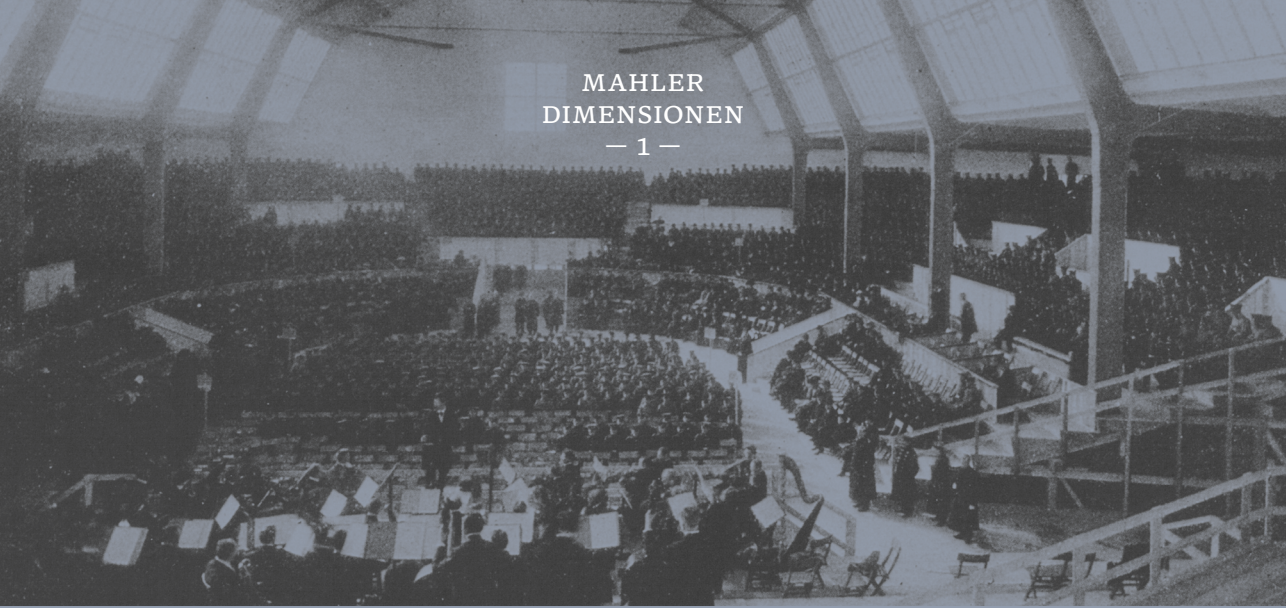




MAHLER
DIMENSIONEN

— 1 —

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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Queering Mahler's Orchestration

Sam Reenan

Gender and Sexuality in Mahler's World

Gender and sexuality have enjoyed a long and enduring scholarly discourse in Mahler studies. Morten Solvik and Stephen E. Hefling situate one of the earliest sources on the subject: a sixty-page letter report to Hans Riehl by Natalie Bauer-Lechner, the composer's close friend and chronicler, from 1917, six years after Mahler's death.¹ Solvik and Hefling recognize in Bauer-Lechner's letter a certain reticence to publicize "intimate details from the life of someone she had known so well,"² despite her understanding of the historical importance of the composer and the public interest in his complex personality and interpersonal relationships. Over a century later, the journal *19th-Century Music* recently published a 2024 special issue re-examining Mahler's music and personal life in light of contemporary thinking.³ Throughout the reception history associated with Mahler's gender identity, his intimate life, and his family affairs, commentators have shown interest in the relationship Mahler had with women and his conception of the feminine.

Bauer-Lechner's sixty-page letter to Hans Riehl of February 1917 represents one of the earliest accounts of the composer's encounters with women. The document includes what Bauer-Lechner terms the "most personal" details of Mahler's life, which she had been pressured to leave out of her published recollections by the composer's wife and sister.⁴ In the letter, Bauer-Lechner chronicles a wide range of emotions associated with Mahler's womanly interactions: his worries, fears, and self-accusations over various engagements that would go "unfulfilled";⁵ a forbidden love for the married and more mature Marion von Weber that contributed to a decade-long period of compositional impotency; the rejuvenating power Bauer-Lechner herself held over him during a long night, "locked in tight quarters [...] unfolding our entire lives for each other";⁶ Mahler's "jealous little sister" Justine, who "would certainly have been one of his greatest passions" were they not siblings;⁷ some murmurings of Mahler's possible homosexuality, including due to his closeness with Bruno Walter, rumors that, according to Peter Franklin, were silenced by his very public fixation on Anna von Mildenburg;⁸ and finally his marriage to Alma, about which Bauer-Lechner would "have

1 Morten Solvik and Stephen E. Hefling, "Natalie Bauer-Lechner on Mahler and Women: A Newly Discovered Document," *The Musical Quarterly* 97 (2014), no. 3, 12–65.

2 Ibid., 15.

3 Jeremy Barham (ed.), "Mahler, Sex, and Gender," *19th-Century Music* 47 (2024), no. 3 (Special Issue).

4 Solvik and Hefling, "Natalie Bauer-Lechner on Mahler and Women," 13.

5 Ibid., 24.

6 Ibid., 34.

7 Ibid., 34, 38.

8 Ibid., 44 and Peter Franklin, "Missing Love-scenes, Evasion, and the Inexpressible in Early Mahler," *19th-Century Music* 47 (2024), no. 3, 192–208: 195.

nothing to say.”⁹ What her letter seems to reveal about the composer’s “love of women” is that it could swing wildly from affairs of convenience to full-blown *affaires de cœur*, and that Mahler did not manage the situation very well at either end of this spectrum. Moreover, Bauer-Lechner reports that Mahler became intimate with several of the female singers (mostly sopranos) that performed under his baton. Considering Mahler’s application of the alto voice in *Das Lied von der Erde* – a voice that Lawrence Kramer describes as “ambisexual” in Mahler’s hand – his avoidance of the soprano may suggest an attempt to subvert his own sexual proclivities.¹⁰

Stuart Feder and Franz Willnauer summarize various accounts of the sometimes fractious relationships Mahler had with the women in his life, corroborating some of the intimate details in Bauer-Lechner’s letter.¹¹ Feder articulates the influence of Mahler’s mother (including in the naming of his child),¹² adds to Bauer-Lechner’s remarks on Justine and Anna von Mildenburg,¹³ and also interrogates the relationship between Mahler and his closest confidante. In the latter relationship, Feder analyzes how Mahler and Bauer-Lechner grew close through shared familial challenges. To Feder, perhaps in contrast to Bauer-Lechner’s testimony, “Mahler largely took Natalie for granted,” showing no signs of the “deeper attachment” that “might correspond to her feelings for him.”¹⁴ In other words, the reality of Mahler’s relationship with Bauer-Lechner – and thus the authenticity of her recollections about their intimate relationship and the other female encounters portrayed in her letter – may not match the story that she presented and which would go on to influence decades of Mahler reception. These biographical details add to the sense that the social, gender, and sexual dynamics at work in Mahler’s life and in his social sphere eschewed any sort of simplistic binary, and that Mahler himself struggled with the subject of his own masculinity as well as with the intimacy he may or may not have felt and the relationships he cultivated with the women in his life.

According to Kristin Knittel and Genevieve Robyn Arkle, Mahler’s public image – indeed, how the public viewed his masculinity and his relations with women – was fundamentally connected to his Jewish identity.¹⁵ Knittel associates the anti-Semitic response to Mahler with negative public descriptions of his conducting style – his “fluttering” movements,¹⁶ his “thin and nervous and sensitive” style,¹⁷ and the supposed “feminine” aspects of the Jewish body that some identified in his conducting personage.¹⁸ Arkle shows how, in Mahler’s Vienna, the composer’s heritage exposed him to an association with “an inferior, degrading, and weak form of male Jewish femininity.”¹⁹ She describes the composer’s marital relationship with

9 Solvik and Hefling, “Natalie Bauer-Lechner on Mahler and Women,” 52.

10 Lawrence Kramer, “Mahler’s Contralto Voice,” *19th-Century Music* 47 (2024), no. 3, 209–218: 217.

11 Stuart Feder, “Before Alma... Gustav Mahler and ‘Das Ewig-Weibliche,’” in: *Mahler Studies*, ed. by Stephen Hefling, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997, 78–109, and Franz Willnauer, *Frauen um Mahler: Die Wegbegleiterinnen des Komponisten*, Mainz: Schott 2022.

12 Feder, “Before Alma,” 84.

13 Ibid., 85–88, 91–101.

14 Ibid., 102.

15 Kristin Knittel, “‘Ein hypermoderner Dirigent’: Mahler and Anti-Semitism in *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna,” *19th-Century Music* 18 (1995), no. 3, 257–276, and Genevieve Robyn Arkle, “Gustav Mahler and the Crisis of Jewish Masculinity,” *19th-Century Music* 47 (2024), no. 3, 157–175.

16 Knittel, “‘Ein hypermoderner Dirigent,’” 268.

17 Ibid., 270.

18 Ibid., 261, 270.

19 Arkle, “Gustav Mahler and the Crisis of Jewish Masculinity,” 160.

Alma Mahler, which featured a withdrawal of sexual intimacy after 1905: "If female independence and sexuality posed a threat to masculinity, Alma was a threat to Mahler's. He adored her, but only a version of her that conformed to his ideals and posed no threat to his identity as man, as Jew, as husband, as composer."²⁰ Moreover, if, as Henry-Louis de La Grange suggests, Alma Mahler could have used her sexual appetite to control the men in her life, and if, as Arkle summarizes, contemporaries like Otto Weininger would describe Jewish males as, like women, expressing a "a strong desire for sex," then "Mahler's celibacy can be understood as an opportunity for him to transcend his inherent Jewish femininity and establish a sense of masculine control inside his marriage."²¹ Arkle finds other evidence of Mahler's reaction in his public perception, including the composer's attempts to rebuff criticism of his masculinity through physical fitness as well as religious conversion to Catholicism.²² Our understanding of how Mahler conceptualized gender and sexuality cannot ignore his marital experience, public reception, and the reciprocal influence that his experience of gender would have had on his experience of religious identity.

Of course, the title of this chapter is not "Gender and Sexuality in Mahler's Orchestration," but "Queering Mahler's Orchestration." Rather than simply examine how Mahler's music implicates the gendered and sexual political landscape in which he was situated, my goal is to propose a transgressive rethinking of the composer's orchestrational approach, one that implicates queerness directly in his compositional design. This study aims to intervene in the conventional analytical thinking applied to Mahler's compositional choices, reconceiving orchestrational analysis as a means of hermeneutic *queering*. Recent accounts in queer music studies – particularly by scholars like Judith Peraino, Fred Maus, Danielle Sofer, and Gavin S. K. Lee – have articulated how the concept of queerness associates with notions of subversion, non-normativity, hidden meanings, and a concerted focus on subjective experience.²³ Such epistemological concerns are the focus of this chapter, offering a queer way of knowing Mahler's music, a methodology to "hear queer."

By applying the active term "queering," I propose that we apply a gender queer critical lens to Mahler's orchestration. In queering Mahler's orchestration, we will consider how his music might be said to encode a normative gender binary, and we will attempt to "hear queer," to creatively listen for hidden meanings associated with gender ambiguity, fluidity, and non-conformity that push back against prevailing norms of reception.²⁴ I aim to accomplish something like Susan McClary's analysis of masculinity in Franz Schubert's music, which

²⁰ Ibid., 175.

²¹ Ibid., 172.

²² Ibid., 166–167.

²³ Judith Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity From Homer to Hedwig*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2006, Fred Maus, "Classical Concert Music and Queer Listening," *Transposition* 3 (2013), <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/148>, Danielle Sofer, "Specters of Sex: Tracing the Tools and Techniques of Contemporary Music Analysis," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 17 (2020), no. 1, 31–63, <https://doi.org/10.31751/1029>, and Gavin S. K. Lee (ed.), *Queer Ear: Remaking Music Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press 2023.

²⁴ I consider a difference between "queer listening" and the kind of creative interpretive hearing proposed here. "Queer listening," as Sofer notes, fails to center queer experiences by bracketing off queer listeners as "an unintended audience" (Sofer, "Specters of Sex," 52). In the present chapter, my goal is to imagine how the musical characteristics in Mahler's songs create the possibility of centering the experiences of anyone who might hear queerness in his music.

offers an account of “his particular constructions of subjectivity” through gendered narratives and constructions of male subjectivity that set him apart from his contemporaries.²⁵ For our purposes, Mahler’s “particular constructions of subjectivity” invite us to hear resonances between Mahler’s orchestrational practices and the non-normative, fluid, and ambiguous aspects of queerness recognizable in contemporary gender discourse.²⁶ That Mahler would construct a clear-cut binary strategy for feminine and masculine characters in “Von der Schönheit” – only to defy that binary in significant moments of dramatic narrative – offers us an opportunity to understand Mahler’s subjective experience with, and understanding of, gender and sexuality. Moreover, by actively reading hidden meanings into these compositional choices, Mahler’s orchestration becomes a hermeneutic space where we can hear queerness into music. Even if we do not suspect that Mahler explicitly questioned his sexual or gender identity in the sense that some have written about in relation to Schubert,²⁷ we can still apply the concept of queering in the spirit articulated by Lee: “The power of epistemological queering lies in the systemic paradigm shift demanded by queer theorists, such that everyone is called upon to revise their normative understanding of the world around us.”²⁸

Interpreting Binary Orchestrations of Gender in “Von der Schönheit”

“Von der Schönheit” serves as a critical starting point for understanding the orchestration of gender in *Das Lied von der Erde*. It is the only song of the cycle to include a direct textual reference to both the female and male characters. Mahler sets the text into five strophes, distributed as follows: strophe 1 = lines 1–7; strophe 2 = lines 8–12; strophe 3 = lines 13–17; strophe 4 = lines 18–26; strophe 5 = lines 27–33.

25 Susan McClary, “Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert’s Music,” in: *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary Thomas, New York: Taylor and Francis 2006, 205–233: 214.

26 Fred Everett Maus, “Queer Sexuality and Musical Narrative,” in: *Queer Ear: Remaking Music Theory*, ed. by Gavin S. K. Lee, New York: Oxford University Press 2023, 233–265: 238.

27 This sort of interpretation follows from Peraino’s usage of the term “queer” (Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, 6).

28 Gavin S. K. Lee, “Introduction: Queer Ear,” in: *Queer Ear: Remaking Music Theory*, ed. by Gavin S. K. Lee, New York: Oxford University Press 2023, 7–30: 7.

1	[1] Junge Mädchen pflücken Blumen, pflücken Lotosblumen an dem Uferrande. Zwischen Büschen und Blättern sitzen sie, sammeln Blüten in den Schoß und rufen	Young girls are plucking flowers, plucking lotus flowers at the river's bank. Between bushes and leaves they are sitting, collecting blossoms in their laps and jesting
5	sich einander Neckereien zu.	with each other.
	Goldne Sonne webt um die Gestalten, spiegelt sie im blanken Wasser wider.	The golden sun weaves around their forms, reflecting them in the pure water,
	[2] Sonne spiegelt ihre schlanken Glieder, ihre süßen Augen wider.	Sun mirrors their slender limbs, their sweet eyes.
10	Und der Zephir hebt mit Schmeichelkosen das Gewebe ihrer Ärmel auf, führt den Zauber ihrer Wohlgerüche durch die Luft.	And the breeze with gentle caress lifts the fabric of their sleeves, disperses the magic of their perfume through the air.
	[3] O sieh, was tummeln sich für schöne Knaben dort an dem Uferrande auf mut'gen Rossen? Weithin glänzend wie die Sonnenstrahlen; schon zwischen dem Geäst der grünen Weiden trabt das jungfrische Volk einher!	O see, what handsome boys are assembled there at the bank of the river on spirited horses? Glistening from afar like the rays of the sun; between the branches of the green willows the fresh young people are cantering already!
15		
	[4] Das Roß des einen wiehert fröhlich auf und scheut und saust dahin, über Blumen, Gräser wanken hin die Hufe, sie zerstampfen jäh im Sturm die hingesunknen Blüten, heil! Wie flattern im Taumel seine Mähnen, dampfen heiß die Nüstern!	The steed of one whinnies joyfully and shies and rushes off, over flowers, grasses, the hoofs fly, trampling suddenly like a storm the fallen blossoms, hey! How his mane flutters in the frenzy, how hotly the nostrils are steaming!
20		
	Goldne Sonne webt um die Gestalten, spiegelt sie im blanken Wasser wider.	The golden sun weaves around their forms, reflecting them in the pure water.
25		
	[5] Und die schönste von den Jungfrauen sendet lange Blicke ihm der Sehnsucht nach. Ihre stolze Haltung ist nur Verstellung: In dem Funkeln ihrer großen Augen, in dem Dunkel ihres heißen Blicks schwingt klagend noch die Erregung ihres Herzens nach.	And the loveliest of the maidens sends longing glances of yearning after him. Her proud bearing is only pretense. In the sparkle of her large eyes, in the darkness of her passionate glance the excitement of her heart still resonates plaintively. ²⁹
30		

Mahler constructs a sharp orchestrational binary to set this gender dynamic, which he then manipulates for narrative effect. Notably, the composer sets the alto voice in a low, contralto register, repeatedly reaching as low as A₃; according to Kramer, this vocal writing has elsewhere represented for Mahler a “cancellation of sexual difference, the annulment of sex.”³⁰ Mahler’s intimate attractions to soprano vocalists in particular – as recounted by Bauer-Lechner – may corroborate the non-sexualized character of the contralto voice. The first, second, and final strophes of text in Mahler’s “Von der Schönheit” focus on young female characters. Each of the first two strophes begins with a couplet of poetic text that situates the young girls in their environment, before shifting in the second half of the strophe to observation of their physical attributes and actions. The third and fourth strophes, meanwhile, divert attention to the youthful male figures. In Kramer’s words: “At no point do the girls and boys meet. Desire does not arise until the brief last stanza, where the most beautiful of the girls gazes at

²⁹ Mahler’s German text and the English translation appear in HLG-E4, 1352–1353.

³⁰ Kramer, “Mahler’s Contralto Voice,” 213.

Rit. a tempo Etwas fließend

contralto

Jun-ge Mä-d-chen pflü-cken Blu-men, pflü-cken Lo - tos - blu-men an dem U - fer - ran - de.

2 fl., 2 ob., 2 cl. fl. 1, ob. 1, cl. 1

p *pp dim.*

hp., vn. II

pp *sempre pp*

hp., va., bn. 1

p

EX. 1A

[Fließend]

contralto

Gold'-ne Son - ne webt um die Ge - stal - ten, spie-gelt sie im blan - ken, Was - ser wi - der.

fl. 1, ob. 1, cl. 1

p *f*

pic. (8va), vn. I

glockenspiel

vn. II +hp.

pp *sempre* *tr* *tr* *hn. zart* *p* *pp*

hp., va. (pizz.), bn. 1, cl. 2

2 bn., hp., vc. (pizz.)

p *pp*

rit.

EX. 1B

EXAMPLE 1: Mahler, "Von der Schönheit," reduction showing the distribution of instruments into three stable groupings: **A.** mm. 7–13; **B.** mm. 24–29.

a boy on horseback.”³¹ Offering a clear textual depiction of a binary conception of masculine and feminine gendered composition, “Von der Schönheit” therefore represents something of a baseline for our consideration of the intersections between Mahler’s orchestration and his understanding of gender dynamics.

Before we can dig into the specific gendered construction of *Das Lied von der Erde*, I should first address my mindset and methodology regarding the analysis of orchestration. Despite the extensive scholarship on Mahler’s conception and experience of gender, it is rare to find scholars addressing specific music-analytical details that contribute to this discourse.³² My interest in the composer’s approach to orchestration in *Das Lied von der Erde* was first piqued by Tobias Janz, who led a workshop in Toblach, Italy, in September of 2022. The primary objective of this workshop was to explore methods for analyzing orchestration, in effect to counter the 19th-century critical perspective, paraphrased by Emily Dolan, that “good orchestration defies analysis.”³³ My approach in contemplating orchestration in *Das Lied* is generative in nature – that is, I began by considering what I found to be notable in “Von der Schönheit” and then applied these research questions to the remaining repertoire. This approach led me to consider three primary aspects of Mahler’s orchestrational language: the distribution of musical structure into particular instrumental groupings, the integrated or independent role of the voice within the ensemble texture, and the composer’s characteristic instrumentation choices. While these factors form the bulk of the analytical discussion to follow, they only scratch the surface of how we might apply formalist analysis to Mahler’s orchestration.

Mahler’s orchestrational portrayal of femininity in the opening strophe of “Von der Schönheit” is reproduced in **EXAMPLE 1**. The ensemble forms a simple, stratified texture of instrumental groupings and unison doublings of the contralto voice, effectively approximating a chamber group. The strophe begins with two musical phrases that respond to the poetic form: the first phrase sets the opening couplet of text, and the second extends further over the remainder of the strophe. The opening (mm. 7–13, **EXAMPLE 1A**) and concluding (mm. 24–29, **EXAMPLE 1B**) couplets of strophe 1 establish the core features of Mahler’s “feminine sound.” In each case, the texture is organized into three groupings: a treble group of solo upper woodwinds, a bass group of viola and bassoon, and a contralto grouping of harp and second violins doubling the voice at unison for the entire phrase. Mahler’s feminine sound can thus be characterized by the musical intimacy, inwardness, and closeness evoked by his chamber ensemble orchestration. Moreover, although the sonic orchestrational strategy represents a “feminine sound,” reflected in the poetic text, the voice’s complete integration within the ensemble through unison doubling suggests that its contribution to the feminine sound is functionally passive. The sonic closeness of the orchestration is a result of the unison doublings of the voice, the limited instrumentation, and the compact registral span which keeps all pitches within the two octaves from G₃ to G₅, essentially duplicating the range of the voice. The harp is perhaps the greatest signifier of the feminine sound in “Von der Schönheit”; as we will see momentarily, it disappears during the third strophe.

31 Ibid., 215.

32 Recent contributions represent welcome additions to this area of research, especially those found in the 2024 special issue of *19th-Century Music* (Barham, “Mahler, Sex, and Gender”).

33 Emily Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, 17.

Strophe 2 problematizes this conception of feminine sound, although the overall orchestration strategy persists. The text depicts the bodily features of the young women, awash in the light of day: their “slender limbs,” their “sweet eyes,” “the fabric of their sleeves,” and “the magic of their perfume.” The instrumentation is largely the same as in strophe 1, but in measures 30 to 42 it is stratified into the five more disjointed groupings charted in **TABLE 1**, with the woodwinds and strings rarely overlapping. Additionally, the solo violin enters for the first time in measure 33, and the cello establishes a true bass register. No instrument doubles the contralto voice at the unison; instead, the violins and piccolo intermittently join the voice at the octave or tenth, while the voice also performs as an independent line without any doubling in measures 36 and 39 to 42. In strophe 2, we can view these changes to orchestration as representational signals of a gendered shift. As the text describes details of the young women’s bodies, the change in key combines with new instrumentation and texture, a wider register, and a more distant approach to the voice, suggesting a new perspective that observes the young women from afar, something akin to Laura Mulvey’s concept of the “male gaze.”³⁴ In this case, the particular emphasis on the *bodily* features of the young women reinforces this conception – Mahler’s orchestration contributes to an expressive objectification of these characters, replacing the *inward* intimacy of strophe 1 with a sense of *carnal* intimacy, not quite lust, but tinged with the sexual objectification embedded in the male gaze concept. Here, Mahler’s feminine sound is refracted through the prism of a male observer’s eroticism, preserving the overall orchestration approach while modifying it to reflect a perspectival shift.

The essential strategy of Mahler’s feminine sound in “Von der Schönheit” can thus be summarized by several orchestration features. Instrumental distribution is consistent and stratified into three or four coherent groups that remain throughout the strophe. The contralto voice tends to be integrated into the ensemble through unison doubling, thereby conveying its lack of independence or agency. The ensemble instrumentation is reserved and chamber-like, primarily featuring strings, woodwinds, and harp. These details of orchestration elicit a connection to the “Urlicht” movement of Mahler’s Second Symphony.³⁵ In both the very opening and the final vocal phrases of the earlier symphonic movement, the orchestration approach summarized in **TABLE 2** bears a striking resemblance to Mahler’s feminine sound. At the outset (mm. 15–30), as the text references the relief from pain that heaven offers, the second violins double the voice with only an accompanying string ensemble, solo oboe, and a single measure of brass as the voice rests. Later, Mahler returns to a sparse, close textural setting for the religious affirmation of the final phrase: “Dear God will give me a light, Will light my way to eternal blessed life.” Joined now by the harp, the contralto voice continues to be doubled by strings and accompanied by an ensemble of woodwinds and horns, all of which dissipate in the close.

The intertextual connection between “Von der Schönheit” and “Urlicht” offers an important extension of the core interpretive concepts in Mahler’s gendered orchestration. Namely, Mahler’s feminine sound incorporates aspects of an *eternal*, or *transcendent*, or *heavenly* sound,

34 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16 (1975), no. 3, 6–18.

35 Kramer draws a connection between the “Urlicht” and *Das Lied von der Erde* in the usage of the contralto voice, but he does not specifically address the intertextual orchestration approach (Kramer, “Mahler’s Contralto Voice,” 210–214).

Strophe 1 (mm. 7–27)			Strophe 2 (mm. 30–42)
part 1 (mm. 7–13)	part 2 (mm. 14–22)	part 3 (mm. 24–27)	
fl. 1, ob. 1, cl. 1	pic., vn. I	fl. 1, ob. 1, cl. 1	pic., fl., solo-vn., vn. I
hp., vn. II	vla.	hp., vn. II	ob., cl., hn. 1
bn., hp., vla.	hn. 1, glockenspiel	cl. 2, bn., hp., vla.	vn. II
	vc.		hp., vla., vc.
voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison	variable, intermittent doubling of voice (e.g. octave, tenth)

TABLE 1: Mahler, “Von der Schönheit,” mm. 7–27 and 30–42, instrumental distribution; here and in the following tables bold instrument labels indicate the instruments that double the voice.

following keywords in the text. The strategic connections of the feminine sound to “Urlicht” also reframe the bodily imagery of strophe 2 of “Von der Schönheit.” In the middle section of “Urlicht,” the text refers to a “little angel” who intervenes in the progression of man to heaven, attempting to turn him back from God:

O Röschen roth!
 Der Mensch liegt in grösster Not!
 Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pein!
 Je lieber möcht' ich im Himmel sein,
 je lieber möcht' ich im Himmel sein!
 Da kam ich auf einen breiten Weg;
 da kam ein Engelein und wollt' mich abweisen.
 Ach nein! Ich liess mich nicht abweisen!
 Ach nein! Ich liess mich nicht abweisen:
 Ich bin von Gott und will wieder zu Gott!
 Der liebe Gott, der liebe Gott wird mir ein Lichtchen geben,
 wird leuchten mir bis in das ewig selig Leben!³⁶

At this stage, the orchestrational characteristics resemble those of the stratified texture of strophe 2 of “Von der Schönheit” described above, featuring a solo violin trading off with the piccolo and intermittent doublings of the voice. The angelic figure offers a different model of the feminine at the gates of heaven from, say, the eternal-feminine that guides man into heaven in the Eighth Symphony. In “Urlicht” and “Von der Schönheit,” the orchestrational linkage of the carnal and the angelic suggests that bodily (and sexual) transcendence merge when man is faced with the desire to supplicate and return to God. These associations of the feminine with transcendence of the earthly body will later bear fruit in our consideration of “Der Abschied.”

³⁶ The German text was drawn by Mahler from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Mahler would make adjustments to the punctuation throughout; the text is presented here according to the 1897 first edition of the score of the Second Symphony (Gustav Mahler, *Symphonie in C-moll No. 2. Für grosses Orchester, Chor und Soli*, Leipzig: Hofmeister 1897).

first vocal phrase (mm. 15–30)		final vocal phrase (mm. 55–65)
part 1 (mm. 15–20) ("man lies in direst need, man lies in direst pain")	part 2 (mm. 23–30) ("I would rather be in heaven")	"I am from god and to god I will return. Dear god will give me a light, will light my way to eternal blessed life"
vn. I+II, vla.	ob. 1	solo-vn. 2 → 3 fl., 2 ob. → vn. I → cl. 1 → vn. II
vc., cb.	vn. I, vn. II , vla.	eng. hn., vn. II
	vc.	hp., bn., hn., vn. II, vla., vc., cb.
voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison

TABLE 2: Mahler, Symphony No. 2, iv, "Urlicht," mm. 15–30 and mm. 55–65, instrumental distribution.

Strophe 3 (mm. 62–74)								
62	63	64	65	66	67	68–69	70–71	72–74
ob., cl.	ob., cl.	fl.	ob., cl.	vn. I	ob.	vn. I	fl., ob., cl.	fl., ob., cl.
vn. I, vc.	vn. I	vn. I	vn. I, vc.	vn. II, vla.	vn. I	hn., vn. II, vla.	vn. I, vc.	vn. I
vn. II, vla.	vn. II, vla.	vn. II	timp.		vla.	vc.	vn. II, vla.	vn. II hn.
bn., cb.	timp.				bn., vc.	bn., vc., cb.	bn., hn., tpt., timp.	bn., vla., vc.
voice doubled at unison and octave	voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at octave	voice independ- ent, no doubling	voice doubled at third	voice doubled at third	voice independ- ent, no doubling	voice doubled at unison and octave	voice drops out

TABLE 3: Mahler, "Von der Schönheit," mm. 62–74, instrumental distribution.

Strophe 4 (mm. 88–95)							
88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95
vn. I+II, hn.	vn. I+II	fl., cl.	fl., ob., cl.	vn. II	fl., ob.	vn. II	vn. II
vla., vc.	fl., ob.	vla., vc.	vn. I+II	fl., cl., vla., vc.	cl.	cl. 1	fl., ob., cl.
bn.	hn. 1+3	bn.	hn. 1+3	bn.	vc.	vla.	vla.
cb.	vla.	cb.	vla.	hn.		vc.	bn., vc.
	vc., cb.		vc., cb.				
voice doubled at unison and octave	voice doubled at unison and octave	voice doubled at unison and octave	voice doubled at unison and octave	voice doubled at unison, octave, third, and sixth	voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison	voice doubled at unison

TABLE 4: Mahler, "Von der Schönheit," mm. 88–95, instrumental distribution.

Whereas the first two strophes of “Von der Schönheit” focus our attention on a musical setting of the feminine, the third and fourth strophes construct a sonic masculinity that is marked by starkly contrasting instrumental distribution, vocal integration, and ensemble makeup. In preparation for the third strophe, Mahler composes one of the rare true tutti passages of the whole of *Das Lied von der Erde* (mm. 45–61).³⁷ This outburst of orchestrational abundance signifies the shift from the inwardness of the feminine to the dynamic energy of the masculine. The first part of strophe 3 (mm. 62–74) is charted in **TABLE 3**. The contralto voice introduces the male characters in this passage, which features a complex of shifting roles: a full woodwind section that is later joined by brass; a bass voice that includes the timpani; a variegated set of imitative parts; and sporadic doublings of the voice at the octave, third, and unison. Later, in strophe 4, the text metaphorically relates the youthful vigor of the boys to the horses they ride. **TABLE 4** shows how strophe 4 maintains a thicker texture, stratified into at least five distinct and constantly shifting instrumental groupings. At this stage, the ensemble spans five octaves of pitch space, includes horns and low strings, and continues to double the voice at the octave.

In contrast to the prioritization of intimacy, inwardness, unison doubling, and instruments like the harp in Mahler’s “feminine sound,” his “masculine sound” spreads out over a wide registral span; presents an irregular approach to distribution and vocal integration; and prioritizes new instruments including the timpani, horn section, and pizzicato low strings. The result is a sense of expansiveness, instability, and a full – but not, necessarily loud – orchestral sound. Examining the textural distribution more carefully, we can see that the groupings change every measure, as do the instruments that double the voice. The more than five octaves of orchestral span (from as low as G1 up to F6), the shifting vocal doubling, and the unstable groupings create an energetic, somewhat nervous, construction of symphonic masculinity.

Notably, the final couplet of strophe 4 in measures 98 to 103 returns to the text that ended strophe 1. Mahler’s setting in **EXAMPLE 2** responds by arriving *subito* at the orchestrational approach of his feminine sound, thus effecting a perspectival shift – if the musical narration previously embodied a male character leering at the young women, we now recognize a “female gaze,” a longing look by the women characters themselves. The “female gaze” is a transformed version of the original feminine sound, transposed into a higher register and key. It moreover leads to a final strophe in which the contralto voice takes up a mezzo-soprano tessitura while describing the “longing glances” of the “loveliest of the maidens” toward the male figures. Perhaps Mahler sought in these moments to frustrate the binary distinctions embedded in his orchestration of femininity and masculinity, or to situate lustfulness squarely in a feminine gendered space which he himself would not inhabit. Should we therefore hear in this moment a sense of female sexual desire as against the male Jewish femininity that could place such desire in Mahler’s masculine body? Or does it depict an effeminate sonic masculinity, in which the song’s young men are emasculated by Mahler’s compositional decisions, which weaken their virility and endow their feminine counterparts with a sexual power not unlike that of Alma Mahler? Or, as Kramer describes it, do we hear a distant, unrealizable desire shared among the

37 In his study of Mahler’s orchestration in *Das Lied von der Erde*, Jürgen Maehder notes how Mahler’s strategy of reduced orchestration in the inner movements of the *Wunderhorn* symphonies seems to become an organizing principle for the entirety of *Das Lied*, where true tuttis are exceedingly rare (Jürgen Maehder, “Orchesterbehandlung und Klangfarbendisposition im Spätwerk Gustav Mahlers: *Das Lied von der Erde*,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 70 [2013], no. 1, 31–65).

[Fließend]

contralto
Gold-ne Son - ne webt um die Ge - stal - ten, spie-gelt sie im blan - ken Was - ser wi - der.

fl. 1, pic., cl. 1
p

hp.
+ vn. I
pp

tr

[hp. +] vn. II
p

hp., va. (pizz.), cl. 2
p

vn. solo

EXAMPLE 2: Mahler, "Von der Schönheit," mm. 98–101, reduced score excerpt of the final part of strophe 4.

characters, a desire that, perhaps fittingly for Mahler, "literally comes to grief"?³⁸ Whatever the case, the final couplet of strophe 4 offers an opportunity to hear queer by contemplating the ambiguous array of interpretive possibilities in the orchestrational juxtaposition of feminine and masculine sonic strategies.

Queering and Transcending Gender in "Der Abschied"

By examining Mahler's orchestration techniques as manifestations of the portrayal of a somewhat strict gender binary, "Von der Schönheit" offers a backdrop against which comparable practices can be interpreted in the final song of *Das Lied*, "Der Abschied." This longest movement in the cycle describes the departure of two friends, two male characters sung by the contralto voice in Mahler's original plans. Mahler shifts pronouns – e.g., changing "ich" to "er" – to reinforce the masculine nature of the musical characters, much as he did in changing the title of the second movement from "Die" to "Der Einsame im Herbst."³⁹ But Mahler's texts represent a deeper metaphor for earthly transcendence in death. As the friends bid each other farewell, the text and music undergo a dramatic transformation, panning out from the individual characters to a generalized reflection of human mortality in relation to the cyclic nature of life on earth, and of heavenly life in death.

³⁸ Kramer, "Mahler's Contralto Voice," 216.

³⁹ Stephen Hefling reports that throughout the process of drafting versions of *Das Lied von der Erde*, the work was conceived for alternating tenor (or soprano) and alto (or baritone) voices, but it is clear that "Der Abschied" was always planned as one of the alto-voice songs (Stephen E. Hefling, "Das Lied von der Erde: Mahler's Symphony for Voice and Orchestra – or Piano," *The Journal of Musicology* 10 [1992], no. 3: 293–341).

Fließend Im Takt

contralto (*In erzählendem Ton, ohne Ausdruck*)
sempre p

Die Son-ne schei - det hin-ter dem Ge - bir - - ge. In al - le

fl. *pp* *>* *pp* *>* *pp*

vc. *sempre pp*

Tä - ler steigt der A - bend nie - der mit sei-nen Schat - ten,

sempre pp

die voll Küh - lung sind.

pp *morendo*

EXAMPLE 3: Mahler, "Der Abschied," mm. 19–26, score reduction.

Throughout "Der Abschied," Mahler's approach to orchestration marks a stark departure from that of the earlier five songs. This is no more apparent than in the three so-called "recitatives"⁴⁰ – beginning in measures 19, 158, and 374, respectively – in which the music seems

40 These moments have commonly been referred to as recitatives in the literature on "Der Abschied," see for example Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1985, Hefling, "Das Lied von der Erde: Mahler's Symphony for Voices and Orchestra – or Piano," and Christian Utz, "Multivalent Form in Gustav Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* from the Perspective of Its Performance History," *Musilogica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* (2018), <https://www.musau.org/parts/neue-article-page/view/37> (30.6.2026).

to come to a dramatic halt (what Theodor W. Adorno would term a period of “suspension”⁴¹), even as the textual narrative progresses forward. In these moments, the orchestrational approach reflects an amplification of certain characteristics of the masculine sound presented in “Von der Schönheit.” Examining the first recitative in **EXAMPLE 3**, we see that the registral disparities between the flute and low strings are extreme, there is no instrumental grouping strategy at all, and the declamatory voice has no doubling support from the ensemble. But rather than conveying a sense of *hyper*masculinity, this sparse, disjunct, and discoordinated strategy of orchestration represents a lonely and isolated masculine subject, one whose only companion is the natural scenery and the light cast by the moon above. Later in “Der Abschied,” when the two friends meet for the final time, the last of these moments of recitative evokes an even more extreme sense of distancing and alienation as only the pedal strings and tam-tam accompany the lone voice.

Given these striking moments of coldness and alienation, it may come as a surprise that Mahler makes a prominent return to the intimate chamber texture of “Von der Schönheit” near the close of “Der Abschied.” During and after the final recitative, the text describes the friends taking leave of each other on horseback. As shown in **EXAMPLE 4**, the musical passage in measures 446 to 459 features the return of the chamber-like texture that we have come to understand in relation to Mahler’s feminine sound: solo flute, solo oboe, clarinets, (muted) horns, and strings. Here, the text recalls the relief from earthly suffering through transcendence: “My heart is still and awaits its hour.”

Er stieg vom Pferd und reichte ihm den Trank
des Abschieds dar. Er fragte ihn wohin er
führe und auch warum es müßte sein.
Er sprach, seine Stimme war umflort:
Du, mein Freund,
mir war auf dieser Welt das Glück nicht hold.

He descended from his horse and handed him
the farewell drink. He asked him, where he was
going, and why it had to be.
He spoke, his voice was veiled:
You, my friend,
fortune has not been kind to me in this world.

Wohin ich geh? Ich geh’, ich wandre in die Berge.
Ich suche Ruhe für mein einsam Herz.

Where am I going? I am leaving, I shall journey to the mountains,
I shall seek peace for my lonely heart.

Ich wandle nach der Heimat! meiner Stätte!

I shall journey toward my native land! my home!

Ich werde niemals in die Ferne schweifen.
Still ist mein Herz und harret seiner Stunde.

I shall never stray far.
My heart is still and awaits its hour.

Die liebe Erde allüberall blüht auf im Lenz
und grünt aufs neu!

The dear earth everywhere blossoms in spring
and grows green again!

Allüberall und ewig blauen licht die Fernen!

Everywhere and forever the distant horizons shine blue!

Ewig ... ewig ...

Forever ... forever ...⁴²

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

42 Mahler’s German text and English translation are quoted after HDG-E4, 1371–1372.

contralto

Still ist mein Herz und har-ret sein-er Stun-del!

fl. 1, ob. 1 (*loco*)

espr. *p* *sf* *p*

vn. II

sempre pp *pp morendo*

va.

pp get. vc. (*pizz.*) arco

+ hn. 2+4 (mit Dämpfer)

+ hn. 3 (mit Dämpfer)

p *pp* *pp*

Rit.

ob. 1, cl. 1

cl. 1

vn. I

pppp

pp *molto espr.* *pp* *pp*

vn. II

espr. *pp*

bn. 1+2 + va.

bn. 1+2

hn. 1 (offen)

vc.

vc., cl. 2

pp *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.*

Die

EXAMPLE 4: Mahler, "Der Abschied," mm. 446–459, score reduction.

The breakthrough that ensues in measure 460 underscores the sense of a shift toward Mahler's feminine sound, once more adopting the orchestrational strategy first established in "Von der Schönheit." EXAMPLE 5 reproduces the score of measures 460 to 467, which features two harps and the string ensemble, together with the contralto voice, now in a higher register and doubled at the unison and octave by the violins and violas. During this breakthrough, the text metaphorically celebrates the cyclic renewal of the earth in springtime, rejecting the life/death binary in favor of an eternal sense of joyful rejuvenation: "The dear earth everywhere blossoms in spring and grows green again!" The transgressive, exultant denial of a binary understanding of life and death stands metaphorically as an equally jubilant rebuke of the gendered binary established in "Von der Schönheit," finding, in a moment of masculine transcendence,

Langsam! *ppp*! Ohne Steigerung

contralto

lie - - - be Er - - - de

vn. I+II

ppp

hp., va. (pizz.), vc. (pizz.), db. (pizz.)

dolcissimo

all - ü - ber - all

+ hp. 2, vn. I

vn. II

EXAMPLE 5: Mahler, "Der Abschied," mm. 460–467, score reduction.

the celebratory achievement of a quality of the feminine. That Mahler sets this moment with a surprise shift to the parallel major and an orchestrational approach that features the harp, the strings, and the voice in its highest register all contributes to a sense of transcendence of the (masculine) body through heavenly departure.

Approaching the moment of breakthrough, and setting the transcendent arrival of the words "Die liebe Erde" in the final strophe, Mahler thus repurposes his feminine sound as a sonic depiction of intimacy and inwardness, but also of the *eternal* and *never-ending*, again following the keywords in the text. In "Der Abschied," this sonic imagery evokes the departure of a man and his transition to an eternal afterlife, or perhaps an eternal shedding of the bodily and the subjective through the cyclic renewal of nature. Before the breakthrough moment of transcendence, the voice part remains separate, not integrated into the texture. No instrument doubles the singer as she states "Still ist mein Herz, und harret seiner Stunde!" The chamber orchestra sound, which could point to Mahler's feminine sound during this passage, nevertheless employs shifting instrumental groupings and a wide registral span of almost four octaves. The independence of the voice and the subtle modifications to the orchestration's feminine sound are paradoxically all signals of the masculine musical body, the male body of the departing friend, refracted through the angelic, feminine lens of its impending departure from

the earthly realm. The transcendence of that masculine body from the earthly to the heavenly subsequently manifests in Mahler's orchestration as a transition from male to female characteristic sounds. At measure 460, the ensemble returns to three stable instrumental groupings and unison and octave doublings of the voice, signaling a feminine conception of gendered sonic imagery.

Crucially, a queer lens allows us to identify further hidden meaning in this transition and thus aspects of nonconformity embedded in Mahler's orchestral strategy. Throughout this passage, for example, the contralto voice has in fact morphed into the mezzo-soprano register, just as it did at the end of "Von der Schönheit," never straying below G₄ and reaching as high as the G₅ above. This shift in tessitura highlights a parallel shift in our rigid understanding of the masculine/feminine sounds first presented in "Von der Schönheit." While aspects of masculine sound (shifting groupings, wide register, vocal independence) appear in the ensemble before the breakthrough – only to yield to a seemingly feminine sound afterwards – both periods actually combine the binary orchestrational characteristics. Before the breakthrough, the chamber ensemble instrumentation of solo woodwinds recalls the feminine sound and its intimate sonic closeness. Afterwards, the wide orchestral register and octave vocal doublings allude to the masculine sound and its sonic expansiveness. Mahler's muddling of gendered orchestration thus blurs the binary set forth in "Von der Schönheit," holding space for various non-normative interpretations. Kramer offers one possible Goethean take: in this transformational moment, "what we hear in the singer's timbre is an Eternal Not-Quite-Feminine that becomes, as if irrevocably, Mahler's contralto voice."⁴³

Obscuring Gender in the Schönberg/Riehn Chamber Arrangement of *Das Lied von der Erde*

One final example further challenges our view of a gendered binary orchestration in Mahler's music by queering the very materials of orchestration itself. In doing so, this example asks us to reconsider the factors that contribute to gender construction within Mahler's orchestral music but also within the dynamics and economics of social discourse. Arnold Schönberg initiated a chamber reorchestration of *Das Lied von der Erde* which was ultimately completed in the 1980s by Rainer Riehn. The arrangement for chamber ensemble – consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, first and second violin, viola, cello, and bass, as well as piano, harmonium, and percussion – was intended for performance at the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*, a membership-only group which Schönberg organized to promote new music in the 1920s. He entrusted the orchestration to his pupil, Alban Berg, but it was not completed due to financial difficulties until Riehn finished it decades later. Riehn summarized Schönberg's goal, which was "not initially aimed at a 'new interpretation,' but rather at the humbly respectful, but extremely difficult, technical task of preserving (without loss) the original sound using incomparably more economical, even drastically reduced means."⁴⁴

⁴³ Kramer, "Mahler's Contralto Voice," 218.

⁴⁴ Rainer Riehn, "Über Mahlers *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* und *Das Lied von der Erde* in Arnold Schönbergs Kammerfassungen," in: *Schönbergs Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen* (Musik-Konzepte, vol. 36), ed. by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, Munich: edition text + kritik 1984, 8–30: 26.

If Mahler's original versions of "Von der Schönheit" and "Der Abschied" encode sonic representations of an early 20th-century Viennese understanding of the complex dynamics of gender within the orchestrational fabric of the concert symphony, we can ask whether Schönberg and Riehn were able to "preserve" the gendered aspects of Mahler's "original sound." Moreover, we can reflect on the social and intellectual ecosystem in which such an arrangement was imagined. What, for Schönberg or Riehn, constitutes sonic originalism? For these figures, would the "original sound" of *Das Lied* even include sonic expressions of gender (non-)conformity like those discussed earlier in this chapter? Or within the *Verein*, which surely invited a predominantly male audience and an exclusively male list of composers,⁴⁵ would arrangements amplify either feminine or masculine gendered sonic strategies, reflecting in the *Verein's* output, respectively, a version of the male gaze or a notion of masculine privilege?

In the interpretations offered in this chapter, we have considered gendered aspects of orchestration in Mahler's music as direct reflections of the composer's lived experience with gender in his personal and public life. To preserve Mahler's original sound would, in this view, necessarily mean observing the spectrum of gendered sounds reflected in "Von der Schönheit" and "Der Abschied." Of course, this poses some challenges to the analysis presented above, not least because one of the principal ways that Mahler differentiated between gendered sounds was through instrumentation and the distinction between a chamber and a full orchestra. Of course, the Schönberg/Riehn reorchestrations blur this gendered binary by casting the entirety of the piece in a chamber setting, replacing string, woodwind, and brass sections with soloists and adding the piano and harmonium. The dynamic binary between intimacy and expansiveness thus becomes attenuated in this version, and the instrumental gender signifiers of the harp and solo violin no longer carry the same sonic significations.

TABLE 5 summarizes the Schönberg/Riehn recasting of the quintessential feminine sound in the opening of the first strophe of "Von der Schönheit." Comparing **TABLE 5** to **TABLE 1**, we notice certain correspondences as well as important changes. Although the flute, oboe, and clarinet function as a trio of soloists in both versions, the context in which they appear is quite different: in Mahler's *Das Lied* these soloists are parts of fuller sections (comprising three flutes, three oboes, and four clarinets), so that the trio in measures 8 to 13 is marked as a distinctly chamber-like presentation of the upper woodwinds in the broader context of the song cycle. The trio gains even more marked distinction because of how it is introduced: the woodwind pickups on beat three of measure 7 that lead into the trio double each woodwind instrument with accented *forte* notes in the doubling players' parts, so that the downbeat of measure 8 conveys a *subito* lightness of sound, chamber intimacy, and thinness of texture. In the arrangement for chamber ensemble, the woodwind trio is never differentiated from the fuller woodwind sections, and the eighth-note pickups to measure 8 are supported instead by the harmonium.

Two other notable instrumental changes accompany the chamber reductions to the woodwinds described above: first, the piano's replacement of the harp divorces it from its gendered sonic role, and second, doubling of the voice shifts to the cello. With no harp available in

45 For example, in the first season alone, 45 works were performed, all by male composers. The list of performers for these performances did include a number of women, however, so that the group was by no means exclusively male (Alban Berg, "Prospekt des Vereins für musikalische Privataufführungen" [1919], in: *Schönbergs Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen* (Musik-Konzepte, vol. 36), ed. by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, Munich: edition text + kritik 1984, 4–7).

Strophe 1
part 1 (mm. 7–13)
fl. ob., cl., harmonium
pf., vn. II, vc.
vla., bn. pf.
voice doubled at unison

TABLE 5: Mahler, “Von der Schönheit,” Schönberg/Riehn arrangement, mm. 7–13, instrumental distribution.

“Der Abschied” – breakthrough	
before breakthrough (mm. 446–459)	after breakthrough (mm. 460–467)
fl., ob., cl. , vn. I	vn. I+II
vn. II	pf., vla., vc., cb,
bn., vla., vc., harmonium	
hn., pf., harmonium, cb.	
voice sporadically doubled at unison, octave, and third	voice doubled at unison, octave, and third

TABLE 6: Mahler, “Der Abschied,” Schönberg/Riehn arrangement, mm. 446–467, instrumental distribution.

the *Verein*'s chamber ensemble, the piano ends up replacing the harp's doubling of the voice and contribution to the functional bass. However, this creates a representational problem in relation to the harp's gender-signifying role in the original. In Mahler's original version, the third and fourth strophes set the contrasting masculine characters; one of the factors that contributes to this contrast is the *absence* of the harp, suggesting that the instrument be recognized as a sonic signifier of the feminine sound. In the chamber reorchestration, the piano does not adopt the harp's exclusively feminine role: in just the first portion of the third strophe (when the young boys are first introduced), the piano fills the roles of the timpani (e.g., mm. 63 and 65), bassoon (m. 70), and trumpets and clarinets (m. 71). When it comes to the doubling of the voice, the Schönberg/Riehn orchestration transfers the unison doubling of the voice in the first strophe from the harp and second violin to the piano and cello, placing the cello in a higher registral position than the second violin. With this role reversal, the cello takes on a uniquely transformative role, performing at times as the lowest bass voice in an ensemble with a wide range, suggestive of a masculine sound, and, at other times, as an intimate partner to the voice in a closely devised ensemble, suggestive of a feminine sound. The cello becomes, perhaps anachronistically, a sort of sonic drag performer, manipulating the ambiguity of gendered orchestrational strategies by playfully switching between a defining role in masculine and feminine sonic spaces. This passage's reconstruction of Mahler's “feminine sound” therefore changes some of the basic sonic signifiers, while preserving a sense of intimacy and closeness.

The impact of the modified chamber reorchestration on the transcendent ending of “Der Abschied” is somewhat more problematic. In Mahler's original, there was a blending of

“masculine and “feminine sounds” across the transition to “Die liebe Erde”: before the transition, the orchestration leaned toward the masculine and later shifted toward the feminine. In the reorchestration charted in **TABLE 6**, those signifiers are less prominently implicated, with the ensemble reflecting less sense of transformation across the breakthrough period. The effect of the strings and piano is most notable. Before the transition, the string ensemble lacks the fullness of sound that would give the expansive ensemble quality the suggestion of the masculine sound. In fact, the harmonium seems to attempt to resolve this sonic problem by filling in here, doubling string instruments at times to fill out the thin texture. After the breakthrough, the ensemble again struggles to embody the intimacy and inwardness of Mahler’s feminine sound because of the missing harp. The piano cannot convincingly contribute to the feminine sound because it does not carry the sonic qualities of the two harps in Mahler’s original. Instead, the transcendent moment at the end of “Der Abschied” functions differently in the Schönberg/Riehn arrangement, no longer embodying a sense of masculine-to-feminine transition, but instead amplifying the fluidity and ambiguity that underpins that transition.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored how Mahler establishes sexual difference in his orchestration and how this construction of gender can reflect the complex understandings of gender that existed in the early 20th century. Mahler’s feminine sound is exemplified in “Von der Schönheit” by characteristics of intimacy and inwardness. When applied beyond the opening strophes of this song, in moments that may be interpreted as depictions of female sexual desire, masculine impotency, and even an eternal afterlife, the quality of the feminine sound changes in both subtle and striking ways. “Von der Schönheit” suggests a binary contrast with Mahler’s masculine sound, but its expansive, energetic, and nervous quality underpins moments of both male vigor and, in “Der Abschied,” departure and grief. In the process of analyzing these select moments, I have suggested that the creative interpretive approach of hearing queer offers new perspectives on how we understand Mahler’s music in relation to contemporaneous understandings of the composer and the social dynamics of gender and sexuality. Queering Mahler’s orchestration elicits new questions about Mahler’s lived experience, his worldview pertaining to gender and sexuality, the expressive dynamics of his music, and our capacity as interpreters to apply queer listening practices in service of new ways of knowing canonic music. The variety of ways that Mahler experiments with gender through musical form and orchestration suggest that he may have exhibited some openness toward or understanding of the fluidity of gender and sex categories. Whether or not Mahler himself experienced homoerotic desire, or heterosexual impotency, or questions of his own gender and sexual identity, *Das Lied von der Erde* dramatizes the fluid boundaries of those social categories. With these considerations in mind, I hope that this chapter has offered an example of how music analysis can contribute to the discourse surrounding Mahler’s biography, gender, and sexuality. Additionally, I hope that the queer framing of my analytical approach demonstrates that biographical considerations of gender and sexuality can think beyond the conventional and can consider non-normative, nonconforming, and hidden interpretations of the composer’s life and world.

This chapter examines Gustav Mahler's orchestrational choices in his final orchestral song cycle, *Das Lied von der Erde*, as reflections of social constructions of gender in the early 20th century. By applying a gender queer epistemological frame, we can critically consider those decisions in light of contemporary analytical approaches to orchestration, gender, and sexuality. In order to contextualize Mahler's approach to gendered orchestration, I begin by examining some of the long (and recent) history of critical commentary on Mahler's lived experience with gender and sexuality. Given these biographical considerations, I recognize a conventional gender binary established by the composer in his music, and I propose *queering* that binary, invoking both Mahler's non-normative decisions and our contemporary hermeneutic agency. Then, I analyze two songs from *Das Lied von der Erde*. "Von der Schönheit" represents a theoretical baseline, featuring a stark orchestrational differentiation between (and navigation across) masculine and feminine conceptions of gender. In "Der Abschied," gender fluidity is implicated by orchestration itself in a final transition that refers back to the orchestrational language of "Von der Schönheit." Finally, I contemplate how the chamber version of the song cycle initiated by Arnold Schönberg and completed by Rainer Riehn simultaneously reifies and neuters the gender dynamics embedded in Mahler's original score. My hope is that these music-analytical ideas can contribute to the broader discourse surrounding critical gender studies and Mahler's lived identity, a discourse which tends to eschew formalist music analysis.

Schlagworte/Keywords: arrangement, Bearbeitung, *Das Lied von der Erde*, gender, Geschlecht, Gustav Mahler, männlich/weiblich, masculine/feminine, narrative, Narrativität, orchestration, Orchestrierung

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