

the less, provide an effective pedagogical sequence. It begins, after all, with such father figures as Adler, Kerman, Adorno and Dahlhaus, and moves on, in Chapter Two, to such equally venerable theorists as Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Derrida and Schenker. But then the successive grouping of issues around the chapter themes of voices, identities, places and positions becomes ineffective as a potential pedagogic sequence, partly because the concerns become increasingly interrelated and partly because these are merely a selection of more discipline-redefining studies drawn from the much more extensive range of musicological subfields still existing, but little touched upon by Williams. Any survey of musicological graduate thesis topics would suggest, for instance, that traditional archival and analytical studies are still frequent, and that these sub-disciplines still need systematically to be taught to graduate musicology students, even in a reconstructed Musicology. Rather, Williams's book will be of most educational value at an intermediate stage of musicological induction, when the key musicological sub-disciplines have been introduced, and the budding musicologist is interested in how they link together and connect with the broader concerns of humanistic scholarship.

Karen Painter, ed., *Mahler and his World*  
 Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002  
 ISBN 0 691 09244 3 (pb), 0 691 09243 5 (cloth); 408pp., ill., index

Reviewed by John A. Phillips

*Mahler and his World* is among fourteen similarly titled volumes to have been released thus far by Princeton University Press in their Bard Music Festival series. The intention, implicit in the generic title, is to situate the music of canonical composers of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries—so far, from Haydn to early twentieth century, represented by Strauss, Debussy, Schoenberg, Bartók and Ives—within their respective socio-cultural and political milieus. *Mahler* editor Karen Painter, an associate professor at Harvard University, specialises in 'nineteenth and twentieth century music in relation to aesthetics, ideology, and musical thought' (p. 392). She has made an unequivocally successful and useful contribution to Princeton University Press's valuable project; indeed, the book's scope and comprehensiveness makes my task as reviewer more difficult than if it contained flaws of any significance. In short, it does not; *Mahler and his World* is arguably the most important contribution to the extensive literature on this composer since the publication of the third volume of de La Grange's massive biography in 1999.

The conductor-composer Gustav Mahler has been as well served by history as anyone of his time. His influence upon the development of twentieth-century music continues to prove his prophecy that 'my time will come.' Not only do his works continue to resonate with modern lay audiences in an immediate way—thanks to the appropriation and continued cultivation of the late romantic symphonic idiom by Hollywood—but continue to inspire disparate compositional responses as wide ranging as those of Shostakovich or Henze. Mahler's compositions have an extensive and often profoundly insightful hermeneutic literature, evidenced for instance by the writings of Adorno and Eggebrecht. While Mahler the conductor

played a central role in the international concert and operatic stage during his lifetime and remains a fascinating object for studies of what was, after all, the formative period for the modern concert and operatic music scene, it is the remarkable and enduring appeal of the composer and his music that has been responsible for the consistent level of attention he has enjoyed. Standing at the crossroads between the late romantic and modernist streams, both his highly subjective, impassioned expressiveness and forward-looking compositional structures continue to speak directly to listeners and composers. The man himself is now better illuminated by the gradual appearance since the 1970s of de la Grange's exhaustive biography (now up to its third and penultimate volume), which documents Mahler's day-to-day interactions with the world around him. In fact, a host of Mahler books and articles refracts the composer's life and thinking through the prism of his music. However, the current volume represents what is in many respects a welcome and overdue contextualisation of both approaches: on the one hand, that of the biographer, and on the other, the work analyst.

An increasingly encountered problem these days is that books devoted to particular composers tend to consist of little more than miscellaneous collections of essays, rather than true 'chapters,' exhibiting any number of different approaches, methodologies and agendas, with concomitant lacunae and overlaps. This is not the case here, where Painter has fulfilled Princeton's perilously broad brief with a single, purposeful and unified plan, bringing together a strong series of nine offerings, plus valuable documentary material. The former constitutes the first two parts of the book, entitled respectively 'Context and Ideologies' and 'Analysis and Aesthetics.' The third and fourth sections are reserved for a feature of Princeton's Bard Music Festival series: the reproduction, with informative commentary and where necessary in exemplary English translation, of contemporary concert reviews, program notes and reports.

The volume begins with Leon Botstein's magnificent analysis of the question 'Whose Gustav Mahler? Reception, Interpretation and History,' referred to by *New York Times* reviewer John Rockwell as a 'typically virtuosic riff on Theodor W. Adorno's book on Mahler.' In fact, it is far more wide reaching. This is such a rich offering—it alone would justify the book's purchase—that a summary in the available space can scarcely do it justice. Botstein firstly seeks to explain the highly faceted role played by 'the Mahler phenomenon' (p. 1) for the history of music throughout the twentieth century, a composer he justifiably cites as representing 'the most visible figure from the high-art classical music tradition since Mozart,' and his opus, 'the defining example of symphonic music' (p. 2). The very accessibility of Mahler's music has offered endless scope to interpretative approaches (p. 14), protecting it 'from the collapse after 1970 of a particular species of modernist musical aesthetics focused on the autonomy of musical materials, and the parallel disappearance of older forms of musical literacy within the public' (p. 15).

Against this can be read Adorno's efforts, in his 1960 essay on the composer, to 'secure Mahler for the future of modernism ... to interpret his music as a radical break with late romantic traditions,' when in fact, 'the apex of Mahler's significance to the public and to contemporary music composition at the end of the twentieth century has coincided with the revisionism of that century's history and the collapse of the importance of modernism, the revival of neoromanticism, and the resurgence of minimalism and tonality in new music,' revisions which have also reassigned Strauss to a more appropriate centrality (p. 17). According

to Botstein, the challenge we now face is to unmask a 'post-twentieth-century Mahler wrapped ... in layers of appropriation' (p. 19), for which task he draws insights from the approaches of anti-Mahlerian critics of the Nazi era and earlier (pp. 20ff). For these critics, Mahler failed to grasp the 'connection between musical convention and nature' (p. 28); racial accusations of Jewish music as rootless, banal and superficial played a role. Botstein's final section limns the parallels between Mahler's music and the late nineteenth-century novel. In contrast, for instance, with Strauss, Mahler's musical 'conversation remained exclusively with the larger public,' a strategy of interpretation, he avers, that links Mahler to the nineteenth-century novel (p. 34), a point made already by Adorno; in particular Botstein details parallels to narrative procedures in Flaubert, Fontane and Henry James. Like the reader of nineteenth-century prose realism, Mahler's listener 'must actively impose meaning, use memory, observation and recognition ... to complete the work' (p. 35). However, while Mahler's music was heard back then as a challenge to 'a species of nostalgia about traditions of culture and the relation of art to society, human consciousness, and truth telling,' today, by virtue of its very success in challenging older compositional strategies, its negativity has been 'upended ... into a routine cry of anguish and a sentimental attachment to the difficulties each listener encounters in negotiating life ... Perhaps a more careful and harsher reading of his music, adequate to the composer's vision, can challenge this bland, narcotic effect' (p. 42).

The ensuing essay by Charles S. Maier deals with Mahler as performer and director within the theatre world in which he spent most of his working life, placing the performative trends of the time and Mahler's approach as an operatic director, conductor and interpreter into social and political context within the 'larger debate about the political valence of modernity—progressive and liberating or technocratic and repressive' (p. 59). This is followed by Talia Pecker Berio's more speculative but profoundly insightful 'Mahler's Jewish Parable,' which examines the role played by a variably defined 'Jewishness' within Mahler's musical creativity, his relationship to Judaic hermeneutic scriptural traditions and the specific nature of the multiplicity of voices found in his music. 'I tend to hear in Mahler's sound world ... an echo of this Jewish all-embracing vision of the text as reality and of reality as hypertext ... with no distinction between the "high" and the "low", the holy and the profane, the past and the present' (p. 98), a view which Berio relates to Adorno's understanding of Mahler's music as musical narrative, suggesting that its links with a specifically Jewish subjectivity provide a key to understanding Mahler's distancing of his own voice in his later music.

Problems of voicing in relation to gender issues are also pursued in Peter Franklin's 'A Soldier's Sweetheart's Mother's Tale? Mahler's Gendered Musical Discourse,' which examines Mahler's representation of masculine and feminine voices and attendant subject positions in the song *Das Schildwache Nachtlied*. The manner in which musical structure and text interlink here supports Kramer's and Taruskin's deconstruction of the category of the extra-musical (pp. 117–18): 'Mahler's specially reflexive, alienated, and yet manipulative relationship with the master narrative of the culture he appropriated, as an exoticised or even implicitly feminised outsider, gave rise to a musical project in which music seemed constantly to question and reconstruct itself as a phantasmagoria of voices' (pp. 123–24).

The book's intended centrepiece is surely the final essay of Part One, Painter's own comprehensive and far-reaching examination of 'The Aesthetics of Mass Culture: Mahler's

Eighth Symphony and its Legacy.' Her argument takes Mahler's magnum opus far beyond the closed sphere of private inspiration and autonomous work analysis, resiting it as a central document of the emergence—aesthetic, social and political—of mass culture in Austria midway through the first decade of the twentieth century, and as representing in contemporary reception a paradigm of the artist's responsibilities to that culture. Painter virtuosically relates the dimensions of the work and choice of vocal texts, as well as specific musical techniques, to the rise of the lower middle class and ideas about mass culture and idealist ethics being developed by Austrian socialist thinkers of the time, for instance, Karl Renner and Viktor Adler. Ensuing critical responses (pp. 138ff), as Painter demonstrates, traced socio-political themes, among them the notion that such mass performances possessed anti-individualist and 'socially redemptive value' (p. 143), and appropriated the symphony as an icon of socialist art (p. 148) or conversely denigrated it as a 'product of advanced capitalism, its ritual content ... spurious' (p. 150). Reading the work wholly in this light was, of course, inadequate. While the conception of the Eighth also incorporated many higher intellectual projects, and Mahler subsequently drew back into a private, closed compositional realm (p. 151), it cannot be overlooked that there was but a short step from the aesthetics reflected in socialist critical responses to the Eighth to the fascist use of mass culture as an implement of social control a generation later.

The second part of the book brings together four fine, if less dizzy, panoramic studies in the analysis and aesthetics of Mahler's music. Camilla Bork investigates the role of 'Musical Lyricism as Self Exploration,' in *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*; Peter Revers the relation of text and music in Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, both of which are translated from German originals—subtly different, perhaps more narrowly focused approaches may be perceived here from those of the Anglophone offerings. In the two final essays, Thomas Peattie's 'In Search of Lost Time: Memory and Mahler's Broken Pastoral' draws parallels between Proust and Mahler's use of narrative and memory, while Stephen Hefling articulates more formalist concerns in his 'Aspects of Mahler's Late Style.'

As referred to earlier, the last two sections of the book, which make up almost half of its total length, as constituting valuable documentary resources to understanding the reception of Mahler's music in his own day, facilitate a better understanding of subsequent reception paths first hand, without the mediation of hermeneutic gloss or interpretative construction. Part Three, edited by Zoë Lang, outlines 'Mahler's American Debut' via programme notes and reports from the New York premiere of Mahler's Fourth in 1904–5, and the American premiere of the Fifth and an East Coast tour undertaken by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Gericke in 1906. (It could be noted that Australians heard Mahler's music for the first time in 1935, with the Fifth under Schneevoigt, as the reviewer has established.) Part Four, 'Mahler's German-Language Critics,' edited and translated by Karen Painter and Bettina Varwig, assembles a veritable cornucopia of largely inaccessible documentation of early Mahler reception, accounts of Mahler's conducting, of performances of his First, Fifth and Seventh symphonies and of *Das Lied von der Erde*, four obituaries from 1911 and four reviews of the milestone Mahler Festival in Amsterdam in 1920.

With entire libraries of published materials on composers of Mahler's stature now in print, Princeton's '[insert composer's name] and his world' approach represents a crucial and ultimately much overdue means of bridging the gap between our often exhaustive but largely

autonomous understanding of a composer and his music, and the often under-represented knowledge about how that composer and his music fitted into the social, cultural, artistic, political, religious, ideological—you name it—perspective of his time.

Jonathan Lewsey, *Who's Who in Verdi*  
Aldershot, Hants. & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001  
ISBN 1 85928 440 X; xviii + 560pp.

Reviewed by Nancy Calo

From its very beginning, opera has played a significant social and political role in society. The role of Verdi's operas in particular was one of great importance in fulfilling the need for a people's voice. Verdi purposely developed a musical vocabulary around historical themes that were admirably suited to the expression of political ideas. Perhaps his themes fulfilled his personal agenda of protest at the time. However, Italian opera remained at the mercy of the censors throughout Verdi's era: any music that hinted the Risorgimento spirit was forbidden on top of which the libretti themes heavily revolved around political messages of power, authority and human relationships. It is the latter that shines through in Lewsey's A-to-Z of Verdi's operas and characters: *Who's Who in Verdi*.

Thorough understanding of an opera is a complicated process. One cannot perceive operatic meanings exclusively through the music; neither can the libretto or plot be undervalued in the search for a complete understanding of the genre. That is where this book is a much-needed addition to the other generalist opera publications that tend to surface from time to time. The publication comprises over 250 entries covering each of Verdi's operas and their characters. A detailed synopsis of each work is provided, as well as commentaries on each character's motivation and function. The source of the libretto is given, together with the date and place of the opera's first performance. The cast is listed and the time and place of setting is also provided.

As far as reading the book is concerned, however, where does one start? The preface by Lewsey himself is a must solely for the purpose of being clear about the author's intentions. At first glance, there is barely a mention of music and how Verdi's operas fitted into the social and political milieu. Why did Lewsey not delve into the politics with which Verdi's operas, and especially their choruses, are intertwined? Much has been written to suggest the correlation between the Italian opera chorus and its role as a voice for the people dating as far back as Rossini's era. This is entirely intentional: Lewsey acknowledges the available literature on every possible facet of Verdian opera but this. He wishes to fill a gap, dedicating this volume entirely to the libretti. Yet Lewsey concedes that many 'libretti have been condemned as having no literary merit.' What makes this work successful is that he 'take[s] each libretto on its individual merits and [is] not to be tempted into lengthy digressions on where libretto and source converge or diverge.'

Throughout the book, Lewsey remains focussed on the fact that the drama invoked and 'elicited a wealth of great music.' It is exclusively a work of Verdi's dramatic content that