

friday

Entertainment

'Nest-egg' of souvenirs treasure of music world

By Richard Newman
of The Free Press

It was once just a "nest-egg" but now it's a treasure of international importance that only a few Londoners know exists in the city.

It is one of the world's most important collections of memorabilia and iconography concerning Vienna at the turn of the century and composer-conductor Gustav Mahler, who in the past decade has inspired almost a cult in the classical music world.

Prof. Alfred Rose, who died four years ago, labelled it a only a "nest-egg" for his wife Maria, but its sentimental and monetary value increases almost daily in the world of inflation and surging interest in Mahler.

Included are the bronze Rodin bust of Gustav Mahler, paintings, photographs, etchings, musical scores and hundreds of letters and postcards — a veritable trove.

With embarrassing regularity, Mrs. Rose is reminded how the value of the inheritance of a notable Viennese musical family soars.

When Ulla Colgrass of Music Magazine interviewed Mrs. Rose and saw some of the collection last summer, Mrs. Rose said she would keep it together in a bank vault as long as she could do so, for she feels a responsibility for it. She is fully aware of the value of the Mahler belongings in an age when the music of Mahler seems to speak more loudly than it ever did when he was alive.

The collection and Mrs. Rose's stewardship of it are considered so important, that two weeks ago she was made an honorary member of the prestigious International Gustav Mahler Society in Vienna.

Foundation for the collection was the marriage of Justine Mahler to Arnold Rose. They were the parents of Alfred, who became a protege of composer Richard Strauss and a pianist, conductor and

composer. Alfred left a thriving career in Vienna, fleeing with Mrs. Rose when the Nazis marched into Austria.

The baggage stickers of the Veendam of the Holland American line still adhere to two suitcases in a London bank vault that contain the items which have in just the past few years become priceless and irreplaceable. The suitcases alone tell the story of the flight of Alfred and Maria Rose from Austria to the United States via Holland in 1938.

They settled in London in 1948 after spending two summers here founding the University of Western Ontario Opera Workshop, now renamed Opera Theatre. Alfred taught singing and music history at the university and pioneered music therapy in Westminster and London Psychiatric hospitals in London.

Justine was a sister of Gustav Mahler, a confidante as well as Mahler's Viennese "arm." The collection is partly the result of the care she took of all of Mahler's affairs. Alfred's sensitivity over the domestic money troubles which Mahler often wrote about led him to keep the contents of many letters private. Arnold Rose at 17 had been the youngest man ever to hold the post of concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic, and for 57 years led the famous Rose Quartet, which toured Europe and visited the United States in 1927.

Enhancing the value of the collection is the fact that when Mahler married, his wife was the gregarious Alma Mahler, who became a focal point for much of Viennese artistic life. Friends and confidants were among the leaders in the artistic community. In the Rose Viennese household, Franz Werfel, one of Alma's husbands, was a regular guest.

One of the prized items is an autographed picture of Giuseppe Verdi, addressed to Arnold, Alfred's father. Its story reveals the sense of destiny which the young Alfred foresaw for the Mahler-Rose artifacts. His father once planned to give the picture to Werfel on one of his

visits. Werfel had written what was considered then the definitive book on Verdi's life and works. The night Werfel came to dinner, the picture disappeared. Alfred, with an uncanny sense of history and family pride, had hidden it in his own room rather than see it leave the family. Years later, his father agreed he had done the right thing.

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The Mahler-Rose material precipitated toward the Roses in London in such volume that today almost every biography of Gustav Mahler mentions Alfred Rose as a primary source. While alive, Alfred was a store of rare Mahler information having worked on the scores which were in his possession.

The core of the collection is almost 500 letters and postcards from Mahler to his sister, as well as notes and letters from such famous composers as Liszt (postmarked at Weimar), Goldmark, Richard and Johann Strauss and Antonin Dvorak among others. Mrs. Rose has translated more than 250 letters and postcards so far. The vault contains manuscripts in Mahler's own hand as well, some original manuscripts of songs from Das Knaben Wunderhorn and a piano transcription which Alfred Rose did of one of the symphonies.

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The first recorded North American performance was by the New Haven Symphony, for the purchaser acquired it for Yale University. Pierre Boulez later conducted it with the Cleveland Orchestra.

As far as is known, the bust of Mahler in the Rose-Mahler collection is the only Auguste Rodin bronze in London. There are now only five Mahler busts extant. President Giscard d'Estaing of France acquired one four years ago in Paris. Alma Mahler gave her bust of Mahler to the Mahler Society in Vienna in 1956. Sothebys in New York estimates that the value of the London bust has almost tripled in value in three years to \$12,000.

A prize is the watercolor by Oscar Koschka, a friend of Alma Mahler. It was given to Alfred's father after he, like Koschka, had fled Austria. Arnold died in 1946, treasuring the floral painting, which carries a message from the artist hoping the painting would comfort him in his "winter of exile."

There are paintings by Carl Moll and Emil Jacob Schindler, stepfather and father of Alma Mahler respectively as well.

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sketches of Arnold Rose as well as engravings. One engraving of the Rose quartet is done by another artist, but Schmutzer works cover a whole dynasty of Viennese intellect.

(Many of the original plates for the Schmutzer etchings were lost in the harbor of Piraeus, Greece, when Mrs. Rose's brother, in flight ahead of the Nazis, sought to ship them to Egypt.)



One of the five existing Auguste Rodin busts of Mahler is a prized item in the collection of Mahler memorabilia in London.

Alfred did sell 39 letters to the University of Western Ontario music library, which Mrs. Rose is also translating, and a few letters to private collectors, but he could never have realized how prized they would become within such a short time after his death — as interest in Mahler has exploded. The music library has established what it called the Mahler-Rose room for its Mahleriana and other valuable collections. Critic-biographer Baron Henri de la Grange who has undertaken the most detailed biography of Mahler so far, has placed the value of some Mahler letters as high as \$300 a page.

The well-known Viennese musicologist Kurt Blaukopf, another biographer living in Vienna, agrees with de la Grange that the collection is the single best concentration of Mahleriana still in private hands. Much of the other Mahler material has been scattered; other heirs, who had to flee Austria under the Nazis, found they were in need of money and early Mahler admirers inveigled material from them.

Alfred Rose's own presence on the Viennese scene is recorded, even in the awesome shadow of his uncle and father. There is a vast number of photographs of both Mahler and the Roses with the greats of the Viennese scene. Alfred's and his sister Alma's autograph books record the signatures of many leaders of the Viennese artistic scene.

There are photos of Alfred with the great Lotte Lehmann, one of the greatest singers whom he coached for parts in Richard Strauss operas. There are also letters. He coached Maria Jaritzka in Fedora at the Vienna Opera, where he conducted both in the opera itself and the folk opera, with his father his concertmaster. There are a 1940 letter of recommendation for Alfred and postcards from the great lieder singer Elisabeth Schumann who premiered three of Alfred's songs.

A letter to "Alfie" from Alice Strauss, the daughter-in-law of Richard Strauss, tells of the rift between Alma Mahler and the Strausses.

Like his composer uncle, Alfred had an ear for languages and this facility made him a valuable addition for two tours of the Rose Quartet. Alfred was given a pair of cufflinks by Queen Isabella of Spain in 1922 when he made a quintet or formed a piano quartet when called for in their programming. The manuscript for Alfred's string quartet, which he dedicated to the wife of President Calvin Coolidge when the quartet toured the eastern United States, is in the Library of Congress in Washington but the manuscripts for his other compositions are in the collection.

Alfred's Adagio was performed by the London Symphony the season before his death. His piano sonata was performed by Dr. Damiana Bratuz in London in 1968 and a number of singers still program his songs.



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