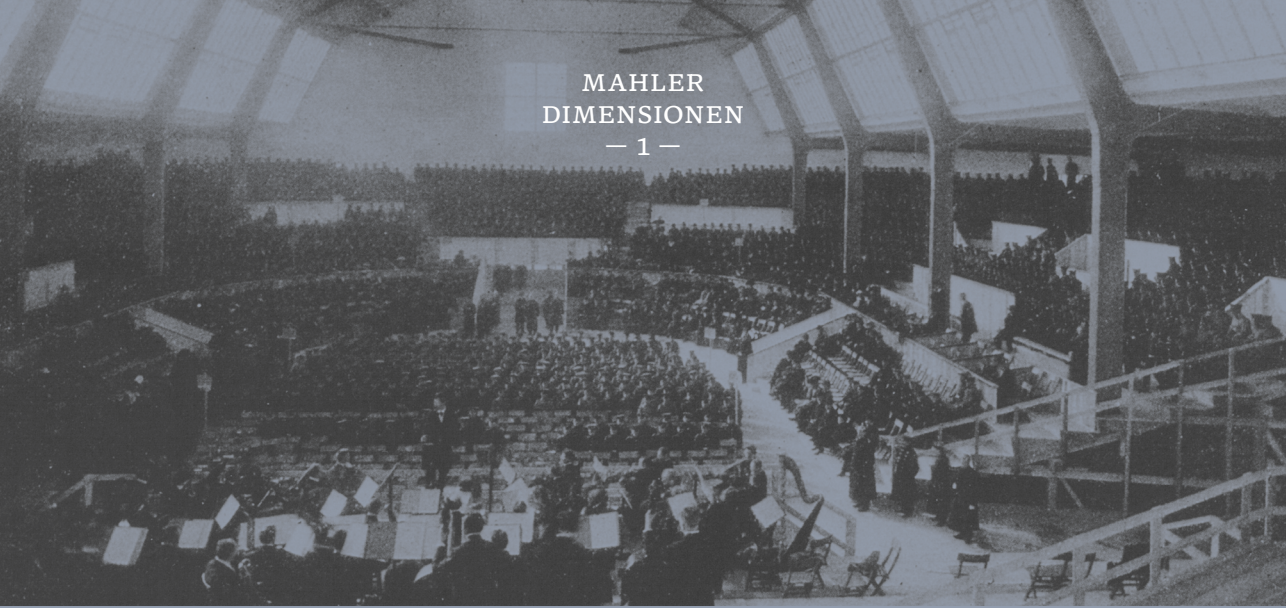




MAHLER
DIMENSIONEN

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TOBIAS JANZ & CHRISTIAN UTZ (HG./EDS.)

Gustav Mahlers Klang

*Zwischen Schaffensprozess,
Interpretation und Rezeption*

Gustav Mahler's Sound

Between Compositional Process,
Performance, and Reception

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Amongst the Topics of Darkness and Light

Mahler's Music as Sound-World

Fredrica Roos

In 1907, Gustav Mahler met Jean Sibelius in Helsinki, where, during a walk together, they began to discuss the meaning of the symphony. Sibelius declared his admiration for the form's strictness and the profound logic that creates an inner connection between all its motifs, but Mahler objected that "the symphony must be like the world. It must contain everything."¹ A slightly similar, related quote is "But, to me, 'symphony' means constructing a world with all the technical means at one's disposal,"² which has implications for the composer's vision of the symphony as well as my own interpretation of it as a concept of world.

Mahler's comments have been extensively cited in the literature, often constituting the basis for interpretations of his music. Connections to "world" have been made in various ways, such as linking the concept with different types of symbols or narratives, in many cases related to aspects of autobiography. Mahler's programmes, statements, and song texts have also been considered in these kinds of readings, together with the music's unusual features and the rich diversity of topics that pertain to the concept of world.

In what follows, I will demonstrate a method of analyzing Mahler's oeuvre that applies his comments about "the world" in a new way, based on the actual sounds and their generation of imaginary musical worlds during listening. This model aims to acknowledge Mahler's unique treatment of orchestration and its implications for the resulting multitude of expressions, spanning from grotesque brutality to shimmering beauty. From a wider perspective, however, the aim is to suggest other means of listening to and analyzing musical works, which recognize the prominent role of timbre and its imaginary power. The present chapter is a condensed version of my dissertation on musical worlds in Mahler's orchestration, providing a general outline of its suggested model and theoretical framework. This stems from literary cognitive theories of world-making and narrative that I adapt to a corresponding notion of the musical sound-world. Several selected "world topics" in Mahler will be addressed, as exemplified by his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, which by means of their specific orchestration, style, and presentation techniques manifest different kinds of musical worlds. I start with a discussion of timbre's function as a compositional element and how the exploration of sound-worlds can be served by giving it a focal position. This is accompanied by discussion of features representative of Mahler's sound-world and molded by his parallel careers as composer and conductor.

Compared with other musical parameters such as pitch, harmony, and tonal-motivic relationships, the so-called secondary parameters of timbre and orchestration have received significantly less attention. This concerns both analytical practices as well as the musicological field in general. There are many reasons for this skewed situation, going far back in time to

¹ Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2007, 185.

² NBL-E, 40.

views and value judgments ascribed to the different compositional elements of a musical work. While these historical directions will be further addressed in relation to the later discussion of Mahler's sound-world, I will first point out some useful analytical tools for timbral analysis centered on the investigation of musical worlds.

In contrast to primary, structural parameters, timbre is inherently more difficult to study since it cannot be organized or measured in the same systematic manner. Attempts to develop a coherent method for examining timbre have generally been directed towards physical properties of sound, such as the spectrograph, which graphically represents the multiple components that constitute a complex of *Klang*. Whereas these kinds of objective data can give valuable information about the acoustics and construction of timbre, they are of little use when looking at the imaginary perception of sound from the vantage point of listening. Thus, alternative analytical approaches that take into account a broader, more all-encompassing listening experience are needed. Norwegian scholar Rolf Inge Godøy's theory of instrumentation and John J. Sheinbaum's concept of multivalence offer two such approaches that I have found valuable for the interpretation of world and narrative.³ Both authors treat timbre as part of, and in dialogue with, music's other compositional parameters, hence granting it equal hierarchical status. In Godøy's article *Skisse till en instrumentasjonsanalytisk systematikk*, he places the complex and multidimensional phenomenon of sound production into three mutually dependent main categories: timbre, texture, and harmony. To begin, "timbre" is defined as "a term describing the tonal quality of a sound."⁴ This term, used in both English and French, corresponds to the similar German term *Klangfarbe*, which literally means "sound-color."⁵ What studies of timbre generally illuminate – and what can be productively transferred to a focus on sounds as worlds – is the central importance of metaphors. This underlines the significance of human conceptual language and the need to connect aural input with aspects of reality in order to make sense of what we hear. The second category of "texture," referring to "the sound aspects of a musical structure,"⁶ is vital for the perception of musical worlds for several reasons. The principal aspect of texture, I would argue, concerns the distribution of orchestral parts and their subsequent roles in the sound mass, counting for both the construction of certain spatial milieus as well as the voices, characters, and events situated therein.

Sheinbaum's proposed multivalence perspective for the analysis of timbre suggests a similar way of thinking to Godøy's model. For Scheinbaum, multivalence occurs when "various factors are compared side by side and can be seen to work against, as well as with one another".⁷ An especially important constitutive parameter for multivalence is form, which also serves as the focus of Sheinbaum's central investigation of timbre. Since the analysis of timbre entails listening, the experience of form becomes more dynamic when experienced through time. Thus, a focus on timbre alters the standard apprehension of this parameter, which is normally

3 Rolf Inge Godøy, *Skisse till en instrumentasjonsanalytisk systematikk*, Dissertation, Oslo University 1993, <https://hdl.handle.net/11250/4436270>, and John J. Sheinbaum, *Timbre, Form, and Fin-de-Siècle Refractions in Mahler's Symphonies*, Dissertation, Columbia University, New York 2002.

4 Murray Campbell, "Timbre (i)," in: *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27973>.

5 Thomas Erma Møller, *Symfoni nr. 4 og 5 av Jean Sibelius: En komparativ analyse av orkestreringens utforming*, Master's Thesis, Department of Musicology, University of Oslo 2011, 9.

6 "Texture," in: *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27758>.

7 Sheinbaum, *Timbre, Form, and Fin-de-Siècle Refractions in Mahler's Symphonies*, 10.

concerned with temporality, as illustrated by the graphic design of formal schemata. This further entails that the division of formal parts does not always coincide with changes in themes and motives, but rather with alterations of *Klang*. As I also argue in relation to musical worlds, formal parts might be understood as various sub-worlds within a larger sound-world that places a greater emphasis on spatiality. This suggests that music's inherent capacity for repetition enables the establishment and continuity of a world's various elements, such as places and characters. Transformation and narrative development arises in turn from the recurring, yet slightly varied formal sections. Marie-Laure Ryan's notion of "fictional recentering," which describes the imaginative and immersive transportation of the reader into a literary story, offers a useful perspective on the phenomenon of returning to either a new or subtly altered realm of the world.⁸ Timbre's dependence on some or all parameters of a musical work makes it plausible to think of music in terms of all-encompassing sound, which is, after all, what we actually hear.

Foundations for Musical World-Making

Having sketched a general method for the analysis of sound, I now turn to the theoretical framework for investigating Mahler's compositions as musical worlds. These theories largely derive from the field of literary narratology, which might seem counterproductive in light of the many problems posed by applying language-dependent concepts onto the non-semantic specificity of sounds. However, considering that music, in comparison with the visual media of drama and film, shares with literature the interactive production of worlds, such theories might help to elucidate processes of imaginary generation in listeners. It is important to point out, however, that the model I propose in the following provides a blueprint for the study of musical worlds rather than an exact reconstruction of the terms discussed.

In my analyses, the concept of "world" functions as an umbrella term for exploring a plurality of worlds on various levels in Mahler. A valuable definition of "world" is as a totality or wholeness – "a total environment or surround space."⁹ This totality consists of several sub-worlds, each of which contain their own set of entities. They are all interconnected in various ways and together form one, complete world. Based on Mahler's statement that a symphony comprises a world, I equate this totality with the symphonic work. In line with cognitive narratology, where the rendering of an imaginative universe is an act of co-creation between the reader and the text, a corresponding pairing for music would be that of the listener and the sounds themselves. The score thus functions more as a sort of script for the coming forth of the world in the interactive process of listening.

This way of interpreting the symphonic work – as an imaginary world experienced by the listener – inevitably demands further clarification concerning the affiliation, reception, and perception of world and its relation to Mahler and the listener, as well as to myself, the analyst. Whose world are we speaking of and how can it be defined? Because of the large quantity of

⁸ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2001, 93–94, and David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, 119–120.

⁹ Michael Heim, *Virtual Realism*, New York: Oxford University Press 1998, 90–91.

extra-musical material that Mahler left behind, we are invited to adhere to the popular assumption that it is he himself – the composer – who speaks through the music. When we hear his works, we consequently hear his feelings, life, and *world*. At the heart of this attitude lies the dichotomy between absolute and programmatic music, in which Mahler presents a particularly complicated case. As is well known, he wished to be seen as a composer of absolute music yet supplied the audience with programmatic notes for several of his symphonies, in addition to leaving behind a vast number of statements regarding narrative and autobiographical interpretations. In line with Vera Micznik, however, I believe that these kinds of sources should be regarded more as reception rather than documentary proofs.¹⁰ As with Mahler's own intentions, they form signposts or "cues" for the apprehension of world, but in no way constitute final truths. The objective of musical imagery instead leads to a focus on Mahler the composer-creator rather than Mahler the man, who in the manner of a craftsman or "master builder" constructs his works as worlds, using all available technical means.

Despite mediating features from his own life, these emotions and expressions are distilled and neutralized by means of sound. Hence, while listeners to this day continue to feel and participate in Mahler's world, its universal entities ultimately enable them to appropriate the conjured images, atmospheres, and related elements as their own, and to relate to them in terms of *intersubjectivity*. But more precisely, who is the envisioned listener? I assume the reader of the following analyses has some fundamental knowledge of Western classical music, yet the wider aim here is to also include those without any specialized musical background. Following the cognitive approach of storyworlds, every individual will make up and perceive the resulting world in their own, unique way, based on their various experiences and competences. This model thereby suggests another approach to world-making than, for example, that of "Weltanschauungsmusik," which centers on a more philosophical and aesthetically colored world view.¹¹ It is important to note, however, that the musical worlds I investigate do not claim any direct correspondence with reality or the real world, but are rather products of the imagination. As for myself, the analyst, my goal is to stay as true to the representative characteristics of Mahler's compositions as possible. Owing to the abstract nature of musical imagery, however, there will inevitably be, to a larger or lesser degree, an element of subjectivity. But then, the point of my interpretations is to present a *general* framework for hearing the composer's music in new ways, rather than to prescribe any exact content. Helpful in this regard is Marion Guck's notion of "analytical fictions," which argues that musical analytical practice by means of language-usage always conveys a personal involvement with musical works on the analyst's part, even in the most technically oriented instances.¹² Neither the analyst nor the listener can therefore perceive or describe musical works in a manner that fully accommodates predetermined interpretations. On the contrary, I wish to suggest new,

10 Vera Micznik, "Music and Aesthetics: The Programmatic Issue," in: CCM, 35–49: 39.

11 See Hermann Danuser, *Weltanschauungsmusik*, Schliengen: Edition Argus 2009, and Hermann Danuser, "Musical Manifestations of the End in Wagner and in Post-Wagnerian 'Weltanschauungsmusik,'" *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994), no. 1, 64–82.

12 Marion A. Guck, "Analytical Fictions," *Music Theory Spectrum* 16 (1994), no. 2, 217–230. See also Veronika Muchitsch, *Vocal Figurations: Technique, Technology, and Mediation in the Gendering of Voice in Twenty-First-Century Pop Music*, Dissertation, Uppsala University 2020, 41–43, for a discussion of this matter and the notion of "accountability" in musical analysis.

creative analytical methods that specifically acknowledge aspects of music and timbre that stimulate the imagination.

The study of musical worlds builds on theories of world-making and narrative, and, more specifically, on the notions of “storyworld” and “possible worlds” theory. Introduced by David Herman as a psychological model, storyworld is a sort of “worldmaking practice” whereby readers use textual cues to build representations of the worlds evoked by narratives.¹³ In its most basic sense, storyworld is the world in which the characters and actions of the story are set. When mentally constructing the storyworld, the reader uses knowledge and concepts from reality in order to make sense of the narrative universe. “Worldedness” describes the connection between the literary world and the real world that we live in.¹⁴ This interrelationship is necessary for the imaginative construction of world. It also acknowledges that each subject, depending on their different life experiences, will perceive the storyworld in their own, personal way. Hence, as Nelson Goodman puts it, “worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking.”¹⁵

Possible worlds theory overlaps with and expands the notion of storyworld into that of a plurality of worlds. As in storyworld, this theory presents a cognitive approach where the could-be-possible exists alongside more concrete narrative facts. The basic idea is that reality is a universe that consists of a number of different worlds, including both aspects we can imagine and those that physically exist. This universe is conceived as a solar system where other, possible worlds orbit like satellites around the actual world that we live in. For the current investigation, Ryan’s application of possible worlds theory to literature has been crucial. She proposes a similar system of co-existing multiple worlds, centered around a “textual actual world,” that is, the one assumed as actual in the narrative, and possible worlds created by the characters through their mental activities of imagining and dreaming et cetera. In contrast to narrative facts, possible world theory is about the possible world-making that takes place inside the world of the literary work.¹⁶

Both theories’ cognitive orientations offer a necessary complement to narratology’s more structural elements of plot and event sequences. I argue that the same widening of perspective is also productive for musicology. Here, the concept of world can broaden and develop the sort of narrative-focused research that has long dominated Mahler studies, facilitating exploration of elements such as spatiality and opening up new paths of narration based on timbre, texture, and tone. Understanding narrative as a subsidiary component of the encompassing interpretive framework of world thus leads to a rethinking of its definition, wherein music further mediates a state of being, freed from the necessity of action and causality. In addition,

13 David Herman, “Storyworld,” in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, London: Routledge 2005, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203932896>, 569–570. See also Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 105–123.

14 Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, New York: Oxford University Press 2012, 42–47.

15 Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis: Hackett 1978, 6.

16 See Peter Hühn, Jan Christoph Meister, John Pier, and Wolf Schmid (eds.), *Handbook of Narratology*, Berlin: de Gruyter 2009, Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, 103, Marie-Laure Ryan, “From Parallel Universes to Possible Worlds: Ontological Pluralism in Physics, Narratology, and Narrative,” *Poetics Today* 27 (2006), no. 4, 633–674: 644–649, Marie-Laure Ryan, “Possible-Worlds Theory,” in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, London: Routledge 2005, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203932896>, 446–450, and Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 120–122.

the world concept is an analytical approach that allows for connections to be made with realms other than literature, such as cinematic techniques and spatial-scenic conceptions of theatre. From my point of view, this intermedial perspective can shed light on music's own unique and complex narrative potential.

World-making in Mahler's Symphonies

I now address how these theories of world-making can be applied to the investigation of worlds in Mahler's symphonies. Using the parts of these theories that are transferrable to music, I propose a modified and elaborated model for the exploration of plural worlds from various perspectives. The foundation for this model is the equation of "storyworld" with a musical "sound-world," engendered by the cognitive interaction between the listener and the aurally perceived sounds. I borrow the concept of "sound-world" from Jens Hesselager, who developed the term from our perception of "world-sound," designating the way in which we hear sounds in the real world.¹⁷ It is important to point out, however, that musical storyworlds do not tell stories in the same, detailed ways as those of literature, but rather mediate the imaginary elements of a world and its narrative processes.

Just as previous knowledge and experience from the real world influence the reader's construction of the storyworld, I argue that similar connections to our environment play a role in the imaginary production of sound-worlds through listening. Metaphorical concepts related to spatiality (for example binaries of high/low, up/down) and embodiment are of particular importance in this regard, as are evocations of timbre, which form necessary tools for orientation in the sound-world. In the manner of textual cues, one can speak about different kinds of "soundposts" that work as interpretive triggers in the construction of a musical sound-world.

Together, the notion of storyworld and possible worlds theory provide a framework for the investigation of multiple kinds of worlds in Mahler. As a totality comprising a network of sub-worlds, storyworld is comparable with the entire musical work. The Fourth and Fifth Symphonies therefore present their own storyworlds respectively, though they are constructed from the same categories of world. The movements in each symphony relate to the storyworld of the entire work in various ways, sometimes presenting one world but often containing several. Worlds can also appear from outside of the storyworld, which in Mahler often coincides with the effect of the "breakthrough," or marked differences in timbre and texture.¹⁸ To conceptualize the distinction between inside and outside the storyworld, I apply the terms "diegetic" and "non-diegetic" from the study of film music, the former coming from a source within the film's diegesis – its storyworld – and the latter, by contrast, coming from outside the diegesis.¹⁹

17 Jens Hesselager, *Making Sense of Sounds: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Ideas on Instrumentation*, Copenhagen: Dansk Musik Tidsskrifts 2004, 155–159.

18 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1992, 41.

19 See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1987, 3, 14–20, and 22–26.

When addressing the different smaller sound-worlds that together form the total sound-world of the symphonies, I make a general distinction between a single main world and other possible worlds, loosely based on the criteria of possible worlds theory. As for the main world, I regard it as the outer, physical realm of places, milieus, and entities that establish a space for their constituent entities. As in possible worlds theory, the main world acts as a vantage point from which to view other possible worlds, which is useful in differentiating sound-worlds with deviating timbres. This can be specified further in music categorizing different worlds into various kinds or topics, such as social worlds (dance milieus, conversations) and worlds of nature (e.g., landscapes, natural processes). Possible worlds, meanwhile, are the inner spheres of the story's characters, but also, as I claim, those of the listener's, who can sometimes take on the position of an agential character. All the possible worlds of the symphonies are characterized by variations in sound and atmosphere, often coinciding with abrupt sectional changes or ruptures.

Crucial for my analysis of musical worlds is the notion of point of view or focalization. Consequently, alternating worldviews or world versions arise, resulting in different ways of seeing and being in the world. Some of these are the perspectives of the story's characters, who 'cue' the mediation of the world, but many spring from the various positions of the listener in relation to the surrounding sounds. In this sense, musical worlds are mostly made by and for the listener, who becomes the imagining, possible world-making subject.

All the worlds that comprise the total storyworld coexist and relate to each other within an interconnected system. Compared to the static satellite system of possible worlds theory, however, I suggest that musical sounds generate a more fluid and interchangeable spectrum, existing, for example, in terms of levels, layers, and oscillations. Related to the system of worlds is the transportation between them. Mahler's specific compositional techniques thus provide the means by which listeners are imaginatively transported into, between, and out of these worlds. Examples of such transitions are thresholds, collapses, or even silence.

I investigate the sound-worlds in Mahler's music and their resulting storyworld from a set of different categories, relating to construction and content. These are space and time, together with characters, voices, and gestures. This selection partly stems from their essential functions in narratology, but also their universal importance for human experience. Spatial and temporal dimensions form the constitutive elements of world, representing the where and when components of storyworlds.²⁰ Together with event and action sequences, they function as the organizing principles of their constituent entities, such as characters, objects and places.²¹

In the musical domain, the closest one gets to the presence of characters in narratives is the concept of virtual human agency, which has been studied most prominently by Robert Hatten.²² As the term virtual implies, the idea is not of an actual agent but refers to the simulation of actions, emotions, and reactions of human agents.²³ Related to virtual human agency is Edward Klorman's theory of multiple agency and Edward T. Cone's discussion of agents in his seminal work *The Composer's Voice*.²⁴ Taking these notions as point of departure,

²⁰ Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 128.

²¹ Ruth Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994, 8.

²² Robert Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2018.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

²⁴ Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016, and Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1974.

I further explore many different kinds of musical agencies, encompassing performative, narrative, and subjective dimensions. In addition, I propose other agencies specific to Mahler's music and sound-world, such as world-organizational forces analogous to directors, discussed below in the section on world topics. Virtual human agency generally plays an important role in the cueing of perspectives of world, and, by extension, the listener's related position. The categories of voice and gesture are also intimately bound up with human agency.

These categories offer a lens through which to investigate the contrasts and specific features that characterize Mahler's sound-world. In the manner of a creative director, he collects material from the real world that is subsequently transferred into the musical work of art. These world materials have their origin in the fundamental dichotomy of life and death, consisting of variations on topics such as darkness and light; the grotesque and the beautiful; irony or humor and sincerity; nature and the urban; and dreams and realism. Because of the constant presence of these world topics and their ever-shifting nuances in Mahler, it is plausible to speak of a *discourse on world*.

Mahler's Sound-World

As a complement to the presented theoretical framework, it is necessary to outline the specific characteristics of Mahler's sound-world. This part of the study focuses on Mahler's instrumentation practices, which constitute a point of departure for exploring his music as worlds created by means of sound. Even though instrumentation was vital for Mahler's symphonic composing, his conception of and interest in the area was also closely related to his main occupation as a conductor. These two parallel careers influenced his unique understanding of sound, and ultimately various features of world.

As previously noted, timbre's generally marginalized position in musicology is indebted to difficulties in its study as well as a lack of analytical tools and pedagogical traditions. Since the potential combinations of instruments are enormous, the resulting harmonic and timbral contexts become infinite and thereby problematic to determine. This is also one of the reasons why treatises of instrumentation, such as Berlioz's landmark *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*,²⁵ remain handbooks in practical craftsmanship rather than complete theories of orchestration. In addition, variations in timbre arise from specific playing techniques, together with changes in dynamics and register, further complicating the possibility of a comprehensive analytical method encompassing all co-operating elements.

However, this situation also relates to historical circumstances, where contexts of reception and specific value judgements about orchestration were highly influential – and still might be. During the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, the prevailing aesthetic theory deemed timbre to be hierarchically lower than other, primary compositional parameters. Through its associations with sensuality and surface, sound was understood as an external feature of the musical work, functioning more as “clothes” for the music's essential substance and inner meaning.²⁶ A related analogy from the 19th century differentiates between the musical “draw-

²⁵ Hector Berlioz, *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*, Paris: Schöenberg 1843.

²⁶ Hesselager, *Making Sense of Sounds*, 4. See also Karen Painter, *The Aesthetics of the Listener: New Conceptions of*

ing” and the musical “painting.” While the drawing referred to the abstract musical structure, consisting of pitches and durations, the painting referred to the instrumental coloring of that structure – i.e., its orchestration. Timbre was thus seen as something that came *after* the structure, as detached from the composition’s initial construction and therefore redundant.²⁷

However, one might argue that the “painting” presents the most complete version, given that all elements, including dynamics and articulation, are present. This further implies that it is the actual *sound* of music, and not its primary skeleton, that forms the concrete totality. In fact, this seems more in line with Mahler’s own vision of composition, in which orchestration was inextricably linked to the structural idea of the work. By regarding timbre as an important means of expression, on par with other parameters, Mahler’s apprehension, approaching a more modern concept of sound design, stood in sharp contrast to contemporary views of it as subordinated to pitch and other primary parameters. This is apparent in the composer’s endless revisions, or *Retuschen*, of his own works, which were largely concerned with aspects of dynamics and, above all, instrumentation.²⁸ The fact that Mahler almost never changed the compositional structure of a work makes it clear that, for him, timbre and tone were music’s main expressive devices.²⁹

Mahler’s instrumentation principles are not only valuable for understanding his creative process, but also for their interconnection with different elements of world. It is significant that the composer himself referred to world in various senses in his statements about orchestration. Most of these spring from the retellings of Natalie Bauer-Lechner, in addition to comments found in Mahler’s letters and correspondences. The principles I discuss here are similar to some of the maxims initially outlined by Altug Ünlü in his book *Gustav Mahlers Klangwelt: clarity, lyricism, primacy of melody, tonal radiance as well as contrast and alternation*.³⁰

One of Mahler’s most frequent mottos concerns clarity and layers of voices. Following a performance of *Carmen*, he exclaimed to Bauer-Lechner: “The most important thing in composition is clarity of line [der reine Satz] – that is, every voice should be an independent melody, just as in the vocal quartet, which should set the standard here.”³¹ Thus, for Mahler, timbre was not a superficial, external feature of the musical work but rather a composite means to achieve exactness in communication: “Instrumentation [...] is not there for the sake of sound-effects, but to bring out clearly what one has to say.”³²

In Mahler’s compositional output, clarity of line is often achieved through the use of solo instruments with distinct timbres or other heterogeneous material, usually also featuring a part with a rhythmic *Eigenprofil*.³³ Ultimately, this goes back to the blending of different timbres to achieve the result of mixed or unmixed combinations, of a homogeneous or heterogeneous instrumental constellation.

Musical Meaning, Timbre, and Form in the Early Reception of Mahler’s Symphonies 5–7, Dissertation, Columbia University, New York 1996, 83–84.

27 Hesselager, *Making Sense of Sounds*, 7.

28 David Pickett, “Arrangements and *Retuschen*: Mahler and *Werktreue*,” in: CCM, 178–199: 184.

29 Herta Blaukopf, “Mahler as Conductor in the Opera House and Concert Hall,” in: CCM, 165–177: 176.

30 Altug Ünlü, *Gustav Mahlers Klangwelt: Studien zur Instrumentation*, Frankfurt/M: Lang 2006, 3–30.

31 NBL-E, 75.

32 Ibid., 178.

33 Peter Jost, “Mahlers Orchesterklang,” in: MH, 114–126: 116.

Instead of the standard procedure of first composing at the piano and then orchestrating, Mahler favored a point of departure in the violin and the voice. This contributed to the central principle of *Gesanglichkeit* (singability) in his instrumentation, relating to both his prioritization of clarity and the essential primacy of melody (*Primat der Melodie*), and gesture or contour. All of these features are important for my localization of virtual human agents and their expressions through various kinds of voices. The composer's exploitation of the actual, human voice in his œuvre is well-known, but it is remarkable how the melodic, lyrical quality also applies to his instrumental writing.

In a letter to Marschalk offering advice on composition, Mahler emphasized "*Variety and contrast!* That is, as it always was, the secret of *effectiveness!*"³⁴ This dictum illuminates the constant, ever-evolving shifts that permeate his music, in which timbre often plays a prominent role. It has importance for the expressive range of Mahler's musical worlds, as well as their overarching compositional processes.

Mahler's concept of variation also manifests in what Adorno later termed the "variant technique." According to Adorno, Mahler's variant distinguishes itself from Schoenberg's principle of "developing variations" as "a technical formula for the epic and novel-like element of the always different yet identical figures"; in the manner of "gestalts," the composer's themes constantly change, but without losing their recognizability as themes, similar to how characters function in novels.³⁵ However, modifications of instrumentation are not covered by Adorno's term, despite, playing an equally important role as thematic-motivic modifications in the development of the world and its elements. One could even say that timbre forms the central element of this technique, since the expressive effect of the variations largely derives from the changes in instrumentation. But, as previously mentioned, such variations in orchestral combinations are in themselves endless and can therefore pose difficulties in theorization, at least in a more physical, acoustic sense. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that Mahler himself ascribed another kind of meaning to the concept of variation, one associated with the constant evolution of world and life rather than the novel. This is evidenced in several of his statements to Bauer-Lechner, which emphasize his quest for the avoidance of repetition. For example, on the ballad composer Carl Löwe:

[H]e repeats individual stanzas, whereas I have come to recognize a perpetual evolution of the song's content – in other words, through-composition [das Durchkomponieren] – as the true principle of music. In my writing, from the very first, you won't find any more repetition from strophe to strophe; for music is governed by the law of eternal evolution, eternal development – just as the world, even in one and the same spot, is always changing, eternally fresh and new. But of course this development must be progressive, or I don't give a damn for it!³⁶

34 Gustav Mahler, "Statements on Orchestration," in: *Orchestration: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. by Paul Mathews, New York: Routledge 2006, 47–52: 49. See also the title and content of Dimitrios Katharopoulos's chapter in the present volume.

35 Adorno, *Mahler*, 72 and 86–88.

36 NBL-E, 130.

In connection to a discussion of Schubert:

For each repetition is already a lie. A work of art must evolve perpetually [immer weiter entwickeln], like life. If it doesn't, hypocrisy and theatricality set in.³⁷

And in relation to his own Fifth Symphony:

That's why the chordal progressions are so difficult, particularly in view of my principle that there should be no repetition, but only evolution.³⁸

Mahler's specific composition techniques also affect the perception of form and its structure. While working on the Third Symphony in Steinbach am Attersee, he declared: "My calling it a symphony is really inaccurate, for it doesn't keep to the traditional form in any way. But, to me 'symphony' means constructing a world with all the technical means at one's disposal. The eternally new and changing content determines its own form."³⁹

In eschewing the traditional in favor of eternally changing forms, this comment gives the term "symphony" a quite different meaning. By proceeding from a compositional principle of world procedures, writing a symphony becomes similar to constructing a world. This also suggests another possible way of approaching form, which follows the course of the world rather than those of established molds.

Mahler's treatment of timbre was also highly influenced by his experiences at the opera house, where observations of the orchestra's acoustic possibilities in combination with scenic aspects of drama and spatiality affected his approach to composition.⁴⁰ During the prestigious directorship of the Vienna Court Opera (1887–1907), Mahler was deeply involved in theatrical productions in collaboration with stage designer Alfred Roller, acting as a multi-tasking director bringing together all cooperative elements.⁴¹ The dual role of conductor-director is analogous to the composer-director who builds his symphonic works, with the theatrical organization of *mise-en-scène* corresponding to the similar organization of a world, sculpted in sounds.

This kind of dramatic thinking is evidenced within Mahler's œuvre by scenic telling or *tableaux vivants*,⁴² various speech types and narrative positions, off-stage voices (fanfares, calls), and the use of sounds as props. However, the reworking of these features into the symphonic work also leads to a transgression of their original meanings and functions. The result is a mobile drama in sounds, or a sort of abstract theatre, where the dramatic and scenic is transferred to a musical sound-world.

37 Ibid., 147.

38 Ibid., 172.

39 Ibid., 40.

40 Thomas Peattie has extensively explored spatiality in his study on Mahler's incorporation of theatrical devices in the symphony. See Thomas Peattie, *Mahler's Symphonic Landscapes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015.

41 Ibid., 37–38, and Julian Johnson, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies*, New York: Oxford University Press 2009, 182.

42 Johnson, *Mahler's Voices*, 174.

Strangely enough, despite his lifelong preoccupation with the form, Mahler never wrote an opera himself. This was due to the conflict in the composer's musical thinking between the overt nature of drama and the imaginatively mediated nature of expressive sound. The integration of theatrical elements thus affected the conception of the symphonic genre, inviting new generic perspectives on instances where these techniques become means in the construction of world. Through their release in music, however, there is scope for other forms of generic reference, approaching a kind of intermedial narration in which elements drawn from literature, as well as analogies with film, coexist.

Topics of World

In this section, I will present three selected topics of world, illustrated by musical examples from Mahler's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies. These topics treat the subjects of dreams, brass instruments as directors of world, and the aspect of voice respectively. Embedded within the analyses are the foundational categories of space, temporality, virtual human agency, and voice and gesture, although what is discussed here only forms a fraction of Mahler's wide and complex sonic universe.

My main reason for choosing these works concerns their differences in orchestration, style, and absolute-programmatic outline, facilitating the exploration of various types of storyworlds and their diverse techniques of mediation. While the Fourth Symphony forms part of the so-called *Wunderhorn* symphonies, containing programmatic implications and the presence of a human voice, the Fifth Symphony, lacking any singers or text, claims to be absolute music. These differing traits mirror an important larger shift in Mahler's compositional development, with the Fifth moving towards an extended counterpoint filled with harsher timbres, in contrast to the smaller scale of the classical design and orchestral forces of the Fourth. Both works evoke worlds centered on oppositions that characterize life and death, but molded and expressed in their own specific ways. Owing to this multifariousness, I interpret them as belonging to the genres of fairy tale and realism, respectively, as illustrated by the childlike dream universe of the Fourth and the Fifth's darkly suffused world, which is largely built on generic connotations. This division of genre types is found in narratology, depending on how we relate to fictional worlds; that is, to what degree the story recalls the real world.

The first topic of dreams is particularly prominent in the Fourth Symphony. The examples presented in the following stem from the symphony's first movement, which mediates the fairy-tale storyworld from a childlike perspective. Here, one finds dreams as both inner refuge and horrific nightmare, illustrating the contrasting topics in Mahler of darkness and light. These realms establish themselves through particular timbres and atmospheres, granting the listener different perspectives of world, either as immersed subject or embodied observer.

The first example takes place at the end of the exposition, which I interpret as the movement's main world. Until now, the music has displayed various elements of world – such as characters, settings, and song – by means of a portraitlike, scenic presentation. The seventh and last theme (mm. 91–101), however, breaks this procedure and the expected, cyclical order of themes by introducing a new sound-world, which alters the dimensions of time and space. As the tempo slows down, the intense work of the strings early on is transformed into a drawn-

out carpet of interweaving lines, in which the cellos are especially prominent, with glissandos spanning wide intervals. The bassoons' long pedals and extended phrases in the woodwinds underscore the sensation of spatial expansion, as though the world's imaginary frames had swelled into a more expansive sphere. This also effects the evocation of temporal suspension and detachment from the immediate surroundings. Suspension (*Suspension*) is one of Adorno's categories for a "material theory of form" in Mahler, alongside breakthrough (*Durchbruch*) and fulfilment (*Erfüllung*).⁴³ The seventh theme's detachment from the surrounding music reflects his likening of the composer's suspensions to sedimented episodes. However, this feature can also be explained by concepts from narratology.

Duration represents one of the influential categories proposed by Gérard Genette in his theory of narrative discourse, in addition to order and frequency.⁴⁴ This means speed in relation to the length of events and the text devoted to them, normally referred to as story and discourse time. Genette localizes four types of duration – scene, summary, ellipsis, and pause – which present various sorts of story-discourse relations. Up until this point, the themes have mainly come across as scenes that belong to the showing mode, analogous to drama, as opposed to the mode of telling found in a summary.⁴⁵ With the seventh theme and its spatio-temporal expansion, however, this manner of mediation is broken, while simultaneously dissolving the previous themes' portraitlike distance and framing. Although it could be tempting to use the pause category to describe the specific mode evoked here – "a descriptive dwelling on a point in time in which action does not move forward" – I find a more suitable term in a newly added fifth category called "stretch."⁴⁶ This occurs when text time exceeds event time, similar to filmic slow motion, which captures the music's feeling of enlargement and languorous rest. In addition, one should also consider the formal dimension of the passage, where the calming in the tonic takes place in the middle of the development rather than at the end of the exposition, which would normally be the case.

The spatio-temporal effects generate a sensation of withdrawing from the outside world into an inner sphere reminiscent of dreams and longing. Together with the expressive and languorous tone, the music evokes a high degree of virtual subjectivity, opening up an emotional room in which to dwell. At the same time, a recentering from the main world into another, possible one takes place. But to whom does this interior world belong? In novels, when there is no character to whom the consciousness described by the text can be attributed, the reader identifies with the story-internal position and imaginatively transports themselves into the scene of events.⁴⁷ Since, in a corresponding way, no virtual agent is musically present as a character, I propose that the listener takes this position, immersed in the field of sounds. This state differs from the previously portrait-like mediation of world externally observed by the listener, who now, for the first time in the movement, imaginatively enters inside its formerly

43 Adorno, *Mahler*, 41.

44 See Monika Fludernik, "Time in Narrative," in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, London: Routledge 2005, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203932896>, 608–612, and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, New York: Cornell University Press 1980.

45 Martin Löschnigg, "Summary and Scene," in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, London: Routledge 2005, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203932896>, 576–577.

46 Monika Fludernik, "Time in Narrative," 609.

47 Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, 133.

enclosed frames. At this point, the seventh theme further functions as a direct transition into the subsequent dream sequence of the development; an inner world of dreams resulting in other dreams similarly produced by mental activity.

The second dream example occurs in the development (mm. 102–238), which starts abruptly with a return to the sleigh bell motif that opened the movement and also cued the fairy-tale, childlike storyworld. In contrast to its initial, shimmering tone, the sleigh bell is now subjected to a number of timbral and thematic distortions. The development section transforms the main world into a dream sequence by means of deformation. Deformation represents one of Nelson Goodman's means of world-making and takes place here from the vantage point of the sleigh bell motif.⁴⁸ In the following, I present an excerpt from my analysis of the development as a coherent dream sequence alternating between different kinds of dream worlds characterized by light and darkness – one luminous and paradisaical, the other horrific and nightmarish.

A crucial reason for regarding the development as representing another world than the exposition is the significant disruptions between the two sections, as identified by several critics.⁴⁹ The differences also lie in the more fragmentary, heterogeneous texture and motivic and timbral distortions that permeate most of the music. As for the dreamlike features, the episodic and discontinuous structure mirrors the common sequential experience of dreams – through transformations of sound, the world constantly recreates itself. Out of the dream sequence's total of six episodes, I will now analyze the third, which forms part of the horrific nightmare world encompassing episodes 3–5.

At the end of the childlike paradise of the second episode, the music abates in a short, wave-like gesture that leads into the third episode (mm. 145–154). Mahler's orchestration is significant in this version of the nightmare world, producing an imaginative space of what can be termed "environmental sounds." This is similar to Michel Chion's definition of "ambient" or "territory sounds" on screen, i.e., sounds that establish a space and characterize its locale.⁵⁰

The third episode with the first distorted variant of the paradise theme starts in the woodwinds in measure 145, where short, ascending gestures in an uncomfortably high register approximate the contour and expression of screaming. Instructed to play with bells up (*Schalltrichter auf*), the forced, accented tones of the clarinet and oboes result in a strained and shrieking timbre. Since the theme is performed in unison, it becomes plausible to apply the notion of multiple agency, as opposed to that of a virtual subject. In his study of Mozart's chamber works, Klorman adapts the multiple-agency concept to the interaction among individual players in a chamber ensemble.⁵¹ Concerning the woodwinds' statement, however, I prefer to formulate multiple agency as a shared utterance analogous to that of a choir. This resonates with Cone's idea of a multiple persona. However, in accordance with Klorman, I view the players as individual agents in contrast to the persona of the composer.⁵² The differing timbres of the woodwind instruments underline such a distinction, coming together as

⁴⁸ Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 16–17.

⁴⁹ See Donald Mitchell, "'Swallowing the Programme': Mahler's Fourth Symphony," in: MC, 187–216: 213, Raymond Knapp, "Suffering Children: Perspective on Innocence and Vulnerability in Mahler's Fourth Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 22 (1999), no. 3, 233–267: 248, and Adorno, *Mahler*, 96.

⁵⁰ Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia University Press 1994, 75.

⁵¹ Klorman, *Mozart's Music and Friends*, 122.

⁵² Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, 103–104.

a group but still constituting separate virtual human agents, thus suggesting multiple agency in collective terms. Muted trumpets (mm. 150 and 153–154) add to the menacing sound-world through their echoes of a series of three accented notes, and, by playing *mf* and thus pressing the tone, produce sounds of horror and eeriness.

Together these sounds create a mixture of atmosphere, tension, and voices, forming cues for the setting of some kind of horror milieu. Because of their juxtaposition and fragmentary nature, one perceives them as various components spread out in space, emanating from different directions. This reflects Mahler's conception of polyphony as heterogeneous, multidirectional sound perceived *en plein air*.⁵³ However, compared with sounds heard in the real world – referred to by Hesselager as “world-sound” – the listener cannot identify their exact origins in terms of determinate objects.⁵⁴ However, the music's sound-world provides a similar spatio-temporal orientation of its sounds, which function as aural landmarks in terms of distance and proximity, foreground and background, et cetera. This further relates to the phenomenon of spatial imagery, in which we similarly apprehend our bodies as situated in space by means of language metaphors.⁵⁵ By applying concepts that are relatable to reality, the listener consequently becomes an observer, imaginatively situated at the scene of events, albeit through interlinking with sounds instead of words. A sensation of three-dimensional surround-sound thus emerges, resulting in an expansion of musical space.

My second example of Mahler's world topics concerns the brass instruments' various functions as what I liken to “world directors.” These instruments have a special prominence in Mahler's orchestration in general, being innovatively used in a rich set of roles, primarily relatable to various kinds of speech and structuring of world. This arises both from the composer's way of letting the instruments come to the front with clearly marked, human-like voices, as well as from his reinvention of standard conventions.

The marked role of the brass instruments as narrators is strongly reflected in their organizational function in the storyworld. This stems from Mahler's way of placing the instruments' traditional gestures of fanfares, signals, and calls between formal sections so that new meanings arise out of old conventions. The effect becomes similar to off-stage voices sounding from behind the theatre stage, with the difference that these voices now come from inside the symphonic work, appearing to exist outside the storyworld but with the authority to steer its unfolding. This act of superior control is also manifested in the instruments' chameleon-like ability to occasionally enter into the storyworld and take on other types of roles, such as characters. The brass instruments' mobile interlinking of world ultimately makes it plausible to define them as directors, with Mahler transferring his own profession into these particular instruments to create a composite drama in sounds. Through his specific scoring technique, they variously call forth, stop, transport us to, or even destroy worlds. Because of the diversity of Mahler's musical materials, there is a need for a structural force linking all the disparate parts of the world together into a totality, which, by extension, also enables the listener to move across its vast geography.

⁵³ See Mahler's statement in NBL-E, 155–156.

⁵⁴ See Hesselager's discussion of world-sound and sound-world in Hesselager, *Making Sense of Sounds*, 155–161.

⁵⁵ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Space,” in: *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. by Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert, Hamburg: Hamburg University 2012, revised 2014, <https://www-archiv.fdm.uni-hamburg.de/ihn/node/55.html> (30/06/2026).

I will now present two short examples from the Fourth Symphony, where the solo horn plays a particularly important role for the overarching organization of world. The solo horn that initiates the second movement sounds estranged and foreboding, presenting a deep contrast to the stable, positive ending of the Allegro. Its lingering on the interval of a minor second marked by accentuated swells, together with the uncertainty in key and direction of its harmonically ambiguous position in G minor, generates an ominous, threatening atmosphere. During the course of just three measures, Mahler transfers us to another part of the work's storyworld – the world of Death, personified by the solo violin, tuned in scordatura, which enters for the first time in measure 7. In measure 3, the horn is joined by woodwinds on staccato notes, permeated by non-harmonic resolution, expanding the initial atmosphere into a more concrete sense of place. The instrument thereby carries out two primary functions: announcing a new scene in the fairy-tale world while simultaneously foreshadowing its atmosphere. Through Mahler's placement of the traditional gesture of calling in this particular formal position, the horn's associations with hunting in nature are transmuted into a role that structures as well as generates world.

Later in the movement, the horn, together with clarinets, functions as a portal into the nature world of the fairy-tale storyworld, as represented by its two trio parts (mm. 71–101 and 203–245).⁵⁶ This nature world forms one of several sub-worlds of the movement's fairy-tale storyworld, constituting its own sound-world. The entrance into the first trio takes place in measure 68, when two clarinets and a solo horn disrupt the expected return of Death's fiddling dance theme by means of a calling gesture, marking the shift to a new space. Whereas the calling figure in itself would signal the appearance of world, the specific combination of the two instruments' timbres makes it into a particular means of transportation. The wide registral spread generates an estranged, quasi-magical tone, evoking a vast, voluminous space. This creates a sensation of opening that I regard as a portal, imaginatively moving the listener into the first trio (m. 71) and its fairy-tale nature realm, inhabited by humorous animal voices. Consequently, the sub-world in question is perceived as being situated at a great distance, the portal function thus exemplifying how Mahler's instrumental treatment produces effects of spatial distance and mobility.

Finally, I turn to my third and last example which addresses the topic of voice. The aspect of "songfulness" or "vocality" plays a defining role in the perception of Mahler's instruments as virtual agents that embody humanlike voices and gestures. Frequently, they are marked with performance directions such as *singend*, *gesangvoll*, *sehr gesangvoll*, *ausdrucksvoll*, *espressivo*, and so on. A further important link between song and symphony is the speech-like element of Mahler's orchestration. Adorno draws attention to the "language-like" ("Sprachähnlichkeit") element that runs through the composer's music, claiming that "extreme proximity to language is one of the roots of Mahler's symbiosis of song and symphony, in which nothing changed even in the instrumental middle symphonies."⁵⁷ What is more, voices and virtual human agency are important in cueing the perspective of worlds, which I will now demon-

56 My differentiation of formal sections here might not be entirely congruent with the norm, due to the interpretation of portals and other transitional functions, as discussed below.

57 Adorno, *Mahler*, 22, and Johnson, *Mahler's Voices*, 19. See also the original German edition of Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1960, 34–35.

strate with an excerpt from the Fifth Symphony's second movement, displaying various types of voices situated in nature.

The first and second movements that constitute the work's Part I mediate a dark type or topic of world due to their shared somber mood and their permeation by harsh timbres. The timpani roll heard at the climax (m. 65) is the only instrument left in the wake of the first theme's (mm. 1–73) collapse, functioning as a barely audible, one-measure transition to the second theme (mm. 74–140). Out of the silence that follows the destruction of what I interpret as an action space, a different kind of sound-world emerges. The raw brutality characterized by the heavy brass timbre now gives way to a soft, yet cautious woodwind choir. Their sound appears even more out of place due to the unprepared key change to F minor and the altered tempo (*bedeutend langsamer*, “significantly slower”). Together, these sudden shifts produce the effect of an imaginary recentring, transporting the listener into a space situated somewhere else in the storyworld.

The motifs that open the section derive from the accompaniment of the first movement's second trio (mm. 323–390),⁵⁸ consisting of a triplet figure and an ascending gesture of a ninth. Through the modified instrumentation from strings from woodwinds, however, the motifs are transformed into a new setting of what I view as a place in nature.

In terms of texture, these motifs appear among the various woodwind parts so that they emerge as voices from different locations in space. This surround-sound effect arises from Mahler's way of dynamically differentiating the parts to produce the impression of echoes. The strained tone generated by the clarinet in its higher register (mm. 74–75) and the group of three oboes performing a compressed, nasal-sounding F minor chord (mm. 75–76) further endow these voices with a tone of disturbing intrusiveness. Constant *sf-p* dynamics increase both the quality of timbre and the presence of echo effects. Together, the instruments evoke a group of fragmentary animal voices, emerging in an empty space, appearing alternately and creating a cacophony through the repeated triplets or calling gestures of the ascending ninth.

Following on from this initial cueing of a natural setting, there is yet another motif derived from the second trio, as the cellos enter (m. 78) with a variant of the first violin theme. Their elegiac melody and lamenting tone clearly resonate with the voice of a virtual human agent, underlined by Mahler's performance direction of *molto cantando*. The sonority of a group of cellos in unison is closer to the sound of a human voice than that of the other strings, such as the violins, while also mediating a sense of melancholy and inward contemplation.

Mahler believed Man to have two forms of relations with Nature: “He [i.e., Man] may find himself in a harmonious and happy relationship with Nature, or alternatively in painful and hostile opposition to her.”⁵⁹ The alienation of the virtual subject from nature's voices suggests the latter, in contrast to the mediation of the natural world as a place of safety and refuge in the Fourth Symphony's second movement. Further reflected in the persistent and intrusive surrounding of the animal voices, this voice mode illustrates Mahler's ever-shifting nuanced approach to the representation of the same topic, where nature emerges as a lonely place, mirroring the darkness experienced by the virtual subject. Through identification with

58 Again, since my formal division takes into account various kinds of transitions into and out of worlds and its entities, it differs slightly from the standard schemata.

59 NBL-E, 96–97.

the speech and mode of this voice, the listener becomes integrated in the natural place, experiencing the simultaneous sounds that surround them from the position of an agent instead of an observer as before.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented what I hope to be a new and fruitful model for analyzing Mahler's music as an interactive sound-world. Through the composer's rich variety of orchestral combinations, together with their constantly changing settings and functions, a vast plurality of different kinds of musical worlds arises, which mediate an expressive diversity analogous to that of the real world. In Mahler, no instrument has a fixed or predetermined role but is continuously transformed with regard to timbre and textural position, resulting in a collective of orchestras. Timbre thereby becomes something plastic and moldable, mediating the idea of the work as well as its structure. From the distinction of a main world as the base for several possible others, this chapter has explored a set of different topics of world, including dreams, nature, the brass as directors, and the aspect of voice. These sound-worlds are manifested through various cues, enacted by a combination of timbre, texture, and genre manipulation. Although the basis for the sound-worlds of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies have been their respective genres of fairy tale and realism, both explore oppositions of life and death, darkness and light, with Mahler's diverse orchestration acting as a means to illustrate these nuances. Hence, it is plausible to speak of a discourse on world concerned not so much with plot as with an endless development of the same, continuous topics.

Mahler's treatment of the orchestra ultimately challenges the symphony as a genre, turning it into a dramatization of worlds through sounds. This results in another kind of intermedial experience, which invokes a mobile, spatial presentation approaching the cinematic. Immersing oneself in Mahler's œuvre thus becomes like walking around in a huge cathedral that incessantly re-builds itself. A sound-world arises that takes the listener on a fascinating musical journey, directed not by the composer but by the instruments' multifaceted voices. Defining his musical works in this way suggests an approach that reaches beyond the traditional notions of programme music and autobiography to become more in line with Mahler's own vision of the symphony as a construction of world. Perhaps this way of hearing in sounds can also reveal something *about* the world. If we listen closely to Mahler's unique sound, how he scores the world, we can see it shimmering in all of the colors of the rainbow, emerging as a multifaceted and complex palette where no element holds any single static meaning.

Gustav Mahler's comment to Sibelius in 1907 that a symphony must be like the world is one of the most cited in classical music and has functioned as an essential point of departure for interpretations of the composer's œuvre. However, these interpretations have generally focused on autobiographical, programmatic, or narrative aspects of the music, mostly relating to features of "plot" or various kinds of semiotic references. In this chapter, I use the concept of "world" with the aim of investigating Mahler's music as a "sound-world" and its imaginative production through listening. The focus lies particularly on timbre and orchestration, elements that have often been bypassed in musicological research. This chapter applies a theoretical framework of world-making and narrative from cognitive literature but also makes references to theatre and film. The "storyworld" notion and the related "possible worlds" theory form the vantage point for examining "world" from different perspectives. In the analyses of "world," I explore the categories of space and temporality, together with those of voice, virtual agency, and gesture, to represent the domains of construction and content. These are applied to Mahler's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, which respectively represent generic worlds of fairy tale and realism. Mahler's rich and mercurial orchestral combinations create a multifaceted realm of shifting worlds with complex interrelationships that give rise to a sort of intermedial drama in tones. Hearing his symphonies as worlds also permits new methods of analysis that are more dynamic, thereby emphasizing the imaginative and structural possibilities of sound.

Schlagworte/Keywords: Gustav Mahler, Klangwelt, music analysis, Musikanalyse, Narratologie, narratology, orchestration, Orchestrierung, sound-world, Welterzeugung, world-making

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