

# Spiritual Conflict in Gustav Mahler's First and Second Symphonies

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*To Michalis Adamis, a Teacher, a Mentor and a Friend, whose passion for Mahler rivals my own, and whose love and profound understanding of music was an inspiration and a driving force. Without his endless hours of work, his support and his compassion none of this would ever have been possible. Thank you.*

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## Abstract

This study explores the presence of 'spiritual conflict' in Gustav Mahler's First and Second Symphonies, and attempts to show that relevant issues of spiritual struggle are apparent throughout Mahler's oeuvre. To do so, issues concerning Mahler's spirituality, as they are apparent from both primary and secondary sources, are examined, with particular emphasis on reports by Bruno Walter concerning Mahler's interest in mystical writings, and especially those by the seventeenth-century writer of epigrams, Angelus Silesius (b. 1624—d. 1677), whom Walter identifies as being Mahler's favourite mystic. In the second part of the study, the representation of 'spiritual conflict' through the secondary parameters of texture, dynamics and orchestration, in Mahler's First and Second Symphonies, is examined, with the assistance of an originally devised method of visually representing, and viewing, these secondary parameters on both a synchronic and diachronic level.

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‘Wouldn’t you just *die* without Mahler?’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trish (played by Maureen Lipman), in the film *Educating Rita*, by Willy Russell.

*Life is full of misery, loneliness, and suffering –and it's all over much too soon.*

Woody Allen

## Introduction

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'For what purpose?' remained the torturing basic question of his soul. From it grew the strongest spiritual impulses for his creative work, and every one of his creations must be considered another attempt to find the answer. And, no sooner had he found it, than the old question would again send forth from the depths of his heart the unappeasable call of yearning. For, such was his nature that, because of its inconstancy, he was unable to hold conquered spiritual positions.

Bruno Walter<sup>1</sup>

The problem of whether music should be analysed with purely musical, or with the help of extra-musical, criteria is one that has been widely and eloquently debated. The usefulness of purely musical analysis—in the sense that a Schenkerian analysis is purely musical—is undeniable. But it is a point of debate whether an analysis of this sort can truly give an adequate interpretation of such an immense and global work as a Mahler symphony. As Bruno Walter, in his book *Gustav Mahler*, says, 'standards of humanity will have to be added to those of art if the creative work of Mahler is to be fully appreciated.'<sup>2</sup> Walter's word is not the only statement to that effect that we have, however. Natalie Bauer-Lechner, in her *Recollections*, records Mahler as having said the following:

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<sup>1</sup>Walter, Bruno, *Gustav Mahler*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1937, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

My two symphonies contain the inner aspect of my whole life; I have written into them, in my own blood, everything that I have experienced and endured –Truth and Poetry in music. To understand these works properly would be to see my life transparently revealed in them. Creativity and experience are so intimately linked for me that, if my existence were simply to run on as peacefully as a meadow brook, I don't think that I would ever again be able to write anything worth while.<sup>3</sup>

This statement refers to Mahler's First and Second symphonies, which are the subject of this present analysis. However, when examined in retrospect—something which we now have the luxury of being able to do—the statement does not seem to hold any less true when applied to his subsequent symphonies. Since he continued composing to the last, the above statement permits one must assume that he continued experiencing life, passionately. And since we have his word that experience and creativity are so indivisibly bound in his psyche, one must assume that his later works also contained 'the inner aspect of his whole life'.

The intention of this thesis is to attempt an analysis of Mahler's first two symphonies through the spectrum of the *spiritual conflict* that seems to have tortured him throughout his entire life. The best way of defining the term *spiritual conflict* seems to be, once again, through Mahler's own words, or at least through Bruno Walter's recording of them:

How dark is the foundation upon which our life rests... Whence do we come? Whither does our road take us? Have I really willed this life, as Schopenhauer thinks, before I even was conceived? Why am I made to feel that I am free while yet I am constrained within my character as in a prison? What is the object of toil and sorrow? How am I to understand the cruelty and malice in the creations of a kind God? Will the meaning of life be finally revealed by death?<sup>4</sup>

Mahler never seems to have found permanent resolution to the existential angst that is so apparent in the above quotation. At best, he found temporary repose in either faith and spirituality, or philosophy, or even in the natural sciences. The

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<sup>3</sup> Bauer-Lechner, Natalie, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, London: Faber, 1980, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

same questions, as Walter tells us and as is obvious from some of Mahler's own correspondence, always kept recurring.

Mahler's interest in philosophy, in particular, has always been a major point of interest in any attempt at interpreting or understanding his works. His spirituality, however, has been an issue that has been almost totally left unexplored. One might easily group Mahler's 'spirituality' under the more general heading of 'philosophical interests', which is surely the reason that there is so little on the subject in recent relevant literature. I, however, will attempt to argue that spirituality is something quite different from philosophical interests and, consequently, the neglect of this part of Mahler's inner life has left a serious gap in our understanding of his works. Spirituality may be defined as "The experiential side of religion, as opposed to outward beliefs, practices and institutions, which deals with the inner spiritual depths of a person."<sup>5</sup> The reading of philosophy is very often undertaken for simple intellectual exercise, but this is not necessarily the case. Many people read philosophy, at least at some point in their lives, because of intellectual curiosity, or to 'broaden their horizons'. The distinction that is being made here is that in Mahler's case, the interest in philosophy stemmed from his preoccupation with existential questions and his natural tendency towards spirituality, and not vice-versa. For some people—Mahler included—all the issues explored in philosophical, religious and mystical writings are part of their everyday life; they are lived and experienced, thoroughly and passionately. They are very real and serious problems and not just intellectual fodder.

Most of Mahler's readings have been quite thoroughly researched; his interest in Romantic literature, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Goethe, Schopenhauer and Wagner. His interest in mystical writings, however, has all but been left untouched. This is probably due to the fact that, of all his friends, the only one that gives any sort of reference to this aspect of Mahler's literary interests is again Bruno Walter, and even he only devotes about two sentences to the matter. They are, however, two highly enlightening sentences:

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<sup>5</sup> Goring, Rosemary (ed.), *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, London; New York; Sydney; Toronto: BCA, 1992, p. 499.

Of the mystics, he was perhaps fondest of Angelus Silesius. He had the feeling of veritable kinship with him and liked to find solace in his daring and exalted nearness to God.<sup>6</sup>

This simple record of Mahler's interest in mystical writers is so brief and understated that it is not difficult to miss entirely, when reading a book so full of important and interesting information about Mahler. It remains, however, a record that tells us at least two important things: firstly, the name of Mahler's favourite mystic and why he was his favourite, and the fact that he obviously also read others. We might not have a record of other mystics that Mahler may have been interested in but, by researching Angelus Silesius (b. 1624—d. 1677), it is certainly possible to make some educated guesses. I will not however be attempting to prove that Angelus Silesius, *per se*, is the overriding influence on Mahler's First and Second symphonies. What I will be trying to do is to show how Silesius' writings, as an *example* of mystical/spiritual thought, serve to elucidate and interpret aspects of these two symphonies. This is a subject that needs due consideration and I will be going into it in some detail later on in this study. I will also be addressing possible concerns about the reliability of Walter's evidence in that same section, since Walter is the only original source that specifically mentions the subject.

The final objective of this study will be an attempt to show that Mahler's First and Second Symphonies are indivisibly bound together and that with the ending of the Second Symphony, a certain cycle comes to a close. In this case, we even have Mahler's own word for it, from a letter to Max Marschalk, in 1896:

What it comes to, then, is that my Second Symphony grows directly out of the First!<sup>7</sup>

This is a connection that Mahler makes on a programmatic level, at least in this specific letter, but I will also attempt to see whether a more 'substantial', musical connection can also be made between the two symphonies. This means, not only the study of spiritual conflict as it may be represented in both symphonies, but also an attempt to see whether there are any other, purely musical, links between

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<sup>6</sup> Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>7</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, London: Faber & Faber 1979, p. 180.

the two. The chronology of the two symphonies certainly allows for connections, whether intentional or not, especially between the *Totdenfeier*—the Second Symphony's first movement—and the finale of the First Symphony. Both were composed during the first part of 1888.

More importantly, however, what I will attempt to show is that the cycle which these two symphonies comprise is a reflection of the psychological cycle of Mahler's own spiritual/existential conflict which comes not to a close, with the end of the Second Symphony, but only finds *temporary* repose and resolution.

In the second part of the study, an analysis of Mahler's First and Second Symphonies will be undertaken, focusing on the representation of spiritual conflict through the secondary parameters of texture, dynamics and orchestration based on Leonard B. Meyer's theory of Implication-Realisation,<sup>8</sup> and with the assistance of an originally devised method of visualising these secondary parameters, on a synchronic and diachronic level.

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<sup>8</sup> Meyer, Leonard B., *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

*I can't listen to much Wagner. I start getting the urge to conquer Poland*

Woody Allen

## Chapter I

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For those who follow the path of the inner cult, music is essential for their spiritual development.

Sufi Inayat Khan.<sup>1</sup>

Mahler first came in contact with those philosophical writings that were going to be major lifelong influences during his student years in Vienna. There he encountered the writings of Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, through the 'Pernerstorfer Circle'. This was a loosely organised group that would eventually comprise several of Mahler's closest friends, such as Friedrich Löhr, Hugo Wolf, Albert Spiegler and Siegfried Lipiner. The Austrian political situation and philosophical and aesthetic questions were the common concerns of the group. The exact date on which Mahler joined the group is not known, but by 1878 he was active in the circle.

The philosophical writings of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner have not only been thoroughly researched, discussed and documented, but also the manner in which they influenced Mahler's thought in relation to music and musical creation has been deeply analysed. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche influenced Wagner's writings and for all three, music plays an important role

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler*, I, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1974, p. xxi.

in their philosophical systems.<sup>2</sup> Since the object of this study is not Mahler's aesthetic preoccupations, it seems superfluous to go into another lengthy discussion about the way in which these three writers influenced his thoughts on the subject.<sup>3</sup> What has yet to be attempted, however, is a discussion on the way Schopenhauer and Wagner, especially, influenced Mahler's religious thinking and spirituality and to see whether there is evidence to support either claim.

## Schopenhauer and Wagner

In 1854, Wagner encountered Schopenhauer's writings. In his autobiography, he describes the effect this philosopher had on him:

I looked at my Nibelung poems and recognised to my amazement that the very things I now found so unpalatable in the theory were already long familiar to me in my own poetic conception. Only now did I understand my own Wotan myself and, greatly shaken, I went on to a closer study of Schopenhauer's book... Its gradual effect on me was extraordinary and, at any rate, decisive for the rest of my life. Through it, I was able to judge things which I had previously grasped only instinctively....<sup>4</sup>

Although Wagner wrote this passage many years after his first encounter with Schopenhauer there are also several of his letters to Liszt and Röckel, contemporary to his first readings of Schopenhauer, that describe the influence the philosopher had on him in much the same terms.

The book Wagner is referring to is Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. According to his theory 'the world is my representation[...] It then becomes clear and certain to [man] that he does not know a sun and

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<sup>2</sup> See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E. J. F. Payne, New York: Dover edn., 1969; Richard Wagner, *Beethoven*, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, London, 1896, reprint ed., New York, 1966; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, trans. Francis Golling, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> See Banks, Paul W., "The Early Social and Musical Environment of Gustav Mahler", PhD diss., University of Oxford (St. John's College), 1982. Stephen Hefling, "The Making of Mahler's "Totenfeier": A Documentary and Analytical Study", PhD diss., Yale University, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Wagner, Richard, *My Life*, Cambridge University Press: 1983, p. 509.

an earth, but only an eye that sees the sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only a reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself.<sup>5</sup> He goes on to show that the man is ruled by the will which is 'the innermost essence, the kernel of every particular thing and also of the whole. It appears in every blindly acting force of nature, and also in the deliberate conduct of man...'<sup>6</sup>

This 'will' we are all ruled by is the will-to-live, and so, in truth, one can say that 'The world is my will.'<sup>7</sup> The will is the driving force behind all our actions. The overpowering will to live is so insatiable that it can never be satisfied.

Thus, a constant struggle is carried on between life and death, the main result whereof is the resistance by which that striving which constitutes the innermost nature of everything is everywhere impeded... We call its hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, *suffering*; its attainment of the goal, on the other hand, we call *satisfaction*... We then see these involved in constant suffering and without any lasting happiness... No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving... Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure or end of suffering... [so] essentially, *all life is suffering*.<sup>8</sup>

There is, however, a possibility of salvation. The way to salvation according to Schopenhauer is the negation of the will and by achieving a state of complete acceptance and equanimity.

If all the above seems to have distinctive Hindu and Buddhist overtones to it, it is for a very good reason. Schopenhauer expressly compares his theory to those of Hindu and Buddhist teachings from the very beginning of his book, on page 4. According to Schopenhauer, Hindu and Buddhist religious practices can remove the 'maya', the veil of illusion that prevents us from understanding the true nature of ourselves and the world. Once that is

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<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309-310.

achieved, we can hope to find salvation. In fact, Schopenhauer taught that Hindu, Buddhist and Christian mystics seem to share a common understanding of this process:

Different as were the dogmas that were impressed on their faculty of reason, the inner, direct and intuitive knowledge from which alone all virtue and holiness can come is nevertheless expressed in precisely the same way in the conduct of life.<sup>9</sup>

Schopenhauer showed 19th-century Europe that the intuitive, mystical approach to God and spirituality existed well before any of the major religions of the western and middle-eastern world, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, he does not do away with Christianity altogether:

The doctrine of original sin (affirmation of the will) and of salvation (denial of the will) is really the great truth which constitutes the kernel of Christianity, while the rest is in the main only clothing and covering, or something accessory. Accordingly, we should interpret Jesus Christ always in the universal, as the symbol or personification of the denial of the will-to-live, but not in the individual... That Christianity has recently forgotten its true significance, and has degenerated into shallow optimism, does not concern us here...<sup>10</sup>

What he does vehemently oppose is institutionalised religion, because it exploits the vulnerability of people who need to feel that their life has a reality beyond death, and it prevents the search for truth through a 'shallow optimism', where the will-to-live continues to exist under a different guise. In which case, according to Schopenhauer, religion 'must be pushed aside. And to require that even a great mind—a Shakespeare or a Goethe—should make the dogmas of any religion his implicit conviction... is like requiring a giant to put on the shoes of a dwarf.'<sup>11</sup>

The theory of reincarnation is another point in far-eastern spirituality that Schopenhauer agrees with. He thought that the Upanishads and the Vedas give a much clearer explanation and understanding of spirituality than do either the Old or the New Testament. 'Brahmanism and Buddhism, on the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 405-406.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

other hand, quite consistently with a continued existence after death, have an existence before birth, and the purpose of life is to atone for the guilt of that previous existence.<sup>12</sup> According to these religions, the soul goes through a cycle of births, deaths and rebirths, until it becomes enlightened—a Buddha—and returns to its origin, becoming part of the Divine. There it continues a blissful *non-existence*: Nirvana.

From this point of view, the idea of the Christian 'heaven' would condemn the soul to an endless living death, where, as mentioned earlier, the will-to-live has not been overcome, but continues to exist and to control the soul, in a different guise.

Thus we find the doctrine of metempsychosis, springing from the very earliest and noblest ages of the human race, always world-wide, as the belief of the great majority of mankind, in fact really as the doctrine of all religions, with the exception of Judaism and the two religions that have arisen from it. But, as already mentioned, we find this doctrine in its subtlest form, and coming nearest to the truth, in Buddhism.<sup>13</sup>

Schopenhauer, however, also recognises a point that would be of great significance to the person who takes spirituality seriously, a person like Mahler seems to have been. This point is the fact that the *mystics* of all religions seem to be in agreement about the manner in which salvation is possible, i.e. the denial of the will-to-live; and also in the ultimate goal of the soul, that is, to return to a permanent non-existence in God:

Nothing can be more surprising than the agreement among the writers who express those teachings, in spite of the greatest difference of their age, country, and religion, accompanied as it is by the absolute certainty and fervent assurance with which they state the permanence and consistency of their inner experience. They do not form some sect that adheres to, defends, and propagates a dogma theoretically popular and once adopted; on the contrary, they generally do not know of one another; in fact, the Indian, Christian, and Mohammedan mystics, quietists,

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

and ascetics are different in every respect except in the inner meaning and spirit of their teachings.<sup>14</sup>

It is perhaps advisable at this point to offer a brief definition of the concept of mysticism. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines it as: 'A doctrine or discipline maintaining that one can gain knowledge of reality that is not accessible to sense perception, or to rational, conceptual thought.'<sup>15</sup>

Schopenhauer's discussions of mysticism did not revolve exclusively around Eastern mystical thought. He also showed that mysticism had become a part of Western spirituality through the neo-Platonists and the Christian Mystics such as Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328) and his pupil John Tauler (c. 1300-61), in the late Middle Ages.

Meister Eckhart's teachings seem to be saying the same things that Eastern mystics had been saying for thousands of years:

There are four reasons why the soul should 'arise' and dwell above itself. The first is because of the many and various joys it finds in God, for God's perfection cannot contain itself but lets pour forth from him creatures with whom he can share himself, who can receive his likeness... The second reason why the soul should 'arise' is because of the purity it finds in God, for all things are pure and noble in God... The third reason why the soul should 'arise' is because of the completeness it finds in God, where there is no difference... If in God goodness were one thing and wisdom another, the soul could never find fulfilment in God... The soul must dwell above itself if it is to grasp God... The fourth reason why the soul should 'arise' is because of the boundlessness it finds in God. All things are ever new in God... This is how the soul dies in itself before it strides into God... the soul strides into God where it will remain forever, reigning with God in eternity; and then it never thinks of temporal things or itself. Rather it is completely dissolved in God and God in it. What it does then, it does in God.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

<sup>15</sup> Audi, Robert (ed), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 515.

<sup>16</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn, 1986, p. 335-337, cited in Alan D. Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas: A Spiritual Journey*, Lewiston, 1996, p. 199-200.

The way Schopenhauer understands the Christian mystic's ideas in relation to his own theories is apparent from his following comment: 'For just what the Christian mystics call the *effect of grace* and the *new birth*, is for us the only direct expression of the *freedom of the will*.<sup>17</sup>

Evidence of the lasting influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner can be found everywhere, from Wagner's letters to his friends and his prose writings, to his wife Cosima's diaries. He accepted the theory of the will, and that the only way to salvation was the denial of the will-to-live: 'Fate I deem certain, but the work of man is useless. —Stones are gods, they do not hate, they do not beg, they do not interfere in the affairs of others, bestirring themselves only when one wishes it. Probably no other people has ever seen and comprehended things as well as the Indians.'<sup>18</sup> He also seemed to have found what he had been looking for in the idea of reincarnation. On June 7, 1855, he wrote to Franz Liszt:

... according to his [the Buddha's] doctrine of metempsychosis, every living creature will be reborn in the shape of that being to which he caused pain, however pure his life may otherwise have been, so that he himself may learn to know pain; his suffering soul continues to migrate in this way, and he himself continues to be reborn until such time as he causes no more pain to any living creature in the course of some new incarnation but, out of fellow-suffering, completely denies himself and his own will to live.—

How sublime and uniquely satisfying is this teaching in contrast to Christian-Judaic dogma according to which each human being—for in this case, of course, the suffering beast exists only to serve man!—merely has to behave himself in the eyes of the Church throughout the short space of his life on earth, in order to lead an extremely easy life for the rest

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<sup>17</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 404.

<sup>18</sup> Wagner, *Cosima, Diaries 1869-1877*, vol. 1, New York, 1977, p. 946 (13 Feb. 1877) translation from Aberbach, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

of eternity, whereas those who have not followed the teachings of the Church in this brief life will suffer equally eternal torment as a result!<sup>19</sup>

Although the above letter was written in 1855, it seems that his conviction on the doctrine of reincarnation remained just as strong twenty-five years later, when Cosima Wagner quoted him in her diary on December 16, 1880 as having said: 'Every act, good or bad, has its consequences; it is of no account whether the individual lives to see it or not. If he holds out, he will see it. There is something sublime about the justice of Fate –for one cannot ascribe it to human beings.'<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Wagner was so impressed by the Buddhist doctrines, when he first came into contact with them, that he even started considering writing a music drama revolving around Buddhist ideas: 'After reading Bournouff's *Introduction to the History of Buddhism* I even distilled from it the material for a dramatic poem, which has remained with me ever since, if only in a very rough outline, and might one day even be brought to fruition. I gave it the title *Die Sieger*... To the mind of the Buddha, the previous lives in former incarnations of every being appearing before him stand revealed as clearly as the present.'<sup>21</sup>

Although *Die Sieger* never actually came to fruition, Wagner tells us in *Mein Leben* how a second project was born from his contact with Schopenhauer: 'It was no doubt in part the earnest frame of mind produced by Schopenhauer, now demanding some rapturous expression of its fundamental traits, which gave me the idea for a *Tristan und Isolde*.'<sup>22</sup>

It was not, however, only the Buddhist doctrines that Wagner found in Schopenhauer which impressed him. His encounter with the philosopher brought about in Wagner a re-evaluation of the Christian faith. In 1879, he told his wife: 'Yes, it was Schopenhauer who revealed Christianity to me.'<sup>23</sup> He also seemed to think that the introduction of Buddhism into Western society and thought might prove to be beneficial for Christianity: '... by giving

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<sup>19</sup> Translation from Aberbach, *op. cit.*, p. 177-178.

<sup>20</sup> Wagner, Cosima, *Diaries*, vol.2, p. 576, translation from Aberbach, *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>21</sup> Wagner, Richard, *My Life*, p. 528-529, translation from Aberbach, *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 510, translation from Aberbach, *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> Wagner, Cosima, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 269-270, translation from Aberbach, *Ibid.*, p. 168.

much attention to Buddhism one learns to understand Christianity, and people were surely now beginning to realise that the greatest heroic power lies in resignation.<sup>24</sup>

In his essay 'Beethoven', in 1870, Wagner compares Christianity to music. From the manner in which this comparison is made, it is apparent that he has internalised Schopenhauer's Buddhist and Mystical theories, and is applying them to his view of the ideal Christian faith:

Both say aloud: 'our kingdom is not of this world.' And that means: we come from within, ye from without; we spring forth from the essence of things, ye from their show.<sup>25</sup>

In 'Religion and Art', of 1880, he goes so far as to advocate vegetarianism as being essential for the regeneration of the race, on the principle that animals only differ from humans in the degree of their intellectual capacity; however, 'what precedes intellectual equipment, what desires and suffers, is the same will-to-live in them as in the most reason-gifted man.'<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the profound effect Schopenhauer had on Wagner can even be seen in the 'educational plan' Wagner and his wife drew up for their son, in August 1878. The one and only philosopher to make it onto the 'reading list' was Schopenhauer. On matters of religion, on the other hand, the two writers mentioned were the two medieval catholic mystics, Meister Eckhart and his pupil Johannes Tauler.<sup>27</sup>

## Wagner's and Schopenhauer's influences on Mahler

How did all of the above influence Mahler himself? First of all, we know that, as soon as Wagner's 'Art and Religion' appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* (1880), Mahler immediately took up vegetarianism, for about three years.<sup>28</sup> He

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<sup>24</sup> Wagner, Cosima, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 912, translation from Aberbach *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> Wagner, Richard, 'Beethoven', *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, p. 120, translation from Stephen Hefling *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>26</sup> Wagner, Richard, 'Religion and Art', *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 226, translation from Stephen Hefling 'The Making of Mahler's "Totdenfeier"', p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> Wagner, Cosima, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 135, translation from Aberbach, *op. cit.*, p. 201-202.

<sup>28</sup> Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler*, I, p. 60-70.

was not alone; two of his friends, Richard Kralik and Victor Adler from the Pernerstorfer circle, did exactly the same.<sup>29</sup> But the effects of Wagner's article on the circle did not stop there. The ideas formulated in the article, although attractive, did not offer immediate applications for social reform and so the circle began to be divided between the more politically orientated members and the 'aesthetes'. Mahler, Lipiner and Kralik, in 1881, formed a new society, the *Sagengesellschaft*.<sup>30</sup> Kralik's formulation of the objectives of the new society is found in his work *Tage and Werke, Lebenserinnerungen* of 1922. According to him, the goal of the organisation was 'living, thinking and working in myths, gods, and heroes... A new world view should come into being, an artistic, poetic one opposed to the modern scientific one.'<sup>31</sup> Lipiner's version of the above, with obvious Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian overtones, was: 'for us, the kingdom of forms is no longer a wonderful fairy world into which we flee from "life". For us it is nothing –or it is *true life*.'<sup>32</sup>

In July 1883, Mahler travelled to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal* and when he returned, he wrote to his life-long friend Fritz Löhr:

When I walked out of the Festspielhaus, incapable of uttering a word, I knew I had come to understand all that is greatest and most painful and that I would bear it within me, inviolate, throughout my life.<sup>33</sup>

His admiration of Wagner seemed to have lasted throughout his life and the impact on his world-view was just as long lasting. Ten years after the above letter, in July-August of 1893, Natalie Bauer-Lechner records him as having said:

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<sup>29</sup> Hefling, *op. cit.*, p. 114. For a detailed discussion on the Pernerstorfer Circle and its activities see: William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

<sup>30</sup> Hefling, *op. cit.*, also McGrath, *op. cit.*, p. 93-99.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Hefling, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Also McGrath, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> Lipiner, Siegfried, Die künstlerische Neuerung in Goethes *Faust*, *Deutsche Zeitung*, June 30, 1881, p. 1-2; cited in Hefling, *op. cit.*, p. 115, and McGrath, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>33</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 73.

Whenever my spirits are low, I have only to think of Wagner and my mood improves. How amazing that a light like his ever penetrated the world! What a firebrand! What a revolutionary and reformer of art such as had never existed before! But then he was born at the right moment, at the precise juncture of time when the world was waiting for what he had to say and offer. And from this stems nearly half of the immense, world-shaking effect of such genius. "For the greatest power lies in the moment of birth and in the ray of light that greets the newly born", as Hölderlin says. How many lofty spirits may there be who, coming into the world at the wrong moment, go their way unused and unrecognised and vanish without a trace!<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, Wagner's (and Schopenhauer's) belief in fate—of some form or another—had affected Mahler. The form taken by Mahler's belief in fate will be discussed more extensively later on, along with a more general examination of Mahler's particular spiritual preoccupations.

For the time being, I will attempt to establish to what extent Mahler may have been influenced by Wagner's and Schopenhauer's ideas on spirituality. A point that is of importance, however, is that Mahler's beliefs and ideas on spirituality cannot stem solely from reading Schopenhauer and Wagner, or any one writer in particular. He must have had similar thoughts and ideas himself, or at least questions to which thoughts such as these provided answers, before ever coming into contact with Schopenhauer and Wagner, for the ground to have been fertile for those writings to form a lasting influence. His thoughts and beliefs cannot have been created, from scratch, by Schopenhauer and Wagner. They can only have been reinforced, expanded and developed on a pre-existing foundation. Otherwise they would have seemed irrelevant at best, nonsensical at worst.

There are various sources which can give us the necessary information to form a fairly clear idea of Mahler's preoccupations, thoughts and beliefs. The first, which is probably also the one that offers indisputable evidence, is his correspondence. Although there are letters in which he does discuss philosophical and spiritual issues outright, these are not the only ones that can

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<sup>34</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 38.

be used as 'evidence'. There are numerous letters in which he goes into—sometimes lengthy—descriptions of his state of mind and preoccupations which, I believe, are just as important in examining Mahler's personality and spirituality. In this latter case, a certain amount of deduction, comparison and interpretation may be necessary, in order to produce a clear picture of what he may be referring to, but in most cases even that is not necessary, as his words speak for themselves.

The picture of Mahler's mind is quite easily completed by his friends' reports of him. Natalie Bauer-Lechner may not have gone into his philosophical and spiritual interests very extensively, but she does nevertheless give us some information on the matter, mostly inadvertently, through her recordings of his discussions on music. Bruno Walter, on the other hand, devoted large sections of his writings specifically to Mahler's philosophical and spiritual preoccupations. Also, Richard Specht, although not one of Mahler's closest friends, nevertheless seemed to have had a deep understanding of Mahler's nature and music. So much so, in fact, that when he wrote a small book on Mahler, which appeared in a collection of short biographies published in 1905, he sent it to Mahler before publication for his approval. Mahler's response to the book is recorded in a letter of 1904 to Specht, and is so indicative of the depths of Specht's understanding of Mahler's 'essential nature', and Mahler's response is so sincere, that I believe it is worth quoting in full:

Dear Specht,

I think it was Walter's laconic attitude that gave you such a fright.<sup>35</sup> –Well—I have emended only a few tiny details; the passage on p. 11 where you touch on one of the most important psychological problems might well have been expanded and given more weight, for I believe that that is how it is with all human values.

On p. 16 I have indicated the 'literary' version. –The repetitions of certain words came about only in the course of setting to music. –

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<sup>35</sup> Mahler had remarked to Walter that he would like to see a few changes made and Walter conveyed this in such a way to Specht that he thought that Mahler had rejected the whole book. (note of the original editor of Mahler's *Selected Letters*, p. 276).

The reference to my parents as 'publicans' seems to be a rather trivial example of extreme accuracy. I think it would be adequate to describe my father simply as a businessman.

Finally, I should like to thank you most warmly for your sympathetic treatment, from which alone (as you correctly observe) understanding can come about –and vice versa. Despite my sporadic successes (which I perhaps owe only to attendant external circumstances) there still seems to be a long hard road ahead for my works –and for my future ones perhaps even more so!

The time therefore seems to have come when there is need of such a brave pioneer to tell it all over again. –

My Sixth will pose conundrums that only a generation that has absorbed and digested my first five symphonies may hope to solve.

Yours sincerely,

Mahler

The whole thing was immensely to my liking; and I am astonished by how deeply you have penetrated into my essential nature. And your understanding is doubly precious to me because it has proceeded from the works to their creator.<sup>36</sup>

Through letters such as this, it is possible to clarify concerns about the reliability of the reports on Mahler's personality by his friends. Such relevant reports will be dealt with in more detail in the second part of the following chapter. In the first part of the chapter I shall explore what Mahler himself said on the issues of spirituality and philosophy, and compare them with Schopenhauer's and Wagner's views. First of all, I will deal with what can be gleaned from Mahler's letters, then from Bruno Walter's testimony, and finally from the songs and poems that Mahler chose to set to music.

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<sup>36</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 276-277.

*How can I believe in God when just last week I got my tongue caught in the roller of  
an electric typewriter?*

Woody Allen

## Chapter II

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### Primary Sources:

#### Mahler's Correspondence.

Although Mahler came from a Jewish family, there are no indications that he was, at any point in his life, a practising Jew. In February 1897 he converted to Catholicism in Kleine Michaelskirche in Hamburg. It is considered a given that the reason for this conversion was to help his appointment as Director to the Vienna Court Opera. Mahler was fully conscious of the fact that his Jewishness was an impediment to his career, as he told his friend Fritz Löhner in a letter of spring 1894. 'The situation of the world being what it now is, the fact that I am Jewish prevents my getting taken on in any Court Opera theatre. –Neither Vienna, nor Berlin, nor Dresden, nor Munich is open to me. The same wind is now blowing everywhere.'<sup>1</sup>

My intention is not to attempt to argue that his reasons for converting to Roman Catholicism were other than the obvious. I will, however, attempt to show that his conversion did not in any way compromise his spirituality or

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<sup>1</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, p. 152. This letter was not dated by Mahler, but the editor of the English edition, Knud Martner, provides the above date.

his beliefs, because his spirituality was beyond the strict confines of any one religious system. This is something that becomes quite clear if one examines his correspondence, whereas an examination of his creative work at a first glance might be deceptive, since up until *Das Lied von der Erde* all his references were of a catholic/Christian nature. *Das Lied von der Erde* might then be interpreted as a sudden turn towards eastern-based philosophies near the end of his life, whereas in fact his philosophical outlook seemed to be under eastern spiritual influences from when he was a teenager. All this combines strangely with his constant references to Christian symbolism and, if one is not as familiar with eastern philosophies as with the western mystical philosophies, it is something that is easily missed altogether. In his letters there is even the occasional reference that sounds suspiciously pagan in its connection with nature and natural phenomena.

In June of 1879, Mahler seems to have been going through a period of what might be called 'adolescent angst', and his thoughts were recorded in two letters to his friend Joseph Steiner, of the 17th and the 18th of that month. The letters are long and written with romantic literary flourish and to the modern reader they might seem outlandish. The meaning of what he is saying is not so strange, although the imagery may well be:

...When the abominable tyranny of our modern hypocrisy and mendacity has driven me to the point of dishonouring myself, when the inextricable web of conditions in art and life had filled my heart with disgust for all that is sacred to me –art, love, religion –what way out is there but self-annihilation? Wildly I wrench at the bonds that chain me to the loathsome, insipid swamp of this life, and with all the strength of despair I cling to sorrow, my only consolation. –Then all at once the sun smiles upon me –and gone is the ice that encased my heart, again I see the blue sky and the flowers swaying in the wind, and my mocking laughter dissolves in tears of love. Then I *needs must* love this world with all its deceit and frivolity and its eternal laughter. Oh, would that some god might tear the veil from my eyes, that my clear gaze might penetrate to the marrow of the earth! Oh, that I might behold this earth in its

nakedness, lying there without adornment or embellishment before its Creator; then I would step forth and face its genius...<sup>2</sup>

The next day, the 18th, Mahler continued writing to Steiner in much the same vein, only this time he seems to be describing a dream, and even in the dream the same preoccupation with the 'meaning of life' appears dominant:

... and the branches sway in the wind, rocking me into a slumber like the daughters of the elfin king, and the leaves and blossoms of my favourite tree tenderly caress my cheeks. –Stillness everywhere! Most holy stillness!... Suddenly a table rises out of the ground, and behind it stands a spiritual figure veiled in blue clouds: it is Melion<sup>3</sup> hymning the 'Great Spirit', at the same time censuring him with genuine Three Kings tobacco! And beside him the two of us sit like altar-boys about to serve at Mass for the first time.

And behind us a grinning goblin hovers, decked out in piquet cards, and he has Buxbaum's<sup>4</sup> face and calls out to us in a terrible voice, to the melody of Bertini's Études: 'Bow down! For this glory too shall turn to dust!' A cascade of smoke from Melion covers the whole scene, the clouds become even denser, and then suddenly, as in Raphael's painting of the Madonna, a little angel's head peers out from among these clouds, and below him Ahasuerus stands in all his sufferings, longing to ascend to him, to enter the presence of all that means bliss and redemption, but the angel floats away on high, laughing, and vanishes, and Ahasuerus gazes after him in immeasurable grief, then takes up his staff and resumes his wanderings, tearless, eternal, immortal.

O earth, my beloved earth, when, ah when will you give refuge to him who is forsaken, receiving him back into your womb? Behold! Mankind has cast him out, and he flees from its cold and heartless bosom, he flees to you, to you alone! O take him in, eternal, all-embracing mother, give a resting place to him who is without friend and without rest!...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> The original editor of Mahler's Selected Letters informs us that Franz Melion was Mahler's teacher at the grammar school he went to from 1875 to 1877.

<sup>4</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>5</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

Behind all the bizarre, singularly romantic imagery, what is clearly obvious is that the young Mahler was in real torment. Ahasuerus, in the letter, is the 'wandering Jew', a figure which seems to also represent Mahler's own predicament, as his Jewishness doubtless contributed to his inner turmoil. Alma reports him as often saying in later years: 'I am thrice homeless. As a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout all the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed.'<sup>6</sup> A simple, straightforward 'translation' of the above letters, however, would be that the young man pouring his feelings out in a letter to his friend simply does not understand the world, life, its meaning and the meaning of suffering, and most of all God. When one does not understand something fear is the normal reaction. Mahler was clearly frightened—not frightened of God—but life, and everything that life entails, including suffering and death. He also seems to feel alone in his fearful preoccupations, as is obvious both from the second letter quoted above, and from a shorter one he wrote a month later, to Albert Spiegler:

... Ah, it is long since there was any altar left for me: only, mute and high, God's temple arches over me, the wide sky. -I cannot rise to it, and would so gladly pray. Instead of chorales and hymns it is thunder that roars, and instead of candles it is lightning that flickers -Storm on, storm on, I understand your language not, ye elements, and when ye jubilate to God, to my human ear it sounds like wrath!

Write soon. Everyone else is silent.

Ever,

Gustav Mahler<sup>7</sup>

The touching sincerity of this letter seems to need no further explanations. Yet one might easily argue that all the above are simply manifestations of the natural anxiety created by the inescapable transition from puberty to adulthood. That records of his preoccupation with metaphysical questions do not suddenly run dry when he reached adulthood is evidence that the issues he was grappling with ran much deeper than that. Nevertheless, overtly

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<sup>6</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton, London: John Murray, 1946, pp. 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57-58.

Christian imagery does seem to disappear at some point in his letters, even though it remained a method of expression in his creative work at least up to his Eighth Symphony. By 1885, there is evidence that his spiritual thought had matured and crystallised into something decidedly non-sectarian. He now seems to be clear on matters such as 'premonitions' and 'clairvoyance'—which will be discussed more extensively later on—and on eternal issues such as the source of happiness. There are two letters of that year that testify to this; both were written to Fritz Löhr in the month of April of that year. On 28 March 1885 Löhr's mother had died and this is part of the letter Mahler sent to him as a reply, when Löhr informed him of his loss:

There is nothing to say. I had such forebodings during these last days. Nameless anxiety and sorrow befell me. -I kept on wanting to write to you, and always something held me back..<sup>8</sup>

It seems that Mahler, in hindsight, considered these 'forebodings' to refer to the death of Löhr's mother and he seems to be treating them as a completely natural phenomenon. The sincerity and unaffectedness of the language might also hint at the idea that Mahler may have been accustomed to such phenomena; and that Löhr either shared his views on the matter, or at least was aware of them, even though there is nothing else in this letter that would corroborate that supposition.

Mahler's reply to Löhr, when the latter apparently asked Mahler if he had enjoyed himself at the music festival in Kassel, at which Mahler conducted Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*, is found in the second letter of that year. No more than two sentences from that letter are necessary for the point to be made:

... You want to know if I enjoyed the 'music festival'. -As for that, it is as with any fulfilment one expects from outside..<sup>9</sup>

In these two simple sentences, Mahler seems to be subscribing to the well-known notion that happiness and fulfilment can not be found outside oneself, but only within oneself. It also happens to be a notion that is common to most mystical traditions, including those of Christianity and Buddhism. It also

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85.

doesn't seem to be far removed from Wagner's and Schopenhauer's ideas, as discussed earlier.

By the 1890s Mahler was a mature man and this maturity is reflected in his correspondence of that period. His philosophical and religious thought seems also to have matured and his correspondence bears testimony to that. There are five letters that will be discussed, written in this period, the first three in 1896, the fourth in 1895 and the last in 1897.

The first letter that I wish to discuss was not dated by Mahler himself, which was something he often neglected to do, but Knud Martner, the editor of the English translation of Mahler's *Selected Letters*, tentatively dates it at 1896. Addressed to Richard Batka, a music critic, it is a reply to a questionnaire about artistic creativity and the problems of the artist's participation in some common cultural task.<sup>10</sup> The way the questions were posed, however, seems to have disagreed with Mahler's philosophical outlook on art and creativity, hence his response to the letter seems to be more about his outlook on life and religious thought, than about the processes of creative activity:

...But what I really cannot reconcile myself to is your inquiry into what artists are working 'at'...But I could no more tell you what I work 'at' than what I live 'on'. -The living cloak of the godhead<sup>11</sup> -that might serve as an answer! But it would only make you go on asking questions, would it not?

When I have given birth to a work, I enjoy discovering what chords it *sets vibrating* in 'the Other' [im 'Anderm']. But I have not yet been able to give an explanation of that myself -far less obtain one from others. That sounds mystical! But perhaps the time has again come when we and our works are on the point of once again becoming a little in-'comprehensible' to ourselves. *Only if that is so* do I believe that we work 'at' something...<sup>12</sup>

To modern eyes, this reply to the questionnaire seems more like an evasion than a truthful answer. And yet, if one compares this letter to Mahler's

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<sup>10</sup> This information is provided by the original editor of Mahler's *Selected Letters*, p. 176.

<sup>11</sup> Quotation from Goethe's *Faust*, identified by Knud Martner, in Mahler's *Selected Letters*, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 175-76.

creative works, to other letters of his and even reports from his friends, it looks as if he was being quite sincere, and answering the questionnaire to the best of his ability. He even wrote in much the same terms to his friend Max Marschalk, a Berlin music critic and composer, in March of 1896:

... I know that, so far as I myself am concerned, as long as I can express an experience in words I should never try to put it into music. The need to express myself musically—in symphonic terms—begins only on the plane of *obscure* feelings, at the gate that opens into the ‘other world’ [die ‘andere welt’], the world in which things no longer fall apart in time and space...<sup>13</sup>

This part of the letter to Marschalk is quoted extensively in relevant literature, but almost never with the intention of illustrating Mahler’s religious and philosophical thought, but rather his attitude towards symphonic composition and programmes. Compared with the previous letter to Richard Batka, however, the consistency of his philosophical-spiritual references is not only self-evident, but also meaningful. Whether the ‘Other’ mentioned in the first letter and the ‘other world’ in the second are one and the same in Mahler’s mind is impossible to know for certain. It could be argued that the ‘Other’ referred to in the first letter is obviously the listener. If that were the case, however, it would be difficult to explain why it is placed in inverted commas, something which is done to denote that the word in question is used in some other than its usual meaning. In both cases, the ‘Other’ and the ‘other world’ are connected with the ‘in-comprehensibility’ of man and his artistic creations, and with ‘*obscure* feelings’; an educated guess might lead to the conclusion that Mahler is referring to the same thing. Also, when in the second letter he describes the ‘other world’ as the one in which ‘things no longer fall apart in time and space’, he is distinctly reminiscent of the mystical writings, not only of Meister Eckhart, but also of Angelus Silesius who lived around three hundred years later in the 17th century. Meister Eckhart, as was mentioned earlier, says:

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

The third reason why the soul should 'arise' is because of the completeness it finds in God, *where there is no difference...*<sup>14</sup> If in God goodness were one thing and wisdom another, the soul could never find fulfilment in God...

Whereas Angelus Silesius, a writer of epigrams, phrases the same concept in verse:

When man starts to withdraw from multiplicity  
And turns his face toward God, he enters unity.<sup>15</sup>

Anna von Mildeburg was the recipient of a third letter, also of 1896, which explains to her the concept behind the sixth movement of his Third Symphony:

... But the love in my symphony is one different from what you suppose. The <motto> of this movement (no.7) is:

Vater, sieh an die Wunden mein!  
Kein Wesen lass verloren sein!<sup>16</sup>

Now do you understand what it is about? It is an attempt to show the summit, the highest level from which the world can be surveyed. I could equally well call the movement something like: 'What God tells me!' And this in the sense that God can, after all, only be comprehended as 'love'...<sup>17</sup>

This letter seems to have been composed by a man with mature, confident faith that understands the principles of Christianity much better than most. Yet, a year earlier, in 1895 when he wrote to Fritz Löhr describing the movements of the Third Symphony, the description he gives for this same movement is radically different, not so much on a programmatic level, as on the level of Mahler's feelings towards the content of the movement:

VI. 'W[as]. m[ir]. d[ie]. Liebe erzählt', a summary of my feelings towards all creatures which develops not without deeply painful spiritual

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<sup>14</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> Silesius, Angelus, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradly, New York: Paulist Press, 1986, (epigram no. 224) p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> The motto is from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, from the poem "Erlösung" (Redemption), but Mahler has made radical changes to it, as was usual.

<sup>17</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 188. The motto he attaches to the seventh movement of the symphony actually belongs to the sixth movement of the final version.

involvement, which, however, is gradually resolved into blissful confidence:

*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft...*<sup>18</sup>

The conflict of emotions in this passage is much more similar to and reminiscent of Mahler's earlier, teenage letters, to his friend Joseph Steiner. Even though in the letter to Anna von Mildenburg the connotations seem markedly Christian, the fact that he normally refers to all 'living beings' or 'creatures', rather than just humans, seems to reflect a much more Buddhist outlook on the world.

Finally, the last letter of this same period that seems relevant is one written to Arnold Berliner, which once again is undated; the original editor of Mahler's *Selected Letters* dates it 22 April 1897. This letter bears one of admittedly very few indications that Mahler may have adopted Wagner's and Schopenhauer's belief in reincarnation. It is true that he never specifically expressed himself on the matter, but in this letter it is the wording that is difficult to interpret in any other way:

... Another new chapter now begins. But I am going *home*<sup>19</sup> and shall do my utmost to put an end to my wanderings so far as *this life* is concerned...<sup>20</sup>

Constantin Floros is the only writer, to my knowledge, to broach the subject of reincarnation in relation to Mahler's spiritual beliefs. He connects it, however, not to Wagner and Schopenhauer, but to the Jewish mystical tradition of the Qabalah and its doctrine of 'soul migration'.<sup>21</sup> It is a reasonable connection to make when taking into account the fact that Mahler came from a Jewish background and did not convert to Catholicism until 1897. The fact that, by all accounts, he was never a practising Jew somewhat weakens the hypothesis, unless we assume that he somehow had access to Qabalistic mystical writings. Although we may never know if that was the

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<sup>18</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 164. The term *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* is taken from Nietzsche's work of the same title, but Mahler uses the term in a totally different context from Nietzsche's philosophy. For a discussion on the subject see Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker, Portland, Ore., 1993.

<sup>19</sup> To Vienna, apparently.

<sup>20</sup> My emphasis. Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> Floros, Constantin, *Gustav Mahler, I: Die geistige Welt Gustav Mahlers in systematischer Darstellung*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1977, p. 113-114.

case, the fact that there is evidence indicating that Mahler was interested in mystical writings in general does not exclude the possibility. As with Christianity, the writings of the inner cult of the Jewish tradition differ hugely from the practised version of the religion.

There are two more letters that bear indications that Mahler may have espoused the age-old belief in reincarnation, but again, it is only small deviations from standard expressions which make this one of the possible interpretations. First, however, a letter that offers invaluable insight into Mahler's beliefs and also paves the way for the letters written in the latter part of his life is one written to Max Kalbeck on 22 June 1901. It comes in that category of letters that, I believe, need no interpretation whatsoever:

...Scarlet fever is not very noticeable here by the lake; and even if it were –jy reste! You can see that too is an article of faith with me; though it is also knowledge that a man's real enemies are not outside him, but within himself. –Actually I cannot understand how it comes that you—with a musician-poet's soul—do not possess that faith-knowledge. What is it then that delights you when you hear music? What makes you light-hearted and free? Is the world less puzzling if you build it out of matter? Is there any explanation to be got from your seeing it as an interplay of mechanical forces? What is force, energy? *Who* does the playing? You believe in the 'conservation of energy', in the indestructibility of matter. Is that not immortality too?

Shift the problem to any plane you choose –in the end you will always reach the point where 'your philosophy' begins to 'dream'.<sup>22</sup>

This is probably the clearest and most specific record of Mahler's outlook on the world and his spirituality available from a primary source. If one compares this record to, for example, Bruno Walter's reports on Mahler's personality, concerns about Walter's reliability diminish significantly.

The self-assured confidence in his faith that is apparent in this letter disappeared as soon as, in 1907, Mahler was diagnosed with the heart condition that would eventually kill him. In July 1908 he wrote a long and touching letter to Bruno Walter describing—or at least trying to describe—his

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<sup>22</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 251-252.

psychological state. The psychological crisis that he was experiencing at the time is hardly surprising when taking into consideration the fact that, in 1907, as well as him being diagnosed with a terminal heart disease, his eldest daughter Maria died of diphtheria at the age of four. This coincidence of circumstances would have been sufficient to test anyone's faith. Much more so Mahler's, whose nature is described by Bruno Walter to be such that 'because of its inconstancy, he was unable to hold conquered spiritual positions... and he was forced again and again to renew his fight for spiritual possessions.'<sup>23</sup>

All the letters quoted thus far in this discussion have been taken from the English edition of Mahler's *Selected Letters*. With the following letter to Walter, however, I will quote Stephen Hefling's translation that can be found in *The Mahler Companion*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1999. The reason for this decision is based entirely on the translation of the last sentence of the quoted section. The translation in the *Selected Letters* is less literal and I feel that the subtle connotations of the original German text are lost. To illustrate the point, the German version of the sentence will also be given, after the English one. Regardless of the theoretical difficulties of translation, the essential nature of Mahler's thoughts is clear in either translated text and that is exactly what is of interest to the present discussion. The letter was written to Bruno Walter on 18 July 1908.

... -If I am to find the way back to myself again, I must surrender to the terrors of loneliness... you do not know what has been and is going on in me, but it is certainly not that hypochondriac fear in the face of death that you suppose. I had already realised that I must die. -But without attempting here to explain or describe to you something for which there are perhaps no words at all, I will just tell you that in one stroke I have simply lost all the clarity and reassurance I ever achieved; and that I stood vis à vis de rien and now at the end of a life I must learn to stand and move again as a beginner...<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Walter, Bruno, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 132.

<sup>24</sup> Hefling, Stephen, "Das Lied von der Erde", in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 438.

...und dass ich vis à vis de rien stand und nun am Ende eines Lebens  
als Anfänger wieder gehen und stehen lernen muss.<sup>25</sup>

The meaning of this passage is not hard to understand when taking into consideration that Mahler was diagnosed with a *terminal* heart disease. Of course we all know that we will eventually die, but fortunately, most of us do not know when that will be. It is not hard to imagine the impact it would have on us if we were told at a quite young age (Mahler was only 47 at the time) that that would be sometime in the near and foreseeable future, without actually being told when. That sort of uncertainty, combined with the definite knowledge that it will happen would probably lead most of us to the unavoidable question 'am I ready to die?' This seems to be exactly the question that Mahler was forced to confront and is answering in this letter. It seems the answer was 'no'.

What makes this letter interesting, besides the obvious conflict of emotions with religious or spiritual faith, is the last sentence of the passage. It could be argued that I am guilty of pedantry, and if this letter were the only example of this sort of wording, I would be inclined to agree. If one compares, however, the phrase 'at the end of *a* life' with the phrase 'so far as *this* life is concerned', which was quoted earlier from a letter of 1897 to Arnold Berliner, the similarity in wording becomes immediately obvious. This is also the reason why Stephen Hefling's translation was preferred to that of the English edition of Mahler's *Selected Letters*. In the latter translation, the indefinite article 'a' is omitted entirely, to create the phrase 'at the end of life am again a beginner...' Obviously, the connotations of this phrase in English are completely different when the indefinite article is included.

The obvious solution to this problem of translation would be by recourse to the original German text. In this one can see a very purposeful use of an indefinite article, for which there is no obvious reason why it should be omitted in the English translation. This issue intrigued me to such an extent that I sought the advice of a native German speaker. He assured me that 'eines Lebens' does indeed translate into 'a life' and that there is no reason

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in Floros, *Gustav Mahler, I: Die geistige Welt Gustav Mahlers in systematischer Darstellung*, p. 100.

that he could think of for the article to be omitted in English. He also informed me that, in German, the most common rendition of 'at the end of life' would be 'am Lebens ende'; alternatively, the form 'am Ende des Lebens' could be used, but that would be less common. In fact, he went a step further, informing me that, if this were a modern German text, 'am Ende eines Lebens' could even be translated as 'one life'. Accounting for the fact that the text was written in the beginning of the twentieth century, he admitted that he was not certain whether that would be a correct translation for the period and advised against the use of 'one', and for the use of 'a'.<sup>26</sup>

There is one more piece of evidence relevant to this attempt at deducing whether Mahler shared Wagner's and Schopenhauer's belief in reincarnation and that is found in a letter written a year later, in 1909, again to Bruno Walter:

...There is much too much to write about myself, I couldn't even begin to try to begin. I am experiencing so infinitely much now (in the last eighteen months), I can hardly talk about it. How should I attempt to describe such a tremendous crisis! I see everything in such a new light – am in such a state of flux, sometimes I should hardly be surprised suddenly to find myself in a new body. (Like Faust is the last scene)...<sup>27</sup>

This last comment is obviously not related in any way to a belief in reincarnation. It may, just as easily, be a literary metaphor to illustrate Mahler's diversified perception of things in that certain period of his life. Considering the two letters discussed previously, however, it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that there may be a connection. Faust himself may not have been literally reincarnated, but Mahler's comment takes on a whole different dimension when one takes into consideration Mahler's philosophical background.

It is probably worth noting that ideas of reincarnation are in no way connected to spiritualism, the latter being the belief that 'spirits of the deceased survive bodily death and communicate with the living, usually via a

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<sup>26</sup> Personal communication with Dr. Martin Pos, early January 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

medium by means of messages, or apparently paranormal physical effects.<sup>28</sup> Spiritualism had become in vogue in fin-de-siècle Europe and America and it is known that Mahler attended one séance in 1909, in New York, and was profoundly shaken by the experience.<sup>29</sup> But there is no evidence to suggest that he had attended any other séances earlier, or indeed any after 1909.

In conclusion, Mahler's personal correspondence offers a very intimate glimpse into his personality, his outlook on life and his belief system. It may not always be clear but it certainly provides enough evidence and information with which to examine the validity of his friends' reports on his personality. What is clear is the fact that spirituality and religious faith—of whatever description—played a vital part in Mahler's life. The person who goes to the greatest lengths to explain this about Mahler's personality is Bruno Walter.

## Secondary Sources:

### Bruno Walter on Mahler

Bruno Walter met Mahler in 1894 at the Hamburg Opera. Mahler was Walter's senior by 16 years but that did not stop the two of them forming a well-documented friendship that lasted until Mahler's death. In Walter's eightieth-birthday interview issued on CBS Records he told Arnold Michaelis: 'I came as near to him as the difference of age made possible... Mahler was the greatest performing musician I ever met, without any exception.'<sup>30</sup>

In the Preface of his book *Gustav Mahler*, Walter explains that the book is not a biography, but 'a description of [Mahler's] "being", that is to say, a reproduction of the picture of Mahler that I carry within me.'<sup>31</sup> There is no reason to doubt Walter's sincerity but his admittedly subjective viewpoint may raise concerns about his reliability, even on such abstract notions as spirituality, philosophy and religious faith.

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<sup>28</sup> Goring, Rosemary (ed.), *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, p. 499.

<sup>29</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton, London: John Murray, 1946, p. 133-134.

<sup>30</sup> Issued on CBS Records, BRG 72068/9. Cited in Norman Lebrecht, *Mahler Remembered*, London: Faber & Faber, 1987; reissue 1998, p. 81.

<sup>31</sup> Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, p. viii-ix.

One such concern about relying on Walter as 'evidence' for information on Mahler's spirituality was brought to my attention by Dr Peter Franklin. He informed me that Bruno Walter should be read with a degree of caution since he became interested in theosophy in his later life. Dr Franklin felt that Walter may have tried to win Mahler over to 'a more fully mystical/spiritual' viewpoint near the end of Mahler's life'. He also brought my attention to the fact that the echoes of that debate could be caught in some of Mahler's later letters to Walter.<sup>32</sup>

This is obviously a legitimate concern. The letter of 18 July 1908, part of which was quoted earlier in relation to the subject of reincarnation, suggests in its first part that Mahler and Walter were indeed in the midst of a debate, the subject of which, however, doesn't become clear until one reads the footnote that appears in the English edition of Mahler's *Selected Letters*:

... I am so grateful for your kind, wonderful letter. I couldn't help smiling because I seem to notice that you are turning my own weapons against me. Heaven knows what you hit, but certainly not the 'enemy'! What is all this about the soul? And its sickness?\* And where should I find a remedy? On a Scandinavian journey? The most that could have done for me would have been to provide me with some distraction. But it is only here, in solitude, that I might come to myself and become conscious of myself... -If I am to find the way back to myself again, I must surrender to the horrors of loneliness...<sup>33</sup>

\*Bruno Walter remarks: I suppose I had suggested that Mahler should read Feuchtersleben's *Dietetics of the Soul* (1838); his rejection of it is only too understandable in the light of his nature.<sup>34</sup>

The problem with this letter is that it is not very clear what the subject of the debate is. Is it the 'soul' and 'its sickness', is it the specific book in question, or is it the fact that Walter suggested that Mahler should read that book while he was on his Scandinavian journey? Or could it be that the debate is on whether *any* book could provide relief for Mahler's 'soul' and its

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication with Dr. Peter Franklin, 17 November 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem.* (footnote).

'sickness'? Taking into account the diagnosis of a year earlier, I would tend to believe that it is the latter explanation which is most likely. Mahler does not seem to be disputing the existence of a soul, nor that it might suffer a 'sickness', but rather that a book could do anything more for the problem than provide 'distraction'. He does not even specifically reject the book in question.

There is no concrete evidence that Walter did attempt to influence Mahler's beliefs. But even if he did, a theosophical outlook is not so far removed from what we have seen to be Mahler's beliefs.<sup>35</sup> Walter's reports on Mahler need not, therefore, be suspected of inaccuracy. Moreover, it is more likely that Mahler, being the elder by sixteen years, would have influenced Walter rather than vice versa. Finally, there is one more primary piece of evidence from Mahler himself to suggest that Walter had as clear a picture of Mahler as can be expected. In 1907 Mahler wrote to Bruno Walter:

My dear Walter,

Thank you very much for your sweet letter. Neither of us need waste words on what we mean to each other. -I know of no one who understands me as well as I feel you do, and I believe that for my part I have entered deep into the mine of your soul...<sup>36</sup>

It is more than evident from this letter that Mahler not only regarded Walter as one of his closest friends, if not the closest, he also regarded him as the person that understood him the best. In light of this, I believe that it would be safe to treat Walter's testimony with the utmost respect. If Mahler's wife, Alma, had ulterior motives in painting an inaccurate or subjective picture of Mahler, there is no evidence that Bruno Walter had any such motives. His testimony may be subjective but he has on his side the credit that Mahler himself gave him for his understanding.

Bruno Walter, in his book *Gustav Mahler*, devotes the final chapter to Mahler's personality. What is interesting, however, is that almost the entire chapter revolves around a single aspect of Mahler's personality, namely his

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<sup>35</sup> See also Ryding, Eric and Rebecca Pechefsky, *Bruno Walter: A World Elsewhere*, New Haven; Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 383.

<sup>36</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

spirituality and its relation to his music. From the first to the very last page of the chapter Walter discusses Mahler's incessant efforts to understand the world and God. Interestingly, it is never one without the other; never the world alone and never God alone, but rather the relation between the two. If we accept that Walter had no reason to be purposefully inaccurate, then the last chapter of his book can only be one of two things: either twenty-seven pages of innocent misinterpretation, or a testimony to Mahler's personality that is as close to the truth as we are ever going to get. It is difficult to believe that after seventeen years of close friendship Walter could have misunderstood Mahler so profoundly.

From the very first page of the chapter in question Walter presents us with the subject he will be discussing throughout:

At the bottom of his soul lay a profound world-sorrow whose rising cold waves would seize him in an icy grip.

'How dark is the foundation upon which our life rests,' he once said to me with deep emotion...And, haltingly, he continued, speaking of the problems of human existence: 'Whence do we come? Whither does our road take us? Have I really willed this life, as Schopenhauer thinks, before I even was conceived? Why am I made to feel that I am free while yet I am constrained within my character as in a prison? What is the object of toil and sorrow? How am I to understand the cruelty and malice in the creations of a kind God? Will the meaning of life be finally revealed by death?'

...Fundamentally, there never was relief for him from the sorrowful struggle to fathom the meaning of human existence...<sup>37</sup>

Walter goes on to tell us how Mahler 'felt impelled to seek a deeper meaning in all occurrences, in life, and in suffering,' and that in his effort to do so he read extensively, not only philosophy but also literature, religion and natural sciences. <sup>38</sup> According to Walter:

In his [Mahler's] explorations of the spiritual world the needle of his compass pointed steadily in one direction –upward. And so he did not only read or receive the substance of learning, but he passed through it,

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<sup>37</sup> Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 131-132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137-143.

assimilating what of instruction he gathered, and subordinating to this tendency towards metaphysical perception all of his striving for knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

Walter confirms for us that Mahler was deeply influenced by Schopenhauer and that 'Nietzche's anti-Wagnerianism aroused [Mahler's] indignation and, in later days, he turned away from him entirely.'<sup>40</sup>

The most interesting part of Walter's testimony, however, is where he mentions Mahler's interest in Angelus Silesius. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Walter is the only one of Mahler's friends who makes any comment about Mahler's interest in mystical writers, apart from interestingly, Alma Mahler. Even if her motives might have been suspect concerning certain of her reports, the fact that the two people arguably closest to Mahler independently seem to agree on this subject is compelling evidence. She says:

He [Mahler] was attracted by Catholic mysticism, an attraction which was encouraged by those friends of his youth who changed their names and were baptised. His love of Catholic mysticism was, however, entirely his own.<sup>41</sup>

It is obvious that Walter can in no way be considered one of Mahler's 'friends of his youth...'. And yet, the fact that Walter was possibly interested in the same, or similar, aspects of spirituality may easily account for the fact that he was conscious of Mahler's interest and for the fact that he is the only one of his friends that devotes a couple of sentences to the subject. Specifically, he says:

Of the mystics, he was perhaps fondest of Angelus Silesius. He had a feeling of veritable kinship with him and liked to find solace in his daring and exalted nearness to God.<sup>42</sup>

In themselves, these two sentences do not seem particularly impressive, but taken in conjunction with what has been discussed earlier they become much more interesting. First of all, if we take this report at face value, a pattern emerges. Schopenhauer was interested in mystical writings and so was

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139-140.

<sup>41</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Memories and Letters*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Wagner, both of whom were immense influences on Mahler's thought. It would not, therefore, be out of character for Mahler to share that interest with them. Secondly, Angelus Silesius seems to have had certain important ideas in common with Schopenhauer and Wagner, especially in relation to concepts of 'will' and art.

Silesius's works were readily available in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Numerous publications of his works would indicate both that they must have been in reasonably high demand, and that Mahler would have had access to them. At least three different editions of Silesius's works appeared, after 1830, in roughly thirty-year intervals. *Heilige Seelenlust* was published in 1838,<sup>43</sup> *Sämmtliche poetische Werke* in 1862,<sup>44</sup> and *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* in 1895.<sup>45</sup>

As an example of Silesius's spiritual or philosophical kinship to Schopenhauer, a couple of his epigrams are worth quoting.

It is our will that  
gets us lost or found.  
It frees me now,  
as once it kept me bound.

He who hopes to make true art  
must remember from the start  
that nothing true can be created  
unless by Spirit permeated.<sup>46</sup>

Walter's book on Mahler is not the only place where he mentions Mahler's interest in mystical writings. In 1912, only one year after Mahler's death, he wrote an article for *Der Merker*, entitled 'Mahlers Weg, ein Erinnerungsblatt'. In that article, while discussing Mahler's Sixth Symphony, he wrote:

The man who had fashioned this terrifying musical image of a world without God had begun searching for God in books. He had lost Him in the world, which appeared to him increasingly mysterious and gloomy. Where was this God whose gaze he had sometimes met? Previously he

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<sup>43</sup> Silesius, Angelus, *Heilige Seelenlust*, Geistliche Lieder von Angelus Silesius, hrgs. W. Winterer und H. Sprenger, Mannheim, 1838.

<sup>44</sup> Silesius, Angelus, *Johann Scheffler's (Angelus Silesius) sämmtliche poetische Werke*, hrgs. David August Rosenthal, Regensburg: G.J. Manz, 1862.

<sup>45</sup> Silesius, Angelus, *Angelus Silesius Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, hrgs. Georg Ellinger, Halle. a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1895.

<sup>46</sup> Both epigrams from Angelus Silesius, *The Book of Angelus Silesius/ With Observations by the Ancient ZenMasters*, trans. Frederick Franck, London: Wildwood House, 1976, p. 132.

had searched for him in Spinoza, Plotinus, and other philosophers and mystics.<sup>47</sup>

Obviously, the fact that Mahler was interested and read mystical writers did not only occur to Bruno Walter when he wrote his book on Mahler in 1936. As we can see from the above-mentioned article, Walter was well aware of this side of Mahler's interests one year after his death, so it would be safe to assume that he was also aware of it during Mahler's life. What is also clear from this article is the fact that Walter's perception of Mahler did not change in the twenty-four years that intervened between the publication of this journal and the publication of Walter's book. As far as Bruno Walter could tell Mahler was, throughout his life, a 'God-seeker'.<sup>48</sup>

### **Creative Works: The Human Voice in Mahler's Symphonies**

The first of Mahler's symphonies to contain lyrics was Mahler's Second Symphony and so it will dominate the largest part of this discussion. The human voice is used in the fourth and in the fifth movements.

The words for the Alto solo in the fourth movement are from the poem *Urlicht* taken from the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, while the words for the fifth movement are from the famous poem *Resurrection* by Friedrich Klopstock. Mahler used only two stanzas from the Klopstock poem in the symphony, and wrote another six stanzas himself, a fact scarcely discussed at all in the relevant literature. If Mahler chose to write the words for his symphony himself, he must have had something very specific and personal to say. What that was can only be gleaned through careful examination of the poem itself, which must, therefore, be quoted in full:

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<sup>47</sup> Walter, Bruno, "Mahlers Weg, ein Erinnerungsblatt", *Der Merker*, vol. 3/5 (Mahler-Heft), March 1912, p. 166-171. Cited in Norman Lebrecht, *Mahler Remembered*, p. 129-130.

<sup>48</sup> Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 152.

## Resurrection

Arise, yes, you will arise from the  
dead,  
My dust, after a short rest!  
Eternal life  
Will be given you by Him who  
called you.

To bloom again are you sown.  
The lord of the harvest goes  
And gathers the sheaves,  
Us who have died.

-Friedrich Klopstock

Oh believe, my heart, oh believe,  
Nothing will be lost to you!

Everything is yours that you have  
desired,  
Yours, what you have loved, what  
you have struggled for.

Oh believe,  
You were not born in vain,  
Have not lived in vain, suffered in  
vain!

What was created must perish.  
What has perished must rise again.  
Tremble no more!  
Prepare yourself to live!

O Sorrow, all-penetrating!  
I have been wrested away from you!  
O Death, all-conquering!  
Now you are conquered!  
With wings that I won  
In the passionate strivings of love  
I shall mount  
To the light to which no sight has  
penetrated.  
I shall die, so as to live!

Arise, yes, you will arise from the  
dead,  
My heart, in an instant!  
What you have conquered  
Will bear you to God.  
-Gustav Mahler.

## Aufersteh'n

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du,  
Mein Staub, nach kurzer Ruh!  
Unsterblich Leben  
Wird der dich tief dir geben.

Wieder aufzublüh'n wirst du gesät!  
Der Herr der Ernte geht  
Und sammelt Garben  
Uns ein, die starben.

-Friedrich Klopstock

O glaube, mein Herz, o glaube:  
Es geht dir nichts verloren!

Dein ist, was du gesehnt!  
Dein, was du geliebt, was du  
gestritten!

O glaube:  
Du wardst nicht umsonst geboren!  
Hast nicht umsonst gelebt, gelitten!

Was entstanden ist, das muss  
vergehen!  
Was vergangen, auferstehen!  
Hör' auf zu beben!  
Dereite dich zu leben!

O Schmerz! Du Alldurchdringer!  
Dir bin ich entrunnen!  
O Tod! Du Allbezwinger!  
Nun bist du bezwungen!  
Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen  
In heissem Liebesstreben  
Werd' ich entschweben  
Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'  
gedrungen!  
Sterben werd' ich, um zu leben!

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du,  
Mein Herz, in einem Nu!  
Was du geschlagen,  
Zu Gott wird es dich tragen!<sup>49</sup>  
-Gustav Mahler.

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<sup>49</sup> Text and translation from the 1987 Dover Full Score edition of Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, pp. 378-379.

As can be seen clearly, Klopstock's contribution to the finished product is minimal. Which begs the question, where did Mahler get his inspiration from? It is obviously a poem with clearly Christian imagery and not remotely connected with Schopenhauer, or even Wagner. One could say that the subject is stereotypically Christian and that there is no need to look further into the inspiration behind it. As a point of interest, however, there is one possible element that may have gone into the composition of this poem that I will venture to examine. The idea for this comparison was offered by Bruno Walter's report on Angelus Silesius.

Angelus Silesius was a writer of epigrams for meditation and the fact that he wrote in verse lends itself remarkably to a comparative study of his writings with the Klopstock/Mahler poem. Each verse of Mahler's poem will be examined separately and compared to one or more of Silesius's epigrams. It is important to note that it is not the wording of the poems that is the point of comparison in most cases, but rather the essence of what the verses are trying to communicate, the spiritual/mystical thought behind them is what is of interest.

MAHLER	SILESIUS
<p>O glaube, mein Herz, o glaube: Es geht dir nichts verloren!</p> <p>Oh believe, my heart, oh believe, Nothing will be lost to you!</p>	<p><i>Vom Lieben</i> Die Liebe dieser Welt, die endt sich mit Betrüben, Drum soll mein Herz allein die ewge Schönheit lieben?</p> <p><i>About Love</i> If all our earthly loves always in sadness end, Should then our hearts not be on Divine Beauty bent?</p>
<p>Dein ist, was du gesehnt! Dein, was du geliebt, was du gestritten!</p> <p>Everything is yours that you have desired, Yours, what you have loved, what you have struggled for.</p>	<p><i>Die Liebe zwingt Got</i> Wo Gott mich über Gott nicht sollte wollen bringen, So will ich ihn dazu mit blosser Liebe zwingen.</p> <p><i>Love Forces God</i> If it was not God's wish to raise me above God I should compel him thus, by force of sheerest love.</p>
<p>O glaube: Du wardst nicht umsonst geboren! Hast nicht umsonst gelebt, gelitten!</p> <p>Oh believe, You were not born in vain, Have not lived in vain, suffered in vain!</p>	<p><i>Der Welt Tun ist ein Trauerspiel</i> Freund, gönn es doch der Welt, ihr zwar wie sie will, Doch ist ihr ganzes Tun nichts als ein Trauerspiel.</p> <p><i>The Worldly Goings-On Are a Tragedy</i> Do not begrudge the world its false felicity, All its performances are but a tragedy!</p>
<p>Was entstanden ist, das muss vergehen! Was vergangen, auferstehen! Hör' auf zu beben! Bereit dich zu leben!</p> <p>What was created must perish. What has perished must rise again. Tremble no more! Prepare yourself to live!</p>	<p><i>Es ist kein Tod</i> Ich glaube keinen Tod; sterb ich gleich alle Stunden, So hab ich jedesmal ein besser Leben funden.</p> <p><i>There Is No Death</i> I don't believe in death; if every hour I die, I then shall have each time discovered a better life.</p>

O Schmerz! Du Alldurchdringer!  
Dir bin ich entrungen!  
O Tod! Du Allbezwinger!  
Nun bist du bezwungen!  
Mit Flügeln, die ich mir errungen  
In heissem Liebesstreben  
Werd' ich entschweben  
Zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug'  
gedrungen!  
Sterben werd' ich, um zu leben!

O Sorrow, all-penetrating!  
I have been wrested away from you!  
O Death, all-conquering!  
Now you are conquered!  
With wings that I won  
In the passionate strivings of love  
I shall mount  
To the light to which no sight has  
penetrated.  
I shall die, so as to live!

*Die Liebe*

Die Lieb ist wie der Tod, sie tötet  
meine Sinnen,  
Sie brichet mir das Herz und führt  
den Geist von hinnen.

*Alles kommt aus dem Verborgenen*

Wer hätte das vermeint! aus  
Finsternis kommts Licht,  
Das Leben aus dem Tod, das Etwas  
aus dem Nicht.

*Wie sieht man Gott*

Gott wohnt in einem Licht,  
zu dem die Bahn gebricht;  
Wer es nicht selber wird,  
der sieht ihn ewig nicht.

*Man muss das Wesen sein*

Lieb üben hat viel Müh:  
wir sollen nicht allein  
Nur lieben, sondern selbst,  
wie Gott, die Liebe sein.

*Love*

Love is alike to death, annihilates the  
senses,  
My heart it breaks as well, the spirit's  
drawn from hence.

*The Hidden Source*

Who would have thought of this!  
The darkness brings forth light,  
The something comes from naught,  
death does engender life.

*How One Sees God*

God dwells in light supreme, no path  
can give access;  
Yourself must be that light, if you  
would there progress.

*One Must Be Essence*

To love is difficult, for loving' s not  
enough.  
Like God we must ourselves become  
that very love.

Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du,  
Mein Herz, in einem Nu!  
Was du geschlagen,  
Zu Gott wird es dich tragen!

Arise, yes, you will arise from the  
dead,  
My heart, in an instant!  
What you have conquered  
Will bear you to God.

*Wie eit der Weg in Himmel*  
Christ, schätze dir die Reis'  
in Himmel nicht so weit,  
Der ganze Weg hinein  
ist keines Schrittes breit.

*The Distance to Heaven*  
Christian, do not believe that Heaven  
is so distant;  
The path that leads to it takes  
nothing but an instant.<sup>50</sup>

There is a veritable plethora of mystical concepts in these verses, both in Mahler's and Silesius's. In most instances, the similarity between the concepts behind Silesius's epigrams and those behind Mahler's stanzas is evident, as in the last epigram quoted, *The Distance to Heaven*, and Mahler's final stanza. Even in those cases where the wording of the epigrams differs substantially from Mahler's verses, it is still merely the wording that differs. The idea that is being communicated remains rooted in the same concepts and principles; as for example the concept that Love is the essence of God and only through Love can we hope to approach Him; also, the idea that death is not the end of something, but merely a new beginning; it is simply change, a common concept in mystical thought. Death of the self is thought necessary in an effort to approach the divine, but it is not a literal death which is required, only a metaphorical one. Death can be nothing more than the negation of the will, as in Schopenhauer's philosophy. At the same time, literal suffering and death can be overcome only through such a negation of the will, which can also take the form of altruistic, or Divine Love. These fundamental concepts of spiritual and mystical thought are repeated, over and over again, in several different guises, both in Mahler's and Silesius's poems.

I must stress once again, however, that this comparative examination is not meant to imply that Silesius's epigrams were the specific sources of inspiration behind the writing of these stanzas, but rather that they serve as an example

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<sup>50</sup> All epigrams taken from: Angelus Silesius, *Sämtliche poetische Werke*, vol. III, hrgs. Hans Ludwig Held, München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1949, pp. 9, 10, 15, 97, 112, 130, 148, 156. All epigram translations taken from: Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradz, New York: Paulist Press, 1986, p. 39-134.

of the type of mystical thought that Mahler may have found inspiring. They can be found in virtually every example of such philosophy.

*Urlicht*

O Röschen roth!  
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Noth!  
Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pain!  
Je lieber möcht' ich in Himmel sein!  
Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg;  
Da kam ein Engelein und wollt'  
mich abweisen.  
Ach nein! Ich liess mich nicht  
abweisen:  
Ich bin von Gott und will wieder  
zu Gott!  
Der liebe Gott wird mir ein  
Lichtchen geben,  
Wird leuchten mir bis in das ewig  
selig Leben!

*Urlicht*

O little red rose!  
Man lies in the greatest need.  
Man lies in the greatest suffering.  
How much rather would I be in Heaven!  
I came upon a broad road.  
There came an angel and wanted to  
block my way.  
Ah no! I did not let myself be turned  
away!  
I am of God, and to God I shall return.  
Dear God will grant me a small light,  
Will light my way to eternal, blissful life.<sup>51</sup>

The poem *Urlicht*, taken from the collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, might seem on the other hand like a strange choice for a movement in a work of such a grand concept as this one, especially considering the text used in the finale. It might be tempting to view it as an ironic gesture, because of its naiveté; but the childlike faith expressed in the poem is not entirely all that it seems. Doubtless, its naïve quality is one of the reasons Mahler chose it, for isn't it said that truth often comes from the mouths of babes? And since, according to the Bible, 'the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these' [children] (Matthew 19:14), it is likely in this case that the childlike faith of the poem is not intended as an ironic statement.

It is also possible to see again similarities between this poem and the train of thought behind many of Silesius's epigrams—and, by extension, western

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<sup>51</sup> Translation and original text taken from the 1987 Dover Full Score edition of Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, p. 378.

mystical thought in general. For example, the evocation in the beginning of the poem, the address to the 'little red rose' might seem rather odd, if one is not aware that the rose is a flower used often as symbolic imagery in mystical thought, and in Silesius's epigrams there are at least three poems that include the imagery of a rose.

Die Rose, welche hier dein äussres  
Auge sieht,  
Die hat von Ewigkeit in Gott also  
geblüht.

The rose that  
With my mortal eye I see  
Flowers in God  
Through all eternity.

Die Ros ist ohn warum; sie bluhet,  
weil sie blühet,  
Sie acht nicht ihrer selbst, fragt nich,  
ob man sie siehet.

She blooms because she blooms,  
the rose...  
Does not ask why,  
nor does she preen herself  
to catch my eye.

Dein Herz empfähet Gott mit alle  
seinem Gut,  
Wenn es sich gegen ihn wie eine  
Ros aufut.<sup>52</sup>

My heart could receive God  
if only it chose  
to turn toward the Light  
as does the rose.<sup>53</sup>

We can also see here the very common reference, in mystical thought, to the Light as simultaneously the means to an end, and the End itself; i.e. Light is the symbol of enlightenment, the path to God, and God Himself. Similarly, the line 'I am from God and to God I shall return' in *Urticht* is a common concept in religious/mystical thought and appears repeatedly in Silesius.

Eh als ich Ich noch war, da war ich  
Gott in Gott,  
Drum kann ichs wieder sein, wenn  
ich nur mir bin tot.

I was God inside God  
before I became Me  
and shall be God again  
when from my Me set free.

Die Gottheit ist ein Brunn, aus ihr  
kommt alles her  
Und lauft auch wieder hin. Drum ist  
sie auch ein Meer.<sup>54</sup>

Deepest well  
from which all rises, grows,  
Boundless ocean  
back into which  
all flows.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Silesius, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. III, pp. 19, 39, 87.

<sup>53</sup> Silesius, *The Book of Angelus Silesius/ With Observations by the Ancient Zen Masters*, p. 42, 66, 119.

<sup>54</sup> Silesius, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. III, pp. 96, 166.

<sup>55</sup> Silesius, *The Book of Angelus Silesius*, pp. 130, 140.

Finally, a brief word about the general concept behind the finale of the Second Symphony, as it appears in Mahler's programmes, which will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. According to the programmes, the finale is about redemption.

At first, we see it in the form created by faith and the Church –in their struggle to transcend this present life. The earth trembles... The Last Trump sounds; the graves spring open, and all creation comes writhing out of the bowels of the earth, with wailing and gnashing of teeth... There now follows nothing of what had been expected: no Last Judgement, no souls saved and none damned; no just man, no evil-doers, no judge!<sup>56</sup>

Mahler's version of the Second Coming, at a cursory glance sounds rather unorthodox. This is not the way institutionalised religion would describe the event. The whole point of Judgement Day is *judgement*—not lack thereof. Evil-doers will be judged and will go to hell, and good deeds will be rewarded with heaven.

Angelus Silesius seems to agree with Mahler—or vice versa. For Silesius, God is not a judge and executioner, and, as with all else, Heaven and Hell are not somewhere without, to where souls will be assigned or exiled, but rather they are within us all.

God stands far above  
the anger, rage and indignation  
ascribed to Him  
by primitive imagination.

All heaven's glory is within  
and so is hell's fierce burning.  
You must yourself decide  
in which direction you are turning.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bauer-Lechner, Natalie, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Silesius, *The Book of Angelus Silesius/ With Observations by the Ancient Zen Masters*, pp. 83, 87. Despite strenuous efforts, due to the freedom of the translation and the enormous number of epigrams (which go into the many hundreds), it was not possible to locate these two epigrams in the original German.

*The public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius.*

Oscar Wilde

## Chapter III:

### Overview of Symphony No. 1

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It is interesting how monographs on Mahler's first two symphonies are absent from relevant bibliography. There are, of course, books dealing with Mahler generally, his life and his music, others dealing mainly with his work—whether Song Cycles or Symphonies—and then there are books with collections of essays on various Mahler-related subjects. Also, there are articles either on certain aspects of Mahler's music, or specific movements of certain symphonies. In terms of monographs on the first two symphonies specifically, however, there is virtually nothing between Richard Specht's 1920s analysis of Mahler's First,<sup>1</sup> and Dieter Krebs's *Gustav Mahlers Erste Symphonie: Form und Gehalt* of 1997.<sup>2</sup> In the English language, to my knowledge, there is nothing at all. On Mahler's Second Symphony, I have failed to find a single monograph written in any language. On the other hand, there have been several doctoral dissertations written on the first two symphonies, in the past thirty years, and a number of articles.<sup>3</sup>

Monographs have been written on nearly every other Mahler symphony. These include Peter Franklin's Cambridge Music Handbook on the Third

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<sup>1</sup> Specht, Richard, *Gustav Mahlers I. Symphonie. Thematische Analyse*, Vienna, Leipzig, (1920?)

<sup>2</sup> Krebs, Dieter, *Gustav Mahlers Erste Symphonie: Form und Gehalt*, München/Saltzburg: Katzbichler, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Details may be found in: Namerwirth, Simon Michael, *Gustav Mahler: A Critical Bibliography*, 3 vols., Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987.

Symphony,<sup>4</sup> and James L. Zychowicz's book on the Fourth, in the Oxford Studies in Musical Genesis and Structure series.<sup>5</sup> There are several treatises on the Sixth, such as Norman Del Mar's study published in 1980,<sup>6</sup> and more recently, Robert Samuels's *Mahler's Sixth symphony: a study in musical semiotics* of 1995.<sup>7</sup> There is a collection of papers on the Seventh,<sup>8</sup> a study on Mahler's Ninth,<sup>9</sup> and one on the Tenth.<sup>10</sup> That leaves the Second, the Fifth and the Eighth, which no one, as yet, has treated in a monograph. It is true that musicologists tend to become more interested in composers' later, more mature works, rather than their earlier ones. However, this does not explain the lack of monographs on Mahler's Fifth and especially Eighth Symphony.

Regarding Mahler's First and Second Symphonies, the impression I received while conducting my research was that scholars in the field seem to feel that everything interesting that could be said about these two works has already been said in the sixties, seventies and early eighties, by experts such as Constantin Floros, Donald Mitchell, Deryck Cooke and Neville Cardus. This, in some respects is true, especially in Floros's case, since his book dedicated exclusively to Mahler's symphonies is the only one of its kind, that I am aware of at least, dealing almost solely with analysis and interpretation of the music, and not diverging into lengthy biographical expositions on the composer that are not strictly relevant to the analysis. In this way he had the opportunity to devote his work to meaningful and incisive musical analysis and interpretation which has offered us invaluable insights into Mahler and his music that are in certain respects unique. Deryck Cooke's and Michael Kennedy's books only describe the music in the broadest possible strokes, devoting most of their writing to Mahler's life and the circumstances

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<sup>4</sup> Franklin, Peter, *Mahler: Symphony No.3*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Zychowicz, James L., *Mahler's Fourth Symphony*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Del Mar, Norman, *Mahler's Sixth Symphony: A Study*, London: Eulenburg Books: 1980.

<sup>7</sup> Samuels, Robert, *Mahler's Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Zychowicz, James L., (ed.), *The Seventh Symphony of Gustav Mahler*, Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, Christopher Orlo, *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Specht, Richard, *Gustav Mahler. Nachgelassene zehnte Symphonie. Einführende Bemerkungen*, Berlin, etc.: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1924.

surrounding the composition of his works. Cardus is the only other scholar that made any serious attempt at actually analysing some aspects of the symphonies.

Articles in the English language journals are few and far between as concerns the First Symphony especially. The most interesting one in the most recent years are James Buhler's 1996 article on the First in *Nineteenth Century Music*,<sup>11</sup> and Paul Banks's 1995/96 article, again on the First, appearing in *Muziek und Wetenschap*.<sup>12</sup> The most notable article on Mahler's Second Symphony recently has been Stephen Hefling's 1998 "The Making of *Todtenfeier*" in *Nineteenth Century Music*, derived from his doctoral dissertation of 1985.<sup>13</sup>

There is no shortage of productive experts in the field of Mahler studies at the moment, such as Peter Franklin, Paul Banks, Stephen Hefling, John Williamson, Kofi Agawu, Stephen McClatchie and Robert Samuels, to name a few of the currently active Mahler scholars in Britain and America. Nevertheless, few of their recent works tackle Mahler's First and Second Symphonies with the same fervour they have been researching his later symphonies and all his songs for the past twenty years.

The most recent publication dealing exclusively with Mahler's music is *The Mahler Companion*, published by Oxford University Press in 1999,<sup>14</sup> which includes articles or essays by most of the active and distinguished Mahler Scholars. It is a book indispensable to Mahler studies generally; however, in relation to the first two symphonies, it says nothing that has not been said before.

The authors who have written about and analysed Mahler's first two symphonies have mainly restricted themselves to formal and thematic analyses, occasionally indulging in the examination of the tonal issues involved. One of

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<sup>11</sup> Buhler, James, " 'Breakthrough' as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony", *19th Century Music*, XX/2, University of California Press, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Banks, Paul, 'Mahler's "Most Daringly composed Work": The First Symphony', *Muziek & Wetenschap*, 5, (1195/1996), pp. 253-265.

<sup>13</sup> Hefling, Stephen, "The Making of Mahler's *Todtenfeier*: A Documentary and Analytical Study", PhD diss., Yale University, 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Mitchell, Donald and Nicholson, Andrew (eds), *The Mahler Companion*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

the few exceptions can be found in Paul Banks's essay 'Mahler and Viennese Modernism', in which he offers an interesting and alternative account of the 'structural use of tempo and tempo changes' as a form building process.<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that such endeavours in formal and thematic analyses are not highly interesting and necessary. What is more, these endeavours have served to expose differences in opinion as to the formal structure of some of Mahler's works, as in between Sponheuer, Floros and Buhler for the First; and occasionally even as to the harmonic progression, as in between Floros and Neville Cardus, again for the First.

Floros is the only one who exhibited difference of opinion of any magnitude in the seventies and early eighties, and that difference of opinion covered both the analytical and the interpretative aspects of the symphonies. His accounts of formal structures are different, there are differences in the analysis of the harmonic progression and finally, his interpretation of the symphonies on a programmatic level is different from most other scholars active then, and now. All these differences will be examined in more detail, later on in the chapter.

My final comment, or complaint, concerning the sort of research currently being conducted in the field of Mahler studies does not concern the first two symphonies exclusively. Kofi Agawu has for the past five or six years been drawing attention to the fact that a timbral (or textural) analysis of Mahler's works is long overdue and an interesting challenge.<sup>16</sup> Yet no one has made any attempt even to address the issue on a theoretical level. It is curious that something as new and challenging as this topic has failed to provoke the slightest response from the experts when the field seems to have yielded all it could through more 'traditional' approaches to analysis.

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<sup>15</sup> Banks, Paul, 'Mahler and Viennese Modernism', in *On Mahler and Britten*, ed. Philip Reed, The Boydell Press, The Britten-Pears Library, 1995, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Agawu, Kofi, *Mahler Studies*, ed. Stephen Hefling, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 247.

## The First Symphony:

### History of the composition and reception

Mahler's First Symphony was composed between 1884 and 1888. It was first performed in Budapest in November 1889 under the title 'A Symphonic Poem in Two Parts'. The performance was a fiasco and the symphony was not performed again for three years. It was extensively revised again in 1893, in Hamburg. The revision dates, which are to be found on the Hamburg autograph, kept in the Osborn Collection at Yale University Library, are as follows: *Blumine* 16 August 1893; *Scherzo* 27 January 1893; *Finale* 19 January 1893. Stephen McClatchie recently discovered a copyist's manuscript of part of the symphony, with Mahler's autograph revisions on it, dating from 1889.<sup>17</sup> This obviously predates the Yale manuscript and, although the changes made by Mahler are 'less refined' than in the later Yale version, the 1889 manuscript seems to have served as a source for the latter.<sup>18</sup> The bulk of the revisions made in 1893 were made in the instrumentation of the work, although the finale was extensively reworked. It was in this version that the symphony was first performed on 27 October 1893 in Hamburg. This performance, unlike the first one, was a success. Strauss, who at the time was conductor at the Saxon Court in Weimar, included the work in the programme of the Music Festival and so the First was performed in Weimar on 3 June 1894 under Mahler's direction.<sup>19</sup> Mahler wrote to his friend Arnold Berliner about the audience's reactions: 'My symphony was received with a mixture of furious disapproval and wildest applause. -It is amusing to hear the clash of opinions in the street and in drawing-rooms.'<sup>20</sup>

One of the reasons the performance provoked such 'furious disapproval' was the printed programme that accompanied the symphony. Rather than helping the audience understand the music better, it seemed to have had exactly

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<sup>17</sup> McClatchie, Stephen, 'The 1889 Version of Mahler's First Symphony: A New Manuscript Source', *19th Century Music*, XX/2, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 99-124.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 105.

<sup>19</sup> Floros, Constantin, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, pp. 27-28. For an extensive discussion on the subject, see: Mitchell, Donald, *Gustav Mahler II: The Wunderhorn Years*, pp. 147-161.

<sup>20</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, p. 154.

opposite effect. An example of the opposing reactions to Mahler's Symphony can be seen in the reviews Ernst Otto Nodnagel, a critic and composer, wrote for the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the *Magazin für Litteratur*. He rejected the *Blumine* movement as 'trivial' and condemned the Symphony because it appeared under the guise of programme music whose programme he considered 'in itself confused and unintelligible'. He insisted that he failed to see any relation between the programme and the music.<sup>21</sup>

At the next performance of the Symphony, on 16 March 1896 in Berlin, Mahler dropped both the *Blumine* movement and the programme. This time he introduced the work simply as 'Symphony in D Major'.<sup>22</sup> Even this performance, however, failed to bring Mahler the success he hoped for. Natalie Bauer-Lechner says that Mahler repeated sadly, over and over: 'No, they didn't understand it!'<sup>23</sup>

Mahler seemed to have wondered about the lack of understanding met by the First for his entire life. In 1903, for example, after he performed his First Symphony in Lwow, he reported to his wife: 'Following this, I played my First with the orchestra, which behaved splendidly and was obviously well prepared. Several times I had chills running down my back. Confound it, where do the people have their ears and hearts that they don't get this!'<sup>24</sup> While, in 1909, he wrote to Bruno Walter from New York: 'Day before yesterday I presented my First here! Apparently without getting much reaction. However, I myself was pretty pleased with this youthful effort.'<sup>25</sup>

## The Programmes

The first printed edition of the First differs in many ways from the Hamburg version, mainly in its instrumentation. The orchestral apparatus was

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<sup>21</sup> Nodnagel, Ernst Otto, *Jenseits von Wagner und Liszt. Profile und Perspektiven*, Königsberg, 1902, pp., 4-10. Cited in Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> Bauer-Lechner, Natalie, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen und Briefe*, 2nd ed. Amsterdam, 1949, p. 285, translation from Floros, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

reinforced and certain sections were re-orchestrated. This first edition was published by Josef Weinberger, in Vienna, in 1899.<sup>26</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, when Mahler's First Symphony was first performed in Budapest it was initially entitled 'Symphonic Poem in Two Parts'. The Budapest printed programme was short, with no programmatic descriptions of the various movements:

First Section

1. Introduction and Allegro Comodo
2. Andante
3. Scherzo

Second Section

4. A la pompes funèbres; *attaca*
5. Molto appassionato <sup>27</sup>

The Hamburg programme notes, however, provide extensive programmatic interpretation:

'Titan,' a Tone Poem in Symphonic Form (Manuscript)

Part 1: *Aus den Tagen der Jugend, Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornstücke*

("From the days of youth," Music of Flowers, Fruit, and Thorn)

I. *Frühling und kein Ende* ("Spring and No End") (Introduction and Allegro comodo). The introduction pictures the awakening of nature from a long winter's sleep.

II. "Blumine" (Andante)

III. *Mit vollen Segeln* ("Under Full Sail") (Scherzo)

Part 2: "Commedia humana"

IV. *Gestrandet!* ("Stranded!" (*Todtenmarsch in Callots Manier*). The following may serve as an explanation for this movement: The author received an overt suggestion for it from *Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis* (*The Hunter's Funeral Procession*), a parodistic picture that is well-known to all Austrian children and is taken from an old book of children's fairy tales. The animals of the forest escort the coffin of a deceased hunter to the gravesite. Rabbits carrying a banner follow a band of Bohemian musicians accompanied by music-making cats, toads, cows, and so on: stags, does,

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<sup>26</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Facsimile of the Budapest programme in La Grange, Henry-Louis de, *Mahler, I*, fig 32. All translations from Floros, *Ibid*.

foxes, and other four-legged and feathered animals of the forest follow the procession in amusing poses. At that point the piece in some ways expressed an ironic, humorous mood and in other ways expresses an eerie, brooding mood, followed immediately by

V. *Dall' Inferno* (Allegro furioso) –as the sudden outburst of despair from a deeply wounded heart.<sup>28</sup>

Mahler had this programme published for the Weimar performance, with a few changes: the subtitle of the first part was corrected to read *Aus den Tagen der Jugend, Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornenstücke* (Thorns); the introductory explanation was revised to describe 'the awakening of nature in the forest in the earliest morning'; the titles of the second and fourth movements were changed to *Blumine-Capitel* (Andante) and *Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis, ein Todtenmarsch in Callots Manier*, respectively; the fifth movement was given the fuller title of *Dall' Inferno al Paradiso*.<sup>29</sup>

There are two conflicting explanations of the derivation and meaning of the title of the symphony found on the Hamburg manuscript. Alma Mahler<sup>30</sup> and Bruno Walter<sup>31</sup> certainly attributed the title of the Symphony to Mahler's love for the Romantic writer Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. Richter's novel bearing the same title *Titan* certainly offered a connection. However, Ferdinand Pfohl reported, in his book *Gustav Mahler*, that in 1893 and while in Hamburg, Mahler was 'desperately' looking for a title for his First Symphony. According to Pfohl, Mahler desired a title that would be bold and grand and one of his friends prompted him to use the title 'Titan'. Also, Pfohl is not alone in insisting that the symphony's title had nothing to do with Richter's novel. In Natalie Bauer-Lechner's writings she reports that Mahler objected to the association of the title of his First Symphony with Richter's *Titan*. '[People] connected his [Mahler's] Titan with Jean Paul's. But all he had in mind was a powerfully heroic individual, his life and suffering, struggles and defeat at

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<sup>28</sup> Facsimile of the Hamburg performance in La Grange, *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 30

<sup>30</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton, London: John Murray, 1946, p. 91.

<sup>31</sup> Walter, Bruno, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. James Galston, London: Kegan Paul p. 36.

the hands of fate.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Alma tells us that Mahler decided to eliminate the title because he was constantly being asked to explain how 'various romantic situations' from the novel were reflected in the music.<sup>33</sup>

In a letter to Max Marschalk on 20 March 1896, a few days after the performance in Berlin where he retracted the programme, Mahler tells Marschalk that he invented the programme titles and explanations after the fact. 'My reason for omitting them this time was not only that I thought them quite inadequate—in fact not even accurate or relevant—but that I have experienced the way the audiences have been set on the wrong track by them.'<sup>34</sup> Taking into consideration both Mahler's own testimony and that of Bauer-Lechner and Ferdinand Pfohl, it seems relatively safe to assume that the programmatic explanations were not intended to be understood literally, but rather as metaphors and analogies.

## Interpretations of the Form

### First Movement: *Langsam. Schleppend*

The obvious points of interest concerning this movement, and the ones that have mostly been dealt with by musicologists in the past, are its formal structure and some aspects of thematic and harmonic progression. It begins with a dominant pedal that lasts for 62 bars and the entire length of the introduction. The 62 bar introduction leads on to an exposition which is 99 bars long (bb. 63-162).<sup>35</sup> At this point, one would expect the development section to begin; however, Mahler surprises us with a recurrence of the introduction from bar 163 to 207, a total of 44 bars. This is not an exact repetition of the introductory material, however, either thematically, or harmonically. In this section new thematic material is introduced in the cellos (bb. 167 and 168-71) and there is a very distinct shift of the low pedal from A to F. The development section proper finally arrives at bar 208.

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<sup>32</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> Mahler, Alma, *op. cit.*, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters*, p. 177.

<sup>35</sup> A repeat on Fig. 12, bar 162, was introduced in 1906, in the second edition of the symphony.

Bar 352 brings what, since Adorno, has become known as a 'breakthrough';<sup>36</sup> an unexpected rift in the music producing a sudden climax. Finally, in bar 358, the recapitulation begins, and the movement ends after a seven-bar coda.

Table 3.1: Formal diagram of 1st movement of Symphony No. 1.

Introduction	bb. 1-62	Langsam. Schleppend. <i>Wie ein Naturlaut.</i>
Exposition	bb. 63-162	Immer sehr gemächlich.
Introduction return	bb. 163-207	(♩ = wie früher die ♩) (♩ = 96)
Development	bb. 208-357	Sehr gemächlich.
Breakthrough	bb. 352-357	Vorwärts drängend.
Recapitulation	bb. 358-442	a Tempo (Hauptzeitmass)
Coda	bb. 443-450	Schnell (bis zum Schluss)

John Williamson, writing in the *Mahler Companion*, finds in relation to this movement, that the most curious aspects are 'the extent of the repeated introduction, the dwarfing of exposition and recapitulation and the huge climax that emerges from nowhere.'<sup>37</sup> This mutated version of the sonata form is so problematic as to generate differences of opinion even concerning such theoretically straightforward issues as the starting and ending points of some of its sections. Neville Cardus, for example, locates the beginning of the development section at bar 208, immediately following the repeat of the introduction material.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, in his description of the movement's formal structure, Constantin Floros includes the repeated material from the introduction in the development section, which now effectively starts on bar 163—a full 44 bars earlier.<sup>39</sup> John Williamson, again, seems to identify the start of the development section, at bar 208, which is surely preferable, with the 'sonata—allegro' aspect of the music. At 208 the double bar, and the

<sup>36</sup> Adorno, Theodor W., *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 5-14.

<sup>37</sup> Williamson, John, 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and the First Symphony', in *The Mahler Companion*, eds. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Cardus, Neville, *Gustav Mahler: His Mind and his Music*, vol. I, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965, p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

change of time signature to half-time, along with the clear establishment of D major, after extensive preparation, and the new material in the horns, indicates the beginning of a new section. Additionally, it seems more reasonable to assume that the development starts after the reiteration of the introductory material, rather than before it.

There are many examples, especially from late Beethoven onwards, of introductions recurring before or during the development section. In the case of Mahler's First Symphony it is the unusual length of this device that makes it so notable. Holding the key in suspense, during the introduction, is also a common device in many previous composers achieved by the adherence to dominant harmony. In the introduction to Mahler's First this device takes an unusually extreme form by the sounding of octave As in harmonics spanning all registers. This haze of harmonics continues uninterrupted for 62 bars. Such a prolonged sounding of the dominant has the presumably desired result of making the eventual entry of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* theme in D immediately recognisable as the beginning of the exposition.

The modulation to A major at the end of the exposition is achieved in virtually textbook fashion and yet, instead of launching straight into an already prepared D major and the development section, Mahler returns to the haze of As. In this way, we go through two extensive preparations of the tonic (three if the exposition repeat is observed).

According to Williamson, the tonal function of the double introduction serves as a 'double image of the awakening of nature' and he very aptly compares it to the first movement of Mahler's Third Symphony where the emergence of spring involves several returns to the inertia of the start.<sup>40</sup> The obvious lack of thematic contrast in the exposition is also a point of interest and this, in connection with the double introduction, enhances the overall sense of inactivity in these sections which, together, span over two hundred bars.

The new thematic material in the cellos (bb. 167 and 169-71) with the entry of F on the low pedal can be described both as a 'moment of

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<sup>40</sup> Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

intensification',<sup>41</sup> and a harbinger of things to come. This thematic material, appearing for the first time in the cellos, is in preparation of the new material that emerges in the development section, in bar 221.

Motives from the movement's introduction are also utilised as musical preparation for the breakthrough. But the F minor which emerges at bar 305 seems like an extraneous element in the context. This movement is based more on a series of contrasts and theme transformations, than on any traditional concept of motivic logic. For Williamson, 'sonata form here becomes less a schema for a movement than a collection of sub-genres that participate in a radical rethinking of the symphonic concept.'<sup>42</sup>

This rejection of the traditional forms, on Mahler's part, has had the effect of forcing musicologists into alternative methods of analysing and interpreting his music. The fact that sonata form procedures are no longer wholly applicable to this symphony, or most of Mahler's later ones either, is significant in itself—it carries 'meaning'. There are any number of different interpretations on what this meaning may be, or which may be the most instructive ways of analysing it. In my view, the meaningfulness of this mutation of traditional sonata form procedures resides mostly in the consequent use of the thematic material, rather than in the dimensions of the formal sections themselves. That is, the formal structures are subjugated to the overall, programmatic ideas of the work. The unconventional use and proportions of the various sections, which confound the listener's expectations, can be seen as a device similar to the unexpected twists in the plot of any story.

For Neville Cardus, the themes in Mahler's symphonies, especially the First, 'are a sort of *dramatis personae*. It is no use listening to them as first and second subjects, and so on.'<sup>43</sup> This metaphor implies that the themes of the movement represent different characters in a 'story', and this is the only point I am forced to disagree with. While, like most commentators, I agree that there is a 'story' of some description underlying the progress of the

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<sup>41</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>43</sup> Cardus, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

movement—and of the symphony itself—there is but one protagonist, and the ‘dramatis personae’ involved are but different emotional states of that one protagonist. The ‘story’ is one of internalised dramatic action. Nevertheless, Cardus’s very succinct description of the ineffectiveness of a traditional, formal analysis of Mahler’s First, holds true, whether one considers it to be a story concerning one or many protagonists; whether the narrative is one of external, or internal action.

The metamorphoses of themes in this symphony, indeed, not only of musical interest but significant of psychological or dramatic variations, are such that to dissect them in the familiar analytical terms (the harp takes over the theme, once again in D major over a pedal A) would be as illuminating as if a dramatic critic, discussing say, *Timon of Athens*, wrote: ‘Re-enter Timon and Flavius’ and left it at that, without telling us something of what they are talking about.<sup>44</sup>

### Second Movement: *Kräftig bewegt*

Few scholars refer to the peculiarities of style and compositional technique that this movement exhibits, even though, as Floros points out, several of these recur in later dance sections by Mahler such as the use of the device of parenthesis in the trio of the third movement of the Seventh Symphony.<sup>45</sup> In fact, very little has been said, in general, about this particular movement on a purely musical level. The overall tendency is to interpret its function within the symphony on an extra-musical level. To be sure, this aspect is of immense interest and importance to our understanding of the work. Nevertheless, there are elements of compositional technique at work within the movement that are not only enlightening in terms of interpretation, but interesting on a purely musical/compositional level.

This movement is one of the rare instances where Mahler adheres to the classical A-B-A structure, combining one of his favourite dances, the Ländler, with the more refined Waltz. The two sections are different both in character

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<sup>44</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>45</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

and in tempo. While the Ländler has an energetic, vibrant, bucolic style, the Waltz's character is slower, more elegant and lyrical. Mahler provides the movement with metronome markings; the Ländler's tempo is given as  $\text{♩} = 66$ , while for the Waltz  $\text{♩} = 54$ . The Ländler is in A major, whilst the Trio in F major, with an 'open' tonal scheme of F -G/- C; and once again, the interval of the fourth dominates the movement.

Unlike the first movement, there are no ambiguities in the second's formal structure. Most of the interesting aspects of compositional technique can be seen in the combination of precisely this conventionality in structure, with unconventional harmonic and thematic procedures. The ostinato rhythms of the Ländler  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\text{♩} \text{♩} | \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} | \text{♩}$ , the harshness of some harmonic events, like the clash of the dominant with the tonic in bars 47-51 and the simultaneous coexistence of F minor with C-sharp major in bars 97-103, as well as the insertion of material from the A section into the B section (bb. 229-236, *Etwas Frischer*), are all instances of such contrasts.

Floros describes this as a 'prototypical movement' whose Mahler-like characteristics are discernible in 'the preference for broad harmonic areas, ostinato rhythms and motifs, as well as in harmonic harshness and some unrefined gestures.'<sup>46</sup> Although there are few surprises in the formal structure of this movement, its conventionality is in itself a meaningful statement, in the same way that the first movement's unconventional structure carried meaning through deviation from the norm. Additionally, in a movement which conforms to formal conventions to such a degree as this one, even slight deviations, such as the open-ended tonal scheme of the Trio, the insertion of material from the Ländler in the Trio, and slightly jolting harmonic gestures, acquire significance, by virtue of their contrast with the conventional backdrop.

I would hesitate to dismiss this movement as nothing more than an interlude in the symphony's progress toward more challenging psychological events. If we accept that there is narrative, whether external or internal, running through the work, then this movement can be seen as representing

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<sup>46</sup> *Idem*.

the 'protagonist's' efforts to avoid facing the turbulence that the third and fourth movements have in store. The small deviations from convention that can be heard in the music hint at what is to come, and, for the careful listener, already indicate that the 'protagonist's' efforts are going to be in vain.

### Third Movement: *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen*

The third movement is well known as having been based on the old tune of Frère Jacques—or Bruder Martin, depending on which part of Europe one comes from—a tune that has, somehow, over the centuries managed to travel the length and breadth of Europe. It is a veritable treasure trove of peculiarities of technique and style, and consequently has been variously analysed. The uniqueness of the movement has been widely recognised, including the originality of the instrumentation, the skilful fusion of contrasting elements and the original use of counterpoint. It is probably worthwhile to consider these aspects with individual examples.

Once again following an A-B-A structure, the first part of the movement belongs to the aforementioned Frère Jacques tune, appearing in the minor in the guise of a gloomy canon. The ubiquitous interval of the fourth accompanies it on muffled timpani. On bar 45, a strange, joyful tune, marked *Mit Parodie* emerges, creating an extremely powerful contrast. Mahler manages to bridge these two disparate sections with a third, short, section (bb. 39-44) in which the oboes play what Floros calls a 'rocking melody in thirds and sixths', while a contrasting 'expressive' melody is heard on the trumpets.<sup>47</sup> The trumpet theme is also the link that unites this section and the 'parody' section that follows.

The section in bars 63-70, Floros, believes is the one which Mahler referred to as 'the terribly painful lament of the hero'.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the case, this section also serves as a link between the 'parody' and an intimation of the canon's return (bb. 70-81), which surprisingly, only fades away and transforms into the movement's lyrical theme from the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Fig. 10).

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<sup>47</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> *Idem.*

The quotation comes from the last stanza of the fourth song of the selection, 'Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz'. The song tells about how a melancholy lover finds rest and tranquillity under the linden tree, an appropriate image, in this context, that becomes a metaphor for a final resting place. Both Floros and Cardus regard this borrowing as 'semantically appropriate',<sup>49</sup> but, while Floros regards it as a quotation made by conscious choice, Cardus calls attention to the seamless integration of the song into the movement, observing that 'we are left wondering if it emerged again from Mahler's subconscious as he was composing his First Symphony'.<sup>50</sup> He does not go so far as to propose that the quotation from the *Gesellen* lied was unconsciously interwoven into the movement, but he allows for the possibility of us imagining so. Considering that this is the second time in the symphony that a quotation from the *Gesellen* Lieder is used it is impossible that it is a chance occurrence. However, it is extremely likely that its place in the movement is such that it functions as a representation of an unintentional reminiscence from the part of the 'protagonist'. In this way, its semantic significance is twofold, functioning both as a metaphor for death, and a reminiscence of love.

What Cardus does believe to be an unintentional element in this section is the return of the interval of the fourth. He acknowledges the fact that other, notably German, commentators regard the integration of the interval of the fourth as 'yet another example of Mahler's thematic aptness', but he differentiates his position quite clearly. Considering the consistent and prominent recurrence of that interval throughout the symphony, however, I would be inclined to lean toward the received view that the interval of the fourth is an additional element of thematic unity.

The movement's recapitulation is by no means exact. The return of the canon melody at figure 13 is accomplished in an unrelated key, E-flat minor rather than D minor, and it is not until as late as figure 16 that it reappears in D. The movement closes with the merest snatches of the mocking oboe

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> Cardus, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

melody that first appears in bar 19, now being tossed from one instrument to another until the last snippet of it fades with the harp into silence, leaving the familiar interval of the fourth to beat a slow, solemn, ever more distant retreat beyond earshot.

The other striking feature of this movement is the orchestration. Natalie Bauer-Lechner spoke of the 'unbelievable aural impact' of the *Todtenmarsch* and Mahler's ensuing comments on that subject. Yet few scholars have devoted anything more than a word or two to this issue. It is an element of the movement that is usually merely alluded to through discussions of the vulgar, trite character of the brass section's 'Bohemian' band quality, as it appears on figure 5.<sup>51</sup> The movement's orchestration is so individual and prototypically Mahlerian that it surely deserves closer scrutiny. I will be going into aspects of orchestration and timbre more extensively in later chapters, but for the purposes this brief overview of the symphony, a few salient points may be made here.

Mahler himself discussed the originality of the orchestration with Natalie Bauer-Lechner, pointing out the difficulties he encountered in achieving this task: '...Bringing out each new entry in the canon distinctly and in a startling new colouration—so that it calls attention to itself a little—caused me a great deal of trouble in the instrumentation. Finally, I succeeded in getting the effect which you find so strangely eerie and unusual.'<sup>52</sup>

These surprising new entrances in the canon are noteworthy for their imaginativeness and indeed effectiveness; double-bass solo in an uncommonly high register (b.3)<sup>53</sup> immediately followed by bassoon solo (b. 9), then muted cello (b. 11) and then tuba, again in a relatively high register (b. 15). Muted violas follow, with the first oboe's mocking counterpoint melody (b. 19), and, as the texture thickens we have the entrance of two E-flat clarinets and bass-clarinet, with Cor Anglais on b. 25; this is almost immediately followed by

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<sup>51</sup> See e.g. Williamson, 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and the First Symphony', in *The Mahler Companion*, p. 61.

<sup>52</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Gustav Mahler in den Erinnerungen von Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, Diary entries, Herbert Killian, ed. Hamburg, 1984, p. 175, translation from Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> The 1992 critical Universal Edition of the symphony advocates that this first double-bass entry should be played by the entire section, rather than as a solo passage: Mahler, *Sämtliche Werke: Symphonie Nr. 1 in vier Sätzen für grosses Orchester*, Universal Edition, 1992, p. 78, n. 1.

the violas and cellos, an octave apart (b. 27). Bar 29 sees the entry of four muted horns, accompanied by the harp, while at the same time, the E-flat clarinets and the oboe take on the counterpoint melody. Special reference should be made to the E-flat clarinet which Floros mistakenly states appears for the first time in this movement.<sup>54</sup> Although in the second movement Mahler only makes use of the clarinet in A, the E-flat clarinet actually makes its first appearance in bar 135 of the first movement, and continues to play intermittently throughout that movement, in conjunction with clarinets in B-flat and clarinets in C.

In the latter parts of the movement we are presented with just as many unexpected timbre combinations. There is the combination of oboes and trumpets at figure 5, and then at figure 6 of E-flat clarinets with trumpets and bassoons, while the strings are playing *col legno*,<sup>55</sup> accompanied by Turkish cymbals and bass drum. In the middle, lyrical section, of the movement, the orchestration suddenly becomes more conventional, in this way only serving to enhance the already striking contrast. With the return of the round, however, the bizarre tone colours return, enhancing the impact of the typical Mahler counterpoint, as in bars 124-131, where a layered effect is achieved by a new motive in the trumpets, serving as counterpoint to the round melody and the mocking oboe theme now heard in the flutes. The layering effect is repeated in figure 16, marked *plötzlich viel schneller* (suddenly much faster), where now the new trumpet motive, the canon melody and the joyful tune originally heard in figure 5 are all combined with striking results.

Yet, to my mind, one of the most memorable sections of this movement in terms of aural impact, is the one in bars 158-162, where the mocking melody, here starting off in the bassoons, becomes fragmented, its closing notes tossed first to the clarinets in C, then to the cellos—with the motive's

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<sup>54</sup> Floros, *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Famous examples of *col legno* playing in symphonic literature before Mahler occur in the Finale of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, and Liszt's *Mazeppa*. In his treatise on orchestration, Berlioz noted that this style is called for in symphonic movements 'where the terrible and the grotesque mingles.' See Floros, note 42, pp. 323 and Berlioz, Hector, *Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration*, trans. Mary Cowden Clarke, ed. Joseph Bennett, London & New York: Novello, Ewer and Co. 1882, p. 12.

highest note played in harmonics—and finally comes to a close with the violas in pizzicato.

According to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, the third movement of this symphony was the most 'misunderstood' and 'scorned', of the entire work;<sup>56</sup> and it is not difficult to see why. Mahler described the movement to Bauer-Lechner in terms so trite and ever so slightly vulgar they could never have referred to any other of Mahler's movements: 'By now he (my hero) has already found a hair in his soup and it has spoiled his appetite.'<sup>57</sup>

The programmatic aspects of the *Todtenmarsch* have been widely discussed, and its association with the engraving of The Huntsman's Funeral is even made explicit in the symphony's original programme notes. On an interpretive level, however, the programme notes and the association with a fairy-tale engraving are nothing more than metaphors. Although most of Mahler's contemporaries seemed to fail to understand this movement, since then the piece's illustration of how the trivial and tragic coexist, how the grotesque is a representation of 'the world's sorrow... with its sharp contrast and hideous irony'.<sup>58</sup> have been recognised and have attracted immense interest. This theme, and the idea of the world's (or fate's) indifference to the suffering of the individual are recurring themes in many of Mahler's compositions.

Musically, the effect is achieved by the interweaving of the gloominess of the Bruder Martin canon, with trite, playful counter-themes, Klezmer music, and bizarre sound colours and timbre combinations. There have been other instances where such devices have been used, for example in the finale of Bruckner's Third Symphony, where a polka and a chorale are heard simultaneously. Concerning Mahler's funeral march, however, I have to agree with Williamson when he says that: 'Its vulgarity is a touchstone.'<sup>59</sup> In every aspect, it is extreme; as a metaphor, and as a composition. There is not even the merest hint of refinement in this piece and, if it wasn't for its place within this symphony, it would be difficult to imagine it as an example of

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<sup>56</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 158.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>59</sup> Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

the 'high art' of symphonic writing. And yet it is perhaps the most memorable and most poignant movement of the symphony.

#### Fourth Movement: *Stürmisch bewegt*

The First Symphony's finale, like much of Mahler's later music, poses a problem as far as its formal structure is concerned. Theoretically it is written in sonata form and indeed, at a casual listening, any educated listener will be able to recognise an exposition with two themes, a development of those two themes, and a recapitulation where the themes are re-stated; and following that, something that might be considered an extended coda. However, pinpointing the exact place where each section begins and ends, is deceptively difficult. There is also the added problem of the sudden appearance of a D major chorale in what might be considered the development section (bar 375). This same chorale reappears at the very end of the movement (bar 633).

The recurring chorale is only a problem in terms of the movement's formal structure. It has been argued that with its first appearance, already, a sense of closure is achieved, a sense of final triumph. Hence, both the structural unity of the movement and the final moment of transcendence may be weakened by the recurrence of the chorale at the end of the movement.

The movement has, of course, been variously discussed and analysed, and so it seems legitimate to focus mainly on an article by James Buhler in *19th Century Music* which argues that this D major chorale in the Finale of Mahler's First Symphony functions 'as a critique not just of the deployment of the transcendent chorale but also of the sonata form itself...'<sup>60</sup> According to Buhler, this chorale belongs to the analytical category of 'breakthrough' and its reading as such permits its role in the Finale to be interpreted as an 'immanent critique of form'.<sup>61</sup> The concept of the breakthrough, as presented here by Buhler, develops some of the ideas that Adorno advanced in relation

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<sup>60</sup> Buhler, James, " 'Breakthrough' as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony", *19th Century Music*, XX/2, University of California Press, 1996, p. 129.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

to breakthrough.<sup>62</sup> However, the analytical category of 'breakthrough' itself has its origins much earlier than Adorno. According to Constantin Floros, it originated with Paul Bekker's reading of the symphony's first movement.<sup>63</sup>

Buhler, indeed, was not the first to view that D major chorale in the Finale of Mahler's first as an 'immanent critique of form'. Before him, Bernd Sponheuer seems to have done much of the work, as Buhler recognises: 'According to Sponheuer, breakthrough establishes a type of musical coherence that competes with the traditional binding force of sonata form. It is characterised by the 'bursting open of the closed immanence of form through the unmediated... peripeteia-like turn toward chorale-like transcendence'.<sup>64</sup> Where Buhler believes that Sponheuer's analysis is lacking is in the fact that 'Sponheuer's analysis maintains a strict separation between the formal function of the material and the mediating function that establishes thematic immanence. This separation of function ultimately prevents Sponheuer from completing a reading of breakthrough in terms of formal immanence.<sup>65</sup> For Sponheuer, breakthrough remains a transcendent principle, something that stands outside the sonata form. What Buhler is seeking to do, however, is to prove that the breakthrough in the Finale of Mahler's first symphony can critique sonata form from within, by and through its own principles, or immanently. 'An immanent critique... requires confronting the central theoretical question of how to conceptualise breakthrough such that its own internal structure is constituted in terms of sonata form procedures. Such a theory would allow us to transform the immanent critique of the transcendent chorale embodied in Mahler's "spiritual struggle" into an immanent critique of sonata form embodied in the theoretical concept of breakthrough.<sup>66</sup>

The 'spiritual struggle' Buhler is referring to is taken from Mahler's own words in a letter to Strauss (of July 1894), discussing the recurrence of the chorale in the finale of the First Symphony. Strauss's letter has been lost, but from Mahler's reply Strauss's arguments are quite clear:

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<sup>62</sup> Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, p. 5-14.

<sup>63</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135.

At the place in question the solution is merely apparent (in the full sense a 'false conclusion'), and a change [*Umkehr*] and breaking [*Brechung*] of the whole essence is needed before a true 'victory' can be won after a struggle.

My intention was to show a struggle in which victory is furthest from the protagonist just when he believes it closest. –This is the essence of every spiritual [seelischen] struggle. –For it is by no means so simple to become or to be a hero.<sup>67</sup>

Buhler dedicates an entire section of his article to the concept of spiritual struggle. The view he adopts, drawn as a conclusion from the above extract, is that for Mahler ‘...spiritual struggle, rather than victory per se is the key to becoming a hero. Simply attaining victory is not sufficient to establish that a spiritual struggle has taken place.’<sup>68</sup> Taking into consideration Mahler’s letter to Natalie Bauer-Lechner concerning the chorale in the finale where Mahler says that he wanted the first D chord of the chorale to ‘sound as if it had fallen from heaven, as through it had come from another world’,<sup>69</sup> Buhler argues that Mahler does not accept the idea of the ‘ex machina’ intervention as adequate for the creation of a heroic figure: ‘...Mahler suggests that relying on such fortune of fate, such as unexpected turn of events, is inconsistent with the “spiritual struggle” necessary to becoming a hero.’<sup>70</sup> Hence the need for ‘return’ of the chorale, so as to overcome the arbitrary nature of the ex machina intervention.

Where I am obliged to disagree is with the conclusion Buhler draws from Mahler’s letter to Strauss: ‘Mahler suggests that every spiritual struggle must somehow indicate that victory remains distant when the hero thinks it near.’<sup>71</sup> It seems more reasonable to suggest that it is not so much that every spiritual struggle *must* indicate that victory remains distant, when the hero thinks it near, but that it is the peculiarity of every spiritual struggle that pitfalls and deceptions invariably fool the ‘hero’ into thinking that victory is

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<sup>67</sup> Mahler, *Gustav Mahler-Richard Strauss: Correspondence 1888-1911*, ed. Herta Blaukopf, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Chicago: 1984, p. 34, cited in Buhler, p. 126 (trans. Modified).

<sup>68</sup> Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>69</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 31.

<sup>70</sup> Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>71</sup> Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

near, when in fact it is still remote. The inaccessibility of victory cannot be in itself what defines a spiritual struggle. Rather, the 'hero's' perseverance in the face of this apparently inaccessible victory, and his/her deliberate strife towards it, is a more fitting definition. No lasting spiritual conquest can be made by chance, by an 'ex machina' intervention. It can only be achieved by the individual's will, and personal efforts.

Buhler ultimately argues his case for the 'immanent critique of the sonata form' in the Finale by showing, convincingly, that the Finale can be seen as consisting not of an F minor sonata form with a coda, but of an F minor sonata and a D major sonata which springs up from inside the F minor sonata with the first breakthrough. As a foundation for comparison, he uses Sponheuer's formal diagram of the Finale, on which he superimposes his own (Table 3.2).

FIGURE 3.2: F-minor and D-major sonata forms

EXPOSITION		DEVELOPMENT			REPRISE						CODA	
		175	238	253	290	317	370	428	458	533	574	631
					MODEL		RUPTURE					BREAK-THROUGH
<b>F-minor Sonata Form</b>	Main Theme	Second Theme	Intro Material from 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement	Developmental	Break-through motive; Transformation of main theme	Intensification 1 (development)	Break-through motive and Chorale	Intro. material from 1 <sup>st</sup> movement	Second theme. Re-worked	Main theme (fugato)	Intensification 2 (cf 1, 305-51)	Breakthrough motive and Chorale
Key*:	<b>f</b>	<b>D<sub>1</sub></b>		<b>g</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>C-D</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>F</b> (C pedal)	<b>f</b>	<b>(f)</b>	<b>D</b>
							EXPOSITION	DEVELOPMENT				REPRISE
							Break-through motive and Chorale	Intro. material from 1 <sup>st</sup> movement	Developmental (Fragmented second theme And first theme in fugato)		Intensification (from just before the Reprise of 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement)	Breakthrough and Chorale

\* Bold indicates change in key signature

To my mind, Buhler's formal diagram is more convincing than Sponheuer's, or for that matter anyone else's that treats the recurrence of the chorale as, simply, part of the coda. It is evident, from Mahler's own words, that the recurrence of the chorale was a conscious choice, with a specific end in mind. If its programmatic function is of such significance as Mahler's descriptions say it is, then surely its formal function must also be of greater significance than simply that of an addendum.

Buhler's diagram, and the emergence of the D major sonata, although enlightening in their own right, cannot be said to be the definitive formal analysis of this movement, if for no other reason than the fact that the movement is constructed in such a way that it can support a number of different approaches. There are common points throughout, of course, but also many differences, as we can see if we compare Sponheuer's and Buhler's diagram with that of Floros (Table 3.3).<sup>72</sup>

It is obvious that this formal diagram has been constructed with a quite different objective in mind from the ones discussed earlier. Its purpose is not to critique form, but rather to assist in the 'programmatic' interpretation of the music. Even so, there are interesting points worth noting. Sponheuer and Buhler both place the end of the exposition and the beginning of the development section at bar 238 (Fig. 21, *Langsam*), with what they deem to be Introduction material from the first movement. Floros however, places this section within the Exposition calling it an 'Epilogue in D-flat major'. According to him the material here recalls the inferno motif and some material from the slow introduction of the main section of the movement. For Floros the development section does not start until bar 254 (Fig. 22, *Stürmisch bewegt*). It has to be said that upon examination of the score, Floros's interpretation of the origins of the material seems more accurate.

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<sup>72</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 44-45.

Table 3.3: Formal diagram according to Floros

Bars	Exposition		
1-54	Introduction in F minor ( <i>Stürmisch bewegt</i> ): Inferno		
55-142	First complex of themes in F minor ( <i>Energisch</i> ): Inferno		
143-166	Sequences of swelling brass sounds ( <i>Mit grosser Wildheit</i> ): Inferno		
167-174	Transition		
175-237	Secondary section in D-flat major ( <i>Sehr gesangvoll</i> )		
238-253	Epilogue in D-flat major ( <i>Langsam</i> ): Recall of the slow introduction of the main section and inferno motif	<b>Development</b>	
	254-289		First part in G minor (As at the beginning)
	290-316		First statement of the 'victorious' motif in C major, <i>pianissimo</i>
	317-369		Second part in C minor
	370-427		Second entrance of the 'victorious' motif ( <i>Pesante</i> ) (Modulation from C major to D major and Chorale theme in D major): Paradiso
	428-457		Recall of motif of the main section (very slow; Mahler: <i>'wundervoller Anklang an die Jugend des Helden'</i> ['wonderful allusion to the hero's youth'])
		458-532	Secondary section with transition in F major
		533-573	Main theme in F minor ( <i>Tempo I</i> ): the Inferno image now has been moved to the distance ( <i>ppp</i> )
		574-622	Intensification of material from the main section
		623-695	<i>Höchste Kraft</i> : breakthrough, third occurrence of the 'victorious' motif and Chorale theme in D major: Paradiso
		696-731	Coda

What is slightly surprising is that Floros makes reference to Sponheuer, specifically, in his discussion of the Finale, but does not mention the difference of opinion in regard to where the Exposition ends and the Development begins—a rather important detail, especially since Sponheuer's beginning of the Development is found 16 bars earlier than where Floros places it (as can be seen by looking at the Sponheuer/Buhler diagram). What he does mention is Sponheuer's assertion that 'the first part of the development is not to be understood as a result of intensification, but rather as something "quite surprising, somewhat inorganic and sudden".'<sup>73</sup> Floros's objection to this statement is mainly of an interpretive nature. He asserts that:

One gains this impression if one looks at Mahler's music in purely formal-aesthetic terms. The surprise effect of this passage and the very striking dynamic (*pianissimo*), however, are due to a programmatic intention: Mahler's remark to Strauss about victory always being farthest away from the warrior when he thinks it is closest, refers to this.<sup>74</sup>

Floros makes no attempt to justify, or even mention the fact that he locates the beginning of the development section 16 bars later than Sponheuer. He seems to be dismissing their differences as to the piece's formal structure as a consequence of their different criteria or agendas. I do not disagree with this approach, per se, if indeed this is a conscious approach, but Floros does not clearly state as much, and if one does not have Sponheuer's diagram to hand whilst reading Floros, then it is very likely that the magnitude of their disagreement will be entirely misapprehended.

For the point of entry of the development is not the sole difference of opinion between the two. The most striking difference is the placement of the piece's coda. Sponheuer believes the coda begins in bar 631, and Floros in bar 696, a formal disagreement of significance: Floros's coda is only 37 bars long, while Sponheuer's has 102. No reference to this issue is made in Floros, which only serves to support the supposition that he dismisses these differences as trivial, due to the different criteria adopted by the two scholars.

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<sup>73</sup> Sponheuer, Bernd, *Logik des Zerfalls: Untersuchungen zum Final problem in den Symphonien Gustav Mahlers*, Tutzing, 1978, p. 76f, translation from Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>74</sup> Floros, *Ibid.*

Floros argues that most of the formal structure of the movement is 'programmatically motivated',<sup>75</sup> while Sponheuer and Buhler view much of the piece's meaning as being derived from its critique of sonata form.

Both approaches are valid and musicologically sound, and as such necessary for our full understanding of the work. It is only reasonable to apply them both in any examination of the symphony. It is my belief that, in large part, the formal structure of the movement is subjugated to the overall programmatic intentions, but this does not exclude the possibility of it also comprising a structure which immanently critiques form. It is entirely possible to construct a diagram which takes account of both.

In terms of the beginning and end of the various sections of the symphony I agree with Floros. The G minor section starting on bar 254 to my mind clearly heralds the beginning of the development, and, as mentioned above, placing the recurrence of the chorale within the coda seems to devalue both its formal and programmatic significance. As such, the following diagram represents the formal structure, as I will be considering it to be in all subsequent discussions of the movement (Figure 3.4).

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

FIGURE 3.4: F-minor and D-major sonata forms

	EXPOSITION			DEVELOPMENT			REPRISE				CODA		
		175	238	254	290	317	370	428	458	533	574	631	696
					MODEL		RUPTURE					BREAK-THROUGH	
<b>F-minor Sonata Form</b>	Main Theme	Second Theme	Intro Material from 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement	Developmental	Breakthrough motive; Transformation of main theme	Intensification 1 (development)	Break-through motive and Chorale	Intro. material from 1 <sup>st</sup> movement	Second theme. Re-worked	Main theme (fugato)	Intensification 2 (cf. 1, 305-51)	Break-through motive and Chorale	
Key*:	f	<b>D<sub>b</sub></b>		g	C	c	C-D	d	F (C pedal)	f	(f)	D	
							EXPOSITION	DEVELOPMENT				REPRISE	CODA
							Break-through motive and Chorale	Intro. material from 1 <sup>st</sup> movement		Developmental (Fragmented second theme And first theme in fugato)	Intensification (from just before the Reprise of 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement)	Break-through and Chorale	

\* Bold indicates change in key signature

*Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.*

Sigmund Freud

## Chapter IV: Overview of Symphony No. 2

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### History of Composition

The Second Symphony is well known for the unusual chronology of its composition. The first movement was apparently begun whilst Mahler was still composing, or shortly after he finished composing, the First Symphony, in January 1888. This fact can be established from Natalie Bauer-Lechner's reference to a vision Mahler had after the performance of Weber's *Die drei Pintos*, which took place in Leipzig on 20 January 1888. She mentions how Mahler, while writing the *Todtenfeier*, saw himself 'dead, laid out in state, beneath wreaths of flower', and how the experience disturbed him so much that Mrs Weber was obliged to take away all the flowers that he had received at the performance.<sup>1</sup> By August, it seems, Mahler had completed a sketch of the full score of the movement, which is now in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, and is dated 8 August 1888.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer-Lechner, Natalie, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Floros, Constantin, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 51. For more details on the manuscripts, see Edward R. Reilly, 'Die Skizzen zu Mahlers Zweiter Symphonie', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 34, 1979, pp. 266-85; Reilly, 'A Brief History of the Manuscripts', in Gilbert Kaplan (ed.)

The fair copy was finished by 10 September 1888 and is substantially different from the draft. This manuscript is now in the Sacher Foundation collection in Basel, and the title page bears the heading 'Symphonie in C moll/ I. Satz.' It seems that at some later point, Mahler crossed out the 'Symphonie in C moll', and replaced it with *Todtenfeier*.<sup>3</sup> The movement, in this manuscript, still differs in some respects from the movement in its final version, calling for a smaller orchestra, and apparently, at that time, being intended as a symphonic poem.<sup>4</sup>

While sketching this movement in Leipzig, Mahler also sketched two themes that would later become the beginning of the Andante moderato of the symphony, but he did not continue with their composition.<sup>5</sup>

The completion of the first movement marked the beginning of a five-year hiatus in Mahler's composition of the Second Symphony. He resumed work on it only in 1893, in the meantime having composed several songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. During the summer of 1893, whilst on his summer vacation at Steinbach am Attersee, Mahler completed the composition of the second and third movements virtually simultaneously, and orchestrated the song *Urlicht* which was originally set for voice and piano. Reilly believes that *Urlicht* may not have been considered as a part of the symphony until later, i.e. after the summer of 1893. He bases that assumption on the fact that the title-page of the fair copy of the orchestral score seems to show that it was still thought of as the seventh song of the *Wunderhorn* series.<sup>6</sup>

As was Mahler's habit, after completing the composition of the movements during the summer, he prepared the fair copies during the 1893-94 opera season, during which time he also began revising the first movement. This

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*Symphony No. 2 in C minor Resurrection: facsimile/Gustav Mahler*, New York: The Kaplan Foundation, 1986, pp. 57-67; and Stephen Hefling, 'The Making of Mahler's "Todtenfeier": A Documentary and Analytical Study.

<sup>3</sup> Reilly, 'Todtenfeier and the Second Symphony', *The Mahler Companion*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 85-86.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*. See also: Banks, Paul, 'Mahler's "Totenfeier": a Symphonic Poem?', *The Musical Times*, CXIX/1750, London: Novello, 1988, pp. 662-3. For an extensive discussion on the *Todtenfeier* manuscript's distinctive features see Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler, II: The Wunderhorn Years*, pp. 269-70, and Hefling, 'The Making of Mahler's "Todtenfeier"', pp. 737-55.

<sup>5</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

revision involved structural changes and significant modification and expansion of the orchestration.<sup>7</sup>

Given the complex chronology of the composition of the work, a recapitulation of the relevant dates of the various manuscripts may be useful:

8 August 1888: Preliminary sketch and orchestral draft of the first movement.

10 September 1888: Fair copy of the first movement, in a version that differs from the later forms of the movement. Re-titled *Todtenfeier* at some point.

8 July 1893: Voice and piano version of *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt*, later described as a 'preliminary study of the Scherzo of the Second'.

16 July 1893: Draft full score of the third movement, labelled second.

19 July 1893: Fair copy of the full score of *Urlicht*.

30 July 1893: Draft full score of the second movement, labelled fourth.

1 August 1893: Fair copy of the full score of *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt*.

29 April 1894: Revised version of the first movement.<sup>8</sup>

It is of interest to note the alternative positions of the middle movements as presented in the manuscripts. Apparently, Mahler experimented with different arrangements of these movements and there are indications that he might not have been entirely satisfied with the final version of the symphony, in which the Andante is placed second. This may be seen in a letter to Julius Butts who conducted a performance in Düsseldorf on 2 April 1903:

Still, there really ought *also* to be a lengthy pause for recollection after the first movement, because the second movement does *not* have the effect of a *contrast*, but simply of a discrepancy after the first. This is my fault, not inadequate appreciation on the listener's part. Perhaps you have already felt this after rehearsing the two movements consecutively. – The Andante was composed as a kind of *intermezzo* (as an echo of *long*

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

past days in the life of the man borne to his grave in the first movement –‘when the sun still smiled on him’ –).

While the first, third, fourth and fifth movements are related in theme and mood, the second stands alone, in a certain sense interrupting the strict, austere sequence of events. Perhaps this is a weakness in the conception of the work, but you will certainly see my intention from the above indication.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast with this apparent indecision regarding the arrangement of the middle movements, and indeed regarding the inclusion or not of *Urlicht* in the symphony, Mahler seems to have had been considering the use of a chorus in the finale for some time before he actually came round to composing it. This can be seen in a letter to Arthur Seidl, dated 17 February 1897, which also gives us the spirit in which the finale was conceived:

I had long contemplated bringing in the choir in the last movement, and only the fear that it would be taken as a formal imitation of Beethoven made me hesitate again and again. Then Bülow died, and I went to the memorial service. –The mood in which I sat and pondered on the departed was utterly in the spirit of what I was working on at the time. –Then the choir, up in the organ-loft, intoned Klopstock’s *Resurrection* chorale. –It flashed on me like lightning, and everywhere became plain and clear in my mind! It was the flash that all creative artists wait for – ‘conceiving by the Holy Ghost!’

What I then *experienced* had now to be expressed in sound. And yet—if I had not already borne the work within me—how could I have had that experience? There were thousands of others sitting there in the church at the time! –It is always the same with me: *only when I experience something* do I compose, and only when composing do I experience!<sup>10</sup>

J.B. Förster’s description of the day of Bülow’s funeral gives us the invaluable information that Mahler began work on the finale immediately, that same day.<sup>11</sup> He drafted two different versions of the text for the finale, using only

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<sup>9</sup> Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, p. 269.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Förster, J. B., *Der Pilger: Erinnerungen eines Musikers*, Prague: Artia, 1955, pp. 404-6. Cited in Norman Lebrecht, *Mahler Remembered*, p. 79.

the first two stanzas of Klopstock's hymn and writing the rest himself. The second version included the stanza beginning 'O Schmerz! Du Alldurchdringer!'.<sup>12</sup>

From the dates recorded on the various manuscripts it becomes evident that Mahler must have been working simultaneously on the revision of the first movement (completed 29 April 1894), and the composition of the finale (begun 29 March 1894). This fact becomes all the more significant when one considers the motivic connections between them.

The composition of the finale of the Second Symphony was finally completed in the summer of 1894. On 29 June, Mahler wrote to his friend Friedrich Löhr:

Dear Fritz,

Beg to report safe delivery of a strong, healthy last movement to my Second. Father and child both doing as well as can be expected – the latter not yet out of danger.

At the baptismal ceremony it was given the name 'Lux luget in tenebris' [Light shines in the darkness]. Floral tributes are declined with thanks. Other presents, however, are acceptable.

Yours,

Gustav<sup>13</sup>

The inscription 'Beendigt am Dienstag, den 18 Dezember 1894 zu Hamburg' (completed on Tuesday, the 18th of December 1894, in Hamburg) can be found on the fair copy of the completed symphony.<sup>14</sup>

## The Programmes

Mahler's relationship with programmes and programme music in general, during the early stages of his career, is almost as complicated as the

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<sup>12</sup> Henry-Louis de La Grange prints the two different original versions of the text in parallel columns with the final text, in *Gustav Mahler: Chronique d'une Vie*, I, Paris: Fayard, 1973, pp. 1028-9.

<sup>13</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Reilly, 'Totenfeier and the Second Symphony', p. 89.

chronology of the composition of this symphony. Even though he wrote a programme for his First Symphony and then retracted it, up to and including the composition of his Fourth Symphony he continued giving his friends, and sometimes his audiences, verbal indications, or descriptions, on the nature of the musical message.

These verbal indications, however, never came before the actual composition of a work; they were never a 'plan' to be followed. At most, a rough outline might have been jotted down, as was the case with the Third, Fourth and Eighth Symphonies.<sup>15</sup> Most descriptions emerged during the composition of a work, as in the case of the Third, or immediately after its completion, as in the First and Second Symphonies.

With these facts in mind it becomes clear that Mahler did not compose music with a specific, predetermined narrative or sequence of events in mind. His programmes were simply analogies, or metaphors, of the sequence of *emotional*—rather than *actual*—events that the music sought to convey. It would even be possible to say that the music itself created the programmes, rather than vice versa, although this would be impossible to prove conclusively, and most indications point to a parallel emergence of both the music and the metaphor it sought to express.<sup>16</sup>

For the Second Symphony in particular, three programmes exist, two of them dating from 1896 and the last one from 1901 (see Appendix II for the full programmes). The first programme is recorded by Natalie-Bauer Lechner in her recollections of Mahler in January 1896;<sup>17</sup> the second can be found in a letter to the composer and critic Max Marschalk dated 26 March 1896;<sup>18</sup> and the third was written for the performance of the symphony in Dresden, on 20 December 1901.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Chronique d'une Vie*, I, pp. 790-1 and 1053.

<sup>16</sup> For an examination of the different approaches and attitudes towards programme music between Mahler and Strauss, see Stephen E. Hefling, 'Miners Digging from Opposite Sides: Mahler, Strauss, and the Problem of Program Music', in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Work*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992, pp. 41-53.

<sup>17</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>18</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>19</sup> Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler, II: The Wunderhorn Years*, pp. 183-4.

Most scholars hasten to point out the many apparent differences between the three programmes. Reilly, for example, immediately draws attention to the difference between Natalie Bauer-Lechner's description of the first movement, and that found in the letter to Max Marschalk, using it as an example of what he considers differences in perspective within the programmes for the same work and Mahler's inconsistency in this regard.<sup>20</sup> According to Bauer-Lechner, the movement 'depicts the titanic struggles of a mighty being still caught in the toils of this world; grappling with life and with the fate to which he must succumb –and his death.' The letter to Max Marschalk according to Reilly, however, describes the movement altogether differently.

I called the first movement 'Todtenfeier'. It may interest you to know that it is the hero of my D major symphony who is being borne to his grave, and whose life is being reflected, as in a clear mirror, from a point of vantage. Here too the question is asked: *What did you live for?* Why did you suffer? Is it all only a vast terrifying joke? –We *have* to answer these questions somehow if we are to go on living –indeed, even if we are only to go on dying! The person in whose life this call has resounded, even if it was only once, must give an answer. And it is this answer I give in the last movement.

Reilly does not refer to the third version of the programme, in which, however, the description differs yet again:

*1st movement.* We stand by the coffin of a well-loved person. His life, struggles, passions and aspirations once more, for the last time, pass before our mind's eye. –And now in this moment of gravity and of emotion which convulses our deepest being, when we lay aside like a covering everything that from day to day perplexes us and drags us down, our heart is gripped by a dreadfully serious voice which always passes us by in the deafening bustle of daily life: What now? What is this life –and this death? Do we have an existence beyond it? Is all this only a confused dream, or do life and this death have a meaning? –And we must answer this question if we are to live on.

Reilly also draws attention to the differences between the programmes in the descriptions of the Scherzo, although he does also mention that Mahler, in

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<sup>20</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

both the first and the third programmes, refers to the unexpected outbreak in bar 465 as a 'shriek', or 'cry' of a soul in anguish.

The differences in the descriptions are plainly evident. Nevertheless, it is surprising that so many commentators are apparently unable to see past the words, and into the constant nature of the underlying metaphor. Even though most scholars now accept that Mahler's programmes can, and should, only be understood as mere analogies, suggestive of the emotional content of the work, and not as narrative descriptions of events, it seems that many of them still fall into the same trap of literalness that Mahler's audiences fell into, forcing him to withdraw his programmes, and finally disavow programmes altogether.

If we look past the words, and the narrative of these programmes, the message clearly remains the same. It is possible to allude to the same emotional content through different metaphors. That does not mean that the content is different; simply the analogy differs. Whether the analogy is 'the titanic struggles of a mighty being still caught in the toils of this world; grappling with life and with the fate to which he must succumb –and his death', or, 'the hero of my D major symphony... being borne to his grave, and whose life is being reflected... from a point of vantage... The question is asked: *What did you live for? Why did you suffer? Is it all only a vast terrifying joke?*' the underlying issue remains the same. In this movement, and indeed the entire symphony, Mahler is contemplating the eschatological and metaphysical question of the meaning of life, suffering and death. The identity of the 'mighty being', whether it is the 'hero of the D major symphony', or Mahler himself, or even an abstract character invented by Mahler in his attempt to conjure up a metaphor for his programmes, is not important. It is 'the person in whose life this call has resounded, even if it was only once, [and] must give an answer.' It is everyone that has ever wrestled with similar questions on the nature of existence, like Mahler himself did, throughout his life.

The only scholar who does not even attempt to point out the apparent verbal differences between the programmes, but immediately recognises them

as nothing more than metaphors, and who consequently progresses straight to the point, is Constantin Floros.<sup>21</sup> Of course, he first wrote a book in which he expounds his theory regarding the depth and importance of Mahler's metaphysical angst and his never-ending search for answers, on which he could base his latter interpretations.<sup>22</sup> Floros's assertion that '[Mahler's] religious and philosophical thinking cannot be separated from his work. The Second Symphony, in particular, is a statement of Mahler's thoughts on the theme of death and resurrection' seems unarguable.<sup>23</sup>

Lately, several scholars have contemplated the possibility of Adam Mickiewicz's poem *Dziady* having influenced the first movement of Mahler's Second Symphony. The basis of this hypothesis is that the poem was translated by Mahler's close friend Sigfried Lipiner, and published under the title *Todtenfeier* in 1887.<sup>24</sup> Of course, the date of the publication, the title under which it was published, and Mahler's undoubted familiarity with it are a reasonable basis for an argument, and Hefling uses these facts in an elaborate and complex study, in which he tries to show that there are significant correspondences between Mahler's first movement and a certain part of the poem. Although the study itself is engrossing, in the end, as Reilly points out, Hefling himself comes to the conclusion that Mahler's movement does not follow the story of the poem, but is a separate entity with a life of its own.<sup>25</sup> Hefling maintains that this was due to Mahler's principles concerning musical quality and his effort to 'transcend the flawed fragmentation' of the poem.<sup>26</sup> In the end, however, he admits that 'it cannot be maintained that Mahler's chief goal was the representation of specific events...'<sup>27</sup> Thus, Hefling, in his concluding remarks, does not try to convince us that the movement aspires to a musical, step by step, representation of the

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<sup>21</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>22</sup> Floros, Constantin, *Gustav Mahler, I: Die geistige Welt Gustav Mahlers in systematischer Darstellung*, 1977,

<sup>23</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> See Peter Franklin, '“Funeral Rites” –Mahler and Mickiewicz', *Music & Letters*, 55 (1974), pp. 203-8; and Stephen Hefling, 'Mahler's "Todtenfeier" and the Problem of Program Music', *19th Century Music*, 12 (1988), pp. 27-53.

<sup>25</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>26</sup> Hefling, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*.

poem—although he has spent almost the entire rest of the article attempting to show just that—but that the poem served merely as an ‘impulse’, or ‘occasion’ for the composition.<sup>28</sup>

Hefling raises the question in the beginning of the article of why Mahler did not refer to *Dziady* in any of his reported discussions with friends and family. The reasons he presents as justification for this are the proximity of the poem’s subject matter with certain aspects of Mahler’s personal life, at the time of the composition, which, according to Hefling may have rendered an allusion to the poem awkward, inappropriate or traumatic.<sup>29</sup> Admittedly, I find the argument less than convincing. Given Mahler’s track record of confiding in his friends on matters of personal nature—especially such ones that were relevant to the musical process—I would have thought that at least *some* reference to *Dziady* would have been made to *someone*; if not at the time of the composition, then later. Indeed, later, in 1909, in a letter to Bruno Walter he seems to have quoted from memory a verse from the poem: ‘Not their father art thou, but their Czar!’ But then he makes no direct reference to his Second Symphony.<sup>30</sup>

Floros too makes reference to the possible connections between the poem *Todtenfeier* and Mahler’s movement, but he compares extracts from Mahler’s programmes, rather than the music, with the story of the poem. Even so, the conclusion he comes to is that there exist ‘several parallels between the *mood* of the two works.’<sup>31</sup> It seems obvious that a poem and a symphony about death and resurrection would share parallels in mood. Whether these parallels are intentional or significant is less obvious.

Hefling himself uses the term ‘circumstantial’ repeatedly throughout the study, in reference to the nature of some of the evidence he presents. In my opinion, however, it applies to all of the evidence at hand. When the author himself, after a seventeen-page, double column exposition of his evidence, admits that it can show nothing more than the possibility of the poem acting

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 346.

<sup>31</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 56. My emphasis.

as an 'occasion' behind the composition of the movement, I am inclined to lean towards other, more convincing explanations as to the impulses behind the composition of the work: namely, the ones evident from Mahler's own words.

## Interpretations of the Form

In many ways, the Second Symphony shares some of the First Symphony's formal and stylistic features, only on a much larger scale. There are two impressively dramatic outer movements framing three inner movements of a more song or dance-like character that serve as some sort of interlude in the narrative of the work. The interval of the fourth once again plays a major part in the proceedings, also serving as a unifying factor between the two works.

The most striking of differences between the First and Second Symphonies is, of course, the use of text and the human voice in the Second, in the final two movements. Besides the fact that the text obviously influences the structure of the music, it also provides very specific guidance towards the meaning and interpretation of the work.

### *Todtenfeier: Allegro maestoso*

The movement is in C minor and again seems mainly to conform to sonata form procedures, if not strictly traditional ones. Its formal structure can be summarised as shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Formal diagram of 1st movement of Symphony No. 2

<b>Exposition</b>	
Part A	1-62 (C minor)
Part B	63-116
<b>Development</b>	
Part A	117-253 (C major)
Part B	254-328 (E $\flat$ minor)
<b>Recapitulation</b>	
Part A	329-391 (C minor)
Part B (Coda)	392-445

Although sonata form structures obviously form the basis of the movement, once again, there are problems in precisely defining the beginning and ending of the various sections, and different scholars seem to have different opinions as to the precise locations of these sections and as to the manner in which these are described. There are, of course, certain points of general consensus. The exposition can be seen to comprise two parts, there seem to be two developments in the movement, and the recapitulation can also be subdivided into two sections. There is some debate over the precise location of the beginning of the second development, and a much more minor issue concerning the start of the second part of the exposition.<sup>32</sup>

As a point of comparison, it is interesting to note Reilly's schema of the first movement. It becomes immediately obvious that there is a ten-bar difference in the placement of the beginning of the second development (b. 244, as opposed to b. 254 seen above).

#### **Exposition**

Part I: bb. 1-62

Part II: bb. 62[sic]-116

#### **Development**

Part I: bb. 117-243

Part II: bb. 244-329

#### **Recapitulation**

Part I: bb. 329-391

Part II (Coda): bb. 392-445<sup>33</sup>

Floros also locates the beginning of the second development at b. 254. In this way, the return to the main motif is placed within the first development, whereas Reilly believes it to be the beginning of the second development. If one accepts that there are two distinct developments in the movement, at first

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Specht seems to have been the first scholar to note the existence of two development sections, or at least to make that distinction, in Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, (2nd ed.), Berlin/Leipzig, 1913, p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-105.

glance, both opinions seem reasonable. Part of what makes Mahler's music so distinctively Mahler-like is this confusion—or even fusion—of the boundaries of the traditional structures. This blurring of the boundaries, this ambiguity, is part of the essence of the music, it comprises part of its meaning.

Upon closer inspection, however, it seems not much more than a single development with two parts. As there is no preparation for the recapitulation, it is only the great textural disparity between the two sections, aided by the pause across the bar line at the end of bar 253 that creates this divide. Additionally, placing the return of the main motif within the first part of the development makes more musical sense. Mahler's dynamics are almost as important to the overall nature and structure of the piece as harmony and counterpoint and, in this particular instance, the main motif is restated in *fff* and then gradually fades away, until no longer audible. By convention, it is reasonable to take this to indicate the end of a section, rather than the beginning of a new one. Furthermore, the change of key signature to E-flat minor, along with the tempo marking at figure 16, *Sehr Langsam beginnend*, must be taken to indicate the start of a new section.

In terms of the recapitulation, there is no significant difference of opinion as to the beginning and ending of its sections, although Floros breaks the recapitulation up into much smaller parts than Reilly—as indeed he does for the entire movement. Once again there is a difference of approach here. Reilly goes into the motivic/thematic structure of the piece in detail. Floros, on the other hand, once again seems mainly interested in a more programmatically orientated analysis, and hence restricts himself to the points he considers to be of particular interest.

For the purposes of this chapter, a brief overview of the major events of the movement is sufficient. The movement begins with the funeral march music, in C minor; the second theme enters in E major and ends in E-flat minor. In the second part of the exposition, a new theme appears in A-flat major that eventually leads, through D, to G minor. The exposition ends in G minor, after a significant modal shift between major and minor modes on bars 108-9, as the trumpet oscillates from B $\sharp$ -B $\flat$ . Floros recognises the new

theme appearing in A-flat major (b. 74-78) as 'Liszt's tonic symbol of the Cross, plagally harmonised (I-IV-I<sup>6</sup>)', which he later connects with the Resurrection Chorale of the symphony's finale,<sup>34</sup> while Reilly calls this same motive, perhaps more obscurely, the 'heroic theme.'<sup>35</sup> (Ex. 4.1)

Ex. 4.1. Symphony No. 1, 1st movement bb. 74-78.



Reilly, however, makes an even more interesting connection concerning this particular motive. He draws attention to bars 370-5 in the finale of the First Symphony (Ex. 4.2), and compares them to the aforementioned 'Cross Symbol' motive, pointing out that the similarity of the two gives credence to Mahler's remark that the hero being borne to the grave in this movement is the same hero that we encountered in his First.

Ex. 4.2. Symphony No. 1, 4th movement bb. 370-5.



In the opening section of the movement (bb. 1-18), the powerful, agitated movement of the basses provides much of the material that will later take on many new and surprising guises (Ex. 4.3a, 4.3b).

Ex. 4.3a

Ex. 4.3b

Symphony No. 2, 1st movement bb. 1-18.

*Allegro Maestoso*



The soft, gentle beginning of the first development is not something altogether new; as Floros also points out, it is possible that Mahler studied

<sup>34</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 58, 60. On Liszt's Cross Symbol see Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler, II, Mahler und die Symphonik des 19. Jahrhunderts in neuer Deutung. Zur Grundlegung einer zeitgemässen musikalischen Exegetik*, Breitkopf and Härtel: Wiesbaden, 1977, pp. 243-245, 256-259.

<sup>35</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Bruckner's technique of starting the development quietly, and reserving the biggest climax for the end of the section.<sup>36</sup>

Very soon after the beginning of the first development (bar 129), a new theme appears, inscribed *Meeresstille* [calm of the sea] by Mahler. In fact, this inscription is found in three places in the manuscript.<sup>37</sup> This new theme (called a Pastorale by Floros) appears again in the recapitulation, on bar 370. Floros discusses the *Meeresstille* as an illustration of the notion that Mahler did not often think in terms of technical musical categories during the compositional process.<sup>38</sup> The term *Meeresstille* is presumably an allusion to Goethe's poem of the same title, since Mahler was thoroughly familiar with Goethe's works. It is also highly probable that *Meeresstille* is a metaphor for *Todesstille* (deathly silence), which is a word that appears in Goethe's poem, and seems a highly appropriate description of the section, since the music's dynamics never go above *piano*:

<i>Todesstille fürchterlich!</i>	Terrible silence of death!
<i>In der ungeheuren Weite</i>	In the dreadful vastness
<i>Reget keine Welle sich.</i>	Not a wave is moving. <sup>39</sup>

Arguably, the most interesting section, in terms of the interpretation of the symphony, is to be found in the second part of the development, in bars 270-294. In this section we can see motives that reappear in the Finale with minor differences, effectively tying together the whole work not only musically, but also programmatically. In bars 270-77 (Ex. 4.4) we find a theme derived from the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* sequence in the Requiem Mass, which had already been made famous by Berlioz and Liszt.

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<sup>36</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Found on the sketch for the movement kept in the Austrian National Library, Music Collection, Mus. Hs. 4364 II, fol. 4r, fol. 5v, and fol. 6v. Cited in Floros, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 324.

<sup>38</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>39</sup> Translation cited in Floros, *Ibid.*

Ex. 4.4. Symphony No. 2, 1st movement bb. 270-77

Already established as a musical symbol for death, this theme becomes increasingly triumphant as the music continues, and finally leads to the reappearance of the 'Cross Symbol', in bar 282, followed by what will become the 'Resurrection' motif in the finale and then back again to the *Dies Irae* motif, with no conclusion at that point (Ex. 4.5).

Ex. 4.5. Symphony No. 2, 1st movement bb. 282-286.

The enormous climax on bar 291 is worth mentioning for its harsh dissonance (a diminished 7th superimposed on B $\flat$ , the local dominant: A $\flat$ -C $\flat$ -E $\flat$ -G $\flat$ -B $\flat$ ). In the next bar (291) we get a C $\sharp$  in the chord sounding from the brass, clashing with a C $\flat$  which sounds in the strings and woodwind. But there is an even more powerful climax to come in E-flat minor. F-A $\flat$ -C $\flat$  in bar 313, becomes F $\sharp$ -A $\flat$ -C $\flat$ -E $\flat$  in bar 314—in effect, diminished triads moving up. This disintegrates into what Floros aptly calls the 'Plunging motif' (b. 315), a descending chromatic scale, unexpectedly leading to G, the home dominant, which prevails until the recapitulation. All this pales in comparison, however, to the levels of harmonic tension that Mahler builds up just before the recapitulation, in bars 325-28, made even more intense by the repetitions in

changing dotted rhythms; G-A $\flat$ -C $\flat$ -E $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ -A $\flat$  (b. 326), transmuting to G $\flat$ -B $\flat$ -D $\flat$ -E $\flat$ -F $\flat$ -A $\flat$ -C $\flat$  (b. 327), to G $\flat$ -B $\flat$ -D $\flat$ -E $\flat$ -F $\flat$ -A $\flat$ -B $\flat$  (b. 329) and finally, a sharp, crisp resolution to the tonic C.

The recapitulation is clearly recognisable, taking on the form of an abbreviated version of the exposition. There are many alterations to previously heard themes, as is always the case with Mahler, and the exposition material is now linked with the *Meeresstille* motive. C minor is firmly and clearly established as the tonal centre. The *Meeresstille* material reappears in E major on bar 362, and, just before the Coda, the harmony seems to oscillate between the major and the minor mode, with the horns seemingly unable to decide between G $\sharp$  and G $\flat$ , while the tremolo in the violins, immediately afterwards, shifts from E $\flat$  to E $\natural$ .

The Coda begins in C minor, without any further transitional material, the funeral march's heavy tread dominating the entire section. In bars 404-7, bird-like calls are heard in the flute, anticipating once again both the finale and reminiscent of the First Symphony. The ending of the movement again seems to hesitate between the major and the minor mode, the indecision being articulated first in the horns and trumpets which move from E $\flat$  to E and then by the oboe which effects what Floros calls a 'major-minor seal' (b. 439). It slides from E to E $\flat$ , settling there in a manner that suggests finality. The movement closes with a reiteration of the 'Plunging motif', but without the dissonant harmony that accompanied its appearance just before the recapitulation. This final, sudden outburst dissolves to the sound of ever softer unisons of the tonic in the strings, fading into the distance.

### **Second Movement: *Andante Moderato***

The extreme contrast between the first and second movements of the Second Symphony has already been remarked upon. The second movement is a pleasant, almost idyllic, dance-like piece of music. As we have seen in the 1903 letter to Julius Butts quoted earlier, the contrast is such that Mahler himself recommended, in performance, an interval of five minutes between the

two movements. As early as 1899, he said to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, in relation to the apparent discrepancy:

One mistake in the C minor Symphony is the excessively sharp (hence inartistic) contrast between the Andante, with its cheerful dance rhythm, and the first movement. It is because I originally planned both movements independently, without a thought of integrating them. Otherwise I would at least have begun the Andante with the cello song, and only then followed that with the present beginning. But now it's too late to recast it.<sup>40</sup>

According to Mahler, when Bülow heard *Todtenfeier* he became quite hysterical with horror, declaring that compared with [Mahler's] piece *Tristan* was a Haydn symphony.<sup>41</sup> Some others of Mahler's acquaintances reacted at the opposite extreme to the Andante. Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas and Gabriel Pierné walked out of the Second Symphony's 1910 performance in Paris, in the middle of the second movement, in an expression of disapproval. It seems that they found the movement too tame. Not surprisingly, this gesture hurt Mahler deeply.<sup>42</sup>

Despite all this, on closer acquaintance, the Andante is no more conventional than any other of Mahler's movements. It is a very early instance of Mahler utilising the Ländler, as he so often did subsequently, for the first part of the movement, while the second part is a sort of scherzo. Its formal scheme can be summarised as follows (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Formal diagram of second movement of Symphony No. 2

bb. 1-38	A	A-flat major.
bb. 39-85	B	G-sharp minor.
bb. 86-132	A1	A-flat major.
bb. 133-209	B1	G-sharp minor.
bb. 210-285	A2	A-flat major.
bb. 286-299	Coda	A-flat major.

<sup>40</sup> Bauer Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Mahler, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Erinnerungen und Briefe*, p. 213.

The return of each section is significantly varied. Additionally, the B sections offer a striking contrast to the A sections, both thematically, texturally and in terms of mood, as the minor key gives them a much more intense character.

The imitative counterpoint with a D# pedal beginning on figure 3 is unusual and remarkably effective, and it leads to the triplet figuration in the strings which forms a sort of blanket of sound, over which the woodwind present their principal themes (beginning on figure 4). This interesting textural device will be discussed more extensively in subsequent chapters, as, combined with the intensity of the minor mode, it is largely responsible for the contrast of mood between the A and B sections in the movement.

When the Ländler tempo returns, Mahler creates a beautiful countermelody for the cellos which appears against the main theme played by the violins. This cello countermelody seems to be the only point in the analysis of this movement which Floros and Reilly approach with different preconceptions. Floros states: 'The cello melody seems to have been conceived completely independently from the primary melody; the term *double theme* may certainly be applied.'<sup>43</sup> Reilly states the opposite: 'the main theme and its lovely cello countermelody... seem to have been conceived together though they were eventually uncoupled as the movement developed.'<sup>44</sup> Reilly refers to one of Mahler's sketches for the movement which clearly shows the opening (main theme) combined with the cello countermelody, just as it appears on bar 93 of the finished movement.<sup>45</sup> This hypothesis can only stand if the sketch in question is the initial sketch for the movement; Reilly does say, in the caption to the reproduced manuscript, that it is 'probably the initial sketch of the second movement'<sup>46</sup>, implying a level of uncertainty. It is difficult to say whether this theme was created at the same time as the main theme, or if it was composed later. What is important is its function within the movement,

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<sup>43</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 62.

<sup>44</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>45</sup> The sketch is held at the Austrian National Library, Musiksammlung, Mus.Hs. 4364, vol. I, fo. 7v; reproduced in Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 96, and Reilly, 'Die Skizzen zu Mahlers Zweiter Symphonie', pp. 265-85.

<sup>46</sup> Reilly, 'Totenfeier and the Second Symphony', *The Mahler Companion*, p. 96.

in the way it is presented to us, and in that the theme seems to function as a countermelody to main theme.

The return of the B section (B1, b. 133) is the climax of the movement, a dark, threatening atmosphere created by the 'background' of triplet figurations in the strings and the ostinato rhythms of the timpani. The return of the main theme pizzicato (A2, b. 210) seems even lighter, and more delicate than before, by virtue of its contrast with the previous section. It is gently joyful, and lyrical without becoming sentimental. The most poignant—in my opinion—description of its mood, once again comes from Neville Cardus. In this movement, Mahler 'is actually heard smiling'.<sup>47</sup>

### Third Movement: *Scherzo*

Along with *Todtenfeier*, the third movement of this symphony has been probably the one discussed the most in literature not dealing exclusively with Mahler's symphonies. Carolyn Abbate dedicates the largest part of a chapter to it in *Unsung Voices*,<sup>48</sup> a chapter that is supposed to be dealing mainly with *Todtenfeier* but in fact spends more time discussing the third, rather than the first movement.

In the tempo of a *Scherzo*, the third movement is based on the *Wunderhorn* song 'Des Antonius von Padua Fischepredigt' in which St Anthony, finding the church empty, starts preaching to the fish. The fish listen attentively to the sermon and then promptly return to their previous bad habits. The meter of the movement is 3/8 and the music has the character of a *perpetuum mobile*, with the basic pattern being that of a rondo (Table 4.3).

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<sup>47</sup> Cardus, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> Abbate, Carolyn, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Table 4.3. Formal diagram of third movement of Symphony No.2

	Bars	
Introduction	1-12	C minor
A	13-189	
B	190-327	C major
Transition	328-347	
A1	348-440	C minor
B1	441-464	C major
S	465-480	B $\flat$ minor over C pedal
B1-return	481-544	C major
A2	545-581	minor

Once again, the precise structure of this movement is under debate, with different scholars offering varying descriptions of its form. Most differences of opinion concerning the structure of this movement, however, are superficial.

At a first glance, Reilly's and Floros's formulas seem almost completely dissimilar (see Table 4.4). However, Floros's scheme is nothing more than a less dissected version of Reilly's pattern, with but few exceptions, as can be seen when looking closely at the sections given for each formula.

Table 4.4. Comparative diagram of third movement's formal scheme.

REILLY <sup>49</sup>		FLOROS <sup>60</sup>	
Introduction	bb. 1-7	Introduction	bb. 1-12
A	bb. 6-189	A	bb. 13-189
B	bb. 190-271	B	bb. 190-347
C	bb. 272-327		
Transition	bb. 328-347		
A	bb. 348-440	A <sup>1</sup>	bb. 348-440
B	bb. 441-464	B <sup>1</sup>	bb. 441-544
X	bb. 465-480		
B	bb. 481-544		
A	bb. 545-581	A <sup>2</sup>	bb. 545-581

The first discrepancy lies in identifying the end of the Introduction and the beginning of part A. According to Reilly, the Introduction ends on bar 7, although he identifies part A as beginning on bar 6. symphony.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Reilly, 'Totenfeier and the Second Symphony', *The Mahler Companion*, p. 107-109.

<sup>50</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 65.

<sup>51</sup> Kaplan, Gilbert E., (ed.) *Symphony No. 2 in C minor Resurrection: facsimile/Gustav Mahler*, New York: The Kaplan Foundation, 1986, p. 50.

Floros, on the other hand, ends the introduction on bar 12. Part A, for him, begins at the point where the violins take up the main song theme. This segmentation makes more sense. The next obvious discrepancy comes when Reilly identifies the section between bars 271-327 as part C, then bars 328-347 as a 'transition'. It is true that on bar 271 the character of the music changes substantially, possibly enough for it to be considered a different section; however, the actual building blocks of the music are still the same as those of the B section. They are varied, the texture is thinner, the orchestration is significantly altered, with the harps now taking on a prominent role, and there is some variation in the motives; but in the end, it is mainly still material from the B section. Bars 328-347, on the other hand, are quite clearly transitional.

There is no disagreement as to where the return of the B section occurs (b. 441), but then Reilly inserts what he calls section X in the middle of Floros's very long B section. This X section is where the orchestral 'shriek of the tortured soul'<sup>52</sup> (B-flat minor harmony over a C pedal, b. 465) occurs. (Section 'S' in Table 4.3). These sixteen bars (up to b. 480) are indeed climactic and the music, described aptly as 'sulphurous' by Cardus,<sup>53</sup> seems to struggle with the persistent B-flat minor harmony whose resolution seems endlessly withheld. The first reasonable hope for a stable tonal footing comes with the descending motif (b. 473) that will appear again in bar 14 of the finale (Ex. 4.6).

Ex. 4.6. Symphony No. 2, 3rd movement bb. 473-481

(*Wieder unmerklich zurückhaltend*).

The musical score for Ex. 4.6 is a single staff in 3/4 time, featuring a series of chords in B-flat minor over a C pedal point. The instruments listed are VI, Fl (8va), Vla, Ob, Tr, and Hrns. The score begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and ends with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic. The chords are marked with accents (^) and the overall mood is described as *Wieder unmerklich zurückhaltend*.

When the B part music proper begins again on bar 481 we get the feeling that we have just come back out into a world with some semblance of

<sup>52</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Cardus, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 74.

recognisable order. Reilly's X section is justifiably differentiated from the overall part B, since it is not only significantly different from the surrounding musical events, but it is also repeated in the finale of the symphony.

This movement is one of those rare instances in Mahler's music where, despite the occasional inter-penetration of sections, the form on closer scrutiny is clearly recognisable. The inevitable divergences from the traditionally prescribed pattern do not seem to be intended as reinterpretation or deformation of classical style or form. Rather, they seem to be programmatically driven. The 'shriek', for example, tears the movement apart, and the efforts to re-establish a kind of neurotic jolliness rather fail.

As is inevitably the case with the Second Symphony, the programme or meaning of the third movement needs to be discussed. The text of the *Wunderhorn* song *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt* on which this movement was modelled has been variously commented upon in relation to its programmatic meaning, but most commentators agree on the underlying metaphor. This agreement has, of course, been aided by the programmes issued by Mahler himself for the symphony. To Natalie Bauer-Lechner Mahler said:

The Scherzo I can describe only in terms of the following image: if, at a distance, you watch a dance through a window, without being able to hear the music, then the turning and twisting movement of the couples seems senseless, because you are not catching the rhythm that is the key to it all. You must imagine that to one who has lost his identity and his happiness, the world looks like this –distorted and crazy, as if reflected in a concave mirror. –The Scherzo ends [sic] with the appalling shriek of this tortured soul.<sup>54</sup>

In the famous letter of 1896 to Max Marschalk Mahler described the Scherzo in much the same terms:

When you then awaken from that melancholy dream [the Andante] and are forced to return to this tangled life of ours, it may easily happen that this surge of life ceaselessly in motion, never resting, never comprehensible, suddenly seems *eerie*, like the billowing of dancing figures

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<sup>54</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections*, p. 43.

in a brightly lit ball-room that you gaze into from outside in the dark – and from a *distance* so great that you can *no longer* hear the music! Life then becomes *meaningless*, an eerie phantom state out of which you may start up with a cry of disgust.<sup>55</sup>

In the Dresden programme, this same metaphor is described in very different terms, although the meaning—clearly the same throughout—remains perfectly intelligible:

*Scherzo*: the spirit of unbelief, of presumption, has taken possession of him, he beholds the tumult of appearances and together with the child's pure understanding he loses the firm footing that love alone affords; he despairs of himself and of God. The world and life become for him a disorderly apparition; disgust for all being and becoming lays hold of him with an iron grip and drives him to cry out in desperation.<sup>56</sup>

Mahler's programme notes do not allow much room for debate on what their meaning might be. The movement is a metaphor for the despair brought on by the realisation that life is meaningless—or at least that it seems that way. Previous interpretations of the movement, however, do yield certain interesting points of discussion mostly on the way Mahler's programmes are interpreted by various scholars, rather than the actual meaning of programmes themselves.

Abbate, in *Unsung Voices*,<sup>57</sup> is the first, to my knowledge, to actively compare different interpretations of the programmatic meaning of this movement with the intention of pinpointing similarities and discrepancies. She discusses Floros's,<sup>58</sup> Susan Vill's<sup>59</sup> and Hans-Heinrich Eggebrecht's<sup>60</sup> interpretations, focusing on the concept of 'deafness' as it appears in Mahler's first two programme notes on the movement (you can no longer hear the music.). The point Abbate draws attention to is that all three scholars, each in their own way, arrive at a reading of the scherzo that effectively nullifies

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<sup>55</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 180.

<sup>56</sup> Translation by Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler II: The Wunderhorn Years*, pp. 183-4.

<sup>57</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, pp. 123-130.

<sup>58</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler III: Die Symphonien*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1985, pp. 60-62.

<sup>59</sup> Vill, Susan, *Vermittlungsformen verbalisierter und musikalischer Inhalte in her Musik Gustav Mahlers*, Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1979, pp. 254-55.

<sup>60</sup> Eggebrecht, Hans-Heinrich, *Die Musik Gustav Mahlers*, Munich: Piper Verlag, 1982, pp. 199-226.

the idea of 'deafness' on the part of the main protagonist. As Abbate points out, Floros, by reading the movement as a waltz taking place in the 'brightly lit ballroom,'<sup>61</sup> locates the subject with the dancing figures inside who can hear the music they are dancing to. '[They] might well look through the window from the other side, to see that hungry figure out there in the dark. [They] are not participating empathetically in the emotion of Mahler's excluded protagonist, not hearing what he hears—silence.'<sup>62</sup>

In Vill's reading of the movement, focusing on the similarities between Mahler's programme note and Heine's poem 'Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen',<sup>63</sup> the subject is still located outside, in the dark, along with Mahler's protagonist, but the inability to hear *anything* is transformed into an ability to hear a kind of secret 'music between'<sup>64</sup> which can only be heard by the despairing protagonist. This poem was set to music in *Dichterliebe* by Schumann. It was a song Mahler knew well, and the last five bars of the scherzo are an almost exact quotation of the final five bars of Schumann's setting.

Ex. 4.7 Schumann, *Dichterliebe* No. 9, 'Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen', bb. 80-84



There is an issue of intertextuality here, which may be considered to give particular weight to Vill's reading of the movement, but it is important also to consider that underlying both works is the concept of alienation. Whether this is considered to be represented by the protagonist's inability to hear anything, or his ability to hear a secret 'music between', it is his exclusion from

<sup>61</sup> Floros, *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> [Such playing of flutes and fiddles, trumpets come crashing in; my beloved must be dancing a festive wedding-round. Such humming and such ringing, such drumming with English horn; and in between the sobbing and groaning, of angels sweet and small.] Translation Abbate, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>64</sup> Vill, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

experiencing what appears to be the centre of events, his 'outside-ness', which is the source of his predicament.

Interestingly, Eggebrecht's reading of the scherzo also does not dislodge the subject from Mahler's distant figure hiding in the dark, but he too achieves an interpretation that liberates the protagonist from the curse of deafness by dislodging the deafness from the subject and transferring it to his audience.<sup>65</sup> In Eggebrecht's interpretation, the text of 'Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt' is taken as an allegory of the audience's incomprehension of artistic expression, just as in the song the fish listen to the sermon; the simple action of paying attention does not guarantee understanding of the message. Abbate describes Eggebrecht's plot structure involving a protagonist as 'a composer, misunderstood, bored by the inevitability of being misunderstood, fall[ing] into anomie, and experience[ing] a moment of despair that explodes into...an orchestral "scream" 465 measures into the scherzo.'<sup>66</sup> Once again, here, Mahler's protagonist is freed from the terrifying affliction of incomprehension, and a different subject or subjects are struck down with the deafness that, in Mahler's programmes, leads to the 'appalling shriek of a tortured soul.'

Abbate seeks to explain why this strange insistence in dislodging either the subject of the programmes, or the deafness of the protagonist onto another subject seems to recur in interpretations of the scherzo, time and again. She comes to the conclusion that it is a fundamental terror at the idea of deafness, on the part of deeply musical individuals, for whom the coexistence of music and deafness seems unimaginable. In relation to Vill and Eggebrecht, in particular, she explains their readings as an effort to 'perpetuate a strategy that defends against the silent void by postulating the existence of some secret internal music subsequently projected outward as the work.'<sup>67</sup>

Abbate's discussion and comparison of these three interpretations of the scherzo is enlightening in the sense that it allows us to see how any interpretation cannot but be coloured by the analyst's own psychology. This does not necessarily constitute a bias, in the strict sense of the word, but it

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<sup>65</sup> Abbate, *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

serves to illustrate how critical thought is not unfettered by the critic's own character and preconceptions. Mahler was obviously not trying to discuss music, per se, in his programmes, and yet the interpretations of these programmes has come to focus on the music involved in the descriptions; music that is only part of Mahler's metaphor for a psychological state that—as can be seen very clearly in the Dresden programme—has nothing to do with the act of listening to, or the composition of music. This is a trap that Abbate herself fails to avoid, when she declares that Mahler conscripts this “meaninglessness” to a point about music itself, for in writing that one can sense rhythmic motion without hearing it, and in construing this as the tormenting inability to find “meaning,” Mahler finally reconstrues his “deafness” as the impossibility of locating meaning *within music*.<sup>68</sup> Although logically plausible in the context of music criticism, this interpretation is no less arbitrary than the interpretations discussed above. It seems evident from Mahler's own words that this movement is a metaphor for alienation and the inability to find meaning in life. It is a musical metaphor about life, not a literary metaphor about music. Mahler's efforts to verbally elucidate the meaning of the music have resulted in the words themselves becoming the subject of literary interpretation and criticism, in a way that he could never have anticipated. Sometimes the author does not mean anything more, or less, than what he/she has written, and our best efforts to delve ever deeper into the meaning of his/her words results in us not being able to see the forest for the trees.

#### Fourth Movement: *Urlicht*

*Urlicht* began its life as a separate song—the seventh in the *Wunderhorn* cycle—and was only incorporated in the symphony at a fairly late stage of composition.<sup>69</sup> It could thus be tempting to assume that its inclusion in the symphony was effected purely for reasons of musical necessity, rather than its presence being indispensable to the programmatic meaning of the work. It is

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>69</sup> See letter to Hermann Behn, October 1895 in Mahler, *Unbekannte Briefe*, hrsg. von Herta Blaukopf, Wien: Zsolnay, 1983, p. 24-25.

true, of course, that in terms of the overall symphonic structure *Urlicht* provides the necessary contrast between the third movement and the finale, as Reilly points out, and it also allows for an adequate musical and time interval before the reappearance of the 'shriek' in the beginning of the finale.<sup>70</sup> It would be easy to assume that Mahler decided to use *Urlicht* as a means to bridge the gap between scherzo and finale on the basis that the text was somehow relevant and the poem had already been set to music; in other words that *Urlicht* was simply a convenient piece of building material ready to hand, and that compositional or programmatic intention was secondary to the decision. The chronology of the symphony's composition does indeed allow such issues to be raised, by Donald Mitchell amongst others. Mitchell is not unjustified in saying that '...the compiling of the Second Symphony raises any number of questions about the nature, consistency and integrity of a composer's inspiration.'<sup>71</sup> He refers to J.B. Foerster's suggestion that the song was pressed into service when Mahler was faced with the problem of linking together the scherzo and the finale, which is an idea that Mitchell finds problematic because of the thematic link between *Urlicht* and finale.<sup>72</sup> According to this thematic link, Mitchell guesses that the opposite must be true; i.e. the finale must have been composed with the song in mind.

Raymond Monelle, however, sees a fault in this entire line of reasoning, which he locates in the assumption that 'thematic links are necessarily *contrived*.' He argues that the simple, chance discovery of a thematic link between the two movements would have been reason enough to insert an already composed song between the scherzo and the finale.<sup>73</sup> But while this is a reasonable supposition, it has no more tangible and secure footing than the supposition that the link was contrived.

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<sup>70</sup> Reilly, 'Todtenfeier and the Second Symphony', p. 111.

<sup>71</sup> Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler, II: The Wunderhorn Years*, p. 178.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>73</sup> Monelle, Raymond, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 187.

In the absence of concrete evidence, sometimes it is simply impossible to identify what is compositional intention and what is fortuitous and simply convenient. And it is not always necessary to do so. It would be reasonable to assume that a composer would not include a movement, or text, if it were not necessary to the work. The process by which this was chosen is irrelevant. There is no significant difference between composing a movement specifically for a certain work, and recomposing an already existing piece for that purpose. Either way, the composer elected to include the piece in the work, hence it is—by definition—there due to compositional intention. With this in mind, the question best asked is surely ‘why’ this choice was made, not ‘how’. Since *Urlicht* is still a part of the Second Symphony (whereas the *Blumine* movement is not part of the First), we must assume that its presence there is vital and its thematic link to the finale intentional; and if the thematic links to the finale can be assessed as intentional, then we may also assume that they are in some way ‘meaningful’.

Floros sees *Urlicht* as playing a key role in the dramaturgy of the work in that it answers questions raised in the scherzo and leads into the finale.<sup>74</sup> Monelle takes issue with this view—and presumably with all similar ones—on the basis that ‘this is not the impression given by a hearing of the Symphony. Along with the two previous movement, *Urlicht* seems like a kind of puzzling intrusion.’<sup>75</sup> He then goes on to explain why in his opinion *Urlicht* gives that impression, by comparing it to the previous three, purely instrumental movements and the finale that follows without a break, also pointing out the movement’s rather ‘off-centre’ entry on D-flat when the scherzo had ended in C minor.<sup>76</sup> These are all valid points but they do nothing more than confirm what seems to have been Mahler’s intention to have the three internal movements of the symphony sound like ‘intermezzi’, which is what he called them in the 1901 Dresden programme. The fact that the movement sounds like an ‘intrusion’, as Monelle calls it, an interruption, an intermezzo, does not mean that its role is not necessary and meaningful

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<sup>74</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 65.

<sup>75</sup> Monelle, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

in the overall thematic structure of the work—quite the opposite, in fact, since there is evidence to support the assumption that it was meant to sound like just such an interruption.

Another strange argument from Monelle is that ‘the relevance of the text to the ideas of death and resurrection, its childlike reference to “eternal life” is a trivial detail beside the stylistic discrepancy, both poetic and musical, from the choral ode of the finale.’<sup>77</sup> He then goes on to explain how, in fact, *Urlicht* is closely connected with three other poems from the *Wunderhorn* cycle, all four of which comprise a sort of circle dealing with issues such as ‘earthly need, contrasted with the bliss of Heaven’, and ‘mystic’ as opposed to ‘human love’, and where ‘paradise is described as a garden where grows a rose; once plucked, this turns into the “Bride”’. The imagery is immemorial, referring in the first place to the Song of Songs.<sup>78</sup> All these concepts are not only found in the Song of Songs, but in most religious literature and especially mysticism. Not only would Mahler have been familiar with them, but they are uniquely relevant both to the text of the finale and what seems to be the overall programmatic context of the work. Monelle, however, misses the relevance of this imagery, these concepts, as spiritual and mystical. It is true that the childlike naïveté of the movement contrasts sharply with the weighty idealism of the finale, maybe too sharply; this would explain Mahler’s decision to provide extensive programme notes for the symphony. This naïveté however seems to have been an important part of the work’s dramaturgy. ‘The moving voice of naïve faith [that] sounds in the [hero’s] ear’ is an integral step in the path of the ‘hero’ as he moves from just such a childlike understanding of the spiritual to the revelations of the finale, which first appear in the form expected and created by ‘faith and the Church’—graves springing open, the Last Trump sounding, the Final Judgement imminent—only to realise that all these are nothing but naïve constructs and that in the end ‘there is no Last Judgement, no souls saved and none damned; no evil-doer, no judge.’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>79</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 44.

There can be no revelation where before there was no illusion. *Urlicht* is just one point one has to pass through in a much longer path of understanding. The fact that Mahler wrote his programmes 'after the fact' does not diminish the importance of each building block in what can be seen as the larger scheme of things. There is internal consistency in both the programme notes and the music and text themselves. After the confusion and despair of the scherzo, *Urlicht* comes as a natural human reaction, a sort of internal defence mechanism in a bid to regain a measure of faith, not only in God, but also in life. One can feel a certain sense of desperate determination in its simple devices and exaggerated prettiness, occasionally soured by dissonances created by the violin and the horns. 'Everything is undermined, compromised, stymied, in an image of vital impurity', Monelle says in the most insightful observation of his analysis: 'The music reaches out to the fallen instead of disappearing into a mystic empyrean along with Scriabin and Delius. This explains its terrible poignancy, beyond the warm comfort of tears.'<sup>80</sup>

#### **Fifth Movement: Satz (Finale)**

Analyses of the Finale always comprise the largest section of any discussion of the Second Symphony, and not without reason. It is the largest of the five movements in length, complexity, aspiration and design, and, although the number of bars it comprises (764) does not necessarily justify the space devoted to it in analysis, the musical events that take place within those bars do. Of all previous movements, this one bears the clearest and most obvious correlation to Mahler's programme notes (see Appendix III), and with the addition of the Klopstock/Mahler text (see Chapter II), there is not much room for misinterpretation. Mahler's vision of the solution to 'the terrible problem of life –redemption',<sup>81</sup> portrayed through the concept of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgement, demands a movement as powerful, evocative and transcendental in character as the religious images he chose to

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<sup>80</sup> Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, p. 194.

<sup>81</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

employ. The impact of this movement in performance is overwhelming thanks to its outpouring of emotional power and its archetypal constructs, clearly conveyed with the use of established musical symbolism.

When the dramaturgy is so clearly and precisely set out, in this case by the use of a sequence of events based on pre-existing religious texts, the examination of the work in terms of traditional formal structure is largely superfluous. A description of the movement and the major events—musical and otherwise—that occur within it is necessary here however, especially if these are related to the sequence of events in Mahler's programmes. Even though his programmes, as he so often said himself, are but indications, signposts to help along the path of understanding, and his symphonies are much more than he could put into any description, they are nevertheless invaluable. In this particular case, the existence of the text is the source of the most unambiguous information in relation to the meaning and nature of this movement.

Concerning the Second symphony, Mahler said to Natalie Bauer-Lechner that 'while the first three movements are narrative in character, in the last movement everything is inward experience.'<sup>82</sup> Yet, even though this may seem to contradict Mahler, it is the finale which is the most narrative in character, in the way we normally understand this term. The fact that the events taking place within it may be a sequence of psychological, rather than physical, events does not negate the narrative character of the music. Mahler himself goes on to describe to Bauer-Lechner the 'events' of the finale, in much the same way he later did in his Dresden programme: as a sequence constituting the Apocalypse and leading to the Last Judgement.

Two of the most detailed examinations again come from Floros and Reilly. Once more, their approaches differ, Floros preferring to set his analysis within the more traditional framework of sonata form, while Reilly simply breaks the movement down into an introduction and two parts, and each part into several subsections. The fact that the finale can be divided into an introduction and three sections which could be compared to the exposition,

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

development, and recapitulation of a sonata form does not also imply that sonata form procedures are employed with any constancy, and Floros himself draws attention to this fact, pointing out in advance that the movement is constructed with 'remarkable freedom, as shown by the key relationships'.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, if sonata-like structures can be identified, it is not unreasonable to assume that the composer himself may have had just such a loosely structured sonata-form configuration in mind as the underlying organization of the movement. Although it is by no means impossible that Mahler conceived the movement in abstract terms, such as Part A, Part B, etc., each one perhaps relating to a particular event, it seems more likely that a mutated sonata-form, not unlike, but on a grander scale than the one utilised for the first movement, served as the foundation (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Formal diagram of 5th movement of Symphony No. 2

<b>Introduction</b>		<b>1-42</b>		F minor—C major
<b>Exposition</b>		<b>43-193</b>		
	Part I	43-61		C major
	Part II	62-77		
	Part III	78-96		
	Part IV	97-141		B $\flat$ minor
	Part V	142-161		D $\flat$ major
	Part VI	162-193		C minor
<b>Development</b>		<b>194-447</b>		
	Part I	194-309		F minor/F major/F minor
	Part II	310-324		F minor
	Part III	325-417		E $\flat$ minor
	Part IV	418-447		D $\flat$ major
<b>Recapitulation and Chorale</b>		<b>448-764</b>		
	Part I	448-471		F# minor
	Part II	472-559		G $\flat$ major
	Part III	560-617		B $\flat$ minor
	Part IV	618-639		
	Part V	640-671		
	Part VI	672-711		E $\flat$ major
	Part VII	712-732		
	Part VIII (Coda)	732-764		

<sup>83</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 67.

The programmatic headings that appear in Mahler's autograph score, but which are left out of the published full score, are indicative of two of the major events of the movement: *Der RUFer in der Wüste* [The Caller in the Wilderness] (Fig. 3, b. 43) and *Der grosse Appell* [The Great Summons] (Fig. 29, b. 448). *Der RUFer in der Wüste* coincides with the beginning of the exposition, and *Der grosse Appell* with the start of the recapitulation. Floros gives several literary examples from religious texts that may have served as inspiration for Mahler and which seem related to these two headings. He mentions Isaiah 40:3-5,<sup>84</sup> which rather obvious connection has been mentioned by many scholars before, but he also draws attention to the similarities to a poem written by a Capuchin monk in the seventeenth century, Father Friedrich Procop, entitled 'Herald of the Final Judgement', which also appears in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The poem tells of the fifteen days leading up to the Last Judgement, describing the events of the Apocalypse and including the changes that take place in creation.<sup>85</sup> The first and last verses of the poem are of particular interest:

*Da schrie und rief die tiefe Stimm  
Wohl bei dem Feuerthron mit Grimm:  
Der Jüngste Tag wird sich bald finden  
Solches verkündge den Menschenkindern!*

Then the deep voice shouted and called out  
There by the fiery throne in anger:  
The Judgement Day is soon to come,  
Tell this to all mankind!

.....  
*Am fünfzehnten Tag, das ist wahr,  
Da wird eine neue Welt gar schön und klar,  
Alsdann müssen alle Menschen auferstehen aus dem Grab;  
Wonon uns die Heilige Schrift klar Zeugnis gab;  
Der Engel mit dem grossen Zorn  
Ruft allen Menschen durch das Horn!*

On the fifteenth day, that is true,  
There is going to be a new world, beautiful and clear,

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<sup>84</sup> A voice of one cries in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

<sup>85</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies.*, p. 71.

Then all people must rise from the grave;  
To which the Holy Writ gave witness;  
The angel in great fury  
Calls all people with the horn!<sup>86</sup>

It could be argued that whether Mahler received inspiration from this particular poem or not is insignificant, and impossible to determine, since the poem describes the Apocalypse in much the same terms as Isaiah and John, and all the imagery Mahler used can be found in the Bible. Yet it is important in that it can be used as supporting evidence for the hypothesis that Mahler's religious readings and sources of inspiration were not restricted to the Bible, and included religious and mystic poetry, such as that of Father Friedrich Procop and Angelus Silesius.

Coinciding with the heading *Der Grosse Appell*, on Fig. 29, is the elaborate instruction that the four trumpets should be placed 'in the far distance', and that they should 'sound from opposite directions'. A connection may be made with Matthew 24:31 here: 'He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other'. It is conceivable that this is simply a coincidence, but Mahler's consistent and precise references to the events of the Apocalypse, as they appear in the Bible, show that he had a more than passing familiarity with the text, and that the composition of the movement was based on precisely this imagery. With the Resurrection chorale immediately following this, the implications are obvious.

An interesting comment, relating to this section (Fig. 29-31) comes from Reilly. The bird-calls in the flute he describes as creating 'a spatial as well as melodic and rhythmic contrast with the brass figures. Combined with a piccolo, the birds become more voluble...Their highly irregular rhythmic figures, against the slow-moving harmonic background, once more suggest the "timeless" plane. These are not the birds of death, but the heralds of the Resurrection.'<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Translation taken from Floros, *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Reilly, 'Totenfeier and the Second Symphony', p. 118.

Reilly also points out the two motivic references to *Urlicht* (bb. 55-8 'Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott') in bars 660-67 and bar 649 of the finale, the former coinciding with the words 'in heissem Liebesstreben', the latter with 'Tod! Du Allbezwinger'.<sup>88</sup> Donald Mitchell has already made this particular observation,<sup>89</sup> but I believe it is significant enough to warrant a reference in any discussion of the movement. On closer examination, however, it seems that the reference to *Urlicht* does not in fact end on bar 667, but on bar 672, thus including a full three lines of text. It is not an exact repetition of the motive, of course, but the differences are minor, consisting mainly of larger note values and a few omissions.

Ex. 4.7 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement bb. 660-672.

**Vorwärts.** *cresc.* **f** **Drängend.**

in heissem Liebesstreben werd' ich ent-

*p* *pp* **Langsam**

schweben zum Licht, zu dem kein Aug' gedrun-gen

Another interesting point that Reilly makes<sup>90</sup> is of a clearly programmatic nature, in the form of a biblical reference which he compares to Mahler's Dresden programme and the sixth stanza of the Resurrection poem. He quotes Rev. 21:4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for former things are passed away

He compares it to Mahler's:

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>89</sup> Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler, II; The Wunderhorn Years*, p. 185.

<sup>90</sup> The fact that it appears in a footnote and not in the main body of the text is indicative of his purely musical approach to this analysis.

And behold: there is no judgement... no punishment and no reward! An almighty feeling of love illumines us with blessed knowing and being!

and from the poem:

O Pain, thou piercer of all things, From thee have I been wrested! O  
Death, though masterer of all things, Now are thou mastered!<sup>91</sup>

The similarities are evident, but Reilly's point is to show the essential *dissimilarity* between Mahler's words and those of the bible. In Revelation, judgement has already taken place in the preceding chapter and 'whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast in the lake of fire', whereas in Mahler's work, in the end, there is no judgement. In the effort to point out the differences between Mahler's concept of God and the Last Judgement, and that of the bible—differences which are quite evidently there—many commentators have overlooked passages that could, along with other literary sources, have served as inspiration for Mahler's image of God. Some are offered here as an example. Not all relevant quotations on this matter come from Revelation, although most still come from John:

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 John 4:16-19

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear

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<sup>91</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, note 57, p. 120. The Dover translation of the poem differs from Deryck Cooke's translation that Reilly uses and is quoted above. 'O Sorrow, all penetrating! I have been wrested away from you! O Death, all conquering! Now you are conquered.' (Dover full score edition of Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, p. 378-379). The main difference is the word 'sorrow' as opposed to 'pain'. Both interpretations are viable since 'Schmerz' means 'grief' as well as 'pain' and only the context can indicate which one applies. In this case, there is no clear indication, but the meaning is still intelligible. What is meant is 'suffering', whether that takes the form of physical or psychological pain.

hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.  
We love him, because he first loved us.

Sifting through the entire Old and New Testament would no doubt bring to light many more quotes that are similarly relevant to Mahler and this symphony. In the same way it is entirely likely that there exist other writers than Silesius and Procop who may have served Mahler as sources of spiritual and creative inspiration. No one can say with any degree of certainty to what extent each one of these influenced the shaping of the Second Symphony in particular, but it is surely undeniable that some, or all of these, and probably others too, played an important part in the shaping of Mahler and his concept of God.

Reilly's concluding remarks in his discussion of this symphony are the only purely subjective commentary that can be found in his analysis:

But what Mahler is essentially addressing are the very basic human fears of death and judgement (not just damnation, but judgement of the worth of one's life), and the need to feel that life has meaning. His answers are affirmations that we in our striving and in our love give meaning to our lives, and that we can transcend both death and judgement. Few more powerful expressions of such views, which suggest an outlook that goes beyond traditional sectarian beliefs, can be found in the history of music, and mark an attempt to find a response to the scepticism that has grown ever more potent in the twentieth century. But, perhaps ironically, one should not assume that these were Mahler's own personal convictions. Each of his symphonies is another (and a different) answer to the meaning of existence.<sup>92</sup>

This interpretation is no less valid for its subjectivity—taken as it is from a late twentieth-century outlook—yet it remains just that: a personal reaction and interpretation to an enormous work of art and the mind that composed it, one hundred years earlier. I feel sure that precisely this sort of educated, informed personal reaction is something Mahler would have wanted and

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<sup>92</sup> Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

hoped for. It is my belief, however, that this interpretation imposes a twentieth-century mindset on a work of the nineteenth century, and of a composer who very obviously took spirituality and religion seriously, and whose convictions are evident, both in this particular work and in his personal communications. Mahler's vision of the Final Judgment may not include a judgment', as such, but it certainly includes a God—one that seems to be the same as the one described by John, a God that is Love itself. It is God's Divine Love and our own strivings towards and for love, that brings us to God in the end, without Judgment and without punishment. And it is this which transcends death. Mahler's Second Symphony is not a vision of the world without a God, in which we ourselves give meaning to our lives, it is a vision of the world with a God who is different from the image offered by institutionalised religion. On the other hand, that 'each of [Mahler's] symphonies is another [not very different] answer to the meaning of existence', is, to my mind, undeniable.

## Chapter V:

### Secondary Parameters: Design and Method

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The analysis that will be carried out in the ensuing chapters will be undertaken with the intention of avoiding fragmentation of each work into its smallest composite parts. The intention is to attempt a more holistic examination. Obviously, it is impossible to completely avoid the examination of individual parts, or aspects of the music in any meaningful analysis, but the methods to be used have been carefully chosen because they lend themselves to this approach. The same methodology will be applied to both symphonies in an effort to highlight more effectively the similarities and differences between them.

The main focus of this analysis will be on the texture of the music, an aspect of Mahler's works that has been left completely unexplored in previous literature. Wallace Berry does not so much give a definition of musical texture, as describe what it consists of: 'The texture of music consists of its sounding components; it is conditioned in part by the number of those components sounding in simultaneity or concurrence, its qualities determined by the interactions, interrelations, and relative projections and substances of component

lines or other component sounding factors.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, musical texture is a composite element of musical structure, determined in part by other secondary elements, such as timbre or colouration (including articulation), dynamics and rhythm. Hence, alongside this main focus, other aspects of the musical process will have to be explored, such as orchestration, dynamics, and thematic and motivic progression. It would be impossible to look at musical texture independently of these other interconnected aspects of the musical structure. The immense complexity of a symphonic work fails to justify any one-sided examination of its composite structure, especially when the intention is to propose any sort of interpretation of the music itself. The harmony or the formal structure of a symphony may be of immeasurable importance in interpreting aspects of the music, but these two points alone are by no means adequate in shaping an accurate impression of the forces that make the piece of music what it is. For example, a particular harmonic progression, taking place at a particular point of the musical process, will create entirely different impressions on the listener when it is played on a piano, when it is performed by a small ensemble, or when it is performed by a full orchestra. That same harmonic progression will change again in nature when the dynamics of the music are changed, for example if it is played *forte*, rather than *piano*; and yet again, if one or more of the orchestral sections join in, or withdraw. An example that lends itself well to illustrate this argument is the opening A played in harmonics in all registers in the first movement of the First Symphony. If one looks at the passage harmonically, the immense difference this subtle choice of orchestral colour makes to the entire movement will be completely overlooked. An A is an A, whether it is played in harmonics or not, it will not make any difference to the harmonic progression.

Wallace Berry approaches texture in a way that makes it partially quantifiable. He makes a distinction between 'density-number', i.e. 'the number of sounding components' and 'density-compression', i.e. 'the ratio of the number of sounding components to a given total space'.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, these are quantifiable

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<sup>1</sup> Berry, Wallace, *Structural Functions in Music*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

elements, that is, elements—or events—that can theoretically be counted, examined and analysed. However, the manner in which these elements or events can be counted is where the method becomes problematic when attempting to apply it to a work as large and complex as a symphony. Berry gives the following example to illustrate his definition of density-number and density-compression, and the elements within these that are quantifiable:

If a single pitch is sounded, a texture (here, one of maximal simplicity) is established. If a second pitch is sounded in simultaneity, the texture is altered—its density is increased. If the two pitches are a 2nd apart and they are succeeded by two pitches a 6th apart (the upper moving up a 4th, the lower down a 2nd), a textural ‘event’ takes place—a succession involving not pure quantity (density-number) but involving density compression and a number of important qualitative factors *in the texture viewed independently of other elements*.<sup>3</sup>

It becomes clear that although density-number may conceivably be measurable, even throughout something as large as a symphony, density-compression, a partially qualitative aspect of texture, cannot. For example: if three simultaneously sounding Cs spanning three octaves are sounded, their density-number would be 3, and their density-compression ratio would be 3:24—where 24 represents the total number of semitones covered by the stimulus. However, as Berry points out, there is ‘relatively greater tendency of “fusion” among components so related, and among components relatively so related (5ths, 4ths, etc.) as opposed to one of more heterogeneous, ultimately dissonant PC [pitch class] and IC [interval class] content. All of this concerns the relation of density to dissonance.’<sup>4</sup> Consequently, with the evident practical difficulties of conducting such a measurement of all the density-compression relationships within a full symphonic work, *and* the added problem of certain of the elements involved in this calculation (such as timbre, rhythm and dynamics) being qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of the music, a meticulous analysis of this sort seems impossible.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Timbre especially has been a notoriously difficult component of musical sound to quantify. Only recently have extensive studies begun to be undertaken and these have only served to verify the extreme difficulty—if not impossibility—of quantifying, or defining the element of musical timbre. This is true to the extent that a generally accepted definition of timbre has never been proposed. The American Standards Association proposed that timbre is ‘...an attribute of auditory sensation in terms of which a listener can judge that two sounds are similarly presented and having the same loudness and pitch are dissimilar.’<sup>5</sup> Bregman disagrees with this definition, because he believes it implies that there are certain sounds that cannot be similarly presented as they have no pitch; hence the listener would not be able to decide whether or not that sound possessed the quality of timbre. Accordingly, he believes that the definition should be ‘... we do not know how to define timbre, but it is not loudness and it is not pitch.’<sup>6</sup> A convenient compromise between the two positions is the definition given by Pratt and Doak who adapted the ASA definition, describing timbre as, ‘... that attribute of auditory sensation whereby a listener can judge that two sounds are dissimilar using any criteria other than pitch, loudness and duration.’<sup>7</sup>

Given that just defining the quality of timbre is such a problem, it becomes apparent how much harder the scientific examination of this quality becomes. Studies of the timbre of individual musical instruments have and are being undertaken, but an extensive review of these is beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that, however valuable their results may be to our scientific understanding of musical timbre, they are as yet of minimal usefulness to a musicological examination such as this.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the analysis of timbre in the context of a large instrumental group such as an orchestra seems to be, for now, impossible. In the context of a large number of instruments

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<sup>5</sup> American National Standards Institute, *Psychoacoustical Terminology*, S3.20 New York: American National Standards Institute, 1973, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Albert S. Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis: The Perceptual Organisation of Sound*, London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994, p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Pratt, R. L. and Doak, P. E., ‘A Subjective Rating Scales for Timbre’, *Journal of Sound and Vibration*, vol. 45, 1976, 317-328 (p. 317).

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the scientific examination of timbre see: Grey, J. M., *An Exploration of Musical Timbre*, Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, 1975.

playing, other problems arise, such as the 'blend' of simultaneously sounding timbres. Although work is currently being carried out in this field too, as yet, studies have been undertaken only on dyads of simultaneously sounding instruments.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the study of orchestration is anything but a new field of study. Yet the extensive examination of the orchestration of any one of Mahler's works, to my knowledge, has yet to be attempted.

Finally, the subject of dynamics is also something which music analysts seemed to have avoided, possibly because they are considered such a relative quality, varying hugely from performance to performance, and so belong to the domain of performance studies, leaving the performance experts to grapple with the issue. And yet a briefest glance, at a Mahler score especially, will reveal extensive, detailed instructions as to the intended dynamic variations within the work. Of course it is a relative issue, and it will vary enormously from performance to performance, but the fact remains that the composer's instructions are clearly defined in the score, and hence lend themselves to enquiry. Precisely because it is a relative quantity, it is possible to examine the dynamic inflections within a piece, especially in relation to other aspects of the music, whether these are harmonic progression, formal structure, texture, or orchestration, as the case may be. A triple *forte* in the woodwind, compared to a *piano* in the trumpets, is indicative not only of dynamic expression, but also texture, orchestrational techniques and timbre. Whether the triple *forte* is actually louder in one performance than it is in another is irrelevant. Ideally, the orchestra will be forced to equalise the effect by adjusting their *piano*, otherwise the trumpets will overwhelm the woodwind.

In short, texture, orchestration and dynamics are three aspects of the musical architectonic structure that are interrelated to such an extent that it would prove pointless and inadequate to examine either one without taking account of the others.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information see: Kendal, Roger A., and Carterette, Edward C., 'Identification and blend of timbres as basis for orchestration?', *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 9, 1993, 51-67.

## An Analytical Aid: Design

This approach to the analysis of texture, dynamics and orchestration will be attempted on the basis of two different approaches. The first is one that arose out of what I perceived as a need to *visualise* texture. Texture remains a rather ambiguous component of the musical structure, perhaps because it is related more closely to tactile and visual sensations, rather than aural ones. It soon became evident that by using the score as it stands, or listening to the music itself, texture could only easily be examined, either in small segments, or over 'real time'. If a method could be devised through which the texture of an entire movement, and the way it changes, could be looked at holistically, or on one page, it is conceivable that its examination would yield insights that could not otherwise be gained.

From this realisation I decided to design a method of visually representing texture, in effect a visual aid to textural analysis. Very soon, however, it also became apparent that, since texture is indivisibly bound to dynamics and orchestration, these two components also needed to be represented. To this end, it was decided to create a visual representation of texture, dynamics and orchestration in colour. It became immediately clear that this was something that would have to be generated by a computer programme from relevant data input and could not be done by hand. The implementation of the computer programme, according to my instructions, was undertaken as her M.Sc. project in Information Technology by Lorna Brown, under the supervision of Dr. Tony Printezis in the Department of Computing Science at the University of Glasgow.<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, the use of a computer programme for the generation of this sort of visualisation created limitations as to the sort of data that a computer could utilise. The musical data from the score had to be translated into numbers that the computer could understand. This, however, was something that would have had to be done anyway, if visual representation of texture was to be achieved in anything but musical notation. The 'code' effectively would have to be

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, Lorna M., 'Vimp: Visualisation of Musical Pieces', M.Sc. diss., University of Glasgow, 2001.

changed from notes, to numbers, and then to colour. The entire exercise rests on the principle of substituting one code for another. However, the resulting code cannot be as precise as the original, for two reasons. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, a visual representation has certain limitations: the limitations of what the eye is capable of perceiving, and the practicalities involved in the scale of the representation. It would be impractical—and would also possibly defeat the original purpose of a holistic view—to create a representation the size of a wall. Secondly, the original code is designed to communicate a multitude of information to the musician, all of it relevant to the aspect of texture, but not specifically intended to represent texture. Hence, the secondary code is designed to communicate a more specialised set of information. This information is not only qualitative in nature, rather than quantitative, but is communicated by an entirely different means, i.e. visually, as opposed to aurally. With these limitations in mind it had to be decided which elements of the original score could and should be taken into account in the design process of this programme, and how these would best be represented in the finished product.

It was immediately apparent that only quantifiable sets of information from the score could be translated into a visual representation. 'Texture' could practically only be calculated by measuring the equivalent of Berry's 'density-number', for the reasons discussed earlier. The way to do this would be to count the attacks for every note played in the score. This is more complicated than at first it sounds, because of, for example, the existence of sustained sounds running over a single bar, such as tied notes, and the doublings of notes, which according to Berry also define 'density-compression', and the fusion of which affects the resultant sonority. Eventually I decided that tied notes running over one bar would be counted again, as would octave doublings. Unisons were a unique problem. Berry says that: 'Doubling at the unison of course does not affect texture at all—not even its spatial aspect, but only sonority.'<sup>11</sup> However, sonority cannot be ignored when attempting to produce a reasonably accurate visual representation of texture. For this reason, it was

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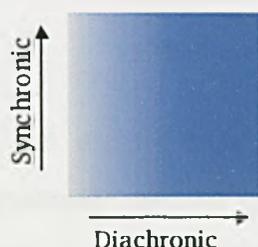
<sup>11</sup> Berry, *op. cit.*, note 12, p. 196.

eventually decided to count as separate elements unisons occurring within different instrument groups, since in this case the element of timbre was also brought into play, and to not re-count unisons occurring within the same instrument group. So, for example, in a 4/4 bar with consecutive semi-quavers and no rests, the programme would be given the number 16 as input data. Conversely, two tied minims would only be given 1, whereas a minim tied to a semibreve in the next bar would give input data of 1 for the first bar and 1 again for the second bar. A middle C sounding simultaneously from the violins and the trumpets would be counted twice, once for each instrument group, whereas the same C sounding from three trumpets would only be counted once. It would have been possible to apply a reverse procedure, through which the rests for each bar would have been counted and then deducted from a quantity that would have been taken to represent the fullest possible texture for a bar. This method, however, would fail to take into account the extremely important feature of the attack of each instrument, which is not only characteristic of texture, but also of timbre and overall sonority.

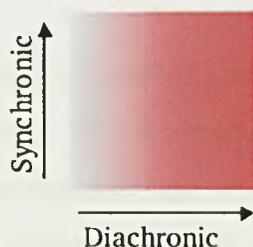
Each section of instruments is represented on the vertical axis, in the same order as they appear on an orchestral score. This is obviously done so as to facilitate the reading of the resultant graph, which would follow the same principles as the orchestral score. The bars of the piece are represented on the horizontal axis, following the linear model of the orchestral score. However, again because of practical limitations, the bars appear considerably smaller than on a full score, with the intention of fitting an entire symphony movement on a sheet of landscape A4 or A3 paper. The programme itself has no actual limitations of size; the size of the final product can be determined and easily changed by the user. If desired, the graph may be printed out at any size. It is only for the purposes of this thesis that the size of the graph needs to be restricted.

It has already been mentioned that the texture, dynamics and orchestration of the music are represented in colour. This is done by first determining a colour scale, for example from pale blue to dark blue, which encompasses an almost

infinite number of hues in between. This scale is not necessarily the only one that can be used. It is possible to change the colour scale at will. Whatever the particular colour-scale, however, the *hue* of the colour will change according to the density-number of the texture in each bar; the higher the textural density, the darker the hue. The thinner the texture, the lighter the hue will be.

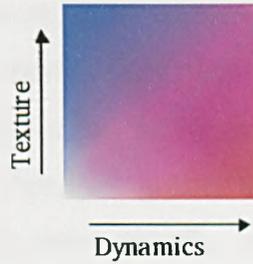


The second parameter in this representation is dynamics. These again will affect the image. So, for this set of data, a different colour-scale must be selected, for example from pale red to bright red, its hue changing according to the changing dynamics, in the same way as with density-number. For example, a *fortissimo* will be represented by greater brightness in the colours, a *pianissimo* by very pale colour levels. Obviously, not all instruments are playing at the same dynamic levels all the time. This means that each instrument section's data will be changing independently of the others, in the same way that it will be changing for texture.



It would then be possible to view these two colour representations either independently, i.e. view the density-number image in blue, and the dynamics image in red, or have the programme combine the two in one overall representation of the texture of the piece, in which the blue colour-scale and the red colour scale would be blended by the software itself. This results in an image with a kind of three-dimensional colour scale, in which areas that are clearly red in colour indicate sparse texture and loud dynamics, areas which

are clearly blue indicate dense texture and soft dynamics, and a virtually infinite number of combined shades of blue and red, from pale lilac to bright magenta which indicates a combination of dense texture and loud dynamics.



At this point, however, we are faced with the serious problem of timbre. Each instrument has an inherently different quality of sound, and this difference in quality includes the extent to which its sound colour ‘blends’ with the sound colour of the other instruments, and the inherent differences of prominence. For example, if a trumpet and a violin are playing at the same dynamic level, the prominence of the trumpet’s sound will be greater. It is a quality inherent to the instrument’s timbre and it is not possible to calculate it in a scientific manner in the context of a full orchestra. It is, however, an element of the music that, if it were left out of account, would result in an inaccurate representation. Since an objective/scientific calculation of an instrument’s prominence within the context of an orchestra is not possible, the only means of factoring this element into the visual representation of texture is a subjective one.

This subjective element could be justified, however, only if it rested on some sort of theoretical foundation. The theoretical foundation can be found in almost any treatise on orchestration and it is the principle that when an instrumental combination is chosen, it should ‘take account of such matters as balance of tone...[and] clarity of texture.’<sup>12</sup> In other words, one of the reasons a typical symphony orchestra usually comprises around sixteen violins, but only two flutes is because the flute’s prominence is such that only two are required to achieve a ‘balance of tone’. More would be overwhelming, while just one would be overwhelmed by the other instruments. This is in large part, but not

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<sup>12</sup> Piston, Walter, *Orchestration*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1978, p. vii

exclusively, dependent on pitch/register, and each instrument's range. Hence, the number of individual instruments comprising each section of the orchestra can be a basis for subjectively calculating the relative prominence of that instrument in relation to the whole group. Obviously, depending on the style of the work and the composer, it is entirely likely that he/she may elect to change the balance of tone of the orchestra, for example by doubling the number of trumpets. However, even then, changes to the orchestral apparatus are made on the given basis of what, conventionally, constitutes an acceptable balance of tone. Hence, by taking a generic classical orchestra as the basis for the calculations, it is possible to subjectively calculate a relative factor for the prominence of each instrument and instrument group, which would then be factored into the generated images for dynamics and texture.

To achieve this, however, it was also necessary to identify a number of other factors that contribute to the element that may be defined as the relative prominence of an instrument. It became apparent that two of the most decisive factors aside from timbre are, firstly, the intensity of the sound produced by an instrument, and secondly the range of that instrument. The relative range of the instrument is important because, the higher the instrument's register, the more penetrating the sound will be. So higher-pitched instruments, like the piccolo, will tend to have a more penetrating sound, than, for example, the double bass.

The intensity of a particular instrument is the amount of energy carried by its sound wave. A sound wave that travels outwards from its source (a cone, or a musical instrument) carries an amount of energy, which is spread over the surface of a sphere centred on the source. The intensity,  $I$ , and the distance from the source,  $r$ , are related by the following equation:

$$I \propto 1/r^2 \quad (1)$$

Consequently, the intensity of a sound produced by an instrument in the context of an orchestra is affected by numerous parameters, such as the distance of that instrument from the neighbouring instruments, the sound waves the other instruments are producing, the physical attributes of the performance

venue, its acoustics, etc. These parameters change from performance to performance, which makes it impossible to scientifically measure intensity in these conditions. It may have been possible to use loudness, i.e. decibel levels of each instrument when playing at an average *mf*, for the basis of these calculations, but this method would have been equally inaccurate due to the lack of available scientific data, and the large number of factors that also affect loudness, whether in a controlled, recording environment, or in a concert hall.

Given the imprecise nature of this whole exercise and the available data—or lack thereof—it became necessary to resort to ‘trial and error’ in our effort to determine the extent to which intensity, on the one hand, and the range of most commonly used registers of the instrument affect the prominence of a group of instruments in relation to the whole—at least on the level of the visual representation. After discussing these issues with the I.T. experts responsible for implementing the software, I initially worked on the assumption that relative prominence of a single instrument in relation to another single instrument was directly proportionate to a rating of its intensity plus a rating of its range (with its most commonly used registers within this range being the determining factor in assigning it a rating). It very quickly became apparent, however, that this equation produced an inaccurate visual representation. Eventually, through more trials, it became clear that relatively accurate representations were only produced if the rating of an instrument’s relative range/register was considered to affect the instrument’s prominence less than its intensity rating. The final equation used for the calculation of an instrument’s relative prominence was:

$$\text{single\_instrument\_prominence} = \text{Intensity} + 0.5 \times \text{Range}$$

This first basic equation was then used to determine the relative prominence of a group of instruments, in relation to the others, by taking into account the number of instruments in that group. In this case however, as Ridgen states,

the sound level will increase logarithmically, not linearly.<sup>13</sup> So, the final equation that mathematically represents the calculation of relative prominence for a group of instruments became:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Relative\_group\_prominence} &= \frac{\text{Group\_prominence}}{\Sigma(\text{group\_prominence})\text{of all groups}} \\ &= \frac{\log(N+1) \times [(Intensity + (0.5 \times Range)]}{\Sigma\{\log(N+1) \times [Intensity + (0.5 \times Range)]\}_N} \end{aligned}$$

Where group prominence  $\Sigma$  is the total sum of the instrument groups.<sup>14</sup>

Hence, the final problem in representing prominence is assigning a number to the factors of range and intensity. Due to all the reasons mentioned above, it was decided to assign this subjectively, rather than attempt any sort of objective measurement, that would in context be imprecise. Again for reasons of practicality, it was decided to assign these numbers on a scale from 1 to 5. So, the various instruments were ascribed a number from 1 to 5 depending on their relative range, the overriding criteria in doing this being the part of their range that is most commonly used. In cases where parts of instruments' ranges overlapped to an extent where ascribing them a rating became problematic, the agility of the instrument in the extremes of its range was taken into consideration as the determining factor.

In the case of intensity, however, it was considered that it would be best if in the subjective determination of a rating for each instrument more than one person's judgement was taken into account. To this end, a blind experiment was designed which was taken by two groups of subjects. This was done after consultation with a social scientist (Hector Tsougarakis, M.Sc. in Psychology), and a musical timbre expert (Dr Rosemary Fitzgerald), and conducted by the author.

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<sup>13</sup> Ridgen, John Saxby, *Physics and the Sound of Music*, New York, London: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1977, p. 32-35.

<sup>14</sup> For a full description of the process of defining and calculating prominence see: Brown, 'Vimp: Visualisation of Musical Pieces', pp. 29-33.

## Method

The first groups were educated listeners and the second expert listeners. The first group comprised sixteen first—and second—year undergraduate music students from the School of Music, University of Leeds. The group of expert listeners consisted of two research postgraduates and seven staff members, again from the School of Music at Leeds. The experiment was conducted by e-mail. The reason a blind, rather than a listening experiment was preferred was because it was deemed desirable to obtain an instinctive response from all the subjects based on the sum of their past experience, as opposed to asking them to give a judgement related to a listening exercise that would unavoidably be conducted by listening to a recording of a symphonic work. Considering that in each recording of a single work the blend, the dynamics, and the relative intensity of the instruments will differ, it was determined that the results of the experiment would be more indicative of the particular recording that was played, rather than the overall subjective perception of the intensity of the instruments in general.

The only alternative would have been to conduct an experiment with the use of music samples of specific pitches and dynamics for each instrument, either through a recording, or with individual performers playing live during the experiment. As mentioned earlier, there are no databases offering any such accumulated, recorded, aural samples, and the resources required to make such a recording from scratch, or using live performers during the experiment made this alternative impossible to implement. Additionally, even if hiring performers had been possible, the inevitable variations between one performer's *mf*, for example, and another's, would almost certainly have had an enormous impact on the results. Consequently, it was deemed that under these circumstances, a blind experiment would provide the clearer results.

Both groups of subjects were given the following instructions and the list of fifteen instruments/instrument groups:

- Assuming all instruments are playing at a dynamic of mezzo-forte, please rate the INTENSITY of the following instruments/instrument groups *in relation to each other*, on a scale graded from 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest intensity rating).
- Please give only ONE rating for each instrument/instrument group and do NOT leave any blanks, even if you are not certain of your reply. Try to use the entire scale from 1 to 5.

Piccolo.....  
 Flute.....  
 Oboe.....  
 Clarinet.....  
 Bassoon.....  
 Contra-Bassoon.....  
 Horn.....  
 Trumpet.....  
 Trombone.....  
 Timpani.....  
 Percussion.....  
 Violin.....  
 Viola.....  
 Cello.....  
 Double Bass.....

The inclusion of a defined pitch or register in the questionnaire was deemed impractical, in that it would confound the results. Since it was a blind experiment, without the use of aural samples, it was considered that the subjects would be incapable of bringing to mind, with any precision, a specified pitch, or register. At the same time, it was considered that, by asking for an intuitive rating of intensity for each instrument, the subjects (all of whom were familiar with orchestral instruments and orchestral music) would instinctively take into account the registers most commonly used within the range of the instrument.

## Analysis

After consultation with Hector Tsougarakis, the types of statistical analysis necessary for the results was determined, and subsequently conducted by the author. The results were first analysed separately for each subject group. The mean and standard deviation for each instrument was calculated and then the instruments were ranked in descending order, from the ones rated as having the highest intensity to ones rated as having the lowest. Afterwards, the grand mean was calculated for each instrument, the standard deviation and the ranking, taking the results from both subject groups. The means for all the instruments from one group were then subjected to a correlation analysis to the means of the instruments of the other group.

The following table (Table 5.1) represents the mean values of the data collected from the two subject groups with their standard deviations, the grand mean with its standard deviation and the degree of correlation of the data derived from the two subject groups.

Table 5.1 Mean values of Intensity data collected

Instruments	Expert Listeners		Educated Listeners		Grand Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Correlation
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation			
Piccolo	4.11	0.93	3.69	1.30	3.84	1.18	0.94
Flute	2.33	0.71	2.62	1.26	2.52	1.08	
Oboe	4.00	0.87	4.06	0.85	4.04	0.84	
Clarinet	2.67	0.71	3.19	1.11	3.00	1.00	
Bassoon	2.78	0.97	2.94	1.06	2.88	1.01	
C-Bassoon	2.33	1.32	3.13	1.09	2.84	1.21	
Horn	3.00	1.00	3.44	1.03	3.28	1.02	
Trumpet	4.67	0.50	4.31	0.79	4.44	0.71	
Trombone	3.33	0.71	3.50	0.97	3.44	0.87	
Timpani	3.00	1.12	2.94	1.24	2.96	1.17	
Percussion	3.78	0.67	3.63	1.15	3.68	0.99	
Violin	3.11	1.05	3.31	1.01	3.24	1.01	
Viola	2.22	0.97	2.63	0.81	2.48	0.87	
Cello	2.78	1.20	2.94	1.06	2.88	1.09	
D-Bass	1.56	0.73	2.38	1.02	2.08	1.00	

## Results

The following table (Table 5.2) shows the values corresponding to the grand mean of the data collected from the experiment and were taken as the intensity rating of each instrument.

Table 5.2 The grand mean of Intensity values collected

Instruments	Intensity Values
Basses	2.08
Violins	3.24
Cellos	2.88
Violas	2.48
Harp	2.5
Percussion	4
Tubas	2
Trombones	3.44
Flutes	2.52
Piccolos	3.84
Horns	3.28
Bassoons	2.88
Trumpets	4.44
Clarinets	3
Oboes	4.04
Contrabassoon	2.84
Timpani	2.96

These results were used throughout the design process of the programme. However, after the completion of the work, the software had to undergo evaluation, which was undertaken in Glasgow, under the supervision of Lorna Brown and Dr. Tony Printezis. Five evaluators with a number of different musical backgrounds were asked to evaluate the programme.<sup>15</sup> From the results of the evaluation, and especially discussions with one of the evaluators, Brown and Printezis felt that some of the intensity ratings used needed to be reassessed. Brown and the evaluator (Jill Stevenson) reassigned values for range/register, using Adler's *The Study of Orchestration*,<sup>16</sup> and using these values, reassigned values for intensity. Accordingly, the final ratings used are shown in Table 5.3.

<sup>15</sup> For full report of evaluation see Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-68.

<sup>16</sup> Adler, Samuel, *The Study of Orchestration*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1989.

Table 5.3 Final Intensity values utilised in the software

Instruments	Intensity Values
Basses	2.5
Violins	2
Cellos	2.5
Violas	2
Harps	1.5
Percussion	4
Tubas	4.5
Trombones	4.5
Flutes	3
Piccolos	3.5
Horns	4.5
Bassoons	2.8
Trumpets	5
Clarinets	2
Oboes	3.5
Contrabassoon	2.8

Brown says, in relation to the new values used: 'Despite the differences in the values, the image is not radically different from the original image. However it can be noted that the brass are generally more prominent, as are the lower strings, and the woodwind are generally more prominent.'<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the only other element that needed to be measured in some way was the dynamics of the piece. After having devised a way of calculating the all-important relative prominence of the instruments, assigning a rating to the various dynamic levels was mostly straightforward. The scale used was as follows:

Dynamic Marking	Value
<i>ppppp</i>	1
<i>pppp</i>	2
<i>ppp</i>	3
<i>pp</i>	4
<i>p</i>	5
<i>mp</i>	6
<i>mf</i>	7
<i>f</i>	8
<i>ff</i>	9
<i>fff</i>	10
<i>ffff</i>	11
<i>fffff</i>	12

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *ibid.*, p. 59.

The programme, unfortunately, cannot cope with the marking *sfz*, which instead can be entered as the equivalent of *ff*, or indeed any other value the user feels is appropriate. However, it is possible to measure *crescendos* and *diminuendos* of any number of bars, and which is one of the very useful automatic features of the programme. What is not possible is the representation of a *crescendo* or *diminuendo* within the confines of a single bar. It is theoretically possible to adapt the programme to be able to do this, but it was felt that the practical limitations of what we can visually perceive within the limits of a graph of a practicable size made such a feature unnecessary.

## The Software

The software was written in Java and has a windows interface, which allows the user to enter and change data at will. All data are loaded in plain text files so that they can be saved and edited independently, without recourse to the software. It is possible to load an instrument database of the user's choice, and also edit it according to the user's needs (Fig. 5.1a and 5.1b).

Figure 5.1a Main VIMP environment

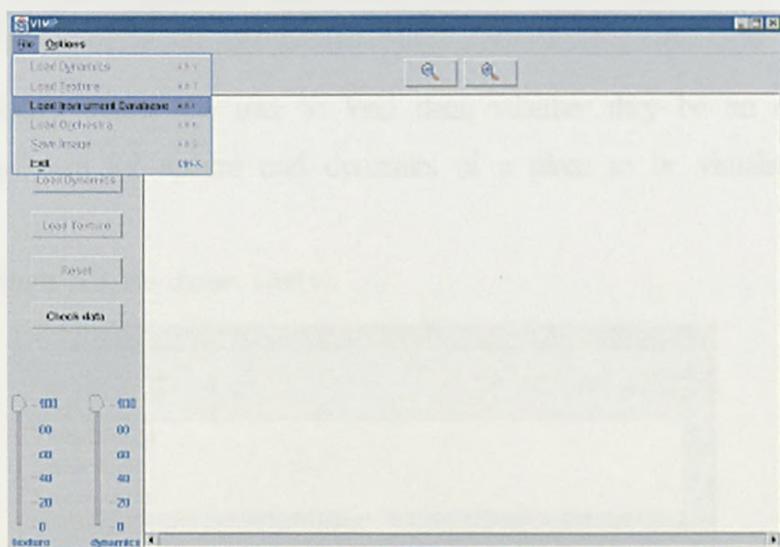
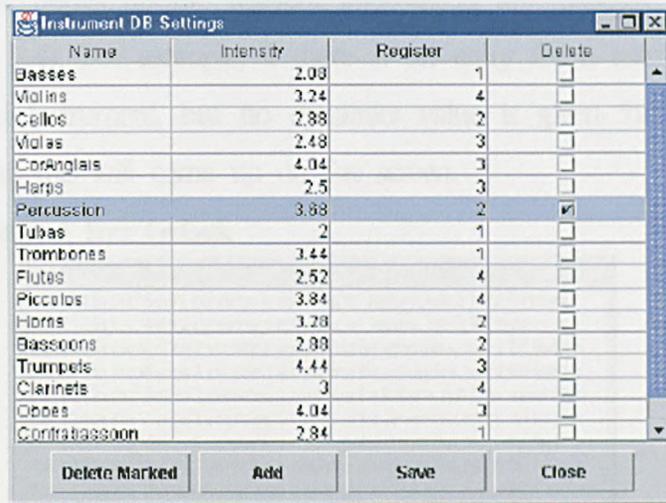
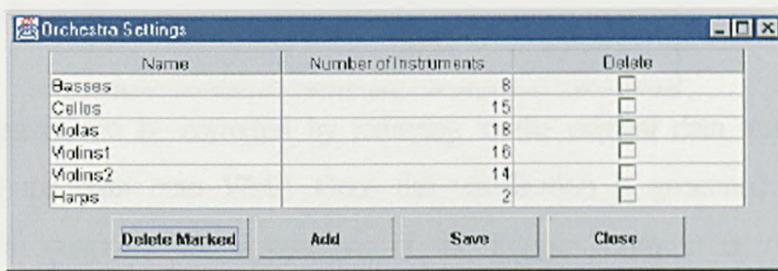


Figure 5.1b Instrument database window



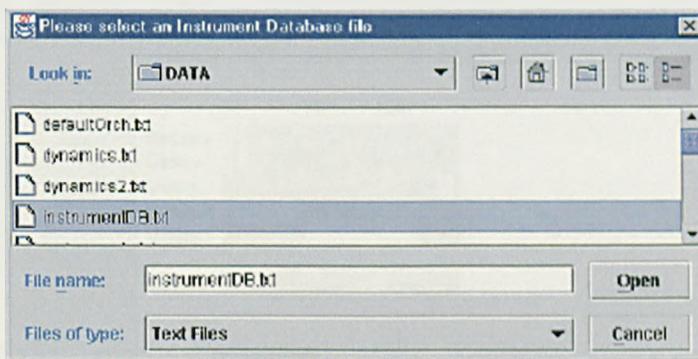
The user may enter, and subsequently edit, the number of orchestra instruments (for each section) he/she requires for any given piece (Fig. 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Orchestra settings window



A file chooser allows the user to load data, whether they be an orchestra database, or data for texture and dynamics of a piece to be visualised (Fig. 5.3).

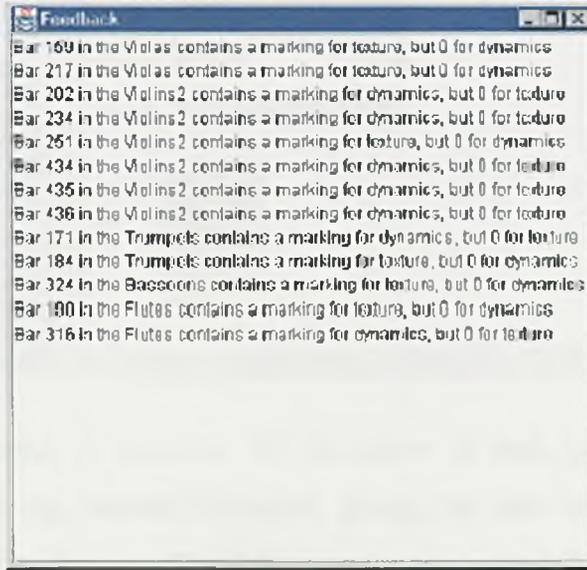
Figure 5.3 File chooser window



Once all the data have been loaded, it is simply a matter of clicking on the 'Generate' button found on the main screen for the visualisation to be

generated. If there are errors in the data input, the software detects them at this stage, and brings up the relevant information automatically in a separate window (Fig. 5.4). For example, if there is an entry for a texture value in a given bar and instrument, but no dynamics value is given for the same bar and instrument, this will come up on the screen.

Figure 5.4 Error feedback

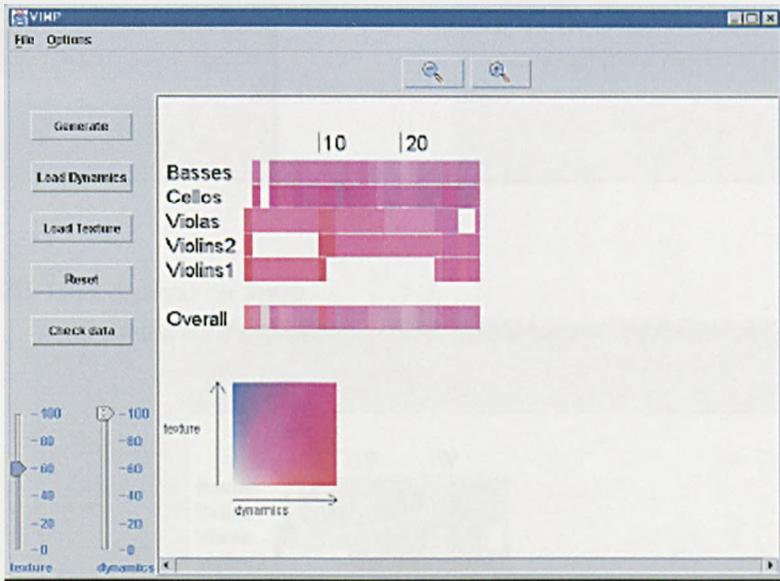


These errors can be corrected by returning to the original data text files, and reloading the data onto VIMP. Once the visualisation is generated it is then possible to customise the appearance of the image. Zoom in or out buttons are provided, as are sliders, through which the user can adjust the visual prominence of texture and/or dynamics in the image manually (Fig. 5.5a and 5.5b).

Figure 5.5a Dynamics set at 60%



Figure 5.5b Texture set at 60%



It is also possible to customise the dimensions of each bar, as it appears in the image, the gap between instrument groups, the font used and the colours representing the values etc (Fig. 5.6).

Figure 5.6 VIMP customisation window



Finally, the user can easily insert labels into the generated image, at the bars of his/her choice, as the following screenshots show, in Fig. 5.7a and 5.7b.

Figure 5.7a Entering text to be used on label, and bar number label should appear on

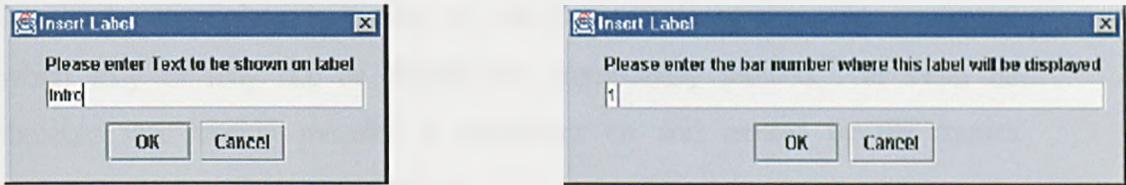
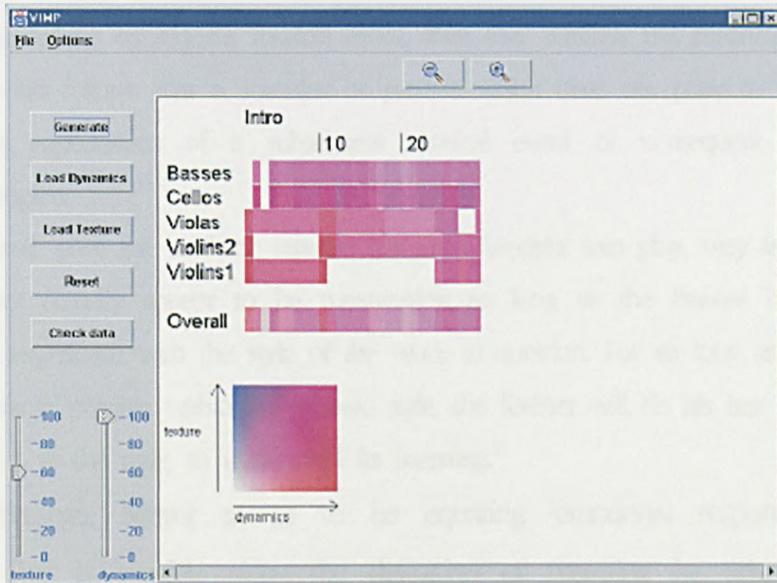


Figure 5.7b Label displayed on image



The final image can then be saved as a PNG (Portable Network Graphics) image file and exported into any imaging or graphics programme for further editing, or even directly into a word processing programme.

## Implication—Realisation

The second and main methodology used in the following analysis is based on the theories of Leonard B. Meyer as discussed in his book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*.<sup>18</sup> Meyer's theory is based on a psychological theory of emotion which states 'Emotion or affect is aroused when a tendency to respond is arrested or inhibited'.<sup>19</sup> This tendency to respond may be conscious or unconscious, and based on either instinctual responses or learned experience;

<sup>18</sup> Meyer, Leonard B., *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

whichever the case, however, the creation of an expectation that either remains unfulfilled, or whose fulfilment is delayed incites emotion. Meyer argues that, if this is the case, then it is easy to see how music can provoke tendencies which may or may not be directly and immediately satisfied.<sup>20</sup> In short, he theorises that musical meaning is dependent on and created by the music's ability to arouse affect in the listener.

Embodied musical meaning is, in short, a product of expectation. If, on the basis of past experience, a present stimulus leads us to expect a more or less definite consequent musical event, then that stimulus has meaning. From this follows that a stimulus or gesture which does not point to or arouse expectations of a subsequent musical event or consequent is meaningless.

However, once the aesthetic attitude has been brought into play, very few gestures actually appear to be meaningless so long as the listener has some experience with the style of the work in question. For so long as a stimulus is possible within any known style, the listener will do his best to relate it to the style, to understand its meaning.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage, Meyer seems to be equating 'emotional response' with 'meaning'. This is possible since the definition of meaning he adopts from Morris R. Cohen states '...anything acquires meaning if it is connected with, or indicates, or refers to, something beyond itself, so that its full nature points to and is revealed in that connection.'<sup>22</sup> According to Meyer, a stimulus may indicate or point to events or consequences which can either be different from itself in kind—this would give it designative meaning—or it may imply events that are of the same kind as the stimulus itself—which would give it embodied meaning. From this point of view, a musical stimulus or series of stimuli can indicate and point not only to extramusical concepts and objects, but also other musical events which are about to happen.<sup>23</sup> He supports his

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, Morris R., *A Preface to Logic*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1944, p. 47. Cited in Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Meyer, *ibid.*, p. 35.

equation of 'meaning' with 'emotional response' by attacking the traditional dichotomy between reason and emotion.

Once it is recognised that affective experience is just as dependent upon intelligent cognition as conscious intellection, that both involve perception, taking account of, envisaging, and so forth, then thinking and feeling need not be viewed as polar opposites but as different manifestations of a single psychological process.

There is no diametric opposition, no inseparable gulf, between the affective and the intellectual responses made to music. Though they are psychologically differentiated as responses, both depend upon the same perceptive processes, the same stylistic habits, the same modes of mental organisation; and the same musical processes give rise to and shape both types of experience. Seen in this light, the formalists' conception of it appear as complementary rather than contradictory positions. They are considering not different processes but different ways of experiencing the same process.<sup>24</sup>

In short, the expectations aroused by certain musical stimuli which are considered the norm within a specific musical style will provoke an emotional response in the listener if their realisation is delayed or altogether absent – hence acquiring 'meaning'.

Meyer goes into detailed examples of how this theory may be applied to various aspects of music analysis, but his main focus is on melodic continuation, harmonic progression, rhythm and completion and closure. He also devotes part of a chapter to texture. He maintains that textural organisation also, or the lack of it, may give rise to expectation.<sup>25</sup> He groups the various ways in which the mind organises the textural data presented to it under five different categories:

(1) a single figure without any ground at all, as, for instance, in a piece for solo flute; (2) several figures without any ground, as in a polyphonic composition in which the several parts are clearly segregated and are equally, or almost equally well shaped; (3) one or sometimes more than one figure accompanied by a ground, as in a typical homophonic texture

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<sup>24</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries; (4) a ground alone, as in the introduction to a musical work—a song, for instance—where the melody or figure is obviously still to come; or (5) a superimposition of small motives which are similar but not exactly alike and which have little real independence of motion, as in so-called heterophonic textures.<sup>26</sup>

It is also possible for the mind to impose a combination of these categories on the musical stimulus, and this is as much dependent on the psychological demand for good shape, as on the expectations and experience of the listener.<sup>27</sup>

Texture, as a rule, does not act independently of other musical variables. Changes in texture are usually accompanied by changes in other parts of the musical organisation, but melody, tonality and orchestration may vary indefinitely, while the basic textural organisation remains the same.<sup>28</sup> Meyer explains how expectation will be most active and intense when the salient shaping forces of a passage remain constant while texture changes, e.g. when a theme or melody that has already been established as the norm in a certain textural organisation recurs in a different textural setting. Furthermore, deviant textures such as these often create tension and uncertainty in the mind of the listener; conflict is created when, for example, in a homophonic texture, additional well-shaped figures are introduced. In the mind of the listener, these figures will be perceived as an intrusion, a disturbance of the supposed homophonic texture.<sup>29</sup>

Another instance which will tend to induce expectation and uncertainty in the listener is where a sense of incompleteness of texture is created. This may be the result of abnormally wide distances between the parts of the textural field; that is, when the parts of the texture are so widely separated in musical space that they are expected to be 'filled in' by other musical stimuli –or, conversely, when the textural organisation is so dense that it will be expected to be come

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188-189.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

thinner, to separate. Meyer cites Berg's *Lyric Suite* as an example of the latter instance.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, a third instance that may create expectation or tension in the listener is when the texture is so uniform as to be understood to constitute an accompaniment, or ground for a theme or figure that is yet to present itself. The longer the length of time for which such uniformity of texture persists, the more likely it is that it will give rise to saturation and hence tension and ambiguity on the part of the listener. Alternatively, ambiguity will arise when a previously clear textural organisation becomes progressively weakened, either because the ground acquires clearer articulation, or because the figure/s lose their definition.<sup>31</sup>

An occasion which will tend to induce ambiguity but is not really texturally dependent is when the individual elements of the texture are so great in number and diversity as to obscure one another, or when their placement is such that they cannot be perceived as clearly separated entities. In this case, however, it is not really the texture that is ambiguous, but the individual shapes and their placement. Meyer considers these occasions rare and connects them mainly to programme music, citing as an example Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-193.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

*Sometimes when I read Goethe I get the paralysing suspicion that he is trying to be  
furry.*

Guy Davenport

## Chapter VI

### First Symphony: Representation of Spiritual Conflict Through Secondary Parameters

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#### **Meaning and Affect:**

#### **Conflict vs. Spiritual Conflict**

Related to the belief in the power and significance of aesthetic experience is the belief in the seriousness, purposefulness, and 'logic' of the creative artist and the work he produces. The presumption that nothing in art happens without a reason and that any given cause should be sufficient and necessary for what takes place is a fundamental condition for the experience of art. Though seeming accident is a delight, we believe that real accident is foreign to good art. Without this basic belief the listener would have no reason for suspending judgement, revising opinion, and searching for relationships; the divergent, the less probable, the ambiguous would have no meaning. There would be no progression, only change.

Without faith in the purposefulness and rationality of art, listeners would abandon their attempts to understand, to reconcile deviants to what has gone before, or to look for their *raison d'être* in what is still to come.<sup>1</sup>

The examination of Mahler's First and Second Symphonies will be undertaken with the specific objective of identifying and analysing musical representation of spiritual conflict. Although it is impossible to quantify 'conflict' in purely musical terms, it is nevertheless possible to identify aspects of the music, and the quality of the music, as producing, or containing, conflict. In previous chapters I have attempted to show, through extra-musical sources, that the conflict apparent in this and the Second Symphony can be described as spiritual. It is obvious that such an interpretation cannot focus exclusively on static instances or excerpts, or even movements, of the symphony, but must both view the work on a synchronic level—as a whole with an underlying theme, in much the same way as one would view a picture—and on a diachronic level, as a dynamic process, the way we experience the work in time.

In all literature of any worth, the plot, the characters, the twists and surprises in the story all serve to expound on a common, underlying theme; this theme can be generally identified by answering the question 'what is this story about?'. Saying that this story is about a character that commits a crime, is not caught and is then consumed by guilt is merely describing the plot. On the other hand, saying that this story is about consequences, human nature, and the sources and workings of guilt is to describe its theme. In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the title gives us a hint of what the story is about, but it is nothing more than that. Most times, the theme is a much more detailed concept than what one can simply find in a work's title. There are an infinite number of ways of looking at and treating the subject of crime and punishment and we cannot know what the author's outlook is by reading only the title; we have to read the whole book before we can identify what the specific connotations of the title. The theme is not

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<sup>1</sup> Meyer, Leonard B., *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 75.

synonymous with the subject of the story, for the theme also includes the outlook of the author/composer on aspects of that particular subject.

Mahler's Second Symphony has become known as the 'Resurrection' symphony, not because Mahler named it that way, but because of the title of the Klopstock poem he uses in the choral finale. This ex-post-facto title gives us a hint at what the symphony is about, but it can also be misleading, as Mahler's title 'Titan' proved to be for his First Symphony. Because of the arbitrariness of assigning signification to the musical code, there is no question that the interpretation of music is a much more difficult and imprecise science than the interpretation of the code we understand as language/literature. Nevertheless, both language and music are codes, and they exist for the purpose of communicating concepts; hence it is possible to interpret them, at least to a certain extent. We may find the hint of the underlying theme in extra-musical sources, but even without such assistance, musical convention may give us the means to interpret the code of any musical work. A purely musical analysis might not get us very far in the direction of qualifying certain concepts, such as 'conflict', simply because the musical code of the time has no specific convention for the expression of such an idea, yet we will still attain a reasonable understanding of the music.

In Mahler's case, at least for the first four symphonies, we are fortunate to have enough extra-musical information that we are able to use in an effort to assign conceptual meaning, even to those aspects of the musical code that are not covered by convention. But it is also the nature of the music itself that invites a hermeneutic interpretation and a conceptualisation of our affective responses. Beside the extra-musical evidence both of primary sources (Mahler's texts, correspondence and programme notes) and secondary sources (reports from Mahler's closest friends and colleagues), the music's formal and thematic structure is such that it is impossible to view it solely as an aesthetic object, in the way one views 'absolute' music. The structure is compromised, stymied, the coherence of the work precariously balanced on a few spindly wires that barely hold the movements together, while our desire for aesthetic gratification is never quite satisfied. To be sure, there are moments of immeasurable

beauty in Mahler's works, but these are constantly undermined by grotesque contrasts and frequent surprises which delay, or altogether withhold from us, the realisation of the numerous expectations the work raises. The music rises up to the highest reaches of refinement, only to collapse again into vulgarity and fragmentation.

In aesthetic terms, the difference between a masterpiece of absolute music and a Mahler symphony is the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful arouses pleasure, by adhering to rules of balance, economy and ultimate unity; in Meyer's terms, it provides complete satisfaction of expectations. There are no loose ends, no irreconcilable contrasts: it offers perfect closure. The sublime, however, incites awe, reaching up beyond these aesthetic ideals, by seeking to surprise, overwhelm, and create tension through contrasting and alternating intense emotional reactions.<sup>2</sup> Expectation is never completely satisfied. There is always something else, whether it be surprise, or frustration, or outright shock. The sublime has a reason for existence beyond simple aesthetic pleasure and it has to be viewed in context. It has meaning, a theme; it shocks the beholder into conceptualisation of affect. Michaelis describes this effect specifically in terms of music: A composer can communicate sublime emotions '...by the use of unconventional, surprising, powerfully startling, or striking harmonic progressions or rhythmic patterns. Supposing, let us say, the established tonality suddenly veers in an unexpected direction, supposing a chord is resolved in a quite unconventional manner, supposing the longed-for calm is delayed by a series of stormy passages, then astonishment and awe result and in this mood the spirit is profoundly moved and sublime ideas are stimulated or sustained.'<sup>3</sup>

According to Meyer, affect and meaning in music are not two diametrically opposed concepts, but rather two complementary elements in any reaction to

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<sup>2</sup> For extensive discussion on the sublime and the beautiful see: Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Peter le Huray and James Day (eds), *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 289.

music, arising not from different processes but from different ways of experiencing the same process. Whether an intellectual or an affective response will arise depends on the disposition and training of the listener.<sup>4</sup> These affects, or meanings of music are the product of expectation on the part of the listener, and the ways in which the consequent musical stimuli alternatively confirm, delay, or utterly thwart the realisation of the listener's expectations. Obviously, for expectation to be aroused, the listener must have previous experience of the particular musical style. If a stimulus does not indicate, or arouse any sort of expectation of subsequent musical events, the stimulus is meaningless.<sup>5</sup> However, '... as long as a stimulus is possible within any known style, the listener will do his best to relate it to the style, to understand its meaning.'<sup>6</sup>

This theory of expectation/implication and realisation can be applied to virtually any aspect and element of the total musical stimulus. Most often it is used in conjunction with analyses of harmonic progression and thematic/motivic development. However, it is equally efficient in the analysis of other musical elements, such as texture, orchestration and dynamics. Since all these are stimuli which are not only possible, but an integral part of the musical style in question, they too carry inherent implications and can be used in a manner which arouses expectation. As Meyer points out, however, texture does not generally act as an independent variable.<sup>7</sup> Besides it being difficult to divorce musical texture from its complementary elements, such as dynamics and orchestration—even if the type of texture we are examining is of the 'ground-figure' type—more prominent patterns of musical stimuli such as harmony and melody always tend to dominate in the listener's consciousness. Hence, the effects of texture in the arousal of expectations will usually be a more subconscious process (and thus, according to Meyer, an affective reaction), than a conscious intellectual one (thus acquiring conceptualised meaning). This is not always the case, since there are types of musical

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<sup>4</sup> Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35-37.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

organisation that bring texture into the foreground of the listener's musical perception, making it—instead of the more usual harmonic and melodic gestures—function as the main signifier: ‘... expectation will be particularly active and intense in cases in which the salient shaping forces of a work remain constant while texture changes...’<sup>8</sup>

## Sources Used

The score used as the basis of this analysis is the Dover Full Score edition of Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 2 (1987). The Dover edition is a republication of the first editions of the symphonies, published by Josef Weinberger, Vienna, under the titles *Erste Symphonie in D Dur*, and *Zweite Symphonie in C Moll*. The differences between the Weinberger and the Universal Edition of the First Symphony published in 1906 are minimal, with only minor revisions made, mainly consisting of a few reorchestrated bars in the fourth movement, and a few footnotes added. The revisions appearing in the Universal Edition of the Second Symphony are more substantial, although again they consist mainly of changes in the orchestration.<sup>9</sup>

What is of greater significance is that Dover have added the repeat at Fig. 12 of the first movement of Symphony No. 1, which did not appear in the 1899 Josef Weinberger edition of the symphony, but was first included in the 1906 edition. This is a significant alteration to the first edition, which Dover fails to mention. In fact, their assertion that the Dover edition of Symphony No. 1 is a reprint of the Weinberger is misleading in this respect.

The first editions of the symphonies were used, in preference to the critical, revised editions, on the basis that they represent the first version of the works that the composer felt were appropriate for publication. It is well known that

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> In the score of Symphony No. 1, there are three type-setting errors, which appear in both the Weinberger and the Dover editions. On bar 153 (Fig. 19 (-5)) of the third movement, the clef for the violas appears as a tenor clef, although the key signature is consistent with an alto clef. On bar 443 (Fig. 40 (-6)) of the fourth movement, in the bassoons, the clef appears as treble, instead of bass, but the key signature is consistent with a treble clef. On bar 243 (Fig. 21 (+6))

Mahler revised his works regularly, often before individual performances. One such first-edition score of the First Symphony, with Mahler's handwritten revisions on it, was discovered as recently as November 2002 in Jerusalem, by Charles Bornstein. Unfortunately, at the time of the writing of this thesis, this copy had not yet been dated, so it is impossible to know at which point in his life Mahler made these changes.

I contacted Mr Bornstein but unfortunately there is currently an embargo on the annotated copy, as Mr Bornstein is preparing the first public presentation of its contents. He did offer me certain information on its contents, however, which are of some interest. Mr Bornstein informed me that the changes again consisted of orchestrational revisions, which aimed at:

- 1) gaining a clearer more etched sound
- 2) making some of the p[iano] textures lighter
- 3) adjustment of dynamics for whatever hall these were for - adjusting the wind soli ku-ku [...] that most orchestras do automatically today anyway.
- 4) the inversion of oboe and 2 flutes for the opening minutes of the 1st movement [...]
- 5) acoustic reinforcements that help the winds to be heard clearly in places against the brasses.
- 6) a basic emergence of a less-Wagnerian [sic], more Mahlerian [sic] sound.<sup>10</sup> (March 13 -email)

Mr Bornstein is planning to perform this version of the First Symphony in late 2004.

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of the fourth movement, in the upper line of the split basses, the D<sub>2</sub> pedal appears as a C, for one bar only.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication (e-mail), 13 March 2003.

## Symphony No. 1 in D major

### Texture, Dynamics and Orchestration: Representing Spiritual Conflict.

As mentioned earlier, this analysis will focus on certain aspects of the music that have been largely neglected in past discussions, namely orchestration, texture and dynamics. These elements, having previously been understood as the gestural, rather than structural, qualities of musical communication, lend themselves readily in identifying spiritual struggle. Where form, or structure, defined mainly as the interaction of pitch and rhythm, can be considered the architectural support of a musical work, these other elements, often considered secondary, show what is being supported;<sup>11</sup> they are everything that disappears completely—as if it never existed—in a Schenkerian graphic analysis which, assuming it were even possible to apply to a Mahler symphony, would be severely limited as a reflection of the work's meaning. And yet, such an analysis is not meaningless when applied to Bach, for example. The reason for this is that, where form is the entire point in a work by Bach, the ingenuity of its perfection inspiring in us profound aesthetic pleasure, in a Mahler symphony the point is affect, and this affect is communicated—in large part—by those elusive musical elements (such as texture, orchestration and dynamics) that facilitate not a conscious, intellectual, but a subconscious, affective reaction to the music. To expand the earlier architectural analogy, these elements are the equivalent of the light, streaming through the stained glass windows in a Gothic cathedral (an architectural style which is considered to adhere to aesthetic ideals of the sublime, rather than the beautiful); they are the sheer size of the construct before which we are dwarfed; they are the carvings, the gargoyles, and everything else which creates the atmosphere of awe a Gothic cathedral inspires us with. Without these elements, and their affectiveness, a Gothic cathedral is nothing more than a big, empty building, of peculiar shape and proportions. Similarly, without the ingenious use of

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<sup>11</sup> Pitch and duration seem to me to form the basis of a compositional dialectic, while intensity and timbre belong to secondary characteristics.' Boulez, Pierre, *Boulez on Music Today*, trans. Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett, London: Faber, 1971, p. 37.

intangible, qualitative elements such as texture, dynamics and orchestration, without the capacity to arouse affect, a Mahler symphony would be at most a curiosity: large, awkward and pointless.

In order to examine the function of these elements of musical communication, it is necessary to take account of instructions from the composer, such as the list of instruments required for performance, and other directions present in the score that relate either to the emotional content of passages, or to aspects of interpretation and performance.<sup>12</sup>

Reading the list of instruments Mahler required for performance of the First Symphony, it becomes evident that these forces, relatively large when compared to a classical orchestra, are almost modest when compared to the forces Mahler required for his Second Symphony. Obviously, not all instruments in each section play all the time, but even so, both the wind and percussion sections are significantly reinforced, giving Mahler the option of using all of the instruments simultaneously, an option that he does not pass by, the most voluminous of the movements, in terms of sheer mass of sound, being the finale.

The simple fact of keeping the maximum forces of his orchestra at bay until the finale, even though it is not the most original of Mahler's orchestration techniques (comparable, for example, with Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*), is nevertheless part of a larger, unique outlook on orchestration that, more than any other feature of the music, makes the Mahler sound instantly recognisable. It is not only the manner in which he utilises the various instruments/instrument groups on an individual level that makes the character of Mahler's orchestration so unique, but also the overall balance—or lack thereof—of the orchestral apparatus and sound-colour. With the brass and percussion sections significantly reinforced, the result, in places, is a jolting, piercing sound-colour that is about as easy to ignore as an explosion; it is entirely unlike the blended orchestration of Wagner or Richard Strauss. In a live performance, the sound emanating from a Mahler orchestra playing the finale of the First Symphony, for example,

becomes a virtually tangible object, with a concrete physical presence. In my experience, this sensation is almost impossible to recreate from a recording, no matter what the quality of the sound system.

This skewed orchestral balance is almost impossible to see (or imagine) just by looking at a printed score of the work, but it is rather more evident in the colour visualisations that I shall discuss presently. These are, I would like to repeat, not finely-tuned, fully-accurate visual codings of the music, but rather a representation of the relative musical values present in a piece. Nonetheless, they yield information on the music that is otherwise difficult to discern, both on a diachronic and a synchronic level. They are analytical aids, nothing more, and are not intended to replace the score.

In the next section, in which I will be looking at the First Symphony in more detail, I shall discuss the texture, dynamics and orchestration of the work on the basis of Meyer's theory of expectation/realisation, and I shall be presenting some visualisations for interpretation and comparison with certain formal and gestural analyses of the symphony.

### **First Movement: *Langsam. Schleppend. Wie ein Naturlaut.***

A great deal has already been written about the opening section of the first movement of this symphony, and the A pedal in harmonics that spans eight octaves and a full fifty-six bars. It is also well known that Mahler changed the original A pedal sonority into harmonics only after he first heard the movement in performance in Budapest. The natural A was too coarse and did not create that ethereal atmosphere that Mahler had apparently had in mind. It is, without a doubt, one of the most understated yet memorable opening sections in the symphonic repertoire.<sup>13</sup> Yet the A pedal is far from being the only noteworthy feature. The introduction sets out a mood, a

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<sup>12</sup> The Dover Full Score edition provides a list of instruments for both the First and the Second symphonies.

<sup>13</sup> As was perhaps unexpectedly recognised by Donald Tovey in: *Essays in Musical Analysis*, Vol. VI, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 75.

theme, for what is to come, or at least hints at certain key ideas, a large proportion of which recur throughout the rest of the symphony.

**INTRODUCTION** (bb. 1-62): With the A spanning eight octaves and thus covering almost the entire aural space that most listeners would be able to perceive comfortably, its function as a blanket 'ground' replaces the most usual ground against which music tends to be projected, i.e. timeless, unorganised silence. It becomes as it were the white background of a sheet of paper on which we can see the black figures that make up words or images, or, a metaphor that would be more appropriate in this case, the sunlight that completely surrounds us, and allows us to see the natural world. It is the famous descending fourth, when it appears in bar 3, that is the first actual *music* we hear.

The piccolo, oboe and clarinets play this descending fourth over four octaves. When it is repeated, in bar 5 by the flutes, English horn and bass clarinet, it comes as a surprise. It sounds much lower than anyone could have expected, played as it is two octaves lower than before, and with the bass clarinet overwhelming the sound of the flutes and the English Horn; then, it is in the oboes again, and the bassoons. This disjointedness, created by the sharply etched changes of timbre and the constant skips up and down the octave spectrum, not only continues undaunted for the full fifty-six bars, but it returns later on in the movement, and indeed later on in the symphony. It is also this disjointedness that creates the very distinct impression that these sounds are coming from all around us, from different sources, randomly, making it almost impossible for us to be able to predict where the next sound is going to come from, or even what that next sound is going to be. The substantial gaps between stimuli, where we hear nothing but the constant ground of the A pedal, only create the impression of a weighty, expectant silence, waiting to be filled in.

It may have been possible for us eventually to become accustomed to the randomness of the recurrences of that most simple musical stimulus of the descending fourth, and eventually to perceive that also as nothing more than another 'ground', rather than a 'figure', if it wasn't for the unexpected

interruptions of the fanfares, coming initially from the clarinets (b. 9)—a surprising timbre for a fanfare—then the trumpets. These much longer, rhythmically complicated figures, sounding as if from far away, give the impression of man-made sound as opposed to the simple, brief, random sounds of nature which the descending fourth seems to represent. The fanfares are the first more prolonged musical stimuli that appear mainly in the middle of registers that are constantly audible from the A pedal, and the descending fourth, still emerging in different octaves and from instrument group to instrument group.

This randomness of shape (rhythmic and other) and sound colour creates a sense of suspension, of indecision, and the expectation that there is something more coherent to come—even though we might not be able to predict what form this coherence will take. The extremes of register, timbre and the virtually constant dynamic of *pp*, create a subconscious tension in the direction of the middle range and dynamics. This tension becomes translated as a struggle in that direction, whereas the repeated diversions, coming first from a new figure in the horns in bar 32, and then the unexpected timpani roll in bar 47, the continuously recurring fourth in different instrument groups, the fanfares, and finally, the crawling, legato figure that appears in the cellos along with the timpani roll, do nothing but thwart the listener's expectations of a more coherent form to come. The withdrawal of the high A pedal and the close imitation that develops in the next few bars between horns, clarinet and English horn threatens to become coherent, but never quite gets there. These contradictory expectations and impulses create a sense of conflict.

**EXPOSITION** (bb. 63-162): By the time the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* theme enters on bar 62, it seems that the textural tension might actually become resolved. The cellos, bassoon and bass clarinet gravitate towards their middle registers, with long, coherent melodic lines sounding, along with a well-timed, harmonically consistent accompaniment from the horns in their lowest registers and the harp. By bar 68, though, the descending fourths reappear in the high register of the clarinets, while the flutes are playing in their lowest range (thus creating a strange crossing effect of the timbres of

the two instrument groups), the cellos, that initially carried the theme, sound a long E over five bars, and the first part of that main theme suddenly appears in the trumpets, where it will stay for most of the next section. The promise of textural coherence is once again retracted and orchestral confusion threatens. Snatches of the second part of the *Gesellen* theme appear, jumping from the first violins, to the second violins and back again. In bar 80 a new quaver motif appears, initially in the first violins, but which then moves to the violas, and eventually the full *Gesellen* theme, intact, reappears in the cellos again in bar 109. From bar 92, the ostinato which roots the prolongation of E major, prior to the resolution to the dominant on bar 109, is texturally disrupted by the random occurrences of the descending fourth, once more jumping from instrument group to instrument group (flutes, clarinets, horns), and the first section of the *Gesellen* theme, its false entry ahead of the cellos on bar 108, still sounding from the trumpets.

It is not until bar 121 that we start getting a hint of coherence from the orchestra, and the first suggestion of exactly what such an orchestra can do, in terms of orchestral mass. The music, for the first time, moves out of the sphere of *pp* and into a tentative *mf* that struggles for a foothold, oscillating down to *p* and back again, while gradually more and more instrument groups begin joining in an increasingly coherent upwards procession to some sort of peak. Even the realisation of this prospect is delayed, however, and only arrives in bar 135, coinciding with the firm establishment of the dominant key (A major), that seemed to have been too easily reached on bar 74 to have been permanent. Suddenly, and for almost the entire next twenty bars, practically the entire orchestra is playing simultaneously (bar the contrabassoons, tuba, the trombones and harp), with every theme, motif, and chord doubled, or even tripled on different instruments in *ff*. This sudden outburst is at once both satisfying as the first proper resolution of textural tension since the beginning of the movement, and shocking, since by this time our expectations have been thwarted so many times that we had begun to suspect it would never happen. Now it has, we cannot predict where it is

going to lead. For the first time there is actual movement in the music and we cannot help but expect that now it has started, it is going to continue.

Then, on bar 155, the entire sound structure suddenly disintegrates again. The A pedal returns to the strings, with progressively softer dynamics, the fourth tumbles down almost the entire wind section, starting from the flutes in *f* and ending—surprisingly, with an enormous leap downward—in the cellos in *pp*. The horns accompany this deterioration with cascading, descending figures that fall all the way down to their lowest register in *pp*. Then there is nothing but the ‘silence’ of the A pedal in harmonics again and the curious, plucked A octaves in the highest register of the harp, sounding once per bar, like the tinkling of broken glass, as the introductory material returns on bar 163.

Bird calls in the flutes and the descending fourth in the piccolo return, and for the next twenty-five bars virtually all textural movement ceases. Nothing comes in to fill the yawning textural gap between the piccolo, flutes, the A harmonic pedal in the violins and violas all hanging suspended in the highest registers, and the new glissando motive that suddenly appears in bar 167 in the cellos (Ex. 6.1).

Ex. 6.1 Symphony No.1, 1st movement, bb. 167-171.



It is not only the glissando that makes this motive sound strained, as if struggling with something; it is also the cello being asked to play in the tenor register, which nevertheless leaves a gap of several octaves between it and the other sounding instruments. No matter how high a cello is asked to play, its sound colour will always give away its nature: that of an instrument that is comfortable in the bass def. Everything in this short section, the cessation of movement, the extremes of register hanging in the air, but most of all the painful efforts of the cello to cry out, conspire to create a pained sense of emptiness.

The first appearance of the bass drum on bar 180 is at the same time both understated, and striking. It generates an atmosphere of menace, as it plays a single crotchet per bar for four bars, so softly that it takes us a few seconds to even realise that we have heard it. The new pitch F contributes to this uncertain feeling, and by the time we have realised what has happened it is already over. The bass drum disappears and will not return again for another twenty bars. Random-sounding descending fourths continue, as does the glissando motive in the cello, and then in bars 188-189, with the accompaniment of a *pp* timpani roll, the crawling, chromatic figure that had first appeared on bar 47 in the cellos returns in the harp, in octaves. It is the most peculiar, unexpected timbre and the most surprising returning event thus far in the movement, and cannot but shock us, once more.

The music seems to start coming together after this, as all instruments gravitate towards a horn-dominated middle register, and some sort of movement returns (horn chorale), even though the music never leaves the sphere of *pp*. Even this is short lived, however, and by bar 201 the texture starts thinning out again. Descending minim-quaver sixths (with a curious criss-cross of first and second flutes and oboes) contrast with descending triplet quaver fourths in the clarinets in *forte*, while all other instrument groups remain in *ppp*. The gaps between recurrences of the fourth become progressively smaller, thus creating a feeling of urgency over a barely audible, one and a half bar long B-flat major 7th chord in the brass and the first appearance of the trombones in the entire symphony.

**DEVELOPMENT (bb. 208-357):** With a sudden shift of the low pedal from F via E-flat to D, the development proper begins in a faster tempo. During the development, all the various themes that have been presented to us during the introduction and the exposition come together in an almost overwhelming barrage of rhythmic and motivic variations. Even though, if one looks at the score, it becomes obvious that there actually is some sort of figure-ground configuration in the music when listening to the resulting effect, this is not the impression created (Ex 6.2).



Fl. I *poco acceler.*  
*p*

Ob. I

Cl. 1, 2 in B♭ *p*

Bsn I

4 Hrns in F *pp*

Trmpt 1 in F *p*

*poco acceler.*

Vln. I *geth. pizz.*  
*p*

Vln. II *arco*  
*pp*

Vla. *arco*  
*pp*

Cello

Bass

The unexpected entries of the different instrument groups, with the various rather short themes jumping from one group to another, the multitude of different musical shapes and rhythms, and the sometimes surprising articulation, such as the pizzicato in the cellos (from bar 229), all conspire to create a sense of disorganisation and of weakened shape which, in turn, creates the alternative expectations that it will eventually either disintegrate, or come together in some sort of musical coherence. To make matters even more confusing, the tension previously being created by the extremes of register and textural thinness of the music has all but disappeared, with all instruments now playing in their middle range, and giving the impression that the music is comfortable where it is, with no reason to go in any other direction. The discrepancy between the expectations created by the weakened shapes and the registral and textural coherence that seems reluctant to move produces two simultaneously contradictory tendencies, largely due to the ingenious orchestration, and with the stimuli being as complex and varied as they are, the sense of conflict that arises is inevitable.

Eventually, we are offered a taste of what we have been expecting all along, with the return of some of the material that first appeared in bar 125, on bar 265, and a modicum of textural coherence. This time, however, this same material never reaches the satisfying climax that it had the first time, but suddenly tapers off into an entirely different direction. Thus we are once again thrown into the sphere of confusion and doubt, in part by the entry of the distant key of F minor. At this point (b. 305), not only has the texture thinned out substantially once more, but there is also a very distinct, though gradual movement towards both registral extremes. In bar 322 and with the sudden appearance of a call in the horns, followed by a totally unexpected fanfare in the trumpets, the flutes and violins seem to have peaked, in terms of register. This and the trumpet fanfare which we have not heard since the introduction serve to warn us of an impending major musical event. We might be forgiven for thinking for a moment that it has arrived by bar 328. The orchestra seems to have finally come together in a dense, rich, satisfyingly homogeneous texture, with all instrumental groups joining in (barring harp

and piccolo) in a long awaited *f*, through all sections. As the *f* instantly slides down to *p*, we realise that it was not in fact a *forte*, but a *fp*, recurring now at the beginning of every bar, whilst the registers continue to rise. We are, in fact, still in the beginning of what will prove to be a long drawn-out climax. The musical shapes become shorter, simpler, repetitive, whilst the texture becomes denser and a *crescendo* starting from *ppp* and ending on *fff* that lasts for a full 15 bars delays the realisation of what is being so tantalisingly withheld for so long, that it becomes almost painful. The final 'breakthrough' in bar 352 becomes at the same time uplifting and an almost debilitating relief, leading inexorably as it does to a perfect cadence in D and the beginning of the recapitulation. These six bars are but a single dominant harmony, broken up into small repetitive shapes and played throughout all registers, with the tonic chord coming in perfectly, in *fortissimo*, on the first downbeat of bar 358, again in all registers.

**RECAPITULATION (bb. 358-442):** This emphatic return of D major marks the beginning of the recapitulation and a kind of frenetic textural and thematic activity that we have not yet seen throughout the movement.

We may have been suspecting all along that the brass section and not the strings are the protagonists in this movement, but the recapitulation confirms this in a positively spectacular way, almost immediately. In bars 361-363, the horns—all seven of them, doubled by clarinets and bassoons, burst out in a triplet/quaver fanfare-type figure, the high speed and high pitch of which makes the horns not only remarkably prominent, but makes them sound tense and over-stretched in their repeated confirmations of the new major tonic, in a sort of mad dash to get there first. This is immediately followed in bar 363, by a very surprising entry of a trumpet solo playing the cello motif that first appeared in bar 167, over a very sparse musical ground, with the *pù mosso* tempo marking initiating an acceleration that will only peak on fig. 33. This motif reappears later on in the recapitulation, again only on solo trumpet, and it alternates with the *Gesellen* theme broken up between the trumpets (first part of the theme) and the woodwind and strings playing the second part—not always in that order—a schema which continues throughout

the rest of the movement. The acceleration perceived here between bars 363-416 is more due to textural factors, than to the increase in speed. There is an absolutely startling two bar-long trill in the horns (b. 390-1), whilst the music becomes progressively denser in texture, something which enhances the *accelerando* effect, and from bar 414 onwards, the quaver figures in the strings and woodwind do not seem to get more than a crotchet rest every couple of bars. The actual *accelerando* does not start till bar 436, with the sudden reappearance in *fff* of the descending fourth which hurtles down four octaves in the space of five bars, whilst leaping up and down the instrument groups, from woodwind and first violins—to trumpets, second violins and violas—to horns, first violins and cellos—and finally, sharply, to timpani; the last two bars of this frenetic cascade marked *Schnell*. A brief almost stunned silence ensues just before the seven bar coda.

**CODA (bb. 443-450):** Again marked *Schnell*, progressively longer, muted, quaver fanfares in the horns and trumpets, accompanied by the woodwind carrying what there is of a melody, are interrupted by full bar rests and the persistent staccato fourth in the timpani, repeated like a march rhythm. Eventually, just before the end, the brass fanfares and the woodwind are doubled by *forte* quaver figures in the strings. All this ends in a big *ff* surge with the fourth falling silent at the beginning of yet another repetition, as it ascends from A to D.

This compressed recapitulation seems faster in tempo than the rest of the movement, denser in texture, with the themes and musical shapes (melodic or rhythmic) being sometimes short, fragmented and unsatisfactory, and sometimes longer and almost complete. These sound sometimes simultaneously, one over the other, or in alternation. The dynamics of this section only fall to *p* for about ten bars and spend the rest of the time in the sphere of *ff*, while at the same time we get some of the most surprising combination of motives with timbres, and successions of timbres, we have had for the entire movement. It is a crowded, fast section, with sharp articulation and a well-established, unwavering major key which almost sounds triumphant, if it was

not for the sharp primary colours and the absence of textural and rhythmic security. The result is rather too crowded and tense to be considered triumphant, and the continuously increasing tempo and dynamics, the peculiar, fragmented—sometimes struggling—timbres and snatches of the recognisable, previously intact musical shapes in unexpected and constantly changing sound colours make the recapitulation sound almost frantic in its attempts at confirming what in bar 358 seemed to be a fulfilling and victorious attainment. This victory starts almost immediately to seem transient and unsatisfactory, but the music seems to not want to admit or accept that fact, and is resolved instead to do its utmost to maintain the illusion of that brief moment of triumph with attempts that can only be described as hysterical.

**Second Movement: *Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell.***

**SCHERZO (bb. 1-174)**

The Ländler, in A major, starts off with only the string section playing. The ostinato rhythms which appear immediately and are all we can hear for several bars will persist throughout the section, and in the first few bars are indicative of the general character of the movement. In bar 8 the main theme in the woodwind makes its first appearance. In bar 24 there is an orchestrational reversal: the ostinato rhythms now migrate to the woodwind section, while the main theme is taken up by the higher strings; only the cellos and basses retain their ostinato, as they do for most of the movement. In bar 32 a new rhythm in woodwind appears briefly, but disappears again a few bars before the repeat (Ex. 6.3).

Ex. 6.3 Symphony No. 1, 2nd movement, bb. 32-34.



This same rhythm returns after the repeat on figure 5 and continues uninterrupted till bar 59 (a total of 16 bars). On bar 60 there is a slight

variation of the previous rhythm with the triplet figure replaced by a semiquaver/quaver figure. With the change in key (C-sharp major) and rhythm on bar 60 we get the first hint that all is not well in Elysium. The next 30 odd bars sound strangely tense and uncomfortable as if they are struggling with something. Large sweeping legato quaver figures in the woodwind and violins enhance this feeling which culminates in bars 97 with the appearance of some bitonal material. The upper parts are in F minor, the lower parts, plus the pedal, in C-sharp major. This feeling of an episode climaxing is enhanced by the timpani roll (*crescendo*, from *pp* to *fff*), the sudden *crescendo* to *fff* in the first violins and *ff* or *ffp* in every other instrument group, and the very clear ascending chromatic scale in all woodwind (except flutes), cellos and violas (bb. 92-97). The high-point of tension comes with bars 97-98 and is ably assisted by the ♩ on the third beat of the bar then again on the first beat of the next bar and the resulting accelerated rhythm. This peak of tension on bar 97-99 does not subside right away but fades slowly, like a radio cut-out, until there is almost silence as the cellos and basses (the only instruments left playing on bar 108, fig. 11) taper off to a *ppp* on bar 112. With bar 118 (fig. 12) Tempo I returns and with it the original ostinato rhythms and main theme, but by figure 13 Tempo I starts picking up speed. *Vorwärts* the composer instructs, which, in conjunction with the ostinato rhythms it produces an effect of pronounced acceleration. In the next 25 bars the musical texture becomes much denser than it has been so far (with the exception of the brief climactic moment described earlier), the triplet/quaver rhythm returns and with the assistance of trills in the violins, flutes and timpani, the music rushes *forward* to the *accelerando* which makes its appearance in figure 15 (bar 159). The texture is now even richer, almost homogeneous; and the music speeds madly towards more trills in all the woodwind now, a timpani roll, a trumpet fanfare and a curt closing of the section in *ff/fff* and just under two bars complete silence before the Trio begins, with a four-bar horn solo and a change in key.

### TRIO (bb. 175-284)

On bar 175 the key changes to F major, and the section has an 'open' tonal scheme of F- /G- C. The waltz is much more lyrical and dignified than the preceding ländler, its tempo much slower. Yet its texture is denser, sharper and more complicated, even though the effect is achieved through a mostly clear figure-ground configuration (Ex. 6.4).

Ex. 6.4 Symphony No. 1, 2nd movement, bb. 219-222.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Cello, VI. 1; Vla 8va; VI. 2; and Bass. The score is for measures 219-222. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Cello and VI. 1 parts are in the treble clef, while VI. 2 and Bass are in the bass clef. The Vla 8va part is indicated by a dotted line. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano) in measures 219 and 220, and *p* in measure 221. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

The ostinato rhythms are different once again, but in bars 229-236 we get an insertion of material from the first section (Ex. 6.5).

Ex. 6.5 Symphony No. 1, 2nd movement, bb. 229-231 *Etwas frischer*.

The image shows a musical score for Horns (Hms) and Trumpets (Trmpts) for measures 229-231. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Horns part is in the treble clef, and the Trumpets part is in the bass clef. The dynamics are marked *fp* (fortissimo piano) for the Horns and *f* (fortissimo) for the Trumpets. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The word 'zu 2' is written above the first measure of the Horns part.

The entire Trio has very little brass, with the only two out of the four trumpets appearing occasionally for 2-4 bars at a time. The horns have a slightly more substantial part to play, but mainly the Trio is written for strings and woodwind. Only near the end in bar 263 do we get a one-bar timpani roll in *pp* and another one on bar 273 in *ppp* that lasts for 4 bars. The Trio ends with a *ppp* cascade down the entire string section into silence and then a variation of the initial ostinato rhythm appears in the horns (octaves rather than fourths), as a harbinger of the return of the A section.

*A SECTION –return (compressed) (bb. 285-358)*

Tempo I returns and with it the homogeneous texture of the last part of the A section. There are no great surprises in this last part of the movement. The A section behaves in much the same way it did earlier, only this time it sounds confident and brash, from the moment of its appearance, and it culminates with another mad, loud dash to the end, complete with woodwind, trumpet and triangle trills.

There is virtually no textural tension to speak of, in the A sections of this movement. There are no large textural gaps, or extremes of register; everything is comfortably ensconced within its middle range. The shapes, though occasionally fragmented are held together by the persistent ostinato rhythms which are varied and interrupted just enough to avoid a feeling of saturation arising. The only surprises on offer here are the occasional odd timbre, suddenly jumping up out of the otherwise smooth, blended, orchestral sound. Most of the—very little—tension that can be found in this movement is tonally and dynamically derived. (see bb. 60-75, 97-103)

In general, this movement is the most conventional of the four that comprise this symphony—some might say of all the symphonies. Little has been said on it on a purely analytical level, simply because it holds so few surprises. In fact, the most surprising aspect of this movement is exactly the fact that it is so conventional, especially when compared to the rest of the symphony, whilst still maintaining its inimitable Mahler-like characteristics of the slightly vulgar and bucolic, with jolting, harsh harmonic gestures and dissonances, combined with the lyrical and dignified.

On an interpretive level, the kind of manic happiness with which the first movement ended seems to have gained a firm foothold in this one. The music has left the sphere of the natural world and of internalised emotional processes, and has decided to join the world of men, society, and everything this has to offer. It can be seen as providing a much-needed distraction from the disturbing thoughts that threatened to take over the first movement. It is

as if the music (or the protagonist) has made a conscious decision to immerse itself in the joys of the world and flatly refuses to allow itself to be distracted by the darkness that lurked at the back of its thoughts earlier. And for the time being it seems to be succeeding admirably in this endeavour, with nothing but the occasional niggling recollection that everything is not quite as it should be, a thought which is quashed so quickly, however, that by the end of the movement it might be forgotten completely. It is only the insistent *accelerandos* that might trouble our thoughts as they strive to maintain the forced jolliness of the movement, but somehow produce a sense of nagging doubt behind all the manic light-heartedness.

**Third Movement: *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen.***

By now he (my hero) has already found a hair in his soup and it has spoiled his appetite.<sup>14</sup>

**A SECTION (bb. 1-82)**

The third movement begins with the solemn timpani beat of a fourth, and two bars later the Bruder Martin melody enters on double bass solo. Soon a bassoon solo picks up the theme, then the cellos, then the bass tuba. Before the flutes and finally the English horn take up this theme, a second, mocking theme appears on figure 3 on solo Oboe (Ex. 6.6).

Ex. 6.6 Symphony No. 1, 3rd movement, bb. 19-23 *Etwas hervortretend*



On figure 4 the violas and cellos split and begin playing in octaves, the harp is also in octaves, as are the bassoons, and from bar 31 onwards the horns in octaves—doubled. The numerous octaves sounding at this time affect

<sup>14</sup> Bauer-Lechner, Natalie, *Recollections*, p. 158.

the sonority of the passage in terms of the density-number of its texture, but considering the large number of instruments currently sounding simultaneously, the texture does not sound as rich as one would expect it to. This is because doubling by the perfect interval of an octave produces minimal dissonance, and hence relatively low levels of density-compression. At the same time, exactly the opposite effect is being achieved by the continuing canon, which is now being taunted by the mocking countermelody in both oboe and E-flat clarinet.

From figure 5 onwards, and the arrival of the Klezmer music, both the mood and the texture of the music change substantially. The interval of the 3rd, and to a lesser degree the 6th, dominate, as both main melody and countermelody sound in 3rds or 6ths. The sonority of this passage is much denser than before, the textures more compressed, partly because of the higher level of dissonance of the 3rds and 6ths, and partly because of the trumpets carrying the countermelody to the Klezmer music in the woodwind section. The very prominent timbre and intensity of the trumpets draws attention to itself, often overwhelming the woodwind section. This becomes confusing and makes it difficult to identify which line is the main melody and which the countermelody, something which in turn, as we struggle to make sense of the texture, arouses affect and conflict. The strings have a mainly accompanying role until figure 7, but by playing *col legno* they amplify the peculiarity of the sonority, and hence confound the listener's expectations even more, as the customary 'string sound' disappears completely, to be replaced by something which is difficult to identify.

On figure 7 the strings take over the main theme, while the trumpets still carry the countermelody. In bars 56-60 there are several odd sound-colour alternations between string/flutes/oboes and clarinets in E/bassoons while one percussionist plays both cymbals and bass drum in a contrasting, even rhythm, that sounds distinctly off beat in relation to the Klezmer music. The short, alternating shapes in different timbres sound fragmented, and the clashing rhythms create rhythmic ambiguity. Every expectation of 'good-shape' that we have is currently being frustrated.

In bars 63-64 the ascending chromatic scale in the bassoon is probably the clearest, most intact musical shape we have had in a while. The section in bars 63-70, Floros believes, is the one which Mahler referred to as 'the terribly painful lament of the hero'.<sup>15</sup>

The mocking melody returns just after figure 9. It sounds, a bit normalized, in violas and cellos for four bars and is very much in the foreground, over a sparse texture, while bassoons carry the second part of the Bruder Martin tune. The violas stop after three bars and the result is the impression of a sudden, quite surprising, resounding gap in the musical texture as only the cellos play the last bar of the theme.

**TRIO (bb. 83-112)**

A very striking rhythmic contrast between the various instrument groups creates the impression of people trying to synchronise themselves and not quite managing to, although the texture of the passage sounds quite sparse, due to the repetitive rhythms and pitches. Everything seems off beat—not 'up beat'. Even though each individual shape in itself is highly repetitive, the perceived lack of synchronisation produces a profound sense of uncertainty in the passage (Ex. 6.7).

Ex. 6.7 Symphony No. 1, 3rd movement, bb. 83-86.

On bar 87 the bassoons and the cellos (split) sound a short, new tune, the countermelody of which immediately follows on clarinets. Even though by looking at the score it seems that the texture of this section should sound

<sup>15</sup> Floros, Constantin, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

very sparse, in actuality it sounds rich and dense. This comes from the 1st violins being split into three sections and playing the same melody in full harmony, hence increasing the density-compression of the passage. The harp doubles the 2nd cellos, then two solo violins come in, playing in thirds, while the flutes also are playing in full triads. Almost every musical shape played for the next 19 bars is played in three-part texture, with the exception of the accompaniment played by the 2nd cellos and harp, and the double basses when they join in again after a substantial hiatus, on bar 107.

#### A SECTION (bb. 113-168)

The A section returns on figure 13, after a short fermata, and the music moves from G to E $\flat$ . The texture becomes denser, with many and varied musical and rhythmic shapes sounding at once, as the more complicated counterpoint of earlier appears again. There are now instrument groups playing in octaves, and others in thirds. The mocking melody reappears in the E $\flat$  clarinet on bar 118 and the timbre is so odd, so surprising, it shocks us back into paying attention. This is obviously not going to be a traditional recapitulation, and the fact that it is in the 'wrong' key, E $\flat$  minor, rather than D minor, confounds our expectations even more.

On bar 124 the trumpets get the countermelody again, a new one this time, while everything else that is happening seems to fade into the background: There is the mocking melody, the second part of Bruder Martin, and the marching accompaniment of the cellos and basses, to a certain extent all being overwhelmed by the intensity and timbre of the trumpets, assisted by the dissonance of the melody in 3rds in much the same way as before when the Klezmer music first appeared, and producing much the same effect.

By figure 15, most instrument groups are playing in thirds again, while in bars 135-37 the most chaotic combination of rhythms yet appear in woodwind, horns, trumpet and 1st violins which are split into three sections and again playing *col legno* in three-part chords. The level of density-compression is again high, resulting in a dense-sounding texture, while the rhythmic disruption both enhances the effect and produces a sense of uncertainty by confusing our expectations. In bar 144 the violins, in a surprise

entrance, are heard doubling the trumpet tune for just over a bar, with a jolting effect; then fall silent again.

In bars 158-162 the mocking melody, here in the bassoons, becomes fragmented, its closing notes are tossed first to the clarinets in C, then to the cellos—with the motif's highest note played in harmonics—and finally it comes to a close with the violas in pizzicato—while all the time the timpani strike the mournful march beat (interval of the 4th again). The timpani beat contrasts strongly with the unpitched cymbals and tam-tam; in the latter's case the lack of definite pitch enhancing the ambiguous effect created by the extremely low register with its richness of overtones, and hence the sense of compression. The slow, sad tread of the mourners fades into the distance and the movement ends, leaving us with a profound sense of uncertainty.

#### **Fourth Movement: *Stürmisch bewegt.***

With the ending of the previous movement, as the slow beating of the timpani marks the step of the retreating mourners, we are not quite sure whether the silence that descends so gradually is complete, or whether our ears are deceiving us and, somewhere, just beyond hearing, the mournful beat is still continuing. It has the effect of forcing us to strain to hear the last dying steps that may or may not be there. Then, at the point where our senses are most heightened, the fourth movement arrives with the aural and emotional impact of an explosion and a scream.

#### **EXPOSITION—F minor sonata (bb. 1-253)**

##### **First Theme in F minor (bb. 1-174)**

The cymbal strike on the first beat of the movement in *fff*, completely devoid of any accompaniment, literally makes one jump. The triplet figures in bars 8-10 cascading down the register spectrum lead to a large textural gap as there is nothing but a single chord in bar 11, sounding from the strings (minus the basses) and tied over from the previous bar in the horns and bassoons. The suddenness of the chords in the brass in bars 14, 15 (marked

*scharf abgerissen*) and the abrupt change from a practically empty bar (b. 13) to levels of high density-compression and dissonance coming with these chords, coupled with the *ff* dynamics are not only surprising but loaded with tension.

The rapid, ascending chromatic semiquavers in flutes/piccolos and strings just before figure 3, leave an enormous gap in the texture-space, with the extremely high registers, the *ff* dynamics and the speed of the passage creating substantial tension both towards a more middle range, a more 'filled-out' texture-space, and clearer musical shapes of less velocity. The 'cross symbol' immediately following in octaves in the trumpets and trombones only partially fulfils the above expectations. The registers have returned to the middle of their potential spectrum, the musical shape and rhythm is clearer and substantially slower, but the texture-space is still very bare.

The textural gap that emerges with the rests in bar 24, with only the violins rushing up towards the full orchestra scream in bar 25 makes the heart beat faster, and the tension created is prolonged until bar 38, when the 'cross symbol' recurs, with an almost blanket sound from the strings, hurried, and anxious, and the woodwind struggling to create some sort of coherent motive. The 'cross symbol' itself takes the tension to the next level, as the trumpets carrying it, the only audible coherent motive in this passage, become so prominent at *ff* that, even though they remain in the middle register, the motif and their timbre carries like a human cry. The strings continue undaunted to race, as if escaping something, the woodwind have the harmonic accompaniment, and the cymbal strike just before figure 6 seems like it is announcing yet more angst and torment to come. But immediately the texture changes, the woodwind take over from the brass, and the racing quavers in the strings remain only in the first violins, while cellos and violas double the woodwind. The trumpets disappear and the more mellow sound of the horns takes over. Still, with the largest part of the orchestra playing, the mass of sound remains at least menacing.

With figure 7 the 'cross symbol' returns to the trumpets, and with it, more sudden, screaming chords, cymbal strikes when least expected, and racing quavers in violins and violas that for the next seventeen bars prolong the

confusion and tension. The off-beat cymbal strike on bar 73 coincides with the peaking of a sudden crescendo from *f* to *ff* and a brief gap in the texture between repetitions of the 'cross symbol', and main theme in the trumpets. The trumpets re-enter immediately afterwards, along with the trombones and woodwind, and for the next ten bars mostly alternate with the horns. Trumpets and horns only sound simultaneously on the first downbeat of bars 82-83 in *ff*, creating once again the effect of a scream. The octave dive downwards in the woodwind, on the third beat of the bar, coinciding with the suddenly very low registers of a *fp* attack in trombones, tuba, 2 of the trumpets and a short timpani roll creates an effect like a gasp for breath, before the next scream at the beginning of the next bar.

The first triangle strike in the movement (*ff*), of bar 84, comes as quite a surprise, along with a short timpani strike. The quaver fourth leap upwards to the third beat of the bar in the horns and trumpets only enhances the effect of the *ff* cymbal strike on the third beat, which coincides with the beginning of a semiquaver plunging passage in oboes/clarinets and second violins/violas in *fff*, whose suddenness seems heart-stopping and has us wondering where it could possibly lead.

With figure 8 the music seems to be establishing a more normative situation (still *agitato*) since the racing motive in the strings has disappeared, as has the percussion, from the brass section only 4 out of the 7 horns are playing, the dynamics have dropped from *ff* and *fff*, to *f* and *fp* and everything has gravitated towards a middle register. This is short-lived, however, and soon the madness returns, with textures more fragmented than before, contrasting rhythms, racing strings and dynamics not dropping below *ff*. The *pp* cymbal rolls/trills in bars 108-109 and 112-113 ending with *ff* strikes on both timpani and bass drum can only be described as frightening.

Two bars before figure 11, the texture seems to become more unified, smoother as the fragmentation of motives and rhythms disappears and there is no dynamic variation for about 10 bars. The density-compression is quite high as everything is harmonised and the texture-space filled out quite satisfactorily with a more or less even distribution of sound throughout the registral

spectrum. Then on figure 12 with a sharp, *ff* attack on trombones, tubas, bassoons, violins and basses, the structure rapidly disintegrates, with wild fluctuation of dynamics, quaver motives plunging from high registers, only to fly upwards once again in the next bar in a different instrument group, accompanied by timpani and cymbal rolls, and in the gaps between all this *ff-fff* screams on full brass. On the first downbeat of bar 149 there is nothing but a *ff* strike on timpani and bass drum; then screaming brass and plunging strings and woodwind—then silence. A fermata across the bar lines makes everything stop dead for less than a second; then the timpani/bass drum attack again, the screams in the brass, the cascading in the strings, and again silence. Another pause across the bar lines. The next time, the quaver patterns are shortened, and the time after that even shorter, and even though the brass is still shrieking in *fff*, the dynamics for the rest of the instrument groups become progressively softer after every pause. Just before the fifth pause (fig. 14) all the note values in the wind sections have been stretched out into semibreves and suddenly after the fifth pause, the dynamics drop to *pp*. The sound fades away (*molto ritenuto*) in long, tied semibreves in the woodwind, *pp* timpani roll and *pp* triplet figures first in the trumpets and trombones, and then in horns, bassoons and clarinets.

Figure 15 arrives *ppp* and with an almost completely bare musical landscape. Only the violins are sounding now, with the very distant accompaniment of the bassoons and only two of the horns playing a *ppp* seven bar long chord. The cellos and basses enter on bar 171 again with only one tied note to play for three and a half bars, but the descending glissando, *molto ritenuto*, *ppp* from E to A on the third beat of bar 174 drowns out everything else that is happening in that bar, more because of the quality of the sound, the timbre of that low glissando, than the prominence of it or the dynamics. The long note values, the sparseness of the texture-space the *ppp* dynamics, all promote a feeling of expectation and suspense.

#### Second theme in D $\flat$ major (bb. 175-253)

The second theme appears on figure 16, with the change of key to D $\flat$  major. Most of the tension in this section is harmonically and motivically

derived. Aside from the first violins that are playing in a relatively high register, the rest of the orchestra is more or less in its middle range; there are no enormous textural gaps, and it is only the rhythm in the horns that is clearly contrasting with the violin theme. The dynamics in the section, for the most part, do not rise above *p* until bar 214 with a *mf* in the strings and a *f* immediately afterward in the bassoons. The *crescendos* that start one after the other in different instrument groups around bars 214-15-16 (along with a timpani roll) culminate in the only dynamic peak in the entire section: a *ff* in the wind/percussion and *fff* in the strings. Combined with the *Rubato* tempo, and a quick slide back down to *pp* and a cadence just before figure 19 it gives the impression of an emotional suspension. The whole section seems to have been simply too lyrical, at the same time with a somewhat strained quality about it. There has just been the first dynamical climax since figure 15 and then it all ends and fades away much too suddenly to be convincing. The timpani roll that started in bar 214 is continuing, even over the half-bar silence that comes after the cadence, as is a *D*<sub>1</sub> pedal in the basses. The ambiguity created by the low register overtones, the dynamics of the timpani roll and the pedal, only serve to generate a sense of menace.

The low registers continue into figure 19, with only bassoons, 2 horns, strings and timpani playing for the next 16 bars. The values become longer, the dynamics slowly fade down to *ppp* and the only movement comes in the form of the up and down, semibreve, step-wise motion in the violas and cellos. Everything fades almost into complete silence, and still the timpani roll is continuing without a break, through figure 20 and into figure 21.

Figure 21 brings a recurrence of the introductory material from the first movement. The crawling motive returns to the cellos, a hint of the chorale motive appears briefly in the clarinets, the 'cross symbol' somehow finds its way in there in the horns—with its second part sounding from the trumpets—then back in the horns again. The timbre of the clarinet playing the first four notes of the chorale in long, slow semibreves, accompanied by the crawling motive in the cellos, and an otherwise almost bare musical canvas, becomes sinister; the clarinet sound colour surprises us and seems

somehow out of place—we have not heard the clarinet since figure 17 and even then it only sounded for three bars, along with oboes and horns. It is surprising here, all of a sudden, and its slightly hollow timbre does not seem to fit with the mood. Anything that seems out of place, or incongruous and surprising, inevitably becomes worrying, or even sinister, since its purpose is not apparent. And in this section the clarinet may have us concerned about its role. Along with the fragmentation of the main theme between horns and trumpets, the crawling figure in the cellos, the high-pitched tremolos in the rest of the strings, the low E-natural on which the clarinets settle for ten bars, the D<sub>♭</sub> pedal in the basses (a sustained diminished 7th), and the timpani roll that has been continuing non-stop for 30-odd bars, the signs become obvious. The tonal, textural and dynamic saturation is such that the expectation of drastic change, of something enormous about to happen, becomes more and more urgent, and yet the realisation of these expectations is delayed to such a point where the anticipation becomes almost unbearable. There is no clear indication of where the music will go on from here, or indeed when.

#### **DEVELOPMENT—F minor sonata (bb. 254-457)**

##### **Developmental in G minor (bb. 254-289)**

Following the upbeat entry of the 'cross symbol' on brass (bb. 252-3), the expected enormous event arrives, on bar 254 (fig. 22), with the beginning of the development section. A *ff* cymbal strike, the main theme shrieking in the trumpets, and screaming, descending, racing strings and woodwind.

##### **Model in C major (bb. 290-316)**

With the change of key signature to C major on figure 25 comes also a sudden change in musical texture, which is so radical and so sudden it would not be inappropriate to describe it as a rupture. Whereas in the previous bar virtually the entire orchestra was sounding in *ff/fff*, racing and cascading downwards, on figure 25 everything but the oboes, clarinets, violins, cellos and basses, suddenly stops dead. The strings are playing a four-bar long, four-octave wide G trill in *ppp*, while the motive in the clarinets and

oboes starts off in *ff* and very quickly sinks down to *pp*. This change is so abrupt and the interruption so palpable it is almost annoying. Just as we were feeling that we knew where the development was leading, this appears out of nowhere. It interrupts the progression to what could only have been a great climax in the music. The woodwind, a bit quirky in timbre, and the motive they are playing slightly grotesque, changes the mood of the music as surely as if a light switch had been flipped, in a dark room, and we are left, once again, with thwarted expectations.

The Breakthrough motive in figure 26 in trumpets and trombones, over a very sparse string section, seems to be trying to confirm this new turn of events. The *pp* dynamics, the full, rounded harmonies and the blended musical texture all conspire to create a feeling of, if not happiness, contentment. And yet something is not quite right. This feeling of serenity is not what we were expecting. It seems that the enormous orchestral apparatus that has been dominating this movement up until now cannot possibly have been leading up to this. The resolution of all the conflict and tension cannot have been something so placid, nor could this mellowness have been attained so abruptly. It is too good to be true, and hence, instead of relaxing into the beauty of coherent motives and a lyrical, blended orchestral sound, we remain on our guard.

The realisation of our expectations stops just short of being gratifying, as what we had expecting was the return of more tension and conflict, and that is what we are offered with figure 27. The fragmentation of the orchestra into contrasting rhythms and split motives returns, and with it the confusion. With a sudden *sf* and *crescendo* up to *ff* in the violins and the return of the 'cross symbol' in the horns and trumpets, the music launches itself back into mass turmoil and the second part of the development on figure 28.

#### **Intensification in C minor (bb. 317-369)**

As before, the full orchestra is now playing, with shrieking, high registers in the woodwind and the racing violins. A complete brass section that never leaves the sphere of *ff* for more than half a bar at a time blasts its way through the turmoil in screams and gasps, the percussion stops and starts

with such irregularity that every new entry is a surprise for us. This continues undaunted until figure 33.

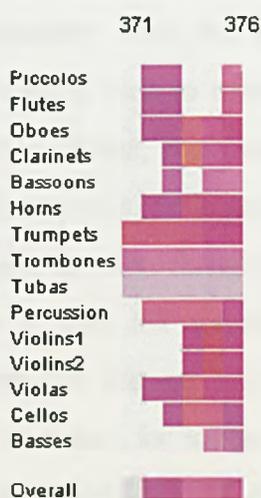
**Rupture in C major—D major (bb. 370-427)/**

**EXPOSITION—D major sonata**

A sudden *fff* semi-quaver downward plunge in full woodwind and strings (barring basses), accompanied by blasting trumpets and trombones sounding the breakthrough motive, a fanfare in the horns and a timpani roll, announces the imminent arrival of some momentous event. As the woodwind and strings plunge downward we cannot help but think that what is coming is the complete and utter dissolution of all musical coherence in the movement; a descent into Hades. Then suddenly there is a gap in the musical texture (Ex. 6.8), the violins race upward frantically, over a silence that is only marred by a triangle trill, and the Breakthrough arrives in D major and a full orchestra in *fff*.

Ex. 6.8 Symphony No. 1, 4th movement, bb. 371-376 *molto rit.—a tempo*.

**Vorwärts—Pesante**



From figure 34 to figure 37, the horn chorale dominates, prominent in the musical texture, but not jarring. The orchestra sounds more coherent and blended than it has at any point so far, filling out the texture-space more or less evenly. The Breakthrough, however, does indeed sound as if it has 'fallen from heaven', its sudden arrival something more than a simple surprise, and yet it quickly asserts itself. The overall musical and textural coherence of this passage has the effect of drawing us in and almost convincing us that this is

indeed the resolution we had been waiting for, even though it was reached rather suddenly. Only the fact that every previous sudden change in mood has not lasted long, and the fact that the dynamics become gradually, progressively softer, creates a healthy doubt in our minds as to where this might be leading.

By figure 37 the musical texture has become substantially sparser, the dynamics have dropped to an average of *p* and the whole triumph of the Breakthrough seems to be tapering off into something that is unpredictable, but not yet worrying. The doubt, created by this ambiguity, nevertheless cannot but generate tension and conflicting expectations in our minds.

1st Movement Intro. in D minor (bb. 427-457)/

#### DEVELOPMENT—D major sonata

Eventually, figure 38 arrives, and brings the return of material from the introduction of the first movement, and this is something we cannot possibly have been expecting. The varied form in which this material makes its appearance, along with the virtually empty musical background compounds the feeling of doubt and unpredictability, while the familiar horn fanfares and the birdsongs in the woodwind, harking back to a much more comfortable, serene musical landscape, only serve to prolong these conflicting emotions.

The full harmonisation of a snatch (in variation) of the second theme in the strings, three bars before figure 40, even though the dynamics go from *pp* to *ppp*, creates the illusion of a very full musical texture which is abruptly interrupted by the pause over the rest on bar 447. The next bar (marked *Molto ritenuto*), again fully harmonised for strings only, seems unrelated to the second theme that came just before, and is again interrupted by a pause, across the bar line this time. The snatch of the second theme which immediately disappears again, and this halting, quiet, slow progression creates a sense of uncertainty, as we cannot be sure what to expect next. The last time there were pauses across bar lines (just before and just after fig. 13), these led into the first appearance of the second theme. The tempo, the dynamics and the orchestration of these few bars does not make it unreasonable to expect just such a return of the second theme, yet, after the

pause across the bar line, on figure 40, what recurs is the crawling chromatic figure that we first heard in the cellos in the first movement, *a Tempo*. It is again played by the cellos, but their sound colour is almost completely drowned out by one bassoon which is doubling the theme. The peculiarity of the timbres is not only a surprise, but, combined with the sudden change in tempo, also generates a sense of foreboding. The feeling that something terrible is about to happen is compounded by the appearance of the first part of the chorale motive at an excruciatingly slow pace, in the violins, its descending fourths sounding like slow sinister steps coming our way. The crawling figure ascends, the chorale motive descends, but everything remains slow and hushed and has us straining to hear every single note. And at the point where we are convinced that something is surely about to snap, suddenly the cuckoo song appears in the clarinets, like a ray of sunshine slipping unexpectedly into a dark room. The bassoons abandon their crawling, legato figure in favour of the *Fahrenden Gesellen* theme of the first movement, which sounds cheeky and hopeful. Bird calls sound in the flutes and by this time, we have forgotten all about the expected recurrence of the second theme. The music seems to be very obviously leading somewhere entirely different. The landscape, both thematically and texturally points towards a return to the first movement material.

#### **RECAPITULATION—F minor sonata (bb. 458-695)**

##### **DEVELOPMENT cont.—D major sonata**

#### **Second theme in F major (bb. 458-532)**

On figure 41 the second theme of the movement returns, in the cellos. Bars 459-480 are almost completely bare, but for the string section, with basses and second violins holding a C pedal. The second theme quite quickly leaves the cellos and the first violins take over. The texture becomes progressively sparser, and the dynamics softer, the note-values longer. There is minimal density-compression, minimal density-number, and the texture space cannot get much sparser than this, and this generates a great deal of tension towards a

fuller, more active sound. This tendency, however, is delayed for a substantial amount of time.

Figure 42 is marked *Tempo. Sehr breites Alla breve*. A motive which we first heard in bar 25 returns in the oboes for three bars and then is taken over by the strings. Figure 43 arrives with a timpani roll. The horns join in, the dynamics increase as more and more sections of the orchestra start playing, and figure 44, marked *Più mosso* and *f* for all instruments enters with an arpeggiato in the harp, a timpani roll and strike, while flutes and first violins are shrieking at the highest end of their registers. There is an accelerated cascade down in the violins and flutes and oboes, which dims rapidly, until on bar 510 the only music remaining is a seemingly endless suspended chord in the clarinets, a C pedal in the basses and tied semibreves in the cellos, oboes and flutes, rising and falling stepwise, and a *pp* timpani roll. The dynamics in the rest of the instruments continue to fade.

This passage in bars 520-532 was discussed by Mahler himself, in relation to its affective qualities, and the reasoning behind his choice of orchestration. Originally he had assigned this passage to the cellos, but then changed it to the violas, since their timbre, straining with the low register, created the desired feeling of tension. This, combined with the still suspended clarinet chord, the *ppp* timpani roll and the gradually longer note values with every repetition of the motive, enhances the feeling of tension as, the longer the last note becomes, the more it seems to be reaching for something, a continuation, which is repeatedly withheld. By the penultimate repetition, the motive has become recognisable as a fragment of the main theme, and without even realising it, in our minds we are filling in the last note of what is needed to complete the motive. But this note is never heard from the violas. It happens again with the last repetition, and this time our need for completion is even greater, but now we get almost three full bars of rests (Ex. 6.9).

Ex. 6.9 Symphony No. 1, 4th movement, bb. 520-532.

**Main theme in F minor (bb. 533-573)**

With figure 45 the first theme finally arrives, in the violins this time, and although that event in itself is enough to make us sigh with relief, the fugato style of the music with the theme jumping from violins, to cellos, to clarinets, to oboes, devoid of any accompaniment other than the continued timpani roll, does nothing to assuage the uncertainty created and relieve any of the tension. This only gets worse with the re-entrance of the violas on bar 541 with the same ascending, three note motive as before, only this time the gap between each repetition becomes rapidly smaller and smaller, creating a feeling of urgency, until the rests disappear almost completely, their place filled in by passing notes returning downward and the motive becomes a run of quavers, like a turn, with nothing but quaver rests between repetitions, which sound like anxious gasps for breath. From bar 543 onwards, the only accompaniment to the struggling, hurrying violas are long, suspended, alternating chords spread out between the oboes, clarinets, violins and cellos, and the timpani roll. The near starkness of the musical landscape, combined with the otherwise full harmonies make rise conflicting expectations. The sound we hear, behind the running violas, is full and complete, with practically no textural tension since the chord is evenly spread out over three octaves with no extremes of register. Yet the sparseness of the orchestration leads us to expect an eventually denser musical landscape. Aside from the violas, the only changes in sound are the alternating E $\flat$  and D $\flat$  semibreves in the flutes and oboes. This very definitive lack of action in the background brings about saturation, and we expect that it cannot possibly last very long, especially from the moment the violas revert to a march-like gradually

descending, three-note figure. This change implies the potential arrival of more coherent musical shapes, and some sort of movement returning to the music.

This movement does indeed return (in a rare occasion of the music gratifying our expectations) to progressively more and more of the instrument groups and on bar 563 the first theme reappears in the woodwind. The texture is still a bit thin since the woodwind disappear again after just one statement of the first theme, and all that is left are the strings and horns. The gradually ascending motive in the first violins, exposed in a high register in *pp*, leads us to expect the rising motion to continue and erupt with the rest of the orchestra somewhere in the higher end of the sound range. Most of the rest of the orchestra does indeed join in, but no sooner does that happen, than the ascending motive is suddenly interrupted in the first violins, and a most bizarre (in the context) *ff* pizzicato in the second violins and violas, skipping up a fourth, and doubled by piccolos, oboes and clarinets sounds. This fourth sounds across three octaves, but the strongest impression is given by the violin and viola pizzicato that seem to have suddenly plunged a couple of octaves down, from the region the first violins seemed to have been inhabiting up until that very point (Ex. 6.10). This is merely an impression, like an aural trick, since the last note heard from the first violins is the same note from which the second violins start their skip up. And yet it is truly startling. Immediately afterwards, the second violins return to bowing and a legato cascade down in semiquavers ending up in *pp* again, and figure 47.

Ex. 6.10 Symphony No. 1, 4th movement, bb. 566-574.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system includes Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), and Viola (Vla.). The second system includes Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vla.). The third system includes Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vla.).

**System 1:** Vln. I and Vln. II play fragmented, short motives with dynamics *pp*. The Viola part is silent, with a dynamic *p* indicated below the staff.

**System 2:** Vln. and Vla. play a cascading line with dynamics *ff*. The Vln. part includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction. The Vla. part includes a *pizz.* instruction.

**System 3:** Vln. and Vla. play a cascading line with dynamics *p* and *pp*. The Vln. part includes an *arco* instruction. The Vla. part includes an *arco* instruction.

The fragmented, short motives, jumping up and down the rest of the instrument groups, seem to fade into the background, and are hardly noticeable compared to this cascade in the second violins, which seems to be the most coherent sound in the landscape. Up until that pizzicato fourth, there had been an implied promise of coherence and a return to a full orchestra sound after what seems like a very long time of confusion, doubt and conflicting tendencies. That realisation is abruptly withheld from us again, the build-up starts anew.

### **Intensification in F minor (bb. 574-630)**

The promise of coherence is not fulfilled until after the trumpet fanfare on bar 593, and two bars before figure 50.

Two bars of a minim/triplet figure fanfare, and the 'cross symbol' (in fig. 33) had heralded the first appearance of the breakthrough motive (in fig. 34). The same type of fanfare reappears four bars before figure 52. There is no 'cross symbol' this time but there is no mistaking that fanfare. Subconsciously (or consciously), we know exactly where it is going to lead, even though this time, it takes longer for the music to get there. Different fanfares on almost full wind *fff* sound with figure 52, and continue without pause for breath for eight bars.

### **Breakthrough in D major (bb. 631-695)/**

#### **RECAPITULATION—D major sonata**

The 'cross symbol' sounds just before figure 53, and finally the chorale in trumpet and trombones sounds on figure 55. Figure 56 is marked *Triumphal* and for the next seventy-four bars there is but confirmation after confirmation of exactly that: the triumph. The chorale is repeated over and over again, along with the 'cross symbol' (breakthrough motive). Practically the entire, full orchestra plays, with hardly a pause for breath, coordinated and coherent, from figure 56 onward and until the very end.

### **CODA—F minor/D major sonatas (bb. 696-732)**

A triangle trill beginning on figure 59 coincides with the beginning of the coda, and continues, non-stop, until the very end of the movement, all the time accompanied by either a timpani or cymbal roll, or both. On figure 60 the chorale and 'cross symbol' motives disappear and there is just fanfare, after fanfare and finally a sharp, decisive confirmation of the tonic.

The abruptness, the suddenness of the first appearance of the Breakthrough which led us to believe that it was a short-lived, temporary triumph and simply too good to be true is not an issue here. The triumph is prepared at

length before it arrives, and then confirmed repeatedly over seventy-four bars. It could be argued that after all the thwarted expectations, the endless twists and turns of the music, the doubt and the confusion of this movement, seventy-four bars are necessary to convince us that this really is the end, that something unexpected and unwanted is not going to suddenly rise its head and make everything tumble back into conflict and incoherence. The relentless repetitions of the chorale and the Breakthrough motive, and then the short, repetitive fanfares near the end, despite the full, coordinated orchestral sound, while being gratifying in their confirmation of the 'triumph', are at the same time still generating tension. Even at the very end, at the highest most point of the music's triumph, Mahler has written music that creates in us conflicting emotions. He deliberately—and to great effect—tries our patience. Seventy-four bars is a long time to wait for the ultimate triumph, a full cadence to be completed; and with every repetition of a motive, with every repetition of a fanfare we become more and more desperate to finally hear those last two crotchets of the movement: D in all registers, D in all registers an octave down.

*Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.*

Isaac Asimov

## CHAPTER VII

### Second Symphony: Representation of Spiritual Conflict Through Secondary Parameters

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#### Symphony No. 2 in C minor "Resurrection"

The forces Mahler required for this symphony are almost double those the First demanded. Although the woodwind section remains virtually the same, the brass and percussion sections are of colossal proportions. Mahler asks for 10 Horns, 8-10 trumpets, 4 trombones, 1 tuba, 7 timpani, 2 pairs of cymbals, 2 triangles, a side drum, a glockenspiel, 3 bells, 2 bass drums, a switch, and two tam-tams. To cope with such an enormous brass and percussion section he also demands the largest possible contingent of all strings.<sup>1</sup>

Not all of these instruments play constantly, and some, for example 4-6 of the 10 trumpets and part of the percussion section, are required to play

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<sup>1</sup> Dover full score edition, p. 170.

offstage in certain parts of the symphony. Still, an orchestra of this size has the capacity to produce a mass of sound that, in a live performance, becomes virtually corporeal. At a *fortissimo*, it is shocking and demands our attention as surely as the sound of an explosion.

**First Movement: *Allegro Maestoso. Mit durchaus ernstem und feierlichem Ausdruck.***

**EXPOSITION in C minor**

**Part A (bb. 1-62)**

The movement begins with a violin and viola *ff* tremolando in an otherwise completely empty background. The *fortissimo* almost immediately dives to *piano* and the cellos and basses take over. Their semiquaver motif *fff*, gradually ascending and becoming longer, merges with a shorter, quaver/semiquaver motif which combined with triplet figures becomes the main motif for the strings. By bar 10 the bassoons join in, in disjointed fits. The registers remain very low and the texture sparse. The contribution of the bassoons to the texture seems erratic and random. This lack of cohesion conspires to create a profound sense of uncertainty. The repetitive figure in the strings seems intent on staying but does not seem to be going anywhere, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, for us to imagine how and if all this is going to come together.

On bar 18, oboes, and English horn sound for the first time with a strong, ascending phrase, and in bar 20 the clarinets join in, while the horns hold a tied C for seven bars. The registers are still relatively low, but higher registers start creeping in around bar 23, as the texture begins to fill out. We are now getting the first indications that it is possible for this orchestra to come together in some semblance of coherence. By bar 31 we have a rich texture, and coherent rhythmic shapes, with most of the orchestra playing; only the percussion, the trumpets, trombones and tuba are still missing. We start daring to hope for an even fuller, unified, satisfying orchestral texture. The rest of the brass join in on bar 35-36, coinciding with a sudden spike in both register

and dynamics. We finally get a unified, coherent orchestral sound, but the immediate, *ff*, rapid unison descent of the entire orchestra from the registral high-point it reached in bar 36 produces the conflicting expectation of imminent deterioration. However, in bar 39 the timpani enter for the first time in the movement, and we are again led to believe that, despite everything, the orchestra is going to hold together. In bars 41-43 the trumpets begin blasting in *fff* a short repetitive figure whose rhythm clashes with the equally repetitive but faster quaver/triplet figure in full brass and bassoons/contrabassoons, a cymbal strike (with the direction *klingen lassen*), bass drum roll and timpani strikes. The rest of the woodwind and the strings fall silent. There is nothing but a great, ear-splitting clamour of brass and percussion (pitched and unpitched). And then, quite suddenly, after the first beat of bar 43, the dynamics plunge to *ppp*, the entire brass and percussion sections fall virtually silent, and woodwind and strings take over again. The promise of a gratifying climax is withdrawn. There is a large textural and registral gap between the octaves of Gs and Cs in the woodwind, the second violins, and the rest of the string section. The tremolando E-flats in the first violins are not quite enough to fill in the gap and this generates a significant amount of tension, as we instantly start needing and expecting that gap to be filled in. This sudden change also generates the implication that a deeper, more fundamental change is about to occur. With all the confusion of the first 40-odd bars, however, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict what this will be.

On figure 3 the symphony's secondary theme arrives, with a tonal subsidence into E major. Dynamics hardly leave the sphere of *pp/ppp*. The texture seems rich and dense because, even though there are only a few instrument groups playing, all registers are evenly spread out with the texture-space filled-out and with no large gaps, and no abrupt changes in dynamics. The triplet motif for eight bars however remains in the cellos and basses, clashing both rhythmically and in terms of articulation with the rest of the long, smoother melodic lines. Consciously, we may hardly notice it, as the main theme in the violins dominates by its higher pitch and timbre and its

longer, more complete melodic shape. Subconsciously, however, we are aware of the cellos and basses. This discrepancy generates conflict both in the literal sense and on an emotional level, since the more the triplets persist in souring the lyrical mood of the second theme, the more we expect the theme to disintegrate back into the initial distressed material.

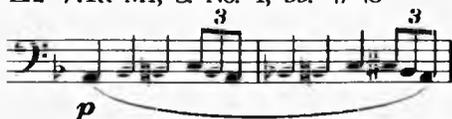
Strangely, the triplets that have been a source of discomfort throughout this section disappear eight bars before figure 4. It is almost a relief and could be construed to mean that the first theme is not about to return after all, if it were not for the dynamics suddenly spiking up to *ff* on bar 59. The *ff* and the viola tremolandi have already been associated with the wild first material, and every reasonable expectation now would be a return of this first theme. Then the G-flat becomes a G-natural in bar 63, and this tonal ambiguity becomes one more unsettling element. Yet, as the dynamics dip to *p* and the music fades into almost silence on bar 63 we are again fooled into a false sense of security.

#### Part B (bb. 63-116)

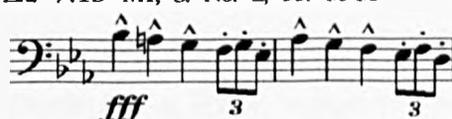
Paradoxically, the rupture that ensues (which begun with the G-flat slipping up to G) is in this case caused by something familiar. When the first theme returns in *fff* on figure 4, bar 64, its appearance is as shocking as it had been in the beginning of the movement.

The 'cross symbol' first appears, intact, in the trumpets on figure 5, with bars 74-79 almost completely dominated by the wind section. The percussion is completely absent, and the strings have nothing more than a negligible presence. On bar 80 however, the strings decide to join in. Violins repeat chunks of the main theme, while horns double the violas and cellos with an inversion and variation of the crawling figure that first appeared in the cellos on bar 47 in the first movement of the First Symphony (Ex. 7.1a and 7.1b). Here the theme is descending instead of ascending and stepping in tones, rather than semitones.

Ex. 7.1a M1, S. No. 1, bb. 47-48



Ex. 7.1b M1, S. No. 2, bb. 80-81



At the same time, the extremely long, very high G in the woodwind generates a large amount of registral tension and a yawning gap with the G in the double basses. There is a very strange texture in bars 80-86, which feels at once both complete and sparse. The extremely high (and low) Gs create an impression of holes in the texture which is however merely an illusion. In reality, almost all registers are covered, and it is simply the Gs at the extremes of the two ends of the sound range emphasising the outer limits of the overall texture-space that contribute to this aural illusion. Additionally, the timpani rolls with the abrupt, repeated swings in dynamics from *f* to *p* compound the feeling of confusion and uncertainty. There is an overall sense of instability in this section, which seems as if it is only bound to deteriorate further.

At bar 87 it is not surprising to find that in this case our expectations are realised. With a practically full orchestra, playing in the full spectrum of registers, with extreme dynamic shifts—sudden and alternating within every bar—the impression of utter chaos is created. This continues until bar 93, with the most intense example being bar 87 where the dynamic shift occurs twice in the same bar, with the change occurring on the upbeat. The syncopated rhythm enhances this effect of weakened shape and unstable texture, due to the high levels of dissonance and density-compression (Ex. 7.2). Other contributors to the impression of chaos are the simultaneously ascending and descending versions of the same motives in bars 90 and 92.

This level and kind of textural and dynamic confusion cannot be easily shown in the colour graph (Ex. 7.3) because it is not designed to calculate data of density-compression and secondly, the density-number and dynamic changes are calculated at the level of each bar. In theory it is possible to calculate changes at smaller levels, for example of half a bar, or smaller yet. However, the problem that arises then is the limited number of minute levels of changes in colour, *within a set space*, which are easily perceivable by the human eye. If the size of the produced graph is enlarged sufficiently however, it is then possible to comfortably perceive these changes at the levels of half a bar, or even less. This would not be convenient if a colour representation

of the entire movement is desired, but for small sections of the music it is perfectly practicable, and perhaps in subsequent development of the software it will be adjusted so the user may have the option of calculating textural and dynamic changes either at half a bar, or whole bar levels.

Ex. 7.2 Symphony No. 2, 1st Movement, bb. 87-88.

The musical score for measures 87-88 of Symphony No. 2, 1st Movement, features the following parts and dynamics:

- Ob.:** *ff* (fortissimo), with accents (^) on the notes.
- Cl.:** *ff* (fortissimo), with accents (^) on the notes.
- Hms in F (1, 2):** *ff* (fortissimo), with accents (^) on the notes.
- Hms in F (3, 4, 5, 6):** *ff* (fortissimo), with accents (^) on the notes.
- Trmpts in F:** *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 87, transitioning to *f* (forte) in measure 88, with accents (^) on the notes.
- 2 Viol:** *ff* (fortissimo), with accents (^) on the notes.

Ex. 7.3 Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 87-93.

87 93



Nevertheless, even as it stands, it is possible to discern in the colour representation the repeated, rapid and varying textural and dynamic alternations that occur between bars 87-93.

In bar 97 the crawling figure in the cellos and basses returns, with the 'cross symbol' in horns, over an otherwise empty musical background. This entire section, until figure 7, sounds bitty and sparse. On bars 115-16, the timbre of the solo harps sounds eerie after all the blaring brass and crawling strings. This ostensibly new sound makes it difficult to predict where the music might be going next, generating once again a feeling of uncertainty.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Part A in C major (bb. 117-253)**

With bar 117 the first development begins, connecting to the secondary theme, now in C major. The return of the secondary theme material so early in the development section is in itself a bit unexpected; however, our expectations all through the exposition have been thwarted already so many times, that the affect aroused by this small added twist is minimal. The anticipation of change, due to the ambiguity of the preceding section, incited more affect than the change itself. Nevertheless, even this small twist of the traditional sonata form implies that there will probably be more unexpected events to come.

On figure 8 the music moves into E major. The new motif in the English horn is slightly surprising, not only because the development section has already begun, but also because of its sound colour. When playing with the rest of the woodwind, it not only blends in wonderfully, but also gives the resulting combined timbre a beautiful husky flavour. As a solo instrument, however, it is always a bit surprising, simply because its sound is unique, and heard with much less frequency than the oboe, for example. And yet in a way, the appearance of the *Meeresstille* motif is also gratifying, as it embodies the realisation of the implication of an unconventional development section.

On figure 11, a variation of the 'cross symbol' in the horns returns, with the last two notes of the motif doubled in 2nd violins (*fff*). This affects the sonority of the passage and prevents the last part of the theme from disappearing under the woodwind and viola/cello themes. Although we again have an almost full orchestra playing in this section (bb. 179-183), the stops and starts of the woodwind and the oscillating dynamics make it all sound disjointed and unstable.

In bars 189-190 there is another sudden change in texture. With the same variation of the 'cross symbol' in the horns and bassoons, an octave leap down sounds in flute and trumpets. This figure becomes remarkably prominent because it consists of simply two minims, falling on the strong beats of the bar, with an otherwise empty texture-space except for the sounding of the 'cross symbol', and because of the extremely high register in the flutes (Ex. 7.4). While this octave drop stresses the first bar of the 'cross symbol' motif, the trombones doubling the last part of the motif in the second bar, with their unique timbre, completely change the inflection of these two bars and the two parts of the motif. What should have been a familiar theme by now becomes something different, almost unrecognisable, and along with the timpani/cymbal/bass drum rolls takes on a sinister role.

Ex. 7.4 Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 189-190.

The musical score for Ex. 7.4, Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 189-190, is presented in a standard orchestral format. The score is divided into two measures, with a vertical bar line between them. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamics range from *ppp* to *ff*. The score is divided into two measures, with a vertical bar line between them. The first measure shows a descending motif in the woodwinds and brass, while the second measure shows a more complex texture with a cymbal strike and a change in dynamics.

This whole effect is repeated in bars 191-92, intensifying the unsettling impression. In bar 194 the 'cross symbol' leaves the trumpets and goes to the trombones and the tuba. The sudden, very marked drop in pitch—and timbre—heightens the sinister effect. We may, and should, be expecting something dramatic to happen, but still, the solitary cymbal clash on the first downbeat of figure 12 is startling.

The descent in the woodwind and strings, the fanfares in the brass and the almost full orchestra generate markedly contradictory expectations. The sound of a full, unified, coherent orchestra is welcome, but the *ff* dynamics on a descending motif clash with tradition and our expectations, resulting in an unsettling feeling. The cymbal strike *fff* on bar 198 becomes literally frightening, while the octave calls in the trumpets stand out in an otherwise

homogeneous texture and seem as if they are announcing the arrival of something; followed by timpani, bass drum *and* cymbal rolls, this impression is enhanced as the rich overtones of the low pitch, the indeterminate shape of the rolls and the conflict of the pitched and unpitched timbres amplify the sense of compression and ambiguity. As the texture becomes substantially thinner and quieter over the next 4-5 bars, the trumpets have two more brief fanfare calls in *mf* and *pp* and we are left wondering what it was that just happened, and what is about to happen next. The explosion of sound and turbulence came rather suddenly and was over again much too quickly.

It is unlikely that anyone would expect a return of the second theme at this point, but a variation of this is what we get on figure 13, over a very sparse, thin background. The lower end of the orchestral range is missing entirely from this section, with even the cellos and bassoons firmly lodged in the tenor clef. The result is a texture that is not so much light and airy, as flimsy. The rest of the registers do not start getting filled in again until bar 221.

The musical landscape fills out slightly over the next few bars, but between bars 235-243 it disintegrates once more. Fragmented, repetitive shapes alternate between different woodwind groups (only briefly passing through the horns on bar 235) in *pp/ppp*, while not much else is happening in the rest of the orchestra—with the possible exception of the very audible triangle crotchets that also stop on bar 238. Eventually, even this minimal activity fades into nothing but for a *pp* timpani roll and four bass drum crotchets, in the last two bars. These last two bars of almost total silence only prolong an intense sense of uncertainty and give us the time to consciously wonder what might be coming next. If we even start guessing that it might be another violent, wild section, we subconsciously start bracing ourselves for it. If this idea does not even cross our minds, then the entry of figure 15 is all the more shocking. The almost completely empty bars 242-43 are laden with tension and conflicting expectations. Sometimes, it is the almost complete absence of sound that carries more tension and conflict than even the highest dissonance of a full orchestra.

And then figure 15 enters in *fff* and a return to the movement's opening material, but with a much fuller orchestral texture this time. The orchestra is only short of harps and trumpets for a bona fide *tutti*. Also, the use of the two tam-tams here (high and low) makes a significant difference to the texture and the blend of sound colours. The unpitched tam-tams 'allowed to sound' (*verklingen lassen*) produce an amazing conflict of timbres between pitched and unpitched percussion, which is especially marked once the unpitched sound of the tam-tams starts to deteriorate.

This first developmental section has, by any standards, been unconventional, particularly the order in which the various themes have been treated. Although the secondary theme was hinted at in the beginning of the section, this was followed by a number of new motives, then the development of what Floros calls the 'third complex of themes' including the 'cross symbol', then the secondary theme, and lastly, the main motives of the movement.

#### Part B in E $\flat$ minor (bb. 254-328)

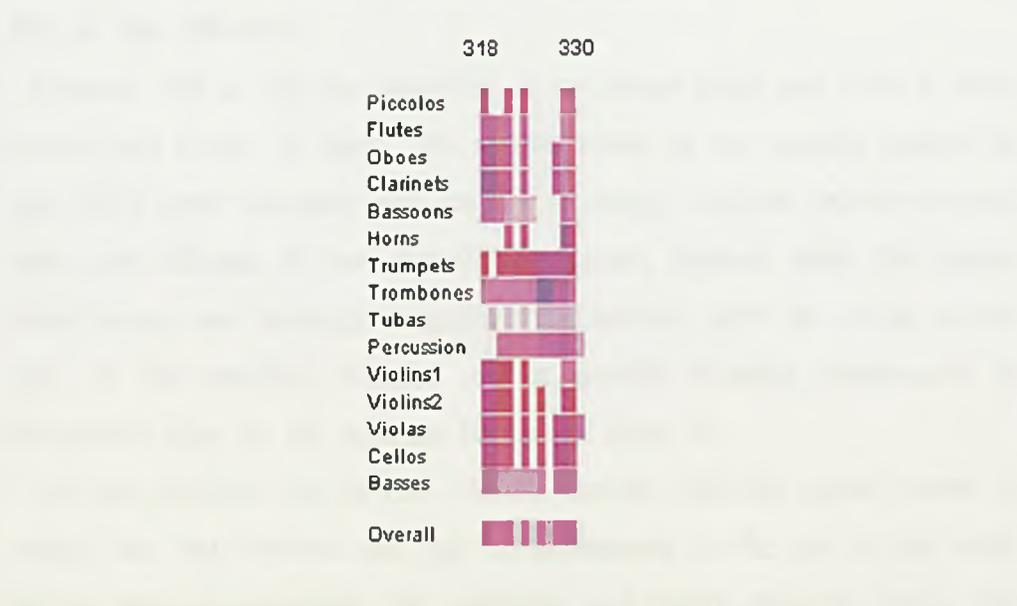
Just ten bars after figure 15, with a change of key signature to E $\flat$  minor, the second developmental section begins on figure 16. Aside from the appearance of a second development section being rather unconventional in itself, the affectiveness of this passage also comes from the persistent, blanket-type sound of the string section's rhythms and the saturation which this inevitably leads to, its ceaseless movement becoming equivalent to a lack of any movement at all.

On bars 304-307 the strings have the direction *mit dem Bogen geschlagen*, which is not quite the same as *col legno*. The notes are actually 'struck' with the wooden part of the bow, which makes for a startling effect, especially combined with the triplet figures (which also appear in the timpani—playing with wooden sticks at this point) and is the first real disruption of the strings' carpet sound that started with the beginning of the second development. This is due mainly to the sound colour produced and the higher levels of density-compression effected by the violas, cellos and basses playing in fourths, rather than the rhythm itself. This bizarre sound is almost impossible to place, since

it is not something that most of us would be familiar with. The repetitiveness of the shapes and the dissonance of the fourths combined with the unusual timbre create a sense of uncertainty and hence apprehension. Again, the clashing rhythms, especially with the syncopation in the horns and trumpets in bars 312-314, generate the impression of chaos. The 'plunging motif' in bar 318-319, with the dynamics at *fff*, the acceleration provided by the triplets and the plummeting of registers gives the impression of an edifice disintegrating.

And yet, most of the orchestra is still there when the dust has cleared, in bars 320-21, although the levels of density-number are significantly reduced. Floros calls the section starting on figure 20 (bars 325-329) a 'catastrophic climax', a most apt description (Ex. 7.5).

Ex. 7.5 Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 318-330.



Starting off on bar 325 with only trumpets, trombones, tuba, timpani and a pizzicato semiquaver chord in the strings and *ff/fff* dynamics, in bar 327 the oboes, flutes, horns and violas, cellos and basses join in. In bar 328 practically a full orchestra is playing, with trills in the woodwind, the descending triplet figures in the strings and tuba, and the cymbal roll enhancing the impression of the *ritenuto* and *molto crescendo*. Already, the repetitiveness of the shapes, the high levels of dissonance and the constancy of the *fortissimo* dynamics have led to saturation even before the *ritenuto* begins. With every new

instrument group joining in giving the impression that it weighs the music down, making it more difficult for the music to move, the *ritenuto* starting on bar 328 only enhances this effect, making each note of every fanfare in the brass come slower and with more and more difficulty with every second that passes, as if they are straining against some invisible force. It becomes as though the sheer power of the ever louder dynamics is the only thing that is carrying the fanfares along. The effect for us is immense tension created by the strain to reach the final cadence, a strain which becomes almost unbearable with every second that it is delayed. When it finally arrives the relief is such that, if this had been the end of the movement, we may not have objected.

### **RECAPITULATION** in C minor

#### **Part A (bb. 329-391)**

However, this is only the beginning of the recapitulation and there is more tension and conflict to come. The sudden return of the opening material in bar 330 is quite surprising after such a seemingly emphatic cadence reached with such difficulty. In bars 346-49 the clashing rhythms make the texture sound messy, and seemingly struggling for coherence, while the arrival, on bar 357, of the transition material and a sparsely occupied texture-space is unexpected after the full orchestra barrage of figure 22.

The solo trumpet calls in bars 366-68, clashing with the second theme in strings, the harp quavers and *ppp* accompaniment in the rest of the wind section hints at uncertainty and confusion, and sounds strangely lonely. The return of the *Meeresstille* motive shortly afterwards is not entirely unexpected.

The sparse texture and the *pp/pppp* dynamics, the flowing descent from the violas to the cellos in bars 384-88, all lead us to believe that the section is closing (Ex. 7.6). We expect complete silence to follow the almost inaudible cadence. Yet on bars 388-89 the octave tremolandi in the first violins return in *pppp*. We now know where the tremolandi always lead (the first theme material), but here we get four bars of tremolandi in the 'wrong' dynamics (*pppp/pp/pppp*) over an otherwise silent orchestra.

Ex. 7.6 Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 384-391.

**Immer langsamer.**

**Horns in F**

1 *pp*

2 *pp* *bis zum gänzlichen Auf hören dimin.* *ppp*

3 *pp* *ppp*

4 *pp* *bis zum gänzlichen Auf hören dimin.* *pppp*

5 *pp* *bis zum gänzlichen Auf hören dimin.* *pppp*

6 *pp* *bis zum gänzlichen Auf hören dimin.* *pppp*

**Vln. I** *fast unhörbar eintreten* *bis zum gänzlichen Auf hören*  
*geth.* *pppp* *pp* *pppp*

**Vln. II**

**Vla.** *pp*

**Cello** *pp* *ppp* *pppp* *mit Dämpfer*

**Bass** *mit Dämpfer*

## Part B—Coda (bb. 392-445)

The emptiness, the delay of the appearance of the first material that we are sure should follow, and of course the 'wrong' dynamics, all conspire to incite a feeling of apprehension, as the implications of the section are distinctly ambiguous. Instead of the first material of the movement, we get a crawling figure (like that of the First Symphony) in unisono harps, cellos and basses on bar 392. The main theme appears in horns in bar 394.

Once again, an event which cannot possibly have been expected is the appearance of bird calls in the flutes, on figure 25. The texture sounds confused and unstable again, due to the contrasting rhythmic figures and the sparsely populated texture-space. The bird calls contribute to this as they appear at irregular intervals. By bar 412 most of the orchestra is playing again, and the multiple rhythms (i.e. triplets vs. dotted crotchets/quavers, and crotches and tied semibreves) make the music sound chaotic.

In bars 415-18 an enormous dynamic build-up commences which—along with the continuing strange combinations of rhythms—gives the impression of a much denser musical texture than what is actually the case, as the only substantial density-number is to be found in the strings. The sharp *crescendos* in woodwind in bar 415, followed by equally sharp *crescendo* in the brass, with the horns stopping for a bar and then starting again with another *crescendo* in bar 417, the bass drum roll, all contribute to this sense of manic activity and build-up, culminating in the tam-tam strike on bar 418. But then on bar 419 we have a sudden reversal of expectations. Instead of the enormous climax we were starting to expect, two thirds of the orchestra suddenly stop playing; and those instruments that continue to play dip from *mf* to *pp*.

From figure 26 everything starts fading and large textural gaps appear. The registers start dropping, the dynamics do not leave *pp*, and descending triplet figures appear in the strings. From bar 422 onwards these gaps become larger. Motives are shorter and it seems as if everything is going to fade into silence, but the *sfpp* at the beginning of every triplet in the violas makes even this seem doubtful and confuses our expectations. Although the registers

continue descending slowly, the texture becomes a bit more dense as more instruments join in. Yet the dynamics stay low, except for the oboes and English horn in bar 430-31 which have sharp dynamic oscillations within each bar, but then finally settle on *p* and then stop playing altogether. The trumpets have a couple of *sf* but quickly settle on *pp* too. The implication of this whole section, and what it leads us to expect, is a soft, veiled ending in which the music gradually fades away. Each theme and each motif of the movement has been now revisited, and even some that did not strictly belong to this movement, like the bird-calls that appeared just a few bars earlier, and it is only natural to expect the movement to finally come to an end.

In bars 437-39, at a general *ppp* with only a sustained G in the violins sounding from the string section, the wind and percussion sections seem to be about to bring the movement to a close. With the *ppp* dynamics, and the majority of the instrument groups, along with the tam-tam, playing on the second half of the bars (437-38) the feeling of impending closure is enhanced. The *ritenuto*, starting on bar 439, for a second seems to be heralding the end, and then on the first upbeat of the bar, oboes and trumpets suddenly spike from *ppp* to *ff*, slip from E<sub>4</sub> to E<sub>3</sub>, and abruptly dip to *ppp* again in bar 440. This *ff* is the first indication we get that all is not over yet, and that E<sub>3</sub> seems to leave everything suspended in mid-air. It is virtually impossible to guess what is about to happen next.

When it comes, on full woodwind with horns and full strings, the plunging motif in *ff* is shocking. And as suddenly as it appeared it is gone again. A quaver C *mf/pp* over three octaves in the lower half of the orchestral range in woodwind, bass drum and strings (*pizz.*) on bar 444 announces the end. Another quaver C in *pp/ppp* this time, only in strings and bass drum, what seems like a long time later thanks to the *ritenuto* that began on bar 444, seals the movement. We did, after all, get the quiet, fading ending, although it did not come in the manner we had expected.

The last four bars come as one of the greatest shocks of the movement, mostly because the movement ends so abruptly afterwards. It is far from the only very sudden interruption or change in mood and texture we have seen

in the movement, yet the fact that it takes place and then all is over so quickly, so *conclusively*, without prior warning, it seems, leaves us wondering whether, just maybe, there is still more to come. Precisely the fact that we have heard sudden, violent ruptures like this before (and the 'plunging motif' in particular), and then the music continued in other strange and unpredictable paths, makes this ending all the more affective. Even with the last note, conflicting expectations are aroused. It is certain that we do need the 5 minutes break that Mahler insists upon before the beginning of the second movement, if only so as to recover from that final shock and process what we just heard. In current performance practice five minutes are rarely, if ever, observed, and yet a substantial pause between this and the following movement is always allowed.

Even after repeated hearings of the movement, the changes are so many, so frequent, and the meanderings and variations of the music so unpredictable, it remains difficult to remember which section follows which; a device which is in large part responsible for the movement retaining its freshness and unpredictability, for the music's twists and turns to remain surprising and consequently capable of arousing affect and remaining meaningful. And yet, throughout all this, there is an underlying formal, thematic and motivic structure that somehow, if somewhat precariously, holds the movement together. The structure itself is vital in allowing the music to become meaningful, since it is only by our conscious or unconscious recognition of its presence, and hence its implications, that expectations can be aroused, which in turn allows the composer to delay, withhold or actually realise these implications.

**Second Movement: *Andante moderato. Sehr gemächlich. Nie eilen.***

As mentioned earlier, this movement is in an A-B-A<sup>1</sup>-B<sup>1</sup>-A<sup>2</sup>-Coda type pattern.

**PART A in A<sub>1</sub> major (bb. 1-38)**

Part A comprises 29 bars where only the string section plays a very pleasant-sounding Ländler, with full, rounded harmonies and a nicely filled-out, if somewhat restricted, texture-space. Then one flute joins in on bar 30 and one horn on bar 38, just before the next section begins on figure 3.

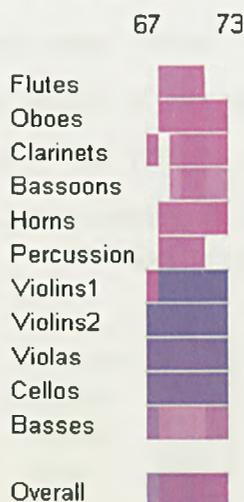
**PART B in G# minor (bb. 39-85)**

Part B arrives, and with the change of key signature there is a very sudden change both in the style and the mood of the music. Semiquaver triplet figures that gradually take over the entire string section become a sound carpet of endless movement. Between bars 48-63 we hear nothing *but* these triplets which become increasingly disconcerting, since the lack of change (motive and rhythmic), combined with the ceaseless movement of the figures creates conflicting expectations and needs. In this case the musical texture is dense and rich, without textural or registral gaps, although the registers seem slightly restricted and confined, since they do not venture much outside the range of an octave, in the very middle of the orchestral range. Saturation becomes inevitable and we expect there to be eventual change, but we cannot predict what sort of change this will be. The activity is constant but does not seem to be leading anywhere, acting very much in the same way as a lack of any movement. This, combined with the endless movement, lack of change, carpet-like texture becomes agitating, as it takes on the form of tension towards an opening up of the orchestral range, and the expectation arises that something surely will come in to fill out the rest of the orchestral texture-space and give some purpose to this seemingly pointless activity.

Clarinets enter with the first recognisable melody for 23 bars on figure 4. This is a sort of relief, because there is finally action (as opposed to simple movement), but we quickly realise that the triplets are still there, in the

strings, and seem intent on staying. There is also some activity in the higher end of the orchestral range, but somehow it does not seem satisfying. The orchestra seems to be divided into two very distinct parts, the strings versus 'the rest', and the registral gaps that appear in the 'rest of the orchestra', although they are in reality being filled in by the string section, continue to carry the tension of a void needing to be filled in. The impression created is that the events in the string section are entirely unrelated to the events in the rest of the orchestra. Hence, from bar 67 onwards, the 'rest of the orchestra' seems to suffer from sparse, disjointed texture, registral tension and general lack of coherence, as opposed to the extremely coherent, but very unnerving string section (Ex. 7.7). It would be unreasonable to expect the 'rest of the orchestra' to overwhelm this very united front offered by the strings so quickly, so it is no great surprise when, on bar 74, the rest of the orchestra falls silent and only the triplets in the strings remain. It is not a surprise, but it is also an unwelcome turn of events because the triplets on their own are so disquieting. Without apparent purpose, they are just 'there', dominant and menacing, with enough density-compression and a high enough density-number to maintain a constant tension towards an opening up of the texture-space.

Ex. 7.7 Symphony No. 2, 2nd movement, bb. 67-73.



In bars 74-81 the enormous crescendo is the first dynamic change we have seen in the triplets since they first appeared, forty-five bars earlier, and it

comes as quite a surprise; as does the first real division of the string section in the same number of bars, on bars 77-81, coinciding with the very gradual diminuendo back to *ppp*.

**PART A<sup>1</sup> in A<sub>b</sub> major (bb. 86-132)**

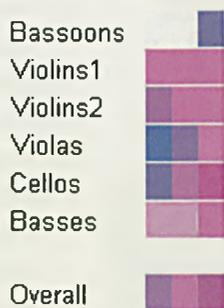
With figure 5 the A<sup>1</sup> part in A<sub>b</sub> major makes its appearance. Again, this section consists of 46 bars for the string section only, a string section demonstrating great unity and coherence. There is no tension to speak of here, textural, registral, dynamic or otherwise. The lyrical mood of the beginning has returned. What conflict and tension does exist lies in the stark contrast between this and the previous section. We find that it is difficult to relax into enjoying the simple pleasures of this music, because somewhere in the back of our minds we keep expecting those triplets to return and the mood to change. It is not unlike a battle of moods for the dominance of the orchestra, or even a heated debate between the two completely different entities that are part A and B. As the lyrical mood so elegantly fades after it has had its turn to speak, on bars 130-31, we are led to believe that it might have just won a decisive victory.

**PART B<sup>1</sup> in G# major (bb. 133-209)**

We could not have been more wrong. With less than a quaver rest separating it from the dying sounds of Part A, Part B<sup>1</sup> and the triplets returns on figure 6 (bb. 132-33) in *fff* (Ex. 7.8).

Ex. 7.8 Symphony No.2, 2nd movement, bb. 130-132

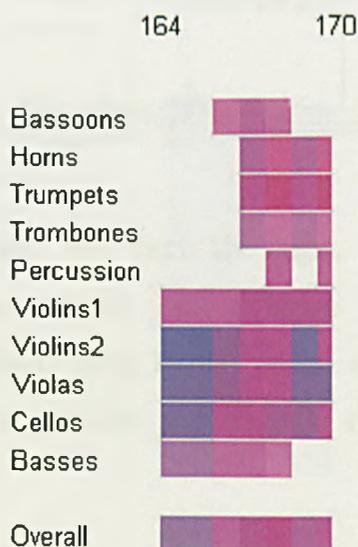
130 132



This time, the entity that is part B seems to have brought reinforcements. It seems like ‘the rest of the orchestra’ has joined forces with the cause of the ‘triplets’. The bassoons double the strings, and suddenly the coherence that was missing from the wind section in bars 67-73 is now established. The string section and ‘the rest of the orchestra’ have merged into a coherent whole, a whole whose objective is to enhance the unnerving, menacing effect of the triplet figurations. This is achieved through sharp oscillations in dynamics that on average do not leave the sphere of *f*—which also makes the registers in the woodwind and first violins seem screaming and painfully high—the plaintive calls in the trumpets, and a bit later on the ostinato rhythms in the timpani which stop and start every few bars. The dynamic oscillations especially, with the carpet sound in the strings, produce two simultaneous yet conflicting effects: although the ceaseless motion of the triplet figurations remains intact, the sharp dynamic shifts give this relentless activity the illusion of a lurching, uneven movement. This in turn heightens the level of ambiguity of the figures, although it does nothing to diminish the saturation effects of an unchanging figuration.

The sudden disappearance of everything but the string section in figure 8 comes as a bit of a surprise, but we quickly realise that the overall effect is like a pause for breath before the return of the plaintive figure in full brass on bar 167 with the sharp crescendo that stresses the semitone at the end of the motif (Ex. 7.9 and 7.10).

Ex. 7.9 Symphony No. 2, 2nd movement, bb. 164-170.



Ex. 7.10 Symphony No. 2, 2nd movement, bb. 167-170.

The musical score for Ex. 7.10 consists of the following parts and features:

- Bsn. 1:** Bass clef, 3/8 time signature. Features triplets of eighth notes.
- Hrns 1, 2, 3, 4:** Treble clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *cresc.*, *f*, *p*, and *f*.
- Trmpts 1, 2, 3:** Treble clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *p*.
- Trmbns 1, 2, 3:** Bass clef. Features a harmonic accompaniment with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *p*.
- Timp.:** Bass clef. Features a rhythmic pattern with dynamics *f* and *p*.
- Vln. I:** Treble clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *ff*.
- Vln. II:** Treble clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *ff*, *p*, and *f*.
- Vla.:** Bass clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *ff*, *p*, and *f*.
- Cello:** Bass clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *f*.
- Bass:** Bass clef. Features a melodic line with dynamics *f*.

What has so far sounded very much like anger, by figure 9 starts sounding a great deal more like sadness, with a legato theme in the first violins starting on bar 175 (helped along by the oboes) contrasting heavily with the now staccato triplets that continue undaunted in the rest of the strings (Ex. 7.11).

Ex. 7.11 Symphony No. 2, 2nd movement, bb. 174-178.

The musical score for measures 174-178 of the second movement of Symphony No. 2 features the following parts and markings:

- Ob. 1, 2:** Marked *pp* *express.* with the instruction *hervortretend* above the staff.
- Ob. 3:** Marked *pp*.
- Trmp 1:** Marked *pp* with the instruction *sehr zurt* above the staff.
- Vln. I:** Marked *ppp* with the instruction *singend* above the staff. The part includes a *Griffbrett* marking and a *spring. Bog.* section with triplets.
- Vln. II:** Marked *ppp* with a *spring. Bog.* section and triplets.
- Vla:** Marked *ppp* with a *spring. Bog.* section and triplets.
- Cello:** Marked *ppp* with a *spring. Bog.* section and triplets.
- Bass:** Marked *ppp* with a *spring. Bog.* section and triplets. The part concludes with a *geth.* marking and a final note.

On figure 10 again, the first violins contrast heavily with the sharp ostinato rhythm in the timpani, and from figure 11 onward, the dynamics start very gradually to drop, coinciding with a similarly gradual descent in registers.

The progressively fading dynamics, the lowering registers, while no significant motivic or rhythmic change takes place, heighten the already substantial

ambiguity of the passage, generating uncertainty and conflicting expectations. By bar 202, only the strings remain once more, still fading away, gradually, and then suddenly the rhythm in the second violins—the sole remaining line—changes. It slows down, it fragments, it becomes shorter. It is like a reversal of the famous straining viola solo in the finale of the First Symphony. Then the D# becomes an E $\flat$ , and with the enharmonic modulation to A $\flat$  major it turns into a single note pizzicato (fig. 12), on the last upbeat of the bar, and then we hear it again on the last upbeat of the next bar (Ex. 7.12).

**PART A<sup>2</sup> in A $\flat$  major (bb. 210-285)**

Ex. 7.12 Symphony No. 2, 2nd movement, bb. 205-213.

Violin 2

*pp* *p*

*pp* *mf* *p* pizz.

Symphony No. 1, 4th movement, bb. 520-530.

Viola

*fff* *ff* *f*

*p* *pp*

Finally it turns into a whole string of pizzicato semiquavers, and the entire string section joins in, then the piccolo, flute and harp. All the way up to bar 243, the whole section has a bizarre, fairground quality about it. It is almost cartoon-like, in a tongue-in-cheek sort of way. As the whole string section, except for the basses, is split in two parts each, both the levels of density-number and density compression are high, with the full harmonisation of the parts, contributing to the strangeness of the pizzicato timbre. The combination

of timbres, including the staccato piccolo, flute and the plucked harps sound mocking, and in a way the music is too pretty: too light-hearted for us to believe its sincerity. And yet at the same time we cannot help but be captivated by its unashamed prettiness.

In this light, the chromatic descent heard only in the cellos and basses in bar 244, as the rest of the orchestra suddenly disappears, becomes remarkably unnerving. The pizzicato, the low register with the ambiguity of its rich overtones, the emptiness of what just before had been a rich, dense musical background, the fading dynamics, all conspire to create a most unsettling effect. As we wonder what can possibly be coming next, the lyrical, Part A section returns. Only this time it is combined with staccatos in the woodwind and arpeggios in the harp. Eventually even the horns join in. It seems like the lyrical theme has now recruited the rest of the orchestra to its cause, in an absolutely beautiful, completely tension free passage, with full texture, complete orchestral range, evenly spread out over the orchestral texture-space, with no gaps and no extremes, in a wonderfully coherent affirmation of the Part A material. As the texture gradually thins out again and the dynamics drop we sense that we are finally coming to the end of the movement and Part A has 'won'.

#### **CODA (bb. 286-299)**

After a beautiful arpeggio and a last glissando in the harps, we cannot help but think that the movement has ended; but we are mistaken. A few seconds later, a *pp* pizzicato quaver in the strings sounds the dominant chord, and a good few seconds after that, the tonic. After such beautiful lyricism, such a mocking, tongue-in-cheek sound conclusively ending the music leaves us wondering whether any of the previous events of this movement can be taken seriously, at face value, or if they were nothing more than a cruel joke from the part of the creator.

If the first movement relied on constant, unexpected changes and variations in the music to generate affect through the delay or withdrawal of the realisation of our expectations, the second movement relied on the opposite:

most of the tension and conflict generated comes from the saturation arising from the distinct lack of change. This movement is not often viewed as having any particularly narrative qualities; however, the stark opposition of the two parts, part A in A $\flat$  major and part B in G $\sharp$  minor, and their very different textural characteristics that persist almost unchanged throughout the movement, can be seen and interpreted, I believe, as a battle of wills for the domination of the movement. It is the conflict between the two that colours the character of the whole movement so effectively that, in the end, even though it seems like part A with its lyrical mood was victorious, what stays in our mind is not this victory, but the struggle that preceded, the process that led there. Besides, those two last pizzicato chords at the end of the movement mar this perceived victory, making it, even at the very end, anything but conclusive.

### **Third movement: *In ruhig fliessender Bewegung***

Most of the strangeness of this movement comes from the quirkiness of the timbres and their combinations. Also, the long legato lines in the strings that again give a sense of endless movement without action (a *perpetuum mobile*) contrast strongly with the short staccato motives in the rest of the orchestra (and occasionally in parts of the string section).

### **INTRODUCTION and PART A in C minor (bb. 1-189)**

There is constant textural tension due to the shortness of all the other motives (besides the constantly flowing legato semi-quavers) which relentlessly skip from one instrument group to the other, making it impossible to predict where they are going to appear next and when. Adding to that there is the peculiarity of the combinations of simultaneous and consecutive timbres, and unusual timbres, like the *col legno* short strikes in the strings and the virtually

unheard of 'switch' (Ruthe).<sup>2</sup> The resultant effect is an orchestra that gives the impression that it is bordering on chaos.

In the midst of this disorder we get short-lived flashes of orchestral coherence, usually in *f* or *ff* (whereas the rest of the music does not rise above *p*), as for example in bb. 75-79; and then it is back to general, grotesque, mocking confusion. In two places where the E $\flat$  clarinet takes on the main legato theme, they are directed to play *mit Humor*, something which is very much indicative of the general mood of these passages. Both sections tellingly coincide with the *col legno* in the strings.

Quite suddenly, in bar 98, with a surprising cymbal strike, the entire orchestra comes together in perfect *ff* coherence—only for the music to instantly race down again, in a chromatic cascade from the higher to the lower registers (and timbres, as the trombones and tuba join in at the end) with a dynamic slide from *ff* to *pp*. The abrupt drop in register and dynamics gives the impression of deterioration while, simultaneously, the full orchestra, evenly spread out over the entire orchestral range evokes the reasonable yet conflicting implication that coherence might shortly be resumed (Ex. 7.13).

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<sup>2</sup> The switch is a bundle of twigs or a split rod, usually struck on some other surface, in this case, as Mahler instructs, on the side of the bass drum. For more extensive description and uses, see James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and their History*, London: Faber & Faber, 1970, p. 396.



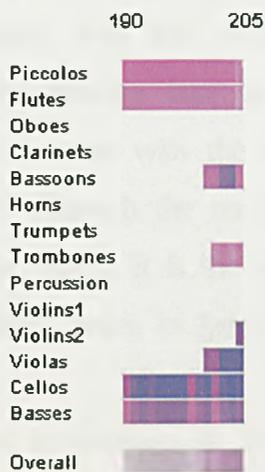


However, on figure 32, with the change of key to F major, we go back to ceaseless, pointless it seems, movement. A similar effect to that created in bars 98-102 appears again, much more briefly this time, in bars 147-48, and with figure 34 we return to incoherence—with the lower strings playing pizzicato now—and very persistent switch sounds, enhancing the bewildering effect.

**PART B in C major (bb. 190-327)**

With a modulation to C major and the appearance of Part B, on figure 36, the pointless unending activity in the lower strings and the high sustained C in piccolo and flute create an enormous registral gap with a consequent strain toward the middle range, and significant textural tension due to both the complete inactivity of the sustained A and the ceaseless movement in the strings (Ex. 7.14).

Ex. 7.14 Symphony No. 2, 3rd movement, bb. 190-205.



These completely opposing devices, wonderfully combined in these bars, are used to create exactly the same effect; that of ambiguity, doubt and expectation of change. The sudden, surprising *ff* orchestral unity which appears again on figure 37 lasts longer than before, but it all seems futile since very soon we are back to the main mood of the movement with bar 239.

The emptiness of the musical landscape of bars 248-53, with only flutes and violin solo, and cello accompaniment sounds strange and disconcerting, as the lower end of the orchestral range is almost entirely missing, and substantial

tension builds up with the need for the texture-space to be filled out and become more substantial. Yet, when immediately afterwards, on figure 39 we get another occurrence of the figure 37 material in E major now (as opposed to D major before), it comes as a surprise and we realise that we had not really been expecting such a sudden and radical change in texture. With the rapid swings and changes in mood, texture and tonality since the return of the B section, it is unlikely that without looking at the score we might notice that the figure 37 material in D major lasted 23 bars, the next section in B minor lasted again exactly 22 bars, and now the swing up to E major came almost precisely on cue. Still, subconsciously we might expect it to last a bit longer than the 15 bars that it does; because on figure 40 it is interrupted by the appearance of some quite different material.

In what sounds very much like a lyrical section, with two harps playing delicately pretty arpeggios and chords and the legato theme in the second violins, it is surprising to get a solo trumpet carrying most of this lyricism, especially after the fierce blasts from the trumpet section that had just preceded this (Ex. 7.15). The passage here is marked *sehr ausdrucksvoll gesungen* and comes in stark contrast with the material the trumpets were carrying just three bars earlier. Although the use of the trumpet in this way is not unusual in Mahler's own idiom, it is the suddenness of the change in character of the instrument which makes its lyricism sound new.

Ex. 7.15 Symphony No. 2, 3rd movement, bb. 271-281.



**TRANSITION (bb. 328-347)**

A transitional section begins on figure 43. The very sparse texture—especially in the strings—enhanced by the alternating couples of strings (e.g. second violins and half the cellos, then violas and second half of the cellos in the next bar), and the slowly rising register in the woodwind, over a very marked inactivity in the rest of the orchestra, follows a gradual upward movement, which eventually starts sounding slightly more coherent as the brass section and the strings become more active (Ex. 7.16).

Ex. 7.16 Symphony No.2, 3rd movement, bb. 328-339.

The musical score for Ex. 7.16, Symphony No. 2, 3rd movement, measures 328-339, is presented in a standard orchestral layout. The score includes parts for Oboe 1, Trumpets in F (1, 2 and 3, 4), Timpani 1, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The tempo is marked "Zum Tempo I. zurückkehren". The score shows a gradual increase in activity across the instruments. The Oboe 1 part begins with a single note in measure 339. The Trumpets in F (1, 2 and 3, 4) play a series of notes, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *p*. The Timpani 1 part plays a series of notes, with a dynamic of *p*. The Violin II part plays a series of notes, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *pp*. The Viola part plays a series of notes, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *pp*. The Cello part plays a series of notes, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *pp*. The Bass part plays a series of notes, with a dynamic of *f*. The score is in 3/8 time and features a key signature of one flat.

Ob. 1

Cl. 1 in Bb

4 Hrns in F

1, 2

3, 4

Trmpts in F

1

2

Timp

Vln. II

Viola

Cello

Bass

F nach Es. C nach G.

*p*

*sf*

*pp*

*p*

As the dynamics slowly rise, so does the register in the woodwind. But at the highest point of the tension accumulated by this gradual upward movement (registral, dynamic and textural) the whole edifice collapses again within one bar (b. 347), and the promise of a tonally and texturally satisfying climax is withdrawn (Ex. 7.17).

Ex. 7.17 Symphony No.2, 3rd movement, b. 347.

Picc. *ff*

Fl. 1, 2 *ff*

3 Ob. *ff*

3 Cl in B $\flat$  *ff*

Bsn 1, 2 *ff*

Cbssn. *ff*

6 Hrns in F *ff*

4 Trmpts in F *sf* *Zungenstoss* 3

3 Trmbn and Tuba *mit Dämpfer* *p*

Cymbal *pp*

Timp 1, 2 *f* *p*

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *arco* *ff* *geth.* *p*

Db. *ff* *p*

**PART A1 in C minor (bb. 348-440)**

The switch announces the return of the Part A material in C minor, on figure 44, constantly moving, highly agitated, and fragmented with high levels of density-compression due to the dissonances produced by the crowded counterpoint. Again there are brief snatches of coherence, just before figure 46. The *mit Humor* clarinet appears for the third time in the movement on bar 395 and for the second time it ushers in the same brief flash of *ff* coherence and immediate deterioration that it did in bars 98-102.

The arrival of the B $\flat$  minor over C pedal 'shriek' on bar 465 (fig. 50 (+8)) is prepared extensively, over 24 bars from figure 49, with another brief appearance of the figure 37 and 39 material. The repetition of fanfare-like shapes in the wind that become progressively more condensed, and the similarly repetitive shapes that become a blanket of sound in the strings, all go on for far too long; longer than we can be comfortable with at *ff/fff*. The full orchestra—for 24 bars—seems caught in a place from which it cannot escape. The small motivic changes do not make as much difference to the overall impression of monotony as does the very gradually rising register in the strings and the brass. This strain of the pitch to escape the confines of textural/motivic homogeneity acquires an almost unbearable urgency in bars 461-63, with the condensing of the horn fanfares and the tremolando runs in the strings, while the woodwind has fallen silent. The sudden acceleration (part of it actual, part of it only an impression created by the condensed motives), coinciding with a violent *crescendo* throughout, a roll in the cymbals and bass drum, and the disappearance of the softer timbre of the woodwind (with the exception of the bassoons/ contrabassoons) makes our need for the music to break out of this cycle all the more pressing. The registers are high enough for us to mistakenly believe that there is not much higher they can go. Although subconsciously we know that this is not the case, this deceptive impression is created partly by the quality of the timbre: the horns straining with the high G at the higher end of their range, and the same straining quality created by the sheer speed and *fff* dynamics of the violins and violas. Consequently, when on the next bar strings and woodwind streak up a

chromatic scale in demi-semiquaver quintuplets and sextuplets, we are not only surprised by the fact that the register could actually go so high, but also by the speed with which it did so. This upward rush—because the registers at least for the piccolos, flutes and first violins are so high—sounds like a last desperate bid for escape. It is as if that pitch—that escape—could not be achieved by any other means.

**PART 5—B $\flat$  minor over C pedal (bb. 465-480)**

The 'shriek', on bar 465, comes at the same time both as an immense relief that the vicious circle is broken, and, at the same time, as an unbearable place to be because of the ear splitting pitch, timbres and dynamics and the seemingly endlessly withheld resolution of the B $\flat$  minor over C pedal dissonance (Ex. 7.18).

Ex. 7.18 Symphony No. 2, 3rd movement, bb. 464-465.

The musical score for measures 464-465 of the 3rd movement of Symphony No. 2. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The top section includes Piccolo 1 & 2, Flutes 1 & 2, 3 Oboes, Clarinet in E, and 3 Clarinets in Bb, all playing a complex, high-register arpeggiated figure. The middle section includes Basses 1 & 2 and Cobsas, 6 Horns in F, 4 Trumpets in F, 4 Trombones and Tuba, Cymbal, Bass Drum, Tam-tam, and Timpani 1 & 2. The bottom section includes Harp, Violins I & II, Viola, and Cello and Bass. The strings play a similar arpeggiated figure, with dynamic markings of fortissimo (ff) and fortississimo (fff). The score is in 3/8 time and features a key signature of two flats (Bb).

The racing, mercurial runs in the strings, woodwind and harps that follow the shriek create an impression of chaos and disintegration yet, strangely, there is another measure of relief in this, since with these following bars the register starts gradually slipping downward again, to a more comfortable range. By bar 473 the dynamics start gradually diminishing, the racing arpeggios

suddenly disappear, the chromatically descending motif seems to be promising the eventual attainment of a stable tonal footing, and we can be forgiven for expecting a semblance of normality to be about to be established. The entire section from figure 49 to figure 51 is rife with conflict, as opposing impressions, expectations and desires, vie for supremacy and are alternatively delayed, denied, or gratified—but even then, always with a twist.

**PART B1—return in C major (bb. 481-544)**

After all this chaos and tension we are desperate for something coherent, calmer, and more comfortable, maybe even some lasting resolution which will lead to the end of the movement. What we do get, on bar 480 (fig. 51 (-1)), are the cellos and basses appearing as if out of nowhere, and announcing the return of the Part B material and everything that implies: more fragmentation, more ceaseless, movement that never seems to be leading anywhere, more mockery and grotesqueness. On bars 519-20 another rupture occurs, with the harps suddenly racing upwards, over an almost entirely bare musical background, and then all strings, fragmented and menacing, led by the double basses, struggle to establish a recognisable motif. It is not only the harps in themselves that contradict our expectations, nor is it only the basses, but rather a combination of the two; the sudden flight up the sound register with the harps, only to have that register plummet again. After this, the registers seem to linger for a while in more or less the middle of the orchestral range, and then with bar 543, we get another minor rupture (the second one in 25 bars), as the registers suddenly leap up and plummet down again—like a roller-coaster ride.

**PART A2 in C minor (bb. 545-581)**

Figure 54 sees the reappearance of the switch, and its associated sense of mockery and grotesqueness. With bar 570 comes a short-lived glimpse of textural, orchestral and registral coherence, which disintegrates rapidly and the movement fades away with a last dotted crotchet of such low register and peculiar timbre, thanks to the contrabassoon, the horns and that last tam-tam

strike, that we feel it vibrate, more than hear it sound, while the depth and ambiguous, uncontrolled nature of this unpitched vibration leaves us with a most profound feeling of unease.

As with the first movement, part of the conflict and tension generated by the third movement is a result of the frequent, minor ruptures, which come suddenly, without prior warning, and consequently are difficult, if not impossible, to predict. Coupled with the alternating part A and B material (and the variation in textures that accompany them), the changes become too many and too frequent for us to be able to keep track of them. At the same time, in the manner of the second movement, there is an underlying 'sameness' throughout the movement: the *perpetuum mobile* of the strings (and woodwind) that relentlessly persists, but does not lead anywhere that we, at least, or the 'hero', is able to discern. The frustration arising from the apparent pointlessness is only exacerbated by the peculiar timbres that we cannot quite place, like the *switch*, the *col legno* and strikes with the wooden part of the bow in the strings, and the *mit Humor* clarinet line that appears three times throughout the movement, at seemingly random intervals. It is a movement that is constantly changing and at the same time is constantly the same, and the conflict arising from these two opposing devices is perceived by us, the listeners, as affect.

#### Fourth Movement: *Urlicht*

*Urlicht* starts without a pause after the third movement, and the first note is the Alto voice free of any accompaniment. It is a very simple movement, maybe even simplistic, in a way. After the raging turbulence of the third, it seems like an *antidimax*—and yet the almost instant tranquility that it inspires comes as a relief and can only be a welcome change.

Most of the conflict and surprise this movement offers comes from the fact that this a *bona fide* Lied, in the middle of a symphony. It feels like an interruption (or intervention) fallen from the sky. It is its presence itself which

conflicts with expectations and everything we know, or think we know, about a work of music called a symphony. If there is any inherent textural tension at all in the first 35 bars, it comes from the mildly surprising efforts of the trumpets to 'sing'. It is not unusual to have trumpets carrying a chorale, but in this case it is their melody line, and the fact that they are carrying it alone, that makes them sound as if they are trying to sing, in the same way as the Alto. Admittedly, their timbre is not ideally suited to such an endeavour, hence the unusualness of the exercise, which has us unconsciously trying to reconcile their apparent new role with the unusual character of the trumpets. All surprises in this movement are mild; another contrast with all the previous movements.

The clarinet triplets, the glockenspiel and the harp appearing on figure 3 are a mild surprise; as is the solo violin on bar 40. A very slight increase of tension might be registered on figure 4, where there is substantially more orchestral activity than at any point so far—most of it consisting of triplet-crotchet repetitive figures in violins, violas and cellos which lend the music a sense of acceleration, and the very high pitch of the piccolo which, despite the *pp* dynamics becomes remarkably prominent. The repetitive figures on the second harp enhance the effect, as does the slowly rising melody line of the Alto, which culminates on a high E (the highest the Alto has to sing for the entire movement.). A professional soloist would not find that E a strain and would sing it comfortably, but the timbre of the Alto voice itself gives the impression that this pitch is more or less at the highest end of its range. There is a measure of strain with that E, which, sung by a soprano, would seem mid-range, so we would hardly even notice it.

In bars 50-54 some more tension is created by the ambiguity of the low-register tremolandi in the strings, and the overall emptiness of the texture-space which, however, conflicts with the reasonably high density-compression of the clarinets and oboes playing in thirds. Then with figure 5, bar 55, the continued tremolos and now the gradually rising (by semitones) line of the Alto, an apparent upward drive hints at some sort of minor climax and generates a mild sense of urgency (Ex. 7.19).

Ex. 7.19 Symphony No. 2, 'Urlicht', bb. 54-65.

Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott! Der lie - be Gott, der  
lie - be Gott, wird mir ein Licht - chen ge - ben. wird leuch - ten  
mir bis in das e - wig se - lig Le - ben!

The sudden appearance of the English horn on bar 59 and the peculiarity of its timbre (its first entry in the movement, lasting for two bars) enhances the feeling of uncertainty produced by the semitone movement (which in theory could go on indefinitely) and the ambiguity of the continued tremolandi.

This admittedly very mild tension is relieved in the last six bars with the harps, strings and Alto cadence to dynamics that start off at *ppp* and continue fading, almost to the edge of hearing.

**Fifth Movement: *Im Tempo des Scherzo's. Wild herausfahrend***

**INTRODUCTION in F minor-C major (bb. 1-42)**

Again without a break, the fifth movement arrives with the cellos and basses streaking upward, followed by the B<sub>1</sub> minor over C pedal 'shriek', and then the same impression of chaos as in the third movement, with the resolution of the jarring dissonance seemingly withheld for ever. The registral and textural, as well as tonal tension, with the high levels of density-compression, sharp emphasis on the higher extremes of the orchestral range and the overall turbulence and instability of this section does not end before bar 25 with the

*caesura*, and the change of key signature, from F minor to C major. The contrast and conflict created with the immediately preceding *Urlicht* cannot be overstated.

The new section beginning on figure 2 in C major is only marginally less agitated. Although the texture is much thinner, the levels of density-compression are much lower, and the dynamics have dropped from *fff* to *pp*, the repetitive figure in the basses and cellos and the rhythmic clashes between woodwind and brass only perpetuate a sense of confusion and tension, while the incongruous tinkle of the glockenspiel seems so out of place as to become startling with every strike.

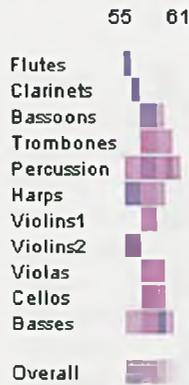
### **EXPOSITION (bb. 43-193)**

#### **Part I (bb. 43-61)**

With figure 3 there is a very obvious change in tempo (*Langsam*), mood and section. Horns (according to the score directions, as many as possible, set up as far away as possible) sound as if they are announcing the arrival of some momentous and solemn event, the expectation of which is heightened by the long pause indicated over the last note. What actually arrives are the oboes with an odd, slightly mocking triplet figure, which eventually the horns pick up in bar 51-52, coinciding with the entry of the trumpets. The strings, in the meanwhile, have been completely silent, and only sound a pizzicato C in the cellos and a tied C semibreve in the basses to coincide with the entry of the harps on bar 53—another unexpected and peculiar timbre. Over this practically bare musical landscape, the strangeness of the figures and timbres, the conflicting rhythms and a *piano* timpani roll that started on bar 48 and is still continuing, take on a grotesque and rather disconcerting character. It remains so between bars 55-61 where, starting up high with the flutes, and gradually dropping down a large part of the wind section, the register (and timbre) of the triplet figure plummets, to the accompaniment of descending trills in the violins, arpeggios in the harps, timpani rolls, and dipping dynamics. On bar 57 the trombones take up a very discernible, funeral-march type figure, accompanied by bass drum and tam-tams (high and low), while



Ex. 7.21 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 55-61.



**Part II (bb. 62-77)**

In bar 62 the Dies Irae motif appears in the woodwind, to pizzicato accompaniment in strings. Both the articulation of the Dies Irae motif in the woodwind, with its non-legato stresses, and the pizzicato timbre of the strings result in a slightly whimsical effect.

**Part III (bb. 78-96)**

The fanfares in the wind section starting on figure 6, fragmented and relentlessly alternating in timbres as they skip from one wind group to the other, sound as if they are coming from several different directions at once, with no awareness of one another, leading to even more ambiguity. This tension is resolved in an unexpected way. Instead of the orchestra finally synchronising itself and coming together, most of it simply disappears in bar 84, except for the bassoons, horns, cellos and basses. Compared to before, this part now actually seems coherent, even if somewhat mocking and grotesque, once again due to the ceaseless triplet figurations.

From bars 90-96 the register gradually keeps descending, until by bar 96 everything has dropped to within the two octaves of the lowest part of the orchestral range (Ex. 7.22).

Ex. 7.22 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 90-96.



The vagueness of this depth of register, exacerbated by the unpitched sound of the low tam-tam, along with the chromatically descending triplets in the double basses, which could, in theory, go on indefinitely, intensify an already existing sense of uncertainty.

**Part IV in B<sub>♭</sub> minor (bb. 97-141)**

Suddenly, with figure 7, there is a leap up in register. The texture is still extremely sparse, with tremolandi in the string section and what sounds like a fragmented theme in the woodwind.

With bar 109 and until 131 the apparent fragmentation deteriorates further, even though, or because, the texture is fuller, thanks to more and more instrument groups joining in. The elevated density-number in this section does not afford us the satisfaction such an event would usually have. Uncommonly high levels of rhythmic conflict, along with weakened shapes, have the opposite effect. The motives are condensed, repetitive and rising in register. The entries of the various instrument groups are staggered, coming in on upbeats or with syncopated rhythms, while the dynamics consistently spike—or plummet—on weak beats, or to coincide with the syncopations. From bar 124 to 131, the compression of the motives is greater, with the repetitions closer together, which gives the passage a sense of acceleration and enhances both the impression of chaos and instability, and consequently the levels of ambiguity and affect generated.

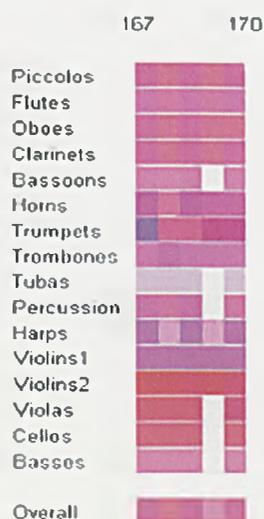
### Part V in D<sub>1</sub> major (bb. 142-161)

On figure 10, bar 142 the Dies Irae motive reappears in D<sub>1</sub> major in the lowest orchestral registers and timbres, in contra-bassoons, trombones and tuba. The contrast with the previous section is not only extremely marked, but also very sudden, with the abrupt drop of registers from the highest end of the orchestral range to the lowest, and with a beautiful, homogeneous chorale, as opposed to the manic motivic activity of before. The chorale sounds grave, and pompous—with the low registers and the long note-values contributing to this effect—and then on bar 150 the strings enter with a contrasting, incongruous string pizzicato. The brass section persists, however, and by bar 155 the strings have fallen silent again and only a full brass section remains, growing gradually louder, until on bars 159-61, with the percussion section now joining in, the dynamics rise sharply to *ff*. The timbres of the brass and percussion at these dynamics, coupled with substantial levels of density-compression, become simply too loud for comfort, while the significant *ritenuto* delays the resolution of this tension for what seems like a long time.

### Part VI in C minor (bb. 162-193)

The resolution eventually comes on figure 11, in the form of the same type of material we encountered on figure 6, now appearing in C major. Very quickly, however, the registers start to rise again, and the motivic activity increases. Finally, by bar 167 (to 171), trills in the woodwind, strings and triangle, and the harp 10plets give the impression of enormous activity and yet, at the same time, they become a carpet sound not much more than a blur (Ex. 7.23). All we can focus on are the alternating brass fanfares which dominate the sonority of the passage.

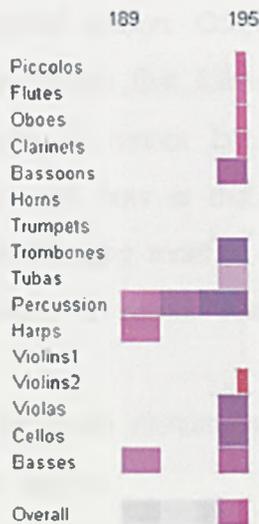
Ex. 7.23 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 161-171.



Even so, at the back of our minds we are aware of the contrast and the conflicting impressions, as we are also of the fact that, despite all this background movement, there is an overriding 'sameness' in the continuing trills which lead to saturation fairly quickly. The change from the trills to triplet figurations, called 'Inferno triplets' by Floros,<sup>3</sup> just before figure 12, is only satisfying briefly, since we quickly realise that the triplets have now taken over the responsibility from the trills for generating the sense of a perpetuum mobile. On figure 13, bars 183-187 the descending triplets in the clarinets, bass-clarinets and strings clash strongly with the sustained, extreme, high register in the trumpets, which sounds strained enough to be a scream. As the dynamics dip from *ff* to *p*, the texture gradually thins out until by bars 191-193 only the percussion remains at *pp*. Then, with a *molto ritenuto* and *molto crescendo*, within two bars the dynamics spike to a point where the tension is virtually unbearable and explode in an almost full orchestra *ff* with figure 14, in F minor (Ex 7.24)

<sup>3</sup> Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 68. The 'Inferno triplets' first appear on figure 3 of the movement.

Ex. 7.24 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 189-195.



**DEVELOPMENT (bb. 194-447)**

**Part I in F minor/F major (bb. 194-309)**

The first two bars of figure 14 are marked *Maestoso*, but the fermata on the first beat of bar 195 (fig. 14 (+1)), combined with a recurrence of the percussion *molto crescendo*, up to *fff* this time, makes it all seem even slower and to be going on for far longer than is comfortable, while it distorts our sense of meter and rhythm and hence amplifies the ambiguity of the section. Quite abruptly, with bar 196, the *Maestoso* becomes *Allegro energico* and a full orchestra (evenly spread out over the texture-space) launches into a section contorted by clashing rhythms, sharply alternating, jerky dynamics and the resulting effect of manic confusion.

On bar 220, with a switch of tonality to F major, a new section begins in a march tempo. For the first time since the beginning of the movement we get an impression of a coherent and full orchestral sound. The trumpets, woodwind, trombones and horns take turns at leading the march. There are only minor textural disturbances due to briefly, and mildly clashing rhythms, as for example in bars 245-248. The first major disruption does not come until bars 274-78 where the woodwind suddenly leaps up in register; most of the lower end of the orchestral range is missing; and the even, repetitive, highly dissonant shapes in the horns clashing with all the shorter, syncopated

figures, along with the *ff* dynamics, are responsible for a significant amount of textural, dynamic and registral tension. Coupled with the coordinated, rapid descent down the orchestral range that follows, on bar 279, while the brass fanfares continue undaunted, it cannot but confuse our expectations even more. Our experience up until now is that coordinated plunges down the sound register (as with the plunging motif in the first movement) usually lead to major changes in section or mood. And yet, on bar 285 the march returns, as before.

On bar 309, however, the *molto ritenuto/crescendo* alerts us to the fact that something seems about to happen.

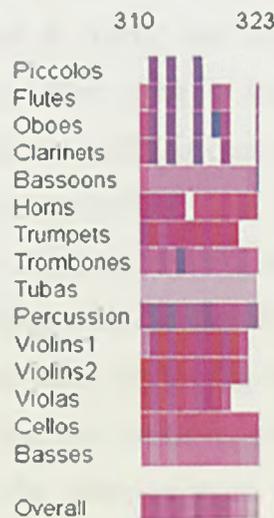
**Part II in F minor (bb. 310-324)**

On figure 20, coinciding with a diminished 7th chord harshly dissonant against the brass, enormously sustained, a major change in mood and texture occurs (Ex. 7.25 and Ex. 7.26). From bar 310 to 322 there is a marked acceleration with the *a tempo più mosso*. With the tremolandi returning to the strings, and timpani, bass drum and cymbal rolls, a carpet of indistinguishable sound is created. The extreme dynamics (*fff/p/fff*) again tend to spike on the upbeats, while runs of descending 'Inferno triplets' in woodwind (starting off at painfully high registers), alternate with ascending motives in brass.

Ex. 7.25 S2 M5, b. 310.



Ex. 7.26 S2 M5, bb. 310-323.



The intonation of this passage, confusing and chaotic, with texture and timbres alternating, and the blanket background activity giving rise to

saturation, and of course the resolution of the diminished 7th dissonance endlessly withheld, is rife with tension. Our expectations become confounded, since we know that this cannot possibly go on for ever, but the repetitions of the shapes, especially in the woodwind, and the background carpet sound make it seem otherwise.

Then on bar 323 most of the orchestra falls silent, except for a very small part of the wind section, and over this disturbingly empty background, we hear a last run of descending triplets from a thinned out woodwind section, now *legato* and *accelerando*, as opposed to the previous *staccato* articulation, which closes the section rather abruptly, with the final resolution of the diminished 7th dissonance strangely coming in the form of a solitary timpani strike of F just before figure 21.

### Part III E $\flat$ minor (bb. 325-417)

The most radical and possibly unexpected change since the beginning of the movement comes with figure 22 and the entry of the offstage orchestra. This offstage orchestra consists of a trumpet in F, a trumpet in C, a triangle, cymbals and bass drum; i.e., for all intents and purposes, a mini brass band. The main and the offstage orchestras seem to be acting completely independently of each other, or to even be oblivious of each other's existence, with the offstage fanfares deliberately off pace, their rhythms clashing with the musical shapes in the orchestra proper. The result is chaotic and unnerving, with the implication that these two 'entities' are either going to eventually meet and blend in a coherent whole, or they are on a collision course which will result in the deterioration or destruction of one or both of them.

The two orchestras seem to meet around figure 25, bars 379-380, with the last note heard from the offstage trumpets coinciding with the first downbeat of bar 380, and triplet figure fanfares now being taken up by the horns in the main orchestra. The initial impression is that the two orchestras will blend without undue problems. Very quickly, however, the entire orchestra subsides into a state of maximum confusion which seems to get progressively exacerbated. Between bars 386-417, every single device used previously to generate conflict and tension is used practically simultaneously, and the result

is a section with enormous emotional impact. There is a multitude of clashing rhythms, syncopated and otherwise, extreme dynamics (with the trumpets, trombones and woodwind going up to *fff*), progressively higher registers, fragmented repetitive shapes (which from bar 395 become even more condensed) and from bar 402 onward, coinciding with Floros's 'Fright Fanfare' over a C-sharp pedal, an enormous acceleration, whose effect is enhanced both by the close repetitive figures in the brass and the *ff* rolls in almost full percussion. There is but a three bar *poco ritenuto*, which only serves to delay whatever resolution may be coming even longer, just before the entry of the next section, on figure 27.

#### Part IV in D<sub>b</sub> major (bb. 418-447)

With the C-sharps becoming D-flats, and an enharmonic modulation to D<sub>b</sub> major, the new section comes with an abrupt change in dynamics (*pp/ppp* from *ff*), tempo (*Langsam*) and texture which is significantly sparser and clearer than before, but which does not so much end, as fades away, with only the lowest part of the orchestral range still barely audible at *pp/pppp*. The ambiguity of the extremely low registers and dynamics leave our expectations suspended for the duration of a full bar rest.

#### RECAPITULATION AND CHORALE (bb. 448-764)

##### Part I in F# minor (bb. 448-471)

On bar 447 an offstage horn sounds, in a long, echoing call, and a new section arrives with figure 29, in F# minor. The onstage flute, piccolo, and percussion rhythms and the offstage horn and trumpets are deliberately off pace with each other, once again creating the impression that one entity is oblivious of the other, an event which is even more striking now that there are also the 'natural' sound of bird calls in the flute and piccolo in the orchestra proper. The longer this continues, the greater the uncertainty that builds up in our minds and we cannot help but wonder which entity is going to end up dominating the landscape.

Part II in G $\flat$  major (bb. 472-559)

With a quite deliberate and remarkable reversal of expectations, on figure 31 the *a capella* chorus enters in G $\flat$  major, *ppp* (Ex. 7.27). Functioning very much like a *deus ex machina*, the chorus is possibly the last thing we might have been expecting to hear at this point.

Ex. 7.27 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 472-478.

**Langsam. Misterioso**  
 Sopr. Solo (ohne im Geringsten hervorzutreten) *rit. a tempo*

Soprano Solo *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

Gemischter Chor a Capella *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

Soprano *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

Alto *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

Tenor *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

Bass *ppp* Auf - er - steh'n, ja - auf - er -

*rit. a tempo*

steh'n wirst du, mein Staub, nach kur - zer -

steh'n wirst du, mein Staub, nach kur - zer -

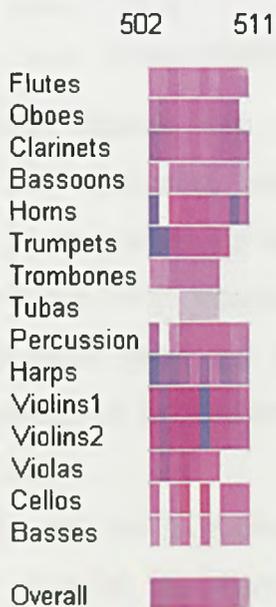
steh'n wirst du, mein Staub, nach kur - zer -

steh'n wirst du, mein Staub, nach kur - zer -

steh'n wirst du, mein Staub, nach kur - zer -

The event is stunning, yet perfectly beautiful, restful and coherent, and we soon forget that we may have been surprised at all. On figure 33 (-1) the full orchestra enters once more, gradually building up into the most texturally and dynamically coherent section of music in the entire movement. There are no registral gaps or tension, no rhythmic, motivic or textural conflicts, no sharp spikes in dynamics. All in all we get a wonderfully well-balanced orchestral sound, while the triangle gives the orchestra a sparkle and lightness it would otherwise have lacked (Ex. 7.28).

Ex. 7.28 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 502-511.



The chorus returns on figure 35, this time with sparse orchestral accompaniment, and still there is no tension to speak of, except perhaps for some mild disturbance caused by the metrical organisation. Then it is back to the orchestra with the same well-rounded, balanced sonority on figures 37-38, with the glockenspiel's crystal-like sound conveying the same shimmering clarity as the triangle did earlier.

### Part III B<sub>1</sub> minor (bb. 560-617)

There is a change in mood on figure 39 with the viola tremolandi, the English horn *sf* and the Alto solo. The viola tremolo becomes disturbing because we have already connected such sounds with chaotic, tension-filled passages. The English horn's unexpected timbre sounds slightly strange in

combination with the Alto voice, perhaps functioning as a distant memory of *Urlicht*. The orchestral texture is extremely sparse and we immediately start expecting that it will have to be filled in eventually (Ex. 7.29).

Ex. 7.29 Symphony No. 2, 5th movement, bb. 560-581.



On bar 571 the very high clarinets, with their short motif and sharp crescendo are unexpected and bewildering, while the repetitive shapes, the sparseness of the texture, the syncopated rhythms and dynamic stresses on upbeats in the following few bars create tension both toward a more evenly distributed sonority over the texture-space, and toward longer, more complete shapes. This tension is aggravated by the unexpected, sudden, spike in register and dynamics in bars 578-580.

On bar 588 the violas take over the song from the Alto and, although this is a very satisfying change of timbre, the sharp oscillation in dynamics leads us to expect more activity: orchestral, motivic, and in tempo. Instead, it all fades away and the violas return to their tremolo, just before the Soprano solo, starting on figure 41, with similar orchestral conditions as before; only this time the violins take over the song, once the Soprano has finished. It is again a very satisfying switch in timbre, although the oboe semitone figure sounds slightly out of place.

#### Part IV (bb. 618-639)

On bar 621 we have the first *f* in the chorus, and soon afterwards, after three *ppp* bars, the first *ff*. It is a significant event but does not last long. By bar 637 the chorus has dipped back down to *ppp*.

#### Part V (bb. 640-671)

Almost immediately afterwards, the realisation of our expectations is denied once again as, in bars 640-45 (fig. 44), the coherent, texturally rich entry of the orchestra in *fff* dynamics gives the misleading impression that the orchestra is about to take over this section again; only it all suddenly fades away and an Alto and Soprano solo takes over.

The agitation in the Soprano-Alto lines, enhanced by tremolandi in violas and cellos, the gradually rising registers and dynamics in strings and voice, and the short, repetitive shapes in bars 659-664, culminating in the Soprano's A<sub>4</sub>, create a significant amount of tension, as it is obvious that this upward drive and the repetitions must stop somewhere but it is impossible to predict either where they are leading or when it will stop. This tension is resolved in the next seven bars, with the Soprano and Alto succeeding in becoming synchronised, and the registers and dynamics dipping gradually back down from *f* to *pp*.

#### Part VI E<sub>3</sub> major (bb. 672-711)

From figure 46 and the re-entry of the chorus in E<sub>3</sub> major, there is an overall sense of activity in the passage, with the staggered entries of each voice of the chorus being alternatively doubled by different instrument groups. The mimesis in the chorus especially, sounding suspiciously like a canon (thus implying that it could, in theory, go on for ever), along with rising dynamics and registers, is responsible for a fair amount of tension which, however, shows signs of being resolved by bar 687. All the instruments and the voices seem to have managed to synchronise themselves and most of the orchestra has now joined the chorus, and we realise that this, in reality, is not a canon. However, even though we now have a beautiful, homogeneous texture (bars 688-695), the registers and dynamics continue rising relentlessly, until the tension toward a more middle range becomes almost unbearable. The 'Luft-Pause' on figure 47 (-1) virtually leaves us breathless (Ex. 7.30).



With immense satisfaction and relief we find that, even if this massive sound can rise any higher, it is not going to. The chorus and horns take over the chorale in a much more comfortable range, and we now know what we are nearing the end. After all this turbulence, everything is coming together in a way that leaves little room for doubt.

#### Part VII (bb. 712-732)

The final verse of the chorale (*Aufsteh'n*) enters in the chorus *fff* on figure 48 and possibly for the first time in the entire symphony we might feel sure that we know where this is leading. The sonority of the passage, evenly spread-out over the texture-space, the homogeneity of the texture, a density-compression that is substantial but not grating, and the even pace of the rhythms, with the full, strong shapes, along with a gradual rise in register that had started again just before figure 48, can only mean one thing; the movement is nearing its end. We have not had such a gratification of expectations in the entire symphony. The brass that were always the protagonists in this symphony join the chorus (with a little help from the woodwind) and lead the rest of the orchestra to a triumphal resolution, while the triangle trill entering on bar 721 again gives a shimmering ethereal quality to an otherwise rather heavy-sounding orchestra.

#### Part VIII (bb. 732-764)

The rest is closure; confirmation that we have arrived where we were hoping to go since the beginning: somewhere where there is no confusion, no tension, no division, no conflict. The glockenspiel, perhaps predictably, now replaces the triangle as the sound of heaven, with its clear, bright resonance amidst all the triumphal clamour. And still, just before the end, that last confirmation of the tonic chord is delayed just long enough for the closing of the movement to be a relief, not a foregone conclusion.

As with the first movement, and in some ways the third, the finale relies in large part on abrupt, constant, unpredictable changes for the generation of affect. Also, however, it relies heavily on the tension created by extremely dense, dissonant textures, and the delay of resolution of such tension, as also on the ambiguity and uncertainty arising from combinations of conflicting

events, such as the effect created by the onstage and offstage orchestras on figures 22 and 29. Compared to the first movement, however, the finale's formal structure is much more obscure, based not on any traditional concept of sonata form, but rather on the programmatic events it is supposed to be representing. This confusion of any recognisable, underlying structures that we can relate musical events to, other than the thematic and motivic unity that in reality holds the movement—and the symphony—together, contributes even more to the unpredictable and turbulent nature of the movement, and hence the arousal of affect.

*I often quote myself. It adds spice to the conversation.*

George Bernard Shaw

## CHAPTER VIII

### Cycles of Conflict

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'What it comes to, then, is that my Second Symphony grows directly out of the First!'

Gustav Mahler<sup>1</sup>

We have already seen that the first movement of the Second, and a couple of themes that would later become the *Andante Moderato*, were composed in 1888, the same year Mahler finished composing his First Symphony. In fact, it is possible that he began the composition of *Todtenfeier* while he was still composing the First. A five-year hiatus in the composition of the Second followed. Nevertheless, the chronology of the compositions and their musical and programmatic connections, make an evident link between the two symphonies which is also supported by Mahler's own words.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the First and the Second Symphonies are connected in more than a superficial way, even though most commentators prefer to stress the connection between the so-called *Wunderhorn* symphonies, i.e. the Second, Third and Fourth, than between the First and Second. Precisely this connecting factor, the inclusion of the

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<sup>1</sup> From an 1896 letter to Max Marschalk, found in: Mahler, Gustav, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, p. 180.

*Wunderhorn* material, is the main—but not always exclusive—point of focus in these discussions. Kennedy, for example, rather than explicitly grouping symphonies Two, Three and Four together, groups the First with the preceding vocal works, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and *Das klagende Lied*, suggesting that it will be seen that these works must be taken together, with the Symphony [No. 1] as the summing-up.<sup>2</sup> He then goes on to mention that the Second, Third and Fourth are usually classified as the *Wunderhorn* symphonies, but confuses the issue by qualifying the distinction and declaring that 'this could apply equally to the First Symphony, for the words of *Das klagende Lied* and the *Gesellen* cycle are Mahler's pastiche of the *Wunderhorn* poems, proving how deeply embedded in his mind were the style and spirit of the anthology.'<sup>3</sup>

Egon Gartenberg's comments on this question are in many ways persuasive, but require rigorous critical scrutiny. The connections he makes between the Second, Third and Fourth symphonies are more specific than those of Kennedy, and he also mentions—even if only in passing—something other than the *Wunderhorn* cycle as the connecting material between the three.

The Second, Third, and Fourth symphonies in particular must be considered as constituting a symphonic cycle itself, going so far as to incorporate direct quotations from the Third Symphony in the Fourth... with the *Wunderhorn* songs contributing the lion's share of connective musical and literary material. Thus Mahler went beyond the cyclic idea for the individual work, superimposing a vaster cyclic idea. Philosophically these three interrelated symphonies express Mahler's convictions at the time; melodically they are bound together by the use in each of them of songs from the composer's *Wunderhorn* cycle... Moreover, Symphonies Two and Three are doubly bound together because they each contain another *Wunderhorn* Lied, now transformed into an instrumental symphonic offering...

... Not yet has darkness and the spirit of gloom and struggle suffused Mahler's spirit and music; rather, the spirit of these song selections ranges

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<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, Michael, *Mahler*, London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1974, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

from lighthearted and gay to a strong spiritual belief in triumph and redemption. The romanticism of Mahler's early years and of the *Wunderhorn* days permeates this cycle of symphonies, the skies are yet unclouded by the oppressive moods and the spirit of farewell and death expressed later. All three symphonies are also bound together by their programmatic content...<sup>4</sup>

Even though Gartenberg goes to much greater lengths than most other commentators to try and explain how, in terms of mood and programmatic ideas, the Second, Third and Fourth symphonies are interconnected, there are flaws in his reasoning. The greatest problem is that the Second Symphony cannot be seen to be free of 'darkness and the spirit of gloom and struggle', since its entire theme is the idea of death and dying. To be sure, it concludes with an affirmation of a strong spiritual belief and redemption after death, but then all of this can be seen to apply equally to the First Symphony which ends with a massive triumph. Neither the First nor the Second symphony can, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as 'light-hearted'. On the other hand, with the Third and Fourth Symphonies, Gartenberg's assertions of light-heartedness and 'skies unclouded by oppressive moods' seem much more appropriate; a quality which can also be seen to extend to the Fifth and Seventh symphonies.

Strangely, Gartenberg goes on to stress the 'spiritual continuity' established between the First and Second Symphonies by the 'use of the funeral march... serving the same mournful purpose.'<sup>5</sup> But just a few pages later, while discussing the Second Symphony version of the *Fischpredigt* and how it defines the mood of the movement, taking it from ironic to cynical to demonic, he declares that: 'The kinship to the First Symphony is again pronounced, with the inclusion of Mahler's own song.'<sup>6</sup> He fails to notice, however, how the mood of the third movement of the Second (*Fischpredigt*) and the Funeral March (third movement) of the First Symphony share those same qualities of the ironic, cynical and demonic.

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<sup>4</sup> Gartenberg, Egon, *Mahler: The Man and his Music*, London: Cassel, 1978, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 267-68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

Although by no means the only commentator to do so, Floros allots more space to the idea that the first four symphonies comprise a *tetralogy*, and he quotes Bauer-Lechner in support: 'In their content and structure, the four of them form a perfectly self-contained tetralogy', she says referring to Mahler's outlook on his first four symphonies.<sup>7</sup> Floros does not however continue with the next line of her book, which in this case is significant: 'A particularly close relationship exists between the Third and Fourth; in fact, the latter even has themes in common with the movement of the Third called "Was mir die Engel erzählen".'<sup>8</sup> This statement implies a divide between the First and Second, and Third and Fourth.

Floros describes the philosophical thought behind the First as 'the idea of transcendence—overcoming misery and suffering', and the Second as 'The eschatological question of death and dying',<sup>9</sup> both of which correspond well with Mahler's own description: 'it [the Third] soars above that world of struggle and sorrow in the First and the Second, and could have been produced only as a result of these.'<sup>10</sup> This can be extended to include the Fourth also, whose theme can be said to be a vision of life after death. It becomes evident that Mahler not only considered these four symphonies as having some sort of internal continuity, but also that the First is intrinsically connected with the Second, and the Third with the Fourth.

If we examine the First and the Second on a programmatic level, these connections become even more evident, and again, we have Mahler's own words to rely on. In the much quoted letter of March 1896 to Max Marschalk he said:

I have called the first movement 'Totdenfeier'. It may interest you to know that it is the hero of my D major Symphony who is being borne to the grave, his life being reflected, as in a clear mirror, from a point of vantage. Here too the question is asked: What did you life for? Why did you suffer? Is it all only a vast, terrifying joke?—We have to answer

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<sup>7</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Floros, Constantin, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

these questions somehow if we are to go on living—indeed, even if we are only to go on dying! The person in whose life this call has resounded, even if it was only once, must give an answer. And it is this answer I give in the last movement.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, the connection does not end with the first movement of the Second, as we might have been tempted to suppose given the chronology of the composition. In fact, there is another piece of interesting evidence on this issue to be found in Mahler's letters and programmes. On 29 June 1894, Mahler wrote to his friend Fritz Löhr:

Dear Fritz,

Beg to report safe delivery of a strong, healthy last movement to my Second... At the baptismal ceremony it was given the name 'Lux lucet in tenebris'...<sup>12</sup>

'The light shines in the darkness' was Mahler's impromptu title to the finale of the Second. It becomes remarkably telling when compared to the programmatic title he gave the finale of his First: 'Dal' Inferno al Paradiso'. The words may be different, but the concept remains the same. It is a description of the transition from hopelessness to hope, from darkness to light, from suffering to joy.

If the philosophical thought behind the First Symphony is, as Floros so aptly describes it, the 'idea of transcendence—overcoming misery and suffering', which in the end is achieved 'only in death, when he [the hero] has become victorious over himself...'<sup>13</sup>, then the more lasting victory of the Second, where the assertion not only of the 'indestructibility of human effort'<sup>14</sup>, as Blaukopf puts it, but also the annihilation of the concept of death itself, can not but close a cycle. Everything that comes after that, with Symphonies Three and Four, comes from an entirely different viewpoint, a viewpoint to which one could only have arrived by passing through the conflicts and struggles of the First and Second. Themes like the 'hierarchy of being, the formation of the

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<sup>11</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>13</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Gustav Mahler in den Erinnerungen von Natalie Bauer-Lechner*, p. 147f, translation from Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, p. 44

<sup>14</sup> Blaukopf, Kurt, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Inge Goodwin, London: Allen Lane, 1973, p. 110.

world, the position of humankind within it, and Mahler's personal profession of *eternal love*,<sup>15</sup> which are to be found in the Third Symphony, and 'meditations on *life after death*'<sup>16</sup> which might adequately describe the Fourth, can only be arrived at and explored after issues of suffering, death and conflict have been dealt with and resolved.

However, the connections between the two symphonies are not confined to the purely programmatic level, for there are also motivic connections. As has been mentioned earlier, in the finale of the First, one of the main motives of the movement is the 'aural symbol of the Cross' which Floros believes Mahler borrowed from Liszt<sup>17</sup> and which appears in both major and minor versions (major second and major third, or minor second and major third). This same Cross symbol, as was mentioned in the previous analysis chapter, also appears in the first movement of the Second Symphony, in bars 74-78, with frequent variations thereafter.

The other clearly recognisable motif the two symphonies have in common also first appears in the finale of the First and reappears in the finale of the Second. Once more connected with Liszt, it is what Floros calls the 'inferno triplets'.<sup>18</sup>

These make a dramatic reappearance in bars 310-323 of the finale of the Second, combined with what Floros terms the Fright Fanfare in the trombones (something which first appears in the beginning of the movement with the B $\flat$  minor 'shriek'), and a tritone variation of the Dies Irae motif in the trumpets.<sup>19</sup>

It is not only material from the finale of the First that reappears in the Second Symphony, however. Again, something which was touched upon in the previous chapter, is the recurrence of a variation of the crawling figure that first appeared in the cellos on bar 47 in the *first* movement of the First. An inversion and variation (stepping in tones, rather than semitones and

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<sup>15</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 22

<sup>16</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem.*

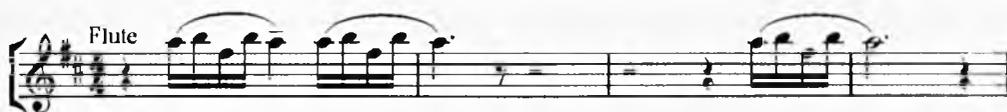
<sup>19</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 74. For a more elaborate analysis of the semantic function of the Cross symbol, Inferno triplets, Fright Fanfare, Dies Irae motives, etc., see Floros, pp. 44-48, 58-61, 67-78.

descending rather than ascending) of this appears in bar 80 of the first movement of the Second; at bar 97 this reappears, but with its original chromatic form restored, and, in bar 392, with a clear intertextual reference to the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth, it initiates the coda. Also in the first movement of the Second, on figure 25 (b. 404) the unexpected appearance of bird calls in the flutes is strongly reminiscent of the *Naturlaut* material of the first movement of the First (Ex. 8.1a and Ex. 8.1b).

Ex. 8.1a Symphony No. 2, 1st movement, bb. 404-6.



Ex. 8.1b Symphony No. 1, 1st movement, bb. 165-68.



But the connections and similarities do not stop there. There are similarities in structure and mood that are just as telling as any motivic connection. The second movement of the First is a Ländler which starts off sounding innocent and pleasant enough, but somehow does not manage to steer entirely clear of tension, conflict and doubt. The same applies to the second movement of the Second Symphony. It starts off as a beautiful Ländler, yet this music spends practically the entire movement trying to assert itself over darker material full of tension and doubt. It seems to win the battle in the end, but its victory is by no means conclusive.

The third movement of the First and the third movement of the Second also have a great deal in common. The most striking and evident comparison to make is the mood of these two movements. Even though one is a slow movement, indeed a funeral march, and the other a Scherzo both are reworked vocal material, and both have a style and temper of irony, mockery, and terrible grotesqueness. The connection is symbolised by the presence of *col legno*, in both movements, a direction which again in both movements also coincides with the score direction *Mit Parodie*, or *Mit Humor*. In the

*Fischpredigt*, there is also the extra source of bizarre mockery, the strange and unusual timbre of the 'switch' [Ruthe], being struck on the side of the bass drum.

The main point of comparison between the two symphonies, however, is surely the abundantly evident, programmatically inspired theme of spiritual conflict. We have seen how on a musical level conflict is achieved through at least the secondary parameters of orchestration, texture and dynamics, but beside and beyond this musical representation of conflict the programmatic and philosophical ideas inspiring the theme of these two symphonies cannot but qualify this conflict as spiritual.

Considering all the above, it is difficult to see how the First and the Second symphonies can be considered two completely independent entities. Of course, interlinking devices exist to a smaller or larger extent between all of the first four symphonies, but the musical and extra-musical links between the First and the Second seem to be on a much larger scale than anything that exists between the Second and the next two symphonies. The simple existence of musical material from the *Wunderhorn* song cycle in the Second, Third and Fourth symphonies does not seem to me sufficient evidence to consider these three a kind of cycle in themselves, excluding the First, as Kennedy suggests, given the decisiveness of the closure of the Second. For what can follow death, resurrection and judgement?

The validity of the *Wunderhorn* grouping in itself, although by no means arbitrary, is to a certain extent debatable, in that the songs themselves are not musically alike. Although two *Wunderhorn* songs occur within the Second, it might be hard to find any connection between the cynical St Anthony song and the serious and pious *O Röschen rot*, other than the general fact of a religious reference; and neither at all resembles the childish view of heaven of the song used in the Third and Fourth. In any case, the bulk of the *Wunderhorn* material in the Second is not texted. The cynicism of the *Fischpredigt* movement is sufficiently apparent musically for its original motivation, the failed sermon, not to be a requirement for understanding the symphony—or even relevant. In fact, with the exception of the evident

connection between the fifth movement of the Third and the first and fourth movements of the Fourth, there is no musical connection between the symphonies merely by virtue of the fact that they use *Wunderhorn* material.

Both the Second and Third contain texts of quite other origins, and it must be said that Klopstock's resurrection hymn, with Mahler's additions in the Second, and the Nietzsche poem in the Third, outweigh the *Wunderhorn* poems in spiritual significance and musical influence. While not wishing to deny connections between the first four symphonies (such as can be drawn between other groups of works, such as the Ninth and *Das Lied von der Erde*) it is surely the case that the poetic elements, and the elements of borrowed song, which unite them are at least matched by the poetic and melodic elements which separate them.

On a psychological level, again, the change of mood from the Third onwards is abundantly clear. The light-heartedness that Gartenberg speaks of, if not all-encompassing, at least plays a significant role and is a driving force behind both the Third and the Fourth symphonies. The world seems viewed from a calmer, more positive viewpoint than in the first two symphonies, and although the music itself is not devoid of struggle, the optimism of the composer is apparent in both the text (in the case of the Third symphony) and the music of these two works. Still, however, both the Third and the Fourth dwell in the sphere of the spiritual and hence retain their connection to the first two symphonies as part of a wider cycle, or tetralogy.

With the Fifth Symphony a new era of Mahler's life begins. The optimism of the Third and Fourth symphonies is left behind once more, as the seemingly permanently recurring existential angst in Mahler's life returned. Yet this time, it seems that the manner in which he dealt with the issue was different from before. Although conflict and struggle abound in the Fifth Symphony, the resolution does not come in the form of religious or spiritual belief, faith, or comfort. Rather, the gaze of the composer seems firmly trained on the worldly, and whatever comfort or answers it can offer. Mahler's meeting with Alma Schindler in November 1901 may have had something to do with this change of outlook. The two met in November, were secretly

engaged on 7 December, and were married in early 1902. A whirlwind passion of this sort is bound to affect one's outlook on life—at least temporarily.

The first movement of the Fifth is once again a death march (*Trauermarsch: Wie ein Kondukt*), and the second is a movement of wild turbulence and passion (*Stürmisch bewegt. Mit grösster Vehemenz*). Especially concerning the second movement, Floros makes both semantic and motivic connections with the finale of the First and the Finale of the Second.<sup>20</sup> The most obvious is the sharing of the 'peripeteia character with the Finale of the First', and the fact that the 'breakthrough in both movements occurs in a chorale'.<sup>21</sup> The chorale in the Fifth, however, fails in the second movement to effect the sort of radical change in mood that the chorale in the finale of the First attains. In the Fifth symphony, the chorale fails to raise us to the realm of 'paradise', as it does in the First.

The next three movements of the symphony are of a radically different mood, and it is there that the turn towards the worldly becomes obvious. In a discussion with Natalie Bauer-Lechner on the Scherzo of the Fifth, during the summer of 1901, Mahler said:

Every note is charged with life, and the whole thing whirls around in a giddy dance... There is nothing romantic or mystical about it; it is simply the expression of incredible energy [unerhörter Kraft]. It is a human being in the full light of day, in the prime of his life.<sup>22</sup>

As for the Adagietto, probably the best known of any of Mahler's movements thanks to its use in Luciano Visconti's film *Death in Venice*, its status as a 'love letter' to Alma is largely accepted now. Notes on the score the conductor Willem Mendelberg used read: 'This Adagietto was Gustav Mahler's declaration of love for Alma! Instead of a letter, he sent her this manuscript without further explanation. She understood and wrote back that he should come!!! Both have told me this!'.<sup>23</sup> The score directions for the

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<sup>20</sup> For a more extensive discussion on the subject, see: Floros, *op. cit.* pp. 145-149.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>22</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, p. 173.

<sup>23</sup> A facsimile of the manuscript can also be found in: Stephan, Rudolf, *Gustav Mahler: Werk und Interpretation*, Cologne, 1979, ill. 38, 39. Translation from Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 154. However,

movement read *seelenvoll, mit innigster Empfindung* (soulful, with deepest emotion). Here, romantic love replaces divine love. The logical continuation of the Adagietto is the Rondo-Finale, a movement so full of joy that it borders on the overexcited. It can be seen as an affirmation of earthly life and the will to live; and in it, the aborted chorale of the second movement returns to dominate the closing pages.

The Sixth Symphony makes a stark, radical contrast with the Fifth. It is unique amongst Mahler's symphonies in that it ends in complete dysphoria. It has become known as the 'Tragic', and it was performed under that title during Mahler's lifetime.<sup>24</sup> The general consensus, and this is what is most strange about this symphony, is that at the time of its composition Mahler enjoyed one of the happiest periods of his life. He was composing, he was happily married, and his second daughter was born in the summer of 1904. And yet, during the same period (1903-1904), not only did he compose the Sixth, but also the *Kindertotenlieder*. According to her memoirs, Alma experienced deep discomfort at the composition of these songs, and with the Sixth Symphony itself when Mahler eventually played it for her.

In the third movement he describes the arhythmic playing of the two children, staggering through the sand. Horrible—those children's voices become more and more tragic, and at the end there is one fading little voice, whimpering. In the last movement he describes himself and his downfall or, as he said later, the downfall of his hero. 'The hero who receives three blows from fate, the third of which fells him like a tree.' These are Mahler's words.<sup>25</sup>

In 1907 Mahler's older daughter died, he resigned from the Vienna Court Opera, and was diagnosed with a terminal heart disease. Much has been written about the seemingly prophetic Sixth (and the *Kindertotenlieder*) which it

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probably the best source of information is from: Kaplan, Gilbert E., (ed.) *Symphonies. No. 5 Adagietto/Gustav Mahler: facsimile, documentation, recording*, New York: Kaplan Foundation, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> See caricature from *Die Muskete* (19 January 1907) in Blaukopf, Kurt, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 219.

<sup>25</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen und Briefe*, pp. 91-93. Translation from Floros, op. cit., p. 163.

would be superfluous to repeat here.<sup>26</sup> The fact though remains that, for whatever reason, in the midst of seemingly unprecedented happiness, Mahler was, possibly at an unconscious level, either preparing for, or expecting the worst. He would not have been either the first or the last person in the world to be fearing the worst in the midst of perfect contentment; it is in some people's natures to expect the worst in all circumstances. The degree to which he was right is of course rather unsettling, but again that is beside the point. What is relevant to this discussion is that his fears, if that is what they were, revolved exclusively round tragic but mundane events (if we can consider death to be solely that), and earthly pain and suffering. The symphony comes as a startling contrast to the Fifth (especially the finale) and its life-affirming joyfulness. Even though the Sixth is in every respect the darkest of Mahler's symphonies and is rife with conflict and tension, it is firmly rooted in the worldly, and its angst is one of human tragedy, and not of abstract spiritual or existential notions. In that respect, it can be considered to tie in with the Fifth, and the Seventh that followed it, again a completely secular work.

The Seventh, written over the summers of 1904-1905, partially coincides with the writing of the Sixth, or at least was begun immediately after the completion of the Sixth. Considering the dark, oppressive character of the Sixth Symphony, the contrast created by the Seventh is quite spectacular. It is also slightly strange how the composition of something so dark as the Sixth could even partially coincide with the composition of a work like the Seventh. It is possible, presumably, that Mahler got the Sixth, and the oppressiveness that went with it, out of his system and was then inclined to go to the other extreme, maybe as a means of compensating, or even simply because after giving voice to his fears with the *Kindertotenlieder* and the Sixth, his spirits were lifted. Whatever the case, the Seventh is another singular work in the Mahler repertoire.

In a letter to Emil Gutmann of 1908, Mahler said, concerning the Seventh:

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<sup>26</sup> For extensive analyses see: Floros, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-186, and Samuels, Robert, *Mahler's Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

It is my *best* work and preponderantly cheerful in character.<sup>27</sup>

Mahler tended to feel that way and say so about each new work of his, that it was his *best* thus far, and though many might disagree with him on that score, few would take issue with the last part of the sentence; especially as concerns the Rondo-Finale, which in positiveness surpasses even the finale of the Fifth. Through various stages of uncertainty the symphony emerges into an atmosphere of brilliant, if thoroughly secular light. The extreme and rather earthy joviality of the movement (cow bells are included in the finale) has provoked some equally extreme evaluations and descriptions. Its brightness has been described as being in 'Las Vegas style',<sup>28</sup> a comment not entirely unmerited, and furthermore in a similar vein to Adorno's comments: 'The movement is theatrical; only the stage sky over the too-adjacent fairground meadow is as blue as this.'<sup>29</sup> Some of Mahler's contemporaries on the other hand viewed this movement, and the symphony, with a more sympathetic eye, Specht, for example, describing it as 'glad, sun-happy, light-hearted joyfulness'.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever the case, and whether our evaluation of it is favourable or not, this movement is at the same time the most secular and the most cheerful of his oeuvre. Even the two *Nachtmusiken* movements and the *Schattenhaft* (Scherzo), although lyrical and carrying some unavoidably eerie elements, lack any sort of metaphoric 'darkness' and oppressiveness and remain on the whole grounded on the mundane. As for the first movement, even though it undoubtedly creates and carries an atmosphere of uncertainty, to say the least, and a significant amount of conflict, it is again of the secular variety. I find Floros's interpretation that 'the motivic symbolism and the instrumentation—the music in general—all show clearly that the development ends with a religious vision'<sup>31</sup> to be stretching a point, if not entirely arbitrary. He bases this evaluation mainly on the section in bars 257-259 which he finds to be reminiscent of the angel scene from *Urlicht* in the Second Symphony (bb. 36-

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<sup>27</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> Julian Rushton: Personal communication, 27 May 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> Specht, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 303, translation taken from Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>31</sup> Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

40).<sup>32</sup> Even if we accept that the two sections bear a certain similarity to each other, a minor motivic allusion cannot on its own support the alleged existence of a religious vision, especially within the context of a work of such an overwhelmingly secular character as this one.

The middle symphonies, as they are generally referred to, also include the Eighth, even though it differs in character, structure and mood from the three previous ones as drastically as a brass band differs from a baroque string ensemble. After writing three completely orchestral symphonies which are firmly rooted in the secular, Mahler made a leap to the other extreme—a symphony which is sung throughout, with two texts, one in Latin, one in German, and of an entirely spiritual/religious character.

The texts of the symphony, the Latin Pentecost hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the final scene from Goethe's *Faust II*, deal with themes of grace, love, ascension, struggle, divine unity, eternity and the imperishable, and unexpected salvation and transcendence. These same themes are expounded both in Angelus Silesius's epigrams and in Mahler's Second Symphony. In the Eighth Symphony, however, they are developed much more extensively and on a significantly larger scale. What was touched upon and achieved after much strife in the Second, in the Eighth is presented as the beginning, the middle and the end, the Alpha and the Omega of work. The main difference between the Eighth and the Second in terms of spiritual outlook is that in the Eighth these themes are not reached after a long spiritual conflict and struggle, but appear as if they are already conquered spiritual positions (It is perhaps significant that both the Eighth and the finale of the Second are in E<sub>b</sub> major).

It is impossible to say at which point they may have become conquered spiritual positions for Mahler, or indeed if this work is simply a manifestation of one more cycle in Mahler's psychological workings, with a future relapse into uncertainty and strife being inevitable. If one takes his works as indicative of his spiritual and psychological state of mind, however, the compositions that followed the Eighth are largely suggestive of a new phase in Mahler's inner

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

life, one that, in all probability, would have been impossible without a previous attainment of a measure of spiritual conviction. The Eighth, in conjunction with the following two works, *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth, suggest that such a spiritual conviction was indeed at some point achieved.

As was mentioned earlier, in the summer of 1907, Mahler's elder daughter died of diphtheria and a few days later he was diagnosed with a terminal heart disease. Two blows of this magnitude would have been enough to test anyone's psychological strength and spiritual convictions. It would not have been surprising to see works created in subsequent periods to be turbulent, angst-ridden, furious—a normal reaction to events of this sort. Yet *Das Lied von der Erde* (composed during 1907 and 1908) is none of those things. Floros describes the mood of *Das Lied von der Erde* succinctly and poignantly:

The basic theme of *Das Lied von der Erde* (the title is Mahler's) is the love of nature and life, the futility of all things, but above all the mortality of mankind who cannot enjoy even for a 'hundred years' 'an all dem morschen Tande dieser Erde [all the decayed trinkets of this earth]' (No. 1), while the 'dear earth' again grows green and blossoms everywhere in spring (No. 6). Looking back, nostalgia and saying farewell are the central emotional and spiritual themes of the work.<sup>33</sup>

The mood of the work may be partially attributable to the fact that Mahler did not begin composing it until the following year, 1908. In other words, Mahler gave himself time to digest and confront the tragic events of 1907. The text of the songs was mainly taken from Hans Bethge's anthology *Die chinesische Flöte*,<sup>34</sup> with many of Mahler's own changes to the poems, giving new titles to some and even adding verses of his own. It is more than likely that the symphonic scope of the work only emerged gradually, probably beginning with the idea of composing songs, then maybe a cycle, before

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>34</sup> See Hefling, Stephen, *Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 31-36 for chronology of publication of the poems and of composition.

finally the symphonic concept of the work took form.<sup>35</sup> Even so, Mahler used the word 'Symphony' only as a subtitle and avoided giving it a number—which in this case would have been Nine. Mahler's superstitious fear of 'the idea of a Ninth Symphony' and 'that no great symphonic writer was to live beyond his Ninth'<sup>36</sup> betrays a continued fear of death over a year after the diagnosis of his heart condition, and yet the spirit of nostalgia and farewell that runs through the work seems to indicate that, with a Damoclean Sword hanging over his head, he was preparing for the worst. Especially the final song of the work, *Der Abschied* ('The Farewell')—or rather Mahler's paraphrase of two poems that he combined into one—speaks volumes. The two original poems were by Mong-Kao-Jen and Wang-Wei entitled *In Expectation of the Friend* and *The Friend's Farewell*. As an example of how Mahler changed the theme of the second poem to reflect the farewell from life, rather than from a friend as was the original, a comparison of the texts is necessary.

**Wang-Wei**

Whither shall I go? I wander to the mountains;  
I seek rest for my lonely heart.  
I will nevermore roam afar.  
Tired is my foot and tired is my soul,  
The earth is the same everywhere,  
And eternal, eternal are the white clouds...

**Mahler**

Whither shall I go? I go, I wander to the mountains,  
I seek rest for my lonely heart!  
I wander to my homeland, my home!  
I will never roam afar.  
My heart is quiet and awaits its hour!  
Everywhere the dear earth blossoms in spring and becomes green  
Anew! The blue horizon shines everywhere and eternally  
Eternally... eternally...<sup>37</sup>

Further explanation seems superfluous, except to say that, where we can see a spirit of resignation and farewell, it is also possible to see the spirit of hope, evident especially in the last two lines, with the word 'eternally'. The concept of eternity, so important to Mahler as has been seen not only over so many

<sup>35</sup> For more on the compositional process see Hefling, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44, Hefling, Stephen, 'Das Lied von der Erde: Mahler's Symphony for Voices and Orchestra -or Piano', *Journal of Musicology* 10, 1992, pp. 311-13, 321-22, 326, and 339-40.

<sup>36</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen und Briefe*, pp. 145-46.

<sup>37</sup> Translations taken from Floros, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-63.

of his previous works, but also in his correspondence and reports from his friends is again apparent here, in particular at the end of the coda, where the Alto sings the word 'ewig' seven times, in long drawn phrases, matching the unresolved harmony.

The composition of the Ninth Symphony began in the summer of 1909 and was completed in March 1910.

In a letter to Bruno Walter of 1909, Mahler wrote:

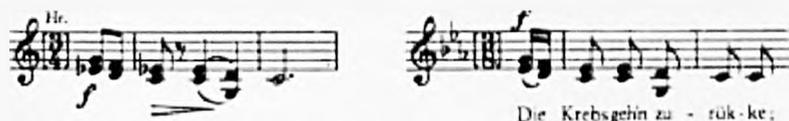
In it [the Ninth] something is said that I have had on the tip of my tongue for some time –perhaps (as a whole) to be ranked beside my Fourth, if anything. (But quite different).<sup>38</sup>

The spirit of resignation and farewell also pervades this work, as with *Das Lied von der Erde*, but there are also significant differences. Egon Gartenberg could not have described the mood of the symphony better when he said:

Thoughts of farewell, of death and transfiguration pervade the ninth Symphony... It is not solely a mood of resignation which fills the first, meandering movements; life is not to be surrendered without a struggle. Mahler indicates *mit Wut* (with fury), and a monumental struggle ensues... The lucidity of the development of this movement [the first], from a simple melody through the terror of battle to the finality of dissolution, marks it as one of Mahler's most outstanding creations. It is an utterance magnificent in its subdued spiritual splendour.<sup>39</sup>

Not only is there in this symphony the sort of vehement struggle and conflict that is present in so many of Mahler's works, but also in the following movements the familiar mood of irony and the grotesque reappear as they have before, especially in the First and Second. In fact, in the second movement of the Ninth, there is even a quotation from the *Fischpredigt*, here carried by the horns (Ex. 8.2).

Ex. 8.2 Symphony No. 9, 2nd movement, bb. 576-578 and *Fischpredigt*..



<sup>38</sup> Mahler, *Selected Letters*, p. 341.

<sup>39</sup> Gartenberg, *Mahler: The Man and his Music*, pp. 346-47.

The emotional journey the music makes in this symphony from turbulence and strife to parody and the grotesque is at the same time both strikingly similar to and radically different from the first two symphonies, because at the end of the journey there lies no glorious affirmation or triumph. The Ninth subsides, dissolves, fades away *pppp* *mit inniger Empfindung* (with ardent feeling), *ersterbend* (dying away) in beauty, without regret.<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to say if there is hope, maybe for something beyond the inevitable, lingering in the dying notes of the Ninth, just as the word 'ewig' lit up the closing of *Der Abschied* in *Das Lied von der Erde*, or if there is nothing there but acceptance. If we are to accept a quotation from the fourth of the *Kindertotenlieder* in the finale as significant, we might conclude, like Floros in agreeing with Monika Tibbe,<sup>41</sup> that with the unmentioned text Mahler reaffirmed his hope or faith in something beyond death (Ex. 8.3 and Ex. 8.3b).

Ex. 8.3a *Kindertotenlieder* No. 4, *Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen*, bb. 62-69.



Ex. 8.3b *Symphony No. 9*, 4th movement, bb. 163-171.



If this is the case, then the ending of the Ninth is not so different from the ending of the Second, after all. In the earlier work, that of a young man, this hope simply takes on a more tangible form in the shape of specific religious imagery and is expressed with passionate, ardent feeling. In the Ninth, the fifty-year-old man seems to have come to terms with the idea of death, something which the youth could not do, and now the hope becomes

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>41</sup> Tibbe, Monika, *Über die Verwendung von Liedern und Liedelementen in instrumentalen Symphoniesätzen Gustav Mahlers*, *Berliner musikwissenschaftliche Arbeiten*, vol. 1, Munich, 1971, pp. 119-124, in Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

something gentle, calm and infinitely more private; something which feels no need to be announced to the world to the sound of blaring fanfares and glorious, heavenly chorales. It simply exists like a small light in the infinite darkness; because as long as we draw breath hope is as inevitable as death.

The Tenth was started during the summer of 1910 and was never finished, although all five movements were fully sketched out. With this in mind, Deryck Cooke's completion of a performing version of the work in the sixties does not seem as blasphemous as some Viennese critics considered it to be.<sup>42</sup> The work starts and finishes with slow movements. The three middle movements, a Scherzo, a diminutive third movement entitled *Purgatory*, and the fourth movement—not titled, but in the style of a (demonic) Scherzo—again in large part follow the familiar Mahler recipe of alternating between boisterousness and the disturbingly grotesque.

The *Purgatory* movement, as does the third movement of the Second, conveys a sense of a *perpetuum mobile*, a relentless, never-ending grind, interspersed with what Floros calls sighing motives, which reappear intact in the finale. On the manuscript of the work, Mahler had written next to an occurrence of these figures 'Erbarmen!! O Gott! O Gott! Warum hast du mich verlassen?' and a bit later, by yet another occurrence 'Dein Wille geschehe!'.<sup>43</sup> It is well known that Mahler was undergoing something of a trauma during the composition of this work, particularly with respect to his marriage, but also no doubt with expectations of his own death. This becomes even clearer if one takes into account not only the nature of the music, but also the other remarks that Mahler scribbled on the manuscript in later movements.

On the folder of the fourth movement, Mahler wrote 'Der Teufel tanzt es mit mir', and below:

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<sup>42</sup> See Gartenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-63 for extensive report on reactions to the idea of a completion of the work and subsequent reception.

<sup>43</sup> 'Mercy! Oh God! Oh God! Why have You forsaken me?' and 'Thy will be done!' -facsimile of relevant page in Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

Wahnsinn, fass mich an, Verfluchten!  
Vernichte mich  
Dass ich vergesse, dass ich bin!  
Dass ich ver.

Insanity, grab me, the accursed one!  
Destroy me  
That I forget that I am!  
That I stop existing  
That I ver [interpretation].<sup>44</sup>

The movement ends with a single beat of a completely muted bass drum. The remark next to it in the short score reads 'You alone know what it means. Ah! Ah! Ah! Farewell, my music!'.<sup>45</sup> In Alma Mahler's memoirs there is an explanation for this comment. She describes the scene of a funeral procession for a fireman that she and Mahler witnessed. The procession stopped and the head fireman gave a short speech. There was a short pause and then a beat on a muted drum. A moment of silence was observed and then the procession moved on. According to Alma the scene reduced Mahler to tears and he used this short muffled beat in his Tenth.<sup>46</sup>

In the finale, in the coda, there is another scribble: 'To live for you/ To die for you' and seven bars before the end the single word 'Almschi'.<sup>47</sup> Mahler's comments on the manuscripts are enlightening as towards his state of mind at the time of the composition of the symphony, and confirm what in the music leaves little room for doubt. The Tenth shares many characteristics with several of Mahler's previous works. It is, as was the First, the Second, the Fifth in some respects, and the Ninth, an emotional journey through rough waters of conflict, strife and grotesque cynicism, to some sort of resolution. Like the Ninth and *Das Lied von der Erde*, there is no triumphant overcoming or resolution, but rather a calm transfiguration and peace.

Mahler's spiritual struggles and conflicts were an issue he grappled with his entire life, only to be exacerbated in his final years by what amounted to a death sentence when his heart condition was diagnosed. The concept of death is a difficult one to come to terms with at the best of times, as is the apparent meaninglessness of life with all its inevitable suffering and inescapable

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<sup>44</sup> In Floros, *Ibid.*, p. 310. Floros also comments that the abbreviated word 'ver.' could mean 'verende' or 'verkomme' (perish), or 'verrecke' (perish like a beast).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>46</sup> Mahler, Alma, *Gustav Mahler: Erinnerungen und Briefe*, p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> In Floros, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

destination. Most of us are spared the foreknowledge of the time of our deaths, but sometimes even this knowledge is preferable to the vagueness of the sentence that Mahler received. Mahler's interest in philosophy and spiritual issues was not simply academic. It had a very real bearing on his life, outlook on life and, consequently, on his artistic creations. In fact, most of his works are a reflection of one man's life-long journey in an attempt to comprehend and come to terms with life and the universe, whether that universe contained a Divine presence (not necessarily God, as we usually understand the concept) or not.

In most recent attempts at meaningful interpretations and analyses of Mahler's music this has been a viewpoint that has been almost totally neglected. That is not to say that it is not possible to view Mahler's works under a purely musical light, to analyse, dissect and reconstruct the technical details of musical creations of such intricacy and originality as Mahler's symphonies. It does mean, however, that any serious attempt at an interpretation of the works, not just a technical analysis of the music, will be severely handicapped if this most fundamental aspect of the creator's personality is not taken into account. Programmatic allusions to other works of literature or even music may well exist, but underlying everything, even colouring the choice of any such works, is the basic, unavoidable, fundamental nature of the artist. In Mahler's case, it has become evident that his endless spiritual and philosophical querying, and his quest for understanding were an indivisible, integral part of his essential nature. It would be naïve to assume that the artist's true nature does not colour and define his artistic output, at least to some degree. It would be even more unrealistic to believe that persistent issues as troublesome, as far-reaching and unfathomable, as the meaning of life, the existence of God, and death, would not influence both the creation of a work of art, and our interpretation and understanding of it.

## Future Work

This study has attempted to show how issues of spirituality and spiritual conflict define the nature of Mahler's first two symphonies, and ultimately link them together, while recognising that these issues were fundamental to the composer's personality and hence recurred throughout his oeuvre.

Further elucidation of Mahler's work may be achieved through a more thorough examination of Mahler's readings, throughout his lifetime, and how these may relate to these and his other works. Although some of the literary, philosophical and scientific works that Mahler would have read are well documented, few attempts have been made at linking them with his creative output, and others, less well known, such as the catholic mystics mentioned by both Alma Mahler and Bruno Walter, have not previously been examined at all. For a composer with such a pronounced tendency to receive inspiration from literary, extra-musical sources, such an examination cannot but prove to be enlightening.

Additionally, the original software employed in this study, as one of the means of analysis of the symphonies, would benefit from further technical development and its application on more works would be interesting. Currently, VIMP has only been tested and used on Mahler's First and Second Symphonies. Employing the software on other of Mahler's symphonies would surely offer more elucidating insights into the textural organization of his works, and a point of comparison with their formal, and other, structures. Furthermore, the application of the software on the work of other composers would in turn elucidate, not only their individual compositional techniques, but also through the differences which would be highlighted, shed light through contrast onto Mahler's own creations and personal style.

Appendix I: Colour Representations of First  
Movements of Symphony No. 1 and Symphony  
No. 2

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Fig. 1a. Entire First Movement of Symphony No. 2 (Dynamics)

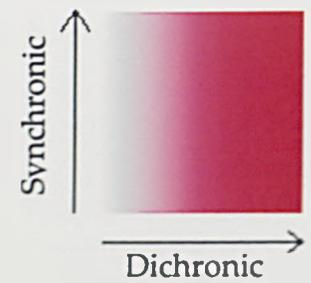


Fig. 1b. Entire First Movement of Symphony No. 2 (Texture)

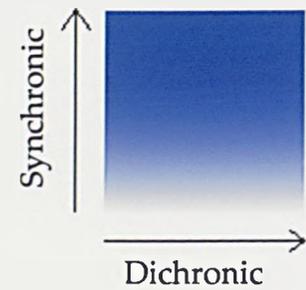
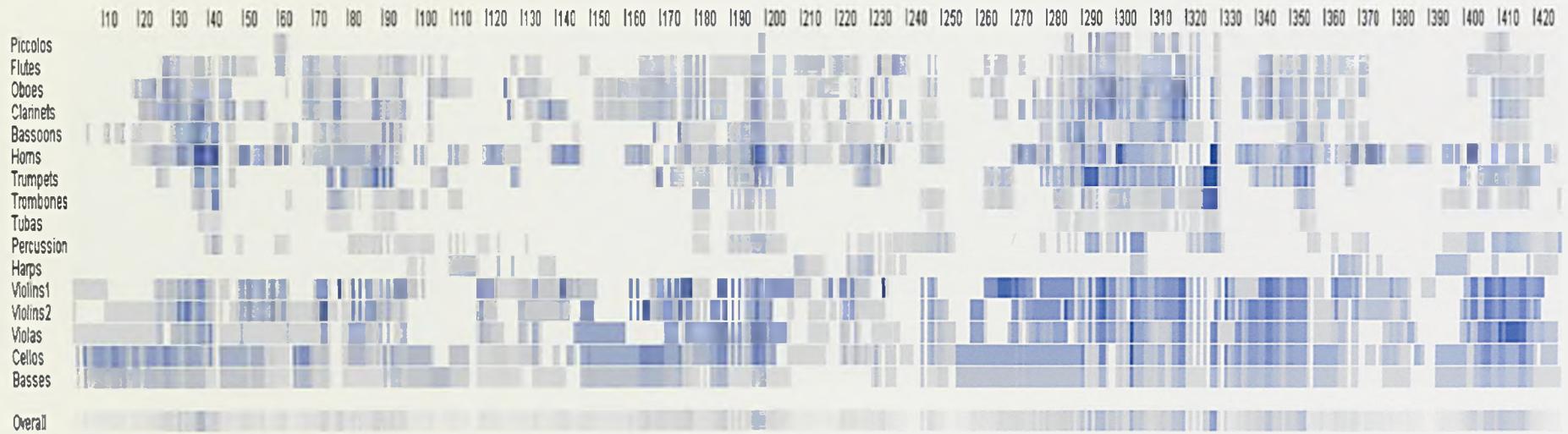


Fig. 1c. Entire First Movement of Symphony No. 2 (Combined)

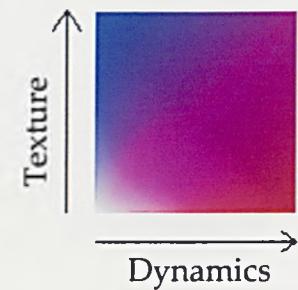


Fig. IIa. Comparison of first 209 bars of first movements of Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 2 (Dynamics)

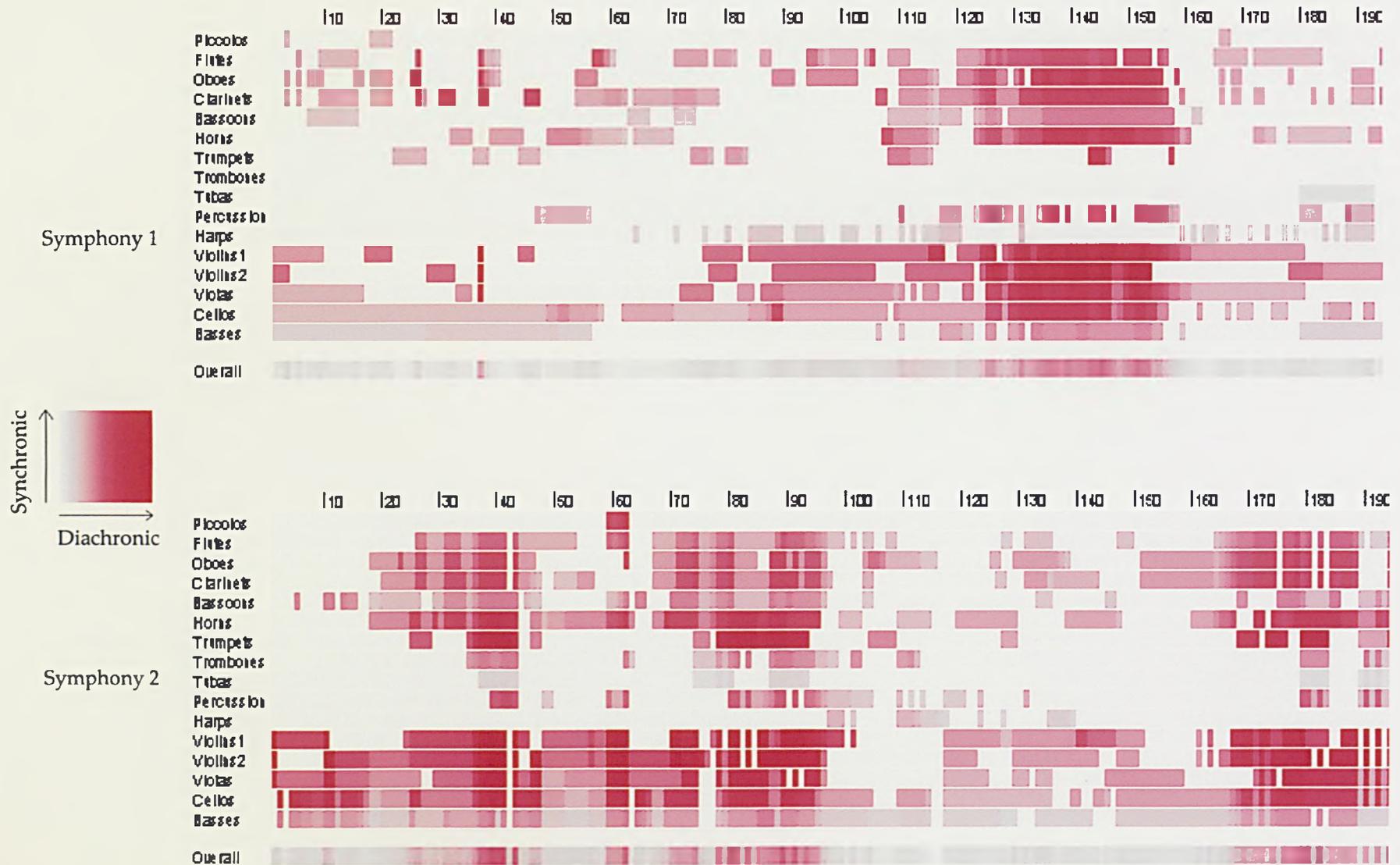


Fig. IIb. Comparison of first 209 bars of first movements of Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 2 (Texture)

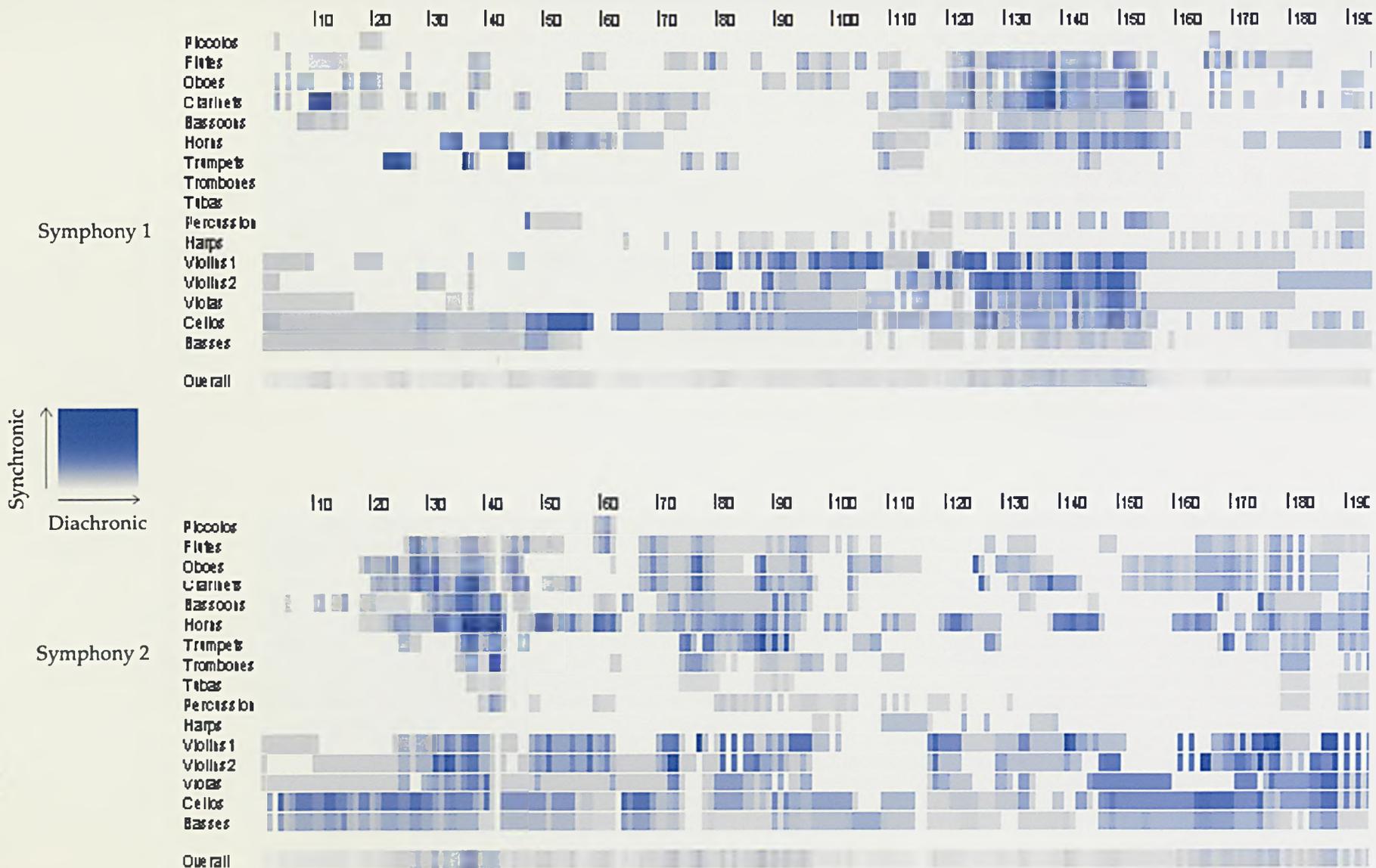
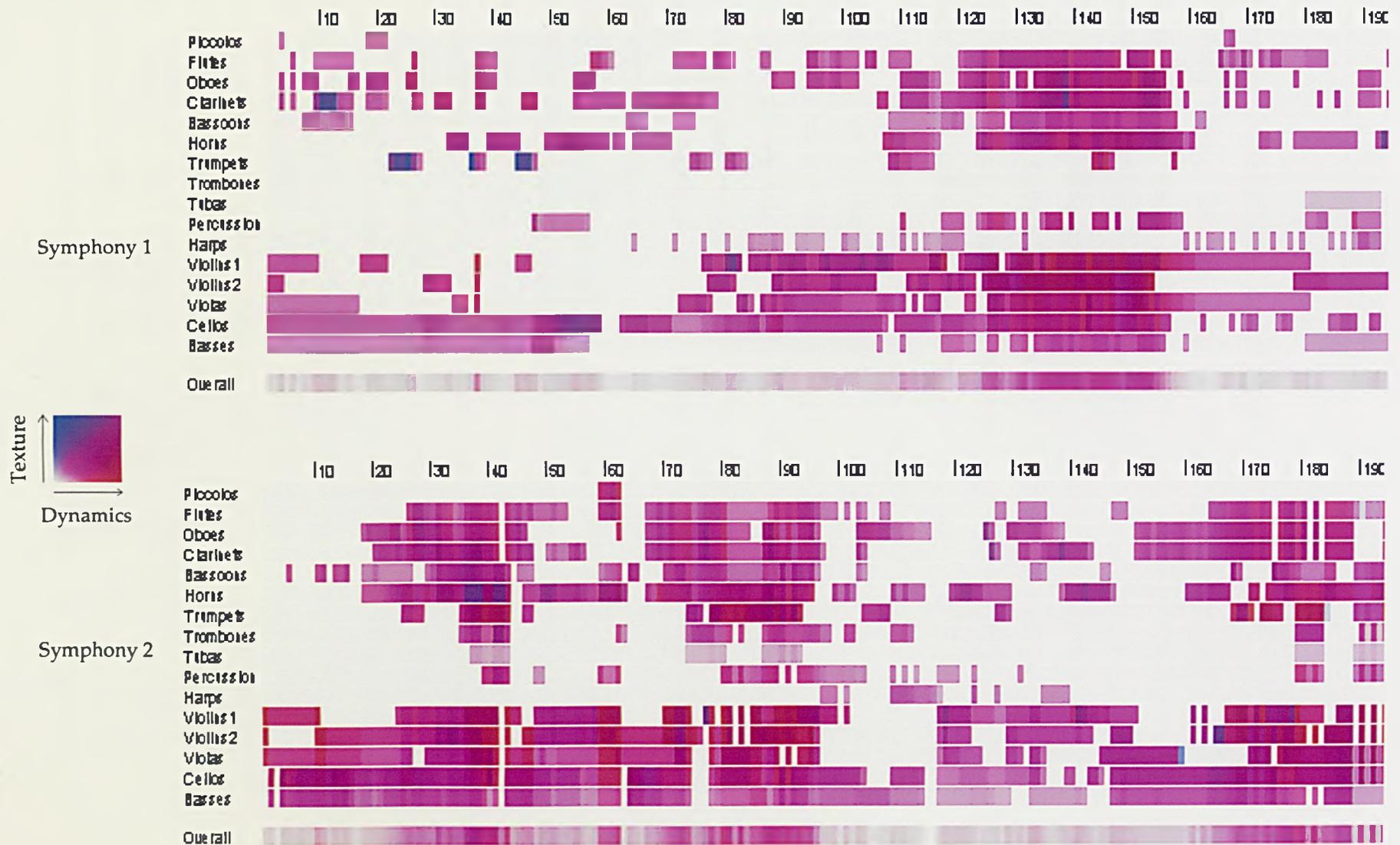


Fig. IIc. Comparison of first 209 bars of first movements of Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 2 (Combined)



## Appendix II: Programmes for Symphony No. 2

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Report by Bauer-Lechner, January 1896

[Quoting Mahler] The first movement depicts the titanic struggles of a mighty being still caught in the toils of this world; grappling with life and with the fate to which he must succumb—and his death. The second and third movements, Andante and Scherzo, are episodes from the life of the fallen hero. The Andante tells of love. The experience behind the Scherzo I can describe only in terms of the following image: if, at a distance, you watch a dance through a window, without being able to hear the music, then the turning and twisting movement of the couples seems senseless, because you are not catching the rhythm that is the key to it all. You must imagine that to one who has lost his identity and his happiness, the world looks like this—distorted and crazy, as if reflected in a concave mirror. The Scherzo ends with the appalling shriek of this tortured soul.

The “Urlicht” represents the soul’s striving and questioning attitude towards God and its own immortality.

While the first three movements are narrative in character, in the last movement everything is inward experience. It begins with the death-shriek of the Scherzo. And now the resolution of the terrible problem of life—redemption. At first, we see it in the form created by faith and the Church—in their struggle to transcend this present life. The earth trembles. Just listen to the drum-roll, and your hair will stand on end! The Last Trump sounds; the graves spring open, and all creation comes writhing out of the bowels of the earth, with wailing and gnashing of teeth. Now they all come marching along in a mighty procession: beggars and rich men, common folk and kings, the Church Militant [die ecclesia militans], the Popes. All give vent to the same terror, the same lamentations and paroxysms; for none is just in the sight of God. Breaking in again and again—as if from another world—the Last Trump sounds from the Beyond. At last, after everyone has shouted and

screamed in indescribable confusion, nothing is heard but the long drawn-out call of the Bird of Death above the last grave –finally that, too, fades away. There now follows nothing of what had been expected: no Last Judgement, no souls saved and none damned; no just man, no evil-doer, no judge! Everything has ceased to be. And softly and simply there begins: “Aufersteh’n, ja aufersteh’n...”<sup>1</sup>

### Letter to Max Marschalk, 26 March 1896

I called the first movement “Todtenfeier”. It may interest you to know that it is the hero of my D major symphony who is being borne to his grave, his life being reflected, as in a clear mirror, from a point of vantage. Here too the question is asked: *What did you live for? Why did you suffer?* Is it all only a vast, terrifying joke?—We *have* to answer these questions somehow if we are to go on living—indeed, even if we are only to go on dying! The person in whose life this call has resounded, even if it was only once, must give an answer. And it is this answer I give in the last movement.

The second and third movements are intended as an interlude, the second being a *memory!* A ray of sunlight, pure and cloudless, out of that hero’s life.

You must surely have had the experience of burying someone dear to you, and then, perhaps, on the way back some long-forgotten hour of shared happiness suddenly rose before your inner eye, sending as it were a sunbeam into your soul—not overcast by any shadow—and you almost forgot what had just taken place. There you have the second movement!—When you then awaken from that melancholy dream and are forced to return to this tangled life of course, it may easily happen that this surge of life ceaselessly in motion, never resting, never comprehensible, suddenly seems *eerie*, like the billowing of dancing figures in a brightly lit ball-room that you gaze into from outside in the dark—and from a *distance* so great that you can *no longer* hear the *music!* Life then becomes meaningless, an eerie phantom state out of which you may start up with a cry of disgust. —There you have the third movement. What follows need not be explained to you!

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, pp. 43-44.

What it comes to, then, is that my Second Symphony grows directly out of the First!<sup>2</sup>

Programme notes by Mahler for a performance in Dresden, 20 December 1901

Symphony in C minor

*1st movement.* We stand by the coffin of a well-loved person. His life, struggles, passions and aspirations once more, for the last time, pass before our mind's eyes.—And now in this moment of gravity and of emotion which convulses our deepest being, when we lay aside like a covering everything that from day to day perplexes us and drags us down, our heart is gripped by a dreadfully serious voice which always passes us by in the deafening bustle of daily life: What now? What is this life—and this death? Do we have an existence beyond it? Is all this only a confused dream, or do life and this death have a meaning?—And we must answer this question if we are to live on.

The next 3 movements are conceived as intermezzi.

*2nd movement.—Andante:* a happy moment from the life of his beloved departed one, and a sad recollection of his youth and lost innocence.

*3rd movement—Scherzo:* the spirit of unbelief, of presumption, has taken possession of him, he beholds the tumult of appearances and together with the child's pure understanding he loses the firm footing that love alone affords; he despairs of himself and of God. The world and life become for him a disorderly apparition; disgust for all being and becoming lays hold of him with an iron grip and drives him to cry out in desperation.

*4th movement Urlicht* (alto solo). The moving voice of naïve faith sounds in his ear.

I am of God, and desire to return to God!

'God will give me a lamp, will light me unto the life of eternal bliss!'

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<sup>2</sup> Mahler, Selected Letters, p. 180.

*5th movement.* We again confront all the dreadful questions and the mood of the end of the 1st movement.—The voice of the caller is heard: the end of all living things is at hand, the last judgement is announced, and the whole horror of that day of days has set in.—The earth trembles, graves burst open, and dead arise and step forth in endless files. The great and the small of this earth, kings and beggars, the just and the ungodly—all are making that pilgrimage; the cry for mercy and grace falls terrifyingly on our ear.—The crying becomes every more dreadful—our senses forsake us and all consciousness fades at the approach of eternal judgement. The ‘*great summons*’ is heard; the trumpets from the Apocalypse call;— in the midst of the awful silence we think we hear in the farthest distance a nightingale, like a last quivering echo of earthly life! Softly there rings out a chorus of the holy and the heavenly:

‘Risen again, yea thou shalt be risen again!’ There appears the glory of God! A wonderful gentle light permeates us to our very heart—all is quiet and blissful!—And behold: there is no judgement.—There is no sinner, no righteous man—no great and no small.—There is no punishment and no reward! An almighty feeling of love illumines us with blessed knowing and being!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler II: The Wunderhorn Years*, pp. 183-4.

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