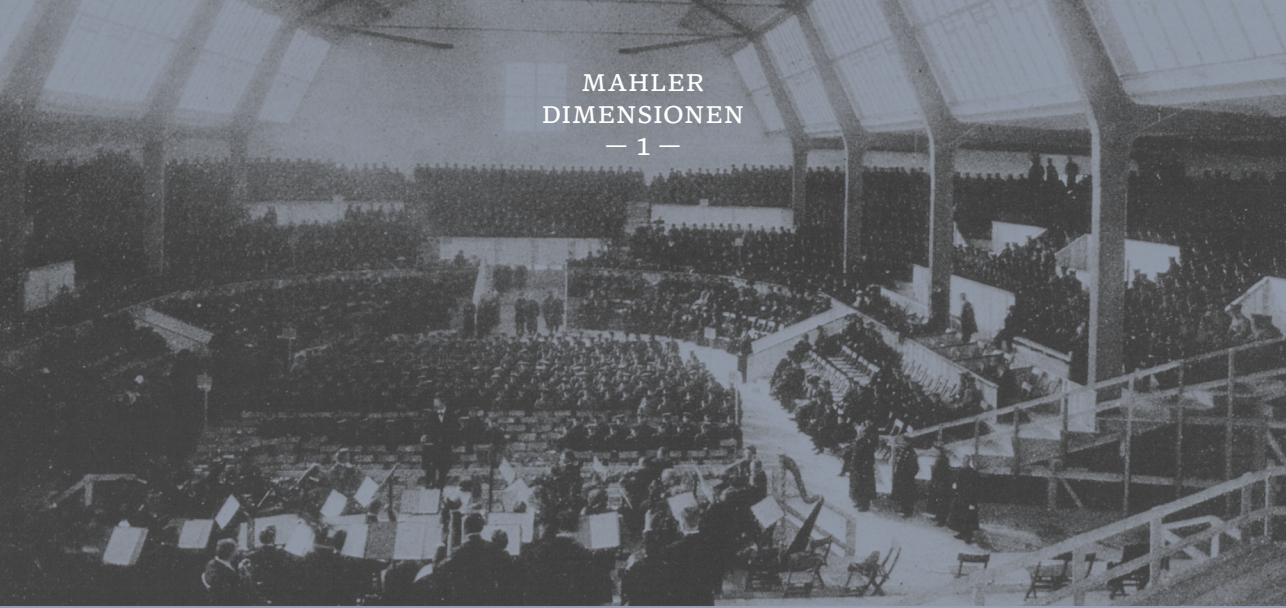




MAHLER
DIMENSIONEN

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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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“Undomesticated” Sounds in Gustav Mahler’s First Symphony

Federico Celestini

Natalie Bauer-Lechner, a violist and close friend of Gustav Mahler who frequently engaged in music-related conversations with him and recorded their discussions, offers us an approach to the subject of “undomesticated” sounds in the composer’s music. On 18 November 1900, Mahler conducted a Philharmonic concert featuring his First Symphony alongside Beethoven’s overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus* and Schumann’s overture to *Manfred*. Despite the orchestra’s statutes, Bauer-Lechner was granted permission to attend the rehearsals, offering her an opportunity to discuss her impressions with Mahler. Unsurprisingly, her comments focused on the First Symphony. She was particularly struck by the sound effects of the first and third movements, especially the latter “Bruder Martin” movement. Mahler took the opportunity to explain the strategies and techniques behind his sound design in this symphony:

[The sound effect] is because of the way I use the instruments. In the first movement, I make them completely vanish behind a shining sea of sound – as a luminous body is eclipsed by the light that streams from it. In the third movement, the instruments are quite differently disguised and masked, and appear, as it were, in strange shapes; everything must sound muted and subdued, like passing shadows.¹

In both movements, Mahler continues, “the orchestra completely retires behind its subject-matter,” whereas in the second and fourth movements it comes into its own “as brilliantly as possible.”² From this authorial description, three modes of using the orchestral instruments can be distinguished:

Phantasmagoria: In the first movement, the instruments “vanish behind a shining sea of sound – as a luminous body is eclipsed by the light that streams from it.” This refers to the evocation of the sound of nature at the beginning of the movement through the flageolet A of the strings in the high register and the descending fourths of the woodwinds.

Alienation: The instruments are said to sound “muted and subdued, like passing shadows” in the third movement, evoking the “Bruder Martin” canon at the beginning.

Brilliance: In contrast to the first and third movements, where the orchestra “completely retires behind its subject-matter,” the instruments come into their own “as brilliantly as possible” in the second and fourth movements.

1 NBL-E, 159, NBL-2, 175: “[Die Klangwirkung] liegt in der Art, wie ich die Instrumente verwende, die im ersten Satz ganz hinter einem Strahlenmeer von Tönen verschwinden – wie der Leuchtkörper hinter dem Glanz, der von ihm ausgeht, unsichtbar wird. Im dritten Satz sind die Instrumente wieder auf andere Weise verkappt und gehen wie in fremder Erscheinung um: alles soll dumpf und stumpf klingen, wie Schatten an uns vorüberziehen.”

2 NBL-E, 160, NBL-2, 175: “so habe ich mich beim zweiten und vierten [Satz] im Gegenteil bemüht, [das Orchester] aufs glänzendste zur Geltung zu bringen.”

The following analysis scrutinizes Mahler's self-described strategies of instrumentation and their sound-aesthetic implications more closely. It is surely important to apply source criticism to Mahler's alleged statements as they were reported by a third party. Nevertheless, this is not an attempt to explain Mahler's compositional style on the basis of Bauer-Lechner's memoirs. Instead, it is an effort to use these text fragments to illuminate Mahler's orchestration practice and aesthetics. Therefore, the value of what follows depends not on the reliability of Bauer-Lechner's memoirs or Mahler's statements, but on the consistency and quality of the thoughts that underlie them. Let us begin with the third mode.

Brilliance

The third mode addresses the traditional goal of a brilliant orchestral sound in the orchestration of a symphonic work. Mahler interprets this category very broadly, as it undoubtedly contains the concept of "beautiful" sound, but is by no means limited to it. The second movement of the First Symphony that is mentioned in this context by Mahler consists of a *Ländler*-like peasant dance as main section and a slow waltz as trio section. The characters of the two sections could hardly be more different. The main section features coarse sounds and powerful playing, as instructed in the score ("Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell", m. 1), which contrast with the delicate, finely orchestrated, and somewhat sentimental waltz.

The Finale follows the pattern of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, beginning with a screaming, dissonant tutti chord in *fortissimo*. The dualism of the sonata form is taken to an extreme here: The infernally connoted main theme in F minor bears the score indications "Stürmisch bewegt" (m. 1), "Energisch" (m. 55), and "Mit großer Wildheit" (m. 73). The secondary theme in D $\flat$ major is characterized in the score as "Sehr gesangvoll" (m. 175). The recapitulation brings a magnificent manifestation of symphonic transcendence, culminating in the solemn brass chorale in D major (mm. 623–656).

In both movements, the sonic identities of the orchestral instruments always remain recognizable, despite a diversity of characters, playing styles, and groupings. This means that the orchestra stays true to the symphonic sound tradition of the 19th century but expresses it with a particular intensity. This effect may be captured by the term "brilliance" (*Glanz*), serving as a contrasting foil to the "masking" effects associated with the other two modes.

Phantasmagoria

The first modality relates to the evocation of the sound of nature. Mahler's description of the orchestration strategies in the first and third movements emphasizes his deliberate concealment of the traditional timbre of the instruments. In order to conjure up the illusion of sounds of nature at the beginning of the first movement, the orchestral instruments must in fact be unrecognizable as such. The term phantasmagoria, which is used here to describe this effect, originally referred to the optical illusion of ghostly apparitions that were projected onto the stage using a magic lantern from around 1790 (FIG. 1).

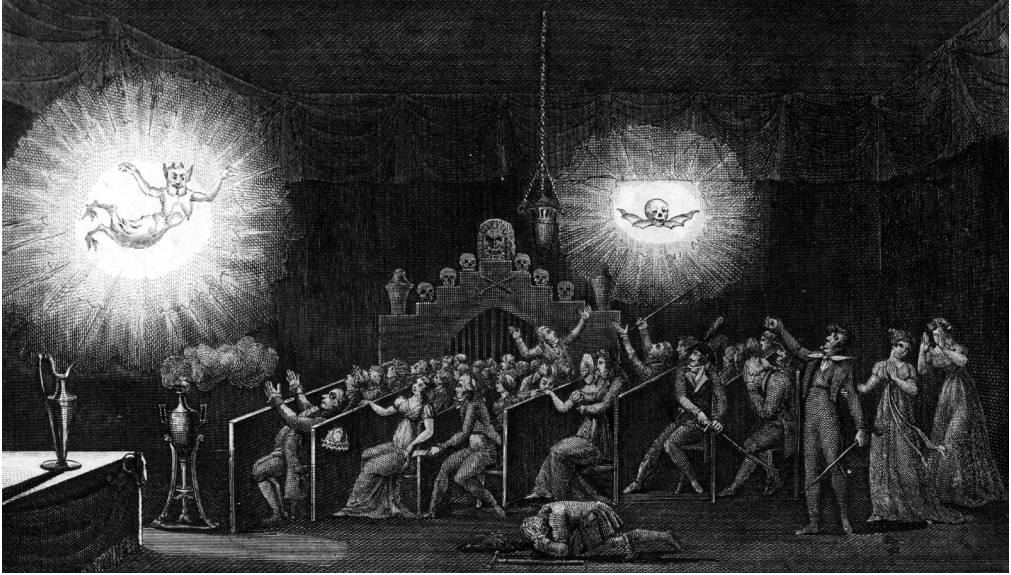


FIGURE 1: Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques*, Paris: Chez l'auteur et à la Librairie de Wurtz 1831, front page.

The origin of the term is thus closely connected to the theatre. Yet it also has a philosophical dimension, owing to the clear association of the concept of phantasmagoria with Plato's famous cave allegory. Plato's allegory describes a group of people who live in a cave and only perceive the world through shadows projected onto the cave wall.³ Similarly, Arthur Schopenhauer refers to the "phantasmagoria of the objective world" to describe the dream-like quality of sensory reality as filtered through Kantian categories. According to Schopenhauer, the real world, a shadow world for Plato, has a "dreamlike quality."⁴ In his major work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819/44), Schopenhauer repeatedly refers to Pedro Calderón de la Barca and his drama *La vida es sueño* (1635), illustrating the close connection between the aesthetic experience of appearance in the theatre and philosophical reflection on appearance per se. It is precisely this proximity that becomes productive in the concept of phantasmagoria.

A few decades after Schopenhauer, Karl Marx expanded the philosophical significance of the phantasmagoria socially and politically. He spoke of it in the context of his analysis of commodity fetishism in the first volume of *Capital* (1867).⁵ Here, Marx uses the term to depict the illusions and mystifying phenomena that arise in the capitalist economic system. He describes the relationship between people and commodities as phantasmagorical, because the presentation and perception of the commodity conceals the labor that was necessary for its production.

³ Plato, *Politeia* VII, 514a – 520a.

⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy," in: *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, translated by Eric F. J. Payne, New York: Dover 1969, 414–534: 419.

⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated by Ben Fowkes, vol. 1, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1976, 163–177.

Finally, Theodor W. Adorno brings together the conceptual strands of the theatrical, the philosophical-metaphysical, and the critical perspective on capitalism, when he subsumes Richard Wagner's law of form under the concept of phantasmagoria:

The occultation of production by means of the outward appearance of the product – that is the formal law governing the works of Richard Wagner. The product presents itself as self-producing; hence too the primacy of chromaticism and the leading note. In the absence of any glimpse of the underlying forces or conditions of its production, this outer appearance can lay claim to the status of being.⁶

In Adorno's analysis, the transition from aesthetic appearance to phantasmagoria points to the exemplary character of Wagner in relation to the ambivalence of work and commodity in bourgeois art. Mahler's work does not escape this ambivalence in Adorno's eyes either, especially not when he stages transcendence in the concert hall, namely in the apotheosis-like finales of the first three symphonies.⁷ It is exactly here where Mahler brings the orchestral instruments to the fore, as Bauer-Lechner reports, "as brilliantly as possible." It is not easy to distinguish between aesthetic appearance and phantasmagoria. Aesthetic appearance acquires a reality *sui generis* in the work of art, based on the latter's illusionary character.⁸ The designation *phantasmagoria*, however, is justified for the beginning of Mahler's First Symphony insofar as the evocation of sounds of nature is not achieved solely through aesthetic appearance but requires the concealment of the means of production.

Alienation

In the second mode, the masking of the instruments is realized as alienation. The aim here is not to evoke sounds of nature phantasmagorically, but to make the orchestral sound seem uncanny. This mode will be given special attention here because it contains occurrences of "undomesticated" sound that bring to light a peculiar dialectic between concealing and revealing.

Mahler understands alienation as a form of disguise. Unlike phantasmagoria, the effect here is to expose the concealment of physical labor in the production of beautiful sound. Let us look once more at Mahler's words as reported by Bauer-Lechner:

If I want to produce a soft, subdued sound, I don't give it to an instrument which produces it easily, but rather to one which can get it only with effort and under pressure – often only by forcing itself and exceeding its natural range. I often make the basses and the bassoon squeak on the highest notes, while my flute huffs and puffs down below. There is

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, London: New Left Books 1981, 85.

⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1992, 137–138.

⁸ Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 85: "[The perfection of the appearance] is at the same time the perfection of the illusion that the work of art is a reality *sui generis* that constitutes itself in the realm of the absolute without having to renounce its claim to image the world."

a passage like this in the fourth movement – you remember the entry of the violas? [mm. 519–529] I always enjoy this effect; I could never have produced that powerful, forced tone if I had given the passage to the cellos (the most obvious choice here).⁹

Mahler is speaking in general terms here, but the starting point for this explanation seems to be the solo double bass in its high register at the beginning of the funeral march. When a professional orchestra performs, the physical effort of the musicians is usually acoustically and visually imperceptible. This is achieved through many years of training and disciplining the musician’s body to learn artful playing technique. This ideal of a “transparent” musical body was developed and propagated since the beginning of the 19th century by the French violin school around Pierre Baillot, Pierre Rode, and Rodolphe Kreutzer on the basis of the enlightened pedagogical ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.¹⁰ In their 1793 *Méthode de Violon*, the three violinists emphasized a noble, relaxed attitude, and a mastery of technique through practice, aimed at completely forgetting the body while playing.¹¹

By using the instruments so that the notes to be played can only be made to sound with effort, Mahler obscures this transparency of the music-making body and thereby disavows the phantasmagoria of the philharmonic sound. The physicality of music-making that emerges affects the sound by intensifying its raw material qualities. Seventy years later, Mahler became an important influence on Helmut Lachenmann’s concept of *musique concrète instrumentale*, as the latter composer expressed it:

The piece of wood that splinters away at the blow of the great hammer [in the finale of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony], the string that breaks at the upbeat in the third string row, the involuntary vibrato of the tuba player whose lips flutter with exertion at the end of the Sixth: they interest and shake me, precisely in relation to the process from which they originate.¹²

9 NBL-E, 160, NBL-2, 175–176: “Wenn ich einen leisen, verhaltenen Ton hervorbringen will, lasse ich ihn nicht ein Instrument spielen, das ihn leicht hergibt, sondern lege ihn in jenes, welches ihn nur mit Anstrengung und gezwungen, ja oft mit Überanstrengung und Überschreitung seiner natürlichen Grenzen zu geben vermag. So müssen mir Bässe und Fagott oft in den höchsten Tönen quieken, die Flöte tief unten pusten. Hierher gehört auch die Stelle im vierten Satz (der Eintritt der Violen ist dir ja gegenwärtig?) [T. 519–529] Auf diese Wirkung freue ich mich immer und nie hätte ich den gepressten, gewaltsamen Ton hervorbringen können, wenn ich sie den hierin leicht ansprechenden Celli gegeben hätte.”

10 See Federico Celestini, “Zur Materialität des Klangs,” in: *Von der Autonomie des Klangs zur Heteronomie der Musik: Musikwissenschaftliche Antworten auf Musikphilosophie*, ed. by Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann and Nikolaus Urbaneck, Stuttgart: Metzler 2018, 33–48: 33–35.

11 Pierre Baillot, Pierre Rode, and Rodolphe Kreutzer, *Méthode de Violon*, Paris: Faubourg [after 1793], 3. See on the musical pedagogical ideal of a transparent body Jonas Traudes, *Musizierende “Wunderkinder”: Adoration und Observation in der Öffentlichkeit um 1800*, Wien: Böhlau 2018, 196–215.

12 Helmut Lachenmann, “Mahler – eine Herausforderung,” in: *Musik als existenzielle Erfahrung: Schriften 1966–1995*, ed. by Josef Häusler, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel 1996, 263–269: 269, translated by the author (“das Holzstückchen, das beim Schlag des großen Hammers wegsplittert, die Saite, die beim ‘zufahrenden’ Auftakt in der dritten Streicherreihe reißt, das unfreiwillige Vibrato des Tubaspielers, dem am Ende der *Sechsten* vor Anstrengung die Lippen flattern: Sie interessieren und erschüttern mich, und zwar gerade in Beziehung zu dem Prozeß, dem sie entstammen.”). On Lachenmann’s reception of Mahler, see Martin Kaltenecker, “Lachenmann und Gustav Mahler,” in: *Nachgedachte Musik: Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. by Jörn Peter Hiekel and Siegfried Mauser, Saarbrücken: Pfau 2005, 44–61.

The peculiarity of this unmasking gesture, with which the phantasmagoria of the philharmonic sound is broken, is that the associated emergence of physicality in no way negates the aesthetic appearance, for instance, in the name of an art-hostile realism. Mahler's "undomesticated" sound in the third movement of the First Symphony is an aesthetic appearance just as the glamorous sound in the finale is. This is why the adjective "undomesticated" is placed in quotation marks in the title of this chapter. The alienation of the instruments and the muffled and dull sound that Mahler achieves are the result of artful orchestration: the unmasking of the phantasmagoria is not a kind of unmasking of the aesthetic appearance, but rather an integral part of it. The materiality of sound that emerges amidst aesthetic appearance shows that it is a component of our aesthetic experience of music. Roland Barthes comes to a similar conclusion in his essay on "The 'Grain' of the Voice":

The "grain" is the body in the singing voice, in the writing hand, in the performing limb. If I perceive the "grain" of this music and if I attribute this "grain" a theoretical value (this is the assumption of the text in the work), I cannot help making a new scheme of evaluation for myself, individual no doubt, since I am determined to listen to my relation to the body of someone who is singing or playing and since that relation is an erotic one, but not at all "subjective" [...].¹³

Barthes discusses the grain of the voice and its absence using the example of two singers, Charles Panzéra and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and establishes a close connection between this characteristic of the "grain" and language, particularly French. Towards the end of his text, however, Barthes concedes the possibility that the "grain" he defines can also be present in instrumental music and thus also represents a criterion of evaluation in this domain. This evaluation focuses on the "image of the body" rather than aspects of interpretation.¹⁴ The fact that we can and (according to Barthes) should make an aesthetic judgment confirms that we are completely in the realm of aesthetic appearance, i.e., of art. Barthes concludes his text by pointing out that the "consideration of musical 'grain' could lead to another history of music than the one we know," one in which, he continues, we should attach "less importance to the tremendous break on tonality which modernity has produced."¹⁵ Barthes's view is that the "grain" of the voice or sound is not just a category of performance, but also of composition. This implies that the history of music could be written differently by taking this category into account. Barthes expressed these thoughts in 1972, and since then the revaluation of sound in musicology has led to a different perspective on the history of 20th-century music. The fact

13 Roland Barthes, "The 'Grain' of the Voice," in: *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, translated by Richard Howard, Berkeley: University of California Press 1991, 267–277: 276. Roland Barthes, "Le grain de la voix," in: *L'obvie et l'obtus: Essais critiques III*, Paris: Seuil 1982, 236–245: 243–244: "Le 'grain', c'est le corps dans la voix qui chante, dans la main qui écrit, dans le membre qui exécute. Si je perçois le 'grain' d'une musique et si j'attribue à ce 'grain' une valeur théorique (c'est l'assomption du texte dans l'œuvre), je ne puis que me refaire une nouvelle table d'évaluation, individuelle sans doute, puisque je suis décidé à écouter mon rapport au corps de celui ou de celle qui chante ou qui joue et que ce rapport est érotique, mais nullement 'subjective' [...]."

14 Barthes, "The 'Grain' of the Voice," 276. Barthes, "Le grain de la voix," 244: "l'image du corps".

15 Ibid., 277. Roland Barthes, "Le grain de la voix," 245: "mais il va de soi que la simple considération du 'grain' musical pourrait amener une autre histoire de la musique que celle que nous connaissons [...] nous accorderions sans doute moins d'importance à la formidable rupture tonale accomplie par la modernité."

that the musical "grain" and the materiality of sound are categories of musical composition is clearly attested to by Mahler and Lachenmann.

Grotesque Bodies

The third movement of the First Symphony exhibits a dense network of intertextual and intermedial relationships, the most important of which are Moritz von Schwind's engraving *Wie die Thiere den Jäger begraben*, Jean Paul's novel *Titan*, E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier*, together with Jacques Callot's grotesque graphic work, and finally Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. All of these works are closely linked to the grotesque tradition. Mahler wrote programmatic notes for the second performance of his First Symphony (in five movements), which took place under the title *Titan* in Hamburg in 1893. The most controversial discussions were sparked by the funeral march, appearing here as the fourth movement, which had already faced the most difficult reception at the premiere in Budapest in 1889.¹⁶ According to Mahler, the external stimulus for this piece was provided by

Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis (The Hunter's Funeral Procession), a parodistic picture that is well-known to all Austrian children and is taken from an old book of children's fairy tales. The animals of the forest escort the coffin of a deceased hunter to the grave site. Rabbits carrying a banner follow a band of Bohemian musicians accompanied by music-making cats, toads, crows, and so on; stags, does, foxes, and other four-legged and feathered animals of the forest follow the procession in amusing poses. At that point the piece in some ways expresses an ironic, humorous mood and in other ways expresses an eerie, brooding mood, followed immediately by V. Dall'inferno (Allegro furioso) – as the sudden outburst of despair from a deeply wounded heart.¹⁷

Most commentators agree that this is a description of a woodcut drawing by Moritz von Schwind, printed in 1850 under the title *Wie die Thiere den Jäger begraben* as one of the Munich illustrated sheets (FIG. 2).

The fact that the weeping forest animals carry the deceased hunter to his grave refers to the motive of hypocrisy. This motive, which Mahler referred to several times in his letters,¹⁸ finds an equivalent in chapters 46 and 47 of Jean Paul's novel *Titan*, in which the prince's funeral is

16 See, for example, August Beer's review of the premiere concert in *Pester Lloyd*: "After the funeral march the mood changed, and after the finale there was a small but nevertheless audible opposition." (Quoted after Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler III: Die Symphonien*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel 1985, 23.) Natalie Bauer-Lechner also comments on this: "The third movement is the 'Bruder Martin' piece which was more misunderstood and scorned than all the rest of the work" (NBL-E, 158).

17 Quoted after Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler III: The Symphonies*, translated by Vernon Wicker, Aldershot: Scholar Press 1994, 30 (Floros, *Gustav Mahler III*, 26: "Zur Erklärung dieses Satzes diene Folgendes: die äußere Anregung zu diesem Musikstück erhielt der Autor durch das in Österreich allen Kindern wohlbekannte parodistische Bild: Des Jägers Leichenbegängniß, aus einem Kindermärchenbuch: Die Thiere des Waldes geleiten den Sarg des gestorbenen Jägers zu Grabe; Hasen tragen das Fähnlein, voran eine Capelle von Böhmischen Musikanten, begleitet von musicirenden Katzen, Unken, Krähen etc., und Hirsche, Rehe, Füchse und andere Vierbeinige und gefiederte Thiere des Waldes geleiten in possirlichen Stellungen den Zug. An dieser Stelle ist dieses Stück als Ausdruck einer bald ironisch lustigen, bald unheimlich brütenden Stimmung gedacht, auf welche dann sogleich 5. 'Dall'Inferno al Paradiso' (Allegro furioso) folgt, als der plötzliche Ausdruck eines im Tiefsten verwundenen Herzens.")

18 See, for example, the young Mahler's letter to Josef Steiner of 17–19 June 1879 (GMB-2³, 30–33).



FIGURE 2: Moritz von Schwind, *Wie die Thiere den Jäger begraben*, Münchner Bilderbogen 1850.



FIGURE 3: Jacques Callot, Etching No. 19, *Balli di Sfessania* (ca. 1620).

depicted and the hypocrisy of those present is denounced.¹⁹ As is well known, Mahler referred to this novel on the occasion of the Hamburg and subsequent Weimar performances of the symphony by giving it the title *Titan*.²⁰ In the Hamburg performance, the fourth movement of Mahler's first symphony was entitled "Todtenmarsch in Callot's Manier." Mahler's allusion to E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier* is obvious.

Numerous musical and technical elements link the "Todtenmarsch in Callot's Manier" with the "Songe d'une Nuit du Sabbat," the fifth and final movement of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*.²¹ The boldness of composing a grotesque movement within the framework of a symphony was unparalleled in 1830 and not attempted again until Mahler's First Symphony. The similarities go far beyond this, however, extending to basic elements of the conception of the two movements and several compositional means of their realization. Both movements base their effect on the humorous distortion of a funeral service: Mahler's parodied funeral march corresponds to Berlioz's "parodie burlesque du Dies irae."²² The use of the trivial is striking, taking shape in Mahler through the Bohemian-style street music (mm. 38–60) and in Berlioz through the distortion of the "idée fixe" (mm. 40–64, anticipated in mm. 21–28). Both composers use the E_b clarinet, which originated in military music and was considered vulgar because of its shrill sound and therefore alien to the symphonic tradition. Mahler's *col legno* effect for the strings in this part of the movement (mm. 39–43 and 135–137), meanwhile, is introduced by Berlioz in the last section of the finale (mm. 444–460).

This slow movement of Mahler's First Symphony can be viewed as a paradigmatic manifestation of the musical grotesque and its latent intermedial character.²³ The reference to the aesthetic category of the grotesque also reveals a further perspective on physicality, as demonstrated by the unmasking alienation of the philharmonic sound in Mahler's instrumentation. In his 1965 study on *Rabelais and His World*, the literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the special nature of the body in grotesque art. According to Bakhtin, the confines between body and world and between body and body in grotesque art are different from those in classical or naturalistic art.²⁴ In the grotesque body, emphasis falls on those parts where the body "outgrows its own self," transgressing its boundaries.²⁵ The grotesque body emphasizes the gross physicality of human existence and is therefore clearly different from that of the classical

19 For more details see Federico Celestini, *Die Unordnung der Dinge: Das musikalische Groteske in der Wiener Moderne (1885–1914)* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, vol. 56), Stuttgart: Steiner 2006, 29–30.

20 See, among others, Eckhard Roch, "Erste Symphonie," in: GMI-1, 88–126: 90–94.

21 The premiere of the *Symphonie fantastique* took place in Paris on 5 December 1830. Mahler performed the work very often during his conducting career. See Henry-Louis de La Grange, "Berlioz und Mahler: Vom musikalischen Roman zum Sphärensang," in: *Musikkulturgeschichte: Festschrift für Constantin Floros zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Peter Petersen, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel 1990, 87–104: 87.

22 Hector Berlioz, "Programme" [version 1855], in: *Symphonie fantastique*, ed. by Nicolas Temperley, Kassel: Bärenreiter 1972, without page numbers. However, the German version of the program of the fourth movement is already reminiscent of Mahler's, especially the change of mood that occurs early on: "Der Zug nähert sich unter den Klängen eines bald düsteren und wilden, bald prächtigen und feierlichen Marsches [...]." (Ibid.)

23 See Federico Celestini, "Das Groteske als Überlieferung, Intertext und Performanz: Der dritte Satz von Gustav Mahlers Erster Symphonie," in: *Das Groteske und die Musik der Moderne* (Zürcher Festspiel-Symposien, vol. 8), ed. by Laurenz Lütteken, Kassel: Bärenreiter 2017, 20–32.

24 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1984, 315.

25 Ibid., 317.

canon, which assumes an “entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual.”²⁶

In this etching from Callot’s *Balli di Sfessania*, published around 1620, the characteristics of the grotesque body described by Bakhtin are clearly recognizable (FIG. 3). Although Bakhtin’s definition of the grotesque body is mainly inspired by literature and the visual arts, it opens up a fruitful perspective for the consideration of the grotesque in music and the slow movement of Mahler’s First Symphony in particular, namely the idea of music played by a grotesque body. Through their exertions, the physical labor of the musicians becomes acoustically perceptible in the materiality of the sound – ironically, within the temple-shaped concert halls of the late 19th century, where the ritualized cultivation of high art as a substitute for religion demands the suppression of the everyday and prosaic. It is no surprise that audiences and critics reacted negatively to this movement.²⁷ The physicality that emerges through the alienation of the philharmonic sound causes a desublimation, which is further intensified by the recourse to the grotesque. The sonic manifestation of the grotesque body also implies crossing the boundary between folk culture and high culture. Bakhtin saw a unique rapprochement between the two cultural spheres and their expressions at the time of the Renaissance, citing Boccaccio, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare as examples of this.²⁸ Whether such an approximation can also be attributed to Mahler remains open to question. In the slow movement of the First Symphony, the musical grotesque is clearly employed as a satirical critique of certain aspects of bourgeois culture. The positivity of the grotesque – characteristic of popular culture according to Bakhtin, with its explicit affirmation of the material and corporeal realm – seems scarcely applicable to Mahler. Nevertheless, the alienation of conventional sounds and idioms within the symphonic context destabilizes the art work’s coherence, albeit in a productive manner.

Noisiness

If we attempt to characterize the “undomesticated” sound and its particularly pronounced physicality from a phenomenological perspective, we find that such sounds are marked by a significant noise component.²⁹ Mahler himself seems to have been aware of this characteristic. In the passage from Natalie Bauer-Lechner’s memoirs quoted above, we find clear traces of this: basses and bassoon must “squeak in the highest notes,” the flutes “huff and puff down below,” and the violas in the fourth movement produce a “forced tone.”³⁰ There are numerous passages in Mahler’s scores in which the noise component is heightened by special instrumentation and playing techniques.³¹ In addition to the distortion of timbre created by playing in unusual registers, occurring in every Mahler work – perhaps with the sole and therefore significant exception of the Eighth Symphony – one should also note the wide range of extended and intensified techniques he employs: *col legno*; playing near the fingerboard or the bridge by

26 Ibid., 320.

27 See among others NBL-2, 176–178. This part is missing in the English edition.

28 Renate Lachman, “Vorwort,” in: Michail Bachtin, *Rabelais und seine Welt*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1987, 7–46: 24.

29 This was recognized early on by Jürgen Maehder, “Verfremdete Instrumentation – ein Versuch über beschädigten Schönklang,” *Schweizer Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 4 (1980), 103–150: 109.

30 NBL-E, 160. See note 9.

31 For an overview, see Altug Ünlü, *Gustav Mahler’s Klangwelt: Studien zur Instrumentation*, Frankfurt/M: Lang 2006, 33–162.

the strings; harmonics; flutter tonguing; brutal outbursts of sound; powerful *sforzandi*; Bartók *pizzicato*; *glissando*; *scordatura*; and an enormously expanded percussion section, including herd bell, hammer, rod, and bells. It can therefore be argued that Mahler was intensely concerned with increasing the noise component in the symphonic sound and thus expanding the musical material with which he could compose. As a result, Mahler clearly demonstrated the practice of composition as sound design, operating alongside the traditional conception of composition as the construction of tone relationships.

Review and Outlook

In a touchstone article from 1980, Jürgen Maehder addresses the phenomenon of alienated instrumentation from a historical and sound-aesthetic perspective. He pinpoints the origins of this phenomenon in French revolutionary opera and identifies seminal moments in German Romantic opera, notably in the Wolf's Glen scene from Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, and in the music of Hector Berlioz.³² Maehder shows how the conquest of new regions of sound, achieved through the negation of the ideal of beautiful sound, took place in the compositional practice of the 19th century. He describes the process of the denaturation of a single tone and the deformation of orchestral movement procedures as "alienation" (*Verfremdung*), following the theatrical theory of Bertolt Brecht.³³ However, whereas Brecht's alienation of existing social relations in his epic theatre aims to disrupt their apparent self-evidence and to reveal them as human-made and therefore changeable, the distortion of instrumental timbres and orchestral compositional technique, according to Maehder, served the 'progress' of musical material without affecting the social form of musical reception – the concert. Surprisingly, Maehder, who subsequently analyzed the orchestral treatment in Mahler's late works in detail, does not mention Mahler in his early article on alienated instrumentation. In this early text, he points out that Wagner does not use alienated instrumentation because, according to Maehder, he had an "idiosyncratic defense against any deformation of the work's totality."³⁴ That Mahler's "undomesticated" sounds have no social significance whatsoever seems questionable. The emergence of physicality and the audibility of physical labor in the production of sounds, as well as the integration of idioms and styles from less well-off social classes – in Adorno's famous words: "Jacobinically the lower music irrupts into the higher"³⁵ – at least suggest that such a meaning cannot be ruled out. Critics often condemned Mahler's works as an unacceptable violation of the high style of symphonic music, repeatedly accusing them of triviality.³⁶ In Mahler's music, where phantasmagoria, alienation, and beautiful sound appear on an equal footing, the work-like totality is, if not deformed, at least shaken in its foundations. The raw materiality of sound thus exposes the phantasmagorical character of the aesthetic appearance without questioning it.

³² Maehder, "Verfremdete Instrumentation."

³³ Ibid., 108.

³⁴ Ibid., 138 ("idiosynkratisch[e] Abwehr jeder Deformation werkhafter Totalität").

³⁵ Adorno, *Mahler*, 35.

³⁶ See Federico Celestini, "Der Trivialitätsvorwurf an Gustav Mahler: Eine diskursanalytische Betrachtung (1889–1911)," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 62 (2005), no. 3, 165–176.

Mahler frequently emphasized his tendency to employ instruments in a manner that requires effort and exertion to produce the desired tones. In such passages, the familiar, polished sound of traditional symphonic timbre becomes so alienated that the instruments become difficult to identify. In a manner reminiscent of Roland Barthes's remarks on the "grain" of the voice, the disruption of symphonic sound results from the bodily effort of sound production. The resulting corporeality of music-making intensifies the raw qualities of Mahler's sound, making its physically embedded materiality perceptible. By using the instruments in this way, Mahler obscures the transparency of the music-making body and thereby exposes the phantasmagoria of philharmonic sound. This chapter explores the aesthetic, political, and music-historical implications of the emergence of "undomesticated" sound in Mahler's work.

Schlagworte/Keywords: alienated sound, Erste Symphonie, First Symphony, grotesque, Groteske, Gustav Mahler, klangliche Materialität, materiality of sound, phantasmagoria, Phantasmagorie, ver-fremdeter Klang

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