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# Contents

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# Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition

JAMES HEPOKOSKI

Symphonic practice in later nineteenth-century Europe was no unitary activity that we should collapse into a crisp, linear narrative. The reality was messier. It would be more accurate to regard the world of orchestral composition as an arena of competing ideologies and diverse aims, a field of energy and circulation. To be sure, the energy was anything but random. Composers, performers, publishers, critics, academics, students and audiences channelled it through a flurry of enabling and constraining preconditions, historical and cultural circumstances sorted out differently by different groups. Among the most significant precondition was the idea of tradition – or, more to the point, the struggle over the presumed ownership of that tradition. By the second half of the century the European idea of the symphony as a high-status cultural achievement was nourished by lovingly shaped readings of the genre's Austro-Germanic past. Commonly enough, the grounding shape was reinforced by a heroic tale: the ascent to the apex, Beethoven – embodying the long-sought liberation of the modern idea of greatness in instrumental music, the definitional moment of full symphonic adequacy, the 'undeniable' launching of 'the new era of music' (as Liszt put it in 1855)[1] – followed by a crisis of continuation in subsequent decades.

Spurred also by external factors – technological, economic, political, ethnic-national – the symphonic crisis invited a number of solutions: it had been disseminated to several different publics on several different terms.[2] As a result, by mid-century no central authority was able to establish a consensus concerning the best way to continue the tradition while still honouring its past. Consequently, the tradition shattered into individualised solutions and partisan controversy. Like the emerging marketplace with which it was implicated, European symphonic activity came to be moulded in significant measure

by an 'invisible hand', generated by the choices of thousands of pivotally placed individuals and the interplay of dozens of small, often powerful interest groups. Several of these groups sought to impose a 'real' configuration on to this tradition according to the promptings of their own self-interests. For such reasons as these it is futile to seek a mythical consistency among the musical styles and dissimilar achievements of the period's most celebrated figures. Instead, the contestations of the age may be rendered approachable only by reawakening the central problems faced by its composers and audiences – the questions to which individual compositions sought to provide answers.

## Dilemmas of symphonic practice at mid-century

It may seem one of the ironies of nineteenth-century music that the perception of a crisis within Austro-Germanic sonata construction set in at almost precisely the same time as the emergence of the academic recognition and honouring of this tradition, most notably in A. B. Marx's University of Berlin lectures and instruction in the 1830s, leading to his extensive, Beethoven-based textbook-codification of musical forms, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch* (1838, with several subsequent, expanded editions). But the two issues – crisis and methodical systematisation – are interrelated. Once precipitated into such detailed language, sonata-symphonic practice and its most prestigious constituent, 'sonata form' (the term famously coined by Marx), became objects open to quasi-scientific classification. It is true, of course, that a broad array of flexible 'first-movement-form' procedures had circulated as common currency among composers several decades before Marx's systematic enquiry. A few quick descriptions of some nodal points of this complex structure had even found their way into print (Koch, Galeazzi, Kollmann, Reicha, and so on). Heinrich Birnbach's essays in 1827 and 1829 had marked an especially important stage in the 'verbal' understanding of the form.[3] (Influential twentieth-century German-language discussions of the subject have viewed Birnbach as part of a broader effort in the early nineteenth century to articulate a prescriptive or 'pragmatic' sonata form. Ever more insistently the concept of a 'form-schema' displaced the earlier idea of an 'open architectonic model'.)[4] But certainly after Marx, whose discussions

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1 Liszt, 'Robert Schumann' [1855], in *Gesammelte Schriften* (henceforth *GS*), ed. L. Ramann [1882] (rpt. Hildesheim, 1978), IV, p. 163.

2 An overview of symphonic monuments is provided in D. Kern Holoman (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York, 1997). A more extensive inventory may be found in selected volumes of A. Peter Brown's *The Symphonic Repertoire: The European Symphony from 1800–1930* (vol. III, Bloomington forthcoming in 2001); and *The Second Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Brahms, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, and Selected Contemporaries* (vol. IV, Bloomington forthcoming in 2001).

3 Heinrich Joseph Birnbach, 'Ueber die verschiedene Form größerer Instrumentaltonstücke aller Art und deren Bearbeitung', an essay in six instalments in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* [hereafter *BamZ*], 4 (1827), nos. 34–7, 45–6 (pp. 269–72, 277–81, 285–7, 293–5, 361–3, 369–73); expanded with a different title in *Cäcilia* 10/38 (1829), pp. 97–120).

4 Fred Ritzel, *Die Entwicklung der 'Sonatenform' im musiktheoretischen Schrifttum des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden, 1969), pp. 213–23. For 'form-schema' see, for example, Ulrich Konrad, 'Der Wiener Kompositionswettbewerb 1835 und Franz Lachners *Sinfonia passionata*: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sinfonie nach Beethoven', *Augsburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* (Tutzing, 1986), p. 222.

were subsequently imitated, and often condensed, by other writers, there can be no doubt that an abstracted, idealised sonata form existed even more concretely as a reified, conceptual 'thing' – something like a 'regulative idea' (in Kant's sense) or an 'ideal type' (in Max Weber's sense), no matter what elasticity it allowed or what variants from it might be observed in actual practice. By this time the fear of the strongest composers was that it had already devolved into empty formula.

In the 1830s Schumann judged contemporary symphonic composition to be hampered by the false comforts of 'old', 'traditional' or 'received' forms – meaning especially, self-satisfied, rule-of-thumb conceptions of what Marx was calling sonata form. Following the heaven-storming gigantism of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, for a composer to continue to embrace the older proportions and contained politeness of traditional composition ran the risk of seeming pallid. Now was the time for monumentality, for formal progress, for bold reinterpretations of past habits. Stirring up issues that would dominate the rest of the century, Schumann laid out the difficulty in his 1835 review of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*:

> Form is the vessel of the spirit. Greater spaces require greater spirit to fill them. The word 'symphony' has hitherto designated instrumental music of the greatest proportions . . . It is enough for second-class talents to master the received forms; those of the first rank are granted the right to enlarge them. Only the genius may range freely.
>
> After Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, in external dimensions the greatest of all instrumental works we have, moderation and limit seemed to be exhausted . . . The later symphony composers realized this, and a few even fled back to the traditional forms of Haydn and Mozart . . . None . . . dared make any substantial changes in the old forms with the exception of isolated [programmatic] experiments like Spohr's latest symphony [and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*].[5]

Schumann's anxiety about the vacuity of 'traditional form' (*hergebrachte Form*) in the hands of post-Beethovenian epigones surfaced again in 1836, in a sharp criticism of a recent prize-winning symphony by Franz Lachner (*Sinfonia passionata* in C minor, 1835). This lengthy work, he charged, was eclectically 'Meyerbeerian' and 'lacking in style' (*stillos*), 'put together out of German, Italian, and French [traits]' instead of continuing the more purely Germanic path set forth by Beethoven. Moreover, its extraordinary length lacked a seri-

ousness of content; the result was a 'diluted' work, an ongoing dissipation into thinness that, by the finale, 'disappeared into complete tediousness and emptiness' (*Öde und Leere*).[6] Similar remarks may be found in a series of essays from summer 1839, on the heels of his discovery of Schubert's Great C Major Symphony and its 21 March première under Mendelssohn.[7] Recent piano sonatas, he insisted, had declined into mere 'examples, or studies in form': 'Single beautiful examples of this genre will surely show up here and there, and already have, but in general it appears that the form has run its course'.[8] As for the symphony (in this case, ones by Preyer, Reissiger and, again, Lachner): 'When the German speaks of symphonies, he means Beethoven. The two names are for him one and indivisible – his joy, his pride . . . For the most part the more recent symphonies decline intellectually into the overture style – the first movements, that is to say; the slow [movements] are only there because they cannot be left out; the scherzos are scherzos in name only; the finales no longer know what the preceding movements contained'. Modern works fail to measure up to the Beethovenian standard, in which the rapidly changing ideas are 'linked through an inner, spiritual bond'.[9]

Schumann's writings from the later 1830s brought together three convictions: (1) the Germanic post-Beethovenian symphony must retain a strong, ethical component; it needed to be underpinned with moral seriousness and consistency of national character and not lose itself in special effects, amusement or divertissement; (2) in the absence of a foregrounded problematisation or transformation in individual works, 'traditional form' decayed into insipid formula; and (3) the resulting formal shapes, whatever their relationship to tradition might be, needed justification through a strong expressive content, implicit or explicit, that could draw the movements together under a single conception. His subsequent four symphonies (1841–51) were doubtless intended as object-lessons. In beguilingly ingenious ways each of them seeks to reconcile earnest, Beethovenian (self-consciously 'Classical') sonorities with formal experimentation. (See the discussion in chapter 7.)

5 Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (henceforth *NZfM*) (3 and 31 July, 4, 7, 11 and 14 August 1835); rpt. of revised essay in Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker* [1854, henceforth *GS*] (rpt. Wiesbaden, 1985), I, pp. 118–51 (quotations from pp. 118–19). The translation used here is that of Edward T. Cone in *Berlioz: Fantastic Symphony* (New York, 1971), pp. 226–7. Cone noted that the Spohr symphony in question was No. 4 in F major, a programme symphony subtitled *Die Weihe der Töne* (The Consecration of Sound).

6 Schumann, *NZfM* (8 November 1836). Reprinted in 'Die Preissymphonie', in Schumann, *GS*, I, pp. 230–5. On Lachner's music and Schumann's criticism, see Konrad, 'Die Wiener Kompositionswettbewerb'. Konrad additionally argues that Lachner may have been aware of and influenced by Schubert's (as yet 'unknown') 'Great' C Major Symphony.

7 Schumann's essay on the newly uncovered Schubert symphony and its 'heavenly lengths' appeared a year later, in 1840. Reprinted in Schumann, *GS*, III, pp. 195–203.

8 *NZfM* (26 April 1839); Schumann, *GS*, III, p. 80.

9 Schumann, *NZfM*, (2 July 1839), 1; *GS*, III, pp. 133–44. The translation of most of this passage is that of Linda Correll Roesner, 'Schumann', in Holoman, *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, p. 43. Cf. the translation in Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (New York, 1969), p. 61; and Jon W. Finson, *Robert Schumann and the Study of Orchestral Composition* (Oxford, 1989), p. 19. Cf. also Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New York, 1996), pp. 3–4; and Frisch, '"Echt symphonisch": On the Historical Context of Brahms's Symphonies', in David Brodbeck (ed.), *Brahms Studies II* (Lincoln, Nebr., and London, 1998), pp. 113–33.

The same concerns for a historically appropriate balance between preservationist and progressive impulses – though filtered through a different personality and sense of poetic elegance – might be claimed for the other main set of Classicising symphonies that saw publication in the period 1840–51, those of Mendelssohn. No. 2, the large-scale 'Lobgesang' from 1840, paid obvious homage to Beethoven's Ninth. This highly polished 'symphony-cantata' merged three instrumental symphonic movements (linked without pauses) with a forty-minute, socially affirmative cantata finale, complete with arias, choruses, recitative and even an interior chorale. No. 3, 'Scottish' (1842), displayed tidier, more Classical proportions but might have been planned, in part, as a metaphor and proposed solution for the current symphonic dilemma. Among its remarkable features is a phoenix-from-the-ashes epilogue ('finale maestoso'), which, at least on a broader plane of interpretation, may be construed as representing a grand hope, a swelling declaration of the historically conscious renewal of the symphonic tradition itself, whose 'death' had just been enacted in the preceding movements.[10] No. 4, 'Italian' (published only in 1851, posthumously – though completed and performed in 1833), is a more traditionally formatted work. Compactly brilliant and filled with masterly details and characteristic touches, it is less structurally adventuresome as a whole than either No. 2 or No. 3. (Mendelssohn's 'Fifth' Symphony, the 'Reformation', had been composed in 1830 but would not see publication until 1868.)

Mendelssohn's Fourth and Schumann's Third, both emerging in the early 1850s, brought this phase of post-Beethovenian symphonic composition to a close and precipitated a new crisis of continuation. On the one hand, throughout the 1850s and 1860s self-styled progressives and their supporters claimed to have supplanted the more abstract symphony with the new genres of the music drama (Wagner) and the symphonic poem (Liszt). On the other hand, conservative partisans of the official or mainline mid-century style, honouring the proportions and textures of Mendelssohn and Schumann, decried the radicalism of Liszt and the 'New German School' and looked in vain for worthy successors to the more restrained, more abstract symphony. Finally appearing in 1876 – perhaps in part spurred into existence by the appearance of Max Bruch's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 in 1868 and 1870 – Brahms's magisterial First Symphony addressed a long-felt need and shored up a traditionalist position that many on all sides had assumed was no longer viable.[11]

10 This interpretation – according to which performances of this symphony enacted what the work itself may have sought to declare – differs in some respects from that offered in Peter Mercer-Taylor, 'Mendelssohn's "Scottish" Symphony and the Music of German Memory', *19th Century Music*, 19 (1995), pp. 68–82.
11 David Brodbeck, *Brahms: Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 11–15, 84–5; and Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New York, 1996), pp. 20–7.

These controversies were played out in the context of a more fundamental dilemma, one that may be regarded as the foundational paradox of mid-century symphonic practice. Briefly put, the seeming compositional imperatives towards complexity, individuality and emancipation from an uncritical reliance on inherited traditions worked at cross-purposes to the cultural conditions required for this music's widespread public success. These conditions encouraged participants to promote the impression of symphonic music's ready accessibility to an international, liberal-humanist public whose musical literacy was often shaky. This illusion needed to be underpinned by strategies of reassurance. For some, it was the quasi-religious conviction that in the hands of its greatest masters instrumental music could express transcendental essences by taking on the role of an idealised 'spirit' or metaphysics. (Here the additionally implied aesthetics of immediacy offered an easy dispensation from cognitive grapplings with music's history, genres and structures by declaring that these concerns were either fussily academic or irrelevant.) For others, it was the claim that instrumental music could reach a wider audience through a merger with high-prestige literary, national or philosophical programmes. For still others it was harboured in the growing cult of the performer. Additional fuel for the enterprise was furnished by a marked upsurge in superficial music criticism in the press, buttressed by the simplified music-guide or programme-note for the lay listener.[12]

Such considerations led to two features characteristic of later nineteenth-century orchestral music. The first was a heightened personalisation of symphonic style and content. In principle, each composer, spurred onward by the doctrine of originality, was to construct an individual (or national) voice to carry on a provocative dialogue with the official mid-century style. Some solutions, while by no means lacking distinctiveness and savour, remained more loyal to the proportions of the Mendelssohn–Schumann tradition – Gade, Bruch, Rubinstein, Svendsen, Goldmark, Parry, Fibich, much of Dvořák. Others insisted on their own uniqueness and innovation counterpointed against the ever-accumulating tradition – Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner, Strauss, Mahler, Nielsen, Sibelius. The second feature was an increasing attention to orchestral music's lush, emotional power – intense sonic surfaces designed to sweep one away or to suffuse the whole with an aura of elevation. This became all the more possible with the dynamic and colouristic resources provided by the modern orchestra. The important point, though, was that these experiences helped to provide audiences, critics and performers with a gratifying sense of devotional participation in profundity while relieving most

12 Cf. Leon Botstein, 'Listening through Reading: Musical Literacy and the Concert Audience', *19th Century Music*, 16 (1992), pp. 129–45.

of them from the burden of investigating the details of the actual musical thought at hand.

Ardent debates and new aesthetic ideologies now swirled around symphonic composition. One senses everywhere in them the old eighteenth-century fear that non-texted instrumental music might mean nothing at all, that it would collapse into empty pretence unless shored up with readily absorbed articles of faith. Before long the various factions would come to accuse each other of trivial composition, of sensationalism or decadence, of betraying the tradition, while maintaining that it alone was not squandering the cherished legacy of Beethoven. After 1850, in an age of expanding technical materials and sumptuous orchestral resources, one persistent symphonic problem was to keep the fear of emptiness at bay through acts of artistic compensation buttressed by earnestly promulgated networks of prestige. As larger Europe raced towards commercial, urban, technological, political and military modernity, the continued viability of the artistic tradition could not be taken for granted.

## Poetic content: the challenge of Liszt

With their Shakespearean, 'Hebridean', 'Scottish' or 'Italian' tints and lyrical landscapes, Mendelssohn's concert overtures and symphonies helped to nurture the idea that orchestral music should take a more decisive literary-poetic turn, and it was a simple matter for non-Austro-Germanic composers to adapt such precedents into *völkisch* evocations of their own homelands. Still, the issue of extra-musical representation extended beyond matters of local colour. Berlioz's programme symphonies from the 1830s posed a special challenge, but many earlier works also spoke to this generalised impulse. Foremost among them were Beethoven's and Weber's overtures, along with the former's much-discussed 'Pastoral' Symphony. Many of Beethoven's other works were also given early and mid-nineteenth-century poetic interpretations. In 1825, for instance, an article signed by 'C. F. Ebers' in the periodical *Cäcilia* suggested that the whole of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, movement by movement, represented a wedding celebration. Schumann would pass on the interpretation – recasting the image as a 'peasant-wedding' – and the reading was also mentioned by Wagner, A. W. Ambros, and others.[13] (In 1877 Karl Goldmark would conflate the reception traditions of Beethoven's Sixth and Seventh, producing the five-movement symphonic poem 'Rustic Wedding'.)

The drive to interpret textless compositions poetically had been intellectu-

ally fortified in part by A. B. Marx's advocacy in the 1820s of programmatic or 'characteristic' music, along with his parallel insistence in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* that to understand Beethoven's major works is to grasp the *Grundideen* or fundamental ideas that had motivated them.[14] By mid-century Wagner raised the pitch of the issue by publishing his often self-serving interpretations of a few of Beethoven's orchestral works. 'The plastic subject of almost all the master's symphonic works [is that of] scenes between man and woman', he claimed in 1852 in a much-cited, if dubious, reading of 'Beethoven's Overture to "Coriolanus".[15] Such powder-kegs exploded into the programme-music debate that preoccupied much of the later nineteenth century.

That debate was sparked in the 1850s by Liszt and his supporters in and around Weimar, the self-styled 'New German School'. Marching under the banner of a historically necessary musical progress (*Fortschritt*, literally a 'step forward'), Liszt argued that the vehicles for this advancement were the 'symphonic poem' (*symphonische Dichtung*) – a term of his own coinage – and the programme symphony. These, he claimed, were the main orchestral replacements for the now-enervated abstract symphony. In both, purely musical effects (potentially new musical forms, motivic and thematic transformation, sensational orchestration) fused with high-prestige literary or historical images conveyed in the title or other supplementary material, such as interior subtitles, appended texts or other composer-authorised programmatic commentary. Poetic ideas were now to serve even more decisively as the wind in orchestral music's sails.

To that end, in the 1850s Liszt completed twelve symphonic poems: *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne, Tasso, Les préludes, Orpheus, Prometheus, Mazeppa, Festklänge, Héroïde funèbre, Hungaria, Hamlet, Hunnenschlacht (The Battle of the Huns)* and *Die Ideale*. Most of these were expansions and adaptations of the one-movement format and sonata-form basis of the operatic and concert overture – the Beethoven, Weber, Mendelssohn or Berlioz precedent shorn of the generic designation 'overture', swollen to larger proportions, and provided, usually, with an even less orthodox formal treatment. He complemented these with two programme symphonies, marked by ever-transforming representational themes or motifs: the '*Faust* Symphony in

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13 See Thomas Grey, 'Metaphorical Modes in Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism: Image, Narrative, and Idea', in Steven Paul Scher (ed.), *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 93–117 (on Beethoven's Seventh, pp. 99–110).

14 E.g., Marx, 'Etwas über die Symphonie und Beethoven's Leistungen in diesem Fache', in *BamZ* 1/19–21 (1824), pp. 165–8, 173–6, 181–4); and Marx, *Über Malerei in der Tonkunst* (Berlin, 1828). See also Scott Burnham, 'Criticism, Faith, and the *Idee*: A. B. Marx's Early Reception of Beethoven', *19th Century Music*, 13 (1990), pp. 183–92; and Judith Silber Ballan, 'Marxian Programmatic Music: A Stage in Mendelssohn's Musical Development', in R. Larry Todd (ed.), *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 149–61.

15 My emendation of the translation found in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis [1894], rpt. (New York, 1966), III, p. 225.

Three Character Pictures' (1854–7), with its choral finale setting the conclusion of the second part of Goethe's masterwork; and the 'Symphony on Dante's *Divina commedia*' (1855–7). It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Liszt's orchestral output and the aesthetic ideology that it exemplified. These works served as incitements to personal experimentation and as sources of analogous ideas and even rival compositions for many in the next two or three generations.

Liszt's polemical version of the idea of programme music was instantly surrounded by partisan controversy. Spearheading the traditionalist counterattack to it on behalf of 'the independent meaning of music', the Viennese critic and aesthetician Eduard Hanslick – by 1862 a friend and supporter of Brahms – saw in it little but mistaken, schismatic ideas, an arrogant betrayal of the tradition, and a ready-made pack of excuses for inadequate talent. For Liszt and his followers the fusion of a unique musical process with a clearly indicated poetic concept was to be permanent and inseparable. As Franz Brendel, a leading spokesman for the New German School, insisted in 1859, both belonged 'up to a certain point' to what aesthetic philosophers call 'the work itself'.[16] This meant that to subtract the programme and to hear these compositions only as 'absolute music' – originally the Wagnerian-Lisztian term for the non-representational work – or to try to imagine conceivable, alternative programmes, was an aesthetic error. One would violate the very conditions of the genre, refusing to play the intended aesthetic game by its rules.

The conviction that the 'poetic solution' was the key to the problem of an otherwise blocked musical progress lay behind Liszt's galvanising manifesto, *Berlioz and His 'Harold' Symphony* (1855) – an essay stretching to around a hundred pages, already discussed in another context in this volume (see chapter 11). For polemical purposes he divided current instrumental composition into two camps, non-programmatic and programmatic. The former he referred to in various ways: the 'specifically musical' composers, the 'independent style', the work of the 'formalists' or 'mere musicians', and so on. This position he arraigned as unimaginatively committed to orthodox formulas, as embracing aesthetic stasis, opposed to the inevitable march of history and aesthetic renovation. As Schumann had done almost two decades earlier, Liszt dismissed recent work in non-representational music as lacklustre, imitative, empty. Worse, he claimed, such compositions eluded the understanding of mid-century audiences. Because non-programmatic music conveyed merely 'an abstract ideal' or only loosely generalised 'ideal regions', the listener in

search of more concrete meanings was obliged to fill in the details arbitrarily, pursuing the whims of his or her own fantasy.[17]

As opposed to this, 'tone-poets' (*Tondichter*) were answering 'the call of the times'. They were the 'New Testament' heirs to Beethoven's tradition by producing 'poetic' works that served at least three practical purposes. First, inspired by literary masterpieces, such pieces revealed the 'innermost relationships' between music and great ideas, 'the totality of human feeling, thought, poetry, and aspirations', laid out in 'a succession of soul-states' (*eine Folge von Seelenzuständen*). Second, by providing the programme the composer furnished a much-needed anchor to stabilise the perception of the listener who, lacking this, was in danger of experiencing a free-floating bewilderment. Third – and most revolutionarily – poetic music, unlike traditionalist abstractions, liberated the composer from blindly following eclipsed formal conventions. This was Liszt's clarion call to the future:

> In so-called Classic Music the return and thematic development of the themes is determined [*bestimmt*] through formal rules that one [erroneously] regards as inviolable, even though its composers had no written rule in front of them other than that of their own fantasy. (They themselves drew up the formal layouts that some today wish to regard as law.) On the other hand, in programme music the returns, alternations, modifications, and modulations of the motif are conditioned [*bedingt*] by their relationship to a poetic idea. Here one theme does not call forth another by rule of law. Here the motifs are not a succession of stereotyped similarities or oppositions of tone-colours . . . Although they are by no means ignored, all exclusively musical considerations are subordinated to the treatment of the given subject.[18]

Here Liszt separated himself from the conservatives. Today's geniuses 'create new forms for new ideas, new skins for new wine'; they drive their musical thoughts 'to new and bold, unusual and intricate combinations'.[19] (Nearly ninety years later, Richard Strauss, almost a half-century past his own programme-music battles of the 1890s, would recall the invigorating challenge

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16  Brendel, *Franz Liszt als Symphoniker* (Leipzig, 1859), p. 13. Cf. Vera Micznik, 'The Absolute Limitations of Programme Music: The Case of Liszt's "Die Ideale"', *Music and Letters*, 80 (1999), pp. 207–40.

17  *Berlioz und seine 'Harold-Symphonie'*, in Liszt, *GS*, IV, pp. 3–102. On the issue of Liszt's authorship of this essay (some of which was probably penned by Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, perhaps as part of 'a collaborative effort'), see, e.g., Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ruth Solie (New York, 1998), pp. 116–17. (Some translated extracts from the essay appear on pp. 117–32, attributed to both Liszt and Sayn-Wittgenstein; several of the passages mentioned in the present text do not appear in the *Source Readings*.) Whatever the nuances surrounding the authorship, Liszt obviously endorsed both the ideas and the way that they were articulated, and the declarations were embraced as characteristically Lisztian throughout the rest of the century. All of the translations in the present text are my own. Page-sources in the *Gesammelte Schriften* for the quotations: 'poetic solution', p. 44; 'specifically musical', pp. 49, 50, 56; 'independent style', p. 56; 'formalists', p. 50; 'mere musicians', p. 48; 'abstract ideal', p. 57, quoting Fétis; 'ideal regions', etc., p. 56.

18  Liszt, *Berlioz*; 'tone-poets', p. 47; 'call of the times', p. 42; 'New Testament', p. 59; 'poetic', p. 44; 'innermost relationships . . . totality', p. 57; 'soul states', p. 50; 'In so-called', p. 69.

19  Liszt, *Berlioz*; 'create', p. 60; 'to new and bold', p. 48.

of the Lisztian agenda, whose slogan he recalled as 'New ideas must seek new forms for themselves' [*Neue Gedanken müssen sich neue Formen suchen*].)[20] Even those threatened or scandalised by Liszt could hardly avoid being affected by such ideas. In retrospect it is clear that many of the formal experiments of the later nineteenth century sought to modify existing practice on the basis of some sort of conceptual idea (not necessarily extra-musical) working dialectically with the traditional demands of the material itself. And by the 1860s Northern and Eastern European nationalists of various stripes would seek to merge aspects of Liszt's demands with the validation also conferred by what remained of the claims of traditional form. For both sides, more was at risk than matters of aesthetics and personal taste. 'Form under siege' became a moral battle – for some, a metaphysical one – in which the cultural stakes were high.

The ways in which the reception history of Liszt's ideas was played out in subsequent orchestral music may be complex, but this very complexity afforded later composers a variety of defences as they sought ways of justifying themselves against the equally intricate arguments of sceptics. One significant strand of the reception history, as Carl Dahlhaus has pointed out, lay in Wagner's acknowledgement ('On Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poems', 1857) that a casual examination of Liszt might tempt composers and audiences to lose sight of the self-standing, metaphysical supremacy of music. Consequently, he argued, a literary or extra-musical programme, while necessary as an initial step for both composer and listener, existed primarily as a 'form[al] motif' that the greatest music, following its own inner dictates, will eventually transcend.[21] The metaphysical substance of music, that is, will at some point cast aside the lift-off programme – which had functioned as a mere booster rocket – on the way to the stars. Such a paradoxical position had its self-evident uses against the charge of producing mere, musically empty *Literaturmusik*: it permitted a composer simultaneously to avow and disavow the programme, depending on the circumstances at hand. Yearning for an ever-elusive metaphysical saturation, Mahler, in particular, would be much drawn in the 1890s to the tensions inherent in this argument.

## Between absolute and programme music

It is counter-productive to collapse post-1850 instrumental music into two polarised types. The supposed opposition of absolute and programme music is

20 Strauss, 'Aus meinen Jugend- und Lehrjahren', *Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, ed. Willi Schuh, 1st edn (Zurich, 1949), p. 168. A differing translation is found in *Recollections and Reflections*, trans. L. J. Lawrence (London, 1953), p. 139.

21 See, e.g., Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago, 1989), p. 135; Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 237, 361; Thomas S. Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 308–11.

a false dichotomy, one forged in the heat of nineteenth-century polemics. Nor are such terms to be regarded as verifiable properties of the works themselves. All such classifications serve overwhelmingly as hermeneutic genres – differing modes of interpretation that, for differing purposes, seek to supervise the interplay between a piece and its listener. Hermeneutic genres provide the guidelines encouraging certain kinds of communication to occur while discouraging others; they are lenses through which selected aspects of culturally complex compositions may be called forth for analysis, discussion and commentary. The seemingly mutually exclusive extremes – absolute versus programmatic understandings – are not our only choices. Between them lies a flexible middle ground, a vast zone of nuanced implication that may be tapped in various ways, depending on the desired point of view. Consequently, what we encounter is a spectrum of possibilities under which any single piece might be framed for understanding. There is no single, objectively 'correct' approach to any composition. All symphonic works house multiple strata of potential meaning; some are musical, some are extra-musical. Nevertheless, in their interactions with the public, composers sometimes highlighted one or two of these meaning-strata while downplaying the others. Some works do invite richer speculation about representational allusion than do others. With these caveats, we might explicate the broad categories of interpretive possibility as follows:

### 1. The purely abstract symphony

The hallmarks of the symphony that seeks to call attention to its pure musicality are its declaration on behalf of an abstract generic category in the title ('Symphony No. X in Y major/minor, Op. Z', without further subtitle), its self-evident deployment of recognisably standard theme types operating within a set of more or less standard formal conventions and proportions (however strained they might be in practice), and its pointed avoidance of any explicit programmatic suggestion regarding non-musical references. One is consequently encouraged to hear the musical ideas as the most obvious topics at hand, although those ideas were nearly always crafted to intersect with traditions established in esteemed works of the past.

In its strictest conception, this may be an 'ideal type' unattainable in practice – if by that we mean a work that excludes other types of meaning. Grounded in a rich 'musical logic', Brahms's four symphonies have occasionally been considered under this rubric. Recent research, though, suggests that they are also open to the mixed interpretation suggested in the subcategories of No. 2 below. Functioning as a regulative idea, however, the purely abstract symphony's demands for inner coherence exercised an enormous influence on all orchestral composition. Hanslick's celebrated embrace of formalism is relevant

here. In *On the Beautiful in Music* (*Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854 with many subsequent, differing editions) he argued that music consisted essentially of self-referential 'sounding forms in motion' (*tönend bewegte Formen*). In this view the only genuine subject of any instrumental piece is the quality and implications of its themes – its own explorations of musical language, its own possibilities for self-reflective coherence and commentary, its own autonomous tradition. As for the role of orchestral music in all this, Hanslick would declare in 1886 (following the première of Brahms's Fourth) that 'the symphony . . . is the most inexorable touchstone and the supreme consecration of the instrumental composer'.[22]

## 2a. Dialogues with the musical tradition

At times verging on category No. 1 – and sharing most of its concerns – this more inclusive hermeneutic category stresses the purely musical but leaves room for provocative intersections with larger aesthetic and generic issues outside of the specifics of the immediate work. An otherwise abstract symphony usually invites its listeners to hear allusions to a community-shared collection of referential pieces lodged in the mind and memory – intertextual allusions of differing degrees of verifiability to the canon of accepted masterworks. Such self-conscious historicism underscores the composition's situatedness in a web of traditions. Correspondingly, it encourages us to contextualise what we hear by appealing to a historically grounded conceptual apparatus transcending the individual work. From this perspective an orchestral piece might embody a composer's declaration *vis-à-vis* the status of the tradition or how that tradition was to be absorbed into current composition.

Even if we were to overlook the possibility of their intersections with more programmatic ideas, Brahms's four symphonies are overwhelmingly allusive in this manner. All four have a valedictory sense of 'the Austro-Germanic musical tradition' very much on their minds. Listeners have long known, for instance, that the first theme in the exposition in the finale of the First Symphony alludes to the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth. (Recent scholarship has deepened the issue by also suggesting that, simultaneously, it recomposes the comparably placed finale-theme from Bruch's Symphony No. 2 in F minor, which had appeared in 1870, only a few years earlier.)[23] There are dozens of similarly allusive passages throughout Brahms's works – or so it seems. From this point of view, Brahms's four symphonies are symphonic retrospectives demanding the

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22 Hanslick, rev. of Brahms, Symphony No. 4, *Wiener allgemeine Zeitung* (21 January 1886), cited in Margaret Notley, '*Volksconcerte* in Vienna and Late Nineteenth-Century Ideology of the Symphony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 50 (1997), p. 425.
23 Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies*, pp. 24–5.

attention of a historically educated listener. Indeed, a significant sector of current Brahms scholarship has been devoted to proposing and debating the significance of these potential allusions.[24] It may be, though, that haggling about precise identifications misses the point. More germane than disputing whether this or that allusion is 'really there' is the task of attuning ourselves to the generalised aesthetic invitation to hear ad hoc allusions at all – and recognising that invitation as a central component of the music. (One might call it an all-pervading aesthetics of the secret, rooted in part in Schumann.) The same concerns apply to other allusive composers – for instance, to Dvořák, Strauss, Mahler and Elgar. Here, too, impressions of referentiality seem omnipresent.

Along the same lines, symphonic works in the second half of the nineteenth century were also concerned with recycling a limited collection of appropriately serious moods, effects, poses or compositional 'topics' – the point being to recast and mix them in ingenious, profound or progressive ways. There were many dozens of these generalised topics – a grand topic tradition – nearly all instantly recognisable and almost all traceable to precedents in Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert, Schumann or Mendelssohn. But the legacy of Beethoven was uppermost, even though the later nineteenth-century understanding of these effects had been mediated by the accomplishments of his successors. The desire to create a 'finale-symphony', for instance – one that drove towards a culminating final movement – was grounded in Beethovenian precedent. Any symphony with a minor-to-major narrative trajectory of struggle-to-victory (there were many of them) inevitably conjured up memories of the same effect in several of Beethoven's works. C minor symphonies with C major finales claimed a special resonance with the Fifth Symphony and D-minor-to-D-major symphonies with the Ninth, but the pattern could occur, or be denied, within any symphony that began in – or at some point collapsed into – the minor mode.

Especially in the last decades of the century, an Adagio slow movement carried a Beethovenian connotation – a sign of contemplative inwardness and soul-searching depth. (It would become a specialty of Bruckner and Mahler.)[25] Similarly, funeral-march slow movements unfolded in the shadow of the *Eroica*. This was especially the case with C minor funeral marches within E flat symphonies, as in the slow movements of Bruckner's Fourth (1874, rev. 1878–80) and Elgar's Second (1911), although other funeral-march keys were also possible: C sharp minor for the slow movement of Bruckner's Seventh (1881–3)

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24 See, e.g., Kenneth Ross Hull, 'Brahms the Allusive: Extra-Compositional Reference in the Instrumental Music of Johannes Brahms', Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University (1989); Raymond Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony* (Stuyvesant, N.Y., 1997).
25 Margaret Notley, 'Late-Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio', *19th Century Music*, 23 (1999), pp. 33–61.

and the opening movement to Mahler's Fifth (1901–2, generically a vastly expanded introduction to the first Allegro movement proper); D minor for the ironised nightmare-march in the slow movement of Mahler's First (1884–8 with subsequent revisions; in its initial stages, this seems to have been planned as a programme symphony). In addition, Bruckner typically began his symphonies by reworking the cumulative, *creatio ex nihilo* opening of Beethoven's Ninth (and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*).

One might also cite the penchant for passages, movements or entire works with a pastoral, forest-centred, or idyllic tint – touching upon not only the precedent of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony but also the larger tradition of nature-representation to which it had belonged. The effect of encountering a spacious, relaxed, resonantly pulsating nature – inner motion within stasis, sometimes evocative of an Edenic goodness and purity, sometimes coupled with reflective melancholy, sublime majesty or hearty rusticity – may be experienced in dozens of 'nearly abstract' symphonies: in Bruckner's Fourth (the 'Romantic', with its opening horn-call and 'Hunt' scherzo), in Brahms's Second (1877), in the Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar's quasi-Brucknerian First (1902–3), in Glazunov's Seventh (1902), and the like. Lyrical, idealised landscape was also a primary attraction to the nationalist composers: the opening of Dvořák's Fifth (1875), the slow movement of Dvořák's Eighth (1889), the opening of Sibelius's Second (1901–2) and virtually all of his subsequent symphonies (Nos. 3–7, 1907–24, although the Fourth, still nature-centred, might be considered something of an anti-pastoral), and so on. Not surprisingly, one also encounters this idyllic strain in symphonic poems (as in much of Smetana's cycle, *Má Vlast*, ['My Country'], 1872–9, orchestrated 1880–94) and in programme symphonies. Joachim Raff gave his Third Symphony the subtitle, 'Im Walde' ('In the Forest', 1869); the Seventh, 'In den Alpen' ('In the Alps', 1875; cf. Richard Strauss's 'Eine Alpensinfonie' of 1911–15). Raff's Symphonies Nos. 8–11 (1876–9) comprised a cycle of the seasons.

Even the breadth of a symphony and its deployed instrumental and harmonic resources carried extra-musical resonances. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Wagner- and Liszt-supporters came to regard monumentality as a virtue not only of music drama but of the late nineteenth-century symphony, even when that symphony, as was the case with Bruckner's, was largely abstract (or more precisely in this case – as with Franck – a work that conflated musical production with Roman Catholic devotional practice). Bruckner was a dedicated Wagnerian, and his personalised style of massive gestures, broad chromatic sequences, self-conscious counterpoint, and vast time-scale divided Viennese audiences along cultural and political lines. Progressives

sometimes linked this monumentality to a claim of universality, as opposed to the mere 'Romanticism' or lyrical, fussily detailed subjectivity that these partisans suspected in Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. Grand symphonies, argued Hans Paumgartner in 1882, were the equivalent of a public oration before an assembly of the Austro-Germanic *Volk* (a *Volksversammlung*) – and through them, by extension, to all humankind. To that end they relied on cumulative effects of long-range intensification to a climax (*Steigerung*). Moreover, for some the post-Beethovenian monumental symphony needed to be bold and 'manly' (a term with which Paul Marsop praised Bruckner in 1887, opposing him to the 'ladylike' Mendelssohn of the 'perfumed handkerchief').[26] In such a context the drive towards the Germanic orchestral *magnum opus* becomes more understandable – in Bruckner, in Mahler, even (from a more explicitly programmatic standpoint) in the later tone poems of Strauss and some of the early works of Schoenberg.

### 2b. 'Nationalistic' symphonies

These were works which made a *primary* appeal to national pride, national ownership and a privileged access of understanding possessed by a clearly identifiable regional audience. Crucial here was the invitation to hear the work as capturing an ethnic/national/political essence – as a symphony preceded by a national adjective, 'Russian', 'Swedish', 'Czech', and so on. This feature alone guaranteed a contextual framing of the music along extra-musical lines, regardless of the degree of supplementary programmaticism in which the piece might be engaged. Strengthened forms of this appeal relied on 'national' turns in the music – melodic, rhythmic (dance-based), textural, harmonic or modal quirks that called attention to themselves as standing out from normative Austro-Germanic practice. These aspects of musical difference need not have been uniquely indigenous to the region in question: it sufficed that audiences and critics were willing to hear them in this way and that the composer encouraged them to do so.

The Austro-Germanic symphony, of course, was anything but innocent of implication in the game of 'national' meaning. As early as 1824 A. B. Marx had written in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* that the serious, *Eroica*-like symphony as a genre was to be regarded as 'virtually the exclusive property of the Germans' (*ausschliessliches Eigenthum der Deutschen*).[27] All post-Beethovenian Austro-Germanic symphonies paid homage to this cultural

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26  See the discussion of the ideological currents surrounding the late nineteenth-century symphony ideology in Margaret Notley, '*Volksconcerte*' (on Marsop, pp. 428–9; on Paumgartner, pp. 431–2).

27  28 April 1824, cited in Sanna Pederson, 'A. B. Marx, Berlin Concert Life, and German National Identity', *19th Century Music*, 18 (1994), p. 96.

undertow, although one often sublimated into philosophical claims of a presumed universality within the Germanic particular. At times Teutonic nationalism could be more explicitly foregrounded, especially in the fervent years surrounding the Bismarck-led drive towards the establishment of the Prussianised *Deutsches Reich*, the unified nation-state of Germany, in 1871. One relatively early example is Raff's celebratory, spacious and occasionally proto-Brucknerian Symphony No. 1 (1859–61), subtitled 'To the Fatherland'.

Nor would it be wrong to presume that some French symphonies in the decades after the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1) were concerned with projecting an aura of French difference within a more self-conscious, 'modern' system of bureaucratically administered concert life. Some, like Saint-Saëns (Symphony No. 3 in C minor, with organ, 1886) grounded this in the production of clear-eyed, crystalline musical ideas and spacious textures coupled with what was frequently a schematic-modular conception of formal sections. This approach contrasted with the reigning metaphysical heft and opacity of Germanic practice while still holding on to refined residues of Romantic emotion and Lisztian chromaticism, thematic transformation over broad expanses of musical space, experimentation with larger forms, and the concept of the splashy apotheosis-finale that revisited motifs from earlier movements. César Franck's devotionally earnest Symphony in D minor (1886–8) – which also featured the 'cyclic' return of earlier themes in the finale – took a different direction, one emphasising intense chromaticism, thicker textures and a drive towards a radiant spiritual uplift within what was typically regarded as a Roman Catholic or culturally conservative 'message symphony'. Several other symphonic works were composed in the general orbit of Franck, including Vincent d'Indy's colourful, regionalistic 'Symphony on a French Mountaineer's Song' or *Symphonie cévenole* with piano obbligato (1886), Ernest Chausson's Symphony in B flat (1889–90), and d'Indy's later Symphony No. 2 in B flat (1902–3). Other French symphonists included Edouard Lalo (Symphony in G minor, 1886) and Paul Dukas (Symphony in C major, 1895–6).

The self-assured power-centres of music-historical practice, however, relegated the term 'nationalistic', with its unmistakably deprecatory flavour, to use in conjunction with Eastern and Northern European composition, particularly from regions that prior to the 1840s had staked either modest claims with regard to art music or none at all. One of the local drives behind such music was political: the celebration and validation of an outsider culture in the face of artistic or political forces that had previously sidelined, ignored or suppressed it. In the later nineteenth century, new schools of composers in Eastern and Northern Europe negotiated between two conflicting motivations. On the one hand, musicians from Russia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Bohemia,

Poland, Hungary and so on, sometimes asserted the independent legitimacy of their region's modes of cultural experience by claiming that these wellsprings were more pure and uncompromised than the supposedly overripe Austro-Germanic or French traditions. On the other hand, by adapting local ideas to the most prestigious genre of instrumental music – the post-Beethovenian symphony – they sought to bring honour to themselves and their country by proving worthy of entering an existing international marketplace of music on its own terms.

A composer's assimilation into the Austro-Germanic tradition could occur in varying degrees. Depending on one's aesthetic convictions, the official-style symphonic language could be spoken with either a weak or a strong regional accent. Well-wrought, though only modestly inflected nationalism sought acceptance on more international grounds. This tack stressed tightly knit adaptations of Mendelssohn–Schumann syntax, although that base, after 1860, was typically intermixed with the sweeping, texturally rich style found in the music of Liszt, Wagner, Brahms and others. In such blends room was usually left for the occasional characteristic or folk-styled thumbprint, which might turn up in any of a number of sections: in introductions, in 'lyric-piece' slow-movement themes, in scherzos, or perhaps in culminatory finales. This was the more Classical solution preferred by the Dane Niels Gade (eight symphonies, 1842–71); by the Russian Anton Rubinstein (six symphonies, 1850–86); by the Norwegians Johan Svendsen (two symphonies, 1865–6, 1877) and Christian Sinding (three published symphonies, 1890–1936); by the Bohemian Zdeněk Fibich (three symphonies, 1877–98); by the Englishmen Hubert Parry (four symphonies, 1882–9) and Charles Villiers Stanford (seven symphonies, 1875–1911).

But the models could also be pushed towards a heightened personalism. A heartier local flavour would be overlaid on to the official style by the Bohemian Antonin Dvořák (nine symphonies, 1865–93); an even stronger, more sonorously radicalised one was devised by the Russian Peter Tchaikovsky (six completed symphonies, 1866–93). All strongly accented nationalisms called primary attention to their projection of ethnic difference. In the presence of those regionalisms lay both the attraction and the risk of the more combative strains of nationalism. From the Germanic standpoint, could these accents be welcomed into the tradition? Or were these merely 'folkloristic symphonies' (as Schoenberg would claim in 1947) trying to fill the symphony with melodic material at odds with the presumably more exalted demands of the genre?[28] In

28  Schoenberg, 'Folkloristic Symphonies' (1947), in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984 [originally published 1975]), pp. 161–6. 'The discrepancy between the requirements of larger forms and the simple construction of folk tunes has never been solved and cannot be solved. A simple idea must not use the language of profundity, or it can never become popular' (p. 163).

the later nineteenth century the principal challengers here, in addition to Tchaikovsky, were the St Petersburg Russians with their iridescently colouristic, non-developmental (in the Germanic sense), and often exotic symphonies: Mili Balakirev (two symphonies, 1897, 1908); Alexander Borodin (the most successful: three symphonies, 1867–87); and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (three numbered, completed symphonies in multiple versions, from 1865 onward, in addition to a nearly completed Fourth [1884] and the symphonic suite, *Scheherazade*, 1888). A second St Petersburg generation would be ably represented by the professionally polished Alexander Glazunov (eight completed symphonies, 1882–1906, among the central models for the young Stravinsky's Symphony in E flat, 1905–7). More self-consciously 'modern' symphonies would be produced by other members of this younger generation: by the Dane Carl Nielsen (six symphonies, 1892–1925); by the Swede Wilhelm Stenhammar (two symphonies, 1902–3, 1911–15); by the Englishman Edward Elgar (two completed symphonies, 1908, 1911); by the Finn Jean Sibelius (seven symphonies, 1899–1924); by the Russians Sergei Rachmaninoff (three symphonies, 1895, 1908, 1936) and Alexander Scriabin (three numbered symphonies, 1899–1904, followed by the modernistically striking successors, *Le poème de l'extase*, 1908, and *Prométhée*, 1910).

From about 1865 onward composers from outlying areas sometimes rallied around what may be regarded as one of the nationalistic formulas for a symphony or concerto. Deployed over the course of a work, this formula suggested the ongoing distillation of an ever purer ethnicity, one that finally achieved its liberated centre-point in the final movement. There are many virtually perfect examples of it familiar from the standard repertory: Grieg's Piano Concerto; Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony and Violin Concerto; Dvořák's Symphony No. 8; Sibelius's first three symphonies along with the Violin Concerto; and several others. Within the formula, the first movement was to provide a regionally accented adaptation – perhaps strongly accented – of Western European sonata procedures. (The first movement could be preceded by a slow introduction that invited a politicised understanding as representing the folk-soul of the ethnic group at hand; if so, it was to be taken as the wellspring of all that followed. Not infrequently, the folk-soul source reappeared from time to time throughout the work.) The second and third movements – often a 'national' lyrical song and scherzo – pressed closer towards the goal. That goal was the finale, which, in varying degrees, was to feature the folk-reduction down to its essence. As the most folk-like of the movements, the finale could be understood as representing the full emergence of the group, more or less on its own terms. Towards that end these finales often featured vigorous dance-like music, or, especially, the tracking of thematic, repetitive loops, as if finally centring

around a core of ethnic being within an otherwise linear work – a centring that might involve variation procedures (Dvořák's Eighth Symphony, which even precedes the variations with an annunciatory fanfare) or, more commonly, a circular, obstinately repetitive second theme (Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto; Sibelius's Second Symphony).

### 2c. Tacit, implicit or suspected programmes throughout or for substantial sections

From time to time one learns, or is given to suspect, that ostensibly abstract symphonies include momentary passages that are subjectively emblematic or even quasi-programmatic, such as the spacious horn call in the finale of Brahms's Symphony No. 1 (première, 1876; Brahms had initially written down the call and provided it with a personal text on a postcard sent to Clara Schumann in 1868). More broadly, we might encounter what amount to instances of the programme symphony (no. 3 below) that were initially (or eventually) presented to the public as non-programmatic works. These include nearly abstract symphonies or concertos with more elaborate, but private, hidden or suppressed narratives. In some cases our suspicion that such a programme exists, or our suggestions concerning their details, remains speculative. In the past two decades, for instance, some have sought to propose that Brahms's First conceals a declaration of the composer's feelings towards Clara Schumann – one that she alone was likely to have understood. Such claims rest on the postcard horn-call in its finale and the conviction that Schumann's 'Clara cipher', a specific changing-note figure, is a central element in all four movements. It has also been suggested that at least the first two movements contain reminiscences of Schumann's *Manfred* music (based in part on Byron's idea of forbidden and tormented love).[29]

Tchaikovsky's emotionally edgy, often anguished symphonies have always offered temptations along these lines, and opinion has been sharply divided about the autobiographical significance of, especially, his final three symphonies – by which has been meant the relationship of the music to his homosexuality. With the recent onset of a politicised gender-studies movement in musicology, these questions and the manner in which they are addressed have taken on a new urgency. Here we confront: a programme symphony (No. 4) whose provided programme (a standard grappling with 'Fate') might be taken as a prop for a more concealed statement; a programme symphony (No. 5) – apparently – whose specifics (again dealing with 'Fate') were for the most part abandoned or suppressed; and a desperately depressive symphony with a

29 Michael Musgrave, 'Brahms's First Symphony: Thematic Coherence and Its Secret Origin', *Music Analysis*, 2 (1983), pp. 117–33. Brodbeck, *Brahms: Symphony No. 1*, pp. 31–58.

provocative subtitle furnished by the composer's brother (No. 6, 'Pathétique') and a self-evidently confessional content, but with no other explicit programme. Interpretations of the 'Pathétique' have ranged from a sceptical rejection of all 'fanciful' programmes (thus seeking to focus attention instead on its impressive musical integrity) to considerations of the possible programme ranging from the general to the recklessly specific.[30]

The suppressed programme became a commonly encountered feature of much later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music. Elgar would elevate personalised secrets and 'enigmas' into a central attribute of his music in general. And we now know that Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor ('From the New World', 1893) conflated the composer's limited awareness of a handful of published African-American melodies (including 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot') with a narrative personally extracted from at least chapters 10, 11 and 20 of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*.[31] With the recently uncovered evidence for all this in hand, the larger question may now shift to the mechanism and purpose whereby substantially differing African-American and American Indian representations became overlaid or fused with one another – and then merged with the European conception of the abstract symphony, ultimately to be presented to international public audiences without an official programme.

That Mahler's early symphonies – and possibly some of the later ones as well – also belong in this category seems clear. In the mid- and late 1890s Mahler, recalling Wagner's and Schopenhauer's claims about music's independence from the phenomenal world, was troubled by the supposed limitations that literary programmes seemed to place on what he wished to regard as the boundlessly metaphysical nature of music. Drawing a line of difference between himself and Strauss, he now insisted that his works stemmed from musical impulses, not literary ones; to emphasise any programme, except as perhaps a

30 See, e.g., Joseph C. Kraus, 'Tchaikovsky', in Holoman, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, pp. 299–326, including criticism of those who believe that 'Tchaikovsky had foretold his own death' in the 'Pathétique' and a warning to any others who harbour similar 'fanciful notions (particularly his supposed suicide and his image as a "tragic soul tormented by his homosexuality")', p. 323. The opposite viewpoint is provided by the indulgent programmaticism of Timothy L. Jackson, *Tchaikovsky: The 'Pathétique' Symphony* (Cambridge, 1999).

31 The programmatic issue resurfaced provocatively in Michael Beckerman, 'Dvořák's "New World" Largo and *The Song of Hiawatha*', *19th Century Music*, 16 (1992), pp. 35–48; and Beckerman, 'The Dance of Pau-Puk-Keewis, The Song of Chibiabos, and the Story of Iagoo: Reflections on Dvořák's 'New World' Scherzo', in John C. Tibbetts (ed.), *Dvořák in America: 1892–1895* (Portland, Oreg., 1992), pp. 210–28. Most recently, Beckerman established the African-American connection in 'A New Source for the "New World" Symphony', currently unpublished paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Musicological Society, Kansas City, 6 November 1999; an article in the Chicago periodical *Music* (December 1892), 'Negro Music', with musical examples, 'was the primary stimulus for the symphony's composition'. A broader Hiawatha reading of the work had also been provided by Hepokoski, 'Culture Clash', *The Musical Times*, 134 (1993), pp. 685–8; and Robert Winter, *Antonin Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, 'From the New World'*, CD-ROM (Irvington, N.Y., 1994).

'last, ideal clarification', led one away from what should be a composition's essential spirituality.[32] Accordingly, beginning in the late 1890s he stripped away most of the programmatic titles and subtitles that he had given to what would become his first three symphonies and published them, with differing degrees of nuance and suggestion, as more objectively symphonic works. (Before its publication the First Symphony had been billed in 1893–4 performances, for example, as '"Titan", a Tone Poem in Symphony Form', with separate evocative titles for each of the movements; the first movement of the Second was once offered as a separate symphonic poem, *Todtenfeier* ['Funeral Rites', 1888], based on Mickiewicz; and so on). Knowledge of the varying states of the original titles has long since been restored by scholars.[33]

### 3. Programme symphony/suite, symphonic poem and overture

This category is defined through a gateway title (such as Strauss's *Don Juan* or *Death and Transfiguration*) that prepares the listener to interpret the work through that conceptual framework. Here, too, we find a range of strengths to the representational suggestion at hand. An only modestly programmatic symphony, for example, may be assigned a brief subtitle or nickname – Rubinstein's 'Ocean' Symphony (No. 2, three versions, 1851, 1863, 1880, the last with seven untitled movements corresponding to each of the seven seas); Bruckner's 'Romantic' Symphony (No. 4); Nielsen's Symphony No. 2, 'The Four Temperaments' (1901–2: choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine); and so on. Nor need the presence of a title imply a radicalisation of style. Many of Raff's symphonies sought, at times controversially, to seek a compromise between traditional form and the notion of a programme.[34] And Goldmark's symphonic-poem set, 'Rustic Wedding' (1877) – which includes subtitles (such as 'Bride's Song: Intermezzo') for each of the five movements – is a lyrical, relatively conservative work. Similarly, later nineteenth-century concert overtures harked back to a tradition before the advent of the symphonic poem: they bore a poetic title (along with the genre-identifier, 'overture') but were typically

32 Mahler, letter to Arthur Seidl, February 1897 (Mahler was quoting Seidl's words, 'the last, ideal clarification'). See the translation and further discussion in Stephen E. Hefling, 'Miners Digging from Opposite Sides: Mahler, Strauss, and the Problem of Program Music', in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work* (Durham, NC, 1992), pp. 41, 50, note 1.

33 For overviews of such issues see Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon and Jutta Wicker (Portland, Oreg., 1993); Stephen E. Hefling, 'Mahler: Symphonies 1–4', in Holoman (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, pp. 369–416; Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3* (Cambridge, 1991); Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (eds.), *The Mahler Companion* (Oxford, 1999).

34 Hugo Riemann, in his *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven* (Berlin, 1901), p. 432, criticised Raff on precisely this point. Programme music demanded a poetic transformation of form, he argued, and 'history breaks its staff pitilessly on indecisive attempts [*Halbheiten*] like those Raff-like compromises, because they are not completely honest ... It is an aesthetic lie to write programme music that at the same time is to be taken as absolute music'. Quoted in Markus Römer, *Joseph Joachim Raff (1822–82)* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 59–60.

briefer and more modest in their representational claims. Brahms's complementary pair from 1880 provided the strongest examples: the *Academic Festival Overture* (a celebratory work featuring a few quoted themes and rising, in the manner of Weber's *Jubel* or 'Jubilee' Overture, to the final, climactic inbreaking of a 'publicly' significant tune, here the college-song 'Gaudeamus igitur'); and the *Tragic Overture* (evoking recollections, surely, of moods found in Beethoven's *Coriolan* and Schumann's *Manfred* Overtures).

Symphonic poems proper were normally works that declared themselves to be ideologically Lisztian in their embraces of titles and specific representational images. They tended to follow three main lines. The first was the 'radical' Austro-Germanic line proper, beginning with Liszt in the 1850s and reinvigorated mightily in the late 1880s and 1890s by the dazzling early modernist Richard Strauss, who often called his works 'tone poems' to distinguish them from those of his predecessor. The second was the highly differentiated 'nationalist' track from the later 1850s onward: the genre's natural affinities for history, landscape and national literature would virtually guarantee its eager acceptance by these composers. The third was to be found in French orchestral composition after 1871: Saint-Saëns (*Le rouet d'Omphale, Danse macabre*), Franck (*Le chasseur maudit, Psyché*), Chausson (*Viviane*), Dukas (*L'apprenti sorcier*), Debussy (*Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'*) and others.

Successful examples of the aggressive, post-Lisztian programme symphony proper – as opposed to the mere symphony or suite with a representational title or nickname – were not as common as might be supposed. Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony (1885) makes a strong claim here, as do Richard Strauss's *Aus Italien* ('symphonic fantasy', 1886) and Sibelius's early *Kullervo* (a five-movement 'symphonic poem', 1891–2, not published until 1961, based on texts from the Finnish epic, *Kalevala*, and including two vocal movements). Had he not suppressed their original programmes, Mahler's First and Third Symphonies would qualify unequivocally. Even with the suppression of its first-movement *Todtenfeier* programme, however, his Second Symphony, 'Resurrection' – with its de-texted *Wunderhorn* song as the scherzo and its literally texted two final movements – still stands as an unmistakable programme symphony. A similar argument might be made for the Fourth.

Closely related, though less ambitious in their generic claims, are cycles or suites of symphonic poems – individual tableaux bound together into a single, larger work. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (1888), billed as a 'symphonic suite', is in effect a colouristic programme symphony. The same is true of Sibelius's *Kalevala*-based *Four Legends*, (1893–7, with later revisions; originally called the *Lemminkäinen Suite*, it includes 'The Swan of Tuonela' as the slow movement and 'Lemminkäinen's Return' as its finale). From this perspective – and notwithstanding its self-consciously anti-symphonic ambience – Debussy's *Nocturnes* of 1897–9 ('Clouds', 'Festivals', 'Sirens') seems to be something of a programme symphony shorn of an initial movement. Debussy's three-movement set of 'symphonic sketches', *La mer* (1903–5), also fits comfortably into this general tradition.

## Structural deformation

Dissatisfied with formulaic tradition and driven by mid-century demands for originality, composers now often sought to produce what we may call sonata deformations – individualised adaptations of the regulative ideas that sonata form and the multi-movement sonata had become. A sonata deformation is an individual work in dialogue primarily with sonata norms even though certain central features of the sonata-concept have been reshaped, exaggerated, marginalised or overridden altogether. What is presented on the musical surface of a composition (what one hears) may not be a sonata in any 'textbook' sense, and yet the work may still encourage, even demand, the application of one's knowledge of traditional sonata procedures as a rule for analysis and interpretation.

Needless to say, there had been no shortage of sonata-deformational structures prior to the 1850s, particularly in the hands of the master composers, whose presence loomed large in the new age of canonical repertory. After 1850, however, creatively *ad hoc* designs came to be even more normative, sometimes more eccentric, often to the consternation of later analysts confronting the dizzying variety of individualised shapes and the seeming crisis of form to which they appeared to attest. Such a scattering of procedures has made it notoriously difficult to generalise about the history of sonata form in the later nineteenth century – except to remark that it came to be treated freely, loosely or expansively. And yet, despite the wealth of exceptional compositions, the sonata form *idea* remained venerated as the structural root of the symphonic tradition. As such, it continued to hold sway as a community-shared rule for interpretation, even when it was written *against*. In such instances the normative thing that does not happen, or that is kept from happening (what the literary critic Wolfgang Iser called the 'minus functions' of a text) can be as important as what does occur.[35] For this reason the appropriate formal question to be asked of such a piece – more often, of one of its movements – is not the blunt, reductive one, 'Is it in sonata form'?, but rather, 'Are we invited to apply the norms of the traditional sonata in order to interpret what does (or does not) occur in this individualised work?' In many of the *ad hoc* shapes of the later nineteenth century, the answer is obviously affirmative.

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35 Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 206–10.

Certain types of deformational procedures may be grouped into families. Omitting the expositional repeat within Allegro sonata movements, for instance – a practice increasingly common from the 1840s onward (although it may be occasionally found in middle- and late-Beethoven, for instance, in the first movements of the Appassionata Sonata and the Ninth Symphony and in the finale of the Eighth) – in effect treated quick-tempo movements as though they were overtures. (Overtures – and their successors, symphonic poems – always lacked this repeat.) By mid-century the trimmer overture-format had become the norm, no longer an exceptional practice. Any 'archaic' reinstating of that repeat, as in the opening movements of Brahms's first three symphonies, was probably to be taken as a purposeful gesture harking back not only to older traditions but also to the more abstract or absolute idea of the symphony. (A parallel is to be drawn, of course, to the reinstating of the increasingly archaic orchestral 'tutti' at the opening of concerto first-movements, as opposed to beginning directly with the solo exposition – as commonly happened by the mid- and later nineteenth century.)

But deformational practice extended beyond mere repeat-conventions. After about 1840 one influential treatment of sonata form centred on the idea of creating a stark, maximal opposition between the two 'halves' of an exposition. This procedure was the one most amenable to the then-emerging possibility of more or less explicitly gendered themes.[36] Most commonly, the two-block exposition opened with a tormented, driven, 'masculine' first theme, typically thrashing about in the minor mode and sometimes bonded to a continuation or transition, although one similar in distressed urgency. To this would be immediately counterposed a contrasting block, an angelically redemptive, lyrically 'feminine' second theme in the non-tonic major mode and not infrequently in a slower tempo as well. Interpretable within the exposition as the prediction of a hope, this alternative theme was often treated in the recapitulatory space or coda to a grandiosely salvific, major-tonic-grounded 'Weber apotheosis'. This minor/major binary-exposition type often featured only the briefest – and thinnest – of connective material between the first and second static-blocks (a mere panning from one tableau to another, a clearing of space for the emergence of the second theme). Such an exposition could be implicitly or literally linked to any number of extra-musical contraries: masculine/feminine; tormented hero/redemptive agent; active struggle/withdrawal into the erotic; tyrannical oppression/projected political emancipation; and the like.

One of the earliest occurrences of the gendered two-block exposition is

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36 Hepokoski, 'Masculine–Feminine', *The Musical Times*, 135 (1994), pp. 494–9.

found in Wagner's Overture to *The Flying Dutchman* (first version, 1841), with its representations of the Dutchman and Senta. (As a whole, the overture unfolds as an extraordinarily provocative sonata deformation.) Whether or not Wagner's overture was the principal model for later composition, variants and large-scale expansions of the sure-fire *Dutchman*-exposition-formula, along with its electrifying recapitulatory dénouement, soon became a familiar symphonic option in orchestrally lavish Allegro-tempo compositions or movements (especially finales). It could be readily adapted to rondo-orientated compositions as well. With its built-in struggle-to-victory trajectory, this 'new' sonata-subtype itself became amenable to later alteration, adaptation and deformation (including the frustration of expectations) for localised purposes.

Built on unmediated clash and contrast, the formula was especially associated with certain strains of the radical, Wagner–Liszt view of things: not surprisingly, the more traditionally orientated Brahms seems to have been little tempted by it. Tchaikovsky, though, would occasionally be drawn to the model, perhaps through the mediating influence of Lisztian practice in the 1850s. We find orchestrally spectacular dialogues with the formula in Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* (1869, rev. 1870, 1880, masculine feud followed by a quick-slippage and escape into the forbidden erotic), and in the first movement of Symphony No. 6 in B minor, 'Pathétique' (1893). Here the first theme sets out in B minor (Allegro non troppo) as a tenderly sad, quasi-balletic transformation of the desolate introduction, but in the transition the theme intensifies in texture and tempo into the characteristic frenzy of the *Dutchman*-formula, cresting towards its end and then withdrawing in exhaustion. The maximally contrasting, static second theme in D major, its tempo reined back to an Andante (following a brief link, *ritardando molto* and Adagio), never attains a clear perfect authentic cadence and with it a sense of satisfactory completion and closure: at the end of each thematic module its fifth scale-degree remains frozen in place, immobile. Consequently, the second theme projects not consolation but the unattainability of consolation, the characteristic 'if only!' mood of much music of this period. This non-closed aspect of the secondary theme sets the stage for its later, similarly non-closed B major tonic statement in the recapitulation. The impression here of a recapitulatory incompleteness helps to launch the downward spiral tracked by the subsequent movements.

The two-block exposition formula and its variants persisted to the end of the century and beyond. The finale of Mahler's First Symphony provides a near-perfect illustration of it, although in this case the redemptive apotheosis late in the movement is given not to the 'feminine' second theme but to the threefold appearance of a 'breakthrough' idea that eventually wrenches the musical

process from the 'inferno-key' of F minor to the properly emancipatory D major, the real tonic of the symphony. Further adaptations are found in the first movements of his Second and Sixth Symphonies (1888–94, rev. 1903–4; 1906). The *Dutchman* formula is also treated as a background rule for interpretation in the A minor (sonata-deformational) second movement of the Fifth (1902). Here the emphatically negative point is that what 'ought' to be the generically redemptive feminine, major-mode second theme is written over by a grieving lapse into a reference to the minor-mode funeral march from the first movement. Thus the traditional presence of hope within the sonata-process is erased, and, as with the First Symphony – obviously a model here – an 'external' chorale eventually breaks into the texture to suggest a way out.

Of course, not all sonatas were based on expositions that relied on the starker, two-block model. Another 'new' approach was to produce a loosely knit, discursive exposition – one also potentially in dialogue with implicitly gendered elements – interlarded with digressions and interpolations, giving the impression of a series of contrasting tableaux, only some of which were to be taken as marking the referential stations of the sonata. This slack, anti-efficient approach may have been a response to the multi-sectional finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and perhaps also to the French sonata form tradition and Berlioz's formal experiments. Especially characteristic of some of Liszt's sonata deformations in the 1850s, it may be found in the first movement of the *Faust* Symphony and in several of the symphonic poems. Giving the impression of a leisurely diffusion of thematic materials over musical space, this exposition-subtype was particularly adaptable to programmatic narratives seeking the impression of a vastness of canvas or a near-suspension of the press of time. Such traditionalists as Hanslick saw in it only more evidence of the insufficiently engaged compositional thought of programme music: it produced works in which the sections 'appear often to be strung together as in a mosaic, [or] mixed up chaotically'.[37] This approach resurfaced in some of the larger tone poems of Richard Strauss, such as *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1895–6) and *Ein Heldenleben* (1897–8). It also may be occasionally found in certain movements of Mahler, such as the finale of the Second Symphony.

Regardless of their layout-subtype, many expositions after 1850 feature tonal plans that would have been extraordinary earlier in the century, and these plans may or may not have complementary tonal consequences in the recapitulatory space. To cite one famous example, the exposition of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 (1877–8) moves upward by minor

thirds: F minor, A flat minor, and B major (collapsing to B minor at the beginning of the development). Here the principle at work, eventually partitioning the movement into a full division of the F-tonic octave by minor thirds, is that each locally minor tonic seeks momentary relief by shifting to its presumably *major* mediant; when that mediant is subsequently collapsed into the minor mode, the process replicates itself on a higher pitch level. The exposition of Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3 (1886) – a cooler adaptation of the *Dutchman*-formula – moves from a first theme in C minor to a second theme starting on a modally inflected D flat major (♭II) that finally stabilises, and ends the exposition, in F major (IV!). Here the recapitulatory consequences are notable: the re-establishing of C minor leads to a second theme initially suggesting F major (IV) and thence to a rapidly dissolving E major (III!) – thus deferring the C-tonic resolution to a later movement.

As for developments, the main danger was that familiar mid-movement strategies (motivic fragmentation and combination; sequential modulatory patterns; generic storm and stress) ran the risk of seeming emptily academic. Thus we can find middle spaces of sonata deformations invaded by one or two tableau-episodes, which sometimes elbow out much of the 'developmental'-activity proper. This happens occasionally in Liszt and Strauss; another instance may be found in Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* (1870). The procedure can further the impression that the piece is constructed around a mere linear string of contrasted episodes, perhaps motivically interrelated, up until the point of recapitulation. Another possibility was to produce a sudden 'break-through' of new, seemingly transcendent material within the development that serves to change the course of the whole sonata (finale of Mahler's Symphony No. 1; Strauss's *Don Juan*). Of particular importance were the many adaptations of large-scale 'rotational' procedures (multiple, varied cyclings through the thematic pattern initially laid out in the exposition, a concern especially typical of Bruckner and the later Sibelius; usually, the development begins a second, varied rotation of the expositional materials).[38] Other sonata-based works feature unexpected incursions of what had been introductory material into the sonata-process proper, most often within the developmental space or towards the end of the work, thus in effect informing or framing the whole. This occurs in the finale of Brahms's Symphony No. 1, in Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* (which is also in dialogue with rondo-traditions), in many nationalistic works, and so on.

37 Hanslick, 1857 review of Liszt's *Les préludes*, in *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1869–70), II, p. 119. Quoted, with additional commentary, in Richard Will, 'Time, Morality, and Humanity in Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 50 (1997), p. 275.

38 Warren Darcy, 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', in Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw (ed.), *Bruckner Studies* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 256–77. See also Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge, 1993); and *idem*, 'Rotations, Sketches, and the Sixth Symphony', in Timothy L. Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki (ed.), *Sibelius Studies* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 322–51.

Extraordinary treatments of the recapitulatory space were especially common, perhaps to surmount the non-progressive implication of merely traditional symmetrical repetition, which came to be regarded as the nemesis not only of symphonic poems (must the narrative stop at this point?) but also, eventually, of more abstract compositions as well. Any number of strategies may be found in symphonic works after 1850. Brahms was especially partial to finales that followed a non-repeated exposition with the *immediate* onset of the recapitulation (launched by the first theme in the *tonic*), within whose ordered rotation of thematic materials a large section of first-theme or transition space was expanded freely into a development (as in the finale of the First Symphony).[39]

In another deformational option the composer might decide to omit or reorder some of the important themes. The initial – and most important – elements of the second-theme complex, for example, are suppressed in the recapitulation of the slow movements of Brahms's Symphonies No. 2 and 3, with a concomitant, poignant sense of absence and loss. (Classical models – ones that suggest even more of a hybrid between an ABA′ structure and a partially incomplete sonata – may be found in the slow movements of Haydn's Quartets in G major and D major, Op. 33, nos. 5 and 6, and in that of Mozart's, Quartet in D major, K.575.) In Brahms's Third the 'lost' second theme of the slow movement is reintroduced as an important part of the proceedings of the finale.

Alternatively, it continued to be possible to bypass the tonic recapitulation of the first theme, merging into the 'tonal resolution' only at or around the point of the second theme – usually after a modulatory development that had been based primarily on non-tonic references to the first theme and/or transition. This double-rotational sonata-type also afforded the option of reinstating sometimes prolonged references to the first theme at the end, as if in compensation, in what is best considered coda-space, thus producing the illusion of what has mistakenly been called the 'reversed recapitulation'. With or without the appended tonic-first-theme coda, this was an old 'binary-sonata' formula from the eighteenth century (although one rarely mentioned by the theorists) that managed to breathe new life in isolated pieces in the nineteenth century and beyond: in the finale of Schumann's Fourth Symphony; in Liszt's *Les préludes*; in the finale of Saint-Saëns's Third (an expanded variant with an extra, altered rotation of the materials after the tonal resolution proper) and Mahler's First; in the first movements of Tchaikovsky's and Sibelius's Fourth Symphonies; and elsewhere.

Within more or less full recapitulations, though, the composer might substitute new ideas for old ones, or distort or radically curtail the recapitulation as a whole. Around the end of the century Strauss was much taken with the idea of merely touching upon a recapitulatory theme – as if obligatorily to mark its station – then going on to produce other, often 'new' things in the music that follows (*Don Juan*; *Ein Heldenleben*). Mahler's characteristic solution was different. With his heightened aversion to the potential emptiness of unvaried repetition – and unlike most of his predecessors (the main exception being Haydn) – Mahler overturned the convention of predominantly literal, though transposed repetition of the secondary and closing themes in order to submit his recapitulations to a thoroughgoing recomposition and rethinking. This resulted in through-composed works, ones grappling with the 'modern' instability and volatility of the materials at hand.

With regard to tonality, one might find the lack of a clear tonal resolution within the reprise. This could produce any of a number of 'non-resolving-recapitulation' types that, in their purposeful 'sonata failure', deferred resolution either to the coda-space or to a subsequent movement. To cite merely one instance: the recapitulation proper of Brahms's (F Major) Third Symphony concludes in D major-minor (VI-vi), stabilising back to F major only in the coda. By the 1880s and 1890s it even became thinkable to end a composition or a movement in a key other than that in which it had begun. (This is sometimes called 'progressive' or 'directional tonality'. Each occurrence of it demands a local interpretation.)[40] We have already mentioned Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3 in this regard, whose first movement begins in C minor and ends in E major. A broader extension of the principle may be found in the whole of Nielsen's Symphony No. 1 (1890–2), the staging of a battle between two keys. Here the first movement decides in favour of G minor (although it begins on a rapidly relinquished C major chord) and the finale moves from G minor to C major. Other examples: the finale of Mahler's First Symphony (F minor to D major); the whole of Mahler's Second Symphony, 'Resurrection' (C minor 'resurrected' to E flat major at the end); the first movement of Mahler's Third (D minor to F major); and some of the later Mahler symphonies as well.

Several composers came to be attracted to the 'double-function' sonata or

39  For a useful discussion of this much-noted structure along with a list of instances of it and a bibliography of earlier treatments, see John Daverio, 'From "Concertante Rondo" to "Lyric Sonata": A Commentary on Brahms's Reception of Mozart', in David Brodbeck (ed.), *Brahms Studies I* (Lincoln, Nebr., and London, 1994), pp. 111–36. Daverio's term for this structure, an 'amplified binary', may be slightly misleading, as might other common terms for it, such as 'expanded sonatina' or 'sonata with displaced development'. Cf. Robert Pascall, 'Some Special Uses of Sonata Form by Brahms', *Soundings*, 4 (1974), pp. 58–63.

40  For the term 'progressive tonality', see Dika Newlin, *Bruckner–Mahler–Schoenberg*, rev. edn (New York, 1978). The term 'directional tonality' stems from the work of Robert Bailey – with particular reference to the concept of a 'double-tonic complex' within an individual piece. See Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's 'Siegfried': Its Drama, History, and Music* (Ann Arbor, 1982), pp. 88–95; Christopher Orlo Lewis, *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's Ninth Symphony* (Ann Arbor, 1984); Robert Bailey, 'An Analytical Study of the Sketches and Drafts', in Robert Bailey (ed.), *Richard Wagner, Prelude and Transfiguration from 'Tristan und Isolde'* (New York, 1985), pp. 121–2 (double-tonic complex).

'multi-movement work in a single movement' (four movements in one, characteristic especially of Liszt, Strauss, and the early Schoenberg); others to hybrid blends of the sonata with other formal principles. Still another procedure was to produce a movement or set of movements that stages the conception, maturation and growth of a single idea that finally rings forth in full at or near the end. Raff's Symphony No. 1 participates in this cumulative logic, as do most of Bruckner's symphonies, with their characteristic chorale- and/or tonic-attainment endings. One of the most inventive treatments of the technique is found in Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* (1889), devoted to the growth of the secondary theme ('transfiguration'), an idea that is only hinted at in the exposition. (With this mere collapsing-glimpse of the secondary theme, that exposition may be regarded as a deformation of the *Dutchman*-formula.) Several other adaptations of this procedure of 'teleological genesis' – or persistent shaping and re-emergence of an ever-growing idea – are also to be found in the mature Sibelius, who often elevated it into a commanding feature of his style.

## Two waves of composers

One of the remarkable features in the history of the symphony is its unforeseen resurgence of vigour and depth in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. The genre that by mid-century had run aground took sail once more, in what Carl Dahlhaus famously called 'the second age of the symphony', encompassing 'Bruckner and Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Borodin, Dvořák and Franck in the 1870s and 1880s'. Dahlhaus attributed this to several factors, and especially to the symphony's enrichment through the challenges posed by Liszt and the principles of the symphonic poem. In his own compact formulation: 'The reconstitution of absolute music following its mid-century hiatus deserves to be called dialectical in that it emerged in part by abstracting features of its aesthetic opposite, programme music . . . [The essential problem was] how to create a symphonic form equal to the aesthetic claims of the genre and yet consistent with the historical situation of the 1870s.'[41]

In this reading, the 'second age' was called forth principally by a genre-immanent crisis; it emerged as a cluster of solutions to an internal, aesthetic problem. This is surely a valid assessment, and yet a confluence of external pressures was redoubling the urgency of that situation: the near-devotional claims that high-cultural circles conferred on the Beethovenian tradition; the eagerness of outsider cultures ('nationalists') to demonstrate themselves worthy of contributing to the prestige of that tradition; and the looming anxiety, in a rapidly modernising world, that the art-music enterprise might be compromised altogether in a world of accelerating commercialism, technology, sceptical 'realism', new social and political movements, and emerging popular culture. An equally telling motivation for the 'second-age' phenomenon lay not in autonomous concerns within the artworks *per se* but in the interests of the material culture that surrounded them – the web of international orchestra concerts, legal contracts, commissions, publishing, advertising, publicity, conservatory life, journalistic criticism and the like. By the 1870s and 1880s a highly diversified 'institution of art music' was propelling towards its zenith. Committed to the advancement and promotion of the ever-solidifying canon, the bureaucratised concert system required successful new compositions as signs of its own legitimacy and continued viability. New works validated the institution and added to its prestige. As a result, both younger and established composers found themselves placed into competition with each other, and often with the giants of the past, for recognition within the sharply limited marketplace of art. In short, internal and external factors worked together to make possible a renewed tide of symphonies, symphonic poems and concertos.

The 'second-age' symphonists appeared in two generational waves, each with different concerns. The first wave comprised composers born between about 1820 and 1845 and included Bruckner, Brahms, Bruch, Saint-Saëns, Franck, Dvořák, Borodin and Tchaikovsky. It fell on the shoulders of this generation to re-establish in the 1870s and 1880s the foothold of the post-Schumann symphony in diverse local circumstances with substantially differing demands – and to do so in a musical Europe supercharged by the music and ideas of Liszt and Wagner.

Of this distinguished group, the works of all of whom had an enormous impact on later composers, Brahms and Tchaikovsky were the giants, although in most respects they were polar opposites. Today Brahms's distinction seems self-evident: his unparalleled compositional skill and multi-levelled richness of thought; his reverential seriousness *vis-à-vis* the symphonic tradition; his virtually ability to synthesise divergent currents of compositional practice; his virtually heroic rescue of the more 'abstract' tradition with the First Symphony (1876) and its successors; and yet his pervasive melancholy, bidding a loving farewell to that tradition.[42] More challenging to convey in academic terms, Tchaikovsky's enduring contribution lay in his tilt away from studied intellectualism and close argument in pursuit of reawakening the presence of sonority on enhanced, more immediate terms – as though some inexpressible, vibrant secret lay in the naked palpability of sound, often deployed in contrasting sonic

41  Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, pp. 265, 268. The symphony's 'first age', of course, had been that of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

42  Cf., e.g., Reinhold Brinkmann, *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

planes. From one perspective, his debts to the emancipated sound-worlds of
Berlioz, Liszt and (sometimes) Wagner could scarcely be clearer. From another
perspective, he may be heard as stunningly and poignantly Russian. From
another, we notice a prizing of physical movement and the allure of 'staged' or
artificial theatrical glitter – the balletic or operatic (or symphonic?) dream-
worlds of uncontaminated beauty to whose evanescent perfections the fallen
'real world' could never measure up. From still another, this was subversive
music – convulsively emotional, frequently confessional, depressive, manic –
that transgressed previously presumed limits of decorum, thematic type and
dynamic range.

With the late-century symphonic ground thus prepared, there arose a second
wave of younger composers prepared to capitalise upon it, employing all the
virtuosity and technology of the now-augmented and well-drilled civic orches-
tra. This was the first generation of self-styled musical 'modernists', born in the
later 1850s and early 1860s, composers deeply aware of their post-Wagnerian,
post-Lisztian generational difference from their predecessors.[43] Born into an
age of social controversy and ever-advancing modernity and technology –
coming to maturity in the age of Edison, Ibsen, Mallarmé, and Nietzsche – this
'generation of the 1860s' included, most prominently, Richard Strauss,
Mahler, Debussy, Elgar, Sibelius, Nielsen and Glazunov, all of whom began to
establish their careers in the late 1880s and 1890s. The strongly personalised
styles within this group could hardly be more distinct from one another.
Nevertheless, these styles were all individualised solutions to the problem of
seeking to fashion a marketable voice within the 'idealistic' tradition in an
urban age in which such earlier aesthetic convictions were rapidly decaying
away. That these composers thought of themselves as the first modernists – as
something of a youth movement, not as 'late Romantics' – has now been clearly
established. The pejorative label 'late Romanticism' (or 'post-Romanticism'),
with its faded, pressed-flower connotations, was a polemical term of reproach
affixed to them only by the next generation of high modernists, supporters of
the dissonant 'new music' in the years before and after the First World War.[44]

Recontextualising Strauss's generation more properly as 'early modernists'
is a historical task that has just begun – a central component of a much-needed,
larger project to reconstrue early twentieth-century modernism in terms more
complex than those typically proposed in the mid-century historical consensus
that emerged in the decades after 1945. Dahlhaus has underlined the arrival of

a 'breakaway mood' beginning with such works as Mahler's First Symphony
(first version) and Strauss's Don Juan, both completed in 1888,[45] but such
observations only invite further reflection on the multiple components of this
diversified movement within all of the arts and philosophy. The concept of die
Moderne in both literature and music of the 1880s and 1890s, for instance,
brought together a number of generational issues: the recognition of an emerg-
ing 'new world' fundamentally different from that of the earlier nineteenth
century; the need to demonstrate a decisive break with the institutionalised
past and its now-formulaic traditions, to challenge the socially sanctioned
artistic codes; an embrace of a much-enhanced subjectivity in art, in which the
demonstration of a focused, powerful individuality became paramount; the
reliance on strong emotion and 'nerves' as the source the modern personality
(fin-de-siècle modernism as Nervenkunst); the conviction that the break with
decorum led to a higher, more unmediated 'truth' within modern art; and so
on.[46] And yet, at least for the early modernist composers, such attitudes were
somehow to be simultaneously wedded to the existing institution of art music,
resulting in a clash of provocative claims between old and new.

It is under such lights that we shall need to reassess the significance of
Richard Strauss's brazen hypertechnique and flamboyant extroversion, his cal-
culated, moment-to-moment shifting between different stylistic registers, and
his renunciation of traditionalist Schopenhauerian-Wagnerian metaphysics
around 1893–4 to produce such material-world, quasi-Nietzschean manifestos
as Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks (1895) and Also sprach Zarathustra (1896).[47] Or
to enquire into the larger implications of Sibelius's frequent abandonment of
traditional linear-contrapuntal syntax in search of a revelatory, elemental
world of sound-sheet sonority, 'national' melody and motivic compression that
in the 1890s he would imbue with the mythic significance of the Finnish pre-
Christian epic, the Kalevala. Or to re-examine the high-strung tensions and
earnest contradictions that tear at the heart of Mahler's all-inclusive sympho-
nies – suggesting that the Austro-Germanic symphony qua genre, apparently
now in tatters (a metaphor for European society?), was to be held together pri-
marily, if at all, by a force of desperate will. For the most part, the worlds of
early modernist orchestral music in the decades around 1900 need not so much

43 Issues of generational difference and the concept of modernism are treated in Dahlhaus,
'Musikalische Moderne und Neue Musik', Melos/Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, 2 (1976), p. 90; Dahlhaus,
'Modernism as a Period in Music History', in Nineteenth-Century Music, pp. 332–9; Hepokoski, Sibelius:
Symphony No. 5, pp. 1–9.    44 Dahlhaus, 'Musikalische Moderne'.

45 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, p. 334.
46 Important manifestos of the early phases of Austro-Germanic modernism are reprinted in Erich
Ruprecht (ed.), Literarische Manifeste des Naturalismus: 1880–1892 (Stuttgart, 1962), from which the above
features were extrapolated. Another useful discussion may be found in Astradur Eysteinsson, The Concept of
Modernism (Ithaca, 1990).
47 See, e.g., Charles Youmans, 'The Private Intellectual Context of Richard Strauss's Also sprach
Zarathustra', 19th Century Music, 22 (1998), pp. 101–26. Cf. Hepokoski, 'The Framing of Till Eulenspiegel:
Strauss's Credo of Musical Modernism?' in Timothy L. Jackson (ed.), Strauss Studies (Cambridge, forthcom-
ing).

to be defended as to be rediscovered – and problematised – on new terms, hopefully ones emancipated from the misconceptions and partisan bickerings of the past century.

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