

On the Edition of Act 3

Alban Berg left a huge challenge for posterity with his incomplete opera *Lulu*. Act 3, which consists only of fragments and preliminary drafts, has always posed difficult questions for researchers and interpreters alike. The last attempt to complete Act 3 was undertaken by composer Friedrich Cerha. His work set standards when it appeared in 1977. However, despite his great accomplishment, there is still a noticeable uneasiness even after 30 years of performance practice.

Some questions suggested themselves to me, and the search for answers was what led to the new edition of Act 3 that is now being published. Is it possible that the compositional ‘dramatic fall’ between Act 2, which was completed by Berg, and the beginning of Act 3 could have been Berg’s intention, or even a dramaturgical strategy? Is it further possible that there are other reasons for what appears to be an impossible task, namely creating an ‘authentic’ complete version, aside from the unfinished draft material in the form of a compressed score? Are there some passages to be found in the much acclaimed version by Cerha that could have been done in an even better way? It is very interesting to note that, despite experience of producing *Lulu* over several decades, we still have not been able to find a satisfying solution to the problem of Act 3. Additionally, thus far, no single conclusive realisation has been created that would be in a position to end the discussions surrounding the recreation of Act 3. The latest findings from source text researchers published in recent years should, one would imagine, also have been able to lead to a different approach to the musical text.

Starting Point

Before undertaking an attempt to create a new edition of Act 3, the result of which is now available, I devoted myself to staging several productions of *Lulu* and Berg’s *Symphonische Stücke*. I was thus able to gather sufficient experience to accept the challenge of approaching such a grand project. Furthermore, I was able to place *Lulu* into the larger compositional framework of Berg’s oeuvre due to the instrumentation and editing I did for some current Berg transcriptions (see: *Lulu-Bruchstücke*, 2007, the concert aria *Der Wein*, 2006, *Wozzeck*, edited in 2004). With this work behind me, I was able to establish my own position in contrast to the version presented by Cerha.

Cerha’s version is obviously designed to try and keep as closely as possible to the sequence of Berg’s compressed score, and to use it as a valid reference source for compositional decisions. This results in a difference in structure between the design of Act 3 and the preceding ones. The balance between dialogue and music leads to significant problems of text comprehensibility. Due to the largely parlando style of the music, the undifferentiated harmonics and lack of rhythmical structure, the dialogue scenes develop into passages of chatter-filled boredom. The argument frequently presented in this context, namely that Berg intentionally composed the first scene in this trivial form, is easily refuted inasmuch as in other works by Berg, e.g. *Wozzeck*, very similar combinational processes led to completely different, denser and more substantial results.

The reactions to the premiere of the completed Act 3 in Cerha’s version in Paris in 1979 are also most illuminating. Joachim Kaiser’s review stated that, ‘The completion of *Lulu* is just a partial victory’, and later, ‘Without knowing the compressed score, it is difficult to decide whether the mistake lies with Berg in that he didn’t deal well with a scene he couldn’t come to terms with’, or, ‘Act 3 in *Lulu* starts with a softly confused scene... all this should sound luxurious, but it seemed, although authentic in terms of musical themes, yet strangely thin, flat, rhythmically undifferentiated, even a bit boring.’

Work in progress

My attempt at a new transcription of Act 3 is aimed at addressing the above-mentioned problems, and should serve to open up the work. I shall therefore have to dissociate myself from one of Cerha’s fundamental assumptions: namely, the recognition of an apparently binding authoritative quality of the compressed score. The question suggested itself of in how far the particell can be considered a so-called ‘authentic’ basis and overall plan for Act 3 to be followed faithfully. With respect to possible alleged breaks in quality during the process of composition from the drafting stage to the finished score, I find it appropriate to refer to Jean Paul, who apparently said that he could not understand why inspiration should be at work only during the first draft, but not during correction or other phases of the work. It seems that Berg himself harboured some general doubts about the quality of the compressed score for Act 3. In a letter to Anton Webern dated May 6, 1934, he wrote, ‘... I am not quite as completely satisfied as might be supposed at having made the final changes to the music for “Lulu”. In the penultimate passages in particular, there are some things I only

hastily sketched and decided to leave the details for later. And I shall have to “revise” the entire composition again from start to finish!’

After analysing the source texts and evaluating the entire material, I strongly doubt that Berg had any time to spare for the revision work he mentioned before starting on the instrumentation. All Berg left to posterity are some comments which in fact serve to underline the ‘work in progress’ impression of the existing music. He wrote, for instance, for the 2nd Rhabarba ensemble at the beginning of Act 3, ‘22 bars to be inserted for possible extension of the ensemble and to further illustrate the dialogue between Lulu and Geschwitz’, and ‘the 11 bars from 261–271 to be repeated three times as follows: the first time 261–264 stays the same, 265–271 without Lulu, the 2nd time likewise, but Lulu instead of Geschwitz (Geschwitz is silent), the 3rd time all together.’

Quite obviously, Berg himself was not able to come up with a satisfactory solution of how to realise the very dense dialogue between Lulu and Geschwitz during which the background and reasons for Lulu’s escape from prison become clearer. Including the text into a complex ensemble scene merely makes it incomprehensible, makes it crumble near the end and dissolves its firm structure. The problem of text comprehensibility was a difficult task for Berg and one which had to remain unsolved during the particell stage. It became one of my fundamental concerns when writing this version.

The practice we have seen so far was to keep as closely as possible to the order of events as given in the particell in a continuing score. In almost every single interpretation, this led to just those tensions and inconsistencies that apparently are less due to the musical fragment Berg left than with the problematic passages in Cerha’s edition.

I chose the following approach in order to open Act 3 up to new interpretational analysis: I was mainly interested in re-evaluating Act 3 in its position and importance within the framework of the entire opera, examining important modifications and deletions with regard to the source texts currently available, and deriving a more developed transcription from this approach. In terms of opening up the work I was interested in providing suggestions instead of a definitive musical text to facilitate interesting new approaches. You will find, for example, several instances of ossia variations and options for abbreviating passages using vide cuts which will help every musician to arrive at an individual structure for certain sequences. Naturally, this procedure provides new results that may drastically differ from Cerha’s version.

Premises

The following source texts served as the basis for my new transcription. Firstly, Berg’s particell for Act 3 of *Lulu*, comprising a total of 1300 bars, Berg’s clean copy of the score for the corresponding passages, the *Symphonische Stücke* from *Lulu* written in 1935; and secondly the piano score of Act 3 from *Lulu* by Erwin Stein (1935), Cerha’s version of Act 3 from 1978, of course, as well as Cerha’s *Arbeitsbericht zur Herstellung des 3. Aktes der Oper „Lulu“ von Alban Berg* and finally, the revision report on the complete score edition published in 1985. I also referred to my own transcription of the *Lulu-Bruchstücke* for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone and chamber orchestra (premiere 2007) and finally, Thomas F. Ertelt’s *Alban Bergs „Lulu“ – Quellenstudien und Beiträge zur Analyse*, Vienna 1993.

On the basis of this range of source texts, I first had to make some important preliminary decisions. One premise was to retain intact all the parts for which Berg managed to finish instrumentation, and to use them as the foundation for Act 3. The insertions of new and old parts from Acts 1 and 2 were designed to create coherence and reduce the lamented compositional and dramaturgical drop. I also aimed at maintaining all the dialogue passages in the same form that Berg organised them, based on Frank Wedekind’s model. The arrangement of all vocal soloists was not changed; in this I followed Berg’s expressly formulated instructions. The orchestra arrangements present a mix of original and new tones after my introduction of a new instrument, the accordion. Such a step seemed appropriate and enriching to Berg’s universe of tones and the atmosphere of the roving minstrel song.

I desisted from using the form of notation popular with the 2nd Vienna School and did not set accidentals for each individual note. Instead, I followed the traditional forms of notation where accidentals are valid for each complete bar. We learnt from experience that a musical text can be read more easily and faster when using this method. Due to considerations of playing technique, I did, however, occasionally use accidentals as reminders in the orchestra scores which, in order to improve readability, were not included in the full score. The identification of main and secondary voices, or main and secondary rhythms still expressly noted at Berg’s time was eliminated as superfluous after almost 100 years of performance practice of music from the 2nd Vienna School. The course and the priorities of melodies and rhythms are obvious from the musical context.

The Paris Scene

The structurally instable basic atmosphere of the first scene, like a torso only, is taken into account in that ensemble and dialogue parts take turns in a hard and realistic manner. The duet – the last piece in Act 3 completed by Berg himself – is assigned a key role since it refers back (to Lulu’s song) and points ahead (to Wedekind’s roving minstrel song) particularly strongly. Wherever I intervened, I endeavoured – while keeping the open form of the Paris scene intact – to insert the musical parts as necessary elements between the dialogues to develop the mood and the atmosphere of the scene. Deletions and rearrangements were inevitable. The sequence of the Paris scene is now as follows:

1. Ensemble, duet Lulu-Marquis
2. Ensemble from Berg’s original score, after the 2nd ensemble is abandoned in bar 261, we are left with the following elements:
 - Dialogue 1 (p. 716)
 - Pantomime 1 (p. 716)
 - Dialogue 2 (p. 717)
 - Pantomime 2 (p. 722)
 - Dialogue 3 (p. 728)
 - Pantomime 3 (p. 728)
 - Scene/Dialogue 4 (p. 729)
 - Scene with Lulu and Schigolch, on p. 745 with an option to shorten by using a vide cut to p. 748
 - Cadenza 1 (p. 755)
 - Dialogue 5 (p. 758)
 - Cadenza 2 (p. 759), with reference back to the scene with the animal tamer in Act 1
 - Dialogue 6 (p. 761)
 - Cadenza 3 (p. 761)
3. Ensemble, with new passage to lead into the transition music for the London scene, the ‘Grandioso’ from the *Symphonische Stücke* (p. 769)

The London Scene

Berg certainly did not coincidentally place the great London scene quartet between the introductory scene and the two important key scenes with Lulu meeting the Negro and the one with Lulu and Jack the Ripper – it was intended as the highlight in the finale. The only vocal part in the quartet Berg detailed in the compressed score was Alwa’s, and accordingly, we could hardly find less material to use as the starting point for a grand orchestra quartet. Cerha’s version rather confirmed the fundamental doubts as to the music’s authenticity as well as the poorer compositional quality. Cerha’s reference to the modification of the ‘hymn’ from the end of Act 2 makes sense, but Berg left us with too little to work with to find a solid basis for the completion of such a dense quartet. The ‘quartet experiment’ may justly be regarded as a failed one. However, we should be careful to assign guilt to Cerha alone: his great achievement of having rescued Act 3 from oblivion deserves more than respect. The failure to write a plausible completion of the quartet that fits smoothly into the context is mainly due to the actual shortcomings, the state, sketchy and unrevised, of the material left by Berg.

It is therefore hardly promising to approach this passage with the objective of encountering ‘authentic Berg’ music. I rather tried to find a way to create sensible continuity by means of a dramaturgical trick, and pay equal attention to the dramatic course of the plot of *Lulu* based on Wedekind and to Berg’s interpretation. To achieve this goal, I placed continuous musical passages as atmospheric colouring between the dialogues, comparable to the way it was done in the Paris scene. The material inserted is based on those parts Berg finished setting to music. It was then adapted to each individual position. Once again, some ossia passages were added to open the scene to diverse interpretational approaches.

Tightening up the London scene placed those scenes with three characters that have huge formal importance (Professor-Negro-Jack the Ripper) in a direct relationship with each other. The entire scene almost seems caught up in a maelstrom pushing it to the finale with Lulu’s murder. I therefore arrived at the following sequence:

Dialogue Alwa-Schigolch (p. 809)

Dialogue Professor-Lulu (p. 814), then with Alwa, Schigolch (p. 824)

Dialogue-Scene 7, originally a quartet with interludes ad lib to structure the text (p. 837)

Dialogue Alwa-Schigolch (p. 838)

Dialogue Lulu-Negro (p. 845)

Transition to Schigolch scene (p. 863)

Dialogue Geschwitz-Lulu-Jack the Ripper (p. 869 to end), with ossia parts on p. 879 and option for a vide cut p. 894.

Incidental Music

There are three versions of incidental music to choose from for the start of the London scene. The first two (barrel organ version 1 and barrel organ version 2) have been included into the score and only differ in their instrumentation. The third version for barrel organ for a 'Werkel' (a barrel organ type instrument popular during Berg's time) is included in the Appendix. This version is '... corresponding to the true poverty in the final scene for the instrument called "Werkel" – barrel organ ...', see Ertelt, Thomas F.: *Alban Berg's Lulu*, Vienna 1993 (UE 26271), p. 187ff.

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