

Presence: Mahler and New Music

by Grant Nebel

The question of ancestry in culture is spurious. Every new manifestation in culture rewrites its past, changes old maudits into new heroes, old heroes into those who should have never been born. New actors scavenge the past for ancestors, because ancestry is legitimacy and novelty is doubt—but in all times forgotten actors emerge from the past not as ancestors but as familiars.

Greil Marcus¹

Much of the thinking about Western art and Western music, casual and otherwise, takes place under the term *representation*. Here, “to represent” means “to use one thing in place of another.” (The concept also holds power in science and politics.) A picture stands in place of a thing (or a person, or a landscape, anyway in place of a *vision*); a story stands in place of a life, a biography stands in place of a person. The commonplace question “What does this mean?” translates into “What does this represent? What can I translate this into? What is behind this document?” The document – what we hear – isn’t what matters; “[t]he document was always treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace.”²

Composers are often subjected to this process. James Tenney has remarked that the period from 1600 to 1950 (Monteverdi to Cage, to attach names to the era) is the *operatic* age, the period when music’s function was to arouse emotions, when music was seen to represent the emotions of the composer, and its success was dependent on whether or not these emotions were also aroused in the listener.³

Mahler, with a music of extreme gestures and a life of only slightly less extreme gestures, has been explained too often in this way; the criticism and explication surrounding *Death in Venice* and the Fifth Symphony is the best example of this. It’s only through an accident of timing that Mahler and *Death in Venice* missed the massive publicity machine surrounding Beethoven and the later film *Immortal Beloved*. (Whether this is a good or a bad thing is left as an exercise for the reader.)

Representation in music largely takes places through narrative, and narrative takes place largely through the progression of harmonies. Sound progresses through a series of harmonies; a key is established (the beginning), a different key (or set of keys) is/are established (the middle), a dominant key appears (here comes . . .), and the initial key reappears (. . .the end). Stated more simply: keys are established, prepared, and resolved. This creates a *narrative* – a way to understand successive events in time.

Much music after 1950 (often called *new music*, although I prefer the more descriptive term *post-common-practice music*) has been discussed less in terms of representation and more in terms of sound. Following Mark Prendergast, we can call the era after 1950 the Ambient era, after the title of his comprehensive survey *The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance – the Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age*.⁴ Prendergast and Tenney evaluate music not according to emotional responses or the listener or the emotional intentions of the composer, but in terms of its presence, in terms of the sound itself. The vagueness of this term corresponds to the youth of this period; in 350

years, we’ll have a better language to describe the effects of the music of our time.

Much can be written about Mahler and new music; much can be done in terms of tracing Mahler’s influence on contemporary composers. Likewise, a lot can be written in a hit-and-miss style on Mahlerian influences on new music, from the orchestral amplification in the Chicago industrial band Ministry to the three-minute melody lines of Brian Eno.⁶ My goal is different, and necessarily more mysterious (a charitable term; you may consider this vague); I want to look at and describe some artifacts in the territory first explored by Mahler, and to look at two composers from the field of new music who have also explored the same territory: the punk symphonist Glenn Branca (b. 1948) and the architect of near-silence Morton Feldman (1926-87).

I am not arguing that Mahler is a proto-Feldman or a Branca without amplification; I do not feel that Mahler was held back by common practice. Each composer worked within a language given to him, and each was faithful to that language. Mahler worked with the harmonies and instruments of late Romanticism; Branca knows that the first purpose of rock is the righteous kicking out of jams; and Feldman created what may be the most *balanced* works in all of music.

Neither of these composers can be called Mahlerian, in the way that John Adams or Dmitri Shostakovich can be called Mahlerians. But these are composers who, with languages, materials, and styles that come from radically different traditions than Mahler, explored the same basic questions of music: How can I sustain musical interest over a great scale of time? How can I make my symphony “embrace the world”? What form(s) can I make? How do I arrange and separate my sounds? Although the question of influence is endlessly fascinating to me, especially as a teacher, it’s even more interesting to see similarities and unities in composers from diverse and even antithetical traditions.⁷ It suggests, again, a territory of music that different composers inhabit, even if they never meet.

Glenn Branca, creator of symphonies over an hour long and requiring up to a dozen players, emerged from punk, a musical genre whose canonical works are for groups of three to four and last less than two minutes. The first punks (the New York Dolls, the Ramones) in the New York scene that birthed Branca were deliberately attacking the bloated, “symphonic” art-rock of the 1970s. “These kids are doing what nobody else is doing! They’re bringing back back the three-minute song! These were the days of the ten-minute drum solo, the twenty-minute guitar solo.”⁸ Branca first received attention as a guitarist in his bands, The Static and Theoretical Girls, in the late 1970s.⁹

⁶ Worthy of their own essay—so I won’t discuss them outside of this note—are the jazz works of Uri Caine. *I Went Out This Morning Over the Countryside* is a two-CD recording of the Uri Caine Ensemble’s interpretation of Mahler’s works. Some of the works are given a literal treatment, others are used as a springboard into free jazz. It’s not Caine’s most effective work; unlike the composers discussed here, Caine tries to *translate* Mahler into the language of jazz. Caine’s two-CD recording of the Goldberg Variations is more successful, probably because of the closeness of jazz, with its continual activity and need for improvisation, to the Baroque.

⁷ The Glenn Branca website, www.glennbranca.com, has some memorable images of the effect of his music on a classical audience that was essentially unprepared for it.

⁸ Jerry Nolan (second drummer for the Dolls), in Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 117.

⁹ A somewhat untheorized – though not unmarketed – area of musicology is the connection between various *subgenres* of art and rock (or popular) music. Selling rock, especially heavy metal, in orchestral settings is an obvious marketing ploy, although the late Michael Kamen created some resounding orchestrations of Metallica’s works in S&M. Some counterexamples, though, are: the Nau Ensemble’s *The Eternal*, which presents the music of Joy Division (one of the most rigorous and classical of the punk bands) in a style of medieval polyphony; DJ Spooky’s mixing-board approach to Iannis Xenakis’ *Analogiques A and B*; and much contemporary rave music echoes, if it doesn’t actually derive from, the metric modulation of Carter.

¹ *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 21.

² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith), p. 6.

³ David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch, eds., *Writings through John Cage’s Music Poetry, and Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 173.

⁴ Mark Prendergast, *The Ambient Century From Mahler to Trance—the Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

In the early 1980s, though, Branca turned to large-scale works. His First Symphony, subtitled "Tonal Plexus," uses forces of guitars, horns, and percussion, and lasts about one hour. The first movement, over ten minutes long, uses the most basic material of rock (specifically, of heavy metal): the E-major chord. Over these ten minutes, the chord builds in volume through the guitars, with two notes alternating loudly over the top. The third movement opens with the pounding of the percussion ("drums" are a wholly inadequate term here – the instruments are wooden 2x4s being pounded into oil drums) and builds over fifteen minutes to a tape-splice cutoff. (The building of sounds in volume and intensity over the course of ten to twenty minutes is a recurring feature of Branca's music.)

What happens in Branca's First Symphony isn't acceptable by the Classical standards of music – development and change, the setting up of a tonal center, moving away from that center, and coming back. In terms of storytelling, the First Symphony doesn't work. What Branca does well, though, is make one feel the sound as an overwhelming presence, as a thing in its own right.

Conventional musical analysis runs into an equal amount of trouble when describing Mahler's Eighth Symphony, or even *Das Lied von der Erde*. The Eighth is as overblown as Branca's work, and that is part of its effect; the sheer volume, density, and diversity of sound is the power and point of the music. The spectacle of the music is also its purpose; to see Mahler's Eighth in a concert hall, to see *that many* musicians together is as startling as the number and coordination of Branca's performers are in a pop music hall. An even more Mahlerian spectacle is Branca's Thirteenth Symphony, *Hallucination City*, subtitled "for 100 guitars." (Images of the first performance are available on his website, which promises a recording soon.)

Branca's Second Symphony uses much the same materials as his First (minus the horns), but deploys them in a more subtle fashion. The Second opens with what might be called a fanfare for bass drum solo – two minutes of thwacking by Andrew Z'ev Weinstein. (Z'ev also contributes a fascinating percussion solo for the second movement.) It is like the Mahler Tenth, but inverts the effect; what was once a funeral march is a celebratory beginning. (On the recording, you can hear a giggle just as the last beat fades.)

The third and fifth movements of this Symphony owe the most to Mahler. The third movement – Branca's Adagietto – uses a repeated scraping sound from the guitars to underscore a slow build of chords. Branca gets the maximum effect of the minimum amount of material, and holds it for the longest time – the movement builds to a bass-and-drum finale over the course of fifteen minutes. (His rock background leads to a repeated weakness in the symphonies: a reliance on drumming for momentum. Generally, the longer he can avoid a drum figuration, the more effective his symphonies are.)¹⁰ The last movement is barely three minutes long, and is nothing more than repeated chords from a single guitar, played at intervals of a second or so apart. It's a fading of sound as moving as the ending of "Der Abschied."

Branca's Third Symphony goes further into the sense of sounds appearing and disappearing. The first movement sounds like an extended version of an orchestra tuning up,¹¹ as chords are played and go silent. Various kinds of chiming notes appear over this (the fact that this Symphony is entirely in just intonation makes this extraordinarily beautiful); the music doesn't progress but hangs like streamers in an aural space. The third (and final) movement suggests a full orchestral version of the end of the Second, with chords looming up and falling away. Again, in the sense of harmonic narrative, this is static. The music achieves its power through the beauty of the individual sounds, not their progression from one to the other. If Branca's Third risks boredom, it's probably because of this.

Branca has also written effectively for a conventional orchestra. His largest work in this genre, the Ninth Symphony, is a one-movement

¹⁰ The exceptions to this rule have been Branca's Sixth and Tenth Symphonies, which move away from the Mahlerian territory and closer to rock. In these works, the drums reinforce the drive of the music rather than detract from it.

¹¹ I owe this description to Laura Gillespie.

work that suggests the music of Morton Feldman. A shifting mosaic of iambic motives in strings, horns, and voices, it remains (at first hearing) static for fifty minutes. Longer motives appear in the work and then sink back, and the eight-note climax comes from almost nowhere. It can't be described effectively in terms of narrative – like Branca's Third Symphony, it's boring when described that way – but one that creates a sense of space and density.

The sense of space – common to Branca here and Mahler in *Das Lied von der Erde* – finds a complete expression in the works of Feldman, probably the composer most affected by a sense of space. An early friend and ally of John Cage,¹² Feldman's closer artistic progenitors were the Abstract Expressionist painters of 1950s New York. Feldman took ideas from painting – the surface, the picture plane, the attack of colors – and used them in his compositions.

In the last fifteen years of his life, Feldman made many long compositions, far surpassing the scale of Mahler. They range from the seventy-minute long piano composition *For Bunita Marcus* to the four hours *For Philip Guston* (for three players – one playing piano/celesta, one playing flute/piccolo, and one percussionist) to the five-to-six hour String Quartet No. 2. These works are all quiet, they use very few notes, and if Feldman didn't have a Mahlerian sense of volume, he had a Mahlerian ego; "you suspect that [he] wanted to be the first Jewish composer who wrote a piece that was longer than *Parsifal*."¹³

It's the quietness of the music, though, that gives it the Mahlerian presence. With Feldman's music, you have to pay close attention, because what matters, again, isn't the transformation of harmonies but the *continual*, and subtle, transformation of sounds and rhythms. Feldman's scores are a nightmare of changing time signatures, tempos, and points of attack; the result is that, listening to it, you never know what's coming next. Mahler first explored the territory of writing music in terms of density rather than polyphony; Feldman explored how to hold musical interest at a low density of sound.

For Bunita Marcus, for example, opens with a single C-sharp and nothing else, played by the left hand and then the right hand. Other notes join it, but never more than one at a time, and always separated by rests. The durations of the notes and the rests, and the meter, continually change. All this makes a sound that demands attention because it can never be predicted; it's a sound without any narrative.

In a musical narrative, each sound has a function; it leads into another sound. (Elliott Carter has written extensively on this.) Common to all three composers, and discussed openly by Feldman, is the sense of musical *space*. I do not mean here the physical placement of the instruments but the way in which these composers separate sounds. Yet Mahler, Branca, and Feldman separate their sounds; they give each sound a life of its own and use time to separate it. (Physicists tell us that time is what keeps everything from happening all at once.) Christian Wolff, in one of the earliest comments on new music, remarks that "[here] a concern for sound comes into its own."¹⁴ In *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mahler separates his sounds with a sparse orchestration, letting each one be heard on its own. Branca and particularly Feldman take this even farther, so that in Feldman, a single C-sharp is a thing with a life of its own.¹⁵

¹² Feldman should not be considered a Cageian composer, if that term makes any sense. See Morton Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. by B. H. Friedman (Cambridge: Exact Change, 2000). In fact, Feldman has probably made the most effective criticism of Cage: "John Cage, who finds art intolerable, wants the social situation to change it. . . ." (p. 82). "Never, on pain of losing our divinity, are we allowed to decide. My quarrel with Cage is that he decided. . . ." (p. 30).

¹³ Alex Ross, "Brooklyn Bridges," *The New Yorker*, vol. 75, no. 32 (Nov. 1, 1999): p. 122.

¹⁴ This comment appears in John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 68.

¹⁵ Cage has used this idea. A layer of one of his most successful compositions, *Apartment House 1776*, consists of "Harmonies": Eighteenth-century hymns and melodies where Cage has (randomly, of course) removed some groups of notes and extended the others, so the lines are changed into long notes broken by long

And, just as importantly, with a long duration of time. Feldman remarked that "I need at least 45 minutes before I can begin to know what a piece is about." It's pointless to call Feldman's music, or Mahler's, too long, because the too-long length is the power. Feldman, and Branca, and Mahler all created music which is too big to be contained by whatever we choose to represent it. Feldman has stated that "up to an hour and a half, you think about form, but after an hour and a half, it's scale." Feldman's music sometimes resembles that of Anton Webern, who achieved the same effect by going to the opposite temporal extreme. For music twenty seconds or six hours long, the question "what story does this tell?" makes no sense.

In the Second String Quartet, the absence of narrative allows the presence of another kind of interest. Occasionally louder than his other late works, the Second Quartet consists of many small patterns, repeated, with the number of repetitions continually varying. Like his other works, the meter signatures continually change, and through this, Feldman makes a continually changing world. Alex Ross has described this work as "a kind of continent of sound which you never see whole."¹⁶

Mahler's music also conveys this sense of being too huge, too diverse, for any label or representation to be stuck on it. This ambiguity may be the essential condition of art. If we can represent art, if we can use a one-sentence description in place of the artwork, then we don't need to experience the work itself. By their *scale*, Feldman and Mahler make sure we have to experience their works – in the whole – to get anything out of them.

In the previous issue of *Naturlaut*, James L. Zychowicz has described the many *different* forms in the Seventh Symphony.¹⁷ Another way of regarding this is to see the form *itself* as the composition. Rather than use existing forms as a thing to contain the composition, Mahler created forms and then made the music to illuminate it. In the same way, Feldman's forms are those of notes constantly going away and coming back, something that sounds on first listen static but then becomes more and more complex. (Mahler's music, on first listen, can be overwhelmingly complex but then becomes more and more lucid.)

The most common element of the Mahler-Branca-Feldman territory is Mahler's conviction that "a symphony must embrace the world," and embracing a world isn't telling a story. The story is always oriented towards a goal; a world, to be interesting, has to be diverse, maybe even self-contradictory. Mahler achieved this diversity while working in a particularly diverse chromatic language, using chords that could go in any direction. Feldman achieved a similar result by ignoring functional harmony and concentrating instead on tonal and rhythmic diversity; the score for the Second String Quartet includes not just multiple time signatures but also multiple accidentals, including sharps, flats, double sharps and double flats, none of which can be played enharmonically.

But after a certain point, given the lack of obvious musical activity, we become aware that a single note is an incredibly complex entity in itself: that it is not staying the same at all; that there is rhythm, melody, harmony, and timbre wrapped up inside it. . . .

Eric Tamm¹⁸

Extended and/or repeated listening is, of course, one of the features of the age of recorded music. Prior to the twentieth century, repeated encounters with music meant study of the score, and, most likely, performance of the work yourself. (Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* is an exemplar of this kind of music.) There's no possibility of performing a symphony yourself, though; and to hear the music at the proper volume

silences. (Other layers include Black, Protestant, Jewish, and Native American songs, Moravian melodies, and drum solos; "that is the true polyphony" indeed.) Many of Eno's longer Ambient pieces use this kind of melody.

¹⁶ Ross, p. 122.

¹⁷ James L. Zychowicz, "Mahler's Seventh Symphony Revisited," *Naturlaut*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Dec. 1, 2004): p. 2.

¹⁸ *Brian Eno: His Music and the Vertical Color of Sound* (Boston and London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 153.

you need the proper equipment.¹⁹ Branca's music, of course, is impossible without amplifiers ("Branca Unplugged" is an oxymoron), and Feldman's music is suited for the age of compact discs and now, audio DVDs. (For example, the Flux Quartet's recording of Quartet #2 occupies five full CDs or a single DVD.)

I approach the territory of Mahler, Branca, and Feldman in the most literal way, as a listener. *Listening* is an enormous question that has hardly been touched or studied, outside of a few comments. Brian Eno remarks that *how* we listen to music is a crucial part of that music; a concert hall is not a nightclub is not a living room, and the musics for each are different.²⁰

Listening to these composers, one hears chords that last long enough for them to be artifacts in their own right, interesting to hear on their own. (Again, Branca's First Symphony may be the deepest exploration of E-major, just as Mahler's Tenth makes its own chromatic chord its home.) And listening to hear these composers, I hear, I'm forced to bear witness to the power and presence of the sound. It's the length and presence of the music that does the forcing. I notice that with Mahler and Branca, I can't be in front of the speakers no matter how quiet I set the volume; with Feldman, I'd rather not move when I listen to it. The sound itself has a presence that demands its own respect.

Listening to each composer is excellent training for listening to the other two. Each of these composers teaches us to respect slowness, to hear a tempo that does something besides dance or march. Each of these composers arranges sounds in time, not in a way that tells a story but accords each sound its own place. If "a symphony is a world," then what these composers do is not to tell a story but to show us the world in all its size, unpredictability, and contradictions. This doesn't evoke a humanistic response, rather it's a feeling of awe before the object itself.

Select Discography

Glenn Branca

Information on all of Glenn Branca's work, including biographies, photos and videos, excerpts and news, is available on his website www.glennbranca.com. Not all the symphonies are available commercially, but the following are of interest:

Symphony No. 1: *Tonal Plexus*—ROIR

Symphony No. 2: *The Peak of the Sacred*—Atavistic

Symphony No. 3: *Gloria: Music for the First 127 Intervals of the Harmonic Series*—Atavistic

Symphony No. 5: *Describing Planes of an Expanding Hypersphere*—Atavistic(quieter, more Ambient work)

Symphony No. 6: *Devil Choirs at the Gates of Heaven*—Atavistic
Some claim this as Branca's best work; although I prefer the Second, I can see the argument. It suggests a rockabilly rather than a heavy metal or punk tradition.

Symphony No. 9: *L'ève Future*—Point Music

Symphonies No. 8 and No. 10: *The Mysteries*—Atavistic
More like a chamber work, these two also are closer to straight-up heavy metal. To my way of thinking, this work is not as interesting, although the second half of No. 10 is worth the price of the CD.

Movement Within, on Bang on a Can's *Renegade Heaven*
Another example of Branca's skill at building intensity over a period of approximately fifteen minutes.

¹⁹ I suspect the connection between symphonic music and really loud noise is why there are so many classical music performers who are also heavy metal fans. Another Mahlerian work, for sheer presence of sound, is Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony.

²⁰ Prendergast, p. xi.

Morton Feldman

An excellent website devoted to Morton Feldman, including a complete (LP and CD) discography is at www.cnvill.demon.uk/mfhome.htm. Almost all of his later works are available on Hat Hut Records, and all have been given excellent recordings; however, Mode Records is coming up fast on the outside with their Feldman Edition. Some of the more notable works not mentioned in the main text are:

Cello and Orchestra, Piano and Orchestra, Oboe and Orchestra, Flute and Orchestra—cpo

These pieces, from the mid-1970s, mark the beginning of the late Feldman style. There are still some loud moments in these works, but already the interest is in the evenness and uneventfulness of the pieces. (And this in the concerto genre!)

Neither, For Samuel Beckett

The first, from 1977, is for soprano and orchestra, sets a poem by Beckett; the second, just as long but less eventful, was finished a decade later and was Feldman's last orchestral piece.

String Quartet #1 on Koch International

Patterns in a Chromatic Field, a.k.a. *Untitled Composition for Cello and Piano*

These two works, from 1979 and 1981 respectively, are a good introduction to the late work. The First Quartet has almost enough density to sound occasionally conventional; the Untitled Composition introduces the shifting patterns that come to full flower in the Second Quartet. (John Zorn's Tzadik Records has just contributed a new recording of the Untitled Composition.)

Triadic Memories

From 1981, this is usually considered Feldman's best work for solo piano. I don't agree; skip this and get *For Bunita Marcus* instead.

Piano and String Quartet

From 1985, this is another definitive, very quiet composition. If there's such a thing as Ambient music that keeps you continually on edge, this is it. In addition to all the other recordings, Elektra-Nonesuch has contributed one with Aki Takahashi and the Kronos Quartet.

Grant Nebel spent the first half of his life (so far) in Evanston, listening to WFMT and WXRT about equally. He spent the second half largely in Southern California, including seven years at one of the best schools of new music in America, the University of California at San Diego. (He was studying history, though.) Currently, he's working as a scribe – that is, music typesetter – at A-R Editions in Middleton, Wisconsin. His compositions will be available online by the summer of 2005.

2005-6 Performances of Mahler's Music by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

The newly released program for the 2005-6 season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra includes performances of four symphonies by Gustav Mahler:

- Symphony no. 2 "Resurrection"
Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor, with Celena Shafer, soprano, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, mezzo soprano, and the Chicago Symphony Chorus (16, 17, and 18 March 2006)
- Symphony no. 4
David Zinman, conductor, with Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano (4, 5, 6 May 2006)
- Symphony no. 5
Daniel Barenboim, conductor (14, 15, 16 October 2005 and 30 May 2006)
- Symphony no. 9
Daniel Barenboim, conductor (15 June 2006)

The last work is part of Barenboim's "Farewell" concerts, in which he will conduct Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and also the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. The program for Beethoven's Ninth includes the "Choral Fantasy," a work in which the composer anticipates some of the ideas that he would take up in his last Symphony.

Did you know?

Many of Mahler's works received exceedingly bad reviews from the press in the early days – not only at home in the musically conservative Vienna, but also abroad. As shown below, the Eighth Symphony was severely ridiculed by the Chicago press even as late as 1952.

Bad Reviews of Mahler's Eighth Symphony

If you are perverse enough to endure over an hour of masochistic aural flagellation, here's your chance! This grandiose Mahler "Symphony of a Thousand" [Symphony No. 8], with all its elephantine forces, fatuous mysticism and screaming hysteria, adds up to a sublimely ridiculous minus-zero.

R.D. Darrell, *Down Beat*, Chicago, June 4, 1952

At the end of the first part of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, I strolled about the lobby, absolutely disheartened and disillusioned. That these lovely old Latin iambics, filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit should be wrenched into rhythms, square and round, and yelled and shouted by hundreds of vociferous ladies and gentlemen, ponderously piled in superincumbent tiers, with a howling orchestra with additional instruments galore—seemed gross and irreverent. Dry Teutonic intricacies of melody and harmony seemed to instill a furor, with the accent on the roar.

Charles Peabody, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, April 12, 1918

If there is any music that is eminently a routine, reflective, dusty sort of musical art, it is certainly Mahler's five latter symphonies. The musical Desert of Sahara is surely to be found in these unhappy compositions. They are monsters of ennui, and by their very pretentiousness, their gargantuan dimensions, throw into relief Mahler's essential sterility. They seek to be colossal, and achieve vacuity.

Paul Rosenfeld, *Musical Portraits*, New York, 1920

Book Discount

The Chicago Mahlerites has obtained several book discounts for the membership:

Gustav Mahler - Letters to His Wife

Edited by Henry-Louis de La Grange & Günter Weiss

In collaboration with Knud Martner

First Complete Edition; revised and translated by Anthony Beaumont
Cornell University Press

This book is reviewed on page 11 of this issue of *Naturlaut*

20% Discount, at \$32

Mahler's Fourth Symphony

by James L. Zychowicz

Oxford University Press

20% Discount, at \$28

Please contact Teng-Leong Chew to obtain these discounts.

The Chicago Mahlerites welcome the following new members:

Karl Wechter from Chicago, Illinois
Phil Garon from Falls Church, Virginia
Stephen Ambra from Concord, New Hampshire
Melissa Mendez from Chicago, Illinois
Matthew Silverstein from Chicago, Illinois