Orchestral Conducting Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation consists of three conducting recitals.

RECITAL 1

January 20, 2023, at 7:30 P.M., Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the University of Michigan Life Sciences Orchestra. Program: Symphony No. 1 in D major by Gustav Mahler.

RECITAL 2

November 18, 2023, at 8:00 P.M., Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the University of Michigan Campus Symphony Orchestra. Program: Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op.38 “Spring” by Robert Schumann.

RECITAL **3**

April 20, 2024, at 7:30 P.M., Hankinson Rehearsal Hall, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the Symphony Orchestra. Program: Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor, Op.37 by Ludwig van Beethoven.

RECITAL 1

Gustav Mahler — Symphony No. 1 In D major

1. Langsam, schleppend
2. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell
3. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen
4. Stürmisch bewegt

RECITAL 1 ABSTRACT

January 20, 2023, at 7:30 P.M., Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the University of Michigan Life Sciences Orchestra. Program: Symphony No. 1 in D major by Gustav Mahler.

RECITAL 2

Robert Schumann Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op.38 “Spring”

1. Andante un poco maestoso – Allegro molto vivace
2. Larghetto
3. Scherzo: Molto vivace
4. Allegro animato e grazioso

RECITAL 2 ABSTRACT

November 18, 2023, at 8:00 P.M., Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the University of Michigan Campus Symphony Orchestra. Program: Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op.38 “Spring” by Robert Schumann.

RECITAL 3

Ludwig van Beethoven — Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor, Op.37

1. Allegro con brio
2. Largo
3. Rondo. Allegro – Presto

RECITAL 3 ABSTRACT

April 20, 2024, at 7:30 P.M., Hankinson Rehearsal Hall, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work performed by the Symphony Orchestra. Program: Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor, Op.37 by Ludwig van Beethoven.

PROGRAM NOTES

Recital 1: Mahler Symphony No.1 in D Major (1888)

Gustav Mahler's Symphony No.1, commonly known as the "Titan," is a monumental composition that represents a departure from conventions while also embracing the musical currents of its time. Composed between 1884 and 1888, a period marked by Viennese vibrant cultural scene and the emergence of the Romantic era, Mahler Symphony No.1 reflects the influences and tensions of the late 19th century. It witnessed nationalistic fervor, philosophical introspection, and a reevaluation of traditional forms. As Mahler navigated the performance of the piece, his symphony underwent revisions, providing insight into his evolving creative vision. Mahler Symphony No.1 is meticulously well structured to serve as the foundation of its expressive power. The symphony is made up of four movements, each containing the distinctive narrative.

I. Langsam. Schleppend–Wie ein Naturlaut

The first movement, originally titled *Frühling und kein Ende*, Spring and No End, modifies sonata form. It begins with a slow introduction that symbolizes the gradual awakening of nature from a prolonged winter's slumber.

The introduction (mm.1–58) opens with the indication, *Langsam, schleppend*, Slow, dragging, depicting nature's initial dormancy. The strings establish a sustained A note spanning seven octaves and create a rich and expansive sonic canvas. Over this sustained note, Mahler introduces a two-note motif in the woodwinds, gradually developing into a repeated pattern of descending fourths. This nature theme is periodically interrupted by fanfare-like awakening calls played by clarinets, later echoed by offstage trumpets placed at a considerate distance. These calls punctuate the slumbering atmosphere, evoking the emergence of spring. (Ex.1)



Ex.1

Amidst these awakening calls, a slow and mellow horn melody emerges, marked as *sehr weich gesungen*, sung very softly. This melody adds a lyrical and introspective layer to the evolving soundscape, enriching the overall narrative of nature's rebirth. The tranquility of the horn melody is again disrupted by fanfare-like passages on the trumpets, enhancing the tension between nature's awakening and its slumber. (Ex.2) Meanwhile, a rising chromatic motif by the cellos and contrabasses, layered with the nature theme played by the trumpets, adds to the



Ex.2

textural complexity.

This introduction transitions into the exposition as the descending two-note cuckoo motif gradually builds up, which transforms into the main theme of the movement. (Ex.3) This cuckoo motif juxtaposes with the beginning of the piece. (Ex.1)

The exposition (mm.62–162) marks a notable shift from the tension of the introduction to a more tranquil atmosphere. The main theme is drawn from the second song of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen,* specifically the verse of *Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld*, I walked across the fields this morning. The melody resonates with the lyrics, expressing the delight in the beauty of

the world. (Ex.3) This theme begins in the cellos and gradually builds in dynamics as it travels through various sections of the orchestra, eventually embracing the full brass ensemble. This emphasizes its thematic richness and contrast.



Ex.3

In the development section (mm.163–357), the resonating A and cuckoo calls persist. A cantabile cello melody emerges as a secondary theme. (Ex.4)



Ex.4

As the development section progresses, Mahler varies the song motif by alternating color, dynamics, and orchestration. Particularly noteworthy is the foreshadowing of the inferno section of the finale. The atmosphere turns ominous, contrasting with the following climax section. (Ex.5)



Ex.5

The climax brings a moment of triumph, marked by trumpet fanfares, woodwinds and horn signals, which dispels the preceding darkness. This climactic section serves as a transition to the recapitulation.

The recapitulation (mm.358–442) revisits the main thematic elements, maintaining the joyful character of the exposition, with the short coda. (mm.443–450)

II. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

The second movement, originally titled *Mit vollen Segeln*, Under Full Sail, presents a lively and rustic scene through a modified minuet and trio structure. Instead of the traditional minuet, Mahler chose a *Ländler*, a 3/4 folk dance originating from Austria, which is reminiscent of hopping and stamping of a countryside dance.

The main section opens with a distinctive bass motif that establishes the foundation of the *Ländler*. (Ex.6)



Ex.6

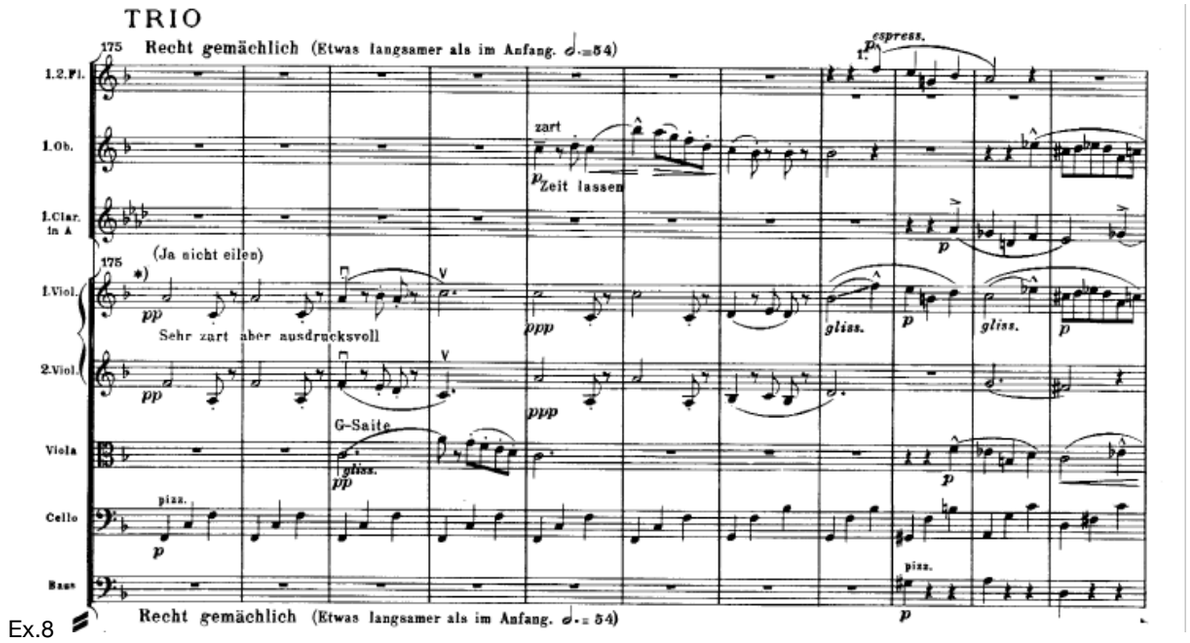
The *Ländler*'s main theme is then introduced in the woodwinds, overlaying the bass motif. (Ex.7)



Ex.7

This theme varies across different sections of the orchestra, adding to the lively and energetic dance. The rhythmic elements play a crucial role in establishing the dance-like quality of the movement, while ostinato contributes to the rustic and unrefined nature of the dance.

The trio section (mm.175–358) introduces a contrasting character by slowing down the tempo and adopting a waltz form. This section provides a break from the lively *Ländler* and presents a more refined and elegant dance. (Ex.8) At the end of the trio, a modified version of the Ländler theme returns in a shorter and heavier orchestration, which contributes to its unsophisticated and peasant-like character.



Ex.8

III. *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen*

The third movement, originally titled “In the Hunter’s Funeral Procession”, serves as the slow movement of the piece. It draws inspiration from the old Austrian folk story, “The Hunter’s Funeral.” The movement begins with the soft beating of a two-note ostinato by the timpani, followed by the main theme on a solo contrabass. (Ex.9) Mahler quotes the melody from the old nursery rhyme of French origin, *Frère Jacques*, to add a sense of irony and humor.



Ex.9

The canon section (mm.1–38) proceeds in a random order among different instruments, creating unexpected timbre combinations. The oboe at m.19 introduces a counter melody, enriching the texture and foreshadowing the following development. (Ex.10)



Ex.10

A new melody in mm.39–44 appears in thirds and sixths played by the oboes. (Ex.11)



Ex.11

Another section in mm.45–49 and 57–60 shows a band-like instrumentation with Turkish cymbals, bass drum, woodwinds and trumpets. This unexpected turn adds a touch of irony and unpredictability to the music. (Ex.12)



Ex.12

A return of the canon (mm.70–81) leads to a more reflective section (mm.81–112), drawing material from the final stanza of the fourth song of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, titled *Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz*, The Two Blue Eyes of My Beloved. (Ex.13)



Ex.13

At m.139, Mahler interweaves three thematic elements simultaneously, with a sudden increase in speed heightening the emotional intensity. The canon theme is juxtaposed, alluding to tragedy. (Ex.14)



Ex.14

The intertwining elements gradually unravel and lead to a slow conclusion with alternating fourths played in the lower strings.

IV. *Stürmisch bewegt*

Initially titled as *Dall'Inferno al Paradiso*, From the Inferno to Paradise, the final movement continues from the third movement without a pause, presenting a stark contrast with an abrupt cymbal crash and a dissonant chord. The exposition (mm.55–253) opens in F minor, played by the brass and woodwinds, gradually gaining momentum. (Ex.15)



Ex.15

Through a transition, the lyrical secondary section in D-flat major contrasts with a song-like atmosphere. (Ex.16) The codetta section recalls the inferno triplet motif.



Ex.16

The development (mm.254–457) begins with another inferno motif in G minor, and the second part of the development in C minor at m. 317 intensifies the atmosphere. The modulation to D major marks the transition to the Paradiso. (Ex.17)



Ex.17

The recapitulation (mm.458–695) open with the secondary section in F major, alluding to the hero's departure from the inferno. The main theme returns in F minor at m.574, which depicts the inferno image in the distance. The intensification of its material builds tension and leads to the climax section at m.623, accompanied by Chorale theme in D major, symbolizing the Paradiso.(Ex.18)



Ex.18

The coda (mm.696–731) concludes the emotional journey of the piece, culminating in a triumph of victory and paradise.

PROGRAM NOTES

Recital 2: Schumann Symphony No.1 in B-flat major, Op.38

After Beethoven's death in 1827, composers had the challenge of composing symphonies that could match his masterpieces. Schumann was a notable figure who rose to this challenge, adding his own twist to the symphonic tradition. Schumann Symphony No.1, also known as the "Spring Symphony" highlights his innovative approach and mastery of the form.

Schumann serves as a bridge between the classical era of composers like Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the emerging romanticism of the 19th century. While he follows the structural conventions of the symphony, he introduces unique elements that distinguish his works. For instance, in Symphony No.4, he employs cyclic structures by reintroducing thematic material across movements, which are connected without breaks between them. Similarly, Symphony No.3 features an additional movement, similar to an inserted interlude, creating a five-movement structure.

Each movement of Schumann Symphony No.1 resonates with a sense of poetic introspection and a wide range of expressive colors.

I. *Andante un poco maestoso–Allegro molto vivace*

The themes and melodies in Schumann's Symphony No.1 demonstrate organic development through cyclical techniques. This involves the recurrence of major themes not only within movements but also between the other movements.

The introduction evokes the onset of spring with a majestic fanfare played by the horns and trumpets in unison, announcing the first melody. (Ex.2-1)



Ex.2-1

This melody is repeated in rich harmonies by the strings and woodwinds, raised by a major third. This repetition of the motif within the introduction mirrors a broader thematic progression. The exposition begins with the first theme by the strings and woodwinds ensemble from m.39. (Ex.2-2)



Ex.2-2

The first theme demonstrates a cyclical element where the motif of the introduction is condensed and reprised. The second theme starts at m.80, led by the woodwinds. (Ex.2-3)



Ex.2-3

Unlike the vigorous and energetic first theme, the second theme has a melodious and contrasting character. It begins in A minor and transitions to F major in later phrases. This theme incorporates rhythmic motifs from the introduction, providing a cyclical essence. Within the exposition, this motif repeats before moving into the development section.

The development section starts at m.134. Schumann employs various techniques such as repetition, sequence, and key modulation to develop the themes and melodies. The section is divided into five parts.

1. mm.134–177: Development of the first theme and sequential progression (Ex.2-4)



Ex.2-4

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2. mm.178–201: Presentation of the first theme in D major.
3. mm.202–245: Further development and sequence of the first theme (Ex.2-5)



Ex.2-5

4. mm.246–289: Coda of the development section (Ex.2-6)



Ex.2-6

5. mm.290–316: Transition to the recapitulation section, reminiscent of an expanded version of the introduction

The recapitulation begins immediately at m.317 with the motif of the first theme. (Ex.2-7)



Ex.2-7

The second theme is restated in its original key of B-flat major at m.343. (Ex.2-8)



Ex.2-8

Subsequently, the transition follows the same melodic pattern as the exposition. (mm.359–380)

The coda, starting at m.381, consists of the motif and rhythmic patterns of the first theme. In the later part of the coda, the fragment of this theme accompanies the second subject. (Ex.2-9)



Ex.2-9

Finally, from measure 484 to 515, the introduction motif cycles repetitively, concluding the movement.

II. *Larghetto*

The second movement is in E-flat major, conveying a tranquil pastoral atmosphere. The melody repeats with embellishments and accompaniment by various instruments. Schumann chooses a prominent theme from the exposition as the basis for extensive variation. The sequence of the principal melodies and their cyclical characteristics is as follows:

1. Theme

The melody of the theme derives cyclically from the ascending triplet motif fragment of the first theme in the first movement. (Ex.2-10)



Ex.2-10

2. Variation I



Ex.2-11

Transposed into E-flat major, the cello plays the melody of the theme, accompanied by other strings and woodwinds decorating and emphasizing it. (Ex.2-11)

3. Variation II



Ex.2-12

The melody of Variation II is performed by horns and oboes, with the theme ornamented by divided rhythms of the strings. (Ex.2-12)

III. *Scherzo: Molto vivace*

The third movement is a scherzo in D minor, comprising a main theme of the scherzo and two trios. The movement is also characterized by the cyclical use of principal melodies.

1. Scherzo

The trombone motif from the conclusion of the second movement is condensed to create the main melody of the scherzo. (Ex.2-13)



Ex.2-13

2. First Trio

The main melody of the first trio uses the harmonic resonance from the opening theme of the first movement in a cyclical manner. (Ex.2-14)



Ex.2-14

3. Second Trio

The main melody is considered as an extension and repetition of the first theme from the first movement. (Ex.2-15)



Ex.2-15

IV. *Allegro animato e grazioso*

The thematic material of the introduction mirrors the cyclical melodic theme of the first movement's first theme. (Ex.2-16) This cyclical motif and rhythm are revisited in the transitions and development sections. The first theme in the exposition is played on the violins, which melody also echoes the cyclic imitation of the eight-note motif from the first theme of the first movement. (Ex.2-2)



Ex.2-16

The second subject unfolds at m.66, presented in F major. The motif originates from the cyclic use of the rhythm from the introduction. (Ex.2-17)

Ex.2-17



The development sections spans from measure 101 to 177. The first part of mm.101–120 serves as a transitional passage linking the exposition and the development section. From m.121 onwards, the development progresses with the main thematic material from the rhythm of the introduction, played by the contrabasses. (Ex.2-18)

Ex.2-18



This motif is developed across other instruments through sequential progression throughout the section.

The recapitulation section mirrors the progression of the exposition, comprising the first and second subjects and transitions.

PROGRAM NOTES

Recital 3 : Beethoven Piano Concerto No.3 in C minor, Op. 37

In the evolution of the classical piano concerto, Mozart played a pivotal role in shaping the classical model of this genre. He blended elements of the Baroque instrumental concerto's ritornello form with the sonata form. Mozart adopted the conventional three-movement structure - fast-slow-fast - while simultaneously introducing formal innovations. Building upon Mozart's groundwork, Beethoven continued this tradition and composed a total of seven concertos with piano. Beethoven Piano Concerto No.3 showcases his mastery of form, expression, and pianistic virtuosity.

I. Allegro con brio

The first theme in the orchestra (mm.1–49) opens in C minor, with the primary theme (mm.1–16) comprising the eight-measure antecedent phrase followed by another eight-measure consequent phrase. The rhythmic figure of an ascending leap by a third and the dotted rhythm are a motto motif for the entire piece. (Ex.3-1)



Ex.3-1

What's interesting is the contrast between the rhythmic emphasis in the antecedent phrase (mm.1–8) and the melodic emphasis in the consequent phrase (mm.9–16). It begins with the strings (mm.1–4), followed by the woodwinds (mm.5–8), and then the full orchestra (mm.9–16), gradually expanding from piano to fortissimo. The transition section (mm.36–49) elaborates on the motifs of the first theme and highlights syncopation rhythms.

The second theme (mm.50–57) in presented in the relative key, E-flat major. Contrasting the rhythmic accents and ascending progressions of the first theme, the second theme features sequences and stepwise motion, generating a more lyrical atmosphere. (Ex.3-2)



Ex.3-2

In the codetta (mm.74–110), the piece returns to the tonic key, restating the themes from the previous sections. The rhythmic motive of the antecedent phrase is prominently repeated, leading to a powerful conclusion by the full orchestra. (Ex.3-3)



Ex.3-3

The solo exposition spans measure 111 to 248. The first theme (mm.114–130) begins with an eight-measure piano solo, which reaffirms the first theme in the orchestra exposition. The structure of the solo exposition remains consistent with the orchestra exposition. (Ex.3-4)



Ex.3-4

The melodic and harmonic variations in the solo exposition already contain a tendency toward the characteristics of the development section.

The second theme of the solo exposition (mm.164–171) resembles the orchestra exposition's second theme, with a consistent structure in the relative major key, E-flat major. The piano solo carries the primary melody, while the strings provide harmonic background. (Ex.3-5)



Ex.3-5

The expanded codetta section (mm. 187–226) is divided into two parts. The first part (mm.187–198) consists of the materials from the second theme with virtuosic piano passages. While the orchestra codetta concluded in C minor, it appears in E-flat minor in the solo conclusion. The latter part (mm.199–226) continues with the piano's virtuosic passages including sixteenth-note flourishes. Throughout this section, the orchestra exchanges the motto motif with the piano, which was at the exposition's opening. The solo codetta section is more expansive compared to the orchestra exposition and leads into the following tutti section. (mm.227–248)

The development section follows the typical features of the sonata form such as variations and developments of thematic material from the exposition. Compared to Beethoven's other concertos, this section is relatively short, spanning only 60 measures. It is divided into three parts.

The first part (mm.249–279) emphasizes elements from the antecedent phrase of the exposition as a crucial motif for both the orchestra and piano solo. (Ex.3-6)

The second part (mm.279–294) reintroduces fragments of the antecedent phrase, particularly in the cello and contrabass.

The third part (mm.295–308) features thematic variations in the woodwinds, while the strings introduce motifs from earlier in the movement.



Ex.3-6

In the recapitulation (mm.309–416), the formal structure is similar to that of the exposition but on a smaller scale. The first theme section (mm.309–339) demonstrates variations in timbre through different instrumentation. The second theme (mm.340–416) is restated as in the exposition but in C major. In the cadenza (mm.417–480), the thematic material from the exposition's antecedent phrase is highlighted. Transitioning to the coda (mm.481–507), the timpani stands out by repeating earlier motifs.(Ex.3-7) This leads to a shift to the piano and strings, building up to a powerful conclusion of the orchestra.



Ex.3-7

II. Largo

The second movement is in a ternary form, A-B-A'.

In the A section (mm.1–38), the melody on the piano solo is begun with quarter notes, divided into sixteenth notes, and then into thirty-second notes, as rhythmic sequences.

In the B section (mm.39–52), while the piano solo repeats an arpeggio pattern, the flute plays a melody above, accompanied by the strings' pizzicato, creating lush sonorities.

While the tranquil introduction of A was dominantly introduced by the piano solo, A'(mm.53–72) reprises the theme with dialogue between the piano and the orchestra. The structure, duration, and harmonic progression remain consistent. The coda (mm.73–90) reintroduces the rhythmic motifs in the previous sections.

III. Rondo. Allegro - Presto

The third movement remains in the same key as the first movement, C minor. The formal structure combines elements of both sonata form and rondo form.

The first refrain, A (mm.1–55), plays a central role in the movement in its harmonic and rhythmic essence (Ex.3-8). A is divided into three segments: the thematic section (mm.1–16), followed by a transitional section (mm.17–32), and a final section (mm.33–55) that expands the main theme.



Ex.3-8

A distinctive feature in this section is the structural connection between the second and third movements. The opening note of the third movement, A-flat, connects with the final note of the second movement, G#, creating a natural sense of harmonic continuity through an enharmonic pitch.

The first episode (mm.68–126) is divided into three parts: the introductory section (mm.56–67), the second section in the relative key, E-flat major (mm.68–82), and the last section

characterized by virtuosic piano passages (mm.83–102), in which a melodic exchange between the orchestra and the piano solo is observed. (Ex.3-9)



Ex.3-9

A following transition between mm.103–126 leads to the return of the refrain A'(mm.127–181), which is a recapitulation of A with identical structure.

The second episode (mm.182–297) is divided into two sections, similar to the development section in the sonata form. The first part (mm.182–229) shows the development of the motif from refrain A. The main melody is introduced by the orchestra and echoed by the



Ex.3-10

piano solo in response. The second part (mm.230–297) features diverse transformations of this motif and serves as a transitional passage, leading back to the following refrain. (Ex.3-10)

The following refrain A (mm.298–330) retains the same key and structure as the earlier refrain A (mm.1–55) but on a smaller scale without the transitional passage.

The third episode (mm.331–375) mirrors the structure of the first episode (mm.68–102). While the first episode was in E-flat major, this time is modulated in C minor.

The final refrain A' (mm.376–407) differs from the previous refrains, notably in its free development of themes. At m.380, the motifs progress contrapuntally across all orchestra sections, except the piano solo. (Ex.3-11)



Ex.3-11

The coda (mm.408–463) is in C major, in which the piano solo and the orchestra exchange a passage. The piano's virtuosity intertwines with the orchestral accompaniment, and a tutti brings the piece to a grand ending.

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