

Anmeldelser

Herbert Killian (ed.): Gustav Mahler in den Erinnerungen von Natalie Bauer-Lechner mit Anmerkungen und Erklärungen von Knud Martner. Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, Hamburg 1984

At long last the complete memoirs of Natalie Bauer-Lechner have been published, complete in the sense that they are based on the only surviving source: the original manuscript of the first publishers, E.P. Tal & Co. The diaries that were the original source for these memoirs and from which Natalie Bauer-Lechner published excerpts in *Der Merker* as early as 1912 (III, p.184–188) and in the *Musikblätter des Anbruch* in 1920 (p.306–309), were unfortunately lost after the Second World War. The first edition of the memoirs was published only after the death of the author, in 1923. The editor, Johann Killian, and especially the publishers of that edition chose to suppress passages and even chapters that were thought to be too private and, because of the lack of historical interest in Mahler at that time, too trivial to be published. Many of these passages have been reinstated and some chapters have been supplemented by Natalie Bauer-Lechner's collection of "Mahler-Aussprüche" published in the above mentioned *Musikblätter des Anbruch*.

The restored passages: whole chapters, paragraphs, and the occasional sentence, make up an extensive part of the new edition, roughly adding a third to the first edition's volume. The themes touched upon in these previously-omitted parts cover a wide spectrum: aesthetical and ethical questions, the reception of Mahler's work as a conductor and composer, performance-practice as the conductor of his own and other composers' work and especially as the director of opera, his view of other composers and performers, comments on the process of composing, and, lastly, Mahler as a human being. Most of the passages related to aesthetics and ethics, in particular those that deal with the question of programme music and those that link Mahler to the ideology of the Wagner-circle, have already been printed in Constantin Floros' *Gustav Mahler vol.I: Die geistige Welt*, Wiesbaden 1977 (pp.193–201). But there still remain some tidbits for those who are interested in questions related to ideology: for example a Wagner-Schopenhauer related comment in connection with the "Fischpredigt" of the Second symphony, where Mahler remarks that he can only compose such a piece of music if he sees its content (Vorgang) before him "as a most direct perception" (allerunmittelbarsten Anschauung), "for every art depends on the perception" (p.28). Another time he clearly refers to Schopenhauer's idea of the

ever-progressing consciousness of the Will in saying that he realises more and more that even a beetle is an individual whose life one has to respect "as also we and our lives most certainly are dependent a hundred times over on the mercy (Schonung) of such superior living beings (höherer Lebewesen) (as for example of our earth which is surely such a superior individual)" (the twelfth of July, 1900, p.158). Also the revised edition of the memoirs provides yet another sketch of titles for the third symphony, in the form of a letter from Mahler to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, dated the third of September, 1895 (p.36).

The most interesting sections of the restored parts — since the parts concerned with the question of aesthetics and ethics were already mostly published in *Floros* vol.I — are the ones that deal with Mahler's performance-practice, both as a conductor and as an opera-director. Together with the great amount of similar sources presented by de la Grange in his recently completed Mahler-biography the material on performance-practice in connection with Mahler has now become much more accessible.

Natalie Bauer-Lechner gives many descriptions of Mahler's expressive way of conducting (for example p.42). She quotes him for saying that to get the orchestra to play certain expressions "one can only *paint* what the measure contains (erfüllt)" and she immediately paraphrases him in Wagnerian-Schopenhauerian terms: his conducting consisted of a "visual perceptive pre-shaping of the whole spiritual and sensual content of a piece" (bildnerisch-anschaulichen Vorgestalten des ganzen geistigen und sinnlichen Inhalts eines Werkes) (p.110), a paraphrase Mahler no doubt would have agreed with, as he repeatedly refers to Wagner as his ideal in both practical musicianship and in ideological questions, and furthermore was often compared to Wagner in his way of conducting.

Most interesting are Natalie Bauer-Lechner's numerous descriptions of Mahler as a director of opera-productions, not only with regard to the staging itself but also with regard to the qualities he looked for in a singer. One of the aspects that Natalie Bauer-Lechner points out is the emphasis of the life-like quality in both set design, acting and singing — "life-like" understood not in the sense of a naturalistic copying of nature, but more in the sense of "stylized life" (p.180) and in the Wagnerian meaning of life as drama and dramatic truth. She points out that Mahler altered the setting of for example the spinning chamber in the *Flying Dutchman* and the shoemaker's workshop in the *Meistersinger* from the traditional hall-sized dimensions to a more intimate scale (p.106 and p.145). He also seems to have demanded life-like acting in the fighting scene in the *Meistersinger* (p.145) and in *Carmen*, where he made the participants of ensemble scenes continue with their acting while singing and not, as seems to have been the custom before, merely stand in front of the apron (p.154). Mahler's concern with the truthfulness of a scene even extended to the hair-style of women in the choir scenes in the *Dutchman* (p.107). His ideal for the pronunciation of

a sung text, again very conspicuously, is the spoken pronunciation (p.167), “the short vowels must be sung in a short way, however the music to the specific words are, otherwise the unity between words and tone is dissolved, a unity, that can be broken apart as little as body and soul” (p.167). This ideal Alma Mahler later confirms in the negative with a remark on the “*bel canto* Feindlichkeit” of Mahler’s followers (Alma Mahler: *Erinnerungen und Briefe*, Amsterdam 1940 p. 67).

Natalie Bauer-Lechner describes, among others the above-mentioned production of the *Flying Dutchman* in December 1897 at great length from the perspective of the use of stage design, lighting, and colour for the symbolic and dramatic purpose of communicating the two opposing spheres of the Dutchman and Daland. The use of very simple means to create the ominous sphere surrounding the Dutchman: his black-clad men and the ship painted black with evidently very prominent red sails seem like an anticipation of the production of *Tristan and Isolde* of 1903, where contemporary descriptions all emphasise the use of colour and lighting in general and more specifically Isolde’s tent, drenched in orange-red light in the first act. Mahler’s late-expressed opinion then, that on stage everything should have a meaning, a symbolic function, clearly predates his collaboration with Alfred Roller, which started in 1902 and which resulted in the famous stagings of *Don Giovanni* and the above-mentioned *Tristan and Isolde*, among others. In her descriptions Bauer-Lechner seems to indicate that Mahler applied Wagner’s concept of the “Gesamtkunstwerk” in his direction of opera productions and developed it even further in his own sense, taking as his point of departure from two central concepts of Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk — the one being “das Leben” or real life understood as providing art with material for the drama, which, when combined with music, in turn was considered the ultimate artistic expression of life (see p.180) — the other being the aim to create the “ganze Mensch” or the “whole human being”, which one contemporary quotes Mahler of having stated to be the main aim of opera (paraphrased by Oskar Bie, Mahler here speaks of “Menschwerdung”, the becoming of the “whole human being”, through the means of opera; in Paul Stefan (ed.): *Gustav Mahler. Ein Bild seiner Persönlichkeit in Widmungen*, München 1910 p.23). Generally speaking the “whole human being” seems to be a central concept in Mahler’s performance-practice, as he also points to this concept as crucial for the making of a good singer (she has in her roles got to express “eine ganze, lebenswarme Gestalt” (p.155)) and a good conductor (“ein voller und hochstehender Mensch (. . .)”, “who has the ability to feel (nachempfinden) what the composer thought and felt, when he created his piece” (p.114).

This long-overdue version of Natalie Bauer-Lechner’s memoirs features a great many useful additions to the original edition. The editor of the memoirs, Herbert Killian, the son of the original editor, Johann Killian, and

a great-nephew of Natalie Bauer-Lechner, has written a sensitive preface to the edition, mostly, and rightly so, concerned with drawing a picture of the remarkable woman, who was the author of the memoirs. (We will come back to Natalie Bauer-Lechner herself later.)

Knud Martner's annotations are very helpful, setting chronology right, putting events in connection with others not mentioned in the memoirs, and often supplying the reader with new information, as for example the exact reference to a Kretzschmar article on performance-practice of Early Music, which Mahler speaks of as having "struck a chord in his soul" (p.188). The placing of Martner's notes on their respective pages, however, would have been of greater convenience to the reader.

The new edition of the memoirs is equipped with good indexes, one of persons, works and locations and one indexing Mahler's works. These facilitate the use of the memoirs considerably in comparison with the old edition, which did not have an index at all. The chronological table, focusing mainly on dates concerning the relationship between Natalie Bauer-Lechner and Mahler is likewise a handy addition.

The new edition also includes an appendix which features Natalie Bauer-Lechner's divorced husband's application for retirement written on his behalf by his employer: a genealogical table of the Lechner family; memoirs of Mahler's summer retreat in the years 1893-96, Steinberg am Attersee, by the son of Mahler's sister Justine, Alfred Rosé; and Mahler's public retort to critics of his performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with alterations according to Wagner's ideas. A few words on the choice of the appendix material would have seemed appropriate, since not all the material is obviously relevant. One is, of course, always pleased when sources are made more broadly accessible, but the retirement application of Natalie Bauer-Lechner's ex-husband, from whom she had been divorced for five years when her friendship with Gustav Mahler started, seems going a bit far.

The editor's task has been, in his own words, only to restore the passages that were suppressed by the original publishers, and to make small linguistic corrections, which, as far as I can tell, consist mostly of systematically turning all verbs in the present tense into the past tense — an interference with the original text which I find deprives the memoirs of much of the immediateness and personal commitment that makes them so sincere.

The most serious editorial omission in my opinion is the decision not to indicate which parts of the manuscript represent the restored sections, especially as they consist of anything from insertion of single words, sentences and paragraphs to whole chapters. A restoration of the original text in the manner of the exemplary new edition of Gustav Mahler's letters by Herta Blaukopf from 1892 (and thus the inclusion of the preface written by Paul Stefan to the original edition) would have been far preferable. The following is a list of the most important of the restored sections (whole chapters are indicated by their headings, the more important restored paragraphs of ex-

isting chapters are indicated by parentheses () around the respective chapter headings, the sections printed in Constantin Floros: Gustav Mahler volume I, p.306–309, are indicated by an asterisk *):

(Besuch in Budapest) / Berchtesgaden, Sommer 1892 / (Das Andante der Zweiten Symphonie) / (Über “Das irdische Leben” und die “Fischpredigt”) / Unerwünschte Eingebung / (Werk und Wirkung) / (Dirigentenmühen) / (Brutalität der Geräusche) / (Die Größe Wagners) / (Geistige und leibliche Geburt) / Rang und Vereinigung der Künste* / Brief von Gustav Mahler an Natalie Bauer-Lechner / (Orchestertechnik und Schreibweise) / Wie Mahler dirigierte / (Abermals Hamburg) / (Mahler-Konzert in Berlin 16.März 1896) / (Die Proben) / Mahlers Menschlichkeit / Gedrückte Stimmung / (Sorgen um die Zukunft) / (Martyrium) / (Gespräch über die Dritte Symphonie, 29.Juni, 1.Juli*, 4.Juli) / (Komposition und Instrumentation 16.Juli, 25.Juli, 27.Juli*, 28.Juli*, 31.Juli*) / Kindheitserinnerungen / Über “Rübezahl” / Abschied von Steinbach / (Wiedersehen in Hamburg, September-Oktober 1896) / Proben und Aufführungen / (Ungleiches Tempo) / Urlaub in Tirol / Düstere Gedanken* / (“Der Ring des Nibelungen” (1897)) / (“Dalibor”) / (“Der fliegende Holländer”) / (“Djamileh”) / (In der Direktionsloge) / Aufführung der Bohème / Vom Musizieren / (Vom Tempo und Naturgefühl) / (“Das klagende Lied”) / Ferien 1898 / (“Der Ring des Nibelungen” (1898) / Das zweite philharmonische Konzert / (Das Fünfte philharmonische Konzert) / Mahler-Aufführung in Frankfurt / (Beethovens Siebente Symphonie) / Sarkasmus / Die Entstehung der “Revelge” / Das Sommer-Publikum / Vom Auswendig-Dirigieren / Tierpsychologie / (Das Mahlerhaus am Wörther See, 22. August 1899) / (Die “Meistersinger”) / Erfindung und Gestaltung) / (Problem der Symphonien Beethovens) / Seltenheit der Dirigenten / Überschriften und Bezeichnungen* / (Über Brahms, Dvorak und Beethoven*) / Aufführung von fünf Mahler-Liedern / Aufführung der Neunten, Kritik und Rechtfertigung / Über die Brahms-Variationen / Tolstois “Auferstehung”* / Ordensverleihung / (Marie Gutheil-Schoder) / (Hans Rott, 12.Juli 1900) / (Über Schubert) / (Das Geheimnisvolle der Kunst) / (Das Unfaßbare der Natur*) / (Vom zweiten Ich*) / Mahlers Einzel-Exkursionen / (Die Mildenburg) / Gesang und Aussprache / Mahler-Aufführung in München* / Hofkonzert / Fruchtbare Keime* / (Über Mahlers Erste Symphonie*) / Mahlers Erste Symphonie in Wien* / Aufführung der Neunten Symphonie von Beethoven / Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit* / “Das klagende Lied” / Erholung in Abbazia* / (Im neuen Heim) / Nächtlicher Spaziergang / Flitterwochen und Ehe mit der Muse / Rückkehr nach Wien / Vom intelligenten Singen / “Tristan“-Aufführung / “Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor” / Mahlers Vierte Symphonie in München* / Schlußwort.

The aesthetical aspect of the new edition leaves much to be desired. Often the layout is confusing, for example the facsimile of the letter from Mahler to Natalie Bauer-Lechner quoting the titles of the Third Symphony and its transcribed version are not laid out in a clear way (p.36–38); the various tables and maps are scattered throughout the book; the music examples are

clumsy, as are the relative sizes of the bold and normal type faces. There is hardly a blank page in the book. On the whole, economical consideration seems to have been the determining factor of this publication, which is a shame, as it would seem that the memoirs had deserved the right to a more aesthetically satisfying edition.

— And finally to the person who wrote the memoirs. The impression one gets of Natalie Bauer-Lechner from the memoirs is that of a “hero-worshipper” as the author of the preface to the first edition, Paul Stefan, characterises her. However, this is not the correct impression: in fact, she was one of the first emancipated women of her time. Her book “Fragmente. Gelerntes und Gelebtes” (Wien 1907) is a document of her personal development to an independent-thinking human being, and of the views and beliefs gained through this experience. She acknowledges a deep debt to Gustav Mahler and also to Siegfried Lipiner — a close friend of Mahler’s — for having opened her eyes to the spiritual qualities of life, but the need to develop her own personality only dawned on her when she was forced to give up the close relationship to “great, creative people” (p.29) as she phrases it, one of these (although she does not mention names) most certainly being Gustav Mahler. In the book she touches on many subjects that must have been controversial at her time, and in many countries still are. She is highly critical of the child-upbringing and education of her time, speaks out against physical punishment of children, expresses the, for many people still provocative, opinion that parents are not always the best child-rearers and that ideally the state should take over the power that the family has over children. She is outspoken about sexual relationships, claiming that girls are wrongly raised to chastity and boys to excess, and is an advocate of sexual information and the use of contraceptives — and, of course, of the right of all human beings to educate themselves according to their abilities and of women’s right to vote. She also very precisely categorises what she calls the “Frauenfrage” as an essentially middle-class phenomenon, which it still largely is today. Her views on the emancipation are, interestingly enough, bedded in the same synthesis of socialistic thought and metaphysical idealism which was prevalent in the Pernerstorfer circle (and later the Austrian Social Democratic Party), to which also Gustav Mahler and Siegfried Lipiner belonged.

Not only because she was a musician — she was a member of the “Damen-Streichquartett Soldat-Kröger” — but also because she shared a common ideological background with Mahler, she is a valuable and very qualified reporter on Mahler’s ideas. In one thesis of her book, however, she repudiates herself. She claims that “Of important people women — until now! — generally surpass men in their *being* (Sein) and *character* (Wesen): but men surpass women by far in their *action* (Tun) and *creativity* (Schaffen)” (Fragmente p.108). The editor of the new edition discloses that Natalie Bauer-Lechner presumably in 1918 published a book expressing her strong pacifistic views. The following quotations are taken from the manuscript,

which is the only surviving source, as the book itself seems to have disappeared. No comments are necessary, they speak for themselves of the ideals of their author:

“... The day will come when socialism has rooted so strongly in the whole world that the horrors of war will die out by themselves. . .

The massacre of the human race will cease and transform itself into ever-higher forms of spiritual contest, into a life-confirming and life-enriching instead of destructive contest in all fields. . .

It is part of God's plan of the world that the war in spite of everything, as long as it has its horrible grip on the world, brings about improvements ('als Teufel schaffen muss'). Thus. . . the question of women's rights must be coming nearer to their fulfilment with a gigantic stride. Alone. . . through the brutal fact of the immense loss of the lives of men in this most deadly war. One will be glad to fill with women the huge gaps, that have opened in all fields of men's work and occupation. And thus the right to vote for women, indispensable for themselves and for society as a whole, cannot fail to be instigated. . .” (p.12).

For the publication of this book Natalie Bauer-Lechner was arrested, accused of treason and imprisoned for a longer period of time.

Her friendship with Gustav Mahler lasted from 1890 until his engagement with Alma Schindler ended it in 1902. As to the nature of this friendship one can only guess. It is more than likely that she herself saw the attachment in a different light than Mahler, who in his self-centred manner seems to have treated her affectionately, but essentially as someone whom it was handy to have around. The devastating effect that Mahler's engagement with Alma Schindler had on her is felt acutely in the last entry with which the memoirs are abruptly cut off: “Six weeks ago Mahler engaged himself to Alma Schindler. If I were to speak about it, I would find myself in the role of the doctor, who had to treat his nearest and dearest on life and death. To finish this therefore shall be laid in the hands of the highest eternal Master!” This experience undoubtedly later led her to write that in their lives with great men women could give men humanity (Fragmente p.109). We can only be thankful to her that she had the insight to record her relationship with Gustav Mahler and leave us one of the most important documents on his life and thinking.

Susan Haase Derrett

Joseph Kerman: Contemplating Music. Challenges to Musicology, Harvard University Press 1985, 255pp. (hardback). British edition: Musicology, Collins 1985 (hardback), Fontana 1985 (paperback)

This newly-published book by Joseph Kerman, professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley, comes right in the middle of an ongo-