

Gustav Mahler: Prospect and Retrospect

- by Donald Mitchell

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On 18 May, Mahler will have been dead for exactly 50 years. It is a convenient moment, perhaps, to survey, very briefly, the present state of Mahler studies and research.

It is a surprising fact, I think, that there is a need at all for the kind of research on documents and autographs that we associate with composers from the more distant past. Mahler, after all, was a public figure and lived in a glare of publicity. He was, undoubtedly, what the newspapers call "news," and that means a great deal of information about him of interest for later generations was recorded in the daily press or journals of the time.

So far, so good, one may think. But how accurate are those press reports, the advertisements, publishers' announcements, and so on, which are the very life blood of the industrious modern researcher, who pounces on a date here, a title there?

We are all indebted to the indefatigable Mr. Nicolas Slonimsky, that sleuth of the newspaper files, who has corrected many wrong dates and brought many forgotten dates to light. Newspapers, for him, at least for the most part, have the last word. But do they? And here I must add, that those of us associated with newspapers maintain a certain skepticism, even in the face of the daily black-and-white facts. It is, I sometimes think, the anonymous sub-editor who writes, or rather rewrites, the history that the unsuspecting reader has pushed through his door in the morning. This is not at all a flippant point. It can have all kinds of distressing consequences for the future.

Let us take one small example that concerns Mahler. The ordinary reader may well wish to know the date, place and circumstance of the premiere of the most popular of Mahler's symphonies, the Fourth. If he looks for the information in the 5th edition of *Grove*, he will find none of it. But Mr. Slonimsky's invaluable *Music Since 1901*¹ tells us that the work was first performed in Munich on 23 November 1901, conducted by Felix Weingartner. He has the date from a review in the Munich *Allgemeine Zeitung* of 26 November and from an advertisement in the paper on the day of performance.

Now Weingartner certainly was the conductor of the Kaim Orchestra in Munich, but it struck me as odd indeed that Mahler, who otherwise always conducted the premieres of his works, should have made an exception of the Fourth Symphony. On the face of it, there seemed no reason to doubt Mr. Slonimsky's patient and convincing documentation. But a glance at Weingartner's autobiography solved the problem. There he makes it clear that while he conducted his part of the program, it was Mahler who took over for the premiere of the Fourth Symphony. I haven't, naturally, wasted my time trying to find out why Mr. Slonimsky was misled, but it would not surprise me at all to discover that it was the newspaper that got the facts wrong. Weingartner, needless to add, goes on conducting the premiere of Mahler's Fourth Symphony to this day. He is on the rostrum in Deryck Cooke's excellent Mahler handbook.² Once unleashed, these errors

are extraordinarily difficult to kill.

Well, that is a simple example of the kind of muddle still surrounding the bare facts of Mahler's life and music. Gradually, bit by bit, the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are being fitted together. Gaps are being filled, misfits removed, the picture becomes a little clearer. It was only very recently, for instance, that I was able to attach a date and place to Mahler's baptism. An event of some biographical importance, one would have thought, but you will search the reference books in vain for a precise date. It seems strange that it was not until last year that someone was inquisitive enough to go along to the Kleine Michaelskirche in Hamburg and examine the baptismal register. And there, in his 37th year, Mahler was baptized on 23 February 1897. Another tiny detail has been completed. All the work that needs to be done, in this sphere alone of Mahler research, really requires the support of a generous pair of wings from, shall we say, Gulbenkian or Fulbright.

It is a biographical handicap, a crippling one indeed, that so many of Mahler's contemporaries are no longer alive to be cross-examined, to be emptied of their memories. The great upsurge of interest in Mahler and his music, postponed by the war and before that by the censorship of the Nazis, has come just too late. We have lost the possibility of sifting the reminiscences of friends and colleagues who might have helped sketch in the blank pages of Mahler's life, especially those evasive early years. (The great figures of the Mahler era, his widow, for example, and Bruno Walter, have long told us all they know.)

But even about the early years, the odd fragment of information comes in which helps one to pencil in a shadow – it's rarely anything more substantial. I have this particular period of Mahler's life very much at heart, having written, as some reviewers were not slow to point out, a whole book about Mahler's early compositions, many of which no longer exist.³ I freely confess to succumbing at times to something near panic as I added yet another lost work to an already very long list. I began to wonder, not if the work was lost, but if it had ever existed.

Just such a work was an early opera. *Herzog Ernst von Schwaben*, which I supposed Mahler to have worked on in 1877 or 1878, when he was a youth of 17 or 18. I notice that my own description of the opera begins, "Very little is known about this work," the libretto of which was written by a boyhood friend, Josef Steiner. Imagine my surprise, when, only a few months ago, I found that a close relative of the librettist was living in London. She was able to tell me that the projected opera was a topic of discussion in the Steiner household. More than that, she remembered the librettist picking out on the piano some of the tunes that his composer friend had imagined for the work. Steiner himself, of course, is long dead. But some 82 years after the opera was abandoned, left incomplete and probably destroyed, confirmation did come to me of the work's bodily existence. I had not, after all, been pursuing a total fantasy. It is odd how these footnotes to history come to be written.

There are some works from the early years, still extant, which have not been placed at our disposal. For familiar reasons, certain members of the composer's family sit on unpublished manuscripts which might add something to our knowledge of the young Mahler's development. (I must add here that the composer's widow is not among the squatters, though she has her compensating foibles.)

The International Gustav Mahler Society, which has its headquarters in Vienna, and correspondents in most of the countries of Europe, has been busy for some years collating and scrutinizing Mahler's sketches and autographs. This is a particularly important undertaking since it is by no means certain that the printed editions of the scores, though most of them appeared in the composer's lifetime, represent his final intentions. Hence the urgent need for yet another *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. The first volume of the edition, a revised score of the Seventh Symphony, appeared last year. It was scrupulously prepared for publication by the President of the Mahler Society, Erwin Ratz, the distinguished Viennese musicologist.

¹ 3rd Edition, New York, 1949, p. 20

² Published by the BBC in 1960, p. 29

³ *Gustav Mahler: The Early Years*, London, 1958

It is true to say, I think, that Mahler was never satisfied with the instrumentation of his symphonies (he rarely altered the shape of a work). The most celebrated example of wholesale revision we find in the Fifth Symphony, of which two scores, both published by Peters, were printed. The later version greatly clarifies the sound of the earlier, and very often by the cutting of superfluous duplication; but one can also clarify, of course, by making additions, by strengthening a part through doubling, by meticulous dynamic articulation. It is amazing what Mahler can accomplish in the way of clarity by the addition of a few rests. His amendments remind us that transparent scoring is not just a process of knocking things out but as much a process of knocking things in. A comparison of the two scores of the Fifth will provide any inquiring student with ample evidence of the principles upon which Mahler worked. His unceasing anxiety to improve his scores is well illustrated by a reminiscence of Otto Klemperer, who attended the rehearsals of the Seventh Symphony in Prague, in 1908. "Every day," he tells us, "after the rehearsal Mahler took the complete orchestral material home, to improve it, polish it up and re-touch it. We attendant young musicians, Bruno Walter, Bodanzky, von Keussler and I. would gladly have helped him. He would not tolerate assistance and did everything alone."⁴ Typical of the man, and typical of his relentless drive after an ideal orchestral sound.

If we remember that this Klemperer experience may be applied to all the symphonies, that the re-touching went on long after the premiere of a work and its publication, the importance of a critical edition of the works becomes self-evident. In a very real sense every performance of a Mahler symphony under Mahler was a premiere. What the Mahler Society has to do is to catch up on the final premiere in each case and fix it in music-type. One cannot but wonder what changes Mahler would have effected in the Ninth Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*, works which he never himself heard.

Obviously the *Gesamtausgabe* is of the first significance. But even when that is accomplished, a wide field of musical, as distinct from biographical, research remains. We are familiar with Mahler's editions of Schumann's symphonies; but what do we know in detail of his re-touchings of Beethoven's symphonies and overtures; of Schubert's Ninth Symphony; his edition of *Oberon*; his reconstruction of Weber's opera *Die drei Pintos*; his edition of *Figaro*, which adds a scene in the interests of dramatic clarification; his suite of movements from Bach's orchestral works, for which he realized the continuo part? One never knows what sudden illumination, of Mahler or his time, one may gain from exploration of these side-paths, and others like them.

The most incidental fact, indeed, can sometimes challenge the assumptions one has held for years. I had always imagined, for example, that Mahler, one of the most celebrated European conductors of his day, must have been kept busy conducting Beethoven's symphonies. It was quite extraordinary to find from Klemperer's little book of reminiscences, which appeared only last year, that one of the reasons why Mahler enjoyed his time in America, which came at the very end of his life, was that there he had the opportunity to conduct, for the first time, the "Pastoral" Symphony. It makes an odd, if enlightening comment on the musical society of which, we know, Mahler was not always a very happy member.

One path that death decisively blocks, if the musician was born before the gramophone era, is that of performance. We can never know now what a Mahler performance was really like. None the less, rather in the same way that we can deduce the principles of Mahler's methods of revision from the comparison of different versions of the same work, we can at least estimate something of the impact and character of his performances by inspection of the scores from which he conducted. These provide, as minutely as possible within the limits of musical notation, a kind of map of Mahler's intentions. He applied phrase-marks and dynamics to the scores of other composers with the same liberality with which he showered his own. If one knows Mahler's music well, which tells us how his mind worked, and can use one's imagination, one could, I think, arrive at a clear picture of how he approached the music he conducted—though nothing, of course, can restore to us Mahler's conception of tempo. But his scores are

documents of considerable interest, and some day should receive the attention they merit. My own perusal of them (the scores were very carelessly preserved in Vienna, when I saw them) did not get very far. But I saw enough to convince me that the kind of ideal articulation of sound after which Mahler labored in his own music must have been no less prominent a feature of his performances. And much of what he wanted to achieve, though not the achievement, could be demonstrated in music-type, so meticulous and plentiful are the signs and symbols with which he adorns his scores.

There I must leave the story of Mahler studies. Much, as you have heard, remains to be done. More, indeed, than I suggest, for I have only scratched the surface of the problems. (I have not mentioned, for example, the gaps there are in his correspondence.)

You may well wonder whether we are likely to be surprised by the discovery of unknown musical autographs. Not, I am sure, from Mahler's maturity. But there is one lost early work which might still turn up. Mahler composed it when he was 23 and a conductor at the Cassel *Hoftheater*: the incidental music for Scheffel's *Trompeter von Siikkingen*, which was performed at the Cassel theatre as a sequence of "living pictures." The music was also successfully used in productions at Mannheim, Wiesbaden and Karlsruhe. Mahler quickly lost interest in what was undoubtedly an occasional piece and the work vanished. But I'm certain that there must be a set of parts buried somewhere in the archives of one of the opera houses that made use of the material.

A more tantalizing prospect—some might think it menacing—was opened up by an article which appeared in *Musical America* in 1938.⁵ It was written by Paul Stefan, an intimate of the original Mahler circle in Vienna: but in 1938 he was an exile, and living in America, where he died in 1943. In this short article, which has received very little attention, he tells of a conversation with the late Willem Mengelberg, one of the most celebrated of Mahler's interpreters between the wars. Mengelberg claimed not only to have inspected, but to have played through at the piano, the manuscripts of four symphonies from Mahler's youth. The autographs were in the possession of the then aged Baroness Weber who was living in Dresden and had promised the composer never to permit a performance of works which he would sooner have seen destroyed. Fact or fancy? Here, of course, we're down among the dead men. Stefan is dead and Mengelberg is dead: Dresden was destroyed in the war and is now not the most accessible of cities. It is improbable that the Baroness survives. Where does one start?

The information contained in the article matches up at many points with what we know of Mahler's early life and works. He was certainly very friendly with the Weber household in Leipzig and there is no doubt that symphonies, or at least attempts at symphonies, must be counted among his early exercises in composition. Whether these Dresden manuscripts, if they are, or were, authentic, may be identified with the lost symphonies of which we have a record, or whether they represent fresh attempts, remains a wholly open question which may now never be answered. Perhaps an echo of this address may stimulate inquiry in Dresden itself. Meanwhile we may remark upon the irony of Stefan's article appearing in a year — 1938 — that could not have been less auspicious for research of this kind; both the time itself and the very nature of the subject excluded the possibility of acting on Stefan's information. Just over a year later the holocaust that many admirers thought Mahler's music presaged, consumed the Europe of which he had been a part,

His music, however — his published music — remains with us; and the centenary year has provided evidence of a most remarkable swing in Mahler's favor. The celebrations have been widespread, exhaustive and exhausting. England, which for many years was reluctant to take the plunge, has not been backward in paying generous tribute to this Austrian master. Who would have thought, ten or fifteen years ago, that a series of Mahler concerts in London would draw capacity audiences? That at the Festival Hall, an overflow audience would listen by relay to the program that was being given in the main hall?

The historian must take note of these movements in taste. After all, the

⁴ *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler*, Zurich, 1960, p. 10

ultimate status of a composer is determined neither by critics nor by historians but by his capacity to attract and hold an audience, which feels the need to experience and re-experience his music. Historians may be the judges, critics the counsel for the defense or the prosecution; but the public is the jury.

One already hears voices, some of them influential voices, raising cries of "fashion." Composers, fortunately, are hardy annuals. At least the good ones are, and though fashion may freeze them one season and scorch them the next, they manage to survive these extremes of climate. Sibelius, I have no doubt, though now so senselessly, indeed sickeningly, downtrodden, will sprout again; perhaps a little less luxuriantly than before but still of a commanding size.

It may well be that Mahler will suffer the swings of fashion. But fashion is a two-way affair. For years, let us remember, in this country, Mahler-like some other composers—was subjected to the fashion of confident neglect. If one is obliged to choose between fashions, I prefer to rate as the more important a fashion that has its origins in aural experience of the music.

If there were historical reasons—those I concede—for the slow headway Mahler's music made in this country between the first and second world wars, there are good musical reasons. I think, for his present, relative, ascendancy. A substantial factor, undoubtedly, has been the discovery, in our own day, of Mahler's importance for some of the leading figures of twentieth century music, not only composers of the intervening generation, like Berg and Schoenberg, but some of the most prominent composers of a later generation, often composers from a ample, or Britten. The influence of Mahler upon Shostakovich requires, musical culture quite the opposite of Mahler's-Shostakovich, for example, I think, no detailed substantiation. It is self-evident. And if one looks at a work of Britten's as recent as his last orchestral song-cycle, the *Nocturne*, one finds there, above all in the concluding song, a clear extension of Mahler's style.

The chronology of musical understanding is often capricious in actual sequence. It does not surprise me at all that a keener interest in Mahler has been stimulated by the more general awareness of contemporary music we encounter today. A growing recognition of a new musical climate he helped to create, however distantly achieved, encourages one to come to terms with his own music. The understanding of what Mahler was about, as shown by later composers, can usefully guide our own appreciation of his music. In catching up on their music, we can catch up on his, too. There is a great deal to be learnt, in fact, from listening to the history of music in reverse.

If nothing else, the centenary year has taught us. I think that Mahler was, and is of significance for the twentieth century. But it is one of the perils of centenaries that they unavoidably exaggerate and distort. (They also, let me add, tire a composer's friends and confirm the antagonism of his opponents. How one longs for the good old days, when everyone was left in peace.)

I am particularly anxious on this occasion to avoid undue emphasis on the 'prophetic' Mahler. It is all too easy to decline into a curious kind of obsessive state in which one can't hear the music for the prophecies. Linear counterpoint in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, the systematic use of fourths in the first movement of the Seventh, intimations of a conscious neo-classicism in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony and the last movement of the Seventh – all very important, true and prophetic. But there is a real danger here that in following the signposts one assumes a condition of perpetual mobility that prevents one from resting for a moment and regarding the symphonies as things in themselves, not pointers to the future.

Nonetheless, I should feel that I was failing in my duty if I did not mention a signpost that was brought to my mind only the other night when I heard Stockhausen's *Gruppen*, for three orchestras, for the first time. We live at this latest moment in a flood of news and views about musical space, stereophony, directional sound and multiple orchestras. During an idle moment in *Gruppen* – when the work, so to say, had moved away from me somewhere down the hall – it did strike me that

Mahler too must be given his due as an early bird in the multiple orchestra business. The Second Symphony, in particular, which makes use of an off-stage brass band plus percussion, is rich in "stereo" effects. It was doubtless the dramatic, "resurrectional" character of the symphony that promoted the use of this device. But there is one passage in the finale in which the combination of the two orchestras gives us just those contrasts in texture and perspectives of sound which allow one to claim the passage as a clear and important historical precedent. Most significant of all, the orchestras enjoy a fair degree of rhythmic independence. My only excuse for adding yet another prophecy to the list is the fact that here we have Mahler foreshadowing the musical preoccupations of a generation of composers later than any I have previously mentioned. So far as his prophecies are concerned, Mahler seems to show a capacity to remain perpetually in fashion.

But how do the symphonies stand if we look at them as we might regard any of the other groups of symphonies by late romantic composers? By Tchaikovsky, for example, Brahms, Bruckner or Dvorak? (And by the way, if I do not talk about the songs or song-cycles of Mahler's maturity it is because they have been received in a way that the symphonies have not. In general, moreover, they share the characteristics of style which belong to the symphonies in any given period.)

We shall find, I think, that Mahler's symphonies show a width of contrasts, both between works and within individual symphonies, that we do not find in any of the other composers I have mentioned. This may strike you as an elementary observation, but some elementary things are also very unusual. For example, if one places the first movements of the Second and Fourth Symphonies side by side, one finds oneself poised between two virtually opposed worlds and textures, monumental symphony on the one hand and something that one might think approaches a divertimento on the other. Mahler often referred to his Fourth Symphony as his "Humoreske." If one compares the two finales, the contrast is even more striking—an epic, choral finale on the one hand, a solo song on the other. Within the symphonies, too, as I have said, there is this same, sometimes disconcerting, shock of violent contrast. There is the well-known pastoral Andante from the Second Symphony, for example, which so surprisingly succeeds the solemnities of the huge first movement. Despite Mahler's call for a pause of five minutes—rarely observed in performance—the attempt to relax tension by way of extreme contrast does not, I think, come off. I was not surprised to discover that Mahler himself came to think that this juxtaposition of skyscraper and grass hut was a mistake, though not soon enough to prevent him from doing much the same thing in his Third Symphony, the first and second movements of which present a similar contrast in style and dimension. In later symphonies he was much more successful in holding a judicious balance between the relative weights of his sequence of movements.

But though, to return to my original point, the first movements of the Second and Fourth Symphonies exhibit such strikingly opposed features, they share, in form, an important unity. It is these two movements that represent, among the first group of Mahler's symphonies, his most successful handling of sonata structure. Yet paradox and contrast creep in even here. It is the first movement of the "simple" Fourth Symphony which shows the greater degree of formal sophistication. The point of recapitulation alone is a masterpiece of subtle compression. It simultaneously combines formal procedures which are normally exposed in sequence—the lead-back from the development and the recapitulation of the first group. The recapitulation proper, which at length finds its "right" key, starts, so to speak, in midstream.

Let me add at once that the sonata principle haunted Mahler from the beginning to the end of his cycle of symphonies. We find in his works a number of extremely original approaches to a form which, by the end of the nineteenth century, had become highly problematic. In any history of the sonata idea, Mahler's symphonies must receive the most serious consideration. He kept the form on its feet with extraordinary resourcefulness even when, by all the rules of the game, it should long since have been carried out of the ring.

Of course, you may argue, quite properly, that the sonata principle is, above all, a scheme of ordered tonal relationships, the force of which was dissipated by romantic harmony. But we have to face the curious fact that "sonata form" has gone on, I think quite meaningfully, even when tonal references have been completely abandoned, as we find in Schoenberg, for example. I think we must view Mahler's sonata movements as part and parcel of a general development in the history of music, which resulted at length in a valid form independent of its original tonal basis. In this respect, Mahler was surely very much Schubert's successor.

In some important respects, the Second Symphony is the odd man out among the first group of Mahler's symphonies. It anticipates the creative ambitions of the Eighth Symphony-his choral symphony and the classical character of its first movement looks forward to the middle-period symphonies in which Mahler came closer, though perhaps not very close, to the house-style of the later Viennese symphonists.

It is in the First, Third and Fourth Symphonies that one finds Mahler's most comprehensive use of national musical materials; or perhaps it would be better to say "local" rather than "national." In these three works, and of course in parts of the Second, one hears, as one does not hear to the same degree in the later works, the music that Mahler heard about him in his youth: folksong, military signals, brass bands, and bird-song (shades of Messiaen!). One has to remember that Mahler was born in Bohemia and lived the impressionable years of his youth in Moravia. He was not a self-conscious musical patriot, but one cannot overlook the audible impact made on him by the world of sound which assailed his young ears. The most radical example of this influence occurs in the first movement of the Third Symphony, a movement of vast proportions which is largely built up out of military fanfares, folksong and popular march tunes, and throughout which the unmistakable sonority of the wind band predominates.

(Here was played a recording of Mahler's Third Symphony, first movement, figures 43-51.)

Many people find that music from the Third Symphony among the worst Mahler ever wrote. It certainly arouses in its acutest form the problem of his banality, about which so much has been written, on one side or the other, that I shall hold my peace on this occasion. I have said all I have to say elsewhere. But though one may dismiss the music, one is obliged to dismiss it for what it is - quintessential Mahler. One cannot account for it in terms of Strauss or Wagner, poles of reference, if you like, for much else in Mahler. Nor can one explain it in terms of the Viennese symphony. It is something quite singular; and in so far as it expresses a sense of place, I think we might approach the work as an offshoot, though a highly idiosyncratic one, of the nationalism in music we readily accept elsewhere. This is not, of course, the whole truth about Mahler's early symphonies, but it is certainly one aspect of their style which has not been very thoroughly explored.

There is something undeniably different about Mahler's concept of nationalism-I would call it his "factuality." Mahler uses his materials, as it were, straight, not touched up. It is this feature of Mahler's early symphonies which has caught the very intelligent ear of the German musicologist and sociologist, Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno. In a new book,⁶ devoted to the composer, a perceptive study indeed but alarmingly unreadable, he writes: "The term socialist realism suits Mahler alone, were it not depraved by current use: the Russian composers of 1960 frequently sound like a disfigured Mahler." I have already mentioned the influence of Mahler on Shostakovich. Is not socialist realism, indeed, yet another sub-division of a protracted nationalism?

I seem only to have scratched at the surface of Mahler's music. The middle-period symphonies, Nos. 5, 6 and 7 - for that matter, all Mahler's later symphonies - show a turning away from so radical a use of popular materials. But he still retains very clear links with the style that gave us the first movement of the Third and unique "character" movements like the scherzos of the Second and Third Symphonies, or the famous parody funeral-march, the slow movement, of the First

Symphony. Character movements of the new type are the second and fourth movements of the Seventh Symphony, a pair of nocturnal serenades in which the popular materials, the march tunes and birdcalls and military fanfares, have undergone a remarkable refinement. One finds music like this nowhere else in the symphonic literature.

But there is, in the later works, a distinct change of emphasis in style. From the Fifth Symphony onwards - excluding the Eighth because it is such a solitary achievement - it is possible to view Mahler with more consistency as one of the last in the line in the tradition of the Austro-German romantic symphonists.

Neither leading the troops nor bringing up the rear is an enviable situation. But though Mahler was often obliged to compose, as it were, with his back to the wall, his prodigal inventiveness did not fail him: nor was he slow to make tactical use of the legacy left him by his predecessors in the field. He required, for instance, a new type of strong, long, lyrical melody, for these abstract symphonies, one free of the association with nature that we find in the big, singing themes of the First Symphony. His invention was equal to the task, and we find the new type of melody serving as second subjects in the first movements of both the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies. It characterizes, indeed, one of the best known of Mahler's movements, the Adagietto of the Fifth Symphony: melody, moreover, which wears a very personal face.

He was a tireless ransacker of musical resources which were certainly not conventional means of symphonic expression-the march, for example. I have never counted up the number of marches in Mahler's symphonies but they must amount to a formidable quantity. They certainly cover an extraordinarily wide range of mood. We march, it seems, not only into the grave but also out of it. But Mahler's successful promotion of the march, not just to symphonic status, but to first-movement status - above all in the first movement of the Sixth Symphony - deserves particular notice. There were distinguished precedents-Beethoven, Wagner-but no other composer has explored the possibilities of the march with such persistence.

The waltz, the *Ländler* and the minuet-here, too, Mahler pursued these simple dance forms from the past and proved them capable of bearing new, if sometimes prickly fruit. The scherzo of the Ninth Symphony juxtaposes all three dances, a synthesis which is perhaps characteristic of the artist who stands at the end of a tradition. There is much that is synthetic, in the exact sense of the word, about Mahler's symphonies.

In the middle-period symphonies, his adherence to the sonata principle in his first movements is, if anything, strengthened. But, characteristically, he seeks out fresh approaches. The two movements which go to make up the first part of the Fifth Symphony, for example, represent a novel attempt to divide between two movements the functions of exposition and development we normally find in one.

But it was not really until the Ninth Symphony that Mahler broke through with what might be claimed as a new form: the slow first movement, which is not a slow movement placed first, but a first movement in a slow tempo which retains, nonetheless, its time-honored dramatic character and dynamic, developmental impetus, by a skilful handling of dual tempi. With some qualification, this same scheme and formal intention may be said to apply to the first movement of the unfinished Tenth Symphony.

And there, I fear. I must leave Mahler, with much left unsaid. It is clear from Mr. Deryck Cooke's magnificent reconstruction, from the sketches, of the finale of the Tenth Symphony, that the work was by no means Mahler's last word. Far from giving, or cracking up, we have every reason to suppose that he would have launched out on yet another project. Mr. Cooke's great achievement, and the many Mahler performances we have heard this last year, in our concert halls and on the BBC, allow us, I think, to take a modest pride in the contribution this country has made to a just appreciation of Mahler's genius.