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MAHLER, GOETHE AND THE STRIVING FOR THE INDESCRIBABLE IN THE CLOSING SCENE OF FAUST

By

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ABSTRACT

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By

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This thesis aims to provide concise information pertaining to the influence of Goethe upon Mahler, and, in particular, discusses the text of Faust as it relates to the structure and tonal progressions in the second part of Mahler's Symphony No. 8. Beginning with an overview of the many Faust legends, the importance that both Goethe and his Faust II had on the nineteenth century is summarized, and related to the concept of the sublime, as is Mahler's unusually strong inspiration for the Symphony No. 8. Critiques of Goethe's Faust II are compared to similar criticisms regarding Mahler's symphony. The form of the second movement is shown to be generated by the text and the tonal relationships of Symphony No. 8 are compared with those symphonies immediately preceeding it, citing differing scholarly critiques on the subject.

Mahler, Goethe and the Striving for the Indescribable in the Closing Scene of Faust

The Faust legend as told by Germany's greatest poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832), has been the source of inspiration for numerous musical compositions from a variety of composers ranging from Schumann to Wagner and Liszt. A long admirer of Goethe's works, Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911) had also thought of setting the final scene from Act V of the second part of Faust to music for quite some time, but lacked the drive to do so until he suddenly came under the influence of a "blitzartige Vision" [lightning-like vision] and composed the entirety of what is now known as his Eighth Symphony in the short space of ten weeks.[1] This inspiration was the catalyst for the composition of this work. Although this inspiration led Mahler to write a work as massive and complex as Symphony No. 8, it will be the aim of this paper to demonstrate how aspects of the Faust text provide ample explanation of the musical devices and forms that Mahler employed in his "Symphony of a Thousand". Concerned as Mahler's own music was with struggle and

[1] Constatin Floros, Gustav Mahler Band III, Die Symphonien (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1985.) p.211 [All translations, unless otherwise specifying, are my own].

redemption, the Faust legend had for him special meanings which he strove to express in his symphonic composition.

Gustav Mahler, inheriting the German Romantic tradition of Wagner and Brahms, sounded its last great utterance in the heightened levels of expression and the formal innovations of his nine symphonies. Hovering between the downfall of tonality and the rise of atonality with the Second Viennese School, Mahler's music is painfully nostalgic, ever harkening to a time of innocence now far away. His tastes in literature were also strongly oriented to past traditions. He never established much of an affinity to modern literature[2], but read Goethe and other major literary figures of the past avidly, often bringing these literary influences with him in his musical compositions. These influences can be felt not only in those works that actually have words to be sung, but in other compositions in more subtle ways, such as his First Symphony subtitled after the novel The Titan by Jean Paul (1763 - 1825).

His long-standing love for the works of Goethe has been recorded by many sources who knew Mahler personally. Bruno Walter wrote: "It was Goethe, though, that stood as the sun in the heavens of his [Mahler's] spiritual world, whom he knew in an unusually comprehensive way and whom he quoted from memory out of sheer love."[3] Mahler's letters are

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2 Herta Blaukopf, "Metaphysik und Physik bei Mahler", in A Mass for the Masses: Proceedings of the Mahler VIII Symposium, Amsterdam, 1988 (Rijswijk: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1992).

3 Constatin Floros, Gustav Mahler I: Die geistige Welt Mahlers in systematischer Darstellung, (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1977.) p. 46. "Als Sonne aber stand am Himmel seiner geistigen Welt Goethe, den er in selten umfassender Weise kannte und aus unbegrenzter Gedächtniskraft zu zitieren liebte."

riddled with references and quotes from Goethe's numerous writings, and he loved nothing more than to engage in discussions about his favorite author. Faust in particular held tremendous attention for him, and there exist many letters, mostly to his wife, where he discusses at length the closing scene and the last lines of Goethe's play.[4] It has even been said that he carried copies of Faust and Johann Eckermann's Gespräche mit Goethe in his pockets, and owned a large collection of Goethe's works that he was saving for his old age.[5] From his earliest days as a student to the last months of his life, one can find traces of Goethe in Mahler, and can use this knowledge to elucidate the manner in which Mahler would compose music in general, and the Eighth Symphony in particular. However, the composition of Symphony No. 8 also took place amid a background of tremendous changes taking place during the time in which Mahler lived.

In the Nineteenth century, Vienna had blossomed into one of Europe's foremost cities, rivalled only by London and Paris. It was a time not unlike modern times in that science and technology were advancing at such a rate that a single individual could not keep abreast of the wealth of newly discovered knowledge. Among the list of new inventions that were forever changing the face of the world were the x-ray machine, gas lamp, automobile, electric street car, electronic counting machine and motion pictures. Recent breakthroughs in communications technology brought in even more contact from the "outside" world, and transportation made

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[4] Floros, p. 51.

[5] Floros, p. 48.

speedy travel practically a necessity. In addition, new perspectives and intellectual movements were poised on the verge of disintegrating traditional values and religious views in favor of a more cooly analytical approach to human beings and human consciousness.[6] The rise and acceptance of such diverse philosophies as Marxism, Social Darwinism, a proto-Nazism as well as psychoanalysis were all comtemporary theories with Mahler; along with many artists of his time, Mahler felt that art was one of the last vestiges of expression left open to the modern individual where a protest was yet capable of being heard above the roar of the new century. The optimism expressed in art during the bygone Romantic century was no longer felt; in its place, an ever growing skepticism and escapism were taking hold. To the turn-of-the-century Vienna, Goethe's concept world in Faust seemed as far removed from daily consciousness as the childlike innocence depicted in poems from Des Knaben Wunderhorn that held such a strong fascination for Mahler. Mahler's music, nostalgic and yearning for bygone simplicity as it did, drew him to Goethe's masterpiece, whose expression of the certainty in human striving for transcendence was now a memory long since buried amid the tumult of a technological, informational, spiritual and artistic revolution.

This striving for transcendence is inherent in Mahler and his music as well, and this could be termed the concept of the sublime, a term coined

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6 Manfred Wagner, "Wien nach 1900 - oder: Ein Zentrum entwickelt seine Gegensätze" in A Mass for the Masses: Proceedings of the Mahler VIII Symposium, Amsterdam, 1988 (Rijswijk: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1992.).

by an ancient Greek rhetorician Longinus.[7] M. H. Abrams, in his book The Mirror and the Lamp, primarily discusses aesthetic principles of nineteenth-century literature, principles that can be applied to all arts, including music. During the nineteenth century, a radical change took place in the perception of both art and art criticism. Basically, classical criticism viewed art as a mirror of life, with a function to instill placidity and to reflect thoughts towards an ideal image. This view changed and instead criticism viewed art romantically as a product of a powerful artistic inspiration that projected the thoughts of the artist like a lamp into the surrounding darkness. Abrams cites the summary of J. G. Sulzer, one of the first to expound this new view in an encyclopedia of aesthetics published between 1771 and 1774. "The poet is . . . put into a passion . . . he cannot resist . . . he is transported . . . . He speaks, even if no one listens to him, because his feelings do not let him be silent."[8] Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900), writing almost one hundred years later in his autobiography Ecce homo[9], would say "Has anyone at the end of the nineteenth century a distinct conception of what poets . . . called inspiration? . . . I will describe it. . . . [O]ne would hardly be able to set aside the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely medium of overwhelming forces. The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes

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7 M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953.) p. 72-73.

8 Abrams, p. 89.

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce homo, (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1977.).

visible, audible, something shakes and overturns one to the depths, simply describes the fact. One hears, one does not seek; one takes, one does not ask who gives; a thought flashes up like lightning, with necessity, unfalteringly formed -- I have never had any choice."[10]

Although the German Romantic Beethoven might be considered the first to compose under these "sublime" inspirations, Mahler, very much a part of everything romantic, often told of sudden flashes of inspiration that generated passages of his works. He wrote in a letter to his wife about his struggling work on his Seventh Symphony, when he boarded a ferry to take him across the lake by their summer cottage. "At the first stroke of the rudder, the theme, (or, rather, the rhythm and spirit) of the introduction to the first movement struck me -- four weeks later, and the first, third and fifth movements were completely finished!"[11] His own comments on the composition of the Eighth Symphony, though, are unusually strong in their descriptions of the power under which the work was conceived. "I have perhaps never worked under such a drive, it was a lightning-like vision -- the entirety suddenly appeared before my eyes and I

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10 Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce homo, R. J. Hollingdale trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1988.) pp.102-103. "Hat jemand, Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, einen deutlichen Begriff davon, was . . . Inspiration [ist]? . . . Ich [will]'s beschreiben. . . . [man Würde] in der Tat, die Vorstellung, bloß Inkarnation, bloß Mundstück, bloß Medium übermächtiger Gewalten zu sein, kaum abzuweisen wissen. Der Begriff Offenbarung, in dem Sinn, daß plötzlich, mit unsäglicher Sicherheit und Feinheit, etwas sichtbar, hörbar wird, etwas, das einen in Tiefsten erschüttert und umwirft, beschreibt einfach dei Tatbestand. Man hört, man sucht nicht; man nimmt, man fragt night, wer da gibt; wie ein Blitz leuchtet ein Gedanke auf, mit Notwendigkeit, in der Form ohne Zögern -- ich habe nie eine Wahl gehabt." Text from Insel Verlag edition, (see Note 6).

11 Floros, p. 184. "Beim ersten Ruderschlag fiel mir das Thema (oder mehr der Rhythmus und die Art) der Einleitung zum 1. Satze ein - - und in 4 Wochen war 1., 3. und 5. Satz fix und fertig!"

merely needed to write it down, just as if it were being dictated to me."[12] This kind of passion and expression in art is not only limited to Mahler and Romantic music. Artistic movements such as that of the Secessionists, led by Gustav Klimt, were attempting to supplant the dying mysticism of their time with their own artistic inspirations, "to provide in art a surrogate religion offering refuge from modern life."[13] Mahler too was a part of these upheavals and artistic trends; indeed, he even referred to his Eighth Symphony as his "Mass".[14]

Goethe may seem far removed from such times, but, in actuality, he was alive during the very time that this dramatic alteration in artistic views was coming about. He even helped to change the perspective. Peter Salm, writing about Goethe's artistic views, wrote "[p]oetry was for [Goethe] not a selection of impressions from nature, nor was it a mirror to nature. Rather than imitate, art should compete with nature's processes, and great art, though illuminated by nature, should transcend it."[15] Thus Goethe, in his poem The Metamorphosis of Plants, written in 1798, years before Faust I was begun, writes of an unspeakable mystery that lies within the plant, ineffable in its very nature, and in doing so, offers a stunning parallel with

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12 Floros, p. 211. "Ich habe auch vielleicht noch nie unter einem solchen Zwange gearbeitet; es war eine blitzartige Vision -- so ist das Ganze sofort vor meinen Augen gestanden und ich habe es nur aufzuschreiben gebraucht, so, als ob es mir diktiert worden wäre."

13 Carl Schorske, Fin - de - Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.) p. 254.

14 Constantin Floros, "Die 'Symphonie der Tausend' als Botshcaft an die Menschheit" in A 'Mass' for the Masses: Proceedings of the Mahler VIII Symposium, Amsterdam, 1988, Jos van Leeuwen, Hrsg. p. 121.

15 Peter Salm, The Poem as Plant: A Biological View of Goethe's Faust, (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971.) p. 3-4.

the closing stanza of Faust II with its own evocation of the indescribable sublime. "Overwhelming, beloved, you find all this mixture of thousands, . . . many names you take in, and always the last to be spoken drives out the one you heard before, barbarous both to your ear. All the shapes are akin and none is quite like the other; so to a secret law surely *that chorus* must point, to a sacred enigma. Dear friend, how I wish I were able all at once to pass on, happy, the word that unlocks!" [Italics mine][16]

It is sometimes difficult for non-Germanic people to appreciate fully the profound significance of Goethe's poetic accomplishment in his Faust. Scholars can literally devote their lives to the analysis of Faust, and the thousands of publications on the subject have not exhausted its content. Shakespeare's Hamlet is usually cited as the English-language equivalent of Faust in terms of its modernity and its influence upon future authors, among them Goethe. But one would perhaps need to mention John Milton (1608 - 1674) and his Paradise Lost to come into contact with an English-language text that deals with a similar thematic material in a similar degree of complexity. The Divine Comedy of Dante (1265 - 1321) makes for another philosophical parallel, and one that also requires a life long commitment on the part of scholars to know the text thoroughly.

Goethe's Faust contains such a wealth of knowledge that readers of many faculties can find information pertinent to their own field. Part of this stems from Goethe's own personal wealth of knowledge; when he was

16 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Selected Poems, Christopher Middleton ed. (Boston: Suhrkamp / Insel Publishers Boston, Inc., 1983.) p.155.

not writing brilliant plays, novels, poems and autobiographies, he was publishing studies of plant morphology, a theory of colors, and studies of weather, as well as numerous other examinations in the natural sciences. It was this background that Goethe brought with him in his non-scientific writings, giving them a depth and realism seldom matched. This led the Goethe scholar Peter Salm to remark that "{i}n many of Goethe's prose passages, and indeed in some of his poetry, the borderline between science and poetry is vague . . . ."[17] In Faust this interplay among disciplines comes into its most developed form in what is regarded as one of the most complex of Faust legends. However, it should be borne in mind that Goethe, as towering an intellect as he was, did not invent all of this complexity at once, but was instead already building upon a rich tradition of Faust legends by the time he himself first began working on a Faust drama.

From the first publications of the *Teufelsbücher* and the first *Faustbuch* published by Johann Spies in 1587, there had been a marked trend towards the intellectualization of the Faust legend. What had once been a petty charlatan who consigned himself to the Devil essentially to dedicate himself to the playing of pranks, to the necromancer and sorcerer who conjured up the spirits from the dead, Faust acquired with time more of the traits now typically identified as Faustian. His original function in the Spies book was as a warning symbol to all in post-reformation

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17 Salm, p.39.

Germany not to stray from the teachings of the church and be led into destruction by the Devil, a Devil that was considered by Luther and many other Protestants to be an actual, incarnate being. At the time when the original *Volksbuch* was printed, witch trials were rampant, and sermons condemning witchcraft and Devil worship were weekly events. In addition, Spies had recently published a new, more strict code of laws for dealing with witches and those proven to be in league with the Devil; the punishment for confessed witchcraft was death by fire.[18]

Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1593), in his setting of the Faust story, plants in Faust the new element of striving after power and influence. The Devil pact is now made for possessions that would otherwise be unattainable. After a short prologue, the drama opens with Faust sitting in his study glancing through books from various disciplines such as philosophy, medicine and law. Rejecting these, he realizes that magic is the sole source available to him to attain that which he seeks. In the final scene, just as the Devil is coming to seize him, Faust pleads "Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years -- a hundred thousand, and -- at last -- be saved!"[19] In Marlowe's Faust one can recognize many of the qualities that would come to be associated with the Faust in Goethe's play. Goethe's Faust opens with monologue for Faust in which Faust expresses his discontent with the knowledge he has attained while acquiring his four

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18 Frank Baron, "The origins of the Faust Legend" in Faust through Four Centuries (Tübigen: Max Niermeyer Verlag, 1989.) p. 22.

19 Christopher Marlowe, The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series Inc., 1948.) p. 51.

doctorates in philosophy, law, medicine and theology. He says that it is now magic that holds the key to knowing "what secret force hides in the world and rules its course."[20]

Gotthold Lessing (1729 - 1781), in his sketches for a Faust drama, planned to take this evolution some steps further. Lessing, living at a time more removed from the superstitions of Faust's origin, lessened the influence of the Devil by rationalizing the magical aspects of the story. As spirits do not walk about in real life, they could not simply walk across a stage, so Lessing had any scene that needed the presence of spirits in it take place in Faust's dreams, as the dreams were regarded as a gateway into the irrational.[21] In addition, he included the Enlightenment concept of the striving for knowledge as being the highest undertaking of humanity. This Faustian quest for knowledge was new, but, more importantly, indications from his sketches reveal that he would have saved Faust from his demise at the hands of the Devil, an as of yet unheard of twist in the original story.[22] As Lessing did not finish his sketches, and the letters containing references or reports of the play's intended content were not yet published, most scholars acknowledge that although it is unlikely Goethe knew of Lessing's Dr.Faust, he carries this intellectualization to the highest degree yet in his own Faust, incorporating not merely the infernal quest for knowledge and the ultimate saving of Faust, but also loading the text and the story with

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20 Walter Kaufmann, translator Goethe's Faust, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961.) p. 95. "Daß ich erkenne, was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält. . . "

21 Phillip Palmer and Robert More, The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing, (New York: Octagon Books, 1966.) p. 286.

22 James Kelly, The Faust Legend in Music (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1976.) p.41.

classical symbols, particularly in Part II of Faust.

What is so fascinating about Goethe's version of the story is not just that Faust is redeemed in the end, but rather how it is that he is redeemed, for it is not by Faust's striving after knowledge and experience alone that he is saved. Rather, Goethe believed that human endeavors and human striving can only take one so far, that a higher force was also needed to save Faust from his demise. Faust's own undertakings can prepare him for salvation, but it is a higher power that ultimately carries him upwards where all of his strength and Devil pacts could not. The higher power of eternal love leads him aloft. "In Faust [there is] an ever higher and more purified striving until the end, and from above to aid him comes the eternal love. . . .we cannot save ourselves solely through our own strength, but only with the aid of divine grace."[23] It is with this combination of humanism and religion, the worldly with the mystic, that Faust II concludes. Goethe transforms the Faust story from that of a popular story prankster and a Protestant dogmatic publication into an allegory of redemption through struggle that expands to include Faust as the representative of all of humanity. Faust's striving to know and experience ever more is rewarded with his salvation at the end of the second part. Having spent nearly two lifetimes in unceasing search for that which could satiate him, Faust even dies in *Vorgefühl*, in a premonition and a longing

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23 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche, Vol.24 Johann Peter Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1949.) p. 504. "In Faust selber eine höhere und reinere Tätigkeit bis ans Ende, und von oben die ihm zu Hülfe kommende ewige Liebe. . . .wir nicht bloß durch eigene Kraft selig werden, sondern durch die hinzukommende göttliche Gnade."

for that happiness in the beyond. His errors and misdeeds committed in his quest are forgiven. He is united with his beloved Gretchen from Faust Part I, and led up to the heights and vision of the Mater Gloriosa.

Future Faust legends are not quite as optimistic. Friedrich Maximilian Klinger (1752 - 1831), Nikolaus Lenau (1802 - 1850), and certainly the twentieth century settings of Thomas Mann (1875 - 1955) and Hanns Eisler (1898 - 1962) come far closer to the original *Volksbuch* in their depictions of the hopelessness and pessimism in human nature. In Fausts Leben, Taten und Höllenfahrt, Klinger makes his Faust an inventor of the printing press. Disillusioned when he finds no interest in his life's work and no source of income whereby he could sustain his family, he turns to magic. Klinger leads his Faust through a series of travels with his Devil companion. Faust all the while uses magical powers both for personal pleasures and occasionally for aiding his fellow men, only to have the Devil demonstrate that all of his aspirations were hollow and ultimately cruel to those with whom he came into contact. Having exposed the meaninglessness of Faust's actions, the Devil drags him to hell, where he is to suffer eternal hopelessness. Thomas Mann in Doktor Faustus made his Faust character, a composer by the name of Adrian Leverkühn, seal his pact with the Devil to become a genius for twenty-four years, to attain the inspiration he himself lacked. Set in Thomas Mann's own time, Mann's story is an allegory of the fall of humanism into barbarity, the exposing of the highest of principles as hollow and meaningless; the compositions that

this composer writes all prefigure more strongly the collapse that Germany would take with the election of Hitler in 1933. The Devil takes Leverkühn just as it comes for Germany itself.

Seen against the backdrop of Fausts to come, Goethe reperesents the high water mark of romanticism for Faust. Goethe's particular version of the Faust legend held sway for the duration of the Nineteenth century; indeed, it eradicated much memory of any other Faust. Thomas Mann, in his speech, *"Deutschland und die Deutschen"*, said "It is a large mistake on the part of the saga and the poem that neither brought Faust into relation with music. Faust would have to be musical, would have to be a musician. . . . If Faust is to represent the German soul, he must be musical, for abstract and mystic, and that means musical, is the German way of relating to the world . . . "[24] Although Mann would be the first author to link Faust with music in a literary work, many composers felt a strong affinity with Faust, and there is no dearth of compositions inspired by Goethe's great work. Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856) composed Scenes from Goethe's Faust, Charles Gounod (1813 - 1893) a Faust opera, and Hector Berlioz (1803 - 1869) La Damnation de Faust. Franz Liszt (1811 - 1886) chose Goethe's play as the basis for one of his most ambitious orchestral compositions, his Faust Symphony. Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883), upon learning of Liszt's symphony, revised a Faust Overture which he had

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24 Thomas Mann, "Deutschland und die Deutchen" in An die Gesittete Welt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1986.) p. 706. "Es ist ein großer Fehler der Sage und des Gedichts, daß sie Faust nicht mit der *Musik* in Verbindung bringen. Er müßte musikalisch sein, müßte Musiker sein. . . . Soll Faust der Repräsentant der deutschen Seele sein, so müßte er musikalish sein, denn abstrakt und mystisch, das heißt musikalisch , ist das Verhältnis der Deutschen zur Welt . . . "

composed earlier.[25] But of all the composers who felt a strong attraction to the story of Faust, perhaps none was drawn more strongly to its central theme and divine vision at the end as was Gustav Mahler.

Mahler felt a particular affinity with this text, expressed long before the actual composition of the Eighth Symphony took place. In a letter to Bruno Walter written in 1909, Mahler commented on the sheer power that this text had upon him. "I see everything in such a new light -- I am in such motion; I wouldn't wonder if I were to suddenly behold a new body around me. {Like Faust in the final scene}"[26] Many of Mahler's musical compositions seem primarily concerned with struggle and salvation; his Symphony No. 2, subtitled "The Resurrection", serves as only the most overt example of this. In this symphony he makes use of the chorus for the first time in his symphonies, a chorus that had itself become a symbol used to express universality, a practice inherited from Beethoven and his massive choral symphony. Much in Mahler's other music deals with thematic material similar to that of the final journey of Faust. His Third Symphony is a towering six-movement work built in the overall form of an ascension from the D-minor first movement depicting an inanimate winter, to the second movement and spring, third, to the animal kingdom, fourth humankind, fifth angels, and sixth a towering D-major Adagio, subtitled

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25 Kelly, p. 154.

26 Floros, p.125. "Ich sehe alles in einem so neuem Lichte -- bin so in Bewegung; ich würde mich manchmal gar nicht wundern, wenn ich plötzlich einen neuen Körper an mir bemerken würde. (Wie Faust in der letzten Szene)"

Was mir die Liebe erzählt -- What Love tells me.[27] It would appear, too, that from the earliest stages of its conception, Mahler thought to use a chorus for the entire duration of his Eighth Symphony. As it turned out, this feature was the only one to survive in the final work.[28]

Surviving sketches demonstrate that Mahler was originally thinking of a four-movement symphony, each movement having a different text, the titles for which were: Hymne Veni Creator, Weihnachtsspiele mit dem Kindlein -- Scherzo [Christmas night games with the child], Adagio -- Caritas, and lastly a Schöpfung durch Eros [Creation through Eros].[29] The exact placement of the inner movements seems to have been a question for Mahler; an alternate version of these sketches shows the order switched. It would appear that from the early stages, the words *Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus* [Infuse our senses with light, place love in our hearts] of the Latin hymn were set aside for special treatment, as they have been bracketed apart from the stanza in which they appear.[30] Mahler never composed any music to this planned symphony, so it is impossible to speculate how the symphony would have turned out had he retained the original texts, but the actual composition came extremely quickly as soon as he decided to link the hymn directly with the closing

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27 Constantin Floros, "Die 'Symphonie der Tausend als Botschaft an die Menschheit" in A Mass for the Masses: Proceedings of the Mahler VIII Symposium, Amsterdam, 1988 Jos van Leeuwen, Hrsg., p.129.

28 Donald Mitchell, Gustav Mahler Vol. III: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death, (London: Faber and Faber, 1985.) p. 530.

29 Eveline Nikkels, "O Mensch! Gib Acht!": Friedrich Nietzsches Bedeutung für Gustav Mahler, (Amsterdam: Rodopoi, 1989.) p. 133.

30 Mitchell, p. 525.

scene from Goethe's masterpiece in a two-movement work, his Eighth Symphony.

A primary source of criticism of this work has been the disparity of these texts of the two parts. The coupling of a Latin hymn with Germany's national poem seems audacious in the extreme. Neither could be less well suited for the other. Hans Mayer, a prominent Goethe scholar, wrote of the "ungeheuerlichen Diskrepanz" [monstrous discrepancy] that separated the two texts.[31] Mayer goes on to protest Mahler's forcing of these texts into a musical and spiritual unity, and calls into question Mahler's understanding of Goethe and Faust. He thought that Mahler's explanation of the closing verses was a "renunciation of all Christian interpretations of the closing of Faust", and called Mahler a "großartigen Usurpator" [first-rate usurper] and a "naiven Dilettanten" [naive dilettante] in taking a pre-existent masterpiece and trying to connect himself with it in a vain attempt at self promotion.[32]

In addition, the musical styles explored in each movement differ too greatly for one to view the work as an organic whole. The first movement is bombastic, the second hushed and slow moving. Furthermore, within the movements themselves there is little if any real contrast, at least not to the degree that is usually regarded as Mahlerian. Most of Mahler's symphonies thrive and are propelled forward on an almost violent contrast of material,

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31 Hans Mayer. "Musik und Literatur" in Gustav Mahler (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1966.) p.148.

32 Constatin Floros, Gustav Mahler I: Die geistige Welt Mahlers in systematischer Darstellung, (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1977.) p. 52.

and this lack of such a typical Mahlerian feature leads one to wonder about Mahler's intent. Mahler seems to have indulged in a prolonged, monochromatic style that borders on banality. The very fact that the whole work begins and ends in one key, discarding his practice of progressive tonality as was demonstrated by the Fifth and Seventh Symphonies (and later the Ninth as well), composing instead a symphony with minimal tonal shifts, seemed to suggest to critics that Mahler was not composing at his usual level.

Theodor Adorno certainly thought this and is often cited for his rather caustic reception of Mahler's Eighth Symphony. He speaks of the "ostentatious cardboard" and "giant symbolic shell" that is Mahler's "official magnum opus". Adorno thought that Mahler was a poor yes - sayer, that Mahler's supposedly triumphant passages were the least convincing musically. He had already cited this in symphonies prior to No. 8; the optimistic endings of Symphonies No. 2, No. 5 and No. 7 were all derided. When presented with an entire symphony that was predominantly optimistic, Adorno did not hesitate to denounce it in the harshest manner. "The magnum opus is the aborted, objectively impossible resuscitation of the cultic. It claims not only to be a totality in itself, but to create one in its sphere of influence. . . . In reality it worships itself."[33]

What is extremely interesting is that similar criticisms were levelled at Goethe upon the posthumous publication of Faust II; Part II did not take

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[33] Theodore Adorno, Mahler, A Musical Physiognomy (Chicago: The Universtiy of Chicago Press, 1991.) p. 138.

up the action where Part I left off. Critics felt that after Faust's failure in the realm of personal love he should try to seek success in the political world, aiding the populace and trying his hand in the realm of love on a broader level, the love of humanity. Rejected drafts for the play show that Goethe originally agreed with this thought, but he ultimately decided to alter his plans fundamentally in favor of a more abstract, allegorically driven conception. It should be born in mind when considering Goethe's Faust that one is speaking of a life's work. From the time of the first impression that the old puppet plays made upon him as a boy to a few months before his death at 83, the Faust legend had become as much a part of Goethe as it had a national myth.[34] When Goethe returned to the Faust drama after years of interlude from the 1808 publication of Faust I, the dichotomy between Faust and Mephistopheles, the Faustian striving, even the pact between Faust and Mephisto, are all subjugated to the overriding principles of Goethe's symbolic intent. While Part I can be understood as a *Strum und Drang* work, full of rage and passion, Part II is quite a different story. It proves quite difficult to categorize, and its abstractions tax scholars to this day. Goethe elevated the entire Faust drama and conflict onto a higher, more contemplative plane, and in accomplishing that, made room for Faust's ultimate salvation. Goethe himself spoke that "[t]he first part is almost all subjective, everything emerges from a more passionate individual, just as any half- enlightened person might well do. But in the

[34] An interesting aside is that Faust II is the only one of Goethe's works to bear the word *Finis* at its end, as if its conclusion had a far deeper meaning to the author.

second part there is almost nothing subjective, here appears a higher, broader, brighter, less passionate world. . ."[35] Goethe is not balking at the task of Faust's dealings with the world. They are merely abstracted into an array of symbols which in turn act out the "drama" on the conceptual level. Goethe was very aware of the potential problems that this shift in focus would bring readers. In his last letter to Wilhelm Humboldt, Goethe darkly remarked that he hesitated to bring Faust II, his "sehr ernsten Scherze" [very serious jest] to print, saying "The time is really so absurd and confused that I am convinced that my sincere and long pursued work on this strange construction will be poorly rewarded; it will be driven ashore and left like a wreck in ruins to be buried by the sandy refuse of time. Confused teachings for confused actions reign over the world."[36] Goethe even forbade the publication of Faust II until after his death. In spite of Goethe's fears, though, it is precisely this removal from the physical to the metaphysical, this distance from the *Sturm und Drang* of the first part that demonstrates Faust's progression and development, and prepares him for his final elevation at the close of the play.

Seen in this light, Mahler's dramatic change of compositional style

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35 Eckermann, p. 453. "Der erste Teil ist fast ganz subjektiv; es ist alles aus einem befangeneren, leidenschaftlicheren Individuum hervorgegangen, welches Halbdunkel den Menschen auch so wohl tun mag. Im zweiten Teil aber ist fast gar nichts Subjektives, es erscheint hier eine höhere, breitere, hellere, leidenschaftslosere Welt. . ."

36 Wilhelm Emrich, "Das Rätsel der >Faust II< Dichtung" in Aufsätze zu Goethes >Faust II< Werner Keller, Hrsg. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991.) p.26. "Der Tag ist aber wirklich so absurd und konfus, daß ich mich überzeuge, meine redlichen, lange verfolgten Bemühungen um dieses seltsames Gebäu würden schlecht belohnt und an den Strand getreiben, wie ein Wrack in Trümmern daliegen und von dem Dünenschutt der Stunden zunächst überschüttet werden. Verwirrende Lehre zu verwirrtem Handel waltet über die Welt."

between his symphony's first and second parts seems more an act of subconcious text- setting than merely an effective compositional tool. One can quote from Goethe's Faust I, Act I: Vor dem Tor, where Faust speaks of the inner conflict raging within him. "Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast, and one is striving to forsake its brother. Unto the world in grossly loving zest, with clinging tendrils, one adheres; the other rises forcibly in quest of rarefied ancestral spheres."[37] Faust Part I can be seen as a prolonged drama of the first soul, Faust Part II as an extended episode in the second. The first part is wild, passionate, the second conceptual and abstract. Mahler's score shows a similar dichotomy. Part I is mostly in the higher dynamic levels, predominantly written for chorus, and full of more learned compositional techniques, while the second part is more pliant in form, more wide-ranging in its expression and more often delivered at a hushed dynamic level. It may seem odd that the more abstract text receives the more emotional delivery in Mahler's setting, but Mahler merely allows ample room for the power of the words to have primacy, and not allow the music to block the *Himmelsglut* [divine fire] of Goethe's vision.

Still another little explored point to consider is that Goethe knew the Latin hymn *Veni creator spiritus*. Indeed, he even translated it and commented on it to acquaintances, stating that it represented an important facet of human relation to the creator. This has since been dubbed: *das*

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37 Walter Kaufmann, translator Goethe's Faust, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961.) p.145. "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust, die eine will sich von der andern trennen; die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust, sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen; die andere hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen."

Ewig - Männliche [eternal masculine]. If the final *Ewig - Weibliche* [eternal feminine] of the closing stanza from Faust II is understood as the ultimate goal towards which all undertakings strive, and to which the entire Faust drama has been heading, then the *Ewig -Männliche* is this striving itself. It is the quest; it is the learning and the passion and burning desire to move ever onwards, never to rest until the goal has been reached. With its more learned approach and more strict form, Part I of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 is a perfect manifestation of this *Ewig - Männliche*. It directly invokes the creator spirit and then continues to assert itself boldly, seldom allowing room for a lyrical theme before storming ahead to new and ever louder themes. In contrast, the placidity of Mahler's Part II corresponds with that of Goethe's own text and Goethe's own advancement from Part I to Part II. The second movement of Mahler's symphony opens with a concertino of instruments playing the first contrasting lyrical theme of the whole work in the most extended passage in a minor tonality. It also takes quite a number of bars before the orchestra again rises to a forte dynamic level, a level that it almost never leaves in the first part. What at first seems odd or forced in Mahler's score gradually resolves to reveal a keen awareness of Goethe's text that can only be regarded as remarkable.

It is an interesting counterpoint to Goethe's misgivings about the public reception of his Faust II that Mahler seems to have had none and was thoroughly convinced of his newest symphony's incredible content from the very outset. Statements such as "It is the grandest thing I have yet

composed." and "All of my earlier symphonies are but preludes to this one." characterize Mahler's mindset after the composition was completed.[38] But what is fascinating is that the Eighth Symphony brought Mahler his first public success as a composer. The premier of the work was an outstanding occasion, and Mahler was elated in thinking that his greatest work was also to be the most easily understood and accepted. Tragically, just as Goethe finished Faust II only seven months before his death, Mahler too would be dead just eleven months after the premier of his Eighth Symphony, not living long enough to hear the premiers of his final song cycle Das Lied von der Erde or his Ninth Symphony. His first taste of success and public acceptance as a composer would be his last.

In Mahler's Eighth Symphony, one has a unique fusion of both Goethe's and Mahler's sublime vision, each in his own way a culmination of the author's creative outputs, here striving side by side towards the common goal. Mahler's score for the final scene of Faust II plunges the listener straight into the depths of Goethe's Bergschluchten [mountain ravines] in the tonality of Eb-minor, a shadowy shell of the triumphant heaven-storming Eb-major that blazens the previous movement to its close. Goethe begins his final progression of Faust from the lowest natural depth known to him, the mountain ravine. From this lowly place he gradually continues with "scenes" that take place in ever higher regions, until even the earth is left far below. Mahler, in beginning this movement in Eb-

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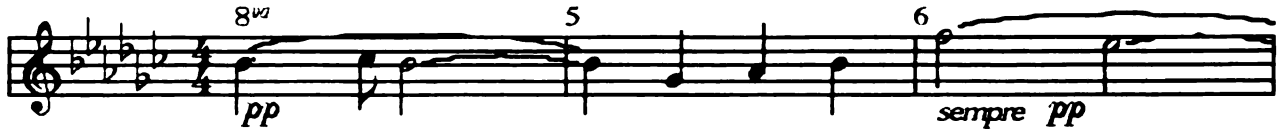
[38] Constatin Floros, Gustav Mahler Band III Die Symphonien (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1985.) p. 210. "Es ist das Größte, was ich bis jetzt gemacht." and "Alle meine früheren Symphonien sind nur Präludien zu dieser."

minor, is also starting from a depth new to the work. Here a new theme is heard in the winds that will prove to be of immeasurable importance throughout the work:

Example 1 (measures 4-6)



Equally important are the *Accende lumen sensibus* theme, now serving as an ostinato to what appears to be its own funeral march, and above all the violin tremolo on a pedal Eb. This pedal persists for 70 measures of the 166-measure introduction. It serves a dual purpose, both connecting this movement to its predecessor, and pointing forward towards the ending's transcending Eb-major peroration, a closing that makes even the massive close to the first part seem dynamically paltry in comparison.[39] The two movements could not be more different in their approach, but through each there is a pronounced unity, even stability. A sense of progression from these opening bars seems evident, and as the work continues, leaving the Eb-minor *Bergschluchten* behind, one feels as if the music were taking leave of all earthly sorrow, and rising with the text to the planes of mystery.

Much has been written regarding the form of this vast movement. Donald Mitchell argues quite convincingly that it is not entirely accurate to

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[39] Mitchell, p. 547.

regard this work as containing a slow movement, a scherzo and a finale in an all- encompassing one movement, but rather that a more operatic analysis seems appropriate. " . . . [T]he old straitjacketing attempt at classification goes on. There is hardly a commentator on the work . . . who does not promote for Part II an outline scheme of a continuous adagio, scherzo and finale . . . hinder[ing] us from comprehending [the work's] unique function and singular organization."[40] He cites practical considerations concerning the choir's need for rest after twenty minutes of loud, prominent singing, as well as the inevitability of contrast after so much music that was loud. Mitchell likens the movement to a secular and sacred cantata that moves into the realm of oratorio, alternating between the two in accordance with the text that is being portrayed at any given time. The first 166 bars are then to be understood as an overture for what is to come, which in turn is then an alteration of solo songs with choruses. "The prime function of the prelude is surely to set the stage for that final transcendent choral event -- to set it in motion, rather."[41] The scherzo, ". . .is not a scherzo at all, but a relatively fast-flowing and brightly coloured choral song. . ."[42] The events that occur in this movement are, to Mitchell, actors and actions taking place upon a stage, the final Chorus Mysticus the main character, an analogy not at all inappropriate given Mahler's long and prominent opera-conducting past. However, although an

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[40] Mitchell, 545.

[41] Mitchell, 545 - 547.

[42] Mitchell, p. 579.

operatic conductor for much of his conducting career, and therefore subject to non-symphonic influences as well as symphonic models, Mahler was never one to abandon traditional sonata and symphonic forms. It is for this reason that such "movement" divisions seem apparent.

Constantin Floros analyzes the movement as containing movement divisions as follows: Bars 1-384 comprise the Adagio, bars 444-519 comprise the Scherzo, and bar 639 begins the Finale.[43] His own decisions regarding the measure numbers of these movements is meant also to correct those of Richard Specht, who would appear to have been off in his designations of the movements by several measures.[44] Floros points out the formal recapitulations within the massive movement, such as the trio of penitent women, figure 142, that uses the same thematic material as that shown in figure 63. However, Floros goes on to state that ". . .a so-called formal analysis is not all appropriate; only a semantic analysis can fully work out Mahler's compositional principles."[45]

It was Mahler's genius to blend vocal and symphonic forms and genres into a synthesis rivaling that of the union of Faust with Helena that precedes Faust's death. Helen of Troy is a figure featured in many Faust legends. In traditional versions, Faust tries to impress people by calling back spirits from the dead, among them Helena, with whom he falls in love. Goethe, elevating every aspect of Faust onto a higher level, sees in

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43 Floros, p.227.

44 Floros, p. 227.

45 Floros, 228. ". . .eine sogenannte formanalytische Betrachtung dieser Musik [ist] nicht am Platz: nur einer semantischen Analyse kann es gelingen, Mahlers . . . Vertonungsprinzipien herauszuarbeiten."

this particular episode an allegory of mankind's yearning for beauty and love. Goethe transforms the once petty affair into a spiritual union that expresses the modern individual joined with antiquity, beauty and creativity. One of Mahler's more romantic traits was to blend the forms of the the song and symphony. Mahler only composed orchestral songs and symphonies, and these forms show an ever increasing degree of integration. In Symphonies Nos. 1 through No. 4 there are actual orchestral songs incorporated into the symphonic work, either quoted instrumentally, or sung by voices. His middle symphonies are devoid of such quotes of pre-existing songs, but possess turns of phrasing and colors that are reminiscent of a song, such as the first Nachtmusik from his Symphony No. 7. His early song cycles Des knaben Wunderhorn and Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen might still be considered collections of songs, but already in Die Kindertotenlieder, there is a movement towards a more symphonic structure; the first movement employs sonata form, and the final movement functions well as a finale. In Mahler's last works, this blending reaches its most intricate manifestation yet. His last song cycle, Das Lied von der Erde, is practically a symphony for two solo singers and orchestra. The Ninth Symphony, although purely orchestral, has such a vocal quality to it that one practically looks for the words that seem to be spoken. The symphony even ends with a quote from Die Kindertotenlieder. It is this union between vocal and instrumental forms that lends Mahler's music its unique expressive power.

It is not suprising, then, to find a similar degree of integration present in Mahler's penultimate symphony. It is possible to use many sets of terminology when one is approaching this work. Symphonic "movements" come into consideration when one is examining the text and observing efforts on Mahler's part to draw the listener's attention to what he at least perceives to be a change in the thematic material of the text. It is even possible that these "movements" are the subconscious remnants from the original four-movement sketch. For example, the aforementioned overture can also fit into a broader context of an Adagio that encompasses Pater Ecstaticus' and Pater Profundus' solo songs. The dominating tonality is that of Eb-minor, and the subject matter is more concerned with somber or tempestuous material. Pater Ecstaticus sings of lances, lightning and arrows, and the verbs *bezwingen, zerschmettern, durchdringen,* and *durchwettern* are far from placid.[46] Pater Profundus' song alternates words such as *Felsenabgrund* and*wildes Brausen* with *Liebesboten*, and *allmächtige Liebe.*[47] In short, Mahler seems to see a close bond in this set of passages, while the angels announcing Faust's salvation (Gerettet ist das edle Glied) mark a new subject, bring new keys (B-major/ Eb-major), and more of a scherzando effect. This effect lasts until Doctor Marianus invokes the Mater Gloriosa (Höchste Herrscherin der Welt!), which announces the beginning of the Finale.[48] The Chorus

[46]"bezwingen: to defeat, durchdringen: to run through, durchwettern: to storm through, zerschmettern: to shatter"

[47] "Felsenabgrund: mountain abyss, wildes Brausen: wild tumult, Liebesboten: love's messengers, allmächtige Liebe: almighty love"

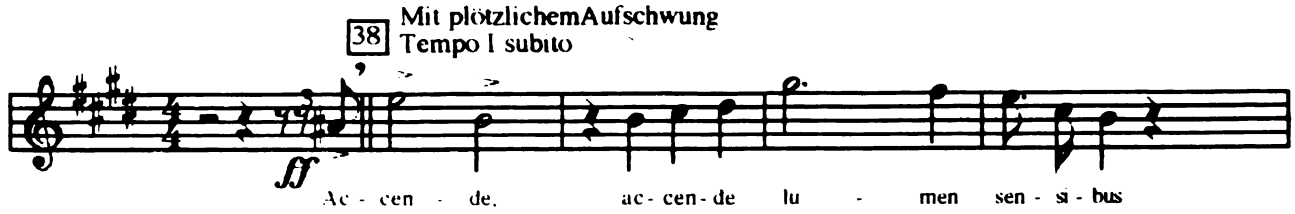
[48]" Höchste Herrscherin der Welt: Highest Mistress of the World"

Mysticus can be seen in this light as a massive coda, a final interweaving of thematic material before the awe-inspiring close.

There has been some speculation that Mahler in writing this symphony was attempting a deliberate *summa*, and therefore incorporated every form available to him, ranging from the motet to the chorale, the symphony, the song, opera, instrumental interludes and the secular and sacred cantata if not more as well. Given the rather rapid rate of composition the Eighth Symphony underwent, though, it seems doubtful that Mahler's use all of those forms would have stemmed from such a reason. It would, however, be typically Mahlerian for him simply to employ anything that was available to him to express his artistic intent. This practice usually led him to include all varieties of instruments in works, as well as to revise formal proceedures to his needs. In Symphony No. 6, Mahler included such diverse instruments as cowbells and a hammer to acquire the wide palette of moods and colors he needed. His ordering of the movements of his symphonies is also usually oriented against tradition and driven instead by expressive needs. Symphony No. 5 *begins* with a Funeral March, followed by an Allegro, then a Scherzo, Adagietto and concludes with a Rondo - finale. Symphony No. 9 has traditional movement ordering turned inside out; the slower movements lie outside of the faster ones. The brusque Scherzo and raging Rondo - burlesque are surrounded by the opening Andante comodo and the final lamenting Adagio.

Examining Symphony No. 8 more closely, one can observe similar innovations within the second movement. As noted above, many of the techniques that Mahler employs in his compositions stem from vocal traditions, and operatic terminology can be of profound use for one to understand the remarkable degree of subtlety with which Mahler approaches this text. The musical devices, as simplfied as they are, function as rungs on this poetic Jacob's ladder. The pedal and ostinato have already been mentioned, but in addition, the symphonic themes from Part I begin appearing now as leitmotives, their changing guises and occurrences serving to connect not just the two texts, but to focus on the progression that the text is taking. The most commonly heard theme is that of the *Accende lumen sensibus,*

Example 2 (Measures 262-265)



but other motives, even whole sections, return in a new placement.

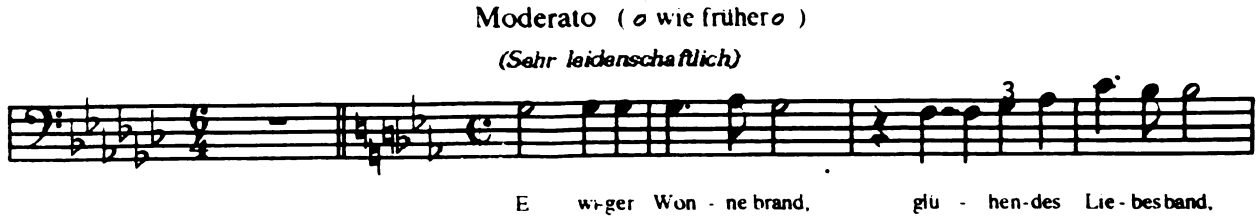
Associative tonality, yet another inheritance from Wagner, comes into play as well. This is not a technique particular to Symphony No. 8; many of Mahler's symphonies from his so-called middle period (Nos. 5, 6 and 7) all demonstrate to some degree keys that interlock or relate throughout the multiple movements. Symphony No. 5 demonstrates

associative tonality within a work that progresses from a C#-minor first movement to a D-major finale. The opening C#-minor Funeral March contains an extended passage in A-minor starting at figure 15 and carrying through until 15 measures before the end of the movement. The second movement begins in a stormy A-minor, but a D-major passage breaks through at figure 27, only to fade away and close the movement in A-minor. The Scherzo and Rondo - finale are in D-major, separated by an F-major interlude. Symphony No. 6 proves even more interesting to examine, as it, like Symphony No. 8, begins and ends in the same key. Beginning with an A-minor march having a marked rhythmic pulse, the subsidiary theme of Symphony No. 6 enters at figure 8 in F-major, and is recapitulated in D-major at figure 35. The following A-minor Scherzo, also possessing a marked rhythm and a strong thematic link to the A-minor march of the first movement, contains two trios, one in F-major and one in D-major at figures 56 and 71, respectively. In addition, within the development section of movement one, there appears a remarkable episode in Eb-major. This passage, beginning at figure 23, is tonally as far removed from A-minor as possible, and offers a precious repose from the violent development section that surrounds it. The third movement, a self-contained Andante, is the only one of the four movements devoid of driving rhythms and massive dissonances; its tonality is Eb-major. Mahler would continue this compositional technique in his Eighth Symphony as well, where his portrayal of the various characters in Goethe's play and the

tonal relationships to one another prove fascinating.

Having opened in Eb-minor and remained static for 218 measures, Pater Ecstaticus, (auf und ab schwebend / soaring up and down), brings the movement to Eb-major for the first time. In addition, he sings a variant of the opening wind melody that demonstrates a progression into a more lyric, passionate realm:

Example 3 (Measures 219-222)



This version of the theme will attain its crowning glory in the final Chorus Mysticus. Pater profundus, (tiefe region / deep region), draws the tonality back to Eb-minor, only to have B-major break through upon the announcement "Gerettet ist das edle Gleid der Geisterwelt vom Bösen".[49] The younger angels, speaking of victories and completing the great work (das hohe Werk vollenden) once again bring Eb-major. From then on, brighter tonalities dominate the spectrum, E-major being sounded upon the first appearance of Mater Gloriosa, a tonality itself prefigured by the appearance of the *Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus* in the

49 "Gerettet is das edle Glied der Geisterwelt von Bösen: The noble member of the spirit world is saved from evil"

development of the first movement, not coincidentally also in E-major.[50] Una Poenitentium appears in D-major, a pitch below the fundamental E of the work, but also a key whose final acts as the leading tone in Eb-major, the note that although itself not stable, is one that draws one upwards to the final resting point of a tonality. This is in fact Una Poenitentium/Gretchen's function in this closing scene: she herself is not yet pure enough (D-major instead of Eb) but is to draw the yet bewildered Faust to higher spheres (Eb and E). Mater Gloriosa's only words are addressed to Gretchen, telling her to ascend into higher planes (Eb) and act as a signal to Faust, that he may follow.

Because E-major seems to function in this work as the key expressing the highest aspirations and the loftiest goals, it could be asked why the work does not conclude in E-major, instead of Eb-major.[51] The consistent tonality used in this symphony, although rare in Mahler's output, might here used to underscore Goethe's own thoughts that the theme of love runs unabatedly through the entirety of his play. As for Eb-major, the drama itself ends with Mater Gloriosa calling Gretchen, and indirectly Faust, into the higher spheres, Doctor Marianus and the chorus intoning "*Blicket auf*" [Lift your eyes].[52] The view of these spheres is denied to the

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50 This passage in Symphony No. 8 (figure 38) offers yet another link to Mahler's previous symphonies, Nos. 6 and 7 of which also contain in their development sections a passage in a new tonality, the importance for which only becomes aparrent in later movements. See Symphony No. 6 figure 23 and Symphony No. 7 five measures after figure 39. The major difference in Symphony No. 8 is that this passage is not inward looking like its counterparts in the earlier symphonies, but the most assertive theme in the whole movement.

51 Mitchell, p. 577.

52 Underlining shows my emphasis

audience; the Eternal Feminine is to lead us upwards. Goethe, all throughout Faust II, is using his symbols in an attempt to explain and demonstrate very abstract concepts, and in the closing scene, what he attempts to depict not only outstrips the capacity of a theatre stage, but language itself. Writing about another matter, Goethe reflected "The true and the divine are never to be directly recognized by us, we can view them only as a reflection, in an example, symbol or in single and related manifestations; we become aware of them as incomprehensible life and yet cannot get rid of the wish to nonetheless understand."[53] Peter Salm writes of Faust: "What emerges is a play beyond a play, in which the stage becomes an avenue to a larger human drama whose theme is the struggle for an ever-heightening awareness. . ."[54] Even Mahler acknowledges that the highest ideals take one where the work of art can no longer go; art can only take the beholder so far, for it too is a work of the earth and not heaven. In a letter to his wife discussing Goethe and the last lines of Faust, he wrote that "[Faust] is all an allegory to convey something which, whatever form it is given, can never be adequately expressed. . . . And so in immediate relation to the final scene, Goethe in person addresses his listeners. He says: 'All that is transitory . . . is nothing but images, inadequate, naturally, in their earthly manifestation; but there, freed from

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[53] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Sämtliche Werke, Albrecht Schöne, Hrsg. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Faust Kommentare (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1994.) pp. 815-816. "Das Wahre mit dem Göttlichen identisch, läßt sich niemals von uns direkt erkennen, wir schauen es nur im Abglanz, im Beispiel, Symbol, in einzelnen und verwandten Erscheinungen; wir werden es gewahr als unbegreifliches Leben und können dem Wunsch nicht entsagen, es dennoch zu begreifen."

[54] Salm, p.69.

the body of earthly inadequacy, they will be actual, . . . there is done what here is in vain described, for it is indescribable. And what is it? Again I can only reply in imagery and say: The eternal feminine has drawn us on -- we have arrived -- we are at rest -- we possess what on earth we could only strive and struggle for."[55] Given that, the eight-bar passage towards the end where the orchestra and chorus does arrive at E major before Mater Gloriosa withdraws is a remarkable and precious glimpse into the beyond, and although the work ends in Eb, the Chorus Mysticus, having begun *wie ein Hauch* [like a whisper] pours forth such masses of sound as have never been heard on earth before.

If one were to take into consideration the incredible sense of direction that Mahler has imbued this movement with, it is even tempting to take this tonal association one step further and view the key of Eb as the enharmonic equivalent D#, which would in turn act as the leading tone of the otherwise unattainable E. Now, if in fact Mahler had wished to be so explicit he might have written the last pages in D# major, but he didn't have to be. The words of Goethe and Mahler's musical momentum carry the listener beyond the conclusion of the work to that which can no longer be written, only alluded to, an allusion that just might take the form of the concluding offstage trumpets playing rising ninths that point ever farther, ever upwards, ever *hinan.*

Mahler's symphonies have always enjoyed a rather Janus-faced

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55 Alma Mahler, Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters, trans. Basil Creighton (London: Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1968.) pp.320-321.

reception; the changing times have brought with them various, differing and even conflicting understandings of Mahler's place in musical developments and the places for his symphonies within those developments. None of this is more true than for his Eighth Symphony. Initial reactions ranged from Thomas Mann's tremblingly reverent letter to Mahler, where Mann identifies Mahler as "der ernsteste und heiligste künstlerische Wille unsere Zeit"[56] [the most serious and holy artistic spirit of our time], to Adorno's outright dismissal of the work; from those, like Mayer, who regarded Mahler's interpretation of Goethe's drama as a sacrilege, to those who saw in Mahler's setting an expression that could only be likened to the divine itself. These poles have continued to hold sway.

Detailed analyses by Donald Mitchell and Constatin Floros demonstrate that the work is not the disparate, disjunct misfit it was once held to be; indeed, they have helped to demonstrate that the continuity that spans the course of Mahler's master setting of Goethe's masterpiece is stunning. Goethe's play begins with a prologue in the heavens and ends with Faust and Gretchen soaring after the Mater Gloriosa. Part one of Mahler's symphony ends with all choral and orchestral voices rising scalewise to the apex of their ranges on the word *Patri* ; Part two ends with the the invocation of the Mater Gloriosa. Mahler's score begins with the invocation *Veni* [Come!] and ends with the Mater Gloriosa beckoning *Komm!* to those who would be led higher. In between the beginnings and

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[56] Thomas Mann, Briefe 1889-1936 Erika Mann, Hrsg. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1961.) p. 88.

ends of both Goethe's and Mahler's works lie a multiplicity of styles, forms, allusions, motives and symbols. But through them both there is a unity that can only inspire. The aged poet, just five days before his death, wrote in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Through use, teaching, reflection, success, failure, encouragement, resistance and still more reflection, the functions of a human being unwittingly join in free collaboration the acquired to the inborn, bringing forth a unity that astonishes the world." [57] In spite of such insights, musical scholars, performers and audiences will ever have divergent opinions regarding the success or failure of Mahler.

Whatever conclusion that one arrives at, it is precisely in considering the sheer impossiblilty of the task that Goethe set to accomplish in Faust, and later Mahler's own unspeakable task of trying to set the impossible to music, that one comes into contact with the indescribable striving that is uniquely Faustian. If Goethe leaves Faust silent for the final scene of his play, what the reader encounters is what Faust sees. Mahler adds what Faust heard. ". . . [T]his supreme moment, which though beyond expression, scarcely even to be surmised, touches the very heart of feeling."[58]

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[57] Johann Wolfgang Goethe Sämtliche Werke, Horst Fleig, Hrsg. Briefe, Tagebücher, Gespräche (Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993.) "Die Organe des Menschen durch Übung, Lehre, Nachdenken, Gelingen, Misslingen, Fördernis und Widerstand und immer wieder Nachdenken verknüpfen ohne Bewusstsein in einer freien Tätigkeit das Erworbene mit dem Angeborenen, so dass es eine Einheit hervorbringt welche die Welt in Erstaunen setzt." Goethe in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt, March 17, 1832.

[58] Mahler, p. 320.

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