In the Labyrinth of Identities: Michael Haas
Rediscovering Hans/Hanuš Winterberg
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What does nationality say about a composer? Stravinsky is credited with saying that a composer should always have his passport in his pocket – that is, he should always be certain of his musical origins and positioning. For an artist deeply anchored in the Russian tradition, this poses less of a problem than it does for one whose formative experiences came out of the cultural melting pot of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy – one whose identity is multiple in nature. For Hans/Hanuš Winterberg, this multiple identity involved being musically rooted in the Bohemian-Moravian tradition, being close to the second Vienna School, speaking better German than Czech, and being able to either avow or ignore his Jewish identity until 1939, when ignoring it was no longer possible. Hans/Hanuš Winterberg’s life and work offer a prime example of the fate of art and artists when politics demands clear-cut identities, and where ambivalence is the source of inspiration and creativity.

Winterberg was born in Prague on 23 March 1901, the son of factory owner Rudolf Winterberg and his wife Olga (née Popper). He came from a Jewish family.

His father’s father Leopold (Lôwi) Winterberg was a rabbi and cantor in Aussig (Ústí nad Labem), and later the first rabbi in Prague-Zizkov. Hans learned piano with Terezie Goldschmidtova (born Thèrese Wallerstein; later murdered in Maly Trostinez in 1942), and later studied composition with Fidelio F. Finke and conducting with Alexander Zemlinsky at the German Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Prague. In 1939/1940, he studied composition with Alois Hába at the Prague State Conservatory, where Gideon Klein was a fellow student. In between his studies with Finke, Zemlinsky and Hába, he worked as a répétiteur in Brno (Brünn) and Jablonec nad Nisou (Gablonz an der Neiße).

In the Czechoslovakian census of 1930, Rudolf Winterberg registered his family as linguistically and culturally “Czech,” due to a certain loyalty to then-President Masaryk. However, this was probably also to avoid losing government contracts for the Fröhlich & Winterberg factory. On May 3 of this same year, Hans Winterberg married the German-Bohemian composer Maria Maschat, a Roman Catholic and former piano prodigy. On 3 April 1935, their daughter Ruth was born. When the Nazis occupied Prague in 1939, making it the capital of the so-called Bohemian Protectorate, the marriage between Maria and Hans Winterberg was officially registered as a “mixed-race marriage.”

In 1941, Maria and Ruth received German citizenship, and were registered as living apart from Hans Winterberg, beginning in 1942. The marriage was officially dissolved on 2 December 1944 “under the terms of the Reich Marriage Act.” On 25 September 1943, Winterberg was compelled to take up forced labor. On 26 January 1945, he was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. Due to his late arrival, he escaped the deportation of musicians in October 1944 that sent Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Haas and Hans Krása to their deaths in Auschwitz.
On 8 May 1945, he was liberated by Soviet soldiers. During his imprisonment, he composed the *Theresienstadt Suite* for piano. Though not allowed to leave the Ghetto until June 3, on June 7 he returned to his former apartment.

The Fröhlich & Winterberg factory, property of his father Rudolf and Rudolf’s brother-in-law Hugo Fröhlich, had been Aryanized in 1940. Rudolf had died in 1932, while Hugo Fröhlich perished in Dachau in December 1940. Hans’ mother was shot in August 1942 in the Maly Trostinez extermination camp. Due to the Beneš decrees expelling German-Czechs from Czechoslovakia, Maria and their daughter Ruth had to leave the country in 1945. The marriage had by then already fallen apart and thus, the enforced divorce under Nazi law had become a reality.

On 27 December 1945, they registered their residence in Ammerland, south of Munich. In June 1946, Winterberg, who was unaffected by the Beneš decrees since his family had registered themselves as “Czech” in 1930, applied for a passport in order to retrieve manuscripts that – or so he argued to the Czech authorities – he had, in an effort to ensure their safekeeping, left with friends elsewhere in Europe. If it had been clear to the Czech authorities that Winterberg wanted to immigrate to Germany, the passport and travel most likely would not have been approved.

But did he intend from the beginning to not return to Prague? Prague had emerged from the war largely unscathed, while a significant portion of Munich had been razed to the ground. Winterberg had lost virtually his entire family in the Shoah. For most survivors, a return or actual relocation to the country of the Nazi criminals was unthinkable.

Yet all the people Winterberg had been closest to in pre-war Prague were now either dead or living in Germany. Apparently, Czech acquaintances, pointing to his German-language background, also suggested that he move to Bavaria, as he explained in a 1955 letter to his former fellow student in Prague, composer Heinrich Simbriger.

In 1938, this area was surrendered to Hitler’s Germany by Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini in the so-called Munich Agreement.

In general, however, the term also referred to German speakers in all the border areas of Czechoslovakia. Just over 23% of the total Czech population was German-speaking, including nearly all Czech Jews. However, the German-speaking Czech population also included Czech nationalists such as Bedřich Smetana (born Friedrich Smetana, 1824 – 1884), who is still celebrated as a Czech national composer today due to works such as the *Má vlast* symphonic cycle and operas such as *Dalibor* and *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*).

For many Czechs, including the composers Pavel Haas, Erwin Schulhoff and Hans Krása, German was a language that said nothing about their national identity. Some of the most significant German-language authors of the first half of the 20th century were from Prague, including Franz Werfel, Max Brod, Egon Erwin Kisch, Franz Kafka and Rainer Maria Rilke. It would be absurd to call these figures “Sudeten Germans.” However, this is what befell the German-speaking composers Hans Winterberg, Walter Süskind, Hans Feiertag and Kurt Seidl – all of whom worked in Prague – in the Prague-based German-language music press of the 1930s. Feiertag’s case in particular illustrates the term’s abstruse and problematic nature, as he was a native of Vienna. As a portmanteau, the term “Sudeten German” was ultimately used for all German-speaking Czechs expelled from Czechoslovakia following the Beneš decrees of 1945.

Winterberg belonged to the German-speaking Jewish cultural elite in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period. As a student at both the Prague State Conservatory and the German Academy, he was influenced on the one hand by the Bohemian-Moravian tradition. He is indebted to Janáček especially in his use of folkloric elements, but above all in his fondness for polyrhythmic structures – a characteristic that links him with Pavel Haas, Hans Krása, Bohuslav Martinů and Erwin Schulhoff.
On the other hand, he is also close to the Second Viennese School, with this influence certainly transmitted through Zemlinsky. He wrote about his career in an autobiographical sketch: “Originally inspired by Arnold Schoenberg, in the end, I found a polyrhythmic, polytonal path.” Just as Winterberg had a very personal, individual concept of “impressionistic” composition, so was his transformation of Schoenberg’s technique entirely unorthodox, and adapted to his own needs. In his piano cycle Neoimpressionistische Stücke in 12-Tönen (Neo-Impressionistic Pieces in 12 Tones) he placed the supposedly irreconcilable spheres into a single context – certainly not without irony, but nevertheless in a fashion entirely characteristic of his work. In 1967, he wrote in a letter to Wolfgang Fortner: “As a composer, I’ve got to know, so to speak, all of the music-developments of our century and have worked within each of them, starting with Impressionism or Expressionism from the 1920s, during a period when serial and atonal compositions from Schoenberg and his followers were also current. Later, and since my emigration from Prague (after the Second World War), I’ve intensively followed new music developments, which have taken place specifically here in Germany. Nevertheless, after many long decades of musical roundabouts, I’ve finally found for myself, even if only in my more advanced years, a personal style that not just in my own opinion, represents something akin to a free variation of serialism.”

Yet what links Winterberg most deeply with the spirit of the Czech and particularly Prague culture of the 1920s and 1930s is the element of the fantastic, the surreal, the uncanny, as we encounter it in Kafka, and in the operas of Schulhöff, Krása and Martinů. Winterberg did not compose any operas. However, he thought and conceived his pieces theatrically. Like Bartók and Stravinsky’s Firebird, his ballets can be performed in concert as free-standing tone poems. The actions are almost always of a phantasmagoric nature, as seen in Ballade um Pandora, Die Sonnengötter, Himmlische Hochzeit, Mandragora – Mystisches Ballett and Moor-Mythos (Ballad of Pandora, The Sun Gods, Celestial Wedding, Mandragora – Mystical Ballet, and The Myth of the Moor.)

His orchestral works are also programmatically conceived. These include Arena 20 Jahrhundert, Stationen für Orchester and Symphonischer Epilog (The Arena of the 20th Century, Stations for Orchestra, Symphonic Epilogue), to mention just a few. He referred to his Symphonische Reise- Ballade (Symphonic Travel Ballad) as a “surrealistic dream ballet,” and provides his idea of a storyline in the foreword. Even in his symphonies and piano concertos, Winterberg seems to carry the listener out of reality through a musical wormhole into an uncanny world of irreality; yet they are conceived with such architectonic precision that they never lose themselves in associational flourishes. Winterberg also left behind an extensive, highly demanding and rewarding body of chamber-music for a wide range of ensembles, as well as numerous piano works and songs with piano or orchestral accompaniment. One can assume that Winterberg’s music represents a path that other composers of the Czech prewar avant-garde would have taken had they survived.

Quite a few compositions by the introverted and reclusive composer were performed and recorded for broadcast during his lifetime, but none was published. (To be completed in next edition.)

Jascha Horenstein (1898-1973) was part of the bridge between conductors who knew Mahler and the new stereo recording generation. He was born in Kiev to Jewish parents who moved to Königsberg in 1906 and then to Vienna in 1911 where he began his musical studies in 1916 under Joseph Marx and Schreker. In 1920 he moved to Berlin working as an Assistant to Furtwangler at the Berlin Philharmonic with spells at the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

He became Principal Conductor of the Dusseldorf Opera in 1928 and its music Director a year later but was forced to resign in 1933 by the Nazis; it was the only permanent post he was ever to hold. After the War he resumed his career in Europe and was particularly admired in England where he was the Guest Conductor with the LSO, and in 1961 he made his debut at Covent Garden with Fidelio.

Throughout his career he was a champion of Mahler, Bruckner and his friend Nielsen, all unfashionable at the time, marked by the Vox first studio and second commercial (after Walter 1938) recording of Mahler 9 with the VSO in 1952.

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As I studied the life of the man in more detail, I became aware of a situation to which enough prominence is still not given. I refer to the fact that during his decade in charge of music and opera in Vienna, a large amount of his time was spent conducting. There, and in other parts of Europe, his own works and, perhaps more importantly, the output of all the famous composers we know, were performed.

He was probably the greatest conductor of all time but remember there was no radio, television or any other media form, by which to judge. As a result, there is too little information and knowledge to support my assertion. We only have critics' notices and, fortunately, some comment by that great conductor Otto Klemperer, who was probably the only person of his stature who actually saw Mahler conducting, when, as a young man, he would have attended his concerts.

I think to support my view that he was the greatest conductor of all time, I need to explain the history of conducting and the role the conductor plays.

Conducting, as we know it today, started during the last two decades of the 19th century. Thus, it is now about 140 years since a maestro first regularly stood on a podium in front of a group of musicians.

You may well ask what happened before? The answer is that it's part fact, part myth, somewhat apocryphal and dependent on what you may have seen and read. Before the time of the 'Maestro', symphonic, concerto and other orchestra work was led by the concertmaster, or any other 'group' leader. This was usually the principal first violin player or, with regard to a concerto, the soloist himself. Often it would be the composer, but not as a conductor as we currently recognise.

It was only about 1880 that Hans von Bülow (1830 - 1894), would have stood before what we recognise as an orchestra and 'conducted' in the style to which we are now accustomed. It started in that way, about that time.

Perhaps readers might remember the occasion, quite recently, when Daniel Barenboim walked off of the podium at an appropriate point and sat down amongst the audience, letting the orchestra get on with it. It makes you think, but that is another subject!

How the advent of a conductor occurred, and when or why, is not entirely clear. It is possible that musical compositions were getting more complicated and demanding; also the size of the orchestras was growing. But surely the work of Mozart and Beethoven had at their time been as demanding as the Mahler and Bruckner works had become at the end of the 19th century?

It was expected when new works were presented that Brahms and Tchaikovsky and others would have held the baton. It was not necessarily good conducting, but probably more a question of interpretation, of what they as composers, had intended. It was probably also felt that orchestras should be led by a skilled musician although the likes of Richard Strauss and others may have introduced other views on the subject. Of course, the exception to the rule (there is always one), must be Gustav Mahler. Whether or not he is one of the greatest composers of all time will always be the subject of debate. What has to be accepted, is that he was certainly the greatest conductor of all time, as attested to by Otto Klemperer who as a young man actually saw him conduct.

In the 14 decades which this brief history covers, there appears to be only one other contestant for the title of the greatest.

That is Toscanini, and I will deal later with that statement, except to note that when Mahler left the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1910, he was succeeded by Toscanini. Hans von Bülow was born in 1830 and died in 1894 and, as stated earlier, was really the first of those maestros (as they became) who changed it all.

One of the reasons for conductors being created in the form that we now know, was due to the popularity of opera from the 19th and into the 20th centuries. The fact is, that the conductors to whom I will draw your attention, made their reputations in the Pit rather than on the Podium. It was from where they operated, and then graduated and eventually made their reputations.

I set out below a series of names and dates of the most famous and successful conductors who commenced from the end of the 19th and then into the century that followed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Death Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hans Richter</td>
<td>1843</td>
<td>1916</td>
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<td>Arthur Nikisch</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>1922</td>
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<td>Gustav Mahler</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1911</td>
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<td>Felix Weingartner</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>1942</td>
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<td>Arturo Toscanini</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willem Mengelberg</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1951</td>
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<td>Serge Koussevitzky</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td>Bruno Walter</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<td>Thomas Beecham</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>1961</td>
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<td>Leopold Stokowski</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<td>Otto Klemperer</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1973</td>
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<td>Wilhelm Furtwangler</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fritz Reiner</td>
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The reader will note that I have set out conductors in the order of their birth dates rather than the date of their demise, but if this list is read in conjunction with what is written, the reader can relate as necessary to this history.
Otto Klemperer, who died in 1973, was the last of these early famous conductors and there have, of course, been many others in the last 40/50 years.

So after Hans von Bulow being credited with the commencement of conducting as we know it, the next to continue the process was Hans von Richter. Now he was in competition with Mahler in the period before Mahler was appointed supremo at Vienna around 1897. Although Mahler then reigned supreme for ten years, Richter held many important posts and further established the cult of maestro.

Another competitor at that stage was Arthur Nikisch who was also in some form of competition with Mahler, but history repeated itself in the sense that Mahler reigned supreme whilst Nikisch built a fine career in Europe, and as he died in 1922, he had that additional ten or so years at the forefront of conducting. The next notable was Felix Weingartner, whose influence lasted much longer than the others, only dying in 1942.

It was the next big name, Arturo Toscanini, who then reigned supreme for many, many years in comparison with the others. Toscanini is recognised as one of the greatest conductors of all time but that is because lasting until 1957 most of the recent writers and commentators had actually seen him conduct, but of course none of these (other than Klemperer) had actually seen Mahler working in the usual environment, or the specific environment that was Vienna under Mahler 1897-1907, where only literary records are available by which to judge. Those records would be the various concerts conducted at various times and the comments of the critics.

Although in the following years there were other outstanding conductors considered to be in the first league like Wilhelm Furtwängler and possibly Bruno Walter, the fact remains that Mahler and Toscanini have to be recognised as the greatest conductors of all time, albeit on different evidence.

Bruno Walter was in fact a student of Mahler’s and probably worked more closely with him than any others and not as a competitor as in the case of Richter and Nikisch.

So we have to examine and consider Mahler and Toscanini in a different manner, although it is academic as to who may or may not have been the greatest. In fact, is it important, other than to put things into perspective? Even today if the man in the street were asked to name a conductor it would be Toscanini. I suppose that means he is the best known, but who in today’s world would pick out of the blue, an answer that would have suggested Mahler?

Inevitably, as Mahler has gained recognition and is revered by so many (but not enough), there is debate amongst his fans as to who performs his music the best. At one stage in various essays, I was advocating that young conductors would do best as a result of having a different perspective. Now I am not so sure. I can only consider the more contemporary conductors like Solti, Bernstein, Barbirolli, Karajan, Abbado and Rattle, although there are many others.

There are those who would be very upset if I omitted the ailing Klaus Tennstedt, and I am inclined to agree. Somehow or other Ivan Fischer rarely gets mentioned and he and his orchestras are one of the more natural central European figures. One also has to distinguish between performances on record, video or in the concert hall.

In the case of Mahler in particular with so much vocal work, one has to take into account the choirs used in any performance. So how do you decide?

It is, of course, at the end of the day, a personal choice.

I am writing about Mahler and me and so I can only give and want to give my personal views.

If I was in my desert island dream, would I be taking a video, a DVD? Obviously not a live performance. So how do I go about this complex selection?

I come to the conclusion that with so many gifted professionals and such technical brilliance, what matters most is the music. I have been trying to listen more intently and disregard the peripheral elements.

That said, Solti’s 8th with the Chicago Symphony stands out in my mind as does Tennstedt also with the 8th.

The last movements of the 3rd with Abbado I find totally sublime. The young Daniel Harding (in his 40s) who is also president of the Gustav Mahler Society, gave a memorable performance of the Resurrection which I was able to attend in the new concert hall in Paris.

I choose not to mention versions I have not enjoyed. I don't care whether movements have been reversed in order. It is the music that attracts me not the conductor’s musicology.
Before trying to analyse Cate Haste's biography of Alma Mahler objectively, it is important to take her at her own word. In the Foreword, she is perfectly clear that she likes Alma Mahler and part of her purpose is to contest the "poisonous legend" Alma left behind. To this end she says new light is cast on this most complex of women by her diaries which, she says, are more reliable than her more retrospective writings. I wonder, is there really a diarist without at least some notion of an historical verdict? Do we really write diaries simply to get things out of our system? As Alma is shown by Haste to be subject to wild mood swings, it is hardly credible that, at least some of the time, she was not self-consciously writing for her legacy. In spite of her 'Ackroyd-lite' technique, mercilessly chronological, piling entry upon entry from diaries and letters, we learn nothing much that we did not already know about this most paradoxical of women, who is best illustrated by two quotations. First, Albrecht Joseph, later her daughter Anna Mahler's husband and Werfel's Secretary: "Alma's unique gift was ..... a profound, uncanny understanding of what it was that (creative) men tried to achieve, an enthusiastic, orgiastic persuasion that they could do what they aimed at ... and that she fully understood what it was ... (which) made those whom she loved regard her as a demi-goddess"; and it is true without the shadow of a doubt that she turned Werfel from a clique poet into a major commercial success. Secondly, Krenek, a student of Schreker and a short-term husband of Anna, wrote: "... (she had) the knack of turning life into a dizzying carousel ... an extravagantly festooned battle ship ... with the same style as Wagner's Brunnhilde transposed to the atmosphere of Die Fledermaus"; she wanted, he concluded, to make people "helpless subjects of her power". Anna believed that her mother's jealousy was a key to her power. These two views are far from contradictory and, indeed, constitute a tortured form of symbiosis, but the overall conclusion for me is that nothing she says is to be taken half so seriously as it usually is, particularly when something she says is lifted as a proof-text. From the diaries we learn that she was a politically conservative, respectable young woman tortured by her loss of space given to her toyings and desire; she was anti-Semitic largely because she associated Jews, not Judaism as a whole, with left-wing radicalism, but she had relationships, physical and intellectual, predominantly with Jews including her partners. This stance persisted right up until the publication of her And The Bridge Is Love in 1959 when her collaborator had to remove numerous offensive anti-Semitic references. Although she was constitutionally restless, she was capable of making adjustments and re-writing her own history to enable her physical and emotional survival.

If her diaries and letters and those of her partners are anything to go by, she did not enjoy what we might think of as a normal sexual relationship with any of them, Kokoschka and Werfel at least being decidedly perverted. Haste might have been more honest had she entitled the book Passionate Body but, of course, that would never do!

All this suits Haste's style extremely well. She spends her first 100 pages writing about the lead-up to Alma's marriage to Mahler, with an enormous amount of space given to her toyings and first kiss with Klimt, the loss of her virginity to Zemlinsky and her tortuously tortured relationship with Kokoschka. By contrast, she only spends 75 of the 400 pages of her text on her life with Mahler, where she says nothing new, before going on to Gropius and, finally, Werfel.

There are two claims to be disentangled here, the first broad, the second narrower. The first is the claim that Alma's relationship with creative men was central to her life and theirs, where the diaries are, to use a common phrase, all over the place; but Haste is not able to substantiate this claim because she shows no evidence of knowing anything about painting (Klimt, Kokoschka), music (Zemlinsky, Mahler, Krenek, Schoenberg), architecture (Gropius) or literature (Werfel); and she is unable to put these figures into their extraordinarily rich contexts of Vienna between 1890 and 1914, Vienna in the Great War and Europe between the two Wars. Werfel occupies nearly half of the book which is justified in terms of the chronological span of his relationship with Alma but, in spite of his enormous literary success while he was alive, who really remembers him now?
Compared with the others, the Mahler legacy is towering but in his less than 20% coverage Haste gives no more than one line to each of the Symphonies she bothers to mention, and she makes no mention of the VPO's valedictory 9th under Walter, led by Mahler's brother-in-law Arnold Rose before the Anschluss. There is no evidence here of Michael White's claim (Wayfarer Issue 19-3) that she was Mahler's great advocate after his death. Haste's last statement is that Alma was much more driven by her musical creativity than her admiration for creative men, which leads to the second claim. This narrower claim, but one which is central to Mahlerian interests, is that Mahler stifled Alma's compositional genius, a charge which she makes repeatedly in her diaries and letters up until his death; and, indeed, his pre-marital letter to her is crystal clear on the point and his apology for his folly only came just before he died. But here is the critical piece of evidence, written as a note to introduce the record of Alma's 17 published songs: "Though Alma Schindler was a prolific composer, only seventeen of her songs survive in published form" (my italics). There are two intriguing aspects to this claim. First, in a book almost entirely composed of diary entries and letters, there is no mention of Alma composing after Mahler's death except for "a few lieder". Haste says this is not clear: "Her silence perhaps came about because after a gap of ten years, with no opportunity to practise, she no longer had the confidence." In the light of her general behaviour, this is hardly plausible.

The claim that she was "prolific" is set down as follows: "Her works are estimated to comprise perhaps as many as a hundred lieder and various instrumental pieces; many are assumed to have been lost, either in the incinerated ruins of war-time Vienna or mislaid during her flight to exile in America. Her 1898-1902 diaries mention in all around seventy-three songs and she also wrote piano music and chamber music including a violin sonata and a fragmentary piano trio. "In 1948 Alma wanted to go to Vienna to see what had happened to ... her manuscripts", so we know from this evidence that she left them behind in her flight to America. There is no evidence that she ever copied her work or deposited originals or copies with anybody when she left. The surmise that she might have lost her music during the flight is without foundation. By far the best passage in the book is Haste's gripping account of Alma and Werfel's flight in 1940 from Vienna via a circuitous route, including crossing the Pyrenees on foot, to America. Now she left Vienna with two suitcases, which might have easily contained her music. By the time she reached the Franco-Spanish border she had 12 pieces of luggage, all of which an American official escorted across the border by train as she and Werfel crossed on foot. Her hand luggage over the mountains included the original autographed copy of Bruckner's 3rd Symphony which she clearly thought much more valuable than her own music.

Haste has no explanation for her indifference although there is some evidence that Alma regretted it evermore as she got closer to death. Alma's problem with composition, it seems to me, again attested in the diaries, is that she was incapable of the sustained application required by autodidacts which, necessarily, women with compositional ambition in her time needed to be. I think that Haste has dealt the final blow to the theory that Mahler was the primary cause of Alma's thwarted compositional ambition and he is certainly not responsible for the loss, through carelessness or deliberate destruction, of her lost oeuvre.

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He went on to record all of Mahler's Symphonies except 10 but was hampered by the lack of a permanent appointment or recording contract. Most of the original releases are not available on disc but most are available as downloads and as radio stations explore their archives they are finding more of his recordings. The recordings are of wildly varying quality but he never conducted anything less than interesting and passionate and his 8th with the LSO at the 1959 Proms became legendary, withstanding the challenge of early stereo recordings by Bernstein, Kubelik and Haitink, perhaps only surpassed by Solti in in 1971; and his 1972 Manchester recording of Das Lied has stood the test of time.

During his career Horenstein also championed new music: in 1929 he conducted the premiere of three Movements of Berg's Lyric Suite and in 1950 he conducted the Paris premiere of Wozzeck; he recorded Robert Simpson's 3rd and repertoire by Richard Strauss and Hindemith. Late in his career he turned to opera with works by Nielsen and Wagner.

He collapsed while conducting Nielsen in 1971 but, ignoring his doctors, he refused to lighten his work load and died two years later while planning performances of Mahler 5, 6 and 7.
On 25 September, the Society held a long-awaited reunion in London. Members enjoyed a sumptuous tea and a heartfelt address from its Chairman followed by a Q&A session from some of the main figures associated with Gay Walley’s play about the Mahler marriage, *Love, Genius, and a Walk*, to be given at the Theatro Technis.

Suggestive hints of the play's dynamics were tantalisingly dangled but little of substance was given away; and this was matched by the modesty of those involved, who did not say that after earlier New York performances the work was nominated for six prizes, including Best Play at the City's Midtown Festival.

The play's central theme sought to demonstrate that art and marriage, largely but not exclusively concerning the Mahlers, are not necessarily mutually supportive let alone reciprocal paths to joy and enlightenment. Mahler, played by an informed Lloyd Morris, was not portrayed as a cold fish in matters of the heart, more a composer of genius intent on giving himself to his art and not necessarily to what he clearly perceived as the banalities of everyday life.

I found it revealing that after little explosions of resentment at disturbances from Alma, who considered herself marginalised, Morris would emphasise Mahler's immediate guilt over his intemperate reactions.

Their interactions were the backdrop to a divided modern couple, one obsessed with composition, the other a thwarted composer, complicated by a background of financial worry.

What could have played out as another cliché of such societal rifts was carefully presented not least by the husband enjoying, though only revealed in snatches, something of an intellectual and cultural hinterland.

Key characters such as Mahler's protégé Bruno Walter and Alma's lover, the architect Walter Gropius, guided us through the last months of Mahler's life, though such tragedy was leavened by the intimidating presence and caustic wit of Emma Wilkinson Wright's Pauline Strauss. And in that time, as we know, Mahler 'enjoyed' a long meeting and walk with the celebrated psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Here the dialogue hit its height as black humour spiced the exploration of the interplay between ideals and emotions that clearly haunted the composer.

A drinks party completed a fine occasion.

At its 2021 AGM the Society agreed to raise its Annual Membership fees which had remained the same since foundation twenty years ago.

The new fees are as follows:

- Individual £25
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- Students £10

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