
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Michael Graubart

ORPHEUS TRUST: Killed or expelled — will they now be forgotten?

During the Nazi years, many thousands of Austrian musicians died in the gas chambers. Some escaped to Britain or to the United States. Many of these have since died; some are still alive. After the war they were not welcomed back to Austria and in any case most of them did not want to return.

They became part of British and American cultural life, and it hardly needs saying that they — as composers, teachers and performers — contributed greatly to the richness and diversity of musical life in their adoptive countries. What is often forgotten is that they were once organic parts of Austrian musical life, too.

In 1996 Dr. Primavera Gruber founded, and still directs, the Orpheus Trust in Vienna in order to preserve their memory and to celebrate their work. The Trust, with a staff that really consists just of Dr. Gruber with minimal assistance, has established an archive and a huge database which is consulted by all sorts of international organizations like the EU. It has mounted exhibitions and hundreds of concerts that have included a great number of first performances. It is respected and valued all over the world.

Except, it seems, in Austria. This year has been celebrated as the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the war and the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of a new, free, independent and better Austria in which people will not be persecuted for their racial origin or religion. Is it not tragically ironic that this year may also see the demise of the Orpheus Trust through lack of federal funding?

The amounts required are pitiful compared with general government expenditure, but it seems that it is always the small organizations whose work is valuable out of all proportion to their cost that are the easiest to abandon. This year, to celebrate its tenth anniversary, the Trust had planned a series of events in many European countries in collaboration with organizations there. The preparations were advanced enough for the Trust to apply to the EU for a grant. But the grant had to be refused: regulations stipulate that one third of the cost would have had to come

from Austria itself, and the 70,000 Euros offered by the City of Vienna was not enough. Dr. Gruber approached the federal government for supplementary support, but the request was ignored.

The series of events will not take place. What is worse, the Trust cannot cope with the continually increasing demands on its services without a small increase in its staff, and may not be able to continue in existence. The only hope is that if enough musicians and others in countries like Britain declare that they value the work of the Trust, the Austrian government may relent. On the Trust's website at <http://www.orpheustrust.at> one can read about its projected activities, its present predicament, the names of those who have already stood up to be counted and some of their statements of support. (Readers whose German is not up to it should click on 'English' at the bottom of the left-hand column; near the top of that column, 'News' is self-explanatory and 'Support' offers a statement of support that one can print out, sign and send.)

I suppose I should declare an interest: I was a refugee from Austria myself in 1938. But for the sake of justice, of cultural richness and of history I ask my fellow-musicians and educationalists in this country to join me in trying to save the Trust.

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Individual choice or collective pressure?

I am dismayed by the covert anti-semitism of Robin Freeman's essay on Gideon Klein (*Tempo* Vol. 59, No.234, October 2005). Dismayed, too, by other aspects, including the mistranslation (in view of Freeman's otherwise good German probably tendentiously deliberate) that causes an innocuous remark of Haba's, 'It is mainly a matter of clear phrasing and the distribution of climaxes in the melody and dynamics' (NB: 'in', not 'between') to suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange: 'It is essentially a matter of *long term* phrase structure and the *sundering* of melodic and dynamic climaxes' (my italics); and the silly remark, attributed to Celia

Stock, that Mahler's sensibility was typically South German Catholic; if that refers to Austrian popular music and to Schubert, it is not only trite but completely misses the bitterly ironic regret for something irretrievably past; not to mention Mahler's own equally bitter but self-aware lament that he was regarded as a Jew in all the world...

It is not my purpose, nor am I qualified, to critique Freeman's views of Klein's music in particular and Czech music in general. Klein had every right to feel at home in his Moravian environment; Freeman had every right to find Moravian and not Jewish stylistic traits in his music. Moreover the definition of what constitutes Jewishness in music — not the Sephardic Jewishness of Iraqi-Jewish music or the Ashkenazi Jewishness of Polish-Jewish music, say, but Jewishness itself — has, to my knowledge, never been satisfactorily achieved.

But is it necessary to dismiss anyone's desire to affirm their Jewishness by attributing it to outside pressure? What pressure was Schoenberg under when he declared his solidarity with the persecuted Jews of Europe? Why offensively

conjoin such pressure from Nazis with that from Zionists? Or 'Zionists': why equate the self-conscious Jewishness of someone proud to be a Jew with the specific political and territorial aims of Zionism, whether one accepts, as I do (though without finding the present actions of Israel justified), that the latter were historically necessary or not? Such susceptibility to conspiracy theories not only denigrates the personal allegiance of many Jews to whatever they conceive of as Jewish culture; it comes close to denying the pain of Jews during the Holocaust, and savours of an 'aesthetic' version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

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The 'Excursus' from Robin Freeman's Gideon Klein article, which was to have been published in the present issue, has been held back to April 2006 for reasons of constriction of space — (Ed.)