

GUSTAV MAHLER

SYMPHONY No. 8

Mahler wrote his 8th Symphony in the years 1906 and 1907. He conducted the first performance himself in Munich on December 12th, 1910, only a few months before his death.

The Symphony is written for 8 solo voices, two large mixed choruses, a boys' choir and a very large orchestra, with quintuple woodwind and many extra instruments. The work differs from other choral symphonies, in that the voices are employed from the very beginning and are treated throughout as equally important to the orchestra.

There are two movements: The first is on the words of an old Latin hymn and its form follows in the main the traditional scheme of the sonata.

I

After a full chord of the organ, the main theme is exposed:

A Allegro impetuoso

ff Ve - ni, ve - ni cre - a - tor spi ri tus!

Trpts

Trb.

Vlns

ve - ni, etc.

The first bars (a) are announced by the combined choruses and repeated in a rhythmic variation by the trumpets, while the trombones are sounding a counter theme (c) consisting of the first six notes of the main theme. The violins continue with (d). The 2nd main theme (3)* begins with the motif (b) of A.

B

ff spi - ri - tus, o, cre - a - tor ve - ni, cre - a - tor etc.

* the boxed numbers refer to the rehearsal numbers of the score.

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and leads to the bridge passage [5] built from motifs of A.

In the second subject [7], beginning in D \flat , the solo voices predominate.

C

Im-ple su - per - na gra-ti-a, gra-ti-a

Vlns Fl. & Ob.

Qui Pa-ra- cli-tus di - ce-ris

It is immediately developed and combined with earlier motifs (compare Cc with Ad) and modulates over A \flat , E \flat and B \flat , back to E \flat and to the short closing section [15].

The development is in two main parts, the first of which is fairly loosely shaped: two orchestral interludes of dramatic character alternate with slow lyrical sections. The orchestra begins [17] with a new modulating motif,

D

and continues with fragments of the main theme. A new combination, derived from the counter theme [18]

E

leads to an episode [19] beginning in the chorus with a distorted version of the main theme in D minor;

F

In - fir - ma no - stri, in - fir - ma no - stri cor - po - ris,

this is followed by the 2nd subject (2 bars before [21]); and the episode closes with inversions of the counter melody and a cadence on the main key. The 2nd orchestral interlude [23], of eerie character, takes up the theme's inversion over a pedal on B, and later on A \flat . The theme disintegrates, until cadences establish A \flat as the dominant of the following section in C \sharp minor, sung by the solo voices [30]

G

molto espress.
Ww.

In - fir - ma, in - fir - ma no - stri cor - po - ris

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It is a lyrical version of Ex.E. The bass melody is derived from the main theme, the accompaniment from the chordal figures of Ex.E. Modulating over F, D & G, to C, the melody of Ex.G is combined with various versions of the 2nd subject.

The surprising entry of the dominant of the key of E with an exalted version of the counter theme marks the second part of the development [37]. After four introductory bars, a new theme is exposed [38] which is to be prominent in the 2nd movement. (The first interval of a diminished fifth, A# — E, becomes later regularly a fourth, B — E).

H *ff* Ac - cen - de, ac - cen - de lu - men sen - si - bus

This part of the development is closely knit and throughout, in the initial tempo Allegro Impetuoso. A section in E minor [42], is followed by a double fugue, which is the centre point of the movement [46]

I Prae - vi - o te dnc - to - re sic vi - te -
 Dnc - to - re prae - vi - o te, prae - vi - o, prae - vi - o,
 - mus om - ne, om - ne
 te prae - vi - o om - ne

The new theme (Ex.H) joins in the fugue and on the pedal B \flat the music rushes into the powerful recapitulation [64].

This time the first theme is immediately followed by a new version of the 2nd subject; it develops in the main motif (c) of Ex.C and is entrusted largely to the solo voices [69]. The closing section (in A \flat) also provides a new combination of various motifs [76].

J *sf* *ff* D G Ca

An orchestral interlude follows [79], built on many imitations of the counter-theme Ac, in diminution, inversion, and finally in the augmentation of the solo sopranos. This leads to the Coda, which begins with the first theme in B \flat [84]. The first 3 notes of the theme become predominant, sounding like the ringing of bells [89]. Now the full splendour of the large apparatus is being exploited. On the extended sub-dominant of the closing "plagal" cadence, while imitations of voices and orchestra run up to their top A \flat 's, an extra chorus of trumpets and trombones sounds the theme of Ex.H [91], and closes, to the final E \flat chord of soli chorus and orchestra, with the augmentation of the theme of the fugue (Ex.B.).

II

The music of the second movement is on the poem which forms the last scene of Goethe's "Faust". While in the old legend *Dr. Faustus* is condemned to Hell, in Goethe's drama, the Angels snatch his soul from the claws of the Devil. The sinner is vindicated by Eternal Love, personified by the Holy Virgin. His redemption is the subject of the scene in Heaven which Mahler has composed.

The form of the movement is unorthodox and can perhaps be described as a series of free variations, grouped into distinctive parts. There is a certain resemblance in this to the Finale of Beethoven's Choral Symphony, or even the last movement of the *Eroica*. However, Mahler's scheme is more comprehensive and at the same time the thematic material is more integrated. We can distinguish three large parts, the first of which comprises a slow introduction and various "Allegro" sections, which, in addition to the choruses, introduce soli for baritone, bass and tenor voices. The second part, from [100], is mainly devoted to soli of female voices, 3 sopranos and 2 altos; here slow or moderate tempos prevail. The last part (from [176]) is in the character of a hymn and contains the final climaxes.

The orchestral introduction (*poco adagio*) exposes within the first few bars most of the movement's thematic material.

In the course of the movement the motifs a, b, c and d (c₁ is an augmentation of c) are combined in many ways, to form ever-new melodies, or melodic patterns of different shapes. The first part of the introduction is ternary, and a chorale appears as its middle section (5 bars before [4]), which is the nucleus of the main theme of the movement, built from the motifs a and c of K.

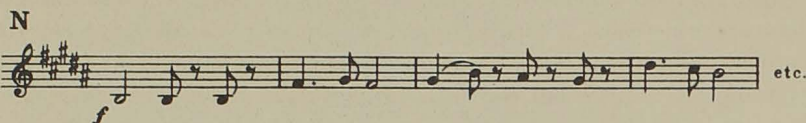
The theme gains more definite shape in the second part, [8]. A variation follows (*piu mosso*) (2 bars after [12]), with the melody in the horn and a florid counter-melody in the violins. The closing section of the orchestral introduction brings a new Chorale melody [21].

Now the introduction is repeated and varied with added chorus, [25]. The main theme appears as a fully grown song for the baritone (*Pater Ecstaticus*) at [31] (*Moderato*). It is in ternary form, and the subsequent variation is a solo in 3 stanzas of the bass (*Pater Profundus*) again accompanied by the counter-melody (*Allegro appassionato*), [39].

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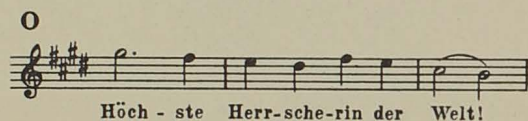
A repetition of the main theme **53** forms a bridge to the following *Allegro deciso* **56**.

This opens with the second main theme of the movement (Ex.H)—it is just another form obtained from the basic material (motifs b and c of Ex.K). In the continuation a new theme appears in the orchestra 5 bars after **60**.



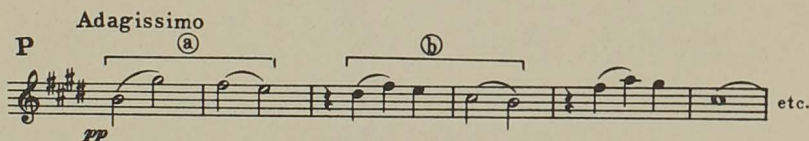
Some transitory bars lead to a lyric *scherzando* section of the female chorus (5 bars after **63**); it is in ternary form and followed by the second main theme (Ex.H), **78**. Another reference to the first movement follows, when the D minor episode from the development (Ex.F) is recapitulated (three bars before **77**); the music is identical, only fitted to the German instead of to the Latin words.

The Chorale which closed the orchestral introduction (Ex.M) opens a new section at **81**. The speed, which had slowed down during the previous episode, quickens here, the boys choir enters with Ex.N (one bar after **85**), and the tenor (*Doctor Marianus*) emerges with the third main theme of the movement, **89**.



It is fully developed in a song of 3 stanzas—needless to say that their sequence is in the form of variations. The tempo is becoming slower at the end of the 3rd stanza and another variation (four bars after **99**), beginning in the violins and accompanied by the chorus, forms the end of the first part of the movement.

A few transitory bars of the orchestra lead to the 2nd part. The melody, which the solo tenor had developed, appears *Adagissimo*, again in a different guise, and in this form it becomes the main theme of the 2nd part, **106**.



It is played by the first violins and repeated by the woodwind, with the chorus accompanying, **109**. Two subsequent variations form the bridge to an extended trio of female voices (*Magna Peccatrix*, *Mulier Samaritana* and *Maria Aegyptiaca*). At first, the three characters have individual soli (figures **117**, **121** and **128**); later at **136**, they combine in a *pp* canon; a recapitulation of the earlier *scherzando* melody follows as an ensemble of the three (compare 4 bars after **132** with 5 bars after **63**); and they conclude in unison with a variation of Ex.P, **144**. Introductory bars of the orchestra lead to the recapitulation, in speedier tempo, of P, sung by another soprano solo (*Una Poenitentium: Gretchen!*) The orchestra takes up the melody (**155**) and develops it, while boys voices sing a counterpoint; they take the lead at **161** with Ex.N, however, soon the solo soprano emerges again to sing one of the most beautiful passages of the symphony. Formally, it constitutes a recapitulation within a few bars of the principal themes of the first movement: from **165** the second

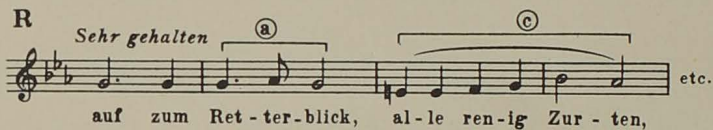
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subject is recapitulated in full; at **168** the trumpets enter pianissimo with the main theme, while the counter-theme is played by the horns; the closing section follows immediately and ends with a florid passage of the soprano. A new version of P forms the coda of this part (**172**), played by the orchestra, while another solo soprano (*Mater Gloriosa*) sings in sustained notes of the sinner's redemption.

The latest part **176** begins with a new motif



After some bars, built on this motif, the solo tenor sings the main theme of the movement in a new form.



The theme at first appeared in the form of Ex.L, and later as the solo of the baritone (*Pater Ecstaticus*). In its new shape it is combined with motifs of Ex. P and rounded off by the hymn-like motif Q. In the subsequent sections (from **186**) the main motifs (P and Q) are developed in sequences and at the climax the counter-theme from the first movement (Ex.Ae) is sounded in the brass instruments (2 bars before **196**); with this and the motif Q the music broadens and dies away on a pedal B \flat .

Harmonies of the orchestra's most tender timbres form a prelude **190** to the final *Chorus Mysticus*, sung by the combined choruses very softly ("wie ein Hauch"). It recapitulates the music of the tenor solo, Ex.R. In a great climax the chorus is repeated *ff* and when the voices end, the extra chorus of trumpets and trombones sounds as a chorale the initial theme of the first movement, **218**. The counter-theme in the brass dominates the remaining bars and the movement ends in the splendour of the full orchestra.

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P O C K E T S C O R E S

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VIII.Symphonie/Thematisches Verzeichnis zu Hawkes Pocket Scores

6 Seiten in englischer Sprache, mit 18 Notenbeispielen

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