

Perspectives

From Symphonic Poem to Symphony: The Evolution of Mahler's First Symphony

by James L. Zychowicz

Over a century after its premiere, Mahler's First Symphony is one of its composer's more widely performed compositions. Mahler's First Symphony is a relatively familiar work in the concert hall, and a number of fine recordings exist to make the music accessible outside of live performances. With this work Mahler, already respected as an opera conductor, announced his arrival in the musical world as a compelling symphonist. At the very time when composers like Johannes Brahms and Anton Dvořák were at the height of their popularity, Mahler conceived a new symphony that had all the earmarks of divergent thought. It resembles in some ways the accomplishment of such a progressive composer as Hector Berlioz in the *Symphonie fantastique*. Yet Mahler composed his First Symphony with his own unique approach, and did merely imitate an orchestral work by Berlioz or a tone poem by Franz Liszt or even the latter's *Faust Symphony* or *Dante Symphony*.

During Mahler's lifetime audiences and critics responded to his First Symphony in various ways, some having expressed as much enthusiasm as others voiced their displeasure with the composition.¹ For many, the music is immediately engaging, with the highly evocative pedal point at the beginning of the work that takes the listener to the opening theme of the first movement. Yet questions arise about what follows. Does the movement entitled "Blumine" come next, or is it best to follow the four-movement version, which represents Mahler's revision of the original structure of the work? Along with the question of structure, it

is important to consider Mahler's decision to remove programmatic associations from this work and his other symphonies. What is the appropriate way to treat the legacy of this important work and in doing so pay respect to the composer's wishes for the work in a responsible and reliable manner?

About the Composition of the First Symphony

Mahler composed his First Symphony between 1885 and 1888, having completed the scoring in November 1888. The work had its premiere in November 1889 in Budapest, where Mahler was then director of the Budapest Royal Opera, a position he held until 1890, when he became the principal conductor at the Hamburg Opera. From his activities at the time, Mahler was still establishing himself as a conductor, as he moved to increasingly prestigious and demanding positions as his own reputation grew for an international public. His reputation as a composer lagged behind his growing reputation as a promising young conductor.

By the time First was premiered, Mahler had a modest number of works to his name, including the cantata *Das klagende Lied*, which he had composed between 1878 and 1880. Beyond that, he had completed some Lieder, notably settings for voice and piano from the anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1880-87) and also the song cycle, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, a work that exists with two versions, one for voice and piano, the other for voice and orchestra.² Mahler composed that song cycle between 1884 and 1885, just before he began composing the First Symphony, and the connections between the two works are well known.

Given his previous efforts with vocal music and his career as an opera conductor, it would be natural for Mahler to choose to compose operas or at least some kind of works for the stage. Symphonic composition as a preferred vehicle of expression belonged to the previous generation,

Table 1 : The Evolving Structures of Mahler's First Symphony

Year	1889 (Budapest)	1893– January (Hamburg)	1893 – October (Hamburg)	1896 (Berlin)	1899 (first publication)
Title	Symphoniai költemény [Symphonic poem]	Symphonie („Titan“) in 5 Sätzen (2 Abtheilungen)	Titan, eine Tondichtung in Symphonieform	Symphonie in D-Dur für großes Orchester (in 4 Sätzen) [No designations given to any of the movements]	Symphonie in D-Dur
Movements	I. rész [Part 1]	I. Theil „Aus den Tagen der Jugend“	I. Theil: „Aus de Tagen der Jugend“: Blumen-, Frucht, und Dornstücke		
	1. Bevezetés és Allegro comodo [Introduction and Allegro comodo]	1. „Frühling und kein Ende“	1. „Frühling und kein Ende“ (Einleitung und Allegro comodo). Die Einleitung stellt das Erwachen der Natur aus langem Winterschlaf dar.		1. Langsam. Schleppend. Wie ein Naturlaut
	2. Andante	2. „Blumine“	2. „Blumine“ (Andante)		
	3. Scherzo	3. „Mit vollen Segeln“	3. „Mit vollen Segeln“ (Scherzo)		2. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell
	II. rész [Part 2]	II. Theil: „Commedia humana“	II. Theil: „Commedia humana“		
	4. A la pompes funebres: attacca	4. Todtenmarsch in „Callots Manier“.	4. „Gestrandet!“ (ein Todtenmarsch in „Callots Manier“.		3. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen
	5. Molto appassionato	5. „Dall' Inferno al Paradiso“	5. „Dall' Inferno“ (Allegro furioso)		4. Stürmisch bewegt
Comments		Symphony in five movements (two parts)	Symphonic Poem in the form of a Symphony [five movements divided into two parts]	Symphony in four movements	Symphony in four movements

¹ While it by no means exhaustive, a selection of criticism from the premiere of Mahler's First Symphony (Budapest, 20 November 1889) is published in *Mahler:*

His Life, Work, and World, ed. by Kurt Blaukopf and Herta Blaukopf (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 82-83.

which included among others figures like Brahms and Bruckner, whose works Mahler performed as a conductor. A number of composers of Mahler's generation were attracted by opera, including some enthusiastic Wagnerians, whom Mahler knew during his student years.³ Some, however, pursued symphonic works, like his colleague Hans Rott, whose early symphony was known to the youthful Mahler.⁴ Yet those who pursued symphonic composition at the end of the nineteenth century confronted the legacy of Beethoven, as Brahms had successfully done with his four contributions to this genre – and even then, Brahms' First Symphony received the dubious epithet of Beethoven's Tenth Symphony. Notwithstanding that connection, his adherence to the Austro-German symphonic tradition⁵ also placed Brahms in a certain stylistic context, which at once gave him a place in the culture and, at the same time, limited the perception of Brahms as an innovator.

Other nineteenth-century symphonists fared differently, and it was a matter of determine the direction the symphony would take after Beethoven. Taking a cue from Debussy's trenchant comments about Beethoven's influence on the generations that followed him,⁶ Mark Evan Bonds explored this aspect of symphonic composition in the nineteenth century; for him, composers who paid respect to Beethoven's legacy employed the following emphases: (1) the prominence of form; (2) the role of text and voice; (3) the fusion of genres; (4) cyclical coherence; and (5) the role of the Finale in the context of the entire work.⁷ Each of these elements can be regarded as crucial aspects of Mahler's style, and they are already present in the First Symphony, where all the factors may be seen to come into play, including the overt reference to voice and text through the self-quotation of Lieder. Of all those elements, though, it is, perhaps, the use of music from his own songs that set Mahler apart from other composers and allowed him to create associations outside the Symphony itself.

By incorporating aspects of the art song within the structure of his Symphony, Mahler took the work out of the realm of strictly absolute music through these intertextual references.⁸ Even without the reliance on an explicit program, the quotations from his songs may be seen to bring their texts into an instrumental milieu, where the music is part of the thematic groups that function inside the larger forms of the first and third movements. Because the quotations are part of the musical structure, it is not necessary to know the songs to understand the work, since the music also functions on its own terms as played music, not as part of a sung text.

As to the self-quotations in the First Symphony,⁹ interpretations may differ, but the fact remains that Mahler enhanced the meaning of the

² See the worklist included with "Gustav Mahler" by Peter Franklin, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed

³ Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973), p. 33. While La Grange mentions contemporaries of Mahler who supported Wagner's music on p. 33 and pp. 43-44.

⁴ Uwe Harten, ed., *Hans Rott (1858-1884): Biographie, Briefe, Auszeichnungen, und Dokumente aus de Nachlaß von Maja Loehr (1888-1964)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), p. 252.

⁵ A. Peter Brown, *The Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. 4, *The Second Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Brahms, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, and Selected Contemporaries* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. xv-xvii.

⁶ Debussy once stated the "It seems to me that the proof of the futility of the symphony has been established since Beethoven." See Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche, the Dilettante Hater*, trans. by B. N. Langdon Davies (New York: Dover Books, 1962), pp. 17-18. For Debussy, Beethoven did not perpetuate the symphony as he found it, but treated its conventions creatively.

⁷ Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 20-21. His discussion of Mahler's response to Beethoven focuses on the Fourth Symphony (pp. 175-200).

⁸ For a discussion of the way the programmatic ideas intersect the more formal structure of the First Symphony, see Dieter Krebs, *Gustav Mahlers Erste Symphonie: Form und Gehalt*, Musikwissenschaftliche Schriften, vol. 31 (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzschichler, 1997), esp. pp. 15-24.

⁹ See, for example, Susanne Vill, *Vermittlungsformen verbalisierter und musikalischer Inhalte in der Musik Gustav Mahlers*, Frankfurter Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft, Band 6 (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1979), pp. 205-40.

Symphony as a whole by introducing elements from his songs into the work. The extroverted music from the second of his *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* fittingly matches the text, which connotes an individual venturing into nature, and it also fits the description of the movement implicit in the title he later added. By reworking the song into the Symphony, Mahler created a link that goes beyond the kinds of programmatic associations other composers had pursued.

Likewise, the evocation of the last song in the third movement of the Symphony conveys the kind of melancholy to which he referred in his programmatic description of the penultimate movement. Even without having the text of that song explicitly stated, it is enough for Mahler to use the materials thematically in the First Symphony. Both quotations draw ideas from one genre to another, thus allowing for a heightened meaning and, at the same time, preventing the work from being incomprehensible to those unfamiliar with the songs by developing the musical ideas in an instrumental setting.

Symphony or Symphonic Poem?

In considering the various kinds of symphonic works that were known when Mahler composed his First Symphony, the influence of the symphonic poem, with which Richard Strauss had already made his mark, should not be underestimated. For those who facing the symphonic tradition in the late-nineteenth century, program music was an alternative that was still developing. In the symphonic poem, composers could find the freedom of expression that was not as easily achieved with the symphony. Even so, the precedents that Beethoven set with such a programmatic work as his Symphony no. 6, the so-called Pastoral Symphony, affect the symphonic poem and also the program symphony. Those aspects of symphonic composition that Bonds identified are characteristic of the genre as it was understood in the nineteenth century, and entailed by implication, the influence of extramusical ideas, that is, specifically programmatic elements.

In pursuing symphonic music as a means of expression, Mahler must have faced this kind of choice, since he initially called his First Symphony a symphonic poem. As indicated in Table 1, an outline of the evolving structure of the First Symphony, Mahler originally called the work simply a "symphonic poem" without any further description, as found in the published program for the premiere in Budapest.¹⁰ While Mahler conveyed to the press at the time some ideas about the emotions he wanted to evoke with this music, he did not publish a narrative program or any other sort of description of the work.¹¹ While some of the criticism may be seen as a reaction to the Symphony as a piece of new music, per se, other comments suggest confusion about the cohesiveness of the work itself. Perhaps Mahler's later addition of programmatic ideas was intended as a response to the mixed reception his work received.

Thus, in 1893 Mahler changed the designation of the work for two performances in Hamburg. For the January performance he gave the work the name "Titan,"¹² first as "Symphonie ('Titan') in 5 Sätzen (2 Abtheilungen)" ["Symphony ('Titan') in 5 movements (2 parts)"] when the work was reprised in October of the same year, it was then called "Titan, eine Tondichtung in Symphonieform" ["Titan", a tone poem in the form of a symphony]. While Mahler bowed to convention by entitling his new work as a symphony, the use of five, rather than four, movements, placed him with a progressive composer like Berlioz or, at least, suggested the programmatic efforts of Robert Schumann, whose Third Symphony, the "Rhenish" Symphony, is a five-movement work. Yet when Mahler later reversed the elements of the title and called it a "tone poem in the form of a symphony," he connected that very same work to program music, just as Richard Strauss had done in a work like *Aus Italien*, which is an overtly descriptive work, albeit within a four-movement symphonic structure.

¹⁰ A facsimile of the published program is published in Knud Martner, *Gustav Mahler im Konzertsaal* (Copenhagen: n.p., 1985), p. 22.

¹¹ La Grange, *Mahler*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973), p. 203.

¹² Mahler apparently named the Symphony "Titan" in January 1893, as indicated by Ferdinand Pfohl, *Gustav Mahler: Eindrücke und Erinnerungen aus den Hamburger Jahren* (Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1973), p. 17. For performances later in 1893 and in 1894 Mahler used the title for the work.

Moreover, Mahler's reference to "Titan" points to the famous novel by Jean Paul, and while there is no explicit connection between the programmatic titles of the movements in Mahler's Symphony and the plot of the novel,¹³ some hold that the descriptions of nature that Jean Paul undertook resemble Mahler's own evocations of nature in his work. At the same time, the reference to Jean Paul's "Titan" brings associations from the novel into the Symphony which are conveyed by the use of descriptive titles of movements that resemble those in another novel by Jean Paul. Mahler's descriptive titles actually resemble the ones that Jean Paul used for the novel *Siebenkäs*, but the connection is no more specific than this, since Jean Paul's story is neither reflected in Mahler's program for the work nor in the music itself. A pithy distinction about the relationship between Jean Paul's work and Mahler's First Symphony occurs in the comments of the German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus in his discussion of the "hero" of the Second Symphony:

The "hero" [of the program of Mahler's Second Symphony] is neither Jean Paul's "Titan," to whom the program of the First Symphony refers, nor Mahler himself, but rather, as Hermann Danuser recognized, an "aesthetic subject" of the music that, like the "narrator" of a novel or the lyric "I" in a poem, belongs to the esthetic stock of the work itself. . . .¹⁴

In essence, the unnamed "hero" at the core of the program appears to be a composite of several personas, including Mahler himself, as the implied narrator by virtue of his being the composer of the music. Mahler is not being evasive in constructing this kind of narrator, but rather, the multiple associations are all valid expressions for the audience to use in interpreting the musical narrative for themselves. Any perceived ambiguity in these programmatic associations is related to the nature of music itself, which does not in itself contain absolutes in the meanings it conveys and the connotations that allow the art to renew itself. Rather, the understanding of musical meaning relies wholly on contexts that can vary radically from between a work and its composer, as occurs in Mahler's First Symphony. By using descriptive titles that suggest emotional states or carry impacted meanings, Mahler created programmatic references that put the burden of interpretation on the audience. Instead of publishing a program that connected the music to specific actions, like some of the descriptive programs of Franz Liszt or even the programmatic "Biblical" sonatas of the eighteenth-century composer Johann Kuhnau,¹⁵ Nevertheless, any sort of program in Mahler's First Symphony is rather vague when compared to the specific and continuous narratives found in other tone poems. His programmatic references hardly resemble the stories that are integral to some of Strauss's works, like the *Don Juan* or *Till Eulenspiegel*, and by leaving his programmatic ideas open-ended, Mahler avoided leaving himself open to the criticism that might have occurred had he insisting on using more concrete images for interpreting his music.

Rather than allow his music to be judged against its assigned program, Mahler placed the burden of interpretation on the audience, who could infer more specific narrative ideas when the used his programmatic titles, which are sometimes nothing more than a phrase. This gave him the freedom to compose a work that could be regarded as program music, a progressive form for the day, and at the same time used conventional musical forms and other structural devices to function at a deeper level.

In calling the work as he originally conceived it, a tone poem – a symphonic poem –and by using a five-movement structure divided into sections, Mahler diverged from the traditional symphony with its four-movement structure without sectional divisions. By dividing the work into parts Mahler evoked the kind of structure that Berlioz used with his

¹³ John Williamson offers some perspectives in his article on "The Earliest Completed Works: A Voyage Towards the First Symphony", pp. 39-61 in *The Mahler Companion*, edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 56-57.

¹⁴ Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, translated by Roger Lustig (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 140.

¹⁵ Johann Kuhnau, *Musicalische Vorstellung einiger biblischer Historien*, edited by Karl Päsler, *Denkmäler der deutscher Tonkunst*. Series 1, vol. 4 (Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1901). This is a set of 6 program sonatas that were first published in 1700 and included prose narratives at various points in each piece.

dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette* (1839), where the three numbered sections of the work correspond to parts of the drama on which it is based. Such sectional divisions are imperceptible to the audience when they hear the work, but are significant in the published program. Without some sort of temporal devices that either connect sections or interrupt them, the part divisions function at an intellectual level and do not affect the perception of the movements and the relationships they have to each other. While he used them with later works, Mahler eventually abandoned the part divisions he had once used in the First Symphony when he revised the score for publication.

Abandoning the Program

Mahler's perspective on program music gradually shifted from his overt endorsement of the genre in the initial version of the First Symphony and the single-movement *Todtenfeier*,¹⁶ to his later use of calling his works symphonies without further explanation. By March 1896 Mahler revised his First as "Symphonie in D-Dur für großes Orchester (in 4 Sätzen)", when he conducted it at a concert of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra on 16 March 1896.¹⁷ Several days later he wrote a sort of explanatory letter to the critic Max Marschalk in which he confirmed that he had previously given the work the title "Titan" and provided some program notes that we composed after the fact – after he had finished the work. He went on to say that

My reason for omitting them this time was not only that I thought them quite inadequate – in fact, not even accurate or relevant – but that I have experienced the way the audiences have been set on the wrong track by them. . . .¹⁸

No longer did he refer to his music as symphonic poems in the form of a symphony or otherwise suggest that he was composing program symphonies. The perspective Mahler expressed in the previously quoted letter appears to reflect ideas that must have evolved over several years, when he had to balance the criticism of a work like his First Symphony with the intentions he had for works he composed later. In a letter he wrote to Marschalk approximately a week later, Mahler explained his position further:

Just as I find it banal to compose programme-music, I regard it as unsatisfactory and unfruitful to try to make programme notes for a piece of music. This remains so despite the fact that the *reason* why a composition comes into being at all is bound to be something the composer has experienced, something real, which might after all be considered sufficiently concrete to be expressed in words. – I am sure we now stand at a great parting of the ways, where the divergent paths of symphonic and dramatic music will soon become obvious to anyone with a clear notion of the nature of music. – Even now, if you compare a Beethoven symphony with Wagner's tone-poems, you will have no trouble in recognizing the essential differences between them. – True, Wagner has taken over symphonic music's *means of expression*, just as the symphonic composer, for his part, is completely justified in making whatever use he wishes of the means of expression with which Wagner has enriched music. . . .¹⁹

It is telling that Mahler referred to Wagner's operas as tone-poems, a designation which anticipates Norman Del Mar's reference to Strauss's early operas as "stage tone poems,"²⁰ that is, tone poems for voice and

¹⁶ For a perspective on the function of the program in Mahler's symphonic poem *Todtenfeier*, see Stephen E. Hefling, "Mahler's *Todtenfeier* and the Problem of Program Music," *19th Century Music* 12 (1988):27-53.

¹⁷ Knud Martner, *Gustav Mahler im Konzertsaal*, p. 47. The program opened with "Todtenfeier" (1. Satz aus der Symphonie in C-Moll für großes Orchester), followed by the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (sung by Anton Sistermans, baritone), before concluding with Mahler's First Symphony.

¹⁸ Gustav Mahler to Max Marschalk, 20 March 1896. *Gustav Mahler: Briefe*, ed. by Herta Blaukopf, 2nd ed. (Vienna, Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1996), pp. 169-70; English translation, *Gustav Mahler: Selected Letters*, edited by Knud Martner, translated by Eithne Wilkins, Ernst Kaiser, and Bill Hopkins (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), p. 177.

¹⁹ Gustav Mahler to Max Marschalk, letter of 26 March 1896, *Gustav Mahler: Briefe*, pp. 171-72; English translation, *Gustav Mahler: Selected Letters*, p. 179.

orchestra. At the same time Wagner's use of Leitmotifs throughout his operas may be regarded as an extension of the kind of motivic development that Beethoven had used in his quartets and symphonies, especially the later works in both genres. Taking a cue from his references to Wagner, it is possible to apprehend Mahler's sense of the tone poem as something evocative. Thus, his statement to Marschalk is not Mahler's declaration about foregoing a style of composing that became uncomfortable for him to pursue, but rather, it is possible to understand his comments as an evolving formulation of his creed as a composer.

For Mahler to abandon any overt programmatic trappings reinforced the emphasis on the interpretations that arrive from music composed in this fashion and the means which derive from the use such self-referential ideas. After all, if dramatic music as found in Wagner's operas could be considered tone poems, it is also possible to consider symphonic works to reflect some aspects of program music without necessarily having to be exclusively descriptive in nature. Mahler could then imbue his musical structures with extramusical elements to enhance their meaning and also their internal logic. By constructing musical narratives in this manner, Mahler did not need to rely on an explicit text to convey a story which is, after all, conveyed better within the structure of the music itself.

At the same time, it is significant that Mahler referred to the written program as coming after the score. No matter when he conceived the program, he mentioned his difficulty with creating the program notes after the fact, and thus serving as a tool for the audience, rather than as an integral part of the musical structure of the work. This perspective conveys the impression that the program notes could be omitted, since it was, after all, the music that mattered. It remained for Mahler, as the composer of the work, to deal with the consequences if his ideas were misinterpreted. In a sense, this resembles the critical notes that the poet T. S. Eliot provided for his landmark poem, *The Waste Land*,²¹ which contains images that are subject to interpretation. When he published *The Waste Land* Eliot chose to assist the reader by using the unusual tack of providing notes to guide the interpretation of the poem, but nowhere does he insist that those notes are the only guidelines for reading the work. Likewise, Mahler's comments in the letter quoted above suggest some latitude with the interpretation he offered in the programs for the First Symphony.

While those comments to Marschalk date from late 1896, Mahler made some other statements about programs in 1900, just after he had revised the First Symphony for publication, and in yet another letter to Marschalk, Mahler declared an end to programs for himself. At this point he took his discussion back to Beethoven, rather than Wagner, and declared that:

From Beethoven onwards, there is no modern music that has not its inner programme. – But any music about which one first has to tell the listener what experience it embodies, and what he is meant to experience, is worthless. – and once more – repeat – every programme! – One simply has to come provide with ears and a heart and – not the least – give oneself up willingly to the rhapsodist. A residue of mystery always remains – even for the creator!²²

In this statement Mahler has become unequivocal in his position on programs, and if any doubt existed before, Mahler made it clear that he did not want conventional programs to be associated with his music. This does not seem to be intended as a criticism of other composers, since he did not proceed to comment on them specifically. If nothing else, the letter reinforces Mahler's avowed decision to forego creating programs for his own music and the reliance on them for interpreting it. Taking his ideas a step further, he argues persuasively that music could

not be equated with words, especially the limited text found in a narrative program, which would become for some, not a means toward understanding the music, but its sanctioned interpretation. Abandoning the program is all the more important for the First Symphony, since a program of any sort had not been part of the work as Mahler originally conceived it, but something that he added later, after the work had received its premiere.

Thus, some aspects of Mahler's conception of his works may be seen to evolve, just as his style of orchestration and scoring did, to enhance the way he wanted the works to sound. For those who know the programmatic ideas that the composer had for the work, including the audiences of his day, this presents a conceptual problem as to whether it is proper to invoke those earlier images that Mahler fully intended as part of the work. When the emphasis is on the symphonic aspects of the First, it is possible to put the extramusical elements in perspective, and thus apprehend the Symphony through its structure and musical narrative. The programmatic elements then become an artifact of the past, like the earlier versions of the work with the later-excised "Blumine" movement. If this is the preferred form of the work, it is important to honor the composer's intention, since he is, after all the one responsible giving the music its ultimate shape as a means of expression. The situation is similar to literature, where authors revised novels in response to the critical response. With Dickens, for example, the concluding chapter of a critically esteemed novel like *Great Expectations* as it was ultimately published in book form differs from the ending that audiences had read when the work was published serially.²³ The decision to make such a change in the work is not arbitrary, but wholly dependent upon the author's wishes as he intended present the novel from that point onwards – and even in this case, Dickens made no effort to suppress the earlier ending. Likewise, Mahler's intended his revisions of the First Symphony to follow the work from that point forward, and did not revert to the earlier form of that work.

Mahler's Revisions of His First Symphony

The first of Mahler's symphonies to see print was the Second Symphony, which was completed in 1894 and published in 1897. Mahler published his First Symphony in 1899,²⁴ and in doing so used the revised version, which involved four, rather than five movements and lacked the descriptive phrases that he been part of the work several years earlier. By making those revisions, Mahler essentially excised the program from his First Symphony. While he is nowhere explicit about it, the absence of descriptive titles, including the division into specific parts removed the language in the score that had connected the music to any program. This action is fully in line with what Mahler had stated about program music and his stake in it. In essence, Mahler revised the score of his First Symphony to reflect his latest aesthetic ideas. It is not as though he rejected the earlier score entirely, but rather, Mahler found a way to allow the music to exist on its own terms so that listeners could enjoy the work on its own merits, without the now passé crutch of a verbal program – or even the vestiges of one – to explain the meaning of the music. Instead, the audience could rely on their perception of the musical narrative and the structures that he used to support it.

In making this revision, Mahler created a second version of the First Symphony, which he intended to supplant the earlier one. He removed the manuscript of the "Blumine" movement from the score, but did not destroy it. Nevertheless, "Blumine" was no longer part of the revised version of the First Symphony, even though some have since performed and recorded the work with the excised movement. Nevertheless, "Blumine," was part of the first version of the Mahler's Symphony no. 1, but never published as part of the work. This distinction is important for understanding that attempts to include "Blumine" in performances of the First Symphony as Mahler published it are not inauthentic. While Mahler had performed "Blumine" as part of his original conception of the work but ultimately did not use it in his later conception of the work when he

²⁰ Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, 3 vols. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 1:239

²¹ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, edited by Michael North, Norton Critical Edition [series], (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001. Eliot's own notes are reproduced on pp. 21-26, and some of his own comments on them are found on pp. 112-13.

²² Gustav Mahler to Max Marschalk, undated letter, most likely written around 20 November 1900, *Briefe*, p. 277; *Selected Letters*, p. 262. The emphasis in Martner's translation is not in Mahler's original letter in German.

²³ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, edited by Edgar Rosenberg, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999, pp. 358-59 (both endings are found on these facing pages); see also "Putting and End to *Great Expectations*" by Edgar Rosenberg, pp. 491-527.

²⁴ The work was published in Vienna by the firm Joseph Weinberger in 1899, and it was subsequently published by Universal Edition (Vienna) in 1905. See La Grange, *Mahler*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973), pp. 465-66.

published it as his Symphony no. 1. Moreover, he never went back to the five-movement version of the Symphony, and any mention of the disposition “Blumine” is absent from the extant correspondence concerning the First. Moreover, when he was revising the editions of his early symphonies for Universal in 1910,²⁵ Mahler did not indicate any substantive changes for the First Symphony that might even remotely restore the abandoned movement to the score.

For these reasons, later attempts perform “Blumine” require some thought about honoring Mahler’s wishes and rendering the music as he intended it. Since Mahler excised “Blumine” from the Symphony before the work was first published, the prospect of including that movement in performances of the First Symphony is connected with issues of authenticity. Since Mahler chose not to retain the movement in the revised version of the First Symphony that he saw into print, including “Blumine” within the score of the revised version of the work is counter to the composer’s intentions for the work as a whole. At the same time, Mahler did not choose to maintain multiple versions of this Symphony.²⁶

More importantly, in revising the score for publication, Mahler arrived at a shorter, more concise work. From the sonata form of the first movement, he proceeded to the Scherzo, slow movement, and Finale, as though it were a more conventional work. Yet the content remained the same, and it is this aspect of the First Symphony that distinguishes it, since the first symphonies of other composers are not often regarded as highly as Mahler’s. Even the esteem for Brahms’s First Symphony that allowed it to be called Beethoven’s Tenth points to an affinity with another composer – Beethoven – instead of pointing to the characteristics that Brahms introduced into the structure to put his own stamp on the form. With Mahler, the situation is different, since his incorporation of extensive material from his song cycle *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* not only establishes a context for describing it as a song symphony, but also integrates this Symphony with the composer’s earlier work. The close association between pieces in a composer’s oeuvre sets Mahler apart from others, like Strauss, who never brought together their own vocal and symphonic work so convincingly. At the same time, this aspect of the content also points to the juxtaposition of song and symphony, which would play upon the structure of Mahler’s other works. While this is overtly present in the so-called “Wunderhorn” symphonies, his later symphonic music embodies vocal elements, while the songs also benefit from symphonic elements. In a sense, the kind of integration of song into symphony that Mahler began to pursue in his First Symphony – a stylistic trait that Bonds set up in his parameter for discussing the development of the genre after Beethoven – finds its complement in the symphonic song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde*. The blurring of genres that allows for such a perspective is critical to the way that Mahler renewed both the symphony and song cycle in his lifelong pursuit of both.

Versions and Editions

After revising the First Symphony for publication, Mahler did not leave the score to pursue other works. As with his other works, he returned to the First Symphony at various points in his career, with his revisions through 1906 made on the revised edition of the score that was published that year by Universal Edition. Mahler retained his own annotated scores, and used them as the basis for the revisions that were published in 1906, with later annotations left unpublished and eventually incorporated into the critical edition, that is the one originally published by Erwin Ratz, which was presented as the *Ausgabe letzter Hand* (1966; rev. 1992²⁷). (Table 2 contains a selected list of editions of the Mahler’s

First Symphony.) While Hans Ferdinand Redlich challenged Ratz’s work with his own score for the score, the fact remains that the last revisions that Mahler saw into print were published in 1906, and any remaining ones, while authentic, might not have been used in their entirety. Some of the last revisions concern the details of the score, which still need to be considered by conductors who perform the First Symphony. Passages marked “solo” for the basses could be handled by a single player or the section – such notations are imprecise and subject to interpretation. Mahler’s annotation could refer either to a solo section or soloist is possible, and the ultimately a decision would require some sensitivity to balance in performing the work. The desire for accuracy and authenticity in performing Mahler’s music is essential to their interpretation, but those ideals should never be invoked at the expense of musical values.

Edition	Date	Publisher	Comments
First Edition	1899	Joseph Weinberger	Engraved by the firm Joseph Eberle, Vienna
	1906	Universal Edition	Platten Nummer 2931
Reprint edition	1943	Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd.	Reprint of 1899 edition, not the one from 1906
Russian edition	1960	Russian State Music Publishing House	Published in Moscow
Redlich edition	1966	Edition Eulenburg, Zürich,	Edition no. 570 (also marked with Platten Nummer E.E. 6347)
Critical edition	1966	Universal Edition	Band 1, Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by Irwin Ratz (Edition no. 13820)
Philharmonia edition	N.d. [1967]	Universal Edition	Replication of the critical edition as a miniature score, edition no. PH 446
Kalmus edition	N.d.	Kalmus (Belwin-Mills)	Reprint of the 1960 Russian edition
Verbesserte Ausgabe (“Improved edition)	1992	Universal Edition	Edition no. UE 13820 – “Improved” (verbesserte) version of the critical edition, edited by Sander Wilkens, and intended to supersede Ratz’s edition.
“Korrigierte Neuauflage”	1995	Universal Edition	Korrigierte Neuauflage, “Corrected new printing” of the “Verbesserte Ausgabe” edited by Sander Wilkens
Philharmonia edition	1998	Universal Edition	Replication of the “Verbesserte Ausgabe” of the critical edition as a miniature score, edition no. PH 545

²⁵ Gustav Mahler to Emil Freund, undated letter from Alt-Schludersbach, probably July 1910, *Selected Letters*, p. 361; *Gustav Mahler: Briefe*, 2nd ed., pp. 416-17 (letter no. 449). The following letter in that edition, no. 450 (pp. 417-18) concerns the revision of the Fourth Symphony, but it is not included in Martner’s translation.

²⁶ This is not to rule out entirely those rare instances that merit multiple versions of symphonies when the composer undertook substantive revisions, as Bruckner did with his Third Symphony. Yet this is the exception rather than the rule with symphonic works, especially those of Mahler, who superseded his earlier scores when he later revised them.

²⁷ In addition to his edition of the work, Sander Wilkens published a thorough analysis of Mahler’s autograph score of the First Symphony in *Editionspraxis und allgemeine Korrektursystematik zu den Werken Gustav Mahlers: Kritischer*

A more complex situation concerns the disposition of the excised movement, “Blumine.” While it is of interest to those who wish to know more about Mahler’s music, including it in the revised version of the First Symphony is a decision that raises questions about the integrity of the score. After all, the movement was part of the work before its publication, and Mahler did not revise it when he brought the Symphony into print. To bring the “Blumine” movement into modern performance should also involve returning to Mahler’s fair copy, rather than inserting the excised

Bericht und Revisionsbericht zum Autograph der Ersten Symphonie, Berliner musikwissenschaftlicher Arbeiten, vol. 41 (Munich: Verlag Emil Katzschichler, 1996).

movement into the revised version of the score. The question exists as to even performing the “Blumine” movement at all, since Mahler did not sanction its performance after the score was published. Yet the fact that he did not destroy the movement in the manuscript sources preserved the score for later generations, and serves as evidence of the early conception of the score as it once existed.

Like the “Blumine” movement, the various programs for the First Symphony are historic artifacts that also contribute a perspective on the evolution of the work. The First Symphony was no longer restricted to the program as the principal means of interpretation, but could be approached in various ways, including analyses of form, thematic content, cyclic elements, and other aspects of the music. For those who wanted to view it in a comparative way alongside the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, an element not taken up in the various programs, this approach also became possible. The listener could perceive the musical narrative and follow the thread of thought in the music itself, that is, to treat the music on its own terms without interpreting through the sometimes misleading measure of the verbal program. Most importantly, Mahler’s decision to jettison the program is crucial to the subsequent success of the First Symphony, which has remained a vital part of the concert repertoire. By removing the connections to an explicit program, Mahler did not necessarily limit the possible interpretations of the work, but, rather, allowed his audience to bring their own associations to the music and, thus, enhanced the meanings which can intersect in this rich and exciting work that endures as a remarkable and effective First Symphony.

Announcement

We would like to remind our members that the annual membership fee of \$10 is due on January 1, 2006. Please kindly make your check payable to “The Chicago Mahlerites” and kindly mail it to:

The Chicago Mahlerites
P. O. Box 11560
Chicago, IL 60611-0560

The society would also like to take this opportunity to wish our members a wonderful holiday season.

Additions to the Library of The Chicago Mahlerites

The following publications and documentary DVDs have been recently acquired by The Chicago Mahlerites and are housed in the Society library. CDs and DVDs of performances are not listed in this catalog. Members are welcome and encouraged to check out these items. Please contact Teng-Leong Chew (see e-mail address on the last page of *Naturlaut*) for more information.

Books

1. ***Perspectives on Gustav Mahler.***
Edited by Jeremy Barham. Ashgate Publishing Co., 2005
2. ***Die Chinesische Flöte: Nachdichtungen Chinesischer Lyrik***
By Hans Bethge. Insel Verlag, Leipzig, 1920
Gift from James L. Zychowicz
3. ***The Cambridge Companion to the Lied***
Edited by James Parsons. Cambridge University Press, 2004
Gift from James L. Zychowicz
4. ***Gustav Mahler Briefe und Musikautographen aus den Moldenhauer-Achivenin der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek. (in German)***
Compiled and written by Günther Weiß, Sigrid von Moisy, and Hartmut Schaefer. Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München, 2003
5. ***Gustav Mahler: Letters to His Wife***
Edited by Henry-Louis de la Grange and Günter Weiss in collaboration with Knud Martner. First complete edition revised and translated by Antony Beaumont. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
6. ***Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis***
By Stuart Feder. Yale University Press, 2004
7. ***The Mahler Symphonies: An Owner’s Manual***
Includes full-length Hänssler sampler CD.
By David Hurwitz. Amadeus Press, 2004
8. ***Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler’s Ninth Symphony***
By Lewis Thomas. Penguin (non-Classics) Press, 1995
9. ***Mahler and His World***
Edited by Karen Painter. Princeton University Press, 2002
10. ***The Mahler Companion***
Edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson. Oxford University Press, 2001
11. ***Mahler’s Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics (Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis)***
By Robert Samuels. New Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2004
12. ***Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte Deutsche Lieder***
Compiled by L. Archim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano
Winkler-Verlag München, 1808
Gift from James L. Zychowicz
13. ***An Integration of Ancient Chinese Poetry and Western Post-Romantic Music: A Study of Gustav Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde.***
By Pu-Qi Jiang (Ph.D. Dissertation) University of Cincinnati, 2003
14. ***Mahler’s Fourth Symphony***
By James L. Zychowicz. Oxford University Press, 2005
15. ***Symphonic Metamorphoses. Subjectivity and Alienation in Mahler’s Re-cycled Songs***
By Raymond Knapp. Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 2003
16. ***The Correct Movement Order in Mahler’s Sixth Symphony.***
Edited by Gilbert Kaplan, Kaplan Foundation, New York, 2004
This booklet can be obtained for free from the following link:
http://posthorn.com/Mahler/Correct_Movement_Order_III.pdf
17. ***The Seventh Symphony of Gustav Mahler: A Symposium***
Edited by James L. Zychowicz. The University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music, 1990
Gift from James L. Zychowicz
18. ***Das Lied von der Erde: The Culmination of Mahler’s Artistic Life.***
By Haiping Hu (Ph.D. Dissertation) University of California at Los Angeles, 1991
19. ***Gustav Mahler et l’Ironie dans la Culture Viennoise au Tournant du Siècle. Actes du colloque de Montpellier. (in French, German, and English)***
Edited by Henry-Louis de La Grange. Editions Climats & Association des Amis de l’Orchestre de Montpellier-L.R., 2001
Gift from Henry-Louis de La Grange.
20. ***Gustav Mahler***
By Bruno Walter. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1958

DVDs

1. ***Conducting Mahler: I have Lost Touch with the World.***
Directed by Frank Scheffer. Ideal Audience International, 2005
2. ***What the Universe Tells Me – Unravelling the Mystery of Mahler’s Third Symphony.***
Produced by Jason Starr. Video Arts International, 2004