

## INTRODUCTION

Even as recently as 1999, the British Mahler authority Donald Mitchell wondered why no one had yet translated into English one of the most important German monographs on Mahler, Paul Bekker's "magisterial" 1921 study of the symphonies.<sup>1</sup> After all, two other major studies had been translated years before. The influence of Theodor W. Adorno's seminal and notoriously challenging book *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, published in German in 1971 but containing material first written in 1960, was especially noticeable after Edmund Jephcott's 1992 English translation.<sup>2</sup> Constantin Floros's *The Symphonies*, the last of his three volumes on Mahler from 1985, is a more accessible source with useful outlines of the formal designs of Mahler's symphonic movements. It appeared in English, in a translation by Vernon Wicker, in 1993.<sup>3</sup> The appearance of these works in translation makes the absence of an English version of Bekker's book all the more noticeable. In 2012, Bekker is still being cited but remains untranslated. Even if one reads German very well, one may still not absorb as much of the full scope and details of a study as huge as Bekker's as one would when reading it in his or her native language.

The importance of Bekker's work for German-speaking Mahler experts, including Adorno and Floros, can be detected in countless ways. One of the concepts most generally, albeit incorrectly, attributed to Adorno is that of the *Durchbruch*, or "breakthrough," a term used to describe a moment in a work of Mahler where pent-up energies that have been repeatedly

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1 Donald Mitchell, "Eternity or Nothingness? Mahler's Fifth Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 236-325 at 304.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

3 Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1993).

dammed up and turned back are released with the greatest force. Adorno most famously used this term to refer to the analogous climaxes of the first and last movements in the First Symphony.<sup>4</sup> The term actually originated with Bekker, who used it to describe precisely these two moments in the First, although it would be further developed by Adorno.

Bekker is, of course, also used as a source for English-speaking writers, but, as Mitchell makes clear, an English translation is long overdue. In addition to the historical significance of the book itself, Bekker's own status as one of the most influential and important music critics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century demands it. His book on Beethoven has been available in English since 1927.<sup>5</sup> Readers can quickly gain a sense of Bekker's prolific writings and influence by surveying the vast collection of his documents and letters, housed at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University.<sup>6</sup> He is considered the originator of the concept of "New Music" to describe trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> In addition to Mahler, he was also a champion of Franz Schreker, Ernst Křenek, and Arnold Schoenberg. Bekker's effectiveness as a critic was sharpened by his extensive theoretical, historical, and practical knowledge. He championed a hermeneutic approach to both criticism and analysis that is exemplified in his Beethoven volume.

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4 See James Buhler's important article on this subject, "'Breakthrough' as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony," *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 20/2 (1996), pp. 125-43. The article discusses the concept at some length with respect to the Finale of the First. Bekker is cited at the beginning of the article.

5 Paul Bekker, *Beethoven* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1911). English translation by Mildred Mary Bozman (London: J. M. Dent, 1927). Bekker's important survey of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century symphony, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918), is unavailable in English translation.

6 The catalog can be browsed at <http://drs.library.yale.edu>. See also Christopher Hailey, "The Paul Bekker Collection in the Yale University Music Library" in *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 51/1 (1994), pp. 13-21. This article also contains extensive biographical information.

7 Most significantly in the essay "Neue Musik" from 1919, published in Bekker, *Dritter Band der gesammelten Schriften* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1923), pp. 85-118. The concept would later form the basis of major works by Anton Webern and Adorno (Anton Webern, *Der Weg zur neuen Musik*, edited by Willi Reich [Vienna: Universal Edition, 1960, based on a collection of private lectures given in 1933], English translation by Leo Black as *The Path to the New Music* [Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser Co., 1963], and Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* [Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1949], English translations by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster as *Philosophy of Modern Music* [London: Sheed and Ward, 1973] and Robert Hullot-Kentor as *Philosophy of New Music* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006]).

Later, he would also articulate important currents in aesthetic philosophy and music sociology that demonstrated considerable influence on Adorno and his followers.

Max Paul Eugen Bekker was born September 11, 1882 in Berlin. He worked as a freelance violinist in Berlin and later as a conductor in Aschaffenburg (1902-3) and Görlitz (1903-4). His first position as a music critic was with the *Berliner neueste Nachrichten* in 1906. He moved to the *Berliner allgemeine Zeitung* in 1909 and then in 1911 to the prestigious *Frankfurter Zeitung*, where he became chief music critic until 1923. In 1925, he was appointed General Director (Intendant) at the opera house in Kassel, moving to a similar position in Wiesbaden in 1927. Because his father was Jewish, he was dismissed in 1933. He left Germany at that time and settled in Paris, where he wrote for the *Pariser Tageblatt*. In 1934, he emigrated to New York, becoming chief music critic for the German-language *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*. His first book in English, *The Story of the Orchestra*, was completed shortly before his death in New York at age 54 on March 7, 1937.<sup>8</sup>

Bekker had a lively interaction with other musical intellectuals of his time. His hermeneutic approach was famously attacked by Hans Pfitzner for ascribing too much importance to poetic ideas in his interpretation of music by Beethoven and others.<sup>9</sup> Other structuralists and formalists, such as Heinrich Schenker, would similarly criticize Bekker.

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8 These biographical details are taken from Christopher Hailey, "Bekker, (Max) Paul (Eugen)," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), iii: 153-54 and Martin Geck, "Bekker, Max Paul Eugen," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2. Aus., heraus. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), Personenteil 2:968-70.

9 Hans Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz* (Munich: Verlag der Süddeutschen Monatshefte, 1920). The pamphlet, whose title translated into English is *The New Aesthetic of Musical Impotence*, is a tirade against Bekker and his championship of Schreker and other progressive composers. Pfitzner also attacked the hermeneutic approach in Bekker's Beethoven book. Bekker responded to Pfitzner in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* with an article entitled "Impotenz – oder Potenz" (January 15-16, 1920). For an article that relates interesting connections between Pfitzner and Mahler, along with Alma Mahler, Bruno Walter, Guido Adler, and Anton Webern, see John Williamson, "Mahler and Pfitzner: A Parallel Development," in *On Mahler and Britten: Essays in Honour of Donald Mitchell on His Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Philip Reed (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), pp. 119-31. After overcoming his ambivalence about the opera, Mahler conducted Pfitzner's *Die Rose von Liebesgarten* at Vienna in 1905.

Because of *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien*, Bekker is often grouped with two other significant critics and theorists, August Halm and Ernst Kurth, both of whom were early champions of Anton Bruckner and wrote books about the composer. Halm and Kurth were close friends and colleagues of one another, but Bekker's intellectual relationship with each was quite different. Halm, while progressive, remained a formalist and was opposed to hermeneutics. He heavily criticized Bekker's approach to Beethoven in works such as the *Tempest Sonata*.<sup>10</sup> Bekker, in turn, responded that Halm's language was hardly less metaphorical than his own, and chastised Halm for being overly dogmatic. Nonetheless, Bekker seemed to appreciate the value in Halm's work. He cites the Bruckner monograph at the beginning of the chapter on the Mahler's Seventh Symphony, not in a polemical or critical way, but primarily to indicate that Mahler's works cannot be approached in the manner that Halm applies to Bruckner (which treats each Bruckner symphony as a varied approach to an ideal model, "The" Bruckner symphony).

Bekker and Kurth had a warm intellectual regard for each other. Bekker greatly admired the Swiss theorist's writings. He published an enthusiastic review of Kurth's *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts* in which he called it "one of the most significant achievements in the field of musicological research" and especially commended Kurth's discussion of polyphonic melody, whose "wealth and insight and newness of approach" had "no equivalent in the Bach literature."<sup>11</sup> The two men also corresponded. "I do not doubt that a mind of your sharpness and fanatical search for the truth will achieve a total breakthrough," Kurth once wrote of Bekker's

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10 See Laura Lynn Kelly, "August Halm's 'Von zwei Kulturen der Musik': A Translation and Introductory Essay" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2008) and Alexander Rehding, "August Halm's Two Cultures as Nature" in *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Susannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 142-60, especially from p. 153. *Von zwei Kulturen der Musik* was first published in 1913, and Bekker was one of the book's primary targets.

11 See Ernst Kurth, *Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Lee A. Rothfarb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 3 (and p. 3, n. 6).

relatively low regard for Bruckner.<sup>12</sup> A portion of Kurth's two-volume book on Bruckner has been translated by Lee A. Rothfarb.

The association of Bekker with these two Bruckner scholars, and the important role played by Bruckner and Mahler in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century German music criticism in general, speaks to the pivotal role of Bekker's masterpiece and provides yet another argument for its translation.<sup>13</sup> Here, for the first time, the full text of *Gustav Mahlers Sinfonien* is made available for an English-speaking audience. There may be several reasons why it has not been attempted until now. The scope of the book is immense. Each symphony is treated in about 30 pages of densely typeset prose, and there is also a long introductory chapter called "The Symphonic Style" ("Der sinfonische Stil"). Bekker's analyses are written with musical examples integrated into the text as a part of the narrative flow, a practice that would be considered unusual today. Between 76 and 104 of these examples appear in each of the ten chapters devoted to the symphonies, an astounding total of 888 individual examples. This, along with the distinctive manner in which they are embedded within the printed prose, is bound to make a potential publisher wary. Perhaps because of the integration of examples into the narrative, Bekker sometimes uses sentence fragments, which pose occasional challenges for the translator. He also uses Mahler's German-language score directions as elements of larger sentences, and it is not always simple to render such unusual syntax in idiomatic English.

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12 Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 155. This book is largely concerned with Bruckner and Mahler reception in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bekker, Halm, and Kurth are extensively cited and discussed throughout.

13 The pairing of Bruckner and Mahler is no longer as routine as it once was. It was of great importance for early Mahler reception. One of the first journals in English to be devoted to both composers was *Chord and Discord* (a "Journal of Modern Musical Progress"), the journal of the Bruckner Society of America. It was launched in 1932, with issues published at irregular intervals until 1969, with one additional issue appearing in 1998. Most issues contained articles on Mahler as well as Bruckner. Dika Newlin, a former student of Arnold Schoenberg, published her Ph.D. dissertation from Columbia University in 1947 as *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (Morningside Heights, NY: Kings Crown Press; revised edition published 1978 by W. W. Norton & Co., New York). The book traces the Bruckner-Mahler pairing onward to Schoenberg and the "new music."

Despite the significant difficulties facing any translator of Bekker's book, there is no question that his study is significant, even foundational for many later trends in Mahler research. In my extensive critical notes and commentary at the end of each chapter, I aim to trace at least some of the intellectual paths that lead from Bekker to later writers. Bekker's work not only sheds new light on the work of later Mahler critics such as Adorno and Floros, but also numerous others, Mitchell among them. It also reveals a type of descriptive analysis not commonly seen in later studies and even unusual in its own day. As indicated above, Bekker relies heavily on notated examples, but the primary purpose of these is to supplement and illustrate the prose descriptions and to act as memory aids. There are no formal diagrams, no structural graphs, no measure numbers or even rehearsal numbers. Bekker takes a narrative approach in discussing the music from the first bars to the last. Structural analysis in the manner of Heinrich Schenker (toward whom Bekker was hostile, a sentiment reciprocated by Schenker) plays almost no role. For Bekker, the themes and their roles are of paramount importance. The character of the Mahlerian theme is in fact the final, clinching topic of his opening chapter.

In his foreword, Bekker claims that his is the first work to examine all the symphonies in detail and to present them as a totality. Studies that preceded his are listed in his brief bibliography, for example the individual analyses by Richard Specht, Otto Ernst Nodnagel, and J. V. v. Wöss. A collaborative volume published as *Meisterführer*, No. 10, published before Mahler's death, includes brief discussions of the first eight symphonies. But Bekker's claim is correct: he was the first to present a study of all the symphonies (including *Das Lied von der Erde*) in a single, unified volume. While each Mahler symphony is a kind of "world" unto itself, there are also connections across works that emerge more clearly when Mahler's oeuvre is considered as a whole. The links between songs and symphonies are mentioned by Bekker, and

many later writers would follow his example. But he also considers such things as the special connotations of key choice—such as A minor, D major, or E major—that one can trace across numerous symphonies. It seems plausible that the unusual architecture of Adorno’s Mahler book results from his having noticed the sorts of intertextual connections that Bekker indicates across the composer’s symphonies. Adorno does not consider each symphony in turn in separate chapters, as Bekker does. Rather, he uses broad topics, such as “Tone,” “Characters,” “Novel,” and “Decay and Affirmation.” Within each of these topical chapters, Adorno’s comments range freely across all of the works. His position, in effect, is that one cannot begin to access meaning in an individual Mahler work or passage thereof without knowing the composer’s entire life’s work.<sup>14</sup>

While Bekker did have personal access to Alma Mahler, several primary sources that Mahler experts take for granted today were only available to him in an incomplete or corrupted form. The first volume of letters, published by Alma, was released shortly after Bekker’s book, as were the invaluable *Memories (Erinnerungen)* of Natalie Bauer-Lechner under her own name. Excerpts from the latter had been published anonymously in 1912 in a special Mahler issue of the journal *Der Merker*. Even so, Bekker’s efforts to construct a narrative based on incomplete sources are often impressive. Most notably, he constructs a plausible plan for the drafting of the Third Symphony that is based on letters whose dates had been incorrectly published. Bekker himself is the first source of two early program sketches for the Third Symphony (which were published in a slightly different form by Alma), the originals of which have disappeared, and a similar sketch for the Fourth Symphony, which has survived.

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<sup>14</sup> I acknowledge Steven Bruns for suggesting that Adorno’s essentially intertextual approach to Mahler may be traced to Bekker, as explained here.

## The “Symphonic Style” Chapter

The opening chapter of the book, “The Symphonic Style,” with its carefully planned rhetorical structure, announces Bekker’s deep familiarity with the symphonic tradition. His book therefore not only considers Mahler’s symphonic output as a totality, he also considers Mahler’s place from a well-informed historical understanding of the genre. Bekker begins with a survey of the symphonic tradition as it evolved from Beethoven to Mahler, only briefly touching on the earlier tradition of Haydn and Mozart. His division of post-Beethoven symphonists falls into three groups: German “bourgeois” romantics, program symphonists, and finally, the “Austrian” symphonists, who synthesized the best aspects of both former groups.<sup>15</sup> The scheme is provocative and well argued. Bekker then discusses the “symphonic problems” raised by Beethoven. These include the order of the inner movements, the weight of the slow movement, the structure of the first movement and specifically its introduction, and finally, the character of the finale, which Bekker argues is the one problem that Beethoven did not definitively solve. The “Austrian” symphonists, Schubert, Bruckner, and finally Mahler, approached the “finale problem” from different angles. Schubert’s great B-minor and C-major symphonies are discussed at length, the former as evidence of how the “finale problem” had been recognized and abandoned, and the latter as evidence of how it had been deftly avoided despite the presence of a finale.

Bekker argues that Beethoven and his determinative logic were not the motivation for the Austrian symphonists. He discusses Bruckner at great length, focusing on his “historical mission” to shift the weight of the symphony from the first movement to the Adagio or the

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<sup>15</sup> Bekker’s unusual choice of the term “bourgeois” (“bürgerlich”) to describe the German romantics implies that they were “civic” professional musicians as opposed to the Beethovenian model of the “Artist as Hero” in the sense of Nietzsche, or as opposed to the “Austrian” composers, who are seen as close to the earth and to the “people” (“Volk”), and whose work transcends social class.

Finale. He presents the argument that, while Bruckner's Adagio and scherzo movements are of an unprecedented grandeur and scope, his finale movements, while extremely ambitious, are often noble failures. Bekker proposes that Bruckner attempted to solve the "finale problem," but was unable to do so. Bekker's instincts seem to have been validated by later musicians and audiences. While Bruckner certainly remains in the repertoire, the worldwide "renaissance" of Mahler's music since the 1960s has greatly overshadowed his predecessor.

This sets the stage for Gustav Mahler. A critical awareness of Bruckner's work is essential for Mahler, who finally solves the "finale problem." Bekker introduces the concept of the "Finale Symphony" and argues that all of Mahler's symphonies are one of three types of "Finale Symphony." This is the most far-reaching and important thesis in the chapter, and is connected to a perceived freedom in the number, type, and order of movements used by Mahler. The three types are: 1) the "direct, forward-moving ascent to the final goal" (Symphonies 1, 6, and 8); 2) the "arrangement of movements that orbit the nucleus of the Finale" (Symphonies 2, 3, 5, and 7); and finally, the most unusual, the Finale as a resolution or epilogue (Symphonies 4 and 9).

Bekker identifies four groups, or cycles, of symphonies, the *Wunderhorn* Symphonies (Nos. 2, 3, and 4 with No. 1 as a "Prelude"), the instrumental symphonies (Nos. 5, 6, and 7), the Eighth, which stands alone as a culmination of the two preceding cycles, and finally, the "Farewell" works, *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth. Bekker closely associates each "cycle" with the texts of the songs that surround them. He then makes another provocative statement: "It is curious: Mahler's symphonic art, determined in its organic manifestation by the broadly and powerfully constructive monumental drive, finds its emotional sources in the smallest musical manifestations of form, in the song" (p. 66). The songs, then, provide an entry point into each

group, or cycle of symphonic works, including one work, *Das Lied von der Erde*, that both serves this function of the earlier song groups—that of introducing a new type of symphonic aesthetic—and itself becomes the first symphonic example of that aesthetic. Bekker’s argument here is not always persuasively supported, particularly in the case of the Rückert songs and the instrumental symphonies. The direct link between the *Wunderhorn* songs and a movement such as the first of the Third Symphony is also questionable.

The types and styles of Mahler’s symphonic movements are presented in summary, preparing us for the detailed discussions of each in the chapters to follow. Bekker enumerates various formal types, including sonata-form outlines without the original purposeful drive of the sonata; scherzo-type movements (largely derived from the Ländler and the waltz); his careful use of the Adagio, knowing its “dangerous power” from Bruckner; and finally, his use of the human voice in the context of the symphony, placed in the context of the state of the genre after Beethoven.

Bekker concludes the chapter with relatively brief discussions of Mahler’s orchestrations, his precise performance indications, his harmony and polyphony, his melodic, harmonic and instrumental sound symbols, his choice of keys for movements and entire works, and finally, the structure of his themes, which, according to Bekker, are “the actual agents of motion for the symphonic organism.” Bekker frequently emphasizes the structural functions of Mahler’s themes, and he develops this idea in intriguing ways.

Bekker’s comments on some of these topics may seem cursory in comparison to their treatment by later scholars. Nonetheless, he does offer many fascinating insights. His comments on Mahler’s orchestration, for example, particularly ideas such as the subordination of individual instrumental colors to the total, cosmic unity of the sound were provocative enough to be quoted

and elaborated by Adorno (see pp. 73-74 and p. 88, note 38). In the chapters on the individual symphonies, Bekker will come back to Mahler's instrumentation, noting, for example, the shift toward a string-dominated sensibility in the Fourth or the problem of the abundant use of "heavy brass" in the Fifth. In the chapters on *Das Lied von der Erde* and especially on the Ninth Symphony, Bekker argues that the perception of the instrumental sound is totally constrained beneath the perception of the idea, that Mahler's abstract musical ideas cannot always be realized adequately in the actual instrumentation. This includes the hammer blows in the Sixth Symphony (see the "Anmerkungen," p. 832). Bekker thus prefigures critical attitudes toward the music of Schoenberg and his school, where the "idea" of the composition is as important as or more important than the actual sounds one hears when the music is played.

Regarding counterpoint, Bekker presents the idea that Mahler's polyphony is constructed in a way that is meant to emphasize the principal melodic line, not the effect of the lines coming together in a harmonic or artful way. He will also elaborate on these ideas later on, particularly when, in the chapter on the Eighth Symphony, he states that "Mahler makes the means of polyphonic style serviceable for homophonic purposes" (see p. 632), and that the polyphonic technique has a "homophonic clarity." This brings the idea presented in the opening chapter—that the main melodic lines guide the musical continuity—to a conclusion that seems radical, that the formidable contrapuntal virtuosity seen in Part I of the Eighth is subservient to the main melodic line.

Bekker's ideas about Mahler's themes and how he uses them are essential for a full understanding of his analytical approach. He argues that the character of the themes themselves, along with their possibilities for expansion, becomes more significant, as "thematic work" in the traditional sense becomes less significant. The themes are not simply pitch or rhythmic

structures built from motivic kernels in the traditional sense. They continually grow, evolve, and “become.” They are the actual generative force of the symphonic movements. Bekker traces the ability of these themes to function in such a manner to their origin in song melody, which is not beholden to the same rules of development seen in typical symphonic themes. Thus, the nature and function of Mahler’s symphonic themes, like the origin of each successive type of symphonic aesthetic, can be attributed to their strong connection to the genre of song—a genre, Bekker argues, that Mahler always conceived with an eye toward its expansion within a symphonic frame.

While the chapter as a whole is presented in a masterful way, it does raise important questions about how Bekker will approach the analytical and critical implications during the course of the following analytical chapters. The basic thesis—that Mahler’s works should be approached as a totality—is an ambitious critical precondition. Bekker’s hermeneutic approach is rather conventional, though he does enliven his interpretive narrative periodically with surprising insights. Many readers are likely to find the opening section of each symphonic chapter to be the most original. His introductory observations about form, orchestration, the special nature of Mahler’s thematic material, and so forth, often point the way for Mahler scholarship far into the future. Bekker does not develop fully the rich implications of the ideas he announces at the outset of the symphonic chapters, and there is often some disconnect between the provocative opening paragraphs of each symphonic chapter and the more conventional, chronological interpretive narrative that follows. Occasionally, Bekker will interrupt the descriptive analysis to ask another important question. For example, immediately after presenting the second theme of the Sixth Symphony’s first movement, he asks whether this is, in fact, a weak theme and if so, does it still serve its purpose well? Invariably, these digressions

lead smoothly out of and back into the flow of the musical descriptions, but the sense of disconnect between them and the chronological narrative is still perceptible. This aspect of the book is understandable, especially given Bekker's ambitious aim of considering Mahler's entire symphonic oeuvre. The questions about musical form in Mahler are alone enough to fill enough pages for another book at least as long as Bekker's complete monograph, and numerous scholars continue to grapple with these questions. Indeed, nearly a century of Mahler scholarship since 1921 has been influenced implicitly and explicitly by Bekker's pioneering work, as my critical commentary is intended to show.

### **The Individual Analytical Chapters**

With the ground laid by the important opening chapter, Bekker embarks on his journey through Mahler's symphonic oeuvre. The First Symphony is "Das Vorspiel," the prelude. The scope and meaning of the Finale are important for his analysis—each chapter devoted to a specific symphony always has the "Finale Symphony" concept as a central thesis to support—but here, Bekker starts by outlining the motives of the work and their significance, particularly the motive of a fourth. These are "sound symbols" ("Klangsymbole"), another important aspect of Bekker's discussions. While he is generally suspicious of "program music," hermeneutic interpretation pervades his descriptions of musical events. Here, in relation to the First Symphony, the motive of a fourth is such a sound symbol, and Bekker is careful to distinguish this from any sort of "program." The fourth can be seen as an altered cuckoo call or as the emblematic interval of the song source for the movement without placing these perceptions in the context of a larger conceptual narrative. Instead of this, Bekker opts for more abstract concepts, such as the process of "Becoming," an important theme of the opening chapter. Here,

it is applied to the first movement's introduction, where the important motives are also first given. This focus on abstract concepts clearly prefigures Adorno's typical approach. Mitchell's work is a modern example of a hermeneutic approach to Mahler's output.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the analysis of the First, Bekker is determined to distance the work from its published programs, which he correctly observes were drafted after the work's completion, although he does include the text of the Weimar program in his "Anmerkungen," a brief set of notes at the end of the book. The analysis of the work proceeds without reference to these programs, and the "sound symbols" are examined for their own sake. He probably goes too far with this exclusion, particularly in relation to the third movement.

There are frequent connections to other symphonies, such as a comparison of the function of this introduction with that of the Sixth's Finale. The Ländler-Scherzo, with its long sustained harmonies, is a type that will return as late as the Ninth Symphony. In this Scherzo, the legacies of Beethoven and Bruckner, whose scherzo movements were discussed at length in the opening chapter, are apparent. In relation to the third movement, Bekker emphasizes in particular Mahler's introduction and use of parody. The important topic of parody is also discussed in relation to Mahler's incorporation of melodies from his *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. In comparison to the *Wunderhorn* song sources for purely instrumental material in the Second and Third symphonies, these quotations from the early song cycle have a curious lack of emphasis here, and are discussed rather late in the chapter. It seems that Bekker may have withheld the aspect of parody and quotation as a sort of introduction to the "Wunderhorn" symphonies that followed.

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, "Eternity or Nothingness," the essay on the Fifth Symphony cited above, or in the same volume, "'Swallowing the Programme': Mahler's Fourth Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. Mitchell and Nicholson, pp. 187-216.

Bekker's formal outline of the Finale is notable. His reasons for not analyzing the movement in traditional sonata form are persuasive, but the resulting enormous "coda" is an aspect few later analysts have retained.<sup>17</sup> The sheer length of the second theme is said to preclude development. This movement is the first example of the characteristic formal ambiguity in Mahler that will become apparent in Bekker's analyses of later movements, such as the Finale of the Sixth and the first movement of the Ninth.

The concept of the "Breakthrough" ("Durchbruch") is, of course, the aspect of this chapter that had the most far-reaching consequences for Mahler studies. Bekker introduces it in his analysis of the first movement, whose extreme contrasts of mood, particularly in the development section and coda, allowed for the great, "liberating" outbursts both here and in the Finale. It is doubtful that Bekker intended the word to be as pregnant and significant as it later would become through Adorno. It was, to him, an apt description of the musical process that led to these moments of triumph and liberation. Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine that Adorno would have arrived at the concept without Bekker's use of the term to describe precisely the same moments and symphony that Adorno would use to introduce it. Adorno includes several long quotations from Bekker in the course of his book and makes frequent reference to him, but never cites him on the "Durchbruch."

For Bekker, the Second Symphony is another step on the way to solving the "finale problem." The number of movements is increased beyond four for the first time, and, as he says, the "formal clamp opens up." He does not see the "split" Finale as a completely successful solution. Bekker's inclusion of the Second in his group of "Finale Symphonies" that "orbit" around the nucleus of the Finale seems somewhat strange. It becomes clearer when observing

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<sup>17</sup> See the first two pages of Buhler's article, cited above, on this point.

his analysis of the symphony, which is heavily weighted toward the first movement. He does, however, praise the “strength of summation” and “organic direction to the end” in the Finale, despite the “breakthrough of the programmatic,” which Bekker says that Mahler still needed as an aid to achieve the goals of the Finale. He states that it is the first “grand symphonic finale” since Beethoven’s Ninth, and the parallels between these two “choral” movements are noted. The unusually long genesis of the symphony, and particularly the role of its first movement, would play an important role in later discussions and analyses, but it is not a major point for Bekker, although he does cite two important letters in connection with the composition and concept of the Finale.

If he underestimated the value of the published programs for the First Symphony, in the Second, Bekker nearly ignores them entirely, although there is evidence in the chapter that he was at least aware of several of their features.<sup>18</sup> Bekker introduces other overarching concepts, however, such as key symbolism, formal ambiguity, and motivic analysis. Here, Bekker separates several germinal motives from the first movement’s main theme, which he is hesitant to label a theme as such. These motives generate the dynamic motion of the entire movement.

The use of song in symphony is another major point. The Second contains the first “orchestral transcription of a *Wunderhorn* song” in its third movement (a large-scale transformation of “Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt”), and the first wholesale transfer of a vocal setting with a *Wunderhorn* text as a symphonic movement, the fourth movement, “Urlicht.” Both types of self-borrowing would also appear in the Third Symphony. Only the former, that of an “orchestral transcription,” occurred in the First, and only the latter, that of a complete transfer of a vocal setting, would happen in the Fourth.

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<sup>18</sup> I include a brief summary and description of these programs in my notes on the chapter.

Bekker's attempt to view Mahler's oeuvre as a totality is clearly seen in his handling of the transition between the Second and Third Symphonies. According to him, the pantheistic view of a life in nature in the Third could not have occurred without the religious (or quasi-religious) experience of the Second. For Bekker, the Third embodies the process of "Becoming" as does no other of Mahler's works. In contrast to the two previous symphonies, Bekker discusses the program of the Third at length. This is because of the considerable amount of primary source material for the symphony's genesis. As mentioned above, Bekker includes two previously unknown program sketches along with several passages from letters Mahler wrote to Anna von Mildenburg, which he uses (despite having incorrect dates in some cases) to establish a narrative for the final stages of the symphony's composition.<sup>19</sup> Bekker maintains that the Third is the only example of a program that was conceived before the composition of the symphony, retained throughout that composition, and carried through to the end.

For Bekker, the Adagio-Finale is the first one that makes a genuinely logical, culminating fulfillment of what has transpired before it. It is the first true Adagio of the fifteen symphonic movements that Mahler had composed up to that point, and the first movement that reaches a true rest and satisfaction, not a point of repose to gather strength for further activity. This rest and satisfaction are the fulfillment of love, the "universally animating power of nature."

The massive first movement is for Bekker the representation of "Becoming" in its earliest stages. It is full of formal ambiguities, such as the identity of the main theme, the border between the introduction and the main movement, and the lack of conventional thematic duality.

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<sup>19</sup> Mildenburg (1872-1947) was one of the most prominent Wagnerian sopranos of her day. Mahler introduced her at Hamburg in 1895, where she remained his protegee until 1898. In that year, he brought her to Vienna, where she entered into a long-term contract, gaining enormous success and stature. Even outside of Vienna, for example at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London, her interpretations of Wagner and Strauss roles earned great acclaim. In Hamburg, she and Mahler had a passionate affair, but when this cooled during the Vienna years, they remained friendly and collegial. She married the Austrian author Hermann Bahr in 1909.

One moment not given great emphasis by Bekker is one that caused puzzlement and some consternation among later writers: the extremely unusual onset of the recapitulation, where the opening horn gesture returns after the disintegration of the previous development and the abrupt entry of the side drum rolls. Thematic connections are noted between the first movement and later movements, especially the fourth movement (the Nietzsche setting) and the Finale.

Bekker's discussions of the remaining movements are structured with the destination of the Finale in mind. The song source for the third movement, the "animal piece," is examined at length, along with the implications of the post horn episodes. He sees the Nietzsche setting as a principal point of contact between the lines of the Second and Third Symphonies, but says that the path leads to a "freer height" than that of the Second, meaning the large-scale goal of the final Adagio. "The overcoming of pain is no longer a fundamental problem; it was only an episode of the ascent" (p. 303). This can also be seen in the following chorus of the angels and the morning bells. Here, Bekker does note the thematic connections to the Fourth Symphony, whose Finale was originally planned for this symphony (although he does not mention the similar thematic echoes of the Fourth's Finale in the second movement, the "flower piece"). According to Bekker, having effectively solved the problem of the new symphonic style for the first time, Mahler could move to the work that served as a culmination of the symphonies to that point, and the one which introduced the most novel type of Finale, as an epilogue or resolution.

The Finale of the Fourth Symphony, then, is also a "Finale of a Finale," as it were, the Finale of not just the symphony, but of the entire "Wunderhorn" cycle of symphonies. The symphony represents the culmination and resolution of the cycle and its Song-Finale is the ultimate resolution of the questions and problems raised in the course of the first four symphonies. While Bekker's analysis of the symphony treats the Finale comparatively briefly,

most of the opening material in the chapter is devoted to tracing its strands in the other movements. The more modest length and scope of the other movements, the completely different kind of themes, the more string-dominated orchestration—these are all a product of the symphony’s derivation from the Finale and its goal of arriving there. Associative tonality, particularly the “key of otherworldly rapture and transfiguration,” E major, comes to the fore.<sup>20</sup> The keys of E and G are paired throughout the symphony, acquiring a range of associations particular to this symphony, in addition to the larger symbolism of E major across other works such as the Second and Eighth. Bekker spends much time on external programmatic concepts such as the “Schlaraffenland” (the English “Cockaigne”), the presence of death in the form of “Freund Hein” in the second movement, and references to the bourgeois “Biedermeier” style of the post-Napoleonic era. Bekker’s discussions of these provide a vivid background to the symphony and its various extramusical associations, and they are further elucidated in my notes to the chapter.

His argument for the symphony as a culmination of the *Wunderhorn* phase is convincing, and he makes an effort to bridge the gap between the “Wunderhorn” symphonies and the following instrumental works. Bekker, however, fails to note the thematic correspondence between the climactic “kleiner Appell” passage in the first movement of the Fourth and the opening gesture of the first movement funeral march of the Fifth. Many later commentators also miss this connection, but it would have supported Bekker’s view of the symphonies as an interrelated totality.

The middle period instrumental symphonies—the “second cycle,” as Bekker terms them,

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<sup>20</sup> The term “associative tonality” was coined by Robert Bailey in his study of Wagner’s tonal processes. (See, for example, *Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from “Tristan and Isolde,”* edited by Robert Bailey [Norton Critical Scores. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985], pp. 113-46). It has since come into common use and replaced outdated terms such as “key symbolism.”

are given an extensive introduction. The new instrumental style is closely connected to the abandonment not only of songs as symphonic movements, but as the basis for instrumental movements. Bekker does concede certain thematic correspondences in these symphonies with the contemporaneous songs to texts of Friedrich Rückert, but he qualifies this by observing that they are “episodic” and “without influence on the development of the movements” (p. 396).

Bekker also emphasizes the “orchestral, architectonic, and formal” expansion of these works, including the shift of emphasis to the brass, the renewed emphasis on multi-movement sectional structures, such as the three-part design of the Fifth, and the expansions of formal types, most notably the scherzo (he claims that of the Fifth is Mahler’s first true example), but also the rondo, to which Mahler turns in the Fifth and Seventh symphonies for the finale. According to Bekker, thematic development, a secondary concern in the “Wunderhorn” symphonies, is now a driving force. The new concept of orchestration created problems for Mahler that persisted throughout his revisions of the symphonies, particularly the Fifth, a point emphasized by Bekker, who states that the Fifth suffered under the burden of the “iron armor” (“Eisenpanzer”) that Mahler found necessary here, by which he means the overly heavy reliance on the brass.

Bekker’s view is that all of these changes result from the detachment of the song element as a direct part of the symphonic composition, meaning that there are neither extended instrumental transcriptions of songs nor wholesale incorporation of vocal songs as symphonic movements. But this does not mean that song as a mediator fell out of play. This is, of course, one of the main points of Bekker’s opening chapter. The “episodic” references to the Rückert songs are a part of that mediation, and are therefore of significance, despite their lack of “influence on the development of the movements.” Thus, he discusses the Rückert songs at

length, both the *Kindertotenlieder* and the individual songs, such as “Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,” and their influence on the style and aesthetic of the instrumental symphonies. They are the most “songlike” of his songs and therefore incapable of symphonic amplification. By this, Bekker means that these songs are distanced from the folk element, that they are “art songs,” setting the words of an identifiable and contemporary poet, closed entities whose meaning would not be enhanced or “amplified” by more extensive incorporation into a symphony. But the influence is still palpable. The first of the *Kindertotenlieder* not only has thematic echoes in the Fifth Symphony, but its closing line could also serve as a motto for the work as a whole: “Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt”—“Hail to the joyous light of the world” (see Example 5-1, p. 403). Bekker states that “at this point for Mahler, it was not about collecting thematic or poetic material for the symphonies in his song compositions. It was only to find and mark out the ground upon which a symphonic building could be erected” (pp. 404-5).

Bekker begins his analysis of the Fifth with another discussion of associative tonality as well as the movement between keys from the beginning of the work to the end, a concept that later scholars have called “progressive tonality.” The principal point in these observations is that the expressive character of keys and how they articulate the mood of the movement in question is of greater importance than the old concept of tonal unity across a symphonic work, where symphonies were expected to begin and end in the same key. He illustrates this by using the keys of movements to contrast them to other movements of a similar type. For example, he asserts that the C-sharp minor in the opening funeral march is a stark contrast to the C minor in the opening movement of the Second, to which it cannot really be compared. It is a more passive piece of suffering as opposed to the more active battle piece in the Second. In both cases, the keys are essential in determining the mood and character of the movement in question. In the

case of the Fifth, the change in key center from C-sharp minor in the first movement to D major in the Finale (anticipated by its use at the chorale climax of the second movement and again in the Scherzo) is also essential in establishing the mood and character of not just the movements, but the symphony as a whole. The meaning of the shift up a half-step from the opening of the symphony to its conclusion is just as significant as the choice of a certain key to correspond to the character of a certain movement.

Bekker considers the second movement to be “one of Mahler’s greatest conceptions of all,” and “one of the most powerful achievements of symphonic art.” Its key, A minor, like E major, has an extraordinary significance for Mahler. Bekker’s perception of the piece as being in a “clearly articulated sonata design,” however, is unusual. Other movements that have aspects of a traditional sonata design but show significant deviations, such as the Finale of the First and the first movement of the Ninth, are not even designated as sonata-form movements by Bekker. That is not to say that an analysis of the second movement of the Fifth in a sonata form is unjustified. Indeed, it would be taken up by later writers, but it has become a source of debate. Floros would cite Bekker here, only to be reprimanded by Mitchell, who believed that a perception of the movement as a sonata form was detrimental to understanding its structure, which is based on discontinuity, quotation, and interruption.<sup>21</sup> In any case, Bekker’s analysis of this movement is one of the most extensive, detailed, and impressive in the book. His effusive praise of the movement continues in his comments on the culminating chorale. We are reminded in such cases that matters of form in Mahler are rarely simple, and scholars continue the debate to this day.

Bekker’s statement that the Scherzo is the “first scherzo in the classical sense of a dance

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21 See “Eternity or Nothingness,” p. 285.

piece, and at the same time the last” is provocative, since it could be argued that the similar movements of the First and Ninth Symphonies qualify as such. Despite its great length, Bekker says that the Scherzo is “perhaps the most straightforward movement that Mahler composed.” The Adagietto is analyzed as a prelude, and Bekker spends time discussing its relationship to the Rückert song “Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen” while keeping that relationship within the context of the “new,” looser bonds between song and symphony discussed at the chapter’s opening, bonds based on spiritual relationships and thematic allusions rather than transcription or incorporation. The Finale, Bekker says, is a new solution to both the problems of form and the goal of “Becoming.” Form here, both the fugue and the rondo, becomes a symbol for the process of “Becoming” in this movement. Unlike other such processes, such as that in the Third Symphony, here the goal is known from the outset. The collapsed chorale in the second movement is the inevitable destination at the end of the Finale, where instead of collapsing, it will reach fulfillment. This idea has been approached by several later writers, including Mitchell and David B. Greene, as outlined in my notes for the chapter.<sup>22</sup> Bekker sees the processes in the movement’s large subsections, with their many diversions and redirected motions, as Mahler’s will paving the way for the arrival. The discussion of the movement as a solution to formal problems is effective, but in relation to the movement’s temporal and spiritual goal, Bekker does not address the question raised by later writers such as Mitchell and Greene: is the climactic chorale at the end of the Finale weakened by its collapse in the second movement, where, in its instrumentation and context, it actually showed more potential for a “breakthrough?” (see p. 460 and pp. 473-74, note 44).

For the symphony as a whole, Bekker again concedes that a programmatic interpretation,

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<sup>22</sup> See Mitchell, “Eternity or Nothingness?” p. 325, and Greene, *Mahler: Consciousness and Temporality* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1984), pp. 117-19.

based on the emotional progression of the work and its individual movements, is both tempting and easily accomplished, but sees such attempts as pointless. The musical language itself, including the language of forms, is of such an expressive clarity here, Bekker says, that any attempts at programmatic explication would be completely superfluous. Most characteristic are the paths to fulfillment in the symphony, which Bekker says are unique in Mahler's output: "He never attempted again . . . buildups of the insatiability that is shown in the second, third and fifth movements of this symphony, always breaking off again, and always climbing again to towering heights" (p. 464). These paths to fulfillment are a part of that musical and formal language that transcends any program. Indeed, Mahler never provided any such explication for this symphony, as he had, at least to some degree, with all four of the previous symphonic works. The long section at the end of the chapter, which includes these ideas, is an excellent illustration of Bekker's hermeneutic approach, his constant search for expressive meaning in the music itself.

The Sixth Symphony is a problematic work for Bekker. While he praises its dramatic structure and the power of its sound symbols—both motivic (the major-minor motto) and instrumental (the hammer and the cowbells)—he makes note of the symphony's relative unpopularity in his time and even seems to justify it. Speaking of the catastrophic conclusion of the work, he says: "There are few works of art, especially of music, that depict this downfall and make it known with such fanatical mercilessness or with such unrelenting severity. That is perhaps also what makes this symphony so much less accessible and even initially gives it something repulsive: the oppressive circle of thoughts and moods from which, in contrast to all other works of Mahler, it shows no way out" (pp. 482-83).

Bekker is also more critical of certain themes than he has been in previous symphonies, particularly the second theme of the first movement and the main theme of the Andante, although

he mitigates such criticism by asserting that these themes, despite their deficiencies, function well in that role for which they were intended. Bekker refers to a “textbook example of sonata form” in his discussion of the first movement, a more justifiable statement than his similar assertion about the second movement of the Fifth. Besides the appearance of an exposition repeat and a clear thematic duality in that exposition, the functions of the development and recapitulation sections here are closer to those in the traditional symphony. There are fewer interruptions, and the climactic moments of arrival are more conventional in effect, unlike, for example, the emergence of the chorale at the end of the movement from the Fifth Symphony.

Bekker’s analysis of the Finale is notable. Unlike most who wrote after him, he frames the development section with the two hammer blows, making it much shorter. Adorno, Floros, and others would build on the skeleton of Bekker’s formal analysis, but it remains unique, as most published formal analyses of this Finale. In my notes on the chapter, I point to the comparative chart of such formal analyses presented by Robert Samuels, in which Bekker is included.<sup>23</sup> According to Bekker, this is the first wholly successful Finale in the context of his first group of “Finale Symphonies”: those that have a direct, forward-moving ascent to the final goal. He goes so far as to say that the first three movements are reduced to the role of preludes, despite the considerable weight of the opening movement.

A surprising debate continues even today regarding the order of the middle movements. Such a debate, where the order of movements within a symphony is disputed and performed in different ways, is unique in the entire symphonic literature. Bekker does not make much of it. He accepts the revised Andante–Scherzo order, and he probably knew this order in performances he would have witnessed. Ultimately, the question does not play a large role in his presentation

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 72-75.

of the symphony. Of more importance to him, once again, are the Finale's role in the totality of the work and the Sixth's role in the totality of Mahler's symphonic oeuvre. In this context, the tragedy of the work is examined in contrast to the triumph of the Fifth that preceded it and the Seventh that followed. At the beginning of the chapter, Bekker says: "The burdensome gravity of a world view that brutally rejects every objection has something crippling in its awful one-sidedness. This tragic symphony thus belongs to those works in which the listener only arrives at an opinion of their purely artistic value after overcoming their substance" (p. 483). Not only does Bekker here add to his "justification" of the symphony's relative unpopularity, he also alludes to an arduous process of coming to terms with this particular work that mirrors his assertion (and Adorno's assumption) that each of Mahler's symphonies can only be appreciated in the context of its place within the whole. At the end, after the journey across this tragic landscape, he can assert that "the fact that the moment enters where strength is spent, where no more resistance or recovery is possible, this is indeed tragic, but only in the sense of material existence. The hammer can only crush that which is accessible to it, or that which it is possible to crush. The spirit that directs the will is not to be bent, not to be destroyed" (p. 535). This assertion provides his bridge to the chapters on the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, where Mahler's "spirit that directs the will" emerges even more strongly than before.

The chapter on the Seventh Symphony begins with a comparison between Bruckner and Mahler. According to Bekker, who, as indicated above, cites Halm's book here, it is possible to define a "typical" Bruckner symphony, but this is not possible for Mahler. Each symphony has its own special and individual character that cannot be used as a standard for the other symphonies. The Seventh is seen as a bridge between the conflicts of the two preceding instrumental symphonies and the grand unity of the Eighth. His focus, at least initially, remains

sharply directed upon the middle movements, which he sees as Mahler's most refined of this kind. The first "Nachtmusik" is characterized as the last retrospective of the march songs from Mahler's *Wunderhorn* period. He sees both of the outer movements, not just the Finale, as "day" pieces, and the entire symphony as based on the opposition between light and darkness.

In contrast to the Fifth, the Seventh is more concerned with thematic and melodic unfolding than with the sort of contrapuntal art displayed in the Fifth. Thus, its Rondo-Finale is based on variation rather than fugal technique. The introduction is briefer than those in other symphonies, but it is largely based on a harmonic process—the emergence of a distinct key center from the ambiguity of the nebulous opening. Despite this relative brevity, the introduction still contains the seeds for the movement's themes. These themes are conceived as building blocks of larger structures rather than as individual appearances, which (according to Bekker) perhaps limits their appeal, but increases their unique character within Mahler's oeuvre. Observations such as these point back to Bekker's assertions about the character and role of the Mahlerian theme in the "Symphonic Style" chapter, along with the fascinating ambiguity of those assertions. On one hand, the observation that the themes in the Seventh are building blocks of larger structures fits with his description of Mahler's themes as the "generative sources" of his movements. On the other hand, Bekker's implication that these themes have a more motivic character than those of other symphonies seems to indicate an exception to the idea that Mahler's themes are unfolded and expanded, rather than "developed." The opening tenor horn theme is perhaps the best example of the "unique" type of theme Bekker is describing here. It is fragmented, transformed, and developed throughout the course of the movement.

Bekker states that the harsh and dissonant harmonies of the first movement are hallmarks of the "emerging late style" that would find its fruition in the Ninth. These harsh harmonies,

along with the unusual key relationships and thematic characters, temper the regularity of the form in the movement. In this symphony, Bekker sees some miscalculation in Mahler's overly meticulous performance indications, such as the explanatory note regarding the fermatas in the second theme of the first movement. Bekker says that "the brilliant practitioner Mahler made the mistake of indicating the finest details, according to his own performance style, in his scores. He did not consider that such exactness brings more dangers than advantages" (p. 562). The danger is that through overly strict interpretation, Mahler's indications may become "crude caricature effects in performance."

Bekker could not have known the controversies that would later arise in the assessment of the Finale. In contrast to negative appraisals such as those of Adorno and Deryck Cooke, Bekker's enthusiastic and positive assessment of the movement may strike some modern readers as surprising.<sup>24</sup> His enthusiasm leads him to an engaging discussion of the nuances in the rondo form that are overlooked by the movement's detractors. Bekker's characterization of the movement as a "C-major dithyramb" has been frequently cited.<sup>25</sup> He sees in the movement the "summit of life-affirming confession" and "the maximum capability of instrumental expression." In this context, the movement forms the Finale of the instrumental cycle, just as the song "Das himmlische Leben" that closed the Fourth was a summation of the "Wunderhorn" symphonies.

The Eighth Symphony was not only Mahler's greatest public triumph; according to Bekker, it was an artistic summit that could only be achieved after traversing the two symphonic cycles that preceded it. It was also the point from which the preceding seven symphonies could

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24 These negative appraisals are discussed in my notes to the chapter, pp. 617-18, note 44.

25 For example, in Floros, *The Symphonies*, p. 207 or in James L. Zychowicz, "Ein schlechter Jasager: Considerations on the Finale to Mahler's Seventh Symphony," in *The Seventh Symphony of Gustav Mahler: A Symposium*, edited by James L. Zychowicz (The University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Madison, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, 1990), p. 105.

be properly assessed. In it, as Bekker points out, Mahler needed to give voice to everything, to make an all-encompassing work that could express the message of pure, all-encompassing love.

Bekker uses the earliest known sketch for the plan of the Eighth, another document he presents for the first time, to prove that Mahler thought about the work as a symphony (as opposed to an oratorio or large-scale cantata) from the outset. Those who state that the work is not really a symphony misunderstand Mahler's message. It is not simply a dispute over a title. The Eighth represents a culmination of everything Mahler had understood under the concept of the symphony. It is, as Bekker claims, "the fulfillment of that which he envisioned as the original nature of the symphonic work of art" (p. 627).

Like so many later critics, Bekker strove to justify the pairing of the two texts, the old Latin hymn "Veni creator spiritus" and the final scene from Goethe's *Faust*. He does so by asserting that Mahler did not wish to create a *Faust* composition, but that Goethe's words were only a means of expressing the same sentiments seen in the hymn. "What drew him to Goethe's words and scenes was alone the idea of the appearance of love as a purifying, liberating, clarifying power," he says.

According to Bekker, another new style was necessary that corresponded to the forces demanded and the message of the work. The themes are accessible, human melodies that sound almost effortless. They stream from the "primary source of music." Bekker says that Mahler's declamation is not about presenting the text in the most efficient manner, and often almost goes against the meaning of the text. Rather, the primary motivation is to sing internally, giving the text a sort of musical objectivity. Bekker's emphasis of the Eighth as a kind of universal "Song for the Masses" can be seen as counter-intuitive, since many other writers instead emphasize the contrapuntal virtuosity.

Bekker does analyze Part I in sonata form and subscribes to the notion, today largely discredited, that Part II combines three movements—Adagio, Scherzo, and Finale—into one. This is important for his classification of the Eighth as the type of “Finale Symphony” that has a direct, forward ascent to the summit, but it is not of absolute significance for his analysis of Part II. The analysis of both parts proceeds in a relatively straightforward way, noting most of the musical correspondences between the two parts.

After the Eighth, what could follow? This is the question asked by Bekker in relation to the last symphonic cycle, “Der Abschied” (“The Farewell”). The answer requires a rather extensive introductory passage in which the characteristics of the “late style” are set forth. The new polyphony of the late style, along with the lines that Mitchell and Mahler’s friend Guido Adler would call “heterophonic,” are discussed in some depth, as is the new type of transparent orchestration, which is often almost like chamber music, particularly in *Das Lied von der Erde*. Bekker had not yet arrived at terms such as “heterophony” or Adorno’s “blurred unison,” but he keenly perceived the aspects of this new polyphony and orchestration. To arrive at an objective assessment of the “late style,” Bekker and later critics such as Mitchell have found it necessary to compare *Das Lied von der Erde* and its musical language to that of the earlier song cycles and the symphonies that stand under their influence.

Bekker claims that the work differs from earlier song sets or cycles in the organic unity of the songs and the presence of the large, predominant Finale. The first song, “Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde,” is also large, but not predominant, and is perhaps analogous to first movements such as those in the First and the Sixth Symphonies. *Das Lied von der Erde* also represents a counterpart to the Eighth Symphony—a private and personal declaration in response to the very public pronouncements of love in the Eighth. Sound symbols again play a large role

in Bekker's analysis. The melodic A–G–E motive is a counterpart to the major-minor chords in the Sixth, but it is more concealed and subtle. Key symbolism, such as the use of A minor in the first song, is again a point of interest for Bekker.

While the opening chapter does not make direct reference to *Das Lied von der Erde* in the context of "Finale Symphonies," it is clear that *Das Lied* follows this model, and this is Bekker's justification for including it among the symphonies with its own analytical chapter. Bekker makes a memorable statement about how the large Finale, "Der Abschied," corresponds to Mahler's symphonic practice in general. Again, we see that Bekker's principal concern in the book is that of the "finale problem" and how Mahler overcame it. It is in this context that *Das Lied von der Erde* and its place within Mahler's symphonic oeuvre should be considered.

Nowhere is Bekker's position as a pioneer in Mahler analysis more clearly on display than in his final chapter on the Ninth Symphony. He was the first to publish a large-scale analysis of this work. With this in mind, it is fascinating to compare Bekker's views on the Ninth with those of later writers, and indeed, more deviations from later analyses can be seen with this symphony than anywhere else, particularly in the context of formal designations. It is also apparent in his perception of the relationship between the movements, which he regards as looser than in previous symphonies.

Bekker does not analyze the first movement in a sonata form, although almost all later writers do so. This is in marked contrast to his insistence on such a form in, say, the second movement of the Fifth. This does not mean that Bekker's perception is not valid. If anything, it shows that he is remarkably perceptive, as later writers have also noted the movement's deviation from norms of sonata form. Despite the rondo form of the third movement, Bekker is vague about formal divisions there, as he is throughout the symphony. Parallels with the Fourth

Symphony abound in Bekker's analysis. The dance movement is another "dance of death." The Finale is, like that of the Fourth, an epilogue and a resolution—this time, a resolution of Mahler's entire body of work. One of Bekker's most memorable statements in the book comes before he embarks on his analysis of the Ninth: "'What Death Tells Me' is the unwritten heading of the Ninth Symphony."

Bekker does not consider the Tenth Symphony, although Alma did give him access to the draft. There is a brief discussion about it in the chapter on *Das Lied von der Erde* in the context of the "late style," but as with the publication of the letters and with the release of Natalie Bauer-Lechner's *Memories* under her own name, Bekker's book preceded the publication of the draft and the performance of two of the movements by just a few years. We can surely understand his statement that "this score will never be heard," and in 1921, who would have been in a position to call him a bad prophet? In fact, the nature of many of the sparest drafts for the Tenth may actually confirm Bekker's view that Mahler tended to think of the large-scale melodic impulse as the primary shaping force. Many passages in the draft have only a "main tune," sometimes with a bass line. If Mahler followed the same process in other works, the contrapuntal details would come later and would presumably be subsidiary, as Bekker hears them in a work such as the Eighth, with its "homophonic polyphony." I am grateful to Steven Bruns, who has studied closely the sketches and drafts for the Tenth, for this observation.

The chapter on the Ninth concludes with a brief, prophetic, and beautiful epilogue that points toward a Mahler Renaissance. A decade after Bekker's work, National Socialism would raise its ugly head in Europe, and public consumption of Mahler's music during that time would be one of its many casualties. Mitchell noted the "generally sorry history of the reception of Mahler's symphonies between the two World Wars," and pointed out that until the end of the

Second World War in 1945, there were large areas of the world in which Mahler's music was officially suppressed.<sup>26</sup> But that Mahler Renaissance that Bekker foresaw would occur in the 1960s and continue to this day. Bekker's epilogue is a final testament to a pioneering work of criticism that will now be available in its fullness to the English-speaking world. I am humbled by the privilege of carrying out this translation.

### **Notes on the Translation**<sup>27</sup>

The notes at the end of each chapter constitute my critical commentary on Bekker's text, a vital aspect of this translation project. These notes are generally of three kinds: 1) clarifications of details in the translation or musical examples; 2) citations and expansions of references by Bekker, including such things as correspondence, books, or other material; 3) references to later scholarly work that may help to elucidate either Bekker's text or the music in question. These are the most extensive and important notes. In them, I have traced some of the paths leading from Bekker to later criticism and scholarship on Mahler. Of course, the vast amount of Mahler scholarship since Bekker's book was first published makes it unrealistic to include everything here. My aim has been to present a representative sample that makes clear how important Bekker's work is for later Mahler research. I have avoided works that are primarily biographical, since Bekker's book is not a biography. My own bibliography at the end is restricted to works cited in the notes and introduction, including those cited by Bekker.

It has been my conscious effort throughout the translation to retain the character of Bekker's language while presenting it in idiomatic English. I nearly always retain Bekker's sentences. A particular area of concern in this respect is Bekker's frequent use of German

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<sup>26</sup> "Eternity or Nothingness?" p. 309.

<sup>27</sup> The full text of Bekker's German original can be found at <http://archive.org/details/GustavMahlersSinfonien>.

sentence fragments, typically lacking a main verb. This is most common in the heavily analytical portions, usually in areas with frequent musical examples. In general, I retain Bekker's fragments when the effect is not jarring in English.

Larger titled works or groups of songs such as *Das Lied von der Erde* or *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* are given in italics, even though Bekker used quotation marks.

Bekker frequently uses Mahler's German score indications within the flow of his sentences. When he does this, he always uses quotation marks. My practice is to present these score indications first in English, since they form part of a coherent sentence, giving the German in parentheses. The only deviation from this policy is when a German indication is a major tempo or character heading of a movement. Italian score indications or musical terms are generally given in italics unless they indicate a major tempo heading, in which case they are given in standard type. Plurals of these Italian terms vary according to what I perceive as the most standard usage in English. Thus, I have chosen "*tremolos*," but also "*pizzicatti*." Bekker often uses "Violoncelli" or "Violoncello." In these cases, I have typically standardized the instrument to "cello" or "cellos" (not "celli").

Bekker's use of musical terminology is fairly consistent, and my effort has been to follow suit in translations of terms, applying equivalents that would be recognizable to English-speaking musicians. There are occasional slight deviations based on context. One particularly problematic case of a word that is not a specifically musical term is Bekker's frequent use of the word "Steigerung" and its plural, "Steigerungen." I render this word variously as "intensification," "heightening," "buildup," or "increase." None of these four alternatives is suitable for every instance in which Bekker uses this potent German word.<sup>28</sup>

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28 This word was given special meaning by Goethe. For an application of Goethe's concept to music, see Thomas

Capitalization of movement designations such as “Finale” or “Scherzo” varies according to use. When the words refer to specific movements, they are capitalized, but are frequently given in lowercase when the use is more general. There are exceptions based on my personal perception of what works better in each individual case. Words such as “Adagio” or “Andante,” like all other major Italian tempo indications, are always capitalized, even when it refers to a type of movement in general rather than a specific example.

Bekker’s title pages and sections within chapters have been retained. For the latter, I begin them with the first word in boldface type. Bekker uses an enlarged first letter of the first word. Bekker gives the complete text of all Mahler’s vocal movements, either in the body of the text, within musical examples, or a combination of both. The practice can vary from work to work. Notes are always given to indicate Bekker’s treatment of the texts and my approach to replicating that treatment. I provide the original German and an English translation in two columns when the text is in the main body. In musical examples, I replicate the German with an English translation in the caption, unless the text in the example is given in the main body. These practices are also in place when Bekker quotes a work with text that is not in the actual symphony, such as the song “Ablösung im Sommer” in the chapter on the Third Symphony.

My presentation of the musical examples is intended to make it much simpler for the reader to locate each passage in the original score than in Bekker’s original, in which each example is embedded within the lines of text without clear measure number or rehearsal number citations. All 888 of the examples have been digitized and set on a separate line within the translated text. Bekker’s manner of introducing them with a colon has been preserved. My interpolation has been in providing captions for each example. In these captions, I have assigned

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Clifton, “An Application of Goethe’s Concept of Steigerung to the Morphology of Diminution,” *Journal of Music Theory* 14/2 (1970), pp. 165-89.

numbers to the examples, beginning with the chapter in which they are found. They are numbered sequentially throughout each chapter. Thus, “Example 7-58” is the 58<sup>th</sup> example in the chapter on the Seventh Symphony. For the chapter on *Das Lied von der Erde*, I have adopted the formula “DL-8,” for example, indicating the eighth example in that chapter. This was done to prevent unnecessary confusion that would have resulted from either applying the number 10 to the examples from the Ninth Symphony or from using the number 9 continuously throughout the analyses of both works. I have also indicated the measure numbers and, in as detailed a manner as possible, the instrumentation for each example. I have made an effort to be as accurate as I can in this interpolation based on the most current available scores. As mentioned above, when the example contains text, it is also replicated and translated in the example caption unless the text is given elsewhere.

The reproduction of the examples remains true to Bekker’s originals, with a few minor exceptions, some of them practical. The most significant exception is that instrument names and their abbreviations are given in English instead of German. All German score indications are preserved. Some of the original examples contain errors, some of them quite significant. In general, Bekker’s originals are preserved even with errors, except in certain cases such as incorrect key signatures. Any errors that I have discovered, including the few that have been corrected, are indicated in the chapter notes. The few practical deviations from Bekker’s original examples have also been noted. I have made every effort to proofread the reproductions as meticulously as possible.

Finally, I have indicated in brackets the page numbers of the original German edition for easy reference and comparison, locating the number before the largest possible portion of the original German text as given in English. The differences between German and English syntax

mean that in certain cases, the correspondence will not be exact, and some words will find themselves on the “wrong” side of the inserted page number. I believe that in all cases, my insertion of the numbers has been careful enough that it will aid readers with a basic proficiency in German to easily find corresponding passages of the original.

Boulder, Colorado, April 2012

KELLY DEAN HANSEN