

MAHLER'S PROGRAMMATIC CADENCES: IDENTIFYING CADENTIAL FORMULAS TO REINFORCE NARRATIVE

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Abstract

Extant physical evidence of Gustav Mahler's programmatic nature suggests a possible observation of certain musical elements to ascertain narrative meaning. Prior analysis has focused on musical elements such as tonal structure (Agawu, 1986), form (Monahan, 2011), thematic development, excessive, unique, and spatial instrumentation (Peattie, 2011), and many others in order to uncover or decipher Mahler's narrative. One important compositional element that remains noticeably absent from these analyses is Mahler's cadential formulas. While Mahler has been criticized for utilizing "straightforward" tonal cadences, a study observing the orchestration at cadential moments notes a more nuanced manner (Sheinbaum, 2005). I contend that Mahler's choice of cadence parallels the importance of other musical elements in relation to program. I consider cadences to be a pre-meditated element of Mahler's compositional style explicitly selected to highlight his programmatic concepts. This approach offers further possible insight for correlating subtle compositional elements and underlying narrative.

This research complements the well-documented programmatic nature of Mahler's compositions. Through Mahler's small collection of written programs, private writings, correlations between events in his personal and professional life and the compositions created around those events, and even abstract ideas from scholars, many narrative programs have been argued. By analyzing specific cadential moments in both Mahler's symphonic and vocal writing, I offer additional evidence to reinforce some of the previously suggested narratives of his works.

Keywords

Gustav Mahler – Musical Narrative – Cadence – William Caplin – Program Music

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The programmatic nature of Gustav Mahler's music has long inspired a search for meaning within each composition by musicologists and champions of the composer's works.¹ While written programs and text adaptations by Mahler himself accompany

1 A number of prominent figures have suggested narratives associated with Mahler's music. These include those who knew the composer personally, such as Bruno Walter, Natalie Bauer-Lechner, and Alma Mahler; musicologists of the mid-20th century, such as Theodor Adorno and Donald Mitchell; and modern musicologists like V. Kofi Agawu, Ryan Kangas, and Barbara Berry. A number of these narratives are included in this article for consideration while analyzing narrative meaning in relation to cadences.

some works, most contain little defined meaning, therefore, their programmatic nature is often open for interpretation. A number of proposed programs have surfaced for works that exist with no direct narrative provided by the composer. These narratives are inspired by personal events in Mahler's life, which include career advancements, personal illness, death, Viennese politics, and many other abstract ideas. Scholars have turned to a wide range of musical elements to support these narratives.²

There is a noticeably limited amount of research involving Mahler's cadential selections and their correlation to the respective narratives. A 2005 article by John Sheinbaum inspects the orchestration at cadential moments in Mahler's symphonies, however, while the article maintains the potential to be related to narrative, it only briefly aligns cadences with abstract concepts like disintegration and the *fin-de-siecle* society often associated with Mahler.³ A closer, more thorough look at narrative is found in Barbara Barry's article, "In Search of an Ending: Reframing Mahler's Context of Closure," though Barry chooses to observe the broader structural interpolation of movement endings, rather than specific cadences.⁴ In doing so, Barry attempts to identify and analyze Mahler's avoidance of closure – a gesture of finality that Mahler stylistically composes as conclusions in many of his symphonic movements and lieder.

So what, if anything, do the cadences tell us about narrative in Mahler's compositions? This article focuses on the function of cadences within Mahler's lieder and symphonic movements as a comment on possible underlying narrative associated with those works. For this analysis, I draw from William Caplin's conception of cadences to select moments within Mahler's compositions where the cadential formula (or in some cases, lack thereof) may reinforce a previously suggested narrative. Caplin clarifies his definition of the classical cadence by creating a list of elements fundamental to his approach. These include the ideas that a cadence effects formal closure at a limited number of levels within the musical structure; the harmonic content of the cadence is highly constrained; and lastly, that cadential arrival represents a formal *end*, not a rhythmic *stop*.⁵ The examples employed in this research adhere to Caplin's approach to cadence, specifically as it pertains to formal placement and structure.

In order to fully conceptualize cadences as contributing to narrative, we must view both *cadential arrivals* and *cadential function*, as outlined by Caplin. For Caplin, a

2 Examples of analysis concerning musical elements in relation to Mahler's narrative include Kofi Agawu's study of the tonal strategies of Mahler's song cycles; Thomas Peattie's analysis on the use of spatial orchestration in the First Symphony; and the extensive inspection of sonata form successes and failures in Mahler's music by Seth Monahan.

3 John J. Sheinbaum, "The Artifice of the "Natural": Mahler's Orchestration at Cadences," *Journal of Musicological Research* 24, no. 2 (2005): 91-121.

4 Barbara Barry, "In Search of an Ending: Reframing Mahler's Contexts of Closure," *Journal of Musicological Research*, 26, no. 1 (January, 2007): 55-68. Barry employs the word interpolation to describe subversions, delays, and prolongations as they pertain to moments in Mahler's second and eighth symphonies.

5 William E. Caplin, "The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 56.

cadential arrival is defined by the first appearance of the final harmony of a cadential progression, though several delayed arrivals may occur throughout the progression. Example 1 illustrates some standard cadential progressions. The brackets indicate the boundaries of the cadential progression, while the ending harmony defines the type of cadential arrival as authentic, half, or deceptive.

Example 1. William Caplin, "The Classical Cadence," p. 72.

The image shows three musical examples of cadences in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Brackets below the notes indicate the boundaries of the cadential progression. Roman numerals are placed below the notes to identify the chords.

- authentic cadential:** I⁶ II⁶ V⁷ I
- half cadential:** I⁶ IV V⁶ (V⁷) I
- deceptive cadential:** I V IV⁶ V II⁶ V⁶ (V⁷) VII⁷ VI

Caplin continues to explain the motion preceding the cadential arrival as cadential function:

But the phenomenon of cadence as closure consists of more than just the moment of cadential arrival, for there must be some musical material immediately preceding that arrival whose formal purpose is to announce "a cadence is forthcoming." This time-span, which also includes the arrival of the cadence itself, expresses *cadential function* because it sets up, and then usually fulfills, the requisite conditions for thematic closure through specific harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and textural devices. Even if the implied cadential arrival fails to materialize – owing to deception, evasion, or abandonment – we can still identify a passage of music whose formal function is cadential.⁶

Caplin makes two extremely important statements in this passage: firstly, that thematic closure occurs not just through the defined harmonic function, but also through melodic, rhythmic, and textural means. He also states that cadential function still exists even when a strong cadential arrival is avoided. The first comment suggests that while searching for narrative with regard to cadences, all aspects of cadential function must be observed, including textural and orchestrational qualities – similar to the case study by John Sheinbaum. The second comment reinforces that strong cadential arrival is not required to establish narrative connection. An avoided cadential arrival can also support specific narratives when considering the situational placement of the cadential function

⁶ Caplin, "The Classical Cadence," 77.

as it relates to the suggested narrative, an idea that Barry touches on while regarding Mahler cadences as “gestures of finality.”⁷

This research is situated within the domain of musical semiotics. This is a well-explored field, and a number of authors have included Mahler in their efforts to find symbolic meaning in music.⁸ In his text, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*, Kofi Agawu analyzes the first movement of Mahler’s 9th Symphony. In his introduction of the analysis, he writes “Narration is often (though by no means always) melody-led and imbued with tendencies of beginning, continuing, or ending.” Although melody is of great importance in determining narrative, a number of compositional units carry an intrinsic narrative disposition. For Agawu, it is Mahler’s intricate textures that create narrative “building blocks” within the movement, separating sections through their similarities or contrasts and continuities or discontinuities.⁹

The theoretical analysis enclosed will observe all of these possibilities as they pertain to a narrow selection of Mahler’s cadences and attempt to utilize those cadential situations to reinforce pre-existing narrative suggestions. While prior interpretations have undoubtedly observed cadence as an important component of overall composition, closer analysis of these specific cadential moments will serve to strengthen the previously accepted programs. This formulaic approach towards cadences can easily be applied to many instances in programmatic music and is not solely limited to the examples herein. This study draws upon already existing narratives while the analytical model employed creates further possibilities for future programmatic considerations.

Second Symphony, First Movement “Trauermarsch”

The first movement of Mahler’s Second Symphony, “Resurrection,” is assigned a narrative inspired by multiple statements by Mahler himself. In a journal entry from January, 1896, Natalie Bauer-Lechner quotes Mahler as stating that, “The first movement depicts the titanic struggles of a mighty being still caught in the toils of the world; grappling with life and with the fate to which he must succumb – his death.”¹⁰ Furthermore, in a letter to his sister Justa in December 1901, Mahler writes of the first movement,

We stand by the coffin of a well-loved man. His life, struggles, passions and aspirations once more, for the last time, pass before our mind’s eye. – And now in this moment of gravity and emotion which convulses our deepest being, when

7 Barry, “In Search of an Ending,” 55.

8 For further discussion on music and semiotics, see Robert Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

9 Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 255.

10 Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, ed. Peter Franklin, trans. Dika Newlin (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 43.

we lay aside like a covering everything that from day to day perplexes us and drags us down, our heart is gripped by a dreadfully serious voice which always passes us by in the deafening bustle of daily life: What now?¹¹

These letters give an inclination of Mahler's penchant for dramatics and clearly outline a broad narrative for the movement: the death of a heroic individual and discovering a way to cope with an altered perception of life that results from that loss. Mahler develops a cadential function that establishes a musical semblance to this narrative, shown in Example 2. For thirty-six measures, a prolonged pedal on C establishes the tonal center and a sense of continuous normality. At m. 37, a densely homogenous descending line, repeated at a lowered third transposition level in m. 38, finally guides the harmony away from the tonic and to the dominant, G. The dominant holds for another two measures before finally resolving to the tonic. While the use of an authentic cadence is rather typical, Mahler creates a moment of narrative at this cadential arrival by delaying it for such an extensive amount of time and utilizing chromatic inner lines in the orchestration with woodwinds, horns, and upper strings. In this treatment of the standard authentic cadence, the thirty-six-measure prolongation of the tonic parallels the routine pattern of daily life. This pattern is dramatically interrupted by a shift to the dominant, featuring increased dynamics and use of chromatic pitch. The presence of an authentic cadence, a common musical occurrence, signals the cadential arrival and represents death, a common event in life.

Des Knaben Wunderhorn, "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt"

A more subtle example of cadential narrative can be found in "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt," from the *Wunderhorn* collection. The text of the song provides a basic narrative; St. Anthony, finding his church empty, decides to go to the river and preach to the fish and other creatures that congregate there. At the end of the sermon, the creatures leave, each unaffected by the words of St. Anthony's sermon. Mahler's orchestration in this lied is comprised of incessant motion of eighth and sixteenth notes, reinforcing the narrative as the text describes the action of fish swimming to hear St. Anthony's message. Despite the use of rapid harmonic shifts, there are two cadential moments of stability where Mahler utilizes a simple V-i harmonic motion to signify closure. The first instance begins its cadential function at m. 77, where the harmony departs from the tonic toward the eventual cadence. In mm. 77-79, the lowest voice descends from scale degree $\hat{4}$ to $\hat{2}$ before rising to $\hat{5}$ in a scalar motion of the tonicized G, before quickly descending to the tonic C (refer to Example 3). This cadential function and arrival deviates from normative procedure, but within its context, it displays all of the proper devices to be marked as a cadential moment. It subsequently connects to the narrative, as it accompanies the text "die Stockfisch ich meine, zur Predigt erscheinen!" ("It's the cod I refer to, appear for the sermon!") – The codfish appear for the sermon, pausing after having swam up in such a hurry to listen.

11 Gustav Mahler to Justi Mahler, 13 December 1901, in *The Mahler Family Letters*, ed. and trans. Stephen McClatchie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 362.

Example 2. Mahler, Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection," first movement, mm. 31-43. © 2006 by Universal Edition.

1. 2. Fl. *sf* *zu 2* *fp* *p* *ff*

1. 2. Ob. *f* *zu 2* *fp* *p* *ff*

Engl. Horn *f* *nimmt Oboe*

1. 2. Clar. in B \flat *f* *zu 2* *p* *ff*

Bassclar. in B \flat *f* *p* *ff*

1. Fag. *f* *p* *ff*

2. *p* *ff*

Contrafag. *p* *ff*

1. 2. Horn in F *f* *gestopft* *offen zu 2* *ff*

3. 4. Horn in F *f* *offen* *f* *ff*

5. 6. *f* *p* *f* *ff*

1. 2. Trmp. in F *zu 2* *p* *f* *ff*

3. 4. *zu 2* *p* *f* *ff*

1. 2. Pos. *zu 2* *mf* *ff*

3. 4. *zu 2* *p* *f* *ff*

Tuba *f* *ff*

1. Viol. *sf* *mf* *sempre* *cre* *scen* *do* *ff*

2. Viol. *mf* *uniss.* *ff*

Viola *ff*

Cello u. Bass *fp* *mf* *sempre* *cre* *scen* *do* *ff*

c: i (prolongation)

36 zu 2 a tempo 2

1. 2. Fl. *sempre ff*

Ob. *sempre ff*

3. *sempre ff*

1. 2. Clar. in B \flat *sempre ff*

Bassclar. in B \flat *sempre ff*

1. 2. Fag. *sempre ff*

Contrafag. *sempre ff*

1. 2. Horn in F *ff*

3. 4. Horn in F *ff*

5. 6. *ff*

1. 2. Trmp. in F *ff* zu 2 gestopft *ff* offen (Schalltrichter in die Höhe) *verklingend* *pp*

3. 4. *ff* zu 2 gestopft *ff* *verklingend* *ppp*

1. 2. Tuba *ff* *ff* *ff*

Becken *ff* mit Tellern *ff* mit Schwammstich *klingen lassen*

Gr. Tr. *ff* *ff* *f*

Pauke 1. *p* *molto cresc.* *ff* C nach E, G nach H

2. *ff* *ff* C nach B

1. Viol. *ff* G-Saite *ff* Doppelgriff *trem.*

2. Viol. *ff* G-Saite *ff* *trem.* *p*

Viola *ff* *ff*

Cello *ff* *ff*

Bass *ff* *trem.* *ff* *p*

c: i (prolong.) v V i (PAC)

Example 3. Mahler, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, “Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt,” mm. 74-80. © 2001 by Dover Publications.

74 80

im - mer-zu fa - sten: die Stock-fisch ich mei - ne, zur Pre - digt er - scheinen.

II Vln.

I Vln.

Vla. pizz.

Vlc. pizz.

C.B. pizz.

arco

arco

p *p* *pp* *pp*

c: i *p* iv V7/V V i (IAC)

The second instance of V-I closure in “Des Antonius” occurs at m. 159. It precedes the final stanzas of the text; the sermon has ended and it is time for the fish to depart. Mahler matches the text with a harmonic closure after a drawn out departure from the tonic. With an emphasis on A_b beginning in m. 154, Mahler then prolongs the lower voices by a lowered perfect fifth with D_b in mm. 156-157. These D_b 's transition by a tritone to G in m. 158, which finally resolves to cadential closure with a motion to C, emphasized by a rhythmic texture of continuous sixteenth note pedals, seen in Example 4.

The lied ends in a rather unusual fashion with consideration to cadential arrival. Mahler makes no effort to close with a strong harmonic statement, but rather prolongs the tonic harmony by subtly fading away, perhaps reflecting the narrative that the fish have departed and forgotten all they heard in St. Anthony's sermon. This avoidance of emphatic harmonic closure recalls Barbara Barry's conjecture that Mahler often avoids closure as an interpolated compositional gesture of finality. Though it is unlikely that the closing of “Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt” exists as a commentary of interpolated finality paralleling death, the argument does fit the endings of two later works: *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony.

Example 4. Mahler, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, “Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt,” mm. 154-63. © 2001 by Dover Publications.

154 I Vln. pizz. div. arco
 II Vln. pizz. div. arco
 Vla. pizz. sf
 Vlc. pizz. arco
 C.B. pizz. sf
 c: bVI bII V

159 163
 Vla. Die Pre - digt ge - en - det, ein je - der_ sich
 pp spicc. sempre stacc.
 Vlc. pp spicc. sempre stacc.
 C.B. pp spicc. sempre stacc.
 i (PAC) (prolongation of the tonic)

***Das Lied von der Erde*, “Der Abschied” and the Ninth Symphony, fourth movement “Adagio”**

The conclusions of both the final song in *Das Lied von der Erde* and the fourth movement of the Ninth Symphony exemplify Barry’s argument concerning the lack of closure as a gesture of finality. In addition to this similarity, the works have also been interpreted with similar narratives. The final song in *Das Lied von der Erde* is titled “Der Abschied,” (“The Farewell”) and may be considered Mahler’s farewell song to the earth. The composer himself wrote the concluding lines of the text:

I wander to the homeland, to my abode!
 I will never more wander afar.
 Still is my heart, and awaits its hour!

The beloved earth all over everywhere
 Blossoms forth in spring and greens up anew!
 Everywhere and ever brightly blue the horizons,
 Eternally... ever...¹²

A possible narrative for this final moment in “Der Abschied” may be drawn from the teachings of German philosopher Gustav Fechner, who believed that people create for themselves the conditions of their future lives, and that the soul continues to develop even after death “according to the unalterable law of nature upon earth.”¹³ Mahler was aware of this belief and may have even supported it, as Fechner was said to be Mahler’s favorite philosopher.¹⁴ Other possible narratives may be drawn from various sources, as highlighted in Stephen Hefling’s text, *Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde*:

Richard Specht’s review of the premiere associates the close of “Der Abschied” with the ecstatic musical rhetoric of Isolde’s Transfiguration at the conclusion of *Tristan*. So, too, does the letter from Britten just quoted in part and drawing upon that source, Donald Mitchell briefly concurs. More recently, Hermann Danuser has suggested, with little elaboration, that the close of “Der Abschied” “brings the symphonic process to its inevitable conclusion, while at the same time lending it a necessary degree of that unending quality inherent in the *Weltanschauung* model of a love/death dialectic.”¹⁵

In *Das Lied von der Erde*, it is the vocal line that creates the unending quality as it repeats a descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$ and never resolves to the tonic. While the harmony is clearly presented, it never forms the rhythmic or textural requirements for a cadential moment. This lack of closure supports the narrative Hefling’s illustration of narrative while simultaneously supporting various aspects of finality.

The final movement (“Adagio”) of the Ninth Symphony concludes in a manner similar to “Der Abschied.” Of the Ninth symphony Vera Micznik writes,

12 Of the provided excerpt, only the line “I will never more wander afar” is not Mahler’s personal addition to Hans Bethge’s text.

13 Gustav Fechner, *Life after Death*, pp. 33-35 (German reprinted edition, pp 16-17).

14 Stuart Feder, *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 150.

15 Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117.

Whether couched in metaphorical or analytical language, one specific interpretation appears consistently in all the extra-musical elaborations: the symphony's expressive content is pervasively viewed as a representation of Mahler's 'farewell to the world and to life.'¹⁶

The title of Micznik's article, "The Farewell Story of Mahler's Ninth Symphony" aligns with common references to the symphony as Mahler's "farewell" composition. In his Harvard lectures, *The Unanswered Question*, Leonard Bernstein describes his own opinion of the Ninth: "It is terrifying, and paralyzing, as the strands of sound disintegrate ... in ceasing, we lose it all. But in letting go, we have gained everything."¹⁷ Furthermore, Bernstein's choice in the word "disintegrate," reflects Theodor Adorno's own thoughts on Mahler's music. For Adorno, Mahler was the master of "disintegration and decay," utilizing the "dismantling of traditional language" to his advantage.¹⁸

The final measures of the Ninth Symphony are devoid of any strong cadential figures, as the thin orchestration meanders about diatonic harmonies before finally settling on the tonic chord. Here it may be argued that the final viola voice parallels the vocal line in *Das Lied* in its unwillingness to resolve. The only apparent semblance of cadential function is found in the pseudo-plagal cadential figure at mm. 172-73, though its texture and rhythmic form lend itself to the idea of disintegration rather than stability, seen in Example 5.

***Kindertotenlieder*, "In diesem Wetter"**

The closing in the late song cycle *Kindertotenlieder* resembles the disintegration found in both *Das Lied von der Erde* and the final movement of the Ninth Symphony, but differs in its treatment of closure with an authentic cadence in the final measures. After the final modulation has been made to D major, Mahler decays the voices towards a disintegrated closure highlighted by prolongation of the tonic. This prolongation is broken in m. 132, where the cadential function shifts to the dominant before achieving cadential arrival on the tonic in m. 133. This cadential arrival occurs six measures before the ending of the lied, which prolongs the tonic D major from m. 133 onward. In his text *Light in Battle with Darkness: Mahler's Kindertotenlieder*, Peter Russell shares his thoughts on the narrative of this closure:

When the vocal line comes to an end, there follows an instrumental epilogue filled, as Dika Newlin puts it, "with all the intimate tenderness of a *Hansel and*

16 Vera Micznik, "The Farewell Story of Mahler's Ninth Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 20, no. 2 (1996): 144.

17 Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard*, Vol. 1973. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1976.

18 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 123-24.

whose further singing phrase brings the song to its final D major cadence at bar *Gretel* episode." At bar 128 the continuation of the melody is given to the cellos, 133. The gentle quaver figures of the rocking accompaniment meanwhile falter and finally cease; the end comes with a deep, soft D major chord.¹⁹

Russell also suggests that this section, with its allusions to a lullaby, gives another "child's view of heaven" – a description Mahler also used of the last movement of his recently completed Fourth Symphony.²⁰ If this is the case, the cadential narrative may be portrayed as decaying towards finality, but accepting of this "death as a final sleep" as portrayed by the use of a stable, authentic cadence, seen in Example 6.

Fifth Symphony, Fourth Movement "Adagietto"

One final example comes from the fourth movement, "Adagietto" of the Fifth Symphony. This example features a deceptive cadence that uses the arrived lowered VI chord as a pivot towards a new tonal center. Unlike the previous examples, narratives surrounding the Fifth symphony are much more elusive and mysterious. In her article "The Hidden Program in Mahler's Fifth Symphony," Barbara Barry offers a few thoughts on this movement and how it relates to Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*:

If *Kindertotenlieder* is directly quoted in Part I, then it reappears transformed in Part III, in the Adagietto. Just as the end of the song cycle transfigures the grief of death into consolation, so the Adagietto transfigures the earlier reference to death—the external reference to the *Kindertotenlieder* and the internal reference to the F-minor funeral march—into a transcendent stillness.²¹

She further explains that the fourth movement is the expressive center of the Fifth Symphony, as it serves as the "hinge-point of its metamorphic procedures."²² Furthermore, this movement contains a privately encoded love message from the composer to his wife, Alma.²³ If this narrative is accurate, what meaning could be garnered from, as Jeremy Barham has labeled it, a modulating deceptive cadence?²⁴ The tonicized key of B \flat major prepares a cadential arrival in mm. 45-46 with the

19 Peter Russell. *Light in the Battle with Darkness: Mahler's Kindertotenlieder*. (Berne: European Academic Publishers, 1991), 111.

20 Russell, *Light in the Battle with Darkness*, 111.

21 Barbara Barry, "The Hidden Program in Mahler's Fifth Symphony." *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (1993): 59.

22 Barry, "The Hidden Program," 60-61.

23 This encoded love message quotes Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. The hidden quote is explored in more depth in Donald Mitchell's *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death: Interpretations and Annotations*.

24 Jeremy Barham, *Rethinking Mahler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 53-54.

Example 6. Mahler, *Kindertotenlieder*, “In diesem Wetter,” mm. 128-133. ©1990 by Dover Publications.

128 11

Cl. *p* *pp*

B. Cl. *p* *pp*

Fg.

Hr. *pp* *pp*

Cel. *f*

Vln. *pp* *pp*

Vla. *geteilt*

Vcl. *ohne Dämpfer* *p hervortretend* *Dämpfer wieder auf.*

C.B. *pp* *11*

D: V **I (PAC)**

Example 7. Jeremy Barham *Rethinking Mahler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 54.

45 **Etwas drängend.**

I. Vln.
II. Vln.
Vla
Vlc.
C.B.

cresc. *ff* *p*

Bb: II⁷ V⁷ Gb: ^bVI Gb: I

harmonic motion of ii-V, and then creates a deceptive cadence by rising to G \flat (\flat VI). This triad continues into the following measure, however, now as the tonic of the new key of G \flat major, seen in Example 7.²⁵ The modulation brings a return of the opening material, a melody that matches Barry's suggestion of a "transcendent stillness" and may be interpreted as the encoded love message. Perhaps this deceptive moment is Mahler's inability to fully detach from the idea of death which occupied so much of his compositional narrative around this time.

The cadential function and cadential arrival of these various moments in Mahler's compositions outline the possibility of musical elements reinforcing narrative. While it is impossible for narrative to be gleaned from cadential formulae alone, it is possible to combine cadential functions and arrivals with additional compositional elements in order to form a commentary that may be transitioned into non-abstract ideas. This analytical approach to compositional elements may undoubtedly be expanded upon by searching further into cadential moments that have yet to be explored as programmatic in nature. Though narrative in music is often driven by melodic features, observing non-melodic components such as cadences one may reinforce pre-existing programmatic narratives. This study invites further analysis into these non-melodic components and strengthens narratives beyond the traditional, melody-motivic approach.

²⁵ The reductive score excerpt is originally printed in Jeremy Barham's text *Rethinking Mahler*, p 54.

About the author

Neal Warner is a Detroit born composer, arranger, producer, and music educator. His chamber works have been presented at the Charlotte New Music Festival, The Oregon Bach Festival at University of Oregon, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. His theatrical compositions have been produced exclusively through the Bonstelle and Hilberry theatres during his tenure as Music Director at Wayne State University in Detroit. Warner holds a Bachelor of Music from Berklee College of Music and a Master of Music in Composition and Theory from Wayne State University. He is currently pursuing a DMA in composition at the University of Arizona.

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