

Curriculum Vitae

- 1857 Bernhard Mahler, called the Jewish “book-learned coachman” and Marie Hermann, “the limper, the Duchess,” daughter of a soap maker, marry in Kaliště at Humpolec, Bohemia.¹
- 1858 Isidor, the first of eleven sons, is born to Marie Mahler; he dies in infancy. Eight of Gustav Mahler’s ten brothers fail to reach legal majority. Of the two who do, one shoots himself at 22 in despair of becoming a successful musician like his brother, and the other is a wastrel and a dreamer, who will die long after Gustav, in Chicago, a representative of Heller Candies, Vienna, Austria.²
- 1860 Jul 7 Gustav is born in Kaliště, ‘Muddy Puddles’, Bohemia, in a rambling stone house he will tell Natalie “never had any window panes.”³ Once a tavern, a museum in the composer’s honor today occupies the structure that stands there (the original burned in 1937), where in 1996 the young Czech singer Dagmar Pecková sang Gustav’s *Songs of a Wayfarer* to a small group of pilgrims. Mahler in the 1990’s will be suddenly in vogue; the totalitarian regime will have discouraged performances of his works, although the longtime director of the Czech Philharmonic, Václav Neumann, will conduct them avidly.
- 1860 Oct In response to Franz Josef’s *Oktoberdiplom*, giving Jews greater freedom of settlement and economic advancement, the family moves to

Jihlava (in German, *Iglau*) on the Moravian side of the Czech-Moravian highlands. Iglau, a long-time German-speaking islet of commerce and trade on the artery from Prague to Brno and Vienna, is the site of Bernhard's schnapps distillery, which will soon propel him into the ranks of the comfortable bourgeoisie. The family lives in the building with the distillery, at 4 Pirmitzergasse, called after World War I Znaimergasse (Znojemská in Czech, from the Moravian town Znojmo); after World War II, Malinowskigasse or Malinovského; after 1989's Velvet Revolution, Znojemská again (Czech only spoken, German and Russian abolished). The building stands today (2009) featuring a "Mahler Coffee House" and a two-room second-floor exposition of "The Young Gustav Mahler in Jihlava."

- 1861 Brother Ernst born, to die at fourteen of pericarditis. As he dies, Gustav tells him folk tales of his own invention at his bedside and bears his death grievously.
- 1863 Sister Leopoldine (Poldi) born, to die a young woman of twenty-six in the same year as her parents. Suffers a marriage of convenience in the early '80's, a brain tumor in 1889.
- 1864 Richard Strauss born in Munich.
- 1867 Brother Alois born, the family Baron Munchausen, a prankster, a fantasist, a ne'er-do-well, and a lifelong embarrassment to his brother (see 1858).
- 1868 Sister Justine born (d. 1938), Gustav's most beloved sibling, with whom he will share a household for many years. His jealous wife Alma will grow to hate her and will write in her memoir many years after Gustav's death that Justi once told her: "You have him as an old man, but I had him when he was young."⁴ This is an unlikely story, but Alma

by that time will believe it to be true. Justi will marry Gustav's concertmaster, Arnold Rosé, the day after her brother will marry Alma (see 1902). One child, Alfred, will settle in Canada.

Gustav plays an accordion in the dusty streets of Iglau and follows behind the military orchestras as they march across the wide sunlit main square; listening to the marches, he wets his pants in trance-like concentration. He makes his first musical composition, *Polka with Funeral March*.⁵ He reads *Don Quixote*. He discovers a piano in grandfather Hermann's attic in Ledeč hidden in an upper partition; he can reach the keys he cannot see and plays by feel and instinct the songs he has partly heard, partly imagined. The piano is sent home by horse and cart to Iglau by his amazed grandfather. He has his first formal photograph (aged six): "I want to be a martyr."

1869 Enters Iglau Gymnasium. "Not exactly a shining light" in his studies, he is best at religion and gymnastics. Later in life philosophy and art theory will replace religion in his reading, and he will become a lifelong sportsman.

1871 Gustav is sent to study at the Neustädte Gymnasium in Prague. Boards with the Moritz Grünfeld family. He is neglected and lonely, follows an unrecognized inner curriculum, finishes 64th of 64 in his class (a trait of geniuses). One day he stumbles upon Alfred Grünfeld, nineteen, and a chambermaid clamorously making in an open area. "I never forgave him that."⁶ He has no money, he loses interest in his studies; at last his father comes to rescue him, finding him in an apparent autistic trance. He returns to Iglau and the Gymnasium. Gives music lessons and piano concerts.

- 1873 Brother Otto born.
- 1875 Sister Emma born (d. 1933). Gustav summers in Časlav, where he finds his first patron, Gustav Schwarz, who insists he leave Iglau for the Vienna Conservatory. Gustav knows that Bernhard will need to be convinced; he writes a flowery, deeply-felt, slightly conniving letter to Schwarz explaining how his father ought to be approached so that he will give his consent.⁷ On September 10 he enrolls in the Conservatory. Piano instructor and Schubert specialist Julius Epstein interviews father and son. “Your son is a born musician. He has *spirit*, but he is not destined for the *spirit* business,” he tells Bernhard, speaking in the paronomastic style his son will cultivate throughout his life.⁸ His concentration will be piano.
- 1876 Begins the business of composing upon arrival in Vienna, but tosses every project aside before completion in dissatisfaction and uncertainty. There is a symphony, and an apocryphal story about his feverishly copying it out the night before Old Helmesberger, the composition teacher, is to sight-read it, Mahler copying it with glaring mistakes in an all-night session and Old Helmesberger tearing it up and tossing it on the floor.⁹ There is a project for an opera, *Ernst von Schwaben*; there are many lost and discarded songs, Schubertian beyond Schubert, so say his friends Krzyzanowski and Hugo Wolf. There is a *Nordic Symphony* by the young Jewish composer, also discarded.
- Bruno Schlesinger (Bruno Walter) born, destined to be one of Gustav’s closest and most sympathetic colleagues. He will outlive Gustav by fifty years.

- 1876 July Wins prize for composition with a piano quintet movement, now lost; writes a movement for a quartet in A minor, recovered and played today as a curiosity; it is not yet *Mahler*. Fellow student Natalie Bauer-Lechner introduces herself to Gustav at a concert. She will write the single most valuable memoir of Gustav Mahler. “A fine kid,” he says of her, somewhat disrespectfully, at least from the perspective of a hundred years later.¹⁰ His behavior is erratic, marked by breaches of discipline alternating with obsequious remorse. In a fit of frustration and self-loathing he resigns from the Conservatory, then begs to be reinstated. “It has all been a misunderstanding.”¹¹
- 1877 Still uncertain that his destiny is music, he enrolls at the University of Vienna. He is interested in history, ancient philosophy and the philosophy of art. He leaves the university abruptly in the fall of ’78; returns in ’80; leaves again. Joins Wagner Society with Wolf, dabbles in vegetarianism. His gastrointestinal system will carry the marks forever. Later the scent of anti-Semitism drives him out of the Society; unpalatable.
- 1878 After flunking his first *Abitur* he finally graduates the Conservatory. Summers at home in Moravia. His first girl friend, a cousin of Emil Freund, inspires a romantic letter to Joseph Steiner full of the sorrows of Werther and the glories of nature and desire.¹² He writes of the earth as a loving mother in whose bosom he will bury himself for consolation in his loneliness. Life without his love is a living death for him. She kills herself two years later.
- The kernel of *Das klagende Lied* (from *Klage*, ‘lament’, ‘accusation’, ‘legal complaint’; the German title with its triple ambiguity is

translatable directly into Czech as *Píseň Žalobná*, but not so easily into English) develops from a story by Bechstein, a Greif poem and two Grimm tales about a singing bone. The theme is fratricide and sexual guilt. His first complete full-length work, music and text by Mahler, it is an operatic cantata for orchestra, choir, and soloists. He completes a first version in November, 1880, and revises it later in Hamburg. “My opus one; the first Mahlerian work.” He also calls it his *Schmerzenkind*, ‘child of sorrow’, for it will lead the procession of his symphonic children on the hazardous and humiliating path to final acceptance on the concert stage.¹³

- 1879 Aug 31 Alma Maria Schindler born; her future husband, Gustav, is nineteen. She will outlive him by fifty-three years.
- 1880 Back at the University. Goethe, Napoleon, Greek art. He shares an interest in folklore with Wolf. They briefly consider writing an opera together on the topic of *Rübezahl*, the protean giant from the Silesian Riesengebirge who defends Good against Evil. Inspired, they set off in separate directions with a friendly bet who can finish first. In a day or two Wolf reports he has been to the library and has lots of possible opera story lines in mind, but nothing written; Gustav has the completed text of his libretto, *Rübezahl*. Wolf is annihilated. Their friendship cools; the arc of Wolf’s career flattens. Gustav, meanwhile, never writes the music for his work; this project is only a *test*. He has already developed an uncanny objectivity toward his own compositions; if they are *tests*, they need not be completed, if completed and they are *juvenilia*, they must be destroyed. So also the detritus of the laboratory (notes, sketches) of mature works, to the despair of musicological historians. Only the Tenth survived, by the

perfidy of nature, as he would say, as he was no longer alive to complete or to destroy it.

In love again. He writes three *lieder* for the daughter of the Iglau postmaster, Josephine Poisl: *Im Lenz*, *Winterlied*, *Maitanz im Grünen*.¹⁴ The latter, an Austrian *ländler* or rude country dance, will be a form he will use all his life. It sings the lusty joys of simple rhythms, and seems to have a range of semiotic values in his work: country-bumpkin lack of sophistication, country musical popularization, banal, raucous hand-slapping dancing, and also tenderness, love, honesty and affection.

1881 *Das klagende Lied* fails to win the Beethoven prize for composition at the Conservatory. “Had I won that prize I might have become a full-time composer,” he tells Natalie, but this is an illusion, as one can hardly imagine Gustav Mahler utterly removed from the “hell of the theater” where he will take his place as the greatest musical entertainer of his time.¹⁵ Among his Conservatory friends is Hans Rott, the composer who will be driven to insanity by criticism of *his* music and will serve as an object lesson for Gustav: *hold on*. Gustav meets the elegant *littérateur* Siegfried Lipiner, who will remain a close friend for many years until ejected from their lives by Alma.¹⁶ He takes long forest walks with Iglau acquaintance Fritz Löhr, a lifelong companion and correspondent.

Summer. His first “job” is conducting operettas in a “shed” in Bad Hall, near Linz. He manages to get fired.

- 1881 He is conductor *am landschaftlichem Theater* in Laibach (Ljubljana), now Slovenia. The town is about half-and-half Slovene and German speaking; his cast is talentless, but he begins to stage operas and operettas, including *Der Freischütz*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Der Barbier von Seville*, and one of his future specialties, *Die Zauberflöte*. He will be a Mozart specialist and a Wagner specialist.
- 1882 Jan Conductor in Olmütz (in Czech, Olomouc), in north-central Moravia, like Iglau a German-speaking islet. He learns more and more operas. It seems this is going to be his life's work, willy-nilly. Gets reputation as an eccentric vegetarian, orders strange dishes in restaurants, conducts hallucinatory orchestras. At season's end, the theater is closed (no reflection on his hard work). Apocryphal anecdote: an influential person watches him conduct *Carmen* from memory and gets him a job in Kassel. Real truth: the conductor-from-memory might have been any one of a thousand other ordinary *Wunderkinder*, but *he* worked from the score.¹⁷
- 1883 Feb 13 Wagner dies.
- Signs three-year contract as choir director and second conductor in Kassel, a theater run with Prussian discipline by Adolf von Gilsa. Blanches as underling to the uninspired Wilhelm Treiber. Stages *tableaux vivants* for the verse epic by Victor von Scheffel, *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, writes music for it, destroys the music in disgust, leaving a genre piece that will become the *Bluminesatz* of the First Symphony. Later, he will excise it from the symphony.

Meets and loves Johanna von Richter, lyric and dramatic soprano. He writes her poems, a habit he will renew when in love with Alma. He writes Johanna a four-piece song cycle (around 1883-1884, completed around January '85), *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, lit. 'Songs of a Traveling Journeyman', known in English as *Songs of a Wayfarer*. This will turn out to be a masterpiece, the first by Mahler at the advanced age of 24 or 25, and the first integrated orchestral *lieder* cycle in history. He writes the texts himself from *Wunderhorn* sources. The last two songs are a march and a funeral march. While the tonalities are progressive, the love affair fails.

1884 Witnesses the conducting of Hans von Bülow, writes a conspiratory letter begging the great man to take him, a lonely wayfarer, out of the hell-hole of Kassel.¹⁸ He is snubbed, but continues to admire von Bülow's work. Gustav is fined for adding a violin part to Delibe's *Der König hat's gesagt*, initiating a lifelong habit of tinkering ever so delicately and subtly with musical scores, for which critics (the "bosses," as he called them) will forever chasten him.¹⁹

Conducts Mendelssohn's oratorio *Paulus* at the Münden festival with 480 performers, including Rosa Papier; uses a large stick as baton. Grand proportions are pleasing to him. Intimations of Beethoven's Ninth, his own future Second Symphony, his Eighth Symphony. He wishes he could conduct Wagner at Bayreuth, but cannot (too Jewish); dreams of *Parsifal*, which may only be performed at Bayreuth.

1885 July In Prague again he is now conductor at the Tyl Theater (German Theater or *Landestheater*) where *Don Giovanni* premièred. He works for the brilliant impresario Angelo Neumann, who feeds him Wagner.

- Inspired, he tries vainly to wriggle out of a too-hastily signed contract in Leipzig. Performs *Die Meistersinger* for the first time and falls in love with another singer, Betty Frank.²⁰
- 1885 Nov He is second conductor under Arthur Nikitsch, *Stadttheater*, Leipzig. Impresario Staegemann gives Nikitsch the entire Wagner *Ring*, leaving little for Gustav; he sends out feelers for another position.²¹ Falls in love again: Marion von Weber, married wife of the famous composer's grandson. A passionate love, it will last to the end of 1887.
- 1887 Jan Friendship with the Weber family. Someone casually shows Gustav the torso of the great operatic composer's unfinished *Die drei Pintos*. For a time the score is meaningless to him; then, in a lightning bolt of inspiration (timed by his inner clock to please Marion) he discovers he can read the scribbles and the glyphs, he understands what Weber means, he will complete the unfinished score with an amazing intuitive grasp of Weber's intent! Impressed, Staegemann gives him time off in the autumn to do so.
- Meets Richard Strauss in October, beginning a lifelong professional relationship between the two foremost composers of their era.
- 1888 Jan Première of Gustav's *Pintos* is well received. The royal family of Saxony is present, gushes Gustav to his parents back home in Iglau. They all loved my work! The score is sold to C.F. Kahnt. Everybody repeats the same pun about "what is *gemalt* ('painted' — Mahlerized) and "what is *gewebt* ('woven' — written by Weber).²² Strauss at first is much impressed, until Hanslick and von Bülow tell him otherwise; later, after assimilating the received opinions of the leading critics, he

“can’t believe Mahler has the brass *play so high*.”²³ Defying the limits of instrumental register will in time become a feature of Mahler’s idiom. Emboldened, he writes his first symphony and the first version of a symphonic poem, *Todtenfeier*, “Funeral Obsequies.” “Now I’m famous and will have no difficulty getting anything performed,” says the composer. He could not have been more wrong.

His reputation as a performer soars, despite volatile moods and a disposition to tyranny. When he believes himself artistically in the right he will not budge.

1888 Sep 10 This is the date that he places on the completed MS of *Todtenfeier* in Prague. The work will later become the first movement of the *Resurrection* symphony. Despite the kind indulgences and friendship of Staegemann — the only theater manager ever who will give him time to compose instead of bitterly rebuking him for doing so, and under whose aegis he writes several masterpieces — Gustav seeks an appointment which will give him total control.

He is appointed Director of the Hungarian Royal Opera under Intendant Baron Beniczky. For the first time he *has* full artistic control of music, drama, and staging. His heart sings; he impulsively promises to learn Hungarian, to conduct Hungarian national operas, to conduct Wagner in Hungarian, later regretting such idealistic vows. He agonizes and quarrels, he struggles with translators; despite local suspicion of the young Bohemian-Austrian interloper, his premières are public successes and he wins admirers, including the Baron. He is lonely for

the German language; in a year or two he begins a correspondence with old schoolmate Natalie, and a friendship without physical love, a *Seelenfreundschaft*, begins to form (c. 1890) which will be — no, sadly, not life-long, as much as we would have wished it to be so. It will break cleanly in January, 1902, when Gustav gets engaged to Alma Schindler.

- 1889 Feb 18 Bernhard Mahler dies. Sister Poldi has a brain tumor. Marie Mahler is very ill throughout the spring into the summer and is not expected to recover. Hitler is born in Austria. It is a bad year. Gustav begs friend Fritz Löhr to stand in for him at his mother's bedside. In September he takes his final leave; she will die in a few weeks and he, the composer of *Trauermarschen* ('funeral marches') par excellence, will be unable to attend her funeral. In the meantime sister Poldi dies. Justi is beside herself. Gustav takes charge of his younger and/or irresponsible siblings Emma, Otto and Alois.
- 1889 Nov 20 Gustav answers these three devastating deaths by staging the first major Mahler performance, Symphony Number One, with a subtitle *Symphonische Dichtung* 'Symphonic Poem' and a fanciful program by the composer intended to guide the listener (I almost wrote 'reader') into its daedal conduits, across its girandoles. It is a difficult work for this audience and this time. The heading of the program reads: 1. Teil: Introduction und Allegro Commodo. 2. Andante. 3. Scherzo. 2. Teil. A la pompes funèbres (sic) 5. Molto appassionato (sic). The performance is a humiliating failure.

- 1890 Meanwhile he wrestles with the Hungarian language, the national operas he leafs through in frantic search for quality (e.g. the work of good friend and supporter Ödön Mihalovics). Impossibly difficult language. Why do they have so many umlauts in a row? ‘A towel’ — important to Gustav, he is always washing drinking glasses and tossing his towels about his lodgings²⁴ — is *egy törülkötő*, and the last umlaut, if you look carefully, is italicized, of all things. Travels to Italy with Justi in search of singers and inspiration. Returns with Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*, representative of the “verismo” style, and stages it successfully. Still he feels more and more unhappy in Budapest.
- 1890 Jan His boss Baron Beniczky is replaced by Graf Géza Zichy, who proves no friend of Gustav.
- 1891 Mar Unscrupulous and talented Bernhard Baruch Pollini engages Mahler in Hamburg as conductor at the *Stadttheater Hamburg* and seduces him with promises of future advancement to full directorship of the opera. Von Bülow, Gustav’s idol, languishes in semi-retirement in Hamburg. His conversion to Gustav’s side after a stunning Mahler performance of *Siegfried* aids his advancement. Among his new Hamburg friends is Adele Marcus, a late-thirtyish widow of intellectual and artistic inclinations who becomes another *Seelenfreundin* (‘soul partner’ or platonic lover).²⁵
- 1891 May 18 Conducts his first *Tristan*. This work, after years of seasoning and restaging in the next decade by Alfred Roller, will become his best-known Wagner opera.
- He summers near Vienna and near Salzburg, where he runs into Natalie; visits Bayreuth and then Bohemia, with old friends, and makes

a lonely voyage up the coast to Scandinavia. Von Bülow condemns *Todtenfeier*: “If this is music, then I don’t understand anything about music.”²⁶ Later Gustav will conceive this “music” to be the introduction of a vast allegorical fresco about the life and the immortal soul of man, or *a man*, or Gustav himself. For now, however, rejection by the prophet von Bülow occludes all work on the symphony. At the end of this year and into the next he writes songs from the stylized collection of folk poems by Arnim and Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, “The Youth’s Magic Horn,” whose themes have been absorbing him for some years. Some of these songs will have orchestral accompaniment, including *Der Schildwache Nachtlied*, “The Sentinel’s Night Song,” *Verlor’ne Müh*, “Wasted Effort”, *Wer hat dies Liedchen*, “Who has Thought Up This Song?”, *Trost im Unglück*, “Comfort in Bad Luck”, and, significantly, *Das himmlische Leben*, “Heavenly Life,” the kernel idea for both the third and fourth symphonies. At first he calls these songs *Humoresken*.

1892

Schott publishes his early songs, *Lieder und Gesänge*.

The Hamburg orchestra is selected from a short list of major German ensembles for a guest tour in England. Hamburg friend Arnold Berliner teaches Gustav English (“I make greater progress in English as you can observe in this letter”).²⁷ The tour is his first international success. He summers in Berchtesgaden near Salzburg with Natalie, Fritz, and Justi. The chief event of the summer is rehearsal for a performance of some of the songs which he has wheedled von Bülow into conducting, but the old man changes his mind and calls it off, deciding he can’t do

“those strange *Gesänge*.” Gustav tries to make light of it, but cannot disguise his bitterness. “There’s another really friendly boost to creativity,” he remarks sarcastically.²⁸ While in Berlin preparing to return to Hamburg for the opera season he learns of a massive outbreak of cholera in that city; he returns to Berchtesgaden, where he tarries all of August, all of September and into October, while thousands die in Hamburg. Upon his return Pollini fines him for his lateness; he is outraged and determined to escape Hamburg forever. Meanwhile he must continue on in this uncomfortable job, as he has no other recourse.

1893

Natalie discovers an inn called “Gasthof zum Höllengebirge” on the eastern shore of the Atter Lake, in the midst of the great Dolomite range of the Salzkammergut (‘salt chamber lands’). The name of the inn comes from the name of the surrounding mountain range, translatable as ‘Hell Peaks’.²⁹ The view is incomparable, the location seemingly remote enough for a composer suffering from acute sensitivity to noise; the water is icy cold, the summer flowers, exotic. Mountain climbing, biking, boating. He is now a *summer composer*, nestled for a brief time in an ideally beautiful retreat with several trusted and intelligent women. For the first summer at Steinbach am Attersee — the little burg where the inn is located — Justi rents the first floor for the family, planning room for Otto and Emma. This summer he revises No. 1 and then on July 8, the first day of his thirty-fourth year (old for a composer), a creative storm strikes him and holds him enthralled for a full three weeks, during which he writes the song *Fischpredigt*, (“The Sermon of St. Anthony to the Fishes”) and a symphonic movement with identical thematic material as the song. Unaccountably optimistic, he plans to expand *Todtenfeier* into a huge

symphony; he writes 2.2, 2.3 (= “The Sermon to the Fishes”), and borrows an earlier *Wunderhorn* song, *Urlicht*, “Primal Light” to serve as 2.4. Only a finale and a unifying idea is lacking. He still does not understand this work that is pressing itself into life. He is collecting it in bits and scraps, but it lacks wholeness and individuality. It is an arrested embryo.

Early in the 1893 season, Natalie tells us,³⁰ Gustav finally contracts the deadly cholera he had so feared the summer before. Justi, who as a child used to play coffin-and-flowers, decides to die with her brother; she eats from the same spoon and lies down at his side. Very ill, he expects to die, the anecdote continues, but on November 6 Tchaikovsky dies instead (*au lieu de lui*) and Gustav recovers so as to be able to take his predestined place in the pantheon of great composers.

1893 Oct 27 He presents a performance of the new First, with a revised program (bracketed passages to follow are my remarks). “Part One. From the Days of Youth. Flower-, Fruit-, and Thorn-pieces. 1. Spring without End. 2. Blumine [this is the reworked old trumpet solo from *Säckingen*, see 1883] 3. With Full Sails [a *ländler*, see 1880]. Part II. ‘Commedia Humana’. 4. Stranded! A Death March in ‘Callot’s Manner’. [Gustav explains: this comes from a picture in an old book of fables, “The Hunter’s Coffin Conveyed to the Grave,” the animals of the forest accompany the coffin of the dead hunter to his grave. A Bohemian band. Animals. The mood varies from irony to uncanny brooding. [This movement rouses the critics to new heights of disgust.] 4. *Dall’ Inferno* follows, ‘The sudden eruption of the despair of a deeply wounded

heart.””³¹End of programmatic description. He asks a good friend and influential critic Ferdinand Pfohl for a title for his Symphonic Tone Poem; finally he himself hits upon *Titan*, a novel by Jean Paul with a sympathetic hero (the titles in the program quoted above come from that novel, as a matter of fact). The critical reception is contemptuous. “My doomsday critic,” Josef Sittard, attacks vigorously.

Begins friendship with Czech composer Joseph Foerster. Corresponds regularly with Strauss about staging the latter’s opera *Guntram* in Hamburg. Fears Pollini is on the point of hiring Strauss to Hamburg as his equal partner; despises Pollini more and more; hopes against hope that Strauss will conduct his (Mahler’s) new works. Dreams of escape. Munich, Berlin, Vienna? His Jewishness stands in the way.

1894 Feb

Von Bülow dies in Cairo. A cardinal event in Gustav’s creative life is at hand. Gustav attends his funeral in Hamburg in March and is struck *as by lightning* by the mediocre Klopstock chorale *Auferstehen*, “Rise Again.” This is the final piece in the puzzle of The Second. It all has meaning now! He rushes home to his friend Foerster, crying ecstatically, “I have it, I have it!” Foerster is supposed to have cried back with incantatory intonations, as though intuiting Gustav’s discovery: “*Auferstehen!*”³²Freudians of today are ecstatic, as von Bülow was a “musical father figure.” *He* is dead, and now *she* (creativity) may live, and so forth. The Second Symphony, headed by *Todtenfeier*, can now issue forth from where it lay blocked in the conduits of Gustav’s psychic womb. With death comes understanding on wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love.

1894 May 10 Strauss marries the singer Pauline de Ahna, with whom Alma Mahler will have terrible fights ten years hence. Gustav tries to persuade Pollini to stage *Guntram*, to no avail. In June in Weimar he leads the much-derided First to a third resounding defeat in a row, this time shorter by one movement (*Blumine*) and with changes in the program. Strauss is present. The critic Otto Nodnagel attacks; later this mild musical dreamer will have a road-to-Damascus conversion and become so wild and fervent a Mahlerian that Gustav will have to disassociate himself from his febrile prophecies.³³

Gustav has had a little stone *Häusl* — ‘a little house’, *Häuschen* in standard German, *Häusl* with the Austrian diminutive suffix — built right on the shore of the Atter, across a flower-strewn meadow from the inn, where this summer he plans to compose in utter silence and isolation. And he *means* utter isolation, for he writes ahead of time to Justi to bar the road to Natalie; she talks too much, she spies, she mothers, she negotiates. The summer of 1894 has no entries in Natalie’s *Memories*, for she is not there. He closes all the windows in the *Häusl* to bar sounds as well, but two crows, as in a fairy tale, manage to sing him a motif for 2.5, the grand finale, which he is now writing. He completes the symphony.

In the fall season nineteen-year-old Bruno Schlesinger (Walter), a lifelong friend, pupil, and premier exponent of his music, is hired by Pollini in Hamburg.

- 1895 Feb 6 Brother Otto shoots himself through the heart at the apartment of a lady friend of the family, a translator of Dostoevsky, one of Gustav's favorite writers.
- 1895 Mar 4 He tests 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 before a live audience in Berlin, including Strauss, whom he tries vainly to persuade to take the podium, or, at a later date, to conduct the whole work.
- 1895 Mar 11 Infamous performance of Beethoven's Ninth, with Gustav's "improvements" to the score; he has a specially constructed platform mounted on stilts, which sways ominously to his body movements and gives him a migraine. "An E-flat clarinet here, a trombone added there; and, in the B major tenor solo with male choir in the finale, some *Illustrationsmusik* under the floorboards," says the critic Emil Krause, contemptuous of the off-stage orchestra.³⁴ Gustav will respond: "I invite conductors of my works in posterity to take the same wise, reasoned liberties with *my* scores in the interest of musical integrity."

The third summer at Steinbach sees the beginning of the Third Symphony; he writes what he calls the "flower piece" (3.2) and the "animal piece" (3.3). It seems to be something about the Great Chain of Being, beginning with inanimate nature — the grandeur of the Salzkammergut mountain ranges — and concluding with God. He writes endlessly changing programmatic descriptions to his friends: "The Fortunate Life," "A Summer Night's Dream," "My Merry Science" [reference to Nietzsche], "Pan, a Symphonic Poem."³⁵ He sketches two more *Wunderhorn* songs, *Lied des Verfolgten im Turm*,

“The Song of the Prisoner in the Tower” and *Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen*, “Where the Beautiful Trumpets Blow.”

The fall season finds his relations with Pollini worsening. In May he sends an abortive resignation which he retracts in humiliation (see 1876 for the beginning of the pattern). Pollini hires a dramatic soprano, Anna von Mildenburg, a moody, big-boned, bosomy, sensual young actress seemingly born to play a Wagnerian heroine, Isolde or Brunhilde. Gustav cannot resist this elixir of brilliant raw talent and languorous sexuality and, after some months of “training” his recruit (teaching and courting) he tumbles into a tangled love affair which in his naiveté he hides from no one in Hamburg.³⁶ The greatest obstacle to marriage is her jealousy of his compositions, which she can only see as formidable rivals for his attention. Like a fury or a fairy from a minor opera, she will haunt the scene for years to come. Finally, many many years later, she will marry happily and begin to behave sensibly, proving a better friend than a lover.

1895 Dec 13 He premieres the Second Symphony in Berlin, using another (the same?) gallows-like wooden frame (see Mar 11) and getting another horrible migraine. *Resurrection*, as it will be known, is a public success and a critical failure. The public gasps when the chorus enters, unaccompanied, pianissimo, in 2.5. He makes a valuable new friend in the critic of the Berlin paper *Vossische Zeitung*, Max Marschalk. Of the warm public reception of 2 Bruno Walter will write: “This day marked the beginning of his recognition as a composer.”³⁷ Nevertheless he is

beginning to realize he may never be regularly performed in his lifetime.

1896 Feb He gives the première of *Songs of a Wayfarer* in Berlin along with the fourth attempt at the First. Another failure; the count now stands at four losses, no wins. Marschalk writes a paper, “The Narrating Arts,” including an interpretation of 1 that astounds Gustav with its understanding. “Your interpretation of my work is so unified and comes so much from the heart (“*kommt von innen heraus*”) that I actually couldn’t have changed a word.”³⁸

He recruits influential friends to help him secure a post as conductor; no, *the post as Director*, in Vienna, at the Court Opera, among them Mildenburg’s teacher Rosa Papier, “my star in Vienna.”³⁹

The fourth summer in Steinbach finds Gustav arriving without the sketches for 3; in panic he telephones a Hamburg friend to have them sent. He agonizes in anticipation; they arrive. He completes the symphony, one even more massive than its predecessor. He is surrounded by women. Anna receives his daily love-letters while love-struck, self-contained Natalie listens to his discussions about music in general and his own music in particular; faithful sister Justi cooks and cleans. Bruno Walter visits Steinbach (“don’t concern yourself with gazing at those mountains; I’ve composed them all off,” he tells his guest).⁴⁰ He visits Brahms, dying in Ischl; he takes a long cycling tour after the work of 3 is over, and dedicates the long first movement to Natalie. “Nature as a whole, which so to speak awakens from

unfathomable silence to resound and to ring.” The finale is called “What love tells me; here the Ixion wheel of appearances is finally brought to a standstill.”⁴¹ Somehow he knows this to be his last summer in Steinbach and the knowledge brings tears to his eyes. He will not write another symphony for three years, until he is ensconced at the Wörtersee, in another woodland *Häusl* again overlooking the water. The Steinbach structure stands today, over the years and the wars having served as a washhouse, a slaughterhouse, a latrine; its manifold usefulness has insured its survival. (In Austrian slang *Häusl*, the little house, also means ‘toilet’; in Czech slang, by extension, *hejzl* is a ‘bastard’.) It is today a Mahler exhibit-*Häusl*, with a guest book filling up and filling up with moving inscriptions in many languages from visitors and pilgrims, many addressed directly to the composer as if he were alive today, or to his patient ghost. The *Häusl* is now surrounded by camping vehicles; bathers lounge in its shadow and Austrian children play soccer nearby into the long summer evenings. Exactly one hundred years after its completion the town will erect a monument to 3 at the pier, where the tour boat stops on its rounds about the busy crystal lake that Gustav loved in its solitude. In the guest book in the *Häusl* one young woman writes: “How can such beautiful music have issued from such a little building?” “Aha,” answers Gustav. “Precisely the point.”

Rosa Papier and Eduard Wlassack map the siege of Vienna. Intrigue and secret negotiations go on behind the backs of the blind old Director Jahn and his conductors and the numerous contenders for the prize of

associate conductor. Gustav writes letters to everyone of any influence in his life. The Hamburg agony cannot be allowed to continue.

1897 Feb 23 Like a thief in the night, Gustav steals to the Kleine Michaeliskirche in Hamburg to be baptized a Catholic. At least one old friend is deeply offended by what he perceives as lack of religious sincerity on Mahler's part. This is Ferdinand Pfohl, his longtime Hamburg ally. An unfortunate phrase in a letter from Gustav to an influential Hungarian friend survives: "I have been a Catholic since shortly after leaving Budapest [which was in 1891; note the *real* date of his baptism immediately above]."⁴² The conspirators will recommend him later to the full directorship of the Royal Court Opera, saying, "[We hereby submit the name of] Kapellmeister Gustav Mahler, a young Austrian of 37, of the Christian faith, who, in his previous posts as Director of the Royal Budapest Opera and [Hamburg Stadttheater] has given proof of his genius."

He is aware that a Jew cannot so easily shuck off his skin and transfuse his blood, that his Jewishness and "his way of doing things"⁴³ will cause problems. (He sees these, correctly, as two utterly separate, yet related, issues.) Indeed, the ten Vienna years will utterly sap his energy, but not because Jewish blood still runs in his veins. This is a gilded city, cynical and light, a provincial city where the opera and the theater have risen to grand cults in the grand manner, but where comfort and easy entertainment in the old traditional ways are most valued. The little wiry Jew from Bohemia with his flashing glasses and his tyrannical insistence on "art" will only "pound his head against the

wall;” for a time, and only for a time, “*the wall will give way.*”⁴⁴ In April he is named conductor; on October 8, Director of the Opera. The following year he will become Chief Conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, the independent orchestra made up of opera musicians. This is the absolute power he has so long desired.

1897 Mar

He travels by train to Moscow for his first Russian tour. The Russians do not understand his Wagner and he cannot understand a word of their impenetrable language.

In May *Lohengrin* is his Vienna première, critically acclaimed by the doyens, most of whom (Kalbeck, Hirschfeld, Heuberger) are in his camp and on his side at the start, at least, and for the moment.

In the summer his family wanders in the Tyrolian Alps and around Salzburg in search of a permanent home. Kitzbühel; the Schwarzsee, Steinach am Brenner; Gries. At Vahrn he builds a *Häusl* in his dreams and believes it will come true. He convalesces from a throat abscess. Final preparations are made for the overthrow of the blind Director Jahn in favor of Gustav Mahler.

In December steamy ex-lover Anna von Mildenburg is hired to a five-year contract in Vienna, joining a splendid troupe of singers — Hermann Winkelmann, Marie Renard, Ernest von Dyck, Leopold Demuth. Anna is strictly enjoined by Rosa Papier from embarrassing the Director. He sets about turning the cast into dramatic actor-singers. He abolishes the *claque*, then sends detectives into the audience to root out paid supporters. No fake applause, no self-interest. He closes the opera to late-comers, demanding strict punctuality from the hazy-eyed

Viennese opera-going drinkers and card-players (“but the Court Opera is supposed to be relaxing entertainment,” moans Emperor Franz Joseph); he rejects an opera supported by the Emperor (“well, I’m not giving him a command; if the Director of the Court Opera thinks this work is unstageable, then it is unstageable”, says the Emperor).⁴⁵

Rehearsals are uniformly meticulous. In *Die Zauberflöte* he forces Elise Elizza to repeat “Die, you monster!” so many times that at last the frustrated singer screams the phrase directly at *him*; he smiles diabolically and answers, “That would suit you down to the ground, wouldn’t it, Fräulein Elizza?” This is an apocryphal story, but it is not implausible.⁴⁶

His old schoolmate Hugo Wolf, now dangerously deranged, begs him to stage his opera *Der Corregidor*. Wolf is the young man he had so offended seventeen years earlier by beating him to the composition of a libretto for *Rübezahl* (see 1880). He is now a talented song-writer but little else. Gustav, struck by the pangs of ancient friendship and guilt, determines to help him and eventually to stage the opera, though he knows it lacks dramatic coherence. Wolf goes berserk during an interview with the Director in his office; Gustav must push a hidden button in his desk to summon a factotum and usher the frothing maniac away.⁴⁷ He still hopes to stage Wolf’s *Der Corregidor*.

A nagging legacy from the old blind Director is Leoncavallo’s terrible *La Bohème*, to be carefully distinguished from Puccini’s wonderful *La Bohème*. The composer of the former, present and moping at rehearsals, thinks Mahler is sabotaging it by deliberate miscasting. Gustav

wonders why so few musicians have a sense for quality in music and why so few composers can evaluate their own work. Of *La Bohème* he will say years later “I *think* they both *stink*,” referring to Leoncavallo’s and Puccini’s.⁴⁸

- 1898 Mar 3 His young colleague Franz Schalk is set to do the fifth attempt of 1 in Prague. Gustav sends detailed instructions. It has a certain measure of public success, at least. Schalk, however, lacks insight, dedication, and intensity. He is a mediocrity who will be around a long time.
- 1898 Mar 6 The Belgian conductor Sylvain Dupuis performs his *Resurrection*. This is the first foreign Mahler study, *omen faustum* (‘good omen’; he loves Latin phrases) for things to come in hospitable Holland. So, two different Mahler symphonies are performed by conductors other than the composer in four days’ time! *Omen faustum*.⁴⁹

Early summer health problems. There is a hemorrhoid operation. He is in Vahrn, in Tyrol. There is no composing and no *Häusl*. Younger sister Emma is in love with Eduard Rosé, brother of his concertmaster; they will marry and disappear to America. On August 18 he is biking with Justi and Natalie in Carinthia, on a woodland path along the warm waters of the Wörtersee, two hundred kilometers east and south of the Tyrolian Alps he has been haunting. They happen to run into Anna von Mildenburg. “This area is charming, the weather is excellent, the lake fine for boating and swimming,” she chirps. “But don’t rent, *build!* I have a friend...”⁵⁰ He finds a plot of land and arranges to have a villa built right on the banks of the lake, with a *Häusl* to be placed

strategically in the woods above, before a good view of the lake. Both structures stand today.

He needs an assistant conductor. Negotiations begin with old friend Bruno Walter, for the time proving unsuccessful, as Walter is not sure he can yet handle the hypoxia of Vienna and Mahler. Gets Schalk (see Mar 3). Some lovely new singers arrive, among them Selma Kurz, beautiful and talented (careful, Gustav, *noli tangere*, ‘don’t touch’), and the magnificent Marie Gutheil-Schoder. Alongside his favorite productions of Wagner and Mozart, he is constrained for political or diplomatic reasons to do inane works such as the comic opera *Donna Diana*, and Goldmark’s *Die Kriegesgefangene* (‘The Prisoner of War’, about Achilles’ slave Briseis), and Lorenzo Perosi’s yawn-filled oratorio *Resurrection of Lazarus*. There is Daniel Auber’s *Fra Diavolo*, during which the baritone is knocked cold by an iron curtain and the musicians in the pit stand to ogle Rita Michalek stripping on stage.⁵¹ He begins work on an outstanding debt, the staging of Siegfried Wagner’s *Der Bärenhäuter*, under the captious and anti-Semitic criticism of the composer’s mother, who is also von Bülow’s and, finally, Wagner’s wife, Cosima, the keeper of the Wagnerian treasures. She thinks he is sabotaging her son’s work by subtle shifts and cuts.

1899 Performs *Bärenhäuter*.

1899 Apr Performs *Resurrection* in Vienna. Two anti-Semitic cellists in his own orchestra, Kretzchmann and Sulzer, spread foul rumors. Leadership is shifting at the top. He writes a 43-page memorandum on why the

Director's requests and dreams should be supported by higher management.⁵²

Summer near Alt-Aussee, not far from the Attersee, while he awaits construction of the villa to the south. While sitting at length on the toilet he is *struck by lightning* (his image) and composes the *Wunderhorn* song *Revelge*, "Reveille."⁵³ Is intermittently disturbed by yodellers, bands of tourists and tourists' bands and psychosomatic ailments. He walks in the woods, retouches *The Song of Complaint* (*Das klagende Lied*) and 3. In the last ten days of his vacation there is another bolt from the blue. He starts to sketch a brand new symphony. The outlines coalesce from day to day and hour to hour; it is another *Wunderhorn* symphony, ending with a song which had been planned for 3, *Das himmlische Leben*, "Heavenly Life." He will say later that the actual compositional work of the Fourth has taken place over the concert season 1899-1900 in his unknowing and unsuspecting unconscious.⁵⁴ It is the last *Wunderhorn* symphony but in the elaborate contrapuntal structure of its first movement it announces the middle period of Mahler's life. It will be utterly reviled and misunderstood for generations and then, in a transformative miracle, will come to be the most familiar and the 'easiest' of his works, the introduction to Mahler.

In the autumn he draws closer and closer to Selma Kurz; she will sing a concert of his *lieder* in January, 1900. He writes to her; he agonizes. Is he in love? Is he jeopardizing his career? He invites her to a performance of *Die Zauberflöte*. "Believe me, I love you, as I love no one else."⁵⁵

Performs Beethoven's Fifth. Tells his musicians: "This should not be *heruntergespült* 'washed down the drain' [pun on *heruntergespielt* 'misplayed'].⁵⁶ He tinkers with the score. In the first movement, he adds a second oboe; in the finale, he has the horns enter with the bassoons instead of the bassoons passing the theme to the horns. Anti-Semitic voices leak these changes to the press before the performance. Worse leaks are yet to come with Beethoven's ninth.

1899

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* is published.

Stages an elaborate and brilliant performance of *Die Meistersinger*. The temperamental, dull-witted baritone Reichmann doesn't sing Hans Sachs this time, but after many battles with Mahler he will, with great success. "Thanks to God in heaven and... and, yes, to Mahler. He drove me batty but he forced me to surpass myself. I forgive him everything."⁵⁷

Retouches Beethoven's Ninth (see '99 Apr); critics are apoplectic, claiming both the sound and sense of Beethoven have been violated. Gustav and his intellectual poet friend Siegfried Lipiner write a long-winded defense. Critics are even more apoplectic. He will never again do a Beethoven Ninth without angering musicologists and writers on music. Hirschfeld, once a staunch defender, becomes after this performance a lifelong enemy. Prince Liechtenstein, his superior one step down from Emperor Franz Josef, compliments him: "A marvelous performance, but I have heard other tempi." "Oh really, has Your

Majesty heard this work before?”⁵⁸ He is very touchy on the subject of his tempi. When a lady from the Ladies’ Committee of the New York Philharmonic will ask about a tempo, he will answer with blazing silence and a killing stare.

Critic Max Graf analyzes his *Tristan* and his *Figaros Hochzeit*. “The passion of the one and the delicacy of the other have been unheard of in Vienna.”⁵⁹ The same critic will attack the Fourth Symphony. The differing reception of Mahler conductor and Mahler composer is an established pattern. He prepares Alexander von Zemlinsky’s folklike *Es war einmal*, “Once Upon a Time;” the composer will be Alma Schindler’s woeful and passionate lover about the time Gustav enters her life. The performance is panned by the *Deutsche Zeitung*: “composer has a Polish name. Mahler does too many foul Slavic things.”⁶⁰

1900 Natalie and Gustav take an Easter trip to Venice, meeting Justi and Selma there. On the way they stop at Klagenfurt near Maiernigg, where the villa he is building is fast taking shape.

Correspondence with Strauss, whom he asks to conduct the complete 3, not merely a few selected movements (there are six) which will be misunderstood in isolation. Strauss suggests a ballet for the Opera, *Kometentanz*, “Comet Dance”; Mahler accepts it on the spot, though in general he dislikes ballet.⁶¹ Meets invalid Henriette Mankiewicz, another older wise woman in his entourage; she awakens in him a new

interest in opera sets and visual perception. She will be a friend to Natalie after the break in 1902.⁶²

1900 Jun The Vienna Philharmonic embarks on its first grand tour, to Paris on the occasion of the Paris World Exhibition. First thing his eyes light upon as he leaps from the train: placards advertising “M. Gustav *Malheur* et l’orchestre philharmonique de Vienne,” “M. Charles Malher,” and others. “A fine start,” he says. The tour is a success, but the hectic pace and mincing Princess Metternich, the royal patronness, disgust him.⁶³ He is obliged to borrow money from Baron Rothschild to get the orchestra home.

1900 Jul Summer. Composer’s block. Where is the Fourth in these pitiable sketches? Where is the glorious symphony I started to write last summer? What did I mean to say here? It is all meaningless. On his fortieth birthday (7.7.00) the rhythm begins to beat (he is keenly superstitious; those are auspicious numbers!). The weather gets better. He hears an organ grinder across the lake, a personal symbol of sex and fertility. 4.1: “An unheard-of merriment, an unearthly joy, an amazing light, an amazing delight.” 4.2: “*Danse macabre*.” 4.3: “St. Ursula laughs.”⁶⁴ 4.4, a song from the *Wunderhorn* collection: “The child, who in chrysalis belongs to this higher world, explains how it is all meant.” There is another *building* metaphor in the notes of his remarks to this work: 4.4 is the *verjüngende Spitze*, “a church spire that forms the light and airy summit of the edifice.” He finishes the work at Maiernigg, in his new *Häusl*, in August, then at once is overcome by post-partum blues. It will be fleshed out the next year and by April, 1901, very

nearly in its ultimate form (last revisions 1910-11). It will be among his most loved and most played.

1900 Oct Does a Munich première of 2 with the Kaim orchestra, Natalie and Justi attending and aiding. Success! Ludwig Schiedermair (see note 63) writes the first Mahler study, a little booklet for the series *Moderne Musiker*. Gustav sends some autobiographical addenda.

1900 Nov 20 The First Symphony rises to a sixth sacrifice, this time the Vienna première. A calamity; he is hissed, “the whistled-off Mahler,” as he puts it.⁶⁵ He rushes the tempi merely to get through the work and off the stage before he is trampled by the angry mob. Hanslick: “One of us is crazy, and I am not the one.”⁶⁶ The score on 1 now stands: five bad defeats, one decent try (by Schalk, of all people), no victories. Critic Ludwig Karpath’s memoirs chronicle the rainbow hyperbola of his deteriorating relations with the Philharmonic, which worsen and worsen until the end of the association is inevitable. He resigns as conductor of the Philharmonic.

Mozart this season: *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Figaro*, and a bright new *Così fan tutti* with Gustav at the harpsichord. He renews his efforts to get Bruno Walter, who is finally hired and debuts at the Court Opera in September of 1901.

1901 Feb 17 The “child of sorrow,” *Das klagende Lied*, premieres in Vienna, with Walter, Schalk, and Natalie auscultating at rehearsals from strategic remote boxes. Joseph Weinberger publishes the work, called by the critics “cult of the ugly,” “subversive,” “a songbird made out of an

ostrich.”⁶⁷ Gustav is pleased with the performance. A few days later Alma Schindler sees him in concert at the opera and the first impression his future wife makes of him is of a cinerous yellow-and-white light of sickness and agony in his face, due to the pain of bad hemorrhoidal bleeding. “This man can’t last long,” she confides to her diary.⁶⁸

Indeed, Mahler needs an operation. The concerned Emperor speaks to the doctors; his boss Prince Montenuovo recommends a salary increase and time off for recuperation in a Mediterranean setting. The illness is life-threatening — deterioration of the lining of the intestine. While resting in a sanatorium near Vienna, Mahler discovers that his copyist has interchanged 4.2 and 4.3. “Had I died, the symphony would have been incomprehensible,” he says optimistically, as though *now* it will be clear to everyone.⁶⁹ He begins reading Bach in the hospital; this is the second gesture of his unconscious mind toward the polyphonic textures of 5, 6, and 7 to be written in the coming years. The *Wunderhorn* years are over with the first movement of the greatest *Wunderhorn* symphony, the Fourth. Natalie and Justi accompany him to Abbazia (Croatian Opatija), a beach on the Istrian peninsula. Walks and talks with Natalie. She would like to marry him. “I can only marry a beautiful woman.” “But I *am* beautiful — ask Henriette Mankiewicz.”⁷⁰

1901

Summer marches into a new home, built by a forty-year-old bachelor for an unknown mistress. The villa in Maiernigg, a townlet on the Wörthersee so brief that Gustav seems its only inhabitant, is “too

beautiful. *Man vergönnt es nicht*, one doesn't allow oneself such."⁷¹ As usual, it takes him time to settle into his work; this time, after four plus years without a *Häusl*, everything is different: his reading — Bach motets and cantatas, Kretzchmar's study of ancient music, Schumann songs — and his style of composition. In place of the familiar *Wunderhorn* songs with their doomed soldiers and lovers, he is steeped in the mannered rhetorical poetry of the early nineteenth-century writer Theodor Rückert, translator and orientalist, with its pantheism (which Gustav loves) and its punning self-referentiality (which he practices himself). The lyricism in these mediocre verses is unlocking new doors. What they will inspire in Gustav will be incomparably greater art than the poetry itself may aspire to. "My new inspiration is Bac[c]hic." The scherzo of the Fifth Symphony is begun, "The World Weightless." "My principle is that nothing may repeat itself, that everything must develop out of itself further. The apparent jumbled chaos [of this movement] must, as in a Gothic cathedral, resolve itself into total order and harmony."⁷² Gustav the cockatrice is reborn into a strange new creature. He begins to use sketchbooks for ideas that occur to him on his walks. He works on what he thinks is a motif for the new symphony, whose outlines hang still dim in the morning haze of the lake, whose warm waters he contemplates from the window in the woods; in time the motif turns out to be, of all things, one last *Wunderhorn* song, *der Tambourg'sell*, "The Drummer Boy". Melody and text fit like machine parts for a bomb made by two terrorists in cities remote from each other, to the design of some unknown fiend. It is a transitional link from early to middle Mahler; the old thinker will say a half century later that his symphonies have subterranean flumes

by which they communicate with each other.⁷³ The major-minor oscillation of the Sixth Symphony is here; the performance indications — Mahler is history's most eloquent master of performance indications — include *schreiend* 'screeching' and *klagend*, 'with lamentation', a key word. Songs based on lyrics from Rückert, "At Midnight" and "I am Lost to the World" are profoundly introverted and melancholic. He lights upon the words as a fecundating agent for music profoundly greater than the texts themselves. This becomes his method through *Das Lied von der Erde*, "The Song of the Earth." He writes 5.1 and 5.2, together making a vast funeral march with only the penumbra of a chorale for relief. He reads Rückert's collection of more than four hundred poems in memory of his dead children and composes three of his *Kindertotenlieder*, "Songs for Dead Children" (probably KL.1, .3, and .4). His own beloved firstborn daughter will die in six years' time; he does not yet know her name nor the name of her mother. Is he dreaming of his unknown older brother Isidor, or the brother he loved, Ernst, or the brothers he vainly struggled to support, Otto and Alois? These songs lie at the font of contemporary chamber music. He will insist on an intimate hall for their performance.

As a footnote to the summer's work, a critic asks him to evaluate a light opera he has written for possible staging at the Royal Court Opera. He refuses; the summer is reserved for composition only. The critic has influence; the critic is now an enemy, another enemy.⁷⁴

1901 autumn Strauss has long since abandoned the idea of the ballet *Kometentanz* and has turned his energies and attention to opera. "Can you do my

Feuersnot?” “Without question. By the way, could you do something with my Third Symphony?” “Love to, but I understand you like to reserve the premières of your works for yourself.” The mocking irreverence of *Feuersnot*, “Fire Famine”, is giving the censor some problems. It will get even worse with the Straussian works to come, starting with *Salome*, but by the time of *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier* Gustav will be gone from the Opera. Still he does not give up trying to outwit the censor. In matters of art he is utterly without compromise.⁷⁵

Bruno Walter arrives for work. Gustav stages Nicolai’s *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, “The Merry Wives of Windsor”, with Gutheil-Schoder in the lead. In her memoirs she gives a good example of his dramatic sensibility. At the moment when her husband rushes onto the stage to accuse her of cavorting with Falstaff, Gustav has her sit in ironic silence for a bar or two instead of leaping up to sing an immediate denial. Offstage, maestro and singer have a brief intimacy. No letters survive.⁷⁶

The brilliant transcriber Joseph von Wöss, who has proven himself with *Song of Complaint* and will also transcribe 3, 8 and 9, now prepares a four-hand score of 4, which Gustav is to introduce in Munich in November.

1901 Nov 25 Première of 4 in Munich under his baton. Felix Weingartner conducts other works on the ticket. Listeners are bewildered (see Feb 1901); the work lasts only fifty-five minutes, while most expected to sit for an hour and a half at least. Sensitive Swiss critic William Ritter is driven to nightmares, but in time he will be a devoted associate; Leipzig critic

Arthur Seidl is favorable. Other reactions: “A circus, a scandal. Morbid and insipid supermusic.”⁷⁷ Weingartner takes the Kaim orchestra on a tour and conducts 4 all over the country. Reviews are bad. The young Czech soprano Ema Destinová is the planned soloist for the Berlin première under Strauss, but she does not sing it. Note that the enormous Third is still unperformed.

1901 Nov 7 The most important entry for this year follows herewith. I place it last. He meets twenty-two-year-old Alma Schindler, “daughter of Austria’s most important landscape painter” (Alma’s very own words), in her youth a chatelaine surrounded by art and artists; now she has a stepfather she disdains, Carl Moll, “who looks like one of those kitschy carved wooden statues of St. Joseph.” She is a budding composer taking lessons from her “gnome-like lover” (this is still Alma speaking), who is the Zemlinsky of “Once Upon a Time”, and is surrounded by the wild ghosts of former lovers, including crackpot painter Gustav Klimt.⁷⁸ Her stepfather’s house is a hotbed of the newly born Secessionist movement in art. She is a cosseted, sharp-tongued, superficial, wonderful beauty. “He liked my acid tongue,” she writes of Gustav, whom she meets at a dinner party; the meeting is arranged by friends; Gustav hates dinner parties and Viennese society, Alma adores it all. Among the circle of artists and composers are Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, Anton von Webern, painter Kolo Moser, and architect Joseph Hoffmann, who will design Gustav’s tomb in Grinzing, where he will lie with daughter Putzi.

“It is not easy to marry a man like me” (who is dedicated to work and to composing, he means).⁷⁹ It is love at first sight for Gustav, or perhaps love *before* first sight; Alma is surprised and needs to be persuaded. Walks and talks. In December he writes her poems and love letters from Berlin, where he performs 4, and from Dresden, where he performs 2. He is hooked; *this is it*. Both of them agonize about the marriage; she cannot deny him, he cannot deny himself her. Gustav: “Am I too old? Is this a fatal error?” Alma (to her shocked diary): “Do I really love him? What about poor Alex?” His letters to her are vast and honest, replete with cosmological imagery and *Tristan*-like poetry (“I am you and you are me,” etc.). But note this: with the honesty that never failed him in moments of high seriousness, he tells her how their marriage will have to be. “There is only one composer in the family, and I am he.”⁸⁰ Take it or leave it. He knows she is a flirt; that she is ever so slightly deaf from a childhood illness; that she loves dirty stories and enjoys setting her acquaintances against one other. He does not anticipate how difficult he will be for her to bear. She will drink too much. He does not realize how much of him she will need. In December they are secretly engaged. He invites her to a performance of *Die Zauberflöte* (see 1899 Apr).

- 1901 Dec 27 The engagement is announced in the press. All Vienna is abuzz.
- 1902 Jan 5 Gustav throws a party to introduce Alma to his closest friends. Natalie is not invited, probably a good idea, as Alma, on the defensive, offends everyone, including old, old friend Siegfried Lipiner. He loses Lipiner’s friendship; both regret this and bear the hurt the rest of their lives, to 1911 and 1912, respectively.⁸¹ This same month the Strausses

arrive for *Feuersnot*, and Alma boils with contempt: “he [Strauss] cares for nothing but money.”⁸² Pauline Strauss makes a terrible scene. On a different note, Strauss is delighted with Gustav’s staging of his work. Their relationship climbs to a new level of mutual respect that Alma cannot obliterate. Gustav, always with keen self-intimations, calls himself *unzeitgemäßig*, a man outside and out of touch with his time, while Strauss is the perfect Man of his Time. It is in this context that he makes the famous remark, coined on medallions: *Mein’ Zeit wird kommen*, ‘my time will come’, continuing on (medallions never seem to give the full context): “and *his* will pass.”⁸³

1902 Jan 12 Vienna premiere of 4. Doblinger is to publish it and will keep the rights until 1909, when they pass to Universal. Natalie attends this performance, most likely still unaware of the engagement of Gustav and Alma. Alma calls her “the Lechner-Bauer woman,” reversing her surnames and their own respective roles in Gustav’s life — stranger (1) and first lady in his heart (2). Natalie’s invaluable notes cease; *it is over*. “She took a lover soon after our marriage,” sniffs Alma in contempt.⁸⁴

1902 Feb Alma is pregnant. He stages a portentous opera, *Der dot man*, “The Dead Man,” by Styrian composer Josef Forster, based on a 1533 libretto by Hans Sachs about a man who pretends to his wife to be dead. Alma and Gustav are not yet married.

1902 Mar 9 They are married in the Vienna Karlskirche. He slips and falls from the kneeling board; general merriment ensues in which he happily takes part. Next day Justine and Arnold Rosé, his concertmaster, are also married. So ends the long brother-sister Mahler household. At the start relations between Justine and Alma are surprisingly warm, but when

Alma writes her memoir, the cold waves will have long since washed away all feelings. Gustav and Alma honeymoon in frozen St.

Petersburg, where he concertizes, gets a migraine and a horrible cold on the train. Back home in Vienna, Alma finds that Justine has horribly mismanaged the domestic finances, that they have a debt of “fifty thousand gold crowns” (the crown being then the official currency of the Empire), Gustav’s salary being twelve thousand (about twenty-five hundred U.S. dollars). She begins to skimp and save and is careful to let everyone know of the pains and sacrifices.⁸⁵

1902 Apr

Exhibition of the *Secession*. The editor of the movement’s paper, *Ver sacrum*, is the designer Alfred Roller.⁸⁶ The mad painter Gustav Klimt puts Mahler’s face in a huge 30-meter philosophic panel, a visual representation of Wagner’s interpretation of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, as the lone knight leading the battle of humanity to ultimate victory. In early summer Gustav views Roller’s astonishing sketches for *Tristan* and hires him to design the set. This remarkable artist, himself new to the theater, strips the stage of fanciful decorations and uses light and color to evoke expressively the “inner meaning” of a scene, blending the visual and aural content in what he calls a theatrical *space*. Stage design is viewed as an act of framing, an integrated module in the grammar of the work as a whole. These presently familiar notions shock raw nerves in the first decade of the century — this is modern stage production as it will be for decades — and with Roller in his workshop Mahler will take Wagner, especially his beloved *Tristan*, into new realms of possibilities. This is the last instantiation of Mahler’s understanding of Wagner as “total art,” music, drama, setting, the very intuition that stunned von Bülow when he saw Gustav do

Wagner eleven years before in Hamburg. Mahler is now at the peak of his talent as a musical entertainer; he is the greatest player of his era.

1902 Jun The première of the Third is at last at hand, with rehearsals set for Cologne and performance in Krefeld. Strauss is helpful with details; he brings along his first trombonist from Berlin. In Krefeld there is no hotel; Alma and Gustav stay at the home of a silk manufacturer in a “bridal chamber filled with hideous ornaments,” as she recalls, and they are desperately afraid of breaking anything or of having accidents with water, as he is wont to do.⁸⁷ At rehearsal he balks at detailed programmatic explanations, wishing to leave everything blank. “Just as my personal life is an organic development and not an accumulation of bits and pieces, so also with the life expressed in my works one by one. In each new symphony I pick up more or less where I left off in the one before; by that I *don’t* mean that I simply tie a new thread onto the old one I’ve finished spinning. Let each listener discover his own program.”⁸⁸ How the last sentence follows from the preceding discussion is not clear. The performance on June 9 is a great success. The young Dutch virtuoso conductor Willem Mengelberg is in attendance. German cities file requests with the composer for permission to perform the behemoth. The Third is being treated much more kindly than the First.

1902 summer This is the second summer at Maiernigg and the first together for the newlyweds. They are in bliss. He rises at six, breakfasts in the *Häusl* on graham bread, marmalade, coffee, milk; works till noon; his wife works on the score of 5 with him, copying it out. Mildenburg lives across the

lake and makes occasional irritating visits; she and Alma are on speaking terms, however. He completes 5, with its famous Adagietto (according to Mengelberg, a love song to his wife). He writes Alma a love song from Rückert, *Liebst du um Schönheit*, “If You Love for Beauty.” She frames the score and keeps it on the wall for fifty-three years.⁸⁹

1902 Nov 3 Maria Anna Mahler (Putzi) is born, named for her parents’ mothers.

1903 Stages Mozart’s torso *Zaide* as completed at his request by the critic Hirschfeld, Bruno Walter conducting. The work fails, however, and the influential Hirschfeld blames Mahler. Another enemy may be added to a lengthening list.

He now seeks latitude to travel, during the season if possible, and perform his own works. In January he does 4 in Wiesbaden; Alma remains in Vienna, lonely for him. As Director he is often forced to deny leaves of absence to his singers, and especially to deny salaried leaves. Even dear Gutheil-Schoder, pregnant, gets a refusal (evil tongues have rumored it to be *his* child).⁹⁰ Now in the first years of the decade he will find himself more and more the target of criticism for conducting his own works outside of Vienna, and the consequent target of vilifying and baseless criticism that he is neglecting his Opera duties while on his personal tours. In the 1903-1904 season he cuts his personal appearances at the Opera podium in Vienna to 38 from a staggering 111 in ’97-’98; in his first two seasons he has staged over

one hundred Wagner operas, the vast majority uncut and conducted personally by Mahler. He is criticized for cutting back.

1903 Feb Roller and Mahler stage *Tristan*; costs are 25% higher than his original estimate and he is, as always, held accountable for the overrun. Roller alone answers for the sets, costumes and lighting. Mildenburg as Isolde, statuesque and full-figured, with a voice still huge and commanding, stands festooned and blazoned with furs and jewelry, symbolic of fury and sexual desire. Cigar-smoking tenor Erik Schmedes is Tristan. Mahler does the full text, all five hours uncut, setting dramatic climaxes against long breathless moments of moody low tide. He has a migraine during the first act. The performance is unforgettable. Though the sets are only a first try by Roller, they will be painstakingly recreated by Furtwängler in a revival forty years hence.

1903 Feb 22 Hugo Wolf dies in an insane asylum. Gustav vows to stage his *Der Corregidor* come hell or high water, as an affectionate tribute to his memory.

Stages Charpentier's *Louise*, a modern opera with socialist undertones. Falls in love with a new instrument that Charpentier uses, the celesta, and tries it out in the last of the five *Kindertotenlieder*, in 6.1, 6.3, 8.2, and in *The Song of the Earth*.

Interest in *Resurrection* grows; Julius Butts conducts it in Düsseldorf, and Strauss, president of the *Allgemeiner Deutsche Musikverein*, plans a gala performance for the Basel cathedral as the centerpiece of a four-

day Musikfest. Hermann Sutor is to conduct. For both of these events there survive valuable letters from Mahler to the conductors on how to proceed. The symphony is a great success, the event a triumph. Czech composer Oscar Nedbal promises to do the work in Prague. Leipzig friend Arthur Seidl gives an insightful review of the Basel performance.⁹¹ In December Nedbal, true to his word, does perform the *Resurrection* in the Rudolfinum, Prague.

He seeks a new publisher. Emil Freund, who for some years has been functioning as Gustav's attorney, negotiates with Leipzig firm C.F. Peters for the rights to 5.

Third summer in Maiernigg. He begins to sketch the fatal Sixth Symphony, with its gong-omens and death marches and hammer blows to the head and the major-minor "seal" characteristic of the work and the middle symphonies. Written in the happiest period of his marriage with Alma, the work portends the summer of 1907, the summer of doom. In Alma's well-set phrase, "he put his life to music *anticipando*."⁹² While she had been pregnant and seemingly in love last summer, Alma now becomes querulous and angry. She is no longer sure she has chosen wisely in marrying Gustav Mahler. *Why did I marry this white-faced little man? I hate looking after this fiery-eyed little toddler who looks and acts just like her father. I hate boating, biking and swimming. I have a nightmare: "A large long-legged green snake forces itself into me. I pull its tail. It won't come out. I ring for the chambermaid. She gets hold of it. It slides out with all my inner organs in its mouth. I am hollow and emptied like a shipwreck."⁹³*

- 1903 Oct He visits Amsterdam, alone, staying with Mengelberg, and performs 3, his first work in this progressive country which will be so hospitable to him. “The orchestra was nuts about my work (lit.: ‘completely out of the *Häusl*’); it was super. The colors, the windmills, the water, the cows, the ships and masted forests [he is speaking now of the Holland countryside], and this marvelous blurry light radiating from it all.”⁹⁴
- Visits Zaandam, viewing ship-building. He muses about Peter the Great, the Russian tsar who studied the West in this country; he knows Lortzing’s *Zar und Zimmermann*, “Tsar and Carpenter.” Meets the “courageous” conductor Hueckerth, who had *preceded* him with a performance of 3 in Arnheim; meets the Dutch composer Alfons Diepenbrock. There are some eloquent photographs of tall, gangly Diepenbrock standing beside stocky Mengelberg, with the little thin man Mahler in a long coat or mantle, gesturing.⁹⁵
- 1904 Stages a series of bad operas: Lortzing’s mystical *Der Waffenschmied*, Weber’s inane *Euryanthe*, Wolf’s lyrical failure *Der Corregidor*. The Wolf Society holds him accountable for its collapse. At season’s end, one of his greatest supporters, Ludwig Karpath, writes a lengthy and unexpected attack on his work as Director. Too authoritarian; wastes money; doesn’t do any truly new works (no world premières); neglects true German operas other than Wagner; has too many expensive singers. Conclusion: nonetheless, *there is no better director than Mahler*, he should remain at the helm in Vienna.⁹⁶
- Does 3 in Mannheim and in Heidelberg. Nodnagel (see 1894), in love with Gustav’s every written musical note, writes another “crazy”

analysis. Does 3 in Prague. A Czech critic, Richard Bat'ka, writes of quotations and “banality” in Mahler’s music; he is the first to discover these fundamental and original traits.⁹⁷ In March, in Szeged, the Hungarian première of 3 is well received. The behemoth cannot count its performances, in five nations, in the two brief years since the Krefeld première, on the fingers of two hands. It is unaccountably his most popular work. In Mainz Emil Steinbach wants to do 4, but Gustav is worried. “My persecuted stepchild. Humor like this, as distinguished from wit or gaiety, is little understood.” Steinbach’s brother Fritz does 3 in Cologne; Gustav travels to hear Emil’s 4 and Fritz’s 3.⁹⁸

1904 Feb

Alma is five months pregnant with their second daughter.

Tensions mount at the opera. He fights with Leo Slezak over a request for leave of absence. Czech bass Willy Hesch, eavesdropping in the corridor, hears a tremendous crash in the Director’s office; Slezak bursts out the door, swinging his great girth and gnashing his teeth. “Tell me, Slezak,” asks Hesch. “Is he...dead?”⁹⁹

1904 Apr 4

A society for the fostering of contemporary music is founded (*Vereinigung Schaffender Tonkünstler*); membership includes Bruno Walter, Zemlinsky, Josef von Wöss and Arnold Schönberg, who has written *Verklärte Nacht* and *Péléas und Mélisande*; Schönberg’s *Lieder* première takes place amid wild boos and hisses and entrances and exits. This gifted young friend of Mahler is now teaching in Vienna and will teach Berg and Webern. Gustav, who knows himself well enough to know that he himself is not a “contemporary musician” of this ilk,

welcomes him as a colleague. “I don’t understand his music, but he must be treated with respect.” On his deathbed: “Who will be left to protect composers like Schönberg?”¹⁰⁰

1904 summer Maiernigg. Composer’s block, bad weather. Gustav is alone at the villa. He rows up to Krumpendorf, reads Tolstoy’s *Confession*, Goethe, and the Wagner-Wesendorck letters. Prepares the villa for his family’s arrival; Alma is in labor in Vienna. Makes a sandbox for Putzi. In desperation makes a hiking trip to Toblach in southern Tyrol (where he will compose his last works after Putzi’s death in 1907) and, *like a bolt of lightning*, the outlines of the finale of the Sixth strike him down just as the hammer fells his hapless “hero”. Anna Justine (Gucki), “Alma’s child,” is born June 15. He tells Putzi (“Gustav’s child”) animal stories — Brentano’s *Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia* — and makes funny faces for his infant daughter. Surrounded by domestic warmth and happiness, with Alma more comfortable and relaxed now that the pregnancy is ended, he completes the doom-filled Sixth and, for the *Vereinigung* series at Schönberg’s request (see Apr 4) he writes two more *Kindertotenlieder*, “Dead Children’s Songs”; one of the two was the finale, thus finishing a cycle of five. Alma is thunderstruck by this. “I can’t understand how someone can sing the death of children when half an hour before he has kissed and nuzzled them, healthy and whole. For the sake of God, you are painting the devil on the wall!”¹⁰¹ 6 finished, he takes her solemnly to the *Häusl* to play it for her. The second theme of 6.1 is the soaring “Alma theme;” the scherzo trio theme is, according to her, supposed to portray “the arhythmic play of the two little children as they reel, running through the sand.” This cannot be quite right, as

Gucki was only weeks old and not yet a toddler; Alma may have been thinking of her half-sister Maria. This often quoted little story is typical of Alma's exiguous and unreliable reports of what her husband has told her of his work. After Natalie's scrupulously honest memoir, this behavior is more than frustrating for us today. He writes the two *Nachtmusik* intermezzi which will go into the Seventh (he was thinking of Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* from the Rijksmuseum, he tells Mengelberg).

1904 Oct 4 Mahler and Roller stage *Fidelio*. Critics attack its "realism," but it, like *Tristan*, becomes a landmark.

1904 Oct 13 Première of the Fifth in Cologne. Although he has tested and emended the score with his own Vienna orchestra, he approaches a new première with trepidation; this is his new polyphonic style and he is unsure of himself. "I never really learned counterpoint."¹⁰² Bruno Walter and Alma are in attendance at rehearsals, and Walter agrees with Gustav's assessment in his memoir. "The instrumentation [as it stood for the Cologne première] did not clarify the intricate counterpoint of the voices in the scherzo."¹⁰³ After one rehearsal Alma bursts into tears, waving the score at him: "You've written a symphony for percussion!" He smilingly agrees and emends. He tinkers with this work for years to come, until shortly before his death, when he will write: "I have finally finished my Fifth." (He had been aware of failings in both 1 and 2, but felt it to be *too late* to make corrections there; not so with 5.) The performance, to the surprise of no one, is generally panned. "No logic, no clarity, hypercomplex," says one.¹⁰⁴ Ex-friend Ferdinand Pfohl, the

Hamburg critic who hates Gustav for his faithless conversion to Catholicism, observes (in what seems to be an *ad hominem* review) after the Hamburg première: “High morality, strong truth are absent in his work, which is marked by meanness and inferiority. The finale is a crown of glitter and merriment, helping us to forget somewhat the meager eclecticism of his imagination.”¹⁰⁵ What Pfohl *really* had in mind to say was something such as: *this unfeeling bastard turned his back on the religion of his childhood, and, with Luciferian calculation...* Contrast Pfohl’s glum evaluation to the sprightly remark of another critic after the Straßburg première in May, 1905: “I always knew that inside Mahler there was an operetta composer.”¹⁰⁶ (General laughter; this dense corpus is the very antipode of an operetta.) The day after the Cologne performance Gustav travels to Amsterdam, where Mengelberg has the orchestra ready to play 4. To let the audience study the work as it should be studied, he is going to have it played twice in succession. The program reads: “Gustav Mahler. Fourth Symphony. (Pause.) Gustav Mahler. Fourth Symphony.” He is charmed and delighted by Mengelberg and his brilliant orchestra. Will Amsterdam be a home for him, perhaps, after Vienna, as it has been for so many expatriate thinkers and artists? Henceforth he will leave the performance of his earlier works to others to concentrate his energies on introducing 5 and 6. The ever-ridiculed First is played by the brave Ferdinand Löwe in Vienna; I have lost count of the failures. Walter Damrosch introduces American audiences to Mahler in New York on November 6 with the Fourth played by the New York Symphony. The young virtuoso Oskar Fried will do 2 in Berlin next season, with

Gustav in attendance, and it is Fried who in 1923 will make *Resurrection* the first recorded Mahler symphony.

1905 Jan 29 Mahler conducts Friedrich Weidemann in the première of *Kindertotenlieder* in Vienna. They will become a kind of signature-piece for this singer.

1905 May Mahler and Strauss meet in Graz for a concert by the *Allgemeiner deutsche Musikverein*. Gustav wants to do a matinée of his own songs in an intimate hall; they settle on the Stephaniesaal. A few critics are strangely mesmerized, like cobras; “Nerve music (*Nervenmusik*), says Ernst Decsey in a conjugate gesture of repulsion and fascination. Like Nodnagel and Ritter before him, he too will soon become a Mahlerian.¹⁰⁷

This season sees Hans Pfitzner’s forgettable opera *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten*. For four years the nervous little man has been petitioning the Director for a study and a hearing and a performance; this is not some amateur in off the Ringstrasse, for he has the firm support of both Bruno Walter and Alma Mahler, with whom he flirts month after month and who intercedes with her husband on his behalf out of pity and sexual frustration. “I’ll see what I can do,” Walter writes Pfitzner. “If I can catch him in just the right mood for some of the beautiful passages in your work, I can get him to read and listen. I need to find the right moment.” Years pass. “This is jelly. Primitive slime,” says Mahler with uncharacteristic harshness (clearly Walter has chosen the wrong moment), and in unwitting parody of his own critics he shows us

how easy it is to do hurt with words.¹⁰⁸ “Cannot rise above the invertebrates to animal life,” continues Mahler on the subject of *Die Rosen des Liebesgarten*. “One wants to cry out like Calchas: ‘Flowers, only flowers!’ The audience comes as well disposed as it could be, but is exhausted in the thick fog of this faltering mysticism.” Time passes, and the tireless Bruno Walter *finds* the right moment, and lo and behold, Mahler accepts the opera, to be staged by Roller! Walter was right. And as with every work Gustav undertakes he throws himself into it and sees only good. He writes Pfitzner: “It’s a pleasure for me to tell you that from rehearsal to rehearsal I see deeper and deeper into the beauties of your work [just as Walter had predicted!] and I am beginning to reconcile with the text.”¹⁰⁹ He produces it in May to a good reception; he overwhelms Pfitzner by responding to the composer’s every suggestion. In matters of art one may change one’s mind and still remain uncompromising. This is no paradox for Gustav Mahler.

Strauss plays him selections from his opulent, decadent *Salome*, a much greater opera than *Die Rose*. In a flash Gustav sees three things: that this is greater than anything written for the singing stage since Wagner; that Strauss is the leading contemporary composer; and (this is the key) that the homoerotic text on which it is based would prevent the Court Opera in its lifetime as presently constituted from producing *Salome*. Nevertheless Gustav wants it. In so many years of the “hell of the theater” he has been faced with a few traditional masterpieces and a barrage of contemporary trash; Wagner or *Der Corregidor*, *Die Zauberflöte* or Hirschfeld’s version of *Zaide*. No wonder he is dazzled

by the idea of doing, finally, a first-class première of a real masterpiece. Flying in the face of certain defeat, he offers Strauss vain hopes, he dangles *Salomé* before the Volksoper to pique the Court Opera authorities' pride. You see, gentlemen, the Volksoper and not the Hofoper may get the première of a work of true genius! What do you say to that? What do you say, eh? He writes Strauss foggy letters and strings him on: "Your work has at last given me the key to understand Wilde's play" (in which, previously, Gustav has not shown the slightest interest). The censor writes wryly: "Sexual pathology is not the domain of the Court Opera." Gustav has been right all along. Not until 1918, after the death of Franz Joseph and the Austrian state, is this work to be played in the great house on the Ringstrasse. Instead of piquing the censor, Gustav's own pride is hurt; he never forgives the Opera for this. In matters of art he is uncompromising.¹¹⁰

1905 summer Fifth summer at Maiernigg and fourth with Alma. Composer's block. He rows up to Krumpendorf. As soon as he dips the oar into the blue Carinthian waters, the opening motif of 7.1 rises from the shallows ("or, rather, the rhythm and the style of the introduction"). This is the dotted figure in the strings that opens the work, followed by the tenor horn song. He completes the Seventh from last year's blueprints, wrapping the two *Nachtmusik* pieces around a demonic scherzo, *schattenhaft*, 'shadow-like'; there is here the montage technique that he will use in later works. The Seventh prefigures the Ninth, as the Fourth has prefigured the Fifth, spying across spiritual plateaus. In the first copy of the final score he writes (and later excises): "to be played with continually more advancing and even more *pointless* movement." The

art of the composer's interpolated verbal commentary or "performance directions" to musical scores has reached a new height. He announces the "birth" of 7 to Guido Adler in his lapidary post-partum style, in better Latin than he ever had in school: "Septima mea finita est. Credo hoc opus fauste natum et bene gestum." *Omen faustum*.¹¹¹

Gustav and Roller plan a Mozart cycle for the composer's sesquicentennial in 1906, *Figaro* to be the centerpiece. Richard Specht publishes the first biography of Gustav Mahler.

- 1905 Nov He is in Berlin for Fried's reading of 2; discusses with Strauss a *Tonkünstlerfest* in Essen planned for the following year, and also the première of 6 at that event. He meets the publisher C. F. Kahnt in Leipzig; flits home to perform Mozart operas, thence to Trieste for 5 and, later in December, to Breslau for 5. This itinerary is carefully noted down and used by his enemies as evidence he is neglecting the Opera.
- 1906 Feb Writes to the Viennese-native conductor of the Boston Symphony, Wilhelm Gericke, about the American première of 5. In March he travels to Amsterdam where Mengelberg is preparing the same work for a tour of five Dutch cities. "He is the only person I could unhesitatingly entrust with my work," he writes Alma. "Here in Amsterdam I've already got a brave little following, young people are especially interested. And most important, Mengelberg keeps me on his repertoire."¹¹²

- 1906 May 8, 9 *Tristan* with Erik Schmedes, Anna von Mildenburg and Richard Mayr on Tuesday. *Der fliegende Hollander* the next day. Wagner uncut and at its most sophisticated, with sets by Roller and direction by Gustav Mahler. In the audience sits an awe-struck seventeen-year-old Adolf Hitler, on his first visit to Vienna, getting to know Wagner staged and performed incomparably well.¹¹³
- 1906 May 27 Première of the Sixth in Essen at the forty-seventh *Tonkünstlerfest*. He agonizes over the placement of the two inner movements — which should follow the first, the scherzo or the slow movement? — and rehearsals are exhausting, but 6 needs fewer changes than did 5. Most nerve-grating of all is his personal relationship to 6.4, the huge march of doom, in which his hero is felled by three famous hammer-blows. In an apocryphal anecdote, Strauss walks in the office to find Gustav in tears, wringing his hands and sobbing uncontrollably over the score. Strauss at first doesn't notice Gustav's condition and tells him: "You ought to play a funeral march at the start of the concert, Mahler, the local mayor has died. Hey, what's the matter with you? What's going on? Oh, now." Never one to cope with emotion or tears, Strauss dives out a side door to escape embarrassment.¹¹⁴ Later he tells Gustav that the movement is "over-instrumented," which comment Gustav ponders for the rest of his life, as both Alma and Bruno Walter will readily confirm.
- 1906 Sixth summer at Maiernigg. Again there is a period of desperate paralysis and disorientation preceding a sudden burst of good work. After three elaborately polyphonic symphonies without the human

voice Mahler writes a massive choral symphony, a *soi-disant* Major Work, “my greatest;” in two parts, it is (1) a symphonic cantata, a setting of a ninth-century Christian hymn by Hrabanus Maurus entitled *Veni creator spiritus*, “Come, Spirit Creator”, made in Fulda, 809, and (2) a musical recreation of the final scene of Goethe’s *Faust*. It is a consecrational festival-work, a Mahlerian *Parsifal*, a work that the old thinker half a century later loved to hate: “It has *not* succeeded,” he says, in answer to Goethe’s line from *Faust*, “It has succeeded!”¹¹⁵ The cantata is another of Gustav’s somnambulistic miracles. As he composes, he has in hand at Maiernigg an abbreviated copy of the text of the hymn he has chosen, yet the music that pours forth from the depths of his unconscious is much longer and more copious. In time Gustav gets the complete text from Fritz Löhr and finds to his astonishment that it fits the music he has written, etc. (At the Munich performance Pfitzner whispers, in response to *Veni, creator spiritus*, ‘Come, Creator Spiritus’, “What if it doesn’t come?”) The work ends with a Chorus Mysticus that is reminiscent of 2.5 in its prophetic hush: “All that is transitory is only a likeness. The eternal feminine draws us upwards.” The hymn and the Goethe text swarm with elemental symbols of Gustav’s life; no wonder the inner compositional voice demanded to be heard. Here the themes are love and grace, illumination, Goethe’s Mater Gloriosa, the mother of so many dead children and so many glories of art. Illumination is at the center: *accende lumen sensibus*, ‘ignite our senses with light’, *infunde amorem cordibus*, ‘infuse our hearts with love’; the music makes a special point of its appeal for creative ignition, *accende*, appearing in both the hymn and the Faust scene. On August 18 he tells Mengelberg that it is

finished, his Eighth. “Imagine that the universe begins to intone and to ring with sound.”¹¹⁶

In Salzburg in August for the Kaiser’s birthday, he presents his new study of *Figaro*, playing the secco recitative himself on the spinet; it is rapturously received. Strauss is now composing *Elektra* with his marvelous librettist, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. “Hey Mahler, forget the pigsty of the theater. Write an opera,” he suggests. Gustav, conscious of the tonal conservatism of his new work, 8, writes to Alma: “It probably wouldn’t impress him to find out what archaic old stuff I’ve been fooling around with this summer. Oh, blessed, blessed to be *modern!*”¹¹⁷

1907 Jan

Performs 6 in the Vienna Konzertverein, home of the Philharmonic. “When sound fails,” writes enemy Hirschfeld in his vituperative review, “a blow falls. So orators, when in key moments words fail them, strike a blow of the fist to the rostrum.”¹¹⁸ After the Third is attacked in Berlin — the Third, of all his symphonies the best received in his lifetime — he ventures a rare reply to the critics, all Olympian disdain and fatigue and self-proclaimed martyrdom. “I don’t give a sausage about the whole affair. I’m like a stag under the hounds in the *campaign* against me [*Hetze*; the word reappears, his defenders use it as well, in reference to the critical reception of his works as well as to the concerted movement, now in a dangerously malignant, florid stage, to cut him down from the Directorship of the Opera]. These blows from all sides [the Berlin critics are unanimously contemptuous] have the

effect of a massage. I brush off my suit when they splash it with excrement. To spite all the authorities, *to survive!*"¹¹⁹

1907 Feb

He and Roller do another staging of *Die Walküre*, their last together. Vienna begins to rot under his feet. Ten years have worn upon him like as many decades. "I'm nothing new to them any more." Incessant squabbles with his singers and open disagreement with his superiors on the budget are fraying his nerves; the stage has become a battleground. Still he cannot bring himself to believe he will abandon his post. Despite what he tells himself and his intimates, he needs the Directorship, his creative winds must whistle coolly and softly in the winter in order to rage and howl in the summer, and for that he needs the rhythm of the Opera grind. The *Weltlauf*, the humdrum daily battle indifferent to spiritual needs, is something he cannot cast aside. He will never live in quiet retirement like Strauss, and what is more, the circumstances of his departure, with scathing criticism of his achievements from every quarter, sorely hurt his pride. To the last he will not believe that Prince Montenuovo will not beg him on bended knee to live and die in Vienna in that office. There are those who understand. "Vienna isn't worthy of a Mahler," someone writes; this "solitary and impudent autocrat," who refused to toady to the Bosses in this town where the persona of a performer is always more highly valued than his creative achievement, this genius who believed only in himself and who was supported by no one but himself, has paid dearly for his independence, for "the lies and accusations have had time to congeal," says the friendly critic.¹²⁰ Hirschfeld (see above, 1899 and 1903) heaps mockery on a "petition" by friends of Mahler to retain

him; rumors fly that Gustav engineered the idea, that many musicians were “forced” to sign it by the diabolical autocrat.

1907 Jun Heinrich Conried, the New York impresario who has lured Caruso from Italy to America and staged Wagner’s sacred *Parsifal* outside of Bayreuth, thereby earning the enmity of the Wagner family, begins negotiations with Mahler to come to work for the Metropolitan Opera. Huge sums are mentioned. He is seduced. Conried, coincidentally, stages *Salome* in New York, to general horror; Boston Mayor Kennedy, grandfather of the future president, outlaws the work. Gustav gives a farewell interview to Karpath, mentioning as chief reasons for his departure from Vienna “the sterility of contemporary opera” and the difficulty of keeping top quality performers in Vienna within the constraints of his budget. Julius Korngold, a friend, cries Cassandra: Vienna will rue the day it let him go, this decade will be remembered as the golden age of the Court Opera. He has a last talk with Montenuovo, who “begs” him to stay in Vienna, but only if he will devote his full energies to the Opera — which condition, as he is fully aware, is impossible at this time for Mahler the composer.¹²¹ This rankles as it comes from a long-time ally, the old courtier who has and still does respect and admire Mahler but who is bowing to the general wisdom that it is time for him to depart and is doing this subtly and painfully, by not *unconditionally* begging him to remain. The last impression is bitter; his will to battle is vitiated. His pride is hurt that the old man Emperor Franz Josef will not personally intercede to retain him.

1907 summer En route to Maiernigg he runs into Mildenburg and her fiancé Hermann Bahr, of all people; the three travel together. Daughter Gucki has scarlet fever. In Maiernigg Putzi contracts the disease from her little sister, who recovers while the older child, four years and eight months of age, falls severely ill and dies, slowly, over an agonizing two weeks at Maiernigg.¹²² This was “his” child, wild and dark, writes Alma, and it seems to her that he blames his wife for the loss, driving them more apart than ever before. (Even Gucki will feel, years later, that somehow she must be at fault for infecting her sister.) Gustav, so often a gallant, sensitive, even uxorious husband — especially in times of need, though they turn out usually to be *his* times of need — cannot express his anguish to Alma; she is left to her loneliness, hurt and angry that he cannot comfort her, thirsty for sexual companionship and adventure, filled with resentment at his bowed back and his racking sobs. Gustav’s own feeling of guilt is so mighty that he wonders how he will bear it. This was the promise of the *Kindertotenlieder*, the *Dead Children’s Songs*. He will abandon Maiernigg, the villa and the *Häusl* that Natalie and Mildenburg found for him eight years ago, never to return.

Alma has psychosomatic heart pains; a specialist prescribes long rest. On a whim Gustav agrees to an examination by the country physician, who accurately diagnoses a bilateral mitral retraction, compensated; this is a probable consequence of the narrowing of the healed endocardium, the inner tunic of the heart, after a childhood streptococcal inflammation. This is the third hammer-blow of 6.4, that symphony of doom. “I have to learn to walk anew,” he writes Walter.¹²³ No more cycling or rowing; he walks with a stopwatch in

hand, counting his pulse, asking Alma to listen to his heart. The rest of the summer is spent somewhere near Toblach (now Dobbiaco, Italy) in (then) South Tyrol. A Vienna specialist tells him that he may continue conducting and need not confine his activities so severely as he had imagined. He will get better; he will conduct and compose, he will heal. Yet the death sentence will hang over him even as he learns to live, and live optimistically and comfortably, with the heart abnormality. It is not so much *that* as everything else, and everything together.

In a farewell letter to his musicians (December, 1907) he laments that “in place of a completed work I have left only a patchwork, a torso;”¹²⁴ we hear him speak of his directorship in the same terms as of his beloved symphonic children, and in particular the Tenth, which he will write, incompletely, in 1910. As always, he is spying into the future. “No one is so answerable to the perfidy of the object (*die Tücke des Objekts*), the resistance of the material, as the performing artist. But I have given everything and not spared myself.” The adversative clause — the *but* — is more bitter than stubborn. An ordinary mortal, Felix Weingartner, will succeed him in Vienna; haunted by phantoms, he will not last there long. “Wasps’ nest,” he will complain of the post-Mahler atmosphere at the Opera, and bitterly. Roller, disillusioned, will himself depart in 1909.

A series of extraordinarily eloquent photographs of Gustav Mahler is made by Moritz Nähr at the Opera. This is now the old Mahler we see with his lined face and tiercel stare, hands in his pockets or clenched tightly in his lap, slightly dyspeptic and preoccupied, with never the

hint of a smile. He is forty-seven years old. The set of the mouth and the averted gaze are ironic, exasperated, distanced. In several of the pictures one sees, or senses, a warmth that seems to grow as the eye lingers, and at last even a hint of humor — the eloquent complexity of experience. The more one looks at them the more one learns about Nühr's subject, and the more they reveal. Walter will write melodramatically that “the shadow of death” hangs over him; the photographs belie this.¹²⁵ There is a new energy in Mahler; he has two more masterpieces to write. Beaten down, perhaps, but he is not dead, not yet.

As a parting salvo the indefatigably anti-Semitic *Deutsches Volksblatt* prints some racially defamatory remarks about him.

1907 Oct

Stages *Madama Butterfly* as his last Vienna study; Puccini is more than pleased. A hit. Farewell concert: *Fidelio*, October 15, with an admiring Adolf Hitler possibly in attendance. Goes to Russia and Helsingfors, where he meets Sibelius. In a postcard to Alma on Sibelius' music he writes: “Pui kaki” (no translation needed; this is a phrase of disgust commonly used by Gucki Mahler).¹²⁶ Osovsky in *Slovo* reviews his Petersburg concert: “Hypnotist. God and Satan are battling for his soul [a paraphrase from Dostoevsky's *Dmitri Karamazov*]. Ramses III. Dostoevskian. Has lived the music in the flesh. Chin forward, teeth clenched. Sobriety of gestures like Assyrian frescoes. Nothing for effect.”¹²⁷

He *did* like Sibelius, personally, who told him that a symphony must follow a strict inner logic and form, that everything must be subordinate to a single idea. Mahler in answer to this: No, a symphony must be again and again continually reborn so as to include anything and everything. (Here he anticipates his own late style in *Das Lied von der Erde* and especially in the Ninth Symphony, 1909.) “What would you like me to conduct of yours?” he asks Sibelius, congenially. He is uncompromising in matters of art, but always ready to change his mind. Finnish painter Akselli Gallen takes him around the lakes and paints his portrait. Rimsky-Korsakov mocks 5: “He has no idea what is coming in the next bar. A real *maljar*” — this is the same tired pun on his name, this time with the Russian word for house-painter or dauber, borrowed from the German.¹²⁸

1907 Nov Plans to conduct 2 in Vienna. Mildenburg and Walter have performed *Dead Children* while he is on tour, and she offers her services for 2, but Gustav insists on an alto for *Urlicht* (= 2.4) and the soprano part in 2.5 is too small for her, she complains. He finds a soprano with a weak voice; throws out the trombone part for her sake, though everyone is playing as softly as possible. Alban Berg attends the performance. Gallant to the end, he writes a gracious farewell letter to Mildenburg. Farewell to Vienna. Berg introduces his fiancée to him at the station as he departs Vienna; she hands him a bouquet. Karpath, now an enemy, laughs maliciously: “The tiny number of people who came to say goodbye was laughable.”¹²⁹

1907 Dec 21 This year of horrors comes to a close with his arrival in New York on the *Kaiserin Augusta Viktoria*. Gustav and Alma settle in a suite on the eleventh floor of the Majestic Hotel, 72nd Street. Alma, fresh from a brief love affair in Paris that Gustav knows nothing of, is stimulated by New York society. He will accommodate her wishes and go to parties and dinners, visiting the playgrounds of young American wealth. “I felt immediately at home,” Alma will write inspiredly.¹³⁰

1908 He is to conduct at the Metropolitan Opera in the age of high society; this is the hall of Vanderbilt and Morgan built for the pleasure of the rich. The superficiality of the audiences, especially of the ladies with their committees, is of a different kind from Vienna and just as daunting. He hopes naively that America will offer him a spiritual second homeland. He meets Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony, rival of the Philharmonic; Gustav’s contract forbids him from conducting the orchestra. (He will soon reject an offer to direct the Met; those days are over.) He is overwhelmed by the city — skyscrapers, Central Park West, and especially the subway, which he rides delightedly for amusement as though it were the Prater *Riesenrad* (giant Ferris wheel) back home.

He has a four-year contract for three months of work a year at 20,000 crowns per month (\$5000). His première is *Tristan* on January 1 with the Swedish singer Olive Fremstad; Conried has an international troupe of talented singers at his disposal. The performance is praised on almost every side, though his very spare conductorial gestures dismay. “You could hear every word of the text,” writes a New York

reviewer.¹³¹ He mourns for his dead daughter and regularly goes back to bed after breakfast; there is no telephone in the suite. Sexual estrangement from his wife is total. Meanwhile, the ladies are excited about him; he is the world's greatest conductor. Mrs. Sheldon is trying to organize an orchestra just for him. Toscanini is to be engaged as co-conductor. The ladies want to have all of Europe imported on a silver salver for their delectation.

1908 Feb 16 Alma tells a famous story about the funeral of a New York fireman which the Mahlers witness from their hotel windows, Gustav leaning out of his study window and Alma, her bedroom window.¹³² He is “deeply moved” by the sound of a huge muffled bass drum on the street eleven floors below. They both weep unaccountably, as though for the death of their daughter, of their marriage, of the sadness and emptiness of their lives. The drum will go into his Tenth Symphony two years hence. Their closest friend is the Viennese émigré neurologist Dr. Joseph Fraenkel, who serves as their personal physician. (After Gustav's death he proposes to Alma but he is too late, she is involved with an artist.)

1908 Mar He presents *Fidelio*, with Roller's sets shipped into New York from Vienna. Preparations are very thorough. *Leonore 3* opens the second part of the first act in total darkness, entralling the ladies. He has New York eating out of his hand. Sounding very little like a dying man, he writes: “It was a bombshell. Now I hope to make a lot of money as well as to give myself some satisfaction.”¹³³ Visits Boston, conducts *Tristan* and *Don Giovanni*. It is raining in Harvard and at MIT, as it will be

during the Solzhenitsyn speech seventy years later. Alma is bored by what she senses to be a provincial old town; an intellectual friend suggests they read Henry James on the dichotomy New York ~ Boston. Gustav is dying of homesickness. To escape himself he is reading Hans Bethge's fashionable, perfumed trade book *faux*. translation of oriental poetry, *The Chinese Flute*.

1908 Apr

The Mahlers depart New York on the *Kaiserin Augusta Viktoria* on April 23, arriving May 2 at Cuxhaven (Hamburg). Vienna is celebrating the sixtieth year of Franz Joseph's empire. All life forms are in violent and hectic celebration and self-congratulation. "To the time its art, and to art its freedom," runs the Secessionist motto; Klimt adds that "art must impregnate all forms of life," thinking no doubt of his unending passion for Alma Schindler Mahler.¹³⁴ Another mad painter, Kokoschka, is here in Vienna; he will have a wild three-year fling with Alma very soon. Schönberg's wife runs away with another man; to distract himself he takes up expressionist painting, including some marvelous studies of Gustav Mahler. European art is abandoning the auricular for the optical. Gustav decides to participate in the Prague empirefest, in full national ferment, as a Czech citizen. In late May he is back in Prague again, home of painful memories. With him are the young artists Otto Klemperer and Artur Bodanzky; Nedbal (see 1903) shows him around the city where he had been an eleven-year-old gymnasium student and a young conductor. There is a snapshot of Mahler with a Prague street scene in the background, Mahler smiling broadly. The Czechs have performed his Fourth with great success; they fondly recall his championship of Smetana and Dvořák. He sees

Psohavci, “The Dog Heads,” in the Czech National Theater and decides to première his Seventh in this city. Another “foreign land” (coincidentally, the land of his lost youth) is welcoming him, while Vienna has turned her back.

1908 summer Gustav has Toblach forever in his mind, to whose gigantic Dolomite peaks he used to make secret votive pilgrimages from Maiernigg; he thinks of Steinbach, which seems so remote in the past. The mountains whisper the texts of songs. The family — Gustav, wife, daughter, Czech cook — settles in a huge house on a hill in Alt Schleuderbach, a kilometer from the town Toblach, in the shadow of the peaks, with a wooden *Häusl* fifty meters into the meadow. After some loiterers wander into his compound he has *barbed wire* strung around the *Häusl*. Composer’s block. “I feel like a drug addict suddenly taken off the stuff,” he writes to Walter.¹³⁵ To Marcus: “I’ve spun a cocoon. Maybe the burblings in my head and my heart will someday resound in your universe too.”¹³⁶ We read here the semiotic of composition; it is a new symphony coming, different from anything before. This is the *Spätstil*, the late style (no one has *had* a ‘late period’ since Beethoven, says the old thinker), tinged with new colorations and passions. Like Beethoven, he will never hear a note in performance of his last works, not for deafness, of course, but simply as there will be no time for re-instrumentation, for rehearsals, for testing and tinkering as he used to do, there will not even be time for a single performance. But it will turn out that there is no need, this is pure gold, *this is it*. He chooses six Bethge poems from the Chinese collection; themes: love and farewell, the vanity and meaninglessness of existence, the eternity of renewal.

Delicate rewordings he administers to the texts are electric; the music for his own words is saturated with feeling (his usual parallel structures, his rhymes, his clarity, his yearning, *Sehnsucht*); he includes a line from a poem he had written to Johanna von Richter (see 1883). This is a symphony, he says, not a song cycle; indeed *Das Lied von der Erde* in its first and sixth movements is like *Gesänge*, with sonata-style development and orchestral interludes. The last movement, called *The Farewell*, is thirty minutes long and half the entire work, which he declines to give a symphonic number so as to avoid the killing basilisk stare of the Ninth. “How do you suppose anyone will conduct this thing?” he asks Walter as he shows him the last pages of this movement, where the instruments of the chamber-style orchestra are treated with such independence that the measures disappear into the stationary, ecstatic calm.¹³⁷ There is a celesta and a mandolin, the later playing *barely audibly*. Walter will master it indeed, performing the work again and again for the next half-century after Gustav’s death. In the midst of the excruciating sublimity of creation, one leaf-strewn day in late summer, a smiling young man clambers through the barbed wire, hailing him in an aural hallucination, a New York accent: “Mr. Mahler, Mr. Mahler! I have *just* the piano for you in your private work and in your performances. Let me show you these brochures...” The smile, the bow, the salesman’s unflinching antics — this desacralization confounds and enrages the composer. “He sobbed, he foamed at the mouth, he had a heart attack,” says Alma rather sarcastically.¹³⁸ The intruding salesman is removed, Gustav is an emotional wreck. And yet, months hence, the man’s New York firm optimistically supplies his New York apartment with pianos; he *likes* them, he *buys* them — he

can forgive, he can change his mind. In matters of art one must be flexible to one's intuition. The Mahlers enjoy their new instruments.

1908 Sep In Prague for the première of 7, September 19. Stays at the *Blaue Stern*, which he finds too noisy. "Last night my neighbor snored so loudly I thought some misfortune had occurred [is he dead?]; but he tells me fortunately that he is leaving tomorrow."¹³⁹ Supported by young virtuosos Klemperer, Bodanzky and Walter, he rehearses and makes corrections in the score himself at night. He makes tests with small groups of instruments. "I have to made a drum out of a sausage kettle, a trumpet out of a watering can, and a concert hall out of a wine tavern [Mahler is not exaggerating; the hall is the Concert Pavilion at the Exhibition grounds prepared for the great jubilee of Franz Josef; it was indeed a dining hall]."¹⁴⁰ Recommends Klemperer to the German Theater in Prague ("Grab Klemperer!"), earning his pupil's gratitude for a half-century to come. Asks his agent to set up 7 next month in Munich. "The first horn, first trumpet and first trombone have to be brilliant players; I need a kettledrum with machine-operated pedals. Please get me into a comfortable, quiet hotel with an especially quiet suite." In rehearsal a bird sings. "Close the windows, please, that bird is not in the score."¹⁴¹ 7 is well received and gets an insightful review from Ritter (see 1901) and a host of Czech critics, in Czech and in German. Ritter tells him: "You know, your Fifth, Sixth and Seventh form a whole, they are your middle period. Note the major ~ minor alternations, for one thing, and the polyphonic style." Gustav is astounded, as he might be reading my words on this page. He feels like an artist reading studies of his words written fifty, a hundred years

hence; Ritter, he knows, is right, though he never consciously thought of it that way. “You have,” Ritter tells him in French, “a Shakespearian lack of fear of the vulgar [meaning musical quotations from popular or non-classical sources] next to the sublime.” Ritter will write an insightful and lavishly complementary review of the Ninth immediately after its première performance in 1912, too late for Gustav to enjoy.¹⁴²

Retires to Toblach to orchestrate *Das Lied*. Conducts in Hamburg before departing on the *Amerika* to New York. His conducting is “transparent as glass, a clarity of contours unrivaled; like the cold light of an autumn day.” Only one hostile review of the Munich performance of 7 appears, by Pfohl, who is as angry as ever (see 1904).¹⁴³ Settles in the Savoy on 5th Avenue and 59th Street and begins his second season in America. He abandons the Met in favor of the New York Philharmonic. On Dec 8 he plays his *Resurrection* to a flabbergasted New York audience.

1909

He throws himself into the season with *Tristan* and the first American performance of Smetana’s Czech national opera, *The Bartered Bride*. “He needed a counterweight to his inner tensions,” Alma will write a quarter-century later. “I couldn’t imagine him without practical musical activity. He also was concerned that my future and that of his daughter be secure forever.”¹⁴⁴ Alma, however, was in no condition to communicate such retrospective understanding to her husband, who loved her distractedly and abstractly. “You have an abstraction for a husband,” someone told her; the remark echoes in her nightmares. He writes meditatively to Walter on conducting, on composing, on matters

of life and death; asks about Siegfried Lipiner, his old friend from the days of Natalie, wonders what *he* would say.¹⁴⁵

1909 Apr Karl and Anna Moll, his parents-in-law, hatch a plot to get August Rodin, now seventy, to make a bust of Gustav. He is told it is all Rodin's idea and agrees. Rodin turns out to be an old man in a black beret with a white beard, speaking only French; Gustav is not strong in French. Gustav reminds him of Mozart (aquiline nose, sheaf of hair) and of Frederick the Great. The great sculptor works on clay models, progressing to plaster and terra cotta; Gustav sits for over a week. There are numerous abortive stabs at philosophic discussions in imperfectly shared languages; Gustav is impressed with the artist. Rodin makes two bronze and one marble bust, the latter an amalgam of Mozart and Mahler. The family chooses one of the two bronze busts as definitive; given to the Vienna Court Opera, it will survive the bombings to today.

1909 Jun The estrangement between the Mahlers deepens. Both are depressed and lonely. Alma takes the waters at Levico while he tries to work at Toblach. Composer's block. Depression. Loneliness, though he craves to be alone. She is away for a whole month and he writes her every day without fail, walking to Toblach to mail the letters, trying to calm her and lift her spirits. Showing her his love in this way only makes her angrier, as this is not what she needs. The family in the big house at Toblach snores; their homemade cheese stinks. He needs apples and honey. His letters grow more beautiful; he seems at the end of his life to have at last learned to write, reaching out to her in tenderness of

words as the habit of touching her body is long forgotten, undiscoverable and impossible.¹⁴⁶ In pain and loneliness he goes to visit her at the spa. She is disgusted by his new haircut, like Anna Karenina by her husband's ears at the station in Petersburg. He retreats to Toblach after two days. Writes her a dense analysis of the last scene of Goethe's *Faust*, followed by humorous details of life in Toblach. Begs for visitors; the young conductor Oskar Fried comes, and the critic Ernst Decsey. When at last she comes, Strauss and wife drop by while on an automobile tour of the mountains. What are you looking so nervous for, old man? Where's that opera I told you to write?

Works in his smallest *Häusl* of the three, barely more than two and a half meters square, made of wood and wind-whipped so that he uses a gas stove and a blanket in the early morning. There is a view not of water but of valleys and mountains. He writes a symphony; this time, after some hesitation, it will be numbered Nine. There are two huge slow movements framing two dance movements, the second a terrific, parodic *Rondo-Burleske*. There are no texts or songs for voice. He tells Walter: "This is something I've had on the tip of my tongue for a long time [lit.: 'on my lips']."¹⁴⁷ Symphony as verbal utterance; is it a narrative, an exclamation of wonderment, a prayer, an oracular riddle, a cry of pain, a lament, *klagend*? He will not say. Someone says, erring by over-simplification or distortion: "It is *what death tells me*" (as the Third had movements entitled "What the Animals Tell me," "What God tells Me").¹⁴⁸ With his usual unerring critical understanding of his own works, Gustav said of it to Walter: "I rank it alongside my Fourth. But it's completely different."¹⁴⁹ Gustav always understands himself in

the end, though the words and the arguments may come long after or long before. Is this Mahler's greatest work? This year he moves Putzi's body into Grinzing cemetery in Vienna, buying his own plot and adjusting his will.

Schönberg writes him in New York of his admiration for 7. Gustav replies warmly, saying he is trying to study Schönberg's quartet. Aware this analysis is not likely to get far, the young composer tells Alma: "I don't care what he may say negatively about my music. *I love him.*" We are left to imagine Alma's response to this remark. Schönberg's pupil Alban Berg is said to have remarked that 2.5 absorbed him so much that he felt in listening to it he was being unfaithful to his fiancée. We can imagine Alma's response to *that* remark.¹⁵⁰

- 1909 Sep He travels to Holland for a performance of 7. "I praise the court of Mengelberg, it is truly an angel's work." In gratitude to his Dutch friends: "Everything awakens for joy [last line of 4.4; see 1904]."¹⁵¹
- 1909 Oct He arrives in New York for the new season as director of the New York Philharmonic. Meets press. Ambition is to make this the greatest American orchestra. Greatest European orchestra is the Vienna Philharmonic. I plan four series of concerts, including a historical series, to present to the public the evolution of the art from the eighteenth century to the present. Thirty-five concerts and a New England tour. Thursday-Friday evening *and afternoon*, Wednesday evening, Sunday matinée. We can imagine the ladies' response to this onslaught of art. Rehearsals are typically Mahlerian, but the players'

union has limited their duration. He loses his temper only at indifference and has no compunctions about embarrassing a lazy player. “Play that again. Now play it again. Again.” The orchestra at times feels itself incapable of giving him what he wants. In November he presents Baroque concerts, with newly instrumented Bach suites, followed by a Beethoven cycle. Goes to bed after rehearsals “when I take my midday meal; they call this abominable crap ‘lunch’.”¹⁵²

1910 He conducts Strauss, Debussy, Pfitzner, Rachmaninov. Does *Queen of Spades* with the Met with Leo Slezak and Ema Destinnová. The Roosevelt family invites the Mahlers to Oyster Bay; Alma is charmed and delighted. She tells us how Louis Tiffany takes them to an opium den in Chinatown.¹⁵³ In February begin the preparations for his most elaborate première, the grand Eighth, in Munich in September. Impresario Emil Gutmann calls this the *Symphony of a Thousand* and hypes it like a circus, with Gustav’s picture pasted all over town. Walter trains the soloists in Vienna, Schalk works with the Singverein, and the third link is Georg Göhler, director of the Riedel-Chor in Leipzig, who does a satisfying job and offers a tribute to Gustav in *Die Musik* for which he is eternally grateful. Plans are afoot for a fiftieth anniversary *Festschrift*. The volume, edited by Paul Stefan, includes articles by Roller, Fried, Strauss, Schnitzler, Mildenburg; some are sophisticated studies, such as that by Mildenburg’s husband Hermann Bahr.

1910 Apr He conducts *Resurrection* in Paris. Leading French composers walk out at 2.2 (too Schubertian); a bitter disappointment, at the height of his career, reminiscent of the troubles with the First.

Summer. Again Alma is at a spa while Gustav is at Toblach and alternately traveling to rehearsals for the Eighth. There is one last charming anecdote. Alma sends him some drawings by Gucki which, she gravely suggests, show the influence of a French painter whose works Gucki may have seen (recall that Alma is the daughter of a painter and that her influence has led her husband to the visual arts). Gustav laughs himself to tears at this comment. Gucki will some day become a sculptor of note. She will outlive her father by seventy-seven years, dying only in the improbably remote year of 1988.¹⁵⁴

Summer brings a symphony, the Tenth and last, and a marital crisis. In her memoirs Alma calls him the “artist X;” he is the brilliant young architect Walter Gropius. He may have had predecessors, and Gustav might well never find out about artist X but for the mailing by Gropius of a letter to his lover Alma with the Freudian misaddress “Herr Direktor Mahler.” Gustav opens the letter. “*Was ist das?*” The scenes that follow between husband and wife leave her drained and him in nervous collapse. “He was completely churned up inside,” she recalls, rather weakly.¹⁵⁵ The event gives her the opportunity to assert herself over him — he becomes a whimpering puppy, writhing on the *Häusl* floor, flooding her with poems and remonstrations — she knows she will not leave him, but neither, perhaps, will she renounce her lover or the possibility of future lovers. She is dedicated to him but no longer

desires him; he is passionately in love with her, cannot make love to her, cannot endure the thought of abandonment.

Even in this state he works on 10 and prepares for the Munich event. The Tenth documents his emotional devastation and subsequent (mostly sublime and unearthly) reconciliation with himself. The score is dotted with pathetic appeals to his wife: “Almschi! Almschili! Only you know what this means!” In his poems to her he calls her his *lyre* and to himself he whispers “rest, rest my staff” (Wandering Jew; what would the angry old friend Ferdinand Pfohl say now?). After the summer’s end he never touches the MS again. Most of 10 is left in three- and four-part score, but 10.1 and 10.3 are nearly complete; it is not a fragment or a set of fragments, but a torso (see 1907’s farewell to Vienna); in 1923 Alma allows their publication. After learning about Gropius he meets with Sigmund Freud in Leiden at the end of August for a personal consultation. *Mutterbindung*, *Marienkompex*, *Zwangsneurose*, mother fixation, Mary complex, obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Freud cannot of course make a detailed diagnosis on the basis of one long day’s interview. “Freud is right! You are and always will be the centerpoint of my life, Almschi!” he telegrams in illogical triumph; it is not clear how this thought follows from Freud’s commentary.¹⁵⁶ He insists on feeling better and in the sun rather than the dark umbrae of mother archetypes and soiled trousers symbolizing fertility. “I didn’t really have time to get to the bottom of his neurosis,” says Freud, with a soft smack of his lips, emphasis on *bottom*.¹⁵⁷ Gustav gives Alma a wedding ring in Munich as she has complained he never gave her any jewelry. “I thought we two were above such

things,” he says at first, crestfallen. Josef Hoffmann designs a diadem for her and Gustav digs out her old songs from her composition days and encourages her to work at them again.¹⁵⁸

In less than two weeks’ time he is in Munich for the general rehearsals of 8. Gutmann the impresario has plastered the city with his picture and the famous engraving of Mahler by Orlik; copies of the Stefan-edited volume on Mahler are hawked on street corners; Gustav, who hates adulation, slinks in embarrassment to his hotel. It is September 11, the day before the performance. Alma is in attendance (as is Gropius, who loves Mahler, as do all of Alma’s lovers, loving the composer at a discreet distance); as usual he stations Walter to auscultate at various points of the immense hypermodern room of concrete and glass — an Exhibition Hall — where the musical celebration is to take place. He fills the hall with soldiers to test the sound. He seems reborn for this; he is total concentration, charming the children — in the summer the choirs had asked their masters when the nice man was going to come back. He rehearses seated in an armchair, leaping up to make comments and changes. Ritter reports his words: “Here the orchestra should sound like a huge guitar.” “Here the children enter like a knife into butter.” “Ladies, silence please, I shall put speaking parts into my next symphony, for now, please take a walk.”¹⁵⁹ “Ignite with light (*accende lumen*) is the bridge to the Goethe section and the nerve center of the work.” The first performance is at 7:30 on September 11; there are about three thousand in attendance and one thousand performers; the weight of the children, Walter writes, visibly sags the balustrade. At the conclusion he walks the ranks of the children, touching their hands and

thanking each; the applause lasts longer than 8.1 itself (about twenty-five minutes). “A good song, Mr. Mahler,” one child tells him in shy congratulation after the applause finally stills — one of his fondest critical appraisals. Almost all of his friends and associates are there, I cannot list them all — Strauss and Mildenburg, Mengelberg and Diepenbrock, Marcus, Berliner, Schalk; there are court luminaries and artists, including Cincinnati Symphony director Leopold Stokowski, who will conduct 2 and 8 until the improbably remote year of 1977.

Walks with Fritz Löhr, as in the old days in Moravia. Considers quitting the Philharmonic and buying a farm south of Vienna; homesick. To most old friends, he seems changed, older; he dresses more carefully (“you don’t need to spit under the table to be Beethoven”)¹⁶⁰, avoids upsetting himself, has a gray cast to his features; his voice rarely rises above a calm baritone to tenor. Alma takes the Orient Express from Munich to Paris to meet with her lover Gropius, charitably hiding this relationship from Gustav; they embark on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* for New York in two different ports. Her secret correspondence with her lover continues in America. The Mahlers return calmly to New York,

1910 Nov where the new season begins with a mixture of Bach and contemporary works. He is financially secure; he is touched by the abiding affection of some of the ladies for his work — “I may end up being my own successor in New York” — and he and Alma take more trips together, to Niagara Falls, for example. Christmas for the first time is a great event in the Mahlers’ Savoy suite, for Gucki, now six, and for Alma, for whom he buys a huge solitaire costing a thousand dollars. Shopping

trips on Fifth Avenue, walks in the snow with Gucki. The Ninth is cleanly orchestrated and he returns to 5 for final mothballing. “I never really learned counterpoint; still, I don’t understand how I could have written like such a rank beginner.”¹⁶¹ Suffers attack of angina in December,

1911 Feb

and then another in February, alarming Dr. Fraenkel. While still suffering from this illness he conducts his last concert, in New York, February 20. When the fever subsists Fraenkel summons a top bacteriologist from Mount Sinai Hospital, Emanuel Libman, who lists his symptoms for him: low-grade intermittent fever, systolic-pre-systolic murmur, palpable spleen, clubbed fingers. His is an expert diagnosis: chronic mitral infection of the endocardium, staphylococcal bacterial endocarditis, or SBE. The original mitral insufficiency (see 1907) is visited by a microbe, the Osler bacterium. The illness is generalized by colonization of the microbes in the major organs of the body. Gustav’s blood renders one of the first cultures associated with this disease to be analyzed by research scientists in a period when it was, naturally, incurable; today, or in the lifetime of his wife, his second daughter, and many of his closest colleagues, it could be effectively treated with antibiotics and an operation. Libman tells him that he will probably die, but that serum treatments in Paris at the Pasteur institute are worth the try. He spares Alma the news, makes jokes, calls the *staphylococcus virulens* “my beastie.”¹⁶² Intermittent relief from the flow of poison into his blood deludes him into hopes of wellness. He plans another New York concert in March, but this he cannot realize and in desperation he departs New York for Paris,

1911 Apr arriving in Cherbourg April 16. He rests at the Neuilly Clinic, where Alma nurses him guiltily and obsessively, aware at last that she will lose him; she has not left his side for over three months, she feeds him and changes his bedding, listens to his prayers and his promises — “perhaps I won’t die after all and we shall take trips together, you and I, Almschi.” Her dedication turns to tenderness and a deeper love for him than she has ever felt. Perhaps this is meant to be my last real gift to him, mopping his brow and bathing his body; these are our moments together. She knows that, at thirty-one, she will likely be his widow for many years to come and that she will remain Mahler’s widow no matter how many other men and other husbands she may have. Alma Mahler. Visits from Justine Rosé and Bruno Walter lift his spirits, but Alma is irritated and jealous, she fights with Justi and is curt with Walter. She irrationally accuses the members of the Philharmonic directorship of causing her husband’s illness. “I’m not suffering, but it is all so unpleasant,”¹⁶³ he remarks to someone, meaning perhaps his helplessness in all of this. The Viennese blood specialist Chvostek suggests treatment in Vienna for psychological reasons; delighting the patient, he severely instructs the dying man to rest six months before conducting again. Gustav, by now delusional, believes him like a child. The microbes are in the liver and the knee; he has difficulty breathing. Digitalis and morphine are applied. The Orient Express takes the family back to Austria,

1911 news of his illness preceding him. This is the last of those journeys that so plagued him on concert tours. Lungs infected and drugged, he is

delirious the last four days. With Alma, his in-laws and the Walters at his side, and Mildenburg's husband, Hermann Bahr, he dies at 11:05 p.m. on May 18, 1911. He is buried according to his wishes in Vienna's Grinzing cemetery, address 19-6-6-1, with his daughter, in a ceremony without music, with a granite stone bearing no other inscription than "Gustav Mahler."

- 1911 Nov 20 Première of *Das Lied von der Erde*, conducted by Bruno Walter in Munich.
- 1912 Jun 26 Première of the Ninth Symphony, conducted by Bruno Walter in Vienna.
- 1924 First performance of 10.1 and 10.3, the nearly completed movements of this work, prepared by Ernst Křenek, a friend and lover of Gucki's, with the permission of Alma. Bruno Walter strongly opposes this performance and writes Alma: "You know as well as I do that no composer was so seriously against the publication of incomplete works as was Gustav Mahler. I much regret this."¹⁶⁴
- 1960 Dec 19 First performance of the *Performing Edition* of 10, prepared by Deryck Cooke, conducted by Berthold Goldschmidt with the BBC. Second, improved version of the score is prepared with permission of Alma Mahler and performed by Goldschmidt on August 13, 1964. The American première takes place in New York, as Alma had wished, in Carnegie Hall under Eugene Ormandy.

¹ Killian, Herbert. *Gustav Mahler in den Erinnerungen von Natalie Bauer-Lechner*.

Translated by Editor Herbert Killian. Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1984, 63; Müller, Karl-Josef. *Mahler. Leben, Werke, Dokumente*. 2nd ed. Mainz, München: Piper Schott Serie Musik, 1989, 24-25.

² Otto 1873-1895, and Alois 1868-1931.

³ Killian 1984, 62. Natalie Bauer-Lechner 1858-1921, musician, friend of the family and Gustav's faithful memoirist in the 1890's.

⁴ Mahler, Alma. *Gustav Mahler. Erinnerungen*. 2nd edition. First edition 1940. ed. Amsterdam: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992, 73: "Eines freut mich, ich habe ihn jung gehabt, und du hast ihn alt" ("One thing makes me happy — I had him young and you have him old"). Alma adds, maliciously: "The jealousy of the sister appears more dangerous than that of a beloved, as it is hopeless."

⁵ Killian 1984, 69.

⁶ Alma Mahler 1992, 18-19.

⁷ Blaukopf, Herta. *Gustav Mahler Briefe*. 2nd (First 1982) ed. Wien: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1996, 25, number 1, Iglau, 28 August, 1875.

⁸ Müller 1989, 33ff.

⁹ de la Grange, Henry-Louis. *Mahler. Volume One*. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973, 35.

¹⁰ Blaukopf 1996, 124-125, number 115, to Friedrich Löhr, August, 1892.

¹¹ Müller 1989, 37-38.

¹² Blaukopf 1996, 30-33, number 5, 17 June 1879.

¹³ La Grange 1973, 79. Mahler also called 1 his *Schmerzenkind* (Killian 1989, 178).

¹⁴ La Grange 1973, 61-62.

¹⁵ Killian 1984, 117.

¹⁶ Sigfried Lipiner, 1856-1911, poet, librarian and Mahler's close confidant.

¹⁷ La Grange 1973, 93-94.

¹⁸ Blaukopf 1996, 51-52, number 25, Kassel, January, 1884.

¹⁹ "Die Herren Vorgesetzten." La Grange 1995, 319.

²⁰ La Grange 1973, 136.

²¹ Blaukopf 1996, 81-83, numbers 58 and 59, to Friedrich Löhr, December 1886 and January 1887.

²² Blaukopf 1996, 87-88, number 64, December, 1887, shortly before the performance: "They won't know what is mine and what is Weber's". Then, 91, number 68, after the performance in January, 1888: "Everything was fantastic. From today on I am a world-famous man."

²³ La Grange 1973, 169-170. Strauss apparently criticized Mahler's instrumentation after being reproved instructed by von Bülow ("was ist *gemalt* und was ist *gewebt*").

²⁴ Killian 1984, 80-81.

²⁵ Adele Marcus, 1854-1927, Hamburg native, artistic intellectual and family friend ("die Markus," as he referred to her). See Blaukopf 1996, 177, number 170, and especially 249-250, numbers 248 and 249, summer, 1897; La Grange 1973, 235.

²⁶ La Grange 1973, 244.

²⁷ Blaukopf 1996, 121-122, number 111, June, 1892.

²⁸ In a letter to sister Justi, quoted in La Grange 1973, 262.

²⁹ See Natalie's memoir chapter "Steinbach am Attersee. 1893", Killian 1984, 25-34.

³⁰ This account is to be found not in Killian (the official version of the memoirs) but in some selected papers partially published in 1923, in the possession of La Grange and referred to as *Mahleriana* (La Grange 1973 884, 955, and, for the story about the cholera, 280). This illness — mentioned only by Natalie, with its tantalizing anecdote — took place in the autumn of 1893, about a year after the 1892 Berchtesgaden vigil mentioned above. Note that Natalie is notoriously reliable in what she tells us about Mahler, and that unknown hands purged her MS.

³¹ The full program is quoted in Müller 1989. For Sittard's attack, see La Grange 1973, 282-283.

³² Lebrecht, Norman. *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen seiner Zeitgenossen*. Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne; Serie Musik, Piper Schott, 1993, reminiscences of Josef Bohuslav Foerster 1859-1951, 85-90.

³³ La Grange 1973, 300-301, La Grange 1995, 664-666, Müller 1989, 289.

³⁴ Müller 1989, 120.

³⁵ See many letters of 1895-1896 to Berliner, Löhr, Mildenburg, Marschalk and Walter (Blaukopf 1996, especially numbers 145, 146, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 186).

³⁶ Anna von Mildenburg, 1872-1947, was Mahler's Hamburg discovery and debuted under him in 1895, going on to many years of stardom. She married Mahler's acquaintance, the writer Hermann Bahr, and had learned to appreciate her old lover and mentor, Gustav, in her *Erinnerungen* of 1921. On her rivalry with his compositions, see Blaukopf 1996, 191-192, number 183, summer, 1895.

³⁷ La Grange 1973, 345.

³⁸ Blaukopf 1996, 171-173, number 167, Hamburg, 26 March 1896. This letter contains his first clear non-programmatic statement; programs are useless, but the initial *Veranlassung* ('impulse, cause, motivation') can have a useful meaning for the listener, as a kind of signpost or *Sternkarte* 'star map' for initial orientation. Thus, 2.1 is the funeral, and the following movements put the question: *why have you lived?* 2.2 is like a summer light shining into the past, and 2.3 is a reflection of the meaninglessness of life, an *Entfernung*. In 2.4 is the answer.

³⁹ Blaukopf 1996, 219-220, number 213, Hamburg, 5 February 1897.

⁴⁰ La Grange 1973, 375.

⁴¹ Killian 1984, 68. See Müller 1989, 136 for the dedication of 3.1.

⁴² Written to Ödön Michalovics; La Grange 1973, 389-390 and La Grange 1995, 53, for the recommendation of the young Christian Austrian Mahler.

⁴³ Blaukopf 1996, 140-142, number 135, to Friedrich Löhr, end of 1894 or early 1895.

⁴⁴ La Grange 1995, 63.

⁴⁵ La Grange 1995, 60-62.

⁴⁶ La Grange 1995, 63.

⁴⁷ La Grange 1995, 69-72.

⁴⁸ The rhyming or punning parallelisms, so characteristic of Mahler's oral as well as written speech, is even better in German: "Mich will's bedünken, daß sie alle beide stinken," supposedly a reference to Heinrich Heine (La Grange 1995, 629).

⁴⁹ See note 110 below.

⁵⁰ Killian 1984, 140.

⁵¹ La Grange 1995, 146 and 161.

⁵² La Grange 1995, 347-349.

⁵³ Killian 1984, 135.

⁵⁴ Killian 1984, 161-162.

⁵⁵ La Grange 1995, 225-227. There were 18 letters to Selma, now in the Kurz-Halban archival collection (227), and not a one made it to the published collections of Mahler's letter. Selma Kurz 1874-1933, was one of Mahler's Vienna stars, a lyric-dramatic soprano. She says of him that he turned her into a coloratura soprano from an alto, thereby pointing her on her true artistic path. "Through his will and enthusiasm he got the best and the last effort from me" (Lebrecht 1993, 121-122). As with Mildenburg, it was her talent that attracted Mahler sexually. The affair, if there was one, was brief and has is not documented beyond his passionate letters.

⁵⁶ La Grange 1995, 202, and Killian 1984, 42.

⁵⁷ La Grange 1995, 195.

⁵⁸ La Grange 1995, 233.

⁵⁹ Müller 1989, 200.

⁶⁰ Müller 1989, 202. Alexander Zemlinsky 1871-1942, Vienna Conservatory student and composer, friend to Alma and Gustav Mahler; emigrated to the United States.

⁶¹ Blaukopf, Herta, ed. *Gustav Mahler-Richard Strauss Briefwechsel 1888-1911*.

München-Zurich, 1980, 46-50.

⁶² Henriette Mankiewicz, 1854-1906, artist and family friend, ousted by Alma Mahler.

⁶³ La Grange 1995, 257.

⁶⁴ From a letter from Walter to Ludwig Schiedermaier, purportedly at Mahler's dictation (!) when a program was demanded. Quoted in Floros, Constantin. *Gustav Mahler III Die*

Symphonien. 3 vols. Vol. 3. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1985, 107, and fully discussed in La Grange 1995, 757-758. Natalie has very detailed remarks, partly reproduced by Walter's letter, Killian 1984, 162-164. The *verjüngende Spitze* is a key structural metaphor. After this symphony it will become harder and harder to press Mahler for programs; by the seventh there will be no remarks at all, nor will there be for the ninth or the tenth.

⁶⁵ Killian 1984, 178.

⁶⁶ La Grange 1995, 308.

⁶⁷ La Grange 1995, 328-330 gives the reviews. Mildenburg played a starring role.

⁶⁸ Alma Mahler 1992, 26.

⁶⁹ The worry about misordering of 4 is found in portions of Natalie's MS that were not included in the standard Killian editions; see La Grange 1995, 335, and note.

⁷⁰ La Grange 1995, 341.

⁷¹ Killian 1984, 187.

⁷² Killian 1984, 192-193. "...daß alles auch sich heraus weiter entwickeln muß".

⁷³ Adorno, Theodor W. *Die musikalischen Monographien*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994, 203. "Subterranean communication...as in works of Kafka."

⁷⁴ This was Richard Heuberger with his light opera *Opernball*.

⁷⁵ Blaukopf 1980, 55-66.

⁷⁶ La Grange 1995, 386.

⁷⁷ Theodor Kroyer in *Die Musik* (La Grange 1995, 401).

⁷⁸ La Grange 1995, 424; 428-433.

⁷⁹ Alma Mahler 1992, 32.

⁸⁰ La Grange and Weiß 1996, 104-111, number 14, Dresden, 19 December 1901.

⁸¹ See de la Grange, Henry-Louis. *Gustav Mahler. Volume 3. Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, Appendix 4, Two Letters of Siegfried Lipiner Addressed to Mahler, 955-960.

⁸² Alma Mahler 1992, 42.

⁸³ La Grange and Weiß 1996, 129, number 18, 31 January, 1902.

⁸⁴ La Grange 1995, 467.

⁸⁵ Alma Mahler 1992, 51.

⁸⁶ Alfred Roller, 1864-1935, artist and collaborator with Mahler at Vienna.

⁸⁷ Alma Mahler 1992, 54-55.

⁸⁸ La Grange 1995, 522; from a letter to Ludwig Schiedermaier.

⁸⁹ Alma Mahler 1992, 79.

⁹⁰ La Grange 1995, 499-501.

⁹¹ La Grange 1995, 610-614.

⁹² Alma Mahler 1992, 90.

⁹³ La Grange 1995, 619-620.

⁹⁴ La Grange and Weiß, 1996, 169-179, number 49, Amsterdam, 21 October, 1903.

⁹⁵ Willem Mengelberg (1871-1951), Concertgebouw director and great Mahlerian in his lifetime and for many years after Gustav's death; Alphons Diepenbrock (1862-1921), Dutch composer.

⁹⁶ Müller 1989, 271-273.

⁹⁷ La Grange 1995, 668.

⁹⁸ La Grange 1995, 669-670.

⁹⁹ La Grange 1995, 677.

¹⁰⁰ Alma Mahler 1992, 88-89, 136-137.

¹⁰¹ Alma Mahler 1992, 90; for the sandbox, also 90.

¹⁰² La Grange 1973, 19.

¹⁰³ Walter, Bruno. *Gustav Mahler*. Translated by James Galston, with an essay by Ernst Křenek. New York: The Greystone Press, 1941. [find page]

¹⁰⁴ Müller 1989, 285-286.

¹⁰⁵ Müller 1989, 293-294.

¹⁰⁶ Müller 1989, 296.

¹⁰⁷ Ernst Decsey (1871-1941), critic and friend of the late Mahler. See his memoir as quoted extensively in Lebrecht 1993, 234-250. For “nerve music” see also Müller 1989, 298.

¹⁰⁸ La Grange and Weiß 182, number 64, Heidelberg, February 1904.

¹⁰⁹ Müller 1989, 303-304.

¹¹⁰ See Blaukopf 1980, 83 and 88, for Mahler’s condemnation of the censor’s label of “sexual pathology” on *Salome*; for the Strauss-Mahler correspondence on this issue, 78-95 and notes by Blaukopf, 136-142.

¹¹¹ From a letter in late 1910 to friend Guido Adler, quoted in Floros 1985, 184. For the origin of the “rowing motif” see the same page and commentary by Floros, 184ff. The extraordinary *schattenhalf* Scherzo was to be played “in stetig fortlaufender *müssiger* (pointless) Bewegung” (Floros, 196).

¹¹² La Grange and Weiß, 275, number 164, Amsterdam, 9 March 1906. See also numbers 160, 161, 162.

¹¹³ Haman, Brigitte, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators*. 1966. Munich: Piper, 94ff.

¹¹⁴ Alma Mahler 1992, 123.

¹¹⁵ Adorno 1994, 282-284; Pfitzner's joke is also quoted here in a violent attack on the symphony.

¹¹⁶ Blaukopf 1996, 335, number 360, Maiernigg, August, 1906.

¹¹⁷ La Grange and Weiß, 282, number 173, Salzburg, August 1906.

¹¹⁸ Müller 1989, 338.

¹¹⁹ La Grange and Weiß, 313, number 202, January, 1907.

¹²⁰ La Grange 1984, 32-36.

¹²¹ La Grange 1984, 59-65.

¹²² Putzi may have died from diphtheria, or even both diphtheria and scarlet fever. (La Grange 1999, 689-690).

¹²³ Blaukopf 1996, 365-366, number 394, Toblach, 1908; Alma Mahler 1992, 148-149.

¹²⁴ Blaukopf 1996, 146, number 376, 7 December 1907.

¹²⁵ La Grange 1984, 111.

¹²⁶ Blaukopf and Weiß 1996, 344, number 241, Helsingfors, October, 1907. "National composition here... nordic kitschy harmonizations as national sauce," he says of the music he hears. But later he meets Sibelius, admits he's "an extremely nice person, like all Finns," (345, number 243) and even, one day, asks him works of his should conduct (cf. his chameleonic response to Pfitzner's *Rose* above.)

¹²⁷ La Grange 1984, 133; see 141-145 for more on the Finns and Sibelius.

¹²⁸ La Grange 1984, 149.

¹²⁹ La Grange 1984, 173-176 tells the Vienna farewell.

¹³⁰ Alma Mahler 1992, 188.

¹³¹ La Grange 1984, 229.

¹³² Alma Mahler, 1992, 162-163.

¹³³ La Grange 1984, 286.

¹³⁴ La Grange 1984, 311-312.

¹³⁵ Blaukopf 1996, 365, number 394, Toblach, summer 1908.

¹³⁶ Blaukopf 1996, 370-371, number 399, Toblach, August 1908.

¹³⁷ La Grange 1984, 1170.

¹³⁸ Alma Mahler 1992, 168.

¹³⁹ La Grange and Weiß 362, number 253, Prague, September 8, 1908.

¹⁴⁰ La Grange and Weiß 363, number 254, Prague, September 10, 1908.

¹⁴¹ La Grange 1984, 357.

¹⁴² La Grange 1984, 376; for Ritter's remarks on 9, 1182, 1205, 1211.

¹⁴³ La Grange 1984, 399-401. The sympathetic critic is Heinrich Chevalley. Mahler's conducting style had in his early career been described as jerky and nervous, very different from what is observed here. Pfohl, who had known Mahler since the days of Pollini and hated him since 1897, writes that "Mahler is no longer interesting to musicians. The spirit is gone."

¹⁴⁴ Müller 1989, 379; this is taken from a 1962 interview and is confirmed by a letter from Mahler to Guido Adler of 1910, even to identical vocabulary — *counterweight*, *inner*, *practical* (Blaukopf 1996, 398, number 430, January 1, 1910). "I need practical work as a counterbalance to my enormous inner events in sleep." Alma's amazing memory makes her deliberate distortions seem even more insidious.

¹⁴⁵ Blaukopf 1996, numbers 423, 429, 435.

¹⁴⁶ La Grange and Weiß 1996, 378-404, numbers 266-289.

¹⁴⁷ Blaukopf 1996, 391-392, number 423, Toblach, August 1909.

¹⁴⁸ Critic Paul Bekker, quoted in Floros 1985, 269, alongside a strong demurrer from Adorno: “This is a worse distortion of the truth than the flowers and the animals of the third that got into Mahler’s own head.”

¹⁴⁹ Blaukopf 1996, 391-392, number 423, Toblach, August 1909.

¹⁵⁰ La Grange 1984, 551 and 158.

¹⁵¹ La Grange 1984, 556-569.

¹⁵² Müller 1989, 394-395.

¹⁵³ Alma Mahler 1992, 191-193.

¹⁵⁴ La Grange 1984, 748.

¹⁵⁵ Alma Mahler 1992, 206; see her sparse narrative of the incident, 203-207, and, for greater detail, La Grange 1984, 752-780.

¹⁵⁶ La Grange and Weiß, 456-458, number 345, Munich, September, 1910, and further letters and telegrams associated with the Freud visit, with commentary by the editors, 441-469.

¹⁵⁷ Lebrecht 1993, 256-259.

¹⁵⁸ Alma Mahler 1992, 213. “This is the first piece of jewelry he ever gave me.” There was no engagement ring in 1902, but there had been a wedding ring.

¹⁵⁹ La Grange 1984, 790-800 and Müller 410-414 for these details and comments on the première of 8.

¹⁶⁰ Alma Mahler 1992, 215.

¹⁶¹ Blaukopf 1996, 428, number 463, to George Göhler, February, 1911.

¹⁶² La Grange 1984, 961; Müller 1989, 424-428, and, in Blaukopf, Kurt, *Mahler. Sein Leben, sein Werk in zeitgenössischen Bildern und Texten*. Vienna, 1976, 278 see George Baehr's commentary on "Gustav Mahler and his Illness," by Nicolas Cristy, Beverly Cristy and Barry Wood, Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association, 82, 211f.

¹⁶³ La Grange 1984, 972.

¹⁶⁴ La Grange 1984, 1224 and 1227. "This is a profound misunderstanding of the creative process," Walter writes to Alma. "I only permitted Cooke to have a scholarly conference with examples from the published facsimile," Alma lies. In 1963 she hears the tape of the first recording of portions of the Cooke performing version. "Wunderbar!" As La Grange points out, the materials were about to fall into the public domain. In May, 1963, Alma gives Cooke permission to perform the work anywhere in the world.