

"NOW HIS TIME REALLY SEEMS TO HAVE COME": IDEAS ABOUT MAHLER'S
MUSIC IN LATE IMPERIAL AND FIRST REPUBLIC VIENNA

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In Vienna from about 1918 until the 1930s, contemporaries perceived a high point in the music-historical significance of Mahler’s works, with regard to both the history of compositional style and the social history of music. The ideas and meanings that became attached to Mahler’s works in this milieu are tied inextricably to the city’s political and cultural life. Although the performances of Mahler’s works under the auspices of Vienna’s Social Democrats are sometimes construed today as mere acts of political appropriation, David Josef Bach’s writings suggest that the innovative and controversial aspects of Mahler’s works held social value in line with the ideal of *Arbeiterbildung*. Richard Specht, Arnold Schoenberg, and Theodor Adorno embraced oft-criticized features in Mahler’s music, regarding the composer as a prophetic artist whose compositional style was the epitome of faithful adherence to one’s inner artistic vision, regardless of its popularity. While all three critics addressed the relationship between detail and whole in Mahler’s music, Adorno construed it as an act of subversion. Mahler’s popularity also affected Viennese composers during this time in obvious and subtle ways. The formal structure and thematic construction of Berg’s Chamber Concerto suggest a compositional approach close to what his student Adorno described a few years later regarding Mahler’s music.

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CHAPTER 1

THE VIENNESE AFTERLIFE OF MAHLER'S WORKS: A PRELIMINARY SKETCH

Mahler's music is well liked and often performed today. It is also widely understood that this was not always the case. Central to the current popular understanding of Mahler's music is its rise from a state of underappreciation and neglect. Many people were thoroughly unconvinced of its artistic merit during Mahler's lifetime, raising objections such as that it was derivative, uninventive, and frequently banal. Critics often complained that the music did not achieve what it strove for and that it privileged superficial effects above substance. Many of these accusations were couched in anti-Semitic terms, both explicit and implicit.

Also deeply imbedded in Mahler lore is the idea that he composed his music with an eye toward future audiences and future vindication. Today it is commonly understood that this vindication started in earnest during the years around 1960, when the number of performances and recordings of Mahler's works began to increase and numerous major books on Mahler were published. This renewed interest in Mahler's music can be explained at least partially by the centennial of his birth in 1960 and, in the wake of the occasion, the efforts of those who loved his music—Erwin Ratz, Donald Mitchell, Leonard Bernstein, Henry-Louis de La Grange, Theodor Adorno, and many others. In addition,

important critics and musicians have suggested that Mahler's music struck the ears of audiences at that time in ways that they, by virtue of the time, were prepared to embrace.

Although these arguments help explain the Mahler renaissance that began in the 1960s, they tend to make that renaissance overshadow another crucial moment in the afterlife of Mahler's works. From the later years of World War I until the collapse of the Austrian First Republic, the music-historical significance of this repertory to Vienna's cultural life reached an early peak, with respect to both the history of compositional style and the social history of music. From 1917 to 1931, Mahler's works were performed in Vienna with remarkable and unprecedented frequency. During that time, they accrued a variety of meanings: as international themes for a post-national postwar environment, as prophetic utterances of a persecuted artist, as examples of vindicated musical progress, and as revolutionary art capable of lifting up working-class audiences. These meanings attest to the fact that in this early phase of Mahler reception history—in late Imperial and First Republic Vienna—rather than decades later, these works first came into their own.

1.1 The 1960s and 70s as Mahler's Golden Age

Leonard Bernstein declared in 1967 that the composer's "time has come." Bernstein argued that audiences were able to perceive the true meaning of Mahler's music—its essential conflict—only in the 1960s, after the violent

extremes of human behavior since Mahler's death.¹ "If ever there was a composer of his time," he wrote, "it was Mahler, prophetic only in the sense that he already knew what the world would come to know and admit half a century later." Bernstein sensed that his contemporaries and he were among the first to understand that Mahler's music was essentially about internal conflict and diametric opposition.² "What was this duple vision of Mahler's? A vision of his world, crumbling in corruption beneath its smug surface, fulsome, hypocritical, prosperous, sure of its terrestrial immortality, yet bereft of its faith in spiritual immortality."³ By the late 1960s, historical forces were aligned so that audiences' ears were better attuned to Mahler's message:

Only after we have experienced all this through the smoking ovens of Auschwitz, the frantically bombed jungles of Vietnam, through Hungary, Suez, the Bay of Pigs, the farce-murder in Dallas, the arrogance of South Africa, the Hiss-Chambers travesty, the Trotzkyite purges, Black Power, Red Guards, the Arab encirclement of Israel, the plague of McCarthyism, the Tweedledum armament race—only after all this can we finally listen to Mahler's music and understand that it foretold all.⁴

1. Leonard Bernstein, "Mahler: His Time Has Come," *High Fidelity* 17, no. 9 (September 1967): 51-54.

2. Bernstein's dualistic understanding of Mahler (and how he related personally to it) is an important thread in Christopher Jarrett Page, "Leonard Bernstein and the Resurrection of Gustav Mahler" (PhD Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2000). See pp. 378-381 for Page's discussion of the preliminary drafts for the essay, in which Bernstein sketches out ideas regarding a handful of dichotomies that Mahler is supposed to embody.

3. Bernstein, 52.

4. *Ibid.* The "Arab encirclement of Israel" must refer to the events leading up to the Six-Day War (in June of that year, a few months before this issue was published) and the buildup of troops on its eve.

Bernstein alleged that Mahler's audiences had not perceived the social critique in this music. It was their failure to understand the nature of their own times (something that Bernstein believes Mahler had personally achieved) that prevented them from seeing Mahler's works for what they were:

They heard endless, brutal, maniacal marches—but failed to see the imperial insignia, the Swastika . . . on the uniforms of the marchers. They heard mighty Chorales, overwhelming brass hymns—but failed to see them tottering at an abyss of tonal deterioration. They heard extended, romantic love songs—but failed to understand that these *Liebesträume* were nightmares, as were those mad, degenerate *Ländler*.⁵

Bernstein undoubtedly underestimates the capacity of audiences in previous decades to apprehend the torn, bitter quality he perceived in Mahler's music. Bernstein actually follows a tradition that reaches back well into Mahler's lifetime when he defends the aspects of Mahler's works that distort, evoke, and otherwise frustrate the audience's expectations against accusations of conventional compositional failure rather than progressive artistic victory. Nor was Bernstein a pioneer in the idea that Mahler's music required historical hindsight to be properly understood, that it reflected Mahler's internally conflicted nature, or that Mahler's incorporation of familiar topoi was executed with a strong sense of antipathy, irony, and pessimism.

Bernstein was right, nevertheless, to attribute Mahler's renewed popularity in part to the historical vantage point of the 1960s. The first of several

5. Bernstein, *ibid.*

musicologists to confirm this view was Carl Dahlhaus.⁶ For Dahlhaus, writing in 1972, Mahler's "rätselhafte Popularität" (mysterious popularity) was the most recent illustration of the idea that "for the spirit of an epoch, the newly received is hardly less characteristic than the newly composed."⁷ Mahler's music, Dahlhaus writes, spoke to audiences during the 1960s and early 70s with a new, timely relevance. But unlike Bernstein, who attributes this relevance to the cultural and political perspective of the 1960s, Dahlhaus underscores the compatibility of Mahler's works with factors in the history of composition, making the case for Mahler's contemporary significance for composers such as Ligeti, Kagel, and Berio.

Years later, doubtless with this same argument in mind, Dahlhaus wrote, "it is not unthinkable that the years around 1970 might someday represent the high-water mark in the later history of Mahler's works."⁸ Dahlhaus is referring here to the idea of an historical *kairos* or *point de la perfection* that, when applied to the writing of a history of music, would emphasize the moment at which an

6. Carl Dahlhaus, "Rätselhafte Popularität: Gustav Mahler—Zuflucht vor der Moderne oder der Anfang der Neuen Musik," in Peter Ruzicka, ed., *Mahler—Eine Herausforderung: Ein Symposium*, 5 (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1977). This essay first appeared in *Die Zeit*, August 12, 1972. More recent studies on this topic include Monika Tibbe, "Anmerkungen zur Mahler-Rezeption," in *Mahler—Eine Herausforderung*, 85-100; Peter Ruzicka, "Befragung des Materials: Gustav Mahler aus der Sicht aktueller Kompositionsästhetik," *ibid.*, 101-120; and Thomas Schäfer, *Modellfall Mahler: Kompositorische Rezeption in zeitgenössischer Musik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999).

7. Dahlhaus, "Rätselhafte Popularität," 5: "für den Geist einer Epoche ist das neu Rezipierte kaum weniger bezeichnend als das neu Komponierte." Here, as elsewhere (unless otherwise indicated), the translation is mine.

8. Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 157.

artwork becomes the most vital and meaningful. Among various other examples of such an historical outlook, Dahlhaus cites the importance of Bruckner's symphonies in the 1920s, "Bach's works at various points in the nineteenth century (depending on their genre), Wagner's *Ring* during the heyday of Bayreuth around the turn of the century, and Charles Ives's posthumous oeuvre in the 1960s."⁹ Dahlhaus goes on to underscore the heuristic value of attempting to account for not only how important a work was during such a moment but also why. In the case of Bruckner, for instance,

It should not only be taken as an attempt to turn a particular stage in the interpretation of Bruckner into a dogma and let it stand outside history as an authority from which to pronounce judgment on other periods. Instead it means simply that the insights of the 1920s form a useful vantage point for surveying this historical process [i.e. the reception history of Bruckner's oeuvre] in its entirety and rendering it intelligible.¹⁰

Dahlhaus's "high water mark" metaphor is apt, because the 1960s Mahler boom largely washed away popular memory of Mahler's significance to late Imperial and First Republic Vienna, an historical moment rivaling the later one in its richness of insightful political and critical responses to Mahler.

1.2 Current Scholarship on the Interwar "Mahler Wave"

No one disputes the fact that Mahler's music had early adherents. Still, the scope of Mahler's popularity before World War II was grander than is often

9. Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, *ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 158.

assumed. As Henry-Louis de La Grange recently put it, “Since we often think of Mahler’s ‘time’ as ‘having come’ in the 1960s, it is surprising to learn how frequently his works were given in Europe prior to 1933.”¹¹ La Grange writes that in the years following 1911 and 1912 (when *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony, respectively, were released to much acclaim), Mahler’s music was performed far less frequently and that only in 1920 had Europe “celebrated Mahler’s art in true style.”¹² La Grange goes on to describe in some detail the magnitude of the success of Mahler’s music—indeed, his temporary canonization—in numerous European countries before the National Socialists’ rise to power and Hitler’s conquest of Europe.

As surprising as La Grange’s account might strike many concertgoers and classical music enthusiasts today, it is by no means altogether new to music scholars. In 1977, Kurt Blaukopf identified two short-lived *Mahler-Wellen* (Mahler waves) during the first half of the twentieth century—one beginning with the Munich premiere of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony in 1910 and the other beginning with the many concerts in Vienna around 1920, when the Amsterdam Mahler Festival took place. These moments of popularity were followed by the ultimate *Hinwendung zu Mahler* (shift toward Mahler) in the 1960s that Bernstein

11. Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4, *A New Life Cut Short (1907-1911)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1661. Appendix 3Ad to this book, “A Performance History of Mahler’s Works” (pp. 1657-1669) provides a good, pithy account of Mahler performances from 1911 to 1960.

12. *Ibid.*, 1660.

famously trumpeted.¹³ More recently, Christoph Metzger attempted to capture broadly the entire reception history of Mahler's music. Metzger partitions Mahler performance history into three phases punctuated by World War I (1914-1918) and Nazi Germany (1933-1945), which he designates as two "distinct caesuras in cultural life that also pertain to the drastic reduction in the prevalence of Mahler's compositions."¹⁴ Metzger also provides a broad overview of the more prominent topoi that appeared in reviews and musicological studies of Mahler's works over the course of the twentieth century, for example, references to whether Mahler's music exhibits national character or to whether its composer's will (*Wollen*) is matched by his capability (*Können*).

Other scholars have sought to make finer points about this repertory's cultural significance between World Wars I and II. Karen Painter has attempted to show, among sundry other things, that the sheer power of Mahler's symphonies had a political resonance that increased in the wake of World War I with the continuing rise of mass politics.¹⁵ And two recent studies—one by Gerhard Scheit and Wilhelm Svoboda and the other by Oliver Hilmes—have

13. Kurt Blaukopf, "Hintergründe der Mahler-Renaissance," in *Gustav Mahler: Sinfonie und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch, 16 (Graz: Universal Edition, 1977).

14. Christoph Metzger, *Mahler-Rezeption: Perspektiven der Rezeption Gustav Mahlers*, Taschenbücher zur Musikwissenschaft, no. 136 (Wilhelmshaven, Germany: Heinrichshofen, 2000), 52: "deutliche Zäsuren im kulturellen Leben . . . die auch den drastischen Einbruch der Verbreitung von Mahlers Kompositionen betreffen."

15. See Karen Painter, "The Aesthetics of Mass Culture: Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Its Legacy," in *Mahler and His World*, 127-156 (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2002), and Chapter 4, "Mahler's Progressive Legacy and the Aestheticization of Violence," of her *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900-1945*, 125-166 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

investigated the ways in which Mahler's music weathered anti-Semitic and anti-modern criticism. Scheit and Svoboda discuss the adversaries of Mahler's music in Austria in the decades before the 1960s Mahler boom.¹⁶ The scope of Hilmes's study—which consists of several studies, in contrast to the continuous historical narrative Scheit and Svoboda present—extends to German-speaking Europe from Mahler's lifetime through Hitler's Germany, where Mahler's works were still performed occasionally.¹⁷

My study addresses the interwar "Mahler wave" as well as prewar Mahler reception in a new way, by focusing specifically on Mahler's legacy in Vienna during that time. From 1897 to 1907, the years he directed the Vienna Court Opera, Mahler made a strong impression on numerous people who went on to become important leaders in the city's musical life in the ensuing decades, including the critics Richard Specht and Paul Stefan, the Social Democratic critic-turned-party official David Josef Bach, and the composer Arnold Schoenberg. Their admiration for Mahler's works can be understood as part of a larger European popularity encompassing Germany and the Netherlands; still, the terms in which they understood this repertory has particular implications for Viennese music culture. Although many of the topics that emerge from the sources that I use also appear in writings from Berlin, Munich, and elsewhere,

16. Gerhard Scheit and Wilhelm Svoboda, *Feindbild Gustav Mahler: Zum antisemitische Abwehr der Moderne in Österreich* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2002).

17. Oliver Hilmes, *Im Fadenkreuz: Politische Gustav-Mahler-Rezeption 1919-1945—Eine Studie über den Zusammenhang von Antisemitismus und Kritik an der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

the topics have special resonance when considered within the context of Viennese music culture, with its particular network of institutions and individuals.

1.3 Performing Mahler in Postwar and First Republic Vienna

Although the aforementioned Amsterdam Mahler Festival of 1920 is generally considered a benchmark in the postwar Mahler-boom, there were signs of an upswing in the popularity of Mahler's music several years earlier. Table 1.1 shows the number of times Mahler's nine completed symphonies, the two-movement performing version of the Tenth, *Das Lied von der Erde*, *Kindertotenlieder*, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and *Das klagende Lied* were performed by the Philharmonic and the Symphoniker's forerunner orchestras (i.e. the Concertverein, Tonkünstlerorchester, Sinfonie-Orchester and RAVAG-Orchester) between 1912 (the first full calendar year after Mahler's death) and 1937 (the last full calendar year before Germany annexed Austria).¹⁸ The data is given according to annual total ("T") as well as subtotals for the Philharmoniker ("P"), Symphoniker and forerunner orchestras ("S"), and concerts for which I have not yet determined the performing ensemble ("U"—some or all of these may

18. What follows is a highly simplified chronology of the Symphoniker's forerunner orchestras. The Wiener Concertvereinorchester was founded in 1900. In the first few years after World War I, it merged with the Wiener Tonkünstlerorchester (founded in 1907) to form the Sinfonie-Orchester, although both ensembles continued to perform individually. In 1933, the Sinfonie-Orchester split into two orchestras: the radio orchestra of the RAVAG (Radio Verkehrs AG) and the Wiener Symphoniker. A thorough and historically nuanced treatment of this stage in the history of the Symphoniker is Ernst Kobau, *Die Wiener Symphoniker: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Studie* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1991), 11-71.

Table 1.1. Number of times the symphonies (including the two-movement performing edition of the Tenth), *Das Lied von der Erde*, *Kindertotenlieder*, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and *Das klagende Lied* were performed by the Philharmonic and the Symphoniker's forerunner orchestras each year, 1912-1937.

Year	P	S	U	T	Year	P	S	U	T
1912	1	3	0	4	1925	3	18	0	21
1913	0	3	0	3	1926	4	21	0	25
1914	0	4	0	4	1927	2	6	1	9
1915	4	3	0	7	1928	3	13	0	16
1916	1	4	0	5	1929	3	16	0	19
1917	2	8	0	10	1930	5	10	0	15
1918	5	2	0	7	1931	3	10	0	13
1919	3	20	0	23	1932	1	8	0	9
1920	1	23	0	24	1933	4	4	0	8
1921	0	15	1	16	1934	5	3	0	8
1922	0	15	0	15	1935	4	4	0	8
1923	1	7	3	11	1936	6	4	0	10
1924	3	11	1	15	1937	4	2	0	6

Source: *Wiener Philharmoniker: 1842-1942* (Vienna: n.p., 1942), private correspondence from Ernst Kobau of the Archiv Wiener Symphoniker, and data culled from concert reports and reviews in the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, *Der Tag*, *Die Bühne*, *Die Stunde*, *Musikalische Kurier*, *Neue Freie Presse*, *Neues Wiener Journal*, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Wiener Zeitung*.

have been by visiting orchestras).¹⁹ To supplement the information shown in Table 1.1, I have included in Table 1.2 the annual number of concerts featuring one or more Lieder (not as part of a complete collection) or isolated symphonic movements, performed by the same ensembles in the same period as Table 1.1.

During the war years after 1914, the number of performances of Mahler's works surprisingly increased somewhat, from an annual average of approximately four to approximately seven. And in 1919, the number rose to twenty-three, more than twice what it had been in any year since Mahler's death. With the exception of 1927, the number of larger-scale works performed by Viennese orchestras did not fall into the single digits again until 1932, after which the annual count was ten or fewer through the Anschluss. The years 1919, 1920, 1925, and 1926—with works per year rising above twenty—can be considered peak years.

It is also worth noting that the number of Mahler's works performed annually by the Philharmonic rarely rose above three.²⁰ There were four in 1915, five in 1918, four in 1926, and five in 1930. This trend changed in 1933, of all years: four works were performed in 1933, five in 1934, four in 1935, six in 1936, and four in 1937. And in the few months of 1938 before Hitler stood in the Heldenplatz (this partial year is excluded from the table), the Philharmonic had already performed the Ninth Symphony twice. This, as I discuss more fully below,

19. Note that the annual figures are listed by calendar year, not by concert season.

20. The figures for Philharmonic concerts include subscription concerts, Nicolai concerts, *Außerordentlich* concerts, *Sonstige* concerts, and radio concerts.

Table 1.2: Number of concerts featuring one or more Lieder (not as part of a complete collection) or isolated symphonic movements, performed by the Philharmonic and the Symphoniker's forerunner orchestras each year, 1912-1937.

Year	P	S	U	T	Year	P	S	U	T
1912	0	0	0	0	1925	0	0	0	0
1913	0	2	0	2	1926	0	6	0	6
1914	1	3	0	4	1927	0	3	0	3
1915	0	5	0	5	1928	0	4	0	4
1916	0	4	0	4	1929	1	5	0	6
1917	0	5	0	5	1930	0	9	0	9
1918	0	4	0	4	1931	0	3	0	3
1919	0	2	0	2	1932	0	1	0	1
1920	0	6	0	6	1933	0	1	0	1
1921	0	1	0	1	1934	1	2	0	3
1922	0	1	0	1	1935	0	0	0	0
1923	0	3	0	3	1936	2	0	0	2
1924	0	1	0	1	1937	0	0	0	0

Source: *Wiener Philharmoniker: 1842-1942* (Vienna: n.p., 1942), private correspondence from Ernst Kobau of the Archiv Wiener Symphoniker, and data culled from concert reports and reviews in the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, *Der Tag*, *Die Bühne*, *Die Stunde*, *Musikalische Kurier*, *Neue Freie Presse*, *Neues Wiener Journal*, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Wiener Zeitung*.

seems to have had less to do with the Philharmonic than with the initiative taken by conductor Bruno Walter.

To be sure, the arch in performance frequency between 1912 and 1937 does not necessarily constitute a proportional increase. To argue such a thing would require more data than I currently possess; it would depend, moreover, as much on the relative popularity of other composers to that of Mahler. It is fair, however, to say that the representation of Mahler's music in Viennese concert life grew during these years. The most prominent peaks in the performance history—the first around 1920 and the second around 1925—seem to correlate with the most important events of that history: the Amsterdam Mahler Festival and the Viennese Mahler cycle of 1920, the release of Mahler's Tenth Symphony in 1924, and a second Viennese Mahler cycle in 1925 and 1926.

Many scholars have observed the importance of the year 1920, fifty years after Mahler's birth. That summer, Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg, a friend of Mahler who by this time had long been advocating for his music, chose to celebrate his twenty-fifth year with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw with a concert series in Mahler's memory. The Amsterdam Mahler Festival took place on nine evenings from May 6 to May 21. The Concertgebouw performed all nine completed symphonies in near-chronological order (the Eighth and Ninth were juxtaposed), as well as *Das klagende Lied*, the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the *Kindertotenlieder*, the five Rückert Lieder, and *Das Lied von der Erde*.²¹

21. *Mahler-Feestboek* (Amsterdam: H. van Munster & Zoon, 1920), 5.

The Amsterdam Mahler Festival was well covered by the Viennese press. In anticipation of the festival, there appeared in April a special double issue of *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, the house journal of the Viennese publisher Universal Edition, devoted to Mahler.²² The issue contained articles by Guido Adler, Hans Redlich, Richard Specht, Alfred Roller, and several others on various matters regarding the composer. Also included were anecdotes, letters, and two facsimiles of the manuscripts to Mahler's Tenth Symphony. In the weeks following the festival, articles on the festival by Egon Wellesz and Felix Salten appeared in the *Neue Freie Presse*.²³

Not to be outdone, Vienna had its own set of Mahler concerts months later. Oskar Fried conducted a Mahler cycle in Vienna with the Sinfonie-Orchester from September 24 to October 21. All completed symphonies but the Eighth were performed, as were the *Kindertotenlieder*, the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, some *Wunderhorn* Lieder, and *Das Lied von der Erde*. Fried returned that December to conduct a Sinfonie-Orchester concert with *Das klagende Lied* on the program. With this cycle, the prominence of Mahler's music in Vienna reached an apogee that can be substantiated (as I do below) not only by the numerous feuilletons and essay-reviews about Mahler in the press that fall but also by increasing reflection on the recent Mahler phenomenon itself. Finally,

22. The journal was quite new, having first appeared in November 1919. This was only its tenth issue.

23. Egon Wellesz, "Das Mahler-Fest im Amsterdam," *Neue Freie Presse*, May 31, 1920; Felix Salten, "Wien und die Musik: Vortrag beim Gustav Mahler-Fest in Amsterdam," *Neue Freie Presse*, June 3, 1920.

the signal year of 1920 concluded with a second Mahler-Sonderheft that December, this time from the Viennese arts journal *Moderne Welt* with contributions from Specht, Paul Stefan, Marie Gutheil-Schoder, and others.

In the mid-1920s, after a brief spell of fewer performances, interest in Mahler rebounded with the premiere of the *Adagio* and *Purgatorio* of Mahler's Tenth Symphony on October 12, 1924.²⁴ Coinciding roughly with the release of a facsimile edition of the Tenth Symphony manuscripts, the premiere was executed by the Philharmonic under Franz Schalk. Then, in what helped form another peak in the frequency of Mahler performances, Clemens Krauss led the Wiener Verein Tonkünstlerorchester in a Mahler cycle during the 1925-26 concert season. This cycle, the first complete Mahler cycle in Vienna (as the 1920 cycle had omitted the Eighth), was originally to be conducted entirely by Krauss, but in early April 1926 he became ill and was forced to relinquish the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies, respectively, to Anton Webern and Robert Heger.²⁵ Krauss's cycle also included the *Kindertotenlieder* and the two performable movements of Mahler's Tenth.

The rate of Mahler symphony performances in Vienna overall declined to under ten per year in the early 1930s, although, as mentioned earlier, the number of Philharmonic performances actually increased. This seems largely due to the

24. On the series of events leading to the premiere of the two movements from the Tenth Symphony, see Claudia Maurer-Zenck, "Zur Vorgeschichte der Uraufführung von Mahlers zehnter Symphonie," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 39 (1982): 245-270.

25. "Ein Mahler-Zyklus," *Die Stunde*, September 27, 1925; Paul Stefan, "Kapellmeister Heger—Dirigent im Mahler-Zyklus," *Die Stunde*, April 10, 1926.

advocacy of onetime Mahler protégé Bruno Walter, who conducted all of the Philharmonic subscription performances of Mahler's music between 1934 and 1938 and played a leading role in the Gustav Mahler Commemoration events of April and May 1936 in which the Philharmonic and Symphoniker both participated.²⁶ The Philharmonic performances of the Ninth Symphony on January 15 and 16, 1938 under Bruno Walter—less than two months before the *Wehrmacht* marched across the German-Austrian border—were the last in Austria before World War II.

1.4 Mahler's Vindication Prophecy and Its Earliest Fulfillments

When Bernstein titled his 1967 essay "Mahler: His Time Has Come," he was referring to a quotation that has been misleadingly attributed to the composer for at least nearly a century. Mahler did write these four words, in that order, but they did not stand alone as a single verse of prophecy. Rather, they formed part of a longer sentence that had more to do with Mahler's immediate rivalry with Richard Strauss than with the fear that his works would only be understood after his death. In 1902, Mahler wrote to his future wife, "Rather live in poverty and walk the path of the enlightened than surrender oneself to Mammon, don't you agree? One day people will separate the wheat from the

26. On Mahler's reception in *Ständestaat* Vienna and Walter's role in it, Chapter 6 of Hilmes's book (169-216) is worth reading.

chaff—and when his [Richard Strauss’s] time is passed, my day will come.”²⁷

Herta Blaukopf notes that Mahler was nowhere near having to “eat the bread of poverty” at this point in his career and, moreover, that his tone may have had as much to do with making an impression on Alma—or dealing with jealousy toward Strauss’s success—as it did with his view of Strauss’s artistic merit.²⁸ Yet countless well-meaning individuals have used the partial quotation as an introductory epigram for speeches, essays and program notes that inevitably embrace the reverse prophecy, following it with self-satisfied remarks like “And indeed it has.”²⁹ This semi-spurious quotation was not the sole source for critics’ decades-long search for Mahler’s prophesied moment of recognition. The composer wrote to his wife in 1904, “Would that I could perform my symphonies for the first time fifty years after my death!”³⁰

As Mahler’s surging popularity became increasingly apparent, Viennese critics occasionally evoked the idea of Mahler’s forward-looking—indeed prophetic—understanding of his music’s significance to help explain the trend. The notion of Mahler’s time coming has long encouraged audiences to try to

27. Gustav Mahler to Alma Schindler, 31 January 1902, Semmering, in Gustav Mahler, *Letters to his Wife*, ed. Henry-Louis de La Grange and Günther Weiss, trans. Antony Beaumont (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 100.

28. Herta Blaukopf, “Rivalry and Friendship: An Essay on the Mahler-Strauss Relationship,” in Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss, *Correspondence 1888-1911*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 131.

29. This can be demonstrated with an internet search using the word Mahler and the phrase “My time will come.”

30. Gustav to Alma, 14 October 1904, Cologne, in Mahler, *Letters to his Wife*, 179.

understand his music within their own historical situation. In the years leading out of World War I into the 1920s, people began to remark with unprecedented frequency that in some sense Mahler's compositions were finally being appreciated to the degree they had deserved all along. Even by early 1918, critics were making observations regarding the growing number of concert performances of Mahler's music. Carl Lafite, who attended the Philharmonic performance of Mahler's Fourth Symphony under Mengelberg, thus felt justified in announcing that "support for Gustav Mahler is currently at its zenith in Vienna."³¹ A few months later, at a benefit performance of Mahler's Eighth in the *Hofoper* by the Philharmonic under Franz Schalk, Julius Korngold found it "astonishing how many friends and confidants Mahler had who until now remained carefully hidden."³² Korngold suggested that Mahler's unprecedented standing was a vindication for the animosity that the composer had endured in Vienna: "And is it not a moving atonement for the ingratitude?"³³ And toward the end of 1920—in the wake of the Amsterdam Mahler Festival and in the midst of Vienna's own Mahler cycle—Richard Batka was still surprised at the growing public interest in Mahler's music. Having attended the cycle's initial concert performance of the Second Symphony on September 24, Batka expressed

31. Carl Lafite, "Zweites Mengelberg-Konzert," *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 8, 1918: "Die Gustav Mahler-Pflege steht gegenwärtig in Wien im Zenith."

32. Julius Korngold, "Hofopertheater (Aufführung von Mahlers Achter Symphonie zugunsten des Witwen- und Waisenfonds)," *Neue Freie Presse*, April 9, 1918: "Erstaunlich, wie viel bisher sorgsam verborgen gebliebene Freunde und Vertraute Mahler besessen hat."

33. *Ibid.*: "Und ist es nicht eine ergreifende Sühne des Undankes?"

renewed astonishment at the success of Third Symphony just six days later: “Had someone prophesied ten years ago that such a devout escalation of enthusiasm for Mahler were possible after the Second Symphony, as we experienced it after the Third, they would have been sent off to Steinhof [a Viennese mental institution] on the spot. What seemed outrageous at that time has now become fact.”³⁴

But for many, the events of 1920 seem to have confirmed that Mahler’s music was finally here to stay. Already that April, Rudolf Stephan Hoffmann was ready to declare unequivocally, “There is no longer any doubt: Mahler is the composer of our time.”³⁵ Like other critics, Hoffmann marveled at the growth of Mahler’s audience: “In ten years, the small, ridiculed Mahler clique that existed before has become a vast congregation [*Gemeinde*], the unconscious creed of which could be ‘I am from God and want to return to God.’”³⁶ While Hoffmann acknowledges the merit of the “strictly aesthetic values” of Mahler’s music, he places a great deal of emphasis on its “tremendous ethical, prophetic content.”³⁷

34. Richard Batka, “Mahler-Zyklus III,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 1, 1920: “Wer da vor zehn Jahren prophezeit hätte, daß eine solche andachtsvolle Steigerung des Mahler-Enthusiasmus nach der ‘Zweiten’ möglich sei, wie wir ihn nach der ‘Dritten’ erlebten, den hätte man vom Fleck weg nach Steinhof rekommandiert. Jetzt ist das damals ungeheuerlich Scheinende zur Tatsache geworden.”

35. Rudolf Stephan Hoffmann, “Repräsentative Wiener Mahler-Aufführungen,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 1 (1920): 310: “Es ist kein Zweifel mehr: Mahler ist der Komponist unserer Zeit.”

36. *Ibid.*: “Die kleine verlachte Mahlerclique von einst ist in zehn Jahren eine gewaltige Gemeinde geworden, deren unbewußtes Bekenntnis lauten könnte: ‘Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott.’”

37. *Ibid.*: “nur-ästhetischen Werte,” “ungeheuren ethischen, prophetischen Gehaltes.”

He writes, “Here again, after a long time, music has broadened our outlook into the immeasurable and has made the eternal secrets of final things perceptible in tones that come from the heart and press into the heart; the holy spirit of art has been revealed in an overwhelming incarnation: the *creator spiritus*.”³⁸ At the conclusion of his essay, Hoffmann inserts the quote “Meine Zeit wird kommen” (My time will come) and responds, “*Sie ist da!*” (It is here!)³⁹

Still another reference to Mahler’s “time” “coming” appeared just a few months later, after the Amsterdam Mahler Festival, when Richard Specht, writing for the *Berliner Tagblatt*, observed, “Now his time really seems to have come.”⁴⁰ Specht himself had foreseen seven years earlier in his book that “Seine Zeit wird noch Kommen” (His time will come yet).⁴¹ But now, in contrast to Hoffmann’s unrestrained rejoicing, Specht was ambivalent about what he termed the “Mahler Vogue”—a phenomenon that he perceived to be turning Mahler’s profound art into a passing fashion for the public and a commodity for the concert impresario: “He, the untimely one, became the vogue and, worse still, a ‘business’ for the entrepreneur, a secure venture for all of those who know all about creating

38. Hoffmann, 310: “Nach langer Zeit hat hier die Musik wieder den Blick ins Unermeßliche geweitet, hat die ewigen Geheimnisse der letzten Dinge in Tönen ahnen lassen, die vom Herzen kommen und zum Herzen dringen, hat sich der heilige Geist der Kunst in einer überwältigenden Materialisation enthüllt: der *creator spiritus*.”

39. *Ibid.*, 312, Hoffmann’s emphasis (the last phrase is printed in *Sperrschrift*).

40. Richard Specht, “Die Mahler Mode,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, July 7, 1920: “Nun scheint seine Zeit wirklich gekommen zu sein.”

41. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1913), 44.

demand for the supply of the concert market and, in doing so, make a profit.”⁴²

As much as it thrilled Specht to witness the tremendous applause following performances of the Second, Third, and Eighth Symphonies, the same response after *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony suggested to him “a misconception there or, worse, insincerity, intellectual philistinism, or the lie of a fad.”⁴³ This, Specht makes clear, is not the fate that he wanted for Mahler’s legacy—a matter to which I return in Chapter 3.

Specht was not alone in his ambivalence toward a certain measure of emptiness in Mahler’s popularity at that time. Korngold, writing on Fried’s Mahler cycle that autumn, reflected that “every new public that pursues the name, the sensations, wherever and with whomever they happen, wants its part of Mahler.”⁴⁴ The stylish set, Korngold suggested, was “enticed by the legends, the oddities, the ecstasies, the realism, the garishnesses, the dimensions, the adventures in sound, the upturns to the secrets of God and the afterlife, and even the sudden descents into very mundane melodies.”⁴⁵

42. Specht, “Die Mahler Mode”: “Er, der Unzeitgemäße, ist Mode geworden. Und, was noch schlimmer ist: ein ‘Geschäft’ für die Unternehmer, eine sichere Spekulation für all jene, die sich darauf verstehen, aus dem Angebot auf dem Konzertmarkt eine Nachfrage zu provozieren und ihren Profit dabei zu finden.”

43. Ibid.: “ein Mißverständnis da oder schlimmeres: Unaufrichtigkeit, Bildungsphilisterei oder die Lüge einer Mode.”

44. Korngold, “Musik (Randbemerkungen zum Mahler-Zyklus),” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 2, 1920: “Jenes neue Publikum, das dem Namen nachgeht, den Sensationen, wo und wer immer sie sich abspielen, will sein Teil an Mahler.”

45. Ibid.: “Es locken die Legenden, es locken die Seltsamkeiten, die Ekstasen, die Realismen, die Grellheiten, die Dimensionen, die Klangabenteuer, die Aufschwünge zu den Geheimnissen von Gott und Jenseits und auch das plötzliche Niedersteigen zu sehr irdischen

1.5 Mahler's Congregation

The sense that Mahler's music had become merely fashionable probably made it easier for some critics to remain skeptical of the more optimistic claims regarding Mahler's popularity. This skepticism surely increased in response to the spiritual fervor that marked the way in which his works were often discussed. In discussions of Mahler and his music by partisans and foes alike, various kinds of religious images frequently were invoked: Mahler as priest, saint, or prophet, and his enthusiasts as *Gemeinde*—a term for community often used in the religious sense. Although critics had directed this language toward Mahler while he was alive—with regard to his conducting as well as his composing—the spate of Mahler performances in the late teens and early twenties and the resulting coverage in newspapers and music journals breathed new life into this set of metaphors.

In particular, the Amsterdam Mahler Festival used the figure of the thrice-homeless, now-vindicated Mahler symbolically as its symbol of post-nationalistic European renewal. According to its manifesto, the event was partly about “the common worship of a single genius” as an “homage to the great artist whose superhuman effort and self-sacrifice have made this festival a success,” but it had a broader social significance: “the way is pointed here to the great goal toward which musicians must arrive in the years to come; to rebuild the broken

Melodien.”

bridges between the peoples.”⁴⁶ Scheit and Svoboda have characterized the festival as “die Vergötterung Mahlers” (Mahler’s deification), namely “die Apotheose eines internationalen Gottes nach der Götterdämmerung der Nationen” (the apotheosis of an international god after the twilight of the gods of nations). This internationalized, almost Messianic Mahler ultimately provided considerable fodder for anti-Semitic, German nationalist opponents of the composer’s music.

Just as some critics expressed ambivalence about the fashionable side of Mahler’s popularity, others were repelled by the quasi-religious reverence with which his works were so frequently treated. In 1919, an unacknowledged writer for Max Graf’s *Musikalische Kurier* expressed frustration over a report in the *Wiener Tageszeitung* on a performance of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony. The remark under scrutiny was as follows: “Musicians do not value A minor all too highly. Mahler’s Sixth Symphony has to teach them better. Ever since this symphony, A minor must be loved and revered.”⁴⁷ The *Musikalische Kurier* writer responded, “It is consistent with the intolerant nature of the Mahler church’s adherents that they would really like to have music begin with the works of Gustav Mahler.”⁴⁸

46. C. Rudolf Mengelberg, ed., *Das Mahler-Fest, Amsterdam Mai 1920: Vorträge und Berichte* (Vienna, 1920), 71, cited in English in Scheit and Svoboda, 13-14.

47. “Disharmonisches: Das unbeliebte A-Moll,” *Musikalische Kurier* 1, no. 1 (24 October 1919): 16: “Die Musiker schätzen A-moll nicht allzuhoch. Mahlers sechste Sinfonie muß sie eines besseren belehren. Seit dieser Sinfonie muß man A-moll lieben und verehren.”

48. Ibid.: “Es entspricht dem unduldsamen Wesen der Anhänger der Mahler-Kirche, daß sie am liebsten die Musik mit den Werken Gustav Mahlers beginnen lassen möchten.”

Should those be ashamed “for whom Gustav Mahler was indeed one of the strongest personalities of modern music but not the universal god,” since they already loved Mendelssohn’s “Scottish” Symphony as well as a long list of other important works in A minor?⁴⁹ “Are Handel’s Concerto Grosso in A minor or Bach’s Violin Concerto in A minor perhaps old junk to the orthodox adherents of the Mahler faith?”⁵⁰

Oskar Fried’s Viennese Mahler cycle during fall 1920 was the occasion for much reflection on the meaning of Mahler’s new popularity. In the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, Richard Batka noted the significance of the cycle’s occurrence in Vienna, the city “in which Mahler worked and, despite a determined opposition, is venerated to an increasing degree as musical leader and national saint.”⁵¹

But to some, this level of honor was distasteful. Another critic observed in the *Musikalische Kurier* that “the *Mahlergemeinde*, too, has grown in recent years in Vienna, and the Mahler boom was already busily exploited last year.”⁵² Noting that “Mahler accepted one of the leaders of modern compositional thought [the

49. “Disharmonisches”: “denen Gustav Mahler zwar eine der stärksten Persönlichkeiten der modernen Musik, aber nicht der Universalgott ist. . . ?”

50. Ibid.: “Händels Concerto grosso in A-moll oder Bachs A-moll-Violinkonzert ist den Orthodoxen des Mahlerglaubens vermutlich alter Plunder?”

51. Batka, “Mahler-Zyklus,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 25, 1920: “wo Mahler gewirkt hat und trotz einer verbissenen Opposition in steigendem Maße als musikalischer Führer und Nationalheiliger verehrt wird.”

52. “Oper und Konzert,” *Musikalische Kurier* 2, no. 40 (October 1, 1920): 337: “Die Mahlergemeinde ist in den letzten Jahren auch in Wien gewachsen, und die Mahlerkunjunktur wurde schon im letzten Jahr geschäftlich eifrig ausgenützt.”

writer may mean Schoenberg]”⁵³ and implying a kind of artistic snobbery on the part of Mahler adherents, the writer then proceeds to poke fun at the sanctimony with which Mahler’s music was often hailed: “the Amsterdam Mahler Festival was the canonization of the new saint, preaching *urbi et orbi* [to the city and to the world] about his work, which will wander, large as life, through Vienna in the [Fried] Mahler Cycle, with ceremonial rites and ardent prayers, a test of approval of this intellectual penitent and seeker of God.”⁵⁴

Graf himself adopted the religious metaphor a year later in a tongue-in-cheek disclaimer of the conducting skills of Furtwängler, who “possesses for this music [Mahler’s First Symphony] neither the allure of the Mahler church’s high dignitaries nor the quivering, erratic nerves of the Mahler missionaries and wandering priests.”⁵⁵ Critics often wrote of a *Mahler-Gemeinde* in the sense of a community of Mahler enthusiasts, but it is also clear that in contexts such as the above—especially when a “Mahler church” is mentioned—the sacred sense of *Gemeinde* (i.e. congregation) was the intended meaning of the term.

53. “Oper und Konzert”: “einer der Führer des modernen Gedankens in der Tonkunst ist Mahler anerkannt.”

54. Ibid.: “das Amsterdamer Mahlerfest war die Kanonisation des neuen Heiligen, die Verkündigung *urbi et orbi* seines Werkes, die mit feierlichen Riten und begeisterten Gebeten vollzogene Lobprüfung dieses Büßers des Geistes und Gottsuchers, der im Mahlerzyklus in Lebensgröße durch Wien wandern wird.”

55. Max Graf, “Furtwängler-Konzert,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 6, 1921: “Furtwängler besitzt für diese Musik weder die Hohepriesterallüren der Großwürdenträger der Mahler-Kirche, noch die zuckenden, fahigen Nerven der Mahler-Missionäre und Wanderpriester.”

1.6 Mahler, Conflict, and Struggle

The rhetoric of conflict (*Auseinandersetzung*)—with its references to struggling (*Ring*) with truths—was also commonplace in First Republic-era reviews of Mahler’s music. In a 1931 review titled “Der Mahler-Apostel Walter” (still another instance of religious reference in connection with Mahler), Robert Konta wrote about how difficult the musical language of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony was and how contemporary listeners were able to understand it better than the original audiences. When it premiered in 1903, “its intellectual content, much too complicated, was confronted with the stream of successes that, at the time, apparently still flowed so calmly, widely, and innocuously.”⁵⁶ But in 1931, though the work was no less challenging, the audience was better able to understand it: “it remained the firebrand’s tremendous struggle over the ever-hidden truth and insights. The ardent pursuit of a freedom that none can achieve, the thirst for a reconciling love, the petition of a mercy for all: that is what the listeners perceive now. And that must have been the marvelous success of Mahler’s Fifth yesterday.”⁵⁷

56. Robert Konta, “Der Mahler-Apostel Walter,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 2, 1931: “Ihr viel zu komplizierter geistiger Gehalt stellte sich gegen den damals scheinbar noch so gelassen, breit und ungefährlich fließenden Strom der Ereignisse.”

57. *Ibid.*: “Sie ist das ungeheure Ringen eines Feuergeistes um Wahrheit und Erkenntnisse geblieben, die sich stets verbergen. Das heiße Umwerben einer Freiheit, die keiner erreichen kann, das Geizen nach einer versöhnenden Liebe, das Bitten um ein Allerbarmen. Das spüren jetzt die Hörer. Und das muß wohl der gestrige ungeheure Erfolg der Mahlerischen Fünften gewesen sein.”

As early as 1919, some critics had even come to expect these elements to be emphasized in interpretations of Mahler's symphonies:

Oskar Fried, the Berlin conductor, understands how to work out this score [of Mahler's Ninth] with great clarity of contour. They become transparent under his illuminating baton. With regard to intelligence, everything was there, but the touches of mood and feeling lacked full, convincing vividness. But there is a lot to this aspect here, especially for those who perceive here Mahler's testament, as it were, his last conflict with the eternal problem of death and life. Now the titanic spirit that endeavored with constant striving takes its rest from struggle and sorrow in the quiet cemetery! This truly human, touching element of the work came less to fruition this time.⁵⁸

This disappointed review from Richard Batka is one of numerous others concerning Mahler performances in which the conductor failed to bring out sufficiently the *Ringen* and *Auseinandersetzung* in the score.

In early 1921, the *Neues Wiener Journal* delivered to Viennese readers a rant by Berlin critic Hans Tessmer.⁵⁹ Tessmer blamed the rise of empty-headed Mahler fans on a rampant disease called "Mahleria" (a pun on "malaria") that robbed its victims of the capacity to think clearly about and properly evaluate Mahler's music. Those who were infected, such as Hermann Scherchen and Paul Bekker, resorted to the use of empty catchphrases like "Weltanschauungs-

58. Batka, "Mahlers 'Neunte,'" *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 24, 1919: "Oskar Fried, der Berliner Dirigent, versteht es, diese Partitur mit großer Klarheit der Kontur herauszuarbeiten. Sie wird transparent unter seinem erhellenden Taktstock. Nach der Seite der Intelligenz war alles da, wogegen die Note der Stimmung und Empfindung weniger zu vollen, überzeugenden Plastik gelangte. An diesem Moment liegt aber hier sehr viel, gerade für den, der hier gleichsam Mahlers Testament, seine letzte Auseinandersetzung mit dem ewigen Problem von Tod und Leben vernimmt. Nun ruht der immer strebend bemühte Titanengeist vom Ringen und Leiden aus auf dem stillen Friedhof! Dieses echt Menschliche, Rührende des Werkes kann diesmal weniger zur Geltung."

59. Hans Tessmer, "Mahleria: ein haltloser Angriff," *Neues Wiener Journal*, February 9, 1921.

musik” and “Ringen” that neither distinguishes Mahler as special nor—in Tessmer’s mind—actually describes Mahler’s music.⁶⁰ To be fair, it is clear that the praise heaped onto Mahler by increasingly numerous supporters was puzzling and annoying to the unconverted, and it was not always immediately obvious why Mahler’s struggles or worldview were of such heightened importance. Critics in favor of Mahler’s works nevertheless used these ideas in formulating what these works meant.

1.7 Overview of the Remaining Chapters

Also prevalent in Viennese reception of Mahler’s music was the idea of its connection with the masses. Although rhetoric of this kind was applied on various occasions in Vienna and elsewhere, it is especially concentrated around the Workers’ Symphony Concert performances of Mahler’s symphonies in the Austrian First Republic and in the writings of David Josef Bach, who founded the concert series to bring musical masterpieces to the Viennese working class. During his tenure as director of the Social Democratic Kunststelle, Bach programmed one of Mahler’s works almost every year on the Workers’ Symphony Concerts. Although it is commonly accepted that Bach embraced the mass political value of the powerful and the overwhelming in Mahler’s grandest works, I demonstrate in Chapter Two that he was every bit as interested in strictly musical considerations. Bach’s reviews and essays from the 1900s and 1910s

60. Tessmer.

reveal his view that, to an audience with a basic grasp of the standard orchestral repertory, Mahler's music was easily comprehensible and empowering in its various revolutionary innovations (such as dramatically gestured formal features, or the unsettling juxtaposition of stylistically disparate passages). Thus the inherent social value that Bach perceived in Mahler's works earned them a place in his *Arbeiterbildung* program.

David Josef Bach and several people in his political circle—including Workers' Symphony Concert conductors Alexander Zemlinsky, Erwin Stein, and Anton Webern, as well as the music critic and composer Paul A. Pisk—were personally connected to Arnold Schoenberg, another musician who played a major role in shaping Mahler's Viennese legacy.⁶¹ As I discuss in Chapter Three, Schoenberg and Richard Specht both promoted an influential pair of ideas in their writings on the composer: Mahler as Wagneresque artist who spurns popular opinion and commercial interests in favor of his true, inner art, and his works as scripture-like records that communicate that truth. Critics such as Julius Korngold and Joseph Marx showed ambivalence toward the appropriation of Mahler's legacy by the Viennese avant-garde, arguing instead that Mahler's

61. Anton Webern's connections with Bach and involvement in Viennese socialism have long been topics of scholarly interest. See Linde Dietz, "Anton Webern als Leiter der Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzerte und des Arbeiter-Singvereins," in *Almanach der Wiener Festwochen 1969*, ed. Kurt Blaukopf, 105-108 (Vienna: Verlag Jugend und Volk, 1969), Werner Jank, "'Wenn schon, dann bitte Genosse von Webern!' Zu den Beziehungen zwischen IGNM-Österreich und Arbeitermusikbewegung in der Ersten Republik," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 36, no. 2 (Feb. 1981): 73-82, Christopher Hailey, "Webern's Letters to David Josef Bach," *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung* 9 (Mar. 1996): 35-40, Hartmut Krones, "Anton Webern, die 'Wiener Schule' und die Arbeiterkultur," in *Anton Webern: Persönlichkeit zwischen Kunst und Politik*, ed. Krones, 51-85 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), and Julian Johnson, "Anton Webern, the Social Democratic Kunststelle and Musical Modernism," *Austrian Studies* 14 (2006): 197-213.

music was best understood in conventional terms and could be counted as part of the avant-garde's aesthetic heritage no more convincingly than could the music of Bach and Brahms. Of course, Schoenberg is even better known for having claimed these composers as part of his compositional lineage.⁶² But a young Theodor Adorno—who briefly lived in Vienna during the mid-twenties and studied composition with Alban Berg—was profoundly attracted to the music of Schoenberg and Mahler alike, and he, too, embraced the challenging aspects of Mahler's compositional language as manifestations of the composer's artistic independence, using the idea of truth in Mahler's works as the basis for his reading of them as social critique.

Numerous Viennese composers, many of them in Schoenberg's circle, wrote music that strongly suggests Mahler's influence. In Chapter Four, I study the ways in which discussions of and approaches to musical composition in interwar Vienna exhibit Mahler's composition-historical significance for that era. In particular, I address Alban Berg's Chamber Concerto, which, in its formal structure and thematic construction, manifests the very principles that Berg, Schoenberg, and Adorno value in Mahler's works. Just as Dahlhaus, Schäfer and others have emphasized the central role of Mahler's works in the history of composition in the 1960s and 70s, I show in this chapter that it is equally useful

62. See, for example, Arnold Schoenberg, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea" and "Brahms the Progressive," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Dika Newlin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 37-51 and 52-201.

to understand the importance of Mahler's works in late Imperial and First Republic Vienna.

1.8 Conclusion

Unfortunately, much of what earlier audiences valued in Mahler's works has slipped away from popular attention, replaced by aspects deemed more relevant to the present. In the meantime, the historical currents of the late twentieth century have shaped the socio-cultural role of Mahler's compositions to suit the needs of a music culture some hundred years later. Mahler's works had living, culturally vital meaning not just in his own time but in this interwar Viennese milieu as well. The landscape of early Mahler performance in Vienna during this time was much richer than Bernstein construed, indeed rich enough to merit describing the years from Mahler's death until the Anschluss—above all, the 1920s—as the time when Mahler's time first arrived, so to speak, in the old Imperial city. His works became so deeply imbedded in Viennese music culture that inquiry into their performance inevitably uncovers the historical residue of topics of established significance: Red Vienna, the Schoenberg-led Viennese avant-garde, and the very music of the composers who revered Mahler.

CHAPTER 2

MAHLER TO THE PEOPLE:

DAVID JOSEF BACH'S IDEA OF MAHLER AS REVOLUTIONARY

Among the many Viennese concertgoers who converged after World War I into the *Mahlergemeinde*, some of the most enthusiastic were members of the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs* (Austrian Social Democratic Workers' Party). In the party's periodicals, reviews of performances Mahler's music were usually positive and were sometimes supplemented with anecdotes casting the composer as sympathetic to socialism.⁶³ During the period of the Austrian First Republic when the SDAPÖ controlled Vienna (1919-1934), Mahler's works were performed almost annually as part of Vienna's Workers' Symphony Concerts.⁶⁴ And above all, David Josef Bach—an instrumental figure in the development of the party's arts programs and founder of the Workers' Symphony Concerts—cited Mahler's Third Symphony as an inspiration for the concert series. Upon the series' premiere of the Third Symphony in 1922, Bach

63. On at least three occasions, party publications retold an anecdote in which Mahler reports giddily about having experienced a May Day workers' parade. See David Josef Bach, "Victor Adler und Gustav Mahler," *Kunst und Volk* 1, no. 10 (November 1926): 6; Bach, "Tagesneuigkeiten: Victor Adler und Gustav Mahler," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 11, 1926; "Eine Mahler-Anekdote," *Kunst und Volk* 3, no. 3 (November 1928): 65.

64. The Austrian First Republic itself is variously said to end with the suspension of Parliament by Engelbert Dollfuß (1933), the so-called Austrian Civil War and subsequent banning of the SDAPÖ (1934), the beginning of the *Ständestaat* (also in 1934), and the Anschluss (1938).

proclaimed that the piece “now has become the property of the people.”⁶⁵ He later characterized the same event as “the triumph of the workers who conquered this work.”⁶⁶ Bach was also thrilled to bring Mahler’s other symphonies to the concert series during the 1920s, writing in 1926 that

had Gustav Mahler been able to experience his works . . . acclaimed by a working-class public, it would have been a great satisfaction for him, a compensation for many sorrows. He did not doubt that it would come to this, but as long as he lived, we were not yet ready. . . . Even the artwork that Mahler’s oeuvre represents can be conquered only gradually.⁶⁷

In the years that followed, Bach introduced most of Mahler’s other symphonies to the series.

The appeal of Mahler’s works for those espousing the concept of *Arbeiterbildung*—the attempts to better the working class through cultural education—is all too often overlooked or underestimated. The reduction of discrepancies in levels of education and cultural literacy was a key component of Viennese socialists’ broader effort to address socioeconomic inequality. Many Austromarxists believed that in lacking access to the grand European musical tradition, the workers were denied not merely property or a mark of status but in

65. David Josef Bach, “Erinnerungen (Zum letzten Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert: Gustav Mahlers Dritte Symphonie),” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, June 9, 1922: “Um so sichtbarer ist es geworden, daß Mahler keine Gemeinde mehr braucht, nun er Besitz des Volkes geworden ist.”

66. Bach, “Tagesneuigkeiten”: “den Triumph der Arbeiter, die dieses Werk erobert hatten.”

67. Bach, “Gustav Mahlers Zehnte Symphonie vor den Arbeitern. Das nächste Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, February 7, 1926: “Wenn Gustav Mahler es hätte noch erleben können, daß seine Werke . . . von einem Arbeiterpublikum bejubelt werden, es wäre ihm eine große Genugung, eine Entschädigung für viele Leiden gewesen. Er zweifelte nicht daran, daß es so kommen werde; aber solange er lebte, waren wir noch nicht reif. . . . Auch dieses Stück Kunst, das Mahlers Lebenswerk bedeutet, kann erst allmählich erobert werden.”

fact something that uplifted listeners emotionally and spiritually and gave them access to some of the farthest reaches of human experience. Party institutions such as the Workers' Symphony Concerts, numerous workers' performing ensembles, the Social Democratic Kunststelle, arts periodicals (e.g. *Kunst und Volk* and *Der Strom*), and the arts coverage in the daily *Arbeiter-Zeitung* all promoted the performing arts as a means of reducing class distinctions and giving workers access to the spiritual elevation believed to be inherently possible from experiencing art.

To David Josef Bach, the leading figure in Viennese socialist *Kunstpflge* of the early twentieth century, it was above all a set of specific edifying qualities that made Mahler's music so well suited to the party's arts programs. Bach's reviews of prewar performances of Mahler's music for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, his most detailed writings on the subject, share with a number of his other essays a preoccupation with art that shows revolutionary originality while at the same time possessing the capacity to be enjoyed by all audiences. In this chapter, I demonstrate that Bach's attraction to Mahler's music had a much more thoughtful and nuanced basis than is currently acknowledged.

2.1 David Josef Bach's Rise to Musical Leadership

Workers' arts programs flourished in the first few decades of the twentieth century, during which time David Josef Bach quickly became the most influential figure in Austromarxist arts policy. As Edward Timms notes in his recent second

volume on Karl Kraus's Vienna, Bach was "a gifted organizer who has rarely received the credit he deserves, either in studies of Kraus or in general histories of Red Vienna."⁶⁸ Bach lived an active life as music critic, concert organizer, a disciple of Austromarxist thinkers such as Pernerstorfer and Victor Adler, and—eventually—party arts policy director. This placed him in a uniquely advantageous position. With experience beginning in 1904 as music critic for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and many other periodicals and as founder of the Workers' Symphony Concerts in 1905 (together with Ferdinand Löwe and the Concertvereinorchester), Bach was able to develop and act upon his ideas about the relationship between a musical work's properties and its social value, up until and beyond his appointment as director of the Kunststelle in 1919.

Born in 1874 to a Galician Jewish family in Lemberg and raised in Vienna, Bach became a lover of music and left-wing politics at a young age. During his years in a *Gymnasium* during the mid-1880s, Bach was associated with a group of students interested in socialist ideas. Among these students were Karl Lafite—later music critic for the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* (more on him in the following chapter)—and writer-publisher Fritz Blei.⁶⁹ The group eventually made the acquaintance of social democrats August Bebel (a German) and Victor Adler.

68. Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: The Post-War Crisis and the Rise of the Swastika* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 261. Timms singles out Helmut Gruber's *Red Vienna* as one of the existing general histories he has in mind (see note 80 below).

69. Jonathan Koehler, "'Soul Is But Harmony': David Josef Bach and the Workers' Symphony Concert Association, 1905-1918," *Austrian History Yearbook* 39 (2008): 71-72.

Bach's involvement in the SDAPÖ grew from that point on.⁷⁰

By the time Bach set out to establish the Workers' Symphony Concerts in 1905, he had been active as a journalist since 1900 and as a music critic since 1904.⁷¹ In the meantime he wrote to Adler that he wanted to contribute more to the workers' movement by venturing beyond journalism: "For the worker today, music criticism, a dubious undertaking in and of itself, consists of empty words. The worker can be brought up on music, not through observations but rather through the actuality of art. . . . The art monopoly must end. It is possible to begin this work with music."⁷² The picture emerges of a man who wanted to make a difference but believed that he was on the wrong track. Adler allowed Bach to proceed with his project on an experimental basis, despite initial skepticism on the part of many fellow party members.⁷³ The effort was successful enough for Bach to continue with the series for almost thirty more years, until the SDAPÖ was banned in 1934 at the end of the so-called Austrian Civil War.

Another formative experience for Bach in 1904 was the Viennese

70. Koehler, 72. See Hugo Schulz, "Aus den Flegeljahren," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, January 1, 1925.

71. Henriette Kotlan-Werner, *Kunst und Volk: David Josef Bach 1874-1947*, Materialien zur Arbeiterbewegung 6 (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1977), 17-19.

72. Bach, "Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Arbeiter-Sinfonie-Konzert," *Kunst und Volk* 4, no. 2 (October 1929): 41: "Musikkritik, an sich ein zweifelhaftes Unterfangen, ist heute für den Arbeiter leeres Wort. Nicht durch Betrachtungen, sondern durch die Tatsache der Kunst kann der Arbeiter an die Musik herangebracht werden. . . . Das Kunstmonopol muß ein Ende haben. Es ist möglich, diese Arbeit mit der Musik zu beginnen."

73. Karl Seitz, who later became the mayor of Vienna, was such a skeptic, as he later recounted in an essay on the Workers' Symphony Concerts. See Seitz, "Das Erbe der Musik," *Kunst und Volk* 3, no. 2 (October 1928): 1-3.

premiere of Mahler's Third Symphony that December. As was typical for Mahler's compositions, the premiere received a substantial number of negative reviews—some of them rife with anti-Semitism—as well as several positive and mixed ones. Among the favorable responses was a lengthy, enthusiastic review in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* by the thirty-year-old fledgling critic Bach, for whom, by all accounts, this was a first encounter with Mahler's music.⁷⁴ In several essays he wrote during the 1920s, Bach looked back on this concert as a seminal moment in his nascent role as bringer of the arts to the working class.

While orchestral music (including symphonies, opera overtures, concerti, and even programmatic works) was central to the Workers' Symphony Concert repertory, the series ultimately made available many types of music for other media to the workers who attended.⁷⁵ In addition to symphonies, audiences also heard chamber music, Lieder, choral music, melodramas, and recitations. A few concerts even featured waltzes and jazz. The series included works as old as Isaac's "Innsbruck, ich muß dich lassen" and as cutting-edge as Alban Berg's *Der Wein*.⁷⁶

74. Bach, "Mahlers Dritte Symphonie," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, December 20, 1904. I address this review in more detail later in this chapter.

75. For an exhaustive list of the Workers' Symphony Concerts and their programs, see Johann Wilhelm Seidl, *Musik und Austromarxismus: Zur Musikrezeption der österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung im späten Kaiserreich und in der Ersten Republik*, Wiener musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge 17 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 177-223.

76. The Worker's Symphony Concert performance of Berg's *Der Wein* was produced in association with the IGMN; see Hartmut Krones, "Anton Webern, die 'Wiener Schule' und die Arbeiterkultur," in *Anton Webern: Persönlichkeit zwischen Kunst und Politik*, ed. Krones, 71-72 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999).

Although Bach was enthusiastic about Mahler's music during the early 1900s, none of the works appeared on the Workers' Symphony Concerts until 1913 (three *Wunderhorn* Lieder), and no symphonies appeared until 1919. Bach's writings on the workers' arts programs in general show that he believed in a graduated approach to workers' concert programming, one that acquainted audiences with classic forms and genre conventions first before progressing to more difficult music. He wrote in the 1922 article cited above, for example, that "it took eighteen years until we came to Mahler's Third. In the meantime, the workers were brought up on the greatest masterpieces of music, on all of the classical art, of which we hardly missed even a single characteristic work."⁷⁷ Beginning in 1919 with the Second Symphony, Mahler's works were programmed frequently in the Workers' Symphony Concerts. Starting then, his music appeared on a program nearly every season until 1932—far more frequently than the Vienna Philharmonic performed it during the same years.

It makes sense that in 1919 Bach would introduce Mahler's symphonies to the Workers' Symphony Concerts, for that year marked a new phase in Bach's career in other ways, too. It was then that the Social Democrats came to power, and Bach was appointed to head the newly formed Social Democratic Kunststelle, which provided affordable tickets to arts events in the city. Thus Bach's activities acquired a much higher profile. Moreover, the Kunststelle had

77. Bach, "Erinnerungen": "Immerhin, es hat achtzehn Jahre gedauert, bis wir zu Mahlers *Dritter* kamen. Dazwischen liegt die Erziehung der Arbeiterschaft zu den größten Meisterwerken der Musik, zu der gesamten klassischen Kunst, aus der uns kaum noch das eine oder das andere bezeichnende Werk fehlt."

authority over the Workers' Symphony Concerts, which, beginning with the 1919/20 season, became more frequent after the lull of World War I, ultimately to surpass the number of concerts per year before the war. There was an early apogee in interest in Mahler's music during the years immediately following World War I, crowned by Mengelberg's 1920 Mahler festival in Amsterdam and, a few months later, Vienna's first Mahler cycle performed by the Symphonie-Orchester under Oskar Fried.

2.2 Bach, Mahler, and Mass Politics

Mahler's Eighth Symphony was performed in the two-hundredth Workers' Symphony Concert in 1926. Joining the usual group of professional musicians were several workers' ensembles: the Singverein der Kunststelle, the Freie Typographia, and the children's choirs of the Freien Schule-Kinderfreunde II and the Neumayergasse Bürgerschule.⁷⁸ On the day of the premiere, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* printed these comments:

The bold risk of marrying the highest, most sensitive vision of art, the greatest symphonic music, until now the exclusive property of the bourgeoisie, to the true people, to the working class—it worked from the day it was undertaken. And as intimate as the alliance between art and the workers now has become, for this today's concert is a symbol: Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony before the workers, sung by workers' choirs and workers' children's choirs. . . . In [the Workers' Symphony Concerts], the cultural ascent of the working class is mirrored brilliantly. . . . To the extent that workers' movement becomes bigger and more powerful, the worker becomes economically freer and culturally more developed, and to

78. Seidl, 158. For a well-researched discussion of the Freie Typographia, please see Manfred Permoser, "Anton Webern und die 'Freie Typographia,'" in *Anton Webern*, 95-103.

the same extent, the number of Workers' Symphony Concerts rises. The social yield of the revolution also became a cultural yield.⁷⁹

Bach embraced the metaphorical value of performances such as this. The large number of performers, the inclusion of working-class choirs, the overwhelmingly powerful nature of the music, and the sheer act of coordinating a performance on such a grand scale were symbolic not just of the social ascent of the working class but also of the spiritual and physical power of the workers' movement in general. In the Workers' Symphony Concerts, working-class ensembles often contributed to performances of choral-orchestral works of the standard repertory (e.g. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony) as well as newly composed ones (for example, Delius's *Mass of Life* or Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*). On these occasions, Bach and other Social Democratic music critics took every opportunity to underscore the metaphorical significance of such performances to the workers' movement in general.

The symbolic power of combined forces in Bach's description may bring to mind other Social Democratic uses of mass gatherings. Several scholars have written about the use of symbolically large numbers of people to promote the

79. *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, April 18, 1926, cited in Seidl, 157-158: "Die kühne Wagnis, die höchste, empfindsamste Erscheinung der Kunst, die große symphonische Musik, bisher Alleingut der Bourgeoisie, mit dem wahren Volke, mit der Arbeiterklasse, zu vermählen, es gelang an dem Tage, da es unternommen ward. Und wie innig das Bündnis zwischen Kunst und Arbeiterschaft nun geworden ist, dafür ist das heutige Konzert Symbol: Gustav Mahlers Achte Symphonie vor den Arbeitern, vor Arbeiter- und Arbeiterkinderchören gesungen. . . . Den kulturellen Aufstieg der Arbeiterklasse spiegeln sie glanzvoll wieder. . . . In dem Maße, als die Arbeiterbewegung größer, mächtiger, der Arbeiter wirtschaftlich freier, kulturell entwickelter wird, in diesem Maße schwillt die Zahl der Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzerte an. Die soziale Ernte der Revolution wurde auch zu einer kulturellen Ernte."

party, such as workers' *Sprechchöre* and mass athletic demonstrations.⁸⁰

Occasionally, Bach's language suggests that the Workers' Symphony Concerts, too, were a type of mass performance intended to galvanize the attending crowds with stirring, collective experiences. Consider, for example, Bach's frequent references to the 1904 Viennese premiere of Mahler's Third Symphony, which he heard with Victor Adler, as a key moment in the conception of a workers' concert series. Years later, when the work was performed on two Workers' Symphony Concerts in May 1922, Bach wrote in glowing terms about the significance of making this and other Mahler symphonies accessible to the workers:

Today, it may well be said that Mahler's Third Symphony has also spoken to proletarian listeners, has simply overpowered them. Had Mahler experienced this! In this work, on this evening, the union of art and people was achieved. Eighteen years ago . . . there existed the burning will to defend the entire people's right to art. . . . The possibility of acting on this belief in the unity of art and people was given a few months later, with [Victor] Adler's help, in the Workers' Symphony Concerts.⁸¹

In a 1926 retrospective article on the connection between Victor Adler and

80. "Sprechchor" refers most basically either to an ensemble chanting a text simultaneously in a speaking voice or a text meant to be delivered in this way. This performing art was most popular in German-speaking Europe between roughly 1919 and 1945, especially in conjunction with politically organized mass festivals (see Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture 1919-1934* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 109, regarding the Kunststelle's efforts). Composers such as Wladimir Vogel and Max Brand incorporated the *Sprechchor* into musical compositions. The *Sprechchor* is featured in the famous 1935 documentary film *Triumph des Willens*.

81. Bach, "Erinnerungen": "Wohl aber darf man heute davon sprechen, da nun die *Dritte* Symphonie Mahlers auch zu proletarischen Hörern gesprochen, sie schlechthin überwältigt hat. Wen Mahler dies erlebt hätte! . . . an diesem Werk ist an diesem Abend die Vereinigung von Kunst und Volk vollzogen worden. Vor achtzehn Jahren . . . entstand der brennende Wille, das Recht der Kunst auf das Volksganze . . . zu verfechten. . . . Die Möglichkeit, diese Überzeugung von der Einheit Kunst-Volk auswirken zu lassen, die war mit Hilfe Adlers einige Monate später gegeben mit den Arbeiter-Sinfoniekonzerten."

Mahler, Bach described in further detail how the performance of Mahler's Third in 1904 precipitated the Workers' Symphony Concerts:

Once, some twenty years ago, [Adler] and I visited the dress rehearsal for the premiere of Gustav Mahler's Third Symphony. He was seized, ravished, inspired. On the way home he said to me, after many deep words on the music we had just heard: "We must bring it to them, too." We did bring it to them, three years ago [*sic*], as the Third Symphony was performed for the first time in a Workers' Symphony Concert.⁸²

In these passages, Bach shows an interest in framing the concert experience in the broader terms of the workers' movement. From one perspective, however, he does so in broad strokes. On the one hand, much goes unexplained. Bach does not state exactly why Mahler's symphonies—above all, the Third—are so worthy of his accolades. He does not explain what Mahler's work had to do with the unity of *Kunst* and *Volk*, beyond the fact that *Kunst* was being brought to a working-class *Volk*. Nor does he enumerate the specific qualities of the piece that garnered the reaction he describes. Rather, a more basic idea emerges in which Victor Adler was "seized, ravished, inspired" and the proletariat was "overpowered" by Mahler's music.

Although in truth Bach's response to Mahler's Third was as intellectual as it was emotional, passages such as these—often cited in discussions of Bach's music program—show a single side of his agenda that, though important, can

82. Bach, "Tagesneuigkeiten": "Einmal, es sind fast zwanzig Jahre her, besuchte er mit mir die Generalprobe zur ersten Aufführung der *Dritten* Symphonie von Gustav Mahler. Er war ergriffen, hingerissen, begeistert. Auf dem Heimweg sagte er mir, nach manchem tiefen Wort über die eben gehörte Musik: 'Dazu müssen wir es auch noch bringen.' Wir haben es dazu gebracht, vor drei Jahren, als zum erstenmal im Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert die *Dritte* Symphonie gespielt wurde." Actually, it had been well over four years since the Workers' Symphony Concerts first featured Mahler's Third on May 27 and 29, 1922.

seem trite or overblown when considered in isolation. These essays and others like them—in which a party leader writes about a party-sponsored event in the party's daily newspaper—have to be understood to some extent as acts of self-promotion and propaganda. Furthermore, the high frequency of references to the people, the proletariat, conquest, etc. may amount at times to the throwing around of political buzzwords. Focusing on these most obvious instances of deliberate politicization at the expense of other factors risks perpetuating a one-sided view of Bach's program, one in which overwhelming music, mass numbers of participants, and vague rhetoric can seem to predominate.

For a better understanding of the power and significance of mass gatherings in interwar Vienna, the memoirs of Elias Canetti (1905-1994) are an invaluable resource. Canetti, who lived in Vienna from 1924 to 1938, casts doubt on the idea that the power to be harnessed by mass demonstrations and similar events was understood to any reasonable extent. Canetti's Nobel Prize-winning *Crowds and Power* (1960) explores the idea of mass gatherings as a social phenomenon with a logic and drive all its own, outside of the individual's will and not necessarily even requiring a leader. The book no longer carries the same currency that it once did, as the field of sociology has increasingly shifted toward quantitative inquiry and empirical observation.⁸³

83. One scholar, in condemning a more recent manifestation of "the languishing science of crowd psychology" (i.e. Moscovici's *The Age of the Crowd*), was comfortable dismissing *Crowds and Power* as "a pedantic attempt to regenerate a crowd psychology." John D. McCarthy, review of Serge Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd: A Historical Treatise on Mass Psychology*, in *American Journal of Sociology* 93 (1987): 522, 525.

Still, Canetti was there. It was during his years in Vienna that Canetti began work on his theory of crowd psychology. After witnessing a demonstration in Frankfurt am Main in the wake of Walther Rathenau's assassination in 1922, Canetti became intrigued by the mysterious power that crowds seemed to exert on individuals, himself included.⁸⁴ Dissatisfied by Sigmund Freud's *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (1921) and Gustave Le Bon's *La psychologie des foules* (1895), Canetti began a lifelong effort to unlock the almost instinctive behaviors that seemed to guide the formation and decay of crowds.⁸⁵ His descriptions of personal encounters with the crowd phenomenon in Vienna confirm his active presence in the city's cultural life. For example, the burning of the Palace of Justice in 1927—a key moment, certainly, in the history of the First Republic—became one of the most important models of crowd behavior for Canetti, who was there, marching among the myriad angry workers in the streets that day.⁸⁶

Particularly fascinating is Canetti's account of a lecture given by Karl Kraus.⁸⁷ What struck Canetti the most about the experience was not so much the content of the lecture as the strange, ritualistic character of Kraus's delivery and

84. Canetti, *The Torch in My Ear*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982), 79-80.

85. *Ibid.*, 147-149.

86. *Ibid.*, 244-252.

87. In addition to the passage in Canetti cited below, see Timms, 294-295. Timms notes Canetti's initial amazement regarding Kraus and observes, "With the passage of time Canetti became more critical" (*ibid.*, 295).

the audience's responses—the tremendous applause, the seemingly exaggerated laughter at Kraus's quips—and the way that Kraus seemed to have his hand on some control that powered the audience collectively. "Imagine the army of the Wild Hunt in a concert hall, trapped, locked up, and forced to sit still, and then repeatedly summoned to its true nature."⁸⁸ Although unity of the audience's responses to Kraus and the reference to a concert hall might seem potentially analogous to the Workers' Symphony Concerts, Canetti's response suggests a crowd instinct that, while bringing together the audience, also generated in it a menacing, unbridled power.

To be sure, mass politics were necessarily the rule, not the exception, in a Vienna that had been fully, universally enfranchised since 1919 (1905 for men). Efforts to stir and mobilize masses—such as the mass demonstrations of the SDAPÖ—and to channel the crowd forces so vividly described by Canetti were a natural and inevitable development of democracy. Nevertheless, as a cultural phenomenon, the Workers' Symphony Concerts had far more in common with the regular season of the Wiener Sinfonie-Orchester than with the awe-inspiring spectacles of the party's mass festivals. Although some of Bach's essays, such as the ones cited above, suggest an interest in moving listeners with powerful music and grand productions, many of his other writings outline a program concerned much more with providing educational outreach and access to music and the arts.

88. Canetti, *The Torch in My Ear*, 71.

This is not to say that Bach's rhetoric should be ignored. In recognizing the symbolic value of the concert featuring Mahler's Eighth, performed in part by workers for workers, Bach seems to acknowledge old critical traditions that associate the symphonic genre with power and the bringing together of many voices. In the 1770s, Johann Georg Sulzer regarded the symphony as "especially suited to the expression of the grand, the solemn, and the sublime" and likened the chamber symphony (as opposed to symphonies composed for church or theater) to a chorus that unifies numerous voices into a whole.⁸⁹ Heinrich Christoph Koch, citing Sulzer, compared the symphony to a chorus, too, remarking additionally that symphonies conveyed "the feelings of a whole multitude of people."⁹⁰ Paul Bekker took these ideas a step further in 1918 by suggesting that Mahler's symphonies, and—long before Mahler—those of Beethoven, had a "community-forming value" (*gemeinschaftbildenden Wert*) and the means to create "communities of feeling" (*Gefühlsgemeinschaften*).⁹¹ Bekker perceived in these works and those like them the power to speak to middle-class

89. Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (Leipzig, 1771-1774), s.v. "Symphonie," cited in Mark Evan Bonds, "The Symphony as Pindaric Ode," in *Haydn and His World*, ed. Elaine Sisman, 132 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

90. Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon welches die theoretische und praktische Tonkunst, encyclopädisch bearbeitet, alle alten und neuen Kunstwörter erklärt, und die alten und neuen Instrumente beschrieben, enthält*, 2 vols. in 1 (1802; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1964), col. 1386, cited in Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145. See also Notley, "'Volksconcerte' in Vienna and Late Nineteenth-Century Ideology of the Symphony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50 (1997): 432.

91. Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918), 57. Bekker expounded on this idea as it related to Mahler a few years later in *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921). I am grateful to Margaret Notley for bringing the views of Bekker and Pisk to my attention.

concert audiences in a special new way through the boldness of the principal themes and the use of the grand orchestra, characteristics that had been associated with symphonic monumentality and the “truly symphonic” since at least the late nineteenth century.⁹² Seven years later, Viennese socialist critic and composer Paul A. Pisk gave an account that seems indebted to Bekker, in which Mahler, after Beethoven, “sought to give the symphony a community-forming power.”⁹³ Pisk described Mahler’s works as “the last attempt before the war to unite the audience into a community.”⁹⁴ To Pisk, the success of Mahler’s symphonies lay in their capacity for general appeal as well as in content that was at once edifying and popular:

Mahler combines the feeling of life and nature with the intellectual element in his works. He incorporates folk melodies into his works and chooses philosophical problems that are obvious to every man without class distinction (all-embracing love: Eighth Symphony, the continuation of life after death: Second Symphony).⁹⁵

92. See Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*, 147-150 and elsewhere.

93. Paul A. Pisk, “Zur Soziologie der Musik,” *Der Kampf* 18 (1925), 186: “Knapp um die Jahrhundertwende begegnen wir noch einem Sinfoniker [Mahler] der versucht, der Sinfonie eine gesellschaftsbildende Kraft zu geben.” Pisk, like Webern and others, was one of those figures in Viennese music culture who was active in Schoenberg’s circle as well as Bach’s. For more on Pisk, see Hans Moldenhauer, “Paul Amadeus Pisk and the Viennese Triumvirate,” in *Paul A. Pisk: Essays in His Honour*, ed. John Glowacki, 208-216 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), Elliott Antokoletz, “A Survivor of the Vienna Schoenberg Circle: An Interview with Paul Pisk,” *Tempo* 154 (1985): 15-21, Hanns-Bertold Dietz, “Paul Amadeus Pisk (1893-1990),” *AMS Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (1990): 8.

94. Pisk, 186: “Sein Kunstwerk muß als der letzte Versuch vor dem Kriege gewertet werden, die Hörerschaft zu einer Gemeinschaft zusammenzufassen.”

95. *Ibid.*: “Gustav Mahler vereinigt in seinen Werken das Lebens- und Naturgefühl mit dem verstandesmäßigen Element. Er bezieht Volksmelodien in seine Werke ein, wählt philosophische Probleme, die jedem Menschen ohne Unterschied der Klasse nahelegen (die allumfassende Liebe: Achte Sinfonie, das Fortleben nach dem Tode: Zweite Sinfonie).”

Pisk was not alone in perceiving the music's combined accessibility and deeper significance. Bach's writings on the arts and, specifically, about Mahler's music often echo the same idea, as I discuss below.

Related to the idea of music's community-forming power is another subject worth further investigation (I do not address it properly here): whether and how party members attempted to deal with the aspects of Mahler's compositional style perceived as national, ethnic, or cosmopolitan. The secondary literature has long supported the notion that hermeneutic possibilities arise from passages in Mahler's works that might have had socio-cultural connotations—for example, German, Czech, Jewish, Christian, aristocratic, folk, or working-class. The extent to which party members would have regarded ethnic or national connotations as helpful to their cause would have depended on prevailing attitudes toward the empire's many nationalist movements. Such ideas changed over time. The unity of the empire and the fate of the numerous nationalist movements within it were exceedingly and increasingly important to Austro-Hungarian Imperial politics, the gravity of these issues reaching a climax during World War I and its aftermath. Just before the twentieth century, the German-Austrian party leaders supported a federal state that included all of the nations under Habsburg rule.⁹⁶ But as much sense as it might have made for figures such as Victor Adler, Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Josef Scheu, or David

96. Anson Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism: From Red Vienna to Civil War 1927-1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 14-15.

Bach to promote a multinational musical idiom, there appears to be no evidence for this, nor do Bach's reviews of Mahler's works suggest that he was attracted to or found constructive value in any distinctly national elements in Mahler's music. Furthermore, by World War I, when the possibility of such a federal state receded, the multinational ideal faded from Austromarxist ideology.⁹⁷

2.3 Repertoire and Class in the Workers' Symphony Concerts

The music policy of the Austrian Social Democratic Workers' Party has raised even more questions among scholars who argue that Bach and so many of his comrades were middle-class Liberals who imposed a bourgeois musical repertory onto the working class. One of the most formidable problems that faced late Imperial and First Republic Viennese socialist arts policy was the debate over the extent to which elite artwork ought to be incorporated into the workers' lives. Helmut Gruber—who is particularly hard on SDAPÖ arts policy—notes that nearly all party writings on the role of culture and the arts in its goals exhibit “the difficulty of striking a balance between the workers' right to the cultural inheritance which had been denied them and the need to fashion a culture expressive of their own class.”⁹⁸ The outcome of this challenge, Gruber states, was “a continuous contradiction in the relationship between a desired socialist culture and the existing bourgeois one.” Gruber argues that even party fathers

97. Tom Bottomore, “Introduction,” in Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds. and trans., *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 32.

98. Gruber, 83.

Victor Adler and Engelbert Pernerstorfer disagreed on the matter, the former anticipating a new socialist culture as a reaction to the old, the latter arguing, in the spirit of *Bildung*, for the imperative to expose the workers to elite culture.⁹⁹

Jonathan Koehler has commented that the repertory of the first decade of Workers' Symphony Concerts was so traditional that it shows very little difference from that of the city's preeminent orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic:

During this period the association performed many of the same symphonic works that the Philharmonic performed with the greatest frequency: Beethoven's Third, Fifth, and Seventh symphonies; Brahms's Second; Bruckner's Fourth; and Mozart's Jupiter Symphony. Works by other composers, including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Schubert, Liszt, and Berlioz never commanded more than 5 percent of either orchestra's repertory.¹⁰⁰

Koehler also points out that Wagner's music, deemed by Bach and others as revolutionary and represented generously on the workers' concerts, was also well-represented in Mahler's Hofoper. At first glance, it can seem odd that the Workers' Symphony Concerts would offer an almost exclusively bourgeois repertory to the working-class audience, the same repertory enjoyed by the elites at the Philharmonic concerts.

Of course, workers' access to "great" art was precisely the point of Viennese socialist efforts in music. Furthermore, the idea that this was a worthwhile effort was not new in Bach's time. Austromarxists were among the earliest to hold that the privileges of the propertied classes extended beyond

99. Gruber, 83.

100. Koehler, 85-86.

material wealth, beyond mere objects, to include valuable edifying experiences such as education and the arts.¹⁰¹ The kinds of music patronized by the privileged middle and upper classes—above all, compositions considered masterpieces—were often a part of efforts to educate the working class. To this end, as Notley has shown, a number of participants in Viennese musical life during the 1880s and 1890s observed the need to increase the availability of great music in the city to those who were priced out of the Philharmonic subscription concerts.¹⁰² This historical development led to numerous popular concerts and ensembles. Not least of these was the Wiener Concertverein-orchester, the city's second major orchestra and forerunner to today's Wiener Symphoniker. The Concertvereinorchester was to become the principal orchestra of the Workers' Symphony Concerts.¹⁰³

Art was widely considered to be able to enhance people spiritually, to provide an experience that could build one within, not just materially. Among those who wrote about the necessity of bringing great art to the working class

101. Rabinbach, 8. The Vienna Arbeiterbildungsverein, founded in December 1867, was the first organization after the 1867 *Ausgleich* to promote the cause of elevating the lower class through education. As Anton Rabinbach and others have pointed out, middle-class liberals of the 1860s tended to support the idea of lifting the working class up from its low socioeconomic condition by means of education, seen as promoting a rational outlook on life, discouraging superstition, and fostering good morals.

102. Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*, 150-156. See also Notley, "Musical Culture in Vienna at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School*, ed. Bryan R. Simms, 41-42 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999).

103. Note that it was the Symphoniker and its ancestor organizations that filled this role—not the Philharmoniker, as is sometimes erroneously written. See, for example, Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900-1945* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 142.

was Pernerstorfer, a man perhaps best known to musicologists for his early intellectual influence on the young Mahler. In his essay “Art and the Workers” (1907), Pernerstorfer wrote, “The modern proletariat of every people is not only excluded from consuming this world’s material goods. The more it develops, the more strongly and painfully it senses that the heightened existence [*Dasein*] given to us by art is still another privilege of the propertied.”¹⁰⁴ Pernerstorfer went on to establish the imperative that art have some kind of living connection with an audience:

We struggle for . . . the joy in art for the sake of itself, in art as expression of highest humanity. Not as certain ultramodernists mean it, who want an “art for art’s sake,” an art merely for aesthetes. Such an art appears to us in the best case as a perhaps interesting, exotic product of a greenhouse culture. The art that we want should be a concern for all, that, streaming from a gifted individual, flows in the veins of the community.¹⁰⁵

Pernerstorfer thus articulates the social necessity of the arts on at least two levels: that art has intrinsic, humanizing value to which everyone is entitled, regardless of class, and that it must be cultivated in such a way that fosters a community’s involvement with it.

104. Engelbert Pernerstorfer, “Die Kunst und die Arbeiter,” *Der Kampf* 1 (1907-08): 39: “Das moderne Proletariat jedes Volkes sieht sich nicht allein ausgeschlossen von dem Genuss der materialen Güter dieser Welt, es empfindet, je mehr es sich entwickelt, um so stärker und schmerzlicher, dass jenes gesteigerte Dasein, das uns die Kunst gibt, auch ein Vorrecht der Besitzenden ist.”

105. *Ibid.*, 40: “Was wir anstreben, das ist weit mehr: das ist die Freude an der Kunst um ihrer selbst willen, an der Kunst als Ausdruck höchsten Menschentums. Nicht wie gewisse Uebermoderne es meinen, die eine ‘Kunst für die Kunst,’ eine Kunst für blosse Aestheten wollen. Eine solche Kunst erscheint uns in besten Falle als ein vielleicht interessantes, exotisches Erzeugnis einer Treibhauskultur. Die Kunst, die wir wollen, soll eine Angelegenheit aller sein, die aus einem begnadeten Individuum fließend in die Adern der Allgemeinheit strömt.”

Both of these ideas formed a significant part of Bach's philosophy concerned with the social uses of music. And while it can seem perplexing that Bach chose such an apparently customary repertory for the Workers' Symphony Concerts, his essays on the value and use of the arts to the advantage of the working class shed much light on his motivations. When the Workers' Symphony Concerts had been in place for six years—by which point Bach likely had become familiar with the problems involved in making such a program successful—he published an essay establishing the need for music that was, in a particular sense, popular.¹⁰⁶ In the interest of fostering a healthy and sustainable music culture, Bach argued for the promotion of *volkstümlich* (popular) music. Bach credited this concept of popular art, *volkstümliche Kunst*, to Wagner and defined it as a kind of art that belonged to the people, had a popular appeal, and could be grasped by an audience but that nonetheless aspired to greatness (he used as a musical example Weber's *Der Freischütz*). Bach distinguished *volkstümlich* music from merely *populär* music, such as the street song or *Gassenhauer*.¹⁰⁷ *Volkstümlich* specified a higher-level popularity than the lesser *populär*.

Bach also stressed the initial imperative of exposing the workers to a subset of this kind of music: music that could be enjoyed if not necessarily

106. Bach, "Volkstümliche Musikpflege," *Der Strom* 1 (1911):13-15. See also Christian Glanz's discussion of this article in "David Josef Bach and Viennese Debates on Modern Music," *Austrian Studies* 14 (2006): 185-195.

107. "Populär" also means popular. Although Bach uses both words in order to make certain distinctions, the words are synonyms outside of his argument.

understood on first listening. He argued that the *Volkskonzert* should program the music of composers who made a powerful effect when first heard—for instance, Beethoven or Wagner, rather than the subtler Mozart or Haydn: “Some have expressed the opinion that Mozart and Haydn are ‘easier’ and therefore better suited for a people’s concert. By no means.”¹⁰⁸ According to Bach, “Understanding is no simple act but rather a complex process that must run its course. The first phase is enjoyment [*Genußfähigkeit*]. Only by awakening this, deepening and improving it through systematic work can the preparation of the popular support of music be carried out. Only in this way is it at all possible.”¹⁰⁹

Bach also spoke of revolutionary art—words that, standing alone, can seem like empty political rhetoric. We know from his essays, however, that Bach used the phrase to refer to art that was forward-looking and embraced the possibilities of the future. He valued this futuristic orientation, not just as a political symbol of breaking from the status quo, but also to promote independent, imaginative thinking. To Bach, what made art revolutionary and, above all, great, was that it “always hurries ahead of its time, and all great art is revolutionary, since it contains new elements within it.”¹¹⁰ Forward-looking

108. Bach, “Volkstümliche Musikpflege,” 14: “Mancher hat gemeint, Mozart, Haydn seien ‘leichter’ und darum für ein Volkskonzert geeigneter. Mit nichten.”

109. Ibid., 15: “Verstehen ist kein einfacher Akt, sondern ein zusammengesetzter Vorgang, der seine Zeit ablaufen muß. Das erste Stadium heißt Genußfähigkeit; diese zu erwecken, durch systematische Arbeit zu vertiefen und zu verfeinern, nur dies kann die Aufgabe volkstümlicher Musikpflege bilden. Nur so ist sie überhaupt möglich.”

110. Bach, “Der Arbeiter und die Kunst,” *Der Kampf* 7 (1913/14): 44: “Die Kunst eilt immer ihrer Zeit voraus, und alle grosse Kunst ist revolutionär, weil sie neue Elemente in sich enthält.”

originality was, in Bach's mind, the key to being revolutionary: "despite its bondage to time and place (and even to the place of origin, in regard to class), true art always contains new elements that point into the future and that increasingly become the possession of the future and of the future class; true art is therefore always *revolutionary*, even if the word 'revolution' does not appear in it."¹¹¹

Wary of the vagueness of the meaning of "revolutionary," Bach acknowledged that it was all too easy to designate artwork as revolutionary in a shallow, indiscriminate manner. For instance, in a 1913 discussion of Wagner as a revolutionary composer, Bach described the pitfalls of selecting especially Marxist-sounding passages from Wagner's essays. To Bach, Wagner's music was indeed revolutionary, but for a different reason. Bach explained that "he gave us a new music, a new dramatic poetry through the unity of tone and word, he endowed us with unforgettable shapes, unforgettable tones, enriched our being—is that not enough? And above all, is this not precisely revolutionary?"¹¹² Linger on this example, Bach drew a distinction between the politics of the artist and of the art, for "the artist can only exist for us insofar as he exists in his

111. Bach, "Programm für das Jahr 1927/28," *Kunst und Volk* 6, no. 2 (September 1927): 1: "wahre Kunst enthält bei aller Gebundenheit an Zeit, Ort, auch klassenmäßigen Ort der Entstehung, immer Elemente, neue Elemente, die in die Zukunft weisen, sie erst recht zum Besitz der Zukunft und der Klasse der Zukunft machen; wahre Kunst ist deshalb immer *revolutionär*, auch wenn das Wort 'Revolution' darin nicht vorkommt."

112. Bach, "Der Arbeiter und die Kunst," 41: "Er hat uns eine neue Musik gegeben, eine neue dramatische Dichtkunst durch die Vereinigung von Ton und Wort, er hat unvergessliche Gestalten, unvergessliche Töne uns geschenkt, unser Wesen bereichert—ist das nicht genug? Und vor allem: ist nicht gerade dies revolutionär?"

works.”¹¹³ Thus it was less important that Wagner was personally a socialist than that his music was original and progressive. Bach was not interested in force-feeding workers an essentially middle-class repertory to serve as a permanent canon, nor did he promote music that was simply great or beautiful, that was merely worthwhile as art in itself. Rather, Bach promoted music that he believed would inspire change by virtue of its technique, its mode of expression, and therefore its meaning.

2.4 Mahler’s Compositions as Popular and Revolutionary

While Mahler’s capacity to move and overwhelm audiences with his music surely contributed to his appeal to Austromarxists, his works also appealed to Bach’s specifically musical ideals pertaining to *Volkskonzert* programming. Bach perceived in Mahler’s music an optimal balance of *Volkstümlichkeit* and revolutionary originality. He first expressed his ideas about Mahler’s works in a series of reviews of Mahler premieres between 1904 and 1912 (see Table 2.1). Although Bach does not use the term *volkstümlich* to refer directly to these pieces, he often notes popular elements in Mahler’s compositions, such as folk melodies and idioms, military music, and sounds of the Prater. More importantly, Bach consistently remarks upon the formal coherence he heard in Mahler’s symphonies, a quality that contributed to their *Genußfähigkeit*—although, to be

113. Bach, “Der Arbeiter und die Kunst,” 41: “der Künstler für uns nur soweit existieren darf, als er in seinen Werken existiert.”

sure, the works of Beethoven and Wagner more readily exhibited that quality than those of Mahler. Bach regarded Mahler as a revolutionary artist. In an article published in 1926, on the day that Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* was performed in a Workers' Symphony Concert, Bach describes Mahler as "a man whose entire life's work lines him up among the new, among the subversives, among the revolutionaries, who was as disposed to sorrow as he was anxious to alleviate the sufferings of others as best he could."¹¹⁴ According to Bach, the party leader Victor Adler, "who was averse to every false appearance and to any big to-do, saw the flames of rich sorrow and real humanity glow in all of Mahler's works. To him it seemed the obvious duty of the socialist to help with all of one's power the new art, the hated artist who hopes from the future what the present denies."¹¹⁵ Here, Bach reiterates the idea of artists looking toward the future for what is lacking during their own time.

That said, Bach himself placed far more importance on the revolutionary quality of the art than on that of the artist. The specific qualities of Mahler's works that made them revolutionary are, to a great extent, the same characteristics that contributed to Bach's decision to delay their introduction into the Workers' Symphony Concert repertory for some time. Bach's early Mahler reviews reveal

114. Bach, "Tagesneuigkeiten": "ein Mann, dessen ganzes Lebenswerk ihn unter die Neuerer, unter die Umstürzler, unter die Revolutionäre reiht, ein Man, der ebenso zu leiden bereit war, wie er die Leiden anderer nach Kräften zu mildern bemüht war."

115. Ibid.: "Er, der jedem falschen Schein, jedem Getue abhold war, sah im ganzen Werke Mahlers die Flamme reicher Leidenschaft und echten Menschentums glühen. Ihm schien es selbstverständliche Pflicht des Sozialisten, der neuen Kunst, dem angefeindeten Künstler, der von der Zukunft erhofft, was die Gegenwart verweigert, mit allen Kräften zu helfen."

Table 2.1. David Josef Bach's reviews of Mahler performances in *Arbeiter-Zeitung* from 1904 to 1912.

<u>Issue of <i>Arbeiter-Zeitung</i></u>	<u>Performance</u>
December 20, 1904	Third Symphony, Viennese premiere
February 5, 1905	<i>Kindertotenlieder</i> , four other Rückert Lieder, and nine songs from <i>Des Knaben Wunderhorn</i>
December 19, 1905	Fifth Symphony, Viennese premiere
January 10, 1907	Sixth Symphony, Viennese premiere
September 24, 1908	Seventh Symphony, world premiere in Vienna
September 14, 1910	Eighth Symphony, world premiere in Munich
July 4, 1912	Ninth Symphony, world premiere in Vienna

that he found much of the value of Mahler's music to lie in its response to the musical tradition that preceded it. Thus, he explained that in the eighteen years between the institution of the Workers' Symphony Concerts and the series premiere of Mahler's Third, "the workers were brought up on the greatest masterpieces of music, on all of the classical art—we scarcely missed one single significant work."¹¹⁶ Bach's *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reviews of Mahler's symphonies from 1904 until 1912 frequently focus on specific ways in which the composer responded to tradition, building upon or breaking from it. It makes sense, then, that Bach would familiarize working-class audiences with Beethoven, Wagner, and others before presenting them with Mahler's music.

2.5 Mahler's New Symphonic Path

To Bach, Mahler's compositions generally achieved a combination of strong formal coherence and expressive power hitherto unmatched in its effectiveness. Mahler took conventional means of organizing music—e.g., the basic principles of sonata form, or the incorporation of recurring motives and themes—but at the same time manipulated those elements in ways that, to some critics, necessitated explanations (such as programs) or represented faults. Bach, however, embraced Mahler's compositional language for its capacity to be understood (or at least enjoyed) without the aid of such explanations. He

116. Bach, "Erinnerungen": "Dazwischen liegt die Erziehung der Arbeiterschaft zu den größten Meisterwerken der Musik, zu der gesamten klassischen Kunst, aus der uns kaum noch das eine oder das andere bezeichnende Werk fehlt."

welcomed Mahler's extended stylistic vocabulary and formal strategies for their enhancement of music's expressivity. Bach's reviews of Mahler's works pinpoint specific passages and features that illustrate how well they succeed in these respects.

This idea emerged most strongly in Bach's review of the Seventh Symphony.¹¹⁷ Here, Bach argued that Mahler's symphonies represented not only a development of the modern symphony but also a return to the symphonic traditions of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. Bach contended that the classic symphony—from Mozart to the time of Brahms, according to his definition—differs from the modern symphony in the relationship between form and whatever ideas or images the work might express. In the classic symphony, Bach wrote, the form was relatively easy to grasp, but the poetic or philosophical meaning was elusive and difficult to apprehend. In the modern symphony, on the other hand, beginning with nineteenth-century program music, the poetic and philosophical substance of the work came to the forefront (often as an explicit program) while the formal structural aspects became elusive. Linking the two symphonic schools, Bach maintained, are Mahler's symphonies, which combine the clear, well-defined structure of the classical symphony with the emphatic, meaning-imbued musical gestures of the modern symphony. Bach illustrates this with a prominent passage in the Seventh Symphony's first movement:

117. Bach, "Mahlers Siebente Symphonie," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, September 24, 1908.

The first movement seems surprising and puzzling. But it is not its form that constitutes the secret. The construction is completely clear and well-laid out, indeed downright simple.¹¹⁸ Even an intermezzo inserted before the reprise is not something completely new, not entirely without precedent in the classical symphony. As it is, of course, the insertion stands out immediately to every listener. That creates its particular character of mood, which separates it from the other *Sätze*. But what naïve misunderstanding to speculate here over the composer's intentions!¹¹⁹

Bach's overall point is easily taken. The listener is provoked less by the presence of this "intermezzo" before the recapitulation—almost certainly he means mm. 254-337—than by the forcefully gestural manner in which it occurs—as something distinctly distanced from the typically dark character of most of the movement. As in his other works, Mahler marked the path through his symphony with suggestive signs that contribute an added dimension of meaning to the structural organization, thematic interconnections, and key relations.

Measures 254-337 are threaded through with motives that elsewhere had quite a different character but here seem blissfully transformed. The funereal rhythm of the slow introduction permeates much of the remainder of the

118. It is certainly aggravating to read Bach's insistence that this movement's difficult form is "downright simple"; he makes similar claims about equally difficult movements in other pieces. To hear this movement in terms of sonata-allegro form can be said to be straightforward insofar that it clearly suggests theme groups, key areas, and an exposition-development-recapitulation scheme—at least to an extent that a listener can hear his or her way through the movement. However, far less straightforward is the necessarily normative exercise of accounting for the movement's many unique or at least odd traits in terms of textbook sonata-allegro form.

119. Bach, "Mahlers Siebente Symphonie": "Der erste Satz wirkt befremdend, rätselhaft. Aber es ist nicht seine Form, die das Geheimnis ausmacht. Die Konstruktion ist ganz klar und übersichtlich, ja recht einfach. Selbst ein vor der Reprise eingeschobenes Intermezzo ist nicht gänzlich Neues, nicht in der klassischen Symphonie vollkommen Beispiellooses. Nun fällt freilich jedem Hörer das Einschiebsel ohneweiters auf. Das macht sein besonderer Stimmungscharakter, der es vom übrigen Satze scheidet. Aber welch naives Unverständnis, hier über die Absichten des Komponisten zu grübeln!"

movement, but in mm. 254-337, this and other motives are cast in variants with strikingly different characters. After the last quarter-note value of m. 254, in the heat of the movement's development, the orchestra backs away from fortissimo, slows down, and falls out, leaving only high violins, trembling in pianissimo, and hushed trumpets playing stately, measured herald rhythms (see Ex. 2.1).

Although this new mood is temporarily abandoned at m. 266 by what promises to be a return to the earlier character of the development, this, too, is brought to a halt at m. 298 by the same interruptive gesture heard earlier: the orchestra is silenced, save a pianissimo landscape of high tremolando violins and soft trumpet fanfares. In the course of this passage, motives from earlier in the movement reappear, recognizable but changed to fit this new mood. The treading, martial rhythm of the introduction (see m. 1, in most of the strings and woodwinds) are reshaped into woodwind figures that recall the avian *Naturlaute* from elsewhere in Mahler's oeuvre (Ex. 2.1, m. 261, flutes; see also m. 303, solo oboe and m. 307, flutes). The motive that appears when the movement's tempo first accelerates (m. 19, flutes, oboes, clarinets, second violins—La Grange's "transition theme") reappears in mm. 258-259 (Ex. 2.1, first clarinet and first viola) and elsewhere, robed in a chorale-like homophony, but harmonically open and without resolution.¹²⁰ And the fanfares themselves frequently are shaped in the angular melodic fourths that appear in nearly all the melodies and themes of

120. Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 855.

Example 2.1. Mahler, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. 1, mm. 253-263.

rit. 32 Gemessener

253

Picc.

1.2. Fl.

3.4. Fl.

1.2.3. Ob.

Eh.

Klar. in Es

1.3. Klar. in A

2. Klar. in A

Bklar. in A

1.2.3. Fag.

Kfag.

1. Trp. in B

2.3. Trp. in B

1.2. Pos.

3. Pos.

Tuba

Pk.

Bck.

Trgl.

Glsp.

VI. I

VI. II

Va. 2fach get.

Vc. 2fach get.

Kb.

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Example 2.1 (continued).

Meno mosso **Wieder etwas bewegter, aber gemessen, wie vorhin** 33 Meno mosso

258

1.2. Fl. *ff*

1. Ob. *ff*

1.2. Klar. in A *Feierlich p* *ff* *fp*

3. Klar. in A *p* *pp*

Bklar. in A *p* *pp*

1.2.3. Fag. *p* *pp*

1. Trp. in B *poco più mosso*

2. Trp. in B *poco più mosso pp* *sempre pp*

3. Trp. in B *p* *dim.* *pp*

Vl. I *sempre pp*

Va. 4fach get. *Feierlich p* *dim.* *ppp*

Vc. 4fach get. *p* *pp*

Kb. *p* *pp*

zu 2

the movement (Ex. 2.1, m. 260, third trumpet). The almost unbearable expectation created by all those measures of hushed waiting and herald fanfares is finally resolved in m. 317. Here, in what La Grange has described as “one of the rare episodes in Mahler’s music to radiate the sensuality of Strauss,” Mahler treats his audience to a soaring violin melody, itself indebted to the motivic material introduced in the exposition, particularly the lyric second theme group (mm. 118-133).¹²¹ In this passage, without doubt the central component of the “intermezzo,” even the primary theme makes an appearance as a countermelody (m. 319ff, horns 1 and 2). The violin melody builds to a stirring climax in m. 335, before shifting anticlimactically and without transition to the reprise of the introductory material in m. 338 (see Ex. 2.2).¹²²

This passage as a whole, like so many in Mahler’s oeuvre, practically demands an explanation, as do the strangely transfigured themes that permeate it. But instead of attempting a complicated explanation to account for the various stages of the movement and particularly mm. 254-357, Bach assures the reader that the mystery of the “intermezzo” is precisely the point:

It contains none of what is thrilling or stirring in the first movement. We all feel that beneath the introductory Adagio’s unrest, the especially self-entrenching first motive that pecks at the entire movement’s woodwork like a churchyard beetle, and the hard, rigid strictness of the

121. La Grange, 858-859.

122. La Grange writes that the “moment of intense lyricism gradually and naturally merges into a return of the slow Introduction (m. 338) with its dotted rhythm” (p. 859). This comment is difficult to understand. While the continuous use of earlier motives prepares the ear for a reprise of the opening, however, it hardly makes for a gradual or natural transition into m. 338, the very point of which seems to be to a cold and abrupt shift of mood.

Example 2.2. Mahler, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. 1, mm. 334-342.

42

*) auf jede Note einen ganzen Bogen [GM]

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Example 2.2 (continued).

338 **Adagio** (Tempo der Einleitung)

1.2. Klar. in A *pp* *sempre pp* zu 2

3. Klar. in A *pp* *sempre pp*

Bklar. in A *pp* *sempre pp*

1. Fag. *pp* *sempre pp*

2.3. Fag. *pp* *sempre pp*

Kfag. *pp* *sempre pp*

1.3. Hr. in F *pp* zu 2

2.4. Hr. in F *p*

1. Pos. *f* großer Ton, aber weich geblasen

3. Pos. großer Ton, aber weich geblasen

Gr. Tr. *pp* *pp*

Adagio (Tempo der Einleitung)

Va. get. *pp* *sempre pp*

Vc. get. *pp* *sempre pp*

Kb. get. *pp* *f* *f* *[sempre pp]*

development, there must be something else special that remains. But insofar as such puzzles can be solved at all, their solution is found not in some unknown poetical element but rather in a bold harmony, peerless even today. It can be found where the difficulties and their solution are more felt than recognized, even if not immediately upon first hearing.¹²³

Bach bases this most general interpretation on the way that motives first appear and then recur transfigured in the movement's intriguing intermezzo-like passage. Focusing on audible phenomena in the work such as this, Bach discourages the reader from treating such oddities as clues or signals with some definite, recoverable meaning, an exercise that distracts listeners from the music's profounder, more valuable offerings. "That," he says, "is good for listeners who can no longer bear the music without a program, since their own feelings, their own hearts cannot provide anything that resonates in the chords of the work."¹²⁴ According to Bach, the Mahler symphony inherits its rhetorical intensity and emphatic style from the modern symphonic tradition and its source, program music; however, its narrative coherence and inner logic are imported from a tradition in which symphonies speak to audiences without the need for

123. Bach, "Mahlers Siebente Symphonie": "In ihm liegt auch gar nicht das Aufregende, Aufwühlende des ersten Satzes. Wir alle fühlen, daß hinter der Unruhe des einleitenden Adagios, hinter dem sonderbar sich eingrabenden ersten Motiv, das wie der Totenkäfer an dem Gebälke des ganzen Satzes pickt, hinter der harten, unbeugsamen Strenge der Durchführung noch etwas Besonderes stecken muß; aber soweit sich solche Rätsel überhaupt lösen, finden sie hier ihren Schlüssel nicht in einem unbekanntem Poetischen, sondern in einer kühnen Harmonik, die auch in der neusten Zeit ihresgleichen sucht. Das läßt sich auffinden, wenn auch nicht gerade beim allererstenmal, wo man die Schwierigkeiten und ihre Lösung mehr empfindet als erkennt."

124. Ibid.: "Das ist gut für Hörer, die es ohne Programm in der Musik nicht mehr aushalten, weil sie aus eigenem Gefühl, aus eigenem Herzen nichts geben können, was den Akkorden des Werkes widertönte."

external explanations or programs. This combined expressive capacity and independent coherence seem to have impressed Bach considerably.

2.6 Mahler's Expanded Compositional Language

Bach's early reviews also celebrate certain compositional choices that struck many other critics as flaws. When Mahler pieced together stylistically discontinuous passages or worked with vulgar and banal thematic material, Bach argued, this was not a sign of the composer's weakness but rather a virtue, since these types of gesture enabled the composer to use a broader, more complex musical language than was customary.

For example, in his review of the Third Symphony, Bach notes that the first movement, which conveys a wide range of emotional extremes, is threaded through with a single theme, played by the horns at the very beginning of the symphony. At first, Bach reflects on how the theme alone strikes him: "It sounds like a folksong; it awakes memories of the songs we sang in happy youth, but nonetheless it remains special."¹²⁵ (A brief word of caution: Bach repeatedly and mistakenly attributes this theme to the trumpets.)¹²⁶ The youthful memories, of

125. Bach, "Mahlers Dritte Symphonie:" "Volksliedmäßig erklingt es; es weckt Erinnerungen an die Lieder, die wir in glücklicherer Jugend gelungen, aber es bleibt doch eigen."

126. It can seem as though Bach's repeated references to the "first trumpet theme" refer to early trumpet themes such as the one first heard in mm. 31-33 or the lyrical melody beginning in m. 83. Bach is clear, however, that he is referring to a theme occurring *before* the music that reappears in the fourth movement (mm. 11-23 of the first movement): "Unmittelbar an das erste Trompetenthema rückt das Geheimnis der tiefen Mitternacht, das erst im vierten Satze ganz vor uns ausgebreitet werden soll" (Directly upon the first trumpet theme, there advances the secret of deep midnight, which shall be spread out completely before us in the fourth movement) (Bach, "Mahlers Dritte Symphonie"). Actually, *no* trumpets play in the first movement before m.

course, might well have been real: as many have noted, this melody strongly resembles “Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus,” a song with significant political connotations that both Mahler and Bach must have been aware of.¹²⁷ Moreover, the use of the melody might have suggested to Bach the same *Volkstümlichkeit* he discussed several years later in “Volkstümliche Musikpflege.” But in the context of the movement as a whole, the theme accrues deeper meaning:

An abundance of musical events is accumulated in [the theme]. What the musician gets out of it by means of symphonic technique are just as many ideas, a round dance of changing moods around the one inner experience, represented by a single motive. Not a program from which each word should be made aurally perceptible, but rather an emotional basic motive [*psychisches Grundmotiv*] that the artist transforms into artistic form according to his whim.¹²⁸

Throughout the movement—with its slow funereal passages, raucous development, and intensely upbeat “Triumpfmarsch”—the horn melody recurs, a single and consistent thread sewn into the fabrics of the various contrasting sections. Bach summarizes approvingly that “through all the moods, from pain to exuberance, there runs a self-confident mirth, easily recognizable even

31.

127. See William McGrath, “Mahler and Freud: The Dream Of the Stately House,” in Rudolf Klein, ed., *Gustav Mahler Kolloquium 1979: Ein Bericht*, Beiträge der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Musik 7, 41-51 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981).

128. Bach, “Mahlers Dritte Symphonie”: “Eine Fülle musikalischen Geschehens ist in ihm aufgespeichert. Was der Musiker mit den Mitteln symphonischer Technik daraus hervorholt, sind ebensoviele Gedanken, ein Reigen wechselnder Stimmungen um das eine innere Erlebnis, das ein einziges Motiv bedeutet. Kein Programm, aus dem jedes Wort dem Gehör sinnfällig gemacht werden soll, sondern ein psychisches Grundmotiv, das der Künstler nach seiner Laune in künstlerische Form verwandelt.”

outwardly, the same rhythm of life's joy. This main feature remains unspoiled, and it is the living content of that marvelous power of intensification."¹²⁹ Far from being a fault, Bach argues, the procession of the same thematic material through such starkly contrasting atmospheres is the very crux of the movement.

In his review of the February 1905 *Liederabend*, Bach describes the value he finds in Mahler's use of banal themes: "The rogue mischief" of "Rheinlegendchen" "does not even avoid melodic banalities."¹³⁰ These banalities, Bach posits, are not a fault but rather a compositional device knowingly and intentionally used by Mahler: "There is a particular reason for these banalities—they are not there because Mahler could not compose differently, but rather because he succeeds in conjuring forth all moods from gaiety to grief, from harmless joy to spooky horror."¹³¹ As a particularly effective example of this, Bach mentioned one of the songs, probably "In diesem Wetter" from *Kindertotenlieder*, in which he detected a recurring theme that resembles an oboe theme from the first movement of Mahler's Third Symphony, "almost a

129. Bach, "Mahlers Dritte Symphonie": "Durch all die Stimmungen von Schmerz bis zur Ausgelassenheit zieht sich musikalisch, schon dem äußeren Sinn leicht erkennbar, unerschütterlich der gleiche Rhythmus der Lebensfreudigkeit, einer selbstsicheren Heiterkeit; dieser Grundzug bleibt unvermischt, und er ist der lebendige Inhalt jener ungeheuren Kraft der Steigerung."

130. Bach, "Gustav Mahler-Abend," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, February 5, 1905: "dessen schalkhafter Uebermut auch melodischen Banalitäten nicht ausweicht."

131. *Ibid.*: "Mit diesen Banalitäten hat es eine eigene Bewandnis—sie stehen nicht da, weil Mahler nicht anders kann, sondern weil er es selbst damit trifft, alle Stimmungen von Lustigkeit bis zur Trauer, von der harmlosen Freude bis zum gespenstischen Grausen hervorzuzaubern."

Gassenhauer, but one that the dead would enjoy.”¹³² Although Bach does not embrace these musical vulgarities as emblems of great music, he cherishes them for their evocative power within their respective works.

In the Fifth Symphony, too, Bach makes a point not to evaluate all of the themes as equally good, a consequence of the fact that “Mahler cannot experience anything, either great or insignificant, without immediately finding a musical expression for it.”¹³³ The Fifth Symphony’s finale, as Bach noted, is rich in new themes as well as recurring ones. But among the latter is “the theme of the Adagietto, otherwise so sweet and shallow that only people without any musical ballast can ‘bathe’ in it at all,” which “obtains in the last movement another, more beautiful face, although the traits remain the same.”¹³⁴ To Bach, the truly interesting thing about the Adagietto theme is not so much its charm—which is self-evident to anyone and itself not so valuable an insight—as the way it is transformed to contribute to the overall effect of the finale as culmination.

132. Bach, “Gustav Mahler-Abend”: “beinahe ein Gassenhauer aber einer, bei dem die Toten sich vergnügen.” Although Bach specifies that the theme occurs “in one of the soldier songs,” the thematic resemblance suggests that he was more likely referring to “In diesem Wetter” (not a soldier song at all), in which something similar to the oboe theme in Mahler’s Third, mvmt. 1 (especially mm. 579-81) recurs throughout. If Bach did have “In diesem Wetter” in mind, his mischaracterization is certainly excused by the fact that, in Mahler’s Third Symphony, the oboe melody is part of the complex texture of the development section, much of which is reminiscent of military marches.

133. Bach, “Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, December 19, 1905: “Mahler kann nichts erleben, nichts Großes und nichts Unbedeutendes, ohne daß er dafür sogleich einen musikalischen Ausdruck fände.”

134. Ibid.: “selbst das Thema des Adagiettos, sonst so süßlich und seicht, daß nur Leute ohne jeden musikalischen Ballast darin gar ‘baden’ können, gewinnt im letzten Satze ein anderes, schöneres Gesicht, obwohl die Züge die gleichen geblieben sind.”

There is another idea at work here: Mahler's willingness to apply a single theme to multiple styles or in several moods, even seemingly disjunct ones. Here, as in his review of the Third Symphony's first movement, Bach makes the case that Mahler followed the principle of thematic transformation with unprecedented intimacy:

Mahler usually has a particular reason to implement the same themes. He betrays more than a secret of art when he treats the same theme now seriously, now cheerfully. From a pious chorale one can get a cheerful melody; one can augment and recombine a waltz to such an extent that it develops a strange character. Mahler doesn't just apply his marvelous technique to all of his musical ideas. He betrays emotional [*seelische*] secrets that earlier composers did not expose so lightheartedly. To whom has it never happened, that he laughed out loud in deepest sorrow, that a cheerful, frivolous thought came to him at the most solemn hour, that in the highest of spirits he was gripped by a stirring mood? Mahler speaks frankly about all of this.¹³⁵

For many other critics, the stylistic discontinuities and uncouthnesses that resulted from this compositional approach were difficult to accept. Bach, however, embraced them as central to Mahler's expressive power on the premise that what counts with such musical elements is their contextual meanings, not their apparent qualities judged in isolation.

Bach argues this point most emphatically of all in his review of Mahler's

135. Bach, "Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie": "Mit der Verwendung der gleichen Themen hat es bei Mahler überhaupt eine eigene Bewandnis. Er verrät mehr als ein Kunstgeheimnis, wenn er dasselbe Thema bald ernst, bald heiter nimmt. Aus einem frommen Choral kann man eine heitere Melodie gewinnen, einen Walzer kann man so lange steigern und kombinieren, bis ein fremdes Wesen daraus geworden. Es ist nicht allein die Freude an seiner ungeheuren Technik, die Mahler so mit allen seinen musikalischen Gedanken spielen läßt. Er verrät seelische Geheimnisse, die frühere Komponisten nicht so leichten Herzens preisgegeben haben. Wem wäre es nicht widerfahren, daß er im tiefsten Leid laut aufgelacht hätte, daß ihn in ernster Stunde ein heiterer, leichtsinniger Gedanke überfällt, daß er in größter Ausgelassenheit von rührsamer Stimmung gepackt wird; dies alles sagt Mahler rund heraus."

Ninth Symphony. The second movement, Bach writes, “comes across as being so unedifying” in its method of thematic development and “is, in its symphonic significance, exaggerated ballet music.”¹³⁶ The *Ländler* theme, “commonplace among the masses,” is improperly developed through the course of the movement—Bach considers it an unsuitable theme to attempt to develop in the first place—resulting in what is, in the most apparent sense, a compositional failure.¹³⁷ But instead of rejecting the movement, Bach interprets its problematic aspects as a successful exercise in irony, maintaining that the movement manifests the contradictions he had to face in establishing a successful career:

In its comicality, the Ninth recalls Mahler’s First Symphony. At that time, though, the artist was in a world in which he first had to conquer and secure his place. The difficulty doing so—which actually was able to become externalized, the inner contradiction that had to be transformed into harmony through the artist’s life and works—led the composer to romantic irony.¹³⁸

The first movement features a “noble song” that is “disturbed by all kinds of secondary intentions”—a description well suited to the quality of the themes that

136. Bach, “Gustav Mahlers Neunte Symphonie,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, July 4, 1912: “Es ist zu symphonischer Bedeutsamkeit aufgebauschte Ballettmusik.”

137. *Ibid.*: “über die Maßen gewöhnlich.”

138. *Ibid.*: “In dieser Witzigkeit berührt sich die Neunte mit der ersten Symphonie Mahlers. Damals aber war der Künstler in eine Welt gestellt, in der er seinen Platz erst erobern und sichern sollte. Die Schwierigkeit des Unterfangens, das eigentlich außer werden konnte, der innere Widerspruch, der durch das Leben und Wirken des Künstlers in Harmonie verwandelt werden sollte, führte den Komponisten zur romantischen Ironie.” Beyond what the context suggests, it is difficult to ascertain precisely what Bach means by “romantic irony.” For an idea of how rich in meaning this term is, see Heinz J. Dill, “Romantic Irony in the Works of Robert Schumann,” *The Musical Quarterly* 73 (1989): 172-195.

disrupt and interrupt the first theme of the exposition.¹³⁹ Bach's discussion of the third movement, his favorite of the four, echoes his earlier arguments about the expressive effectiveness of rapidly shifting moods: "If it is fun (the composer uses the name 'burlesque'), then it is colossal fun, a mad fierceness, in which terror becomes laughter."¹⁴⁰ Bach complains that "the bacchanal sweetness of the fourth movement occasionally approaches candy."¹⁴¹ However, in its easy, resigned quality, which stands out in light of the thematic impotence Bach perceives in the first two movements, the finale ultimately articulates the significance of the Ninth Symphony, "making its peace" after Mahler's lifetime of struggle for legitimacy and in the wake of his victorious Eighth. Mahler, who "took on the world with his Ego," has finally "become one" with it and "gives up the struggle."¹⁴² With the Ninth Symphony as well as with the others, Bach finds the greatest source of meaning in how themes transform, whether they seem to triumph or falter, and what emotions they seem to express. From this point of view, the greatest and least of themes are equally worthwhile.

139. Bach, "Gustav Mahlers Neunte Symphonie": "edle Gesang," "wird gestört durch allerhand Nebenabsichten."

140. Ibid.: "Wenn's ein Spaß ist (der Komponist gebraucht den Namen 'Burleske'), dann ist's ein kolossalischer Spaß, ein toller Grimm, dem das Grauen ein Gelächter wird."

141. Ibid.: "Die schwelgerische Süße des vierten Satzes verläuft gelegentlich in Süßlichkeit."

142. Ibid.: "Der letzte Satz macht Frieden. Nicht weil der Kämpfer erkannt hat, daß der Sieg nur in dem Vermählen des Ich mit dem Weltganzen besteht und diese Entäußerung des Ich den größten Triumph der künstlerischen Persönlichkeit bedeutet; denn nur, wer in sein Ich die Welt aufzunehmen vermochte, kann mit dieser Welt eins werden. Mahler hingegen wird friedlich, weil er—wenigstens im vierten Satz dieser Neunten Symphonie—den Kampf aufgibt."

2.7 Mahler and the Working-Class Audience

Bach believed that acquaintance with the formal and stylistic conventions of music's Classical masters—above all, Beethoven—would equip an audience of workers to appreciate the symphonic tradition indebted to those masters and to understand the basic premises of formal construction. This foundation would have also given workers a frame of reference with which to pick up on Mahler's "revolutionary" responses to his musical heritage, above all those responses that, to Bach, represented the composer's expanded and unprecedentedly effective musical language.

Bach maintains a decidedly novice-friendly tone in discussing these qualities of Mahler's works, and in supporting the notion that given the aforementioned requisite musical background, a listener can make sufficient sense of a Mahler symphony without additional help or information. Spurning the compulsion of some to explain Mahler's music in great detail with varyingly authentic programs and anecdotes, Bach encourages his readership to approach this repertory with the will to understand it on its own terms and to avoid being discouraged by things that are unfamiliar or difficult to grasp. Bach's early reviews of Mahler's works predate the appearance of any of those pieces on the Workers' Symphony Concerts, but they already exhibit an interest in the capacity of Mahler's music to be enjoyed by a working-class audience.

Although Bach considers the recurring and transforming initial theme of the Third Symphony's first movement to be central to the movement's meaning,

he advises his readers against attempting to understand all the details of this process through a program: “The listeners cannot accept that beneath this stubborn series of notes (which, although it recurs note-for-note, gleams in all whimsically changing colors) lies a composer’s mysterious intention, which can only be poetic or philosophical.”¹⁴³ Instead, as I have shown, Bach holds that the thematic recurrence itself, manifesting itself in various moods over the course of the gradually intensifying movement, rather than representing some external idea requiring further knowledge of the audience, is itself the heart of the movement’s significance.

Likewise, with regard to the Fifth Symphony, Bach cautions his readers against attempting to connect the work as completely as possible to a program. This, according to Bach, was the primary flaw of the monograph on the Fifth Symphony by Ernst Otto Nodnagel, who was “doomed by his will to prove too much and explain too much.”¹⁴⁴ Bach recommends enjoying as much of the music as possible, without worrying about understanding it completely or understanding all of its features:

Nobody has to recognize immediately all of the connections. . . .
But those who can enjoy music ought to take gratefully the beautiful things that are offered to them, rather than resisting them on account of being

143. Bach, “Mahlers Dritte Symphonie”: “Die Hörer lassen es sich nicht nehmen, dass hinter dieser eigensinnigen Tonfolge, die trotz ihrer notengenauen Wiederkehr in allen Farben wechselnder Laune schimmert, eine geheimnisvolle Absicht des Komponisten steckt, die nur poetisch oder philosophisch gedeutet werden könnte.”

144. Bach, “Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie”: “scheitert an seinem Allzuvielbeweisen-Allzuvielerklärten-wollen.” See Ernst Otto Nodnagel, *Gustav Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie: Technische Analyse* (Leipzig: Peters, 1905).

unfamiliar with their type or being unable to describe their nature. Many [a listener] feels that he cannot approach the secrets of the new, bold form by making himself a poetic image for it, and so he turns angrily away from the work. The brilliance that would have inspired him, had he been able to construe it completely, now blinds him and stings his eyes, forcing him to close them.¹⁴⁵

Here again, Bach underlines the need for listeners to open themselves to the music without harboring expectations or allowing themselves to become alienated by its more challenging aspects.

In his discussion of the Seventh Symphony's first movement, Bach writes that "one can show," using the example of the first movement "intermezzo," "the extent to which Mahler has outgrown the poetic and the philosophical aspects of modern music. Here the ways part."¹⁴⁶ Bach mocks the tendency of some enthusiasts to grasp for meaning in Mahler's every passing remark as a basis for such programs— "Since the gentle sounds of the intermezzo paint—or can paint—heavenly bliss, one needed greedily and earlessly to reach for every word that the composer let slip at the rehearsal or even on another occasion, in order not to be truly embarrassed by this image"—before insisting that it is rewarding enough to experience simply what one hears, without necessarily being able to

145. Bach, "Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie": "Niemand ist verpflichtet, alle Zusammenhänge sofort zu erkennen. . . . Aber jeder, der Musik zu genießen vermag, soll Schönheiten, die sich ihm darbieten, dankbar aufnehmen und sich nicht gegen sie sperren, weil ihm ihre Art nicht vertraut ist oder weil er ihr Wesen nicht beschreiben kann. Mancher fühlt, daß er den Geheimnissen der neuen, kühnen Form nicht näher kommt, wenn er sich ein poetisches Bild dazu macht, und er wendet sich ärgerlich von dem Werke. Der Glanz, der ihn berauschte, würde er ihn ganz deuten können, blendet ihn und sticht ihm in die Augen, die er schliessen muß."

146. Bach, "Mahlers Siebente Symphonie": "Gerade an diesem Intermezzo ließe sich aufzeigen, wie weit Mahler über das Poetische und Philosophische der modernen Musik hinausgewachsen ist. Hier trennen sich die Wege."

explain it all in the most precise terms.¹⁴⁷

In his review of the Eighth Symphony at its Munich premiere in 1910 more than in any other of his writings, Bach embraces the idea that an audience should allow itself to experience Mahler's music directly, without constantly attempting to understand or explain its details. As did many other critics, Bach commented on the music's power, likening the symphony to a magical airship [*Zauberschiff*]. But rather than focus on the "ravishing power" with which Mahler's music gripped the Munich audience, Bach used his magical flight metaphor to mock his pedantic contemporaries, switching between moods of heightened pleasure and nervous scrutiny:

With the wind we have flown. The storm took us up in its arms, carried us over land and sea; a view into endlessness uplifted us; an inkling of bliss made us shiver—now tell me, how did the journey go? Did everything go all right? Were departure and arrival exactly precise? Were the times adhered to? Were there no deviations from the specified route? Ultimately did you all not climb too high? Were there not stretches that were too close to the ground? And how did one actually fly? According to which system? Since when and by whom was it approved?¹⁴⁸

For Bach, the crux of this work's power lay not just in the music's capacity to

147. Bach, "Mahlers Siebente Symphonie": "Daß die sanften Klänge des Intermezzos himmlische Seligkeit malen oder malen können, um dieses Bild brauchte man wahrhaftig nicht verlegen zu sein, ohne Ohren gierig nach jedem Worte zu recken, das dem Komponisten bei einer Probe oder sonst irgend einer anderen Gelegenheit entschlüpft."

148. Bach, "Mahlers Achte Symphonie," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, September 14, 1910: "Mit dem Winde sind wir geflogen. Der Sturm nahm uns auf seine Arme, trug uns über Länder und Meere; Blick in die Unendlichkeit machte uns erheben, Ahnung der Seligkeiten erschauern—nun sage, wie ist die Fahrt gewesen? Ging alles in Ordnung zu? Waren Abfahrt und Ankunft genau bestimmt? Sind die Zeiten eingehalten worden? Gab's keine Abweichungen von der vorgeschriebenen Straße? Seid ihr nicht am Ende zu hoch gestiegen? Waren da nicht Strecken zu nah dem ebenen Boden? Und wie flog man überhaupt? Nach welchem System? Seit wann und von wem ist es genehmigt?"

overwhelm but also in the audience's choice to abandon fear, accept the unfamiliar, and eschew prescriptive rules that might impede appreciation of the work: "He who *wants* to go, can; he who brings with him the emergency parachute of a 'but,' a 'however,' and an 'anyhow' will not board; he who believes that his thermometer creates the temperature will be horrified if the unfamiliar is no longer indicated."¹⁴⁹ Elsewhere in the review, Bach shifts the image of flight to an altogether different metaphor: that of a preacher and a crowd of followers. Referring to the line in Part One, "Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus" (Enkindle light in our minds; infuse love in our hearts), Bach argues that at the end of the first movement, Mahler fulfills this ancient plea:

The composer pours fire into the hearts. He who is grasped by the fire is carried aloft by it with the Gloria, the powerful close of the first movement. The light floods through the high church window. But the preacher who spoke to the crowd leaves the ground and floats into the air with hands outstretched—so goes a holy legend. We float with him.¹⁵⁰

Bach's image of a preacher and followers underscores the divide between follower and skeptic. To be sure, Bach considers the Eighth Symphony an achievement in compositional terms—e.g. text-music connections and significant thematic interrelations throughout both movements—but at the same time he

149. Bach, "Mahlers Achte Symphonie": "Wer mit *will*, kann mit; wer den Rettungsfallschirm eines 'Doch,' eines 'Allerdings' und 'Immerhin' mitnimmt, wird nie aufsteigen; wer da glaubt, daß sein Thermometer die Temperatur schafft, wird sich entsetzen, wenn das Ungewöhnliche nicht mehr angezeigt wird."

150. Ibid.: "Der Komponist gießt Feuer in die Herzen. Wen das Feuer ergreift, den trägt es mit dem Gloria, dem gewaltigen Schluß des ersten Satzes, empor. Das Licht flutet durch die hohen Kirchenfenster; der Prediger aber, die zur Menge sprach, verließ sichtbarlich den Boden und schwebte mit ausgebreiteten Händen in der Luft—heißt es in einer Heiligenlegende. Wir schweben mit ihm."

assures the reader that “he who feels the power needs no scribe’s exegesis in order to believe it and prove it to himself.”¹⁵¹ Here more than anywhere else, Bach seems to invite the less experienced listener to approach Mahler’s music without fear, while ridiculing the reluctance of critics to do the same. He even evokes the matter of class consciousness in a way that might have amused working-class readers as much as it must have offended Mahler’s opponents: “What’s that, does the throng of the all-too-busy annoy you and keep you from following? Does the light seem less beautiful because its warmth pleases the scum, too, or because the mosquitoes dance in its rays?”¹⁵² In this review, Bach makes his most emphatic case for an approach to concertgoing and listening that was inviting to all socioeconomic classes. This was certainly appropriate for the readership of the socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and is consistent with Bach’s attitude toward music’s role in *Arbeiterbildung*—that it be socially well integrated and accessible to all classes.

2.8 Conclusion

When Bach celebrated the fact that the working class had “conquered” Mahler’s Third Symphony and when he spoke on other occasions of bringing Mahler’s symphonies into the hands of the people, he was not merely

151. Bach, “Mahlers Achte Symphonie”: “Wer die Kraft empfunden, braucht keine Auslegung der Schriftgelehrten, um sie zu glauben und sich selber zu beweisen.”

152. Ibid.: “Wie, das Gewimmel der allzu Geschäftigen macht euch Verdruß, hindert euch, zu folgen? Aber scheint das Licht weniger schön, weil seine Wärme auch dem Geschmeiß behagt, weil in seinen Strahlen die Mücken tanzen?”

constructing a façade of socialist rhetoric around the concerts. Rather, he was emphasizing the new accessibility of a repertory that he believed to be comprehensible to anyone with a grasp of the classical symphonic tradition. To Bach, Mahler's compositions represented a forward-looking expansion of the compositional language of Mahler's day. This music, as he understood it, fit exceedingly well into his vision of the kind of music that most needed to be made accessible to the working class.

CHAPTER 3

“THE MOST RUTHLESS TRUTH”: MAHLER AS TIMELY

During the years leading out of the Great War, the frequency of performances of Mahler’s works in Vienna increased markedly. As the number of concertgoers and critics who favored Mahler’s music grew, many reflected on the significance of this rise in popularity. Writings of the late 1910s and early 1920s, as we saw in Chapter One, typically emphasize the inner conflicts and struggles that critics perceive in Mahler’s works, celebrating these aspects as qualities rather than finding fault with them. And to the consternation of some, Mahler’s music was embraced by many in the Viennese musical avant-garde—particularly Arnold Schoenberg and his circle.

This chapter investigates the idea that Mahler was a purveyor of artistic truth in the midst of falsehood, his compositions the medium for that truth. Before the war, this idea captured the minds of the likes of Richard Specht and Arnold Schoenberg, who perceived in Mahler’s works musically encoded entreaties to audiences for earnest, truthful art in place of the merely entertaining or marketable. Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, arriving on the scene in 1925 with a graduate degree in philosophy, took this idea further, expanding the ethical ramifications of musical truthfulness. These ideas engage with the social value of progressive music in such a way that recalls David Josef Bach’s concept of

revolutionary music, and they contribute to a more vivid picture of what Mahler's music meant during its first period of popularity.

3.1 "But above all, one has learned to listen to Mahler."

For years, critics lambasted Mahler's symphonies for being overly long, self-indulgent, laden with banalities, and too poor in substance to justify their often extravagant means. The conservative musical tastes of many critics predisposed them against hearing Mahler's music with an open mind. A shockingly high number of early reviews made anti-Semitic arguments, either explicitly or through subtly used terms and phrases that would have resonated with like-minded readers. To be sure, this kind of criticism of Mahler's music—and, indeed, the works of many composers—continued long after the twilight and aftermath of World War I. But these years also witnessed a new, positive thread in Mahler reception: that a new generation of audiences more capable of understanding Mahler's music now had begun to emerge.

In a review of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, performed in May 1917 by the Tonkünstlerorchester under Paul Pella, Elsa Bienenfeld suggests that Mahler's music was becoming better understood in recent times. Regarding Mahler's symphonies, Bienenfeld writes that "their forms are beginning to be apprehended; their content is beginning to be loved. The image of contemporary culture is caught most strongly and sorrowfully in Mahler's music. Mahler leads

us into a wonderful reality that is at the same time to-the-point and wistful.”¹⁵³

Placing great emphasis on Mahler’s young followers, Bienenfeld states that now, just as it was during Mahler’s lifetime, “it is again the youths who profess enthusiasm for him and see their dreams fulfilled in his works.”¹⁵⁴ And citing Pella as an example of one of these young people, Bienenfeld looks to the new generation that will “certainly solve the manner in which Mahler’s symphonies are to be interpreted most profoundly.”¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, critics were increasingly accepting the elements of Mahler’s style that had proven so challenging through the years. During the 1920 Viennese Mahler cycle, after Oscar Fried conducted the first four symphonies on September 24, 28, and 29, Heinrich Kralik wrote happily of the “comfortable, comprehensible approach” these works provided for listeners: “This picturesque musical language that always narrates so clearly, always captivatingly, always brilliantly; that incorporates with fondness popular inflections in dialect, coaxes the ear, convinces the mind, overpowers the senses.”¹⁵⁶ But, assuring the reader

153. Elsa Bienenfeld, “Konzerte,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, May 17, 1917: “Mahlers Symphonien dringen immer siegreicher durch. Man fängt an, ihre Formen zu begreifen, und ihren Inhalt zu lieben. Die Mahlersche Musik ist es, in der am stärksten und am leidenschaftlichen das Bild der gegenwärtigen Kultur aufgefangen ist. Es ist eine wunderbare Wirklichkeit, in die Mahler uns hineinführt, sie ist sachlich und sehnsüchtig zugleich.”

154. Ibid.: “Jetzt ist es wieder die Jugend, die sich begeistert zu ihm bekennt und in seinen Werken ihre Träume verwirklicht sieht.”

155. Ibid.: “Die Art, wie Mahlersche Symphonien zu interpretieren sind,” “gewiß noch auf tieferschürfende Weise gelöst werden.”

156. Heinrich Kralik, “Aus dem Konzertsaal: Mahlerzyklus,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, October 4, 1920: “bequeme, faßliche Handhaben,” “Diese bilderreiche musikalische Sprache, die so deutlich, immer fesselnd, immer geistvoll erzählt, die mit Vorliebe volkstümliche, dialektische

that Mahler's success hardly lay in his music's accessibility, Kralik insists that "above all, one has learned to hear Mahler. The things that first were aesthetic snares and pitfalls are not advertised any differently, namely the contradictions in having the trivial, *Gassenhauer*-like, and burlesque appear within the hallowed symphonic domain. But today we listen better throughout the material and seek, with more success, an effective principle beyond the acoustical manifestation—whereby, of course, the door is also open for all kinds of vague subjective wishes and meanings."¹⁵⁷ It is not difficult to identify with Kralik's ambivalence. After all, it was one matter for the once objectionable elements in Mahler's music to achieve acceptance; determining just how to interpret them was a different matter altogether.

It stands to reason that Mahler's increased popularity during the postwar years was accompanied by a growing willingness to find ways to explain the more challenging features of his works. Practically from the beginning, Mahler developed a reputation for being a strong-headed artist, both as conductor and composer, who forged ahead in whichever direction his art took him, regardless of whether it offended performers or left listeners puzzled. As Henry-Louis de La Grange points out, Mahler understood that when critics, having engaged

Wendungen einbezieht, überredet das Ohr, überzeugt den Verstand, überwältigt die Sinne."

157. Kralik: "Vor allem aber: man hat es gelernt, Mahler zu hören. Die Dinge, die einstmals ästhetische Fallen und Wolfsgruben waren, sind nicht andre geworden, nämlich die Gegenstände von trivialem, gassenhauerischem, burleskem Aussehen inmitten des geweihten symphonischen Bezirkes. Aber wir hören heute besser über das Stoffliche hinweg, suchen mit mehr Erfolg ein wirkendes Prinzip jenseits der akustischen Erscheinungsform - womit freilich auch für allerlei vage subjektive Wünsche und Meinungen der Zutritt offensteht."

seriously with his music, found fault in it, the objects of their complaints were compositional decisions he had made intentionally and—in spite of those criticisms—without regret: “He knew very well that the ‘stubbornness’ they accused him of was simply his need to follow his own path, without worrying about the opinion of the public or the ‘connoisseurs.’”¹⁵⁸ Many concertgoers who appreciated Mahler’s work also admired his obstinacy, and when attention to Mahler’s music grew in the late 1910s, so did the idea of the composer who struggled for the sake of artistic integrity and his own high standards. In 1919, for example, in the wake of a performance of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, Richard Batka proclaimed that Mahler “has become the legendary patron saint of the Vienna Opera, whose name is for today’s generation the epitome of all that is artistically high-minded, indulging no weaknesses, representing the idea of the holiness of the artwork.”¹⁵⁹ And despite the differences people may have had with him, Batka continues, “one cannot mistake what he did and sought, the ideal course, the purity of the artistic aim.”¹⁶⁰ It quickly becomes clearer why this image of Mahler might have served as a model for other composers who endured similarly disappointing encounters with critics and audiences.

158. Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, *Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897-1904)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 477-478.

159. Batka, “Festkonzert in der Oper,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 14, 1919: “So ist er jetzt zum legendären Schutzgeist der Wiener Oper geworden, dessen Name für die Generation unserer Zeit den Inbegriff alles künstlerisch Hochsinnigen, keiner Schwäche Nachgiebigen, den Gedanken von der Heiligkeit des Kunstwerkes Vertretenden bedeutet.”

160. *Ibid.*: “Gewiß, man muß nicht mit allem einverstanden sein, aber man darf in nichts, was er tat und erstrebte, den idealen Zug, die Reinheit der künstlerischen Absicht verkennen.”

3.2 “Like a Savonarola of music”: Richard Specht on Mahler

One major contributor to the idea of Mahler as an independent, high-minded artistic striver was Richard Specht, whose essays on Mahler and thematic guides to his works began to appear in the early 1900s. Originally published in *Der Merker* and other periodicals, many of these writings largely found their way into Specht’s 1913 book *Gustav Mahler*, which underwent numerous reprintings and a few revisions in the ensuing years. Its original foreword declared that despite Mahler’s death two years earlier, “His work remains with us, a legacy that far too few have made their own, and the time for which must come and will come.”¹⁶¹ In the revised 1918 edition, Specht noted in a new, second foreword that his book had sold surprisingly well despite the war, a consequence, he insists, not of his book’s greatness but rather “a triumph of the cause that it promotes”—i.e. Mahler’s music.¹⁶² And in the more extensively revised edition of 1925 (in which, among other things, he amends his position on the viability of Mahler’s Tenth Symphony), Specht also acknowledges the problems that accompanied the increased popularity of Mahler’s works.¹⁶³ Echoing the assertions in his earlier essay “Die Mahler Mode” (mentioned in

161. Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1913), 5: “Sein Werk bleibt uns; ein Vermächtnis, das noch viel zu wenigen zu eigen geworden ist und dessen Zeit kommen muß und kommen wird.”

162. Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, rev. ed. (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1918), 12: “den Triumph der Sache für die es wirbt.”

163. Specht, “Nachschrift,” in *Gustav Mahler*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), 295-319.

Chapter One), Specht observes, “It is the danger in Mahler’s present: either that he is degraded to an article of fashion and simultaneously to a commodity, or that aimless admiration will alienate us from his true character and place his *Heiligsprechung* [“canonization,” literally “pronouncement of saintliness”] ahead of his *Menschsprechung* [an invented word, literally “pronouncement of humanity”]”—that is, ahead of the understanding that Mahler, too, was mortal and that his symphonies, by no means Gregorian dictations, in fact address the problems of humanity.¹⁶⁴

These admonitions make more sense in the context of Specht’s earlier arguments about the significance of Mahler and his compositions. Playing with the question of how well Mahler fit into his own milieu, Specht insisted that despite suggestions to the contrary, Mahler was not *unzeitgemäß* (untimely) at all and that his music “spoke to the best of his contemporaries and signified the strongest experience to them.”¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, Specht allows that Mahler’s oeuvre was “only untimely in the sense that it had nothing to do with fashion, nothing to do with the din of the market, where it is determined what garments music will wear in the morning.”¹⁶⁶ This untimeliness, of course, is not untimely at

164. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1925), 314: “Es ist die Gefahr in Gustav Mahlers Gegenwart: daß er entweder zum Modeartikel und gleichzeitig zum Geschäftsartikel erniedrigt wird, oder daß ziellose Bewunderung uns seine wahre Gestalt entrücken und seine Heiligsprechung vor seine Menschsprechung setzen will.”

165. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 160: “zu den besten seiner Mitlebenden gesprochen und ihnen stärkstes Erlebnis bedeutet hat.”

166. Ibid.: “Unzeitgemäß aber nur in dem, daß es nichts mit Mode zu tun hatte, nichts mit dem Lärm des Marktes, auf dem bestimmt wird, in welcher Gewandung die Musik von morgen zu erscheinen habe.”

all. What Specht suggests is that Mahler's music spoke directly to his own time, even if it was not always well taken by critics and audiences. Specht illustrates his point further by likening Mahler to Savonarola, who led populist crusades against the moral corruption of his time and, in the name of Christianity, threatened the prevailing order:

He was only really untimely in that his art was like a penitential sermon to his time, that he functioned like a Savonarola of music and, in urgent proclamation, imparted the most overwhelming shock to all complacency and dispassionateness, all apathy and frivolity. And the penitential oratory toward and against his time, against its lovelessness and complacent dispassionateness, its vain superficiality and its fear of struggling with the great—the penitential sermons that this Savonarola of music recorded in his giant works of sound therefore spoke with such power, because into them was composed not wrath but understanding, not curse but blessing, not despair but renunciation, not only the shiver before the final things and before nature but also the recognition of them, and because the voice proclaiming all that was the voice of love.¹⁶⁷

Here, Specht seems to tap into a number of ideas attached to Mahler, above all his reputation for being inexhaustibly persistent in achieving high artistic standards during rehearsals, occasionally to the point of offending and alienating musicians.

Specht then fleshes out the characteristics of Mahler's symphonic sermons in musical terms. To Specht, Mahler's music set itself apart from much

167. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 159: "Nur insofern war er wirklich unzeitgemäß, daß seine Kunst wie eine Bußpredigt gegen seine Zeit war, daß er wie ein Savonarola der Musik wirkte und in zwingendem Aufrufen aus aller Gleichgültigkeit und gelassenheit, aus aller Fühllosigkeit und Frivolität die überwältigendsten Erschütterungen übte. Und die Bußreden an und gegen seine Zeit, gegen ihre Lieblosigkeit und ihre Scheu vor dem Ringen mit den Großen,—die Bußreden, die dieser Savonarola der Musik in seinen tönenden Riesenwerken aufzeichnete, haben deshalb mit solcher Macht gesprochen, weil in ihnen nicht der Zorn, sondern das Verstehen, nicht Fluch, sondern Segen, nicht Verzweiflung, sondern Entsagung, nicht nur der Schauer vor den letzten Dingen und vor der Natur, sondern auch ihr Erkennen zum Tonbild wurde, und weil die Stimme, die all das verkündete, die Stimme der Liebe war."

of the other music of his time by eschewing superficial beauty, artifice, and conservatory formality in favor of an intimate, honest, and truthful mode of expression: “What is so compelling in Mahler’s nature and in his work is not the same that the creations of other greats bring near to us: not the symmetry of reposeful harmony, the pure lines, the prudent repression of all emotional tumults, the sense of having found something, the inner peace.”¹⁶⁸ In Mahler’s works there is

never imitative depiction, never small-minded realism or ornamental play; always only the most intensive expression of the inner life in that mysterious art that comes like no other from the unknown, from the Realm of the Mother. The unheard-of truth that makes all these works glow is peerless; nowhere does it allow the merely formal (the architecture of these creations and their superhuman mass are especially awesome), never the spinning forth with no ideas [*gedankenloses Fortspinnen*], no playing with beautiful sounds [*Schöntönerei*], no empty arabesques, nowhere the superficial, nowhere dead points.¹⁶⁹

Some of Specht’s remarks underscore the value of economical means. More centrally, however, he is emphasizing the seriousness with which Mahler penned his works—the intent to make important, enduring points rather than merely to create ephemeral objects of entertainment.

168. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 160: “Was in Mahlers Wesen und an seinem Werk derart bezwingt, ist nicht das gleiche, was uns die Schöpfungen anderer Großer nahebringt: nicht das Gleichmaß ruhevoller Harmonie, die reine Linie, die weise Bändigung aller seelischen Tumulte, das Gefundenhaben, der innere Friede.”

169. *Ibid.*, 163: “niemals nachahmende Schilderung, niemals kleinliche Realistik oder ornamentales Spielen; immer nur intensivster Ausdruck innerlichen Lebens in jener rätselhaften Kunst, die wie keine andre aus dem Unbewußten, aus dem Reich der Mütter kommt. Die unerhörte Wahrheit, die all diese Werke glühend macht, ist ohnegleichen; sie duldet nirgends bloß Formales (so großartig gerade die Architektur dieser Schöpfungen und ihre übermenschlichen Maße sind), nirgends gedankenloses Fortspinnen, keine Schöntönerei, keine leeren Arabesken, nirgends Äußerliches, nirgends tote Punkte.”

Mahler's often notorious musical style, Specht asserts, should not be regarded as mere novelty (though novel it frequently was) but rather as the natural consequence of his independence from commercial consideration: "Mahler," Specht insists, "never sought a new style or new means of expression, and above all he never sought anything fundamental. But he always found both as the only and obligatory expression of his nature, which adhered solely to its own law."¹⁷⁰ For example, in writing about Mahler's First Symphony, Specht claims that while most composers writing their first or second symphonies tend to be somehow derivative or backward-looking, Mahler's work "speaks entirely its own language."¹⁷¹ On closer examination, Mahler's language separates into two opposing ones: "the subjective, a stormy, instigating, and absorbing stirring-up to the highest things" and "the objective, an intoning as though the secrets of the animate and inanimate objects of nature became sounding."¹⁷² By defining *dieser seltsame Zwiespalt* (this odd dichotomy), off putting as it often was to critics, as an "obligatory expression of [Mahler's] nature," Specht goes even further in fortifying an image of Mahler as a seeker of artistic truth, disregarding of critical

170. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 166: "Mahler hat nie einen neuen Stil oder neue Ausdrucksmittel gesucht, vor allem nie als etwas Primäres gesucht; aber er hat beides immer gefunden, als den einzigen und zwingenden Ausdruck seines nur dem eigenen Gesetz gehorsam Wesens."

171. *Ibid.*, 170: "spricht durchaus seine eigene Sprache."

172. *Ibid.*, 170-171: "Die subjektive: ein sturmvolles, aufwiegelndes und sich verzehrendes Aufrütteln zu den höchsten Dingen;" "Die objektive: ein Tönen, als wären die Geheimnisse der bewegten und unbewegten Dinge der Natur klingend geworden."

opinion.¹⁷³

Specht allows that despite Mahler's "timeliness," there remained a basic disconnect between his music and most of its audiences while he was alive:

He never had the privilege of experiencing . . . the hour of victory for his work, which in his lifetime was almost exclusively derided and maligned, at best overlooked, and only recently perceived as the liberating experience: as the call of one who grasps for the greatest, who speaks to us of our own need, our own longing, severs this need and longing and out of it has created his work.¹⁷⁴

That said, Mahler's works certainly were not altogether overlooked—a fact Specht grants. When Specht wrote that Mahler's music "spoke to the best of his contemporaries and signified the strongest experience to them," there is a handful of people whom he probably had in mind above the others. His 1920 essay "Mahlers Feinde"—part of the aforementioned special Mahler issue of *Musikblätter des Anbruch*—suggests that a list of such people would have included at minimum David Josef Bach, Elsa Bienenfeld, Paul Stefan, Julius Korngold, Felix Salten, and Hermann Bahr.¹⁷⁵ Bach, as we know, was enthusiastic about the peculiar aspects of Mahler's compositional style as soon as he heard the dress rehearsal of Mahler's Third in 1904.¹⁷⁶ Likewise, Bach's

173. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 171: "In Mahler ist dieser seltsame Zwiespalt immer da."

174. *Ibid.*, 168: "Die rechte [sic] hat er nicht erlebt . . . die Stunde des Sieges für sein Werk, das zu seinen Lebzeiten fast nur verhöhnt und verleumdet worden ist, bestenfalls übersehen und nur vor wenigen als das befreiende Erlebnis empfunden wurde: als der Ruf eines nach dem Größten Fassenden, der uns von unserer eigenen Not, unserer eigenen Sehnsucht spricht, diese Not und Sehnsucht teilt und aus ihr heraus sein Werk geschaffen hat."

175. Specht, "Mahlers Feinde," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2 (1920): 279.

176. See pp. 40-41 above.

friend Arnold Schoenberg attended a rehearsal for the same performance—it may have been the same rehearsal—and despite his reservations about Mahler, he was moved so profoundly by the work that he wrote the composer a letter about it.¹⁷⁷

3.3 Schoenberg and Mahler

While sitting in the audience, Schoenberg finally made sense of the heretofore baffling compositional style of a composer he had previously disdained. He wrote to Mahler,

I have seen your soul in its nakedness. . . . It was spread out in front of me, like a wild and mysterious landscape, full of terrifying chasms and ravines, and next to them, serene and charming, sunlit meadows, idyllic places of repose. I felt it was like an awesome phenomenon of nature, with its terrors and calamities and its transfiguring, comforting rainbows. . . . I felt the battle against illusions; I sensed the pain of one who has lost them; I saw the forces of good and evil engaged in combat; I

177. In 1891, when he and Bach met, Schoenberg was a musician and aspiring composer who was just a month younger. For a time, the biographies of the two men intertwined. For example, Schoenberg dedicated an early opus of Lieder to Bach's sister Eva (Henriette Kotlan-Werner, *Kunst und Volk: David Josef Bach 1874-1947*, Materialien zur Arbeiterbewegung 6 [Vienna: Europaverlag, 1977], 14). Furthermore, as biographers often recount, the young men, both of little means, thriftily satisfied their need for music with the sounds of the Prater and the military band. In 1895, partly with the help of Joseph Scheu, the father of the Austromarxist choral society tradition and Bach's predecessor as *Arbeiter-Zeitung* music critic (more on Scheu shortly), Schoenberg left his bank job to conduct three choral societies: the Mödling Choral Society, "Freisinn," the Meidling Men's Choral Society, and the Stockerau Metalworkers' Singers' Union (David Josef Bach, "A Note on Arnold Schoenberg," *Musical Quarterly* 22 [1936]: 12-13; Albrecht Dümmling, "Im Zeichen der Erkenntnis der sozialen Verhältnisse: Der junge Schönberg und die Arbeitersängerbewegung in Österreich," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 36 [1981]: 65-73). Not long after Bach replaced Scheu as music critic for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* in 1904, he began to advocate publicly for Schoenberg. See also R. John Specht, "Schoenberg Among the Workers: Choral Conducting in Pre-1900 Vienna," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 10 (1987): 28-37 and Manfred Permoser, "'Wir waren arme Hunde, aber jung, lebenshungrig und zukunftssicher...': Schönberg und die Arbeitersängerbewegung," *Journal of the Arnold Schonberg Center* 3 (2000): 70-76.

saw a human being struggling in agitated torment for inner peace; I felt a human being, a drama, the *truth*, the most ruthless truth!¹⁷⁸

Schoenberg notes the juxtaposition of beautiful and ugly, wonderful and horrible, disturbing and comforting. All of this is placed within the composer himself, whose music displays his “soul in its nakedness,” reveals a “battle against illusions” and a struggle for “inner peace,” and conveys the “most ruthless truth.” This image, which brings to mind Specht’s lone, struggling musical Savonarola, represents Schoenberg’s first representation of Mahler as an artist-hero who retained his values in the face of criticism, and whose music expressed its meaning with striking immediacy.

In the years that followed, Schoenberg became a friend to Mahler and an advocate of his works.¹⁷⁹ Schoenberg and his friend and fellow composer Alexander Zemlinsky regularly paid visits to Mahler’s home.¹⁸⁰ And when the time

178. La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75-76.

179. Consider, for example, the long thread of scholarship on Mahler’s role in Schoenberg’s development, which reaches at least as far back as Schoenberg’s student Dika Newlin, whose best-known work, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1947), followed her even earlier article, “Arnold Schoenberg’s Debt to Mahler,” *Chord and Discord* 2.5 (1945): 21-27. See also Dieter Rexroth, “Mahler und Schönberg,” in *Gustav Mahler: Sinfonie und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch, Studien zur Wertungsforschung 9, 68-80 (Graz: Universal Edition, 1977), and Henry-Louis de La Grange, “Mahler und Schönberg: Tradition und Revolution,” in *Bruckner-Symposion: Bruckner, Liszt, Mahler und die Moderne im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 1986, 17.-21. September 1986*, ed. Renate Grasberger, 15-21 (Linz: Linzer Veranstaltungsgesellschaft, 1986). Borrowing in part from Harold Bloom’s work on influence, Julie Hubbert, too, moves beyond stylistic comparison to trace continuities in the two composers’ musical philosophies, for example their attitudes toward the practice of arranging or reworking the compositions of earlier composer; see her “Mahler and Schoenberg: Levels of Influence,” PhD diss., Yale University, 1996; of particular interest is her final chapter, “Music About Music: *Retuschen, Bearbeitungen*, and Composition” (319-380).

180. Stephen E. Hefling, “Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schönberg,” in *Mahler’s Unknown Letters*, edited by Herta Blaukopf, trans. Richard Stokes (London: Gollancz, 1986), 168.

came for Mahler to move to New York City in December 1907, Schoenberg was among the handful of people who helped organize the surprise gathering at Wien Westbahnhof to see Mahler off at the platform.¹⁸¹ After Mahler died in 1911, Schoenberg dedicated his *Harmonielehre* to him and wrote a brief memorial for *Der Merker*.¹⁸² In 1912 Schoenberg prepared a lecture that he presented in several cities, in which he argued in support of Mahler's music.¹⁸³ Schoenberg was one of those who signed the manifesto at the Amsterdam Mahler Festival of 1920.¹⁸⁴ In the early 1920s Schoenberg corresponded with Mengelberg in an attempt to create a Mahler society.¹⁸⁵ Even Schoenberg's compositions occasionally suggest a nod toward Mahler, from the strange emergence of "Ach, du lieber Augustin" in the Second String Quartet to the bizarrely transfigured arrangements of Baroque works. Joseph Auner has observed in Schoenberg's cello concerto reworking of a keyboard concerto by Georg Matthias Monn that "the eerie second movement" "might be mistaken for a funeral march by Mahler."¹⁸⁶

181. La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, 792.

182. It appeared in the 1 March 1912 issue, 182-183.

183. See note 192 below.

184. Gerhard Scheit and Wilhelm Svoboda, *Feindbild Gustav Mahler: Zum antisemitische Abwehr der Moderne in Österreich* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2002), 13.

185. See Berthold Turcke, ed., "The Mahler Society: A Project of Schoenberg and Mengelberg," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 7 (1983): 29-92.

186. Joseph Auner, "Schoenberg's Handel Concerto and the Ruins of Tradition," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49 (1996): 286.

In Schoenberg's Society for Private Performances of Music, which was intended as an outlet for performing modern music in the absence of applause, jeers, and malevolent critics, chamber arrangements of Mahler's music were sometimes featured.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Mahler's works themselves served as the *terminus post quem* for the Society's concert repertoire. Alban Berg wrote to his wife in 1918 that Schoenberg intended for the Society to perform music "from the period 'Mahler to the present.'"¹⁸⁸

In the 1920s and into the 1930s, Schoenberg's close self-association with Mahler's legacy was controversial to some critics. Julius Korngold was a particularly outspoken opponent of this. In a feuilleton on the 1920 Vienna Mahler Cycle, Korngold wrote that "Insurgents dare to see [Mahler] used for that 'new music' that is now desperately produced in a laboratory flask."¹⁸⁹ Korngold then proceeded to demonstrate the many ways in which Mahler's music sounds traditional, though making little secret about his thoughts on "new music" in the process. Mahler's oeuvre, Korngold writes,

187. Of particular interest here is Rainer Riehn, "Über Mahlers *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* und *Das Lied von der Erde* in Arnold Schoenbergs Kammerfassungen," *Musik-Konzepte* 36 (1984): 8-30. See also Jerry L. McBride, "Orchestral Transcriptions for the Society for Private Musical Performances," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 7 (1983): 113-26; Judith Karen Meibach, "Schoenberg's 'Society for Musical Private Performances,' Vienna 1918-1922: A Documentary Study," PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh 1984; and Walter Szmolyan, "Schönbergs Wiener Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen," in *Katalog Arnold Schönberg Gedenkausstellung*, ed. Ernst Hilmar, 82-104 (Vienna, 1974).

188. Alban to Helene, July 1, 1918, in Berg, *Letters to his Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernard Grun (London: Faber, 1971), 225.

189. Julius Korngold, "Musik (Randbemerkungen zum Mahler-Zyklus)," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 2, 1920: "Aber Auflehnung fordert es heraus, ihn für jene 'neue Musik' in Anspruch genommen zu sehen, die jetzt kramphaft in der Retorte erzeugt wird."

knows nothing about demolition of formal connections, which it intones and constructs quite rigorously in large multi-movement symphonies that actually just expand Brucknerian expansions newly and freely. And it knows just as little about the disregard of melodic formation in the old sense. In fact, going out in broadly curving, vivid themes and melodies that are periodized into the frowned-upon “squares,” [Mahler’s oeuvre] prefers diatonic images, honors old cadences, and observes the logic of modulation on both small and large scale. It never even seeks harmonic perplexity as such. . . . In Mahler’s music there is also no perceptible softening of the rhythm, at least not in the sense of that “hovering” and “flowing” that—the latest formula of the day—signifies the sacrifice of one of the strongest bulwarks of music, behind which self-expressed confusions and instabilities hide. With Mahler, strict rhythm—often in the most obvious and succinct manifestations of march and dance—tightens not only the basic ideas but also structures, hammers, rivets the entire movement. Nowhere is the shapeless, the jellylike; neither is there anything of impressionism, expressionism, or futurism, be it in older or more recent construction.¹⁹⁰

How, Korngold asks rhetorically, can Mahler be grouped with “the tone-convulsions or even with the atonal psychosis?”¹⁹¹

It is not known whether Korngold attended Schoenberg’s lecture on

190. Korngold: “Weiß sie doch nichts von Zertrümmerung formaler Zusammenhänge, die sie vielmehr auf das drastischere in großen mehrsätzigen Symphonien betont und ausbaut, die selbst wieder eigentlich nur Brucknerische Erweiterungen neu und frei erweitern. Und weiß sie doch ebensowenig von der Mißachtung melodischen Gestaltens im überkommenen Sinne, sie, die vielmehr auf weitbogige, plastisch bis zum verpönten ‘Quadratischen’ periodisierte Themen und Melodien ausgeht, diatonische Bildungen bevorzugt, alte Kadenzierungen hochhält, die Logik des Modulationsganges in die Nähe wie in die Ferne beachtet. Nie auch sucht sie die harmonische Verblüffung als solche. . . . In Mahlers Musik ist auch keine Erweichung des Rhythms zu spüren, am wenigsten im Sinne jenes ‘Schwebenden’ und ‘Fließenden,’ das, die letzte Formel vom Tage, die Opferung einer der stärksten Schanzen der Musik bedeutet, hinter der sich äußerte Verworrenheiten und Unvermögenheiten verbergen. Strenger Rhythmus—und dies oft in der sinnfälligsten und prägnantesten Erscheinungsform von Marsch und Tanz—strafft nicht nur die Grundgedanken, sondern gliedert, hämmert, vernietet den ganzen Satz bei Mahler. Nirgends Gestaltloses, Qualliges; und auch nichts von Impressionismus oder Expressionismus, Futurismus, sei in älterer oder in jüngster Auslegung.”

191. Ibid.: “Was hat dieser Vollblutmusiker mit seinem Drange zu monumentalen Gestaltungen, die noch immer von klassischen Grundtyp ausgehen, mit seiner Vorliebe für das Volksliedhafte und Volkstümliche, mit den Krämpfen der Tönen oder gar mit der atonalen Psychose zu schaffen?”

Mahler in 1912. Schoenberg did not publish the lecture immediately, and it was not until the preparation of *Style and Idea* (1950) that he translated the lecture into English, with Dika Newlin's assistance, for publication.¹⁹² Throughout the essay, Schoenberg cited common criticisms of Mahler's style, arguing that the objects of these criticisms were in fact vital to what Mahler was trying to accomplish.

Peter Franklin, who writes about this essay at length, considers Schoenberg's interpretations of Mahler in light of his own identity formation.¹⁹³ Franklin takes an extreme position: "In fairness we would have to observe that the entire essay has really very little to do with Mahler; I might even venture to doubt that Schoenberg cared a great deal for his works."¹⁹⁴ Later he phrases this in more colorful terms:

Beyond the quirky mannerisms of Schoenberg's written style—the oddly overwrought visionary tone, the frequently threatened self-revelation as Messiah—a startlingly clear exposition of his most secret philosophy of art is to be found in this essay. Behind the image of Mahler is to be seen a more complete likeness of Schoenberg than may be found in any photograph or almost any biographical or critical study of him.¹⁹⁵

192. Arnold Schoenberg, "Gustav Mahler," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Dika Newlin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 7-36. The differences between the original lecture and the English version of 1950 are established in Ivan Vojtěch, ed., *Arnold Schönberg Gesammelte Schriften 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), 482-483.

193. Peter Franklin, "An Essay by Schoenberg," in *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 89.

194. *Ibid.*, 82.

195. *Ibid.*, 89.

Schoenberg certainly frames Mahler's significance in terms that easily transfer to his own position as a scorned composer of new music—a fact that Franklin demonstrates well. However, in light of the views of Specht and others about Mahler's music, the ideas in Schoenberg's essay are not so easily dismissed.

Some of Schoenberg's contemporaries were also suspicious of the Viennese musical avant-garde's appropriation of Mahler. Paul Banks, commenting on Schoenberg's effort to populate his compositional heritage with musical greats, characterizes this appropriation, after James L. Rolleston, as Schoenberg's "search for ancestors."¹⁹⁶ Certainly Korngold, as we have seen—and also Joseph Marx in the 1930s, after the First Republic's demise—countered attempts to portray Mahler as anything but a late Romantic composer. In covering the premiere of the first and third movements of Mahler's Tenth Symphony in 1924, Korngold emphasizes how firmly even Mahler's incomplete work is planted in common-practice musical idioms, finally exclaiming, "What a paradox . . . are the attempts of the expressionists and atonalists to place Mahler among their ancestors! The revolution needs an ancestry; to this end, its upstarts violate *Altvater* Bach as the last Beethoven, and they also abuse Mahler."¹⁹⁷

196. Paul Banks, "Mahler and Viennese Modernism," in *On Mahler and Britten*, ed. Philip Reed, Aldeburgh Studies in Music 3, 15 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995), after James L. Rolleston, "The Discourse of Abstraction: Thinking about Art, 1904-1914," in *Arthur Schnitzler and His Age*, ed. Petrus W. Tax and Richard Lawson, 123 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984).

197. Korngold, "Mahlers zehnte Symphonie," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 15, 1924: "Wie paradox daher die Versuche der Expressionisten und Atonalisten Mahler unter ihre Stammväter zu versetzen! Die Revolution braucht Ahnen; ihre Emporkömmlinge vergewaltigen zu diesem Zwecke Altvater Bach wie den letzten Beethoven, und sie mißbrauchen auch Gustav Mahler."

Schoenberg, however, was less interested in how diatonic, rhythmic, or formally arranged Mahler's music was than in what Mahler accomplished with his innovations. In the first place, Schoenberg argues that Mahler's perceived faults are often merely pieces that make sense in the context of the entire puzzle: "We do not believe enough in the whole thing, in the great thing, but demand irrefutable details. We depend too little upon that capacity which gives us an impression of the object as a totality containing within itself all details in their corresponding relationships."¹⁹⁸ Even with the best of intentions, the listener struggles to make sense of the parts of Mahler's whole works. As an example, Schoenberg brings up the often discussed matter of banal themes in Mahler's compositions:

Here and there one has come across a passage which one does not like; a melody which one finds banal, which seems to be unoriginal; a continuation which one does not understand, for one thinks to find a better substitute; a voice-leading which seems to scorn all the requirements heretofore set up for good voice-leading. . . . It is pardonable that such a one feels justified in caviling at details. . . . But, as has been said, we are petty; simply because we cannot survey the great thing in its entirety, we concern ourselves with its details—and, as punishment for our presumptuous behavior, we fail even there.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, Schoenberg contends, Mahler's unique stylistic traits often initially strike the ear as flaws: "Whenever the most personal of the composer's peculiarities appear, the listener is struck. But instead of recognizing immediately that this is a special feature, he interprets the blow as a blow of offense. He

198. Schoenberg, "Gustav Mahler," 7.

199. *Ibid.*, 10.

believes that there is a mistake, a fault here, and fails to see that it is a merit.”²⁰⁰

Here again, Schoenberg explains that such elements must not be evaluated in isolation but rather understood only as parts of a work’s totality: “how can one speak of a sentimental theme, when this complaining, sorrowing theme may, in the course of events, elevate itself to resignation? . . . The whole work can be sentimental, but not the single passage. For its relationship to the whole is decisive: what it becomes, what importance it is granted in the whole.”²⁰¹

Mahler’s orchestration was another object of frequent criticism, primarily for its alleged excess. According to Schoenberg, however, it is never superfluous; on the contrary, it emerges as part of the work’s content: “His sound never comes from ornamental additions, from accessories that are related not at all or only distantly to the important material, and that are put down only as decorations.”²⁰² Echoing his earlier statement that “what usually appears merely as a symptom of the outward form” in Mahler’s music is “material and construction as well,”²⁰³ Schoenberg writes that

where it soughs, it is the theme which soughs; the themes have such a form and so many notes that it immediately becomes clear that the soughing is not the *aim* of this passage, but its *form* and *content*. Where it grunts and groans, the themes and harmonies grunt and groan; but where it crashes, gigantic structures clash against one another; the architecture

200. Schoenberg, “Gustav Mahler,” 19.

201. *Ibid.*, 17.

202. *Ibid.*, 25.

203. *Ibid.*, 14.

crumbles; the architectonic relationships of tension and pressure are in revolt.²⁰⁴

Here again, what might at first seem faulty is argued to be a strength.

Schoenberg maintains that the attributes he discusses are qualities of Mahler's personal compositional style, inspired from within. In following his own path, Mahler epitomizes Schoenberg's idea of the forward-looking genius artist whose own time—with its own fashions and paths toward comfortable success—rejects him: “The truly great have always had to flee from the present into the future, but the present has never belonged so completely to the mediocre as it does today. . . . No one wants to write just for today, even if he can hardly be believed in for as long as one day.”²⁰⁵ But the virtue of remaining committed to artistic greatness at the expense of success in the moment, Schoenberg writes, is the lesson of Mahler's model: “The genius lights the way, and we strive to follow. Do we really strive enough? Are we not bound too much to the present? We shall follow, for we must. Whether we want to or not. It draws us upward. This . . . is what Gustav Mahler's work, like the work of every man, was allowed to tell us.”²⁰⁶ Phrases such as this certainly bring to mind Schoenberg, himself an iconoclastic composer just a few years into his “emancipation of dissonance” and looking to the future rather than the present. Nevertheless, Schoenberg does not just dwell on aspects of Mahler's biography, e.g. his unwillingness to cater to

204. Schoenberg, “Gustav Mahler,” 25.

205. *Ibid.*, 11.

206. *Ibid.*, 35.

fashion. He also draws attention to the compositions themselves as models of what artists should aspire to. Schoenberg's position is not too far from that of Bach. As we saw in Chapter Two, Bach recognized in Mahler's music a revolutionary art that, in its progressive compositional language, inspires inventive, creative thinking in its audience and nourishes social progress. Nor is it far from Specht's characterization of Mahler's symphonies as "the musical penitential sermons of our generation," works that avoid the merely pretty or comfortable and instead confront audiences with the "unheard-of truth."²⁰⁷ For his part, Schoenberg points to the musical work as the embodiment and bearer of a cultural ideal—the high assessment of original art of integrity instead of trendy and marketable art. Schoenberg, in fact, sounds a lot like Specht in his remark to student Karl Linke, "Music should not adorn but rather be pure."²⁰⁸

3.4 Adorno and Mahler

Having completed a doctoral degree in philosophy at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Theodor W. Adorno moved to Vienna in 1925. Adorno had met Berg the previous year at the Frankfurt premiere of the *Drei Bruchstücke aus "Wozzeck"* and now began studying composition with

207. Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (1913), 161: "Mahlers Werk und seine Symphonik vor allem ist die musikalische Bergpredigt unserer Generation."

208. *Arnold Schönberg* (Munich: Piper, 1912), 77: "Die Musik soll aber nicht schmücken, sie soll bloß sein."

him.²⁰⁹ By this point, Adorno, trained as a pianist, had already developed an interest in the music of Schoenberg as well as Mahler, and Berg's music suited his existing tastes well, as he later recounted: "the *Wozzeck* pieces, above all the introduction to the March and then the March itself, struck me as a combination of Schoenberg and Mahler, and at the time that was my ideal of genuine new music."²¹⁰

Among Schoenberg's Mahler-admiring adherents, none has caused as much controversy as Adorno, whose book *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (1960), translated into English in 1992, made a stir for its insistence upon the "brokenness" of Mahler's music.²¹¹ Constantin Floros complains that in spite of what good Adorno did, "It was nevertheless of considerable consequence for Mahler reception in the past twenty-five years that Adorno completely ignored Mahler's authentic programs and, with them, the composer's own worldview."²¹² More controversial still is the excessive degree to

209. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4.

210. Adorno, "Reminiscence," in *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*, translated by Juliane Brand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 13. A good recent study of Adorno's relation to Viennese music culture in the 1920s is Heinz Steinert, *Adorno in Wien: Über die (Un)Möglichkeit von Kunst, Kultur und Befreiung* (Muenster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2003). I should add here that there is some controversy regarding Adorno's authority as spokesperson for Schoenberg's circle; see Richard Wattenbarger, "A 'Very German Process': The Contexts of Adorno's Strauss Critique," *19th-Century Music* 25 (2002): 317.

211. Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), in English as *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

212. Constantin Floros, "Zur Wirkungsgeschichte Gustav Mahlers," in *Fragment or Completion? Proceedings of the Mahler X Symposium Utrecht 1986*, ed. Paul Op de Coul, 188 (The Hague, 1991), cited and translated in Peter Franklin, "...his fractures are the script of

which, according to John Williamson, Adorno's ideas are "insert[ed] . . . as a canonical text between work and critical reception."²¹³ Critic David Allenby, too, laments "Adorno's deified status" as well as "the level to which the Adornian view has been propagated, along with other modernist dogma, by a musico-critical elite." Allenby suggests alternatively that we "regard his view of Mahler as at best historically interesting but now anachronistic, and at worst too specific even in its own time to have any universal significance."²¹⁴ The following discussion of Adorno's ideas about Mahler—and my further encounters with Adorno in Chapter Four—will, I hope, convey in a convincing manner that Adorno's views go far beyond the merely "historically interesting." The terms in which Adorno understood Mahler symphonies reveal his strong affiliation with concepts that Specht and Schoenberg dealt with and that circulated from the 1910s into the Mahler boom of the early- to mid-twenties, especially the idea that it avoided superficial aesthetic beauty for its own sake, subverted the treatment of artwork as commodity, and, like a musical sermon or prophecy, communicated a kind of artistic truth unwelcome in its own time.

truth.'—Adorno's Mahler," in *Mahler Studies*, ed. Stephen E. Hefling, 271 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

213 John Williamson, "Adorno and the Mahler 'Revival,'" letter to the editor, *Musical Times* 131 (1990): 405.

214. David Allenby, "Saint or Sinner?" review of *The Life of Mahler*, by Peter Franklin, and *Mahler Studies*, ed. by Stephen Hefling, *Musical Times* 139 (1998): 25-26. I was glad to see John J. Sheinbaum take issue with Allenby's remark, too; see Sheinbaum, "Adorno's Mahler and the Timbral Outsider," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131 (2006): 81-82.

The most important early crystallization of Adorno's ideas regarding Mahler's compositional approach and significance is his 1930 essay "Mahler Today," which reexamines a composer whom Adorno felt had been avoided because of the special challenges that his music posed.²¹⁵ What merited particular suspicion, Adorno posited, was that Schoenberg had been brushed off by means of strikingly similar ideas, all of which somehow threatened the establishment:

the Jewish intellectual whose deracinated intellect ruins oh-so-beneficent Nature; the despoiler of venerably traditional musical goods, which are either turned into banalities or corroded, pure and simple; the abstract fanatic with the will, discovered by Riemann, "to accomplish something unheard-of," who is burning down the lovely greensward all around us, on which everyone else feels so good—Mahler, like Schoenberg, is the butt of all these accusations, as if the radical dialectical rupture of the newer music did not fall between them.²¹⁶

Responsible for repressing Mahler, writes Adorno, was "the bourgeois music culture of the prewar world," which "has reconstituted itself and strictly rejects everything that is not in keeping with its moderate peacefulness. Everything that does not fit in is regarded as crazy and esoteric, or banal and kitsch."²¹⁷ Adorno thus identifies the aspects of Mahler's style to which critics were averse as subverting the very establishment that intended to sweep him under the rug.

215. Adorno, "Mahler Today," translated by Susan H. Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert, 603-611 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), originally published as "Mahler Heute," *Anbruch* 12 (1930): 86-92. It should be noted that "Mahler Heute" was printed in the second special Mahler issue of *Anbruch* (formerly *Musikblätter des Anbruch*), which contains several other essays of interest.

216. Adorno, "Mahler Today," 603-604.

217. *Ibid.*, 604.

Central to Mahler's musical language, after all, argues Adorno, was the radically new formal and thematic treatment of nineteenth-century musical idioms. Mahler's music, Adorno posits, "wants to be understood in two layers: The external layer, with which it protected itself and which probably grew to be a part of it from the time of its inception, communicates with romanticism. These relationships have been explored to excess. Mahler's form results from the contest between his substance and that romantic layer."²¹⁸ By "substance," Adorno means the phrase, theme group, theme, motive, and all other compositional building blocks that, when composed out, typically generate the work as a whole. The crucial quality that Adorno senses in Mahler's oeuvre indeed can be found in this "contest," especially where the substance behaves in unexpected ways: "But the relations among motifs . . . are not principles of the architecture but cells from which the totality grows *without ever being constructed according to its abstract measure.*"²¹⁹

Adorno contends that Mahler, like Schoenberg, composed "in protest against the bourgeois symmetry of form, to which [both composers] oppose the free contours of the freshly trodden landscape of the imagination," although they composed in different musical languages, "Mahler with the archaically corroded material of romanticism; Schoenberg with material that is driven forward

218. Adorno, "Mahler Today," 607.

219. *Ibid.*, 608, emphasis mine.

dialectically.”²²⁰ Here, Adorno invites the reader to take the apparently problematic aspects of Mahler’s musical style, aspects that had finally become accepted by so many in postwar Vienna, and see them again as problematic—that is, not to reject them anew but rather simply to value them as problems. In Adorno’s view, the disruptive and the problematic are the content of Mahler’s music, and this is what Adorno attempts to elevate.

Like Specht and Schoenberg, Adorno understood Mahler’s compositions as earnest expressions of his own artistic vision, as opposed to what audiences wanted to hear. Furthermore, Adorno shared Schoenberg’s embrace of the Mahlerian detail and gave equal emphasis to the importance of understanding the work as a whole. That said, certain aspects of Adorno’s perspective are glaring in their uniqueness. To Adorno, the most idiosyncratic and controversial features of Mahler’s music—from banal theme to unsatisfactorily constructed movement—are acts of subversion. Adorno also held that an awareness of Mahler’s brokenness, moreover, was an awareness of the world’s brokenness: “His musical figure is present among us and his contents should be, too, if people were not anxiously endeavoring to paste over the cracks that cut through the objective world despite all objectivity; their sense becomes legible in Mahler’s works.”²²¹

220. Adorno, “Mahler Today,” 608.

221. *Ibid.*, 609-610.

3.5 Conclusion

During this time of its unprecedented popularity in Vienna, Mahler's music was understood to represent the composer's effort to remain true to his inner art in spite of his resulting notoriety among critics and his unfashionability. Although this idea certainly emerged during Mahler's lifetime and, to be sure, from no single source, it took on renewed meaning in the writings of Specht and Schoenberg, which grant special status to Mahler's compositions as the embodiment of a kind of vital truth, made possible only by virtue of Mahler's steadfast adherence to the highest artistic integrity and refusal to settle merely for what happened to be in vogue. The implication emerges that had Mahler composed in a tamer way, or had he subdued the uncouth and the animal, he would not only have been guilty of composing conventionally, but his music as well would have been dishonest. In light of this, the young Adorno's ideas about the subversiveness of Mahler's compositions—some of which would appear in his better known book in 1960—emerge from a context to which they are plainly indebted.

CHAPTER 4

ALBAN BERG AND THE MAHLER OF 1920S VIENNA

Carl Dahlhaus had the Mahler wave of the 1960s and early 70s in mind when he observed that “the newly received is hardly less characteristic of the spirit of an epoch than the newly composed.”²²² Illustrating this principle, Dahlhaus went on to show that “Mahler’s music is directly, not inversely, connected to the tendencies of the musical avant-garde of the sixties.”²²³ In Kagel’s music, he wrote, “Mahler’s influence is apparent not in musical technique but in attitude,” whereas in Ligeti’s works that influence is “latent and hardly graspable, but nevertheless undeniable.”²²⁴ Dahlhaus also mentioned Berio’s *Sinfonia*, well known for its use of Mahler’s Second Symphony Scherzo and quotations from works of other composers. “It is legitimate,” he argued, “that Luciano Berio . . . made the Scherzo from Mahler’s Second Symphony the basis for a collage, a musical rag rug, insofar as Mahler already presages collage technique, the gluing together of heterogeneous constituent parts, in movements

222. Carl Dahlhaus, “Rätselhafte Popularität: Gustav Mahler—Zuflucht vor der Moderne oder der Anfang der Neuen Musik,” in Peter Ruzicka, ed., *Mahler—Eine Herausforderung: Ein Symposium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1977), 5: “Für den Geist einer Epoche ist das neu Rezipierte kaum weniger bezeichnend als das neu Komponierte.”

223. Ibid., 10: “Dagegen ist Mahlers Musik mit den Tendenzen der musikalischen Avant-Garde in den sechziger Jahren unmittelbar, nicht durch Umkehrung, verbunden.”

224. Ibid.: “Bei Kagel etwa ist der Einfluß Mahlers (nicht in der musikalischen Technik, aber in der Attitüde) manifest,” “latent und kaum greifbar, aber dennoch nicht zu leugnen.”

such as the first *Nachtmusik* from the Seventh Symphony.”²²⁵ But as the preceding chapters demonstrate, the importance of Mahler’s music to late Imperial and First Republic Vienna was manifested in many ways. The strong presence of Mahler and his works in Viennese music culture of that time, not only in concert halls but also in minds and discourse, naturally left an impression in the history of composition, too.

This chapter addresses how Mahler’s music can be understood to have effected Viennese composers who were active in the Mahler wave of the late 1910s, 1920s, and early 1930s. After briefly surveying some salient examples of composers in Vienna who modeled works after Mahler’s, I focus on Alban Berg. Scholars have long sought to trace Berg’s longstanding and well-documented enthusiasm for Mahler in his compositions. Discussions of Mahler’s influence on Berg and others in the Schoenberg circle normally single out instances of musical irony, nostalgia, and references to earlier or simpler musical idioms. An alternative can be found in Adorno’s early work on Mahler, which emphasizes and attempts to explain the compositional innovation in his works, rather than dwelling on the aforementioned elements that so often dominate our view of Mahler today. Adorno’s discussion of Berg’s Chamber Concerto (composed in 1923-25, published in 1925) illuminates compositional approaches akin to those

225. Dahlhaus, 10-11: “Und daß Luciano Berio in einer Sinfonia das Scherzo aus Mahlers Zweiter Symphonie zur Grundlage einer Collage, eines musikalischen Flickenteppichs machte, ist (trotz mancher Fragwürdigkeiten des Werkes) insofern legitim, als die Collage-Technik, das Zusammenkleben heterogener Bestandstücke, bei Mahler in Sätzen wie der ersten Nachtmusik aus der Siebten Symphonie bereits vorgezeichnet ist.”

he found in Mahler's music. This chapter demonstrates that by better understanding the terms in which Mahler's works were received by composers in 1920s Vienna, we gain an improved sense of the full richness of things waiting to be discovered in those composers' works.

4.1 Composition in the Wake of Mahler's Wave

Because Mahler's works were so prominent in the musical life of Vienna during these years, critics occasionally evoked his name when describing the symphonic works of contemporary composers from other parts of the world. For example, in anticipation of an upcoming Viennese performance of the Russian composer Nikolai Mjaskowsky's Sixth Symphony, one local critic declared that the "monumental structure" and "rich, inventive melodies" of the work qualified its composer for the moniker "the Mahler of Russia."²²⁶

But far more intriguing than this phenomenon are the instances in which the composers themselves left signs of Mahlerian inspiration in some of their works. A striking example of this is Karl Horwitz's *Vom Tode*, op. 8, a four-movement work consisting of an instrumental overture and three orchestral songs for baritone. Horwitz, who had studied with Schoenberg, completed the work in 1922 and self-published it with the Viennese publisher Waldheim-

226. P.H., "Moderne Musik im In- und Auslande," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 8 (1926): 239: "monumentaler Aufbau," "reiche und erfindungsstarke Melodik," "den Mahler Rußlands." For a more involved discussion of Mjaskowsky, see Paul A. Pisk, "Mjaskowsky als Sinfoniker," *Kunst und Volk* 2, no. 12 (March 1928): 9-10.

Eberle.²²⁷ When *Vom Tode* premiered on a Workers' Symphony Concert conducted by Fritz Stiedry on January 19, 1924, it was programmed alongside Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.²²⁸ This was an appropriate pairing, given that the overture, titled "Totenfeier, zum 18. Mai 1911," was, according to Horwitz, "composed under the influence of Gustav Mahler's death."²²⁹ The overture makes reference to Mahler's Second Symphony not only by name (*Totenfeier* was the title of the symphonic poem that became the opening movement of the Second) but also by quoting from the Second Symphony's finale.²³⁰ The three orchestral songs represent "man's conflict with death, which either fills him with horror (movement 2, 'The Adversary'), brings him untold sorrow (movement 3, 'Death'), or amounts to the salvation he longs for (movement 4, 'To Rest')."²³¹ Among the critics covering the premiere, Paul Stefan was attuned to the work's role as homage, particularly the first movement: "The overture heads into the world of [Mahler's] symphonies but is definitely of its own spirit, and in its demeanor and skill it is worthy of the master, whom it may justifiably name and

227. Hermann Danuser, "Karl Horwitz' *Vom Tode*—Ein Dokument der Mahler-Verehrung aus der Schönberg-Schule," in *Mahler-Interpretation: Aspekte zum Werk und Wirken von Gustav Mahler*, ed. Rudolf Stephan, 181 (Mainz: Schott, 1985).

228. Johann Wilhelm Seidl, *Musik und Austromarxismus: Zur Musikrezeption der österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung im späten Kaiserreich und in der Ersten Republik*, Wiener musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge 17 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 204.

229. Karl Horwitz, "Vom Tode," *Pult und Taktstock* 1 (1924): 29: "Das Vorspiel (Totenfeier, zum 18. Mai 1911) ist unter dem Eindruck des Todes Gustav Mahlers geschrieben."

230. *Ibid.*

231. *Ibid.* "Auseinandersetzungen des Menschen mit dem Tode, welcher ihn entweder mit Schrecken erfüllt (2. Der Feind) oder ihm unsägliche Trauer bringt (3. Der Tod) oder für ihn die ersehnte Erlösung bedeutet (4. Zur Ruh')."

cite.”²³² Moreover, as Hermann Danuser shows, the final song “Zur Ruh” recalls Mahler, too, not only as an obvious counterpart to the last movement from *Das Lied der Erde*, “Abschied,” but also in stylistic aspects that suggest numerous other passages in Mahler’s oeuvre.²³³

Another noteworthy homage to Mahler from the same time is Zemlinsky’s *Lyric Symphony* (1924), a kind of song symphony consisting of seven orchestral Lieder for male and female singers (baritone and soprano) on poems by Rabindranath Tagore. Zemlinsky, now living in Prague, fostered a love for Mahler’s music that reached back to the years when Mahler conducted the Vienna Court Opera.²³⁴ His unrequited love for the young Alma Schindler is well known, as are the visits he and Schoenberg frequently made to the Mahler household together a few years later.²³⁵ In his career as a conductor, Zemlinsky regularly brought Mahler’s orchestral works to the concert hall, especially in

232. Paul Stefan, “Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert,” *Die Stunde*, January 22, 1924: “Das Vorspiel führt in die Welt seiner Symphonien, ist aber durchaus eigenen Geistes und in seiner Haltung, seinem hohen Können des Meisters würdig, den es mit Recht nennen und zitieren darf. Die drei Gesänge für tiefe Stimmen . . . , auf Verse von Brentano, Claudius und J Kerner, zeigen die gleichen Vorzüge (und die hohe literarische und philosophische Bildung) des Komponisten, der hier ein modernes Requiem in Erlösung enden läßt.”

233. Danuser, *passim*.

234. Zemlinsky’s interest in Mahler has inspired several scholarly investigations. See John Gordon Williamson, “Mahler’s ‘Wunderhorn’ Style and Zemlinsky’s ‘Schneiderlein,’” in *Das Gustav-Mahler-Fest Hamburg 1989*, ed. Matthias Vogt, 293-311 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989); Jitka Ludvova, “Mahler, Zemlinsky und die Tschechische Philharmonie,” *Nachrichten zur Mahler-Forschung* 36 (1997): 3-10; and Christy Morgan, “Alexander von Zemlinsky and the Influence of the Mahlers and Schönberg,” *Musical Opinion* 129 (2006): 28-29.

235. Stephen E. Hefling, “Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schönberg,” in *Mahler’s Unknown Letters*, edited by Herta Blaukopf, trans. Richard Stokes (London: Gollancz, 1986), 168.

Prague, and according to Antony Beaumont, *Das Lied von der Erde* in particular became “a hallmark of his concert repertoire.”²³⁶

In hindsight, therefore, it seems natural that Zemlinsky, in the early stages of composing the *Lyric Symphony*, described it to his publisher Hertzka (Universal Edition) as “something in the style of *Das Lied von der Erde*.”²³⁷

Monika Lichtenfeld has shown in great detail that the work indeed resembles Mahler’s in numerous ways, at least some of which were apparent to Zemlinsky’s contemporaries.²³⁸ In a review of the work’s premiere in Prague, Paul Stefan made the following observations:

With this work, Zemlinsky took up the perilous vicinity of *Das Lied von der Erde*. Here, as there, are poems arranged for a man’s and a woman’s voice from the emotional world of the far east—Zemlinsky took them from Tagore’s volume—here, as there, tender love and farewell, but with Zemlinsky even more definite the symphonic form of the whole, for the sake of which the individual songs often lead into one another without pause.²³⁹

236. Antony Beaumont, *Zemlinsky* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 224.

237. Monika Lichtenfeld, “Zemlinsky und Mahler,” in *Alexander Zemlinsky: Tradition im Umkreis der Wiener Schule*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch, Institut für Wertungsforschung 7, 101 (Graz: Universal Edition, 1976), 101: “in der Art des Liedes von der Erde.”

238. To this day, Lichtenfeld’s study remains the most extensive to address the various connections between the *Lyric Symphony* and *Das Lied von der Erde*. Beaumont offers a dissenting viewpoint, arguing that the works are only superficially similar: “The form of Mahler’s work is linear, Zemlinsky’s is circular; Mahler divides his work into six clearly separated movements, Zemlinsky prefers a through-composed, operatic structure.” Beaumont also observed that “where Mahler’s ideal is of sharp-edged clarity, for Zemlinsky clarity is often subservient to emotional pluralism. The scoring is often denser and, if performed with anything less than exquisite care, less diaphanous than in any other of his works.” See Beaumont, 319.

239. Stefan, “Prag und die Prager, Smetana und Zemlinsky,” *Die Stunde*, June 12, 1924: “Zemlinsky hat sich mit diesem Werk in die gefährliche Nachbarschaft des ‘Liedes von der Erde’ begeben: hier wie dort haben auch eine Männer- und eine Frauenstimme verteilte Gedichte aus der Gefühlswelt des fernen Ostens—Zemlinsky hat sie den Bänden Tagores entnommen—, hier wie dort zarte Liebe und Abschied, bei Zemlinsky aber noch deutlicher die symphonische Form des Ganzen, der zuliebe die einzelnen Gesänge oft ineinander ohne Pause übergehen.”

When Zemlinsky conducted the premiere of the *Lyric Symphony*—just days before conducting the premiere of Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*—Berg (whose *Lyric Suite* is at least as much an homage to the *Lyric Symphony* as the latter is to Mahler’s work) honored him with a side-by-side comparison of his career with that of Mahler.²⁴⁰

In 1925, the Czech composer Fidelio F. Finke wrote a piece that resembles *Das Lied von der Erde* strongly enough that it deserves mentioning here. Although Finke was not Viennese, the work has a remarkable connection to the city and to Mahler. Finke, having already written a cycle of five orchestral songs for tenor and soprano released a few years earlier as *Frühling*, then composed a sixth movement, “Abschied,” based on a poem by Franz Werfel, for both singers, who first sing one by one and then in duet.²⁴¹ Werfel, of course, was the husband of Mahler’s widow Alma, and the couple’s circle of friends included Berg, Schoenberg, and many other notable figures. The superficial resemblance of this work to *Das Lied von der Erde*—which also consists of six orchestral songs for male and female voice, the last one titled “Abschied”—suggests a Mahlerian heritage, and if this similarity was inadvertent, Werfel may

240. Alexander Zemlinsky, *Briefwechsel mit Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg, und Franz Schreker*, ed. Horst Weber (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 308-310, cited in Lorraine Gorrell, *Discordant Melody: Alexander Zemlinsky, His Songs, and the Second Viennese School*, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance 64 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 50-51.

241. Fidelio F. Finke, “‘Abschied’: Lyrische Szene für Sopran, Tenor und Orchester nach Worten von Franz Werfel,” *Pult und Taktstock* 2 (1925): 66-67. This brief essay is an entry in a longer article consisting of composers’ descriptions of their works being performed in that year’s Prague Music Festival (“Die Komponisten des Prager Musikfestes über ihre Werke,” 63-68).

have mentioned it to Finke in any event. More strongly, however, the romantic subject matter in Finke's cycle recalls Zemlinsky's *Lyrical Symphony*.

The proximity of these examples to Schoenberg's circle of friends seems natural, given the admiration for Mahler's music that he shared with his friends (such as Zemlinsky and David Josef Bach) and cultivated in his students.²⁴² I addressed in Chapter Three the fact that although Schoenberg and several of his students were major proponents of Mahler's music, Mahler's actual influence on their works is sometimes treated skeptically. Schoenberg's love for Mahler's music has long been a point of controversy, from the rejection of his appropriation of Mahler's legacy by musically conservative contemporary critics to the suspicion of his motives by musicologists more recently.

4.2 Berg and Mahler

Schoenberg's student Berg, however, is another matter. Of the three composers associated with the "second Viennese school," Berg's combination of biographical and compositional connections to Mahler has afforded him the least controversial comparison to Mahler. Like that of Schoenberg, Berg's long record of activities and comments attest to his interest in the older composer's music. Berg was just a teenager when he first encountered Mahler through *Das klagende Lied*, a mere fledgling composer when he saw Mahler off at the train

242. Besides Berg (whom I discuss below), Anton Webern's connections to Mahler have attracted attention over the years. See Elmar Budde, "Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis Mahler-Webern," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 33 (1976): 159-173 and Julian Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

station in 1907 upon the latter's departure to New York City. Berg's musical style, so often contrasted with that of Schoenberg in its relative proximity to Mahler's post-Romanticism, more readily facilitates the case for influence.

Berg's well-known love for Mahler and his works has inspired numerous studies that compare the music of the two composers.²⁴³ Berg's Three Orchestral Pieces, Op. 6, for example, have attracted scholarly attention for years.²⁴⁴ As Hans Redlich shows, the second movement, "Reigen," recalls Mahler's propensity for derisive stylized dances, and the finale "Marsch," a tragic and distorted processional, strongly brings to mind the martial outer movements of Mahler's Sixth (Berg's march even shares climactic hammer blows with Mahler's finale).²⁴⁵ Mark DeVoto has identified several passages in Op. 6 that resemble others in Mahler's Sixth and Ninth Symphonies.²⁴⁶

243 Nicholas Chadwick's study of Berg's early Lieder outlines four stylistic periods, each of which suggests varying levels of stylistic influence from Mahler, Brahms, and Schoenberg ("Berg's Unpublished Songs in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek," *Musik and Letters* 52 [1971]: 123-140). See also Zoltan Roman, "The Orchestral Interlude in *Wozzeck*, III, 4/5: Berg's 'Homage' to Mahler and *Das Lied von der Erde*," in *Atti del XIV congresso della Societa Internazionale di Musicologia, Bologna, 1987: Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di cultura musical*, 3:361-368 (Turin: Edizioni di Torino, 1990), Constantin Floros, "Alban Berg und Gustav Mahler," in *Gustav Mahler: "Meine Zeit wird kommen"—Aspekte der Mahler-Rezeption*, ed. Georg Borchardt, 75-85 (Hamburg: Dolling und Galitz, 1996), Constantin Floros, "Gustav Mahler, Alban Berg und das Österreichische in der Musik," in *Entwicklungen, Parallelen, Kontraste—Zur Frage einer "österreichischen Symphonik"*, ed. Renate Grasberger et. al., 165-173 (Vienna: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1996).

244. Most recent is Derrick Puffett, "Berg, Mahler, and the Three Orchestral Pieces, Op. 6," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berg*, ed. Anthony Pople, 111-144 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

245. Hans Redlich, *Alban Berg: Versuch einer Würdigung* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1957), 93-101.

246. Mark DeVoto, "Alban Berg's 'Marche Macabre,'" *Perspectives of New Music* 22 (1983-84): 442-445.

Although the Three Orchestral Pieces might appear upon first glance to be Berg's only work resembling a symphony, his *Drei Bruchstücke aus "Wozzeck"* (premiered in 1924) and *Symphonische Stücke aus der Oper "Lulu"* (premiered in 1934)—both arrangements intended to popularize the operas from which their materials were drawn—are, in effect, multi-movement orchestral works that, in certain places, incorporate the singing voice. Margaret Notley has pointed to the Mahlerian qualities of the *Symphonische Stücke* in particular, noting that "it recalls the lush sound of late Mahler in melodic style, orchestration, and at times choice of harmonies." Notley also observes that Berg considered calling the work a symphony.²⁴⁷

As the preceding survey begins to show, discussions about Berg's debt to Mahler's compositional style tend to base comparisons of the two composers' works on the idea that both approached musical style eclectically, juxtaposed contrasting styles, and remolded and recontextualized traditional genres. Dave Headlam recently noted that while Mahler's music often juxtaposes the musically simple (e.g. folk-music idiom) with the musically complex and cerebral, in Berg's music the familiar stylistic features of tonal music frequently bubble to the surface of compositions otherwise dominated by rhythms of cutting-edge complexity and atonal, sometimes twelve-tone pitch organizational schemes.²⁴⁸ But Headlam

247. Margaret Notley, "Berg's *Propaganda* Pieces: The 'Platonic Idea' of *Lulu*," *Journal of Musicology* 25 (2008): 101.

248. Dave Headlam, *The Music of Alban Berg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 385.

also insists that such comparisons also help reveal the differences between

Mahler's and Berg's approaches to composition:

Although the juxtaposition of styles is an important component of the emotional and spiritual affect in the music of both composers, Mahler stayed within one system, operating at both extremes of the tonal language, whereas it is usually asserted that Berg, under the influence of Schoenberg, took the process a step further by adapting aspects of atonal and twelve-tone techniques and balancing these with tonal features even within the same pieces.²⁴⁹

Comparing Berg's historical position at the turn of a new music-historical era with that of Monteverdi, Headlam stresses that even the passages in Berg's music that hearken back to post-Romanticism manifest the same compositional approaches found in his less ambiguously atonal and twelve-tone music. Thus, Berg "create[d] a language that subsumed tonal harmonies, progressions, and voice-leading as one option among many within a larger cyclic language."²⁵⁰ Headlam is not suggesting that this unity detracts from the expressivity of references to the tonal tradition. Quite the contrary, he contends that "Berg actively invoked the changed emotional power of tonal gestures and relationships," and "the symbols he found in tonality—nostalgia, vulgarity, folk images, deconstructed waltzes and marches, peace and tranquility—retain their potency, regardless of the level of integration."²⁵¹ Headlam bases his comparison of the two composers' styles on an idea that underlies how Mahler's music is

249. Headlam, 385.

250. *Ibid.*, 388.

251. *Ibid.*

understood today—that these symbols are at the heart of Mahler’s affective potency and are closely connected with the juxtaposition of styles.

4.3 Mahler’s Music in Berg’s Vienna

Mahler’s stylistic juxtapositions attracted the attention of music critics from his lifetime through the 1930s, and there is little doubt that Mahler intended to pique the imaginative processes of listeners through them. There was much more, however, to the challenges that Mahler’s music posed for contemporary and later audiences, even in areas as fundamental as formal structure. As Notley has shown, while a number of Viennese Liberal critics tried to embrace Mahler’s works in the early twentieth century, they were nevertheless at a loss to explain ruptures in the formal structures or thematic treatment that had no precedents in the music of Beethoven or Brahms.²⁵² Moreover, Mahler’s earlier symphonies were associated to varying extents with programmatic descriptions that the composer subsequently suppressed, which only exacerbated the difficulty for critics who attempted to make analytical sense of the music. The fractured logic seemed to require “extra-musical” explanation.

This study provides several examples of prominent musical figures in Viennese musical life who valued Mahler’s works for their challenging innovations. David Josef Bach regarded Mahler as a revolutionary composer and

252. Notley, “Musical Culture in Vienna at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in Bryan R. Simms, ed., *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 42-45.

programmed most of his symphonies on the Workers' Symphony Concerts during the First Republic. We know from his early reviews for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* that he was especially enthusiastic about Mahler's novel treatments of form, his inclusion of stylistically unconventional and banal themes and passages, and the often jarring manner in which he juxtaposed passages of vastly different affect. These features, according to Bach, expanded the music's capacity to convey feelings and to imbue formal gestures with added meaning—features, Bach held, that a working-class audience already familiar with the symphonic tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could understand without explanatory programs.

Others latched onto the concept of Mahler's idiosyncratic compositional style as a spurning of the shallowness and complacency in the Viennese music culture of his day. To Richard Specht, Mahler's achievement was not simply in creating something new but rather in the "Ausdruck seines . . . Wesens" (expression of his nature).²⁵³ Arnold Schoenberg also considered Mahler's difference to be representative of the composer's faithfulness to his own inner vision, a virtue that Schoenberg championed in his own musical career as well.

Finally, Adorno embraced the rhetoric of musical truth found in discussions on Mahler's music by Schoenberg, Specht, and others. Even in his earliest years as a music critic during the 1920s, Adorno argued that there was a

253. Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schuster und Loeffler, 1913), 166.

moral urgency to aesthetically truthful music in a culture that had long come to expect music to serve as commodity (i.e. to fulfill the listener's expectation, to conform to taste and fashion, and to be beautiful) rather than as genuine artistic expression. His impassioned essays on the composers whose works he treasured above all, namely Mahler, Schoenberg, and Schoenberg's students (not least among them his composition teacher Berg), offer a rich source of insights into the nature and meaning of the new Viennese music—as well as its kinship to the works of Mahler—in that era.

Adorno had a broad range of ideas about Mahler's music and its relation to Berg's works. For instance, scattered throughout a 1931 essay Adorno wrote about Berg and Webern are various remarks regarding Mahler's significance to Berg. Adorno establishes early on that "Berg unites [Schoenberg] with Mahler on one hand and on the other with the great music drama and legitimizes him from this point."²⁵⁴ Turning to Berg's *Three Orchestral Pieces, Op. 6*, Adorno writes that "here Berg's contact with Mahler is fully consummated. Mahler's symphonic breadth, the concentration of brass groups, the choric richness of the woodwind movements are felt; the rhythmic character of the motives also has a relation to him."²⁵⁵ Making a comparison that many scholars have since echoed, Adorno describes the second movement as "a Reigen in the spirit of Mahler's scherzi."²⁵⁶

254. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, "Berg and Webern—Schönberg's Heirs," *Modern Music* 8, no. 2 (January-February 1931): 31.

255. *Ibid.*, 33.

256. *Ibid.*, 34.

In the case of *Wozzeck*, Adorno argues that Berg's compositional language and choice of genre lend a new depth of meaning to a recurring thread of Mahler's works: "The Mahler folk-lore"—he may have had in mind *Das klagende Lied*, the *Wunderhorn* texts, or the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*—"which was so at odds with independent atonality, here, under the domination of the dramatic idea, is transformed into a subterranean dream folk-lore, which is first revealed in its true light by the dissonant character of the harmony and the dimmed forte of the orchestra."²⁵⁷ In a letter to Berg a few years later regarding the *Symphonische Stücke aus der Oper "Lulu"*, Adorno suggests a Mahlerian quality in Berg's orchestration.²⁵⁸

Adorno's interest in the way that Mahler pitted the smaller units of a piece against the large-scale formal processes crops up in his "Mahler Heute" and again, decades later, in *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*.²⁵⁹ The idea appears as early as that December, however, when he compares Berg's transformational technique in *Wozzeck* with that of Mahler, writing that "[Mahler's technique of transformation] presents fixed themes in the foreground alone,

257. Adorno, "Berg and Webern," 34.

258. Adorno to Berg, 23 March 1935, Frankfurt am Main-Oberrad, in Adorno and Berg, *Correspondence, 1925-1935*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Wieland Hoban (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity, 2005), 221, cited in Notley, "Berg's Propaganda Pieces: The 'Platonic Idea' of *Lulu*," *Journal of Musicology* 25 (2008): 101.

259. Adorno, "Mahler Today," trans. Susan H. Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 603-611, originally published as "Mahler Heute," *Anbruch* 12 (1930): 86-92; *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), originally published as *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960).

oftentimes with the mockery of truly symbolic banality revoking the thematic privilege, but actually has its effect in the midst of the motivic cells and the thematically incommensurable structure.”²⁶⁰ Echoing contemporary remarks that now, in the period in which Mahler’s time had come into its own, people were finally able to comprehend Mahler’s new compositional language, Adorno advances an interpretation of his own—one that would remain in his reading of Mahler for decades to come—that a lack of inner resolution in the “thematically incommensurable structure” was implicit in the stylistically disparate passages, in the themes that seemed to contradict or refute one another. The ethical dimension that Adorno finds in this kind of whole—as a sum of irreconcilable parts—is expressed in the characteristics that he imbues those parts with: the “privilege” of the theme is denied with the “mockery of truly symbolic banality.”

Here, Adorno offers a point of comparison between the music of Berg and Mahler that merits further attention: that both composers explored the possibility of treating a work’s form and content as autonomous, participating in a kind of dialogue that can proceed either destructively (as with Mahler) or more playfully (as with Berg). Both of these cases offer a contrast to Adorno’s image of Beethoven, in which the universal and particular are reconciled in a brief period

260. Adorno, “Alban Berg: Zur Uraufführung des *Wozzeck*,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 7 (1925): 534-535: “Bergs Technik der Verwandlung trifft mit der Malerschen genau zusammen, die im Vordergrund nur, oftmals mit dem Hohn wahrhaft symbolischer Banalität das Thematische Sonderrecht verwerfend, fixierte Themen aufstellt, eigentlich aber zwischen der motivischen Zelle und dem Thematisch inkommensurabeln Bau waltet.”

of optimism in the early nineteenth century.²⁶¹ We saw in Chapter Three that Adorno believed in the importance of “the inseparable reciprocal relation between ‘content’ and ‘form’” from almost the very beginning of his involvement with the Viennese music scene, a fact that, on the face of it, could explain away this particular Berg-Mahler connection as Adorno’s fabrication.²⁶² But given the perceptive and insightful nature of Adorno’s observations of the music of both composers, Adorno may well have observed a compositional approach that Berg and Mahler had in common. Adorno’s earliest observations on Berg’s Chamber Concerto, which also include comparisons to Mahler, focus strongly on the interplay between the external logic of formal structures and the natural unfolding of motives and themes. This, as I will show, suggests a new way of locating the “Mahlerian” in Berg’s music.

4.4 Berg’s Chamber Concerto: The Open Letter of Dedication

When Berg finally introduced his Chamber Concerto, composed between 1923 and early 1925, to the Viennese musical community, it was neither as a published score nor in concert performance.²⁶³ Instead, he wrote and submitted

261. Responding to Adorno’s claim that “Beethoven’s music is Hegelian philosophy,” Richard Leppert writes that “Beethoven’s ‘connection’ to Hegel is manifested in the relation of his music to Absolute Spirit, a utopian construct of oneness in which the subject, as a particular, progresses forward and is ultimately reconciled to the all and preserved in it—a striving progression evident, for example, in sonata form development sections.” *Essays on Music*, 520.

262. Adorno to Berg, 6 January 1926, Frankfurt, in Adorno and Berg, *Correspondence*, 37.

263. The Chamber Concerto was published by Universal Edition on December 29, 1925 and premiered in Berlin on March 19, 1927. The Viennese premiere took place on March 31,

for publication in *Pult und Taktstock* an elaborately descriptive open letter to his former teacher Schoenberg, to whom he dedicated the work.²⁶⁴ The letter lays out a set of important characteristics of the concerto: the significance of certain motives, many numerological correspondences, formal procedures employed in each movement, the use of rhythmic motives, and numerous other features. Yet several clues, including a few obviously tongue-in-cheek remarks in the letter and a certain unruly quality to the music itself, suggest some irony in the mathematical rigor with which Berg charts the structure of his concerto.

To be sure, the Chamber Concerto is filled with riddles—some public and others secret—and their presence (if not their meaning) would be clear even without the open letter. The very beginning of the score includes a five-measure “motto” for the two soloists (violin and piano) and horn, captioned “Aller guten Dinge [All good things] . . . ,” with instructions that the motto be performed without the conductor. The motto is constructed so that the three melodic fragments are performed consecutively, one by each instrumentalist. The pianist enters first, holding its last pitch while the violin (also holding out its last note) and horn respectively enter with their fragments. This trio of melodic fragments, as Berg explains in the open letter, completes the motto’s caption (all good things

1927. See Douglas Jarman, “Introduction,” in Alban Berg, *Sämtliche Werke, I. Abteilung: Musikalische Werke, Band 5: Konzerte, Teil I: Kammerkonzert* (Vienna: Universal Edition and the Alban Berg Stiftung, 1996), xv-xvi.

264. Berg to Schoenberg, 9 February 1925, in *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, ed. Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris (New York: Norton, 1987): 334-337, originally published as “Alban Bergs Kammerkonzert für Geige und Klavier mit Begleitung von dreizehn Bläsern,” *Pult und Taktstock* 2 (1925): 23-28.

come in three), not only by signaling the significance of the number three to the concerto, but also by spelling the pitch letters from the names of Arnold Schoenberg (**Arnold SCHönBERG**), Anton Webern (**Anton WEBERn**), and Alban Berg (**AlBAN BERG**). These fragments are then heard immediately in the first several measures of the first movement and, by virtue of the piece's form and construction (which I discuss later), many additional times throughout the first and third movements. If this inspired any of the work's earliest listeners to think about each of the three composers in the roll call of their names, those listeners would have been surprised to learn that Berg did not just work his, Webern's and Schoenberg's names into the piece but also—privately—that of Schoenberg's recently deceased first wife Mathilde Zemlinsky; he seems, moreover, to have associated certain passages with Pisk, Polnauer, and other students of Schoenberg.²⁶⁵

Berg's letter also describes the form and structure of each movement. Symmetry and rigorous process are central to the movements' forms as he describes them. The first movement, Berg writes, features

the sixfold return of the same basic idea. This idea, a tripartite variation theme of 30 measures presented in the exposition by the wind ensemble, is initially repeated (1st recapitulation), i.e. varied for the first time by the piano alone exploiting its virtuosic potential. Variation 2 presents the melody of the "theme" in [retrograde]; variation 3 in [inversion]; variation 4 in retrograde inversion (whereby these 3 middle variations can be regarded as a quasi-development section of this "first

265. Barbara Dalen, "Freundschaft, Liebe, und Welt': The Secret Programme of the Chamber Concerto," in *The Berg Companion*, ed. Douglas Jarman, 141-180 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990).

movement sonata form”), whereas the last variation returns to the basic shape of the theme.²⁶⁶ Because this occurs by means of a stretto between piano and wind ensemble (—these are canons in which the voice that enters later tries to pass the one that entered first and indeed achieves this and leaves the other far behind—), this last variation (or recapitulation) takes on an entirely new dimension corresponding to its simultaneous structural function as a coda. Which really needn’t be stressed particularly, since each of these thematic transformations obviously takes on its own character, even though—and *this* I consider important—the Scherzo character of the first part generally predominates and must be adhered to during performance.²⁶⁷

Berg puts it gently when pointing out that “each of these thematic transformations obviously takes on its own character.” While the theme-and-variations scheme is borne out simply enough in the six thirty-measure presentations of a single melodic idea (hereafter called the Theme with a capital T, since I want to be able to refer to other musical ideas as themes, too, but also avoid confusion), sonata form adds a layer of complexity to the movement and provides the impetus for some of the differences in character to which Berg refers. Thus, the Theme’s initial presentation also serves as an orchestral exposition to which the piano responds in the first variation, also the solo exposition. The twelve-tone-style manipulation of the expository material in variations two, three and four are part of those variations’ collective role as development. As I discuss further below, the theme is also treated in other, less straightforward ways in the three developmental variations.

266. Berg mixes up what happens in variations two and three, so I just swapped the terms “retrograde” and “inversion” for the sake of clarity.

267. Berg to Schoenberg, 335.

The second movement, an Adagio, also combines two formal patterns. Here, according to Berg's open letter, da capo aria form is combined with the palindromic treatment of the thematic material (the latter having several counterparts elsewhere in Berg's oeuvre, e.g. the *Filmmusik* in *Lulu*).²⁶⁸ In some passages—for example, the movement's midpoint—all of the material is mirrored. Here, Berg wanted the gesture to be so emphatically made that he arranged the measures so that the four measures preceding the midpoint were published on the left-hand page of the opened score, with the same material appearing in almost mirror image on the facing page.²⁶⁹

Finally, the third movement, "Rondo ritmico con Introduzione," combines the thematic material (and sometimes more) from the first and second movements, resulting in an ultracomplex fabric of previously heard but newly rendered material. Berg states that the materials are combined in three ways: "free contrapuntal treatment of the corresponding parts," "the consecutive juxtaposition of literal repetitions of individual phrases and passages, in other words a quasi-duet," and "the precise transfer of entire passages from both movements."²⁷⁰ Berg admits the somewhat procrustean nature of the undertaking, given how different the first two movements are: "consider,

268. See Robert P. Morgan, "The Eternal Return: Retrograde and Circular Form in Berg," in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, edited by David Gable and Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 111-149.

269. Dalen, 150. Berg took similar measures with the *Symphonische Stücke aus der Oper "Lulu"*, *Der Wein*, and certain passages in the Lyric Suite.

270. Berg to Schoenberg, 336.

esteemed friend: on the one hand a basically scherzoso variation movement of c. 9 minutes duration, on the other a broad, lyrical, expansive Adagio lasting a quarter of an hour!”²⁷¹ But this “attempt to bring all of these disparate components and characters together . . . the attempt to create out of *that* a new movement with its own individual character resulted in the form of the ‘Rondo ritmico.’”²⁷²

Berg put together a table illustrating the balance and symmetry of the patterns of the Chamber Concerto’s various subdivisions (as measured in quantities of measures) as well as the way in which material from the first two movements is distributed in the third (see Figure 4.1). Thus the first movement Theme aligns with the third movement Introduzione, Variations One through Four become the repeated 175 measures of the third movement proper, and Variation Five ends up as the last reprise and coda of the finale. Likewise, the bipartite, primary-retrograde effect of the second movement’s mirrored halves translates into a similar halving in the third movement; specifically, the repeated portion is divided into an exposition and development.

Despite the atmosphere of logic and order that Berg’s open letter envelops his Chamber Concerto in (an atmosphere that probably led Pierre Boulez to describe the work as “probably the strictest that Berg ever wrote”), the music

271. Berg to Schoenberg, 336.

272. Ibid.

itself exhibits a degree of complexity that reaches far beyond Berg's table.²⁷³ Moreover, even an attempt to grasp Berg's composition at the level described by the aforementioned formal description (especially in the third movement) presents considerable challenges. David Congdon has wittily described the Chamber Concerto as "an analytical *bête noire*, uncomfortably endowed with formalistic contrivances and affectionately confused in its abundant diversity of systematic adherences and departures," adding that "Berg himself contributed handsomely to this obfuscation in his well-known open dedication to Schönberg."²⁷⁴ Perhaps we should simply embrace Berg's affectionate confusion, the disconnectedness between the rigidity of compositional processes Berg emphasizes in his open letter and the dynamic and complicated surface details that emerge within those processes. The challenge posed by this disconnectedness—something that Adorno picked up on, as I show below—is in fact one of the Chamber Concerto's most engaging qualities.

4.5 Adorno on Berg's Chamber Concerto

After Adorno reviewed Berg's Chamber Concerto as part of his coverage of the Frankfurt IGNM performance in the Berlin monthly *Die Musik*,²⁷⁵ Berg

273. Pierre Boulez, foreword to Alban Berg, *Kammerkonzert für Klavier und Geige mit dreizehn Bläsern* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1953), translated by Felix Aprahamian.

274. David Congdon, "Composition in Berg's *Kammerkonzert*," *Perspectives of New Music* 24 (1985): 234.

275. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, "Das fünfte Fest der internationalen Gesellschaft für neue Musik in Frankfurt a. M.," *Die Musik* 19 (1927): 879-884.

Figure 4.1: Chart illustrating Berg's Chamber Concerto. From "Alban Bergs Kammerkonzert für Geige und Klavier mit Begleitung von dreizehn Bläsern," *Pult und Taktstock 2* (1925): 26.

I Thema con Variazione	Thema in der Grundgestalt (Exposition)	Var. I. (1. Reprise)	II im Krebs	III in der Umkehrung	IV im Krebs der Umkehrung	V in der Grundgestalt (2. Reprise)	Taktzahl
	Takte: 30	30	60	30	30	60	
II Adagio	Dreiteilig						480
	A ₁ Takte: 30	B 36	A ₂ (Umkehrg. von A ₁) 12 30	A ₂ 30	B (Spiegelbild des vorerw. B.) 12 36	A ₁ 12 30	
III (= I plus II) Rondo rhythmico con Introduzione	Introduktion (Kadenz für Geige und Klavier)	: Exposition (da capo)				Durchführung :	960
	Takte: 54	96				79	
Wiederholung: 175							480

wrote to him, “I read your article on the music festival & thank you *with all my heart for those words in it devoted to me*. I can safely say that what you have written there is the finest that has so far been written about me.”²⁷⁶ Berg might have been responding primarily to some of the more hyperbolic praise that Adorno gave his Chamber Concerto—such as that it “will guarantee, with simultaneous references to Schoenberg and Mahler, that even our dark, lost music, on which no visible star shines any longer, is not completely hopeless.”²⁷⁷ Still, Adorno’s detailed discussion of Berg’s compositional technique is filled with valuable insights. The published article in *Die Musik* was edited considerably for length, however, and since my purpose here is to engage with Adorno’s ideas as fully possible, I will discuss the article in its original form.²⁷⁸

In this review, Adorno discusses the combination of forms in each movement and the independent quality of the motives and themes that make up those forms. He writes that the work is “driven by the dialectic of large forms, over which the detail alone can still keep watch.”²⁷⁹ The source of this dialectic, Adorno writes, is *Wozzeck*, in which Berg used the “means of combinatorial

276. Berg to Adorno, 4 September 1927, Vienna, in Adorno and Berg, *Correspondence*, 108.

277. Adorno, “Das fünfte Fest,” 880-881: “wird . . . einmal mit Schönbergs und Mahlers Zeugnissen dafür einstehen, daß selbst unsere dunkle, verlassene Musik, der kein sichtbarer Stern mehr leuchtet, nicht ohne alle Hoffnung ist.”

278. Adorno, “Die stabilisierte Musik: Zum fünften Fest der I.G.N.M. in Frankfurt am Main,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19, *Musikalische Schriften VI*, 100-112 (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1984).

279. *Ibid.*, 103: “getrieben von der Dialektik der großen Formen, über die allein der Einzelne legitim noch wachen kann.”

construction . . . to get the musical contingency of the progression of scenes in a strictness that is at once innate to music and dramatically autonomous.”²⁸⁰

Adorno goes on to describe the two-pronged quality of Berg’s *Wozzeck* music, which on the one hand is constructed ostensibly to reflect various traditional formal schemes: dance suite movements, symphonic movements, and inventions (loosely conceived), but on the other hand follows the characters and dramatic action with its leitmotifs and occasionally strong evocative quality.²⁸¹ Adorno returned to this aspect of *Wozzeck* not long afterward in “Die Oper *Wozzeck*” (1929), one passage of which merits reference here:

What recalls Mahler, above all, is the architectonically incommensurable, wholly organic type of symphonic expansion. But where in Mahler, often enough, the brittle program had to fill the gaps, here in Berg it is accomplished compellingly by the dramatic structure. When the musical construction founders under the power of the expressive moment, then the dramatic construction embraces the moment perceptibly, in its stead.²⁸²

As elsewhere, Adorno attributes to Mahler’s works a brokenness in which the treatment of themes conflicts with the execution of a satisfactory, closed formal structure; here he also suggests that Mahler’s “brittle program” gives this brokenness some coherence. Analogously, Adorno suggests, the formal

280. Adorno, “Die stabilisierte Musik”: “die Mittel der kombinatorischen Konstruktion,” “die musikalische Kontingenz des szenischen Verlaufs in einer Gesetzhlichkeit zu empfangen.”

281. See Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg, Wozzeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42, among many other places, for Fritz Mahler’s well-known chart of the various formal structures in the scenes of *Wozzeck*.

282. Adorno, “The Opera *Wozzeck*,” trans. Susan H. Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, 619-626 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), originally published as “Die Oper *Wozzeck*,” *Der Scheinwerfer: Blätter der Städtischen Bühnen Essen* 3 (1929/30): 5-11.

structures in the scenes of *Wozzeck*, symbolically poignant if not always immediately audible, are warped by the music's additional duty of serving the darkly, movingly dramatic content of the opera. It is this musical double duty that Adorno suggests is the origin of Berg's formal technique in the Chamber Concerto.

Returning to Adorno's 1927 discussion of the Chamber Concerto, this "means of combinatorial construction" from *Wozzeck* takes on profoundly new implications when applied to a concerto: "*Wozzeck's* relaxed manner of construction yields in the instrumental realm the possibility . . . of writing in a way that is at once utterly strict and utterly relaxed, the possibility of weighing total architecture fully against the right of the impulsive particle."²⁸³ Adorno's characterization of the Chamber Concerto reveals the same interest in the interplay between content and form that resurfaces in his 1930 essay "Mahler Heute."

What intrigues Adorno most of all about Berg's Chamber Concerto is that the combinations of forms facilitate a certain freedom in the foreground material, which always operates in dialogue with at least two formal conventions at once. Adorno observes,

Thus, the first movement is a variation across a far-reaching, motivically rich theme that is manipulated according to its form of transposition, the inversion and especially the retrogradation. But at the

283. Adorno, "Die stabilisierte Musik," 103: "ergibt die aufgelöste Konstruktionsweise des *Wozzeck* ins instrumentale Bereich die . . . Möglichkeit, zugleich ganz gebunden und ganz aufgelöst zu schreiben, die totale Architektur und das Recht der treibmäßigen Partikel vollständig gegeneinander auszuwägen."

same time it is a sonata-form movement with repeated exposition, grand development, and recapitulation, in which—in the development—the ultimate in canonic arts is achieved. Thus, moreover, the Adagio is a multiple-themed, expanding slow movement in the spirit of the escalating variation technique of late Mahler. But at the same time it is a completely strict structure that turns back around into itself, broad stretches in strict retrograde, but at the turning point decisively and vitally altered in every part. The Rondo-Finale finally combines the first two movements, the pacing forward and the returning, contrapuntalizes them together in spirit and, in a number of cases, literally, and binds them through a new rhythm that is energetically carried out.²⁸⁴

By Adorno's reckoning, the rich, eventful musical fabric that results is at odds with what one might expect from the formal configuration that Berg outlines in the open letter. He remarks that "what results from this combinatorial basis is not rigid polyphony but rather a bold mobility of the musically particular."²⁸⁵

Finally, selecting a handful of particularly striking moments among the details, Adorno suggests, among others, "the beginning of the slow movement, the violin melody hovering over the distant chords of muted brass; or the silence across its turning point, over the piano C-sharp; or the briefly disruptive violin

284. Adorno, "Die stabilisierte Musik," 104: "So ist der erste Satz eine Variation über ein weit geschwungenes, an Gestalten reiches Thema, das unter Einbeziehung seiner Versetzungsformen, der Umkehrung und des Krebses zumal, verarbeitet wird; zugleich aber ein Sonatensatz mit Exposition, Wiederholung der Exposition, großer Durchführung und Reprise; wobei in der Durchführung das äußerste an kanonischen Künsten geleistet wird. So ist weiter das Adagio ein vielthematisch sich ausbreitender langsamer Satz im Sinne der steigenden Variationstechnik des späten Mahler; zugleich aber ein in sich selbst rückläufigen, völlig gesetzmäßiges Gebilde, über weite Strecken streng krebsartig gefügt, nach dem Wendepunkt aber doch entschieden und in allen Partien zentral verändert. So kombiniert endlich das Rondofinale die beiden ersten Sätze, den vorwärtsschreitenden und den rückläufigen; kontrapunktiert die, der Idee nach und vielfach tatsächlich, miteinander und bindet sie durch einen neuen, energisch durchgeführten Rhythmus."

285. Ibid.: "Und es resultiert aus dieser Kombinatorik nicht etwa starre Polyphonie sondern gerade eine kühne Beweglichkeit des musikalisch Einzelnen."

outburst before the *Generalpause* of the finale.”²⁸⁶ To be sure, these are great examples of moments when the broad formal shape of the work is brought to life in the details. The almost mechanical efficiency with which the Adagio opens is at the same time surprisingly poignant. A trumpet, horn, trombone, and solo violin, all muted, begin the movement already playing their respective pitches, having entered at various points in the previous measure (the last measure of the first movement) unnoticed. The entrances of these four instruments, practically inaudible at *ppp* in that final measure where several other parts are marked *fff*, tie over into the first measure of the Adagio. Berg makes the central axis of the Adagio more than a fleeting point of symmetry, instead reserving the two-and-a-half measures on either side of it to form an eerily placid hurricane’s eye, often noted for the twelve C-sharp chimes in the piano and bassoon parts. Finally, the violin’s crucial moment to which Adorno refers takes place just before m. 630, which marks the third movement’s midpoint—a structural feature that combines the second movement’s axis of symmetry with the first movement’s transition from Variation Two to Three. Here, at the end of a long *ritardando*, the violin seems to conduct the trumpet (which plays the first movement’s retrograde Theme) and the piano (which has the second movement’s C-sharps) to a halt through the conspicuous physical gesture involved in performing the downbowed *fortissimo* triple stops.

286. Adorno, “Die stabilisierte Musik,” 104: “der Beginn des langsamen Satzes, die schwebende Violinmelodie über den fernen Akkorden des gedämpften Blechs; oder die Stille beim Wendepunkt dieses Satzes, über dem Cis des Klaviers; oder der kurze, sprengende Violinausbruch vor der Generalpause des Finales.”

4.6 Combined Forms and “Impulsive Particle” in the First Movement

Although the open letter goes far in emphasizing the significance of form to the Chamber Concerto, Berg goes even further by ensuring that the form is audible. The first movement presents the Theme twice through—in the orchestra in mm. 1-30 and solo piano in mm. 31-60—preparing the listener all the more to recognize at least some of the melody’s features when turned backward and upside-down in the developmental Variations Two, Three, and Four. The first sixty measures thus work in much the same way that a traditional concerto’s double exposition helps familiarize the listener with the themes and motives well enough to appreciate their manipulation in the remainder of the movement.

In the first two presentations of the Theme (mm. 1-60), the listener might notice, for example, that its initial rising half step E-sharp–F-sharp (m. 1, english horn) reappears at the end of the Theme as a kind of bookend (enharmonically spelled F–G-flat, m. 30, clarinet in A). In a gesture that prefigures the Adagio’s mirror-image climax, this characteristic emphasizes the audibility of the Theme’s multiple directional shifts. Thus, when the prime first variation gives way to the retrograde second variation in mm. 60-61, the A clarinet part in m. 60 is presented in exact retrograde in m. 61—rhythm, register and all. The G-flat’s tie across the measure helps to create the sense of moving, like Carroll’s Alice, through the looking-glass. This effect may not be entirely alien to the beginnings of sonata-form developments, but the means by which Berg accomplishes it is certainly original.

The transition from the retrograde second variation to the inverted third variation is also striking, as the incremental spelling of the Theme's beginning (i.e. E-sharp–F-sharp, E-sharp–F-sharp–G-sharp, E-sharp–F-sharp–G-sharp, E-sharp–F-sharp–G-sharp–C-sharp, etc.) is noticeably played upside-down at m. 120. And in the transition from the inverted to the retrograde-inverted variation, a barrage of quick, soft F-E intervals in the single reeds (m. 150), at descending registers, is answered in rising registers with E-F intervals from the same instruments in similarly low dynamics and quick tempo (m. 151). The transition to the prime fifth variation is especially sly. The incrementally spelled Theme's opening, though retrograde-inverted, is made boldly recognizable by its presentation in loud piano octaves that, in losing note by note, also diminuendo and gradually shrink down to a single E-F trill in m. 181—not coincidentally the first two pitches of the prime fifth variation. Berg's resourceful use of the Theme's bookended E-F interval thus helps reinforce the sense of overarching structural coherence articulated in the open letter.

The straightforward presentation of the Theme by the orchestra in mm. 1-30 and the piano in mm. 31-60 might lead the listener to expect a similarly routine journey through the remainder of the movement. Variation One, after all, matches the Theme very closely, not only in pitch content but also in the character of its constituent passages; the swells, ebbs, climaxes and pauses more or less match. It would be reasonable, following this, to expect much the same in the development (which, after all, already has a kind of built-in

developmental process prescribed by the retrograde, inverted, and retrograde-inverted plan for Variations Two, Three, and Four) and recapitulation. But Berg already hints to the contrary in the letter with regard to the recapitulation, in which the Theme is presented in seemingly spontaneous canon. After all, as Berg points out in discussing Variation Five, “each of these thematic transformations obviously takes on its own character.” As faithfully as the pitch content of the first movement bends according to the dictates of the twelve-tone-inflected theme-and-variations structure, it sometimes seems to do so as unpredictably—indeed, occasionally with seeming insubordination—as it can. As Berg’s concerto unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that the open letter considerably understates the implications of the variation form and sonata form.

Certain passages of the Theme with pronounced gestural significance (i.e. theme-like melodies, or sections that build to climaxes) are sometimes rendered virtually unnoticeable in the three developmental variations, while some of the more unassuming or less pronounced parts of the Theme are brought to the forefront. Take for example the section of the Theme from the climactic G in m. 20 to the end of m. 24. This melody, shared initially by flute and A clarinet but eventually completed by the clarinet alone, consists largely of sigh-like slurred descending intervals that descend gradually in register as the dynamics die down from forte to pianissimo. The effect is one of diffusing tension. The analogous passage in the solo piano variation, mm. 50-54, leaves a similar impression. But in Variation Two, the retrograde version of the melody has an entirely different

tone. The variation's designation as "Langsames Walzertempo" (m. 61) is reinforced by topical references such as the oom-pah-pah stock accompaniment that already hails the variation's impending arrival in the piano at m. 59 and pervades the variation (it recurs later, too) (see Ex. 4.1). The dizzying chains of third intervals in the english horn (mm. 63-64), oboe (mm. 64-65) and A clarinet (mm. 66-67), recognizable manifestations of the Theme in mm. 27-29, even suggest the eighth-note runs characteristic of the Ländler. The melodic idea under question, which first appears in the Theme's diffusive mm. 20-24, reappears in Variation Two in mm. 73-81 in the flute. As one might expect, the retrograde version of the passage builds up tension instead of releasing it, just as the pitches are presented in reverse order. A set of canonic and near-canonic entries (oboe, m. 75; A clarinet, bass clarinet and bassoon, m. 77) join in this crescendo. But then in m. 81, the trombone, too, enters with the line. In the trombone part, the rising leaps are not merely slurred; they are glissandoed. This, together with the trombone's downbeat-heavy rhythm, the adoption of the accompanied upbeats by most of the other winds in mm. 82-83, and the shrill upward flourishes in piccolo and E-flat clarinet, makes the trombone's entry the signal of a turn toward a circuslike, buffoonish atmosphere, the over-the-top quality of which rivals the most bombastic of Henry Fillmore's circus marches. Berg's analytical description of the movement and accompanying chart do nothing to prepare the listener for the raucousness with which this retrograde melody takes on a life of its own.

Example 4.1. Berg, Chamber Concerto, mvmt. 1, mm. 79-86.

19

Schwungvoll

79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86

Picc. *poco f*

Fl. *fp* *fp* *f*

Ob. *fp* *f*

E.H. *cresc.* *fp* *fp* *f*

Es-Kl. *poco f*

A-Kl. *fp* *f*

Bkl. *fp* *f* (A)

Fag. *fp* *f* (Cis)

Kfg.

Trp. (m.D.) *m.Dpf.* *f*

1. *gestopft* *f*

Hr. *gestopft* *f*

2.

Pos. *o.Dpf.* *f* *gliss.*

Schwungvoll

Klavier *f* *ff*

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Example 4.1 (continued).

20

83 84 85 86

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E.H.

Es-Kl.

A-Kl.

Bkl. (B)

Fag. (D)

Kfg.

Trp. (m.D.) Dpf. ab

1. offen non stacc. mf

Hr. 2. offen non stacc. mf

Pos. fp mfp

Klavier

N *p* *f*

UE 18 155 a

The melody's appearance in Variation Three departs even further from previous ones in character. Variation Three represents an inversion of the Theme, but in practice, just as Variation Two manipulated the theme in many more ways than merely by presenting it in retrograde, mm. 91-120 display even greater divergence from the original Theme (see Ex. 4.2). Here, the entire passage is given to the trombone (mm. 140-144). In the Theme version of this passage, the ensemble begins at a loud climax and gradually softens—a process that could have been left intact, since the intervallic patterns of a retrograde melody, at least, occur in the same order as they do originally rather than in reverse. In Variation Three, however, this passage does precisely the opposite. In fact, it goes even further by interrupting the flow of a mainly forte passage with a sudden piano dynamic, abrupt reduction in orchestration, and—to dispel any doubt that m. 140 is the beginning of something new—the introduction of a quadruplet-rhythm piano accompaniment, simulating a meter change and quickening the pace. Then, the trombone crescendos from piano to fortissimo, and the tempo accelerates in the measures leading to m. 144, its melody rising in register, facilitating an increasingly bright tone. As the trombone's upward-slurred intervals (the retrograde of the relaxed downward-slurred clarinet/flute slurs of the Theme) build in intensity in mm. 141-144, other instruments enter in canon to thicken the texture gradually: first the bassoon in m. 141, followed by the horns in m. 142 and bassoon in m. 143. Here again, Berg does not merely surpass expectations with regard to the developmental treatment of the melody; he does

Example 4.2. Berg, Chamber Concerto, mvmt. 1, mm. 139-145.

34

poco - -

139 140 141

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E.H.

Es-Kl.

A-Kl.

Bkl.

Fag.

Kfg.

Trp.

1.

Hr.

2.

Pos.

Klavier

molto f

p kurz aber schwer

poco.

schwungvoll begleitend

poco - -

gliss.

UE 18 155 a

Reproduced from Alban Berg, *Sämtliche Werke, I. Abteilung: Musikalische Werke, Band 5: Konzerte, Teil I: Kammerkonzert*, ed. Douglas Jarman (Vienna: Universal Edition and Alban Berg Stiftung, 1996), © with kind permission by UNIVERSAL EDITION AG., Wien.

Example 4.2 (continued).

35

- - a - - - - poco - - - - accel. - - - -

142 143

Picc. _____

Fl. _____

Ob. _____

E.H. _____

Es-Kl. _____

A-Kl. _____

Bkl. *p* (weich) *cresc.*

Fag. *N* *f*

Kfg. _____

Trp. _____

1. *N* *mf* *gliss.*

Hr. *N* *mf* *gliss.*

2. *N* *mf* *gliss.*

Pos. *più p* (quasi Echo) *poco cresc.*

- - a - - - - poco - - - - accel. - - - -

Klavier *a* *poco* *cresc.*

Example 4.2 (continued).

36

A tempo (aber schwer)

144 145

Picc. 

Fl. 

Ob. 

E.H. 

Es-Kl. 

A-Kl. 

Bkl. 

Fag. 

Kfg. 

Trp. 

1. 

Hr. 

2. 

Pos. 

(E) 

(Fis) 

(Ergebnis: 

A tempo (aber schwer)

Klavier 

Rhythmus-Umwandlung: 

Die kleinen Noten nur zur event. Verstärkung der Oberstimme (H⁷) der Bläserakkorde

so emphatically, boldly outlining his transformation of the material in many ways at once.

4.6 Conclusion

Berg, whose love for Mahler's music has been established many times over, was active in a milieu in which Mahler's music was prominent. Given this fact, it makes sense that scholars have sought to locate tangible musical connections between the works of both composers. With today's understanding of Mahler as a starting point, one can listen to Berg's works and, with little difficulty, locate what Headlam has referred to as "deconstructed waltzes and marches." But by examining how Mahler's music was understood during the time of Berg's composition by people who were central in his musical life, we can gather hints about what else might have constituted a Mahlerian compositional gesture.

Adorno and Schoenberg were both interested in the relationship of part and whole in Mahler's music. In Schoenberg's Mahler lecture, he explained that passages often thought to be banal or sentimental were actually crucial to the work, and to understand this one had to approach a Mahler composition not just on a theme-by-theme basis but also from the perspective of the entire work. Adorno developed this idea in his own work on Mahler, but to him, the totality of a Mahler symphonic movement often consisted of an irreconcilable relationship between the formal demands and the independent musical details. Berg's

Chamber Concerto operates similarly, insofar as Berg uses the open letter to elevate form as a means of explaining the piece (in this respect, the open letter acts as a kind of program). In counterpoint with the expectations Berg creates in the letter, he fills the foreground with pronounced, forceful events that considerably outpace the expectations that the letter creates. On the one hand, overarching formal processes have a bold presence—as a kind of “program” as well as in a truly audible way—and yet on the other, the musical details, which play out in accordance with the forms, nevertheless behave very much as though they have a life of their own. By setting up such a strong contrast between the scaffold-like formal structure of the movement—so grandly presented in the open letter—and the inventive, unexpected ways in which the material ultimately engages with it, Berg exhibits an attentiveness toward the dialectic between form and content, as Mahler did before him.

EPILOGUE

There is a lesson to be learned, perhaps, from the cautious, guarded manner in which Richard Specht greeted the coming of Mahler's time in Vienna. Granted, the Mahler renaissance that Vienna witnessed in the wake of World War I was a phenomenon that proponents of Mahler's compositions had ample justification to be pleased by. It meant that more people would be engaging with works that, according to Specht and others, epitomized artistic depth, purity, and aspiration. It does not surprise, therefore, that Specht came away warily from the celebrated Amsterdam Music Festival, disturbed as he was by the audience's inclination to answer the delicate, bittersweet final lines of the Ninth Symphony with the same wild applause it gave after the grand, triumphant ending of the Second Symphony. It was not enough for Mahler's music to be popular; Specht wanted for it to be understood.

Likewise, Leon Botstein recently expressed ambivalence toward the popularity that Mahler's music has enjoyed during last half century. He laments that "the Mahler that outraged his most discerning contemporary critics . . . and attracted, during his career, many supporters—particularly younger musicians like Alban Berg and Anton von Webern—has vanished. The aspects of negativity, rebellion, innovation, and resistance Adorno located in Mahler's music are

neither heard by the audience nor communicated from the stage.”²⁸⁷ To Botstein, the new Mahler era heralded by Leonard Bernstein in the 1960s lacked much of what made Mahler’s works so important to their supporters prior to World War II: “Particularly since the end of the Cold War, the rage for Mahler has become so unproblematic and broad that even in contemporary scholarship an uncritical, hagiographical tone of awe and adulation predominates, reminiscent of a consumer mania.”²⁸⁸ This is surely not to say that such a tone had not existed before—Specht complained about it on multiple occasions during the 1920s, as did other critics, as we have seen. But in Mahler’s Vienna and the Vienna of the First Republic, there also existed a much stronger recognition of the radically new in Mahler’s compositional style.

This was the Mahler whose symphonies David Josef Bach valued for their inspiring, empowering newness. Bach’s Mahler—whose music balanced cultivated popularity and forward-looking innovation—represented an ideal model of the revolutionary and *volkstümlich* in music. While sufficiently comprehensible to working-class audiences acquainted with Beethoven’s symphonies and other standard repertoire, Mahler’s music looked toward the future with its clashing stylistic juxtapositions, used stylistically discontinuous passages, and included themes that sounded vulgar or banal in order to enhance the complexity of musical language.

287. Leon Botstein, “Whose Gustav Mahler? Reception, Interpretation, and History,” in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter, 3 (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2002).

288. *Ibid.*, 11.

It was this Mahler whom Specht regarded as a kind of outsider prophet, railing against the tendencies of his time. No wonder Specht feared the commodification of Mahler's compositions and, perhaps worse, the barrier that "aimless admiration" creates in the way of understanding them: Specht's Mahler told truths that most did not want to hear.²⁸⁹ And at the very heart of this concept of Mahler are the musical characteristics that Mahler's most dogged critics complained the most about: the epic dimensions of his symphonies, the unorthodox treatments of form, and the quality of the themes, the noblest and most beautiful of which were often said to be offset by trivial, base, and maudlin ones. Mahler, Specht held, did not settle for merely giving audiences what they wanted and instead challenged them with his difficult artistic vision.

This was the controversially difficult Mahler about whom Arnold Schoenberg (himself a controversially difficult composer) lectured, in Vienna and other cities, in 1912. Like Bach and Specht, Schoenberg found in Mahler an artistic visionary who inspired kindred truth-seekers with his gaze toward chapters in music history yet to come. It was this Mahler, furthermore, whom Schoenberg continued to champion together with many of his friends, students, and associates in the ensuing years (much to the consternation of certain musically conservative critics) by attending, conducting, and otherwise facilitating performances of Mahler's works, and by advocating for them in print. These and

289. Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), 314: "ziellose Bewunderung."

other Viennese composers occasionally even composed in homage to Mahler, sometimes in patently obvious ways. But with cases such as Berg's Chamber Concerto, it is also possible to discern compositional approaches that, despite a diminished interest in them today, were then closely tied to—and therefore bring us nearer to—how Mahler's works were heard.

It almost needs not be said that this is this same Mahler whom Theodor Adorno had in mind when writing that Mahler composed “in protest against the bourgeois symmetry of form” and “pose[d] against it the free contours of the imagination's freshly trodden landscape.”²⁹⁰ Adorno, like Bach, found in Mahler's music the capacity to reflect social realities through the way that it treats the musical materials of its past. But whereas Bach embraced all musics that can be deemed revolutionary in the contexts of their own eras, Adorno went much further in construing Mahler's innovative treatment of formal structure and thematic content as an act of subversion.

Today, however, the idea that Mahler's compositional style represented an affront to the conventions of his time—an idea that Adorno certainly shared with the other major figures I discussed and still others additionally—is no longer central to the popular cultural Mahler image. In its place are more attractive, if also valuable, aspects: the engaging programs, inferences between music and biography, the thoroughly charming orchestration that is by turns grand and

290. Theodor Adorno, “Mahler Today,” trans. Susan H. Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 608.

subtle, and—ironically enough—the qualities of the themes themselves, even the most shocking of which, in the twenty-first century, astound nowhere near as much as they once did. This phenomenon may well be tied somehow to the fact that the early Viennese Mahler wave of the late 1910s, 1920s, and early 1930s, despite its integral role in so many sectors of the city’s music culture during that time, also receded long ago from popular memory. But by more closely approaching that music culture and its constituent institutions, we can begin to understand more deeply what Mahler’s music meant to its advocates in late Imperial and First Republic Vienna.

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