Mahler: Music, Reception, Identity

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Abstract: Writings on the socio-cultural complexities of Mahler's identity and his music in context vary in relation to four basic motifs: his Jewishness; his Germanness; the partly Slav environment of his early years; and his relationship to the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. Studies combine these elements, or privilege one above another. It may help to rethink this subject if we consider that his self-awareness formed amid a changing social environment; if his personal identity will be studied in the context of the identity history of his family; and through scrutinizing the decisive socializing role of the localities in which he lived. These conclusions can reveal the unparalleled mobility of his career in a rapidly-transforming context. Late nineteenth-century Central European societies drew at once on the "past" (post-feudal, pre-modern attitudes and practices), "present" (constitutionalism based on equal civilian rights, and nationalism), and "future" (populist and racist ideologies questioning the enlightened, liberal consensus). All three impacted not only Mahler's identity, but his image: how the surrounding society perceived him. These approaches also facilitate critical readings of the contemporaneous attempts to embed Mahler's music in national, regional, and ethno-cultural contexts. This paper examines the reception of the third movement of Symphony No. 1 as a case study, exploring how Mahler's construed images were reflected in different interpretations of this music.

Keywords: Gustav Mahler, reception history, identity

Close, yet distant – this perhaps captures the nature of present relationships with the socio-cultural elements integral to Mahler's identity as a composer, conductor and opera-house manager. This identity seems to be close to us because the points of reference, which can help to describe it, seem to be in some measure living

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and existing. Nevertheless, his identity is also distant on two accounts. Firstly, the meaning of familiar concepts changed significantly over the century and a half since Mahler's birth: a process which began already during his lifetime. Secondly, certain concepts through which Mahler's identity is imagined, and the particular configuration of some of these concepts have irrevocably vanished. The social contexts comprising Mahler's world experiences appear familiar, yet this very familiarity is deceptive: we confront an Atlantis submerged in the sea of the past.

Those visiting the Czech Republic who seek out the town of Jihlava (known to former inhabitants by its German name, Iglau) are pleased to find its architecture by and large as it used to be around the end of the 1800s. The unity of its rectangular main square has been lost to a central market building redolent of state-socialist modernism, but in one street leading from the square stands the house where the Mahler family lived. In this abode Gustav's father, Bernhard, ran a schnapps distillery and a store to sell his products – liqueurs, domestic rum, rosoglio, punch, essences and vinegar – along with beers and wines for local consumption.[1] The Roman Catholic St. James' Church is also preserved, Gothic in architecture and Baroque in furniture, in whose choir Gustav regularly sang as a boy.[2] Missing, though, is the synagogue, where the Mahler family worshiped regularly. This was torn down in March 1939, fifteen days following the Third Reich occupation – demolished not by the invaders, but by Nazi-sympathizing youths among the local German-majority inhabitants. The members of the local Jewish community (or rather townsfolk classified as Jews by ancestry under the Nuremberg Laws) were deported in 1942, via the Theresienstadt Ghetto, to extermination and concentration camps. Many of the remaining community, reduced to a tenth of its size by the Holocaust, chose to emigrate. The town's only reminder of this former religious community is the denominational cemetery.[3] After the war, Jihlava's German inhabitants were themselves deported by the restored Czechoslovak state. The socio-cultural environment in which Mahler spent his childhood ceased to exist by 1945.

"I am thrice homeless. As a native of Bohemia [*als Böhme*] in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed" – this poignant verdict is often quoted as Mahler's own. However, the source is in actuality the often unreliable memoirs of his widow, which claim to reflect Mahler's own sentiment.[4] Documents originating closer to him justify at least qualifying this thrice-negative conclusion. The literature examining Mahler's identity in relation to his compositions focuses on four core

1. Stephen MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32; Zdeněk JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler and Jihlava* (s.l.: Museum of Highlands in Jihlava, 1994), 12–13.

2. Paul BANKS, *The Early Social and Musical Environment of Gustav Mahler* (PhD Dissertation, Oxford: University of Oxford, 1982), 44–46.

3. JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 69–71.

4. Alma MAHLER-WERFEL, *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler* (Frankfurt etc.: Propyläen–Ullstein, 1971), 137. For the English translation, see Alma MAHLER, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, transl. by Basil CREIGHTON, ed. by Donald MITCHELL (London: John Murray, 1973), 109.

characteristics, each of which may feature centrally, or overlap in these accounts: his Jewishness; his Germanness; his Slavic environment; and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Simultaneously, it may facilitate reconsidering the topic if we bear in mind that Mahler's identity itself changed as time passed, that is, that the formulation of his self-identity transpired in specific and evolving social environments; if we examine his personal identity in the context of the identity history of his family; and if we take into account the localities that played significant roles in shaping Mahler's social development. These elements allow for transferring attention to Mahler's unique mobility in a transmuting society. Taking into account these considerations, a critical inquiry of contemporary attempts can be conducted, whose aim was to embed Mahler's music in a national, regional, or ethno-cultural domain.

1.

The earliest written record of the Mahler surname appears in a 1793 roster of Jews in the village of Chmelná.[5] The family adopted the German surname in all likelihood earlier, following the 1787 ruling by the Emperor Joseph II.[6] The roster records the name of Gustav's great-great-grandfather, Abraham, who was surely a highly esteemed member of his village community as a shochet and precentor of the synagogue. Born in Chmelná in the same year was Abraham's grandson Simon Mahler, grandfather of Gustav. Simon married Marie Bondy without a state permit and began work as a house-to-house peddler. They only legalized their marriage in 1850, a few years after the *Familiantengesetze* limiting the numbers of Jewish marriages were annulled.[7] Their first child, Bernhard, was born in 1827 in Lipnitz (Lipnice).[8] The family moved the same year to Kalischt (Kalište), where Simon's parents-in-law lived. The small local population of 500 people comprised Czechs, except for the Mahler-Bondy family, who spoke German, or perhaps still Yiddish German.[9] Simon Mahler's father-in-law, Abraham Bondy, earned his

5. Jens Malte FISCHER, *Gustav Mahler*, transl. by Stewart SPENCER (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 16. See also <https://www.jihlava.cz/rodina-gustava-mahlera/d-516186/p1=103782> (accessed 16 July 2019).

6. On the decree, see Viktor KARÁDY, *Zsidóság Európában a modern korban: Társadalomtörténeti vázlat* [Jewishness in Europe in the modern period: A social history outline] (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000), 158.

7. Ibid., 80, 153.

8. FISCHER, *Gustav Mahler*, 16; JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 11; Vlastimil SVĚRÁK, Renata PISKOVÁ, Helena NEDBALOVÁ and Petr DVOŘÁK, *Počátek cesty: Gustav Mahler a Jihlava v archivních pramenech – Journey's Beginning: Gustav Mahler and Jihlava in Written Sources* (Jihlava: Okresní úřad Jihlava–Státni okresni archiv v Jihlavě, 2000), 17.

9. JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 11; KARÁDY, *Zsidóság*, 166: "A zsidók kezdettől fogva a cseh tartományokban honos németség nyelvéhez közel álló jiddis-németet beszélik … ." [The Jews from the outset spoke Yiddish German, which was close to the native language of the German community in the Bohemian provinces.]

living by leasing a wine distillery, where Simon worked from the outset, eventually taking over the business financially. Meanwhile his young son Bernhard frequented the neighborhood in a horse-drawn cart, selling the wine spirits and other goods.[10] During his travels, Bernhard met his future wife, Marie Hermann of Ledetsch (Ledeč), whose wealthy father (a trader and soap maker) ensured a sizable dowry for the marriage in 1857. The couple were therefore in a position to purchase a dwelling house in Kalischt, which served also as a tavern and store. Their eldest son Isidor lived for hardly a year.[11] When their second son Gustav was born, the parents made what was probably the most important decision of their life: they moved from Kalischt. Though sixty-seven, Simon Mahler did not hesitate to change his life, and he seized the prospect of leaving Kalischt to start a new business elsewhere with his wife.

Simon and Bernhard had progressed from house-to-house sales, through lease, to distributing goods from their own workshop. They achieved these social shifts in the Cisleithanian territory of the Habsburg Monarchy (that is, from 1804, the Austrian Empire), the Bohemian Crown lands, or more precisely, rural settlements in the Czech lands of Eastern Bohemia. Their direction, prospects and limitations were determined by the legal specifics enjoyed or suffered in the feudal state by Jews, individually and communally: "If serfdom before 1848 meant oppression in many ways and forms by 'high society,' Jewry in a legal sense was confined to the crannies of feudalism."[12] Feudalism, having survived into the eighteenth century, gave way slowly to a modern class society and constitutionalism. Although there were setbacks, periods of stasis and reversal, the progression towards legal emancipation and social integration for Jews from the Josephine reforms of the 1780s to the Imperial Constitution of March 1849 ultimately achieved their equal citizens' rights. The neo-absolutist regime withdrew this legislation, but it was again reinstated in 1858, finally leading in December 1867 to renewed legal equality. This survived for a longer term – even after the collapse of the Dual Monarchy in 1918 and the disappearance of the Austrian Empire – but it did not remain lasting.[13]

Returning to 1859–1860, the Austrian Industry Act of 2 December confirmed the right for Jews to pursue industry freely. An imperial decree on 14 January first permitted the hitherto forbidden Jewish settlement in mining towns, and on 18 February Jews were bequeathed the right to real estate ownership, ending imperial restrictions in this regard throughout the Empire.[14] On 7 July 1860, Gustav Mahler was born. His paternal grandparents moved in the same year to the town

10. JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 11–12.

11. SVĚRÁK et al., *Journey's Beginning*, 17.

12. György KÖVÉR, *A tiszaeszlári dráma: Társadalomtörténeti látószögek* [The Tiszaeszlár drama: The social history angles] (Budapest: Osiris, 2011), 88.

13. KARÁDY, *Zsidóság*, 158–159.

14. János GYURGYÁK, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish question in Hungary] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 58–59.

of Deutschbrod (Německý Brod, after 1945 Havlíčkův Brod), where Simon Mahler, in his final half-decade, founded a successful textile and knitwear factory.[15]

Bernhard Mahler, with his wife and newborn son, moved on 22 October to Iglau, a Royal mining town on Moravia's border with Bohemia.[16] The shift in environment was marked: from a peasant community to an urbane world, to a German linguistic island from a community where the majority spoke another tongue, and from the relative isolation as "the village Jew" to membership of a newly reviving denominational community.

Iglau, founded in the thirteenth century, ousted its first Jewish community in 1425. Jewish homes and buildings used for communal and social activities passed into the ownership of Christian inhabitants for their own purposes. The Catholic church appropriated the synagogue, which became a chapel (finally it burnt down in 1523). Sporadically, Jews inhabited the city despite the ban, but the Jewish community could only revive in earnest four centuries later, in 1860. In 1837, only 17 Jews resided in Iglau amidst a population of 15,843 (comprising 0.1 percent), and in 1848, there were still only 99 Jewish residents. Due to the immigration, in the second half of the nineteenth century the Jewish community grew more rapidly than the town's population proportionally: to 1090 in 1869, and 1497 in 1900, totaling 6.1 percent of the 24,387 inhabitants, while the minority Czech speakers made up 17.2 percent. The synagogue opened in 1863 and served for 76 years, and the Jewish cemetery was established in 1869.[17]

The Mahler family was integral to the Jewish community. Bernhard Mahler himself was a founder who became an increasingly esteemed member of the community: in 1878 he joined the board of the Iglau congregation and the council of the Jewish school.[18] Such activities may ascertain the community's acceptance of him, but does not as such shed light on the family's religious stance or their Jewish identity. The sparseness of sources means several speculative directions have been pursued in Mahler studies. Henry Louis de La Grange, in the first volume of his monumental Mahler biography, still cautioned against viewing Bernhard as a "freethinker" and termed the Mahlers an "Orthodox Jewish family."[19] Yet in the final volume, which appeared in 2008, he calls Bernhard a *maskil*: a believer in Jewish enlightenment *(haskalah).* This aligns essentially with Kurt Blaukopf's conclusions, who in 1969 saw "every sign" that Bernhard thought freely on religious questions, and discounted anything which recalled the voluntary isolation of the Jews. He saw "no evidence" that Bernhard Mahler insisted on strict com-

15. <https://www.jihlava.cz/rodina-gustava-mahlera/d-516186/p1=103782>.

16. SVĚRÁK et al., *Journey's Beginning*, 17.

17. JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 59–67; BANKS, *The Early Social and Musical Environment*, 42–44.

18. JAROŠ, *The Young Gustav Mahler*, 67; Henry-Louis de LA GRANGE, *Mahler*, vol. 1 (London: Victor Gollancz, 1974), 841.

19. Ibid., 22 and 412.

pliance with religious precepts in the family home.[20] The literature fails to state precisely what line of Jewish religious practice was followed in Iglau, partly because the congregation's archives were destroyed in 1939.[21] Therefore it can only be assumed that Bernhard, who held important religious offices, was no exception in the Jewish community.

Thus the local congregation may have represented a secularizing direction of reform that sought to progress Jewry, so that it could overcome the pre-modern, tradition-based Jewish community as a "people:" aspiring to separate its denominational life and religious practices from the other spheres of private and social life.[22] This may also have meant adopting some secularized elements of the majority Christian tradition. It is clear from Gustav Mahler's later correspondence with immediate family members that in the 1880s, adult family members attended gatherings for Christmas and for New Year according to the Gregorian Calendar. In December 1888, Mahler sent "Hungarian apples and pears" to his parents from Budapest "for Christmas," and inquired if they would also like to taste "Hungarian salami."[23] Accounts from two separate sources indirectly illuminate how Gustav Mahler reacted as a child to synagogue services. Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler's friend in adulthood, relayed how the young Gustav interrupted the faithfuls' singing with shouts of "Be quiet! Be quiet! It's horrible!". When his wish was granted, he struck up his own favorite song instead.[24] The other anecdote was recalled in 1935 by the bass Magnus Davidsohn (Dawison), who sang in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony conducted by Mahler in Prague in 1899. Davidsohn hailed from a lineage of synagogue cantors, and had undertaken some cantor training himself. When the two were alone, Mahler requested Davidsohn to sing some Jewish liturgical songs. Davidsohn's singing, which was free and full of improvisative elements, awoke childhood memories in Mahler, who subsequently extemporized and elaborated on the songs further on the piano.[25]

In 1869, Bernhard Mahler sent Gustav to school at the German-language state *Gymnasium*, where students of various denominations followed the same syllabus of classic European and German humanities and modern natural history, at the same time, however, received religious instruction appropriate to their faith.[26] Gustav's musical ties with St. James' Church, as a chorister and occasionally as piano accompanist at rehearsals, can be regarded as a manifestation of inter-

20. Kurt BLAUKOPF, *Gustav Mahler oder der Zeitgenosse der Zukunft* (Wien etc.: Verlag Fritz Molden, 1969), 18–19; cf. Henry Louis de LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4: *A New Life Cut Short (1907–1911)* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 472 and 476–477.

21. Ibid., 474–475.

22. KARÁDY, *Zsidóság*, 261–262.

23. MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters*, 6 and 61.

24. LA GRANGE, *Mahler*, vol. 1, 15.

25. Henry Louis de LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2: *Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897–1904)* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 1995), 173–174.

26. SVĚRÁK et al., *Journey's Beginning*, 83–98.

ecclesiastical relations at the school. It may also indicate that local Roman Catholic seniors were able to view church music as part of general, secular education. This is even less surprising because the church choirmaster, Heinrich Fischer, also held the post of town music director, was responsible for the theater music, and founder of the Iglau Men's Choir.[27] Mahler as a Catholic church chorister certainly came to know Mozart's *Requiem*, Rossini's *Stabat mater* and the oratorios of Haydn *(Die Sieben letzten Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreuze)* and Beethoven *(Christus am Ölberge).* He also received his first private tuition in harmony and counterpoint from Fischer.[28] The music historian Guido Adler (1855–1941), who spent some of his childhood in Iglau, recounted that the Rabbis and Catholic priesthood strove for peaceful coexistence amongst denominations and strong family values were advocated in religious life, alongside particular emphasis on tolerance in school teaching.[29]

Six of Bernhard Mahler's fourteen children reached adulthood. The geographical destination for this third generation was Vienna. Their migration matched a broader trend in society, for 15 percent of the Jewish population in the imperial capital in 1880 had been born in Moravia and 15 percent in Bohemia.[30] Of Bernhard's three sons, Gustav not only met his expectations, but far exceeded them, in a career conceivable only after the social mobility and emancipatory advances of the previous two generations. Higher musical education was in fact one of the popular routes to integration opened through equal citizenship: a fourth of the students of the Vienna Conservatory in 1895 belonged to the Jewish religion.[31] Having finished his systematic musical studies, and undertaken courses at Vienna University, Gustav Mahler's career quickly flourished. His parents lived to witness their 28-year-old son direct the Budapest Opera House in the Eastern capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1888. By contrast, for his brothers, advancement in modern society meant a challenge, even a tragic failure. Alois, born in 1867, tried his fortune in the business sector, but soon required financial support from his musician older brother. When they realized that his affairs became more and more confused, his siblings broke their relationship with him; in 1910, he emigrated to the United States and died in Chicago in 1931. The musical talent of his other younger brother, Otto (1873–1895), soon became evident. He began as an aspiring composer, but discontinued his studies at the Vienna Conservatory. Despite fraternal support, Otto failed to find musical employment, and he eventually committed suicide. Of Gustav Mahler's sisters, Leopoldine (1863–1889)

27. Kurt BLAUKOPF and Herta BLAUKOPF, *Mahler: His Life, Work and World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 20.

28. BANKS, *The Early Social and Musical Environment*, 46 and 57.

29. BLAUKOPF and BLAUKOPF, *Mahler: His Life, Work and World*, 20.

30. Leon BOTSTEIN, "Gustav Mahler's Vienna," in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. by Donald MITCHELL and Andrew NICHOLSON (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

31. BOTSTEIN, "Gustav Mahler's Vienna," 18.

married (within her father's lifetime) a businessman in Vienna, Ludwig Quittner.[32] The two younger sisters, Justine (1868–1938) and Emma (1875–1933), married the brothers Rosé (*nés* Rosenblum), whom they met through Gustav. Justine's husband Arnold was a violinist who became concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and Court Opera orchestras and lead violinist of the Rosé Quartet he formed in 1883, premièring works by Brahms, Reger, Pfitzner, Korngold, Schmidt, Schoenberg, and Webern. Emma's spouse Eduard was the quartet's cellist, before attaining orchestral posts in Boston, and subsequently, Weimar.[33]

Upon leaving Iglau in 1875, Gustav Mahler was finally free of parental control (there was only one precedent to this, in 1871–1872, when Mahler unsuccessfully attempted to relocate his place of study to a gymnasium in Prague). Once he became independent after 1875, Mahler did not participate in Jewish communal or religious life in the cities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Germany in which he resided during his student years and subsequently during his career until 1897.[34] Mahler, not least through his readings in historical and contemporary German philosophy, developed an individualistic picture of existential issues that remained creative sources of inspiration until the end of his life. Likewise, reading E. T. A. Hoffmann, Schopenhauer, and Wagner clearly had an effect on his thoughts and he was influenced by the notion of art as a religion and music raised to a metaphysical rank.[35] His professional activities as a conductor and composer were interrelated with his attitude and personal search for God.

It is striking, however, that reflections on Christian, and specifically Catholic, traditions clearly played a more profound role in Mahler's artistry by comparison with, for example, Richard Strauss, a contemporary following a similar career path and an agnostic of Catholic background. Mahler frequently utilized texts relating to Christian spirituality, and even Catholic liturgy, in the vocal movements of his symphonies. He set verses on religious subjects from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (an anthology of popular and folklore-derived poetry) in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 2, the fifth of his Symphony No. 3, and the fourth of his Symphony No. 4.[36] Mahler became acquainted, through the Protestant funeral rites for the conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, with Friedrich Klopstock's 1759 ode *Die Auferstehung* in 1894. He used the first two stanzas of this poem

32. MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters*, 3–8.

33. Richard NEWMAN and Karen KIRTLEY, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 2000), 21–25.

34. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4, 485.

35. Carl DAHLHAUS, *Die Idee der Absoluten Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1978), 62–80 and 91–104; Stephen E. HEFLING, "Mahler: Symphonies 1–4," in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. by D. Kern HOLOMAN (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 371–372; LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 270–271; Jeremy BARHAM, "Mahler the Thinker: The Books of the Alma Mahler-Werfel Collection," in *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, ed. by id. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 84–85.

36. Literary critics were pointing in Mahler's lifetime to the doubtful philological status of the texts published by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano between 1805 and 1808. See Jon W. FINSON, "The Reception of Gustav Mahler's *Wunderhorn* Lieder," *The Journal of Musicology* 5/1 (Winter 1987), 100.

in the choral finale of his Second Symphony, adding some other strophes written by himself. The text set to music in the first movement of Symphony No. 8 is the Whitsun hymn *Veni creator spiritus.* Texts of other kind are used only in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 3 and the second part of Symphony No. 8: the former is a setting of the twelfth section of "*Das Nachtwandlerlied*" from Nietzsche's philosophical work *Also sprach Zarathustra*, while the latter is a setting of the closing scene from the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, featuring numerous symbols and figures of Christian faith. His last vocal-instrumental work, *Das Lied von der Erde*, called symphony by him, consists of a cycle of six orchestral songs taken from German paraphrases of verses by eighth-century Chinese poets.

Naturally, the role of Christian texts in Mahler's symphonies cannot be ascribed, or reduced automatically, to religious faith. These religious texts in Symphonies Nos. 3 and 8 gain specific meaning in the light of other literary-cum-philosophical texts in the same work, and are interpreted through their sometimes affirmative, sometimes also critical and ironic musical environments. For example in Symphony No. 8 the organ playes a decisive role in the sound of the work, just as in the finale of Symphony No. 2 (in the latter context alongside a peal of bells). At the 1895 première in Berlin, Mahler himself bought two bells from the aged master bell-founder of Zehlendorf.[37] These examples demonstrate how Mahler returned several times throughout his career to the view which regarded the symphony as a genre aimed toward the absolute, and as a prolongation of Christian sacrality within European modernity.[38]

Similarly to Mahler's case with Judaism, Richard Strauss got to know Catholicism in its nineteenth-century reform version. Strauss's father joined the Old Catholic movement, which rejected, among others, the notion of papal infallibility proclaimed at the First Vatican Council of 1870.[39] Richard Strauss's diary entry on 18 May 1911, the day of Mahler's death, demonstrates how the experience of secularization in the latter half of the nineteenth century was, of course, a phenomenon transcending denomination. On the other hand, Strauss's entry also attests that in his view, one of the fundamental differences between himself and Mahler was their relationship to Christianity: the fact that in the case of the latter, Christianity remained a source of inspiration. It is also worth noting that Strauss attributed Mahler's attitude to Christianity (and that of the Protestant-born Wagner) to personal preferences in the German philosophical tradition:

> Gustav Mahler passed away following a grave illness. The death of this aspiring, idealistic, energetic artist [is] a heavy loss… . Mahler, the Jew, could achieve elevation in Christianity. As an old man the hero Wagner returned to it

37. BLAUKOPF, *Gustav Mahler oder der Zeitgenosse der Zukunft*, 136–137.
38. Cf. DAHLHAUS, *Die Idee der Absoluten Musik*, 91–104.
39. Bryan GILLIAM, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25.

> under the influence of Schopenhauer. It is clear to me that the German nation will achieve new energy only by liberating itself from Christianity. … I shall call my alpine symphony: *Der Antichrist*, since it represents: moral purification through one's own strength, liberation through work, worship of eternal, magnificent nature.[40]

Strauss portrayed himself, in opposition to Mahler, as an individual who dismissed transcendency entirely: who was an uncompromising believer in Nietzsche. His argument remains instructive even if he sensed only one factor in Mahler's complex (and changeable) worldview. This could not have been otherwise, for Strauss's opinion was formulated before the premières of Mahler's last works: *Das Lied von der Erde*, his settings of Buddhist and Taoist poetry, Symphony No. 9, and the unfinished Symphony No. 10.

It is doubtful whether his artistic work concerning texts tied closely to Christianity, and the impetus which drew him to utilize such sources musically, would have led Mahler to formally convert to Catholicism (which happened in his age of 37). Practical matters must surely have played an important role. There was every indication that without conversion, Mahler would not have attained directorship of the Vienna Court Opera, for which he had garnered support by the end of 1896. He was only appointed conductor in April 1897, though there had been a general anticipation of a position opening considering the ailing health of Wilhelm Jahn. In July Mahler began to manage the institution in the capacity of acting director, and in October he was appointed director.[41] This was one of the most important musical position in the German-speaking lands. At the same time, it offered Mahler a long-desired return to Vienna, and it was an appointment to the Habsburg court, responsible to the Imperial and Royal *Erster Obersthofmeister*.[42]

Mahler had begun preparing to convert to Christianity in the final months of 1896 whilst negotiating the position in Vienna. At that time, he was living in Hamburg with his two unmarried sisters, Justine and Emma. They joined him in religious instruction from a "very liberal" Catholic priest, as they did not "want to let G[ustav] jump into it on his own." Justine admitted in a letter to a female friend that she was taking part without holding any conviction in a venture that was clearly tied to her brother's prospects in Vienna.[43]

Ludwig Karpath, a music journalist and, initially during Mahler's period as opera director in Vienna his close friend, recalled that Mahler later termed the compulsion to change his religion unacceptable and outrageous. On the other hand, he recounted that he adopted Christianity many years before his Vienna appointment

40. Translated from a manuscript source in ibid., 93.

41. BLAUKOPF and BLAUKOPF, *Mahler: His Life, Work and World*, 120–123; LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 41–53; id., *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4, 483.

42. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 18–19.

43. MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters*, 5–6.

and irrespective of his ambitions as director.[44] He told Ödön Mihalovich, a supporter of Mahler's Vienna appointment, that his Catholicism had begun not long after his departure from Budapest in 1891.[45] These hardly unintentional lapses suggest that Mahler had felt somewhat awkward about the timing of the ceremony on 23 February 1897, in Hamburg's *Kleine Michaeliskirche* (his sisters were probably christened on the same day).[46] In any case, in October of 1897 the seniors of the Imperial and Royal Court initiated a long decade of far-reaching patronage through which he could pursue his artistic goals. He engaged directly with Prince Alfred von Montenuovo, deputy and successor to the *Obersthofmeister*, Prince Rudolf Liechtenstein.[47]

Mahler's appointment was immediately interpreted as a provocation to the anti-Semitic faction in Vienna, where the "Jewish question" had been polarizing the city for a decade and a half. The *Deutsche Zeitung* printed on 10 April 1897:

> And so we ask, is it opportune openly to appoint a Jew to the German opera of a city in which a strong movement against the fearsome Jewification of art is just cutting path? … a Jewish conductor does not offer the least guarantee that our German-minded Court Opera, which sails in foreign waters anyway, will even continue in the German sense, in the preservation and cultivation of our great music.[48]

The historical moment at which Mahler won the highest musical post in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was marked (far from equally) firstly by the prevailing legal frames of constitutionalism; secondly by the feudalistic social practices surviving under that regime; and thirdly by the modern political anti-Semitism of the populist mass parties questioning the aforementioned framework.[49] Hermann Bahr, retrospectively from 1920, viewed Mahler's position and importance in turn-of-the-century Vienna thus:

> In Mahler a Bohemian musician sat hand in hand with a young German craftsman and the demon of the metaphysician. He was a Baroque angel with a trumpet and a singer's mouth. Within him were both a devout believer and an actor of the most elemental kind. He was thus the true unification of the bourgeois: at the same time folk-like, ghostly, and seraphic; mysteriously familiar with the dark forces of the abyss as well as the light ones of blessed heights, but

44. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4, 484.
45. BLAUKOPF and BLAUKOPF, *Mahler: His Life, Work and World*, 121.
46. See MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters*, 6.
47. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 19.
48. Julian JOHNSON, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 255.
49. On the third factor, see K. M. KNITTEL, *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

> foreign to the middle regions. In this Jewish Kapellmeister Kreisler, through whose facial expressions Goethe seemed to struggle with the devil, the genius of German music was among us for the last time – and, to complete the hellish joke of history, under Montenuovo's supervision.[50]

Retrospectively, Bernhard Mahler and his children may seem to have lived under separate conditions – their decisions powered by separate motives – though they were ultimately parts of a continuing saga of assimilation. Not only Gustav and two of his sisters, but also their wayward brother Alois, received Christian baptism.[51] Leopoldine, who died in 1889 leaving two children, married a Jewish businessman originally from historical Hungary. Emma and Justine, now Christians, both married in Vienna (in 1898 and 1902 respectively) brothers of Jewish extraction who had come from Iaşi, Moldavia, and who both converted to the Lutheran faith as adults, and became professional musicians. Finally, their brother married in Vienna (in 1902) a Catholic beauty raised in artistic circles.

In the spring of 1903, Mahler appeared as guest conductor in Lemberg (now Lviv in Ukraine), Galicia, the north-eastern province of the Empire.[52] Writing to his wife Alma, he describes derisively the provincial conditions, then he shared with his wife the following impression:

> The most endearing part of it are the Polish Jews that roam the streets here just like stray dogs in other places. – It's highly amusing to observe them! My God, are these supposed to be my kith and kin?! In the face of such evidence, all theories of racial origin appear more ludicrous than I can tell you![53]

Little psychological insight is required to understand how these lines to his twenty-four-year-old wife convey disquiet lurking behind the assimilatory saga, and reflect that he had a clear idea of the externally constructed nature of the stereotypical Jewish image borne from essentialism.[54]

50. Hermann BAHR, "Mahler als Direktor," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2/7–8 (April 1920), 276. For the translation, see Karen PAINTER and Bettina VARWIG, "Mahler's German-Language Critics," in *Mahler and His World*, ed. by Karen PAINTER (Princeton, N.J etc.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 282.

51. SVĚRÁK et al., *Journey's Beginning*, 54.

52. For a study about contemporary Lemberg operatic life, see Renata SUCHOWIEJKO, "The Musical Theater in Kraków and Lviv around 1900: Social Functions and Cultural Meanings," *Studia Musicologica* 58/3–4 (December 2017), 379–397.

53. Henry Louis de LA GRANGE and Günther WEIß, *Die Briefe Gustav Mahlers an Alma: Erste Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995), 144. For the translation, see Gustav MAHLER, *Letters to His Wife*, ed. by Henry Louis de LA GRANGE and Günther WEIß, transl. by Antony BEAUMONT (London: Faber, 2004), 114.

54. On the concept of image, see Gábor GYÁNI, *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* [People, nation, Jew] (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2013), 218–220.

2.

> I am always called a Bohemian… . I read it everywhere. Yet I am not. I am a German. It is true that I was born in Bohemia, but of German parents. It is also true that I admire Smetana. Yet I admire also Debussy, and that does not make me a Frenchman

– commented Mahler, as leading conductor of the New York Philharmonic, to the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1910.[55] What is striking in this remark pronounced in a quasi neutral setting, is the complete absence of references to Austrianness. Iglau's German speakers distinguished themselves as Germans from their Czech footmen and servant girls, and from the Czech peasant world around them. Mahler frequented the group of young Viennese who adopted socialist, Wagnerian, Nietzschean ideas towards the end of his student years and synthesized their views under the umbrella of pan-Germanism before their routes diverged.[56] Vienna's politically defensive, but still socially and economically effective liberal *haute bourgeoisie* and the musical establishment allied with them – which prepared Mahler's home-coming to the imperial city –, bound its ethos and cultural identity to the German enlightenment.[57]

Ultimately, Gustav Mahler was already six years old when the Austrian political elite officially renounced the idea of joining the German union, and under eleven when the unified German nation state excluding Austria came into existence. Mahler's social development certainly did not occur under the political aegis of Austrian identity, let alone Austro-Hungarian identity. Rather, it was affected by the multifaceted social interaction which imparted local specificities to German culture (including musical culture) in Iglau and Vienna. Mahler spent almost equal proportions of thirty of his fifty-one years between a *given* locale and a *chosen* city. He spent summer vacations hiking or cycling the hilly Austrian terrains (mainly Steinbach am Attersee in 1893–1896, Maiernigg am Wörthersee in 1900–1907, and Toblach in 1908–1910).[58] These excursions proved his most fruitful months of composition, informing the elements of nature in so many of his works. The aspects through which posterity have associated the figure of Mahler and his compositional activities with an embodiment of "Austrian" identity Mahler experienced personally as a manner of productive tension between the supposed universality of German culture and the particulars of the places he called home.

55. JOHNSON, *Mahler's Voices*, 254.

56. LA GRANGE, *Mahler*, vol. 1, 68–69; Peter FRANKLIN, *The Life of Mahler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 26–42.

57. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 4, 479; Margaret NOTLEY, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press), 15–35.

58. See MCCLATCHIE, *The Mahler Family Letters*, 109–110, 309–310, and 389.

To evaluate Mahler's remarks regarding Smetana and Debussy, it is worth considering several circumstantial factors. Mahler was actually conducting Debussy at the time of the interview,[59] which may explain why he pretended to have the same relation to the works of the two composers. Nevertheless, the Czech composer was incomparably more prominent in Mahler's conducting repertoire than the Frenchman. He never conducted Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, first performed in Paris in 1902. Of Debussy's orchestral works, Mahler featured four at a total of nine concerts between February 1910 and January 1911.[60] His repertoire included four Smetana operas, which he conducted on 87 occasions in the 1890s and throughout the 1900s. By comparison, he performed Verdi operas 65 times in his career, and a Puccini opera only once.[61] He included four different Smetana works in concert on a total of 13 occasions.[62] He probably overexerted himself in conducting the opera *Dalibor* four times in Hamburg and 21 times in Vienna.[63] Both his commitment to the piece and his reservations in relation to the opera's association with nation-building are illustrated in his remark to sympathetic ears in 1901:

> You can't imagine how annoyed I was again today by the imperfection of this work, the work of a highly gifted artist. He was defeated by his lack of technique and his Czech nationality [*Tschechentum*] (which hampered him even more effectively, and deprived him of the culture of the rest of Europe).[64]

Mahler's remark was similar to his response to Davidsohn, who had asserted the former's willingness to have become a synagogue cantor: "But then you would have been lost to the world of art!"[65] It seems that *Dalibor* failed in two ways: while Mahler, a well-intentioned fellow countryman, found it imperfect from the perspective of (German) universalism, even the Czech-speaking audience received the work coldly at its première. This expressly national opera set in fifteenth-century Prague, based on a text by a German author residing in Bohemia which was rapidly translated into Czech, was received coolly at its 1868 première by the Czech audience and critics "for not sounding sufficiently 'Czech'."[66]

59. Knud MARTNER, *Mahler's Concerts* (New York: Kaplan Foundation, 2010), 259 and 265.
60. Ibid., 259, 265, 285, 293–295, and 321.
61. Ibid., 369–371.
62. Ibid., 334.
63. Ibid., 370.
64. Natalie BAUER-LECHNER, *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler* (Leipzig etc.: E. P. Tal & Co., 1923), 173–174. For the translation, see Natalie BAUER-LECHNER, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, ed. by Peter FRANKLIN, transl. by Dika NEWLIN (London: Faber, 1980), 180.
65. Davidsohn later achieved his plan. See LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 173.
66. John TYRRELL, "Dalibor," in *Grove Music Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O009166> (accessed 16 July 2019).

Mahler the conductor, mainly if not exclusively equated “the culture of Europe” with German or Austro-German musical traditions. Mahler the opera director took, however, a far broader view. In selecting his programs, he was able to apply his own tastes to varying extents throughout his career. Considering, however, his mounting reputation, his stout ability to further his own interests, and his directorial positions in Budapest and Viennese institutions, it is not groundless to claim that his conducting repertoire still largely matches his personal preferences, which in most cases can be attested by narrative sources, too. Between 1880 and 1910 he conducted 2025 performances of musical theatre, 514 (25.3 percent) represented by Wagner. Mozart’s German *Singspiele* appeared 95 times (4.6 percent), and his Italian operas on 160 occasions (7.9 percent). He conducted Beethoven’s single opera 72 times and the *Egmont* incidental music (accompanying staged performances) four times (3.8 percent), Weber’s works 109 times (5.3 percent), and Humperdinck’s opera *Hänsel und Gretel* 50 times (2.5 percent). Mahler led stage works by Lortzing and Johann Strauss Jr. on 37 instances each (1.8 and 1.8 percent). The aggregate proportion of repertoire based on German-language libretti comprised over 60 percent.[67] Discounting his final two seasons with the New York Philharmonic, Mahler’s activity as a concert conductor merely supplemented his opera work and was aimed to no small degree at popularizing his own output. It is nevertheless instructive to see which composers appear most commonly in his concert programs (with performance numbers in brackets): Wagner (235), Mahler (169), Beethoven (166), Schubert (53), Schumann (43), and Richard Strauss (36).[68]

It is beyond doubt that he sought as a composer, both practically and intellectually, to place his own music within the German musical culture he perceived as universal.[69] It is also obvious that his attachment to the symphony at the same time reflected his attachment to Viennese traditions. The Vienna he returned to in 1897 had recently lost its two resident symphonic composers: Bruckner (who died 1896) and Brahms (who died 1897), who had stood in irreconcilable opposition for decades. Both had been on good terms with Mahler, and Mahler himself had completed five symphonies while acting as opera director in Vienna, as if he arrived there as a providential savior of the genre, as one critic of a Düsseldorf performance of his Symphony No. 2 phrased it in 1903.[70] Of his nine-plus-one completed symphonies, eight of their first performances took place in Mahler’s lifetime. Three fourths of these self-rehearsed, self-conducted premières took place outside the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in other German cultural centers (No. 1: Budapest, 1889; No. 2: Berlin, 1895; No. 3: Krefeld, 1902; No. 4: Munich,

67. MARTNER, *Mahler’s Concerts*, 365–371.

68. Ibid., 349.

69. Morten SOLVIK, “Mahler and Germany,” in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. by Donald MITCHELL and Andrew NICHOLSON (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 135–137. Cf. Carl NIEKERK, *Reading Mahler: German Culture and Jewish Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Rochester: Camden House, 2010).

70. LA GRANGE, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, 604.

1901; No. 5: Cologne, 1904; No. 6: Essen, 1906; No. 7: Prague, 1908; and No. 8: Munich, 1910). Still, he was clearly concerned with bringing each to Vienna as well; he himself conducted his first six there.[71]

The lyrics for his own vocal works or symphonic movements with text settings can be grouped as follows: 1) his own texts; 2) German folk or popular poetic traditions; 3) deceased poets of the classical German literary canon (Klopstock, Goethe, Rückert); 4) the only choice with topical connotations relating to contemporary cultural policy, Nietzsche (by then deceased); 5) contemporary German poetry (works of Richard von Volkmann, who died in 1889, and who published as Richard Leander); 6) a medieval hymn ascribed by Mahler and his contemporaries to St Francis of Assisi;[72] 7) Spanish Baroque poetry (Tirso da Molina); and 8) Chinese verses, translated – or rather rewritten – by Hans Bethge. We can only speculate as to whether Mahler would have followed his use of a Latin hymn in Symphony No. 8 and an exoticism expressed through contemporary German style as in *Das Lied von der Erde* by moving to non-German or contemporary poetry, if he would have been living longer. Another noticeable aside to his choices, beyond his cautious conservatism and strong German orientation, was his lack of interest in Austro-Germanic poetry. The composer who set the lines of and collaborated with Hugo von Hofmannsthal was not Mahler, but Richard Strauss, albeit with regard to genres where Mahler had not worked: opera, ballet and *a capella* choral music.

3.

When Mahler, presenting some of his works before the public, added explanatory commentary programs, he always drew listeners' attention to general metaphysical or existential aspects.[73] For contemporary recipients of Mahler's works, who took as a point of departure the Germanic, universalist dimension of the symphony (namely the vocal movements and programs), the frequent allusions to partial or wholly "localized," folkloric musical practices referring to different regions or sociocultural groups of East-Central Europe may have been surprising. Such allusions in nineteenth-century symphonic music usually functioned and gained meaning as parts of nation-building projects. However, to truly convey this cultural policy musically usually called for some declaration of national allegiance by the composer. The idiosyncrasies which guarantee a national character, different to those which are normative to concert music compositional practices, were

71. MARTNER, *Mahler's Concerts*, 359–360.

72. Morten SOLVIK, "The Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav Mahler," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. by Jeremy BARHAM (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26.

73. Programs of the first three symphonies appear in Donald MITCHELL, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years* (London: Faber, 1975), 157–160, 179–184, and 187–195.

not and could not be ascribed exclusively to individual national identities. Such attempts at "folkish" music were related to practices whose spread exceeded the limits of modern national, but also linguistic and ethnic boundaries. It took a communal will among composer, public and critics to identify them as specific national features.[74] By contrast, Mahler did not publicize musical elements in relation to any national, ethnic or regional identities, because he did not seek to create cultural policy from quoting local popular idioms in a symphonic context. He may instead have aimed to reflect in his symphonies the parallel musical realms in society, or juxtapose in a radical way the acoustic phenomena of a broader environment ("nature"). If we are to interpret works in the context of the role they played in the composer's life, it can be argued that he sought to articulate through music his personal experience of "being in transit," in a geographical, cultural and social sense: the personal experience of an identity established on the periphery and arriving at the center. This is something he did not attempt to state publicly in words, being aware of the ideologically charged context with respect to verbal discourse. Nevertheless, citing "low genres" into the symphonic process in an unstylized, "unassimilated" manner may also have been an expression of a critique of language. The focus shifted more and more from the meanings of high art (previously the focus), to how different but equal musical languages can coexist, and how they are in tension with each other, and considering the possibilities and limits of musical expression itself.[75] Anyway, the allusions to local popular music that occur unexplained in Mahler's works have met with various contemporary and posthumous responses. In these responses, intellectual curiosity in relation to these aspects is intertwined by commentators' broader desires to grasp the cultural political intent that Mahler left undetermined – in line with their own convictions and interests.

Richard Batka (1868–1922), as an advocate of Bohemian-German musical culture,[76] saw in the 1908 Prague première of Symphony No. 7 a chance for Mahler to be fêted as "the best German musician from Bohemia." He emphasized that Mahler's visit to Prague, irrespective of its actual intentions, was a political statement: that the force of his personality broke down barriers between ethnic groups, and he gained followers in the Czech musical realm. Batka ascribed this to the absence, since the deaths of Smetana and Dvořák (in 1884 and 1904 respectively), of any Czech composer comparable to "our Mahler." Batka saw a need to place the composer not only in a Czech context but in a social field driven by anti-Semitism, quoting here a private conversation with Arthur Schnitzler. As the latter ironically framed this: "someone who didn't know that Richard Strauss is Aryan and Gustav

74. James HEPOKOSKI, "Beethoven Reception: The Symphonic Tradition," in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. by Jim SAMSON (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 439–441.
75. JOHNSON, *Mahler's Voices*, 232–234.
76. PAINTER and VARWIG, "Mahler's German-Language Critics," 320–322.

Mahler of Jewish extraction would observe specifically Semitic characteristics in the composer of *Salome*: the luxuriant, erotic sensuality; the unbridled Oriental imagination; the proclivity toward outward effect; the talent of self-presentation, and in general the skill at the economic exploitation of his work." Batka contrasted this Strauss portrait with Mahler "as a man of mystic rumination, one who climbs gigantic boulders, a chaste 'Wunderhorn' singer who is able to render the 'Wayfarer' music of the *Volk* into symphonic form, and an idealist – the paragon of the German artist."[77] Of course Batka does not seek a specific ethnic or regional background to Mahler's reflections of folk or popular music. He calls the evocation of "everyday motifs" and the sounds of a "garden pavilion" "*plein air* music," using a more than inspired analytical metaphor, stressing how Mahler can imbue musical motifs in common use with his own personality.[78] Arthur Seidl also interpreted the Mahler-phenomenon in the context of German music and compares it to Strauss in his work *Moderner Geist in der Deutschen Tonkunst*, published in 1901.[79]

Occasionally, the "pan-German" reception of Mahler's music explained its "otherness" through the composer's environments: having been born and spent long periods in a region where "German civilization" was in ever closer touch with Slav, Hungarian, and Europe's most populous Jewish communities. Ludwig Schiedermair – whose 1901 booklet was the first monograph to appear on Mahler – celebrated the composer's idealism, and placed him in the German modernist camp alongside Richard Strauss and Max von Schillings (1868–1933). Yet Schiedermair also viewed him "in the context of the Bohemian, and by implication, Jewish people, in whose art 'Germanity' mingles with Hungarian elements, in which sounds from further East are also heard."[80] Thus, it seems that some contemporaries perceived otherness in Mahler's music as pertaining to a construct of *Eastern periphery*, broad and heterogeneous but nevertheless viewed as uniform, as bridging German or German-oriented culture, Pan-Slavism/Greek Orthodoxy, and Ottoman/Muslim realms. Nonetheless, there is also an explanation for the "otherness" in Mahler's music found in the composer's "Jewishnes". To critics subscribing to racialist antisemitism, everything originating from an artist of Jewish extraction necessarily contained "Jewishness." Rudolf Louis, writing in 1909, found that Mahler's music "speaks Yiddish [*jüdelt*]. In other words it speaks the

77. Richard BATKA, "Gustav Mahlers 'Siebente'," *Prager Tagblatt* 32/260 (20 September 1908), 16. For a translation, see PAINTER and VARWIG, "Mahler's German-Language Critics," 322.

78. BATKA, "Gustav Mahlers 'Siebente'," 16. For a translation, see PAINTER and VARWIG, "Mahler's German-Language Critics," 323.

79. Peter FRANKLIN, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23.

80. Ludwig SCHIEDERMAIR, *Gustav Mahler: Eine biografisch-kritische Würdigung* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1901), 5 and 13; quoted by FRANKLIN, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 22.

language of German music but with an accent, with the intonation and above all with the gestures of the Easterner, the all-too-Eastern Jew."[81]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the third movement of Mahler's Symphony No. 1, namely the famous episode after the initial *Bruder Martin* canon (measures 39–60), became the object of various national and ethno-cultural claims. The passage contains a string of sounds foreign to mainstream concert music, such as the presence of various scales with augmented seconds. We may note the "oom-pah" accompaniment which is outlined by the beats and clashes of bass drum and cymbals (respectively), and by *pizzicato* and *col legno* in strings. The conspicuous *glissandi* violins subsequently dominate the melody. And finally, we can discover the *ensemble* playing as a reduction of a symphony orchestra: string band joined sporadically by bitter trumpet and jaunty clarinet sounds – the quiet, yet broad and expressive singing oboes at the beginning of the passage, as if by human voices. The contemporary reception deserves attention.

Mahler spoke several times of the grotesque, ironic, parodistic aesthetics behind his bizarre parody of a funeral march in Symphony No. 1.[82] He titled the movement "*Todtenmarsch in Callots Manier*" at the 1893 performance of the symphony in Hamburg, echoing the title of a collected volume compiled by E. T. A. Hoffmann (*Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, 1814–1815), and thereby the seventeenth-century graphic artist Jacques Callot. However, Mahler references no sources for the musical *objet trouvé* of the movement.[83] Without doubt, the program attached to the 1893 performance in Hamburg and the 1894 performance in Weimar remark that it was inspired by a certain picture, *Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis*, appearing in a certain story book. According to Mahler, the woodland beasts shedding crocodile tears over the body are joined by a band of Bohemian musicians ("*eine Capelle von böhmischen Musikanten*"). However, it is problematic to identify the picture, and, specifically, the "musicians" in it who provided the (surprisingly, visual) inspiration of the movement. Mahler's account fits best an 1850 carving by Moritz von Schwind: *Wie die Thiere den Jäger begraben*, although this explanation is not self-evident either. The main difference is that in Schwind's work the procession of mourning woodland animals is not joined by human musicians. Further, it is unlikely that Mahler would fail to mention Schwind by name.[84]

The first performance of the earliest version of Symphony No. 1 took place in Budapest in 1889. On this occasion, the work was offered as a "Symphonic Poem in Two Parts" without any explanatory program.[85] The most empathetic

81. Rudolf LOUIS, *Die deutsche Musik der Gegenwart* (Munich etc.: Georg Müller, 1909), 182. Quoted in Vladimír KARBUSICKÝ, "Gustav Mahler's Musical Jewishness," in BARHAM (ed.), *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, 204; and FRANKLIN, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 107.

82. Federico CELESTINI, *Die Unordnung der Dinge* (Munich: Franz Steiner, 2006), 27–40.

83. The texts of the programs appear in MITCHELL, *The Wunderhorn Years*, 156–161.

84. Ibid., 236–237; CELESTINI, *Die Unordnung der Dinge*, 27–28.

85. A facsimile of the concert program appears in MITCHELL, *The Wunderhorn Years*, 148.

and astute review of the local press appeared in the German-language *Pester Lloyd* from the music critic August (Ágost) Beer – it is worth mentioning that he was Mahler's fellow-countryman. He described the funeral-march movement in question as in the Hungarian manner ("*in ungarischer Manier*").[86] We can speculate the motivation behind this assertion. Perhaps Beer sought to instill the unreceptive Pest audience with sympathy to a work he much admired. Alternatively, Beer may have tactfully attempted to conceal the inspiration of Czech-Moravian bands behind the animals' funeral procession, which he recognized from his own similar musical childhood experiences. Nor can it go unnoticed that he saw an allusion to Hungarian intonation in the movement doing no harm to his repute as a music critic. In any case his claim was not considered strange by the first, contemporary recipients of this work.

Beer's review was not the last to ascribe a Hungarian sound to Symphony No. 1; this notion informed the 1898 Prague performance by the local German Philharmonic. Even prior to the concert, an article in the *Prager Abendblatt* detected a sense of "fieriest Magyar wines" ("*feurigsten magyarischen Weinen*") in the third movement as self-evident alongside Slavic motifs. The critic may have been misled, believing that Symphony No. 1 drew on Mahler's memories of his Budapest period.[87] However, the Hungarian association was emphasized again by Theodor Helm, who relayed to *Pester Lloyd* readers after the Vienna première in 1900 how the third-movement passage in question had "a distinctively Hungarianizing melody" ("*eine auffallend magyarisirende Melodie*").[88]

Others perceived traces of the traditions of European Jewish folk music in this work. They certainly witnessed the change that affected not only Jewish identity, but the concept of "Jewish music" between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These evolving phenomena were parallel in nature and chronology to the process through which "Hungarian music" became redefined, from Liszt's writing followed by debates surrounding "Gypsy music," until the appearance of the new folk music, or peasant music, concept established by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály.[89] In the association of Jewry with folk and utility music, it proved to be a decisive factor for a long time that wandering Jewish musicians performed a similar function to Gypsy musicians in East-Central Europe: providing entertainment to rural communities of various languages and ethnicities that blended local demands with their own practices.[90] "Jewish bands" contributed to the pro-

86. A[ugust] B[EER], "Philharmonisches Konzert," *Pester Lloyd* 36/321 (21 November 1889), [without page number]. For a facsimile and translation, see MITCHELL, *The Wunderhorn Years*, 151–154.

87. N. N., "Theater," *Prager Abendblatt* no. 50 (3 March 1898), 3.

88. Theodor HELM, "Feuilleton: Wiener Musikbrief," *Pester Lloyd* 47/284 (27 November 1900), 2–3.

89. Lynn M. HOOKER, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

90. Walter SALMEN, *Jüdische Musikanten und Tänzer vom 13. bis 20. Jahrhundert: "…denn die Fiedel macht das Fest"* (Innsbruck: Edition Helbling, 1991).

vincial music of the early twentieth century not only in Galicia and territories under Russian rule, but also for example in some regions of historical Hungary.[91]

At the same time, in the period when Bartók and Kodály were establishing themselves professionally in Hungary, academically trained Jewish musicians in Tsarist Russia founded the Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1908 to collect and preserve the "true, authentic" folk music of the Jewish community. Lazare Saminsky (1882–1959), an Odessa-born pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov who moved to the United States in 1920, propagated that to find authentic Jewish melody required making a selection from the sung repertoires of traditional Jewish communities. This purist program disregarded songs which displayed oriental (mainly Arab) or West European influences, with the aim of revealing the pieces of genuine Jewish tradition. Saminsky found it especially important to exclude melodies based on scalic augmented seconds from the concept of Jewish music. In his view, authentic Jewish melodies make use of the Eolian, Mixolydian and Dorian modes.[92] Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, a collector of Jewish music on wax cylinders in Palestine from 1907 onwards, who perceived Judaism as integral to the Middle East, conversely viewed scales containing augmented seconds as inherent to Jewish music.[93] This parallel with the turn-of-the-century debate on consistency in "Hungarian music" is noteworthy, in terms of the direction of discourse ("authentic" and "rooted" versus "corrupted" and "alien") as well as scales ("cleanness" in modality and pentatony versus "suspect" scales with augmented seconds).

The Phrygian scale with an augmented second *(Table 1, a)* was a point of contention in public discourse surrounding national music in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Bálint Sárosi states, on the one hand "it was seen as a Hungarian scale, but the Romanians likewise laid claim to it."[94] He also notes its prevalence:

TABLE 1 Scales with one or two augmented seconds

Scales with one augmented second
a) C <u>D-flat E</u> F G A-flat B-flat = Phrygian with a raised third (augmented second)
b) C D <u>E-flat F-sharp</u> G A B flat = Dorian with a raised fourth (augmented second)
Scales with two augmented seconds
c) C <u>D-flat E</u> F G <u>A-flat B</u> = Scale *a)* variant containing a leading note
d) C D <u>E-flat F-sharp</u> G <u>A-flat B</u> = Harmonic minor with a raised fourth (augmented second)

91. Bálint SÁROSI, *A hangszeres magyar népzenei hagyomány* [The tradition of instrumental Hungarian folk music] (Budapest: Balassi, 2008), 34–35.

92. Klára MÓRICZ, *Jewish Identities: Nationalism, Racism, and Utopianism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Berkeley, CA etc.: California University Press, 2008), 72.

93. Abraham Zvi IDELSOHN, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development [1929]* (New York: Shocken Books, 1967), 84–91 and 184–192.

> It appears with striking frequency to this day from Afghanistan to the Balkans, and among Andalusian people (the *fandango*). In areas covered by Arab musical culture, it is the scale of the Hijaz *maqam*. The Turks, who have four variant types of that *makam*, may also call it "Gypsy" *makam*.

Sárosi assumes that the "scale of the augmented second (most of all Phrygian)," became adopted into the "Hungarian musical tradition" largely by Gypsy musicians who brought it from "Turkish small-town popular music."[95] In the nineteenth century, the augmented fourth degree of a minor scale *(Table 1, d)* was regarded as the other "sparkling badge" of Hungarian local popular music, and was also known as the "Gypsy scale."[96] One of the augmented-second scales, viewed as discredited by Saminsky and as part of the Jewish tradition by Idelsohn, is an augmented third-degree Phrygian (known in a Jewish context as *Ahavah rabbah*), while the other is an augmented fourth-degree "Ukrainian Dorian" *(Table 1, a and b).* The aforementioned passage in Mahler's Symphony No. 1 utilizing the Scale *d)* occurs in measures 39–44 and Scale *a)* in a typical form in measures 57–58, while Scale *c)* plays an important role in measures 145–148, for example.

Max Brod, a Prague writer and composer of German Jewish stock and guardian of Franz Kafka's intellectual legacy, published a study in the journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch* in 1920, titled "Gustav Mahler's Jewish melodies." He joined the Zionist movement in 1912, which viewed Judaism as a modern, secular, national community. He attempted to fashion Mahler, who died less than a decade prior, into a Jewish national composer. However, in his attempt to establish the foundations of Jewish national music (which he contended was already apparent in Mahler's music) Brod's criteria differed markedly from Saminsky's. In Brod's view, Jewry *par excellence* was exemplified by the Hasidic communities (to put it somewhat simplified: a branch of Jewish Orthodoxy) of Galicia, Moldavia and the Sub-Carpathian and Eastern swaths of historical Hungary.[97] Brod deduced even such fundamental characteristics of Mahler's music as the frequent use of march rhythms from the style of Hasidic songs. Since Hasidic songs often feature augmented-second scales, Brod's comments suggest at least two reasons for classing the third-movement passage of Symphony No. 1 as musically Jewish.[98]

Heinrich Berl perceived secular "Jewish" music of the long nineteenth century as a source of renewal for Jewish identity. He argued in 1923 in Martin Buber's monthly that in the third movement of Symphony No. 1 Mahler offered the purest

94 SÁROSI, *A hangszeres magyar népzenei hagyomány*, 101.

95 Ibid., 101 and 112.

96 László DOBSZAY, *Magyar zenetörténet* [Hungarian music history] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), 317; Bálint SÁROSI, *Bihari János* (Budapest: Mágus, 2002), 24.

97. KARÁDY, *Zsidóság*, 76–77.

98. Max BROD, "Gustav Mahlers jüdische Melodien," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2/10 (May 1920), 378–379; Max BROD, *Gustav Mahler: Beispiel einer deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose* (Frankfurt: Ner-Tamid Verlag, 1961).

form of Judaism ("*reinstes Judentum*"), which he believed to discover in every technical and aesthetic element of the music (march, lament, irony, folk song, canon, melodic line, harmony, instrumentation).[99]

Subsequent scholars also failed to examine this critically, preferring to further develop the musical markers of national identity which contemporaries found in this passage. Constantin Floros detected elements of the Hungarian *csárdás*.[100] In 1991, Donald Mitchell devoted an entire study to Mahler's "Hungarian *glissando*." Mitchell's argumentation connects the excerpt from the third movement of Symphony No. 1 to his personal experiences with Gypsy music in restaurants of Budapest, and the oriental, Hungarian romantic motifs of the Pesti Vigadó, the venue of the Mahler première.[101]

By contrast, Vladimír Karbusický expanded on Max Brod's ideas, writing in 1999 of "Gustav Mahler's musical Jewishness." He paid special attention to the third movement of Symphony No. 1, and he mentioned Hasidic musical influence in connection with the musical passage in question. Mahler as a child would have been familiar with Hasidic travelling musicians who, Karbusický assumed, must have visited Moravia in the second half of the nineteenth century, and thus Mahler would have become acquainted with these traditions in his childhood. At the same time, Karbusický emphasized the influence that the non-Jewish environment had on Hasidic music. As a musicologist who left Czechoslovakia in 1968, he attributed in his construction an important role to not only the Jewishness of Mahler's music, but also to both the regional and Slavic interrelatedness of the Jewish communities.[102] Raymond Knapp, in his 2003 book, examines elements of Klezmer music in the third movement of Symphony No. 1. The expression "Klezmer," adopted by the revival movement which blossomed, amongst other locales, in the United States, referred in Knapp's case to a broader term for Jewish instrumental utility music in the long nineteenth century.[103] It seems that even Berl's enthusiastic essentialism has its followers. While he detected the purest Jewishness in the slow movement of Symphony No. 1, a prestigious present-day commentator, conductor Iván Fischer, elaborates his belief that "[t]he Fifth is the most Jewish of all Mahler's symphonies. The first movement takes us to the unmistakable mood of Jewish lamentation, the finale to a childlike vision of messianic joy."[104]

99. Heinrich BERL, "Zum Problem einer jüdischen Musik," *Der Jude: Eine Monatsschrift* 7/5 (May 1923), 309–320. See also Karen PAINTER, "Jewish Identity and Anti-Semitic Critique in the Austro-German Reception of Mahler, 1900–1945," in BARHAM (ed.), *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, 186–189.

100. Constantin FLOROS, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies* (Pompton Plains, NJ etc: Amadeus Press, 1993), 42.

101. Donald MITCHELL, "Mahler's Hungarian Glissando (1991)," in id., *Discovering Mahler: Writings on Mahler 1955–2005* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press), 125–130.

102. KARBUSICKÝ, "Gustav Mahler's Musical Jewishness."

103. Raymond KNAPP, *Symphonic Metamorphoses: Subjectivity and Alienation in Mahler's Re-Cycled Songs* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 182.

104. Iván FISCHER, *Mahler: Symphony no. 5. Budapest Festival Orchestra* (CD booklet, s.l.: Channel Classics, 2013, CCS SA 34213), 4.

However, references to the third movement of Mahler's First Symphony are not even confined to folk music or local popular sources. In 2009 Julian Johnson drew a parallel between this passage and Verdi's *Don Carlos.* The orchestral prelude to the death of Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa ("O Carlo, ascolta…"), strongly resembles the aforementioned episode in Mahler's third movement, in both orchestration (the mourning sound recalled also in the trumpet duet of the slow introduction to Bartók's *Concerto*) and in its melodic shape. Not to mention the former is a death scene, whilst the latter is a funeral march parody. The parallel is intriguing even if we know Mahler never conducted *Don Carlos*, and it remains unclear whether he was familiar with the work.[105]

4.

Mahler did not believe in the notion of the beauty of "tonally moving forms," or the omnipotency of exclusive statements made in a program (he ultimately withdrew all explanations written for his earlier symphonies). In Symphony No. 9, his last completed orchestral work, he employs an underlying motif in the first movement in three distinct musical contexts. Firstly it becomes part of a pentatonic tapestry, imitating Chinese music in a stylized way, akin to his previous work, *Das Lied von der Erde.* We are subsequently surprised to find the basic turn of the same phrase appearing in a waltz of Johann Strauss Jr. that Mahler quotes in his music (*Freuet euch des Lebens*, op. 340, 1870, written for the Vienna Society of Friends of Music, which also included the Vienna Conservatory). Finally, the motif gains a new meaning in an allusion to Beethoven's *Les Adieux* sonata (op. 81a).[106] One and the same motif appears addressed to the audience as the voice of the "Orient," later in a form representing the "German music" born in the Imperial capital, and then as a "Viennese waltz:" in each case recognizable, yet distinct. What may be deduced from these remarks is that this dichotomy of clarity and ambiguity, variety and stability, can hardly apply only to the identity of the musical motifs. And what we sense (or fail to sense) of this dichotomy will say more about us than about the object of our contemplation.

105. JOHNSON, *Mahler's Voices*, 174–177.

106. Stephen E. HEFLING, "The Ninth Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. by Donald MITCHELL and Andrew NICHOLSON (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 471–476.