Toward an Expansion of the Critique of the Mahler Revival

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The celebration of Gustav Mahler's centennial in 1960 sparked a revival of his oeuvre. This analysis focuses on texts, which help illuminate Mahler's belated widespread popular reception, and on the trifecta of film, kitsch, and Jewishness. The dominant themes and trends of this revival, as initially led by Leonard Bernstein, are largely at odds with the historically based, critically modernist, historicist reception as advocated by Theodor W. Adorno and others. Mahler's centrality for a modernist and mediated reading of the classical music tradition has instead been displaced by one whose music has come to stand for the psychologically therapeutic while also linked, as I show, to the torment of pathology and the kitsch of sacrificial transcendence. Any critique of the Mahler revival must take even such exaggerated representations into account.

Such Mahler associations flow from Bernstein's biographically deterministic reading of Mahler that sees in him an essentialized expression of tension-filled breaking points of central European fin de siècle culture that were shadowed by a sense of foreboding and doom. Adorno, by contrast, sought to salvage Mahler as a shocking and even radical composer whose innovations pointed the way to the modernism of the Second Vienna School of Arnold Schoenberg. In this article I explore authors and subjects that have emerged in the fields of criticism, film, and performance with this analytic contrast in mind and also seek to uncover what, if any, emancipatory features of social critique can be found in the uses of Mahler after the post-1960s revival.

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The phenomenon of "revival" itself is without much parallel in the cultural history of music. While both J. S. Bach and Antonio Vivaldi do provide historical precursors, there are among modern composers, with the exception of Gioachino Rossini in the world of opera, few parallels with the Mahler revival. The history of Mahler reception is marred by a willful erasure from the repertoire coincident with the period of National Socialism in German-speaking Europe. The context carried over into more than a decade of absence and neglect in the immediate postwar period. This circumstance is compounded by the deliberate exclusion of Mahler from central European stages, a direct result of the implementation of a politicized racist worldview that culminated in the Holocaust. The expulsion from European stages was accompanied by an anti-Semitic critique along the lines of the discourse of "degeneracy," also used to defame and exclude other manifestations of cultural modernism.

The Mahler revival thus at times carries the added burden of remembrance of the victims and the forgotten. As with the cult of Franz Kafka, the revival of Mahler is implicitly a part of the romanticization of the lost intellectual European Jew, a side effect of Holocaust remembrance. Mahler, like Kafka, stands in for doubts about the validity and stability of modernization.[1] It is also a heritage in Europe parallel to that of Native American cultures in some quarters in the United States, an image of absolute victimhood combined with contributions of great cultural value. This curious functional parallelism in popular culture of those two cultures should not overlook the devious obscurities to which history is subjected by such an equation.[2] After all, not only were Jews indistinguishable in many ways in the countries in which they lived, but they inhabited communities within memory of those still living, where they are now mythologized.

I first analyze some of the central lines of argument of the postcentennial Mahler revival, particularly focusing on Bernstein's efforts. The terms presented in this discourse contradict Adorno's reading of Mahler in context. After a brief discussion of how this argument carried over into the world of performance, I then discuss four films that, using Mahler as an "inspiration" or as a sound track, rode the wave of interest in the composer's work. For many, these films may have even been the primary vehicles through which Mahler entered popular awareness. The third and final section examines the interplay

1. Leon Botstein, "Whose Gustav Mahler? Reception, Interpretation, History," in *Mahler and His World*, ed. Karen Painter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 6.

2. For further reading on this link, see Jonathan Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

of kitsch and Jewishness in the Mahler revival with particular attention paid to performances of the Second, or "Resurrection," Symphony.

Bernstein's Mahler was a figure defined by the stress between polarities. It might be termed as a cross between the "suffering servant," who prophesized doom and suffered like no other, and the "little drummer boy," the ultimate outsider in search of transcendence of his disadvantaged origins.[3] In his famed Young People's Concert, Bernstein reveals a Mahler caught between the composer and the conductor, the Eastern folk and the Germanic classical, and the Jew and the Christian. As a bridge composer between the late romantic of the fin de siècle to the protomodernism of the early twentieth century, Bernstein's Mahler is also caught between the figure of the perennial outsider and to the forgotten denouement or culmination of the entire Austro-German classical tradition. As the last great symphonist, Mahler can also be viewed as its final or ultimate expression. The image of Mahler as the ultimate victim who suffered horrendously through his brief fifty-one years underlines the exceedingly overbiographical and therefore deterministic understanding to which he has been subject in the Bernstein-led postcentennial revival. Bernstein's understanding of Mahler's multiple marginalities was overdetermined through his complex levels of overidentification with the composer, which led to a transfer of a high degree of emotionality in his presentation. And like Mahler, Bernstein was both a conductor and a composer who carried a great deal of anxiety about receiving recognition for both spheres of activity. Indeed, unlike Mahler, even decades after his death Bernstein's musical output still retains an insecure position even in a classical repertoire that may tend more toward the adventurous. Later in life, in his presentation "Mahler: The Little Drummer Boy," Bernstein increasingly viewed Mahler as a latter-day Jewish prophet for the catastrophes and violence of the twentieth century that he not only did not live to see but also could not have possibly foreseen. This apocalyptic turn in Bernstein's image of Mahler does not reflect a convergence with Adorno's critical modernist view. It is rather a bloated version of Mahler as suffering servant, and casting the composer as the herald of Hiroshima removes him so far out of his original cultural bounds as to enter the purely theatrical.[4] Considering that

3. The primary "texts" here in question, when we speak of "Bernstein's Mahler," are, first, his Young People's Concert devoted to Mahler, which aired on CBS on February 7, 1960. It is available on DVD; the script may be accessed at www.leonardbernstein.com/ypc_script_who_is_gustav_mahler.htm. The second "text" in question is an eighty-five-minute "video essay," completed by Bernstein in 1985 and now also available on DVD.

4. Bernstein's proclamations to that effect can be heard most clearly during his concluding remarks in *The Little Drummer Boy: An Essay on Gustav Mahler*, dir. Humphrey Burton, prod. Peter Butler, BBC TV in association with Unitel and Video Music Productions, 2007.

Mahler occupied arguably the most powerful position in the cultural arena of his era, the retrospective portrayal as weak and suffering appears almost ingeniously evasive.

There is something of a performative relationship between the form of Bernstein's early reading and the substance of his later understanding. The stress of polarities was prefigured in the metaphors of battle and struggle with duality. A moderated expression of this stance focuses on the distinctly modern nervousness and anxiety attached to Mahler as a composer. This perspective aligns well with the turbulent cosmos of fin de siècle cultural expressions that became cliché in the reception of the writings of Sigmund Freud and Arthur Schnitzler and the artwork of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. Such modern nervousness was read in its historical context as symptomatic of the overstimulation of the modern metropolis. Certain theorists such as Georg Simmel read the blasé attitude that results as indicative of a potentially positive move to rationalization and intellectualization, while reactionary political voices spoke of degeneracy, often coded in anti-Semitic terms.[5] Bernstein's wholesale embrace of this discourse does not provide for sufficient distinction or articulation to ward off a potential collapse of the varying political valences inherent in his use of such terms. While Bernstein's Mahler advocacy does mirror the anti-Semitic fin de siècle critique, his version of Mahler as "suffering servant" incorporates the injuries that were the effect of that critique as well.

Bernstein's emotion-laden Mahler advocacy inevitably carries with it a whiff of the cultic. Furthermore, his intense personal identification and stress on Mahler as a prophet of contemporary crisis articulates an undefined position of the composer as cultural totem and icon. This familiar pretension, closely associated with Wagner, was one that Mahler rejected by default during his life. He never published any kind of programmatic tracts and disavowed any attempt to create a kind of coherent musical mythology for his own time or any other. One might claim that Mahler's post-Wagnerian symphonic project embodies a reinternalization of the severity of operatic gesture into the symphonic hall, yet determinedly without any overarching claim to coherence or extramusical message. Rather than seek any kind of alternative site or discourse for legitimacy, such as Bayreuth, Mahler remained focused on the most establishment of institutions for realizing his career and musical vision at the Vienna Hofoper (Royal Opera House) and the New York Philharmonic.

5. On the extensive anti-Semitic discourse surrounding Mahler, see Edward F. Kravitt, "Mahler, Victim of the 'New' Anti-Semitism," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127, no. 1 (2002): 72–94.

The question has been posed as to whether English-language scholarship on Mahler has attempted to maneuver around Adorno.[6] One might extend this question to encompass the whole of the Bernstein-led Mahler revival. For the present discussion I refer to the stances of Adorno's Mahler image as a counterpoint to that advocated and symbolized by Bernstein. Adorno, of course, grew out of the same context and object world as Mahler and suffered directly from the Nazi assault that also effectuated Mahler's banishment from central Europe. Bernstein, on the other hand, whose background was shaped by the optimism and populism of Yiddish American immigrants, even problematically engaged with pan-German nationalism during his long-standing relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic.[7] Indeed, Bernstein's direct confrontation and experience with discourses of persecution and repression involved homosexuality, not Jewishness. The Bernstein alliance (one might add collaboration) with the Vienna Philharmonic was what made that orchestra, and possibly the city itself, *wieder salonfähig* (no longer objectionable) for the large Jewish audience (and market) in the United States. In this context, "reactionary chic" would be the more appropriate moniker for the "radical chic" Bernstein made notorious by Tom Wolfe.[8] That this occurred even before the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (process of working through the past) initiated by *Der Fall Waldheim* (the Waldheim case) should only compound any hesitancy toward a positive appropriation of its aims and results. For his rather bizarre restorative project, Bernstein needed to prop up Mahler as a kind of identificatory icon. That a Jewish New Yorker would need to repatriate a native son *cum Wahl* (by choice) Jewish New Yorker would seem to reinforce rather than disestablish long-standing prejudices against Mahler. Adorno, on the other hand, tirelessly engaged in the smashing of icons of identity and localization; he also furthered unremitting negation of any alignment of Mahler's music with discourses of transcendent truth.[9]

The "threat" Adorno poses and the compliment of dutiful avoidance to which he has been paid by many Mahler scholars may also be related to the innovative conception of musical criticism he implicitly transmits, which does not pay respect to the fortress formations of traditional American disciplinarity.

6. Stephen E. Hefling, ed., *Mahler Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 272.

7. See Michael P. Steinberg, "Leonard Bernstein in Vienna," in *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), chap. 7.

8. During his tenure in Vienna, Bernstein could on occasion be seen wearing traditional *Tracht* during televised interviews.

9. Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5. ("'It shall not be,' is maliciously sanctioned as precept.")

Roughly speaking, Adorno's Mahler is one at odds with traditional nineteenth-century forms of musical expression and one who directly prefigures the modernism of Schoenberg and Alban Berg. Structurally, Adorno's analysis relies on the conflict between the culturally or historically determined aspects of music as form and the expressive impulses of the subject implied in it.[10] A key distinction, which Bernstein too often fails to make, is that the implied inner subject is not identical with the historical Mahler as such. Adorno's form of presentation is immanent, which is to say that the content of the music he is reading "from," rather than "into," is itself fundamentally musical in nature.[11]

Adorno was writing against the judgment placed on Mahler not only by the Nazis but also by mainstream musical historiography that kept him outside the canon as a composer beholden to extreme hyperbole, that is, as a cautionary example of what not to do.[12] For Adorno, while Mahler engages the traditional dramatic symphonic progression toward transcendence, which is social and hence consumable, his music simultaneously questions this drive and thus glimpses its own emancipation from ideology and myth.[13] The determination to overreach itself, from the *Durchbruch* of the First Symphony to the antifinale of the Sixth Symphony, Mahler's music militates against closure and thus arguably also against the ideology of music in its historical context. Adorno privileges the self-negating moments in Mahler and deconstructs the finales of his symphonies so as not to mine them for affirmative material. The hybrid, "brokenness," of Mahler's musical language does not sanitize or repress the foreign, the childlike, the vulgar, or the alienating but counters the process of musical rationalization. Adorno interprets Mahler's triumphal music (such as the first and third movements of the Third Symphony) as rather threatening energetic forces that undermine the world of artistic illusion itself.[14] Adorno is engaged in inverting or revalorizing Mahler by "redeeming" his faults traditionally ascribed to him in his original historical context. By direct contrast, Adorno is able to assimilate anomalous moments such as the monumental, theatrical, and affirmative Eighth Symphony only by resorting to the language of "identification with the aggressor."[15] This most explicit moment where

10. Hefling, *Mahler Studies*, 276.

11. Ibid., 277.

12. Adorno, *Mahler*, 3.

13. The traditional symphonic sonata form (A B A) has often been viewed as enacting a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which elevates a melody or theme through its repetition and arguably provides a sonic facsimile for a process of transcendence. On this note, see Mark Evans Bond, *After Beethoven: The Imperative of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

14. Hefling, *Mahler Studies*, 282.

15. Adorno, *Mahler*, 138–39.

Mahler resorts to a pseudoreligious, ritual artwork dressed in the language of power and the collective is deemed "an offense." Adorno wanted to consistently preserve the Mahler who challenges, even attacks, his audience. He interpreted the three hammer blows of the sixth as "heading for the audience."[16]

One contested field where Adorno and Bernstein concurrently tread is that of Jewishness. Dwelling at length on the engagement with orientalism as a kind of displaced negotiation of Jewishness in *Das Lied von der Erde*, Adorno is explicitly concerned about Mahler as an outsider, a Bohemian Jew. Yet in a more programmatic statement, Adorno spoke of Jewishness in Mahler as a kind of moment of intellectuality, which infuses all other elements. Remarkably similar to Freud's self-understanding of Jewishness, this conception reflects German Jewish tendencies to repress or minimize "ethnic" components to Jewishness. Bernstein, by contrast, in his Young People's Concerts, refers to Jewish folk colorations as redolent of a nationality, a conception undoubtedly influenced by his Yiddish and Eastern European background. By the end of his life, in his "Little Drummer Boy" video essay Bernstein argued unpersuasively for Jewishness (in a distinctly unthreatening form) as the defining element in Mahler. Bernstein claimed to have unlocked the secret to Mahler's perpetual inner torment through his repressed guilt at having little sympathy with his origins, which was complicated by his conversion and its apparently "tortured" aftermath.

In the field of Mahler reception and scholarship, Adorno has become the lone voice in the wilderness, a difficult, analytic, and modern voice. This stance is similar to what he hoped would be occupied by Mahler in the classical music tradition. Bernstein, meanwhile, who claimed for Mahler the epithet "prophet," became himself the leading "prophet" of the Mahler revival that he spearheaded as a result of his work with the New York Philharmonic in 1960.[17] The Mahler that the general public has come to know reflects very much the figure introduced by Bernstein, one of Zen-like suffering, spiritually transcendent, purely subjective, consoling, and therapeutic. This is a Mahler thought to be of great actuality, yet completely divorced from the actual conflicts and politics of

16. Hefling, *Mahler Studies*, 292.

17. An admirable, as yet unpublished dissertation on the entire Mahler-Bernstein complex does much to establish that Bernstein's Mahler engagement started even earlier in the postwar period, in the late 1940s. See Christopher Jarrett Page, "Leonard Bernstein and the Resurrection of Gustav Mahler" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000). Yet this ultimately celebratory portrayal of Bernstein's advocacy demonstrates that this earlier period of involvement was limited to the Second Symphony and heavily linked to an ideology of Jewish fate that complements the analysis pursued later in this article. This dissertation is also helpful in further supplementing the excesses of Bernstein's personal Mahler identification, which features utterances such as "when I perform Mahler I feel as if I have written the music. 'What a brilliant key change I made there,' I tell myself" (294).

his own context. To cite but one example, a main obstacle to a Mahler revival prior to the 1960s was the link between antifascism and an antimonumentalism opposed to late romantic grandiosity, an association entirely lost on contemporary audiences.[18] The main argument of this presentation is to expand the critique of the revival by integrating elements from moments of popular Mahler consumption that dramatize self-induced suffering to the point of pathology while engaging the kitsch of sacrificial death and violence. To that end, I first turn to films "inspired" by or featuring Mahler that emerged in the wake of the Bernstein revival of the 1960s. The very existence of films inspired by composers, not just of their sound tracks, is itself a phenomenon worthy of greater analysis.

Mahler at the Movies

The emergence of Mahler as the intimate composer of the psychoanalysis of the everyday has been linked by Leon Botstein with a return to blatant sentimentality and a rapprochement between popular and concert music.[19] Film is a privileged medium for precisely such a blurring of boundaries. Mahler as "prophet of the antimodern" may come most clearly into view through an analysis of his use in film. A further element hitherto unnoticed in this interpretation is Mahler as sound track to the compulsive, the obsessive, and the slightly more pathological than what Botstein refers to as the "generic psychological and personal alienation of the modern individual." The focus of these films, however, is not the dehistoricized, existential plight of the modern individual but the asocial revolt of those whose inner torment prevents calm assimilation into the social norm. Mahler's music as film sound track performs a kind of kitsch psychology that reaches the audience, with minimal effort, while creating surrogates for understanding and analysis.

This tendency is marked in films of roughly a ten-year period (1965–75) and on both sides of the Atlantic. A stellar example of new wave American neorealist cinema, *The Honeymoon Killers* (1970) was the one foray into film by an American opera composer, Leonard Kastle. Based on the true story of the "lonely hearts killers" of the 1950s, the film covers the emotional disintegration of a pair of star-crossed lovers who lead each other down a path of deceit, theft, and murder. François Truffaut referred to it as his favorite American film, while Marguerite Duras called it the greatest love story she had ever seen.[20] This black-and-white film was shot in a quasi-documentary

18. Botstein, "Whose Gustav Mahler?," 7.
19. Ibid., 4, 17.
20. Interview with Leonard Kastle, by Robert Fischer, United States, 2003.

style, and the only music on the sound track is that of Mahler. Kastle, as a graduate of Juilliard, was a witness to the overall transformation that Mahler underwent at the hands of the classical music establishment. "Mahler was laughed at . . . an overbaked composer who wrote in the summer," Kastle recalls, "but now his symphonies are staples."[21]

As a gesture to the growing ascendancy of Mahler, Kastle set his film in its entirety to the Sixth, or "Tragic," Symphony, though in a manner that ironically preserved the former dominant judgment on the composer. "Mahler was overbaked in a beautiful way and this whole story is overbaked," Kastle said. "That Mahler is neurotic is no question."[22] This decidedly inarticulate term, *overbaked*, captures one aspect of the kitsch element in the use of this music, namely, that it oversells every climax.

The film's characters, driven by an irrational kind of loyalty and almost sick love, make themselves out to be stylized suffering heroes but at the end are just a pair of depraved killers. Raymond Fernandez, a refugee from fascist Spain, has suffered a brain injury, and Martha Beck, raped as an adolescent, had two self-induced abortions, as well as social torment because of her severe weight problem. Their romantic entanglement becomes a criminal alliance. At first another potential victim of lonely-hearts lothario Raymond, Martha resigns herself to becoming an accomplice, posing as his sister as they crisscross the country in search of more potential victims of hyperaccelerated extortions that occur on the "honeymoons" after express marriages. Aside from the union of an asocial foreigner and a social outcast, the "love story," the plot reveals a distorted inversion of the suburban, placid ideal of domesticity. The film's momentum is toward the telos of a suburban house at which the couple arrive but from which they are repeatedly ejected by their self-destroying and lifestyle-sustaining career of crime. The psychosexual charge that ignites the antagonism, which results in murder, is Raymond's consistent inability to abide by his agreement with Martha, not to sleep with the women he is marrying. Their headlong retreat into utter depravity is arrested only by their inability to carry on after their exploits lead them to murder the child of one of their victims.

A slowed version of Mahler's Sixth Symphony opens in a psychiatric hospital as Martha performs her rounds as a dutiful nurse in her last few moments of normality, with a slightly deranged vigor that appears to bear the seeds of the sadism that will soon follow. Demonstratively depressed, she lives with her mother when her life is transformed by the entry of a mysterious

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

Spanish seducer. Her hysterical performance as she fakes sickness to win him back sets the tone for the uncontrolled, tormented hyperemotional register, which the music is deemed to serve. A criticism at the time was that the application of the Mahler was the film's only significant failure.[23] The unflattering portraits, the sordid details, and the psychological realism were all hailed as a breakthrough murder melodrama of a new neorealist age.

Dispatching with the romanticism of *Bonnie and Clyde* (the film to which it is often compared), Mahler's music functions as a kind of psychological sound track, which has been chosen more often for the docudramatic than for reinforcing a more traditional tragic/heroic narrative. Crescendos are employed conventionally for quotations of triumph and for the buildup of dramatic tension. Kastle employs the so-called Alma's theme to great effect for the romantic sequences, in particular when the two imprisoned lovers, awaiting death, write letters to each other. Kastle remarked that he felt Mahler's music "was a better fit for late twentieth century audiences" and that even Mahler's persona "fit well within the movie."[24] Yet remarking himself on the "overbaked" quality of the tragic torment aligned with Mahler's music, Kastle made his contribution to the Mahler revival to highlight precisely those elements that had previously been disdained and discarded. A startlingly frank portrayal of pathology, both Martha and Raymond left families and children to embark on their self-destructive affair; the film invites the interpretation that their deaths in the electric chair were some kind of mutual sacrifice for the love they shared. Mahler's music is a vehicle for insight into pathological violence and the sacrificial suffering to which the main characters remain invariably dedicated.

The Gambler, a 1974 film liberally based on the Fyodor Dostoyevsky novella (which later became an opera by Prokofiev) of the same name, had a strong European Jewish "refugee pedigree." The Czech Jewish filmmaker Karel Reiz (whose parents died at Auschwitz) employed the services of James Caan (son of German Jewish refugees) and Jerry Fielding, né Feldman, a film composer blacklisted for over a decade for his refusal to name names to the US House Committee on Un-American Activities. Another example of "one symphony = one film," Fielding splices in the First Symphony and then, using a rather bizarre method, applies his own sound track, which is said to be "inspired by," but in effect duplicates, the symphony in question. This highlights the issue of Mahler's actuality and relevance, which was a hallmark of

23. Roger Greenspun, "Kastle's 'Honeymoon Killers': Recalls Lonely Hearts Murders," *New York Times*, February 12, 1970.

24. Interview with Kastle.

his revival.[25] The film is a psychologically driven urban drama about a literature professor compelled to gamble who seemingly relishes the prospect of his own demise, despite the caring interventions of his wife and mother, both of whom he repeatedly betrays.

The film's setting is almost defiantly urban, with images of blight and decay, which were more common popular cultural tropes in the mid-1970s. The use of a Mahler symphony, rather than, for instance, a sound track that engages representations of what has come to be known as "blaxploitation," makes deliberate the argument that Mahler is just as relevant and appropriate for depicting urban struggle. Fielding's translation and adaptation of the First Symphony in his own musical language, though, seem to both contradict and fulfill the dictum of Mahler's actuality. Yet Fielding's work does provide a kind of artificial pathos to what would otherwise be a fairly clear-cut case of addiction. The audience may be led to believe that the professor is sacrificing himself out of an inability to reconcile with the monotony of a secure bourgeois existence.

As in *The Honeymoon Killers*, the music functions as an ambient id, a psychological space of insight into the protagonist's motivation. With a heavy reliance on the first movement (*langsam schleppend*, "slowly dragging"), the score creates the effect of a buildup of a story constantly in the process of beginning. Indeed, Caan's character is a truncated individual who seeks out humiliation and loss and who can never come to rest. A cliché of Freudian emplotment, the professor has an absent father and a strong, independent doctor for a mother, and he pursues mindlessly his own destruction through one debt larger than the next, all the while seeming to sexually neglect his beautiful wife. After one particularly trying loss that involved the disappearance of the last amount of money he could call on from his family, the professor faces a potentially violent end. Instead, he enlists one of his students, an African American basketball star, to "throw" a match that more than recoups his loss. Unable to celebrate with his "bookies" and would-be captors after the game, the professor ventures into the murky inner city, where he propositions a prostitute. Unable or unwilling to actually engage her services, he apparently has sought her out only so that he may steal from her the money that he himself has given her. A fight with her pimp ensues, which results in the prostitute slashing the professor's face. The film ends with the professor before a mirror, contemplating the bloody gash, as if to imply that he is finally able to feel

25. "Mahler Grooves" was emblazoned on a popular pin of the era. The phrase actually originated in a saying of Leonard Bernstein.

something. As one of his underworld associates mentions earlier, "All of you who can't stop are just in it to lose." Nodding affirmatively, the professor acknowledges the psychic trap in which he is caught, unable to merely follow the rational requirements for his existence.

The false starts and incomplete crescendos of the first movement illustrate his furtive and thwarted steps to autonomy from his compulsion. The use of what has often been termed "music of nature" in an urban setting underlines Adorno's argument about Mahler's puncturing of the ideology of nature, which Adorno identified as a stalwart element in the Austro-German classical tradition. And while the pathos and solemnity would seem to impart a sense of heroicism to the protagonist's self-destruction, as in the earlier example the film depends on the music as psychological kitsch, as a shortcut to emotionality as a guarantee of audience response.

Another pair of films demonstrates a parallel and related phenomenon of European films and directors at roughly the same moment as their American counterparts. A docudrama on rising neo-Nazi movements in Austria, *The Inheritors* (1982), also lays a claim to Mahler's music. A unique instance of a film from Austria, it engages Mahler's music as cultural patrimony, though it does not reveal the necessarily complicated relationship the country has with Mahler. The film does not engage Mahler as an outsider or Jewish composer whose music and legacy could effectively serve as a cautionary tale of growing ultranationalism. Rather, Mahler's music is harnessed as an unproblematic gestural claim to national heritage that itself enacts the allure of nationalism and repression that is the film's subject matter.

The plot concerns a sensitive but ultimately disturbed son of a bourgeois family driven into emotional crisis by mistreatment and neglect by his parents. While his brother also suffers and ultimately commits suicide, the protagonist, Thomas, is driven into a neo-Nazi movement. While overbearing, his parents are clearly involved and concerned; Thomas seems to willfully take a path to a kind of self-sacrifice for a cause with more pathos than pleasing his devoutly bourgeois parents. The more convincing portrayal of the film, though, is the stark detail of the involvement of unreconstructed old Nazis with the younger generation. Their influence on the youth as Holocaust deniers who skillfully create respectable facades puts the lie to the putative distinction between neo- and old Nazis. Thomas falls in with colleagues from the lower classes and is seemingly taken under the wing of one of them, a friend whose father abuses and rapes his mother and multiple siblings. The film ends with Thomas shooting his friend's father, precisely what he is not able to do (and would likely never contemplate doing) to his own father. A central flaw of the film is that by

unrelentingly demonizing the parents of the younger generation, it unwittingly justifies the self-presentation of the neo-Nazis as an alternative family.

The use of Mahler's music is sparser than in the previous two American films. The start of the Ninth Symphony is used briefly as accompaniment during the slow-motion finale. Yet the film opens with the third movement of the First Symphony (*feierlich und gemessen*, "solemn and measured") with a wide-pan shot of the countryside. In an apparent panorama and reflection of the Austrian countryside, the camera follows a runner through the countryside who ultimately becomes the first victim of neo-Nazi gangs. The music participates in the aestheticization of violence and remains unclear as to whether it is intended to create a kind of nationalist atmosphere or is to serve as a precautionary and distancing mechanism. The music's role resonates with earlier instances in its propensity toward hysterical overstatement and in its psychological focus on a disturbed and ultimately diabolical protagonist.

The best-known example of this micro-genre is Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971). Taking Thomas Mann's novella as a source text, the director rather overdrives his assumption that Mann based the work on the life of Mahler. In this sense, the film is the first of several biopictorial reflections of Mahler, though in this case involving a rather ahistorical depiction of his demise. While it has been proved that Mann's consideration of a photograph in his story is based on an image of Mahler and that he was shaken by the composer's untimely death, the overriding narrative concern with repressed homosexuality was entirely his own.[26] The boy depicted in the film and story did actually exist, and was located by Mann's biographer Anthony Heilbut. Research also suggests that Mann's reading of Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche, and their theories that would later coalesce as the death drive, partly inspired the story.

Yet the references to Mahler in the film are unmistakable. Visconti depicts his heart trouble, the death of one of his daughters, and a dramatization of audience indignation after a performance, which has become iconic in representations of Mahler and his reception. Visconti renders Mahler's music in an entirely unprecedented manner, using the adagietto of the Fifth Symphony (unnaturally decelerated) as a leitmotif of the film, which almost determines the film's movement. The ritardando of the tempi mirrors the image of decay that is the film's central concern. By the denouement the use of the adagietto functions as a kind of repeated sadomasochistic lashing of Mahler alias Gustav von Aschenbach denying himself in his disturbed pursuit of a preternaturally beautiful young exiled Polish aristocrat. It also aestheticizes his

26. Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 1995), 22–23.

slow death into something almost sickeningly sweet. One reviewer described the application of the music as a kind of requiem for the living.[27] In tandem with the torment of excruciatingly slow camera zooms, the music brings us inside the decaying psyche of a diseased protagonist.

Known colloquially as the "gay Lolita," the film charts the perversion of desire for beauty into repressed sexual lust for a young boy.[28] We have yet again the conjunction on film of Mahler's music and a tale of personal disintegration. The setting of a voyage to Venice carries with it all the weight of an association of a journey to the south as a descent into the psychic depths, the allegory of a journey into an emotional underworld. Beyond the dreamlike lighting that forgoes any awareness of time of day or season, the Venice of the story is in the grip of a pestilence that the city itself refuses to acknowledge, a rather facile analogue to forbidden desire in the film generally. The composer stays too long, dying in the grip of his fever intermixed with the disease of desire never to be fulfilled, another depiction of Mahler as a sound track for heightened emotionalism, death, and self-sacrifice set adrift that leads ultimately to self-destruction.

The "Resurrection" Symphony, Kitsch, and Jewishness

The particular nexus of Jewishness and kitsch in the Mahler revival is grounded in various appropriations and uses of the "Resurrection" Symphony. While apparently improbable, as this work engages the validity of the representation of the arguably Christian theological notion of resurrection, it has in various contexts served Jewish resistance, remembrance, Israeli nationalism, and stunted American Jewish attempts at cultural heroics.

While historically certainly the most popular of Mahler's symphonies in the concert hall, this work, above all, has come to encapsulate some of the most heightened and problematic aspects of the Mahler revival. The text of this work poses the dilemma of the suffering subject, cast beyond the boundaries of society, who ultimately receives reintegration through a discourse of accessible spirituality. Thus this work stages personal crisis in psychologized terms while offering a traditionalist resolution that performs an erasure of modernist energies of fracture and disrepair. This symphony is also read as the sound track to the defining biographical transition in a composer now

27. Vincent Canby, "Death in Venice," *New York Times*, June 18, 1971.

28. The film and the novella have been disowned by American queer theorists reacting against the instantiation of this work as a kind of master text for investigating gay desire. On this issue, see accompanying essays in Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice: A New Translation*, ed. Clayton Koelb (New York: Norton, 1994), 207–32.

understood largely through biographical stepping-stones, namely, his conversion to Christianity and concomitant ascension to leader of the Vienna Imperial Opera. The legitimacy of Christian theological terms of resurrection as well as specifically Catholic claims to representation through theatricality is secured through their articulation by the voice of a Jewish outsider.[29]

The continued prominence of the Second Symphony as centerpiece in the Mahler revival, due in no small part to its adoption, even appropriation, in Jewish contexts, is both a vexed and bewildering phenomenon. To address this issue, I first turn to a little-known performance of the Second Symphony yet to be fully restored to the historical record. The Jüdischer Kulturbund, an emergency relief project for the thousands of Jewish cultural workers expelled from the German civil service in April 1933, evolved into a full-fledged cultural enterprise, which persisted until the eve of the Holocaust.[30] While the Kulturbund did engage Mahler's lieder on multiple occasions, it did not perform a Mahler symphony until after the nationwide pogrom of November 1938. That the organization did not turn to Mahler symphonies until persecution had exceeded crisis proportions is a matter of the historical record. The repertoire of the Kulturbund, despite Nazi designs, reflected a deep immersion and identification with the classic and canonical works of the Austro-German symphonic tradition typical of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle class). There were very few forays into explicitly modernist material or into Jewishly coded material purely for dissimilation or nationalization. In fact, the preservation of the humanist ideals of the German Enlightenment represents a point of resistance to the Nazi program and a solitary survival of "the other Germany," under National Socialism. While there existed a stringent surveillance apparatus on the activities of the Kulturbund, a sufficient sphere of autonomy enabled the creation of an organizational identity, even a cultural movement. After the Nuremberg laws, the circle of censorship tightened, removing more and more of the traditional repertoire, including Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel. Yet even at this stage the musical directors did not turn to any of Mahler's symphonies.

The pogrom of November 1938 marked a profound trauma, shattering any lingering illusions about the potential for the continued coexistence of a

29. There is indeed a Jewish theological tradition of resurrection, but consideration of this important topic lies beyond the purview of this article.

30. Historiography on the Kulturbund remains vexed and limited. In English see Lily Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010). In German see *Geschlossene Vorstellung: Der Jüdische Kulturbund in Deutschland, 1933–1941* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1992).

Jewish minority in Nazi Germany. The organization's founder and director, Kurt Singer, observing events from afar, first in New York and then in Amsterdam, wrote a letter to Nazi overseer Hans Hinkel to state that the Kulturbund should be immediately liquidated. He clearly harbored no illusions about the gravity of the situation. In fact, events evolved quite contrary to Singer's wishes: after the pogrom the Kulturbund and its attendant press apparatus were the only autonomous Jewish institutions allowed in Nazi Germany. The organization was ordered reopened by dictatorial fiat, its leaders released from concentration camps to that explicit end. Any pretense of self-determination was removed, as Gestapo *Rückgespräche* replaced institutional oversight by the Prussian cultural commissioner. In grotesque fashion, the theater wing of the Kulturbund opened with a frivolous English light comedy, *Rain and Wind*. The orchestra, by contrast, only eighteen days after Kristallnacht, proceeded with Mahler's First Symphony. The benefit of hindsight renders any reading of this performance in context as facile. We are not privy to whichever traditions of listening practice were engaged by this production. One may speculate as to whether the romantic evocations of nature's revivification in the opening of the symphony fortified shattered nerves or offered the coaxing sounds of narcotic escape. Nevertheless, the historical moment did not call for unremitting despair or absolute sense of doom, as it coincided with the largest exodus of Jews from Nazi Germany since 1933. Yet the gravity of the predicament was matched by the harnessing of the full orchestral might demanded by a Mahler symphony.

However, the context surrounding the Kulturbund's performance of the Second Symphony was fraught with peril. Held in the latter stages of the "phony war," Nazi Germany had already occupied most of Europe, and the Jews of Poland in particular had begun to suffer in the early stages of the Nazis' murderous assault. By the spring of 1941, by most accounts, though Jews were legally able to flee until October 1941, most who were still in Nazi-occupied Europe were beyond rescue. One month after the performance, in February 1941, the first mandatory slave labor details commenced. Scarcely a year later several of the performers, including the conductor Rudolf Schwarz, the later mentor of Sir Simon Rattle at the Birmingham Symphony, would be in Auschwitz. The single extant piece of contemporaneous literature about the event is a review by Michal Michalowitz published in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*. The review doubles the rhetoric of the music itself, speaking ecstatically of the performance's miraculous nature and the emotional convulsions of those in attendance.[31] Yet it appears unjust to limit an appraisal of this perfor-

31. Michalowitz's review is cited in Steinberg, *Judaism Musical and Unmusical*.

mance as a delusionary participation in the rhetoric of Christian-coded universalistic transcendence. It is a profound testament of strength that one of the organization's most difficult productions—Michalowitz refers to it as a "Gipfeleistung"—occurred under such calamitous circumstances.

The validity of multiple cultural interpretive frameworks here is both justified and inadequate. While one might argue that the performance of Mahler's Second constitutes a prayer for transcendence or the search for an echo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, these speculations do not seem sufficiently grounded in a sense of historical moment or tradition. While later performances of the Second Symphony do indeed engage in more blanket forms of appropriation, I would argue that, based on the constituency present, this Kulturbund performance reflects recognition that the social conflict and predicament of Mahler were of one and the same dilemma and context as their own. Turning to Mahler represents a refusal to repress any aspect of a culture of multiple identities and allegiances that has assiduously developed. That is, for this audience Mahler may very well have represented the spectrum of affiliations, anxieties, and aspirations of German-speaking Jewry. Furthermore, revoicing the outsider who longs for social integration for Jews trapped on the eve of the Holocaust is a damnatory admonishment for an outside world that had excluded them from the human community by thoughtlessly mismanaging attempts at rescue and consequently abandoning them to a fate worse than could be imagined.

Another staging of the Second Symphony in a Jewish context has none of the gravity of historical peril, but an even more absolutist and problematic engagement with a doubling of the terms of transcendence (in this case the transcendence of conversion and of resurrection) engaged by the musical rhetoric. The first momentous weeklong celebration of the founding of the state of Israel culminated in a performance of the Second Symphony on the top of Masada by the Israel Philharmonic in 1988. Forty years before, the orchestra had played in celebration of Israel's Declaration of Independence and also after the liberation of Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 1967, but never had such a production been devoted to commemorating a past anniversary that was not a contemporaneous event. Discarding the populist ethos evident at those earlier events, the concert in 1988 was dedicated to the theatrics of glitz, an Israeli descent into the indulgent 1980s with waiters in tuxes and togas.

Typical concert etiquette was also dispensed with, as the experience and accompanying audience reaction were fused with that of a laser light show and ultimately fireworks. A special acoustic shell and stage, along with a café, were constructed at great expense for just one evening, with concomitantly

exorbitant ticket prices. Certainly, much comment was made at the time that more than half of the audience was made up of foreigners.[32]

Masada is not simply an iconic attraction in Israeli culture but a national shrine and the site of nationalistic ritual. For a long time it served as the site of the induction ceremony for the Israeli Defense Forces. The historical weight of such a location is severe. The former Herodian royal summer palace was the last holdout of the Zealots, all of whom ultimately chose suicide rather than surrender to the Roman legions, preferring loss of life over the loss of national independence. Few nationalist myths seamlessly weave a spirit of such totalizing self-sacrifice into the ethos of national defense. Explicit reference to this discourse was made in the context of the concert. The alleged words of the Masada commander Elazar ben Yair were read by Yossi Yadin, whose father was a national icon, both a military commander and an archaeologist: "Let us at once choose death with honor. Let our wives die unabused, our children without knowledge of slavery. Come! While our hands are free and can hold a sword let them do a noble service! Let us die unenslaved by our enemies, and leave the world as free men in company with our wives and children."[33] The recitation in Hebrew was followed by celebrity recitations in French by Yves Montand and in English by Gregory Peck.[34] The gesture to archaeology in both setting and quotation is germane to a nationalist mission, which conceives of archaeological discovery as equal in importance to military defense. Such a nationalist discourse seeks legitimation through an often-mythological ancient past instead of grounding the state in the context of one of the greatest human rights emergencies and diplomatic failures of the twentieth century.

Masada functions metonymically for the spirit of hopeless and symbolic resistance, its strong cultural valence arguably reenergized only through the history of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and similar acts of resistance.[35] This performance constitutes an explicit celebration of the "rebirth" of the state of Israel after forty years, also referencing the forty years of wandering in the desert by the biblical Israelites, which uses Mahler's symphony and actively engages the language of resurrection. At the time Foreign Minister Shimon Peres made the

32. Linda Gradstein, "Mahler at Masada; A Concert Spectacle to Honor Israel's Fortieth," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1988.

33. *Musical Masterpiece at Masada*, distributed by Sisu Home Entertainment, New York, 1988.

34. The choice of Peck fit the event's regal aspirations while ironically revealing the artifice at work. After all, one of Peck's most famous roles was a Gentile disguised as a Jew in *Gentlemen's Agreement*.

35. For a slightly less sacrificially oriented reading of Masada in the national imaginary of Israel, see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

connection explicit: "This is an unprecedented revival of human strength and the great spirit and deep convictions of a people who have suffered so much." While neatly clad in a Zionist worldview, the forty years of wandering are analogized to the aimlessness of Diaspora existence; this setting does not cower from infusing the language of resurrection with the remembrance of the dead and murdered of the Holocaust. It was Yitzhak Shamir alone, former member of the ultranationalist Stern Gang, and future prime minister, who cited the incongruity of a German Christian symphony in this context and setting.[36]

Doubtlessly, Mahler's Jewishness and conversion to Christianity were well known by almost all in attendance, and the use of his work represents at the same time an act of appropriation but also the cavalier exercise of national sovereignty that can harmonize oppositions through the power of theatrical staging. The rhetoric of national resurrection was carried through even after the concert's conclusion. The event's finale was a live telephone link between a violinist in the orchestra and her sister in Leningrad. The two had not seen each other for fourteen years. The sister had been denied an exit visa, and her son was about to be pressed into the Soviet army. The allusion to a "reserve army" of Jews (especially those both European and cultured), to further the national "resurrection," is unmistakable. The conversation ended with a heavily Russian accented Hebrew, "next year in Jerusalem." The bitter irony to this event is that parallel to the concert, and the cause for rerouting traveling visitors around the town of Hebron, was the start of the first Palestinian intifada, which proved that tragedies and irregularities would follow Jews even into the realm of the nation-state. The lack of attention paid to this coincidence further reveals the forced nature of a staged transcendence that requires the repression of unreconciled polarities.

For a final context in which to approach the nexus of kitsch and the "Resurrection" Symphony in the Mahler revival, I turn to the symphonic American (Jewish) bourgeois everyman, Gilbert Kaplan. A Wall Street financier, Kaplan has funneled his wealth and passion in the service of his obsession with this particular symphony. He has conducted the symphony with fifty orchestras, recorded it twice, and released a new critical edition containing five hundred changes from the traditional score. (He actually owns Mahler's original score, purchased at auction for almost a half million dollars.) A musical novice and savant, Kaplan conducts no other symphony.

A reiner Tor (a pure fool), Kaplan plays the Parsifalian simple fool to "redeem the redeemer" from the clutches of the guarded musical establishment.

36. See Gradstein, "Mahler at Masada."

He enacts the rapprochement between popular and classical music, which Botstein outlined as a critical facet of the Mahler revival. Indeed, Kaplan's work in this regard has been glowingly received in the popular press, with the sharpest criticism coming most often from the seasoned musicians he purports to conduct. The descriptive language accorded this bizarre phenomenon engages the language of obsession and acute emotionality. Kaplan symbolizes the intense degree of personalization as a literal impersonation of this running conceit in the Mahler revival.[37] Certainly, his own advocacy of his role and the work itself encourage just such a reading: "There's no escaping the power of this symphony. People in the audience find themselves in tears, and they don't know why. It gets under their skin in a way they can't prevent."[38] Kaplan functions as a stand-in for the postheroic, complacent, and wealthy bourgeois, an American Jew without exposure to the turmoil of Europe or Israel who finds calling, purpose, and reawakening in Mahler's most theatrical and representational work. Kaplan comes not only from the world of finance but also from that of journalistic self-promotion as the founder of the periodical *Institutional Investor*. This perennial institutional insider claims for himself the mantle of the newfound faith of the outsider expounded in the symphony's text. If Mahler was born as a Jew, his "resurrection" was as the Catholic director of the most prominent opera house in the world. Extrapolating from this reading, Kaplan the Wall Street maven is reborn as a cultural Rambo. It is Kaplan's presentation as a musical innocent who uncovers and unlocks secrets of the original score that functions as an allegory for classical music "getting real," a process apparently possible only for one schooled in the dramatics of feigned passion.[39] He deliberately portrays his quest as a vicarious reacquisition by the bourgeois of those youthful dreams discarded by the wayside in place of the search for stability and wealth: "I had a feeling that people in the audience were urging me to fulfil my dream. They were up with me on the podium that night, playing baseball for the Yankees, writing the book they never wrote or getting the girl they never got."[40] The modulation into the heroic, not to mention allusions to family romance, reflects almost to the point of caricature Freud's theories of dreams as wish fulfillments. Kaplan's glib appropriations of the fantasies and aspirations of a generation are at turns grotesque but then rendered bizarre

37. T. L. Ponick, "Mahler's Symphony a Personal Passion," *Washington Times*, March 31, 2004.

38. Ibid.

39. Norman Lebrecht, "Mahler Gets Real; One Man's Dream to Make the First Recording of Mahler's Second Symphony as the Composer Intended Has Finally Come True," *Evening Standard*, December 17, 2002.

40. Gilbert Kaplan, "Desperately Seeking Mahler," *Economist*, November 27, 2008.

when one considers that Kaplan seeks singularity in a work that has been performed more than almost any other in the classical repertoire. Kaplan's appropriation of Mahler puts the finishing touches on the "Resurrection" Symphony as a globalized musical commodity and fetish piece. His sham pretense to a unique emotional filiation with the work ultimately confirms widely held anti-intellectual and anticlassical impulses in a growing global middle class.

In an essay published at the beginning of the Kaplan phenomenon, one writer viewed Kaplan as the epitome of the "Just Do It" ideology of the Reagan years: namely, you do not have to slave away slowly learning for years—if you just try hard enough, you will succeed. He further remarked that it was often clear that the great orchestras were essentially playing on their own when Kaplan held the baton.[41] In essence, Kaplan is vindicating the dominant ideologies of his day, in a similar vein in which Mahler's rearticulation of the Catholic baroque for the fin de siècle updates the legitimacy of those cultural codes. The naked truth behind the veil of transcendence through pure passion untainted by institutions or teachers is a financial rationale. Ultimately, what distinguishes Kaplan from any other neophyte with high aspirations is his ability to translate the symphonic hall, the conductor's baton, and, of course, Mahler's Second itself into a commodity that may be bought and sold to the highest bidder.

Indeed, the term *kitsch* derives from the German expression *etwas verkitschen*, "to make something cheap." The implications are not limited to the degradation of art to a sugary condiment; they extend also to the commodification process itself, which can affect the inner life of a work of art as much as its external value. Kitsch can function as a kind of shiny status symbol designed to achieve prominence within a certain circle, no doubt an ancillary aim of Kaplan's.[42] Yet the association of kitsch with pleasant, ill-defined feelings that do not require any particular effort is not at all out of place in accounting for the popularity and performing style of the Mahler ascendant in his Bernstein-led revival. Dragged from their context, Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin too have been degraded to the level of sentimental songs for "greatest hits" collections; Mahler, rather, becomes a new-age guru in the concert hall. The kitsch threshold vitally depends on the mass reproducibility of experience and the internal proliferation of information that references itself. That is, the number of films, biographies, and recordings of Mahler

41. Laurence de Looze, "Is Gilbert Kaplan to Gustav Mahler as Harry Belten Is to Felix Mendelssohn?," *Antioch Review* 49 (1991): 339–56.

42. Gilles Dorfles, *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste*, trans. John McHale (New York: Bell, 1969), 41.

Figure 1. Bernstein nearly falls backward at the conclusion of his conducting the "Resurrection" Symphony, performed by the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood on July 5, 1970, Lenox, Massachusetts. UPI Photo/Files

multiply to such an extent that any pretense to reference of the original context or source material is neglected.

The amount of information and production around Mahler is increased, but the alienation from the original context reduces the "message" or analysis of his works to the experience of the phenomenon itself. Essentially, the kitsch process reduces the music to an ornament of the perceived event as such. The effortless arousal of great levels of sentimentality is mirrored in the conductor as the embodiment of what Hermann Broch referred to as the "kitsch man" (fig. 1).[43]

43. Hermann Broch, *Dichten und Erkennen: Essays*, vol. 1 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1955), 295.

The word *mythagogic* has been coined to refer to the attribution of mythical elements to people or objects.[44] Mahler as the suffering servant and poet of humanity happens to be incongruent with critical voices of his own era. Julius Korngold, certainly not a representative of the *volkisch* reaction, referred to his music as "satanic" and "annihilating." The violence and malevolence once heard in his music are repressed through echoes of sacralizing tendencies evident in tempos that are wilting and wearisome in their sluggishness and a plush sound of almost narcotic distraction. Alex Ross wrote of control-M for "mahlerian" on computers for current conductors and orchestrators, instantly recognizable for heavy bows through hymnal harmonies.[45] In 2000 Walt Disney, the world headquarters of kitsch, commissioned two composers to specifically write music after Mahler's Eighth. Rather than music made by composers based on artistic inspiration, we have another example, à la Kaplan, of music made on command to serve as money-producing noise. The end result at the premiers was said to be comical and sad. The very endeavor further underscores a certain emptiness and artificiality in the contemporary reception of Mahler.

Broch proposed considering "Mahler's Century" the century of kitsch.[46] He saw the period as symptomatic of failure of the bourgeoisie to stay true to the severity of their own virtue-bound tradition. He read the origin of romanticism in the exaltation of the internalization of revelation in the individual mind, a result of the reformation.[47] The exchange of ethics for aesthetics, redolent of an age of kitsch, also indicates a period of decline. The sumptuous, saccharinization of death, bathed with gazes into the infinite and the trappings of the religious, dominates the Mahler of *Death in Venice*. Incidentally, Mahler's Second can also be heard on the sound track to a recent PBS documentary on the three religions of Jerusalem, during the section on resurrection, of course.[48]

In his latter-day sequel to the Young People's Concert on Mahler, "The Little Drummer Boy," Bernstein sought to reintroduce Mahler as the proverbial bearer of apocalyptic bad tidings, a prophet of doom with a message too painful to ignore. Bernstein wanted the listener to hear Auschwitz and Hiroshima within Mahler's symphonies. Apparently, the suffering servant of

44. Dorfles, *Kitsch*, 46.
45. Alex Ross, "The Biggest Rockets," *London Review of Books*, August 24, 2000.
46. Dorfles, *Kitsch*, 53.
47. Ibid., 57.
48. *Jerusalem: Center of the World*, dir. Andrew Goldberg, PBS Home Video, 2009.

beauty "who suffered more than any man who lived" did not go far enough for Bernstein at the end of his life.[49] In critique, one should stop at Mahler not as the therapeutic and the voice of the psychological but as the sound track to the kitsch of pathological torment and self-sacrificial transcendence. As the saying goes, it dazzles you until it blinds you, and then gives you back your sight.

49. Bernstein, *Little Drummer Boy.*