

## **Josef Lanz**

*“In the heart of a landscape that inspired his creative imagination, Mahler seems to invite us to delve more deeply into the musical landscape he carried within himself.”*

(Henry-Louis de la Grange)

## **Music Week in Memoriam Gustav Mahler — Gustav Mahler Music Weeks**

“When the idea—sustainably promoted and supported by the local tourist office—emerged to declare the year 1981 a ‘Gustav Mahler Year’ on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of his death, the intention was not only to honour the memory of the man whose music experienced a worldwide renaissance after the Second World War, but also to recall that Gustav Mahler himself had stayed and composed in Toblach during the summer months of 1908 to 1910.

For the artistic conception and direction, Professors Ugo Duse of Venice and Heinz Klaus Metzger of Munich were engaged. Valuable music-historical documents were provided by the International Gustav Mahler Society in Vienna. Financial support was granted by the Regional Government of South Tyrol and by the Italian Ministry of Tourism in Rome.

In this way, the Gustav Mahler commemorative event became a cultural occasion whose impact extended far beyond Toblach and continued to resonate thereafter. However, the intention was not to stop there. In the years to follow, Gustav Mahler was to continue to be honoured through concerts and through the preservation of his former place of work in Toblach.”

(Herbert Santer, President of the Mahler Committee, in the preface to the first edition)

## **Prehistory of the Music Week**

Until the 1950s, Gustav Mahler was still remembered by several elderly citizens of Toblach; however, there appear to have been no activities relating to the famous summer guest until that time. The population, shaped by two world wars and the troubled interwar period in South Tyrol, undoubtedly had other concerns.

In 1953, students of the Franciscan Grammar School in Bolzano pitched their holiday tents in the cool, shaded forest surrounding the composer’s hut. The hut itself served as a kitchen. It must have been a place of special relaxation, as the Franciscan monastery in Bolzano continues to organise summer camps for its students in Alt-Schluderbach to this day—albeit no longer in the immediate vicinity of the composer’s hut.

In 1957, Gustav Mahler was officially commemorated in Toblach for the first time. The International Gustav Mahler Society, together with the municipality of Toblach, organised a commemorative ceremony and unveiled a memorial plaque in honour of Gustav Mahler at the Trenkerhof in autumn 1957. In the same year, a street was named after him. Professor Erwin Ratz, President of the International Gustav Mahler Society, delivered the commemorative address.

The local teacher and choir director Heinrich Oberhammer from Aufkirchen played an enthusiastic role in making the event possible. In recognition of his commitment to preserving the Gustav Mahler memorial sites, the Mahler Society offered him honorary membership.

In subsequent years, artists and intellectuals repeatedly stayed at the Trenkerhof, finding inspiration and suggestion in the atmosphere of the Mahler rooms and occasionally drawing attention to the composer’s international significance.

Toward the end of the 1970s, a fortunate interplay of cultural aspirations among young music enthusiasts from the Upper Puster Valley and the ambition of emerging tourism stakeholders paved the way for the experiment of the Toblach Music Week as a cultural-tourism event. It was an experiment because, initially, it was unclear how the name of the great composer could be meaningfully and contemporarily linked with the name of Toblach and celebrated accordingly.

Presumably, the objectives of the new cultural initiative were not entirely clear. For some, it was intended as a signal—a reorientation of the cultural offering; for others, it was an opportunity to pursue a new path in tourism marketing. This tension may well have been the challenge that brought the diverse group together.

The former president of the spa administration and founding president of the Mahler Committee pragmatically formulated the idea:

“...to do something with Gustav Mahler and thereby make Toblach important.”

Without this ambition, the initiative surrounding Gustav Mahler in Toblach might have remained merely an idea.

Initially, consideration was given to commemorating the Mahler sites in Alt-Schludersbach and to mounting a memorial exhibition for the Mahler commemorative year 1981. Contact was established with the International Gustav Mahler Society. How the idea of a music week ultimately emerged cannot be determined with certainty. The concept became more concrete when Johann Viertler assumed the directorship of the Toblach Tourist Office and, through Ferruccio Calzavara and Hans Schmieder, made contact with Ugo Duse.

By 1980 it was clear that the first Music Week would take place in 1981. The competition for the graphic design of a logo—still used to identify the Music Weeks today—was won by Norbert Scantamburlo from Innichen. On 13 January 1981, the Gustav Mahler Committee was founded to organise the Music Week. Founding members were Felix Dapoz, Siegfried Kahn, Bernhard Lösch, Hans Mairhofer, Herbert Santer, Hans Schmieder, Josef Trenker, Johann Viertler, Andreas Walder and Heinrich Walder. At its first general assembly on 19 January of the same year, the committee elected Herbert Santer as its president.

## **The First Music Week in Memoriam Gustav Mahler**

The first Music Week in memoriam Gustav Mahler took place from 19 to 26 July 1981. It was clear from the outset that it could not be a Mahler festival featuring symphonic performances. In the small mountain village of Toblach there was neither a concert hall nor the infrastructure required to stage a music festival of this nature. The focus therefore had to be placed more on reflective, interpretative and analytical engagement with Mahler's music and his era.

The Music Week began at a time when Mahler was still struggling for his place in music history and his later widespread popularity could not yet be foreseen. By engaging Ugo Duse and Heinz Klaus Metzger as artistic directors for the first three years, two highly distinguished figures were secured who set the conceptual course of the Music Week in memoriam Gustav Mahler and immediately established the event's international reputation.

The speakers at the first edition were Heinz Klaus Metzger (Munich) on *Some Compositional Consequences of Mahler*, Kurt Blaukopf (Vienna) on *Gustav Mahler and the Art of Secession*, Giuseppe Pugliese (Venice) on *Towards a History of the Interpretation of Mahler's Music*, and Sergio Martinotti (Milan) on *Viennese Culture between Bruckner and Brahms*.

The concerts in the first year took place in the parish church of Toblach and in the “White House” in Niederdorf. The Quartetto Academica performed works by Mozart and Beethoven alongside Hugo Wolf’s Quartet in D minor. Annelies Hückl, accompanied by Emilio Riboli, sang songs by Schubert, Brahms, Wolf and Strauss on the opening evening, followed the next evening by songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and *Five Songs after Rückert* by Mahler.

An organ concert by Henning Wagner included works by Franz Schmidt and Charles Ives, among others. The Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento, conducted by Hermann Michael, performed Hugo Wolf’s *Italian Serenade*, Richard Wagner’s *Siegfried Idyll* and Gustav Mahler’s famous *Adagietto*. The closing concert of the first Music Week was given by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation Chamber Choir under the direction of Gottfried Preinfalk.

## Second Music Week

Outstanding speakers also shaped the second edition of the Music Week. Hans Mayer spoke on *Mahler and Literature*, Ugo Duse on *The Folk Origins of Mahler’s Song*, and Dieter Schnebel on *The Beauty in Mahler*. In a lecture-concert, Heinz Klaus Metzger presented stylistic comparisons of the musical settings of the poetry cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* by Otto Vrieslander, Joseph Marx, Max Kowalski and Arnold Schoenberg. The Ensemble Musica Negativa, conducted by Rainer Riehn, performed excerpts from the works.

In another concert at the Resch House in Innichen, the ensemble presented Dieter Schnebel’s *Wagner Idyll* and Mahler’s *Songs of a Wayfarer* in an arrangement by Arnold Schoenberg. The *Quartet Movement* by Mahler and Schoenberg’s *Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 9* were performed by the Vienna Chamber Musicians.

## “Das Lied von der Erde” at the Trenkerhof

The Music Week in memoriam Gustav Mahler soon became a delicate balancing act between artistic ambition and financial limitations.

“Even this third edition of our Music Week seeks to be ‘work of remembrance’, which, with its modest means, attempts to preserve an adequate degree of dignity—despite the often unavoidable recourse to ‘curiosities’, which can be humiliating where they bear the mark of the financial situation with which Toblach’s Music Week in memoriam Gustav Mahler must live.”  
(Mahler Committee)

In retrospect, one might almost speak of good fortune that there was no concert hall and little money available, for the third edition of the Music Week remains unforgettable. When it was announced that “only” an arrangement of *Das Lied von der Erde* would be performed, the Italian broadcasting corporation RAI—until then a major financial supporter—initially declined to participate, but was persuaded at the last moment. Thus, both a “curiosity” and an event were preserved that would prove to be a highlight in the history of the Mahler Weeks.

The starting point was an arrangement of *Das Lied von der Erde* begun by Arnold Schoenberg and completed by Rainer Riehn for the performance in Toblach, which he himself conducted with the Ensemble Musica Negativa. (Schoenberg had reduced contemporary works that did not meet the needs of bourgeois society to their essentials and presented them within the framework of the Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna, founded by him in 1918.)

The world premiere of this arrangement took place in the living quarters of the Trenkerhof in Alt-Schluderbach, where Mahler had resided during the summer months. The event was recorded by RAI Bolzano television.

In the years that followed, RAI Bolzano (radio and, in part, television) recorded and broadcast a number of concerts. This was undoubtedly a significant contribution to making the Mahler Week(s) known to a wider audience.

On the occasion of the opening of this Music Week, the sculpture *Gustav Mahler* by the Ljubljana-based sculptor Bojan Kunaver was unveiled in Alt-Toblach.

Lectures were given by Hans Rudolf Zeller on *Das Lied von der Erde*, Heinz Klaus Metzger on *Mahler and Judaism*, Paolo Petazzi on *Mahler and Berg*, and Hubert Stuppner from Bolzano on *The Archetypes of Compassion in Mahler's Symphonies*.

## Artistic Directors Come and Go

The lack of a suitable concert hall, limited financial resources, and the initially hesitant acceptance by the local population repeatedly put the committee—and thus the Music Week—under strain. The initial upswing became a test of endurance and, at times, a burden. Consideration was given to holding the Music Week on a biennial basis in order to reduce the strain.

However, a loyal group of Mahler enthusiasts from within the country and abroad, as well as sustained international interest and media attention, repeatedly encouraged the committee to continue.

The fourth edition of the Music Week in memoriam Gustav Mahler in 1984 marked a turning point. Due to differing views, continued collaboration with Duse and Metzger no longer seemed possible, and artistic direction was entrusted to the musicologists Quirino Principe and Hubert Stuppner. They continued the existing concept with a strong emphasis on lectures.

Quirino Principe, Sergio Martinotti, Luisa Zanoncelli Duse, Herta Blaukopf and Guido Solvetti spoke on topics including Mahler's piano music, Mahler's letters, and the "difficult" pairs *Clara–Robert* and *Alma–Gustav*.

Musically, it was particularly noteworthy that larger orchestral works could be performed for the first time. The Symphony Orchestra of the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS), conducted by Cornelius Eberhardt—an ensemble that would remain loyal to the Music Week until 1990—performed the *Adagio* from Mahler's Tenth Symphony and *Songs of a Wayfarer* in the parish church of Toblach.

The Music Week concluded with Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and Gottfried von Einem's *Philadelphia Symphony*, performed by the Austrian Youth Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Hubert Stuppner.

In the programme booklet of the 1985 Music Week, no fewer than three artistic directors or advisers were listed: in addition to Quirino Principe and Hubert Stuppner, the eminent Mahler biographer Henry-Louis de la Grange joined the team. The lectures by Henry-Louis de la Grange and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt focused on the relationship between Schoenberg and Mahler.

Mahler's Seventh and Ninth Symphonies were performed in arrangements for piano four hands (Gino Gorini, Eugenio Bagnoli, Mario Delli Ponti and Carlo Levi Minzi), accompanied by

introductory talks by Henry-Louis de la Grange. The AIMS Orchestra under Cornelius Eberhardt performed Mahler's Symphony No. 4, while the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento presented the *Bach Suite* in Mahler's arrangement.

## Henry-Louis de la Grange as Artistic Director (1986)

In 1986, Henry-Louis de la Grange assumed sole artistic direction. His guiding thought was expressed in the words:

*"In the heart of a landscape that inspired his creative imagination, Mahler seems to invite us to delve more deeply into the musical landscape he carried within himself."*

De la Grange's international connections with artists and scholars were clearly reflected in the programme of this Music Week. Particular emphasis was placed on the musical component. The Italian composer Luciano Berio composed a chamber-orchestra version of five early songs by Gustav Mahler especially for the Toblach Mahler Music Week. These were premiered by the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento under the direction of Hermann Michael, with the then still largely unknown young baritone Thomas Hampson, who also presented a further song recital featuring works by Gustav Mahler, Alexander von Zemlinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Alma Schindler Mahler and Richard Strauss—already displaying the refined art of song for which he would later become renowned.

From France, Henry-Louis de la Grange brought chamber musicians from the leading French musical circles of the time: Régis and Bruno Pasquier, Philippe Muller, Alain Damiens, Michel Dalberto and Jean-Claude Penner, who appeared as soloists or in chamber ensembles in four concerts. The programmes included works by Schubert, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms, as well as composers of the Second Viennese School such as Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alexander Zemlinsky and Anton Webern.

The AIMS Orchestra gave its now traditional concert in the parish church, performing Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 3 "*Rhenish*" with instrumental retouchings by Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, and Gustav Mahler's *Totenfeier* (the original version of the *Allegro maestoso* from the Second Symphony).

The Auryn Quartet performed Debussy's Quartet in G minor, Berg's *Six Bagatelles*, Hugo Wolf's *Italian Serenade*, and Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*.

Among the lecturers were Erwin Ringel on *Gustav Mahler and the Freudian Death Drive*, Donald Mitchell on *Mahler's Farewell: Form and Content in the Finale of Das Lied von der Erde*, Giuseppe Pugliese on *Mahler after Mahler: Has His Time Come?*, and Rudolf Stephan on *Mahler's Symphonic Poem Totenfeier*.

Two exhibitions accompanied the Music Week. Jörg Madlener, serving as Artist in Residence, presented works inspired by Mahler at the Trenkerhof in Alt-Schludersbach—paintings that sensitively translated Mahler and his music into visual form. In addition, the Austrian Consulate General in Milan provided the photographic exhibition *Wiener Werkstätte 1903–1932*.

The opening of the Music Week featured the Puster Valley Vocal Ensemble under the direction of Hubert Hopfgartner and organist Heinrich Walder from Toblach, with works by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Johannes Brahms, Anton Bruckner, Anton Heiller, Augustin Kubizek, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Hugo Wolf and Max Reger.

Until then, the parish church of Toblach had served as the principal concert venue for the Music Week. However, given the thematic focus of the programme, works increasingly had to be performed that were not only unsuitable in content but also acoustically ill-matched to a church setting. Henry-Louis de la Grange therefore developed plans to present Mahler symphonies outside Toblach, in a hall with superior acoustics.

Local parochial thinking and de la Grange's artistic aspirations proved irreconcilable, and as a result, an important personality for the Mahler Music Week was lost. Nevertheless, de la Grange has maintained his close connection to Mahler in Toblach to this day, spending his summer months regularly in the vicinity of Alt-Schluderbach.

### **“This Atmosphere in the Lush Green of Meadows and Forests”**

For the next four years (until 1990), Hubert Stuppner assumed artistic direction. In the preface to the programme booklet, he wrote:

*“Gustav Mahler’s unique creative output took shape almost exclusively during the summer months, removed from the bustle of the cities, in the warm solitude of a summer somewhere between Maiernigg and Toblach. This atmosphere—of lush green meadows and forests, of sunsets and sunrises, of ‘little birds in the branches’, cowbells and evening bells—is the leitmotif of Mahler’s entire œuvre, of all his symphonies, from the summery, airy sound of nature that opens the First Symphony to the deeply grounded lullaby of Das Lied von der Erde, which Mahler completed in Toblach on the words ‘forever, forever’. In Mahler’s music, this emphatic adoration of life and beauty, summer—as a symbol of warmth and fullness of existence—is the central locus of music itself; it is in summer that music tunes itself, begins to sing, spreads its wings wide, comes into being and fades away—an earthly and heavenly life at once, in the idyll between June and September.”*

At the centre of the 1987 Music Week were Mahler's early works, including Symphony No. 1 performed by the AIMS Orchestra and songs sung by Horst R. Laubenthal, alongside resonant parallels with the Austro-Bohemian tradition represented by Franz Schubert and Franz Schmidt. Hans H. Eggebrecht lectured on *Mahler's Elective Affinity with Schubert*.

Alongside works from the Classical and Romantic repertoires, the Second Viennese School repeatedly formed a musical focal point: Arnold Schoenberg's String Quartet in D major, Webern's String Quartet, Op. 28, and *Five Movements for String Quartet*, Op. 5; as well as later works such as Ernst Krenek's *Sonata in One Movement*, Op. 92 and Giacinto Scelsi's *In nomine lucis* (Roman Summereder, organ).

Without a concert hall and with limited financial resources, Mahler's music could neither be showcased lavishly nor marketed in the manner increasingly common in international music tourism. What could be done, however, was to reflect deeply on Mahler's music and on the evolution of its reception.

In the 1988 programme preface, Hubert Stuppner wrote:

*“Following the engaged post-war mode of interpretation ‘in the shadow of negativity’, as Adorno had described Mahler’s music as an ‘idiom of contradiction’, emphasising its problematic and existential aspects, recent decades—perhaps as a reaction to the ‘Dialectic of Enlightenment’—have accustomed us to a more positive Mahlerian ‘physiognomy’, to more consonant interpretations. Not long ago, here in Toblach, Dieter Schnebel praised ‘the beauty’ in Mahler, and*

*Hans H. Eggebrecht foregrounded the ‘vocabulary of the diatonic, the archetypal and the folk-like’, placing moments of beauty ahead of parody and negativity. Whereas Adorno had discerned ‘happiness only on the edge of catastrophe’ in Mahler’s symphonic novels, more recent consciousness—no doubt as a result of the worldwide promotion of Mahler reception—has seen the ‘disturbed world’ give way to a fairy-tale dream world of beauty.”*

The eighth Mahler Week was therefore appropriately opened with a homage to Schnebel by the String Academy of Bolzano: the quiet, concise *Mahler-Moment* composed in 1985. As Stuppner observed, the symbolic *Liebst du um Schönheit* here appeared “largely withdrawn, timid and chased away, as though frightened by the clamour surrounding Mahler ‘amid the tumult of the world’.”

Thus, as before, the eighth Mahler Week combined music with intellectual history, integrating the questions raised by Mahler and his era from a contemporary perspective into a musical-literary-psychoanalytical discourse. This included a panel discussion entitled *Mahler and the Music After Him*.

With a historically faithful reconstruction of a Bohemian brass band programme from Mahler’s childhood (Military Band of Carinthia, conducted by Sigismund Seidl), the Music Week sought to highlight aspects of Mahler’s compositional style. When military band music, male choral singing and even puppet theatre resounded without regard for the young Mahler, he is said to have remarked:

*“Do you hear it? That is polyphony, and that’s where I got it from! ... Just like this, from completely different directions, the themes must come, and be entirely distinct in rhythm and melody. Everything else is merely polyphony in name and disguised homophony. The artist must instead first order and unite them into a coherent and sounding whole.”*

Erwin Ringel lectured on *Mahler’s Relationship to the Austrian Soul*. The intellectual kinship and the differences between Mahler and Bruckner were highlighted both in lectures (Sergio Martinotti) and in concerts. The Leonhard Lechner Chamber Choir, the Brixen Cathedral Choir and wind players from South Tyrolean music schools, conducted by Willi Seebacher, performed Anton Bruckner’s Mass in E minor. In these years, the AIMS Orchestra’s programmes included Bruckner’s Symphonies Nos. 6 and 4.

Works of Expressionism within Mahler’s sphere and era were also featured: Schoenberg’s *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* after Stefan George, Alban Berg’s Piano Sonata Op. 1, Schreker’s *Der Wind*, and contemporary responses such as Luciano Berio’s *Folk Songs* and Werner Pirchner’s *Chamber Symphony*, tracing lines back to Mahler (Ensemble Kontrapunkte, conducted by Peter Keuschnig).

### **...and Again “Das Lied von der Erde”**

The unquestionable highlight of the 1988 Music Week was the first performance of *Das Lied von der Erde* at its place of origin, presented by the Haydn Orchestra under Carl Melles, accompanied by a symposium on the work.

In the following two years, *Das Lied von der Erde* again occupied centre stage: in 1989, with an arrangement for alto, tenor and 24 instruments by Hubert Stuppner (world premiere, Orchestra La Fenice di Venezia), and in 1990 with the Italian premiere of the original version for mezzo-soprano, tenor and piano (Linda Watson, Fred Silla, Massimiliano Damerini).

A lecture-concert in 1989 (Stefan Kohler, Director of the Richard Strauss Institute in Munich, and the Mainz Wind Ensemble, conducted by Rainer Schöll) explored the relationship between Mahler

and Richard Strauss. Alongside wind works by Strauss, five Mahler songs in an arrangement by Friedrich Karl Wanek for soprano and winds received their world premieres, sung by the young soprano Christine Schäfer.

In 1990, another singer who would later achieve international renown appeared in Toblach with Mahler songs: Thomas Quasthoff.

From 1990 onward, or rather by decree of the diocesan authorities, orchestral concerts could no longer be held in the resonant parish church. For the next ten years, larger concerts were hosted in the acoustically drier gymnasium of the middle school, while chamber music had already found an appropriate home in the music hall of the primary school since 1985. The AIMS Orchestra bid farewell to the Mahler Week in 1989 with the *Adagio* from Mahler's Tenth Symphony and Symphony No. 5.

## Separation of Theory and Music

For the 1991 programme of the Gustav Mahler Music Week, a conceptual separation between theory and the music programme was decided upon. Rainer Keuschnig (pianist, Ensemble Kontrapunkte, Vienna) became artistic director of the musical component for the following three years, while Attila Csampai (music editor at Bavarian Radio) assumed responsibility as scholarly director for the newly defined *Mahler Protocol* and for the newly established record prize *Toblach Composer's Hut*.

Rainer Keuschnig placed emphasis on chamber music and contemporary works:

*"In keeping with Gustav Mahler's historical presence in Toblach, significant composers of contemporary European music will come to Toblach. Each season, one composer will be available as Composer in Residence for the Music Week. At the same time, opportunities will be created for conversations with the composer, offering insight into his or her work, ideas, concepts and personality. In this way, a substantial reduction of distance between composer, performer and audience is intended."*

The composers in residence during the following three years were Franco Donatoni, Wolfgang Rihm and Salvatore Sciarrino. Renowned soloists and ensembles were invited to perform their works, including Christine Whittlesey (soprano), Daniel Schlee (organ), the Janáček Quartet, the Panocha Quartet, the Eder Quartet, Ensemble Carme (Milan), Ensemble Neue Reihe (Vienna), wind players from the Berlin Philharmonic and the Czech Philharmonic, the Arnold Schoenberg Choir Vienna, and the Prague Radio Choir.

Attila Csampai, who had already become acquainted with the Mahler Music Week a year earlier through a *Comparative Interpretation of Mahler's Sixth*, placed the focus of his lectures, panel discussions and the record prize on interpretation and recording, as well as on a culturally critical examination of contemporary Mahler reception.

Lecture topics during these years included:

*The Rise and Fall of a Classic – Mahler's Popularity on Record* (Ulrich Schreiber),  
*From "Clarity" to "Indistinctness" – On the Changing Zeitgeist on Record: Mahler's Discographic Fate from 1960 to 1992* (Attila Csampai),  
*Mahler's Fourth Symphony on Record – A Critical Comparison* (Dietmar Holland),  
*Italian Mahler Conductors* (Luigi Bellingardi),  
*Instructions for the End of the World – Gustav Mahler and the (End-)Zeitgeist* (Michael



Stegemann),  
*My Time Has Come... Been... and Passed – An Analysis of the Risks of Overexposure* (Norman Lebrecht).

These were complemented by panel discussions on topics such as *Does Mahler Owe His Fame to the Record?*, *Mahler's Musical Message*, and *Is Mahler's Time Already Over?*, featuring Mahler specialists including Constantin Floros, Hermann Danuser, Paolo Petazzi, Hubert Stuppner, Max Nyffeler, Karl-Anton Rickenbacher, Alberto Rizzuti and Michael Stegemann.

With the newly established record prize *Toblach Composer's Hut*, an international jury chaired by Attila Csampai has, since that year, annually honoured new recordings and reissues that set particular accents within the extensive Mahler discography.

## **Mahler's Inner World Remains Alien**

It is documented that Gustav Mahler maintained virtually no contact with the inhabitants of Toblach; he loved the “wilderness” of the remote farmstead in Alt-Schludersbach at the forest's edge. His personal relationships were brought with him from Vienna, Berlin and other metropolises.

Should a similar situation continue to exist between the Music Week and the local population? Mahler's inner world still remained foreign. It continued to be a small circle of Mahler specialists and devoted admirers who sustained the Music Week and honoured it beyond Toblach. Meanwhile, the cult site of Alt-Schludersbach with the Trenkerhof and the composer's hut remained neglected.

“The tension between Mahler's highly cultivated, inward concept of nature and the seemingly culture-remote, austere archaic character of the Alpine and Dolomite skyline is real and becomes almost tangible in the still unresolved fate of the composer's hut in Alt-Schludersbach, which must continue to live with the contradiction of being half hut, half sanctuary, and still awaits its definitive recognition as a Mahler cult site of the highest rank.”

(Attila Csampai)

Through the establishment of a bar and restaurant business bearing the evocative name *Mahler Stube*, as well as an adjacent wildlife park, the Trenker family's farm experienced an economic upswing. However, these changes to the farm and its immediate surroundings did not meet with unanimous approval among “Mahler friends”. The entire ensemble—farm, meadows, rows of trees and garden hut—was thus awakened from a Sleeping Beauty slumber, during which the ambience had remained almost authentically preserved for decades, but which might otherwise have led to a natural, gradual decay.

The complicated ownership situation surrounding the core of the Trenkerhof memorial—the composer's hut at the forest edge—has, for several years, been the reason why this site has not received the care and recognition it deserves. These circumstances led some members of the Gustav Mahler Committee to leave the association for personal reasons, while others continued their work with conviction. Erika Laner, a member since 1985 and vice-president since 1996, has since become the driving force behind the organisation of the Music Weeks.

## **Stronger Integration of Local Creativity and Culture**

In 1994, I—Josef Lanz, a native of Toblach and Aufkirchen (RAI Bolzano, Classical Music Department; member of the Toblach Mahler Committee since 1984)—was entrusted with artistic direction, a role I continue to hold to this day.

My initial intention was to more strongly integrate local creativity and culture and to enhance the profile of Alt-Schludersbach, in the hope of bringing the Music Week—or better still, culture itself—more firmly into the consciousness of the local population.

The Swiss cultural philosopher Urs Frauchiger once wrote:

“I know only one thing: music is neither a matter of festivals nor a matter of weeks. Music belongs to everyday life just as much as to festive days; music demands years and decades, not weeks.”

Thus, the Music Weeks were conceived more as a cultural endeavour than as a purely touristic offering.

For the first time, the opening of the Music Week took place in front of the composer’s hut. My wish then—and still today—is that the Mahler Music Week should not merely import art and scholarship unreflectively and present them to visitors, but increasingly become a concern of the local population itself.

At the opening, a brochure—authored by Inga Hosp—was presented on the Toblach teacher, choir director, organist, choirmaster and composer Sebastian Baur, who was active during Mahler’s time. This publication captured an important chapter of Toblach’s musical, cultural and tourism history. At the church service, Baur’s *Patronal Mass* was performed.

As *composer in residence*, I invited the Tyrolean composer Werner Pirchner, who created an unforgettable atmosphere with his film *The Decline of the Alpine Land* and a performance with Vienna Brass in front of the composer’s hut.

## **Mahler – A Jazz Enthusiast?**

A further innovation in a completely different direction was the inclusion of jazz in relation to Mahler’s music. To this end, I invited the Russian jazz pianist Leonid Chizhik to give a concert. “I am convinced,” Chizhik wrote, “that if Gustav Mahler had lived at the time when jazz spread through Europe as an art form, he would certainly have been a jazz enthusiast.”

This jazz orientation reached an absolute high point in 1998 with the invitation of the Uri Caine Ensemble.

Not to be overlooked is the world premiere of *Two Movements for String Quartet* (1927) by Alexander von Zemlinsky, performed by the Mandelring Quartet.

## **Thematic Integration of Protocol and Music Programme**

### **Mahler and Nature**

In 1994, Attila Csampai’s *Mahler Protocol* underwent a significant change, bringing music programme and theory into thematic proximity under the overarching theme *Mahler and Nature*:

“...it opens up an extraordinarily wide field for exploring Mahler’s own concept of nature against the real backdrop of a nature idyll that can still be experienced—and may once again be endangered.”

(A. Csampai)

Together with the Zurich Alpine philosopher Iso Camartin, this dialectic of an “idyll with a double bottom” was examined intellectually. Further lectures were given by Enzo Restagno (*Mahler and Nature – From Philosophy to Biology*), Oswald Beaujean (‘*Blümlein blau, verdorre nicht...*’ *Notes on the Concept of Nature in Mahler’s Songs*), Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich (*What Gustav Mahler Tells Me – Narrative Aspects of Mahler’s Symphonic Writing*), and a panel discussion addressed the question *What Role Does Nature Play in Mahler’s Work?*

## **Mahler’s Popularity**

The following year (1995), the protocol theme *Mahler’s Popularity* addressed the “levelling tendencies of the current Mahler craze flooding everything” and spoke of Toblach as a “magical Mahler place” in which the point of contact between village culture and cosmopolitan culture should continue to develop and consolidate as an exclusive forum for Mahler researchers and enthusiasts from all over the world.

(A. Csampai)

At the same time, a change took place in the leadership of the Mahler Committee: the previous president, Herbert Santer, stepped down, and Hansjörg Viertler (then managing director of the Upper Puster Valley Tourism Association and involved behind the scenes since the beginning of the Music Week) succeeded him.

In terms of content, the 15th Mahler Week remained “a balancing act between the demands and possibilities of a remote location, attempting a degree of cultural self-reflection in the face of the monumental backdrop of Mahler’s creations.”

(A. Csampai)

The prominent South Tyrolean painter Robert Scherer exhibited his works *Hommage to Gustav Mahler*. Markus Köhler performed Ernst Krenek’s *Travel Book from the Austrian Alps*, and piano trios by Werner Pirchner and Francesco Brazzo were played by the Vienna Piano Trio.

Arrangements and improvisations characterised the further musical programme: the Pannonian Wind Orchestra performed Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 1 in D major in an arrangement for wind orchestra by Désiré Dondeyne; early piano songs by Mahler were heard in Luciano Berio’s transcription for chamber orchestra, as was Robert Schumann’s Symphony No. 4 in Mahler’s arrangement (Dagmar Pecková, Haydn Orchestra, conducted by Christoph Eberle). Improvisations on themes from Mahler’s works formed the content of an organ concert by Jan Raas.

## **Mahler and Film**

As a follow-up to the theme *Mahler’s Popularity*, the year 1996 focused on a completely new and previously unexplored topic: *Mahler and Film*. Visual richness, vivid imagery, film-like dramaturgy, closeness to nature, flashbacks and atmospheric tension—these essential characteristics of Mahler’s aesthetic form a fertile ground for film music.

Did Mahler directly influence Hollywood composers, or not? Lectures were given by Berndt Heller (*Gustav Mahler’s Music in Film*), Ennio Simeon (*Mahler’s Reception in Cinema*), and Matthias

Keller (*Mahler's Death in Hollywood*). Under the title *Bruckner, Mahler and Strauss in Cinema*, Ensemble 13 performed arrangements for salon orchestra from the 1920s.

Arrangements of Mahler's works for reduced symphony orchestra by Hans Stadlmair, Erwin Stein and Benjamin Britten were performed by the Haydn Orchestra.

## **Opening Through New Projects – “My Music Is the Sound of Nature”**

In 1996, a collaboration began with the South Tyrolean Artists' Association that continues to this day and has led to a series of projects highlighting local culture. That year saw the project *Metamusic – Pieces about Music*, featuring the world premieres of short piano pieces by 17 Tyrolean composers. In a discussion and brief piano pieces, they expressed their aesthetic viewpoints (Peter Paul Kainrath, piano; Andreas Pfeifer, moderator).

In 1997, the festival *Dream Summer Night* was held in honour of Ludwig Thuille, born in Bolzano and active in Munich.

That same year, the American-Cuban composer George Lopez created, on commission from the Mahler Music Week, a work entitled *Dreamtime and Dream Interpretation – Symphonic Action for Instrumentalists in Mountain Space, Op. 11*, conceived for the natural amphitheatre around the Zsigmondy Hut in the Sexten Dolomites and premiered there by the Tyrolean Ensemble for New Music.

“Following the dream paths of Bruce Chatwin,” Lopez said, “I find certain places almost predestined to awaken an inner voice.” A hiker who happened upon the music remarked: “It felt as though the mountains were speaking.” An unconscious yet striking statement, which also resonates with Mahler's music: “*My music is always and everywhere the sound of nature.*”

The 1998 Music Week remains particularly memorable for the suggestive night concert by Uri Caine at the composer's hut in Alt-Schludersbach and for the concert by the Uri Caine Jazz Ensemble.

This concert was released as a double CD under the title *Gustav Mahler in Toblach* by Winter & Winter and received high acclaim from the international press.

## **Mahler and Schubert**

The 1997 Mahler Protocol addressed the theme *Mahler and Schubert: Winter Journeys of a Wayfarer – Relationships with Nature and Flight from the World in the Songs of Mahler and Schubert* (Ulrich Schreiber), *On the Relationship Between Schubert's and Mahler's Instrumental Music* (Paolo Petazzi), and a panel discussion entitled *At the Boundaries of a Dark Century: Schubert and Mahler*.

A song recital by the contralto Birgit Remmert rounded out the theme. The Music Week concluded with Volkmar Fischer's lecture *Das Lied von der Erde – Reflected in Its Interpreters* and a performance of the work in the chamber-orchestra arrangement by Arnold Schoenberg and Rainer Riehn, presented by the Bolzano String Academy with Birgit Remmert and András Molnár (conducted by Zolt Nagy).

## The New Concert Hall

At the end of the 1990s, renovation work began on the former Imperial and Royal Grand Hotel, including the construction of an integrated concert hall. Still very much a construction site, but already usable with the new *Gustav Mahler Hall*, the 19th Music Week was opened in 1999 amid a nostalgic turn-of-the-century atmosphere combined with a sense of new beginnings.

At the opening concert with the Vienna Jeunesse Orchestra under Herbert Böck (Mahler's Symphony No. 1), the moment of truth arrived regarding the hall's acoustic quality, with a stage accommodating over 100 musicians and an audience capacity of 450 seats. The acoustic performance met with universal approval: even fortissimo passages sounded transparent and unforced within the relatively compact auditorium.

A particularly exciting experience was the renewed appearance of the Uri Caine Jazz Ensemble, this time presenting Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe* alongside various songs by Gustav Mahler.

To mark the inauguration of the new concert hall, two world premieres were presented. The Tyrolean composers Werner Pirchner and Hubert Stuppner received composition commissions from the South Tyrolean Artists' Association and the Mahler Committee, resulting in Pirchner's *From My Composer's Hut...*, PW 95, and Stuppner's *Klezmer Dances*.

The Music Week concluded with Benjamin Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* and Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (Bolzano String Academy, conducted by Frieder Bernius), a programme that embodied the spirit of musical renewal brought about by the new venue.

## Expansion of the Music Weeks and New Audiences

Interest in the Gustav Mahler Music Weeks continued to grow, audiences increased, and the structure of the Grand Hotel cultural centre—with concert hall, seminar rooms, music school, youth hostel and park—opened up new possibilities. The year 2000 marked a significant innovation with the extension of the Music Week to approximately four weeks (8 July – 5 August). From this point onward, the “new old” name *Music Weeks* (in the plural) came into use.

The new concert hall was now to be used over a longer period for high-quality events. Gradually, a multifaceted festival developed that responded to the cultural interests of a broader audience. Performances of Mahler's works, lectures and the record prize formed the intensive Mahler Week and thus the core of the Music Weeks.

From 2000 to 2004, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra was engaged as orchestra in residence. Concerts conducted by Daniel Harding, Marc Minkowski and Alan Gilbert ranked among the absolute highlights of these years. The programmes included *Kindertotenlieder*, *Das Lied von der Erde* (in the expanded Schönberg–Riehn instrumentation) and Arnold Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1*, *Op. 9*.

At the 2000 Music Weeks, Mahler's Symphony No. 7 was performed by Orchestra La Fenice under Eliahu Inbal, and Symphony No. 5 by the Staatskapelle Weimar conducted by George Alexander Albrecht. Other outstanding events included a song recital with baritone Dietrich Henschel and pianist Helmut Deutsch (songs by Schubert, Mahler and Pfitzner), the *Musical Inspirations of Franz Schubert, Gustav Mahler... and Other Funeral Marches* by the Tyrolean ensemble Franui, and the *Sound-Paintings* of Swiss violin virtuoso Paul Giger.

An exhibition entitled *Painters Hear Mahler*, organised by the South Tyrolean Artists' Association, accompanied the Music Weeks.

The Mahler Protocol 2000 was devoted to the theme *Mahler's Farewell to the World*, with lectures by Constantin Floros (*Mahler's Farewell to the World*), Christoph Schlüren (*Mahler's Liebestod – On the Interpretation of Mahler's Tenth Symphony*), and Jonathan Carr (*Mahler between Toblach and Manhattan – Legends of Mahler's New York Years*).

The 2001 Mahler Protocol bore the title *Setting Out with Mahler into the New Century*. A particular highlight of the Mahler Music Weeks was the rehearsal period in Toblach and the performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony by the German Federal Youth Orchestra under Roberto Paternostro.

A topic deserving deeper exploration was opened in 2001 with Dorothea Redepenning's lecture *Traces of Mahler in Soviet Music: The Example of Dmitri Shostakovich and Alfred Schnittke*. This was complemented musically by a concert of the Bamberg Trio (trios by Shostakovich and Schnittke) and by the Russian State Symphony Orchestra under Dmitry Yablonsky performing Mahler's Symphony No. 6. Further highlights included the performance of Hubert Stuppner's string quartet *A Mahler Soirée* and an appearance by the Bolzano String Academy with baritone Christian Gerhaher, conducted by Frieder Bernius (works by Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler).

The highlights of the 2001 Music Weeks were documented on a double CD released by Real Sound—an initiative that would be continued in subsequent years.

## **Cultural Initiatives Beyond Toblach – “The Epitome of All Delights”**

Following the temporal expansion in 2000, a decision was made in 2002 to expand the Music Weeks geographically as well, creating what could be described as a free Upper Puster Valley cultural summer. The Mahler Weeks now exerted influence and attraction on a wide range of cultural initiatives beyond Toblach.

In Niederdorf, the association *Kulturzeichen Niederdorf* had already collaborated with the Mahler Music Weeks for several years. In the evocative atmosphere of the Church of St. Magdalena im Moos—without electricity and featuring the newly restored Köck organ from 1693—artists and ensembles appeared such as La Reverdie, Babette Haag (marimba), Luca Scandali (organ), Giorgio Fava (violin), the Vienna Glass Harmonica Duo, Frank Bungarten (guitar), Accentus Austria, Ensemble savâdi, and local artists including Leonhard Tutzer and Peter Waldner (organ).

While Gustav Mahler spent the summers of 1908 to 1910 in Toblach, the young Richard Strauss was staying with his family in nearby Sillian in East Tyrol. His sister Johanna later recalled: “Sillian was for us the epitome of all delights.” A small Strauss festival subsequently developed there, with concerts at Heinfels Castle becoming a popular meeting place for Mahler and Strauss enthusiasts.

The Romanesque collegiate church in Innichen proved ideal for a cappella singing of past centuries, hosting ensembles such as the Vocal Soloists of Ratisbona, Sette Voci under Peter Kooij, and the St. Florian Boys' Choir.

Collaborations also emerged with Cortina d'Ampezzo and Klagenfurt, linked through Mahler memorial sites in Alt-Schludersbach and Maiernigg and the Mahler Composition Prize in Klagenfurt.

## **Growing Diversity**

In 2002, around 160 performers presented Mahler's Symphony No. 2 "*Resurrection*" (Philharmonic State Orchestra Halle, Beethoven Choir Ludwigshafen, Claudia Rohrbach, soprano; Yvonne Naef, alto; conducted by Daniel Beyer). This work was also the theme of the Mahler Protocol, with lectures by Michael Stegemann and Peter Gülke.

In the Grand Hotel Cultural Centre, the Richard Strauss Institute of Garmisch-Partenkirchen presented the exhibition *Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler – Opposing Poles of a New Magnetic Axis*. Concerts and lectures explored the contrasts and connections between the two composers.

Further highlights included Paulus Manker's five-hour film *Alma – A Show Biz to the End*, song recitals by baritone Thomas E. Bauer, contemporary premieres, chamber music, brass programmes, and a concert by the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under Daniel Harding with violinist Viktoria Mullova.

## Youth and Education

The integration of young musicians became a special concern: in 2004 with the *Forum for Young Artists* and the project *PuschtraWind – Youth Wind Orchestra of the Mahler Music Weeks*, developed in cooperation with South Tyrolean and Tyrolean wind music associations and directed by Michael Luig.

## 25 Years of the Gustav Mahler Music Weeks

In 2005, the Gustav Mahler Music Week(s) celebrated their 25th anniversary. What began in 1981 virtually from nothing had grown into an internationally recognised festival. An intensive international programme was embedded within a quiet village culture, initially facing resistance but ultimately gaining broad acceptance.

Musical highlights of the anniversary year included the Toblach Mahler Trilogy performed by two orchestras, the Kronos Quartet with a new Mahler project, complete performances of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs, Brahms's *German Requiem*, and numerous lectures within the Mahler Protocol.

The Toblach Mahler Talks, in collaboration with the International Gustav Mahler Society, were devoted entirely to *Mahler in Toblach*. Lectures, exhibitions and the planning of a permanent exhibition and publication marked this culmination.

## Conclusion

The new concert hall, the integration of local culture, and the temporal and geographical expansion of the festival have given the Gustav Mahler Music Weeks a lasting foundation on which to build for the future. What began as an experiment has become a firmly established cultural institution—rooted in place, open to the world, and dedicated to the enduring legacy of Gustav Mahler.