

The Ninth Symphony by Gustav Mahler was selected for discussion in the present cycle not only because of ~~the~~ extraordinary ~~scope~~ ^{scope} ~~and quality~~ of its communication, but also because of the significance of its (management of the musical material. In fact, both these aspects ~~are~~ manifest in the ~~should not be separated from each other~~ ~~of form and content of a work~~ ~~of a~~ These two aspects can not, and should not be separated. ~~If you~~ ~~fact~~ If upon encountering a work of art we experience a noteworthy emotional impact, we may be sure that ~~upon~~ closer inspection we will discover that our spontaneous experience is due to tangible details of the musical process which, ~~up to~~ up to a point, may be ~~and~~ identified in technical terms.

The Symphony which we shall consider in this program was written in 1909. It is the parting message of a great musician who even before reaching the age of fifty had learned that his days were numbered. Heartrending sorrow, melancholy sadness, defiance and resignation speak to ~~us~~ us with ^{all too} directness that no sensitive listener can mistake the message of emotion and mood presented by the work.

But no matter how tragic the personal experience that inspired this composition, it is not this experience as such which makes it one of the great works of our century. For facing the transitoriness of earthly life and the ~~menace~~ menace of personal extinction has been the lot of every human being since the beginning of time. We have to look for those features which transcend the emotional impulse that prompted the creation of the work, in order to appreciate its permanent significance. These features must be found in the ordering of the materials ~~from~~ ^{of} which the work is made up, and such ordering must be evaluated in the context of history.

Mahler was one of the last composers who believed in the unbroken continuity of the symphonic tradition set up by the great masters of the classical period, Mozart, Haydn and above all, Beethoven. In keeping with the optimistic philosophy of progress prevailing throughout the ~~nineteenth~~ nineteenth century everything became bigger, if not better. Consequently Mahler's symphonies belong to the ~~best~~ ^(most extended) ever written. The Ninth Symphony takes nearly one and a half hours to perform so that in the present survey we shall have ~~to be~~ ^{to} content ^{ourselves} with some fragmentary selections from the gigantic work. (245)

30:2.75 = 10.9
25.00
25

11.275
275
30.25

16 pages.

11.55
12.25 | 30

In the light of the viewpoint we have just developed, the unique signi- (2)
ficance of Mahler's work, especially of his late symphonies, lies in the
dialectical tension between two opposites. On the one hand his allegiance
to the symphonic tradition ~~prompted~~ ^{made} him ~~so~~ confident that the symphonic
form as it was handed down to him from the age of classicism would
stand the strain and stress of nearly limitless expansion. ^{It is easy}
to see ~~that~~ such confidence was hardly justified, and this is the
gist of many critical objections raised against Mahler's concepts.
Frequently the continuity of the structure is torn up by fantastic
breaks - an early, ^{striking} example of which may be found in the finale of the
Second Symphony when the faraway trumpet calls resound through
the frightful silence announcing the Last Judgement. Here it is the
poetic idea that lends the passage pragmatic justification.
From a purely musical viewpoint these awe-inspiring pages are
equally as justified because this strange interlude so to speak adds
a new dimension to a musical context which if it would stay within
the conventional dimensions ~~would~~ ^{might} fall apart.

In Mahler's later works the gaps and cracks do not only
~~bear~~ witness of strain and stress in the large spans of the
overall structure, they also run as so many crevices through
the texture of the music, thus affecting its basic thematic
material. It is precisely these seemingly negative aspects
which are the truly forward-looking, prophetic features of
his work. For the development which was preordained for
the ~~musical~~ compositional style derived from the classical
tradition did not mean further straightforward ^{advance} ~~progress~~
to still more colossal symphonic monsters, but it
led to progressive fragmentation of material and
structure and ~~the~~ reduction of length ~~and~~ and volume to
those minima of sonority which we shall encounter in Webern's
works. The fascination which Mahler's late symphonies
emanate is due to the fact that the foreshadowing of
~~the~~ future principles of design is projected against a
backdrop that still shows the outlines of once unbroken
continuity in large areas.

In passing it may be mentioned that Mahler's Eighth Sym.⁽³⁾phony is perhaps an exception from the tendency just discussed and prevailing in his work from the Fifth Symphony on. In the first movement of the Eighth, ~~the same Creator God~~ Mahler succeeds in ~~restoring~~ restoring full continuity through the formidable impetus that sweeps through this extremely long piece from beginning to end. As much continuity as there is in the long chain of attractive and grandiose details that form the second movement of the symphony, it is more a consequence of faithfully following

One might speculate whether in the Eighth it was the element of the human voice which ~~restored~~ by its very nature ~~counteracted~~ worked against the cracking up of the musical substance. For the symphony consists of two huge vocal pieces, the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the final scene of Goethe's *Faust*.

Goethe's lyrical thought sequence than a product of musical architectural planning.

We ~~now~~ now turn to our analytical survey of the Ninth Symphony. It has four movements, just like most symphonies of the classical type. But the character and sequence of these movements deviate conspicuously from the traditional model. It will be remembered

that this model calls for a more or less dramatic first movement ~~at~~ at a fairly fast pace, full of pronounced contrasts which are brought into agitated interplay. This is followed by a slow, contemplative and lyrical second movement and ^(usually) a so-called *Scherzo*, which emphasizes dance-like characteristics. The last movement then releases the tension built up so far in a playful mood and in very fast tempo. This movement usually has the form of a *rondo*, a term relating it to a similar structural design of poetry, in which one recurring central idea alternates with two or more subordinate ideas. It should be kept in mind that this scheme has never been a strict rule according to which the individual efforts of the composers could be classified as right or wrong. For ^(in art) there is no arbiter, no agency to set up rules except the artists themselves. Consequently what appears to posterity ~~as~~ ^{as} a rule, is merely the formulation of a convention by which the majority of artists of a given period ~~are~~ abide. On closer inspection it turns out that the most vital, durable and significant specimens constitute exceptions from the rule.

The order of the four movements in Mahler's Ninth Symphony deviates from the traditional scheme ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ that the first is neither fast nor very slow, and dramatic in an entirely different sense from

what the traditional models would offer. The second movement is (4) of the type of the old Scherzo inasmuch as it is dance-like. But it is pre-
vailingly slow and ponderous. The third movement is inscribed "Rondo", thus
anticipating the form usually reserved for the last movement. It is very fast,
but by no means in a light vein. In fact, it is as grim and dramatic
as anybody could wish an opening movement to be. The last move-
ment then is an Adagio of broad, expansive lines, ~~with~~ ^{with} a feeling of
relaxation that usually ~~is~~ ^{is} associated with the idea of a second move-
ment.

In order to understand Mahler's unusual arrangement, we must
probe a little deeper into the meaning of the structural procedures of the
symphonic style. The mainspring of the symphonic mechanism is the
contrast between statement of ideas and the development thereof. This
means, in other words, that on the one hand musical ideas, also called
themes, are presented ~~with~~ ^{with} clear outline, precisely articulated in a state
of stability. On the other hand, such themes are taken apart, its constit-
uent components are modified and brought into new contexts in a
continuous process involving swift changes of texture, moving from
one configuration to the next in fluid transition. The degree of
stability and fluidity vary according to the concept of the whole. Usually
in the first, dramatic movement of the symphonic cycle, frequently de-
signated as Sonata form, ~~the~~ the character of development, that is
of fluidity, prevails while ~~the~~ the other movements, tending toward
the form of the rondo, are based on an alternation of more or
less clearly delineated ideas. Already in Beethoven's symphonies
we may observe that especially in his first movements the areas of
statement and development are not any longer as neatly separated
as in earlier phases of the style. His themes have been rather
aptly called "open-end" structures, that is to say, these themes are
hardly coming to conclusions which would correspond to the period
sign in literature. They end ~~as it were~~ ^{as it were} with commas, semicolons,
dashes, inviting immediate continuation, pointing to forthcoming
ideas, so that the character of developmental fluidity is spreading
out over the entire structure with points of solidity emerging
from the continuous flow.

This tendency leads to a state of affairs in which the traditional
concept of the Sonata form with its clear separation of statement
and development loses much of its earlier significance. The contrast

of stability and flow is not any longer reserved to this particular form since fluidity becomes increasingly the nature of musical utterance altogether. (5)

It appears that in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony all movements are related to the rondo form ~~which~~ is based on alternation of musical characters, including the first movement in which this structural concept is rarely found. Consequently this movement is most interesting in terms of organization of ideas. In view of its extraordinary length of nearly 30 minutes we shall present the opening and concluding portions only which will give us sufficient insight in the expressive character of the music as well as its structure. It may be said that in spite of the unusual expanse there are only two basic characters which alternate with each other, which is quite astonishing. Much shorter rondo forms ~~are~~ usually have two or three subordinate themes alternating with the principal statement.

If we call the two basic elements A and B, we find that the complex A which opens and closes the movement ~~appears~~ ^{enters} six times, while the complex B has five appearances. The general plan of the composition the consecutive entrances According to of the two elements are progressively more elaborate and complex by means of the process which I discussed earlier as development, that is extraction ~~of~~ ^{and} modification and especially elongation of ~~the~~ ^(of particles from the original statements) such particles. This applies ~~to~~ ^{above all} to the B-sections which are much longer and more complex than the A-sections. A being soothing, melancholy and prevaillingly quiet, while B tends to dramatic outbursts, this distribution of emphases ~~imparts~~ ^{imparts to} the movement a great deal of agitation in spite of its basically very moderate tempo.

We shall now hear a few brief examples which should help us to identify later the context of the entire structure. The first five bars of the work — obviously part of the complex which we call A — reveal three ~~extremely~~ elements of considerable significance. The first is the halting ~~and~~ rhythm played by violoncelle and French horn on a (six times repeated) low note. It is followed by a characteristic group of four tones, brought out by the harp. ~~That~~ When the halting rhythm sets in again, ~~the~~ another French horn presents a five-tone

phrase which it will be good to remember. Here is the example. meas. 1 - 5 (till the middle of the bar) (6)

This is followed by the main substance of our A, a long drawn-out, simple and haunting, melodic line of the Violins, which the listener will easily identify. I should like to call to his attention the frequent ~~rests~~ rests, or silences, interrupting this melody, ~~so~~ so that it progresses in very short phrases of rarely more than two or three tones. This fragmentation of the material is an outstanding characteristic of everything that goes into the complex A. The listener will experience the extraordinary expressive intensity and the unique mood which is the result of this inspiration. As I mentioned earlier, it is also typical of the late style of Mahler and points toward ~~the~~ some of the characteristic features of the musical language to come.

Turning now to B, we observe in its opening phrase immediately three aspects in which it differs from A: One: a different tonal flavor (it moves into the minor mode and emphasizes other harmonic combinations than those of A) Two: the melodic line has ~~less~~ much continuity (it is not interrupted by rests), and Three: as compared to A, there is more agitation, drive and dynamic expansion. ~~Here~~ ^{are} here the opening measures of B.

meas. 3 after the ♭ signature - to [3] first beat [or 5]

Toward the end of this first ~~and~~ appearance of B which in spite of its brevity quickly reaches a high pitch of intensity we hear a short motif pronounced by the trumpets. The repetition of its three ~~short~~ narrowly confined descending notes is extremely characteristic. ~~and~~ We shall hear it many times later. Here it is:

three last bars on p. 7 (3 before return of \sharp)

The ^{opening} section of the first movement which we are going to hear presently comprises the first two appearances of the complexes A and B. The second B rises to a vigorous climax and stops abruptly at its high point. This is followed by the halting rhythm which we know from the first two bars of the work, now ~~only~~ only sounded by the heavy brass. The four-tone group which had been heard at the beginning in the gentle tones of the harp is now given over to the harsher sonority of ~~the~~ kettledrums, horns and trumpets. Here our first fragment comes to an end. You hear now the opening section of the first movement.

1st movement, till 1st bar on p. 20 (4 meas.)

before 7, first half of meas.)

(7)

We now come in on the analogous situation which concludes the fourth, enormously extended appearance of B. The high point of this climax is considerably more powerful than the previous one. The halting rhythm now takes on the character of catastrophic menace, thunderously pounded out by the low brass. The composer indicates a triple forte and adds "mit höchster Gewalt", with supreme force. The four-tone phrase is again hammered out by kettle drums and evokes in the ensuing transition the mood of a funeral march. Taken over by the harps and the solemn, otherworldly sound of chimes, the four-tone motif imperceptibly becomes the accompaniment of the gentle, melancholy strains of A. The last reappearance of the passionate B is suddenly interrupted by one of the strangest details of the symphony. The musical process seems to disintegrate into inarticulate elements of sound. A few isolated instruments, far apart from each other, wander around aimlessly as if lost in the immensity of a suddenly empty musical space. The fearful mood suggested here evokes the similar situation in the finale of the Second Symphony which I mentioned before. The similar result is achieved here with purely musical means (that is, without the stage effect of the faraway trumpets) and with a much more advanced vocabulary. After this the music returns slowly to the last time and space equally reduced statement of A.

1st movement, 8th meas. before 15 p. 46 - to end.

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~~This first movement~~ (In terms of emotional content) is a summary of the communication conveyed by the whole work. Since it begins on a note of melancholy resignation, the later outbursts of passion and their interruptions by the overwhelming blows of the halting rhythm assume the character of flashbacks. Whatever the struggle and ^{its} decision ~~may~~ may have been about, it is all over. The resignation ~~made~~ makes it plain that the struggle was lost. The scope of the work, the intellectual effort that is revealed through the originality of its every inspiration, exclude associations, if such are desired, with trifling matters. We are ^{probably} not far off the mark if we feel that this work makes us ^{aware} of the last things of man, of death and what might come ~~after~~ thereafter.

The ensuing movements elaborate on the communication set forth by the first, adding forceful emphasis to its various aspects.

The second movement is, as mentioned before, dance-like. It is modelled (8) after the Kandler, the dance-form ^{indigenously} ~~introduced~~ to the Austrian Alps, a moderately animated three-quarter time considerably slower than the waltz. Mahler's interpretation of this dance in the Ninth Symphony is still slower than the customary tempo, with the exception of the second idea, ~~which~~ which progresses at a more lively pace. ~~It has a character of~~ The slowness of the dance removes it from reality and lends it a dream-like character, as if the ^{gyrations} ~~movements~~ of the dancers were recorded by a slow-motion camera. We shall ~~now~~ now hear the opening phrases of this movement.

2nd mot., till last bar on p. 62, first two beats ^{passage}

From the faster moving second section we quote a short ~~section~~ which is important because its sequence of descending chords is, in modified form, carried over into the third and fourth movements. I also should like the listener to notice the quick turn of a few notes at the end of the fragment to be now heard, ~~but~~ for this seemingly insignificant, conventional figure will be ~~met~~ met again in the later movements.

2nd mot., p. 78, 3rd bar ("a tempo") to 3rd bar on p. 79 (first beat)

We shall now hear the third movement in its entirety. It is ~~is~~ without doubt the most advanced piece ever written by Mahler, by which I mean that it reaches farthest into the new territory of dissonant counterpoint. The movement is inscribed "Rondo. Burleske". It should be noticed that the term "burlesque" in German carries none of the connotations attached to it in present-day American parlance. It rather means bizarre, grotesque, grimly humorous. This Rondo consists of three thematic complexes. The first is exceedingly aggressive through the rithlessness with which sharply dissonating sounds are piled one onto the other. Again the phrases are very short, ~~and~~ so that the context seems to be torn to shreds. While in the first movement this technique suggested gentle ^(slow tempo of the) sighs, it ~~provides~~ ^{evokes} here the picture of a panting rapacious animal, or the desperate gasps of a lost soul. The orchestration too is progressive in that ~~it~~ it is not any longer intent upon artful blending and mixing of sonorities, but allows the different ~~of~~ instrumental timbres to crash against each other in bold juxtapositions. The texture is highly

polyphonic, that is the music consists of two or more melodic lines progressing simultaneously, and these lines are so conceived that they constantly rub each other in sharply dissonant combinations. The overall impression is one of extraordinary ferocity.

The second theme of the rondo is somewhat more amiable. Its bouncy, lilting melody grows out of one of the gruff figurations of the first theme, reducing its speed to one half. The attentive listener will notice that the sequence of descending chords underlying this little tune is exactly the same as that which I brought to his attention in the brief, second example from the Ländler movement.

The ferocious first theme is ~~repeated~~ ^{brought back} and followed by a renewed statement of the bouncy second theme. Here the French horns deliver themselves of a bellowing, ditty-like tune. The first theme returns briefly, ~~stopping~~ on a sustained high note of ~~the~~ violins and flutes, which introduces the third theme. This again has less consistency than the second, but its articulation is also different from that of the first. While in the first theme the fragmentation of the substance only ~~the~~ underlines the formidable drive which ~~is~~ irresistibly sweeps over the cracks and crevices, the third theme is ~~scarcely~~ patiently put together from fragments which only loosely hang together. The standstill thus created is a powerful contrast to the rapidity of the other themes. A few bars after the high tone mentioned the trumpet sings out with the short phrase which is the main substance of this thematic area. The listener might be able to recognize in it a slowed-down version of the little conventional turn which concluded our second example from the dance-movement. This particular motive appears many times, faster and slower, at various pitch levels simultaneously, combined with fragments from other places. The whole passage has a dreamy quality, and the various fragments suggest dimly remembered images of reality passing through the dreamer's subconscious mind. The fragments of the ferocious first theme which appear among these images soon prove to be tokens of reality. The aggressive rhythms of the first theme emerge more distinctly, and soon it returns with its full violence, chasing away the peaceful dream. ~~It concludes the~~ With increasing speed it carries the movement to its breathless, crashing end. Here now is the third movement of Mahler's Ninth Symphony.

Third movement, in its entirety

The fourth movement, an extremely slow Adagio, has the char- (10)
acter of an epilogue, stressing the mood of peaceful resignation
which was indicated in the first movement. However the elements of
struggle and suffering are absent, and thus the expression of resignation
is perhaps less heartrending, but by the same token less original and
slightly more conventional. This movement again is a rondo with only two
thematic characters which are not meant to stress contrast but
are different only in texture and harmonic flavor, ~~but~~ hardly in
mood. We shall hear the first statement of the first of the two
ideas. Even in the first bar we meet again the little turn
which I traced from the second movement through the third. It
may be heard throughout the short section which we ^{are} ~~shall~~ presenting
in the middle and lower voices, now faster, now slower. But we
encounter here another familiar element: as soon as the full
string orchestra enters after two ~~the~~ introductory bars played by
violins only we hear again that sequence of descending chords
which I also traced back to the second movement. They are not
any longer bouncy or lilted, they are broad, massive ^{and} solemn.
Let us now hear this opening passage of the fourth movement.

[4th movt., beginning till meas. 11, first beat]

Coming back for a moment to this little turn I have pointed
out several times, I should like to say that its use is quite
typical of Mahler's stylistic manner. A listener familiar with
early romantic music will remember having heard this formula
many times in Weber, for instance, and particularly in Wagner, ~~and~~
(and Chopin) with whom it was a favorite idiom when he wanted to suggest
the overpowering upsurge of passion. Mahler has frequently
employed such elements of the early romantic tonal language.

In the surroundings into which he places such elements they ~~the~~
easily take on the character of archaic relics, standing about
like ^{ruins} in a landscape dominated by entirely different
^{isolated} features. I have always felt that in this respect Mahler has
anticipated some of the principles which much later became
identified with surrealism.

At the time when Mahler wrote his Ninth Symphony, that
is in 1909, the new musical language which is announced by
~~the~~ some of its alarming details had already come into being.
Arnold Schoenberg had written his ~~first~~ set of three piano pieces

opus 11 which are generally recognized as the decisive (11)
breakthrough into the unknown territory of atonality. Alban
Berg and Anton Webern had started ~~to~~ expressing themselves
in similar ways. There will be elsewhere in this cycle ample op-
portunity for getting acquainted with the nature of these efforts
so that it is not necessary to pursue the matter at this time.

In a sense Mahler's Ninth ~~Symphony~~ has remained the last
symphony written in the grand style. To be sure, many orchestral works
of considerable length and scope were written since, many of them
bearing the title Symphony. But in the majority of these works the
monumentality of outline and the long breath, features which we
since Beethoven associate with the idea of a symphony, are
largely missing. This does not imply a shortcoming on the
part of their composers, a lack of genius, or a general de-
cline of creative abilities. It indicates that a phase of
musical history has come to an end and that the
characteristic properties of the new musical language
emerging at the beginning of our century have ~~not~~ ^{induced}
composers to preoccupy themselves with different pro-
blems and new types of projects. What music seems to
have lost in this respect, it has gained in other directions,
as it has been the case at any of the numerous turning
points in the agitated history of occidental music.
The emotional impact and the intensity of its personal
message ~~is~~ ^{make} Mahler's Ninth Symphony an object of per-
manent human interest. The position of the work at the
dividing line between two worlds of musical thought makes it
an historical landmark. The ~~original~~ original formul-
ation and organization of musical ideas which is due ~~to~~
to both expressive intensity and historical position assures
the ~~symphony~~ ^{symphony} of lasting value as a work of art. 1140