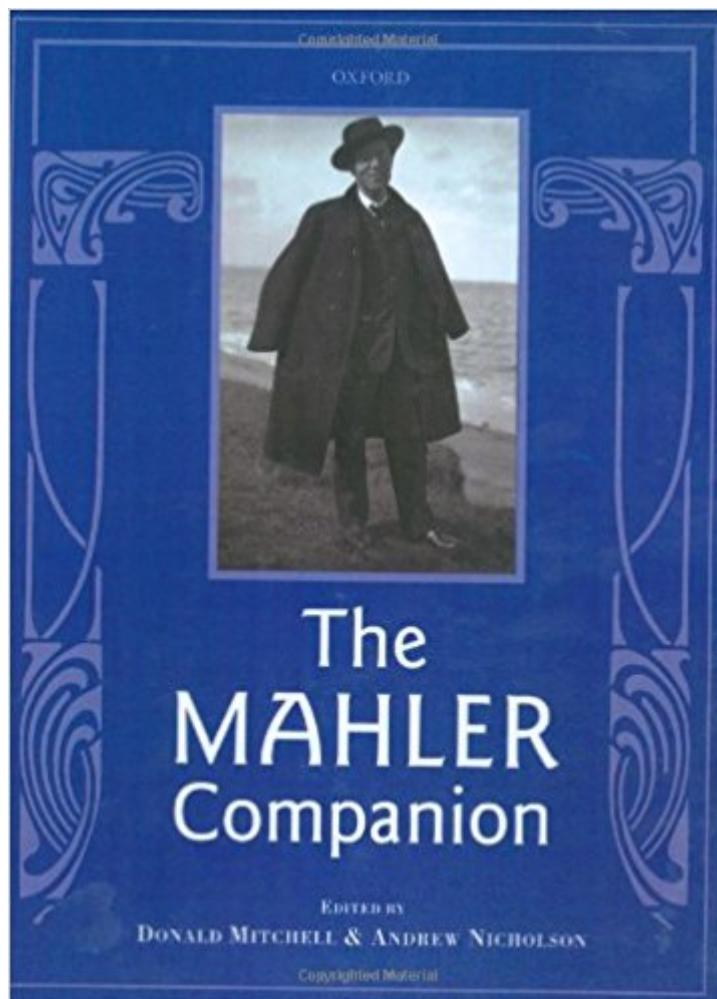


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The Mahler Companion



Synopsis

The Mahler Companion consists of a collection of original essays on Mahler written especially for the occasion by Mahler specialists from around the world. It addresses all parts of his life and work--symphonies, songs and song-cycles (each of which is discussed individually), his conducting activities, compositional habits, and aesthetic development--and sets these within the cultural and political context of his time. In addition, it responds to the global spread of this remarkable composer's music, and an almost universal fascination with it, by attempting to give an account of the reception of Mahler's music in many of the countries in which it eventually came to flourish, eg. Holland, France, Japan, Russia, England, and the United States. This particular series of chapters reveals that the 'Mahler Phenomenon' earned its description principally in the years after the Second World War, but also that the Mahler revival was already well under way pre-war, perhaps especially in England and the States, and most surprisingly of all, Japan. The selection of contributors, who between them cover all Mahler's musical output, shows that here too this volume significantly crosses national boundaries. The very diverse approaches, analyses and commentaries, amply illustrated with music examples, are evidence of the uniquely rich and complex character of a music that spans more than one culture and more than one century. The volumes includes the most significant and up-to-date Mahler research and debate, and illuminates some hitherto unexplored areas of Mahler's life eg. his visit to London in 1892, his sculptor daughter, Anna, and the hall in which the Seventh Symphony was first performed in Prague in 1908.

It has often been claimed that Mahler, born in 1860, was in fact a prophet of much that was to come in the 20th century. His later works undeniably anticipate, often with dazzling virtuosity, many of the principal techniques and aesthetics of the new century, only the first decade of which he lived to see. Small wonder that among his earliest admirers was a collective of some of the most important and innovative composers of our time, Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern. Their successors (Copland, Shostakovich, and Britten, to name a few) were to range across contrasting cultures and national frontiers. Drawing on the best resources and the most up-to-date information about the composer, this volume fulfils the need in Mahler literature for a genuinely comprehensive guide to the composer and will be the authoritative guide for Mahler enthusiasts for years to come.

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Customer Reviews

This collection of essays, by a wide range of contributors, adds considerably to our collective knowledge of Gustav Mahler, his life and times and the cultural milieu in which he worked as composer and conductor, and of course his music. The editors, as they note in the Introduction, provided very loose guidelines to the contributing essayists: Beyond refereeing the broad topics for inclusion, the editors largely gave carte blanche to the contributors regarding style and content. This "looseness of control" has resulted in a volume of both very considerable strengths (some of which I highlight here) and a few perplexing weaknesses and oversights which I allude to at the end of my comments. The "logical bookends" of this volume are an opening essay by Leon Botstein, titled "Gustav Mahler's Vienna," and a closing essay by Wilfrid Mellers, titled "Mahler and the Great Tradition: Then and Now." The former sets the cultural, socio-political and philosophical stage of fin-de-siècle Vienna onto which Mahler entered, and the latter nicely summarizes how Mahler might fit into a continuum of musical composition and practice that preceded and succeeded him. (This new paperback edition also includes, at the end, two new essays, not present in the hardback edition, covering recollections of his daughter, Anna, and recently discovered Mahler "juvenilia" in the form early chamber music and songs.) In between these bookends, all of Mahler's music, and much about his life and times, and how he and his music were accepted (or not accepted) inside and outside Vienna, are covered.

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