

## **Beyond the Caricature: Cultural Jewishness in the Third Movement of Mahler's First Symphony**

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The music of Gustav Mahler has been received as “Jewish” in fulfilment of the various hermeneutic biases of its receivers. Over the past century these socio-political agendas have included anti-Semitic delegitimation of Jewish-born artists, from the time of Mahler to the Nazi era; the “Jewish pride” of the concurrently burgeoning Zionist movement; Jewish attempts to resuscitate that which was lost in the Holocaust; broader “public expiation” for the Holocaust and World War II; “nostalgia and personal identification” on the part of Jewish artists in the latter half of the twentieth century; and the universal modernist tendency to read in art the “alienation of the modern individual” in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to claim that, as a result of this reception history, Mahler has ascended to the level of “Jewish paragon” in the western canon. This is evidenced by the significant increase in the number of Jewish readings of Mahler that have percolated into mainstream musicology over the past two decades.

An unfortunate consequence of this reception history, however, is that in their eagerness to realise their respective socio-political agendas, writers have simplified the identification and analysis of Jewishness in the music itself. This is evident in three of four avenues of inquiry that appear to dominate the discussion of Mahler's Jewishness. They may be labelled “biographical,” “musical,” and “paratextual” lenses, and have led to the formation of unhelpful reductionist caricatures. The argumentation of the first two avenues in particular will also be criticised on a dialectic level.

A fourth stream of scholarship that reads broader cultural tropes in the music of Mahler has also emerged. It is unique in reaching beyond the caricature and appreciating the depth and breadth of

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Botstein, “Whose Gustav Mahler? Reception, Interpretation, and History,” in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 8–9.

Jewish culture. This article will explore and extend three properties revealed by this lens in Part II.

If Mahler has become the iconic “Jewish” composer, then the third movement of his First Symphony (hereafter the Trauermarsch), composed between 1887 and 1888, has come to be heard as his most iconically “Jewish” work.<sup>2</sup> The first three avenues of inquiry – particularly the second – have been exhaustively applied to this movement. And yet, perhaps because of its subsequent association with reductionism, the Trauermarsch has hardly been examined through the fourth lens of cultural Jewishness. In Part III, this void in the discourse will be redressed through close musical analysis, and in doing so the Trauermarsch will be freed from its shackles of reductionist caricature. Ultimately, this article intends to complexify our reception of Jewishness in that movement, and subsequently throughout Mahler’s oeuvre and western art music. It is hoped that this article lends the current simplistic, teleological discussion about Jewishness in western art music a more pluralist, dialectical disposition.

### Three Reductionist Analytical Avenues

The first three of four avenues of scholarship seek to establish Jewishness in Mahler’s music in “biographical,” “musical” and “paratextual” terms. It will be shown that the reductionist premises upon which the first two approaches are built render their respective paths ineffectual. Moreover, it will be seen that all three lenses employ simplistic, unhelpful caricatures of the more complex phenomenon of Jewish culture, and that these caricatures have come to dominate the discussion of Jewishness in Mahler’s music, particularly in reference to the Trauermarsch. It is worth noting that these three avenues actually coexist (with each other and with the

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<sup>2</sup> In 1889 the Symphony was premiered in Budapest as a five-movement, bipartite “Symphonic Poem.” Its titles as well as musical content were revised in successive iterations in Hamburg (1893), Weimar (1894) and Berlin (1896) – most notably, the removal of almost all extramusical titular paratext, and the omission of the original second “Blumine” movement. For more detail on the Symphony’s chronology, see Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

fourth approach, as will be seen in Part II) on multiple interrelated continua – the most obvious indicator is the frequency with which the same scholar often straddles multiple avenues. It is useful for the purpose of clarity, however, to parse the lenses into discrete hermeneutic camps.

The first avenue asserts the Jewishness of Mahler’s music through exclusive reference to his biography (Mahler was born in the village of Kalischt, Bohemia in 1860, raised in nearby Iglau by orthodox Jewish parents and converted to Catholicism in 1897).<sup>3</sup> Those who fall into this category include anti-Semitic detractors contemporaneous with Mahler, such as Rudolf Louis, who in 1909 wrote that Mahler’s music abhors him because it “speaks Yiddish...with the intonation and above all the gestures of...the all-too-Eastern Jew.”<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, some philo-Semitic voices also inhabit the same avenue. In his 1985 video essay “The Little Drummer Boy,” Leonard Bernstein argues that the Trauermarsch (funeral march) genre, “the one constant that stamped every one of his great works,” assumes a specifically Jewish meaning in Mahler’s hands. This is based on Bernstein’s intriguing, but tenuous, thesis that Mahler’s lifelong “obsession with death” is both aspirational, in that Christianity provides consolation after death in the form of heaven, while Judaism offers “no ultimate rewards except on Earth”; and expiational, as Mahler atones “for being Jewish, and then for being ashamed of being Jewish.”<sup>5</sup> Although Bernstein’s video essay holds the dubious honour of containing arguments that fall into all four avenues of inquiry, in this instance he – like Louis – hears Jewishness in Mahler for purely biographical reasons.

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<sup>3</sup> This biographical context will suffice for the purpose of this article. For more detail, see Vladimír Karbusický, “Gustav Mahler’s Musical Jewishness,” trans. Jeremy Barham, in *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 195–216; and Leonard Bernstein, “The Little Drummer Boy” (Deutsche Grammophon, 1985), television documentary (accessed June 11, 2012) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Wvej9xn12g&feature=relmfu>.

<sup>4</sup> In Julian Johnson, *Mahler’s Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 258. For further examination of Louis’ writings, see Painter, “Reception,” 179–80.

<sup>5</sup> Bernstein.

Such views rest on the premise that the primary criterion for creating “Jewish” art is being born a Jew. This is problematic for two reasons: it not only presumptuously caricatures Mahler as an artist who could not help *but* write in the idiom of his ancestors; it also caricatures the process of artistic creation, in which it is widely accepted that genetics plays no role alongside factors such as environment and intent.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, it insults non-Jewish composers such as Bruch, Stravinsky and Ravel who have sought – and, arguably, succeeded – to write in the Jewish style.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, however, this avenue cannot ever reach beyond conjecture: consideration of an artist’s biography is inevitably aimed at the establishment of authorial intent (be it conscious or subconscious) – which, as Talia Pecker Berio states, “we’ll never be able to say.”<sup>8</sup> This is particularly true when considering the role of Mahler’s Jewish background in his conception, as he was so reluctant to speak on the subject. As such, this first approach is both reductionist and toothless.

A second avenue may be viewed as a (no less inadequate) complement to the first. It treats music as a quasi-autonomous object – an analytical model that V. Kofi Agawu might describe as introversive semiosis<sup>9</sup> – in its attempts to define Mahler’s Jewishness as the sum total of discrete musical elements. To lapse into vernacular, it zooms into “the notes” – specifically, those notes *within the confines* of the double bar line, as shall be seen.

This approach has been applied comprehensively across Mahler’s oeuvre. Adorno, for example, suggests the possibility of “synagogal or secular Jewish melodies” in the second movement of the Fourth

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<sup>6</sup> An indicative case study is the almost unanimous reception of Felix Mendelssohn’s music as Germanic, if not ecumenical – not Jewish. See Talia Pecker Berio, “Mahler’s Jewish Parable,” in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 92–93.

<sup>7</sup> Examples include Bruch’s *Kol Nidre* for cello and orchestra, op. 47; Stravinsky’s *Abraham and Isaac*, a sacred ballad for baritone and orchestra; and Ravel’s *Deux Mélodies Hébraïques*.

<sup>8</sup> Pecker Berio, 94.

<sup>9</sup> See V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: a Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Symphony.<sup>10</sup> Max Brod hears the accents of Hasidic march rhythms in the first movements of the First, Third and Sixth, and the finales of the Second, Sixth and Seventh.<sup>11</sup> Even that most overtly Christian of Mahler's works, the Eighth, is not spared – Ludwig Landau has found the “declamation of many melodic shapes”<sup>12</sup> to be reminiscent of Hasidic folk music.<sup>13</sup>

The Trauermarsch, however, has become the centrepiece of this discussion.<sup>14</sup> Max Brod and Vladimir Karbusický point to march rhythms, major/minor ambivalence, and the augmented second interval, among other musical features, to establish the nexus between section B (see Figure 2 on page 38 and Example 2 on page 41) and Hasidic folk music.<sup>15</sup> More recently, David Hurwitz has also emphasised its “klezmerlike”<sup>16</sup> instrumentation, characterising the music as drawn “straight out of Mahler's Czech/Jewish heritage.”<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Berl, a non-Jewish critic contemporaneous with Mahler, is unequivocal:

The third movement of Mahler's First Symphony is Jewry, the *purest* Jewry. Here one finds everything: march, funeral, irony, folk song, canon,

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<sup>10</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 149. Peter Gradenwitz also emphasises the importance of synagogal melodies in Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel: From the Biblical Era to Modern Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 210.

<sup>11</sup> Max Brod, *Gustav Mahler: Example of a German-Jewish symbiosis*, trans. Brian Gallwey (Frankfurt am Main: Ner-Tamid, 1961), 24.

<sup>12</sup> Ludwig Landau, “Das jüdische Element bei Gustav Mahler. Zum 25. Todestage – 18. Mai 1936,” *Der Morgen*, 12 (1936): 67–73, in Karbusický, 209.

<sup>13</sup> Hasidism is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that first emerged in seventeenth-century Eastern Europe as a movement founded on joy and mysticism. For an overview of the rise of Hasidism and the reformations it made to the Jewish musical tradition, see Philip Bohlman, “World Music at the ‘End of History,’” *Ethnomusicology* 46/1 (2002): 14–15.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, 257.

<sup>15</sup> Brod, *Symbiosis*, 18–30; Karbusický, 200–09.

<sup>16</sup> Klezmer is a style of secular Jewish music whose roots are also found in Eastern Europe, but which has since absorbed the influence of American jazz, and is now commonly defined as a synthesis of these two styles.

<sup>17</sup> David Hurwitz, *The Mahler Symphonies: An Owner's Manual*, Unlocking the Masters Series, no. 2 (Pompton Plains, New Jersey and Cambridge: Amadeus Press, 2004), 8.

melodic development, harmony, instrumentation...there is hardly more direct evidence.<sup>18</sup>

(To his credit, Berl's inclusion of "irony" in his list of musical elements aphoristically pre-empted the fourth avenue of inquiry, as shall be shown).

This lens stands on the premise that an otherwise complex and highly variegated culture can be reduced to a collection of non-contextualised musical clichés. This causes two problems. Firstly, it fails to account for the multiple expressions of Jewish culture extant throughout the world: while Karbusický also considers the influence of secular Jewish opera, such as Jacques Halévy's *La Juive*, in the "intensified tremoli and the restless rhythms" of Mahler's Symphonies,<sup>19</sup> he is unique in the literature, which almost unanimously draws its Jewish musical tropes from the Hasidic idiom. Secondly, even if the literature were more pluralist in its appraisal of Jewish musics, this second approach still divorces itself from the deeper, necessarily extra-musical cultural tropes that lie beyond "the notes."

Despite such problems, this avenue of musical Jewishness has provided the grounds for the most heated debate – of whose flashpoints the Trauermarsch is the most hotly contested – and has come to dominate the discussion of Jewishness in Mahler's music. Karen Painter, for example, dismisses Brod's argument for evidence of Hasidic folk influence in the Trauermarsch as "so ideologically driven as to enter into pure speculation."<sup>20</sup> Israeli musicologist Peter Gradenwitz also feels Brod "may have gone too far."<sup>21</sup> However, in questioning only the *extent* of Brod's analysis, these voices fail to negate its underlying reductionist premise. Indeed, this same "musical" lens is applied by others in their attribution of section B's

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<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Berl, "Zum Problem einer jüdischen Musik," *Der Jude. Eine Monatsschrift* 7/5 (May 1923), 315, in Painter, "Reception," 187. Emphasis his own.

<sup>19</sup> Karbusický, 196–97.

<sup>20</sup> Painter, "Reception," 187.

<sup>21</sup> Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel*, 209. An exploration of this "hermeneutic bias" in terms of the writers' political, religious and ideological motives is tempting, but lies outside the scope of this article.

ethnic character to non-Jewish sources – most commonly, a variation of Bohemian urban folk music. Constantin Floros dubs it “Czardas-like”; Peter Franklin and Dika Newlin hear an explicit imitation of Bohemian street musicians; and Henry-Louis de la Grange uses the terms “village/street tune.”<sup>22</sup> Bernd Sponheuer even calls it “circus music.”<sup>23</sup> In this manner, the debate of musical Jewishness has grown positivist and verificationist.

A handful of writers have attempted to mediate the debate and dismantle its positivism by drawing attention to the assimilating relationship between Hasidic folk music and its surrounding non-Jewish idioms. Peter Gradenwitz, while conceding that some of Mahler’s melodies resemble Hasidic folk songs, reminds us these songs “were as much indebted to Slav melodies as the popular music and the march tunes young Mahler heard in his native town.”<sup>24</sup> Even Karbusický emphasises the “integrating quality”<sup>25</sup> of the Hasidic sound world, citing Ruth Rubin’s seminal work on Yiddish folk music.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, it is Bernstein who demonstrates that the debate of “musical” Jewishness must ultimately lead to a dead-end, by making explicit what these others only imply. He too identifies “Gypsy, Hungarian, Arabic” influence in the augmented second interval, and a Slavic inflection in the “flirting between major and minor modes.”<sup>27</sup> However, he argues that it is *precisely* this “borscht” of cultural

<sup>22</sup> Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler III. Die Symphonien* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1985), 39, in Karbusický, 207; Peter Franklin, “Mahler, Gustav,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (accessed May 31, 2012) <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40696>.; Dika Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg*, rev. ed. (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), 145; La Grange, *Mahler, Vol. I* (London: Gollancz, 1974), 756. Others expressing similar views include Worbs, Stedman, Downes and Barford – see Bibliography. See also Karbusický for a more comprehensive summary of the literature.

<sup>23</sup> Bernd Sponheuer, “Dissonante Stimmigkeit. Eine rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studie zum dritten Satz der Mahlerschen Ersten,” in Hermann Danuser, *Gustav Mahler. Wege der Forschung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), in Karbusický, 200.

<sup>24</sup> Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel*, 210.

<sup>25</sup> Karbusický, 203.

<sup>26</sup> See Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: Yiddish Folk Song*, rev. edn. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 233, 245.

<sup>27</sup> Bernstein.

influences, “the product of centuries of wandering, adapting and readapting,” that gives Jewish music its “whatever” – what Adorno calls the “Jewish element” that “shrinks from identification”<sup>28</sup> – namely, its distinct musical flavour.<sup>29</sup> After all, there is “no such thing as a Jewish B-flat!”<sup>30</sup> Such a conception of Jewish music condemns this second avenue of inquiry to stalemate – to show non-Jewish influence is to show Jewishness, and by extension, vice versa. I find this definition highly convincing as it accounts for the multiplicity of Jewish musics, and corroborates my personal experience. Even if we were to reject Bernstein’s position, however, the course of this article in seeking an alternative to the lens of musical Jewishness remains valid, if for no other reason than the near impossibility of distilling such a vast and variegated sound world into its musical essence! Therefore it is shown that the second approach, too, is not only reductionist, but doomed to deadlock.

A third analytical avenue constitutes pseudo-paratextual attempts to read specific Jewish religio-cultural events into moments of Mahler’s music – an example of Agawu’s extroversive semiosis. Indicative of this approach is the reception of the Second Symphony’s program by various Jewish commentators. David Schiff, along with Bernstein and Norman Lebrecht, interpret the “Resurrection” of the Finale as Jewish due to the absence of a “Last Judgement,” made explicit in Mahler’s program notes: “there is no sinner...no punishment and no reward.”<sup>31</sup> Karbusický adds that the Finale’s bipartite structure of “apocalypse and resurrection” corresponds to the eschatological vision outlined in the Book of Daniel.<sup>32</sup>

The same approach is applied when these scholars perceive the *shofar* in Mahler’s symphonies. The ancient ram’s horn is sounded on

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<sup>28</sup> Adorno, 149.

<sup>29</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> David Schiff, “Jewish and Musical Tradition in the Music of Mahler and Schoenberg,” *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 9/2 (1986), 218; Bernstein; Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed the World* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 75.

<sup>32</sup> Karbusický, 198–99.

the Jewish High Holy Days, during which time it is traditionally held that individuals are reinscribed in the Book of Life, pending their behaviour in the previous twelve months and the sincerity of their personal reflection and repentance. As such, the *shofar* is replete with connotations of the confluence of life and death. Consequently, Bernstein and Brod seize upon the paratext of “Resurrection” and hear the *shofar* in the off-stage horn calls of the Second Symphony;<sup>33</sup> Lebrecht identifies its rhythmic patterns in the lower strings of the same work;<sup>34</sup> and Karbusický points to the horns’ ascending fifths in the final bars of Mahler’s last and unfinished work, the Tenth.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly, this approach demonstrates a greater appreciation of Jewish *culture* than do the previous two. Objects such as the *shofar* and concepts such as universal Resurrection are imported directly from the Jewish cultural lexicon and have been accurately represented in analysis. It is not, however, the *content* but the *method* that renders this third avenue guilty of reduction. The aspects of Jewish culture that writers such as Brod invoke are selected solely on the criterion of coincidental – superficial – resonance with the paratext surrounding Mahler’s works. The result is a smorgasbord of discrete cultural components that may appear appetisingly whole when each is appraised individually, but which – in the absence of any broader cultural framework, hierarchy or principles – collectively represent an almost arbitrary simplification of a complex and diverse world.

Thus I have shown that the first three avenues of inquiry end in reductionist caricatures of Mahler, of the process of artistic conception, of Jewish culture and ultimately of the Trauermarsch. Furthermore, the first approach ends in conjecture, the second in verificationist stalemate, while the findings of the third appear too aleatoric to make a significant contribution to the discourse. As shall be seen, it is at these precise points of inadequacy that the last lens will prove most successful.

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<sup>33</sup> Bernstein; Brod, *Symbiosis*, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Lebrecht, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Karbusický, 199.

## A Fourth Analytical Avenue: Cultural Jewishness

The final hermeneutic approach also employs extroversive semiosis, but seeks to read broader, interdisciplinary Jewish cultural tropes in Mahler's music. In doing so, it is unique in acknowledging and embracing Jewish culture and its artistic expression as richer, deeper and more sophisticated phenomena than is suggested by the caricatured findings of the previous three avenues. The main proponents of this approach are Schiff and Talia Pecker Berio,<sup>36</sup> and to a lesser extent Bernstein, who identify intertextuality, otherness and irony as three key tenets of cultural Jewishness evident in the work of Mahler.<sup>37</sup>

I will now outline these three properties, substantiate their Jewishness with reference to internal and external sources of cultural identity, and extend them.<sup>38</sup> These findings will then be applied to a close analysis of the Trauermarsch in Part III. As will become clear, I am not trying to claim these interdisciplinary features as the exclusive assets of Jewish culture; rather, I am positing that they are *celebrated* as such within Jewish communities, and ultimately combine to form a lens through which a reading of the Trauermarsch benefits.

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<sup>36</sup> Schiff; Talia Pecker Berio, "Mahler's Jewish Parable," in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 87–110; Bernstein.

<sup>37</sup> Intertextuality is treated as a cultural rather than musical trope because, as stipulated above, the second avenue of musical Jewishness restricts itself to analysis of the notes with the confines of the double bar line, and as such remains disconnected from the discourse on music's ability to comment on itself.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of how Jews in nineteenth-century Europe ascribed their cultural identity from both internal and external loci, see Jerzy Mizgalski, "The Political Identity of Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries as Reflected in the History, Heritage, and Cultural Identity of Częstochowa Jews" (paper presented at the conference of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies titled *The Jews of Częstochowa – Coexistence – Holocaust – Memory*, Częstochowa, April 22–23, 2004), 28. For a more general discussion of the dual role of internal and external sources of cultural identity, see Verónica Benet-Martínez et al., "Negotiating Biculturalism: Cultural Frame Switching in Biculturals with Oppositional Versus Compatible Cultural Identities," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33 (2002): 492–516.

Intertextuality as a property of cultural Jewishness is founded on the ubiquity of commentary in Jewish scripture: specifically the Talmud, several tomes' worth of interpretative discourse on the Torah (Old Testament), which in turn contains "whole books" that interpret earlier events.<sup>39</sup> These interpretations, or *midrashim*, inhabit many genres, ranging from parable, in which an "imagined fictional event" is created as a parallel to an "immediate 'real' situation" (*masnal*, in Hebrew), to linear exegesis.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the extent of internal dispute within the Talmud recalls that humorous cultural adage of "two Jews, three opinions!" The idea of a text that is a commentary of another text is given visual realisation in the layout of a Talmudic page, in which *midrashim* encircle the source they interpret (see Figure 1).<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 1** An indicative page of the Talmud, displaying the original text in the centre, and the various inter-generic midrashim around it (the first page of the 1835 Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot).



<sup>39</sup> Pecker Berio, 98.

<sup>40</sup> David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 5, in Pecker Berio, 98.

<sup>41</sup> Schiff, 221.

Bernstein alludes to this quality when he characterises Mahler's musical ambiguity as "Talmudic...his rabbinic either-or."<sup>42</sup> However the argument is fully elucidated by Pecker Berio, who characterises Mahler's music as "a complex net of cross-references and transformations,"<sup>43</sup> and Schiff, who labels Mahler's propensity for allusion – to himself, and to others – as *midrashic*.<sup>44</sup> I will extend these positions by suggesting that it is particularly in instances where intertextuality not only alludes to, but *reinterprets*, an earlier text – as in accordance with Talmudic practice – that it assumes a particularly Jewish tenor.

In a rather different sense, intertextuality has also been identified as Jewish by external cultural sources. As Schiff notes, the "theft libel" expounded by Wagner in his 1850 essay "Das Judentum in der Musik" (Judaism in Music) asserts that "the Jew has never had an art of his own," and that Jewish composers have instead "stolen" from their non-Jewish counterparts.<sup>45</sup> Rudolf Louis, for example, applied the libel to Mahler in 1905, speculating that without the model of Bruckner, Mahler "could not have developed his own symphonic form."<sup>46</sup> Thus, intertextuality as an asset of cultural Jewishness is derived from both inherent and external cultural loci.

I acknowledge that intertextuality is a cornerstone of modernism and postmodernism, and I make no attempt to colonise these movements in the name of Judaism. Indeed, Newlin, who resisted the characterisation of section B as Jewish, feels the First Symphony is "saturated" with self-commentary.<sup>47</sup> Franklin, too, points to "stylistic and generic allusion,"<sup>48</sup> and even Painter highlights Mahler's self-

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<sup>42</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>43</sup> Pecker Berio, 97.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; Schiff, 222. For further evidence of the role of commentary in Judaism, see Pecker Berio.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Wagner, "Das Judentum in der Musik," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1850), in Schiff, 222. See also K. M. Knittel, *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 1–2, 49–67; and Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel Against the Jews* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Painter, "Reception," 179.

<sup>47</sup> Newlin, 143.

<sup>48</sup> Franklin.

reflexivity, describing the Seventh as an “essay in music about music.”<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, intertextuality – particularly where it facilitates reinterpretation – is advanced here as an aspect of Mahler’s music that may be celebrated as Jewish.

The second observation in the literature is a sense of “otherness.”<sup>50</sup> Again, Bernstein hears in the Trauermarsch “echoes of the diaspora...of being strangers in so many lands for so many centuries.”<sup>51</sup> Pecker Berio calls this “nonbelonging [sic] or half-belonging,” and finds its internal origin in cultural practices such as the *Mizrakh* (Orient), a small ornamented wooden plate that observant Jews in the diaspora hang on the eastern wall of their homes in symbolic and perennial evocation of their distant homeland.<sup>52</sup>

Of course, the Jews’ treatment as one of Europe’s “most persistent internal Others”<sup>53</sup> is another, externally derived cause for their feeling of “nonbelonging.” Schiff refers to this condition, but adds a layer of psychoanalysis when he cites Mahler’s propensity for “the intrusion of some commonplace melody”<sup>54</sup> as evidence of the sublimated “dread of assimilated German Jews that they will find themselves speaking Yiddish.”<sup>55</sup> A simpler interpretation might conceive of these oft-noted interpolations as representations of the intruding Jews themselves, alien and unwelcome in the social and political fabric of nineteenth- (and twentieth-) century Austro-Germany.<sup>56</sup> I propose that it is especially in its expression of the

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<sup>49</sup> Painter, “Reception,” 177.

<sup>50</sup> Pecker Berio, 95, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>52</sup> Pecker Berio, 95.

<sup>53</sup> Bohlman, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Gustav Mahler, reportedly to Freud, in Mitchell, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Schiff, 223. Schiff extends his Jewish-inflected psychoanalysis so far as to reinterpret the conflict between Mahler’s parents, one of the main factors in Mahler’s traumatic childhood, as “yet another paradigm of the fate of traditional Jewish values in the modern world” – namely, “pious, passive mothers and assimilated, aggressive fathers.” (Schiff, 223, 220.) Schiff also applies such analysis to Schoenberg’s parents. This, however, lies beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of the socio-political discrimination of Bohemian Jews in Mahler’s time, see Bernstein.

homelessness of the Other that Jewishness may be found in Mahler's music.

Once more, it would be untrue and insensitive for me to claim otherness, or even homelessness, for Jews alone (recalling, for example, that Edward Said first popularised "the Other"). Adorno, who patently ignored the question of musical Jewishness in the Trauermarsch altogether, hears "the Other" throughout Mahler's oeuvre, and an utterance of its nondenominational "despair" in the Trauermarsch.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, the Jewish people's two-millennia-long national homelessness, punctuated by bouts of discrimination and rejection in their host countries, legitimises this as a second way in which cultural Jewishness may be read in the Trauermarsch.

The third property of cultural Jewishness mentioned in the literature is irony. It was noted above that Berl includes irony in his list of Jewish musical elements in the Trauermarsch. Bernstein, too, hears the irony in this movement as Jewish, dubbing it "Kafka-like, so deeply enjoying its own suffering."<sup>58</sup> Franz Kafka, a contemporary of Mahler, is also cited by Pecker Berio in her discussion of the "famous Jewish self-irony,"<sup>59</sup> although German (Jewish-born) poet Heinrich Heine and Yiddish writer Sholem Yankev Abromovitsch are also noted for their use of irony. Pecker Berio identifies both internal and external cultural sources respectively when she describes irony as a time-tested mechanism of "distance" (which she views as foundational to Judaism and traces back to the Second Commandment), and of "defence" in the face of misfortune.<sup>60</sup>

However, if irony is defined as the subversion of the receiver's expectations, then this property may be extended to encompass two further devices of Jewish humour. The first is parody/satire, where a subject is mocked through its exaggeration or placement in an inappropriate context. Its relation with irony is twofold: the subject's inappropriate placement subverts the receiver's expectations; and

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<sup>57</sup> Adorno, 52.

<sup>58</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>59</sup> Pecker Berio, 106.

<sup>60</sup> Pecker Berio, 106. The Second Commandment is "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath" (Exodus 20:4, in Pecker Berio, 95).

sometimes those very expectations are the subject of parody. An examination of Jewish parody reveals that irony is not simply exported wholesale from Jewish cultural literature – it can just as readily be found in musical form. Karbusický describes how secular musical material “assumed a touch of irony and parody” when intertextually absorbed into the Hasidic folk idiom.<sup>61</sup> Rubin points to other parodic works in which a serious text is set to a light-hearted tune.<sup>62</sup> She also emphasises the role of satire in her exhaustive survey of Yiddish folksong, citing nineteen examples and devoting two sub-chapters to the topic.<sup>63</sup>

Secondly, it is both vicariously through its role in parody, as well as through its inherent subversion of emotional expectations, that the widely held conception of Jewish humour as “a mixture of laughter and tears”<sup>64</sup> is also subsumed under the umbrella of irony. Again, Bernstein prefigured this link when he characterised the Trauermarsch’s irony as “so deeply enjoying its own suffering.” In musical form, Karbusický and Rubin find such emotional polarity in the “abrupt change from the exuberant joy of the dance to the seriousness of lamentation” in the Hasidic folk idiom.<sup>65</sup> The fact that these two techniques of Jewish humour – parody and “laughter through tears” – have identifiable musical signifiers reveals that “cultural” and “musical” Jewishness are not entirely discrete, but actually exist as opposite poles of a continuum.

Thus, irony is not the exclusive product of Jewish culture. Indeed, the literature is unanimous in its identification of the “ironic” in the Trauermarsch. Rather, I suggest that irony – and especially its

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<sup>61</sup> Karbusický, 204.

<sup>62</sup> Rubin, 159.

<sup>63</sup> These two subchapters are: “IV. Marriage: Taunts and Teasers” and “VI Merriment: Humour and Satire.” Both of these are explicitly relevant to the Trauermarsch, which has been likened to “Jewish/Yiddish wedding music” (Bernstein and Karbusický, 201) and “light-hearted merry-making” (Brod, *Symbiosis*, 14).

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Sachs, *Beauty and the Jew* (London: Edward Goldston, 1937), 22. Rubin echoes this sentiment: “Jews in the Eastern European areas ‘laughed through their tears’” (Rubin, 159). So does Lebrecht, who hears in the Trauermarsch “a very Jewish recognition that no act is ever totally tragic or entirely happy.” (Lebrecht, 59).

<sup>65</sup> Karbusický, 197.

expression in parody and “laughter through tears” – forms the third aspect of cultural Jewishness that will suffuse this article’s reading of the Trauermarsch.

Unlike the frenzied debate in the second analytical avenue of musical Jewishness, the reading of these three properties of cultural Jewishness in Mahler stands virtually unopposed. The only voices expressing a blatantly contrary opinion are a minority of critics in Mahler’s time who claim him wholly for the Austro-German tradition.<sup>66</sup> However, their comments cannot be divorced from their socio-political context, in which, as illustrated, “Jewish” was synonymous with “derivative and inferior.”<sup>67</sup> Besides which, as Bernstein illustrates in his analogy of Mahler’s music to the Yiddish language, “Jewish” and “Austro-German” need not be viewed as mutually exclusive.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, the internally contested lens of musical Jewishness has been trained much more frequently on the Trauermarsch than has the lens of cultural Jewishness. Yet, as has been shown, and as Julian Johnson makes explicit, this very movement has become the epicentre of the debate on Jewishness in Mahler’s music.<sup>69</sup> This is likely a consequence of the attention attracted by the heated, far-ranging and decades-long debate engaged in the second analytical avenue. That this avenue has been shown to be reductionist and stalemated does not vitiate the Trauermarsch’s status in current musicological circles as the most iconically “Jewish” work in Mahler’s oeuvre.

Indeed, with the exception of the aphoristic remarks by Berl and Bernstein mentioned above, Brod (of all people!) is most explicit in identifying cultural Jewishness in the Trauermarsch – yet even he hesitates, asking if it is “too bold to find the musical expression of

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<sup>66</sup> For examples of such critics, see Painter, “Reception.”

<sup>67</sup> Painter, “Reception,” 179.

<sup>68</sup> Bernstein calls Yiddish a “compendium of linguistic influences overlying a base of Middle High German...it is a kind of borscht, gulash, but it is recognisable. Similarly Mahler’s music is basically the German musical language inherited from Bach, Brucher etc, but sometimes overlaid with echoes of the diaspora.”

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, 257.

this ‘being not wanted, an intruder’ in that movement?’<sup>70</sup> It seems that the literature would answer “yes” – apart from these three voices, it falls resoundingly silent at the intersection of this fourth analytical avenue and the third movement of Mahler’s First. This may be because that movement has been so ravaged by the verificationist diatribes of the second avenue that scholars keen to apply the fourth feel there is insufficient intellectual elbow-room for a cultural reading.

Certainly, Pecker Berio makes plain her aversion to any consideration of musical Jewishness in her insistence that the discussion remain “*metaphoric*.”<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, she *does* dip a reluctant toe in the waters of musical detail, hearing irony in the *Purgatorio* third movement of Mahler’s Tenth Symphony, and the “voice of an Other” in his Ninth.<sup>72</sup> Yet she fails to apply such analysis to the Trauermarsch, leaving us instead with the dramatic but unhelpful image of “the faceless crowd that moves slowly forward toward an unknown destination to the sound of a popular song turned into a funeral march.”<sup>73</sup>

Schiff, on the other hand, may have felt it more judicious to use a work that had *not* been previously engaged in the discussion of Mahler’s Jewishness to expound his *midrash* thesis – hence his focus on the Fourth Symphony, in which he identifies Mahler’s own 1892 song “Das Himmlische Leben” (The Heavenly Life) as the *midrash*.<sup>74</sup>

Recent scholarship has continued to neglect a cultural reading of the Trauermarsch. Works by K. M. Knittel, Carl Niekerk, Björn Heile and Karen Painter concentrate on Mahler’s Jewishness as a socio-political rather than musicological issue, focusing on contemporary anti-Semitic reception of Mahler (the man and conductor more than the composer), his relation to broader literary and philosophical trends and his appropriation by subsequent styles.<sup>75</sup> Julian Johnson

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<sup>70</sup> Brod, *Symbiosis*, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Pecker Berio, 94. Emphasis is her own.

<sup>72</sup> Pecker Berio, 106.

<sup>73</sup> Pecker Berio, 105.

<sup>74</sup> Schiff, 224–27.

<sup>75</sup> K. M. Knittel; Carl Niekerk, *Reading Mahler: German Culture and Jewish Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010); Björn Heile. “On Taking Leave: Mahler, Jewishness, and Jazz in Uri Caine’s *Urlicht/Primal Light*,” in *Music and Displacement: Diasporas, Mobilities, and Dislocations in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Erik Levi and Florian Scheding, Europa:

includes an excellent summary of the literature in his 2009 book *Mahler's Voices*, and argues for a pluralistic, non-literal interpretation of Mahler.<sup>76</sup> In doing so he emphasises the non-exclusivity of the Jewish cultural tropes identified by Schiff and Pecker Berio as flagged above, treating irony as indicative of his argument that these tropes are “readily acknowledged in other discussions but simply accounted for differently.”<sup>77</sup> Perhaps for this reason, he fails to see the value of the cultural lens and refrains from applying it any further.

Regardless of their exclusivity to Jewish culture, however, it remains that these three properties of intertextuality, otherness and irony – and particularly their respective extensions as *midrashic* reinterpretation, homelessness, and parody and laughter through tears – may be, and *are*, recognised and celebrated as “Jewish” within Jewish communities. Subsequently, their reception in the Trauermarsch through the cultural lens is legitimate and worthwhile as it complexifies a discourse that has been hitherto dominated by reductionist caricature, as demonstrated in Part I. This increases the significance of the Trauermarsch by ascribing its Jewish element(s) a dialectical, rather than teleological, character: now simplistic symbols of musical Jewishness may be seen to exist in *dialogue* with metaphoric cultural tropes. Broader musicological appreciation of Jewish culture also stands to benefit from such complexification and diversification. As such, the course this article will take along the avenue of cultural Jewishness does not contradict Johnson’s overall pluralist thesis that “Mahler’s music does its best to ‘perform’ one identity, but it cannot entirely repress others from breaking through regardless.”<sup>78</sup>

Part III will illustrate how the reception of Jewishness in the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony – that most iconically “Jewish” work by the most iconically “Jewish” composer in the western canon – may be freed from the fetters of reductionism by a detailed application of the fourth avenue of inquiry.

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Ethnomusicologies and Modernities Series, ed. Philip Bohlman and Martin Stokes (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 105–116; Karen Painter, “Perspectives.”

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, 255–262.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, 259.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

## Cultural Jewishness in the Trauermarsch

Here, the three characteristics of cultural Jewishness identified above will be applied to a close analysis of the Trauermarsch: firstly, intertextuality, and its specifically *midrashic* quality of reinterpretation; and secondly, otherness, and its Jewish utterance as homelessness. The presence of Jewish irony, including parody and “laughter through tears,” will be observed as an underlying tonal quality through both. For the purposes of this article, I will adopt the structural labels Karbusický assigns in the left hand column of his formal outline of the third movement (Figure 2).<sup>79</sup> As flagged above, I will endeavour to steer clear of the dangerous territory of authorial intent. However, especially where Mahler’s paratext is drawn into our analysis, some consideration of his potential compositional motives is unavoidable. Inasmuch as paratextual analysis is meaningfully employed by this cultural reading, it would appear that the third and fourth avenues outlined above are not absolutely distinct, but also exist at opposite ends of an analytical spectrum, as was the case with the second and fourth avenues (see page 34).

**Figure 2** Vladimir Karbusický’s formal outline of the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony (Karbusický, 208).

<b>A</b> bars 1–38 a + a’	‘Bruder Martin’ = essentially a dirge in Hasidic minor-mode colouration
<b>B</b> bars 39–44, 45–82 b <sup>1</sup> b <sup>2</sup> +d <sup>1</sup> +a”	Hasidic dance melody (=b <sup>1</sup> ) and Hasidic ‘march melody with parody’ (=b <sup>2</sup> ); d <sup>1</sup> = a new theme in the polyphony
<b>C</b> bars 83–112 c + a”	‘Die zwei Augen von meinem Schatz’ ( <i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i> ), ‘like a folk tune’
<b>A’</b> bars 113–37 a”+a””	Plunge of the A section into the dark region of E flat minor; intensified, heart rending dirge
<b>B’</b> bars 138–68 b <sup>1”</sup> +d <sup>1</sup> +a”	Reminiscences, resigning, conciliatory fading away; d <sup>2</sup> = a new theme in the polyphony

<sup>79</sup> I have selected Karbusický’s schema because, as he notes, his is the only example of a “tabular description” of the structure in the literature. (Karbusický, 207.) I am not, however, advancing all the elements of his interpretation sketched in the right hand column. A similar, if less nuanced, conceptualisation of the form is the “ABACABA” plan suggested by La Grange (La Grange, 756).

As has been seen, the intertextual “patchwork” of Mahler’s music (to quote the composer)<sup>80</sup> references his own material as well as that of others. Newlin stresses the prevalence of self-commentary in the First Symphony,<sup>81</sup> so here I will focus on how self-reflexive motivic relations and direct quotations in the Trauermarsch reinterpret earlier musical events, and how they relate to Wagner’s “theft libel.”

The movement opens with the “D-A” tonic/dominant pedal ostinato in the timpani, which doggedly underpins the entirety of section A and returns whenever a derivation of the “a” theme (“Brüder Martin,” as seen below) is heard. This represents two tiers of motivic self-commentary. Firstly, it illustrates Mahler’s “preoccupation with the fourth,”<sup>82</sup> immediately bringing it into dialogue with his many other works that prominently feature this interval (like Newlin, I posit this preoccupation notwithstanding the obvious reliance of all tonal music upon the dominant-tonic relationship and the resultant fourth interval). Of particular note is the Symphony’s relationship with his first song cycle, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer), composed during 1883–5. For example, the first three notes of the vocal melody in the second song, “Ging heut morgen übers Feld” (I Walked this Morning across the Field), are “D-A-D” – a fragment of the timpani ostinato – while the following two bars each outline a fourth (see Example 1 on the following page). This song is appropriated in the *first* movement of the First Symphony, drawing the self-reflexive net tighter – the Trauermarsch ostinato not only reinterprets musical material from outside the Symphony, but also that from within.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the sixty-two bars of introduction to the first movement constitute

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<sup>80</sup> This term is actually drawn from Mahler’s farewell letter to the Vienna State Opera in 1907, in which he confesses to leaving “a patchwork of things incomplete, as man is destined to do...” (in Brod, *Symbiosis*, 11.) However, I feel the quasi-existential tenor of the second clause legitimises the term’s broader semantic application to encompass other aspects of Mahler’s life and art.

<sup>81</sup> For an analysis of the influence of other composers, such as Bruckner, in the Trauermarsch and the rest of the First Symphony, see Newlin, 143–47.

<sup>82</sup> Newlin, 145.

<sup>83</sup> Newlin also finds the interval in the fourth movement of the First Symphony, outlined both by the “sturdy marching principle theme” and in the “triumphal” moment of breakthrough (145).

“permutations of this basic interval.”<sup>84</sup> However, it is through a consideration of the interval’s respective contexts that its recurrence in the Trauermarsch may be established as *midrashic*.

**Example 1** Gustav Mahler, “Ging heut morgen übers Feld,” the second song in *Leider eines fahrenden Gesellen*, vocal part only, bars 1–5.

Voice

Ging heut mor-gen ü- bers Feld, Tau noch auf den Grä-tern

In the first movement the fourth interval was “variously disguised” as a trumpet or cuckoo-call, which brazenly punctuated the quiet stasis of the A pedal point. In the third movement, however, the interval is transformed into the “heavy-falling fourth”<sup>85</sup> bass line, the very defining feature of the funeral march genre. It is also recalled from the foreground to the background, now ironically *becoming* the pedal point.<sup>86</sup> Such reinterpretation of the fourth interval reflects the *midrashic* quality of Jewish commentary, in which the same textual content is expounded through different genres and drawn to divergent conclusions. It is also ironic, subverting the listener’s expectations as to the motif’s textural function.

It is worth noting another point in the Trauermarsch at which the fourth appears prominently: in the woodwinds, in the  $b^2$  theme of section B (Example 2 on the following page).<sup>87</sup> The phrase concludes with the “A-E” fourth passed between the clarinet and flute – which is precisely how the first movement starts, in rhythmic augmentation (Example 3 on page 42). Yet their respective contexts – one, a parodistic street dance of (some) ethnic folksy inflection, the other, a serious, expansive symphonic introduction evoking the *creatio ex nihilo* Germanic tradition of Beethoven’s Ninth and Bruckner – could not lie further apart.

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<sup>84</sup> Newlin, 145.

<sup>85</sup> Newlin, 127.

<sup>86</sup> Newlin, 145.

<sup>87</sup> Newlin alludes to this vaguely – “the fourth is prominent in the “parody” section” (145) – however, the analysis is my own.

**Example 2** Gustav Mahler, the third movement of Symphony no. 1 in D major, bars 45-49. The “E-A” fourths in the clarinet and flute are indicated.

Mit Parodie. *Nicht schleppen*

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in E *gut hervortretend*

Bassoon *pp*

Horn in F

Trumpet in F *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Bass Drum

Cymbals  
The cymbal is attached to the bass drum and struck by the same player

Violin 1 *col legno*

Violin 2 *col legno*

Viola *col legno*

Violoncello *col legno*

Double Bass

Rit.

**Example 3** Gustav Mahler, the first movement of Symphony no. 1 in D major, bars 1–8. The “E-A” fourths in the clarinet and flute are indicated.

**Langsam. Schleppend. Wie ein Naturlaut.**

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes the Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in B $\flat$ , Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$ , and Bassoon. The second system includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello (zu drei), and Double Bass (zu drei). The woodwinds play a melodic line with 'E-A' fourths indicated by brackets. The strings play a rhythmic accompaniment of chords. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *sempre pp*.

This exemplifies the inter-generic nature of Jewish intertextuality. The inappropriateness of the context in which the first movement's material is now found offers one interpretation of Mahler's instruction that  $b^2$  is to be played "Mit Parodie" – the passage is poking fun at the Symphony's opening.<sup>88</sup>

Conversely, the second tier of self-commentary opened up by the tonic/dominant pedal refers to other works that employ the same technique to a similar mournful effect. Newlin identifies the "heavy-falling fourth" bass in "Nicht wiedersehen!" (Never to Meet Again!), the fourth song of the third volume of Mahler's *Lieder und Gesänge* (Songs and Chants) (see Example 4).<sup>89</sup>

**Example 4** Gustav Mahler, "Nicht Wiedersehen!," The fourth song of the third volume of *Lieder und Gesänge*, bars 1–4.

**Schwermüthig.**

Voice      Und nun a - de,    mein her - al - ler - lieb - ster Schatz! Jetzt

Piano      *p*  
mit starkem Pedalgebrauch

<sup>88</sup> It is, of course, debatable as to whether this motivic relation is *audible*. However I feel that the ear is drawn to this bar (implying, admittedly, some degree of authorial intent on Mahler's part) as its addition extends the first phrase of  $b^2$  from a conventional periodic four-bar construction (bars 45-8, Example 2) to the highly unconventional length of five and a half bars.

<sup>89</sup> An analysis of the tonic/dominant ostinato bass across Mahler's entire oeuvre creates yet another complex intertextual net, into which are drawn "Hans and Grete" (the third song of the first volume of *Lieder und Gesänge*), and the later "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt" (1893) and "Der Tamboursg'sell" (1901) ("Antonius of Padua's Fish Sermon" and "The Drummer-Boy," the first and last songs in the second volume of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ("The Youth's Magic Horn")). This is a possible point of further inquiry.

The (meta-) irony is that here, the emotional affect is one of “simple yet deeply moving pathos,”<sup>90</sup> and the temporary evocation of the funereal aesthetic to support the words “Farewell, my heart’s beloved” is sincere. Yet, as has been shown, the Trauermarsch and its section A dirge have been unanimously interpreted as ironic and disingenuous. Donald Mitchell’s chronology, which places the song’s composition in late 1887 – *just* before the period in which Mahler worked most on the First Symphony – strengthens the reading of such an ironic intertextual relationship between the two works.<sup>91</sup>

The more obvious example of self-commentary is the “direct quotation”<sup>92</sup> of the F major material from the final section of “Die zwei blauen Augen” (The Two Blue Eyes), the fourth song in *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, in section C of the Trauermarsch. Hurwitz points out that this song’s melody was, in turn, derived from Mahler’s early cantata *Das Klagende Lied* (The Song of Lamentation), dating from around 1880.<sup>93</sup> This establishes a two-generational intertextual genealogy, recalling the Talmudic *midrashim* that interpret books of the Torah that interpret earlier events. Franklin observes that, in the song – which Schiff might call the *midrash* of the movement because it “explains and judges all things,”<sup>94</sup> as shall be seen – the F major material is followed by an f minor coda that “insists upon the tread of a funeral march.”<sup>95</sup> This highlights further self-reflexivity: in the third movement of the First Symphony, Mahler also marks the end of the song quotation with a return to funeral march material, here the “Brüder Martin” dirge from section A.

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<sup>90</sup> Newlin, 127. Newlin specifically describes this affect in contradistinction to what she dubs the “element of grim and sardonic irony” in the first song in the same volume, “Zu Strassburg auf der Schanz” (“At Strasbourg on the Battlement”). As further evidence of self-reflexivity, the first bar of this song outlines the interval of the fourth three times, while the dotted rhythms in the vocal part recall those of section B in the third movement of the First. Incidentally, these dotted rhythms are sung to the word “Brüder,” creating a textual parallelism with the third movement of the First and its use of the “Brüder Martin” tune.

<sup>91</sup> Mitchell, 113–15.

<sup>92</sup> Franklin.

<sup>93</sup> Hurwitz, 8.

<sup>94</sup> Schiff, 226–27.

<sup>95</sup> Franklin.

Indeed, the very way in which Mahler cross-fertilises song and symphony may be read as a further example of Jewish intertextuality.<sup>96</sup> While “lyrical elements” had infiltrated the symphonic form long before Mahler, Newlin argues that he was “the first to use song-themes structurally in the symphony.”<sup>97</sup> This process, as Stephen Hefling notes, started with the First Symphony – emphasising the critical role the Trauermarsch plays in *reinterpreting* music already published as vocal music (as distinct from music that merely “sounds” vocal, such as the chorale in Brahms’ First Symphony) in a context devoid of the human voice. Considering that the audience for which Mahler was writing only knew “Die zwei blauen Augen” as a song, the subversion of its expectations in Mahler’s instrumental setting may also be read as ironic in its historical context.

Finally, all this self-reference may be viewed in response to Wagner’s “theft libel.”<sup>98</sup> Schiff argues that Mahler flagrantly “rises to the challenge” set by anti-Semitic critique through alluding to as many other composer’s works as possible.<sup>99</sup> I believe Mahler’s equal propensity to quote himself is a more affirmative, if ironic, defence of his artistic originality – the critics are not wrong in identifying the allusive, but are ultimately humiliated when these allusions are traced to their principal source, Mahler himself.

Thus this analysis shows that both motivic relations and direct quotation, as well their explanation in terms of the anti-Semitic “theft libel,” lend themselves to a reading of a re-interpretative, *midrashic* self-commentary, laced through with Jewish irony and parody, in the Trauermarsch.

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<sup>96</sup> Stephen Hefling, “Das Lied von der Erde,” in Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, ed., *The Mahler Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 444.

<sup>97</sup> Newlin, 143.

<sup>98</sup> The subjunctive here is deliberate. Although I am sure Mahler was aware of Wagner’s “theft libel” – after all, Brod calls him “the most decided and enthusiastic worshipper of Wagner” (Brod, *Symbiosis*, 7) – I make no attempt to “read Mahler’s compositional mind” concerning his motives for allusion. The libel remains a relevant consideration, however, in our *reception* of the Trauermarsch as culturally Jewish.

<sup>99</sup> Schiff, 223.

Moving now onto that second element of cultural Jewishness – Mahler’s remark to Alma on being “thrice homeless” as a “Bohemian in Austria, an Austrian in Germany and Jew in the world”<sup>100</sup> highlights the acute, if not exclusive, nexus between the Jewish conception of otherness and homelessness in the diaspora. This sense of what Brod described as “being not wanted, an intruder” is evident in the paratext of the Trauermarsch, as well as within and between the movement’s main formal sections.<sup>101</sup>

Mahler’s experimentation with titles affords us some hint as to the intended extramusical content of the Trauermarsch, and subsequently serves as a yardstick by which to measure the legitimacy of readings – such as homelessness – that have been applied retrospectively. The Symphony was originally titled “Titan: From the Life of a Lonely One” at its performances in Hamburg and Weimar in 1893 and 1894 respectively.<sup>102</sup> The third movement serves as the apotheosis of such loneliness and “nonbelonging” in its various iterations as “Stranded” (1893–4), and, less intuitively, “The hunter’s burial” (1894).<sup>103</sup> The pictorial source for the latter title is Moritz von Schwind’s “parodistic”<sup>104</sup> 1850 woodcut, “Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis” (The Hunter’s Funeral Procession – see Figure 3 on the following page), and its metaphorical paraphrase as “The end of the undesirable intruder” – the death of the “other” – is cited by Brod as paratextual justification for his above-mentioned reading of Jewish otherness in the Trauermarsch.<sup>105</sup> Whether the “intruder” depicts the assimilated Jew’s momentary relapse into Yiddish, which has no place in his

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<sup>100</sup> In Max Brod, *Israel’s Music*, trans. Toni Volcani (Tel Aviv: Sefer Press, 1951), 33.

<sup>101</sup> Brod, *Symbiosis*, 19.

<sup>102</sup> Reinhold Behringer, “Symphony No. 1: From the Life of a Lonely One,” accessed May 31, 2012, [http://www.virtualphilharmonic.co.uk/Mahler\\_S1.php#Eulenburg](http://www.virtualphilharmonic.co.uk/Mahler_S1.php#Eulenburg). The German is “Titan: Aus dem Leben eines Einsamen.” The first part of the title refers explicitly to Jean Paul’s 1800 novel of the same name. Unfortunately a discussion of this extramusical source and the Symphony’s subsequent function as a *bildungsroman* falls outside the scope of this article – see Niekerk for a more involved discussion.

<sup>103</sup> Mitchell, 158–59.

<sup>104</sup> Mahler’s own word, in the programme he wrote for the First Symphony in 1893. In Mitchell, 157.

<sup>105</sup> Brod, *Symbiosis*, 20.

world and is hastily swallowed in shame and fear (as Schiff might argue), or the Jew himself, an alien destined to wander unwanted through Germanic culture, the paratextual network evokes the homelessness of cultural Jewishness.

**Figure 3** Moritz von Schwind, “Des Jägers Leichenbegängnis” (“The Hunter’s Funeral Procession”), woodcut. The pictorial source of the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony.



To return to the music – as mentioned earlier, section A comprises the “Brüder Martin” march-canon. Inasmuch as a “musical sarcasm”<sup>106</sup> can be said to exist on the level of “purely” introversive semiosis, Mitchell, Bernstein and Brod hear it in the “pitiless, stridently sharp canon” and the “vulgar calls of mockery in the E flat clarinet.”<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, irony is also present in the subversion of

<sup>106</sup> Mitchell, 90.

<sup>107</sup> Brod, *Symbiosis*, 19–20. The related questions of whether anything in music is “purely,” exclusively musical (considering that composers, performers and receivers are constructs of their respective worldly experiences), and – even if the answer the first question were yes – whether it is possible to receive music in such a manner, have been discussed at length. Schoenberg answers the first question affirmatively, but concedes that “there are relatively few people who are capable of understanding, purely in terms of music, what music has to say.” (Schoenberg, 141.) Daniel Barenboim is even less conciliatory, claiming that music is neither rational nor emotional and that “it is very dangerous to try to verbalise music” at all. (Daniel Barenboim, Interview by Wolfgang Schauffler for Universal Edition Wien, April 21 2009 (transcript accessed May 31, 2012) <http://www.danielbarenboim.com/indExamplephp?id=60>.) Ironically, elsewhere Barenboim has praised violinist Maxim Vengerov, who is famous for his imaginative creation of *masha!*-like programmatic parables to accompany solo

receiver and performer expectations. The extended use of a children's round in a Symphony is itself parodistic – either the round, or its symphonic context, does not belong. Mahler is typically ambivalent as to which it is, however, an ambiguity that grows as the “Brüder Martin” tune punctuates and frames the entire movement's structure, and instils in the listener a feeling of uncertainty, of being lost at sea without a point of reference. This sensation – which Brecht dubbed “*Verfremdungseffekt*” (distancing effect) almost fifty years later – is amplified as the familiar round is made unfamiliar: its exposition in the solo double bass subverts its traditional association with children's voices; its transformation into the minor mode subverts its customary childish light-heartedness. Such irony casts the listener adrift into the waters of hermeneutic homelessness.

The same is true of the performers. La Grange notes that Mahler *deliberately* wrote the instruments' canonic entries in registers that can only be played “with considerable strain”<sup>108</sup> – for example, the high double basses and bassoons, and the low flutes. This not only creates what Mahler appropriately calls a “suppressed” sound,<sup>109</sup> but forces the performer into an awkward state of technical insecurity as the simple ditty ironically fails to “fit under the fingers.” Thus, the subversion of listener and performer expectations in section A is not only ironic, but also invokes the condition of “nonbelonging” and homelessness in the musical transmission/reception experience.

The widespread reception of section B as a vulgar street tune of ethnic derivation, as has been discussed, encourages its characterisation in the context of a symphony as an “intrusion of some commonplace melody.” Again, for Schiff, this represents the assimilated German Jew's sublimated fear of the metaphorical lapse into Yiddish – that their roots, to them a source of humiliation, would be revealed; alternatively it may represent German Jewry itself. Furthermore, the sudden emotional contrast between sections A and B, which Mahler himself identifies as “now ironically merry, now weirdly brooding,”<sup>110</sup> recalls the Jewish attitude to humour as

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violin repertoire, as a performer with “artistic honesty.” This discussion lies outside the scope of this article.

<sup>108</sup> Gustav Mahler, in La Grange, 755.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Gustav Mahler, 1893 programme to the First Symphony, in Mitchell, 157.

“laughter though tears.” This presents a second interpretation of “Mit Parodie” – if Mahler is expressing cultural Jewishness, and satire is a well-worn device of Jewish humour, then the instruction derives not from Mahler, but from the *original* interdisciplinary source, which Mahler has simply copied into his symphony.

Mahler’s evocation of the German folksong idiom in section C, made explicit in the instruction “Volksweise” (Like a folksong), further supports the reading of section B as an intrusion. Section B was sonically distinctive in the “oom-cha” of the Turkish cymbal/bass drum combination and the extended *col legno* of the violins (see Example 2 on page 41). In of themselves, such exotically percussive timbral effects (especially when coupled with the augmented second interval and solo woodwind timbre that were noted above) illustrate how Mahler even employs stock nineteenth-century “Oriental” devices to express the nonbelonging and otherness of the section B material (and, inasmuch as such devices have been used by other European composers to connote other, non-Jewish cultural minorities, their presence also emphasises the non-exclusive claim of Jewishness to otherness). In section C, however, the gentle triplet figures of the harp replace the percussion as the rhythmic driver, and the violins bow the song melody with the hair, *con sordino*. Indeed, this melody has been so successfully received as “German” that Strauss’ appropriation (conscious or otherwise) of an almost identical conjunct quaver cadential figuration, played in parallel thirds in the strings, in “Von den Hinterweltlern” (Of Those in Backwaters), the second part of his tone poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra* op. 30, seems to have passed through the musicological world unnoticed! (See Examples 5a and 5b on the following page).

**Example 5a** Gustav Mahler, third movement of Symphony no. 1 in D major, violins I and II only, bars 91–3. Note particularly the symmetrical contour through scale degrees 3-2-1-2-3 (doubled a third below), and the phrase's end on the submediant, as indicated.

**Example 5b** Richard Strauss, “Von den Hinterweltlern,” the second part of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, op. 30, organ and upper strings, bars 37–40. (See also a similar figure in the third part, “Von der Grossen Sehnsucht” (Of the Great Longing), in the winds at bars 22–4 and the strings at bars 26–8.)

More relevant to this discussion, the contrasting effect of this “rippling oasis of peace,”<sup>111</sup> whose idiom the listener more readily understands (especially in consideration of Mahler’s first audience, the German middle class), and in which the listener finally feels at home, encourages the retrospective interpretation of sections A and B as intruders, despite their chronological antecedence.

The bardic connotations of the harp in section C also encourage another exploration of Mahler’s paratext – this time, the text set by the song(s) that Mahler quotes. As Hurwitz notes, both “Die zwei blauen Augen” and *Das Klagende Lied* deal with a “wandering lad” who takes momentary repose from his journey under a tree.<sup>112</sup> Again, we can hear the echoes of itinerancy and homelessness.

The suspicion that sections A and B are intruders displaced by section C is confirmed in the tonal “homelessness” of the section A’ that immediately follows, denied its original d minor and thrust instead into the “wholly unrelated” key of e-flat minor.<sup>113</sup> This is not just ironic in its subversion of listener expectations. As Karbusický observes, Christian Schubart characterised e-flat minor as expressing “the most profound spiritual distress...that fear of the trembling heart.”<sup>114</sup> If we subscribe to Schiff’s psychoanalytic reading, this is further evidence of the German Jew’s “fear” of the Yiddish utterance. Alternatively, if the intrusion of section A/A’ (and subsequently, section B/B’) is viewed as representative of the Jewish alien presence in German culture, then its “distress” may be read metaphorically as the Jew’s terrified realisation, upon witnessing the folksong exemplar of Germanic culture, of the failure of his attempts at assimilation.<sup>115</sup>

Finally, the movement’s conclusion with an unsuccessful attempt to contrapuntally combine the motifs of each section, ultimately

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<sup>111</sup> Hurwitz, 8.

<sup>112</sup> Hurwitz, 8.

<sup>113</sup> La Grange, 756.

<sup>114</sup> Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* ([Vienna: 1806] repr. Hildesheim: Verlag Georg Olms, 1969), 278, in Karbusický, 207.

<sup>115</sup> For examples of the extent to which the “taint of being Jewish” remained strong in Mahler’s time, even after Jews were granted civil liberties in 1867, see Bernstein.

dissolving in motivic and formal fragmentation, may again be interpreted as a metaphor for the failed assimilation of the Jew into the Austro-German cultural paradigm, who remained instead the intrusive, marginalised “other.”

Therefore it has been demonstrated how otherness – in particular, its Jewish realisation as intrusive homelessness, commingled with irony, parody, and “laughter through tears” – may be viewed in both the paratext and musical-formal content of the Trauermarsch. As such, Part III has found evidence for all three properties of cultural Jewishness identified in Part II – *midrashic* intertextuality, homeless nonbelonging, and, through both these, Jewish irony, parody and “laughter through tears” – in a close analysis of the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony.

## Conclusion

This article set out to liberate the reception of Mahler’s Trauermarsch from the shackles of reductionist caricature affixed by generations of hermeneutic biases. In Part I it was shown how this distortion has derived from the biographical, musical and paratextual areas of inquiry, which have dominated the discussion of Jewishness in Mahler’s music, and their reliance upon simplistic premises as well as their dialectic inadequacy were problematised. Part II explored and extended a fourth avenue of scholarship which, rather than resorting to further clichés, uniquely acknowledges the rich diversity and depth of Jewish culture. It was noted that the cultural tropes identified and extended are not exclusively Jewish, and need not be, so long as they are recognised and celebrated as Jewish within those communities. It was further noted that the Trauermarsch, despite its central position in the discourse on Mahler’s Jewishness, was virtually untouched by this lens, and Part III proceeded to fill this gap in the literature through close musical analysis.

In doing so, this article has shown that the reception of that most iconically “Jewish” work by the most iconically “Jewish” composer in the western canon, which has suffered the most at the hands of reductionist caricature, may be substantially complexified. This clarifies our understanding of the general compositional process and that of Mahler in particular, and enriches the broader musicological discussion of Jewishness in western art music. The benefit of such

complexification is felt most acutely, however, in the reception of Jewishness in the Trauermarsch itself. In accepting the non-exclusivity of Jewish cultural properties, and in overlaying the extant positivist debate on musical symbology with a more pluralist, metaphoric discussion, this article has assigned Jewishness in the Trauermarsch a dialectical, rather than teleological, character. Not only are discrete musical features heard in dialogue with interdisciplinary cultural tropes, but if the pluralist non-exclusivity of the cultural lens is imported to its musical counterpart, then the debate need not end in verificationist stalemate after all. From this angle, even reductionist caricatures appear less facile.

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past century, Mahler's music has been received as "Jewish" in fulfilment of so great a range of hermeneutic biases that he has attained the status of "Jewish paragon" in the western canon. As a corollary of this reception history, the literature has simplified the tasks of recognising and analysing the Jewishness in the music itself. This is evident in three of four avenues of inquiry – dubbed "biographical," "musical," and "paratextual" – which dominate the discourse, and which have led to the construction of reductionist caricatures. A fourth avenue reads interdisciplinary cultural tropes in Mahler's music, and in doing so is the only lens that demonstrates an appreciation of the rich and complex Jewish civilisation. Yet scholars have been hesitant to train this lens on Mahler's most emblematically "Jewish" work – the third movement (Trauermarsch) of the First

Symphony. This article aims to fill this gap by identifying and extending three elements of Jewish culture – self-commentary, homelessness and irony – and applying them to a close analysis of the Trauermarsch. (I note that while these tropes are not exclusively Jewish, they are celebrated as such within Jewish communities.) Consequently, I hope to complexify our reception of Jewishness in the Trauermarsch, and throughout Mahler's oeuvre and western art music, by ascribing the discussion a more pluralistic, dialectical character.

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