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POIGNANT QUOTATIONS AND THEMATIC STRUCTURES
IN
GUSTAV MAHLER'S NINTH SYMPHONY

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the undergraduate Honors Program
in the Department of Music of
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Edward D. Stone

GUSTAV MAHLER

A study of Gustav Mahler's Ninth Symphony cannot be begun without introduction. Too many extra musical experiences in Mahler's life need to be explored before a study of the music is undertaken. His life, especially the two years before his death, was like a whirlwind of problematic experiences. It is impossible to say exactly which of these experiences affected the Ninth but it is certain that many of them did. In tracing the line from birth to death one sees the inner turmoil that Mahler brought into this last completed Symphony. Deryck Cooke places Mahler with such men of vision as Wagner, Flaubert, Rodin, and Rilke--men who devoted their whole lives to artistic creation, leaving little time for the affairs of life. Even so, Mahler was human. He took time to help fellow musicians, had a strong sense of humor, but also a deep sense of remorse for unknowingly having starved his wife and family of love. He constantly kept abreast of the sciences and, since his university days, always had near him a book of philosophy. As Cooke writes:

Mahler's inner conflict was the eternal one between innocence and experience, idealism and realism, affirmation and denial. Of a basically life-loving nature, he was confronted from the beginning with the problems of cruelty, pain, and death, and thus with the question of the value and purpose of human life.¹

Gustav Mahler was born on 7 July 1860. His father, Bernhard, was a Jewish innkeeper in the Bohemian village of Kalischt, now Kaliste.² A few months after his birth, in December, the family moved to Jihlava a short distance away.³ The family background in Gustav's childhood was an intensely unhappy one. His father ill-treated his mother, creating what Deryck Cooke calls a father-hatred and a mother-fixation in the young Mahler.⁴ Despite the family's poor economic position his mother, Marie, bore fourteen children, five of whom died in infancy. The Mahler household must therefore have been in a continuous state of tension with Gustav caught in the middle. He was the first child to survive to adulthood. Otto, thirteen years Gustav's junior, committed suicide at the age of twenty-five. Gustav's younger brother, Ernst, died at the age of thirteen with the young Gustav staying beside him throughout the drawn-out illness.⁵

In school Mahler was said to have been absent-minded and unreliable, but to have loved music. His father recognized his talent early, and fostered it in the household. On 10 September 1875, the fifteen-year-old Mahler enrolled at the Conservatory of the Gessellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna.⁶

Conservatory graduates were not trained in conducting but rather were given a strong general foundation in music. Mahler was grounded in pianistic skills, score reading, composition, and improvisation. Thus equipped, he moved

from the Vienna Conservatory to the podium for the summer season of 1880. He conducted operettas with a small provincial group of musicians in Hall, a summer spa in Upper Austria.⁷ His 1881-82 contract was with an opera house in Liabach (now Ljubljana in Yugoslavia). Although the calibre of performers, as in Hall, must have been low in this small vacation town, Kurt Blaukopf writes that the Slovenian music historian Dragotin Cvetko, who had studied the situation at Laibach that season, concluded that under Mahler's direction, the level of operatic performance was well above the provincial: "It approached, and on some occasions equalled, the standards at important musical centres."⁸ Thus Mahler's career as conductor was off to a strong start.

From Laibach Mahler began his ascent; in only six years he earned positions at Olmütz, the Royal Theatre in Kassel, the Stadttheater in Leipzig, the Royal German Provincial Theatre in Prague, and, finally, the Royal Budapest Opera in 1888.⁹ All seemed to be going well for Mahler at this time, but then his luck changed. In February 1889 his father died, while his mother died the following October.¹⁰ The Budapest position also turned sour; Mahler's First Symphony was not well received by the unprepared Hungarians. By March, 1891, however, Mahler became first conductor of one of the most important musical positions in Germany: the Hamburg Opera.¹¹ His stay in Hamburg was

filled with both a great many successes and failures of his own works. After a stay of some six years which saw the premieres of Mahler's First and Second Symphonies under his own baton, Mahler became restless and disillusioned with Hamburg, and began looking again for another position.

On 27 April 1897, Gustav Mahler became a conductor at the Vienna Opera.¹² He was not as free here in his duties as in Hamburg because he stood in the shadow of Wilhelm Jahn, the Principal Conductor of the Opera at the time. Jahn was forced to resign his directorship due to old age and failing eyesight. At the same time Mahler's growing fame enabled his supporters to bypass older conductors in the Opera, including Hans Richter, in favor of appointing Mahler Director. Thus on 8 October 1897 Mahler took over the direction of one of the most illustrious musical institutions in the world.¹³

It is difficult to decipher the events that subsequently pushed Mahler from the post in Vienna that he worked so hard to attain. Shortly after his success in the opera house, Mahler was elected to be Richter's replacement as conductor of the Philharmonic Society, which presented orchestral works to the public. Mahler now had the opportunity to conduct his own symphonic works and to learn the great repertoire of orchestral music that he had until this time been unable to perform. The added public exposure and Mahler's revolutionary interpretations and demands soon

brought him into conflict with the critics and public alike. These conflicts are tied in with Mahler's forceful personality and the social problems facing the Austrian Empire, particularly Vienna, at the time. Mahler, for social reasons, professed Catholicism; but the public soon found a Jewish Opera conductor unacceptable.

Also, towards the end of 1900, Mahler's health began to fail. The huge amounts of energy that he expended producing operas and concerts brought on severe headaches and stomach problems. Never lessening the load he drove himself to finish yet another symphony--now his Fourth.¹⁴ As Cooke writes:

Flashing his piercing eyes through his glasses, and impatiently gnawing his lower lip, the man seems to be driven by a demon. . . . Making enemies right and left by his utter indifference to personal considerations, he nevertheless exerts such a spell over singers, players, and technicians alike that he achieves matchless realizations of the works of the great masters. As a conductor he becomes a legend in his own time.¹⁵

His illness progressed to the point where he required surgery. The lining of the intestinal tube had deteriorated to a degree worse than Mahler's doctors had feared.¹⁶ This situation was aggravated by his relations with the members of the Vienna Philharmonic, who failed to give him a new vote of confidence. Ostensibly because of health, but probably due to this and other political reasons, Mahler resigned as conductor of the Philharmonic Society on 1 April of 1901 after three seasons.¹⁷

That November Mahler met Alma Marie Schindler. A few weeks after their initial meeting Gustav Mahler informed the general management of the opera of their engagement. The wedding took place on 9 February 1902.¹⁸ From then on, Mahler's summers passed quietly as he was free to compose and recuperate. The winter months were filled with operas and all the confrontations they involved.

Kurt Blaukopf states that there are three discernable periods in Mahler's tenure at the Vienna Opera. The first was between 1897 and 1902 as the young director began his struggle for musical integrity. The second was the period of association with the famous stage designer Alfred Roller, which lasted from early 1903 to 1904. The third phase covered the years 1906 and 1907, when the demands of his Eighth Symphony diminished the energy available for his work at the Opera.¹⁹ Intensifying the problems in this last period was the fact that Mahler began conducting many concerts abroad. Mahler the musician was now living fully two lives: summers spent quietly in the Austrian mountains composing symphonic works; winters spent producing operas in Vienna, with spare time used to complete the scores of his latest works. Before he was fifty, Mahler discovered that his heart was failing.²⁰

It now becomes almost impossible to separate Mahler's life into clear routines. He conducted concerts all over the Empire along with short tours abroad. The Eighth

Symphony was complete even though Mahler's fame as conductor dictated that he interrupt his summer vacations with guest appearances. Mahler, always a perfectionist, became disillusioned with the Vienna Opera due to lack of preparation allowed for each performance. In the eighteen months prior to his rapidly approaching resignation, Mahler gave five historic Mozart productions, a stunning Wagner performance, a Gluck revival and, finally, completed the score of his Eighth Symphony. By May 1907 tempting offers from the manager of the Metropolitan Opera were already on Mahler's mind, and by that autumn the word was official--by the Emperor's gracious decision Mahler was released from his contract with the Vienna Opera.²¹ As was expected, no one was sad to see him leave at the time. Bruno Walter, a few years later, described Mahler's term as Director of the Vienna Opera as a ten-year festival, never again to be duplicated.²² The excessive strain of the last months took a heavy toll on Mahler. On 5 July 1907 his oldest daughter, Marie Anna, died of scarlet fever and Mahler, who was very close to the girl, collapsed a few days later with a heart attack. The diagnosis was double-sided congenital valve defect.²³ His doctors prescribed complete rest. After an insufficient convalescence period Mahler went on tour in Germany and Russia as the final details of a contract with the Metropolitan Opera in New York were completed. His goals were now clear as stated in this letter to his friend Arnold Berliner:

My contract has been drawn up by a lawyer; as soon as it's all finished I shall send it to you for inspection. You may rest assured, all has been carefully considered. At worst I risk being uncomfortable for three months of the year, on the other hand I shall make 300,000 Kronen net within the next three years. That is how it stands.²⁴

Mahler saw the American engagement as a means to earn money so that he would have the freedom to compose quietly in the future.

He produced seven operas during the 1907-08 Metropolitan Opera season, giving nineteen performances. However, due to unforeseen personnel changes, he submitted a tentative resignation as director of the opera and went back to Europe. From May onward he was able to devote himself entirely to composing what would be his last works. In late 1908 he returned to New York, where he shared conducting responsibilities of the Metropolitan Opera with Arturo Toscanini. In March 1909 Mahler was retained as Principal Conductor of the new Philharmonic Society of New York.²⁵ As Blaukopf writes, Mahler felt that this appointment was the fulfillment of all his desires. It was the chance to direct a Symphony Orchestra that he had longed for all his life. In Europe he composed, while in America he had the freedom to experiment with a full orchestra.²⁶ He completed the Ninth Symphony in the summer of 1909 and began a Tenth. In the autumn came a third trip to New York. With only one opera to be produced this season, this trip was to be one filled with concentration on the

orchestra. He performed works by Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, and many others.

Given this pace, it is not surprising that Mahler's heart condition, already diagnosed as serious, progressed while his relations with Alma began to deteriorate. From 1907 on Mahler knew that he was suffering from a fatal heart disease. Because of this, he fell into a period of despair. In 1910 he went back to Europe, where he met with Sigmund Freud. Worried about his unstable relations with his wife, Mahler made and cancelled three successive appointments with Freud before the two finally met in Leyden, Holland.²⁷ Though the meeting was brief, Freud later wrote this to a pupil:

I analyzed Mahler for an afternoon in Leiden. If I may believe reports, I achieved much with him at the time. . . . In his interesting expositions through his life history, we discovered his personal conditions for love, especially his Holy Mary complex (mother fixation). I had plenty of opportunity to admire the capability for psychological understanding of this man of genius. No light fell at the time on the symptomatic facade of his obsessional neurosis. It was as if you would dig a single shaft through a mysterious building.²⁸

After his usual summer vacation he returned to America for the 1910-11 season. The progressing illness brought about increasing emotional as well as physical deterioration, and this, coupled with declining relations with the American orchestra, caused a second, fatal collapse. Mahler was brought back to Europe in late April, and died in Vienna

on 18 May 1911, just fifty days short of his fifty-first birthday.²⁹

It was this type of life that surrounded the creation of Mahler's Ninth Symphony. Of the eleven symphonic works (for Das Lied von der Erde may also be called a symphonic work), only the last three were not premiered by Mahler. The Tenth Symphony was left unfinished; so the Ninth is his final testament in the symphonic form, one of the two completed works that he never heard.

POIGNANT QUOTATIONS IN THE NINTH SYMPHONY

As the era of Romanticism reached its zenith so also did the art of orchestration and harmony, along with the psychological problems associated with the real world. The music-dramas of Wagner, for instance, represent this culmination as do Mahler's first four symphonies. These last-named works seem to exist in a boundless world. Mahler then extended this Romanticism. His late works contain realistic tones, tones of human tragedy and frustration mixed with striving human aspiration.³⁰ The music of the Ninth Symphony seems filled with sadness and world weariness, the conflicts of a man searching restlessly for peace and tranquility in life. At the same time there is a pervading sense of resignation from life and all of its problems. It is almost impossible to put into words the methods that Mahler uses to give this mood to a work; but one explainable method is the use of varied musical quotations. The Ninth in general displays a tendency towards reminiscence which, even though it can be found in other Mahler symphonies, seems somehow to be a special property in a last work. Dika Newlin specifically mentions Bruckner's Ninth as another example.³¹ This reminiscence comes out in the form of musical quotations (whether intentional or not), which add a new dimension at that point in the work. The poetry of T. S. Eliot uses this

same technique to achieve similar goals. Zoltan Roman asserts that the Ninth falls into the category of Mahler's works that show either no relationship, or at most very little, to pre-existent vocal music.³² This could well be true of the purely instrumental Ninth, but there are sections in this work that directly refer to vocal and instrumental works of the past.

Alban Berg studied the full score of the first movement in the summer of 1910 and he wrote this summary in a letter to his wife:

Once again I have played through the score of Mahler's Ninth Symphony; the first movement is the most heavenly thing Mahler ever wrote. It is the expression of an exceptional fondness for this earth, the longing to live in peace on it, to enjoy nature to its depths--before death comes.

For he does come irresistibly. The whole movement is permeated by premonitions of death. Again and again it crops up, all the elements of terrestrial dreaming culminate in it . . . most potently, of course, in the colossal passage where this premonition becomes certainty, where, in the midst of the höchste Kraft of almost painful joy in life, Death itself is announced mit höchster Gewalt. . . .³³

The first movement begins with reminiscences of the basic mood presented in Das Lied von Der Erde. Walter says that "Der Abschied" might well serve as a subtitle for the Ninth Symphony since the mood of the first movement is derived from the concluding mood of Das Lied.³⁴ The opening melody in the symphony seems to begin where Das Lied left off. The last motto that the contralto intones is the falling step on "Ewig": ex. 1: Das Lied, 5th mvt., 10 mm. from the end



followed by the musical direction "gänzlich ersterbend" to the remaining instruments. This motto carries over into the Ninth where, six measures into the work, it forms the nucleus of the first theme: ex. 2: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 6-8



In fact, this motto, either in its complete form: ex. 3a,



or in its incomplete form: ex. 3b,

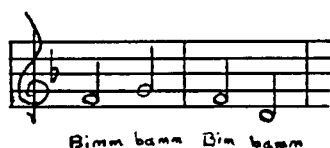


is used repeatedly throughout the symphony to begin or end themes.³⁵ Another similar quotation can be found in the Third Symphony, fourth movement. Mahler begins the setting of Nietzsche's words: "Take Heed, O man! The night is deep, and deeper than the day thinks." Mahler does not set this scene exactly as Nietzsche did in Zarathustra's Second

Dance Song, where each line was punctuated by a note of a bell striking the midnight hour, but instead chooses to set these words to a particularly poignant melody: ex. 4: III Sym., 4th mvt., mm. 20-23



These words, sung to the falling step F# to E, refuse to resolve down to the tonic D.³⁶ One immediately notices that the Ninth begins with exactly this interval in exactly the same key. Even the rustling sounds in the strings are related (Compare III Sym., 4th mvt. mm. 20-23 with IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 6-8). Whether or not these quotations were intentional can never be answered. The "Ewig" quote is most probably intentional since Das Lied was composed in the same summer as the Ninth. In any event, the mood is cast and the falling step motto does cause the listener to "take heed." In the Third Symphony, immediately after the setting of Nietzsche's words in the fourth movement, occurs the song of morning bells, in movement five, along with the "Bimm bamm" of young voices:³⁷ ex. 5a: III Sym., 5th mvt., mm. 1-4



This mood of this same motive can be found, this time in the harp, in the opening of the Ninth's first movement. It is

even more interesting that this same motive is found in the Third Symphony in retrograde form: ex. 5b: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 3-4, Harp



As further proof of Mahler's intention to evoke a specific mood, the quotation from the Third Symphony in this case is a setting of a Wunderhorn text "Es sungen drei Engel" ("Three angels were singing a sweet song"), which adds greatly to the mood of invocation.³⁸

According to Hans Redlich, the most notable signal of Mahler's preoccupation with death is what Redlich considers the obvious allusion to Beethoven's Sonata, op. 81a (Les Adieux). The motto "Le - be wohl": ex. 6: Beethoven op. 81a,



is moved into Mahler's Ninth, quoted in measure 245 ff. of the first movement as:³⁹ ex. 7a: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 245-25

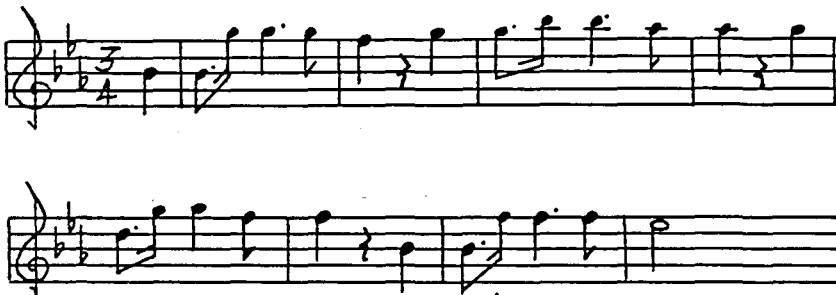
Redlich fails to mention that the "Lebe wohl" motto seems to be an integral part of the entire symphony and not just part of the mood in the first movement. The motto can be found, among other places, in the second movement: ex. 7b: IX Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 101-103



as well as in the third movement: ex. 7c: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 115-158



Mahler's mood is not always serious whenever he quotes. In at least one instance he hints at an escape from the mental anguish presented in the opening bars, but here makes a mockery of dance music with a suggestion of scorn and irony toward worldly pleasures.⁴⁰ This mockery is embodied in a quotation beginning in measure 148 of Johann Strauss' waltz, "Freut euch des Lebens," opus 340: ex. 8: Strauss, no. 5, mm. 4-10



while Mahler sets his quote as:⁴¹ ex. 9: IX Sym., 1st
mvt., mm. 147-159



The counter melody in the first violins at this spot includes another reference to the opening "Ewig" motto.

The third movement of the Ninth also contains its share of reminiscence. The opening bars of the Rondo-Burleske intervallically recall the opening bars of the second movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony:⁴² ex. 10: V. Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 1-3



when in Mahler's Ninth it is translated as: ex. 11: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 1-4



As mentioned above, it is impossible to tell whether such a quote is a conscious act or not; but when such important motivic material is introduced immediately at the beginning of each movement, the likelihood that it was a conscious act is increased. Indeed, this motive repeats itself throughout

the movement, providing the primary impetus that creates the burlesque character. Dika Newlin suggests that in the L'istesso tempo of the third movement of the Ninth:⁴³

ex. 12: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 109-116



there is more than just a passing reference to the "Life" theme of the Third Symphony: ex. 13: III Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 1-5



The point is clarified by Mahler himself in his brief index of the themes in the Minuet of the Third Symphony.⁴⁴ He describes this theme as the: ex. 14: from the sketch book "Main theme unfolding itself in all the time richer variations":



From this viewpoint it seems as if the Ninth Symphony's third movement is yet another development of this theme.

Although this symphony ends in a mood of gentle resignation, the Rondo-Burleske and the closing Adagio are linked together by a profiled turn-motive that was introduced in the third movement but that now rises to prominence in the last. The motive first appears in the third fugato, mm. 320-321, of the Burleske: ex. 15:
IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 320-321

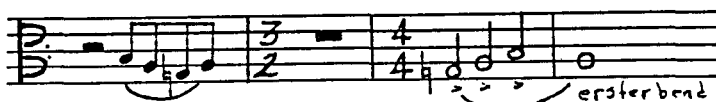


Out of this motive Mahler develops long melodic arches of great expressivity in the D major episode of the third movement (see mm. 392 ff: mit grosser Empfindung). A little later one is not surprised to hear the motive so expressively treated before transformed into a repulsive figure in the middle of the ethereal episode:⁴⁵ ex. 16: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 444-445



By the time the closing Adagio is reached this main theme becomes important. It is repeated expressively in differing rhythms by almost every section of the orchestra in measure after measure of the last movement. Newlin writes that this movement especially tends to give the impression of

looking back into the past.⁴⁶ Specific quotations are hard to pinpoint, though there is a constant sense in the listener's ear that he has heard at least some of this before. Only four measures from the end the turn-motive, which had such robust energy in the preceding movement, returns, in the viola, to close the Adagio in fragmentary, then augmented form: ex. 17: IX Syn., 4th mvt., mm. 180-185



In at least one author's opinion, it is not the composer's intention for the listener to recognize every recurring theme. As remarked above, the introduction of motives with a discernible rhythm or tune produces a feeling of continuity in the listener's mind.⁴⁷ By recalling obvious motives of past works the composer must have wanted, at least subconsciously, to emphasize that fleeting moment that is music and give it a stronger, more poignant meaning.

THEMATIC STRUCTURES IN THE NINTH SYMPHONY

In the Ninth Symphony constant variation of themes, penetration of one theme by another, and a unique treatment of cyclic form mark Mahler's constant striving for originality in the symphonic genre.⁴⁸ Egon Wellesz feels that the Ninth breaks ground on a new stylistic period for Mahler, characterized by a broken treatment of the melodic line that was carried on in the Tenth.⁴⁹ Cooke, an expert on the Tenth, has remarked similar qualities in that symphony; so the two men are probably referring to the same trait: the fragmented melodic line. Whatever the case may be, it is certain that for Gustav Mahler the symphonic form was a means of expressing, in tones, his relationship to the surrounding world.

Jack Diether refers to the first movement as "a singular amalgam of the sonata and rondo forms."⁵⁰ This movement clearly contains an exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda; but it also has a long and involved development section that alternates episodes in subsidiary tonalities with rondo-like returns to the key and subject matter of the exposition.

The exposition, too, hints at rondo form. Its two main sections are repeated (with alterations) in lieu of the classical repeat sign. The first subject is in D major:

ex. 18a: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 6-12



while the second subject moves to D minor: ex. 18b: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 29-31



as is common in the presentation of themes in a classical rondo. In place of the classical repeat sign to signal the end of the exposition a motive is inserted, first in the trumpets: ex. 19: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 44-46



At measure 47 D major returns in the written-out repeat of the exposition. This repeat is a varied form of the earlier section with the themes spread out and filled in, making them much longer and broader than before. The exposition comes to a climactic close in B-flat major at bar 107.

The development section is fully twice as long as the exposition, so one must assume that Mahler has chosen to introduce new material. This section, like the entire symphony, is clearly divisible into smaller sections, each with its own tonal center. Inserted between these sections are quick glimpses of the earlier, peaceful motives (mm. 8-12) from the exposition.⁵¹ After the climax of the exposition (mm. 100 ff.) the music seems to grope for some kind of form. This sense of searching in the dark will return throughout the rest of the work. The first major episode begins in G minor at measure 174, where Mahler has marked Allegro risoluto. This section develops the triplet theme: ex. 20: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 42-44



first found in the exposition, mm. 42, in the horn. In this symphony this is to be Mahler's "Fate" motive. This section is far removed from the pervading mood of quiet reminiscence found in the opening of the exposition, in that here the air is filled with the terrible realization of death that Alban Berg spoke of in his letter. This section does not fall below the fortissimo level until it begins its descent into the next section.

Section two begins in measure 210 (Leidenschaftlich) in B-flat minor. This the second subject (see ex. 18b) leads off, altered to the fortissimo level. In this section, though, Mahler lets the storm pass as sweeter memories come to mind and the themes run at a quieter pace. In this section, too, there is a brief return to the material found in the exposition (mm. 254-275), again suggesting the tradition of rondo form with its constantly returning "A" theme, reminding us here of times past. This, however, is a false recapitulation, and the mood swings again to the third and final section of the development.

This section, beginning in measure 285, interrupts the peaceful mood prevailing at the end of the previous section with a jolting shift to B major on another heavy fortissimo chord. This time death is announced with utter certainty as Mahler, within this last section, brings the full force of the orchestra down upon all remaining hope: "mit höchster Gewalt" (with the greatest force). After this spiritual holocaust all themes disintegrate into fragments, searching for cohesion. Constantin Floros, in his book on Mahler, suggests that the passage towards the end of the development seems reminiscent of a Requiem (see mm. 317-330). Mahler's performance instructions Gehalten (sustained) and, a little later, wie ein schwerer Kondukt (like a heavy funeral procession) are representative of parallel passages in other works.⁵² The knowledge of imminent death during

the three years previous to the completion of this work seems to have made a lasting impression on Mahler's works. Finally the Fate-motive (see ex. 20) is sounded, again by the horns (N.B.: important material is very often announced by the horns in this work), and the mood reforms as the recapitulation approaches in measure 347 at Wie von Anfang.

The beginning of the recapitulation is as disoriented as was the beginning of the development after the devastating climax of the recapitulation. As in other sections, two well-defined islands of tonality occur in the recapitulation. Mahler telescopes the first section of the exposition into a single statement of the main theme and its subsidiary theme with the second half of the theme intensified by chromatic alterations. The tension of this reprise moves forward at the fortissimo level, most unlike the exposition, as it dovetails with the second section of the recapitulation at measure 372 where the second theme returns, in its turn telescoped and varied. After only five measures of this second theme, the melody is interrupted, m. 376, by a chamber-orchestra-like cadenza. The suspension of the reprise is certainly curious to the listener as some poignant thought seems to have been inserted at that moment. Scored in counterpoint for flute, oboes, clarinet, horn, and low strings, this cadenza is a finely-etched example of Mahler's forward-looking techniques of orchestration, anticipating the styles of Schoenberg and Berg. But after fifteen measures

it evaporates as the second section of the recapitulation returns full force for another eleven measures. At this point, m. 398, as in the exposition (see mm. 43-44), the Fate-motive is restated by the horns to signify the movement's close. The Coda begins in measure 408. In this closing section Mahler, without quoting any specific theme save the "Ewig" motive, seems to hint at all of the pathos that has been felt in the preceding 400 measures as all sound literally dies away.

Mahler reversed normal perspectives of form in this symphony by choosing to place two faster movements between two slower ones. As mentioned earlier, the "Ewig" motto permeates the whole work and is used to begin or end other motives. The second movement opens, as did the first, with the falling motto, this time used mockingly against the thought of worldly pleasures: ex. 21a: IX Syn., 2nd mvt., mm. 2-4



This movement is one of Mahler's Ländler (an Austrian folk dance). The Ländler (Tempo I) contrasts with a Waltz (Tempo II), the Ländler containing a Trio (Tempo III) of its own. The tempo markings are especially important to

the structure of this second movement. Floros points out that Tempo I, according to the printed score, is in the "tempo of a comfortable Ländler" and "somewhat ponderous and very coarse." Tempo II is a Poco piu mosso subito while Tempo III is designated a Ländler but "very slow." However, in the sketch of the Ninth Mahler had slightly different explanations of these dances. In the sketch, Tempo II is termed a waltz, while Tempo III is a minuet. This shows that Mahler intended to have three different dances abut against each other, suggesting that the tempo of the minuet be slower than that of the Ländler while the Ländler was to be slower than the Waltz.⁵³ It is also important to note that a vein of continuity runs through this movement: each of these three dances begins with a reflection of the "Ewig" motto as well as a reflection of the opening Ländler motive. The waltz starts: ex. 21b: IX Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 89-91



where as the Trio begins as: ex. 21c: IX Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 222-225



The structure of this movement is very orderly. The Ländler, and the Trio are set in a classical relationship to each other, the Ländler in C major and the Trio section (minuet) in the normal subdominant key of F major. But before the minuet can enter the waltz interrupts, without modulation, in the clashing key of E major (m. 90). This waltz continues for over seventy-five measures, modulating freely, until the Ländler breaks through to finish its statement (m. 170). Following this interruption, the minuet enters, uninhibited by the waltz, in measure 218, in the subdominant key--F major. It lasts only twelve measures, though, as the Ländler takes over a tempo piu mosso subito. As in the beginning, the waltz again interrupts the progress of the Ländler, this time in the key of D major. This key choice could not have been by accident since, at this point, there is a clear reflection of the opening Adagio. A shadow of the "Ewig" motto can still be seen at the outset of the section: ex. 22: IX Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 260-264



The melodic line begins, as does the "Ewig" motto, on F-sharp, then works its way down the whole-tone scale to the F-sharp below (written enharmonically as G-flat). The whole melodic sentence is quoted here to show, as Jack Diether notes, the first appearance of an important motive--the turn-motive (marked "a").⁵⁴ This turn, which grows out of this passage, will return later to form large motivic ideas in the next two movements. In this way all of the movements are related by one common element--the falling step. After eighty-two measures of this waltz the Trio reappears, this time without introduction by the Ländler, as if by its own accord. For the last time in this movement the key switches to F major for some thirty bars. Measure 369 introduces the Ländler "wie zu Anfang" and the reprise begins. After thirty-six bars the Ländler gives way to the seemingly stronger, cosmopolitan waltz (m. 405). From this point on the waltz holds control of the reprise until the trumpet, with the "Ewig" motto, calls lamentingly for a return to the Ländler: ex. 23: IX Sym., 2nd mvt., mm. 515-517



The reprise now leads into a hollow coda (m. 598) which presents mere wisps of themes until the last cadence of plucked strings, piccolo, and contrabassoon, spanning five octaves.

Jack Diether writes that "to follow such a rich and complex double-Scherzo with the contrapuntal tour de force of the demonic Rondo-Burleske is probably the boldest stroke in the whole series of startling juxtapositions which Mahler created."⁵⁵ After six bars of introduction the principal rondo theme begins: ex. 24: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 6-10



The contrasting B-theme begins in measure sixty-four: ex. 25: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 63-68

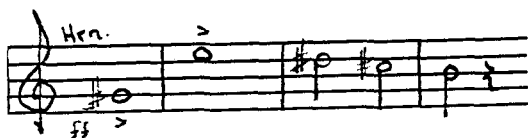


and after the C-theme in F major pushes through, now in 2/4 time, ever breaking up the mood of the first movement. The whole scene is turned into a sort of mad romp: ex. 26: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 108-111



The most impressive part of this long, complex movement is Mahler's ability to build tension and destroy the mood of

the opening just as the last movement had done. When the 2/4 section (C-theme) returns later in A major (see m. 262), it incorporates what is considered by Diether as an Evocation of the "Pan" theme from the Third Symphony. Soon afterwards the main rondo theme is brought back this time against a low chromatic figure in the horns: ex. 27: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 311-314



Six measures later this chromatic motive begins its repetition, first in the low woodwinds, while the principal rondo theme (example 24) is transformed into the turn-motive mentioned earlier: ex. 28: IX Sym., 3rd mvt., mm. 321-321



The chromatic figure (example 27) now becomes ever more insistent in the brass as the violins climb to a new height of shrillness which suddenly evaporates into a high tremolo and flutter-tongue on the dominant of D major (see mm. 337-395). With this point reached, Mahler has brought us to the climax of the symphony. This D major section, beginning

in measure 347, is like a foreign body within the confines of the Burleske, finding Heaven at last after having climbed through Hell. The dynamics, timbre, and harmony all impose on the section what one author describes as the character of the ethereal, the dreamlike, the unreal.⁵⁶ Diether says that this is another way of groping one's way into the finale, of searching in the darkness for the right material.⁵⁷ This search continues, discovering the turn-motive that has been suggested for so long. This motive is altered over and over again, bandied about from instrument to instrument until the clarinet decides that the search is over and states a call-to-arms theme (m. 472 f). The music remains episodic until after cue 40 in the score where all of the rondo themes begin to assemble in the distance. After a twenty-two measure retransition these themes are ushered in by muted horns in the original key and tempo (see m. 518), and after a shortened reprise the themes rush into an unrestrained stretto-coda (measure 617) where Mahler releases all of his harmonic and contrapuntal mastery in a wild drive to the finish.

The Rondo-Burleske and the final Adagio are linked together by the turn-motive first found in the second movement (ex. 15). The motive first came to prominence in the third fugato of the Rondo-Burleske (mm. 320-321). Out of this motive, as already mentioned, Mahler constructed the longreaching melodic arches of expression in the odd

D major section of the third movement (see mm. 394 ff: mit grosser Empfindung). By now it seems logical to hear this motive invoke the mood of the final Adagio.

So much has already been said elsewhere about the use of progressive tonality in Mahler symphonies, that the symphonies that use it are no more important than the ones that do not. In this paper let it only be said that Mahler, in designing the colossal Ninth, saw fit to begin in a key with two sharps and end in a key with five flats. Let us set out from here.

The Ninth Symphony depicts a retirement from life; so it slowly sinks from a strong but hesitant D major down to D-flat major. Thus the whole Adagio must effect this slip into the depths; for the previous movement, Rondo-Burleske, ended in A minor. The mood in the Adagio has little relationship to the earlier movements. It is filled with the utmost sadness of leave-taking, but at the same time with a deep love of life and a feeling for life.

The violins open with a two-bar unison flourish on the G-string: ex. 29: IX Sym., 4th mvt., mm. 1-2



From the outset there is a chromatic presentation of the turn-motive from the second and third movements, but no sooner

does it rise to motion than it settles back again into the rest of the string section. The main theme of this movement is then presented by the strings: ex. 30: IX Sym., 4th mvt., mm. 3-4



with its contrasting second theme following close behind: ex. 31: IX Sym., 4th mvt., mm. 13-14



The melody climbs continually higher with increasing intensity until the point in the exposition where there is a complete change in the musical texture: ex. 32: IX Sym., 4th mvt., mm. 28-30

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Empfindung

The key of C-sharp minor interrupts the progress of the melody, ushered in by three sets of instruments separated by a void of nearly five octaves strikingly scored for violins on top and cellos on the bottom doubled an octave lower by contrabassoon. This C-sharp minor section represents the second theme in a sonata form.

In the development (beginning in M. 49), the themes and key areas are explored in more detail. The two clauses of the main section (D-flat major) are worked into a more continuous fabric in the development. Throughout, the C-sharp minor section seems never to bend, keeping its chamber-orchestra-like setting even in the development (see measures 88-118). Diether feels that this instrumentation is reminiscent of "Der Abschied" especially in measures 88-89 where the minor third ostinato figure is a true reflection of the earlier work.⁵⁸ All of the themes come together over a drum-roll crescendo (mm. 117-120) as the trumpets announce fate's presence and the trombones enunciate the formerly passionate turn-motive in blaring scorn. Before it is all over, the violins present the funeral tread of the first movement: ex. 33a: IX Sym., 1st mvt., mm. 108-110



with their slashing down-bows now as: ex. 33b: IX Sym.,
4th mvt., mm. 122-125



This is the final climax of the movement and the work as the development yields to the recapitulation.

In the recapitulation (from m. 125), the intensity tapers down from here. All of the themes are stripped of their terror and are now swallowed in the whole. Nothing is left but longing and despair. Each is given its last word (see measures 130-133 and measures 134-137) as the recapitulation closes with a cadenza for high violins, after which they descend in a brief echo of the flute cadenza of the first movement.

Following a general pause, the twenty-seven-bar coda for pianissimo strings, Adagissimo, concludes the symphony. All strings are muted except for the first violins who remain in the upper positions. The unmuted second violins enter in the fourth bar of the Coda with the music to which the words "Der Tag ist schön auf jenen Hoh'n" ("The day is bright on yonder heights") are sung in Mahler's Kinder-totenlieder, quoting poignantly as they descend and come to rest on the dominant A-flat. The turns of the viola, ever slowing, finally die away.

We see in the last works of Gustav Mahler a rejection of Catholicism in favor of the pantheism expressed in Das Lied von der Erde. There is no longer a striving to reconcile eternity by a striving to reconcile life. The spiritual affirmation found in the Eighth Symphony has crumbled under the weight of imminent death. Not only is the philosophy of Das Lied von der Erde a pagan philosophy but after the Eighth Symphony the only explicit mention of God connected with Mahler's music is that which is written in the margin of the Tenth: "Oh God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁵⁹ This symphony which began with the distant sounds of death and dealt so heavily with this earthly life ends as truly reconciled to both as it seems possible for a man of Mahler's tremendous intellect to become.

NOTES

¹Deryck Cooke, Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to His Music (London: Faber Music, Ltd., 1980), pp. 9-10.

²Cooke, p. 7.

³Donald Mitchell, Gustav Mahler: The Early Years (London: C. Tinling and Company, Ltd., 1958), p. 1.

⁴Cooke, p. 7.

⁵Kurt Blaukopf, Gustav Mahler, Translated by Inge Goodwin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), p. 19.

⁶Blaukopf, p. 28.

⁷Henry-Louis De la Grange, Mahler I (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973), p. 76.

⁸Cvetko, quoted in Blaukopf, p. 50.

⁹De la Grange, pp. 117-185.

¹⁰Blaukopf, p. 87.

¹¹De la Grange, p. 228.

¹²De la Grange, p. 422.

¹³De la Grange, pp. 417-445.

¹⁴Blaukopf, p. 158.

¹⁵Cooke, p. 8.

¹⁶De la Grange, p. 615.

¹⁷De la Grange, p. 620 (with the resignation letter quoted).

¹⁸Blaukopf, p. 167.

¹⁹Blaukopf, p. 145.

²⁰Cooke, p. 8.

²¹Blaukopf, p. 214.

²²Bruno Walter, Gustav Mahler, Translated by Lotte Walter Lindt (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957), p. 38.

²³Blaukopf, p. 217.

²⁴Blaukopf, p. 216.

²⁵Blaukopf, pp. 225-226.

²⁶Blaukopf, p. 226.

²⁷William J. McGrath, Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 247.

²⁸The Haunting Melody. Theodor Reik, p. 343, quoted in Kurt Blaukopf, pp. 11-12.

²⁹Philip Barford, Mahler Symphonies and Songs (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970), p. 53.

³⁰Barford, p. 8.

³¹Dika Newlin, Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), p. 200.

³²Zoltan Roman, "Mahler's Songs and Their Influence on His Symphonic Thought" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1970), p. 427.

³³Hans F. Redlich, Bruckner and Mahler (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, Inc., 1953), pp. 220-221.

³⁴Walter, p. 142.

³⁵Jack Diether, "The Expressive Content of Mahler's Ninth," Chord and Discord ii (October 1963): 74-76.

³⁶Barford, pp. 30-31.

³⁷Barford, p. 31.

³⁸Cooke, p. 65.

³⁹Redlich, pp. 219-220.

⁴⁰David Ewen, The Complete Book of 20th Century Music (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 225.

⁴¹Barford, pp. 31-32.

⁴²Newlin, p. 200.

⁴³Newlin, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁴Donald Mitchell, Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), pp. 318-319.

⁴⁵Constantin Floros, Gustav Mahler II, (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 83-84. (Partially translated by James Erb.)

⁴⁶Newlin, p. 201.

⁴⁷Egon Wellesz, "The Symphonies of Gustav Mahler," Music Review i (1940): 11.

⁴⁸Cooke, p. 115.

⁴⁹Wellesz, p. 6.

⁵⁰Diether, p. 78.

⁵¹Diether, p. 79.

⁵²Floros, pp. 144.

⁵³Floros, pp. 168-169.

⁵⁴Diether, pp. 83-84

⁵⁵Diether, p. 89.

⁵⁶Floros, p. 156.

⁵⁷Diether, p. 95.

⁵⁸Diether, p. 102.

⁵⁹Diether, p. 107.

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