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SIXTH SYMPHONY

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[207] Of Mahler's complete symphonies, apart from the Ninth, which occupies an exceptional place, the three instrumental symphonies, Nos. 5, 6, and 7, are the most seldom performed. Among these, the Sixth has had particularly scarce appearances on concert programs.¹ The main reason for this may be first of all that the works including voices make a stronger outward impression on listeners, and are also more open to understanding, while the purely instrumental compositions offer fewer points of connection. Added to this is that among all of Mahler's works, it is precisely the Sixth that is intellectually and sonically the most austere, the least accessible, and the most challenging. The austerity already speaks from the choice of key: A minor. It speaks from the course of the symphony, which is known by a subtitle, the "Tragic," that apparently stems from Mahler himself.² Finally, it speaks from the construction. More decisively than ever before, the essential elements of the symphonic plot are directed toward the Finale. This obtains absolute predominance, and demands, to a completely unusual degree, a continual increase of intellectual concentration. It would not be correct to press for more frequent performances of the Sixth Symphony in particular in order to overcome the obstacles that arise from it. Preconditions for the understanding of Gustav Mahler's oeuvre are that one should learn it in its entirety, see the connections from work to work, and comprehend how one grows out of the other and how one determines the other. Only then is it possible to see works of exceptional character such as the Sixth not as offspring of a strange and overwrought fantasy, but rather as organic members of a spiritual Becoming. Out of such an understanding of their developmental conditions is to be found the correct relationship to their apparent abnormalities. These really are only apparent. They attract attention when one considers the individual work outside the context of the neighboring works. When the connection is

established, one recognizes the whole as an organism growing in logical continuity. With no other symphonic composer is the unity of the complete works so sharply defined, and therefore their acquaintance as necessary as with Mahler, for no other similarly restricted himself to symphonic composition. Of his nine symphonies, Beethoven created eight in a single period of his life, between his 30th and 42nd years. He likewise maintained a certain consistency in the inner drive toward the symphonic form. All the same, he wrote large works in other areas—opera, piano, and chamber music—during this time. Bruckner's interest turned occasionally to the Mass, to choral compositions, and also to chamber music. They offered him options for the display of ideas that could find no room in the symphony. Mahler is the only one who exclusively dedicates his creative work to the symphony. With him, there never stirs a desire to write in other genres. In that area where he seems to leave the symphonic realm, in the composition of song, he really only seeks access to new symphonic structures. A unity in his symphonic work thus arises that cannot be found to the same degree anywhere else. Out of this follows the necessity of understanding the works not only as single appearances, but rather in their relationships to each other. Out of this follows the recognition that Mahler, not only within the symphonies, [208] established a new creative principle, perceived in a monumental way through the combination of several movements into parts. His constructive drive reached further, beyond the individual work. He placed this individual work into relationships to similar works, and unified it with them to arrive at a symphonic cycle. The First through the Fourth Symphonies make up such a cycle, as do the instrumental symphonies from the Fifth through the Seventh. The Eighth joins itself to them as a Finale. Another such group, whose closure is determined by mood, is that of *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony. These two

symphonic tetralogies, along with the epilogue of the two farewell works, are inwardly evolved units. The works stand in the same relationship to each other as do the movements of a single symphony. Only through this recognition of the whole can the single work be essentially and inwardly understood in its order.

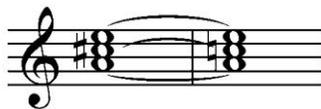
The Sixth Symphony in particular requires a comparative reference of its musical and intellectual construction to the two adjacent works. Mahler's view of life is not pessimistic. He understands well the certain suffering in the destiny of the individual. Yet life always appears worth living to him. With all his senses he loves the earth, from youth on through a fulfilled, happy adulthood, and on up until the melancholy farewell blessing of the solitary one. Of the 39 movements in his nine symphonies, only ten finish in minor. Nothing could be further from him than the proclamation of an apocalypse as the artistic formation of a message of destruction. Especially not after he had just risen up over the grief of the past in order to greet the "joyous light of the world" in the Fifth Symphony, and to allow the unconquerable source of creativity and work to bubble up in the Finale. Perhaps just now, however, the question about the relationship of the striving individual to the powers of this world must have pressed itself upon him. No longer the question regarding internal inhibitions, which were conquered by the Fifth Symphony, but rather the question about the external, the resistance of matter. He had felt exactly this with a consistent and particular gravity, and it became for Mahler a symbol for the idea of the tragic. "I have always honestly tried to set my goal high. My efforts could not always be crowned with success. The resistance of matter, the malice of the object is handed to nobody as it is to the practicing artist. Yet I have always placed my whole being upon it, and subjected my person to the cause, placing duty above my inclinations." In 1907, Mahler wrote

this in the farewell letter to his Vienna musicians.³ The Sixth arose a few years earlier, from 1903 to 1904. It may well be that even at that time, when Mahler's work in Vienna was already leaning toward its end and embittering battles often paralyzed the flight of his ideas, similar thoughts and moods arose in him. Their precipitation was formed into the Sixth. It signifies no conclusive confession, but more likely a moving episode in Mahler's life. An internal crisis that seizes the strong one more violently, the more he becomes aware of his solitude.

These are the contrasts from which the tragedy of the work emerges: consciousness of solitude, such as had resulted as a consequence of the development toward the Fifth Symphony, and recognition of the resistance of matter. The [209] Fifth Symphony reflected in its course the happiness of creation and of "becoming lost" to the world in the song. The Sixth leads into the tragedy of loneliness. It is to be understood as a fight of the will against the inflexible, the crushing, and the blunt. For these contrasts, solitude and the battle against matter, Mahler again created sound symbols: cowbells and a hammer. Both are not to be understood as the superficial employment of unusual sound production. They are "intended as highly symbolic."⁴ Cowbells are, according to Mahler's own words, the last sound that still penetrates from the earth to the solitary one on the highest peak, a symbol of complete aloneness, of standing high above the world.⁵ They ring out in those places where the music achieves its most extreme sense of distance: before the closing section of the first movement, which brings an ascent to the heights, in the Andante, which represents the dream and rapture of the solitary one, and in the Finale, in preparation for the last struggle. The second symbol is the hammer. Mahler prescribes the sound of the hammer at three places in the Finale: "Kurzer, mächtig aber dumpf hallender Schlag von nicht metallischem Charakter" ("Short, powerful, but dull echoing blow of nonmetallic

character”). This sound effect was also ridiculed and made the subject of cheap jokes, and also criticized as unaesthetic. One like the other is based on pathetic misunderstanding. Mahler envisioned the suggestion of an intervention from something otherworldly, something overpowering, something fateful, something against whose shattering, supernatural effect man can no longer fight.⁶ He arrives at the edge of his capacity, but wishes to extend beyond this and is struck to the ground. This is the meaning of the hammer.

Besides the sound color symbols, the Sixth also has a motivic one. In its idea as well as in the nature of its application it is also an innovation in the symphonic art. Mahler gives the symphony a motto in the form of a short motive, the change from A major to A minor:



[Example 6-1: A-major—A-minor motto]

It is not a theme. Because of its purely harmonic appearance, without a melodic or rhythmic physiognomy, it was not suited as such. It does not even provide the foundation for thematic or motivic formation. It appears, however, in all the decisive moments of the symphonic narrative, now in held whole-measure chords, now dissolved into hard-thrusting eighth notes, always a determinant, like an irrevocable sentence of fate. In this short harmonic formula, Mahler has pressed out the pure content of that which hovered before him as basic knowledge: the sense of being powerfully pressed down, the downward pull from major to minor, from the major to the minor third. It is the only musical event of the motto, but it is a deeply characteristic one. The remembrance is here awakened to a work that lies far behind, the Second Symphony. Its first movement also ends in the sounds of the suspended alternation of major and minor, until

suddenly the major third is decisively knocked down to minor. What was a short episode in the early work here becomes a fundamental symbol, such that Mahler neither before this nor in the following works again employed. The note sequence A–G–E that pervades *Das Lied von der Erde* most likely rests upon similar ideas, but it does not have the same sonic and pictorial strength as the motto of the Sixth, and is also not as intentionally led into the consciousness of the hearer, but rather works more as a secret stimulating impetus.

[210] With such an elemental subject, the orchestral resources naturally needed to be stretched again to the utmost level. There is an increase in number even in comparison to the Fifth Symphony. Woodwinds are quadrupled throughout, clarinets supplemented by the shrill D clarinet. The horn group grows from six to eight, the group of trumpets from four to six, and the trombones are increased from three to four. The percussion consists of thirteen instruments: timpani, glockenspiel, cowbells, deep bell sounds, bass drum, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, slapstick (whip), xylophone, tam-tam, rute, and hammer.⁷ Despite this massive contingent, to which a celesta also comes for the first time in Mahler, and despite individual sound clusters of explosive power, the complete effect of this symphony is less violent than that of the Fifth. Mahler does reach for individual intensifying devices of the most unusual dynamic power. His disposal of the complete forces, however, is strikingly economical. He avoids the acoustically demanding chorale effects, in particular those of the heavy brass. He also forms the themes without any preliminary view of their presentation by the brass instruments. Woodwinds and strings take a stronger share of the melodic lead than in the Fifth. The primitive choral contrasts shown by the orchestra of the Fifth, which gave the dynamic construction a terraced quality, are changed for the sake of a more transparent line of sound, a more strongly individualized

treatment of instruments.

In the formal construction, Mahler avoids indicating a division into parts. The symphony is in a simple four-movement plan: Allegro energico, Andante moderato, Scherzo, Finale. Despite the lack of authentic prescriptions for structural division, one can group the symphony into two parts, in that one groups the three opening movements together and considers them as a preparation for the Finale. One can also assume a three-level structure similar to that of the Fifth and later of the Seventh: both outer movements as cornerstones, the Andante and Scherzo as a middle group. The triple division is justified insofar as the actual symphonic narrative is prepared in the first movement and delivered in the finale. The Andante and Scherzo, the one as a reverie and the other as a comical fantasy, stand like intermezzos between the two outer movements. One could interpret the first movement as the forward march of a wanderer in high places. Carrying heavy unanswered questions and doubts, he strives upward in solitude, in order to find, far from the daily routine, strength for the confrontation with the puzzles of existence that press upon him. The idyll of the Andante, which builds up to a visionary excitement, and the eerie manifestations of the Scherzo bring diversions and new outlooks, but no solution. Only the Finale conjures the elemental powers, stretches the forces to their utmost intensity, and compels the absolute baring of the inner drive, inhibited by no more restrictions. Will and fate grapple with each other, and fate introduces the three hammer blows upon which the will is broken. The tragedy of individual existence, the predetermination of the destruction, and the powerlessness against dark, incomprehensible forces all lead to the downfall. 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 [211] 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. The tragedy of the inevitable, naturally determined destruction of all striving through otherworldly powers, a depiction of a hopeless fight against fate that cannot be resisted by any human power, finds here a direct and precipitous blow. 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.

The first movement is driving march. More generally, it is a march built upon “violent but precise” (“heftig, aber markig”) striding rhythms, filled with an energy of motion that knows no hesitation, no softness, no consideration besides its incessantly piercing and driving will. Mahler used the type of the march frequently in his symphonies, so frequently in fact that some critics have found therein a sign of weakness or perhaps of single-mindedness. Up until the Sixth, every symphony, with the exception of the Fourth, contains a movement in the character of a march. The First Symphony begins with the cheerful wanderer piece, and the Third with the entry march of Pan and his disciples. The Second and Fifth open with funeral marches, and another funeral march is found in the First Symphony as its third movement. Mahler also often makes use of the march in his songs, specifically in the youthful songs and the *Wunderhorn* songs. “Der Schildwache Nachtlid” begins “marchlike” (“marschartig”), “Trost im Unglück” likewise with an “audacious” (“verwegen”) march melody. “Heute marschieren wir” carries the “jaunty march tempo” (“kecke Marschtempo”) already in the opening text, the intimate,

profound “Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen” is, despite the marking of “verträumt, leise” (“dreamy, quietly”), the descriptive presentation of a march fantasy, “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz”, the cheerful “Scheiden und Meiden”, and the melancholy “Nicht Wiedersehen” are pieces of deliberately pronounced march character, but above all are the two most large-scale *Wunderhorn* songs, the “Tambourg’sell” with the characteristic tempo “Gemessen, dumpf” (“Measured, muffled”) and “Revelge” with the prescriptive “Marching continually forward” (“Marschierend. In einem fort”).

The comparison of the *Wunderhorn* songs with the Rückert songs shows that in the later songs Mahler no longer uses the type of the march that was preferred by him through the years. He also gradually drops it in the symphonies. The opening movements of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies are Mahler’s last march structures in a larger style. The series closes with the first movement of the Sixth. Only the first “Nachtmusik” of the Seventh still carries march-like traits, but they are of a completely different kind than the earlier large march movements. There the march is a stylistic device, while before it was a formative idea. Therein is found the meaning of the march type for Mahler the symphonist and the overall musician as such. It is not that he took the march as a pattern. The variety of the march characters in the symphonies as well as in the songs shows that there is no question of a poverty in creation or of the need for reliance [212] on certain basic rhythmic types. The march idea was important to Mahler in other respects during the first creative period. As a rhythmic and architectonic form it corresponded to the folk qualities of melody that Mahler emphasized in this period. It provided a suitable frame for the simply cut themes, and also offered the possibility for broad harmonic periods of intensification laid out in large expanses. In this respect the march corresponds to the style of the *Wunderhorn*

time. Its frequent use in the songs and symphonies of the first half of Mahler's creative output can be explained by the desire for a rhythmic and architectonic formal design that was appropriate for the basic stylistic attitude of this time.

Beyond this, however, there was still something else that bound Mahler to the march type up until the Sixth Symphony, and this is to be seen as an actual formal idea. In the march was included the presentation of progress, of movement, and of emerging in the motion and in the unceasing variation. Out of this idea, the march becomes an integral part of Mahler's symphonic nature. It was this rearranging of itself from moment to moment, this constant actuality, this consistent forward striding for the sake of striding that corresponded to an inner need to create in the Mahlerian will, which was more drive than consciousness, more joy in activity as such than a well-defined goal. "Marschierend. In einem fort," this performance indication of "Revelge," is characteristic of that which Mahler requires of the march in general. He desired this "in einem fort" ("continually forward"), with restlessness as a stylistic and formal principle that would then lead to a particular result in a particular case. And so the most large-scale movement of the *Wunderhorn* symphonies, the opening movement of the Third, was identified as a musical and formal representation of "Becoming." The tonal symbolization of this Becoming could not be seen more urgently than through the "Marschierend, in einem fort" that stands as an invisible motto above the score.

Mahler gradually let go of this basic idea of determining form, the representation of emerging, in the second half of his creative output. Just as his song settings turn in their character and attitude of feeling from direct experience to a description of conditions, so also does his symphonic composition lose in some degree the actual representation of experience. It

passes over into a statement of confession that determines other stylistic structures. A contrapuntally rich and motivic life arises. The structural lines are more distinctly demarcated than in the earlier works, which give preference to the technique of purely linear expression. It is not concerned with an explication of ideas that branches into a psychological or analytical basis of thinking. Mahler's counterpoint is a synthesis, built from a summation of themes that becomes necessary in the later symphonies in light of the fullness and diversity of ideas that crash against each other.

The gradual turning away from the march type is therefore related to the stylistic change in Mahler's creation, but without corresponding to this change in every aspect. The realizing, the attraction of immediate clarity, which bound Mahler to the march, was in effect beyond the stylistic divide of the Fifth Symphony. It again came into play at the moment where an internal occasion prompted Mahler to turn to the march form. Such an [213] occasion arose with the first movement of the Sixth. It was meant to musically symbolize an upward thrust or an ascent. Similar to the idea of Becoming in the opening movement of the Third, so in the Sixth is the idea of climbing, of the creative will gradually lifting itself. For this idea, whose representation again requires an immediate presence and an exciting experience, the march was the closest symbol and the most suitable formal and rhythmic tonal embodiment. It takes nothing away from vitality of this march "in einem fort" that Mahler here, for the only time after the First Symphony, repeats the exposition note for note, as was the custom in the classical symphony. Until now, the repetition had become superfluous in light of the extensive layout and the advancing development, which tolerated no reflection, in Mahler's symphonic movements. In the Sixth it proved itself not only as not disturbing, but even desirable. The movement was laid

out in a comparatively concise way, and an expansion of content to add more weight with respect to the Finale seemed appropriate. There was no danger of recapitulating musical stages of development that had already been overcome. The goal of this movement's development is only to make the upward thinking comprehensible. This upward thrust has nothing of the enthusiastic energy of youth. It grows out of hardship, out of necessity, and out of the recognition of difficult, decisive questions that can only be resolved at the most extreme heights. This upward thrust deploys itself in the face of a violently pressing force. It arises not from joyful excitement, but rather from the dutiful force of will.

Like the complete structure, the individual themes of the movement stand under the sign of the basic idea. A short introduction begins. It is only five measures, but in them the formal will of the whole is already concentrated. Mahler, who until now had preferred German movement headings and only occasionally employed Italian indications, uses both of them this time. This was surely not from a whim, but because he perceived the need for supplementation. “Allegro energico, ma non troppo, heftig, aber markig” (“Allegro energico, ma non troppo, violent, but precise”)—both together give the mixture of defiance, energy, and wildness that Mahler here imagines. The basses enter with rough, thrusting, restlessly driving *staccato* quarter notes on A. The snare drum accompanies with brief strokes. Climbing from below to above, strings and woodwinds find their way in. A short-breathed motive, lifted stepwise with stubborn emphasis on the weak beats, thrusts itself jerkily upward, as if a burden must be shaken off in order to obtain freedom of forward motion:

Allegro energico, ma non troppo
Heflig, aber markig

f Basses
f Strings *immer stacc.*
 1. Viol. *sf*
cresc.

[Example 6-2: strings, mm. 1-5, harmonies not complete on upbeat figures]

With the completion of the fifth bar, the load is thrown off. The theme mightily strides out:

Viol. *ff*
ff
ff *ff*
8va basso *Tbn.*
cresc.
fff

[Example 6-3: violins, mm. 6-13; trombones, mm. 10-12]

[214] The most extreme strength of tone is summoned. On the upbeats, full of fanatical energy, the violins, in order to strengthen the sound, must play the A doubled, with the fourth finger and the open string. The unbridled approaching of the theme is marked through this as well as through the two almost roaring chords, with which eight horns support the opening measures. The theme initially obtains no closure, and is only a restless will. The first statement in A minor is followed in the fifth measure by a repetition in D minor from three trombones, interrupted by the precipitous, triple *forte* motive of a seventh in the strings:



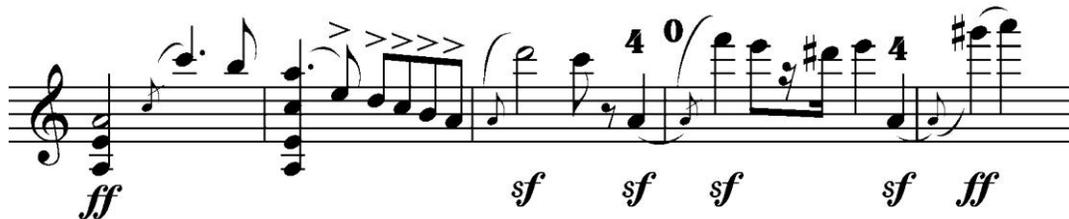
[Example 6-4: strings, m. 13]

The bass rhythms of the opening immediately press after it. It sounds “garishly” (“grell”) from the oboes:



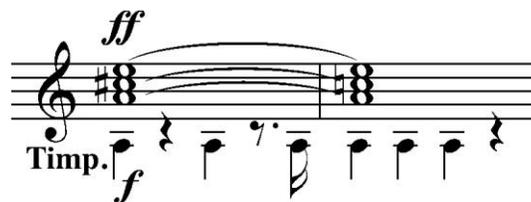
[Example 6-5: oboes, mm. 14-18; first violins, mm. 16, 18; first and second violins, mm. 19-21; trumpet, mm. 20-22]

Rise and fall alternate. While trumpets climb upward with the theme, violins and violas plunge precipitously to the depths. But the intensity of the motion does not subside. It leads from the E in the basses to a new A-minor idea related to the first:



[Example 6-6: unison strings and winds, mm. 25-29 (not all instruments remain in unison)]

Characteristic of the themes of this movement and of the entire work are the wide leaps spanning several octaves in almost every measure. The jaggedness of this thematic material, which reaches passionately beyond itself, corresponds to the unbridled defiance of the will. It is given a contrasting supplement by the basses, which tenaciously persist on one note, thrusting in restless uniformity. Without pausing, the march drives on. Horns and trumpets bring the theme even more glaringly to the forefront without adding anything materially new. Over a pedal point on E, the winds flood in mighty waves to the depths until they break off with booming timpani beats on A, accompanied by a snare drum roll. Despite the silence of the other instruments, this is no abatement of strength. The expression, stripped of its tonal character, still intensifies its elemental power, and the tension releases itself like a thunderstorm in rhythms of the two percussion instruments. During this roll and these timpani strokes—Mahler requires two timpanists for its execution—the motto suddenly cuts in:



[Example 6-7: oboes, trumpets, timpani, mm. 59-60]

It is a curious tonal color. Three trumpets and four oboes enter at the same time. The trumpets begin *fortissimo* in major, fading away *pianissimo* to minor, while the oboes, with a doubled middle voice for emphasis of the change, are reversed, growing from *piano* to *fortissimo*. The sound is altered as it rings out; it begins in the metallic, shining character of the trumpets and changes to the transparent, glassy tone of the oboe. The sentence of fate interrupts the strict course of the action. Brass and percussion fall silent. A mystical dusk: soaring half-bar

Mahler because of such themes that are not completely successful in execution, and his creative capabilities have been doubted or even disparaged by making reference to these kinds of weaknesses. There are indisputable weaknesses. They are not, however, weaknesses of creative power. He who could create nine symphonies of such weighty construction could not show his incapacity with one relatively insignificant secondary theme. To a greater extent, a weakness of the Mahlerian creative principle in general is shown here. One looks into Mahler's workshop and one sees how and with which prerequisites he forms themes. The sensual and perceptual appearance of the sound is for him a secondary concern. Of real importance is the meaning of the sound. It emerges from the presentation, and through the presentation, phrases of similar sound and direction can obtain different fundamental interpretations. Mahler thus structures his themes from the conception of their semantic effect, but he does not write symphonies simply because he has usable themes. In general, both the idea of the presentation and thematic individuality were able to come together. These were the creatively pure moments. Occasionally the thematic force was less strong. Then Mahler followed the idea of the presentation alone. His musical sensibility was symbolically idealistic to such a great degree that he would not have been able to apportion such a decisive meaning to the sensual appeal of the sound. Those who heard and interpreted for themselves Mahler's themes that were imperfect in a material sense needed to recognize that they sufficed in their places. Despite this, it would be a futile vindication to deny their openness to attack. Such themes are found in places with a secondary order of importance, and make their most notable appearances in the Sixth and Seventh symphonies. A decreasing power would have necessarily stood out to an increasing degree in the works that followed. But neither the Eighth nor the Ninth symphonies, nor *Das*

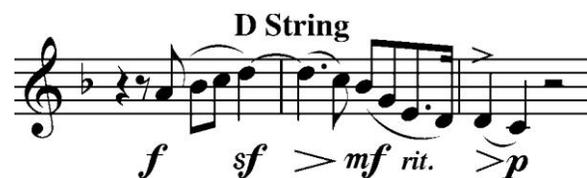
Lied von der Erde warrants such an accusation. One can therefore only establish, here and in other similar episodes yet to be noted, an erroneous low regard of the sonic materials and an overestimating of the presentational effect, [216] too strong an emphasis on intellectually determined formation, and a one-sided disregard of impulsively determined invention. Therein is documented the individuality of Mahler's artistry. It was not divinely perfect, but rather it was conditioned by humanity. It drew its best, innermost strengths from its deep humanity. Only through this was humanity in the natural sense consciously lifted to an object of artistic representation. That which is torn, suffering, or tormented, that which longs for recovery, the powerful stretching of the forces, and the overflowing of passion, all provided the impetus for creation. It therefore needed to reflect the conditions of this deeply human art: its intuitive weaknesses and a power of expression that was occasionally only hinted at and not always capable of objectively pure articulation.⁹

Mahler demands a sweep from the second theme here, the expression of an enthusiastic impulse that presses outward and upward. For this, the simple melody with its somewhat thin intellectual kernel and its short-breathed sequences¹⁰ is exactly right for him. It has the unrelenting drive that continually provides its own momentum, and it has the traits of enthusiasm that the austere first theme lacked and that make this second theme sound like an encouraging, ecstatic march song. The first upswing is followed by a startling holdup, a remembrance of the opening theme in sharp *pizzicati* and short wind rhythms:



[Example 6-10: violins, oboes, clarinets, mm. 91-94]

It is only a slight obstruction. With even more liveliness than before, the F-major theme begins anew. The upper voices of the woodwinds intone it, horns and trumpets accompany with imitative, confirming, encouraging calls, while strings, harps, and celesta play around it with lush, rolling figuration. The song, swelling up, marches and climbs in jubilant ecstasy. It comes to an end in an almost Italianate style, with a broad cadence in which the melody very slowly drips away. The germ phrase of the theme is continually repeated until it softly sinks away in a dreamlike F major:



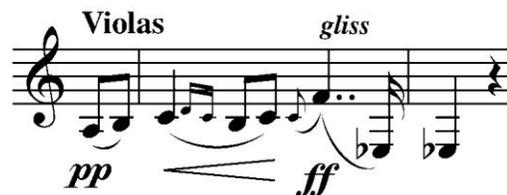
[Example 6-11: first violins, mm. 116-118]

Out of this waning F major, the thrusting opening rhythm, like a call to action, stretches itself out with suddenly swelling force. The introduction rises for the second time, and the developments that have been traversed thus far follow for the second time, as if a single survey had not been urgent enough, or as if the forces had not been enough established for that which is to come.¹¹ Where this will lead has until now been only briefly and incidentally implied. The first and second themes in themselves carry no deep contrasts. They are different and individualized, but in intention and nature they are corresponding manifestations of the same basic will, urging to activity. The one moves forward harshly and defiantly, with grim determination, quickly knocking down obstacles, while the other rides on enthusiastic wings, with a joyful, hopeful swing, storming heedlessly past all hindrances. The two complement each other; the opposition is between them and the fatalistic motto. Until now it had only appeared

after the first execution of the opening theme, but then it was suppressed by the song theme.

The development section that now follows grows out of the idea of this opposition. It is built in four large stages. Each part brings a consolidation and [217] discussion of the important fundamental ideas. It flows into a restatement of the opening that is not a repetition, but instead directs the coming development into new paths through the turn to major.

After the song theme fades away for the second time, the march rhythms of the first theme begin again, this time not urging impetuously, but quietly, almost timidly knocking. Only warmly flickering *sforzati* betray the restrained passions:



[Example 6-12: violas and cellos (with clarinets and bassoons), mm. 126-128]

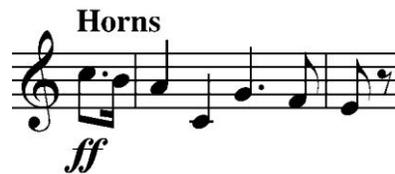
This supplementary phrase to the march motive is a new addition. It alternates with the falling trill motive that had already made previous appearances and now independently comes to the fore:



[Example 6-13: flutes 1 and 2 and oboe 1, mm. 129-130]

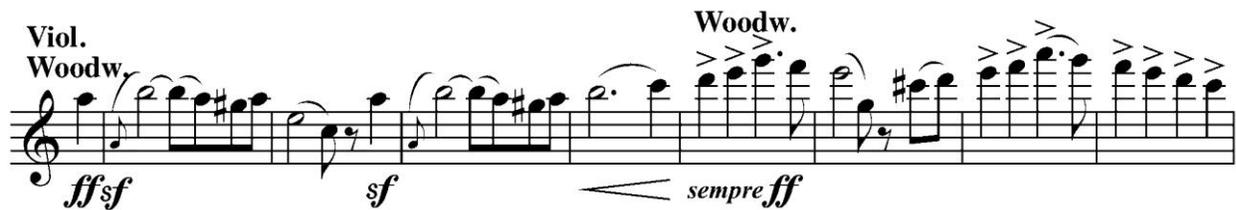
The thematic call, resounding like a signal through the brass, appears as the third member of this

group:



[Example 6-14: horns, mm. 137-139]

Out of the interplay of these three motives arises a vehemently explosive E-minor outbreak of the opening theme. The winds obtain supremacy. Trumpets, horns, and trombones climb sharply upward. In the strings, the march rhythm drives forward, and in the winds, the trill motive sounds, emphasized by the shrill rattle of the xylophone. A new and passionate theme presses forward:



[Example 6-15: violins, flutes, E-flat clarinet, mm. 157-161; flutes, oboes, all clarinets, mm. 161-165]

It is rounded into periods like a song. As an answer, the song theme itself arises from the lower voices to the top, supplemented by sharp march rhythms from the brass and cut by trilled chords from the woodwinds. A violent tempest of all forces, *fortissimo*, suddenly turns to a shimmering *pianissimo* tremolo in the violins. The song theme trails away in the woodwinds. Only celesta and basses, the latter on a mystical low D, continue to play. A bright C major spans above this. Cow bells ring, and in the flutes, a promising C-major call of a fourth:



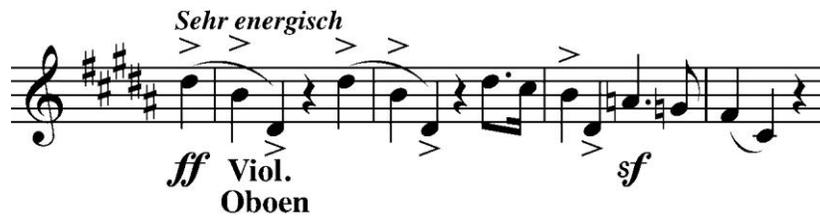
[Example 6-16: flutes, mm. 200-203]

The timpani answer quietly on A and D. The motto sounds dismissively from muted horns, transposed from A to C. As in the exposition, it is supplemented by those chorale-like harmonic progressions. Yet the cowbells continue to sound, as does the fourth. Strings and celesta glide downward in gentle *tremolo* harmonies. The song melody is heard in inversion, transposed to G major, divested of its impetuous sweep, and re-interpreted, “*grazioso*,” as the expression of an idyllic, peaceful mood:



[Example 6-17: 1st flute, oboe, clarinet, mm. 217-222 (with other flutes from m. 220, 2nd oboe from m. 221)]

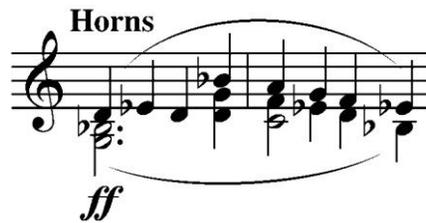
G major changes into a tenderly singing E-flat major. The horn enters in counterpoint to the upward directed violin melody with the theme in its original form. Then again cowbells, the calling fourth, and those mysterious harmonic progressions, portentous of fate, sinking into dreams and forgetting the present. Then, Tempo primo subito, the opening theme flares up “very energetically” (“*sehr energisch*”) in B major:



[Example 6-18: violins and oboes, mm. 250-254]

[218] The third part of the development begins.¹² The energy is stretched to the utmost level.

There are no more contrasts. The motive of those portentous chorale harmonies is also carried into the stream and changed to a more urgent song:



[Example 6-19: horns, mm. 271-272]

Everything comes to a climax in an enthusiastic resumption of the initial song of the storm, the opening theme. It is now heard no more in minor. It obtains a confident major sound, a jubilant A major. The first rising idea appears as a symbol of the will to victory. The recapitulation begins in a livelier, richer, and stronger presentation than before. The transition to the second theme also deviates from the earlier one, with accelerated rhythms, decorative figures, and divested of its spectral paralysis. The second theme is now a pure song, transposed from F major to D major, radiant, warm, ringing out with a large and fulfilled tone on the G string of the violins, and fading away with a deep contra-B that is not cut off.¹³ As if in warning, the shadow of the first theme rises in the trombones over a softly throbbing F-sharp in the basses:

[Example 6-20: trombones, contrabassoon, basses, timpani, mm. 376-379]

Più mosso subito, “pressing forward as if in a rage” (“wie wütend dreinfahrend”), the full orchestra suddenly flares up:

[Example 6-21: first violins (*tremolo* not indicated), bassoons, bass clarinet, trombone 3, with partial doubling from four horns, trombones 1 and 2, and tuba, mm. 382-385]

From the basses, the song theme presses urgently upward, and the fanfare motives of the first theme are heard from the winds. Tempestuous, broadly expansive chords, which then plunge down again, cry out from the trombones:

[Example 6-22: trombones, tuba, clarinets, bassoons, mm. 407-409; violins, m. 409]¹⁴

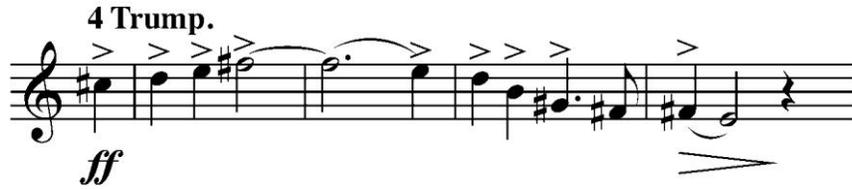
The first theme is combined with the inversion of the second:

[Example 6-23: oboes, cellos, basses, mm. 410-412; violins, mm. 410-411, clarinets, mm. 411-412]

The themes and rhythms push into each other ever more closely, and sharp march chords sound “roughly” (“roh”) from the trombones. The physical strength of the tone production climbs to the highest level as strings and flutes disappear entirely. Only brass and the sharply piercing woodwind register, with the E-flat clarinet, rage forth in chopping rhythms. Out of this confusion of harmonies, a pure C major breaks through from the trumpet. Horn fanfares confirm it and a C-major *tremolo* shimmers in the celesta and second violins, while the first theme is heard from the first violins, also in plain C-major:

[Example 6-24: trumpets, mm. 428-432; horns, mm. 429-432; second violins and celesta, mm. 429-430]¹⁵

C major shifts directly to D-flat major. The song theme swells mightily in the brass choir. Over rolling fourths from the timpani, it is heard in a hymn-like augmentation, coming from the trumpets like a song of triumph: [219]



[Example 6-25: trumpets, mm. 444-448]

The path from the A-minor opening to the A-major summit has been found. A mighty stream of joy pours out. The fourths in the timpani and basses roll forth until the end. The chorale solemnly sounds from the trombones. The song theme broadens more and more into a song of victory whose individual motives, resoundingly exchanged by all the voices, now proudly commanding, now joyfully soaring, are brought together in a turbulent closing chorus of jubilation.

The usual meaning of the movements within the symphony appears to be reversed here. The first movement brings upswing and triumph, the last breakdown and catastrophe. Regardless of this inversion of the usual constructive type, Mahler rarely ever held himself so strictly to the formal scheme as in this piece. With the repeat of the exposition, the precisely planned development, the carefully worked-out reprise, and the large-scale coda, it could be taken as a textbook example of symphonic sonata construction.¹⁶ These formal relationships to the old-style symphony are certainly of a mainly external nature. The placement of the sections toward each other, their meaning for the continuation of the symphonic action, and the constantly rising line of ideas and their presentation all differ substantially from the layout of the older symphony, which only built up to the development, and whose second part was mostly recapitulation. Most meaningful for Mahler in this respect is the coda. With the C-major turn of the trumpets and horns, it brings the verdict and determines the ending of the movement.¹⁷ The

motto itself comes forward characteristically, but not really decisively. Its significance is restrained to that of a preliminary announcement, and in its opposition to the themes, it works more passively than as a directly intervening force. In the course of the movement, then, the symbolism of the motto is not clarified, and the basic idea of the tragic, the powerful depression from courageous major down to the gloomy minor mood, is not confirmed, but rather disputed. In reality, this opening movement does not touch at all on the fundamental problem of the work: on the battle with matter, with the blind power of destiny, and with the opposition of the world. What it should and does bring is the consolidation of individual strength, which later on must take up the fight with the elemental powers. These appear here only as premonitions, as a strengthening challenge. The purpose of the first movement is to bring about this strengthening. The triumphant mood in which it ends is the jubilation of a personality that has come to itself, climbed to the heights and become freed from everyday life, no more, no less. The assignment of the two following middle movements is to further effect this consolidation. Combined with the first, they form the prelude or the first part of the tragic plot that comes to its conclusion in the Finale.

Originally the Scherzo followed the first movement, and the Andante came after it as the third. Mahler later reversed the order that still stands in the score today, and placed the Andante in second position.¹⁸ The reasons for this [220] are not known. Perhaps Mahler was concerned with giving the lively, agitated opening movement a sharper contrast through the Andante than was offered by the Scherzo. In any case, the exchange shows that a progressive action within the middle movements is not expressed. The Andante and Scherzo are free, fantasy-like

supplements to the opening movement. Its victorious, joyous ending provides their basis. The Andante moderato in E-flat major begins “tenderly but expressively” (“zart aber ausdrucksvoll”) with a melody in songlike fashion. Like the song theme of the first movement, it does not count among the most strongly inspired demonstrations of the Mahlerian spirit. The opening, with a languishing rise of a sixth, has an almost ironically popular quality. Only the surprising turn to minor in the first and third measures gives the melody a more original feature, and this then seeks to establish itself in a conclusion with modulations that seem somewhat convoluted and forced. One could presume that Mahler himself did not find any pure joy in this theme. It is striking that he allows it to step back and gradually disappear within the movement while the whole picture unfolds ever more marvelously as one that becomes alienated from worldly matters and strives upward toward distant dream worlds. Or is it perhaps intentional that the first melody is given a particular worldly tone in order to make the forgetting of everything that is bound to the earth and its substance more distinctly noticeable later on?¹⁹ The violins sing thus:

Andante moderato
1. Viol. zart aber ausdrucksvoll

The musical score shows a single staff for the first violin. It starts with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Andante moderato' and the performance instruction is '1. Viol. zart aber ausdrucksvoll'. The music begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some chromatic movement. There are dynamic markings including *pp subito* and *fp* (fortissimo piano) later in the passage.

[Example 6-26: first violins, upbeat to m. 1-m. 7, with flute doubling in mm. 5-7]

The violin song falters here, as if it no longer finds itself at ease in the somewhat tormented, probing chromatic line. In continuation, the winds lead back to E-flat major with a rocking

eighth-note motive that meaningfully steps forward:

Oboe

p < *sf* *p*

[Example 6-27: oboe, mm. 7-9]²⁰

The violins now add a closing phrase in which the rocking motive is widened to a cajoling sixth:

1. Viol. *pp* *sf* 2. Viol. *pp subito* *pp subito*

[Example 6-28: first violins, mm. 10-16; second violins, mm. 13-16, with some clarinet doubling]

It spins itself dreamily further, moving from low clarinets and violas to the flutes, which are divided into four parts and trade voices in pairs. Under this, the English horn sings a melancholy minor-key tune:

Engl. Horn *p espr.* Flutes *p* Cl. *p* *rit.* *dim.*

[Example 6-29: English horn, mm. 22-25; flute and clarinet 1, mm. 24-27; clarinet 2, mm. 25-27]

The minor mood, however, is not yet capable of establishing itself, and merely drifts dreamily through the voices. The major melody of the opening arises anew in the horn, freely paraphrasing the original line. The first bars remain quite simple: strings without first violins accompany in peaceful, muted harmonies, and only the harps provide rhythmic broken chords. The second half of the melody blooms up with unusual warmth of orchestral sound and concludes with a long, lovingly executed cadence with tenderly entwining [221] motives. E-flat major sinks away, and the secretive sound of a string harmonic on G leads into other spheres. The previous motives continue to be heard, but the character of their sound, and with it their expressive value, is transformed. The solemn isolation of E-flat major has vanished, and the new E-minor color provides a curiously tense, expectant mood. Suddenly, the minor-key veil is lifted. A radiant E major shines out: undulating triplets in the string basses, upward swelling harmonies in harp and woodwinds, and over them luminous, solemn horn chords and the rocking motive in the trumpets:

The musical score shows three staves. The top staff is for Trumpets (Trump.), the middle for Horns, and the bottom for Woodwinds (Woodw.). The Horns part begins with a forte (f) chord. The Trumpets part enters with a forte (f) triplet. The Woodwinds part enters with a forte (f) triplet. The score includes dynamic markings such as sf, p, and f, and articulation marks like accents and slurs.

[Example 6-30: 6 horns and trumpet, mm. 85-90; flutes and oboes, mm. 89-90]

It is a moment that is vividly reminiscent of the E-major breakthrough in the slow movement of the Fourth Symphony, to which it has an actual internal relationship. As it was there and in the Finale of the Fourth, E major is the key of transfiguration, the expression of rapture, the vision of the otherworldly.²¹ The world is distant, and the idea of eternity opens heaven to the solitary

one. The sound of the cowbells, the last call from the sinking world, becomes ever weaker. The promising sounds of the horns climb higher, as if they wish to continue proclaiming more and clearer things from distant worlds. Yet it is only a vision. The gleam is extinguished again as the view and the senses slowly turn back to the earth. The opening melody sounds again in E-flat major, distributed to the woodwinds, then the horn. An intimate counterpoint in the violins spreads itself over this, striving sweepingly to the heights, but with the gradual dying away of the melody it likewise loses itself in the depths:

The musical score is written on a single staff in E-flat major. It features several parts: Violins and Flutes (pp), Oboe (p), Horn (p espr.), and Woodwinds (p espr.). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

[Example 6-31: oboe and clarinet, mm. 99-100; first violins, mm. 100-105; flute, mm. 100-103; horn, mm. 101-104; bassoon, mm. 100-103; flute, oboe, and clarinet, m. 105]

A second secretive turn is born from the E-flat-major conclusion. Again through the string harmonic on G, but this time underlain by tenderly modulating harmonies, a change to C major is now carried out. Flutes and clarinets, “Misterioso,” intone something like an echo or a continuation of the last countermelody, while fragments of the opening theme in the bass voices, dreamy and “without expression” (“ohne Ausdruck”), seem like distant memories:

[Example 6-32: flute 1, clarinet 1, violas, cellos, mm. 115-118]

The dream spins itself further toward A major. The rocking motive is heard in the first horn, and flutes and violins cover it with atmospheric sounds that lose themselves “like a breath” (“wie ein Hauch”) in the ether. The melancholy minor tune of the English horn from the opening of the movement softly enters, now given to the oboe. All senses are sharpened to the highest degree, the stillness appears to become tone and sound, and no more earthly noise can be heard. Here now the melancholy tune once again breaks forth, given to horns, bassoons, violas, and cellos, and becoming passionately agitated. Is it the opposition between the celestial clarity in that peace of distant worlds and the [222] unsatisfied lament of one’s own that leads to the elemental explosion and the almost overpowering evocation of this minor-key manifestation? Is it an attempt to draw it over into the pure sphere of E major? The cowbells ring out, and the opening melody thrusts forth out of the depths in a mighty upward sweep from basses, bassoons, and tuba, then violas and cellos attempt to take it further. The sumptuously beautiful countermelody of the violins spreads itself above with wide bowing, and the full orchestra resounds with the highest intensity, “always with moving feeling, swelling up and down” (“immer mit bewegter Empfindung, auf- und abwogend”). The atmospheric E major does not grow to this fullness of life and strength, as it falls back to E-flat major. The sound floods into the movement of inner

life which can only again be awakened by the contemplation of transcendent revelations. The opening melody does not return again. It has disappeared, as if absorbed by the power of the melodic manifestations that now unfold. The rocking motive here comes meaningfully to the forefront. The stream of sound gradually abates, losing itself in individual lingering, singing, calling, echoing voices. Becoming ever slower and dimmer, it concludes in the dying notes of the flute and muted horns, blurring tenderly like the fading twilight afterglow.

As in the Fifth, it would also not be difficult to invent a programmatic interpretation of the Sixth Symphony. The intensifying structure of the first movement and the visionary sweep of the second, which lead to the catastrophic release of an impetuous fighting mood in the Finale, all give manifold clues to such an interpretation. The Scherzo, the third movement in the new ordering, could also easily be classified in such a poetic plot. One could think of a dance of elemental spirits and primeval creatures that can be perceived by the lonely wanderer in the heights far above the earth. Or one could interpret the whole as a picture of times of the day, sketched in huge outlines: morning, midday, dusk, and night, whereby the Scherzo would represent the fantastic activity of the twilight specters. These or similar such interpretations are in no way to be fundamentally dismissed, as long as they are not forcefully followed through on every point or indeed taken as authoritative explanations. Absolutely nothing can be explained by them. They only somewhat strengthen the impact of those things in the music that stimulate the imagination.²² With Mahler, conditions for such stimulation are always given, not only through the musical expression, but also through the vividness of his performance directions. If one were to summarize these utterances, however, one would see that they are substantial enough

in themselves that a further subjective interpretation with conceptual programmatic ideas is superfluous. This is also true of the Scherzo of the A-minor symphony. It joins itself to the sequence of those typical Mahlerian scherzo movements that lead from the Fish Sermon of the Second through the animal piece of the Third and the Dance of Death in the Fourth, and further to the spectral piece in the Seventh up through the grotesquerie of the Ninth. This is the basic type of Mahlerian scherzo. They are consistently movements of demonic and fantastic character, usually not vibrant and quick in rhythm, as in Beethoven's and Bruckner's scherzos, but more likely heavy or massive, emphasizing the burdensome weight and earthbound nature of the rhythm. [223] The Scherzo of the Fifth, full of worldly, joyful power, stands with the peasant dance of the First as the exceptional appearance among these pictures of somber fantasy.²³ The Scherzo of the Sixth also begins in an almost threatening manner. "Wuchtig" ("Heavy") is the indication of the heading, "beat three eighth notes without dragging" ("drei Achtel ausschlagen ohne zu schleppen"). The sharply accented rhythmic value of each eighth note should be preserved. The timpani alone beats out a firm eighth-note upbeat, then string basses and cellos follow "*forte, martellato*" with a beat for each bowing. Then the violins, violas and horns intone the sharply contoured theme. With tenacious persistence, it holds onto the incorrigible upbeat in the first two measures. The third measure brings a resolution of the melodic line that is still heavy, even somewhat bulky and burdensome:

Wichtig
Timpani, Basses

Viol.

f sf ff sf sf

sf fp fp

wie gepeitscht

[Example 6-33: timpani, cellos, and basses, upbeat to m. 1-m. 2; first violins, mm. 2-11 (joined by second violins, mm. 6-11 and violas, mm. 6-9)]

“As if whipped” (“wie gepeitscht”), demands Mahler of the two closing measures in the violins.

The expression of a dark wildness, forced into inflexible rhythmic bonds, is established right from the beginning of the movement, and followed through without heed to the sound.

Trombones and tuba thrust downward in hard crashing sixteenth-note first inversion chords:

ff Tbn.
Tuba

[Example 6-34: trombones and tuba, mm. 12-13]²⁴

The upper voices rush upward, whistling shrilly:

f sf sf

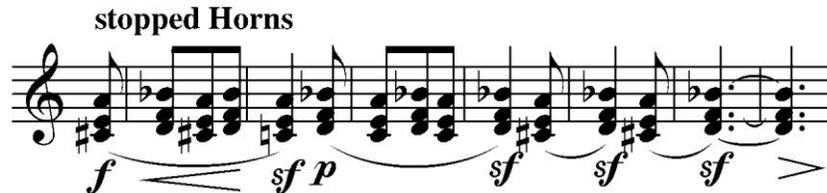
[Example 6-35: flutes, piccolos, oboes, clarinets, mm. 11-13]

The plunging trill motive from the first movement is heard:



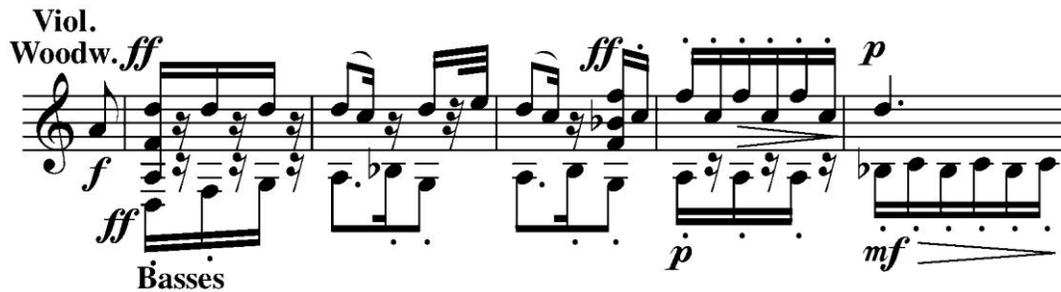
[Example 6-36: first violins (flutes, piccolo, E-flat clarinet), mm. 15-19]

In an inexorable sequence, the clumsy dance rhythm pushes further. A winding chromatic sequence of harmonies from stopped horns and trumpets seeks to reach new harmonic paths:



[Example 6-37: stopped horns mm. 26-33]²⁵

The dance turns from A minor to F major, where follows a dance tune of similar strength to the first, but less gloomy:



[Example 6-38: first violins, cellos, basses (flute, oboe), mm. 41-46]

It solidifies itself in the woodwind choir, through an alternation of triple and quadruple meter, to

a self-willed rhythmic line:

The image shows a musical score for Flutes, Oboes, and Clarinets (Cl.). The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef. It consists of six measures. The first measure is in 3/8 time, followed by a 4/8 measure, then a 3/8 measure, a 4/8 measure, and finally a 3/8 measure. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Dynamic markings are placed below the staff: *p* (piano) under the first measure, *ff* (fortissimo) under the second measure, *p* under the third measure, *f* (forte) under the fourth measure, and *ff* under the fifth measure. There are also hairpins indicating crescendos and decrescendos.

[Example 6-39: flutes, oboes, clarinets, mm. 50-55]

Yet this theme, whose melody has already been somewhat cultivated, passes fleetingly by. The tougher natural strength of the first theme presses impetuously upward, shoves the new melodic impulses to the side, and pushes through with the greatest effort of sonic energy. Downward sliding first-inversion chords from trombones and horns interrupt the rhythmic pounding: [224]

The image shows a musical score for Horns. It is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The first part of the score is in 3/8 time and consists of four measures of eighth notes. The second part is in 4/8 time and consists of two measures of chords. Dynamic markings are placed below the staff: *f* (forte) under the first measure, *p* (piano) under the fifth measure, and *sf* (sforzando) under the sixth measure. There are also hairpins indicating a crescendo and a decrescendo.

[Example 6-40: horns, trombones, mm. 79-83]

Suddenly, for the first time since the opening movement, in the *fortissimo* of the trumpets, the motto is heard. The upper voices crash downward, and everything is gathered in a softly fading A minor. With a light swell of the woodwinds, the picture is changed. A new tune enters “thoughtfully” (“bedächtig”). It displays the features of the second dance theme. Before, it had not been able to hold itself against the overpowering force. Now it appears more graceful, is extremely simply scored, and brings a surprisingly teasing tone into the whole. Mahler himself emphasized the contrast with the performance indication. “Old-fashioned, *grazioso*”

(“Altväterisch, *grazioso*”), he directs.²⁶ An idyll arises out of the darkly rhythmic, elemental world, unforeseen and unexpected. The alternation of meters gives the delicate, refined melody something like the character of a miniature:

Altväterisch. Grazioso.

Oboe

f > > > *p* *bedächtig* < < < *p* *sf* *p* < < *p* > > >

[Example 6-41: oboe, mm. 96-103]

A sonic contrast is also emphasized. In place of the full orchestra, the different choirs enter in a charming alternation. Woodwinds begin with the dance tune, and the strings take it over from them. The first theme thumps into the middle of this before it is appeased and held back. The “altväterisch” music again prances solemnly forward, makes its cleanly executed *pas*,²⁷ is again suppressed by the more robust theme, and finally asserts itself. A delicate game thus arises between graceful and coarsely primeval elements. Until the dance motive is pulled to the depths and the original power comes forth out of it in firm and vigorous timpani beats. But it does not yet reach a breakthrough. Chromatically descending wind chords lead, “becoming slower” (“*langsamer werdend*”), into an F minor that is almost like a funeral march:

Ob
Clar. *sf Langsamer sf*
p col legno
Strings
f p

[Example 6-42: oboes, clarinet 1, piccolo, flutes, mm. 182-188; violins, violas, bassoons, mm. 183-184]

Only coming out of this intermezzo, which is given a ghostly color by the muting of trumpets and horns and by the *col legno* striking of the strings, does the Scherzo theme powerfully break forth again. It is developed in a similar manner as before, but is executed with still sharper color and thematic cut, and with richer dynamic contrasts. The motto, mediating between both dance themes and assigned to horns and trombones this time, is also released from the stiff chord progression into a rhythmic motion, and is drowned out by a trenchant trumpet signal:

ff.
Trump.
ff. Horns *dim.* *p* *ff.* Timp.

[Example 6-43: trumpet, mm. 261-265; horns, mm. 261-264, timpani, m. 265]

The “altväterisch”²⁸ round dance is kept almost more idyllic than before. It is now heard in D major, spun out delicately and antiphonally, a graceful play of contrasts that intrude upon the

imagination like the remembrance of solitude in an earlier world. The funeral march-like intermezzo [225] follows, colored even more darkly. Beginning in E-flat minor, it pushes back to A minor, as if the opening were to start a third time. But how would it go further? Is this not all only dream, remembrance of the world while far from the world, the twilight between consciousness and unconsciousness? A sudden start, a shrill cry of awakening that is similar to the conclusion of the “Fishpredigt” Scherzo. “Shrill, bell in the air” (“Grell, Schalltrichter auf”) sounds the distorted dance motive from four oboes, plunging to the deep:



[Example 6-44: oboes, mm. 401-406]²⁹

As if the apparitions have suddenly vanished, everything sinks into darkness. In the depths, timpani and bass drum softly pound the eighth-note rhythms of the opening. Individual motives, disjointed and internally disconnected, now sound from various voices. Nothing more can hold onto itself. Imperiously cutting in, the motto of fate sounds from the trumpets, sinking from A to G and from G to F in a slow *decrescendo*:



[Example 6-45: muted trumpets, mm. 420-429]

Stopped horns and finally muted trombones take it up. Here and there one of the ghosts of the dance still peers out. It is banished by the relentless command of the winds, which retain

leadership until the end. Ever closer and more sinister, the atmosphere closes in on itself. Contrabassoon and timpani venture a last reminiscence of the dance rhythms. Then the whole thing fades away on a dark A-minor chord of the bassoons.

Perhaps it was the meaningful emergence of the motto in the Scherzo that moved Mahler to remove this movement from the original second position to the third, thus providing an immediate preparation for the Finale.³⁰ After the Scherzo, which fades away in sinister, tense darkness, the breakout of the Finale's opening is like a release. It brings the development, which until now has only been implied, to an acute crisis. It uncovers conflicts that until now have been threatening and lurking, and yet remained intangible under the surface. What is the will of the motto, which has certainly been meaningful, yet has intervened in the course of the development without any actual active force of its own? Three symphonic movements have been traversed, pieces with many grand and many graceful details. It cannot yet be seen, however, where the path should lead. Problems are implied, but not yet clearly established. Everything to this point was a preparation in the higher sense. The formal as well as the intellectual musical tension has been raised to the highest level. Now the resolution explosively bursts forth.

The Finale of the Sixth Symphony is, after that of the Eighth, the largest that Mahler wrote.³¹ It is not only the richest in content. The measure count alone could not be decisive, although it bespeaks the will that is directed into a powerful expanse. What gives this Finale its exceptional position is the power of the formal control, the unity into which the most varied moods and conflicts are captured as a totality. [226] Mahler had actually always written grandly

conceived finales with monumental expression. Even in those instances where his final movements stand behind other movements of the same symphony in extent and seeming weightiness of content, as in the Third, Fourth, or Ninth, they are really the spiritual points of resolution. Only a special type of problem determines the apparent subservience of the finale. In other works, the Fifth and the Seventh, Mahler created finales in which all of the forces at work in the preceding movements shine out in the greatest brilliance. Plowing through had already occurred and the matter had been intellectually and formally clarified. He could therefore build these finales in grandly rising, unified lines. Mahler found both finale types—the externally receding one that is internally the strongest, and the crowning one that shines in luxuriant splendor—only in the course of his development. In the beginning he envisioned a third type: the finale in which the main ideas of the work reach a breakthrough for the first time, leading there to a decisive confrontation. This is the finale type that Mahler uses in the First Symphony, but he is not yet able to internally grasp it and round it off. Then he sets this type of finale aside for a while and forms his concluding movements from other basic patterns. He creates in the Second a programmatically motivated fantasia, in the Third and Fourth two unusual movements of that intensive type. In the Fifth, he structures a consummate artistic masterpiece in the brilliant style, if this description can be used to characterize the differences. Now, after this testing and strengthening of his ability, he again picks up on the oldest kind of finale problem, which he had not attempted again since the First Symphony. He builds a finale that still carries in itself the chaos of the whole work and only now makes order out of it. And now he succeeds at that which in the First Symphony could only be seen as fulfilled through the strong influence of external resources: the summation of all the conflicting elements into a complete work of grandiose unity

in purpose, of a logical consistency in construction that could only be created by a master of architectonic structure.³² In order to understand the effect of such a massively towering movement, other performance conditions are required than are offered by today's concert hall. One must obtain a wide view and a distance with regard to such a colossus. Only then are its acoustic as well as its formal proportions—they both determine each other—recognizable. If this is more or less valid for all of Mahler's works, it particularly applies to the three instrumental symphonies, and among them it particularly applies to the Sixth. Perhaps therein a reason also lies for its unpopularity. The characteristic aspect of monumentality in Mahler's nature has become in these works, especially in the Sixth, and particularly here in the Finale, the actual determining and basic formal idea.

Rondo, variation, and even fugue were not considered as a formal scheme. Mahler applies that form to the movement which is most likely to offer room for the inclusion of a diverse and developing content: the sonata form. It is divided into first and second themes, development, recapitulation, and coda, and it places a mighty *sostenuto* introduction before the actual presentation of the themes. To make the architecture of such a movement clear would require still more [227] means than were offered by the sonata scheme. It was not only necessary to set off the individual parts thematically and dynamically. Caesuras needed to be created that, like giant stakes as it were, would allow the larger levels of construction to emerge from a great distance. Mahler invents a device through which he is able to create an intellectual, dynamic, and formal organization, and at the same time architectonically control the overflowing wealth of material. This device is the hammer.³³ Its symbolic meaning was already discussed. Its use, however, is not limited to symbolic fulfillment. It serves at the same time still other

purposes of large formal delineation, and thus emerges from intellectual, sonic, and formal necessity. The hammer blow sounds three times. The first time is after the conclusion of the exposition, immediately before the beginning of the development. The second time is at the conclusion of the development, shortly before the recapitulation of the main material. The third time is at the conclusion of the reprise before the coda. The first two hammer blows therefore, in formal consideration, define the development, while the third concludes the recapitulation and leads into the coda. With that, three important breaks are created. They identify the development of the form. The dynamics also obtain their last intensification through these three hammer blows. According to Mahler's intentions, the dynamics here outdo the sonic power of the heavy brass, and represent the highest possible physical power within the capabilities of orchestral expression, creating tonal high points within the undulating flood of sound. The use of the hammer thus results from organic needs of various kinds. They are all rooted in the requirements of the formal intentions, which here urge an expression. The threefold equality of this last rhythmic and sonic means of intensification, however, gives to the whole the cohesion of a complete appearance.³⁴

The introduction, *Sostenuto*, comprising 114 measures, and therefore twice as long as the introduction to the First Symphony, begins with a darkly murmuring altered four-three chord above C in a strange, dusky coloration: a held low C, *piano*, from the horns, contrabasses, and contrabassoon, a hard snapped *pizzicato* beat from the cellos, and *fortissimo* upward gliding harp harmonies. To this are added in the second half of the measure bassoons and D clarinet *piano*, flutes, B-flat clarinets, and muted strings *forte*, and oboes *pianissimo*. Sound mixtures with this almost whimsical and arbitrary terracing can be found often in Mahler's later scores. They may

appear to be exaggeratedly nuanced, but they show how carefully Mahler considered the importance of the sound colors against each other. The individual instrument gradually loses all of its own importance and becomes merely a means of expressive orchestral technique. Over this harmony, swelling as if in a muffled glow, a wide ranging violin phrase spreads itself, boldly rising in the first part and inexorably falling in the second part. The motto is heard from the winds in an accompanying role. The major chord sounds *fortissimo* in the brass, changing with the entrance of flutes and bassoons into a minor that floats away:

The image shows a musical score for Example 6-46. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for Basses, marked 'Sostenuto' and 'Basses'. It features a series of chords with dynamic markings *p*, *f*, *f*, and *dim.*. The bottom staff is for Horns and Tuba (Tbn.), marked 'Horns' and 'Tbn.'. It features a series of chords with dynamic markings *ff*, *p*, *ppp*, *ff*, *f*, and *mf*. Above the bottom staff, there is a section for the first violins (1. Viol.) with a melodic line and dynamic markings *f* and *dim.*. The score is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature.

[Example 6-46: basses, m. 1; horns and winds, mm. 1-2, first violins, mm. 3-8; full orchestra (except percussion and harp), mm. 9-12; cellos, mm. 13-15]

[228] During a muffled roll of the bass drum, the string basses heavily heave downward, climbing down to a low A. The meter is changed. Broad half notes become “somewhat dragging” (“etwas schleppend”) quarter notes. The first onslaught has passed, and stillness enters. Only the drum roll continues to sound. A tuba motive arises from it, so to speak, eerily stretching itself to an octave and there asserting itself with stubborn repetition:



fließend
4. Horn

1. Horn

p *p* *pp*

[6-49: 4th horn, mm. 30-33; 1st horn, mm. 33-40]

It is not successful in finding a firm tonality. It fades away without closure. “Again dragging” (“Wieder schleppend”), the oppressive dream mood enters with incoherent violin *tremolos*.

“Slowly” (“Langsam”), the ponderous tuba motive sounds out:

Langsam

p
Tuba

[Example 6-50: tuba, m. 41]

Oboes repeat it more vehemently, briefly ascending, and at the same time the octave motive sounds from the horn in a pathetic transformation:

Oboes *ff* *ff*

ff Horns *p* *f* *p*

[Example 6-51: oboes, horns, piccolo, mm. 42-43]

The picture becomes more and more bleak. The last motives mesh more tightly into each other.

In between, heavy beats of the bass drum are heard with increasing frequency. The fantastic confusion condenses itself into a “heavy, *marcato*” (“schwer, markato”)³⁶ striding chorale tune that sounds like a dirge. All strings are silent. Only the wind choir—deep woodwinds, horns, and tuba without trombones and trumpets—marches in solemn measure, like a funeral band that comes gradually closer in constant steps, and blows out its song:

[Example 6-52: top voice of wind choir (clarinets, horns, bassoons), mm. 49-64; trumpets (with tuba), mm. 65-67]

The conclusion attempts to reach G major out of the gloomy C minor of the beginning. Then the trumpets cut in violently with the motto of fate. G major flares up like lightning over massive timpani beats, and then quickly fades to G minor. Again the dream mood. A confused chaos of aimless, searching ideas. *Tremolos* of muted strings, while individual woodwinds and [229] horn make futile attempts to grasp once again the rhythmically firm horn theme and to lead it further. Livelier than before, *forte*, “gradually building to the next tempo” (“allmählich zum nächsten Tempo steigern”), the chorale once again, supplemented by the likewise strengthening octave motive:

f Horns, Engl. Horn

f Basses

8^{va} basso

[Example 6-53: horns 1 and 2, English horn, mm. 82-85; cellos, basses, bass clarinet, bassoons, mm. 82-84]

A sharply onrushing buildup is set in motion, climaxing on the major-key motive of the horn:

Woodw.

cresc. **ff**

ff Horns
Trump.

fff

[Example 6-54: oboes (with clarinet doubling), trumpets; mm. 93-95, horns, English horn, mm. 94-95]

It unloads itself onto C major–C minor, the always returning motto of fate that turns every major-key upswing into the gloom of minor. Now it churns itself up with passionate ferocity, *Allegro moderato*. The dotted rhythm of the tuba theme becomes the seed of an *Allegro* motive:

Allegro moderato

Bsn. > >

ff *dim.* *p*

[Example 6-55: bassoons and cellos, mm. 97-99]

Here again is one of Mahler's characteristic sound mixtures: bassoons blow *fortissimo* while cellos back them up *piano*. An agitated, upward flying string motive answers:



[Example 6-56: violas, mm. 99-101; first violins, m. 101]³⁷

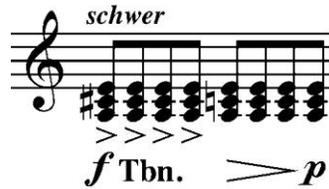
The tempo drives forward, motives and rhythms become shorter, and the harmonies push themselves from C minor to A minor. The storm breaks out:



[Example 6-57: oboes and first violins (with some doubling of English horn, clarinets and second violins), mm. 113-121]

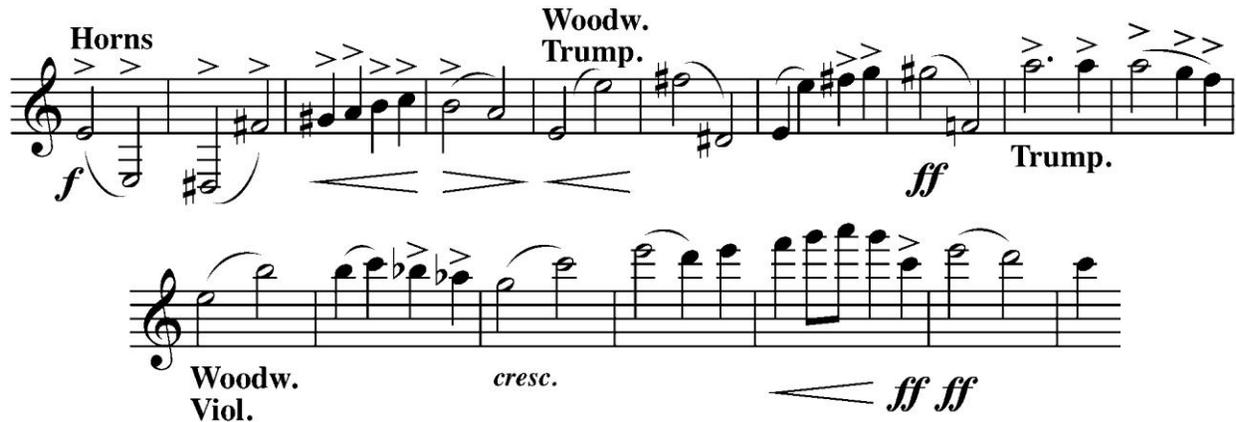
As in the earlier large symphonic movements, Mahler here also does not set up a single, solidly closed theme, but rather a multi-part theme group. The first is this robust, impulsive A-minor theme with a bold closing turn to E major. It is almost hurled out, with the upper voices of the woodwinds *fortissimo* and both groups of violins in triple *forte*, storming on the G string. From A minor to D minor, then back to the opening key, it rages onward with no abatement of strength, without change of dynamics, defiantly and insistently asserting itself, always circling around tonic and dominant, hammering strongly upon them. Even the motto of destiny, which is inserted into the first large A-minor cadence, is incapable of hindering the impetuosity, and is

itself taken by it. The otherwise unmoving, firmly rooted harmonies are seemingly shaken by the thrusting force of the theme and broken into heavily staggering eighth notes:



[Example 6-58: trombones, m. 139]

But a change does not occur. The theme churns further in the basses. Over it, a new theme sounds out, making reference to the octave motive in line and to the chorale in declamation:



[Example 6-59: horns, flutes, oboes, mm. 141-144; flutes, oboes, 5th trumpet, mm. 145-148; 1st trumpet, flute, mm. 149-150; flutes, oboes, clarinets, first violins, mm. 151-157]

Brazenly stepping out in constant rhythms and powerful intervals, it is taken up in alternation from the various groups of instruments. [230] Horns begin, woodwinds continue, trumpets, woodwinds, and strings follow again, each with a few measures, always calling to the others, until they all come together with a mighty swing at the hymnal turn to C major. Even now, a concluding fate motto does not lead to a change. The motives of the first group continue and

combine with one another:

[Example 6:60: trumpet 1, (with oboes, clarinets, violas), trombones and tuba (with contrabassoon), mm. 160-161]

The half-measure notes and dotted march rhythms, at first moving steadily, are carried away by the sixteenth-note upbeat of the theme's beginning into a flooding wave of intensification. The conclusion of the theme resounds powerfully from four trombones and the tuba:

[Example 6-61: trombones and tuba, mm. 180-188; bass clarinet, bassoons, contrabassoon, mm. 184-188]

Now a sudden change. Out of the storming A minor blossoms a calm, warmly shining D major. Under vibrating eighth-note triplets in the flutes and clarinets, the horn has a joyful promise: the major-key idea of the introduction, now consolidated into a second theme, rising in a proud arc:

[Example 6-62: 1st horn, mm. 191-194; two oboes and clarinet, mm. 193-200; flute, mm. 196-200]

The horn intones the gallant rhythms of the opening measures, and woodwinds take over the exhilarating continuation. Violins and flutes, in a duet with horns, oboes, and clarinets, add a broadly streaming epilogue:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Violins and Flutes, marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. It features a melodic line with accents and a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is for Horns, starting with a piano (p) dynamic, then moving to a fortissimo (ff) dynamic, and ending with a piano (p) dynamic. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

[Example 6-63: first violins, flutes, four horns, oboes, English horn, clarinets, mm. 205-212; second violins and violas, mm. 208-212]

In self-confident fullness, the stream of song flows until instead of a concluding D major, an abrupt minor breaks in.³⁸ The introductory motive of the violins rises up, “widely drawn” (“breit gezogen”):

The image shows a single staff of musical notation for Violins. The dynamic is marked as fortissimo (ff). Above the staff, the instruction "Etwas zurückhaltend" (slightly restrained) is written. Below the staff, the instruction "dim. breit gezogen" (diminuendo, broadly drawn) is written. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

[Example 6-64: first violins, mm. 231-234]

The other dream motives of the introduction are heard warningly and threateningly from the depths and from the heights. Sudden darkness spreads itself over the smooth picture that was

just bright. But the second theme is only frightened off for a few moments. Under a sudden F-sharp-major *tremolo* in the violins, it newly rises up, overcoming all inhibitions, relieving more and more of the pressure. It leads onward more enthusiastically than before, broadening to a hymn-like sweep, with victorious D major in the most luxuriant frenzy of excitement. From this jubilation, almost insatiably reaching out, a sudden crash and the deepest collapse. An unknown power has spoken: the hammer has fallen. All voices become silent, and only in the trumpets and trombones, the falling octave and chorale motives resound in demonic augmentation:

[Example 6-65: three trumpets and trombones (with tuba), mm. 336-346]

Added to this, judgment-like and in triple *forte* of the [231] horns, the motto of fate, G major–G minor. A pause for breath in terrible fright. A surge of strings in driving sixteenth notes, along with woodwinds and harp *glissandi*. A violent desire and attempt to overcome and suppress the monstrous terror by searching for the second theme. It is heard *fortissimo*, “coming forward” (“hervortretend”) from the trumpets. A turn from the frightful appearance, then surrender to a gentle, transfigured mood, a lyrically singing, “calming” (“beruhigend”), flowing A major:

[Example 6-66: 1st trumpet, mm. 364-367; four horns, cellos, and basses, mm. 368-371]



[Example 6-70: cellos and basses, mm. 385-386]

The strength is yet unbroken. The harmony slowly becomes brighter. F minor turns to C minor, “strong but somewhat measured” (“kräftig aber etwas gemessen”), then “ardently” (“feurig”) to C major. The march again firmly presses forward. Out of the “ardent” C major, a “gradually calming” (“allmählich sich beruhigend”), new A major blossoms, singing out in full harmonies and a wide sweeping melodic line, climbing again to a peaceful clarity. The introductory theme appears in a downward directed contrary motion, pointing, as it were, to a fulfillment of the desire that once flooded over:



[Example 6-71: violins, 3 horns, mm. 461-464]

The second theme, in organ-like fullness, again gives the concluding cadence. And there pounds the second hammer blow. Again are heard the judgment sounds from horns, trombones, and trumpets, this time without the major–minor motto of fate. Again the upward and downward surging string runs. Then a cadence is built over an octave motive from the basses:

Horns *f* Trump.

Tbn. *sf*

ff Tbn. Tuba *ff < ff*

[Example 6-73: horns, trombones, tuba, string basses, mm. 708-711]

Pressing ever more forward, it is abbreviated and flows into an active A major, where once again the introductory theme resounds like a song of triumph in major:

Horns
Tbn.

ff > < *ff* >

[Example 6-74: four horns, 3rd trombone, mm. 728-731]

The apotheosis of the powerfully striding bass theme now arises, with undulating major-key arpeggios in the strings and jubilant triadic trills in the woodwinds shining above it:

Tbn.
Tuba
Basses

p *cresc.* *mf* < *f* *cresc.* *ff* *ff*

[Example 6-75: cellos, basses, trombones, tuba, bassoons, bass clarinet, mm. 765-773]

After this glorious halo of A major, the opening of the introduction once again terribly foams to the surface. And then the third hammer blow. The motto of fate resounds for a long time in horns, trumpets, and trombones at the same time, with a mixture of stopped and open tones. It sounds for the last time. The strength of resistance is finally broken, and the storm has passed. Only a short epilogue follows as a coda. Over a penetrating timpani roll, the octave motive, *espressivo* in trombones and tuba, stretches itself upward like a shadow, “significantly slower” (“bedeutend langsamer”) in tempo and “heavy” (“schwer”) in expression:

[Example 6-76: trombones and tuba, mm. 790-794]

Clarinets and bassoons cover it with the dark D-major–D-minor harmonies of the fate motto like a shroud. The strings are silent. “Ever slower” (“Immer langsamer”), and ever softer, the octave motive sounds from the depths. Then a trenchant held A-minor chord. Heavy timpani beats and a drum roll. They trail into the distance. And out.

The Sixth is the only one of Mahler’s symphonies that does not close victoriously, like the First, Second, Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth, nor transfigured, like the Third, Fourth, and Ninth. And yet it would be wrong to give too extensive an interpretation to the tragedy that it proclaims. Mahler depicts the tragedy of a [233] single individual, destined for a downfall, who succumbs to the resistance of matter. He only succumbs, however, in view of a personally determined

existence, not in view of the living will. This will always sets new strength against the motto of fate, the knowledge of which has stood firmly from the outset, continually striving and overcoming. 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. This spirit, which offers defiance to fate up until the last motion, which continually rebuilds the world, however often the hammer may break it in pieces, does not come to an end with the dark closing chord of the A-minor symphony. It has become acquainted with solitude in the happiness of creation and in the harshness of its tragedy. It cheered this solitude in the Fifth Symphony, where it led it to the heights of its own essence, and it shuddered before it in the Sixth, where it looked into itself in the abysses of life. Now it pulls it back out of this spell of ecstasies and visions of self-observation. It hearkens again to the voices that are heard from without. It is urged to forget the severity, the burden, the mysteries, and the suffering, and again to be only an instrument, only a living echo of resounding life. The soul has been penetrated to the depths, and has proclaimed the happiness and the torment which have lived within it. It now simply wants to sing once again. The solitary one takes the path back to nature, to the world, and to humanity. The Seventh Symphony results, and in its shadow, the crown of Mahlerian creation grows and slowly matures: the Eighth. [234 blank]

NOTES

- 1 Frequency of performance is not easy to quantify, as any statistics or data compiled by organizations such as the League of American Orchestras will not include all performances, particularly those by amateur groups. It is, however, safe to assert that the Fifth, at least, has now asserted itself as one of the more frequently performed Mahler symphonies, behind only the First and the Fourth. The Sixth still seems to lag behind today, as it did in Bekker's time. Its performance frequency is probably about the same as the Third, Seventh, and Ninth, and less than the Second.
- 2 In Bekker's time, the idea that the title "Tragische" came from Mahler himself probably arose from the inclusion of the title on the program for a performance conducted by Mahler on January 4, 1907 in Vienna. The later assertion by Bruno Walter postdates Bekker and first appeared in his Mahler biography of 1936. See, e.g., David Matthews, "The Sixth Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, edited by Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 366.
- 3 Bekker quotes the resignation letter in full in the "Anmerkungen," giving Richard Specht as his source. It appears in *Gustav Mahler Briefe*, revised and edited by Herta Blaukopf (Vienna and Hamburg: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1982), pp. 322-23 (Letter 376).
- 4 Bekker's placement of the words "hoch-symbolisch intentioniert" in quotation marks may be a reference to a well-known statement of Goethe to Felix Mendelssohn in a letter from September 9, 1831. The subject was Mendelssohn's planned composition of a cantata to Goethe's poem "Die erste Walpurgisnacht." The passage in question is translated in John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night: The Heathen Muse in European Culture, 1700-1850* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), p. 62: "It pleases me greatly that you have dedicated yourself so seriously to 'Die erste Walpurgisnacht,' for no one has been able to make anything of this poem, not even our excellent [Carl Friedrich] Zelter. It *is intended as elevated symbolism* [original: 'hoch-symbolisch intentioniert'—italics added by KDH] in the literal sense. For in the history of the world, it must eternally be repeated that something old, established, proven, [and] reassuring will be compacted, pushed aside, dislocated, and, if not abolished, then corralled into the tightest space by emergent new forces . . ."
- 5 According to several sources, Stefan being the earliest, Mahler made these comments about the cowbells at a rehearsal for the first Munich performance of the Seventh Symphony in 1908. See Paul Stefan, *Gustav Mahler: Eine Studie über Persönlichkeit und Werk* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1912), p. 126. See also Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1993), p. 165.
- 6 The availability of Constantin Floros's book on the symphonies in English (the last of a three-volume work and the only one to be translated) has been one of the best sources of Bekker material in English to this point, since Floros cited him often. He refers to Bekker more in connection with the Sixth than with any other symphony, including this significant insight about the symbolism of the hammer, along with that of the major-minor sequence below (see *The Symphonies*, pp. 162-63, 164).
- 7 In this description, both instruments often termed "whip" in English are used: the familiar "slapstick" (German "Holzklapper") and, as seen in the Second and Third Symphonies, the "rute," the switch-like beater used on the wood of the bass drum. The former was removed from later revisions of the score.
- 8 While the chorale episode is an obvious transition in a sonata exposition, Robert Samuels, in his detailed semiotic study of the Sixth Symphony, notes the peculiarity in the choice of a chorale for this moment, the

“nominalist” nature of Mahler’s formal procedures, and the unusual harmonic path of the chorale, pointing out ways in which Mahler could have approached F major in a more conventional way. Samuels’s concern at this point is a discussion of musical “narrative,” in the context of which he describes the sonata as an “artificial model.” See Robert Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 145–45. On the subject of Mahler’s sonata-form movements as musical narratives, see Seth Monahan, “Mahler’s Sonata Narratives” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2008), which includes chapters on both the first movement and the Finale of the Sixth. The chapter on the first movement (pp. 104–49) discusses the tonal plot of the exposition, including the chorale transition, in some depth. See also Christopher Hailey’s essay on the Sixth Symphony, which analyzes its formal structure in terms of key distributions and the concept of “associative tonality” as coined by Robert Bailey (“Structure and Tonal Plan in Mahler’s Sixth Symphony” in *Gustav Mahler*, edited by Hermann Danuser [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992], pp. 253–75). Hailey states that the succession of harmonies in the chorale’s first phrase outlines the principal tonalities, roughly in their order of appearance, of the whole movement (pp. 274–75).

- 9 Bekker’s highly intriguing diversion, which both criticizes the second theme and justifies it, is a reaction to such terse criticisms as that given by Mahler’s friend Guido Adler, who characterized the theme as “melodically weak” (“melodisch schwach”). See Guido Adler, *Gustav Mahler* (Leipzig and Vienna: Universal Edition, 1916), p. 74. Because Bekker was writing long before Alma published her memoirs, he was probably unaware of the now familiar description of the theme as a portrait of her. A more sympathetic view of the theme is provided by Matthews, who makes reference to the “Alma” connection and then connects the melody to the idea of “redemption,” making further connections to the Eighth Symphony and to Wagner’s *Parsifal*, then showing how the melody is derived from material in the first subject. See Matthews, “The Sixth Symphony,” pp. 367–68. An article on the subject of the “Alma” theme, reimagining the Sixth as a type of “domestic tragedy,” was recently published by Seth Monahan. See “‘I have tried to capture you ...’: Rethinking the ‘Alma’ Theme from Mahler’s Sixth Symphony” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/1 (2011), pp. 119–78.
- 10 The word “Rosalien” used by Bekker here refers specifically to a type of brief melodic sequence where a relatively small fragment is repeated a step higher, as in the second and third full measures (mm. 78–79) of Example 6–9.
- 11 The repetition of the exposition in practice, which Bekker represents as self-evident, had fallen out of favor to such a degree later in the century that Theodor Adorno, writing in 1960, made the strange observation that the movement “*originally* had repeat marks after the exposition (Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], p. 92). Mahler did in fact remove a planned exposition repeat in at least two instances, the second movement of the Fifth and the first movement of the Ninth, but he did not do this here as Adorno’s remark mistakenly suggests.
- 12 Floros would later identify this point as the fourth and final part of the development (*The Symphonies*, p. 166). Bekker had previously indicated four parts, and this seems the only logical location for the beginning of the fourth part. But since he labeled the cowbell and celesta episode (the third part in Floros) as neither the second nor the third part, and since he makes no later reference to a fourth part, it is impossible to know whether his demarcation of the third part here is a mistake or intentional.
- 13 The statement about the “textbook example of sonata form” below (see note 16) is undermined here. Bekker appears to place the beginning of the coda here, as does Floros. Robert Samuels, however, continues the recapitulation at this point, calling the following music “the longest ‘developmental’ passage in the movement” (*Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, p. 146). This is not without merit, since the second subject in D major is so briefly

presented after the transition, whose differences to the exposition Samuels also discusses. Samuels does not begin the coda until m. 449, about 75 measures later. He contrasts this developmental passage with Beethoven's coda procedures, since there is a departure from the tonic without a return until m. 449 (pp. 146-47).

- 14 In the earlier version of the score now published by Dover, this passage is played by trombones and tuba throughout. In the later edition, they drop out after m. 407, leaving the continuation to clarinets and bassoons. Bekker was presumably working from the earlier edition.
- 15 Bekker indicates the *tremolo* in second violins. In the later edition, it is given only to celesta.
- 16 This statement has often been cited by later authors, e.g., Floros, *The Symphonies*, p. 165.
- 17 These statements seem to point the way toward viewpoints such as those of Samuels. By stating that the second part of the old sonata form was "mostly recapitulation," in contrast to Mahler's practice here, Bekker acknowledges that there is clearly something new and unusual about the end of the recapitulation and the coda.
- 18 The controversy over the order of the middle movements persists even today. Erwin Ratz, who edited the first Critical Edition of the symphony that was published in 1963, believed he had evidence that Mahler wished to revert to the original order, but this has been contested by Jerry Bruck, Gilbert Kaplan, and Reinhold Kubik. Their conclusions, which they regard as decisive and incontestable, are published in *The Correct Movement Order in Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, edited by Gilbert Kaplan (New York: Kaplan Foundation, 2004). David Matthews, however, already presented a strongly argued case for the original Scherzo–Andante order on *musical* grounds, which was published in 1999 ("The Sixth Symphony," pp. 372-74). Even after the Kaplan publication, Gastón Fournier-Facio was prepared to contest the conclusiveness of the Andante–Scherzo order (see "The 'Correct' Order of the Middle Movements in Mahler's Sixth Symphony," Appendix I in Donald Mitchell, *Discovering Mahler: Writings on Mahler, 1955-2005*, edited by Gastón Fournier-Facio [Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2007], pp. 633-47). Performances and recordings with the Scherzo in second position are much more common, as most available scores are printed with that order. In 2004, Kubik, then the chief editor of the Critical Edition, changed the official policy of the edition and directed that the movement order should be "corrected" in future printings. It is interesting that Bekker retains the revised Andante–Scherzo order in his analysis, even though Willem Mengelberg performed the symphony with the Scherzo–Andante order in 1919 and 1920 on the basis of a direction from Alma in a telegram sent after Mengelberg asked her about the question of movement order. This telegram formed the basis for Ratz's decision in the first Critical Edition. These performances by Mengelberg would have been exactly contemporary with Bekker's writing. The scores used by Bekker still had the Scherzo–Andante order, as he notes both here and in the "Anmerkungen."
- 19 Bekker's criticism of this theme is notable and frequently cited by later critics. Samuels refers to Bekker's words in the context of his detailed and thorough motivic analysis of the movement (*Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, pp. 59-60). Floros also quotes this passage, strongly disagreeing with Bekker (*The Symphonies*, pp. 176-77). Both Samuels and Floros refer to Arnold Schoenberg's defense of the theme, in which he focused on its five-bar phrases. One of the most interesting points Samuels makes in relation to the theme is the close resemblance of its final cadence (which Bekker finds "convoluted and forced") to the closing melodic turn in the main melody of the first song from the *Kindertotenlieder* (*Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, pp. 18, 26). Bekker's failure to find this connection is notable in light of his references to this song in connection with the Fifth Symphony (see p. 403). One later writer who expressed sentiments similar to Bekker regarding this theme is Adorno, who referred to Bekker's statement about the theme being gradually forgotten over the course of the movement. At this point, Adorno is discussing themes and their identities, using the memorable expression that thematic variants "divest

the theme of its identity; the fulfillment is the positive manifestation of what the theme has not yet become. In some movements that make use of main themes in a normal configuration, they protrude strangely from the actual musical process, as if it were not their own history” (*Mahler*, pp. 88-89).

- 20 Samuels notes the striking similarity of these figures (which play a major role in his semiotic and motivic analysis) to those in the main theme of the first movement from m. 11 (shown here in Example 6-3 above). He observes the diversion into the closing phrase derived from *Kindertotenlieder*, No. 1 as opposed to the “violent half-close of the first movement.” See *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, p. 26.
- 21 Floros quotes Bekker here (*The Symphonies*, p. 179). Again, the thread of E major as the key of “transfiguration” makes an appearance. Floros further compares the melodic turn to the “Blicket auf” motif from the Eighth Symphony. This motif appears in E-flat major (the home key of the Eighth and of this movement), but it is interesting to note that E major also plays a large role in Part II of the Eighth, right at the moment when *Mater gloriosa* “soars above” (m. 780).
- 22 In this context Samuels’s invocation of the Dance of Death (typically more closely associated with the Scherzo of the Fourth Symphony) is interesting (see *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, pp. 119ff.). See the chapter on the Fourth Symphony, pp. 390-91, note 18. Samuels’s analysis of this movement is primarily concerned with the semiotic codification of genre, using rhythmic and melodic structures and their connections to dance genres.
- 23 Indeed, Samuels, referring to Floros (in his second, untranslated German volume) and Adorno, compares and contrasts the use of similar generic and motivic materials in the scherzo movements of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, implying that the similarities between the movements are as important as the differences. See *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, pp. 94-95. See also Adorno, *Mahler*, p. 103.
- 24 In later versions of the score, only trombones play these notes without tuba.
- 25 Although Bekker states that the passage in this example includes trumpets, it does not, even in the first editions.
- 26 The translation of the word “altväterisch” is very difficult. In the published translation of Floros, *The Symphonies*, “jovial” is suggested (p. 174), perhaps a reference to a literal reading of the word as “grandfatherly,” which does not really fit the nature nor the programmatic suggestions of the theme (which Alma, probably anachronistically, compared to the arrhythmic playing of children [see Floros, *The Symphonies*, pp. 175-76]). Samuels provides the helpful information, for which he credits Paul Banks, that the word can refer to a Bohemian dance with an asymmetrical combination of meters, as in this Trio section (*Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, p. 95). Because most analysts, including Bekker, interpret the word as an adjective, I have opted for the most accepted English rendering, “old-fashioned.” Edmund Jephcott, in his translation of Adorno, *Mahler*, uses the similar “antiquated” (p. 103).
- 27 “Pas,” not a German word, is another apparent reference to the French dance term. See also its use in the chapter on the Second Symphony, p. 198 and p. 243, note 24.
- 28 Not given in quotation marks in Bekker, but retained untranslated here. See note 26 above.
- 29 In this example and the next, there is a one-measure discrepancy in numbering between the first edition reprinted by Dover and later editions. This is because m. 332 in the first edition was split into two measures (332-333) in the revisions. The numbering here follows the later versions.

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- 30 But the Andante also provides a preparation for the Finale in the smooth E-flat-major–C-minor transition, as noted by Fournier-Facio, Matthews, and others. See note 18 above.
- 31 Bekker is correct in the sense of measure count. The Finale has more measures than that of the Second (surprisingly so) and even the Scherzo of the Fifth. In terms of performance time, it is certainly behind the Second's Finale.
- 32 This discussion revisits Bekker's theses regarding the "finale problem" and the "Finale Symphony" in his opening chapter, "The Symphonic Style." See pp. 61-62.
- 33 Samuels provides an intriguing and stimulating discussion of various analytical descriptions of the Finale in a sonata form. Of these, Bekker's is the earliest he includes and Floros's the latest. Central to the discussion is that none of these analysts places formal boundaries in exactly the same places. Bekker's is, notably, the only one to place the boundaries of the development section precisely between the first two hammer blows, resulting in a briefer section, as everybody else either begins or ends the development section, or both, before and after the hammer blows. Samuels tabulates all of these analytical efforts in impressive detail in *Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, pp. 72-75. Adorno's analysis is probably closest to Bekker's, but he places the hammer blows as inner markers within a larger development. Adorno's perceptive discussion, in which he makes provocative statements such as "the sonata skeleton is indispensable to the last movement of the Sixth in binding together its dimensions" and "Mahler's emancipation from sonata form was mediated by the sonata," and in which he also introduces the concept of "disintegration fields" (or "dissolution fields") is found in *Mahler*, pp. 96-100. The idea is that Mahler is testing the limits of sonata form as a means of releasing himself from the bonds of the formal structure. Floros, after making note of several previous discussions of the movement, including those of Erwin Ratz, Adorno, and Bernd Sponheuer (all included in Samuels's table) makes the highly charged statement that "the structure of the movement corresponds to normal sonata form," but, as Samuels states, he invents the concept of "music from far away," which roughly corresponds to Adorno's "disintegration fields." These rather different metaphors used to describe the same passages in the movement only heighten the divergent nature of the various analytical attempts. Samuels notes that Floros (and Sponheuer) rely on extramusical explanations at those points where the formal functions are most unreadable. See *The Symphonies*, p. 180. See also *Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, pp. 80-82.
- 34 Bekker avoids any discussion here of Mahler's later deletion of the third hammer blow, but in the "Anmerkungen," he dismisses it as a practical matter and explains his reasoning for including the third hammer stroke in the discussion and analysis of the movement.
- 35 Mahler actually asks for "low bell sounds" here, not cowbells. The cowbells do not appear until m. 238.
- 36 Mahler spelled the Italian word incorrectly in the score.
- 37 In the original, a bar line is missing after the first four notes, which are an anacrusis. It has been inserted here.
- 38 For Samuels, this moment and the passage that follows effectively illustrate the problems with formal analysis in the movement. It is nearly impossible to find agreement on where the "development section" begins. Most analysts (except for Bekker) see this as either the beginning of the development section or as the introduction to the development "proper." The echoes of the introduction are indeed strong here, which would prompt such a reading. Adorno places the beginning of the development later than the others, but still much earlier than Bekker. Bekker's reasons for including the entire section up to the first hammer blow as part of the exposition

probably have to do with the return of second theme material in an implied D major (the key associated with the theme on its first appearance) around m. 288, or simply the ease of using the hammer as a formal demarcating line. Samuels discusses the existence of at least five possible starting points for the development section between mm. 229 and 364, the extreme points of the section in question. For the entire discussion, see *Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, pp. 82-88.

39 Based on Bekker's language here, his placement of the recapitulation is ambiguous. Samuels, applying the statement that the second hammer blow at m. 479 frames the development, places Bekker's recapitulation there, but this sentence, coming as it does after the example labeled as 6-72, could just as easily facilitate a reading where Bekker begins the recapitulation at m. 520, as do all of the other analysts tabulated by Samuels. This boundary is not nearly as problematic as the line of demarcation between the "exposition" and the "development."

40 Bekker here makes reference to the low bells, which he did not do when discussing the opening, where the cowbells are in fact not heard.