

“DER TAG IST SCHÖN.” A MOTIVIC JOURNEY

by Lewis M. Smoley

Thank you for giving me the honor to share some of my thoughts about Mahler’s music with you during this year’s Gustav Mahler Musikwochen. I am delighted to be here.

As we become more familiar with the music of Gustav Mahler, we may notice that certain musical elements, such as distinctive phrases, gestures, rhythmic figures, and modal shifts, appear so frequently that they seem to have some special significance. More than merely stylistic traits or favored compositional devices, it is my contention that these phrases, gestures, rhythms, etc. have motivic significance. They not only provide connective tissue that integrates Mahler’s entire output, but they may also function symbolically as signposts that suggest possible extra-musical meaning. Pierre Boulez once argued that Mahler’s music is replete with such motivic figures that function as identifiers relating individual works and fusing them into a vast musical universe. In conversation, Donald Mitchell suggested to me that Mahler’s music virtually cries out for a detailed motivic analysis along these lines, for such an analysis might uncover a relational perspective in Mahler’s works that can both enhance our understanding of his music and direct us to discover new depths of meaning. Others analogize Mahler’s symphonies to chapters of one enormous work unified more by the subtle treatment of musical symbols than by overt thematic statements.

So what if Mahler’s music does contain such suggestive musical figures that function from work to work? Do these figures have any extra-musical significance? Even if they operate referentially, as signposts that point to other works of Mahler, what relevance do they have to the nature of the works individually and as a whole? I hesitate to call these musical figures “motifs”—a term that is often subject to disdain by those who denigrate any analysis that might

contain an extra-musical component. My reason for such an equivocation is to avoid confusion about Mahler's use of motivic material and to emphasize that for the most part these motivic figures do not function either to identify or describe extra-musical characters, events, or concepts in the manner of Wagner's *leitmotiven*. Mahler's treatment of his universalized motifs—which I call "*Urmotiven*" or "Primal Motifs"—is quite different from Wagner's use of *leitmotiven*. Mahler's motivic usage in the context of his 'symphonic dramas' is of a purely conceptual nature. Functioning referentially, they provide neither labels for nor identifiers of characters or material objects. Instead, they function on two levels, as signal references to earlier works and to universal concepts that connect different works by drawing attention to shared aspects of their dramatic nature.

In Mahler's *Wunderhorn* period these 'shared aspects' were emphasized by including a song theme as the principal subject of a symphonic movement, as in the First Symphony's first and third movements, or by refashioning an entire song into a symphonic movement, as in the Third Symphony's third movement. These 'shared aspects' were then subjected to developmental treatment. In works Mahler composed during this period, we have little difficulty in recognizing cross-referential material. Moreover, Mahler gave us programs for the so-called *Wunderhorn* symphonies. Although he does not explicate his reasons for using, for example, songs or their themes in these symphonies, Mahler probably saw no reason for doing so, given that such overt usage should make his conceptual intentions clear.

Later, however, Mahler rejected these programs, not because they did not reflect what he wanted to convey, but because he wanted to avoid the presumption that he was creating descriptive music in hopes that his works would stand or fall purely on their musical merits. From the middle period on, his direct application of songs or their thematic material virtually

disappears and Mahler's use of *Urmotiven* becomes more significant and subtler. Now the briefest melodic or rhythmic fragment recalls other works in which it appears and thereby conjures up underlying significance of universal import. Yet the symphonies written from his middle period on remained dramatic in nature. As the underlying premises of Mahler's symphonies became more conceptual rather than overtly programmatic, his use of musical references as trans-compositional connectives acquired greater significance. Given the dramatic nature of the so-called *Wunderhorn* symphonies, Mahler's audiences expected to find some underlying 'program' implicit in his middle period symphonies, Five, Six and Seven, as well. But Mahler refused to disclose any such hidden agendas. Even when he set texts in the Eighth Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*, any overriding conceptual meaning that could be derived from each of these works was neither overt nor definitive. Nonetheless, the recognition of his *Urmotiven* and an understanding of how they function in his music can provide a key to unlocking an important perspective on what Mahler might have had in mind.

In an article appearing in *Music Review* nearly fifty years ago, Philip Barford explored one such "motif". He carefully avoided using that term, however, referring to it as a musical 'archetype'. This "archetype" consists of three notes rising stepwise--a leap upward followed by a falling second. It has been frequently referred to as the *sehnsucht* (or longing) motif. Barford's article provides numerous examples of the various ways in which this 'archetype' appears in Mahler's works. The sheer number is astonishing! He drew no conclusions from Mahler's use of this 'archetype' however. To my knowledge no one has followed Barford's lead and presented a study of any other of Mahler's 'motifs'—or whatever one may choose to call them--both to explicate them and to determine whether and in what way they may have significance. I have

attempted to do that in my commentary on each of Mahler's works that appears on my website, classicalpodcasts.com.

Although there are several *Urmotiven* that cut across compositional lines other than the one that Barford's article focuses upon, I would like to concentrate on one phrase that I believe has important motivic significance as well as a fascinating history. I am referring to a melodic phrase that appears at the end of the fourth song of *Kindertotenlieder*. Although it takes shape throughout the song, the phrase that I call attention to is sung to the last line of the text, "*der Tag ist schön auf jeden hoh'n*" ("the day is beautiful on yonder height."). The song begins with a tragic yet internalized expression of loss and ends with hope for relief from suffering with this phrase as its culmination.

The vocal phrase at the end of the song, sung to the words "*Der Tag ist schön auf jenen Höhen,*"--which I will refer to as '*Der Tag*'--can be divided into two parts. The first part consists of a falling minor second, followed by a plunge downward, and then a rising minor second. This couplet of seconds, one falling followed by one rising, is repeated. The second part of *Der Tag* begins with a leap upward and ends with a descending scale. Since the first part often appears independently of the second, I will discuss it in more detail.

The falling minor second has a long and identifiable history as a traditional symbol for tragedy. It appears with substantial frequency in Bach's music with a tragic connotation. More directly relevant to influences that are significant to the development of Mahler's idiom, it appears in Wagner's operas as the so-called motif of "woe". Here is an example of the use of this figure sung to the word "*weh*" in Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.

There are numerous examples of this simple, yet independently treated two-note falling minor second in Mahler's music, used to express deeply felt tragedy; for example, in the third

song of the *Gesellen* cycle. In the Second Symphony, the falling second appears without words as a purely musical symbol of tragedy toward the end of the first movement

The second of the pair of seconds that comprise the first part of *Der Tag*, the rising second, might be considered conceptually the converse of the falling second, connoting the opposite of the tragic, a feeling of hope, virtually a musical counterweight to the “woe” motif. Thus, I suggest, the conjunction of this pair of seconds in the order used most often by Mahler in the fourth *Kindertotenlieder*—falling then rising-- may imply the passage from tragedy to hope. In the song this couplet of seconds is repeated at a higher position to reinforce its significance. The second part of the “*Der Tag*” motif consists of a leap upward which reaches the highpoint of the phrase and then descends scale-wise to the tonic in cadential form. It does not appear motivically in Mahler’s music without the first part preceding it. But as we will see in discussing *Der Tag*’s usage in *Der Abschied* from *Das Lied von der Erde*, it can play an important role in the development of the motif. Below is the entire *Der Tag* phrase as it appears at the end of the fourth song from *Kindertotenlieder*.

S1 [Kindertotenlieder/4th song, mm. 66-70]¹

The *Der Tag* motif has a fascinating history. It appears in one form or another in each and every work that Mahler wrote after *Kindertotenlieder*, yet it is completely absent from Mahler’s music written before the song cycle. This fact reinforced my growing conviction that the *Der Tag* phrase has motivic significance derived from the meaning of the song’s text to which it is first sung.

Instead of progressing on a motivic journey from the beginning, I’m going start near the very end of Mahler’s last complete work, his Ninth Symphony. For it is here that the *Der Tag*

¹ Measure numbers refer only to highlighted or bracketed measures.

motif has been universally recognized as a presumably intentional quotation from the end of *Kindertotenlieder*/4 placed by Mahler on the last page of the score of the Ninth. Notice how the first part of the motif is repeated twice as slowly and the descending scale of its second part lingers as if trying to prolong its course.

S2 [SYMPHONY NO. 9/4th movement: mm. 165-171]

If Mahler really did consciously refer to this last line of the fourth song from *Kindertotenlieder*, what was he trying to convey? A reference to his own lost child, whom he lovingly called Putzi, whom he mourned after she died for the rest of his life and who remained buried deeply in his subconscious? Might virtually any reference to this song cycle have become a symbol for death itself—even Mahler’s own? Or was this reference to *Der Tag* a last expression of hope in the beyond akin to the meaning of the text in which it originally appears? One could conceive of many possible meanings for this reference, but it is not my purpose to discuss them here.

What is rarely mentioned in the Mahler literature is that the *Der Tag* motif appears in the Ninth not only at the end of the finale, but earlier in that movement, as if in preparation for its telling last appearance during the prolonged stillness of the closing moments. The first part of the motif is played by the second violins and violas during the development of the finale’s second theme and is echoed by the first violins. Horns follow in a blaze of light with the second part of *Der Tag*:

S3 [SYMPHONY NO. 9/4th movement: mm. 110-113]

The motif’s first part can also be found elsewhere in the Ninth, for example in the first movement. Here, the four-note conjunction of falling and rising minor seconds is contained in the embellished melodic line played by the first and second violins.

When I noticed that the *Der Tag* motif appeared several times in the Ninth, I began to wonder if it might also be found elsewhere in Mahler's music, apart from its origination in *Kindertotenlieder*. So I hunted through the scores of works written after that song cycle and before the Ninth. To my amazement I discovered numerous instances of its appearance, sometimes only *Der Tag*'s first part, elsewhere the entire motif. But whichever form it takes, *Der Tag* appears in each and every symphony and in some of the songs that Mahler wrote after *Kindertotenlieder*. Moreover, I was astonished to discover that *Der Tag* does not appear in Mahler's music before *Kindertotenlieder*. Thus, I drew the perfectly natural conclusion that *Der Tag* must have motivic significance. Although we have no hard evidence from Mahler about why this phrase appears in virtually every work after *Kindertotenlieder*, or what extra-musical meaning, if any, *Der Tag* might have, its frequent use can neither be overlooked nor dismissed. My purpose in this paper is not to guess at a possible 'meaning, but simply to point out some of the numerous examples of its appearance, and demonstrate how ingeniously it is interwoven into Mahler's music.

Essentially, the *Der Tag* motif is manifested in three different ways:

- (1) As part of a thematic statement or in the development of thematic material;
- (2) As incorporated into rhythmic figuration; and
- (3) In the course of development, sometimes using such compositional techniques as inversion, retrograde, etc., which might well suggest that whatever meaning this motif may have also undergoes "development" or "re-orientation." Here, the comparison with Wagner's motivic practice is most appropriate.

Rückert-lieder was written between 1901-1902, about the time that Mahler was working on his Fifth Symphony and after he wrote the fourth song of *Kindertotenlieder*. In a passage from *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, the solo oboe combines the first part of the *Der Tag* motif with a cadential phrase that appears five measures later in the voice. That cadential phrase has some of the characteristics of the descending scale from the second part of the *Der Tag* motif.

S5 [RÜCKERTLIEDER: from *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, mm. 19-21]

Der Tag virtually permeates the **FIFTH SYMPHONY** as it does no other work of Mahler's, appearing in each and every movement. Here are just a few examples. In the first movement, at the end of the funeral march theme, the first part of *Der Tag* appears in the melodic line in the violins.

S6 [SYMPHONY NO. 5/1st movement: 1st violins, mm. 143-44

] But notice the usual order of the pair of seconds—falling and then rising--is reversed so that the rising second precedes the falling second. Notice also that the second time the motif appears one bar later the interval between the pair of seconds is expanded from a minor fourth to a minor fifth. Could the reversal of the order of seconds here have a negative connotation, given that the 'positive' rising second now precedes and leads into the 'negative' falling second? The movement is a funeral march, after all.

An even subtler use of the motif's pair of seconds appears in the Fifth Symphony's second movement. Here the pair of seconds fits into a long string of woodwind figuration that precedes the cello passage marked *klagend*. The frequent repetition of this part of the motif in the figuration seems to me to enhance its significance by emphasis.

S7 [SYMPHONY NO. 5/2nd movement: oboes, clarinets, mm. 177-179)

In the third movement, the first part of the motif (the paired seconds) sneaks into the playful violin music during the reprise of the opening section. This this part of the motif is played in a clipped 'dotted rhythm' and has a rather frivolous character:

S8 (SYMPHONY NO. 5/3rd movement: 1st violins, mm. 523-24)

In the *Adagietto* movement, the *Der Tag* motif embellishes the expansion of the main theme in the violins during the middle section. Again its repetition seems to underline its significance.

S9 [SYMPHONY NO. 5/4th movement: 1st & 2^d violins, mm. 57, 67]

In the finale there are eighteen distinct references to the *Der Tag* motif, which mostly occur during the joyous return of the *adagietto* theme. A reference to the motif's paired seconds appears in oboes and clarinets leading into the theme. During the restatement of the *adagietto* theme at the passage marked *Grazioso*, the paired second of *Der Tag* now become a permanent part of this theme. After that theme concludes, the paired seconds continue *staccatissimo*, first in violas, followed by a horn and then oboes. Not only does this stress the motif's importance, but transforms it from its original use in *Kindertotenlieder* as a message of hope to hope fulfilled, thus enhancing the joyous character of the movement as a whole.

S10 (SYMPHONY NO. 5/5th movement: oboes, clarinets, mm. 185-6;
1st violins, mm. 205-206, 221-222; violas, horn and oboes,
mm. 235-247, etc.]

In the Sixth Symphony, the couplet of seconds from *Der Tag* makes several appearances in the first movement, again as part of the expansion of its first theme. One example occurs in the violins after the first subject returns unexpectedly.

S11 [SYMPHONY NO. 6/1st movement: 1st violins, m. 258]

The paired seconds of *Der Tag* can also be found in a cadential phrase that ends the embellishment of the second theme in the violins, which recalls the motif's use in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony mentioned earlier. Notice that the paired seconds are inverted here, the rising second preceding the falling second. Could this reordering imply that hope (the rising second) will ultimately be dashed by tragedy (the falling second), and thereby contain a hint of the symphony's conclusion? Keep in mind that these musical examples are representative of numerous appearances of the *Der Tag* motif that occur in this movement alone:

S12 [SYMPHONY NO. 6/1st movement: 1st violins, M. 278]

Several references to *Der Tag* also occur in the Seventh Symphony. In the first movement, the couplet of falling and rising seconds appears as part of the third or *schwung* subject in the violins. Following immediately after the couplet appears is a rising chromatic version of the *sehnsucht* motif:

S13 [SYMPHONY NO. 7/1st movement: violins, mm. 120, 124-5, 129]

Der Tag is also found in the *schwung* theme when it reappears *fortissimo* in the violins, flutes and oboes later on in the movement. After the tenor horn solo that follows, the violins restate the theme with a *sehnsucht* variant followed by the paired seconds of *Der Tag* as it appeared in the previous example.

S14 (SYMPHONY NO. 7/1st movement: flutes, oboes and violins, mm. 354-55;
Violins, m. 364]

In the fourth movement, an inversion of the paired seconds from *Der Tag* sneaks in at the end of a melodic phrase played by the first violins simultaneously with its original form

played by an oboe. Later on, an inverted version of the paired seconds is tagged onto the original version. It shows up again, still in inverted form, at the end of the reprise of the violin theme. Curiously, the rising second is lowered a half step but the succeeding falling second remains the same as before. Given the parodistic aspect of much of the Seventh Symphony, Mahler may be simply toying playfully with *Der Tag* here.

S15 [SYMPHONY NO. 7/4th movement: 1st oboe and 1st vlns., m. 34; 1st violins, m. 291]

In Part I of the **EIGHTH SYMPHONY**, the pair of seconds from *Der Tag* appears a goodly number of times. First, during the restful "*firman virtute*" section, sung softly by the soloists. The first part of *Der Tag* is added to the *Imple* theme sung first by the 1st alto soloist and echoed immediately thereafter by the solo tenor, both singing this part of the motif to the key word "*infirm*" (meaning 'infirm' with reference to the body). Conversely, while the first chorus quietly repeats the word "firmans" ("strength") shortly thereafter, first violins play the original version of the paired seconds from *Der Tag*, possibly to reinforce the importance of this motif here as an affirmation of hope for the perpetual strengthening of the soul through the illumination of the senses. I stress "illumination" because the motif of "Light" with which the Eighth Symphony begins, immediately follows in the basses, repeated by the other choral voices with the support of the brass.

S16 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/Part I: 1st violins mm. 160, 162-63; trumpet/trombones, then horns, mm. 165-67]

Our motif is again interjected into the *infirmans* theme during the passage that focuses on the words "*lumen accende sensibus*", where it is first sung by the alto soloist and then the second soprano soloist, followed by a pair of horns, then the tenor and baritone choristers accompanied by a pair of clarinets, all in close succession:

S17 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/Part I: solo violin, then horn, m. 234; 2d soprano/1st alto, m. 236; tenor/baritone, m. 238]

In Part II of the Eighth, the first part of *Der Tag* becomes part of the extension of the developing theme during the third variation, where it first appears in the horns, second violins and cellos in the bar marked "*Pesante*". Here the first horn supported by violas completes the entire *Der Tag* motif by adding its second part to the couplet of seconds:

S18 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/Part II, horns/2d violins, cellos, m. 138]

In the scherzando fourth variation, the first part of *Der Tag* (the paired seconds) becomes a principal element in the developing theme. Here it is played first by the flutes, and echoed by the oboes, trilling the last note of the couplet of seconds to give it a light-hearted quality:

S19 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/Part II: flutes, m. 149, 153; oboes, m. 157]

During the twelfth variation, we hear the motif's paired seconds followed by a descending scale from the second part of *Der Tag* inserted in the alto solo's melodic line, doubled by the violins. Once again this motivic reference is emphasized by its repetition in the solo violin two measures later, to which is added a variation of the descending scale of the motif's second part. Notice in the score that the tenors of Chorus II follow with the Light motif on the words "*Die ew'ge Liebe nur*" ("eternal Love alone"), indicating what the source of Light is.

S20 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/ Part II: alto solo, m. 571 then horn followed by violins, 572-74)

In the reprise of the so-called "scherzando theme" that begins the thirteenth variation, the woodwinds double the sopranos & altos of chorus I, who sing the words "*nebelnd um Felsenhöh*" ("approaching the high rock").

*Ich pur' soeben,
nebelnd um Felsenhöh',
ein Geisterleben,
regend sich in der Näh'.
Seliger Knaben
seh' ich bewegte Schar,
los von der Erde Druck,
im Kreis gesellt. . .*

I feel now,
approaching from afar
a spiritual being,
Like a mist encircling the peak.
I see a moving throng
of blessed boys
freed from the press of earth,
joined in a circle. . .

The hopeful nature of the text may well be a reason for the appearance of the *Der Tag* motif here.

S21 (SYMPHONY NO. 8/Part II: Ist Chorus, m. 582 and with flutes at m. 586)

Possibly the most significant use of the *Der Tag* motif occurs in *der Abschied*, the last movement of *Das Lied von der Erde*. Hints of its use there occur in the second movement, *Einsame im Herbst*. Listen to the alto soloist sing the moving passage “*Sonne der Liebe, willst du nie mehr scheinen, um meine bitteren tränen mild aufzutrocknen?*” (“sun of love, will you never shine again tenderly to dry my bitter tears?”). During the alto’s fervent outcry on these words, the first part of *Der Tag* appears in the vocal line sung to the words “*sonne der liebe*” in the redemptive key of E-flat major, while the violins play an inverted version of the *sehnsucht* motif against the original version on the words “*um meine bitteren*” followed by a version of *Der Tag* that omits the last note. By omitting the rising tone with which *Der Tag*’s first part concludes, this part of the motif, which takes us from tragedy (falling minor second) to hope (rising minor second), has been subverted and with it the positive connotation that the order of the pairing of these two seconds should have, thereby leaving us in despair. This incomplete version of *Der Tag* keeps repeating, as if it were struggling to recover its last note and thereby evoke the feeling of hope out of despair that its original version implied. All in vain! As we shall see this passage anticipates the more extensive treatment of *Der Tag* during the orchestral interlude that separates the two poems used in *der Abschied*. There the motif struggles desperately to find

that last note and thus make the first part of *Der Tag* whole again so that it would once more become a symbol of hope in the face of tragedy. Here is the reference to the first part of *Der Tag* that appears in the second movement. Notice how the woodwinds echo the couplet of seconds that form the motif's first part immediately after it is sung. Then the violins repeatedly play an inverted version of the *sehnsucht* motif with its last resolving tone omitted.

S22 (DAS LIED/2nd movement: alto solo followed by woodwinds, mm. 128-129; violins, mm. 131-132, then alto, m. 133)

Before the struggle that takes place during the orchestral interlude in *der Abschied* that I mentioned earlier, the first part of *Der Tag* is imbedded in the oboe theme, first played in minims and then in quavers; later, the flute follows suit:

S23 (DAS LIED/6th movement: oboe, m. 61, 67; flute, m. 75)

The motif returns during the expansion of the third subject in first violins just before the alto cries out "*O Schönheit dieses Abends zugenießen!*":

S24 (DAS LIED/6: 1st violin, mm. 207-208)

As I suggested above, *Der Abschied*'s orchestral interlude contains the most remarkable use of the *Der Tag* motif in all of Mahler's music. Set to a funeral march rhythm, this extensive purely orchestral passage can be viewed as a deeply *angst*-ridden struggle to recapture the original form of the *Der Tag* motif, after it had been truncated by omission of the last note of its first part (the paired seconds). As anticipated in the second movement, the message of *Der Tag* has been perverted by having the tail of its first part cut off, thus corrupting its life-affirming significance. In the orchestral interlude, the music desperately tries to put that distortion to right by recovering what had been lost and restoring the motif to its original form. It is worth

going through this section in some detail to see how this attempt at the motif's restoration encompasses the entire section.

The orchestral interlude begins with an introduction that contains several elements that will play a major role in the rest of the section. After the basic march rhythm is established, a four three-note figure consisting of a falling fourth succeeded by a rising minor second, appears in the bass, repeated in the upper register. This three-note figure can be seen as the first part of *Der Tag* with its first note omitted. Flutes pick up the three-note figure played sequentially with low strings, while descending chromatic figures haunt the atmosphere. After a short pause, this configuration of phrases is subjected to further if brief expansion until the music stops as if in mid-stream ending the introduction.

S25 **[DAS LIED/6th movement: mm. 304-322]**

Now the major portion of the orchestral interlude can begin in earnest. The march rhythm returns in clarinets, while violins, flutes and oboes repeat the three-note figure and then stretch it into the full *Der Tag* motif, only to invert its first part, twisting the motif out of shape, and failing to end its second part on a cadence, all this happening while the three-note motif continues to haunt the music in the bass. Then these woodwinds invert and further distort *Der Tag*, their desperate attempt to bring back its original form being most evident as they suddenly cry out at the end of a poignantly twisted version of *Der Tag*. It is as if *Der Tag* were struggling desperately for completion and thus reaffirmation and revivication of its original restorative purpose, as a symbol of hope in the face of dreadful *angst* that accompanies thoughts of death.

As the horns reassert the march rhythm, violins play the paired seconds from *Der Tag's* first part. But when they try to repeat the couplet, they seem unable to do so, left only to thrice

repeat the incomplete figure. Woodwinds sing out the *sehnsucht* motif tied to the descending scale of *Der Tag*'s second part. They end this phrase with a turn figure that also relates to *Kindertotenlieder*. When the violins enter trying to fit the two parts of *Der Tag* together, they keep messing it up. Woodwinds intrude forcefully, trying to help by encouraging the violins. But having distorted *Der Tag* virtually beyond recognition, the violins conclude with the descending scale of *Der Tag*'s second part, which ends with what Constantin Floros calls the 'gong of death'. To the horns' wailing of the march rhythm, strings keep repeating the incomplete version of *Der Tag*'s first part in a last desperate attempt to complete it. But they fail and the march rhythm sinks slowly into the bass ending with a booming low C.

S26 (DAS LIED/6th movement: mm. 323-365)

The struggle to evoke a sense of hope by recovering the motif's omitted rising tone is unavailing. Notice that the leap upward that connects both parts of *Der Tag* has also been omitted. In its original version, it was this leap upward following the rising second that extended its emotional uplift and thus carried the message of hope to its highpoint. Here, by contrast, no such uplifting gesture occurs and the second part of the motif merely descends to a tragic cadence, having failed to remedy the sense of hopelessness conveyed by the entire section. Viewed in this context, the orchestral interlude is one of the most heart-breaking passages in all music.

However difficult it may have been for Mahler to follow this passage with a positive ending, he does so by finding a remedy for the anxiety brought on by thoughts of death through the Nietzschean principle of *amor fati*, viewed from the perspective of the eternal recurrence of the same. Although that is a fascinating subject, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

For those of you who are wondering whether *Der Tag* might also be found in the incomplete Tenth Symphony, you need look no further than the *Purgatorio* movement, where the couplets of seconds are tagged on as decorative figuration at the end of the oboe theme in the central section:

R27 **[SYMPHONY NO. 10/3rd movement, Cooke 2d version: oboe, mm. 31-32]**

We may never know if Mahler intended *Der Tag* to mean anything in particular. It may well be a sheer musical gesture with nothing more than purely musical significance. Yet because it appears so frequently in all of Mahler's works after *Kindertotenlieder*--where it has a clear meaning derived from the text—because Mahler used some many other musical figures referentially, and because of his affinity for generating works with implicit 'programs', I believe these are ample grounds for considering *Der Tag* as a motivic device with referential connotations and possible extra-musical implications. It is my hope that these observations might provoke additional exploration of Mahler's works from a motivic vantage point. It is my contention that a more in-depth understanding of Mahler's use of motifs will provide greater insight into his music that will illuminate how Mahler communicated his message about the human spirit.