Hans von Bülow

A LIFE AND TIMES

ALAN WALKER

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Hans von Bülow in 1886. A photograph by E. Bieber.

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To the memory of
Marie von Bülow
Keeper of the flame

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Acknowledgements

Hans von Bülow's vast legacy, scattered across a wide variety of locations, reflects a life of ceaseless travel. He is known to have given more than 3,000 concerts during his career as a pianist and conductor. His long and arduous tours took him through a dozen or more countries, and left a complex trail of paper in their wake—programmes, newspaper reviews, photographs, reminiscences, diary entries, and correspondence. Much of this material is esoteric and remains unpublished. But it is not possible to write a reliable account of Bülow's life without taking it into account. It is my pleasant duty to thank all those colleagues who helped me along the way.

I have elsewhere spoken of the 'geography of biography', of the absolute necessity for biographers to visit the places about which they write, without which it is virtually impossible for the spirit of times past to penetrate their work. A single walk across Dresden's venerable Augustus Bridge, which spans the river Elbe, did more to stimulate my recalcitrant pen into capturing the details of Bülow's childhood than did the perusal of a dozen articles in remote libraries. Equally memorable were my visits to Bülow's impressive grave in Hamburg's Ohlsdorf Cemetery, and the great St. Michaelis Church where the funeral ceremony itself was held. Several accounts of Bülow's obsequies have come down to us, of course, but for me they refused to leap from the page until I had experienced these geographical locations for myself.

As for such cities as Berlin and Meiningen, with whose orchestras Bülow achieved his greatest triumphs, they are an indispensable part of the

biographer's itinerary—even though a number of places associated with his career were destroyed during World War II. My guide on all these visits to Germany was Dr. Horst Förster, who lavished the same attention on my work as if it had been his own, and he opened doors for me, particularly in Berlin and Hamburg, which might otherwise have remained closed. I remain grateful to him.

By far the largest Bülow archive is held in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. It was deposited there by Bülow's second wife, the actress Marie Schanzer, in several installments between the two world wars. On various visits to the Staatsbibliothek I was helped by the music archivist Frau Ute Nawroth, herself a Bülow specialist, and by her colleagues. Documents that might have taken days for me to uncover in this largely uncatalogued collection were made readily available for my inspection, and simplified my work.

My visits to the Meininger Museen and the Meininger Staatsarchiv were likewise made easier for me by the support I received from Frau Maren Goltz, the chief music archivist. Bülow spent five years of his life in Meiningen, directing the Court Orchestra and bringing it to the forefront of Europe's musical life. The archive, which is housed in the ducal castle, contains a rich supply of memorabilia, to which I was given free access.

Many other organizations supported me in my work, of course, together with individual members of their respective staffs, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them here. Among the most important were: Fran Barulich and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; Jane Gottlieb and the Juilliard School of Music Library; Catherine C. Rivers and the Music Division of the Library of Congress; Donald Manildi and the International Piano Archives, University of Maryland; Mária Eckhardt and the Liszt Museum and Research Centre, Budapest; Robert Parker and the Music and Rare Books Division of the British Library; Jonathan Summers and the British Library Sound Archives; Paul Collen and the Centre for Performance History at the Royal College of Music, London; Sally-Anne Coupar and The Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow; and Rosemary Johnson and the Royal Philharmonic Society, London. Among other individuals who helped in important ways were Professor William Renwick, who designed the music examples; Professor Hans Schulte and Professor Gabriele Erasmi who served as linguistic consultants; and Laura Siegel, Dominique Caplier, Nadejda Vlaeva and Peter Förster, who dealt with a medley of musicological inquiries arising from my biographical narrative. I am likewise grateful to Professor Alan McComas, in the Department of Neurology at McMaster University, Canada, for throwing light on many of the baffling symptoms associated with Bülow's terminal illness and death, and encouraging me to explain them in terms that a layman could understand. There could be few better guides through the maze

that constitutes Bülow's family tree than Anna Gravina, one of his direct descendants, and I greatly appreciate her assistance in helping me to fill in some gaps in the genealogical table on pp. xxvi–xxvii. To Peggy Findlay, Helen Creedon, and the staff of the Inter-Library Loans Services at McMaster University, I extend my special thanks. The care they expended on my numerous requests for assistance, over a very long period of time, was exemplary.

My colleague William Wright was generous to a fault in his support of my project across the years. He not only helped me put the finishing touches to my account of Bülow's visits to Scotland (the details of which still remain a closed book to many scholars), but also drew my attention to a rich variety of unpublished sources, some of which I was able to integrate into my text. He also read through the entire book in typescript, a heroic task, and made a number of practical suggestions along the way. The help I received from Lisa Yui must also be acknowledged. She spent many a difficult hour in the mustiest corners of New York's research libraries, in pursuit of materials having to do with Bülow's American tours. More than once these scholars struck gold, and the fruits of their work have left their impression on my narrative.

To Gregor Benko I owe a particular debt. He generously made available to me the important run of unpublished letters from Bülow to his last amour, Cécile Mutzenbecher, which throws new and unexpected light on the musician's complex emotional life. Dick Anderson's familiarity with the Steinway archives in New York came more than once to my rescue, and he referred me to a number of unpublished documents connected to Bülow that might otherwise have passed me by. To Professor Jim Lawson my thanks are especially due for going through my German translations. Bülow's prose is often dense and labyrinthine, and it sometimes branches out in unexpected directions. Few are the letters of Bülow that do not contain either a series of esoteric puns or a display of verbal fireworks so brilliant that they are liable to dazzle even the native German speaker. Professor Lawson saved me from wandering down more than one blind alley and led me back to the essential points at hand.

Finally I want to place on record my indebtedness to my research assistant of many years standing, Pauline Pocknell, who passed away very suddenly after she had already begun to help me with this project. Pauline was irreplaceable, and was therefore not replaced. I can only hope that from whatever coign of vantage she occupies in that heaven which is surely set aside for scholars of her calibre, she will accept this accolade, and survey the pages that follow with friendly tolerance—an attitude that I actively discouraged her from extending towards my work during her lifetime.

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The Bülow Chronicles

Book One: On the Slopes of Parnassus, 1830–1869

The Early Years 31

A severe winter in Dresden, 1830 ~ the river Elbe freezes over ~ Bülow's birth on January 8, 1830 ~ his childhood marred by chronic 'brain fever' ~ discovers his talent for music, aged nine, together with his photographic memory ~ first piano lessons with Cäcilie Schmiedel ~ youthful encounters with the eccentric Henry Litolff, who lives with the Bülow family ~ enrolls at the Dresden Lyceum, where he studies Greek and Latin ~ attends the premier performance of Richard Wagner's *Rienzi* in the Dresden Royal Opera House (October 20, 1842) and becomes a confirmed Wagnerian ~ friendship with the Ritter family ~ an early encounter with Franz Liszt ~ studies at the Leipzig Conservatory of Music, where his teachers are Louis Plaidy for piano and Moritz Hauptmann for theory ~ his youthful repertoire includes Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin ~ a memorable encounter with Felix Mendelssohn ~ the turbulent marriage of his parents ~ a sojourn in Stuttgart, 1846–1848 ~ friendship with the Molique family ~ a boyhood prank ~ Wagner praises some of his youthful compositions ~ becomes an unwilling law student at Leipzig University ~ the Dresden Uprising, May 1849 ~ his parents divorce ~ he transfers to Berlin University ~ an excursion to Weimar ~ meets Liszt and sees him conduct *Fidelio* ~ back in Berlin he begins to write polemical articles for the press and makes enemies.

With Liszt in Weimar 49

Bülow witnesses Liszt conduct the world premier of Wagner's *Lohengrin* (August 1850) ~ despite parental opposition he gives up the study of law in favour of music ~ Wagner and Liszt intervene in his behalf ~ Wagner secures temporary

conducting posts for him in Zurich and St. Gall ~ Bülow then moves to Weimar and studies the piano with Liszt ~ a description of Weimar and Liszt's musical reforms there ~ he meets the members of Liszt's masterclasses ~ a trip with Liszt to the Ballenstedt Music Festival (June 1852) ~ the First Berlioz Week in Weimar (November 1852) and Bülow's role in it ~ the 'War of the Romantics' ~ Bülow's article against Henriette Sontag and its repercussions ~ it causes a rift with his father ~ with Liszt's support, Bülow sets out on his first concert tour of Germany, Austria, and Hungary ~ a setback in Vienna, a success in Pest.

The Growing Virtuoso 69

The death of Eduard von Bülow ~ Hans dashes from the Karlsruhe Festival to Ötlishausen to attend the funeral ~ his letters of condolence to his mother and sister ~ he returns to the Karlsruhe Festival and receives an ovation for his performance of Liszt's Fantasie on Motifs from Beethoven's 'Ruins of Athens' ~ meets Count Theodore Myscielski in Dresden, who invites him to teach his four daughters at the family castle in Chocieszewice, Poland ~ Berlioz visits Dresden (April/May, 1852) and conducts his *Damnation of Faust* and other works ~ Bülow spends much time in the composer's company ~ he undertakes to make a four-hand arrangement of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini.*

Bülow takes up his teaching post at Chocieszewice, October 1854 ~ his droll descriptions of life in his 'Polish swamp' ~ after several weeks of dull routine he visits Berlin and attempts to ignite a new career there ~ he gives a concert in the Singakademie, which loses money, but he forms useful connections with the city's leading musicians ~ Julius Stern offers him the post of head of the piano department at the Stern Conservatory to replace Theodor Kullak ~ he returns to Poland for a few more weeks before beginning a new life in Berlin.

Berlin, 1855–1864 I: A City of Mingled Chimes 83

Franziska joins Bülow in Berlin, and finds a new apartment for them both ~ he begins teaching at the Stern Conservatory ~ his teaching routine and methods described ~ some early connections with Prussian royalty help his career ~ Bülow reacts against the stilted musical life of Berlin and forms his own concert series, the 'Trio-Soirées' ~ he gives the first performance of Liszt's Sonata in B minor, January 22, 1857, and presents the new Bechstein grand piano at the same concert ~ his declining relations with the Berlin press ~ an explosion in the Singakademie, January 14, 1859 ~ *Die Ideale:* 'I achieved victory under this sign'.

The 'War of the Romantics' and its ramifications ~ Brendel calls a 'Congress of Musical Artists' in Leipzig, June 1859 ~ in his keynote speech he withdraws the designation 'Music of the future' hitherto used to describe the works of Liszt and Wagner, and instead calls these composers and their acolytes 'the New German School' ~ in response Brahms and Joachim draw up a 'Manifesto' dissociating themselves from such a school, condemning its principles as 'contrary to the innermost spirit of music'.

Berlin, 1855–1864 II: Marriage to Cosima 95

The arrival in Berlin of 'the Erlking's daughters', Blandine and Cosima Liszt ~ Bülow is charged with giving them piano lessons ~ the early childhood and youth of

these girls ~ Liszt's fretted relations with their mother, Countess Marie d'Agoult ~ Liszt's life in Weimar with Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein ~ Bülow and Cosima declare their love for each other ~ Liszt is not entirely in favour of this match, and asks the couple to wait before marrying ~ the Catholic wedding finally takes place at St. Hedwig's Church, Berlin, on August 18, 1857 ~ they spend their honeymoon by Lake Geneva, and visit Wagner in Zurich ~ three weeks of music making with Wagner at the 'Asyl' ~ married life in Berlin ~ the incompatibility of Cosima and Franziska von Bülow ~ Daniel Liszt sees Bülow conduct in Prague ~ Daniel visits the Bülows in Berlin and falls ill ~ his death and funeral.

The marriage of Hans and Cosima begins to founder ~ the birth of Daniela ~ Cosima falls ill and begins a lengthy convalescence at Bad Reichenall ~ the death of her sister Blandine Liszt, and the effect of this loss on Cosima ~ a second daughter, Blandine, is born to Cosima: the harrowing circumstances surrounding the delivery of this child ~ Wagner and Cosima meet in Berlin and 'amidst sobs and tears' declare their love for each other during a ride in the Tiergarten, November 28, 1863 ~ their respective woes contrasted and compared ~ Cosima's disturbed frame of mind considered ~ her earlier 'suicide pact' in Geneva with Karl Ritter becomes known to Wagner, together with the unhappy state of her marriage to Bülow ~ a catastrophe looms.

Catastrophe in Munich, 1864–1869 115

The newly crowned eighteen-year-old King Ludwig of Bavaria brings Wagner to Munich ~ he installs Wagner in the Villa Pellet by Starnberger See ~ Wagner invites Bülow and Cosima to join him there ~ Wagner procures for Bülow the position of *Vorspieler* to the king ~ Cosima becomes pregnant by Wagner with their first child, Isolde ~ in June 1914 the Bayreuth *Landesgericht* is asked to rule on the paternity of this child, but concludes that the matter cannot be determined beyond reasonable doubt ~ after Bülow discovers that Cosima and Wagner are lovers, he suffers a breakdown and moves into a Munich Hotel ~ Liszt arrives in Munich ~ he warns Wagner to terminate the relationship with Cosima on pain of losing his friendship ~ Ferdinand Lassalle's visit to Munich, and his dramatic death by duelling ~ Bülow and Cosima return to Berlin (September 1864) and make arrangements for their permanent transfer to Munich ~ another visit from Liszt.

The University of Jena bestows on Bülow the degree of doctor of philosophy, February 13, 1864 ~ the convocation programme features Bülow as pianist and conductor ~ the Bülow family returns to Munich (November 24) and takes up residence on Luitpoldstrasse ~ Wagner resides on Briennerstrasse, where Cosima spends much time in his company ~ Bülow gives a royal command concert in Munich's Odeon Theatre, and conducts model performances of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* ~ Wagner's plans for the creation of a Royal Music School ~ his lavish lifestyle becomes a drain on the royal treasury and arouses hostility ~ the Munich press lampoons Wagner and Bülow and a newspaper war breaks out ~ rehearsals for *Tristan* begin on April 10, 1865, and Cosima gives birth to Isolde the same day ~ Bülow's 'Schweinhunde' remark gets him into trouble with the press ~ Wagner chooses Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld as his first 'Tristan' and Ludwig's wife, Malvina, as his first 'Isolde' ~ dogged by misfortune, the first performance of *Tristan* is postponed until June 10 ~ the death of Ludwig Schnorr and the 'curse' of *Tristan* ~ Wagner dabbles in Munich politics and is banished from Bavaria.

Wagner moves to Tribschen in Switzerland, and continues his relationship with Cosima ~ her infidelity is reported in the Munich press, and Bülow challenges the editor of the *Volksbote* to a duel ~ King Ludwig visits Tribschen incognito ~ Wagner and Cosima persuade the king to publish a letter in their defence and in so doing perjure themselves ~ Cosima gives birth to Eva on February 17, 1867, her second child by Wagner ~ the episode marks a crucial turning point in Bülow's relations with Wagner ~ Liszt confronts Wagner at Tribschen and breaks off all connection with him ~ Malvina Schnorr conveys to the king some intimate details of Cosima's relationship with Wagner: the king realizes for the first time that he has been duped ~ Bülow conducts the first performance of *Die Meistersinger* ~ his growing conflict with Wagner ~ Cosima decides to leave Bülow and flee to Wagner ~ she informs Liszt who removes his blessing from her ~ Bülow tenders his resignation from Munich, begins divorce proceedings, and moves to Florence.

Book Two: Ascending the Peak, 1870–1880

Bülow in Florence 163

First sight of Florence: 'a dream of wonder' ~ meets again his childhood friend, Jessie Laussot ~ he acquires an apartment on the Borgo S. Frediano ~ the ballerina Elvira Salvioni beguiles him and he dedicates to her his *Il Carnevale di Milano,* op. 21 ~ an infatuation with Giulia, 'the seventeen-year-old star in my life' ~ a benefit concert for the victims of the Pisa floods, January 1870 ~ his Bechstein piano at last arrives from Munich, but his practicing disturbs the neighbours ~ travels to Berlin in pursuit of a Protestant divorce from Cosima ~ spends time with Carl Tausig ~ the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and Bülow's reaction to it ~ a Beethoven Centennial Festival in Milan, November–December 1870 ~ Tausig dies and Bülow writes his obituary notice for the Leipzig *Signale* ~ visits Liszt in Rome to celebrate the latter's sixtieth birthday, October 22, 1871 ~ completes work on his edition of Beethoven's piano music, which he dedicates to Liszt 'as the fruits of his teaching' ~ announces a farewell concert in Florence (December 28, 1871) and embarks on his European concert tours ~ within three months he gives more than sixty recitals, and by year's end has raised almost 100,000 francs, much of it for the support of his children.

First Tours of Britain—and Beyond, 1873–1875 181

Bülow crosses Albion's shores in April 1873 ~ of musical life in England, and its absence ~ J. W. Davison 'the music monster' of newspaper criticism ~ Bülow makes his debut with the Philharmonic Society, playing Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto ~ he is awarded the Society's Gold Medal, May 26, 1873 ~ he also appears as a conductor, directing the Prelude and Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan* ~ after spending the summer in Baden-Baden he returns to London, in November 1873, and plays at the Crystal Palace ~ his subsequent tour of the English provinces takes him to such cities as Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham, and Newcastle, en route to Scotland ~ he accuses his agent, George Dolby, of swindling him ~ his extended tours take him to eastern Europe, as far afield as Vilnius, Kiev, Odessa, and Kursk ~ Carl Bechstein supplies him with pianos along the way ~ Bülow's mixed commentaries to Bechstein on these instruments ~ he objects to being used as 'a commercial traveller' ~ in Moscow he meets his old fellow stu-

dent Karl Klindworth, who is working on his vast piano reduction of Wagner's *Ring* cycle ~ visits the dying Countess Marie von Mouchanoff-Kalergis in Warsaw and plays Chopin to her as she slips into the arms of death ~ during a brief return to Italy he excoriates Verdi's newly composed *Requiem,* an action he later regrets and for which he apologizes ~ his English pupil Elizabeth Beesley ~ the reminiscences of Laura Rappoldi-Kahrer ~ of cold baths and water cures ~ a sojourn in Glasgow and a success with the Glasgow Choral Union ~ returns to London and conducts at one of the 'Walter Bache Concerts' ~ suffers a mild stroke, but succeeds in giving three 'farewell' recitals in London ~ returns to Germany with a partial paralysis of the right hand ~ he establishes contact with a new agent, Bernard Ullman, who plans his American tour.

First Tour of America, 1875–1876 211

Bülow draws up a will and sets out for America ~ first concerts in Boston's Music Hall ~ he gives the world premier of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B-flat minor, October 25, 1875 ~ he fires his conductor, Carl Bergmann, for 'incompetence' ~ an unfortunate interview in *The New York Sun* ~ a letter from Tchaikovsky ~ concerts and contretemps in New York ~ Chickering versus Steinway ~ Bülow inaugurates Chickering Hall, November 15, 1875 ~ some ear-witness accounts of his playing ~ his impressions of Midwest America ~ an interview in the *Chicago Times* ~ considers becoming an American citizen ~ becomes infatuated with Baroness Romaine von Overbeck, who does not return his advances ~ Bülow and the young singer Lizzie Cronyn ~ he abandons his gruelling American tour in a state of exhaustion after giving 139 concerts ~ returns to Germany and seeks a cure at Bad Godesberg ~ Liszt on Bülow's physical condition ~ Hans von Bronsart offers Bülow the conductorship of the Hanover Court Theatre.

A Scottish Interlude, 1877–1878: 237
Bülow and the Glasgow Choral Union

Bülow is invited to direct the Glasgow Choral Union ~ his connections with the critic Thomas Logan Stillie ~ meets the Scottish composer George Macfarren ~ inaugural concert in St. Andrew's Hall, November 16, 1877 ~ impressions of the organist W. T. Best ~ Bülow's 'Saturday Popular Concerts' ~ Alexander Mackenzie's description of Bülow on the podium ~ a farewell concert before an audience of more than 3,000 people ~ he is presented with an inscribed baton by the organizers of the Choral Union ~ returns to his position in Hanover.

At Hanover, 1877–1879 247

Misfortunes of the Hanover Court Theatre ~ Bülow takes command ~ his reforms are not well received ~ he introduces Brahms's newly published Symphony no. 1, in C Minor (October 20, 1877) and dubs it 'Beethoven's Tenth' ~ Liszt visits Hanover ~ with Liszt at the annual festival of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein in Erfurt, June 22–26, 1878 ~ Bülow plays Bronsart's Piano Concerto in F-sharp minor, with Liszt conducting ~ returns briefly with Liszt to Weimar ~ tours England as a pianist once more and raises money for the Bayreuth Deficit Fund ~ his gift of 40,000 marks is returned by Wagner ~ a Beethoven recital in

London's St. James's Hall ~ a failure in Glasgow ~ he plays in the English provinces ~ an alcoholic concert in Birkenhead ~ Bülow loses his luggage as he crosses the English Channel en route to Hanover ~ some fabled confrontations with the heldentenor Anton Schott ~ Bülow dubs him 'the Knight of the Swine' ~ resigns from Hanover, and Schott follows two years later.

Britannia Scorned, 1878–79: Encounters and Skirmishes in 'The Land without Music' 263

Bülow attacks the musical life of Britain in his controversial 'Travelogues', written for the Leipzig *Signale* ~ his confrontations with the conductor August Manns ~ Manns hits back: 'How not to do it' ~ Bülow is reprimanded by *The Musical Times* ~ a New Philharmonic Society concert débâcle: Bülow walks out on Wilhelm Ganz, the 'would be conductor who cannot read a score' ~ he publicly attacks Ganz ~ a refuge in Sydenham with his relatives, the Bojanowski family ~ friendship with the writer C. M. Barry ~ more anecdotes.

BOOK THREE: VISTAS FROM THE SUMMIT, 1880–1894

The Meiningen Years, 1880–1885: I: The Meiningen Miracle 277

Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen invites Bülow to direct the Court Orchestra ~ the duke's family background and his three marriages ~ Bülow arrives in Meiningen in September 1880, and takes up residence in the Sächsischer Hof Hotel ~ Meiningen, a sleepy town with five droshky cabs and no restaurants ~ Bülow begins daily rehearsals on October 1, 1880, 'according to the Meiningen Principles' ~ no music other than Beethoven is studied ~ the orchestra emerges transformed and plays all nine Beethoven symphonies from memory ~ the Ninth Symphony is given a double performance on December 19 ~ Bülow's rehearsal methods considered in detail ~ to the orchestra he adds the Ritter viola, the five-string double bass, and the pedal timpani ~ Bülow takes the orchestra on its first tours ~ the *Berliner Volkszeitung* speaks of a miracle ~ Brahms arrives in Meiningen and Bülow begins the long championship of his music.

The Meiningen Years, 1880–1885: II: Enter Marie Schanzer 295

Bülow falls in love with the young Meiningen actress Marie Schanzer, and marries her, July 29, 1882 ~ Marie's family background ~ descriptions of her character ~ their unusual *ménage à deux* ~ some mixed reactions of friends and family ~ further complications with Cosima and the Wagner family ~ Bülow and Cosima meet after a separation of more than twelve years ~ they quarrel violently over Bülow's refusal to allow Wagner to adopt Bülow's daughters ~ thanks to Liszt's intervention Bülow is reunited with his daughter Daniela, whom he has not seen since her early childhood ~ Bülow's daughter Blandine is married in Bayreuth to Count Biagio Gravina, but Bülow is barred from the wedding ~ in the midst of this load of care Bülow and Marie go on honeymoon to Klampenborg ~ he falls seriously ill ~ Marie returns with him to Meiningen and nurses him for several months ~ Wagner dies on February 13, 1883, producing a 'shattering effect' on Bülow ~ a story from Max Kalbeck's biography of Brahms rebutted ~ Bülow stops conducting for several months, but finally recovers.

The Meiningen Years, 1880–1885: III: Paths of Glory 311

The orchestral tours continue ~ the twenty-three-year-old Gustav Mahler hears the orchestra in Cassel (January 1884) and is electrified ~ Mahler's letter to Bülow ~ Brahms's music is regularly featured ~ Brahms is invested by Georg II with Meiningen's 'Grand Cross' ~ the orchestra creates a sensation with three concerts in Berlin's Singakademie (February 1884) ~ Bülow conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in a 'Popular Concert', and in a legendary speech from the podium insults the Berlin Royal Opera House, calling it the 'Hülsen circus' ~ Baron von Hülsen retaliates by stripping Bülow of his title of 'Prussian Court Pianist', whereupon Bülow styles himself 'the People's Pianist' ~ Bülow's interest in his young acolyte Richard Strauss ~ Strauss makes his traumatic conducting debut with the Meiningen Orchestra ~ Bülow appoints the twenty-one-year-old Strauss as his assistant conductor at Meiningen ~ some Strauss anecdotes of Bülow on the podium ~ Bülow gives recitals in Paris (April 1885) and introduces the piano music of Brahms ~ some mixed reviews ~ in Versailles he meets Cosima's half-sister Claire de Charnacé and they recollect some past family crises ~ after a disagreement with Brahms, Bülow resigns from Meiningen ~ Strauss follows him a year later ~ Marie Schanzer is fired from the Meiningen Theatre ~ a brief sojourn in St. Petersburg where Bülow conducts a season of concerts for the 'Russian Music Society' ~ a farewell appearance in Meiningen, January 29, 1886.

Bülow the Pedagogue:
The Frankfurt Masterclasses, 1884–1887 333

Dr. Joseph Hoch leaves his fortune for the creation of the Hoch Conservatory of Music in Frankfurt ~ Joachim Raff is appointed the first director ~ Raff dies prematurely ~ his funeral and burial in Frankfurt ~ he leaves his family in straitened circumstances ~ Raff's successor is the conservative Bernhard Scholz ~ a 'revolution' ensues at the Conservatory and a number of the faculty break away ~ they form the Raff Conservatory of Music and bring in Bülow as its honorary president ~ the tensions between the two institutions ~ for four summers (1884 through 1887) Bülow gives masterclasses at the Raff Conservatory to raise money for a monument to Raff ~ the classes described ~ some Bülow aphorisms on the piano and its technique ~ some anecdotes from the classes ~ a lesson with Laura Kahrer ~ Walter Damrosch becomes a conducting student ~ Damrosch describes his time with Bülow ~ Bülow takes over Liszt's masterclass in Weimar and has some confrontations with the pupils ~ Broadwood & Sons presents the Raff Conservatory with one of its Imperial grand pianos, 1884 ~ Bülow's editions considered ~ Clara Schumann's reaction to them: 'I have always forbidden my students to use these editions.'

A New Home in Hamburg, 1886 353

Bülow bids farewell to Meiningen and settles in Hamburg ~ a description of this Hanseatic city and its artistic and commercial promise ~ Bülow develops his famous Beethoven Cycle, to be given across four successive evenings ~ presents it for the first time in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, in October 1886 ~ Hugo Wolf hears it in Vienna and attacks Bülow for a 'Beethoven massacre' ~ Daniela marries Henry Thode in Bayreuth ~ Bülow takes up a new position as director of the Hamburg

Subscription Concerts ~ a description of the city's 'Convent Garden' concert hall ~ begins to feature Brahms's music in Hamburg, its 'most illustrious musical son' ~ Bülow is invited by Bernhard Pollini to take on an ambitious series of thirty operas in the Stadttheater ~ a landmark production of *Carmen* ~ Weingartner's criticisms of Bülow's conducting; his crusades against Bülow and their origins considered ~ Bülow's clandestine love affair with Cécile Gorrisson-Mutzenbecher ~ he terminates the relationship at the request of Marie von Bülow ~ Bülow is invited to take over the ailing Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Berlin Philharmonic, 1887–1892: I: The Eagle's Wings 373

Bülow tells his manager, Hermann Wolff, 'I can only justify my existence [in Berlin] by introducing reforms' ~ first concert in the Philharmonie (October 21, 1887) arouses enthusiasm ~ his preoccupation with programme-building ~ emphasis on the German classics ~ world-famous soloists appear with him on the platform ~ the Paderewski saga ~ the lights go out while Teresa Carreño plays the Tchaikovsky Concerto ~ the old Philharmonie and its history ~ Bülow's conducting style ~ the young Bruno Walter witnesses his first Bülow concert and decides to become a conductor ~ Nikisch and Furtwängler compared with Bülow ~ Max Kalbeck and Felix Weingartner among Bülow's severest critics ~ the special relationship between Bülow and Richard Strauss ~ Bülow introduces some of Strauss's orchestral works to Berlin, including *Macbeth, Aus Italien,* and *Don Juan* ~ he rehearses *Death and Transfiguration* ~ Bülow creates an endowment fund for the Berlin Philharmonic ~ he opens his rehearsals to the general public ~ more Bülow anecdotes ~ Bülow conducts Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony twice in one evening, March 6, 1889.

Return to America, 1889 and 1890 399

March 14, 1889: Bülow sets sail for America on the steamship SS *Saale* which docks in New York eight days later ~ he agrees to play exclusively on Knabe pianos ~ New York and its many marvels ~ Bülow and his colourful manager, Frederick Schwab ~ makes his first appearance as a conductor in America on March 27 in the Metropolitan Opera House ~ W. J. Henderson's description in the *New York Times* ~ a dispute over the Menuetto of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony ~ Henry Krehbiel of the *Tribune* weighs in ~ Bülow gives his four-part Beethoven Cycle in the Broadway Theatre for the first time in America, April 1 to 5, 1889 ~ plays the Fugue from the *Hammerklavier* Sonata as an encore ~ takes his Beethoven Cycle to Boston ('a modern Athens') ~ makes a cylinder recording for Thomas Edison of a Chopin Nocturne ~ describes Edison's invention as 'an acoustical marvel' ~ plays in Philadelphia before returning to New York for his final concert in the Metropolitan Opera House ~ a contretemps over a contrabassoon ~ records the *Eroica* Symphony for Edison: an account in *The Century Magazine* ~ departs America on May 5 ~ signs a contract with the impresario Leo Goldmark to return the following year.

March 12, 1890: crosses the Atlantic for a second time ~ a storm at sea, 'not without its dangers' ~ a blizzard in Boston ~ the opening concert in Boston's Music Hall is delayed ~ Bülow learns of the dismissal of his political hero Chancellor Bismarck: 'my patriotism has suffered badly' ~ gives piano recitals in New York,

Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Washington ~ conducts a farewell concert in the Metropolitan Opera House on May 10, with d'Albert as soloist in Brahms's B-flat major Piano Concerto ~ returns to Germany on the SS *Fulda*.

The Berlin Philharmonic, 1887–1892:
II: 'Glory, Honour, and Good Fortune' 419

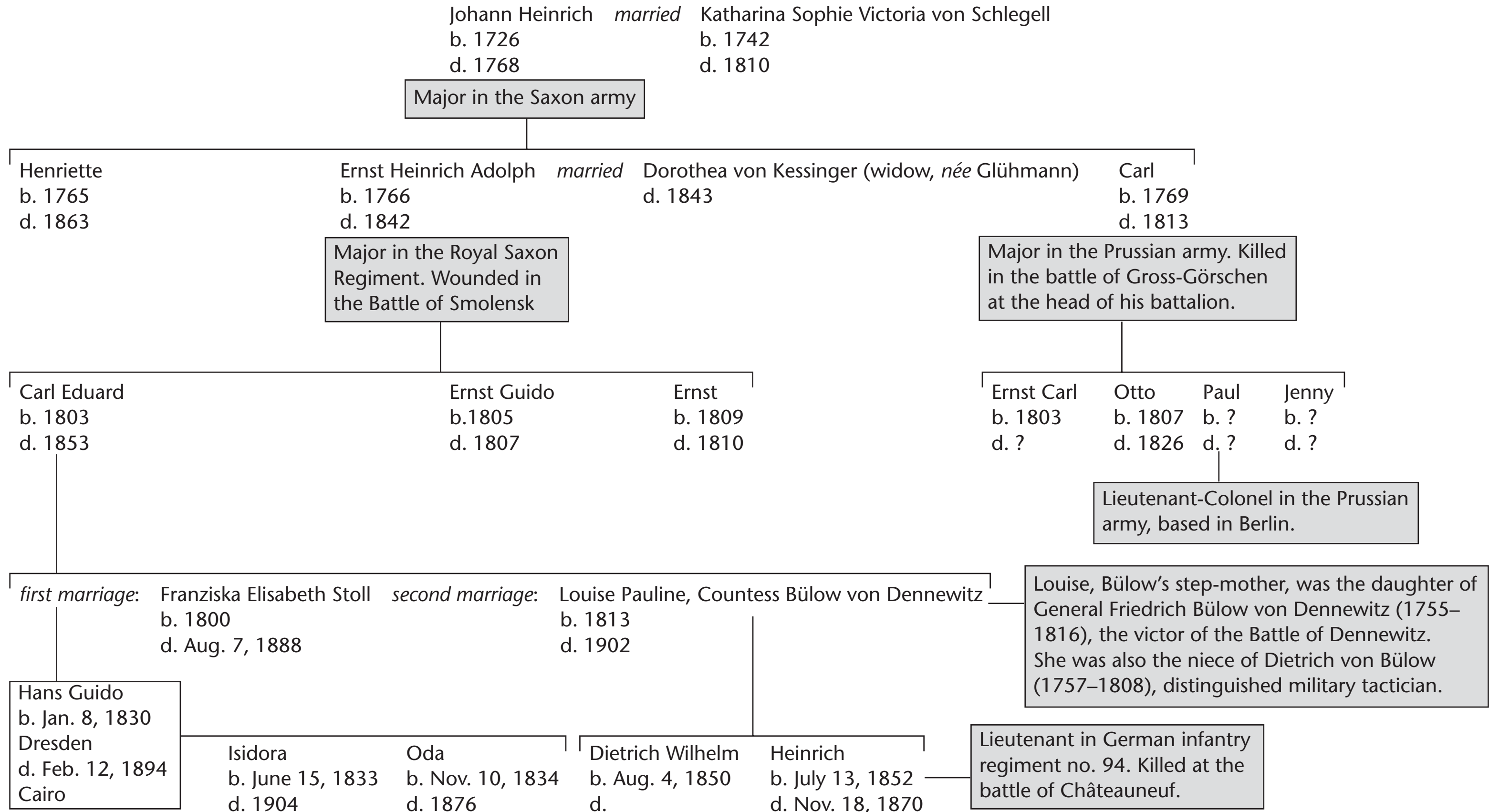
Bülow returns to the Philharmonic despite ill health ~ he seeks a variety of cures, including 'galvanic' treatments ~ he receives the Freedom of the City of Hamburg on February 22, 1892 ~ on March 28, 1892, he gives his last official concert with the Philharmonic ~ he delivers a postconcert speech in which he 're-dedicates' the *Eroica* Symphony to Bismarck, which causes a political uproar in Berlin and beyond ~ he meets Bismarck in Hamburg (April 1) and conveys his greetings to the former chancellor on the occasion of the latter's seventy-seventh birthday ~ the concert he conducts that evening is described by Gustav Mahler as 'supreme perfection' ~ the relationship between Mahler and Bülow considered ~ Bülow admires Mahler the conductor but fails to understand Mahler the composer ~ Bülow's disastrous introduction to Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony ~ he writes a letter of atonement to Giuseppe Verdi, who graciously replies ~ resigns the conductorship of the Berlin Philharmonic after five years and fifty-one concerts ~ an emotional return to Italy where he is reunited with his daughter Blandine and meets his three grandchildren for the first time ~ his portrait is painted by Lenbach.

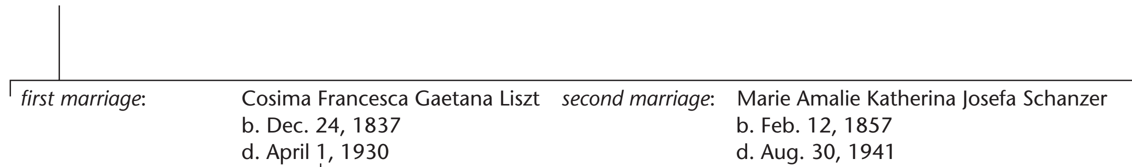
The cholera epidemic in Hamburg and its impact on daily life ~ 17,000 citizens are infected and the wealthier inhabitants flee the city ~ the Bülows repair to the Danish resort of Skodsborg and then move on to Berlin ~ Bechstein Hall is opened on October 4, 1892, and Bülow gives the inaugural recital ~ it is his swansong as a pianist ~ he conducts the Berlin Philharmonic one last time in benefit of the orchestra's pension fund ~ too weak to give a speech, he plays instead a snatch of music from Mozart's *Zauberflöte:* 'Auf wiedersehen, until we meet again.'

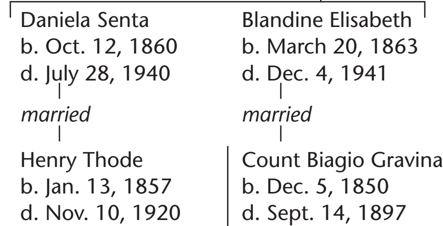
The Last Days and Death of Bülow, 1893–1994 441

Enters Berlin's Pankow Hospital for nervous diseases ~ undergoes experimental treatments ~ becomes a patient of Freud's colleague Dr. Wilhelm Fliess ~ criticizes the medical experts and discharges himself from Pankow ~ travels to Bavarian watering places in search of a cure ~ cholera breaks out again in Hamburg ~ a refuge in Aschaffenburg, in the Black Forest ~ Marie and Bülow set out for Cairo in search of a 'miracle-cure' ~ death of Bülow in Cairo, February 12, 1894 ~ an autopsy is performed the following day ~ the body is returned to Hamburg and lies in state at the city's St. Michaelis Church ~ the funeral service, in which Gustav Mahler participates ~ Mahler is inspired to complete his *Resurrection* Symphony ~ last farewells and cremation at Ohlsdorf ~ Bülow's second will ~ Marie von Bülow's final years in Berlin ~ she edits Bülow's letters.

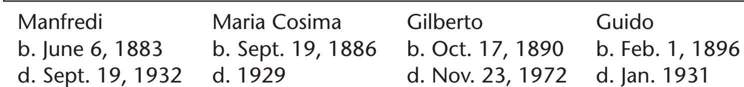
Bülow's Family Tree

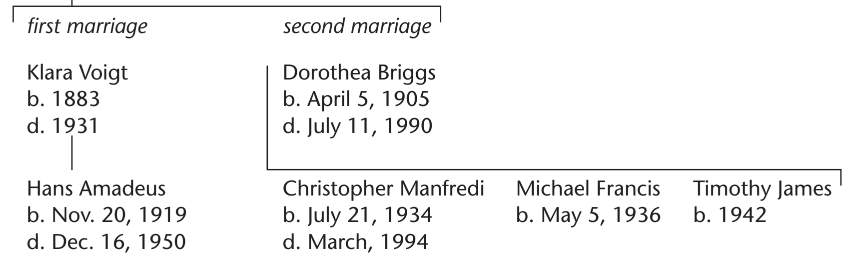






Hans von Bülow could trace his lineage back to the thirteenth century. According to the 'family book', compiled in 1858 by his father's cousin Paul von Bülow, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Prussian army, the founder of the line was the knight Gottfried von Bülow, who was known to be alive in the year 1231. This more remote part of the family tree may be found in RHB.





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Prologue

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From Alpha to Omega

From Alpha to Omega, he is Music personified.
—Franz Liszt[1]

In Art there are no trivial things.
—Bülow[2]

I

Hans von Bülow once arrived in a small German town to give a piano recital. He was informed by the somewhat nervous organizers that the local music critic could usually be counted on to give a good review, provided that the artist first agreed to take a modestly priced lesson from him. Bülow pondered this unusual situation for a moment, and then replied, 'He charges such low fees he could almost be described as incorruptible'. On another occasion Bülow got back to his London hotel after dark. As he was climbing the dimly lit staircase, he collided with a stranger hurrying in the opposite direction. 'Donkey!' exclaimed the man angrily. Bülow raised his hat politely, and replied, 'Hans von Bülow'![3]

Volumes could be filled with the wit and wisdom of Hans von Bülow, and the biography that follows teems with examples. His banter was woven into the very weft and weave of his complex personality. He had, moreover, the enviable gift of instant retort. A gentleman eager to be seen in his company once observed Bülow taking a morning stroll. He overtook the great musician, but was unsure of how to introduce himself. Finally he thought of something to say. 'I'll bet you don't remember who I am.' 'You just won your bet', replied Bülow, and walked on. Equally withering were Bülow's observations on the follies of everyday life. Having

1. WLLM, p. 397.
2. *Weimarer Zeitung,* issue of December 16, 1880.
3. These and other Bülow anecdotes have come down to us in a variety of forms and from a variety of sources. The main ones will be found in BBLW, pp. 276–91; and BA, pp. 210–16.

heard that an eligible young bachelor wanted to improve his social station through marriage, he observed, 'It will never work. The young lady wants to do the same thing'.

On orchestral players Bülow could be particularly hard, especially if he felt that they were incompetent. He once berated a trombone player who was failing to deliver the right kind of sound, and told him that his tone resembled roast beef gravy running through a sewer. In Italy, during a rehearsal of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Bülow found himself confronted by a timpanist who simply could not master the intricate rhythms of the Scherzo. There comes a moment in this dynamic movement when the timpanist must break through with force, hammering out the basic rhythm of the main theme. Bülow strove with might and main to pound the pattern into the poor man's head, but to no avail. Suddenly the solution occurred to him. *Timp-a-ni! Timp-a-ni! Timp-a-ni!* he kept yelling. A smile of comprehension slowly dawned on the player's face, as he caught the rhythm of the one word with which he was familiar, and in no time at all he was playing the passage in the correct manner.[4]

Molto vivace

ff

Timp - a-ni! Timp - a-ni! Timp- a-ni! Timp - a-ni!

Bülow could also be severe on fledgling composers, particularly if he suspected that they wanted him to endorse their music. During a visit to Boston, in the spring of 1889, a local composer of modest talent sent Bülow one of his compositions and was bold enough to request an opinion. The piece was titled 'O Lord, hear my prayer!' Bülow glanced briefly at the manuscript and wrote beneath the title, 'He may, if you stop sinning like this!'[5]

A more famous case was that of Friedrich Nietzsche who, in the summer of 1872, was indiscreet enough to send Bülow an ambitious orchestral composition of his own—a 'Manfred Meditation'—for the conductor's critical appraisal. It was one of the philosopher's major blunders. He had witnessed Bülow conduct *Tristan* at the Munich Royal Opera House a few weeks earlier, and by way of thanking him for 'the loftiest artistic experience of my life' he had sent Bülow a copy of his newly published 'The Birth of Tragedy'. When he heard that Bülow was sufficiently impressed with the book to carry it with him everywhere, he was emboldened to

4. DMML, pp. 83–84. This concert took place in Milan, on December 4, 1870, as part of the city's Beethoven centennial festival.

5. *Boston Evening Transcript,* April 1, 1890, referring to Bülow's visit of the previous year.

send him his 'Manfred Meditation', doubtless hoping that the famous conductor would favour him with the usual assortment of platitudes that professionals are sometimes apt to offer distinguished amateurs. If Nietzsche thought to secure some fine phrases from Bülow, proffered by virtue of who he was, rather than by virtue of what the music itself was worth, he was sadly mistaken. Bülow looked at the 'Manfred Meditation' and knew that he must do his duty. He told Nietzsche that his score was 'the most unedifying, the most anti-musical thing that I have come across for a long time in the way of notes put on paper.' Several times, Bülow went on, he had to ask himself if it were not some awful joke. Having inserted the blade, Bülow now twisted the hilt and used Nietzsche's own philosophical precepts against him. 'Of the Apollonian element I have not been able to discover the smallest trace; and as for the Dionysian, I must say frankly that I have been reminded less of this than of the "day after" a bacchanal.' In brief, Nietzsche's score had produced in Bülow a hangover.[6]

Schadenfreude, too, was never far from the surface, for like most of us Bülow found occasional joy in the misfortune of others. Two of his orchestral players, named Schulz and Schmidt, were slowly driving him to distraction because of their evident inability to understand what he required of them. One morning he got to the rehearsal only to be met with the sad news that Schmidt had died during the night. 'And Schulz?' he inquired.

It would demean Bülow to be remembered by such anecdotes alone. He strode across the world of nineteenth-century music like a colossus. Bülow was music's great reformer. He set out to make a difference. His career, as we shall see, was epoch making, and it unfolded in at least six directions simultaneously. He was a renowned concert pianist; a virtuoso orchestral conductor; a respected (and sometimes feared) teacher; an influential editor of works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and above all of Beethoven, in the performance of whose music he had no rival; a scourge as a music critic, whose articles resembled the spraying of antiseptic on bacteria; and last, he was a composer whose music, while it is hardly played today, deserves a better fate than benign neglect. The tales with which his life has become encumbered can easily divert attention from his real achievements. When Bülow's second wife, the Meiningen actress Marie Schanzer, was invited to provide some recollections about her late husband for the influential journal *Die Musik,*[7] some sixteen years after his death, she at first declined, and for rather similar reasons. She knew what the world wanted to read, and instinctively realized that Bülow

6. Bülow's devastating critique may be consulted in full in BB, vol. 4, pp. 552–554.
7. Issue of January 1910/11, Heft 7, pp. 210–212.

the jester and provocateur, however entertaining these aspects of his personality might be to the general reader, must not obscure a musical legacy that was possibly unique.

II

Hans von Bülow's stature first impressed itself upon me while I was writing my three-volume biography of Franz Liszt. There, of course, he inevitably played a supporting role, first as Liszt's most gifted piano pupil and later as his son-in-law, the husband of Liszt's daughter Cosima. Bülow's life touched on Liszt's at a hundred different points, and it is hardly possible to tell the one story without reference to the other. Nonetheless, Bülow must needs remain on the sidelines as far as the story of Liszt's life is concerned. In the standard biographies of Richard Wagner his position is marginalized still further. Bülow dutifully enters Wagner's life just in time to help propel the composer onto the international stage by conducting unforgettable world premiers in Munich of *Tristan* (1865) and *Die Meistersinger* (1868). Meanwhile, as the whole world knows and is weary of being reminded, Wagner seduces Cosima, impregnates her with three of his children while she is still Bülow's wife, and encourages her to leave hearth and home to join him in Switzerland. Bülow then obligingly disappears from view, his mission accomplished. Yet this most musical of musicians went on to enjoy a remarkable career, quite independent of those of Liszt and Wagner, from both of whom he broke free.

It has been well said that we burn a page of history even as we read it. To Hans von Bülow that observation applies with peculiar force. So much that was once known and admired about him has been forgotten, his narrative consigned to the ashes of the past. Until now there has never been a full-scale biography of Bülow in English. The present book not only fills the void, but presents much that is new.

If we had to find a single phrase to sum up Bülow's exceptional career it would surely be 'The pursuit of excellence'. All his joys and all his sorrows flowed from this primary goal. Excellence achieved was a day of rejoicing. Excellence denied was a day of sorrow and even of retribution, both for himself and for others. He knew that in order to better the future he must disturb the present. That disturbance forms one of the more graphic aspects of his story.

We remarked that Bülow's career unfolded in several directions simultaneously. Before turning to the main narrative it would be helpful to review them here.

III

Bülow came to be regarded as the greatest classical pianist of his time, renowned for his fidelity to the score. His creed was never in doubt. The

role of the performer was to be the servant of the composer, not his master. Today such a view is commonplace, but it was not commonplace in Bülow's time. Bach and Beethoven dominated his repertoire, but he also played a lot of music by Chopin, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Liszt, and in later years much Brahms.[8] When Bülow confronted a musical masterpiece he believed that he was in the presence of greatness. And he expected his listeners to share his sense of reverence. When they did not, he chastised them. Like the prophets of old, the interpreter was a chosen one, there to be ushered into the presence of God in order to take back the Word to the people. Nor is the biblical analogy inappropriate, for Bülow himself was always making them. His aphorism 'In the beginning was rhythm' is an obvious modification of the opening verse of the book of Genesis. He once described Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues as the Old Testament of music, and Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas as the New. To which observation he added, 'We must believe in both'.[9] And in an interview that he gave to *The Etude,* he observed, 'I believe in Bach the father, Beethoven the son, and in Brahms the holy ghost of music'.[10] The abandon and excess that sometimes characterized the playing of his great rival Anton Rubinstein, with its self-indulgent departures from the text, was for him a form of blasphemy—as if the Bible itself was being used to justify a personal opinion. He believed that no performance could be as perfect as the work it interpreted. For the performer, Parnassus must always be just beyond reach.

The only two pianists in the second half of the nineteenth century with whom Bülow could be compared were Carl Tausig and Anton Rubinstein. (Liszt had retired from the concert platform in 1847, at the height of his powers.) Tausig died young, and Bülow's fine obituary notice of the Polish virtuoso testifies to the high regard in which he held him. A year before Tausig's demise, in fact, Bülow heard him perform privately in Berlin and was stunned. He confided to his Italian pupil Giuseppe Buonamici, 'Tausig is surely the greatest pianist in the world—he has attained the most ideal perfection that I ever imagined'.[11] Rubinstein falls into a different category. He was seen as Bülow's great contender, his nemesis even, and comparisons were constantly being made between them. Their performing styles, to say nothing of their platform personalities, were quite dissimilar. Rubinstein ambled onto the platform like a great bear. Bülow appeared on stage rapidly, 'like someone afraid that the bank will close before he can make his deposit'.[12] Bülow complained that 'Rubinstein

8. The full extent of Bülow's vast repertoire, both as a pianist and as a conductor, may be seen in HMIB, pp. 458–515.

9. BAS (part 2), p. 273.

10. Issue of May 1889, p. 73.

11. BC, unpublished letter dated June 26, 1870.

12. *Chicago Times,* February 6, 1876.

Bülow at the piano. A silhouette by Hans Schliessmann.

can make any number of errors during a performance and nobody is disturbed. If I make a single mistake, it will be noticed immediately by everyone in the audience, and the effect will be spoiled'.[13] The observation was well founded. Rubinstein was described during his celebrated tour of America as a storm-king at the piano, riding the instrument as he would a war-charger. His errors in technique were concealed beneath a thunder of sound, or else atoned for by the superb eloquence of his expression. Bülow was exactly the opposite—a precise, careful, uncompromising, studious technician. He was the Swiss watchmaker of pianists. The jewelled perfection of his playing was a thing to behold. Everything was so tightly sprung that he could not afford to make an error.[14]

But the comparison runs deeper than that. Rubinstein and Bülow represented the twin archetypes of piano playing which remain with us today. They are best described as the 'Dionysian' and the 'Apollonian'.[15]

13. MMML, p. 238.

14. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who attended Bülow's recitals in Scotland, made a similar distinction in his memoirs. 'Rubinstein could at times behave like a whirlwind; Bülow impressed by a brilliant technique, but even more by the surgeon-like skill with which he laid bare the composer's intentions . . .' MMN, p. 88.

15. Dionysius and Apollo, the gods of fertility and intellectual organization respectively, have often been invoked to describe the opposite sides of human nature. The one represents through his Bacchanalian revels the passionate side of humanity; the other represents the supreme authority in matters of intellectual organization, his notable interests being archery, medicine—and music.

It was said that unless one had heard Rubinstein, one could not appreciate Bülow; that unless one had heard Bülow, one could not esteem Rubinstein. The one served as a foil for the other. With Rubinstein the text was the starting point. It served as an entrance into a world of imagination, in which the performance was borne aloft on the wings of fantasy, constrained only by the mood of the moment and the taste of the player. The electricity generated by Rubinstein's recitals was partly due to the unexpected, which lay in wait for the audience (and possibly for Rubinstein, too) at every touch and turn.

For Bülow the unexpected was anathema. Such was his respect for the composer that his goal was to reproduce the text down to the smallest detail. He would have agreed with Stravinsky that to violate the letter was to violate the spirit. He once said, 'Learn to read the score of a Beethoven symphony *accurately* first, and you will have found its interpretation'.[16] Bülow's idea of perfection was to play with such clarity that if the performance were to be taken down from dictation the result would conform in every respect to the printed score. Since such an ideal is beyond the reach of most mortals, the pursuit of perfection for Bülow consisted in reducing the distance, however short, that separated sight from sound. And he would have argued that his was by far the harder task, as indeed it was. By the very nature of the difficulty, in fact, Bülow knew that he could never rest content.

Eduard Dannreuther used the words 'passionate intellectuality' to describe Bülow's playing, and they have often been quoted. Others found it cold and devoid of imagination. Clara Schumann called it 'wearisome', disliking Bülow's analytical approach to music that she herself played with distinction. During his fabled American tour of 1875–1876 the critic of *The Music Trade Review* longed for a false note, such as Rubinstein and even Liszt were known to strike. But Bülow rarely obliged his audience with such a symptom of vulnerability. Seated at the piano his posture was restrained. He was memorably described by Richard Strauss, his acolyte and admirer, as 'marble from the wrists up'. Bülow had small hands, and could hardly stretch beyond an octave—providing yet another instructive example to pianists that nimbleness and dexterity may yet compensate for a small grasp.[17]

Bülow's ability to sight-read was also something to behold. He was completely at home when confronting a full orchestral score, replete with its transposing instruments and a medley of clefs spread across twenty staves or more. Wagner was amazed when he witnessed Bülow play *prima*

16. SRR, p. 121.

17. The casts of Bülow's hands, made during his lifetime, are preserved in the Bülow archives of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek. See the photograph reproduced on p. 339.

vista from the pencil sketches of the composer's still-unpublished opera *Siegfried*. He kept peering over Bülow's shoulder, while Bülow, his eyes glued to the page, kept exclaiming 'Colossal!' 'Unique!' 'Fit for the next century!'[18]

Bülow was one of the first pianists to devote an entire recital to one composer—Bach, Chopin, and above all Beethoven, whose last five sonatas were regularly presented by him during a single evening. Even more striking was the great Beethoven Cycle that he began to present in public around 1886, in which he played all the important sonatas and sets of variations, from the A major Sonata, op. 2, no. 2, right through to the *Diabelli* Variations, across four consecutive evenings. And everything was performed from memory, an important point to which we propose to return. Largely forgotten today is that Bülow was the first pianist to devote an entire recital to the music of Brahms. Such a proposal was at first considered dubious, even by Brahms, but Bülow overcame the opposition and achieved a conspicuous success. Bülow was the thinking man's pianist and he came to prominence at a time when the concert platform stood in danger of being taken over by a generation of 'light entertainers'—Leopold de Meyer, Louis Gottschalk, and (later) Vladimir de Pachmann among them—who laced their programmes with paraphrases of popular operas and potpourris of favourite melodies. With this sort of programme the mature Bülow would have nothing to do. The care that he took in creating his recitals and orchestral concerts, especially in his later years, is still a model that can be followed with profit today. He understood that a good programme, like a good piece of music, is greater than the sum of its parts, that each piece could and should throw light on the others. In an age when many programmes lasted for three hours or more, and consisted in the main of a smorgasbord of pieces put together on a whim, Bülow's concerts became memorable for their musical logic. The individual pieces were like members of one family, bound together by biography, history, genre, and sometimes by their key-schemes—golden threads that ran from one composition to the next.

Bülow's piano technique was obtained and kept up at great physical expense. It was nothing for him to practise for five or six hours a day while preparing for a concert tour. Bernard Boekelmann expressed it well when he pointed out that 'at the piano Bülow was never free . . . his mental organization was inflexible . . . he was rigid in mind and body'.[19] This

18. That was in August 1857, when Bülow and Cosima visited Wagner in Zurich. For Wagner's account of the visit see WML, p. 669; also MCW(2), p. 29.

19. BRAB, p. 502. Boekelmann, an admirer of Bülow, was a Dutch pianist and teacher who is chiefly remembered for his unique editions of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues and the Two-Part Inventions, in which he prints the different voices in contrasting colours, to indicate the part-writing, an idea worthy of Bülow himself.

stood in such marked contrast to the fire, dash, and freedom of his conducting that it led many to say that the orchestra, not the piano, was his natural instrument.

IV

Bülow was, in fact, the first virtuoso conductor. It was his work with the Meiningen Court Orchestra, in the 1880s, that allowed him to claim this title. The story of how he took a small forty-eight-piece orchestra, and fashioned it in his own image, has entered the history books. That part of his narrative, at least, has not turned to ashes. At Meiningen, Bülow the conductor emerged as an extension of Bülow the pianist. After rigorously rehearsing the orchestra on a daily basis for three months, Bülow had the ensemble play all nine Beethoven symphonies from memory. He then took the orchestra on tour. The capital cities of Berlin and Vienna had never witnessed such discipline in an orchestra, and it made them look to their laurels. When the entire string section played Bülow's orchestral arrangement of Beethoven's Grosse Fuge from memory, standing up, audiences were astonished. But that was before ten of the violins returned to the stage and played Bach's unaccompanied Chaconne from memory, in unison. Bülow would doubtless have justified such radical demands by observing that he was not asking the players to accept anything that he himself was unwilling to do.[20]

Some of the best descriptions of Bülow at rehearsal we owe to Richard Strauss, who became Bülow's assistant conductor in Meiningen in 1884. 'The gracefulness with which he handled the baton', wrote Strauss, 'the charming manner in which he used to conduct his rehearsals—instruction frequently taking the form of a witty epigram—are unforgettable; when he suddenly turned away from the rostrum and put a question to the pupil reading the score, the latter had to answer quickly if he were not to be taunted with a sarcastic remark by the master in front of the assembled orchestra'.[21]

Nor was Strauss alone in his admiration of Bülow. Conductors as diverse as Bruno Walter, Gustav Mahler, and Walter Damrosch witnessed the passion and fire he could draw from an orchestra, and they wrote about it. So did other musicians, including composers Alexander Mackenzie, Charles Villiers Stanford, and above all Tchaikovsky—whose bold

20. Bülow's reforms often caught the attention of the press. A typical article in the *Boston Musical Herald* informed its readers that 'Hans von Bülow is continually making innovations on the customs of conductors. Not satisfied with requiring members of the orchestra perfectly to memorize their parts throughout, he is now training them so to observe marks of tempo and expression as to be able to play satisfactorily without the guidance of the conductor's baton.' Issue of January 1885, p. 6.

21. SRR, pp. 120–121.

letter in support of Bülow deserves to be better known.[22] Felix Weingartner was deeply impressed when he first witnessed Bülow conducting the Meiningen Orchestra in Eisenach. Later he became one of Bülow's severest critics, accusing him of self-aggrandizement and of having done damage by creating 'a lot of little Bülows', those aspiring conductors who aped the choreography of their hero while not possessing a sliver of his talent. 'Sensation-mongering in music began with Bülow', Weingartner wrote caustically in his widely read treatise *On Conducting*.[23] These remarks, as we now know, were written in a spirit of revenge. They were calculated to damage Bülow, and we shall eventually come to understand that they arose from autobiographical considerations.[24]

We may safely leave the last word with Liszt's pupil Frederic Lamond, who had also studied with Bülow and was intimately acquainted with the European scene from the 1880s up to World War II. 'He was the greatest conductor who ever lived—not even Toscanini approaching him', Lamond wrote. 'I have seen and heard them all. No one, Nikisch, Richter, Mahler, Weingartner, could compare with him in true warmth of expression, which is the soul and substance of all art'.[25]

Bülow's appointment as artistic director of the recently formed Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, in 1887, garnered international acclaim both for him and for the city. Within five years he raised what was at that time a modest group of players in search of leadership to an ensemble of world stature. There were many ear-witnesses to what Bülow accomplished in Berlin, and we have devoted substantial portions of our narrative to those golden years. His Berlin audiences packed the old Philharmonie to capacity, for they understood that they were witnessing history. Bülow's public rehearsals, and his postconcert speeches, which were filled with the wittiest observations, sent everyone home in anticipation of the next concert. On the podium Bülow was a figure of enormous authority, bouncing with energy. His arm gestures were wide, and his baton described the most eloquent arcs, bringing the entire ensemble into its orbit. He was described as having 'a singing baton'. His body would sway back and forth as he attempted to capture that most elusive quality called *tempo rubato* (elusive, that is, to orchestras). Attending to the shape of every phrase, Bülow would dart here and there, piercing the players with

22. The Paris *Figaro,* issue of January 13, 1893. See also TLF, p. 529.

23. WMC, pp. 22–23; and WBR, p. 163.

24. Weingartner's observations had an unfortunate influence on both David Ewen (EMB) and Gunther Schuller (SCC), in their respective books on conductors and conducting. Both authors seem unaware that Weingartner held two irreconcilable opinions about Bülow, one before January 1887 and one afterwards. The significance of that date, which represented a dramatic turning point in the personal relationship between Weingartner and Bülow, is dealt with at length on pp. 364–66.

25. LM, p. 43.

his gaze and drawing from them music of deep intensity. His mental equipment for a conductor was complete. His ear was infallible, as was his memory, which had no boundary line.

Bülow's memory. All roads lead to this topic, and it would be negligent not to touch on it here. It was a gift of nature and had been his from childhood. He had the ability to imprint on his memory whole pages of a musical score that he had seen but once, and reproduce them at the piano. This has always been a rare possession, and there is probably no one in the profession of music today who can lay claim to it, which is why it provokes disbelief. Even Toscanini's well-known ability to recall orchestral scores in detail pales by comparison. Among the many anecdotes that have come down to us, one that can do duty for the others was recorded by Bülow's admirer, the Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford.

During a concert tour of Britain, Stanford tells us, Bülow encountered the Irish composer George Osborne opposite Lamborn Cock's old music shop in Bond Street, London. Bülow remarked that he was about to leave for Brighton where he was to play a recital that same evening. 'Of course, you are going to play something of Sterndale Bennett's?' remarked Osborne. 'Why?' queried Bülow. 'Because it is his birthday', retorted Osborne. 'I don't know anything of Bennett's,' observed Bülow, 'tell me something'. 'We are at his publisher's door', replied Osborne. 'Come in and choose for yourself'. After rummaging through various items, Bülow selected Bennett's *Three Musical Sketches,* op. 10: 'The Lake', 'The Mill Stream', and 'The Fountain'. He then left the shop, went to the railway station, and learnt them on the train journey from London to Brighton. That same evening he played them from memory.[26]

Whatever the score, and whatever its complexity, Bülow rarely had a note of music in front of him, not merely at the concerts but more impressively at the rehearsals as well. He usually knew better than the players what was on the printed page before them, and sometimes better than the composer too. He was once rehearsing an orchestral piece of Liszt, in Liszt's presence, when Liszt stopped him with the observation that a certain note should have been played *piano*. 'No', replied Bülow, 'it is

26. SPD, pp. 263–264. Because this account of Bülow's memory, as told by Osborne, struck Stanford as being so extraordinary, he searched for someone who had actually witnessed Bülow walk onto the platform in Brighton that evening without any printed notes before him, as opposed to someone who had merely seen Bülow buying the scores in a London music shop earlier in the day. He found a witness whom he identified as 'a musician, the late Dr. Sawyer', a resident of Brighton who had attended the concert and confirmed that Bülow had played everything from memory. The most likely time for this concert to have taken place would have been towards the end of April 1873, during Bülow's first visit to England. Sterndale Bennett's birthday fell on April 13, more than a week before Bulow arrived in the country, so Osborne's own memory of the incident was not entirely reliable. Stanford was wise to subject the matter to more careful scrutiny.

sforzando'. Liszt suggested that Bülow should look at the score, which was duly produced. It turned out that Bülow was right. The orchestra began to applaud and in all the excitement one of the brass players lost his place, creating further uncertainty. 'Look for a B-flat in your part' said Bülow, who had once more thrown the score aside. 'Five measures further on I wish to begin'.[27]

One thing remains to be said, for it is the bane of orchestras everywhere. Few are the players who actually enjoy their work, who draw from it that spiritual satisfaction that lured them to music in the first place. From childhood they labour to conquer the technical difficulties posed by their instruments, and eventually learn to express their artistic selves through them, only to discover that the thing they have come to treasure most—their musical individuality—is the one thing not required of an orchestral player. This surrender of self, this loss of musical identity for the good of the group, is a trauma from which the player may never recover. Whatever individual impulses remain are quickly suppressed by the conductor, as he strives to impose his own view of the music on everybody else. And this view changes as each visiting conductor does his best to obliterate the interpretations left by his predecessors. In such a depressing context, the player becomes part of an ever-changing soundscape, so to say, which is never quite his own, and which may even have a compulsory visual component attached to it—with all the strings bowing together, and all the winds breathing together, a picture-perfect image redolent of soldiers on the parade ground.

By the same token, few are the conductors who are able to convince the player of the rightness of their view, and so inspire them that they draw the best from them. Conversion, not compulsion, seems to be the key. One thinks of Furtwängler and of Beecham, of Bruno Walter and of Leopold Stokowski, but the list is painfully short. To this roll call we must add the name of Bülow, whose players in the Meiningen and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras came to identify so completely with his world of sound that they willingly played as one. Of course there were conflicts, as the pages that follow amply demonstrate. But the rank and file were won over. It is sufficient for us to recall that when Bülow resigned from the Berlin Philharmonic, his players signed a petition urging him to stay, and referred to him as 'our great teacher'.

V

Teaching, in fact, was one of Bülow's lifelong activities, although he came to detest institutionalized instruction. When he was only twenty-five years old he was appointed head of the Piano Department of the Stern

27. BRAB, p. 502.

Conservatory of Music in Berlin (taking the place of the renowned pedagogue Theodor Kullak), a position he held for nine years. Later, at the behest of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, and in collaboration with Richard Wagner, Bülow took charge of the fledgling Royal Music School in Munich, and helped to draw up its first curriculum. It was to his summer masterclasses at the Raff Conservatory in Frankfurt, however, that an international cast of pupils flocked. They included Frederic Lamond, Vianna da Motta, Giuseppe Buonamici, Laura Kahrer, and Theodor Pfeiffer, all of whom left vivid accounts of those days. Bülow, they all agreed, was a teacher to be revered, but also feared.

Unlike Liszt, who cast a benevolent ray of light on all his pupils, however poorly they played, Bülow took it to be his mission to drive the worst of them out of the profession. The concert hall of the Raff Conservatory was filled with young hopefuls each summer. Bülow was fond of making little speeches from the platform, filled with paradox and humour. 'Piano playing is very difficult', he warned his audience. 'First we have to learn to make all the fingers equal. Then later, in playing music with several independent voices, we have to learn to make them unequal again. That being so, it seems best not to practice the piano at all—and that is the advice I give to many'.[28] Because he could not abide incompetence, those pupils who played badly through sheer nervousness, or were simply not prepared, had reason to fear his sarcasm. He once listened to a young lady and, with the whole class looking on, turned to her with a deep bow and the caustic comment, 'I congratulate you, Mademoiselle, upon playing the easiest possible passages with the greatest possible difficulty'. To another pupil, whose Beethoven playing lacked contrast, he remarked drily, 'If you play the second bar exactly like the first, the public will say, "Good God, he is practicing!"'[29]

VI

Closely linked to Bülow's activity as a pedagogue was his work as an editor. He understood that a deep study of a musical text is as important for the performer as the study of fingerprints is for the detective. The printed page was like the bars of a prison behind which the composer held his muse captive. Those bars had to be removed. His editions of Bach, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and above all of Beethoven show the great detective at work. Every page of his edition of the Beethoven sonatas, for example, contains footnotes and commentaries on the text that are both exhaustive and exhausting. And they have but one purpose: to help the player release the ghost that the composer has imprisoned inside the machine.

28. PSB, p. 14.
29. ZMB, p. 37.

Bülow's editions do not meet the requirements of modern scholarship. They betray their time and place, as for that matter do the editions of Liszt, Tausig, Klindworth, Busoni, Schnabel, and countless others who died before the Age of the Urtext was ushered in. Nor should we forget that they are performing rather than scholarly editions. Their chief fascination for us is that they illuminate Bülow's own interpretations. If they were to be published today, some enterprising publisher would doubtless suggest that they be accompanied by a CD, in which Bülow himself would give some practical illustrations at the keyboard. Because recordings were unavailable to him, his detailed verbal injunctions were the only substitute.

Bülow was also a critic who did not hesitate to dip his pen in vitriol in defence of things he thought worthwhile. His early articles in the Leipzig *Signale* often created mayhem. One or two of them—his fulminations against the soprano Henriette Sontag, for example, and his attacks against the British musical establishment—brought him notoriety, and even resulted in an occasional death threat. But they all served the same purpose. They reminded the public that 'in Art there are no trivial things'.

VII

Finally, what of Bülow the composer? In a brief note on Bülow's compositions, Frederick Niecks delivered an opinion from which posterity has scarcely wavered. 'So supremely eminent as an interpreter, both as a pianist and as a conductor, Bülow was sterile as a composer'.[30] That was a harsh judgement. There are more compositions than are generally supposed, although it is true that they are hardly ever played today. During Bülow's lifetime his Orchestral Fantasy *Nirwana,* and his incidental music to *Julius Caesar* were frequently to be heard. And works for solo piano, songs, chamber music, and choral music abound in his catalogue of works. His suite of piano pieces called *Il Carnevale di Milano,* op. 21, his Ballade for Piano, op. 11, and his *Mazurka-Fantasie,* op. 13 (dedicated to Cosima), are worth reviving. (A complete list of Bülow's compositions will be found in Appendix II to the present volume.) When Bülow himself was asked why he so rarely featured his own music in his programmes, he replied with uncharacteristic modesty that 'others have written much better things than mine'. Bülow was not the first musician to sacrifice his career as a composer in order to concentrate on promoting the works of others, but he may have been the most prominent. He saw his situation with clarity when he proposed the following device, which shows his name being supported by those of his three great contemporaries—Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner—whose music he spent a lifetime promoting at the expense of his own.

30. NPM, p. 481.

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VIII

As for Bülow the man, he was complex, difficult, always living on a knife-edge, and intolerant of much that he observed around him in humanity at large. He had no small talk. Normal conversation for Bülow took the form of debate. Disputation was the only way to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. And he would continue an argument for as long as it took, finally wearing down his interlocutor. He would have made a brilliant lawyer, a profession for which he was at first intended but soon abandoned. His sharp intelligence was placed instead in the service of music, a discipline which he spent a lifetime attempting to transform, wishing to rid it of incompetents and ne'er-do-wells wherever he found them. Bülow might well have said of himself, what the French statesman Lazare Carnot once said of Talleyrand, 'If he despised men so much, this is because he had studied himself so deeply'.

Bülow had a hasty tongue, and rarely bothered to varnish his remarks; he therefore made enemies who retaliated. Constance Bache, the English translator of some of his early letters, was not wrong to describe him as the 'best abused' musician of his time—with the exception of Wagner.[31] He was often asked to write his memoirs, but usually turned down the request with such ripostes as 'life is too short for reflection', or 'it is better to use such time for fresh work'.[32]

IX

Any discussion of Bülow the man raises a matter that cannot be allowed to go by default. It is impossible to read his letters without observing the vein of anti-Semitism that runs through them.

His correspondence is laced with mindless references to 'Jew-ridden Berlin', a 'Jewish conspiracy', and even distasteful mention of a 'Jew's greasy face' (this last being an observation about his one-time agent Julius Steinitz, who, in the 1870s, after their common expenses had been met, was extracting a usurious 25 percent commission from what remained). We call such language 'mindless' because in nineteenth-century Germany

31. BEC, p. ix.
32. BB, vol. 1, p. vi.

comments of this kind were part of the *lingua franca,* picked up and thrown about with abandon by the population at large.

There can be no reasonable reply to the observation that it is not the job of a modern biographer to thrust his head through the canvas of history and give whomever he finds back there a lesson in political correctness. It has been well said that the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there. This thorny topic has in any case been dealt with in commendable detail by Bülow's most recent German biographer Frithjof Haas, and it would be a pity to waste another word on it.[33] We are nonetheless obliged to raise a fundamental question: was Bülow simply reflecting the temper of the times or helping to create it? To put the matter bluntly, was he the ventriloquist or the dummy? Like hundreds of thousands of Europeans, and not just Germans, Bülow was a thoughtless mouthpiece for individuals with dangerous ideas.

A very good example of this was his readiness to sign the petition against the Jews drawn up by the anti-Semitic agitator Dr. Bernhard Förster (1843–1889), whose other claim to fame was that he was Nietzsche's brother-in-law. Förster was a schoolteacher and author. In 1880 he drew up a petition against the Jews in Germany, addressed to Chancellor Bismarck, which quickly acquired 250,000 signatures. It was titled 'Petition in der Judenfrage, an Fürst Bismarck', and was published in the *Berliner Bewegung.* German society, it warned, was being undermined by wave upon wave of Jewish immigrants who were crossing the German borders without restriction from Eastern Europe, and changing the fabric of the nation. Bülow signed it, along with all the others, but regretted having done so when he discovered that Wagner had declined Förster's request. In Cosima Wagner's Diary we learn: '[Wagner] reads aloud the ridiculously servile phrases and the dubiously expressed concern, "And I am supposed to sign that!" he exclaims'.[34] The best that can be said for Bülow's position in this sorry affair is that he tried to have his signature withdrawn, to no avail. Bismarck, incidentally, would have nothing to do with the petition.

Not long after signing Förster's appeal, Bülow went to Vienna and was asked about his action by his Jewish colleague, the publisher and concert promoter Albert Gutmann, who used to arrange occasional concerts for him in the imperial capital. Gutmann noticed that Bülow had included a group of Mendelssohn's 'Songs without Words' in one of his recitals, and challenged him: 'I heard that you signed the anti-Semitic petition in

33. HHB, pp. 312–322.
34. WT, vol. 2, p. 506.

Berlin. How come that with such a disposition you put Mendelssohn into your programme?' 'Very simple!' Bülow replied. 'Because Mendelssohn was a Jew—like Christ!'[35]

Bülow, in fact, was a perfect example of the great paradox that so often entangles individuals in possession of those supreme artistic and intellectual gifts that were his. While condemning Jews as a group, he enjoyed warm and vital friendships with individual Jewish intellectuals and artists, friendships in which one finds no trace of the abrasive utterances he reserved for Jews in general. The two contemporary pianists he most admired—Carl Tausig and Anton Rubinstein—were both Jews. Among conductors, the one for whom he reserved the greatest praise was Gustav Mahler. Above all violinists he esteemed Joachim, and was proud to share the concert platform with him. He was the great defender of Felix Mendelssohn, whom he had revered from his youth. He also appointed Jewish musicians to the Hamburg and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras, basing such appointments on merit. For the last fifteen years of his life he entrusted every aspect of his public career to Hermann Wolff, his Berlin-based Jewish agent, who became far more than a business colleague, but a family friend as well. In politics, one of his heroes was the left-wing socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, 'the Jew from Breslau', and a follower of Karl Marx. It was for Lassalle's 'German Workers Party' that Bülow composed a rousing anthem, to be sung at their rallies. And this raises a prospect of a somewhat different kind. If Bülow had been alive in Hitler's time, he would almost certainly have been sent to the gas chambers for his support of Lassalle and for his radical left-wing political views.

Were Bülow to revisit us today, he would surely marvel at the distance we have managed to place between ourselves and the prejudices of his time, and we suspect that he might want to argue with us about it. He would doubtless point out that long after his own demise, such luminaries as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charles Lindbergh, H. L. Mencken, Henry Ford, Ezra Pound, and Mark Twain[36]—the list is long—were uttering infractions far worse than the ones for which Bülow himself is properly brought before the bar of history, and he would be right to insist that they join him there, as indeed they have.

35. GAW, p. 16. Bülow was referring to the fact that Mendelssohn's father, Abraham Mendelssohn, had brought up his family of four children as Christians. They were baptised and received into the Protestant Church in 1816, the name 'Bartholdy' being affixed to their own, at the time of their conversion.

36. Mark Twain's essay 'Concerning the Jews' is widely interpreted as an anti-Semitic document, although he himself always denied it. It first appeared in *Harper's Monthly Magazine,* September 1899.

X

We do well to recall that for much of his life Bülow suffered from a variety of neurological symptoms which, while they did not succeed in diverting him from his chosen path, often resulted in friction with his fellow human beings, who usually had no idea of his physical tribulations. Yet there were times when to be in Bülow's company was to bask in the full nobility of a superior character. Toni Petersen, the daughter of the mayor of Hamburg, who knew Bülow well, put it best of all when she remarked ruefully, 'When one is friends with Bülow, one has wonderful moments but sorrowful years'.[37]

Descended from a distinguished military family in Germany, whose lineage can be traced back to the thirteenth century, personal discipline and the need to excel were instilled into Bülow from childhood. He spoke four modern languages—German, French, Italian, and English—and was well versed in the classics, writing both Greek and Latin. He was deeply read in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, whose pessimistic view of the world appealed to him. Optimism for Bülow was an impossibility, a preposterous principle on which to base one's life. 'Pessimism', he once observed, 'has made me more light-hearted, more philanthropic, more tolerant, more at ease, than that other absurd doctrine'.[38] He daily looked the world in the face and saw it for what it was: a ridiculous tragedy over which one has little control. For Bülow there was no promise of anything at the end of the difficult road that life had marked out for him. But, good Schopenhauerian that he was, he found redemption in one simple idea: it was not enough to have life, one must live it. And live it he did. Bülow packed so much activity into his relatively brief span of years, that there are times when the biographer can hardly keep pace with him. Nonetheless, the complex pleasures of his company make the journey well worthwhile.

37. S-WWW, p. 71.
38. BB, vol. 5, p. 75.

Bülow's Family Background

'All the Bülows are honourable'. From the Bülow family coat of arms.

On the morning of August 17, 1812, Napoleon's Grande Armée paused on its long march towards Moscow, and began a terrifying barrage of

artillery against the Russians defending the old city of Smolensk. The battle continued all day, and part of the next, and involved more than 110,000 soldiers. By nightfall the 'holy city', with its historic spires and golden domes, was on fire. Napoleon roused his exhausted equerry General Caulaincourt from his slumbers in order to admire the spectacle through his spy-glass. 'It's an eruption of Vesuvius!', exclaimed Napoleon. 'Is it not a fine sight?' 'It is horrible, sire', replied the general. 'Bah!' replied Napoleon. 'Remember, gentlemen, this adage of a Roman emperor: "the corpse of a dead enemy always smells good."'[1] At dawn the following day, as the first French scouts clambered over the shattered masonry and zigzagged their way along rubble-strewn streets littered with dead bodies, it was the smell that many of them remembered. The carnage had been appalling. In the Battle of Smolensk, the French lost 9,000 men, the Russians 11,000.

Among the wounded German officers was Baron Ernst von Bülow, a major in the Royal Saxon regiment fighting in support of Napoleon. He was decorated for valour, and was bestowed with the Royal Saxon Order of Henry from his own commanders and the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour from Napoleon. After the war he was pensioned off and lived in Dresden until his death in 1842. He was the grandfather of Hans von Bülow. Hans knew him well, and during his childhood he must often have listened enthralled as grandfather Ernst relived his military campaign under Napoleon. The Bülow family book describes Ernst as a man of 'punctuality and orderliness', qualities that remained with this professional soldier for life. 'The love for his princely house, the courteous behaviour of a nobleman towards the rest of mankind, and his goodness of heart, were recognized by all.'[2] Ernst had earlier married Dorothea von Kessinger, a widow, who brought to the marriage a castle at Eilenberg, which is where she gave birth to their three sons, only one of whom survived infancy. This was Eduard von Bülow, the father of Hans. He was born on December 17, 1803.

Destined by his soldier-father for a career in business, Eduard was put to work in various banking houses, but he found the experience so distasteful that he rebelled, and when he was only twenty-three he acquired a publishing business in which he invested money and still greater hopes. The venture failed and he enrolled at the University of Leipzig in order to study the classics. In 1828 he married Franziska Elisabeth Stoll, who was born in 1800, and took her back with him to live in Dresden. This marriage was an act of pure chivalry on Eduard's part. When he first met her, Franziska was trapped in an unhappy union to a Dresden banker named

1. CM, vol. 1, pp. 393–95.
2. BAB, p. 1.

Kastel. According to Du Moulin Eckart the twenty-five year old Eduard 'freed her from these unworthy bonds'—by methods that have not become part of the scholarly record.[3] We shall have more to say about Franziska presently.

In Dresden, Eduard pursued his preferred life of scholar, writer, and poet. The Bülow home became a meeting point for an important artistic and literary circle, which included Baron von Lüttichau (Intendent of Dresden's Royal Opera House) and his talented artist-wife Ida; Countess Pauline Bülow-Dennewitz and her daughter Louise; and Eduard's friend, the German romantic novelist Ludwig Tieck. Music played a conspicuous role on these occasions. Franziska was a good amateur pianist and she often took part in performances of chamber music with local players.

Eduard published a number of books that were well regarded in their day.[4] Perhaps his most colourful narrative was a biography devoted to his distant relative, the great military tactician Baron Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow (1757–1808), whose life reads like a novel, and ought one day to become the basis for one.[5] In his account of Heinrich's work Eduard wrote that 'given greater luck, Baron Heinrich might have earned the name of genius in his chosen profession of military theorist.'[6] Heinrich had joined the Prussian army in 1773 but resigned his commission in 1790 in order to travel to France, then in the turmoil of revolution, where he studied the battlefield tactics of the French and came to admire Napoleon. When he got back to Germany he devoted himself to his main work, 'Geist der neuern Kriegssystems' ('Spirit of the new system of warfare') (1799), which attracted attention. In 1805 he published two further books on battlefield tactics called 'Lehrfätze der Strategie' ('Practical rules of Strategy') and 'Neue Taktik der Neueren: wie sie sein sollte' ('Latest Tactics of the Innovator: how they should be'). Based on precise mathematical principles, Heinrich's theories attempted to transform warfare into an exact science. In these texts he laid down the rules of battle as if he were explaining a game of cricket, and illustrated his expositions with complex diagrams resembling a field of play, with shells taking the place of cricket-balls. All one had to do was to follow the rules of geometry and the war would be won. The trouble with such a 'choreography of a battlefield', as Heinrich's

3. MHB, pp. 19–20.

4. Among them are: 'Simplicissimus' (1836); 'Ein Fürstenspiegel' (1849); 'Der arme Mann von Tockenburg' (1852); and the first German translation of Alessandro Manzoni's patriotic novel 'I promessi sposi'.

5. The book is subtitled 'Military accounts and various writings of Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow, with a critical introduction by Eduard von Bülow and Wilhelm Rüstow' (1853). Eduard provided the biographical material, while Rüstow supplied the statistics. Eduard's greatest work remained unfinished at his death: a massive biographical lexicon of all the famous personalities of antiquity.

6. BRM, p. 1.

critics were quick to point out, is that you could not expect your adversaries to conform to it, and the law of unforeseen consequences would intervene. He had a somewhat arrogant attitude towards his peers and once declared, 'I am writing for posterity, not for my contemporaries. I do not like to cast my pearls before swine.'[7] Unfortunately for Heinrich his ideas were never taken up by the Prussian generals, perhaps because they suspected that they themselves might be the swine before whom he was reluctant to cast his pearls. During the Napoleonic campaign of 1805, Heinrich was accused of being implicated in a covert effort to raise money to help bring about a French invasion of England—a favourite idea of his, which he discussed too freely. An arrest warrant was issued by the Prussians, who went to his house but failed to find him there. They eventually located him 'in the arms of a young maiden who loved him',[8] and a criminal process was begun against him. He was declared insane (his battlefield tactics presumably being part of the evidence against him), handed over to the Russians, and died in prison in Riga, possibly as a result of ill-treatment by his captors. These and other stories about this Hoffmanesque character were often retailed within the Bülow family circle, and played a vibrant role in the development of young Hans's personality.

II

Before her marriage to Eduard, Franziska had lived for some years in the Leipzig home of her sister Henriette, who was twelve years her senior and married to Kammerrath Christian Gottlob Frege, the head of Leipzig's great banking house and a man of high social standing in the city.[9] Kammerrath Frege had powerful connections both to the Royal Saxon Court in Dresden and to the hierarchy of the Church. His political views were those of the conservative right, and the maintenance of social order was for him a primary duty. This patrician home was famous for its support of the arts. Among its distinguished visitors were writers, painters, and musicians, including Goethe, Herder and Auerbach, as well as Mendelssohn and Schumann. During the early years of their marriage the Freges lost several infant children to illness, and looked to Franziska to help them protect the welfare of those who remained. She became a surrogate mother to their son Woldemar, who in later life always praised his aunt Franziska

7. Ibid., p. 25.
8. Ibid., p. 37.
9. The venerable Frege banking house had been established in the 18th century by the head of the family, Gottlob Frege (1715–81), who had come into a sudden fortune when the German currency was de-valued. He had gone on to increase his family's wealth through his weaving and lace-manufactory, and was given the title 'Kammerrath' by the Saxon court for himself and his heirs in perpetuity. His sons later joined him in the banking business.

for her loyalty to him and for her devotion to the Frege family. After giving up this home, and settling down to married life with Eduard in Dresden, Franziska continued to visit the Frege family during the holidays, and often took her two small children Hans and his sister Isidora to meet their cousin Woldemar and his growing family in Leipzig.

Woldemar was twenty years older than Bülow, and by the time of these holiday visits (1840–45) he was a professor of law at Leipzig University. He had married the soprano Livia Gerhardt on her eighteenth birthday, and brought her into the Frege household, the newly-weds living in one part of the spacious dwelling and Woldemar's parents in another. This gifted singer had already appeared in prominent roles at the Leipzig Theatre and the Royal Opera House in Berlin. Mendelssohn thought highly enough of her to dedicate some of his songs to her. Livia even entertained thoughts of becoming a professional musician, but marriage and motherhood intervened, and she devoted much time to the welfare of their son Arnold. The influence of the Frege family on the young Bülow cannot be overestimated. We shall have reason to mention them frequently in the course of our narrative.

III

Despite its starry-eyed beginnings, the marriage of Eduard and Franziska was a turbulent one and ended in an acrimonious divorce when Bülow was nineteen years old. Eduard was an intellectual for whom the life of the mind was paramount. Franziska had a more passionate nature and could be abrasive when crossed, unable to compromise with those around her. She was, moreover, intensely religious, something that helped to alienate her from her free-thinking husband. When she was already eighty-four years old her implacable character forced her to renounce her Protestant religion, with some of whose tenets she had become disillusioned, and convert to Roman Catholicism.[10] More important than these religious differences were the political ones. Eduard was a social liberal, an opponent of the oppressive clerical and state parties then in power in Saxony. His political sympathies lay with the left wing reformers, who were springing up across Germany and clamouring for change. Franziska, forever loyal to the conservative views of the Frege family, found Eduard's position intolerable. It required one event of significance to rip the marriage apart, and that was provided by the Dresden Uprising of 1849, which found the couple on opposite sides. They parted company soon afterwards, and a Protestant divorce followed.

10. On January 28, 1884, Bülow wrote to his daughter Daniela, 'Tomorrow your grandmamma is to enter the Roman Catholic Church at Coblenz, which means that I have to send five hundred marks to the poor of St. John's parish. There's news for you.' (BNB, p. 616).