

Der Lindberghflug.

Mürzthaler Werkstatt,

Mürzzuschlag. 24 October 1984.

In the fall of 1982 the Austrian town of Mürzzuschlag—famous as the birthplace a century ago of Brahms' Fourth Symphony--mounted the first Mürzthaler Werkstatt, an annual and predominantly musical festival with a strong twentieth-century accent and an even stronger local one. Hans Werner Henze's experiment in Mountepulciano was clearly one of the precedents for establishing the Werkstatt in the economically precarious Mürz Valley, and indeed Henze himself directed the 1982 and 1983 festivals.

Any international ambitions the festival may have lost with Henze's departure last year were fully compensated by the regional significances of the 1984 Werkstatt. Typical of these, and important from other points of view, was the much-acclaimed performance of *Der Lindberghflug* that concluded the opening concert 24 October. Apart from two of the three admirable soloists, the singers and players were all drawn from the region: the Singkreis Krieglach (whose director, Hans Held, was also a notably sensitive soloist) and the Orchesterprojekt Kindberg-Mürzzuschlag under its conductor, Ernst Smole, who is in charge of the municipal music school.

The success of the occasion owed much to Smole's understanding of the music and to the enthusiasm he communicated to his mostly young players and singers. Untoward though the style and tone of the work remain today, the performance had a spontaneous vitality that would be hard to capture in purely professional circumstances. (A few minor liberties taken by the players in the two jazz-inflected numbers were reluctantly but wisely accepted by Smole in the interests of *esprit de corps*!)

At the end of the concert, the audience stayed on to hear the work re-recorded for television. With all due respect to Gottfried Rennhofer's "Visuelle Umsetzung," the fact that music and text speak for themselves in their different ways was never more clearly demonstrated. Whether literal illustration or Brechtian distancing is aimed at, the addition of a visual dimension must always introduce formidable problems, musically, formally, and, not least, ideologically. Some day, perhaps, someone's stroke of genius may help solve them. Meanwhile, the purely musical results of the Mürzzuschlag performance were a valuable reminder of the work's potential outside the metropolitan concert circuits.

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