

THE NIGHTINGALE'S NEW NEST: A GLIMPSE INSIDE LILLI LEHMANN'S SUMMER VILLA

Rosamund Cole

Abstract

In 2015, the author was invited to visit a Villa in Scharfling am Mondsee that had belonged to the world-famous opera singer Lilli Lehmann, whose life and performance style were the focus of her PhD research. The Villa was preserved largely in its original state, as proven by photos discovered there, which showed Lehmann and her family enjoying it together. Objects and pictures found in the house are used along with extracts from Lehmann's diaries and correspondence between her and Victor Maurel, her intimate friend, to retell some of Lehmann's story including her relationship with the famous baritone. Focusing in particular on the time when Lehmann built this house, the article reveals some of the emotions beneath the surface of the family photographs and speculates that Lehmann may have given her husband the house as settlement to avoid a scandalous divorce. Some of the valuable works of art by painters such as the secessionist Carl Moll, Albin Egger-Lienz, Hans Volkmer and Bernhard Zickendraht as well as previously unknown portraits of the singer were discovered and identified by the author using accompanying documentation found in the Villa. These are also revealed in the article in photos taken by the architectural photographer Günter Wett, whose 2017 documentation of the house shows it in its unaltered condition.

Keywords: Lilli Lehmann, Villa Lehmann, Scharfling am Mondsee, Paul Kalisch, Hedwig Helbig, Hans Volkmer, Carl Moll, Peder Severin Krøyer, Salzburg Festspiele, opera, singing

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Biographical note

Rosamund Cole worked as a Senior Lecturer for Singing at Leeds College of Music before gaining her PhD from the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in 2018 (Supervisor: Prof. Richard Wistreich) supported by a full AHRC studentship. She has been invited as a guest lecturer at Royal College of Music, Detmold Musikhochschule, the RNCM and the Salzburg Festival Conference 2019. During her PhD she held a full AHRC Kluge Scholarship at the Library of Congress, Washington DC and was awarded a scholarship from the American Musicology Society to research the Lilli Lehmann House. Prior to academia, she worked as a full-time soloist for opera houses in Germany including die Bühnen der Stadt Köln, Staatstheater Darmstadt, Stadttheater Heidelberg and Theater Erfurt. She also worked for the National Theatre in Prague and Opera North, which sponsored her vocal training which she undertook at the National Opera Studio, London, and the Royal Northern College of Music.

Rosamund Cole and the editors of the Open Arts Journal are most grateful to Günter Wett for allowing publication of his photographs in this essay.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

THE NIGHTINGALE'S NEW NEST: A GLIMPSE INSIDE LILLI LEHMANN'S SUMMER VILLA

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Figure 8.1: Lilli Lehmann's lakeside house in Scharfling am Mondsee, Austria with her husband Paul Kalisch standing before it, c. 1900–03, from an old photo album found in the Villa. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Lilli Lehmann's summer villa, still known as 'Villa Lehmann' (or Scharfling 5), is a large, fin-de-siècle house built on the shores of the Mondsee, 30 km east of Salzburg, Austria, in the mountainous lake district of the Salzkammergut (Fig. 8.1). The villa was built in 1899 for the internationally famous opera singer Lilli Lehmann (1848–1929). In 2015, I discovered it preserved in a relatively unchanged condition, full of the original contents. In the face of preparations for its sale, and in collaboration with the International Stiftung Mozarteum (ISM) and Professor Eva Rieger, I succeeded in procuring a large proportion of the contents for

the ISM Bibliotheca Mozartiana and Mozart Archive in Salzburg.¹ In 2017, with support from Professor Rieger, I arranged for the whole house to be professionally photographed. Juxtaposing these images taken of the villa from 2017 with those taken more than 100 years before, this article examines the significance of

¹ The themes discussed in this essay are further detailed, alongside other aspects of Lehmann's work as a performer, writer and director, in the forthcoming PhD publication (Cole, 2024).

the house in relation to the singer's personal life and artistic career, and the role the house played in the private drama that was unfolding for Lehmann in her relationship with her husband, the opera singer Paul Kalisch, and his relationship with their niece, Hedwig Helbig.

Lilli Lehmann (Fig. 8.2), still famous in opera circles today, was in her own time a household name. She was dubbed the 'Berlin Nightingale' (Lehmann, 1914, p.439) and was viewed widely as the greatest soprano in the world, working regularly with the famous composers of her time including Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and Richard Strauss (Andro, 1907, p.4).² She built her stellar 55-year career in Germany, made her fortune in the USA and left her mark for posterity in Austria, in particular in Salzburg, spending her money not only on building the villa there, but also by helping make Salzburg the 'Mozart city' that tourists flock to see today.



Figure 8.2. Franz Xaver Setzer, Lilli Lehmann aged 72, 1920. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

2 There are numerous descriptions of Lehmann in this vein such as Therese Rie, recycling Mendelssohn's quote about Jenny Lind in relation to Lilli Lehmann: 'She is one of the greatest artists that I have experienced; the greatest that I know' (in Andro, 1907, p.4), similarly Paul Gerhardt: 'The audience, must without exception have realised, that this is one of the greatest, most exquisitely perfect singing artists of our time' (1893, 12. January). (Translations by the author).

At the time she built the villa, Lehmann was reaching the pinnacle of her career as a professional opera singer, being already hugely famous in Europe and the USA. She had been singing professionally almost without pause since the age of 16 (Lehmann, 1865). Brought up in genteel poverty by her mother, Marie Loew, who taught her to sing, she and her sister, Marie Lehmann (1851–1931), earned and managed all their own money and singing careers, both rising to international fame and gaining an exceptional level of financial autonomy for women in the nineteenth century (Lehmann, 1896).³ Aged 22, Lilli Lehmann was awarded a secure position at the Berlin Court Opera and at 27 was honoured with the title of Royal Court Singer in Berlin and thus a guaranteed pension on retirement. She joined Wagner for his first festival performance of the Ring Cycle in Bayreuth. By the age of 30, she had already sung 143 roles and given 1,030 performances of operas and numerous concerts, including for royalty, both in Germany and abroad.⁴ For example, in 1878 she was invited as the star soloist at the court of the Swedish king.

In the ensuing years, Lehmann conquered the operatic world on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1885, she daringly gave up her secure contract in Berlin in favour of several years on concert tours in America supported by the influential businessman William Steinway and also singing on a 'star contract' for the Metropolitan Opera, New York. The Met's opera pay ledgers for 1886 show her to have been the most highly paid artist there that year, performing mainly the most notable Wagner roles such as Brünnhilde (*Die Walküre*) and Isolde (Fig. 8.3).⁵

3 Lehmann, was the highest paid singer on the ledgers at the Metropolitan Opera in 1886, earning \$16,800 in the accounts examined, only a fraction of her entire salary for that season. (Handwritten scraps of paper found in her diary show that in 1896 she was paid \$1,250 for Isolde at the Metropolitan Opera and \$1,495 for a recital. In her letters to Maurel in 1900 she related that she would expect approximately 3000 marks per concert. She was however generous with her money and aware of the financial discrepancy between her own pay and that of her husband, she provided extra financial support for her husband, setting up a pension fund for him in 1896 noting this in her diary on 13 February that year.

4 These figures are calculated by the author using the Repertoire list, begun in 1865, that Lehmann kept for recording details of all her performances throughout her career.

5 Metropolitan Opera Archive, New York, Account Ledgers (1886, 73, p.89) show Lehmann was paid \$16,800, more than all the other performers listed in the Met account ledgers at this time.



Figure 8.3: Lehmann as 'Isolde' in the Covent Garden (London) production of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1884, aged 36, just before she went to America to make her fortune in a 'star contract' that was frequently repeated until she finally retired from the USA in 1902. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Writing to Victor Maurel in 1899, Lehmann called herself a woman of iron' and indeed proved herself to be a determined woman of action (1899a, fol.12).⁶ A previously unknown early portrait of Lehmann suggests a refusal to conform, in that it shows a rather sceptical-looking young woman with folded arms that seem to suggest she was photographed reluctantly (Fig. 8.4). In later life, she charmed and impressed those around her with her intelligence and wit, but also infuriated some with her forthright manner, success, power and foresight. During her career, Lehmann broke the societal norms for women in numerous ways, not

6 'I still had to suffer because everyone said: "Ah what a breath of a voice, ah how she has lost", and all these other good things, but I was a woman of iron, I stayed my path and little by little the mixed voice entered [started to function] and I was saved' ('J'avais encore à subir que tout le monde disait ah quel souffle de voix, ah comme elle a perdu – et toutes ces bonnes choses, mais j'étais femme comme le fer, je marchais ma route, et peu à peu, la voix mixte entrait et j'étais sauvée' (Lehmann, 1899a, fol.12).

least in her catalogue of achievements for the city of Salzburg. She was one of the main driving forces behind the fundraising for the new Mozarteum Conservatoire in Salzburg. To this end, she organised regular Mozart performances resulting in the annual *Mozart Feste* for which she was artistic director 1902–14, and created a proto-Salzburg opera festival, more than a decade before Max Reinhardt adopted the project. Lehmann was also the main donor who enabled the purchase of Mozart's birthplace for the city of Salzburg as well as the Zauberflöten-Häuschen (the wooden pavillion in which Mozart is said to have completed and rehearsed parts of his opera *Die Zauberflöte*).



Figure 8.4: Lilli Lehmann at about 18 years old, undated, c.1867. Previously unknown photo portrait of Lilli Lehmann discovered by the author in the attic of the Lehmann Villa in 2015. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Lehmann was a pioneer in many other areas, including being one of the earliest artists to make commercially successful recordings (Lehmann, 1906/7–97). Beside her work as a singer, she was also one of the earliest female opera directors and the first in Salzburg. In 1920, in conjunction with the start of the new Salzburg Festival run by Max Reinhardt, Lehmann published a detailed account of her 1910 production of *Don Giovanni*, perhaps asserting her position as having established the original Mozart Feste that had preceded the Festspiele (Lehmann,

1920, pp.3–7, 21–3). Furthermore, unconventionally for a woman at this time, she published several books and authored often controversial articles outspokenly criticising current fashions in staging and the attitudes of young singers to the profession. In her article 'Arti', for example, she roundly criticised Mahler and Roller's recent production of *Fidelio* (Lehmann, 1904–05). Her contribution to musical life, in particular in Salzburg, was widely recognised in her lifetime with several awards and international honorary fellowships. Despite her many contraventions of usual conventions for women, she succeeded in establishing herself as a central figure in the cultural establishment of Austria and Germany, her fame as such extending also to the USA, France and Britain.

Lehmann's success as an opera singer was mainly built on the patronage of the aristocracy and on social networking. Her diaries and autobiography show her awareness of this and are full of accounts of her contact with higher echelons of society, including, her stay with the Princess Marie of Wied in 1893, which is described in detail in her diary (Lehmann, 1894 fol. 10/01). The potential impact on Lehmann's social status and economic success was therefore an important consideration in her choice of location for the houses she built. Ten years before building her holiday home in Scharfling am Mondsee, Lehmann had managed – at great tax advantage – to secure three plots to build villas for herself and her sister in the prestigious new Grünwald district on the outskirts of Berlin, among the elite of the capital. Equally astute was her choice to build in Scharfling am Mondsee, in the Salzkammergut, the charming lake district area near to Salzburg, popular as a holiday destination for the established artistic community.

It was a ravishing and easily accessible location, just below the Schafberg mountain and on the edge of the Mondsee lake. There was a connecting steamboat at Scharfling across the lake to Mondsee town. Across a rough track was the villa's private bathing hut where swimmers could change and little wooden steps led them directly into the dark water of the 'lovely Mondsee' (Lehmann, 1914, p.438). Paul Kalisch's painting of the landscape around the villa (Fig. 8.5) shows its optimal position on the edge of the Mondsee, with the sparsely populated village of Scharfling, its pier just beyond and fields stretching back to the forest and mountains behind.

This quiet place was already full of happy personal memories for Lehmann and she had an established social circle there. Lehmann had first visited the



Figure 8.5: Paul Kalisch, *View of Scharfling am Mondsee*, date unknown, c.1900–12. Oil on wood. The painting is apparently based on a photograph in the album at the villa, suggesting that the photos may have been taken by Paul. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Mondsee lake when she was 29 years old, with her mother and sister. Years later, she set down her first impressions in her autobiography:

A true horn of plenty pours forth over me happy reminiscences at the name of this almost unknown little spot of earth. As early as 1878 Mamma, Riezl [Marie Lehmann, Lilli's sister], and I arrived there by accident. Distant from Salzburg about five hours by carriage, we found at the Mondsee a small, old inn frequented by peasants, famed for its good table, where just two Viennese families had stayed for many years alone, and where two remaining tiny rooms were kept ready for transients who ascended the Schafberg from there, at the foot of which lies Scharfling, a steamboat landing place ... so we remained at that little spot that ever pleased and made us more happy the longer we knew it, and in the neighbourhood of which so many dear friends lived.

(1914, pp.438–40)

Lehmann's choice of Scharfling am Mondsee for her villa was, however, also an advantageous financial investment. Like Grünwald, the Salzkammergut was a fashionable area for rich and cultured Austrians to spend their summers, in part due to the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I, whose court settled annually in Bad Ischl, 30 km southeast of Scharfling am Mondsee.

As a result, a new train line was built connecting Salzburg with Bad Ischl and Mondsee. Lehmann therefore chose to buy land at the foot of the hill where the train ran, just below the station at Scharfling so she could walk home from the station through the woods, after visiting Salzburg or Mondsee to attend or sing in performances.

Lehmann occasionally came into contact with members of the court there. In her autobiography she commented on her delight when, in 1878, she was recognised by royalty at Scharfling am Mondsee:

I met, also, at Scharfling, Archduke Rudolf, the heir to the Austrian throne, who arrived by steamboat with a large company to make the ascent of the Schafberg, from which one enjoys a glorious view of the Austrian Alps. Heavily veiled, I was standing near the landing and was much astonished when I saw the Crown Prince walk straight up to me, addressing me with the words, 'Ah, the Berlin nightingale!' I was thunderstruck by his memory and affability, for, as far as I knew, the Crown Prince had seen me only once, in the distance, when he was in Berlin, at a Thursday court concert.

(1914, p.439)

Having grown up with almost nothing and worked so hard to earn her fortune and status, this recognition from royalty was another satisfying indicator that she had now 'arrived' in society.

Owning a holiday villa in this fashionable area consolidated Lehmann's social status and afforded plenty of opportunities to work and socialise with other friends in her artistic circle, including the composers Karl Goldmark and Ignaz Brüll, the music critic Eduard Hanslick, the actors Charlotte Wolter and Franz Tewele and the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal. There were also friends from the Vienna Secession, such as Gustav Klimt, whose house was on the nearby Lake Attersee, and Carl Moll and his stepdaughter Alma Schindler (who was later married to Lehmann's friend Gustav Mahler). Alma's diaries describe Lehmann socialising at her stepfather's parties in Vienna and paint an utterly different image of Lehmann to the stern matron depicted in paintings hanging at her Villa. This Lilli is the life and soul of the party: beautiful, irreverent, witty and vivacious. The parties are full of boisterous dancing, singing and kissing, suggesting the social life in the Salzkammergut may also have been anything but staid:

She [Lehmann] was the most boisterous of all. Between the main course and the dessert she carried the plates out and, seeing how much Klimt had eaten, she said: 'You know, Moll, the way your president stuffs himself! Enough for the whole Secession.' [...] Altogether she was so witty, sang, joked, danced. Yes indeed, they danced, even a quadrille. That meant every man had to kiss his partner. Carl, never one to miss a chance, grabbed Lilli and gave her a couple of smacking kisses. She laughed heartily. He said he'd been given them, she said he'd taken them.... This evening [10 March 1898]: tarot party with the Zieres, Frau Duschnitz, Spitzer, Lehmann, Hellmer, Epstein & Klimt. After dinner, we took black coffee in the studio, danced and sang. Lehmann sang Rubinstein's duet 'Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', with Mama, and Marie Lehmann danced a pas de deux, then we all sang glees and had a whale of a time. After we'd danced our fill, the party ended at 3:30.

(Mahler, [1898] 2000, p.8, p.12)

Lehmann says in her autobiography that she built the Villa around 1898, however, a contract the author found in the house shows she bought the land in Scharfling from Josef Wesenauer on the 30 August 1899. She had her villa built in the typical rustic style of the area, with the work undertaken by Johann Auer, a master builder from Mondsee. The original ground-plans and designs, dated 27 December 1898, lay forgotten in drawers in the house. Later Kalisch, who had originally trained as an architect, developed the house with the grand addition of a decorative tower, closing up the open arcades on one side to improve the insulation of the ground floor, where he would eventually have his study, drawings of which are contained in the collection. His painting of the view from the mountain behind their Villa shows the house before the tower was built on in 1912 (Fig. 8.5). Attractive architectural drawings of the Villa still hung in the stairwell in 2017. These show the house in its original design (Figs. 8.6 & 8.7). Kalisch's alterations, visible in a modern photograph of the Villa (Fig. 8.8), appear to be more a demonstration of ownership and wealth than practical improvements.

Staying at Villa Lehmann

The invitation extended to me in 2015 by Martin Schulz and his mother Erika Schulz, the elderly Austrian owner of the house, to stay in the Villa had been the

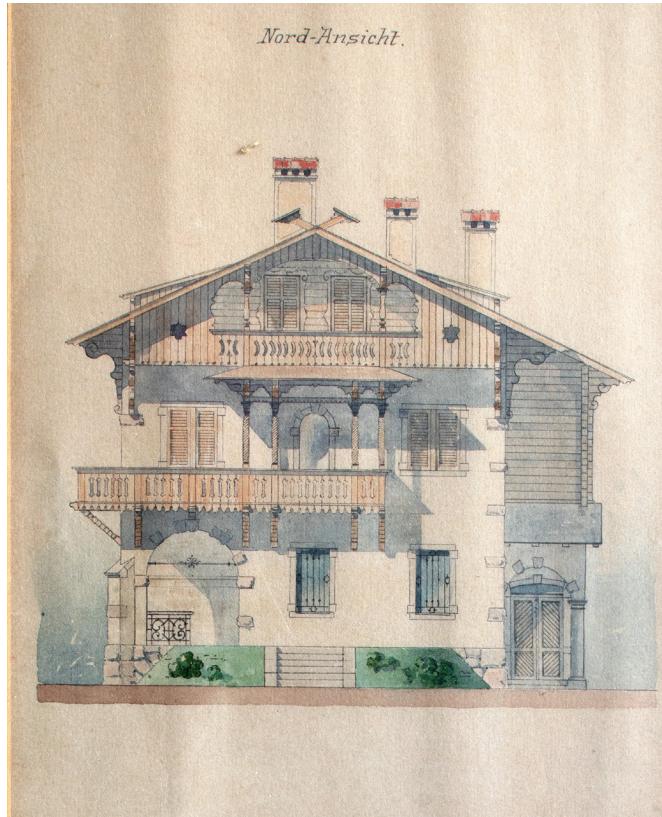


Figure 8.6: Architectural Drawing of the original North view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee, date unknown, c.1899. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

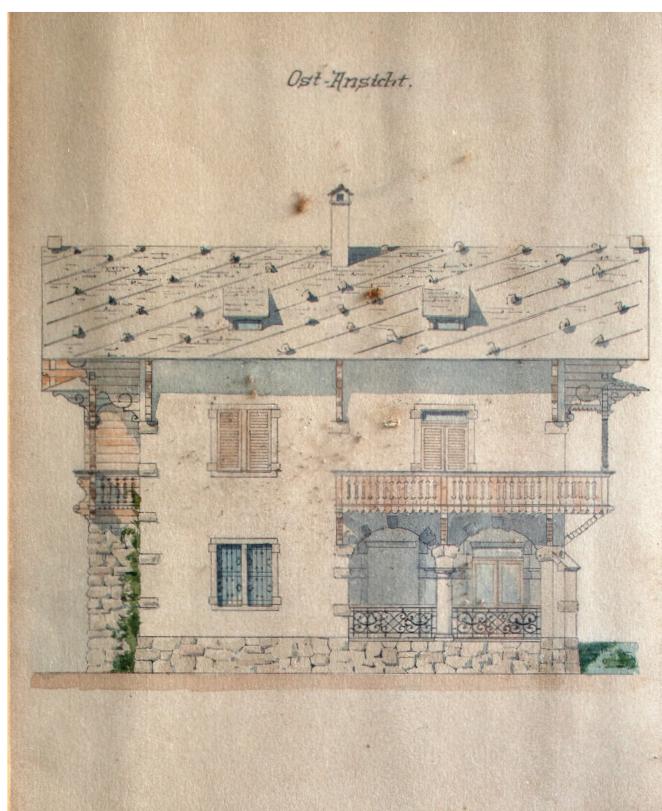


Figure 8.7: Architectural Drawing of the original East view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee, date unknown, c.1898. Watercolour on paper. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)



Figure 8.8: East view of Lehmann Villa at Scharfling am Mondsee, 2017. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

result of a search for the provenance of diaries and letters held in America, during my PhD research there. I was astonished on arrival at the Villa's well-preserved state. It felt as if at any moment Lehmann might walk in from her daily constitutional walk with her Dachshund, 'Baby'. Shortly after the visit I documented my memories:

August 2015, Scharfling am Mondsee

That first night in the villa it was very hard to sleep on the ancient, lumpy horsehair mattresses, surrounded by paintings of Lilli's niece, Hedwig, whose strange story of her relationship with her uncle and haunted gaze disquieted me. After some time the only solution seemed to be to give up on sleep and the firmly closed drawers of the chest of drawers and desk in the next room beckoned [Fig. 8.9]. Closer investigation revealed a folded scrap of paper with the words 'Look Down!' written on it, inviting me to investigate further in the drawers below. Erika Schulz ... evidently amused by the bursting curiosity of the 'English girl', had left this for me to find. Now, tentatively I pulled open the heavy drawers and surveyed their contents. Within lay a treasure trove of notebooks, letters, legal documents, photographs, autographed scores, handwritten writings by Lehmann and some of her famous friends, her most precious autographed books, delightful knick-knacks such as a little brass letter stamp with a dachshund jumping up (the family's favourite dog) and miniature scissors; luxurious personal items: ivory, inlaid fans and exquisite gossamer thin, embroidered handkerchiefs belonging to Lehmann's most famous student, the soprano Geraldine Farrar, Marie Lehmann

and Marie Loew in silken 'étuis', all wrapped up carefully in tissue paper by Erika's sister-in-law: 'Tante Mimi Schulz', perhaps already 30 years previously. I heaved out a large, heavy photo album and discovered pictures of the house in c.1900–03, proving to my astonishment and excitement that it had indeed scarcely been changed at all in over a hundred years. It was however not just one chest of drawers, all the cabinets and every surface were filled with Lehmann's possessions and the walls hung with her portraits, many familiar from her autobiography [Fig. 8.10]. The rooms were still furnished with the original furniture, curtains, books, porcelain, the beautiful light fittings and even their writing paper and some of Kalisch's own home-made saucy greetings cards preserved in a paper-cabinet [Fig. 8.11].

(Cole, 2015)



Figure 8.9: View of first floor 'Salon' at Villa Lehmann, 2017. The chest of drawers and desk contained most of the documents and personal effects that are now archived at the ISM. (Photo: Günter Wett. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

I was fascinated by the collection because it was overflowing with objects from Lehmann's life. Each one documented another relationship or event of her so familiar biography, but also proffering new and intimate detail that added material flesh to the ghosts I had already summoned up in my research: the collection of souvenir teaspoons from her journey on concert tours around far reaches of the USA, a cabinet full of old glasses and delicate porcelain, a silver salver engraved with her name, monogrammed silver cutlery,

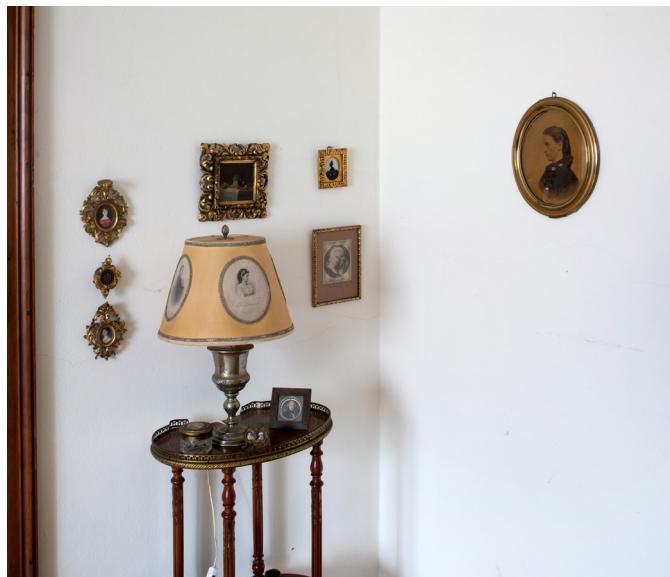


Figure 8.10: View of first floor Salon at Villa Lehmann, 2017. It shows some of the numerous portraits of Lehmann that hung in these rooms, many of which appear in her autobiography, *Mein Weg*. The lampshade shows portraits of Lilli Lehmann, Marie Lehmann and Minna Wagner. (Photo: Günter Wett, Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)



Figure 8.11 (& detail): One of a series of three saucy greetings cards probably made by Paul Kalisch, found in a cupboard still full of original supplies of writing and drawing paper. A pretty waitress is shown balancing on top of a giant champagne bottle which she bends down to open causing it to explode and her to lose her footing. (Photo: Rosamund Cole, 2015. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

her beautiful travel clock from New York in its leather case, a portrait of her dog 'Baby', mother-of-pearl opera glasses, Lehmann and her sister's bronzed baby shoes. For the following years the house became a place of pilgrimage for me, and I was eventually asked by the family to create an inventory in preparation for its sale. As a result, I was permitted to search the whole house and discovered concealed cupboards in the wooden sitting room panelling containing a long forgotten, exquisite Jugendstil coffee set; several valuable clocks; documents, such as all the family wills forgotten in a cabinet in the hallway as well as previously unknown portraits in the attic and intriguing personal items, including silk umbrellas in a hand-embroidered, monogrammed case. The architectural photographer Günter Wett photographed the entire house, and the author was employed by the International Stiftung Mozarteum to catalogue the entire collection in preparation for it to be stored permanently at the Mozart Archive in *Mozarts Geburtshaus* and the Bibliotheca Mozartiana in the Mozarteum Conservatoire, Salzburg.

The décor within the Villa matched the rustic style without. Built over three main floors, the house had a substantial attic and cellar. On the ground floor



Figure 8.13: View of the downstairs living room in Villa Lehmann Vila in Scharfling am Mondsee. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)



Figure 8.12: Chest decorated with lilies that match the decoration in sitting room painted by Paul Kalisch. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)



Figure 8.14: Lilli Lehmann, Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig sitting in downstairs living room in Lehmann Villa in Scharfling am Mondsee (original photographer unknown) (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

were two entrance halls at the front and the back of the house; a living-dining room; a small, modern kitchen; a sitting room; a second reception room and small anterooms. On the first floor was a room used as a library leading to a small sitting room, two large bedrooms, a modernised bathroom and a small bedroom. In the upper rooms on the second floor was a main bedroom with a balcony and a fantastic view over the lake plus some anterooms used for storage. Further steps led to substantial attic spaces. There were cellars, which I did not view. The main living room on the ground floor was panelled with wood, which Paul had hand-painted with a pattern of lilies in honour of his wife (Fig. 8.12). He had also decorated some wooden furniture including a wooden chest with the same motif. The furniture was in the traditional, countrified style typical of the area: a pine dining table, turned chairs, a bench, plate rack and a tiled oven. All of these are visible in the 1903 photo album and still present in 2017, when the collection was photographed (Figs. 8.13 & 8.14).

The significant collection of art preserved in the villa in 2015 demonstrated Lehmann and Kalisch's fashionable tastes, social standing and status. Lehmann had written an inventory of all the works of art they had bought including a large collection of portraits of her and her family by notable painters, sculptors and photographers, all of which were kept at the Villa. The couple seem to have been good at spotting burgeoning talent and had their portraits captured by several young artists who later became famous, including the renowned Austrian portraitist Albin Egger-Lienz, who also painted Lehmann's niece Hedwig Helbig (Fig. 8.15), and Bernhard Zickendraht.⁷ A significant photographic portrait in the Villa collection was by Theodor Hilsdorf, a celebrated photographer of cultural icons such as Cosima Wagner (Toth, 1989). Furthermore, her list showed the collection had originally included a work by the Norwegian artist Peder Severin Krøyer sold previously and a wintry view of the Karlsplatz in Vienna by Lilli's friend Carl Moll still hanging in the house in 2017 (Fig. 8.16).

The villa afforded Lehmann and Kalisch the opportunity to relax and recover from their exhausting opera seasons, pursuing their hobbies of painting, reading poetry and writing articles, plays and books,

⁷ There was a photograph and information at the Villa about another painting by the Norwegian painter Peder Severin Krøyer which had been sold by Mimi Schulz in the 1980s. The portraits of Lehmann and Kalisch by Egger Lienz are now preserved in the Landesmuseum in Linz, Austria.



Figure 8.15: Albin Egger-Lienz, *Hedwig Helbig*, no date. Private Collection. (Photo: Günter Wett)



Figure 8.16: Carl Moll, *Schneelandschaft Karlsplatz Wien*, 1902, hanging in the living room. Private Collection. (Photo: Günter Wett)

all evidenced by the considerable collection of manuscripts, art works and first editions of books that were still preserved in the upstairs rooms. Paul was a keen amateur artist and, as well as many light-hearted drawings and caricatures (Fig. 8.17), the collection had several artworks by him including paintings and two busts of Hedwig (Fig. 8.18). Amongst the artists visiting the house was the young Munich painter Hans Volkmer who stayed regularly. Volkmer undertook several portraits of the family, often basing them on photographs, which have also been kept as part of the collection in the Villa. The results of his work were still displayed in the Villa in 2015.

Volkmer coached Paul in his painting technique and Lehmann's diaries of 1902 reveal that he also was helping her in producing the anatomical drawings for her famous treatise on singing: *Meine Gesangskunst* (How to Sing), completed and published in 1902 (Fig. 8.19). It appears that the Villa offered



Figure 8.17: Paul Kalisch's desk showing his gold leaf and several hand-drawn postcards he had sent Lilli Lehmann including, on the upper left, a caricature of Lilli, in which Kalisch has depicted Lehmann as an Eagle of Germany and himself kissing her claws. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

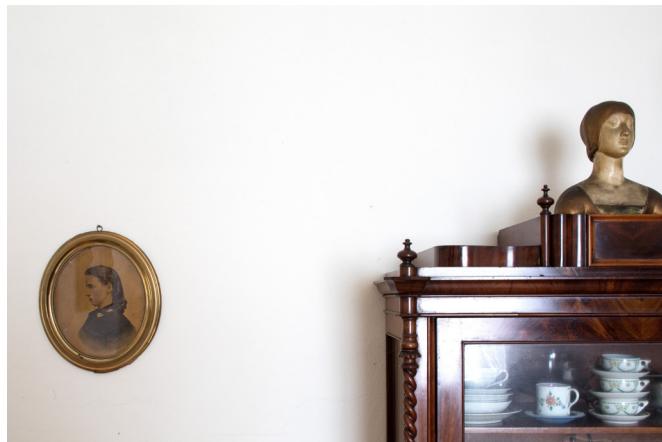


Figure 8.18: Interior view showing a bust of Hedwig Helbig by Paul Kalisch, on the dresser and, on the left, the portrait of Lehmann as a young girl made famous through publication in her autobiography. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

a conducive setting for Lehmann's writing and its purchase coincided with a considerable increase in her productivity as a writer, publishing not only her treatise but also newspaper and magazine articles, a biography, political leaflets and her editions of sheet music. As her energy to perform on stage waned, these writings functioned as publicity of her work as a singer, teacher and director; preserving memories of her career and productions she had directed for posterity; disseminating her strident views on singing and staging and also on animal rights and arguing her own case publicly when potential scandals arose and needed managing.

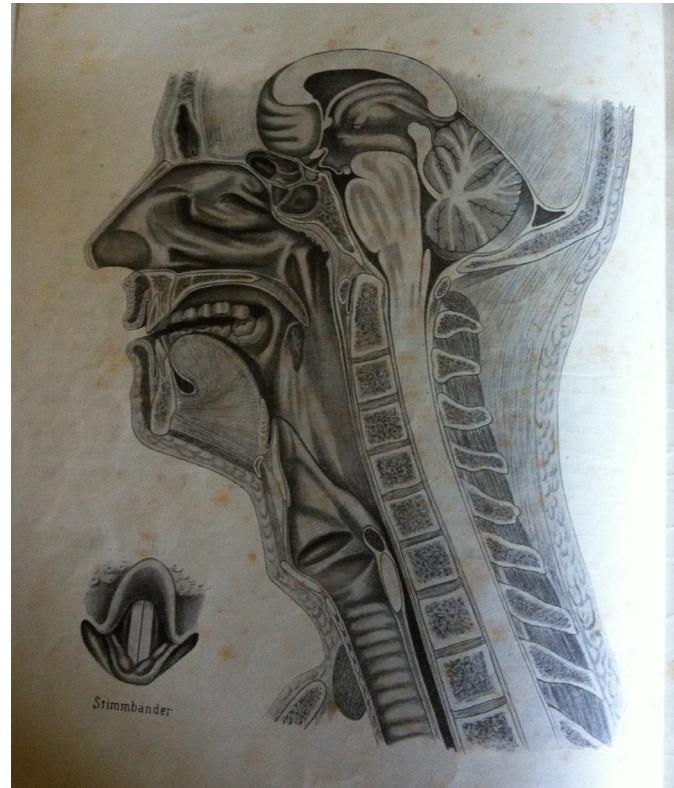


Figure 8.19: Illustration from Lilli Lehmann and Hans Volkmer, *Meine Gesangkunst* (1902) 1st Edition. (Photo: Bibliotheca Mozartiana, International Stiftung Mozarteum, Salzburg)

Discord in the rural idyll

Careful image management was an area that Lehmann had repeatedly shown herself to excel in throughout her career often evading near scandal. The villa in Scharfling provided the backdrop for the collection of images contained in the photo album depicting Lehmann and Kalisch as a happy couple, enjoying their fashionable new holiday home with their devoted niece (Fig. 8.20). Some of these photographs were subsequently published in newspapers and magazines presenting to the world the couple's good fortune and warm relations. However, preserved beside this album lay clues to a more complex narrative that belied this picture of contentment: a signed book published in both French and German (translated by Lehmann) and part of a personal letter. The book was by Lehmann's intimate friend, the renowned French baritone Victor Maurel, dedicated admiringly to her after their first performances together as Don Giovanni and Donna Anna in Berlin 1898. The letter belongs to a large collection of 79 intimate letters in French between the two artists written between December 1898 and March 1902, now held in the Maurel-Gresac Papers at Yale University Library.



Figure 8.20: Lilli Lehmann, Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig together, c. 1902, from the photo album found in the Villa. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

These letters reveal that already in December 1900 she had become very disillusioned about Paul Kalisch and their marriage. She admits how she no longer felt attracted to Paul, and simply pitied him, describing him as vain and conceited, pathetic now in his drudgery at Wiesbaden theatre, his face made almost unrecognizable by illness and suffering from rheumatism, everything being red, swollen and cramped (Lehmann, 1900b). She wrote to Maurel apparently distressed at some amorous indiscretion on Paul's part while he was working in Wiesbaden, and she was evidently considering undertaking proceedings to lead to divorce. Like Lehmann, Maurel had recently had marital problems which had led to his eventually getting divorced. However, he advised her against this course and attempted to help the couple by meeting with Paul on the pretext of sharing his expertise in acting skills, to talk to him about their problems. It seems that as a result Lehmann may have persisted in the marriage in the hope that things would improve, perhaps with the help of rest at the summer Villa.

Lehmann's diaries in this period seem to indicate that the marriage to Paul and warm relations continued even after their separation, with Lilli continuing to ensure financial provision for him and even at her death ensure her continued support. The Villa collection bears witness, too, to this loving side

of their marriage through Paul's furniture decorated with lillies; hand-painted boxes given to Paul from Lilli, a photograph of them announcing their wedding, in this case signed wittily by each with: 'Unter die Haube! – Lilli' (transliterated: 'Under the veil! – Lilli', meaning 'Just Married!') and 'Unter dem Pantoffel! – Paul' (transliterated 'Under the slipper! – Paul', meaning 'Under her thumb!') (Fig. 8.21); and charming caricatures, including one from 1899 showing Lilli greeting Paul at the gate of the Villa in a Japanese style robe that she also wears in some of the photographic portraits of her in the old photo album (Fig. 8.22).

Tensions between Lehmann and Kalisch, however, continued as a description of a visit by Alma Mahler to the new holiday home reveals. In it, she describes a marital tiff she witnessed between Kalisch and Lehmann, which presents Kalisch unusually as controlling Lehmann. This was unique as other reports of their relationship always emphasise his emasculated role in the relationship, focussing on him as the lower earning, less competent singer and brow-beaten husband.



Figure 8.21: Lilli Lehmann and Paul Kalisch postcard announcing their recent wedding signed by both with humorous captions, 1888. (Photo: Falk; Mozart Archive/International Stiftung Mozarteum)

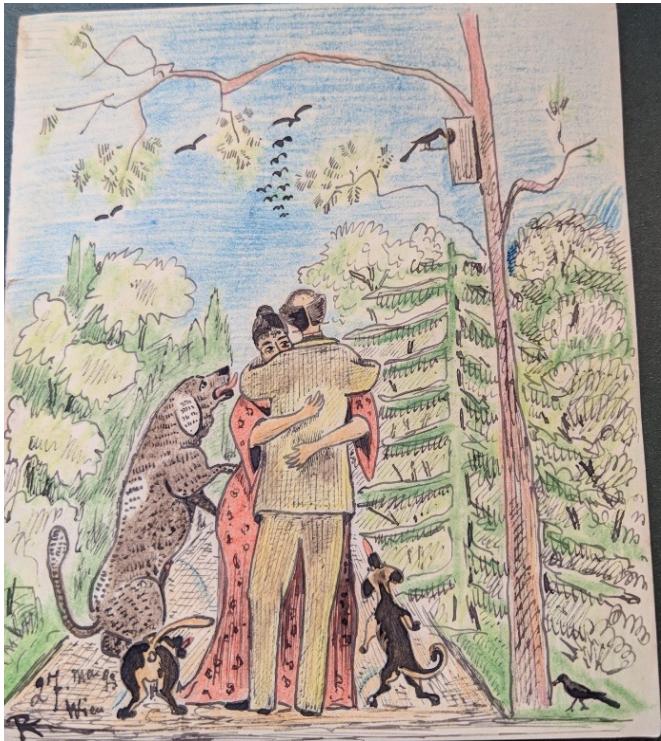


Figure: 8.22: Paul Kalisch, caricature postcard for Lilli, dated 27 May 1899. (Photo: Günter Wett; Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)



Figure 8.23: Plaque in Villa Lehmann exhorting: 'Patience and Renunciation', referred to by Alma Mahler in 1900, photographed 2017. (Photo: Günter Wett. Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Villa in Paul Kalisch's name on 27 October 1907. She also admits to having erroneously claimed ownership of the property as it had been paid for in part with funds from Kalisch. It seems highly unlikely that Lehmann would have made such a mistake and rather probable that this was a face-saving demand on Kalisch's part, that provided him with potential financial compensation instead of a divorce. Eventually, Kalisch would begin a relationship with Lehmann's niece Hedwig, towards whom the couple had previously taken a semi-parental role and Paul would live with Hedwig until he died in 1946. The potential scandal of this later constellation had evidently not escaped the notice of other researchers and questions have remained about the causes and date of the marriage break up. Amongst the old correspondence in the Villa were letters to Mimi Schulz asking her to elucidate on the relationships but Mimi refused to cooperate. It appears however that there is as yet no evidence of an overlap with Paul's relationship with Lehmann and her niece.⁸

Thursday 9 August 1900

... The house in Scharfling is nice – if not particularly well kept. The dining room is entirely of wood, very attractive. In the bedrooms, none of the beds had been made. Over Kalisch's desk hangs a banner with the words 'Patience and Renunciation' embroidered on it. I said it didn't much look like renunciation to me (which in my opinion is a compliment). But he was so offended that he left the room. He tyrannises her. And she – such a hot-blooded woman that she'd kill for love or hatred, he winds her around his little finger ... And she's so beautiful!

(2000, p.311)

The plaque that provoked the argument was still hanging in the sitting room in 2017 (fig. 8.23).

By 1907, however, it seems the role of the Villa had finally changed from a place of retreat for the couple to a means of safe, scandal-free escape from the marriage. Divorce at this date would have been a disgrace for Lilli and may have affected her livelihood and that of all her dependents, including Paul who she made arrangements to support financially throughout his life, even after their separation. Legal documents in the Villa in Scharfling showed that Lehmann had placed the

8 The American Musicologist Lim Lai (1981), in his long article about Lehmann, suggested that the singer and Victor Maurel had a love affair while they were away in the USA in 1899. It might therefore be logical to assume that the suspected affair with Maurel was the reason for the disintegration of Lehmann's marriage to Paul Kalisch, although evidence seems to show that this was not the case. Lai based his conclusions on the fact that Lehmann declared she had bought a ring she and Maurel had planned to buy and asked him to wear it 'for several days and nights, and then give it to [her] so [she could] wear it for the rest of [her] life' (p.185). It is however unclear if this romantic suggestion was reciprocated. After initially in 1898–99 going on tour together in America, singing the main roles in performances such as *Don Giovanni*, Maurel and Lehmann enjoyed a long and intense correspondence, the subject, however being their shared passion for singing and interest in vocal technique.

For Lehmann, the summer villa was the site of a consuming passion at this time: the first edition of her vocal treatise *Meine Gesangskunst*, dedicated to Hedwig Helbig. Lehmann had written her treatise in parallel with Victor Maurel in whom she felt she had found an intellectual equal. They passionately exchanged views on their treatises as they wrote them. These two separate projects became intertwined as the two artists discussed ideas and even carried out teaching experiments on each other's vocal students to prove their theories. Through this shared intellectual project, they became intimate friends and despite the inference that they may have become lovers, on balance, there is a lack of convincing evidence for this despite the wealth of existing correspondence. Certainly, Lehmann's letters show that she was very dependent on Maurel for emotional support during this period and it seems may have hoped for greater intimacy. In one of her letters to Maurel she wrote:

I would be very interested to know if you had thought of me toward midnight on the night after my departure. I was dreaming of you so natural[ly] that I would really like to know if one of your thoughts had been so strong that I dreamt it.⁹

(1900a, fol.56)

Evidence I have uncovered all point toward an admiring friendship, as the signed photograph found in the collection at the Library of Congress suggests (Fig. 8.24). This was written in 1898, early on in their friendship when they first travelled together to perform in New York. Her dedication seems ambiguous, but it is perhaps significant that she uses her married name Lilli Lehmann Kalisch which was not often the case. Maurel's last letter to Lehmann was written on 18 October 1902 after which, despite all protestations of love, there seem to have been no further communication and no regretful comment in Lehmann's extant diaries. Maurel later married Fred de Gresac, a successful film-script writer who was in later life renowned in Hollywood circles as a lesbian. The apparent breach in Lehmann and Maurel's communications suggests, that this was not a relationship that rivalled Lehmann's marriage and

⁹ 'Je m'intéresserai beaucoup à savoir si vous avez pensez à moi la nuit après mon départ vers minuit. Je rêvais de vous si naturel que je voudrais bien savoir si une pensée de vous a été assez forte que moi je la rêvais' (1900a, fol.56). For more detail about this correspondence please refer to Cole (2019).

in balance was probably not the cause of its eventual disintegration and the loss to Lehmann of her summer Villa, far more likely her focus on writing her book and furthering her career contributed to a gradual growing apart of her and Paul Kalisch's relationship.



Figure 8.24: A portrait of Lilli sent to Victor Maurel with the ambiguous dedication: 'A Monsieur Victor Maurel, un artiste qui ne semble pas seulement de l'être, amicalement. Lilli Lehmann Kalisch Berlin New York 1898'. (Photo: US Library of Congress, Photographic Collection).

The exact date Lehmann ceased to stay in the house in Scharfling is unclear but by 1914 when she visited Salzburg, she would stay in the city, at the home of Dr Franz Stibral, the president of the Mozarteum, as a paying guest, presumably while Kalisch and Hedwig stayed in the Villa in Scharfling (Stibral, 1918, p.3). Though it is unclear when Paul and Hedwig entered into a relationship (Fig. 8.25), they remained together for many years, and were eventually buried together in the cemetery in Mondsee town.

Paul and Hedwig survived World War Two despite Paul being from a famous Jewish family, and being classed in Nazi records as being Jewish (Brückner, 1938). They were perhaps protected by their local popularity and status as members of Lehmann's family. Nevertheless, tellingly, Kalisch sold the house on to

Hedwig Helbig on 11 February 1939, suggesting that they were well aware of their perilously insecure position and viewed Helbig, a baptised Christian, as less likely to have the house removed from her than Kalisch. A large collection of photos and letters found in the collection in the Villa show that Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig enjoyed a close friendship with the actor and Nazi sympathiser Werner Kraus both prior to and during WWII. It seems plausible that this relationship afforded them both protection despite Paul's Jewish roots. The Villa, after Paul's death in 1946, continued to be Hedwig Helbig's home until she died.



Figure 8.25: Paul Kalisch and Hedwig Helbig, c.1900-03, from the photo album in the Villa. (Photo: Mozart Archive / International Stiftung Mozarteum)

Conclusion

Lehmann's professional influence was far reaching. In her independent thinking and financial self-sufficiency, she embodied an emancipated lifestyle that many other women in Germany and abroad admired and sought to emulate, some of them seeking to follow her path as an opera singer as a way of achieving financial autonomy. The Villa played its part in this aspect of their story too. It served as a repository of items that not only documented her biography but also bore witness to this influence in the form of letters and tokens from former students from Japan, the USA and Europe, many of whom had attended her summer academy at the

Mozarteum which she started in Salzburg in 1916.¹⁰

Study of her diaries and letters has led me to the conclusion that Lehmann's move to build a Villa near Salzburg was part of her plan for the next phase in her life after she had stopped singing and it had its roots in a larger plan that is also revealed in her correspondence with Victor Maurel. Study of these letters shows that already in 1899 she envisioned creating a conservatoire in which a new approach to singing would be undertaken and fantasised about this with Maurel: 'We will work together and I hope very much that in some years we will have some results which will render far better things than any book, don't you agree?'¹¹ She also discussed with Maurel a new way forward in teaching, proposing undertaking new masterclass type lessons in which students and teachers would discuss and share their ideas with each other:

Do you know the idea of giving singing lessons in public doesn't leave me? I care about it. It is about having a clear idea and finding some sensible students who would help with the idea. It would be necessary to speak in public with artists who are prepared to leave aside their false shame of not wanting to speak of their faults ... It would be a social event for singers and so I am sure it would work.¹²

¹⁰ One example of this was Geraldine Farrar who stayed in contact with Lehmann throughout her career and some of her letters and presents were amongst the extant collection in the villa. Another example was Antoinette Sher-Gil, a frustrated singer who wrote to Lehmann from Shimla in India describing how Lehmann's gramophone recordings allowed her to transcend her stifling reality. The International Sommer Akademie still continues in a similar form.

¹¹ 'Nous allons travailler ensemble et j'espère bien qu'en quelques années nous aurions [sic] des résultats qui vaudront mieux que tous les livres.' Letter from Lilli Lehmann to Victor Maurel. Gresac Papers. Yale University. GEN MSS 1363 – Beinecke, p. 26. (23. September 1899).)

¹² 'Et savez-vous que l'idée de faire des leçons de chant devant le public ne me quitte pas? J'y tiens, il ne s'agit que de former l'idée bien et de trouver quelques élèves bien raisonnable [sic] qui puissent aider à l'idée. – Il faudrait aussi parler en public aux artistes, qu'ils se dépouillent [sic] d'une vergogne fausse de ne pas vouloir se [sic] dire ses [sic] fautes, et combien ce serait artistique de travailler avec eux, qui se sont donné la peine, de faire une vraie étude sur la question de l'art du chant. Il [sic] serait une affaire sociale des chanteurs, et sur ce point-là, la question tournerait du bon côté [sic] j'en suis sûre.' Letter from Lilli Lehmann to Victor Maurel. Gresac Papers. Yale University. GEN MSS 1363 – Beinecke pp. 100–101. (26. September 1900).

This vision echoes very much Richard Wagner's plans, with which Lehmann is likely to have been familiar, to build a conservatoire to educate performers in his special performance style. (Hey and Hey, pp.245–6). Hey cited here the pamphlet written and distributed by Wagner on 16 September 1877, describing his vision for his new school for performers of his musical-dramatic works. Lehmann, perhaps inspired by these ideas then went on indeed to build herself not only a home near Salzburg to retire to but eventually a conservatoire to work in as she began to stop singing professionally. There she indeed followed through her plan to set up innovative international summer master-courses to which the finest young musicians continue today to travel each summer to study with experienced professionals and exchange ideas with their peers. The building of the Villa can therefore be viewed as the first stepping stone in realising this plan, despite it eventually having to be relinquished due to the collapse in her marriage.



Figure 8.26: Illustration from a 1910 tourist guide showing of the Villa and discovered in the collection, under the title 'Villa der Kammersängerin Lilli Lehmann' despite it already at that time belonging to Paul Kalisch. (Photo: Verlag Brandt, Gemunden)

A tourist guide from 1910 shows a picture of the 'Lilli Lehmann Villa' suggesting its allure for visitors to the area (Fig. 8.26). It continued to be known locally as the Lilli Lehmann Villa or Villa Lehmann even right up to modern times. Scharfling 5 and its entire contents was eventually inherited in 1951 by Hedwig Helbig's neighbour, Maria ('Mimi') Schulz, the mother-in-law of Erika Schulz, who had cared for Hedwig in her old age

and during her final sickness. The family kept the house respectfully, some rooms preserved almost like a shrine until Erika finally moved out in 2018. Martin Schulz, her son, tells how he as a child was not permitted to play in the upstairs salon and library which contained most of the Lehmann collection (Figs. 8.12–8.13). His paternal aunt 'Mimi' had very carefully put all Lehmann and Kalisch things into the chest of drawers and writing desk, beautifully packed away for posterity until the house was finally sold and its contents procured, appropriately by the International Stiftung Mozarteum which owes so much of its foundation to the work of Lilli Lehmann.¹³ Now many of the images, paintings and other artefacts are kept at the Mozart Archive in Mozart's Geburtshaus which Lehmann largely supported buying for the city of Salzburg and the most important documents, books and music are stored in the Bibliotheca Mozartiana that was also built in large part through her efforts.

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¹³ This purchase and creation of the archive was achieved with generous support from Prof. Eva Rieger and the Mariann Steegmann Foundation.

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