



DOCUMENTARY



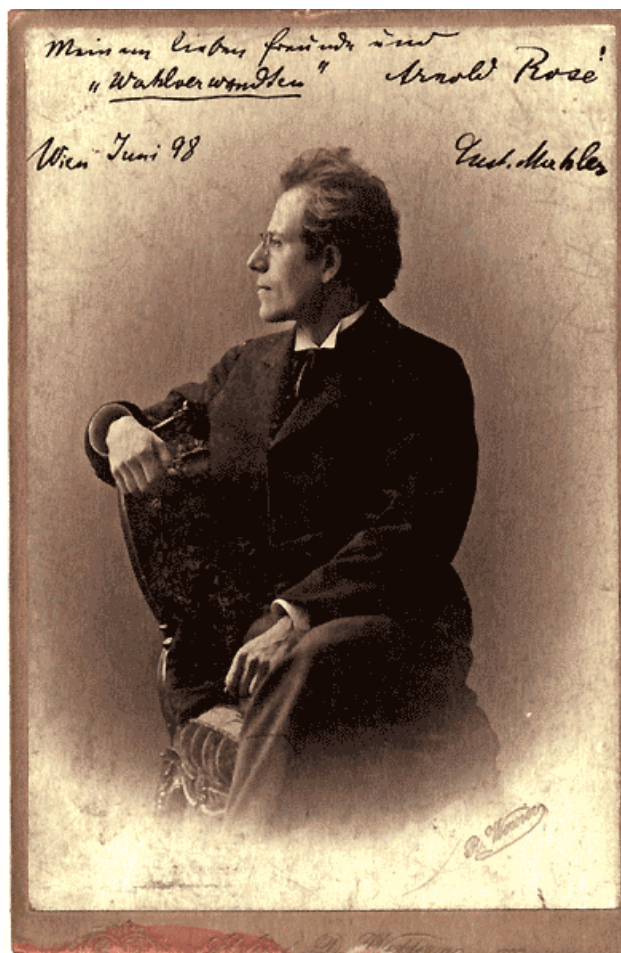


GUSTAV
MAHLER
REFLECTIONS

TREATMENT

The time of childhood, the time of joy and love, of hope and fear of the unknown, too, the time of learning, experiencing, the time of first disappointment and first tragedy. The time, which leaves an impression in everybody and is reflected during the whole later life. Sometimes the reflections are clear, sometimes they are hidden, but they are always intense and deep.

What was the childhood like of a man who is considered the last great symphonist of the 19th century, a man who called himself “three times homeless, as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the entire world”? A man, whom Sigmund Freud diagnosed a strong Oedipal attitude towards his mother. A mother of fourteen children of whom seven died in infancy and Gustav’s beloved brother Ernst, only one year his junior, died at the age of 14. Gustav Mahler had a very bright insight, everything he experienced was stored in his mind and utilized and transformed in his compositions. When he was two a servant left him alone on the barracks courtyard. While she flirted with her soldier boyfriend, the little boy was enjoying the sounds of drums and bugles. Since he was four he was making music all the time and composing even before he could play scales. Once in the house of his grandparents Gustav could not be found anywhere. After a long search he was discovered in the attic, strumming on an old piano. Gustav Mahler’s memories abound in street musicians, songs he had heard in his father’s pub, folk songs sung by their Czech servants, fairy tales and children’s games. Since early childhood Mahler was greatly affected by clashes between his parents. He witnessed frequent arguments between the ruthless father and the sensitive harassed mother. Natalie Bauer-Lechner remembers Mahler telling her that his “parents were like fire and water. He was tough, she was gentle. Without this connection it would not be me and there would never be my Third.” He told Freud how after one of the unbearable scenes he ran out of the house and heard a hurdy-gurdy playing the popular Viennese melody O du lieber Augustin. Since then he juxtaposed great tragedy with light entertainment.



During his studies at Vienna Conservatory he returned home for holidays. He used to go out for walks on Sundays in the countryside where there were village balls with Czech musicians. Years later when out on a walk with a friend a great jumble of sounds was heard from a distance – military music, men’s chorus, puppet show, shooting booths and merry-go-rounds all mixed up together. Mahler cried: “Do you hear it? That is polyphony, and that’s where I got it from! – Already as a small child in the woods of Jihlava it impressed itself upon me and moved me so strangely.” Something of Mahler’s childhood impression of mingled sounds makes itself felt in the counterpoint of his Symphony No. 3. The reflections of early experiences can also be traced in Mahler’s Symphony No. 1. In this composition Mahler for the first time takes stock of his life and makes use of his experience.

The film will mainly deal with the period of Mahler’s childhood and time related to his native region. Having left Jihlava for the Vienna Conservatory Gustav Mahler was still in touch with his

parents, friends and brothers and sisters. He only left the town with his remaining siblings after the death of their parents. Even after that time page 264 of the Register of Jihlava Citizens dated 2 May 1908 bears witness to the fact that Gustav Mahler, his wife Alma and daughter Anna Justine, having their address at Auenbruggergasse, Nr. 2, Wien, still had the right of domicile in Jihlava.

The documentary film will be looking for the interrelation between the work of Gustav Mahler and his experiences since his birth in the village of Kaliště near Humpolec on 7 July 1860 during his childhood spent in the town of Jihlava until the time of his admission to the Vienna Music Conservatory on 20 September 1875, where he was entered as Mahler Gustav of Jihlava.

The film will make use of the preserved historical written documents and photographic material in order to create a realistic atmosphere and to enhance the intensity of the statement.

The form will require a stylized reconstruction of the most important moments of Gustav Mahler's childhood in confrontation with his music. One level of the film will aim at enacting the key moments in the early years of the composer's life. To make the distinction clearer, these parts of historical reconstruction will be marked by a magenta shade evoking archival film material. These live-action sequences will be shot on location in period



settings, costumes and using period props. The historical characters will not have any dialogues; our aim will rather be to render the atmosphere of the period and a particular situation with real sounds and noises of the environment.

The film will also present short personal confessions and experiences of outstanding personalities - conductors, performers and musicologists,





their feelings on Mahler's music and their opinions of Mahler as a conductor and mainly as a man. Each of the historical passages will be followed by a contemplation of the possible impact of the presented situation on the particular compositions. These parts of the film will be shot in an indifferent setting in an intimate atmosphere with stress on the presented content. All narration should be very emotional and personal with dramatic features of discoveries, posing new questions in order to keep the spectator tense and anticipating.

As a counterpart to the historical information the film will present Mahler's music and life mediated by young people.

The compositions, in which we will search for reflections of childhood and youth, will be performed live in rehearsal so that the spectator will become part of the creative process of a preparation for a concert of Mahler's music. We will watch spontaneous reactions of the musicians and thus get an intense visual and musical experience. The music will be performed by young musicians from all over Europe, members of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester. What interests us is their perception of Mahler's music, what his music means today, what it can say to young people. Why, after decades of disinterest of the past generations, is Mahler's music so appealing nowadays?

The selection of compositions will be limited to pre-selected pieces (Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3 and other compositions according to the final version of the script), which will also create a musical background for the parts of the film where music will only illustrate the historical facts. By focusing on the search for the roots of Mahler's childhood, on the situations and experiences that had a strong impact on his perception of the world and that marked his sensitive mind and influenced his creative work, the film will look for answers to questions which are important for the understanding of the relation between Mahler's childhood and his musical output. At the same time, with the help of young musicians, it will enquire about contemporary perception of Mahler's music and its meaning for the young generation.

Timing: 57 min. Format: High Definition

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