

SCORE REVIEWS

Gustav Mahler, *Symphonie Nr. 5*. Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Band V, edited by Reinhold Kubik (Frankfurt am Main: C.F. Peters, 2002). 384pp. €89.00

The questions that any new critical edition invite are: why is there a need for it and what does it offer that earlier editions do not? In light of the publication history of Mahler's Fifth Symphony (which began in 1904) and the recent appearance of this score, these questions can be answered relatively easily. But it is also true that, for a variety of reasons, this work has entered the public, performance and scholarly consciousness of our time more deeply perhaps than most of Mahler's other output, rendering the authoritative impulses of the critical editor all the more timely and desirable.

For good or ill, the Adagietto tempo debate, sponsored most prominently by Gilbert Kaplan, together with the various misguided but powerful mythologies that have grown up around the movement, has helped to keep the public profile of the symphony high, while Visconti had already done his best to ensure that this movement, and indeed the symphony as a whole, remains the most widely used Mahler music in screen scoring history. The work has spawned four dedicated publications, all of which feature in the bibliography of Kubik's edition: Eberhardt Klemm's *Zur Geschichte der Fünften Sinfonie von Gustav Mahler. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Mahler und dem Verlag C.F. Peters und andere Dokumentation* (Leipzig, 1979); Sander Wilkens's *Gustav Mahlers Fünfte Symphonie. Quellen und Instrumentationsprozeß* (Frankfurt, 1989); Kaplan's *Gustav Mahler Adagietto. Facsimile – Documentation – Recording* (New York, 1992); and the Donald-Mitchell-edited *New Sounds, New Century. Mahler's Fifth Symphony and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra* (Bussum, 1997), which contains his own extensive study of the work, later expanded yet further into the 90-page colossus at the centre of *The Mahler Companion* (Oxford, 1999; rev. 2002). Also worth mentioning, as Kubik does here in his discussion of performance practice issues, is his own illuminating essay on Mahler's adoption of Classical and pre-Classical articulatory notation practices in the Fifth Symphony as means of countering fashionable early twentieth-century continuous legato playing.¹ Internet search engines (vague and unwieldy guides to contemporary popular reception though they undoubtedly are) consistently reveal the 5th Symphony to be in the top three of Mahler's symphonies in terms of volume of hits (usually next to the 1st and 8th Symphonies), and when the enterprising German-based media company EuroArts recently decided to add a Mahler work to its educational DVD portfolio of 'Discovering Masterpieces of Classical Music' alongside symphonic works by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Dvořák, Strauss and Bartók, it chose the 5th Symphony. There seems to be a broad perception, then, that this chronologically central work in Mahler's creative output is also

¹ Reinhold Kubik, "'Progress' and 'Tradition': Mahler's Revisions and Changing Performance Practice Conventions", in *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005): 401–15.

in a wider cultural sense central to the projection of his artistic message in a global context – that it is Mahler's most suitable cultural representative. That part of this perception may be due to its assumed status as his first ostensibly 'non-programmatic', autonomous symphonic work – which is therefore able to hold its own more successfully in the critical imagination against those of Austro-German forerunners, and yet which continually seduces commentators into colourful semantic tales – may only serve to reinforce Mahlerian aesthetic ambiguities and latter-day cultural prejudices. Be that as it may, the appearance of this edition might be said to carry more weight than is usual for a new Mahler critical edition.

At the very least, however, this score forms a significant plank in Kubik's quest to bring Mahler manuscript studies and editorial practice into the twenty-first century – a quest which has already seen the production of several distinguished revised scores of other works since he became chief editor of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* in 1993 (for example, the Piano Quartet movement, piano and orchestral versions of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* songs and the original three-movement version of *Das klagende Lied*). The advances beyond Karl Heinz Füssl's previous edition of 1989 (produced in collaboration with Sander Wilkens) are considerable, and these stem from Kubik's willingness to balance the philosophy of 'Fassung letzter Hand' (in this case, parts revised by Mahler in New York, 1910–11, which form the edition's principal source) with common-sense flexibility towards a range of other sources (chiefly the autograph manuscript, the set of parts used by Mahler in 1905–07 and his conducting score from 1905), so that slavish obedience to a principle does not override sensible matters of musical practicality and accuracy. From the list of musical sources that heads the critical report (pp. 334–5), it appears that Kubik consulted rather more widely than his predecessors, although in fact these additional sources (sketch pages for the Scherzo, printer's proofs of Mahler's second revision of the score dating from February/March 1904, a four-hand piano arrangement by Otto Singer from 1904, a conducting score for the performance in Antwerp [rediscovered in 1990 but neither used by Mahler nor containing any autograph insertions] and a set of parts Mahler had prepared for a performance by the Vienna Konzertverein in 1909) had little or no fundamental impact on the new edition. The existence of the Konzertverein parts merely serves to clarify that they should not be confused with a set of parts Mahler used for revision in 1910–11. (Wilkens speculated in 1989, mistakenly as it turned out, that the latter were those prepared for the Vienna performance.) The printer's proofs (later owned by Schoenberg) were useful in showing Mahler's handwritten transposition for D clarinet of a passage for C clarinet in bars 265–314 of the first movement, an alteration that did not appear in the first editions either of the study score (September 1904) or of the conducting score (December 1904), but was included in all printed parts. Füssl's edition, whose list of instruments specifies neither C nor D clarinet, still notates the passage as for the C instrument and simply adds the footnote 'the whole passage is played by the Clarinet in D'; Kubik's lists the D clarinet and prints the part for this instrument with a note about differences in the sources at the foot of the page. The proofs also contribute to the mixed readings of the close of the Adagietto: eight bars before the end during the final melodic descent, autograph manuscript, Stichvorlage, first edition of the study score, the sets of parts used by Mahler during 1905–07 and those he revised in 1910–11 all have 'Sehr zurückhaltend', while the first edition of the conducting score has the almost exact opposite, 'Drängend', the printer's proofs have 'Vorw.[ärts]'

followed by 'rit' four and six bars later, and in his copy of the study score Mahler crosses out 'Sehr zurückhaltend' and re-enters it four bars before the end of the movement. Füssl's edition simply retains 'Drängend' with no explanation (but presumably because it stems from the last published edition in Mahler's lifetime), while Kubik has 'Sehr zurückhaltend' in line with Mahler's last known thoughts (the revised parts of 1910–11), giving full information at the foot of the page and in the critical notes, which admit of the possibility of alternative interpretations. Although requiring a little more work from its readers and users, at least Kubik's edition does not allow principled editorial policy to lapse into narrow dogmatism. The proofs source also contains examples of Mahler's own estimated movement timings (notably 9 or 10 minutes for the Adagietto), and these are added by Kubik to existing lists of timings in tables in the preliminary pages of the edition, which also include a list of performances of the Symphony during Mahler's lifetime.

Of the other source material meticulously surveyed by Kubik, the two sets of sketch pages for the Scherzo, now housed in the Pierpont Morgan library, offer one or two interesting insights into Mahler's possible structural, harmonic and interpretative thinking (notably, the fashion for providing editors' tabular formal analyses of works in such editions appears to have long since vanished), such as a) the annotations 'Variation 4' and 'Variation 5' on the sketch page of bars 83–128, occurring at a relatively early stage of the eventual finished movement (the first return of the contrasting polyphonic idea from bar 40) and perhaps alluding to Mahler's syntactic process of unfolding successive variants; and b) on the sketch page of what became bars 632–655: 'bei der Reprise als Anfang zum', 'eventuell', '– Anfang / wahnsinnig / durch alle Tonarten hetzen!' ('in the reprise as beginning to the', 'perhaps', – beginning / frantic / chasing through all keys!'), a passage which indeed urgently develops the mock-simplistic waltz idea from bar 136 through shifts to and fro between G and G_b major and through other chromatic wanderings.

Mahler's copy of the 1904 study score was later owned by Bruno Walter, who occasionally marked in colourful interpretative suggestions. Kubik mentions just one of these: in the first movement, bar 263, at the return of the funeral march, now with additional Bohemian street-band instrumentation, Walter wrote 'Bild der nickenden Pferdeköpfe' ('Picture of the nodding horse's head') – an evocation of the clatter of the liveried horses pulling the funeral cart?

Autograph entries in the scores that Mahler used in performances in Trieste and Amsterdam (1905 and 1906), mentioned by Kubik but considered irrelevant for the edition because Mahler only rarely ascribed permanent status to them, nevertheless offer intriguing glimpses into Mahler's willingness to adapt his material to specific performing conditions (quality of players, acoustics and so on) in terms of altered instrumentation and in some cases melodic rewriting. The existence of these and their illustration of wider nineteenth-century performance practice ethics, of course problematize the very notion of a fixed, authoritative text underlying latter-day publishing philosophies and any critical edition. Presumably no conductor these days would dream of tampering with scores in this way, preferring to adjust and mould performance within, and to, the demands of the written text. Has something been lost in this? There is no easy answer to the question, for acceptance that the musical 'work' exists as an abstract entity for which the score is but a clumsy and inadequate framework might, at one extreme (and providing there is time to rewrite scores), license all manner of interpretative excesses through its shift of responsibility entirely to the conductor. On the other

hand, reverence for the finality of such texts assumes a prior subservience on the part of those charged with bringing them to life, and a potentially restrictive interpretative practice. Where can the line practically and legitimately be drawn between ethically acceptable and unacceptable intervention, particularly in the knowledge, reinforced by Kubik, that Mahler would have continued to revise his scores (and indeed secured with Universal the publishing right to do so) thus rendering any edition never more than 'provisionally definitive'?

The presentation and orthography of the score itself are to my eye admirably clear and uncluttered (occasional, unobtrusive editorial suggestions without support from the sources being helpfully enclosed in square brackets), while comprehensive notes at the end of the volume reveal not only Kubik's attention to detail but the necessity for this revised edition. These include lists of readings not present in the principal source (the 1910–11 parts) adopted from the parts used by Mahler in 1905–07, the autograph manuscript, and autograph insertions in Mahler's copies of the 1904/05 study and conducting scores; and the most useful list of all: that of the numerous differences between this edition and its 1989 predecessor (beyond the myriad omissions of, and inaccuracies in, minor notational elements – from staccato marks and positioning of dynamics to the note values of ornaments – in the earlier edition), which stretches to eight pages. Indeed, until such time as remaining missing sources come to light – sketches of other movements, fair copy of the whole work, orchestral parts of the first performance and particularly a) Mahler's reference score from 1905–07, which is now known to have made its way to England in the 1930s,² and b) his putative revised score of 1910–11 – it is difficult to see how this critical edition can be surpassed.

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² See Reinhold Kubik, 'Regarding Mahler's Reference Score to the Fifth Symphony', *News About Mahler Research* 54 (winter 2007): 36–8.