

REFLECTIONS ON THE GARLAND SERIES

by Chris Tutt

MOST of our members are fully aware of the scope of the *Selected Works of Louis Spohr*, a series of ten volumes giving a useful cross-section of Spohr's output in reprints of old scores, manuscripts and a few newly written scores, published by Garland Publishing of New York. There was a list and full review of the series given by Keith Warsop in the 1989 Journal, but some of you might also be interested in the views of Martin Wulfhorst given in the March/April issue of the German magazine *Musica*. I myself have bought over the years volumes 1 (*Faust*), 6 (symphonies 1, 2 and 5), 8 (lieder) and 9 (chamber music for strings). I was just being tempted to order some more this summer because of the favourable exchange rate but I delayed and then the pound was devalued!

Martin Wulfhorst first reminds us that there are two other series of publications in modern times which attempt to provide a typical cross-section of Spohr's works, that from Bärenreiter and the ongoing *Neue Auswahl der Werke* from the

Internationale Louis Spohr Gesellschaft. These are new critical editions which provide both scores and parts. Garland does not attempt this, but just provides facsimiles, for the most part, of old scores. One good point is that there is very little overlap with the two earlier series. Martin Wulfhorst also praises the full and informative introductions by Clive Brown to these volumes. He pays tribute to Dr Brown's great knowledge of Spohr's music and his personal efforts to revive some. He does say that he would like to have seen references to some of the major dissertations in German concerning Spohr, such as that by Hans Glenewinkel about Spohr's chamber music for strings.

He singles out for special praise Volume 1 in which Jonathan Stracey provides a new handwritten score which shows both the original version and the additions of the 1852 revision of *Faust*. This also has an informative introduction and critical notes about the text. He does wonder why *Pietro von Abano* was chosen for the series rather than *Zemir und Azor*. He comments that the handwritten score of the First Symphony is hard to read. We now have symphonies 1 to 7 available in print. Will conductors now be more willing to consider them for their concert programmes?

Martin Wulfhorst considers that Spohr's most successful area of composition was that of concertos. A larger proportion of them come in the early part of Spohr's career which he finds the most successful. He questions whether the Garland choice of the Concertante for Violin and Cello, WoO 11, and the Violin Concertos 10 and 12 is the most suitable. He would like to see a number of newly edited scores and sets of parts for the concertos.

He thinks that the volume of lieder is a particularly valuable contribution to the appreciation of Spohr as it contains all the songs published in sets and a number of individually issued ones. Though there are a proportion of tame drawing room songs, there are also many real gems. He would have liked to have seen separate instrumental parts for Opp. 103 (clarinet) and 154 (violin) as well as separately printed and indexed song texts.

He declares that it is Spohr's chamber music that has been most widely revived in recent years and that volumes 9 and 10 will encourage this trend. Nevertheless, he regrets that Spohr's violin duos and works that include the harp are not represented here. These are the most original virtuoso works of Spohr's early period.

Volume 9 covers a long span in Spohr's career, from the fresh early quartet Op. 4/2 to the mellow Op.141. Most of the works make great demands on the first violin but the effort is amply repaid. The best of recent recordings show that these works can bring a valuable enrichment of the repertoire if they are performed with energy and understanding. There is a need for more sets of parts in modern editions.

Martin Wulfhorst is not so enthusiastic about the Chamber Music with Piano. He says that the trios have attractive features but are less inspired than the Piano and Wind Quintet, Op.52, or the later Septet, Op.147. He does like the Piano Quintet, Op.130, though not all commentators would agree that it is superior to the trios. He concludes by saying that the Garland Edition is on the one hand a milestone in the Spohr Renaissance but on the other hand also shows how much is still to be done to make all the best parts of Spohr's output generally available.