The Hans Gál Society

Hans Gál

A life in music

1890
1987

The illustrated biography

English

Photograph: Lotte Meitner-Graf

Contents

Introduction 4

Early Life 5

Musical Education 10

Early Works 17

The First World War 21

'Arzt der Sobeide' 24

Post War Recovery 26

Marriage and Family 30

'Die Heilige Ente' 35

'Das Lied der Nacht' 38

The 1920s 42

Recognition 46

Scholarship 48

Appointment in Mainz 50

The Mainz Period 53

The Nazi Take-over 55

'Die Beiden Klaas' 57

Return to Vienna 59

Emigration 63

Internment 67

Edinburgh 69

Wartime Works 71

New Works 72

Late Works 74

Research & Writing 76

Gál's Music 78

Postscript 80

Introduction

The composer Hans Gál was born near Vienna in 1890. Following considerable success in the 1920s, he was appointed Director of the Conservatory in Mainz in 1929. Hitler's accession to power in 1933 led to his instant dismissal and the banning of all his works. He returned to Vienna, but was again to forced to flee by Hitler's annexation of Austria in 1938. He emigrated to Britain and settled in Edinburgh, where he remained active until his death in 1987.

The complete 26-chapter biography, with its illustrations and supplementary biographical notes. Links lead to the works, recordings and supporting material on hansgal.org.

hansgal.org

Chapter 01

Early Life

Hans Gál was born on 5th August, 1890, in Brunn am Gebirge, a village near Vienna, during the family's summer holiday. The name Gál is of Hungarian origin, and both parents came from the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Gál's grandfather on his mother's side, Leopold Alt, originated from Sopron (Ödenburg) and had been apprenticed to a tailor, but having learnt to read and write at the age of 18, he moved to Vienna (where he stood on the barricades in 1848) in order to study medicine. He became a homeopathic doctor. His eldest daughter, Gál's Aunt Jenny, became an opera singer in Weimar at the time of the young Richard Strauss. On his father's side, Gál's grandfather was also Hungarian, and a doctor. Gál's father, Josef Gál, who married Leopold's younger daughter Ilka, came to Vienna from Hungary as a student; he, too, became a homeopathic doctor.

Gál had three sisters, Edith (Ditta), the eldest (b. 1888), Margarethe (Gretl) (b. 1895) and Ernestine (Erna) (b. 1899). The family apartment at 14 Wipplingerstrasse, close to the city centre, was attractive but rather cramped, especially since father Gál needed two of the six rooms for his homeopathic practice. Gretl and Erna shared a room, but Hans had to sleep in the waiting room, though he had the use of a box-room to work in, where a small desk and chair were crammed in between a large linen cupboard and an equally large wardrobe. Despite its ideal central location, the apartment had the disadvantage that four of its rooms faced south, and the heat in the densely built-up city made it intolerable during the summer months. At this time of the year the family therefore stayed in furnished lodgings at 1, Probusgasse, in the outlying northern district of Heiligenstadt, on the edge of the Vienna Woods and almost opposite the Beethoven house (some of the

elderly residents recalled throwing snowballs at Beethoven in their childhood). The house also had a large garden. Hanna Gál recalls that

> "the children found playmates, the parents played cards, etc. Father Gál organised communal outings with the occupants of the house, for which a hand-cart was hired. . . . One of the residents, who enjoyed walking, took Hans with him on his excursions. As a result, Hans acquired a remarkably good knowledge of the surroundings of Vienna: Mödling, Helenental, Rekawinkel, etc. Furthermore, both of them always took their sketch-books with them, and Hans was introduced to the mysteries of perspective. [Personal correspondence, December, 1988.]

At the age of ten, Hans was sent to the 'Gymnasium' (grammar school), the only route to a university education and an acceptable career. His time at school was hardly enjoyable. Later he recalled the

> "depressingly uniform classrooms, badly heated, badly ventilated, corridors smelling of disinfectant and lavatories, where we spent the 'respirium', a harsh, forbidding impersonal treatment by overworked, sullen teachers." [Letter to Kleiber's biographer John Russell, 14.9.1956]

His close school friend was Erich Kleiber, later a distinguished conductor. The two were known as 'the twins', as they shared the same birthday and were the smallest pupils in the class:

> "We always kept our copy-books conveniently near each other for a surreptitious oblique look across at written examinations, and had a well-developed technique of whisperingly prompting each other in case of need. And I can see myself, or Erich, in feverish haste copying from the other's copy-book a spot of forgotten homework, five minutes before eight, when the daily martyrdom started. And we shared a constitutional bias against mathematics. Physical exercise? Next to

> none. There was gymnastics, but under a stupid, crude teacher, the worst brute of them all. The natural reaction of us youngsters was to make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible by a kind of dull, passive resistance, and to endure it as an unavoidable part of the daily boredom. There were games, once a week, during the summer term, but they were not compulsory and I think neither myself nor Erich ever went there; we would not have wasted an hour of our precious spare time for that. It was certainly an unhealthy upbringing." [ibid.]

Nevertheless, writing half a century later, Gál had to admit that there was something of value in his education, and that, apart from the classics, he obtained a good basis in general education. One thing Gál did not gain from his schooldays, however, was his passion for music:

> "Music? None whatever. There was some wretched class singing which was not compulsory, and we hardly attended it any longer than perhaps the first term. It looks odd that in a country usually regarded as one of the most musical in the world, music was practically non-existent in the higher school." [ibid.]

Biographical notes

Jenny Fleischer-Alt

Jenny Fleischer-Alt, sister of Hans Gál's mother Ilka, was born in Bratislava in 1863. By her late teens she was already a highly successful opera singer, performing in Vienna and Prague, and in 1884, at the age of 21, she was employed at the court theatre in Wiesbaden. Her repertoire included many title roles. In 1885 she moved to Weimar, where, one year later, she was appointed to a highly-paid position at the court opera.

In addition to her opera appearances she gave performances at the Grand Ducal court, where she won favour with the Grand Duchess on account of her

beautifully clear voice and vocal artistry, and in 1890 the Grand Duke Carl Alexander awarded her the title of 'Grossherzogliche Kammersängerin' (Grandducal Court Singer).

In the same year she married the artist Friedrich Fleischer. In accordance with the conventions of the time, this obliged her to abandon her brilliant career as an opera singer. She and her husband moved into the spacious villa in Belvederer Allee in 1900, where they led an elegant life, childless but complete with Maltese spaniels, until her husband's death in 1937.

(For continuation see 'Emigration')

Erich Kleiber

Erich Kleiber was born on 5th August, 1890 (the same day as Hans Gál). He studied in Vienna and then in Prague, and became the chorus master of the German Opera there. After appointments at the opera houses in Darmstadt, Düsseldorf and Mannheim, in 1923 he was appointed music director of the State Opera in Berlin, and gave the first performance of several works, including Berg's *Wozzeck*. He held the post until 1934, when he resigned in protest against National-Socialist policies, and went first to Amsterdam and then, in 1938, to Buenos Aires. He returned to Europe in 1945, and was particularly associated with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. In 1954 he was again appointed director of the State Opera in Berlin. He died in 1956.

Illustrations

Hans Gál, 1895

Hans (right) with sister Edith, 1892

Brunn am Gebirge - Gál's birthplace

Josef Gál, father of Hans

Ilka Gál, Mother of Hans

Erich Kleiber

Chapter 02

Musical Education

Although Gál's family was not particularly musical, his father enjoyed opera, and took Hans and his three sisters to performances, which awakened his interest in music. When Hans was eight, his Aunt Jenny, while visiting them, noticed Hans's musical talent, and insisted that he should receive piano lessons. He did not enjoy practising, and later confessed to having secretly moved the hands of the clock forwards in order to shorten the time.

The musical event which really ignited Hans's interest in music, however, was a concert for school-children at which Wagner's *Meistersinger* overture and Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* were played. He was fourteen, and this was his first experience of an orchestral concert. The *Choral Symphony* so impressed him that he made one of his sisters play it over and over again with him as a piano duet. In the next few years, he developed a passion for music. Like everyone else, he "went through a violent fit of Wagnerism, as if it had been measles" [Letter to John Russell, 14.9.1956] There were performances at the Opera, some of which were conducted by Mahler, whose conducting he could recall quite clearly, even eighty years later. Another event which remained in his memory was a performance in 1907 of Strauss's *Salome* by a touring company from Breslau, in the 'Deutsches Volkstheater'.

At the age of fifteen, after passing through several piano teachers, Hans had eventually become a pupil of Richard Robert (1861-1924), at that time Director of the New Vienna Conservatory, one of the most respected teachers in Vienna. Gál obtained his music-teaching certificate, which included music history, piano-playing and harmony, under Robert's supervision in April, 1909.

Hanna Gál recalled:

> "There were three outstanding piano-teachers working in Vienna at the same time in the first quarter of the century. At the Academy was Emil Sauer, who had himself been a pupil of Liszt and who trained his students primarily to achieve the greatest virtuosity. Also the world-famous Leschetizky had settled in Vienna. His pupils were recognisable by their wonderfully shaped sound. The third highly-respected piano-teacher was Professor Robert. His pupils were not just 'piano-players', as Hans called them. They had to be able to transpose at sight, and vocal accompaniment and score reading were practised. Klara Haskill, before the family moved to Paris, [Georg] Szell, Hans, [Rudolf] Serkin, Rudi [Rudolf] Schwarz and many other musicians came from his school. Frau Robert occupied herself with the social aspects of Robert's pupils. Szell found his first wife there." [Private correspondence, 10.10.1989]

Through his social contacts within the Robert circle, Gál also learnt to ski, which, as Hanna comments,'"opened up a new world for him and gave him great pleasure" [op. cit.]'

By the end of his school-days Gál was already a proficient pianist, and had composed, without any technical training, around 100 songs, piano versions of four opera sketches, and innumerable piano pieces - all later destroyed as works of his apprenticeship.

In 1909 Robert obtained for him an appointment as teacher of harmony and piano at the New Vienna Conservatory, which made it financially possible for him to continue his studies. He was fortunate to find - again through Robert - his ideal mentor and 'spiritual father' in Eusebius Mandyczewski(1857-1929), who had belonged to Brahms's closest circle of friends, and under whom Gál worked intensively for two years (1909-11) on musical form and counterpoint. He loved and revered Mandyczewski, and remained in close contact with him until his death (more ...).

With regard to Gál's relationship to Mandyczewski, Hanna Gál relates:

> "In his batchelor days Hans twice spent his summer holidays in Mönichkirchen, a wooded village in the hills above Aspang. Mandyczewski had a house built there to his own specifications. When it was ready an artist friend painted an organ-playing St. Cecilia *al fresco* on the wall. In the inn Hans heard two locals talking about the house and its decoration. One: 'Well, why didn't he paint the Virgin Mary on the house?' Answer: 'She couldn't play the piano.'
>
> Hans had a happy time there. He lived very comfortably with Fräulein Loni, the former cook of the vicar, to whom the vicar had left the house; he worked a great deal, walked for hours on end every day in the beautiful woods, and could always go and see Mandyczewski, play with the delightlful little Vicki, then about 4 years old, and talk to Herr or Frau Mandyczewski about serious and trivial things. He couldn't have wished for anything better." [Personal correspondence, October, 1989.]

At the same time (1909-1911) Gál embarked on his academic studies of musicology at the Musikhistorisches Institut of the University, under Guido Adler (1855-1941), the eminent music historian and founder of the series *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich.* In 1913 he concluded his studies with a doctoral dissertation entitled "On the stylistic characteristics of the young Beethoven, and their relationship to the style of his maturity", which was accorded the rare honour of being published in Adler's own *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*.

Biographical notes

Richard Robert

Richard Robert was born in Vienna in 1861. After studying music at the Vienna conservatory, he worked as theatre conductor and pianist before turning to teaching, in which he was very successful. Among his pupils, in addition to Hans Gál, were Klara Haskill, Georg Szell, Rudolf Serkin, Alfred Rosé, Wilhelm Gross, Rudolf Schwarz, and others.

Robert also worked as a music critic, and edited the journal *Musikalische Rundschau* from 1885-1891. In 1909 he briefly took over the direction of the New Vienna Conservatory, where he had previously given courses in musical style. He died in Vienna in 1924.

Eusebius Mandyczewski

Eusebius Mandyczewski was born in the Ukraine in 1857, the son of a Greek Orthodox priest. He studied with Nottebohm in Vienna, and became archivist of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. From 1879 he was a close friend of Brahms. From 1897 he taught at the Vienna Conservatory.

He was a man of great scholarship and learning, though he published relatively little. He edited the complete edition of Schubert′s works and, together with Gál, that of Brahms. He died in 1929.

Mandyczewski

In 1957, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Mandyczewski′s birth, Gál wrote of his teacher in the following terms:

If I were to say who, including my immediate family, had had the deepest and most enduring influence on my development, then without a moment’s hesitation I would name my teacher, Eusebius Mandyczewski. Of what I learned from him, his teaching, however important and fundamental it may have been, was the least part. The main thing that he gave to his student was

himself, his attitude, his unfailing truthfulness, his artistic and human integrity. Anyone to whom this was inaccessible remained aloof from him, and he from them. At the age of eighteen or nineteen one is too young to grasp these things consciously and they only became clear to me much later. But what the young person certainly sensed instinctively from the first moment was the authority of an unconditional belief in the active power of what the spirit of the Great and Immortal had created in the course of the centuries. He taught the skills in the only way in which they should be taught, through example and instruction, according to the method of the Gothic architects' guild. I never saw a text-book, just as I myself could never use a text-book in my teaching.

If the teacher's first objective was the transmission of skills, he never forgot the end for the means: to learn to find oneself through the free working-out of form. It was for him a matter of course that that could only take place on the basis of a single, unshakeably firm basis: that of unconditional truthfulness. 'Anyone who is not confident of answering for every note that he writes at the Last Judgement should not even begin',—perhaps he never uttered this sentence but it was the core of his teaching. He had neither understanding nor patience for the false, the contrived, for things born of idleness, fashion or a craving for publicity. He had just as little patience in his occasional judgements of people whom he rejected on principle. 'What do you mean', he used to say, 'he is just a rogue', or else 'a big-head'; and that for him was the end of the matter. The surprising thing was his natural amiability towards such people. He was on his guard against rogues and big-heads, but I never saw him behave towards such a person with anything other than gentle friendliness. It was enough for him in dealing with the rogue phenomenon to know that it existed, that he belonged to the necessary world order and that one merely had to distance oneself from him personally in order not to be contaminated by him; and what was true of people was also valid for actions or utterances of whatever kind.

If there is an aristocracy of existence and of the spirit, then Mandyczewski possessed it in greater measure than anyone else I have known. This nobility of the spirit was stamped on his face, in the perfectly beautiful, peaceful, contemplative features of a person who is firmly anchored in his own internal world and whom life has made into a stoic. After a serious operation he replied smilingly to a doctor who had asked him if he had any pain: 'I knew that it would not be pleasant.'

Measured against the enormous richness of his ability and his knowledge, he published little, with the exception of his participation in the great Complete Editions of the classics—Schubert, Haydn, Brahms. His encyclopaedic knowledge, supported by an unfailing memory, was placed at the disposal of anyone who wished to make use of it. The thick volumes that he could have written never came to pass, because he never felt the need to communicate what he knew in any other form than through personal contact. The unforgettable profit belonged to all those who enjoyed the good fortune of being in contact with him.

In any case one should not forget that even the wisest of the wise, Socrates, did not leave behind any books.

Guido Adler

Guido Adler was born in Moravia in 1855. He studied theory and composition at the Vienna conservatory with Bruckner and Dessoff. While at university he co-founded (with, among others, Hugo Wolf) an 'Academic Wagner Society'. Following his appointment as lecturer in music at the University in 1882 he was one of the founders of the important journal *Vierteljahrschrift für Musikwissenschaft* ('Quarterly Journal of Musicology'). In 1885 he was appointed professor of music history at the University of Prague and in 1898 became Hanslick's successor as professor in Vienna.

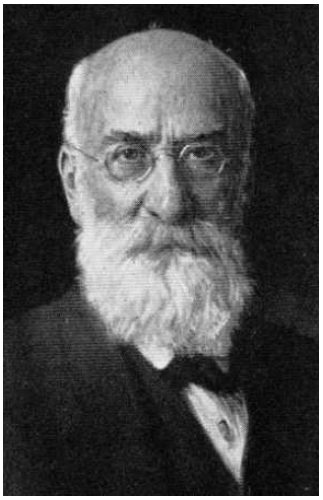
From 1894 to 1938 he was editor of the series *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* ('Monuments of Music in Austria'), which published early Austrian music up to the time of Beethoven, and also edited the important publication *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* ('Handbook of Music History'), published in 1924. He also founded and directed the Institute for Music History at the University. Many scholars and composers passed through his hands.

Adler is regarded as the founder of modern musicology. He is noted particularly for his work on stylistic analysis. He died in 1941.

Illustrations

Jenny Fleischer-Alt (Tante Jenny) on stage, Weimar

Eusebius Mandyczewski



Guido Adler

Chapter 03

Early Works

In the period before the First World War, considered by Gál as the years of his apprenticeship, he had completed an opera, a symphony, for which in 1915 he won, out of 78 contestants, the newly created 'State Prize for Composition', and other orchestral and chamber-music works. These were for the most part 'laid aside'; even the prize-winning symphony was withdrawn before the forthcoming performance and replaced by a new composition, while virtually all of the works performed at a concert devoted entirely to his works in April 1915 at the Wiener Musikverein - they included a quintet for piano and wind instruments, a piano trio, and several vocal works - were never published. A similar fate befell a quintet for flute and string quartet (performed by the Rosé Quartet in 1915), an overture to Grillparzer's play *Weh dem, der lügt*, performed in 1916, and a further orchestral piece *Vorspiel zu einer Tragödie* ('Prelude to a Tragedy'), performed at the Konzertverein in 1917.

Some works, however, survived their composer's critical judgement. They include choral works for male and female choir from 1910-1911 (Op.11 and Op.12), the earliest of his surviving works, and the cantata *Von ewiger Freude* ('Of Eternal Joy') from 1912, which established his wider reputation. This work was given its first performance in a concert at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in February, 1913, sung by the choir of Albine Mandyczewski and conducted by Mandyczewski himself; it was published by Universal Edition in 1916 as his Opus 1. [Note: throughout his life he only assigned an opus number to his works on publication, so that the opus numbers only coincide with the order of composition under the most favourable circumstances.] The text of this half-hour long cantata is a German poem from the baroque era, a period to which he was to return on other occasions.

The work is also a first indication of Gál's love of female voices which reveals itself in many of his later works.

Surviving instrumental works of this period include the *Three Sketches* for piano (Op. 7), composed in 1910-11, the *Five Intermezzi* for string quartet (Op. 10), composed in 1914, the *Piano Quartet* (Op. 13) and the ever-popular *'Heurigen' Variations* (Op. 9), written in July 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War. The title refers to the 'Heurigen', Viennese wine restaurants, especially those on the edge of the Vienna Woods, where the new season's wine ('Heuriger') is served during November and December, to the accompaniment of food and music. The cheerful character of this work, a set of variations on a popular Heurigen melody, which manages to incorporate the well-known tune 'O, du lieber Augustin' for good measure, captures, if in somewhat caricatured form, the prevailing light-hearted mood in Austria on the eve of the war. Much later, Gál wrote of the origin of the work:

> "Over half a century ago, a hunchbacked extemporising singer by the name of Ungrad haunted the popular wine-houses of the Viennese suburbs. If you secretly slipped him a consideration with the necessary information he would improvise humorous and not necessarily polite verses to the melody of these variations, whose object was some lady or other, and such fun-poking attentions were generally not resented. The present piece was written on the day after such an occasion, as a penitential tribute to the victim. This was in 1914, between the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia and the outbreak of the First World War, and it is documentary evidence that the youth of the time greatly underestimated the seriousness of the situation. I have unfortunately forgotten the poems of the extemporising poet; but in any case they would probably have been unprintable."

The work was not published until after the war, when it was extremely popular. As one critic remarked:

> "Hans Gál's 'Variations on a Viennese Heurigen Melody' are completely carefree, real Viennese folk-music. This is the Viennese Schubert, this is Austria with its love of song and its joy in music, seeking and finding expression in heightened fashion in the 'Heurigen'." [*Breslauer Zeitung*, 15.1.1925]

Or again:

> "The novelty of the evening: 'Variations on a Viennese Heurigen Melody' proved to be a splendid thing. Hans Gál has scored a hit." [*Die Tonkunst, Berlin.* 1.12.1925]

Biographical notes

Rosé Quartet

The Rosé Quartet, which in its 50-year existence achieved international fame, was founded in 1882 by Arnold Rosé (1863-1946), brother-in-law of Mahler. He was a prodigy, passing the entrance examination for the conservatory at the age of 10, and becoming a member of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at the age of 18. He became leader of the Vienna court orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic, and also professor at the State Academy. His technique, tone, musicianship and leadship qualities were much praised.

Dismissed from his post as leader of the Philharmonic following the Anschluss in 1938 on racial grounds (the name Rosé had been changed from Rosenblum by his father in 1899, in order to disguise his Jewish origins), he fled to London in May 1939, assisted by funds collected by Carl Flesch, and the quartet continued its existence there. He died in 1946.

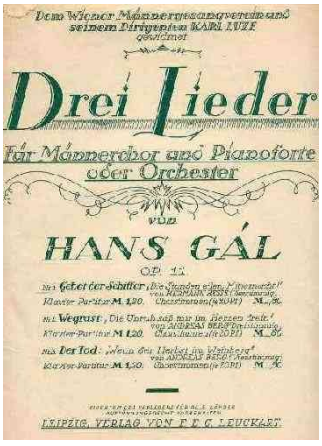
Heurigen

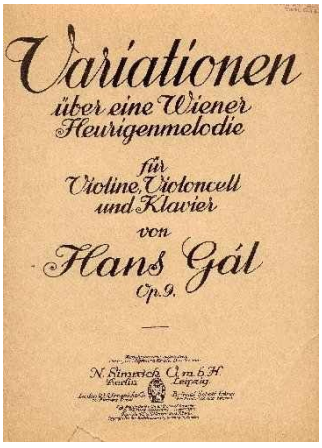
Derived from *heuer* (= 'this year'), the word *Heuriger/Heurigen* refers to the season's new wine, and, by extension, to the wine-houses around Vienna in which it is served.

The custom of wine-makers selling their own wine in wine-taverns goes back to an ordinance of Emperor Joseph II (the 'Josephinian Ordinance') of August 17th, 1784 which states: "We hereby grant all subjects the freedom to sell food, wine, and fruit cider of their own production at all times of the year, however, whenever, and at whatever price they wish".

The last season's wine is sold from 11th November to 31st December each year, to the accompaniment of food - usually traditional Austrian country dishes - and music.

Illustrations

The Vienna Musikverein

Cover of Op.11, 'Drei Lieder'



'Heurigen' variations

Chapter 04

The First World War

By the outbreak of the First World War Gál′s career had already made a promising start, with successful performances of his works not only in Austria but also further afield in Germany. The war was an unwelcome interruption, which inevitably destroyed - at least for several years - much of what had been achieved. In 1915 he was drafted into the army, serving first in Serbia. His 'active service' does not appear to have been so active as to stem the flow of his compositions, however. At this time, as also later in his life, his salvation was the ability, developed in his youth through confined domestic circumstances, simply to shut out all external distractions and to concentrate on his own work. As a result a number of significant works emerged even in these disrupted years, including the cantata *Vom Bäumlein, das andere Blätter hat gewollt* ('The tree that wanted different leaves') of 1916, for alto solo, six-part female chorus and small orchestra, which was immediately published as his Op. 2. His experiences in Belgrade, hearing folk-tunes played in local cafés, served as the basis for his *Serbische Weisen* ('Serbian Dances') for piano duet (Op. 3), composed in Belgrade in 1916, which were only published after the war, but then on account of their popularity rapidly appeared in various 'pirate' arrangements, making it necessary for the composer to produce his own orchestral arrangement. There followed a string quartet, also completed in 1916, which was given its first performance in Vienna by the Rosé-Quartet in the same year and (unlike two earlier string quartets) sufficiently satisfied the sharper self-criticism of his maturer years as to be finally published in 1924 as his *Quartet No. I* (Op.16). Erwin Kroll describes it as

> "one of the few creations of recent date which really breathe something of the spirit of Schubert. This quartet is Schubertian in its blissful

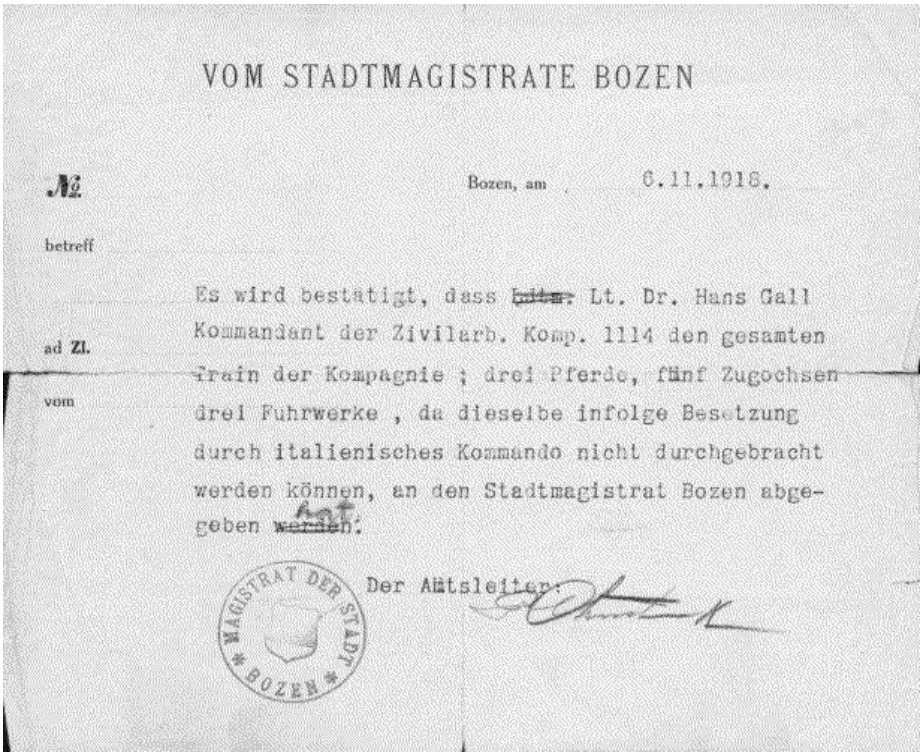
> major-minor tonality, its melodic richness, its piquant rhythms and dance-like exhilaration." ['Vom Schaffen Hans Gáls', *Simrock Jahrbuch* 2, 1929, p.172]

In the autumn of 1917 Gál was transferred to the Polish Carpathians, in the north-eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Here he was with a construction detachment which had the task of building a mountain railway - fortunately well behind the front line. However, he had more ambitious plans than merely building a railway, as he explained:

> "With my poor eyesight I was soon out of the troop that had anything to do with weapons. My rifle had become too dangerous for our own people. Well, in short, I was assigned to the administration troop and was relatively safely housed there. My main occupation at that time was to write an opera." [Quoted from *Hans Gál zum 100. Geburtstag.* Kulturdezernat der Stadt Mainz, 1986.]

The opera - *Der Arzt der Sobeide* ('Sobeide's Doctor') - was completed in Italy one year later (see below). Again, it was not his first attempt; as a 20-year old he had already completed - and 'laid aside' - an opera called *Der Fächer* ('The Fan'), based on a text by Goldoni. The scene of Gál's final war-time activity was South Tirol. When it became clear to him that the war was completely lost and the front was about to break up, he decided, without waiting for orders, to retreat with his company. At the border between Italy and Austria he had to dispose of the company's transport, a cart with horses and oxen. The receipt, duly stamped by the authorities in Bolzano, has been preserved.

Illustrations



VOM STADTMAGISTRATE BOZEN

Nr.

Bozen, am 6.11.1918.

betreff

ad Zl.

vom

Es wird bestätigt, dass ~~Leut.~~ Lt. Dr. Hans Gall Kommandant der Zivilarb. Komp. 1114 den gesamten Train der Kompagnie ; drei Pferde, fünf Zugochsen drei Fuhrwerke , da dieselbe infolge Besetzung durch italienisches Kommando nicht durchgebracht werden können, an den Stadtmagistrat Bozen abgegeben ~~werden~~.

MAGISTRAT DER STADT * BOZEN *

Der Amtsleiter:

Receipt for Horses, Oxen, etc., Bolzano

Chapter 05

'Arzt der Sobeide'

The main work of the wartime period is the comic opera *Der Arzt der Sobeide* ('Sobeide's Doctor'), to a libretto by Fritz Zoref. It dates from the years of active service (winter 1917-18), when Gál was supposed to be building a mountain railway with a construction detachment in the Carpathians. It was finished later in Italy and brought safely home - as the only war trophy. It was published in 1919 as his Opus 4, and had a successful premiere in the Breslau theatre on 2nd November of that year, under the baton of Julius Prüwer.

Waldstein characterises this opera, which is set in 16th century Christian-Moorish Granada, as "a cloak and dagger piece with a hint of the poetic from the Arabian Nights" and lists some of the attractions of such material for the composer:

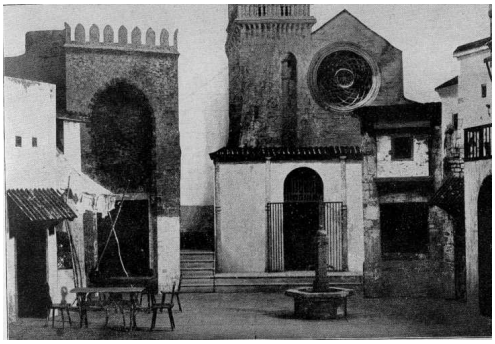
> "for Gál it may have been the joyous mood, the liveliness of the situations and no doubt also the local colour that was decisive, the stimulus for direct lyricism, fandango rhythms, the graceful mixture of southern sensuality and ironic heroism". [Wilhelm Waldstein: *Hans Gál: eine Studie*. Vienna: Elisabeth Lafite, 1965. p. 22.]

The opera has some features which are characteristic of Gál's later stage-works, too: the purely vocal parts are lightly orchestrated, allowing the voices to come through, but the composer gives himself freer rein in orchestral intermezzi, which can be - and indeed were - played independently. It is also, like his last opera *Die beiden Klaas*, a 'numbers' opera, consisting of a series of individual pieces. The melodic lines are developed freely, with many interpolations.

The premiere brought the young Gál the highest recognition. The following example gives a representative impression of the reception at the time:

> "Here all the virtues are combined which reveal the master of his craft. A lavish richness of melodic ideas permeates the whole work, naturally underlining and enhancing the lyrical episodes with special emphasis, carried along by a harmonic freedom which, in spite of all its boldness appears completely unforced. The sense of a vitalising rhythm, preventing the occurrence of any dead moments, is particularly successfully developed. Behind the natural flow of the parts, especially the singable vocal lines, is concealed a deceptively easy, mature, technical artistry . . .." [Georg Jensch: *Volkswacht*]

Illustrations



'Der Arzt der Sobeide', set for Act I, Breslau, November 1919

The Breslau theatre today

Chapter 06

Post War Recovery

If Gál could thank the war for anything, it was the enforced break from his own early works, giving him the necessary critical distance only to publish those works of which he was later still convinced. This applied to only a fraction of the available compositions from the time before 1918; but he still acknowledged these select works even in old age. The works composed before he was thirty often only give hints as to the face of the later, characteristic Gál in isolated features, but they all have in common a lively freshness and naturalness as well as a well-developed early sense of form and clarity.

With the end of the First World War began the rebuilding of Gál′s musical career in Vienna. The next decade could be seen as decisive for his development as a composer as well as for his reception, and his own individual style was largely established during this period. But in view of the post-war political and material crisis in Austria - not to mention the galloping inflation which by 1922 had reduced the currency to one 14,000th of its pre-war value - the circumstances for the young composer were at first extremely difficult and debilitating. In 1919 he was awarded the Rothschild Prize, and was appointed 'Lektor' for music theory at the University of Vienna. This was an unpaid appointment, and he had to wait a further year before he had an official position, with a very modest salary, as lecturer for harmony, counterpoint, form and instrumentation at the University, the same position that had once been held by Bruckner. He also increasingly appeared as a performer, especially in chamber music.

A welcome addition to his income, apart from private tuition, was also provided by his work at the Neue Wiener Bühne, a theatre where he was engaged to provide incidental music for the plays. It was here that he met

Karl Michael von Levetzow (1871-1945), who was later to write the libretti for all his remaining operas. Gál composed the music to Levetzow's play *Ruth*, which was performed at the theatre, and this music was later turned into a suite and performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, but eventually it was rejected by the composer, and, like so many other works, 'laid aside'. It was not until 1924, when, after the phenomenal success of *Die heilige Ente* (see below), he signed an exclusive contract for his compositions with the publisher Simrock, who in turn provided him with a regular income, that his financial situation was really secure.

Nevertheless the cultural upsurge of the twenties in Germany brought a period of rapid advancement for Gál. Publishers wooed him, and there were performances of all his works. He continued to live and work in Vienna, but it was mainly in Germany that he increasingly found opportunities. He frequently travelled there to performances of his works.

Biographical notes

Neue Wiener Bühne

The 'Neue Wiener Bühne' (The 'New Vienna Stage') was located at 33, Wasagasse. Built in 1865 by Otto Wagner for the theatre-devotee Baroness Pasqualati, the theatre was originally called the 'Harmonie-Theater' but was renamed the 'Neue Wiener Bühne' in 1908. It was an open-air theatre with 900 seats, 20 boxes and 450 standing places. Under the direction of Emil Geyer (1913-22) it acquired a reputation for avant-garde and expressionist drama, but in 1925 became a variety theatre. It closed in 1928, and was demolished (except for the facade) in 1934.

Karl Michael von Levetzow

The Austrian writer Karl Michael Freiherr (Baron) von Levetzow belonged to an aristocratic family. Born in Moravia, Czechoslovakia, in 1871, he studied law in Vienna, spent a year in South America, and returned to an administrative post in Trieste. But he soon went to Berlin, where he took part in Ernst von Wolzogen's cabaret 'Überbrettl' (1902). He then led a restless and bohemian existence, living in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and even Egypt and India, but returned regularly to Vienna. In the 1930s he eventually settled in Bohemia. He wrote poems (*Höhenlieder*, 1898), plays (*Der Bogen des Philoktet*, 1909, *Die ewige Angst*, 1912, *Ruth*, 1919, *Der goldener Pfad*, 1921) and literary and political essays. Apart from his collaboration with Gál, he also produced the libretti for d'Albert's operas *Scirocco* (1919), *Die schwarze Orchidee* (1928) and *Mr. Wu* (1932); for Krenek's *Bluff* (1924/5); and for Gerstner's *Enoch Arden*. He died in 1945, awaiting trial on a political charge. (See also below: 'Die Heilige Ente' and 'Das Lied der Nacht'.)

Illustrations

Karl Michael von Levetzow

Chapter 07

Marriage and Family

In 1922, at the height of the inflation and its attendant financial difficulties, Gál married Hanna Schick, from a distinguished and cultivated Viennese family, one of whose members was the philosopher and psychologist Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923). They met through the pianist Louise Wandel, who happened to know Hanna's mother, and, since she had been ill, was invited to stay with the Schicks, where Hans, an old friend, visited her. Hanna had already heard some of his music in concerts in Vienna but did not know him personally. She explained that "when this pianist asked me what sort of chamber music I would like to hear I said, among other things, the Piano Quartet by Hans Gál. On that occasion he played cello. Six weeks later we were engaged."

Hanna's mother liked Gál and even painted his portrait, but she must have been rather suspicious of this composer, twelve years his daughter's senior, as a husband, since she went to the trouble of submitting samples of their handwriting to a famous graphologist before they were engaged. The graphologist advised against the union, on the grounds that Hans was clearly too egotistical. As Hanna confessed, on the occasion of what would have been Hans's ninety-ninth birthday, and after sixty-five years of marriage, this was, in a sense, an accurate assessment, but

> "what he naturally couldn't see was that this egotism was not a crude material one, but served only his creative work, for which, often quite ruthlessly, he had to fight for time and freedom. But my mother was very worried, and was fully expecting that our marriage would not last long." [Private correspondence.]

She also related how, a few weeks before their marriage, Hans had taken her, unannounced, to see the Mandyczewskis:

> "Frau M. opened the door and Hans said to her: 'Frau Professor, I've brought you a young lady who would like you to teach her how to cook.' Frau M. was perplexed for a moment, then said enthusiastically 'I see through everything!', and I was warmly welcomed." [Private correspondence, 5.10.1989.]

Hanna later recalled her happy and privileged childhood in Prague:

> "Until 1918 large parts of Bohemia were in the possession of a few high aristocrats. These great lords had their magnificent town palaces in Prague and Vienna, and their hunting castles in appropriate areas. They rented out their country estates to landlords on long leases. Over the years my grandfather looked after three such estates. The first was Welen, where all his daughters were born. Then Letnan and Gbell were added. Gbell, owned by Count Czernin, was the largest and finest of the three estates, and was the nearest to Prague, so that every day my mother and her sisters could be brought to one of the suburbs of Prague, from where they could catch a tram to school.
>
> The main house stood at the far end of the stable block. The very large courtyard had a row of houses along the right-hand side: the estate-manager's house, the permanent summer houses of the two oldest married daughters, and also accommodation for the seasonal workers. On the left-hand side stood outbuildings for the vehicles and the agricultural tools, hens, geese, and horses. The full width of the courtyard, opposite the main house, was taken up with the cow-sheds, with room for more than a hundred dairy cows. On the front of these stalls was the door to the enormous garden. The back wall of the cow-sheds was planted with fruit on a trellis. In front of this, by the side of the long gravel path to the tennis court, were strawberry beds. On the other side of the path there were blackcurrant, gooseberry and

> raspberry bushes. To the right of the garden entrance you first came to some vegetable plots, a pump with a water-butt, and then a slightly higher field with a few isolated fruit trees. This was the playground for my cousin Elly and me. Every day the two children's nannies filled two children's baths from the pump, and put one in the blazing sun, the other in half-shade. We never got tired of first getting into one and then into the other. If we wanted to eat something, there were carrots and kohlrabi in the vegetable plot and all kinds of ripe and unripe fruit. The two nannies sat under a tree, chatting and sewing, crocheting or embroidering for their costumes. Later, when my younger brother Karl and his cousin Heini, who were both the same age, could walk, it was not quite as easy for the nannies. The boys would run off, fall down on the gravel path and cut their knees; they got stomach ache from all the fruit and of course there was constant scrapping, shouting and fighting.
>
> In 1908 - I was then six - we moved to Vienna, and that was the end of my long summer paradise in Gbell." [Private correspondence.]

The move to Vienna took place just a few weeks before the jubilee of Kaiser Franz Josef, which Hanna recalled with equal clarity:

> "It would naturally not have been possible for us to risk going into the city on the actual day of the celebrations, but a few days earlier we drove into town in one of the coaches belonging to the factory, with me sitting on the box next to Herr Stummerer, the coachman, and saw something of the preparations and rehearsals for the great occasion. I remember especially the Votivkirche, whose rich decoration, illuminated in a rosy light, had the effect of a pastry-cook's creation. We drove all along the Ringstrasse and went back home via the river, between the Brigitta bridge and the Franz-Josef station." [Private correspondence.]

With a view to augmenting the family income, Hanna studied speech therapy at the out-patients' department of the hospital. A year after the marriage, in 1923, the first child, Franz, was born, to be followed, one year later, by Peter.

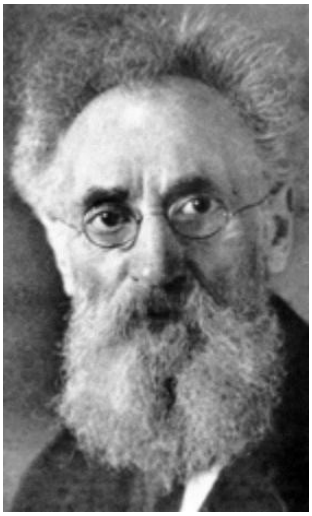
Biographical notes

Wilhelm Jerusalem

The philosopher Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923) was born in Bohemia. After studying classical philology in Prague and a period of teaching at a 'Gymnasium' (grammar school), he studied philosophy in Vienna, where he became a professor of Philosophy and Educational Theory in 1920. He is known for advocating reform of the educational system of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and for his concern with the education of minorities, especially the deaf-blind.

Illustrations

Hanna Schick



Wilhelm Jerusalem

Portrait of Hanna Gál (chalk) by Johanna Kampmann

Sons Peter and Franz as children

Gál with son Franz, 1923

Hans & Hanna Gál

Chapter 08

'Die Heilige Ente'

The decisive break-through for Gál came with the great success of his second opera, *Die heilige Ente* ('The Sacred Duck'), a lyrical comic opera in a Chinese setting, which had its première in Düsseldorf in April 1923 under Georg Szell, and was published as his Op. 15 by Universal Edition. It was immediately taken up by another six theatres and was eventually performed with continued success in over twenty theatres, including Breslau, Weimar, Aachen, Chemnitz, Kassel, Königsberg, Prague and Berlin, during the next ten years. It was performed on Vienna Radio in 1929 - the first modern opera to be staged by the station. The main part was sung in several of these performances by the well-known opera singer Josef Witt. The work was still in the repertoire of German opera houses in 1933, when its successful run came to an abrupt end as a result of the political circumstances. *Die Heilige Ente* was Gál's first collaboration with the librettist Karl Michael von Levetzow, whom he had met during his work at the Neue Wiener Bühne, and for whose play *Ruth* he had composed the incidental music. Richard Strauss had said: "If I hadn't found Hofmannsthal, I would have liked to work with Levetzow" [quoted from Waldstein, op. cit., p. 40]. More will be said of Levetzow below)

Gál's essay 'On the problem of comic opera' of 1927 doesn't mention his own operas but is especially enlightening about his relationship to his textual material and could be applied in its entirety to his *Heilige Ente* :

> "Comic opera only has a genuine potential for effect (it can by its very nature make no use of the naturalistic device of an exciting and brutally nerve-wracking plot), when it is also capable of arousing a strong emotional reaction. Comic as well as serious opera must be able to do this. For this it needs - the most obvious of all platitudes! - music.

> Genuine, heartfelt and original, sung and inspired music! And now comes the creative secret of the dramatically sensitive musician: he must have material which grips him in order to produce something which is in turn gripping... One thing seems clear to me: the only thing that can release creative energies in an artist, if he really is one, will - in the field of comic opera - not be a silly farce or a witty parody, be it ever so clever, but a character comedy, dealing with genuine, deeper human themes. The heart of all genuine musical drama lies in what is human..." [*Musikblätter des Anbruch* IX, Vol. 1/2, pp. 91-2, 1927]

The plot of the opera does indeed revolve around human characters, bordering at times on the tragic, but with a good dose of humour, too. Involving gods, priests, a mandarin, a simple coolie, opium, changes of identity, and not least a duck, it offered full scope for Gál's creative imagination, ranging from the tender and expressive to the ironically humorous, all infused with an oriental touch. It was extremely effective on the stage. The opera, rooted in the German comic operatic tradition, was greeted by Paul Nettl as "a new high-point in the line of development Lortzing-Nicolai-Cornelius-Götz" [quoted from Waldstein, op. cit., p. 41].

Illustrations

'Die heilige Ente' - collage from Radio Vienna magazine, 1929

'Die heilige Ente', Mainz, 29.11.1932 (3)

'Die heilige Ente', Mainz, 29.11.1932 (1)

'Die heilige Ente', Mainz, 29.11.1932 (2)

'Die heilige Ente', Josef Witt as Kuli Yang

'Die heilige Ente', Cologne, 2003

Chapter 09

'Das Lied der Nacht'

After the success of the *Heilige Ente* there followed Gál's third opera, *Das Lied der Nacht* ('The Song of the Night', Op.23), a romantic drama set in 12th century Sicily, with a *Turandot*-like plot [the opera was written in 1924-25, was therefore almost simultaneous with *Turandot,* and had its first performance just one day before *Turandot* (on the 24th April, 1926)]. It was premièred in Breslau in 1926, and then in Düsseldorf, Königsberg and Graz. This opera, called a 'dramatic ballad', again had a libretto by Levetzow, and it brought further confirmation of Gál's standing as an opera composer. The critic of the *Schlesische Tagespost* wrote of the first performance:

> "A great success. For me personally the evening was altogether one of the most powerful operatic experiences ever! Music and poetic conception combined in the happiest fashion."

In Breslau, where all previous Gál operas had been performed (and in 1924 even a carnival parody under the title *Die Heilige Rente: nach der Oper von Gans Egal*), *das Lied der Nacht* was received as a new high point:

> "One doesn't know whether to emphasise the extraordinary variety and expressive colour in his music, which confronts us in the exposition, or the magnificent musical construction of the second 'Scene', which has rarely been equalled in the operatic literature. Corresponding to this exuberant lyricism in mood and solemnity there is the depth of symphonic ideas, whose working out reveals the hand of the mature practitioner. The harmonic combinations are thoroughly modern, but modern in the best sense; they signify an enrichment of the expressive palette, they are spiritually conceived, they communicate throughout an original experience of beauty... All in all, therefore, the new opera constitutes an enormous advance for the composer, as, alongside the

> mastery and creativity which we had already admired in the 'Heilige Ente', it opens up for the first time the fullness of his heart. And so it will always be considered the most valid testimony of his talent so far." [*Breslauer Zeitung*]

Hanna Gál explained how the collaboration with Levetzow (whose texts had also been set to music by Schönberg in his Op. 1) had come about, and revealed something of the extraordinary character of the librettist:

> "After the success of the *Heilige Ente* Hans received innumerable manuscripts from poets, writers and those who regarded themselves as such, with suggestions for collaboration on a new opera. Hans was completely uninterested, and barely took the trouble to read the manuscripts. It was not until a few years later that he again became interested in writing an opera, but insisted on having Levetzow as librettist. But where had the fellow gone? A letter to his last known address in Paris remained unanswered. Eventually Hans learned from one of the poet's aristocratic cousins [he was related to Ulrike von Levetzow, the last love of Goethe, and the subject of his *Marienbader Elegie*] that Levetzow was in Corsica and obtained the address. Levetzow showed a lively interest, and so Hans decided that our holiday would take us to Italy and Corsica.
>
> After a few all-too-short days in Venice and Florence we arrived at Livorno from where, once a week, a ship went to Bastia. The crossing over the incredibly blue Mediterranean was uneventful. We had to spend the night in Bastia. Pretty dreadful. We then took the train that went once a day along the coast from Bastia to Ajaccio (Napoleon's birthplace). The train stopped at every little town. In response to our question regarding a certain sanitary facility we received the answer 'Le pays est large.' Arriving at Levetzow's abode we found the place almost deserted. It was a malaria area, and in the summer the inhabitants took their animals to their summer quarters on the nearby mountain plateau. Levetzow couldn't do that, for he and his friend

Jean Baptiste literally didn't have a sou in their pockets. Fortunately, J. B. was a Berganzi, belonging to one of the most famous bandit families of the island, and he had credit everywhere.

The pair had got nowhere in Paris and had decided to move to Corsica and live off hunting and fishing. They had bad luck with the hunting; Levetzow thought he had killed a chamois, but it turned out to be the neighbour's goat, the breeding bull, so to speak, of the whole village. And the fishing wasn't right either, as Jean Baptiste didn't like fish soup. I don't know how they managed, but in any case they always had plenty of wine and cigarettes, and through our visit some cash came into circulation again. J. B. did the cooking. Levetzow: 'Tu n'as pas oublié le poivre?' J. B. 'Non, je n'ai pas oublié le poivre.' The first ideas for *Das Lied der Nacht* were sketched out and discussed, sitting on Levetzow's bed. ...

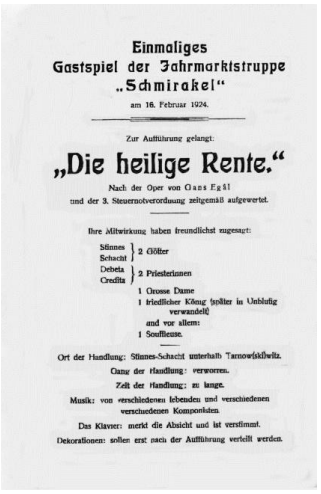
Hans was horrified by the circumstances of his friend's life and pulled all the strings to get him to return to civilisation. And so a few weeks later Levetzow appeared in Vienna. The director of Universal Edition paid him a monthly honorarium in anticipation of future royalties, my mother bought some pictures from him that he had inherited, so a start was made. He wanted to give language lessons, but it went the same way as with the hunting and fishing in Corsica. Without Jean Baptiste it just wasn't right. One day the latter appeared in Vienna, with a dachshund on a lead. The height difference between the dachshund and Jean Baptise was the same as that between J. B. and Levetzow. Naturally, nothing came of the good resolutions for a bourgeois life, and he eventually had to move in with a nephew on a mortgaged estate in Moravia. There he got into political difficulties and was taken into custody. He died in prison before the case came to court.

He was the only real bohemian that I ever knew." [Private correspondence, 1989.] [more . . .]

Illustrations

'Das Lied der Nacht', Graz. Hela Quis as Lianora

'Das Lied der Nacht' Finale, 1st performance, Breslau, 1926



Einmaliges
Gastspiel der Jahrmarktstruppe
„Schmirakel"
am 16. Februar 1924.

Zur Aufführung gelangt:

„Die heilige Rente."

Nach der Oper von Hans Gál
und der 3. Steuernotverordnung zeitgemäß aufgewertet.

Ihre Mitwirkung haben freundlichst zugesagt:

Stinnes, Schacht } 2 Götter
Debeta, Credita } 2 Priesterinnen
1 Grosse Dame
1 friedlicher Klang (später in Unheilig verwandelt)
und vor allem:
1 Souffleuse.

Ort der Handlung: Stinnes-Schacht unterhalb Tarnowitzkiwitz.
Gang der Handlung: verworren.
Zeit der Handlung: zu lange.
Musik: von verschiedenen lebenden und verschiedenen verschiedenen Komponisten.
Das Klavier: merkt die Absicht und ist verstimmt.
Dekorationen: sollen erst nach der Aufführung verteilt werden.

Poster for parody 'Die heilige Rente'

Chapter 10

The 1920s

The operas stood at the centre of Gál's work in the post-war years, but he was no less active in other areas. In this creative period (1919-1929) many choral works were produced, among them *the Phantasien nach Gedichten von Rabindranath Tagore* ('Fantasies on poems by Rabindranath Tagore', Op.5), the cantata *Requiem für Mignon* ('Requiem for Mignon', Op.26), *Motette* ('Motet') to a poem by Matthias Claudius (Op.19) and *Epigramme* ('Epigrams') to poems by Lessing (Op.27), both for 8-part mixed a-capella choir, and *Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von R.M.Rilke (* 'Three songs to poems by R.M.Rilke', Op.31) for 3-part women's chorus with piano accompaniment.

Vocal music played an essential role from the beginning. Even as a schoolboy he went to the choir rehearsals of the Singverein of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, then as a student had taken part in Mandyczewski's Sunday 'Bachiads' and together with the oboist Alexander Wunderer had been co-founder of the Vienna Bach Society in 1912. In 1927 he founded his own Madrigal Society, which was then the only choir in Vienna which performed a-capella works. Gál was considered to be "one of the first to bring about the renaissance of a-capella music-making through his own compositions." [Erwin Kroll, p.175]. He himself wrote in an essay on 'Vocal Chamber Music':

> "What our musical life is in need of is ... a revival of the joy of music-making, a fresh impetus for domestic music... The glories of the a-capella epoch have largely been made available in the last few decades by new editions. Here is a treasure to be unearthed for practical music which can be compared in importance to what musical life gained from the rediscovery of the life's work of Johann Sebastian Bach. But above all there is in this area a task for the creative musicians of our own time, whose fulfilment could have an

> extraordinarily fruitful effect on the whole of musical development: a new vocal music is there to be created, music which, though born of the spirit of our time and using the newly acquired expressive possibilities, leads back to the long-buried sources of genuine vocal music, chamber music in the true sense of the word, which offers pleasure and stimulus not merely to listen but also to sing." ['Vokale Kammermusik', *Musikblätter des Anbruch* X, Vol. 9-10, 1928]

In these works one can already find full autonomy and maturity of personal style, as well as a rich variety, conditioned by the material, which gives his vocal compositions a special attraction. They also gained high recognition in the reception at the time, as the following newspaper extracts testify:

> [Op.27 Epigrams] "These madrigals count among the best that have been produced in this field in recent years" [*Allgemeine Musikzeitung*]

or again:

> "Choral music has never been fresher and wittier, even in the heyday of the madrigal, in the 16th century." [Adolf Aber in the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*]

There also appeared a continual stream of piano and chamber works, among them the *Suite for Cello and Piano* (Op.6), the *Violin Sonata* (Op.17), the *Piano Trio* (Op.18), the *Divertimento* for wind octet (Op.22), composed for the Kiel Music Festival of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein (General German Music Society) and the *Second String Quartet* (Op.35), which was given its first performance by the Rosé Quartet in Vienna and then (played by the Kolisch Quartet) received highest recognition at the Zürich Music Festival in 1932 as "a delightful, original, magnificently melodious and rhythmically lively piece of music from the first note to the last" [Report on the 62nd. Musicians' Congress in Zürich, *Kieler Zeitung* 16.6.1932].

Biographical notes

Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein

The Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein ('General German Music Society') was founded in Weimar in 1861 by a group of composers, including, among many others, Franz Liszt, Franz Brendel, Richard Wagner, and Hans von Bülow. Composers from outside Germany were also involved, making it virtually an international society. It held annual festivals, which included performances of new works, until 1937, interrupted only by the First World War. Its influence declined in the later years of the 19th century, but it revived again with the appointment of Richard Strauss as president in 1901. Virtually all significant composers belonged to it, and it was prominent in the promotion of new and avant garde music.

The society was absorbed into Goebbels's Reichsmusikkammer (Reich Music Chamber) in 1936 and dissolved in 1937, as part of a campaign against 'modern' music.

Kolisch Quartet

The Kolisch-Quartet was founded by the Austrian violinist Rudolf Kolisch (1896-1978). Kolisch studied violin (with Sevcik), musicology (with Guido Adler) and composition in Vienna. Owing to a childhood accident, in which he had lost part of a finger, he played the violin left-handed. After the first world war he became a pupil and friend of Schönberg (the latter married Kolisch's sister), and in 1922 he founded the Wiener Streichquartett (Vienna String Quartet) which then became the Kolisch-Quartet. The quartet acquired an international reputation, especially for the performance of works by Schönberg and the 'Second Viennese School'. They made it a rule to play everything by heart.

Forced to emigrate to America, the quartet disbanded in 1939. After the second world war Kolisch became leader of the Pro Arte Quartet and taught at the University of Wisconsin. He died in America in 1978.

Illustrations

Hans Gál (1) 1925

Hans Gál with the Vienna Madrigal Society, 1929

Caricature of Hans Gál, 1927

Chapter 11

Recognition

During the second half of the 1920s every year brought new successes. One can see from the tables of performances of new works published by Simrock how numerous were the performances in the late twenties: in a single year from July 1926 to June 1927 a total of 24 performances of 10 piano, chamber and choral works by Gál are recorded; for the following year, when radio broadcasts were already playing a greater role, there are 38 entries (*Simrock Jahrbuch* I, 1928, p.159,160; II, 1929, p. 207, 220). We get a similar picture from the opera statistics of the *Oper-Jahrbuch* of Universal Edition (which then had 104 operas in its list), in which the most frequently performed operas up to the end of 1926 are entered. The *Heilige Ente* (with 13 theatres) is in 12th place, but in a list which contains older works, too, such as *Jenufa* (1901) or Weber's *Oberon* in Gustav Mahler's arrangement (1913), and also the recent favourites, Schilling's *Mona Lisa* (1915), several operas by Schreker and Korngold's *Snowman* (1910).

Gál likewise had notable success with orchestral works in the post-war period. Above all the *Overture to a Puppet Play* (Op.20) became an internationally popular concert piece and had over 100 performances in a short time, from Stockholm to Basle, under conductors such as Furtwängler, Keilberth, Szell, Weingartner and Busch. For the *Symphony in D* (Op.30), which was published as his 'first' (after two predecessors had been 'laid aside') he was awarded a prize by the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation on the occasion of the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of Schubert's death in 1928. Further recognition of his compositions was the award of the Art Prize of the City of Vienna in 1926.

During this period Gál also established many good relationships with colleagues and friends. A number of prominent musicians had been his

friends since his school and student days in Vienna, including the conductors Erich Kleiber, Georg Szell and Carl Prohaska, and the composer Egon Kornauth. Friendships were established with, among many others, the composers Julius Bittner and Karl Weigl and the oboist Alexander Wunderer. In spite of their very different views on music, he had a good working relationship with Alban Berg and Anton von Webern, and also had dealings with the composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

Chapter 12

Scholarship

Apart from his own compositions and his teaching responsibilities, during the late 1920s Gál, together with Mandyczewski, worked on the Complete Edition of the works of Brahms. Gál was responsible for the first 10 volumes, and Mandyczewski for the remaining 16. The edition was first published by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1926-7. Here the close friendship between them stood him in good stead. Hanna Gál recalled that

> "At the time when the two of them were preparing the Brahms Complete Edition, and Hans was constantly busy in the archives of the Gesellschaft für Musikfreunde, which were looked after by Mandyczewski, they met almost every day, and Hans, who otherwise hated swallowing the dust in archives, was so entranced by Mandyczewski's intelligence, his knowledge and his rich store of memories, that the collaboration nevertheless gave him great pleasure." [Private correspondence, 10.10.1989.]

Hanna also recalled that on one occasion at this time, during a rather uncomfortable holiday in Aspang, with "no gas, a difficult cooker and above all an unreliable nanny",

> "Hans escaped from the domestic misery as often as possible and climbed up the hill to the Mandys at Mönichkirchen . . . The old people were ill and very unhappy. Hans's visits did them good. It was the time when Mandy and Hans were working on the Complete Brahms Edition. There was no lack of topics of conversation, and that was good and useful for all concerned. One year later Mandy was dead." [Private correspondence, October 1989.]

Further scholarly activity involved editing volumes for the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich.* Gál's contributions were the volumes on the waltzes of Johann Strauss (both father and son), published in 1926 and 1928. He undertook many other arrangements and editions, among them approximately 100 scores in the Philharmonia series, newly-founded by Universal Edition. His *Anleitung zum Partiturlesen (Directions for Score Reading),* likewise written for the Philharmonia series, had been published in 1923.

Chapter 13

Appointment in Mainz

In 1929 Mandyczewski died, and it may have been this, together with the successes that his compositions had enjoyed in Germany, that led Gál to apply for the vacant position of Director of the Conservatory in Mainz, in the Rheinland. As he put it in his letter of application, 'my works have been published by German publishers and been performed in nearly all German cities; I think, therefore, with respect to all my activities so far, that I would not be considered a foreigner in Germany.' He was one of 120 applicants for this post, but he had strong support from his referees, among them Wilhelm Furtwängler, then conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Fritz Busch, conductor and director of the Dresden opera, and the directors of the opera houses in Breslau and Frankfurt. It is also possible that Richard Strauss added his influence on Gál's behalf. After a rigorous selection procedure, Gál was appointed to the post, which he took up on 3rd December, 1929, by a unanimous decision of the appointing committee, endorsed by the city fathers. His family followed him there in March, 1930, taking up residence in a splendid art-nouveau house with a large 'ox-eye' window overlooking the Rhein:

> "The view of the Rhein and the lively traffic there I always found wonderful. We had a window overlooking the Rhein, it was round in art-nouveau style and was so to speak an ugly landmark in Mainz. But looking out of this round window was wonderful."

The post was certainly no sinecure; the conservatory had about 1000 students and 70 teachers, and Gál was fully involved in its activities. He himself directed the choirs and orchestra, as well as taking the conducting class and the courses on counterpoint, harmony and composition, and he still had a few piano pupils. He set out his goals for the conservatory in an

article in the local press, which appeared only a few weeks after his appointment:

> "Even those who are already predisposed to music must, so to speak, be awakened to a higher, more intensive, truly artistic musical sensitivity, as musicians as well as listeners . . . This capacity for productive listening and experiencing, which I should like to call artistic receptivity, is, as any attentive observer can confirm, in serious decline today, in spite of all attempts to spread culture more widely. The main deficiency in this respect is, in brief, in the teacher's ability to bring the musical work of art to life for the student to whom he is supposed to be conveying it . . . Real enthusiasm, true joy in music comes only from a masterpiece, never from something worthless or insignificant, which cannot satisfy anyone in the long run. Therefore bad music is much, much more damaging than is generally assumed, it destroys not merely taste but also indirectly the pleasures of music . . . Artistic sensitivity and musical enthusiasm can . . . only be learnt from the masterpieces of the great composers; and the best way to achieve it is naturally through*practical music-making."* [*Mainzer Anzeiger,* 31.12.1929]

In pursuit of these goals Gál appointed a number of distinguished musicians to the staff of the conservatory, among them the Viennese pianist Louise Wandel. He also founded a women's choir and madrigal ensemble - he was jokingly referred to as 'Hans Madri-Gál'.

A vivid portrait of Gál's own teaching is presented by Otto Schmidtgen, a student at the time - and much later a successor as director of the conservatory and a committed promoter of his music:

> "Gál's teaching was extremely instructive, supported by comprehensive knowledge and an extraordinary familiarity with the literature, which still amazes me today. Teaching from such a lofty standpoint can hardly be fitted into a 'timetable' . . . It was never the

> case that only the work under discussion was mentioned, the horizon was very broad, so that for example in talking about the 'Rosenkavalier' problems were suddenly discussed which related to Bach and Mozart. The teaching had nothing schoolmasterly about it, but had rather the character of a friendly talk . . . We all sensed that he was a personality of a quite special stamp who stood head and shoulders above everyone else." [Waldstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2.]

One thing that Gál did not do was to allow his students to study any of his own works, and none of them were ever performed at the conservatory. They were naturally performed, however, to appreciative audiences, in concerts in the city itself.

According to Hanna Gál, the intense activity of the job offered Gál a way of dealing with the loss of his friend and mentor Mandyczewski. As she put it,

> "The stimulating and very tiring work in Mainz helped him over the loss. In Vienna it would have have been dreadful! No Mandy in the archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, no Mandy in the director's box in the auditorium at the Musikverein, no Mandy, who knew more than the best encyclopaedia, no Mandy, the good friend and adviser!" [Private correspondence, October, 1989.]

Chapter 14

The Mainz Period

The period in Mainz was for Gál highly stimulating and varied. Not only was he active in the conservatory, but he was, with Ernst Toch and Alban Berg, on the directorate of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein (the German Music Society). This was a respected organisation which organised regular Festivals of Contemporary Music, each time in a different town. Every submitted work was assessed by a jury of two, who had to write a detailed report. Berg and Gál were responsible for the Austrian section, and it is remarkable, and a testimony to the integrity of both, that despite their radically different conceptions of music, they almost always agreed on their assessment of the originality and musical competence of the works.

Gál enjoyed these occasions, as they gave him contact with directors of conservatories and university professors from all over Germany.He always came back with a store of amusing anecdotes from the world of German music. Hanna accompanied him on some of these trips, though they usually only attended the concerts themselves when a piece by Hans was on the programme. This was the case in Krefeld, where his *Epigrams* received their first performance, in Königsberg, for his *Ballet Suite* for Orchestra (Op. 36), and finally in Zürich, in 1932, for a performance of his second *String Quartet*.

Meanwhile, the flow of his own compositions in no way abated. Here belong, apart from the above-mentioned *Ballet Suite*, the fairy-tale play *Der Zauberspiegel* ('The Magic Mirror', Op.38), which had its first performance as a Christmas play in the Breslau Theatre in 1930, the *Serenade for Violin, Viola and Cello* (Op.41), written in 1932, the *Violin Concerto* (Op.39), also written in 1932 and first performed in Dresden in February 1933 by Kulenkamp, Fritz Busch conducting, and above all a new opera *Die beiden Klaas* ('Rich Claus, Poor Claus', Op.42), whose fate will concern us below. He was now generally recognised and widely regarded as one of the most respected composers of his generation.

The Gáls returned to Austria for their summer holidays, or occasionally to Switzerland. For shorter breaks they went into the nearby Rheingau and Taunus forests. They also spent some time at a children's home in the Black Forest - a contact that they were soon to be grateful for.

Biographical notes

Ernst Toch

Ernst Toch was born in Vienna in 1887. He was at first self-taught, composing in his youth, alongside his medical studies, music in a late romantic style. He was awarded the Frankfurt Mozart Prize in 1909 for his Chamber Symphony in F, which gave him a scholarship to study at the Conservatory, and he decided to devote all his time to music. In 1910 he won the Mendelssohn Prize and between 1910 and 1913 he received the Austrian State Prize for Music four times. In 1913 he was appointed to teach at the Mannheim Music College.

After the First World War Toch's work became more experimental, with extended tonality and the use of speaking voices. During the 1920s he was very successful, and received a regular income from the publishers Schott, giving him the financial security he needed to compose. Among the important works of this time is his *Piano Concerto* (1926). In 1928 he and his family moved to Berlin, where he turned to stage works, of which the best known is the one-act opera *The Princess and the Pea*, but in 1933 the rise of the Nazis forced him to flee, first to France and England, where he wrote his *Big-Ben Variations* for orchestra (1935), and then to America, where he became professor of composition at the University of Southern California.

The style of his 1920s works was unpopular in America, and he reverted to his earlier romantic style. There he composed seven symphonies, of which the third was awarded a Pulitzer Prize (1957) and in 1960 he also received a Grammy award. He also wrote film music, much of it anonymous, for Columbia, Paramount and Twentieth Century Fox. He wrote a number of works on music, of which the most influential was *The Shaping Forces in Music* (1948). He died in Los Angeles in 1964.

Chapter 15

The Nazi Take-over

Hitler's seizure of power, early in 1933, brought Gál's career in Germany to an abrupt end, on account of his Jewish origins. The National Socialists occupied Mainz in March 1933 - the city was in no way a Nazi hotbed, and in fact a detachment had to be sent from Worms to achieve this - , hoisting the swastika on public buildings, including the Conservatory, and articles soon appeared in the local press denouncing 'the Jewish control' of the conservatory - one concluded with the words 'Away with the Jew Gal. Mainz Conservatory for German Art!'. On 29th March he received a letter from the authorities with the brief communication: 'I hereby suspend you with immediate effect.' His secretary recalled that 'Director Gál just picked up his hat and went'. But it was not only his employment that was lost; all performances and publication of his works were henceforth forbidden in Germany, depriving him at a stroke of his livelihood. The violin concerto had had its first performance one month earlier, but the opera *Die beiden Klaas*, which was being prepared for performance by Fritz Busch in Dresden, could, as a result of the events in Germany, no longer be staged (more).

At first Gál protested vehemently against his dismissal, invoking - in vain - a clause in the law which exempted from dismissal those 'non-Arians' "who had fought at the front for the German Reich or for its allies in the World War". He was reluctant to believe that this situation could last. Shortly after Hitler had become Chancellor, Gál had attended a concert on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Wagner's death at which Hitler was also present, sitting near him. Gál had looked carefully at Hitler's face and concluded that no-one could possibly take him seriously. Events proved him tragically wrong.

The family remained in Mainz, but it soon became clear that they could not stay there, if only because they endangered their many friends, whose visits to the house to express sympathy and support were carefully monitored by Nazi sentries at the door, and their children were also being subjected to abuse at school. They therefore left to stay with acquaintances in the Black Forest (in the children's home where they had already gone for short holidays), from where Gál continued to pursue his legal claims, which, incidentally, dragged on for a year. He also managed - characteristically - to continue composing even under these desperate circumstances, the result being his *Nachtmusik* (op. 44), for soprano, male-voice choir, flute, cello and piano, to a poem by Grimmelshausen, the text of which runs, significantly, 'Come, O nightingale, consolation of the night'. Later that year, unwilling to cut his ties with his cultural roots by emigrating, Gál and his family returned to Vienna.

One final note: the Gáls' landlord in Mainz refused to accept any rent for the period between April and August 1933 - his own personal protest against the Nazi regime.

Chapter 16

'Die Beiden Klaas'

The first musical victim of the events in Germany was the opera, *Die beiden Klaas* (op. 42). This work appeared to have been pursued by the irony of fate with particular doggedness. It was completed in 1933, when Gál was at his height, and the most important opera houses competed for the first performance. A double premiere was planned, with simultaneous first performances in Hamburg and Dresden, which would have taken place in 1933 had they not fallen victim to the political circumstances. The work was then proposed for performance by Bruno Walter at the Vienna State Opera, but the directors had reservations: the opera was offensive and could undermine public morals - clear precursors of the Nazi persecution of 'degenerate' art. It was nevertheless accepted by the Vienna Volksoper and was in preparation at the beginning of 1938, but was then abandoned when the Volksoper suffered a financial collapse - shortly before the National Socialists 'annexed' Austria to Germany. It was eventually given its first posthumous performance in York, England (in English translation), 57 years later to mark the 100th birthday of the composer, and without any catastrophes.

The work - it is a numbers-opera in the style of the German 'Singspiel' - is based on the Low German version of the mediaeval farce which underlies Hans Christian Andersen's tale of Big Claus and Little Claus, and again it arose in close collaboration with Levetzow. The text of the story is, however, woven together with other freely invented themes into a timeless yet at the same time contemporary satire against sexual hypocrisy and petty-bourgeois 'morality'. In the character of the Midwife, who is stylised beyond the traditional match-maker/gossip into a kind a surrealist 'Führer' figure, with

her retinue of grotesquely comic petty-bourgeois neighbours - the self-styled 'Furies of Morality' - one can draw some parallels with the street politics of the later Weimar republic. One senses above all in this opera the sharp satirical humour of Levetzow who (with Wolzogen) was director of the Munich Cabaret 'Die Elf Scharfrichter' ('The Eleven Executioners'), but the bitter and sceptical basis is completely absorbed into a coarse, popular humour and a correspondingly cheerful and humorous music.

Chapter 17

Return to Vienna

Driven from Germany in 1933, the Gáls returned to Vienna. They were not alone in this; Germany, with its active musical life, had been a magnet for Austrian musicians, many of them Jewish, during the 1920s, and many now returned, though others chose to emigrate, to Czechoslovakia, France, Switzerland, or further afield to England or the USA. Although returning to Vienna was the natural thing for the Gáls to do - they had family and friends there, and even some funds, and Gál did not wish to tear himself away from his cultural roots - Austria was, in fact, far from the ideal place for exiles from Nazi oppression in Germany. Fascist tendencies were already evident there, parallelling the developments in Germany. The Chancellor, Dollfuss, suppressed socialist movements in the early 1930s, and was himself assassinated in an attempted Nazi putsch in July, 1934. The seeds of the later 'Anschluss' of Austria by Germany were already being sown.

The difficulty for the newly returned exiles was not merely the loss of employment; Germany, with its many opera houses, orchestras and publishing houses, was by far the most important outlet for the works of Austrian composers, and this market was now closed to them. For Gál there were now very few possibilities for performance of his works. One such took place in Zürich, in December 1934: the premiere of the play *Hin und Her* by Ödön von Horváth (1901-1938), another Viennese refugee from Germany, to which Gál had written the music, with the composer at the rostrum. (Significantly, the plot revolves around the unsuccessful attempts of a man on a bridge between two countries to get a passport for either.)

Gál now had to attempt to pick up the threads of his previous existence in Vienna, but with no fixed employment he had to rely primarily on private lessons to earn his bread. He occasionally conducted the new Vienna Concert

Orchestra and again took over the Madrigal Society, which he himself had founded in 1927, and the concerts of the Bach Society. The most important work of this period is the cantata *De Profundis* (Op.50), a setting of a cycle of baroque poems compiled by himself. It is a large-scale vocal symphony in five movements, for solo singers, choir, orchestra and organ, dedicated 'to the memory of this time, its misery and its victims', whose texts (dealing with the 30 Years' War) reflect with apocalyptic vividness Gál's sense of impending doom. Nevertheless, this work, written with no immediate prospect of performance, testifies to his unshakeable belief in the validity and viability of the musical tradition in which it is so firmly anchored, and with its composition he liberated himself as a creative artist from the trauma of 1933. Waldstein (op. cit., p. 62) points out that each of the movements of this work ends in a major key, positive and life-affirming in spite of his despair. As Waldstein expresses it:

> "The movements of this cantata are not like the acts of a play, which follow on from one another and produce a whole as a sequence. They are like variations on the same theme, each one arrives at the same conclusion, affirming this world and this life with all its bitterness, bringing creator and created together through humble submission; the differences lie only in the path, in light, colour, landscape, in the threatening dangers and their conquest." [loc. cit.]

Another composition of this period was the *Improvisation, Variations and Finale on a Theme by Mozart* (Op. 60), written for mandolin and strings. Apart from this, Gál occupied himself with various arrangements, such as the *G Major Symphony* by Gluck (1934), as well as the revision of a text-book on music history by Olga Kurt-Schab (1935).

Even before the annexation in 1938 it became increasing evident that there was no future for the Gáls in Austria. When Hitler invaded, 'annexing' Austria to the 'Third Reich', it was clear that there was no alternative to flight, especially as the Austrian population welcomed Hitler with open arms.

Within three days of the German troops crossing the border Hanna left Austria, to prepare the way for Hans, and to find out whether escape was still possible. Hans followed, and they made their way to London, with the intention of emigrating to America.

Biographical notes

Ödön von Horváth

The Austrian playwright and novelist Ödön (Edmund) von Horváth was born in 1901 in Fiume (now Rijeka) in Croatia - then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. His father was a diplomat, and moved around a great deal - to Belgrade, Budapest, Munich, Bratislava, and Vienna. As a consequence, Ödön was educated in a variety of languages (″I was fourteen before I wrote my first German sentence″) and grew up in a multicultural environment (″I am a typically old-Austrian mixture, Hungarian, Croatian, Czech, German; I′m afraid the only one I can′t offer is Semitic″). In 1923 his family settled in Murnau (Bavaria), where he begin to write intensively. In the following year he moved to Berlin, where most of his works were produced, including the plays *Die Bergbahn* (′The Cable Car′) [1926], *Zur schönen Aussicht* (′The Beautiful View′) [1926], *Sladek, der schwarze Reichswehrmann* (′Sladek the Black Soldier′) [1928], *Italienische Nacht* (′Italian Night′) [1931], *Kasimir und Karoline* (′Kasimir and Caroline′) [1931], and *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald* (′Tales from the Vienna Woods′) [1931]. From 1929 he received a regular retainer from the publisher Ullstein and in 1931 he was awarded the Kleist Prize.

Horváth′s work is highly critical of the attitudes of the lower middle class, whose indifference led to the rise of the Nazis. Following Hitler′s assumption of power in 1933, his hostility to the Nazi régime led to the cancellation of the first performance of his play *Glaube Liebe Hoffnung* (′Faith Love Hope′). His parents′ house in Murnau was searched by the Gestapo and his books were publicly burnt. Like Gál, therefore, though for different reasons, he was

obliged to leave Germany in 1933 (and Austria in 1938). He returned to Hungary in 1933 in order not to lose his Hungarian citizenship. To this period belong his plays *Die Unbekannte aus der Seine* ('The Unknown Woman from the Seine') [1933], *Hin und Her* ('Back and Forth') [1933], and *Himmelwärts* ('Heavenwards') [1934]. Remarkably, he returned to Berlin in 1934 and stayed there for a year before settling in Henndorf, near Salzburg in 1936. There he wrote the plays *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* ('Don Juan Returns from the War') [1936], *Ein Dorf ohne Männer* ('A Village without Men') [1936], *Der jüngste Tag* ('Judgement Day') [1936], and *Figaro läßt sich scheiden* ('Figaro gets a Divorce') [1936], as well as the novels *Jugend ohne Gott* ('Youth without God') [1937] and *Ein Kind unserer Zeit* ('A Child of our Time') [1937]. Gál collaborated with Horváth on a number of these works.

When the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938, Horváth fled via Czechslovakia, Italy and Switzerland to Paris. There, while walking along the Champs Élysées he was caught by a sudden storm, and killed by a falling branch from a tree.

Horváth's works, like Gál's, were suppressed during the Nazi period, but they were successfully revived in the 1960s.

Chapter 18

Emigration

The Gáls arrived in London in March, 1938, first Hanna, to be followed, a week later, by Hans. The children came two months later. Of Gál's sisters, Gretl also came to England early in 1938, while Erna, who had fled to Norway, followed just before the Germans invaded Norway in 1940. The third sister Edith and their mother Ilka were less fortunate. They left Vienna in 1939 to stay with Aunt Jenny Fleischer in Weimar, but conditions became increasingly difficult there. Ilka Gál died in hospital in March 1942, following a serious accident; Jenny and Edith took their own lives in April 1942, immediately before they were due to be transported to a concentration camp (more . . .).

Like so many other refugees the Gáls first settled in London, where they lived alternately in squalid lodgings and with generous hosts, but at first they had no prospect of a work-permit. A former student of Gál's, alerted to his fate by a radio broadcast, put them in touch with an 82-year old aristocrat, who lived alone in his country seat (alone, that is, apart from his eight servants, seven gardeners and chauffeur), and ate only porridge. The Gáls spent a month there in his company, to be followed by other invitations from kind-hearted and concerned hosts.

The contrast with the world they had left behind was considerable. Hanna recalled their impressions at that time:

> "Early spring in 1938 was quite extraordinarily beautiful. The sun shone brightly every single day for weeks on end. The parks were a dream. In nearby Kensington Gardens we were fascinated to see old men in wellingtons as well as children stepping into the pond to watch and direct their model boats, people were walking and playing on the

> grass - which is strictly forbidden in continental parks. The great variety of flowering boxes and bushes, the beautifully tended beds of tulips and other spring flowers, all this fascinated and bewildered us. In our respectable boarding house the proprietress put on a hideous long evening gown for dinner, but the whole house smelled almost nauseatingly of mutton. One day Hans found himself alone with one oldish lady in the lounge where they were listening to the nine o'clock news when the chamber maid called him to the phone. By the time he came back the news bulletin had come to an end but the old lady stood bolt upright in the middle of the empty lounge whilst the National Anthem was on. He never forgot this episode. Nor did he forget the first Saturday in April. After a very tiring morning he was sound asleep on his bed when Nelly, the chambermaid, knocked at the door with the great news 'Oxford has won'." [Private correspondence, 1.4.1988.]

A chance meeting with Sir Donald Tovey, a distinguished musician and music scholar in whom Gál recognised a kindred spirit, led to an invitation to Edinburgh, where Tovey held the chair of music at the University. Tovey wanted to obtain Gál for the university. Since there was no free post available at that time, for the time being Tovey engaged him on the reorganisation and cataloguing of the Reid Music Library, giving him welcome employment for the summer and autumn of 1938. But Tovey suffered a heart attack shortly afterwards and died before he could arrange the hoped-for teaching engagement. Gál returned to London, where meanwhile Hanna had obtained permission to work as a speech therapist. Eventually she was given the use of a house for a whole year, which at last offered them and their two sons a family home.

But shortly afterwards (autumn 1939) the war broke out and Hanna immediately lost her job. Now they decided to move to Edinburgh, where the possibility of cheap accommodation arose with Hanna acting as housekeeper to Sir Herbert Grierson, the retired professor of English literature at the University. Gál felt comfortable in this thoroughly cultivated environment,

where there was good conversation, chamber music and singing. He continued to compose, formed a madrigal choir, founded a refugee orchestra, and gave concerts. He also established many lasting friendships with intellectual and cultivated people, not necessarily with musical connections, and many, but not all, refugees like himself. They included, among many others, Max Born, later to win the Nobel prize for physics, with whom Gál played chamber music, the neurologist Käthe Hermann, the biologist Willy Gross, and the dentist Hugo Schneider.

Biographical notes

Tante Jenny

Tante Jenny continued to live in Weimar during the Nazi period. Despite being Jewish (though she had converted to Christianity as a young girl), she was protected from the worst excesses of the regime by her marriage to the 'Aryan' Friedrich Fleischer until his death in 1937. (There is nevertheless good reason to believe that her failure to obtain a satisfactory teaching contract at the state Music College in the late 1920s was racially motivated.) After her husband's death, Jenny was financially well situated.

When the ailing Ilka Gál and her niece (Hans's sister) Edith arrived in Weimar, there were seven residents in the house: Jenny, Ilka, Edith and four old servants, all dependent on her. In 1940 and 1941 the Gestapo moved two elderly Jewish women into the house, followed by the old musician Eduard Rosé (brother of Arnold, founder of the famous Rosé Quartet, and himself one of its former members), all without means. A law of September 1939 had restricted access of Jews to their bank accounts, allowing them to withdraw only 1,700 marks per month. When this was reduced to 150 in February 1942, and she was allowed only 500 for the whole household, the situation became desperate, especially as Ilka suffered a serious accident and had to be cared for in hospital, at Jenny's expense.

Ilka Gál died on 4th March 1942. Requests to the authorities for relaxation of the monetary restrictions were refused. On 7th April, 1942, Jenny and Edith took poison; Jenny died immediately; Edith died four days later. Both escaped the imminent transportation into a concentration camp.

Immediately after Jenny's death the Gestapo confiscated the house and its contents. Despite his 83 years, Eduard Rosé was tranported to Theresienstadt in September, 1942, and died there in the following January.

Donald Francis Tovey

Donald Francis Tovey was born at Eton in 1875 and studied classics at Oxford. He soon achieved success as a gifted pianist and composer, performing in London, Berlin and Vienna, and became a protégé of Joachim. He was appointed Reid Professor of Music at the University of Edinburgh in 1914, where, in 1917, he founded the Reid Orchestra. He continued to perform and to compose in a classical style, but he is best remembered for his critical and analytical works, especially his *Essays in Musical Analysis* (1935-45), *Musical Form and Matter* (1934), *A Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas* (1931), and *Beethoven* (1944).

He was knighted in 1935 and died in 1940.

Sir Herbert Grierson

Sir Herbert Grierson was born in Shetland in 1866. In 1894 he was appointed Professor of English Literature at the University of Aberdeen, the first holder of the Regius Chalmers chair. In 1915 he moved to the chair of English in Edinburgh.

Grierson was one of the most distinguished scholars of his day, writing especially on seventeenth century literature. He published a highly influential edition of the poetry of Donne which was largely responsible for the revival of Donne's work, and also edited the letters of Sir Walter Scott. He died in 1960.

Chapter 19

Internment

The early years of the war were anxious times. The war on the continent was going badly, and the threat of invasion loomed ever nearer. The authorities resorted to panic measures. Hanna had to leave the coastal area - which included Edinburgh - and Gál was interned. Aliens had originally been classified into three groups: category A (to be interned), category B (subject to restrictions) and category C (exempt from both). But with the fall of France, an increasingly nervous population, and Churchill's exhortation to 'collar the lot', by Whitsun 1940 internment was extended to cover category B and a large section of category C. In all about 27,000 'enemy aliens' were interned, including Jewish refugees, the group who, ironically, had the most reason to be on the side of the allies against Nazi Germany. The policy was, of course, motivated by the desire to control potentially dangerous enemies, but that it affected not just genuine Nazis but also those who were fleeing from them, and indeed incarcerated both together indiscriminately, can only be seen as not merely unwarranted, but also a serious misjudgement.

Gál, along with all the other Edinburgh refugees, was arrested on Whit Sunday, in May, 1940, and first accommodated in a disused hospital. After an uncomfortable few days, they were transferred to a camp at Huyton near Liverpool. A month later they were moved to Douglas, on the Isle of Man. The company included many of the most distinguished intellectuals, and it did not take long for a camp 'university' to be established, with lectures, study groups, and the like. Some of the internees thrived on the rich intellectual diet; Gál, too, found the company stimulating, but the experience was far from pleasant, given the deprivations of life as an internee and above all their total powerlessness in the face of mindless and petty bureaucracy, that appeared not to have understood the difference between Nazis and 'refugees from Nazi oppression'. He was also cut off from news of the war,

and for weeks on end had no idea of the fate of his eldest son Franz, who had been taken into internment at the same time, but then immediately separated from him. His anxiety became panic with the torpedoing in the Irish Sea of the *SS Arandora Star,* a ship carrying refugees, which was en route for Canada, as it was possible that Franz might be aboard. He also contracted a skin disease in the camp, which became so bad that he had to spend several weeks in the camp hospital and was eventually released early.

For the first and only time in his life Gál kept a diary during this period, with the title *Music Behind Barbed-Wire: A Diary of Summer 1940* (see *Books and Articles*). It records in some detail his observations on life as an internee, and his reactions to them - the discomforts, the pettiness and incompetence of the authorities, the anxieties and frustrations; but also the human values which, in spite of - and perhaps because of - all the hardships, continued to assert themselves. Many of his Edinburgh friends were interned with him, but he also met up with old friends and acquaintances, who joined the camp from other parts of the country.

At first Gál had no appetite for music, but in due course his creative urge returned. In Huyton he composed his *Huyton Suite* (Op.92) for flute and two violins (the only instruments that were available in the camp). The cheerfulness of this work again testifies to Gál′s ability to draw on inner strengths in spite of the external circumstances. He also wrote the music for a camp revue, *What a Life!*. The hurdles and ultimate exhilaration in staging this review provide a constant, and tragi-comic, backdrop to much of the diary. Despite his distaste for internment, he stayed on in the camp for an extra day after being granted his release in order to give the second performance. It was an overwhelming success.

By the autumn of 1940, as a result of lobbying by liberally-minded politicians and other figures, and also in the light of the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, the folly of the internment policy was realised. Gál was able to return to Edinburgh in late September of that year, a free man.

Chapter 20

Edinburgh

After internment Gál returned to Edinburgh. But without employment, accommodation or source of income the prospects were not promising. An opportunity presented itself in the form of the vacant post of caretaker and fire warden at an evacuated girls′ school. Characteristically, Gál used this opportunity to bring musicians into the house regularly for a 'Collegium Musicum'. On each occasion a programme was rehearsed and performed for the family members. The participants still recall the splendid sandwiches which Hanna produced on these occasions, in spite of the war-time rationing.

The Gáls′ troubles were not, however, at an end: their younger son Peter, evidently unable to cope with the stresses of the situation, took his own life. The birth of a daughter, Eva, in 1944 can be seen as a resolve to overcome this devastating tragedy.

With the end of the war the situation for the Gáls began to improve markedly. First, the new Professor of Music at Edinburgh University, Sydney Newman, obtained for him a permanent teaching post in the music faculty, providing financial security and a focus for his activities. Ironically, shortly afterwards he was also offered a teaching post at the Vienna Academy, but after so many upheavals he could not bear to uproot himself yet again, especially as he was now in his mid fifties. He remained active at the university well beyond retirement age, and resided in Edinburgh until the end of his life. He became a well-known personality in the musical life of the city, as composer, performer, scholar and teacher.

Gál was also involved with Rudolf Bing (who was also from Vienna), then director of the Glyndebourne Festival, and later director of the Metropolitan

Opera in New York, in discussions about the possibility of founding a festival in Edinburgh. Gál was sceptical; it did not seem possible that Edinburgh, then something of a cultural backwater, could rival Salzburg. Bing brought the plan to fruition, however, with the establishment of the Edinburgh International Festival in 1947, which went on to become one of the most important cultural events in the world. Gál was closely involved with the festival for many years; he even took part in a memorable performance of Brahms's *Three Vocal Quartets* (Op. 64) and *Liebeslieder-Walzer* (Op. 52) and Schubert's F-minor *Fantasy* with Clifford Curzon, Irmgard Seefried, Kathleen Ferrier, Horst Günter and Julius Patzak in September, 1952.

Gál's musical roots were still firmly anchored in the Austro-German tradition, and he never became part of the cultural establishment in his adopted homeland. As early as 1948 he returned to Vienna to take part in a performance. In the same year he went back to Germany for the first performance of his *De Profundis* and again in 1956 for that of *Lebenskreise*, commissioned by the Mainz Choir on the occasion of their 125th anniversary. In 1958 he was awarded the Austrian State Prize, and with the money he and his family spent their first post-war holiday in Austria. He also received honorary doctorates from the universities of Edinburgh (1948) and Mainz (1977), the Order of the British Empire (1964), and the Grand Order of the Austrian Republic 'Literis et Artibus' (1981).

Chapter 21

Wartime Works

Although after the war Gál could once more attempt to pick up the links that had been broken through 15 years of prohibition and exile, it was clear that times had changed, and the musical values which Gál's music embodies had lost much of their currency (not with the public, but with the leaders of musical taste and fashion). In England, where he was hardly known before 1938, he had in any case to begin again, in order to gain any foothold at all on foreign soil, but he continued to compose undeterred, without consideration of external recognition. In Germany and Austria, where his reputation had to some extent survived the war, his music could be performed again, albeit on a much more limited scale than before. His cantata *De Profundis* (Op.50), dedicated "to the memory of this age, its agony and its victims", written in Vienna before the war, and performed for the first time by Otto Schmidtgen in Wiesbaden in 1948, had a particularly profound effect there. Wartime works could now receive their first performances, many in Germany under the baton of Otto Schmidtgen. Among the orchestral works are the *Pickwickian Overture* (Op.45), *Lilliburlero* (Op.48), subtitled, 'Improvisations on a Martial Melody', which takes as its theme the Irish tune used in wartime radio broadcasts, the *Cello Concerto* (Op.67) and the *Second Symphony* (Op.53), which was first performed by Schmidtgen in Wiesbaden in 1948.

Many works that were not published until much later likewise stem from these wartime years: for example the *Violin Concertino* (Op.52), the *Viola Sonata* (Op. 101), the *Sonata for Two Violins and Piano* (Op.96) and the *Trio for Oboe, Violin and Viola* (Op.94), which he wrote as a partner for the *Huyton Suite*. The traces of the confusions caused by Nazi persecution, war and exile are clearly discernible in the complete asynchrony of the opus numbers.

Chapter 22

New Works

Many new works followed in the late 1940s and 1950s, among them the *Third Symphony* (Op.62), the orchestral suites *Kaledonische Suite* ('Caledonian Suite', Op.54), *Mäander* ('Meanders', Op.69) and *Idyllikon* (Op.79); the *Piano Concerto* (Op.57); and the cantata *Lebenskreise* ('Life Cycles', Op.70), dedicated to 'the Mainz Liedertafel on the celebration of its 125-year existence and its conductor Otto Schmidtgen', which is based on poems by Goethe and Hölderlin and forms a positive counterweight to *De Profundis*. Gál commented on this work as follows:

> "Life proceeds in phases, in which we can recognise continual change and unceasing development. These phases are divided into six episodes, each of which deals with a specific aspect of life and a particular view of it. The work has a symphonic structure inasmuch as each of the six parts is implemented independently like the movement of a symphony, and the movements stand in a relationship to one another corresponding to the cyclical principle of a symphony."
> [Quoted from Waldstein, op. cit., p. 93]

He himself referred to these two cantatas as the centrepiece of his oeuvre.

That so many orchestral works arose at this time is certainly to be explained in part by the stimulus provided by real opportunities for performance, not only in England (above all by his former student Rudolf Schwarz, conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the only conductor, incidentally, to have conducted all four symphonies during the composer's lifetime; they have since all been conducted by Kenneth Woods) but also in Germany and Austria. It was for Gál a happy period, which came to an abrupt end with the tragically early death of Otto Schmidtgen in 1964. As always, however, alongside the large orchestral works he also wrote a whole series of vocal, piano and chamber works, including several choral works: *Four Part-Songs* (Op.61), *Two Songs for 4-Part Male-Voice Choir* (Op.63), *Satirikon* (Op.72), *Jugendlieder* ('Songs of Youth', Op.75), *A Clarion Call* (Op.76), *Of a Summer Day* (Op.77); piano works: *Two Sonatinas* (Op.58), *Drei Marionetten* ('Three Marionettes', Op.74); the *Clarinet Trio* (Op.97) and the *Cello Sonata* (Op.89).

Chapter 23

Late Works

After the 1950s the number of Gál's larger orchestral works diminished. In the 60s he wrote two *Sinfoniettas* for mandolin orchestra (Op.81, Op.86) for his Viennese friend Vinzenz Hladky, who directed a mandolin orchestra at the Vienna Academy (he had previously written for Hladky's mandolins the *Improvisation, Variations and Finale on a Theme by Mozart*, and the *Capriccio for Mandolin Orchestra*), and the *Cello Concertino* (Op.87). In the 70s there appeared an orchestral suite, *Triptych* (Op.100) and his fourth symphony: *Sinfonia Concertante* for flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello and orchestra (Op.105). But what is characteristic of his last 25 years is above all the concentration on chamber music for a variety of different instruments and combinations, among them the *Concertino for Treble Recorder/Flute and String Quartet* (Op.82), sonatas for clarinet (Op.84) and oboe (Op.85), the third and fourth *String Quartets* (Op.95 and Op.99), three *Duos* (Op.90 (1), Op.90(2), Op.90(3), *Trios* (Op.88 and Op.104), the *String Quintet* (Op.106) and the *Clarinet Quintet* (Op.107), the last two both from the year 1977, when the composer was already 87.

It remains to mention Gál's main piano work, the *Twenty-Four Preludes* (Op.83), which owe their origin to a fortnight's stay in hospital in 1960, during which time he wrote one prelude every day, "so as not to get out of practice", as he jokingly put it.

> "What was begun under such unusual circumstances was continued in the following months, developed and revised. Several pieces were replaced by others, so that few of the 'hospital pieces' are contained in the final version. After completing the whole work, the composer expressed the view that, if Bach had in his day composed the Well-Tempered Clavier in order to demonstrate that one could

> compose in all keys (which was by no means taken for granted at that time), then it was time to demonstrate that one could still compose in all keys today." [Otto Schmidtgen: 'Hans Gál's neues Klavierwerk', *Das Podium* 1/2, 1961. Monatliche Mitteilungen der Mainzer Liedertafel und Damengesangsverein, Mainz]

Of the work itself Gál himself said:

> "The Preludes were a birthday present for myself. They are studies in piano sound, piano technique and concentrated miniature form. Each of these three elements is for me an area of inexhaustible possibilities, and as I wrote the pieces I had the feeling that I could have written 24 more without repeating myself, in view of the unbelievable variety of what can take place between the black and white keys. All the Preludes are as concise as possible in order to shape a thought with precision". [Quoted from Waldstein, op. cit., p. 38]

Also a birthday present - but this time for his *ninetieth* birthday - Gál wrote *Twenty-Four Fugues* for piano (Op.108) and even performed them several times in public, in Britain and in Germany. In 1982 he wrote two works for solo cello (Op.109a and Op.109b); in the following year there appeared *Four Bagatelles* and a *Sonatina* for Recorder (Op.110a and b), although he had for years maintained that his "workshop was closed". His predominantly turning to chamber music in old age no doubt reflects the more personal, more inwardly oriented situation of a composer who now lived far from public life and in increasing isolation, and it is doubtless significant that his very last works are all for solo instruments. But in addition there was his ever-increasing experience and mastery. He said with reference to his *Duo for Bassoon and Cello* (Op. 90, no. 1): "I was 40 before I learnt to write for 3 parts - and 60 before I learnt to write for 2" [quoted from Waldstein, op. cit., p. 38].

Chapter 24

Research & Writing

Gál was (and remains to this day) probably better known through his activities as scholar and writer than through his music. Over the years he wrote a number of books, which brought him wide recognition and success. What characterises all of them, and constitutes one of their most appealing and valuable features, is that they stem from his own life-long concern with the music of the great composers and a deep knowledge of their works, but also from the personal perspective of his own inner knowledge of the secrets of the creative process. As a result, his writings are not simply presentations of the 'facts' or the outward circumstances of his subject, but go beneath the surface, often in an unconventional way.

His first post-war book, *The Golden Age of Vienna* (1948), can perhaps be seen as a homage to his homeland - it is dedicated 'To my Austrian Friends all over the World'. It is a popular rather than a scholarly work, but it characteristically sets the account of music and musicians in Vienna from Gluck to Schubert in a broad historical and cultural context, and offers insightful and original ideas on the life and works of the composers themselves.

In the early 1960s Gál wrote monographs on Brahms (1961) and Wagner (1963). These are not dry scholarly tomes - Gál hated the 'dust-swallowing' activity of library research - but spring from intimate knowledge of the composers works. As a friend and close collaborator of Mandyczewski, and co-editor of the complete edition of Brahms's works, he had a deep affinity with Brahms, enabling him to penetrate into both works and personality. With Wagner, he attempted to steer a middle way between the greatness of his music and the monstrosity of his ideology. The great value of both works is that they are written from the perspective of the practising musician rather

than the mere scholar. In the 1970s Gál wrote two more monographs: on Schubert (1970) and Verdi (1975). A deep love of Schubert′s music permeates the former work, while in the latter Gál′s own experiences as a successful opera composer no doubt contribute to his understanding of the dramatic and literary, as well as the musical aspects of Verdi′s work.

In addition to these monographs, Gál also published *The Musician's World: Great Composers in their Letters* (1965), a further collection of the letters of Brahms (1979), and a guide to the orchestra works of Schumann (1979).

Chapter 25

Gál′s Music

A characteristic of Gál′s music is its remarkable consistency and originality of style. Though deeply rooted in the Austro-German musical tradition, he had by his early twenties already found his own musical language, to which, though always open to new forms and combinations, he remained faithful. He at all times kept aloof from fashionable trends and movements of both his own and later generations. The list of his published works is long, and includes compositions of all kinds. But what characterises all of them is their clarity and precision, which derives from his absolute mastery of the material. His music combines polyphonic structure with flowing melody; free, expressive lyricism with emotional restraint. Often complex, it is never obscure; frequently witty, it is never trivial; consistently optimistic, it is never superficial.

His personal style cannot be derived from any single or specific 'influence', but one can identify certain particular affinities on his part: the early classics, whose clarity, plasticity and playful humour are basic constituents with Gál; Brahms, whose lyrical yet restrained romanticism is similarly fundamental to him; the chromatic harmonies and extended tonality of the pre-serial early moderns; a Schubert-like love of melody; counterpoint, which was part and parcel of his style from early on, and which, through his life-long concern with J. S. Bach, became second nature to him.

With the fickle changes in musical fashion, especially in the post-war years, Gál's musical idiom has often been misunderstood, indeed dismissed as conservative, a throw-back to an early period. This impression may perhaps have been reinforced by Gál's long life - as a living composer he was expected to be 'modern'. But this is to misjudge his works. Certainly, he held true to the musical values which underpin the great classics, in a period where, in some circles at least, they were unfashionable. But his works amply demonstrate the capacity for innovative development of the tradition in which he worked, and his ability to put his own stamp on this tradition, developing his own, clearly recognisable style and musical character.

Chapter 26

Postscript

Hans Gál died of cancer on 3rd October, 1987, at the age of 97. Hanna recalled his last days:

> "He still suffered no pain, for which I shall be eternally grateful, but he could no longer eat, and became weaker from day to day. Nevertheless, every day he came down on the stair-lift, fully dressed, and stayed in his room until it was time to go to bed, reading, listening to music . . . Against the well-meaning advice of the doctor, I decided to keep him at home as long as possible, where with his books, music, radio, etc. he could lead an almost normal life, although he was becoming steadily weaker through lack of nourishment. It was not until five days before the end that he went into the wonderfully run hospice. There he had his own room, I could be with him as long as I liked, and when, two days before the end, the feared pain began, he could be helped." [Personal correspondence.]

In the last year of his life he could enjoy visible signs of greater recognition for his music, including the first British radio recording of *De Profundis* and of the complete cycle of his string quartets. He was not to see the first Viennese performance of *De Profundis*, produced on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the annexation of Austria in March 1988.

His wife Hanna, who had stood by his side for 65 years, and without whom he would certainly not have lived so long nor so creatively, passed away peacefully in December, 1989, and was therefore not to witness the first performance of *Die Beiden Klaas* ('Rich Claus, Poor Claus', op.42) on the 100th anniversary of his birth nor the first post-war revival of *Die Heilige*

Ente by the Deutsche Oper in Berlin in their series 'Forgotten Contemporaries: Opera at the Piano'.

Apart from the changes in fashion, the political events during Gál's long life took their toll on his works, many of which went out of print and were unobtainable, and performances were all too rare. But recent years have seen a revival, and more interest is now being shown. Out-of-print works are being brought back into circulation, and there is a steady flow of performances and recordings. It is to be hoped that as a result a new generation will relive and revive the music of Hans Gál.

Explore further

Chronology of Gál's life

Family tree

Sketchbook