INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Beating the Lockdown with Simon Wallfisch & Iain Farrington 1-2

Pre-Recital discussion 3-5

Recital Review 5-6

Dr Jim Pritchard: Tribute to our Co-Founder & First Editor 7

Editorial 8

Contact details 8

In the next edition:

Leslie Bergman reviews Stephen Johnson’s book on Mahler’s 8th symphony

Darren Niman on the Role of Social Media for music societies

Kevin Carey on Historic Budget Recordings

Anthony Raumann GMSUK Chair gives a personal account of the events leading to the Recital

We are living in challenging times with the current lockdown restrictions which, although being eased, are likely to be with us for several months. With this in mind, the members of the committee of the Gustav Mahler Society UK (the Society) and the Gustav Mahler Society in the North and Midlands have been exploring ways of adapting modern technology to serve our Members and support musicians and musicologists who have, or wish to have, an association with us and the wider world by performing recitals or holding lectures for our Members. On 12th April, I contacted the international baritone and cellist Simon Wallfisch and international pianist Iain Farrington who have, in the past, provided highly polished performances for the Society. They agreed with my proposal to prepare a Lockdown Digital Recital for us and we chose a format consisting of a pre recital interview (see directly below) and songs by Simon interspersed with solos from Iain (see below).

The programme was ambitious but Simon and Iain relished the challenge of using their creative and technical expertise to present a full digital recital to concert hall standards. Within the space of a fortnight Simon and Iain had made considerable progress with the recordings and arranged a Zoom meeting with me to record and subsequently edit the material for the pre-recital conversation. The atmosphere was relaxed and the exchanges about the items in the programme showed Simon and Iain’s depth of understanding and appreciation of Mahler’s Jewish background, folk music and Germanic cultural influences and philosophy which shaped his music.
Simon also gave an insight into the difficulty of performing *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and reflected on the simple beauty of *Liebst du um Schönheit* from the *Rückert-Lieder*. Iain provided a background to the rediscovery of *Blumine* in the 1960s and the reasons for Mahler’s decision to remove it from the Second Movement of his 1st Symphony. We did not have time, however, to discuss the piano version of the *Adagietto* from the 5th Symphony. Simon and Iain forwarded copies of all items, except the interview, to the Society before transmission of the YouTube video of the recital at 5pm on 1st May 2020. I created the Society’s text for the introduction to the video release and Simon and Iain gave permission for us to release the video worldwide. I must thank Derek Jones and Darren Niman of the Society in the North and Midlands for arranging distribution of the video link to several of the Mahler Societies and to other organisations worldwide. Derek’s marketing expertise was also very helpful in this regard. I also sent links to Marina Mahler, President of the Mahler Foundation, as well as a selection of professors of UK music colleges. Catherine Alderson also applied her linguistic skills and arranged a translation of the text for the Gustav Mahler Society of Mexico which has a large following. We even pondered the feasibility of finding a member or friend of the Society to arrange a translation into Urdu for the Gustav Mahler Society of Colombo as a mark of respect for its members.

I would describe the preparations as a whirlwind of activity and there was an inevitable frisson of excitement and trepidation in the Raumann household at 5pm on 1st May in view of our efforts as a society to see the project through to fruition. Simon made slight cuts to the pre-recital conversation which ran smoothly. The concert recital was sublime and was a tribute to Simon and Iain’s exceptionally talented and nuanced performances. Simon’s pace was measured to ensure that the full dynamics of his superb voice projected to the audience and his performance of the lieder was heartfelt and full of passion. Iain gave a deep and subtle performance of the piano arrangement of *Blumine* and the *Adagietto* from the 5th Symphony whilst also showing perfect balance in his accompaniment to Simon’s exceptional performance of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and of the *Rückert Lieder*. The Society has received compliments from viewers in the UK and worldwide including one from Mahler’s grand-daughter Marina Mahler who entered a post on the New York Gustav Mahler Society Facebook page. Initially, I felt apprehensive about the project as I have never embarked upon such an adventure and I am thankful to my colleagues who provided advice and support but, ultimately, the project would not have been possible without the drive and creativity of Simon and Iain whose high professional standards ensured that the whole project was such a success. For anyone who has not yet seen the video the link is: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXoVW_CFgbIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXoVW_CFgbIA)

“..."I hope that this is the first of many collaborations with our musicians and musicologists in our efforts to beat the lockdown.”

Anthony Raumann
Pre-Recital Discussion

ANTHONY RAUMANN
in conversation with Simon Wallfisch and Iain Farrington 27th April 2020

AR: Thank you both very much for what you have done for the Society and this collaboration. It's a bit of a proactive adventure isn't it? A first for us and, if I am correct, probably a first for you as performers.

SW/IF: Yes.

AR: I should say, by way of introduction, both Simon and I are extremely well known and very versatile performers. Starting with you Simon, what about your choice of Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and Rückert-Lieder which are very challenging and emotionally very draining?

SW: Well, it's funny because in this project the challenge has not been the musical performance (laughing). Iain and I have done several recitals together and I was really lucky that he asked me to join him in his big Mahler project. Was it last year or even two years ago now?

IF: Well, what I was doing with that particular Mahler series in 2018 was that I was trying to put these songs and the Symphonies in context with all the different music that Mahler had heard and was inspired by and, of course, Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen fed into his own 1st Symphony. But, they themselves are influenced by German, Austrian and Czech folk music: the way he uses drones at the bottom of the keyboard or orchestra, which is something derived from folk music, and also, not so much in Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen but in other parts of his music - in his Symphonies and his songs - there is the Jewish influence.

And we, in fact, started the very first concert of that series with a ‘Kölner Drei’ version, that was done at the time Mahler was himself going to a synagogue as a boy, and then we followed it up with a Czech folk song, which he would have known as well. So, in a way, I love this whole idea, and I think Mahler is quite unique in this respect, that his music is influenced by all these different genres, different nationalities, which come together in his own style and I think, in a way, that is one of his great gifts to the world: his bringing together so many different aspects of music.

I think that the great thing about Simon is that, because we know each other and we have a lot of fun and like to muck about in rehearsal, we are up for a challenge and for trying these things out and would never say no to putting all these different styles, one after another.

AR: As a performer, what would you say are the challenges of performing these lieder?

SW: There is an enormous range in these songs. I don't know why it is with the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen that young singers take them on quite early because, actually, they are extremely hard. Not only do you need an enormous vocal range to get through some of these songs but you also need to be able to have this real pianissimo at the top and you need every single colour on every single extreme of the vocal palate. That is very challenging but so much fun and, actually, so is the act of recording them - that is, performing them - but you get much more into the subtleties of the score that perhaps you couldn't do if you are performing them with a large orchestra in a big concert hall; and he wants things whispered, Pianissimo at the top of the voice and you can't whisper with a full symphony orchestra behind you no matter how quietly they're playing.

So, it's an effect that has to be brought up a level but in this project I am in my back bedroom with two beautiful microphones about 12 inches away. I can whisper if I like (laughing) so it's ...

AR: It can be an advantage can't it?

SW: Yeah! An intimate chamber version, which is so much fun. These songs are fun because they're so challenging.

IF: The text, of course, is by Mahler himself but it is very influenced by folk song and, in fact, one of the things that we did in those earlier recitals when we put these in context was that we did the folk songs when we put these in context. We did the folk songs which the text was based on; and he uses colloquialisms and imitation birds and I think that is really telling. He is deliberately tapping into popular style, popular language and so, as you say, it's about ordinary folk. It's kind of trying to get the idea of people taking a stroll in the countryside. Then, as you say, it being Mahler, there is a sting in the tail with "Nein! Nein!" Things aren't looking so rosy and then it turns extremely bloody in the next song.

AR: I was just wondering, Simon, from your perspective, singing Mahler's lieder, I know
that with your German connections as well that you have that innate feel and I have it within myself, being on my father's side from Vienna, and his family from Pilsen and Budapest. It's in-built in a way into the psyche with, for example, Schubert's works. Are there other romantic composers, such as Brahms, whose music you really associate with and perform? What do you think are the differences and similarities? It may be crass to ask the question but I have to understand the difference between your appreciation of these different types of romantic composers?

SW: I am particularly drawn to composers like Mahler, but there are others as well, who I just think: Wow! I would love to meet that guy and there's something in his cultural background, as Iain was talking about earlier. You know, the very, very mixed, Austro Hungarian Empire, around what is the Czech Republic, was so, so heavily mixed. In Mahler's day, when he was born, German was the spoken language but Czech was just around the corner and there was of course a strong Czech nationalist feeling but there was also a very strong German, and Austrian and also a very strong Jewish culture. There were so many different ways of associating with being Jewish and I suppose that my family background, and I think what you were talking about just now perhaps with your family background, was more of a middle European culture, soaking up all the high Germanic culture that there was and then regurgitating it in a very, very eclectic and unique way. And I think that Mahler had that and...
Recital Review

KEVIN CAREY experiences a balance between robustness and refinement in the GMSUK Recital

GMSUK Sponsored YouTube Recital, 1.v.20: Simon Wallfisch (baritone), Iain Farrington (Piano).

As Simon Wallfisch notes in his conversation with Anthony Raumann (see above), piano recital performances of Mahler songs allow the singer to get much closer to the dynamics which the lyrics require; and the piano has to do all the work of a full orchestra. The overall objective, then, is to establish balance between robustness and refinement and this they surely achieved. The recital set out, not inappropriately, with Mahler’s first mature work, the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfaring Lad). What Mahler called the Piano-Reduction was composed between 1883 and 1885 and it was orchestrated, as it was always meant to be, in 1893, constituting the first full realisation of the orchestral song. Thus, the challenge for the pianist is not just to take the piano score on its merits but also to reflect some of the orchestral experience back into the playing, a feat which Iain Farrington, with his unique experience of creating the piano arrangements of Mahler’s Symphonies, accomplished consistently, bringing colour and contrast to his playing over and above that required by the initial score. The challenge for the singer is of a different order altogether because it involves a judgment about the temperament of the protagonist. This short Spring cycle owes a good deal to Schubert’s extended Winterreise (1827) - not least in much shared vocabulary - but whereas the judgment in the Schubert is to gauge how mad its protagonist, Mahler requires the singer to decide with what degree of irony Mahler’s text and music should be treated. At this point in Mahler’s career he could be accused of acute romantic sensibility with its three-way symbiosis, like a plait, of love, nature and death, but he had not yet reached the stage where he perceived himself as fundamentally unstable.

AR: I wanted to say, on behalf of the Gustav Mahler Society UK and also the Gustav Mahler Society in the North and Midlands, that we are very much thrilled with the opportunity to work with both of you and I must say, long may it last because you both have that vitality and a real drive and that’s what we love about your performances, whenever you have performed for us and with the release of the videos, our members will really enjoy the performances, as indeed, will other members of the public who tune in. So, a small society working with two big sharks in the musical world no doubt. I am joking of course! But I wish you all the best in your careers and also keep safe, keep healthy, as I also wish our members and listeners all good things for the future once this Coronavirus threat has been sorted out. Thank you very much indeed both of you.

SW: Thank you very much Anthony. Thanks to the Gustav Mahler Society for your support.

AR: Oh, you are most welcome.
The challenge begins with the first song where the rejected lover, contemplating his beloved's wedding to another, sinks into isolationist despair. Wallfisch, correctly in my view, chose the ironic route, laying it on so heavy that he took on the two outer sections more slowly than either of my Fischer-Dieskau recordings (Furtwängler 1955; Kubelik 1964). The middle section, supposed to summon up the countervailing joys of nature, is also deeply ironic because the protagonist knows perfectly well that a bright morning does not, after all, compensate for an irreversible jilting. The second song is the same but it simply puts all the brittle joy at the beginning and all the heartache at the end. In the pre recital interview Wallfisch noted that the musical whisper is perfectly well that a bright morning does not, after all, compensate for an irreversible jilting. The second song is the same but it simply puts all the brittle joy at the beginning and all the heartache at the end. In the pre recital interview Wallfisch noted that the musical whisper is possible with a piano but not with an orchestra and he introduces it so well in the second half of this song. The third song, opening with a knife in the jilted breast, presents a new set of challenges which the duo met with more than a little courage. The song begins with the first outburst of what was to become Mahler's demonic side, demanding an almost coarse delivery combining menace with self-pity and, after a passage of eerie recollection during which Wallfisch takes some pardonable liberties with the intonation, there is a furious, almost tuneless outburst before the song subsides into contemplation of the grave.

Farrington's touch, from the dreamy to the drastic, was impeccable and Wallfisch kept his pitch superbly, just avoiding the tumble into the abyss. Knowing how to treat the final song after all this more or less confected drama, is never easy but I think the correct approach is to be somewhat forgiving and let the abandoned lover fall asleep covered in the blossom of the linden tree is the kindest solution; to do otherwise is to put the lover's stance at odds with music which is all about resignation, tender but with the Mahlerian undertone of instability. Iain Farrington then played Blumine, the movement removed from Mahler's First Symphony (1885-8). I have never understood why there is any controversy about Mahler's decision to extract this piece as he never showed any sign of wanting to restore it after the Symphony was published in its final version in 1899 for no other reason, it seems to me, than because it does not fit with the rest, largely composed, as it was, for quite another purpose. It is no more than a pretty C-Major melody 'as Farrington admitted in the pre recital interview, and although he did his best with it, it is more of a curiosity than a lost treasure. Quite a different vocal challenge is presented by The Fünf Lieder nach Rückert (Five Rückert Songs) (1901-02) which formed the core of what became the published Seven Last Songs because, apart from more or less relating to the romantic plait mentioned earlier, the songs are not connected and are, musically and lyrically, of variable quality. They were not performed in the published order for what turned out to be very good reasons. Liebst du um Schönheit is the only song Mahler wrote for Alma and it immediately shows Farrington as a sensitive accompanist in contrast with his heroic solo playing; they sing and play it relatively straight, with more than a nod to Richard Strauss, even though there is the now developed Mahlerian self-parody of despair. Um Mitternacht, of course, is not a lied at all but is a contrapuntal symphonic piece which proceeds with grandeur and concludes with one of Mahler's best climaxes to which both give due weight. This is another example, if one were needed, of the truth that bad, strophic verse with an excrably bathetic rhyme scheme is no bar to sublime music. Ich atmet' einen linden Duft is a pretty little thing, based on an untranslatable pun on "lind" and "linde" (soft and lime tree respectively) which brought out some of Farrington's most delicate playing and some of Wallfisch's sweetest singing, I could well have done without Blicke mir nicht, possibly the worst song Mahler wrote in his mature period but the duo got the best out of it. Compensation, however, was at hand. Had Mahler written nothing but Ich bin der welt abhanden Gekommen he would still be more than a footnote in musical history for this surely ranks with Strauss's Four Last Songs and it brought out, in their final duet, all the...
best qualities we had enjoyed in the recital, a delicacy which Mahler can never quite let be, a restlessness which is always looking for calm, and a resort to resignation which never quite comes off. Overall, what Mahler's complexity requires is infinite inflection and that, particularly in this last song, was what Wallfisch and Farrington provided.

The recital finished with Farrington's piano arrangement of the famous, maybe infamous, Adagietto from the Fifth Symphony which, thanks to Visconti on the one hand and the much more culpable Bernstein on the other, because he should have known better, this is the most pulled-about piece of Mahler. The first thing to say, then, is that Farrington played it at the correct tempi with the proper degree of contrast; this may be a love song but it's not a nostalgic ballad for a lost love although it does share some of the other-worldliness of Ich bin der Welt which preceded it.

***************

Dr. Jim Pritchard

ANTHONY RAUMANN GMSUK Chair pays tribute to the First Editor of The Wayfarer and Co-Founder of the Society

In 2001 Dr Jim Pritchard, former chairman of the Wagner Society, embarked upon a new venture and became co-founder, with Gina Brown, of the Gustav Mahler Society UK (the Society). He held the position of Chairman until 2012 during which time he secured the firm foundation upon which the Society has thrived.

Jim Pritchard’s outstanding contribution to the Society is undoubtedly his brainchild The Wayfarer, the flagship of the Society which he has edited with total dedication for almost twenty years. His reviews and articles have been masterly, thought provoking and informative as well as humorous. They are a testament to the profundity of his knowledge and passion for Mahler's work and all aspects of his life. I have kept a full collection of The Wayfarer since I joined the Society shortly after its inception and I would not dream of parting with it.

I have made my own modest contributions to The Wayfarer on occasion and other members have regularly submitted high quality reviews of orchestral performances, recitals, books and articles, which Jim Pritchard has selected carefully and arranged in what is a readily accessible and entertaining publication, which Members can enjoy both in the printed and online versions. I marvel at Jim's creativity and determination over the years to produce the numerous editions of this excellent journal.

Alas, Jim Pritchard has decided to retire as editor but thankfully another Committee member, Kevin Carey, has agreed to take on this important role within the Society. Kevin has an encyclopaedic knowledge of classical musical discography including many recordings of Mahler's works and, like Jim, is very knowledgeable about all aspects of Mahler's works. I am confident that with Kevin at the helm The Wayfarer is in safe hands and I wish him many happy and successful years in his new role.

I would, above all, like to thank Jim Pritchard for his outstanding work as Editor and hope that he continues to make contributions to The Wayfarer and to the Society.

So, on behalf of all our members, Cheers Jim!

Anthony
Editorial

Just as I became the Chair of one of the UK’s leading charities less than a year after the financial crisis broke in September 2008, I join the Wayfarer at a time of crisis for live arts performance in general and for live music in particular. Brave though the lock-down efforts have been, man cannot live forever on a diet of home-produced recitals, no matter how ingenious or good. In a paradoxical way, our own splendid recital reminded me of what we are missing.

Of all the composers, alongside Wagner and Bruckner, the performance of Mahler’s music will be most greatly affected by COVID-19 and its aftermath because of the scale of the works and the concomitant requirement for a large audience. If we think of the Symphony of a Thousand, double the size of the stage and halve the size of the audience to maintain physical (not social) distancing, we can easily see how badly the economics will turn out. If music and theatre are the last aspects of our activities to come out of lock-down then Mahler will be at the back end of the musical freeing-up.

It is therefore important that we consider carefully what we must do to ensure the survival of a Mahler performing tradition that stretches back to the composer/conductor himself.

In the first place and, admittedly somewhat passively, we should take the time to explore the more than a century of Mahler recording to deepen our appreciation of the history. Secondly, we should consider how best to support artists developing their skills in the field of Mahler’s music and, thirdly, if the physical distancing can be managed for large orchestras, we may need to be part of coalitions to finance Mahler concerts.

The Society already uses the majority of its funds, derived from membership fees, to support Mahler education and performance and we will continue to do this in a much more testing environment. The COVID-19 virus has shown how fragile is the whole of our institutional framework such that every institution and organisation we can think of is now in financial crisis, so we will all have to think very carefully - particularly those whose income or pension has been severely damaged by the lock-down - which good causes we choose to support. In the grand scale of things, Mahler is, after all, only a tiny part of the lives of most people but let us hope that we all find it possible to include the promotion of the music of Mahler in our portfolio of much needed benevolence.