



*Daniela Wolff: „Was ist aus Sicht des Lektors das Besondere und das Herausfordernde bei Mahler?“*

*Daniela Wolff: “From your editorial viewpoint, what is most significant and challenging about Mahler?”*

# “Urtext would even be misleading here

*About the Mahler Edition of Breitkopf & Härtel*

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*But there is in fact a detailed editorial report for that*

**Daniela Wolff: Just in time for the publishing house’s 300th anniversary in 2019, Breitkopf & Härtel starts publishing all of Gustav Mahler’s symphonies. A great and significant project for the publisher with a considerable workload. All the scores are to have detailed Editorial Reports, though the publishing house is hesitant about labeling them “Breitkopf Urtext.” I suspect that the category “Urtext” must be critically questioned in Mahler’s case. Is that correct?**

Christian Rudolf Riedel: Well, yes, “Urtext” is a term that is to be questioned fundamentally with respect to every edition, not just those for Mahler. “Urtext” suggests the expectation that the composer’s definitive wishes, if indeed these can even be identified at all, can be pinned down without further ado in an “Urtext.” But unfortunately, composers do not notarize a “testament” with their final compositional wishes, and what survives is usually any-

thing but clear. So, we have to search for clues, which is sometime quite tedious, but can often be very exciting. As it now turned out, the traces Mahler left us as composer and conductor with his countless revisions are so multifarious that for certain they do not lead to a final authentic version, justifying in every detail the description “Urtext.” Such does not, alas, exist with Mahler, and yes, such a designation would even be misleading here. I’d now need to explain that in more detail, but there is in fact a detailed editorial report for that. Incidentally, I find doing without the “Urtext” label a proper, courageous publication decision and hope that it will lead to more rather than less confidence in the edition.

**DW: So, a new edition without the “Urtext” label. But what then will distinguish it? What can the user expect?**

CRR: Even without the “Urtext” label, it is nevertheless a critical edition with a reliable

Gustav Mahler, *Symphonie Nr. 1*,  
Partiturnabschrift von Johann Weidig,  
angefertigt für die Hamburger Aufführung  
1893, mit Korrekturen und Eintragungen  
Mahlers. New York Public Library,  
Bruno Walter Collection, Signatur: »JOB 85-2«  
– Scherzo, Triobeginn mit Mahlers Korrekturen,  
Ergänzungen und Streichungen

Gustav Mahler, *Symphony No. 1*,  
Score copied by Johann Weidig, prepared  
for the Hamburg performance in 1893,  
with Mahler's corrections and annotations.  
New York Public Library, Bruno Walter  
Collection, shelfmark: "JOB 85-2"  
– Scherzo, Beginning of the Trio with Mahler's  
corrections, additions and cancellations



music text based on the relevant sources of the most recent extant version. Of course, it also offers a lot of interesting information about source criticism and performance practice. In some cases, there are new insights into details that so far are not to be found in any other edition. I am very happy and also a bit proud that this has been achieved particularly in the first symphony, the symphony with the longest and most confused revision history. As an example, for the edition of "Blumine," I was the first to be able to use Mahler's revised score, which he used for at least two performances. The only previous edition – incidentally, it was not published until 1968 – is based on the unrevised autograph. So here, finally, is an edition of the ultimate surviving version.

**DW: The new edition is being edited "in collaboration with leading Mahler orchestras," so the announcement states. What exactly does this mean, and what influ-**

**ence does this collaboration have on the present edition?**

CRR: This assertion relates to the edition's objective and its target audience. Unlike complete editions seeking to document the entire genesis process and tradition for scholarly purposes, this edition is primarily concerned with practical issues and these in two ways. For one thing, conductors are entitled to expect a reliable music text and at least the most important information of a textually critical and performance-practice nature required for interpretation; secondly, musicians relying on the parts need to have their very special needs and demands satisfied. For this reason, I have stayed in close touch with musicologists, conductors, and musicians for many years, but above all with the orchestra librarians of MOLA [Major Orchestra Librarians' Association]. It is really incredible with what kind of dedication and professionalism these people work towards the same goal as we publishers also pursue:

namely, to provide the best possible performance material. This has now evolved into a formal collaboration on our Mahler project, and I am very grateful for the many valuable suggestions and much indispensable feedback that have come about so far, and look forward to more such, hopefully still to be revealed.

**DW: In the many years of your publishing activity, you've repeatedly worked as an editor for Breitkopf & Härtel. So the Urtext editions of Dvořák's "New World" symphony, Robert Schumann's violin concerto and overtures, or the Beethoven overtures, *Leonore No. 3* and *Fidelio*, appeared under your aegis. Moreover, from your experience as an editor of orchestra music, you can look back on a multitude of editions from all eras – going all the way back to Pergolesi. From your editorial viewpoint, what is most significant and challenging about Mahler?**

CRR: As already indicated, I am fascinated by the tremendous range of clues left by Mahler. His symphonies can be compared only to Beethoven's in terms of the complexity of their geneses and traditions. But the difference, to put it simply, is that Mahler as composer notated far less chaotically than Beethoven, actually even very precisely, because as conductor he himself had had, in fact, to pay for the consequences. On the other hand, Mahler revised far more. More than two decades lie between the first fair copy of the first symphony's score in 1888 and the final revision of 1910. This presents a huge editorial challenge that I'm only daring to approach because I've worked as a passionate collector on the track of music history, and learned and discovered much in the process. In doing so, my practical experiences as a conductor, together with a certain innate curiosity and joy of discovery benefit me as I pursue and understand such clues. This includes not only philological skills, acquired as a musicological career-changer from "learning by doing," but also musical intuition. And, of course, good fortune in discovering new sources. But I would definitely also like to mention the fantastic Mahler team at Breitkopf that supports me energetically and competently, without which all of this would not really work.

**DW: And speaking from the conductor's perspective?**

CRR: You can certainly imagine what it means to hold in your hands the parts, long considered lost, that were used for the premiere of Dvořák's "New World" symphony, or Beethoven's *Fidelio* score used for its first performances in 1814. There you can immediately see what changes have been made in the last rehearsals. It's almost like being there yourself. Incidentally, the same thing happened to me when I had in front of me the orchestra parts that Mahler collated and used for his last performances in New York. There is

almost a sense of physical closeness that allows you to see through a window into an otherwise closed world. One example: The famous trio theme of the second movement [he sings] is very diversely notated in the score sources, initially with slurs and accents, then next with glissando, later he

***A sense of physical closeness that allows you to see through a window into an otherwise closed world***

replaced the accents with *Schweller* [crescendi and diminuendi], added a secondary part and with "zart" [tender] another verbal performance marking. In short, we see how Mahler struggled for its right expression. In the engraver's model that he revised in 1910 and indicated as "correct for the new print" – it is already the third "first print!" – he eradicated the slurs and glissandi. Evidently, the glissandi were too mawkish, not delicate enough. But his just intentional notation in the score is only comprehensible if we read it in tandem with the bowings in the parts [sings]. That's the way it was performed under his direction. Maybe Mahler sang it in the rehearsal as well. Very exciting!

**DW: As already mentioned, the new edition of all Mahler's symphonies represents an extremely ambitious project by the publisher. What special features may the orchestras be happy about, and why, after publication, would symphony orchestras prefer to play Mahler from the new Breitkopf edition?**

CRR: Above all, it should be especially the practical features, ranging from the generous format of the parts and their rastral image, to turning aids and orientation systems

with cue notes, numbering aids, structural rests. Also, to transposed parts to replace instruments no longer common today, or for additional parts, such as, for example, when Mahler sometimes called for reinforcements to the orchestra apparatus. Perhaps, it is also helpful that the performance material is completely available for sale, even with a discount through the subscription offer. Once purchased and marked, this would be a sustainable, yet affordable investment in an own material.

**DW: Mahler's first symphony and the accompanying symphonic movement "Blumine" will be published just in time for Breitkopf & Härtel's 2019 anniversary year. Of course, orchestras worldwide are as keenly interested what to expect next after this start. Will you also be the editor of the other symphonies?**

CRR: I am by nature not only incorrigibly curious, but also optimistic. This will hardly ever change [laughs]. I'm ready for it, anyway. What lies in the future, is not in my hands. "Vederemo" – a word frequently found in Mahler's letters – , we'll see.

**DW: Is there already a timetable for the release of the other symphonies? When is the whole project scheduled to be concluded?**

CRR: Yes, there is a timetable, also an idle wish as to the time of conclusion of this project. Of this is the entire Mahler team including the publishing management quite unanimous. But, similar to the "Urtext" label, declarations of intent do not count. The exact release dates will be announced as they actually happen.