both of these excerpts demonstrate the degree to which scholarship on festivals is moving away from simply studying the *content* of the events (i.e., the music, film, visual artworks, etc., forming the basis of these festivals) and is increasingly focusing on the social, cultural, and/or political ramifications of the events instead.

These two books, like most contemporary scholarship in their field, focus primarily on festivals that have taken place in recent years or on festivals that continue to take place in today's world; *FCPS* uses the term "post-traditional" to refer to such events, while *FoC* simply uses "contemporary" as in the excerpts above. While the authors of *FCPS* never explicitly define "post-traditional," they do seem to define its predecessor, writing that:

In the early days of sociological inquiry, beginning with Durkheim [1912], festivals began to be recognized as instances of 'collective effervescence,' and therefore as channels for expressing and consolidating a sense of community. This was as true of the arts festivals in ancient Athens as of the revolutionary festivals at the time of the French Revolution. Traditional festivals organized in various rural communities across the centuries to mark the change of seasons fulfilled a similar purpose.³⁰

Post-traditional festivals, then, are not intended solely to strengthen one's existing worldview, as these older festivals would have done; rather, they seek to broaden it. Though the 1920 Mahler-Feest occurred almost a century before most of the events analyzed in these collections, a great degree of similarity exists between the international orientation of the Amsterdam festival and that of more 'contemporary' ones; in this sense, it would not seem particularly far-fetched to classify the Mahler Feest among the earliest examples of a 'post-traditional' festival, or at least as an event that demonstrates characteristics of both 'traditional' and 'post-traditional' festivals, as I will do in the following chapters.

³⁰ Giorgi and Sassatelli, 1.

As the title of *FCPS* indicates, arts festivals are typically considered components of what sociologists and others refer to as the cultural public sphere. Jim McGuigan, one of today's leading public-sphere scholars, describes this term (along with the public sphere more broadly) in the following way:

The public sphere is supposed to be the arena of critical dispute, free and open debate of a reasonable kind about issues of interest shared by citizens. It is meant to be a space in which opinions are formed and articulated concerning public interests that should, therefore, be consequential for the political process in a democracy. To paraphrase Lippmann (1922), the public sphere is a dogma of modern liberal democracy... The concept of a *cultural public sphere* refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective—aesthetic and emotional—modes of communication.³¹

Arts festivals, therefore, fit into this model since they provide spaces for dialogue among interested parties prompted through some sort of artistic expression, whether this dialogue is simply about the content of the festival or whether it is about the larger societal ramifications or political underpinnings of the event. While the original Habermasian notion of the public sphere tends to distinguish between publics of different nations (and is thereby problematized by international gatherings or organizations), the addition of the *cultural* descriptor to this term allows for the focus to be shifted away from national publics and onto groups of people organized by factors beyond a shared nationality.³²

There is a relatively large body of contemporary literature that deals explicitly with notions of nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism in arts festivals, much of which

³¹ Jim McGuigan, "The cultural public sphere – a critical measure of public culture?" in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 79 and 83. Emphasis original.

³² See Monica Sassatelli, "Urban festivals and the cultural public sphere: Cosmopolitanism between ethics and aesthetics," in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 12-28.

analyzes the balance that such events aim to strike between a sense of rootedness and a sense of the global. For example, Stanley Waterman aptly describes this phenomenon as follows:

Successful festivals create a powerful but curious sense of place, which is local, as the festival takes place in a locality or region, but which often makes an appeal to a global culture in order to attract both participants and audiences.³³

In their chapter in *FoC*, Jasper Chalcraft, Gerard Delanty, and Monica Sassatelli even go so far as to argue that festivals can serve to completely blur the line between “placedness” and “placelessness,” creating a space that is fully delocalized even though it exists, by necessity, in a specific locality.³⁴ Relatedly, but with a bit of a sharper focus, Jean-Louis Fabiani examines two recurring festivals in France as quasi-diplomatic tools, writing that “in both [the Festival d’Avignon and the Cannes Film Festival], what is at stake is to present the world with an image of France: mostly a self-representation in the case of Avignon (a picture of the cultural republic at its best), and the presentation of France to the entire world in the case of Cannes.”³⁵ This certainly relates to the complex interplay between nationalism and internationalism as discussed above, and I will return to outline a similar relationship between the local and global in the 1920 Mahler-Feest in the next chapter.

Although its scope is a bit different from that of this project, Maurice Roche’s *FCPS* chapter on “mega events” provides another useful framework for my examination of the 1920 Mahler-Feest. In his analysis of such events—which include international Expos, World Fairs,

³³ Stanley Waterman, “Carnivals for élites? The cultural politics of arts festivals,” *Progress in Human Geography* 22, no. 1 (1998): 58.

³⁴ Jasper Chalcraft, Gerard Delanty, and Monica Sassatelli, “Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Art Festivals,” *The Festivalization of Culture*, 113. See also Jasper Chalcraft and Paolo Magaudda, “‘Space is the Place’: The Global Localities of the Sónar and WOMAD Music Festivals,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 173-189.

³⁵ Jean-Louis Fabiani, “Festivals, local and global: Critical interventions and the cultural public sphere,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 96.

Olympic Games, and the like—Roche argues that such gatherings “contribute to the production, dissemination and reproduction of recognizable, trustworthy and potentially enjoyable place identities and to sociocultural space and mobility across Europe,” and that they further “offer normatively valuable and ontologically significant experiences of hospitality, celebratory co-presence and peaceful coexistence in contemporary European culture and society.”³⁶ After examining a few case studies, he concludes that:

Such international mega-events, and the network of national and sub-national festive events that they overarch, can be interpreted as having helped to produce and reproduce European civil space in at least the minimally cosmopolitan sense of providing valuable instances and models of peaceful coexistence and co-presence...

In the modern period, international mega-events at various stages in modernity have offered Europeans visions and experiences of what they deeply needed to know. This was that a non-threatening ‘proto-cosmopolitan’ and ‘minimally cosmopolitan’ European society and culture could be more than an idle wish; that, however transient, it could be a practical and lived reality.³⁷

In line with Fabiani’s arguments about festivals as diplomatic tools, as well as my own notions of internationalism developed above, Roche further asserts that “international Expos are useful elements in the repertoire of techniques for upgrading the international marketing and branding of host cities and nations so as to make them appear attractive both to inward investment and to international tourists and their spending power.”³⁸ While the 1920 Mahler-Feest clearly would not fall into Roche’s category of “international mega-events” based on its size and impact, the basic premises of his arguments nonetheless do indeed lend themselves to my analysis. As I will show further in the next chapter, the Mahler-Feest allowed its participants and attendees—even

³⁶ Maurice Roche, “Festivalization, cosmopolitanism and European culture: On the sociocultural significance of mega-events,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 125.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

just for two weeks—to experience a Europe not dominated by national divisions and strained relations, but by a picture of unity transcending traditional political and geographic boundaries, thereby fulfilling the same societal role of creating a “proto-cosmopolitan” space that Roche ascribes to these mega-events.

The interplay that I have described thus far between the realms of the cultural and the political in large arts festivals (and similar events) is inextricably linked to the notion of “soft power” that was coined by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. a few decades ago, and which has since been explored by many other scholars in various fields. Nye describes this concept as follows:

Soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them.

Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others... The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority. If I can get you to want to do what I want, then I do not have to force you to do what you do *not* want.³⁹

Soft power is naturally contrasted with “hard” power, or the use of force or intimidation to affect the decisions of others through military or economic might. Thus, when an arts festival is used to promote the interests of a nation or other group on the world stage, as described above, it is an example of soft power in which the demonstration of cultural strength is used to attain political or diplomatic goals. This is the case when such a festival is sponsored or organized either by an official state government or by a non-government entity that nonetheless seeks to promote the interests of the state or nation.

One final chapter of *FCPS* is worth examining here before moving on: that of Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin, in which the role of the festival curator is explored. While

³⁹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (March 2008): 95. Emphasis original.

most of the authors in *FCPS* explore the dialogue that festivals create between artists/creators and audiences, Papastergiadis and Martin add the curator (and other behind-the-scenes staff) into the mix here, describing such individuals as “mediator[s] of the contemporary.”⁴⁰ They explain this phrase as follows:

The function of the curator is no longer confined to being an arbiter of good taste, or the authoritative interpreter of historical trends. As a mediator in a cosmopolitan cultural sphere, the curator is required to set in motion questions that both come from the core of artistic practice and also interact with non-artistic issues. This adds not only a new level of social negotiation to the curatorial agenda, but also a more robust awareness of the interplay between art and politics.⁴¹

Although these authors use this language to describe festival curators in our contemporary world, I will use a similar framework in Chapter 3 of this dissertation to analyze the role that Rudolf Mengelberg played in bridging the gap between art and politics in his *Mahler-Feestboek*, which bears a strong resemblance to the curatorial roles described here. This framework has further significance given the degree to which Mengelberg single-handedly decided upon the plans for numerous aspects of the Mahler-Feest, as I discuss in the following chapters.

1.3 The Arts Festival as Monument

While the 1920 Mahler-Feest was ostensibly an arts festival at its core, it was simultaneously a grand act of commemoration, serving to memorialize Gustav Mahler as well as to celebrate Willem Mengelberg’s twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the Concertgebouw. This retrospective orientation is not necessarily present in all arts festivals, though such large-scale events do naturally lend themselves to these sorts of ideologies and interpretations. To

⁴⁰ Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin, “Art biennales and cities as platforms for global dialogue,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, 57.

⁴¹ Ibid.

better disentangle the relatively complex web of commemoration in the 1920 Mahler-Feest, then, I will now turn to another category of scholarship which, like festival studies, has undergone great expansion in recent years: that of monumentality and collective memory.

This field of study provides a framework for assessing the relationships between past, present, and future in ritualistic or commemorative events. Rudy Koshar, in his monograph on German cultural memory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, writes that:

Just as one's memory defines a sense of one's past and future, collectivities such as towns, voluntary groups, churches, and nations also rely on the past to orient themselves in time... Both [individuals and groups] rely on stories told and retold, adapted and shaped in response to specific moments of opportunity and crisis, celebration and challenge... Cultural memory, moreover, is ritualistic and performative.⁴²

This is largely in line with the arguments of social historian Peter Burke, who writes that, “rituals are reenactments of the past, acts of memory, but they are also attempts to impose interpretations of the past, to shape memory. They are in every sense collective re-presentations.”⁴³ Thus, commemorative rituals can look backwards and forwards simultaneously, using history as a guide—though perhaps an edited guide—for the present and/or the future. This idea is captured succinctly in Paul Connerton's assertion that such rituals serve to remind a community of “its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative.”⁴⁴

For Koshar, the cultural memories of national communities in Europe generally consist of “recurring themes and symbols derived from folklore, medieval imagery, Christian belief, and national iconology,” which are transmitted through various forms of media, “including not only

⁴² Rudy Koshar, *Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 8.

⁴³ Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 190.

⁴⁴ Paul Connerton, “How Societies Remember,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, 338.

the political sphere and ‘elite’ culture but also commercial culture.”⁴⁵ Musicologist Alexander Rehding picks up almost exactly on this point in a description of monuments—which would certainly be among Koshar’s forms of media that transmit cultural memory—writing that:

The monument is charged with the task of both celebrating the loftiest achievements of a culture and presenting them in an immediately approachable form, their intellectually demanding and often also elitist nature notwithstanding... The monument promises to bring both aspects to the fore—mass appeal and elite—as if there were no tension between the two.⁴⁶

In addition to this interplay between the highbrow and the lowbrow, Rehding further describes monumentality as existing “between the private and the public, between the small and the outsized, between the commemorative and the sublime”; throughout this project, each of these dichotomies will be relevant to my approach to the 1920 Mahler-Feest.⁴⁷

Historically, these concepts are connected most strongly with the nineteenth century, which Koshar refers to as “the age of monuments,” largely due to the era’s strong nationalistic movements, with newly unified nations such as Germany turning to physical monuments as “the linchpin of a larger framing strategy to enhance national loyalties in an uncertain and still youthful state.”⁴⁸ Rehding similarly writes that “in the nineteenth century, ... monument and nation came to be almost inseparably commingled.”⁴⁹ Both of these scholars further describe the rise of monuments in the nineteenth century as being inextricably linked to the rise of the bourgeois public—and with it, the cultural public sphere. Rehding extends this to what he refers

⁴⁵ Koshar, 7.

⁴⁶ Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ Koshar, 11 and 30.

⁴⁹ Rehding, 42.

to as “the three pillars of nineteenth-century European culture,” or class, history, and nation.⁵⁰ He describes the intersections of these pillars with monumentality as follows:

The rising bourgeoisie, to begin with, with its self-definition based on *Besitz und Bildung*—property and education—increasingly gained the role of the principal carrier of culture. Second, historicism, understood in its broadest terms as the valorization of the past as a key source of knowledge over the present, formed the background against which the identity-shaping forces of the monument came to the fore... And third, cultural nationalism provided the illusion that class differences can be leveled out with the view to a higher spiritual community, commensurate with national or cultural borders, building on the traditions, rituals, and spiritual links to the past that historicism provided.⁵¹

Thus, the broad cultural characteristics of nineteenth-century Europe—particularly throughout the greater Germanic world—provided a fertile (metaphorical) ground upon which monuments of all sorts could be erected.

Importantly, Rehding’s scholarship moves away from the study of monuments as purely physical or architectural objects and opens the door to the study of other artistic and/or cultural entities as monuments in and of themselves. One such example is the mammoth publication of the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst (Monuments of German Composition)* series, the first volume of which appeared in 1892 along with the editor’s note that the series would include “works whose historical and artistic significance have a right to continue to dwell among the German people.”⁵² Just as the cultural landscape of the nineteenth century gave rise to grandiose ideas of monuments, it also gave rise to the scholarly discipline of musicology (and other historically-centered fields), allowing for projects like these *Denkmäler* to take on attributes of nationalism,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 41. See also Koshar, 30.

⁵¹ Rehding, 41.

⁵² Philipp Spitta, Preface to *Tabulatura nova*, ed. Max Seiffert (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1892), trans. in Rehding, 142.

monumentality, and historicity while simultaneously fulfilling Connerton's idea of the "master narrative" conveyed by such actions of commemoration.

The editors of the *Denkmäler* series explicitly decided to limit their focus to German composers who had lived between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Even with these geographic and temporal constraints, however, they would have faced one of the perennial issues of collective commemoration: who, exactly, to commemorate? This question relates in many ways to one posed by Burke in his study of social memory: "why do myths attach themselves to some individuals (living or dead) and not to others?"⁵³ He immediately poses his answer to this question, writing that, "in my view, the central element in the explanation of this mythogenesis is the perception (conscious or unconscious) of a 'fit' in some respect or respects between a particular individual and a current stereotype of a hero or villain."⁵⁴ He continues in this vein, writing that in the case of such myths, "differences between past and present are elided, and unintended consequences are turned into conscious aims, as if the main purpose of these past heroes had been to bring about the present—our present."⁵⁵ Thus, in Burke's view, when we decide to memorialize or commemorate a historical figure, it is not entirely because of their actions in the past, but rather it is because of the relation of these actions to the contemporary society in which the commemoration takes place, once again fitting into Connerton's notion of the desired "master narrative" perpetuated by such actions.

For the purposes of this project, a useful preliminary case study is the 1845 Beethoven Festival in Bonn, which was intended to commemorate what would have been the composer's

⁵³ Burke, 190.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 192.

seventy-fifth birthday. As discussed above, this was the era of physical monuments, and the festival was to serve as the grand inauguration of a Beethoven statue sculpted by Ernst Julius Hähnel—the first publicly-displayed statue of any composer in Germany.⁵⁶ There is little need to expound here on the mythology surrounding the figure of Beethoven, so it is easy to see why Bonn would have wanted to honor the late composer with a statue.⁵⁷ At the time, however, the idea of commemoration became a rather contentious issue. Some of those involved in the debate resurrected ideas from the writer Jean Paul (1763–1825), who had earlier questioned the need for monuments honoring artistic figures. Rehding describes Jean Paul’s concerns as follows: “it is not the monument that bestows immortality on the artist, but conversely, it is the great creation of the artist remembered that only gives rise to the erection of the monument in the first place. If Beethoven’s creation itself glorifies the artist, then why does Beethoven need a physical monument?”⁵⁸ But, as Rehding continues, “Jean Paul offers a way out: he considers the monument to be a work of art on a work of art... The point of a monument is for posterity to express its admiration for the great work of the deceased. And this, Jean Paul explains, can only be achieved by a work of art in its own right.”⁵⁹

Among those who were personally involved in this debate was Robert Schumann. From his perspective, the primary significance of a monument would lie in its ability to carry a specific view of the past into the future (going back to the “master narrative” idea once more). In regard to the Bonn statue, Schumann was concerned about the precise way that Beethoven would be

⁵⁶ See Rehding, 54-56.

⁵⁷ For more on this, see Abigail Fine, “Objects of Veneration: Music and Materiality in the Composer-Cults of Germany and Austria, 1870-1930” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017).

⁵⁸ Rehding, 56.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

represented, questioning whether a statue might simply perpetuate a misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the composer for all eternity.⁶⁰ He was further wary of the idea of a single location (such as Beethoven's birthplace of Bonn) laying claim to the composer through such a statue, and wondered whether multiple competing statues would eventually be sculpted in other cities, vying with one another to create and possess the 'authoritative' depiction of Beethoven, and thereby robbing *all* statues of the promise of authenticity.⁶¹ In the end, however, Schumann's arguments were not strong enough to prevent the erection of the monument in Bonn nor the festivities surrounding its unveiling.

While it is clear that the Beethoven sculpture falls under Jean Paul's conception of a monument as "a work of art on a work of art," one might further argue that the *festival* was yet another work of art commemorating the composer. In addition to Beethoven, however, it would further serve to commemorate—in a different way—those involved in its planning and execution. Rehding describes this circumstance as follows:

For the musicians among the well over two thousand international visitors, the Beethoven festival was a unique opportunity to make, or break, a career. There were a number of rivals among the celebrities, all of whom had a vested interest in seizing the opportunity to establish or consolidate their entitlement to Beethoven's legacy...

In other words, there is an implicit understanding that the act of honoring Beethoven in return bestows honor on the celebrant.⁶²

After a great deal of debate, this role of 'celebrant' was given to Franz Liszt, who benefitted tremendously from the occasion. Rehding summarizes this notion in writing that:

⁶⁰ See *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁶¹ Similar views were expressed later in the century on the erection of a statue of Franz Schubert in Vienna, which some found to be overly romanticized and thereby not representative of the historical figure of Schubert himself. See, for example, George Grove, "The Schubert Monument at Vienna," *The Times* (London), Oct. 2, 1889.

⁶² Rehding, 59-60.

All in all, Liszt would be the minister to a congregation of Beethoven worshippers. He had every interest in instrumentalizing Beethoven to further his own immortality. And he had every reason to be confident that his calculation would succeed: a local newspaper hit the nail on the head when it reviewed the festival under the headline ‘Beethoven Festival in honor of Franz Liszt.’⁶³

This last phrase is of particular significance; it not only demonstrates the reorientation toward present (and future) that often accompanies ostensibly historically directed events like this, but it also shows the degree to which overlapping webs of commemoration can readily become intertwined in such events. In summarizing the festival, Rehding succinctly outlines this idea, writing that it contributed to “monumentalizing history, monumentalizing Liszt, monumentalizing the nation, even monumentalizing monumentality,” and concluding with the statement that “the monumentality that emanated from Beethoven’s statu(r)e could be applied to almost any object.”⁶⁴

Aside from the co-opting of Beethoven’s reputation to further that of Liszt, the type of commemoration seen in the 1845 Bonn Festival was relatively innocuous. It is not difficult, however, to imagine how a similar event could be carried out with more nefarious undertones. Almost a century later, in 1937, a four-day festival was held in Regensburg by the National Socialist Party ostensibly in honor of Anton Bruckner, marking the unveiling of a bust of the composer in the German ‘pantheon’ hall of Walhalla. As Rehding notes, however, “effectively, Bruckner was just a bystander at his own party,” with his music being stripped of any references that would diminish its apparent ‘Germanness,’ and with the militaristic choreography of the festival seeming to outweigh any contribution of Bruckner’s own to the event.⁶⁵ Thus, while it

⁶³ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 195.

may be debatable on moral grounds whether this *Regensburg Bruckner Erlebnis* fits into Jean Paul’s monumental paradigm of “a work of art on a work of art,” this example nonetheless works hand-in-hand with the 1845 *Beethovenfest* in Bonn to demonstrate the degree to which such events—ostensibly intended to commemorate deceased artists—can be reoriented to serve the contemporary goals of their organizers and/or participants.

It would be remiss, at this point, not to address what is perhaps the most paradigmatic example of the commemorative music festival: Richard Wagner’s *Bayreuther Festspiele*, which occurred for the first time in 1876 and has recurred with varying degrees of regularity since then.⁶⁶ This differs from the two composer-centric festivals discussed in the preceding paragraphs because Wagner himself was responsible for its establishment and early direction, but it is similarly intertwined with politics and nation-building in Germany. Frederic Spotts, in his history of the Bayreuth Festival, writes that:

Once consummated in a physical center and site of a recurring celebratory festival, the enterprise was inevitably drawn into the ideological vicissitudes of the young country... [The festival] converted Bayreuth into a mighty fortress in defense of ‘true German values,’ in other words a stronghold of reaction, nationalism, and anti-Semitism.⁶⁷

From its origins, everything about the festival was to be thoroughly German, down to the musicians performing in the orchestra. Everything was also to revolve entirely around the figure of Wagner; Spotts describes this in stating that, “apart from the festival itself, there is little to see and less to do [in Bayreuth]. That, at least, is exactly as Wagner wanted it. One was to come to

⁶⁶ After the inaugural festival in 1876, the *Bayreuther Festspiele* did not take place again until 1882; the World Wars (and their fallout) also led to the cancellation of the festival between 1915 and 1923, and between 1943 and 1950, and the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of the 2020 iteration. Aside from these gaps, the festival has occurred annually since its inception.

⁶⁷ Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), viii.

Bayreuth for the opera and nothing but the opera.”⁶⁸ In other words, one was to come to Bayreuth on a pilgrimage of sorts, intent on commemorating Wagner and his art. This arrangement also worked to the benefit of the municipality, with the town council realizing, as Spotts puts it, “that Wagner’s enterprise would put their sleepy town on the map,” similarly to some of the other festivals described above.⁶⁹ For now, this is only a cursory overview of the complexities of the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, but I will return to discuss the festival further throughout this dissertation as a point of comparison with the Mahler-Feest.

Before moving on, one additional element of remembrance is worth expanding upon here: the commodification of commemoration, which relates in some way to each of the three festivals I have just discussed. With the rise of physical monuments in the nineteenth century also came an increased desire for commemorative souvenirs, which would allow the spirit of a monument to be brought into one’s home. The Beethoven Festival in Bonn, for example, led to the publication of a *Beethoven-Album* in which artists and thinkers from eight nations submitted tributes to the composer (some textual, some musical) solely for the purpose of commemoration.⁷⁰ Koshar examines a similar phenomenon specifically in regard to memorials and commemorative sites established in the wake of World War I, showing that “memory of the war quickly became commercialized—indeed, commemoration was a big business.”⁷¹ He goes on to describe the rise of a new form of tourism that brought visitors from across Europe to battlefields, cemeteries, and other war-related locations, writing that “even when pilgrims toured

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁰ See *Beethoven-Album: Ein Gedenkbuch dankbarer Liebe und Verehrung für den grossen Todten* (Stuttgart: Hallberger’sche Verlagshandlung, 1846).

⁷¹ Koshar, 104.

such sites of memory, they participated in the burgeoning business of mourning as they relied on guidebooks, hotels, and official tour guides, and they bought souvenirs (at usually substantially inflated prices) or sent postcards.”⁷² With the rise of the bourgeoisie throughout the nineteenth century, the very idea of tourism had taken off among Europe’s new leisure class, and examples such as this demonstrate the degree to which just about any aspect of life could be co-opted into the business thereof. I return to the idea of tourism in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, examining Rudolf Mengelberg’s program book for the 1920 Mahler-Feest through the lens of the touristic guidebook.

Regardless of what is being commemorated, a monument, as Rehding puts it, “is meant to *mean*.”⁷³ Specifically, as we have seen, it is meant to mean something in the present even as it looks toward the past. Whether it takes the form of a statue, a publication, or something more ephemeral like a festival, a monument presents its audience with a specific view of history—as thinkers from Schumann to Connerton have understood—in hopes of shaping the cultural or political views of a group in its contemporary world, or even in the imagined future. I will argue, across the next three chapters, that the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest was designed to be just this sort of monument, not only drawing attention to the figures of Gustav Mahler and Willem Mengelberg, but further contributing to the promotion of a specific socio-cultural and political identity that its organizers sought to endorse.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Rehding, 26. Emphasis original.

1.4 The Salzburg Festival

In August of 1920, three months after the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, the contemporary Salzburg Festival took place for the first time under the artistic leadership of Hugo van Hofmannsthal, Max Reinhardt, Franz Schalk, Alfred Roller, and Richard Strauss. Like the Mahler-Feest, the Salzburg Festival arose in large part due to the political circumstances of post-war Europe, with Reinhardt having asserted in 1918 that the members of the organizing committee felt that they had the “spiritual growth of the new Austria in their hands,” following the then-recent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁷⁴ Thus, for Reinhardt and his colleagues, the festival provided the opportunity to forge a modern Austrian identity by looking to the past, focusing specifically on the region’s medieval Catholic roots and Baroque grandeur (and, of course, its connections to Mozart). Given the temporal proximity of this festival with the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, as well as the overlapping political circumstances, the *Salzburger Festspiele*—particularly its original iteration in 1920—will serve as an important counterpoint throughout this dissertation.

While the festival itself did not begin in earnest until 1920, the city of Salzburg had long been a popular destination for visitors seeking to experience its cultural richness. As John and Margaret Gold note in their recent monograph, *Festival Cities*, the municipality had capitalized on its Mozart connection since the early years of the nineteenth century, attracting more than 50,000 tourists annually by the 1840s.⁷⁵ Just as Bonn was in the midst of planning its Beethoven festivities for 1845, Salzburg was similarly erecting a statue of its prized composer (sculpted by Ludwig Schwanthaler), which was unveiled in 1842 along with three days of Mozart-themed

⁷⁴ Qtd. in Gold and Gold, *Festival Cities*, 117.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, 111-112.

celebrations in the city. Similar events continued to occur sporadically between then and the outbreak of the First World War, including four separate festivals between 1900 and 1910; these featured performances by many esteemed Austro-German musicians of the time, including Gustav Mahler, who conducted *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1910.⁷⁶ In contrast to the post-war iterations, however, these earlier festivals were not explicitly cast as nation-building tools by their organizers. Naturally, the war led to significant ideological changes here.

It would be difficult to overstate the difficulties and uncertainties that Austria faced in the wake of the war. Michael P. Steinberg describes this, in part, as follows:

The Salzburg festival was inaugurated in the summer of 1920, less than two years into the fifteen-year life of the ‘republic that no one wanted.’ Defeat on the battlefield and at the conference table had made Austria into a dysfunctional fragment, severed both from Germany and from the former national components of the Habsburg empire. Vienna had become an imperial capital with almost no territory to administer. The Habsburg industrial base lay beyond the new Austrian boundaries; the vast railroad network that connected Vienna with that base was useless. In this condition, Austria had little chance of economic survival. Two alternatives seemed possible: some kind of de facto unification or economic federation with the former national components of the empire, or a true annexation or union (*Anschluss*) with Germany (the Weimar Republic).⁷⁷

As Steinberg posits, the political basis for the *Salzburger Festspiele* arose out of a strong nationalistic (anti-*Anschluss*) mentality among a subset of Austrians—most of whom were conservative Catholics—who believed that their nation “embodied not only an authentic German cultural heritage, but the most authentic one.”⁷⁸ Thus, for the festival’s organizers, as Steinberg notes, “Austrian national identity and its representative aesthetic discourses would remain

⁷⁶ See Michael P. Steinberg, *Austria as Theater and Ideology: The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 42.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* It is perhaps for reasons like this—the intensity of nation-building ideology, though for a different nation—that Spotts posits the Salzburg Festival as the first true equal of Wagner’s Bayreuth. See Spotts, 5.

German, Catholic (and hence distinct from the Protestant German state), and baroque.”⁷⁹ Notions of monumentality were also intertwined here, with Steinberg casting the festival as an example of the neobaroque, the goal of which was to “reconstitute and represent the present, in this case the late nineteenth century, in the image of a golden past,” echoing the monumental intersections of past and present as discussed above.⁸⁰

The preparations for the 1920 festival began as early as 1917, as the geopolitical outcomes of the war were becoming clear. The war itself was one of the primary sources of inspiration for the event, with Reinhardt writing the following in a preliminary memorandum:

In addition to many of the most important phenomena revealed by our times, we must take note that the arts, especially the theatrical arts, have not only held their own during the ravages of this war, but have proven that their existence and maintenance are essential necessities... It has become apparent that the arts are not merely a luxury for the rich and sated, but food *for the needy*. Never before has the often-doubted dignity of theater been put to a more serious test, and never has it passed any test with such honor.⁸¹

Although he posits the festival as being broader in scope than a composer-focused event like Wagner’s Bayreuth, he is sure to note that the *Salzburger Festspiele* would be thoroughly Austrian, pointing to the “*special talent of the Austrian peoples*” in the arts, and asserting that “the rich fruits of this plentiful Austrian source should benefit Austria itself,” rather than being lost when Austrian artists leave home to perform in other lands.⁸² He further discusses the economic advantages of the festival, writing that “the result of this international propaganda...

⁷⁹ Steinberg, 22.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸¹ Max Reinhardt, “Memorandum regarding the Construction of a Festival Theatre in Hellbrunn” [April 25, 1917], trans. Alexa Nieschlag, *Salzburger Festspiele*, accessed March 5, 2024, <https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en/blog/memorandum-regarding-the-construction-of-a-festival-theatre-in-hellbrunn>. Emphasis original.

⁸² *Ibid.* Emphasis original. Reinhardt seems particularly concerned here with the participation of Austrian artists in the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, believing that these artists should instead serve their own nation.

will not only benefit the City of Salzburg, but indirectly the entire *Austrian Alpine region and all the touristically attractive areas of the Monarchy*,” and concluding that the festival “may be destined to bear witness to the importance of Austria and its culture throughout the world.”⁸³ As Lisa Silverman notes, Hofmannsthal expressed similar allegiances to Austria in the years after the war, with both figures envisioning the festival as “carrying on the spirit of the Austrian empire in the new republic through culture and art.”⁸⁴

A distillation of such views can be found in flyer created by the festival committee in 1918, which sought assistance in working toward the following goals:

Join the Salzburg Festival Society! *Help* the construction of the Salzburg Festival Halls in the Hellbrunn Castle Park! *Help* build a mountain of the Grail for the most genuine and great art! *Enable* at the same time *the reconstruction of Austria*, of which the Salzburg Festival will always be a most important factor! *Prepare* the way for the lasting harmonization of spirits from the bedrock of all-encompassing art!⁸⁵

This excerpt is quite telling in terms of the festival’s underlying political ideology. Most notably, the phrase “the reconstruction of Austria” is entirely emphasized, drawing the reader’s attention more strongly than the following sentence about the “harmonization of spirits.” Thus, while the flyer does convey some degree of cosmopolitan thinking, it is clear that the organizing committee saw the nation-building aspect as being more fundamental than the project of universal inclusivity. Across the border in Germany, the post-war landscape similarly led the leadership of the Bayreuth Festival to (once again) promote their own nation-building aims, leading to an advertising slogan of, “he who loves Germany and wants to do something for its

⁸³ Ibid. Emphasis original. The Habsburg monarchy did still exist at the time of Reinhardt’s writing, though it would be dissolved shortly thereafter, in the wake of the war.

⁸⁴ Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and culture between the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 164.

⁸⁵ Reproduced in Steinberg, 54-55. Emphasis original.

recovery and its future as a culture-nation must come to Bayreuth's aid."⁸⁶ This sentiment is exceedingly similar to the "*reconstruction of Austria*" statement above, but with no mention of any international or universal goals at all.

Much of Steinberg's seminal monograph on the Salzburg Festival is dedicated to his analysis of these tensions between the local and the international, which Steinberg labels as "nationalist cosmopolitanism." Steinberg describes this philosophy, in part, as follows:

The festival program revealed on every level a convergence of explicitly cosmopolitan and pan-European ideals with a Bavarian-Austrian—that is, a baroque—nationalism. As the alleged geographic center of Europe as well as of the Catholic-German 'nation,' Salzburg promoted the 'belief in a Europeanism, as it was fulfilled and illuminated in the period from 1750 to 1850.' The paradoxical convergence of nationalism and cosmopolitanism is a crucial component of the Salzburg ideology: Hofmannsthal never relinquished the notion that cosmopolitanism is essentially a German virtue.⁸⁷

He later explains this final thought in more detail, writing that, "for Hofmannsthal, cosmopolitanism was a virtue and nationalism a vice—but an Austrian virtue fighting against a Prussian vice. Cosmopolitanism was therefore tacitly defined as a *national* virtue, and, by extension, as a nationalist ideology."⁸⁸ Hofmannsthal believed, as Steinberg writes, that Germanic culture (i.e., that of both Germany and Austria), "is superior to other European cultures precisely because it is the only national culture to be possessed of a true spirit of cosmopolitanism. In other words, it is a German cultural virtue to understand foreign nations and cultures."⁸⁹ Given that Hofmannsthal and his fellow festival organizers viewed Austria as the truest carrier of Germanic culture, it is no surprise that the festival would have been imbued with

⁸⁶ Qtd. in Spotts, 138.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 23. Steinberg takes the quoted material here from Hofmannsthal's essay, "Die Salzburger Festspiele."

⁸⁸ Ibid., 102. Emphasis original.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 108.

this spirit of “nationalist cosmopolitanism,” seeking to demonstrate Austria’s cultural superiority in part through its ability to bring together peoples of disparate backgrounds.⁹⁰

This ideology of “nationalist cosmopolitanism” certainly differs from the post-war internationalism that I outlined above, despite the fact that both originated nearly simultaneously in reaction to the war. For this reason, Steinberg’s framework will serve as a useful point of comparison throughout this dissertation. The clearest difference between the two philosophies is that conveyed by their labels, with one ultimately being nationalistic in its focus and the other drawing its focus away from any single nation. While the Salzburg Festival did indeed seek to promote the unification of various peoples, it did so with the intent of strengthening Austria and its reputation; if any example of a supranational organization was endorsed by this festival, it was that of Austria itself. Post-war internationalism was not devoid of nationalistic aims either, as I discussed above, but its proponents nonetheless saw value in creating and maintaining global relationships with higher objectives than those of any single nation. This brief comparison will suffice for now, but I will return to this topic in more detail in the following chapters.

In addition to its nationalistic intentions, another lens through which the Salzburg Festival has been analyzed—and which will be relevant to this project—is that of religion. Although the festival outwardly perpetuated a strongly Catholic worldview in line with Austria’s identity as the Catholic German state, both Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt (born Max Goldmann)

⁹⁰ Any doubt about Hofmannsthal’s views of Austrian superiority over Germany is alleviated through his 1917 text, “Prussians and Austrians,” in which he expounds upon the differences between the two nations, placing Austrians ahead in almost every category. See Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Selected Plays and Libretti*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), lxv.

were of Jewish descent.⁹¹ As Silverman notes, both men went out of their way during the planning stages to ensure that the festival would *not* be interpreted as Jewish in any explicit manner, since such an interpretation would distract from the Austrian identity that they sought to promote. Even the festival’s location in the provincial city of Salzburg may be interpreted as an attempt to get away from the city of Vienna, which was associated more closely with elements of Jewish culture.⁹² Further, the only performance during the 1920 festival was of Hofmannsthal’s play *Jedermann* [*Everyman*], an adaptation of a medieval Christian morality play that Hofmannsthal had written about a decade earlier.⁹³ Records from the first *Salzburger Festspiele* indicate that a large number of Jews attended the event, with Silverman writing that:

For Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt—as well as for many Jewish members of the audience—a passion for Catholic baroque theater thus may have represented not a lack of interest in their Jewish backgrounds, but rather an attempt to distance themselves from that aspect of their identities, to find a universalizing, totalizing experience through theater, and to create a measure of inclusivity in this new Austrian cultural identity.⁹⁴

Silverman aligns this with other aspects of Jewish identity in post-war Austria, writing that “many Austrian Jews idealized Catholicism as a parallel authentic ‘spiritual’ response to the crises of their contemporary condition,” arguing that the focus on redemption and salvation in Catholicism worked in tandem with the desire to define the new Austrian culture.⁹⁵ She further draws parallels between the artistic goals of the Salzburg Festival and those of contemporaneous

⁹¹ Both of Hofmannsthal’s parents were Christian, but at least one great-grandfather of his was Jewish.

⁹² See Silverman, 146-147.

⁹³ As Silverman notes, earlier performances of *Jedermann* were not well-received compared to its successful performance at the 1920 Salzburg Festival, potentially indicating its usefulness as a piece of unifying art after the war. See *ibid.*, 163. *Jedermann* continues to be performed on a near-annual basis at the Salzburg Festival today.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

Yiddish theater in Vienna, coming to the conclusion that, “whether foregrounded or occluded, Jewishness was thus crucial to the constructions of Austrian national culture in post-war theater.”⁹⁶

Despite the attempts made by Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt to minimize any traces of ‘Jewishness’ in the 1920 festival, their own Jewish backgrounds, in combination with their desire to assemble an international audience for a performance of contemporary theater, led a number of local newspapers to attack the event—in strongly antisemitic terms—for its improper appropriation of Catholic tradition.⁹⁷ Such articles and reviews, however, indicate that the festival did indeed bring together both Jewish and Catholic audiences for a collective experience, potentially fulfilling the organizers’ desire to demonstrate the cosmopolitan spirit of post-war Austria. Silverman points specifically to a review by Alfred Polgar, who was not typically friendly in evaluations of Reinhardt’s works, but who in this case wrote that during the festival, “somehow the seated individual feels his individuality reduced. Just by being there he becomes part of a community.”⁹⁸

Unlike the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, the *Salzburger Festspiele* was not a one-off event, and has continued to occur on an almost-annual basis since its origins. The complex political history of Austria and Germany (and Europe more broadly) across the twentieth century has led to the festival being co-opted for various purpose during these years. After the *Anschluss*, for example, the 1939 festival fell under the control of the Nazi Party, was attended by a number

⁹⁶ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, 167-168.

⁹⁸ Alfred Polgar, “Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater,” *Prater Tagblatt*, Aug. 19, 1922. Trans. in *ibid.*, 170.

of Nazi officials (including Adolf Hitler himself), and was redefined as a “Festival of the German Soul” by Joseph Goebbels.⁹⁹ In 1945, by contrast, the festival served as an informal gathering place for diplomats from the US, UK, USSR, France, and Austria, and was further seen as a symbol of the rebirth of European culture following the atrocities of the Second World War.¹⁰⁰ Unrelated to these two iterations, the Salzburg Festival also inspired an offshoot festival of new music beginning in 1922—which would lead to the creation of the International Society for Contemporary Music—and which I will discuss further in Chapter 2 in connection with the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest. As Fabiana Sciarelli and Ludovica Caniparoli have shown, the *Salzburger Festspiele* continues to be a boon for Salzburg’s tourism industry today, bringing large numbers of international visitors (and their pocketbooks) to the city to experience its cultural richness and natural beauty each summer.¹⁰¹

1.5 Conclusions

Taken as a whole, the examples and frameworks introduced throughout this preliminary chapter demonstrate that arts festivals are not simply domains for entertainment, though a pleasurable aesthetic experience is certainly a significant part of what draws audiences to them in the first place. Beyond this, however, arts festivals carry, and have carried, political ideologies—whether of nationalism, internationalism, commemoration, or otherwise. As part of the cultural

⁹⁹ See Gold and Gold, 127-128. The 1939 festival featured music primarily by Mozart, who—after the *Anschluss*—could be interpreted by the Nazi party as belonging to the greater German world, rather than specifically to Austria.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 129. At this time, the city of Salzburg also served as the headquarters of the American Occupation Forces.

¹⁰¹ Fabiana Sciarelli and Ludovica Caniparoli, “The Salzburg Festival: A local development engine,” in *Festival and Event Tourism Impacts*, ed. Dogan Gursoy, Robin Nunkoo, and Medet Yolal (London: Routledge, 2021), 192-205.

public sphere, festivals permit organizers and attendees to engage critically with contemporary issues, using the arts as a platform for discussion and debate among all those who seek to take part in the conversation. To echo the above-quoted statement by Giorgi and Sassatelli in their introduction to *FCPS*, I argue here that all arts festivals have political motivations of some sort, seeking to create and/or shape identities and communities according to the desires and beliefs of their organizers.

The 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, of course, is no exception to this argument, and I will use the various frameworks established in this chapter to examine the processes through which this festival took on its political dimensions, as well as the broader ramifications thereof. As Nadine Rossol writes in her recent monograph on political spectacle in the Weimar Republic,

The limitations of examining festivals, spectacles, parades and assemblies lie in the very nature of these events. They were unique experiences affecting participants and spectators in ways which written sources as well as visual ones can only partially capture. Consequently, the various political and cultural meanings which the organizers inscribed into these performances become particularly important to offer the ‘intended’ interpretive framework for the audience.¹⁰²

The limitations described by Rossol here certainly apply to the Mahler-Feest as well, since the experience of having attended the event cannot be replicated nor adequately conveyed through documentary sources; it is for this reason that the frameworks I have developed throughout this chapter are of particular importance for a study like the present one.

The complex interrelations between nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism discussed above will allow me to situate the Mahler-Feest in the precise interwar socio-political landscape from which it arose, and comparisons with Steinberg’s characterization of “nationalist cosmopolitanism” in the contemporaneous Salzburg Festival will allow me to differentiate

¹⁰² Nadine Rossol, *Performing the Nation in Interwar Germany: Sport, Spectacle and Political Symbolism, 1926-36* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

further between these contrasting responses to the effects of the war. The scholarly approaches to cultural memory and monumentality used by Rehding, Koshar, Connerton, and others discussed above will permit a more nuanced analysis of the function of commemoration in the Mahler-Feest, along with its inherent blurring of the lines between past, present, and future. More broadly, the recent literature within the field of festival studies will serve to ground my analysis in contemporary academic trends, with the festival itself—rather than its musical content—serving as my primary object of study.

Chapter 2: The Mahler-Feest and Interwar Diplomacy

On June 17, 1920, the *Musical Courier*—a New York City newspaper—published an article by musicologist César Saerchinger, who reported on “a peace conference—the most genuine peace conference that has been held since the world went awry six years ago.”¹ He went on to describe the same event as “the first time [that] Frenchmen and Germans, Italians and Austrians, Englishmen, Americans, Belgians, Hungarians have stood together...on neutral and hospitable soil.”² Contrary to what one might assume, this article was not about the Paris Peace Conference, nor the resulting Treaty of Versailles, and not even the founding of the League of Nations, each of which had occurred within the prior year. Rather, Saerchinger’s words referred to the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest.

A brief survey of newspaper articles published in cultural and political capitals across Europe that summer demonstrates that Saerchinger was far from the only journalist to describe the festival in this way. For example, readers of *Das Tagebuch* in Berlin were presented with a partial list of the international musicians and guests present at the Mahler-Feest, which, for journalist Rudolf Kastner, “demonstrates that it was possible, through the arts, to hold a peaceful conference of peoples after 1914 and 1918—something that politicians and diplomats from all around the world have not yet accomplished,” and even going so far as to write that “with this festival, Holland has revised the 1919 [Treaty of] Versailles, at least culturally.”³ In Rome,

¹ César Saerchinger, “Musicians from all parts of the world, regardless of creed or nationality, gather in Amsterdam to honor Gustav Mahler,” *Musical Courier* LXXX, No. 25 (June 17, 1920): 26.

² Ibid.

³ “Holland hat mit diesem Fest Versailles 1919 wenigstens kulturell revidiert. Die folgende Namenskette der in Amsterdam anwesenden oder (in fünf Kammermusiken) noch aufgeführten Künstler und Gäste wird zeigen, dass es

readers of *Il Tempo* were presented with an article by Alfredo Casella, proclaiming loftily that through the Mahler-Feest, “the highest union possible within humanity—that of the arts—could be seen again for the first time since 1914, above the fray [of the war] which has not yet fully disappeared from the horizon.”⁴ Egon Wellesz, in Vienna’s *Neue Freie Presse*, redirected a similarly internationalistic message toward Mahler himself, writing that “a new phase has begun: Mahler is no longer a matter for Vienna, for Austria, [or] for Europe, as before; rather, he has become an artistic concern of the entire world.”⁵ Taken as a whole, these excerpts cast the 1920 Mahler-Feest—and even Mahler’s music—as an instrument of artistic diplomacy, contributing to the mending of strained relations between nations during this volatile post-war period.

What is particularly notable about Saerchinger’s article is his reference to the “neutral and hospitable soil” on which the festival was held; indeed, the Netherlands was no stranger to this sort of diplomatic event around this time. Between the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as the opening of the grandiose Peace Palace (housing the Permanent Court of Arbitration) in 1913, the country had established itself as a center for international affairs—as an ostensibly neutral gathering place where representatives of various nations could come together to settle disputes and advance the larger causes of humanity. Prior to the war, Dutch political theorists such as Cornelis van Vollenhoven advocated for the nation to embrace this mediating position, allowing the otherwise-small state to play a significant role on the world stage. Though

der Kunst möglich war, nach 1914 und 1918 einen fried samen Völkerkongress abzuhalten, wie ihn die Politiker oder Diplomaten... aller Länder noch nicht zustandebringen.” Reprinted in *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam, Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. C. Rudolf Mengelberg (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1920), 49.

⁴ “Per la prima volto dopo il 1914, vidi rifiorire – au dessus de la mêlée di cui gli ultimi bagliori non sono ancora spenti all’orizzonte – la fraternità la più elevata della quale sia capace l’umanità: quella dell’arte.” Reprinted in *ibid.*, 64.

⁵ “Es beginnt eine neue Phase: Mahler ist nicht mehr eine Sache für Wien, für Österreich, für Europa, wie bisher, sondern eine künstlerische Angelegenheit der ganzen Welt geworden.” Reprinted in *ibid.*, 43.

these internationalist initiatives could not avert the war, and a third Hague Conference scheduled for 1915 had to be cancelled in light of the hostilities, the Netherlands remained steadfast in its neutrality throughout the combat, even providing materials to both warring sides, which led to the nation being criticized by various parties in the international media.⁶ Thus, in the wake of the war, the Dutch state sought to rectify its tarnished reputation and reclaim its position of global significance—a process which, as I will discuss below, involved official state actors as well as unofficial groups and other entities acting in service of the nation.

In this chapter, I examine the Mahler-Feest within the contexts of Dutch and international politics around 1920, arguing that the festival should be interpreted as an unofficial diplomatic act which sought—at least in part—to promote the goals of the Dutch state on the world stage after the war. I begin with a directed overview of the political culture in the Netherlands between around 1900 and 1920, focusing primarily on the nation’s emergence as a center for international politics and mediation, to illustrate the circumstances out of which the festival’s political orientation emerged. For the remainder of the chapter, I connect several concrete aspects of the Mahler-Feest to the political ambitions of the Netherlands around this time, relying primarily on archival material from the event itself. First, I analyze the festival committee’s deliberate meddling in the international press as a parallel to the 1919 formation of the National Bureau for Documentation on the Netherlands, which aimed to ensure that the nation would be portrayed abroad in only the best possible light. From there, I present the explicitly internationalist actions of the Mahler-Feest—its assembly of guests from around the (Western) world, its secondary

⁶ See Pelle van Dijk, “‘You act too much as a journalist and too little as a diplomat’: Pieter Geyl, the National Bureau for Documentation on the Netherlands and Dutch public diplomacy (1919-1935),” in *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands, 1815-2000: A small country on the global scene*, ed. Ruud van Dijk, Samuël Kruizinga, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, and Rimko van der Maar (London: Routledge, 2018), 80.

program of contemporary international chamber music, the signing of the Manifesto of Foreign Guests at the festival's conclusion, and the simultaneous establishment of a global Mahler Union (*Mahler-Bond*)—as evidence of the diplomatic goals of the festival's organizing committee. Taken as a whole, I argue that these actions show a clear intent, on the part of the committee, to use the festival—and Mahler's music—to contribute to the Netherlands' reclaiming of its position as a center of internationalism shortly after the end of the war.

2.1 The Netherlands in the Early Twentieth Century

In August of 1898, in the wake of the Spanish-American War, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia issued a proclamation calling for a coming-together of governments from across the world, “with the object of seeking the most effective means of ensuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and lasting peace and, above all, of limiting the progressive development of existing armaments.”⁷ Such a call, especially coming from such a powerful figure, was far from an ordinary order of business in European politics at this time, and it therefore received extensive coverage in the global press; as Maartje Abbenhuis's extensive research on the topic has shown, “there was nary a newspaper [anywhere] that did not mention the rescript. Many printed its text in full.”⁸ This coverage spurred great interest among the international diplomatic corps and broader intelligentsia alike, and discussions soon began with the goal of finding a suitable location for such a gathering.

⁷ Qtd. in Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 187.

⁸ Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences and International Politics, 1898-1915* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 1.

Despite Russia's role in proposing the conference, St. Petersburg was immediately ruled out as a potential host city to minimize any impressions of a conflict of interest, and to avoid the potential fallout of a failed conference. The other major powers were excluded for the same reasons, leaving as options a few cities in the small, neutral states of Western Europe. Among these options, the Dutch political center of The Hague (*'s Gravenhage* or, less formally, *Den Haag*) was selected as the host city, though not least due to various problems among the alternatives. As Abbenhuis writes, "the Russian government chose The Hague in part because the Swiss cities were deemed unsafe (the Austrian Empress had been murdered in Geneva by anarchists in September 1898), the Danish government was uninterested and, at least according to the Catholic press, Brussels was too closely aligned to the Pope."⁹ Although the Dutch government recognized that hosting such an event would be a huge expense—and a large political risk—the spirit of the proposed conference was largely embraced by the national population, for whom the political ideal of neutrality had long been viewed as "an expression of the unselfish, cosmopolitan and liberal attitude of their citizenry, who furthermore [felt that they] had the international, imperial and commercial interests of all of Europe at heart."¹⁰

After much preparation, the first Hague convention began on May 18, 1899, with the Netherlands' young Queen Wilhelmina hosting 96 representatives from 26 nations at her royal *Huis ten Bosch* [House in the Woods] on the outskirts of the city; the event continued well into the summer, lasting ten weeks in total. In addition to all of the 'great power' governments, the conference hosted representatives from nations as geographically diverse as Japan, Persia, and Mexico, making it a global event of sorts, though many nations nonetheless went

⁹ Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 58.

¹⁰ Abbenhuis, *Age of Neutrals*, 164.

unrepresented.¹¹ After extensive discussions throughout the summer, the convention produced a number of treaties and declarations intended to diminish the likelihood (or at least the severity) of future wars, most notably through the founding of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which would, in theory, provide nations with a peaceful apparatus for solving disputes through a judicial system rather than through the waging of war.

About four years later, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt suggested the need for a second convention to refine and expand upon the achievements of the first. This event took place—again in The Hague—from June to October of 1907, and brought so many international representatives to the city that the discussions were moved to the grand hall of the *Binnenhof* [Inner Court], the oldest portion of the Dutch parliamentary complex. As Abbenhuis writes, “what struck contemporaries particularly about the 1907 conference... was its global reach. Almost every recognized nation-state participated. Never before had so many governments come together in one place to discuss a common agenda.”¹² In total, more than 230 delegates from 43 nations attended, providing both large and small states—many for the first time—with a voice on the international stage. Both then and now, historians and political theorists have questioned the significance of the Hague Conventions, particularly given their inability to avert the major crises of the twentieth century, but Abbenhuis and others have convincingly shown that the events did succeed in bringing about significant changes across the world, at least in terms of popular mentalities. As Abbenhuis writes, the conventions “inspired contemporaries to believe that a new

¹¹ Among the three U.S. delegates to the 1899 Hague Conference was Seth Low, then president of Columbia University. See Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

world order based on international cooperation and organization might be attainable in the future,” echoing the rising spirit of internationalism discussed in the previous chapter.¹³

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will focus primarily on two related effects that the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 had on the political landscape of the early 1900s: a shift of diplomacy and political activism into the broader public sphere (i.e., away from being the sole purview of career diplomats), and the simultaneous establishment of the Netherlands as a global center for internationalism, mediation, and peace advocacy. Abbenhuis succinctly describes this first point in writing that “while the 1899 Hague conference was a diplomatic event, which only official government representatives could attend, it was also a public spectacle in which the weight of global and domestic opinion played a role in directing the hands of the states involved. Before the doors of the 1899 Hague conference closed, a new era of public diplomacy had opened.”¹⁴ This “new era” began almost as soon as the newspapers published Tsar Nicholas’s call for the first conference, with liberal readers across the world responding positively to these ideas of pacifism and harmony—and internalizing the conviction that they, too, could have an impact on global affairs. Thus, as Abbenhuis writes,

Internationalism, peace, arbitration and neutrality inspired many educated and powerful elites, who, as members of the gentry classes, also had significant transnational ties and often socialized in the same circles as the men in government who made foreign policy. As such, it is no coincidence that the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 witnessed the coming together of career diplomats, lawyers, admirals and generals alongside a collection of Europe’s rich, powerful, educated and idealistic.¹⁵

¹³ Abbenhuis, *Age of Neutrals*, 179.

¹⁴ Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 23.

¹⁵ Abbenhuis, *Age of Neutrals*, 160.

Equally important, for the purposes of this project, is that these gatherings took place in the otherwise somewhat unassuming country of the Netherlands.

During both of the Hague Conventions, the Dutch government—as well as local non-governmental entities—sought to capitalize on the newfound attention that the nation was sure to receive. Officially, Queen Wilhelmina hosted day-trips to Amsterdam and state receptions for the foreign delegates attending each convention; the Minister of Foreign Affairs (and several other Dutch politicians) hosted many additional social events across the months-long durations of the conventions, bringing together official participants as well as journalists and others present in The Hague for more casual discussions of the topics at hand.¹⁶ During the 1907 convention, the government also sponsored a boat tour to Rotterdam, as well as various cultural exhibitions and events which sought to promote international tourism in The Hague, the province of Zuid Holland, and the nation more broadly. According to the Dutch press, most of the international delegates thoroughly enjoyed their time attending the conventions, and many took the opportunity to travel more widely within the Netherlands when they weren't actively involved in the official events.¹⁷

The Dutch press also sought to make use of these opportunities to expand its readership (and influence) beyond the confines of the Netherlands, putting its local expertise to good use in reporting on Dutch customs and institutions, and acting as a mediator between the convention hosts and the vast array of foreign journalists who had been sent from as far away as New Zealand to report on the events. Despite their experience reporting on the Dutch royalty and government as a whole, the local and national press quickly realized that the relative

¹⁶ See Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 79 and 159.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 79.

insignificance of Dutch as a global language would severely limit their potential readership. While Dutch journalists could typically read and respond to news in English, French, and German (and sometimes additional languages), the same could not be said for the abilities of foreign journalists to read Dutch-language reporting. To remedy this, at least one Dutch newspaper published certain convention-related stories in French, and a separate *Journal de l'Haye* [*Newspaper of The Hague*] was proposed by Dutch journalists as a way to promote their viewpoints beyond their linguistic borders.¹⁸ Taken as a whole, a great number of Dutch entities from both the private and public sectors sought to use the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions to promote their vision of the Netherlands as a place where the business of international relations could be freely and fairly conducted.

Serving to support this image—and providing a lasting physical manifestation of The Hague's status as the international city of peace and justice—was the construction of the Peace Palace [*Het Vredespaleis*], which was completed in 1913 and still houses the Permanent Court of Arbitration to this day.¹⁹ The planning for this grandiose building began in 1903, when Andrew Carnegie donated a sum of \$1.5 million to the Dutch government,

believing that the establishment of a Permanent Court of Arbitration by the Treaty of the 29th of July 1899 [during the First Hague Convention] is the most important step forward of a worldwide humanitarian character which has ever been taken by the joint Powers, as it must ultimately banish war, and further, being of opinion that the cause of the Peace Conference will greatly benefit by the erection of a Court-House and Library for the Permanent Court of Arbitration.²⁰

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 81-82.

¹⁹ The motto of the city of The Hague still remains *Vrede en Recht* [Peace and Justice]. Since 1913, the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, and various other global judicial institutions have also established their headquarters in The Hague.

²⁰ “A Deed to Create a ‘Stichting’ (foundation or trust under the Netherland Law) for the purpose of erecting and maintaining at the Hague (Kingdom of the Netherlands) a Court-House and Library for the Permanent Court of Arbitration, established by the treaty of the 29th of July 1899,” October 7, 1903, item 09000004774676, Peace Palace Library, The Hague, Netherlands.

For Carnegie and others, the 1899 Hague Convention was only the beginning of what they assumed would be a long line of gatherings to cure the ills of humanity, and thus this Peace Palace would go on to serve as the host venue for any such conferences that would occur after its construction, in addition to serving as the permanent home of the Court. Between its 1903 inception and the 1913 opening of the Palace—including a multi-year competition for the architectural and garden designs, and a lengthy construction process which brought together building materials and styles from across the world—the idea of the palace itself continued to captivate global newspaper readers, and set into stone (both literally and figuratively) The Hague’s status as the center of internationalism in the early twentieth century. As Felix Moscheles (then President of the International Arbitration and Peace Association) summarized in a Festschrift compiled for the opening of the palace, The Hague “is destined to become a world center in the service of all men, focusing their aspirations and representing the Rule of Justice and Equity.”²¹

Although the 1913 opening of the palace did not coincide with either of the Hague Conventions, the Dutch government did not pass up the opportunity to capitalize once more on its emerging position in world affairs, creating a sort of Netherlands-focused convention for the grand occasion. As Abbenhuis notes on the ceremonial opening of the palace,

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade sent tens of thousands of posters, more than 205,000 brochures, 4 million bookmarks and 120,000 postcards to tourism operators, exchange bureaus, embassies, consulates and railway and shipping companies in Europe and the United States. All aimed at selling the Netherlands as an ideal destination for 1913... According to all these depictions, the Netherlands was not only honoring its maturation as a monarchy in 1913, it also celebrated its international stature as a country of peace and internationalism.²²

²¹ Felix Moscheles, “The Palace of Peace” in *Het Vredespaleis Gedenkboek*, ed. “Vrede door Recht” Society (The Hague: Boekhandel Gebroeders Belinfante, 1913), 41.

²² Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 176.

This endeavor seems to have paid off, with The Hague being selected as the host city for a huge number of conferences in 1913, both explicitly political (the International Council of Women, the Interparliamentary Union, and the World Peace Congress) as well as more general international gatherings (such as the International Tourism Conference, the International Pharmaceutical Congress, the International Conference of Master Cotton Spinners, the International Students' Congress, and many more).²³

Around the time of the opening of the Peace Palace, planning began in the Netherlands for a third Hague Convention which would meet in 1915, ostensibly setting up a recurring 8-year schedule after those of 1899 and 1907. With each successive convention, the Dutch government assumed greater responsibility for the planning and execution thereof, and a high-level committee was established for this third convention; the group was led by Willem de Beaufort (the previous foreign minister) and further included Tobias Asser (who had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1911 for his work at the earlier Hague Conventions), Cornelis van Vollenhoven (an outspoken professor of Dutch politics whose work I will discuss shortly), and J.A. Roëll (a high-ranking military and political officer). With the outbreak of the war, however, the planning was soon halted, and it was determined that the convention could not proceed as expected—a strong reminder that the work of the previous two conventions had either failed or remained unfinished.

Regardless, as Abbenhuis summarizes,

Between 1899 and 1915, The Hague helped to define international politics. The Hague permeated public discourses about the future of world organization, the role of international law in diplomatic affairs and the promise of conflict resolution. At the outbreak of the First World War, The Hague's normative appeal determined how contemporaries considered their world.²⁴

²³ For full lists, see *ibid.*, 178.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

For those who worked on the planning of the 1920 Mahler-Feest just a few years later, then, the types of diplomatic standards and interventions established by the Hague Conferences—and the reputation that they helped to give to the Netherlands as a nation—would have been impossible to ignore, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

In parallel to the concrete political and diplomatic actions taken in relation to the two Hague Conventions and the construction of the Peace Palace, a related intellectual school of thought was taking shape in the Netherlands, spearheaded by Cornelis van Vollenhoven (1874–1933), professor of law and political science at Leiden University. His seminal work on the Netherlands' position in world affairs was “*Roeping van Holland*” [“Holland's Calling”], which was first published in 1910 in the literary magazine *De Gids* [*The Guide*] and again in 1913 as part of a collection of essays by Van Vollenhoven titled *De Eendracht van het Land* [*The Unity of the Nation*]. Following the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, Van Vollenhoven used these essays to advocate strongly for the Dutch nation to demonstrate its leadership in global affairs by spearheading both the organization of the 1915 conference as well as the creation of an international naval force (with the Dutch navy as its centerpiece, naturally) to carry out the peacekeeping business of the conventions. Geert Somsen summarizes Van Vollenhoven's rationale as follows:

The reason why the Dutch should pick up this task [i.e., of becoming an international mediator], Van Vollenhoven argued, was not because the Russians and Americans had happened upon The Hague, but because the Netherlands simply seemed made for it. It had no apparent appetite for territorial expansion, it reflected a high civilization, and it could boast an international law tradition going back to Hugo Grotius [in the early seventeenth century] ... His principal point was to present advancing peace and mediation as a *national* task which could bring the country greatness and glory, perhaps

even of the magnitude of the Golden Age of the seventeenth century, yet without needing the power and dominance that the Dutch Republic had possessed back then.²⁵

Rather than extolling the virtues of the Netherlands to a global audience, Van Vollenhoven's Dutch-language essays were written for his fellow citizens, with the goal of inspiring them to contribute to the general mission of Dutch success.

On the opening page of *De Eendracht van het Land*, Van Vollenhoven creates a somewhat dire image of world affairs, writing that “from every corner of the earth foments the conviction that something must be done to counter the anarchist future of the world; that this would succeed—and succeed now—if only one nation stepped up and led the way. But who?”²⁶ Unsurprisingly, it is the Netherlands that Van Vollenhoven believes should be this leader, writing that “before the end of 1913, our nation—after two hundred years of decline—will have reclaimed its international role”; this role, for Van Vollenhoven, would be the role of the mediator.²⁷ He is careful to frame this as a task that would require some specific direction from those in positions of leadership, writing that “every step to return the Netherlands to an international role of significance is doomed, from the start, to fail and to disappoint, if the nation is not given *one* central international task—grand, comprehensible, and straightforward.”²⁸

²⁵ Geert Somsen, “‘Holland’s Calling’: Dutch Scientists’ Self-fashioning as International Mediators,” in *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe: Intersections of science, culture, and politics after the First World War*, ed. Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen, and Sven Widmalm (New York: Routledge, 2012), 48-49. Emphasis original.

²⁶ “Uit alle hoeken der aarde gist de overtuiging, dat tegen den anarchischen toestand der wereld iets moet worden gedaan; dat het gelukken zou, nu gelukken zou, als maar een der staten vooruittrad en de leiding nam. Wie?” Cornelis van Vollenhoven, *De Eendracht van het Land* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1913), 1.

²⁷ “Dit boekje wil medestuwten. Het preekt, dat vóór het eind van 1913 ons land, na tweehonderd jaar verval, zijn internationale rol moet hebben hernomen.” Ibid. Emphasis original.

²⁸ “Elke poging om aan Nederland een internationale rol en plaats van betekenis te hergeven is van vooraf gedoemd tot mislukken en tot teleurstelling, als men niet in het midden der natie weet te zetten één internationale taak, groot, bevattelijk en eenvoudig.” Ibid., 5. Emphasis original.

For Van Vollenhoven, the execution of this task would fall not only on those in government and other high-level positions, but on Netherlanders of all walks of life, including “the hairdressers, the hoteliers, the booksellers, the gardeners, the students, the shipmen, the nursery school keepers—yes, all of them.”²⁹ He continues somewhat more floridly on the importance of the country’s reputation, writing that:

Our position at the Peace Conferences is weakened if the hotels in The Hague are expensive and deficient, or if the youth on the street behave impolitely, just as it is strengthened by every Dutch dredger in East Asia, by every award for Dutch manufacturing, *by every accolade for a Dutch orchestra*, by every little Dutch tube of liquid helium.³⁰

Such a message, with its emphasis on the quasi-diplomatic roles of the arts, sciences, and technology, corresponds with Van Vollenhoven’s full-throated endorsement of the objectives of the Hague Conventions, since he asserts that peaceful arbitration and disarmament would naturally lead to an increase in funding for (and attention devoted to) these humanistic pursuits. In looking ahead to the proposed 1915 convention, he asserts that while the first two were spearheaded by Russia and the US, respectively, “the day of the small nation has arrived; the third conference should not just be announced by us, but ought to be equipped with its own program by us, ... initiated and called for by us—by Wilhelmina.”³¹ As stated above, Van Vollenhoven was given a place on the committee responsible for the planning of this 1915

²⁹ “Maar misschien zijn dit alles frazes. Die ‘gansche natie’ en dat ‘grootte doel’ — dus ook de kappers, de hotelhouders, de boekhandelaren, de tuinlui, de studenten, de bootwerkers, de bewaarschoolhouderessen? Zeker, zij allen.” Ibid., 24.

³⁰ “Onze positie op de vredesconferentiën wordt verzwakt, als de Haagsche hotels duur en gebrekkig mochten zijn of de straatjeugd onbeschaamd mocht wezen; gelijk zij wordt versterkt door elken Hollandschen baggermolen in Oost-Azië, door elke bekroning van een Hollandschen fabriek, door elke belauwering van een Hollandsch orkest, door elk Hollandsch buisje vloeibaar helium.” Ibid., 24. Emphasis added.

³¹ “Nu is de dag der kleine naties gekomen; de derde conferentie moet niet enkel worden rondgeboodschapt door, ze behoort met een eigen program te worden toegerust door, met een eigen daad te worden ingezet door, te worden aangesticht en opgeroepen door: Wij Wilhelmina.” Ibid., 21.

convention, meaning that—at least until the impossibility of the event became clear—he would have been able to begin planning it in a way that would have further solidified the role of the Netherlands as an international mediator among nations.

While Van Vollenhoven believed that the central mediating role of the Netherlands should lie primarily within the political sphere, many of his contemporaries sought to extend this characterization of the nation more explicitly to other fields. Among such thinkers was Pieter H. Eijkman, a physician who lived in The Hague and believed that the city should serve as *the* international center of science (in addition to politics and justice), and even going so far as to draft a plan in 1905 that would turn The Hague into the unofficial “world capital” through the construction of various centers for international cooperation in the sciences, which would be located in the same part of the city as the yet-to-be-built Peace Palace. A 1906 character sketch in *De Hollandsche Revue* [*The Revue of Holland*] describes Eijkman as follows:

There is a man who walks around with a giant plan in his head, a titanic concept, a world idea.

A man who wants to establish a world capital in the Netherlands.

A man who wants to turn The Hague into the intellectual center for every region of the world.

A man who wants The Hague to be seen as the place where ‘the brains of the world,’ as William Stead once called them, will be located.

That man is P.H. Eijkman.³²

Although the construction of such scientific centers never explicitly came to fruition, Eijkman did establish a Foundation for the Promotion of Internationalism around this time, which was designed to survey existing internationalist movements and promote the development of others,

³² “Het is een man, die met een reuzenplan, een titanen-konceptie, een wereld-idee in zijn hoofd rondloopt. Een man, die in Nederland een wereld-hoofdstad wil stichten. Een man, die ’s Gravenhage wil maken tot het intellektueele centrum van alle werelddeelen. Een man, die den Haag wil aangewezen zien als de plaats, waar zich ‘the brains of the world’—zooals Willem Stead ’t eens genoemd heeft—zullen bevinden. Die man is P.H. Eijkman.” “P.H. Eijkman, Arts: Karakterschets,” *De Hollandsche Revue* 11 (1906): 179.

particularly in relation to the sciences. In support of these ideas, Eijkman published two monographs, likely choosing to write in French due to its status as a more global language than Dutch: *L'internationalisme Medical* (1910) and *L'internationalisme Scientifique* (1911).³³

Like Van Vollenhoven, Eijkman believed that the Netherlands would be the optimal location to host international gatherings and institutions, in part due to its status as a small (neutral) nation, and in part due to its national traditions and cultural qualities. Somsen summarizes Eijkman's views in writing that "the Dutchmen's typical 'solid, calm, serious way of acting' made their country much preferred, Eijkman argued, as did their linguistic abilities and the insignificance of their own language."³⁴ For Eijkman, cooperation in the sciences would serve as the most direct path to peace among nations due to the very nature of scientific research, which requires international collaboration in order to progress. Thus, for Eijkman, these plans would have had the threefold benefit of promoting scientific advancement, promoting world peace, and promoting the Netherlands as the center for global mediation and internationalism.

As the preceding section has surveyed, the Netherlands was seen by many—both at home and abroad—as *the* center of global affairs in the years leading up to the First World War. Between the two Hague Conventions and the opening of the Peace Palace, the nation had become the *de facto* site for diplomacy and internationalism, within both the political sphere and the arts and sciences more broadly. Notably, a great deal of the initiative for these developments came from outside of the Netherlands—with the conventions proposed by Russia and the United

³³ See C.-E. A. Winslow, "The Movement for Scientific Internationalism at The Hague," *Science* 35, no. 895 (Feb. 23, 1912): 293-296.

³⁴ Somsen, 50.

States, and the funding for the Peace Palace coming from Andrew Carnegie—though the Dutch government certainly capitalized on its newfound clout by the 1910s.³⁵ Simultaneously, these developments showed the world that the business of diplomacy did not need to be conducted by official governmental representatives alone, but rather, that a broader class of the citizenry could have a tangible impact on world affairs. With the outbreak of the war in 1914 came two opposing lenses through which these developments could be viewed: on the one hand, the war reinforced the case for the necessity of mediation on a global scale, but on the other hand, it showed that the political strategy of neutrality was not as straightforward as the Dutch had long believed it to be.

2.2 The Post-War Press Campaigns

It hardly needs to be stated that the war changed almost every aspect of life in the Western world, even in those countries that did not participate militarily. From the start of the hostilities, the war would have been a constant reminder that the goals of the Hague Conventions may have been overly ambitious (or, to some, unattainable), even as it reinforced the belief—especially in the Netherlands—that more needed to be done to achieve lasting peace among nations. As Abbenhuis writes in her study of the Netherlands during the war, “a universal desire for peace enveloped the [Dutch] population by 1918... Most Netherlanders saw it as their duty as neutral citizens to foster international peace,” particularly given their country’s role in the early twentieth-century peace movements discussed above.³⁶ Such discussions played out in the public sphere, allowing individuals, businesses, and other entities to express opinions freely on the

³⁵ For more on the shift in Dutch governmental mentality toward a more active role, see Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences*, 179.

³⁶ Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 224.

matter. Abbenhuis writes that “during the war... there were no social restrictions inhibiting the Dutch from calling for an end to the hostilities. In fact, one of the few topics about which Dutch newspapers were relatively consistent was encouraging international peace.”³⁷ Thus, any member of the newspaper-reading public in the Netherlands would have been quite familiar with the nation’s overall stance on the war.

The Dutch government also strongly advocated for peace during the war, but for reasons perhaps just as much practical as they were ideological. As the nation discovered, its prized neutrality was not a golden ticket to wartime success, either morally or more tangibly. Though the Netherlands did not actively participate in the war, over 400,000 Dutch men were conscripted to ensure a potential defense, rationing was put into place for certain foods and wares, and a huge number of foreign refugees sought protection within the Netherlands’ borders.³⁸ At the same time, the Dutch policy of neutrality allowed for continued trade with other nations—regardless of their warring status—leading to a situation in which the Netherlands provided supplies to countries on both sides of the conflict, drawing almost universal condemnation. Pelle Van Dijk writes that:

During and shortly after the First World War, the Netherlands had lost goodwill in other countries. International media perceived the neutral country as weak and condemned it for having financially profited from the war. In addition, the Allied press accused the Dutch government of pro-German sentiments as it had, for instance, granted asylum to the German emperor Wilhelm II.³⁹

Thus, for the Netherlands, peace advocacy during the war played two interrelated roles: an end to the war would ease the precarious economic and diplomatic circumstances that the country

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See *ibid.*, 17.

³⁹ Van Dijk, 82.

faced, but it would also serve to turn neutrality into something positive, in contrast to the international criticism that the country had been receiving. As Abbenhuis writes, “if a neutral [country] could facilitate some form of negotiation between the warring parties, then it was more likely that its neutrality would receive greater recognition. It would provide the neutral [country] with an international voice, which many neutrals feared would be lost to them in a post-war world dominated by the interests of the victors.”⁴⁰ Throughout the war, then, neither the government nor the citizenry of the Netherlands lost sight of the nation’s internationalistic ambitions, despite great pressure to give up on such forms of idealism.

When the fighting finally came to an end in November 1918, the Netherlands (and the judicial apparatus in The Hague) had played no role in mediating between the warring powers, evidencing a circumstance in which the nation had effectively lost the international influence that it had gained in the early 1910s. The restoration of this power was among the nation’s top post-war priorities, both officially and in the broader public sphere, and it is against this political backdrop that the planning for the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest began. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I argue that from start to finish, the festival was intended to play a role—albeit unofficially—in the Netherlands’ quest to restore its position on the global stage, using music as a medium to bring the world back together on what Saerchinger would later refer to as “neutral and hospitable soil” as quoted above. To do so, the festival’s organizers knew that they would need the help of the global press in promoting the event’s goals and ideology outside of the Netherlands; in this respect, the Concertgebouw’s *Mahler-Comité* mirrored strategies that were being employed simultaneously in the service of the Dutch state more broadly.

⁴⁰ Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral*, 224.

In February 1919, almost immediately after the signing of the treaties ending the war, a quasi-governmental organization began to take shape in the Netherlands with the goal of promoting the interests of the nation abroad through a concerted strategy for engaging with the foreign press. This organization took the name of the *Nationaal Bureau voor Documentatie over Nederland* (National Bureau for Documentation on the Netherlands, hereafter NBDN), and was spearheaded by Frans Drion, who had been a liberal member of the lower house of the Dutch parliament since 1912. The NBDN consisted of a group of correspondents—primarily academics and journalists—who were sent to the major cities of various Western nations and tasked with reporting back to Drion on any stories relating to the Netherlands in their assigned nation’s press, as well as with working to subtly influence the press in order to improve the reputation of the Netherlands in their assigned locality.⁴¹ Though the organization received some of its funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it operated almost entirely independently, and its correspondents were generally non-governmental employees.⁴²

In his analysis of the NBDN, Van Dijk writes that during the interwar years, “the promotion of interests abroad was one of the issues in which governments of nation states were eager to leave initiatives to other actors,” with these governments recognizing the importance of managing their global reputations, but not wishing to play a direct role in the shaping thereof due to the risk of being accused of spreading propaganda.⁴³ This was particularly important immediately after the First World War, since the spreading of propaganda had served as a

⁴¹ See Van Dijk, 81-83.

⁴² In the early post-war years, the NBDN received most of its funding from large Dutch businesses that had interests abroad, such as shipping companies and banks. See *ibid.*, 85.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 80.

wartime strategy for nations on both sides of the conflict; it was also important for the Netherlands, as an ostensibly neutral country, not to be seen as having too heavy a hand in dealing with the foreign press. The NBDN was not the only Dutch organization that stepped into this role in the interwar years; as Van Dijk notes, various other independent groups worked during this time to promote the interests of the nation abroad, including the society *Nederland in den Vreemde* (The Netherlands Abroad), which sponsored Dutch-themed events in other nations, as well as the independent publisher E. Van der Vlucht, who set up shop in France in order to publish pro-Dutch material there.⁴⁴

According to a “confidential” [*vertrouwelijk*] report from a February 1919 meeting—the earliest source on the NBDN held by the Dutch National Archives—Drion had been in close contact with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the early priorities of the organization were to establish presences in Brussels, Paris, and London, primarily to counter negative reporting on Dutch-Belgian relations and the asylum that the Netherlands had granted to the German Kaiser Wilhelm.⁴⁵ Further documentation shows that by early 1920, Drion was receiving regular briefs from correspondents in these three cities, as well as Genoa, Copenhagen, and Stockholm; within a few years, the NBDN would go on to have additional covert reporters stationed in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States.⁴⁶ In general, the updates sent from these correspondents to

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁵ “Vertrouwelijk Rapport tot 8 Februari 1919,” collection 2.19.026, box 1, Inventaris van het archief van het Nationaal Bureau voor Documentatie over Nederland, 1919-1936, Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

⁴⁶ See collection 2.19.026, boxes 2-14, Inventaris van het archief van het Nationaal Bureau voor Documentatie over Nederland, 1919-1936, Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague. The NBDN’s US correspondent (in New York) between 1927 and 1932 was Dr. Adriaan J. Barnouw, Professor in the Department of Germanic Languages at Columbia University. Interestingly, a *New York Times* article on Barnouw’s death refers to him as “an unofficial ambassador of understanding between the Netherlands, where he was born, and his adopted America.” See “Adriaan Barnouw, Dutch Expert Who Taught at Columbia, Dies,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1968.

Drion demonstrate that they were paying extremely close attention to the press in their assigned nations, sending him excerpts from articles relating in any way to the Netherlands, but further, that they went to great lengths to develop relationships with the local press bureaus, with the ultimate goal of influencing reporting on the Netherlands.⁴⁷ In summarizing the position of the NBDN, Van Dijk writes that its network of correspondents “effectively became actors who shaped Dutch foreign relations” even though they were not official representatives of the Dutch government; at the same time, however, Van Dijk notes that they “deliberately engaged in the manipulation of foreign media in order to improve the Dutch reputation abroad,” even as Drion tried to claim that his bureau “only corrected ‘factual errors’” in foreign reporting.⁴⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, the existence and activities of the NBDN demonstrate not only that the international reputation of the Netherlands was of great importance to the nation at this time, but also that the maintenance thereof was carried out in large part by non-governmental actors and institutions.

When the planning for the 1920 Mahler-Feest first began to take shape, the members of the Concertgebouw’s *Mahler-Comité* were likely unaware of the existence of the NBDN, but they nonetheless approached the international press with a strategy not far from that employed by Drion and his correspondents.⁴⁹ According to Rudolf Mengelberg’s diary, the earliest planning for the event began on May 17, 1919—almost immediately after the end of the Concertgebouw’s

⁴⁷ See, for example, Letter from G.J. Hoogewerff to Drion, June 1, 1920, collection 2.19.026, box 33, Inventaris van het archief van het Nationaal Bureau voor Documentatie over Nederland, 1919-1936, Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

⁴⁸ Van Dijk, 93.

⁴⁹ The Mahler-Feest committee was comprised of Hendrik Freijer (the Administrator of the Concertgebouw), Jo Beukers-Van Ogtrop (the President of Amsterdam’s *Toonkunst* choir), and Rudolf Mengelberg.

previous season—and by August 29 of that year, Rudolf could write excitedly that the festival plans had been “drawn up.”⁵⁰ Beyond the logistical planning for the concerts and other events, the festival committee recognized early on that the international press would play a key role in the success of the festival, not only in terms of advertising to potential attendees, but also in terms of spreading (and promoting) the specific political and artistic goals of the event. Just as the correspondents of the NBDN worked behind the scenes to influence global reporting on the Netherlands, the members of the *Mahler-Comité* similarly worked—albeit a bit less subtly—to ensure that their festival would be described and portrayed only in the precise way that they wanted it to be.

In the fall of 1919, the committee sent letters to at least two prominent music scholars, asking them to write articles on the upcoming festival which could be published in the German and Austrian press; though the copies of these letters held in the archives today are not signed, they strongly appear to have been written by Rudolf Mengelberg.⁵¹ These letters—to Otto Neitzel and Richard Specht, both dated October 8, 1919—begin by stating that “a few comments from authoritative sources in German newspapers would be very welcome” in regard to “our great Mahler Festival of May 1920.”⁵² In the letter to Neitzel (a Cologne-based music scholar

⁵⁰ “Mahler-Festpläne entworfen!” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, Aug. 29, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. I provide a great deal of additional information on Rudolf Mengelberg’s biography and viewpoints in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁵¹ The most compelling evidence for Rudolf’s authoring of the letters is a sentence in the letter to Specht in which the author states that “ich bin selbst Deutscher”; Rudolf was the only member of the *Mahler-Comité* to be German by birth. The German language of the letters provides further support for this assertion, although Mengelberg was certainly not the only member of the committee to be conversant in German.

⁵² “Für unser grosses Mahler-Fest Mai 1920, zu dem Ihnen in Bälde schon eine Einladung zugehen wird, würden uns ein paar Hinweise von autoritativer Seite in deutschen Blättern sehr willkommen sein.” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Otto Neitzel, Oct. 8, 1919, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

and writer), Mengelberg explains that a contribution from him would be particularly welcome, “since you have insight into the musical life of Amsterdam and have such warm sympathy for it,” as evidenced by an article titled “Gustav Mahler und das Concertgebouw” that Neitzel had previously published in the *Kölnische Zeitung*.⁵³ In further explaining his desires to Neitzel, Mengelberg writes that:

There are three essays which we would ask of you. Of these, one must appear in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, one in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, and a third in a major newspaper (such as the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Die Woche*, etc.)... As an honorarium, we can offer you 500 marks.⁵⁴

Considering the language used in this letter, it seems that Mengelberg was attempting to recruit Neitzel for a purpose not dissimilar to the goals of the NBDN’s foreign correspondents. He was aware that Neitzel would write positively about the upcoming Mahler-Feest, and that Neitzel’s clout within the German musicological world would allow him to publish articles in the large-scale newspapers that he listed (in which the articles “must appear”), spreading the desired message to as broad an audience as possible.

The letter to Specht begins similarly, stating that Specht’s “word is of the utmost authority in all matters relating to Mahler,” again reaffirming the festival committee’s desire for their promotional materials to carry as much intellectual weight as possible.⁵⁵ The letter then

⁵³ “Wenn Sie, verehrter Herr Doktor, der Sie einen Einblick in das Amsterdams Musikleben getan haben und demselben so warme Sympathie entgegenbringen, dazu bereit sind, noch einmal, wie schon und Ihnen dankenswerten Aufsatz: ‚Gustav Mahler und das Concertgebouw‘ in der Kölnische Zeitung, hier einer grosser Sache, Pionierdienste zu leisten, wäre uns das ganz besonders willkommen.“ Ibid. Emphasis original. Here, Mengelberg is referring to the same article by Neitzel quoted above in the introduction to this dissertation.

⁵⁴ “Es handelt sich um drei Aufsätze, um die wir Sie bitten möchten. Von diesen müsste einer in der Kölnischen Zeitung, einer in der Allgemeinen Musikzeitung und ein dritter in einer grossen Zeitschrift (wie z.B. Illustrierte Zeitung, die Woche etc.) erschienen... Als Honorar erlauben wir uns, Ihnen Mk.500.- anzubieten.“ Ibid. Emphasis original.

⁵⁵ “...Ihr Wort in Mahler Angelegenheiten je vor allen autoritär ist.“ Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Richard Specht, Oct. 8 1919, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

refers to Specht's earlier praise of the Dutch Mahler tradition in the foreword to his book on the composer, going on to discuss Mahler's varied reception in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. Among other descriptions, the letter indicates to Specht that "Mahler is spiritually at home in Vienna, having his roots there; [whereas] in Holland, he has been naturalized through training, and has become a fundamental factor in the [local] spiritual life."⁵⁶ With statements like this, Mengelberg may have been subtly attempting to influence the articles that he hoped Specht would publish, since Mengelberg would have wanted these articles to emphasize Mahler's connections to the Netherlands. The conclusion of the letter is as follows:

Be once more—esteemed Herr Specht—a “voice in the wilderness.” Our Festival Committee asks you for three essays to be published in various sources, two of which—or, at the very least, one—in a major daily newspaper. We can offer you an honorarium of 1000 Kronen for this. Some materials enclosed. If desired, we can also send photographs, etc.⁵⁷

As with the letter to Neitzel, this excerpt shows the degree to which Mengelberg sought to influence the articles published internationally about the festival, even going so far as to send “materials” and potentially photographs to Specht, which undoubtedly would have portrayed the festival—and Mahler himself—in the manner that Mengelberg and his colleagues desired.

A few months later, in December 1919, Mengelberg wrote a letter to the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* in Berlin, which would ostensibly rank among the sort of “major daily newspapers” in which he hoped to publish festival-related material. The letter consists of the following:

In light of the great significance of the Mahler-Feest, which, as the first international music festival after the end of the war, will present all of the works of the great

⁵⁶ “In Wien ist Mahler geistig zuheim, dort wurzelt er, in Holland ist er durch Erziehung eingebürgert und zu einem wesentlichen Faktor des geistigen Lebens geworden.“ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Seien Sie verehrter Herr Specht, nochmals ‚Rufer in der Wüste.‘ Unser Fest-Komit  bittet Sie um drei Aufs tze, in verschiedenen Bl ttern zu ver ffentlichen, darunter zwei, wenigstens aber einer in einer grossen Tageszeitung. Wir erlauben uns Ihnen hierf r ein Honorar von 1000 Kronen anzubieten. Einige Material beiliegend. Wenn erw nscht, k nnen wir auch Photographien etc. senden.“ Ibid.

symphonist Gustav Mahler for the first time, we are convinced that the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* will have interest in and sympathy for our undertaking. It would be of great satisfaction if you, esteemed Sir, would send your valued music reporter Professor Dr. H. Springer to the event. At the same time, we would like to make note of the fact that despite the miserable value of the German currency, there will not be any major costs associated with staying here, as the numerous international guests will be housed without cost in private homes.⁵⁸

As with his letters to Neitzel and Specht, this letter again shows Mengelberg not-so-subtly attempting to dictate the ways in which the festival would be covered in the German press. Of note here is the fact that Mengelberg asks for a specific reporter to be sent to the festival (likely under the assumption that this reporter would cover the event in a manner desirable to the Concertgebouw's intentions), and the fact that Mengelberg also draws a direct comparison between the "miserable" economic circumstances in Germany and the much better circumstances in the Netherlands, would could afford to freely house the "numerous international guests" attending the event. In sending such a message to a press outlet, Mengelberg likely hoped that the coverage of the event would draw attention to this wealth—both economic and cultural—that he believed was characteristic of the Netherlands (in comparison with Germany) at this time.

Even before the end of 1919, Mengelberg's press strategy seemed to be succeeding in at least one way, as evidenced by a letter sent on December 18 to the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité* from the editors of the *National-Zeitung* in Basel, Switzerland. In this letter, the editors indicate that they had received word of a series of Mahler concerts in Amsterdam, "to which

⁵⁸ "Angesichts der grossen Bedeutung des Mahler-Festes, das als erstes internationales Musikfest nach Beendigung des Krieges zum ersten Male alle Werke des grossen Symphonikers Gustav Mahler zur Aufführung bringt, sind wir davon überzeugt, dass die ‚deutsche Tageszeitung‘ unserem Unternehmen Interesse und Sympathie entgegenbringt. Es wäre uns eine ganz besondere Genugtuung, wenn Sie, verehrter Herr, Ihren geschätzten Musikberichtstatter Herrn Professor Dr. H. Springer hierzu entsenden würden. Wir erlauben uns zugleich darauf aufmerksam zu machen, dass trotz der miserablen Valuta des deutschen Geldes grössere Kosten mit dem Aufenthalt hier nicht verbunden sein werden, da die zahlreichten ausländischen Gäste in Privathäusern gastfrei aufgenommen werden." Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to the editor of the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, Dec. 8, 1919, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

artists from France, Italy, Austria, Germany, England, and America have been invited.”⁵⁹ The editors then ask for the dates of the concerts, so that they can plan to send a representative to the event. For Mengelberg, this letter would have been quite welcome, as it indicated the degree to which publicity about the Mahler-Feest—and specifically its international scope—had spread across Europe, even to a nation that the festival committee had not specifically targeted (as far as the archival material demonstrates) prior to this point.

The *National-Zeitung* in Basel was not by any means the only publication that reverse-solicited to the committee in hopes of publishing material on the Mahler-Feest; indeed, several newspapers seem to have played right into Mengelberg’s hand in this regard. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, in a letter dated February 9, 1920, provides Mengelberg with the pricing for an article on the festival in response an inquiry that he had sent them, but also goes on to suggest their *Illustriertes Blatt*, writing that “for this occasion, we would not want to hold you back from augmenting your publicity [*Propaganda*].”⁶⁰ In addition to the high-quality illustrations and paper, the editors advise Mengelberg that the *Illustriertes Blatt* is “distributed across all German lands and is read in all of the educated, well-off circles”; it is further found “in the good cafés, hotels, and restaurants, and the waiting rooms of doctors, lawyers, etc., for considerably greater reach.”⁶¹ The Concertgebouw archives in Amsterdam do not hold Mengelberg’s original letter to

⁵⁹ “Aus einem Zeitungsnotiz ersehen wir, dass in Holland für Mahler verschiedene Festkonzerte veranstaltet werden, zu denen Künstler aus Frankreich, Italien, Österreich, Deutschland, England und Amerika eingeladen worden sind.“ Letter from Verlag & Redaktion der *National-Zeitung Basel* to the Concertgebouw *Mahler-comité*, Dec. 18, 1919, collection 1089, box 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁶⁰ “Bei dieser Gelegenheit wollen wir nicht versäumen, Sie für die Ergänzung Ihrer Propaganda...” Letter from *Frankfurter Zeitung* to the Concertgebouw *Mahler Comité*, Feb. 9, 1920, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁶¹ “Das Illustrierte Blatt wird wöchentlich in sehr hoher Auflage über alle deutschen Länder verbreitet und über all von den gebildeten, gutgestellten Kreisen gelesen. Daneben sorgen Colportage, Bahnhofsbuchhandel,

the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, but it seems likely that the editors of this publication had some idea of Mengelberg's underlying ideology when they drafted this letter, knowing that reaching the "educated, well-off circles" in "all the German lands" would have been exactly his priority.

In the final few months leading up to the Mahler-Feest, Mengelberg's press strategy became even more exacting, with letters demonstrating his attempts to dictate precisely when, where, and how the festival would be portrayed. The clearest example of this is a letter to the editors of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, dated April 23, 1920, in which Mengelberg attempts to change the reporter assigned by that publication to cover the festival. In this letter, Mengelberg explains that he had had a conversation with a journalist named Paul F. Sanders, who told Mengelberg that the *Berliner Tageblatt* had reached out to him to report on the Mahler-Feest.⁶² In Mengelberg's opinion, per the letter, "Mr. Sanders appears to fully be the wrong person to write about the festival," and that based on his conversation with Sanders, he "seems to be in no way sympathetic to the Concertgebouw."⁶³ Mengelberg continues, laying out his case as follows:

Besides this, Mr. Paul F. Sanders is a completely unknown young musical dilettante, whose opinion is solely and exclusively legitimated through the reputation of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. The Festival Committee has made direct efforts to give the Mahler-Feest a completely international character and is naturally interested in having this character conveyed by the reports in the international newspapers. And therefore, it is important to us that a global publication like the *B.T.* be represented by an individual whose voice corresponds roughly with the significance of the enterprise.⁶⁴

Strassenverkauf sowie Auflegen in den guten Café's, Hotels und Restaurants und in Wartezimmern von Ärzten, Anwälten usw. für weitere erhebliche Verbreitung." Ibid.

⁶² See Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to editors of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, April 23, 1920, collection 1089, box 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁶³ "Jedenfalls möchte ich auf Ihre Anfrage hin nicht versäumen, Ihnen vertraulich aber offen zu erklären, dass mir Herr Sanders als durchaus nicht die geeignete Persönlichkeit erscheint, über das Fest zu berichten. Zunächst ging mir aus der Unterredung unzweideutig hervor, dass Herr S. dem Concertgebouw keineswegs wohlwollend gesinnt ist." Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Im übrigen ist Herr Paul F. Sanders ein völlig unbekannter junger Musikbeflissener, dessen Urteil nur und ausschließlich durch das Ansehen des B.T. legitimiert würde. Die Fest-Komitee hat sich gerade bemüht, dem Mahler-Fest einen durchaus internationalen Charakter zu geben und hat natürlich besonderes Interesse, dass dieser

To rectify this problem, Mengelberg suggests that the *Tageblatt* instead send Dr. Leopold Schmidt, whose opinion and status are apparently of higher value, but further states that if they cannot send Schmidt (or “a well-known writer on music”), they might in that case select among the “greatest Mahler specialists, such as Hofrat Prof. Dr. Guido Adler, Dr. Paul Stefan, or Prof. Richard Specht, all of whom will be coming to the festival in Amsterdam from Vienna.”⁶⁵ As with several of the examples above, this letter shows Mengelberg attempting to subvert the autonomy of an independent press outlet to report on the Mahler-Feest as it pleases, knowing that his recommended “Mahler specialists” would portray the event exactly as Mengelberg wanted it to be portrayed.

One final example is a letter dated May 3, 1920—just three days before the festival’s opening concert—in which Mengelberg writes to the editors of the Berlin-based *Signale für die Musikalische Welt* after receiving a “rather disappointing” exemplar of their article on the festival. The disappointment is primarily related to the fact that, as Mengelberg writes, “we had sent you the article ‘Die Bedeutung des Mahlerfestes’ [The Significance of the Mahler-Feest] as a leading article, but you printed it as a secondary article with smaller text.”⁶⁶ Mengelberg further identifies a change that the publication has made to one of his sentences, writing that “in

Charakter auch in den Berichten in den ausländischen Zeitungen zum Ausdruck kommt. Und da ist uns natürlich daran gelegen, dass ein Weltorgan wie das B.T. durch eine Persönlichkeit vertreten ist deren Ruf der Bedeutung des Unternehmens einigermaßen entspricht.“ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “Wenn Sie Herrn Dr. Leopold Schmidt nicht senden können, würden wir Sie gebeten haben, die Berichterstattung einem bekannten Musikschriftsteller, am besten Mahler-Spezialisten, wie Hofrat Prof. Dr. Guido Adler, Dr. Paul Stefan oder Prof. Richard Specht, die alle aus Wien zu dem Feste nach Amsterdam kommen, mit der Berichterstattung beauftragt.“ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Zunächst möchten wir darauf hinweisen, dass wir den Aufsatz ‚Die Bedeutung des Mahlerfestes‘ als Leitartikel sandten, während sie ihn an zweiter Stelle mit kleineren Lettern abdrucken.“ Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to editors of the *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, May 3, 1920, collection 1089, box 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. Emphasis original.

this version, the sentence is rendered completely ineffective, and the significance of the festival described therein is completely gone.”⁶⁷ Finally, Mengelberg writes that the lead article that they *did* include (written by one of their own authors, ostensibly), “contains a comment right at the beginning which will serve to mislead the public opinion and historical judgment [on the festival].”⁶⁸ Beyond simply demonstrating his efforts to meddle with the press coverage of the festival, this example also shows how closely Mengelberg followed the international coverage of the event, even during the busy weeks leading up to its start.

All of the examples discussed in this section have involved Mengelberg inserting himself into the affairs specifically of the German-language press, despite the fact that he was clearly interested in promoting the event beyond the German-speaking world. The apparent lack of communication with press outlets in other nations is perhaps simply due to the various language barriers that would be involved in writing such letters, but it is also quite feasible that Mengelberg would have concentrated primarily on the Germanic world due to its own claims to Mahler, which he sought (at least partially) to challenge through the festival’s association of Mahler with the Netherlands; this is not dissimilar from the NBDN’s initial goals of working to counter specific types of reporting on the Netherlands in specific cities, as described above.

Despite the lack of letters to other nations, the existing archival material from the planning of the Mahler-Feest does demonstrate that the committee spent time considering the broader international press, with handwritten lists of press outlets in cities including Brussels (*Critique du Jour*, *Guide Musical*), Paris (*Le Pantheon*, *Le Courrier Musical*, *Figaro*), London

⁶⁷ “In dieser Fassung verliert der Satz Hand und Fuss und die in ihm umschriebene Bedeutung des Festes kommt überhaupt nicht zum Ausdruck.“ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Schliesslich bringen Sie als Leitartikel einen Aufsatz, der gleich zu Anfang eine Bemerkung enthält, die geeignet ist, die öffentliche Meinung und das historische Urteil zu missleiten.“ Ibid.

(*Daily Chronicle*, *The London Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*), and New York (*The Musical Courier*, *The World of the Globe*).⁶⁹ The lists, however, do not indicate whether the festival committee ever made contact with these agencies, or whether they were simply listing major newspapers and journals. Notably, there are no such lists of Dutch press outlets, and the archive does not contain any letters between the *Mahler-Comité* and any publications within the Netherlands, though perhaps any such conversations would have occurred in person. In any case, the Dutch press certainly did publish extensively on the Mahler-Feest during the spring of 1920, though the majority of local reporting ahead of the event focused primarily on Willem Mengelberg's jubilee rather than the broader political ramifications of the festival.⁷⁰

Though he would not have realized it due to the secrecy around the NBDN, Mengelberg's strategy for dealing with the press in advance of the 1920 Mahler-Feest was not far from that employed concurrently by the Bureau in promoting the Netherlands more broadly. Both Mengelberg and the NBDN had specific ideological lenses through which they hoped the international press would report on the Netherlands, and both made great efforts to stay aware of all material published on their topics of interest while also working to counter any potentially contrary viewpoints. Because Mengelberg sought to promote the Netherlands not only as a second homeland for Mahler's music, but also as a musical meeting point for representatives of various nations (as some of his letters quoted above indicate), his dealings with the foreign press fit into the model set by the NBDN and other organizations that aimed to promote the global

⁶⁹ See draft lists of press outlets, undated, collection 1089, boxes 2996 and 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁷⁰ See, for example, "Willem Mengelberg, 1895-1920," *De Nieuwe Courant*, April 23, 1920; "Willem Mengelberg Gehuldigde," *De Tijd*, April 26, 1920; and "La fête Willem Mengelberg à Amsterdam," *La Gazette de Hollande*, April 26, 1920. This last newspaper seems to be an example of the French-language press that had been established in the Netherlands around the time of the two Hague Conventions, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

interests of the Netherlands at this time. Just like the NBDN's representatives—and many other individuals outside of the Dutch government—Mengelberg was acting as an unofficial diplomat of sorts here, working within his own field toward the reestablishment of the international reputation of the Netherlands after the war.

When he went on to publish a retrospective on the Mahler-Feest in late 1920, Mengelberg included excerpts from newspaper articles published in Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, England, and the United States.⁷¹ Though it is clear that Mengelberg carefully selected and assembled these excerpts as the editor of the volume, the monograph (unsurprisingly) fails to note that he was also involved, behind-the-scenes, in the drafting and editing of some, but certainly not all, of the articles contained within it. Among the articles reprinted in this volume is the Italian-language contribution to the Rome-based *Il Tempo* written by Alfredo Casella—an article which caught the attention of G.J. Hoogewerff, a Dutch art historian and the NBDN's foreign correspondent based in Italy. In an update to Drion on recent coverage of the Netherlands in the Italian press spanning June 12–25, 1920, Hoogewerff describes Casella's article as “a *very* agreeable piece,” and indicates that his assistant has forwarded a copy of the article to Drion.⁷² As quoted at the outset of this chapter, Casella's article includes, among other things, the assertion that through the Mahler-Feest, “the highest union possible within humanity—that of the arts—could be seen again for the first time since 1914”; it is likely due to statements like this that

⁷¹ See *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. C. Rudolf Mengelberg (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1920), which I also discuss further in the following chapter.

⁷² “Dit geldt even zeer een ander artikel van artistieke aard en wel dat van Alfredo Casella over de Mahlerfeesten te Amsterdam in *Il Tempo* van het begin van deze week. Een zéér sympathiek stuk. Mej. De Zwart heeft het u toegezonden.” Press Report from G.J. Hoogewerff to Drion, June 26, 1920, collection 2.19.026, box 33, Inventaris van het archief van het Nationaal Bureau voor Documentatie over Nederland, 1919-1936, Het Nationaal Archief, The Hague. Emphasis original.

Hoogewerff labeled it as “very agreeable” to the larger Dutch cause.⁷³ With the NBDN’s awareness of this article—and its usefulness to Dutch diplomacy—Mengelberg’s aggressive press strategy seems to have been validated, with the festival truly being interpreted as an event of political significance by an uninvolved observer.

2.3 Internationalism in the Mahler-Feest

The meticulous press strategy discussed in the previous section was far from the only way that the 1920 Mahler-Feest intersected with the contemporaneous world of post-war politics. Indeed, just about every aspect of the festival was carefully planned and executed with attention given to the ways that the event would contribute to ongoing conversations about the Netherlands’ role—and the role of the arts—in the changing world order after the war. As stated at the outset of this chapter, I argue here that the organizing committee specifically hoped for the festival to play a role in the reestablishment of the Netherlands’ international reputation, with the event mirroring the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as the numerous other international gatherings held in the Netherlands in the early 1900s, in several key ways. In this section, I examine four such aspects of the festival, each of which serves to demonstrate the specific goals of its organizers: the assembly of prominent guests from across the western world, the secondary program of chamber music written and performed by an international group of musicians, the signing of the Manifesto of Foreign Guests, and the establishment of a global Mahler Union at the end of the festival. Each of these actions demonstrates a commitment to the principles of internationalism on the part of the organizing committee, but at the same time, each

⁷³ See note 4 above for original citation of Casella’s article.

also supports the specific *Dutch* brand of post-war internationalism, in which the hosting of foreign peoples and institutions was a strategy just as much nationalistic as it was internationalistic.

From the earliest days of planning, the members of the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité* went to great efforts to invite guests from all corners of the (Western) world and to ensure that these guests would be supported to the greatest extent possible during their travel and stay within the Netherlands. As early as June 1919, a draft sketch of a poster advertising the festival indicates that the committee hoped to have 3,000 copies printed in German, 1,000 in French, 1,000 in English, and 5,000 in Dutch, allowing them to advertise both locally and abroad.⁷⁴ The committee also compiled extensive lists of guests that they hoped to invite, with individuals listed from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy, France, England, the United States, and (naturally) the Netherlands.⁷⁵ Due to the Mahler-centric nature of the event, and perhaps also to the Germanic musical tradition, the number of invitees from Germany and Austria far exceeded that of any other nation, and number of the attendees from these nations likely rivaled the number of Dutch attendees at the festival itself.

The majority of foreign invitees received a mailed invitation indicating that they would receive "hospitable accommodation (room and board)" at a specifically listed private home in Amsterdam; the invitation also indicated that in this home, the invitee would find their "tickets

⁷⁴ Draft sketch of Mahler-Feest poster, undated, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. This draft poster is drawn on stationery from the Hotel Nassau-Bergen, which is where Rudolf Mengelberg's diary indicates that the committee met on June 21, 1919 for a discussion of the festival plans. See Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, June 21, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁷⁵ See various lists of invitees and attendees, 1919-1920, collection 1089, boxes 2996 and 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

and festival book, as well as special invitations to various events during the festival.”⁷⁶ The reverse side of the invitation asked the invitee to RSVP and further indicated that the document would entitle the receiver to procure a Dutch visa from their local consulate; in addition, the invitee would be entitled to a first-class train ticket from the Dutch border to their destination in Amsterdam.⁷⁷ At the top of the invitation, next to the official Mahler-Feest insignia, were three names attesting to the significance of the festival: Prince Hendrik of the Netherlands (listed as *Protektor*), J. De Visser, Cultural Minister of the Netherlands (Honorary Chairman), and A. Roëll, the Queen’s Emissary to the Province of Noord-Holland (Chairman).

The first two names here (Prince Hendrik and J. De Visser) seem largely ceremonial; there is no evidence that either of these men participated directly in the planning and/or execution of the festival aside from helping to channel the necessary funding to the Concertgebouw (which, of course, was indispensable). The third name, however, presents a more interesting case. Antonie Roëll—the governor of Noord-Holland (the province in which Amsterdam lies), a former mayor of Amsterdam, and member of an aristocratic family involved in many high-level positions throughout the Netherlands—played a more hands-on role in the Mahler-Feest, serving as the most explicit link between the festival and the Dutch government.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ “Sie finden gastliche Aufnahme (Logis und Verpflegung) im Hause [blank space] bei [blank space]. Dort sind deponiert: Eintrittskarten und Festbuch, sowie besondere Einladungen zu verschiedenen Veranstaltungen während des Festes.“ German-language invitation to the 1920 Mahler-Feest, undated, collection 1089, box 3003, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. It appears that the festival committee mailed these German-language invitations to all foreign invitees, regardless of their local language.

⁷⁷ “Gegen Vorzeigung dieser Einladung erteilt Ihnen der zuständige holländische Konsul das Visum zur Einreise nach Holland. Gegen Abgabe einliegenden Ausweises (Reiseschein) erhalten Sie vom Bahnhofsvorstand der holländischen Übergangsstation) unentgeltlich eine Fahrkarte 1. Klasse nach [blank space]. Bitte einliegende Postkarten umgehend ausgefüllt zurückzusenden.“ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Among the other members of this family was J.A. Roëll, one of the three members of the planning committee for the 1915 Hague Convention (before its war-induced cancellation), as discussed above. The exact relationship between the two Roëlls discussed here is unclear.

Roëll was made aware of the planning for the festival as early as July 1919, and in September of that year, he wrote a letter to Rudolf Mengelberg stating that he had conveyed the Concertgebouw's plans to the *Dagelijksch Bestuur* [lit. "daily committee"]—a sort of executive committee of the Dutch government—and that these plans had been well received by its members. According to this letter, the committee hoped to remain involved in the planning for the Mahler-Feest, with Roëll writing that "it is the intention of the *Bestuur* to request approval [from the government] for the various plans" relating to the festival.⁷⁹ In any case, whether the invited guests recognized the names or not, the presence of Roëll, De Visser, and Prince Hendrik on the official Mahler-Feest invitation would certainly have testified to the grandiosity—and official nature—of the event to which they had been invited.

Among the central purposes of the *Mahler-Comité's* plan to invite guests from across the world was the intention to show them the richness—both material and cultural—that could be readily found in the Netherlands. The lodging and transportation perks discussed above were no small part of this, but the committee further arranged for other events during the festival which were designed to showcase the Dutch way of life. This intention is conveyed most directly in a February 1920 letter from the committee (likely Rudolf Mengelberg, again) to the society *Nederland in den Vreemde* [The Netherlands Abroad], which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, sought to educate foreigners on the Netherlands, holding events both locally and internationally. The committee's letter includes the following:

During this event [the Mahler-Feest], Amsterdam will be visited by a great number of prominent figures in almost every field, among them many well-known musicians and

⁷⁹ "Overeenkomstig Uwer verzoek... is het mij aangenaam U te kunnen mededelen, dat ik het plan ter take bracht in eene bijeenkomst van het Dagelijksch Bestuur der Feestcommissie en dat dit hier daarmede in hoofdzaak kan vereenigen. Het ligt echter in de bedoelingen van algemeene vergadering der Feestcommissie de goedkeuring op de verschillende plannen te vragen." Letter from A. Roëll to Rudolf Mengelberg, Sept. 15, 1919, collection 1089, box 2996, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

journalists. Since there are free days in between most of the concerts, it is perhaps in the interest of your Society *to acquaint the foreign guests more closely with the intellectual and societal life of our nation* through visits to museums or the zoo, or through some kind of lecture. It is unnecessary to state that we are gladly prepared assist in this regard.⁸⁰

The official *Programm der Mahler-Fest-Wochen* distributed to the foreign guests demonstrates the degree to which such outings and events were planned. The “afternoons” section of the program describes an afternoon tea aboard a steamship on May 13, a visit to the Rijksmuseum on May 15, a visit to the Asscher diamond-cutting firm on May 18, and a boat tour of the city of Amsterdam on May 19.⁸¹ According to the Dutch press, this boat tour was sponsored by the Amsterdam City Council [*Gemeentebestuur*] and was attended by Alma Mahler, Tilly Mengelberg, Arnold Schoenberg, Johan Halvorsen, and Florent Schmitt, as well as members of the Concertgebouw’s board, the City Council, *Nederland in den Vreemde*, and “various other celebrities from Amsterdam”; Willem Mengelberg could not make it due to his busy rehearsal schedule for the festival performances.⁸² In addition to these Dutch-themed touristic outings, the foreign guests were further invited to Haarlem (the provincial capital) for an afternoon tea hosted by Roëll and his wife on May 16.⁸³

A few weeks after the conclusion of the festival, the committee wrote thank-you letters to many of the individuals and organizations involved in these demonstrations of Dutch culture;

⁸⁰ “Bij die gelegenheid zal Amsterdam worden bezocht door een groot aantal vooraanstaande personen op bijna elk gebied, waaronder vele bekende musici en journalisten. Waar de Concerten zullen plaatsvinden meestal met een tusschenruimte van een dag ligt het wellicht op den weg Uwer Vereeniging, de buitenlandsche gasten door bezoeken aan musea, Artis, of door een of andere lezing nader met het geestelijk en maatschappelijk leven in ons land bekend te maken. Het is onnoodig te verklaren, dat wij gaarne tot medewerking in dit opzicht bereid zijn.” Letter from *Mahler-Comité* to the Vereeniging Nederland in den Vreemde, Feb. 18, 1920, collection 1089, box 2997, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. Emphasis added.

⁸¹ See the appendix of this dissertation for a full day-by-day schedule of events during the Mahler-Feest.

⁸² See “Boottocht,” *De Tijd*, May 20, 1920.

⁸³ “Programm der Mahler-Fest-Wochen,” May 5–21, 1920, collection 3090-01, box 7113, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

such letters were sent to the diamond-cutting firm, the director of the Rijksmuseum, and the steamship company mentioned above, and they all focus specifically on the effects that these visits had on the foreign guests.⁸⁴ On the same day, the committee sent a letter to the director of *Nederland in den Vreemde*, writing that:

We would like to express once again our sincere and heartfelt thanks for the incredibly great and sincere support that you and your society provided for the reception of the foreign guests of the Mahler-Feest. We are certain that the society *Nederland in den Vreemde* played a large role in the success of the festival, and *specifically in the fact that the foreign guests left the Netherlands with such exceptionally multifaceted impressions.*⁸⁵

With this letter, there is no doubt about the degree to which this goal—acquainting the foreign guests with the Dutch way of life—was prioritized by the *Mahler-Comité*, just as the same goal was prioritized by governmental and non-governmental entities in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and (especially) 1907, as discussed above. Most specifically, the afternoon tea reception for the festival’s foreign guests at the Roëll household mirrors the earlier social events held for the foreign delegates at the Hague Conventions, which had been hosted by Queen Wilhelmina and her Foreign Secretary. Effectively, then, the foreign guests at the Mahler-Feest were treated like dignitaries of sorts, being hosted by the Queen’s Emissary to Noord-Holland, for whom the assembling of international guests would be seen as a domestic priority.

⁸⁴ See letters from *Mahler-Comité* to Diamantslijperij Firma Asscher, B.W.F. van Riemsdijk, and Stoomvaart Maatschappij ‘Nederland,’ May 29, 1920, collection 1089, box 2997, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁸⁵ “Wij hebben de eer U bij dezen nog eens onzen oprechten en hartelijken dank te zeggen voor den buitengewoon grooten en sympathieken steun door U en Uwe vereeniging ondervonden bij gelegenheid van de ontvangst der buitenlandsche gasten van het Mahler-Feest. Wij zijn het er over eens, dat de Vereeniging ‘Nederland in den Vreemde’ een groot aandeel heeft aan het welslagen van het feest en speciaal aan het feit, dat de buitenlandsche gasten met zoo bijzonder veelzijdige indrukken Nederland hebben verlaten.” Letter from *Mahler-Comité* to the Vereeniging Nederland in den Vreemde, May 29, 1920, collection 1089, box 2997, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. Emphasis added.

Beyond assembling foreign audience members, the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité* also ensured that the *music* performed at the festival would capture the international spirit that they sought to promote. Due to the centrality of Mahler on the festival's primary program, the way that the committee achieved this was through the incorporation of five afternoon concerts of chamber music written—and, for many of the pieces, performed—by a diverse selection of relatively contemporary composers. The series was officially organized by the violinist Alexander Schmuller and featured works by Max Reger, Alphons Diepenbrock, Francesco Malipiero, Alfredo Casella, Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, Sem Dresden, Paul Le Flem, Paul Gilson, Rudolf Mengelberg, Willem Pijper, G.H.G. von Bruckén Fock, Arnold Schoenberg, Modest Mussorgsky, Johan Halvorsen, Ewald Straesser, Jan van Gilse, Alexander Scriabin, Julius Röntgen, Adolf Busch, Carl Nielsen, Artur Schnabel, Josef Suk, Florent Schmitt, and Igor Stravinsky. The program book for this series of chamber concerts indicates that the “Honorary Committee” [*Eere-Comité*] was comprised of 23 individuals, including Antonie Roëll, Jo Beukers-van Ogtrop, Hendrik Freijer, Mathilde Mengelberg-Wübbe (the wife of Willem), and a number of other figures associated with the Concertgebouw.⁸⁶

Schmuller provides the most explicit description of the origins and goals of this chamber series in a preface within its program book, writing the following:

The plan to have several performances of International Modern Chamber Music during the Mahler-Feest arose from the idea that Amsterdam should be the center of musical internationalism these days and should extend hospitality to a number of creative and performing musicians from various nations.

Thus, the intention [was] for as many nations as possible to come forward with their most representative figures...

⁸⁶ See *Vijf Concerten van Internationale Moderne Kamermuziek tijdens het Mahler-Feest, 6-21 Mei 1920, Georganiseerd door Alexander Schmuller* (Amsterdam: N.V. Boek- en Handelsdrukkerij, 1920). Available in collection 1089, box 3004, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam. Interestingly, Rudolf Mengelberg is not listed as a member of this committee despite his hands-on participation in all other aspects of planning for the festival.

From the overview [of the concerts], you can see that we have meticulously striven for the majority of European nations to be represented. For Switzerland, the famous Zurich-based composer Volkmar Andreae was invited; he could not come due to pressing engagements. Of the English composers, Edward Elgar was held back due to terrible family circumstances... [Discusses several other English composers who could not attend.]

My own [Russian] countrymen are, unfortunately, only represented by Mussorgsky, Scriabin, and Stravinsky. It was impossible to reach contemporaries such as Glazunov, etc. We also lack representatives of Polish, Finnish, and Spanish nationality.⁸⁷

It is clear from this preface that Schmuller and the committee went to great lengths to ensure that the chamber music series was as thoroughly international as possible, even if they were not able to have quite as much diversity as they had initially hoped. Of even greater significance for the purposes of this dissertation is Schmuller's support for "the idea that Amsterdam should be the center of musical internationalism these days," providing yet another diplomatic lens through which the Mahler-Feest can be seen. For Schmuller and the other members of the committee (including Roëll, the Queen's Emissary), casting Amsterdam as a center for *musical* internationalism would have gone hand-in-hand with the broader post-war efforts to cast the Netherlands as a center for *all* types of internationalism. Significantly, Schmuller—just like Rudolf Mengelberg—was not a native Netherlander, and his role as the organizer of this concert series—which supported the larger Dutch political cause—would likely have lent even greater weight to such proclamations of internationalism.

⁸⁷ "Het plan om tijdens het Mahler-Feest eenige uitvoeringen van Internationale Moderne Kamermuziek te geven is gerijpt uit de overweging, dat Amsterdam in die dagen het centrum van muzikaal internationalisme zal zijn en aantal van scheppende en herscheppende kunstenaars uit verschillende landen gastvrijheid zal verleen.

Vandaar de opzet om zoveel mogelijk landen met hunne meest representatieve figuren naar voren te doen komen...

Uit het overzicht zal men zien, dat er zorgvuldig naar is gestreefd om de meeste landen van Europa te doen vertegenwoordigen. Voor Zwitserland was de bekende Züricher toondichter Volkmar Andreae genoodigt; dringende bezigheden beletten hem echter te komen. Van de Engelsche toondichters was Edward Elgar wegens droevige familieomstandigheden verhinderd...

Mijn landgenooten zijn helaas slechts vertegenwoordigd door Moussorgsky, Scriabine en Strawinsky. Het was onmogelijk om tijdgenooten als Glazounow, enz. te bereiken. Zoo ontbreken ook vertegenwoordigers van Poolsche, Finsche en Spaansche nationaliteit." Alexander Schmuller, "Een Woord Vooraf," in *ibid.*, 5-6.

By the end of the Mahler-Feest, two additional initiatives arose, further demonstrating the event's diplomatic orientation: the signing of an international manifesto promoting the continued use of music as a unifying political tool, and the creation of a global "Mahler Union." The first of these—the English-language "Manifesto of Foreign Guests at the Mahler Festival"—was enacted on the final day of the festival (May 21, 1920) having been signed by musical representatives of nine nations: Alfredo Casella (Italy), Florent Schmitt (France), Arnold Schoenberg (Austria), Oscar Bie (Germany), Samuel Langford (England), Paul Gilson (Belgium), Carl Nielsen (Denmark), and Johan Halvorsen (Norway). A German-language copy of the manifesto lists Julius Rabe (Sweden) and omits Gilson; there is no obvious indication of the reason for this discrepancy.⁸⁸ The manifesto was not signed by any representative of the Netherlands, perhaps to avoid any impressions of bias as the host nation, but perhaps also to reaffirm the desired Dutch position of serving primarily as a mediator between other nations. It is unclear who was actually involved in the drafting of the manifesto, but it seems that it was *not* likely written by the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité*, indicating that the ideas introduced by this committee were well-received by the international guests.

The Manifesto begins as follows:

The foreign guests of the Mahler Festival Committee here assembled unite in thanking the Mahler Festival Committee and the City of Amsterdam for the generous hospitality and the numerous kindnesses extended to them. They recognize that this hospitality has sprung from a broad spirit of international brotherhood and a profound understanding of the significance of music as the great universal art. The opportunity afforded to all of us—for the first time since the long years of war and isolation—to shake the hands of our

⁸⁸ See "Manifest der ausländischen Gäste des Mahlerfestes in Amsterdam," May 21, 1920, collection 1089, box 3006, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

brethren in art, irrespective of nationality and race, has been one of the most precious gifts, for which we shall never cease to be grateful.⁸⁹

Though it acknowledges the fact that the festival was ostensibly centered around the two figures of Mahler and Willem Mengelberg, the manifesto goes on to assert that:

We feel that the great importance of this occasion [i.e., the Mahler-Feest] lies in its universal social aspect. The way is pointed here to the great goal towards which musicians must strive in the years to come; to rebuild the broken spiritual bridges between the peoples; to foster that common understanding through which alone the true brotherhood of man may be attained.⁹⁰

In isolation, the above quote holds much more value as a political statement than as a musical one, indicating that the signers of the manifesto truly saw themselves as artistic diplomats, striving to find ways to restore “the true brotherhood of man” after the preceding years of turmoil.

While the first portion of the manifesto is centered on these lofty ideals, its second half proposes a music-centric strategy for the accomplishment of such goals:

Inspired by this thought, we express the hope that other international manifestations may grow out of the present one. We hope that as soon as possible, in some such neutral and hospitable spot as this, where all the artistic agencies for its fulfillment are at hand, a great international festival or congress of music may be held, at which every musical nation of the world may present its last and best contributions to the art, and at which the workers in musical aesthetics and criticism may exchange their thoughts and the results of their studies.⁹¹

For the signers, then, the Mahler-Feest was just the beginning of what they imagined would be a long line of global music festivals, drawing performers and scholars from across the world to celebrate the achievements of modern composition, and simultaneously to continue extracting as

⁸⁹ “Manifesto of the foreign guests at the Mahler Festival May 21, 1920,” reprinted in *Das Mahler-Fest Amsterdam, Mai 1920*, 71.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

much diplomatic potential out of music as they could. Significantly, the identification of “some such neutral and hospitable spot as this,” would have served to further amplify the perception of the Netherlands as such a place—a highly desirable perception in the eyes of the festival’s Dutch organizers and sponsors.

The manifesto concludes with a call for the establishment of “an international committee” tasked with carrying out its plans for organizing further music festivals; the signers propose Willem Mengelberg as the leader of this committee, writing that he, “perhaps more than any man in Europe, has during the years of war kept alive the spirit of internationalism in music.”⁹² Based on the existing archival materials, it does not seem that any such committee was actually formed, nor that any actions were taken in direct response to the manifesto, though Paul Op de Coul and other scholars have drawn links between this manifesto and the 1922 foundation of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), particularly given that Egon Wellesz and Paul Stefan—both of whom had been at the Mahler-Feest and strongly supported its political positions—were closely involved in the founding of the ISCM.⁹³ As Op de Coul notes, both Wellesz and Stefan published articles in the 1920s in which they specifically alluded to the Mahler-Feest as a “prelude” (to use Stefan’s word) to the ISCM festivals.⁹⁴ This link to the ISCM festivals—which still persist annually today—is among the most significant lasting ramifications of the 1920 Mahler-Feest.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ See Paul op de Coul, “Modern Chamber Music at the 1920 Mahler Festival: A Prelude to the International Society of Contemporary Music,” in *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, ed. Donald Mitchell (Haarlem, Netherlands: TEMA Uitgevers, 1995), I.83-84.

⁹⁴ See Egon Wellesz, “Salzburg,” *Melos* 4, no. 1 (August 1924): 13; and Paul Stefan, “Zehn Jahre neue Musik aus dem Anbruch,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 11, no. 9-10 (November/December 1929): 346.

The final day of the festival—May 21, 1920—also saw the establishment of an ostensibly global *Mahler-Bond* [Mahler Union, or *Mahler-Bund* in German], which, according to a set of draft statutes written by the Concertgebouw leadership, aimed “to promote and spread the understanding and cultivation of Gustav Mahler’s art.”⁹⁵ This was to be done, among other methods, through “the promotion of performances (Mahler festivals, etc.) in all cultured lands,” the hosting of “theoretical and popular lectures,” “the publication of essays and analyses,” “the establishment of a performance school” focused specifically on Mahler’s musical style, and “the establishment of local chapters in suitable locations of all nations.”⁹⁶ The international nature of the organization is further reinforced through the fact that the membership costs given in these draft statutes are listed in guilders, francs, marks, kronen, and dollars.

The Concertgebouw archive holds a 14-page list of the names and addresses of 145 individuals present at the Mahler-Feest who wished to join the *Mahler-Bond*; the majority of the addresses given are within the Netherlands (covering Amsterdam as well as a many other Dutch municipalities), but the list also includes large numbers of signers from Germany and Austria, and lesser numbers from Sweden and the United States.⁹⁷ The document lists Alma Mahler as the Patroness [*Beschermvrouwe*] of the *Mahler-Bond*, Willem Mengelberg as its Honorary Chairman [*Eere-Voorzitter*], and Arnold Schoenberg as the Chairman [*Voorzitter*]. A separate handwritten

⁹⁵ “Der Bund bezweckt: das Verständnis und die Pflege der Kunst Gustav Mahlers zu fördern und zu verbreiten.” “Entwurf: Statuten des Mahlerbundes,” undated, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

⁹⁶ “Dieser Zweck soll erreicht werden: 1. Durch Veranstaltung oder Förderung von Ausführungen (Mahlerfesten etc) in allen Kulturländern...; 2. Durch theoretische und populäre Vorträge; 3. Durch Herausgabe von Schriften und Analysen; 4. Durch Errichtung einer Stilbildungsschule...; 8. Durch Errichtung von Ortsgruppen an hierfür geeigneten Orten aller Länder.” Ibid.

⁹⁷ See “Mahler-Bond: Opgericht 21 Mei 1920 te Amsterdam,” May 21, 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

list of names in the archive seems to indicate early planning for various local chapters of the *Mahler-Bond*, with names listed for Austria (including Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Franz Schreker, Erich Korngold, Paul Stefan, Richard Specht, Guido Adler, Alfred Roller Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Egon Wellesz, et al.), Germany (Paul Bekker, Bruno Walter, Richard Strauss, Artur Nikisch, et al.), Sweden (Julius Rabe), Denmark (Carl Nielsen and Johan Halvorsen), Hungary (Bela Bartok), and France (Romain Rolland).⁹⁸ It is unclear to what extent any of these individuals were actually involved in planning and/or discussions (especially those who were not in attendance at the festival), but about half of the names are accompanied by a handwritten “X,” potentially indicating that they had confirmed their interest in the matter.

Despite its lofty ideals and early interest, the *Mahler-Bond* never got much further than the initial planning phases; this was primarily the result of significant disagreements between Willem Mengelberg and Arnold Schoenberg about the very nature of the society, with the former advocating for it to be as thoroughly international as possible, and the latter for it to be primarily an Austro-German entity. The seriousness of these disagreements came to the fore when each of the involved parties examined the draft statutes that the other had written in the summer of 1920. This began on July 14 of that year, when Schoenberg sent his draft to the Concertgebouw’s *Mahler-Comité*, Alma Mahler, and a number of prominent Austro-German conductors (including Otto Klemperer, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Carl Schuricht, and others), asking for their feedback and expressing his hope that the society would be fully functional by the

⁹⁸ See Handwritten List of Names and Locations, undated, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

beginning of September.⁹⁹ A few days later, Schoenberg wrote in a separate letter to Alma Mahler that “I regard [the document] as very successful... Hopefully the Amsterdammers will embrace it firmly right away!”¹⁰⁰ At some point later that summer, Alma responded to Schoenberg’s drafts, writing to him that “I find your ideas *simply splendid* and *absolutely feasible* and *completely in Gustav’s spirit*.”¹⁰¹ Despite Schoenberg’s initial optimism and support from Alma, his draft was not at all embraced by the Amsterdammers.

A letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Schoenberg on August 25 indicates that he and the other members of the Concertgebouw committee had only received Schoenberg’s statutes shortly prior to that date. In this letter, Rudolf expresses his disapproval of the fact that Schoenberg had distributed the draft more widely than they had initially agreed upon, but goes on to write that “we can completely agree to the essentials of your concept of the Society’s function and purpose, and the means to achieve them.—However, not so concerning the organization of the Society.”¹⁰² Rudolf goes on to write that:

We desire Amsterdam to be the main location and therefore the central management. For various evident reasons: 1.) the idea to found the Society came from Amsterdam; 2.) the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam provides a natural headquarters and the strongest means of promotion (conductor, orchestra, choruses); 3.) for financial reasons.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ See letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Mahler-Feest Committee and Alma Mahler, July 14, 1920, translated in *Schoenberg’s Correspondence with Alma Mahler*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth L. Keathley and Marilyn McCoy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 250.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Alma Mahler, July 19, 1920, trans. in *ibid.*, 252.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Alma Mahler to Arnold Schoenberg, undated [July or August 1920], trans. in *ibid.*, 257. Emphasis original.

¹⁰² Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Arnold Schoenberg, Aug. 25, 1920, trans. in Berthold Türcke, “The Mahler Society: A Project of Schoenberg and Mengelberg,” *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 7, no. 1 (June 1983): 69.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Later in the letter, Mengelberg refers to Schoenberg's intended society as an "autocracy," and pushes back against the latter's vision of the role of president, writing that in the opinion of the Concertgebouw committee, the president "should have a moral dominance rather than absolute independence laid down by the statutes."¹⁰⁴ Despite these initial points of strife, Rudolf here expresses an optimism that an agreement could be found during Schoenberg's upcoming visit to Amsterdam that fall.

On September 11, Schoenberg ostensibly responded to this in a letter to Willem Mengelberg, in which he states that "I am *deeply offended* with the manner in which my draft of the statutes for the Mahler Society was received. How can one have exposed me to something like that!!"¹⁰⁵ In particular, Schoenberg was dissatisfied with the system of checks and balances that the Dutch statutes would have imposed on his leadership of the society through the ability of all members to vote on major decisions, going so far as to write that "I am indeed no democrat; I think that democracy is antiquated. Yet nowhere does it seem so unreasonable and unsuitable as here."¹⁰⁶ He even goes on, in this letter, to propose his resignation from the society if a suitable compromise (i.e., one in which his power would remain absolute) could not be found.

Eleven days later, Willem Mengelberg responded to Schoenberg's letter with a telegram, beginning as follows:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 71.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Willem Mengelberg, Sept. 11, 1920, trans. in *ibid.*, 79. Emphasis original. See original letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Willem Mengelberg, Sept. 17, 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Around this time, Schoenberg was also heavily involved in the drafting of statutes for his *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen* (Society for Private Musical performances), which likely made him feel more strongly about the necessity for strict statutes here. In 1938, Schoenberg would go on to write that "I was a kind of dictator, 1920, in a musical society, created by myself in my ideas and on the whole very successful." Translated in Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 151.

In your opinion, you are right about everything regarding the establishment of the *Mahler-Bond*; however, we in Holland are of a different opinion. We want an absolutely international *Mahler-Bond* in which America, England, and France are just as involved as Vienna and Germany, which is in the interest of the Mahler matter. Your statutes, which are locally grounded in German—and specifically Viennese—circumstances and views, upon which the whole thing will be established to suit your personal opinion, would be absolutely untenable for other nations, and Holland would not participate therein.

Our view, by contrast, is for an institution that gives equal statutory rights to all nations, through which each receives equal enthusiasm and develops equal activity. Only such international foundations would allow for a large, rich, and fruitful Society.¹⁰⁷

Schoenberg responded to this telegram a few weeks later, with a letter seemingly designed to ease the tensions between the two. In this letter, dated October 12, Schoenberg writes that “since [your telegram] attested your friendship in the clearest and most intensive manner, I am now sure that we shall certainly come to an agreement orally. As deep as our differences may be in regard to the Mahler Society, I am convinced we shall find a solution that will satisfy both of us.”¹⁰⁸

On December 13, Rudolf Mengelberg’s diary includes an entry describing a meeting between Willem and Schoenberg as lasting from 1:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., in which Schoenberg (a “very tiring man”) “presents his ridiculous demands for every point” on the statutes.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, despite their mutual goodwill toward one another, the men were not able to reconcile their

¹⁰⁷ “Nach Deiner Auffassung Einrichtung Mahlerbund hast Du in allem Recht jedoch haben wir in Holland andere Auffassung. Wir wollen einen absolut internationalen Mahlerbund worin America, England, Frankreich ebenso interessiere sind als Wien und Deutschland—dies im Interesse der Mahlersache. Dine auf Deutsche speziell Wiener Lokalverhältnisse und Ansichten gegründete Statuten nach welchen das ganze auf Deine Persönliche Auffassung passend eingerichtet wird würde für andere Nationen absolut unannehmlich, auch Holland würde da nicht mitmachen.

Unsere Auffassung dagegen ist dass Einrichtung allen Nationen statutarische Gleichberechtigung gibt wodurch Alle gleiche Begeisterung empfinden und gleich rege Tätigkeit entfalten werden. Nur solche internationale Grundlagen werden grossen reiche Früchttragenden Bund ermöglichen.” Copy of telegram from Willem Mengelberg to Arnold Schoenberg, Sept. 22, 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Willem Mengelberg, Oct. 12, 1920, trans. in Türcke, 89.

¹⁰⁹ “Konferenz mit Schönberg über die Statuten des Mahlerbundes. Von 1 bis 7½ Uhr! Zu Tisch bei Willem ausser Schönberg: Cronheim. Schönberg gibt in allen Punkten seiner lächerlichen Forderungen nach. Sehr ermüdender Mann.” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, Dec. 13, 1920, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

differences on this matter, and all activity surrounding the foundation of the society seems to have faded by the end of 1920 (although at least one local chapter of the society was formed that year, in Frankfurt, planning at least one concert of Mahler's Eighth Symphony along with works by Wolf and Bruckner).¹¹⁰ Schoenberg's last mention of the society came in a letter to Alma on February 8 of the following year, in which he writes that "the Mahler Union is still not formed! I actually have no further interest in this matter. I do not believe that it will develop to my liking."¹¹¹ This also appears to have been the end of the potential planning for a *second* Mahler-Feest under the auspices of the society, which had been under discussion after the first festival. On July 29, 1920, for example, Rudolf Mengelberg had written to Schoenberg that "we have to settle the question of the next Mahler Festival in Spring 1921 as soon as possible. It is very urgent"; however, the disagreements over the statutes of the *Mahler-Bond* seem to have superseded this discussion, and it appears that no concrete plans for such a second festival were ever made.¹¹²

During the summer of 1920, on the sidelines of these statue-based discussions, Rudolf Mengelberg hoped for his retrospective publication on the Mahler-Feest to be published under the auspices of the *Mahler-Bond*, serving as the first of many such publications that he hoped the society would eventually produce. Letters between this Mengelberg and Universal-Edition indicate that the fraught leadership discussions became an impediment to this as well, with the publisher writing to Mengelberg that "of course, we cannot issue a publication of the *Mahler-*

¹¹⁰ See "Einladung zur Gründung einer Frankfurter Ortsgruppe des Mahlerbundes," 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

¹¹¹ Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Alma Mahler, Feb. 8, 1921, trans. in *Schoenberg's Correspondence with Alma Mahler*, 264.

¹¹² Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Arnold Schoenberg, July 29, 1920, trans. in Türcke, 63.

Bond without Schoenberg’s approval,” since Schoenberg was—at least on paper—the Chairman of the Society.¹¹³ A few weeks later, however, Universal-Edition informed Mengelberg that they had received no response from Schoenberg on the matter and were prepared to move forward without his explicit approval.¹¹⁴ After much back-and-forth between Mengelberg and Universal-Edition, the book—*Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*—was released that fall, with the phrase “Publication of the *Mahler-Bond*” [*Veröffentlichung des Mahler-Bundes*] on its title page; at least one Dutch newspaper similarly announced it as such.¹¹⁵

Despite the interpersonal disagreements and lack of any real accomplishments, the idea of the *Mahler-Bond*—and specifically the view of it promoted by both Mengelbergs—adds another lens to the international frameworks surrounding the 1920 Mahler-Feest. For both Rudolf and Willem, the *Mahler-Bond* was to be an “absolutely international” society, with chapters as far away as the United States, but with its headquarters in Amsterdam. Beyond serving to solidify Amsterdam as a global center for Mahler’s music, this initiative would also have fit into the broader Dutch project of reclaiming the Netherlands’ role in global affairs—in all fields of human enterprise—following the loss of this role during the war. Thus, whether they were conscious of it or not, the Mengelbergs’ criticisms of Schoenberg’s German-centric plans for the *Mahler-Bond* came as a result of their own ideological pursuits which combined nationalistic and internationalistic ambitions in alignment with my conception of post-war internationalism as discussed in the previous chapter.

¹¹³ “Wir können selbstverständlich ohne Schönbergs Zustimmung nicht eine Publikation des Mahlerbundes herausgeben.” Letter from Universal-Edition to Rudolf Mengelberg, July 20, 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

¹¹⁴ See Letter from Universal-Edition to Rudolf Mengelberg, Aug. 7, 1920, collection 1089, box 3005, Inventaris van het Archief van het Concertgebouw N.V., Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

¹¹⁵ See J.W. Kersbergen, “Van het Mahlerfeest,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Dec. 2, 1920.

2.4 Conclusions

As I have shown throughout this chapter, the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest was a political statement just as much—if not even more—than it was a musicological or commemorative one. Of course, the festival did celebrate the achievements of Gustav Mahler and Willem Mengelberg, and did promote new interpretations of the music on its program, but at its heart, it arose from—and further contributed to—the specific socio-political circumstances of the Netherlands (and Western Europe more broadly) after the conclusion of the war. In planning the event, the Concertgebouw’s *Mahler-Comité*—with Rudolf Mengelberg at its helm—took great care to ensure that every aspect of the festival would support and promote their grandiose ideas for the centrality of Amsterdam in the contemporary musical world, operating in parallel with simultaneous efforts across many fields and enterprises to restore the Netherlands to the international status that it had developed in the early twentieth century and then lost during the First World War.

The *Mahler-Comité* specifically contributed to this through its ensuring that the foreign press would report on the festival in the desired manner, its assembly of (and hospitality toward) guests from across the Western world, the series of thoroughly international chamber music to accompany the Mahler performances, the signing of the Manifesto of Foreign Guests, and the establishment of the *Mahler-Bond*. These initiatives worked in tandem to promote the Netherlands, and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw more specifically, as a “neutral” site where the leading (musical) minds of the time could gather to discuss—and potentially solve—the great problems facing humanity after the war. In this way, the 1920 Mahler-Feest became something of a “proto-cosmopolitan space” (to echo Maurice Roche’s term introduced in the previous chapter) in which the event—through its employment of artistic diplomacy—allowed for its

attendees to experience a gathering in which the pursuit of internationalistic ideals superseded the nationalistic conflicts of the previous decade.¹¹⁶ In doing so, the Mahler-Feest distinguished itself from the relatively contemporaneous Salzburg Festival, which (at least in its original iteration) prioritized the national goals of Austria to a much greater extent than any internationalistic goals.

Anne-Isabelle Richard writes that over the past two centuries in the Netherlands, “international relations [have] not just [been] the purview of the Foreign Ministry and its diplomats. A much broader foreign policy elite of businesspeople, intellectuals and journalists and the like, as well as more grass-roots activists, [have been] involved in influencing foreign policy.”¹¹⁷ This is clearly the case with quasi-governmental groups like the NBDN, as discussed above, but I argue here that the Mahler-Feest provides further evidence for this assertion. Rudolf Mengelberg, the entire *Mahler-Comité*, and many others involved in the planning and execution of the festival should be considered part of this “foreign policy elite of businesspeople, intellectuals and journalists” who had a tangible effect on the post-war perceptions of the Netherlands, as well as on the shaping of its relations with the other nations that were represented by guests at the event.

The role of culture within the realm of diplomacy during this time was also entangled with notions of political neutrality, particularly in nations like the Netherlands. In their

¹¹⁶ See Maurice Roche, “Festivalization, cosmopolitanism and European culture: On the sociocultural significance of mega-events,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2011), 124-141.

¹¹⁷ Anne-Isabelle Richard, “Between the League of Nations and Europe: Multiple internationalisms and interwar Dutch civil society,” in *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands, 1815-2000: A small country on the global scene*, ed. Ruud van Dijk, Samuël Kruizinga, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, and Rimko van der Maar (London: Routledge, 2018), 97-98.

introduction to *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen, and Sven Widmalm write the following on the interwar period:

The role of scientists, scholars, and artists blended into, or was sometimes claimed to replace, the work of politicians. If a just and lasting peace could not be achieved through political dealings in Versailles, it might more reasonably be expected to come from those who had stayed out of (and indeed above) the war: the neutral nations and their unblemished purveyors of culture. Whatever was left of European civilization was supposed to reside in their minds. [...]

Their smallness was now an asset, their reluctance to take sides was now presented as moral rectitude—as a sign that *they* had not lost their heads to fanatic nationalism, that *they* were the ones who had preserved Europe’s civilization and rationality.¹¹⁸

Returning to the newspaper excerpts quoted at the outset of this chapter, such ideas were certainly not lost on those who attended the Mahler-Feest, with journalists such as Saerchinger and Kastner remarking specifically on the fact that the festival—through music—had accomplished something that had not yet been accomplished by career politicians in Versailles or anywhere else in the wake of the war. Indeed, almost all of the international coverage of the Mahler-Feest remarked on the “neutral” status of its host country, as though such a gathering would only have been possible in a location like Amsterdam.

While the Mahler-Feest was the most substantial *music*-centric attempt by a neutral country to assert its post-war significance on the world stage, it certainly was not the only intellectual venture that sought to strengthen one of Europe’s nonaligned lands immediately after the war. In Denmark, for example, the physicist Niels Bohr sought to use scientific collaboration in such a manner, with one of Bohr’s colleagues writing that “future researchers of all countries should meet one another in Copenhagen for special studies and to pursue common cultural ideals at the Bohr Institute of atomic physics”—a sentiment strikingly similar to that expressed in the

¹¹⁸ Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen, and Sven Widmalm, “Introduction,” in *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 2 and 4-5. Emphasis original.

Manifesto of Foreign Guests at the Mahler-Feest.¹¹⁹ For Henrik Knudsen and Henry Nielsen, this Danish openness to international cooperation in the sciences—which simultaneously advanced the national interests of Denmark—led to a circumstance in which “the new role of Danish scientists is best described as quasi-ambassadors in the service of the foreign policy of the small neutral state.”¹²⁰ As Jimena Canales has shown, Albert Einstein (though certainly not from one of the small neutral states) was a further proponent of this diplomatic interpretation of the sciences, writing in 1920 that “scientific creations... elevate the human spirit above personal and selfish nationalistic aims,” and in 1921 that “scientists... must be pioneers in this work of restoring internationalism.”¹²¹ Thus, the figures involved in the Mahler-Feest fit into a broader post-war movement in which European artists, scientists, and intellectuals increasingly took on roles that resembled those traditionally held by diplomats, using their own fields to work toward the larger societal goals that they hoped to achieve.

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, the line between nationalism and internationalism was particularly blurred in the Netherlands during the post-war years. In many instances, a single action or event—such as the 1920 Mahler-Feest—could promote the national interests of the Dutch state precisely through its promotion of international cooperation, fulfilling Van Vollenhoven’s “calling” for the nation. In her analysis of scientific collaboration in the post-war era, Somsen refers to “a general self-image that the Dutch developed in the course of the twentieth century: that their country is a ‘*gidsland*’—a ‘guiding nation,’ which does not wield

¹¹⁹ Arnold Sommerfeld, qtd. in Henrik Knudsen and Henry Nielsen, “Pursuing Common Cultural Ideals: Niels Bohr, Neutrality, and International Scientific Cooperation during the Interwar Period,” in *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 125.

¹²⁰ Knudsen and Nielsen, 134.

¹²¹ Albert Einstein, qtd. in Jimena Canales, “Of Twins and Time: Scientists, Intellectual Cooperation, and the League of Nations,” in *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 247.

much political power, but is a moral beacon for liberty, reason, and international openness.”¹²² She goes on to write that in several European countries during the post-war period, “science could be a *Macht-Ersatz* (power substitute)—an expression of national greatness at a cultural level which was taken to be at least as important as political and military prominence”; effectively, this conception of the *Macht-Ersatz* is equivalent to soft power, as introduced in the previous chapter.¹²³ Adopting this line of thought, I argue that music should be interpreted as another source of soft power in the post-war Netherlands, with the cultural and intellectual might of the Mahler-Feest serving to promote the image of the nation as a *gidsland*, strengthening its national standing through the promotion of artistic internationalism. Starting from the Dutch mathematician Willem De Sitter’s 1926 assertion that “in the realm of the sciences, the Netherlands is one of the great powers,” I argue that through the Mahler-Feest, the Netherlands became—even just for a short time—one of the world’s great powers in the realm of music.¹²⁴

¹²² Somsen, 58.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁴ “Nederland is op het gebied der wetenschap een der groote mogendheden.” Willem de Sitter, “Rede van Prof. Dr. W. De Sitter,” *Physica: Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Natuurkunde* 6, no. 1 (January 1926): 2.

Chapter 3: Rudolf Mengelberg's Festival Program Book

Despite the outward complexity of the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, almost every significant aspect of the event's framing—both musical and non-musical—can be traced back to one man: Rudolf Mengelberg. He was a member of the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité* (the group tasked with organizing the festival) from its earliest meetings in the summer of 1919, and, according to numerous pieces of documentary evidence, it was this Mengelberg who came up with the idea of holding a Mahler-centric festival in the first place.¹ Though his primary position on the committee was ostensibly to serve in the scholarly (and thus behind-the-scenes) role of researching and writing the festival's program book, Mengelberg's ideas impacted all of the planning and framing surrounding the event, particularly in relation to its political and diplomatic valences. Thus, while the jubilee clearly put Gustav Mahler and Willem Mengelberg in the spotlight, one might equally label it as a festival centered around Rudolf Mengelberg in terms of the values and ideas that it promoted.

Kurt Rudolf Mengelberg was born on February 1, 1892, in Crefeld (spelled Krefeld since 1925), a German city on the Rhine northwest of Düsseldorf, not far from the Dutch border.² Though their exact relationship is described in various ways by different sources, it is clear that Mengelberg's father—a prominent lawyer—was a cousin of the conductor Willem Mengelberg.

¹ See, for example, letter from Heinrich Mengelberg to Rudolf Mengelberg, April 12, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7099, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague, which I discuss further below. In this, Mengelberg's father responds to a letter in which Rudolf ostensibly introduced the idea of a Mahler festival in connection with Willem's anniversary; the date of this letter is well before the Concertgebouw began any official planning for the event.

² Biographical information taken from Paul Cronheim, "Rudolf Mengelberg (Krefeld, 1 februari 1892 – Beausoleil (A.M.), 13 oktober 1959)," in *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 1960, 131-135 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960).

After initially studying law in Geneva and Bonn, Rudolf decided to change course, moving to Leipzig around 1912 to study musicology under Hugo Riemann, with the goal of receiving a doctoral degree. He completed a dissertation on the eighteenth-century Italian composer Giovanni Alberto Ristori in 1915, and this study was published in book form by Breitkopf & Härtel the following year.³ Shortly thereafter, Mengelberg moved to Amsterdam, where he would spend the next forty years of his life.

According to a Dutch immigration register, Mengelberg entered the Netherlands on November 7, 1916, at the age of 24; the document lists his occupation as “student of music.”⁴ Upon his arrival in Amsterdam, he began studying composition with his cousin Willem—who by then had been the chief conductor of the Concertgebouworkest for more than twenty years—as well as with Cornelis Dopper, an assistant conductor of the orchestra. He was hired by the Concertgebouw as a program editor the following year, which served to catapult him into his impactful position on the *Mahler-Comité* in 1919. Perhaps owing to his success with the Mahler-Feest, Mengelberg quickly ascended through the ranks of the Concertgebouw, becoming its artistic director in 1925 and its general director in 1935. He remained in this latter position until 1955, when the Concertgebouw and Concertgebouworkest became separate legal entities, at which point he retired and moved to the southern French town of Beausoleil (bordering Monaco), where he remained until his death in October 1959.

³ See Curt Rudolf Mengelberg, *Giovanni Alberto Ristori: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte italienischer Kunstherrschaft in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916). Both in German- and Dutch-language sources, Mengelberg’s first name is spelled variably as Curt or Kurt.

⁴ Vreemdelingenregister, Nov. 7, 1916, archive 5225, item 935, Archief van de Gemeentepolitie, Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Netherlands. <https://archieff.amsterdam/indexen/deeds/363b2ffa-0fdb-4908-ad36-778cbfb98186>. This document also indicates that Mengelberg became a naturalized citizen of the Netherlands in 1932. According to Paul Cronheim’s above-cited obituary, Mengelberg moved to the Netherlands in 1915—a detail which is supported by letters from Mengelberg to his parents with Amsterdam as the post location as early as November 1915. The discrepancy here has no clear explanation.

In recognition of his service to his adopted country, Mengelberg was honored during his lifetime with a gold medal from the Concertgebouw, a silver medal from the city of Amsterdam, and was made an officer in the Orde van Oranje-Nassau, a title conferred by the Dutch monarch in recognition of one's "national or even international significance."⁵ In 1952, the Concertgebouw also established a Rudolf Mengelberg Foundation [*Stichting Rudolf Mengelberg Fonds*] in honor of Mengelberg's sixtieth birthday and thirty-fifth anniversary as an employee; it appears that the foundation remained active until 1970, supporting the musicians and staff of the Concertgebouworkest.⁶

In addition to writing program notes for numerous seasons at the Concertgebouw, Mengelberg also published several full-length monographs over the duration of his career. The earliest of these was something of a retrospective look at the Mahler-Feest (published in the same year as the festival), in which Mengelberg assembled various documentary materials, including essays, speeches, and even newspaper excerpts from across Europe describing the event.⁷ In 1923, he published a short German-language biography of Mahler, drawing significantly from the biographical and analytical sections of his Mahler-Feest program book, though with an apparent change in certain viewpoints.⁸ A few years later, in 1928, he went on to publish *Holland als kulturelle Einheit* [Holland as Cultural Entity], a German-language study in which he presents a case for the cultural strength (contrasted with military strength) of the

⁵ "Officier in de orde van Oranje-Nassau," Kanselarij der Nederlandse Orden, accessed April 8, 2022. <https://www.lintjes.nl/onderscheidingen/orde-van-oranje-nassau/officier-in-de-orde-van-oranje-nassau>.

⁶ See Archief van de Stichting Rudolf Mengelbergfonds, 1952-1970, archive 1093, Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Netherlands. <https://archieff.amsterdam/inventarissen/details/1152/path/31/findingAidId/1093/start/60>.

⁷ *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. C. Rudolf Mengelberg (Vienna: Universal-Edition, 1920).

⁸ Rudolf Mengelberg, *Gustav Mahler* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1923).

Netherlands; a Dutch translation of this book was published the following year under the name of *Nederland, spiegel eener beschaving* [The Netherlands: Mirror of a Civilization].⁹ About a decade later, as the general director of the Concertgebouw, Mengelberg published a history of the orchestra, entitled *50 Jaar Concertgebouw, 1888-1938* [50 Years of the Concertgebouw, 1888-1938].¹⁰ Finally, after World War II, Mengelberg published his last monograph, *Muziek: Spiegel des Tijds* [Music: A Reflection of its Time]; in this Dutch-language book, he analyzes the trajectory of art music from the Middle Ages through his lifetime, relating it to the trajectory of Western society more broadly and making predictions for the future of music and culture.¹¹

In this chapter, I examine the Mahler-Feest through an explicitly musicological lens, focusing primarily on Mengelberg's extensive program book for the event. I argue here that Mengelberg's document promotes a uniquely politicized interpretation of Mahler's life and works, allowing the festival's content to be seen as a musical parallel to the event's diplomatic framing as discussed in the previous chapter. I begin this chapter with an overview of the primary scholarly works on Mahler written in the decade after the composer's death, in order to better contextualize Mengelberg's interpretations and arguments; my central sources in this section are the monographs by Paul Stefan (1912), Richard Specht (1913), and Guido Adler (1914), with Paul Bekker's 1921 publication further serving as a brief point of comparison. I do not aim to present new research on these publications here; rather, I draw on the texts

⁹ Rudolf Mengelberg, *Holland als kulturelle Einheit* (Baden-Baden: Merlin-Verlag, 1928). Rudolf Mengelberg, *Nederland, spiegel eener beschaving* (Amsterdam: Blitz, 1929).

¹⁰ Rudolf Mengelberg, *50 Jaar Concertgebouw, 1888-1938* (Amsterdam: Van Munster, 1938).

¹¹ Rudolf Mengelberg, *Muziek: Spiegel des Tijds* (Rotterdam: W.L. & J. Brusse, 1948).

themselves, as well as on more recent scholarship, to paint a broad picture of the literature on Mahler in the years leading up to and around the time of the festival.

Following this, I construct an overview of Mengelberg's relevant viewpoints and beliefs in a section called "Mengelberg's Mentalities," using letters, diary entries, and other writings from 1915 through 1920 to provide a framework for approaching his writings on the Mahler-Feest; this section is particularly significant since it shows the degree to which this Mengelberg singlehandedly shaped numerous aspects of the festival. From here, I examine the program book for the Mahler-Feest, beginning with Mengelberg's essay on Mahler's historical position and continuing with his detailed notes on the individual symphonies. Throughout this section, I address the difficulty in categorizing the document, which serves simultaneously as a set of program notes and as a scholarly monograph, while transcending the traditional boundaries of both genres; here, I employ Christian Thorau's paradigm of "touristic listening" as my primary lens through which to examine this dichotomy. In my exploration of Mengelberg's arguments themselves, I focus on his assertion that Mahler's music embodies the "democratic" spirit of the twentieth century to a greater degree than the works of any of his contemporaries, and on his argument that Mahler's complete symphonic works were the only logical choice of repertoire for an interwar music festival seeking to promote values of European unity and internationalism. Although Mengelberg does occasionally engage with the writings of his predecessors and contemporaries, my analysis demonstrates that his overall approach to Mahler's life and works—which I refer to as his "diplomatic" interpretation of Mahler—differs significantly from the existing body of literature discussed in the first section of this chapter.

To conclude, I examine Mengelberg's writings published after the Mahler-Feest—on Mahler and otherwise—assessing various changes in his perspectives across his lifetime, but also

showing that many of the ideas that he expressed in 1920 remained with him throughout all of his later publications. Of particular significance in this section is Mengelberg's comparison of the Dutch and German cultures, which, in combination with his earlier writings on Mahler, makes it clear that he saw Mahler as a figure more at home in the Netherlands than in the German-speaking world, lending further credence to the location of the Mahler-Feest. More broadly, I further show in this section that all of Mengelberg's scholarly writings leave little doubt that he truly believed in the ability of cultural entities (such as music and, by extension, the Mahler-Feest) to play a functional role in the realm of international politics and diplomacy.

3.1 The Landscape of Early Mahler Literature

Almost no scholarly literature on Mahler was published during his own lifetime; this is not surprising given that he was much more well-known (and successful) as a conductor than as a composer until after his death, and that the field of musicology was still in its infancy at this time, with scholars such as Guido Adler working to codify the discipline just as Mahler was writing his symphonies. The earliest book-length study of Mahler (though referring to it as “book-length” is a bit of a stretch, given its total of 35 pages of text) is Ludwig Schieder's *Gustav Mahler: eine biographisch-kritische Würdigung*, published in 1901 in Leipzig, in which Schieder presents a basic biography of Mahler's first forty years, introduces the first two symphonies and *Das klagende Lied* (with musical examples of their main themes), and even devotes a significant number of pages to Mahler's conducting career, placing Mahler “in the top tier of modern conductors” alongside such names as Mottl, Nikisch, and Weingartner.¹² The only

¹²Ludwig Schieder, *Gustav Mahler: Eine biographisch-kritische Würdigung* (Leipzig: H. Seeman, 1901), 31.

Mahler-specific source that Schiedermaier references is Arthur Seidl's *Moderner Geist in der deutschen Tonkunst*, published the same year as Schiedermaier's study, in which Seidl briefly discusses Mahler's music alongside that of his contemporaries.¹³

By the time of Mahler's death in 1911, the field that one might dub "Mahler studies" was led by a few primary figures. Central among these was Richard Specht, who published a book-length study of Mahler (twice the length of Schiedermaier's) in 1905, as well as a shorter article in *Die Musik* two years later.¹⁴ Paul Stefan similarly emerged as a leading scholarly figure during this time, publishing the first edition of his *Gustav Mahler: eine Studie über Persönlichkeit und Werk* in 1910, and serving as the editor of the festschrift *Gustav Mahler: ein Bild seiner Persönlichkeit in Widmungen* during the same year; the latter was comprised of entries from thirty-one of Mahler's friends and colleagues, and was presented to the composer in celebration of his fiftieth birthday.¹⁵ Given Mahler's untimely death the following year, this volume serves as an indispensable compendium of contemporary views on the composer from a time in which its contributors felt that Mahler's career was nowhere near its end.

The years immediately following Mahler's death saw the publication of the three above-mentioned monographs by Stefan (1912), Specht (1913), and Adler (1914), which have come to be seen as the defining publications in early Mahler scholarship. Stefan's publication was the second edition of his earlier book on Mahler, with newly added sections on Mahler's last works and legacy; a third edition was later published in late 1920, largely unaltered but with a new

¹³ Arthur Seidl, *Moderner Geist in der deutschen Tonkunst* (Berlin: „Harmonie“ Verlagsgesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst, 1901).

¹⁴ Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin: Gose & Tetzlaff, 1905) and Richard Specht, "Gustav Mahler," *Die Musik* VII, no. 15 (1907): 149-171.

¹⁵ Paul Stefan, *Gustav Mahler: eine Studie über Persönlichkeit und Werk* (München: R. Piper & Co., 1910) and *Gustav Mahler: ein Bild seiner Persönlichkeit in Widmungen*, ed. Paul Stefan (München: R. Piper & Co., 1910).

foreword discussing the Mahler-Feest and the founding of the *Mahlerbond*, as well as a new appendix listing performances of Mahler's works specifically under Willem Mengelberg. Similarly, a second edition of Specht's monograph was published in 1922, also largely unaltered (though without images and score examples due to high printing costs in the Weimar Republic), but with a new dedication to Willem Mengelberg and a discussion of Mahler's posthumous successes in the Netherlands; I will address these later editions of Stefan's and Specht's works more thoroughly in the following chapter. Adler's study originally appeared in 1914 as an entry in the *Biographisches Jahrbuch und deutscher Nekrolog* and was published (unaltered) in book form by Universal-Edition in 1916. Unlike the two other books discussed here, Adler's was not republished in an updated edition after this point.

During the years immediately surrounding the Mahler-Feest, a few Mahler-centric monographs were also published in the Netherlands. The first of these was Herman Rutters's *Gustav Mahler* (1919), which was released as part of the series *Mannen en Vrouwen van Beteekenis* [Men and Women of Significance], which also included a book on Willem Mengelberg (written by Hugo Nolthenius) published a year later.¹⁶ In 1920, the same year as the Mahler-Feest and the distribution of Rudolf Mengelberg's program book, Constant van Wessem also published a Dutch-language book on Mahler's life and music.¹⁷ For both Rutters and Van Wessem, it was important for the Dutch population to have literature on Mahler written in their own language; each of these books largely presents the same biographical and analytical

¹⁶ Herman Rutters, *Gustav Mahler* (Baarn: Hollandia-Druckerij, 1919) and Hugo Nolthenius, *Willem Mengelberg* (Baarn: Hollandia-Druckerij, 1920).

¹⁷ Constant van Wessem, *Gustav Mahler* (Arnhem: N.V. Uitgevers-Maatschappij van Loghum Slaterus en Visser, 1920).

information on Mahler as most of the German-language literature introduced above, but with a few idiosyncrasies to which I will return below.

The final significant source on Mahler's music from this period is Paul Bekker's monograph *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien*, published in Berlin in 1921.¹⁸ This book has a much stronger analytical focus than those mentioned so far, with Bekker specifically stating that his book does not present new biographical information because "there are enough biographies of Mahler, and those of Specht and Stefan have the advantage of being written from direct knowledge and, in part, from shared experience of the personality and destiny."¹⁹ Instead, Bekker aims to walk his readers through the more technical aspects of Mahler's works, meaning that his goal was not far from that of Rudolf Mengelberg with his program book. Although Bekker's work was not published until the year after the Mahler-Feest, it will nevertheless serve as an important point of comparison with Mengelberg's publication since both writers had access to the same existing material on Mahler and both sought to explain Mahler's complex works to a more general audience.

In a broad assessment of the literature on Mahler published through 1921, a few common themes and arguments tend to recur with some degree of regularity. Among these are the desire to 'save' Mahler and his works from years of unpopularity and neglect, the inability to avoid discussing Mahler's Jewish heritage (though each author approaches this in his own way), the explicit canonization of Mahler in the great line of (typically German) composers, and the

¹⁸ Paul Bekker, *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921).

¹⁹ Translation from Kelly Dean Hansen, "*Gustav Mahler's Symphonies (Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien)* by Paul Bekker (1921): A Translation with Commentary" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2001), 41.

assertion that Mahler's time was still to come. I will consider each of these in turn throughout the remainder of this section.

Almost every author named in the preceding paragraphs begins his work on Mahler with an assessment of the difficulties that Mahler faced as a composer during his lifetime, particularly in comparison to other contemporary composers whose works had been better received. This line of thought is perhaps best demonstrated in the following lines of Stefan's monograph:

[Mahler] was not understood, at any rate as long as he lived; he was scarcely known, people scarcely sought to know him. ... While [other composers] are, if not understood, at any rate exalted and proclaimed, why is nothing said about Mahler? Why are people better informed about Richard Strauss, Pfitzner, Reger? Why was not and still is not Mahler pointed out as the man he is?²⁰

Stefan returns to this idea and even sharpens it a bit later in his book, arguing that "there is perhaps no living musician except Pfitzner who has been more wounded by silence and indifference, and certainly none more violently abused, than Mahler."²¹ For Stefan, one of the central purposes of this book seems to be a sort of rehabilitation of Mahler in the eyes of the broader German-speaking public; a similar sentiment is also found in the publications by Adler and Specht from this time.

In the opening paragraph of his book, Adler writes that:

It is not surprising that Gustav Mahler's sharply-defined artistic personality met with opposition of all kinds in its exalted struggle to achieve the loftiest and purest musical ideals... What was and is strange is the kind of attack to which both the creative and re-creative artist was exposed, for which a partial explanation, but no justification, is found in the baser instincts, the malice, of enemies as they appear in nearly all spheres of public

²⁰ Paul Stefan, *Gustav Mahler: eine Studie über Persönlichkeit und Werk* [1912], trans. T.E. Clark (New York: G. Schirmer, 1913), 3-4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 68. Although this is beyond the scope of both this dissertation and Stefan's monograph, Stefan seems to have trouble categorizing Pfitzner here, given his conflicting assertions that audiences are "better informed" about Pfitzner, but also that he has been "wounded by silence and indifference" to a similar degree as Mahler.

life, and in none more than music, where the ‘sensitivity’ of our period has taken an almost pathological turn.²²

Although Adler argues here that the prevailing sentiments of the time are a primary reason for Mahler’s troubles, he goes on almost immediately to write that “removed now from party partiality and hatred, today the human and artistic portrait of Mahler can be sketched and the attempt made to place his work in the galley of history.”²³ Given that Adler’s original publication was a necrology for Mahler, he is almost certainly suggesting that Mahler’s death should serve as the impetus for a reconsideration of the composer through a more scholarly lens rather than one colored by personal grievances. Specht offers a similar viewpoint, writing in his introduction that “this book should serve as a reminder, should help in working toward an understanding of [Mahler’s] great works, to prevent Mahler’s accomplishments—which have united our serious performing arts with the new style and even afforded them new possibilities—from being forgotten.”²⁴ Each of these writers, then, saw himself at least in part as a historian, working to secure a place for Mahler in the musical canon.

In this quest, each writer had to deal with the potentially thorny issue of Mahler’s ancestry. Although each sought to situate Mahler in a long line of Austro-German composers, each similarly found it necessary to address Mahler’s Jewish heritage in the process, seemingly with the intention of elevating the Germanic aspects of Mahler’s identity while addressing prevailing criticisms of any Jewish ones. Stefan, for instance, dedicates an entire section of his

²² Guido Adler, *Gustav Mahler* [1916], trans. Edward R. Reilly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), 17.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “Dies Buch soll daran mahnen, soll mithelfen, am Verstehen seines großen Werkes zu arbeiten, das völlige Vergessenwerden jener Taten Mahlers zu verhindern, die unsrer ersten Bühnenkunst einen neuen Stil und darüber hinaus neue Möglichkeiten gegeben hat.” Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1913), 5.

book to this issue; the section is titled “Work and Race” [*Werk und Rasse*], and it contains Stefan’s musings on the question of whether Mahler’s compositions contain traces of his Jewish “race.” He begins this discussion with a deliberately non-specific example of a man of Jewish descent living amongst Germans, writing that:

Neither language, nation, nor community binds him to the people of his forefathers (the “confession” may be left out of consideration); no idea of race is living in him. The Jewish element in him is a residue, physically provable, intellectually negligible. Such a man must first acquire his spiritual nature.²⁵

For Stefan, then, a man living in these circumstances (which certainly seem designed to reflect Mahler’s circumstances) must self-consciously choose his identity, which Stefan refers to as “spiritual nature.” Shortly after this passage, Stefan focuses specifically on Mahler, writing that:

Such was the case of Gustav Mahler. Grown from earliest youth in the succession of Beethoven and Wagner, ... a pupil of Goethe, Schopenhauer and the German romantic school; then he goes the way of German music, which leads most surely to the heart of Germanism...

Again and again his works move in Christian-pantheistic and in national-German paths. Where a leading-thought grows with him, it is the proud Idea of the German philosophers... He who wishes to characterize the great works of this great life, from the earliest popular lyrics to the renaissance of symphonic art, can do so only through the development of German music: it proceeds germ within germ, from German music, and it will increase its glory and fructifying power.

That other glory of German music, that of reproduction, Gustav Mahler was one of the first to help create; here again a pupil of Richard Wagner. The seriousness, the sincerity, the ceaseless striving after perfection that blazed in him—that is German...²⁶

Thus, Stefan leaves no doubt of his conviction that Mahler choose the German path for his “spiritual nature,” focusing on works such as the Eighth Symphony to bolster his interpretations of Mahler’s works as being both Christian and Germanic through and through, and also on Mahler’s conducting style as being further evidence of his Germanness.

²⁵ Stefan, trans. Clark, 9. Stefan himself was born (as Paul Stefan Grünfeld) in Moravia to parents who had converted from Judaism to Christianity, so he likely viewed his own “spiritual nature” through this lens as well.

²⁶ Ibid, 9-10.

Stefan concludes this section as follows:

Today there may be many musicians of Jewish descent, but there is no Jewish music. So long as it is not possible to prove anything positive or negative, anything common (good or bad) to the works and activity of these musicians, so long as any really “Jewish” peculiarities are not seriously to be found (but seriously, and not in jest or out of hatred), so long will Gustav Mahler’s significance belong to those amongst whom the most intelligent foreigners have long since placed it: in the succession of the great German geniuses.²⁷

Stefan clearly wants to stay out of the fray here, criticizing the attempts of others to find common “Jewish” characteristics to decry in the works of Mahler and other composers, but he nonetheless finds it necessary to spend almost four full pages discussing this issue. Ultimately, however, he reaches the expected conclusion: that Mahler is fully German and should be categorized as such in the annals of history, rendering any discussion of “Jewishness” ultimately moot.

Specht presents a similar viewpoint in his monograph, arguing that Mahler drew upon a blend of differing cultural influences, but ultimately labeling him as a German above all. He writes the following:

Mahler (like his music, which is an “identical” expression of him) is a Jew, is Jewish in the force of his spirituality, in the feverish restlessness of his search for meaning and law in the world, in his passionately gloomy fervor, in the degree of uncertainty and also of subtlety in his being; he is a Christian, is Christian in his faith, his belief in heaven, his humility before the divine, his belief in the afterlife, his yearning for discipleship...

And he is fully German in his spiritual culture, in his objectivity and self-discipline, his submission to the perceived rules, and in the fact that he did nothing for himself, but rather for the sake of the thing itself—just as Richard Wagner says of Germanness. Despite all of this, if one wishes to label this mixture as Jewish, then it is true that Jewishness found its truest expression in Mahler, and we have—for the first time—what could be labeled as Jewishness in music (not just music with Jewish traits, which has existed before)... What is certain is that Mahler, as devout and deeply religious as he was, considered each religion to be but a legend, and that he did not belong to any of these congregations—not even that of the Buddhists or the pantheists.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁸ “Mahler (und ebenso seine Musik, die seinen „identischen“ Ausdruck bedeutet) ist Jude und jüdisch in der Stoßkraft seiner Geistigkeit, in der fieberischen Rastlosigkeit des Suchens nach dem Sinn und Gesetz der Welt, in der leidenschaftlich düsteren Glut, in mancher Ungleichmäßigkeit und auch in mancher Spitzfindigkeit seines

Notably, Specht refers to Mahler as “fully German” [*ganz deutsch*], whereas his discussions of Mahler’s Jewish and Christian characteristics are seemingly less all-encompassing. It is certainly also significant that both Stefan and Specht refer to Wagner as Mahler’s closest spiritual predecessor, thereby placing Mahler even more securely into the “German” category.

In regard to this question of Mahler’s ancestry and its potential effects on his music, Adler’s discussion is slightly more nuanced than the two presented above, primarily due to his addition of “Austrian” characteristics to the mix. As a fellow Bohemian-Austrian, he likely felt particularly suited to make statements such as the following:

Specific Austrian touches make themselves lastingly felt through the use of melodies of [Mahler’s] Moravian-Bohemian homeland (in all his works, but especially in the third movements of the Second and the Third and even in the second movement of the Ninth), and in the Scherzos, in which *Ländler* and waltzes are assimilated in transformations and syntheses (in the First as also in the Ninth etc.). Austrian military figures, as well, play a not-unimportant role.²⁹

Despite this nuance, however, Adler leaves no doubt that he views Mahler as a German artist, following in line with the great canon of Austro-German musicians before him, writing that:

Mahler stands on the firm soil of German culture, like the masters already cited who preceded him [i.e., Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner, Brahms, etc.]. His Jewish lineage may perhaps explain the occasionally pronounced over-sharpening of expressive force and the fanatical exaggeration in the re-creation of his spiritual impulses. But whether this tendency can be traced back exclusively to lineage remains an open question, for it is also perceptible in thoroughly German masters. Thus Richard Wagner, who, as he ‘only felt himself well, when he was beside himself’, heightened expression to the extreme, to the greatest extreme...

Wesens; er ist Christ und christlich in seiner Gläubigkeit, seiner Himmelsgewißheit, seiner Demut vor allem Göttlichen, seinem Jenseitsglauben, seiner Sehnsucht nach Jüngerschaft...

Und er ist ganz deutsch in seiner geistigen Kultur, in seiner Sachlichkeit und Selbstdisziplin, seiner Unterordnung unter das von ihm erkannte Gebot und darin, daß er nichts sich selber zuliebe, alles um der erwählten Sache willen tat. Wie Richard Wagner es vom Deutschen aussagt. Will man diese Mischung trotz alledem jüdisch nennen, dann allerdings hat das Jüdische in Mahler den stärksten Ausdruck gefunden, und wir hätten zum erstenmal das, was jüdische Musik zu nennen wäre (nicht nur Musik mit jüdischen Zügen, die schon oft da war)... Sicher ist, daß Mahler, so fromm und im tiefsten Keim religiös er war, doch jede Religion nur als Legende empfand, und daß er keiner all der Gemeinden angehörte; nicht einmal der der Buddhisten oder der Pantheisten.” Specht, 2nd ed., 51.

²⁹ Adler, trans. Reilly, 42.

It is certain that Mahler's melodic idiom grew from the soil of the folk music of his homeland, that his thematic treatment was formed on the procedures of the masters named above, that his songs already reveal in the handling of language the most intimate connection between the composer and the poet and, in the poems written and set to music by him, show the German feeling for the inseparable unity of language and music. Moreover, one who could perform Wagner, Beethoven, Mozart, Lortzing and others with the stylistic purity displayed by Mahler, and this for the most part without external models but from within himself, from intuition, is a true German artist; like every universal master, he possessed the ability to enter also into the spirit of other stylistic paths.³⁰

Like Specht, Adler allows that one may be able to find "Jewish" characteristics in Mahler's music, but he interestingly alleges that the same characteristics may be found in the music of Wagner and other German composers. Like Stefan, he also refers to Mahler's conducting style as being particularly German in nature. Finally, it seems as though Adler wants to have it both ways in labeling Mahler as a "universal master"; for Adler, this label seems to be applicable only to a fully Germanic artist, but one who is nonetheless somewhat flexible in style.

For all three of these early writers on Mahler, the idea of categorizing him as a "German master" seems to conflict—at least on the surface—with their above-mentioned assessments that Mahler and his music had been severely neglected by audiences and critics. To rectify this, each turns to the notion that Mahler's time had not yet come, in terms of both popular reception and historicization. Thus, Adler writes the following on the present and future:

The works of Mahler have had to win ground for themselves step by step. At the beginning progress was very slow. As much as his muse was a child of its time, as much as the present speaks from the spirit of his art, it is still far from fashionable...

Dissent is met with everywhere and most of all where something new, something independent, comes to light. And Mahler was far-seeing. He built in organic union with tradition. His creations, in addition to their intrinsic value, also have meaning for the future... His works range themselves beside the more programmatic direction of Richard Strauss and the more formalistic one of Max Reger. These three composers are the main supporters of the music of the future... Young people love Mahler and his art, and thus his right to the future cannot be taken from him. Conductors who have modeled

³⁰ Ibid., 42-43.

themselves on him and revere his memory are active on behalf of his works. Thus he will not be 'lost to the world'...³¹

This excerpt by Adler introduces the primary approaches that contemporaneous writers took in historicizing Mahler shortly after his death: a discussion of passing fads versus lasting achievements, and a comparison between Mahler and other (Germanic) composers of his time who the writers similarly predicted would be canonized as representatives of the period around the year 1900.

Specht, for his part, writes the following in the second edition of his book (published in 1922), after an overview of some of the musical characteristics of Mahler's oeuvre:

That is why Gustav Mahler is the great master of our time, since he is perhaps the only one whose acts and works truly contain the content of the turn-of-the-century, "everything that those of the future will praise from our time." And also everything that they will criticize.³²

Toward the end of his updated monograph, Specht returns to this idea, explicitly discussing his predictions for the canonization of composers from this time:

In our awareness, Mahler's creations stand, next to those of Richard Strauss, as the only ones that have the true power to transmit the expression of our time to the future. It may be that Pfitzner is the stronger melodist, or that Reger is the stronger contrapuntalist, but one day when certain composers of today must be designated who brought music forward and us along with it, then the names of Strauss and Mahler will be chosen above all. The first as the most brilliant "apporteur de neuf," the Bringer of the New, the most sparkling, most captivating, most tempting spirit of our day; the other as the mystical seeker of God, the most monumental creator of modern symphonism, the bringer of the new greatness, the unworldly eavesdropper of lost earthly and heavenly songs...

[Mahler's] time will come. One can speak differently of him today than a few years ago, and [still differently] than the time in which he was alive...

It doesn't matter whether the current fashion joins in to celebrate Mahler, for fashion will pass, but Mahler's music will endure. Its voice, that of eternal love, that which humanity—striving for the light—doesn't want to hear, would mean nothing other

³¹ Ibid., 72-73.

³² "Deshalb ist Gustav Mahler der große Meister unserer Zeit, weil er vielleicht der einzige ist, in dessen Tat und Werk wirklich der Inhalt der Jahrhundertwende, „alles, was die Nachkommen einst an unserer Zeit segnen werden" enthalten ist. Und alles dazu, dem sie fluchen werden." Specht, 2nd ed., 160.

than losing faith in this humanity, abandoning that which, during these horrifying years of war, had closed our ears and desecrated the thought of a growing perfection of the world and of humanity, and even turned it to absurdity. That is why we listen to this voice—[why we] must listen to it. And that’s why its time [i.e., the time of Mahler’s music] will come.³³

Given that this edition was published two years after the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, it is possible that Specht’s discussion of the war here—and its relationship to Mahler’s music—was impacted by the festival, a point to which I will return in the following chapter.

Though Stefan’s original publication does not explicitly engage with these notions of historicity, he includes a new section, titled “The Survivor” [Die Überlebende], in the later 1920 edition. In addition to directly mentioning the Mahler-Feest and Willem Mengelberg’s impact on Mahler reception in the Netherlands, Stefan also discusses Mahler’s position in relation to historical time, writing the following:

Yes, [Mahler] had to die in order to live. Shortly after him, many others died in the war and in a no-less-horrible time of peace. A new generation has come about, and Mahler is their guiding star. Humiliated and insulted, tormented and tested, they reach their hands out to him and his art, grasping and comprehending all of it. For many young people, he may have taken Wagner’s place—he who admired Wagner so much. Some want to see

³³ “In unserem Bewußtsein steht Mahlers Schöpfung neben der des Richard Strauß, als die einzige, der die Kraft eigen ist, den Ausdruck unserer Tage den Späteren hinzutragen. Mag sein, daß Pfitzner der stärkere Melodiker, Reger der stärkere Kontrapunktiker ist; aber wenn einmal von jenen Tondichtern von heute gesprochen werden wird, die die Musik weitergebracht haben und uns dazu, dann werden allen voran die Namen Strauß und Mahler genannt werden. Der eine als der genialste „apporteur du neuf“, der Bringer des großen Neuen, der glanzvollste, bedrückendste, verführerischste Geist unserer Tage; der andere als der mystische Gottsucher, der monumentalste Bildner moderner Symphonik, der Bringer des neuen Großen, der weltabgewandte Erlauscher verlorener Erden- und Himmelslieder...

Seine Zeit wird kommen. Man darf ja heute anders von ihm sprechen als vor wenigen Jahren und gar als zur Zeit, in der er noch lebte...

Gleichviel, ob jetzt die Mode mitspricht, wenn Mahler bejubelt wird; die Mode wird vergehen, aber Mahlers Musik wird bestehen. Ihre Stimme, die der ewigen Liebe, der zum Licht ringenden Menschlichkeit nicht hören wollen, hieße nichts anders, als an dieser Menschlichkeit irrewerden, sich selber aufgeben, dem in diesen grauenvollen Kriegsjahren geschändeten Gedanken einer werdenden Vollkommenheit der Welt und der Menschheit unser Ohr verschließen und ihn zum Widersinn machen. Deshalb wird man diese Stimme hören und hören müssen. Und deshalb wird ihre Zeit kommen.” Ibid., 284-286.

him as the great, as the last Romantic, others simply as the genius who shook hands with Beethoven beyond Romanticism...³⁴

Like the Specht example above, Stefan did not incorporate this sentiment into his book until after the Mahler-Feest, demonstrating the likely impact that this event had on his interpretations.

Finally, a similar response to changing tides of public opinion can be found in Paul Bekker's 1921 monograph on Mahler. At the end of his introduction, he writes that:

The skepticism of a jaded time is on the wane. New people and new masses are rising up, and the yearning for faith, for light, for revelation is powerful in them. The defiant, passionate, inwardly glowing, longing art of Mahler finds in them a growing response, and in the shadow of this world-encompassing art, the softer, smoother, more externally accessible music of Bruckner also gains ever more ground. In both lies the future message of the symphonic art, for where something most intimate is formed into great art, it gains power over all humanity.³⁵

Although Bekker was not present at the Mahler-Feest, and almost certainly did not have access to Rudolf Mengelberg's program book while writing his own monograph, his ideas are similar to those found in the program book and the later (post-festival) editions of Stefan's and Specht's publications, a point to which I return below and again in the following chapter.

Thus, when Mengelberg was writing his program book for the 1920 festival, the scholarly landscape on Mahler was dominated by Adler, Specht, and Stefan, each of whom presented a relatively similar swathe of ideas on Mahler's cultural-historical position as discussed above. Mengelberg was undoubtedly familiar with these works and would have been in close contact with each of these scholars while writing his program book, given that all three attended and

³⁴ "Ja, er mußte sterben, um zu leben. Bald nach ihm sind viele andere im Krieg und in einem nicht minder entsetzlichen Frieden gestorben. Ein anderes Geschlecht war da und dem ist Mahler Leitstern. Erniedrigte und Beleidigte, Gequälte und Geprüfte strecken die Hände aus nach ihm und seiner Kunst, fassen und erfassen dies alles. Manchen Jüngeren mag er an Wagners Stelle gerückt sein, er, der Wagner so sehr verehrte. Sie wollen in ihm den großen, den letzten Romantiker sehen — andere wieder gerade den Genius, der über die Romantik hinweg Beethoven die Hand gibt." Stefan, 2nd ed. (1920), 160.

³⁵ Bekker, trans. Hansen, 83.

delivered speeches at the festival. Despite this, Mengelberg's interpretations of Mahler and his music do not follow precisely in line with those of the Austro-German authors, as I discuss below. Overall, it seems that Mengelberg borrowed certain aspects of these earlier interpretations but came to his own unique conclusions about Mahler's cultural-historical position, advancing the festival's primary message that Mahler's music would serve a quasi-diplomatic function in the years after the war. As alluded to above, it seems that this trajectory came full circle when scholars such as Stefan and Specht—writing after the festival—began to incorporate ideas reminiscent of Mengelberg's into their own later publications, which I will discuss further in the following chapter.

3.2 Mengelberg's Mentalities

From the earliest letters that he wrote to his parents after his move to Amsterdam, Rudolf Mengelberg demonstrated a clear interest in the relationships between music and global affairs, as well as a specific proclivity for the music of Gustav Mahler (even as he had recently completed his dissertation on eighteenth-century Italian music). Indeed, the beginnings of some of his ideas that would make their way into his later writings and thoughts on the Mahler-Feest can even be seen in some of these documents. In a letter dated November 18, 1915, for example, he updates his parents on a lecture that he had been preparing, writing that “it is becoming a bit different from my original conception, because I'm giving more emphasis to the general conditions of the arts in relation to political events, and only touching upon the war-inspired works.”³⁶ Three days later, in a separate letter, Rudolf writes that “on Thursday, in eight days,

³⁶ “[Der Vortrag] wird etwas anders, als ich mir ursprünglich dachte, weil das Schwergewicht mehr auf allgemeine Betrachtungen der Kunst in Verbindung mit politischen Ereignissen fällt und die durch den Krieg inspirierten

Mahler's Third is being performed! It is only a shame that Father has cancelled again. I would really love for him to hear it at some point."³⁷ Later in the same letter, Rudolf tells his parents about his idea to hold a "modern *Liederabend*" in Krefeld, consisting "primarily of works by Mahler, then one of my own and several from other living composers."³⁸

In his following letter, Rudolf updates his parents on the Mahler performance, writing the following:

A description that even approximates the experience is not possible. Mahler's Third is more colossal, newer, and more peculiar (I'm not saying more beautiful) than its two predecessors. And the performance was simply perfect, technically perfect and inspired to the highest degree... Willem is truly God-given... The work, which lasts over two hours, did not visibly bore the large audience for a single moment, and the excitement led into massive applause after the wonderful concluding *Adagio*.³⁹

Even at this point, years before any planning for the 1920 Mahler-Feest had begun, Rudolf Mengelberg's views on Mahler had certainly begun to take shape; this is likely due in no small part to his exposure to Willem's proclivity for—and skill in conducting—Mahler's works.

A handwritten essay titled "Problems of the Present" [*Gegenwartsproblemen*], written in or around 1916, provides further documentation on Mengelberg's intellectual perspectives from

Schöpfungen nur gestreift werden." Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, Nov. 18, 1915, collection 3090-01, box 7099, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

³⁷ "Donnerstag in 8 Tagen geht Mahlers III! Es ist nun doch zu schade, dass Vater wieder abgesagt hat. Ich möchte so gern, er könnte sie einmal hören." Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, Nov. 21, 1915, collection 3090-01, box 7099, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

³⁸ "Ich habe ihr [Frl. Belissen] den Vorschlag gemacht, mit mir einen ‚modernem Liederabend‘ in Krefeld zu geben. Hauptsächlich Werke von Mahler, dann eine Nummer von mir und eine von anderen lebenden Komponisten." Ibid.

³⁹ "Eine Schilderung, die das Erlebnis nur annähernd wiedergibt, ist nicht möglich. Die dritte von Mahler ist noch kolossaler, neuer und eigenartiger (ich sage nicht: schöner) als die beiden Vorgängerinnen. Und die Aufführung war einfach vollendet, technisch vollendet und in höchstens Masse inspiriert... Willem ist wirklich gottbegnadet... Das über 2 Stunden dauernde Werk ermüdete das grosse Publikum offenbar keinen Moment, und die Spannung löste sich nach dem herrlichen Schlussadagio im riesigen Jubel." Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, Dec. 5, 1915, collection 3090-01, box 7099, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original.

this period. It is unclear whether this may be the material of the lecture to which Mengelberg referred in the letter to his parents quoted above, or whether this material was ever delivered to any sort of audience, though it is clear that it underwent numerous revisions, with sections and even entire pages stricken out and rewritten. Mengelberg begins the essay in a flowery, Romantic style, writing that “the time in which we live, a time of global-historical transformations of the greatest degrees, opens for the historian... perspectives of immense breadth,” acknowledging the significance of the ongoing war as a major turning point of history.⁴⁰ He also acknowledges the omnipresent political tensions of the time, writing that “no area of intellectual life is spared of partisan-political influence; everywhere in the intellectual world, questions of race, nationality, and even petty partisanship play significant roles.”⁴¹ He notes that music is certainly one of these “areas of intellectual life,” but remarks gladly on the fact that musical performances had become much more accessible and widely attended in the preceding years.

In discussing this democratization of musical performance, Mengelberg writes that “the events [i.e. recent concerts] have stripped themselves of the traditional dress of a social occurrence attended by a group of Bourgeoisie, and have taken on a very different character—something of an intellectual public assembly.”⁴² Mengelberg clearly sees this as a positive development—and this idea would certainly carry on into his later thoughts on the Mahler-Feest—but simultaneously, he introduces his primary “problem of the present”: namely, that the

⁴⁰ “Die Zeit, in der wir leben, eine Zeit weltgeschichtlicher Umformungen grösster Ausmasse, eröffnet für den Historiker... Perspektiven von ungeheuren Weiten.” Rudolf Mengelberg, “Gegenwartsproblemen,” ca. 1916, p. 1, collection 3090-01, box 7092, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁴¹ “Kein Gebiet des geistigen Lebens ist heute partei-politischer Beeinflussung enthoben, allenthalben auch in der Welt des Geistes spielen Rassen-, Nationalitäten-, ja kleinliche Partei-fragen die grösste Rolle.” Ibid., 2.

⁴² “Die Veranstaltungen haben das traditionelle Kleid eines gesellschaftlichen Ereignisses, abgestreift und einen ganz anderen Charakter bekommen, etwa den einer geistigen Volksversammlung.” Ibid., 3.

German world does not have any leading contemporary composers, as it had in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He initially proposes Richard Strauss as such a figure, but concludes shortly thereafter that Strauss is representative not of the contemporary era (i.e., around 1915), but rather of the *fin-de-siècle* period, which Mengelberg understands as 1890-1910.⁴³ At this point in the essay, he seems somewhat concerned about the possibility that Debussy's musical innovations could propel him to the forefront of audience's minds—particularly since these innovations did not have their origins in any German style—even going on to write that “what Schumann was for the Romantics, Debussy is for today's generation.”⁴⁴

In the second half of the essay, Mengelberg proposes Mahler and Reger as additional contenders for musical representatives of the *fin-de-siècle* German world, writing specifically that Mahler is “more form-creating and style-creating than Reger or Strauss,” but also that “he is the summarizer of German music, the last prophet of its symphonic ideals,” seemingly linking Mahler more strongly to the past than to the present.⁴⁵ Like the writers discussed above, Mengelberg acknowledges Mahler's Jewish heritage here, but concludes that Mahler was fully integrated into the “German intellectual life and the German cultural world.”⁴⁶ He writes that “Mahler's world is that of German Romanticism,” but asserts that “Mahler's spirit, Mahler's

⁴³ See *ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴⁴ “Was Schumann für die Romantik, das ist Debussy für die heutige Generation.” *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁵ “Mahler ist mehr als Reger und mehr als Strauss formschöpferisch und stilschöpferisch... So ist er der Zusammenfaser der deutschen Musik, der letzte Kündler ihres symphonischen Ideale.” *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁶ “[Mahler war] aber vollkommen dem deutschen Geistesleben und deutschen Kulturkreis angehörig.” *Ibid.*, 24.

style is built on Classical ideals,” previewing a similar sentiment that would recur a few years later in his program book for the Mahler-Feest, as I discuss below.⁴⁷

From Mahler, Mengelberg moves on to Schoenberg, whose then-recent shift away from Romantic-inspired styles he views as a bad decision, and to Stravinsky, who he sees as a true musical “revolutionary” (though again with some concern about Stravinsky as a potential leading composer of non-German origin). At this point, he writes that “we cannot predict where or from which race [*Rasse*] this new era will find its clearest expression” in music, but he laments that it does not seem likely to be a Germanic composer who will come to serve as the primary representative of the era.⁴⁸ He does, however, assert that the global industry of music performance still has a strong basis in German music, writing that “the entire organization of *Musikpflege* in Germany, and across the whole world, has arisen from German music and the requirements of its recreation [i.e. its performance].”⁴⁹

To conclude the essay, Mengelberg returns to his opening ideas on the position of music in society, asserting that the (Germanic) world has a hugely rich musical tradition spanning multiple centuries of history, and further writing that:

⁴⁷ “Mahlers Welt ist die der deutschen Romantik. Mahlers Geist, Mahlers Stil ist auf das klassische Ideal gerichtet.” Ibid.

⁴⁸ “...und wo und in welcher Rasse diese neue Epoche ihren stärksten Ausdruck findet, ist natürlich nicht vorauszusehen.” Ibid., 26b.

⁴⁹ “Die ganze Organisation der Musikpflege in Deutschland und in aller Welt ist erwachsen aus der deutschen Musik und den Erfordernissen ihrer Belebung.” Ibid., 32. As Pamela Potter has shown, this sort of attitude was common among German musicologists around this time, with music being cast as one of the most significant carriers of German culture. See Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[These musical works] have even stronger effects, and are more prosperous, when they enter further into the consciousness of the people. Music should be shared not only among small groups, but among the entire population. That is the demand of our time.⁵⁰

Thus, while Mengelberg is unable to point to any clear musical representative of the era at this point, he is nonetheless strong in his assertion that the present circumstances call for the continued democratization of music into an art form accessible to all people. Taken as a whole, this essay provides a useful “baseline” view of Mengelberg’s thoughts on the broader musical world—and Mahler in particular—to which I compare his later writings surrounding the Mahler-Feest throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Mengelberg’s diary provides a further window into his viewpoints during the period after his move to the Netherlands and before any real planning for the Mahler-Feest began. On March 15, 1918, for example, Mengelberg writes about a visit by Richard Strauss to Tilly Mengelberg (Willem’s wife), in which the war seemed to be the primary topic of conversation. He describes the discussion as follows:

The three of us sat together for a long time. Conversation on politics and the upcoming offensive in the West. Strauss is very happy with the progression of things, and also with the Russian peace, which to me seems very temporary. “In May we will have peace,” Strauss says. I see the coming period far more pessimistically, in comparison.⁵¹

About a week later, he writes on a political discussion that he had with a British man who had previously lived in Germany but had been staying in the Netherlands for some time, writing that,

⁵⁰ “Und sie wirken um so stärker und segensreicher, je weiter sie in das Bewusstsein des Volkes eindringen. Nicht nur kleine Kreise sollen an der Kunst teilhaben, sondern das ganze Volk. Das ist die Forderung der Zeit.” Mengelberg, “Gegenwartsproblemen,” 33.

⁵¹ “Wir sassen zu dreien ziemlich lang zusammen. Gespräche über Politik und die bevorstehende Offensive im Westen. Str. ist mit der Entwicklung der Verhältnisse sehr zufrieden, auch mit dem russischen Frieden, der mich sehr vorläufig erscheint. ‚Im Mai haben wir Frieden‘ sagt Strauss. Ich sehe der kommenden Zeit weit pessimistischer entgegen.” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, March 15, 1918, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original.

“He finds the atmosphere here [in the Netherlands] very unpleasant. Distrustful. [He said:] ‘I’d rather be an Englishman—and enemy—in Berlin than a ‘neutral’ here in Holland.’”⁵² The fact that Mengelberg reports on these discussions is indicative of the fact that he had a strong interest in these topics—particularly the wartime circumstances of both Germany, his original homeland, and the Netherlands, his adopted homeland. Notably, Mengelberg’s pessimism in the face of the war presents a significant contrast to the unbridled optimism that he would show just a few years later after the war had ended.

Mahler’s music (and Willem’s performances thereof) remains another frequent topic in Mengelberg’s diary during this time. On May 11, 1918, for example, he writes that a performance of Mahler’s Eighth made an “unbelievably intense impression,” going on to characterize Willem’s conducting “as though possessed,” and the audience as “wild with excitement, which I have never before seen among the Dutch.”⁵³ The following month, he writes about Paul Bekker’s new monograph *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler*, remarking that it contains “similar ideas to those that I had in my Crefeld Mahler lecture,” and that “Bekker is the first German writer on music who ranks Mahler in the highest category, which I have also always done.”⁵⁴ Despite agreeing with Bekker’s analysis of Mahler, Mengelberg concludes that

⁵² “Findet aber hier die Atmosphäre sehr unangenehm. Misstrauen. ‚Lieber als Engländer und Feind in Berlin, als hier in Holland als ‚Neutraler.‘” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, March 21, 1918, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁵³ “8te Mahler. Unvergleichlich intensiver Eindruck. Willem’s Leitung wie ‚besessen.‘ Publikum wild vor Begeisterung, wie ich die Holländer noch nie sah.” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, May 11, 1918, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁵⁴ “Ähnliche Ideen als ich in meinem Crefeld-Mahler-Vortrag ausführte, was für mich natürlich eine sehr spannende Lektüre wurde. Bekker ist der erste deutsche Musikschriftsteller, der Mahler den höchsten Rang anweist, den auch ich immer für ihn in Anspruch nehme.” Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, June 10, 1918, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

“it is tragic that Bekker treats Willem so meanly—Willem, who has already put these ideas into practice, perhaps as the only one [who has done so], or in any case the first.”⁵⁵

About a year later, the earliest discussions of the Mahler-Feest can be seen in letters between Rudolf and his parents. On April 12, 1919, Rudolf’s father Heinrich (who, on all personal documents, goes by the honorary title of “Justizrat Mengelberg”) wrote a letter indicating that he had received a letter from Rudolf on April 7 in which Rudolf introduced the idea of holding such a festival. The elder Mengelberg responded, in part, as follows:

Your information about the program for the Jubilee-Festival of May 1920... was of great interest to me. However, I can’t escape several fundamental reservations about the idea. In an anniversary festival—in which the honoring of the jubilarian is the central purpose—the event, in my opinion, must be whole and clearly so, so that the participants remain together for several days, enjoy the artistic experience together, and come together through other events. This is not possible, however, with concerts that are spread over ten days... My reservations also include the fact that the performance of works by one author over 10 days would be monotonous and tiring...

Thus, my view is as follows. The actual anniversary festival should take place over 3 days: Day 1 with something like the Seventh Symphony by Mahler, Day 2 with Strauss’s *Heldenleben* as the finale, [and] Day 3 with the Ninth Symphony as the finale. Then on the occasion of the New Year of 1920: all of Mahler’s works. In addition, the performance of large works by composers of all nations in astute combination.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ “Tragisch, dass Bekker so schuftig gegenüber Willem gehandelt, – Willem, der doch gerade diese Ideen in der Praxis verwirklichte, vielleicht als einziger, jedenfalls erster.” Ibid. Emphasis original.

⁵⁶ “Deine Angaben wegen des Programms für das Jubiläumsfest von Mai 1920... interessierte mich sehr. Ich kann eben trotz allem über die grundsätzlichen Bedenken gegen die Idee nicht hinwegkommen. Bei einem Jubiläumsfest—bei welchem doch die Ehrung des Jubilars der Zweck der Veranstaltung ist—muss m.E. die Veranstaltung eine geschlossene sein und zwar so, dass die Teilnehmer für einige Tage zusammenbleiben, die künstlerischen Eindrücke zusammen geniessen, und sich zu sonstigen Veranstaltungen vereinigen. Dies ist aber nicht möglich bei Konzerten, die sich auf 10 Tage erstrecken... Mein Bedenken bleibt aber auch bestehen, dass die Ausführung der werke eines Autors an 10 Tagen monoton und ermüdend wirken muss...

Also meine Auffassung geht dahin: Das eigentliche Jubiläumsfest auf 3 Tage festlegen: I Tag etwa die VII Sinfonie von Mahler, II Tag als Schlussnummer: Heldenleben von Strauss, III Tag Schlussnummer: IX Sinfonie. Dann aus Anlass des Jubiläums von Neujahr 1920 an: Alle Werke von Mahler. Ausserdem die Aufführung grosser Werke von Komponisten aller Nationen in geschickter Zusammenstellung.” Letter from Justizrat Mengelberg to Rudolf Mengelberg, April 12, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original. It is unclear which “Ninth Symphony” the elder Mengelberg is referring to here, though Beethoven’s Ninth would seem to be a logical candidate based on his other viewpoints.

Several aspects of this letter are particularly revealing. Simultaneously, this document shows that Rudolf was thinking about a Mahler-themed anniversary festival for Willem before anyone else (as far as the documentation shows), but also that several key features of the actual festival in 1920—specifically the focus on bringing people together through the arts, as well as the series of chamber music by internationally diverse composers—may have originated not with Rudolf, but with his father. In particular, the elder Mengelberg’s use of “together” [*zusammen*] two times in one sentence, followed closely by the verb “to bring together” [*vereinigen*] previews the style of writing that the younger Mengelberg would use not long afterward in his festival program book.

Rudolf left this letter unanswered for several weeks (perhaps while he was considering the festival plans in more detail), finally writing back to his parents on April 29 and explaining that he had been quite busy in the preceding days. He begins to address his father’s objections here by writing that “in my opinion, music festivals in the style that Father suggested are no longer in fashion,” and explaining that the Concertgebouw had already held a three-evening concert series (featuring *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mahler’s Ninth, and Mahler’s Tenth) to mark the orchestra’s twenty-fifth anniversary in 1913.⁵⁷ He addresses several reservations about his father’s suggestion of *Das Heldenleben*, and writes that “with a Mahler cycle, the universal character of this art—which we believe in—will come directly to the fore”; he continues to write that “you must not forget that most of Mahler’s works are already very popular here,” including those which he asserts have been poorly received in Germany, such as the Ninth.⁵⁸ Thus, from

⁵⁷ “m.E. sind Musikfeste in der Art, wie Vater es vorschlägt, nicht mehr zeitgemäss.” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, April 29, 1919 (A), collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original.

⁵⁸ “Zweitens soll gerade mit dem Mahler-Cyclus der universale Charakter dieser Kunst zum Ausdruck kommen, von der wir eben glauben... Du musst nicht vergessen, dass die meisten Werke Mahlers hier doch schon sehr populär sind.” Ibid. Emphasis original.

the start, Rudolf saw Mahler's works as the only possible musical foundation for the festival that he envisioned, and even specifically noted his understanding of their character as "universal."

Later that same day, Rudolf wrote a second letter to his parents after having a meeting with Tilly in which they discussed Rudolf's (and his father's) ideas on the festival. Rudolf begins the letter by writing that "the more I think about our Mahler plan, the more I believe that it must be carried out."⁵⁹ He continues his grounding of the festival in the local circumstances, writing that "the entire plan has arisen specifically from the atmosphere here, from the experience here," in contrast to his father's ostensibly German-centric views.⁶⁰ Along with this letter, he enclosed a draft schedule for the Mahler-Feest, which he states he had already discussed with Hendrik Freijer (the Administrator of the Concertgebouw); this schedule does not have any dates but simply lists the programs for nine concerts spanning Mahler's complete works, many of which even have specific soloists noted. Remarkably, this early draft schedule is identical to the final schedule of the 1920 festival, with all of the song cycles and smaller works being distributed among the concerts of larger works in the same way.

As the Concertgebouw's plans for the upcoming season became clearer, Rudolf's letters to his parents continued to provide regular updates on the state of affairs. In late May of 1919, he sent a letter providing an overview of the general programming for the 1919-1920 season, further writing that "I have also already begun the preliminary work for the Mahler-Feest. Arranging

⁵⁹ "Je mehr ich über unseren Mahler-plan denke, desto mehr fühle ich, dass er durchgesetzt werden muss." Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, April 29, 1919 (B), collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original.

⁶⁰ "Der ganze Plan ist eben aus der Atmosphäre hier, aus dem Erlebnis heraus erwachsen." Ibid. Emphasis original.

this cycle will be one of the greatest tasks of my life.”⁶¹ He continues, in this letter, to discuss his expected financial recompense for his work on the festival (even mentioning the involvement of Antonie Roëll, the Queen’s Commissary to Noord-Holland, in supporting the event), and writes gladly that he will be able to live a bit more independently as a result thereof. About a week later, his father wrote back with excitement about Rudolf’s potential for advancement in his career, but also reminded his son to “do everything calmly, and don’t overexert yourself.”⁶² Rudolf’s diary indicates that several lengthy meetings about the upcoming Mahler-Feest (and the entire jubilee season) took place throughout the summer of 1919.⁶³

The following winter, Rudolf continued to update his parents on new developments as the festival began to feel more concrete. On December 9, for example, he wrote excitedly that a number of foreign guests had accepted their invitations, and that “over 600 subscriptions [have been] pre-ordered in 14 days!”⁶⁴ The next month, he updated his parents once more—this time on official letterhead with the Concertgebouw Mahler-Feest logo—remarking on the global interest in the festival [*“Interesse in der ganzen Welt”*] and stating that guests from Belgium, England, and France had recently accepted their invitations. In the same letter, Rudolf expresses his hope “that politics won’t cause any arguments” during the festival, but affirms his confidence

⁶¹ “Die Vorarbeiten für das Mahler-Fest habe ich auch schon begonnen. Diesen Cyklus zu arrangieren wird eine von den grossen Arbeiten meines Lebens sein.” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, May 21, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁶² “Mache nur alles mit Ruhe und überanstrenge dich nicht.” Letter from Justizrat Mengelberg to Rudolf, May 30, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. Emphasis original.

⁶³ See Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, May–August 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁶⁴ “Fürs Mahler-Fest sind schon verschiedene Zusagen von ausländischen Gästen gekommen. Über 600 Abonnementen in 14 Tagen vorausbestellt!” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, Dec. 9, 1919, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

that “otherwise, everything promises to be wonderful!”⁶⁵ As before, these letters indicate that issues of internationalism and artistic diplomacy remained constantly in Rudolf’s mind throughout the entire planning process for the festival.

In December 1919, the German-language publication *Musikblätter des Anbruch*—a semimonthly journal with a focus on contemporary music—published an article on the upcoming Mahler-Feest which was (slightly) misattributed to “Dr. Ernst Rudolf Mengelberg, Amsterdam.” It is clear that this is the same (Kurt) Rudolf Mengelberg, who immediately grounds the article in contemporary politics, writing the following:

During the war, the proper spirit for this tremendous undertaking was lacking. Even though the treaty has not brought us peace, such a festival is more possible under the current circumstances than under the pressure of wartime, autocratic urges, personal bondage, and the suggestion of chauvinistic hunts.⁶⁶

Throughout this article, Mengelberg frequently refers to the “universal” spirit of the festival, of Willem’s conducting, and of the Concertgebouw as an institution; he also spends multiple paragraphs discussing the connections between Mahler and Amsterdam, perhaps anticipating that the publication’s German-language readership may question the significance of this relationship. After quoting from a letter that Mahler had written to Willem Mengelberg in 1904, Rudolf asserts that “here, we have achieved what for German orchestras and their leaders still remains an enormous task for the future: the individualization of playing,” by which he means that “the

⁶⁵ “Hoffentlich macht uns die Politik keinen Streit durch die [illegible]. Es verspricht sonst alles großartig zu werden!” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, Jan. 11, 1920, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁶⁶ “Während des Krieges fehlte aber das rechte Animo zu dieser gewaltigen Unternehmung. Wenngleich der Friede uns den Frieden nicht gebracht hat, so ist ein solches Fest unter den heutigen Umständen doch eher möglich, als unter dem Drucke kriegerischer Ereignisse, autokratischen Zwanges, persönlicher Unfreiheit und unter der Suggestion chauvinistischer Hetzen.” Rudolf Mengelberg, “Mahler-Fest in Holland,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 1, no. 3-4 (December 1919): 112.

orchestra does not play as a single mass, but as a diverse group of individuals.”⁶⁷ With this, he asserts that Amsterdam is the best home for Mahler’s music, and that with this festival, “Amsterdam will become, so to speak, Mahler’s Bayreuth.”⁶⁸ Like several of his perspectives discussed above, this idea would recur regularly as he continued to write on the festival.

About a month before the start of the Mahler-Feest, Rudolf wrote to his parents that he had been hard at work on his program book, reaching the point at which he was primarily making corrections and finalizing its layout.⁶⁹ Finally, on April 26—about ten days before the festival’s opening concert—he wrote that he had “happily finished [his] program book,” of which 1500 copies would soon be printed; he also proudly stated that “it is about 240 pages in length, with about 150 pages of text that I’ve written”; the remainder of the pages consisted primarily of images and texts/translations of the musical works.⁷⁰ With this, Rudolf’s most public-facing task related to the festival was complete, and his ideas on Mahler would soon be propagated to his largest audience yet.

⁶⁷ “Hier ist das erreicht, was für die deutschen Orchester und ihre Leiter gewaltige Zukunftsaufgaben sind: die Individualisierung des Spiels. Das Orchester hat nicht als Masse zu spielen, sondern als eine vielgestaltige Gruppe von Einzelindividuen.” *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁸ “...und Amsterdam gleichsam Mahlers Bayreuth zu machen.” *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ See Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, April 5, 1920, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

⁷⁰ “Mein Festbuch habe ich jetzt glücklich fertig. Ende dieser Woche liegen 1500 Exemplar fertig gedruckt vor. Es umfasst etwa 240 Seiten, wovon etwa 150 Seiten Text von mir.” Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to his parents, April 26, 1920, collection 3090-01, box 7109, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

3.3 The Program Book

It would be difficult to overstate the scope of Rudolf Mengelberg's Dutch-language *Mahler-Feestboek*. In this lengthy document, Mengelberg not only guides listeners through each movement of Mahler's ten completed symphonies (plus *Das klagende Lied*); he also aims to characterize Mahler's position in the broader realm of European musical culture. In addition to these extended essays, the book further includes a listing of every performer involved in the festival, photos and biographies of the soloists, a short essay on Mahler's relationship with the city and people of Amsterdam, a listing of every performance of Mahler's works in the Netherlands up to 1920, various photos of Mahler throughout his life, many of which were taken in the Netherlands, and advertisements for the aforementioned lectures and chamber concerts. In short, it is quite clear that this program book was conceived to be every bit as grandiose as the music—and the festival—itsself.

In the broadest sense, Mengelberg's program book differs from most other early writings on Mahler because it was designed to accompany a specific set of performances, and it was only ever published in connection with the Mahler-Feest. In a recent chapter on program notes in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Listening in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Christian Thorau introduces a paradigm that he refers to as “touristic listening,” positing the emergence of concert program notes in the mid-nineteenth century as an offshoot of printed travel guides, which had become exceedingly popular at the time. He describes his model as follows:

The [nineteenth-century] tourist's mode of discovering and appropriating the world established patterns of behavior that would soon enough make their entry into music. By equipping concertgoers with histories, narratives, and musical analyses, a new body of explanatory literature guided the audience safely through hitherto unknown territories of

sound. The visit to a musical performance was somewhat like a *Bildungsreise* on which one did not set out without a well-known travel book.⁷¹

For many attendees of the 1920 Mahler-Feest, the successive performances of Mahler's complete symphonic works could certainly have been described as "hitherto unknown territories of sound," particularly given that some of the works on the program had been premiered less than ten years prior to the festival, and others (such as the Sixth Symphony) remained infrequently performed at the time. Simultaneously, as discussed above, the scholarly literature on Mahler was still limited in 1920. While ardent fans may have been familiar with the monographs discussed here, it is certain that many festival attendees would have had relatively limited knowledge of the intricacies of Mahler's works, even if they were familiar with his conducting career. In writing the festival's program book, then, Mengelberg would have been responsible for "[guiding] the audience safely" through these massive and complex pieces—as well as providing attendees with a frame of reference for contextualizing Mahler as a creator—offering information that would satisfy both the newcomer and the devoted Mahlerian alike. In reality, however, Mengelberg's program book ventures well beyond the traditional scope of the genre as conceived of by Thorau, with this monograph promoting a particular "diplomatic" interpretation of Mahler's music rather than a neutral, balanced examination thereof.

Mengelberg begins his book with a 17-page introduction, in which he provides a very brief biographical sketch of Mahler's life (in about one page) and then presents his overarching arguments about Mahler's cultural-historical significance. Among Mengelberg's primary tasks here is to publicly justify the Concertgebouw's selection of Mahler as the centerpiece of a post-

⁷¹ Christian Thorau, "'What Ought to be Heard': Touristic Listening and the Guided Ear," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Listening in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Christian Thorau and Hansjakob Ziemer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 213.

war festival that sought to reunify the Western world. This explanation was especially important because, as Mengelberg writes, “Mahler, the composer—the great symphonist and lyricist—was paid hardly any attention during his lifetime”; he goes on to add that “one can certainly say that no great composer was more misunderstood—and worse, more neglected—during his life” than Mahler.⁷² At this point, it seems quite clear that Mengelberg is borrowing from Stefan’s above-cited statements on Mahler’s lack of popular reception. It is notable that while Stefan offers Pfitzner as an example of a comparably neglected composer, Mengelberg asserts that “one can certainly say” that Mahler was alone in the extent of his neglect.

Shortly after this, Mengelberg includes another section that is strikingly reminiscent of Stefan’s work, but this time with key differences that provide a window into Mengelberg’s specific agenda. Borrowing almost word-for-word from Stefan, he asks the following questions:

How is it that Richard Strauss immediately made countless friends with his earliest works, and quickly found himself at the center of international musical life? How is it that the much younger Max Reger had just as much public interest in Germany as Debussy did in France—an interest that was denied to Mahler up to and even beyond his death?⁷³

What is most striking about this is the fact that Mengelberg again departs from Stefan’s inclusion of Pfitzner as a point of comparison, and instead compares Mahler’s reception to that of Debussy. Perhaps Mengelberg simply felt that Pfitzner did not belong in this comparison, but it seems more likely that he was attempting to broaden his comparative approach to Mahler by

⁷² “Maar van Mahler, den componist, den grooten symphonicus en lyricus, is tijdens zijn leven, in ’t algemeen genomen, nauwelijks notitie genomen... Geen een van de groote componisten, kan men wel zeggen, is tijdens zijn leven meer miskend en, wat nog erger is, meer veronachtzaamd.” C. Rudolf Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest: 6-18 Mei 1920* (Amsterdam, 1920), 41.

⁷³ “Hoe komt het, dat een Richard Strauss zich al direct met zijn eerste werken talloze vrienden maakte en spoedig in het middelpunt stond van het internationale muziekleven? Hoe komt het, dat de veel jongere Max Reger in Duitschland even veel algemeene belangstelling ondervond als Debussy in Frankrijk – een belangstelling, die Mahler tot zijn dood en nog daarna bleef ontzegd?” *Ibid.*, 42.

including a composer from outside of the Austro-German sphere here. Given the Germanic specificity of the early writings on Mahler discussed above, it comes as no surprise that Debussy makes no named appearance in any of the publications by Stefan, Specht, or Adler (including the later editions), and that Stefan, for example, is quick to dismiss what he refers to as “the new French school” as being too concerned with “mere sound.”⁷⁴ Mengelberg, on the other hand, praises Debussy a bit later in his program book for having created “something so completely new” [*iets zoo volkomen nieuws*], and even stating that in Debussy’s music, we find “a renaissance of the musical miniature in the spirit of our time”—a sentiment he borrowed almost word-for-word from his own 1916 essay on “The Problems of the Present” as discussed above.⁷⁵ Given that all of this occurs within the first few pages of Mengelberg’s introduction, his readers would have been primed to see Mahler not just as a composer situated within the traditional Austro-German sphere, but as one with an international and even cross-cultural stature, despite Mengelberg’s simultaneous assertions that Mahler was severely undervalued during his lifetime.

Around this point in his introduction, it becomes clear that Mengelberg’s discussion of Mahler’s *lack* of prominence actually plays a significant role in his overall historicization of the composer. He begins with the following quasi-poetic description of his argument for why Mahler had been adored by few and neglected by many:

Once one has discovered the spring and has sipped from it, then one will forever thirst for this art. But this spring lies far from the well-trodden path along which the artistic community was propelled in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

People were very much under the influence of the Romantic school. And that influence of Romanticism is still quite strong today. In order to clarify the negligence

⁷⁴ See Stefan, trans. Clark, 77.

⁷⁵ “In hem [Debussy] belichaamt zich een renaissance van muzikale miniatuur-kunst in den geest van onzen tijd.” Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 43. Emphasis original.

toward Mahler's music, and to give relief to him, that movement must be clarified in a few ways.⁷⁶

For Mengelberg, musical Romanticism is characterized by the following principles: extreme pathos, long and "even ungracious" [*zelfs ongraceiuzer*] melodies, an overall largeness of sound, and the dominance of harmonic compositional principles rather than "melodic-contrapuntal" ones (which, for Mengelberg, are representative of the Classical era).⁷⁷

Mengelberg asserts that Schumann and Wagner are the two primary representatives of musical Romanticism, discussing the diverging paths that these composers took in response to the works of Beethoven and other earlier models. He posits Brahms as the "heir apparent" [*erfgenaam*] to Schumann, though with a bit more Classical influence, and then further extends this lineage to Max Reger, whose music he views as a "dialect" of sorts, rather than a truly new style.⁷⁸ He then moves on to the question of Richard Strauss, concluding that even though Strauss had often been heralded as a modern composer in the early twentieth century, "it is still on Romantic ground that his music is built," again echoing his own earlier sentiments in the 1916 essay.⁷⁹ For Mengelberg, all of these prominent composers of Mahler's generation were simply following in line with earlier Romantic-era models.

At this point, he brings Mahler into the mix as follows:

⁷⁶ "Heeft men eenmaal de bronnen ontdekt en zich daaraan gedrenkt, dan blijft men eeuwig dorsten naar deze kunst. Maar die bronnen liggen afzijds van den breeden heirweg, waarop het kunst-lievend publiek in de laatste decennia der 19^e eeuw zich voortbewoog.

Men stond geheel onder den invloed van de romantische school. En die invloed van de romantiek is ook heden nog zeer sterk. Om de nalatigheid ten opzichte van Mahler's kunst te verklaren, om reliëf te geven aan zijn figuur dient die beweging in een paar trekken te worden gekarakteriseerd." Ibid., 42.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 42-43.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁹ "Het is alweer de romantische grond, waaruit zijn muziek opgroeit." Ibid., 44.

Up to the present day, musical life remains under the spell of Romanticism, which consists of chamber music, opera, music drama, and symphonic poems.

But Gustav Mahler—and this is the heart of the matter!—is *not* to be understood through this *Romantic* standpoint of the nineteenth century.

And this is the primary cause for the misunderstanding and neglect of his music. The taste of music-loving audiences and musicians was, and still is, unilaterally focused.

One cannot consider this music as being charged, so to say, with those styles—be it that of Wagner or that of Schumann-Brahms.⁸⁰

Mengelberg does not deny that Mahler was heavily influenced by the Romantic composers that came before him—and he spends several paragraphs discussing these compositional inheritances—but he nonetheless remains firm in his assertion that Mahler is *not* to be categorized among the Romantics, in accordance with his earlier view of Mahler as a composer with Classical tendencies.

To illustrate this point, Mengelberg turns to Beethoven, who he views as being a fully Classical (rather than Romantic) composer. He argues that the idea behind Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was never fully realized nor equaled by the Romantics, specifically stating that Wagner's attempts to posit the music drama as a natural successor to Beethoven equated to "a fundamental error" [*een fundamenteele dwaling*].⁸¹ For Mengelberg, the symphony and the music drama serve entirely separate purposes; he argues that "Beethoven's testament must be realized in the symphonic style, for only the symphony can reveal the deepest essence of the idea that '*Alle Menschen werden Brüder.*' Only the symphony gives us the ability to fully ordain our

⁸⁰ "Zoo blijft het muzikleven tot op den jongsten tijd in den ban der romantiek, die zich uit in kamermuziek, in opera, muziekdrama en symphonisch gedicht.

Gustav Mahler nu – en dit is de *cardo quaestionis!* – is van uit dit *romantische* standpunt in de 19^e eeuw *niet* te begrijpen.

En dit is de hoofdreden van de miskenning en veronachtzaming zijner muziek. De smaak van het muziklievend publiek en ook van de musici was en is ten deele nog eenzijdig bevangen.

Men mag deze kunst niet, om zoo te zeggen belast door een van die stijlen – hetzij dien van Wagner, hetzij dien van Schumann-Brahms, benaderen." Ibid., 45. Emphasis original.

⁸¹ Ibid., 46.

communal life.”⁸² In this sense, he goes on to classify Mahler as “Beethoven’s kindred spirit... the fulfiller of his last will in the sense of the Ninth Symphony.”⁸³ He briefly discusses Schubert and Bruckner as having helped to propel the symphonic style from Beethoven to Mahler, but he leaves no doubt that he views Mahler as the true inheritor of Beethoven’s ideas, and sees these other two nineteenth-century composers simply as necessary milestones along this path.

Mengelberg is clear to note that it is not simply broad philosophical ideas that link Mahler back to the Classical period, but that Mahler’s musical style is also grounded in the features common to this earlier era. To support this assertion, he discusses Mahler’s polyphonic techniques (explained as “Bach’s contrapuntal art transferred over to the modern, colorful orchestra”), his extensive development of individual themes and motives, the independence of each voice in his orchestra, and even a “Mozart-like transparency” in his dense works.⁸⁴ Though Mengelberg allows that some of these characteristics can also be seen in Schubert’s works, he is more emphatic in his linking of Mahler to these earlier composers.

At this point, around halfway through his Introduction, Mengelberg enters into the realm of politics, finally beginning to address the question of “why Mahler?” specifically in regard to the festival. He argues that Mahler’s works are the purest musical expression of the European political landscape of the early twentieth century, writing that:

Mahler is the symphonist of our century—of this developing, emerging time. Just as Beethoven was put to the test as a symphonist by the awakening of *individualism*, so must Mahler be understood through the awakening of *democracy*...

⁸² “In symphonischen zin moest Beethoven’s testament worden verwezenlijkt. Want alleen de symphonie kan de diepste ervaring der idee ‘Alle Menschen werden Brüder’ openbaren. Alleen de symphonie vermag ons gemeenschapsleven de hoogste wijding te verleenen.” Ibid. Despite Mengelberg’s attempts to distinguish between the symphony and the music drama here, many of Mahler’s works straddle this line, drawing upon both traditions.

⁸³ “Gustav Mahler is Beethoven’s geestverwant, is de voltrekker van zijn laatsten wil in den zin der Negende symphonie.” Ibid.

⁸⁴ “De contrapunt-kunst van Bach is op het moderne, veelkleurige orkest overgedragen.” Ibid., 47-48.

As an artist, he is, of course, so far beyond his time, that he gives shape to and even immortalizes it; that is, he lends universal validity to the forms of the time. For forms of art are certainly reflections of social forms.⁸⁵

He goes on to compare the “revolutionary” spirits of these two composers, focusing specifically on the ways that each had been criticized by the “cultured people” [*Gebildeten*] of their respective time. Beethoven, he writes, pushed back against the “formal, salon-like” styles that were expected by the rococo elite, and instead imbued his music with a more personal feeling.⁸⁶ Mahler, for his part, “made music into a folk-art” [*heeft de muziek tot volkskunst gemaakt*], leaving Mengelberg unsurprised at the critical reactions of more traditional audiences.⁸⁷ Although he does not explicitly reference Paul Bekker at any point in his program book, the latter portion of this excerpt above certainly echoes Bekker’s 1918 conception of music’s *gesellschaftsbildende Kraft*, or socially formative force, through which musical works play an active role in the ongoing development of society and culture; I return to this idea in more detail in the following chapter.⁸⁸

In addition to Beethoven, Mengelberg draws a connection between Bach and Mahler, which provides another window into his characterization of the latter. He writes that:

⁸⁵ “Want Mahler is de symphonicus van onze eeuw, van den komenden, wordenden tijd. Gelijk Beethoven als symphonicus te toetsen is aan het ontwaken van het *individualisme*, zoo is Mahler te begrijpen door het ontwaken der *democratie*...

Als kunstenaar staat hij natuurlijk in zoover boven zijn tijd, dat hij dien schept en tevens vereeuwigd, d.w.z.: den tijdsvormen algemeene geldigheid verleent. Want de vormen der kunst zijn beslist een spiegelbeeld der sociale vormen.” Ibid., 48. Emphasis original. Although Mengelberg never provides an explicit definition for his view of “democracy,” his use of the term throughout various documents seems to refer primarily to circumstances in which a broad segment of the population (not just the upper class) is able to come together in participatory events, whether to make decisions related to government or society, or to share an aesthetic or intellectual experience, such as in a concert setting.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918).

Bach gives form to the *churchly* community, Mahler the *social*... Once one has truly internalized this, then one begins to understand Mahler in the right way...

The heart of Bach's music (its material) is the *chorale*; the heart of Mahler's music is the *volkslied*. This is in complete agreement with the essence of both art forms, in which each has served as the highest expression of the spirit of its time.

The chorale is the elemental expression of churchly communal life; the *volkslied* the expression of the social feeling of community.⁸⁹

For Mengelberg, all of Mahler's music is rooted in a basis of simplicity, which he is sure to note should not be confused with triviality. He argues that, like Bach, Mahler's motives and themes are of the utmost simplicity, and that even though each voice in Mahler's large orchestra is treated independently, the way that these voices come together projects an image of simplicity and unity. The following excerpt is quite informative in this regard:

Carefree, each melody sings against the other, each rhythm beats against the other, but out from this multiplicity arises a law which binds each part together into a living organism. Without this law, there would be chaos. The great thing about Mahler, then, is this specific power that holds everything together—and *not just the musical voices, but also the people who listen to them.*⁹⁰

In many ways, this excerpt demonstrates what is perhaps Mengelberg's greatest rhetorical strength: his ability to interweave musical analysis with his politicized views on Mahler in a way that seems designed almost to permeate his readers' subconscious without feeling forced or artificial. By bringing the audience *into* his analysis of Mahler's music, he is priming his readers

⁸⁹ "Bach formeert de *kerkelijke* gemeenschap, Mahler de *sociale*... Wanneer men dat innerlijk heeft ervaren, begint men in den juisten toon voor Mahler gestemd te raken..."

De kern van Bach's muziek (haar materie) is het *koraal*; de kern van Mahler's muziek het *volkslied*. Dat is geheel in overeenstemming met het wezen der beide kunsten, waarin ieder aan den geest van zijn tijd de hoogste uiting gegeven heeft.

Het koraal is de primitieve uiting van het kerkelijke gemeenschapsleven; het volkslied de uiting van het sociale gemeenschapsgevoel." Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 49. Emphasis original.

⁹⁰ "Onbekommerd zingt de eene melodie tegen de andere, het eene rythme botst tegen het andere, maar over deze veelvormigheid heerscht een wet, die alle deelen tot een levensvatbaar organisme verbindt. Zonder die wet, ware er chaos. Het groote in Mahler is dan ook juist de kracht, die alles bijeenhoudt, en wel niet slechts de stemmen, maar ook de menschen, die er naar luisteren." Ibid., 50. Emphasis added.

to experience the symphonies through the specific perspective—that of unification—that he hoped to disseminate.

This discussion of simplicity leads directly into a section on the *volkslied*, which, as indicated above, Mengelberg views as the basis for all of Mahler's music, even the purely instrumental symphonies. Mengelberg sees Mahler's approach to the *volkslied* as another point of differentiation between him and the Romantics, asserting that Mahler's "natural, unforced urge toward the *volkslied*, toward the original poetry" puts him in a completely different category than composers such as Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, and Strauss—all of whom, in Mengelberg's assessment, chose texts primarily for their "contemplative" character, and primarily from "newer, aesthetic literature," which he clearly looks down upon.⁹¹ Mengelberg similarly dismisses Wagner's attempts at creating a folk style as completely misguided. While he acknowledges that Wagner incorporates folk-like subjects into his works, he asserts that this subject matter has nothing in common with the "artificial" musical styles in which it is cast.

In Mahler, however, as Mengelberg argues, one finds perfect harmony between text and music, with both elements working together to create a true style of *volkskunst* that is not found in the work of any Romantic-era composer. He argues that there is no true dividing line between Mahler's symphonies and orchestral songs, with each containing traces of the other, and with Mahler appropriately expanding the notion of the symphony (following in Beethoven's path) to encompass works with singing throughout, such as the Eighth Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*. In a similar vein, Mengelberg praises Mahler for abandoning the traditional constraints of

⁹¹ "De natuurlijke, niet geforceerde drang naar het volkslied, naar de oorspronkelijk poëzie, is een bewijs voor een zeer belangrijken trek, die Mahler doet contrasteeren met de romantische en na-romantische kunst van de 19^e eeuw, gelijk die hier werd beschreven.

Schumann, Brahms, ook Hugo Wolf en Richard Strauss plegen teksten te kiezen van beschouwend karakter, meestal verzen uit de nieuwere, aesthetische literatuur." Ibid., 51.

the four-movement symphony and instead creating his symphonic forms based on their content. As he writes, “this creation of form for each individual work lends an immeasurable quality to Mahler’s oeuvre, through which each work becomes a world of its own.”⁹²

In the final two pages of his Introduction, Mengelberg widens his perspective to provide his broadest arguments for the very existence of the Mahler-Feest. He opens this section with the following paragraph:

This spiritual and artistic course of development makes a complete performance of his oeuvre important in itself, as this Mahler-Feest seeks to realize. It is not just a chronological series of Opus 1, 2, 3, and so on, but rather, each work organically follows in line with psychological necessity. A complete, closed cycle of works by a genius such as Mahler strengthens more than anything else on earth the belief in a higher order of things, in fate and predestination. It enriches our little lives to experience the development of such a great man and artist through his works.⁹³

To complement this personal, psychological basis for the festival, Mengelberg adds a more explicitly political one:

But Gustav Mahler has an even wider-reaching significance for our time. Here, I have tried to describe Mahler in the spirit of the time, to show how he was ahead of his time, how a new era took shape through his art.

Before 1914, the well-to-do, undisturbed bourgeoisie could not be awakened from their “sleep of the righteous” by that music. At most, it interrupted, bothered, and irritated them. But a new generation, a new group, is choosing it as their guiding star, even their priestess.⁹⁴

⁹² “Deze vorm-schepping voor ieder afzonderlijk werk verleent aan het oeuvre van Mahler dat onmetelijk gehalte, waardoor elk werk een wereld op zich zelf is.” Ibid., 53.

⁹³ “Deze geestelijke en artistieke ontwikkelingsgang maakt een gezamenlijke wedergave van zijn oeuvre gelijk dit Mahler-Feest het wil verwezenlijken, reeds op zichzelf belangrijk. Het is geen toevallige serie van opus 1... 2... 3... enz., maar het eene werk volgt organisch op het andere met psychologische noodzaak. Een gesloten, voleindigde kring werken van een genie als Mahler versterkt meer dan eenig ander verschijnsel op aarde het geloof aan een hogere wettelijkheid der dingen, aan noodlot en voorbestemming. Het verrijkt ons kleinere leven zulk eene ontwikkeling van een groot mensch en kunstenaar in zijn werken over-te-leven.” Ibid.

⁹⁴ “Maar Gustav Mahler heeft voor onzen tijd en nog verder strekkende beteekenis. Er is hier getracht Mahler uit den tijdgeest te verklaren, aan te toonen, hoe hij op zijn tijd vooruit was, hoe een nieuwe eeuw gestalte kreeg in zijn kunst.

De welgedane, ongestoorde bourgeoisie vóór 1914 kon door die muziek niet ontwaken uit haren slaap des rechtvaardigen. Hoogstens stoorde, molesteerde en irriteerde het haar. Een nieuwe generatie, een nieuw geslacht kiest haar echter tot leidster, ja, tot priesteres.” Ibid., 53-54. The “*slaap des rechtvaardigen*” [sleep of the righteous]

Mengelberg does not continue in this line of thought after this, making it among the more unfinished-seeming sections of his program book. This sentiment echoes his ideas on the democratization of music in his 1916 essay discussed above, but with somewhat of a pulling-back from expressing these ideas as directly as he did then. Here, in the *Feestboek*, this is his most explicit reference to contemporary politics, so it seems that he was perhaps cautious not to be too overtly critical of the bourgeoisie, particularly given that the list of festival attendees (and sponsors) would certainly have included members of this class.

At the end of the Introduction, Mengelberg briefly and somewhat obliquely introduces a religious ideology into his argument, referring to Mahler's symphonies as arising from a "Christian social spirit" [*Christelijk-sociale geest*].⁹⁵ He does not provide any further explanation of this term, but his concluding paragraphs seem to interweave this idea with the political and musical arguments discussed above. His conclusion is worth quoting in full:

Thus, the Mahler-Feest will unite us. The music is no longer entertainment, stimulant, or even reprehensible illusion; it is also no longer pleasant relaxation after a day's work, nor the sheltered privilege of exclusive social and spiritual circles. No: music is a foundation, music is resignation to the spirit, music knows no borders of class or nation, music is the symbol of a higher community.

This awareness has been lost for a long time. Mahler, the great father, has brought it back to life within us.

Thus, whenever we—the people of the twentieth century—come together in the name of Mahler, we profess what binds us, what holds us together over all differences in birth, education, and character; united over all borders of class and nation:
the profession of a higher humanity.⁹⁶

was a nineteenth-century Dutch (and German) expression used mockingly to refer to the carefree lifestyle of the bourgeoisie, and particularly their feigned ignorance of the problems faced by the lower classes.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁶ "Zoo zal ons het Mahler-Feest vereenigen. De muziek is niet meer verstrooiing, genotmiddel of zelfs verwerpelijke zinsbegoocheling, ook niet meer aangename ontspanning na verrichte dagtaak, evenmin het naijverig beschutte voorrecht van sociaal en geestelijk exclusieve kringen – neen: muziek is stichting, muziek is overgave aan den geest, muziek kent geen stands- of landsgrenzen, muziek is het symbool eener hoogere gemeenschap.

Almost every word of this conclusion is informative. Mengelberg begins with the expected notion that the festival aims to unify the Western world, but he continues somewhat unexpectedly to eschew all traditional interpretations of the ‘function’ of music, stressing that Mahler’s music is not a luxury item nor a mode of entertainment, but rather that it *must* be interpreted primarily as a functional socio-political tool. In this line, it is notable that he casts Mahler as a savior of sorts—as the only figure whose music could resurrect contemporary society from deep division and strife. He is very clear to cast Mahler as the key figure in this argument; he does not simply say “when we come together, we profess what binds us,” but rather he writes “when we come together *in the name of Mahler*,” indicating that the unifying goals of the festival could not possibly be achieved through the works of any other figure.

In assessing Mengelberg’s introduction as a whole, it is quite clear that his positioning of Mahler differs greatly from those of the scholars whose publications I discussed above, despite his obvious familiarity with their works. Perhaps most significant in this regard is his broad assertion that Mahler’s time had come—that the post-war landscape around 1920 was *the* time in which Mahler’s music would finally reach the apex of its socio-cultural (and even political) significance, serving as the necessary musical balm for society’s contemporaneous divisions. Stefan, Specht, and Adler all wrote their first editions before the war, but in any case, their monographs are all completely lacking in this sort of politicized interpretation of Mahler and his music, meaning that Mengelberg’s strong views in this regard are entirely his own. These views also sharply contrast with Mengelberg’s own views in his 1916 “The Problems of the Present,”

Dit bewustzijn is langen tijd verloren gegaan. Mahler de groote verwekker, heeft het in ons weder levend gemaakt.

Wanneer wij mensen van de twintigste eeuw dus samen komen in het teken van Mahler, dan belijden wij datgene wat ons verbindt, wat ons samenhoudt over alle tegenstellingen heen van geboorte, opvoeding en karakter; vereenigt boven alle grenzen van stand en land: de belijdenis eener hoogere menschheid.” Ibid., 55.

in which he asserted that there was no musical figure—and especially no *Germanic* musical figure (including Mahler)—who was representative of the contemporary era. It is unclear what caused his mentality to shift so significantly during this time, but it may be attributable to a change in perspective after the war, or he may simply have decided to change his arguments to better support the festival’s overarching framing.

Herman Rutters, in his 1919 Dutch-language book on Mahler—perhaps the closest contemporary (in terms of time and place) to Mengelberg’s program book—left the question of “Mahler’s time” unanswered, writing the following:

Whether [Mahler] is far ahead of our time with his works, as his enthusiastic admirers appropriately and inappropriately assert, remains a question that only the future can answer with certainty. [...]

The question of whether he stood above his time and wrote for all generations... that question can only be answered by those who come later.⁹⁷

Despite the fact that Mengelberg and Rutters were writing in the same country, around the same time, and ostensibly for similar audiences, they came to quite different conclusions about Mahler’s relevance to their specific cultural milieu, again demonstrating the uniqueness of Mengelberg’s politicized interpretations that left their mark on the entire Mahler-Feest.⁹⁸

As alluded to above, Mengelberg sought to minimize any sense of Austro-German centrality in his program book, and rather emphasized what he saw as Mahler’s wide-ranging appeal. He never refers to Mahler as a “German master” or an “Austrian master” or anything of

⁹⁷ “Of hij met zijn werken onzen tijd verre vooruit is, gelijk zijn geestdriftige bewonderaars te pas en te onpas verkondigen, is ten minste nog een vraag, die alleen de toekomst met stelligheid kan beantwoorden. [...]

De vraag, of hij boven zijn tijd stond en daarom voor alle geslachten schreef... die vraag kunnen eerst zij beantwoorden, die na ons komen.” Rutters, 54 and 59.

⁹⁸ Two years before publishing this book, Rutters wrote an article in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in which he argued that large-scale concert works, like Mahler’s symphonies, were no longer desired by audiences, who instead (in his conception) looked for smaller, more intimate works in response to the war; it is unclear why he was selected to write this particular volume on Mahler in 1919. See Floris Meens, “Sounds of Decline: Cultural Criticism in the Dutch Debate on the Future of Classical Music, c. 1890-1930,” *Journal of Music Criticism* 6 (2022): 12-13.

the sort here, and instead uses only the broadest of terms, such as “humanity” or “mankind,” to convey his notions of the universal applicability of Mahler’s works. Unlike the German-language writers discussed above, Mengelberg also avoids just about any discussion of Mahler’s Jewish heritage in his program book; the only instance in which this topic comes up in the book at all is in a brief statement indicating that Mahler suffered from anti-Semitism that affected his career in Vienna. As with virtually all other aspects of his program book, it seems that Mengelberg likely avoided this issue entirely in order to support his “diplomatic” positioning of Mahler as a universal composer.

Following the introduction, Mengelberg’s program book contains more than 100 pages of notes on the individual symphonies (plus *Das klagende Lied*), with texts and reduced score excerpts where applicable. He does not apply a one-size-fits-all model to each of his analyses; rather, he approaches each piece on its own terms, at times focusing almost entirely on issues of compositional form and motivic development, while at other times exploring the effects that a symphony might have on the listener, or comparing a work with that of another composer. Unlike in his Introduction, he does not seem intent on imposing a single overarching view or interpretation upon his readers over the entirety of this section, although he does approach certain symphonies through the clearly politicized lens discussed so far.

The first symphony that Mengelberg treats in this way is the Third, which he views as the start of Mahler’s mature compositional career. At the outset of his section on this symphony, he immediately compares it with Beethoven’s Third as follows:

Just as humanity had to begin a new musical epoch with Beethoven’s Third Symphony, so too is Mahler’s Third a milestone and an indication of a new era. One could even say that both Beethoven’s and Mahler’s Thirds are the most historically significant creations

of symphonic art—truly weighty turning points in the history of mankind—specifically in their embodiment of the spiritual and political aspects of the world.⁹⁹

Mengelberg goes on to explain that his interpretation of Beethoven's Third is based on its political significance, which he asserts can only be understood in the context of the French Revolution. In the case of Mahler's Third, Mengelberg points to its embodiment of the notion of community, which he suggests is the prevailing cultural feature of the (post-war) twentieth century, again echoing Paul Bekker's ideas as discussed above.

Musically, Mengelberg argues that the work demonstrates “the highest of mastery,” largely because its “form and content are one and the same, and poetry, philosophy, [and] painting are all absorbed and subsumed into the music.”¹⁰⁰ He again compares Mahler and Beethoven, providing us with a slightly more nuanced perspective:

Mahler anticipated this epoch; he shapes the new community, just as Beethoven, one hundred years earlier, had given musical form to the new, free personality. Just as we experience the fate of the individual in the *Eroica*, so too do we experience that of community in Mahler's Third.¹⁰¹

Throughout his program notes, it is rare for Mengelberg to make explicit connections between these sorts of broad, political statements and specific musical features. In this case, however, he actually does provide us with a musical analogue for his argument: he points to Mahler's inventive combination of multiple disparate themes in the middle of the first movement as an

⁹⁹ “Gelijk men met Beethoven's Derde Symphonie een nieuwe epoque in de muziek moet beginnen, is ook Mahler's Derde een mijlpaal en wegwijzer tevens naar nieuwen tijd. Ja, men kan zeggen, dat zoowel Beethoven's als Mahler's Derde de historische belangrijkste scheppingen zijn der symphonische kunst, nademaal zij, in aansluiting aan het algemeen-geestelijke en staatkundige leven der wereld, gewichtige keerpunten der menschheidsgeschiedenis in zich belichamen.” Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 94.

¹⁰⁰ “De geheele derde [staat] op de hoogte der meesterschap. Vorm en inhoud dekken zich geheel, en alle poëzie, filosofie, schilderkunst is geheel in muziek opgezogen en belichaamd.” Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁰¹ “Mahler heeft het voorgevoel van dezen tijd; hij formeert de nieuwe gemeenschap, gelijk Beethoven, honderd jaar vroeger, die nieuwe, vrije persoonlijkheid haar muzikale gestalte geschonken had. Gelijk wij in de *Eroica* het levenslot van den enkeling doorleven, zoo in Mahler's Derde dat der gemeenschap.” Ibid., 96.

example of community-building, even going so far as to say that “it is as though banners and torches are being waved and flaunted with passionate cries,” evoking feelings of a large communal gathering in which each voice contributes to a massive overall sound.¹⁰²

At the end of his section on the Third Symphony, Mengelberg again zooms out to provide an overview of the entire piece (in line with his argument), writing that:

In the first movement, we experienced the earthly community, the community of existence, of the creatures, which finds its most organized form in the social community of mankind. At the end, Mahler unites us with a higher community: that of the spirit, of belief, and of love.¹⁰³

He certainly seems intent on driving home his point here, using the word “community” [*gemeenschap*] no less than four separate times in the span of two sentences (in a way reminiscent of his father’s 1919 letter, discussed above, on what he saw as the unifying purpose of a grand music festival). For Mengelberg, the all-encompassing nature of the Third makes it the work that seems to align most obviously with his goals, and with the goals of the entire Mahler-Feest.

The Fourth Symphony—with its more balanced proportions and elements of Classical style—presents a completely different outlook than the Third, leading Mengelberg to analyze it in quite a different way. Despite this, he still concludes that this work is also representative of his time, writing that:

Again, Mahler opens an entirely new world for us. His visionary innocence, his genius, leads us—the complicated and relativistic people of the twentieth century—into spheres of absolute belief, into fields of childlike bliss. The great movement that we now see in the visual arts—the search for the simple and essential, the quest for the so-called

¹⁰² “Het is alsof met banieren en fakkels bij hartstochtelijke kreten gezwaaid en gewapperd wordt; een volkomen opgaan in het gevoel der gemeenschap.” Ibid., 102.

¹⁰³ “Wij doorleefden in het eerste deel de aardsche gemeenschap, de gemeenschap van het bestaan, van de kreatuur, die in de sociale gemeenschap der menschen haar hoogst georganiseerden vorm vindt. Aan het slot vereenigt ons Mahler tot de hoogere gemeenschap – die des geestes, des geloofs en der liefde.” Ibid., 107.

“primitive”—had already begun twenty years ago with this masterwork, which, in its persuasiveness and utmost spirituality, is unmatched by any example of the newest painting or sculpture.

Among the creative personalities of our time, no one is so completely privy to the latest secrets and has such purity of soul in the struggle as Mahler does.¹⁰⁴

Throughout his analysis of this work, Mengelberg continues to compare it with contemporaneous examples of visual art, even asserting that the rapid-fire alternation between themes in the development section of the first movement is akin to the emerging style of cubism. Particularly in regard to the works that Mahler composed after 1900 (starting with the Fourth), Mengelberg seems interested in characterizing them in as ‘modern’ a way as he can, likely to ensure that his readers would not view them as coming from a previous era.

Mahler’s middle-period instrumental symphonies (the Fifth through the Seventh) naturally do not lend themselves as readily to Mengelberg’s politicized interpretive style as the earlier and later works do, and for these works, his program notes are a bit more restricted to technical musical analysis rather than the sorts of broad-reaching philosophical interpretations discussed above. Particularly for the Sixth Symphony, which had received far fewer performances up to 1920 than any other of the symphonies, Mengelberg would certainly have known that his program notes would play a crucial role in preparing the audience to take in such a difficult work. Thus, while he is quick to admit that “if there is any symphony in the literature that deserves the nickname ‘tragic’, it is certainly Mahler’s Sixth,” he also argues that the finale of the Sixth is “a superior masterwork that has no equal in the entire symphonic literature,” and

¹⁰⁴ “Weer opent ons Mahler een geheel nieuwe wereld. Zijn vizioenaire onbedorvenheid, zijn genius geleidt ons, de gecompliceerde en relativistische menschen der twintigste eeuw, in kringen van absoluut geloof, in beemden van kinderlijke gelukzaligheid. De groote beweging, die wij thans in de beeldende kunst kunnen gadeslaan, de zucht naar het eenvoudige en essentiele, het streven der z.g. “primitieven”, heeft in de muziek reeds twintig jaar geleden dit wonderwerk vooropgestuurd, dat met zijn overtuigingskracht en uiterste vergeestelijking nog door geen enkel voortbrengsel der nieuwste schilder- en beeldhouwkunst is geëvenaard.

Onder de scheppende persoonlijkheden van onzen tijd is nog niemand zóó doorgedrongen tot de laatste geheimenissen en heeft zooveel ziele-zuiverheid in worsteling terugerlangd als Mahler.” Ibid., 112.

even that it “constitutes a high point of Mahler’s instrumental symphonic art.”¹⁰⁵ All of these arguments, however, are firmly grounded in musical features, such as melodic invention and unique formal structures, and Mengelberg does not devote much of this section to extra-musical characteristics, other than to say that the symphony’s form and content are fully unified.

In programming Mahler’s final three symphonic works, the festival committee agreed on the following order: *Das Lied von der Erde*, then the Ninth Symphony, and finally the Eighth Symphony; this was the same order that Mengelberg had proposed in the draft schedule sent to his parents a year earlier. From the committee’s perspective, this ordering would allow for the Ninth Symphony to be performed on the anniversary of Mahler’s death, and for the festival to conclude with the monumental Eighth Symphony. Interestingly, Mengelberg seems to view the Ninth Symphony as a lesser work than the other two here, writing that “the Eighth Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde* overwhelmingly and affectingly crown Mahler’s life’s work, each complementing the other,” while “Mahler’s last symphonic work [i.e., the Ninth] is in reality not a recapitulation of the previous two, is not one last ascent – it is much more of an epilogue.”¹⁰⁶ In describing his complementary characterizations of the former two works, he writes that “if the Eighth Symphony is a powerful manifest, a summons for humanity, in which Mahler—the *priest*—turns toward the masses, then *Das Lied von der Erde* is an inward, personal confession

¹⁰⁵ “Zoo ooit een symphonie in de wereldliteratuur den bijnaam van ‘tragisch’ verdient, dan is het wel Mahler’s Zesde... [Die is] een verheven wonderwerk, dat in de heele symphonische literatuur zijn wederga zoekt... De Finale der zesde symphonie vormt een hoogtepunt van Mahler’s symphonisch-instrumentale kunst.” Ibid., 128 and 139.

¹⁰⁶ “De achtste symphonie en het ‘Lied von der Erde’ bekronen – elkander wederzijds aanvullend – het levenswerk van Gustav Mahler zoo overweldigend en tegelijk aangrijpend... Mahler’s laatste symphonische werk is ook in werkelijkheid geen samenvatting der beide vorige, geen laatste stijging – het is veel meer een epiloog.” Ibid., 182.

from Mahler, the *man*—an intimate dialogue between friends.”¹⁰⁷ In the Ninth Symphony, by contrast, “we experience all of the feelings of pain, despair, and distance,” with which he admits that we are familiar from the other symphonies, but from which Mahler—“the great liberator”—had always rescued us, other than in the Sixth Symphony.¹⁰⁸ For Mengelberg, the Ninth fits into the relatively common paradigm (in Mahler scholarship) of “a work by a lonely man who has resigned himself from life.”¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, during his discussion of *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mengelberg turns once more to the topic of universality by way of Mahler’s borrowed (and reworked) texts, writing that:

Just as the Chinese texts are so universal—despite their local color—that they immediately grip our European hearts, so too is Mahler’s music free of anything ‘exotic,’ and, though quite picturesque, it is still fully imbued with the deepest feeling.¹¹⁰

With this defense of Mahler against any potential charges of exoticism, Mengelberg again seeks to situate the composer as having written music for all of humanity; he also praises the “universal” nature of the original Chinese texts, which comes as no surprise, given his proclivity for all things universal. Here and elsewhere, however, he does not address the issue of language in his discussions of universality; he keeps all sung text in its original (untranslated) German

¹⁰⁷ “Is de achste symphonie een geweldig manifest, een oproep aan de menschheid, waarin Mahler, de *priester*, zich wendt tot de menigte, zoo is ‘Das Lied von der Erde’ een innig persoonlijke bekentenis van Mahler, den *mensch*, een intieme dialoog van vriend tot vriend.” Ibid., 177. Emphasis original.

¹⁰⁸ “Wij doorleven alle stemmingen van smart, vertwijfeling en afstand doen... stemmingen, die ons reeds uit vroegere werken bekend zijn, maar toch altijd zegevierend overwonnen of verheerlijkt werden door den grooten bevrijder Mahler. Slechts in de zesde symphonie, de ‘Tragische’ beleven we een hopelooze ineenstorting.” Ibid., 183.

¹⁰⁹ “De negende symphonie is het werk van den eenzamen ménsch Mahler, die met het leven heeft afgesloten.” Ibid., 191-192.

¹¹⁰ “Gelijk de chineesche verzen ondanks hun locale kleur toch zóó algemeen menschelijk zijn, dat zij ook onmiddellijk ons Europeanen in het hart grijpen, zoo is ook Mahler’s muziek vrij van al het ‘exotische’, en, hoewel zeer schilderachtig toch steeds doortrokken van het diepste gevoel.” Ibid., 179.

throughout his program book, although he does provide Dutch-language translations for the Latin texts in the first part of the Eighth Symphony.

The Eighth, along with the Third, is the second work by Mahler that fits particularly well with Mengelberg's political stance as a result of its all-encompassing nature, its combination of sacred and secular texts, and its unrivaled grandiosity. He opens his section on this work by quoting from a letter that Mahler sent to Willem Mengelberg in 1906, in which Mahler writes that the Eighth "is my greatest accomplishment thus far... Imagine that the universe itself begins to sound..."¹¹¹ For Rudolf Mengelberg, this quote "leaves no doubt that the master had fully understood the significance of the Eighth for his oeuvre—and further, for his time and for future generations."¹¹² As we have seen, Mengelberg misses no opportunity to posit that Mahler's works had remained exceedingly relevant, if not even gained in societal relevance, between the time of their composition and that of the Mahler-Feest. In further describing the Eighth, he reinforces this point with some of his most overblown rhetoric yet, asserting that:

This symphony is the crowning achievement of [Mahler's] life's work. With it, the powerful "Mahlerian" spirit rises up, and Mahler—the creator of new forms—ascends to the stars along with it, as one of the greatest saviors of mankind.¹¹³

With this text in hand, the audience would have been primed to experience the performance of the Eighth Symphony—the final event of the festival, for which the Concertgebouworkest was supplemented with additional performers—as a truly monumental occurrence. Indeed, for many

¹¹¹ "Es ist das Größte, was ich bis jetzt gemacht habe... Denken Sie sich, dass das Universum zu tönen und zu klingen beginnt." Qtd. in *ibid.*, 204.

¹¹² "Dat de meester de beteekenis van de Achtste voor zijn werk en daarmee voor zijn tijd en voor de generaties der toekomst zelf sterk heeft gevoeld, blijkt ondubbelzinnig uit het hier aangehaalde." *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹³ "Deze symphonie is dan ook de kroon op het levenswerk. Daarmee rijst de geestelijke macht 'Mahler' en Mahler, de schepper van nieuwe vormen, tot in de sterren, als een der grootste verlossers der menscheid." *Ibid.*

who had been there, this final concert was among the most memorable events of the entire Mahler-Feest.¹¹⁴

Setting aside issues of politics for a moment, Mengelberg's program book absolutely serves as one of the most significant analyses of Mahler's complete symphonic works from the early twentieth century. The analytical section of his book is longer than the entire monographs by Stefan and Adler published in the 1910s (in which only a few pages, or even a few paragraphs, are dedicated to each work), and is rivaled in length only by those of Specht and Bekker. By and large, Mengelberg's analyses are astute and persuasive, fulfilling Christian Thorau's model of "touristic listening" by providing his readers with the information they would have needed to approach the symphonies whether they had previously listened to them or not, even if his diplomatic interpretations of Mahler often venture beyond this purpose. This is particularly notable given that Mengelberg was only 28 years old at the time and was writing in a foreign language (and had lived in the Netherlands for less than four years at that point). While there is no documentary evidence explicitly linking *Willem* Mengelberg to the drafting of this program book, it is almost certain that the cousins would have discussed various aspects of the music during the period leading up to the festival (while Rudolf was studying under Willem), so it seems a fair assumption to say that some of the lines of thought in the program book may have come from Willem, who was quite intimately familiar with all of Mahler's works. Whether this was the case or not, Rudolf Mengelberg is listed as the sole author of the book.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, N.H. Wolf, "Het Mahler-Feest: Concertgebouw, 6-21 Mei 1920. III. (Slot.)," *De Kunst* 12 (1919/1920): 493-497.

Unlike many early analysts of Mahler's music (and other musical analysts from this time in general), Mengelberg actually demonstrates a bit of self-reflection on the very role of the analyst. In his discussion of the Seventh Symphony's final movement, he includes the following meta-analysis:

One may take this free interpretation of the finale for what it is. It is not bound to anything, and one may certainly free oneself from it and allow the music to affect one as it will. The examples are hardly intended to provide a *direct path to universal understanding*. One cannot caution strongly enough against an *illustrative* conception of Mahler's music, because one may well create a misunderstanding that violates the *spirit* of his art.¹¹⁵

Thus, for Mengelberg, one's personal experience of the music provided a more authentic interpretation than technical analysis could.¹¹⁶ This is in line with Thorau's conception of program notes as a sort of travel guide, since such a guide may point a traveler in the right direction when it comes to providing context for a sight or attraction, but one's actual encounter with the object or location would always outweigh the act of preparatory reading in a guidebook. At the same time, however, this statement seems to indicate a bit of tension between the goals of Mengelberg's individual musical analyses and those of his entire program book; while he may assert here that his musical analyses should not necessarily be taken as gospel, he nonetheless does not shy away from the all-encompassing politicization of Mahler's life and works discussed here, with which he clearly expects his readers to agree.

¹¹⁵ "Men moge deze vrije interpretatie van de finale nemen voor wat zij is. Zij bindt tot niets en men kan zich daarvan emancipeeren en enkel de muziek als zoodanig op zich doen inwerken. De concrete beelden willen slechts den *weg banen* tot een *algemeen begrip*. Men kan niet genoeg tegen de *illustratieve* opvatting van Mahler's muziek waarschuwen, want men zou een misverstand in de hand werken, dat zondigt tegen den *geest* zijner kunst." Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 163. Emphasis original.

¹¹⁶ The fact that Mengelberg includes this statement specifically in his discussion of this particular movement—rather than his broader discussion of Mahler's oeuvre in his introduction—is almost certainly significant. Given the troubled reception history of the finale of the Seventh, and particularly the difficulty that audiences had (and continue to have) with interpreting it, it seems that Mengelberg found this to be the most appropriate location in his program book for this sort of meta-analytical discussion.

To conclude his program book, Mengelberg includes a short essay titled “Gustav Mahler and the Concertgebouw,” in which he provides further explanation for the basis of the Mahler-Feest. He begins this section with a discussion of the Concertgebouw’s rise to prominence, writing that when Brahms visited Amsterdam in 1884, he noted that the city’s people “ate and drank excellently, but made terrible music.”¹¹⁷ When Mahler first visited Amsterdam two decades later, however, the Concertgebouworkest had blossomed into the group that would be able to fulfill Mahler’s highest artistic wishes, largely due to the impact of Willem Mengelberg’s directorship. Rudolf cites three factors that contributed most significantly to this growth: “the high level of [Willem’s] artistic performances, the great number of concerts, and the diversity of his programs.”¹¹⁸ To expand upon this last factor, Rudolf adds a list of composers whose works had been performed by the Concertgebouw under Willem’s direction (or under the composers themselves), including Grieg, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Debussy, Reger, Schoenberg, Elgar, and others. As this list demonstrates, Willem certainly sought to bring composers of diverse national origins to the Concertgebouw, which was likely among the factors that led to Rudolf’s positive views of internationalism in music.

In regard to Mahler specifically, Rudolf refers to the strong friendship between the composer and Willem, which was matched in strength by the commonalities in their artistic approaches, writing that:

[Willem] Mengelberg and his ensemble have been the most personal, most important, most unique in performing the works of this great modern symphonist, ensuring the Concertgebouw a lasting place in the history of music. Although there is hardly anywhere

¹¹⁷ “...men hier voortreffelijk at en dronk, maar afschuwelijk muziek maakte.” Ibid., 215. Mengelberg posits this sentiment as coming from Brahms himself, but he does not include an explicit quotation nor provide a specific reference for this quotation.

¹¹⁸ “Het hooge niveau van zijn artistieke prestaties, het groote aantal concerten en de veelzijdigheid zijner programmas.” Ibid., 216.

in the world where Mahler is fully appreciated, he is admired and loved in Holland as one of the great masters of composition, and is popular in the best sense of the word.

Thus, Amsterdam has become Gustav Mahler's Bayreuth.¹¹⁹

Significantly, Mengelberg describes something of a synergistic relationship between the Concertgebouw and Mahler here, in which the institution gave the composer an appreciative, receptive audience, and the composer in turn gave the institution a place in the historical canon. By equating Amsterdam to Wagner's Bayreuth, Mengelberg further lends an air of seriousness and even spirituality to the Concertgebouw, casting it as something of an eternal temple of worship for Mahler and his works.

Throughout his program book, then, Mengelberg never loses sight of his goal. His perspectives on Mahler's political significance—and that of the festival—can be found in his introductory essay, his analyses of the individual symphonies, and his supplementary essay on Mahler and Amsterdam. Given that this was *the* program book officially issued by the Concertgebouw for the festival, his words would have carried great weight, potentially convincing scores of attendees that his views were not simply subjective interpretations but rather objective facts, and that Mahler's music truly was imbued with the political sentiments which he ascribed to it. This is in line with Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin's conception of curator figures as "mediator[s] of the contemporary," as well as with Paul

¹¹⁹ "In de herschepping van de werken van dezen grootsten modernen symphonicus heeft Mengelberg met zijn ensemble het persoonlijkste, het belangrijkste, iets éénig in zijn soort gegeven, waardoor het Concertgebouw een blijvende plaats in de ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis der muziek is verzekerd. Terwijl Mahler nog bijna nergens in de wereld op zijn volle waarde wordt geschat, word hij in Holland als een van de grootmeesters der toonkunst vereerd en bemind, en is hij in den besten zin van het woord populair.

Zoo is Amsterdam Gustav Mahler's Bayreuth geworden." Ibid., 216-217.

Connerton's notion of the "master narrative" conveyed by such figures (largely through commemorative actions) as introduced above in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.¹²⁰

3.4 Mengelberg's Later Writings

Despite its clear significance as an early analytical source on Mahler's life and works, Mengelberg's *Mahler-Feestboek* was never published other than in connection with the 1920 festival; still today, it exists only through surviving copies from this time. According to a ledger book kept by the Concertgebouw administration, at least 288 copies of the *Feestboek* were sold during the festival at the price of *f* 5 each, but the book does not appear to have been sold at all after the conclusion of the event (for context, a subscription ticket to all of the evening concerts was priced at *f* 40 for those who did not receive sponsored admission). It is unclear what happened to the remainder of the 1500 copies that Rudolf had told his parents would be printed, although some were distributed to the special invited guests as indicated on their original invitations.¹²¹ The fact that the book was not published otherwise seems somewhat unusual, given that the festival committee clearly recognized the academic significance of the publication, writing in a letter to the printing company that "we intend to have no advertisements in our *Feestboek*; no exceptions."¹²² With this, the book found itself in a gray area of sorts; it was not

¹²⁰ Nikos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin, "Art biennales and cities as platforms for global dialogue," in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2011), 57; and Paul Connerton, "How Societies Remember," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 338.

¹²¹ Register of Income and Expenses, 1920, Archive 1089, number 2.20.8.1.1.2, box 2999, Concertgebouw Archives, Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief. The guilder (*f*) was the Dutch currency up until its replacement by the Euro in 2002.

¹²² "Na bespreking met de leden van de Mahler-Feest-Commissie deel ik u mede, dat wij van ons voornemen, geen advertenties in ons feestboek op te nemen, geen uitzondering kunnen maken." Letter from Mahler-Feest Committee

simply an ordinary program book to accompany a concert (since such a document would have contained advertisements and other indirectly relevant information), but it was also not a fully-fledged publication to be found on the shelves of booksellers or libraries.

It seems possible that the Dutch language of the *Mahler-Feestboek* was at least one potential cause for its lack of further publication, particularly given that Mengelberg went on to publish his German-language retrospective on the festival during the same year. This monograph, *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, was issued by Universal-Edition, and was the first (and last) publication of the nascent *Mahler-Bond* that had been founded during the festival. As discussed in the previous chapter, a series of letters between Mengelberg and Universal-Edition throughout the summer and fall of 1920 indicate that, like everything related to the *Mahler-Bond*, interpersonal disagreements—here between Schoenberg and both Mengelbergs—led to numerous difficulties and delays in the book’s publication.¹²³ The monograph was eventually printed in November 1920, to be sold in the German-speaking lands and the Netherlands, though without any real resolution of the interpersonal disputes.

As alluded to above, this publication included the full texts of the lectures given by Mengelberg, Adler, Casella, Stefan, Salten, and Specht during the Mahler-Feest, various newspaper excerpts reporting on the festival from seven different countries (in almost as many languages), and the text of the Manifesto of Foreign Guests created during the gathering. Mengelberg’s intent with this volume is clear; he writes in the introduction (the only newly written segment of the book) that, “the following pages testify to a music-historical and cultural-

to N.V. Uitgevers Maatschappij Van Loghum Slaterus & Visser, April 27, 1920, Archive 1089, number 2.20.8.1.1.4, box 3006, Concertgebouw Archives, Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief.

¹²³ Letters between Rudolf Mengelberg and Universal-Edition, June-December 1920, Archive 1089, number 2.20.8.1.1.4, box 3005, Concertgebouw Archives, Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief.

historical occurrence that took place in May 1920 in Amsterdam... May these journalistic accounts, combined with the talks given at the festival, present an image of those great days, so that the seeds sown there may bear rich fruit!”¹²⁴ Like many others present for the festival in Amsterdam, it is clear that Mengelberg was deeply impacted by the event, believing it to have been fully successful in achieving the goals that he had set out for it, and viewing it not as a one-off occurrence, but as the start of many other similar events that would bridge the gap between music and politics during the post-war period.

Mengelberg’s own lecture reprinted in this book was given on two separate occasions during the Mahler-Feest, as well as in pre-festival publicity events in Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden, and Frankfurt, perhaps among other locations. Though this lecture was given in German, it bears a striking similarity to the above-analyzed Dutch-language essay on Mahler’s cultural-historical significance in Mengelberg’s *Feestboek*; in fact, the essay in the *Feestboek* simply seems to be a translated, revised, and slightly expanded version of the lecture, indicating that Mengelberg potentially drafted the German version first (in his native language), and later adapted it for the Concertgebouw publication, likely with proofreading assistance from a native Dutch speaker.

Mengelberg introduces the collection of newspaper excerpts gathered for second part of this book as follows:

The greatest variety of voices is assembled here in order to provide the most objective image of the Mahler-Feest and its historical significance as is possible. Throughout, three primary viewpoints come to light: Gustav Mahler and his reception in the world around 1920, the significance of Willem Mengelberg and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw for

¹²⁴ “Die folgenden Blätter sollen von einem musik- und kulturhistorischen Ereignis zeugen, das sich im Mai 1920 in Amsterdam vollzog... Mögen diese Berichte vereinigt mit den anlässlich des Festes gehaltenen Vorträgen ein Bild jener großen Tage festhalten, damit die dort gelegte Saat reiche Früchte trage!” Rudolf Mengelberg, “Vorwort” to *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte*, 3.

Mahler and for European music more broadly, [and] the Mahler-Feest as the first bridge for international artistic and intellectual exchange after the World War.

In this compilation, exclusively non-Dutch perspectives are taken into account in regard to the following: impressions of Mahler's works as performed by the Amsterdam ensemble, as well as Holland in general as a cultural and musical center, most directly and precisely reflected through comparisons and parallels by the foreign participants with the musical landscapes of their own countries, resulting in valuable observations and suggestions... The accounts assembled here from Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, England, and America originated in Amsterdam, but will be of general and lasting interest due to their lack of assumptions and the breadth of their perspectives.¹²⁵

He goes on to explain that Dutch journalistic perspectives were not included because they did not present the same international viewpoints as the foreign examples, and because the Dutch articles were so numerous (and lengthy) that they would have required an entire publication of their own; indeed, the Concertgebouw archives contain multiple folders worth of journalistic clippings from newspapers within the Netherlands reporting on the festival. In any case, this foregrounding of an international diversity of approaches and perspectives certainly aligns with Mengelberg's centering of internationalism in all aspects of the festival. Given that his stated purpose for the book was to effectively canonize the Mahler-Feest as an event of major historical significance, his inclusion of this varied set of newspaper clippings would have further ensured that the festival was also remembered as one of *international* significance. Finally, his characterization of the event as "the first bridge for international artistic and intellectual exchange after the World

¹²⁵ "Die verschiedensten Stimmen sind hier vereinigt, um ein möglichst objektives Bild von dem Mahler-Fest und seiner historischen Bedeutung zu geben. Hierbei werden stets drei Gesichtspunkte in die Augen springen: Gustav Mahler und seine Erkenntnis in der Welt um 1920 – Willem Mengelberg und das Amsterdamer Concertgebouw in ihrer Bedeutung für Mahler und die europäische Musik überhaupt – das Mahler-Fest als erste Brücke internationalen künstlerischen und geistigen Austausches nach dem Weltkriege.

In dieser Zusammenstellung wurden nur außer-holländische Darstellungen berücksichtigt, da sich in ihnen das Fest: der Eindruck der Werke Mahlers in der Wiedergabe durch das Amsterdamer Ensemble sowohl, wie ganz allgemein Holland als kulturelles und musikalisches Zentrum – am unmittelbarsten spiegelt und gerade durch Vergleiche und Parallelen der ausländischen Festteilnehmer mit der Musikpflege in ihren eigenen Ländern sich wertvolle Betrachtungen und Anregungen ergeben... Die hier zusammengestellten österreichischen, deutschen, italienischen, französischen, belgischen, englischen und amerikanischen Schilderungen der in Amsterdam empfangenen Eindrücke aber werden gerade durch ihre Voraussetzungslosigkeit und die Weite ihrer Perspektiven von allgemeinem und bleibendem Interesse sein." Ibid.

War” reinforces the idea that the festival was not simply something passively attended by an international audience, but rather that (in his view) it actually contributed to the mending of diplomatic relations during the challenging post-war era.

Three years after the festival, Mengelberg’s short, German-language biography of Mahler was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Interestingly, Mengelberg seems to abandon the overtly politicized interpretations of Mahler’s life found throughout the *Mahler-Feestboek*, and instead takes a more objective approach in the biographical section of this book, providing a great deal of additional details without much in the way of interpretation. He does mention the Mahler-Feest and the Dutch Mahler tradition in a single paragraph at the end of this section, providing readers with a basic overview, but he fails to convey the significance of the event in the same way that he had done in his program book and his later retrospective on the festival.

Perhaps even more surprising is Mengelberg’s overview of Mahler’s music in this book; here, he moves significantly away from his understanding of Mahler as a universal composer, and instead aligns himself much more closely with the views of the German-language writers on Mahler discussed above; indeed, the ideas in this publication seem to be closer to those in his 1916 essay on “The Problems of the Present” than to those in the *Mahler-Feestboek*. Here, Mengelberg opens the section on Mahler’s music with the assertion that “Gustav Mahler stands at the end of the great era of German music,” and goes on to describe Mahler as “the master of the German spirit,” despite his Jewish heritage.¹²⁶ Despite his clear shift of focus to Mahler’s Germanic characteristics here (with statements such as “the entirety of German Romanticism—

¹²⁶ “Gustav Mahler steht am Ende der großen Epoche der deutschen Musik... [er ist der] Meister deutschen Geistes.” Mengelberg, *Gustav Mahler*, 33.

from Weber through Wagner—is contained within Mahler’s music”), Mengelberg does provide a list of non-Germanic composers who influenced Mahler in various ways, including Debussy, Liszt, Bizet, and Tchaikovsky.¹²⁷ In the work-specific analyses that follow, Mengelberg keeps a significant amount of material from his *Feestboek*, including his above-discussed views on the cultural significance of the Third and Eighth Symphonies for the twentieth century.

While some of this interpretive material is retained, the overall reading experience of this biography is entirely different than that of the festival program book written only three years earlier. It is not clear why (or even whether) Mengelberg may have changed his views during this period, though perhaps the German language and publisher of this monograph led him to put forth a more German-centric portrayal of Mahler (even though this was not the case with the festival retrospective published in German by Universal-Edition). In any case, this book seems to be a bit of an anomaly in the context of Mengelberg’s larger career, conforming more closely to the ideas he expressed in his unpublished 1916 essay than to anything he wrote after that point.

After 1923, Mengelberg did not publish any further materials explicitly on Mahler or the Mahler-Feest; instead, he seems to have redirected his scholarly energies to the realm of cultural studies more broadly, while retaining some of the political views conveyed through his *Feestboek*. His first venture in this new direction was his German-language *Holland als kulturelle Einheit* (1928), which he introduces as presenting “the Dutch experience of a German man, a *Rheinländer*, who has played an active role in the country’s cultural life for more than a

¹²⁷ “Freilich ist in Mahlers Musik die ganze deutsche Romantik—von Weber bis Wagner—latent.“ Ibid., 36-37.

decade now.”¹²⁸ The book includes chapters on various aspects of Dutch culture, including its architecture, painting, literature, music, religious practices, social history, and even its storied relationship with the sea. Throughout, Mengelberg tends not to refer to the work of other scholars, but rather simply presents his own perspectives on the Netherlands in relation to the German world, and occasionally in relation to France.

For the purposes of this study, the most significant chapter of Mengelberg’s book is its first, titled “The Right of the Small Nation” [*Das Recht des kleinen Nationen*]. He posits this title as “one of the catchiest buzzwords of our turbulent era,” explaining that it came about through the reshuffling of power that occurred in Europe during and after the war, allowing smaller nations to claim larger roles on the world stage than they had previously been able to.¹²⁹ In Mengelberg’s view, a small nation with the following characteristics would have the ability to take on such a role: “the uniqueness of its national character, the strength of its nature, its spiritual and physical resources, [and] a favorable geographic position.”¹³⁰ Mengelberg asserts that the Netherlands fits such a description, largely due to its historical status as a world power, arguing that even though the Dutch Golden Age had long been over, “none of the intensity of [the nation’s] cultural life had been lost.”¹³¹ He further argues that the location of the

¹²⁸ “[Das Buch ist] entstanden aus dem Erlebnis Hollands durch einen Deutschen und Rheinländer, der seit mehr als einem Jahrzehnt am kulturellen Leben des Landes aktiv teilnimmt.” Mengelberg, *Holland als kulturelle Einheit*, 7.

¹²⁹ “Zu den einprägsamsten Schlagworten unserer bewegten Epoche gehört: *das Recht der kleinen Nationen*.” Ibid., 9.

¹³⁰ “Eigenart des Volkscharakters, Kraft ihrer Natur, Schätze des Geistes und des Bodens, Gunst der geographischen Bedingungen – dies alles sind Eigenschaften die dem Kleinen erhöhte Macht und damit erweitertes Recht verleihen.” Ibid., 11.

¹³¹ “Wie sehr sie auch im Laufe der Jahrhunderte an Machtumfang verloren haben, an Intensität kulturellen Eigenlebens haben sie nichts eingebüßt.” Ibid., 12.

Netherlands—between the larger powers of Germany and England—gives it the unique ability to interact regularly with, and even exert influence on, both of these larger nations.

In a later chapter titled “The Netherlands Today” [*Holland in der Gegenwart*],

Mengelberg expands greatly on these ideas, asserting that:

If *one* nation truly possesses the *Recht des Kleinen*, as was discussed earlier, and gains further victories with each generation, it is Holland. Its right lies in the *power* of its *essence*...

This is not a power that dominates, but rather a power that convinces. It is not power in numbers, but the power of a deeply independent culture.

This Holland does not direct or steer, but rather educates and influences. But its balancing and mediating nature is no less significant for the European community as the weight of a Great Power...

[Discusses the nation’s shift to independent neutrality during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.]

Thus, the Dutch neutrality should not be considered as weakness or apathy, but rather as strength and as a positive stance. For Holland is just as conscious of its independence as the surrounding Great Powers are aware and afraid of the eternal spirit of this small country, which remains alive in the land and its people.¹³²

With segments such as this, new aspects of Mengelberg’s underlying (and unspoken) mentality in relation to the Mahler-Feest seem to come to light. Here, he continuously points to the Netherlands’ cultural power—what we would now refer to as soft power—rather than military power, affirming that this small nation could exert influence on the world stage through intellectual and artistic means. With this, it becomes clearer that Mengelberg would have viewed

¹³² “Doch wenn *ein* Staat das *Recht des Kleinen*, von dem eingangs gesprochen wurde, im wahren Sinne besitzt und sich von Generation auf Generation wieder neu errungen hat, so ist es Holland. Sein Recht beruht in der *Stärke* seines *Wesens*...

Es ist keine Macht, die dominiert, sondern eine Macht, die überzeugt. Es ist nicht die Macht der Zahl, sondern die Macht der Tiefe selbständig wirkender Kultur.

Dieses Holland ist nicht führend oder richtunggebend, sondern es erziehend und beeinflussend. Aber das ausgleichende und vermittelnde Wesen ist nicht minder bedeutsam für die europäische Gemeinschaft wie das Schwergewicht einer Großmacht...

So ist die holländische Neutralität nicht als Schwäche oder Teilnahmslosigkeit zu werten, sondern als Kraft und als positive Einstellung. Denn Holland ist sich seiner Selbständigkeit ebenso bewusst, wie die es umgebenden Großmächte in diesem kleinen Staat den Geist der Jahrhunderte achten und fürchten, der in Land und Leuten lebendig ist.” Ibid., 39-41. Emphasis original.

the quasi-diplomatic orientation of the 1920 Mahler-Feest as stemming from, and further contributing to, this “Recht des kleinen Nationen” of the Netherlands, and that for him, no other location would have allowed the festival to be invested with the true cultural power that he felt it should have.

In the final chapter of this book, Mengelberg explicitly compares the Netherlands and Germany in various ways, simultaneously summarizing his preceding arguments. The opening of this chapter, reproduced below, bears striking similarity to a sentiment found in the *Mahler-Feestboek*:

Classicism permeates and shapes reality, *Romanticism* escapes it. Classical culture is spiritualized reality, Romantic culture is the resolution of conflicts between reality and fantasy.

Classical culture is a culture of *concrete forms*, *Romantic culture* is a culture of *ideas*.

Both of these forms of culture have been fully developed by the Germanic peoples of the European continent: the Classical in the Netherlands, [and] the Romantic in Germany. Together, both demonstrate the *breadth of Germanic significance in the world*.¹³³

The first sentence of this excerpt is reproduced almost word-for-word from Mengelberg’s *Feestboek*, in which he had written that “in their attitudes toward life, toward reality, we find the greatest difference between Romantic and Classical art. The former, Romanticism, escapes life; the latter, Classicism, gives it shape!”¹³⁴ While he does not specifically mention Mahler (or the festival) at any point in *Holland als kulturelle Einheit*, this section seems to link his artistic

¹³³ “*Klassik* durchdringt und gestaltet die Wirklichkeit, *Romantik* entflieht ihr. Klassische Kulturgestalt ist durchgeistigte Realität, romantische Kulturgestalt Lösung des Konfliktes zwischen Wirklichkeit und Phantasie.

Die *klassische Kultur* ist eine Kultur der *konkreten Form*, die *romantische Kultur* eine Kultur der *Ideen*.

Diese beiden Kulturarten sind von der germanischen Rasse des europäischen Kontinents zu höchster Entwicklung gebracht: die klassische in den Niederlanden, die romantische in Deutschland. Beide zusammen offenbaren die ganze *Spannweite germanischer Weltgeltung*.” Ibid., 83. Emphasis original.

¹³⁴ “In die verhouding tot het leven, tot de werkelijkheid ligt het diepste onderscheid tussen romantische en klassieke kunst. Gene, de romantische kunst, ontvlucht het leven; deze, de klassieke kunst, geeft het gestalte!” Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feestboek*, 46.

analysis of Mahler's music with his cultural analysis of the Netherlands most explicitly, through his comparisons of both with the ideals of Classicism. Thus, by bringing these two sources together, it becomes clear that Mengelberg felt that Mahler's artistic style had more in common with the culture of the Netherlands than that of Germany, providing yet another explanation for the Concertgebouw's choice—and his choice—of Mahler as the centerpiece of the festival. Even though he likely held this specific view when writing his program book a few years earlier, he did not explicitly link Mahler and the Netherlands in this way at that point, perhaps based on a hesitance to be seen as taking Mahler too significantly away from the Germanic world.

One final segment of *Holland* is worth mentioning here: in his chapter on the religious landscape of the Netherlands, Mengelberg includes one paragraph on Judaism, in which he writes that “[the Dutch] mindset has also sympathetically accommodated *Judaism*, and the individualistic essence of the Jew has assimilated into Dutch culture to a greater extent than in other lands.”¹³⁵ This is in keeping with Mengelberg's above-described attitude in the *Feestboek*, in which he does not dwell to any extent on Mahler's Jewish background, but rather simply mentions it once as a biographical fact, and moves on from there.

Taken as a whole, Mengelberg's *Holland als kulturelle Einheit* provides a hugely informative window into his perspective on his adopted country and its position in the broader socio-political landscape of Europe. Though it was written eight years after the Mahler-Feest, many clear parallels can be made between it and his earlier *Feestboek*, allowing for this later monograph to serve as a sort of interpretive lens through which to view the former. With this book in hand, there is little doubt that Mengelberg truly would have seen the 1920 Mahler-Feest

¹³⁵ “Diese [Niederlandsche] Geistesrichtung ist auch dem *Judentum* verständnisvoll entgegengekommen, und mehr wie in anderen Ländern hat sich das individualistische Wesen des Juden gerade dem niederländischen Kulturkreis assimiliert.” Mengelberg, *Holland*, 49. Emphasis original.

as an event with just as much—if not even more—political significance than musical significance.

After *Holland*, Mengelberg would not publish another book for twenty years aside from his 1938 retrospective on the first half-century of the Concertgebouw, which is primarily a documentary (rather than interpretive) survey of events. In his final monograph, *Muziek: Spiegel des Tijds* (1948), he returns to the intersections between music and culture, this time writing for a Dutch-speaking audience after the Second World War. From its very opening pages, Mengelberg makes his opinions on the horrors of contemporary society quite clear, writing that “evil spirits have shown our weakness and hopeless desolation, and have tried to conquer humanity with a great blow.”¹³⁶ In the face of this, he writes that “we must find ourselves again, we must become human again—not elements of a machine, not specialists—but rather, each person must become a home for the universal spirit.”¹³⁷ In line with this, he posits artistic style as the primary element that would be able to rectify societal evils, writing that “style turns our earthly community into a reflection of a higher harmony.”¹³⁸ Despite being written almost 30 years after his *Mahler-Feestboek*, it is clear that Mengelberg’s views on the role of the arts—particularly in times of societal crises—had changed very little during this time.

¹³⁶ “De booze geest heeft onze zwakheid en hopelooze verlatenheid erkend en getracht het menschdom met één grooten slag te veroveren.” Mengelberg, *Muziek*, 7.

¹³⁷ “Wij moeten onszelf terugvinden, wij moeten weer menschen worden, geen onderdeelen van een machine, geen specialisten, maar iedereen op zich zelf een tehuis van den universeelen geest.” Ibid.

¹³⁸ “De stijl maakt ons aardsche gemeenschap tot het spiegelbeeld van een hoogere harmonie.” Ibid., 9.

For Mengelberg, music is the art form most capable of this societal regeneration; he writes that “the form and the entire development of our community is reflected in music.”¹³⁹ To support this assertion, he traces the intertwining of music and culture going back to the Middle Ages and Renaissance—much further back than he had discussed in the *Mahler-Feestboek*—but he eventually returns to familiar territory, discussing Beethoven’s music as a demonstration of the rise of individuality in response to the French Revolution and other societal changes around 1800. At this point, having lived through the Second World War, Mengelberg reframes his earlier analysis of Wagner, asserting here that Wagner had awakened a nationalistic consciousness in musicians across Europe, causing the development of distinct regional styles that moved away from the (supposed) universality of composers such as Beethoven.

It is notable that Gustav Mahler plays only a small role in this entire monograph. In discussing Mahler’s era broadly (though not yet mentioning Mahler specifically), Mengelberg writes that “despite all of this regional differentiation, a picture of European society still emerges in late-Romantic music, which still weakly reflects the light of universal Western society.”¹⁴⁰ He goes on to list Mahler among the most notable composers of his time, writing that “Mahler takes music to its utmost limits as the bearer of an ideology,” but he does not ever specify what sort of ideology he is referring to here.¹⁴¹ He later casts Mahler (along with Reger, Debussy, Strauss, Ravel, Sibelius, and even Puccini) as a representative of “the time of great European music, upon which our entire musical life is built,” but he does not place any special emphasis on Mahler

¹³⁹ “Want in de muziek weerspiegelt zich de vorm en de geheele ontwikkeling van onze maatschappij.” Ibid., 18.

¹⁴⁰ “Dit geeft ook in de laat-romantische muziek – niettegenstaande alle regionale versnippering – nog het beeld van een Europeesche gemeenschap te zien, welke nog zwak het licht der universeele Westersche gemeenschap weerkaatst.” Ibid., 26.

¹⁴¹ “Mahler overspant de muziek tot de uiterste grens als draagster van een ideologie...” Ibid., 27.

here; instead, he simply seems to be contrasting early-twentieth-century music composed in a more traditional style with the increasingly abstract styles that had emerged throughout the century. Mengelberg clearly has an axe to grind with the cadre of modernist composers, comparing their dissolution of existing musical norms with what he viewed as the dissolution of Western society more broadly, leading to both World Wars.

Perhaps most relevant to the present study is Mengelberg's discussion of the 1946 festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (held in London), which he did not attend, but which he points to as the first international music festival after the Second World War. He clearly does not believe that this festival fulfilled the same political function as the earlier Mahler-Feest, given his response to an article written by Willem Pijper on the event.

Here, Mengelberg writes that:

Half of Europe lies in ruins. Millions of people have died in conflict and misery or have been thrust into indescribable suffering. The survivors feel threatened by even greater horrors. Longingly, they yearn for comfort and refreshment through the arts. Musicians come together to listen to the most significant musical accomplishments of the past few years [since the previous festival in 1939] and to propagate them to the world... And the fact that our correspondent can only describe a high point of the festival using the veiled language of the expert demonstrates yet again the entire tragedy of our time: that the spirit is no longer able to find a body.¹⁴²

For Mengelberg, this festival—which featured the modernist styles of composers including Béla Bartók and Anton Webern—was an abject failure in what he would have seen as the highest goal of a post-war festival: to present music accessible to anyone, to serve as a unifying force in the face of deep division. He does not mention the Mahler-Feest at any point in this publication, but

¹⁴² “Half Europa ligt in puin. Milloenen menschen zijn in strijd en ellende omgekomen of gedompeld in onuitsprekelijk leed. De overlevenden zien zich bedreigt door nog veel grooter verschrikkingen. Reikhalzend zien zij uit naar troost en verkwikking door de kunst. De musici komen bij elkaar, om het belangrijkste aan te hooren, wat op muzikaal gebied in den loop der laatste jaren is voortgebracht en dat uit te dragen in de wereld... En onze gedelegeerde kan ons aan een hoogtepunt van het feest slechts in de geheime taal der ingewijden de geheele tragedie van den tijd opnieuw demonstreeren: de geest, die geen lichaam meer kan vinden.” *Ibid.*, 49-50.

his language in passages like this indicates that he almost certainly had it in mind as a point of comparison when writing decades later.

In the final paragraph of *Muziek*, Mengelberg writes the following:

It is not the task of man—neither of the critic, nor of the state—to stipulate from the outside *the way* that art should be. We can only point to the mindset that may enable us as a society to become creative again... The prospect of a new renaissance is appearing for humanity. We must search for the way back to the source of life, to find an inspired community once again, and to see the labyrinth of division dissolved in the light of Grace.¹⁴³

As with many of his passages discussed so far, Mengelberg once again foregrounds the notion of the creative fields serving as a remedy for societal division, and here goes a bit further to lend a quasi-religious dimension to his assertion through the use of “Grace” [*Genade*] as a stand-in for the arts in his final sentence. Notably, his poetic language about returning to the “source” [*bron*] of life is something of an echo of the passage in his *Mahler-Feestboek* in which he referred to Mahler as the “source” that had been underappreciated by his contemporaries. Though he does not quite make this notion explicit, it seems as though Mengelberg is advocating for a return to more traditional styles of art and music—styles that would align more closely with that of Mahler and his contemporaries—as a path forward from the troubles of the mid-twentieth century, just as he had done several decades earlier.

¹⁴³ “Het is niet de taak van den mensch – noch van de critiek, noch van den staat – van buiten af te bepalen, *hoe* de kunst er moet uitzien. Wij kunnen slechts de geesteshouding aanwijzen, welke ons in staat zal stellen als gemeenschap weer creatief te worden... Het verschiet eener nieuwe renaissance opent zich voor de menschheid. Wij moeten den weg zoeken terug tot de bron van ons leven, om een bezielde gemeenschap te hervinden en het labyrinth der splitsing te zien opgaan in het licht der Genade.” *Ibid.*, 87. Emphasis original.

3.5 Conclusions

In their chapter on the 1920 Mahler-Feest in *Mahler in Amsterdam* (published for the occasion of the 1995 Mahler Festival in the same city), Johan Giskes and Ada Klarenbeek label Rudolf Mengelberg as “the man in the shadows”, briefly discussing his role in organizing the event but not providing any detailed analysis of his ideas.¹⁴⁴ The same can be said for Rob Overman’s chapter on the Mahler-Feest in the English-language *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, also published for the 1995 festival. Here, Overman labels Mengelberg as “the driving force behind the organization of the festival,” further stating that his *Feestboek* contains “extensive program notes,” but does not engage with these notes any more deeply than on the surface level.¹⁴⁵ The only scholar who seems to have engaged with Mengelberg’s ideas in any serious way is Michiel Schuijjer (writing in *Mahler in Amsterdam*), whose chapter on religiosity in relation to the Dutch Mahler tradition begins with an analysis of Christian-inspired vocabulary in the above-analyzed concluding paragraphs of Mengelberg’s essay on Mahler’s historical position in the *Feestboek*. Here, Schuijjer argues that Mengelberg’s program book, along with other aspects of the Mahler-Feest, lent an air of religiosity to the entire festival, though he adds in a footnote that “a political interpretation seems just as obvious” as a religious one.¹⁴⁶ Aside from this opening section of Schuijjer’s chapter, however, there seems to be no other true analysis of Mengelberg’s ideas, which is surprising given their unusual context and scope.

¹⁴⁴ “De man in de schaduw.” See Johan Giskes and Ada Klarenbeek, “Het Mahler Feest 1920,” in *Mahler in Amsterdam: van Mengelberg tot Chailly*, ed. Johan Giskes (Bussum, Netherlands: THOTH, 1995), 44.

¹⁴⁵ Rob Overman, “The Mahler Festival of 1920,” in *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, ed. Donald Mitchell (Haarlem, Netherlands: TEMA, 1995), I.62 and I.64.

¹⁴⁶ Michiel Schuijjer, ““In het teken van Mahler’: religieuze achtergronden van de Mahlerverering in Nederland.” in *Mahler in Amsterdam*, 114.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Mengelberg's *Mahler-Feestboek* is a hugely informative source on Mahler reception during the years shortly after his death, both in terms of Mengelberg's musical analyses, which are among the earliest complete analyses of Mahler's symphonic works, and in terms of his arguments for Mahler's "diplomatic" cultural-historical position, which are intertwined with the political landscape of Europe during the years after the First World War. Although Mengelberg demonstrates a great deal of familiarity with the early biographical works on Mahler—particularly Paul Stefan's monograph—he nonetheless comes to his own distinct conclusions, providing a perspective significantly different from those of his Austro-German contemporaries, and even those of his Dutch contemporaries writing on Mahler. In many ways, the *Feestboek* seems to have been a prequel of sorts for the remainder of Mengelberg's career, with his later publications drawing upon and expanding the ideas found in this earlier work, though typically without explicit reference to the Mahler-Feest.

While the Concertgebouw's Mahler-Feest sought to celebrate Mahler's compositional accomplishments and Willem Mengelberg's accomplishments as a conductor, Rudolf's *Feestboek* actually takes a bit of agency *away* from each of these figures. Thus, while Rudolf asserts early in his book that "the first great Mahler-Feest is a testament to [the fact that] the universal significance of Willem Mengelberg reaches its apex in his pioneering work for Gustav Mahler," the rest of his lengthy document gives very little attention to Willem, aside from a few paragraphs on his friendship with Mahler.¹⁴⁷ It is certainly possible, as suggested above, that Willem assisted Rudolf in his drafting of the program book in regard to either the cultural-historical essay or the individual symphonic analyses (or both), but there is no real mention of

¹⁴⁷ "De universeele betekenis van Willem Mengelberg vindt zijn hoogste uiting in het pionierswerk voor Gustav Mahler; hiervan getuige het eerste groote Mahler-Feest." Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 20.

Willem—nor of his conducting style—in either of these sections. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, Mengelberg’s interpretations often also blur Mahler’s own conceptions of his works, foregrounding the voice of the analyst over that of the composer.

All this is to say that Rudolf Mengelberg’s *Mahler-Feestboek* was much more than a set of program notes for Mahler’s complete symphonic works, although this in itself would still have been significant in 1920. In addition to this, however, the book provides readers with a perspective on Mahler and his works not found elsewhere in the contemporaneous literature. In Mengelberg’s conception, Mahler’s works become a diplomatic tool, serving as the necessary grounds for the rebuilding of international relations in the wake of the First World War, which Mengelberg believed could be achieved only through the realm of arts and culture. With his sharp analytical insights and his astute and persuasive writing style, Mengelberg’s words would have carried great weight for all who read them, making him far more than a “man in the shadows.” In truth, there is perhaps no figure who played a more significant role in the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest than Rudolf Mengelberg.

Chapter 4: Reconsidering the 1920 Mahler-Feest

In 1889, Gustav Mahler confidently predicted to his friend and colleague Lilli Lehmann that “in one hundred years, my symphonies will be performed in enormous halls, reaching 20,000 to 30,000 people and becoming large folk festivals”; at this point, Mahler had composed his first three symphonies and was working on his fourth.¹ Looking retrospectively, this would go on to become a remarkably prescient statement from the then-twenty-nine-year-old composer still relatively early in his career. Mahler was correct in many ways here, only miscalculating the amount of time that it would take for these “large folk festivals” of his works to arise—though, of course, his prediction for the number of attendees at such events may have been a bit unrealistic at the time.² The spirit of this prophesy, however, first came to fruition just thirty years later, in the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, and has largely been propagated by other such events since that time (including the 1995 Amsterdam Mahler Festival, which fell very close to Mahler’s prediction of “one hundred years” after 1889, and drew a combined total of more than 34,000 guests to its 20 concerts over a 2-week period).

It is not particularly surprising that Mahler’s music has been associated with ideas of grandiosity and expansiveness since his lifetime; after all, his symphonic works are among the longest in the standard repertory, calling for exceedingly large numbers of musicians (and instruments) and often invoking metaphysical themes and other similarly complex subject

¹ “Meine Sinfonien wird man in 100 Jahren in Riesenhallen aufführen, die 20000 bis 30000 Menschen fassen und zu großen Volksfesten werden.“ Gustav Mahler, qtd. In Lilli Lehmann, *Mein Weg* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1913), 160.

² It is difficult to imagine the circumstances that would allow for this number of attendees to hear Mahler’s works in a live festival setting, unless Mahler was also anticipating significant improvements in distribution technology. Even Munich’s Neue Musik-Festhalle, which hosted the grandiose premiere of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony in 1906, had a seating capacity of around 3,000 people at that point.

matters. These characteristics have been variably embraced and rebuked by audiences and critics since the 1880s, but whether loved or hated, they are among the first attributes that come to mind when one thinks of Mahler. Certain works in particular, such as the Eighth Symphony, have even inspired entire analytical approaches and academic gatherings focused on their largeness, both physically and abstractly—a point to which I will return below.³ In any case, while there are plenty of reasons for one to choose Mahler's works as the centerpiece of a large-scale music festival, the precise links between Mahler himself and the 1920 Mahler-Feest have still not been fully elucidated.

In this chapter, I return to the figure of Gustav Mahler, who so far has played a central yet only passive role in this dissertation since he did not live to participate in nor experience the 1920 Mahler-Feest. Broadly, I seek to reconsider Mahler's position in relation to the festival, addressing questions such as these: To what extent did Mahler view his own works through the same lenses promoted by Rudolf Mengelberg and the other members of the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité*? How did Mahler's personal relationship with Willem Mengelberg influence the framing of his music during the festival? Over the past century since the 1920 Mahler-Feest, to what extent have its interpretations persisted in—and had influence on—the broader fields of Mahler reception and historiography? To address these questions, this chapter is divided into two primary parts, the first of which examines material from before 1920, while the second examines material from after the Mahler-Feest.

³ See, for example, *A 'Mass' for the Masses: Proceedings of the Mahler VIII Symposium, Amsterdam 1988*, eds. Eveline Nikkels, Robert Becqué, and Jos van Leeuwen (Rijswijk, NL: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1992); and Christian Wildhagen, *Die Achte Symphonie von Gustav Mahler: Konzeption einer universalen Symphonik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

To begin, I look retrospectively at Mahler's letters and other contemporaneous documentation, assessing his own descriptions of his works and his overarching mentalities in order to compare these with the descriptions found in Rudolf Mengelberg's festival program book. I further examine the correspondence between Mahler and Willem Mengelberg to trace additional ideologies from the composer to the festival. As a whole, in this section, I demonstrate that the vast majority of Rudolf Mengelberg's analyses of Mahler's life and works actually *can* be traced back to the composer's own perspectives, even if Mengelberg takes certain liberties to emphasize the viewpoints that he sought to advance and takes advantage of ambiguities or areas in which Mahler's perspectives were not clearly recorded—especially in his overtly political references to a socialist-democratic spirit in Mahler's music.

In the second part of the chapter, I conduct a meta-analysis of writings on Mahler and his works since the time of the Mahler-Feest, assessing the degree to which this scholarship has been affected by the festival and its portrayal of the composer, as well as the degree to which the festival itself has played a role in various scholarly analyses. I examine a wide scope of literature here, drawing upon works from the various eras of Mahler scholarship over the past century, up to and including very recent literature. Through this analysis, I show that while explicit references to the 1920 Mahler-Feest largely faded from the literature after the Second World War, the existence of several recent studies dealing explicitly with the festival and its effects on Mahler's reception history indicates a renewed interest in this topic and this sort of scholarly approach in the twenty-first century.

4.1 A Composer in Absentia

Coming to a complete understanding of Gustav Mahler's beliefs and viewpoints—both on his own music and on the broader world—is not a particularly easy task. Although many of his letters (to a broad assortment of recipients) have survived, Mahler's perspectives are not always consistent across changing times and circumstances, and the information contained within these letters still leaves many questions unanswered. Simultaneously, several “first-hand accounts” of Mahler's life and personality—notably those of Natalie Bauer-Lechner and Mahler's wife Alma—are notoriously unreliable as academic sources, not least due to the fact that they were largely compiled after Mahler's death based on personal memories from earlier times. In the case of Bauer-Lechner, the *Recollections* were not published until after her own death, when selected materials from her collection of *Mahleriana* were assembled by J. Killian for the book; several scholars have shown that Killian (or someone else) removed and even destroyed much of Bauer-Lechner's *Mahleriana*, so a great deal of her material on Mahler is no longer extant.⁴ Over the past century, the lack of precision on Mahler's personal viewpoints has been something of a double-edged sword; while it certainly makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions about Mahler's attitudes, it has also allowed for Mahler's life and works to be interpreted in a wide variety of ways by different individuals depending on their personal inclinations and ideologies.

In this section, I examine Mahler's beliefs and attitudes toward a limited set of topics most closely related to those discussed by Rudolf Mengelberg in his 1920 *Mahler-Feestboek*, demonstrating that Mengelberg did take a relatively informed scholarly approach in covering

⁴ For more, see Peter Franklin, “Foreword” to *Recollections of Gustav Mahler by Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, trans. Dika Newlin, ed. Peter Franklin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 9-11.

Mahler's life and works, even while emphasizing the principles that he sought to advance to his readers, sometimes at the expense of historical accuracy. Specifically, I compare Mahler's perspectives on religion, philosophy, immortality, politics, and the arts with those advanced in the *Feestboek*, in addition to comparing Mahler's and Mengelberg's respective statements on several specific works. At the end of the section, I analyze Mengelberg's statements on Mahler's relationship with Amsterdam through the lens of Mahler's own statements on the city and its people.

While Mahler certainly felt a strong sense of religiosity throughout his life, his system of beliefs did not conform in full to that of any organized religious tradition; this circumstance is made even murkier by the fact that he converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1897 in order to serve as the director of the Vienna Hofoper, which would not otherwise have been possible for him as a Jew. Regardless of his official conversion status, Mahler's lifelong beliefs combined elements of Jewish theology, Christian theology, and other non-traditional systems such as *Kunstreligion* and several nineteenth-century philosophies. These religious beliefs not only affected the ways that Mahler interpreted and responded to the world around him, but also made their way into several of his works across the duration of his compositional career.

In the introduction to *Die Bildnisse von Gustav Mahler*, Mahler's friend and colleague Alfred Roller—who met the composer only after his conversion to Catholicism—wrote that “Mahler was deeply religious,” before expanding upon this statement as follows:

His belief was that of a child. God is love and love is God. This idea came up over and over in conversation with him, thousands of times. I once asked him why he had not written any Masses; he seemed concerned and asked “Do you believe that I would be

able to? Well, why not? But no, the Credo is part of it.” And he began to recite the Credo in Latin, saying “No, I just cannot do it.”⁵

Given that the Credo is a personal affirmation of the primary teachings and beliefs of Catholicism, Mahler’s words here almost certainly convey that he was not comfortable with all of these beliefs and was not willing to declare them in the context of such a musical work. From here, Roller continues to describe Mahler’s relationship with God, writing that, “I never heard a blasphemous word from Mahler. But he did not need any intermediary to God; he spoke with him face-to-face. God lived easily within him.”⁶ Simultaneously, Roller addresses Mahler’s Jewish background, writing that “Mahler never concealed his Jewish heritage, but it did not bring him any joy...The primary element that connected him to Judaism was compassion.”⁷ Thus, for Roller, Mahler’s religious identity was not easily categorized even after his conversion, despite Mahler’s clearly strong religious feelings.

Alma, on the other hand, explained things much more monolithically, writing (after her husband’s death) that Mahler “believed in Christ and had certainly not been baptized purely out of opportunism in order to get the job as director of the Vienna Court Opera.”⁸ Given Alma’s interest in shaping her late husband’s reputation and legacy in the particular ways that she wanted him to be remembered, this sort of statement comes as no surprise, but it also

⁵ “Er war tief religiös. Sein Glaube war der eines Kindes. Gott ist die Liebe und die Liebe ist Gott. Diese Idee kehrte in seinem Gespräch tausendfältig immer wieder. Ich fragte ihn einst, warum er eigentlich keine Messe schreibe. Er schien betroffen. ‚Glauben Sie, dass ich das vermöchte? Nun, warum nicht? Doch nein. Da kommt das Credo vor.‘ Und er begann das Credo lateinisch herzusagen. ‚Nein, das vermag ich doch nicht.‘“ Alfred Roller, *Die Bildnisse von Gustav Mahler* (Leipzig: E.P. Tal & Co, 1922), 26.

⁶ “Ich habe von Mahler nie ein blasphemisches Wort gehört. Aber ihn verlangte nach keinem Mittler zu Gott. Er sprach mit ihm von Angesicht zu Angesicht. Gott hauste gern in ihm.” Ibid.

⁷ “Mahler hat seine jüdische Abstammung nie versteckt. Aber sie hat ihm keine Freude gemacht...Was ihn vorwiegend an das Judentum band, war Mitleid.” Ibid., 25.

⁸ Qtd. in Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 392.

demonstrates the ease with which Mahler's religious identity could be co-opted in various ways to support varying arguments. If one wanted to support such a case for Mahler as a Christian, for example, one could easily point to the texts that he set in the Second, Third, Fourth, and Eighth Symphonies, all of which promote explicitly Christian beliefs.

When one probes more deeply than the surface, however, the difficulty of assigning Mahler such a specific label becomes increasingly apparent. In a letter to Alma on Christmas Eve of 1901 (only one month after meeting her), for example, Mahler wrote the following:

Let us celebrate this day, which unites us, just as it unites all people in the joyous belief of children, as an everlasting token that we, for whom love has brought unity and happiness, should always open our hearts to our fellow men. (For the bond that unites us has been forged in the name of a love that surpasses understanding, divine love as we could call it, and this bond unites us indissolubly with all living creatures.) On this day, a day dedicated to children, a day on which the seed of love both earthly and divine takes root according to how it has been sown, I bless you, my dear heart.⁹

What is perhaps most striking about this passage is Mahler's complete lack of explicitly Christian theology in relation to the celebration of Christmas, despite his clear desire to find spiritual meaning in that day. Instead, Mahler demonstrates the sort of compassion that Roller had described and emphasizes his belief in a "divine love" which "unites us indissolubly with all living creatures." This letter is one of Mahler's most direct expressions of universality, and I will return to it below in comparison with Rudolf Mengelberg's characterizations of Mahler.

For many recent writers, Mahler's beliefs align more closely with the tenets of *Kunstreligion* than with those of any traditional religion. As several scholars have noted before me, this term can be difficult to define, having taken on evolving meanings since its origins in the German world around 1800, but recent scholars have come to a greater consensus about the

⁹ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Schindler, Dec. 24, 1901, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, ed. Henry-Louis de la Grange and Günther Weiss, trans. Antony Beaumont (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 89.

most accurate ways to define it.¹⁰ In its basic conception, Elizabeth Kramer defines *Kunstreligion* as “the belief that art manifests the divine”; she continues as follows:

In *Kunstreligion*, art is thought to enunciate divine ideas and feelings, artistic experience is compared to religious ritual, and artistic works are seen as divine presences on earth. Works can be understood as divine in and of themselves or as striking manifestations of the divine.¹¹

She goes on to characterize the possible interrelationships between music and spirituality in three ways: “music as giving voice to spiritual ideas; musical experience and spiritual experience as similar; and music as perceived as a particular type of spirituality.”¹² Thus, in its original context, musical *Kunstreligion* related primarily to the spiritual experience of the listener. As the nineteenth century continued, however, the role of the creator/performer increasingly took on qualities of a spiritual leader for adherents of *Kunstreligion*. As Karen Leistra-Jones writes on Hans von Bülow in the later nineteenth century, “critics reviewing [Bülow’s] concerts regularly cast him as a New Testament apostle ‘proclaiming the gospel’ of Beethoven to his followers, or as a pastor-like figure who helped devout congregations acquire a deeper understanding of musical scripture.”¹³ In addition to “pastor” and “apostle,” as used here by Leistra-Jones, other religious terms that were often applied to musical figures—especially composers—during the

¹⁰ See, for example, Sonja Wermager, “Robert Schumann and ‘the Artist’s Highest Goal’: Religion, Romanticism, and Nation in the Late Choral Works” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2023), 17-18.

¹¹ Elizabeth Kramer, “The Idea of *Kunstreligion* in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005), 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³ Karen Leistra-Jones, “Hans von Bülow and the Confessionalization of *Kunstreligion*,” *The Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 44.

nineteenth century were “priest” and “prophet,” all of which denote a mediating role between the ordinary realm and that of the divine.¹⁴

On Mahler, Stephen McClatchie writes that “in terms of religious feeling, then, we may safely call Mahler an adherent of Kunstreligion, with its aesthetic notions of genius, inspiration, and transcendence.”¹⁵ Indeed, several of Mahler’s own statements corroborate this label, and many of Mahler’s contacts (including Roller, as quoted above) interpreted the composer as a quasi-divine figure, or at least as a figure with more direct connections to the realm of the divine than most. In her *Recollections*, Bauer-Lechner conveys an 1893 conversation in which she and Mahler discussed the composition of his Second Symphony, with the composer saying that:

The inception and creation of a work are mystical from beginning to end; unconsciously, as if in the grip of a command from outside oneself, one is compelled to create something whose origin one can scarcely comprehend afterwards... But, even more strangely than in a whole movement or work, this unconscious, mysterious power manifests itself in individual passages, and precisely in the most difficult and significant ones. Usually, they are the ones which I don’t want to come to grips with, which I would like to get around, yet which continue to hold me up and finally force their way to expression.¹⁶

For Mahler, then—at least at this point—the act of composition had a quasi-divine element through which he, by composing, served as a sort of conduit between a heavenly realm and the ordinary world of his listeners.

Even after the completion of a composition, Mahler similarly felt that his works had an otherworldly power, with Bauer-Lechner recalling an 1896 discussion as follows:

In his youth, he had a similar experience [of being awe-stricken by a work] with a seemingly insignificant passage in *Das klagende Lied*. He could never get through it without being profoundly shaken and overcome by intense excitement... He felt such

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 60, and Kramer, 175-216.

¹⁵ Stephen McClatchie, “Organized Religion,” in *Mahler in Context*, ed. Charles Youmans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 180-181.

¹⁶ Qtd. in *Recollections of Gustav Mahler by Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, 30-31.

intense physical pain...that he could not go on with his work and had to rush from the room—until one morning, while working on this same passage, he collapsed in a nervous fever.¹⁷

There may well be some degree of exaggeration in this statement, but it is nonetheless clear that Mahler saw his works as arising not entirely from his own hand and transcending the limits of everyday existence, at least at this point in his career. Around fifteen years later, in 1910, a letter from Mahler to his wife indicates that his perspective had changed since the above conversation with Bauer-Lechner, though the tenets of *Kunstreligion* were still present. In this letter, Mahler wrote that “today was the full rehearsal of Part II [of the Eighth Symphony]. Here, too, ‘the Lord (Mahler) looked on it, and saw that it was good’!”¹⁸ While this statement seems to indicate that Mahler felt fully in control of his works at this point in time, it also indicates that he viewed them as divine creations—particularly the Eighth Symphony, which Mahler had described as “the universe [beginning] to sound” in a letter to Willem Mengelberg a few years earlier.¹⁹

Another lens on Mahler’s religious beliefs is provided by his espousal of certain philosophical systems. In his recent biography of the composer, Jens Malte Fischer writes that:

Mahler’s private religion—if we may use such an expression—was a highly individual mix of Goethean pantheism, a belief in entelechy of a kind associated with both Goethe and Gustav Fechner, namely, the notion of a creative destiny imposed on us by forces outside ourselves, a religion of compassion in the spirit of Dostoevsky, a Nietzschean independence and a profoundly felt natural religion. When Mahler used the word ‘God’, he did not mean the Christian or Jewish God but...an amalgam of all this and much else besides.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 53.

¹⁸ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, June 21, 1910, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 364. As the editors of this volume indicate, Mahler’s quotation marks here refer to the fact that he had used the same language to describe a rehearsal of the Third Symphony in 1902.

¹⁹ “Denken Sie sich, dass das Universum zu tönen und zu klingen beginnt.“ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, Aug. 18, 1906, in *Gustav Mahler und Holland: Briefe*, ed. Eduard Reeser (Vienna: Internationale Gustav Mahler Gesellschaft, 1980), 70.

²⁰ Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, 260.

For Fischer, then, Mahler's religion was in many ways self-created—a sort of assembly of bits and pieces drawn from various existing systems, both theological and philosophical. Mahler was a voracious reader throughout his lifetime, once remarking that his books were “the only friends I take along with me! ... [They are] my true brothers and fathers and loved ones,” and his worldview was significantly impacted by his reading habits.²¹ Although he read works by authors spanning a wide temporal and geographic range, he was captivated most strongly by several writers from the nineteenth- (and late eighteenth-) century Germanic world. According to Morten Solvik, Mahler shared the belief with these authors that “art, by virtue of its mystical essence, was capable of bridging the gap between the material and ideal realms, that the creative act was both transcendental and revelatory,” echoing the later-nineteenth-century notions of *Kunstreligion* described above.²² Thus, for Mahler, as Solvik writes, the act of composition was inherently bound to “the common task of unraveling the essence of life itself”—drawing simultaneously upon both religious and philosophical systems in crafting his works.²³

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rudolf Mengelberg did not devote much of his program book to Mahler's religious identity, though the topic does come up a few times. He never explicitly labels Mahler as being fully Jewish or fully Christian, though he makes a brief reference to the anti-Semitism that Mahler faced from the Viennese press during his lifetime (without going into any further detail about Mahler's Jewish heritage), and he gives the following characterization of Mahler's works as being imbued with Christian ideology:

²¹ Qtd. in Morten Solvik, “The literary and philosophical worlds of Gustav Mahler,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 30.

Thus, we—the people of the twentieth century—come together through music, whether it might contain Christian religious symbols with which we are all familiar, like the *St. Matthew Passion*, or whether it may have arisen out of a Christian-social spirit, like Mahler’s symphonies.²⁴

He is clear here to distinguish Mahler’s musical religiosity from that of J.S. Bach, likely in support of his positioning of Mahler as “the symphonist of [the twentieth] century,” but Mengelberg gives no further explanation for what exactly constitutes this “Christian-social spirit” in Mahler’s works. It is possible that Mengelberg is referring to the sort of viewpoint that Mahler expressed in his above-quoted Christmas Eve letter to Alma from 1901, in which he wrote about the divine love that unites all living beings on earth, though it is not clear whether Mengelberg would have known about this perspective in 1920. As with many aspects of the ideologies in the *Mahler-Feestboek*, the lack of written (and preserved) communication between Rudolf and Willem Mengelberg leaves it unclear as to what information, if any, Rudolf may have learned from his cousin about Mahler’s viewpoints. In any case, Rudolf’s program book contains a great deal less material on organized religion—either Judaism or Christianity—than the contemporaneous literature on Mahler by early scholars such as Specht, Stefan, and Adler, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Like the more recent writers discussed in the paragraphs above, Mengelberg seems to have felt more strongly about the elements of *Kunstreligion* in Mahler’s life and works than about the elements of more traditional belief systems. On numerous occasions throughout the program book, he refers to Mahler as a “savior,” “prophet,” or “father,” who enlightens and guides humanity through his musical works; Mahler also becomes a “priest” in Mengelberg’s

²⁴ “Zoo komen wij menschen der twintigste eeuw in het teeken der muziek samen, hetzij deze kerkelijke Christelijke symbolen bevatte, die ons allen vertrouwd zijn, gelijk de Mattheuspassion, hetzij deze gesproten zij uit Christelijk-socialen geest, gelijk de symfonieën van Mahler.” C. Rudolf Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest: 6-18 Mei 1920* (Amsterdam, 1920), 54.

analysis of the Eighth Symphony, building upon the nineteenth-century tradition of referring to creative and performing artists in such ways as discussed above. Further, Mengelberg refers to each of Mahler's works as being "a world of its own," reinforcing the idea of Mahler as a divine creator and echoing Jean Paul's conception (also espoused by Mahler during his lifetime) that artistic creations should be all-encompassing.²⁵

Taken as a whole, then, Mengelberg's descriptions of Mahler's religious and philosophical beliefs do not directly contradict any of Mahler's own self-expressed beliefs, even if Mengelberg leaves out some key information on this topic, such as any real discussion of Mahler's Jewish background. His statements on the "Christian-social spirit" of Mahler's works may be a bit heavy-handed (and simultaneously lacking in explanatory detail), but it is certainly possible to find support for such statements in Mahler's own writings and musical works if one seeks such support. Further, his *Kunstreligion*-inspired characterizations of Mahler are largely in line with Mahler's own conceptions of himself as a creative artist, even if Mengelberg takes these characterizations and applies them—somewhat liberally—to the specific sociopolitical circumstances of 1920 in a way that may not have corresponded with Mahler's own views if he had lived until that time.

Beyond religion and philosophy, the concepts of reception and immortality (and their relationships to the arts) are two further areas in which Mahler's own perspectives should be compared with those advanced by Mengelberg in the *Feestboek*. Mahler was clearly preoccupied with these issues from an early period in his career, expressing to Bauer-Lechner in 1899 that:

²⁵ Ibid., 53. For more on Mahler and Jean Paul, see Solvik, "The Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav Mahler," 24, and Fischer, 135.

One would like best to withdraw from the world altogether, for any hope of finding understanding there is vain and idle indeed. Not only am I disgusted with the Opera, but I'd even like to get rid of the concerts. In spite of everything I would not, and could not, give up my composing. But not for other people, who will understand it least of all—I have barred the road to them too thoroughly. No! what I create, I create for myself.²⁶

Not long thereafter, in 1901, Mahler wrote to Alma that he had “spent the past fifteen years battling against superficiality and incomprehension, bringing down on me all the troubles, indeed all the miseries of the trailblazer,” indicating that he viewed his works as being (at least on some level) ahead of their time.²⁷ A few years later, he expanded further upon this idea in another letter to Alma, writing that “for the next fifty years, conductors will take it [i.e., the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony] too fast and make nonsense of it... Would that I could perform my symphonies for the first time fifty years after my death!”²⁸ In this last sentence, Mahler seems to be commenting not only on the problems that he saw in his listeners, but also, perhaps, on his view that his eventual death would serve as the impetus for his continued artistic legacy.

Despite Mahler's clear disenchantment with his contemporary audiences, he maintained the belief throughout his life that his music would eventually ensure his immortality. In response to a question on this topic in 1901, Bauer-Lechner recalls Mahler as having responded with “sooner or later, they [i.e., the works] themselves will do whatever is necessary; do you have to be there in person when you become immortal?”²⁹ As Carl Niekerk has written, Mahler likely came to this sort of philosophy through the ideas of Gustav Fechner and Eduard von Hartmann, both of whose philosophies, as Niekerk explains, “produce a vision of continued existence—life

²⁶ Qtd. in *Recollections of Gustav Mahler by Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, 139.

²⁷ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Schindler, Dec. 16, 1901, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 73.

²⁸ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Oct. 13, 1904, in *ibid.*, 179.

²⁹ Qtd. in *Recollections of Gustav Mahler by Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, 166.

after death—built on a non-Western and complex belief that the essence of what a human being produces lives on after its physical demise.”³⁰ Both Niekerk and Fischer point to the concluding scene of Goethe’s *Faust* as an embodiment of this philosophy—with Gretchen effectively “surviving” her own death through Faust’s memory of her—and to Mahler’s use of this scene in his Eighth Symphony as further evidence of his espousal of this belief system.³¹

Curiously, Mahler actually seems to employ the complete *opposite* argument from this in a 1909 letter to Alma, in which he writes the following:

Now you probably know or have some idea what I think of the ‘works’ of man. They are the part of him which is fleeting and perishable; whereas what a man creates of his own person, what his restless striving and vitality combine to make him, is that part of him which survives... What we leave behind, no matter what it may be, is merely a husk, an outer shell. *Die Meistersinger*, the *Choral Symphony*, *Faust*—all these are nothing but discarded wrappings. In essence, our bodies are also no more than that.³²

This certainly seems to contradict Mahler’s above-quoted view that the continued existence of his works after his death would ensure him some degree of immortality, but Mahler also seems to have adopted this particular argument here in order to reassure Alma after she had expressed disappointment at a period of unproductivity in her life. In any case, this sentiment is an anomaly in Mahler’s overall perspective on artistic immortality expressed across his lifetime. Indeed, only two days after this previously quoted letter, Mahler implicitly describes the ability of artistic works to persist across history, writing to Alma that “truth is a subjective concept, and it varies for each of us and in every new epoch. Consider the symphonies of Beethoven, which make a

³⁰ Carl Niekerk, “Mahler and Death,” in *Mahler in Context*, ed. Charles Youmans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 231.

³¹ See *ibid.*, and Fischer, 406-407.

³² Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, June 20, 1909, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 324. Emphasis original.

new and different impression on every listener.”³³ Significantly, he is not only pointing to the fact that Beethoven’s symphonies have ensured some level of immortality for the composer; he is also expressing the idea that artistic works can—and do—take on new meanings and significances in accordance with changes in society and culture, even well after the deaths of their original creators.

Rudolf Mengelberg, in his festival program book, picks up precisely on this line of thought in describing his view of Mahler as “the symphonist of our century—of this developing, emerging time.”³⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, Mengelberg argues that Mahler is *not* a Romantic-era composer in any way, but rather is emblematic of the twentieth century, particularly through what he considers to be Mahler’s musical embodiment of emerging “democratic” principles. Like Mahler, Mengelberg posits music as being open to varying interpretations in response to changes in the world, and he uses this premise as the foundation of his argument that Mahler’s music had finally found its proper historical time during the years after the First World War (following the initial period during which he, like Mahler and others, asserts that the music had not been fully understood nor appreciated by audiences). In positioning his cousin Willem as a true champion of Mahler’s works, and as a conductor who was uniquely able to convey Mahler’s own intentions in the works, Rudolf provides a counterpoint to Mahler’s above-quoted complaints about his contemporary conductors, further solidifying the idea that the Mahler-Feest was *the* time and place to hear Mahler’s works under the appropriate conditions. Thus, Mengelberg’s general approaches to the topics of reception and

³³ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, June 22, 1909, in *ibid.*, 326.

³⁴ See Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 48.

immortality do not stray far from Mahler's own, and he even picks up on several lines of thought that Mahler explicitly expressed, perhaps making their way to him through Willem.

In describing Mahler's musical style—and some of the specific works—Mengelberg further echoes Mahler's own perspectives in several key areas. The broadest of these is Mahler's conception of his symphonies being reflective of the entire world, as introduced above. In the summer of 1896, Mahler wrote the following to the opera singer Anna von Mildenburg in reference to his Third Symphony: “just try to imagine such a major work, literally reflecting the whole world—one is oneself only, as it were, an instrument played by the whole universe.”³⁵ A few years later, he expanded upon this idea in a letter to Alma, describing the Second Symphony as “a rounded, unified whole [which] is no easier to explain than the world itself. – I am convinced, namely, that if God were asked to expound the program of the ‘world’ He created, He would be just as incapable of doing so!”³⁶ Mahler did not seek to portray the same world in each of his works, but rather sought to construct different ones, writing in 1901 that he had decided to “explore new paths in every new work. That is why it is always so hard to get started. Whatever routine one has acquired is of no help. One has to learn afresh for every new work.”³⁷ Thus, when Mengelberg wrote in his program book, as quoted in the previous chapter, that “each work

³⁵ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Anna von Mildenburg, July 18, 1896, in *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, ed. Knud Martner, trans. Eithne Wilkins, Ernst Kaiser, and Bill Hopkins (New York: Faber and Faber, 1979), 190.

³⁶ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Schindler, Dec. 18, 1901, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 76.

³⁷ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Nina Spiegler, Aug. 18, 1901, in Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon and Jutta Wicker (Singapore: Amadeus Press, 1993), 116.

[by Mahler] becomes a world of its own,” he was conveying the precise idea that Mahler had expressed in relation to several of his works during his own lifetime.³⁸

The idea of the symphony as a world further plays a significant role in Mengelberg’s musicological conception of Mahler as a ‘unifying’ composer. The following story recalled by Bauer-Lechner from the summer of 1900 is particularly informative in this regard:

The following Sunday, we went on the same walk with Mahler [to a carnival] ... Not only were innumerable barrel-organs blaring out from merry-go-rounds, swings, shooting-galleries and puppet shows, but a military band and a men’s choral society had established themselves there as well. All these groups, in the same forest clearing, were creating an incredible musical pandemonium without paying the slightest attention to each other. Mahler exclaimed: ‘You hear? That’s polyphony, and that’s where I get it from! ... Just in this way – *from quite different directions* – must the themes appear; and they must be just as different from each other in rhythm and melodic character (everything else is merely many-voiced writing, homophony in disguise). The only difference is that the artist orders and unites them all into one concordant and harmonious whole.’³⁹

This echoes an earlier statement that Mahler had conveyed to Bauer-Lechner, in which she recalls him saying that “the most important thing in composition is clarity of line—that is, every voice should be an independent melody.”⁴⁰ Given the unlikeliness that Rudolf Mengelberg would have been familiar with these stories in 1920, it is remarkable how similar his characterization of Mahler’s polyphonic style is to Mahler’s own. As quoted in the previous chapter, Mengelberg describes it as follows:

Carefree, each melody sings against the other, each rhythm beats against the other, but out from this multiplicity arises a law which binds each part together into a living organism. Without this law, there would be chaos. The great thing about Mahler, then, is

³⁸ Mahler’s above-quoted conception of the Eighth Symphony as “the universe beginning to sound,” of course, is another example of this.

³⁹ *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 155-156. Emphasis original.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

this specific power that holds everything together—and not just the musical voices, but also the people who listen to them.⁴¹

It seems, then, that Mengelberg—perhaps with the help of his cousin Willem—interpreted Mahler’s musical style in exactly the way that the composer had intended, with his identification of “a law which binds each part together into a living organism” echoing almost exactly Mahler’s own conception of the composer creating “one concordant and harmonious whole” out of a multitude of distinct parts. These statements—by both Mahler and Mengelberg—also reinforce the characterization of Mahler as a God-like figure who brings order to an otherwise disordered world, echoing the later-nineteenth-century extensions of *Kunstreligion* as discussed above.

Mengelberg points to a number of other musical (and extra-musical) features of Mahler’s works in similar ways to the composer himself, including Mahler’s choices of texts. In the spring of 1905, Mahler wrote a letter to the musicologist Ludwig Karpath in which he discussed his proclivity for the texts from *Des knaben Wunderhorn*, stating that “I have devoted myself heart and soul to that poetry (which is essentially different from any other kind of ‘literary poetry,’ and might almost be called something more like Nature and Life—in other words, the sources of all poetry—than art).”⁴² Mengelberg’s criticism (in the festival program book) of the use of “newer aesthetic literature” by Mahler’s contemporaries bears a strong resemblance to this attitude, with Mengelberg similarly interpreting Mahler’s texts as coming from a source much closer to the ‘folk’ than those of his peers, regardless of whether this is actually true.

⁴¹ Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 50.

⁴² Letter from Gustav Mahler to Ludwig Karpath, March 2, 1905, in *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 284.

Several of Mengelberg's ideas about Mahler's position in the history of music further resemble the positions held by Mahler himself, particularly in relation to Beethoven and Bach, although the standard interpretations and receptions of these two canonic composers (with which Mengelberg tends to agree) were well established even by the start of Mahler's career. Mengelberg's primary perspective on Beethoven in the program book, shared by many other interpreters across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is that his music is best understood through the lens of "individualism"; this echoes an 1893 letter in which Mahler expressed to the nine-year-old Gisella Tolney-Witt the idea that over the course of history, "the composer began to relate ever deeper and more complex aspects of his emotional life to the area of his creativeness—until with Beethoven the *new era* of music began."⁴³ That same year, Bauer-Lechner recalls Mahler saying that:

In order to understand and appreciate Beethoven fully, we should not only accept him for what he means to us today, but must realize what a tremendous advance he represents in comparison with his forerunners... Of geniuses like Beethoven, of such a most sublime and most universal kind, there are only two or three among millions. Among poets and composers of more recent time we can, perhaps, name but three: Shakespeare, Beethoven and Wagner.⁴⁴

Thus, for both Mahler and Mengelberg (and for many others, of course), Beethoven was one of the few 'universal' figures in the history of music, and one who truly had a lasting impact on the direction thereof.

Among the canonic composers other than Beethoven, J.S. Bach is the one who Mengelberg links most closely with Mahler, writing that Mahler's style resembles "Bach's

⁴³ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Gisella Tolney-Witt, Feb. 7, 1893, in *ibid.*, 148. Emphasis original.

⁴⁴ *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 29-30.

contrapuntal art transferred over to the modern, colorful orchestra.”⁴⁵ Bauer-Lechner recalls several conversations with Mahler about Bach, including one in which Mahler stated that “in Bach, all the seeds of music are found, as the world is contained in God. It’s the greatest polyphony that ever existed!”⁴⁶ Shortly after this, she recalls Mahler saying that “[Bach’s] polyphony is a marvel beyond belief, not only for his own, but for all times,” and going on to express that “it’s beyond words, the way I am constantly learning more and more from Bach (really sitting at his feet like a child): for my natural way of working is Bach-like.”⁴⁷ Thus, Mahler clearly viewed Bach as another timelessly universal figure in the history of music—again, in parallel to almost all of his Austro-German musical contemporaries after the Bach revival in the mid-nineteenth century—and likely would have responded positively to Mengelberg’s comparisons of the two.

Beyond those areas discussed so far, the question of Mahler’s politics is a particularly significant one here, given the degree of emphasis that Rudolf Mengelberg places on this topic in his program book. For Mengelberg, Mahler was a composer who believed strongly in democracy and in universal equality among mankind, and one whose music clearly conveyed these beliefs. In actuality, however, Mahler’s personal political views are equally difficult to define as his religious beliefs. As several recent scholars have noted, Mahler’s written record (of letters and otherwise) contains practically no mention whatsoever of any political views that he may have held, potentially leading to an interpretation of Mahler as a relatively apolitical individual, but

⁴⁵ Mengelberg, *Mahler-Feest*, 47-48.

⁴⁶ *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 166.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

also allowing interpreters a great deal of freedom to frame Mahler's politics as they wish. Given the absence of explicit documentary material on this subject, writers and scholars have sought to find covert or underlying political statements in Mahler's music, with varying outcomes.

Among Mahler's works, the early *Wunderhorn* symphonies—particularly those with texted movements—are the ones that have received the most attention in this way. Peter Franklin, for instance, has written on the fifth movement of the Second Symphony as conveying “an apocalyptic leveling of status and power” that demonstrated ideas of “socialism as much as spirituality” to those who read a 1901 program that Mahler wrote for the work—although this is the same program that Mahler described to his sister Justine as being “only intended for someone naïve.”⁴⁸ On the first movement of the Third Symphony, which he compares to “the sight and sound of a May Day workers’ procession to the Prater,” Franklin writes that it is a “small wonder that some of Mahler’s more conservative critics heard in this music a threat not only to bourgeois propriety but also to the very fabric of society as it was then constituted.”⁴⁹ Using Mahler’s friendship with Viktor Adler, the leader of the oppositional Austrian Social Democratic Party, as further evidence, Franklin comes to the conclusion that Mahler—at least around the time that he was writing his first few symphonies—espoused pro-socialist political views, and even incorporated these views, somewhat imperceptibly, into his works. In her recent book, Molly M. Breckling further extends these ideas to Mahler’s *Wunderhorn* songs, arguing that Mahler’s edits to several texts in this collection demonstrate his continued commitment to the ideals of “utopian

⁴⁸ Peter Franklin, “Socio-political landscapes: reception and biography,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 14. See also letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Schindler, Dec. 18, 1901, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

socialism” that he had picked up from Viktor Adler and others in the Pernerstorfer Circle during his student years in Vienna.⁵⁰

Significantly for this project, Breckling’s book also includes a chapter analyzing “anti-militarist commentary” in Mahler’s *Wunderhorn* songs. This analysis is important because—in spite of the number of songs Mahler composed on military themes, and despite the generally praiseworthy attitude of the original *Wunderhorn* folk poetry toward these themes—as Breckling explains, “none of [Mahler’s] militaristic songs paints the soldier’s life in an entirely positive light.”⁵¹ She categorizes some of these songs as depicting “the horrors that await men on the battlefield,” others as examining “the punishments inflicted on young men who try to abandon their military duties,” and yet others as evoking “the pains of separation from loved ones when a young man is called off to war.”⁵² As with his positive views on socialism, Breckling credits Mahler’s time in the Pernerstorfer Circle with shaping his anti-militaristic (and pacifistic) views as well, largely through the writings of Wagner, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer.⁵³ For both Franklin and Breckling, however, all of these political views “expressed” by Mahler through his works came very early in his career and did not seem to persist beyond that point; Franklin even examines the Eighth Symphony as possible evidence that Mahler’s once-liberal political views had become increasingly conservative as his career progressed.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ See Molly M. Breckling, “‘The brutal bourgeoisie’: Mahler and Socioeconomic Equality,” in *Hidden Treasures: Cultural, Social and Political Commentary in Mahler’s Songs from Des knaben Wunderhorn* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2023), 171-196. Mahler joined the Pernerstorfer Circle around 1879 and left the group in 1883.

⁵¹ Breckling, *Hidden Treasures*, 23.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, 25-30.

⁵⁴ See Franklin, 17.

When Rudolf Mengelberg cast Mahler as something of a composer of the people in his *Mahler-Feestboek*, then, this portrayal was not entirely far-fetched, though it was also lacking in detail and contextualization. Mahler was indeed a member of the liberal Pernerstorfer Circle during his youth, and several of his works leave themselves open to interpretations that support left-wing ideas, as discussed above, but he stayed out of the world of politics after his student years, leaving no further trace of his political leanings even in communication with his close confidantes. Further, Mahler's smaller works, such as the *Wunderhorn* songs, do not seem to have played a significant role in Mengelberg's conception of Mahler in the program book, given that he makes hardly any reference to such works therein, so any possible "anti-militaristic" messages that Breckling has identified in these songs almost certainly played no role in Mengelberg's portrayal of Mahler as a composer whose works could rectify the ills of the war. Even so, it is notable that Mengelberg's above-discussed characterization of the Third Symphony's first movement as portraying the idea of "banners and torches...being waved and flaunted with passionate cries" resembles very closely Franklin's modern-day reading of this movement as arising from the experience of a May Day parade. Thus, while Mengelberg places Mahler further along the spectrum of democratic socialism than the composer himself would have, and gives no thought to the fact that Mahler's political beliefs may have changed later in his life, Mengelberg's characterizations of Mahler's stances, as with the topics discussed above, cannot be labeled as fully falsified.

One area in which it is certain that Rudolf Mengelberg would have had access to Mahler's perspectives is in relation to the composer's thoughts on Amsterdam and the Netherlands. Mahler was not shy in expressing his feelings about the Dutch world in his letters to

Willem (and to Alma), and it is clear that Rudolf had access to some of these letters—or at least to the sentiments expressed therein—when writing his program book.⁵⁵ From his first trip to Amsterdam in 1903, Mahler was highly impressed with Willem and the Concertgebouworkest, writing to Alma on October 20 that “I just couldn’t believe my eyes or ears when they started on the Third Symphony. It was utterly breathtaking. The orchestra is superb and very well rehearsed.”⁵⁶ He was also immediately taken with the country’s landscape, writing to Alma on October 22 that “one can understand why so many painters make their home here! The colorful houses, the meadows, the cows, windmills and waterways as far as the eye can see...and above all the wonderful, hazy light in which everything is bathed”; in the same letter, he went on to write his oft-quoted remark (in Dutch Mahler scholarship) that “the musical culture in this country is stupendous. These people really know how to listen!”⁵⁷

Following his return to Vienna at the end of that month, Mahler wrote the following lines to Willem Mengelberg, who had hosted him in Amsterdam:

Let me take the opportunity to say once more how good for me those beautiful days were that I spent with you and your lovely wife, and that I feel that Amsterdam has become a second homeland to me, thanks to your friendly care and deep artistic understanding. Once more—a most sincere and heartfelt thank you for everything.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ This Mengelberg even published a selection of these letters shortly before the festival. See C. Rudolf Mengelberg, “Gustav Mahler an Willem Mengelberg: Ein Blatt zeitgenössischer Musikgeschichte,” *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 41, no. 15 (1920): 234-236.

⁵⁶ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Oct. 20, 1903, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 133-134.

⁵⁷ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Oct. 22, 1903, in *ibid.*, 135-136. Emphasis original.

⁵⁸ “Lassen Sie mich Ihnen bei dieser Gelegenheit nochmals sagen, wie wohl mir die schönen Tage gethan, die ich in Ihrer und Ihrer lieben Frau Gesellschaft verlebt, und dass ich das Gefühl habe, dass mir in Amsterdam eine zweite Heimath erstanden ist, dank Ihrer freundschaftlichen Fürsorge, und Ihres so innigen künstlerischen Verständnis. Nochmals herzlichsten, treuesten Dank für Alles.” Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, ca. Nov. 1, 1903, in *Gustav Mahler und Holland: Briefe*, 43.

The next summer, several months before his second trip to the Netherlands, he wrote to Willem that “those days in Amsterdam are among the most pleasant that I have spent in the company of a fellow artist [*Kunstgenossen*].”⁵⁹ Across all four of his visits to Amsterdam, Mahler’s letters—both to Willem and to Alma—are equally enthusiastic and florid to those quoted above. After his second visit to the city, in the fall of 1904, he built upon his earlier letter to Willem, writing that Amsterdam “has quickly become a second *musical* homeland to me.”⁶⁰ During his third visit, in the spring of 1906, he wrote to Alma that “here in Amsterdam I already have a staunch crowd of supporters, particularly young people, who go quite wild about me. The audience was most respectful, the press downright friendly.”⁶¹ During his fourth (and final) visit in the fall of 1909, he wrote to Alma that “once again, I’m thoroughly enjoying Holland... The orchestra is wonderful and has taken me very much to heart. This time it’s not work but pleasure.”⁶² Clearly, then, Mahler was impressed with many aspects of the Netherlands, and felt more at home there (musically and otherwise) than in many of the places to which he traveled.

At the end of the *Mahler-Festboek*, in the short essay titled “Gustav Mahler and the Concertgebouw,” Rudolf Mengelberg reproduces in full Mahler’s above-quoted letter to Willem from November 1904, as well as a second letter from August 1906 in which Mahler writes to Willem about plans to perform his Sixth Symphony in Amsterdam; Rudolf further includes a full

⁵⁹ “Die Tage in Amsterdam gehören für mich zu den erfreulichsten, die ich in Gemeinschaft mit einem Kunstgenossen verlebt.“ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, June 12, 1904, in *ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁰ “...in Amsterdam, das mir so schnell eine 2. Musikalische Heimath geworden [ist].” Letter from Gustav Mahler to Willem Mengelberg, ca. Nov. 1, 1904, in *ibid.*, 52. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, March 9, 1906, in *Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife*, 230. Emphasis original.

⁶² Letter from Gustav Mahler to Alma Mahler, Sept. 29, 1909, in *ibid.*, 346. Emphasis original.

facsimile of this second letter in the program book.⁶³ Thus, Rudolf certainly had access to the correspondence between Mahler and Willem when writing this book, and likely also had access to the perspectives that Mahler shared with Alma (at least second- or third-hand), given that Alma and Willem remained close friends after Mahler's death. When Rudolf wrote in this essay that "Amsterdam has become Gustav Mahler's Bayreuth," then, he was not simply doing so for rhetorical effect, but rather was making this claim based on Mahler's own perspectives on the city, as well as the overwhelmingly positive reception that he and his works had continued to receive there. Just like his analyses of Mahler's religiosity, philosophical beliefs, stance on immortality, political leanings, and various aspects of musical composition, Mengelberg's positions here do not deviate demonstrably from Mahler's own, evidencing the careful scholarly approach that he took in his portrayal of the composer, even as he sought to use this approach to promote his particular ideology about Mahler's role in the post-war reunification of the Western world, often taking full advantages of gaps—or ambiguities—in the historical record to cast Mahler in the ways that best supported his own ideas.

4.2 Post-Festival Perspectives on Mahler

As discussed in the previous chapter, the total amount of scholarship on Mahler written before 1920 was not particularly large, and the material that did exist at that time was written predominantly by a small number of scholars, most of whom had had personal connections to Mahler during his lifetime. Some material on the composer was published between 1920 and 1950, but these years are generally seen as a relative low period in Mahler scholarship, in part

⁶³ Mahler's intended trip to Amsterdam to perform the Sixth Symphony did not end up happening, making the Sixth the only symphony of the first seven that Mahler did not himself introduce in the Netherlands.

due to changing tastes and in part due to Mahler having been labeled as a “degenerate” composer by the Nazi party.⁶⁴ In the second half of the century, however, Mahler’s music experienced what is now referred to as a “renaissance,” with conductors such as Leonard Bernstein bringing these works into the standard concert repertory around what would have been Mahler’s one-hundredth birthday.⁶⁵ Since this time, Mahler’s works have remained among the most frequently performed in Western (and some non-Western) concert halls, and have also been featured in various films, TV shows, and other forms of mass media.

In parallel to this, an almost overwhelming amount of scholarship has been published on Mahler since the 1960s, with almost every aspect of his life, music, milieu, and reception having been investigated in some way. In this section of this chapter, I analyze the ways in which the perspectives on Mahler promoted by the 1920 Mahler-Feest have persisted—and still persist—in scholarship on and attitudes toward Mahler and his music since the time of the festival. As is the nature of this type of analysis, it is not possible to consider every scholarly monograph and article written on Mahler during the past century, so I have limited my survey of the literature based on the specific relevance of each source to this inquiry, as well as the significance thereof in the broader realm of Mahler scholarship.

As introduced in the previous chapter, both Paul Stefan and Richard Specht issued revised editions of their seminal texts on Mahler shortly after the Mahler-Feest, both of which

⁶⁴ See, for example, Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁶⁵ As Mieke Wilfing-Albrecht has recently shown, the idea of a “Mahler Renaissance” is quite a bit more complex than this one-dimensional labeling would imply, with different nations (and even individuals) experiencing the phenomenon at differing times and in differing ways. Regardless, by around 1970, Mahler’s music had been established as a central part of the symphonic canon across the western world. See Mieke Wilfing-Albrecht, “Adjusting an Image? The ‘Mahler-Renaissance’ between Vienna and New York,” in *Telling Sounds: Tracing Music History in Digital Media Archives*, eds. Elias Berner and Matej Santi, 63-80 (Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2023).

included new material directly related to the Dutch Mahler tradition. Stefan's third edition was published in 1920, almost immediately following the festival—and a decade after the first edition had been released in 1910 (and translated to English for a second edition in 1912). In the prologue to the 1920 edition—one of the few newly added sections—Stefan situates the book in its contemporary contexts, writing that “in July 1920, he [Mahler] would have turned sixty years old. Two months before that, the first Mahler Festival took place in Amsterdam, [and] the Mahler-Bund was established.”⁶⁶ He goes on to write that while Mahler's reception had improved to some degree since the earlier publications of the book, much “promotion” [*werben*] of Mahler's cause still remained to be done.⁶⁷

The bulk of Stefan's material in this third edition remains identical to that of the earlier editions, but a newly added section at the end, titled “The Survivor” [*Der Überlebende*], presents Stefan's thoughts most closely related to those endorsed by the Amsterdam Mahler-Fest. Here, he writes that although Mahler's works were best understood when conducted by Mahler himself, the cultural and societal impacts of the war had nonetheless been driving interest in Mahler's music among new groups of listeners: “Yes, [Mahler] had to die in order to live. Shortly after him, many others died in the war and in a no-less-horrible time of peace. A new generation has come about, and Mahler is their guiding star.”⁶⁸ He goes on to compare Mahler

⁶⁶ “Im Juli 1920 wäre er sechzig Jahre alt gewesen. Zwei Monate vorher hat in Amsterdam das erste Mahler-Fest stattgefunden, ist der Mahler-Bund begründet worden.“ Paul Stefan, *Gustav Mahler: Eine Studie über Persönlichkeit und Werk*, 3rd ed. (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1920), 9.

⁶⁷ “Es wirbt längst nicht mehr allein für Gustav Mahler, es gerät immer mehr in (willkommene) Gesellschaft, aber es wirbt. Es muss noch werben.“ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Ja, er musste sterben, um zu leben. Bald nach ihm sind viele andere im Krieg und in einem nicht minder entsetzlichen Frieden gestorben. Ein anderes Geschlecht war da und dem ist Mahler Leitstern.“ Ibid., 160.

with Beethoven in a way very similar to Rudolf Mengelberg's comparisons of the two composers in the festival program book, writing that:

Mahler's art and the phenomenon of Mahler is elemental like that of Beethoven—part of their Ethos. Like Beethoven, and for the first time since him, [Mahler], in his music, instinctively solves the human problems of the era for those who are unconscious but are awakening...⁶⁹

Like Mengelberg and others, Stefan here points to Mahler as the only figure since Beethoven who has fully captured the societal spirit of his time; his use of the in-progress term “awakening” is also highly reminiscent of Mengelberg's description of Mahler as “the symphonist...of this developing, emerging time.”

Around half of the text of Stefan's “The Survivor” section relates explicitly to the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest and to the Dutch Mahler tradition that Willem Mengelberg had created and maintained. It is worth quoting from this material at length:

Let no one believe that Mahler was or still is a Viennese phenomenon. The place that belongs to him today is perhaps not located in Vienna or in Austria at all, hardly in Germany, but rather in small circles that have cropped up everywhere to some degree, but primarily and most visibly in Holland. It is incredible there, what Willem Mengelberg—this calm, clearly aware director...—what this, so to say, old-masterful Netherlander, through his conviction, his power, and his care, has done for the understanding of Mahler in an entire country. The attention, the respect, and the love of an entire people have been captured there.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “Mahlers Kunst und Mahlers Erscheinung ist elementar wie die Beethovens—aus ihrem Ethos. Wie Beethoven und zum erstenmal seit ihm löst er in seiner Musik unbewusst für Unbewusste, aber Bewusstwerdende die menschlichen Probleme der Epoche in Musik...” Ibid., 160-161. Of course, comparisons between Beethoven and Mahler were not particularly unusual at this time, with the two composers often being cast as the endpoints of the grand nineteenth-century symphonic tradition.

⁷⁰ “Glaube aber niemand, dass Mahler eine wienerische Angelegenheit geworden oder geblieben sei. Die ihm eigene Stätte hat er heute vielleicht gar nicht in Wien und Österreich, kaum in Deutschland, sondern in kleinen Kreisen, die sich ein wenig überall gebildet haben, am meisten und sichtbarsten aber in Holland. Da ist es denn wunderbar, was Willem Mengelberg, dieser ruhige, klar bewusste Dirigent...was dieser gleichsam altmeisterliche Niederländer durch seine Überzeugung, seine Kraft und seine Pflege in einem ganzen Lande für das Verständnis Mahlers erwirkt hat. Die Aufmerksamkeit, die Achtung, die Liebe eines ganzen Volkes ist hier gesammelt worden.“ Ibid., 161-162.

After going so far as to say that “clergy preached about [Mahler’s music] in their churches” in the Netherlands, Stefan goes on to write that “the rest of us first experienced [this phenomenon] during the festival for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mengelberg as the Director of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.”⁷¹ In reviewing the Mahler-Feest, Stefan writes that:

In the city, in the land of great familiarity with Mahler—a familiarity which has been confirmed even to a greater degree since Mahler’s death—it was still something special for him and for his enterprise. This became apparent during the first Mahler-Fest through the light of transfiguration, so to speak. Only the greatest knowledge and love on the part of the director, the orchestra, the singers, and the audience could bring about such a truly unforgettable artistic event and maintain its spirit. With good reason, guests were invited from everywhere; the festival was to be an example to them.⁷²

Stefan never mentions *Rudolf* Mengelberg by name anywhere in his text, even though it seems that his line of thought was strongly influenced by the positions advanced by Mengelberg in the *Feestboek* (or, perhaps more likely, by Rudolf’s German-language discourses on the same topics during the festival weeks). Stefan does, however, include Mengelberg’s program book on his list of “Several Writings and Essays on Gustav Mahler” in the appendix of this third edition.⁷³

To conclude “The Survivor,” Stefan discusses the founding of the Mahler-Bond at the end of the festival, pointing optimistically to the organization’s goals of promoting performances

⁷¹ “Geistliche predigten davon in ihren Kirchen. Wir anderen haben es erst bei der Feier der fünfundzwanzig Dirigentenjahre, die Mengelberg im Concertgebouw in Amsterdam vollendet hat, erst in diesem für Mahlers Werk bedeutungsvollen Mai 1920 erfahren...” Ibid., 162. Stefan’s comment on “clergy preaching” about Mahler’s music seems most likely to be hyperbole (in line with conceptions of these works as carrying spiritual messages); there is no indication that Stefan actually attended any such services, though it cannot be completely ruled out that there may be some truth behind this statement.

⁷² “Aber in der Stadt, in dem Land der großen Mahler-Vertrautheit, einer Vertrautheit, die sich seit Mahlers Tod erst recht bestätigt hat, war es um ihn und um seine Sache doch etwas Besonderes. Das zeigte sich bei dem ersten Mahler-Fest...gleichsam im Lichte der Verklärung. Nur die größte Kenntnis und Liebe des Dirigenten, des Orchesters, der Sänger, des Publikums konnten ein solches wahrhaft denkwürdiges Ereignis der Kunst zustande bringen und im Geiste festhalten. Mit gutem Recht hatte man Gäste von überall her geladen; ihnen durfte das Fest ein Beispiel sein.“ Ibid.

⁷³ Stefan indicates here that the language of Mengelberg’s book is Dutch, and further includes the Dutch-language publications by Rutters and Wessem on this list. See Ch. 3 of this dissertation for more on these monographs.

of Mahler's music across the western world. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he only mentions Arnold Schoenberg being selected as the chair of the society and does not discuss Willem Mengelberg being involved in any way, despite this Mengelberg being labeled as the "honorary chair" on all archival documentation relating to the origins of the Mahler-Bond and being referred to as such by several other contemporaneous commentators. For Stefan, who took music lessons with Schoenberg, the idea of a Mahler Society led (even in part) by someone from outside of the Austro-German world may have been too difficult to accept, even with his clear admiration for the work that Mengelberg and others had done to promote Mahler's cause. Regardless, Stefan does include a new appendix in this third edition of his book in which he lists the number of performances that each of Mahler's works had been given under Willem Mengelberg through April 1920 (both within and outside of the Netherlands), ranging from five performances of the Sixth Symphony to a whopping forty-two performances of the Fourth. Mengelberg is the only conductor to receive this sort of list in Stefan's book, further reinforcing the emphasis placed on him after Stefan's attendance of the Mahler-Feest.

It is clear that Stefan was highly moved by his experience at the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest; indeed, almost every change from the first edition to the third edition of his monograph relates in some way to the festival, the Mahler-Bond, the Dutch Mahler tradition, Willem Mengelberg, or the changes in Mahler reception that had been taking place during and after the First World War. He does not hesitate to label the Netherlands as the nation that had been most friendly to Mahler since the composer's death, though he also reflects optimistically on the fact that younger listeners—especially those directly affected by the war—had been turning toward Mahler as their "guiding star" in the face of difficult circumstances. While he does not directly acknowledge Rudolf Mengelberg's program book as a source for his revisions, it seems safe to

say that his ideas were affected by the material contained therein. The degree to which Stefan engages with these topics around the Mahler-Feest in his revised edition would certainly have left a mark on his readership, and the fact that his monograph was one of the first significant sources on Mahler's life and works means that this readership was—and to some degree still is—quite large.⁷⁴

Richard Specht published the second edition of his *Gustav Mahler* in 1922; its content was almost entirely unchanged from the first edition of 1913, though it included a new dedication to Willem Mengelberg, a new foreword in which Specht addresses some of the societal changes since the previous edition, and several newly added paragraphs at the conclusion of the Epilogue. The very first sentence of the new foreword sets the tone for the remainder of that section, with Specht writing that “even this book has not emerged from the war unscathed.”⁷⁵ He explains that this is “not only because the mind was focused on things other than intellectual [pursuits] during this first time of global catastrophe,” but also because the printing situation in the Weimar Republic meant that the new edition had to be published without images or musical examples.⁷⁶ While Specht laments this loss of material, he points to Universal-

⁷⁴ In addition to this revised edition, Stefan also published articles in a number of German-language newspapers around the time of the Mahler-Feest, commenting positively on Mengelberg's interpretations, the general reception of Mahler's music in the Netherlands, and the grandiosity of the festival itself. See, for example, Paul Stefan, “A Musician's Journey to Holland: The Mahler Festival in Amsterdam,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, May 27, 1920, trans. in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 362-364.

⁷⁵ “Auch an diesem Buch ist der Krieg nicht spurlos vorübergegangen.“ Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1922), 9.

⁷⁶ “Nicht nur, weil in der ersten Zeit des Weltbrandes der Sinn auf andere als auf geistige Dinge gerichtet war...” Ibid.

Edition's introductions to Mahler's symphonies, as well as to the program booklets of the Vienna Philharmonic, as sources to which readers could turn for analytical information on the music.

In reviewing the success of his first edition, Specht asserts that "the fact that the majority of my readers have not been in Germany and Austria, but rather in Holland" is a testament to "the magnificent pioneering work of a wonderful musician and director."⁷⁷ He continues as follows, addressing his dedicatee directly:

You—dear Willem Mengelberg—are to be thanked if Holland has become the true 'Mahler-land,' since so much love, understanding, and enthusiasm have been drummed up there like nowhere else; we have a long way to go [in other countries] until we join you. Your wonderfully clear, passionately lively performances of Mahler's works have awakened the proper feelings for this music and are so powerful that your audiences always demand more of these symphonies... With exceptional energy and irresistible persistence, you have done the same for the character of this highly misunderstood, vilified, maligned artist and man—who was truly a great—though far reaching and, of course, with a completely different result, as I have tried to do with my weaker power in my narrow circles. Therefore, it is a joy for me to place your name on the dedication page of this new edition, as a sign of thanks and as a cheerful salute in the spirit of pleasant solidarity.⁷⁸

Significantly, however, Specht dates this foreword as having been written on July 18, 1918—well before the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest took place, and even before any planning for the event had begun.

⁷⁷ "Dass es seine meisten Leser nicht in Deutschland und Österreich, sondern in Holland gefunden hat, ist freilich auch ein Symptom...[von] die großartige Vorkämpferschaft eines prachtvollen Musikers und Dirigenten." Ibid., 12. It is unclear where Specht's readership statistics came from, but it seems reasonable to assume that his publisher would have kept records of book sales and distribution across various national markets.

⁷⁸ "Ihnen, Lieber Willem Mengelberg, ist es zu danken, wenn Holland das eigentliche Mahlerland geworden, wenn ihm soviel Liebe, Verstehen und Begeisterung erobert worden ist, wie nirgend sonst: wir haben noch lange zu arbeiten, bis wir Ihnen nachkommen. Ihre wunderbar klaren, leidenschaftlich lebendigen Aufführungen Mahlerscher Werke haben den rechten Sinn für diese Musik erweckt, und so stark, dass Ihre Konzertbesucher immer wieder diese Symphonien fordern... Sie haben mit ungemeiner Energie und unwiderstehlicher Beharrlichkeit für das Wesen des vielverkannten, geschmähten, verlästerten Künstlers und Menschen, der ein ganz Großer war, weithinwirkend und freilich mit ganz anderem Gelingen das gleiche getan, was ich in meinem engeren Kreise mit meiner schwachen Kraft zu tun bestrebt war. Deshalb ist es mir eine Freude, Ihren Namen auf das Widmungsblatt dieser neuen Ausgabe zu setzen: als Zeichen des Danks und als einen frohen Gruß im Gefühl schöner Gemeinsamkeiten." Ibid., 12-13.

It is not clear whether the few newly added paragraphs in Specht's epilogue were also written before the festival or whether they were written between 1920 and 1922. Unlike Stefan's revised edition, however, this one does not make any explicit reference to the Mahler-Feest nor to the founding of the Mahler-Bond, even as Specht overtly praises Willem Mengelberg for his championing of Mahler's cause in the Netherlands. Given this, it seems most likely that Specht added these paragraphs (and completed the manuscript for this second edition) before the Mahler-Feest and had perhaps intended to publish the book earlier than 1922, but was delayed by circumstances beyond his control, such as the same printing difficulties that led to the removal of images and figures from the book. Regardless, I argue that Specht's revised edition still contributed to the scholarly dialogue around the Mahler-Feest because of its emphasis on Mengelberg, and because the majority of Specht's readers on Mahler (both within and outside of the Netherlands) would have been familiar with—and reminded of—the idea of the Mahler-Feest, even if it did not come up explicitly in this particular book.⁷⁹

Though Guido Adler did not publish a new edition of his book on Mahler in the wake of the festival, an article that he wrote for a Mahler-themed edition of the periodical *Musikblätter des Anbruch* in April of 1920 conveys some of his thoughts in relation to the festival. In this article, titled "To the Mahler-Feest in Amsterdam," Adler writes extremely positively about the host nation, stating that "the Netherlands...has been engaged in laudable ways in the area of

⁷⁹ Specht's short article on "Gustav Mahler's Present" in a 1921 edition of *Moderne Welt* also makes no reference to Amsterdam, Willem Mengelberg, the Concertgebouw, or the Mahler-Feest, even as the text conveys some ideas similar to those in Rudolf Mengelberg's program book, with Specht asserting that Mahler embodied "the strongest call of eternity of this time" [der stärkste Ruf der Ewigkeit gegen diese Zeit]. Richard Specht, "Gustav Mahler's Gegenwart," *Moderne Welt* 3, no. 7 (1921-1922): 1.

music, and makes us particularly thankful for their generous practice of neighborly love.”⁸⁰ With this, he is echoing (before the festival) the way that Rudolf Mengelberg would have wanted the Netherlands to be described—as a host nation that sought to bring together its neighbors under the banner of the arts. Like several other writers discussed above, Adler goes on to praise Mahler for “how he sought to capture the problems of the world in a cohesive musical way,” again reaffirming Mahler’s connections to contemporary society more broadly.⁸¹ At the end of this short article, Adler writes that “the Mahler-Feest in Amsterdam will be an act of great magnitude, a sacrificial consecration, a demonstration of the noblest spirit and devotion,” casting the event—like Rudolf Mengelberg and others—in quasi-religious terms, and preparing his readers for what he believed would be a truly incredible experience.⁸²

In the following article in the same issue of *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, Otto Neitzel describes the relationship between Mahler and the Concertgebouw; he concludes by writing that “thus, I set out to experience the honor given to our Mahler in this neutral foreign land, and I discovered the island of the musically blissful.”⁸³ As with the authors discussed so far, Neitzel—a writer from the Germanic world—casts Amsterdam as a musical capital of the European continent, and particularly in relation to Mahler’s music. By explicitly referring to the Netherlands as “neutral” here, Neitzel also supports the exact positioning that Rudolf

⁸⁰ “Die Niederlande...betätigen sich auch heute in rühmlicher Weise auf dem Gebiete der Tonkunst und erfüllen uns mit besonderem Danke für die großmütige Ausübung der Nächstenliebe.“ Guido Adler, “Zum Mahler-Fest in Amsterdam,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2, no. 7-8 (April 1920): 255.

⁸¹ “...wie er die Weltprobleme einheitlich tondichterisch zu erfassen suchte...” Ibid.

⁸² “Das Mahler-Fest in Amsterdam ist eine Tat großen Stils, ein Weiheopfer, ein Zeuge von vornehmster Gesinnung und Hingabe.“ Ibid., 256.

⁸³ “So war ich ausgezogen, um der Ehrung unseres Mahler im neutralen Ausland beizuwohnen, und habe die Insel der musikalisch Glückseligen entdeckt.“ Otto Neitzel, “Gustav Mahler und das Amsterdamer Concertgebouw,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2, no. 7-8 (April 1920): 262.

Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw's *Mahler-Comité* would have wanted audiences to read. Indeed, this may well be one of the articles about which Rudolf Mengelberg wrote to Neitzel in the Fall of 1919 in his quest to secure the most positive reporting on the festival as he could, as discussed above in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

After the Mahler-Feest, Adler wrote an article for the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* in which he summarizes attendance at the event as follows:

There were sold-out halls, devout and enthusiastic guests from the educated circles of the art-loving city, guests from all musically cultured countries. It was a union of believers in art that revealed the solidarity of the like-minded from nations that had been feuding for so long, as well as from the fortunate, neutral ones.⁸⁴

Like others who were there, Adler writes with admiration for the festival and for the city of Amsterdam, and clearly demonstrates his eager engagement with the political messaging of the event. This is, once more, exactly the sort of reporting that Rudolf Mengelberg and the rest of the committee would have wanted, ensuring that those who had been at the festival would continue to remember it fondly, and that those who had not been there would have a positive impression of it nonetheless. Between Adler's reputation as a musicologist and the reputation of the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, this article—like the sources discussed above—would have carried great academic weight in steering the opinions of its readers.

As stated at the outset of this section, the years between 1920 and the "Mahler revival" around 1960 were a relative low period in terms of new Mahler scholarship. After the seminal publications by some of Mahler's own colleagues and associates in the decade following the composer's death, as well as the flurry of revised editions and periodical articles surrounding the

⁸⁴ Guido Adler, "Mahler-Fest in Amsterdam," *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 2, no. 10 (July 1920): 608; trans. in *Mahler and His World*, 365-366.

Mahler-Feest, scholars—and readers—tended to gravitate toward other topics during the years leading up to and during the Second World War. This is not to say that Mahler’s music fell completely out of fashion, of course—performances thereof remained relatively common in the Netherlands (especially prior to the 1940s), and also to some degree in the United States, where Willem Mengelberg attempted to popularize them during his tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1922 to 1928. The changing tastes of the public, however, are apparent in a letter from the administration of the New York Philharmonic to Willem Mengelberg in May of 1923, in which Mengelberg was told that:

The Committee did not feel that it would be justified this coming season in performing another work by Mahler. The Committee does not question the value of Mahler’s music but in view of the very general complaint about programs and the great decrease in box office receipts because of that displeasure, it feels that it would be unwise at this time to go further in the Mahler controversy...⁸⁵

Thus, even three years after the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, the success of the event—and its portrayal of Mahler as a universal figure, as well as its boosting of Mengelberg’s reputation as a leading conductor of Mahler’s music—was waning at least to some degree.

Explicit ideas promoted at the Mahler-Feest, however, would come up one more time during the 1920s, in a speech given by Willem Mengelberg upon receiving the Honorary Doctor of Music degree from Columbia University in January of 1928. In this address, Mengelberg echoes his cousin Rudolf—and Paul Bekker—in stating that “a lively contact has always existed between the cultural and social development on the one side and the evolution of musical form on the other. It appears clearly that musical form is influenced and defined by that for which men are striving at a certain time”; he goes on to assert more specifically that “symphonic music...is

⁸⁵ Letter from the administration of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra to Willem Mengelberg, May 31, 1923, folder 010-04-14, p. 33-34, New York Philharmonic Digital Archives, New York.

closely connected with individualistic development and its final result: the great democratic life of our time.”⁸⁶ After surveying several general tendencies of art music across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he posits that early-twentieth-century music aims for “a new ideal: toward a community transcending the individual,” and continuing with the argument that “this tendency is embodied in the work of Gustav Mahler, who, in a certain sense, has created a folk-music of our period, and who has thereby added a new and greater value to our symphonic music.”⁸⁷ In this short speech, he echoes almost all of his cousin Rudolf’s primary points from the *Mahler-Feestboek* as excerpted here, and he does not reference any composer besides Mahler as having written music that captures the spirit of “our time” or “our period”; he does not, however, mention the 1920 Mahler-Feest at all. A document titled “Draft Speech for Willem—Honorary Doctorate America” in *Rudolf’s* archive at the Nederlands Muziek Instituut indicates that Rudolf was closely involved in the drafting of this speech for Willem in 1928.⁸⁸ This is of particular significance because it is the latest instance of Rudolf promoting such ideas on Mahler, even after the publication of his 1923 biography (discussed in the previous chapter), in which he seems to have abandoned many of his politicized views on the composer.

In addition to the 1940 publication of Alma Mahler’s *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen und Briefe*, in which Alma makes several references to Willem Mengelberg and the Mahler-Feest, the late 1930s and 1940s saw the release of two significant monographs on Mahler, both of which

⁸⁶ Willem Mengelberg, “The Essence and the Effect of Music: Address on the Occasion of Receiving the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from Columbia University,” speech, New York, January 9, 1928.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ See Rudolf Mengelberg, “Ontwerp rede voor Willem eredoctoraat Amerika,” 1928, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague. The German-language text of this draft aligns almost exactly with the English-language speech given at Columbia by Willem, as referenced in fn. 86 above.

directly referred to the 1920 festival and its impacts on Mahler's legacy.⁸⁹ The first of these was Bruno Walter's *Gustav Mahler*, published in German in 1936 and translated into English for a 1941 edition. In a section on Mahler's reception, Walter writes that "the first wave of general acknowledgement of Mahler's compositions in Europe came shortly after the First World War, inaugurated by the Mahler Festival of 1920 in Amsterdam."⁹⁰ Walter had not attended the 1920 Mahler-Feest himself, likely due to interpersonal disagreements with Willem Mengelberg given that both men saw themselves as the most authentic interpreters of Mahler's works, and both had close personal connections with Mahler. For this reason, it is not particularly surprising that he does not even include Mengelberg's name in this single sentence about the festival in Amsterdam. Aside from this brief reference, Walter makes no further mention of Amsterdam, the Dutch Mahler tradition, or of Mengelberg's conducting anywhere in the book.

Around a decade later, in 1945, Dika Newlin completed a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University titled "Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg," which went on to be published in book form two years after that. In it, Newlin refers to Amsterdam as "the traditional seat of an intense Mahler cult, where Mengelberg had brought the Concertgebouw-Orchester [sic] to ever greater perfection."⁹¹ Later, in discussing the state of European music-making after the First World War, she writes that "modern music was trying to become international once more... [The 1920 Mahler-Feest] was the first really international musical event that had taken place since the

⁸⁹ Gabriel Engel's English-language biography of Mahler, published in the United States in 1932, makes no direct reference to the Mahler-Feest, but Engel does include Rudolf Mengelberg's German-language *Das Mahler-Fest* (the retrospective book published in the wake of the festival) in his bibliography. See Gabriel Engels, *Gustav Mahler, Song-Symphonist* (New York: The Bruckner Society of America, 1932).

⁹⁰ Bruno Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. James Galston (New York: The Greystone Press, 1941), 214.

⁹¹ Dika Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 249.

war, and was joyously hailed by all participants as the start of a new era.”⁹² Unlike most writers at this point, Newlin demonstrates scholarly engagement with the original materials that arose from the festival (such as Mengelberg’s program book) in writing the following:

The cult of Mahler was taking on a new aspect in these difficult, turbulent post-war years. Now he was made—and it would have come as a great surprise to him!—the apostle of socialism; his music was suddenly the very epitome of music of and for the “masses”...

While the Mahler Festival was hailed by many as symbolizing a new spiritual union between nations, it also stimulated fresh interest in music festivals both national and international.⁹³

In these few sentences, Newlin covers all of the primary points that Rudolf Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw had aimed to make with the 1920 Mahler-Feest, namely the idea that Mahler’s music was universal and would serve to reunify the western world in the wake of the war. For Newlin’s English-speaking readership in 1947, this detailed reference to the Mahler-Feest would likely have awakened some interest in the festival among those who had not been familiar with it, even with Newlin’s qualification that Mahler himself would not have fully supported the specific political framing that the festival imposed upon him. Significantly, this era of publications marks a turning point in Mahler scholarship as it relates to the Mahler-Feest, since both Walter and Newlin point to the festival as a key event in the history of Mahler reception but do not themselves promote the festival’s ideologies, as several scholars had done in the years shortly after 1920.

As discussed above, the years around 1960 saw a “Mahler revival” in which the composer’s popularity among audiences reached new highs through an increase in the number of

⁹² Ibid., 265.

⁹³ Ibid., 265-266.

performances and recordings of his works, as well as new biographical and analytical writings, and the issuing of the Mahler *Gesamtausgabe* by the Internationale Gustav Mahler Gesellschaft beginning in 1959. Despite this significant increase in interest in the composer and his works, explicit references to the Mahler-Feest (and to the Dutch Mahler tradition more broadly) largely faded from the literature around this time.⁹⁴ This is likely for a variety of reasons, not least due to Willem Mengelberg falling into a state of complete disrepute after publicly showing openness to members of the Nazi party during the Second World War and thereby being banned from conducting in the Netherlands for life beginning in 1945; the lifetime ban was later shortened to six years, but his death in 1951 made this a meaningless distinction.⁹⁵ At the same time, the proliferation of high-quality recordings of Mahler's music—and especially a newfound tendency for conductors and orchestras to record complete Mahler cycles—drew the attention of audiences away from the 1920 event that had not left any recorded legacy, and which likely would have been viewed as belonging to an earlier historical period.⁹⁶

Rather than engaging with performance studies or reception history, which may have led to further analysis of the Mahler-Feest during this time, most of the new literature on Mahler from the second half of the twentieth century deals either with matters of biography or of musical analysis, or attempts to interweave the two. Hans Redlich's *Bruckner and Mahler*, first published in 1955 and re-released in a second edition in 1963, puts the lives and works of these two

⁹⁴ Even a Dutch-language biography of Mahler published in 1950 makes no reference whatsoever to the 1920 Mahler-Feest, even though it does discuss Mahler's trips to the Netherlands and Mahler's friendship with Willem Mengelberg. See Norbert Loeser, *Gustav Mahler* (Haarlem, Netherlands: J.H. Gottmer, 1950).

⁹⁵ For more, see Frits Zwart, *Conductor Willem Mengelberg, 1871-1951, Vol. 2: Acclaimed and Accused* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

⁹⁶ See James L. Zychowicz, "The Mahler Revival," in *Mahler in Context*, ed. Charles Youmans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 251-257.

composers in dialogue with one another, but does not engage at all with performance history beyond Mahler's lifetime; likewise, the book's timeline concludes with Mahler's death in 1911.⁹⁷ Theodor Adorno's 1960 monograph *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* is similarly focused on drawing parallels between Mahler's life and works. As Christoph Metzger writes, Adorno "neglected to mention the frequent performances of the symphonies up to the 1930s in Europe (particularly in the Netherlands), even ignoring the well-documented Mahler Festival in Amsterdam. Mengelberg's influence went unrecognized."⁹⁸

Deryck Cooke, in his short 1980 *Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to his Music*, makes a passing reference to the Mahler-Fest in writing that "in Holland and Belgium [Mahler's music] is extremely popular—a legacy of the Mahler festivals given by Willem Mengelberg," but he does not delve any more deeply into this topic, using it simply as a point of comparison for Mahler's broad reception in other lands.⁹⁹ Even Henry-Louis de La Grange, in his monumental series of biographical works on Mahler (published in French between 1979 and 1894, and in English between 1995 and 2020), does not address Mahler's posthumous legacy other than in a short appendix titled "A Performance History of Mahler's Works," though the various volumes of the series do include a great deal of information on Mahler's four visits to the Netherlands during his lifetime. Thus, while readers in the second half of the twentieth century had access to a wealth of new biographical material on Mahler's life and analytical material on his works, little attention was given during this time to the impacts of the 1920 Mahler-Fest on his ongoing

⁹⁷ Hans Redlich, *Bruckner and Mahler* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1955).

⁹⁸ Christoph Metzger, "Issues in Mahler reception: historicism and misreadings after 1960," trans. Jeremy Barham, in *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 214.

⁹⁹ Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to his Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3. Cooke's pluralization of "Mahler festivals" further indicates a general lack of familiarity with this topic, since the 1920 Mahler-Fest was the only true Mahler festival given by Willem Mengelberg in Amsterdam.

reception, and almost no attention was paid to Rudolf Mengelberg's writings on the composer from earlier in the century.

As with most scholarly disciplines, the field of Mahler studies has broadened greatly in scope since around the turn of the twenty-first century, incorporating new methodologies, areas of inquiry, and interdisciplinary connections. Within this broadening has been a renewed interest in events such as the 1920 Mahler-Feest (though still among a relatively small group of scholars), almost certainly inspired to some degree by the 1995 Mahler Festival in Amsterdam, which was organized by the Concertgebouw to mark the 75th anniversary of the original festival, as well as what would have been Willem Mengelberg's 100th anniversary as the ensemble's director. I will discuss this festival in more detail in the conclusion of this dissertation, but it suffices to say here that the publication of two edited collections in conjunction with this it—the Dutch-language *Mahler in Amsterdam: Van Mengelberg tot Chailly* and the English-language *Mahler: The World Listens*—brought ideas of the Dutch Mahler tradition and the 1920 festival back into the minds of interested audiences, even among those who were not present in Amsterdam in 1995. While both books featured impressive rosters of scholarly contributors, both also fell somewhere between the categories of trade books and academic publications, providing a great deal of historical information but not much in the way of analysis.¹⁰⁰ In any case, these two books have served as central sources for several recent dissertations which have examined the 1920 Mahler-Feest and its legacy in novel ways.

¹⁰⁰ A few years earlier, in 1988, a symposium had been held in Amsterdam on the topic of Mahler's Eighth Symphony; several presentations dealt with the Dutch Mahler tradition, but these largely did not engage with the 1920 festival in more than a cursory way either. See *A 'Mass' for the Masses*.

The first such dissertation is David C. Paul's "Converging Paths to the Canon: Charles Ives, Gustav Mahler, and American Culture," completed in 2006 at the University of California, Berkeley. While the majority of this dissertation deals with Mahler's posthumous reception in America, Paul does include a section on the 1920 Mahler-Fest in a preliminary chapter dealing with Mahler's reception as it had developed in Europe; among the analytical frameworks that he considers here is Mahler as "the forger of community, who as conductor and composer created a public space in which the masses could be deployed to progressive ends," echoing almost exactly Rudolf Mengelberg's conceptions of Mahler in the festival program book.¹⁰¹ Paul does not examine the program book or any of Mengelberg's other writings here, however, working primarily with the secondary sources from the 1995 Mahler Festival described above, as well as a small number of documentary sources from those who attended the 1920 festival, such as Olga Samaroff Stokowski's chapter on the event in her memoir, *An American Musician's Story*.

Two dissertations were completed in 2009 which similarly engage with the Mahler-Fest as an element of context for other areas of inquiry. Forest Kinnett, in his dissertation on the reception of Mahler's music in "late imperial and First Republic Vienna," quotes from Rudolf Mengelberg's German-language retrospective *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920* in a section on quasi-religious portrayals of Mahler during this period, and further points to various journal articles that had been published in Vienna before and after the 1920 festival, spreading the event's messages to Austrian audiences even if they had not been in attendance themselves.¹⁰² Olaf Post, in his dissertation on the modern-day reception of Mahler performances

¹⁰¹ David C. Paul, "Converging Paths to the Canon: Charles Ives, Gustav Mahler, and American Culture" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006), 101.

¹⁰² See Forest Randolph Kinnett, "'Now his time really seems to have come': Ideas about Mahler's Music in Late Imperial and First Republic Vienna" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2009), 14-15 and 24.

by the Concertgebouw Orchestra, begins with a chapter on the Dutch Mahler tradition. Within this chapter is a seven-page section on the 1920 Mahler-Feest, in which Post provides a historical overview of the event and its primary ideologies, though he does not cite any sources in this section beyond the two above-mentioned trade books published around the 1995 festival; his only mention of Rudolf Mengelberg is in relation to this Mengelberg's assertion that Amsterdam was to become "Gustav Mahler's Bayreuth."¹⁰³

Matthew Mugmon's 2009 Harvard dissertation titled "The American Mahler" engages with the 1920 Mahler-Feest and its ideas perhaps more seriously than any other scholarly work from the twenty-first century until the present study. In this dissertation, Mugmon analyzes Mahler's rising popularity in the United States from 1920 through the "Mahler revival" around 1960 largely through a network of interactions that he draws among Nadia Boulanger, Aaron Copland, Serge Koussevitzky, and Leonard Bernstein. For Mugmon, the story of Mahler's posthumous reception in America begins with Boulanger's attendance at the 1920 Amsterdam Mahler-Feest, which exposed her to Mahler's works (and the festival's ideologies), leading her to share this material with Copland when he later came to study with her. Throughout his chapter on Boulanger, Mugmon draws on contemporaneous documentation from the festival, such as newspaper articles and transcriptions of the lectures given by several Mahler scholars, casting the event as "an emblem of postwar international reconciliation," and even draws parallels between the festival and the founding of the League of Nations during the previous year.¹⁰⁴ In discussing Boulanger's French-language review of the festival that she wrote for *Le Monde Musical* after

¹⁰³ See Olaf Post, "'The Way these People Can Just listen!' Inquiries about the Mahler Tradition in the Concertgebouw" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2009), 42-48.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew Mugmon, "The American Mahler: Musical Modernism and Transatlantic Networks, 1920-1960" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013), 34-35.

the event, Mugmon asserts that “Boulanger seems to have bought into the internationalist thrust of the Mahler festival, urging her readers to suspend their prejudices” (i.e., about Mahler as a Germanic composer whose works did not correspond with contemporaneous French tastes).¹⁰⁵ Thus, Mugmon’s work reveals a significant point about the Mahler-Feest: namely, that Boulanger’s attendance of and response to the festival helped promote Mahler’s works not only in France but also in the United States (through Copland and her other American students), providing an additional degree of documentation for the internationalist agenda promoted by Rudolf Mengelberg and the festival’s other organizers.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the dissertations discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the Mahler-Feest and its ideas have also been discussed in several scholarly monographs during the past two decades or so. The edited collection *Mahler and His World*, published in 2002, concludes with a section of contemporaneous documentation on the festival, excerpting from newspaper articles by Oskar Bie, Paul Stefan, and Guido Adler (as discussed above), all of whom promoted Rudolf Mengelberg’s festival ideologies in language similar to Mengelberg’s own.¹⁰⁷ The unattributed introduction to this section states that:

Germans and Austrians alike felt a sense of national humiliation after the close of the war; musicians hoped that music could create a more genuine peace and reconstitution. Symphonic music performed at a site that had remained neutral, offered a chance for

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁶ Much of this material on Boulanger’s attendance at the Mahler-Feest also appears in the second chapter of Mugmon’s more recent monograph, *Aaron Copland and the American Legacy of Gustav Mahler* (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Karen Painter’s chapter in this volume discusses mass culture in relation to Mahler’s music, quoting several writers in the 1920s who saw Mahler’s music as a community-building tool, but Painter makes no reference to the 1920 Mahler-Feest here, seemingly missing a good opportunity for comparison. Paul A. Pisk, for example, wrote in 1925 that Mahler “sought to endow the symphony with the power of social transformation... His art must be judged the final prewar effort to forge listeners into a community. The war has brought an end to these attempts for once and for all.” Paul A. Pisk, “Zur Soziologie der Musik,” *Der Kampf: Sozialdemokratische Monatsschrift* 18, no. 5 (May 1925): 186-187, translated in Karen Painter, “The Aesthetics of Mass Culture: Mahler’s Eighth Symphony and Its Legacy,” in *Mahler and His World*, 144.

reintegration the very year after the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1919. Many musicians were in attendance... Amsterdam was the ideal location for what contemporaries dubbed a Mahler ‘peace conference.’¹⁰⁸

The documentation in this section of *Mahler and His World* presents important material from the time of the festival, illustrating the perspectives of three significant figures who were in attendance, all of whom seemed to believe fully in the messages advanced by Rudolf Mengelberg and others. Adler’s contribution, for example, includes a sentence—free of any musical reference—in which he claims that the festival “was a highly significant event, promising much for the future development of normalized international relations.”¹⁰⁹ In the same year as *Mahler and His World*, the publication of *The Mahler Companion* included a chapter on “Mahler and Holland” by Eveline Nikkels, who detailed Mahler’s relationship with Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw as well as the continued Dutch Mahler tradition after the composer’s death; this chapter has remained one of the most frequently cited sources among scholarly writings that refer to this tradition up to the present day.¹¹⁰

Painter’s 2007 monograph *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900–1945* is another recent source that covers some of the context around the 1920 Mahler-Feest, but Painter’s explicit discussion of the festival therein is somewhat limited (though this is likely due to the festival having taken place outside of the German-speaking world, and thereby lying outside of the scope of the book). Painter begins her segment on the festival by writing that “if Mahler’s ties to tradition allowed his music to symbolize the world destroyed by the war, his ties

¹⁰⁸ Painter, “The Mahler Amsterdam Festival, 1920,” in *Mahler and His World*, 357-358.

¹⁰⁹ Guido Adler, “Mahler-Fest in Amsterdam,” trans. in *Mahler and His World*, 366.

¹¹⁰ See Eveline Nikkels, “Mahler in Holland,” in *The Mahler Companion*, rev. ed., ed. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 326-337. More recently, Stephen Downes’s chapter on Mahler’s “Posthumous Reputation, 1911 to World War II,” in *Mahler in Context* (2021) includes a single paragraph on Willem Mengelberg and the 1920 Mahler-Feest, citing only Nikkels’s earlier chapter.

to modernism made it the most plausible way to retrieve that world.”¹¹¹ While this sentence may seem true retrospectively, it is somewhat at odds with Rudolf Mengelberg’s portrayal of Mahler as the composer whose music would guide the way forward through its capturing of the social spirit of post-war Europe. Most of the rest the discussion of the festival in this monograph is comprised of a from the same Oskar Bie article excerpted in *Mahler and His World*, before Painter moves on to discuss the importance of the year 1920 in Beethoven history (as the 150th anniversary of his birth), remarking that “for those [Germanic critics] of a nationalist orientation or a more conservative taste Beethoven was more relevant” than Mahler during that year.¹¹² With this segment on the Mahler-Feest, however, this monograph still fits into the broader trajectory of Mahler studies during the twenty-first century, when the festival has been cast and analyzed as a significant event in the history of Mahler reception, emerging from the relative obscurity into which it had fallen during the latter half of the twentieth century.

4.3 Conclusions

For various reasons, Gustav Mahler has always been a relatively difficult figure to study. While we have extensive records and documentation from his lifetime, these sources leave many questions unanswered and leave a great deal of ambiguity in relation to other questions, particularly about Mahler’s personal beliefs. For writers and scholars since his death, this circumstance has been both a blessing and a curse, forcing many to rely on speculation in approaching certain topics of research, but also leaving room for personal ideologies and predilections to color ostensibly “objective” studies of Mahler’s life and works. Thus, for Rudolf

¹¹¹ Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations*, 165.

¹¹² Ibid.

Mengelberg, Mahler was the perfect candidate to cast as an explicitly political figure in his *Mahler-Feestboek*, with the composer having left just enough evidence to make it difficult for readers (or later scholars) to absolutely refute many of Mengelberg's claims. As shown in the first half of this chapter, Mengelberg's portrayals of Mahler's religious beliefs, personal philosophies, political views, and attitudes about the arts (both in general and in relation to his own works) generally do have a basis in Mahler's own biography—perhaps passed on to Rudolf by Willem—although he tends not to tell the full story, presenting only evidence that supports his specific beliefs, and leaning into ambiguities to cast Mahler's music as a political tool.

Mengelberg was not the only intellectual during this period to posit Mahler as a quasi-socialist composer of the people whose music could be used to assemble the masses in ways that the music of other composers could not. Perhaps the most well-known writer on music with similar views at this time was Paul Bekker, who wrote the following in his 1918 monograph *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler*:

The criterion of great symphonic art...is the particular type and degree of the power through which this work of art is able to form communities of feeling [*Gefühlsgemeinschaften*], that is, its ability to create out of the chaotic mass of the public a unified, properly individualized being that recognizes itself—in the moment of listening, the experience of art—as an indivisible unity, moved by the same sentiments and striving for the same goals. It is only this *socially formative* [*gesellschaftsbildende*] ability of the artwork which determines its significance and value.¹¹³

For Bekker, as for Mengelberg and others, Beethoven and Mahler were the composers whose symphonies best demonstrated this “socially formative ability.” In his 1921 book on Mahler, he writes that “the capacity of [Mahler's Eighth Symphony] reaches beyond a single nation. As in

¹¹³ Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918), 17; trans. in Matthew Pritchard, “Music and epistemological humility: Looking back to (and forward with) Paul Bekker,” in *Remixing Music Studies: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Cook*, ed. by Ananay Aguilar, Ross Cole, Matthew Pritchard, and Eric Clarke (London: Routledge, 2020), 186.

Beethoven's Ninth, eternal possessions of humanity are glorified here whose recognition is not bound to the sensitivities of national borders"; a few sentences later, he writes that in this same work, Mahler found a way to "enliven and inspire the masses, and...to compel a unification of the community of listeners that had been previously undreamed of."¹¹⁴ Bekker and Mengelberg clearly shared certain mentalities in this regard. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, Mengelberg did have access to Bekker's pre-1920 writings when drafting his *Mahler-Feestboek*, but he wrote in his diary that Bekker's *Die Sinfonie* demonstrated "similar ideas to those that I had in my Crefeld Mahler lecture," indicating that—at least in Mengelberg's own conception—he was not appropriating Bekker's ideas, but rather, that the two men had come to them independently around the same time.¹¹⁵

In Austria, David Josef Bach—a music critic and left-wing political activist—attended a 1922 performance of Mahler's Third Symphony in Vienna (as part of a series of Workers' Symphony Concerts) and published a review in the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, writing that:

Mahler's Third Symphony has also spoken to proletarian listeners; it has quite simply overwhelmed them... In this work and on this night the unification of art and *Volk* has been consummated... Mahler has become the property of the *Volk*.¹¹⁶

A few years later, in another article for a different pro-socialist publication, Bach went on to write that although "Mahler always held himself aloof from political life... Everyone who came

¹¹⁴ Paul Bekker, *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 274; trans. in Kelly Dean Hansen, "Gustav Mahler's Symphonies (*Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien*) by Paul Bekker (1921): A Translation with Commentary" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2012), 630.

¹¹⁵ "Ähnliche Ideen als ich in meinem Crefeld-Mahler-Vortrag ausführte, was für mich natürlich eine sehr spannende Lektüre wurde." Transcribed diary entries of Rudolf Mengelberg, June 10, 1918, collection 3090-01, box 7100, Archief Rudolf Mengelberg, Nederlands Muziek Instituut, The Hague.

¹¹⁶ David Josef Bach, "Zum letzten Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert: Gustav Mahlers Dritte Symphonie," *Arbeiter Zeitung*, June 9, 1922. Trans. in Painter, "The Aesthetics of Mass Culture," 145.

into contact with him knows that his politics were socialist. He showed it publicly.”¹¹⁷ Like Mengelberg, Bach does not hesitate to categorize Mahler’s political views in this very specific way, using ambiguities in the historical record to support his desired conclusions.

The following decade, Ivan Sollertinsky—a Soviet musicologist and close friend of Dmitri Shostakovich—similarly pointed to Mahler as the symphonist whose works would serve as the best example for Soviet composers who sought to write music accessible (and politically useful) to the proletariat. In a 1935 lecture on Soviet symphonism, Sollertinsky stated that Mahler “tried to resolve the problem of the Beethovenian symphony... tried to solve the problem of bringing elements of folklore into the symphony... tried to address the problem of a democratic musical language.”¹¹⁸ Three years earlier, in his monograph on Mahler, Sollertinsky had similarly cast Mahler as a composer whose music embodied socialist realism, writing that:

The so-called ‘banality’ in Mahler’s *melos* is the result of a conscious aim to ‘democratize’ musical language; banality is used as a protest against impressionist refinement, salon artistry and aristocratic individualism... Cherishing the dream of the utopian idea of ‘collective symphonism,’ Mahler was first and foremost oriented towards song.¹¹⁹

Thus, while Mengelberg, Bekker, Bach, and Sollertinsky were all writing in different countries and under differing socio-political circumstances, they all came to strikingly similar conclusions about Mahler’s political views and the manifestations thereof in his works. Beyond this, all four also felt that Mahler’s music could be used in the service of real-world political movements, particularly in relation to assembling a population beyond the intellectual elite; this demonstrates

¹¹⁷ David Josef Bach, “Viktor Adler und Gustav Mahler,” *Kunst und Volk: Mitteilungen des Vereines Sozialdemokratische Kunststelle* 1, no. 10 (November 1926): 6. Translated in *ibid.*, 147.

¹¹⁸ Qtd. and trans. in Pauline Fairclough, “The ‘Perestroika’ of Soviet Symphonism: Shostakovich in 1935” *Music & Letters* 83, no. 2 (May 2002): 265.

¹¹⁹ Ivan Sollertinsky, *Густав Малер [Gustav Mahler]* (Leningrad: State Music Publishers, 1932), 32-33; trans. in Pauline Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo: Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 9-10.

once more the ability of scholars to find in Mahler's works support for various sorts of political ideologies that they sought to promote.¹²⁰

As time has moved forward, however, these 'politicized' interpretations of Mahler's life and works have generally given way to more neutral, scholarly readings thereof.¹²¹ As shown in the second half of this chapter through the case study of the Mahler-Feest, Rudolf Mengelberg's readings of Mahler were actively promoted (at least to some extent) by several scholars during the 1920s, before simply being cast as a single point in the history of Mahler reception in the literature until the 1950s and fading almost entirely from publications on Mahler during the second half of the twentieth century. Several recent dissertations and other sources from the past twenty years have demonstrated a renewed interest in the 1920 Mahler-Feest—and in the types of scholarship that relate to this sort of event—with writers such as Matthew Mugmon pointing to its significance for Mahler's long-range international reception across the twentieth century. It is my hope that the present study will contribute to this ongoing dialogue and encourage further work to be done on the festival and its socio-cultural contexts, which have certainly not yet been exhausted as the subject of scholarly inquiry.

¹²⁰ The view that concert music could be used to assemble the masses was certainly not universally held at this time. As Benjamin Steege has shown in his work on Weimar Germany, theorists such as Heinrich Bessler believed that (in Steege's words) "the more the social milieu of the concert hall became the paradigmatic site for musical listening, the more the experience of music lost its power to form and sustain communal bonds, as the long-standing intimacy between music and its everyday settings—children's play, labor, social dance, worship, and so on—was severed." Benjamin Steege, *An Unnatural Attitude: Phenomenology in Weimar Musical Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 102.

¹²¹ This is not to say that these topics have disappeared entirely from the literature; several scholars have recently considered Mahler's 'music for the masses' using contemporary academic approaches. See, for example, Peter Revers, "Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Max Reinhardt's Concept of *Massenregie*," in *Rethinking Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203-216; and Peter Franklin, "Mahler's Overwhelming Climaxes: The Symphony as Mass Medium," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 15 (2018): 391-404.

Conclusion: The Mahler-Feest as Model

Inside the modern-day Concertgebouw, the main performance hall [*Grote Zaal*] is adorned with a large number of ornamental references to historical musical figures, both from the Netherlands and from abroad. No figure, however, receives more attention here than Gustav Mahler. His name—one of 46 inscribed around the upper perimeter of the hall—is given the most central position on the rear balcony, so that it would be most directly in the line of sight of a performer looking out over the audience from the center of the stage. Unlike any other composer honored here, Mahler also receives a second tribute in this hall—a decorative plaque on one of the side walls, inscribed with the following text: “To the memory of the Mahler-Feest, 6-21 May 1920, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Willem Mengelberg as the Director of the Concertgebouw,” with bronze profiles of both Mahler and Mengelberg on the wall above it.¹ Thus, the 1920 festival—which was itself an act of commemoration—is continuously commemorated here, and has been further commemorated through multiple additional Mahler-centric festivals and other events held in Amsterdam since then, echoing Alexander Rehding’s analysis of the 1845 Beethoven Festival in Bonn as “monumentalizing monumentality” in addition to honoring the composer and performers.²

For the Concertgebouw, the 1920 Mahler-Feest was a major event. Not only did it mark Willem Mengelberg’s twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the ensemble, it also firmly

¹ “Ter herinnering van het Mahlerfeest, 6-21 Mei 1920, bij gelegenheid van het 25-jarig jubileum van Willem Mengelberg als Directeur van het Concertgebouw.” Bronze plaque on the side wall within the *Grote Zaal* of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw.

² Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

established the Concertgebouw—and the Netherlands more generally—as a leading center for the performance and interpretation of Gustav Mahler’s works, not long after the composer had first made a name for himself there during his four visits to Amsterdam. On top of this, however, the festival served an even grander purpose in the realm of diplomacy. By bringing together musicians and other audience members from across the Western world, and by asserting that Mahler’s music in particular would serve to restore a sense of unity among all people after the First World War, the 1920 Mahler-Feest became a political act just as much as a musical one. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, all aspects of the festival were carefully designed with this objective in mind—largely determined by the decisions and actions of Rudolf Mengelberg—and the event was interpreted as an unofficial diplomatic gathering by attendees and journalists alike. Despite its outwardly internationalistic appearance, the venture was also implicitly nationalistic in its aims, serving to support the goals of the Dutch state in becoming a neutral center for global dialogue and mediation in the early decades of the twentieth century, and fitting into my paradigm of post-war internationalism. In this way, the Mahler-Feest became something of a musical analogue of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as the Paris Peace Conference and other diplomatic summits that took place after the war, in a way that other contemporaneous artistic events—such as the original Salzburg Festival—did not.

Despite the relatively straightforward external appearance that a gathering like the 1920 Mahler-Feest may initially have, my analysis throughout this dissertation has demonstrated the underlying complexity of the event. To reuse a phrase from my introduction, I have cast the festival—beyond simply being a commemoration of Mahler’s life and music—as an intersection point between the varying interests of a conductor (Willem Mengelberg), a scholar (Rudolf Mengelberg), and a performance institution (the Amsterdam Concertgebouw), as well as factors

relating to the Dutch political tradition and the global societal effects of World War I. The fact that this single two-week festival can serve as the basis of an entire dissertation is a testament not only to its multifaceted nature, but also to the fact that such events are indeed worthy objects of academic study. Here, I join a growing list of scholars—including Andy Bennett, Gerard Delanty, Liana Giorgi, Maurice Roche, Monica Sassatelli, Jodie Taylor, Ian Woodward, and others—in calling for the study of arts festivals not simply for their content but for their own sake, as reflections and even drivers of culture.

Looking ahead, I propose that the frameworks and approaches used throughout this dissertation be applied more widely to a variety of arts festivals and other similar events, both historically and in the contemporary world. One such event would be the 1918 Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music in Massachusetts, which took place even sooner after the First World War than the Mahler-Feest did, and which the musician and patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge referred to as having created a “musical League of Nations”; the ideas of post-war reconciliation and unification through music promoted by this festival are very similar to those promoted by the relatively contemporaneous Mahler-Feest.³ Much more recently, a two-week visit to China by fourteen members of the Philadelphia Orchestra in the Fall of 2023 has been described optimistically (by the orchestra’s president) as a quasi-diplomatic summit in which “representatives from [the] two countries are speaking through violins, cellos, oboes and clarinets.”⁴ This may well be a situation in which the orchestra is attempting to impose its own

³ See Robin Rausch, “A Musical League of Nations: The 1918 Berkshire Festival of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge,” *In the Muse: Performing Arts at the Library of Congress* (blog), Sept. 19, 2018, <https://blogs.loc.gov/music/2018/09/a-musical-league-of-nations-the-1918-berkshire-festival-of-elizabeth-sprague-coolidge>. Aside from this blog post, the political dimensions of this festival do not appear to have been studied.

⁴ Matías Tarnopolsky, “American Musicians Are Doing Something Profound in Beijing Right Now,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 16, 2023. As Tarnopolsky describes, the visit consisted of “two weeks of concerts mingling American and Chinese musicians, master classes, chamber music performances and panel discussions,” making it something of

rosy lens on a less-than-perfect real-world circumstance, but the persistence of this (rather clichéd) language around music’s diplomatic power reaffirms the continued need for scholars to contextualize and historicize such ideas—even Secretary of State Antony Blinken, at the launch of the U.S. State Department’s Global Music Diplomacy Initiative in September of 2023, referred, without much additional context, to the ability of music “to build a sense of community.”⁵ The examples given here do not even come close to scratching the surface in terms of the sheer number of musical events that take place on a regular basis and promote a huge range of ideas and viewpoints beyond those arising directly from the music itself. It is my hope that this dissertation might serve as both a stimulus and a model for further study of the inherent interconnectedness between such events and the socio-cultural worlds around them.

Simultaneously, the necessary limitations of this study suggest several avenues for further examination of topics more closely related to the 1920 Mahler-Feest itself. Among these topics is the story of Willem Mengelberg, who has not been a particularly significant figure in this dissertation despite his major role in the festival (and his personal friendship with Mahler). While Frits Zwart’s recent biography has provided a great deal of information about this Mengelberg’s musical life, there is still more work to be done in terms of investigating the shift in his mentalities from 1920—when he ostensibly believed in the Mahler-Feest’s messages of unity and brotherhood, and was hailed in the festival’s Manifesto of Foreign Guests as the man who “during the years of war kept alive the spirit of internationalism in music”—to the period

a miniature festival in itself. Another similar event worthy of further study would be the New York Philharmonic’s 2008 trip to Pyongyang, marking the first visit to North Korea by an arts organization from the United States. See Daniel J. Wakin, “North Koreans Welcome Symphonic Diplomacy,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2008.

⁵ Antony J. Blinken, “Remarks at the Launch of the Global Music Diplomacy Initiative,” speech, Washington, D.C., Sept. 23, 2023.

around World War II, when he was denounced and exiled from the Netherlands for his interactions with the Nazi party.⁶ Of course, the career and writings of *Rudolf Mengelberg*—as well as his own musical compositions—are also worthy of further study. Despite an extensive archival collection of his papers in the Nederlands Muziek Instituut in The Hague, this dissertation seems to be the most detailed study of this lesser-known Mengelberg (in either English or Dutch) to date. Another potential avenue for research stemming from this dissertation would be a more in-depth study of the relationships between Mahler’s Austro-German supporters and his Dutch supporters around the time of the festival and in the ensuing years. While I have addressed this topic to some degree throughout this project, I have certainly not completed an exhaustive study of the jealousies, rivalries, and other tensions between the representatives of both national “schools” of Mahler reception here. Finally, this dissertation naturally suggests further study of Mahler-centric festivals since 1920 more broadly; I briefly introduce this topic below.

The Persistent Entity of the Mahler Festival

The 1920 Mahler-Feest in Amsterdam may have been the first event of its kind, but it was certainly not the last; indeed, an almost countless number of Mahler-centric festivals have taken place across the world during the century since then. These have ranged from relatively small festivals with a few concerts of Mahler’s works to vast undertakings on the same scale as the original Mahler-Feest, and even to fully online “festivals” during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, Mahler’s complete works do lend themselves well to a festival setting, given that his

⁶ See Frits Zwart, *Conductor Willem Mengelberg, 1871-1951, Vol. 2: Acclaimed and Accused* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

entire oeuvre can be performed in a relatively small number of concerts, and that the “largeness” of the works means that every concert is something of a main event. The entity of the Mahler festival, however, still seems to pervade the broader realm of Western culture to a greater degree than comparable events organized around the works of other similar composers. In this final section of this dissertation, I briefly survey and comment on the evolution of the Mahler festival since 1920, concluding with some thoughts on the position of such events in our contemporary world and speculating on their potential positions in the future.

After the 1920 Mahler-Feest, the next true Mahler festivals did not take place until the ‘Mahler Renaissance’ around 1960. As discussed above in the Chapter 4, the years between 1920 and 1960 were a relative low period for Mahler’s music—though, of course, his music did not disappear completely from the concert stage (nor from the recording studio) during this time.⁷ Around the centenary of Mahler’s birth, however, events on Mahler were organized in several major cities across the Western world. The Vienna Festival, for example, hosted an exhibition on “Gustav Mahler und seine Zeit” in 1960, as well as a full cycle of his complete works across four weeks in 1967, bringing together the Vienna Philharmonic, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Austrian Radio Orchestra, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.⁸ In the United States, a series of concerts covering most of Mahler’s symphonies was organized by the New York Philharmonic under the joint direction of Leonard Bernstein, Bruno Walter, and Dimitri Mitropoulos in 1960, corresponding roughly with the start

⁷ In the Fall of 1920—only several months after the Amsterdam Mahler-Feest—Oskar Fried led the Vienna Sinfonie-Orchester in a series of eight Mahler concerts in the Musikverein over a period of three weeks, performing all of the symphonies except the Eighth, as well as a selection of the orchestral songs. This was less of a festival than a cycle, however, since there were no supplemental events, and since the audience consisted primarily of local attendees. See Marian van der Meer, “Mahler Cycles since 1920: A Growing Phenomenon,” in *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, ed. Donald Mitchell (Haarlem, Netherlands: TEMA Uitgevers, 1995), I.89-90.

⁸ See *ibid.*, I.90.

of Bernstein's efforts to popularize Mahler's music among the general concertgoing public in America at that time.⁹ In addition to further events in both Vienna and New York, cycles of Mahler's works were given in several other cities in the decades that followed, with the London Symphony Orchestra organizing a festival titled "Mahler, Vienna and the Twentieth Century" (largely under Claudio Abbado) in 1985, and the Parisian Théâtre du Châtelet organizing a festival in 1989 in which each of Mahler's works was performed by a different orchestra (some from outside of France), supplemented by a series of scholarly events on Mahler, including several lectures by Henry-Louis de La Grange.¹⁰ Unlike the 1920 Mahler-Feest, none of the events discussed in this paragraph led to the publication of an extensive program book along the same lines as that written by Rudolf Mengelberg.

The 1920 Mahler-Feest was most closely replicated in May of 1995, when the Concertgebouw hosted another extravagant Mahler festival, which Olaf Post has labeled as "the biggest festival in the history of the Concertgebouw."¹¹ Based on a personal interview with the Concertgebouw's artistic director and the festival's primary organizer, Martijn Sanders, Post writes that the goals of this 1995 festival were as follows:

(1) to celebrate the music of Mahler, (2) to commemorate Mengelberg's 25th anniversary with the Concertgebouw Orchestra which was celebrated 75 years before, and (3) most importantly, to establish the Concertgebouw's status as the Mahler center of the music world.¹²

⁹ See Mieke Wilfing-Albrecht, "Adjusting an Image? The 'Mahler-Renaissance' between Vienna and New York," in *Telling Sounds: Tracing Music History in Digital Media Archives*, eds. Elias Berner and Matej Santi (Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2023), 70-76.

¹⁰ See Van der Meer, 1.90-92.

¹¹ Olaf Post, "'The Way these People Can Just listen!' Inquiries about the Mahler Tradition in the Concertgebouw" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2009), 62.

¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

In effect, these are identical to the musical goals of the original 1920 Mahler-Feest—though, of course, the grander political objectives of the earlier festival were no longer applicable in the same way in 1995.¹³ To accomplish these goals, the Berlin Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic joined the Concertgebouworkest in performing the full cycle of Mahler’s symphonies over a two-week period (primarily under Bernard Haitink). In addition to this, an international symposium and four separate exhibitions on Mahler’s life, works, and milieu were organized in museums in Amsterdam and The Hague, and books were published in both English and Dutch on the Mahler tradition in the Netherlands (to which I return below), adding further framing elements to the festival in a similar way to its predecessor.

Despite costly ticket prices, the festival sold out a year ahead of time, and a supplemental tent was even constructed in the park space across the street from the Concertgebouw to allow for additional patrons to watch the concerts and other events on a large screen at a lower cost. To reach geographically disparate audiences, all of the performances were broadcast on Dutch radio, and four of the concerts were also broadcast on television.¹⁴ As Post notes, newspapers within the Netherlands and abroad generally reported positively on the festival, though some critics found the event to have been overly corporatized, musically exaggerated for the sake of making each piece feel especially grandiose, or focused on the self-aggrandizement of the performers.¹⁵

¹³ At least one concert during the 1995 festival had political ramifications, however: the performance of Mahler’s Second Symphony on May 5th marked exactly 50 years since the liberation of the Netherlands from German occupation. Donald Mitchell, in the introduction to *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, alludes to this in writing that “On a festive occasion one does not want to dwell on the dark side of twentieth-century history. But 1995 is also the 50th anniversary both of the liberation of Auschwitz and of the end of the Second World War in Europe... While celebrating as we do [Mahler’s] global triumph in the 1990s we should also remember; and remember, as we move into the new century, not to forget.” Donald Mitchell, “Introduction” to *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, ix.

¹⁴ See Post, 63-65.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

As with the original Mahler-Feest, the 1995 festival was referred to as “Mahler’s Bayreuth” in several newspaper articles—and by Sanders himself—and was even reportedly labeled as “the Olympic Mahler Games.”¹⁶

Along with the performative elements of the event, the 1995 Mahler Festival also brought about a new wave of scholarship on Mahler, particularly in relation to his time in the Netherlands and the broader Dutch Mahler tradition since that point. As the editors of *Mahler in Amsterdam: van Mengelberg tot Chailly* indicate in the preface to the book, Sanders had approached them in the early 1990s with the idea to curate an exhibition on these topics to accompany the festival, and they were able to secure funding to organize and inventory the extensive archives of the Concertgebouw in the process.¹⁷ The book itself serves as permanent documentation of their exhibition and, together with *Gustav Mahler: The World Listens*, further demonstrates the impact that such a festival can have on the scholarly landscape surrounding a figure like Mahler. This English-language book, some 450 pages in length, served as the closest thing to a “program book” for the 1995 festival, outdoing even Rudolf Mengelberg’s *Mahler-Feestboek* in scope with its compilation of chapters by numerous authors and its incorporation of sources that Mengelberg had not had access to in 1920.¹⁸

In addition to one-time events like the 1995 Mahler Festival, others have been held on an ongoing basis, in some ways paralleling the regularity of the Salzburg and Bayreuth Festivals. The Gustav Mahler Music Weeks in Toblach (Dobbiaco), Italy, for example, have been held

¹⁶ Ibid., 65. Post does not provide a specific attribution for this quote.

¹⁷ Wilhelmina Chr. Pieterse and Johan Giskes, “Ten geleide,” in *Mahler in Amsterdam: van Mengelberg tot Chailly*, ed. Johan Giskes (Bussum, Netherlands: THOTH, 1995), 6.

¹⁸ This 1995 book also includes a large section of advertisements, making it read more similarly to a concert program book than Mengelberg’s *Mahler-Feestboek*, even at the expense of its potential scholarly legitimacy.

annually since 1981, bringing together performers, scholars, and audiences to experience Mahler's own compositional surroundings in the Dolomites, with the events often structured around a particular theme each summer. In the United States, the Colorado MahlerFest (which began in 1988) aims to do something similar, using the mountainous landscape of the Rockies to approximate Mahler's compositional milieu. The mission statement of this MahlerFest even shares a resemblance with Rudolf Mengelberg's ideas about the 1920 Mahler-Feest with its assertion that "MahlerFest is about community... We bond through shared musical experiences as well as through informal social events."¹⁹ At the time of this writing, there is no indication that either of these ongoing festivals will be discontinued in the near future.

For the one-hundredth anniversary of the 1920 Mahler-Feest, the Concertgebouw hoped to hold yet another Mahler festival, this time even grander than the one in 1995. Years before 2020, planning began for an event that would feature the full cycle of Mahler's symphonies performed over ten successive nights by the Concertgebouworkest (under Myhung-Whun Chung), the New York Philharmonic (Jaap van Zweden), the Berlin Philharmonic (Kirill Petrenko), the Vienna Philharmonic (Daniel Barenboim), the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra (Daniel Harding), and the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Iván Fischer). As with the earlier festivals, several daytime concerts of the smaller works were planned, along with an academic symposium focused on the texts of Mahler's songs. On January 22, 2020, the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* published an article in which Erik Voermans wrote that "the Mahler Festival is already a success," with the full-festival passes having sold out in November 2018, and with guests coming "not only from

¹⁹ "About MahlerFest," Colorado MahlerFest, accessed Feb. 22, 2024, <https://mahlerfest.org/about-mahlerfest>.

the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, but also from America, Canada, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.”²⁰

Less than two months after this article was published, however, the plausibility of the 2020 Mahler Festival was seriously called into question as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dutch government announced in early March of that year that any gathering with more than one hundred people would be unlawful, forcing the Concertgebouw to cancel all concerts at that time and to begin planning for the possibility that the festival would not be able to occur. As Simon Reinink, the artistic director of the Concertgebouw, expressed to *Het Parool* that month, “I’m an optimist, but also a realist... I don’t want to think about the month of May without a Mahler Festival. But if that’s the way it is, then that’s the way it is.”²¹

The following month, the festival was officially cancelled, but the Concertgebouw simultaneously announced that a “Mahler Festival Online” would be organized in its place, with video recordings of all of the symphonies (each performed by the Concertgebouworkest) being aired nightly at the same time as the originally scheduled concerts. To complement these recordings, short video documentaries would be made about each symphony (together titled *Mahler’s Universe*), featuring interviews with Marina Mahler, Jessye Norman, and Thomas Hampson, among others; members of the Concertgebouworkest would also discuss specific musical passages from each work.²² In responding to the relatively novel virtual format of the

²⁰ “Het Mahler Festival is nu al een succes... De kopers [van de passe-partouts] kwamen niet alleen uit Nederland, België en Duitsland, maar ook uit Amerika, Canada, Australië, Japan, Taiwan en Hongkong.” Erik Voermans, “Tijdens het derde Mahler Festival kan niemand om Mahler heen,” *Het Parool*, January 22, 2020.

²¹ “Ik ben een optimist, maar ook een realist...Ik wil niet denken aan een meimaand zonder Mahler Festival. Maar als het zo is, dan is het zo.” Simon Reinink, qtd. In Erik Voermans, “Mahler Festival komt in het gedrang door coronacrisis,” *Het Parool*, March 19, 2020.

²² See Erik Voermans, “Mahler Festival gaat door: online met 25 streams,” *Het Parool*, April 30, 2020.

festival, Voermans writes that “what’s nice about the streams on YouTube is the possibility for conversation, which is eagerly employed by the Mahlerians.”²³ After surveying some of this idle chatting, he goes on to write that “there are also more content-based discussions, but what is most striking is the atmosphere of felt unity, of a shared musical love.”²⁴ Thus, just like the festival a century earlier—and even in a fully digital format—the 2020 Mahler Festival Online became a community-building tool just as much as it was a musical experience.

The cancellation of the 2020 Mahler Festival spurred the Concertgebouw to begin planning for another equally grandiose in-person festival of Mahler’s works for May of 2021; this one was to feature the Concertgebouworkest (under Fabio Luisi), the Hong Kong Philharmonic (Jaap van Zweden), the London Symphony Orchestra (Simon Rattle), the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (Jakub Hrůša), the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Iván Fischer), and the Munich Philharmonic (Valery Gergiev).²⁵ From the start, the Concertgebouw was cautious in announcing these plans, with Reinink stating that “the situation resulting from the Corona crisis remains an uncertain one. We need to wait and see if we will be up and running again by next May.”²⁶ At the same time, however, the Concertgebouw pointed to the success of the 1920 Mahler-Feest—one year after the 1919 influenza pandemic—as a sign of hope that the 2021 festival would take place as planned. Despite this hope, the continued effects of the pandemic in

²³ “Het aardige van de streams op YouTube is de chatmogelijkheid, waar door de mahlerianen gretig gebruik van wordt gemaakt.” Erik Voermans, “Bij het Mahler Festival Online mag je gewoon door het concert kletsen,” *Het Parool*, May 14, 2020.

²⁴ “Inhoudelijker discussies zijn er ook, maar wat bovenal ontroert, is de sfeer van gevoeld saamhorigheid, van een gedeelde muziekliefde.” *Ibid.*

²⁵ See “The Royal Concertgebouw presents Mahler Festival 2021,” Het Concertgebouw, accessed Feb. 22, 2024, <https://www.concertgebouw.nl/en/press/the-royal-concertgebouw-presents-mahler-festival-2021>.

²⁶ Qtd. in *ibid.*

2021 meant that this festival ultimately had to be cancelled as well; another Mahler festival planned by the Gewandhausorchester in Leipzig during an overlapping two-week period in May of 2021 was cancelled for the same reason.²⁷

In May of 2023, the Concertgebouw announced new plans for “the third Mahler festival in its history,” to take place in May of 2025, with all of Mahler’s works being performed over a nine-day period by orchestras from three continents; all press releases since then have made explicit reference to the 1920 and 1995 festivals in the Concertgebouw, as well as to Mahler’s personal connections with the city and people of Amsterdam.²⁸ The program, as of the time of this writing, includes performances by the Concertgebouworkest (under Klaus Mäkelä), the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Iván Fischer), the NHK Symphony Orchestra (Fabio Luisi), the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Jaap van Zweden), and the Berlin Philharmonic (Kirill Petrenko and Daniel Barenboim), as well as a series of chamber concerts of Mahler’s smaller works and those of several other composers.²⁹ The complete festival pass—ranging from €1008 to €1950 for the main hall concerts, plus €154 to €235 for the recital hall concerts—sold out extremely quickly online, evidencing the continued demand for such events in the contemporary world.

As this brief survey has shown, the persistent entity of the Mahler-centric festival in the Western world shows no signs of slowing down at this point. The fact that the Orchestra

²⁷ A scaled-back version of the Mahler Festival in Leipzig did eventually take place in May of 2023, with performances of Mahler’s Second and Eighth Symphonies, as well as *Die drei Pintos*, all performed by the Gewandhausorchester under Andris Nelsons and Dmitri Jurowski.

²⁸ “Concertgebouw organising new Mahler Festival in 2025,” Het Concertgebouw, accessed Feb. 22, 2024, <https://mahlerfestival.concertgebouw.nl/en/concertgebouw-hosts-new-mahler-festival-in-2025>.

²⁹ The other composers with works programmed in the recital hall during this festival are Berg, Brahms, Dvořák, Janáček, Korngold, Krenek, Alma Mahler, Pfitzner, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Webern, and Zemlinsky. See <https://mahlerfestival.concertgebouw.nl/en/programme-1> for the full program.

Sinfonica di Milano hosted a three-week Mahler Festival in the Fall of 2023 to celebrate the ensemble’s thirtieth anniversary is a further testament to the continued allure of such gatherings—particularly given that the ensemble has no direct connection to Mahler, and that Mahler visited the city of Milan only briefly during an 1890 tour of Italy with his sister.³⁰ Despite general trends away from the “classics” and toward more contemporary music (and more diverse composers and pieces), Mahler’s works nonetheless remain a constant fixture in concert halls across the world, and are frequently employed—either in single concerts or as part of larger series or festivals—to mark significant occasions and anniversaries.³¹ Based on the traditions established over the past century, it seems safe to say that Mahler’s music will continue to be performed in the contexts of grand festivals for the foreseeable future, and that these festivals will be framed using the same sort of language—that of community-building—that was used by Rudolf Mengelberg and others in Amsterdam in 1920. Thus, when Mahler predicted in 1889 that “in one hundred years, my symphonies will be performed in enormous halls, reaching 20,000 to 30,000 people and becoming large folk festivals,” he was not particularly far from the truth.³²

³⁰ This festival brought together ten Italian orchestras under eight conductors, including Riccardo Chailly and Manfred Honeck. For more, see <https://sinfonicadimilano.org/en/festival-mahler-2023>.

³¹ In New York City alone, for example, the Metropolitan Opera marked its post-COVID return to public performance with Mahler’s Second Symphony in September 2021 (after an 18-month closure), and the New York Philharmonic will perform the same work in June 2024 to mark Jaap van Zweden’s final concerts as Music Director.

³² “Meine Sinfonien wird man in 100 Jahren in Riesenhallen aufführen, die 20000 bis 30000 Menschen fassen und zu großen Volksfesten werden.“ Gustav Mahler, qtd. In Lilli Lehmann, *Mein Weg* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1913), 160.

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Appendix: Schedule of Events during the 1920 Mahler-Feest

Thursday, May 6

- Festival Concert 1:
 - *Das klagende Lied* (soloists: Gertrude Foerstel, Aaltje Noordewier-Reddingius, Sigrid Onegin, Jac. Urlus)
 - *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (soloist: Jac. Urlus)
 - Symphony No. 1

Friday, May 7

- Afternoon Lectures:
 - Richard Specht, “Gustav Mahlers Sieg”
 - Guido Adler, “Gustav Mahlers Persönlichkeit”
 - Alfredo Casella, [no title]

Saturday, May 8

- Festival Concert 2:
 - Symphony No. 2 (soloists: Elise Menagé-Challa, Sigrid Onegin)

Sunday, May 9

- Chamber Concert 1:
 - Max Reger, Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello
 - Sem Dresden, “Wachterlied”
 - Alphons Diepenbrock, “Dämmerung,” “Wandrer’s Nachtlid,” “Den Uil”
 - Francesco Malipiero, *Quatre Preludi Autunnali*
 - Alfredo Casella, *Siciliana e Burlesca*
 - Maurice Ravel, *Sonatine*, “Ronde”
 - Claude Debussy, *l’Isle joyeuse*, “Yver, vous n’este qu’un villain”
 - Paul le Flem, “Le neige”

Monday, May 10

- Festival Concert 3:
 - Symphony No. 3 (soloist: Meta Reidel)

Tuesday, May 11

- Chamber Concert 2:
 - Paul Gilson, *Petit Trio*
 - Cyril Scott, Piano Sonata
 - Willem Pijper, Sonata for Piano and Cello
 - G.H.G. von Brucken Fock, *Liederen voor alt*
 - J. Halvorsen, Passacaglia for Violin and Alto

Wednesday, May 12

- Festival Concert 4:
 - Symphony No. 4 (soloist: Gertrude Foerstel)
 - Symphony No. 5

Thursday, May 13

- Excursion: Afternoon tea on the ship “J.Pz. Coen” in Amsterdam harbor.

Friday, May 14

- Afternoon Lectures:
 - Paul Stefan, “Gustav Mahler und das Theater”
 - Felix Salten, “Wien und die Musik”
- Festival Concert 5:
 - Symphony No. 6
 - *Kindertotenlieder* (soloist: Hans Duhan)

Saturday, May 15

- Excursion: Morning visit to the Rijksmuseum.
- Festival Concert 6:
 - Songs from *Des knaben Wunderhorn* and *Rückert-Lieder* (soloists: Ilona Durigo, Aaltje Noordewier-Reddingius)
 - Symphony No. 7

Sunday, May 16

- Excursion: Afternoon tea at the Haarlem home of Antonie Röell, Queen’s Emissary to the province of Noord-Holland.
- Chamber Concert 3:
 - Ewald Straesser, Sonata for Piano and Violin
 - Jan van Gilse, *Tagore-liederen*
 - Alexander Scriabin, Piano Sonata
 - Julius Röntgen, Trio for Violin, Viola, and Cello
 - Adolf Busch, *Preludium en Passacaglia*

Monday, May 17

- Festival Concert 7:
 - *Das Lied von der Erde* (soloists: Mme. Charles Cahier, Jacques Urlus)

Tuesday, May 18

- Excursion: Morning visit to Asscher diamond cutting firm in Amsterdam.
- Festival Concert 8:
 - Symphony No. 9

Wednesday, May 19

- Excursion: Afternoon boat tour around the waterways of Amsterdam.
- Chamber Concert 4:
 - Carl Nielsen, Sonata for Piano and Violin
 - Artur Schnabel, *Notturmo for Alto*
 - C. Rudolf Mengelberg, Sonata for Piano and Violin
 - Josef Suk, Quartet No. 2

Thursday, May 20

- Chamber Concert 5:
 - Florent Schmitt, Piano Quintet
 - Arnold Schoenberg, *Zwei Lieder*
 - Igor Stravinsky, *La Berceuse du Chat*
 - Modest Mussorgsky, *Hopak*
 - Ernest Chausson, Concerto for Piano, Violin, and String Quartet

Friday, May 21

- Festival Concert 9:
 - Symphony No. 8 (soloists: Gertrude Foerstel, Aaltje Noordewier Reddingius, Mme. Charles Cahier, Ilona Durigo, Jac. Urlus, Jos. Groenen, Thom. Denijs)