

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No.10 in F sharp Major

A performing version by Deryck Cooke

In the final years of his life, from 1909 to 1911, Mahler was working on his *Tenth Symphony*. After his death certain movements gave the impression of being complete, namely, the introductory *Adagio* (the missing repeats were written out by Ernst Krenek with the help of Franz Schalk and Alban Berg) and the not even two hundred measures of the third movement, entitled *Purgatorio* (the missing instrumentation was not difficult to supplement, following what was already supplied); both premiered on October 14, 1924 in Vienna, played by the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera and conducted by Franz Schalk. The first to gradually revise a »performing version« of the remaining three movements was the English musicologist Deryck Cooke, using the sketches which seemed to denote the structure and development of the *symphony* (not a single measure was missing, although many were not fully elaborated, often only noting the top voice). This version was first performed in London on August 13, 1964; Berthold Goldschmidt conducted the London Symphony Orchestra.

»A highlight«, declared Ernst Decsey in the December 1924 issue of the Berlin magazine *Die Musik*, »was the performance of two movements from Gustav Mahler's posthumous *Tenth Symphony*, of which one, the opening *Adagio*, undoubtedly signifies a lasting gain for concert halls« and whose effect »under Franz Schalk's baton« no one could »elude«; »the force of the following Intermezzo«, however, »could not measure up in impressiveness. Moreover, it was so brief that it seemed to end before truly finishing «. In the London *Sunday Times* of August 16, 1964, Desmond Shawe-Taylor summarized his impression of Cooke's version in one sentence, »The practical result is that the world has gained a new Mahler symphony, and in all important aspects a very good one, which rises to exceptional majesty in the last of its five movements.« When the entire *Tenth* was soon after heard in Germany, Hans-Heinz Stuckenschmidt wrote in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of October 14, 1964, »The sincerity of Cooke's restoration is above all suspicion, the authenticity of Mahler's writing evident. An insight opens onto a masterpiece of the highest rank; it was well worth the work and the struggle for acceptance. The Mahlerians in Vienna will be shown to have been wrong to protest.« Mahler's last completed symphony, the Ninth, as Arnold Schoenberg said in his »Prague Speech« in 1913, which was devoted to the object as well as to the secret, »is extremely strange. In it, the author hardly speaks as a subject. It seems almost as if there were a hidden author for this work, who merely used Mahler as his mouthpiece. This work is no longer in the first person singular. One might say that it brings objective, nearly dispassionate verifications of a beauty which can only be perceived by those who can forego animal warmth and feel at home in intellectual coolness.« – »We will no more learn the true intentions of his *Tenth*, for which sketches exist, as with Beethoven, than of Beethoven's or Bruckner's. The Ninth seems to be a boundary. Whoever wishes to go beyond it, must depart. It looks as if the *Tenth* might tell us something we should not yet know, for which we are not yet mature enough. Those who have written a Ninth are too close to the hereafter. Perhaps the riddles of this world would be solved if one of those who knew them had written a *Tenth*. And that is probably not to be.« – »We should continue to remain in the dark, which is only occasionally illuminated by the light of

genius. We should continue to struggle and grapple, yearn and wish. We should remain blind until we have acquired eyes. Eyes that can see into the future. Eyes that penetrate through more than the sensual, which is only an allegory of the transcendental. Our soul should be this eye.«

Incidentally, the facsimile edition of everything »existing of Gustav Mahler's *Tenth Symphony*« was edited by Erwin Ratz, who in his preface also refers to the *first movement*, the *Adagio*, as a »preliminary stage«. »He supports this,« explains Theodor W. Adorno, »with Mahler's procedure in the Ninth Symphony. The draft scores of its first three movements are comparable to that one; in the definitive version, however, Mahler not only changed details but intervened deeply into the music. The expectation engendered by the appearance of the manuscript score, that the movement might be more or less complete, is refuted by the appearance of the final score, and entirely when full knowledge of the composition is taken into account. One could speak of a vertical fragment. Although a continuous overall progress is apparent, the place of the effected secondary voices is often taken by a kind of mere harmonic pattern, the ›chorale‹. One of the strangest abilities of Mahler, the ability to invent free, highly organic counterpoints, does not entirely come into its own. Moreover, the movement can hardly be said to have reached its authentic form at all; compared to the rich, unusually expansive thematic material, it seems much shorter than would be expected from Mahler's practice in other, including his late, works; too short by his own measure.» – Incidentally, Adorno thoroughly »advocated« a »reconstruction« of the entire *Tenth*, even though he clearly recognized that the fragment offered »insufficient support« for the »essential « in an »epic-musical composer such as Mahler«, which is the »seemingly inessential, the constantly new production and change of detail«. It would then be preferable, writes Adorno, »to sink into Mahler's handwriting, at once determined and as if driven by fear, with the reverence due to the possible above the real.«

And Michael Gielen? »Amazingly, my first impression, which I got from looking over the facsimile score, changed into its opposite. There is much more of Mahler here than I saw at first.« Especially the *Finale*, which he once considered to be almost »dispensable«, impressed him now »in an extraordinary way«. »The arranger was obviously inspired by Mahler's spirit. It also conveys the impression that Mahler, after all the cries of pain in the previous movements, here discovers a clarified, resigned outlook toward death, as is also expressed in his magnificent death mask.« Undoubtedly, »Cooke must have trusted largely to his intuition, his instinct; and he had the help of Berthold Goldschmidt who, after all, came from the ›right‹ circle, being a pupil of Krenek. Nonetheless, it is largely rather a conjecture, as Cooke also stated quite clearly. It is an attempt to make the sketch capable of being performed, to let us get to know the substance of the music. It is not an attempt to finish the symphony, Cooke never intended to fill in everything. You can really hear where the holes are, where there is only a schematic harmonic basis and now and then a counter melody to enliven it a bit. And I find that perfectly legitimate. – Since there are now several versions, I also looked at another one and its author, Clinton Carpenter, in America, who tried to finish the *Tenth*, and indeed completely finished it off; all the staves are filled with thematic things and accompaniments, it is fat and that makes it infinitely boring. I mean, it is important to really accentuate the fragmentary character. However, where Mahler's music is largely complete, as

in the first Adagio, there is no reason not to support the principal voices of the strings with woodwinds, or generally use the wind instruments more and more imaginatively, including counter parts, where Mahler did not get beyond the shell of the music.«

Gielen more specifically – *First movement*: »What I find most interesting in terms of composition is how Mahler, as a consequence of the third movement of Beethoven's Ninth with an adagio and andante character, brings these two characters so very close together – the adagio idea briefly, the andante idea something like a dance of death – and how they increasingly interpenetrate one another. The andante becomes a kind of scherzo, it becomes more and more diabolical, more threatening, while the majesty of the adagio continues fairly unmoved.«

The *second movement*, then, the first scherzo, is »perhaps technically the ›most interesting‹, the most advanced, the most modern movement, with its constant changes of meter – there are only two movements by Mahler with so many changes of meter: the scherzo in the Sixth and this first scherzo in the *Tenth*; but here it is taken much further. In each partial reprise, in each statement of a thematic complex, everything changes, the meter, the phrasing, the harmony, the instrumentation, even the rhythm; no stone remains unturned. And this constant variation of the same idea, that everything remains undecided, everything fluctuates, you cannot count on anything – that not only corresponds to Mahler's private crisis, it also matches the experience of the world at the moment of 1910, modern physics was just being born at that time ...«

As far as the *Purgatorio* movement is concerned, incidentally, Gielen is »convinced that it has nothing whatever to do with Dante's ›Divine Comedy‹. It has been associated with *purgatorio* poems by Mahler's boyhood friend Siegfried Lipiner and which seem to go well with the marital crisis that had just begun«. The drumbeats at the beginning of the *final movement*: »The anecdote is well known: Mahler was looking out of the window of his New York hotel with his wife as a funeral procession passed below, a fireman was being buried – that was long before September 11, 2001 – the procession went very slowly and was accompanied by an occasional beat on a very muted drum. And this material element of a bare drumbeat – which accompanied the funeral of another, but which Mahler, of course, associated with himself – this marks the introduction to the Finale. After the *fourth movement*, the second Scherzo, which recedes in a wraithlike waltz situation and finally stands still, the Finale begins with a very hard, wicked stroke, with music that drags: tuba solo – hence it is a real mourning situation ...«

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